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In His service,

T. A. McMahon

Executive Director

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* Written by T. A. McMahon

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Response to *The Seduction of Christianity*

Dave Hunt

There seems to be a literal revolution in process! *Charisma* spent two hours on the phone interviewing me recently. They have refused to allow Harvest House to advertise *Seduction*, were not going to write a review, wanted to avoid even mentioning the book, but apparently have received so many letters supportive of *Seduction* and critical of them, and so many people are withdrawing support from “faith” teachers that they have to make some kind of response. KBRT in Los Angeles has received more letters and phone calls about this book than any other topic or book they can remember. To “prove” that I have caused great confusion in the body of Christ, Paul Crouch sent me what he called a “typical” letter from a TBN viewer. It criticized him for having men like Hagin, Copeland, Schuller, et al. and told him to clean up his show. I didn’t think this “typical” writer sounded confused at all. Christian TV may have to change!

The people we name in *Seduction* must be receiving a huge volume of mail and phone calls taking them to task and withdrawing support. This has caused them to react in anger. Robert Schuller has called the book satanic and demonic on a radio interview in Seattle and accused my publisher of being motivated only by money. He was in Seattle autographing his latest book when he made the accusation. I was shocked that a man who is always so “positive” on TV could be so “negative” in real life. Jamie Buckingham has written that T. A. McMahon and I “are witch hunters” and our “approach is, at best, spiritual McCarthyism.” He goes on to say, “Relying on false information, twisted facts, unfounded

accusations, inquisitorial investigative methods, and sensationalism, these enemies of the supernatural attack nearly everyone in the charismatic movement....(T)hey are attacking the faith movement, inner healing, the charismatic approach, and anyone who uses common sense and believes in signs and wonders.” One “wonders” if he even read *Seduction*. These once soft-spoken but now red-faced “faith leaders” seem incoherent, beside themselves, almost apoplectic. Paul and Jan Crouch got into an unexpected argument live on TBN recently with Hal Lindsey over the issues raised in the book. I was named on the live show, but my name was bleeped out on replays. Hal, praise God, did not back down but told them they were wrong and why.

Something unique in modern church history seems to be in the making. Far outnumbering the stepped-up attacks, letters and phone calls of encouragement pour in. Dave Wilkerson wrote on December 26, “I get wind of all the harsh words being said about you and your book, and it truly troubles me. How can so many people be so blind!...God put this book on your heart and brought it to the attention of the body of Christ, and you must never back down. Brother [Leonard] Ravenhill...told me yesterday it is one of the most significant books of modern times.” Similar encouragement is being received from other Christian leaders.

Q&A

Question: Did the authors follow Matthew 18 and go to the people mentioned in the book before they wrote it?

Answer: Matthew 18:15-17 has to do with *private* (not public) *sin* committed by one brother or sister in the Body against another. “Moreover, if thy

brother shall *trespass against thee...*” (KJV). All translations agree that the subject is *sin* or *trespass*, not false teaching. Although a few do not specifically state in verse 15 that this is a trespass by one Christian against another, the context makes this clear in *all* translations. Look for example at verse 21, where Peter, in response to what the Lord has said, asks Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother *sin against me* and I forgive him?” (KJV); “how often shall my brother *sin against me*” (RSV); “how many times can my brother *wrong me*” (Phillips); “how often shall my brother *sin against me*” (NAS), etc.

The entire context has to do strictly with a personal problem between two Christians, where one has wronged the other, and is therefore to be kept private unless it can’t be resolved in that manner. In contrast, many other scriptures make it very clear that sin which is known publicly is an offense to the entire Body and must be dealt with *publicly*: “Them that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear” (1 Tm 5:20, KJV). This is both for the benefit of the body of Christ and also to let the world know that the church doesn’t tolerate sin. False doctrine is not the subject of Matthew 18, but something else entirely, and does not come under the instructions Christ gives in that passage. It is impossible for erroneous teaching that is presented publicly ever to be considered a *private trespass* of one person against another, which must therefore be dealt with privately between the two.

False doctrine is *never* a private matter and is *always* to be dealt with *publicly*. Much of the New Testament was written to publicly correct false teaching. Even the beloved Apostle John named Diotrephes in 3 John and promised that when he came to that church he would publicly correct the offender in person. Paul withstood Peter to the face publicly for his false interpretation of the law that caused

him not to associate with Gentile believers (Gal 2:11-14). In a day of mass media, particularly when denied access to Christian TV networks, the only method of public correction of false teaching is to write books to call the attention of the Body to errors that affect the whole Body.

In keeping with many other scriptures that could be cited, 1 Corinthians 14:29 clearly states, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." Clearly the issue is not whether an individual listener is offended by what one of the preachers has said, even if one could stretch that to be a "sin" against his brother. It would be entirely inappropriate for a listener to take aside the prophet he felt had spoken falsely and have a private discussion with him, and only if he refused to hear, then tell it to the church. The issue is the doctrinal purity of the Body, which must be guarded at all cost. And what has been publicly stated must be discussed publicly. It may well be that the prophet spoke truly and the offended listener was wrong. So when he speaks out against what the prophet has said, he himself will be corrected by others. It is this kind of open discussion among believers that the Bible teaches, and that is the only protection against error being introduced and allowed to corrupt the church. Never is it suggested that no one must disagree with what is being taught because to do so would cause "division." On the contrary, we are told that we *must* correct error in teaching and do so *publicly*.

Furthermore, what has been said in books and on TV etc. is part of the public domain, subject to review, analysis, critique of any kind. Anyone who makes public declarations intended to influence large audiences through books, radio, TV etc. ought to know that he is responsible for what he says, and will be held accountable. No one has ever asked me for permission or even discussed with me critiquing any of my many books, and some reviews have been

very unfavorable. That is expected.

It is not necessary to talk with a writer or speaker in order to be accurate and fair. It is a rather weak excuse to say that some writer/leader really didn't mean what he said. Then he should have said what he meant. Unfortunately, there are thousands and, in the case of some, millions who have read and/or heard and taken it at face value, as any reasonable person would. Words have meaning and it is assumed that the normal meaning applies. Even if one of these teachers has changed his beliefs, we must still deal with what has been published for the sake of those who have been affected by it. If a person has changed his beliefs, then he ought to publish just as widely in tape and book form a renunciation of any false or misleading teaching he has given in the past rather than make a private explanation to me.

***Question:* A frequent reaction to *Seduction* is that it causes division within the Body. What is your response to this criticism?**

Answer: I agree that we as Christians are to love one another genuinely and to seek unity. However, I would remind you that it is the "unity of the *faith*" that we are to maintain; and it is the *truth* that we are to speak in love. If members of the Body have erred, then we must in love correct them.

Furthermore, division is not always bad. Christ caused division everywhere He went (Jn 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). He even declared that He had come into the world to bring division (Lk 12:51)!

I've heard Romans 16:17 misquoted repeatedly on this subject: "Mark them which cause divisions and avoid them." That is not what Paul says. We are to mark and avoid those who "cause divisions and offenses contrary to [sound] doctrine...."

If division arises due to opposition to the truth it is not the one teaching or standing firm for sound doctrine who is

at fault, but those who "will not endure sound doctrine" (2Tm 4:3). That doctrine is despised today is one of the clearest signs of the last-days apostasy, which is growing at an alarming rate.

Let those who oppose *The Seduction of Christianity* point out from the Bible where we have erred. If they cannot do so, it is a pitiful cover-up of their aversion to truth to raise the cry of "division"!

The Ecumenical Movement

Dave Hunt

At the first World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, a previously unknown 30-year-old Hindu named Vivekananda inspired the dream of Hindu-Christian syncretization and a one-world religion. That hope, which smoldered almost unnoticed for decades, has now burst into the flame of New Age beliefs and organizations and has spread to the church as part of the growing last-days apostasy. Coincident with the acceleration of the religious deception prophesied by Jesus himself, 25 years ago The Temple of Understanding was formed with the encouragement of Thomas Merton, the Dalai Lama, Indian Prime Minister Nehru, Eleanor Roosevelt, Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, Albert Schweitzer and UN Secretary-General U Thant. It was headquartered at James Parks Morton's Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Morton is the current president of this "Spiritual United Nations," which is hoping to move to its own 18-acre site on the Potomac outside Washington, D.C. in preparation for the planned 1993 Centenary World Parliament of Religions. In the meantime, a year-long Spiritual Summit is being held from October 1985-86 as another step toward joining together all world religions. [Note, 1995: In fact, the move was never made and the Temple of Understanding is still located at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine with Morton still leading it.]

The spirit of ecumenical unity is building to a fever pitch under Professor Hans Kung's slogan, "No world peace without peace among the religions." Evidence of the growing acceptance of occultism in Christianity is seen everywhere. One Catholic, a critic of *Seduction*, writes, "I am a graduate of Silva Mind Control...attended courses in Transactional Analysis [taught] by a priest in my parish...a priest friend teaches Silva and uses it in his retreats, Sister ____, a nun, has had wonderful success with Silva in her school. Jose Silva is a Catholic." Justifying the use of "New Age Dawning" as the title for "The Five Year Plan for Evangelism in the Presbyterian Church (USA)," Robert McNeilly, chair-

man of the committee that chose this slogan, explained, "...those who oppose the New Age Movement would likely oppose much of what the Presbyterian Church (USA) already is doing and saying..." A February 13, 1986 news release declared, "Dr. Doran C. McCarty, professor of ministry at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary [Mill Valley, CA], proposed a 'new shaman' in his faculty inaugural address.... 'The Making of the New Shaman'...presented as part of the first chapel service of the spring semester.... The New Testament picture of Jesus was that of a shaman [witch doctor], McCarty related." The basic shamanic practices described by Dr. Michael Harner in *The Way of the Shaman*—visualization, psychotherapy, hypnotherapy and positive thinking and positive confession—are widely accepted and practiced in the church.

The merger of Christianity with shamanism is essential to the formation of Antichrist's coming world religion. This is only possible where sound biblical doctrine is ignored in favor of whatever "works," and experience and "new revelation" take the place of Scripture. This is why I am so gravely concerned by the reaction to *Seduction* on the part of most of the leaders of the so-called "faith movement." They attempt to escape any examination of their beliefs and practices by calling correction "divisive." The predominant theme that has emerged in the last few months coming out of the positive confession/Rhema camp is "unity." How to combat the effects of *Seduction* was a major topic at a meeting of about 400 of the top charismatic ministers in January at Jim and Tammy Bakker's PTL complex. "Unity" based not upon truth but upon an agreement not to disagree with each other was the order of the day.

This was also the theme of a historic gathering of top "faith teachers" called by Oral Roberts a few days later in Dallas, where the Charismatic Bible Ministries (CBM) was formed with Roberts as head, Kenneth Copeland as secretary, and 27 fellow charismatic trustees, including Paulk, Reid, Strader, the Hagins, Tilton, Hayford, Hickey, Buckingham and Caldwell. All seemed to agree that CBM was the seed of the greatest unity in modern church history and would spark worldwide revival. Oddly enough, high priority was given by these "faith teachers" to health, accident and life

insurance.

Let us pray that genuine unity will come centered in truth and that there will be conviction of sin, repentance and a renewed determination to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Q&A

Question: What is the correct biblical use of faith?

Answer: Very simply, faith must have an object. In Mark 11:22 Jesus said, "Have faith in God." One has faith in something or someone. Faith is absolute, total trust. There is no one and nothing in the universe that deserves our complete 100-percent faith except God. It is absurd to say that God is a faith God or has faith. In whom does God have faith? Because we are little gods under God, "in God's class" as Capps, Cho, et al. teach, they say we can "speak the creative word" also. These men have turned faith into a power that God used to create the world. They say that this power is contained in words, that God released His faith by speaking words, and that we can do the same. That is not biblical. And I am not the only one who says so. The Assemblies of God have an official booklet condemning such teaching. In fact, this so-called "faith teaching" is believed by only a small fraction of the evangelical, born-again Christians today.

Question: There has been increasing visibility of "stigmata." Is this of God?

Answer: The stigmata are not from God. They could be psychosomatic (hysterical), psychic (i.e., demonic), simulated or imagined. It would not be glorifying to Christ for us to bleed like He did on the cross and feel the pain He endured for us. That would in fact detract from His finished work on the cross. We are to take up the cross and follow Him, bear in our bodies the marks of Christ and fill up that which is lacking in the suffering of His body...but all of these verses refer to the trials and suffering that come upon us for His name's sake as we stand true to Him as His followers—not literal bleeding from the palms.

The idea of stigmata also detracts from the faith we are to have in Christ because of what His Word says, the testimony of the prophets in the Old Testament times who foretold His coming and suffering for our sins, and of the eyewitnesses in the New Testament who were inspired to write their accounts. We do not need stigmata to confirm that Christ died for our sins; this “sign” causes us to look in the wrong place and it is destructive of true biblical faith.

Moreover, the verse they use from Joel and Acts speaks of signs in nature, not in humans; and the “blood” is most probably exactly what it says in the next sentence: “...the moon [turned] into blood.” It is tragic that so many Christians run after signs and wonders instead of taking God at His word.

Question: Would you please describe the problems you have with the two business courses, “New Age Thinking” and “Leadership Development—Reach For Excellence”?

Answer: Both of the courses, *New Age Thinking* (now called *Investment in Excellence*) from Lou Tice’s Pacific Institute, and the course taught by Charles G. Krone Associates (Leadership Development—Reach For Excellence), are similar. They center in self, with a heavy emphasis upon self-image, self-assertion, self-management, etc. They then attempt to go “beyond self” into the transpersonal or transcendent realm, which is religious but from a humanistic and New Age perspective.

Tice’s course is more heavily psychological in its orientation and language and gets into visualization, whereas the Krone course is more philosophical and seems to be the new wave at Bell and other companies. Part of the appeal of both of these courses is a semantic one (i.e., new language and new concepts bring sudden and profound insights that seem to trigger a “conversion” experience that changes lives and can last for months or depends upon how firmly the person clings to these beliefs).

The Krone course has a more complex philosophical base built around his “Law of Three” that is similar to Hegel’s thesis, antithesis and synthesis popularized as Marxism’s dialectic. Unfortunately, the

humanism underlying both courses that is presumed to be applied only in business becomes the basis for living one’s life, i.e., one’s personal religion. Its principles of success eliminate the need for God or reconciliation to Him through the redemptive work of Christ.

Question: What is your opinion of rock music? Would you condemn it?

Answer: I am not an expert on music, but I know that music can be used of Satan as well as by God. It plays a big part in all religions, from Christianity to paganism. Here I am talking about the “beat” or rhythm, not the words. The particular beat of music can put one into an altered state of consciousness, where demonic influences can then invade one’s mind. This is especially true of a loud and monotonous beat that is both hypnotic (monotonous) and isolating (so loud that thinking of anything else is impossible). There is music that is clearly uplifting and some that is degrading, agitating and not at all suitable for praising God, but rather for arousing man’s baser instincts: you don’t need to be a musician to see the results and to sense it in your spirit as you listen. If that kind of music forms the background for supposedly “Christian” words, then I think we have a perversion.

It has been my limited observation that in most rock, Christian or not, it is virtually impossible to understand the words that are being sung because of the loud “music” being played. Thus the “beat” is the main element that moves the audience. The words, no matter how good, have little effect except upon those who already have them memorized.

Question: Would you tell us your understanding of the endtime events? I believe in the Rapture, but when does it take place?

Answer: Scripture seems to indicate that there are believers during the Great Tribulation, and yet it is clear that we shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.

I believe that there will be many who will believe the gospel during the Great Tribulation after the Rapture, and they will

be killed by the Antichrist or his forces (Rv 6, 7). You ask when the Rapture (when we will be caught up together with them [the dead raised] to meet the Lord in the air...) takes place. Jesus said that He would come like a thief: “At such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh” (Lk 12:40). He seems to be saying that He is going to come at such a time that if we sat down and looked at conditions around us we would think, He would not come then, and that is when He will come! I don’t see this at the end of the Great Tribulation. In fact there would be few if any to rapture then, for those who take the mark of the beast will suffer the wrath of the Lamb, and those who don’t, are killed. Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah...” (Lk 17:26). The last thing they expected was the flood [judgment], they were partying it up, in the midst of peace and prosperity. That hardly sounds like the end of the world, Armageddon, etc.! I would suggest that if you haven’t read it, please read my book *Peace, Prosperity and the Coming Holocaust*. I explain much of this in that book.

“Christian” Psychology - Part I

Dave Hunt

With clear insight so typical of his writings, C. S. Lewis warned of the failure to distinguish between a *modern communication* of God’s Word and *modernism*. The former, he declared, takes the unchanging and unchangeable truth of the Bible, puts it in modern language and applies it to the present. The latter, in sharp but often unrecognized contrast, borrows the latest fashionable ideas or fads from the world, dresses them up in Christianized language and passes this deceitful combination off as Bible truth.

“Christian” psychology represents the most deadly and at the same time the most appealing and popular form of modernism ever to confront the church. Those who refused the temptation to adjust biblical interpretation to agree with Darwin have succumbed to the even more deadly delusion of integrating Freud and Jung into Christianity. It is astonishing that so many of today’s staunchest evangelical leaders, in order to be “relevant,” are preaching a form of Science of Mind without even recognizing it. Psychology now wields such a powerful and all-pervasive influence upon Christianity—in seminaries, Bible schools and colleges, mission organizations, radio, television, denominational leadership and all other Christian institutions as well as churches—that to call Christian psychology into question is taken as an attack upon Christianity itself. This is all the more astonishing in view of the fact that “Christian” psychology doesn’t exist. This fact can be proved very simply: go to any library or bookstore and look in the index of any psychology textbook. No listing for “Christian Psychology” will be found.

Most Christians mistakenly believe that there is an identifiable body of knowledge known as “Christian psychology.” That simply isn’t true. There is no Christian who is recognized as being on a par with Freud, Jung, Rogers, Maslow, et al., and who is the founder of a particular school of psychology known as “Christian psychology.” No such school is recognized

even by Christian psychologists and certainly cannot be found in any psychology textbook. One can be a Rogerian therapist, a Freudian psychoanalyst, or the follower of any one or a combination of numerous schools of psychology (such as behavioristic, humanistic, transpersonal, etc.). But *Christian* psychology? It doesn’t exist.

Then what is meant by this term? What is so-called Christian psychology? It is simply one form or another of secular psychology developed by godless humanists hostile to the Bible and now dressed up in Christian language. Nor do Christian psychologists even agree among themselves. They are the followers of many different contradictory schools of secular psychology. That this is the source of all Christian psychology cannot be denied. Bruce Narramore, for example, writes, “Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem.”

He admits that godless humanists opposed to the gospel were the ones who gave Christian psychologists a new interpretation of the Bible unknown to the church until that time. The same is true of every idea that is being seductively brought into the church through Christian psychology. We are supposed to be pleased that the Bible has been reconciled to humanism and has wonderfully been shown to be in agreement with the theories of Freud, Jung, et al.! And we are asked to accept “new insight” into the true meaning of God’s Holy Word, an insight that was conceived by enemies of the cross of Christ.

Before believing that suspicious scenario, we would do well to heed the many non-Christian psychologists and psychiatrists who are issuing warnings such as the following by E. Fuller Torrey (recognized as one of the leading research psychiatrists in the world):

Psychiatry has been willing to sanctify its values with the holy water of medicine and offer them up as the true faith of “Mental Health.” It is a false Messiah.

If the church is to return to biblical

Christianity, it must purge itself of psychological theories and terminology. Psychotherapy is, in fact, a rival religion that cannot be integrated with Christianity. Having nothing of value to offer to anyone, much less to Christians, it is both deceptive and destructive. Its influences must be removed from the church. We do need counseling in the church. This is, in fact, one of its greatest needs. But it must be *biblical*, not *psychological*, counseling.

Secular psychologists and psychiatrists in increasing numbers are pointing out in books, articles, and lectures the bankruptcy of their profession. How astonishing it is that as those who were once its leading proponents are abandoning their sinking ship, Christians are jumping aboard as though it were the ark of safety.

Q&A

Question: Tell us something about Carl Jung and his influence on psychology.

Answer: Freud and Jung would generally be recognized as the most fundamental figures in psychology. There is a small part of psychology that is scientific; i.e., giving tests or dealing with learning problems and so forth, which can be objectively documented. We are criticizing psychotherapy. Freud and Jung are the major figures behind this fraud. Of course, many others followed them. Lately Freud is being increasingly discredited. Carl Jung is coming more and more into the fore among Christians because Freud was an atheist. He criticized anybody who believed in God or had religious experiences. Carl Jung, on the other hand, was very much a religious person. This fact attracts many Christians, particularly inner healers, most of whom are heavily Jungian. Carl Jung has a strong influence in the Episcopal and Presbyterian church, the Presbyterian and Lutheran renewal, the Catholic church, Paulist Press and so forth.

Jung’s influence is growing, particularly in religious circles, because he talked about religion, religious

experiences and so forth. But he was a heavily demonized occultist and his major theories came from his spirit guide Philemon. Most people who follow Carl Jung either don't know the demonic source of his theories or choose to ignore it.

Shirley MacLaine, in her book *Out on a Limb*, says, "this book is about a search for my self." It's self-centered. She says she is in touch with ascended masters, these higher forms, these spirit entities. She says this sort of thing has always been in the world, but it used to be practiced by just a special elite. Only a few people were involved in seances, in spiritualism and so forth, but it is now becoming very widespread for a number of reasons. Carl Jung had a large part to play in this. At first Jung claimed that these higher forms were simply archetypes that were being dredged up, projections and exteriorizations of thoughts within. The entities that are encountered, Jung would say, are not an actual reality, which modern man finds acceptable.

However, Carl Jung, not too long before he died, began to have second thoughts about the real existence of these spirit entities. Maybe they were real after all. Some of you may know that he was involved in seances. He saw ghosts. Carl Jung grew up in a haunted house. So did his mother. As a teenager she kept the spirits at bay long enough for her father (Jung's grandfather), who was a medium, Master Mason and Protestant minister, to write out his Sunday sermon. Even later in life Jung tells of spending several weekends in a vacation house that turned out to be haunted. He was awakened one weekend by a loud boom on the wall right by his head. There opposite him on the pillow was the face of a woman with half of her head blown away and she was as real as life. Of course he leaped out of bed a bit frightened, but he had seen this kind of thing many times. He was involved in this sort of thing and he explained it as an exteriorization of inner thoughts. We know from the Bible it was demonic.

Carl Jung said psychology is the study of the psyche. And *psyche* in Greek means "soul." Carl Jung said he didn't know what soul was. But of course, he didn't accept the biblical view of the soul and spirit. Instead, psychologists made a science of mind. They called it the science of human behavior. They decided they

were going to be able to explain how human beings behave and why they behave and how to reprogram their behavior and change their behavior, not through morals, not through God, not through redemption, not through the blood of Jesus Christ, but through scientific principles. That was Carl Jung's basic belief.

Question: Are the techniques used on people in psychotherapy reliable?

Answer: I can't begin to answer that thoroughly here. I'd suggest you read Martin and Deidre Bobgan's book, *The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way* and other books by Christians refuting the scientific claims of psychotherapy.

You just can't escape the fact that psychology has a very, very powerful influence in modern society. We have turned our society over to these people. Here's a quote from a book, *The Psychological Society*, by Martin Gross. He says, "the major agent of change in modern society is psychology. This cult sits at the very center of contemporary society as an international colossus whose professional minions number in the hundreds of thousands. Its ranks include psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, family therapists, educational psychologists, sensitivity groups and encounter leaders, assorted lay therapists, Christian psychologists" and on and on and on it goes. Here's what he says: "*Its experimental animals are an obliging, even grateful human race. They [psychotherapists] don't know what they are doing.*"

Just get a subscription to *Psychology Today*. Read it 10 years ago or 5 years ago and see how the theories change. You've got 250 psychologies and 10,000 therapies. It's a smorgasbord of personal preferences and the research proves that none of them are scientific nor do they necessarily offer any help. Yet the church has become the largest referral agency to psychologists and psychiatrists. Christians have forfeited what used to be called the cure of souls to what is now called the cure of sick minds. It's not biblical nor is it scientific!

Psychologists also have the highest occupational hazard rate of any pro-

fession—divorce, suicide, alcoholism, etc. The Bible is the manufacturer's handbook that claims to have "everything that pertains to life and godliness." Why turn to a bankrupt system? I've already shared with you that 7,000 of the world's leading psychotherapists recently gathered in Phoenix to evaluate where psychotherapy has come in 100 years. R. D. Laing summed it up well. He said he couldn't think of any fundamental insight into relationships between human beings that has resulted from a century of psychotherapy.

Question: When the Scriptures talk about self, what do they mean?

Answer: The Bible doesn't give a definition for self. It tells us some things about self. Look at Luke 9:23 where Jesus says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." Self, independent of God, must be denied. That includes my will and everything that I am. Jesus said that I must even hate my life—I must lose my life in order to gain it. If I cling to my life I'll lose it, but if I give it up I'll find a new life. We were made "in the image of God" (Gn 1:27). We're like a mirror. It has one purpose: to reflect a reality other than its own. What would you think of a mirror that tried to develop a "good self-image"? We are to reflect the image of Jesus as the Holy Spirit empowers us. Matthew 16:24-26 says the same thing.

Jeremiah 10:23 is a powerful scripture that every Christian should memorize: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We are made in the image of God. That means we are not self-contained and it's the power and the life of God that is to be lived through us. And when we try to be self-contained entities we are in rebellion to God's design for us. Even the personalities within the Trinity do not operate independently. Jesus said in John 5:30 that as a man on this earth "I can of mine own self do nothing." John 16:13 says that even the Holy Spirit "shall not speak of himself [i.e., independently of the other members of the Trinity]; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak...." If He will not act independently, then how can we possibly act independently of Him? So, this self that He wants us to deny attempts to act independently of God.

"Christian" Psychology - Part II

Dave Hunt

This is the second of two brief discussions of so-called Christian psychology. What we are saying in few words could be thoroughly documented if we had the space, which we don't, so I am trying to be very basic. Psychology pretends to be the study of the soul; it has in fact been called the cure of souls. Yet the Bible claims to provide the diagnosis and cure of the soul. God is the only One who can take care of man's spiritual problems, and in fact He has done so. The Bible claims that God has given to the believer "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3). We don't need help from Freud, et al.

Christian psychology says that we do need such help, that the Bible doesn't have all the answers we need, that prayer, repentance, being filled with the Holy Spirit and other biblical remedies are not enough because there are *psychological* problems that require something more. Does it not seem a bit odd that God has apparently inspired the likes of Freud, Jung, et al. with "truths" unknown to the apostles and prophets and all of the leaders in the entire history of the church? No, we are told reassuringly, this is not to be considered strange at all. What we need to understand is that "all truth is God's truth." This specious phrase is invoked whenever questions are raised and is generally accepted without further thought.

The question of what is meant by *truth* is seldom asked. Are we talking about *scientific* facts involving the brain and body, or about *God's truth* involving the soul and spirit? Jesus said, "Thy Word *is truth*," not *part* of the truth. Psychology pretends to deal with the soul and spirit (it actually claims to be a science of *mind*), a subject upon which God has spoken with finality and about which He claims to have communicated in His Word

the *whole truth*. There are no parts of this truth missing from the Bible and left in limbo to be discovered by godless theorists. To suggest that there are is to contradict the clear testimony of Scripture and the consistent teaching of the church since the beginning, a church that got along very well without psychology until its very recent introduction into secular society and from there into the Christian realm.

As soon as the door was opened for the "truths" of psychology to shed further light upon Scripture a subtle process began. If "all truth is God's truth," and psychology is part of that truth, then it has to be given equal authority with the Bible. Of course Christian psychologists deny this. In all sincerity they assure us that no psychological theory will be accepted that contradicts the Bible; but in actual practice "psychological truth" is imposed upon the Bible and becomes the new grid through which the Bible is to be interpreted.

Imperceptibly but inevitably, psychological theory by this process gains authority over the Bible and the church, and anyone not trained in the new truths of psychology is not qualified to question the new interpretations. Christian universities and seminaries develop large and growing psychology departments in order to keep up with "current trends." No church staff of any size is any longer complete without at least one psychologist. Pastors begin to believe that they are not competent to counsel from the Bible without going back to seminary for an advanced degree in psychology. They are competent to *preach* or to *teach* the Word of God if they have a degree in theology, but incompetent to *counsel* from the Word of God without a degree in psychology. This new state of affairs is accepted almost without question; and those of us who do question it as unbiblical are accused of causing division or of speaking from ignorance because we presumably don't know enough about psychology.

Christian psychology could almost be described as a cult inside the church. It has its own vocabulary to

describe, an endless array of problems tagged with labels not found in the Bible and unknown to the church in its entire history. These strange new phrases now roll glibly off the tongues of pastors who are sincerely trying to be "relevant" and to "communicate" in modern terms. In short, this cult has its own gospel, its own religious rituals administered by its own class of priests, the Christian psychologists, who have gained authority over those who only know God's Word but have not yet been initiated into their inner academic circle and are thus unqualified to counsel from the Word of God. Nor can one appeal to the Scriptures as a means of correcting this new priest class, because they alone hold the keys to the new interpretation of the Bible and the new Christianity. It is a master stroke of genius from the great mastermind of deception himself. And it is being carried on in the name of the Lord and for the good of His church, so they sincerely believe, by men and women who earnestly desire to benefit the body of Christ.

We desperately need a return to biblical Christianity!

Q&A

Question: What do you think about the teaching that we all hate ourselves and have to learn to love ourselves?

Answer: First of all I'd say it's not even rational. Ephesians 5:29 says *no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it.*

Having to learn to love ourselves is a totally new "doctrine" within the church. Read A.W. Tozer, Moody,

Torrey, Spurgeon, Andrew Murray. You won't find it in any of them. It's been picked up the last 20 years from psychologists; men who did not get it by studying the Word of God on their knees in prayer.

Erich Fromm, an atheist, popularized the idea of self-love. He got it from Nietzsche. One of Fromm's books was *Ye Shall be as Gods*. He took the lie of the serpent for its title. In his book, *Man for Himself*, he justified the idea we all hate ourselves and we need to learn to love ourselves by saying Jesus taught it when He said, "love your neighbor as you love yourself" (Mt 12:39).

Let's look at Matthew 22:36-40. Jesus gave the two great commandments: love God and love your neighbor. Today a third one has been introduced: love yourself. However, if we were deficient in self-love Jesus wouldn't have said to love your neighbor as you love yourself, because he said it to everybody and not to a certain class or category of people.

So it's a given—we must already love ourselves. And he couldn't say "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Mt 7:12) if we all innately hated ourselves and wanted to do ourselves harm.

This teaching came into the church from psychology and was picked up by Robert Schuller in his book, *Self-love: The Dynamic Force of Success*. Since then, it has moved throughout the church and has been picked up by men in the best pulpits. There are no scriptures to support it. Read Philippians 2:3 and Romans 12:2.

Remember, God made man in His image. C. S. Lewis wrote, "We are but mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright at all, depends entirely on the Son which shines upon us."

If there's something wrong with the image in the mirror, the mirror needs to get back in line with the one whose image it was designed to reflect. But instead of being turned toward God and a relationship with Him, we're being turned to ourselves, a self-image psychology.

The Scriptures say, "but we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the

same image" (2 Cor 3:18). What we're being taught today is that we need to visualize our self-image as we want it to be—focus on our self-concept and then we'll be transformed into that. That is absolutely opposite what the Bible says and it is destructive to biblical Christianity.

Question: Doesn't the Bible use visual language? Didn't Jesus speak in parables and expect us to visualize?

Answer: No, it does just the opposite. The Bible is, in fact, unique for its non-visual language. When you go back over the Bible and compare it with a novel, you will find that the Bible offers few descriptions, even in the parables. God's Word is written in the simplest of literary style upon which objective truth can be hung. When you read something written by a novelist, you see in your mind a picture that the novelist is painting. This is a legitimate use of the imagination. An architect properly visualizes, as does a dress designer. If you think, however, that you can create reality with your mind or you can get God to do something for you, manipulate Him, then you've stepped over into the occult. God creates out of nothing while man is limited to the use of what God has created. To prove that fact, try to visualize a new prime color in the rainbow. It can't be done.

Question: But don't we think in pictures?

Answer: We do not think in pictures, but in words. Have you ever visualized justice, or truth? What picture would you have for God, who is not to be pictured at all? Yes, the Bible does give visual descriptions of God and Christ. Let's look at some examples.

Let's take the description of Jesus in Revelation 1. He has a two-edged sword coming out of His mouth. Are we expected to visualize a literal sword? No, the description is telling us something we can't even visualize.

The image that is given is intended to teach us something deeper.

Or how about in Psalms 91:4 where it says that He (God) will cover us with His feathers and under His wings we shall trust? Should we conjure up an image of a big bird and say that God is like that? In every case where the Bible gives us what one would call visual language, it is to teach us something beyond the literal reality. In fact, visualization would only lead us astray.

False Teachings on Faith

Dave Hunt

We each shrink from pointing the corrective finger at anyone, yet each of us is responsible to check out today's teachers against the Bible, just as the Bereans did with Paul. Critics often demand, "By what authority do you question the teaching of Christian leaders?" My standard response is, "I'm just a Berean, and so are you, so test what I teach by Scripture also."

The failure of Christians to know the Bible, to think for themselves and to do their Berean duty allows church leaders to continue to lead millions astray. That is no light matter and should concern us all enough to do something about it. No one can excuse himself for going along with false doctrine and practices or for remaining silent when others are being misled!

Several people have forwarded to me copies of a Kenneth Copeland letter that is a blatant example of what every Christian ought to reject and reprove. Enclosing a photo of himself standing in front of his "prayer cabin" in the Ozarks, Copeland writes, "There will be moments during those three days and nights [at the cabin] when the anointing on me will be greater than any need you have." Setting himself up as a channel of "the miracle power of God flowing through me," he instructed recipients of the letter to do three "very important" things to get *their* "miracle":

1. As you visualize yourself there with me, remember there is no time nor distance in the realm of the spirit.
2. Fill in and return to me the 'Covenant of Agreement' prayer form. I want it right beside me so that every time those special moments of anointing come *I can touch you* by touching our Covenant Agreement.
3. The very moment your letter leaves your hand to be mailed back to me *say with your mouth (out loud)*—"Lord Jesus, my miracle has started! It's working for me now!"

This three-part ritual was presented as the technique that would assure "you will have *what we say*." It is sad enough that naive Christians are being led into attempting to manipulate God through white magic, but they are also being relieved of their money and enticed into covetousness by the unbiblical promise that "planting money" guarantees a harvest of money in return. There is one guaranteed winner: the person enticing you with the seed-faith promise, in this case Kenneth Copeland.

He makes clear that giving him a seed-faith offering is an essential part of the ritual: "I want you to remember...your 'Covenant Agreement' letter is not the only thing that will be in your envelope when you release your *faith words*. Your seed-faith offering will also be in your envelope." Describing his ministry as "good soil," Copeland invokes visualization again: "As you enclose your seed-faith offering in the envelope *see your harvest coming up!*" (Copeland's emphasis for all quotes)

On TBN February 5, 1986, with co-hosts Paul and Jan Crouch giving enthusiastic approval, Copeland explained that Galatians 6:7 means that when you give money to a ministry, if you don't expect to reap a harvest of money you are mocking God! And in her book, Gloria Copeland declares that Mark 10:30 guarantees that for every \$1 you give you receive \$100, which she says is a very good deal.

It sounds like a slot machine in the sky, a guaranteed way to buy a miracle—and at a bargain price! There is nothing mysterious about how it works, however; the money doesn't drop from the sky into the ministries of Hagin, Copeland, Roberts, et al. It is given to them by their supporters, who unfortunately don't have a list of donors to entice into giving *them* seed-faith offerings, which is the only seed-faith that works! Of course we ought to give to ministries that will use the funds for God's purposes, but it is not biblical to "give to get." Paul made it clear in 1 Corinthians 13 that even if

we give all we have to feed the poor and our bodies to be burned and are not motivated by love (love expects nothing in return) it is not accepted by God.

How did this pagan idea get into the church? It was invented by Oral Roberts "in the early fifties," as he explains in his book *The Miracle of Seed-Faith* (p 6). The "faith teachers" who use this same money-raising technique learned it from him. There is no way it can be derived from Scripture. In Matthew 13 the seed represents the Word of God, the soil is the heart of those who receive it, and the sower is Christ. In variations of this central parable, the seed represents Christians, the soil is the world and again the sower is God himself. Never is there a hint that "seed" is *money* or that God blesses those who give to get.

Yet millions of Christians go along with this and other unbiblical schemes, hoping to reap a reward in this world, which, if they did, would rob them of an eternal reward. In direct reproof of this false interpretation, Galatians 6:8 goes on to say, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Every Christian ought to firmly oppose false teachings whether they come from Kenneth Copeland or Dave Hunt or anyone else. To fail to do so is not only an encouragement of false teachers but a failure to warn those who are deceived by them.

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Kingdom/Dominion Theology - Part I

Dave Hunt

There are many factors that make up the growing apostasy and seduction of the church. One of the most alarming, least understood, and fastest spreading errors is the teaching that earth instead of heaven is the ultimate home for the church, and that her goal is to take over the world and establish the kingdom of God. Only then, it is said, can Christ return—not, however, to take us to His Father’s house as He promised His disciples in John 14, but to reign over the Kingdom which we have established for Him. As we mentioned in the last chapter of *Seduction*, if the real Jesus Christ is going to catch His bride up from earth to meet Him *in the air* (1 Thes 4:17), then those who work to build a kingdom for a “Christ” whom they will meet with their feet planted on earth have been under heavy delusion indeed! They have been working for the Antichrist!

One hears a great deal about Christ returning only when the church is a *unified, vibrant, forceful, spotless, wrinkle-free Bride* (*Harvest Time*, Nov. 1986, etc.). There is no scripture to support such teaching. Nor is it logical that Christians who happen to be alive when Christ returns must attain to perfection in order to join (at that heavenly marriage to the Lamb) millions of Christians from past ages who attained to no such perfection at all.

The only righteousness that any of us has is that of Christ himself. Our works qualify us for *rewards* but not for *heaven*. “Absent from the body, present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8) is as true of carnal Christians when they die as it is for the most victorious. Christians from all ages “must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10), and when our works have been tried with fire (1 Cor 3:13-15) and in shame we have confessed our sins and failures (1 Jn 1:9) and He has wiped “all tears from [our] eyes” (Rv 21:4), then and not until then will His bride be without spot and wrinkle, united before the Father’s throne in heaven and ready to join in that great feast above!

We ought to seek to live holy and faithful lives to His glory. His coming, however, is not dependent upon that small fraction

of the church alive at the time reaching some perfection which millions and perhaps billions of Christians already in His presence through death have never attained.

This teaching can be traced back several centuries, but its recent explosion dates from the Latter Rain, or Manifest Sons, movement that began in 1948 in Canada in apparent revival. It was declared to be heresy by the Assemblies of God in 1950. Its relationship to the positive-confession (Hagin, Copeland, et al.) and discipleship (Mumford, Simpson, et al.) movements is clearly established. Obviously, if we can get whatever we confess, then we ought to confess healing and immortality and peace and prosperity and salvation for the world. This is in fact where the name “Manifest Sons” comes from: the last-days overcomers must manifest total victory over all foes in these bodies without a resurrection, even over death.

Earl Paulk is a major leader in this movement as are John Giminez of Rock Church and Bob Weiner of Maranatha Ministries, active on college campuses across the country. Pat Robertson at times sounds as though he leans strongly toward this position (for example, his Dec. 9, 1984 talk at Bob Tilton’s church), as does James Robison. Hardcore Manifest Sons teachers make such statements as, “You can study books about going to heaven in a so-called ‘rapture’ if that turns you on. We want to study the Bible to learn to live and to love and to bring heaven to earth.” (See *Beyond Seduction*, p 244.)

Others are more cautious and even devious in their statements. Earl Paulk, for example, claims to believe in the Rapture in spite of the fact that he has written entire books denouncing it. Just as Mormons use words such as salvation, eternal life, God, etc. but have their own meaning, so those in this movement use terminology with accepted meaning for other Christians in order to confuse. It is a mistake to assume that by “Rapture” Paulk means being caught up to meet Christ in the air with the resurrected saints and taken to heaven. Like the “Happy Hunters” (who tell of seeing a huge Christ at a crusade in Fresno—presumably not as tall as Oral Roberts’ *900-foot Jesus*—and Christians being *raptured* up into Him and being recycled back to earth) those in this movement use the term “Rapture” to signify reaching a new

oneness with Christ that enables them to fully manifest His power and glory.

Prophetic scriptures are either denied, interpreted as having already been fulfilled (much of Revelation happened at A.D. 70, for example) or spiritualized. The church is Israel, which no longer has any place in prophecy as a nation; Armageddon is the ongoing battle between the forces of light and darkness; the Antichrist is a spirit not a person; we are already in the Great Tribulation and the Millennium both, etc. Instead of exegeting the Bible, there are *new revelations*. For example, the brochure for the Atlanta ’86 conference for pastors, held at Paulk’s church with speakers such as Oral Roberts, Tommy Reid, et al., declared that Christ’s return was being held up by the reluctance to accept new revelation. The latter are presented by a new class of prophets who cannot be judged but must be obeyed.

Closely related in belief are several other groups: reconstructionists such as Gary North, et al., as well as Christian socialists such as Jim Wallis (of *Sojourners*), Tom Sine, et al., whose major focus is upon cleaning up the earth ecologically, politically, economically, sociologically, etc. They imagine that the main function of the church is to restore the Edenic state—hardly helpful, since Eden is where sin began.

Many groups are beginning to work together who disagree on some points but share with the New Agers a desire to clean up earth and establish the Kingdom. I expect such cooperative efforts to grow, even involving Christian leaders who are not aware of what they are actually promoting. One example is the Coalition on Revival, which includes such evangelical stalwarts as Joseph Aldrich, Bill Bright, Armin Gesswein, Josh McDowell and J. I. Packer, who are not aware that the actual intention of the leaders of COR falls in line with what we are discussing.

I give brief attention to this subject in the last chapter of *Beyond Seduction*. A more detailed treatment is provided in *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* Be on your guard. Keep close to our Lord and to His Word. Be Bereans who don’t rely upon the interpretation of someone else (be he Dave Hunt, Robert Schuller or anyone) but who know what they believe and why on the basis of God’s Word.

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Kingdom/Dominion Theology - Part II

Dave Hunt

Last month we referred to the growing kingdom/dominion/restoration movement, and the related danger of sincere people being involved in a vast international cooperative effort to bring peace and justice upon the earth through humanistic means. *Sojourners* magazine (headed by Jim Wallis) boasts that it "has become a connection point...creating a network of faith and action among evangelicals, Roman Catholics, mainline Protestants, the historic peace churches, the charismatic renewal, the peace movement, and non-Christians looking for a faith that touches the world they live in." Any such "faith" that this ecumenical movement (which includes non- and even anti-Christians) can agree upon is obviously not the faith once for all delivered to the saints for which Jude tells us we must earnestly contend. In fact, this cooperative effort effectively undermines true biblical faith.

Significantly, the Pope is emerging as the inspirational leader in an unprecedented international ecumenism. He has cleverly declared that "liberation theology" (divested of Marxism) is the hope of the world and that a common concern for the welfare of humanity will be the means of uniting all religions into one. Mother Teresa is the champion of the humanistic ecumenism which the Pope advocates and she has become so highly respected that to criticize her would be unthinkable. She is the epitome of good works, selfless love and Christlike living—or so it seems. Yet she enjoys the acclaim of everyone in all religions, which is very un-Christlike (Mt 10:22, Mk 13:13).

The reason for her popularity (which has deceived many evangelical leaders into unreservedly praising her) is her universalism. Although she seems to glorify Christ, she says He is in *everyone*. Indeed, AIDS victims are declared to be "Jesus in a pitiful disguise." In her speech at the United Nations after receiving the

Nobel Peace Prize (Jesus never gained such acceptance by the world), Mother Teresa explained that she wanted to get everyone to pray because prayer "purifies the heart," and when the heart is pure you "see God in everyone." Hers is the "god" of all religions. Her goal is to bring everyone "nearer to God," and when that happens, she explains, if you are a Buddhist you become a better Buddhist, if a Hindu you become a better Hindu, etc.

We cannot fault her selfless, sacrificial example of charity. It is staggering that this woman has been responsible for taking 40,000 derelicts out of the gutters of Calcutta and her work is spreading around the world. There is, however, something more important than helping the suffering and afflicted to die in a clean bed. It is in fact not love at all to clean them up only to let them go out into eternity without Christ. That is comparable to carefully attending to a blister on the finger while ignoring the fact that the patient has a ruptured appendix.

Both in Calcutta and New Delhi, Pope John Paul II declared that he had come to learn from the great spiritual heritage of India. (This "great spiritual heritage" of Hinduism has left India the poorest, most pitiful country in the world.) One year ago he "walked down the aisle of Rome's main synagogue to thunderous applause and sat beside Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff." The historic event was described as "an unprecedented papal gesture to end nearly 2,000 years of enmity between Catholics and Jews." The Pope has met with leading Muslims and Buddhists, including the Dalai Lama, and in doing so has repeatedly called for a uniting of all the world's religions. Last October 27 he succeeded in gathering at Assisi representatives of most of the world's leading religions in a "Day of Prayer for Peace." In his invitation he declared that "the challenge of peace, as it is presently posed to every human conscience, transcends religious differences."

It is a powerful appeal: the necessity to unite to rescue the world from a nuclear holocaust and to work together in the humanitarian cause of the poor and needy. And along with this is the equally irresistible power of a common mystical experience of "God" that frees one from the necessity of theological arguments and thus dissolves the basic conflict between religions. The charismatic movement is made to order for the new ecumenism and significantly it is the charismatics who are almost frantically pushing "the greatest move of unity in history." An integral part of this "move" is Protestant-Catholic "unity" which has Protestant charismatics overlooking fundamental doctrinal differences and embracing occultic practices.

With the clear biblical warnings of a coming world religion (Rv 13:4,8) we do well to watch these developments carefully and to seek to rescue as many as we can from compromise that denies the true faith.

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Our Focus is Heaven

Dave Hunt

The Bible begins with God creating the universe and it ends with Him destroying it entirely and creating afresh a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rv 21:1). From beginning to end history is the eternal God fulfilling His immutable purpose. Once we get a clear view of the cosmic proportions of God’s plan, we lose any delusions as to our own greatness and are delivered from all mistaken notions that we can somehow fulfill human destiny by our own efforts.

Of course that very delusion fuels the humanist’s cosmic aspirations. As part of SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence), President Carter, a professing Christian, *cast this message into the cosmos* aboard the Voyager spacecraft. It was addressed to any *spacefaring civilization* that might chance to *intercept Voyager*:

This is a present from a small distant world...attempting to survive our time so we may live into yours. We hope someday...to join a community of galactic civilizations. This [is] our hope and our determination...in a vast and awesome universe.

Jimmy Carter, President of the United States, The White House - June 16, 1977

Far from hoping to *join a community of galactic civilizations*, the Christian looks forward to the destruction of the present cosmos and the creation by God of a new universe that will be inhabited by a new race of twice-born children of God, who have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and have been made new creations in Him. Once that tremendous fact grips one’s heart it becomes clear why salvation must be by grace alone; it is nothing that we deserve or could accomplish, but it must be entirely God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves.

A new heaven and a new earth inhabited by a new race descended from a new Adam, Jesus Christ himself! That is God’s purpose and it is staggering to contemplate! From this perspective, it is ludicrous to imagine that the church by organizing conservative voters or even by preaching the gospel is going to

establish God’s kingdom. The true and eternal kingdom of God involves not just this small planet but all creation, including the purging by the blood of Jesus and the remaking of heaven itself. Nothing could be better established from Scripture and logic than the glorious fact that the ultimate fulfillment of God’s purpose is something that only He can accomplish. Obviously we can only be part of it as we allow Him to have His way in and through us.

This realization puts us on our faces before God in wonder and worship, and causes us to yield ourselves wholeheartedly to His will. Unfortunately, that awesome sense of the greatness of God and the cosmic and eternal proportions of the work that He is doing seems largely absent from Christianity today. Could this be why so many carry the self-imposed burdens of the many “programs” they are trying to put into effect in order to “live victorious lives” or to “advance the cause of Christ”? When we see that the task is totally beyond our capabilities, then we cease from our striving and begin to allow Him to work in and through us by His mighty power.

Many object to this heavenly/eternal perspective as “pie-in-the-sky in the sweet-bye ‘n’ bye” talk. There are warnings about being so “heavenly minded” that one is of “no earthly good.” We must be practical, so the argument goes, meeting first of all the earthly needs of ourselves and others and doing our best to make this world a better place for everyone.

Yet Christ himself continually turned the focus of His followers from earth to heaven. Throughout Scripture we are counseled to live at all times with the understanding that life on this earth is very brief and that it is followed by an eternal existence of either indescribable bliss in God’s presence or unbearable agony in separation from Him. Peter declares that the knowledge that “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise [and] the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pt 3:10) causes us to live godly lives. And John adds that the hope of being transformed into His likeness *when He shall appear* causes us to *purify ourselves* (1 Jn 3:2-3).

Of course, the greatest motivation is the love that is born in our hearts as we realize that the Creator of the universe loves each

of us so much that He became a man to die in our place. This love has captured our affection so that we gladly declare that we are His and His alone for eternity. Accepting the death of Jesus Christ as our own death, we have given up life as we would have lived it so that He can live His resurrection life through us. The eternal Kingdom has already begun in every heart where the King reigns! Moreover, as His bride, we long to be united in that heavenly marriage with Christ our Bridegroom and to honeymoon with Him forever in His Father’s house! Forever we will worship and praise the One who has made all things new!

Many would have us believe that self-love is *the* answer to the world’s ills. Both Christian leaders and the unsaved are teaching and preaching this *lie*. It is self-love that has wrought the ills of the world: greed, lust, and envy. And yet proponents of self-love or self-esteem say this is what will bring inner peace.

A recent newspaper article stated, “About the same time they learned their former governor was holed up in Japan studying Zen [Buddhism], Californians were given the nation’s first governmental task force devoted to boosting self-esteem. The Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility will spend \$735,000 over the next three years trying to prevent crime, drug abuse and other social ills by making folks feel better about themselves.”

Peace cannot be achieved personally until the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, reigns in our hearts. And peace on this earth will not be seen until the King of Kings comes to reign. But startlingly enough, even His presence will not turn men from their self-determination to rule their own kingdom (see Rv 20:7-10).

Message 7 in the new video series “Seduction and Beyond” presents further thoughts on kingdom/dominion theology:

You see, the kingdom of God is not the millennium. The Word of God distinctly tells us, “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom: “You get that in Psalm 145. Even Nebuchadnezzar knew that. You get that in chapter 4 and chapter 7 of Daniel. Isaiah 9:6, that verse that we know so well, that we quote each Christmas particularly: “For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And the government will be upon his shoulders. And his name

shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father..." And then what does the next verse say? "And of his kingdom and peace there will be no end." No end.

Yet, the millennium ends, and with the greatest war the world has ever seen. Satan has been loosed, he deceives the nations and they march upon Jerusalem. At that time, Jesus himself has been reigning over this earth for 1,000 years. The lion lies down with the lamb. He has brought peace to this earth. It is not the kingdom of God, but the final proof of the incorrigible nature of the human heart. And there is no hope except we deny self and take up the cross and follow Jesus Christ. The kingdom involves a new heaven and a new earth (Rv 21:1). And that new universe is only to be inhabited by those who have been willing to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Who have allowed Jesus Christ to take over and make them new. And for whom old things have passed away; all things have become new. They look to Him and to Him alone to be their life; to be their all....

The Bible should be revered as doing all that words can do to bring us to God—that is, to point the way. But the life-giving power of Christ does not reside in Greek and Hebrew syntax, but in the quickening of the Holy Spirit; for "the gospel is not in word only, but in power and in much assurance of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thes 1:5). What folly to ascribe to the letter of Scripture that power which the words themselves most plainly tell us is solely in the quickening Spirit of God!

Yet Scripture has suffered this very perversion of teaching at the hands of those who claim to uphold most ardently its infallible inspiration. Thus, many profess a sound doctrinal understanding of the letter of Scripture, but at the same time they reject the very work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives to which the plainest meaning of the Scripture they so zealously study and guard would point them!

Quotable

The Holy Scriptures are the divinely inspired Word of God, and therefore to be fully believed, highly revered, and strictly obeyed. Since faith comes from hearing the Word of God, and *the just live by faith*, we must ever remember that the basis of the Christian life is a constant meditation upon and simple acceptance of all that the Bible would say to us. But as Christ's work of redemption in the flesh was only preparatory to His future indwelling us by the Spirit, so the written doctrines of Scripture are only a means to all that inward teaching and powerful working of Christ's Spirit within us. As we must beware of neglecting the Word of God, so also we must beware of resting in the mere letter without expecting through the indwelling Holy Spirit a real and living experience of all that Scripture holds out to our faith. Nothing of divine love, life, or goodness can have birth or place in us but by inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. So they who imagine these virtues can be acquired by studying the letter of the gospels and epistles are under the same deception as the Jews that Christ said would not come to Him because they thought eternal life was in and by the Old Testament Scriptures alone.

William Law

The Power of the Spirit, pp 35-36

Guruism

Dave Hunt

Paul urged Timothy, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15). We learn several things from this simple statement: (1) each one of us has a personal responsibility to know *what* one believes and *why* on the basis of an individual knowledge and understanding of God’s Word; (2) this responsibility has been placed upon *each of us by God himself* and cannot be pushed off on anyone else; (3) the knowledge God requires does not come miraculously or by osmosis but only through *diligent study*; (4) one cannot merely accept what others have learned from their study, but *each must think the issues through* and come to a careful and *clear understanding for oneself*. It is also implied that one must have carefully thought through the common questions of life that confront all generations. The Bible is not to be studied in a vacuum as though it were abstract theory but must *be practically applied to all aspects of daily life*.

One of the besetting sins of mankind is to elevate unduly those whom one admires—to fear them, to seek their approval, to grant them a special status, to let them do our thinking for us and eventually to follow, honor and worship them instead of God. That is one of the problems at some of the more visible TV ministries where the Christians who have given millions of dollars have no real representation, but those in leadership control for their own interests vast properties bought with the sacrificial giving of the body of Christ. Jim Bakker needed correction years ago, but there was no one to give it to him. Where was the Board, the church, or the Assemblies of God under whose *cover* Bakker supposedly operated? He was so idolized by his followers that many refused to believe the facts even when they were

revealed. No less serious is the long record of obviously false prophecies by Christian leaders who are highly honored instead of being corrected.

We all need correction. We need to lovingly correct one another, to think for ourselves, to follow the Lord and not men and not to allow any leader to get in a position where, like a Hindu guru, he cannot be accountable. And those who show an unwillingness to be corrected should be disqualified from leadership. Some, such as Earl Paulk, insist that ordinary *Berean* Christians have no right even to question the *prophets*. That is heresy. We not only have the right, but we have the obligation before God to hold Christian leaders accountable.

In exposing the *guruism* in the church that has placed certain leaders on pedestals of infallibility, I run the risk of being set up as a guru by those who begin to follow *me* and take *my word without question*. I see this tendency in many of the letters we receive, where questions are asked for which the questioner ought to have taken the time to search out the answer for himself. There are deep issues involved that must be thought through carefully by each of us. We want to help you, but we don’t want to become a hindrance to your individual spiritual growth by functioning as an *answering machine* that automatically spouts out information that each could and should dig out for himself.

We want to encourage you to do your own research and to provide information for us to organize and have ready for those who need it. I am grateful to the many who do provide information that I could never take the time to dig out myself, information from many places I have never visited, from newspapers and books I have never read. I want to make that information available in books, videos and other means. But we are still receiving hundreds of letters asking questions which the writers could have

researched for themselves were it not so easy to ask us.

We want to help when that help is needed; and we want to assist you in your understanding and growth as we hope you will assist us. But there is a depth of understanding, a solid purpose of heart and assurance that can only come through individual hard work as you “study to shew thyself approved unto God” (2 Tm 2:15)...I want to encourage you to do that, because I am convinced that we live in very dangerous days. The apostasy and seduction are going to get much worse, and only those who walk closely with the Lord and are daily in His Word and are aware of the growing delusion around them and are thinking issues through for themselves under the leading of the Holy Spirit will stand the severe tests ahead. May our Lord protect and give you grace to stand firm in your commitment. And may He enable you to rescue many before it is forever too late.

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Reaction to The Seduction of Christianity

Dave Hunt

When we wrote *The Seduction of Christianity*, Tom McMahon and I had no idea that it would stir up such controversy. We are still astonished by the heated, vitriolic attacks; and now almost two years after publication, rather than subsiding, the campaign against *Seduction* seems actually to be gaining momentum. I thought you might like to know some of the facts in order to pray specifically. The following examples are only representative of much, much more.

There are constant attacks against me personally, pastors declaring that I am demon possessed and warning their congregations not to read *Seduction* or to attend my meetings if I happen to be speaking in their area. My motives and character are impugned from pulpit, radio and TV. For example, one pastor of a large church wrote in his weekly bulletin that it was “proven by credible sources that the book was written strictly for *money* so please do not buy it!” When I told him this was libelous, he printed an apology in his bulletin for “judging [my] heart,” but reiterated that *Seduction* was “full of inaccuracies, slanderous accusations based on out-of-context statements....” When I pointed out that it is not “judging my heart” to accuse me of something “proven by credible sources” and asked who the “credible sources” were so that I could confront them, he did not reply to my letter. Nor did he reply to my request for specific examples of “inaccuracies, slanderous accusations [and] out-of-context statements.”

An editorial in *Christianity Today* made similar libelous personal accusations, and my letter of response was cut so much by *CT* that I would have preferred that they not print it at all. Another *CT* article filled with undocumented and false accusations was titled “Welcome to the Inquisition.” Since when do two unknown laymen conduct an *inquisition*? Inquisitions are imposed by the clergy in power, and this is in fact the main source of our opposition.

Robert Schuller has great power, and

when he declared on radio that *Seduction* (although he hadn’t read it) was literally “demonic, satanic, a work of the devil,” many probably believed him. Recently Schuller told a pastor at whose church I was scheduled to speak, “Dave Hunt is a devil; you can see the serpent in his eyes,” and warned that he would have to exorcise the “negativism” out of the stones of his church if he allowed me to speak there. This was right after he had told a group of pastors, in keeping with his “positive” TV image, that they should never say anything “negative” against anyone. Schuller and Oral Roberts together convinced the pastor of a very large church, who had until then been favorable, that he ought to take *Seduction* out of the church bookstore. Schuller and others have been offered the opportunity to discuss the issues with me on TV and have refused. In fact, John Ankerberg has not yet been able to find anyone named in the book (except Jose Silva, an occultist) who will come on his TV show to discuss the issues with me. Why?

When Hal Lindsey interviewed me on his Saturday morning radio program, almost half of his stations across the country cut him off as soon as they heard my voice. At the same time, rumors have been spread that I have been invited on this radio or that TV show to face some leader and have refused. You may be certain that I have never refused any such invitation. Although I have been banned from TBN for years, those who call the station to inquire have been told, “Jan has tried to get Dave to come on the show and he won’t do it.” That is not true.

On a recent trip to the East Coast, the church where I was scheduled to speak canceled under pressure. That pastor as well as others confessed in private that they agreed with the message of *Seduction*, but were afraid to let me in their churches because of extreme pressure from positive-confession and word-faith pastors who were very strong in the area. Those sponsoring the meetings had a very difficult time finding another host church. Christian psychologists and psychiatrists have likewise exerted unbiblical and unethical pressures to keep me off talk shows and out of churches.

Apparently we have struck a nerve

that has caused powerful leaders to use desperate tactics in an attempt to silence me and obscure vital issues in a fog of *ad hominem* lies. One leader of a large international ministry, a good friend for years, wrote a letter accusing me of “slaughtering” scores of innocent Christian leaders. Yet my response, sincerely asking him to please specify whom I had slaughtered and how, and promising to repent if he would substantiate his charges, has never been answered.

To the pastor of a large West Coast church who had held a pastors’ conference at which Schuller and Roberts, et al. spoke and during which Hunt and *Seduction* were misrepresented, I wrote, “If you know of *any* inaccuracies, out-of-context or twisted quotes, dishonest or unfair tactics or anything that isn’t 100 percent factual in *Seduction*, then please let us know and we pledge to correct it for the next printing.” That was six months ago, and the letter has never been answered, yet he was so concerned about errors in *Seduction* that it was a major item on the conference agenda.

There can be no doubt that a historic battle is shaping up. I expect it to get worse. The issues may be more important and the hour later than any of us realize. All we have called for is a reexamination of current teaching and practices in light of Scripture, yet we are being fought on every front. Of course there are many solid pastors and internationally known leaders who have given strong support to *Seduction* and *Beyond Seduction*.

I am not calling your attention to the opposition to gain your sympathy, for I can truly testify that I feel no pressure. Of course I want to be sensitive to legitimate complaints and quick to accept valid correction—but false accusations, no matter how vicious, give me no concern at all. This is the Lord’s battle, and we must be certain that we are on His side. I have written the above so that you can specifically pray for repentance on the part of leaders who seem more concerned about “their” ministries, reputations and friends than truth. Pray for a new love of the truth to sweep the church; and for eye-opening discernment on the part of many who have been deceived. “Stand therefore...” (Eph 6:14).

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Visualization

Dave Hunt

In addition to the forms of opposition mentioned in last month's letter, there have been at least three books published specifically to refute *The Seduction of Christianity*. They are *Seduction?? A Biblical Response*, by Reid, Virkler, Laine and Langstaff; *The Church Divided*, by Wise, Cho, Bennett, Virkler, et al., and the latest, *That The World May Know*, by Earl Paulk. Although these men issue warnings against reading *Seduction*, I would recommend that you get these books, if you have that much interest in the subject and the Lord so leads, in order to see for yourselves the arguments being used to justify the many serious errors that were exposed in *Seduction*.

Seduction?? was the first to appear. Most of this book is taken up with the quotation of hundreds of Bible verses pertaining to a particular word or subject derived from a computer program called CompuBIBLE. That is very commendable, but totally irrelevant and reveals a complete misunderstanding of what *Seduction* had to say on these subjects. For example, 25 pages are used in quoting "363 verses that demonstrate the positive things God has to say about having a positive mental attitude" (p 115). Yet a "positive mental attitude" is mentioned in none of these verses nor anywhere else in the Bible. The 363 verses quoted mention joy, thanksgiving, gladness, praise, etc. as though *Seduction* were opposed to such fruits of the spirit. We are as much opposed to a "negative mental attitude" as we are to a "positive" one, but Virkler, et al. don't understand that and miss the whole point. The issue is *truth* and *reality*, whereas a "mental attitude" may have no relationship to either but is created by the imagination.

Not everyone in an insane asylum is depressed. Many have a very "positive" outlook on life because they have lost

touch with reality. Maintaining a "positive mental attitude" during a stock market crash will not cut losses, but selling one's stocks in time will. But neither "positive" nor "negative" are proper terms to use when the issue is *facts*, much less do such amoral terms have anything to do with living the Christian life. The authors of *Seduction??* equate "positive" with "love, joy, peace, etc.," yet these are not the product of a "mental attitude" but the "fruit of the Spirit" which grow out of a right relationship with God. This is not hair-splitting, but something of real importance related to the last-days deception. Robert Schuller has published a Bible that has all of the "positive" verses marked. That illustrates what the current teaching on always being "positive" does to God's Word—we become partial to that which we can interpret favorably to ourselves.

The exegesis in *Seduction??* and the conclusions drawn are astonishing. It is unbelievable that any human being, even a Mormon or Hindu, would aspire to becoming a god. That allegedly born-again evangelicals would insist that man's proper function is to be a little god under God is incomprehensible. Such statements are made as, "I can't tell any of the faith teachers that they shouldn't preach [that we are gods]—because it is scriptural....[B]ut recognize the fact that you may not be able to handle going around confessing that you are a god—even though you are confessing the Word. It could be very dangerous for you" (p 26). So here we have a "positive confession" that is dangerous! Why? They think that being a "god" is good, but we aren't mature enough to handle it yet and might become proud—yet we must take our position as gods with dominion over the earth in order to establish the Kingdom!

The true God clearly says, "I am God and there is none else. Is there a [true] God beside me? I know not any!" The scripture declares, "There is one

God...[but] there are gods many." Indeed it is biblical that we are gods and that God has said so—but it isn't good. We became gods by disobeying God, by joining Satan, the god of this world, in his rebellion. And in Jeremiah 10:11 the only true God states the fate of all false gods: "Thus shall ye say unto them, the gods that have not made the heaven and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens."

Nearly one-third of the book (about 50 pages out of a total of 165) contains "383 verses that deal with dream, vision, seer, look, and eyes..." (p 52). The false impression is given that *Seduction* rejects dreams, visions, revelations, etc. and that these verses therefore refute what *Seduction* has to say. On the contrary, we are not against visions and dreams, etc. (that should be clear to anyone reading the book) if God gives them, but only against conjuring them up by divination techniques. Again the exegesis is incredible. The statement "I looked," as used by prophets, is offered as proof that they used a visualization technique, as is the statement by the Apostle John, "I was in the Spirit." Virkler states, "Jesus lived in a *constant* flow of divine images, as He *only did that which He saw the Father doing*" (Jn 5:19).

To interpret "saw" from an idiomatic expression (like "See here!" or "Can't you see what I mean?") in that narrow and literal way is obviously absurd. This would mean that in this "constant flow of divine images" Jesus must have "seen" His Father do everything before He could do it; i.e., Jesus "saw" the Father being baptized by John, being tempted of the devil in the wilderness, sitting on the well with the prostitute before He did it, "saw" the Father being scourged and crucified, etc.

None of the prophets used visualization or any other technique for getting revelations from God, but repeatedly state, "The Word of the Lord *came*

unto me.” That they could not make this happen whenever they pleased and did not initiate it is clear. See, for example, Jeremiah 42:7 where Jeremiah goes to God for guidance. He did not “visualize God” or “journal” as Virkler teaches sincere but deceived Christians to do in seminars around the country. We are told, “And it came to pass *after ten days*, that the word of the LORD *came* unto Jeremiah.”

Nor did the disciples visualize Jesus. Doubting Thomas had to wait a week before Jesus came to him, not as a result of the disciples visualizing Him but of a miraculous act He initiated. In John 21 the appearance of Jesus on the lake shore was a surprise to the disciples, not something they created in their minds. Nor does it state that this was the umpteenth time Jesus had appeared (because they could “see” Him any time they pleased through visualization such as Virkler and various inner healers teach today), but it says, “This is now the *third* time that Jesus *shewed himself* to his disciples” after His resurrection (21:14). He must *show Himself*. We cannot call from the right hand of the Father on high the Son of God to appear before us any time we choose. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul recites the times Jesus had appeared: “He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: [then] of above five hundred brethren at once...[then] of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also....” Clearly Christ appears to whom He will when He will for His own purposes, and is not constantly appearing all over the world to those who try to visualize Him.

The only reason for going over this again is to alert readers to the fact that those teaching this very dangerous occult technique used for making contact with spirit guides have not repented as a result of *Seduction*, but have hardened their position and are now attempting to justify visualization from the Bible. This shamanic technique will play an

increasing role in preparing the world for the Antichrist, and we need to know the arguments that friends and loved ones are being given to draw them into this. Think it through carefully for yourself, see what the Bible says, pray and be ready to rescue as many as you can before it is too late.

Some interesting connections: A number of former associates or disciples of John Robert Stevens, recently deceased leader of The Walk (a charismatic cult connected with the Latter Rain and involved in “Christian” witchcraft) have moved into mainstream charismatic circles without renouncing their “Walk” connections and beliefs. Among them: Royal Cronquist, active in FGBMFI circles; Mel Bailey, former Walk “apostle” now on staff with Earl Paulk (see Paulk’s paper, *Thy Kingdom Come*, Feb. 1987, p.9 for a Bailey article); and Mark Virkler, curriculum director for Thomas Reid’s Association of Church-Centered Bible Schools. (Reid and Virkler are the two principal co-authors of *Seduction?? A Biblical Response*.) Virkler told Georgie Kinyon of We Care Ministries that he “had studied under John Stevens and did not see anything wrong with his doctrines.” Paul Yonggi Cho is closely connected with (among others) Reid, Virkler, Paulk—and Robert Schuller, who wrote the foreword to Cho’s *The Fourth Dimension* and who is also heavily into visualization.

Speaking of visualization, Virkler teaches seminars designed to “open one up to two-way communication with Almighty God,” which Reid says “is going to change the nation....” (Sadly enough, not just Virkler’s seminar but the growing use of visualization may indeed “change the nation.”) The secret is in two divination techniques (divination is forbidden by the Bible in any form): “journaling” and “visualization.” What Virkler calls “the breakthrough” into two-way dialogue with God came through information gained at a seminar

conducted by Dennis and Matthew Linn, Jesuit priests who teach the visualization of Mary and Joseph for inner healing. Virkler teaches visualization of a “Jesus” who can be conjured up at will in the imagination but then begins to move and speak on his own. Clearly contact has been made with some spirit entity independent of the visualizer’s imagination, but it is not our Lord Jesus Christ, for He cannot be called from the right hand of the Father on high to appear before us as our private guru any time we please.

Remembering the Reformers Part I

Dave Hunt

In August, my wife, Ruth, and I managed to spend three weeks together in Europe. I really couldn't afford to take the time, but very much needed to get away, and having free tickets that were going to expire, decided to use them. We had a wonderful time. I was able to relax, clear my head, get a fresh perspective—and managed to work on the manuscript of a new book T. A. McMahon and I are writing for the secular market titled *America: The Sorcerer's New Apprentice* (subtitle: "A Commonsense Guide to the Exploding Occult Marketplace.") Ruth and I visited a number of pastors and Christian friends (we've lived in Europe twice), and found that *Seduction* is causing a stir in the church all over the continent, where Schuller, Peale, Cho, Hagin, Copeland, et al. have a large and growing following.

As we drove through Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy and Austria, where the Reformation had taken place, we read once again that gripping story. I had scarcely given it a thought in years; in fact I had all but forgotten the great Reformation and what it gave us. Now my heart was deeply moved, my spirit stirred, and I found myself weeping, broken before God. Who would not weep when reading Hugh Latimer's last words to his companion as they were being burned at the stake: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace...as I trust shall never be put out!"

Tears came to my eyes again and again as we continued to read the inspiring and convicting story of the courageous men and women who stood up against the corruption and false doctrine of the Roman Catholic

Church, and who, for their faith in God and their uncompromising stand for the truth of His Word, were burned at the stake or tortured to death in other ways. But I wept even more at the realization that the "candle" these men and women of God ignited in their day has all but flickered out in ours. How could the church of today have strayed so far from those great truths for which so many had died? That question began to trouble me and I would like to explore it in this letter and the next.

In the city of Constance on the Bodensee, that large and beautiful lake that lies between Germany and Switzerland, stands a huge stone. A short walk from the house in which John Hus lived, this monument marks the place where he was burned at the stake in 1415 for his evangelical faith and his belief that the Bible is our final authority and that every Christian has the right and responsibility to know and interpret it for himself. Of the many Catholics who began to see these same truths, Luther would write 100 years later, "We were all Hussites without knowing it."

In the cathedral that still stands in the center of the town, Hus (ordained a Catholic priest in 1401) was tried and found guilty by a Church whose "celibate" priests, in *that very Diocese of Constance alone, were fathering about 1,500 illegitimate babies a year!* These priests remained in the good graces of the Church by paying a "crib tax" for their sexual promiscuity, while Hus was burned to death for advocating holiness and the true priesthood of all believers. In his last letter to his friends, Hus wrote, "Finally, I entreat you all to persevere in the truth of God."

Standing there in front of that monument, choked with emotion, I thought not only of Hus but of the thousands of others like him who became literal human torches burning for truth and freedom of conscience,

and to whom we owe so great a debt. The Protestant Reformation involved vital issues and eternal truth for which the Reformers laid down their lives. There was a simplicity and purity to their faith. Consider, for example, the last words of Anneken Jans to her infant son on the eve of her execution in Rotterdam: "Where you hear of a poor, simple cast-off flock which is despised and rejected by the world, join them, for where you hear of the cross there is Christ."

Painfully I thought of the shocking contrast offered by today's self-centered gospel, now corrupting the church worldwide, that promises freedom from suffering and persecution, and worldly success through a "positive confession" and whose central message is each person's "divine right to prosperity!" No one would either burn anyone at the stake or be willing to be burned for that false "gospel"—nor for the "New Reformation" Robert Schuller calls for based upon "each individual's right to self-esteem!"

Schuller claims (and he is honored by seminary professors and many evangelical leaders for such statements) that the "classical interpretation of this teaching of Christ on 'bearing our cross' desperately needs reformation....The cross Christ calls us to bear will be offered as a dream...an inspiring idea...that helps the self-esteem-impooverished persons to discover their self-worth...possibility thinking is the positive proclamation of the cross!" How is it possible that such "positive," self-centered success-oriented counterfeit gospels of today could be so widely accepted? Is this not an insult to the memory of the martyrs and the sacred cause for which they died? How could the Reformation not only be forgotten but apparently rejected by leading Protestants today as much as it was then (and still is) by the Catholic hierarchy?

Meeting in 1545, the Council of Trent

did repudiate the rampant immorality and the sale of indulgences *for money*. But it flatly *rejected* the cry for reformation *on every other point*. The ultimate authority of the Bible, salvation by grace alone through faith, the sufficiency of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, and the priesthood of all believers were vehemently denied by the council; while purgatory and indulgences, Mariolatry and images, salvation by works and through the continual sacrifice of Christ again and again in the Mass, etc. were all reaffirmed and remain at the heart of Catholicism today. Yet leading evangelicals are calling for “unity with Rome.” How can that be?

Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Hus and most of the millions of others involved in the Reformation were originally Catholics. When they saw for themselves what the Bible really said about salvation by grace through faith and the personal relationship of each believer to God through Christ, they proclaimed the gospel in the face of persecution and were willing to die for their faith. Yet the majority of today’s Catholics (priests, nuns, lay persons) who supposedly receive the “baptism in the Spirit” remain seemingly oblivious to the critical issues the Reformers died for, and continue in unbiblical beliefs and practices. Can it be that such persons have indeed been baptized into the “Spirit of truth?”

Among today’s Protestants (especially charismatics) there is a growing spirit of ecumenism which embraces as “brothers in the faith” anyone who “speaks in tongues,” without regard to their false doctrines and practices. At the large charismatic “unity” conference recently held in New Orleans, about half of the participants and a significant number of leaders were Catholics—and the call for “unity” was not on the basis of the true faith once for all delivered to the saints, but “signs and wonders” and an agreement not to question one another’s doctrine. Is it too

harsh to consider this entire “Conference on the Holy Spirit” a historic rejection of the Reformation and the issues for which millions gave their lives?

How is it that eternal truths for which the martyrs died can be set aside as though of no importance, while a substitute, counterfeit, “positive” gospel of prosperity or self-esteem can grow so rapidly in acceptance? After carefully considering such questions it seems to me that in many respects the Protestant church today may be in worse condition than the Catholic Church of Luther’s day. We want to consider why that may be possible in our next newsletter.

Remembering the Reformers Part II

Dave Hunt

This is a follow-up to last month's discussion of the Reformation. It is staggering to see that in the so-called Protestant church of today there are many parallels to what the Reformers complained about in the Catholic Church of Luther's day. Moreover, many of those who promote these false teachings have been elevated to pedestals of Protestant infallibility as lofty as the pope's and the Catholic priesthood. To be a simple Berean and check the doctrines of Christian leaders against the Bible is not only unthinkable today, but is condemned as strongly as daring to question the pope and Catholic dogma was in Calvin's day.

It is the pope's great authority, the huge Church he heads, its antiquity, and, as some insist, "the great good (in spite of the evil) it has accomplished," that are used to brush aside any questions of doctrinal purity that are raised. In this manner any actual discussion of the issues and the merits of the arguments for or against biblical accuracy are avoided. The same is now true among evangelicals and charismatics. The popularity of a certain leader, the size of his church or ministry, how long it has been established, and the great good he or she may have done become the basis for deciding issues rather than the Bible.

Two major foundation stones of the Reformation were the sole authority of the Bible and the priesthood of all believers. The Bible teaches that neither man nor organization can add to or take from Scripture or interpret it for others. The response of the Council of Trent in 1545 was to reject the Reformers' cry of *sola scriptura!* and to declare that the Bible was not enough for life and doctrine; that in addition there were the pronouncements of the pope, of the Councils and the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. Clearly, the situation is very similar among Protestants today.

There are, of course, the Earl Paulks and

other "prophets" who claim to have "new revelations" that must not be judged and who even deny the right and the responsibility of each believer to check what he has been taught against the Bible. Paulk says, "When we take our Bibles home, get on our knees and make our own decisions concerning the preacher's sermon, we decide the truth of God's anointing [upon a preacher or ministry] according to our own private interpretations" (*That The World May Know*, p 144). He condemns this Berean activity, although the Bible calls it "noble" (Acts 17:10-11).

Similarly, today's "Christian psychologists," a new infallible priesthood unknown at the Reformation but now accepted among both Protestants and Catholics for several decades, also reject the cry of *sola scriptura!* with their own slogan, "All truth is God's truth!" One can no longer be a simple Berean and "search the scriptures daily" to see whether what is being taught is biblical. No longer is all of "God's truth" pertaining to "life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3) to be found alone where the Bereans looked but also in a new source unknown not only to the early church but all down through history until this century. New "revelations" have been given through the godless, antichristian apostles and prophets of psychology (Freud, Jung, et al.) and accepted by the church as of equal authority with the Bible. (Please see *Beyond Seduction*, Chapters 6-9 for a more detailed discussion.)

The Reformers objected to the images of the Catholic Church, which they considered to be a form of idolatry. In its rejection of the reforms that were so desperately needed, the Council of Trent justified the retention of images, which remain an important part of Catholicism today. The fact that so many of the "saints" had used this method and that so many had found images helpful for prayer and worship was sufficient justification to override biblical prohibition. That was bad enough. But now, largely through the influence of Jungian psychology, both Protestants and Catholics have lately embraced an even deadlier form of idolatry: visualized images that come alive and even speak! Contact has clearly been

made with the spirit world, but not with God or Christ.

Christian psychologists justify visualizing "Jesus" as a necessary "inner healing" therapeutic technique for dealing with "traumas" allegedly buried deep in the unconscious and which biblical methods such as prayer, repentance, obedience, faith, and the filling of the Spirit, etc. supposedly cannot reach. Thus we have diagnoses and cures which cannot be found in Scripture and which the church did not need for 1,900 years, but which we are now told are essential. This is all justified because it "works" so well for so many, and because it is taught as a part of "God's truth" that somehow was left out of the Bible, although that Holy Book claims to have given all that is needed for the man or woman of God to be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tm 3:16-17).

It is astonishing enough that the secular world has embraced shamanism (witchcraft) in modern form and is training itself to be demonized through visualizing "inner guides" as part of the new transpersonal psychological, medical and self-improvement techniques which have recently become so popular. It is more than astonishing, however, that the evangelical church (not just the liberals and modernists) has accepted and is promoting the same techniques among the unsuspecting sheep of our Lord's flock. And again today's Protestants and Catholics have joined together in the same unbiblical practice, which is far more dangerous than the images of wood and stone that the Reformers criticized. Those Protestant "inner healers" who justify their practice because the visualized "Jesus" performs so well must explain how it is that the "Mary" being visualized by the Catholics has no less power to heal. And of course both must explain how it is that all manner of "guides" visualized by occultists (from "space brothers" and Ascended Masters to coyotes) perform just as well as "Jesus" or "Mary."

We have to agree with A. W. Tozer that a revival of today's Christianity would set the cause of Christ back at least 100 years. What we need is a new Reformation.

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Watching

Dave Hunt

Last month we spoke of the great need for reformation as a foundation for genuine revival. Our recent visit to Australia and New Zealand confirmed this even more in our hearts. It is impossible to share in a few words the month Ruth and I spent on this last trip. We are grateful to the Lord for His care and provision; to those who arranged the numerous meetings and media opportunities; to the many who were of such great help and kindness during our travels; and to all who supported us in prayer.

We can hardly claim great understanding of these two countries on the basis of our one short trip. Of more value than our own personal observations were the statements of the many Aussies and Kiwis with whom we had contact. It was insightful also to have some frank discussions with pastors who oppose my “negative” teaching. It seemed quite clear that the same false teachings and practices so prevalent here (psychology, selfism, visualization, positive/possibility thinking, positive confession, the success/growth/health/wealth-proves-God’s-gospel, kingdom/dominion/restoration, etc.) are deceiving the church “down under.” Turning on TV to see what was available, my first Sunday in Sydney, I found Robert Schuller’s “Hour of Power” with Norman Vincent Peale as his guest. Both are greatly admired by Christians there and emulated by church leaders. Yonggi Cho and John Wimber are also very influential, with “church growth” and “signs and wonders” seemingly far more appealing to many than sound doctrine.

Everywhere I went people asked the same questions and expressed the same concerns as here in the U.S. and Canada. There are many (including pastors who contacted me privately) who are deeply burdened for the condition of the church, whose hearts are broken to see so many succumbing to deception, and who are trying to combat error and are meeting increasing opposition. Please pray for them and for the church down there.

It surprised me that opposition to *Seduction* and to me personally seemed much stronger in both Australia and New

Zealand than here, with Australia by far the most vocal. At the last minute I was canceled from the only Assembly of God that had been willing to have me speak in Sydney. In one area no church would have me or support my meetings, so I spoke to unsaved farmers. The response at all of my meetings was very encouraging. Many had been troubled by teachings and practices without fully understanding why, and were grateful to have the issues clarified in the context of Scripture. Audio and video tapes of the meetings and media interviews were made and will have a wide impact.

The recent “stock market crash” occurred shortly after we had arrived in Australia. Many have asked about that and specifically whether it changes anything I wrote in *Peace, Prosperity and The Coming Holocaust*. (Actually we had taken that book with us to reedit and update it.) I do not pay much attention to financial markets, world banking and economics, etc. because I consider the moral and spiritual situation to be of greater importance and give my time and energy to that. So my opinions are based more upon my understanding of Scripture than upon any special knowledge of the current financial, economic, or political situation.

How quickly the stock market will recover I don’t know, but I would expect continuing prosperity (though it may have little genuine foundation and will eventually collapse) and the appearance of improving prospects for world peace. I think the recent “crash” was due to irrational panic rather than factors marking the start of another “1929.” It may very well, however, quicken the pace toward worldwide economic and financial cooperation, important steps on the road to the eventual total control by Antichrist. And the fact that another “1929” did not develop could breed pride that the “system held” and even greater overconfidence than before.

The above opinion is based mainly upon my deep conviction that we are in the “last days,” that Christ will rapture His bride soon and that this will occur during a time of apparent “peace and prosperity.” If the world is presently sliding over the cliff into a severe financial collapse (which it surely will suffer after the Rapture during the Great Tribulation,

then, in my opinion, that would set back the timetable of our Lord’s return substantially—yet so many other signs point to its imminence. Of course I could be entirely wrong. Each of you must come to your own convictions, so I urge you to be daily in serious study of God’s Word.

Whatever the case, we are to be watching and longing for His return. In our witness to the lost and warnings to the wayward we must proceed with urgency as though we have little time; yet we must also act prudently in all things in case our Lord should tarry, which He very well may for His own reasons. Whatever extension of time He gives should be used to His glory and to rescue as many as possible before it is too late.

Surely the church, which is Christ’s bride, ought to be living in an attitude of expectancy and longing to be caught up to meet Him in the air. In my travels I see little of that genuine expectancy and sincere desire to depart this world to be with Christ. That in itself is another sign of the nearness of His return, which He said would come at a time when most would not expect Him (Mt 24:44). In the parable of the ten virgins, “as the Bridegroom tarried” even the five wise virgins “slumbered and slept.” That description hardly fits with a post-trib return in the midst of Armageddon, but it certainly seems to characterize the present time. Christ went on to say, “At the midnight hour, a great cry arose; Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!” (Mt 25:6). I would like to hear His return spoken of among Christians with that kind of excited anticipation! That must characterize any genuine spiritual “awakening!”

Your help in sharing audio and video tapes, books, catalogs and getting others on the mailing list will have eternal consequences. Your financial help enables us to extend our ministry. As 1987 ends and we enter 1988 (should the Lord delay His coming and spare us to serve Him further), may it be with the renewed determination to be the instruments of His will, to give Him the love and praise He deserves, to know Him better and to make Him known as widely as we can.

May the joy of the Lord be your strength, and may His good hand of blessing be upon all that you seek to be and say and do to His glory!

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Truth Compromised

Dave Hunt

Once again it is difficult to believe that another year has come and gone so quickly and we have already launched into 1988. Will this be the year in which Christ will catch His bride away to meet Him in the air and take us to heaven for that great marriage celebration? Only the Lord knows. Nevertheless, that should be our longing and eager anticipation. Are you excited at the prospect? Every Christian ought to be! "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rv 22:17,20).

The world, however, has another hope. And with the Reagan/Gorbachev summit, prospects for global peace seem to have brightened. Confidence is also growing that the recent stock market "crash" will have little effect on the economy as a whole, and continued economic growth without renewed inflation seems likely. If we are indeed as near our Lord's return as it appears, then this trend will continue until "Peace and safety" is the happy phrase on everyone's lips and the confident outlook of the world.

Then "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief" (1 Thes 5:2). That fearful day of God's wrath, which comes when the world least expects it (see also Is 2:12; 13:6,9,13; Jl 1:15; Am 5; 2 Pt 3:10, etc.) could not begin with the return of Christ to reign over the nations from Jerusalem (i.e., at the end of the Great Tribulation), for God's judgment has already been pouring out upon earth and no one will be saying "Peace and safety" in the middle of Armageddon. The Day of the Lord must therefore start at the beginning of the Tribulation.

And surely if Christ had not raptured His bride and we were still upon earth when Israel is under siege by all the nations of the world and about to be destroyed (Zec 12:9; 14:1-9; Rv 19:19), we would be expecting His return *then*.

Yet Christ warned that He (like the Day of the Lord) would come "as a thief," when (just as in Noah's time) the last thing anyone would expect would be judgment. Even His own would not be expecting Him (except those who watch and pray), for even the "wise" would "slumber" as the Bridegroom tarries (Mt 24:37-44; 25:5, etc.). It would therefore seem that Christ must come to catch away His bride with the same surprise and at the same time of "peace and prosperity" as the sudden dawning of the Day of the Lord.

That secret and surprise "catching away" is known as the Rapture. There is another reason why it cannot happen at the end of the Tribulation. Praise God that we will already be in heaven before He comes visibly in power and glory to rescue Israel. This is quite clear from the fact that the "marriage of the Lamb" (Rv 10:7) takes place just before Christ comes riding on that white horse with the armies of heaven to rescue Israel and establish His millennial kingdom. We will return to earth with our conquering Lord, then reign with Him in our resurrection bodies for 1,000 years while Satan is locked up.

In the days ahead, I expect the Rapture to be increasingly denied as well as any prophetic recognition for national Israel. Kingdom/dominion/restoration/reconstruction is now the fastest growing movement in the church. Please pray for the book on this subject (*Whatever Happened to Heaven?*) which I will be working on as soon as *America: The Sorcerer's New Apprentice* is completed.

I think we will also see increasing compromise of the truth, much of it on the part of sincere but deceived Christians who think it is helpful to make the gospel sound as much like worldly wisdom as possible in order to "win the lost." Of course that is not winning them at all, but wreaking havoc with another gospel and another Jesus. It is most confusing when both the truth and the lie

are presented by the same persons, depending upon what audience they address.

Robert Schuller offered a classic example of this, in his interview by Paul and Jan Crouch on TBN, December 8, 1987. Paul indicated that he had gotten many letters (perhaps some of them from some of you) protesting his support of Schuller and claiming that Schuller preaches a false gospel. So Paul proceeded to ask Schuller what he believed, in order to remove any doubts of his evangelical orthodoxy. Robert Schuller presented himself as a firm believer in evangelical Christianity. Taking what he said at face value (with the few exceptions commented upon below) anyone listening to him (including myself) would have been convinced of his true evangelical faith. I hope and pray that he was sincere in his clear declaration of the essentials of the gospel.

On the other hand, it was very troubling for me, being aware of facts which were unknown to the average viewer, to watch the program knowing that Robert Schuller was being less than forthright in his responses to some questions. And Paul was either ignorant of the facts or unwilling to pursue his questioning to the point of exposing another side of Robert Schuller (if there is one), which was in fact the stated purpose of the program.

Schuller admitted that he often speaks to groups which would be classified as "New Age." His rationale was that he will go anywhere to spread the truth. That sounded good. Unfortunately, the "truth" he proclaims to New Age audiences is not the same truth which he so convincingly presented on TBN. To the ministers and ministers-in-training he addressed at Unity headquarters near Kansas City, for example, Schuller said nothing they didn't agree with, nothing to let them know that he had any concern for or disagreement with their beliefs (Unity

rejects the gospel and advocates yoga, reincarnation, and the whole New Age trip). In fact, he *commended* them and offered his success techniques to help *Unity grow larger!* Such action ought to be known and denounced by every Bible-believing Christian! The impression Schuller gave to the TBN viewing audience was not consistent with the facts.

In response to Paul's questions, Schuller stated that his "number one job is to lead people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." Again it sounds commendable and the viewers must have been duly impressed. However, at Unity headquarters no attempt was made to correct their false impression of Jesus (who to Unity is not "the way, the truth, the life and the only Savior of sinners" but one of many "wayshowers" like Buddha or Krishna) and to present to them the true Jesus Christ. In fact, on another occasion, when a Baptist minister in Warren, MI learned that Schuller was going to dedicate the newly expanded Unity church there and reproved him, Schuller responded that he intended to present the truth and asked for prayer to that end. What Jesus did he present on that occasion? Not the Jesus who died for our sins and rose the third day for our justification. Schuller's motivational talk, that could have been addressed to any secular group and which the Unity congregation loved, presented Jesus as "the greatest possibility thinker of all time!" That "gospel," consistent with Unity beliefs, brought cheers from the congregation. Of course it wouldn't offend anyone, but neither would it save them.

Schuller also declared that while he would go to New Age groups to preach the truth, he would not invite them to speak from his pulpit. Again the actual facts bear little relationship to the impression given the TBN audience, to whom Paul Crouch had promised the truth. The list of New Agers, cultists and occultists who have been guests on

the "Hour of Power," passed off as purveyors of truth and encouraged to spread their false beliefs to that vast audience, is far too long to recite here. It ranges from Schuller's friend and colleague (they do seminars together) Gerald Jampolsky (who uses *A Course in Miracles*, dictated by a demon posing as Jesus—the *Course* has also been taught at the Crystal Cathedral, according to spokespersons there), to leading Mormon Jack Anderson (encouraged by Schuller to spread his Mormon false doctrine of God on "Hour of Power") and includes numerous shades and varieties in between.

His statement that he never sits "in judgment" or makes "critical negative remarks about others" even if they "attack" him sounded so "positive." Here again, however, those few who may have known the facts realized that Schuller was once more giving the viewers a false impression.

Even in the midst of the sound doctrine which he presented so convincingly, Schuller's basic error came through in his insistence that we must phrase the gospel so that it never offends anyone (Christ himself is called "a rock of offence," and Paul has harsh words for those who would take the offense out of the Cross in order to be popular with the world (Is 8:14; Rom 9:33; 1 Pt 2:8; Gal 5:11-12; 6:12-14, etc.); and in his heretical declaration that positive thinking and possibility thinking are "nothing more than biblical faith" (of course even atheists subscribe to positive/possibility thinking). Neither Paul nor Jan saw anything wrong with any of this and even nodded their approval when Schuller said, "I preach repentance so positively that most people don't recognize it."

One need not be a theologian, however, to conclude that either there is something basically and seriously wrong with this "positive" approach—or that Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Paul, et al. and Jesus himself had the wrong approach and would have been far more

effective if they had not been so "negative."

Convinced of Schuller's evangelical orthodoxy, Paul finally threw up his hands and said, "What can you say!" Then, turning to the camera, he chided his viewers: "Why do you keep sending me those letters [asking about Robert Schuller]!" The interview had been carried off smoothly. TBN had reaffirmed its imprimatur of Robert Schuller, and apparently everyone went home well satisfied that those "negative" maligners out there had been silenced once again.

The danger is that we become weary of pointing out error and retire from the battle for truth. I confess that my natural tendency would be to back off in face of the accusations that I am contentious and splitting hairs. The issues, however, are too important to ignore; and with the eternal destiny of souls hanging in the balance, we must continue to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints as we are urged to do. May the Lord help all of us to stand true to Him and to His Word.

Prophecy

Dave Hunt

Prophecy is a difficult subject. I certainly don't pretend to have all of the answers—but I do believe we should diligently seek to understand as much as we can of what God has spoken through His prophets and through His Son (who had much to say about apostasy, His second coming, the Great Tribulation, etc.) Some argue that because there is so much disagreement over prophecy and it is such a confusing subject, we should therefore forget it. Yet the Book of Revelation offers a special blessing to those who study, understand and obey what it teaches (Rv 1:3).

In a recent Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) newsletter, its director says, "You know, Hal Lindsey [pretrib Rapture] may be right—and you know, Bishop Earl Paulk [no Rapture—Christ returns to rule the nations after Christians have taken over the world in His name] may be right." He goes on to argue that it doesn't matter who is right; i.e., Rapture or no Rapture is not worth discussing. Yet Hal Lindsey, who says a great deal about the Rapture and prophecy because he considers it extremely important, has been one of the most popular guests on TBN (the viewers also apparently consider this topic important) and has often hosted programs. It seems odd that so much valuable TV time would be allocated to a subject that is considered a waste of time to discuss.

It is even more confusing that the Holy Spirit would devote so much of the Bible (about 30 percent) to prophecy if it doesn't matter what view one takes. Unfortunately, the desire to avoid disagreement over prophecy affects other areas as well. Some write disparagingly of those who try "to get their doctrine across instead of doing what Jesus asked us to do—'Feed my sheep'—'Love your neighbor'—'Go into all the world.'" Are we supposed to leave 30 percent of the Bible out of the message we take "into all the world?" Can we feed His sheep without doctrine? And what kind of "love" would allow one's neighbor to be deceived by false teaching?

We can all sympathize with a desire to avoid contention over doctrine. I do not relish controversy. My inclination would be to retire from the battle. But we have been told to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints—and a

vital part of that faith involves the promise of His return. TBN gives us a shocking lesson in what happens when one takes a neutral position in this battle and begins to minimize the importance of sound doctrine.

The TBN newsletter is titled "A Falling Away First" and references 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The Greek word there is *apostasia* ("apostasy" in English) which means "a falling away from the truth." Having declared that it matters not how we interpret prophecy, and that doctrine is not worth discussing, apostasy is then defined as a decrease in giving to ministries such as TBN! After telling us, in effect, that it doesn't matter whether TBN broadcasts false doctrine, in the next breath we are asked to support the ministry, false doctrine or not. And he warns us that if we are giving less to TBN now than we once were, we have fallen into apostasy and as a result could come under the "strong delusion" that God will send upon those "who believed not the truth."

How can one both demean those who contend for sound doctrine and in the next breath express a concern about truth and warn of delusion and Satan's lies? Crouch does a good job of concisely explaining some of the New Age lies, and specifically identifies the lie that "All is God and God is all." Yet this very lie was the central message in the major article in the Summer 1986 issue of Robert Schuller's *Possibilities* magazine (p 8). That same article also had John Marks Templeton declaring that "The Christ Spirit dwells in every human being whether the person knows it or not" (p 12).

This is the worst heresy possible, the very lie Paul Crouch warns against that will damn a soul for eternity. And it is only one example among many that could be given of Schuller's promotion of New Age teachings and teachers. Yet as we mentioned last month, Paul and Jan recently spent considerable time on TBN absolving Robert Schuller of promoting any false doctrine. And those who would take issue with false doctrine are banned by the Crouches from *their* TBN network. I do not enjoy controversy, but I do believe the issues are serious and deserve public notice and discussion.

While I disagree on many points with Gary North, I appreciate the fact that he takes the issues seriously enough to debate them publicly. In his latest newsletter, North ridicules those who see a special fulfillment of prophecy in the

return of Israel to her land in 1948. He boasts that 1988 will come and go without the Rapture and this fact will seal the doom of dispensationalism because the Rapture and Great Tribulation will not have happened within the predicted 40-year generation period since the birth of modern Israel.

I, for one, never put such an interpretation upon Christ's statement, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Mt 24:34). Jesus often referred to the Jews of His day as a "wicked, adulterous, disobedient, unbelieving," etc. generation. I always assumed *that* to be the generation that would not pass away; i.e., that Israel would remain in unbelief and rebellion against God until Christ returns visibly in power to rescue her (Zec 12). She is certainly still in that condition today. There are, however, other possible interpretations of the "generation" to which Christ referred.

North's Reconstructionist Dominion Press has just published a book by Gary DeMar and Peter Leithart titled *The Reduction of Christianity: Dave Hunt's Theology of Cultural Surrender*. It is presumably an "answer" to what little was said about kingdom/dominion and reconstruction in *Seduction* and *Beyond Seduction*. I have scarcely addressed these issues yet, but plan to do so, God willing, in my next book.

Gary North and Gary DeMar plan a visit out here to debate with me, hopefully in a large church or two as well as on radio and television, if time is made available. Unlike Crouch, North and DeMar consider prophecy worth discussing. In my opinion, the Rapture will be one of the most hotly contested issues in the immediate future. It would be helpful if the church (and the world) could see such issues discussed openly and frankly on Christian TV and radio. I think that would be in the interest of truth, sound doctrine and the edification of the body of Christ—but whether it happens or not is in the hands of those few individuals who dictate what will be presented over Christian media.

I also hope and pray that, like North and DeMar, others, including some of the leading Christian psychologists, will also be willing to come forth and enter into public discussion of the issues raised by some of their teachings. They have been repeatedly challenged to do this, but so far have not been willing. Your prayers and actions to help bring this about will be much appreciated.

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The Preaching of the Cross

Dave Hunt

In our great concern over the growing apostasy and in our zeal to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, we must constantly take heed of our personal relationship with and testimony for our Lord. And to do this, we must always keep foremost in our hearts and minds the *Cross*.

Scripture makes it very clear that the cross of Christ is the heart of the message we preach, the determinant of our relationship to this evil world, and the secret of victory over the world, the flesh and the devil in our daily lives. Christ reminded His listeners repeatedly that it was not possible to be His disciple and thus a true Christian without denying self and taking up the cross to follow Him. I think the Bible makes it clear what this means, although there is also more depth of truth in the Cross than we will be able to fathom in this life.

Paul wrote, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). This characterized his consistent conduct and the message he preached. For him there was one important rule: "Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect" (1:17). We dare not compromise, dilute or try to improve, with man's wisdom, the straightforward simplicity of the Cross. To do so destroys its truth and power to save others and to deliver us from succumbing to daily trials and temptations.

We have a tendency to forget that "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1:18). One of the greatest problems today is the often well-intentioned attempt to reinterpret the gospel to make it sensible and acceptable to the natural or carnal man. Instead, the unchangeable message must change the thinking and lives of those who receive it or it cannot change their eternal destiny. Let that never be forgotten. That transforming power is missing, both from the gospel preached to the lost and from the Christian's life, when the sharp sword of the Word with its radical message of the Cross has been sheathed in the popular psychologies and self-oriented thinking of our day.

What we are trying to say is illustrated through a man who had the most amazing and unique testimony of anyone who ever lived. A resident of death row, he knew on the day of his execution, as footsteps came resolutely down the corridor, that he was

going to die. When the door of his cell swung open, however, the jailor spoke these astonishing words: "You are being set free. Another man is dying in your place!"

Of course, I'm referring to Barabbas, the only man who ever lived who could literally testify, "Jesus died for me, in my place!" But Barabbas was not saved. Why? Simply because the death of Christ had freed him to live his own life. Yet that is often today's self-centered understanding of the gospel: Jesus died for me so that I can live for myself, for worldly success and happiness, and go to heaven when I'm too old or too sick to enjoy earthly pleasures anymore. Against that false impression, A. W. Tozer wrote:

Among the plastic saints of our times, Christ has to do all the dying and all we want is to hear another sermon about His dying—no cross for us, no dethronement, no dying. We remain king within the little kingdom of Mansoul and wear our tinsel crown with all the pride of a Caesar; but we doom ourselves to shadows and weakness and spiritual sterility.

People would come to Christ promising to follow Him wherever He would lead. His reply was simple: "Let Me make it very clear. I'm heading for a hill outside of Jerusalem called Calvary, where they will crucify Me. So if you intend to be true to Me to the end, take up your cross right now, because that is where we're going."

Of course no one did that. Even His closest disciples all forsook Him and fled to save their own lives. Nor would it have saved their souls had they died on crosses erected beside His. He had to die in their place. But after His resurrection they were changed men, no longer afraid to die for their Lord. For then they understood and believed and gladly submitted to the truth: Christ had died in their place because they *deserved* to die. His death was not to deliver them from death, but to take them through death and out the other side into resurrection.

At last they understood and believed. Acknowledging that God was just in condemning them to death for their rebellion against Him, they accepted the death of Christ their Savior as their very own. They had died in Him; and *believing that changed everything*.

In Galatians 6:14 Paul writes, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

As those who have been crucified with Christ, we have been completely cut off from this world. One of the problems with today's Christianity is its attempt to make itself appealing to the spirit of this world and thus to become popular with the world. Christ would no more be popular today than He was in His day; and He said that those who hated Him would hate His disciples. So John wrote, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn 2:15).

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul explained further: "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2 Cor 13:4). How are we weak in Him? Not in our relationship to sin or Satan or to the temptations of this world, over which we have the victory through Christ. We are weak in the same way that He was weak, i.e., in that He did not fight to defend Himself or His kingdom against the political or military might of this world. His victory (and ours in Him) over Satan also came in submitting to death: "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb 2:14-15).

It is not through gritting our teeth and determining by our will power that we overcome temptation, but in accepting the fact that we are dead in Christ. The dead no longer lust, lose their tempers or act selfishly. Our victory is in our being "*dead* indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11). We have given up life as we would live it in order to experience His life being lived in and through us. The life He gives is *resurrection* life, and only those who are dead can receive that. We cannot know the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, until we have willingly accepted His death as our death.

These few thoughts scarcely scratch the surface of the meaning of the Cross (which includes, of course, the Resurrection). In meditating upon this greatest event of all time and eternity, we begin to see both the horror of our sin and the amazing love of our Lord—the two chief motivations for holiness. May we abide in His love, that the Cross so fully proved, and become the messengers and channels of that love to the world for which He died.

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Psychology & the New Age

Dave Hunt

Last month's letter was written just a few days before the shattering Jimmy Swaggart revelations. I still have difficulty believing that nightmare has happened. Your heart, like mine has been broken, I'm sure—not only for Brother Swaggart, but for Christ and His church. A man of God has fallen and the enemies of God have been made to rejoice. It should be a time of humbling and repentance for all of us, confessing that "But for the grace of God, there go I." It is a timely reminder not to look to men, no matter how great, but to rest our confidence only in our Lord.

The cause of Christ has suffered a much heavier blow than through the Bakker affair, because Swaggart was so outspoken in favor of sound doctrine and holy living. Not only has Christianity become even more an object of derision than ever before, but standing for sound doctrine and preaching against evil will now be even more difficult for God's servants. While his willingness to bear the humiliation of public confession was commendable, if Swaggart is to be greatly used of God again his restoration must be brought about by God himself in His own time. Any attempt to engineer or rush that process will only result in greater disaster. I do not know what or how long it may take to restore credibility in the eyes of the secular world, not only to Jimmy Swaggart but to evangelical Christianity in general.

Some Christian psychologists have been gloating publicly, declaring that Jimmy's stand against psychological counseling prevented him from obtaining victory over sin. Presumably that must also have been why David fell, and Eve as well, while Joseph and Daniel and Paul, who stood so firm, must have somehow gotten a special revelation ahead of time of what was later revealed to Freud, Jung and the other godless anti-Christians who have given us the "new truth" upon which Christian psychology is founded. Nonsense!

At least Christian psychologists have left no doubt about what they really believe: that repentance, prayer, being crucified with Christ and filled with His

Spirit, are not sufficient to enable Brother Swaggart or the rest of us to live godly lives. Psychology, they now insist with renewed boldness, is an essential supplement to God's Word. The Bible does not contain all we need "for life and godliness" after all, even though it makes that claim. If that is true, then the apostles and prophets and Christ himself have lied in offering a remedy that really doesn't live up to its promises. One or the other is true; we cannot have it both ways. I still choose to believe in the sufficiency of God and His Word. Certainly history bears witness that with the advent of psychology things have gotten worse, not better, both for the world and the church.

I do not know what further shocking blows lie ahead, but the apostasy has gotten an unexpected boost and the great falling away will continue to gather momentum. At the same time, I believe, the Word of God tells us that there will be a great "last days" reaping of souls, as the Lord empowers His servants to hastily gather in from the "streets and lanes of the city" and from "the highways and hedges" the "poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" that His house may be full (Lk 14:16-24). Could it be that this scripture has reference to the drug addicts, AIDS victims, homosexuals, those in prisons and other cast-offs of society—and, yes, the New Agers, occultists, and practitioners of yoga, TM, and other forms of Eastern mysticism who have been deceived but are crying out for the truth? Such are coming to Christ, and I believe their conversions will dramatically increase in the days ahead.

By God's grace and through your prayers T. A. McMahon and I have just finished *America: The Sorcerer's New Apprentice*.^{*} Harvest House is doing a fantastic job, and the book is scheduled to come off the press in record time April 20. It has been written for the secular world, and many Christians may not like it for that very reason. We have tried to meet non-Christians on their own ground by analyzing the rise of New Age shamanism (witchcraft) throughout society on its own merits and explaining what is happening and the extreme inherent dangers—not in the usual Christian manner with a barrage of Bible quotations that too often turns off non-Christians, but strictly on the

testimony of those involved.

We think the book will prove to be a devastating revelation to many New Agers, as well as to the secular world in general. The documentation we give demonstrates conclusively that Americans by the tens of millions are literally being trained to turn their lives over to seducing spirits. This process involves the entire public education system, from the average kindergarten to the graduate schools of such universities as Harvard and Stanford. In fact, what is happening at Stanford, for example, now recognized as the top American university academically, is staggering.

Some of the critics of *The Seduction of Christianity* faulted our definition of sorcery. We now give them an entire book on that subject, which should open the eyes of many who considered *Seduction* to be exaggerated or extreme. We think the secular world is going to have to take this book seriously. In fact, it may be as much a shock to the secular world as *Seduction* was to the church. We hope and pray that will be so.

America is a book you can give or lend to your non-Christian friends, be they business executives or auto mechanics, New Agers or not, atheists or religious types, and know that it will not turn them off with "Christian jargon" but will merit their serious attention. We think that Christians will also find its analysis of the relation of science to religion, of naturalism vs. supernaturalism, the existence of God, evolution, reincarnation, psychic phenomena, demonic possession and other important topics to be of great help and interest. We simply want this book to accomplish what God has purposed for it, no more and no less. Your prayers to that end will be much appreciated.

Do not be discouraged no matter what has happened or may yet occur. The promise of Christ still stands: "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth....go ye therefore...and, lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mt 28:18-20). May the joy of the Lord be your strength and may His good hand of blessing be upon all you seek to be and say and do to His glory.

^{*} Reprinted as *The New Spirituality*.

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Reconstruction

Dave Hunt

Last night I returned from Dallas, where Tommy Ice and I debated Gary North and Gary DeMar on the subject of "Christian Reconstruction: A Deviant Theology?" Video or audio cassette tapes should be available soon for those interested. Tommy is an Austin, Texas pastor and a former Reconstructionist who knows their beliefs inside and out. North is co-founder (with his father-in-law, R.J. Rushdoony) of the Reconstruction movement, and DeMar is co-author of the book, *The Reduction of Christianity: Dave Hunt's Theology of Cultural Surrender*.

Tommy concentrated on the Reconstructionists' failure to support with a single Bible verse their postmillennial eschatology (that we are now in the Millennium with Satan bound and the church gradually taking over the world). Ten years ago, when he was one of North's admirers, Tommy had asked North what scriptures he had to support his eschatology. North made no reply and continued to stare at the floor without answering as Tommy repeated the question. Tommy suggested that Reconstructionists still have no biblically based eschatology. North's response at the debate was that he has published David Chilton's *Days of Vengeance*, which purports to show that the Olivet Discourse and almost the entire Book of Revelation were fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Titus. Rather than attempting to support this incredible thesis with a verse-by-verse exegesis, however, Chilton simply imposes upon the Bible the reconstructionist presuppositions, which could never be derived from the text by any reasonable interpretation.

My approach was to show that their view of "dominion" is not only deviant but the sandy foundation upon which the entire structure of reconstructionism is built. In Genesis 1:26-29, God tells

man that, as a higher order of creation made in God's image, he has been given dominion over the earth and everything upon it: the trees, herbs, fish, fowl, animals and all other life forms. Reconstructionists draw four false inferences from these verses—inferences that simply do not follow from the text:

1. That this "dominion mandate" includes ruling over other human beings, setting up governments and institutions etc.;

2. That "dominion" was lost by Adam at the Fall;

3. That the key purpose of Christ's death, burial and resurrection was to restore the dominion over earth and lower creatures which Adam allegedly lost; and

4. That the Great Commission of Matthew 28 is simply a restatement in New Covenant terms of the original "dominion mandate," and thus involves "fulfilling the same task."

Upon this faulty foundation of "dominion theology" (of which Rushdoony is said to be "the father"), the entire reconstruction movement has been erected. Yet Psalm 8:6-8 confirms what we each know by experience (we still swat flies and eat chicken, etc.): that even after the Fall man retains his God-given dominion, which is simply a stewardship responsibility to care for the earth. Moreover, this scripture reaffirms what is also clear from Genesis 1:26-29—that "dominion" has nothing to do with ruling over other human beings, but is limited to the things God has made ("the works of thy hands...sheep and oxen...beast...fowl ...fish...").

Although Adam did not lose "dominion," he lost his relationship to God and his place in Eden. Our hope, however, is not for a return to that paradise. As "new creations in Christ Jesus" (2 Cor 5:17), we have been promised something far better—life in a new universe of absolute perfection

into which sin and death can never enter. In contrast to Adam who died, we have eternal life and can never perish; and in contrast to the earthly God-visited paradise which Adam lost, we will dwell forever in the very presence of God in heaven—in the "Father's house of many mansions" (Jn 14:2), from which we will never be expelled. Therefore, to teach, as do the Reconstructionists, that Christ's redemptive work restores what Adam lost," is the very "reduction of Christianity" which they decry.

It is a further "reduction of Christianity" to suggest that the Great Commission calls us to reassert the allegedly lost "dominion" over this earth and its lower creatures. And it is a gross perversion to turn the Great Commission into a "cultural mandate" which assigns to the church the task of taking over the world to establish the kingdom of God before Christ returns. Yet this "dominion theology" is rapidly gaining ground among charismatics and evangelicals alike. One of the most disturbing examples is the Coalition on Revival (COR), which we mentioned in the February 1987 newsletter.

The false assumptions of "dominion theology" are built into the very foundation of COR. Its steering committee not only includes Reconstructionists such as North, Rushdoony and DeMar, but other dominion-oriented factions, including Earl Paulk-type kingdom/dominion advocates such as Maranatha's Robert Weiner, pastors John Giminez and "Bishop" John Meares; and shepherding leaders such as Bob Mumford and Dennis Peacocke. Their strong influence upon COR is quite evident. Oddly, the rest of COR's roster reads like a who's who of evangelical leaders, many of whom are probably not aware of the heavy reconstructionist/kingdom-dominion/shepherding influence in the COR Manifesto to which they have

committed themselves. North boasts that although much of the COR leadership still profess to be premillennialists, they have in fact become what he calls “operational postmillennialists.”

Going back to the debate, North and DeMar (because they cannot support postmillennialism with solid biblical exegesis) adopted the tactic of insisting that eschatology (the interpretation of prophecies concerning the last days) was not the issue at all, but that our real disagreement was over ethics. On the contrary, we believe as firmly as they that every area of the Christian’s life belongs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and that the conduct of Christians must be above reproach. We do not believe, however, that the unsaved world can be “Christianized” by getting it to “conform to biblical standards.” Paul’s explanation of why Israel failed to conform is conclusive: “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh...” (Rom 8:3). Moreover, even if this were possible, it would tend to provide sinners with a veneer of self-righteousness that would make it all the more difficult for them to see their need of Christ as Savior and Lord. Yet COR declares that the church has a “biblical mandate” to play a “leadership role with the world...transforming the world and influencing it to conform to biblical standards ...before Christ returns.”

There were serious ethical problems we might have raised at the debate, such as Gary North’s misrepresentations in his September 1987 *ICE Newsletter*. In it he stated that DeMar had sent me the manuscript for *Reduction*, offering me the opportunity to respond to it, and that I had “prudently declined.” Yet North knew that it had been impossible for me to respond by the deadline they had set of August 12 (I only returned from a trip to the East Coast the night of August 11 and had to get ready to

leave for three weeks in Europe on the 13th).

In his March 1988 *American Vision* newsletter, Gary DeMar named two large and prominent churches in Southern California in which he declared the debate would be held on April 12 and 16, when in fact neither church had ever agreed to host the debate. Then in his April 1988 newsletter DeMar wrote that “the debates we were going to have in California” had “been cancelled” because “the large churches and ministries that initially agreed to host the debates [there were no such “churches and ministries”] backed down after they saw the book [*The Reduction of Christianity*], because they realize that their position is biblically weak.” Such fabrications stand in sharp contrast to the impressive talk at the debate in Dallas about ethics and Christianizing secular institutions through inspiring the ungodly to imitate the godly lives of Christians.

The attempt to fit Scripture into the false mold of “dominion theology” has created strange theories and contradictions. We are accused of “defeatist eschatology” and gross “pessimism” for believing that Christ will soon rapture His bride home, marry her in heaven, then return with her and the armies of heaven to rescue Israel, conquer His enemies and rule this earth in righteousness and peace for 1,000 years. Yet their teaching that it will require a *minimum* of 36,600 years (and perhaps hundreds of thousands of years) of continuing ungodliness and billions dying without Christ as Christians gradually take over the world before our Lord can return is called “an eschatology of victory.” They will not allow Christ to be present to rule over the millennial kingdom. Although He was personally humiliated, rejected and crucified upon earth, they will not allow Him to be exalted, honored and triumphant upon earth by

personally reigning during the Millennium. Since “dominion” is our “assigned task,” it would be “defeat” for Christ to intervene personally from heaven; only if we do it all in His absence is it “victory,” by their definition.

In fact, they say, Christ has already come. His promise to “come quickly” was the comforting assurance to the Christians in A.D.65 that He would return *in the person of the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem!* Nor is the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19 a future event for Christ’s bride to eagerly anticipate, but a symbolic expression of the new meaning in the Eucharist since Israel’s excommunication by God when “Christ” destroyed Jerusalem in A.D.70. Israel has allegedly been replaced by the church.

Gary North would have us become excited about the prospect that by the year 2000 “Christians and [non-Christian] conservatives will be swept into most elective U.S. offices by ridiculous margins.” There is such enthusiasm about the next Christian march on Washington and the hope of taking over this world that the church has lost its vision of heaven. I think it is high time that the bride of Christ became excited about that heavenly marriage and the prospect of seeing and being with her Bridegroom forever. Oh, that a great cry would arise from the church: “We love you, Lord Jesus! Please come and take us home! The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! Come, Lord Jesus, come!”

Astrology

Dave Hunt

There seems to be no end to the disillusionment we are experiencing with both religious and political leaders. The latest, of course, comes from the revelations concerning the long-time involvement of the Reagans in astrology and the President's sad enslavement to lucky charms and other superstitions. While Mrs. Reagan reportedly "doesn't have a deep faith in God," the President claims to be a born-again Christian. Yet he has for years submitted to occult beliefs which made him the virtual prisoner of an astrologer, who literally confined the President to the White House on the many days it was "astrologically dangerous" for him to go out. It seems incredible that affairs of state at the highest level, including Soviet-American summit meetings, signing of disarmament treaties, etc., could be scheduled only when the zodiac allowed, thus seriously reducing the President's effectiveness. Yet that is the shocking revelation contained in *For the Record*, the account by former Secretary of the Treasury and White House Chief of Staff Donald T. Regan of his years in Washington, D.C.

Of course the President had admitted to some such follies more than twenty years ago, but most observers had assumed that, with his open confession of Christianity and bolder stand for biblical principles in recent years, his occultism had been abandoned. We were wrong. Instead, these superstitions, especially astrology, in what Regan calls "probably the most closely guarded domestic secret of the Reagan White House," have gained a stronger hold than ever—much stronger than any outsiders suspected.

To understand the seriousness of the situation, not only for the First Family but for all Americans, we need to consider two factors: (1) that such prac-

tices are not confined to the Reagans, but are widespread throughout America; and (2) that God condemns these practices in the strongest terms, has severely judged Israel and many other nations for such abominations, and thus America is in grave danger of suffering similar punishment.

First of all, it is the utmost hypocrisy for the media to criticize the Reagans for what is so widely accepted and practiced by the majority of Americans, including sports heroes, business and political leaders, educators, and media personalities themselves. As we mention in *America: The Sorcerer's New Apprentice*, this country is in the midst of the greatest occult revival in history. Hundreds of newspapers across America carry daily astrology columns, which are consulted by tens of millions of Americans. Carl Jung had great respect for astrology and used it in his analysis, as do many of today's psychologists and psychiatrists. Top athletes and coaches have certain hats, or socks, or numbers, or days of the week which they are convinced bring "good luck," and no amount of evidence can persuade them otherwise. The superstitious fears still prevailing in the space age dictate that the "unlucky" thirteenth floor of most high-rise hotels and office buildings simply does not exist. Even skeptic Carl Sagan, the pagan high priest of cosmos worship, though a critic of astrology, declares, "If we must worship a power greater than ourselves, does it not make sense to revere the Sun and stars?"

Americans have fallen into numerous occult practices which attempt to utilize and control supernatural powers allegedly innate in the universe. Thus the creation is worshiped instead of the Creator (see Rom 1) and mankind is turned from the true God to substitute powers, i.e., to idols. This idolatry is the essence of the "New Age"—which is simply a continuation under new names of the

ancient "doctrines of devils" and accompanying occult practices that have always permeated all cultures. Israel was eventually destroyed by God's judgment because of her continual practice of idolatry in many forms, including astrology, sorcery, divination and other occultism, all of which the Bible repeatedly condemns yet which are rampant in the United States today. Consider this comparison showing the strength of this movement: while *The Late Great Planet Earth* sold an astonishing 25 million copies, during almost the same period of time two books on astrology by Linda Goodman sold 60 million.

The Bible paints a clear picture of how great an abomination astrology is to God and yet how prevalent it remained among His chosen people in spite of repeated reproof. Jeremiah 19:13 and Zephaniah 1:5, for example, indicate that it was a common practice for the kings and the people to engage in occultic rituals in honor of "the host of heaven...and other gods" upon the roofs of their houses throughout Israel. In Acts 7:42, Stephen reminds the Jewish religious leaders, who were about to stone him, that their ancestors had never ceased to worship idols and "the host of heaven." (New Age occultism is also rampant throughout Israel today.) There are numerous pronouncements against astrology (almost always tying it in with idolatry, occultism, sorcery) in the Bible, such as Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3-5; 23:4-5; 2 Chronicles 33:3-5; Jeremiah 8:2. So evil are these abominations in God's eyes that anyone in Israel practicing astrology or any other form of idolatry/sorcery was to be put to death (Dt 17:2-7).

It is bad enough when the president of the most powerful nation in the world, a nation which has put men on the moon and boasts of its science and wisdom, is enslaved by superstitious practices, including astrology, which, as we demonstrate in *America*, science

has disproved long ago. It is far worse, however, when a president who has openly professed faith in Christ, has called for national prayer and spoken out for biblical standards of morality (and from whom America so desperately needs sound spiritual leadership) sinks to the level of secretly seeking help and protection from astrology and lucky charms! It calls into question not only his leadership qualifications but also the Christian faith he has publicly declared and in secret denied.

We dare not view lightly what God has denounced and severely judged. Thousands of letters should go from Christians to the President, pointing out what the Bible has to say about astrology and lucky charms and other superstitious/occult practices that he has engaged in, and calling upon him to repent. Those Christian leaders who have access to Reagan must personally call upon him to repent. Their organization of and participation in prayer breakfasts, Washington for Jesus rallies and other similar events will be exposed as empty rhetoric if they do not now explain to the President his error and call upon him to make full, sincere and public confession, and to lead our nation to do likewise.

What God had to say to Israel is no less apropos for America today: "O pleasure-mad kingdom, living at ease, bragging as the greatest in the world—listen to the sentence of my court upon your sins...disaster shall overtake you suddenly....your astrologers and stargazers, who try to tell you what the future holds...are as useless as dried grass burning in the fire. They cannot even deliver themselves. You'll get no help from them at all!" (Is 47:8,11-14, Living Bible.)

I doubt that any of us, including myself, have even begun to realize the full implications of the occult revival and apostasy that is engulfing our generation and today's church. May the Lord open

our eyes, show us our sin, and enable us to live and proclaim His truth with convicting power so that many will be rescued before it is too late. And may His joy be your strength as you realize that in so doing you are hastening the day of His return.

Christ or a Church?

Dave Hunt

Christianity is unique because of the uniqueness of Christ our Lord. He alone is both God and man. He alone could by His own death pay the penalty for the sins of the world and thus fully satisfy the demands of divine justice. And in contrast to Buddha or Muhammad or other religious leaders, whose graves contain their decayed remains, the grave of Jesus is uniquely empty. He alone conquered death and promised His disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jn 14:19). Everything we have is in Him and Him alone—and thus depends entirely upon our relationship with Him.

And it is that *personal* relationship which each Christian has, and must have with the Lord in order to be a Christian, that constitutes the most wonderful uniqueness of Christianity. For a Buddhist to have a personal relationship with Buddha, for example, is neither possible nor necessary. It is no hindrance to the practice of Buddhism that the founder of that religion is dead and gone. Islam also works very well with Muhammad in the grave. Not so with Christianity. If Jesus Christ were not alive there would be no Christian faith because He *is* all that it offers. Christianity is not an impersonal *religion* but a personal *relationship*.

Unfortunately, very early in the history of the church this personal relationship with Christ was lost—in fact it was denied. A hierarchy of leaders with headquarters in Rome took unbiblical control of Christendom. Taking the place of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church claimed to provide the way to heaven. As *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (Tan Books, 1977, Imprimatur by Joseph E. Ritter S.T.D., Archbishop of St. Louis) declares, the Catholic Church is "the gate to heaven for all of good will...the only church instituted by Christ for the salvation of mankind" (pp 24-25).

Christ says, "Come unto me...I am the door...the way, the truth, the life." The Roman Catholic Church, however, began to claim that *it* was the means of salvation and called the world to itself instead of to the One of whom Peter (supposedly

the first pope) had said, "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12). A host of intermediaries—the Catholic priesthood and hierarchy and a pantheon of "saints" headed by Mary—had stepped between the Savior and those who would come to Him. That precious and essential *personal relationship* with Christ was denied to those who needed it by those who claimed to represent Him. The new way to "attain life everlasting" was "to belong to the Church, which Christ established . . ." (p 25).

Joining the Roman Catholic Church became a substitute for the essential saving relationship with Christ. Cut off from Him who is the Living Word, those who became members of that Church were also effectively denied the written Word. The Church declared itself to be the sole interpreter of scripture. Catholic catechisms today make it clear that the individual cannot understand the Bible for himself; hence there is no point in reading the Bible, but only what the Church says about it. Such is the official position of the Church. As *The Convert's Catechism* says, the Roman Catholic Church as "the only true Church" is "the custodian and interpreter of Revelation. ...Man can obtain a knowledge of God's word [only] from the Catholic Church and through its duly constituted channels" (pp 14,19, 27,34,36). The Catholic Church has been wielding this kind of control without apology for centuries: "When he has once mastered this principle of Divine Authority, the Inquirer is prepared to accept whatever the Divine Church teaches on Faith, Morals and the Means of Grace" (p vi).

The Bereans had been highly commended for testing against Scripture what Paul taught, but that practice was now conveniently forbidden by the Church. In his 1988 book *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* (written to refute "Bible Christians"), Catholic apologist Karl Keating declares that the Catholic Church with its "papacy, hierarchy, priesthood, sacraments, teaching authority, and... infallibility...tells us the Bible is inspired, and we can take the Church's word for it precisely because the Church is infallible. ...Fundamentalists are quite right in believing the Bible is inspired, but their

reasons for so believing are inadequate because knowledge of the inspiration of the Bible can be based only on an authority established by God to tell us the Bible is inspired, and that authority is the Church" (pp 125,127). In his recent appearance in New York to present the 1988 Erasmus Lecture, Cardinal Ratzinger, chief Vatican theologian, confirmed once again that the Catholic Church alone can interpret Scripture.

Even Augustine, great thinker that he was, succumbed to this deadly delusion. Keating quotes him as saying, "I would not believe in the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so." This explains, of course, why the Catholic Church has no Wesleys or Moodys or Billy Grahams or street evangelists calling sinners to Christ. That would be a waste of time. Men must first of all acknowledge and join the true Church; and then, convinced of its infallibility, they will obey its rules, participate in its sacraments as the "means of grace," and through their relationship to that Church eventually (after possibly suffering in purgatory for their sins) enter the gates of heaven. One must therefore question the wisdom of Billy Graham in having Catholics counsel at his crusades and in referring "converts" back to Catholic churches. Even more urgently must we question huge charismatic conferences on the Holy Spirit and world evangelism where there are Catholic speakers and half of the participants, while claiming to have been "baptized" in the Spirit, remain in this Church and continue to look to its sacraments for salvation.

The lie is so obvious that no one has any excuse for being deceived by it. Romans 1 and 2 tell us clearly that all mankind, through the witness of creation and conscience, recognize that the gospel is true. On the day of Pentecost 3,000 Jews became Christians through Peter's preaching without any mention of a true church. He only preached Christ, who is "the true Light, which lighteth every man" (Jn 1:9); i.e., every person in his heart knows the truth when Christ is preached to him. In the great outpouring of the Spirit in Samaria where thousands more became Christians, Philip the evangelist simply

“preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). There is not a hint that he first of all proved that a true church existed and on the basis of its testimony they then believed the gospel. And to the Ethiopian official who was reading Isaiah 53, Philip “began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). The Ethiopian believed, not because he was convinced of the existence of an infallible Catholic Church, but because of the convicting power of God’s Word through the Holy Spirit. Shame on Augustine for denying this essential truth!

The apostles and first-century Christians “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4) to those who had never heard of the church. Nor did they suggest that the gospel should be believed because the “true church” had endorsed it. The church exists because of and is subject to the Bible, not the other way around. Paul and his colleagues preached not a church but Christ crucified (1 Cor 2:2). In fact the true gospel “whereby ye are saved” (1 Cor 15:1-4), which is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes [it]” (Rom 1:16), doesn’t even contain the word “church,” much less anything about joining it. The lie about the authority of the Catholic Church denies the very basis upon which the gospel is to be received and thus destroys souls for whom Christ died.

Unfortunately, the above is relevant to today’s Protestants. One of the chief accusations leveled against those who would be Bereans today is that their lack of theological degrees disqualifies them from testing the teachings of church leaders against Scripture. Of course the Bereans had not attended seminary either, and such Protestant elitism denies the indwelling Holy Spirit and priesthood of all believers. Similarly, Christian psychologists, like the Catholic hierarchy, claim immunity from challenge by “laymen” outside their ranks. We cannot judge their teachings by the Bible, because “all truth is God’s truth,” and some of that “truth” could be contained in the writings of godless humanists, which those without psychology degrees are presumably unable to understand. It is the old error of

Catholic authoritarianism in a new Protestant form.

The scourge of false “shepherding” has not been purged from the church. It has merely changed its image and is now more widely practiced than ever. We continue to receive a steady stream of calls from those who are being “discipled” by leaders who demand unquestioning submission to their “authority.” That is, in fact, unbiblical authoritarianism. It is true that the Bible does say, “obey them that have the rule over you” (Heb 13:17). Such submission, however, is to Christ and God’s Word through those in authority. Each member of the body of Christ has the responsibility to determine by the leading of the Holy Spirit and his own knowledge of the Bible whether what he is being asked to believe and do is of God or not, and must obey only what is right in his own conscience.

The abuses of shepherding are a two-way street. The fault is not only with the “shepherd” but with those who submit to unbiblical authority. There is the tendency in all of us to look to others as a way of escaping the responsibility of knowing the Word of God for ourselves and of maintaining a close walk with the Lord personally. Shepherding is one more subtle way of weakening that personal relationship with Christ which is the essence of Christianity. Too many Protestants, forgetting that *sola scriptura* and “the priesthood of all believers” was the cry of the Reformation, would rather let the pastor be a man of God and a deep student of the Word and merely accept what he teaches instead of checking it out and living it for themselves. That unwillingness to accept one’s personal responsibility before God opens the door to Protestant abuse of authority little different from that practiced by the Catholic Church.

That each Christian must exercise his individual responsibility is clear from many scriptures. Paul’s statement, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1) implied that those to whom he wrote were to follow Paul only to the extent that they, by their own judgment, believed he was following Christ. The same principle applies when

it comes to following Christian leaders today. Earlier, Paul had written, “I beseech you, be ye followers of me” (1 Cor 4:16). The expression “I beseech you” is used by Paul 18 times in his epistles, and hardly seems compatible with the authoritarianism being practiced today, particularly among charismatics.

Peter says that church leaders are not to “lord it over God’s heritage,” but are to be “examples to the flock” (1 Pt 5:4). An “example” is a person or behavior that one follows willingly without coercion or authoritarian demands. Peter humbly declares that the purpose for which he has written his epistles is “to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance” (2 Pt 3:11), which again implies voluntary compliance and only on the basis of a standard of purity known to all rather than some special revelation enforced by a “bishop,” as some are now insisting. The writer to the Hebrews declares that we are each to “provoke [one another] unto love and good works” (Heb 10:24), which suggests the antithesis of authoritarian rule.

In fact, everything the prophets speak to the church is to be judged by those to whom they speak (1 Cor 14:29-30), indicating again that there is no special class of leaders who must be obeyed by those under them without question simply on the basis of their position of authority. Peter reinforces this when he says, “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility” (1 Pt 5:5); and Paul writes, “For ye may all prophesy, one by one, that all may learn [from one another]” (1 Cor 14:31). John confirms this teaching (1 Jn 2:21, 27).

There are to be no gurus in the church. Others must follow what I speak or live only to the extent that they are convinced of its validity by the leading of the Holy Spirit and their knowledge of God’s Word. And I need your exhortation, correction, encouragement and godly example as much as you need mine. May the Lord help us to know and love Him and His truth and to enjoy the personal relationship He graciously enters into with us more deeply each day—and not to allow anyone or anything to come between us and Him.

Anti-Semitism

Dave Hunt

On the day of Pentecost, when the church was established, national Israel did not cease to exist. Israel remains God's special people and is the beneficiary of particular promises which apply to her alone and which are in the process of being fulfilled. Yet there is a growing movement today which identifies the church as Israel, denies any place for national Israel in God's future plans, and declares that all of the promises and unfulfilled prophecies that once referred to Israel now belong to the church. Earl Paulk, one of the leaders in this movement, writes,

Some of the strongest fundamental churches still preach that Christ will return to gather national Israel unto Himself, and I say that is deception and will keep the Kingdom of God from coming to pass!

In almost any Christian bookstore, about 99% of the books will say that "God's time-clock is Israel" and that "God's covenant is still with Israel."...[I say that] prophecies about Israel as a nation [are] now transferred to spiritual Israel, which is the people of God [i.e., the church]...¹

Christians in the West have traditionally been the major base of support for Israel. With the new "the-church-is-Israel" movement gaining a wide following, however, a drastic change is developing in the attitude of many Christians, especially charismatics, toward Israel. While those promoting this belief deny the charge of anti-Semitism, the increasingly bold use of sarcasm, ridicule and openly displayed antagonism by some is ominous. This trend is only in the beginning stage and is growing rapidly. Gary North writes,

When Israel gets pushed into the sea, or converted to Christ, Scofieldism dies a fast death. Rest assured, I have a manuscript ready to go when either of these events happens.²

We are witnessing a revival among Protestants of the traditional anti-Semitism of the Roman Catholic Church. Many people have forgotten that the Church

which claimed as its first pope a Jewish fisherman, whose alleged founder, Christ himself, was a Jew, as were the apostles and the entire church in its infancy, very early became a persecutor of Jews. Most Catholics are probably not aware that anti-Semitism was made the official position of the Catholic Church and it remains so to this day. As a reminder:

The Council of Vienne (1311) forbade all intercourse between Christians and Jews. The Council of Zamora (1313) ruled that they must be kept in strict subjection and servitude. The Council of Basel (1431-33) renewed canonical decrees forbidding Christians to associate with Jews, to serve them, or to use them as physicians, and instructed secular authorities to confine the Jews in separate quarters, compel them to wear a distinguishing badge, and ensure their attendance at sermons aimed to convert them.

Pope Eugenius IV...added that Jews should be ineligible for any public office, could not inherit property from Christians, must build no more synagogues, and...any Italian Jew found reading Talmudic literature should suffer confiscation of his property, etc.³

No wonder Hitler felt that he had good precedent for his sanctions against the Jews. The Vatican was understandably silent during the Holocaust and has not yet, after 40 years, recognized the nation of Israel.

Anti-Semitism, like infant baptism, was one of several carry-overs from Catholicism from which Luther never broke free. His pamphlet *Concerning the Jews and Their Lies* (1542) was in fact filled with lies about Jews: that God hated them, that the Talmud encouraged lying, robbery and even the killing of Christians; that they poisoned springs and wells in order to accomplish this; and that they used the blood of murdered Christian children in their rituals. Providing Protestant confirmation to match Catholicism's justification of much that Hitler would do to the Jews, in later life Luther

...advised the Germans to burn down the homes of Jews, to close their synagogues and schools, to confiscate their wealth, to conscript their men and women to forced labor, and to give all Jews a choice between Christianity and having their tongues torn out.⁴

Such extremes are not yet openly expressed among evangelicals and charismatics, and hopefully will not be in the future. Yet the above shows what anti-Semitism can develop into in the name of Christianity. Those presently speaking out against Israel carefully vent their animosity only against the Jews as a nation, while professing a love for them as individuals. Earl Paulk even writes, "I have no disagreement with any who teach that national Israel is important to the fulfillment of end-time prophecy." He says this in spite of having gone on record (as quoted above and elsewhere) that the church is now Israel and that Israel has no place in prophecy.

Instead of "God is dead," we are now told that "Israel is dead." There is little difference, however, in the two attitudes, since He is so often identified as "the God of Israel." David Chilton's *Days of Vengeance* attempts to justify the astonishing reconstructionist/kingdom/dominion thesis that Israel was "excommunicated" by God in A.D.70 when the armies of Titus destroyed Jerusalem.⁶ Under the title, "The Church Is Israel-A Vital Teaching," McKeever has written,

We love the Hebrews who live...in the nation of Israel. We support them and thank God for such an ally in the Mideast. However, the Lord has shown us clearly that in no way are they Israel. Israel is composed of all believers in Jesus Christ.

It is vitally important for the body of Christ to realize that they are Israel and that the unfulfilled prophecies concerning Israel are theirs to participate in.⁷

Speaking in Oklahoma City on April 11, 1988, Rick Godwin, a long-time associate of James Robison and popular speaker on Christian media, delivered the type of anti-Israel rhetoric that is becoming so typical in charismatic circles: "They are not chosen, they are cursed! They are not blessed, they are cursed!...Yes, and you hear Jerry Falwell and everybody else say the reason America's great is because America's blessed Israel. They sure have. Which Israel? *The Israel—the church. ...That's the Israel of God, not that garlick one over on the Mediterranean Sea!*"⁸ Earl Paulk's criticism of national Israel

and those who look favorably upon her includes the ultimate accusation:

The hour has come for us to know...that the spirit of the antichrist is now at work in the world...[through] so-called Holy Spirit-filled teachers who say, "If you bless national Israel, God will bless you."

Not only is this blatantly deceptive, it is not part of the new covenant at all!⁹

Paulk and Godwin were recently lauded and endorsed by Paul and Jan Crouch as guests on their internationally televised TBN "Praise The Lord" show. Paul asked Paulk some of the questions that critics have raised, and the latter did a masterful job of sidestepping the issues and presenting himself as *not* claiming that the church is Israel (in spite of the quotes above), as *not* rejecting the Rapture (in spite of having written entire books against it), and other such deceit. Paul and Jan have now added Earl Paulk to their whitewash of Kenneth and Gloria Copeland and Robert Schuller. They endorsed him enthusiastically, promoted his latest two books (and by implication all of his other writings), and, addressing Hal Lindsey and Dave Hunt directly (in case they were watching out there somewhere), asked them if they had heard Paulk's answers and promised to give them a copy of his newest book, which would correct their false ideas.

If we are to believe the leaders in this "church-is-Israel" movement, then one of the greatest events in the history of the world—the return of the Jewish people to their own land and the rebirth of Israel in 1948—is a freak accident with no significance. On the other hand, if this astonishing occurrence of undeniably great importance is, in fact, the fulfillment of biblical prophecies that the church has so long believed it to be, then here is an indisputable modern miracle of international prominence to which Christians can point—an event which gives irrefutable validity to the Word of God. "The-church-is-Israel" advocates would rob the church of the most convincing available witness to God's existence, righteous judgment and faithfulness: the remarkable history of the Jewish people,

their prophecy-fulfilling odyssey and return to their historic homeland, and the prophesied climactic future events yet to occur there.

The rejection of Israel is essential to the unbiblical Reconstruction/Kingdom/Dominion teaching that a Christian elite has a mandate to take over the world and set up the Kingdom, (a theocracy), as a condition of Christ's return. Only Jesus Christ himself can be trusted with such power. That is why it is so distressing to hear the Paulks, Norths, et al. laying claim to this absolute theocratic power in Christ's name. This is but one of many reasons why King Jesus himself must set up His kingdom and personally rule over it—a teaching increasingly rejected in the church today. C. S. Lewis said it well:

I believe that no man or group of men is good enough to be trusted with uncontrolled power over others. And the higher the pretensions of such power, the more dangerous I think it both to the rulers and to the subjects.

Hence Theocracy is the worst of all governments. If we must have a tyrant, a robber baron is far better than an inquisitor. The baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity at some point be sated; and since he dimly knows he is going wrong he may possibly repent.

But the inquisitor who mistakes his own cruelty and lust of power and fear for the voice of Heaven will torment us infinitely, because he torments us with the approval of his own conscience and his better impulses appear to him as temptations.¹⁰

Whether men are ready to admit it or not, the *only* choice is really between Christ and Antichrist. Nothing less than an absolutist theocracy will hold in check the evil and bring about the radical solution which the world's ills require. World events point inexorably to the establishment of such a regime. It will either be under the false world religion of Satan and his personal incarnation, or under the truth of God and His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. No mere man could qualify, all of the good intentions of COR and the Reconstructionists and assorted other dominionists notwithstanding.

It is quite clear from Luke 24:47-48 and

other passages that the disciples were not expected to inaugurate the Kingdom but to be witnesses concerning the King and His future coming. There will be no kingdom of God without the King present and ruling in power. All Christians admit this to be the case when it comes to the spiritual kingdom in our hearts—Christ must reign there. The same is true of the outward manifestation of His kingdom upon earth during the Millennium—He must personally reign there as well.

Currents of change are sweeping through the world and the church. In the crucial days ahead, the evangelical church could well suffer a division over the Rapture and the related issue of Israel comparable to that experienced by the Catholic Church as a result of the Reformation in the 1500s. Nor would it be surprising if, as a result, in the cause of "unity," the larger faction in Protestantism moved much closer to ecumenical union with Catholicism, which not only has been traditionally anti-Semitic but discarded the Rapture about 1,600 years ago.

Please do not rest with taking my word for what I say. Check it out for yourselves. Be students of God's Word, lovers of truth, and prayer warriors!

Endnotes

- 1 Earl Paulk, *The Handwriting on the Wall* (booklet self-published by Paulk's Chapel Hill Harvester Church, Decatur, GA 30034), 17,19-20.
- 2 Letter to Peter Lalonde, dated April 30, 1987.
- 3 Will Durant, *The Reformation* (Simon and Schuster, 1957), 729.
- 4 Durant, *op. cit.*, 727.
- 5 Paulk, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Nov. 1987), 4.
- 6 Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 443, etc.
- 7 *End-Times News Digest* (James McKeever Ministries Newsletter, Dec. 1987), 3.
- 8 Rick Godwin, "Rick Godwin No. 2" audio tape (Sunday evening sermon at Metro Church, Edmond, OK, April 11, 1988).
- 9 *Handwriting*, 17,19-20.
- 10 C. S. Lewis, "A Reply to Professor Haldane," in *Of Other Worlds* (Harcourt, Brace, World, 1967), 81.

The Kingdom of God

Dave Hunt

Last month we commented upon the anti-Semitism that seems to be increasing among charismatics, although so far it is directed only against the *nation* Israel (denying modern Israel any part in Bible prophecy) and not against Jewish *individuals*. Of course scripture indicates quite clearly that the coming millennial manifestation of the kingdom of God is tied very closely to Israel. Thus to deny Israel that special part in prophecy, and to claim that the church is now Israel, removes foundational points of reference and opens the door to distortion and confusion both as to Israel and the church. The angel Gabriel confirmed the great importance of Israel's connection to the Millennium when he told Mary that the child to whom she would give birth, who was clearly the promised virgin-born Messiah, "the Son of the Highest," would reign upon "the throne of His father David...[and] over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there [should] be no end" (Lk 1:30-33).

The Antichrist, of course, is the counterfeit of the true Christ, and he will establish a kingdom which will be the counterfeit of the true millennial reign of Christ. I have been saying for years that the depiction of the Antichrist in most Christian books and movies as an obviously evil ogre will only help the Antichrist when he comes. He will actually seem to be a man of peace, love and brotherhood who has only the good of the human race in mind. He will be Satan's man posing as God's man, the Antichrist masquerading as the true Christ; and his kingdom will claim for itself the prophecies that God has promised to Israel.

While there are those, such as deliberate Satanists, who will know and

rejoice that they are following the Antichrist, I am convinced that the vast majority of people upon earth will be deceived into thinking that they are following the Savior of the world. That is exactly who the Antichrist, in their deluded minds, will seem to be. This, in fact, is what they desire to believe, and God will help them believe it by giving them a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thes 2:10-11). Such will be the awful fate of those who "received not the love of the truth."

I was reminded of the Antichrist being mistaken for Christ by a letter just received from Lt. Col. Michael Aquino. Those of you who have read *America: The Sorcerer's New Apprentice* will recognize him as the Satanist who heads the Temple of Set (a break-off from Anton Lavey's First Church of Satan), to whom we refer extensively in Chapter 14 in connection with the Oprah Winfrey show on which he appeared. Having apparently read it, Aquino was complimentary of the quality of *America's* arguments, though of course he took strong exception to much that we wrote.

Aquino had a great deal to say that I am unable to share now. Much of his letter was a strong challenge to Christianity that cannot be simply waved aside but must be taken seriously. Apropos to the present topic, he made the statement (which to many Christians would be new and shocking) that most people would find it exceedingly difficult to discern any difference at all between the Antichrist and the Christ. Considering that this comes from a man who (if he were only from Western Europe) could be a good candidate for Antichrist himself, makes his statement fascinating, indeed.

The deception surrounding the New Age, its infiltration into the church, and the climax it will yet reach will be beyond present comprehension. Although most of those involved in the kingdom/dominion/reconstruction COR

(Coalition on Revival) movements are not New Agers and even oppose the New Age movement, they are, in my opinion, playing into Satan's hands by the confusion they are creating in relation to the Second Coming and the millennial kingdom. We dare not consider the study of prophecy to be of merely academic interest, but vital to spiritual survival in the days ahead. In this regard, as in all others, it is essential that we follow the Word of God as closely as possible.

Central to our concern over the loss of a heavenly perspective and the growing preoccupation with building a kingdom on this earth is a basic understanding of the Kingdom itself. Some Bible teachers have attempted to distinguish between the "kingdom of heaven," the phrase which is used only in Matthew, and the "kingdom of God," which is used in the other Gospels. It is quite clear, however, that these two terms are used interchangeably. It would be absurd to suggest that in their frequent references to the Kingdom the other three Gospels never once refer to the kingdom Matthew wrote about. That this is not the case is quite clear from the fact that the other Gospels sometimes repeat the same story as Matthew, using almost identical words, except that they refer to Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" as the "kingdom of God."

Both words, "God" and "heaven," make it clear that, as Jesus said, His kingdom "is not of this world." While it does have an earthly manifestation during the Millennium, the Kingdom will not be realized in its eternal fullness—which "flesh and blood cannot inherit" (1 Cor 15:50)—except in the new universe that will be created after the present one is destroyed. To deal with the Kingdom fully is far beyond the scope of a brief newsletter. However, there are certain simple but important concepts which we can and

must understand.

In Acts 1 the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). That would have been the perfect time for Him to state (if it were the case, as we are now being told) that Israel was finished or was shortly to be finished and that the Kingdom never would be restored to her, but that the church had become Israel. In contrast to such teaching, Christ’s reply—“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power”—implied three major points which must form the basis for any understanding of Israel and the coming Kingdom:

(1) That the kingdom of God, contrary to the Reconstructionists, had not yet come but would be inaugurated at some future undisclosed time “which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7).

(2) That the Kingdom would primarily involve national Israel, and would be restored to her specifically (v 6).

(3) That it would not be manifested on this earth until King Jesus himself returned personally to reign (“wilt thou...restore”).

The very wording of the disciples’ question demonstrates that they had never been told by Christ that His earthly ministry or His resurrection, as some are teaching today, had marked the inauguration of His kingdom. This great “restoration of the kingdom to Israel” that had been prophesied by the Hebrew prophets, that Israel had looked forward to for hundreds of years, that all Christ’s followers associated with the coming of the Messiah, and that was obviously very much on the hearts of the disciples, was clearly yet future in their minds. The fact that Christ did not correct them on this, but said that time for the restoration was “in the Father’s hands,” is evidence enough that those

who claim we are now in the Millennium are deceiving themselves and are deceiving others.

The disciples’ threefold expectation that (1) the Kingdom was yet future; (2) that Christ himself would restore it; and (3) “not to the church but to Israel” was consistent with what Jesus had so often taught them. Peter, James and John were present on the mount when Christ was “transfigured” (glorified) and Moses and Elijah came to speak with Him. Telling them beforehand of this special event, Christ had stated that they would “see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Mt 16:28). Clearly it wasn’t the actual Kingdom itself, but a preview which they witnessed. The message, once again, however, was that the Kingdom was yet future and that it involved the personal presence of Christ. What was previewed on the Mount of Transfiguration has certainly not come to pass as yet.

At the Last Supper, Christ said that He would not eat of the passover again “until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God”; and that he would not drink “of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come” (Lk 22:14-20). This double message tells us again that the Kingdom has not yet come and that when it does, Christ himself will be present, eating and drinking and even partaking of the Jewish passover. Clearly, that hasn’t happened. But one day soon it will come to pass!

Hold the things of this world loosely, using but not abusing them. Our Bridegroom is looking down upon His bride and grieving that the church is more concerned about making this world a fit place for the next generation of earthbound Christians to live in than she is about being with Him. Let the Lord reveal His love to you and the longing of His heart to have you in his presence. And in response, may our hearts and lives and desire become a

symphony of worship and love that cries, “Come, Lord Jesus, come!”

Imminence

Dave Hunt

We have discussed the kingdom/dominion/reconstruction/COR movement a number of times. I consider it to be the fastest growing adverse influence in the church today, and thus a primary cause for concern. It is helping to set the stage for the coming world government of the Antichrist by confusing key issues of prophecy. Of course, those involved in this movement would sincerely deny that they are helping, or that they wish to have any part in helping, the Antichrist in any way. There is another and more subtle danger—the undermining of one’s personal spiritual life as a result of this movement’s unbiblical teachings.

Those who believe that they must take over the world and establish the millennial kingdom for Christ in His absence either reject the Rapture or relegate it to such a distant and unimportant position that it has no practical value in their lives. This has serious consequences because the hope that Christ could return at any moment is intended by God to be one of the major purifying factors in the Christian’s life (1 Jn 3:3). I believe that John is referring both to doctrinal as well as moral purity by the phrase “purifieth himself.” The two go together, yet doctrine is now frequently avoided as a cause of division rather than what it actually is, the necessary container of truth.

One of the most unpopular doctrines today (in stark contrast to its prominence only a few years ago) is that of the Rapture—Christ catching His bride away to heaven (1 Thes 4:13-18). Because Christ has not come “quickly,” as He promised (at least by our definition), there are those who consider the Rapture a topic to be avoided. However, the great number of statements in the Bible regarding the end times in general,

and the Rapture in particular, suggest that this whole area should be a prominent part of our Christian faith and life.

With respect to the Rapture, we are repeatedly urged to have an attitude of *watching and waiting*. Why is this attitude commanded by Christ? Does its value for us, and the importance the Bible obviously attaches to it, reside primarily in the Lord’s return actually being imminent? Indeed not.

Whether or not the Lord’s return is imminent for *us*, we now know in retrospect that it was not imminent for all those generations of Christians who came before us. If the sole value of their “expectancy” lay in its being satisfied, i.e., in it being *true* that the Lord would come imminently—then the fact that Christ has not yet returned would leave us without any explanation for why the Lord urged this “expectant” attitude in the first place. Therefore there must be something important, something integral to a good Christian life, about the attitude of expecting Christ’s return at any moment. What could this be?

There can be no doubt that believing that we could be caught up at any moment imparts an added seriousness to our lives. We won’t be here forever, so we should make every minute count. Moreover, it makes us insecure in our tendency to identify ourselves too closely with a world which does not hold our ultimate destiny, and reminds us of our true citizenship in a world to come which is based upon eternal rather than earthly values. This attitude certainly ought to characterize a Christian life, and a lively sense of the possibility of Christ’s imminent return is more than justified if it has this good effect on us.

But doesn’t the possibility of imminent death supply exactly the same motive? No. While it supplies a very powerful motive indeed, there is

a great difference. The expectancy of being caught up at any moment into the presence of our Lord in the Rapture does have some advantages over a similar expectancy through the possibility of sudden death:

(1) If we are in a right relationship with Christ, we can genuinely *look forward* to the Rapture. Yet no one (not even Christ in the Garden) looks forward to death. The joyful prospect of the Rapture will attract our thoughts, while the distasteful prospect of death is something we may try to forget about, thus making it less effective in our daily lives.

(2) While the Rapture is similar to death in that both serve to end one’s earthly life, the Rapture does something else as well: it signals the climax of history and opens the curtain upon its final drama. It thus ends, in a way that death does not, all human stake in continuing earthly developments, such as the lives of the children left behind, the growth or dispersion of the fortune accumulated, the protection of one’s personal reputation, the success of whatever earthly causes one has espoused, and so forth.

One way that people cope with the finality of death is through such forms of pseudo-immortality—ways in which we, or things we cared about, “live on” after we are gone. Even Christians, who have genuine immortality to look forward to, may nevertheless be tempted to find consolation in some of these forms of pseudo-immortality. The Rapture, however, undercuts all of these; and to whatever extent these pseudoconsolations are weakened, our post-mortem hope becomes purified of its earthly elements. Being thus forced to face the fact that our destiny lies in heaven, we will be motivated to live with that goal in mind.

(3) The incentive provided by death is weakened somewhat by the fact that we generally have at least some control over its relative imminence. Certainly we are radically contingent beings, and

our lives could be snuffed out at any time. But this is not the way people usually die. The cancer victim could have refrained from smoking, or added more fiber to his diet, or sought treatment earlier. The guilty auto accident victim could have driven within the speed limit or taken a taxi when he had too much to drink.

Though death can come suddenly and without warning (we are not complete masters of our own fate), it is nevertheless true that we make decisions daily that increase or decrease the chances of our dying tomorrow, next month, or in ten years. This not-altogether-illusory sense of control over the time of our death reduces its incentive for godliness by making us feel that we can afford to postpone a closer relationship with God until next week, next month or next year. In contrast, we have absolutely no control over the timing of Christ's return to earth. It will just happen "out of the blue." Belief in the imminent return of Christ, then, does not allow us to postpone anything.

The whole dominion/reconstruction movement is too wedded to an ongoing earthly process stretching into the indeterminate future to be truly faithful to the totality of what Scripture says about being sufficiently disengaged from this world to be ready to leave it behind at a moment's notice. I am concerned that the Reconstructionists and the Coalition on Revival as well as other kingdom/dominion advocates are fostering a false conception of our earthly ministry—a conception which we must guard against lest we subtly fall into an attitude like that of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, for whom Christ's return to earth represents an interference with the mission of the church. He has Christ thrown into prison, where he visits him to complain:

There is no need for Thee to come now at all. Thou must not meddle

for the time, at least...fortunately, departing Thou didst hand on the work to us. Thou has promised, Thou hast established by Thy word, Thou has given to us the right to bind and to unbind, and now, of course, Thou canst not think of taking it away. Why, then, hast Thou come to hinder us?

All human beings are tempted to be more at home in the world than they should be. Christians are not exempt from this temptation, and when they succumb it often leads to an effort to reinterpret Scripture accordingly. Reconstructionists exemplify this temptation, some even taking it to the point of claiming that Christ returned in A.D. 70 in the person of the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem and excommunicate Israel—and that this was the day of the church's wedding to Christ prophesied in Revelation 19!

Christ's return before they have taken over the world would be as inconvenient to the Reconstructionists and others in the kingdom/dominion movement as it was to the Grand Inquisitor, and for the same reasons.

Our hope is not in taking over this world, but in being taken to heaven by our Lord, to be married to Him in glory and then to return with Him as part of the armies of heaven to rescue Israel, destroy His enemies and participate in His millennial reign. Yet too often those of us who claim to believe this hold the belief in theory only, while denying it with our lives. Our hearts should be in perpetual wonder and joy at the prospect of being suddenly caught up to be with Christ, our bodies transformed to be like His body of glory and to be wedded to our Lord for eternity.

Heaven is not so much a location *somewhere* as it is being with Christ *wherever* He may be in the universe at the time, for we will be perpetually in His presence. It is not so much a *place* as it is a *state of being*, enjoying a heavenly existence that is beyond our present understanding but which ought to be our continual and exciting anticipation. And in our transformed

bodies, made like His body of glory, in which we will share His resurrection life, we will reign with Him over this earth for 1,000 years. Then we will spend an eternity during which He will be perpetually revealing to and in us more and more of Himself, His love and grace and kindness.

Part of the problem with the kingdom/dominion/reconstruction movement is its mistaken notion that mortal man can accomplish what only immortal Man, our risen Lord, and we as immortal resurrected beings with Him, can perform. Do not settle for anything less than the fullness of what Christ has promised! The glory of the eternal kingdom that He offers is light years beyond the COR agenda of Christianizing and taking over this present world in these bodies of weakness and corruption.

We can miss His best by refusing to take seriously what the Bible clearly teaches and by not standing firm for sound doctrine. And we can also miss out on our true reward by attempting to live in our own strength the Christian life which only Christ can live through us. May we be true to His Word and to Him in our daily lives. The joy and glory He has planned and in which He desires that we participate is more than enough to excite and inspire and motivate us. "Set your affection on things above" (Col. 3:2)!

Roman Catholicism

Dave Hunt

Last month, in relation to the shocking rise of anti-Semitism among Christians, we referred to the incredible claim by the Reconstructionists that Christ's promise to "come again" was fulfilled when "He came" in A.D.70 in the person of the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem and slaughter the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine. In fact they claim that the entire Olivet Discourse (Mt 24-25) and all of the prophecies in Revelation (except for Rv 20:4-22:21) were fulfilled at A.D.70.

This particular theory was invented in the early 1600s by a Jesuit named Alcasar to counter the Reformers' claim that the Roman Catholic Church was the "great whore...MYSTERY BABYLON" sitting on the beast in Revelation 17. In a stroke of genius, Alcasar realized that if he could establish the theory that Revelation had all been fulfilled by A.D.70, then its prophecies could not possibly apply to the Roman Catholic Church. That scenario was eagerly adopted by the Reconstructionists, in spite of the fact that the Book of Revelation was written at least 20 years after A.D.70, which destroys this fantasy. For those interested in a scholarly discussion of the date of John's writing, *Dominion Theology, Blessing or Curse?* by H. Wayne House and Thomas D. Ice is recommended.

In addition to data from the first century, the history of the Roman Catholic Church itself provides overwhelming evidence that the Reformers were correct: John's vision went far beyond A.D.70 and was astonishingly accurate. In fact, the undeniable development of the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages into all that John attributes to the "woman sit[ting] upon a scarlet coloured beast" (Rv 17:3) is almost as powerful a proof for the validity of the Bible as the preservation and return of Israel to her land.

The Christianization of the world being pursued today with high hopes by the Coalition on Revival (COR) and other reconstructionists was accomplished 1,600 years ago under the Roman Emperor

Constantine and his successors. Far from producing the benefits COR promises, however, it was the undoing of the early church. "Christianity" became so dominant that its profession was essential for those who wanted to gain social, political or even military recognition. As a result, Romans "converted" by the thousands, thus polluting the church. Augustine himself lamented,

The man who enters [a fourth-century church] is bound to see drunkards, misers, tricksters, gamblers, adulterers, fornicators, people wearing amulets, assiduous clients of sorcerers, astrologers...

He must be warned that the same crowds that press into the churches on Christian festivals, also fill the theatres on pagan holidays.

Roman paganism had simply taken on a thin "Christian" veneer to survive to this day under the cloak of Catholicism in an even more dangerous form. As head of the pagan priesthood (a position Constantine never renounced), it seemed only natural that the emperor should also function as *de facto* head of the church. As such, Constantine convened, gave the opening address and played a dominant part in the first ecumenical council, the Council of Nicaea in 325. Thereafter, the emperors, in partnership with the popes, maintained "the unity of the faith" by persecuting and killing in the name of Christ those who dared to disagree with their dogmas and decrees. Pope Leo I—ascribing to the secular authority an "infallibility" that would later be claimed by the popes—flatteringly declared that the emperor was "incapable of doctrinal error."

It was the emperor who was first called the "Vicar of Christ"—a title inherited by the popes when the Roman Empire disintegrated. Constantine's title of *Pontifex Maximus* as leader of the pagan priesthood was also taken by the popes. Thus the head of the Roman Catholic Church is called the "Roman Pontiff" to this day. In fact, during the Middle Ages, the popes circulated what is generally believed to be a forged document called *The Donation of Constantine* in order to give legitimacy to papal powers they were exerting over kings and kingdoms.

The *Donation* declared that Constantine had moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople in the East and deeded the Western Empire, with all the attendant imperial authority, to Pope Sylvester in order to "exalt the most holy See of blessed Peter in glory above our own Empire and earthly throne, ascribing to it power and glorious majesty and strength and Imperial honor." It further declared:

And we command and decree that...the Pontiff who occupies at any given moment the See of that same most holy Roman Church shall rank as the highest and chief among all the priests of the whole world and by his decision all things are to be arranged concerning the worship of God or the security of the faith of Christians.

In recompense for this we concede to...the Pontiffs who will preside over the See of blessed Peter until the end of the world...our Imperial palace of the Lateran...the crown of our head...[and] the tiara; also the shoulder covering ...the purple cloak and the crimson tunic and all our Imperial garments...

We confer on them also the Imperial sceptres...the spears and standards...the banners and various Imperial decorations and all the prerogatives of our supreme Imperial position and the glory of our authority...[and]...the city of Rome and all the provinces, districts and cities of Italy and the Western regions, relinquishing them to the authority of himself and his successors as Pontiffs by a definite Imperial grant...

Whether the *Donation* is a forgery or not, the fact remains that the popes used it to justify not only their power but their regal vestments, religious paraphernalia and the pomp that surrounds their office to this day. Moreover, historians proclaim with one voice that the papacy stepped into the gap left in the West by the collapsing Empire, and the sceptre of the Roman emperors unquestionably passed to the popes. Historian R. W. Southern points out,

During the whole medieval period there was in Rome a single spiritual and temporal authority exercising powers which in the end exceeded those that had ever lain within the grasp of a Roman Emperor.

Even military leaders and kings were forced, no matter how unwillingly, to bow the knee to the pope in recognition of the all-pervasive power which the Church wielded over the masses of people. Add to that fact its great wealth, and the Church was a formidable force that even the most powerful rulers found easier to join in partnership than to fight. Historian Walter James reminds us that there was another even more compelling reason why every knee bowed to the popes—which today's Catholic catechisms still insist is valid:

The Papacy controlled the gateway to heaven which all the faithful, including their rulers, hoped earnestly to enter. Few in those days doubted the truth of this and it gave the Popes a moral authority which has never been wielded since.

During the Middle Ages the power the popes wielded reached awesome heights in remarkable fulfillment of the vision given to John in Revelation 17 of that magnificent "whore" headquartered in a city located upon seven hills (v 9) and which "reigneth over the kings of the earth" (v 18). The identification is unmistakable. As Southern points out, the medieval church held the "power of life and death over the citizens of Christendom and their enemies within and without....Popes claimed the sole right of initiating and directing wars against the unbelievers ...[and to protect] their territorial interests." For example, Pope Innocent III never lost a battle! No one could withstand him.

This astonishing power over kings and kingdoms had already been demonstrated even before the Empire's collapse. Take for example the humiliation of Emperor Theodosius in 390, who was required to make public penance upon threat of excommunication. As a later example, consider Charlemagne being crowned Emperor by Pope Leo III during Mass in Rome's St. Peter's on Christmas Day 800 A.D.—or the humbled Emperor Henry IV, waiting barefoot in the snows at Canossa to make his peace at last with Pope Gregory VII in 1077. Apparently unaware that he was admitting the fulfillment of John's apocalyptic vision, Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) asserted in no uncertain terms the authority of the Church over all secular powers. Pope Boniface VIII reiterated

Innocent III's assertion of absolute dominion over kings in his *Bull Unam Sanctam* (1302).

The Roman Catholic pope, successor to the ancient Roman emperors, continues to wield similar power today. Most nations—including the United States—maintain diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Even the Soviet Union has maintained high-level contacts with the Vatican over the last two decades, and aides to the Pope and Gorbachev have been negotiating to set up a meeting between these two powerful heads of state. Like other secular rulers, Gorbachev is driven by necessity—he knows and respects the power of the Vatican, which rules over more than 800 million Catholics worldwide. In contrast, there are less than 60 million Lutherans. Today the Lutheran World Federation has its offices at the headquarters of the infamous World Council of Churches, which works for ecumenical union with Rome.

The charismatic movement has been particularly vulnerable to union with Roman Catholicism ever since Catholics began to "speak in tongues." One wonders, however, why most Catholics who have allegedly been baptized in the Spirit become even more enamored of prayers to Mary and various "saints," the reoffering of Christ in the Mass, and other serious heresies so contrary to what the Holy Spirit has declared in Scripture.

The predominant cry today is for "unity." It was the principle weapon with which the Roman Catholic Church attempted to stop the Reformation. Luther was urged to "keep in mind the unity of the holy, catholic, and apostolic church...." As though faith is believing *anything*, rather than commitment to truth for which we must contend, Earl Paulk suggests that Paul's "unity of the faith" (Eph 4:13) has nothing to do with doctrine. Paulk advocates unity not only with Catholics but even with Mormons. A unity in which sound doctrine plays no part is very appealing to those who wish to be "positive" at all cost. It is today's major weapon in reversing the Reformation.

Among so-called Protestants today, the great issues of the Reformation for which thousands were martyred have been forgotten or are no longer considered

important. Describing his feelings as he watched Pope John Paul II perform the unbiblical "sacrifice of the Mass" during his visit to Los Angeles in September, 1987, Robert Schuller reportedly said, "I cried through most of the Mass, because there was nothing that he said in words or in theological content that didn't harmonize with my own belief system." At that time Schuller confided to Catholic priest Michael Manning,

It's time for Protestants to go to the shepherd [the pope] and say, "What do we have to do to come home?"

In contrast to Schuller's attitude, we do well to remember the words of Bishop Ryle. Referring to Bloody Queen Mary's brief re-introduction of Catholicism into England and the resulting death by fire of 288 Christian leaders in four years because they refused to accept Transubstantiation, Ryle wrote with great passion,

I wish my readers to remember that the burning of the Marian martyrs is an act that the Church of Rome has never repudiated, apologized for, or repented of, down to the present day....

Never has she repented of her treatment of the Vaudois and the Albigenses; never has she repented of the wholesale murders of the Spanish Inquisition...never has she repented of the burning of the English Reformers.

We should make a note of that fact and let it sink down into our minds.

Doctrine is important. Truth is vital. We are urged to contend earnestly for the faith. One day we must all stand before our Lord to give an account. In subsequent newsletters, if the Lord tarries and spares us, we want to suggest some ways in which we can contend constructively and effectively for biblical truth. We must not only believe the truth, but we must act upon it and contend for it.

First Coming & Second Coming

Dave Hunt

Even the Christmas story being sung and recited at this time of year becomes the victim of the increasingly popular kingdom/dominion/reconstruction teachings we have discussed in recent months. Take for example the story of the wise men (the Bible doesn't say there were "three"). Having seen a new star, which they understood signaled the birth of a promised king of Israel, they journeyed to Jerusalem—not because the star led them there (as Christmas songs and stories erroneously say), but because that was where they logically expected a Jewish king to be born. We don't know how they were alerted to watch for the star, but it could have been because of an oral account of Balaam's prophecy (Nm 24:17) handed down among Eastern magi.

The visitors' earnest inquiry concerning the whereabouts of the newborn king "troubled" Jerusalem. Questioned by scheming Herod, the rabbis pointed out the scripture (of which the magi were also apparently ignorant) that declared where the Messiah would be born: "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel" (Mi 5:2 as quoted in Mt 2:6).

Instead of ruling Israel at that time, however, as the above prophecy (and others) so conclusively declare He one day surely will, the Bethlehem-born Messiah was rejected and crucified in fulfillment of other scriptures such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53—and thus He became our Savior. Nevertheless, unless God is to be proven a liar, Micah 5:2 and similar scriptures must yet be fulfilled. Christ himself declared, "all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and

in the psalms, concerning me" (Lk 24:44).

Christ chided the two disciples on the road to Emmaus for being blinded by their own folly to what the prophets had so clearly declared. Had they heeded the scriptures they would have known that the Messiah had to be crucified, and they would not have been so puzzled and disheartened the day of His resurrection. And so it is with us today. If we heed only those few scriptures that will be repeatedly read and expounded during the Christmas season, then we will know that just as surely as He came once to die for our sins, so Christ must return to this earth to rule Israel from Jerusalem. Those who deny this reject some of the clearest verses in the Bible and refuse to accept one of the most fundamental reasons why Jesus was born into the world. To that extent, they preach "another Jesus."

The second coming of Christ is clearly taught in the announcements of His birth so familiar in the Christmas story. Other scriptures inform us when this great event will occur: in the midst of Armageddon when Israel's Messiah intervenes to rescue her, destroy her enemies and set up His earthly kingdom (Zec 12:14, Rv 19:7-20:6), ruling not only Israel but the entire world from "the throne of David" in Jerusalem. Having persisted in unbelief to that moment, the surviving remnant of Israel will recognize their Messiah and "all Israel will be saved."

Christ will be accompanied at that time by the armies of heaven, among which must surely be His bride, for she never again leaves His side. She has been married to Him in heaven (Rv 19:7-9), and must therefore have already been taken by the Bridegroom to His Father's house in a pretrib Rapture. She will reign with Him over the earth for 1,000 years—then share the glory and joy of His eternal reign over the entire universe. As part of the familiar nativity story, choirs around the world will once again sing

in that awesome finale to Handel's *Messiah*, proclaiming the glorious truth that "He shall reign for ever and ever and ever...and ever!"

Reconstructionists such as North and DeMar deny that Jesus, though "born King of the Jews," will ever rule over Israel (which they say is *finished* as a nation) or that He will personally reign over the millennial kingdom. They claim we are in the Millennium now, the church is in the process of taking over the world, and only at the end of the Millennium will Christ return—not to reign over Israel and the world from Jerusalem, but to "rapture" the saved and destroy the wicked.

While kingdom/dominion advocates believe that Jesus will return to reign over the earth, they insist that he cannot return until they have first "restored all things," thereby establishing the millennial kingdom for Him in His absence. Earl Paulk argues this from Acts 3:20-21, which declares that "the heaven must receive [Christ] until the times of restitution [restoration] of all things...." His error is an obvious one. Clearly the scripture does not even imply, much less state, that Christ must remain in the heavens until all has been restored by the church, but that He remains there until the *time* for the restoration has come, at which point He returns to effect the restoration Himself—something the church was never intended to do, nor could it accomplish this in His absence.

Like the Reconstructionists, the kingdom/dominion advocates also deny that Christ will rule over His "people Israel." They insist that national Israel no longer has any place in God's plan and that the church is now Israel and has inherited all of her promises. Yet the angel Gabriel specifically declared that the One to whom Mary would give birth, this "Son of the Highest," would be given "the throne of his father David" and that He would "reign over the

house of Jacob for ever..." (Lk 1:32-33). Like Micah 5:2, this scripture in Luke must also be fulfilled.

As the birth of Christ is being given special attention once again at the Christmas season, Christians ought to remember and call attention to the fact that He was born *King of the Jews* (Mt 2:2). His own to whom He came "received Him not" (Jn 1:11) and even accused Him of usurping Caesar's place by claiming to be "the King of the Jews" (Lk 23:3). That rightful title given to Him in His birth, however, was still His in death. It was nailed to the cross just above His head and written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: "*This is Jesus the King of the Jews.*" Thus, as the Christmas story is not complete if it only declares His birth but not His death, so we have failed to understand its full significance unless we remember once again that the One who was born and crucified as the rejected *King of the Jews* must yet reign as such in fulfillment of Scripture. Unfortunately, there are still the pharisees among us who deny the validity of this title today.

At Christmas time the songs and sermons focus almost entirely upon the blessings that have come to those who are in the church (both Jew and Gentile) through the good news of the gospel. Too often we overlook the prophesied blessings to Israel that were foretold in the Old Testament and pledged anew in conjunction with the birth of Christ. Consider, for example, the prophecy of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Affirming that John would be the forerunner of the Messiah, Zacharias also declared under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the Messiah would accomplish God's promise "that we [Israel] being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him [God] without fear" (Lk 1:74). That promise of a time of future blessing for national Israel is an integral part of the Christmas story—and it will yet be fulfilled, in spite of its denial now sweeping the church.

Christ is no more pleased with those who today declare that the church is the true Israel than He was when He sent through John His letters to the seven churches in Asia. To those who are tempted to embrace this blasphemous teaching that Christians are the real Jews, Christ's words to the Church of Smyrna sound a solemn warning: "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Rv 2:9).

We realize that many also consider it blasphemy to participate at all in the world's "celebration" of Christmas, and we respect their opinion. Each of us must be true to conscience and God's Word as he understands it. The commercialization of the Savior's birth by merchants and the hypocrisy of those who in the name of Christ give gifts to one another but forget those in need is deplorable. Nevertheless, at Christmas time the fact of Christ's birth, life and death for our sins is proclaimed, though imperfectly, to the entire world as at no other time of the year. Christians ought to rejoice in that fact and discreetly use this season for proclaiming the truth rather than simply denouncing error.

While the unfortunate choice of December 25 set by the Church of Rome in the fourth century was probably intended (as Chrysostom and Cyprian indicate) as a *substitute* for the pagan worship of the Sun-god and the Saturnalia celebrated on that day, the actual result was a further *mixture* of paganism and Christianity so characteristic of Roman Catholicism ever since. Some of the Reformers, particularly the Puritans, forbade the celebration of Christmas, and the Pilgrims brought that attitude to America. It is worth noting, however, that Christmas is also vigorously opposed by atheists and humanists. It would be a great triumph for Satan if Christmas could be abolished. Failing that, his alternative plan is its perversion, and he has had much success in that regard.

While seeking to correct error and oppose the many abuses involved in the popular celebration of Christmas, our attitude should remain that of the Apostle Paul: "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil 1:18). Paul wrote that from prison, and in the same letter declared in triumph, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (4:4).

May His joy be your strength in the coming year until He returns to take us to be with Him evermore. May that glorious day come soon! In setting our affection on things above instead of on this world it is helpful to remember the words of David: "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). Such a hope gives strength to serve our Lord with great courage and joyfulness.

"Christian" Psychology

Dave Hunt

The purpose of this monthly newsletter is not only to inform but to stir readers into action. It is not enough to lament false doctrine in the church—we must do something to stop it.

The nailing of Martin Luther's 95 theses to the Wittenberg door was the catalyst that began the Reformation. Today the church is in even worse condition. Catholicism continues to promote the very evils against which the Reformers fought. Protestantism no longer protests Roman Catholic errors that still lead millions into hell, but its ecumenically minded leaders hope for a merger with Rome. In the popular clamor for "love and unity," vital issues for which the martyrs gave their lives are ignored.

We desperately need another Reformation, but there is little interest in correcting false doctrine. Today Martin Luther would be denounced not only by Catholics but by Protestants as well for causing "division." I have documented horrendous heresies (and others have also) on the part of many of today's most popular church leaders. A great cry of protest should have forced these false teachers either to repent of their errors or to lose their support from Christians. Instead, I am banned for being divisive.

Let's take one category of error as an example: humanism. Its penetration into the church has been staggering! Once confined to liberals/modernists and pseudo-evangelicals, humanism is now embraced by virtually the entire evangelical church. How did this come about? Largely through the acceptance of psychology. It was Norman Vincent Peale who first conceived "Christian psychology"—the very thought of which, J. Harold Ellens reminds us, was opposed by "the entire

Christian church for nearly half a century." Peale persisted. His protégé Schuller picked up the banner, then others followed. Today "Christian psychology," once heresy to Christians, is the new evangelical orthodoxy. Weep and pray and work to uproot it from the church!

Bruce Narramore (nephew of Clyde Narramore, another of the early godfathers of "Christian psychology") unashamedly writes, "Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem." He thus admits that no one in 1,900 years of church history ever imagined that self-love and self-esteem (and other popular selfisms) were taught in the Bible. The secular humanists invented selfism and the "Christian psychologists" bought it and brought it into the church.

Consider the ironic statement by James Dobson in his December 1988 *Focus on the Family*: "Christian psychology is a worthy profession for a young believer to pursue, *provided* his faith is strong enough to withstand the humanistic concepts to which he will be exposed..." He thus promotes a strange new brand of "God's truth," a new interpretation of Scripture, unknown in the church for 1,900 years, that was invented by and must be learned from godless anti-Christians! This new Christianized humanism is fast becoming the basis for an ecumenical union, not only between Protestants and Catholics but with New Agers as well, to form Antichrist's coming world religion. Wake up to what is happening and take action!

Dobson is to be commended for leading the fight against humanism's immoral stepchildren: abortion, pornography, child-abuse and homosexuality. Yet he has based his entire ministry upon another stepchild of humanism: the theory that virtually every

problem in modern society and the church today (from drugs, rape or murder to depression) is caused by a "bad self-image" or "low self-esteem." Josh McDowell and Chuck Swindoll (like many others) promote the same antibiblical myth, justifying from the theories of godless psychologists the love and esteem of self, in spite of Christ's command to deny self. That such men have otherwise fruitful ministries does not excuse them for such serious false teaching.

Christian colleges, universities and seminaries have become breeding grounds for secular humanism accepted as psychology. For example, the Narramores' Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology has merged with Biola University and also infects Talbot Theological Seminary through its psychology program. Literally thousands of pastors are now following humanism's pied pipers back to seminaries for further study—not in theology, however, but in psychology in order to become competent to *counsel* their flocks in the new truth!

And who sets the standards for these studies? The godless secular humanists, of course! Take, for example, the following ecstatic announcement by Fuller Theological Seminary: "*Accredited!* The Graduate School of Psychology has received accreditation from the American Psychological Association for a third five-year period after evaluation by two APA site visit teams...the [APA] committee on accreditation...found the program's religious orientation not to adversely affect the quality of [psychological] training." Isn't that terrific? Our seminaries merit Satan's imprimatur of approval because his representatives find that in spite of a "religious orientation," students are being well trained in humanism!

Like other seminaries, Fuller places a heavy emphasis upon hypnosis, which comes right out of the occult. Related occultic visualization techniques, again

justified by humanistic psychology, are now rampant among evangelicals. Inner healing, as it is popularly taught, is simply occultic Jungian analysis dressed in a thin veneer of Christian terminology. (For substantiation of these and other charges see *Beyond Seduction*, Chapters 6-9, and *The New Spirituality*, Chapters 7-8).

But surely Christian psychologists such as Larry Crabb, who is considered by his followers to be the most biblical of all, could not have imbibed humanism's lies! Let us take but one example. In *Understanding People* (p 129) Crabb writes, "Unless we understand sin as rooted in unconscious beliefs and motives and figure out how to expose and deal with these deep forces within the personality, the church will continue to promote superficial adjustment while psychotherapists, with or without biblical foundations, will do a better job than the church of restoring troubled people to more effective functioning."

So this "most biblical" Christian leader tells us that the Bible lacks the real solution, which can only be found in psychological concepts and techniques invented by such godless anti-Christians as Freud—who, by the way, couldn't straighten out their own lives. And what of this merger between theology and psychology that Peale pioneered nearly 70 years ago? Gary Collins, who has been one of the leading evangelicals working for decades to realize Peale's dream, states in *Can You Trust Psychology?* (p 130), "It is too early to answer decisively if psychology and Christianity can be integrated." In other words, the very term "Christian psychology" has been for all these years a fraud, a blatant misrepresentation that continues to be foisted upon the church!

We desperately need another Reformation! I have nailed my "95 Theses" to the church's door, and so have many others. Still the church sleeps and the false teachers we challenge will not agree to discuss the issues publicly. John Ankerberg has tried for three years

to get anyone we name in *Seduction* (from Copeland to Schuller) to come on his program and discuss the issues with me. Other TV programs have also tried as well without success. The "Christian psychologists" have all made their excuses. Gary Collins, Mark McMinn and James Foster had agreed to a discussion of the issues with me, Martin Bobgan and Jay Adams on The Ankerberg Show, but backed down at the last moment.

It is time we carried the battle for a return to biblical truth to the individuals and institutions that are supporting humanism. I appeal to you to ask God what He would have you to do and then to follow His leading with prompt and vigorous action.

Science Falsely So-Called

Dave Hunt

“Friendship of the world is enmity with God” (Jas 4:4). It would be both illogical and unscriptural to imagine that those in whom the One now lives who was “despised and rejected of men” and through whom He now expresses Himself on this earth would not themselves be despised and rejected by the world. Popularity with the ungodly requires a compromise of faith.

It is an insult to God to modify Christianity to reflect worldly wisdom. He who does so forgets that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Cor 3:19) and imagines that God’s Word needs supplementation with human ideas. To adjust the gospel in order to make it appealing to the ungodly is dishonest; while to supplement the Bible with worldly wisdom as though it were inadequate where it claims to be fully sufficient is to deny the faith. Yet such fatuous adjustments are being made increasingly, causing unbelievers to despise and ridicule Christians—not for our Christlikeness, but for our folly.

The cause of Christ is not discredited by failure to keep up with modern science (which has nothing to do with spiritual reality), but by the substitution of “science falsely so-called” for God’s unchanging truth. This is a modern abomination.

A prime example of such dishonor to the cause of Christ took place at the 1988 Christian Booksellers Association annual convention held in Dallas last July. The scene was one of CBA’s biggest events, the Evangelical Publishers Association banquet. Author Gary Smalley, the featured speaker, was a humorous and a polished communicator, but his speech was humanistic nonsense. His entire talk was based upon today’s popular left-brain/right-brain myth spawned by pop psychology—a myth which brain researchers call “whole-brain half-wittedness.”

I was embarrassed because of the many non-Christians present who knew that what Smalley was saying was

ludicrous. Yet they observed hundreds of Christian leaders, representing the cream of evangelical publishing, applauding in enthusiastic approval. I was angry because I knew this event could only make the unsaved present even more cynical of “Christianity.” Moreover, instead of biblical truth that sets free, a deluding lie that would enslave was being passed off upon trusting Christians who thought that the “expert” addressing them knew whereof he spoke.

How bad was Smalley’s information? An *Omni* article recently said, “Everyone knows that the left [brain] hemisphere is rational, logical and Western, and the right is creative, intuitive, and Eastern. Everyone knows, that is, except the scientists who did the research on which the whole notion of left and right brains is based.” The determined efforts by brain researchers such as Jerre Levy of the University of Chicago “to undo the ‘mythology’ that has sprung up around right and left brain” have had little effect. As one writer explains: “...the left/right brain myth has a lot of pizzazz.” Smalley used that “pizzazz” to dazzle and delude his audience.

Showing the contempt with which brain researchers view this fad, another article in *Psychology Today* was titled “Left Brain, Right Brain, Broccoli Brain?” In a third magazine, Sally P. Springer, co-author of *Left Brain, Right Brain*, writes, “The concept that the human brain is divided into two halves or hemispheres, each with specialized functions, is now firmly entrenched in popular culture...[Yet] by all of our current measures...both hemispheres are active and involved in any situation. ...Those who seek to modify our educational systems and implement assessment and training programs based on our knowledge of brain asymmetry are indeed on shaky ground....their ideas receive no [scientific] support.”

Then what must be said for those who reinterpret the Bible and counsel Christians based upon this humanistic myth! 2 Timothy 4:3-4 warns, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall

they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” The fulfillment of that prophecy seems to have come upon today’s church with a vengeance.

Unlike some of the more devious theories of humanistic psychology honored in the church today, the left/right-brain error is obvious and easily refuted. It deals not with the soul/psyche but with the physical brain. That people favor or use only one side of their brains is as absurd as the notion (also promoted by “Christian psychologists”) that we use only 10 percent (or less) of our brains and thus have a huge untapped potential. It is ludicrous to imagine that most brain cells lie unused—or that husbands need to “develop” or “activate” the right side of their brains in order to communicate with their wives. Yet such myths, couched in Christian terms, are more appealing to the carnal mind than biblical truth.

Instead of sound doctrine, Gary Smalley’s talk offered a series of humorous anecdotes presenting an oversimplified perspective on the communication problems husbands and wives experience—all explained by the myth that males are left-brained while females are right-brained. The solution he offered was to paint “emotional word pictures,” which allegedly activate the dormant right side of men’s brains and communicate with the dominant right side of their wives’ brains. There was nothing of spiritual value, no teaching from God’s Word. Men and women were depicted as stimulus-response mechanisms whose failures to love and forgive were simply due to poor communication caused by brain hemispheres being out of sync.

The only reference to Scripture was to tell us at the end of the talk that he had explained left/right-brain thinking so that we could fulfill the admonition in Ephesians 5 for husbands to love their wives. Then he prayed. For the first time in my life I did not close my eyes and could not join in a prayer. It seemed an insult to God to seek His blessing upon this deceitful and harmful mixture of misinformation and pop psychology.

Smalley's talk at the CBA Convention was based upon his new book (co-authored with John Trent), *The Language of Love*, published in 1988 by Focus on the Family and distributed by Word Books. The prestigious *Focus on the Family* magazine for November 1988 featured Chapter 4 from that book, sending out to hundreds of thousands of trusting Christians such false statements as, "By using the power of emotional word pictures to open his right brain, a man can move beyond 'facts' and begin to achieve total communication with a woman....If a woman truly expects to have meaningful communication with her husband, she *must* activate the right side of his brain....Indeed, a world of colorful communication waits for those who learn the skill of bridging both sides of the brain." This is pure nonsense and is condemned by the very brain research which Smalley and Dobson naively imagine supports it.

There are almost no references to Scripture in the entire Smalley/Trent book. The very few there are consist of attempts to use the Bible to support the fallacious humanism being presented. For example, it is suggested that Nathan the prophet activated the right side of King David's brain by using "an emotional word picture that would change the course of a kingdom and echo throughout the ages....shattered by the blow of one emotional word picture... [David] was forced...to feel...." Talk about a trivialization of Scripture! It was the Holy Spirit who convicted David!

Not only does a *technique* (activating the right brain and thereby arousing the emotions through the use of "word pictures") become the key, but its appeal is not to conscience or truth but to *feelings*. The technique is self-centered and independent of the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin and the power of truth to reach the conscience. There is no moral obligation or motivation by the fear of God and His love, but it is all feelings- and experience-oriented. The fact that such techniques, like placebos, often work for a time makes them doubly dangerous.

While Smalley's book does point out the necessity for communication, it promotes a feelings-oriented pseudo-spirituality unrelated to truth. The only "faith" it offers is divorced from fact and vulnerable to further delusion. From church leaders we are increasingly getting pop psychology under a Christian label but with basically no biblical content. Thinking non-Christians recognize this folly and belittle the gospel and Christianity on that basis.

Take for example the following from The Association for Humanistic Psychology's October 1988 *AHP Perspective*: "Christians claim to know that Jesus died for their sins because they experience relief and new life when they 'accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.' They fail to grasp that such a sense of renewal flows naturally from releasing guilt feelings and experiencing acceptance, no matter whether the belief that brings us to this new freedom is based on fact or fiction." This is a valid criticism of a psychologized and self-centered "Christianity," that justifies itself not on the basis of truth but as a means of producing a more positive self-image and greater sense of self-acceptance and self-worth. Such "Christianity" has no valid claim to superiority over other humanistic methods that produce similar placebo effects. Today's pop "Christian" psychology is setting a generation up for a huge fall. The only hope is a return to propositional truth (sound doctrine).

The same issue of *AHP Perspective* also comments, "Many of us grow up with little or no awareness of how often and how much we adjust our perceiving to accommodate our needs for acceptance, approval and belonging." Certainly a valid point. Yet these very "needs" are placed ahead of objective truth in the church today—and catering to them is the foundation of much Christian psychology. Substituting psychology's latest fads for solid biblical exegesis will produce a new generation of "Christians" whose "faith" makes them feel good and may even temporarily help their marriages, but has no moral/spiritual/biblical content. Such "faith" will fail them in times of real crisis.

The popularity and pernicious influence of fallacious humanistic theories in the church is indicated by the fact that even before publication, bookstores had ordered more than 100,000 copies of Smalley's book. Yet this "Christian" book published by one of the most trusted and influential Christian leaders today gives to millions the false impression that the reason husbands and wives have problems is not that their hearts are evil and selfish but simply that there has been a failure to communicate one's feelings adequately. While communication is indeed important, it must convey not only feelings but commitment based upon God's truth.

Jesus was the perfect communicator, yet there were multitudes who heard His parables (which Smalley says are designed to activate the right brain), experienced His miracles and rejected Him. He was crucified by those He healed and fed and taught, because they would not accept His admonition: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). That truth is absent from Smalley's book.

Let us not shrug our shoulders and go on about our business when we see obvious and serious error promoted by Christian leaders. Ask God what he would have you do in each specific instance and do it.

The cross of Christ and our crucifixion to the self life, so missing from popular evangelicalism, is the only way to heaven and the only basis of joy and genuine victory in this life and of His "Well done" in the life to come. Let us remain true to our rejected Lord in spite of popular fads and the reproach attached to His cross.

Postscript: Dave Hunt met with Smalley and Trent and their pastor in Phoenix at their request as a result of their article. They subsequently removed from *Language of Love* the references to left-brain and right-brain mythology. Unfortunately, however, they have continued to promote other myths from psychology.

The Problem of Self-Love

Dave Hunt

The last two months we have pointed out examples indicating a sad fulfillment in our day of Paul's warning that in the last days prior to Christ's return sound doctrine would be scorned and in its place professing Christians would turn to *myths*. We noted that as a result there is a diminishing biblical and increasing humanistic content in Christian books and sermons. The very foundations of the Christian faith are being undermined by many of those who are looked to as its chief defenders. Yet at the same time, most if not all of those involved in this destructive process stoutly and sincerely insist that what they teach is "biblical."

How is such delusion possible? It has been accomplished by a subtle redefinition. Whereas to be "biblical" used to mean that a teaching was *derived* from Scripture, it now means that it may be derived from anywhere so long as it can somehow be interpreted as being *compatible* with Scripture. Thus the Bible and Christ the Living Word are no longer "The Truth" as Scripture so clearly claims. Instead, under the specious slogan that "all truth is God's truth," Holy Writ is now seen as only one of many ingredients in a new recipe for happiness to which anything may be added so long as the mixture still tastes somewhat "biblical." As a result, Christians are losing their taste and appetite for unadulterated Truth.

This accelerating erosion of spiritual discernment is compounded by the fact that exegesis of Scripture has fallen into disfavor with both shepherds and sheep. Ears are being tickled instead with humanistic concepts which are introduced as allegedly necessary and helpful supplements to God's Word, complete and sufficient though it is in itself. Far from being helpful, however, these "supplements" subtly effect reinterpretations of Scripture—and a generation grows up with a "Christianity" whose foundations have been undermined without their knowing it.

Let's take a simple example. Jesus commanded His disciples, "But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [food, clothing, shelter] shall be added unto you" (Mt 6:25-33). From humanistic psychology, however (now a legitimate source of revelation according to the "all truth is God's truth" thesis) so-called "Christian psychologists" have borrowed another myth: Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of needs." It states that man's physical needs for such things as food, clothing and shelter must *first* be met, then so-called psychological needs, and *last of all* spiritual needs. Although it blatantly turns Christ's command upside down, Maslow's theory and its derivatives now permeate the books and sermons of many church leaders and influence evangelism. Biblical exegesis has been abandoned for a new source of "truth."

Let's take one more example. Paul solemnly warns, "...in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves..." (2 Tm 3:1-2). Then follows a list of sins which peculiarly characterize our world today and all of which have their root in self-love. Once again from humanistic psychology, however, "Christian" psychologists have borrowed the seductive myth that self-love (along with its concomitant self-esteem/worth/acceptance, etc.) is a vital ingredient for "mental health." Thus, instead of the *prevalence* of self-love, as the Bible declares, a *lack* of it is now stated to be the root of the sins listed in verses 2-4, which have been redefined as "behavior problems" requiring newly discovered "psychological solutions."

As we have so often noted and documented, this pop psychology myth, having been introduced into Christianity by leaders of impeccable reputation, has become so popular that today it is the prevailing belief throughout the church. It is as though Paul actually wrote, "...in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be haters of their own selves, and as a consequence will need to undergo therapy and attend

seminars in order to learn to love themselves properly...." Such mutilations would be required before one could *derive* the current self-love/self-worth fad from Scripture.

Acceptance of psychology's delusion that a lack of self-love is our major problem meant that Christ's statement to "*love your neighbor as yourself*" had to be re-interpreted as a command to love *ourselves*. Why would Christ command us, if we all lack self-love, to love our neighbors as we [fail to] love ourselves? Christ's apparent error is now corrected by books and seminars teaching us how to first of all love self so that we can fulfill His command.

In contrast, simple exegesis of Christ's command to "*love your neighbor as yourself*" would *derive from Scripture* the following: (1) clearly we must already love ourselves, or such a command would be foolish; (2) this is confirmed by Ephesians 5:29 ("For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it..."), which is substantiated by the obvious fact that we feed, clothe and care for ourselves and seek to satisfy our own desires; (3) we are thus commanded to manifest love for our neighbors in the same way; ie., by caring for them as we care for ourselves; and (4) the fact that this command is necessary indicates that, rather than lacking in self-love, our problem is an excessive amount of it, which causes us to be selfish and thus to neglect caring for others. It is this self-centeredness that Christ seeks to correct. Such had been the consistent interpretation of this Scripture for 1,900 years until humanistic psychology was embraced as a valid source of "God's truth."

As a result, Christian leaders now promote the very love of self that Paul warned would characterize men in the last days and from which Christ came to deliver us by His cross!

That we must *derive* Truth from the Bible itself and from no other source is clear from Christ's statement: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"

(Jn 8:31-32). Simple exegesis indicates that the Truth which alone sets us free from sin and self is (1) revealed only through His Word; (2) understood only by those who “are of God” and obey (“if ye continue”) His Word; and (3) hidden to all others (see vv 43-47). Each of these points is denied by the “all truth is God’s truth” myth. It credits those “not of God” with revelations of “God’s truth” which supplement the very Word of God which they oppose.

Solomon wrote, “My son, *give me thine heart*, and let thine eyes observe my ways. For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit” (Prv 23:26-27). Here we have the simple ingredients of a godly life. There must first of all be the relationship to God as children (“My son...”) born into His family by His Spirit. Then follows surrender of our hearts to Him (“give me thine heart”), which involves both love and commitment. Next we observe His ways, follow His example, obey His Word. How can we do this? Motivation comes through our love for Him and the wisdom imparted by His Word. No matter how pleasurable for the moment, unfaithfulness to God (as to one’s spouse) and disobedience to His Word eventually become a deep ditch and a narrow pit bitter as death itself.

Why should husband and wife be faithful to one another? Why not so-called free sex? For one thing, sex is never “free,” but always carries obligations and consequences that cannot be escaped. Of course it is possible for a husband or wife to “tire” of each other and to “fall in love” with someone else—but that is not real love. God’s Word tells us that “love” is more than sexual passion or pleasure. The God-ordained relationship between male and female (like our relationship to Him) involves total commitment. The man who cheats on his wife or divorces her to marry a “more attractive” woman may enjoy what seems to be pleasure and fulfillment for a time. Eventually, however, the remorse for having broken his marriage vows and having dishonored the God who created him will turn illicit pleasure into great pain. Obedience to God’s Word gives joy now and eternally. Exchanging that deep

and lasting satisfaction for temporary pleasure is a bad bargain indeed.

Psychology allows one to say, “I *can’t* love my wife or husband or parent.” Yet we are *commanded* to love: first of all God, then neighbor as ourselves, and finally even our enemies. True love comes from *obedience to God’s Word* and is thus based upon commitment to sound doctrine. Nor is there any excuse under any circumstances for not loving spouse or parent, friend or foe, whether they mistreat or even hate us. The same is true of all of the ingredients of a happy, productive, fruitful, victorious life: they come from obedience to sound doctrine. Far from being divisive as some complain, *doctrine is our very life*. Those who will not endure it delude themselves with a false “Christianity” that will be severely judged for its fundamental disobedience.

The Bible does not say, “Rejoice in the Lord always...unless you are unable to do so because of an unhappy childhood, a bout of ‘depression,’ or adverse circumstances.” It does not say, “Be anxious for nothing...unless you have a nervous disposition.” It does not say, “Forgive...unless you are unable to because of abuse, etc.” We are not excused from obeying the command, “Be not afraid,” because we happen to be timid and fearful. Nor are we excused from the command, “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts,” because we have been diagnosed as susceptible to stress. Nor are we excused from the command to *love* because we find certain people unlovable. Unfortunately, however, the simple obedience to God’s Word that sound doctrine compels has been undermined by psychological “counseling” that nourishes unbelief and rebellion. Therapy then offers to justify our disobedience, to comfort us in our rebellion, and to provide the peace and joy that only God can give to those who trust and obey Him.

Love, joy, peace, etc. are clearly declared to be the fruit not of therapy but of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. How? Through some magic process by which God “zaps” us and we are transformed? No, but as God’s Truth so grips our hearts that we are fully persuaded

to be ruled by His Word, to obey Him and to trust Him to fulfill in us what He has promised. This is not to deny the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit powerfully in our hearts and through us in others, in ways beyond human comprehension. It is merely to say that the Bible clearly declares that God works in our lives through our obedience to His Word. As Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32).

The litmus test of truth for victorious Christian living must be: Is it *derived* from Scripture, or is it the wisdom of this world, packaged in Christian terminology in order to make it appear to be *compatible* with Scripture? This test should not only be applied to the sermons and writings of others, but to ourselves. We should each get on our knees and ask God, “How much of my daily life is rooted in Your Word, and how much is rooted in the world? When I am happiest, is it because I know I have pleased my Heavenly Father, am rejoicing in His grace and love, and ‘the joy of the Lord is my strength’ (Neh 8:10); or is it because I have achieved worldly goals that bring the same joy to those who ‘know not God and obey not the gospel’?”

Jesus accused the Pharisees of establishing traditions that nullified Scripture. Even the clear command to “Honour thy father and mother” had been turned completely around by the Pharisees (Mt 15:1-6). Christ indicted them with their having established a system of religion that allowed men seemingly to honor God outwardly while in their hearts they remained committed to self. What left men’s hearts far from God while their lips seemed to praise Him? Christ summed up His indictment by declaring that Israel’s religious leaders had substituted the traditions of men for the true doctrine of God’s Word (vv 7-9). This same “leaven of the Pharisees” is fermenting in today’s church. May God help us to boldly expose it and to stand uncompromisingly for obedience to His Word.

Sufficiency of Scripture

Dave Hunt

How it strengthens our faith and rejoices our hearts to read the testimonies of the Holy Spirit-inspired writers of Scripture who found the Bible sufficient for their every need! And how sad it is to find today Christian leaders teaching that the Bible is deficient for modern man and needs to be supplemented by humanistic myths. For your encouragement in the faith consider again what the writers of the Old and New Testaments had to say about the sufficiency and perfection of God's Holy Word. Therein He has given to us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," making us "partakers of the divine nature..." (2 Pt 1:3-4).

Psalms 1 makes it clear that those who obey, delight in and meditate upon God's Word day and night will be like healthy trees growing beside a river. Their Holy Spirit-empowered lives will produce fruit for God in abundance and perfection—without any help from the philosophies of men. In Psalm 19 David exults, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart....More to be desired are they than gold...sweeter also than honey...and in keeping of them there is great reward" (vv 7-11). Psalm 119 declares, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word...O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies...I have more understanding than all my teachers...I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. ...Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path..." (vv 9,97-100,105). Examples could be multiplied of those who found God's Word not only sufficient but "the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer 15:16). How much more should we!

Like the Old Testament saints and the early church, we too should find our joy in obeying God's Word—and believe that it provides all the counsel we need. Yet *Moody Monthly*, March 1989 (p 23), declares that it "is imperative" for those coming out of cults "to get professional [i.e., psychological] counseling...it could be harmful to survivors to expect them to rely totally on prayer and Bible study." Dwight L. Moody, who taught that we should "rely totally on prayer and Bible study," would denounce such a statement were he alive today! It suggests that not only Moody, but Calvin,

Luther, Wesley, Spurgeon, and all of the Christian leaders down through history (including the apostles and prophets themselves) suffered from a lack of the modern psychological insight now provided daily over Moody radio by "Christian psychiatrists" Minirth and Meier. To thus declare that the Old and New Testament writers were deficient in their understanding and lives, and in what they passed on to us in God's Word, because they lacked the additional "truth" that would be revealed centuries later to Freud, Jung, Maslow, Rogers, et al. is blasphemous heresy which we must oppose!

The sufficiency and importance of biblical truth and doctrine is presented powerfully in John's brief second epistle. John mentions truth five times in the first four verses. He then warns about deceivers who pose as Christians but who deny the doctrine of Christ. Showing how essential sound doctrine is, he declares that anyone who "abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (v 9). He then commands separation from such persons. How important, then, is the current battle being waged for sound doctrine!

Weep as you read Kenneth Copeland in his December 1988 *Believer's Voice of Victory*: "the unity of the faith...won't be based upon doctrine. You see, doctrine doesn't unify. It divides....It doesn't matter what your doctrine is....We'll be unified by the Spirit of God...[when] we'll drop our silly list of doctrinal demands and come together in the unity of faith." To Copeland and the others in the positive-confession movement, "faith" is a "positive force" for producing miracles that has nothing to do with the truth and the doctrine of Christ which John says is essential. According to Kenneth Hagin in *Having Faith In Your Faith*, even non-Christians can "develop God's laws of faith" and get miracles. This is religious science and the rankest of heresy, yet it is regularly taught and defended on the two largest Christian TV networks: TBN and CBN.

Most of the epistles were written to correct doctrinal error. Why bother, if "it doesn't matter what your doctrine is"? In fact, doctrinal purity is essential not only for salvation but also for living the Christian life. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Thou has fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions...." (2 Tm 3:10-11). Doctrine was the very foundation of Paul's life. And so it must be of ours. Yet Norman Vincent Peale presents a "gospel" which he says can be embraced by "Catholics, Jews, Protestants, people who have no religion, and...[those] hostile to

religion." What is Peale's gospel? "Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities!"¹ Robert Schuller proclaims the same humanism, yet like his mentor Peale, he is acclaimed as an evangelical leader.

The Pope promotes a similar ecumenism. He recently declared that the efforts of "Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists [etc.]...were unleashing profound spiritual energies in the world and bringing about a 'new climate' of peace.² The "Virgin Mary" who allegedly appears at Medjugorje, Yugoslavia agrees. She speaks much of "conversion," but like Mother Teresa she does not mean conversion to Christ. Her message can be "accepted by Catholic, Protestant, Moslem or Jew."³ "Mary" declares, "Everyone worships God in his own way with peace in our hearts."⁴ What happened to the false gods?

Such universalism is condemned by John's statement that "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not "in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (2 Jn 9). Why? Because Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6). This statement is foundational to the "doctrine of Christ" that John says separates true Christians from the rest of the world. In defense of that doctrine, millions have died as martyrs of the faith.

Truth is the issue, and it both unites and divides. It unites those committed to it, and at the same time divides them from all others who oppose sound doctrine. It is bad enough to propose "unity" between fundamentalism and modernism, Protestantism and Catholicism. The ecumenism of "Christian psychology," however, that attempts to unite theology with psychology, the evangelical faith with the teachings of godless humanists, is far worse!

No evangelical would interpret "I am the way" to mean that Christ is only one of many ways to God; or "I am the life" to mean that the life He is and offers needs supplementing from other sources. To do so would be a complete denial of the doctrine of Christ. Nor can His statement, "I am the truth," be interpreted to mean that He is only part of the truth. Yet this is the pernicious effect of "Christian psychology's" specious slogan, "All truth is God's truth." No longer Christ and His Word alone, but now Freud, et al. are also legitimate sources of "God's truth." There is no reason, then, why Mary Baker Eddy, Buddha, the Hindu Vedas, etc. may not also be accepted as sources of "God's truth." This heresy is so persistent that I make no apology for dealing with it again.

The "all truth is God's truth" myth is a

basic denial of the *doctrine of Christ* which declares that Christ is *the truth*. "God's truth" is "as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:21). Christ the Living Word is revealed in the written Word: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (Jn 17:17). Christ did not say, "If ye continue in my word...ye shall know *part of the truth* and you shall be made *partially free*. There is more truth yet to be revealed through godless humanists that will liberate future generations more completely than I can now free you through my Word and my Spirit alone." Yet that is the teaching of "Christian psychology." In *Can You Trust Psychology* (p 97) Gary Collins writes, "The Bible speaks to human needs....But God in his goodness also has allowed us [Freud, Jung, et al.] to discover psychological truths about human behavior and counseling that are never mentioned in Scripture but are consistent with the written Word of God and helpful to people facing the problems of modern living." Here is another example of what we mentioned last month: the subtle redefinition whereby *biblical* no longer means *derived* from God's Word, but derived elsewhere, then declared to be *consistent* with Scripture.

Those who proclaim that "all truth is God's truth" confuse *the truth* with mere *facts of nature*. That the latter are not included in the former is quite clear from what Jesus said: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come...whom the world cannot receive...he will guide you into *all truth*" (Jn 14:17; 16:13). Since *all truth* is revealed only by the Spirit of God "whom the world cannot receive," and since "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:14), if science were part of "God's truth," then *all scientific discoveries* would have to be made *only by Christians*. Yet non-Christians make great scientists. So even if psychology were a science, which it is not, it would still not be part of "God's truth," which is revealed by God only to His own.

God's truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit in His Word sets us free from sin and leads us into victorious living. It has nothing to do with science, but involves the moral and spiritual part of man. As soon as science pretends to deal with spiritual truth it has overstepped its bounds. Physics, chemistry, medicine, etc. make no such pretense, but "Christian psychology" does, which is why it is so fallacious and dangerous.

The doctrine of Christ forms the basis for a victorious life of "love, joy, peace, [etc.]" through the power of the Holy Spirit

(Gal 5:22-23). What is that doctrine? That Christ is God himself become man to die for our sins. Resurrected and ascended on high, He comes by His Spirit to live in those who open their hearts to Him. Christ likened Himself to a vine that pours its life through us, the branches, to produce fruit in us for the Father. This dynamic union is no mere mystical experience, but is itself based upon *doctrine*, i.e., what we believe and understand of "the truth as it is in Jesus." John's declaration that we must abide in the *doctrine* of Christ elaborates upon Christ's statement, "Abide in me" (Jn 15:4). As with Paul, so for us today: the lives we live must spring from the *doctrine of Christ* and be consistent with it.

So essential is sound doctrine that the Holy Spirit through John commands that those who "bring not this doctrine" are not to be received into our houses nor are we to "bid [them] God speed" (2 Jn 10). This does not mean that we may not invite Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons, etc. who knock on our doors to come into our homes for a discussion. However, we must do so only to *evangelize* them, making it clear that we oppose their false teachings. This must be our consistent stance toward all who deny the doctrine of Christ, even though they pass for Christian leaders in today's church.

Can't we "just love people" and "accept them" for who they are? In fact it is because we love them that we point out their error and seek to correct them. Our Lord said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rv 3:19). Love is not a mushy acceptance of false teachers. John writes, "This is love, that we walk after his commandments" (2 Jn 6), and that involves standing firm for the doctrine of Christ. The whole purpose of Christ's coming was not to "accept us as we were" but to *rescue us from what we were* and to *change us into what He wanted us to become*. If Christ is truly dwelling in us, then we will want to do the same for those to whom we "[speak] the truth in love" (Eph 4:15).

Endnotes

- 1 Michael Ryan, "Do The Best You Can With What You've Got," *Parade* (Sunday, May 17, 1987).
- 2 "The Pope Speaks," *Our Sunday Visitor* (Nov. 13, 1988).
- 3 Wayne Weible, *Miracle at Medjugorje* (April 1988), 8.
- 4 Quoting an interview with "Seer Vicka Ivankovic" in the *St. Louis Dispatch* (Dec. 25, 1988), *Christian News* (Jan.2, 1989), 4.

Quotable

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, former minister of Westminster Chapel in London, was interviewed by Carl Henry for a February 1980 *Christianity Today* article. Henry asked, "You declined to be either a participant or observer [of the Berlin World Congress on Evangelism]. You were also, I think, the only minister of a major church in London that did not cooperate in the Graham crusades? What kept you on the sidelines?"

Lloyd-Jones' response:

This is a very vital and difficult matter. I have always believed that nothing but a revival—a visitation of the Holy Spirit, in distinction from an evangelistic campaign—can deal with the situation of the church and of the world....I have never been happy about organized campaigns.... When things were not going well, the old approach was for ministers and deacons to call a day of fasting and prayer and to plead with God to visit them with power. Today's alternative is an evangelistic campaign: ministers ask, "whom shall we get as evangelist?" Then they organize and ask God's blessing on this. I belong to the old school.

Henry then asked, "What specific reservations do you have about modern evangelism as such?"

He replied:

I am unhappy about organized campaigns and even more about the invitation system of calling people forward....I just can't subscribe to the idea that either congresses or campaigns really deal with the situation. The facts, I feel, substantiate my point of view: in spite of all that has been done in the last 20 or 25 years, the spiritual situation has deteriorated rather than improved. I am convinced that nothing can avail but churches and ministers on their knees in total dependence on God. As long as you go on organizing, people will not fall on their knees and implore God to come and heal them. It seems to me that the campaign approach trusts ultimately in techniques rather than the power of the Spirit.

The Gospel in the Stars

Dave Hunt

For the last several months, we have been calling attention to the alarming fact that even among evangelicals, in apparent fulfillment of Paul's warning concerning the last days, sound doctrine is being set aside in favor of *myths*. These are being foisted on the church by some of the most respected church leaders—and being embraced by millions of Christians, who seemingly have insufficient discernment to recognize today's deceptions. Most of these myths derive from "Christian psychology." This month we will consider one that does not: the seductive and dangerous idea of the "Gospel in the Stars."

This theory was popular in the late 1800s. Some of the books published then have lately been brought back into print, among them E. W. Bullinger's *Witness of the Stars* and Joseph A. Seiss's *The Gospel in the Stars*. It is asserted that the signs of the zodiac were originally designed by God to communicate the "gospel"; that this "Gospel in the Stars" was known to those living before the flood; that it was later corrupted into astrology; and that the alleged recovery of the "gospel interpretation" of the zodiac is a great witness to God and His Word.

Not one shred of historical evidence can be offered in support of this theory. It is based not upon fact but speculation. Seiss even admits that the insights leading to his thesis came "in connection with his studies of the marvelous wisdom embodied in the Great Pyramid at El Giza" (p 5). The alleged "Gospel in the Stars" is simply a "Christian" interpretation of astrology and occultism, in the same class as pyramidology—and equally dangerous.

It is claimed that "by way of the Bible itself we reach the idea of the GOSPEL IN THE STARS" (Seiss, p. 13). Not so! While the Bible frequently states that the heavens are given for "signs," it never even implies that these "signs" present the *gospel*. The

Bible indicates that creation reveals God's *glory and power*, which are "clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom 1:20) and that "there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Ps 19:3). *Never* does it say that the heavens or any other part of creation declare the *gospel*. That is presented *only* by God's Word and preaching—and that not even by angels, but only by men.

The idea of "The Gospel in the Stars" puts an alleged witness from creation on a par with the revelations contained in the Bible. If this thesis is correct, then there are many places (Ps 19:1-4, Rom 1:19-24, Heb 1:1-2, 2 Pt 1:21, etc.) where the Bible could have told us that the "gospel is in the stars"—but it does not. Hebrews 1:1, for example, tells us that God "spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" but fails to say that He also spoke in the stars. Why does the Bible *never* propose this idea? Obviously because creation witnesses to one thing, prophets to something else. The creation witnesses to God's eternal existence and power and wisdom; the Bible takes it from there and explains the gospel. This distinction is destroyed by asserting that the gospel is contained in the stars.

Actually, those who promote this myth admit that the gospel can't be seen in the stars themselves, but that it comes from a "Christianized" interpretation of the fanciful "signs" of the zodiac assigned by the ancients to certain constellations. Nor can these figures be seen in the natural formations of the stars; they are the arbitrary product of human imagination. D. James Kennedy, one of those who promote Seiss's thesis, admits in his sermon "The Gospel in the Stars" that "You can look at the stars in Virgo until you are green in the face and they would never look like a woman." And even if they did, one would not know from that "sign" that the Son of God and Savior of the world was to be born of a virgin—much less that He would die in our place and offer pardon for sin as a free gift of God's grace. One simply cannot *derive* the "gospel" from the starry heavens, or from any other part of creation!

Therefore, in no way can the alleged "Gospel in the Stars" be equated with what the Bible says the "heavens declare"—a message that Paul reminds us is "*clearly seen*" (Rom 1:20) and understood by all those who observe God's creation, no matter what their language (Ps 19:3). That this is not the case with the "Gospel in the Stars" is obvious. In fact, the very idea that the "gospel" is in the stars would never have entered the average Christian's (nor pagan's!) head from looking up at the starry heavens. Yet, in complete contradiction both of Scripture and common sense, it is declared that the gospel "in all its length and breadth, stands written upon the stars..." (Seiss, p 14). The truth is that the alleged "Gospel in the Stars" is not contained in the *stars* at all. It is found only in the *books* that tell us about this supposed wonder of the heavens and pretend to give us the original meanings allegedly conveyed in ancient oral traditions—for which there can be found no historical evidence today.

Even the Southern Cross, which is the only constellation that really forms a somewhat recognizable figure (and thus is "Exhibit A" for those who promote this myth), fails on at least two counts. First of all, the "gospel" is not clear from looking at a cross. One can only wonder that evangelicals, who reject the notion that the gospel is preached by a cross in a church, would suggest that it is preached by a much less clearly formed "cross" in the sky. Even the physical meaning of such a symbol was unknown before Roman times; and to this day the spiritual meaning of the Cross is unknown to those who have never read the Bible or heard the gospel *preached by men*.

Secondly, the fact that the Old Testament doesn't even mention the Cross is reason enough to reject any suggestion that an oral tradition interpreting the stars presented that truth before Christ's advent. David's statement in Psalm 22 ("they pierced my hands and my feet") was only understood after its meaning had been revealed through its fulfillment in Christ.

So even a “cross” clearly depicted in the stars could not possibly have conveyed the “gospel,” which was not revealed until after Christ’s crucifixion. How much less, then, could any other symbol do so—then or now!

To suggest that there was an oral tradition connected to the stars that presented the *gospel*, when even the Old Testament did not present it, puts oral tradition above Scripture and thus undermines God’s Word. In the Genesis 3 statement by God that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head, the gospel is contained only in embryo and in mystery, and was not understood until the New Testament revealed it. Even were the “signs of the zodiac” distinct, without the Bible, and with only the stars themselves to look at, no one could understand the *gospel* from them. In fact, the symbols of the zodiac have universally served to support occultism and astrology since the earliest times. To suggest that the “gospel” was their “original meaning” promotes a deadly delusion.

The word “gospel” is used 101 times in 95 verses in the Bible (all New Testament) and it is *never* associated with the stars or the witness of creation. The gospel is *always* preached by men and must be made perfectly clear for it to be of any effect. The alleged “Gospel in the Stars” fails on both counts. Moreover, Matthew 24:14, Mark 13:10, etc. indicate that the gospel must yet be preached to all nations, and thus it clearly had not been preached in the stars—certainly not in “all its length and breadth...” as Seiss, et al. enthusiastically but erroneously declare.

The Bible indicates that the gospel *began* to be preached with the advent of Christ (2 Tm 1:10). Paul refers to “the *beginning* of the gospel” (Phil 4:15) and states that it had been a mystery until then “*kept secret* since the world began” (Rom 16:25). It is a contradiction of Scripture to suggest that for thousands of years before it was made clear in the Bible, the gospel had been proclaimed in an oral tradition associated with the stars. Yet

Seiss claims that “men who lived almost a thousand years [i.e., those before the flood]” were taught the “gospel” by God from the stars. Then why did Christ, during His time in Hades, preach the gospel to those who had lived before the flood (see 1 Pt 3:19-20)—and why didn’t Noah, in his preaching to these people before they died, present the “gospel” that was in the stars?

It just doesn’t add up from any angle. Yet Seiss, for example, swept up in an enthusiasm that carried him far beyond facts and reason, expansively declared: “...all the great doctrines of the Christian faith were known, believed, cherished, and recorded [in the stars] from the earliest generations of our race, proving that God has spoken to man, and verily given him a revelation of truths and hopes precisely as written in our Scriptures, and so fondly cherished by all Christian believers” (p 15). That is quite simply false. And such speculation, far from supporting the Bible, actually undermines it and gives mankind an excuse to look to oral traditions instead of only to God’s written Word.

If the “gospel in the stars” is biblical, why doesn’t the Bible even once refer to it? Why didn’t the prophets mention it for support and build upon it? Why on the day of Pentecost didn’t Peter, who referred to signs in the sky (Acts 2:19), use this great “sign”? One would think that such a witness would have had a powerful effect upon Jews “who require a sign.” Why didn’t Paul, in reasoning with the Greeks at Athens (or in his many debates with unbelievers elsewhere), along with referring to what their “own poets have said” (Acts 17), mention this great “sign” in the heavens? Why didn’t Jesus, who quoted so often from the Old Testament and continually used illustrations, make at least one reference to the gospel in the stars?

Such total silence throughout Scripture upon a topic that we are now told is of great value disproves this thesis. Notice that Paul, in reasoning with his audience from creation, did not go beyond what creation declares plainly to all and that

which is known by all in their consciences. The very claim that the “gospel” is in the stars is inconsistent with the knowledge that Scripture attributes to creation and with the manner in which Christ and His apostles referred to creation for a witness. When it came to the gospel, Paul based what he said upon Scripture and Christ’s life, death and resurrection—not upon the signs of the zodiac!

Why devote a newsletter to the “Gospel in the Stars”? We do so because this currently popular myth encourages a deadly mixture of humanism and Christianity—the very ecumenical/syncretistic delusion that is growing in our own day. It is similar to the “All truth is God’s truth” myth that makes Freud, Jung and other godless humanists—or Buddha, Krishna, Mary Baker Eddy, et al.—legitimate sources of God’s Truth. Preaching the gospel from the signs of the zodiac is like presenting it from *Star Wars* or other occultic stories, which some have done. Seiss himself fell into that trap.

In his chapter titled “The Suffering Redeemer,” Seiss declares (p 38), “In the divine triad of Brahmanic deities the second, the Son, the One who became incarnate in the man-god Krishna, sits upon his throne cross-legged, holding the cross in his right hand; and he is the god of deliverance....It is the same story of deliverance and salvation through the Cross-bearer, the divine Son of the Virgin.” This is the kind of syncretistic folly presented by such cults as Unity and Science of Mind, and which is now coming even into the evangelical church in so many ways. Though its promoters may be sincere, the “Gospel in the Stars” is just one more means of causing similar deadly confusion. Let’s devote ourselves to the study of God’s Word as our only and sufficient source of Truth!

Eternal Security

Dave Hunt

The question of the eternal security of the believer is often raised in letters we receive. This subject has been the cause of much controversy in the church for centuries, and still creates confusion and distress for many Christians. It is too much to expect to dispel this problem completely for everyone in a brief newsletter, but perhaps we can at least help in that direction.

Those who believe in “falling away” accuse those who believe in “eternal security” of promoting “cheap grace.” The latter is in itself an unbiblical expression. To call it “cheap” is really a denial of grace, since it implies that too small a price has been paid. Grace, however, must be absolutely free and without any price at all *on man’s part*, while *on God’s part* the price He paid must be infinite. Thus for man to think that his works can play any part in *either earning or keeping* his salvation is what cheapens grace and devalues this infinite gift to the level of human effort.

To speak of “falling from grace” involves the same error. Since our works had nothing to do with meriting grace in the first place, there is nothing we could do that would cause us to no longer merit it and thus to “fall” from it. Works determine reward or punishment—not one’s salvation, which comes by God’s grace. The crux of the problem is a confusion about grace and works.

First of all, we must be absolutely clear that these two can never mix. Paul declares, “...if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work” (Rom 11:6). Salvation cannot be partly by works and partly by grace.

Secondly, we must be absolutely certain that *works have nothing to do with salvation*. Period. The Bible clearly states, “For by *grace* are ye saved...*not of works*” (Eph 2:8-9). True to such scriptures, evangelicals firmly declare that *we cannot earn or merit salvation in any way*. Eternal life must be received as a free gift of God’s grace, *or we cannot have it*.

Thirdly, salvation cannot be purchased *even in part* by us, because it requires payment of the penalty for sin—a payment we can’t make. If one receives a speeding ticket, it won’t help to say to the judge, “I’ve driven many times within the 55 mph limit. Surely my many good deeds will make up for the one bad deed.” Nor will it do to say, “If you let me off this time, I promise never to break the law again.” The judge would reply, “Never to break the law again is only to do what the law demands. You get no *extra* credit for that. The penalty for breaking the law is a separate matter and must be paid.” Thus Paul writes, “...by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight...” (Rom 3:20).

Fourthly, if salvation from the penalty of breaking God’s laws cannot be earned by good deeds, then it *cannot be lost by bad deeds*. Our works play no part in *either earning or keeping* salvation.

Fifthly, salvation can only be given to us as a free gift if the penalty has been fully paid. We have violated infinite Justice, requiring an infinite penalty. We are finite beings and could not pay it: we would be separated from God for eternity. God is infinite and could pay an infinite penalty, but it wouldn’t be just, because He is not a member of our race. Therefore God, in love and grace, through the virgin birth, became a man so that He could pay the debt of sin for the entire human race!

In the Greek, Christ’s cry from the cross, “It is finished!” is an accounting term, meaning that the debt had been paid in full. Justice had been satisfied by full payment of its penalty, and thus God could “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). On that basis, God offers pardon and eternal life as a free gift. He cannot force it upon anyone or it would not be a gift. Nor would it be just to pardon a person who rejects the righteous basis for pardon and offers a hopelessly inadequate payment instead—or offers his works even as “partial payment.”

Salvation is the full pardon by grace from the penalty of all sin, past, present or future; eternal life is the bonus thrown in. Denying this cardinal truth, all cultists, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and Roman Catholics, for example, reject

salvation by grace and insist that it must be earned by one’s good works. They accuse evangelicals of teaching that all we need to do is to say we believe in Christ and then we can live as we please, even in the grossest of sins, yet be sure of heaven. Evangelicals don’t teach that at all, yet a similar complaint is made by those who believe in “falling away.” They say that “once saved, always saved” encourages one to live in sin because if we know we cannot be lost then we have no incentive for living a holy life. On the contrary, love for the one who saved us is the greatest and only acceptable motive for living a holy life; and surely the greater the salvation one has received, the more love and gratitude there will be. So to know one is secure for eternity gives a higher motive for living a good life than the fear of losing one’s salvation if one sins!

While those who believe in “falling from grace” are clear that good works cannot *earn* salvation, they teach that salvation is *kept* by good works. Thus one gets *saved by grace*, but thereafter salvation can be *lost by works*. To teach that good works *keep* salvation is almost the same error as to say that good works *earn* salvation. It denies grace to say that once I have been *saved by grace* I must thereafter keep myself *saved by works*.

If those who are saved could lose their salvation, then they must by their own actions keep themselves saved. If that is true, then those who stay saved and get to heaven will be able to boast that they played a key role in their salvation: Christ saved them but they *kept* themselves saved. On the contrary, no man can take any credit for his salvation. We are “kept by the power of God” (1 Pt 1:5), not by our faith or efforts.

“Falling away” doctrine, says Hebrews 6:4-9, rather than glorifying Christ, once again holds Him up to shame and ridicule before the world for two reasons: *if we could lose our salvation*, then (1) Christ would have to be crucified again to save us again; and (2) He would be ridiculed for dying to *purchase* a salvation but not making adequate provision to *preserve* it—for giving a priceless gift to those who would inevitably lose it. If Christ’s death in our place for our sins and His

resurrection were not sufficient to *keep* us saved, then He has foolishly wasted His time. If we could not live a good enough life to *earn* salvation, it is certain we cannot live a good enough life to *keep* it! To make the salvation He procured ultimately dependent upon our faltering works would be the utmost folly.

“Falling away” doctrine makes us worse off after we are saved than before. At least before conversion we can get saved. But after we are saved and have lost our salvation (if we could), we can’t get saved again, but are lost forever. Hebrews 6:6 declares, “If [not *when*] they shall fall away...it is impossible...to renew them again unto repentance.” That “falling away” is hypothetical is clear (v 9): “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” So “falling away” does not “accompany salvation.” The writer is showing us that *if we could lose our salvation, we could never get it back without Christ dying again upon the cross*. This is folly! He would have to die an infinite number of times (i.e., every time every person who was once saved sinned and was lost and wanted to be “saved again”). Thus, those who reject “once saved, always saved” can only replace it with “once lost, always lost”!

John assures us, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know [present knowledge] that ye have [present possession] eternal life...” (1 Jn 5:13). To call it *eternal life*, if the person who had it could lose it and suffer *eternal death*, would be a mockery. On the contrary, eternal life is linked with the promise that one *cannot perish*—a clear assurance of “eternal security” or “once saved, always saved.” John 3:16 promises those who believe in Jesus Christ that they “*shall not perish*, but have everlasting life.” John 5:24 again says, “hath everlasting life, and *shall not come into condemnation*...” One could not ask for clearer or greater assurance than the words of Jesus: “I give unto them [My sheep] eternal life and they shall *never perish*” (Jn 10:28).

If, having received eternal life, we could lose it and perish, it would make Christ a liar. Yet this is the teaching of Roman

Catholicism. Therefore the Mass is declared to be a sacrifice of Christ’s body and blood whereby God pardons sinners. Thus Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice upon the cross was not sufficient. And like Roman Catholicism, the idea that a person once saved could be lost also denies the sufficiency of Christ’s death upon the cross 1,900 years ago.

If sin causes the loss of salvation, what kind or amount of sin does it take? There is no verse in the Bible that tells us. We are told that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us *from all unrighteousness* (1 Jn 1:9)—so apparently any sin can be forgiven. Even those who teach falling away rarely if ever say they got “saved again.” Rather, they confessed their sin and were forgiven. Hebrews 12:3-11 tells us that every Christian sins, and that instead of causing a loss of salvation, sin brings God’s chastening upon us as His children. If when we sinned we ceased to be God’s children, He would have no one to chastise—yet he “scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Indeed, chastening is a sign *that we are God’s children*, not that we *have lost our salvation*: “if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”

Some teach that one must be baptized to be saved; others that one must “speak in tongues.” Both are forms of salvation by works. Some people lack assurance of salvation because they haven’t “spoken in tongues,” others are confident they are saved because they think they have. Both are like those who say, “Lord, Lord, have we not...in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Mt 7:21-23). They are relying on their works to prove they are saved, instead of upon God’s grace. Nor does Jesus say, “You were once saved but lost your salvation.” He says, “I *never* knew you.”

Here is an important distinction. Those who believe in falling away would say of a professing Christian who has denied the faith and is living in unrepentant sin that he has “fallen from grace” and has “lost his salvation.” In contrast, those who believe in eternal security, while no more tolerant of such conduct, would say of the same person that probably Christ

“never knew him”—he was never a Christian. We must give the comfort and assurance of Scripture to those who are saved; but at the same time we must not give false and unbiblical comfort to those who merely say they are saved but deny with their lives what they profess with their lips.

Are we not then saved by our works? Indeed not! In 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 every Christian’s works are tried by fire at the “judgment seat of Christ” before which “we must all appear” (2 Cor 5:10). Good works bring rewards; a lack of them does not cause loss of salvation. The person who hasn’t even one good work (*all* of his works are burned up) is still “saved; yet so as by fire” (v 15). We would not think such a person was saved at all. Yet one who may seem outwardly not to be a Christian, who has no good works as evidence—if he has truly received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, is then “saved as by fire” and shall never perish *in spite of his lack of works*.

Do we then, on the basis of “once saved, always saved,” encourage Christians to “sin that grace may abound”? With Paul we say, “God forbid!” We offer no comfort or assurance to those living in sin. We don’t say, you’re okay because you once made a “decision for Christ.” Instead, we warn: “If you are not willing right now to live fully for Christ as Lord of your life, how can you say that you were really sincere when you supposedly committed yourself to Him at some time in the past?” And to all, we declare with Paul, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Cor 13:5).

Our confidence for eternity rests in His unchanging love and grace and the sufficiency of God’s provision in Christ—not in our worth or performance. Only when this is clear do we have real peace with God. Only then can we truly love Him and live for Him out of gratitude for the eternal life He has given to us as a free gift of His grace—a gift He will not take back and which He makes certain can never be lost!

New Age Inroads into the Church

Dave Hunt

In August it will be four years since the publication of *The Seduction of Christianity*. Through that book, thousands of people have had their eyes opened and have been set free from false teachings. Sadly, those we named in *Seduction* have refused to discuss the issues with me publicly so that a wider segment of the church could hear both sides. Moreover, I have been banned from many radio and TV programs, stations and networks in a planned censorship of my ministry. Instead of repenting, those who have been leading millions astray have actually hardened their position.

About eight books have been written to "refute" *Seduction*, and the false teachers have rallied together in a new emphasis upon "unity" to defend one another. For example, Oral Roberts formed Charismatic Bible Ministries a few months after *Seduction* was published. CBM leadership includes Buckingham, Capps, Cerullo, Cho, Copeland, Crouch, Dortch, Giminez, the Hickeys, Roy Hicks, Sr., Hinn, the Hunters, Lea, MacNutt, Paulk, Price, Savelle, Strang, Lester Sumrall, Synan, Tilton, Treat, Tommy Tyson, Weiner and Ralph Wilkerson. Pledged *not to correct one another's doctrine*, their motto is *Love and Unity Through Signs and Wonders*. Their "4th Annual Conference" was held June 20-22, 1989 at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa.

Seduction did not engage in hair-splitting. The issues raised are vital and affect the eternal destiny of souls. We warned that a false "God," a false "Christ," a false "faith," and a false "redemption" were being promoted. The Hagin/Copeland positive-confession movement is only one example. For them, "faith" is a "force" like electricity that "God" used to create the worlds. We, as little gods, can create with our words and get whatever we want by using the same "laws of faith" their false "God" obeys. "Redemption" is not through the blood

of Jesus shed upon the cross, but through Satan's torture of Christ three days and three nights in hell. If Satan did not torture Jesus enough then are we not saved? And if he did, shall we thank Satan as our co-redeemer? Copeland even tells us how to get our animals "saved and baptized in the Holy Ghost"—and the "Jesus" who speaks through Copeland in "prophecy" denies that he ever claimed to be God.

Norman Vincent Peale's positive thinking and Robert Schuller's possibility thinking are two more forms of positive confession's false "faith" *that will not save*. The teachings of the mind-science cults have entered the church. Yet Christian leaders such as Jack Hayford, and Christian TV networks such as TBN, defend Oral Roberts, Schuller, Copeland, et al. Billy Graham encouraged Schuller to get his message on TV and commends him for his teachings! Write to ask Billy why he endorses men such as Schuller and Peale, who undermine the very gospel that he preaches!

The February 1989 TBN *Praise The Lord* newsletter declared that Paul and Jan Crouch had interviewed Schuller and cleared him of the "false" charge that he promotes the New Age concepts "that God is everything [and] that Christ 'consciousness' is already inherently resident in each man [and woman]...." Yet Schuller's *Possibilities* magazine, Summer 1986, promoted those very lies: "...nothing exists except God. There is no other reality....The Christ spirit dwells in every human being whether the person knows it or not." Unity, a totally New Age mind-science cult ("God is everything," "Christ consciousness in everyone," reincarnation, yoga, etc.) benefits from Schuller's repeated appearances at its churches, headquarters, and functions. He commends and encourages Unity to keep up its good work and grow larger.

In *The Unity Way of Life*, Marcus Bach writes, "You can walk with the Shintoist through his sacred groves, or chant an affirmation with the Hindu on the banks of the Ganges...and still be a student of Unity....As the Christ becomes greater to you in Unity, the Buddha also becomes greater, and the greater the Buddha becomes, the greater the Christ

becomes" (pp 88-89). Peale (who found peace in a Shinto shrine) and Schuller promote such "openness." The above issue of *Possibilities* lauded John Marks Templeton (his picture is on the cover) for giving "the world's largest annual prize" to the person making the greatest contribution to "progress in religion." Winners have "a wide variety" of religious beliefs and are chosen by "a board of judges [who]...represent five major religions." Talk about an ecumenical/New Age rejection of the fundamentals of the Christian faith!

In spite of his denials, Schuller persistently promotes New Agers and their concepts, the deadliest of which is shamanism, the visualization of spirit guides. This occult technique (learned from demons posing as "Masters" of a "Temple of Wisdom" on the "astral plane") was first brought into the business world by Napoleon Hill, whose teachings Schuller promotes (Sep./Oct. 1988 *Possibilities*, for example).

While Hill was bringing visualization communication with spirit guides into the secular world, Agnes Sanford took it into the church as part of "inner healing." Despite *Seduction's* warnings and documentation, this most subtle and dangerous witchcraft practice is more than ever being promoted and defended by church leaders and "Christian psychologists." It is also being used to contact "God" or "Jesus" in "dialogue with God," or "two-way prayer." Only a demon posing as "God" or "Christ," like the genie that appears in the bottle when the lamp is rubbed, appears to those who follow the relaxation/visualization formula.

Sanford, founder of "inner healing," is the charismatics' Mary Baker Eddy. Critics complained that *Seduction* misquoted Sanford. They had the 1972 edition of *The Healing Light*. We quoted from the 1947 edition, because the new publisher in 1972 made numerous cosmetic changes to give the book a wider appeal. Yet Agnes herself had not changed. She was also one of the early popularizers of the Manifest Sons heresy. She taught that the Great Tribulation is in the past; we are now in the Millennium and Christians must, *through Science of*

Mind techniques, take dominion over this earth, even removing the effects of the Fall—without the return of Christ. (See *Creation Waits*, Logos, 1978, etc.)

In *The Healing Light*, she presents a false “God” who is the “life-force” in everyone and in everything. It is a form of “energy” like electricity: “the original force that we call God (p 30)...we are part of God (p 34)...He’s in nature, and He is nature (p 35)...I was conscious of oneness with God, and therefore with the snake which God had made” (p 69). Her pantheism is clear.

From Emmet Fox, who calls himself “one of [Unity founder] Charles Fillmore’s spiritual children,” Agnes picked up many of her ideas, such as “God’s love was blacked out from man by negative thought-vibrations...[Jesus] lowered his thought vibrations to the thought vibrations of humanity” to accomplish “the at-one-ment”—a Unity term that Fillmore called the “reconciliation of man’s mind with divine Mind through the superconsciousness of Christ Mind.” Sanford commends the “prayers of Unity and other modern schools of prayer” (p 143) which “project the power of God” for healing.

On pages 21-22 she gives four steps for tapping into this “God-force,” the second being “...to turn it on...we can simply say, “Whoever you are—whatever you are—come into me now!” To support her Science of Mind, she quotes a scientist: “a vibration of very, very high intensity and an extremely fine wavelength, with tremendous healing power, caused by spiritual forces operating through the mind of man, is the next thing science expects to discover” (p 32). She goes on: “The love-vibrations and the faith vibrations of God and His saints [she includes dead “saints”—“there is no death” (p 143)] enter through our thoughts of life and love. In the same way, the destructive thought-vibrations of mankind, and of ‘Satan’ [whoever or whatever ‘Satan’ may be; her metaphysical system requires no personal devil] enter through our thoughts of illness, hate and death” (p 43-44).

She taught that everything is a matter of thought-vibrations. We can be made

ill by negative vibrations, can heal ourselves and others through positive vibrations and can even forgive the sins of others and turn them into Christians in this way. She writes, “...project into the burglar’s mind the love of God, by seeing him as a child of God and asking God to bless him [p 60]. A new age is being born...when love-power, [projected] at the command of ministers and surveyors and children and everyone, is sufficient to change hearts...This is the beginning of a new order...the dawning of a new day!...As our prayers, our mental training and our acts of forgiveness fuse into a high consciousness of God’s indwelling, we become more and more aware of an inner source of power that can be tapped at will” (p 75). Mary Baker Eddy was no worse!

Incredibly, Agnes Sanford is defended by church leaders. Her books sell well in Christian bookstores and at churches such as John Wimber’s Vineyard fellowships. “Inner healers” John and Paula Sandford, who were associated with Agnes for years, angrily denounce me for misunderstanding and misquoting her. Yet the Sandfords admit that Agnes was involved in Unity, spiritualism, occultism. John even declared that she had been unsaved and *demon possessed* at the time she wrote *The Healing Light* and founded the Schools of Pastoral Care (where he taught with her), and that he led her to Christ and cast the demon out in 1964. Yet he credits this woman, while unsaved and demon-possessed, with healing him of a back injury and leading the church into “the healing of memories.”

One of the early books “refuting” *Seduction* was *The Church Divided* (1986), edited by Jungian psychologist and pastor Robert Wise. He tells of learning “healing of the memories” from Rosalind Rinker, who learned it from Agnes Sanford, whom Wise praises and defends. The “Jesus” he visualized suddenly began to act on its own. Says Wise, “I no longer was creating the scene.” He had made contact with a spirit being, but not with the Jesus of the Bible. Among contributors to *The Church Divided* were Cho, Dennis Bennett, Mark Virkler (whose book *Dialogue With God*

seduces Christians into contact with demons masquerading as “God” and “Christ”), and William de Arteaga. The latter considers Sanford’s *The Healing Light* to be “among the first rank of Christian literature, along with *Pilgrim’s Progress* and *Saint Teresa’s Life*.” In *Past Life Visions* (1983) de Arteaga defends Sanford’s visualization and her belief in a pre-earth human existence. He suggests that Christianity accommodate Hinduism’s “karma/reincarnation,” which he seems to accept as a result of having induced “past-life regressions” in counselees. Such are those who stand together against *Seduction*! Sadly, Jimmy Swaggart seems to have joined their ranks.

In *Christian Meditation: Doorway to the Spirit* (1988), the latest book to “refute” *Seduction*, author Burton W. Seavey (foreword by Paul Yonggi Cho) does a clever job of isolating my quotes from their context and twisting meanings. He’s very convincing. Seavey defends Schuller, Cho’s occult “fourth dimension,” the idea that God uses “faith,” that we’re little gods, and Hill’s/Sanford’s visualization. He says the kingdom of God is “man’s spirit—a part of God placed within every infant birthed into this world.” He dismisses fears of Eastern mysticism, and claims that Christianity is itself an Eastern mystical religion. He teaches that unbelievers have access to the same God-powers as Christians—through *meditation*. This involves entering the alpha level of altered consciousness, moving from left- into right-brain, deprogramming the subconscious, and visualization. The book is strongly endorsed by Harold N. Englund, C. E. director at Schuller’s “Crystal Cathedral,” who commends Seavey for “unravel[ing] some of the gross distortions in the work of Mr. Hunt.”

The above is only a small fraction of the growing apostasy. That such false teachers and unbiblical doctrines are being staunchly defended and promoted in the church today should put us all on our faces before Almighty God! May the Lord examine our hearts and help us to stand firm for His Truth. He is coming soon!

Victory Over Sin

Dave Hunt

Torn between their sincere desire to serve and honor their Lord and the inner turmoil of fleshly lusts and the seductive pull of worldly pleasures and honors, many Christians struggle to live for Christ. For them, Christianity involves great effort, little joy, much frustration and disillusionment, and the loss (when they have enough will power to deny themselves) of so much they once enjoyed in life. They struggle to avoid Paul's list of "don'ts" in Colossians 3:5-8: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry...put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." Failing repeatedly, they repent remorsefully and puzzle over their inability to live as they know they should—but seemingly can't.

They fare no better with Paul's list of "do's" that follows (vv 12-25): "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving...put on charity....Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly....And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him...[etc.]"

Is it really possible to be sweet, kind, humble, loving and forgiving at all times? The spirit is willing, but the flesh proves ever to be embarrassingly weak. How can one live up to the high standards the Bible sets for Christian living? Is there some secret to victory we are overlooking?

The two key expressions, "mortify" in verse 5 and "put on" in verse 12, only increase the bewilderment and sense of failure. Is it really possible to "put to death" ungodly desires and, shedding that body of evil, as it were, to be clothed in a resurrection body of godliness? Surely Paul, led of the Holy Spirit, is not

taunting us with goals that cannot be attained and that, in fact, are not at all practical. Was he not, himself, an example of this kind of life, and did he not say more than once, "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1, etc.)? Then why do we fail? From whence comes the motivation and the strength to accomplish what is at once so desirable and yet so seemingly impossible?

There is a general failure to recognize the importance of one little word that occurs in both verses 5 and 12. It holds the answer to our dilemma. Paul does not say, "Mortify your members" and "Put on...bowels of mercies, kindness...." That would impose a "do-it-yourself" religion of gritting one's teeth in determination and struggling to live up to high moral standards—no different from the atheist's or Buddhist's attempt to do the same. That is not Christianity! Paul carefully and pointedly says, "Mortify *therefore*... Put on *therefore*...." Clearly *therefore* refers to something that Paul is convinced gives the Christian the motivation and power to do what he is commanding and lifts the Christian above the impossible struggle of flesh trying to live a godly life. It is, *therefore*, the Christian's secret to a happy, fruitful and holy life pleasing to God.

The mortifying of the old deeds and the putting on of the new is possible only because, as the previous verses declare, "Ye are dead, and...your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:2). Certainly the same thing could not be said of the followers of Buddha, Mohammed, Krishna, et al. Christianity is thus unique and separated from all religions. Herein lies the secret dynamic of the Christian life. Why, then, doesn't every Christian experience this power in daily living? Sadly, many who call themselves Christians have a very superficial understanding of the gospel they claim to have embraced: "[H]ow that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day..." (1 Cor 15:3-4).

For many who believe that Christ died

for their sins, this event is more mystical than historical. The horrible death of the Cross is something that happened to Christ but which has only a theoretical rather than practical connection to them. They have such a faulty understanding of what Christ's death means that they are not true Christians at all. They have imagined that the death of Christ in their place delivered them from their deserved eternal punishment in hell, so that, like Barabbas, they could live as they pleased. They have never desired what Paul rejoiced in: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

Paul was not expressing an inspiring but empty platitude. For that great apostle, the Cross was no mere religious symbol, but the place where he had died to life as he would have lived it and had begun to experience the very life of Christ being lived in him. He knew that Christ gives *resurrection* life; *therefore* only those who have died can experience it. With wonder, amazement and deep gratitude he realized that Christ had actually taken his place before a righteous, holy God—and that God had put Christ to death in payment for his (Paul's) sins. *Therefore*, Paul was a dead man. Christ's death in his place was literally his own death, and he rejoiced in that fact. If he was to experience life thereafter, it must be the resurrected Christ living in him.

The transformation in Paul was at once remarkable, yet not surprising. The most seductive temptation Satan can devise will arouse no response from a dead man. Insult a dead man to his face, and he will not retaliate in anger. As a dead man, Paul experienced a new freedom over sin that he had never known before! Yet, in spite of being dead, Paul was more alive than he had ever been: "I am crucified...nevertheless, I live." Dead to sin, he was alive to God through Christ. So real was this to Paul, that it was as though Christ himself were living in him—and, indeed, He was! Christ had become his very life—and this, said Paul,

was what Christianity was all about!

Paul reminded the saints at Colosse that victory over sin and self was not possible through willpower and fleshly struggle. True victory could only come through understanding and believing what it really meant that Christ had died for their sins and been resurrected for their justification. Paul declared that this was the secret of his own complete transformation—and so it must be with them.

But how could Christ's death, burial and resurrection be as real to them as it was to Paul—so real that their very lives would be totally transformed? Paul explained: They must believe that Christ was *coming* any moment to take them to heaven, where they would thereafter appear with Him in glory! It was the hope of Christ's imminent return that would make the difference between victory and defeat in the Christian life!

That this hope is the key to victorious living is clear. Notice again Paul's staggering declaration: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory[!] Mortify *therefore*...." That was such a vibrant hope and of such certain accomplishment that Paul began this entire section with the statement, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (vv 1-2). Herein lay the secret to the godly life that Paul himself lived and expected of the Colossians as well. They were to be so heavenly minded that the things of this earth would have no appeal and thus no power over them.

Nor was this orientation away from earth toward heaven to be merely a "mental attitude" they had adopted without any basis in reality. It was not wishful "positive thinking," but *truth* that would change their lives. Through Christ's cross Christians have been crucified to the world and the world has been crucified to them, as Paul had firmly declared (Gal 6:14). A man who has just been taken down, dead, from a cross has no interest in this world nor does it

have any claims upon him. The person crucified and those who crucified him have nothing further to do with each other. So it is with the Christian and the world through the cross of Christ. The vicious hatred this world has for Christ, and its irreconcilable animosity against all that He stands for, have been fully exposed in its rejection and crucifixion of our Lord. Christ declared that the world would hate and persecute us as it had Him (Jn 15:18-20; 16:2; 17:14). By His cross we have been cut off from this world just as surely as He has been.

Death, however, did not end it all. Christ rose triumphant from the grave and ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. Moreover, He is coming again in power and glory to judge and take vengeance upon those who have rejected Him—and we, who have identified ourselves with Him in His rejection and death, will participate in His triumph and glory. Nor is that Second Coming so far in the future that it has no practical meaning for us now. On the contrary, it could occur today. The glorious fulfillment of the hope that the gospel has instilled within our hearts could burst upon us at any moment! This fact causes eternity to invade the present and makes the Christian no longer of this world!

Hear Paul say it again: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Consenting to be dead and willing for Christ to be their life was not only the Colossians' basis for victory, but the essential meaning of the gospel they must embrace. Otherwise, there could be no salvation. Without that they were mere Barabbases, grateful that Christ had died *in their place*, but mistakenly assuming that they had been "saved" in order to live for self. If they were not willing to acknowledge Christ's death as their very own and to give up life as they would have lived it so that Christ could become their life, then they could not experience the victory over sin and self that Paul preached. Indeed, they had not consented to the message of the gospel at all!

And what made the fact of their death,

burial and resurrection with Christ the dynamic power that transformed their lives? It was this promise: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Once that truth had gripped their hearts so that His "appearing" had become their daily expectation and hope, Christ's death and resurrection were so real to them in the present that they were changed into new persons. As such, Paul told them, they were to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (vv 1-2). May we each pursue that challenge wholeheartedly!

The "pretribulation Rapture" is thus no mere hair-splitting thesis for theologians to discuss, or a theory without practical effect. It is the overlooked secret to victory in the Christian's life. John said, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (1 Jn 3:3). Paul indicated that it had been his love of Christ's appearing that had motivated him to holiness and faithfulness and had made him victorious—and that the same "crown of righteousness" was for "all them also that love his [Christ's] appearing" (2 Tim 4:8). On the other hand, Christ associated wickedness with failing to love His appearing: "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken..." (Mt 24:48,49).

Let us diligently and enthusiastically "seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Let us "set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Why? "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil 3:20-21). Praise God!

Jews, Gentiles & the Church

Dave Hunt

Before the cross of Christ, mankind was divided into two groups: *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The Old and New Testaments both make very clear what caused this distinction. It was the covenants God had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and with their descendants through Moses. These covenants were *for Israel alone* and separated her from all other nations on the face of the earth, making God's "chosen people" absolutely unique. Israel was segregated from other peoples by the Mosaic law and by her special relationship with the One who calls Himself "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Lv 20:24,26, etc.).

The important distinction between Jews and Gentiles is maintained consistently throughout the Bible: "...so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Ex 33:16); "...for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine" (Lv 20:26); "And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his...own people for ever" (1 Chr 17:21-22); "...ye [Gentiles] were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God..." (Eph 2:12).

After the Cross a new entity came into existence—the *church* that Jesus Christ promised He would build (Mt 16:18). As a result, there are now three divisions of mankind: *Jews*, *Gentiles* and the *church*. Paul tells us that we are to "Give none offence, neither to the *Jews*, nor to the *Gentiles*, nor to the *church of God*" (1 Cor 10:32). It is absolutely essential to understand that these three groups exist side by side in today's world, to distinguish between them, and to recognize that God deals with each differently.

Essential also is an understanding that the church was created through offering to both Jews and Gentiles a "new covenant" relationship with God. This

did not bring Gentiles under the Jewish Mosaic law (as some erroneously teach), but delivered from it those coming into the church, both Jews and Gentiles. Paul explains that Gentiles who were "aliens ...of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" have been "made nigh [to God] by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13). God has "broken down the middle wall of partition between [Jew and Gentile]; having abolished in his flesh the [Mosaic] law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [Jew and Gentile] one new man" (Eph 2:11-22).

These scriptures (and many others) make it clear that the church did not replace Israel, but came into existence as a new and third entity comprised of both Jews and Gentiles and distinct from each. As surely as Gentiles continue to exist outside the church, so does Israel, with all of God's promises and plans for her remaining in full force. God also has unique plans for the church, differing from those for either Israel or the Gentile nations.

A major error of Reconstructionists such as North, Rushdoony, DeMar and Bahnsen (an error that is also taught by Jay Grimstead's Coalition on Revival) is their claim that the law of Moses was for all mankind; and that it provides the moral basis both for the civil government of Romans 13 and for the conduct of Christians today. On the contrary, the law which unsaved civil magistrates enforce under Romans 13 could *not* be the Mosaic law, because that was given exclusively to the Jews. It is rather the moral law that Romans 2 says is written by God in every human conscience.

That the Mosaic law was never intended for Gentiles and is not applicable to the church is clear from many scriptures in addition to those quoted above. Consider: "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them...[and] hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law" (Dt 4:7-8); "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them"

(Ps 147:19-20). As already noted, the Mosaic "law of commandments" that distinguished Israel from the rest of the world was "abolished" by the cross of Christ in the process of creating the church out of both Jews and Gentiles who have been made into "one new man."

Failure to accept the above teaching of Scripture leads to grievous errors which plagued the early church and are being revived today. Foremost, of course, is *legalism*—the idea that to be a Christian one must obey the laws of Moses. This causes confusion both as to justification and sanctification: the means of being delivered from sin's future penalty, and from its present power in our lives. The Scripture makes it clear that neither of these involves keeping the Law. The suggestion of "Judaizers," that the church was under the Mosaic law, was rejected as heresy by the apostles and elders when they met in Jerusalem specifically to consider this subject shortly after Pentecost (Acts 15). Paul thoroughly refuted the Judaizers' teachings in his Epistle to the Galatians.

Certainly through keeping the Law "there shall no flesh be justified" (Rom 3:20). Justification comes as a free gift of God's grace through the finished work of Christ. Nor can one be sanctified (i.e., gain the victory over the practice of sin) by keeping the Law, because of the weakness of human flesh. The good news is that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God accomplished in "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" (Rom 8:3-4). The New Testament presents to the Christian a much higher standard of moral and ethical conduct than that of the Mosaic law. We are empowered to live this higher standard because Christ himself, by the Holy Spirit, has come to indwell our hearts and to live through us a supernatural life pleasing to God. The glorious result is the death of self and a new life of faith (Gal 2:20) that produces the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

There are many serious consequences to the growing delusion that the church is Israel. Christ said that those who "say

they are Jews, and are not” are in fact “the synagogue of Satan” (Rv 2:9,3:9)! Some of those who teach this lie (like Greg Bahnsen) are brilliant. He has his doctorate in philosophy from USC. Yet the errors they make are so elementary as to betray a basic anti-Jewish sentiment, which they deny, but which seems to have blinded them to the obvious.

Bahnsen, for example, quotes Psalm 89:34 (“My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.”) to prove his contention that “God’s covenant is one unchanging moral code through Old and New Testaments” (*By This Standard*, p 44). Yet Psalm 89 has nothing whatsoever to do with a *moral code* but is all about the covenant God made with David that “His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me” (v 36). This is the covenant the angel Gabriel reaffirmed in telling Mary that the One conceived in her of the Holy Spirit would reign on the throne of His father David—a covenant which Bahnsen perversely claims is no longer in force in spite of the very verse he misapplies which declares that it is!

Bahnsen habitually quotes Jesus’s statement, “...one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law...,” to support his contention that the church is under the Mosaic law, but deliberately leaves out the rest of the sentence. Far from teaching that the Law would always be in force, Christ declared that it *would pass away when it was fulfilled*, and that He had come *to fulfill it*: “I am [not] come to destroy the law...but to *fulfill* [it]....One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, *till all be fulfilled*” (Mt 5:17-18). His life, death, burial and resurrection accomplished this fulfillment and made possible the new covenant relationship with God whereby those in the church are “justified by faith without the deeds of law” (Rom 3:21-30). Does this “make void the law”? No, it “establish[es] the law” (v 31) as that which made Israel unique. That same law was the barrier between Jew and Gentile and is still applicable to Jews, but for those now in the church, both Jews and Gentiles, it has been fulfilled and abolished in Christ.

Those who teach that the church is Israel go on to claim that the church is heir to all of the promises given to Israel. This is as ludicrous as claiming that “the land of Israel” is now “the land of the church.” Clearly the church has no relationship to the land God gave to Israel. Hear God’s promise: “...though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee...He that scattered Israel will gather him...they shall come and sing in the height of Zion...they shall not sorrow *any more at all*” (Jer 30:10-11; 31:3-14; etc.)

The preservation of the Israelis as an identifiable people, in spite of the proverbial “wandering Jews” 2,500-year diaspora from the promised land, and the establishment of Israel in 1948, constitute irrefutable proof for the existence of the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” and the validity of His Holy Word. Therefore, to insist that Israel no longer has any claim to her ancient homeland, and that her return thereto is a mere coincidence, denies one of the most persuasive arguments for belief in God and the gospel. It dishonors Him and His Word, and is not only illogical but evil!

My language may seem strong, but it is justified in view of the monstrous errors that grow from this one delusion, as well as by the severity of Christ’s “synagogue of Satan” indictment. It may seem innocent enough to claim for the church 2 Chronicles 7:14, but this scripture that has become such a popular favorite simply does not apply to the church. While Christians may make spiritual applications to themselves from God’s admonition to Israel to “humble themselves, and pray, and seek [His] face, and turn from their wicked ways,” the “land” He promised to heal as a result was *Israel and only Israel*, not the United States or any other country.

Gary North’s latest book, *When Justice is Aborted*, begins with God’s promise to Joshua that He would help him to conquer the land of Canaan—then, on that basis, in a typical reconstruction/kingdom/dominion misapplication of

Scripture, justifies a Christian takeover of the world. The Forceful Men organization, codirected by muscleman John Jacobs, recently sponsored a large conference in Phoenix featuring leading charismatic speakers who promoted the same error. God’s exhortation to Joshua to “go in and possess the land [of Canaan]” was presented as inspiration and justification for a “Joshua generation” of macho-minded Christians taking over America and the world. In fact, Joshua himself had no authority from God to take over any land outside of the prescribed boundaries specifically given to Israel (Gn 15:18-21; Nm 34:1-12; etc.).

I know of no better way for Christians to clarify in their hearts and minds the important points above than to personally visit Israel with God’s Word in hand. There you will see the Bible being fulfilled today before the eyes of the world in “the promised land.” I confess that I used to consider Christian tours of the Holy Land a needless luxury and wanted no part of them. Last June, however, my wife Ruth and I joined a tour of Jordan, Israel and Egypt at the persuasion of a friend. It was an awesomely inspiring and informative experience.

The second coming of Christ becomes clouded in confusion if we fail to remember that the Lord comes in a different and specific manner for “*Jews, Gentiles and the church of God*.” For His bride He comes secretly to “rapture” her to His Father’s house of many mansions, where He has prepared an eternal dwelling place for her. For Israel, in the midst of God’s judgment for her rejection of her Messiah, surrounded by the armies of the world and about to be destroyed, He comes visibly in power to rescue her, to judge her Gentile enemies, and to establish the millennial kingdom with headquarters in Jerusalem. May God help us to “love His appearing” and to witness with a clear voice concerning these soon-coming events.

The Trinity

Dave Hunt

Many Christians are at a loss to understand, much less to defend, the “Trinity.” Critics argue that that word is not even found in the Bible. To deal with that issue, we must begin with God, as the Bible itself does. There are two general concepts of God: (1) pantheism/naturalism, that the universe itself is God; and (2) supernaturalism, that the Creator is distinct from His creation. Within these are two more opposing views: (1) polytheism, that there are many gods; and (2) monotheism, that there is only one true God.

Monotheism itself is divided into two rival beliefs: (1) that God is a single being; and (2) that God has always existed in three Persons who are separate and distinct yet One. Obviously, Christians are the only ones who hold the latter view—and even some who call themselves Christians reject it. Yet it is the only logically and philosophically coherent view of God possible.

Pantheism has the same fatal flaws as atheism. If everything is God, to be God has lost all meaning and so nothing is God. The problems with polytheism are equally obvious. There is no real God who is in charge, so the many gods fight wars and steal one another’s wives. There’s no basis for morals, truth or peace in heaven or earth. Polytheism’s basic problem is *diversity without unity*.

The belief that God is a single being is held by both Muslims and Jews, who insist that Allah and Jehovah are single entities. It is also held by pseudo-Christian cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons—and by various aberrant Christian groups who also deny the deity of Christ. Some Pentecostals claim that God is a single being and that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are God’s three “titles” or “offices.” Here we have *unity without diversity*.

That God must have *both unity and diversity* is clear. The Allah of Islam and the Jehovah of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jews, for instance, is incomplete in himself, unable to experience love, fellowship

and communion before creating beings with whom he could have these experiences. The Bible says that “God is love.” But the God of Islam and Judaism could not be love in and of himself—for whom could he love when he was alone before creation?

This belief that God is a single entity (Unitarianism) and not three Persons existing eternally in one God (Trinitarianism) was first formulated in the early church around A.D.220. by a Libyan theologian named Sabellius. He attempted to retain biblical language concerning Father, Son and Holy Spirit without acknowledging the triune nature of God. Sabellius claimed that God existed as a single Being who manifested Himself in three activities, modes or aspects: as Father in the creation, as Son in redemption, and as Holy Spirit in prophecy and sanctification. This heresy, though condemned by the vast majority of Christians, survives to this day.

The Bible presents a God who did not need to create any beings to experience love, communion and fellowship. This God is complete in Himself, being three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, separate and distinct, yet at the same time eternally one God. They loved and communed and fellowshiped with each other and took counsel together before the universe, angels or man were brought into existence. Isaiah “heard the voice of the Lord [in eternity past] saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Is 6:8). Moses revealed the same counseling together of the Godhead: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”; and again, “Let us go down, and there confound their language” (Gn 1:26;11:7). Who is this “us” if God is a single entity? Why does God say, “The man is become as one of us” (Gn 3:22)?

Moreover, if God is a single Being, then why is the plural Hebrew noun *elohim* (literally “gods”) used for God repeatedly? In fact, this plural noun is in the center of Israel’s famous confession of the *oneness* of God! The *Shema* declares, “Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God is one LORD” (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29). In the

Hebrew it reads, “Jehovah our *elohim* [gods] is one [*echad*] Jehovah.” The Hebrew word *echad* allows for a unity of more than one. For example, it is used in Genesis 2:24 where man and woman become *one* flesh; in Exodus 36:13 when the various parts “became *one* tabernacle”; in 2 Samuel 2:25 when many soldiers “became *one* troop”; and elsewhere.

Nor is the word *elohim* the only way in which God’s plurality is presented. For example: Psalm 149:2, “Let Israel rejoice in him that made him” (literally “makers”); Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Remember now thy Creator (lit. “creators”); and Isaiah 54:5, “For thy Maker is thine husband (lit. “makers, husbands”). Unitarianism has no explanation for this consistent presentation of God’s plurality all through the Old Testament. Although the word “trinity” does not occur in the Bible, the concept is clearly there, providing the unity and diversity which makes possible the love, fellowship and communion within the Godhead. Truly the trinitarian God is love—and He alone.

Jesus said, “The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand” (Jn 3:35). God’s love is not just toward mankind but first of all among the three Persons of the Godhead. And three *Persons* they must be. Father, Son and Holy Spirit can’t be mere offices, titles or modes in which God manifests Himself, for such cannot love, consult and fellowship together. Not only the Son is presented as a Person, but so are the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Bible presents each as having His own personality: each wills, acts, loves, cares, can be grieved or become angry. “Offices” or “titles” don’t do that! Unitarianism isn’t biblical—and it robs the Godhead of the necessary qualities of true Deity.

Godhead? Is that a biblical term? Yes, indeed. It occurs three times in the King James New Testament in Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20, and Colossians 2:9. In contrast to *theos*, which is used consistently throughout the New Testament for “God,” three different but related Greek words occur in these verses (*theios*, *theiotes*, *theotes*), which the King James translators (here’s another reason for

preferring the KJV!) carefully designated by the special word, *Godhead*. That very term indicates a plurality of being. Paul wrote, “In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9). Did he simply mean that in Christ dwelt all the fullness of Himself? That would be like saying that in me dwells all the fullness of me. Well, of course it does—so why say it, and what does it really mean? Nothing!

Does it simply mean that in Christ dwells all the fullness of Deity as non-KJV translations render it? That, too, would be redundant—or it would detract from the deity of Christ. For if Christ is intrinsically God, then what is the point of saying that “in Him dwells all the fullness of deity”? Of course it does! But if Christ is the Son and there are two other persons in the Godhead, then it does mean something. It means that just as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, so when the Son became man He brought that fullness of the *Godhead* with Him into flesh.

In Romans 1:20 Paul argues that God’s “eternal power and Godhead” are seen in the creation He made. God’s eternal power—but His *Godhead*? Yes, as Dr. Wood pointed out years ago in *The Secret of the Universe*, the triune nature of God is stamped on His creation. The cosmos is divided into three: space, matter and time. Each of these is divided into three. Space, for instance, is composed of length, breadth and width, each separate and distinct in itself, yet the three are one. Length, breadth and width are not three spaces, but three dimensions comprising one space. Run enough lines lengthwise and you take in the whole. But so it is with the width and height. Each is separate and distinct, yet each is all of space—just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is each God.

Time also is a trinity: past, present and future—two invisible and one visible. Each is separate and distinct, yet each is the whole. Man himself is a trinity of spirit, soul and body, two of which are invisible, one visible. Many more details could be given of the Godhead’s trinity reflected in the universe. It can hardly be coincidence.

The Hebrew word *elohim* (gods) occurs about 2,500 times in the Old Testament, while the singular form occurs only 250 times and most of those designate false gods. Genesis 1:1 reads, “In the beginning, *elohim* created the heaven and the earth”; i.e., literally, “*gods* created the heaven and the earth.” Though a single noun is available, yet the plural form is consistently used for God. And in violation of grammatical rules, with few exceptions, *singular verbs and pronouns* are used with this *plural noun*. Why?

At the burning bush it was *elohim* (gods) who spoke to Moses. Yet *elohim* did not say, “We are that we are,” but “I AM THAT I AM” (Ex 3:14). One cannot escape the fact that, all through the Bible, God is presented as a plurality and yet as One, as having *both diversity and unity*. This is unique among all the world’s religions! To reject the Trinity is to reject the God of the Bible.

The New Testament presents three Persons who are distinct, yet each is recognized as God. At the same time we have repeatedly the clear statement that there is only one true God. Christ prays to the Father. Is He praying to Himself? “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn 4:14). Did He send Himself? Worse yet, did one “office” pray to and send a “title”? Father, Son and Holy Spirit each has distinct functions, yet each works only in conjunction with the others. Christ said, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself [on my own initiative]: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (Jn 14:10); “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter...even the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:16-17). Throughout the New Testament, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each separately honored and act as God, yet only in concert with one another.

The Old Testament also presents three Persons in the Godhead interacting. For example: “Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens....From the time that it was, there am I: and now

the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me” (Is 48:12-16). The One speaking through Isaiah refers to Himself as “the first and the last” and the Creator of all, so He must be God. But He speaks of two others in the same passage who must also be God: “the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.” Jesus presented a similar passage to the Pharisees (Mt 22:41-46) when He asked them who the Messiah was, and they said, “The Son of David.” He then quoted, “The LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Ps 110:1). Then Jesus asked them, “If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” The Pharisees were speechless. Unitarianism cannot explain these two “Lords.”

It is a mystery how God can exist in three Persons yet be one God; but it is also a mystery how God could have no beginning and create everything out of nothing. We can’t understand what a human soul or spirit is. Nor can we explain love or beauty or justice. It is beyond human capacity to comprehend the full nature of God’s being. But neither can we understand what it means for us or anything else to *exist*—nor can we comprehend what space *is* or what time *is* or matter *is*. For every door science opens, there are ten more unopened doors on the other side. The more we learn, the more rapidly the unknown expands before us like receding images in a hall of mirrors. The Jehovah’s Witnesses and other Unitarians argue that because the Trinity can’t be understood it can’t be. But the fact that it is beyond human comprehension is no reason for rejecting what the Bible so consistently presents to us. God is telling us about Himself so we can believe in and know Him. We dare not reject what He says or lower it to the level of our finite minds.

Christian Activism: Is It Biblical?

Dave Hunt

Increasing numbers of Christians are engaging in social and political activism for the astonishing purpose of attempting to coerce an ungodly society into adopting Christian standards of conduct. "Operation Rescue" is one example. Its founder, Randall Terry, explains that its purpose is to create social upheaval and thereby pressure government into changing the abortion laws. A typical brochure declares, "Rescues help produce the social tension necessary for political change...whether for good or bad, political change comes after groups of Americans bring enough tension to the nation and pressure on politicians that the laws are changed."

No matter how commendable the goal of such tactics, there is *not one example in the entire Bible* of political or social activism ever being advocated or used by God's people. That fact must weigh heavily upon any consideration of this important topic. There are numerous cases of *civil disobedience* in Scripture, but it was *never* engaged in for the purpose of forcing an ungodly society to obey biblical principles. The Hebrew midwives, for example, disobeyed Pharaoh's edict and spared the lives of the male babies, even lying to cover up their "rescue operation." God was so pleased with their obedience to Him that their names, Shiphrah and Puah, have been preserved for us (Ex 1:15-22). This was, however, a matter of *individual conscience* before God, *not* an organized attempt to pressure the pagan Egyptians by mass demonstrations into adopting Israel's God-given morals.

The same is true of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's refusal to obey the king's command to bow to an idol, and of Daniel's defiance of the royal decree against prayer. Though boldly witnessing for God even to kings, Daniel *never* used his high government position to attempt to pressure a pagan society to abandon its evil practices to begin a godly way of life. Nor did Joseph or Esther pressure the pagan societies, in which they held high

positions, to adopt biblical morals. So it was with Ezra and Nehemiah. They used their influence with kings to obtain permission to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, but made no attempt to change the practices of those societies though they practiced abortion, homosexuality, and other evils.

There are *no biblical examples* to support today's "Christian activism." Christ "*suffered* for us, leaving us *an example that ye should follow his steps.*" He sternly and repeatedly rebuked Israel's false religious leaders, yet He *never* spoke out—*not even once*—against the injustices of Roman civil authority! Nor did He advocate, organize, or engage in any public protests to pressure Rome into changing its corrupt system, or the society of His day its evil ways. He submitted to unjust authorities as Romans 13 tells us we should do today: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pt 2:21-25). No "activism" here! So it was with the apostles and the early church.

Yes, Paul told the centurion, who was about to have him unlawfully scourged, that he was a Roman citizen; and he told the local officials at Philippi to come and apologize for beating him and Silas without trial. That was not, however, political/social activism. He was not attempting thereby to change society. He was simply standing up for his personal rights under the law (as we also should do), and that includes voting. Paul was determined to obey God rather than men and never held back from preaching the gospel, though it meant his life. If Christian activism is God's will, Paul would have been the first to pursue it fearlessly at whatever cost.

Scripture, then, from Genesis to Revelation, offers neither example nor doctrinal teaching to support the idea that Christians ought to engage in political/social activism, lobbying, the takeover methods of Coalition on Revival—or that Christians in public office could or should influence society to adopt biblical standards of conduct. Don't forget, any change would have to be effected through a corrupt political system involving an ungodly majority above and below. Romans 13

tells us to obey rulers, and 1 Timothy 2 to pray for them—not to attempt to change them by coercion. It is not only foolish but counterproductive to attempt to persuade the unsaved to live like Christians. They can't do it—and if they could it would only blind them the more to their sin and need of a Savior.

Acts 19:23-41 tells how a large group of citizens in Ephesus staged a huge "demonstration" against Paul and the gospel he preached. A crowd of probably several thousand persons tore their clothes, threw dust in the air and for two hours vociferously chanted their praise to the locally manufactured god that was their chief source of income. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" they cried. Should Paul have gathered a larger crowd of Christians to cry out yet more loudly and longer and thereby impose their will upon the local authorities? Of course not! Such un-Christian conduct is demeaning of our Lord and His gospel and would have been unthinkable for the early church. Yet that is basically what Christian activism involves today—the well-meaning but foolish attempt to force "Christian principles" upon a godless society through more effective lobbying, larger demonstrations and greater social upheaval than the homosexuals, abortionists or pornographers can produce.

Rather than pressure the ungodly to live like saints, we must win them to Christ that they might live wholly by God. Our *personal lives* must be lived in obedience to God's laws even if that brings us into conflict with civil laws. In addition to avoiding idolatry and immorality, Christians must *preach the gospel* to everyone everywhere, regardless of government edicts to the contrary. In so doing, the apostles made that historic declaration: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)! Their example has been followed by Christians down through the centuries, from the martyrs under pagan Rome and its successor, Roman Catholicism, to those who smuggle Bibles into Islamic or communist lands.

Though forbidden by the authorities, the apostles persisted in preaching the gospel. Like their Lord, however, they

made no attempt to lobby in Rome for an end to prostitution and abortions; nor did they stage public demonstrations for a change in unjust laws. There is a danger of being so caught up in the social aspect of good causes that one forgets and neglects the chief Christian calling. The Great Commission does not involve exerting a Christian influence upon society. We are not to “change society,” but to “convert individuals.” There is much talk today about “changing the world for Christ.” In fact there is no biblical teaching or example to support that popular slogan. Rather than persuading sinners to live like saints, we must call them to heavenly citizenship through “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

But aren't we supposed to be “salt and light” in the world (Mt 5:13-16)? Yes, Christ said so. To understand what He meant, we must look to Him as our perfect example. Jesus, “the light of the world,” never advocated or tried to effect social/political change. His *light* reveals sin and leads men to salvation, fitting them for heaven (Eph 5:8-13). *Salt* purifies the wound that light reveals and proves.

Significant changes in society have been effected by preaching and example. Nevertheless, the abolition of slavery, the enactment of child labor laws and greater rights for women, while improvements to be thankful for, have not made society any more godly. Nor is it any more likely under these better conditions that a higher percentage of mankind will end up in heaven than before. While such changes are worth working for, many who call themselves Christians have become so absorbed in good causes that they have lost their fervor for saving souls. They have ended up joining forces with non-Christians who also espouse “traditional values” and in promoting a compromised “social gospel” that cannot save.

Yet the good that social/political activism often produces is a strong motivation for engaging in it. Many Christians were involved in the civil rights movement that finally ended segregation. Surely it is not wrong for Christians to engage in such activities! Certainly the innocent babies that are being murdered in abortion clinics, just as the Jews were in Nazi extermination camps, ought to be rescued! Should Christians do nothing? Is there no basis

in Scripture for helping those who are downtrodden?

Yes, the Bible warns us: “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?” (Prv 24:11-12). The parable of the good Samaritan, too, tells us that we ought to care for all those who are in need of help, even as Christ commands: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” These principles come under God's law written in the consciences of all mankind: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mk 12:31).

We ought to do all we can to rescue babies who are being aborted, just as we would seek to rescue anyone in danger. The Bible doesn't tell us what individual saints may have done in this regard because it is not specifically a Christian task nor is it something that has been assigned to the church, but is the responsibility of every person. Moreover, “rescues” should be engaged in to save lives—not for the purpose of creating “social upheaval” to coerce an evil society into adopting biblical standards. Even persuading oppressive communist regimes to grant greater freedom can have unforeseen malignant side effects.

Suddenly Gorbachev is granting freedom of worship and preaching in the Soviet Union comparable to what we have enjoyed in the West. What are his motives? Like Constantine in ancient Rome, he finds this necessary for the good of the empire—and may even think that freedom would destroy the church even more effectively than oppression. Indeed, such has been the case. Sadly, many Soviet Christians who have managed to bring their families out to the West and who have initially thanked God for liberty, have lost their children to drugs, free sex, pride, lust, and worldliness—and that seems to be a greater hazard for believers in the West's “freedom” than under communist oppression.

Today's Christian activism is far too narrow and selective. It addresses certain issues but ignores many others of equal or greater importance. We must not only rescue the unborn but the children in public schools who are being perverted through

the teaching of immorality, witchcraft, and occultism. We must identify psychology as the major vehicle of so much of this evil, and root it out of our churches, seminaries and universities.

We must denounce sin, call for national repentance, and preach the gospel in convicting power. Christians must call for repentance not only for homosexuality, child abuse, pornography and abortion but for more subtle forms of rebellion against God and rejection of Christ. The church must be indicted both for its lack of social concern and for its heresies and failure to preach the truth. We must denounce the destructive false teachings that abound. It is hypocritical for the church to protest the world's sins while tolerating and even honoring within its ranks those who preach a false gospel and are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Instead of protesters we need prophets who call the world to repentance: Enochs who walk with God and warn of judgment (Heb 11:5; Jude 14-15); Noahs, preachers of righteousness (2 Pt 2:5), who warn of judgment to come and invite sinners into an ark of safety. What if, instead of building the ark, Noah had tried to reform society! We need Daniels: “Mene, mene, tekel upharsin”—the handwriting is on the wall, America! You've been weighed in the balance and found wanting! Murdered babies, the abomination of homosexuality, and society's flippant, deliberate rebellion against God have aroused His anger beyond any possibility of reprieve! We need Isaiahs and Jeremiahs who had never heard of making a “positive confession” or of the “power of positive or possibility thinking,” but preached truth!

“Christian activism” is not Christian. It represents a detour from the straight path the church is to walk before the world. It can confuse the real issues, lead to compromise and unholy alliances, and divert time and effort that would better be used in proclaiming the gospel. Weigh the demands upon your time and set priorities. Be fully engaged in rescuing souls for eternity.

Christmas & Christ

Dave Hunt

Christmas as generally celebrated today is one of many carry-overs from Roman Catholicism that survived the Reformation. Historian Will Durant reminds us that Roman Catholicism grew out of the merger between paganism and Christianity which took place under Constantine in the early 300s. Commenting upon the resulting “Christianization” of the Roman Empire, which Reconstructionists such as Coalition on Revival (COR) director Jay Grimstead look back to fondly as a model of what they hope to achieve, Durant wrote:

Paganism survived...in the form of ancient rites and customs condoned...by an often indulgent Church....Statues of Isis and Horus were renamed Mary and Jesus...the Saturnalia [Festival of Saturn in celebration of the winter solstice] was replaced by Christmas celebration... [I]ncense, lights, flowers, processions, vestments...which had pleased the people in older [pagan] cults were domesticated and cleansed in the Ritual of the Church....

In spite of its pagan/Roman Catholic origins and crass commercialization, we can rejoice that Christmas annually brings a reminder of the Savior’s birth. Unfortunately, however, Christmas festivities generally perpetuate the confusion concerning who Jesus Christ really is, why He came and what He accomplished. This is not surprising, considering the misunderstandings even among His own disciples at the first advent—and the far greater confusion which the Bible warns will precede His second coming. Indeed, the whole world—including millions of “Christians”—will follow and worship the Antichrist, convinced that he is the true Christ.

Christmas celebrations remind us that the same misunderstandings which prevented so many from recognizing Christ when He came to earth will prevail when He returns. The causes of confusion 1,900 years ago remain the key issues today: What is the Messiah’s true mission—and the nature of His kingdom? When, how and by whom will the Kingdom be established—and what is its relationship to Israel and the church? Many “Christians” today are blind in the same way as those

early “disciples” who turned from Christ because He didn’t meet their false messianic expectations.

Even John the Baptist became so disillusioned that he demanded of Christ, “Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?” (Mt 11:3). Such doubts seem impossible for the one whom God had sent to “prepare the way of the Lord”! Already filled with the Holy Spirit as a six-month old embryo, John had leaped in the womb of his mother Elizabeth upon hearing the voice of the virgin Mary, who had just learned that she would give birth to the Son of God. Called and inspired of God to be the “forerunner of the Messiah,” John testified, “He that sent me to baptize...said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he...and I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (Jn 1:33-34). Confident in that supernatural revelation, John boldly declared, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29). Yet the day came when, in despair, he sent two disciples to ask Christ whether He really was the Messiah after all!

Although given supernatural revelation as to His identity, John totally misunderstood Christ’s mission. Hadn’t the prophets said that the Messiah would set up His kingdom and reign in Jerusalem? Then why was *he*, the herald of the Messiah, in prison! John did not understand that Christ had come to die for our sins so that both Jew and Gentile, united in one church, could go to heaven. Nor did he comprehend that there had to be a *Second Coming*.

So it was with the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. Amazed, they watched the One whom they thought had all power, as, seemingly powerless, He was arrested, bound and led away. Obviously Jesus of Nazareth couldn’t be the Messiah after all! Dreams shattered, they fled for their lives. Likewise the two on the road to Emmaus: “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel...[but they] crucified him!” (Lk 24:19-24). His death, which we recognize today is the very heart of the gospel and without which we have no life, convinced Christ’s contemporaries that He could not possibly be the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

“If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe

him!” (Mt 27:40-44) was the jeering taunt of the bloodthirsty mob and the religious leaders gloating at the foot of His cross. “If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us!” echoed one of the thieves hanging beside him. Whom He came to save, from what, to what, and how was clearly not understood at the time by anyone—not even by His closest disciples.

When Christ tried to explain that He must die for the sins of the world, Peter rebuked Him for being so “negative.” Yet Peter, only moments before, had declared by revelation from the Father that Jesus was the Christ (Mt 16:16-17). Obviously he didn’t understand the Messiah’s mission, even though he knew who He was. “Get thee behind me, Satan!” (Mt 16:22-23). Christ had retorted quickly to Peter, showing the importance He put upon correcting such a gross misunderstanding of His mission.

So it was with those in Jerusalem (Jn 2:23-25) who “believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.” They believed He was the Messiah but had a false view of what that meant. “Jesus did not commit himself unto them” because He knew what was in their hearts and that they would not believe the truth. We see the same error in those in John 6, who, because Christ had healed and fed them, wanted to “take him by force to make him [their] king” (Jn 6:15). There were many who called themselves His “disciples” (today they would be called “Christians”) who had a false view of the Messiah, and when He tried to explain the truth to them, would not hear it but “went back and walked no more with him” (Jn 6:66).

We learn from Christ how to handle the multitudes who want to follow Him for the wrong reasons. We must do today what He did then. Many came “forward” to tell Jesus they believed in Him and would follow Him faithfully. Contrary to today’s methods, Christ didn’t have His disciples quickly sign up such persons as “church members” before they changed their minds, and get them involved in the choir or some committee in order to keep them active in the church. “The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but I have nowhere to lay my head” (Mt 8:20). Jesus told the eager would-be converts. “Are you certain you really want to follow me?” Such “negativism”!

“So you want to follow Me?” Christ would say. “Then let Me tell you where we’re going. I’m heading for a hill outside

Jerusalem called Calvary where they'll nail Me to a cross. So if you would be faithful to Me to the end, you might as well make up your mind: take up your cross right now, and follow Me, because that's where we're going!"

Today we're far too sophisticated to present the gospel in such negative terms. We've studied success motivation, psychology and Dale Carnegie courses in "How to Win Friends and Influence People" and consider such new techniques to be ideal for "winning people to Christ." So we fill the churches with multitudes who imagine that Christ's mission is to make them feel good about themselves by building up their self-esteem, answering their selfish prayers and fulfilling their self-centered agendas.

The Reconstruction/Kingdom/Dominionists are more confused than John the Baptist, though their error is similar. They refuse to walk in the rejection of Christ, bearing the reproach of His cross, because that would be "defeatism." They imagine we're in the millennial kingdom already and are supposed to act like "King's kids." They think it is our task to establish that Kingdom through taking "dominion" over the media, educational institutions and political leadership. The "signs and wonders" promoters, from Oral Roberts to John Wimber, imagine they are in the process of taking dominion over all disease and even over death itself without the resurrection and return of Christ.

It is all very positive, and ecumenical. Christian lobbyists such as Bob Grant of Christian Voice and the American Freedom Coalition in Washington, D.C. are willing to work with Moonies and Mormons and all others who are in favor of bringing traditional values back to America. And at Christmas time once again, being able to publicly display a cross or a creche in public becomes a rallying point—a very low common denominator indeed for ecumenical agreement. In defense of such folly, Christian leaders stoutly defend the correctness of working with all those "who call Jesus Lord." Seemingly forgotten are the words of Christ: "Many will say to me... Lord, Lord, have we not...in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me..." (Mt 7:22-23). There are multitudes, such as Mormons and Catholics (to say nothing of many Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, et al.) who call

Jesus "Lord" but are not saved.

On October 17, Paul and Jan Crouch welcomed three Catholics to their "Praise the Lord" program, two priests and a woman lay leader. Paul displayed his usual naiveté and incredible ignorance of theology by smoothing over any differences between Protestants and Catholics as "simply matters of semantics." In his eager embrace of Transubstantiation, a heresy so great that thousands died at the stake rather than accept it, he declared: "Well, we [Protestants] believe the same thing. So you see one of these things that has divided us all of these years [Transubstantiation] shouldn't have divided us all along because we were really meaning the same thing but just saying it a little differently....[am] eradicating the word "Protestant" even out of my vocabulary. ...I'm not protesting anything anymore...it is....time for Catholics and non-Catholics to come together as one in the Spirit and one in the Lord." But Catholics have a different gospel of salvation by works and ritual through the essential mediation of that Church.

Christmas, with its emphasis upon "baby Jesus," tends to perpetuate another serious Catholic heresy: the pernicious myth of Christ's subservience to His mother which Roman Catholicism has deliberately promoted for centuries. Mary certainly should be called "blessed" as the mother of our Lord—but she is not "Co-Mediatrix and "Co-Redemptrix" as Romanism teaches. In Catholic cathedrals throughout the world, for example, one quickly notices that the paintings, statuary and stained glass give Mary the dominant role. *She* is even at times shown on the cross as our Redeemer. Jesus is either a helpless babe on His mother's breast, a small child between her knees, or a lifeless victim of the Cross in her arms. Never is she in subjection to Him, and rarely if ever is He shown in the triumph of His resurrection. *She* is the "Queen of Heaven," where Jesus remains a child subject to her direction.

Typical is the beautiful thirteenth-century stained-glass window we recently observed in a church in France. At the top are the words *Le Pergatoire*, indicating that it is a depiction of "purgatory." Mary and Jesus are shown on a cloud (i.e., in heaven), with the tormented souls in the flames of purgatory below them, arms extended upward in supplication. Are they

crying out to *Christ* for help? No, they are appealing to *Mary*. *She* wears the regal crown.

And Jesus, the Lord of Glory, who triumphed over Satan at the Cross and now sits at the right hand of the Father—how is He depicted? *As a child about seven years old*, standing between the "Queen of Heaven's" knees! No wonder the souls in "purgatory" do not appeal to Him for help. At the bottom of the beautiful stained-glass depiction of this abomination are the words: *Mère Marie, sauvez nous!* ("Mother Mary, save us!")

Such heresy does not originate in the imaginations of the artists but in tradition and dogma not only tolerated but promoted by the Roman Catholic Church. The fear of purgatory is very real to a Catholic, and "Mary" has provided an escape for those faithful to her. She allegedly appeared to St. Simon Stock on July 16, 1251 and gave him what is known as "The Great Promise": "Whosoever dies wearing this Scapular [two pieces of brown cloth containing Mary's promise on one, her picture with "Baby Jesus" on the other, worn one in front, one in back, connected over the shoulder by two strings] shall not suffer eternal fire." Like the Mormon's magic underwear, the Catholic's scapular will supposedly accomplish what the death, burial and resurrection of Christ could not. In 1322, Pope John XXII received a further promise from "Mary" known as "The Sabbatine Privilege": "I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death and whomsoever I shall find in Purgatory [who died wearing the scapular], I shall free." St. Simon Stock's famous prayer ends thus: "O Sweet Heart of Mary, be our *salvation!*"

Christmas offers a rare opportunity to share the true gospel of Jesus Christ and to expose and correct the ecumenical and confused picture it presents annually to the world. Millions are seduced into thinking they are Christians because they have a sentimental feeling for the "baby Jesus." Let us remember what Christ said to those who believed on Him: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). It is that truth which we are called upon to proclaim in clarity and power.

End-Time Events

Dave Hunt

We have now entered the last decade of the second millennium since Christ's birth. One is tempted to cry out: Will our Lord ever return to reign personally upon earth and usher in *the Millennium*? Why has He waited so long? We must not forget that the return of Christ is intimately linked with the coming of the Antichrist—who can only be *revealed in his time* (2 Thes 2:6-8).

I remember, as a young boy in the late 1930s, listening with special interest whenever preachers presented from familiar scriptures the prophesied "signs" that would herald the approach of Christ's second coming. There was much speculation about current developments: What was the significance of the Great Depression? Where did President Roosevelt's New Deal, with its innovative economic and banking measures, fit in? And what about Hitler—could he be the prophesied Antichrist? He was certainly a prime suspect!

Even back then, there was a very firm consensus on at least two points: Israel would have to return to her own land *in unbelief*, becoming a nation there once again; and the Roman Empire must be revived. These convictions were held in spite of every indication to the contrary. Confidence in the Bible alone caused us to believe that what seemed at the time to be preposterous would indeed come to pass—perhaps even in our lifetime.

Of course, applying prophecy to the present world had its difficulties. For example, since the days when she had been part of the Roman Empire, Britain had acquired a worldwide empire of its own upon which "the sun never set." Would that all be part of the "revived" Roman Empire? Again there was a firm conviction that Britain would have to lose her far-flung colonies in order to be included in the new union of Western Europe. Unthinkable in those days when "Britannia ruled the waves"! Yet we accepted such "impossibilities" by simple faith in God's prophetic Word.

Much of what I learned as *prophecy* in my youth has since become *history*. The seemingly impossible has happened, including the astonishing rebirth of the nation Israel. To a large extent she remains in unbelief and rebellion against the One who, nevertheless, still calls Himself "the

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Make no mistake, the Israelites are there in fulfillment of God's promises and under His protection. Jeremiah 30-32 is sufficient (and there are many other similar scriptures) to clear up any doubt on this subject. It includes:

O Israel...I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, *yet will I not make a full end of thee*: but I will correct thee in measure....

All they that devour thee shall be devoured....Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations....He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock...and they shall not sorrow any more at all....

Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars...If those ordinances depart from before me...then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation.... Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that...[Jerusalem] shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down *any more for ever*.

And the revival of the Roman Empire? That staggering event now looms on the horizon. In 1992 the European Economic Community will officially become one massive entity with the power to dominate the world. And now that the Berlin Wall has crumbled and the entire Iron Curtain is being shredded, the dream of worldwide peace and prosperity seem within our grasp. Yet there is an essential element which I do not recall hearing about in my youth. Nor is it generally mentioned today. The ancient Roman Empire was a pagan *religious* entity headed by an emperor who was *worshiped as God*—and that aspect must be revived as well (2 Thes 2:4; Rv 13:4,8)!

There has been much talk of the "revived Roman Empire" as a *political, economic and military power*. Seemingly forgotten is the essential role *religion* played in the world of ancient Rome. Like Gorbachev today, Constantine understood. A brilliant military commander, he also had the genius to recognize the need for a union between paganism and Christianity. By giving the latter official status, he brought internal peace to the Empire. In addition to the title *Pontifex Maximus*, which the emperors bore as heads of the pagan priesthood, Constantine, as the self-appointed civil head of the Church, became known also as the *Vicar of Christ* and the *Bishop of*

Bishops. These three titles the popes, as his successors, retain today.

Concern for the religious unity of the Empire caused Constantine to call the first ecumenical Church Council—at Nicaea. There this pagan "father of ecumenism," the "first pope," gave the opening address and enforced unity upon the quarreling bishops. When the Empire later disintegrated *politically* under the onslaught of the Barbarians, it was held together *religiously* by the all-pervasive presence of the Roman Catholic Church, with its ingenious ecumenical blend of paganism and Christianity still headquartered in Rome. Thus, it was to the popes, successors of the pagan emperors, that the world of the Middle Ages looked for leadership in the longed-for revival of the Roman Empire—unaware that it was prophesied in the Bible as something evil upon which God's judgment would fall.

Hoping to usher in that long-awaited event, Pope Leo III, who'd had his tongue and eyes torn out by a mob seeking revenge for his unbearable tyranny and wickedness, groped his way to the side of Charlemagne, placed on his head a crown and declared him to be "Emperor"! It was Christmas day of A.D.800. The King was attending mass at St. Peter's in Rome. Abjectly pledging his loyalty, the Pope knelt before Charlemagne, whose protection he desperately needed. Yet Leo was also cleverly reasserting the popes' traditional claim to the authority to install or to excommunicate and dethrone kings and emperors. (See Rv 17:9,18—"...that great city...on seven mountains... which reigneth over the kings of the earth.")

If the EEC is to fulfil the prophesied last days revival of the Roman Empire, then it must include these two elements: A new pagan "emperor" who will be worshiped as God (i.e., the Antichrist); and the restoration of a concomitant religious authority. There must be a partnership between the Antichrist and the head of the world church, identified in Revelation 17 as "Mystery Babylon." Even Catholic apologist Karl Keating admits that Babylon signifies Rome. The current pope, John Paul II, is working feverishly to merge all faiths. He obviously understands that not only Protestants and Catholics but all mankind must unite in a new world religion.

Taking great strides in that direction, the professing evangelical church is steadily surrendering everything gained at

the Reformation in its accommodation to Roman Catholicism and to its close relative, New Age paganism. Many of the shocking ways in which even children and youth are being drawn into the latter are revealed by Johanna Michaelsen in *Like Lambs to the Slaughter*. Of course the public schools have played a key role in the seductive process. A major concern of Christian parents which has led to the burgeoning home schooling movement has been the imposition of secular humanism upon students by the public school system. However, something even more subtle and deadly is being developed for leading youth into the coming world religion. Surprisingly, it will involve teaching *about* religion in public schools—in the name of religious liberty!

After the Supreme Court's 1963 decision banning prayer in public schools, any mention of religion disappeared almost completely from the classroom. Yet in that decision the court had encouraged religious discussion, declaring that "one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion." To fill the vacuum they themselves created, public educators are suddenly exhibiting what National Council on Religion and Public Education president Charles Haynes calls an "exploding interest in teaching *about* religion."

Directing this new movement is the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, "a private education group...committed to producing actual class materials by 1990...." Curriculums are already being tested in public schools. The *Williamsburg Charter* is backed by a veritable Who's Who of America's top leaders. Its support has joined together in common purpose such diverse persons and organizations as the Mormon Church and National Council of Churches, with the National Association of Evangelicals; the Muslim American Community, with the American Jewish Committee; NOW's Molly Yard, with Beverly LaHaye and Phyllis Schlafly; People for the American Way's Norman Lear, with James Dobson and Chuck Colson. Billy Graham gave the keynote address at the impressive signing ceremony June 25, 1988. It was attended by such international observers as Feodor Burlatskij, chairman of the Soviet Commission on Human Rights.

In his recent meetings with John Paul II,

Gorbachev acknowledged the vital importance of religion and pledged both religious freedom and a restoration of relations with the Vatican. He and the Pope were described by the December 2 *Los Angeles Times* as "Two of the most compelling figures on the world stage today." It is all hauntingly reminiscent of Constantine's ecumenical achievements!

The aim of the *Charter* (which was echoed by Gorbachev and the Pope) seems commendable: "...we who sign this Charter, people of many and various beliefs, pledge ourselves to the enduring precepts of the First Amendment...commit ourselves to speak, write and act according to this vision and...urge our fellow citizens to do the same." The *Charter* recognizes and seems to decry "the *de facto* semi-establishment of a wholly secular understanding of the origin, nature and destiny of human kind" and promises to foster religious liberty for all. At the same time, however, ideas are expressed that spell trouble for Christians.

Those signing the *Charter* may have the best of intentions, but as a practical matter it is impossible to teach *about* religion without making pronouncements that are at best superficial and at worst inaccurate. For example, the curriculum's description of Islam (perhaps for fear of, like Salman Rushdie, having a price put on one's head), omits the fact that killing non-Muslims and apostates is the shortest route to Paradise and that the most important verses scattered throughout the Koran advocate such killings. A comparison between Jesus, who said we should *love* our enemies, and Muhammad, who taught and practiced *killing* them, would be instructive, but is avoided. Nor is there any mention that a Muslim can marry four wives, beat them if they displease him and divorce them at his whim. Yet how can one really teach *about* Islam or any other religion without revealing the whole truth and making comparisons?

Predictably, the evils of "Christianity" are exposed, with no mention that such practices are contrary to the Bible. The very usage of the term "Christian," without clarification, is consistently misleading. To the Jews, Hitler was a "Christian," and indeed he declared that "National Socialism is positive Christianity"—a monstrous lie. The Catholic enforcers of the Spanish Inquisition, in which Jews were

slaughtered, "converted" under threat of death, and forced to flee the country are described as "Christians" in the curriculum. The suggestion is then made that Vatican II transformed the Catholic Church into a champion of religious freedom. This is false, but what child would know the truth that the Pope's pledge of religious freedom is as hypocritical and treacherous as Gorbachev's?

Biblical Christianity will be the inevitable victim of such misinformation. It offers salvation by grace through faith in Christ and His sacrifice for our sins—while salvation by works is offered in varying forms by all other religions. A major aim of the *Charter* is to dispel "the *spiritual divisiveness*, born of creeds." Students will learn that it is both impolite and irrelevant to suggest that any one religion is right. Such broadmindedness is very appealing, especially to children. Thus the major lesson learned will be that Christians are bigots and that differences in religious beliefs are far less important than "world peace."

The *Charter* pointedly declares, "Justifiable fears are raised by those who advocate theocracy or the coercive power of law to establish a "Christian America" (p 15). That Christian fundamentalists are a threat to peace and intend to take over the world has long been the contention of atheists, humanists and such organizations as People for the American Way. We can hardly deny this accusation in view of statements by the Reconstruction/Kingdom/Dominionists. Paul Crouch, for example, in a recent broadcast, declared with anger and determination in his voice, "We are well able to possess the land. We're going to get violent; and if necessary we're going to take these air waves and these stations for God by force!"

An unbiased, nonreligious teaching of religion is impossible. Students will learn to see religion as a functional means to an end, that end being a Gorbachevian tolerance of all beliefs in the interest of world peace. Thus, the foundation will be laid for a new world religion that sees "truth" as less important than human fulfillment on this earth and ultimately deifies man. You may wish to point this out to the Christian leaders who are presently supporting the *Charter*.

Trinity & Baptism

Dave Hunt

Recently we considered the biblical teaching that the one true God eternally exists in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Among those denying God's triune nature is the United Pentecostal Church (UPC). It also teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation and that it must be done only "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Yet Christ told His disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt 28:19).

A UPC tract argues, "He said *Name*, not *Names*....this name the Apostles understood to be *Lord Jesus Christ*... Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not names, but *titles* of positions held by God..." That desperate attempt to deny the Trinity leads to such ludicrous conclusions as: the *title* of "Father" so loved the world that it gave its only begotten *position* of "Son" to save us. And it was the *position/title* of "Holy Spirit" by which Mary was "found with child," etc.

That Jesus said *name* and not *names* is normal grammatical construction—a shortened way of saying, "In the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit." Surely "name" in this verse could hardly refer to another name—"Lord Jesus Christ"—not even mentioned there! Isaiah 9:6 is similar: "His name [not names] shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." If the UPC argument is valid at Matthew 28:19, then it must be valid in Isaiah 9:6 also. If so, then "mighty God" is a "title or position held by God," and the "name" meant in Isaiah 9:6 is also "Lord Jesus Christ"!

In fact, God has many names such as Elohim (the Strong One—Genesis 1:1 and 2,000-plus other times), Jehovah Elohim (the Lord God, hundreds of times), Jehovah-rapha (the Lord that heals—Exodus 15:26), Jehovah-tsidkenu (the Lord our righteousness—Jeremiah 23:6), the Most High God (Genesis 14:18 plus 47 more times), Lord of Hosts (more than 200 times; 14 times it says "the Lord of hosts *is his name*"); and others. As for the Son of God, Isaiah 9:6 lists only some of His names. The angel told Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS (Mt 1:21). His name is also Immanuel (Is 7:14), etc.

A major verse for the UPC is Zechariah 14:9: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." That doesn't mean that He will have a single name—much less that it is "Lord Jesus Christ." Moreover, "that day" hasn't yet come, so this verse won't help the UPC now. As the context shows, during the Millennium the entire world will know who the one true God is, and He will not be called by any false names.

That does not say, however, that Savior, the Almighty, everlasting Father, the Most High, etc. will no longer be proper names for God in the Millennium—or that they are not correct now. These names can never change, because each describes something of God's character or essence, and He "changes not." Furthermore, if "Lord Jesus Christ" is the one true name of God, then we have an amazing situation: *no one ever called God by His correct name*—not even Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses or anyone else down through history—until it was recently discovered that "Lord Jesus Christ" is God's only true name.

Why did Jesus say to baptize specifically in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Because nothing could be more fitting for that which symbolizes the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The *Father* gave and sent the Son to be our Savior; the *Son* died for our sins; and it was through the *Holy Spirit*, by which we are born again, that Christ "offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb 9:14).

Moreover, *not one* of the baptism verses cited by the UPC says "in the name of the *Lord Jesus Christ*." Acts 2:38 says "in the name of Jesus Christ"; Acts 4:12 refers back to verse 10, which says "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth"; Acts 8:16 says "by the name of the Lord Jesus." There is *not one verse* in the Bible that states that anyone was baptized in the name of "Lord Jesus Christ."

Acts 19:5 says they were baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus." If that was what was said when they were baptized, then the UPC formula, "Lord Jesus Christ," was no more used than "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Clearly, the baptism "formula" wasn't the issue but the fact that these people, though baptized "unto John's baptism," had not believed in the "Lamb of God" to whom

John bore witness. They needed to believe on Christ and to be baptized in His name. "In His name" means *as He had instructed it to be done*; i.e., in the name of "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

That this was the accepted "formula" can be deduced from Paul's actions. He asked them whether they had received the Holy Ghost, and they said, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Paul's shocked response was, "Unto what then were ye *baptized*?" (Acts 19:2-3). Why ask about their *baptism*? Because no one could be baptized "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost" and not hear of the Holy Ghost! Paul would not have asked that question if baptism was "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Like certain other groups, the UPC also argues that "*Water baptism* is an essential part of New Testament salvation... Without *proper baptism* it is *impossible* to enter into the Kingdom of God." Paul's understanding of baptism, however, was quite different. He writes to the Corinthians, "I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius...and [the] household of Stephanas... I know not whether I baptized any other" (1 Cor 1:14-16). Yet Paul calls himself the "father" of the Corinthians and explains why: "for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you *through the gospel*" (4:15). They had been born again into God's family as His children, and Paul had been the means of their salvation—*without baptizing them*.

No, baptism is *not*, as some teach, essential to salvation. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were saved through *believing the gospel* he preached: "How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures..." (1 Cor 15:3). Paul repeatedly declares that we are saved only by *believing the gospel*. For example: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth [it]" (Rom 1:16). It is the *gospel* that saves, *not baptism*. Salvation comes through *believing the gospel*, not by *being baptized*. In fact, Paul declared, "For Christ sent me *not to baptize*, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor 1:17). Clearly baptism is no part of the gospel and thus has nothing to do with salvation.

Then what about the verses that say we

must be baptized to be saved? What verses? There is *not one* in the Bible! Yes, Mark 16:16 says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” but that doesn’t say that baptism is essential to salvation, only that saved people get baptized. The rest of the verse says, “but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Nowhere does the Bible say, “He that is not baptized shall be damned,” or “If you only believe but don’t get baptized you are lost.” There are scores of verses that say, “He that believeth is saved,” but *only one* that says, “He that believeth and is baptized is saved.” And scores of verses declare that if we don’t believe the gospel we are lost—but *not one* says that if we are not baptized we are lost.

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, yet as John 4:2 tells us, *He never baptized anyone*. Why didn’t Christ, like Paul, baptize at least a few people? If He didn’t even baptize *one* then He obviously took care *not to do so* for a specific reason: If the Savior of the world who did all that was necessary for our salvation baptized no one, then baptism clearly has nothing to do with salvation! The thief on the cross was never baptized. If someone about to die cries out, “What must I do to be saved?” must we respond, “There is no hope for you because we can’t baptize you”?

But didn’t Jesus say that we must be “Born again of *water* and of the Spirit”? Yes. He said this to Nicodemus, a rabbi, to whom it would not mean *baptism* because that was unknown in the Old Testament. Israel had ordinances of “washing with water for cleansing” the priests or a leper or someone who had been defiled (see Ex 30,40; Lv 13,15, etc.). So Christ was saying that “cleansing from sin” and a special work of the Holy Spirit were essential to being born again. Ephesians 5:26 explains that the New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament water cleansing is “the washing of water by the word.” Peter says we are “born again...by the word of God” (1 Pt 1:23). Paul calls it “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Ti 3:5); i.e., “born of water and the Spirit.”

It was to Israel that John the Baptist preached “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mk 1:4, etc.), which they understood in the context of

Old Testament water cleansing. Baptism was also connected with the “remission of sins” when offered to Jews in the Book of Acts (whether preached by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (2:38), or to Saul (22:16). That this was associated with Israel’s practice of water cleansing, and not an indication that the physical act of baptism saves anyone, is clear for the reasons already given and in the context of all of the scriptures.

The idea that baptism is essential to salvation comes from Roman Catholicism. Vatican II declares, “By baptism men and women are cleansed from original sin and from all personal sins, they are born again as children of God...” (*Vatican Council II*, Costello Publishing, Vol 2, p 561); “Baptism is also to be given to infants...[that] they may be reborn of water and the Holy Spirit to divine life in Christ Jesus” (Vol 2, p 391), “Baptism, which is necessary for salvation...frees us from original sin and communicates to us a share in divine life” (Vol 2, pp 111-12). *Not true!*

The Bible is very clear that the Old Testament sacrifices and other physical acts, such as circumcision, tithing or keeping the Sabbath, could not pay the debt demanded by God’s justice for sin. They were symbolic of the coming sacrifice of Christ and the heart response of faith required for salvation. Judaism’s great error was its *sacramentalism* and *formalism*: finding salvation in the mere act of prayer, ritual and other deeds rather than in repentance and faith. Matthew 15 and 23 give examples of Christ’s scathing rebuke of Jewish religious leaders for this error that led millions astray.

Christ criticized the rabbis for giving God His “tithes” even from the herbs in their gardens, while neglecting “judgment, mercy and faith.” He quoted God’s rebuke of Israel through Isaiah: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me.” To make a physical act/ritual efficacious for salvation makes it impossible to trust Christ for salvation. It must be either/or. It can’t be both.

The church has only two ordinances: baptism and communion, or the Lord’s supper. Neither is efficacious for forgiveness of sins or salvation. Both are

symbolic of the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. To imagine that either has merit as a physical act repeats the error of Judaism. Yet such is the great heresy of Roman Catholicism—it offers salvation through sacraments, which are physical rituals ministered by the priests.

Thus salvation is not through Christ but through the Roman Catholic Church—by the “means of grace” provided in the sacraments ministered by its priesthood and mediated by Mary. Protestants are joining Catholics to “evangelize the world.” Yet Roman Catholic “Evangelization 2000” does not lead to faith in Christ’s finished work and the assurance of sins forgiven and a home in heaven. It leads one to join the “Church [which]...is necessary for salvation...which men enter through baptism as through a door” (Vol 1, pp 365-66). It obligates one to pay for one’s own sins through good deeds and ritual: “In this life we can satisfy for the temporal punishment due to sin by Prayer, Fasting, Almsdeeds” (*Convert’s Catechism*, p 45). The bishops shall see to it that the...sacrifice of the mass, prayers, alms and other works of piety which [the living] have been accustomed to perform for the faithful departed [in purgatory] be piously and devoutly discharged in accordance with the laws of the Church” (*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, p 214). Christ’s sacrifice of Himself can’t get anyone out of purgatory, but the Mass, rosary, etc. can. And if one dies wearing a scapular, Mary will do what Christ can’t do—she will personally rescue that one from purgatory the Saturday after his death. *Such teaching is an abominable denial of the gospel!*

Offering salvation through baptism or any other physical act is a serious heresy which we must stand against without compromise. The eternal destiny of souls is at stake. We dare not remain silent.

The Roots of Catholic/ Evangelical "Unity"

Dave Hunt

The recent stunning events in Eastern Europe have probably moved the world closer to the "peace" that precedes Antichrist's rise to power. The partnership between Gorbachev and the Pope could play an important role. When the world imagines it has achieved "peace and safety," sudden destruction will come (1 Thess 5:3). A powerful spiritual "peace" delusion seems to be gathering momentum.

Take for example a peace poster popular in North America and Europe. Its full-color replica was the front cover of the December 1989 issue of *Whole Life Times*, a major New Age monthly. The scene offers a magnificent view of the sprawling eleven-story, gilt-roofed "Palace of the Gods" in Lhasa, Tibet, ancient residence of the Dalai Lamas. Towering in the background are the snow-capped Himalayas overarched with a dazzling rainbow—all mirrored perfectly on the glassy surface of a lake.

Superimposed upon the breathtaking landscape is a head-and-shoulders picture of Tenzin Gyatso, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet," smiling most benignly. His huge image rises out of the palace, dwarfing it and blocking the view of a portion of the majestic mountains behind. In large print at the bottom of the poster/magazine cover are the words, "PEACE ON EARTH." The blasphemous implication is clear: The promise of the angels at the birth of Christ will be fulfilled through the Dalai Lama!

This was the *December* issue, but it contained no mention of *Christmas* or of *Jesus Christ*. The entire magazine was devoted to "Peace on Earth" and how to attain it—yet the "Prince of Peace" (Is 9:6), through whom comes "peace with God...through the blood of his cross" (Rom 5:1; Col 1:20), was not mentioned even once in its pages. His gospel has been replaced by the human potential gospel of self-help and self-esteem that occupies each issue of *Whole Life Times* and has even invaded the church.

This poster and magazine represent an attitude that permeates society and is growing. That Jesus Christ alone can bring peace to this earth is considered an intolerably dogmatic statement and is rejected out of hand—not because it can be shown to be false, but because it is too narrow-minded for today's pluralistic world.

Christianity is called a *religion*. Those

representing it are limited to what they can say or do in the public arena. It is considered improper, even illegal in some places such as the public schools, to offer Jesus Christ as a solution to the moral problems that plague society, much less as the hope for world peace.

Not so with Buddhism. The Dalai Lama is immune to criticism, given access to all levels of government, education and society, and respected as the ambassador of religious tolerance. Yet he engages in the most blatant missionary activity, initiating tens of thousands around the world into occultic Tibetan Buddhist beliefs and practices. He is also associated with the World Hindu Congress, which has as its goal the neutralization of Christianity and the establishment of a Hindu-Buddhist belief system as the world religion. So much for "religious tolerance."

It is instructive to note the difference between the treatment afforded the Dalai Lama and a Christian. For example, Oral Roberts' assertion that God told him to collect \$8 million for his now bankrupt City of Faith hospital in Tulsa or he would die is mocked by the media—and rightly so. Yet the Dalai Lama is met with neither skepticism nor ridicule for his even more outrageous claim that he is the *fourteenth reincarnation* of the original Dalai Lama and the Tibetan's god—and that he can teach us all to be gods and to create our own universes.

Despite such preposterous claims and the fact that the Dalai Lama has to this day not been able to prove or demonstrate any of them, this "God-man" is lionized in the media, honored by world heads of state and even by "Christian" leaders such as John Paul II. Like the Pope, he travels the world to promote a new ecumenical and universal religion as the foundation for world peace. On October 5, 1989, the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Those who gave him this award must know that the Dalai Lama proposes to bring "peace on earth" by initiating mankind into "Tibetan Tantric Deity Yoga," thereby turning us all into Buddhas. This mission is being diligently pursued by "His Holiness" around the world. During a three-week stay in Los Angeles in the summer of 1989, he led an audience of 3,000, many of whom had come from all over the world, in a "three-day Kalachakra ritual for world peace" at Santa Monica's Civic Auditorium. Reporting on that conference, *Whole Life Times* explained:

The Dalai Lama taught in Santa Monica that it was possible for all human beings to eventually become a Buddha, a being of the highest wisdom and compassion

and power...[through] a method called Deity Yoga....

Deity Yoga...is a special conscious act of...visualizing the illusion that we are already...god-like...[able] to create our own reality...[that we] are Buddhas.¹

Obviously the Dalai Lama can't create his own reality but shares the same reality with the rest of us. He eats, sleeps, tires, rides the same vehicles, gets wet in the same rain and uses the same money. If "Deity Yoga" hasn't changed even such mundane things, why imagine that it can bring peace to the world? In fact, the Dalai Lama is a fraud who has made more false promises and deceived more people than Jim Bakker—yet he is rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize instead of a prison term!

Hitler also pursued the powers promised by "Deity Yoga." The occult powers which the Dalai Lama now offers as the key to world peace, *der Fuehrer* hoped to use for world domination! The bodies of scores of Tibetan Buddhist monks, whose "psychic energies" were being used by Hitler, were found in the ruins of Berlin. The following excerpt is from a letter I received some years ago:

I remember visiting in the summer of 1950 in the home of Isobel Kuhn... [who] wrote several books for the China Inland Mission.

She and her husband John worked among the Lisu people on the border....Early one morning they were awakened by a group of excited [Lama] priests from Tibet telling them that all of their big gods had gone to Europe This was the day that Hitler came to power.

The approximately 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks traveling with the Dalai Lama created a "sandpainting [of] a mandala that houses many deities" for participants in Santa Monica to visualize as an aid in achieving their own Buddhahood. They created an identical mandala at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. The exhibit included a video of the Dalai Lama explaining the mandala and performing a Kalachakra empowerment ritual for world peace.²

It is not likely that the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles will ever have an exhibit honoring Jerry Falwell and showing videos of his fundamentalist sermons. Then why the Dalai Lama? Obviously his "positive" presentation of human potential, even though it is clearly false, has a universal appeal.

Admirers of the Dalai Lama credit the Kalachakra rituals he has been leading around the world with creating a spiritual atmosphere which made possible the recent

shredding of the Iron Curtain and the new freedom in Eastern Europe. Pope John Paul II supports this idea. He gathered representatives of many religions to Assisi, Italy—among them the Dalai Lama—for a World Day of Prayer in 1986. Thus began an ongoing program of “prayer”—such as the Kalachakra Deity ritual—by all of the world’s religions.

Have these pagan rituals been effective in the cause of world peace? The Pope claims they have been. On the second anniversary of Assisi’s historic founding prayer meeting, John Paul II told an ecumenical gathering of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, et al. that “their efforts were unleashing profound spiritual energies in the world and bringing about a new climate of peace.”³

Honoring the Pope’s efforts for world peace, a group of charismatic leaders has proposed giving him the “Prince of Peace Prize.” Directing this effort is Harald Bredesen, one of the original founding members of the board of the “700 Club” and a long-time confidant and advisor to Pat Robertson. The following is a brief excerpt from Bredesen’s September 29, 1988 letter to the Pope:

Your Holiness and dear Pope John Paul II,

Too many Protestant Evangelicals have long since made up their minds about Roman Catholicism...They fail to notice the mighty Gospel wind that also moves with such force [in Roman Catholicism]....

My heart is moved by a dream, Your Holiness. It is this: that what has already been discovered by men such as David and Justus DuPlessis, Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Richard Neuhaus...regarding the riches and depth of Catholic piety, must become common knowledge among Evangelical Protestants everywhere....

What we envision [is]...a SPIRITUAL PEACE TREATY, signed before the eyes of the world [by]...Evangelical Protestants and Catholics joining together to single out the Pope of Rome as the man most worthy of receiving the Prince of Peace Prize....

Using as a staging ground the week-long PRINCE OF PEACE CELEBRATION [in Rome in 1990], we believe it possible to give one of the most dramatic demonstrations of Christian oneness since the days of the early church...It could and should mark the beginning of a new spirit of cooperation in evangelistic efforts as we anticipate together the year 2000....

Is Bredesen not aware that in Roman Catholicism salvation is not alone through Christ’s death for our sins but through the

Church (“outside of which there is no salvation”; Vatican II, official catechisms) by means of the seven sacraments it ministers? Christ’s sacrifice for sin can only get the faithful as far as purgatory. Good works and the sacraments are required to get to heaven. Mary, in fact, will do what Jesus can’t; she personally takes to heaven those who wear her scapular, say the Rosary and trust their souls to her (see our December 1989 article).

Are those intending to award him the PRINCE OF PEACE PRIZE ignorant of the fact that Pope John Paul II, whose personal motto is *totus tuns sum Maria* (“Mary, I’m all yours”) is an avid promoter of the belief that, although Jesus is the Prince of Peace, Mary is the one who brings peace to the world? His common Catholic belief became stronger for the Pope as a result of his near assassination. When he realized that the attempt on his life on May 13, 1981, had taken place on the anniversary of the Virgin Mary’s first “appearance” May 13, 1917, at Fatima, Portugal, the Pope was convinced that “Our Lady of Fatima” had spared his life.⁴

So John Paul II went to Fatima on May 13, 1982, “prayed before the statue of Our Lady of Fatima,...[and] consecrate[d] the world to Mary as she had requested.” On May 13, 1984, he consecrated the world again to Our Lady of Fatima⁵ who had promised: “If my wishes are fulfilled...my Immaculate Heart will triumph, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace!”⁶ “Mary” apparently brought about the recent amazing changes in Eastern Europe.

In obedience to Our Lady of Fatima’s request, an imposing series of popes consecrated the world and especially the Russian people to the “Immaculate Heart of Mary,” thereby setting in motion the spiritual forces that she had promised would bring peace to the world. They were: Pope Pius XII on July 7, 1952; Pope Paul VI twelve years later, and Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1982, and again on May 13, 1984. Declaring that the Lord had “confided the peace of the world to her,” the apparition that appeared as the Virgin of Fatima presented its plan for “peace on earth”:

Say the Rosary every day to obtain peace....Pray, pray, a great deal, and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to Hell because they have no one to make sacrifices and pray for them...

If people do what I tell you, many souls will be saved and there will be peace.⁷

The substitution of Mary for Christ is

no less abominable than the substitution of the Dalai Lama. It is equally blasphemous to claim that “many souls go to hell because they have no one to make sacrifices and pray for them.” There is only one sacrifice that can be made for sin and which can deliver the soul from hell, and that is the sacrifice accomplished once for all by Christ upon the cross. Instead, Catholicism offers a false Jesus and a false gospel.

Professing for itself the place and attributes of Christ, the apparition of Mary at Fatima promised:

I will never leave you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God...In order to save [mankind], God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart....

I promise to assist at the hour of death with all the graces necessary for salvation all those who...mak[e] reparation to me.⁸

“Jesus,” too, appeared at Fatima as a *small child* by his mother’s side! The resurrected, glorified Savior, who bears the marks of Calvary at the Father’s right hand, is not still a *small child*! Those who saw this vision were either lying or hallucinating or they were deceived by demons masquerading as an obviously false “Mary” and false “Jesus.” Yet every pope in the last 60 years has endorsed the Fatima visions.

And what did this “Jesus” say? On February 15, 1926, for example, “the Child Jesus again appeared to Lucia, asking her if she had spread this devotion of reparation to the Immaculate Heart of His Holy Mother.” *Reparation must be made to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for mankind to be saved?* What an abomination! Protest to Protestant leaders who promote Catholicism! Pray for your Catholic friends and present to them the true gospel.

Endnotes

- 1 Art Kunin, “The Dalai Lama in Los Angeles: What Does Kalachakra Have To Do With World Peace?,” *Whole Life Times* (Aug. 1989), 8.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 *Our Sunday Visitor* (Nov. 13, 1988).
- 4 *St. Louis Review* (Nov. 4, 1988), in *Christian News* (Nov. 14, 1988), 10-11.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 *Our Lady of Fatima’s Peace Plan from Heaven*. Tan Books and Publishers, inside back cover, 1983.
- 7 *Fatima’s Peace Plan*, op.cit., back cover.
- 8 *Lucia Speaks on the Message of Fatima* (Ave Maria Institute, Washington, NJ 07882), 26, 30-31, 47.
- 9 Ibid.

Antichrist's Coming World Religion

Dave Hunt

The Antichrist is generally depicted as a militant atheist who brazenly opposes Christianity. Communism has been called an antichrist system because of its overt suppression of Christianity. It is not surprising, then, that when they were finally able to speak their minds, the Romanian people who suffered under him for 24 years called their deposed president, Nicolae Ceausescu, "the Antichrist." That is why they chose Christmas as the day most fitting to execute him and his wife Elena before a firing squad, having found them guilty of murdering at least 60,000 Romanians and of robbing the Romanian people of more than \$1 billion.

Of course Ceausescu was not the Antichrist. His opposition to Christ and His gospel was much too obvious. Though it may mean "against," in Greek the prefix *anti* also means "a substitute for" or "in the place of." This is, in fact, the way in which the Bible presents the Antichrist. Rather than rejecting Christ, he will pretend to *be* Christ and thus will pervert rather than openly oppose Christianity. He will be a "false Christ" (Mt 24:24, etc.), offering a false and "positive" Christianity acceptable to all.

Hitler was a good potential Antichrist. His opposition to God, plain enough now, deceived many at first. While deliberately out to destroy Christianity and replace it with his neopagan occultism, Hitler pretended that he was the champion of *real* Christianity. And in many ways his pretense was convincing, for Hitler officially opposed homosexuality, immorality, occultism (though he was involved in occultism/immorality). He claimed to be God's representative to establish His kingdom upon earth, and regularly invoked the name and blessing of God in his speeches. For example:

1940: "We pray our Lord that He would continue to bless us in our battle for freedom..."

1941: "We believe we shall earn the blessing of the Supreme Leader...the Lord God has given His approval to our battle. He will be with us...in the future."

1942: "And we will pray the Lord God for that, the salvation of the nation..."

1943: "Our Lord God...will help us as He always has..."

Could any real Christians have been deceived? Did some go along with Hitler to save their own skins? The following from a speech by Dr. Hans Kerrl, Nazi Minister of Church Affairs, is probably representative of the deception under the Antichrist's world religion. It reveals how blatant the lie can become while still being eagerly embraced in the name of "positive Christianity":

The Party stands [for]...Positive Christianity, and Positive Christianity is National Socialism...National Socialism is the doing of God's will...God's will reveals itself in German blood...That Christianity consists in faith in Christ as Son of God makes me laugh....

No, Christianity is not dependent upon the Apostles' Creed...True Christianity is represented by the Party, and the German people are now called by the Party and especially by the Fuehrer to a real Christianity....

The Fuehrer is the herald of a New Revelation.

Thousands of German pastors joined the newly organized "German Christians' Faith Movement," which supported Nazi doctrines and promoted the concept of a "Reich Church" that would unite all Protestants under the state. A minority of pastors, led by Martin Niemoeller, who had originally welcomed Hitler to power, realized at last that Hitler's "positive Christianity" was in fact anti-Christian, and so opposed the nazification of the church. The vast majority of both Catholics and Protestants and their leaders, however, enthusiastically welcomed Hitler's takeover of their country and obeyed his orders without apparent protest or twinge of conscience.

The "Reich Church," formed under leaders picked by Hitler, was formally recognized by the Reichstag on July 14, 1933. On November 13, a massive rally was held in the Berlin Sportpalast by the "German Christians' Faith Movement." Leaders of the rally proposed abandonment of the Old Testament (not so far from today's rejection of Israel) and revision of the New Testament to fit National Socialism. Resolutions called for "One People, One Reich, One Faith" and an oath of allegiance to Hitler to be signed by all pastors. Though Christians had never expected developments to reach this stage, most were too happy over the prosperity and the new social stability to be concerned about Nazi control of the church. Protesters were dealt with harshly by the Gestapo, whose reign of

terror against true Christians began with the arrest of 700 pastors in the fall of 1935.

Amazingly, it was all done in the name of "freedom of religion" and for "unity"—especially *unity*. That will be the cry of the deceivers in our day. Ecumenism is so appealing, yet will eventually produce an apostate church for the Antichrist. Make no mistake: What happened in Germany will happen again but with far greater deception. In fact, one can discern its beginnings now.

Today increasing numbers of "Third Wave Prophets" are bringing a flood of "new revelations." This "Latter Rain" movement is growing with astonishing speed in association with the Vineyards and Kansas City Fellowship under the influence of "prophets" such as John Wimber, Paul Cain (former associate of William Branham), Rick Joyner, Mike Bickle and others. Increasing numbers of churches are "submitting" themselves to these "prophets" in what appears to be a rapidly growing new discipleship movement based upon "signs and wonders" which is bringing dangerous heresies into the church in the name of holiness and unity. More about that in a future article.

"Positive Christianity" has been growing in popularity in America and is already being exported by Western church leaders into Eastern Europe. Those who promote positive/possibility thinking and positive confession are among the most influential television preachers and church leaders in the West. Any suggestion that a teaching is not biblical is rejected as "negative" and destructive of the unity that must be achieved at all cost, not only between Protestants and Catholics but among all religions.

A vast ecumenical movement has been quietly gathering irresistible momentum for years. Its roots go back to the 1893 Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Swami Vivekananda, who stole the show, later founded Vedanta temples across the Western world. A new vision of religious unity spawned such organizations as The Temple of Understanding (founded in 1960 to unite all world religions) in which secular leaders such as John D. Rockefeller and popes such as Paul VI and John XXIII played a role. It has been meeting for years at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine (Episcopalian). Similar ecumenical groups also connected with the UN Meditation Room include Wainwright House of Rye, NY, involved in Jungian spiritual psychology and with more impact upon mainstream churches. Periodic "Spiritual Summits" of world

religions are held, as at St. John's in October 1975. It included a Shinto worship ceremony performed at the cathedral's "Christian" altar and culminated in addresses at the United Nations by representatives of five major faiths.¹ Mother Teresa was a keynote speaker.²

A growing partnership between government and religion is preparing the world for its coming political/religious leader, the Antichrist. The motivation is good: peace and environmental protection, around which all religions can unite. EPA chief William K. Reilly, who calls himself a "pure Irish Catholic," has proposed a new "spiritual vision" of conservation. "Spiritual" and "ecumenical" is the new emphasis. In October 1988, a typical gathering of environmentalists from all over North America in the Santa Cruz, California redwoods "opened with a prayer by Native Americans, thanking Grandfather God 'for all the good things you have put on Mother Earth.'" A "Baptist minister—an ecumenical peace activist"—was one speaker. The meeting "closed with a community-building, earth-celebrating 'spiral dance' ritual led by well-known writer, activist, and feminist 'witch,' Starhawk," long associated with Catholic priest Matthew Fox at his Holy Names College in Oakland, California.³

A Global Survival Conference held in Oxford, England in 1988 brought together "spiritual and parliamentary leaders." A second one was held in January 1990, in Moscow. The highly religious United Nations University for Peace sponsored in Costa Rica in 1989 a Global Gathering for Peace as a follow-up on the Pope's World Day of Prayer for Peace held in Assisi, Italy in 1986. The Catholic Church supported the conference and the Dalai Lama was a speaker. Keynote speaker Robert Muller, former UN Assistant Secretary General and Chancellor of the University for Peace, and a Catholic, called the uniting of Europe set for 1992 "a step towards a world community...a harbinger of hope." He explained:

"We need a world or cosmic spirituality. ...I hope that religious leaders will get together and define...the cosmic laws which are common to all their faiths...They should tell the politicians what the cosmic laws are, what God, or the gods, or the cosmos are expecting from humans...We must also hope that the Pope will come before the year 2000 to the United Nations, speak for all the religions and spiritualities on this planet

and give the world the religious view of how the third millennium should be a spiritual millennium...."⁴

As for the EEC, an official poster depicts Europe as a growing Tower of Babel! At Babel, God scattered mankind and confounded their language in order to stifle the ingenuity that was determined to assault the throne of God by building a "tower that would reach to heaven." The new hope of the world is for "unification" and a single global tongue—undoing what God did at Babel and pushing the rebellion to its final stage and ushering in the reign of Antichrist. The "stars" depicting the 12 EEC nations on the poster are upside-down pentagrams, symbols of the Goat of Mendes, or Satan.

Both the Pope and Gorbachev are pushing the idea of a "united Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals." Gorbachev justifies his view by saying that Russians are Europeans, too, because of their "Christian heritage" dating back 1,000 years to the "conversion" of Czar Vladimir. Staggering stuff from the head of world communism, which has tried to destroy Christianity for 70 years! Eastern Europe is in the process of being united with Western Europe—unthinkable a few months ago. We are seeing the prophesied revival of the Roman Empire, which included much of Eastern Europe. *Time* just changed its spelling from Rumania to Romania in response to complaints by its many citizens pointing out its Roman heritage. The Pope and Roman Catholicism, and particularly the world's 30 million [Note: 70 million in 1995] Catholic charismatics, will play a key role in coming events.

Apostasy is taking over our churches and seminaries. Typical is the report that Denver's Conservative Baptist Seminary is influenced by Catholic Charismatic Renewal and Richard Foster and is now advocating Eastern meditation, including TM, Zen and yoga through its theology department. Many church leaders who have been accepted as evangelicals are becoming bolder and more blatant in their ecumenism. One of the key figures is Robert Schuller, who has proudly said, "...what sets me apart from fundamentalists [is that they] are trying to convert everybody to believe how they believe...We know the things the major faiths can agree on. We try to focus on those without offending those with different viewpoints..."⁵ Schuller's connections include Soviet sycophant Armand Hammer, the cult of Unity, Amway, media magnate

Rupert Murdoch (who's financing Schuller TV in Europe), Napoleon Hill's associate W. Clement Stone (like Norman Vincent Peale, Schuller's mentor, a 33rd-degree Mason), who put up the funds to send out more than 250,000 copies of *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* to pastors and seminary professors, and finally, *A Course in Miracles* promoter Gerald Jampolsky.

There is a rat's nest of interconnected groups working for a new world religion and pushing globalism and religious instruction in schools here and in cooperation with the Soviets. The trail passes through the board rooms of such giants as The Carnegie Corporation and Amway, and foundations such as Religious Heritage of America, Council for the Advancement of Citizenship and Center for Citizenship Education...and ultimately leads back to Os Guinness's Williamsburg Charter and its dangerous religious curriculum for public schools mentioned in our January publication. More on this later.

Another link between all of the above is the ecological concern that has spawned various environmentalist groups, some of which worship Mother Earth as a living organism known as Gaia. Greenpeace addresses valid concerns. It is, however, an attempt to bring peace on earth without submission to the Prince of Peace.

God put rebellious Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and guarded the Tree of Life with the flaming sword of His holy judgment upon sin. Christ took that sword in His heart for us and became "the way" to life. In fact, He is "the life." Environmentalist movements, for all the good they represent, are attempts to restore man to paradise without coming under that sword through Christ. It is the Cross that is compromised by ecumenism. Let us stand true to God and His Word in thought, word and deed. He is coming soon!

It would (and will) take a book to fill in the picture of the incredible delusion that is sweeping the world and church today. I am in the process of writing such a book, now titled *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*. Your prayers are appreciated.

Endnotes

- 1 *New York Times* (Oct. 21, 1975).
- 2 *New York Times* (Oct. 25, 1975), 31, 35.
- 3 *Sequoia* (Oct.-Nov. 1988).
- 4 *World Goodwill Newsletter* (1989, no. 4), 1, 3.
- 5 *USA Today* (Mar. 23, 1989).

Cultism, Catholicism & Authoritarianism

Dave Hunt

Last month we referred to the fact that new “prophets” are arising to play an important role in preparing the world for the Antichrist. They are of two kinds: (1) charismatics/Pentecostals, who claim to receive extrabiblical inspiration directly from God; and (2) so-called “Christian psychologists,” who promote what they claim are extrabiblical revelations of “God’s truth” (“all truth is God’s truth”) given to godless humanists and anti-Christians such as Freud, Jung, et al. Increasing numbers of professing Christians are following the guidance of both kinds of false “prophets,” placing modern “revelations” and “experience” above the Bible.

Behold Protestantism’s growing Roman Catholic-like priesthood that cannot be questioned, which mediates for the people with God and helps build the bridge back to Rome. “Christian psychologists” play such a role within Protestant churches. They speak, as do Catholic priests, with an authority that comes from outside Scripture and which cannot be questioned by mere “Bereans” who know only their Bibles. They minister psychotherapeutic “sacraments and rituals,” which they claim are essential to the spiritual health of the flock and operate a “confessional.” Some even promote images more dangerous than those revered by Catholics, for the visualized “Christ” used in the “healing of memories” comes alive and speaks!

The new “prophets” among the charismatics likewise cannot be questioned. Their “revelations” take precedence over the Bible and must be followed by those who would not be guilty of rebellion. The charismatic movement provides another lane on the highway to Rome. Not only is there a close bond between Protestant and Catholic charismatics (there are about 30 million of the latter worldwide [Note: 70 million in 1995]), but some of the “revelations” also lead in that direction.

Pastor Roland Buck’s story, *Angels On Assignment*, is a classic case in point. One of his visions involved an alleged trip to the “throne room of God,” where he was given in writing a most interesting “prophecy” by “God” himself. As Buck explained,

Number 113 of the 120 events which God entered on this paper from my book in heaven on January 21, 1977,

was the selection of a new pope...in order to help in the restoration of his fragmented body, God had chosen a man named Karol Wojtyla of Poland. This prophecy was fulfilled October 16, 1978 when he began his reign as Pope John Paul II.¹

Buck’s book wasn’t published until 1979. If we take his word, however, that he actually had such a paranormal experience, then a demon was clearly the source of this “revelation.” The seductive purpose was obvious: to make it appear that God himself desires a union between Protestants and Catholics under the Pope. That the ecumenical movement has gained irresistible force cannot be denied. The climate for Protestant-Catholic “unity” today is a slap in the face of the Reformers, all of whom were convinced that the Roman Catholic popes were antichrists. This was the view of Protestant leaders during the next 400 years. Even Billy Graham, in 1948 at the start of his celebrated career, identified Roman Catholicism as one of the “greatest menaces faced by orthodox Christianity....”²

Yet today, leading Protestants refer to Roman Catholics as “Christian brothers and sisters” with whom we can work together in “evangelizing the world by the year A.D.2000.” Encouraging this new view, Billy Graham refers favorably to “the new understanding between Roman Catholics and Protestants” and sends converts back into Catholic churches. He thus undermines the very gospel which he, as the world’s most honored evangelist, preaches so earnestly.

Don’t ever forget that *every* belief upon which Protestantism was founded and for which the martyrs gave their lives was rejected by the Council of Trent. Its *Canons and Decrees* are considered to be a summation of Roman Catholicism valid for all time. Today’s catechisms continue to require all Roman Catholics to pledge absolute and unquestioning obedience to Trent’s dogmas:

I accept, without hesitation, and profess all that has been handed down, defined and declared by the Sacred Canons and by the general Councils, especially by the Sacred Council of Trent and by the Vatican General Council [Vatican II, which reaffirmed Trent], and in a special manner concerning the primacy and infallibility of the Roman Pontiff....³

It is extremely difficult for Roman Catholics to escape the cultic grip in which they are held because they have been convinced that their Church controls the gates of heaven.

To disobey her is to be lost forever. Rome’s power to brainwash is evident in the fact that in spite of the Reformation that shook Europe in Luther’s day, John Paul II commands nearly 900 million followers (about *fifteen times* the number of Lutherans) who are bound to him by oaths typical of most cults. Here is a further portion of the oath quoted above from *The Convert’s Catechism*:

I recognize the Holy Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church as the mother and teacher of all...and I promise and swear true obedience to the Roman Pontiff, successor of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Christ. ...This same Catholic Faith, outside of which nobody can be saved, which I now freely profess and to which I truly adhere, the same I promise and swear to maintain and profess... until the last breath of life....⁴

As it is with Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses or any other cult, so it is with Catholics: though there is much talk about Christ, in the final analysis salvation is not in Him but in the Church. The first thing Mormon missionaries push on prospects sounds very much like Catholicism with a few names and dates changed: that theirs is the one true church outside of which there is no salvation, and that its current head is the true representative of Christ on earth, having inherited that position through apostolic succession that can be traced back to Joseph Smith, God’s true prophet. The claims of Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church and other cults are much the same.

Standing in the place of the One who said, “Come unto *me* and *I* will give you rest” (Mt 11.28), the Roman Catholic Church insists that all must come to *her* and that *she alone* can provide to repentant sinners what Christ himself promised but cannot perform without her priesthood’s mediation. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was gravely concerned about the growing ecumenical acceptance of Roman Catholics as partners in “evangelization” of the world. Blaming this inexcusable naiveté upon “a weak and flabby Protestantism that does not know what it believes,” he earnestly warned,

I would not hesitate to assert that... Roman Catholicism, is the devil’s greatest masterpiece! It is such a departure from the Christian faith and the New Testament teaching, that I would not hesitate with the Reformers of the sixteenth century to [say]...she is, as the Scripture puts it, “the whore.”...Christian people, your responsibility is terrible. You must know the truth. ...There are innocent people who are being

deluded. It is your business and mine to open their eyes and to instruct them.⁵

Crying out against the already growing trend among Protestants in his day to accept Catholicism as not so bad after all, C. H. Spurgeon passionately decried “the spirit that would tamper with Truth for the sake of united action”:

Not so thought our fathers, when at the stake they gave themselves to death...for truths which men can nowadays count unimportant, but which being truths were to them so vital that they would sooner die than suffer them to be dishonoured.

O for the same uncompromising love of truth!

May there ever be found some men... who shall denounce again and again all league with error and all compromise with sin [as] the abhorrence of God...!

Early Protestant creeds unanimously called the pope Antichrist—not only because of Rome’s heresies but because the lives of many popes exemplified Antichrist’s evil. More than one pope vacated “Peter’s throne” when killed by a furious husband who caught him in bed with his wife. Even Catholic historians admit that many of the popes were among the most inhuman monsters to walk this earth. In *Vicars of Christ*, Jesuit Peter de Rosa reminds us that pope after pope engaged habitually on a grand scale in wholesale mayhem and murder, pillage, rape, incest, simony and corruption of the worst sort. Their evil lives are a blot upon the pages of history. It is a travesty to refer to such shameless perverts and master criminals as “His Holiness” or “Vicar of Christ” as they *all* are in official Roman Catholic dogma and documents.

Even if the popes had all been paragons of virtue, it would still be a mockery to claim that they represent an unbroken chain of “apostolic succession” back to Peter. It was long the custom for the popes to be voted in by the populace of Rome, which had its own selfish reasons for desiring one candidate above another. Such a majority vote could hardly be called “apostolic succession” and, in fact, is not acceptable by Rome today. Some popes were deposed by angry mobs protesting their unbearable evil. Others were installed and/or deposed by kings and emperors. Political expediency along with the wealth and influence of the candidate as often as not determined who would be pope. “Apostolic succession” indeed!

Nor is there any evidence that Peter ever enjoyed the position of leadership in

the early church which is now claimed for the pope. Christ’s promise, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 16:19), could be interpreted as having been fulfilled when Peter opened the Kingdom to Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) and to Gentiles in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:34-48). Christ’s further promise to Peter that “whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” was no more than His identical promise to all of the disciples (Mt 18:18-20). Likewise the statement, “whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them...” (Jn 20:23), was made to all of the disciples.

That the special authority which has been claimed by the Roman Catholic popes as his alleged “successors” was never exercised by Peter as the head of the church is clear from the biblical record. Peter exhorts equals, he does not command subordinates: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder” (1 Pt 5:1). He offers his epistles not on the basis of exalted ecclesiastical position or power, but on the fact that he, like the other disciples, has been “a witness of the sufferings of Christ...[an eyewitness] of his majesty” (1 Pt 5:1; 2 Pt 1:16).

The first church council (Acts 15:4-29), which was held in Jerusalem around A.D.45-50, was convened on Paul’s initiative, not Peter’s. And it was James, not Peter, who seemed to take the leadership. Peter’s only recorded statement was not doctrinal but mainly a summation of his experiences. James, however, drew upon the Scriptures and argued from a doctrinal point of view. Moreover, it was James who said, “Wherefore my sentence is...,” and his declaration became the basis of the official letter sent back to Antioch in settlement of the dispute.

James seemingly took upon himself an authoritarian position which, while it never approached the infallibility and dominance now claimed for the pope, was unscriptural and detrimental. Fear of James and his influence caused Peter to revert to Jewish traditional separation from Gentiles. Paul, who wrote far more of the New Testament and whose ministry was obviously much larger, publicly rebuked Peter for his error (Gal 2:11-14). The specious claim that Peter held a special leadership position and was given the chief place among the apostles, and was thus the first pope, is refuted by numerous passages in the New Testament.

Roman Catholicism bases its false dogma upon Christ’s statement, “Thou art

Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Mt 16:18). Whatever Christ meant, that declaration certainly makes no mention either of “infallibility,” “apostolic succession” or a “ruling hierarchy.” Nor can these key dogmas of Rome be supported by any other scripture. One need not argue from the Greek that Peter (*petros*) is not “this rock” (*petra*). The truth depends not upon a questionable interpretation of this one verse but upon the totality of Scripture. That Romanism’s view is not valid is demonstrated fully by the passages in the New Testament to which we have already referred, and by the fact that the entire Bible, rather than supporting it, actually refutes it.

God himself is clearly described as the only unfailing “Rock” of our salvation throughout the entire Old Testament.⁶ As for the New Testament, it declares that Jesus Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built and that He, being God, is alone qualified for that position. The rock upon which the “wise man built his house” was not Peter but Christ and His teachings (Mt 7:24-29). Peter himself points out that Christ is the “chief corner stone” upon which the church is built (1 Pt 2:6-8) and quotes an Old Testament passage to that effect which Christ fulfilled. Paul also calls Christ “the chief corner stone” and declares that the church is “built upon the foundation of [all] the apostles and prophets” (Eph 2:20)—a statement which clearly denies to Peter any special position in the foundation.

Let us each be certain that our lives are built upon that Rock which is Christ and upon an obedience to Him as Lord which is consistent with our profession of faith in Him. May He bless and guide you into the fulfillment of the purpose to which He has called you—and there is such a purpose for each of us in being here.

Endnotes

- 1 Roland Buck, *Angels on Assignment* (Hunter Books, 1979), 70.
- 2 Cited in *Plains Baptist Challenger* (July 1977).
- 3 Rev. Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (Tan Books & Publishers, Inc., 1977, Imprimatur Joseph E. Ritter, S.T.D., Archbishop of St. Louis), 26-27.
- 4 *Catechism*, 26-27.
- 5 Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Roman Catholicism* (Evangelical Press, PO Box 2453, Grand Rapids, MI 49501, one in a series of “Pastoral Booklets”), 1-4, 16.
- 6 See, for example, Dt 32:3, 4; 2 Sm 22:47; 23:3; Ps 62:1, 2; and many more similar verses.

Christ & Antichrist

Dave Hunt

Anti is a Greek prefix which not only means “opposed to” but “in the place of.” Antichrist will indeed *oppose* Christ, but in the most diabolically clever way possible: by pretending to *be* Christ. For the world to follow and worship him, a false antichrist “Christianity” must become the world religion—a “Christianity” that all religions can accept and which embraces all religions into “one faith.” Hence the necessity for today’s growing apostasy: to create an apostate church to be the Antichrist’s earthly bride, just as the true church is Christ’s heavenly bride. Such is the important role of the New Age movement and the many accelerating delusions and seductions in these “last days.”

Through a false gospel, false prophets, occultic religious practices and lying “signs and wonders,” today’s churches are being filled with millions who call themselves Christians, but who are not. Left behind at the Rapture, and happy that the “negative” influence of the vanished troublemakers has been removed, they will worship and follow the Antichrist, thinking he is the true Christ and that they have “never had it so good.” An ecumenized “Christianity,” in partnership with all religions, will carry on and prosper even more after the Rapture than before. The unifying factor will be concern for Mother Earth. Working for peace and ecological wholeness will have replaced truth as the basis of Christianity, as the World Council of Churches has already decreed.

Far from being a cop-out invented by those who desire to escape persecution (which could become very severe in America *before* the Rapture), a pretribulation Rapture is essential for a number of reasons: first of all, to remove the true Christians from earth. If they were present when Antichrist was revealed, they would oppose and expose him. Such opposition must be removed in order to give Satan and man, under Antichrist’s leadership, full freedom to prove that this earth can be turned back into a garden paradise without God. The Holy Spirit, who is omnipresent, will still convict and draw many to Christ

during the Great Tribulation. The restraining influence, however, which He has wielded in this world through the millions of true Christians, will have suddenly been removed, leaving a moral and spiritual vacuum in homes, neighborhoods, businesses, and schools such as we cannot even imagine.

A pretrib Rapture is also necessary because the Antichrist will be given authority by God “to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Rv 13:7). Such a fate could not befall the church, for Christ said that the “gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). Moreover, true Christians have authority and power to “resist the devil” and “he will flee” (Jas 4:7), for “greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world” (1 Jn 4:4). So the fact that Antichrist is given power by God “to make war with the saints and to overcome [i.e., kill] them” is proof that the true church is no longer present.

The “saints” mentioned are those who have not heard and rejected the gospel prior to the Rapture and who believe in Christ during the Great Tribulation. They will pay for their faith with their lives. Those who take the mark of the beast suffer the wrath of the Lamb, while those who don’t are slain by Antichrist. Thus a post-trib rapture would be a classic nonevent, for there would be very few if any surviving believers to be raptured at that time. And surely those Christians who were left alive, seeing the judgment of God poured out upon mankind and earth’s armies gathered for the battle of Armageddon in an attempt to destroy Israel, would know beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Second Coming was about to occur—and would be watching for their Lord to appear. Yet Christ declared that He would return at a time of such ease that even the “five wise virgins” would “slumber and sleep.” He warned, “[F]or in such an hour *as ye think not* the Son of man cometh” (Mt 24:44). Hardly likely in the midst of the greatest tribulation and destruction the world has ever seen or ever will see!

To understand how the stage is being set for the final conflict between Christ and Antichrist, it is helpful to consider some comparisons and contrasts between these two antagonists. First of all, the

procession of events is in God’s hands. While we cannot know the day or hour of our Lord’s return, the Bible does give us many clues as to the general timing of this great occurrence.

There is a precise time for Christ’s second coming just as there was for the first: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son...” (Gal 4:4). The same is true of the Antichrist. Though already present in the world and waiting in the wings, this “man of sin” known as “that Wicked [one]” (2 Thes 2:3,8) can only take power when it is God’s time: “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed *in his time*” (2:6).

Interestingly, the Roman Empire plays an integral part in the timing for the revelation both of God’s Messiah and Satan’s. Ancient Rome set the stage for Christ’s birth: “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (Lk 2:1). It was this decree that caused Joseph and Mary to be in Bethlehem so that Christ would be born there in fulfillment of Micah 5:2. And of course He also had to be executed during the time of the Roman Empire, which introduced crucifixion, in order to fulfill Psalm 22.

For Christ to return, the Roman Empire must be revived. This is clear from Daniel’s interpretation that the distinct parts of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar “...head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron” (Dn 2:32-33) represented four world kingdoms: the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman. That the “feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron” (2:41) represent the fourth world kingdom revived in the last days is clear from the statement, “And in the days of these kings [i.e., represented by the ten toes] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed ...[and] it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (2:44).

Christ did not establish His kingdom the first time He came, so He must come again to do so. When? “In the days of those kings”—i.e., when the Roman Empire has been revived, out of which the Antichrist will arise. No longer “as a lamb to the slaughter” (Is 53:7), but now

returning in power and glory to execute judgment upon those who crucified Him, Christ will destroy this evil empire in its revived form at His second coming. So although the date is not given, the *timing* of Christ's return is clearly indicated.

It is also essential for the Roman Empire to be revived in order for the Antichrist to appear. Daniel prophesied that "the people of the prince that shall come [i.e., Antichrist] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary..." (Dn 9:26). The Roman armies under the command of Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D.70. It is therefore from these people that the Antichrist must arise. That doesn't necessarily mean that he has to be Roman, since her legions came from many parts of the Empire. It does mean, however, that he must come from that world kingdom—and for that to happen the Roman Empire must be revived. We are seeing the fulfillment of this most remarkable prophecy in our day.

Calling Antichrist "the prince that shall come" indicates that he, like the ancient Caesars, will rule the Empire when it is *revived*. Moreover, the ancient Roman Empire was not only a political, economic and military entity, but also a religious one with the god-emperor the head of the pagan priesthood. So in conjunction with a world *government*, a world *religion* headed by the new Caesar, the Antichrist, must be established in the last days exactly as Revelation 13 indicates.

During the periodic waves of Roman persecution which the early Christians endured, all citizens of the Empire were required to bow down to an image of the current Caesar and worship him as god. Those who did not were killed. Such will also be the case under Antichrist in the *revived* Roman Empire: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life...[and] as many as would not worship the image of the beast [Antichrist] should be killed" (Rv 13:8,15).

The contrasts between Christ and Antichrist are also instructive. Our Lord was despised and rejected by Israel and by the world: the Antichrist will be hailed and embraced. Christ was mocked and jeered: the Antichrist will be praised. The cry of those who rejected Christ was, "We'll not have this man to reign over us!" It is awesome to realize that in contrast

the Antichrist will be accepted not only by the world but by Israel as well. Jesus told the Jewish leaders in His day, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43).

Christ's kingdom of light and truth is heavenly ("My kingdom is not of this world"- Jn 18:36); Antichrist's kingdom of darkness is built upon a lie and is totally of this world. It is sad to see so many evangelical Christians becoming increasingly entangled in this world, joining with Catholics, Mormons and other cultists and occultists to pursue its political and social agendas—and in the process losing their hope of heaven. It was characteristic of the early church that they knew they were the *ekklesia*, the called-out ones who were no longer of this world (Jn 17:6,14,16) but were eagerly waiting (1 Thes 1:10) and watching for Christ to return to take them to heaven (Heb 9:28; Jn 14:2-3). That hope must be awakened!

Mystery surrounds both Christ and Antichrist. Of Christ, Paul wrote, "great is the *mystery of godliness*: God was manifest in the flesh..." (1 Tm 3:16). And of Antichrist he wrote, "[T]he *mystery of iniquity* doth already work" (2 Thes 2:7). Each has a mysterious bride, one a virgin, the other a harlot. The mystery of godliness, which will be revealed in Christ's bride, the church, has been "kept secret since the world began" (Rom 16:25) and is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). It can only be fully revealed at the last time (1 Pt 1:5).

The mystery of iniquity, which could conversely be called "Satan in you, the hope of damnation," will also be revealed through a bride, the Antichrist's. She is called "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rv 17:5). As Christ loves and preserves His bride, so Satan will "hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Rv 17:16).

That the second coming of Christ in power and glory to rescue Israel, destroy the armies that are about to destroy her, and to set up His kingdom upon the throne of His father David is a separate event from the rapture of His bride, the church, is very clear. Some try to make them one event by suggesting that we will be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air" on His way to

earth and will immediately turn around and accompany Him to the Mount of Olives and His intervention at Armageddon. However, Revelation 19:7-14 tells of Christ's marriage to His bride *in heaven before* He comes to earth to execute judgment and set up His kingdom.

A major purpose of the Second Coming is to destroy Antichrist: "whom the Lord shall...destroy with the brightness of his coming (2 Thes 2:8). Thus it is clear that the Second Coming cannot take place until the Antichrist has been revealed and has established his kingdom upon earth. If the Rapture were not a separate event from the Second Coming *before* the Antichrist is revealed, then Christians would not be watching, waiting and looking for Christ, but for the Antichrist, which is unthinkable!

One of the growing delusions today is the belief that the church is not to be raptured at all, but that when we have taken over the world (and not until then) Christ will return to reign over the kingdom we have established for Him. Yet Christ promised, "And if I go and prepare a place for you [in heaven], I will come again, *and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*" (Jn 14:3). Paul wrote that "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air [obviously to be taken home to His Father's house of many mansions]; and so shall we ever be with the Lord [in heaven, where He has gone to prepare a place for us]" (1 Thes 4:16-17).

Instead, many who claim to be Christians are looking forward to meeting a "Christ" with their feet planted firmly on planet earth—a "Christ" who has not arrived to take them to heaven but to reign over the kingdom they have established for him. What a delusion! Such have not been working for the true Christ, but for the counterfeit, the Antichrist. They have not been "lay[ing] up...treasures in heaven" (Mt 6:20), but have been building an earthly kingdom. May our Bridegroom reawaken our love for Him, and may our hearts, as it should be with a bride, long to see and be with Him!

Preparation for Antichrist

Dave Hunt

We noted in the last newsletter that since the Antichrist is a counterfeit "Christ" there must be a large "Christian" church on earth to recognize, support and worship him. Of course, this is where the apostasy which is now gathering momentum leads: to the formation of just such a church, which will be the apostate bride of the Antichrist, as the true church is the Bride of Christ. The religion of ancient Catholic Rome—paganism under a thin veneer of "Christianity"—must become the world religion in partnership with Antichrist's world government through the prophesied political revival of the Roman Empire. The partnership between emperor (Antichrist) and the pope must be revived as well.

The Antichrist will be worshiped by the entire world. To make this possible, apostate "Christianity" must enter into union with all of the world's religions—while at the same time there must be a recognition of the importance of "spirituality" by the secularists. As one syndicated columnist put it in an article titled, "What Part Will Religion Play in Emerging Global Struggles?":

In Chicago, which was once considered the heart of Midwestern America, there are now more Muslims than Methodists, more Buddhists than Presbyterians, more Hindus than Congregationalists....In the future, the majority of Christians will be living in the Third World....It's not particularly chic to mix talk about religion and politics, but there is a connection.

An ecumenical union of all religions is seen to be essential, for there can be no political peace without religious peace as well.

The ecumenical movement that will unite the entire world under the Antichrist has now gathered irresistible momentum. Following up the mention of some of the leading ecumenical groups in the May newsletter, the magnitude and prestige of this movement can be seen in one dominant organization: The Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders on Human Survival. Its stated purpose is to "combine legislative common sense with eternal spiritual values."

The Global Forum began in October 1985. While the United Nations was celebrating its 40th anniversary, ten "spiritual leaders," two each from the world's five major religions, and eight elected officials from parliaments on five continents, met together at psychology's New Age center in Tarrytown, New York to explore ideas for ecological salvation and world peace. Out of this meeting grew a working partnership between the world's religious and political leaders—something which had been unthinkable since ancient Rome.

The politicians belonged to the Global Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development. The religious leaders had been invited by the Temple of Understanding, long headquartered at the "Very Reverend" James Parks Morton's infamous Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. As early as 1975 the Temple (Morton is president), known as "the spiritual UN," had sponsored a week-long "Spiritual Summit Conference" which culminated in "addresses at the United Nations by representatives of five major faiths," with Mother Teresa as the keynote speaker (May 1990 *TBC*).

The interrelationship of vast networks of ecumenical groups may be seen in the fact that Temple of Understanding director Daniel L. Anderson also heads the North American Interfaith Network, while Morton is a co-chairman of Global Forum. NAIN sponsors, among other things, the annual North American Assisi, one of many similar conferences now held around the world as follow-ups to Pope John Paul II's October 1986 gathering of representatives of 12 world religions in Assisi, Italy for a day of world prayer for peace. Assisi was a deliberately ecumenical and New Age addition to Catholicism's day of prayer for world peace traditionally called by the popes on the "Feast of the Holy Mother of God."

That first exploratory meeting in Tarrytown in 1985 was followed by the April 1988 Global Survival Conference in Oxford, England, which brought together about 200 spiritual and legislative leaders from 52 countries. "For five days parliamentarians and cabinet members met with cardinals, swamis, bishops, rabbis, imams, monks....Among them: the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, the Archbishop of Canterbury...Cardinal Koenig of Vienna...Carl Sagan, Vice-Chairman of the Soviet Academy of Sciences Evguenij Velikhov, Gaia scientist James Lovelock...Cosmonaut

Valentina Tereshkova." The conference was covered by media teams from 35 countries.

Conferees issued a joint "Final Statement of the Conference," which declared: "We have met at Oxford bringing together our individual experience from the parliaments and religious traditions of the world...brought together by a common concern for global survival, and have entered into a new dialogue on our common future....We have derived from our meeting a vivid awareness of the essential oneness of humanity...the realization that each human person has both a spiritual and a political dimension. We acknowledge the inadequacy of attitudes and institutions within all our traditions [including Christianity] to deal with our present global crisis....We have explored the nature of the relationship between political and religious life, and...have agreed that we [political and religious leaders] both need and desire to work together...and shall promote at regional, national and local levels all possible collaboration between spiritual leaders and parliamentarians....Each one of us has been changed by our Oxford experience...and [we] have undertaken commitments that are irrevocable."

Global Forum next sponsored a four-day symposium at the Aspen Institute in June 1989. It brought together 21 of the world's leading journalists to dialogue with experts, political and religious leaders on global survival issues. Harvard University and Global Forum are hosting a further ongoing series of seminars. As a recent history of this remarkable movement declared, "The momentum is growing: The Global Forum dialogue of spiritual and parliamentary leaders now is being replicated worldwide at local, national and regional levels."

The latest major gathering was the January 15-19, 1990 Moscow Forum co-hosted by what the program called a "unique alliance": "the Supreme Soviet, the country's first freely elected parliament; all faith communities of the USSR, coordinated by the Russian Orthodox Church; the USSR Academy of Sciences; and the International Foundation for the Survival and Development of Humanity." Moscow saw more than 1,000 participants from 83 countries call for a "new planetary perspective" involving a "new spiritual and ethical basis for human activities on earth." In his address to the Forum, Mikhail Gorbachev called it "a major step in the ecological consciousness of humanity." He drew cheers from

delegates when he pledged “to ban nuclear tests completely, for all times, and at any moment, if the U.S. does the same...[and] to open our territory for inspection....”

Laying the foundation for the coming world religion, ecological concerns are being expressed increasingly in pantheistic/New Age terms as though the universe were a living and even conscious entity (the Gaia hypothesis) with whom we must make peace and live in harmony. Calling *spirituality* “common to all humanity,” New Age physicist Fritjof Capra defined it at the Moscow Global Forum as “the experience of being connected to the cosmos as a whole...a sense of belonging that gives meaning to life.” Capra recently founded The Elmwood Institute, dedicated to “the convergence of politics, ecology and spirituality.”

In his keynote speech at Moscow, U.S. Senator Al Gore declared: “I do not see how the environmental problem can be solved without reference to spiritual values found in every faith.” He is *not* referring to biblical Christianity, but to an ecumenical world “spirituality” based upon what he called a “new faith in the future of life on earth...[providing] higher values in the conduct of human affairs.” The final “Moscow Declaration” called for “a global council of spiritual leaders” and the “creation of an inter-faith prayer....” It declared, “We must find a new spiritual and ethical basis for human activities on Earth: Humankind must enter into a new communion with nature....”

In his address to the Moscow Forum, Gorbachev had called for “a new contemporary attitude to Nature...returning to Man a sense of being a part of Nature.” Global Forum’s newsletter, *Shared Vision*, declared that “we need to remember our natural origins and re-learn how to love and respect nature. The love of our eternal parents, Earth Mother and Sky Father, is all embracing....”

Using similar pantheistic/New Age language, John Paul II has promoted a kindred concept in numerous speeches. In his 1990 World Peace Day message on the Feast of the Holy Mother of God, the Pope said, “A harmonious universe is a cosmos endowed with its own integrity, its own internal, dynamic balance.” Addressing a prayer gathering of “Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and others, he told participants that their efforts were unleashing profound spiritual energies in the world and bringing about a “new climate” of

peace. The Pope pledged that “the Catholic Church intends to ‘share in and promote’ such ecumenical and interreligious cooperation.”

Testifying how far the Catholic Church has already gone in promoting “ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation,” the entire May/June 1990 edition of *The Catholic World* is devoted to Buddhism. Articles include “The Buddha Revered as a Christian Saint” and a flattering biography of “His Holiness the Dalai Lama.” The Tibetan Buddhist leader has frequent contact with Catholic leaders. He met twice with Pope Paul VI and five or more times with John Paul II, whom he calls “an old friend.” “Both of us have the same aim,” says the Dalai Lama, who was also, of course, present at Assisi.

The Pope’s September 1989 speech to Catholic and Buddhist monks, who had been visiting one another’s monasteries in order to further Catholic/Buddhist “dialogue,” was revealing. He told the Buddhists: “You were welcomed by Benedictine monks whose motto is precisely PAX—peace. You have encouraged one another to promote this peace of which our world is in such dire need. All human persons...must commit themselves to the cause of peace....You, as monks, make use of...prayer and the search for interior peace....Your dialogue at the monastic level is truly a religious experience, a meeting in the depths of the heart....”

Writing in *The Tibetan Review* (and quoted in *Catholic World*), a Buddhist monk evaluated the goals of this “dialogue”:

The unity of religion promoted by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II and approved by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is not a goal to be achieved immediately, but a day may come when the love and compassion which both Buddha and Christ preached so eloquently will unite the world in a common effort to save humanity from senseless destruction, by leading it toward the light in which we all believe.

A month before his death, Catholic monk Thomas Merton had told an ecumenical conference in Calcutta, “My dear brothers, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to discover is our original unity.” Merton had earlier written that “Buddhism and Christianity are alike in making use of ordinary everyday human existence as material for a radical transformation of consciousness.” He was

convinced that the transformation of consciousness which Zen Buddhism calls “the Great Death” was identical to what Christians call “dying and rising with Christ”—that both led to the same “death of self” and to a “new life” not found in some future paradise, but in “living here and now.”

Of course, the obvious difference is Christ himself and His historical death, burial and resurrection on this planet for our sins, to reconcile us to God. It is this essential uniqueness which ecumenism eventually denies. Paul didn’t try to die to self through mystical techniques popular not only among Catholics/Buddhists/Hindus/New Agers but increasingly so among evangelical Christians. His death to self came about by faith in the finished work of Christ: “I am crucified *with Christ*: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me....” (Gal 2:20).

In a *Time* interview (5/28/90) concerning his two audiences with the Pope, Billy Graham said, “I have spent considerable time with the people around [John Paul II]. I could sense they recognize that they have an affinity with Evangelicals. They have suddenly realized that these are the people who are closest to them theologically.” In fact, the Pope, at the same time he tells Graham, “We are brothers,” has been warning Catholics against non-ecumenical evangelicals. Meanwhile, Pat Robertson is recruiting “conservative Catholics and evangelical Christians” as the “invisible army” of a new Christian Coalition that he hopes will turn America back to God and eventually land him in the White House.

Earlier this year at its annual convention the Michigan Episcopal Diocese refused to vote upon the resolution that “Jesus is the Christ, ‘the only name given under heaven by which we may be saved.’” The resolution was called “flawed because it presumes to define the ways in which God is able to work,” and “divisive and demeaning to people whose faith in God is as strong as ours though it is differently defined.” A substitute resolution was voted upon and passed to the effect that Episcopalians would recommit themselves to proclaim a “Good News” that offended no one.

The apostate church is growing in all denominations. “Positive Christianity” is the enemy of souls. Do not seek to please anyone except our Lord himself. And do not be afraid of the cost, for “The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe” (Prv 29:25).

Ecumenism & Catholicism

Dave Hunt

We have noted that the ecumenical movement plays a key role in forming the Antichrist's world religion, which will be a paganized Christianity such as was developed under Constantine and became Roman Catholicism. It is therefore not surprising that behind the scenes, the Catholic Church has been pushing ecumenism for years. It is not only drawing the "separated brethren" of Protestantism back into the fold, but uniting *all religions under Rome*, as Revelation 17 indicates.

The current pope is the leader of worldwide ecumenism. As such he presents an altogether different picture from the inflexible dogmatist determined to convert the world to Catholicism that most people imagine a pope to personify. On the contrary, John Paul II has taken the initiative in contacting leaders of the world's religions, accepts them as working toward the same goals of social justice, ecological wholeness and world peace, suggests that their prayers are as effective as those of Catholics, and has not attempted to convert any of them. He seems content to be acknowledged as the spiritual leader of the world's religions uniting for peace.

Such a stance on the part of the Pope is entirely consistent with the religious system he represents. As we document in *Whatever Happened to Heaven?*, Catholicism was formed through a union of "Christianity" and paganism and has always adapted itself to whatever religion it Christianized. Haiti, for example, is said to be 85 percent Catholic and 110 percent Voudun. Every voodoo ceremony begins with Catholic prayers. Likewise the deadly spiritist cult of Santeria is a blend of African witchcraft and Catholicism carried on in the name of "saints" who front for African gods. In Rio de Janeiro, Catholic faithful visit cemeteries to petition the spirits of their ancestors along with the Catholic "saints," etc.

Catholicism's paganized Christianity was developed by Constantine to unite his empire. His genius was knowing the value of religious concord in bringing political unity. He seems to have been the first to understand the necessity of ecumenism in arriving at such harmony. Gorbachev apparently has the same insights and, like Constantine, has found a willing partner in the Roman pontiff.

John Paul II has traveled the world to

promote Catholicism's traditional tolerance of pagan religions. At the Universities of Calcutta and New Delhi in his 1986 visit to India, the Pope told huge Hindu audiences that he had not come there to teach them anything but to learn from their "rich spiritual heritage." As worldwide ecumenism's diplomat-at-large he went on to declare,

India's mission...is crucial, because of her intuition of the spiritual nature of man. Indeed, India's greatest contribution to the world can be to offer it a spiritual vision of man.

And the world does well to attend willingly to this ancient wisdom and in it to find enrichment for human living.¹

Such praise of Hinduism by the leader of world Christendom seems inconceivable. Yet such tolerant acceptance of all religions is exactly what will be required to unite mankind under Antichrist. We cannot stop the ecumenical movement, but we must rescue as many individuals as possible before it is too late. The Pope has repeatedly made his intentions clear. Speaking in Geneva, Switzerland to leaders of the World Council of Churches representing 400 million Protestants worldwide, John Paul II declared,

From the beginning of my ministry as bishop of Rome, I have insisted that the engagement of the Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement is irreversible.²

The Pope also makes it clear that there can never be any "compromise on the issue of papal authority." Yet this fact seems not to deter Protestant participation in the Pope's ecumenical movement. Nor has it diminished the praise heaped upon him, even by prominent Evangelicals, for his "spiritual and moral leadership."³

John Paul II continues to openly promote New Age pantheistic ideas. Although the New Age movement has been thoroughly exposed by a number of writers, its basic tenets continue to gain an ever wider acceptance, even among evangelicals, and will play an important role for Antichrist. As early as 1961, James I. McCord, president of Princeton Theological Seminary, urged Christians to accept as a gift from God the New Age, with its accompanying syncretization of Christianity and other religions. McCord was pleased to note that "Our most widely read historian, Arnold Toynbee, is an apostle of an amalgam of Christianity and Mahayanian Buddhism."⁴

The energetic Pope is several steps ahead of both McCord and Toynbee in his personal diplomacy with Hindus,

Buddhists, Muslims and the adherents of many other religions. Nor is he out of line with such New Age events as The World Instant of Cooperation and Harmonic Convergence. As we have earlier pointed out, John Paul II openly promotes the same belief: That united prayers for peace of every kind, from yoga to witchcraft rituals, are releasing powerful "spiritual energies" to heal our planet. The Roman Catholic Church, like the World Council of Churches, has been promoting global cooperation among all religions for many years.

Toynbee's penchant for a Buddhist-Christian partnership is shared by many prominent religious leaders. Consider the following from Newark's Episcopalian Bishop John S. Spong:

In the fall of 1988, I worshipped God in a Buddhist temple. As the smell of incense filled the air, I knelt before three images of the Buddha, feeling that the smoke could carry my prayers heavenward. It was for me a holy moment for I was certain that I was kneeling on holy ground....

I will not make any further attempt to convert the Buddhist, the Jew, the Hindu or the Moslem. I am content to learn from them and to walk with them side by side toward the God who lives, I believe, beyond the images that bind and blind us.⁵

"His Holiness" the Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism has long been the Pope's trusted friend and has been well received by Roman Catholic leaders around the world. In 1979, at the start of his first U.S. tour, the Tibetan God-king-in-exile was feted at Roman Catholicism's New York City landmark, St. Patrick's Cathedral, where he participated in a "prayer service" described by *Time* as "an extraordinary interreligious festival." New York's Terence Cardinal Cooke was the host. The Dalai Lama, who declared that "all the world's major religions are basically the same," was given a standing ovation by the overflow crowd of nearly 5,000.¹ Said Cardinal Cooke, who "shared his sanctuary with a rabbi and a Protestant minister as well as his Buddhist guest":

This is one of the dramatic movements of the Spirit in our time. We make each other welcome in our churches, temples and synagogues.²

Which "spirit"? The Cardinal could not have meant the *Holy Spirit*, whom Christ said would lead His own *into all truth* (Jn 16:13). Another ecumenical cardinal was Augustine Bea, a Jesuit and 19 years rector of Rome's Pontifical Biblical College. Along with Rome's Pro Deo University, Bea annually co-hosted "Agapes of Brotherhood," attended by hundreds of guests from

scores of countries representing the world's major religions from Buddhists and Muslims to Shintoists. Typical of Cardinal Bea's speeches was one at the 7th Agape in which he "stressed the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God, which, he said, embraces all men..."³

Cardinal Bea was Pope Pius XII's personal confessor, close advisor to several other popes, and president of the Secretariat for Promotion of Christian Unity until his death in 1968. He sought out David DuPlessis (known as "Mr. Pentecost"), whom he invited to the third session of the Second Vatican Council.⁴ Bea saw the blossoming charismatic movement as a vehicle for Rome's ecumenical goals. DuPlessis and other leading Protestant charismatics fell like ripe fruit into his hands. Bea's supporters included such wealthy and influential Americans as Henry Luce of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* and shipping magnate J. Peter Grace.

Another guiding hand behind the Charismatic movement,⁵ who likewise used it to further Rome's ecumenical aims, was Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, recipient of the 1976 Templeton Award for Progress in Religion. He called Cardinal Bea one of "the 'prophets' of our own age."⁶ Suenens was given a special mandate to oversee the worldwide charismatic "renewal movement" in the Catholic Church, an assignment that was reconfirmed by John Paul II.

The Cardinal was influential in the General Council formed in the early 1970s by Shepherding and Protestant/Catholic charismatic leaders. This Council guided the ecumenical charismatic movement for years from behind the scenes. The minutes for its May-June, 1977 meeting reveal that a "covenant relationship" was entered into with Cardinal Suenens, which included the following:

We, as a Council, are committing ourselves to work together with the Cardinal for the restoration and unity of Christian people and world evangelization in projects to be mutually agreed upon. In each project, headship, authority and method of functions will be mutually determined by the Cardinal and the Council in the light of the requirements of each situation.

"World evangelization" with Suenens? What naiveté! Cardinal Suenens hosted and gave the opening speech at the Second World Conference on Religion and Peace in Louvain, Belgium in 1974, which received Pope Paul VI's blessing. Delegates were particularly impressed with the important role that religious unity will play in

establishing the coming world government. A continual call was sounded for "a new world order." Under Catholic leadership, the Louvain Declaration stated,

Buddhists, Christians, Confucianists, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and still others, we have sought here to listen to the spirit within our varied and venerable religious traditions...we have grappled with the towering issues that our societies must resolve in order to bring about peace, justice, and ennobling quality of life for every person and every people....

We rejoice that...the long era of prideful and even prejudiced isolation of the religions of humanity is, we hope, now gone forever.⁷

We appeal to the religious communities of the world to inculcate the attitude of planetary citizenship⁸

The World Conference president for many years was a Catholic archbishop from India. The Third World Conference, held in Princeton in 1978, concluded "with a worship service at [New York's] Saint Patrick's Cathedral, where Cardinal Terence Cooke [was] the host"⁹ to members of dozens of religions "worshiping" together.

Even the prayer breakfasts bringing political and religious leaders together across America and patterned after the one which began in Washington, D.C.—originally conceived by evangelicals as opportunities for a clear witness to Jesus Christ—have largely deteriorated into ecumenical platforms for the acceptance of all religions. "Participating groups" at Los Angeles's annual Interfaith Prayer Breakfast, for example, "range from the Board of Rabbis and the Buddhist Sangha Council to...the Bahai faith."¹⁰

An entire volume could be filled with similar examples. The Pope's gathering of leaders from 12 world religions at Assisi in 1986 to pray for peace inspired similar efforts worldwide. Typical is the North American Assisi: A Multi-Religious Meeting, sponsored by the North American Interfaith Network, started by The Temple of Understanding. North American Assisi's promotional material boasts of bringing together on an equal footing "Bahais, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Native North Americans, Shintoists, Sikhs, Unitarian Universalists, and Zoroastrians."

At such gatherings it would be in very bad taste, if not forbidden, for Jesus Christ to present Himself and declare, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6). Such dogmatism is not tolerated by those who

preach tolerance for all beliefs. Yet who is the more dogmatic—the One who made this true statement, or those who ban it?

The proper Christian attitude toward such gatherings is easily ascertained. Try to imagine the Apostle Paul's reaction if he learned that Timothy was sponsoring an "interfaith" prayer service to which he invited participation by the Jewish Sanhedrin, excommunicated "Christian" heretics, and priests from pagan temples!

The confusion when those who call themselves "Christians" go along with such compromise for the good cause of world peace is illustrated by the third annual World Instant of Cooperation as it was celebrated in Wichita, Kansas, December 31, 1988. This worldwide "prayer service" was held simultaneously "in over 70 countries and in cities throughout the United States." The official program, which included talks and prayers by Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Christians, opened with the hymn "Amazing Grace" and concluded with "a song by the Community Baptist Choir."

Jesus warned that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth to life," but "broad is the way that leadeth to destruction" (Mt 7:13). The Apostle Paul was so concerned for the truth that while at Ephesus he "by the space of three years...ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20:31). Jesus told those who claimed to believe in Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). Let us be lovers of truth, and disciple others in the pure Truth of God.

Endnotes

- 1 "Spiritual Vision of Man," *L'Observatore Romano* (Feb. 10, 1986), 5.
- 2 *The Fresno Bee* (June 13, 1984), C12.
- 3 FGBMFI *Voice* ad (Nov. 1981); Focus on the Family *Citizen* (June '90), 10; Wilson Ewin, "The Spirit of Pentecostal-Charismatic Unity," Billy Graham quote in *Bible Baptist* (Jan./Feb. 1980), 72-89.
- 4 *Time* (Oct. 27, 1961), 62.
- 5 Diocese of Newark, *The Voice* (Jan. 1989).
- 6 *Time* (Sept. 17, 1979), 96.
- 7 *Newsweek* (Sept. 17, 1979), 115.
- 8 John Cotter, *A Study In Syncretism* (Canadian Intelligence Publications, 1983), 90-91.
- 9 David DuPlessis, as told to Bob Slosser, *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost* (Logos, 1977), 207-213; Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander (*Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Zondervan, 1988), 253.
- 10 Burgess, et al., op. cit., 125; *New Covenant* (Feb. 1973), 14-17.
- 11 Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* (Servant Books, 1975), 24.
- 12 Alan Geyer, "Religious Isolationism: Gone Forever?" (*The Christian Century*, Oct. 23, 1974), 980-81.
- 13 *Catholic Register*, Toronto, Canada (Sept. 21, 1974).
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- 15 *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 7, 1989, Part II), 7.

Globalism

Dave Hunt

The union of Western Europe to be realized in 1992 will be an enormous step toward uniting the entire world. Already plans are being made for Eastern Europe, including Russia, to join. This gigantic European community will have such overwhelming economic and military power that the earth's remaining nations will have little choice except to join it in some yet-to-be-defined alliance. Rather than "iron-fisted" (that characteristic of Antichrist will come out later), the new world order will begin as a voluntary association for mutual benefit as indicated by the "miry clay mixed with iron" in the feet and toes of Daniel's image. The ten toes, rather than meaning that the revived Roman Empire will be composed of ten nations in Western Europe, will more likely be fulfilled with the division of the entire world into ten regions.

The very thought of globalism used to evoke in the Christian the horrifying image of the Antichrist, who, according to the Bible, will be the leader of the coming world government and religion prophesied in Scripture. Yet the argument is very persuasive that the establishment of a world government is the only way to prevent ecological collapse as well as to end the prospect of future war. Consequently, "one-worldism" has been promoted for years throughout America, especially in the public schools. As the National Education Association has said,

It is with...sobering awareness that we set about to change the course of American education for the 21st century by embracing the ideals of global community, the equality and interdependence of all peoples and nations, and education as a tool to bring about world peace.¹

An integral part of the new global education is, as Allan Bloom warns in *The Closing of the American Mind*, "to force students to recognize that there are other ways of thinking...[in order] to establish a world community...devoid of prejudice."² Bloom's use of "prejudice" is tongue-in-cheek, for in the new world community there are no moral absolutes and it is therefore "prejudice" to suggest that one point of view might be right and another wrong. There must be *absolutely* no absolutes, for such dogmatism would

destroy global unity. *As Newsweek* said regarding public education:

By the 1970s the mere mention of words like "right" and "wrong" was enough to make teachers squirm; certainty was out, moral relativism was in...[especially] in a popular program called "values clarification."³

The recent *Vision 2000 Final Report* of Longview, WA's School District recommends that schools help students adapt to "changes in social norms and traditional value structures" by taking "greater responsibility for teaching...[ethical and moral] values which have historically been provided by the family." Explains Lynda Falkenstein of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory:

Black-and-white answers probably never really existed, but the time is long past when even the myth can endure. Competent world citizens must act in the large zone of grays where absolutes are absent.⁴

In *Learning for Tomorrow: The Role of the Future in Education*, Wendell Bell makes it clear that the "demise of superstition and cultural 'absolutes'" is necessary in order to "unshackle mankind" for the new world of the future.⁵ To create the new-world citizen it is necessary to remove all "prejudice" against the beliefs which others may hold. In the new world of tolerance which Gorbachev and Pope John Paul II intend to create, every religion will be tolerated—except fundamentalist Christianity, which claims that Jesus Christ is the only Savior and that those who reject Him are eternally lost. While promoting ecumenism with all the world's religions, the Pope at the same time warns Catholics "not to be seduced by Protestant fundamentalist sects..."⁶

Gorbachev and the Pope both recognize that evangelical Christianity is the enemy of the new "freedom of conscience" they now promote. Gorbachev's advocacy of "spiritual values" must be taken in the context of his warnings against "outmoded dogmas," by which he does not mean only political ones. In an obvious affront to the One who is the Alpha and Omega (Rv 1:8), he stated at his June 1990 reunion with Ronald Reagan in San Francisco (where tolerance has borne such a deadly fruit as AIDS), "Everything must change. Tolerance is the alpha and omega of a new world order."⁷

Church leaders, both Protestant and Catholic, are jumping on the "one world" bandwagon, which can only be held together by tolerance for all beliefs. As early as 1970 the Lutheran Church in America adopted an official statement titled "World Community - Ethical Imperatives in an age of interdependence." Under the heading "Toward a Global Civil Order," it advocated the establishment of "world and regional institutions" to implement a new world order. It declared that "a church body has the God-given responsibility of generating support for...a world community." The National Conference of Catholic Bishops similarly expressed its support for globalism in a recent Pastoral Letter:

...we are now entering an era of new global interdependence requiring global systems of governance to manage the resulting conflicts...these growing tensions cannot be remedied by a single nation-state approach. They shall require the concerted effort of the whole world community.

The establishment of a politically and religiously united and thus, presumably, peaceful and prosperous world being pursued by Gorbachev, the Pope, the Dalai Lama and other world leaders makes good sense if one knows nothing of Bible prophecy. The "miry clay" of democracy emerging out of communist dictatorships to form the new international socialism adds an element of persuasion that plays an important part in the deception.

Yet the Bible declares that no one but the coming Antichrist can rule over such a world—and that he will be the worshiped head of its humanistic universal religion. Those who attempt to establish a peace that is not based upon submission to Christ as Lord are necessarily working to install the Antichrist's world government, whether they realize it or not. The final paragraph of the 1933 *Humanist Manifesto I* declares,

Though we consider the religious forms and ideas of our fathers no longer adequate, the quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement. He must set intelligence and will to the task.

In an astonishing partnership, "Christian" leaders have joined with humanist

politicians and other world religions in the task of achieving world peace through human effort. We have reported upon some of these ecumenical world conferences in the past. *Humanist Manifesto II* goes on to affirm, "We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species....No deity will save us; we must save ourselves."⁸ It would seem that the world's religious leaders also deny that any deity will save us. *Certainly the biblical prophecies that Jesus Christ must reign over planet earth have no place in ecumenical religious peace conferences.*

Evangelicals, too, are joining forces with cultists such as the Mormons, the Unification Church, and Catholics in pursuing such commendable goals as peace, ecology, opposition to abortion and pornography. Referring to a two-day strategy conference against pornography held in the Reagan White House, one leader stated enthusiastically, "Never before have we seen Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Greek Orthodox and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints leaders come together in such agreement and cooperation on an issue."⁹ The most highly respected Christian psychologist and authority on the family, who attended this conference and in whose magazine it was favorably reported, declared,

There was a tremendous spirit of love and respect among those gathered. [It was] a very emotional meeting.... [Since then] there has been great comradery among the top leaders of virtually all religious groups in the United States."¹⁰

Cooperation among all religions is essential in establishing the new world order. The *Humanist Manifesto* acknowledges that humanism is a *religion*, a belief that cannot be proved by science, but which provides a "faith" upon which one's life may be anchored when all else seems to fail. Gorbachev recognizes the need for this kind of *religious faith*. In the interest of tolerance it may be called by any name.

Truth is not the issue. Gorbachev realizes that the Soviet people must have *something to believe* in beyond their dismal circumstances. Such a "faith" is essential to carry them through the extremely difficult transition from Marxism to some form of democracy and market economy in the days ahead—hence the new push for "freedom of conscience." Of course, a great deal of capitalist financing will be required as well and the Western powers dare not be ungenerous lest *perestroika* fail.

The months ahead will be a crucial time

of transition for the entire world. The already over-extended West will have to share its wealth not only with the failed economies of communism but with the other underdeveloped countries as well. Organizations such as the Club of Rome have been planning for this eventuality for decades. They long ago recognized that *religion* of any kind, even benign cults, must be encouraged during the transition stage—for the admirable purpose, of course, of rescuing planet earth ecologically and ending the threat of war.

In contrast, the Bible declares that there will be no real peace until God's Messiah reigns in person upon this earth. It also warns that when mankind thinks it has finally established global peace, the worst destruction in human history will be imminent. Thus, for those who believe the Bible, indications that the world seems to be uniting for peace politically and religiously should not arouse feelings of earthly security, but rather an assurance of the soon return of Christ to take His own to heaven.

Astonishing events continue to take place in Eastern Europe. The most incredible are yet to follow. Human history as we have known it is racing to its climax. Current developments can only be correctly understood in the context of the long-standing cosmic struggle between God and Satan. The world is being prepared for the appearance of Antichrist and for the awesome moment when Christ, in a face-to-face confrontation "shall destroy [him] with the brightness of his [Second] coming" (2 Thes 2:8).

All of mankind is required to choose the side upon which they will stand in that final conflict. That choice will determine the winners and the losers—for eternity. The day is fast coming when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thes 1:7-8). It will be too late to change sides then.

Until that time the victory over Satan is won only by those willing to "deny self, take up the cross and follow Him." Yet this is the one belief that will not be tolerated by the "unprejudiced" global citizens of the new united world. The martyrs who remain faithful to Christ unto death, refusing to compromise the truth in order to promote false "global peace," will be the eternal victors. Of them it is said:

And they overcame him [Satan] by the

blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death (Rv 12:11).

True Christians must, like their Lord, walk the path of suffering and rejection as those who have accepted His death on the cross as their very own. They recognize, in contrast to the humanistic pride that prevails, that we cannot save this world ourselves, but we do need Christ to save us. Heaven, not a new world order, is their hope. That faith brings them into conflict with the growing movement toward ecumenical religious unity and global citizenship. Christ made it very clear:

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you....(Jn 15:19-20).

So it was with the Christians at the beginning of the church, and so it must be at the end as His return approaches. Like Paul, each of us must glory in the fact that through Christ "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14). We have no more to do with the world system than would a corpse just taken down from a cross. This truth is all the more important as the religious deception prophesied for the "last days" accelerates.

Endnotes

- 1 From the Summary Report of the National Education Association Bicentennial Program.
- 2 Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (Simon and Schuster, 1987), 36.
- 3 *Newsweek* (Oct. 13, 1986), 92.
- 4 Lynda Carl Falkenstein, *Global Education: State of the Art Research Summary Report* (Northwest Regional Educational Lab., 1983), 14, distributed by U.S. Dept. of Education, NIE, Education Resources Information Center, Washington, D.C. 20208. As cited by Eric Buehrer in *The New Age Masquerade: The Hidden Agenda in Your Child's Classroom* (Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1990), 42.
- 5 Cited by Eric Buehrer, op. cit., 43.
- 6 *Seattle Times*, (May 8, 1990).
- 7 *Orange County Register* (June 6, 1990); article begins on p. 1.
- 8 *Humanist Manifestos I and II*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Prometheus Books, 1973), 16.
- 9 Dr. Jerry Kirk, Religious Alliance Against Pornography (RAAP) chairman, quoted in *Focus On the Family* (Jan. 1987), 7.
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Islam & Israel

Dave Hunt

We have commented to some extent upon the incredible changes taking place in Eastern Europe. And now comes the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, precipitating the current Gulf crisis. One more piece of the puzzle falls into place, pushing us along to what Gorbachev, Bush, the Pope and others are now calling “a new world order.”

Much attention has been given to the Iron and Bamboo Curtains of communism. Recent events are causing the world to take notice at last of the even worse Islamic Curtain. Behind that wall any religion but Islam is forbidden. Converts to Christianity have been imprisoned and killed in large numbers in Islamic countries, often by their own family members. Freedom of the press and of speech and of assembly, along with freedom of religion and the import of Bibles and Christian literature, have been denied behind the Islamic Curtain even more strictly than behind the Iron Curtain.

Like Marxism, Islam has failed to produce the ideal society it promised. Many Arab countries, in spite of billions in annual revenues from oil, remain among the most primitive nations in the world, outside of their few large modernized cities. Islam has perpetuated an autocratic feudalism and cruelly held back basic human rights *in the name of Allah*.

While tolerating a great deal of homosexuality, Islam, to its credit, has kept out *much* of the Western world’s wickedness so rampant in nominally “Christian” countries such as the United States. The immorality in the West, however, is contrary to the teachings of the Bible and is done in defiance of Christ—whereas in Islamic countries much evil is due to the Koran itself and is practiced in the name of Allah and in obedience to his prophet, Muhammad.

No one now calls for a Holy War in the name of Christ, as was once done by the popes, and is still done in the name of Allah. Terrorism and the taking of hostages is not carried out in good conscience in the name of Christ but is done in the name of Allah. Christ taught us to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek. He seeks to win men’s hearts with His love. In contrast, Muhammad taught that Islam should be spread by the sword. That satanic doctrine has been applied everywhere, beginning with Muhammad’s

own Quraish tribe in Saudi Arabia.

Islam’s teaching that those who die fighting in its defense go immediately to Paradise made the Arab armies almost invincible. After Muhammad’s death they conquered Persia, Turkey, all of North Africa, crossed the Mediterranean to conquer Spain, and were well on their way to taking all of Europe when they were defeated in A.D. 732 at the Battle of Tours in France. Thus was the “faith” of Islam taken to the world. It was either submit to Allah and to the teachings of his prophet, Muhammad, or die. It is still quite in keeping with their religion for Muslims to consider it their honorable duty to kill Christians and Jews today.

Yes, there were the Crusaders, who struck back against the Arab invaders, but they acted contrary to the Bible. Inspired by Pope Urban II, the members of the First Crusade went to recover “for the Church” the land that rightfully belonged to Israel. Plundering, raping and murdering along the way, they slaughtered all the Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem when they took that “holy city” for the Roman Catholic Church. They were acting in direct violation of the teachings of Jesus whose cross they claimed to be carrying. Not to be outdone by Islam’s promise of instant Paradise for those who died in *jihad*, the Pope offered a “plenary indulgence remitting all punishments due to sin...to those who should fall in the war.”

The call by various popes for Holy Wars ranks among the worst violations of true Christianity from the Dark Ages and would never be repeated today. The shrill cry of *jihad*, however, is still heard and heeded. It is in perfect harmony with Islam and with the deeds of its prophet, Muhammad. It is impossible to understand the current situation in the Middle East, much less anticipate probable future developments there, except in the context of the religion that grips and motivates the Arab world.

Today’s fastest growing religion, Islam means “surrender to Allah,” the God whose revelations (the Koran) were allegedly dictated to the prophet Muhammad. Here we encounter the first of many contradictions. In its early chapters the Koran endorses the Old Testament and Gospels of the New as inspired by God, appeals to their authority to authenticate Muhammad’s revelations and urges obedience to their precepts. Yet the Koran goes on to contradict the Bible by declaring that

Jesus did not die upon the cross for our sins or rise from the dead, and that salvation is by one’s own good works rather than by grace through what God has done for us, etc.

To “explain” the flagrant contradictions between the Koran and the Bible, which it affirms, Muslims insist that the Bible has been corrupted since the days of Muhammad. That this is a blatantly false charge is proved by the many manuscripts in existence from the time of Muhammad and before, which are identical to the Bible as we have it today. The Bible must be discredited to maintain the claim that the Arabs, as descendants of Ishmael, are the true heirs of God’s promises to Abraham. The Koran declares that it was Ishmael, not Isaac, whom Abraham was told to offer to God and to whose descendants the land of Canaan was given.

In 1948, both Jews and Arabs were living in Palestine. Jews had been trying to return to the land of their ancestors for decades, but most were denied entrance by Britain. Horrified by the murder of 6 million Jews in Nazi extermination camps, the UN voted to partition Palestine (18 percent to the Jews) in order to create a small Jewish state as a place for resettlement of the survivors of Hitler’s holocaust. The Palestinian Arabs were given 82 percent of Palestine as a state of their own. Insisting that Allah had promised it *all* to them, and unwilling to allow a Jewish state to exist, six Arab nations attacked, confident of driving the Jews into the Mediterranean.

Thus began the war of 1948. The Jews were forced to fight for survival against a force far superior in numbers and equipment. Having been allotted such a narrow strip of land along the sea that it was indefensible, tiny Israel, as part of her victory, pushed her boundaries outward to a more defensible position.

Jordan subsequently annexed the remainder of Palestine that had been partitioned to the Palestinian Arabs. Since that time the countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria have refused to integrate these Palestinian Arabs into society, confining them to refugee camps. Most remain there today, to keep the “Palestinian problem” alive.

Since 1948 the relentless cry of the Arabs has been to liquidate Israel, which they have attempted to do in several wars. Israelis live under the constant threat of all-out destruction by the surrounding Arab nations, which outnumber them nearly 50

to 1. Had Israel been left in peace she would never have enlarged her borders. The Arabs have reaped the results of their own greed and hatred, which frustrates and angers them all the more. The extension of Israel's boundaries has *only* taken place as a result of wars she has been forced to fight in order to defend her very existence against an enemy sworn to exterminate her.

The Golan Heights, for example, were long used by the Syrians for sniper and rocket attacks upon the Israeli farm settlements below. In the Yom Kippur war of 1973, while the Egyptians simultaneously attacked across the Sinai, the Syrians poured over the Golan and down into Israel with thousands of tanks. The Israelis, caught by surprise and with only a small fraction of Syria's tanks and men, drove the Syrians (at great cost of life) back over the top of the Golan and the Egyptians back to the Suez Canal. Israel has since relinquished the territory it took from Egypt under a peace treaty with that country. On the other hand, in view of the continued threats of extermination from Syria, which like other Islamic nations refuses even to acknowledge its existence, Israel prudently retains the Golan Heights in order to prevent its use once again as a point of harassment and attack.

When Iraq's forces overwhelmed tiny and defenseless but oil-rich Kuwait it was only the swift action of the United States responding to Saudi Arabia's urgent appeal for help that prevented Saddam Hussein from taking over that country as well. This brought about something that previously had been unthinkable: "infidels" upon the soil of Islam's holiest nation defending Mecca and Medina, Islam's two most sacred shrines, *from Muslim enemies!* For the first time in its history, the United Nations responded quickly and almost unanimously to oppose with practical and severe steps an aggressor nation, raising hopes of a truly effective "new world order." Equally amazing, the majority of the Arab states sided with the UN against a fellow Islamic country.

One of Hussein's demands, however, appealed to most Arabs: that any withdrawal of his forces from Kuwait should be linked to a similar withdrawal of Israel from "occupied" Palestine. In their joint press conference in Helsinki, Bush and Gorbachev disagreed on this point. Bush correctly "saw no link between the Arab-Israeli dispute and the Gulf crisis." Hussein's takeover of Kuwait was an act of unprovoked aggression, whereas Israel occupies territory which it was forced to take in self-defense.

All Arabs are now faced with some serious questions. Why did mobs of Arabs give credence to the call for Holy War from Saddam

Hussein, a Muslim who was ruthlessly trampling other Islamic nations? Why are fanatical Muslims responsible for most of the terrorism and hostage-taking in the world and seem to outdo infidels in the commission of atrocities? And if Allah is all-powerful, why do infidels have to defend Mecca—and *against Muslims?*

The Emir of Kuwait's appearance at the UN presented an embarrassing spectacle. An Islamic nation was appealing to a world of "infidels" to help rescue it from another Islamic nation, which was at that moment plundering it and raping and torturing its citizens. Moreover, the Emir of Kuwait was a feudal monarch who, prior to Iraq's invasion, had muzzled the press and jailed human rights activists. In exchange for UN liberation of Kuwait, the Emir will have to yield to pressures for democratic rule. Change must come to the Arab world.

The West has suddenly awakened to the fact that six Arab families ruling from feudal thrones control 44 percent of the world's oil reserves. The pressure of world opinion and growing grass-roots movements in those countries will eventually force new freedom and rights for citizens. Democracy must come to the Arab world as it is painfully coming to the communist world. That will weaken Islam's fanatical hold so that Muslims, too, can become part of Antichrist's empire and religion.

As the collapse of communism is providing great opportunity for the gospel to be made known and received by many in Eastern Europe, so the coming upheavals in the Arab world will bring similar opportunities. After centuries of almost no response to the gospel, Muslims are now coming to Christ as a result of facing some of the serious shortcomings and contradictions in Islam. It promises heaven, but offers little assurance of getting there, except by death in Holy War. As in Catholicism, where nothing is ever enough to keep one out of purgatory, so in Islam one never knows whether enough prayers have been said, enough alms given and enough good deeds done to bring one to Paradise.

Confronted at last by some of the embarrassing questions about Islam, the faith of many Muslims is being shaken. Why did Muhammad with his "new revelation" give his God the same name, Allah, as the chief idol in the *ka'aba*, the ancient pagan temple at Mecca? Why, although he destroyed the idols which it housed, did Muhammad retain the *ka'aba* itself as a sacred shrine? And why did he keep and continue to revere the Black Stone that had long been worshiped along with the idols in the ancient religious ceremonies of Mecca? And why

do Muslims consider the *ka'aba* holy and kiss its Black Stone as an important part of their pilgrimage to Mecca?

Muslims everywhere can no longer deny that Islam has perpetuated a barbaric medieval mentality. Surely they recognize that the continued taking of hostages, murder and terrorism and the frequent spectacle on television of crazed mobs screaming "*Jihad! Jihad! Jihad!*"—"Death to Bush!" and "Death to the United States!" does not encourage Western viewers to put much confidence in a "peaceful Arab solution" to problems in the Middle East. And when a Salman Rushdie, because he writes something offensive to Muslims, has a price put on his head by Islam's foremost leader and must go into hiding to save his life from Muslim assassins, are Arabs proud of such barbarism, and do they feel that it commends Islam to the world? And to be able to beat one's four wives and unlimited concubines and to divorce merely by pronouncing it done, and to cut off hands and feet for petty thievery, as the Koran decrees? Surely the time for change has come!

Unfortunately, the pressure for change is also bringing a growing openness to ecumenism that is preparing the Muslim world to embrace the Antichrist. The new attitude was expressed by M. A. Zaki Badawi, principal of the Moslem College of London, while in attendance at the August, 1990, San Francisco Assembly of the World Religions. In response to Sun Myung Moon's announcement that he was the new world Messiah, Badawi made this interesting comment: "We don't accept Rev. Moon as Messiah, but we respect his vision of bringing the world's religions together." The next step is easy.

Satan's messiah will have incredible powers that neither Moon nor any of the other lightweight antichrists can display. We have already noted that Jesus specifically declared that Israel would accept the Antichrist. It is no longer so difficult to imagine that, with a little more preparation, Muslims, too, will be able to embrace and even worship the counterfeit "Christ"—while still professing allegiance to Islam. For Islam's Allah, after all, is not the God of the Bible that Muhammad claimed him to be.

Events are moving rapidly. God in His grace is allowing great opportunities to share the gospel for the last minute gathering in of communists, Muslims and others who have not heard it (Lk 14:21-23). Let us reap this harvest quickly, for the time is short. Christ's coming for His church is very near. May we live and witness for Him to His glory more faithfully and joyfully than ever!

Prewrath Rapture

Dave Hunt

This is the time of year when the world publicizes the birth of our Lord—but mostly in order to make merchandise of Him. Christmas is big business, generally promoted by godless merchants whose only interest is in using the occasion to make a profit. One day they will stand before the Christ of Christmas as their Judge.

Rather than pointing the finger at others, however, each of us ought to examine carefully his own heart. Are we, too, attempting to use Christ for our own ends? Do we embrace Him merely as an escape from hell to heaven while basically living for self? Or are we truly eager for His will to be “done on earth as in heaven,” beginning with complete submission of ourselves to Him in everything?

Let this Christmas season be a solemn reminder that the One who was born in Bethlehem is soon to return to this earth in power and great glory to execute judgment. First, however, He will take His own to His Father’s house of “many mansions,” where “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10). Then will come that heavenly marriage and honeymoon. We could be caught up *at any moment* to meet Him in the air. That “blessed hope” causes this earth to lose its attraction, purifies our lives and motivates us to win the lost because we believe the time is short.

Our removal from earth to heaven in the Rapture will allow the Antichrist to be revealed to rule over the revived Roman Empire. It has been exciting to see the worldwide dimensions of that “last days” kingdom begin to take shape. We have noted that the collapse of communism opened the door for the fulfillment of a dream first voiced by Gorbachev and the Pope: a United Europe extending “from the Atlantic to the Urals.” From that base of power a “new world order” will emerge—a concept long ridiculed as Utopian nonsense but now accepted and even taken for granted. Talk of a new world order now falls naturally from the lips of President Bush and other world leaders, who seem unaware that their brave new world will be ruled by the Antichrist.

Plans call for earth’s division into ten regions (the “ten toes” of Nebuchadnezzar’s image signifying the revived Roman Empire), each with its own security council and a strategic strike force for maintaining peace and preventing a recurrence of events similar to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Thus, the stage is being set for the fulfillment of an amazing prophecy: “And in the days of these kings [represented by the ten toes] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed...it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms” (Dn 2:44).

Christ’s birth in Bethlehem came at the precise time God had planned (Gal 4:4) and, like His death, was initially related to the Roman Empire. Likewise the revelation of the Antichrist will be at a pre-ordained time (2 Thes 2:6) and will require the presence of the *revived* Roman Empire. (See *TBC* July 90 for details of the fascinating link between Christ, Antichrist and the Roman Empire in relation to the *timing* of His second coming.) It is only fitting that the evil Empire which crucified Christ should be *revived* so that He can destroy it at His second coming.

We have previously given numerous reasons why the church *must* be raptured at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period. Once the dominant belief among evangelicals, the pretrib Rapture is falling increasingly into disfavor. The latest attack upon this belief is found in Marvin Rosenthal’s book *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church: A New Understanding of the Rapture, the Tribulation and the Second Coming*. This book’s novel ideas cannot be supported by Scripture, and Rosenthal’s attempts to do so create numerous contradictions. Nevertheless, we have received so many letters asking about the book from people who were swayed by it that a brief critique seems necessary.

Rosenthal, long a confirmed pretribulationist, has abandoned that position and “now believes that the Church will have to endure the persecution of the Antichrist.” His basic thesis is that the church will “*not* escape all of the oppression of the ‘Tribulation’ period,” but “will escape the wrath of God, which will be poured out...during the second half of the ‘Tribulation’ period.”

Numerous problems immediately arise. Since the Antichrist, according to Rosenthal, must appear first, the church is no longer watching and waiting for Christ but for Antichrist. Moreover, even after the Antichrist takes control of the earth the church cannot look for Christ until she has suffered considerably under that “Wicked” one. Yet the early church was definitely watching for her Lord, not for Antichrist: “From whence [heaven] also we *look for the Saviour*” (Phil 3:20); and to *wait for his Son* from heaven” (1 Thes 1:10); “and unto them that *look for him* shall he appear” (Heb 9:28), etc. If Rosenthal is correct, then one can no longer expect Christ at any moment. Imminency has been lost, and with it the “blessed hope” that sustained believers for centuries.

If the church must remain on earth to face Antichrist, then Christians would refuse to take his mark or worship his image. As a result, they would all be put to death. We are told,

And it was given unto him [Antichrist] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them...and he [the false prophet] had power to...cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed...And that no man might buy or sell, save [except] he that had the mark...of the beast...(Rv 13:7;15-18).

Clearly the church, Christ’s bride, must have been removed, for the Antichrist could not make war with and overcome her against whom our Lord said “the gates of hell shall not prevail” (Mt 16:18). Then who are these “saints”? They can only be those who have not come under the strong delusion (2 Thes 2:10-12) because they previously never heard and rejected the gospel. Millions will believe in Christ during the Great Tribulation and they will pay for their newfound faith with their lives. John tells us,

After this I beheld...[in heaven] a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues...before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes...

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rv 7:9,14).

A “prewrath rapture” would hardly be a

“blessed hope.” In fact, it would be a non-event, for there would be few if any Christians left alive to rapture at that time. Could any Christian take Antichrist’s mark and thus survive to be raptured? Indeed not! Revelation 14:9-10 makes it clear that those who “worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark” will be consigned to hell.

In building his unbiblical thesis, Rosenthal falls into a number of other errors. He insists that 2 Peter 3:10-11 “is not talking of total annihilation of the earth” because Peter earlier said that the world of Noah’s day perished, yet it was not totally annihilated. The analogy fails, for Peter includes in the future judgment the *heavens*, which he specifically says “shall pass away with a great noise” while the very *elements* of which all is composed “shall melt with fervent heat.” It certainly sounds like the destruction of the entire universe, during which “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” In its place, God will create a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (v 13). It is gross error to interpret specific language calling for the complete consumption by fire of the entire universe as merely a surface cleansing of the earth because that was what happened at the flood. He also suggests that this “cleansing of the earth” will take place *before* the Millennium, whereas Revelation 21 clearly places it at the *end* of the Millennium.

Rosenthal goes to the noncanonical Book of Maccabees to try to prove that the “falling away” that Paul refers to in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 is a Jewish apostasy and has nothing to do with the church. Yet Paul is writing to Christians, not to Jews. He has already given warning many times about the coming “falling away,” as have Peter and Jude. They repeatedly refer to apostasy among professing Christians. The writer to the Hebrews deals with the same theme in Chapter 6. To suggest that because the Book of Maccabees refers to a Jewish apostasy, this is then what Paul is talking about, is insupportable. Most of those whom Paul was addressing at Thessalonica were converted Greeks who would have no reason to associate “apostasy” with an incident in Jewish history involving Antiochus Epiphanes, a story they probably didn’t even know. Moreover,

Israel was already in apostasy when Paul was writing: she had rejected and crucified her Messiah and was persecuting Christians. So to suggest that Paul is declaring that some future apostasy is coming to an *already apostate* and unbelieving Israel is illogical.

One error leads to another. The author asserts that signing the pact with the Antichrist “will be Israel’s great apostasy” (pp 205-207). That an already spiritually apostate Israel would be going into apostasy by signing a political/military pact with the world ruler again makes no sense. Moreover, Paul says that the apostasy *precedes* the revelation of the Antichrist (2 Thes 2:3). To avoid the obvious contradiction of having Israel sign a pact with Antichrist before he’s been revealed, Rosenthal proposes a new meaning for “revealed.” He says that it doesn’t mean when Antichrist steps from obscurity into power, but when he puts his image in the temple and Israel *recognizes that he is the Antichrist*. Yet Paul says that the Antichrist will be revealed not through the placing of his image in the temple, but when “*He* who now letteth [hinders] [i.e., the Holy Spirit in Christians]...be taken out of the way...” (2 Thes 2:7-8).

Rosenthal’s further explanation only increases the confusion: “Speaking of that future day when the Antichrist will seek to get the Jews to bow to his image and many will refuse, the Lord said, ‘Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake’ (Mt 24:9).” How could apostate Jews who have rejected Christ be hated of all nations for *Christ’s name’s sake*?! It is one thing to recognize that the Antichrist is evil, and something else entirely to believe that Jesus is the Christ. That will only happen to Israel when He appears to rescue her at Armageddon (Zec 12:10).

Rosenthal suggests that “the Antichrist is a man who lived before....He will literally be raised from the dead” (p 208). In fact, he suggests that this man ruled an ancient kingdom that impacted Israel, so he has been dead for at least 2,500 years. Marvin tries to prove this “resurrection” from the scripture which says, “I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death” (Rv 13:3). Now, to recover from what seemed

to John “as though it were” a mortal wound is a far cry from bringing back to life a totally decomposed 2,500-year-old corpse! He then uses the same scripture to say that this man will suffer a mortal head wound in the middle of the seven-year pact with Israel and be raised from the dead. By what rule of exegesis does one prove two contradictory theories from the same scripture? Lack of space prevents dealing with the many other errors in *The Pre-Wrath Rapture*.

Christ’s repeated warnings that He would come at a time when one would least expect Him (Mt 24:44; Lk 12:40; 21:34-36) cannot be reconciled with Rosenthal’s thesis. Surely as Antichrist’s persecution and slaughter of the church proceeded, the dwindling number of surviving Christians would long for and expect the Rapture. Yet Christ depicted conditions upon earth during the last moments before the catching away of His bride as a time of such ease and boredom that “While the bridegroom tarried, they *all* [even the five “wise” virgins] slumbered and slept” (Mt 25:5). Either Christ was mistaken or Rosenthal is.

Even though God’s wrath had not yet been poured out, a church that was enduring Antichrist’s wrath, involving the most vicious persecution and slaughter of Christians in history, would not be sleeping any more than a church that found itself in the midst of Armageddon! Rosenthal’s prewrath theory thus suffers from the same contradictions as a “post-trib” Rapture.

Much of the Christmas scene promotes false concepts that will help Antichrist pretend to *be* “Christ.” The promise of “peace on earth” announced by the angels at the birth of Christ will not be realized until He personally reigns from David’s throne in Jerusalem, as the prophets foretold. Be not deceived by any call for a “new world order” that promises peace without the presence of the Prince of Peace. May His joy be your strength as you seek to glorify Him in your body and spirit, which are His (1 Cor 6:20). Let us maintain a pure witness until His return. He’s coming soon!

Israel & the Middle East

Dave Hunt

By the time you read this, the January 15 deadline for Iraq to pull out of Kuwait will have almost arrived. It would be foolish to predict what will happen. However, the major factors that should contribute to the outcome can be clearly defined.

The Gulf crisis is the direct result of U.S.-led Western miscalculations. This country was humiliated during the Carter presidency by Iran's taking of American hostages and using them for propaganda and manipulation. Therefore, the Reagan administration rejoiced at Iraq's invasion of Iran and hoped they would destroy each other. When Iran seemed to be winning, however, we and our allies gave Saddam Hussein the weapons and technology he needed to turn the tide. We continued to supply Iraq with the means of building its present war machine, though it was clear that Hussein was utterly ruthless, having used poison gas even against his own people, and having murdered anyone who might be a rival for power.

The weaponry we continued to provide was obviously far beyond Iraq's needs for self-defense. Shortly before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the U.S. State and Commerce Departments approved the sale to Iraq of 1 million nerve gas antidote kits *for defense*. Since none of its neighbors had the capability of delivering such gas, it was obvious that Iraq wanted protection for its troops in case of a shift in the wind during its own *offensive* use of gas. Greedy for profits, we literally sold Saddam the means and thereby encouraged him to attack his neighbors—which, predictably, he did.

Kuwait was a costly lesson, but it finally opened eyes and united almost the entire world to stop Hussein and to prevent similar aggression in the future. Permanent peace through the "new world order" which Gorbachev had proposed at the UN in 1988 suddenly became the hope of the international community. In response to Hussein, war would be outlawed. Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze made it clear to the UN in September that Hussein's attack upon Kuwait was a "threat to a *new world order*." A new era was being painfully birthed.

The issue was never merely the price of oil, as critics suggested in questioning whether such a goal was worth the possible

loss of life. The issue was and is a *new world order* of lasting *peace*. To allow Saddam to keep Kuwait would only encourage his evil designs. It would be the appeasing of another Hitler for "peace in our time," which, as history has demonstrated, only leads eventually to even more bloodshed in the end.

Even if Iraq withdraws from Kuwait, having raped, plundered and all but destroyed her, Saddam Hussein cannot be left with his capabilities for future invasion and destruction intact. No neighboring state could rest secure if that were allowed. Exactly how this threat will be neutralized is not clear. If we are as near to the Rapture, however, as the signs seem to indicate, then a solution to the Iraqi threat will be effected. We must move in the direction of "peace" in the Middle East and worldwide—the false peace that will prevail when Christ takes His bride home, leaving the Antichrist's bride, the false church, to welcome that imposter.

Any attempt to link Kuwait with "the Palestinian question" is the most cynical fabrication. "Justice for the Palestinians" was not Iraq's reason for invading Kuwait. And that a ruthless murderer of his own people and a suppressor of basic human rights could become the champion of "rights for the Palestinians" reveals both Saddam's hypocrisy and that of the Arab world. Moreover, that a naked aggressor who pressed an eight-year war against Iran at the cost of 1 million lives, then raped Kuwait, could delude the world into believing that he wears the shining armor of the "Defender of the Palestinians" demonstrates the prevailing prejudice against Israel. As Dennis Prager of the *Los Angeles Times* pointed out when the UN Security Council condemned Israel for its handling of the October Temple Mount incident in which 20 Palestinians died,

In that U.N. council sit nations every one of which condemned Israel for destroying the Iraqi nuclear weapons in 1982. In that council sit...the Chinese butchers of Tiannamen Square, the totalitarian state of Cuba and the two greatest suppliers of weapons to Iraq—France and the Soviet Union.

Here is tiny Israel...[which] a generation after [Hitler's] gas chambers, has to fit its children with gas masks because hundreds of millions of Arabs hate the Jewish state....

I have never deluded myself that Palestinian self-determination prevents Arab-Israeli peace, since one never saw a

single Palestinian flag, never once heard about the existence of a Palestinian nation, when the entire West Bank was under Arab control before 1967.... It isn't Yitzhak Shamir who causes the hatred. Israel-haters wanted Israel dead when it was governed by David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir. Nor is it the West Bank: Israel-haters wanted Israel dead when Israel had no West Bank. And it isn't Israel's reactions to the intifada; more Palestinians were killed by King Hussein of Jordan in September 1970 than by Israel in 42 years.

The cause of hatred is the mere existence of the Jewish state....

Pressure will increase upon Israel to agree to a "peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue"—as defined by those who have vowed her destruction. A European boycott would cost Israel the \$15 billion she exports there annually, a price she cannot pay. She will eventually be persuaded. The Antichrist will guarantee Israel's security—a covenant which he will break, then lead the world's armies to destroy her. The first step—to nip future Husseins in the bud—may well be regional security councils and forces, the probable "ten toes" of Antichrist's worldwide revived Roman Empire. Something more, however, is involved in the growing "peace and prosperity" delusion, as we have so often warned.

At the same time that the secular world is being prepared politically, economically and militarily for the Antichrist, the church is being prepared spiritually. Ecumenism's many Pied Pipers play an irresistibly seductive tune that exalts "unity" above truth, turns love into prostitution and the church into a whore as foretold in Revelation 17 and 18. Doctrine is despised, experience is glorified and correction is forbidden as "divisive." "Christian psychologists" have persuaded most of the church that an unholy union between Christ and such antichrists as Freud, Jung, et al. is biblical and essential. Zealous to get others to accept the gospel, we have, as Oswald Chambers warned, manufactured "a gospel acceptable to people" which is packaged in the world's appealing language of self-love, self-esteem, self-worth, self ad nauseum.

Satan's strategy has long been to install his "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor 11:15) *inside the church* to corrupt the truth, and he has done so effectively. His ultimate aim is to deceive mankind into thinking that his Antichrist is really the Christ and to bring the world to his feet in worship. Two things are necessary if this scheme is

to succeed: (1) a gradual change in the view generally held by those who call themselves Christians relative to (a) who Christ is, (b) what He came to accomplish, and (c) in what manner and for what purpose He will return to the earth; and (2) a gradual preparation of the world to embrace a “positive Christianity” that is acceptable to every religion.

“Christian leaders” are daily more blatant in their “positive” proclamation of heresy. Benny Hinn’s new book, in which he proposes that the Godhead is composed not of three but of nine (Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each a trinity of body, soul and spirit!), is selling briskly. To Vicki Jamison’s “subliminal tapes” which inject into the subconscious the entire New Testament in one hour (neither study nor understanding is now required) have been added W. V. Grant’s “subliminal neckties” each of which proclaims “Jesus saves” 555 times in print too small to see and is thus all the more effective in “unconsciously” converting the lost! In a recent TBN broadcast Fred Price persuaded his audience that Christ and His disciples were wealthy (otherwise how could they have traveled around for three years without employment?!). He justified his flying first class and driving a Rolls Royce as part of a godly mentality that causes us to treat God first class and gives Christ a successful image.

One hardly knows whether to weep or to laugh at such follies. Certainly Paul would not laugh. The Apostle’s attitude contrasts sharply with that of today’s church leaders who refrain from identifying and correcting heresy for the sake of “unity.” He knew how deceptive and deadly false doctrine could be. Most of his epistles were written to correct those who were wandering even slightly from the truth. Yet the most blatant heresy today not only goes unchallenged by church leaders, but it seems to enhance the acceptance of such preachers. Tony Campolo continues to be one of the most popular Christian conference speakers in spite of declaring:

Then it hit me—humanness and Godness are one and the same....Jesus was God because He was fully human and He was fully human because He was God...

Furthermore, it is in “I-Thou” relationships [as defined by Buber] that a person...encounters the Jesus who incarnates the fullness of humanness. Many people...through “I-Thou” encounters...encountered Jesus, were transformed and humanized by Him, and

yet they didn’t know who He was. Jesus is the only Savior, but not everybody who is being saved by Him is aware that He is the one who is doing the saving....

That little boy [whose mother had tried to get Campolo to take with him from Haiti] was more than a starving child...That little boy was Jesus....The resurrected Jesus...is in every person....I do not mean that others represent Jesus for us. I mean that Jesus actually is present in each other person....

The hymn writer who taught us to sing “Amazing Grace” was all too ready to call himself a “wretch.”...Forgetting our divinity...is responsible for a host of maladies that plague our contemporary society....

A great deal of criticism has been leveled at...Dr. Robert Schuller.... Personally, I think most of his critics are jealous....Schuller affirms our divinity ...[and] isn’t that what the gospel is?...Erich Fromm, one of the most popular psychoanalysts of our time [a humanistic anti-Christian], recognized the diabolical social consequences that can come about when a person loses sight of his/her divinity or the divinity of others....

There are those who would limit Jesus to being present only in those who would acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior, but I will not accept that limitation. I believe that Jesus is present even in...those who refuse Him.

On the contrary, salvation comes *only* through believing the gospel (Rom 1:16), not through an “existential encounter” with an unknown “Jesus” experienced in a human “I-Thou” relationship. It was Jesus himself who said that to have eternal life we must “*know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ” (Jn 17:3). Those who preach any other gospel come under the curse of God’s wrath (Gal 1:6-9).

That Campolo was absolved of heresy by a panel of leading evangelical theologians and that his false teachings continue to appeal to a wide audience is indicative of the growing tide of apostasy. How many crusade against evil in today’s society while tolerating false doctrine! Paul was so concerned about the compromise and error coming *into the church* that, as he testified to the Ephesian elders, “by the space of three years I *ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears*” (Acts 20:31). Were he alive today he would be outraged—and what “negative” epistles he would write to correct the rampant error!

The growing confusion concerning the gospel even among evangelical leaders is evident in the “Lordship salvation” con-

troversy. John MacArthur stands accused of teaching salvation by works because he declares that, to be saved, one must know and receive Jesus as *Lord*. Sincere men are aligned on both sides.

One hardly needs complex arguments, much less a theological degree, to reach a conclusion. When confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus a not-yet-converted Saul of Tarsus responded, “Who art thou, *Lord*?” (Acts 9:5). To a jailer’s urgent plea, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas replied, “Believe on the *Lord* Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). To be saved is to “confess with thy mouth the *Lord* Jesus” (Rom 10:9). Referring to their salvation, Paul told the Colossian believers, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (Col 2:6). Peter explained that Cornelius and those with him and all others who had received the Holy Spirit had “believed on the *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Acts 11:17), and Paul agreed that the gospel he preached involved “faith toward our *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). God’s gift of “eternal life” is “through Jesus Christ our *Lord*” (Rom 6:23). The gospel itself is called “the gospel of our *Lord* Jesus Christ” (2 Thes 1:8); etc., etc. The biblical evidence is overwhelming.

If Jesus is not God, then He cannot be our Savior. And if He *is* God, then He surely *is* Lord. More than 100 times in the New Testament Jesus Christ is identified as *Lord*. This isn’t some title that one is free to use or ignore. This is who He *is*. Thus to fail to know Him as *Lord* is not to know Him at all—and not to be saved at all, for no lesser “Christ” can be the Savior. While one may not understand the full implications of His lordship at the time of receiving Christ, any mistaken notion that the “Savior” who is being received is anything less than “*Lord of all*” (Acts 10:36) is to misunderstand the gospel itself and thus not to be saved.

Let this reminder challenge once again those of us who know Christ as Lord but who, perhaps, have not been allowing Him full control of our lives. And like Paul, let us not “Christianize” but *evangelize* the world around us—and let us “labor night and day with tears” to oppose all error *within the church*.

Catholicism

Dave Hunt

I have just read a disturbing book, *Evangelical Catholics*, by Keith A. Fournier—disturbing because it presents a tragically mistaken thesis that will lead many astray. Fournier seems to be a born-again Christian who claims to be both *fully evangelical* and *fully Catholic*. The book is a plea for Protestants to join Catholics in a joint evangelization effort. While admitting that “genuine and important theological issues (p 168) which “must be discussed and worked through” (p 191) divide Protestants and Catholics, he pleads for “unity” without dealing with such issues. In fact, his book confronts none of the serious issues that divide us.

Without offering *any* proof, he calls the belief by Protestants that Catholics have a false gospel “arrogant triumphalism.” He trivializes as “a straw man” (p 167) the vital issues of the Reformation—issues so important that Catholics burned hundreds of thousands of Christians at the stake for refusing to violate their consciences. Dismissing it all as a “divorce” due to “misunderstandings” in the family, Fournier fails to deal realistically with the facts of history and insults both the martyrs and their executioners.

Fournier’s book calls Protestants to “return home” to Rome. The first chapter ends thus: “I invite you on a journey that will lead us home” (p 23). What he means is quite clear. Chapter 3, the story of his return to the Roman Catholic Church, is titled “There’s No Place Like Home.” He declares that for *anyone* “to belong to Christ is to belong to his church” (p 44). He does not mean some Protestant church or the body of Christ composed of all believers, but “the [Catholic] church of my childhood.”

Fournier tells of being the target of what he calls “virulent, false and angry anti-Catholic tracts” (p 168) and of vowing, as a result, to fight the battle for unity “at every juncture with truth.” Yet he gives us no “truth” about what Catholicism teaches. He denies the charge that Catholics worship Mary and claims that she is only “honored.” Then, leaving a false impression, he changes the subject without mentioning that she is “honored” as follows:

Mary is co-redemptrix of the human race...because with Christ she ransomed mankind from the power of Satan. Jesus

redeemed us with the blood of His body, Mary with the agonies of her heart....The church and the saints greet her thus: “You, O Mary, together with Jesus Christ, redeemed us.”...

God has ordained that no grace will be granted to us except through Mary.No one will be saved or obtain mercy except through you, O Heavenly Lady....No one will enter heaven without passing through Mary as one would pass through a door....O Mary, our salvation is in your hands. [etc., etc.].

This is not the gospel; it is blasphemy! Yet such are the beliefs of Pope John Paul II, whose theology Fournier says he “does not question” (p 204). Fournier declares that Mary was kept from sin, which denies the gospel that “all have sinned” and that Christ died for all mankind. If God could keep Mary, then He could have kept Eve and all human beings from sin, thus eliminating the need for Christ to die. While agreeing that the Roman Church “is not perfect in practice,” Fournier admits no doctrinal error, but writes, “I believe in what the Catholic Church teaches” (p 174). He states that he will not embrace an ecumenism “that harms the purity of Catholic doctrine” (p 157). Rome is never wrong! Is that not the very “arrogant triumphalism” he condemns in Protestants?

Fournier, a lawyer, presents only that part of Roman Catholicism that evangelicals would not find too objectionable. He barely hints at Rome’s heresies. For example: “It is not my intention...to explain more fully the Catholic concept of conversion as a continual process that necessarily takes place within the church” (pp 183-84). Why not explain? Obviously because it would shock evangelicals. In the book’s 218 pages he carefully avoids explaining Rome’s false gospel. Let us, then, in pursuit of truth, consult the most authoritative source of Catholic teaching and practice, The Council of Trent (1545-63), confirmed by Vatican II, to discover what Fournier withholds from his readers.

Fournier’s view that “conversion is a continual process” is clearly *not* the biblical gospel evangelicals preach. How then can Protestants join Catholics in evangelization when each preaches a different evangel? Yes, Catholicism acknowledges that Christ died for our sins and that salvation is by grace through faith and not by works. So far so good. But to that truth Rome adds that Christ’s death was *not enough*. The cross only made possible a process which *may* lead

eventually to heaven—a process involving participation in the seven sacraments which Rome administers.

The first sacrament is baptism, which, for the vast majority of Catholics, takes place in infancy. *The Canons and Decrees of The Council of Trent* (Tan Books, 1978) declares,

...our Lord Jesus Christ...merited for us justification by His...[death upon] the cross...[but] the instrumental cause [of justification] is the sacrament of baptism...without which no man was ever justified...(p. 33). If anyone says that baptism...is not necessary for salvation...or denies that infants newly born...are to be baptized...for the remission of sins...let him be anathema (eternally damned) (pp. 53,20); For by baptism we put on Christ and are made in Him an entirely new creature, receiving full and complete remission of all sins....(p. 90).

Again, this is *not* the evangelical gospel. Beside baptism there are six more sacraments plus rosaries, alms, Mary’s suffering for our sins and her intercession with Christ, the merits of the saints, one’s own suffering for one’s sins in purgatory, etc. And the role of the Church is vital. Thus the Catholic Church is called “our sacrament of salvation.” No evangelical would take that position re a Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist or any other church. Yet *Trent* refers to “our Catholic faith, *without which it is impossible to please God*” (p 21). More “arrogant triumphalism”?

Christ said, “It is finished.” Yet *Trent* anathematizes all who dare to say that for those who have been justified by grace “no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened” (p 46). *Trent* insists that “no one can know with the certainty of faith...that he has obtained the grace of God” (p 35)...or that he is among the number...whom God has chosen” (p 38). Anyone who claims to be certain of his salvation is anathematized (pp 43-45).

Again, this is *not* the evangelical gospel, which assures us that we can *know* [present knowledge] that we *have* [present possession] eternal life (1 Jn 5:13). For evangelicals, the salvation of the soul for eternity is *secure* once faith is placed in Christ. From that moment the believer is assured by Christ himself that he “shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (Jn 5:24). Those who

believe the gospel *know for certain on the authority of God's Word that they "shall never come into condemnation"* (Jn 5:24) and shall "*never perish*" (Jn 10:28). Such biblical assurance is denied by Catholicism's false gospel.

When the Philippian jailer asked, "What must I do to *be saved*," Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved* [period!]" (Acts 16:31). He didn't say, "...and thou shalt begin a long process of involvement in sacraments administered by an elite priesthood that, hopefully, will one day get you to heaven." Salvation/justification/redemption take place once and for all when Christ is truly received as Savior and Lord and the sinner is born again of the Holy Spirit into the family of God. Until then one is not in the family of God, no matter to which church one belongs, be it Protestant or Catholic. Yet Fournier insists that all Catholics are "in the family of God" because they have been baptized.

After 160 pages of talk about unity and evangelizing the world together, in Chapter 10 he acknowledges that "real and important" differences exist between the Catholic and Protestant understanding of the Lord's Supper—so much so that he *refuses to partake of the bread and wine with Protestants!* He continues to plead for "love and unity" as members of the same "family," having "the same Head, the same Savior, the same Elder Brother, and the same Bridegroom—He who is at the heart of our evangelical fervor, Jesus Christ" (p 167). Yet he will not partake of a common loaf and cup in the remembrance of Christ's death with Protestants who are, in fact, *all anathematized by the Council of Trent for their beliefs!* And he persists in urging Protestants to "accept" Catholics without dealing with these vital issues. A disturbing book indeed!

Obviously the differences in belief just in this one area are major. Catholicism's dogmas of the Mass *pervert the gospel*. They were repudiated by the Reformers and hundreds of thousands died at the stake rather than embrace such heresy. *Trent* declares,

...in this divine sacrifice...is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner the same Christ who once offered Himself in a bloody manner...this is truly propitiatory....For the victim is one and the same...now offering [Himself] by the ministry of priests...not only for the sins...of the faithful who are living, but also for those departed in Christ but not

yet fully purified [i.e., still suffering in purgatory for their sins] (p 146).

If anyone says that in the mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God...[by] priests [who] offer His own body and blood...[or] that the sacrifice of the mass is...not a propitiatory one...let him be anathema (p 149).

This blasphemous gospel necessarily alienates evangelicals because it contradicts the specific teaching of Scripture:

Nor yet that he should offer himself *often* [as Catholicism teaches]...but now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all...*for by *one offering* He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified....Now...there is *no more offering* for sin (Heb 9:25-10:18, and many other verses).

Fournier argues for the "real presence" of Christ on the altar where He is sacrificed again in each Mass. After his "conversion" he attended a Protestant Bible school. There he was taught that when Christ, in John 6, said we must eat His flesh and drink His blood, He meant that He would become a sacrifice for sin. And that just as the priest ate of the Old Testament sacrifices which symbolized Christ (Lv 2:3; 6:16, 18, 26, 29, etc.), so we must *believe* in Him. Fournier asked his professor "why the same Jesus who literally meant everything else He said spoke figuratively here" (p 42). Fournier's mistake is simple: Christ did not always speak literally. In fact, when He spoke to the multitudes, as He did in John 6, He *always* spoke in parables: "Without a parable spake he not unto them" (Mt 13:34). He said He was "the light" (Jn 8:12), "the door," (Jn 10:7), "the vine" (Jn 15:1), etc., yet no one claims He meant this in a *literal* sense. Nor do we *literally* eat Him.

In fact, Christ explained that by eating and drinking His flesh and blood He meant *believing* on Him (Jn 10:29,35,40,47). When He called Himself "the bread" (Jn 6:35) He didn't mean that His body was a literal loaf of bread. So when he said of a loaf of bread, "this is my body," He obviously didn't mean that literally either, since He was present in His physical body and holding the bread in His hands when He said it. Moreover, how can Christ's *real* body be contained within a wafer and be physically present in its fullness in each of

millions of wafers in tens of thousands of Catholic churches around the world at one time? *Literally?* Even more important, is it not blasphemy for a Catholic priest to claim to have the power to take Christ's resurrected, glorified body in which He lives at the Father's right hand in heaven and reconstitute it into His precrucifixion body to be re-offered again? Literalism, indeed!

Sadly, it was "feeling this Presence" at a Catholic altar that brought Fournier back into the church of his childhood (p 45). Fortunately, he'd already had the advantage of getting away from the Catholic Church long enough to hear the gospel and to receive Christ and to be born again. What of the vast majority of Catholics who have never heard that gospel? Because of the false teaching, that they are receiving eternal life by *ingesting* into their *stomachs* Christ's *physical* body and blood under the form of bread and wine, Catholics by the millions are prevented from receiving the *spiritual* gift of eternal life through *believing* in Christ in their *hearts*. And for centuries Rome did not allow the common people to partake of the wine turned to Christ's "blood" which it said was essential to life!

This false gospel necessarily separates Protestants from Catholics. Love and unity must be based upon truth, not mere sentiment. It is not an act of love for evangelicals to embrace as Christians and overlook the false gospels of all who call themselves "Christians," whether they be Mormons, Catholics, et al. The vital issue, which Fournier *never deals with* in his entire book, is: What is the gospel, how are we saved, what does the Bible itself teach?

I hope we have clarified why Christ's love compels us not to "accept Catholics," but to *inform* them where and why Rome's dogmas and traditions contradict God's Word. Until they have seen what is false in their religion, they can hardly embrace the truth, for no matter how clear the gospel is made it will be understood in the context of Catholicism and thus misunderstood.

Fournier names many evangelical leaders who, instead of evangelizing Catholics, are working with them to "evangelize" the world. The ecumenical tide threatens to engulf us all. It grows increasingly unpopular and difficult to sound the warning that God has called us to declare. Your prayers and encouragement are much appreciated.

The Gulf War & Prophecy

Dave Hunt

The Gulf War is on everyone's mind and in many prayers. Its ultimate outcome has never been in doubt. Prolongation of the destruction and bloodshed is due solely to the gigantic ego and evil of Saddam Hussein, the Arab Hitler, who is needlessly destroying both his army and country just as *der Fuehrer* did. Let us pray that the war may be over soon—hopefully before you receive this.

The next step will be to establish an unprecedented Middle East peace under a new world order. One of the benefits may well be a weakening, if not crumbling, of the Islamic Curtain, which, like the shattering of the Iron Curtain, should bring a disillusionment with Islam and a new openness to Christianity in Islamic lands. The restoration of the Kuwaiti government should see major steps in the direction of democracy and the freedoms conducive to human rights and the proclamation of the gospel—changes that hopefully will spill over into Saudi Arabia and other neighboring countries. Fanaticism, however, will also reign.

Many are asking where, if at all, this conflict fits into Bible prophecy and what role it will play in preparing the world for the Antichrist. Some Christian leaders are suggesting that because Saddam has been rebuilding ancient Babylon, Iraq is therefore the Babylon of the last days mentioned in Revelation 17 and 18—and that the destruction now underway fulfills last-days prophecies. On the contrary, neither Iraq nor ancient Babylon (which has been in ruins for 2,200 years) nor Saddam's rebuilt Babylon (if he succeeds, which is doubtful) fits the detailed description of MYSTERY, BABYLON in Revelation.

Babylon is a major topic in the Bible. The word occurs 286 times in 252 verses. Nearly always the reference is to historical Babylon. Yet some prophecies of Babylon's destruction, such as Isaiah 13, clearly include last-days events: "the day of the LORD...destruction from the Almighty...the sun shall be darkened...I will punish the world for their evil...I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall

remove out of her place...." Here we have MYSTERY, BABYLON, which has its origins in Babel and, like that ancient tower, represents the world's *united* false religious and political systems now being hailed as a new world order. Clearly, the Vatican ("the city on seven hills that rules over the kings of the earth" - Rv 17:9,18) will head the last-days false church in alliance with Antichrist and his world kingdom. We deal with this in *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*.

Saddam Hussein has portrayed himself as the new Nebuchadnezzar who would, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, destroy Israel. In taking such a role he sealed his doom ("I will...curse him that curseth thee" - Gn 12:3). If Saddam survives the war he should be tried and condemned as a war criminal. His crimes are many and horrendous, having brought death to more than 1 million people and the torture, rape and plunder to countless more. It is being said that even in defeat he will emerge as the great hero of the Arab world. That may be so in the eyes of some fanatical Muslims, but thinking Arabs will see him as the embodiment of evil. It seems likely that his project to rebuild Babylon—a luxury unaffordable to a devastated Iraq—will be abandoned.

There have been predictions that Israel would be drawn into the Gulf War (as Saddam has attempted to do), thus shattering the coalition and causing Arab nations to unite on the side of Iraq. The result would allegedly be the destruction of the United States both militarily and economically. On the contrary, Iraq's ability to bully her neighbors will be destroyed and a new climate for peace created in the region. As for the monetary cost to the U.S., for the first time in history other nations are paying most of the bill.

There is wide concern that the Gulf War could lead to Armageddon. Not so. It will far more likely lead to world peace. At Armageddon all of the world's armies converge upon Israel to destroy her. In this conflict, however, the world's armies are converging upon Iraq in order to bring stability and peace to the region—and to *protect* Israel. Iraq had the most powerful Middle Eastern military establishment and as a result posed a constant

threat to its neighbors. Only by the destruction of that war machine and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power could peace come to the region. It would be a mistake for the coalition forces to stop short of that goal under Arab pressure, a pressure which may grow.

Where does the Gulf War fit into prophecy? It is not specifically mentioned. However, as we have said in the past, if we are very near to the Rapture, as it seems we are, then the outcome will be to set the stage for peace, not for further war. The real significance of this war in the scheme of biblical prophecy is found in the repeated statements by President Bush, Soviet and other world leaders that Saddam Hussein's takeover of Kuwait was a threat to the new world order. The Gulf War is not being fought primarily to lower the price of gas nor even to liberate Kuwait, but to define, establish and preserve a new world order that will, unwittingly, set the stage for Antichrist.

That Utopian term is being taken seriously for the first time in history both by the world leaders invoking it and by the media and general public. Moreover, credence is given to the concept of a new world order by the fact that the United Nations, for the first time in its existence, is fulfilling its purpose by acting swiftly and decisively against a belligerent nation. What happens to Saddam will be a lesson to any other would-be aggressors in the area or elsewhere. No longer will the world community tolerate the rape of a defenseless nation by its neighbor. Thus, a new era of global peace will have dawned—the new world order now being touted.

Gorbachev was the first world leader in modern times to invoke the image of a new world order. In his historic address to the UN on December 7, 1988, he declared, "Further global progress is now possible only through a quest for universal consensus in the movement towards a new world order." The Pope has taken up the refrain and so have other world leaders in many countries. Indeed, the world now seems almost unanimous in its acceptance of such a goal. Sadly, such high hopes are a delusion!

George Bush claims to be a born-again Christian. As President, he is working

diligently to establish world peace. Is that not a worthy goal? And are not all Christians to pray for peace? In a speech January 16, 1991, Billy Graham declared, "There come times when we have to fight for peace." He went on to say that out of the present war in the Gulf may "come a new peace and, as suggested by the President, a new world order." What should the Christian's attitude be toward the hoped-for new world order?

The Bible foretells the establishment of *two* new world orders in the last days: the first to be ruled by Antichrist and the second by Christ himself. We seem to be very close to that first event, and thus to the Rapture which must precede it. Considering the surprising transition by which Eastern Bloc countries are becoming part of a United States of Europe (depending upon what happens to Gorbachev and the Soviet Union), it seems likely that the resolution of the Gulf War will be another giant step toward global peace and the revival of the Roman Empire over which Antichrist will reign.

One thing is clear: the new order on the agenda of both secular and religious leaders at the present time cannot possibly be the millennial kingdom over which Christ will reign, but its counterfeit which will be ruled by Antichrist. We are commanded to pray for those in authority "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tm 2:2). A "peaceable life," however, is not the same as global peace under a new world order established by mankind in disobedience to God. Scripture warns that "the way of peace have they not known" (Rom 3:17).

The Bible presents the only basis for world peace. It must be in concert with righteousness: "righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps 85:10); "the kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom 14:17); "there is no peace...unto the wicked" (Is 48:22; 57:21). True worldwide peace can only be established by "the God of peace" (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Thes 5:23; Heb 13:20, etc.) through the "gospel of peace" (Rom 10:15). In no other way can sinful mankind be reconciled to God—and without that

reconciliation there can be no genuine peace.

Yes, a forgotten purpose of the gospel is to bring worldwide peace. The early disciples "preach[ed] peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)." (Acts 10:36). The angels announced that good news at the birth of Christ: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Lk 2:14). Peace on earth comes only through God being glorified and obeyed and His Christ reigning supreme. Thus, a major purpose of Christ's death for our sins was to make "peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). In preaching the gospel, the early Christians declared the good news of "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1).

Christ must reign within as Lord and Savior for individuals to be at "peace with God." He must also reign over the world, or there can be no real global peace. He will reign as Israel's promised Messiah from the throne of His father David in Jerusalem during the Millennium. That is stated unequivocally in the Bible. His reign on earth will begin not at the Rapture, when He comes *for His saints*, but seven years later at His second coming *with His saints* (Jude 14; Rv 19:14) to rescue Israel at Armageddon and to destroy His enemies. At that time the surviving Jews who had not yet gone back to their land will be taken there by angels (Mt 24:27-31).

The new world order being touted by world leaders today is a counterfeit of God's kingdom—an attempt to establish worldwide peace without submission to the Prince of Peace. But surely it isn't practical for a Christian president, such as Bush, or a Christian secretary of state, such as James Baker, to declare to the world that peace can only come when the Prince of Peace reigns! So goes the argument. Non-Christians such as Muslims, Jews, Hindus, atheists, et al. would be offended, and secular governments would not accept "peace through Jesus Christ." That may be so, but it is no reason for not speaking the truth in love.

If, for fear of offending unbelievers, Christians shrink from declaring to the world that there is no peace apart from Christ, are they not compromising the gospel and allowing God's truth to be

held hostage to fear? Is it not hypocrisy to announce in Christian churches, through the media or in gospel crusades, that Christ is the only hope, while failing to declare this fact in the very seats of power that need most desperately to hear the declaration of "peace through Jesus Christ"? Though sincere, those engineering the new world order's pseudo-peace are setting the stage for the Antichrist of whom we read, "by peace shall [he] destroy many" (Dn 8:25).

Let us not forget that the call for a new world order was first sounded by Satan through his rebellion against God in Isaiah 14. Adam's and Eve's disobedience in the Garden was also essentially an attempt to establish a new world order. So was the building of the Tower of Babel, where the connection between such rebellion and a religion of works was clearly revealed. God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. Thus, any attempt to establish a rule on earth apart from submission to His will is rebellion against Him.

The battle of the ages between God and Satan, reflected in today's rampant evil, rages in every human heart. It is a battle between two opposing worlds: the world as God intended it to be and the world as man playing god wants to make it. Adam bartered the world God had made for another world which man, as the new presiding God, would create and govern on his own. We must renounce that world if we are to be part of God's new creation.

The real test is whether we truly long to make that exchange now when life is vibrant, exciting and full of health and promise—or only when we face death and are forced by illness or old age to leave this evil world. Of course, everyone wants to exchange sickness, death and hell for heaven—but do we want to make that exchange now? Do we long for His coming to take us to His Father's house, or do we have other plans and ambitions that mean more to us than being with Him? That is the challenge of the imminent Rapture. May our hearts be true to Him, and may our love for Him and for the lost motivate us to witness boldly for our Lord!

Israel - Some Historical Reminders

Dave Hunt

The war in the Gulf has ended much as expected. Thankfully, the end came swiftly to limit the loss of life on both sides. The Gulf region and the entire Arab world will never again be the same. The painful process ahead will bring new stability and hopes of peace—giant steps toward the new world order. Pressure will increase upon Israel to give the Palestinians independence, forging a new Middle East “peace” that will ultimately be guaranteed by Antichrist, whom Israel will embrace as her Messiah. We dealt with this aspect in *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*.

President Bush and the Coalition have been repeatedly accused of partiality for enforcing UN Resolution 660 demanding Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait, while not enforcing Resolution 242, which demands withdrawal of Israel from occupied Palestine. Unmentioned has been the fact that 242 also declares Israel’s right to exist behind secure borders—a right which Arabs reject. Moreover, most of the world seems willfully blind to how and why Israel came to possess its occupied territories. Those facts are essential.

Hitler’s murder of 6 million Jews and the postwar murders of those who tried to return to their prewar homes set the stage for the birth of Israel. (In Kelsa, Poland, for example, 200 survivors of the original 25,000 community were attacked—76 were killed—by townspeople who refused to give back homes the Jews had owned before being taken to death camps.) Moved by the plight of hundreds of thousands of Jewish holocaust survivors who had nowhere to live, the UN voted in November, 1947, to partition Palestine—about 18 percent to be a Jewish homeland and the other 82 percent for Palestinian Arabs.

After the British withdrew on May 14, 1948, overwhelming forces from five Arab nations attacked to drive the Jews into the Mediterranean. Egypt’s King Farouk declared, “I cannot and will not tolerate a Zionist state in the Middle East.” The Arabs openly announced in 1948—and have continued to proclaim ever since—their determination to exterminate the Palestinian Jews.

By God’s grace, the outnumbered and

outgunned Israelis were victorious. Contrary to reports that they drove Arabs from their homes, the Jews tried to persuade them to remain. For example, in April, 1948, the British chief of police in Haifa, A. J. Bridmead, reported, “Every effort is being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab population to remain.” A foreign visitor reported, “In Tiberias I saw a placard affixed to a sealed Arab mosque that read,

We did not dispossess them...[and] the day will come when the Arabs will return to their homes and property in this town. In the meantime let no citizen touch their property. Signed, Jewish Town Council of Tiberias.

The *London Economist* (Oct. 2, 1948) declared, “The Israeli authorities urged all Arabs to remain...(but) the announcement [was] made over the air by the Arab Higher Executive urging all Arabs to leave... [because] upon the final withdrawal of the British the combined armies of the Arab states would invade Palestine and drive the Jews into the sea.” The Jordan daily, *Al Difaa*, complained on September 6, 1948, “The Arab governments told us, ‘Get out so that we can get in.’ So we got out, but they did not get in.” As *Time* put it (4/4/88, p 47): “Had Egypt, Syria and other Arab nations accepted Israel’s right to exist in 1947, the Palestinians could have been living for the past 40 years in a state of their own.”

In its 1948 victory, Israel extended its borders to make them more defensible against future Arab attacks. Jordan annexed the remaining land that had been assigned by the UN to Palestinian Arabs, including that portion on the west side of the Jordan River known today as the West Bank. In one uprising against Jordan in 1970, far more Palestinians were killed than by Israel in 43 years.

In 1967, Israel, once again forced to fight overwhelming odds for its very survival, took the West Bank for tactical reasons. Israel’s defense is much easier if Arabs do not control land on her side of the natural barrier created by the Jordan River. Yet Israel offered to give the land back—if the Arabs would recognize her right to exist. The Arabs responded with their famous “Three No’s”: “No recognition of Israel, no negotiation, and no peace.”

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was not founded by a vote among the Palestinians it claims to represent, but

was created by Egypt’s President Nasser, who appointed its first head. The PLO’s current leader, Yasser Arafat, has been “voted” president of the future Palestinian state—not by the Palestinians, but by the PLO Central Committee. Arafat is the nephew of Haj Amin el-Husseini, past Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and admirer of Hitler. Haj Amin openly declared that the Arabs supported the Axis Powers in WW II because they promised a “final solution to the Jewish problem.”

S.S. leader Heinrich Himmler explained that “solution”: “The Jewish race is in the process of being exterminated...that is our program...a splendid page in our history.” Himmler cabled Haj Amin the welcome news: “The National Socialist Party has inscribed on its flag ‘the extermination of world Jewry.’ Our party sympathizes with the fight of the Arabs...against the foreign Jew.” On Radio Berlin, March 1, 1944, the Mufti, Arafat’s uncle, issued the following call: “Arabs, rise as one man and fight for your sacred rights. Kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God [Allah] and religion [and] saves your honor. God is with you.”

Similar cries, ignored by the world now as were Hitler’s then, are still being screamed by Muslim leaders in mosques everywhere! The Satanic spirit that inspired Hitler’s holocaust continues to call for “peace”—and demands the same price. Yasser Arafat sees the extermination of the Jews as the sacred Islamic duty of the PLO, whose very charter calls for Israel’s destruction!

The Palestine National Council’s “Phased Plan” involves four stages: “(1) The rejection of Israel’s right to exist; (2) The establishment of an aggressive Palestinian state on any territory it can acquire; (3) The use of this territory to continue the war against Israel for the “liberation” of more of Palestine; and (4) The employment of confrontation states to assist in the final destruction of Israel.” Arafat has declared, “The goal of our struggle is the end of Israel and there can be no compromise.” Yet Israel is condemned for not “negotiating” with the PLO for the establishment of a Palestinian state!

Islam itself is the major obstacle to peace in the Middle East. The reason is simple: hatred of Israel is central to Islam and is preached in every mosque. The Koran falsely claims that God promised the land

of Palestine not to the Jews but to the Arabs. Thus Israel's very existence contradicts Islam and must be dealt with in the manner which the Koran decrees for all non-Muslims ("infidels"): death! To obey Muhammad, Muslims must force all mankind to submit to Allah at the point of a gun and kill all who refuse.

World opinion and lack of sufficient military power make it impossible to follow Muhammad's commands literally these days as was earlier attempted during the Islamic conquests that nearly subdued all of Europe. Wherever Islam is in control, other religions are suppressed and Muslims who convert to Christianity are killed! Islam has perpetuated harsh dictatorships that treat "infidels" as second-class citizens and deny basic rights even to Muslims.

Taking advantage of the freedom in non-Muslim countries, Islam has become the world's fastest-growing religion. There are more Muslims than Methodists in Chicago, about 400,000 in Los Angeles and 7 million in the United States. Islam is Britain's third largest faith, behind Anglicans and Catholics. The 50 million Muslims in the USSR are the fastest-growing segment of the population.

In spite of the murders that marked Saddam Hussein's rise to power and his open support of worldwide terrorism; in spite of his war against Iran and his slaughter of 5,000 Iraqi Kurds with nerve gas; in spite of his barbaric rape and plunder and wanton destruction of Kuwait and his unparalleled catastrophic devastation of the environment—yet Saddam remains the hero of millions of Muslims and their leaders. That does not speak well for Islam.

How could such an inhuman monster be admired by Muslim masses? That question must haunt thinking Arabs! Saddam's hero status lies in his promise to "destroy Israel" and to "liberate Palestine." Even *after* Kuwait's rape, Jordan's King Hussein said that "to the majority of the Arab world [Saddam] is a patriotic man who...[treats] others on the basis of mutual respect." Evil becomes good when dedicated to the "just cause" of Jewish extermination!

"These are not human beings," declared a Kuwaiti Oil Company official being interviewed on TV with oil-well fires blazing in the background. "They are creatures

like nothing that ever lived on this planet before. They have destroyed the environment for an entire country...for the whole world. I don't trust any Iraqis." Yet a similar destruction wreaked upon Israel would have been cheered. Yes, Islam must share the blame for Kuwait's horror.

Islam nurtures the hatred that creates a Saddam Hussein, an Arafat or Egypt's Nasser, who also used poison gas in his war against Yemen. When Kaddafi roars, "The battle with Israel must be such that after it Israel will cease to exist," he cannot be dismissed as lacking Islamic compassion. Such Hitlerian threats pour continuously from the mouths of Muslim religious and political leaders over radios and loudspeakers and TV in every Arab country.

The Islamic world is one of constant unrest, double-cross, uprisings and wars. Arab leaders distrust one another and fight among themselves. Only Islam and the passion to destroy Israel unites them. Yet Islam itself has inspired this way of life.

Kuwait was the chief paymaster to the PLO and its international terrorists, who "fight Israel" by killing civilians. After a number of diplomats, including a US Ambassador, were killed by terrorists, the Emir of Kuwait was asked whether he would continue to finance the PLO. He replied that he would indeed, "with unlimited funds." The PLO repaid that kindness by giving intelligence data to Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait—after which Arafat declared, "We say to the brother and leader Saddam Hussein, 'Go forward with God's [Allah's] blessing!'" Behold a brotherhood of murderers!

Saudi Arabia's fulminations against Israel have been no less extreme than Saddam's or Arafat's. Typical has been the following from Saudi King Fahd: "The media must urge the Muslims to launch *jihad* [holy war]...united in the confrontation with the Jews and those who support them." That Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had to turn to "infidels" and "Israel supporters" to rescue them from an admired Islamic leader bent upon their destruction must affect the thinking in the entire Arab world. Yet hatred for Israel will remain.

A renewed wave of anti-Semitism is sweeping the world. For example, in Poland, Jewish cemeteries are once again being defaced with swastikas. Israel is considering evacuation of Poland's 7,000

Holocaust survivors, remnants of 3.5 million who once lived there, because Poland is not safe for Jews. Warsaw's Jewish State Theater has been defaced with slogans such as "Jews to the ovens." Poland's new president, Lech Walesa, a Catholic, declared on TV, "A gang of Jews took over our resources and exploited our land, and their aim is to destroy us." Hitler said the same.

After Kuwait's rape, Jerusalem's Catholic patriarch, Michel Sabbah, commended Saddam for "truly carry[ing] in his heart the Palestinian cause," and would not concede that Saddam was "more dangerous" than President Bush. Iraq's ranking Catholic leader, Patriarch Raphael Bidawid, defended Saddam's invasion and annexation of Kuwait and its missile attacks upon Israel's civilians. "This entire war has been planned by Israel," said Bidawid from Rome, where he was conferring with the Pope and other Vatican officials about Middle East "peace." The Roman Catholic Church, which opposes Jewish control of Jerusalem, has yet to acknowledge Israel's right to exist in the 43 years since it became a state.

Evangelical leaders, too, in growing numbers denounce Israel and deny that its existence today relates to God's promises. Yet Bible prophecies concerning Israel continue to be fulfilled. For example, in Jeremiah 23:7-8 God promises to bring back Jews in the last days to their own land "out of the north country [Russia] and from all countries whither I had driven them..." As *Time* (1/14/91) declared, "Nearly one-third of the estimated 3.5 million Jews remaining in the Soviet Union are expected in Israel by 1992...."

God's promise to Abraham is still in force: "I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee" (Gn 12:3). Saddam Hussein, like Hitler, now knows what that means. Let us bless Israel, though it may well shrink in the days ahead as the Arabs get their Palestinian state and Israelis quarrel among themselves over how to respond to worldwide pressure to make dangerous concessions. Let us "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps 122:6) as God has commanded; and let us remember that the gospel is still "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentile]" (Rom 1:16).

Choosing God's Will

Dave Hunt

During the temptation in the wilderness, Satan offered to give Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world...and the glory of them” (Lk 4:5-6). He was not bluffing. This world really is Satan’s to give to whom he will. Jesus did not dispute Satan’s boast that this world had been “delivered unto me [by God]; and to whomsoever I will I give it.” The conditions upon which Satan offered this world to Christ were clear: “If you bow down and worship me”—which, of course, Jesus refused to do. Beware! For the kingdoms and glories of this world are still the favors Satan bestows in order to entice today’s recipients into worshipping him.

Like their Lord, Christ’s true followers refuse the kingdoms and glories of this world. This refusal includes the highly touted new world order, which will still be under Satan’s control. Christ has promised believers something far better—an eternal and heavenly kingdom procured through His defeat of Satan at the cross. As a result of that victory, “the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rv 11:15). Worldly kingdoms will soon pass away, and in their place the kingdom of God will come to earth. Then Christ, together with those who have shared in His rejection and suffering (Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17; 2 Tm 2:12), will reign in glory and ultimate joy forever.

It would be a denial of their Lord for Christians to bask in the popularity and honors which this present world may bestow upon them. That is not to say that a Christian should never be successful in business, science, the academic world, sports, etc. Indeed, Christians should be the very best they can possibly be at whatever they do. But their skill, talent and diligent efforts are expended for God’s glory, not for their own. This world has no attraction for believers; they neither love it nor its plaudits. They are not swayed from the course they must run (1 Cor 9:24-27; 2 Tm 4:7-8) either by the world’s criticism or its compliments. They know that ultimately nothing matters except God’s opinion of them.

We are warned, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jn 2:15). Satan is called “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), and those who love this world are siding with and honoring Satan, whether they realize it or not. Indeed, they are on the road to Satan worship, which will be the worldwide religion during the Great Tribulation (Rv 13:4).

One obvious evidence that Christianity has

been seduced by Satan is the fact that those who are highly honored by the world are, on that basis alone, given instant and special honor in the church. The Christian media fawns over a sports hero, an attractive actress, a wealthy businessman, or a highly placed politician who has supposedly become a Christian. These too-often immature, worldly new believers are paraded and lauded on Christian TV and held up to the church as heroes of the faith and role models for youth—and Christians turn out by the thousands to “ooh” and “aah” at their testimonies. Yet the humble, godly missionary, mature in the faith, who has remained true to Christ through decades of privation, temptation, hardship and danger, and who has won souls in difficult fields of labor, can scarcely draw an audience. Obviously, the average Christian admires worldly success far more than godliness. Something is badly askew!

Jesus told His disciples, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are *not of the world*, but I have chosen you *out of the world*, therefore the world *hateth you*” (Jn 15:19). Thus, to Pilate, Jesus declared, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18:36). He did not mean that His kingdom is totally detached from this *earth*, but that it is not of this *world system*. In fact, it stands in opposition thereto. This present world system (including the new world order), which belongs to Satan, must be destroyed for the kingdom of God to be established.

Christ came to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8), which He accomplished upon the cross (Jn 12:31-33). Such is His purpose in all those who receive Him as Savior and Lord. The works of Satan in and through our lives, and any attachment to this world, must be destroyed so that Christ can reign in us. This goal can only be effected through the work of His cross applied to one’s daily life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Only to that extent will the love of God and His will and Christlike character be manifested in the hearts and lives of believers.

The unsaved love the world. In contrast, Christians do not love the world; they love the Father. We are citizens of heaven, “from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil 3:20-21). Instead of trying to make our mark in this world and to receive its benefits and enjoy its pleasures, we seek to please the Father because we desire a *heavenly* and *eternal* reward.

The choice we face is not, as many imagine, between heaven and hell. Rather, the choice is between heaven and this world. Even a fool would exchange hell for heaven; but only the

wise will exchange this world for heaven. One cannot have both—“all this and heaven, too.” One cannot live both for God and for self. Many who call themselves Christians find it difficult to resist the temptations of this world and to live wholly for Christ.

Why should it be difficult to choose life instead of death, joy instead of sorrow, eternal fulfillment instead of remorse, God’s truth and love instead of Satan’s lies and destructive lusts? The choice is only difficult for those who are deceived by Satan, and who thus, in believing this liar, doubt and dishonor God. What an insult it is to their heavenly Father for Christians to act as though surrendering to God’s will were a great sacrifice—as though exchanging this world for heaven were a bad bargain!

Motivation is a key element. One powerful motivation comes through comparing the length of eternity with one’s brief life on this earth. Only a fool would trade the heavenly and eternal for that which is earthly and temporal—and, remember, *one cannot have both*. “Christians” who habitually live for what they can accumulate and enjoy in this present world, instead of “lay[ing] up treasures in heaven” (Mt 6:19-21) as Christ commanded, deny with their lives the faith they profess with their lips.

Those who repeatedly, in the daily choices they face, opt for this world instead of for heaven, should not be surprised when God gives them for eternity the choice they have made. How can one complain if he is not taken in the next life to the heaven he consistently rejected in this one? Someone has said there are only two kinds of people in the world: (1) those who say to God, “Not my will, but Thine, be done,” and (2) those to whom God says, “Not My will but thine be done.” What a tragedy to be chained for eternity to one’s own will instead of His—forever imprisoned with self and separated from God!

Christ’s declaration to the Father, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Lk 22:42) put Him on the cross. Likewise, we must deny self in submission to the cross (Mt 16:24). That submission puts an end to self, and Christ becomes our very life, our all. This is the path of wisdom (Jb 28). The wise will “shine...as the stars for ever” (Dn 12:3) with His light in their hearts—pure vessels eternally radiating His glory. Fools will experience the blackness of darkness forever and ever because they have insisted upon doing their own thing and being their fallen selves. Man’s destiny is either eternal joy in the presence of God and His angels and saints, or a lonely and eternal agony, shut up to self.

William Law had the gift of expressing with unusual clarity the choice between heaven and this world. He pointed out that

a man would be considered insane who spent his life planning the house, tennis court, swimming pool, retirement condominium, etc. that he expected to build on Mars—yet someone who spent his life equally absorbed in planning, achieving and enjoying such things in this world would be respected as successful and prudent. In fact, said Law, both men are fools. The first is obsessed with a world where he *cannot live*—while the other is attached to a world where he *cannot stay*. The degree of their folly differs only by a few short years.

Jim Elliot, one of the young missionaries martyred in Ecuador in 1956, put it succinctly: “He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose.” What a tragedy to barter eternal life for the enjoyments of this brief world. The Bible does not say that sin has no pleasure; it says that the pleasures of sin can only be enjoyed “for a season” (Heb 11:25)—and a very short season at that, particularly when compared with the endless ages of eternity. A bad bargain indeed!

The phrase “eternal life” refers not only to the quantity of the life God offers, but to its quality—a quality of life that God wants us to begin to experience here and now. Jesus said that eternal life was *knowing* (not *knowing about*) God and His Son (Jn 17:3). Paul warned that Christ would one day take vengeance upon those who “know not God” (2 Thes 1:8). In keeping with the truth of these and similar scriptures, evangelicals profess that they don’t practice a religion *about* God but that they have a personal relationship with God. Unfortunately, this boast has become almost a cliché—one that sounds good in theory but for which there is often little practical evidence in daily life.

Recognizing that eternity is infinitely longer than one’s most optimistic life expectancy provides a powerful motivation for living for Him (and thus choosing heaven instead of this world). But to truly know God provides an even more powerful motivation.

Knowing God leads to holiness. He alone becomes one’s consuming passion, displacing all other desires and overcoming the power of sin in our lives. His presence within is sufficient to satisfy every longing. For to know God is to love Him—and there is no higher motivation for obedience to His commands than love. In fact, no other motivation is accepted. It is no accident that the first commandment is, “Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Dt 6:5).

Obedience to God’s laws must spring from love for Him. Otherwise, as 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 declares, obeying the letter of the law is nothing.

We could give all our possessions to the poor and submit to martyrdom at the stake in service for Christ, but if our motive is not love it would all be in vain. So it is that Christ declared, “if a man love me he will keep my words...he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings” (Jn 14:23-24).

Loving God is the secret of the Christian life. If we truly love Him, then we want to serve and please and glorify Him. We would not want to do anything or even think a thought that would displease or dishonor Him. A genuine love for God—and only that love—produces consistent holiness and godliness in our daily lives. Love is also the great wellspring of joy and peace. It causes us to witness to the lost about us with passion and without shame. For who is ashamed of one’s lover? And who does not rather speak well, boldly and continually, of the one he loves!

Where shall we find this love that we must have for God, and without which we cannot please Him? It is not hiding somewhere in our hearts waiting to be discovered. Nor is it a potential that we have which only needs to be developed. We cannot work it up. It cannot be produced by effort. This love is not in us at all. Though it involves our will and emotions, it comes from God alone.

How then is this love produced? Love is the fruit which the Spirit bears in our lives (Gal 5:22). It is miraculous, like the fruit on a tree—something that only God could produce. Yet we are not like a tree, which has no will or emotions. Obviously much more is involved when the Spirit bears fruit in the believer’s life than is involved in fruit-bearing in nature. His love is the key.

“We love him because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19) tells us that our love for God comes as a response to His love for us. We know of His love through His Word. Our hearts are stirred as we believe what the Bible tells us of God’s love in creating us, giving His Son to die for our sins, patiently bearing our stubborn rejection, pardoning and saving us from the penalty that His holy law demands for our sin, providing heaven at infinite cost. Surely to meditate upon God’s love for us must produce, by His Spirit, fervent love for Him.

Much more, however, is involved than reading and memorizing and believing what the Bible says *about* God and His love. Jesus reproved the Pharisees for searching the Scriptures and at the same time refusing to come to Him, the One of whom the Scriptures testified. What the Bible says about God is there in order to lead us into a personal relationship with Him. We must know not only His Word, but we must know *Him* personally. There is an intimacy with God that is promised to those who love and thus obey Him, an intimacy which is missing in the

lives of many Christians.

To those who love and obey Him, Christ offers an incredibly wonderful promise: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (Jn 14:21). This promise to *manifest* Himself to those who love Him implies a real communication of His presence. This is more than a strong belief that He is with us. It is a spiritual *manifestation* of His presence.

This intimate fellowship begins at conversion with a real communication from God’s Spirit to the believer’s spirit. God’s Spirit “beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). It is not simply putting one’s name in John 3:16 and taking it “by faith.” There is a *knowing* God, a very real *knowing* that we are His, and an ongoing communion with Him in prayer. This does not involve visualization, journaling or any technique, but an intimacy that He initiates and promises to maintain with those who love and obey Him.

Most people, Christians included, would jump at the chance to become an intimate friend and confidant of some world leader, perhaps an astronaut, Olympic gold medalist, the head of a multinational corporation, or a famous heart surgeon. How many, however, neglect the infinitely more wonderful opportunity to know the God who created the universe, to have continual and intimate fellowship with the One who has all power, all wisdom, all knowledge, and Who loves us immeasurably! As with anyone else, God’s companionship must be cultivated. It takes time. And we will only devote the time if we really believe that we can know God and that it is worthwhile.

“He is a rewarder of them that *diligently* seek [not success, pleasure, health or wealth in this world, but] him” (Heb 11:6). God said to Abram, “I [not land or cattle or other possessions that I will bless you with, but *I*] am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward” (Gn 15:1). God wants to reward us with *Himself*. Let us not settle for any lesser rewards, for mere gifts instead of the Giver. Let us diligently pursue this intimate fellowship with God himself that He desires for each of us.

God willing, if our Lord tarries, we will come back again later to this subject of knowing and loving God. In the meantime, let us say with David, “O God...early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee” (Ps 63:1); and with Paul, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phil 3:10). And may knowing and loving God be our passion, as it was theirs.

A Cult is a Cult

Dave Hunt

The evangelical church today is being seduced as never in its history. It faces a danger so grave that, although we have discussed this problem before, it must be addressed again with new insight and vigor. If evangelicals succumb to the seduction, as they increasingly are doing, then their gospel witness will be submerged in confusion and could eventually be lost—a tragic and new dimension to the apostasy from which the church and the world will never recover. Most astonishing and alarming is the fact that (with few exceptions) evangelical leaders and *even the major cult watchers* refuse to acknowledge this threat. We are therefore compelled to address the subject once again with renewed concern.

For decades evangelicals have diligently and faithfully attempted to identify, analyze and warn the church against *cults*. Included in the standard list are Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Unity School of Christianity, Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, etc. Yet the most seductive, dangerous and largest cult (many times larger than all of the rest combined) is not included in the list! Most cult experts refuse to identify this horrendous cult as such! Instead, they accept it as "Christian."

Worst of all, this cult (which preaches a *false gospel* that is sending hundreds of millions into a Christless eternity) is now embraced as a partner in "evangelizing the world" by many groups which preach the biblical gospel. Major denominations, such as the Anglican and the Episcopal church, are involved in merger talks with this cult. The Assemblies of God hierarchy has been engaged in "fruitful dialogue" with this cult, whose members are now widely perceived as born-again Christians. As a consequence, the evangelical church faces an unprecedented crisis that threatens its very survival.

The above is a severe, solemn and devastating charge to make—a charge we have documented in the past and in support of which additional evidence will now be given. I challenge any church leader to public debate who declares that this assertion is false. If proven wrong, I will publicly repent. But if this accusation is true, then a major shake-up in the evangelical church is required, including repentance

by many of its most highly regarded leaders. I solicit your help in providing church leaders with the facts they need to identify this cult—facts of which I myself was ignorant years ago when I, too, failed to identify the Roman Catholic Church as the cult it is.

What is a "cult?" In his book, *Rise of the Cults*, Walter Martin defined cultism as "...any major deviation from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith." Though unmentioned by Martin, Roman Catholicism is undeniably a "major deviation from orthodox Christianity" on *many* "cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith," and thus, by his own definition, a cult. *Recognition of this fact ignited the Reformation! To deny that Roman Catholicism is a cult is to repudiate the Reformation and mock the millions of martyrs who died at Rome's hands, as though they gave their lives in vain.*

But, says someone, since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Roman Catholic Church no longer teaches and practices what it did at the time of the Reformation. That popular idea is false. To counter the Reformation, Rome's foremost theologians met from 1545-63 in the Council of Trent. **Its *Canons and Decrees*, which rejected every Reformation doctrine,** remain the standard authoritative statement of Roman Catholicism, and adherence thereto is required by Catholic catechisms. Opening Vatican II, Pope John XXIII declared, "I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent." Vatican II went on to reaffirm Trent's *Canons and Decrees*. No, Rome has *not* changed since the Reformation—except superficially.

Were Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers alive today, they would denounce Roman Catholicism as the largest and most dangerous cult on earth! Yet the Christian Research Institute (and other countercult groups) refuse to classify it as a cult. In the above book Martin emphasized that the five major cults at that time had "a following *exceeding 8.5 million persons....*" Yet he overlooked Roman Catholicism's *hundreds* of millions!

Answers to Cultists at Your Door presents another example. Its authors, Bob and Gretchen Passantino, are described as "experts in cult research [who] have spent years in countercult ministry" (outside back cover of *Witch Hunt*). They include such marks of a cult as the claim that it "is the only organization on earth

that is following God's will" and that its leader is "uniquely chosen by God to lead God's people" and that it alone "offer[s] the Bible's 'true' interpretation on all matters." Again, the Roman Catholic Church fully fits all of the criteria. It claims to be the only true church; that its pope is uniquely chosen to lead all of God's people; and that *only* its hierarchy can interpret scripture. Yet the Passantinos, like most other "cult experts," fail to include Roman Catholicism as a cult, though it meets all their own tests!

Mormons must blindly obey Joseph Smith and his successors; JWs dare not question The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society; other cultists must submit to their leaders. Such authoritarianism is the primary mark of a cult. The same blind submission is required of all Catholics. Canon 212 of Catholicism's *Code of Canon Law* requires that Catholics *must* give absolute obedience to their "sacred pastors." Vatican II states repeatedly that *only* Catholicism's hierarchy can interpret the Bible and that papal pronouncements must be obeyed without question. Canon 333 (Sec. 3) declares, "There is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff." Vatican watchdog Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's recent 7,500-word "Instruction" declares that dissent about church teachings *cannot* be "justified as a matter of following one's conscience." No cult demands surrender of mind and conscience more fully or arrogantly than Roman Catholicism.

Roman Catholicism is not only left out of the list of cults by the experts, but it is explicitly approved. For example, in *Scripture Twisting*, James W. Sire, long-time editor-in-chief of InterVarsity Press, defines a cult as having "*doctrines and/or practices that contradict those of the Scriptures as interpreted by traditional Christianity as represented by the major Catholic and Protestant denominations....*" (emphasis his) Sire makes Catholicism a standard of orthodoxy against which cults are to be judged! Yet he accuses the cults of twisting Scripture, a technique of which Rome is surely the ultimate master! Sire indicts Mormonism as a cult for adding other revelations to the Bible—but Rome has added far more new revelations to the Bible than the Mormon Church! Sire declares, "There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation

must come”—yet that is exactly the situation in the Roman Catholic Church! How, then, does he make it the standard of orthodoxy?!

Consider also *The Agony of Deceit* published by Moody. Each chapter is written by a leading evangelical about a specific false teaching within today's church. While *Agony* mostly repeats much that was found in *Seduction of Christianity* five years earlier, it is another voice issuing many of the same warnings, for which we are thankful. Yet it, too, whitewashes Roman Catholicism. On page 65 it states, "Traditional Roman Catholicism...hold[s] to biblical inerrancy." In fact, Catholicism explicitly *denies* biblical inerrancy! The next sentence does acknowledge that the "messages [of Protestantism and Catholicism] are poles apart," but moves right on without identifying the vital differences.

Page 111 declares, "The Catholic church resisted the mounting heresies with regard to the Person of Christ, and...Protestants would continue to affirm Catholic Christology." Again, terribly false! Catholicism's Christology is heretical. It denies Christ's exclusive role as mediator between God and man, making Mary "co-mediatrix"; it denies the exclusivity of His redemptive work, making Mary "co-redemptrix" (Vatican II credits Mary with a perpetual "salvific role; she continues to obtain by her constant intercession the graces we need for eternal salvation"); and it denies the sufficiency of His redemptive work, declaring that the redeemed must, in addition to Christ's suffering for them upon the cross, suffer for their own sins here and/or in purgatory, etc. A great deal more heresy is involved in Catholic Christology, such as presenting Him as perpetually an infant or child subject to His mother, perpetually on the cross, but lack of space prevents further detail. The "Christ" of Roman Catholicism is just as false as its "Mary"—as much "another Jesus" as that of Mormonism or any other cult. Let's admit it!

Several times in *Agony* it is stated that Protestants and Catholics embrace the same apostolic creeds. This is a partially true but seriously misleading statement. The implication is that the creeds are an all-encompassing statement of biblical Christianity, which they are not. Furthermore, there is a vast difference between the meaning Catholics and Protestants attach to what the creeds say. For example, while affirming that Christ "suffered under

Pontius Pilate," Catholicism teaches that His suffering was insufficient. In addition to Christ's suffering, we must each suffer for our sins in order to be saved. We can even suffer for the salvation of others. (The Apostolic Constitution of Jan. 1, 1967, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, #1687, urges Catholics to carry "each one his own cross in expiation of their sins and of the sins of others...assist[ing] their brothers to obtain salvation from God"). This is rank heresy to Protestants. Yet *Agony* implies that Catholics mean the same thing as Protestants by the creeds—an inexcusable and deadly error in a book by eminent Christian scholars written to point out errors within the church! Though this and the other books cited above contain much that commends them, their approval of Catholicism is tragically misleading.

The false portrait of Roman Catholicism persists in *Agony*. On page 244, after correctly condemning the sale of indulgences which led Martin Luther to nail his 95 theses to the chapel door at Wittenberg's castle, the editor/compiler of *Agony*, Michael Horton, writes, "It would not be fair, of course, to interpret the entire history and character of Roman Catholicism by this tragic fund-raising scheme...." The implication is that Rome has changed for the better, which is false. Though not sold as blatantly now, indulgences are still an important part of Catholicism's salvation.

The deviation by Catholicism from biblical Christianity goes to the heart of the faith, to salvation itself, and thus affects the eternal destiny of those who are deceived thereby. Roman Catholicism rejects salvation by faith and preaches a false gospel of works that cannot save. Salvation is not in Christ but in the Church through submission to its edicts and sacraments. The *Basic Catechism of Christian Doctrine* calls the sacraments "the chief means of our salvation."

The first of the seven sacraments is baptism, which is performed upon 98 percent of Catholics as infants. It is declared in Canon 849 to be the means "by which men and women are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God...." The *Basic Catechism* declares that baptism "is necessary for salvation ...cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians...." Another sacrament is the Mass, which the *Catechism* declares to be "one and the same Sacrifice with that of the Cross, inasmuch as Christ...continues to offer himself...on the altar, through the

ministry of his priests." Canon 904 states that "the work of redemption is continually accomplished in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice," thus denying Christ's triumphant "It is finished!"

Let me remind you of Hugh Latimer's last words, spoken through the flames to his companion who was bound to the same stake "Be of good courage, master Ridley...for we shall by God's grace this day light such a 'candle' in England as I pray shall never go out!" Tragically, the "candle" lit by hundreds of thousands of faithful martyrs burned at the stake, if not already out, is barely flickering and in danger of being snuffed completely. Paul Crouch, head of the largest Christian TV worldwide network, demeans the martyrs by calling the issues they died for mere semantics; and he makes a mockery of the Reformers by declaring orthodox the heresies that sparked the Reformation.

Those who believe Rome's lies and follow her gospel of works for salvation are lost. Failing to recognize this fact, many evangelical leaders and cult experts have themselves been deceived by Rome and need to be confronted and informed. How tragic to assume that Catholics are Christians who merely have some peripheral beliefs and practices which seem peculiar to Protestants but which will not prevent them from being saved. A false gospel is a false gospel, and it damns those who believe it, whether preached by Mormonism or Catholicism. A cult is a cult. Roman Catholics, like the members of other cults, need to be treated with compassion, warned of cultic lies, and presented with the true gospel which alone can save them.

If you are concerned about the growing cooperation between Catholic organizations and major evangelical ministries such as InterVarsity, Campus Crusade For Christ, Youth With A Mission, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship, Paul Crouch's TBN, Pat Robertson's CBN, etc., please write to them and ask where they stand on this critical issue.

The questions could be 1) What is your organization's position regarding Catholic doctrines? 2) What is your position regarding organizational participation with Catholics in matters of world evangelization? 3) Are you presently either officially or unofficially involved with any Catholic lay or clerical groups or organizations? If so, on what basis...and to what end?

Evangelizing the World

Dave Hunt

Recently I witnessed on television a most tragic and shocking spectacle. On his "Praise the Lord" program before an international audience (most of whom apparently approve or they wouldn't lend their support), the leader of the world's largest Christian TV network vehemently denounced and in fact cursed any who would speak out for sound doctrine or who would seek to correct erroneous teaching. Here is a brief excerpt from that astonishing outburst:

...that old rotten Sanhedrin crowd, twice dead, plucked up by the roots...they're damned and on their way to hell and I don't think there's any redemption for them...the hypocrites, the heresy hunters that want to find a little mote of illegal doctrine in some Christian's eyes...when they've got a whole forest in their own lives....

I say, "To hell with you! Get out of my life! Get out of the way! Quit blocking God's bridges! I'm tired of this!...This is in my spirit. Oh, hallelujah!"...

Have you ever seen the old movie, Patton?...He's my hero, he's my hero. Old nail-chewin', tobacco-chewin', cussin' Patton—but he read the Bible every day. I have a feeling we'll see old General George in heaven....

There's a wonderful scene in Patton...they're trying to get the Third Army across the bridge in France and there's an old, dumb jackass—donkey—right there on the bridge and it's blocking the whole convoy of troops...General George roars up, pulls that ivory-handled revolver out...and he shoots the donkey....

There's a spiritual application here....I want to say to all you scribes, pharisees, heresy hunters, all of you that are going around picking little bits of doctrinal error out of everybody's eyes and dividing the Body of Christ...get out of God's way, stop blocking God's bridges...or God's going to shoot you if I don't...let Him sort out all this doctrinal doodoo!

I don't care about your doctrines as long as you name the name of Jesus, as long as you believe He died dead [sic] and was buried but came out of the tomb on Sunday morning and ascended to the Father...I don't care about anything else! Let's join hands...to get this gospel preached in all the world....

The rest of this stuff is what Paul the Apostle calls dung—human excrement! It's not worth anything! Get rid of it...and get on with winning the lost....

I refuse to argue any longer with any of you out there! Don't even call me if you want to argue doctrine, if you want to straighten somebody out...criticize Ken Copeland...or Dad Hagin. Get out of my life! I don't even want to talk to you...I don't want to see your ugly face!

Appalling as this performance was, it is necessary to recognize and confront the rationale, however emotional and perverted, behind the outburst. Indeed we would agree that zeal to evangelize the world is commendable and commanded—but with what gospel? By denouncing sound doctrine as unimportant and unrelated to the gospel, most of the New Testament was renounced. Is it not a compendium of doctrinal truth? The doctrinal correction that was so vehemently cursed is the very essence of Paul's epistles. In fact, Paul declared that *all* of Scripture is intended for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tm 3:16). He told Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with...doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tm 4:2-3). Apparently that time is now upon us!

Must we now denounce Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, et al. as "heresy hunters"? Has the Reformation been relegated to the trash heap of historical follies for its opposition to Rome's heresies? In their integrity before God to stand firm for "the truth of the gospel" (Col 1:5), millions of martyrs died to give us the religious freedoms we now enjoy. Were it not for God's grace and their concern for what TBN's leader blasphemously referred to as "doctrinal doodoo," we would all be followers of Rome today, blinded and damned by a false gospel. Such is the importance of standing firm for sound doctrine! It is biblical doctrine that guards the gospel from perversion and guides our lives!

We ought to obey Christ's command to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mk 16:15) because we love the lost and have a passion for their salvation. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth [it]" (Rom 1:16). First Corinthians 1:21 confirms that believing the gospel is what saves: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The Apostle Paul explained the gospel that we must believe to be saved: "how that Christ died for our sins...and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day" (1 Cor 15:3). There are those, however, who, while seemingly professing this simple truth, pervert it with additions and false interpretations.

The Bible makes clear that we are saved by believing the true gospel—and that anything *less or more* cannot save. False gospels abound. Take, for example, just one of the heresies taught by Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland. On February 19, 1991, CRI's Hank Hanegraaff explained this perverse teaching to the head of TBN on his "Praise the Lord" program, but it was dismissed as of no consequence. It is the teaching that the shedding of Christ's

blood upon the cross did not effect our redemption. That although Christ cried in triumph, "It is finished!" it was not finished. That although He said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," He came into the hands of Satan who carried our Lord into hell and there tortured Him three days and three nights, thereby accomplishing our redemption. If Satan didn't torture Christ enough, are we not saved? If he did, do we thank him for the vital role he played in our redemption? What blasphemy!

On the contrary, the Bible always links redemption with what happened on the Cross. It is never implied, much less taught, that redemption took place in hell—nor that our salvation is secured by baptism, Mary's intercession, the Mass or our suffering in purgatory. Paul declared that he would glory in nothing except "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14). We are told that Christ "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:8). There is no hint that he also died spiritually in hell at the hands of Satan, as the faith teachers heretically claim.

We have "redemption through his blood" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14) and not by reason of tortures which Satan allegedly inflicted upon Christ. His blood was shed on the cross, not in hell, and it is explicitly stated that He "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20). Throughout eternity, the song of the redeemed in heaven will forever be to Him "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rv 1:5). Yet Copeland teaches a false gospel: "When His blood poured out, it did not atone..."!

Heresy perverts the gospel. Can one believe both a true and a false gospel at the same time? Does not the false belief negate the true gospel it contradicts and thus damn those who believe it? Why else would Paul write his corrective epistles and argue so earnestly against false doctrine if it made no difference? And why else would Jude exhort us to "earnestly contend for the faith once [for all] delivered to the saints" if any "faith" will do?

One false doctrine in the early church (and it persists today) was that in addition to faith in Christ one must also keep the law of Moses. That error caused even apostles such as James and Peter to revert to traditional Jewish separation from Gentile Christians. Was such false doctrine to be ignored since these men preached that Christ died for our sins? No, for they had perverted that truth. The Apostle Paul (a "heresy hunter") said that these Judaizers "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:14). He called this mingling of works with grace

“another gospel” and cursed anyone who preached it (Gal 1:8-9). Declaring that he was “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil 1:17), Paul publicly rebuked Peter for supporting false doctrine—and he did so that “the truth of the gospel might continue” (Gal 2:5).

To those who believed on Him Jesus said, “if ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32). Biblical evangelism leads converts into obedience to the whole truth. Christ promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would indwell and lead them “into all truth.” Surely “all truth” includes all doctrine. What is its value? Sound doctrine, which TBN scorns, defines and upholds the gospel. False doctrine perverts it.

Satan persuades multitudes to reject the gospel. But he sends far more to hell by deluding them with a false gospel which acknowledges that Christ did indeed die for our sins—then adds to that truth the heresy that in addition to what Christ suffered we must also suffer and work for our salvation. Such a false gospel of works is taught by every cult, and none has made it so appealing as the Roman Catholic Church, as we have previously documented.

When Pope John Paul II designated the last decade of this century for “world evangelization,” John Wimber, who has been featured on the cover of *New Covenant*, the major Catholic charismatic magazine, responded, “[This is] one of the greatest things that has ever happened in the history of the Church...I am thrilled with the Pope and glad that he is calling the Church to this goal, to this work.” Would those martyred by Rome be thrilled to know that evangelicals are now supporting her false gospel?

During the course of his tirade, TBN’s founder condemned to hell those who disapprove of heresy and would correct it. Yet he admits to heaven those who teach heresy, including even a godless, cursing Patton who thought he was the reincarnation of some famous warrior from the past. And he arrogantly bans from TBN (as though he owns the network God’s people have purchased with their gifts!) the much needed doctrinal correction that Jesus and Paul insisted upon and to which most of the New Testament is devoted. Tragically, a similar attitude characterizes increasing numbers of today’s evangelical leaders.

Sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association at a cost of \$21 million, more than 10,000 Christian leaders met at Amsterdam in 1986 to plan a strategy for evangelizing the world. In the concluding press conference, a reporter asked, “Dr.

Graham, do you see the preaching of the gospel as a unifying force in Christianity today...?” His ecumenical response was disturbing:

If you have some other theological word, then there is great division, but there’s...no debate over the fact that we need to evangelize...there is an ecumenicity here that cannot [be gotten] under any other umbrella.

Again we ask, “Evangelize with what gospel?” Leighton Ford declared, “Preach the Gospel but don’t be so negative as to refuse to endorse or work with those who belong to a group that proclaims a different Gospel.” He praised Mother Teresa, whom he had recently visited in Calcutta, though she constantly prays the rosary for her own salvation and considers Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and other religions to be acceptable ways to God, thus making Jesus a liar for declaring, “I am the way...no man comes to the Father but by me.”

In his seminar on “Follow Up,” Ian Grant, New Zealand director of Youth for Christ, said, “We make no judgment of churches—that’s the Holy Spirit’s job. Young Christians can be more led into Bible reading and faith in a Catholic charismatic church than in some conservative evangelical churches.” Bill Bright spoke of the “great work of God” in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant fellowships...” *Foundation* editor M. H. Reynolds asked Bright “how he could Scripturally justify...having Roman Catholics on staff and working with them in evangelism,” to which he replied, “I can work with anyone who calls Jesus Lord.”

Yet Jesus himself warned that He would one day say to many who called Him “Lord”—“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt 7:21-23). How can Christian leaders err so badly on something so elementary?!

Mormons, Moonies, and many other cult members “call Jesus Lord.” What they mean by that confession, however, is entirely different from what evangelicals believe. Does it matter? Were the martyrs mistaken in their belief that Roman Catholicism was a false gospel that was damning hundreds of millions of souls? Were they wrong to believe that they would have been lost had they not been rescued from Rome’s heresies? Is that not still true today?

In 1985, due to the conversion to Catholicism of one of its longtime professors (Thomas Howard, brother of Elizabeth Elliot), Gordon College’s faculty senate investigated Roman Catholicism. The finding was that the college’s confession of faith was incompatible with Catholicism. For example, no Catholic could

subscribe to the confession that the Bible is “the only infallible guide in faith and practice,” or that “salvation is by grace and faith alone without works” (*Christianity Today*, 9/20/85, p 38). Howard resigned. He has become a featured speaker at Catholic conferences refuting Fundamentalism. And evangelicals join Rome in evangelizing the world? What folly!

While Roman Catholicism teaches that Christ died for our sins and that He was buried and rose again the third day, it adds to that truth the lie that Christ’s death was not sufficient to get us to heaven. In addition to the price Christ paid, Catholics must themselves suffer for their own sins—and they, like Christ, can also suffer for the sins of others and thus have a part in their salvation. The chief means of salvation, however, is through the sacraments ministered by the church. One of those sacraments, the Mass, teaches that Christ is re-offered again and again and that new installments of eternal life are repeatedly received by eating the wafer that has been turned into His body. Vatican II clearly denies the sufficiency of Christ’s finished work on the cross and declares that our redemption is in the process of being accomplished through the Church’s “sacred liturgy.” How can someone who believes Rome’s heretical perversions of the gospel also really believe the true gospel?

The problem between God and man is sin, man’s rebellious attempt to establish himself in God’s universe by his own wisdom and good works. The only solution is provided by God, and He has made His offer of reconciliation subject to definite conditions. If we change those terms we have effectively rejected His offer. That is the significance of keeping the gospel pure, of earnestly contending for the faith, of being zealous for sound doctrine. There are numerous false doctrines being taught that destroy the “truth of the gospel” which Paul defended with his life. Ought we not to stand firm for sound doctrine, and for the same reason—that those who believe the false gospels are lost eternally?

How ironic—and tragic—that in their zeal to “evangelize the world” so many of today’s Christian leaders turn their backs upon nearly one-fifth of that world! In making peace with the Whore of Babylon they leave in darkness almost 1 billion Catholic victims of a false gospel who desperately need to hear the truth! And by cooperating with Rome to “evangelize” the world, they approve the lies that are damning millions. In our love for Christ and concern for the lost we must do all we can to proclaim the truth to everyone! Let us work together to that end!

Knowing What We Believe & Why

Dave Hunt

Last month we noted how often the New Testament defines and defends the true gospel and condemns all false gospels. We also saw why this is the case: the battle for souls is between God's truth and Satan's lie. Thus, each person's eternal destiny depends upon what he or she believes. One cannot believe both the Truth and the lie. Even though one believes in God (who is He?) and that Christ is our Savior (what does that mean?), if God's truth has been compromised or perverted, such a gospel does not save but eternally damns those who believe it.

Why is this so? Doesn't such condemnation seem harsh? Why is what one believes so vital? Isn't it enough to be sincere? Yet how can one be sincere and believe Satan's lie instead of God's truth? Surely God has given each of us the capacity to know the difference! Thus, those who reject the Truth condemn themselves.

Second Thessalonians 2:10-12 are among the most solemn and terrible verses in the Bible. There we are told that when the Antichrist controls the earth, to all those who "received not the love of the truth" God will send "a strong delusion that they should believe the lie: that they all might be damned." Can anyone complain if God helps them to believe the very lie which they insisted upon embracing? The damned are caught in the net of their own rebellion and left for eternity with the lie they loved. How horrible! Yet how just! From such a fate Christ died to save us.

Our rebellion against the infinite God requires an infinite penalty that we as finite creatures could never pay. We would be separated from God eternally. He could not simply make a "bookkeeping entry" in heaven and forgive us, for that would violate His justice. God so loved mankind that He came down through the virgin birth and became a member of our race in order to be, on the Cross, the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Having paid the penalty in full demanded by His own justice, God can righteously forgive all who admit their guilt and accept the pardon He graciously offers.

When the Philippian jailer cried out,

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas gave a simple answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Surely that means more than simply believing that someone called Jesus Christ existed. Who was He? Lord means God; Jesus means Savior from sin; Christ means Messiah, the one promised in the Scriptures. His very name indicates that He is God who became a man to die for our sins in fulfillment of what God's prophets foretold.

The Old Testament repeatedly presents God as the only Savior. He offers to save Israel from her enemies, and all men, both Jews and Gentiles, from the judgment sin brings. God declares, for example, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else" (Is 45:22). Thus, when Christ said that He had come "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10), He was declaring that He was God the Savior—exactly what the New Testament repeatedly calls both Christ and God the Father.

Paul wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." He went on to explain why they were not saved, though they had "a zeal of God": "For they...[seeking] to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end [goal] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom 10:1-4). Despite their zeal for God, the Jews were lost because they would not come to God on His terms.

Suppose one claims to believe that Christ died for man's sins, but that one must add good deeds, trust Mary to intercede, suffer in purgatory, belong to a certain church or keep certain rules or sacraments to be saved, or that Christ must be sacrificed again in the Mass. Is that man saved? The Bible says no. To believe that anything else is necessary for salvation is to deny that Christ paid the penalty in full, and thus is to reject the gospel. How can those who trust in a church for salvation be trusting only in Christ and His finished work? Or those who agree to accept some church's interpretation of God's Word—how can it be said that they personally know God and are believing Him?

Many who claim to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" have attached their

own meaning to the seemingly biblical words they use. Thus are manufactured the many false gospels, which usually include false concepts of "Christ." The Science of Mind cult, for example, teaches, "We do not deny the divinity of Jesus, but rather we affirm the divinity of all people..." They call Jesus a Savior, but add, "Any world teacher [Buddha, Muhammad, Freud, et al.] who helps mankind to be free from material, intellectual, or emotional bondage is a spiritual 'savior.'" Yet Robert Schuller puts a picture of Della Reese, a leader in Science of Mind, on the cover of his *Possibilities* magazine and features her as a Christian.

Mormonism teaches that "God" (who has another "God" over him and so on endlessly) was once a sinful man redeemed by a "Christ" on another planet. The "Christ" of our planet (Satan's half-brother in a pre-earth spirit world) was conceived when "the God of this world" came to earth in his physical body and had sex with Mary. Mormonism's "Christ" was not God who became man, but a spirit entity who came to earth to get a physical body so he could become a "God," a metamorphosis which is the ambition of every Mormon male (females become goddesses). To a Mormon, eternal life is not a free gift of God's grace, but must be earned and culminates in becoming a "God," who manufactures another world with another Adam and Eve, another Satan, another fall, another Jesus and so on, ad infinitum absurdum.

Yet Robert Schuller has Jack Anderson, a leading Mormon, as a guest on his "Hour of Power" and passes him off as a Christian—and our four living ex-presidents and President Bush, all professing Christians, along with Billy Graham and other leaders, praise Schuller for his "Hour of Power." Earl Paulk likewise calls Mormons Christians. The Church Council of Greater Seattle apologized to American Indians for Christianity's opposition to traditional Native American spiritual practices (i.e., their pagan religion). The "formal apology" was read to a group of Indians by Episcopal Bishop Robert Cochrane. Pope John Paul II has likewise endorsed the same paganism. Ecumenism is both appealing and appalling.

In Catholicism, everyone, no matter of what religion, is somehow "saved" through some mystical association with the Roman Catholic Church. Summarizing this

doctrine in a popular Catholic newspaper, Fr. Benjamin Luther writes, “The Catholic Church has not and cannot change its teaching that it is itself necessary for salvation....” This priest then goes on to explain how Catholics can, nevertheless, deny that Rome teaches that outside of her there is no salvation. One need not be a member but can be saved through “some form of participation in the life of the Church. Pope Pius XII spoke of ‘hidden bonds’ joining nonmembers [with the Church]. So, the Orthodox, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and even those following the great pagan religions, such as the Hindus and Buddhists, can share in the supernatural life...and the grace found solely within the visible boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, through the Church alone they [all] can gain salvation.” (*Catholic Twin Circle*, Jan. 8, 1969, p 15). Amazing! While opposing God’s truth and persisting in their pagan practices, all religions can be united under the Vatican! What a perfect set-up for the apostate world religion under Antichrist!

St. Olaf’s (a Lutheran college) in Northfield, MN, features courses in Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Hinduism. Anantanand Rambachan, a Hindu scholar who has taught at St. Olaf for five years, argues that “the biggest barrier to creating understanding among the great religions is the Christian claim that there is only one way to be saved.” In agreement, Lutheran pastor Clark Morphew declares that “Worldwide religious harmony [is] hampered by ‘one way’ dogma.” Christ’s claim that “no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (Jn 14:6) is brushed aside by professing Christians in the interest of “religious harmony.” Tolerance for Satan’s lie has become the one virtue! How prophetic were Gorbachev’s words: “Tolerance is the alpha and omega of the new world order.” Truth is not a factor!

With the growing apostasy and popularity of New Age ideas, of ecumenism and disdain of doctrine even among evangelicals, the distinctions between the Truth and the lie are being ignored as if what one believes makes no difference after all. Standing for truth is considered to be “negative,” while letting those who believe false gospels go to hell without telling them the truth is an act of “love.” After all, that’s what Mother Teresa, the ultimate exemplar of loving one’s neighbor, has

been doing for decades. Rather than giving the gospel to recipients of her charity, she has encouraged Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, et al. to draw closer to their gods—and has been praised by evangelical leaders for launching those in her care from a clean bed into hell!

Souls are being lost eternally! It has never been more important than now to be ready and able “always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Pt 3:15). Why a *reason*? Because “faith” is not blind; it is not a “leap into the dark,” but is based upon solid evidence. Why must there be *evidence*? Isn’t it enough simply to “believe”? Believe *what*? One would be a perverse fool to believe anything and everything. Then *what* and *in whom* is one to believe? Obviously, there must be a *sound reason* for believing “x” and not believing “y.”

The gospel is the “good news.” We have *great news* to rejoice in, to be excited and happy about and to share gladly with others. But we must know how to explain it so that the issues are made crystal clear. We owe it to those around us to present the gospel so clearly that they have every fact necessary for making the right choice. And that includes soundly refuting Satan’s lies. As Paul exhorted Titus, “In all your teaching show the strictest regard for truth, and [for]...the seriousness of the matters you are dealing with. Your speech should be [so] logical...that your opponent may feel ashamed...” (Ti 2:7-8, Phillips).

One of the greatest needs in the church today is for training in sound apologetics, not only to counter atheism (which is the real “faith” of very few) but false religions, which have ensnared so many more. Why do young people so often “lose their faith” or get caught up in cults when they go off to college or university? Those who “lose” it never had genuine faith—didn’t know *why* and *in whom* they believed—or it would have stood every test.

Parents often worry that their children will be persuaded by their peers to abandon their “faith” and to indulge in evil. Peer pressure in school, however, can only destroy a faith that was itself the product of peer pressure in church or family and lacked sound reason. It may have been pressure from parents, spouse or friends to “believe” in order to gain their approval. Or pressure from pastor or preacher to “go forward” in order to

be accepted into the group and enjoy the benefits of belonging. Or it could have been the call to “come to Jesus” for the wrong reasons: perhaps for healing and prosperity instead of cleansing from sin.

Many Christians who reject the false gospel and know the truth are yet afraid to have their faith challenged by non-Christians at work, or at school. We dishonor God if we fear that our faith will not survive the battle that comes from witnessing boldly for Him. As a young man at UCLA I read everything I could find written against the Bible by atheists, agnostics or skeptics. It strengthened my faith to see what pitiful arguments they had in comparison to God’s truth! We must put what we believe to the test, especially in daily life, living triumphantly for Him rather than for self.

It is not how intelligent we are that counts, but whether what we believe is the truth. Our Lord promised, “if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32). It is a freedom from the fear that others may embarrass us if we proclaim the gospel, and freedom from the power of sin to deceive and attract us. What we really believe not only determines our eternal destiny but our conduct here and now. Thus, God’s truth guards us from evil.

As an 18- to 20-year-old in the armed services during World War II, I saw those around me indulge in every sin imaginable, and they tried to persuade me to join them. Yet I was never tempted even in the slightest to conform. Is that to my credit? No, for according to what I believed about the eternal consequences of such behavior I would have been a fool to join in. What you and your children will do depends upon what each one *really believes*.

An entire generation is being lost because a false psychological gospel of self-esteem, and a lack of sound doctrinal teaching that explains *why* God’s way is best is robbing them of Truth that is worth living and dying for. Let us be “lovers of truth” and effective witnesses with our lips and lives for our wonderful Savior. Be enthusiastic and bold! What good news of freedom in Christ we have to proclaim to those who are enslaved by Satan’s lies!

Let's Get Serious About Imminency!

Dave Hunt

We are witnessing what appears to be an acceleration of the usually slow process of history. Within a few months we have seen the Berlin Wall come down, East and West Germany united, the Warsaw Pact dissolved, the dismantling of the Soviet empire and the worldwide discrediting of communism, the United Nations at last punishing an aggressor and imposing peace on a region, the beginnings of a new world order and an expansion of the revival of the Roman Empire. History is seemingly racing to the climax foretold in the Bible.

While it will no doubt involve arduous, perilous and lengthy negotiations, Israel seems to be moving toward that "peace" pact with its Arab neighbors of which Scripture warns. This false peace that will ensure the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem will ultimately be guaranteed by Antichrist: "ye receive me not, [but] him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43); "...by peace shall [he] destroy many" (Dn 8:25). Surely the stage is being set for the second coming of our Lord, who will rescue Israel at Armageddon.

At that climactic battle the redeemed, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will accompany Christ. When our Lord returns from heaven to destroy Antichrist and to set up His millennial kingdom, we will be with Him and like Him, sharing in His triumph: "and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thes 4:17). Even Enoch knew this fact and prophesied, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment..." (Jude 14-15). Zechariah tells us that when "the Lord goes forth" to destroy the nations attacking Israel and "his feet stand...upon the mount of Olives,"..."all the saints" will be with him (14:5).

For all His saints to come with Christ from heaven at His second coming, they must have been taken there previously. Of course, the souls and spirits of the saints who have died through the ages are already with Christ. The Resurrection, however, must have occurred in order for them to come to Armageddon in glorified bodies. John refers to those accompanying Christ as "the armies which were in heaven." He

declares that they are "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white" (Rv 19:8)—exactly what the Bride has been clothed with earlier at her marriage in heaven to Christ (19:7-8). It is specifically stated that this is the clothing "of saints."

"All the saints" must include those Christians who have not yet died. Obviously, then, not only must the dead saints have been resurrected, but the living saints must have been transformed and caught up into heaven, as well, prior to the Second Coming. This is exactly what is described in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. That event, the simultaneous resurrection and Rapture, is essential so that "all the saints" may be together in heaven in bodies of glory clothed in "fine linen, white and clean," from whence they accompany Christ when He returns to earth at His second coming.

We must conclude, then, that the resurrection Rapture is distinct from, and occurs prior, to the second coming of Christ. First of all, He comes *for* His saints, and only thereafter when He has them all with Him above can Christ come down from heaven *with* His saints. How long prior to the Second Coming must the Rapture occur? One week of years; i.e., seven years. That answer is found in one of the Bible's most remarkable prophecies:

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people [Israel] and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

...from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [69 weeks total]...and after...shall Messiah be cut off...and the people of the prince that shall come [i.e., the counterfeit messiah] shall destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [temple]...And he [Antichrist] shall confirm the covenant...for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice...to cease... (Dn 9:24-27).

Daniel delineates a period of 70 weeks (of years) that will include the first coming of Christ, His murder (a "cutting off"), and the coming of one who will pretend

to be "Messiah the Prince," called "the prince that shall come," i.e., Antichrist. The 70 weeks will end with Christ's second coming and the establishment of His millennial kingdom ("to anoint the most Holy"). Moreover, these 70 weeks specifically pertain to Israel ("upon thy people").

Daniel's amazing prophecy also foretells the exact time of Messiah's coming: 7+62=69 weeks of years (69x7=483) after the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem. Daniel also declared that after Messiah was cut off, the temple and Jerusalem would again be destroyed, this time by "the people of the prince who shall come" (Antichrist). This was fulfilled in A.D. 70 by the armies of Rome under Titus. Therefore the Roman Empire must be revived in order for its people to become the people of the Antichrist.

Writing in Gary North's *Biblical Chronology*, December 1990, James B. Jordan tries to date Daniel's 70 weeks from the decree given by Cyrus to Ezra (2 Chr 36:23; Ezr 1:2-4). However, that decree authorized the rebuilding of the temple, whereas Daniel was told that the 70 years would be counted "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Dn 9:25). That authority was given to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes (Neh 2:8-9) in response to his explicit request to "send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers...that I may build it (Neh 2:5).

It is true that Jeremiah 25:10, Isaiah 44:28 and 45:13 state that Cyrus will allow the Jews to return to rebuild both the temple and the city. Such credit to Cyrus, however, for the rebuilding of Jerusalem was based, no doubt, upon his decree allowing Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, which thus paved the way for Artaxerxes to authorize Nehemiah to rebuild the city. The Bible is quite clear that Cyrus only gave Ezra specific authorization to rebuild the temple and that it was Artaxerxes who gave Nehemiah the authority to rebuild the city. Therefore, we must begin counting the 69 weeks of years (to Messiah's coming) from the later date.

In addition to starting with the wrong date, Jordan fails to recognize that one week is missing. Thus, he calculates the entire 70 weeks (490 years) from Cyrus's decree to Ezra, which he dates at a "revised" 457 B.C. Cyrus, however, cannot be the

Artaxerxes in Nehemiah, because he reigned only about nine years, whereas Nehemiah tells us that he made his petition and it was granted “in the month Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king” (Neh 2:1), thus giving us a crucial date. Artaxerxes Longimanus (the only Artaxerxes who ruled long enough to fit Nehemiah’s description) ruled from 465-425 B.C., thus his twentieth year was in 445 B.C. Sir Robert Anderson established the fact that precisely 483 years of 360 days later (69 weeks of years), to the day, by the Jewish and Babylonian calendars, Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem, was hailed by crowds along his route as “Messiah the Prince,” and four days later was crucified as prophesied.

Recently I listened to a tape by the late Walter Martin arguing against a pretribulation Rapture. He raised the standard objection that the pretrib position had not been held by the church until the early 1800s. He neglected to explain that belief in the Rapture was lost under Roman Catholicism and the Reformers failed to recover it, yet there were always Christians who held this hope (the Anabaptists in the 1500s, for example).

Like Jordan, Martin dated the 70 weeks from Cyrus’s command to Ezra, which he, too, set at 457 B.C. Then he stated, “If you go from 457 [B.C.] 489 years you will arrive at A.D.27 and then you will arrive at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ three and one-half years later. In A.D.70, Titus the Roman Emperor besieged Jerusalem ...destroyed the Temple....He (Titus) was the Prince that came....”

So Martin also had the wrong starting date, the wrong number of years to add to it (489 instead of 483), and arrived at the wrong time—the beginning of Christ’s ministry (which he erroneously dated at A.D.27). Actually, the 69 weeks ended with Messiah’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem, which occurred in A.D.32. Nor could Titus have been “the prince that shall come,” for he made no covenant that he broke in “the midst of the week.” That will be done by the real “prince who shall come,” i.e., Antichrist.

We know that 69 of the 70 weeks (483 out of 490 years) involving Israel elapsed between the command to restore Jerusalem and Christ’s triumphal entry into that city when He was hailed as the Messiah. At

that time, quite clearly, the 70 weeks of years were interrupted. One week (seven years) never ran its course. It is to this week that Daniel undoubtedly refers as the time period of Antichrist’s covenant with Israel, in the midst of which he will break it and seat himself in the temple (2 Thes 2:4).

Much that verse 24 declares was to have been fulfilled within the 70 weeks has not yet occurred. It is clear, therefore, that the seventieth week remains to this day in abeyance and must yet be future. That conclusion cannot be honestly rejected as a dispensational theory dreamed up by Darby or Scofield. On the contrary, we are driven to that conclusion by Scripture and logic.

Why has the seventieth week been deferred? There is only one explanation: Israel’s rejection of Christ and the birth of His church interrupted God’s dealings with Israel. Thus, the presence of the church upon earth continues to put the last week of years on hold. Only by the removal of the church could the final seven years begin to run their course for Israel. God will then deal with her in that period known as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7) and the “Great Tribulation” (Mt 24:22). Here we have an irrefutable argument for the “imminent, pretribulation Rapture of the church.”

Their imminent Rapture to heaven was the great hope of the early Christians. To this fact the New Testament bears undeniable witness. That hope, however, was largely lost during the Dark Ages of Roman Catholic domination, and only a fraction of the church has recovered it and kept it alive since the Reformation. Sadly, that “blessed hope” (Ti 2:13) is being lost again in the flood of ecumenism and false teaching that is inundating the church today.

We return to this topic often because, first of all, it is a major theme of the New Testament, which repeatedly declares that Christians “serve the living and true God; and...wait for his Son from heaven (1 Thes 1:9-10)...[and continually] look for the Saviour [from heaven]” (Phil 3:20; Heb 9:28). Secondly, the notion that the Rapture could be delayed at all (post-anything) is presented as having an evil effect upon those embracing that idea: “if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord

delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken...” (Mt 24:48-49). Thirdly, the Bible indicates that nothing has such a powerful motivating and purifying effect upon Christians as the hope of an imminent Rapture: “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself” (1 Jn 3:3).

The purifying hope John wrote of could not have been a postmillennial coming at least 1,000 years away, for that would have no motivating impact upon our lives. Nor could he have meant a posttrib Rapture, for most if not all those who come to Christ during the Great Tribulation will be slain by Antichrist (Rv 13:7,15). That prospect could hardly be a unique “blessed hope” (Ti 2:13).

Christ exhorts us: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord...blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching....Be ye therefore ready...for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Lk 12:35-40). Such language doesn’t fit a post-anything Rapture, for it would be foolish to watch and wait for One who will not come until after Antichrist appears or the Great Tribulation or Millennium have come and gone.

Let’s get serious about imminency! How tragic that those of us who claim to believe that Christ could return at any moment so often deny this hope by our lives. That doesn’t mean that we don’t build a house or plan for business or church expansion—but we hold such things loosely. Our real interest is in heaven, our longing is to be with Christ, and our passion is to live and witness for Him, winning souls, knowing that He could come at any moment. May this blessed and glorious hope transform our lives! Maranatha!

Are We Too "Negative"?

Dave Hunt

Critics have long leveled the charge of "divisive" and "negative" against those who would warn the church of unbiblical teachings and practices. I prayerfully consider such accusations, for my heart echoes the same concern. I long just to preach the gospel and to put behind me the controversy that has become such an unwelcome part of my life. Yet in preaching the pure gospel one must carefully distinguish it from the clever counterfeits all around.

How negligent it would be not to warn the sheep of poisoned pastures and false shepherds who promote lies in the name of truth. Yet the odds are staggering. Norman Vincent Peale's magazines, for example, have 16 million readers monthly, many times our small circulation! The flesh faints with weariness and frustration. Then why persist in a task so lonely and burdensome? Yes, *why this burning passion?*

There are, thank God, the many letters of encouragement from those who offer their love, support and prayers. There are, too, the earnest "thank you's" from the thousands who have been set free from the delusion and bondage of false gospels—from Catholicism and "Christian psychology" to positive/possibility thinking and positive confession. Yet even without any such encouragement we would be compelled to carry on and would urge you to do the same.

Jeremiah was hated, maligned, imprisoned and threatened with death because he preached repentance and warned of God's impending judgment when the "positive prophets" promised peace and prosperity "by the word of the Lord." Popular opinion opposed him. He became so discouraged that he declared that he would no longer speak for God nor even mention His name. But God's Word was in his heart and burned like a fire in his bones, so that he had to speak (Jer 20). *Yes, above all, it is God's Word burning within that compels us.*

Distressed by accusations of "negativism," I cry out to God and turn to His unfailing Word. And what do I find there? The very message I am constrained to

preach! Christ himself was far more "negative" than I have dared to be. He continually warned of judgment and hell, exposed sin, demanded repentance, rebuked the religious leaders and indicted them as hypocrites, whited sepulchers, blind leaders of the blind, fools. Without doubt, He would be banned from most Christian pulpits and media today!

The Sermon on the Mount is not intended to enhance one's "self-esteem." It encourages one to be poor in spirit, to mourn, to be meek and merciful, and promises that those who are true to God and His Word will be hated, persecuted and vilified (Mt 5). But didn't Jesus say, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Mt 7:1)? Isn't it unbiblical, then, to accuse a Christian leader of any wrong? On the contrary, Christ could only have meant that we were not to judge *motives*, for He clearly told us to judge teaching and lives: "Beware of false prophets [i.e., teachers]... by their fruits [lives] ye shall know them" (15-20). Surely He is calling us to judge false doctrine and deeds!

When Paul exhorted Timothy to "preach the word," he explained that to do so one must "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tm 4:2). Paul warned of "vain talkers and deceivers... whose mouths must be stopped [from teaching false doctrine]." He urged Titus to "rebuke them sharply" (Ti 1:10-13). He told Timothy, "Them that sin rebuke before all [i.e., publicly], that others also may fear" (1 Tm 5:20). Clearly such reproof requires a *judging* that does not violate Christ's prohibition but which, in fact, He *commanded* and the apostles practiced—a judging which Satan hates because it unmasks his lies.

The International Genocide Treaty signed by President Reagan, though not yet enforced, makes it a crime to try to convert anyone of another religion or to suggest that their beliefs are wrong. It will soon be a serious crime to call homosexuality a sin. The day is coming when, to protect "minority rights," we will be prohibited by law from preaching the gospel except in the most "positive" manner. Sadly, much of the evangelical church has already conformed.

It is not enough simply to "preach the truth" when there are lies which counterfeit it so closely that many can't tell the

difference. It is both logically and scripturally essential to expose and refute today's pernicious false gospels. Yet to do so is to be opposed by church leaders and barred from most platforms. I am banned even from such evangelical networks as Moody Radio lest I expose the humanism they promote in the name of "Christian psychology." Why not allow an open discussion of vital issues before the whole church? Are church leaders concerned for truth—or with protecting their own interests?

"Christian psychology" may seem to help for a time, but it undermines our real victory in Christ by redefining sin as "mental illness." This heresy inspired a host of new terms such as obsessive-compulsive behavior, dysfunctional families, addiction—and more recently the increasingly popular co-dependency myths and Twelve Step recovery programs spawned by Alcoholics Anonymous. In *12 Steps to Destruction*, the Bobgans point out that Bill Wilson, founder of AA, based his system upon what was a revolutionary new theory: that drunkenness was not a "moral defect" but an excusable "illness." Wilson was relieved to learn that he was an "alcoholic"—a new term at the time.

Enlarging upon this lie, "Christian psychologists" have redefined as mental illness all manner of behavior that Jesus, the Great Physician, diagnosed as *sin*. John MacArthur tells of hearing a woman call into a "Christian psychology" radio program to confess that she couldn't keep from having sex with anybody and everybody. She was told that her problem arose from an overbearing mother and milquetoast father and that it was an "addiction" that could take years of therapy to cure. So much for Christ's "Go, and sin no more" (Jn 8:11). Disobeying God is no longer sin if one has a compulsion or addiction or has had a traumatic childhood.

In his new book, *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, MacArthur writes, "The depth to which sanctified psychotherapy can sink is really quite profound. A local newspaper recently featured an article about a 34-bed clinic that has opened in Southern California to treat 'Christian sex addicts.' According to the article the clinic is affiliated with a large well-known Protestant church in the area." Several leading

“Christian psychologists” interviewed for the article “scoffed at the power of God’s Word to transform a heart and break the bondage of sexual sin.” The director explained that his treatment center would serve to rescue many Christians who had been taught that “the Bible is all you need.” Yet that is what the Bible itself claims and the entire church believed for 1,800 years until the advent of Christian psychology.

In *The Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine*, Dr. Robert Maddox warns that “all manner of sin...from gluttony to fornication, from stealing to bestiality...is [being] labeled as disease, to be cured with chemical, electrical and mechanical treatments.” The Bobgans also quote from University of California professor Herbert Fingarette’s book, *Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease*: “I just don’t understand why any churches would go for the disease idea...[it] denies the spiritual dimension of the whole thing.” They also quote Stanton Peele from his book, *Diseasing of America: Addiction Treatment Out of Control*: “...disease definitions undermine the individual’s obligations to control behavior and to answer for misconduct... [and] actually increase the incidence of the behaviors of concern.”

How astonishing that as the secular world is abandoning the sinking ship of psychotherapy, Christians are jumping aboard, imagining that this doomed vessel will not only stay afloat but add needed buoyancy to the ark God has provided!

It makes me weep to watch the growing deception, to cry out against it, and to be heeded by so few and opposed by so many. Why is that essential correction which Scripture so clearly demands left to a few of us nobodies and shunned by church leaders who would be heeded by millions? Write to the most influential evangelical leaders and ask how they can “preach the Word” without involving themselves in the reproof and rebuke of rampant error that Paul said *must be* at the very heart of biblical preaching!

Today I received a memo from a researcher who, along with her husband, is among the nobodies crying out against heresy in the church. Her concern was *The Ragamuffin Gospel* by Brennan Manning, a Catholic, published by Multnomah Press. In part she said, “Manning

teaches...that [a Christian] may continue to live a life of debauchery....describes himself as a [heavy] smoker and someone who became an alcoholic after conversion...wants active homosexuals accepted into full fellowship (p 26) along with other immoral people... teaches an eastern-type meditation (pp 43, 205-206)...twists scripture (pp 23, 28, 73, 173); he says that everyone, but the self-righteous [those that obey God by Manning’s definition], will go to heaven (pp 17, 26, 29)....This book is dangerous...a ploy by a new age Catholic to invade the evangelical church....Christian[s] must be warned that...the once trusted names of Multnomah, Thomas Nelson and Fleming Revell [to name a few] are no guarantee of orthodoxy. What a shame!”

I called her to make certain she hadn’t overstated her case. She read excerpts from the book to prove she had not. Christian publishers can no longer be trusted to publish truth but have become purveyors of death! A dump truck would not have been large enough to haul all of the heresy out of the recent Christian Booksellers convention in Orlando. Even Roman Catholic publishers of the most awful blasphemy and incredible nonsense, such as Paulist Press, were represented alongside evangelicals.

Take, for example, the booth of another Catholic publisher, *Our Sunday Visitor*. One of their books on display told the story of Padre Pio, a recently deceased Catholic monk admired by Pope John Paul II. Pio manifested the “stigmata,” a bleeding from his palms *to make up the deficiency in Christ’s redemptive work on the cross!* Pio believed he was *suffering for the salvation of sinners!* He claimed that literally *millions* of the spirits of the dead, whom he saw with his physical eyes, came to him on their way to heaven to thank him for gaining their release from purgatory! *This is only one of Rome’s many heresies.* I confronted *Sunday Visitor* employees concerning the demonic delusion promoted by their books and objected to their presence at a convention of evangelical publishers. They pointed to a nearby booth promoting horrendous, allegedly “Christian” rock music and declared, “We have as much right to be here as they do!” I could only agree.

Today I also read *Mission Frontiers*, the bulletin of the U.S. Center for World

Mission in Pasadena, California, Vol. 13, No. 4-5. They have a biblical passion for world evangelization. In contrast to the Manning/Multnomah justification of smoking, the editorial declared, “Tobacco causes more deaths each year in the United States than heroin, cocaine, alcohol, AIDS, fires, homicides, suicides, and auto accidents combined....More Colombians died last year from smoking American cigarettes than did Americans from using Columbian cocaine.” “Addiction,” or sin?

The editorial also highly commended Pope John Paul II’s recent encyclical on world missions. Disappointment was expressed that the encyclical was “marred by reference at the very end to the idea that...the work of the church is done ‘together with Mary.’” Yet the encyclical was praised and an address given where it could be purchased because it spoke of “people groups,” a term in vogue at the World Center. Sadly, however, 950 million Catholics who need to be evangelized—a special “people group” comprising nearly 20 percent of the world’s population—were overlooked! The editorial, in fact, implied that Catholicism’s evangelism is biblical.

Throughout Central and South America, Catholicism is in the most blatant partnership with spiritism and paganism. Recently, in Brazil, I visited Aparecida, the largest cathedral in the world next to St. Peter’s in Rome. It is dedicated to a small idol of a “Black Virgin”—pulled from a nearby lake in a fishing net—which now performs “miracles.” The Pope came recently to honor this idol. At the Mass the priest led the people in prayers and songs to the idol, asking *it* for salvation and dedicating their lives to it. Aparecida’s large bookstore carries many of the same “positive” books that delude Protestants—books in Portuguese by American authors, from Norman Vincent Peale to “Christian psychologists.”

Today’s evangelical leaders shun their duty to oppose heresy. Many of them promote Catholicism, occultism and humanistic psychology. Therefore we, the nobodies, though few heed us, must cry out even louder to warn the sheep of poisoned pastures and false shepherds. “Positive” or “negative” is not the issue, but truth and simple obedience to our Lord and His Word.

Thanksgiving, Praise & Joy

Dave Hunt

November is the month when we traditionally celebrate Thanksgiving Day. For most Americans it means little more than a holiday from work or school, an excuse to overeat and watch special sports events. The day is hardly devoted to giving of thanks. And what brief thanks is given to God scarcely reflects habitual attitudes. How readily we return to lives devoted to self instead of to Him—lives characterized more by complaining than by gratitude.

These few paragraphs are not intended as an exhortation to sanctify a secular holiday. Rather, we want to deal with something much deeper, something which ought to characterize our lives at all times. Sadly, that continual thanksgiving which Scripture exhorts—"giving thanks *always*" (Eph 5:20)—is a rare commodity among Christians. Why? And how can our attitudes be changed?

Christian psychologists and motivational speakers would suggest that "exchanging grumbling for gratitude turns unhappiness into joy." Now there's a catchy phrase to motivate thanksgiving! So it would seem. Those who are deceived by such slogans adopt a thankful "mental attitude" for selfish reasons—in order to benefit themselves. Such placebo techniques may produce surface changes and even convince those who seem to benefit for a time, but eventually the forced smiles betray the emptiness of hearts.

It is Truth, and only Truth, which can effect any real and lasting transformation in our lives. And the truth is that there is much for which we ought to be genuinely and continuously thankful. Most people who think they have nothing to be thankful for are not nearly as bad off as they could be, and are far better off than millions of others—reason enough to be thankful. No matter how dismal one's circumstances may seem, there is always a great deal for which to give thanks. But the problem goes deeper.

It is self on the throne, wanting to

please and benefit itself—and the failure to deny self as Christ commanded—which brings unhappiness no matter how favorable the circumstances may be. The fear of loss haunts those whose security and joy is in earthly position and possessions; and death eventually robs them of all. Genuine and acceptable thanksgiving to God must have a source far deeper than a feeling of gratitude for the physical blessings of this temporary and fragile earthly existence.

The trials of this brief life will soon be ended—either through death or the Rapture. The Christian knows that though this body of flesh and blood may die and decay, he has a new body "eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1) which will never know pain, fatigue or death. We have "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation..." (1 Pt 1:4-5). Here is truth that ought to grip our hearts and make us always thankful—truth so wonderful that one would think we could never thank God enough. When did you last thank Him for eternal life?

As Christians, our hearts should be continually filled to overflowing with thanksgiving to the God who created and redeemed us. How wonderful that though we sinned so grievously against Him and were His enemies, He became a man to suffer for our sins. His Holy Spirit pursued and wooed us to Himself with infinite Love even when we persisted in our self-centered rebellion. What grace! What love! How can we take these blessings for granted?

The very life we have, with the capacity to know and love one another and, wonder of wonders, to know and love God and enjoy His love, is a priceless gift. What gratitude should flood our hearts and lives and what fervent thanksgiving we ought to express to Him continually! And on top of it all, He has given us the surpassing privilege and joy of experiencing Christ's life within our mortal flesh and witnessing for Him in deed and word right now. What thanks ought to burst forth continually from our hearts to Him!

Thanksgiving, however, is not enough. It should always lead to praise. And there is a difference. Thanks expresses appreciation for what God has done to benefit the one who is thankful. Praise goes beyond thanksgiving. It highly values, exalts, commends, extols, glorifies, and honors God for whatever He has done and especially for *who He is*. Praise takes us from the mundane to the majestic, out of ourselves into Him. It values God above all else. Thus, praise can only flow from a heart that has come to *know* God.

How can we fully know God? Must not the praise of finite beings always reflect an imperfect understanding of Him who is infinite? Is it not an insult to evaluate God as less than He is? Then how can anyone truly praise him? Yet Scripture says we can and must. Though praise is conceived in our imperfect perception of God, it matures into wonder and worship. Praise is made acceptable when it is amplified by the sense of awe that God is infinitely beyond our comprehension. That humble realization draws us closer to Him, sinks us deeper into His love, and compels us to seek to know Him better.

The passion of David's heart, like Paul's, was to know God and to be continually enjoying His presence: "My soul thirsteth for God" (Ps 42:2; 63:1); "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may...behold the beauty of the Lord" (Ps 27:4); "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...that I may know him" (Phil 3:8-10). Could anything else be more worthwhile? "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

As a young Christian I thought that Hebrews 11:6 ("he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him") was the formula for getting things from God. If I would seek Him, as the verse prescribed, then He would reward me with the "things of earth" that I wanted. How could I have missed the fact that I was to "diligently seek *Him*"? And how could I truly seek Him if what I really wanted was not Him at all but

other things? And would it not be a bad bargain indeed if, instead of God as my reward, I received *things!*

What can the result be when all we want is God and He rewards us with Himself? It can't be less than a taste of heaven here on earth! "Joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pt 1:8)! Heaven? We give it too little thought. It's the place where everyone wants to go—but not just yet. For many Christians heaven is a last resort, welcome only when they are too old or too ill to enjoy the pleasure resorts of this evil world.

How can we truly desire God's presence in our lives here and now if we would only reluctantly exchange earth for heaven? To be in heaven is to be in His presence. Do we really desire and enjoy God's presence? Wouldn't that be like being in church all the time—bored, restless, watching the clock, eager for it to end? What an indictment! And what further proof is needed that there is very little of God in most churches in spite of claims to the contrary.

God is a God of joy. To be in His presence is to be supremely happy. Jesus welcomes to heaven His faithful followers with these words: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mt 25:21,23). Joy eternal? David knew it: "in thy presence is fullness of joy and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). We begin to know that joy even now in this life as we give ourselves totally into His hands and rest in His love, trusting Him completely. That is when we begin to experience with wonder, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh 8:10).

A favorite hymn begins, "There's joy in following Jesus, every moment of every day." Great joy for us and for Him: "He will rejoice over thee with joy...he will joy over thee with singing" (Zep 3:17). Even the prophets who pronounced doom upon the disobedient knew this joy in their own hearts and lives: "I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hb 3:18). The closer to God we walk in holiness, the greater our joy: "and let thy *saints* shout for joy" (Ps 132:9). As the hymn writer put it, "When God is near my heart leaps up in ecstasy, and all the world's a paradise

when God is near."

Though circumstances may have worsened, God has not changed. Our earthly condition, no matter how difficult, is temporary and will soon be past—but our heavenly home is eternal and remains secure. That hope brings present joy: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*" (Rom 15:13). Yes, in "*believing*, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pt 1:8)—a joy that makes us strong to live above our circumstances and to demonstrate to all who observe us that God is good and that we are in His hands.

There is much talk about "spiritual warfare" these days, and it often involves much error and extremism. So many Christians spend time "rebuking" demons that would be much better spent in praising God. Instead of focusing so much attention upon Satan and giving him so much credit, let us give thanks that "greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world" (1 Jn 4:4). Here is victory: in thanksgiving, praise and joy!

Question: What about the growing "spiritual warfare" teaching that by "binding" in the name of the Lord the "territorial spirit" controlling a city Christians can take over that city for God?

Answer: Such an idea has no biblical basis, either by precept or example. Yes, "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" prevented the angel Gabriel for three weeks from coming to Daniel (Dn 10:12-13). Daniel, however, was seeking prophetic insight—not to "bind" the "territorial spirit" over Persia. Nor did Gabriel instruct him to wage such warfare. Gabriel's mission was to inform Daniel of last-days events affecting Israel (v 14)—information which the "prince of Persia" tried to hinder. There is no hint that "binding" this demon would have delivered Persia from Satanic influence or that Gabriel's victory over this demon (with the help of Michael the Archangel) had any effect upon the spiritual climate in Persia or aided in the salvation of Persians.

Paul never tried to "bind territorial spirits" in bringing the gospel to the

world of his day, so why should we? And although the apostles "turned the world upside down," there is no hint that a single city was ever "taken for God," as Wimber, Paulk, Hayford, Frangipane, Lea and so many others are promising. In Corinth, for example, where Paul spent 18 months, God gave him special protection and blessing because He had "much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). The issue was not to deliver Corinth, but to call a company of believers out of it. Nor did Paul's success change the destiny of Corinth—or of any other city or nation.

Question: Many are teaching that the church must be united and purified before Christ can return. Is that biblical?

Answer: It is neither biblical nor logical that the small fraction of the church which is alive on earth at the time of the Rapture must have attained to a status unknown by Christians who have died, in order to join them at that heavenly marriage to our Lord. Yes, the Bride is made ready and robed in white linen (Rv 19:7-8)—but the Bride is the *entire church*. If this purification is a prerequisite for being raptured, then what about those who died before the Rapture? Clearly they must be "made ready" after they get to heaven. Then why wouldn't this happen to *all Christians* up there, rather than upon earth?

Surely this final cleansing can only take place at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) when we give account to our Lord, our works are tried in fire (2 Cor 3:11-15) and we are rewarded or suffer loss. There is no biblical basis for a "last-days revival" that will make Christians worthy to be raptured to heaven. We are worthy of heaven through Christ's finished work alone. Moreover, the Bible speaks of the last-days church as apostate (2 Thes 2:3). Christ even questions whether He will find faith on the earth when He returns (Lk 18:8). Even the wise fall asleep while the bridegroom tarries (Mt 25:5). Hardly the "last-days revived church"! Let us therefore watch and be ready for our Lord!

Peace on Earth

Dave Hunt

At the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the angels announced good tidings of great joy...to all people...*on earth* peace, good will toward men” (Lk 2:10-14). Yet God’s gracious and merciful offer of peace was refused! God’s Son was crucified, rose from the dead and went back to heaven, having been rejected by His own people and most of mankind. He will return to earth soon to execute judgment upon a world of increasing evil and continuous wars that grow ever more numerous and destructive. In the meanwhile, God’s offer of pardon and peace goes largely unheeded, while global leaders seek to establish peace through their own devices.

Mankind continues to this day to spurn Jesus and the peace He came to bring. Jews have a special rationale for rejecting Christ: “He didn’t bring the peace which the prophets said the Messiah would establish, and he was crucified. A dead man can’t be the Messiah!” This reaction rejects the historical fact of Christ’s resurrection. It also reveals a basic misunderstanding of the peace God offers. The same ignorance afflicts the world at large.

Most people think of peace as the cessation of wars between nations. The peace that God offers, however, though essential for peace among nations, is far more basic and awesome. Romans 5:1 declares, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The implication is both instructive and frightening: that man is God’s adversary and in a state of war against his Creator.

Many other scriptures confirm the ominous fact that man has made himself God’s enemy and desperately needs the specific peace which would end that conflict: “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7); “enemies in your mind by wicked works” (Col 1:21); “A friend of the world is the enemy of God”

(Jas 4:4), etc. Who would dare to rebel against God? Yet this is the condition of mankind, which must repent of its insurrection and accept peace on God’s terms or suffer the awful consequences.

Only when earth is no longer at war with heaven can there be peace among the inhabitants of this planet. And to attempt to establish peace among nations without first of all accepting the *peace with God* that He offers is to remain in a state of war against God himself. Such is the terrible warning of Scripture!

Encouraged by the end of the Cold War, world leaders are attempting to establish a new world order of lasting peace. All recognize that the key to global tranquility is a peaceful partnership in the Middle East between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Unprecedented efforts are being expended to bring this about. God, however, is left out of the process.

One would expect secular leaders to ignore God. Yet President Bush, Vice-President Quayle and Secretary of State Baker, all of whom profess to be born-again Christians, also ignore God in their attempts to establish peace.

But wait! Haven’t we heard these men invoke God’s blessing? Yes, but they ask God to bless humanistic efforts to bring about a “peace” that He cannot bless, for it contradicts His Word. The very peace they seek is a form of rebellion against God! Nor can such an accusation be dismissed as the wild ravings of a fanatical fundamentalist. Let us look dispassionately at the facts.

There are many irrefutable evidences that the Bible is true, but none more convincing than prophecy fulfilled. In this the Bible is unique. Neither the Koran, the Hindu Vedas, the Book of Mormon, nor the scriptures of Buddhism, Shintoism or any of the world’s other religions contain prophecies that have been fulfilled down through the centuries and are still being fulfilled in today’s modern world. Yet such prophecies constitute about 25 percent of the Bible, with the major subject of biblical

prophecy being Israel.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were promised *by God* that their descendants would possess *forever* a land bordered on the south by “the river of Egypt” in the Sinai, by the Euphrates on the north, the Mediterranean on the west and reaching into Jordan on the east (Gn 12:1-7; 13:15; 15:7; 18-21; 17:7-8; 26:3-5; 28:13-14; 35:9-12; 50:24; Ex 6:2-8; 33:1-3,16; Lv 20:22-26; Dt 32:49; 34:4; Neh 9:8; Ps 89:28-36; Jer 30:3,10,11; 31:7-12,35-36; 33:20-21; Ez 37:21-28; Am 9:13-15, etc.). That area has thus been known as “the promised land.” We dare not forget that it belongs to Israel *by God’s decree*. Yet this is exactly what is denied by the Arabs and ignored by Bush, Gorbachev, the Pope and other leaders in the present Middle East peace negotiations.

God warned His chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), that for disobeying Him they would be scattered throughout the world, where they would be hated and killed. History attests to the accuracy of that ancient prophecy. God also said He would bring His banished and persecuted people back to their own land in the “last days,” just before the return of their Messiah. That incredible promise was fulfilled in 1948!

That the Jews could have been dispersed throughout the entire world for 2,500 years since the Babylonian captivity, 1,900 years since the Diaspora at A.D. 70, yet remain an identifiable ethnic people, is undeniably miraculous. And that after all of these centuries they would return to their own land is even more astounding. No one living today can doubt the existence of God or that the Israelis are His chosen people. The evidence provided by Israel’s presence in her own land after 2,500 years is irrefutable!

Yet God foretold something even more astonishing: “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling...[and] a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of

the earth be gathered together against it" (Zec 12:2-3).

At the time of that prophecy 2,500 years ago, Jerusalem was in ruins and the land of Israel was abandoned swamp and desert. So it remained until recently. Yet God's seemingly preposterous promise was fulfilled. Today the attention of the entire world is focused upon that tiny piece of once forsaken and worthless real estate, in fear of what may happen there—exactly as Zechariah prophesied!

Surrounded by enemies who have sworn its extermination and greatly outnumber it in men and equipment, Israel has survived war after war and has grown in size and strength. How has that been possible? And what makes this minuscule nation so important? The answer is found in Bible prophecy. These are God's special people; He has given them that land. And to them Christ will soon return to rule the world from the throne of His father David. So said the angel Gabriel when he told Mary that she would have a child (Lk 1:31-33). Here is the forgotten promise of "Christmas."

Satan desperately wants to destroy Israel. All who have attempted to do so, from Hitler to the Arabs, have been his pawns. If he could remove the Jews from the promised land, then God would be proven a liar. Bible prophecies concerning Israel back in her land and the Messiah reigning over her on David's throne in Jerusalem could not be fulfilled. Satan would have achieved a stalemate in his battle against God and would have escaped the final judgment pronounced upon him and those who have joined in his rebellion.

Current attempts by world leaders to establish peace in the Middle East are yet another fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Just as Zechariah foretold, Jerusalem has indeed become "a burdensome stone for all people." And the solemn warning remains that "all that burden themselves with [Jerusalem] will be cut in pieces"!

President Bush, and all who burden themselves with Jerusalem, beware!

God has given to Israel the land she now possesses, and much more surrounding it. Woe to anyone who seeks to take land from Israel or who promises Israel "peace" in exchange for any part of the "promised land"! Yes, Israel will make that exchange, "peace" will seem to be established, but it will be a major step on the road to Antichrist's rule and the ultimate holocaust. So says the Bible.

What should Christians such as Bush and Baker do? In light of the proven accuracy of Bible prophecy, they need to heed God's promises to Israel and make certain that they don't oppose them. They must cease from pressuring Israel not to occupy parts of the promised land which it has taken in self-defense to preserve its very existence. Instead, they ought to seek to persuade the Arabs to allow Israel to possess the entire land God promised to her (Gn 15:18-21) and to live there in peace under Israeli rule.

Such a suggestion would inflame the Arabs and be rejected as madness by world leaders. Yet the Bible leaves no alternative. Were President Bush simply to follow what the Bible so clearly says, it would be the end of his popularity here and abroad. But it would gain for him God's approval for eternity, which is far more important than transitory political polls!

If George Bush is truly a Christian, then he surely knows that there can be no genuine peace among nations until mankind has ended its state of rebellion and accepted *peace with God* on His terms. If he believes this, then he must declare it to the world. Who knows what the result might be, for nothing like it has ever been attempted by a world leader. Has God called him for this purpose?

Here is the neglected message of the world's "Christmas." Here is the cause we must all espouse. Instead of joining with the ungodly in unbiblical efforts to save the world ecologically

or politically, we must declare the good news: Christ has "made peace [with God] through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). His enemies can now be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom 5:10). And we must warn of the awful consequences for all who reject this gracious offer of *peace with God*.

Muslims deny that Christ died for our sins, was raised and is coming again. So do most Israelis. The same is true of Hindus, Buddhists—and even many who call themselves Christians. We have pointed out that 950 million Roman Catholics embrace a false gospel which denies that Christ paid the full debt for sin and claims that He must be offered again and again in the Mass, that we must suffer for our own sins in purgatory and that salvation is in the Church through the seven sacraments administered by its priesthood, etc. It is a solemn fact that today's world is filled with "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil 3:18), many of whom claim to be Christians! Let us be certain that we believe and obey God's Word!

There is a further personal application of the gospel. Many Christians are beset by fears, anxieties, and inner turmoil. They have accepted *peace with God* for eternity, but do not rest in the enjoyment of that peace here and now. They have selfish desires that rob them of God's peace. Unwilling, as a practical experience of daily life, to be "crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20), they are ruled by the tyrant Self instead of by the Holy Spirit.

What joy when it is no more self but Christ who rules our lives! Only then can we know the happy fulfillment of the promise: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7). Such is the eternal peace Christ came to bring—and it is meant to begin here and now.

Signs of the Times

Dave Hunt

Most readers are probably aware of Diane Sawyer's recent "Primetime Live" exposé of three popular televangelists: W. V. Grant, Larry Lea and Robert Tilton. The latter takes in at least \$80 million a year by promising health and wealth to those who give to him. It is a sad day when the secular media accuses leading evangelicals of deliberate deception and seemingly documents the charges, thereby bringing reproach upon the gospel and our Lord.

Why are millions of Christians so gullible as to support almost anyone who offers healing and prosperity, even though the promises are obviously unbiblical, extravagant and almost always fail? Where are the church leaders who should be protecting the flock by specific warnings against false teachers and false "miracle workers"? Where are men such as Billy Graham, Chuck Swindoll, James Dobson and others who would be heeded if they spoke out? Why don't highly respected evangelical leaders bring correction to their own ranks? It is desperately needed!

One is reminded of televangelist healer Peter Popoff, who was such an obvious deceiver that it was embarrassing to watch him—yet church leaders allowed him to defraud the flock and bring reproach upon Christ. It was the atheistic humanists who exposed him six years ago: magician James Randi, Paul Kurtz, et al. Popoff claimed "revelations from God" enabled him to call out names, addresses, and ailments of those in his audience. In fact, his wife, Elizabeth, who circulated among the audience before the meetings gathering information, later broadcast the data at 39.17 mhz. from the announcers' booths overlooking the various auditoriums and into a sophisticated electronic device concealed in Popoff's ear.

A deliberate scam? Yes, indeed. Randi and his team recorded the proof. For example, at his February 1986 crusade in San Francisco's Coliseum, when Peter Popoff made his grand entrance on stage amid shouted hallelujahs, Mrs. Popoff tested the equipment with these words: "Hello,

Petey. Can you hear me? If you can't, you're in trouble. I'm looking up names, right now."

During the "healings" the flow of data into Popoff's ear went like this: "She should be there on your right side. *Right* side. In the blue. She lives at 4267 Masterson, and she's praying for her daughter Joy, who's allergic to food." Following these directions, laughter was heard coming from Elizabeth and Pam, the wife of Popoff's assistant Redford Shirrell—as Popoff repeated this information to the victim, pretending it was "revealed" to him by God.

Popoff should have been exposed and denounced by church leaders, but he wasn't! Even after he'd been unmasked by humanists as a deliberate fraud, *Charisma* carried his full-page ad, and Christians continued to send this "man of God" their support.

W. V. Grant also calls out names, diseases and other details pertaining to specific individuals of whom he denies having prior knowledge, claiming to receive this information from God. Actually, he uses an old trick of gathering and memorizing data beforehand that he later presents as "revelation knowledge." Grant was also exposed six years ago by Randi, Kurtz and their team. Yet Christian leaders continued to honor him. Those joining Grant as speakers at recent conferences at his Dallas church included Mike Murdock, T.L. Osborn, Ben Kinchlow, Jamie Buckingham, B.J. Hargis and Hilton Sutton; while a veritable who's who of the charismatic movement have preached at Robert Tilton's Dallas church.

The irrefutable evidence that W.V. Grant, like Popoff, operates a deliberate scam was first presented in two editions of the humanist magazine *Free Inquiry*, Spring and Summer, 1986. They followed up people whom Grant claimed to have healed, only to find that no healing had taken place. Actors whom they planted in the audience were "healed" of make-believe ailments. Phony information which they had fed to Grant or his associates before the meeting was called out by Grant as "revelation from God."

Grant even brings wheelchairs with him in which his ushers persuade the elderly who are tired of walking to sit,

on the promise of being wheeled down close to the front. It is these people who are dramatically called out of "their wheelchairs" and made to run up and down as proof of their "healing"! Those who actually came in their own wheelchairs leave in the same manner, wondering why they weren't healed when so many others apparently were.

Those on Grant's mailing list receive the most outrageous letters telling how he has prayed for them individually (the computer inserts their names to make it appear like a personal letter) and offering methods of receiving a blessing that involve witchcraft-like rituals and are an insult to one's intelligence. For example, the latest mailing included a large picture of "Jesus" holding out his hands, with the instructions to "*Touch my hands—I will touch yours, over by a window, based on Malachi 3:10, where I have promised you, 'I will...open you the windows of heaven....'*" Lay any unpaid bills and your wallet on these Nail Scarred hands of Jesus." Everything must be returned with the largest offering possible. Grant then takes it "to a certain window that the Lord is showing me, as I lay my hands where you lay yours." Always a condition for receiving the "blessing" is the "seed faith offering." This invention of Oral Roberts is now used by many other "evangelists" to persuade the gullible to give in order to reap 100-fold.

There is a new star rising on the charismatic faith-healing circuit. Benny Hinn has attracted crowds as large as 30,000. At 38, he pastors Orlando Christian Center, one of America's fastest growing churches. Its 2,800-seat auditorium is packed three times each Sunday and the service is aired later on TBN. Though he has preached at Grant's church, Hinn's methods vary from Popoff's or Grant's. He raises about \$12 million a year with the usual false promises of healing and prosperity in exchange for "seed faith" gifts—a condition for "miracles." "Give no less than \$100," he exhorts an audience, and promises to "lay my hands on all the envelopes and ask God for financial miracles for the givers."

The secret to Hinn's *power* is his peculiar *anointing*, which he connects with Kathryn Kuhlman and Aimee

McPherson, founder of the Foursquare Gospel Church. He first felt the “full power of the Holy Spirit” on him at a Kuhlman healing service in 1973—and her mantle has presumably fallen upon Hinn. He conducts his meetings almost exactly like hers, though it takes Hinn much longer to get his audience into the expectant mood that seems to generate psychosomatic “miracles.” In an April 7, 1991 sermon, Hinn revealed that he periodically visits Kuhlman’s grave and that he is one of the few with a key to gain access to it. He also visits Aimee’s grave where, he says, “I felt a terrific anointing...I was shaking all over...trembling under the power of God...‘Dear God,’ I said, ‘I feel the anointing...I believe the anointing has lingered over Aimee’s body.’”

The *anointing* or *power* plays a major role at Benny Hinn’s “miracle services.” He uses it to “slay in the spirit” as Kuhlman did 30 years ago. She has been imitated by charismatic evangelist-healers ever since. But Hinn has a new flare. Yes, like Kuhlman, he touches people on the forehead or neck to see them fall over. But he also blows or throws the “anointing” and “slays” from a distance. As Mike Thomas reported in *Florida Magazine*, 11/24/91,

Winded catchers try to keep up with the toppling bodies. He rears back and with a pitching motion slays the entire choir with one toss....“That’s power,” yells Benny. “POWER!” Hinn takes off his custom tailored jacket and rubs it briskly on his body. He is rubbing the Power onto the jacket. Then he starts swinging it wildly, like the biblical David swinging his sling. He decks his followers left and right. Bam! Bam! Bam! The stage vibrates with their landings. Then he throws it [the “anointed” jacket]. Another bam. As a catcher moves to pick up a woman, Hinn slays him...then he slays the catcher who caught the catcher.

When Benny Hinn is moved, nobody is safe from the Power....So many to slay, so little time....[H]e blows loudly into the microphone....Hundreds fall backward...a woman collapses in the aisle and begins to babble. And then, suddenly, Benny is gone. The power vanishes from the room, and the people stare in stunned silence.

This aspect alone of Hinn’s meetings

is enough to condemn him. He capriciously throws the “Holy Spirit” around in a most irreverent fashion, using the third Person of the Trinity as his servant to attract attention to himself. Hinn acts as though the “anointing” is some metaphysical power at his disposal, to be rubbed off onto physical objects. It looks impressive, works largely by the power of suggestion, but has no purpose except to induce an awe of Hinn. “It’s scary,” says Bill James, a former church member. “The people are mesmerized. ...When he comes out, he’s like God.”

Benny’s office at his church contains pictures of himself with George Bush and John Paul II. It was Hinn who arranged for Paul and Jan Crouch to meet with the Pope. Here is Mike Thomas’s impression of a visit with Hinn:

He looks like a Ralph Lauren advertisement, a true gentleman of leisure. As always, his hair is sprayed solidly in place. “I don’t know if you’ll ever see a reverend without socks,” he says proudly. [He’s wearing no socks.] “That’s the way I am. I’m more down to earth than most people.”

This comes from a man who just turned in his Mercedes for a Jaguar and recently moved from the exclusive Heathrow development to the even more exclusive Alaqua, where he now lives in a \$685,000 home. His suits are tailored, his shoes are Italian leather, and his wrists and fingers glitter with gold and diamonds....what he considers a modest lifestyle, as if everyone lives like this.

He wears his diamond Rolex, diamond rings, gold bracelet and custom suits for all to see....“What’s the big deal, for goodness sake?” he says. “What am I supposed to do, drive a Honda?...That’s not in the Bible....I’m sick and tired about hearing about streets of gold [in heaven]. I don’t need gold in heaven. I got to have it now.”

Benny declares, “I have received a new mandate from heaven—bring the message of the miraculous, healing power of God back to America! Invade our nation with the miracle-working power of God in the ‘90s!” He claims that about 1,000 people are healed at each “miracle service.” But as Thomas reported, “Despite all the thousands of miracles claimed by Hinn, the church seems hard pressed to come up with

any that would convince a serious skeptic....

When pressed for truly convincing miracles, [Hinn spokesperson] Susan Smith cited a woman in Orlando who was cured of blindness caused by diabetes. But she would not give the woman’s name. She later admitted that the woman’s vision may still be cloudy. “She still has diabetes, strangely...[and] was just rehospitalized.”

“People of God,” shouts Benny, “we must never speak such faith-destroying words as these: ‘If it be thy will, Lord.’...I am Him [Jesus]! The Word has become flesh in Meee!...You are a little god on earth...!”

His other heresies include the teaching that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each has a body, soul and spirit. “There’s nine of them!” he told his congregation “by revelation knowledge,” but probably got the idea from *Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible*, where this ancient heresy was revived on page 55.

Hinn taught the same heresy as Hagin and Copeland, that when Jesus died on the cross He sank into hell and took upon Himself the nature of Satan and was tortured by Satan for our redemption. Then early in 1991 Hinn repudiated this teaching along with other peculiar “word faith” doctrines. Yet he had taught it as “revelation knowledge.” God’s revelations don’t change.

As for his critics, Hinn says, “You know, I’ve looked for one verse in the Bible—I just can’t seem to find it—one verse that says, ‘If you don’t like ‘em, kill ‘em.’ I really wish I could find it!... Sometimes I wish God would give me a Holy Ghost machine gun. I’d blow your head off!” The TBN studio audience loudly applauded those gracious words from the “man of God.”

Surely we are seeing fulfilled the primary sign Christ gave of the nearness of His return: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Mt 24:24). Let us seek to know God and His Word and to walk in obedience to Him, contending earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. He’s coming soon!

Love is Commanded

Dave Hunt

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Dt 6:5) defines the relationship which God intended between Himself and Israel and all mankind. Though this requirement is not explicitly stated in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20; Dt 5), it is, according to our Lord Jesus Christ, the essence thereof, and the first and greatest commandment given by God to man (Mt 22; Mk 12; Lk 10).

If this is the greatest commandment, then failure to love God with one’s entire heart, soul and might must be the greatest sin of which one could be guilty. Indeed, not loving God is the root of all sin. Nor is our Lord’s explanation of the Ten Commandments a condemnation only of atheists and pagans. It is also a terrible indictment of most Christians. How shamefully little love we give to God! “With all thine heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might!” said Jesus. My own conscience has been deeply convicted.

The second commandment, according to our Lord, is, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Obedience to this command is the essential evidence of truly loving God. John reminds us, “he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 Jn 4:20). Love of neighbor is the inevitable result of loving God. These two commandments (to love God, then neighbor), like blossom and fruit, are inseparable. There cannot be one without the other. Moreover, “On these two commandments,” said Jesus, “hang all the law and the prophets” (Mt 22:40, etc.). Here is the essence of all Scripture and of God’s requirements for mankind.

Were it not for God’s grace and the redemptive work of Christ, this clear teaching from Scripture would hang over us like a death sentence. We have disobeyed the first and greatest commandment, and as a result could not keep the second. The penalty for sin is death—eternal separation from God and from the life and love which is in Him alone. How desperately we need a Savior! And, oh, how God’s gracious and complete

provision in Christ should create in our hearts the very love for Him that He longs for from us!

The church is busy with conferences, conventions, seminars and workshops where numerous subjects from healing to holiness, from prosperity to prophecy, from miracles to marriage counseling, are taught and discussed. Yet the subject of loving God is conspicuous by its absence. Instead, there is much emphasis upon loving self—a teaching unknown in the church until recently.

Jesus said, “upon these two commandments [*first*, loving God; *second*, loving neighbor] hang all the law and the prophets” (Mt 22:40). Since these two commandments are the essence of Scripture, nothing further need be nor can be added. Yet to these *two* has been added lately a *third*: the love of self. Moreover, this newly introduced “law” is declared to be the *first* commandment and key to all else. It is now widely taught that self-love is the great need; that we cannot fully love either God or neighbor until we first of all learn to love ourselves.

This modern perversion of Scripture is due to the influence of humanistic psychology in the church—a fact that is freely, even proudly, admitted by Christian psychologists. For example, Bruce Narramore’s oft-quoted admission: “Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem. This is a good and necessary focus.” The source of this lie is significant.

In 1,900 years no one had found the necessity for self-love and self-esteem in the Bible. Calvin, Luther, Wesley, Spurgeon, Moody, et al. found just the opposite there. It was the humanists who discovered this new “truth”—and now even Christian leaders find the lie appealing and pass it on to their flocks in books and sermons.

Far from teaching self-love, Christ was rebuking it. He was saying, “You feed and clothe and care for yourselves day and night. Now give to your neighbors some of that attention that you lavish upon yourselves. Love your neighbor as you excessively love yourselves.” Christ would hardly tell us to love our neighbors *as we love ourselves* if we did not already love ourselves enough.

Tragically, love for God is not only neglected, it is given a secondary position, and self-love is made preeminent. Instead of being convicted of our failure to love God with our whole heart, soul and might as the gravest of sins and the root of all personal problems, we are being urged to focus upon loving and esteeming and valuing ourselves! What a perversion of Scripture.

There is a growing emphasis today upon world evangelism, and surely that is needful and commendable. We ought to obey the Great Commission given to us by Christ. There is also an awakening social conscience, a concern to demonstrate practical Christianity in caring for those around us, from the unborn threatened with abortion to the homeless and deprived. Yet that which must come first—deep love of God—is largely forgotten.

“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned” (1 Cor 13:3), may be commendable deeds, but if they are not motivated and sanctified by an all-consuming love for God, they are of no value at all in His eyes. Have we really faced the teaching of this great love chapter? How amazing and sad that love of God is buried in the flurry of activity to serve Him! Indeed, the average Christian, while he may love much else, including even the world which he is forbidden to love, gives little serious thought to loving God.

Heaven will be the ecstatic joy of eternal and infinite love. What a taste of heaven we could have now—and at the same time bring satisfaction to our Lord!

Many issues of great concern legitimately occupy the attention of church leaders and their flocks. Yet the greatest commandment, and that which God desires from us above all, is scarcely mentioned, much less given the prominence it ought to have in church fellowship and individual lives. How tragic! And what an indictment of Christianity today! None of us is innocent of this great sin. My heart has been broken as I’ve been convicted anew of how far I fall short of keeping the essence of God’s commandments. I have cried out to Him with new sorrow and longing that He would help me to love Him with my whole heart and my neighbor as myself.

The Bible is filled with injunctions to love God, with explanations of why we

ought to and of the benefits to be derived thereby. Here are a few examples. Look up others for yourselves and meditate upon them. “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul” (Dt 10:12)...“that thou mayest live” (30:6)...“for he is thy life, and the length of thy days” (30:20).

“O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for *them that love him* and observe his commandments” (Neh 1:5)...“all things work together for good to *them that love God* (Rom 8:28)...“eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for *them that love him*” (1 Cor. 2:9). God even tells us in Deuteronomy 13:1-3 that He allows false prophets to work signs and wonders as a test to see “whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” We live in a time of such testing. Loving God fervently will keep us from apostasy.

Yes, love is *commanded*. True love begins in the will, not in the emotions. That love is commanded seems incomprehensible even to many Christians. The world has conditioned us to believe that one “falls in love” and that love is a romantic attraction between the sexes. “Boy meets girl and falls in love” is the most popular theme of novels and movies. Yet “love” without God brings sorrow.

“Falling in love” is perceived as being helplessly swept up in a mysterious, euphoric, overpowering feeling over which one has no control and which, inevitably, loses its magic. One is thus equally helpless in “falling out of love,” and thereafter “falling in love” with someone else. A *commitment of the will* is missing. We are *commanded* to love with purity—God first of all, with our whole being, and then our neighbor as we, by nature, excessively love ourselves. Love is a *commitment to God* that demonstrates itself in human relationships.

Yes, falling in love transforms for a time those who experience it. They suddenly become different persons. Someone else becomes more important than oneself, bringing deliverance from the slavery to self that ordinarily imprisons us all. Self no

longer receives priority, but another has become the primary focus. The love and attention that once was lavished upon oneself now is given to the one who has become the object of one’s love—and that brings tremendous freedom and joy. This temporary release from self-centeredness explains more than anything else the ecstasy of love—a fact which those “in love” generally fail to realize.

If loving others is so transforming, how much more so to genuinely and deeply love God. How can this come about? God is so great, so far beyond our finite ability to comprehend, that it seems impossible to know Him. And it is impossible to love a person (except with God’s love) whom one doesn’t know. Love is above all personal.

It is being taught in the church that the best way to get to know God is to visualize Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh. Visualization is the most powerful occult technique. Visualizing an entity, even “God” or “Christ,” puts one in touch with a masquerading demon. (See *Beyond Seduction*, pp 190-240.) Yet visualization is becoming more popular than ever in the church.

Denying any occult involvement, teachers of this technique declare, “Visualize Christ as your favorite artist paints Him—then talk to Him and He will respond.” What a delusion to enter into a relationship with an imaginary “Christ”! Even if the picture created in the mind were absolutely accurate, which it is not, it would be like “falling in love” with a picture and imagining that it was talking back. Such behavior borders on insanity, yet it is seriously promoted by leading Christians.

It is also suggested that visualizing Bible scenes helps to understand them. Such a practice, commended in a recent *SCP Journal*, is not only occultic but illogical and misleading. Obviously, visualizing oneself seated among the listening multitude will not help to understand the Sermon on the Mount. Most of those in His day who saw and heard Jesus with their physical eyes and ears neither understood nor obeyed what He said. Knowing God and His Word is not aided by images, even if accurate—much less by imagining scenes for which the Bible gives insufficient data to recreate them. “Eye hath not seen nor ear heard,” but God reveals Himself and His truth to our hearts “by his Spirit...because they

are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:9-14).

Images appeal to the flesh. Beauty is only skin deep. Solomon calls charm and beauty “deceitful” (Prv 31:30) and Peter warns against outward attractiveness and commends “the hidden man of the heart” (1 Pt 3:4). What folly to think that an image of Christ created by one’s imagination helps one to know and love Him!

Love is not primarily a feeling. It is a commitment. This is the missing ingredient in much that is called love today. A genuine and lasting commitment to one another is often lacking even in Christian marriages due to worldly influence and the promotion by church leaders of loving, esteeming, accepting and valuing *self*.

Commitment is also the missing ingredient in many a Christian’s relationship with God. Rather than working up a feeling that you love God, make a commitment to Him, to love and obey Him. Jesus promised, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me...and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him...and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him” (Jn 14:21-23).

We need to know God and His love in our hearts. As we seek Him in His Word and in prayer He will reveal Himself by His Spirit. We are to love Him with our whole heart, soul and might. May He grant us a fresh conviction of the sin of not loving Him as we ought, and may the desire to obey this first and greatest commandment become our passion. Only then will we begin to manifest that love for one another which Christ said would be the mark whereby the world would be able to recognize His true disciples—those to whom He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

Heeding the Berean Call

Dave Hunt

Why *The Berean Call*? One reason for the new name is to reflect more accurately what my ministry has long been about. We are not simply a source of “information.” We earnestly desire to join together tens of thousands of concerned believers who will not only be informed but who will *act* upon the information we provide. We stand at a historic juncture no less significant than the Reformation itself. God has called us to earnestly contend for the faith and to rescue as many as possible from Satan’s deception. Please join us in prayer and *action*.

You are each a vital part of this ministry. Please make copies of this newsletter and distribute them widely. Give us the names and addresses of those who would like to receive it. Stand boldly for truth and pray for and support this work as the Lord leads. Satan’s major weapon in the battle for souls is false religion. “Bereans” (Acts 17:11) who know the Bible cannot be deceived. Sound doctrine determines life, now and forever.

A recent study at a Southern Baptist college revealed that 70 percent of the males and 53 percent of the females engage in premarital sex!¹ Such willful sinning reflects a low view of Scripture and little fear of God. The growing numbers of “Christians” who favor homosexual “rights” indicates the same disregard for God’s Word. One’s belief determines how one lives.

What one believes also determines one’s eternal destiny. The true gospel saves; a false gospel damns. Yet that conviction seems to have been lost even among evangelicals. We may need a new definition of evangelical! There are church leaders who would not compromise God’s moral commandments, but who compromise the gospel. Why is there not among Christians at least as great concern and outcry opposing false gospels that damn for eternity as there is against abortion, child abuse, pornography, etc.? God help us!

Why not just be “positive”? Satan’s lies masquerade as God’s truth. Clever counterfeits that appear to be genuine deceive millions. Simply to preach truth could reinforce a false belief that seems so similar to it. The difference must be made clear, for on that difference hangs

the eternal destiny of souls. The necessity for discernment, warning, correction and instruction grips me more each day. I’m determined to devote myself to this unpopular but essential ministry, as the Lord enables, until He takes us home. Let us work together!

A great tragedy is overtaking us. The Reformation that cost hundreds of thousands of martyrs excruciating torture and death is being rejected by leading evangelicals. I would prefer to keep quiet, but I cannot. The eternal destiny of billions of souls is at stake! Here are a few examples.

The two major cover articles (13 pages) in the February 1992 *Bookstore Journal*, the “Official Publication of the Christian Booksellers Association,” urged members to cultivate Catholic customers as “brothers and sisters in Christ.” Tragically, this will prevent the gospel from being given to Catholics.

Among the lead article’s many untruths, author Peter Kreeft declared, “Catholics [don’t pray to saints, they] only ask saints to pray for them—just as we ask the living to pray for us” (p 30). That’s false—and, as a Catholic, Kreeft knows it. Consider “The Holy Father’s Prayer for the Marian Year [1988].” John Paul II doesn’t ask Mary to *pray* for Catholics, he asks her to *do* what only God can do: to comfort, guide, strengthen and protect “the whole of humanity....” His prayer ends: “Sustain us, O Virgin Mary, on our journey of faith and *obtain for us the grace of eternal salvation*” (emphasis added). Didn’t Christ do that already?

There are *hundreds* of prayers to Mary, such as, “In thy hands I place my eternal salvation and to thee do I entrust my soul....For, if thou protect me, dear Mother, I fear nothing; not from my sins, because thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of them...nor even from Jesus, my Judge himself, because by one prayer from thee he will be appeased....” What blasphemy! *Bookstore Journal*, tell the truth!

Prophecy expert Jack Van Impe repeatedly praises the Pope on TV and quotes “Our Lady of Fatima” favorably. The apparition at Fatima (surely not Mary!) said, “many souls go to Hell because they have no one to make sacrifices....” For Catholics, Christ’s sacrifice is not enough. Salvation is in the Church, its sacraments, one’s personal suffering and good deeds.

In his “infallible” papal bull, *Unum Sanctum*, Pope Boniface VIII declared: “There is one holy Catholic and apostolic church, outside of which there is *no salvation*...it is altogether *necessary for salvation* for every creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.” This was confirmed by Vatican Council I. Vatican II declared: “The Catholic Church ceaselessly and efficaciously seeks for the return of *all humanity and all its goods* under [Rome]...this holy Council teaches...that the church...is *necessary for salvation*.” (Emphasis ours) (*Vatican Council II*, Costello Publishing, Austin Flannery, O.P., General Editor, Vol I, pp 364-65)

For a few distressing minutes last night I watched Paul Crouch and Benny Hinn on TV denounce “heresy hunters” once again and insist that doctrine is unimportant. They declared that Roman Catholic doctrine doesn’t matter, for, after all, Catholics “love Jesus.” So did Gandhi; so do many Muslims, to say nothing of Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses. But what “Jesus”? The Bible warns of “another Jesus” and “another gospel” (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6).

Though Catholics believe Christ died for their sins, much more is required. As Catholic apologist Karl Keating says, “‘accepting Jesus’ has nothing to do with turning a spiritually dead soul into a soul alive with sanctifying grace....we are all redeemed—Christians, Jews, Moslems, animists...but our salvation is conditional...you must work to earn your salvation....”²

Paul cursed the Judaizers of his day for preaching “another gospel” (Gal 1:6-9). Yet, like Catholicism, they surely embraced the virgin birth, divinity of Christ, His death, burial and resurrection for our sins, His coming again. What was wrong? They taught that in addition to faith in Christ one must be circumcised and keep the Law. That addendum perverted the gospel into a lie. Catholicism has added far more!

Yet recently, on “The Bible Answer Man” radio program, Norm Geisler declared that the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by faith was biblical. Luther would be shocked! Christian Research Institute director Hank Hanegraaff (Walter Martin’s successor), who was interviewing Norm, agreed. Yet Walter Martin, in debating this very issue with Jesuit Mitchell Pacwa on “The John Ankerberg Show” in March

1987, declared that Catholicism “is a denial of justification by faith...”³

I regard Norm and Hank very highly as brothers in Christ who are contending for the truth. The above is mentioned only to show the wide acceptance Catholicism is gaining among evangelicals. After Keith Green’s death, his wife, Melody, withdrew the *Catholic Chronicles* Keith had written to expose Catholicism. CRI, whom I consider to be an ally in the battle against error, has even allowed Scott Hahn (another leading Catholic apologist) on “The Bible Answer Man” to promote Roman Catholicism without offering the slightest rebuttal! Why?

What a particular Catholic may believe is not the issue, but rather the official teaching of Roman Catholicism. That is found in *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (1545-64) and *Vatican II* (1962-65). Trent denied every Reformation doctrine, from *sola scriptura* to salvation by grace through faith alone. It pronounced 125 anathemas (eternal damnation) upon anyone believing what evangelicals believe and preach today. “No one can know with the certainty of faith...that he has obtained the grace of God [anathema to all who claim they know]” (*Trent*, 6th Ses., Chap. IX). “If anyone says that the sacraments of the new law are not *necessary for salvation*...but that without them...men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema” (*Trent*, 7th Ses., Canon 4).

Vatican II, far from making changes, reaffirmed Trent: “This sacred council...proposes again the decrees of...the Council of Trent” (Vol I, p 412). As for the “sacraments of the new law,” which Trent said were “necessary for salvation,” Vatican II declared, “For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine *sacrifice* of the Eucharist, the *work of our redemption is accomplished*” (Vol I, p 1).

Here are a few more quotes from Vatican II, which prove conclusively that Roman Catholicism is a counterfeit gospel: “Sins must be expiated...through the sorrows, miseries and trials of this life...otherwise...in the next life through fire and torments ...[because] our souls need to be purified ...in purgatory the souls of those who died in the charity of God and truly repentant but who had not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions are cleansed after death with

punishments designed to purge away their debt” (Vol I, pp 63-64).

The Bible declares: “When he [Christ] had by himself *purged* our sins (Heb 1:3)...by his own blood he entered in *once* into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption* for us (9:12)...without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin] (9:22 - suffering in purgatory won’t do it!)...now where remission of these is, there is *no more offering [sacrifice]* for sin (10:18)...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all* (10:10)...for by *one offering* he hath perfected *forever* them that are sanctified” (10:14). Catholicism denies this biblical gospel!

Although Rome teaches that one must be “purged” by suffering for one’s own sins, it offers “indulgences” to reduce or eliminate that suffering. “Indulgences” can thus discharge what Christ’s death could not. Vatican II has 20 complex rules concerning when and how an indulgence may be obtained. For example: “The faithful who use with devotion an object of piety (crucifix, cross, rosary, scapular or medal) after it has been duly blessed by any priest, can gain a partial indulgence. But if this object of piety is blessed by the Pope or any bishop, the faithful who use it with devotion can also gain a plenary [full] indulgence on the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul, provided they also make a profession of faith using any *approved formula*” (Vol I, pp 77-78). “The Church... commands that the usage of indulgences... should be kept...and it *condemns with anathema* those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them...[for] the task of *winning salvation*” (Vol I, pp 71, 74).

Indulgences are dispensed from a “treasury...[entrusted by Christ] to the blessed Peter...and his successors ...Christ’s Vicars on earth...[to] distribute to the faithful *for their salvation*” (Vol I, p 70). “This treasury includes the prayers and good works of the blessed Virgin Mary ...[plus] the prayers and good works of all saints [who] *attained their own salvation* and at the same time cooperated in *saving their brothers*” (Vol I, p. 66). “Those who believe in [Christ] have always ...carried their crosses to *make expiation* for their own sins and the sins of others” (Vol I, p 65). “From the most ancient times in the church good works were also offered to

God for the *salvation of sinners*...” (Vol I, p. 68).

Roman Catholicism has added far more to the gospel than the Judaizers, whom Paul cursed. He was concerned for the Galatians’ salvation. What about 900 million Roman Catholics? Paul told the Ephesian elders, “by the space of three years I ceased not to *warn* every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). Can we be less concerned for souls and truth!

In mid-January I had two debates in Indiana with leading Catholic apologists. The first was with Keith Fournier, lawyer, director of Pat Robertson’s American Center for Law and Justice, and author of *Evangelical Catholics* (Thomas Nelson), foreword by Chuck Colson. The title of that debate was “Roman Catholicism: Is It Evangelical?” Three days later I debated Gerry Matatics, a brilliant former evangelical pastor who converted to Rome in 1986 and who has since become a leading apologist for Catholicism. The title of that debate was “Roman Catholicism: Is It ‘Another Gospel’?” We are offering audio cassettes of these debates. With all my heart I want to warn as Paul warned and preach as he preached. Will you join me in earnestly contending for “the faith once for all delivered to the saints”? Let us heed the Berean call to search the Scriptures daily and to evaluate everything we read and hear by that standard! Let us love others enough to tell them the truth without compromise! **TBC**

Endnotes

- 1 *The Bulletin* (Bend, OR, 1/31/92), A-6
- 2 Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* (Ignatius Press, 1988), 167, 169.
- 3 *Christian Research Journal* (Winter/Spring 1987), 27.

The Truth Will Set You Free

Dave Hunt

“Spiritual Warfare,” one of the hottest topics at the 1989 Manila Conference (Lausanne II) attended by 4,000 evangelical leaders, is the new rallying cry in the church today. We are being told that taking the offensive against Satan (one of seven principles which Joy Dawson says God revealed to her) and “binding” the various “evil spirits” that dominate this earth is the secret to world evangelization and personal victory and prosperity. Even the demon posing as “Our Lady of Medjugorje” exhorts, “Christians have forgotten that they can stop war and even natural calamities by prayer and fasting.” What an awesome power we wield! How appealing it is!

Yes, Paul declared that we wrestle “against principalities [*archons* in Greek], against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12). But what did Paul mean? He urged us to “stand against the wiles of [not attack] the devil” and promised that with the “shield of faith” we could quench Satan’s fiery darts [not shoot darts at him]. Paul said nothing about “binding” Satan or demons. Much less did he suggest that once the “territorial spirit” controlling a city was “bound,” it could be “taken for God” and its inhabitants all converted.

Yet a *Charisma* magazine cover pictures Youth With A Mission’s John Dawson (Joy’s son) declaring, “Battles against evil spiritual forces controlling our cities can be waged and won.” Dawson’s book, *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds*, is, according to Fuller Theological Seminary professor C. Peter Wagner, “the most important book on the subject ever written.” In the foreword, pastor Jack Hayford writes, “This is a book of Holy Spirit insight ... [into] the toughest problems we face on this planet today....” Sadly, the insight is not biblical. Dawson’s book and the *Charisma* article give some impressive *experiences*, which

then become the basis for interpreting Scripture to mean what it clearly doesn’t.

The major verse to justify the “territorial spirit” theory is Daniel 10:13. There it says that “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” withstood the angel Gabriel, preventing him for 21 days from reaching Daniel. However, Daniel was not praying for the conversion of Persia, but for prophetic insight concerning the last days. That insight (being brought by Gabriel) was what this “prince” opposed. Neither Daniel nor Gabriel “bound” this demon (if that’s what this prince was); nor is there any hint that to do so would have resulted in some spiritual breakthrough for Persia. Yet this delusion is rampant today—and leading many astray.

Consider, for example, a *Charisma* feature promoting a Larry Lea “explosive three-day ‘Prayer Breakthrough’ to be held in the Anaheim Convention Center.” It promised that

If you continue in my word....

John 8:31

attendees would “take captive demonic strongholds over L.A. and the nation...and make her one nation under God once more.” Similarly inspired, 1,300 pastors have been meeting in prayer to wage “spiritual warfare” for the “deliverance” of Los Angeles. Similar “prayer warfare” is being conducted in many cities. Such zeal for souls is admirable, but any Berean would know that the method and goal are unbiblical.

A full-page ad in *Charisma* pictured Larry Lea, the “Apostle of Prayer,” in combat fatigues calling for 300,000 “prayer warriors” to join him in taking America for God. This false hope contradicts the Bible and undermines the gospel. Salvation requires an individual response by sinners, not mass denunciation of demons by Christians. Three years ago Lea announced, “[Through]

militant warfare in the spirit realm...demonic strongholds keeping the greater Los Angeles area and our country in bondage will be...pulled down.” Instead, America continues its accelerating slide into moral and spiritual chaos as foretold for the last days.

The Miami Arena rang with the songs, prayers, and victory shouts of 10,000 enthusiastic Christians. They’d been promised a spiritual breakthrough by Larry Lea, who conducts “Prayer Breakthroughs” across the country. The crusade was backed by 430 well-meaning local pastors. Identifying specific spirits—of violence, drugs, witchcraft, greed etc.—that ruled Miami, Lea declared, “these spirits will not dominate this area.” Lea said God had shown him “The strongman of greed” holding back the wealth of the wicked that belonged to Christians. “If we bind the strongman of greed, the wealth of the nations will be given to the church!” Anticipating financial reward, the excited audience joined Lea in wielding an “imaginary sword” and hacking this demon to pieces.

In the ensuing two and one-half years there has been neither a reduction in violence, drugs, etc. in the Miami area, nor a transfer of the “wealth of the wicked” to Christians. Nor has there been any dramatic drop in homosexuality in San Francisco since Lea led Christians there to bind that demon. Nor have any cities anywhere been “taken for God,” in spite of the many seminars, such as those held at Jack Hayford’s Church on the Way in Southern California, teaching a “takeover” that Scripture doesn’t promise.

Does it bother none of the thousands of evangelical pastors involved that such “spiritual warfare” was never waged by Paul? Why did this greatest evangelist of all time, who “turned the world upside down,” never get the believers together to bind the evil spirits dominating Corinth, Ephesus, etc?

Think of what it could have meant to the church for the last 1,900 years if Paul had only realized that a “spirit of greed” was keeping the wealth of the wicked

from needy Christians and had given instruction in his epistles on “binding” this demon! But he didn’t—and a Berean, searching the Scriptures, would conclude that this kind of “spiritual warfare” wastes valuable time and energy, no matter how well intentioned.

C. Peter Wagner and fellow Fuller Seminary professor Charles Kraft advocate “authoritative prayer.” Instead of asking, “According to thy will,” this kind of prayer *commands* God to do certain things. Satan and his minions are also *commanded*—to relinquish their hold upon a city, church, person or situation. Satan laughs. He’s been “rebuked” and “bound” thousands of times, yet he carries on. Satan will not be bound until Christ’s millennial reign (Rv 20:1-9).

To pretend to bind Satan or demons before that time is folly. Satan is defeated in our lives through our commitment to Christ, our love for God and obedience to His Word. Yes, demons are to be cast out of non-Christians when the situation requires it—but neither Christ nor His apostles went on the offensive looking for demons to cast out. (See Acts 16:16-18, for example.) What about the “strongholds” that we are to pull down through spiritual warfare? These are not demon fortresses, but rebellious imaginations that exalt self above God and which are overcome by “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:3-5).

Scripture declares, “*resist* the devil, and he will flee from you.” How? Through drawing close to and obeying God (Jas 4:7-8). Yes, Satan “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,” but we *resist* him by being humble and “stedfast in the faith” (1 Pt 5:8-9). Job overcame Satan by submitting to God’s will: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Jb 13:15). We are to overcome Satan “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of [our] testimony [i.e., faithfulness to Christ]” and being willing to die for Him (Rv 12:11). Jude 9 tells us that Michael, the mightiest of angels, dares not rebuke Satan, but says “the Lord rebuke thee.” We, too, in standing against Satan, take refuge in

God’s strength, wisdom and love.

Consider Benny Hinn’s exhortation: “If you want a healing tonight for your finances you get to that phone now and say I want to make a pledge and I want Benny Hinn to pray that God will break the ‘devil of poverty’ over my life...get to the phones now...the quicker you do it the quicker your miracle comes....In the mighty name of Jesus we come against the ‘devil of poverty’ in your life...!” A lesser-known TV evangelist promises, “the power of the ‘spirit of debt’ will be broken in your life...a supernatural power to get wealth will be loosed into your hands.” Neither diligence, prudence, a new job nor any other practical solution is needed. One needs simply to rebuke and bind the right demon and money will flow into one’s pockets. Sadly, only the TV preachers get richer, while

Put on the whole armour of God...

Ephesians 6

their followers are spiritually impoverished.

A recent letter laments, “Dave, I have backslidden....I told God to put up or shut up. If He was really who these men said He was, then why hasn’t He blessed me with an overabundance in my bank accounts?...I railed and cursed God....My magical words and fetishes from ministries [didn’t work]. Then it dawned on me. I had been raped! Spiritually raped by name-it-and-claim-it in Jesus’ name. Now, I pray for discernment....”

How devastating it is to the faith of those in a church where week after week the pastor and elders, in the name of Jesus, *command* healings that don’t occur! I watched Richard Roberts and his wife last week *command* the Word of God to go out and heal all illness and financial lack in their audience. No one seriously thought it would happen, nor did it. Such empty bravado pleases Satan and makes a mockery of God’s Word! Yes, God still heals in answer to prayer, as He wills, but what audacity to command Him to do so!

It is equally harmful to attempt to overcome sin with unbiblical “spiritual warfare” techniques. Of course, it’s easier on the flesh, and the “in” thing, to blame a demon rather than oneself. What the Bible calls the “works of the flesh” are being blamed on demons. The “demon of lust” or the “demon of sex” or the “demon of pride” has been cast out literally thousands of times from thousands of Christians. This grievous error denies Christ’s indwelling, relieves the Christian of his own responsibility—and robs him of God’s remedy! Yes, impressive experiences seem to support the belief that Christians can be demonized and that victory over sin requires exorcism—but Scripture denies it.

To those who “believed on him,” Jesus said, “If ye continue in *my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the *truth*, and the *truth shall make you free*” (Jn 8:31-32). Instead, they resisted the truth and tried to stone Him! They “believed” that Jesus was the Messiah—but they had an unbiblical concept of a Messiah who would conquer the Romans and let them live in peace and prosperity. They would not accept Him as their deliverer from the real enemy—self and sin within. Exorcising demons from Christians offers a false solution and leaves self untouched! A. W. Pink wrote:

By nature our hearts are so filled with self-love and self-pity that there is no room for Christ. Many are willing to receive Him for His benefits who have no love for His person and no resolution to bow to His Lordship....

God’s truth alone sets free. What we believe determines how we live. God’s Word gives light and life. Last month we noted how Roman Catholicism adds to the gospel and thus destroys it. Its salvation comes through rituals and sacraments. Modern “spiritual warfare” and “deliverance” ministries (like “Christian psychology”) are also sacramental rituals that add to the gospel, undermine God’s Word and rob us of His real remedy. Spurgeon declared,

Truly forgiven sinners dread the appearance of evil as burnt children dread

the fire. Superficial repentance always leads to careless living.

Pray earnestly for a broken heart.

John Wimber's "Power Evangelism" requires "signs and wonders" for sinners to believe the gospel. Yet Romans 1:16 assures us that "the *gospel* [itself] is the power of God unto salvation to every one that *believeth* [it]." Paul declared, "It pleased God *by the foolishness of preaching* to save them that *believe*" (1 Cor 1:21). Ah, but the gospel has lost its power to convert modern man and needs help not only from "signs and wonders," but demons must be bound as well. John Dawson writes, "We need to overcome the enemy [Satan] before we employ other methods of ministry. . . ."

One of the most tragic examples of how this teaching corrupts the gospel is exemplified in Jack Deere, for 12 years on the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary and now the leading theologian in Wimber's Vineyard movement. He was interviewed by Graham Banister in Sydney, Australia, at a Spiritual Warfare Conference taught by Wimber and his team to 5,500 church leaders who each paid \$150 to attend. Banister asked Deere how he would define the gospel, and was told, "I'm not sure." Banister goes on to relate,

Somewhat stunned, I said, "I find that quite surprising—that you're not sure what the gospel is." He replied, "I used to be just like you...thinking the gospel was simply justification by faith." I responded, "Are you saying it's more than that?...What would you add to it?"

"Deliverance," he said, "...things like demons and healing."

I said, "You would add as an essential part of the gospel...the exorcising of demons and healing?" He nodded. I continued, "...like what John Wimber was saying last night...?"

"Yes," he said.

"But you're not sure exactly what should be included?" I asked.

"No," he said, "not yet."

"Would it be fair to say" I asked, "that you're in a state of flux since you joined the Wimber thing?"

He responded, "We're always in a state of flux..."

"But on the gospel message?" I asked.

"...you couldn't go back into that pavilion and tell those people the gospel?"

He replied, "No—not yet."

I responded, "When do you think you could do it?"

And he said, "Maybe five years, maybe ten...."

I remained stunned that one of the leading minds, if not the leading theological mind in the Signs and Wonders Movement, did not know what the gospel was!

Yet the gospel is the key to new life and victory! Believing the gospel, that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead (1 Cor 15:1-4), sets us free from all that once bound us. That problems in a Christian's life are due to inherited influence from ancestors who were involved in the occult or otherwise bound by Satan is not biblical. When we receive Christ we are made new creatures in Him, and all the sins of the past are forgiven.

Yes, we still face the three enemies the Bible warns us about: the world, the flesh and the devil. Worldly-mindedness and fleshly lusts are mentioned far more often than the devil or demons. "Deliverance ministries" and "spiritual warfare" put far too much emphasis upon Satan and substitute experience for truth.

We are to "stand" (in Christ's victory) and to resist," not attack, rebuke or bind Satan. We have no fear of him. Greater is He (the Lord) who is in us than he (Satan) who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4). Because we are "crucified with Christ," (and only because of that) Satan and his demons have no power over us. Christ has become our life. Stop struggling to live the Christian life, and trust Him to live His life through you in obedience to His Word!

Christ neither "rebuked" nor "bound" Satan when tempted by him. He *resisted* him with the sword of the Spirit—"it is written." We must do the same.

The Word of God doesn't become effective in our lives by merely speaking it forth as a "positive confession." It must be understood, believed and obeyed in the power of the Spirit. It is the truth ("Thy Word is truth") that sets us free and keeps us free from the world, the

flesh and the devil. And whom the Son sets free is "free indeed" (Jn 8:36)! TBC

We offer an excellent book on spiritual warfare: Overrun by Demons, by Ice and Dean.

Quotable

Keep about your work [that God has given you]. Do not flinch because the lion roars; do not stop to stone the devil's dogs; do not fool away your time chasing the devil's rabbits. Do your work. Let liars lie, let corporations resolve, let the devil do his worst; but see to it that nothing hinders you from fulfilling the work that God has given you.

He has not commanded you to get rich. He has never bidden you defend your character. He has not set you at work to contradict falsehood [about yourself] which Satan and his servants may start to peddle. If you do those things, you will do nothing else; you will be at work for yourself and not for the Lord.

Keep at your work. Let your aim be as steady as a star. You may be assaulted, wronged, insulted, slandered, wounded and rejected; you may be abused by foes, forsaken by friends, and despised and rejected of men. But see to it with steadfast determination, with unfaltering zeal, that you pursue the great purpose of your life and object of your being until at last you can say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Author unknown

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The Battle for Truth

Dave Hunt

Last month we noted that it is not denouncing the devil but embracing TRUTH that sets one free from sin, self and Satan. Nor is truth a magic formula to pronounce or a “positive confession” to make, but a revelation from God to believe and obey. “The just shall live by faith” (Heb 10:38) in God and His Word. And faith is not a power of the mind, a magic “force,” as the positive-confession and positive/possibility-thinking heresies claim, but a conviction understood, firmly held and acted upon. What and in Whom one believes determines one’s life here and for all eternity.

There is a battle raging for man’s soul and for control of the universe. It is a very real war between the “God of truth” (Dt 32:4; Ps 31:5; Is 65:16) and Satan, “the father of [lies,]” in whom there “is no truth” (Jn 8:44). One either believes God’s truth or Satan’s lie. There is no neutral ground. The cosmic battle of the ages is the battle for truth. But what is truth?

An editorial entitled “Truth” in the Los Angeles Times noted that “in a contemporary eight-volume encyclopedia of philosophy, ‘Truth’ has only three lines—theories on how to talk about it.” Yet in the King James Bible the word “truth” occurs 235 times in 222 verses. Jesus, who said of Himself, “I am...the truth” (Jn 14:6), is called “the Word of God” (Rv 19:13)—and He declared, “Thy word is truth” (Jn 17:17). It is to God’s Word, then, that we must turn to learn of truth.

“Truth” has two meanings in Scripture: 1) temporal facts man may observe about himself and the physical universe, including truthfull reportage of the facts; and 2) eternal and spiritual reality pertaining to God and the relationship all else bears to Him. Decrying the lack of truthfulness, the *Times* editorial was all about #1. It knew nothing of #2. The Bible, however, when it speaks of *the truth*, means the latter.

Isaiah wrote 2,700 years ago, “None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies... judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street” (Is 59:4,14). This description

of Israel as it ripened for God’s judgment fits today’s world. In so many ways our society has opted for lies.

The state promotes many lies, from evolution to “safe sex”; it lies about AIDS, so that a highly contagious, deadly and incurable disease is protected as a “minority right.” Lenders lie about finance charges and salesmen about their product; TV commercials appeal to lust and ambition rather than to truth. And is there a politician who always tells the truth?

Success/motivation/self-improvement and “personal empowerment” seminars and group therapies teach that one creates reality with the mind. Eve’s descendants still love the Serpent’s lie. It’s the heart of Hinduism and of such pseudo-Christian cults as Christian Science, Unity and Religious Science. Norman Vincent Peale and his protégé, Robert Schuller, have even brought into the evangelical church the delusion that saying something makes it so. Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Frederick Price, et al. teach the same lie, but conceal it with biblical language. Bereans are not deceived.

God designed us to personally know and love Him and His truth. Instead, many people allow a guru, the latest Mormon prophet, the Watchtower Society, the pope, a “professional psychologist” or some other deceiver to take the place of God. They have lost the battle for truth!

“Christian psychology” has brought Satan’s lies into the church. Truth is exchanged for feeling good about oneself. Even among evangelicals, sin, repentance and judgment are avoided as “negative.” A false Christ is preached, one who loves us because we’re valuable and who affirms our self-worth. Flattery is preferred to honesty, doctrine and correction are despised, and parents are told to praise their children always, even when they need reproof, in order to “boost their self-esteem.”

The major rationale for Christians turning to psychology is the specious saying, “All truth is God’s truth.” This delusion confuses categories #1 (temporal facts) and #2 (God’s eternal truth). That they are not the same should be clear. Jesus said, “*the truth* will set you free.” Obviously, telling the truth could, instead, put someone behind bars. Moreover, scientific facts have nothing to do with effecting freedom from sin, self and Satan.

Clearly, by *the truth* that sets free Jesus

didn’t mean facts, scientific or otherwise. Therefore, even if it were a science, (which it is not), psychology could not be part of “God’s truth.” Freud, an anti-Christian, knew nothing of the truth to which Christ referred when he told Pilate, “Everyone who is of *the truth* heareth my voice.” That non-Christians are not “of the truth” is clear from His words: “My sheep hear my voice” (Jn 10:27).

“His truth shall be thy shield and buckler” (Ps 91:4) surely doesn’t refer to scientific knowledge. “Having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph 6:14) can hardly mean mere facts. When God said, “if ye can find a man [in Jerusalem]...that seeketh *the truth*...I will pardon it” (Jer 5:1), He didn’t mean a research scientist, much less a psychologist! Non-Christians *know nothing of God’s truth*, for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:14). “God’s truth” is only revealed by His Spirit to His own.

“All truth is God’s truth” is a major lie of Satan designed to justify the godless theories that “Christian psychology” is based upon. Jesus said: “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive” (Jn 14:17); and “when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth” (Jn 16:13). If “the Spirit of truth” guides into *all* truth, and the world *cannot* receive Him, then Freud, Jung, et al. knew *nothing* of God’s truth!

What is “God’s truth”? Paul referred to “the gospel of your salvation” as “the word of truth” (Eph 1:13). He wrote of “the truth of the gospel” repeatedly (Col 1:5; Gal 2:5, 14). Christ, who “came...to give his life...a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45, 1 Tm 2:6), testified, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto *the truth*” (Jn 18:37). Salvation comes through believing *the truth*—the message of the Cross.

Paul declared, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tm 1:15) from the penalty God’s justice demands (Ps 9:8; 96:13; Ez 18:4, etc.). Christ said that He had come “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10) and “to call...sinners to repentance” (Mt 9:13). Christ saves only those who, believing in Him, admit to and repent of being lost, guilty sinners, unable to please God or to save themselves. Here is the truth that sets free!

Didn’t Jesus live the perfect life for us to follow? Yes, but we’re unable to live up to His example. His sinless life

“condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3) and is the standard by which mankind will be judged. His perfection both damns the sinner and qualifies Him to be our Savior, for only One perfectly holy could die for the sins of others. God’s truth includes man’s evil as well as God’s holiness and His righteous provision for sinners.

God’s love gave His Son to die; God’s justice laid upon Him our sins and demanded the full penalty. And man’s evil, self-centered, rebellious heart hated, rejected, and crucified Him. The cross fully demonstrated both the limitless love and justice of God—and the horrifying evil that lurks in the depths of the human heart. Amazingly, the very nails driven into His hands and feet and the spear that pierced His side drew forth the blood that saves!

The salvation Christ purchased with His blood must be received directly from Him (“come unto me”) as a free gift of God’s grace (Rom 3:24), “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:9). Acceptance of this gracious gift is by faith: “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:21). Believe what? The gospel. It is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16) that “Christ died for our sins... was buried, and...rose again” (1 Cor 15:1-4).

Sin’s penalty could not be set aside. God’s love cannot compromise His justice. Christ had to suffer the full punishment we deserved, so that God “might be the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). This “gospel of God” has been declared “by his prophets in the holy scriptures” (Rom 1:1-2). It must either be accepted on God’s terms or rejected. It cannot be changed.

Here we confront a solemn question. How much distortion does it take to turn God’s truth into a lie, to corrupt the gospel so that those who believe it are not saved, but damned? No more important question could be asked. A Berean can accept nothing less than the biblical answer: the spiritual warfare that rages for the eternal destiny of souls is a battle for uncompromised truth!

To undermine the “truth of the gospel,” Satan has invented clever counterfeit gospels that promise life but damn the soul. Those who preach these lies, as we noted in April, are cursed by Paul—and rightly so. These false gospels are like rat poison—very tasty and 98.6 percent

nutritious, but containing just enough hidden poison to kill. Bereans must be prepared to contrast the lie with God’s truth and to warn the unwary earnestly and clearly.

“Christian psychology” has brought a false gospel into the church. It replaces God’s truth of sin and the Cross with humanistic diagnoses (addictions, dysfunctional families, compulsions, co-dependencies, traumas buried in the unconscious, etc.) and pernicious “remedies” (self-esteem, self-assertion, positive self-talk, visualization, and a host of therapies) unknown to heroes of the faith (Heb 11) who triumphed without them. Roman Catholicism, too, is a false gospel. It denies Christ’s finished work and offers salvation through baptism, indulgences and sacraments administered by the Church through her popes, cardinals, bishops, priests and the intercession of Mary.

An equally insidious false gospel is taught by Hagin, Copeland and other TBN-promoted “positive confession” leaders. In spite of past exposés by ourselves, CRI and others, Copeland defended once again this heresy in his September 1991 *Believer’s Voice of Victory*, declaring, “it must be preached because it’s...the Truth and it sets people free.” To support this lie he insisted,

The day that Jesus was crucified, God’s life, that eternal energy...moved out of Him and...He allowed the devil to drag Him into the depths of hell as if He were the most wicked sinner who ever lived...[and] to come under Satan’s control...[or] His body would have never died....

For three days...every demon in hell came down on Him to annihilate Him.... tortured Him beyond anything that has ever been conceived....

In a thunder of spiritual force, the voice of God spoke to the death-whipped, broken, punished spirit of Jesus....God’s Word...charged the spirit of Jesus with resurrection power! Suddenly His twisted, death-wracked spirit began to fill out and come back to life....He was literally being reborn before the devil’s very eyes....

Before His body even had time to decay...Jesus Christ dragged Satan up and down the halls of hell....The day I realized that a born-again man had defeated Satan, hell, and death, I got so excited...!

He’d [Satan] murdered Jesus to annihilate Him....

The many blasphemous lies are obvious to any Berean. That God’s life is

“energy” is a New Age idea. Nor did death to Christ’s body come because He was “under Satan’s control.” It is outright heresy to say that Satan “murdered Jesus.” Christ “laid it [His life] down to take it again” (Jn 10:17). And He gave up His life on the cross, not in hell. Nor could “time” decay His sinless body. God would not allow it “to see corruption” (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:31).

Nor did “the devil drag Him into the depths of hell...[and] every demon in hell came down on Him to annihilate Him....” Satan doesn’t run hell. He hasn’t even been there yet, nor have his demons—nor will they torture lost souls in hell, but will themselves be tortured. The Bible says that God “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is 53:6) and “It pleased *the LORD* [not Satan] to bruise him [Christ]; he [God] hath put him to grief [and made] his soul an offering for sin” (v 10).

As He laid down His life, Christ cried in triumph, “It is finished!” He had paid in full the penalty God’s justice demanded for sin—paid not to Satan, but to God. Christ said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). Instead, the false teachers say He ended up in the hands of Satan, the debt not paid and much yet to be suffered for sin. Blasphemy!

The Bible teaches that our redemption comes “through His blood” (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14, 20). Yet Hagin, Copeland, et al. insist that our redemption comes through Christ being tortured by Satan for three days and nights in hell. Then if Satan didn’t torture Christ enough we’re not saved. And if he did, do we thank him for the vital role he played in our salvation? What perversion! This is surely not the gospel that saves!

What must our response be to the false gospels that abound and are deceiving multitudes? It is not enough to grieve or even to pray. Ask God to show you what *action* to take to oppose heresy and to rescue the perishing! Be a Berean. Search the Scriptures. Know the truth for yourself. Be convinced of it and live it. Then “[speak] the truth in love” (Eph 4:15).

Love corrects. Surely the Bereans would have lovingly told Paul if their search of the Scriptures had uncovered that his teaching was false. Christ said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rv 3:19). If we truly love others, we’ll do all we can to rescue them from error. As John said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk *in truth*” (3 Jn 1:4).

TBC

Quotable

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life have all been “Christianized” (not by the liberal, mind you, but by the evangelicals) and are now being offered along with Christ to everyone who will “believe.”...the very values Christ scorned are now being used to attract people to the gospel.

A. W. Tozer

Immediately after the invention of printing, when every press in Europe was engaged printing the Bible, there was one solitary exception, the Pope’s press at Subiaco, near Rome. The first book ever printed in Italy was printed there in 1465, and from that time it poured forth a perfect stream of literature of all kinds; but never a book, never a chapter, never a verse of Scripture.

Alexander Robertson

The Roman Catholic Church in Italy,
p 212

Q&A

Question: Is it not true that the teaching in the gospels is for Israel and the millennium and that the teaching for the church is found in the epistles as the enclosed booklets teach?

Answer: Was it not in the Gospels that Jesus said He would build His church? He trained and commissioned His disciples to do just that during His earthly ministry related in the Gospels.

In Matthew 28 Christ tells the twelve to make disciples. Shouldn’t we? In Mark 16 they are told to “preach the gospel.” Don’t we preach the gospel? Is it different? No! Where does our authority to preach the gospel and to make disciples come from if not from Christ’s command to the twelve? They were to teach the disciples they made to observe *all* that Christ had commanded them, which would include making disciples...down to us today.

If Paul was the one who brought teaching to the church and the Gospels are only for Israel, how do we deal with the fact that the church was formed before Paul came along! That wasn’t Israel being formed or restored on the Day of Pentecost! Peter and the other disciples preached the gospel before Paul was converted. It was clearly the same gospel by which Paul was converted and which he later preached.

How can one say that Paul’s epistles

are for the church but that Acts was a “transitional” period between Israel and the church, when Paul wrote his epistles during the period of the Book of Acts?! So, we cannot ignore the Gospels and teachings of our Lord as though they apply to some past and future age but not to the church or Christians right now.

Question: If you desire the same salvation and grace that Paul preached about, it is necessary that you line up with William Branham’s teachings. There are 10,000 churches following Branham today! Please respond.

Answer: The Bible says that there “is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” Nowhere does it say that there must also be on earth a mediator between Christ and man, or someone who speaks for Christ. I am astonished that you would claim that Paul was the man who spoke for Christ in his day (what about the other apostles, the many evangelists, prophets, teachers, etc. in Paul’s day?) and that William Branham is the only one who speaks for Christ in our day! There is no such person.

You ask me to refute the teaching that I must “line up with William Branham’s teachings” or be lost. I ask you to show me in the Bible where it says that! We call our ministry The Berean Call, after the Bereans who searched *the Scriptures* to check up on Paul’s teachings. We must in like manner test William Branham’s teachings. I have done so, and declare him to be a false prophet! I don’t want to offend you or lose your friendship, but I must speak what I believe to be the truth, as you know I must.

Branham denied the Trinity. He taught the “serpent seed” doctrine, that Eve’s sin was having sex with the Serpent—and that there is a remnant in the world today of people who are literally the seed of Satan and who can never be saved. He takes Jesus’ words, “You are of your father the devil,” to mean physically begotten of Satan through the Serpent in the Garden. Of course, if any of Noah’s sons were of the serpent seed, then all must have been since they had the same father and mother—and thus all mankind (since we all come from Noah) must be of the serpent seed and beyond redemption. Obviously false, but he taught it by “revelation knowledge.”

Branham denied that hell was eternal; declared that for a woman to cut her hair was grounds for divorce; and that unborn children are not alive until they take their first breath; that while Jesus lived on earth

He was only the Son of man, not the Son of God, and that He became the Son of God only after His ascension to heaven; and that he (Branham) was the “angel” of Revelation 3:14 and 10:7, the prophet of the Laodicean age, and that the true evidence of being of God was following William Branham. He had other heresies, but these should suffice.

Question: A high percentage of Southern Baptist laymen and pastors belong to the Masonic Lodge. This could be a major issue at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention June 9-11. Is there a conflict between Masonry and Christianity?

Answer: Masonry is an anti-Christian religious cult that “does not specify any God of any creed [but] requires merely that you believe in some deity, give him what name you will...any god will do...” It claims to be the religion “around whose altars the Christian, the Hebrew, the Moslem, the Hindu, the followers of Confucius and Zoroaster, can assemble as brethren and unite in prayer...” (See *Global Peace*, p 159).

Masonry’s “God,” symbolized by the All-Seeing Eye, is called “The Great Architect of the Universe” (G.A.O.T.U.) and its “Heaven” is called “the Celestial Lodge above.” Its rituals and initiations into the ascending degrees are highly religious. Masonry teaches salvation by good works and secret rituals and rejects the finished work of Christ upon the cross as the only way to God.

In the initiation into the very first degree, the lambskin is presented as representing “that purity of life and conduct which is necessary to obtain admittance into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides.” In the 19th degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry the initiate is told that attachment to Masonry’s “statutes and rules of the order” will make him “deserving of entering the celestial Jerusalem [heaven].” In the 28th he is told that “the true Mason [is one] who raises himself by degrees till he reaches heaven” and that one of his duties is “To divest [him]self of original sin...”

Masonry, as its own documents reveal, comes from pagan religions and occultism and involves the Mason in oaths and rituals that are a blasphemy against the God of the Bible and are opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For documentation I highly recommend *Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge* and *The Facts on the Masonic Lodge* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon.

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The God of Prophecy

Dave Hunt

What does one say to a professed atheist when he demands proof that God exists? One could, of course, challenge him to prove that God doesn't exist—and to prove the preposterous scenario that the universe and even the human brain just happened by chance. In fact, since God is infinite, finite beings could never arrive at an indisputable proof either for or against His existence. Furthermore, "proofs" are really beside the point.

It is impossible to "prove" philosophically one's own existence—but who doubts it? Then why is a philosophical "proof" of God's existence demanded? Who needs "proof" that one's husband or wife or parent or child exists? If God really is, then He should be able to make Himself known. And if He can't do that, then whether He exists or not would be irrelevant to practical concerns.

Of course, the problem may not be that God isn't making Himself known, but that mankind fails to recognize Him when He does so. Even the natural world suggests such a probability. For example, although the entire universe is composed of energy, mankind was for thousands of years unaware of its existence—not because energy didn't manifest itself and its power, but in spite of that fact.

Could it not be the same way with the God who created energy? Surely He would be far more mysterious than anything He made—and thus even more difficult to comprehend. God is not an impersonal force like energy. He must be a personal Being with emotion, intellect and will, or He could not have created us.

The intricately organized universe God made adequately reveals His infinite intelligence and power. But it is something else for God to manifest His love and His will for mankind. To do so, He would have to make Himself known personally in such a way that a finite man would realize beyond a shadow of doubt that the infinite God was revealing Himself. How could He do so?

Suppose God thundered from the

sky with an audible voice. How could one be certain that it was God who had spoken? Suppose He made some supernatural display of power. How could it be known that God had done it and that it was not a natural phenomenon? If He came as a man, who would believe that He was God? Yet how could He reveal Himself to mankind without becoming one of us? Suppose God manifested Himself in some transcendent form. How could anyone know that it was God and not some highly evolved extraterrestrial visiting earth? How, indeed! Miracles would not suffice, for skeptics could argue that highly advanced technology seems miraculous

[B]efore me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

Isaiah 43:10-11

to those who don't know how it works.

Of course, each religion claims to offer the revelations of the true god or gods. Yet even in their basic concepts of deity there are sharp contradictions, which can't all be right. Hinduism, for example, embraces multitudes of gods and worships idols that supposedly represent them, since everything is god. By contrast, Islam denounces idol worship and pantheism/polytheism and it claims that its *Allah* is the only true god. Buddhism, on the other hand, needs no god.

Allah was, in fact, the name of the chief god in the *Kaabah*, the pagan temple that Muhammad "purged" by destroying the more than 300 idols it contained. Muhammad likely kept the name of this ancient, pagan moon god because it would help to convert idolaters to his new religion if they could be offered something familiar. Yet today's Muslims see no contradiction in this strategy.

The God of the Bible states unequivocally, "[B]efore me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I,

even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour" (Is 43:10-11). Nor does He simply ignore the gods of other religions. He denounces them all, including Allah, as imposters who actually represent Satan or his demons: "they sacrificed unto devils, not to God" (Dt 32:17); "the things which the Gentiles [non-Jews] sacrifice [to their gods], they sacrifice to devils" (1 Cor 10:20).

It is not kindness, but cynicism and a denial of the meaning of language, to suggest that all religions are the same. It is an affront to Muslims to suggest that Allah is the equivalent of the many gods in Hinduism; or to tell a Christian that his God, who gave His Son to die for our sins, is the same as Allah, of whom it is specifically stated that he has no son. In fact, Christianity stands on one side of a theological chasm, with all other religions on the other side—a chasm that renders any ecumenical union impossible without destroying Christianity itself.

One cannot deny, for example, the irreconcilable conflict between the belief that Christ died for our sins and was resurrected (which is the very heart of Christianity), and the Muslim claim that someone else died in Christ's place. To sweep such differences under an ecumenical rug (as Roman Catholicism is attempting to do) is not kindness but madness. Nor is it possible to reconcile the claim of all non-Christian religions that sin is countered by good works with the Bible's declaration that works can't save, but that only Christ, because He was sinless, could pay the penalty for sin by dying in our place. And of course Christ's claim, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father except by me" (Jn 14:6), is the strongest possible rejection of all other religions as counterfeits.

Jesus Christ stands absolutely alone, without rival, in His perfect, sinless life, His death for our sins, His resurrection. The promise of His second coming is also unique to Christianity and separates it from all of the world's religions by a chasm that cannot be bridged by any ecumenical sleight-of-hand. Muhammad never promised to return, nor did Buddha. Only Christ dared to make this promise. Nor would such a claim by anyone except

Christ be given any credence, for the decayed remains of all of the others occupy graves. It is Christ alone who left behind an empty tomb. That undeniable fact is reason enough to accept His claim to Deity and to take seriously His assertion that He would return to this earth in power and glory to execute judgment upon His enemies.

That the Bible, which provides the historical account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is unique for this and many other reasons becomes obvious from even a superficial comparison with all other sacred scriptures. The Hindu scriptures, for example, are obviously mythological. There is no historical evidence that the characters ever existed or that the fantastic tales refer to real events that actually occurred.

The same is true of much that is recorded in other sacred writings, including the Book of Mormon. Not one pin or coin or tiniest shred of evidence of any kind has ever been found to verify that the peoples, much less the events, to which the Book of Mormon refers were real. Not a mountain, river or any piece of topography or geography described in the Book of Mormon has ever been located. In contrast, the world's museums contain vast stores of evidence of all kinds confirming the accuracy of the Bible.

The Bible does not waste its time, as philosophers so foolishly have for centuries, in any attempt to provide some philosophical "proof" for the existence of God. The God to which the Bible bears testimony is capable of communicating with mankind and promises to reveal Himself to all who sincerely desire and seek to know Him. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13), says the Old Testament; and the New echoes the same promise: "He [God] is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6).

In communicating Himself and His will, God provides both subjective and objective evidence. The Bible is full of accounts of God having given tangible "signs" to those who wanted to know Him and His will. To "put out a fleece" is

a common expression that is understood worldwide. It comes from Gideon's use of a sheep's fleece as a sign: asking God for dew on the fleece and not on the ground one morning, then dew on the ground but not on the fleece the next (Jgs 6:36-40).

God has, in fact, given a "sign" to the entire world for all generations. That sign is the land and people of Israel. God

[F]or I am God, and there is none else...Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand...

Isaiah 46:9-10

refers to "Israel my glory" (Is 46:13) and says of her, "in whom I will be glorified" (Is 49:3). How would this come about? By God's specific dealings with Israel before a watching world, after having prophesied precisely what would happen (2 Chr 7:20). Referring to the rescue of Israel at Armageddon, the subject of many Old Testament prophecies, Ezekiel 38:23 declares, "Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD."

The Bible declares that the prophecies it provides concerning Israel supply the irrefutable evidence for God's existence—and for the fact that He has a purpose for mankind. History is not merely happenstance. It is going somewhere. There is a plan. Biblical prophecies declare it irrefutably.

Prophecy, which reveals God's plan in advance, is the missing element in all sacred scriptures of the world's religions, because false gods cannot provide it. Prophecy is not to be found in the Koran, the Hindu Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Book of Mormon, the sayings of Buddha, the writings of Mary Baker Eddy. In contrast, prophecy comprises about 30 percent of the Bible.

Significantly, the God of the Bible identifies Himself as the One who

accurately foretells the future and makes certain that it happens as He said it would. In fact, God points to prophecy as the irrefutable evidence of His existence and the authenticity of His Word: "For I am God, and there is none else. ...Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand..." (Is 46:9-10).

There are two major topics of prophecy, both of which must be studied if one is to have any understanding of the Bible: 1) Israel; and 2) the Messiah, who would come to Israel and through her to the world. These two major topics involve specific fulfillments of prophecy that cannot be denied and which prove God's existence.

Exactly as His prophets foretold, because of their sin God scattered His people, Israel, throughout the entire world (Lv 26:33; Dt 4:27; 32:26; 1 Kgs 14:15; Neh 1:8; Jer 9:16; 49:32, etc.). Yet, amazingly, they remained an identifiable ethnic and national entity. That is miraculous. Moreover, for 2,500 years since the Babylonian captivity, and for 1,900 years since the Diaspora at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70, in fulfillment of other prophecies, the scattered Jews have been hated and persecuted as Satan has sought to destroy them. Yet they survived—another miracle.

Furthermore, and just as the Bible declared (Jer 30:3,10-11; 31:8-10; Ez 11:17; 28:25, etc., etc.), the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have been brought back to their own land after all these centuries. Such an incredible event has never happened to any other people and certainly has no natural explanation. The Bible prophecies are so specific and numerous that no one can deny Israel's rebirth as a miracle of God. But that is not all!

The prophets also declared that in the last days Jerusalem would have a special importance for all nations. Not only would this occur during the Millennium when Christ was reigning there on David's throne, but just prior to His return. Zechariah 12:2-3 declares, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about....I [will] make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for

all people....” God was saying that the eyes of the entire world would be upon Jerusalem for fear of what would occur there.

At the time of this prophecy, about 2,500 years ago, Jerusalem was in ruins and surrounded by desolate desert and swamp. Nothing could have been more ludicrous than to suggest that one day the concerned attention of a modern world of more than 5 billion people would be focused upon this unlikely place. Yet that has been fulfilled precisely as foretold!

Whether atheist or believer, Hindu, Muslim or Jew, all mankind knows that the next world war, when it occurs, will break out over Jerusalem! Israel comprises only one-sixth of 1 percent of the land occupied by the Arabs. Why the great concern today over this tiny piece of arid real estate that lay abandoned for centuries? Yes, Jerusalem is sacred to Catholics, Muslims and Jews. But that doesn't explain why the whole world is concerned with establishing peace in the Middle East. Moreover, neither Catholics nor Muslims existed when these prophecies were made.

The Bible's prophecies concerning the Jews, Jerusalem and Israel are specific, preposterous, and impossible—yet fulfilled. There is no other explanation than that God is the author of the Bible, the Jews are His chosen people, and Israel is their land—and Jesus is the Christ.

In view of this great “sign” that God has given to the world, can anyone honestly be an atheist? Or can anyone deny that Jesus Christ is the only Savior? His advent was prophesied, as well, by the same prophets and is intimately connected to Israel. All that the prophets foretold concerning the coming Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth—and the early church used that fact in proclaiming the gospel (Acts 2:22-36). So should we.

Study the biblical prophecies concerning Israel and her Messiah. I give many of them in *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* and *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*. We need to get back to prophecy and use it in persuading others to turn to Christ as Paul did (Acts 17:2-3; Rom 1:1-5). Yet prophecy is the most neglected biblical topic in the church today. Not so

for Bereans!

We will return to this important topic from time to time if the Lord tarries and spares us to do so. We offer an excellent, professionally produced video on prophecy: *The Mark of the Beast*, by Peter Lalonde. May I suggest that you buy it not only for your own information, but as a witnessing tool to friends and neighbors. **TBC**

Quotable

On Unity—To remain divided is sinful! Did not our Lord pray, that they may be one, even as we are one (Jn 17:22)? A chorus of ecumenical voices keep harping the unity tune. What they are saying is, “Christians of all doctrinal shades and beliefs must come together in one visible organization, regardless... Unite, unite!”

Such teaching is false, reckless and dangerous. *Truth alone* must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity. Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord's prayer in John 17 must be read in its full context. Look at verse 17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the Gospel. (Emphasis added)

Charles H. Spurgeon
The Essence of Separation

Q&A

Question: The Roman [Catholic] Church changed the Sabbath [from Saturday] to Sunday. Jesus could not have died on Friday and risen on Sunday...[He] died Wednesday afternoon and rose before sunset Saturday. Could you comment on this in your newsletter?

Answer: The Roman Catholic Church didn't start “Sunday worship.” The early church met for communion and worship

on Sunday from the very beginning. Acts 20:7 tells us that it was “on the first day of the week” that the disciples came together to “break bread.” That this wasn't just for a meal, but was the communion or Lord's table, is clear. Surely they didn't eat just once a week; but they did meet to remember the Lord in the bread and cup as they had been commanded once a week—and it was on Sunday. First Corinthians 16:2 confirms this, for it tells us that they took a collection or offering on the “first of the week.”

Why did they meet on Sunday? It could only have been because that was the day that Christ, firstborn from the dead and progenitor of a new creation, resurrected. That is clear from Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19. It was “early in the morning...on the first day of the week” that Christ rose from the dead. So those who state that Christ “rose before sunset Saturday” are contradicted by Scripture, which not only says He rose on “the first day of the week” (which technically began Saturday evening), but that it was “very early in the morning.”

You are right. He couldn't have been crucified on Friday afternoon and spent three days and nights in the grave and resurrected Sunday morning. He was crucified on Thursday and died several hours before sundown (the beginning of the next day), so he spent Thursday (part of it), Friday and Saturday, three days and nights, in the grave and rose first thing Sunday morning. Why did the evening of His crucifixion begin a sabbath? The first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were special sabbaths. So the first day of unleavened bread fell on Friday (“that sabbath day was an high day”), which was then followed by Saturday, the regular sabbath. Two sabbaths intervened from the time of His crucifixion until Sunday morning, thus preventing the women from coming to the grave until that time. I hope this is helpful.

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The Fear of God

Dave Hunt

Signed by Peter Peters and Vasilij Ryzhuk, leaders in the “Unregistered Union of Churches,” a desperate plea has just come out of Russia: “For thirty years we have suffered intense persecution, and now freedom is bringing another great harm to our churches...[American] evangelists accompanied by rock bands....We are embarrassed by this image of Christianity....We need spiritual food. Please give us true bread, not false cakes. It is true that rock music attracts people to the church, but not to godly living....We urge you...do not bring it to our country. Do not desecrate our teenagers with it. Even the unbelievers recognize it is unholy music and they cannot understand how American Christians can be so much like the world...and [are] disillusioned with Christianity.”

Surely these brethren who have suffered so much for Christ have much to teach us. Yes, but—someone suggests—these long-persecuted believers have spent so much time isolated that they’re behind the times. And, of course, music is a matter of taste and not defined in Scripture. “Rock music” is too vague a term. There are different kinds, and who is to judge? So the rationale goes.

We need not enter into such arguments. There are at least two biblical criteria that indict most of the contemporary Christian music scene and much of the Sunday morning worship in evangelical churches as well. These two criteria are 1) *mood*: is it befitting the presence of God; and 2) *message*: is there moral, spiritual and doctrinal content that convicts sinners, edifies the worshipers and exalts our Lord?

Check out your own church next Sunday; and if these criteria are not met, pray about what you should do. Don’t succumb to a critical spirit. Try lovingly to bring some understanding to bear. Let your desire be to build up, to instruct and help rather than to condemn and tear down. And be patient. After all, there was perhaps a time when you, too, lacked discernment in these matters.

Let us deal with point 2 first. As I visit churches I am often saddened by the singing and can scarcely bring myself to participate in what passes for “worship.”

The old hymns, with their profound doctrinal content, have largely been replaced with empty, repetitive choruses. The melodies may be catchy and appealing, but the words are shallow, careless and sometimes unbiblical. The beat may be stirring and the hand-clapping enthusiastic, but the often-trite lyrics lack challenge for the heart and nourishment for the spirit.

Let’s take “worship” as an example. It’s largely a matter of singing in most churches. Yet too often the songs are a hindrance rather than a help. *Why* do we worship our Lord? What would cause us genuinely, from the heart, to worship the Father “in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:23)? Ah, there’s that word again. Yes, even when it comes to worship, we

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me

Matthew 16:24

encounter once more that all-important ingredient, *truth*. Truth has meaning, doctrinal content; it is not a feeling or emotion (though it does stir emotions), but a conviction that grips heart, soul, spirit—and, yes, *mind*.

To sing repeatedly “worship *Him*, worship *Him*” is not enough. Worship is more than formula. It cannot be achieved in the abstract and with an empty head. Something must be going on in the *mind*, or the heart is not meaningfully stirred. Worship is not a sacrament or ceremony; it arises in the heart from awed recognition of who God is—*knowing Him*, His infinite love, holiness, power, mercy. Worship is not mindless emotionalism.

The songs we sing can’t just set a *mood* for worship, but must give us some *reason* for worshipping as well. All too many of the modern choruses fail right there. Their appeal is more in their beat and tune than in their lyrics. Yet *words* are far more important than melody. There is no worship without understanding; and the deeper the understanding, the deeper the worship.

Right here is where the old hymns shine—in their words and the understanding they bring:

Son of God, ’twas love that made Thee,
Die our ruined souls to save;
'Twas our sins' vast load that laid
Thee,
Lord of life, within the grave.
What a debt of love we owe thee!

There’s sound doctrinal content that does not just say that we should love Him or that we do love Him, but reminds us *why*.

Consider a well-known Charles Wesley hymn:

And can it be that I should gain,
An interest in the Savior’s blood?
Died He for me who caused His pain,
For me who Him to death pursued?
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

Not only the melody, but the *words* stir the heart—and teach truth which bears repeating and meditating upon.

Let’s consider one more example:

By weakness and defeat,
He won the Victor’s crown;
Trode all our foes beneath His feet,
By being trodden down.
He Satan’s power laid low.
Made sin, He sin o’erthrew.
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so;
And Death, by dying, slew!

Great poetry, great teaching, and so powerfully presented! How tragic when such hymns are exchanged for the shallow, repetitive choruses that have become the mainstay in so many churches!

So much for message. What about mood? Without the right message the mood is meaningless, leaving one with a good “feeling” in the flesh but an emptiness in the spirit. Christian rock fails on both counts. The impudent, irreverent beat and raucous sound overwhelm one’s perceptive faculties so that the words, even if they are excellent, can scarcely be heard, much less contemplated. Add to this the pitiful posturing, the contrived aura of glamor, the raw bid for audience adulation. Try to imagine a rock concert in God’s presence! Would mere creatures, redeemed by grace, dare to “perform” before the throne of the thrice-holy Lord of the universe, the righteous Judge of men and angels? The mood generated is anything but awed reverence and the fear of God.

One could level the same criticism at

most contemporary Christian music. The mood is often reflective of a heedless, we've-got-the-world-by-the-tail spirit rather than authentic Christian joy. Tunes are designed to arouse emotion without content; and the words are more often self-centered than God-centered. Here the disease becomes extremely serious and could even be fatal. In diagnosing the problem, we must take great care that we follow God's Word.

What's wrong with joyful singing? Nothing. Inspired of the Holy Spirit, David wrote, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). Ah, yes, but what is meant by "joy" and "pleasure"? Surely the psalmist is not referring to the "happy hour" joy of a bar, or to the transitory pleasure found in amusement parks. The joy and pleasure around God's throne are not of this world. And there is one essential ingredient of which we may be certain: the fear of God.

How could fear be the fountain of peace, joy and worship? That question may indicate that we are strangers to God and to His joy! Watch a little Christian television, the strutting performance of some "evangelists" and "healers," the irreverent throwing around of "the anointing" of the Holy Spirit, and listen to the boasting bravado. One has the distinct impression that these "servants of God" know nothing of His fear. Listen to their "tongues" with the repetition of favorite words, their giddy laughfests supposedly with the Holy Spirit, weep at the spectacle and ask yourself again, "Where is the fear of God!"

Honesty compels us to point the finger at ourselves as well. An unbiased, heavenly observer watching our lives, sitting in on our "worship services," listening to our conversations, would be compelled to say of most Christians today what the psalmist said of the ungodly in his time: "There is no fear of God before [their] eyes" (Ps 36:1; Rom 3:18). When did you last hear a sermon preached on the fear of God? When did you last attend a church service where the awesome sense of God's holy presence brought weeping and repentance? When did you, or I, in our daily devotions, last fall on our faces before Him in awestruck wonder and worship and godly fear?

Take your concordance and follow "the

fear of God/the Lord" through the Bible and receive much-needed instruction. Israel was told to "fear the Lord thy God" (Dt 6:2) before she was commanded to "love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" (6:5). In a summation of His will for Israel, God declared, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Dt 10:12).

That the fear of God, the awesome reverence that comes from knowing Him and being in His presence, is foundational

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips...for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

Isaiah 6:5

and essential to our relationship with Him and His blessing upon our lives is clear. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him" (Ps 103:17). "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Ps 25:14).

The instruction, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom/knowledge," is found repeatedly (Ps 111:10; Prv 1:7; 9:10). Solomon exhorted, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Prv 14:27). And again: "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him" (Ps 33:8).

Such a sense of God's awesome holiness is virtually unknown among Christians! Why is that fear of God, that holy reverence and overwhelming wonder so lacking in our lives and in our churches and in Christian media? How can men be so blind as to treat God as though He were their servant instead of falling on their faces before Him? For many, He's a cosmic bellhop who exists simply to give them what they want. Apparently they don't yet know God!

See John falling as dead at the feet of His resurrected Lord (Rv 1:17) and the reason for the lack of the fear of God among today's Christians becomes clear. Surely there would be profound reverence, awe and godly fear were we suddenly to find

ourselves in God's presence. Obviously, then, the absence of that fear which the Bible extols betrays how far we are from Him and explains the lack of passionate love for our Lord. Let us seek His face (Ps 27:8; 105:4).

So much that passes for Christianity would be exposed as false were it displayed before the throne of God. The selfism teaching that Christian psychology has brought into the church is one flagrant example. It is not just ludicrous, but grotesque to imagine anyone being concerned about his "self-identity," his "authentic personhood," his "self-image," or feeling good about himself in the brilliant light of God's presence! All mutterings of "positive self-talk" and concern about one's "significance" are silenced before His throne. Any thought of self-esteem or self-worth would suddenly be revealed in the brilliance of God's glory as an evil from hell—and instantly be consumed by His splendor.

Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471) knew something of that revealing and consuming Presence: "I will speak unto my Lord who am but dust and ashes. If I count myself more, behold Thou standest against me, and my iniquities bear true testimony and I cannot gainsay it. But if I abase myself, and bring myself to nought, and shrink from all self-esteem, and grind myself to dust, which I am, Thy grace will be favourable unto me, and Thy light will be near unto my heart; and all self-esteem, how little soever it be, shall be swallowed up in the depths of my nothingness, and shall perish for ever." Self is our problem.

Do you long to be delivered of self? Spend time in the presence of God! How far are they from God whose only communion with Him is in attempts to get Him to bless their plans! Most Christians are so taken up with themselves and their own ambitions that they are strangers to God and His will for their lives. And yet they remain self-satisfied. What a contradiction! How can it be? God reveals the answer in His Word.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart" (Jer 17:9-10). What a devastating indictment of mankind! What a humbling revelation of the human heart—the heart of each one

of us! No encouragement for esteeming self here. The selfist teachings that “Christian psychology” has brought into the church contradict God’s Word, mock His fear, deceive those who are seeking a solution to their ungodly behavior, and, though sometimes seeming to work for a season, in the end leave one worse off than before.

It is not the traumas or abuse one may have suffered, whether in childhood or later in life, real as those may have been, that make us what we are. It is our hearts which are by our very nature self-centered, self-exalting, self-seeking, yes, evil, as Jesus said: “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man” (Mt 15:19-20). Is there any hope?

Repentance and coming to the Cross to embrace Christ’s death as the crucifixion of self and out of that death to become partakers of His resurrection life—that is the only solution. Anything else is but a rationalization to avoid the Cross and salvage something for self, be it esteem, image, worth, significance, authentic personhood or any of the other slogans that are deceiving millions.

It is not therapy that we need, but God! The answer lies not in looking within but in turning to Him, as Jeremiah confessed: “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (10:23). David knew that God was his only hope, both to diagnose and heal his wicked heart. “Search me, O God,” he cried, “and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps 139:23-24). We need to put ourselves entirely in God’s hands!

The fear of God, largely missing in today’s Christianity, is not just an Old Testament doctrine. Spiritual cleansing and holiness can only be perfected “in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). Even loving Christian fellowship can only be “in the fear of God” (Eph 5:21). This godly fear characterized the early churches: they “were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied” (Acts 9:31). That fear, that awesome reverence which comes from knowing God, must be

restored in each of our lives if we are to be what He desires. May it be so, to His glory! TBC

Quotable

It is one of the supreme tragedies...that so many of us think so highly of ourselves when the evidence lies all on the other side; and our self-admiration effectively blocks out any possible effort to discover a remedy for our condition....The final judgment of the heart is God’s. There is, nevertheless, a place for self-judgment and a real need that we exercise it (1 Cor 11:31,32)....For this reason I offer some rules for self-discovery....We may be known by the following:

1. *What we want most.* Ask your heart, What would you rather have than anything else in the world? Reject the conventional answer. Insist on the true one, and when you have heard it you will know the kind of person you are.

2. *What we think about most.* It is more than likely that our [leisure] thoughts will cluster about our secret heart treasure, and whatever that is will reveal what we are. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

3. *How we use our money.* Again we must ignore those matters about which we are not altogether free....But [how we spend] whatever money is left [after necessities] to do with as we please—that will tell us a great deal indeed.

4. *What we do with our leisure time.* A large share of our time is already spoken for by the exigencies of civilized living, but we do have some free time....What I do with mine reveals the kind of man I am.

5. *The company we enjoy.* There is a law of moral attraction that draws every man to the society most like himself....Where we go when we are free to go where we will is a near-infallible index of character.

6. *Whom and what we admire.*

I have long suspected that the great majority of evangelical Christians...have a boundless, if perforce secret, admiration for the world. We can learn the true state of

our minds by examining our unexpressed admirations....

These are a few tests. The wise Christian will find others.

A. W. Tozer

That Incredible Christian

Q&A

Question: In your July newsletter you said that Catholicism was attempting to sweep the difference between the God of Christianity and the Muslim’s Allah “under an ecumenical rug.” Can you document that?

Answer: In *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist* I provide much evidence that John Paul II is the greatest ecumenist of all time. For example, on page 156 I relate his gathering together in Assisi, Italy, in 1986, the leading figures of 12 world religions to pray “for peace” to whatever “god” each believed in. There were snake worshippers, fire worshippers, witch doctors, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims praying together. The Pope declared that they were all praying to the same “God” and that their prayers were creating a spiritual energy which was bringing about a new climate for peace—that “the challenge of peace...transcends religious differences.”

Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, 16, is very specific: “But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Moslems: these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind’s judge on the last day.” That Allah is not the God of the Bible is clear. For an excellent treatment of Islam, I highly recommend *Islamic Invasion*, a book we offer.

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Science & God

Dave Hunt

There are only two possible explanations for the existence of the universe and mankind: chance or design. America's educational system aggressively promotes the former view, while excluding the latter. Explicitly or by clever implication, this outrageous lie bombards us everywhere. As a consequence, the public at large takes for granted, *as scientific fact*, that the universe is a spontaneously self-generated, evolving, closed system that happened by chance, and is thus purposeless and amoral. Destructive as this falsehood has been, science poses a far more subtle danger which has deceived multitudes of Christians.

Many of this century's greatest physicists have issued grave warnings against mixing science and religion. Einstein said, "...scientific theory has nothing to do with religion." Schroedinger declared, "[Science] knows nothing of...good or bad, God and eternity." Yet the church has imagined that an alliance with science would bring to Christianity greater prestige and acceptability. Christian psychology is one example of this unholy partnership. There are others equally deadly. Beware! Einstein was right. Science and God don't mix!

Science is today's secular religion, the new paganism. At its altars the world worships human achievement and anticipates the day when its high priests will have unlocked every secret of the universe and harnessed its unlimited power, conquered space and all disease, and will have achieved virtual immortality for man and enthroned him as master of the universe. This ancient lie of the Serpent to Eve, kept alive in pagan religions and the occult, now, having donned the mask of modern science, is ripening to reap God's wrath. Only this self-deifying dream explains the continued suicidal practice of free sex in spite of AIDS education programs. Such reckless folly reflects the vain hope—and in some quarters the demand—that science will somehow (and soon) find a cure for even that dread scourge.

Science is legitimate when it examines the universe and acknowledges God's existence on the basis of observable intelligent design. But when it proudly denies the Creator, it leads to the very worship of creation that Paul, in Romans 1:18-32, declares to be *the endemic error that darkens the minds of all mankind*. The ecological movement has its *ecotheology*. Georgetown University professor Victor Ferkiss approvingly says it "starts with the premise that the Universe is God." Carl Sagan, the high priest of cosmos worship, declares, "If we must worship a

power greater than ourselves, does it not make sense to revere the sun and stars?" No! It takes little insight to see the similarity between a native bowing before a stick or stone which he credits with some occult power, a witch worshipping "Mother Nature," and a university professor crediting mystic evolutionary forces with producing the human brain.

We endorse scientific investigation of the physical world. The problem comes when science claims that matter is all there is and that everything, including human consciousness and morality, can be explained in scientific terms. That boast pushes God out of His universe; and man, no longer in God's image, becomes a stimulus-response conglomeration of protein molecules evolving to "godhood." Such was the atheistic medical model of Freud upon which psychology, in an attempt to establish a "*science of human behavior*," was founded. The consequen-

Come now, and let us reason together...

Isaiah 1:18

ces have been devastating to the church.

It is so obvious that human behavior can't be scientifically explained, yet the lie persists. C. S. Lewis wrote, "If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind. ..." That simple logic destroys Darwinism. If man is the chance product of impersonal evolutionary forces, then so are his thoughts — including the theory of evolution.

To escape the embarrassing contradictions, most psychologists traded Freud's medical model for the newer humanistic and transpersonal psychologies. The latter pretend to deal with soul and spirit and are thus far more seductive and deadly. Many evangelicals imagine that psychology, now that it wears a "spiritual" mask, is compatible with Christianity. One of the premiere inner healers, Rita Bennett, writes, "I was born again of the Spirit....But my 'soul' part is another matter. The Greek for 'soul' is *psyche*. My soul is my *psychological nature*..." Try to find that in the Bible!

Echoing Freud, Bennett refers to "a vast area called the unconscious" that Christians "are not able to reach directly" but which governs our behavior. "Everything that happened to you, even from the time you were a tiny baby, is recorded in your memory," says Bennett, and is "subconsciously" affect-

ing you in ways you can't understand. The only hope for change is through the sacred rituals of psychology, the new religious science of the soul. Bennett and other inner healers sanctify psychology's pagan rituals with Christian terminology and by visualizing Jesus present in the process—an occult technique for inducing contact with spirit guides, who are only too happy to pose as "Jesus" or "Mary."

Christian psychologists naively accept the perverse extension of materialistic *science* into the realm of *soul* and *spirit*. They have brought into the church the twin lies of "mental illness" and the Bible's lack of insight into these new maladies. Most evangelicals now believe that this new *science of mind*, rather than Scripture, can explain why we act as we do and how we can change. To explain wrong behavior, however, as "mental illness" caused by past traumas turns sin, for which one is morally accountable to God, into a "sickness" beyond one's control. Instead of *saving sinful souls* through Christ alone, Christian psychology pretends to *cure sick minds* with therapy. Spiritual problems now have scientific diagnoses and cures unknown to biblical prophets and apostles.

The similarity to Christian Science is obvious. Its founder, Mary Baker Eddy, determined to unite science with religion, called Jesus a *scientist* who knew the *laws of mind* that govern the universe. There is no sin, sickness, pain, death. We create these illusions with negative thoughts and can cure ourselves with a new, *scientific faith*—positive thinking. Like Unity's founders, Myrtle and Charles Fillmore, Ernest Holmes patterned his similar cult, The Church of Religious Science, on the same delusion: "Science of Mind teaches that Man controls the course of his life...by mental processes which function according to a Universal Law...that we are creating our own day-to-day experiences...[by] our thoughts." Behold, the creature has become Creator, as Paul warned in Romans 1!

The god of Unity/Religious/Christian Science is an impersonal Universal Mind or "higher power"—one with the cosmos and subject to universal laws which man, too, can master. This god exists to give man what he wants and holds no one morally accountable. All is a matter of positive or negative thoughts, which activate this *god-energy* according to universal *laws*. One need only act *scientifically*. The connection to the positive/possibility thinking of Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller, and to the positive confession* of Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland, et al., is again undeniable. (**By confession they mean to speak forth.*)

Crediting Fillmore and Holmes with making him a "positive thinker," Peale says, "through prayer you...make use of the great factor within yourself, the deep subconscious mind...[which Jesus called] the kingdom of God within you....Positive thinking is just another term for faith." His thesis is obviously false; many atheists are positive thinkers, but Jesus said faith must be *in God* (Mk 11:22). Peale, a 33rd degree Mason who found "eternal peace in a Shinto shrine," denies the necessity of both the virgin birth and the new birth. He writes, "Your unconscious mind... [has a] power that turns wishes into realities when the wishes are strong enough." It was Peale who pioneered the merger of theology and psychology which became Christian psychology.

Let me repeat: God needs no help from science. Mixing science and religion turns God into an impersonal energy source to be tapped by scientifically applying universal laws. Peale writes, "Just as there exist scientific techniques for the release of atomic energy, so are there scientific procedures for the release of spiritual energy....God is energy." That is occultism—the worship of creation (natural forces) instead of the Creator. When the witch doctor slits a rooster's throat, sprinkles the blood in a certain pattern and mumbles a formula, the spirits *must* do their part. Occultism operates by the laws of cause and effect.

Peale's most famous protégé is Robert Schuller, who says Christ died to sanctify our self-esteem. He calls Peale "the man who has impacted and influenced my thinking and my theology and my life more than any other living person...." Schuller preaches what he unashamedly calls a "man-centered theology" (again the creature is preeminent). He perverts "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" to mean "Believe in the God who believes in you!"—though the Bible warns, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man" (Jer 17:5). He says it's destructive of the gospel to call anyone a sinner, and declares, "You don't know what power you have within you! ... You can make the world into anything you choose." Here is Religious Science in pseudo-evangelical dress.

Occultists were the world's first and only scientists for thousands of years. To work their sorcery through the "laws of manifestation," occultists have always used three *scientific* techniques: positive thinking, positive speaking and visualizing. All three are now accepted and used in the evangelical church. No one has promoted these occult techniques as successfully as Paul Yonggi Cho, pastor of the world's largest church, in Seoul, Korea.

Of positive speaking (confession), Cho declares, "You create the presence of Jesus with your mouth....He is bound by your lips

and by your words...." As for visualization, the most powerful occult technique, Cho writes, "Through visualization and dreaming, you can incubate your future and hatch the results." In the foreword to Cho's best-known book, *The Fourth Dimension*, Schuller writes of visualization, "Don't try to understand it. Just start to enjoy it! It's true. It works. I tried it. Thank you—Paul Yonggi Cho—for allowing the Holy Spirit to give this message to us and to the world."

Cho says God revealed to him that "spirit is the fourth dimension." Contained within it is a creative force. Cho says God created the universe by visualizing it—and that anyone, occultist or Christian, Satan or God, can create in the same manner through applying "the laws of the fourth dimension." Yes, one need not be a Christian to tap the energy in the atom—and so it is with the "spiritual energy" of religious science.

In full agreement, Kenneth Hagin says God revealed to him that even the ungodly can get miracles by developing "the law of faith." Charles Capps says God told him that positive confession "is a scientific application of the wisdom of God to the psychological makeup of man....These principles of faith are based on spiritual laws. They work for whosoever will apply these laws." The common denominator for all such teachers is the heart of religious science: a *spiritual force* which *anyone* can activate by *scientific* application of the *laws* governing it.

The same occultic partnership with science is found in Pat Robertson's *Secret Kingdom*. It functions under eight *laws* "as valid for our lives as the laws of thermodynamics or the law of gravity"—laws that even God obeys. The seventh is "The Law of Miracles." Robertson echoes Cho, who says that miracles must always conform to the "Law of the Fourth Dimension." Here is, in fact, a denial of miracles, which don't exist in religious science.

By very definition, miracles are not governed by laws. They override all laws. The classic argument of the atheist is that a miracle is simply a natural occurrence for which science hasn't yet found an explanation. While we believe in miracles, we must agree that if science can state the laws which govern a situation, then the event is not a miracle at all. What a tragedy that popular teachers, though they speak continually of "miracles," are promoting Christianized sorcery! Even sadder is the fact that many evangelicals have fallen for a similar lie without knowing it.

For many Christians, prayer is a religious technique for getting what they want. They imagine that if they can just believe that what they are praying for will happen, it will happen. Is this really *faith*? No. If we can make something happen by *believing* it will

happen, then we don't need God. We've become gods who create with our minds. "You are a little god," declare Copeland and Benny Hinn on TBN. "I am a little god!" exults Paul Crouch on international television, and he condemns to hell the "heresy hunters" who say such teachings aren't biblical. God help us!

Hagin writes, "Have faith in your faith." For these men, faith is a force that operates according to "the laws of faith." They have substituted the laws of science for the grace of God, who alone can be the object of faith. Biblical faith is believing that *God* will do what we pray for. That changes everything! No one can have that faith unless he knows that what he is praying for is God's will. We cannot *cause* miracles, nor can we *cause* our prayers to be answered. That's sorcery. There is no ritual, formula, prayer, demand or technique that man can use to bring about a miracle. Miracles and answers to prayer are the gracious gift of the Creator.

God's grace stands in stark contrast to the *laws* of Religious Science. Grace instead of law—what a difference! Miracles are by God's grace alone. And the greatest miracle is the new birth, whereby a sinner is recreated a saint. Even evangelism has been influenced by methodology. Many imagine there is some technique of packaging or presentation that will *cause* the lost to receive Christ. No! Let us take care to preach the simple, biblical gospel, not with man's wisdom, which destroys the Cross (1 Cor 1:17), but in the power of His Holy Spirit. We dare not attempt to arouse the unsaved with psychological or salesmanship techniques, such as are often employed in emotionally charged revivals and crusades.

The Holy Spirit must convince and convict with God's truth. There is no procedure or ritual which can cause a sinner to pass from death to life. The new birth is a miracle of God's grace which only He can accomplish. Unlike the scientific application of laws to release spiritual energy, we must approach the God of the Bible as unworthy sinners trusting His grace and mercy. We must humbly confess that there are no formulas that we can think, speak or visualize that will require Him to respond to us.

Then how do we know whether, or how, God will respond? We can rely upon God's promises because of His integrity and love—not because He is bound by scientific laws. However, as the old poem goes, "God has not promised skies always blue, flower-strewn pathways all our life through...." God's Word does not promise unfailing health, immunity from persecution for His sake or from the cruelties and inequities of this earthly life. He has something far better in mind—an eternal

for those whom He has “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col 1:11) and who, out of love for Him, “[love] not their lives unto death” (Rv 12:11). TBC

Quotable 

A very great portion of modern revivalism has been more a curse than a blessing, because it has led thousands to a kind of peace before they have known their misery; restoring the prodigal to the Father’s house, and never making him say, “Father, I have sinned.” How can he be healed who is not sick, or he be satisfied with the bread of life who is not hungry? The old-fashioned sense of sin is despised. ...Everything in this age is shallow....The consequence is that men leap into religion, and then leap out again. Unhumbled they came to the church, unhumbled they remained in it, and unhumbled they go from it.

C. H. Spurgeon, 1882

American Protestantism is characterized by a peculiar evil which I may describe by the term “spurious revivalism.” The common mischief resulting from all its forms is the over-hasty reception into the communion of the churches of multitudes of persons whom time proves to have experienced no spiritual change. In most cases, these mischievous accessions are brought about by sensational human expedients. It is an unpopular thing for a minister of the gospel to bear this witness. But it is true. And my regard for that account which I must soon render at a more awful bar than that of arrogant public opinion demands its utterance.

R. L. Dabney, 1892

Q&A 

Question: A good Berean knows that we are only to think upon those things which are true (Philippians 4:8). How then can you be involved in writing and promoting fiction (fantasy)?

Answer: Philippians 4:8 says, “Whatsoever things are true...honest...just...pure... lovely

...of good report; if there be any virtue and praise, think [meditate] on these things.” We are being told what to meditate upon. I wouldn’t suggest that you meditate upon the fiction I write, but you can learn from it. Jesus told fictional stories. His parables weren’t true, but they were true to life and illustrated truth. My novels are also true to life and illustrate truth. But truth is not the only criterion in Philippians 4:8. If you applied the rest of the verse as you apply “true,” then you couldn’t be a judge or lawyer, for much that they must deal with is anything but “honest, just, pure.” Nor could the elders confront sin in a church, for that is certainly not of “good report” nor of “virtue or praise.” I believe fiction is a legitimate means of communicating God’s truth. If not, then no preacher may use an illustration and Jesus should not have used parables.

Question: Jesus said, “I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven...if two of you shall agree on anything it shall be given you....” Why can’t we make this work today?

Answer: The Catholic Church teaches that the “keys” were only for Peter (and his “successors,” the popes) and that the “binding and loosing” authority was for all of the apostles (including Peter) and their “successors,” the bishops, et al. Clearly the “keys” in Matthew 16 are connected with the “binding and loosing,” an authority given to all of the disciples in Matthew 18. Obviously, the gospel and sound doctrine are the “keys” to the Kingdom. Peter used these keys to unlock the Kingdom to the Jews through his sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2; and in Acts 15:7 Peter seems to indicate that he used these keys again when he preached the gospel to the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house in Acts 10. Every Christian is a successor to the apostles, and we have the same authority they had to bind and loose. What does it mean?

The “binding and loosing” in Matthew 16 is further illustrative of “keys.” Keys are used both to lock (bind) and unlock (loose). The gospel of Jesus Christ which we preach sets free from sin (looses) those who receive it and condemns (binds) those who reject it. Furthermore, in Matthew 18 “binding and loosing” is linked with the promise, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” That promise applies not to some special “prophet” or “official church hierarchy,” but to all Christians. The context and the entire tenor of Scripture make it clear that Jesus is not handing His disciples

a magic power to wield as they please. He is telling them that as His representatives they are to act in His name. This is no different from His promise that “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (Jn 16:23). Invoking His name in prayer is not a magic formula whereby we receive automatic answers to our requests. His name must be stamped on our character and engraved on our hearts, not just on our lips. To ask in His name means to ask according to His will and to His glory. The same is true with “binding and loosing”—it must be in His name and through His Word.

Question: You always seem to use the King James Version of the Bible. Why not use the modern translations that are so much easier to understand?

Answer: Most people think that the so-called “modern translations” (RSV, NIV, NAS, etc.) simply put the Bible into the language of today in place of the outdated English of the 1600s. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Different manuscripts are involved. The KJV comes from a family of manuscripts known as the Byzantine, Traditional or Received Text (Textus Receptus). Since this group contains by far the largest number of manuscripts, it is also known as the Majority Text. Modern translations come from an entirely different and much smaller family, of which Codex Alexandrinus (A), Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (Aleph) are the main representatives. That the latter are older has been the basis for saying they are better. In fact, the evidence is overwhelming that this family of manuscripts was badly corrupted. Their earlier date has two explanations: 1) Most came from Egypt, where the climate was conducive to their preservation; and 2) it is now generally agreed that when a new copy was made, the worn-out manuscript it replaced was destroyed. Thus it is probable that these older manuscripts had been abandoned or at least were not as well accepted by the church as a whole—whereas the Majority Text was the one in use. The differences between the KJV and modern translations are many (numbering more than 2,000) and are in many instances serious. Yet, where the differences are not critical I will, at times, quote a modern translation when it better communicates a biblical teaching.

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Authority & Unity

Dave Hunt

The question of authority has been, since time immemorial, the central issue confronting mankind. In human society, as in the jungle, the strong and/or the clever rule. Throughout the “civilized” world we see the clash of selfish interests and the attempt to lord it over others. This universal contest for dominion often employs brute force, as in the bloody ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Republics; in the savage violence between Serbs and Croats; in the ruthless suppression of all opposition by Saddam Hussein or the rulers of Red China.

The continuing struggle for supremacy manifests itself in a thousand more subtle ways. We see it as Republicans and Democrats exchange charges and countercharges and maneuver for votes in their fight for control of Congress, Senate, White House, nation. The same conflict rages everywhere: in city and county and even church politics; between pastors and deacon or elder boards; between husbands and wives at home and in divorce courts; between parents and children. It ends only with the grave—or the Cross.

All of humanity’s seemingly diverse conflicts can be traced back to Lucifer’s rebellion against God and from there to the Garden of Eden — and from Adam and Eve to each of us. Mark well the root of evil! Where God’s authority is not acknowledged as supreme *and obeyed*, there can be no order in society, the home or the heart. Self rules, egos clash and false gods abound.

Two dissimilar evils result: 1) as we’ve already seen, those who disobey God compete for supremacy among themselves, selfishly and often cruelly; and/or 2) they submit blindly to some earthly authority (secular or religious), in order to escape moral accountability to God. Yet there is no such escape. Wrongdoing is not excused because it was commissioned by a lawful authority.

It is true that we are commanded to “submit...to every ordinance of man,” to “king [and] governors” (1 Pt 2:13-14). Yes, Christians are required even to obey godless secular officials (Rom 13:1-7)—but only as they administer righteousness. No ruler has the right to command others except as God’s

representative. “There is no power but of God: the [civil] powers that be are ordained of God” to be His “minister[s]” (Rom 13:1).

If a ruler commands what is morally wrong he must be disobeyed. That was what the Nuremberg war crimes trials were all about. No one was to be exonerated of a crime because it was ordered by Hitler, Himmler or a military officer. God is the supreme authority. His moral law engraved on every conscience must always be obeyed, even when to do so means disobeying legitimate human authority.

Thus it was not only right but required of the Hebrew midwives to disobey Pharaoh’s edict and thus save newborn males alive (Ex 1:17). It was and still is right to smuggle Bibles into communist lands, and for Christians in China or Muslim countries to evangelize in defiance of godless laws. Were that not so, Jesus would have had to remain in the grave.

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
2 Timothy 3:15

By rising from the dead, He disobeyed the religious and civil authorities who had put Him to death and secured His tomb with the official Roman government seal.

As for church authorities, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves...” (Heb 13:17). Yet the same rule must hold: One is no more free to disobey God when ordered to do so by religious leaders than when commanded by secular rulers. The disciples preached Christ, though forbidden to do so by Israel’s religious authorities. Arrested, Peter boldly declared, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). So ought we.

Here is a universal principle: No authority, secular or religious, is to be obeyed except as it administers God’s Word. Who is to decide? That is the crux of the issue. The individual, who will be held accountable by God, must decide for himself/herself on the basis of God’s Word. All teaching, whether by evangelist, pastor, priest or pope, must be judged and rejected *by each individual* if not in agreement with

God’s Word.

Is that not what it means to be a Berean? “These [in Berea] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). The Bereans checked the great Apostle Paul’s teaching against the Old Testament (all they had) to see whether he was biblical. Each Berean was personally responsible to make that judgment and act upon it.

It’s likely that some Bereans discussed the matter together. There is not a hint, however, that a “committee” of Bereans or some spiritual hierarchy decided for the rest whether Paul’s teachings were biblical. Note that Paul’s authority as the chief apostle who wrote most of the epistles did not procure automatic acceptance of what he taught. Nor did he direct the Bereans to some church authority in Jerusalem or in Rome that would decide for them.

Three things are clear: 1) each Berean studied the Bible for himself; 2) each Berean was capable, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of understanding the Bible; and 3) on the basis of whether he or she believed it to be biblical, each Berean made a personal decision to accept or reject Paul’s teaching—and *was commended for doing so*. We must be Bereans in our day.

Then what is the purpose of authority if it is not to be obeyed? Not to be obeyed? Of course lawful authority is to be obeyed—but only in harmony with God’s Word. And for that limitation to apply, each individual must decide for himself. It cannot be otherwise.

Doesn’t the Bible speak critically of a tragic time in Israel’s history when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jgs 17:6; 21:25)? Yes, but understand the problem. It was not that everyone individually obeyed God. Not at all. They did what was “right in their own eyes.” In contrast, we must do what is right in God’s eyes, and each of us must determine what that is.

Suppose a pastor or elder teaches something that I am convinced is unbiblical? In love and humility I need to discuss the issue with him from Scripture. It may be that I misunderstood his position. Or my position may be wrong. I have no license to start a revolution. It may

ultimately be necessary to leave the church, but only as a last resort and in view of serious false doctrine that persists.

Let us not write off a brother for a few minor errors. No one is perfect. C. S. Lewis's books, for example, contain many valuable insights, but they also present some false views. The error, however, is not a major part or pillar of his writings. There is a difference between teaching which may contain some peripheral error and popular contemporary writers and speakers who push the error as a major distinctive of their ministry, and who refuse to repent or even to discuss their deviant doctrines.

Bereans don't belong to cults. No cult can endure their insistence upon checking everything out for themselves from Scripture. It is by denying individual accountability to God that cults keep their members in bondage. Mormons may not question the dictates of their hierarchy in Salt Lake City; nor may Jehovah's Witnesses question the teachings of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in Brooklyn. Likewise, Roman Catholics must accept unquestioningly the dogmas of their "infallible" Church. Rome makes no secret that it denies the individual's direct moral responsibility to God.

Take, for example, Vatican II's "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," approved by the members of the Council and signed by Pope Paul VI, November 18, 1965. It declares, "The duty of interpreting God's word...has been entrusted *exclusively* to the teaching office of the Church (often called the *magisterium*). This teaching office is exercised by the pope and the bishops...[for] *all interpretations* of Scripture...." (Bold emphasis added)

Roman Catholics stoutly defend this cultic denial of the individual's right and duty to know and interpret the Bible for himself. They blame the multiplication of Protestant denominations upon individual interpretation and claim that only through submission to the pope can unity be reestablished among all Christians.

In fact, we are to "keep the unity of the Spirit" (Eph 4:3) which God has already established. Conformity to the interpretation of a central authority brings the uniformity of death. The leading and

empowering of each individual by the Holy Spirit produces the dynamic unity of a living organism rather than an organization.

It is claimed that the Roman Catholic hierarchy "gave us the Bible," and therefore that the magisterium alone has the right to interpret it. Karl Keating states Rome's position: "...we conclude [that] an infallible church was founded. Then we take the word of that infallible Church that the Bible is inspired....and that same Church has the authority to interpret the inspired text....As Augustine said, 'I would not believe the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so.'"

What a tragic admission (if indeed Augustine said this) that God's Word by the Holy Spirit's impelling did not in itself speak convincingly to his heart. Yet God said, "For as the rain cometh down...[and] watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud....So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall ...accomplish that which I please..." (Is 55:10-11). Of course! "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword" (Heb 4:12). It needs neither endorsement nor official interpretation to speak to every heart and conscience!

Rome lacks confidence not only in the power of God's Word but in its accuracy. The same "Dogmatic Constitution" declares, "Hence the Bible is free from error *in what pertains to religious truth*...[but] not necessarily free from error in other matters (e.g., natural science)." Doesn't God know science? Yes, but the magisterium doesn't, and its official interpretation would be exposed as not so "infallible" as science advanced — so the Bible is blamed. Remember, it was once an infallible dogma of Roman Catholicism that the sun revolved around the earth. Galileo was forced to kneel before the Inquisition and recant. Ah, no problem: The Church is only infallible regarding faith and morals.

The Roman Catholic position is of faith. Obviously "the Church" did not give us the Old Testament. Christ quoted from it as a settled document before the church came into existence: "Beginning at Moses and *all* the prophets, he expounded unto them in *all the scriptures* the things concerning himself.

...Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand *the scriptures*" (Lk 24:27,45). These are the same Scriptures which the Bereans searched centuries before Roman Catholicism claims to have given us the Bible. Bereans do the same today without any help from Rome!

As for the New Testament, the early Christians knew which books were inspired of God and belonged in the canon of Scripture the same way we do today — by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "He that is of God heareth [recognizes, understands, hearkens to] God's words...My sheep hear [recognize and obey] my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.... Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (Jn 8:47; 10:27; 18:37). Paul wrote, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor 14:37). The Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture inspires born-again readers to know it is of God. Those deaf to the Spirit listen instead to cultic authorities.

It was the Third Council of Carthage in A.D.397 that made the first official declaration that the 27 books we now have comprised the canon of the New Testament. Were the Christians prior to that time unable to use the New Testament because they didn't know which books were included? What absurdity!

How did the "fruitful man" of Psalm 1 know enough to "meditate day and night" in God's law thousands of years before Roman Catholicism "gave us the Bible" and insisted that no one could know it was inspired unless Rome said so? How could a "young man" (not a bishop or pope) possibly "[take] heed" [i.e., understand and obey] God's Word and thereby "cleanse his way" (Ps 119:9) at least 2,000 years before the Roman Catholic magisterium (which alone can interpret the Bible) came into existence? How could the Old Testament prophets, from Moses to Malachi, call upon Israel to "hear the word of God" when the Roman Catholic hierarchy hadn't yet defined it and the magisterium wasn't there to interpret it? God's Word is alive!

It is ludicrous to suggest that one must first prove to a native in the jungle or a

derelict on skid row or an accident victim dying in the wreckage of a car that an “infallible Church” exists which says the gospel is true—and only on that basis will the gospel be believed. It is blasphemous to suggest that the Holy Spirit cannot convict the lost of the truth of the gospel and that the gospel itself has no power unless a Church headquartered in Rome says so. Jesus said, “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he (Jn 16:13) will convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come” (Jn 16:8)—and He said it long before there was any self-appointed magisterium in Rome. “The gospel [itself] is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes [it]” (Rom 1:16).

“How do you know which books ought to be in the canon?” is a favorite question of those who defend Roman Catholicism. The answer is very simple: God’s Word is the life-giving food of those born of the Spirit. The Apocrypha (11 extra books in the Roman Catholic canon) lack that life-giving inspiration. Moses wrote 3,500 years ago (and Jesus quoted it), “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Dt 8:3; Mt 4:4). Peter put it this way: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby...” (1 Pt 2:2).

A Christian recognizes God’s Word the same way a baby recognizes milk: by its taste and by the fact that it satisfies our spiritual hunger. The newest-born Christian no more needs the Roman Catholic hierarchy to tell him which books belong in the canon than a newborn babe needs Rome to tell it that mother’s milk is life-giving.

Rome claims that only priests, bishops, cardinals, popes are led of the Holy Spirit. But the Bible says, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9) and “as many as are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14). To be led of the Spirit loses any meaning if the Holy Spirit who inspired it can’t interpret the Bible to the individual, but one must blindly accept the interpretation of some magisterium.

The rejection of God’s authority and resulting lack of unity began with Satan’s rebellion against God. The chaos on this planet cannot be remedied through some religious hierarchy telling the rest of us what to believe. Individuals must be restored to a living, dynamic, personal relationship with

God by which His Holy Spirit, through Christ indwelling each heart, brings loving submission to His perfect will. That’s the “unity of the Spirit” which God establishes in His truth and which each of us is to guard. TBC

Quotable

Reading the Bible Through

Yes, I thought I knew my Bible,
Reading piecemeal hit or miss;
Now a part of John or Matthew,
Then a bit of Genesis;

Certain chapters of Isaiah,
Certain Psalms, the 23rd;
First of Proverbs, 12th of Romans;
Yes, I thought I knew the Word.

But I found that thorough reading
Was a different thing to do
And the way was unfamiliar
When I read my Bible through.

You who like to play at Bible,
Dip and dabble here and there
Just before you kneel aweary
Yawning through a hurried prayer;

You who treat the Crown of Writings
As you treat no other book:
Just a paragraph disjointed,
Just a crude, impatient look,

Try a worthier procedure,
Try a broad and steady view.
You will kneel in awesome wonder
When you read the Bible through!

Author unknown

God once spoke through the mouth of an ass....I am bound, not only to assert, but to defend the truth with my blood and death. I want to believe freely and be a slave to the authority of no one, whether council, university, or pope. I will confidently confess what appears to me to be true, whether it has been asserted by a Catholic or a heretic, whether it has been approved or reproved by a council.

Martin Luther

When accused of spiritual pride in elevating his own opinions over those of the church

[I cannot recant] unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason. I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God... [and] to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me.

Martin Luther

When ordered to recant at the Diet of Worms

You cannot “hold on” to the truth unless you know what the truth is.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Q&A

Question (composite of several): How can you be down on all contemporary music, choruses, etc.? I’ve heard rock music groups that really glorified the Lord. There is much contemporary music that expresses solid biblical doctrine and love of God in Spirit and in truth regardless of instrument or style. Is it not possible that some of the family of God who worship with contemporary music really know God, fear Him and serve Him as diligently as you do?

Answer: Of course it is, and if I gave any other impression, I certainly didn’t intend to. You seem to have missed the point of my article, as did a few others. Perhaps I failed to make it clear.

I did not condemn all contemporary music. Speaking to my own heart and exhorting others as I felt led of the Lord, I tried to say that there is little fear of God in the evangelical church today. And I said that this lack of reverence and deep appreciation of God’s greatness is often reflected in our songs of worship and praise.

I gave two criteria (mood and message) by which I felt all music should be judged. Is the mood the main effect (it shouldn’t be), and is it worshipful and reverent, something suitable to take place in the very presence of God before His throne, or is it not? After all, we are supposedly singing to Him. Then, does its message (more important than mood) have solid biblical content that will convert the lost or edify

and draw us closer to the Lord?

If you know and use contemporary music of whatever kind that gets an A+ on both of the above, then praise the Lord. It was a word of exhortation that I felt I needed and that the church in general needed. To whatever degree the shoe fits, put it on. Many have written to say that they were indeed challenged and helped by the article. That was my purpose.

Question: An article in Karl Keating's *This Rock*, July 1992, referring to TBC's April newsletter, says Dave Hunt doesn't know the difference between redemption and salvation (they're not the same) and that Hunt shouldn't have criticized Keating's statement, "we are all redeemed—Christians, Jews, Muslims, animists," because this is "basic Christian doctrine, even traditional Protestants hold it." How would you respond?

Answer: Keating is just plain wrong. In fact, there is no distinction between "redemption and salvation," and he gives no biblical reference to prove there is. Anyone who is redeemed is saved; and one can only be saved by being redeemed, as numerous verses prove. Take, for example: "In whom we have *redemption* through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14); and "...the gospel is the power of God unto *salvation*" (Rom 1:16). Redemption is tied to forgiveness of sins and comes through Christ's blood being shed for us—but salvation comes the same way, through believing the gospel, which is about Christ dying in our place to obtain forgiveness of sins for us. Hebrews 9:15 states that redemption gives the promise of "eternal inheritance [life]; and Galatians 4:5 says that we receive the "adoption of sons" (i.e., are born again) through being redeemed by Christ. But to be born again and to receive eternal life is what it means to be saved—or to be redeemed; both terms have the same meaning.

No, it is *not* "basic Christian doctrine, even [held by] traditional Protestants," that "we are all redeemed—Christians, Jews, Moslems, animists." The Bible teaches that Christ paid the price for the redemption of all mankind, that redemption from Satan's power is *offered* to all, but is only *effective* for those who personally accept Christ as Redeemer. They are known as "the redeemed"; for example: "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so" (Ps 107:2)

(that's a definite group of people, not the whole world); "they sung a new song, saying...thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rv 5:9). If the redeemed were redeemed *out of* the rest of mankind, then one cannot say that all mankind is redeemed!

Look up the words "redemption," "redeemed" and "redeemer" in a concordance. These words are *never* used of the world in general but only of God's people, whether Israel in the Old Testament or the saints (believers in Jesus Christ) in the New. To be redeemed means to be set free "from the curse of the law" (Gal 3:13), to be "justified freely by his grace" (Rom 3:24) and to have "the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14) *none* of these blessings accrue to Jews, Muslims or animists, but *only* to those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

Question: My friend is always telling me about the saints, asks me to pray to the saints, begs me to pray to Mary, etc. I tell her, why should I when I have Jesus! I feel as if it's evil just trying to grab me back [into the Roman Catholic Church]. Is it really an attack?

Answer: We are always under "attack" by the world, the flesh and the devil, but that is nothing to be concerned about. Your concern should be (and I know it is) how to win your friend to Christ. Your friend's insistence that you pray to the "saints" flies in the face of the denials by the Roman Catholic apologists that Catholics only ask Mary and the saints to pray *for* them but don't pray *to* them. We pointed out in the April TBC newsletter, *praying to the saints* is exactly what the average Catholic does. So does the pope, and this is the official position of the Roman Catholic Church. Those who deny it are either grossly ignorant or lying. I cover this point in the new tape series we're offering: "Roman Catholicism: A Biblical Perspective."

God repeatedly warns against necromancy (attempted contact with the spirits of the dead: Dt 18:9-12, etc.). There is not one prayer in the entire Bible directed to Abraham, the friend of God, or to Moses or Daniel, et al., nor any indication that anyone ever prayed to the dead. Prayer is to God. The Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be expressed, and Christ is our advocate at the right hand

of the Father. So why should Mary have to intercede for us with Christ?

Question: I've heard a number of Catholic apologists say that Dave has misrepresented Anathema, that it doesn't mean eternal damnation in hell as he says, but simply excommunication. *This Rock* for July 1992 made that same charge. Who is right?

Answer: As for my interpretation of *anathema*, *This Rock* is playing a semantic game with its readers. Of course anathema means excommunication. But excommunication means "eternal damnation," for outside of the Roman Catholic Church there is, according to official teaching, no salvation.

They make anathema sound a bit nicer than it is by suggesting that Rome doesn't anathematize anyone, but heretics do it to themselves. The Roman Catholic Church doesn't excommunicate anyone, but the person does it to himself "by adopting wrong theological positions." Who decides that a theological position is wrong? Certainly the heretics don't pronounce that decree against themselves. It is the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which alone can interpret the Bible, which decides that a belief is heretical. It is they who pronounce the anathema upon all those who disagree with them, which includes you, too, if you are an evangelical.

The article ends with another slur on my integrity, this time accusing me of mangling the position of New Agers along with that of Roman Catholics. No documentation is offered, not one quote, to support this assertion—just another *ad hominem* broadside to discredit me as one who is "pursuing a higher calling than the truth."

God & Self

Dave Hunt

Me, Myself & I is typical of many books written to defend Christian psychology. Its author, Archibald D. Hart, is dean of Fuller Seminary's Graduate School of Psychology. Advertisements for the book call it "a response to Dave Hunt and John MacArthur, Jr." In fact, Hart's quarrel is with God's Word, which he (like other "Christian" psychologists) denies is sufficient to provide counsel for every emotional and spiritual need, even though it claims to be. To say that Christian psychology is *compatible* with Scripture is an admission that it supplements God's Word.

Hart leaves no doubt concerning biblical insufficiency. He states repeatedly, "We desperately need a Christian psychology" (pp 11, 21, etc.); "The need for 'integrating' psychology and faith is urgent" (p 247). *If such is indeed the case, then four logical conclusions must follow:*

1. From its very beginning, the church, including Jesus who founded it and Paul and the other apostles and prophets (to say nothing of Old Testament saints such as Moses and Daniel), desperately needed psychological help. The heroes and heroines of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 all would have lived happier, more fulfilling, fruitful and godly lives had psychological counseling been available in their day.

2. Because Scripture lacks essential insights into human personality, behavior and treatment which are found only in the recently developed field of psychology, the church has been incapable of properly dealing with many emotional and spiritual problems for nearly 2,000 years. The Old Testament saints were similarly handicapped for another 4,000 years before that.

3. Essential diagnoses and cures of spiritual and emotional problems which the Holy Spirit, for some strange reason, failed to include in Scripture, have at last been supplied by humanists, many of whom (like Freud) were rabidly anti-Christian. Thanks to these godless prophets of psychology, the church can at last deal with the full range of emotional and spiritual problems for which Spirit-filled Christians have

desperately needed psychological help for 20 centuries.

4. As a result of these new and essential psychological insights which have been brought into the church by Christian psychologists to supply what is lacking in Scripture, today's Christians live far happier, more fruitful and victorious lives than Peter, John, Paul, Calvin, Wesley, David Livingstone, Hudson Taylor, Spurgeon, Moody, et al. were able to live, relying only upon the Holy Spirit and God's Word. **[Obviously, all four of these conclusions are blasphemously false.]**

Christian psychology tries to merge Christ with Freud and a host of godless theorists. Talk about ecumenism! Psychology deceitfully unites Christian and pagan in a common language and faith. This humanistic religion's priesthood performs rituals known as psychotherapy for the healing of the soul.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.

Psalms 1:1

Whether these priests are atheists, Catholics or evangelicals, whether they quote the Bible or deride it, all have studied similar academic courses, boast similar degrees, and are licensed by the same secular authorities. When will the church wake up!

Hart argues, "The study of the psychology of learning, perception, and personality is just as valid as the study of anatomy or surgery. But I have yet to hear Dave Hunt or anyone else clamoring for a 'Christian theory of surgery.'" Of course not. There is a difference between body and soul, flesh and spirit, brain and mind, glands and morals, germs and will, disease and sin—"between tissues and issues," as the Bobgans put it.

Hart should ask himself, "If it makes no sense to call medicine, chemistry, learning/perception theory, etc., 'Christian,' why should psychology be called 'Christian'?" Why indeed! This error stems from psychology's erroneous claim to deal with the soul (*psyche*) and to offer solutions to spiritual, moral and emotional problems for which Christianity claims to have the only and sufficient answers. Psychology is, in fact,

an illegitimate rival to the promises God makes in His Word.

In spite of Pentecostal and charismatic claims that no Christian need ever be sick, the Bible does not offer total and perpetual *physical* healing in this life. ("By [His] stripes ye were healed" refers to sin, not sickness; 1 Pet 2:24.) God's Word does, however, offer total and perpetual *spiritual* healing, and that includes the emotions. The Bible doesn't claim to be a chemistry or physics or auto mechanics handbook. None of these disciplines offers anything that could be called "Christian." Then what is "Christian" about psychology? Nothing. Remember that what psychology offers was never part of the Christianity of Jesus or Paul! In fact, Hart admits, "Dave Hunt is correct"—Christian psychology isn't really "Christian" (p 22).

Scripture declares that God's "divine power hath given unto us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pt 1:3-4). In His grace and infinite power, God provides all we need to live holy, happy lives.

The question is whether we believe God, are willing to obey His Word, and are content with what He has given us for "life and godliness." Do we trust His "divine power" as sufficient, or do we think that some psychologist, "Christian" or secular, knows what God doesn't, and can do what God can't? Each Christian is a branch in the true Vine. Is not the life of Christ, the Vine, sufficient to produce a life in us that glorifies God and bears fruit for eternity? Does the "divine nature" of which we are partakers by faith need psychotherapy? Surely not!

Christ lives in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17). Need we look anywhere else than to Him? Indeed, Christ "*is our life*" (Col 3:4). The Christian simply needs to allow and trust Christ to fully express Himself through him or her. It is blasphemy to suggest that Christ living in the Christian needs psychological help! The problem is that self instead of Christ is in control.

Self is at the heart of all psychotherapy — secular or Christian. The aim is always *self-improvement, self-actualization, self-assertion, self-love, self-image, self-esteem, self ad infinitum*. Therefore, “Christian” psychology is forced to defend the self which Scripture says must be denied. That defense is the theme of Hart’s book. His final summation declares, “Christians need help...in reclaiming the promised land called ‘self’ for God” (p 248). Incredible!

There is a difference between denying self (Christ’s requirement), and self-denial (Hart’s gospel). The latter involves self giving up its desires in order to achieve self-improvement and pat itself on the back. Christ’s “deny self,” says Hart, really means self behaving itself by self-control and saying yes to Christ. He tells us that rather than being denied, self must be accepted, affirmed, esteemed, improved — and that in order to develop the self, one must first *understand* it (p 71).

In trying to understand the self, however, Hart becomes bogged down in a hopeless swamp of contradictory statements. For example: “The self is the *totality* of what and who I am as a person” (p42). “Deep within each of us is a place we call the self....All the skeletons of shame and embarrassment are kept hidden there” (p 69). (How can the self be a *place* deep within me and yet be the totality of what and who I am?) “I have the ability to *transcend my self*” (p 46). (How can *I* be something different from, and even transcend, *self* if self is the totality of what I am?) “I can ‘know’ myself....The self...can be known fully only by God” (p27). (Which is it?) “No issue is more important for Christian psychology than the proper understanding of the self....The more I probe and search the self, the more elusive and perplexing it becomes” (p 73). (So pursuing the most important issue leads only to increasing perplexity! What an admission!)

Similar contradictions are found on nearly every page, along with even more serious errors such as, “As we learn to graft ourselves onto the true vine [Christ]...self-fulfillment becomes Christ-fulfillment” (pp 71-72). In truth, we do not “graft ourselves” onto Christ. That occurs by God’s power the moment we are born of the Spirit through faith in Christ as our Savior. As for self-fulfillment being Christ-fulfillment, John the Baptist’s declaration that “He must

increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30), and Paul’s “Yet not I, but Christ” (Gal 2:20) should settle that question.

Hart seems torn between his loyalty to his profession and his desire to be biblical. Unfortunately, he does not exegete the Bible, but reasons from his psychological training and then imposes that view on Scripture, citing verses for alleged support which fail to do so because there aren’t any. Numerous examples could be given. On pages 41-42 under the heading “The Self in Scripture,” Hart lists 16 self-concepts, with a supporting verse for each. In 12 of the 16, he totally misrepresents God’s Word. Let us take the first and last as examples.

“Ignorance of the self misleads and deceives (Is 44:20).” The verse he cites states of an idolater, “He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside....” Clearly the deception does not pertain to “ignorance of the self” but to superstitious trust in the alleged power of an idol. Isaiah is not decrying a lack of the self-knowledge Hart advocates, but, as the context shows, the folly of trusting an idol to provide help which it cannot give.

“We are never to forget ourselves (Jas 1:24).” Not so. James writes that those who hear God’s Word but don’t practice what it says are like a man “beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (Jas 1:23-24). James is not telling us “never to forget ourselves,” but to bring our lives into line with God’s Word.

Psychology seeks to “understand” how and why we think and act as we do. Such an approach would help repair an engine but not a person. We are not programmed robots. Trying to “understand” *why* a young woman raised in a Christian home becomes a prostitute, *why* a pastor with a beautiful wife and a fruitful ministry commits adultery, etc., assumes some reason other than self-will and thus offers an excuse for sin. Christian psychology’s growing popularity is easy to understand: it protects self from the accusing finger of conscience and God’s Word.

One diagnosis fits all cases: SIN. At the root of sin is SELF. Jesus said that we are all the slaves of sin and self until He sets us free (Jn 8:34-36). Unbelief is the root of all sin. There is no greater sin than refusing to believe the promises of God

and not allowing Him to mold us to His will. The just live by faith.

“Too harsh!” cries the Christian psychologist. “What about the person who was abused as a child, or who has been traumatized in a hundred other ways?” Could there be a safer refuge for the wounded and fearful than God himself? Is He not able to bring comfort, courage and deliverance? He promises to do so! The Bible is all about those who were hated, abused, cast out, falsely accused and imprisoned, tortured, slain, and yet triumphed through faith in God. He has not changed. He will work the same deliverance today for those who trust and obey Him.

Yes, but what about those whose fathers repeatedly lied, cheated and abused their trust? How can they believe in God as a loving Father when they had no earthly example? Away with such folly! Since when was any earthly father a model of the heavenly Father? David said, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up” (Ps 27:10). His confidence was in God in spite of his parents’ failings!

A husband would be hurt and frustrated if his wife refused to believe him. What about disbelieving God! He has promised never to leave us or forsake us. Some husbands, of course, have lied and broken promises so often that their wives would be fools to trust them until such men have allowed God to do in them what David prayed for: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps 51:10). God can do that, but therapy cannot. Psychological counseling attempts to develop rather than to deny self. Instead of self-confidence, what we need is trust and confidence in God and obedience to His will.

Christ never promised to keep our cars running or to prosper our businesses or to make Christians greater athletes or scholars than non-Christians. He promised eternal life — not just life that never ends, but a divine quality of life here and now. “He that believeth on me,...out of his belly [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water” (Jn 7:38). Every Christian is indwelt by and led of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; Rom 8:14). “The *fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...” (Gal 5:22-23). No therapy can improve upon that! Ask and

believe God to fill you with His Spirit.

God made man in His image. This does not refer to a physical image, for "God is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24). Man was intended, in all he said and did, to reflect God's love, patience, holiness, grace, mercy, truth—the very character of God. Of course that was impossible for man on his own. Man could only be what God had intended for him if God expressed Himself through man. God had to be his very life.

Self had its awful birth when Adam and Eve willfully acted independently of God. That self, said Christ, must be denied (Mt 16:24-26). It is not that man must cease to exist as an individual with emotions, intellect and will. No, he willingly allows God to fulfill through him the purpose for his existence.

Jesus, the perfect Man, said, "I can of mine own self do nothing...I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (Jn 5:30). Only through denying self can we enter into this relationship with the Father which Christ enjoyed and begin to experience the life He has for us. May this be our passion and joy. TBC

Quotable

A true Christian has been dispossessed of his self-esteem and self-sufficiency to make room for God in the heart where there was none but for sin....Now the preferring [of] self before God is the essential part of the corrupt nature....Self-esteem, self-dependence, self-willedness deny affection and subjection to God.

Stephen Charnock (1628-80)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). Poverty of spirit [is]...an absence of self-esteem. Where that kind of spirit is found, it is sweet poverty...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Charles Spurgeon (1834-92)

Recently I was inspired to reflect on the sufferings of the martyrs. How did these, our brothers and sisters in the faith, without

the aid of "Christian" psychology, triumph in such circumstances? And what about their loved ones—how did they face such sorrow? And how will the Tribulation saints (without "Christian" therapists) do likewise? These questions are asked in all sincerity, with due respect. I'm just a Berean, endeavoring to "prove all things; and hold fast to that which is good."

Anonymous

Excerpted from a letter a member wrote to his church out of concern for its growing involvement in Christian psychology

Q&A

Question (composite of several): One of the hottest books in Christian bookstores is *Quenching the Spirit* by William De Arteaga. The author is appearing on major Christian TV networks and this book is having quite an impact. What do you think of it?

Answer: The basic thesis of the book is that God repeatedly brings new truth to the church through first revealing it to cults and occult groups. Therefore, the fact that unbiblical practices such as visualization, inner healing, positive thinking and positive confession came out of the occult is really in their favor because that's how God works! So those using these occult techniques can feel good about it, though no biblical basis for their use is provided. Charismatics love the book, and it is highly recommended by almost everyone in that camp, from inner-healer Rita Bennett to Jack Hayford and Oral Roberts. Fuller Seminary professor C. Peter Wagner calls it "a valuable picture of opposition to new and unusual works of the Holy Spirit, from John Calvin to Dave Hunt...."

De Arteaga validates charismatic mind-over-matter techniques by arguing that quantum physics proves that "mind-observation" affects subatomic particles. This is a myth promoted by New Age physicists. In fact, *something* must make contact with an object for human observation to occur. Ordinarily, light photons bounce off an object and create an image in the eye and brain. Light bouncing off a car

has a negligible effect upon it. To bounce a photon off a subatomic particle, however, in order to "observe" it, is like bouncing a car off a car—so of course observation affects a subatomic particle. It is not the influence of the *mind* of the observer, however, that causes the effect, as De Arteaga mistakenly suggests.

From this misunderstanding of quantum physics, De Arteaga reasons that because "the mind inherently has some tiny power [to influence subatomic particles]...by faith the mind acts in the power of God and can move mountains" (pp 162-63). God's power is seen as a force our minds operate when we obey "spiritual laws." To De Arteaga, these laws channel God's power. This principle, he says, was opened by "the Logos" to the metaphysical cults and from there came into the church. In fact, the source was Satan, and the biblicized "science of mind" he promotes is still sorcery. He has no comprehension that the miracles he espouses cannot be the product of laws but of God's overriding of laws. (See "Science and God," TBC Sep. 1992.)

De Arteaga sounds scholarly and convincing. If, however, his treatment of me, which occupies a considerable part of the book, is representative, then very little of *Quenching* is factually trustworthy. My beliefs and writings have never been so badly misconstrued — not even in *Witch Hunt* by the Passantinos.

The thesis of *Quenching* was previously presented by De Arteaga in *Past Life Visions* (1983): "The Holy Spirit will flow into occult groups if it (*sic*) is blocked out by Orthodox Christians" (p 17). The earlier book is helpful in understanding De Arteaga because in it his heresies are not as cleverly disguised as in the present volume. In *Visions* (p 132), he lauds Agnes Sanford's incredibly heretical *The Healing Light* (see *The Seduction of Christianity* for an analysis); defends her belief in a pre-earth human existence (pp 145-6); seems to embrace evolution of man from lower species (p 126); declares that "ghosts" are "earthbound souls" (p 187) who may legitimately communicate with the living (p 182) and that the dead should be ministered to by the church (p 183). He argues that reincarnation is biblical and was even "validated by Jesus" (pp 197-209) and that such a gospel is helpful for India because it allows "the Hindu to maintain...the concept of karma-reincarnation" (p 215); and he recommends regression into past lives as a standard method of spiritual healing for the

church to adopt (pp 151-63). If it brings comfort to leading charismatics to have such a heretic support them, then so be it.

Question: I am concerned that debates are not profitable regarding Scripture. Could you please address the matter of debates?

Answer: Much depends upon the spirit in which the debate is engaged. A debate can degenerate into a bitter argument where neither party is listening to the other, each merely reiterating his entrenched and opposing views. One's opponent is rarely convinced, but a clear-cut presentation of *both* sides helps the listener to be better prepared when faced with challenges to biblical truth. In order to contend for the faith, one needs to be knowledgeable. Jesus entered into some very frank exchanges with the rabbis in His day. Paul debated publicly everywhere he went: "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him" (Acts 17:17).

Question (composite of several): Is it not true that 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel have been lost and that those known as Jews today are only from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin? If so, what happened to them and how can God bring all 12 tribes back to their land in the last days?

Answer: If the 10 tribes were lost through intermarriage, then they can't be recovered. In that case, the Lord cannot fulfill His promise to bring all Israel back to her land (Jer 32:37-42) and to make Israel and Judah one nation again (Ez 37:16-19). Either the 10 tribes haven't been lost, or the Bible isn't true.

It is a myth that the 10 tribes which were taken captive into Assyria (2 Kgs 17:6-23) have been lost. In Luke 2, Anna knew that she was from the tribe of Asher. She couldn't have been the only one. In 2 Chronicles 34:6, long after the carrying away of Israel into Assyria, we read of King Josiah cleansing from idolatry "the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali." In 34:9-10 there is mention of the offering to repair the temple that was given by "Manasseh

and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel..." In 35:17-18 we read that the passover in Jerusalem was attended by "the children of Israel...[and] all Judah and Israel."

Obviously, not every member of the 10 tribes was carried captive into Assyria, and many must have made their way back to Israel in the ensuing years. Furthermore, since God said that He would scatter Israel into all the world and bring her back to her land in the last days, why should 10 tribes be lost simply because they were taken to Assyria? Here is His Word: "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel [not just Judah and Benjamin] among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth" (Am 9:9).

Those known today as Jews are not only from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah but from all Israel. We have God's Word for that, otherwise He could not bring them back to their land. Here is only one of scores of promises: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of *Israel*, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them;...and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (Am 9:14-15).

The Cradle & the Cross

Dave Hunt

Another Christmas season is here. Why December 25, since it's unlikely that Jesus was born at this time of year? The Roman Church simply took the Saturnalia, a licentious celebration of the winter solstice dedicated to Saturn, and Christianized it in order to convert pagan Rome. The actual effect was to paganize official Christianity. For example, statues of Isis and Horus were renamed Mary and Jesus so that pagans could continue their idolatry under Christian names. Pagan customs involving vestments, candles, incense, images and processions were incorporated into Church worship and continue today. No authentic history denies these facts.

Would the world, then, be better off without Christmas? Atheists think so and wish to remove all manger scenes and crosses from public places. Rather than joining the enemies of God in denouncing Christmas, however, might we not better cultivate the bits of truth that shine through the lamentable commercialization and paganism? This is a unique time of year for presenting the gospel to the world, so let us take advantage of the opportunity.

Christ's birth and the details of His life, death and resurrection were foretold centuries before by the Hebrew prophets. No such prophecies preceded the births of Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad, et al. Biblical prophecy fulfilled is the most powerful persuader we have. Paul used it in converting the lost and turned the world of his day upside down. So should we.

In Romans 1:1-4 we see Paul's approach. He refers to "the gospel of God, (which he [God] had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures)." Christianity is not a first-century invention. It is, in fact, the fulfillment of that which, with one voice, the Hebrew prophets consistently foretold for centuries.

There are more than 300 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. Why? So Israel could identify Him, when in the fulness of time God would send forth his Son (Gal 4:4). The third chapter in the Bible contains the first prophecy of the Messiah's coming, His virgin birth ("the seed of the woman") and His destruction of Satan (Gn 3:15). The prophets declared that He must be of the

"lineage of David" (Jer 23:5; 2 Sm 7:10-16; Ps 89:3-4) and rule upon David's throne. To prove that Jesus met this criteria, Matthew and Luke begin with the genealogy of Joseph and Mary.

Having rejected Jesus, the Jews still hope for their Messiah to come—but they hope in vain. Jesus Christ fulfilled Malachi 3:1 ("the Lord [Messiah], whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple") when He cast out the money changers and merchants (Mk 11:15). The destruction of the temple 38 years later in A.D. 70 made it impossible during the last 1,923 years for any would-be Messiah to fulfill that scripture. Moreover, all genealogic records were lost in the destruction of the temple, so a future

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place...

2 Peter 1:19

"Messiah" would not be able to prove the necessary descent from David.

Yes, the temple will soon be rebuilt. Instead of cleansing it, however, as Christ did, Antichrist will defile it with his image and force the world to worship him as God: "he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thes 2:4).

Jacob prophesied, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...until Shiloh [Messiah] come..." (Gn 49:10). Shortly after the birth of Jesus, about A.D. 7, the sceptre departed when the Jews lost the right to enforce the death penalty. Thereafter, it was forever too late for Messiah to come. By God's grace, however, He had already come; and He will come *again* to rescue at Armageddon those who rejected Him the first time. They will know Him by the marks of Calvary ("they shall look upon me whom they pierced"; Zec 12:10). The sceptre having departed from Judah, Christ, instead of being stoned by the Jews, was executed by the Romans, whose supreme penalty was crucifixion. Thus was fulfilled yet another prophecy: "...they pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps 22:16)!

But back to the cradle. Caesar Augustus had no inkling of the momentous effect of his decree "that all the world should [return

to the city of one's birth to] be taxed" (Lk 2:1). That decree brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in time for the birth of her "firstborn son" (so she had other children) in fulfillment of Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem...out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel..."

What depth of meaning there is in the simple statement, "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son" (Gal 4:4)! His birth had to occur before the sceptre departed from Judah; His death, after. His birthplace was determined by a Roman decree; His death and its method of execution, by the Roman occupation of Israel. He had to come before the temple was destroyed and with it the genealogic records.

The "fulness of time" has passed. No one else can meet the Messianic criteria laid down by the Hebrew prophets! That simple phrase, however, carries a much deeper meaning than we have seen above. If the timing of His birth causes us to marvel, the timing of Christ's death is even more precise and full of meaning. Daniel prophesied the very day of His death.

Through the writings of Jeremiah, Daniel learned that the Babylonian captivity would last 70 years (Dn 9:2). God had commanded that each seven years the Hebrew slaves should be set free, debtors forgiven and the land given a one-year sabbath of rest (Ex 21:2; Dt 15:1,2,12; Lv 25:2-4). For 490 years Israel had disobeyed this precept. As judgment, Jews became slaves of Babylon while their land rested the 70 years of sabbaths it had been denied.

While confessing this sin, pondering and praying, Daniel was given the revelation that another period of 490 years (70 weeks of years) lay ahead for his people and for Jerusalem (9:24). At the end of that time all of Israel's sins would be purged, all prophecy fulfilled and ended, and the Messiah would be reigning on David's throne in Jerusalem. These 70 weeks of years (490 years) were to be counted "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (v 25). That crucial date is given to us in Scripture.

Nehemiah tells us that it was "in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king" (2:1) that he received the authorization to rebuild Jerusalem. When the day of the month was not given the first day was intended. There were

several Artaxerxes, but only one, Longimanus, who ruled more than 20 years—from 465-425 B.C. Thus we have the key date from which this incredible prophecy was to be calculated: Nisan 1445 B.C.

At the end of 69 of these “weeks” (7x69 = 483 years) “Messiah the Prince” would be made known to Israel (Dn 9:25) and then “be cut off [slain], but not for himself” (v 26). Counting 483 years of 360 days each (the Hebrew and Babylonian calendar), a total of 173,880 days from Nisan 1445 B.C., brings us to Sunday, April 6, A.D.32. *On that very day*, now celebrated as Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey and was hailed as Messiah the Prince! (Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled at the same time.)

There is, however, an even deeper meaning to the phrase, “In the fulness of time...” April 6, A.D.32 was, on the Hebrew calendar, tenth of Nisan. On that day the passover lamb was taken from the flock and placed under observation for four days to make certain that it was “without blemish.” During the same four days, Christ, whom John the Baptist had hailed as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29), was likewise on display before Israel. On the fourteenth of Nisan, “the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it [the passover lamb] in the evening [between 3:00 and 6:00 P.M.]” (Ex 12:6). It was during that precise time period that Jesus died on the cross!

It is fascinating to see how God uses man’s decrees and even man’s connivings against Him to fulfill His Word. The rabbis had determined not to arrest Jesus during passover, “lest there be an uproar of the people” (Mk 14:2). Yet that was when He had to die. Judas was not only Satan’s pawn, but God’s. Even the “thirty pieces of silver” he so shrewdly bargained for fulfilled prophecy (Zec 11:12-13). As Peter would declare in his Pentecost sermon, “Him, being delivered *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23). Paul wrote, “Christ our passover [lamb] is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7).

The fourteenth of Nisan began, as Jewish days did, at sunset Wednesday evening. That night Jesus and His disciples had the “last supper” in the upper room where they were preparing to eat the passover the following night. At this meal “before the feast of the passover” (Jn 13:21), Jesus told His disciples, “One of you shall betray me” (Jn 13:1). Earlier He said, significantly, “Tell

you before...that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*” (Jn 13:19). The word “he” is in italics and does not appear in the original. Jesus was declaring once again to His disciples that He was Yahweh, the I AM of Israel, who tells beforehand what will happen and makes certain that it comes to pass (Is 46:9-10).

Arrested by the Judas-led troop in the Garden later that night, Christ was taken secretly to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. A sham trial before the Sanhedrin, with hastily called false witnesses, convened sometime after midnight, condemned Christ to death as dawn broke. Shortly thereafter, Pilate, the Roman governor, was notified of the emergency. Hurriedly taken down side streets, the prisoner was received into the citadel at “the third hour” (Mk 15:25), about 9:00 A.M., Nisan 14. All over Israel preparations

I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done...

Isaiah 46:9-10

were underway to kill the passover lamb, which was to be eaten that night.

Jerusalem was crowded and in a state of great excitement. Valuing public relations, Pilate consulted his ever-volatile citizens and let them decide the prisoner’s fate. Incited by the rabbis, the bloodthirsty rabble suddenly turned against the One who had miraculously healed and fed so many of them. “Crucify him, crucify him” (Lk 23:21). “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Mt 27:25). The horrible chant echoed down Jerusalem’s narrow streets.

Shortly before noon the soldiers had finished their vicious, depraved sport. Jesus, scourged almost into unconsciousness and beaten about the face until he was nearly unrecognizable, was led through the frenzied, screaming mob out of the city to “the place of the skull.” By high noon, the One whom Jerusalem, in fulfillment of prophecy, had the previous Sunday hailed as its long-awaited Messiah, was hanging naked, in shame and agony, on the center cross between two thieves. Man had crucified his Creator! Angels recoiled in horror

and the sun hid its face.

The next three hours of that Thursday afternoon the earth was darkened mysteriously (Mt 27:45) as God “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is 53:6). Thursday? Not “Good Friday”? Indeed not. Jesus himself had said, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [i.e., in that part of Hades known as “Abraham’s bosom”]” (Mt 12:40; Lk 16:22). The gospel includes the declaration that Christ “rose again the third day” (1 Cor 15:4).

Obviously, had Christ been crucified on Friday, He couldn’t possibly have spent three days and three nights in the grave by Sunday morning. We are distinctly told that the angel rolled away the stone “as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week” (Mt 28:1). The tomb was already empty at that point, so Christ must have risen from the dead sometime prior to dawn.

Yet the myth of a “Good Friday” crucifixion persists, with much ritual and dogma built upon that obvious mistake. In this fact alone we have sufficient evidence of Rome’s manufacture and endorsement of untruth to cast doubt upon everything else it affirms with equal dogmatism. And what can be said for the Protestants who, by the millions, so willingly go along with this error?

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—does it really matter? Yes! The day of our Lord’s crucifixion is of the utmost importance. If Christ was not three days and three nights in the grave, then He lied. Moreover, His death, to fulfill prophecy, had to occur at the very time the passover lambs were being slain throughout Israel. It is an astronomical fact that Nisan 14, A.D.32, fell on Thursday.

“And it was the preparation of the passover...The Jews therefore...that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day...besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away” (Jn 19:14,31). Wait! Not a bone of the passover lamb (Ex 12:46) or of the Messiah (Ps 34:20) could be broken. Not knowing why he did it, “one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side” (Jn 19:34), fulfilling yet another scripture: “they shall look upon me whom they pierced” (Zec 12:10).

John explains that the “sabbath” which began at sunset the Thursday Christ was crucified “was an high day.” It was, in fact, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, of which the first and last days were special sabbaths during which no work was

to be done. That “high” sabbath ended Friday at sunset and was immediately followed by the weekly sabbath which ended at sunset on Saturday. Thus two sabbaths followed Christ’s death, preventing the women from coming to the grave until the third day, Sunday morning.

The rabbis thought that having Jesus crucified proved He was not the Messiah. In fact, it was one more proof that He was! In taking His clothes for a souvenir, in gambling for his robe and giving Him vinegar mixed with gall to drink, the soldiers unwittingly added to that proof the fulfillment of yet more prophecies (Ps 22:18; 69:21). The nails driven into hands and feet by Roman soldiers and the spear that pierced His side drew forth the blood of our redemption—all in fulfillment of prophecy!

It is impossible to remain an honest skeptic after comparing what the prophets said with the historical record of Jesus Christ, from the cradle to the Cross. Proof of the Resurrection, which we must leave for another time, is even more powerful! We have solid reason for our faith in Christ. Knowing the facts increases our joy and gives us courage to present the gospel with boldness and conviction. TBC

Quotable

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior’s blood?
Died He for me who caused His pain,
For me who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love, how can it be,
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

’Tis mystery all, the Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
’Tis mercy all, let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night.
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth and followed thee!

Charles Wesley

Beware of the pleasant view of the Fatherhood of God—God is so kind and loving that of course He will forgive us. That

sentiment has no place whatever in the New Testament. The only ground on which God can forgive us is the tremendous tragedy of the Cross of Christ. To put forgiveness on any other ground is unconscious blasphemy. God can forgive sin and reinstate us in His favor [only] through the Cross of Christ, and in no other way.

Never build your preaching of forgiveness on the fact that God is our Father and He will forgive us because He loves us. It is untrue to Jesus Christ’s revelation of God; it makes the Cross unnecessary; and the Redemption “much ado about nothing.” God could forgive men in no other way than by the death of His Son, and Jesus is exalted to be Saviour because of His death.

Oswald Chambers
My Utmost for His Highest

Q&A

Question: I was very upset by the answer from you about the reason you prefer the KJV...I need you to please send me several examples of what you consider “serious” errors [in modern translations]. I would also be very appreciative of some reading material that the lay person can understand...or names of some sources....

Answer: Thank you for your recent letter challenging me re my support of the KJV. This question is too complex to deal with in a brief letter, but let me try once again. You asked for sources.

The best case against “KJV only” is presented by D. A. Carson in *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism*. He points out, in “eight key Christological verses (Jn 1:1,18; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; 2 Thes 1:12; Ti 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pt 1:1)...the KJV fails to underscore the deity of Christ in four.” Most modern translations do as well or better. The NIV scores in seven of the eight. Even Thomas M. Strouse, though strongly criticizing Carson, admits these four KJV failures (Jn 1:18; 2 Thes 1:12; Ti 2:13; 2 Pt 1:1) and explains them as “a textual problem (Jn 1:18) and the other three are translational problems.” Even its defenders must admit to some flaws in the KJV.

Critics fault the KJV because it comes

from a Greek New Testament which was put together by Erasmus in 1516, later improved by Theodore Beza and Robert Stephanus. The latter’s fourth edition in 1551 is “substantially the *Textus Receptus*,” according to Jasper James Ray, one of its most fervent defenders. Too late in time, say the critics, and too few manuscripts as its source. Yet this was basically the Greek text that had been accepted by the Greek church in the East for centuries (the Roman Catholic Church in the West used the Latin Vulgate), earlier manuscripts from which the Greek Bible came having been worn out and discarded. Modern translations (some are worse than others, the RSV in particular) come from a Greek text developed by Westcott and Hort (two scholarly heretics) based largely upon *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*, which, though older, are clearly corrupted.

In *God Wrote Only One Bible*, Jasper James Ray cites more than 200 differences between the KJV and “44 new version Bibles”—some minor, some serious. How do we know who is right without learning Greek and poring over thousands of ancient manuscripts? In checking out the differences Ray cites, not only logic but the testimony of the rest of Scripture and the Holy Spirit come down solidly on the side of the KJV. You wanted examples. Here are a few.

In Revelation 1:11, RSV, NAS (and others, but I can’t list them all) leave out “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.” Not only is this a key claim to deity stated in a special way to show that Jesus is *Jahweh* (see Is 44:6), but it seems logical that the speaker would immediately identify Himself. It is more likely to have been deleted than added.

In John 9:35 modern translations change “Son of God” to “Son of man,” which not only denigrates Jesus but makes no sense in this context. Yes, Jesus often called Himself “Son of man,” but in His general teaching to the multitude where He used veiled language. Here He is introducing Himself to someone who never heard of Him or heard His teaching, and “Son of man” wouldn’t mean anything.

In Luke 2:33 “Joseph” is changed to “father” and in verse 43 “Joseph and his mother” are changed to “his parents.” All of the above (and others) deny His deity. Though Christ’s deity is clear in other places in most modern translations, these and other

verses send the opposite signal, thus causing confusion.

In Colossians 1:14 “through his blood” is left out in RSV, NAS, etc., though they include it in Ephesians 1:7. I don’t think Paul omitted it. In 1 John 4:3, “Christ is come in the flesh” is missing, though this phrase was a key in combatting gnostic cults and now the New Age. In Luke 4:8, “Get thee behind me, Satan” is omitted, though it seems appropriate. In Luke 4:4, “but by every word of God” is missing, making it an improper quote of Deuteronomy 8:3 and weakening it. In each case deletion seems more likely to have occurred than addition.

There are several cases where direct reference to Old Testament prophecies seems very appropriate yet is left out of RSV, NAS, etc., such as Matthew 27:35, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet”; Mark 13:14, “spoken of by Daniel the prophet”; Mark 15:28, “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith,” etc. Again the text seems weakened by the loss.

Question: Christ said, “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” In view of such scriptures, how can you believe in a Rapture and Resurrection at the beginning of the Great Tribulation? Doesn’t Revelation 20:4-5 teach that the “first resurrection” takes place after the Battle of Armageddon?

Answer: Beware of teaching built on one isolated verse. What do “first resurrection” and “last day” mean? The answer can only be found in the context of all Scripture. In John 5:28-29, Jesus spoke of two resurrections: “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the [1] resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the [2] resurrection of damnation.”

Undoubtedly Revelation 20:4-5 refers to the resurrection of life. That the reference is not to the resurrection of *all* believers, however, but only those martyred by Antichrist during the Great Tribulation, is clearly stated: “them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark....”

Then what about Abraham, David, Peter,

Paul, Spurgeon, Moody, and Christians who have died more recently, none of whom was slain by Antichrist? When are they resurrected? At the Rapture, as 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 declares, “the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air.” No mention of that in Revelation 20, so it must have already occurred—another argument for a pretrib Rapture.

The only resurrection after Revelation 20:4-5 takes place 1,000 years later and must be what Christ called “the resurrection of damnation.” Those who are raised then are still “dead in trespasses and in sins” (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13): “And I saw the *dead*, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened...and the *dead* were judged out of those things which were written in the books...” (Rv 20:12). This is the Great White Throne Judgment of the lost. As for Christians, they have already “appear[ed] before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10) right after the Rapture.

In Revelation 19:7-9, we read of “the marriage supper of the Lamb” involving, of course, His bride, the church (Eph 5:23-32). When and how did she get to heaven? Obviously, at the pretrib Rapture! She is clothed in fine linen, white and clean (v 8). Next, Christ descends with “the armies which were in heaven...[also] clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (v 14) to confront and destroy Antichrist at Armageddon. Surely the church comprises that army.

Enoch prophesied that Christ would return to this earth “with ten thousands [i.e., an innumerable company] of his saints, to execute judgment” upon Antichrist and his followers (Jude 14-15). Zechariah 14:4-5 states that when Christ comes to earth to rescue Israel and “His feet stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...*all* the saints” come with Him. Surely these are not disembodied spirits waiting to be resurrected! The saints who accompany Christ from heaven (Rv 19) to reign on earth must be in their glorified bodies—and they must have been taken to heaven previously in order to descend from there with Him at Armageddon.

That this resurrection in Revelation 20 involves only “the souls of them” who were martyred by Antichrist is a clear indication that all other saints have been previously resurrected. Then why wait until after Armageddon for these martyrs to be raised? We are told why.

Some of these same souls are seen earlier: “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God... and it was said unto them, that they should rest...until their fellowservants also...that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rv 6:9-11). Since all Great Tribulation martyrs are resurrected together—and Antichrist kills believers to the very end—their resurrection must await the end of Armageddon.

If the resurrection of believers who lived and died prior to the Tribulation took place seven years previously, why is the resurrection in Revelation 20 of those slain by Antichrist called “the first resurrection”? Clearly, it is in order to show that these martyrs are part of that company which has already been resurrected, the church. It specifically says that they “reign with him [Christ] a thousand years” (Rv 20:6) as do the saints of all ages.

What about Christ raising all believers “at the last day”? This “last day” is surely not the 24-hour period in which these martyrs are raised, for there are many more days that follow. The “last day” is a lengthy period of time called “the day of the Lord [God]” (Is 2:12; Jer 46:10; Ez 30:3; Jl 1:15, etc.) or “the day of Christ” (1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:10; 2 Thes 2:2). It “comes like a thief in the night” when men are saying “peace and safety” (1 Thes 5:2-3) and do not expect Christ to return or God’s judgment to fall but boast that “all things continue as they were from the beginning” (2 Pt 3:3-4,10).

Clearly this day cannot *begin* with the Millennium, for it involves God’s wrath upon mankind prior thereto. Nor can it begin “as a thief” in the midst of the Tribulation, for by Revelation 6 the world is in ruins and men are crying out to the rocks to hide them from God’s wrath. It can only start at the beginning of the Tribulation with the Rapture and resurrection. It must also last until the end of the Millennium and the destruction of the old universe, for Peter says, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away...the day of God, wherein the heavens...shall be dissolved...we...look for new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pt 3:10-13).

There are many more reasons why the Rapture *must* come before the Tribulation. These points are included in the book *How Close Are We?*

Confusion & Compassion

Dave Hunt

The lofty nave of the ornate Spanish cathedral was crowded with worshipers and curious tourists. I stood in a large side chapel featuring a giant crucifix and watched intently as people from all walks of life entered, tarried for a few moments, then left. Most of them approached the crucifix reverently, kissed the nail-pierced feet of the figure hanging upon it, then rubbed across face or forehead the hand that had touched the sacred object as though to absorb some blessing emanating from it. I remembered similar scenes before Hindu idols in India.

With heads bowed and lips moving in earnest prayer, the supplicants would cross themselves, back away a few paces, bow and then turn to leave. Some stood discreetly at a distance for long periods just inside the chapel, eyes fixed mournfully upon the thorn-crowned figure, their lips moving soundlessly, sorrow and pain written on taut features. Burdened by some deep need or desire, the petitioners obviously hoped to arouse sympathy and to receive help from this particular image of a dead "Christ."

As elsewhere, however, the major prayer effort for these devout Catholics was directed to "Mary, the dispenser of every grace God grants to sinners." While Christ is admittedly the way to the Father, Mary is the conduit by which alone one reaches Christ and grace is granted. Nor are Catholic prayers offered to some vague Mary in heaven, but to "Our Lady of Fatima," or "Our Lady of Lourdes," or to some other apparition of one's preference.

In this cathedral in Zaragoza, Spain, prayers are invariably directed to "Mary of the Pillar." Her image, displayed there, is the major focus of attention and honor; for this basilica was built around a pillar where "Mary" allegedly appeared to the Apostle James. To gain Mary's favor, so many people have kissed the marble pillar where this "miracle" occurred that a deep indentation has been worn into it. Beside the pillar is a picture of Pope John Paul II kissing the "holy place" during a recent visit.

We moved to the center of the nave to observe one of the day's numerous masses. It began with prayers to "Mary of the Pillar."

The officiating priest had gotten well into the ritual before he made any mention of Jesus. We watched as hundreds of paper-thin wafers and two golden cups of wine were supposedly transformed into Christ's literal body and blood. Though the appearance of wafers and wine was unchanged, worshipers crossed themselves and murmured in awe at this great "miracle." Holding aloft first a wafer, then a cup, the priest knelt and worshiped "Christ" now present, then offered His flesh and blood as a sacrifice for participants' sins. Anyone denying that each Mass is itself a true, *propitiatory sacrifice* is anathematized (eternally damned) by Rome.

Silently presiding over the ritual from her perch just to the right of the high altar was "Mary of the Pillar." This small idol, about two feet tall, is daily dressed in a different flaring skirt twice as tall as she. About 400 of these priceless costumes, embroidered with precious stones and adorned with diamonds and pearls, compose the "Virgin's" regalia. *Maria Pilar* is, understandably, the most popular name given to girls born in this region of Spain.

The open paganism and idolatry

**...a man is justified by faith
without the deeds of the law.
Romans 3:28**

involved in Roman Catholicism is a shock to American visitors to Spain, Italy, Central and South America. In the United States, Catholicism hides behind a Christian mask and even claims to be evangelical. There is no such pretense in Catholic countries, where Rome long persecuted and killed evangelicals and still vigorously opposes them.

In such countries there is no attempt to hide the obvious occultism, idolatry and worship of Mary. In order to make converts, Rome has absorbed the paganism peculiar to each culture and dressed it in Christian terminology. For example, in Brazil, Roman Catholicism is mixed with spiritism; in India, with Hinduism; in Haiti, with voodoo; etc. Haiti is said to be 85 percent Roman Catholic and 110 percent Voodoo. Every voodoo ceremony begins with prayers to Catholic saints.

As in South America, everywhere we

traveled during my recent speaking tour of Spain, Christians exclaimed, "How can evangelicals in America even dream of joining Roman Catholics in evangelism?! Bring them over here and we'll show them the truth! Evangelicals by the thousands were tortured and martyred in Europe not so long ago. We've been disowned by our families for becoming Christians, and persecuted and jailed for our faith. The priests oppose the gospel continually. They'd have the Inquisition again today if they could!"

I wish every *TBC* reader could visit Catholic countries to see for themselves the varying degrees of spiritism, witchcraft and idolatry being practiced by nearly all Catholics, with the blessing of their Church. I would especially like to bring the "evangelical Catholics" I've debated to Catholic countries where their own Church actively opposes evangelicals. There the very phrase "evangelical Catholic" would be a joke in bad taste. Both Catholics and evangelicals would be outraged!

Yet in America, the lie persists and one despairs of evangelicals ever waking to the necessity of bringing Catholics the gospel. Let me cite the most recent Christian Research Institute (CRI) *Journal* as an astonishing example. It contains an excellent article by contributor Mitchell Pacwa exposing Matthew Fox, a Dominican priest. In 1977 Fox founded the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality. The ICCS has been located at Holy Names College in Oakland, CA, since 1983. Fox's faculty has long included Starhawk the witch; Buck Ghost Horse, a North American shaman; Luish Teish, a voodoo priestess; and Robert Frager, a Sufi mystic.

Fox is a pantheist whose "Cosmic Christ" is everyone and everything. Pacwa critiques Fox's extensive writings and rightly calls him a New Ager and heretic who "ignores or rejects the central scriptural themes of the need for redemption and the centrality of Christ's death." Obviously Fox is not a Christian. Though the Vatican has rejected his teaching and silenced him for one year ending December 15, 1989, Fox remains a Roman Catholic priest. Pacwa admits that Fox "continues to have tremendous influence" in the Roman Catholic Church. Many nuns, priests and lay Catholics have embraced Fox's anti-Christian heresies, yet they, too, have not been excommunicated, and remain in the

Roman Catholic Church.

Riddled with pagan beliefs and practices, Roman Catholicism is also rife with New Age neopaganism. Yet Pacwa, who admits at least the latter, remains a Jesuit priest. In spite of its abominable errors, he defends the Roman Catholic Church as the guardian of truth and the means of salvation. Though Pacwa opposes New Age doctrines, he defends Rome's heresies to the hilt. Why would a major ministry which is dedicated to exposing error, and one which TBC regards very highly, legitimize a Jesuit?

The response to that question is disturbing: "While Catholics and Protestants disagree on many important doctrinal points, they nonetheless agree on such core doctrines as the nature of God and the person and work of Christ." Tragically, this erroneous statement furthers the delusion that Roman Catholics know and believe the gospel, thus preventing the evangelization which Catholics so desperately need!

Ironically, CRI's founder, Walter Martin, once debated this same Mitchell Pacwa on the John Ankerberg Show. Martin proved that Catholics do indeed have a different view of the work of Christ, and Pacwa admitted it. For a Catholic, Christ's work of redemption on the cross was not sufficient to save us, but our own good works are required in addition.

On the Ankerberg show Pacwa vigorously defended the view that good works are essential to salvation and declared, "Until we meet Christ, we can't be positive that we're saved..." Martin summarized the difference between the Catholic and evangelical view of Christ's work on the cross: "Catholicism, carried to its logical conclusion, is a *denial of justification by faith* in the context of Romans 3, 4, 5 and 8, because it involves works as a means of merit...whereas biblical theology says, 'It's by grace...the gift of God, *not by works*, lest anyone should boast.'"

The issue is more than a theological debate. The eternal destiny of souls is at stake! Please consider the practical results of Roman Catholicism's false gospel in hundreds of millions of lives! Missionary friends in Spain told me that in 15 years of personal evangelism they have *yet to meet one Catholic* who has any idea of God's way of salvation or who has any assurance of going to heaven. Their hope is in the

Church, its sacraments, Mary, indulgences, etc.

Talking with believers in Spain, I asked them what life had been like as a Catholic, what they had really believed, and how they became Christians. The stories would make one weep! They lit their candles, went to Mass, prayed to the images, cried out to Mary, crossed themselves and hoped that somehow the Church would get them to heaven—but they had no assurance of salvation.

One man heard the gospel in a cemetery, where Catholics went on holy days to pray to the saints and ancestors. Knowing this pagan custom, a small group of despised evangelicals had come there to preach and give out literature. Another young man learned the gospel from a tract which a friend had been handed by an evangelical. The friend, after skimming the tract, tore it up in anger. So starved was this young man for truth that he laboriously put the pieces back together, read it and was saved.

A missionary friend who has taken an extensive door-to-door survey in Spain

offered a variety of suggestions from "whatever the church says" to "nobody knows, it's too complicated to know." Of the 2,000 surveyed, two said, "By accepting Christ as Savior." They were Protestants.

The question, "What will happen to you after you die?" yielded the following results: 53 percent didn't have the faintest idea; 14 percent rejected belief in anything beyond death; 12 percent said they would get to heaven or a better life, but had no idea how; and the remaining 21 percent offered suggestions ranging from "judgment according to how I lived" to "reincarnation" and "purgatory." How tragic!

Even if true, which it isn't, to what purpose does one claim that Roman Catholic theologians express in the fine print a biblical view of "the person and work of Christ"? Going out into the streets or door-to-door in Catholic countries, one searches in vain for a Roman Catholic who even knows, much less believes, the gospel! Let us have compassion for these lost souls! Let us love them enough to bring them the biblical truth they so desperately need.

The vast majority in Catholic countries, where upwards of 98 percent are raised Roman Catholic, have serious doubts about their religion. Most have been turned off by priests who openly say they don't believe in God or the Bible, yet still say Mass; by alcoholic and pedophilic priests; by Rome's dogmatic control of minds and lives. Yet most still

want Extreme Unction when they die and thereafter Masses and prayers said for them "just in case." Rather than opening them to the truth, disillusionment with Roman Catholicism has turned them against all religion, making it almost impossible to evangelize them. They are left with a spiritual void which they attempt to fill with Satan's pseudoreligions of self-improvement and occultic powers. These cults abound in Spain.

Very quietly and seductively the same merger with paganism which has so long characterized Roman Catholicism is taking place even within evangelical circles. It comes insidiously through psychology and ecumenism and the idea that we must not offend but be tolerant of all beliefs in order to "win" others to Christ. We have documented the occult techniques in psychotherapy (whether "Christian" or not), in the inner healing movement, in the entire recovery movement and the newer 12-step programs now in the church.

Everywhere I travel overseas I find the

The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

told me sadly, "I have yet to talk to a single Catholic over here who can explain what the gospel is, or just what it takes to be saved. They are incredulous when I explain that I am assured of going to heaven after I die because the Scriptures say so and God doesn't lie. None of them would say that it is sufficient only to believe in Jesus to be saved, or that the blood of Jesus alone is, in itself, a sufficient price paid to redeem them from the curse of sin. The more involved they are in Roman Catholicism, the more firmly it seems that they hold to the necessity of works added to their 'faith.'"

One random survey of 2,000 homes in the region of Barcelona revealed the following: 86 percent were Roman Catholic, 14 percent were raised Catholic but inactive; 38 percent had no idea how one gets to heaven; 38 percent said heaven is attained by "loving your neighbor and good deeds"; 10 percent said it was by keeping the Ten Commandments; 2 percent denied the existence of heaven; the remaining 12 percent

same errors accelerating within the church as here in the United States and Canada. We receive hundreds of letters and phone calls from people who have been saved out of Roman Catholicism and the occult, New Age, drugs and psychotherapies of all kinds, only to find the same errors from which they were delivered now proliferating inside the evangelical church. They appeal to us to recommend a good, biblically sound Christian fellowship in their area.

We face some trying days ahead if the Lord tarries. Last week I watched a John Bradshaw seminar series that went five days on Public Broadcasting TV. While talking about faith in God (he had his own unbiblical definitions for both), he denounced those who claim to be saved and thereby “destroy the self-image of others who don’t believe exactly as they do.” It was all extremely clever and persuasive. The audience was obviously convinced. One could easily see the day coming when such arguments would be used to stifle or muzzle evangelicals as a menace to society.

If the Lord tarries much longer, it will become increasingly difficult to be a Berean and to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. The pressure to be “positive” and not to disagree with others will become almost unbearable. We dare not compromise the truth, not because we delight in pointing out error, but because those who reject the gospel of Christ are lost eternally. To bring them the truth, we will risk wrath and ridicule and even our lives if we love the lost with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ who died to save them! He is coming soon. There is no time to waste. TBC

Quotable

I saw that these zealous [martyrs]... willingly gave their lives and their estates for their doctrine and faith. And I was one of those who had disclosed to some of them the abominations of the papal system. But I myself continued in my comfortable life and acknowledged abominations simply in order that I might enjoy physical comfort and escape the cross of Christ.

Pondering these things my conscience tormented me so that I could no longer endure it. I thought to myself—I, miserable man, what am I doing? If I continue in this way, and do not live agreeably to the Word of the Lord, according to the knowledge of

the truth which I have obtained; if I do not censure to the best of my little talent the hypocrisy, the impenitent, carnal life, the erroneous baptism, the Lord’s Supper in the false service of God which the learned ones teach; if I through bodily fear do not lay bare the foundations of the truth, nor use all my powers to direct the wandering flock who would gladly do their duty if they knew it, to the true pastures of Christ—oh, how shall their shed blood, shed in the midst of transgression, rise against me at the judgment of the Almighty and pronounce sentence against my poor, miserable soul!

My heart trembled within me. I prayed to God with sighs and tears that He would give to me, a sorrowing sinner, the gift of His grace, create within me a clean heart, and graciously through the merits of the crimson blood of Christ forgive my unclean walk and frivolous easy life and bestow upon me wisdom, Spirit, courage, and a manly spirit so that I might preach His exalted and adorable name and holy Word in purity, and make known His truth to His glory.

The testimony of *Menno Simons*, founder of the Anabaptist Mennonites, as he mourned the deaths of martyrs he knew

Q&A

The following letters were too lengthy to quote entirely, so pertinent excerpts are given.

Question: Your recent response in the Q&A section seemed to include Israel—a term I will use interchangeably with Old Testament saints—in the Rapture and thus in the church. Such a view automatically nullifies any distinction between Israel and the church. To my mind, 1 Thes 4:14-18 applies only to the church. Israel’s resurrection must come at the end of the Tribulation along with those tribulation believers who were martyred for not receiving Antichrist’s mark. What is your response?

Answer: You ask, “But exactly who will be resurrected at the time of the Rapture?” First Thessalonians 4 says it will be “The dead *in Christ*.” You don’t think any Jews could be included in this number. Why not? Jews who believe in Christ today are

in the church. Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad.” Abraham looked forward to Christ and though he didn’t understand as fully as we do today, he is, therefore, “in Christ.” Surely all saints, Old or New Testament, must be “in Christ.”

When Jesus returns to the Mount of Olives, “all the saints” come with Him (Zec 14:5). The Old Testament speaks of saints as much as the New. You say the Old Testament saints were Israel. What about Adam, Enoch, Noah, et al.? When Christ cried, “It is finished,” and the veil of the temple was ripped from top to bottom, “many bodies of the saints which slept arose” (Mt 27:51-53). These were Old Testament believers redeemed by the blood of Christ. I see no reason why they cannot be part of the church and thus resurrected at the Rapture. If not resurrected then, when?

You say they will be resurrected “at the end of the Tribulation along with those tribulation believers who were martyred.” But Revelation 20:4 specifically limits that resurrection to the tribulation martyrs who believed and were slain after the Rapture. Furthermore, for Old Testament Jews to be part of the church no more nullifies the distinction between Israel and the church than for Jews who believe today to be part of the church. It is the Jews who are alive at the Second Coming and believe in Christ at that time who will inhabit the land of Israel under Christ’s reign during the Millennium.

Question: I receive *The Berean Call* and enjoy your articles. However, your November issue has a misleading statement that needs to be publicly corrected: “In spite of Pentecostal and charismatic claims that no Christian need ever be sick....” I am an Assemblies of God pastor. Neither my denomination nor I believe that.

Answer: Certainly I didn’t mean that *all* Pentecostals and charismatics believe that “no Christian need ever be sick,” nor do I think most people took it that way. However, it would have been clearer had I said, “In spite of the claims by *some* Pentecostals and charismatics....” I recognize that there are many such as yourself who do not hold that extreme position.

There is, however, some confusion. The Assemblies of God “Position Paper on Divine Healing” doesn’t say that one can

always claim a healing and admits that not everyone is healed. Yet it does say, "healing is in the atonement." Yes, all we have is in the atonement, but many AOG pastors give the impression that healing is ours by faith in the same way as forgiveness of sins. Unfortunately, the Position Paper puts its major emphasis upon the parallels between healing from sickness and from sin in a way which could leave some readers with the wrong impression.

I have encountered many within the AOG who teach that one can always claim a healing from anything. This impression is certainly given in the way many pastors *command* the sick to be healed in the name of Jesus. Is it not destructive to a young person's faith to hear the pastor week after week, in the name of Jesus, command the sickness to depart and note that it very rarely does? I agree with your denomination's official position. Unfortunately, something else is often practiced and believed by many within its ranks.

Question: Why do you speak of Pentecostal charismatics in such a derogatory manner? In your November '92 issue you sound as if you have a chip on your shoulder. It's very demeaning to us. I resent the fact that you categorize all Pentecostal charismatics as believing in the "name it and claim it movement." You stated later that charismatics love the book *Quenching the Spirit* by Wm. De Arteaga. This book sounds like it's straight from the pit of hell!! Neither we nor any of our charismatic friends would ever touch anything recommended by Rita Bennett, because she's into such error herself, nor would we read anything recommended by anyone from Fuller Seminary. You don't have to be a good Christian to know that Christianity and psychology don't mix! Please, please stop categorizing Pentecostal charismatics as being ignorant of Satan's devices. Except for this one problem, your paper is good and informative and needed to warn Christians.

Answer: I did not intend to "categorize all Pentecostal charismatics as believing in the 'name it and claim it movement'" and as being deluded by De Arteaga, Rita Bennett, et al., as you suggest. If that was the impression given, then I apologize, for that was not

intended. On the other hand, in spite of your own and your pastor's aversion to false doctrine, the Assemblies of God are not as clean as you imagine. Is it not true that Oral and Richard Roberts and positive confession or word faith teachers are popularly received in many large Assemblies of God?

As for the Pentecostal/charismatic movement in general, does it not provide most of the support and following for those who hold to serious false doctrines, such as the Robertses, Hagin, Copeland, Cho, Hinn, W. V. Grant, Tilton, et al.? (I'm not suggesting that *each* of these men holds *all* false doctrines, but they all hold some.) Nor is this true only among the fringe fanatics. Is it not the case also with the mainstream Pentecostal churches?

Why doesn't the Assemblies of God vigorously oppose the false doctrines and practices and outright heresies that are so prominent in the Pentecostal/charismatic movement? Why is there not a strong voice raised from your Springfield, MO leadership against the excesses and heresies promoted by Paul Crouch around the world? (Crouch was raised in the AOG, is really a product of Springfield, and though no longer ordained is very popular in AOG churches.) On the contrary, there seems to be confusion and compromise within the AOG's own ranks, right up to the top. Let me give some examples.

Glen D. Cole of Sacramento has served at the top level of AOG leadership as an executive presbyter, yet he is deeply involved with much that you say the AOG stands against. He has even had a Catholic bishop perform the Mass in his church at which Cole gave the sermon and said he had "never felt a greater presence of the Holy Spirit at a meeting." Yes, officially the AOG Bylaws, Article VIII, Sec. 11, seem to oppose the ecumenical movement and forbid participation in it, but the language leaves loopholes. Large enough loopholes, apparently, for the AOG itself to have engaged for some years in official "dialogue" with Roman Catholics, reported upon favorably in the *Pentecostal Evangel*!

Not only Cole, but AOG pastors Paul Radke and Karl Strader have served on the highly ecumenical North American Renewal Service Committee alongside numerous Catholic leaders and ecumenists. While the AOG seems to deny that David

(formerly Paul Yonggi) Cho of Korea is officially affiliated with it, he is very popular with pastors of some of the largest AOG churches. For example, Cho was a featured speaker at the Grand Rapids First Assembly of God along with AOG Assistant General Superintendent Everett Stenhouse. One of Cho's close friends and supporters, AOG pastor Tommy Reid, has been involved in pushing visualization of Jesus and two-way dialogue with God for years. Cho also was appointed an original committee member of the AOG's worldwide "Decade of Harvest."

Your current General Superintendent, G. Raymond Carlson, has been (and I presume still is) on the Board of Reference of Richard Foster's *Renovaré* along with Catholics, ecumenists, inner healers. *Renovaré* is pushing worldwide Foster's brand of mysticism, which includes visualization and advocates the "spiritual practices" of Catholic mystics and the integration of psychology and theology. You say that you don't know anyone in your "charismatic circle" who believes in integrating psychology and theology, but I guarantee you that most charismatics, like most noncharismatics, do believe in it.

The AOG has its own involvement in "Christian psychology" and some of its leaders and pastors of its largest churches are involved in promoting the lies of self-esteem and self-love. You remind me that "there are people of all denominations who do believe in Christian psychologists...why don't you pick on some of the other believers?" Apparently you haven't read my books and newsletters. I don't "pick on" anyone. However, I do point out error as I see it in comparison to the Word of God, and I have not been selective in those whom I critique.

I Will be with You!

Dave Hunt

A variety of psychotherapies masquerading under Christian terminology are devastating the church by turning Christians from God to self. Among the most deadly are regressive therapies designed to probe the unconscious for buried memories which are allegedly causing everything from depression to fits of anger and sexual misconduct and must be uncovered and “healed.” These offshoots of Freudian and Jungian theories rooted in the occult and which have destructively impacted society for decades are taking their toll within the church.

One popular variety of regression therapy is called “inner healing” and was brought into the church by occultist Agnes Sanford (see *The Seduction of Christianity*). It was carried on after her death by those she influenced, such as lay therapists Ruth Carter Stapleton, Rosalind Rinker, John and Paula Sandford, William Vaswig, Rita Bennett and others. At first most prevalent among charismatics and liberal churches, inner healing has spread widely in evangelical circles. There it is practiced in a more sophisticated form by psychologists such as David Seamands, H. Norman Wright and James G. Friesen as well as a number of lay therapists like Fred and Florence Littauer. The Littauers’ extreme insistence that rare is the person “who can say he truly had a happy childhood” would seem to condition their counselees to recover unhappy and traumatic memories.

Even if it were safely and accurately possible, should one probe into the past in order to dredge up forgotten memories? Memory is notoriously deceitful and self-serving. One is easily talked into “remembering” something which may never have happened. Inner healing, like other forms of psychotherapy, creates, by its very nature, false memories. Furthermore, why must one uncover memories of past abuse in order to have a right relationship with God? Where does the Bible say so? And if parts of the past must be “remembered,” why not every detail? That task would be hopeless. Yet once the theory is accepted one can never be certain that some trauma is not still hidden in the unconscious—a trauma holding the

key to emotional and spiritual well-being!

In contrast, Paul *forgot* the past and pressed on toward the prize (Phil 3:13-14) promised to all those who love Christ’s appearing (2 Tm 4:7-8). The past is of little consequence if Christians truly are new creations for whom “old things are passed away [and] all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17). Searching the past in order to find an “explanation” for one’s present behavior conflicts with the entire teaching of Scripture. Though it may seem to help for a time, it actually robs one of the biblical solution through Christ. What matters is not the past, but one’s personal relationship to Christ now.

Yet many people claim to have been helped by regressive therapy. Finding the “reason” in a past trauma (whether real or a “memory” implanted by suggestion in the therapy process) can bring a change in attitude and behavior for a time. Sooner or later, however, depression or anger or frustration or temptation returns, leaving one to renew the search into the past to find that “key” trauma, the

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.
Proverbs 14:12

memory of which has not yet been uncovered. And so it goes.

In keeping with the Freudian foundation of all “inner healing,” Fred and Florence Littauer’s book, *Freeing Your Mind from Memories that Bind*, presents the thesis that uncovering hidden memories is the key to emotional and spiritual well-being. They suggest that any “memory gaps” from childhood indicate one has probably been abused (and very likely, sexually). By that definition we’ve all been abused. Most of us can’t remember each house we’ve lived in, each school attended, every teacher and classmate, every family vacation when we were children. To teach, as the Littauers do, that these “memory gaps” indicate periods of abuse that have been covered up by the mind is contrary to common sense and is without scientific verification or biblical support.

The Littauers, like so many others in this field, base their approach upon the so-called four temperaments. This long-

discredited personality theory evolved from the ancient Greek belief that the physical realm was composed of four elements: earth, air, fire and water. Empedocles related these to four pagan deities, while Hippocrates tied them to what were considered at that time to be the four bodily humors: blood (sanguine), phlegm (phlegmatic), yellow bile (choleric) and black bile (melancholy). These characteristics were connected to the signs of the zodiac.

There never was any scientific basis for the four temperaments. Yet many Christian psychologists and lay “healers” swear by them today, making them the basis of “personality classification” and the key to behavioral insights. As the Bobgans point out, however, in their excellent latest book, *Four Temperaments, Astrology & Personality Testing*:

The word *temperament* itself comes from the Latin word *temperamentum* which meant “proper mixing.” The idea was that if the bodily fluids were tempered, that is, reduced in their intensity by balancing the humors with each other, then healing would occur...

Even the positions of various planets were thought to alter the fluids for better or worse...

The four temperaments had virtually been discarded after the Middle Ages ...until a few lone souls discovered them among relics of the past and marketed them in twentieth-century language... [Recently], the temperaments have been enjoying a revival...among astrologers and evangelical Christians...[T]he four temperaments are that feature of astrology made palatable to Christians.

Like other Christian psychologists and lay inner healers, the Littauers do not derive their theory and practice from a careful exegesis of Scripture, but quote an isolated verse now and then in an attempt to give the appearance of biblical support. For example, they quote part of a verse—“I, the Lord, search the minds and test the hearts of men” (Jer 17:10, TEV)—beneath their second chapter title, “Searching Ourselves.” In fact, this scripture opposes the idea of searching ourselves. It declares that only God can search and understand our hearts: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the

LORD search the heart...to give every man according to...the fruit of his doings" (17:9-10, KJV).

The context of these two verses gives the lie to the application made not only by the Littauers but by other well-meaning "inner healers." God curses those who trust in anything else and blesses those who trust only in Him. He promises that those who trust in Him "shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that [never shall] cease from yielding fruit" (Jer 17:8). A fruitful life (love, joy, peace, etc.) is produced by the working of the Spirit of God in the lives of those who surrender their otherwise deceitful hearts to Him! And nowhere does the Bible say that taking personality tests and learning one's "temperament" aids His work in us.

The Littauers have extreme difficulty finding scriptures even remotely appropriate and thus are forced to misapply the Bible. As a further example, the chapter titled "Earliest Memories" (p 141) is headed by the verse, "My heart breaks when I remember the past" (Ps 42:4, TEV). In fact, David is not referring at all to "earliest memories" but to the current ridicule and criticism he is receiving from those who "say daily [i.e., *presently*] unto me, Where is thy God?" The verse, "Write down in a book everything that I have told you" (Jer 30:2, TEV), is quoted directly under the chapter heading "Ready, Aim, Write." That chapter is about taking a "thorough look into your past" and "writing down one's feelings"—about as far from Jeremiah recording Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as one could get!

The Littauers are only one example among a host of inner healers, whether licensed Christian psychologists or lay persons, who, though they may be sincere, are leading Christians astray by the millions. Best-selling pop-psychology authors Gary Smalley and John Trent, heavily promoted by James Dobson, came up with their own four temperaments based upon animal types: lion, beaver, otter, and golden retriever!

One's "personality type" or "temperament" is allegedly discovered through a personality profile test such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA), Personal Profile System (PPS), Personality Profile Test (PPT), Biblical Personal Profiles

(BPP), etc. Though popular, personality tests are unreliable. Human personality with its power to choose and a heart that God says is "deceitful above all things" defy predictive formulas and are far too complex to neatly categorize. Even the once-promising classifications of persons as Type A Personalities, (susceptible to heart attack), Type B (less susceptible) and Cancer Personalities, etc. are being discarded because no scientific correlation can be found between disease and "personality type."

These inaccurate and destructive tests are promoted by a host of popular Christian authors and speakers such as psychologist H. Norman Wright and financial analyst Larry Burkett. Four-temperament and personality-classification theories trivialize the human soul and spirit and provide excuses for un-

**Blessed is that man that
maketh the LORD his trust,
and respecteth not the proud,
nor such as turn aside to lies.**

Psalm 40:4

Christian behavior. The focus is on self, analyzing one's feelings, personality, childhood, and trying to find out why one thinks and does what one does.

In contrast, the focus in the Bible is upon God and Christ and His Word, turning from ourselves to Him, turning from the past to present service, and the hope of His return. Instead of seeking to identify one's personality and temperament by reference to speculative systems related to psychology, astrology and the occult, one's thoughts and actions need to be governed by God's inerrant and sufficient Word. God promises that if we heed the doctrine in His Word, He will by "reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness" direct our lives (2 Tm 3:16). As a result, men and women of God become mature, perfected and prepared unto every good work (v 17). Peter assures us that God "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pt 1:3). Jesus declared that those who continue in obedience to His Word are His true

disciples who "know the truth" and whom the truth makes free (Jn 8:31-32). Only those who doubt such promises or are unwilling to take the way of the Cross turn to manmade theories and therapies.

The Bible never even hints at personality types, nor does it categorize individuals as to strengths and weaknesses as a means of identifying their abilities and predicting their success or failure in God's service. Rejecting Saul's armor, with a sling and five stones David went up against the heavily armed Goliath who had terrorized the entire army of Israel. What was his secret? "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.... This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand" (1 Sm 17:45-46). David's confidence was in the Lord, not in himself. Even had David not been an expert with the sling, God would have enabled him to hit the mark. Paul went

so far as to state that God told him that His strength was perfected in Paul's weakness. Thus Paul declared, "...when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor 12:10). Such statements refute the entire rationale of personality testing, temperament identification, and self-esteem and self-worth enhancement.

The Bible is filled with examples of men and women who were hated, abused and cast out by their own families—men and women who were loners, friendless, lacking in talents or abilities, yet who triumphed over the greatest adversity because of their trust in God. These heroes and heroines of the faith give the lie to the unbiblical and humanistic focus upon self that underlies all of the pop psychologies of inner healing. Moses is but one example among many.

When God called Moses to go to Egypt to deliver His people, Moses pleaded that he was incapable of such a mission and asked God to choose someone else (Ex 3:11, 4:10-13). Did God administer a personality test to show Moses that he was well suited? Did he deal with Moses' poor self-image or abysmal self-worth? Did he prescribe inner healing to deliver Moses from those buried memories of being abandoned by his parents and raised in a foster home and the lack of self-identity that resulted? Did he give him a course in self-improvement, self-confidence and success? On the contrary, God made this promise: "I will be with you!"

The well-meaning "counsel" of those who attempt to help Christians under-

stand themselves, by focusing upon self, actually robs counselees of the divine presence and power which Moses knew. Human strengths and weaknesses are beside the point. What matters is whether or not the power of God's Holy Spirit is manifest in one's life. Many if not most of the great Bible characters as well as the more recent heroes of the faith, from the early martyrs to the great missionary pioneers of the nineteenth century, would probably fail today's personality profile tests.

In fact, God did not choose Moses because he was *highly qualified*. He was chosen because he was the meekest man on the face of the earth (Nm 12:3). Why would God choose such a person to confront the mightiest emperor of the day on his turf, in his palace, to deliver Israel from his grip? He did so to teach the Israelites to trust in Him rather than man for their deliverance!

Never is there a hint that Joseph, David, Daniel or any other hero of the faith needed the therapies which are considered to be so vital and effective today. It was when Job got such a glimpse of God that he said, "I abhor [hate] myself" and repented in ashes (Jb 42:5-6) that he was restored by the Lord. It was when Isaiah also had a vision of God and cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Is 6:1-8) that God was able to use him. We need to turn from self-analysis to look at the Lord.

Thirst for God! Get to know Him! The fruit of the Spirit does not come as the result of understanding ourselves through the use of humanistic analyses or techniques (though clothed in biblical language), but through the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit in our weakness. Be weak enough for Him to use you! TBC

Quotable

The Bible never flatters its heroes. It tells us the truth about each one of them in order that against the background of human breakdown and failure we may magnify the grace of God and recognize that it is the delight of the Spirit of God to work upon the platform of human impossibilities. As we consider the record of Bible characters, how often we find ourselves looking into a mirror. We are humiliated by the reminder of how many times we have failed....The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a

moment, the manufacture of a saint the task of a lifetime.

Alan Redpath
The Making of a Man of God, while he was pastor of Moody Church in Chicago

When a man is used to be much with God, and taken up in the study of his glorious attributes, he abhors himself in dust and ashes; and that self-aborrence is his best preparative to obtain admittance to God again....A proud mind is high in conceit, self-esteem, and carnal aspiring; a humble mind is high indeed in God's esteem, and in holy aspiring....art thou a man of worth in thy own eyes? Art thou delighted when thou hearest of thy esteem with men, and much dejected when thou hearest that they slight thee?...Are thy passions kindled if thy word or will be crossed?...Canst thou not serve God in a low place as well as a high? Are thy boastings restrained more by prudence or artifice than humility?

Richard Baxter (1615-91)

Humble, Lord, my haughty spirit,
 Bid my swelling thoughts subside;
 Strip me of my fancied merit:
 What have I to do with pride?
 Was my Savior meek and lowly?
 And shall such a worm as I
 Weak, and earthly, and unholy,
 Dare to lift my head on high?

Teach me, Lord, my true condition;
 Bring me childlike to Thy knee;
 Stripped of every low ambition,
 Willing to be led by Thee.
 Guide me by the Holy Spirit,
 Feed me from Thy blessed Word:
 All my wisdom, all my merit,
 Borrowed from Thyself, O Lord.

Henry Francis Lyte

Q&A

Question: I notice that some ministries and Christian leaders have said that it wasn't the American people but God who put

Clinton and Gore in power and that God is in control of everything. Is that really true?

Answer: God is in control of His universe and every aspect of it to the extent that nothing can happen that He does not *allow*. He is not, however, the *active cause* behind all that happens. If that were the case, then we would have to blame God for all evil. The idea that it is God's perfect will for each ruler in power to be there is a misunderstanding of Romans 13: "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

Paul is teaching that without God there would be no purpose for life, no order, and thus no basis for authority; and that God has ordained that just as there is order in the natural world so there must be among men. Therefore, each ruler "is the minister of God for good." As God's representatives, rulers are supposed to minister God's laws in righteousness. Actually, very few do.

God no more specifically chose Clinton and Gore to rule than He did Hitler. He did, however, ordain that there should be rulers and that they should be His ministers of righteousness. Since Clinton and Gore advocate rebellion against God in their acceptance of homosexuality, the murder of babies in the womb, and the worship of creation instead of the Creator, they hardly represent God. And, like all rulers, they will be held accountable by Him.

Far from being God's choice, as some claim, Clinton and Gore were the choice of tens of millions of Americans—in actual fact, a *minority* of the American people. Perot took enough votes from Bush to put Clinton and Gore in through the back door. One way or another, however, our country is getting what it wants and it will reap what it is sowing. Let no one blame God!

Question: Why do you quote C. S. Lewis favorably? Aren't you aware of his many unbiblical beliefs, especially the things he says in *Letters to Malcolm*?

Answer: I was not aware of *Letters to Malcolm* by Lewis. It is quite distressing. Could that be something he wrote shortly before his death when he was turning toward the Catholic Church? His prayers for the dead, belief in purgatory and rejection of the literal resurrection of the body are serious deviations from biblical Christianity. His contention that some pagans may

“belong to Christ without knowing it” is heresy. I never read all of *Mere Christianity* (and that would be more than 30 years ago) and don’t remember seeing the errors you have pointed out.

In everything I’ve read of Lewis there have always been parts that bothered me (that we’re to become “gods,” the apparent affirmation of theistic evolution, the Tao, Merlin the Magician being God’s servant, neglect of Rapture, etc.) but I overlooked them because he had so many excellent insights. I’m puzzled how so much light can dwell with such darkness! With the liberals, modernists, the positive-confession heretics, et al., I rarely find any valuable insights to make them worth reading, but I do find much in Lewis. It is perplexing. I could never recommend Schuller, Peale, Hagin, or Copeland in any degree. They have almost nothing to commend them. Lewis, however, seemed to have so much to offer. Can I recommend him with specific warnings about his errors?

You’ve given me much to ponder. I’ll have to go back and read more critically *The Abolition of Man*, *The Problem of Pain*, *Miracles*, *The Great Divorce*, *God in the Dock* and others that I felt had so many excellent insights. Thank you for calling this to my attention.

Question (composite of several similar questions): We can’t seem to find a church in our area that has godly leadership and biblical preaching. We feel so alone and now just read the Bible and pray at home. What should we do? And how do we find a “good” church?

Answer: It is a sad commentary on the state of the church that we receive many such queries. On a practical level, we are attempting to compile a list (admittedly sketchy) of churches, either personally known to us or recommended by readers, which seem to qualify as healthy, Bible-believing and Bible-teaching bodies. We are of course happy to pass this information along but cannot be responsible for misinformation or subsequent changes.

What marks a “healthy” church? Crucial to the answer is Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst....” Christ himself must be the central focus—not a

pastor, gripping sermons, a strong missionary emphasis, exciting youth programs, compatible fellow members, or even agreeable doctrines, important as all these factors are. A fervent love for Christ and a heartfelt corporate worship of His Person must be the primary mark of a healthy church. The early church was thus characterized. It met regularly on the first day of the week in remembrance of His death. That weekly outpouring of praise, worship and thanksgiving had one purpose—to give God His due portion. It isn’t primarily a matter of my need, my edification, my enjoyment or my spiritual satisfaction, but of His worth in my eyes and the eyes of the church.

As I see it, our secondary focus should be our opportunity for servanthood with a corporate body of believers. I give myself to a needy, imperfect people for whom I can pray, for whose needs I can concern myself in practical ways, to whom I can be an encourager and a minister of the Word, and among whom I can demonstrate and work out Christ’s desire that His own “might be one.” This fellowship is commanded: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb 10:25). Is it our joy to gather with God’s people in intercessory prayer and study of the Word, or is Sunday-morning-only quite enough? A healthy church will not only gather *unto* Him, but *with* each other.

Lastly, I need to assess my own spiritual needs. The shepherds must provide the spiritual food that will nurture the flock, that it might be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tm 3:17). That’s a big order and requires, of course, a teachable flock which loves the Word and is in willing subjection to it. The shepherds must also guard the flock of God by keeping out false and dangerous doctrines contrary to the truth. They must adhere to the pure Word of God as the only authority for faith and morals.

You say, “Wonderful! Lead me to such a church.” Remember, however, the order of priority: worship (do *you* worship sincerely, wholeheartedly, and in a manner satisfying to the object of that worship?); servanthood (do *you* serve, even as Christ gave us an example, with humility and with joy?); personal needs (are *you* growing, maturing, taking on Christ’s character?).

The final decision as to your church

affiliation must be, prayerfully, yours. Is your personal worship of the Savior so joyful and satisfying a thing both to you and to Him that it supersedes other considerations? Do your opportunities for service render your fellowship sufficiently meaningful and significant? Or do doctrinal concerns or lack of biblical preaching and teaching cancel out the other two? You must seek the Lord for His answer. God’s comforting assurance remains: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Weep for Your Children!

Dave Hunt

But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children....For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall they do in the dry?

Luke 23:28,31

For the first time in its history the United States now has a president and vice-president who openly encourage homosexuality, the murder of the unborn, and the pagan worship of Mother Earth. President Clinton's first official moves revealed a determination to elevate what for thousands of years has been known as "a crime against nature" to an honorable act that makes one a member of a new and powerful class in society. No one dare speak a word against that favored "minority." Moral convictions based upon conscience and the Bible are now labeled hate and prejudice.

Pressured by that militant and tiny minority (about 2 percent according to polls), both the media and public schools present homosexuality as natural and acceptable. Children are being taught to experiment in order to learn their sexual "orientation" or "preference." If God does not bring severe judgment upon America and the world, He would seem, as has been said, to owe an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah. The entire world, with America leading the pack, is racing down the highway to hell.

The election of Clinton and Gore has introduced a new and frightening dimension to the moral degeneracy of our day. We have long known that liberals in the media and public schools have an antifamily agenda that would rob our children of their innocence and replace a God-given conscience with humanism's "if it feels good, do it!" And now the White House, instead of standing against these change agents and seducers of our children, is providing them legitimacy, assistance and leadership!

Because it was the homosexual community which brought it to crisis proportions—and because of the misinformation the homosexual lobby has persuaded the government and media to disseminate—AIDS enjoys a status never before granted to a *highly contagious and deadly disease*.

Incredibly, instead of being treated like the fatal plague it is, AIDS has become a civil right that gives those carrying it a privileged status and even the prerogative to keep their infection secret. Health laws prevent anyone with such diseases as hepatitis from working in a restaurant, yet those with AIDS may do so. To bar them, which common sense would demand, is forbidden as "discrimination," even though it means sure death to those who, as a result of this insane policy, may accidentally contract the HIV virus.

Such criminal folly, which has displaced true compassion and wisdom, threatens us all with unprecedented catastrophe. Only a few years ago it was denied that blood could be contaminated—and as a result large numbers of hemophiliacs are dead or dying of AIDS. Arthur Ashe is only one

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind....
Romans 1:28

of many "transfusion" casualties. In spite of current precautions, medical personnel treating HIV patients have contracted AIDS. Recently an entire family (parents and children) was wiped out by AIDS, though they were heterosexuals. How it was contracted remains a mystery. The National Center for Health Statistics estimates that "within a few years" AIDS among heterosexuals, which increased 28 percent in 1991, will account for about half of all cases in America.

That Clinton and Gore both claim to be Christians (Southern Baptists) is not surprising. That the label "Christian" can now be attached to any belief prepares the way for Antichrist. He will be worshiped by the entire world as Christ. Thus his followers will be "Christians." A false and even anti-christ "Christianity" must become the world religion. Such is the "Christianity" which the White House now seems to espouse. Prophecy is being fulfilled.

The "Christianity" of Clinton and Gore is quite compatible with the prevailing trend in the church at large. Already Protestants are accepting as church members, and even ordaining, homosexuals and lesbians. While Roman Catholicism officially opposes

homosexuality and abortion, it covers up such deeds among its priests and nuns. For centuries prior to 1869, Rome had even accepted abortion—and could do so again. Doctrine and morals stand or fall together; and Rome has long been the major purveyor of a false gospel.

Pope John Paul II, the world's leading ecumenist, has declared that snake worshipers, witch doctors, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, etc. all worship the Christian God. Yet evangelical leaders continue to praise the Pope as a great spiritual leader and to accept Roman Catholicism as Christian. Recently John Paul II told voodoo leaders in Africa that "they would not betray their traditional faith by converting to Christianity." Such antichrist "Christianity" is in no position to say that anything is wrong, much less sinful, a term that has all but faded from today's vocabulary. If one can brush aside the Bible's doctrines, why not its morals? That is an easy next step. Both the Protestant and Catholic churches are preparing the way to make it a crime to call homosexuality, abortion, incest or indeed anything else sin.

"Project 10" is only one public school program designed to open America's young children to homosexuality. First-grade readers being used across the country include *Daddy's Roommate* (promotes homosexuality as normal and wholesome), *Heather Has Two Mommies* (a child born through artificial insemination to two lesbians living together); and for the third grade, *Gloria Goes to Gay Pride*. Just as evolution is taught as scientific fact and the teaching of creation as an alternate possibility is barred from public schools, so it is with morality. Against the wishes of parents, condoms are given out and "safe sex" taught to young children. To suggest abstinence from premarital sex as a "preventive" is excluded as a *religious* idea.

Just as a small minority of communists took over Russia, China and a host of other nations, so a dedicated minority has seized control of America's courts, public schools and media and is determined to remold the thinking of our children. Schools are supposed to educate students in academic subjects, but instead are trying to remake them morally, emotionally and psychologically. Parents who object to this breach of trust and calculated destruction of "family values" are denied the right to "interfere" in the moral training of their own children and are scorned as "fanatical fundamentalist

Christians,” now the most demeaning of epithets.

A recent *Reader's Digest* poll across the country demonstrates conclusively that the courts, media and public schools are forcing upon our children humanistic values to which not only their parents but an overwhelming majority of American citizens are opposed. For example, 80 percent disapprove the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that it is unconstitutional to offer prayer at a high school graduation (it never used to be), while only 18 percent approve. As for prayer in public schools (voluntary and personal, not regimented), 75 percent favor it and only 19 percent are opposed. William J. Bennett, Secretary of Education from 1985 to 1988, declared,

The Founding Fathers intended [Christian] religion to provide a moral anchor for our democracy. Yet again and again as Education Secretary...I was attacked as an 'ayatollah' when I supported voluntary school prayer—and the posting of the Ten Commandments in schools. (*Reader's Digest* 11/92)

While rejecting biblical moral values long accepted in American schools, those in charge of curricula are pushing substitute religions (humanism, Eastern mysticism, occultism, etc.) upon our children. *Pumsky* [a dragon]: *In Pursuit of Excellence* (a self-esteem course used in the elementary grades) and DUSO (a dolphin) are only two examples of many. These entities, through visualization and guided imagery, become the child's ever-present inner guides to be called upon for problem-solving and miraculous help. The techniques taught to children in public schools are similar to those used by witch doctors for contacting the “spirit guides” (demons) that give them their power. Even non-Christian parents are up in arms about the harmful effects of these courses. Yet similar visualization techniques are rampant in Christian schools and churches, while the errors of self-esteem (see *Beyond Seduction*) are promoted by Christian psychologists.

Whether one's concern is the moral decline or the invasion of paganism, the major influence in effecting such changes in our schools and society comes from psychology. Investigative reporter Martin L. Gross warned in his book *The Psychological Society* that “the nature of our civilization [has been altered] beyond recognition. *The major agent of change has been modern psychology...an*

international colossus whose professional minions number in the hundreds of thousands....Its experimental animals are an obliging, even grateful human race.” Gross's analysis continues:

We live in a civilization in which, as never before, man is preoccupied with *Self*....As the Protestant ethic has weakened in Western society, the confused citizen has turned to the only alternative he knows: the psychological expert who claims there is a *new scientific standard of behavior* to replace fading traditions....This new truth is fed to us continuously from birth to the grave....

The schoolhouse has become a vibrant psychological center, staffed...by [tens of thousands of] guidance workers and school psychologists whose ‘counseling’ borders on therapy....[P]erfectibility [of human behavior] was once sought through the intervention of God, but is now accomplished by supposed scientific adjustment of the psyche....

It is now apparent that the Judeo-Christian society in which psychology began its ascendancy is atrophying under the massive impact of...modern psychology. ...When educated man lost faith in formal religion, he required a substitute belief...[to replace] Christianity.... Psychology and psychiatry...offer mass belief, a promise of a better future, opportunity for confession, unseen mystical workings and a trained priesthood of helping professionals devoted to servicing the paying-by-the-hour communicants.

The traditional concept of *sin* is becoming obsolete...[and] the medico-psychological concept of *sick* has replaced it almost intact. We now speak glibly of murderers...as being ‘sick’ or ‘neurotic’. ...Freud's atheistic ideas have paradoxically [influenced] ministers, priests and rabbis [who] now flock to courses in *pastoral counseling*....Only psychology, we are told, can divine our secret motivations and reveal the elusive ‘why’ of the strange human animal....To egocentric modern man, the prospect of *Self* instead of *God* seated at the center of a world philosophical system is exquisitely attractive.

The university has been invaluable in spreading the new gospel...[and] the popular communications industry...[has made] the jargon of psychology the currency of an entire civilization. ...Natural emotions such as outrage, despair, grief, jealousy, suspicion, disappointment and passing depression are made to appear not only undesirable

but abnormal....The new Society flourishes on the belief that human technology can remake man as effortlessly as a computerized assembly line...offering its techniques as the hope for a scientific Utopia. (Gross's emphasis)

Our children are being inexorably molded into the amoral citizens of humanism's fantasied Utopia. Paul warned that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse” (2 Tm 3:13). We are seeing that prophecy fulfilled before our eyes. Today's children face a world far more evil and occultic than their parents could even have imagined a few years ago. Be warned!

In spite of all the protests parents may voice, the change agents are determined and will continue to press their agenda under the guise of “health education” or even “history” or “literature.” Parents need to 1) have family devotions daily and teach their children to know Christ personally and be fully committed to Him; 2) see that their children are believers in and followers of the Lord out of genuine choice and not due to parental or church pressure to conform; 3) see that their children's honest questions are answered and that they know what they believe and why on the basis of God's Word; 4) know fully what they are being taught at school (public or Christian), arm them to stand against what is wrong, and, if necessary (particularly in the case of very young children), remove them from classes or programs calculated to undermine their faith and morals; 5) carefully supervise friendships, activities and other influences upon their lives which can be as deadly as public school influences; 6) pray earnestly to God for wisdom; 7) love their children fervently; 8) be ready at all times with godly counsel, patiently and lovingly shared.

Christian schools once seemed the answer, but they are increasingly infiltrated with psychological/occultic techniques. Depending upon circumstances, home schooling may be the only hope—but even that all too quickly comes to an end. The day inevitably arrives when the teenager must enter university or trade school in order to qualify for many professions and positions. Eventually everyone must step out into the world to be exposed to the enemy's raw tactics. Christian employment or attendance at a Christian university is not always possible—and even there the influence of psychology and immorality is often rampant.

At Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, for example, Psych 200 is required of all students. The course text has been *Introduction to Psychology* by Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith and Hilgard. That book boasts that psychology has been able to redefine morals for society, even changing what was once viewed as perversion to normal. It treats humans as highly evolved animals, promotes situation ethics and neither acknowledges God nor sin. It exalts self and legitimizes sodomy. A student writes, "I have completed the entire General Psychology course [with] grade of A (I add this to show that I closely listened to and studied the material presented) and never heard the professor even once, to my recollection, correct the false, devilish, unbiblical claims of the textbook."

The situation is virtually the same at other Christian colleges. Even seminaries, and not just the liberal ones such as Fuller, but those with conservative reputations such as Talbot (now thoroughly integrated, like Biola, with Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology), promote the false gospel of psychology.

Sound doctrine is the only anchor for our faith and that of our families. Unfortunately, sound doctrine is increasingly neglected in favor of clever sermonettes and entertaining programs that appeal to the flesh. While many evangelicals still oppose evils such as homosexuality, abortion and pornography in secular society, few are willing to stand against error inside the church. Yet without sound doctrine, everything eventually is corrupted.

Lacking a firm doctrinal foundation, the church is being seduced into conformity with the world in subtle ways that inevitably lead to ever more serious compromise and error. Weep for your children, indeed—and take prayerful, decisive, biblical steps to rescue them from both this present evil world and from apostate "Christianity"! TBC

Quotable

In the name of your own soul and its own salvation, in the name of the adorable victim of that bloody and agonizing sacrifice whence you draw all your hopes of salvation; by Gethsemane and Calvary, I charge you, citizens of the United States, afloat on your wide sea of politics, there is another King, one Jesus; the safety of the state can be secured only in the way of humble and

whole-souled loyalty to His person and of obedience to His law.

A. A. Hodge, 1887

Our Lord Jesus Christ orders us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; therefore, it was resolved... that the Word of God shall be preached freely everywhere....

Law of Religious Freedom
Transylvania, 1571

We are not our own, we are God's. To Him, therefore, let us live and die. We are God's. Toward Him, therefore, let every part of our lives be directed. We are not our own; therefore, as far as possible, let us forget ourselves and the things that are ours....we are God's; let us, therefore, live and die to Him (Rom 14:8) [and]...let His wisdom and will preside over all our actions.

John Calvin, 1509-64, *Institutes*

Scripture warns us that evil character is contagious....If your child has one friend with evil character, he will be infected.... Noah appeared to the world of his day as a religious fanatic, yet his family alone was saved. Abraham kept his family at arm's length from his Canaanite neighbors and their filthy abominations and produced a godly Isaac. Jonadab refused to obey the social planners and polite society of his day, maintained a strict lifestyle for himself and his family and had the joy of looking over the ramparts of Heaven 400 years later to see his descendants still living separated lives (Jer 35:5-10), uncontaminated by the world.

Ron Williams, pastor of Fundamental Baptist Church, Winona Lake, IN
O Timothy, Winter 1992

Q&A

Question: Could you take time to review the enclosed newsletter? It's published by a group called CURE (Christians United for Reformation, headed by Michael Horton and praised by leaders such as Richard Halverson, R. C. Sproul, J. I. Packer and James Boice) who are trying to bring back "Reformed Theology." They claim they are not Reconstructionists, but hold to many similar doctrines, such as Calvinism, rejection of the Rapture, denial that Israel any longer has any

prophetic significance, the claim that we are already in the Millennium, Christ is now reigning "spiritually" but will not reign physically on earth over Israel restored to her land, that Satan is presently bound, etc. Could you review and clarify their teachings and expose their errors?

Answer: Most of the questions you ask I've dealt with in previous books (see especially *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* and *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*), but I will respond briefly.

Much Calvinism is biblical, but some is not. We agree that God is sovereign and could righteously send us all to hell. His Word clearly declares, however, that God loves all mankind (Jn 3:16, etc.), wants all to be saved and none to perish (1 Tm 2:4; 2 Pt 3:9, etc.), provided for everyone's salvation in His Son (Jn 3:17; 1 Tm 2:6; 1 Jn 2:2, 4:14, etc.), and those who perish do so because they reject the salvation He freely provided and did all He could to persuade them to receive. Many of my friends are five-point Calvinists. I think they are terribly wrong in teaching that God doesn't desire all mankind to be saved. It is a libel upon God's character! However, the gospel they preach is biblical. There are fine Christians on both sides of this issue and therefore we don't expend much time disputing it.

As for their eschatology, those holding the Reformed view pick the verses that seem to support it and ignore those that don't. Only by reconciling all of Scripture can we arrive at the truth. For example, they say that the establishment of Israel again in 1948 has no significance. Instead, God's promise to bring Israel back to her land was fulfilled in her return from Babylon and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple that took place 500 years before Christ. They ignore the many verses which promise a final restoration after which Israel will never again disobey or dishonor God or be removed from her land (Israel was cast out and scattered again in A.D. 70 and remains in rebellion and unbelief to this day). God repeatedly states that Jerusalem "shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever" (Jer 31:40; Is 60:14-22; Ez 34:11-31, 36:8-38; 39:29; Am 9:14-15, etc.) and that His people "shall not sorrow any more at all" (Jer 31:12) nor dishonor Him ever again (Ez 37:23; 39:7), all of Israel shall know and serve God from that day forth (Ez 39:22, 28; Zec 12-14, etc.)—obviously yet to be fulfilled.

Likewise, one must ignore or spiritualize away hundreds of verses in order to hold

the Reformed view that the Olivet discourse and the Book of Revelation (up to 20:11) were fulfilled in A.D.70 when Jerusalem was destroyed. Clearly Matthew 24:21-22 wasn't fulfilled (far greater tribulation has befallen both Jews and Christians in our day than at A.D.70, nor was there danger then that all flesh would be wiped out); Christ did not visibly return to earth in the sight of all mankind (Rv 1:7; Mt 24:30) causing Israel to repent and believe in Him (Zec 12:10-13:6); the angels didn't literally gather the elect (Israel) from the four winds to their land (Mt 24:31); one-fourth of earth's population wasn't wiped out (Rv 6:8); a third of the trees and all green grass wasn't burned up, a third of the oceans didn't turn to blood causing a third of all life therein to die (Rv 8:7-10); the two witnesses didn't preach for 1,260 days in Jerusalem, die at the hand of Antichrist, then resurrect three and one-half days later and ascend to heaven (Rv 11:2-12); Antichrist didn't arise and control all buying and selling, be worshiped by all the earth and make war with the saints and overcome them (Rv 13:4-17), etc., etc.

There are scores of similar specific prophecies which cannot be spiritualized away and which clearly have not yet been fulfilled. I deal with these prophecies and give a thorough treatment of the Rapture and Second Coming from a strictly biblical basis in my new book *How Close Are We?* which has just come off the press.

Question: I don't see how anyone can spend his time reading and screening all the books that Christians may read. As a steady diet it would be too disquieting for my soul....I don't know how far one is obligated to explain what the Word means to those who are in error....In my own experience, nothing anyone could tell me would have made any difference until God himself opened my heart.

Answer: We don't spend all or even a large percentage of our time trying to screen everything being printed or to track down every heresy rearing its head in the church. Our work would be impossible were it not for the many "Bereans" around the world who act as our eyes and ears and pass along their concerns and documentation.

As for one's obligation to point out error and to persuade others of the truth, most of the New Testament and much of the Old (certainly the major and minor prophets and the epistles) was written for that very

purpose. Paul corrected Peter publicly, named those who were leading others astray, and continually combatted error in his epistles. We must do the same if we are to obey God's Word and "earnestly contend for the faith once [for all] delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Paul said that the Bible was given for "doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness" (2 Tm 3:16) and he exhorted Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (4:2).

Christ himself set the example we must follow. He was gentle with those who had been deceived, but sternly rebuked the rabbis who had perverted God's Word by false teaching, and He did so publicly. As for the unsaved, Paul disputed daily in the synagogues and in the marketplace (Acts 17:17), doing all he could to "persuade men" (2 Cor 5:11). Yes, only the Holy Spirit can convict and convert the soul, but He is pleased to use us as His instruments. What a responsibility and privilege we have!

Question: In a dream, Paul Cain saw God put His Spirit upon President Clinton and change him into another man just as He did Saul of old. An entire issue of Rick Joyner's *The Morning Star Prophetic Bulletin* was dedicated to this "prophecy." It was revealed to Cain that God had chosen Clinton to lead the United States into a new spiritual dimension, provided Christians pray for him. The future headlines of five specific newspapers were allegedly given in the dream to validate it. Does that mean the prophecy is from God?

Answer: No. Even false prophets (Paul Cain has made *many* false prophecies) can make some correct predictions (Dt 13:1-3). Cain's mentor was "prophet/healer/miracle worker" William Branham (declared a heretic by the Assemblies of God 40 years ago, yet forerunner of today's Hagin/Copeland/Hinn word-faith and healing movements). In spite of Branham's numerous and serious heresies (we've covered them in the past), Cain still praises Branham as "the greatest prophet of the twentieth century." In fact, Cain, like Wimber and other "prophets" associated with the Vineyard movement, continues to teach the Branham/Manifest Sons heresy that a "new breed" of overcomers known as "Joel's Army" will attain immortality without the resurrection or Rapture and, because no one can kill them, will virtually take over the world.

Cain's testimony of numerous childhood spirit visitations and miraculous powers sounds more occultic than Christian. This latest vision has a built-in escape clause: it will happen only "if the church prays for it." If it fails, the church's lack of prayer, instead of the "prophet," can be blamed.

Rather than coming from God, the dream furthers the Manifest Sons delusion promoted by Cain and other "prophets" that we are on the verge of the great "last-days revival." Empowered to perform signs and wonders such as the world has never seen, the "new breed/Joel's Army" will convert entire nations. The only thing new is that Clinton will be one of the generals in Joel's Army!

Apparently even John Wimber has become somewhat disillusioned with such prophecies, which he had embraced wholeheartedly. The descent of Wimber and his team of "prophets" upon England for the October 1990 Docklands Conference had been preceded by a false Paul Cain prophecy of great revival in England. Convinced that the revival would spread from the conference across Europe, Wimber declared, "As Jesus went into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, so He will return on the back of a victorious church. *One in the eye for any dispensationalists among us!*" (What scripture twisting!) Wimber brought his four children to experience this great outpouring of the Spirit, but nothing special happened. Wimber has since broken his ties with Paul Cain, whom, for several years, he had regarded as God's special prophet to the Vineyard movement.

Linking Clinton to Saul's being changed into another man (1 Sm 10:6) hardly fits the prediction that God's Spirit will empower Clinton to lead the country into blessing. Saul, in fact, though changed for a time by God's power, proved to be self-willed and disobedient and eventually led Israel into disaster. Is there an undercurrent of sardonic, twisted humor in the prophecy?

What if the church and secular society get behind Clinton and Gore and experience a "spiritual renewal" compatible with the White House's "Christianity"? Such a fulfillment of Cain's dream, validating him as a prophet, could be an important step in preparing the world for the Antichrist. Interestingly, the latest issue of New Age magazine *Mind, Body, Spirit* also contains a prophecy promising spiritual leadership from President Clinton channeled by Seth, a demonic entity long active in occultic circles.

God's Nonnegotiable Gospel - Part I

Dave Hunt

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel...for IT is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth [IT].

Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16

What is the gospel and from what does it save us? We must begin in the Garden. Persuaded by Satan that God had lied to her, and seduced by the appealing promise of godhood, Eve rebelled against her Creator. Not wanting to be separated from his wife, whom he loved more than God, Adam, who was not deceived (1 Tm 2:14), deliberately joined in her disobedience. Thus "by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men [and women], for that all have sinned" (Rom 5:12). Death not only ends this short earthly life, but it separates the sinner from God forever.

In His infinite foreknowledge, wisdom and love, God had already planned what He would do to reunite mankind with Himself. Without ceasing to be God (an impossibility), He would become a man through a virgin birth. Only God could be the Savior (Is 43:11; 45:21, etc.), thus the Messiah had to be God (Is 9:6; Is 45:15; Ti 1:3-4, etc.). He would die for our sins to pay the penalty demanded by His justice: "'Tis mystery all, the *immortal* dies!" (Charles Wesley). Then He would rise from the dead to live in those who would believe in and receive Him as their Lord and Savior, giving them forgiveness of sins and eternal life as a *free gift of His grace*.

Centuries before His incarnation, God inspired the Old Testament prophets to declare His eternal and unchangeable plan of salvation. Definitive criteria were provided by which the coming Savior would be identified. Jesus and His apostles did not invent a "new religion." Christianity fulfills scores of specific prophecies and is thus provable from Scripture! (See *How Close Are We?*)

So it was not a new gospel which Paul preached, but "the gospel of God, (which He had *promised afore by his prophets* in the holy scriptures.) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ..." (Rom 1:1-3). Thus the Bereans could check Paul's message against the Old Testament (Acts 17:11); and he could use the Hebrew prophets, which were read in the synagogue each sabbath, to show that Jesus

was the promised Messiah (vv 2-3). Not Buddha, not Muhammad, not anyone else—only Christ has the required credentials! The fulfillment of scores of specific prophecies in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is absolute proof that He is the true and only Savior.

In Hebrews 2:3 the vital question is asked, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" There is no escape. The Bible makes that solemn fact abundantly clear. To reject or add to or take from or otherwise pervert or embrace a substitute for "the gospel of God" is to perpetuate the rebellion begun by Adam and Eve and to leave one eternally separated from God and under His wrath. No wonder Paul wrote, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..." (2 Cor 5:11). So must we persuade through the gospel!

The "gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13) "wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved" (1 Cor 15:1-2) is simple and precise, leaving no room for misunderstanding or negotiation: "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day..."

...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

1 Corinthians 1:21

(vv 3-4). This "everlasting gospel" (Rv 14:6) was promised "before the world began" (2 Tm 1:9; Ti 1:2) and cannot change with time or culture. There is no other hope for mankind, no other way to be forgiven and brought back to God except through this "strait gate and narrow way" (Mt 7:13). Any broader road leads to destruction (v 13).

The one true "gospel of God's grace," which God offers as our *only* salvation has three basic elements: 1) who Christ is—fully God and perfect, sinless man in one person (were He less, He could not be our Savior); 2) who we are—hopeless sinners already condemned to eternal death (or we wouldn't need to be saved); and 3) what Christ's death accomplished—the payment of the full penalty for our sins (any attempt by us to pay *in any way* rejects the Cross).

Christ has commanded us to "preach the gospel [good news!] to every creature [person]" (Mk 16:15). What response is required? Both the desperate question and uncomplicated answer are given to us: "What must I do to be saved? *Believe* on the

Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). Neither religion, ritual, nor good works will avail—simply *believe*. "For by grace are ye saved through *faith*" (Eph 2:8)—whosoever *believes* in him will not perish, but has eternal life (Jn 3:16).

It is the *gospel* alone that saves those who *believe it*. Nothing else will save. Therefore we *must* preach the *gospel*. Paul said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the *gospel*" (1 Cor 9:16). Yet how often sentimental appeals are made to "come to Jesus" or "make a decision for Christ" without clearly explaining the *gospel*! Many are attracted to Christ because of His admirable character, "noble martyrdom," or because "He changes lives." Such "converts" have not believed the *gospel* and thus are not saved but remain under God's wrath (Jn 3:36). This is the solemn teaching of Scripture.

There are peripheral issues on which Christians may differ, such as diet, dress, mode of baptism, honoring certain days, how and how often to keep the Lord's supper, etc. Salvation, however, is the central issue on which all must agree. Paul cursed those who taught that one must believe the gospel *and keep the law* in order to be saved (Gal 1:6-12). Such a slight addition destroyed the gospel. No one believing that message could be saved! Nor is anyone a Christian who believes one of today's popular diluted gospels.

Oswald Chambers warned lest, in our zeal to get people to accept the gospel, we manufacture a gospel acceptable to people and produce "converts" who are not saved. Today's most popular perversion is the "positive" gospel which is designed to offend no one with truth. Robert Schuller, for example, has said that it is demeaning to call anyone a sinner and that Christ died to restore human dignity and self-esteem. He "wins many to Christ" with that seductive message—but such a gospel does not *save sinners*.

Evangelistic appeals are often made to "come to Christ" for the wrong reasons: in order to be healthy, happy, successful, to restore a marriage, or to handle stress. Some of today's most popular televangelists are so intent upon "slaying in the Spirit" and physical healing that they fail to deliver from sin. Their gospel is often so diluted or perverted that it deceives many into thinking they are saved when they are not. No fraud could be worse, for the consequences are eternal!

Religion, not atheism, is Satan's main weapon. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest

the light of the glorious gospel of Christ... should shine unto them" (2 Cor 4:4). To combat "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), the great deceiver has many false gospels, but they all have two subtle rejections of grace in common: ritual and/or self-effort.

Ritual makes redemption an ongoing process performed by a special priesthood; and self-effort gives man a part to play in earning his salvation. The one denies the finality of the Cross. The other denies its sufficiency. Consider, for example, the rituals and self-effort in all non-Christian religions. Their denial of the cross of Christ and opposition to the gospel are blatant. Yet pagan/New Age beliefs are proliferating in the church in the name of ecumenism and broad-mindedness.

Pagan worship (Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, witchcraft, etc.) is common at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine, America's largest Episcopal cathedral, which has even featured a female "Christa" on a crucifix. Evangelical leaders firmly denounce such blasphemy among Protestants, but many remain strangely silent when it involves the Roman Catholic Church. Evangelical leaders even laud Pope John Paul II as he travels the world to honor and to express respect and sympathy for the enemies of the gospel.

At Assisi the Pope encouraged the Dalai Lama and his monks to worship at the Church of St. Peter altar, on which they placed a statue of Buddha for their anti-Christian ceremony. Around the world the Pope has held masses in which various pagan rituals (in which he participated) were incorporated. The "Vicar of Christ" has prayed with animists and even entered their sanctuary, consecrated to demons, to participate in pagan rituals which began with a sorcerer invoking ancestral spirits. Imagine the Apostle Paul worshipping at the Temple of Diana in Ephesus!

In opposition to the errors of Mormonism, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc., evangelicals are united. Not so when it comes to errors just as great in Roman Catholicism. Even anticult ministries such as Christian Research Institute espouse Catholic-evangelical ecumenism. CRI refers to Roman Catholics as "born-again," "evangelical" and "Bible-believing"—terms which repudiate the Reformation. Remember, the issue then and now is God's *nonnegotiable gospel*, which Rome literally curses. (See below.)

When he began his ministry, Billy Graham, like the Reformers, called Catholicism the greatest enemy of the gospel. Today he says his beliefs "are essentially the same as those of Orthodox

Roman Catholics...." A similar astonishing about-face has occurred in the last few years among other evangelical leaders due to the widely held belief that

Vatican II (1962-65) transformed Catholicism. In fact, apart from a few cosmetic changes (Mass no longer only in Latin, etc.), Rome's *gospel* remains the same as in Luther's day.

Consider the facts. *To oppose the Reformation*, Rome's leading theologians met in the Council of Trent (1545-63). Its *Canons and Decrees*, which define official Roman Catholic dogma, contain more than 100 anathemas denouncing the gospel of grace affirmed by the Reformers. Every evangelical doctrine is cursed! And Vatican II? It declares: "This sacred council... proposes again the decrees...of the Council of Trent [*including its 100-plus anathemas!*]." As *The Catholic Answer* (March/April 1993) states, "Whatever was 'officially' taught by the Church in one age is 'officially' taught by the Church in every age....Council of Trent [doctrines]

...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Philippians 1:27

are completely consonant with the eucharistic faith of the Church today."

Evangelical leaders who accept Catholics as Christians and join with Rome in "evangelism" are greatly deceived and deceiving others. Chuck Colson is, sadly, one of them. In his latest book, *The Body*, which in many ways is commendable (see also "Q&A" in this issue), he appeals strongly for unity with Rome, but upon the basis of gross misinformation provided to his readers. For example, after explaining that a major catalyst for the Reformation was Luther's revulsion for the practice of selling indulgences, Colson writes,

The Reformers, for example, assailed the corrupt practice of indulgences; today they are gone....(p 271)

Indulgences "are gone"? Absolutely not! Vatican II's *Indulgentiarum Doctrina* by Pope Paul VI devotes 17 pages to indulgences. While admitting some "improper uses" in the past, this document declares that the Roman Catholic Church "commands that the usage of indulgences... be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema those who say that indulgences are useless...." Vatican II

explains that the "merits" of the death of Christ, together with Mary's "good works" and the surplus "good works of all the saints" beyond what they needed in order to "attain their own salvation," have been deposited in a "treasury."

Out of this "treasury" the Church dispenses indulgences in order to reduce suffering in purgatory, "distributing it [the treasury] to the faithful for their salvation....This holy Council...teaches that the Church...is necessary for salvation....[T]he Gospel...[enables] all men [to] attain to salvation through faith, baptism and the observance of the commandments.... [Through] prayers and good works...[the saints] attained their own salvation and...cooperated in saving their brothers.... From the most ancient times...good works were also offered to God for the salvation of sinners." (Emphasis added) Roman Catholicism proclaims a false gospel of ritual and works!

In Catholicism, Christ's death for sins does not save those who believe, but makes it possible for them to merit their salvation through an elaborate religion of ritual and self-effort. Vatican II explains: "The Church...formulated and devised various ways [the seven sacraments] of applying [*in installments*] the fruits of Christ's redemption to the individual faithful.... For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine *sacrifice* of the Eucharist, 'the work of our redemption is accomplished....'" Yet Hebrews 9:12 says that Christ *has already accomplished* "eternal redemption for us"! Such is the promise of the true gospel to *those who believe*.

In Roman Catholicism the "graces won by Christ and the saints" are "applied to the faithful" in installments so that they must come back again and again to receive more "graces and merits" to help them on their way to heaven. There is no assurance that this goal will ever be attained, nor is there any indication of the number of Masses, rosaries, indulgences, etc. it will take to reach heaven. The Catholic's only hope of salvation is in the ongoing ritual of the Church. Yet the Bible offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life as the free gift of God's grace to all who believe the gospel. What a contrast!

The Mass denies that Christ paid fully for our sins at Calvary. It is itself a *sacrifice that saves*. As the *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* declares (pp 248-49), "The Mass is a truly propitiatory sacrifice...by [which] 'the Lord is appeased, He grants grace and...pardons wrongdoings and sins'.... [T]he Mass is the divinely ordained means of applying the merits of Calvary... gradually and continually....The priest is

indispensable, since he alone by his powers can change the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.” Rather than confess this false gospel, hundreds of thousands suffered martyrdom at the stake!

Biblically and logically, one cannot believe both the true gospel of God’s grace and Rome’s false gospel of ritual and works. Of the thousands of former Roman Catholics with whom I’ve had contact, *not one* ever heard the true gospel from the Roman Catholic Church. *All* had to turn from Roman Catholicism to receive assurance of salvation through simple faith in the finished work of Christ. The issue is *God’s nonnegotiable gospel* and the *eternal destiny of souls!* I beg of you, contend for the true gospel, proclaim it in the power of the Holy Spirit, and pray earnestly (and do whatever else the Lord directs) that evangelical leaders will vigorously oppose every false gospel, including Rome’s. TBC

Quotable

A flood of false doctrine has lately broken in upon us. Men are beginning to tell us, “that God is too merciful to punish souls for ever...that all mankind, however wicked and ungodly...will sooner or later be saved.”...We are to embrace what is called a “kinder theology,” and treat hell as a Pagan fable.... This question lies at the very foundation of the whole gospel. The moral attributes of God, His justice, His holiness, His purity, are all involved in it. ...The Scripture has spoken plainly and fully on the subject of hell.... If words mean anything, there is such a place as hell. If texts are to be interpreted fairly, there are those who will be cast into it....the same Bible which teaches that God in mercy and compassion sent Christ to die for sinners, does also teach that God hates sin, and must from His very nature punish all who cleave to sin or refuse the salvation He has provided.

God knows that I never speak of hell without pain and sorrow. I would gladly offer the salvation of the Gospel to the very chief of sinners. I would willingly say to the vilest and most profligate of mankind on his deathbed, “Repent, and believe on Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.” But God forbid that I should ever keep back from mortal man that scripture reveals a hell as well as heaven, and that the Gospel teaches that men may be lost as well as saved.

Anglican Bishop J. C. Ryle
About 100 years ago

Our fathers believed in sin and the devil and hell...[and in] God and righteousness and heaven....Humans, our fathers held, had to choose sides—they could not be neutral. For them it must be life or death, heaven or hell, and if they chose to come out on God’s side, they could expect open war with God’s enemies. The fight would be real and deadly and would last as long as life continued here below....

How different today....People think of the world not as a battleground, but as a playground. We are not here to fight; we are here to frolic. We are not in a foreign land; we are at home....[This idea] has now been accepted in practice by the vast majority of fundamentalist Christians. They might hedge around the question... but their conduct gives them away.

A. W. Tozer

Notice: We have been informed that Assemblies of God head G. Raymond Carlson had resigned from the Renovaré Board of Reference prior to our January newsletter reporting him on it. We can only hope that, if this resignation was because he sees errors in Renovaré, he will make them widely known to rescue others.

Q&A

Question: I am reading Chuck Colson’s latest book, *The Body*, and am greatly disappointed in Chuck for including the Roman Catholic Church as a part of the body of Christ that we are to embrace in his call for unity....I appreciate Chuck Colson, but I’m a bit confused about his term “evangelical Catholics.” What also greatly disappoints me are the endorsements by a host of religious leaders on the jacket. Would you comment on this book in *The Berean Call*?

Answer: I respect Chuck as a Christian who loves the Lord and has sacrificed a great deal to bring the gospel into prisons. Therefore it grieves me to say that his book is a sad mixture of warnings against error and at the same time embracing that which is false and even covering up or ignoring that which, if admitted, would undermine his thesis of unity with Rome. He finds fault (often correctly) with various segments of the evangelical church, but not with the Catholic Church. And the praise he gives Rome is often so blind as to be embarrassing, such as

his statement that “the Catholic Church, to its great credit, does call heretics to account” (p 132). Indeed she does, having burned more than a million at the stake! And to this day both Trent and Vatican II condemn evangelicals as heretics for holding beliefs to which Colson subscribes. Surely he must know this!

As an example of Rome’s censure of heretics, Chuck commends Pope Urban VIII for declaring “that anyone in the New World who kept Indian slaves would be excommunicated” (p 133). But he fails to mention that this same pope condemned polygamists to the most horrible slavery of all—the galleys for life! Nor does he tell us that it was Urban VIII who threatened an elderly and very ill Galileo with torture for saying that the earth revolved around the sun, and had him on his knees in front of the inquisition recanting of this “heresy” in fear of his life! Calling heretics to account, indeed!

It is not “politically correct” these days to say anything the least bit derogatory about homosexuals. Nor is it, among Christians, good church politics (if one wants to be supported by evangelical leaders) to admit any validity to the Reformation or to cast any doubt upon the alleged evangelical soundness of Roman Catholicism. Colson goes right along with this farce.

Rightly warning that we do not “accept everyone who says he or she is a Christian” (p 105), Colson explains that those “who deny the fundamentals, such as the bodily resurrection of Christ, cannot be part of the confessing body.” True, but he fails to recognize that one can believe in the bodily resurrection, as do Mormons, and still hold so much other error as to be eternally lost. Such is the case with Catholics. Catholicism does affirm much orthodox doctrine, but adds to it so much that is false that it becomes a complete denial of the gospel of God’s grace. The Roman Catholic gospel and the biblical gospel are diametrically opposed.

Colson seems blind to the obvious. While he admits serious differences between the Protestant and Catholic view of the sacraments, he waves them aside as unimportant because “all would agree that the sacraments are centered on Christ who took on flesh and died and was raised.” Yes, but there is more. For the Catholic, through baptism (the first of seven sacraments), even as an infant with no knowledge of Christ, one is born again, made a child of God, forgiven of sin and placed in the Church. And in the Mass the literal body and blood of Christ is again offered as a propitiatory

sacrifice. Vatican II declares, "It is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine *sacrifice* of the Eucharist, 'the work of our redemption is *accomplished*...' " (p 1). Thus is denied the gospel truth that by His sacrifice on the cross Christ "*obtained* [a finished work] eternal redemption for us" (Heb 9:12) and that "we *have* [present possession] redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14).

I have corresponded with Chuck on this subject and have given him photocopies of enough out of Trent and Vatican II to thoroughly establish that Roman Catholicism is a false gospel. Therefore, I am at a loss to explain this new book.

Question: Recently I've been aware of a growing movement that I sense is slipping back into legalism—the modern Messianic congregations. There seems to be an underlying pride that sets them apart from converted Gentiles. They practice a lot of Jewish tradition woven into the Christian service. What do you think?

Answer: Many congregations of Jewish believers are very biblical; but others have, as you suggest, fallen into legalism by putting themselves to some extent under the law of Moses. Calling themselves "completed Jews" (an unbiblical term), they think it helps to adopt Old Testament Jewish customs. In contrast, the Bible says there is "neither Jew nor Gentile" (Gal 3:28) in the church, but Christ has made from Jew and Gentile "one new man" (Eph 2:15).

Paul rebuked Peter for going back to Jewish separatism and for compelling "the Gentiles to live as do the Jews" (Gal 2:14). The entire Epistle to the Galatians argues against any Christian, Jew or Gentile, observing the Old Testament law. We have a higher standard: to be like Jesus by allowing Him to live His life through us. Jewish customs have no place in Christ's church!

The freedom we have in Christ from the law of Moses and from Jewish legalism and customs was difficult for the first Jewish converts to accept. The apostles and elders gathered in Jerusalem to consider this issue and under God's guidance declared that the Gentile believers were not under the Law (Acts 15).

What about Jewish believers? There is no difference (Rom 10:12) between them and Gentiles in Christ, for He has "broken down the middle wall of partition" (Eph 2:14) between them, having "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances [the Law] that was against us...nailing it to his cross" (Col

2:14). Jews may honor their ancestral heritage (in the passover, etc.) but must not mix Jewishness with faith in Christ.

Messianic congregations who are trying to act Jewish need to heed Paul's exhortation: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage [Law]" (Gal 5:1).

Question: The series of books about "Joshua" by Joseph Girzone has sold extremely well in Christian bookstores. What is your opinion—for example, of Joshua, the first one in the series?

Answer: *Joshua* is an appealing story and teaches some valuable lessons. Unfortunately, its errors outweigh its truths. The basic idea that Christ could come back as a flesh-and-blood person is unbiblical and, though presented as fiction, is destructive of the truth that He came once to die for our sins, was buried and resurrected and is eternally in a glorified body without blood in its veins (Lk 24:39; 1 Cor 15:42-50). Reincarnation rather than resurrection is implied (pp 19-20, 111, 143). This "Jesus/Joshua" *never mentions* that Christ came and died for our sins. Instead, he tells people that God wants them "to love him and love one another" (p 109), leaving out "with all your heart, soul, might and neighbor as yourself." No human ever loved in that way and that's why Christ died for us, but *Joshua never explains that!*

That Girzone is a Catholic priest is reflected throughout the book. *Joshua* sees the pope as Peter's successor (123, 216, 262-63), depicts fisherman/apostle Peter wearing a "three-tiered tiara...toga and stole" (pp 154-55) and teaches other serious errors: "you can best find God if you look within yourself" (p 113). Denying miracles, he makes the boy's restoration to life on the ship a "natural" event (p 236); declares that all humans are God's children from whose spirits "the things of God...flow as naturally...as the air we breathe" (hardly!); says the Jews have "remained faithful" (p 197). Contrast what the real Jesus said in John 8:31-47!

Joshua is a humanistic "Jesus" whose mission is to bring out the goodness inherent in mankind. He suggests good works for salvation and *not once* presents the truth that all have sinned and that Christ died for sinners so we could have eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. Instead, *Joshua* subtly presents a false gospel. Yet Christian bookstores sell it by the tens of thousands!

Question: Concerning your November 1992 article, I hope you will be big enough to admit your error. "By His stripes ye were healed" does indeed refer to physical healing. Matthew 8:16-17 quotes Isaiah 53:4 and does indeed show it is physical. I pray our Lord will show you this truth. God warns of a form of godliness, denying its power.

Answer: I believe in miracles and have seen God do many. God still heals in answer to prayer. I have been instantly healed myself and have seen others, for whom I prayed, instantly healed.

The Bible, however, does not promise anyone *physical* healing from *sickness* in this life "by His stripes" in the same way that it promises *spiritual* healing from *sin*. I can assure anyone who will believe the gospel that he or she will be instantly saved from the eternal penalty of sin and receive eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. I cannot give anyone the same assurance of being perpetually healed from physical ailments. Can you?

If we have *physical* healing through the cross of Christ in the same way we have *spiritual* healing, then Christians ought to live much longer than non-Christians and there ought to be at least some Christians who have lived 100, 200, 300 or more years. But this is not the case. Our souls and spirits have been redeemed and as proof we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13, 14); but we together with "the whole creation groan and travail...[until] the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:18-25).

You correctly say that Matthew 8:16-17, when it tells of the healings by Jesus before He went to the cross, quotes Isaiah 53:4 ("he hath borne our griefs [sicknesses] and carried our sorrows [pains]"). It does not quote Isaiah 53:5 ("by his stripes we are healed"). That verse, which deals with sin ("wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities"), is quoted at 1 Peter 2:24 ("bare our *sins*...by whose stripes ye were healed"). Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled by Christ's healing ministry; Isaiah 53:5 was fulfilled at the Cross.

As for "denying the power thereof," Paul reminds us that *the gospel* "is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16). I do not deny the power of God in any way for today. I simply oppose those who profess the "power of the Spirit," claim healings that don't occur, and destroy the faith of many with unbiblical promises of healing which bring guilt when not realized.

God's Nonnegotiable Gospel - Part II

Dave Hunt

Go ye therefore, and [make disciples of] all nations,....Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Matthew 28:19-20

Last month we saw from God's Word that lost sinners are offered forgiveness of all sins (past, present and future), and eternal life as a free gift of God's grace by virtue of Christ's fully accomplished redemptive work upon the cross and bodily resurrection. To receive this priceless gift one need only believe the gospel: that one is a sinner deserving God's judgment and unable by self-effort, religious ritual or any other means, to earn or merit salvation even in part; and that Christ paid the full debt which God's justice demands for man's sin. Of course, one must believe the gospel not merely as historic fact but to the extent of placing one's faith completely in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior for eternity.

We noted also that Christ directed His disciples to preach this good news of the gospel to everyone everywhere. This command by Christ to His original followers has become known as the "Great Commission." It is stated in two ways: "go into all the world and *preach the gospel*" (Mk 16:15); and "*make disciples*" (Mt 28:19). Those who preach the gospel are to *disciple* those who believe it. Born again by God's Spirit into His family (Jn 3:3-5; 1 Jn 3:2), converts begin a new life as Christ's followers, eager to learn of Him and to obey the One whom they now love for having saved them.

Christ warned that some would seem to receive the gospel with great enthusiasm only to become entangled in the world, discouraged, disillusioned and would eventually turn back from following Him. Many maintain a facade of Christianity without inward reality, deceiving perhaps even themselves. Never fully convinced in their hearts, they are unwilling nevertheless

to admit their unbelief. "Examine yourselves," Paul warned, "whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor 13:5).

Of those who are genuine, all too few are able to give a "*reason* for the hope that is in them" (1 Pt 3:15). How many Christians are able to convincingly persuade an atheist, Buddhist, Hindu, New Ager with overwhelming evidence and sound reason from Scripture? God's Word is the sword of the Spirit, but few know it well enough to quell their own doubts, much less to convert others.

One of today's greatest needs is for the solid Bible teaching that produces *disciples* who are able to "earnestly contend for the faith once [for all] delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). That faith for which we

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:2

must contend was delivered by Christ to the original 12 disciples, who were then to teach those whom they evangelized "*to observe all things*" that Christ had commanded them. Through succeeding generations of those who have been won to Him and have in turn, in obedience to their Lord, disciplined others, this unbroken chain of command comes down to us in our time. Not some special priest or clergy class, but each Christian today, like those who have passed before, is a successor to the apostles. Think of what that means!

At the heart of Christ's call to discipleship is the daily application of His cross in each life. Yet one seldom hears in evangelical circles today Christ's definitive declaration: "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me...[and] forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:27-33). The call to discipleship must be honestly faced. Through the Cross we die to self and begin to live to our Lord in resurrection power (Gal 2:20).

True discipleship begins at home. Parents are responsible to bring up their children in the nurture, admonition and fear of the Lord. Thorough understanding of the faith

is especially vital for children and youth growing up in a world filled with persuasive arguments against God's truth and in favor of immorality and paganism.

Instead of the popular self-esteem, children need to be taught to deny self, to love truth and hate folly, to please God instead of others or themselves, no matter what the cost in this life. Never mind "social pressures" from what others think, say or do. Youth should be fully persuaded that what God thinks of them and what He will say to them when they appear before Him one day is all that matters. As Jim Elliot, one of the martyrs of Ecuador, said when, as a young man, he chose the mission field over more popular careers, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." That choice is only logical if one believes that time is short and eternity endless. Such commitment brings heavenly joy, peace and fulfillment that nothing earth offers can rival.

To those whom He called into a saving relationship with Himself, Christ said, "Follow me" (Mt 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24, etc.). This simple command, which our Lord repeated after His resurrection (Jn 21:19,22), is as applicable to Christians today as it was when He called the first disciples. What does it mean to follow Christ? Did He promise His followers that they would be successful, wealthy and esteemed in this world? God may grant earthly success to a few for His own purposes. On the whole, however, our Lord declared that those who were true to Him would follow in His path of rejection and suffering: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you....The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...for my name's sake..." (Jn 15:18-21).

Such was the lot of the early church. Yet today it is imagined that Christianity can be popularized. The idea of suffering for Christ doesn't suit a worldly church. How strange such verses as the following seem to Christians in America: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil 1:29). Suffering is *given* to us? Paul speaks as though it were a *precious privilege* to suffer for His sake! After being imprisoned and beaten, the early disciples

rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for is name” (Acts 5:41), such is the commitment to which the gospel actually calls us.

Christ told His disciples after the Resurrection, “As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (Jn 20:21). The Father sent the Son as a lamb to the slaughter into a world that would hate and crucify Him! And as the Father sent Him, so Christ sends us into a world that He promises will treat His followers as it did Him. Are we willing? Is this not your idea of Christianity? Then think again and check it out against the Scriptures. We are farther from Him and His truth than we realize!

Peter, who failed so miserably and was restored by the Lord, explained that Christians would be hated, falsely accused and persecuted and were expected to suffer these wrongs patiently (1 Pt 2:19-20; 4:12-19; etc.). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he wrote, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness...” (1 Pt 2:21-25).

Christians are being imprisoned and martyred again in communist China, in Muslim countries, and at the hands of Catholics in Mexico. Similar persecutions could well overtake us in America. Already pastors are being fined and imprisoned, and churches locked and sold by the state. In 1986, for example, Jefferson County, KY, imposed a licensing fee upon every “business, profession, trade, or occupation”—including pastors and churches. One local pastor, declaring that Christ had commissioned him to preach the gospel, refused to pay any civil authority for a license to do so. At this writing he is in jail awaiting an April 20 trial. Another pastor, arrested and jailed for the same “crime,” was released April 5 due to overcrowding of the jail and his trial was set for April 23, 1993.

In another even more bizarre case, a

Colorado pastor is currently being prosecuted for opposing a local ordinance which would have given homosexuals preferential treatment. Civil authorities claimed that homosexuality was a political issue and to speak about it his church must register as a political organization. This the church has refused to do. The pastor correctly insists that homosexuality is a moral issue which the Bible addresses and which, therefore, he must address as well. He and his church have been taken to court and heavily fined and bank accounts and church property have been seized.

Recently, I listened with tears welling in my eyes as my wife, Ruth, read to me some of the history of her ancestors. For being rebaptized after they became Christians (and thus denying the efficacy of Rome's infant baptism), these Anabaptists were burned at the stake. To escape the flames many fled the

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

Inquisition in Holland to Prussia. From there they fled to Russia, and in the closing days of World War II many attempted an escape from godless and oppressive communism back to the West. Out of one group of 611 that left Russia, only 31 arrived back in Holland. Tramping day and night through the snow, unable to find food or shelter, some were caught and returned, others were killed or died of exposure. Children were torn from parents, husbands from wives. The terror and agony was beyond imagination.

As Ruth read of the indescribable suffering, I thought of the thousands of Christians in America who find it necessary to enter “therapy” and spend months if not years dealing with comparatively trifling “hurts from the past.” I thought of the thousands of Christian psychologists who encourage their clients to pity themselves,

to pamper their “inner child of the past,” when what they need is to deny self, take up the cross and follow Christ!

In contrast, I was inspired by the testimony of those who suffered the loss of possessions, loved ones, of almost every earthly hope and joy, yet triumphed through their faith in Christ. Going to a “therapist” and engaging in self-pity would have seemed incomprehensible to them. Why should they, when they had the Lord and His Word and when they knew that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor 4:17)?

Whence comes the strength to stand against overwhelming suffering and to triumph as Christ's faithful disciples? Oddly enough, victory comes not through our strength, but through our weakness. When Paul cried out for deliverance from a severe trial, Christ replied that He had allowed it to make Paul weak enough so that he would no longer trust in his great abilities but only in the Lord. “[M]y strength is made perfect in your weakness,” the Lord declared (2 Cor 12:9).

Paul exhorts us, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). Did we not receive Christ in weakness as helpless, hopeless sinners crying out to Him for mercy and grace? That, then, is the way we are to walk this path of triumph in suffering—as sinners saved by grace, weak and helpless in ourselves and trusting totally in Him. We are earthen vessels, but we contain a great treasure: “that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Cor 4:7) Such is the secret of our triumph over the world, the flesh and the devil. The load is too heavy for us to carry it ourselves. What a relief to turn it over to Him! And what a joy to be delivered from the fear of man, from seeking to win the acclaim of this world, from seeking anything but His “Well done thou good and faithful servant” (Mt 25:21) in that coming day.

Some manage to amass a fortune to leave at their deaths to their heirs. Others have little of this earth's goods but have great riches laid up in heaven for eternity. It takes little wisdom to know who of these has made the wisest choice and who has been truly successful. God has an eternal purpose for our lives. Our passion should

be to know and to fulfill that purpose beginning here on this earth. One day, very soon, we will each stand before Him. What a tragedy to miss the very purpose for which we were created and redeemed!

You may say, "Yes, I want to be used of God, but I don't know what He wants me to do." Or, "I try to serve Him, try to witness for Him, and it all seems to come to nothing." Learn this: Greater than anything God can do *through* you is what He wants to do *in* you. What counts most is not *quantity* but *quality*, not so much your outward effort but your motive within—the purity of your heart rather than your prominence with men. Moreover, what seems much in time may be very little in eternity. It is not one's talents or energy but the empowering of the Holy Spirit that produces genuine and lasting results: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zec 4:6). Trust God for the filling and empowering of His Spirit.

Millions in past generations have laid down their lives for the faith. Their commitment to Christ meant so much that they would not compromise even when threatened with the most excruciating torture and death. Can we fathom their choice? The martyrs could have chosen the ecumenical path of compromise and of avoiding controversy, and of affirming the "common beliefs of all religions," and thus have escaped the flame or the sword. They chose instead to stand firm for the truth, to contend earnestly for the faith. Christ calls us to do the same. There is no escaping the eternal choice which confronts us. Will it be compromise or commitment? One day we will give an account before God for the path we choose. What joy there is now and eternally in being true to Him! TBC

Quotable

There are few warnings in Scripture more solemn than that [spoken by] the Lord Jesus Christ: "Remember Lot's wife."...The sum and substance of her transgression lies in these three words, "She looked back." Does that sin seem small...a trifling one to be visited with such a punishment?...That look *revealed the true character of Lot's wife*....That look...*told of secret love of the world*...her heart was in Sodom....*The*

immense danger of worldliness is the grand lesson which the Lord Jesus means us to learn....I would fain cry aloud, "Remember Lot's wife." She was no murderess, no adulteress, no thief...she [only] *looked back*. There are thousands of baptized persons in our churches who are proof against immorality and infidelity, and yet fall victims to the love of the world....Have they found the Bible not true? Have they found the Lord Jesus fail to keep His word? No, not at all. But they...are infected with the love of this world....It is sad to see how many a gallant ship launches forth on the voyage of life with every prospect of success and, springing this leak of worldliness, goes down with all her freight in full view of the harbor of safety....Beware of following Christ from any secondary motive....Follow Christ for His own sake, if you follow Him at all. Be thorough, be real, be honest, be sound, be wholehearted.

Anglican Bishop J. C. Ryle
About 100 years ago

From prayer that asks that I may be
Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee,
From fearing when I should aspire,
From faltering when I should climb
higher,
From silken self, O Captain, free
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.

From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices, weakenings,
Not thus are spirits fortified,
Not this way went the crucified,
From all that dims Thy Calvary,
O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire.
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, O Flame of God.

Amy Carmichael, missionary to India

Q&A

Question: One of the staff from Christian Research Institute, in a class he teaches in the Newport, CA area, recently dismissed

Dave Hunt's work because "Dave Hunt is not a theologian." What is your response?

Answer: Neither were the Bereans "theologians," yet they checked out Paul's preaching against Scripture and were commended for doing so (Acts 17:11). Every Christian is both qualified *and obligated* to do the same with every Bible teacher and preacher, no matter how highly regarded or how many degrees they may have—and that's what we try to encourage here at *The Berean Call*. No one is immune from error or correction, and that includes this ministry.

Nor were the disciples "theologians," but fishermen, a tax gatherer, etc. The idea that those who have academic degrees from theological seminaries thereby have a monopoly on interpreting the Bible is both illogical and unscriptural. Such Protestant elitism mimics Roman Catholicism's claim that its hierarchy of bishops, cardinals and popes alone can interpret Scripture.

I don't have all the answers. I'm only a Berean who, trusting the Holy Spirit's guidance, has been studying the Bible on his knees for more than 50 years. Am I, therefore, less qualified to understand God's Word than someone who has studied a few years in seminary? I think not.

Question: In the March/April 1993 issue of *Perhaps Today*, Jack Van Impe writes that Jesus died spiritually "...the Lord Jesus Christ took both the first and second death—the grave and the Lake of Fire— upon Himself when He died." Pastor David Hocking also taught that Jesus died spiritually. On March 15, 1993, on the radio Chuck Smith stated that Jesus's Spirit died. Did Jesus die spiritually? Was the Trinity separated? If the Spirit of God died, who was in charge of the universe while God was dead...?

Answer: Van Impe, Hocking and Smith are biblically correct in this regard. Confusion arises because "Jesus Died Spiritually (JDS)" is the label attached to the heresy taught by Hagin, Copeland and other "word-faith teachers": That our redemption comes not from Christ's death upon the cross, but from His being tortured by Satan in hell for three days and nights. Copeland, for example, says, "He allowed the devil to drag Him into the depths of hell

as if He were the most wicked sinner who ever lived....every demon in hell came down on Him to annihilate Him ...they tortured Him beyond anything that anybody has ever conceived....In a thunder of spiritual force, the voice of God spoke to the death-whipped, broken, punished spirit of Jesus...[in] the pit of destruction and charged the spirit of Jesus with resurrection power! Suddenly His twisted, death-wracked spirit began to fill out and come back to life....He was literally being reborn before the devil's very eyes. He began to flex His spiritual muscles.... Jesus Christ dragged Satan up and down the halls of hell....Jesus...was raised up a born-again man.... The day I realized that a born-again man had defeated Satan, hell, and death, I got so excited...!" (*Believer's Voice of Victory*, Sep. 1991).

It is both fanciful nonsense and heresy to teach that our redemption comes through Satan torturing Jesus in hell. That would make Satan our co-redeemer. If he didn't torture Jesus enough we wouldn't be saved—and if he did, do we thank him? Blasphemy! Satan isn't the proprietor of hell. He hasn't even been there yet. Nor will Satan torture the damned but will himself be tortured with "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41) when death and hell have been "cast into the lake of fire" (Rv 20:14).

Before He died, Jesus cried in triumph, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30), indicating that our redemption had been accomplished *on the Cross*. Christ told the thief on the cross who believed in Him, "Today shalt thou be with me in *paradise*" (Lk 23:43), *not in hell!* He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). Yet Hagin, Copeland, et al. say He ended up, instead, in the hands of Satan in the depths of hell!

Did Jesus die "spiritually"? The Bible says that He "taste[d] death for every man" (Heb 2:9). All that we deserved He endured, which must have included death to His human body, soul and spirit. No, God the Father and the Holy Spirit didn't die, Christ did. Was the Trinity, then, separated? No, God is One. Yet Jesus did cry in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1; Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34). What could that mean? It is a mystery beyond our comprehension, as is the statement that "it pleased the LORD [*Jahweh*] to bruise him, he hath put him to grief...when thou shalt make

his soul an offering for sin" (Is 53:10). We only know and believe that the full penalty demanded by God's infinite justice against sin was paid by Christ upon the cross, and that "he who knew no sin was made to be sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21). Christ was punished by God as though He were sin itself so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life as a free gift of His grace.

Question (composite): Your comments about AIDS and homosexuality in the March newsletter were inaccurate and promoted bigotry. Far more sexual child abuse is done by heterosexuals than by gays. Nor is AIDS "highly contagious," and to claim it is, as you did, spreads fear. The homosexuals I know are very loving and kind. We need to love and accept them.

Answer: Yes, the 98 percent of the population which is heterosexual accounts for somewhat more child abuse than the 2 percent which is homosexual. However, that 2 percent tiny minority consistently accounts for one-third to one-half of *all* sexual child abuse, which it *considers to be normal behavior*. A primary goal of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) is the removal of all age-of-consent laws. The most extensive study done to date of male sexual child abusers reveals that the average homosexual victimized 7.5 times as many boys as the average heterosexual did girls.

If AIDS is not highly contagious, then why do we have an epidemic of it? In fact, Dr. John G. Bartlett, head of infectious diseases at Johns Hopkins Hospital, recently said that by 1997, AIDS deaths will have "soar[ed] past 25 million worldwide, earning it the grim title of *history's most lethal epidemic*" (*Baltimore Sun*, 4/1/93). If homosexuals are "loving and kind," why do they persist in behavior which is lethal both to their "lovers" and to the population as a whole?

Consider a few facts: 1) homosexuals account for nearly 90 percent of all AIDS cases, though it is now spreading rapidly outside their ranks; 2) one who lives an exclusively homosexual lifestyle is *1,000 times more likely* to contract AIDS than a heterosexual; 3) lethal health hazards such as "fisting" and ingestion of feces are common homosexual practices; 4) sadomasochism

is practiced by 37 percent of homosexuals. More shocking and shameful statistics could be given, but these should be enough to condemn homosexuality from purely a humanistic/social perspective, ignoring morality.

Christ said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent" (Rv 3:19). It is far more loving to reprove homosexuals than to "accept them." If you truly love these misguided souls, you will point them to scriptures which call their perversion a sinful abomination to God. And you will urge them to cease from a practice which is both unnatural and lethal and which can only bring remorse and a premature and painful death.

God's Nonnegotiable Gospel - Part III

Dave Hunt

An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me....And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou has polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon

Exodus 20:24-26

...[L]et us build us a city and a tower [of Babel], whose top may reach unto heaven...

Genesis 11:4

No two tenets of faith could be more opposed to one another than those presented above. On the one hand, we have God's rejection of any human effort to buy salvation or His favor. If man is to come to God, it must be solely by His grace and His provision, not by any human work. On the other hand, we see man's flagrant repudiation of God's prohibition against self-effort, and his arrogant attempt to build a tower that would enable him to climb by steps of his own making into heaven itself.

God's instructions were explicit. If the ground was too rocky to gather up a mound of earth for an altar, stones could be heaped together—but they could not be cut, fashioned or polished with a tool. Nor could the altar be elevated. Not one step must be climbed to reach it. There must be no illusion that man could contribute anything by his own efforts to his salvation. God himself is the only One who can save man, and salvation must be a gift of His grace. Such is the gospel consistently presented from Genesis to Revelation. Consider the following:

I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is *no saviour* (Is 43:11); For unto us a child [the Messiah] is born...[He is] The mighty God, The everlasting Father (Is 9:6). ...thou shalt call his name JESUS; for *he shall save his people from their sins* (Mt 1:21)...*they that are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom 8:8). For by grace are ye saved....*not of works*, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9); *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy* he saved us (Ti 3:5); Being justified freely *by his grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24); And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work (Rom 11:6).

It was the incredible act of rebellion in Eden against the Almighty that separated

man from his Creator. No less astonishing is the fact that man continues his defiance in his very attempts to be reconciled to God, and so persists in his self-righteous resolve to contribute *something* toward his salvation. Thus, amazingly, man's rebellion against God is seen most clearly in his religions, all of which are but mirror images of Babel—ingenious and persistent attempts to "climb up some other way" (Jn 10:1) instead of entering through the door (Christ) which God has provided.

Babel may be traced from ancient paganism, to the "high places" (elevated altars) of heathen worship adopted by Israel (Lv 26:30; 1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 23:15; Ez 16:24-39, etc.) and on to every religion on earth today. The ornate temples or mosques and elaborate ceremonies found in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism,

**I, even I, am the LORD; and
beside me there is no saviour.**

Isaiah 43:11

Mormonism and other cults and the occult are obvious continuations of Babel. So are the magnificent cathedrals, lofty steeples, exalted and gilded altars, luxurious vestments and impressive rituals of today's "high church" Anglican, Orthodox, Catholic and other denominations. Such pomp turns off many non-Christians who rightly want nothing to do with a "God" who is influenced by fleshly enhancements.

Was not Solomon's temple most magnificent? Yes, but it was uniquely designed and commanded by God. Both the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple which succeeded it were "a figure [picture]...of good things to come [i.e., of Christ and heaven]" (Heb 9:9-11). God said to Moses, "See to it that thou make all things according to the pattern which I showed to thee on the mount [Sinai]" (Heb 8:5). No such pattern or approval was given by God for any other religious structure.

Protestantism retained some Catholic heresies, such as the error of attaching virtue (or evil) and power to physical objects and rituals. While Protestants reject relics, statues and icons, they often refer to their places of worship as "sanctuaries," as though God dwells there. In fact, God inhabits the Christian's body ("your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" - 1 Cor 3:17; 6:19), which is therefore to be kept holy. Paul reminded the Athenians,

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with

men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;...(Acts 17:24-25).

Jesus explained that God does, indeed, desire our worship—but it must be "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23-24). Affectations, whether in physical adornments, props or ceremonies, appeal to the flesh and, far from enhancing worship, deny both the truth and the Spirit, by which it alone can be offered to the God who created and redeemed us. Sacramentalism, which is the heart of Roman Catholicism—the belief that liturgy's form and formulas transmit spiritual power and that salvation comes through the sacraments—too readily creeps into Protestant thinking as well. (Many Protestants still believe that baptism saves, taking the bread and cup brings life, etc.) Alas, we are all Eve's children by nature and still prone to follow the ways of Cain and Babel.

Every place of worship, Catholic or Protestant, which has been adorned for the purpose of hallowing it or gaining God's favor or making worship more acceptable, violates Exodus 20:24-26 as well as the rest of Scripture. All such "sanctuaries" are monuments to man's rebellion and his proud and perverted religion of self-effort. Unfortunately, it is all too easy to fall into the error of imagining that belonging to a church and periodically "worshiping" in its "sanctuary" makes one a Christian and compensates for one's lack of consistent, personal holiness.

Of course, no one in the 1990s is under the illusion that one can climb a physical tower to heaven. Yet the folly of today's religions is every bit as monumental, and the anarchy against God which motivates those beliefs is just as obscene, as was the Tower of Babel. Billions continue, in the spirit of Babel, to pursue equally futile do-good and positive-thinking, self-help religious programs to earn their way to heaven.

Norman Vincent Peale's "positive thinking" and Robert Schuller's "possibility thinking" replace *truth*. It doesn't matter *what* or *in whom* one believes, but only that one be *positive*. Biblical doctrine, Schuller argues, may have communicated to people in the past, but to our generation it seems so "negative" and offensive that it turns people off. What is needed now is a "positive" gospel that everyone can accept. In a recent article in *The Orange County Register*, Schuller berated preachers "who spew forth their angry, hate-filled sermons of fire and brimstone." (Isn't he judging hearts? Didn't God create hell? Didn't Jesus repeatedly warn about hell?) Explaining that the way to "tell the good religion from the bad religion" is whether it is "positive," Schuller exhorted "religious

leaders...whatever their theology ...to articulate their faith in positive terms.” He then called for a “massive, united effort by leaders of *all religions*” to proclaim “the positive power...of world-community-building religious values.” (Emphasis added) Antichrist himself couldn’t improve on that New Age, one-world-religion doubletalk!

Sadly, for Schuller and Peale, et al., “faith” is a power of the *mind* and “God” is merely a placebo that helps one “believe” and thereby activate this mind power. “Prayer is communicating with the deep unconscious.... Your unconscious mind...[has a] power that turns wishes into realities,” writes Peale. On an Amway tape, Schuller exults, “You don’t know the power you have within you!... You make the world into anything you choose.” It is Babel again in a more sophisticated form. The power of “thinking” becomes the magic stairway that leads to the paradise where all one’s wishes can be fulfilled.

Similar to the above is the “positive confession” of Hagin, Copeland, Cho, Hinn, et al., which is embraced by much of the charismatic movement. Kenneth Hagin, Jr. calls God “the greatest Positive Thinker that ever was!” To these “faith teachers,” faith is a mind power which even God uses—a force contained in words and released when one speaks forth “the word of faith.” Cho writes, “By the spoken word we create our universe...you create the presence of Jesus with your mouth...through visualization and dreaming you can incubate your future and hatch the results.” Here we have an evangelical form of Christian Science or Science of Mind! On TBN, with Paul and Jan Crouch nodding approval, Copeland declared, “Faith is a force just like electricity or gravity...we are a class of gods.”

Many Christians have unwittingly believed a similar lie. They imagine that faith is believing that what they are praying for will happen. Of course, if *believing* something will happen *causes* it to happen, then who needs God? Men have become gods themselves. The power of *belief* becomes one’s tower of Babel, the magic steps by which one climbs to that “state of mind called heaven.”

Biblical faith, however, is believing that *God* will answer one’s prayer. That changes everything! I could never truly believe a prayer would be answered—nor would I want it to be—unless I were certain it was God’s will. Faith is not a magic power we aim at God to get Him to bless our plans, but “the *obedience* of faith” (Acts 6:7; Rom 1:5; 16:26; 2 Thes 1:8, etc.) brings us into submission to Him as the instruments of His will. Yet Benny Hinn says, “Never, ever, ever, go to the Lord and say, ‘If it be thy will....’ Don’t allow such faith-destroying words to be spoken from your mouth.” Why? Because “man was created on

terms of equality with God,” says Hagin. Behold Christianized humanism!

Humanists also have their Babel-like, do-it-yourself religion. They call it science. It, too, reflects man’s continued rebellion. Modern man hopes to conquer the atom, space and all disease and thus to become immortal master of the universe. The materialist’s “heaven” is a peaceful cosmos populated by highly evolved, space-traveling civilizations which have restored paradise through super technology. Such was the dream (“to join a community of galactic civilizations...[is] our hope in a vast and awe-some universe”) which President Carter, a professing Christian, expressed to anticipated extraterrestrial contactees on the gold record carried into space by Voyager in 1977.

Pure materialism leaves the soul empty, but adding a touch of religion to science

**Look unto me, and be ye saved,
all the ends of the earth: for I
am God, and there is none else.
Isaiah 45:22**

seems to fill the void while keeping faith “rational.” There is no more deadly delusion than a scientific religion. It is the delusion of Babel all over again, with advancing knowledge building the steps that both lead man to “heaven” and open to him the very powers of God. One of Christian psychology’s major appeals to evangelicals is its false claim to being scientific. It fails, however, the litmus test of Exodus 20:24-26. Its altars are built of the cut and polished stones of human wisdom; its rituals are not found in Scripture; and self rather than God is the object of worship. Moreover, on its altars burns the strange fire (Lv 10:1; Nm 3:4) of humanistic theories unacceptable to God.

Religious science is a major element in the environmental movement, where the earth is increasingly viewed as sacred. Eco-theology, says Georgetown University professor Victor Ferkiss, “starts with the premise that the Universe is God.” Carl Sagan exemplifies today’s scientific paganism. “If we must worship a power greater than ourselves,” intones this high priest of cosmos worship, “does it not make sense to revere the Sun and stars?” Here we go again! To draw closer to, and thus better observe and worship, the heavenly bodies was a major purpose of the Tower of Babel. The environmental movement is a humanistic attempt to restore the lost paradise of Eden without repenting of rebellion against the Creator.

Such is the message that is being seductively presented to America’s children

in the public schools. Lamar Alexander, former governor of Tennessee, was appointed by President Bush as U.S. Secretary of Education. He says the book that most influenced his thinking in the last 10 years was *A God Within* by René Dubos. In it Dubos declares that a “truly ecological view of the world has religious overtones.... Our salvation depends upon our ability to create a religion of nature...suited to the needs and knowledge of modern man.” That’s New Age.

That religion is being purposefully promoted in the public schools through such programs as *America 2000*, initiated by the Bush administration. We can expect even worse under Clinton. As governor of Arkansas he initiated a school reform which had little to do with academic excellence and much to do with remolding the students into planetary citizens alienated from parents. Former students at the “Governor’s School” testify that foul language was encouraged as part of a brainwashing procedure designed to strip students of biblical morals. There was blatant promotion of gay lifestyles, free sex, rebellion, and New Age beliefs and practices, including the worship of self and the universe as God.

Exodus 20:24-26 is a foundational passage which makes it clear that the earth is neither to be honored nor worshiped, but to be used as an altar. Sin brought a curse upon the earth, a curse which could only be removed through the shedding of blood (Lv 17:11). Animals were sacrificed upon an altar of earth in anticipation of the Lamb of God who would, “by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26), once and for all obtain “eternal redemption for us” (v 12).

It is for man’s own good that God visits sin with death. How horrible it would be for mankind to continue forever in its state of rebellion, thus perpetuating ever increasing evil, sickness, suffering, sorrow and death. Only out of death in payment of the full penalty for sin comes resurrection (not reincarnation’s amoral recycling of evil) and a whole new universe into which sin and suffering can never enter. Such is God’s desire and provision for all mankind. Those who reject the free gift of eternal life offered by His grace will experience eternal regret.

The “gospel of God,” as we have seen, is very specific and must be believed for one to be saved. “[S]trait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mt 7:14). That “narrow-minded” statement was not the invention of some dogmatic fundamentalist, but came from our Lord himself. “The faith” for which we must “earnestly contend” (Jude 3) has definite moral and doctrinal content and must be believed for salvation. All else is Babel. **TBC**

Quotable

How wide is the distinction between the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and that other gospel of which Paul speaks, and which is indeed no gospel (Gal 1:6-9)...[That other gospel] teaches that man is not so very bad; that he has a Divine spark....It tells man to cheer up, think good thoughts, believe in himself, turn over a new leaf, chip in and help keep the wheels of the Church machinery moving, and everything will come out right in the end. This gospel denies the personality of Satan and the punishment of the wicked; it has a heaven, but no hell; a Christ but no Cross; a leader, but no Lord....[I]t has soft words for sinners....[A]t its shrines it serves soothing sophistries to itching ears. In the place of Scripture facts it has silly fables; it denies the doctrines of the Bible and dishes up doctrines of devils....The gospel of gush has no grip upon men. The demand of the day is for strong, sturdy preachers of the pure Gospel of Grace, and zealous followers of the living God.

T. C. Horton, 1910

Jesus Christ my Lord has set me free from a sinful life and eternal damnation in hell. He has freed me from 16 years of alcohol and drug addiction, 5⁺ years of cigarette smoking, 9 years of psychotherapy, 11⁺ years of medication when the doctors and therapists said I'd probably have to depend on them for the rest of my life. He's freed me from loneliness, depression, hopelessness, suicidal feelings, confusion. Since Jesus set me free I can shout with all confidence, "Rejoice in the Lord always...be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!"

TBC reader JC, Connecticut

Notice: A spokesman for Liberty University complains that instead of *Psychology 200* being required for all students as we had reported, "In fact, probably only 50% or so take *General Psychology* and the rest take *Developmental Psychology* and in some cases may not take either...." (*The Liberty University School of Lifelong Learning catalogue for 1991-93*, p 38, lists *Psychology 200* under the general education requirements for undergraduate AA and BA degrees.)

Q&A

Question: The last few days I watched a spectacle on Christian TV that made me ashamed to let anyone know I'm a Christian. John Avanzini claimed to "break the power of debt" for all those who pledged to support his ministry with \$1 or more per day. How could anyone be gullible enough to believe he had such power—much less that God would let him sell it for money! What do you think?

Answer: People are deceived by the self-serving promises of today's false prophets for two reasons: 1) they are ignorant of Scripture, and 2) they, like the "prophets" they follow, want to use God for their own ends. No one in the Bible—not Moses, Joseph, Isaiah, Christ himself or any of His apostles—ever had or used the "power" that Avanzini claims he has but obviously lacks. What he does have is a great talent for getting money out of people by making false but appealing promises. If he didn't have protection of "religious freedom" he would be jailed for fraud. That such scams continue to victimize millions over "Christian" radio and TV will, in my opinion, create a crescendo of complaints and, finally, laws which will suppress genuine Christianity.

Being "debt-free" is neither a promise nor obligation in Scripture. Paul's admonition to "owe no man anything but to love one another" (Rom 13:8) has often been mistakenly interpreted to mean we should pay cash for everything. If so, then who could buy a house? No, one does not "owe" in Paul's sense if the house or car is worth more than is borrowed on it and if payments are made on time. If you are behind on your payments, then you do "owe." That is the sense in which we owe love to one another—we can never get caught up on the payments.

While the ideal is to be debt-free, there is nothing shameful about having a mortgage on one's house. Borrowing and lending are legitimate for God's people both in the Old (Dt 15:7-8) and New Testaments (Lk 6:35; 11:5). God even set regulations for creditors (Dt 15:9-11; 23:19-20; 24:10, etc.). Yes, He promised Israel that she would lend and not borrow (Dt 15:6; 28:12) if she would obey Him (she didn't), but no such promise was made to Gentiles or to Christians. Nor could national Israel realize the promise by a prophet's "positive confession," but only by obedience to God.

I, too, watched the same brazen performance as John Avanzini crumpled pieces of paper, one after another, on which a donor's name was written, and pronounced, "I break the power of debt out of X's life in the mighty name of Jesus." Giving money to his ministry is seemingly necessary for this magic incantation to work. It is one of the baldest

money-making schemes I've ever seen (comparable to the Catholic Church selling indulgences and salvation). Yet Avanzini had nearly 20,000 people signed up! Peter's warning that in the last days false prophets would "with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Pt 2:3) is coming true before our eyes.

Avanzini is the fund raiser Paul and Jan Crouch have found most effective and love to use on TBN. In *The Wealth of the Wicked, Yours for the Taking*, Avanzini "proves from the scriptures that the wealth of this world is literally reserved [for Christians...and shows] how, and even when this transfer of wealth will happen!" (From TBN description of the book in its offer to donors.) He claims Jesus was rich and that all Christians should be also. Here's the formula: for every dollar given to a ministry endorsed by Avanzini, God returns to the donor \$100. He and other "faith teachers" such as Oral Roberts and Kenneth Copeland milk multitudes of millions of dollars with this "hundredfold hoax," as Hank Hanegraaff calls it, in his new book, *Christianity in Crisis*, which we're offering this month.

Question: Psalm 137:9 is a verse which has bothered me for years: "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." How can Christians oppose abortion, yet believe in a God who encouraged Israel to slaughter infants and to rejoice in doing it?! I've had non-Christians throw this verse at me and I can't give them a good answer.

Answer: I, too, puzzled over this verse for years. Then one day I realized what should have been obvious: it was not God's people who committed this horrible atrocity. Israel never conquered Babylon. It was the Medes and Persians who did so. The psalmist is not condoning such barbarous behavior. He is simply warning Babylon that she will be crushed by invaders—and that just as she rejoiced in destroying Jerusalem, so her conquerors will rejoice in destroying her, including her innocent infants.

Question: Roman Catholic apologists such as Gerry Matatics, Scott Hahn and Karl Keating claim that the apostles' oral teaching was as authoritative as Scripture, that it was passed down through history as "tradition," that the Catholic Church has been its careful guardian and that evangelicals lack a full understanding of God's truth because they reject tradition. How do you respond?

Answer: Not every word the apostles spoke was inspired of God. Catholics don't even claim that for the popes, alleged successors of Peter. Moreover, without a written record, no one could be certain even 100 years later, let alone today, that orally transmitted teaching had been passed down accurately.

Obviously, we must have an infallible written record, which is why the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to write the New Testament. We are assured that all *Scripture* is inspired of God. No such assurance is given for *tradition*. In fact, the opposite is implied.

Certainly while the canon of the New Testament was in the process of composition much of the apostles' teaching had only been given orally. That's why Paul reminded the Thessalonians of "the tradition... received of us" (2 Thes 3:6) and admonished them to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2:15). It is equally clear, however, both logically and biblically, that whatever applied to and was to be observed by the church down through the ages was included in the permanent New Testament record. The apostles' teaching certainly has been preserved nowhere else.

Do we have examples of apostolic teaching first given orally then written into the New Testament scriptures? Yes. Paul repeats to the Corinthians in writing what he had previously taught them orally ("delivered unto you") concerning the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:23). Likewise he puts in writing in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians what he had previously taught them orally concerning the Antichrist: "when I was yet with you, I told you these things" (2 Thes 2:5). There are other examples.

Far from promoting extrabiblical tradition, the Bible condemns it. Except for 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6 quoted above, every other mention of tradition in the New Testament is disapproving. Both Peter (1 Pt 1:18) and Paul (Gal 1:13-16; Col 2:8) reveal its errors and the need to be delivered from human tradition. Far from supplementing and being equal to God's Word, as Rome insists, tradition is always contrasted with and declared to be contradictory thereto. It is Rome's traditions (like those of the rabbis) which have led her so far astray. Christ rebuked the Pharisees for voiding the Word of God by their tradition (Mt 15:2,3,6; Mk 7:3,5,8,9,13). Surely He wouldn't then have His church guided by extrabiblical tradition! In fact, none were passed down from the apostles.

Absolutely no tradition held by Roman Catholics today can be traced back to the apostles. Catholic traditions and dogmas such as the Mass, rosary, prayers to Mary and the "saints," etc. developed gradually over the centuries, directly contradict Scripture and therefore must be rejected. Matatics, Hahn, Keating, et al. are clever

but wrong—not only on this point but in all their defense of Rome's heresies.

Question: I've been listening to Bob George on the radio and am confused. He doesn't believe in Christians confessing sin and claims that 1 John 1:9 ("if we confess our sins") was not written to Christians but to the unsaved. Is that true?

Answer: In his books and talks, Bob George provides some excellent insights, especially in combatting the lingering guilt which causes many Christians to ask God repeatedly for forgiveness and robs them of the peace and assurance they ought to enjoy. His view of 1 John 1:9, however, is clearly wrong. The epistle is not a declaration of the gospel to the lost, but exhortation (including the need to confess sin) and assurance to those who know Christ.

Of course, as Bob argues, God has already, through the Cross, forgiven Christians of past, present and future sins. The *eternal* consequences are removed. But sin has practical consequences *in this life*. It dishonors God, is unbecoming of His children, breaks fellowship with Him (1:6), and should be confessed for joy to be restored, which 1 John 1:5-10 clearly teaches. But Bob attempts to deny that by saying that these verses are not written to Christians. Is it possible that the entire epistle is written to Christians (as it clearly is) except for these few verses? No, nor is there any indication that this is the case. John is writing to "brethren" (i.e., Christians - 2:7; 3:13). Never does he address anyone else.

John consistently uses the pronoun "we" throughout the epistle, thus including himself among those to whom he writes and thereby identifying them as Christians. For example: *we* have fellowship with him...[and] one with another" (1:6-7); "hereby *we* do know that *we* know him" (2:3); "now are *we* the sons of God" (3:2); "*we* know that *we* have passed from death unto life" (3:14); "*we* dwell in him and he in us" (4:13); "*we* love God and keep his commandments" (5:2); "*we* are of God" (5:19), etc.

Even the verses which Bob George claims are addressed to unbelievers contain the pronoun "we" by which John identifies himself with those to whom he writes. "If *we* say that *we* have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, *we* lie and do not the truth" (1:6) is surely an exhortation to believers. "But if *we* walk in the light, as he is in the light, *we* have fellowship one with another" (1:7) continues the same thought and can only be addressed to Christians.

Who else walks in light and in fellowship with God? Verses 8 and 10 reject the idea of "sinless perfection" for Christians: "the truth is not in *us* and *his* word is not in *us*" IF *we* say that *we* have no sin...[or] that *we* have not sinned." Surely this solemn exhortation can only be to Christians, not to unbelievers. By what rationale, then, could one conclude that suddenly verse 9—"If *we* confess *our* sins, he is faithful and just to forgive *us our* sins"—is addressed to unbelievers? There is none. Moreover, why, if he is writing to unbelievers at that point, does John include himself among them?

That John is writing entirely to Christians is also clear from his repeated use of the term "little children" (2:1,12,18, etc.). Obviously, as the elderly and last surviving apostle, he looks upon those he addresses as his children in the faith: "little children, abide in him" (2:28); "my little children, let us...love in deed and truth" (3:18); "Ye are of God, little children" (4:4). John ends the epistle with this final exhortation: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (5:21). It is all consistent with his statement in 3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Such language doesn't fit non-Christians.

In his book, *Classic Christianity* (which in many ways is excellent), Bob George declares that a Christian is as righteous and acceptable in the sight of God as Jesus Christ (p 100)! Yet we still disobey and displease God at times, whereas Christ does not. If nothing more, the same common courtesy that causes a child to confess having disobeyed its parents should cause us to confess the same disobedience to our heavenly Father. In denying that clear teaching of 1 John 1:9, Bob takes an extreme position. While he offers some excellent insights elsewhere, his denial that Christians should confess sin has confused many and could lead some to look lightly upon sin.

Mystery, Babylon Part I

Dave Hunt

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets,...how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Luke 13:34

...I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore...With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication....I saw a woman...And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT....[She was] drunken with the blood of the saints, and...of the martyrs of Jesus....[She] is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth [and is built on] seven hills [i.e., Rome].

Revelation 17:1-6,18

Jerusalem and Rome! How different and yet how similar are these ancient (and current) rivals for worldwide spiritual leadership! Both figured so largely in Christ's crucifixion and the persecution of the early church. Both are destined by God also to play dominant roles in the final events prophesied in Scripture. Antichrist will rule the world from Rome's fabled throne of the Caesars, revived as the seat of the new world order. This "Wicked [one]" (2 Thes 2:8) will be embraced by Israel as her Messiah (Jn 5:43) when he brings peace to the Middle East and allows the temple to be rebuilt. That the stage for these coming events is already set seemed apparent to the participants in last month's videomaking tour of Israel and Rome.

The fate of Jerusalem has been inextricably intertwined with that of Rome ever since they joined in unholy alliance to reject and crucify the Lord of glory (Acts 2:23; 1 Cor 2:8). That uneasy partnership was shattered with Jerusalem's destruction by Rome's legions in A.D.70, foretold both by Daniel (9:26) and Jesus (Mt 24:2). The Roman Empire must be revived, for one day its armies will belong to Daniel's "prince that shall come"—i.e., Antichrist—and will seek to destroy Jerusalem again.

The woman in Revelation 17 can only be Rome/Vatican City. No other city built on seven hills wields such authority, exchanging ambassadors with nations. Nor does any other city claim to represent Christ, and thus no other could stand accused of spiritual fornication due to unholy

alliances with earth's rulers. Neither can any other city rival the blood of both Jews and Christians which pagan Rome and later the Vatican have shed. Thomas Hobbes perceptively said, "The Papacy is...the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof."

"In the midst of the [70th] week [seven-year tribulation]" (Dn 9:27), Antichrist will forbid further sacrifices, place his image in the temple and demand to be worshiped as God. Israel will object, bringing the armies of the entire world, under Antichrist, against her to effect a "final solution" to the Jewish problem. Accompanied by the saints of all ages in their resurrected and/or glorified bodies, Christ will intervene. Destroying Antichrist and his armies, Israel's Messiah, at last recognized and accepted by her, will rule the world from David's throne in Jerusalem.

Such prophecies remain hidden from Israel. The spiritual blindness of the vast majority in that land was both apparent and incomprehensible to those on our

**When the Son of man cometh,
shall he find faith on the earth?**

Luke 18:8

recent tour. How true is Christ's sorrowful pronouncement: "this [rebellious (Ps 78:8), faithless and perverse (Mt 17:17), evil and adulterous (12:39, 16:4), etc.] generation [of vipers (12:34)] shall not pass, till all these things [i.e., all the prophesied signs] be fulfilled" (24:34). Only after all prophesied events have occurred (which must precede and foreshadow the Second Coming), and Christ comes visibly in power and glory to rescue her in the midst of Armageddon, will Israel at last believe (Zec 12:10). Then shall be fulfilled Christ's words: "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Mt 10:22); and Paul's: "all Israel [that have survived to the end] shall be saved" (Rom 11:26).

How astonishing it is that stubborn unbelief should persistently characterize the descendants of Abraham, the father of the faithful (Rom 4:11-16)! "[B]lindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles..." (Rom 11:25). More than 30 percent of Israel's Jews are atheists. Although that figure is high compared with many other countries (10 percent in the USA and Ireland, 20 percent in Italy),

it is even higher among *kibbutz* dwellers. This communal lifestyle of Marxist origins breeds atheism. We were told by our host on a visit to a *kibbutz* in Galilee that out of 300 *kibbutzim* throughout Israel only about 15 were "religious," atheism being the faith of all of the others, including his own.

Politely but pointedly, I asked how Israel could assert any better claim to that land than the Arabs, if God did not give it to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for "an everlasting possession" (Gn 17:8; 48:4; Ex 6:8; JI 3:2). He had no answer. I then reminded him that Israel's children study their history from the Bible, and asked how that Book could be 100 percent accurate when it comes to ancient names, places and events and yet 100 percent wrong about the God who its authors claim inspired their writings. Again no answer.

Interviews in the streets for the videos we shot revealed that most Israelis (including even some atheists) do expect the Messiah. Yet they have no biblical understanding of who He might be—or that the prophets said Messiah would be "cut off [killed]" (Is 53:8; Dn 9:26, etc.) and thereafter Jerusalem and the temple destroyed (9:26)! When asked how they would recognize the Messiah, nearly all responded, "He will bring peace." What a setup for Antichrist, of whom it is said, "By peace shall [he] destroy many" (Dn 8:25)! Sadly, the worst destruction in Israel's history, "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 30:7), lies ahead.

Evidence of the conquering Roman presence from Christ's day and from Crusader times is found everywhere. Ancient ruins, neglected and even destroyed when the Arabs were in control, are being expertly restored by the Jews. A Roman presence of another nature continues in Israel to this day: the Catholicized "holy" places, where events in Jesus' life and death allegedly took place. Rome's presence is seen and felt also in the throngs of Catholic pilgrims who come for the indulgences and special favors from God which they've been taught attach to physical places and relics. One has the impression that this land is still theirs. After all, didn't the Crusaders conquer it for Holy Mother Church?

Each holy place is marked (and marred) by the inevitable church constructed upon it. In these shrines, candles (purchase price depending upon size) burn continuously. Robed priests appear periodically at altars to repeat incantations unknown to Christ

and the apostles. Reverently the faithful cross themselves and join in ceremonies believed to convey special grace because performed at a sacred site. Israel needs the money the pilgrims bring. Yet one senses an uneasy truce between Jews, who disown their own who believe in Him, and Catholics, who come to see where Jesus was crucified by Jews, forgetting the Vatican's long persecution and slaughter of Jesus' Jewish brethren.

The Christian church, after being granted recognition and freedom by Constantine, soon became the persecutor of all those who did not submit to its doctrines. Like Islam a few centuries later, Christianity was imposed upon the entire populace of Europe under the threat of torture and death. Christ told His disciples that whosoever would be the greatest must be the servant of all. Instead, the popes aspired to be masters of the world. Church and state joined in adulterous partnership to expand the "Holy Roman Empire" by enforcing conversion with the sword.

Persecution of Jews commenced in earnest after the popes, taking advantage of the power vacuum left when the empire fell to the barbarians, began to rule not just as ecclesiastical leaders of the church but as secular kings. Papal armies fought to expand "the Kingdom of God." The Jews' plight—in the name of Jesus *the Jew*—soon became far more grievous under the alleged Christian church than it had ever been at the hands of pagan rulers. In *Vicars of Christ*, Jesuit historian Peter de Rosa writes of those early days:

[Catholicism] will become the most persecuting faith the world has ever seen. They will persecute the race from which Peter—and Jesus—sprang...[and] order in Christ's name all those who disagree with them to be tortured, and sometimes crucified over fire. They will make an alliance between throne and altar; they will insist that...the throne (the state) impose the Christian [Roman Catholic] religion on all its subjects.

A major target of conquest became "the Holy Land," which had already been claimed by "Saint" Helena. Constantine was the father of the new Church and Helena was honored as its mother. Even before it was conferred upon Mary, the title "Mother of God" was given to Helena as the Emperor's mother. (Every Roman emperor was worshiped as God.) This "mother of the church" journeyed to the Holy Land to buy

relics and to build churches upon alleged sites of key events involving our Lord.

The Roman Catholic Church began to believe it had replaced Israel as God's chosen people. That land, promised by God to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, now belonged, for new and holier reasons, to "Christian" Rome, the new Zion. The pagan empire had become the Holy Roman Empire, the "Kingdom of God" on earth. The hope of its revival was the dream of all Europe during the Middle Ages—a goal which will be accomplished at last by Antichrist. The revived Roman Empire over which he will rule, with enthusiastic Vatican support as in the past, will encompass the entire world.

Without rancor we must face the facts concerning the Holy Roman Empire to understand what its revival will mean. Pagans had blamed every disaster upon Christians. Now the Church blamed all on

Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

John 16:2

the Jews. Accused of causing the Black Death, Jews were rounded up and hanged, burned and drowned by the thousands in revenge. Although now and then a pope sought to ameliorate their condition, there was no place for "Christ crucifiers" in God's Holy Kingdom. More than 100 anti-Semitic documents were published by the Roman Catholic Church between the sixth and twentieth centuries. *Anti-Semitism had become official Church doctrine.* To this day, the Vatican has never conceded Israel's right to exist and wants Jerusalem to be, not in Jewish hands, but under international control.

To raise an army for the First Crusade, Pope Urban II promised instant entrance into heaven without purgatory for all who fell in that great cause. The knights and knaves who responded with enthusiasm to that deceitful promise left a trail of plunder, mayhem, and murder on their way to Jerusalem, where they slaughtered all Arabs and Jews. One of their first acts after their triumphal entry into Jerusalem was to herd the Jews into the synagogue and set it ablaze. On their way to the Holy Land, the Crusaders gave the Jews the choice of

baptism or death. De Rosa recounts:

In the year 1096 half of the Jews of Worms were slaughtered as the Crusaders passed through the town. The rest fled to the bishop's residence for protection. He agreed to save them, on condition that they asked to be baptized. The Jews retired to consider their decision. When the doors of the audience chamber were opened, all 800 Jews inside were dead. Some were decapitated; fathers had killed their babes before turning their knives on their wives and themselves; a groom had slain his bride. The first century tragedy of Masada was repeated everywhere in Germany and, later, throughout France.

Sincere followers of Christ, too, were slain by the hundreds of thousands for attempting to follow the Bible instead of Rome. What these victims suffered from Holy Mother Church is a story sad beyond belief for both persecuted and persecutors. The Inquisitors were caught in a web from which there was no escape, for the papacy did indeed "reign over the kings of the earth." No doubt many of the zealots who carried out papal decrees were sincere. The civil authorities, moreover, feared excommunication should they fail to fulfill the Inquisitors' demands. The facts speak volumes.

Heretics (those who felt bound by conscience to follow God's Word) were committed to the flames because the popes believed that the Bible forbade Christians to shed blood. Victims of the Inquisition exceeded by hundreds of thousands the number of Christians (and Jews) who had been martyred under pagan Roman emperors. Catholic apologists try in vain to absolve their Church of responsibility, arguing that the sentence of death was carried out by civil authorities. Yet this transference to the "secular arm" was required by the Church's canon law, and at the tribunal where heretics were condemned the Inquisitor's throne was higher than that of the magistrate. The prisoner was allowed to know neither the charge against him nor the identity of his accusers. No one was ever acquitted. Torture often made the pitiful victims willing to confess to anything. Will Durant reminds us of Pope Clement V's rebuke of King Edward II's leniency:

We hear that you forbid torture as contrary to the laws of your land. But no

state law can override [the Church's] canon law, our law. Therefore I command you at once to submit those men to torture.

The medieval Inquisition had flourished for centuries when, in 1542, Pope Paul III gave it permanent status as the first of Rome's Sacred Congregations, the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Inquisition. Known more recently as the Holy Office, its name was changed in 1967 to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—quite appropriate, inasmuch as public burnings were known as *autos-da-fé*, or acts of faith. The Office operates today from the Palace of the Inquisition adjacent to St. Peter's. The Grand Inquisitor is Cardinal Ratzinger, who reports to Pope John Paul II.

Before he became Pope Paul IV in 1555, Inquisitor-General John Peter Carafa had converted a house at his own expense into a fully equipped torture chamber for eliciting confessions from the accused. He denounced any who tolerated heretics and declared, "If my own father were a heretic, I would personally gather the wood to burn him." During his brief pontificate the population of Rome was decimated almost by half, with Jews the main victims. Under Paul IV, marriage between a Christian and a Jew was punishable by death. Hitler claimed only to be carrying out what the popes and Church councils had already decreed.

Paul IV forced Jews to sell their properties, confined them to ghettos, treated them as slaves and reduced them to the status of ragpickers. Pope Gregory XIII declared that the guilt of Jews in rejecting and crucifying Christ "only grows deeper with successive generations, entailing perpetual slavery." Later popes, such as Benedict XIV, Pius VII, Leo XII, Pius VIII, Gregory XVI, Pius IX, et al., continued the persecution of Jews. Pope Pius XII knew very well that the Nazis were systematically exterminating Jews. Yet he never spoke a public word against the Holocaust, because to do so would have condemned his own Church. This silence, historians agree, encouraged Hitler and added to the unspeakable genocide.

Jerusalem has its Yad Vashem (Holocaust Museum) to keep ever before the world's conscience the 6 million Jews killed by Hitler. By contrast, there is no memorial to the untold multitudes of both Jews and Christians murdered by Holy Mother Church and now forgotten. De Rosa reminds us

that Pope John Paul II "knows the church was responsible for persecuting Jews, for the Inquisition, for slaughtering heretics by the thousands, for reintroducing torture into Europe as part of the judicial process. But he has to be careful [not to apologize]. *The doctrines responsible for those terrible things still underpin his position.*" (Emphasis added) The Vatican has never repented of these crimes against humanity and God. Of these indisputable facts many of today's evangelical leaders seem willingly ignorant. TBC

Quotable

The Church in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The Church of the Kings praised Moses and persecuted the prophets. The Church of Caiphias praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus. The Church of the Popes praised the Savior and persecuted the saints. And multitudes now, in the church and in the world, applaud the courage of the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness or foolishness similar faithfulness today. WANTED TODAY, men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortune and friends and life itself.

Author unknown

In every age there are always those who profess the name of Christ but who do not want to bear the reproach of the cross. They cannot stand to be looked down upon by the wise of this world. They are more concerned with making the gospel "respectable" than in declaring the "whole counsel of God." They have made a complicated system of "gears" so as to "gear" the gospel to youth, to the athlete, to the politician, to the movie star, etc. The whole program is deceptively dangerous for it appeals to the flesh in the name of the Spirit and invariably glories in size rather than in fidelity to the truth.

Bible Truth Society, New Zealand

No Scar?

Hast thou no scar?
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,
I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star,
Hast thou no scar?

No wound? No scar?
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole. Can he have followed far
Who has nor wound nor scar?

Amy Carmichael, missionary to India

Q&A

Question: Mormons practice baptism for the dead and cite 1 Corinthians 15:29 as justification: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead. If the dead rise not, why then are they baptized for the dead?" Catholics also take this verse to mean that the early church practiced baptism for the dead. Why don't we do so today?

Answer: Paul uses several arguments to prove that there must be life beyond the grave: 1) the fact that Christ rose from the dead (vv 12-16); 2) that if Christ is still dead there is no salvation (vv 17-18); 3) that if there is no life beyond the grave then Christianity is the most miserable religion (v 19) because we are called to deny ourselves in this life in exchange for the life to come (2 Cor 4:8-18); and 4) in 15:29 he argues that even the pagans believe in a life beyond the grave, as evidenced by the fact that they baptize for the dead.

How do we know he's referring to pagans? Earlier in Chapter 15 (vv 12, 14, 15, 17, etc.) Paul uses the pronouns *we, you, our, your*, and *ye*, referring to himself, the apostles and the Christians to whom he was writing. At verse 29 the pronoun changes to *they*; then at verse 30 it reverts to *we*. Clearly those referred to as *they* in verse 29 are not the Christians he refers to as *you* and *we*, but the pagans around them. The latter practiced baptism for the dead, but there is no hint that Christians did or should do so, for that would be contrary to the gospel.

Question (composite of many—the largest number of questions we've ever received on one topic): In your May newsletter you

agreed with Chuck Smith, et al. that “Jesus died spiritually.” That sounds like the doctrine of “soul sleep.” If man, who is mortal, has an immortal soul and spirit that will be in heaven or hell, how then could Christ’s Spirit die? If Christ was God, I can see how His human body could die, but how could God, who is Spirit, die?

Answer: You seem to have two misconceptions: (1) that to *die* means cessation of conscious existence; and (2) therefore, only the body dies. We are “body, soul and spirit” (1 Thes 5:23; Heb 4:12). Confusion arises because, contrary to the teaching of “soul sleep,” the soul and spirit remain conscious after physical death. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43)—a meaningless statement if neither of them would be conscious. Jesus said the rich man was consciously in torment in hell; while in paradise (where the souls and spirits of Jesus and the converted thief went upon death) Abraham and Lazarus, the beggar—and by implication everyone else—were in a conscious state of bliss (Lk 16:19-31). Though physically dead, they were conscious in the spirit world.

The Bible clearly teaches that body, soul and spirit die. Actually, spiritual death comes first, otherwise death would not be at work in our bodies from the moment we are born, a fact which medical science acknowledges but cannot explain. Adam died spiritually (i.e., in his soul and spirit) the very moment he ate of the forbidden tree—“in the day [moment] you eat thereof you will surely die” (Gn 2:17). His body wasn’t dead—yet. He must, therefore, have been spiritually dead, as are all of his descendants from the moment of birth. Even before our bodies die we are spiritually “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13).

These same verses say that when we are born again through faith in Christ we are “made alive.” Certainly the condition of our bodies hasn’t changed, so we must be made alive spiritually and thus restored to fellowship with God. At the death of the body, the Christian’s soul and spirit are taken into heaven (“absent from the body, present with the Lord”; 2 Cor 5:8). At the Rapture the body is resurrected and reunited with the soul and spirit, which have been with Christ in heaven and which “God will bring with him” (1 Thes 4:14).

The Bible says, “The soul (Heb. *nephesh*

—used for soul throughout the Old Testament) that sinneth must die” (Ez 18:4, 20). This tells us that (1) souls die, and (2) a worse death awaits the sinner than that which has already come upon Adam’s race. Although man is dead in his soul and spirit and is dying in his body, the consummation of God’s judgment lies ahead. It is called both the *second death* and the *lake of fire*, a place that was not made for man but “for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41). Into it shall be cast “whosoever is not found written in the book of life” (Rv 20:14-15).

Thus death, which involves all of man’s being—body, soul and spirit—has several stages for Adam and all of his descendants: (1) the soul and spirit are “dead in sin” (Col 2:13), the death process is at work in the body, there is spiritual separation from God, but (prior to death of the body) with the possibility of communication with God through repentance and prayer and of being restored to life and fellowship with Him; (2) death of the body, bringing unconsciousness to it and cutting the soul and spirit off from this life and sending them (if unsaved) to the place of the damned, who are also known as “the dead” (Ecc 9:5; Rv 20:12), or (if saved) to heaven; and (3) the *second death* of eternal separation from God with no hope of restoration.

As the substitute dying in our place, Christ must have fully endured the infinite penalty that God’s judgment demanded for sin, including the Second Death. Since He is both God and man, He was not separated eternally from God but, being infinite, He was able to endure the fullness of that penalty in those few hours upon the cross. How could God die? Death is separation from God, so the question could also be stated, “How could God be separated from and forsaken by God?” Surely Christ was, for He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1; Mt 27:46)! We cannot explain it. We only know that He “taste[d] death for every man” (Heb 2:9), which must mean that He experienced the full horror of eternal separation from God that it will take Christ rejectors an eternity to know. That includes death (separation from God) to the human spirit. Without that full payment we could not be saved.

Question: If Christ took upon Himself the grave and the Lake of Fire, then there is no need of repentance and trusting Him for our salvation. Wouldn’t both penalties be paid in full?

Answer: We could not be saved unless Christ paid in full the penalty demanded by God’s judgment against our sin. The penalty of sin is death. That is the sentence. Death has already passed upon man and will culminate in his separation from his body and from this planet and from God forever unless he can be justly forgiven. God cannot merely make a bookkeeping entry in heaven. The debt demanded by His justice must be paid in full for man to be pardoned. Calvinism says that He paid the full penalty only for the elect, but the Bible repeatedly says it was for the whole world (Jn 3:16-17; 1 Jn 2:2, etc).

Why do we need to repent and believe in Christ if the penalty has been paid in full for everyone? The good news of the gospel is that salvation is *offered* to all. That offer requires acceptance on man’s part. God does not force His love and grace upon anyone. Even the Calvinist, though denying any volition on man’s part, acknowledges that the offer must be accepted through the work of God’s grace.

There is no hint that sin’s penalty for individuals can be isolated from the whole or that Christ paid for each one’s sins individually. Just as to break one commandment is to be guilty of breaking the entire law (Jas 2:10), so payment for one sin is necessarily payment for all.

Question: What can you tell me about Rodney M. Howard-Brown Charismatic churches have been featuring him and he seems to be causing quite a stir.

Answer: He is from South Africa and has become very popular in the U.S. As with Benny Hinn, entire sections of the audience fall under the power. Rodney’s speciality, however, is to have those who fall over begin to laugh uncontrollably, supposedly with the joy of the Lord. Some find themselves stuck to the floor or to their seats—another alleged evidence that “God is in it.” At Benny Hinn’s church in Orlando, after the bedlam had gathered momentum, Benny assured the audience, “This is the Holy Ghost!” I think not. There is no precedent or parallel for anything of this nature found in Scripture. Furthermore, Rodney, like Benny and so many others, literally orchestrates the phenomena, putting man in command of the so-called Holy Spirit. Their religious showmanship is both unbiblical and blasphemous.

Mystery Babylon Part II

Dave Hunt

And in the days of these [ten] kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed....

Daniel 2:44

After this I saw...a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible...and it had ten horns....And the ten horns...are ten kings....

Daniel 7:7,24

And...behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns....

Revelation 12:3

And I...saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns....

Revelation 13:1

I saw a woman sit[ting] upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns....And the ten horns...are ten kings....

Revelation 17:3, 12

Of all the prophecies in the Bible, Revelation 17 is the most astonishing. It culminates a series of visions of four world empires, the fourth to be revived in the "last days" and ruled by Antichrist through ten subordinate "kings"—a series of visions which began 600 years earlier in Daniel 2 with Nebuchadnezzar's image. The image's "head of gold" was the first world empire, the Babylonian; the "breast and arms of silver" pictured the succeeding Medo-Persian Empire; next was the Grecian represented by "belly and thighs of brass"; and finally the "legs of iron, and feet [with ten toes signifying ten kings] part of iron and part of clay" depicted the fourth world empire arising out of Rome.

Daniel's prophecy (continued in Chapters 7-12) foretold accurate details of coming world empires which we can't enumerate. Apropos of our subject, however, the image's two legs foretold the Roman Empire's division into East and West. And so it happened, first politically; centuries later, religiously. Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy (which in July again gained control of religion in Russia) remain divided to this day. They will, however, be reunited as the core of Antichrist's new world religion.

In a second vision, the four world empires were seen as beasts. The fourth had ten horns, representing, like the ten toes on the image, "ten kings" (Dn 7:24) yet to arise. The ancient Roman Empire was never ruled by a coalition of ten kings; yet so it must be when "the God of heaven sets up [his] kingdom." Thus the Roman Empire must

be revived in that form.

God's millennial kingdom will not (as many are teaching) result from a gradual takeover of the world by the church but through a sudden catastrophic intervention by Christ from heaven. He is the stone "cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet...the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold [were] broken to pieces...and the stone...became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (2:34-35). Christ's sudden intervention at Armageddon is also presented by Paul: "And then shall that Wicked [Antichrist] be revealed, whom the Lord shall...destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thes 2:8-10). The same event is found in Zechariah 12-14, Revelation 19 and elsewhere.

The Bible ignores other empires, some of which have been larger than the four

...[A]fter my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Acts 20:29

above. Why? They won't be revived. For centuries the seat of world power was Egypt. There were great dynasties in China, Genghis Khan's far-ranging Mongolian empire, and vast Mayan and Aztec kingdoms in Central and South America. The Arabs once controlled most of North Africa, the Middle East and much of Europe. These empires will not rise again. The United States has been the dominant industrial and military force for 50 years, but that dominance cannot continue. The prophecies are clear: the *Roman Empire* will be revived, with Antichrist's seat in Western Europe and the world religion's headquarters in Rome.

In addition to the revived Roman Empire, the ten-horned beast also depicts Satan (the "great red dragon") and a satanically empowered *man* (Rv 13:4-8)—the coming world ruler, or Antichrist. Yet it wasn't so much the sight of this terrifying beast that took John's breath away, but the woman who was riding him: "MYSTERY, BABYLON." Babylon is not a *country* but a *city* (certainly not the United States). Nor is it the city Saddam is rebuilding in Iraq, for that historic Babylon, in ruins for 2,300

years, obviously does not meet the five criteria. Nor are there two Babylons (a spiritual one and a commercial one) shown in Revelation 17 and 18. They are one and the same.

Babylon was built around the ruins of the Tower of Babel, which, we noted in June, represented the false religion of human effort in opposition to salvation by grace through faith in Christ. It was the satanically inspired attempt to establish man as his own God. Babel's antichrist paganism remained as the unifying factor linking the four successive world empires. And so it must be revived with the Roman Empire.

Like Nimrod at Babel, the Caesars presided over the pagan priesthood and were worshiped as God. All who refused to bow down before the emperor's image in recognition of his deity were slain—a practice which will be reestablished under Antichrist (Rv 13:8,14-15). Most astonishing of all, "Christianity" must merge with Babel's antichrist paganism to form the new world religion! That insight was a major reason for John's amazement.

That a gorgeously clad *woman* was holding the reins astride such a terrifying, world-devouring beast was incredible. The woman's identity, however, staggered John far more. Beneath the erotic attire, flashy jewelry and impudent gaze there was a haunting familiarity. It couldn't be! How had Christ's chaste bride become this brazen whore? What alchemy had transformed that small, despised flock of humble followers of the Lamb into this notorious prostitute toasting Satan with the blood of the martyrs in a golden cup! How could the church, hated and persecuted by the world, as Christ had said she would be—how could she have become this Machiavellian despot that reigned over the kings of the earth?

History authenticates John's vision. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of a heavenly minded church without earthly ambition, a church whose members, increased to about 10 percent of the Roman Empire, were oppressed by the world and periodically slaughtered. Then, in A.D. 313, freedom from persecution came unexpectedly and suddenly under Constantine. Unfortunately, what seemed like a gift from God was a trap laid by Satan. It set the stage for an apostasy that would last more than a millennium—and is now gathering renewed momentum.

When he gave Christianity official

status alongside paganism, Constantine, as emperor and "Pontifex Maximus" over the pagan priesthood known as the Pontifical College, became the *de facto* head of the Christian Church. As such he invented and took the title "Vicar of Christ." Coming from the Latin *vicarius*, vicar means "in the place of." Its Greek equivalent is *anti*. Thus the popes' title, "Vicar of Christ," literally means "Antichrist"—the one who pretends to be Christ.

For centuries, Protestant creeds identified the popes as antichrists. That label surely applies to the paganized Christianity over which the popes have presided as Constantine's successors. Succeeding him also as head of Rome's Pontifical College, the popes retain to this day the related pagan title "Pontifex Maximus." Undoubtedly, however, *the* Antichrist will be the new Constantine—head of the new world order—with the Roman pontiff his right-hand man.

Constantine, the first "Vicar of Christ," did indeed prove to be an antichrist. Not a genuine Christian, he had no concern for doctrine but only for *religious unity* in his empire. The original ecumenist, he convened the first Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicea, in A.D. 325, set the agenda and presided over it as Charlemagne would over the Council of Chalons 500 years later during his attempt to revive the Roman Empire. Though all such attempts failed, the popes gave the Empire continuity in religion and wielded supreme secular authority as well. Historian R. W. Southern reminds us,

...there was in Rome a single spiritual and temporal authority [the papacy] exercising powers which in the end exceeded those that had ever lain within the grasp of a Roman Emperor.

To John's utter amazement, he saw that the church Christ had founded would metamorphose into "that city...on seven hills...that rules over the kings of the earth"! Picture, for example, the humbled emperor Henry IV waiting barefoot in the snows at Canossa to make his peace with Pope Gregory VII in 1077! As noted last month, no other *city* in the world except Vatican City "rules over kings" and meets the other four criteria which identify the woman in Revelation 17. In the July 3, 1992 *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR) a Catholic priest confesses, "The church...was subverted by the ambitions of such men

as [Popes] Gregory VII, Innocent III and Boniface VII [and many others] into a politico-ecclesiastical institution wielding totalitarian power in both sacred and secular fields." Historian Walter James elaborates:

The Papacy controlled the gateway to heaven which all the faithful, including their rulers, hoped earnestly to enter...[I]t gave the Popes a moral authority which has never been wielded since. A Pope like Innocent III held all Europe in his net....

If that seven-headed beast with ten horns, the revived Roman Empire, is to appear, then the "woman" *must* hold the reins once again. While the Roman Catholic Church, since the Reformation, saw its supreme power challenged, it has regained much. The Vatican is a sover-

...[B]e thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Revelation 2:10

eign state like any nation. It exchanges ambassadors with the world's nations and participates in international politics. The NCR boasts, "No other church has such privileged access" to top political gatherings.

John Paul II has emerged as the world's most respected and influential leader. Though papal power is not wielded as overtly as during the Middle Ages, yet the Pope still "rules over the kings of the earth." Presidents Bush and Gorbachev consulted with the Pope at least once a week. President Reagan solicited the Pope's help against communism. Using Poland as a base, agents of the Vatican worked with the CIA to bring down communism and the Berlin Wall. These amazing events, Gorbachev later confessed, could not have occurred without John Paul II.

Ecumenism is essential in creating a "Christianity" which embraces all religions. Psychology plays a major ecumenical role by providing common faith, language and ritual for everyone from atheists, cultists and occultists to Roman Catholics and evangelicals. Today the Reformation is seen as a semantic misunderstanding, its vital issues blurred or ignored. There is a

growing cooperation between the National Association of Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, according to Jack White, NAE president. Even leading cult experts white-wash Rome's heresies. Chuck Colson's (like Billy Graham's) embrace of Catholicism and acceptance of the Templeton Prize is one more shocking example of the growing ecumenism among evangelical leaders which is preparing the way for Antichrist. (See "Q&A" for further clarification.) Nor could a more apt pope than John Paul II have arrived upon the scene at this crucial hour.

The centuries-long involvement of Roman Catholicism in pagan/occultic practices has led naturally to its present marriage to the New Age. Rome has made it clear that the disciplining of New Age priest Matthew Fox is for failure to submit to the hierarchy but not for his horrendous heresies ("*News Alerts.*") Fox continues as a priest with a huge following among Catholics. The involvement in Eastern mysticism of tens of thousands of priests, nuns, and laity is condoned by the Vatican.

We have documented the accelerating secular acceptance of New Age "spirituality" such as Nancy Reagan's obsession with astrology and President Reagan's submission to astrological guidance and his own superstitions. Matters have only gotten worse with the new administration. Bill and Hillary Clinton's and Al Gore's commitment to an amoral, humanistic and New Age agenda is well known. That all three claim to be "Christians" fits the fact that the world religion will be an antichrist "Christianity."

Time magazine recently had a picture of Hillary Clinton with eyes closed, head reverently bowed, as a North American Indian shaman performed a ritual over her. Concluding a recent speech, Hillary declared, "Let us be willing to remold society by redefining what it means to be a human being in the twentieth century, moving into a new millennium." Yes, the Clintons intend to "remold society" and to "redefine what it means to be a human being"!

Part of that remolding involves promoting ungodly lifestyles. The consequences are devastating and worsening. Raw statistics condemn the Clintons' encouragement of homosexuality. The median age of death for married heterosexual men is nearly twice that of homosexuals: 75 compared with 39. Only 1 percent of homosexuals live beyond age 65. The average age of death for married

women is 79 compared with 45 for lesbians (*Christian News*, 1/13/92). Secular studies have demonstrated that living together before marriage increases the likelihood of divorce—exactly the opposite of what those who engage in “safe sex” imagine (*The Baptist Challenge*, 10/92).

Our world is fast ripening for God’s judgment. Consider a simple comparison between the seven leading problems in “Christian” America’s schools in the 1940s and the 1990s. Fifty years ago the worst problems faced by teachers and administrators were 1) talking in class, 2) chewing gum, 3) making noise, 4) running in halls, 5) cutting in line, 6) dress code violations, 7) littering. Today they are 1) drug abuse, 2) alcohol abuse, 3) pregnancy, 4) suicide, 5) rape, 6) robbery, 7) assault. How revealing!

Everywhere youth is bombarded not only with evil but with persuasively presented antichrist philosophies. A recent TV series began with Indiana Jones as a boy in India going to the Theosophical Society to meet founder Annie Besant. There he was introduced to Jidhu Krishnamurti, the “chosen world leader”; he then was taken to various Hindu and Buddhist temples. Christianity was degraded and Jesus was put on the level of all other “religious leaders.” Behold an even more insidious effort by George Lucas to indoctrinate the West into shamanism than even the *Star Wars* series of films!

Christians face two dangers: 1) becoming so immunized to apostasy that it seems normal and no longer alarming; 2) becoming discouraged and deciding that there is no use in standing up to such overwhelming evil. Yes, the stage is set for Antichrist. He will take over the world. False “Christianity” will deceive billions. The Bible says so. We will not save the world or even America. But we *can* rescue countless individuals through prayer, godly example and the proclamation of the gospel. Let us do so! TBC

Quotable

The Ecumenical movement which you praise is the greatest disaster to affect the Christian church this century. It has reduced the professing churches of this country to a collection of bloodless, spineless and

boneless organizations, which can hardly raise a whimper on the side of Christ and His truth. Small wonder that evil progresses as it does, and spiritual darkness becomes more intense as the years go by. You appear to regard a body of professing Christians, of sober conduct, and deep spirituality of mind, as fanatical and bigoted. If this be so then the eminent men of God, such as John Knox of Scotland, John Calvin and Martin Luther on the Continent, and Archbishop Cranmer in England were bigots in their contests with the errors of Popery. We are glad to be in such company.

Donald MacClean, Clerk to the Synod Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Open letter in *The Times* November, 1988

Q&A

Question: I have wondered about Matthew 27:52-53 for a long time and have never heard or read an explanation. What do you think about these “saints” who came out of the graves in resurrected bodies and “went into the holy city and appeared to many”?

Answer: We must accept at face value what is said and interpret it within the context of the rest of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church was not yet in existence and had not yet begun the unscriptural practice of giving certain persons the title of “saint” years after their deaths. All believers, living or dead, are saints according to Scripture. The epistles are addressed to “the saints at Corinth...at Colosse...at Philippi,” etc. The “saints” mentioned here were obviously Old Testament believers such as Abraham or Joseph. We are not told which ones. They could have been unknowns not mentioned in Scripture. It neither says nor implies a temporary resurrection with these people dying again. Therefore, it must have been a special foretaste of the resurrection of “the dead in Christ” yet to come. Note that they did not “come out of the graves” until “after his resurrection.” We don’t know how long they stayed in “the holy city” appearing to believers, but it sounds as though it was for only a short time.

These resurrected saints must have been taken to heaven by Christ in their glorified bodies soon after His resurrection. This probably occurred when He emptied that

part of Hades known as “Abraham’s bosom” (Lk 16:22) and took the souls and spirits of the believers waiting there to His Father’s house (Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8; Heb 6:20). Believers who die today go instantly to heaven: “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:6-8).

Matthew 27:52-53 is an unusual passage. It is also not a major one, not offered as proof of the resurrection, or we would read more about such appearances. It was a sign to those who saw these “saints,” but not to us because we’re given so little data. Then what is the value for us today? Their resurrection along with Christ, together with the clear indication in Hebrews 11:13-16 that the Old Testament saints are heavenly citizens of the new Jerusalem and share in the “perfection” we will experience (v 40), answers an important question. It would seem to indicate that Old Testament believers who looked forward to the cross of Christ (“Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad” - Jn 8:56) are made partakers of the resurrection of Christ and will be raised with the New Testament saints (who look back to the Cross) at the Rapture and caught up into heaven at that time as part of the church. There is no indication in Scripture of any other time when they are resurrected.

Question: Matthew says Christ’s birth was during the reign of Herod [the Great] (Matthew 2:1). Herod was murdered in 4 B.C., so Christ could not have been born any later than that. Yet Luke says that Jesus had just turned 30 years old in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1, 23), who began to reign in A.D.14. So that would mean Jesus was 30 in A.D.29. and thus was born in 1 BC. In a further contradiction, Luke puts Christ’s birth when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, but he didn’t take that office until A.D.6. If the Bible isn’t reliable in these matters, how can it be trusted about anything else?

Answer: The seeming contradictions you mention (as well as several others) have been raised by a number of skeptics as “proof” that the Bible contains errors and thus cannot be God’s Word. One needs to remember that the Bible has been “proved” wrong many times on the basis of the then-available knowledge either of science or history. However, in 100 percent of the cases, when the true facts were at last uncovered, the Bible was vindicated and human ideas had to be adjusted. Such is the case here.

First of all, the dates you have relied

upon from some secular source are by no means certain. Historians hold them in doubt. It would be foolish to throw away one's confidence in the Bible on the basis of dates which are questionable. For example, Will Durant, in the index to his *The Story of Civilization*, Volume III, under Quirinius (another spelling for Luke's Cyrenius) shows A.D.21 as the ending date but has a question mark for the beginning of his governorship over Syria. If Durant, one of the most highly respected of all historians, says the exact date is unknown, I'd be suspicious of a critic who, in order to "prove" the Bible wrong, states dogmatically that Quirinius began his reign in A.D.6! Moreover, other historians, such as A. W. Zumpt, are convinced that Quirinius was governor over Syria *twice*, the first time from 4 B.C. to A.D.1.

The seeming conflict with the date for the beginning of the reign of Tiberius Caesar is more than likely not a matter of error that some archaeological discovery could correct, but one of interpretation. Although Augustus Caesar died in A.D.14, which is therefore listed as the official date that Tiberius began to reign as Caesar in his place, in actual fact Tiberius had already begun to rule the empire some years before because Augustus was very elderly and in poor health. Will Durant puts this as early as A.D.9 when, he writes, "all Rome, which hated him...resigned itself to the fact that though Augustus was still prince, Tiberius had begun to rule." (p 231). On that basis the fifteenth year of his reign would be A.D.24-25. If Jesus was born 4 B.C. just before Herod's death, that would make him 29 years of age in A.D.25 at the beginning of His ministry. Notice that Luke doesn't say he was already 30, but that He "began to be *about* thirty years of age." That could well be a late 29.

Question (composite of several): I wrote to Chuck Colson concerning his acceptance of the Templeton Prize. The reply from his ministry contradicts what you reported. They state that the public presentation in Chicago, though it will be attended by many from the Parliament of the World's Religions, is not part of the Parliament, but actually precedes it. Being awarded the prize, according to Prison Fellowship, has enabled Chuck to present the Gospel at the United Nations, the National Press Club...[etc]."

Answer: Unfortunately (for whatever reason), you are not receiving the facts from

Prison Fellowship. The truth is that the public award ceremony is a major event (perhaps even *the* major event) of the Parliament. The "Twenty-First Presentation of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion" is listed in the preview of major events of the Parliament titled "Glimpses of the 1993 Parliament" contained in the official packet sent to all registrants. It does not *precede* the Parliament, but, according to the official schedule of events, takes place on the *sixth evening* of the eight-day Parliament—Thursday, September 2, 1993. The CPWR [Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions] *Journal* of June, 1993, indicates that Sir John Marks Templeton, founder of the prize, is a "CPWR Board Member" actively involved in planning and promoting the Parliament. He is also a major donor for the underwriting of expenses of the Parliament.

Let us consider a few other facts. The panel which chooses the recipients of the prize includes leading Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Jews. The very purpose of the prize (stated by Templeton when he awarded it to Colson) is to "encourage understanding of the benefits of each of the great religions." (Imagine Elijah on Mount Carmel "encouraging understanding of the benefits of Baal worship" or Paul on Mars Hill "encouraging understanding of the benefits of paganism"!)

Sir Templeton, the founder of the prize, declares that God is the only reality (pantheism) and that Jesus Christ is in everyone whether he realizes it or not (universalism/human divinity). Should a genuine Christian be associated in any way with such a prize or such a man? In receiving the prize, Chuck Colson has identified himself with its goals and the man behind it—and not only implicitly but overtly. For example, at the February 17, 1993 press conference called by the Templeton Foundation (Sir John and Chuck were both present and spoke) Chuck praised Templeton himself and the Templeton Prize: "And so I salute Sir John for establishing this award and doing it in such a generous way...[etc]."

Moreover, contrary to what his ministry reports, Chuck has not "presented the gospel" of Christ in conjunction with his acceptance of the Templeton Prize. The above acceptance speech contained repeated references to "moral breakdown," "moral values," a "rising spiritual movement in America," etc.—ideas acceptable to all religions and even to humanists. While Chuck did refer to "the love of Christ," the "reconciling power of Christ," to a friend's "conversion to Christ," these were vague

terms without any explanation of who Christ is, why He came, what He accomplished and how we are saved. Chuck described his own conversion as calling out to God to "Take me as I am," with the added comment that "From that moment to this, my life has never been the same...." Followers of many religions with varying concepts of "God" give similar testimonies. The gospel was *not* presented. Nothing was said that would contradict the false beliefs of Templeton or offend any of the press corps or would lead any of them to saving faith in Christ.

The same was true of Colson's "Speech to the National Press Club," March 11, 1993 concerning the reception of the Templeton Prize. Again the gospel was not only missing but some of the "spiritual" terminology he used undermined it. The talk was an appeal for reconciliation between the secular press and the "religious right." It contained interesting insights into crime, the prison system and the breakdown of morality in our society. There were once again repeated references to "morality and character," "spiritual awakening," "deeper morality," "moral reformation," "religious value and religious hope"—vague terms acceptable to almost anyone and adaptable to whatever meaning one cared to put upon them. There were also references to "redemption" and "Christian principles," but what was meant was not explained. In fact, some of his statements, such as that placing nonviolent inmates in "work camps or community-based treatment centers" would be "redemptive for the individual by teaching responsibility for his actions" and that "religion provides a moral impulse to do good" undermined the true gospel meaning of "redemption" or "Christian principles." Chuck mentioned "the love of Christ," a "beautifully carved crucifix of Jesus hanging on the cross," but again did not present the gospel. He hinted at it—"only the gospel of Christ can bring about moral reformation...it is Jesus Christ who made a lasting difference in my life"—but never explained how or why.

It has been very sad to hear of evangelical leaders falling into immorality. It is perhaps even more tragic to see a man such as Chuck Colson fall into the trap of ecumenism, compromise and even praising those who promote it, while at the same time imagining, apparently sincerely, that he is thereby presenting the gospel of Christ!

The God Who Hides Himself

Dave Hunt

*Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself,
O God of Israel, the Saviour.*

Isaiah 45:15

*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when
ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

Jeremiah 29:13

*He is a rewarder of them that diligently
seek him.*

Hebrews 11:6

*Life eternal [is to] know thee the only
true God, and Jesus Christ....*

John 17:3

Most of us fail to grasp the depths of depravity into which the United States—and the world—are rapidly sinking, provoking a merciful and patient God to judgment. The evidence is so overwhelming that we're blinded to the truth like the proverbial frog in the pot imperceptibly being brought to a boil. Between 1960 and 1990 out-of-wedlock births in the USA increased more than 500 percent (from 5.3 percent to 28 percent), single-parent families tripled, about 50 million babies were murdered in the womb and violent crimes increased 500 percent. About 16,000 crimes occur on or around school campuses *each day!* Homosexuals now flaunt their sin in public, are feted and wooed by politicians, thanked and indulged by our president for their part in voting him in, and their perversion rewarded with privileged status. It's Sodom and Gomorrah again—or worse!

"You've come a long way, baby!" says the cigarette ad. And so today's woman has. She is free to smoke and destroy her lungs, arteries and heart like a man. She is also free to turn her womb into an execution chamber with the blessing of America's highest court of justice. Popular TV talk show hosts congratulate her for the "courage" to murder her own offspring to protect her "rights." And millions demonstrate in the streets for "the right of choice" not only for abortion but for all manner of "freedoms"—homosexuality, bestiality, incest, pedophilia and drugs, brazenly flaunting perversions that would have made past generations blush with shame. Yes, she's come a long way and so have we all.

The liberal, humanist agenda is clear: to do away with God by denying the conscience He has given us. Virtue is ridiculed, evil is praised as good and liberating, and God-given moral standards are mocked as the narrow-minded thinking of a past generation. Inevitably, "negative" judgments about

homosexuals, the government or other religions will be forbidden—and likely much sooner than most Christians suspect.

The seeds of this liberal totalitarianism are sprouting even in evangelical circles, where those who dare to oppose false teachings and sin are accused of division, are denied a voice from pulpits, radio and TV, and their books are refused display in many Christian bookstores. To fail to see the connection between the censoring of biblical reproof in the church and the rejection of corrective teaching as "negative," and the coming government ban upon any criticism of immorality, is to be blind indeed.

What is wrong with America is not complicated, nor will expensive government programs cure it. Mankind has rejected God and His standards and has deliberately determined to go its own way. Clinical

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah 55:6-7

psychologist Stanton E. Samenow, after studying hundreds of criminals firsthand, wrote in *Inside the Criminal Mind*, "I had to unlearn nearly everything I had learned in graduate school.... We found conventional psychological and sociological formulations about crime and its causes to be erroneous and counterproductive because they provide excuses.... From regarding criminals as victims [of past traumas and deprivations] we saw that instead they were victimizers who had freely chosen their way of life...."

Yet the lie persists. Typical is the following from the Tompkins County, New York *Mental Health Association Journal*: "The [psychological] healing process cannot be completed until the childhood memories that were stuffed into the subconscious during the abuse are remembered, talked about and openly acknowledged. 'The truth shall set us free' remains the basis for all deep psychotherapy...." What a perversion of

Christ's words! The truth of which He spoke has no relation to psychotherapy, but sets free from sin by God's supernatural power working in those who repent and obey the gospel.

Every evil in today's world is a continuation of the rebellion against God which began in the Garden of Eden. "[R]epentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21) is the only remedy. Yet the church is diluting the gospel and devoting itself to social and political activism in alliance with the ungodly. *Saving the world* has replaced *saving souls*. Those "dead in sin" (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13) are being embalmed, even by Christians, with toxic sociological and psychological formulas instead of being raised to *new life* in Christ. Through redefining as *mental illness* what the Bible labels *sin*, modern man, like Adam and Eve, still hides from God. Consequently, God is hidden from His creature.

For a generation now the pens and pulpits of prominent evangelicals, following the heretical lead of Norman Vincent Peale and his protégé Robert Schuller, have poured forth an ever-increasing flood of sincere but misguided advice rooted in selfist psychology. Multitudes of Christians have been persuaded thereby that they do not love *themselves* enough, when, in fact, their real problem is that they do not love *God* as they ought. Instead of seeking God they are seeking to know themselves. The gospel of self-love and self-esteem, unheard in the church for 1,900 years, was not discovered at this late date through diligent Bible study and Spirit-inspired insight into Scripture. In fact, far from being taught in God's Word, this "new truth" is condemned therein. It has another source.

The facts are undeniable. Christian psychology sprang from godless theories foisted upon society as a rival gospel by psychologists determined to destroy Christianity. Typical was Freud, who was motivated, as research psychiatrist Thomas Szasz reminds us, by "the desire to inflict vengeance upon Christianity." Inexplicably, the enticing speculations of anti-Christians—though so clearly contradictory to God's Word—have been welcomed by the church as a new source of "God's truth." Christian psychologist Bruce Narramore has unashamedly admitted that the theory (now popularly accepted as evangelical truth) that self-love and self-esteem are desirable *originated with humanists* and only recently has *begun* to be embraced by Christians:

Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem.

That Maslow reversed Christ's "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Mt 6:33) and put spiritual needs last did not deter Christian leaders from proclaiming his "hierarchy of needs" as a newly discovered part of "God's truth." Nor did it concern Christian psychologists who built upon his theories that Rogers called *self* the "god within" and advocated worshipping at its altar. Christian psychology brazenly turned Christ's "deny self" into "love, esteem, accept, develop, assert and highly value self"—and almost no one seemed to notice the contradiction. That Robert Schuller would declare that Christ had endured the cross to sanctify His and our self-esteem was not surprising. But it was shocking how many evangelical leaders would endorse his books and ministry and how eagerly unbiblical humanistic theories were embraced by Bible scholar/shepherds and taught to trusting sheep. (See "Q&A.")

Inspired with anti-Christian ideas, an ever-growing number of today's prominent evangelicals preach sermons and write books glorifying self—and Christians love it. Leading Christian publishers eagerly use their presses and prestige to proclaim the popular new gospel. Christian psychologists and psychiatrists, the new infallible authorities on spiritual problems affecting individuals and families, with their new source of "God's truth" (Freud, Jung, Maslow, Rogers, et al.), are the most sought-after conference speakers, while the growing budget to advertise their expanding and lucrative empires of clinics and counseling centers has sparked an explosion in Christian radio. The two top-rated programs are hosted, not by Bible teachers, but by a psychologist and two psychiatrists. "America's foremost authority on the family," the most trusted advisor in the church, is a psychologist who (according to his office) deliberately avoids an emphasis upon God's Word, and bases his counsel upon humanistic psychology, especially the theory of self-esteem. A psychologized view of Scripture has become the standard belief in evangelical churches, seminaries and universities. Those who oppose it as unbiblical are dismissed as ignorant, narrowminded and unscholarly.

The greatest growth in both the world and the church has been in the numbers of those dispensing and those receiving psychological

counsel. At the same time, the number of Christians involved in immorality, divorce and the living of frustrated, unhappy lives has kept pace with exploding wickedness among the ungodly. And why not, since both follow the same theories? Like the unsaved, most Christians are convinced of an urgent need to esteem and value themselves more highly—when, in reality, they already esteem and value themselves too highly and care too little for others and God!

There can be no doubt that we are in the "perilous times" which Paul warned would be characterized by men being "lovers of their own selves" (2 Tm 3:1,2). Men have always been narcissistic, but for the first time in history self-love is praised and promoted—and selfishly "looking out for Number 1" is a virtue! Even among evangelicals God commands little reverence and is generally treated as though He exists primarily to fulfill man's desires.

Multitudes of Christians uncritically accept heresy from a Benny Hinn who

**Whosoever will come after me,
let him deny himself, and take
up his cross, and follow me.**

Mark 8:34

promises *physical* healing, but they refuse correction which would bring desperately needed *spiritual* healing. Millions seek *happiness*, but few desire *holiness*. The gifts are eagerly sought; the Giver is slighted. The pursuit is of *blessings* rather than the *Blesser*. Paul's desire "That I may know him" (Phil 3:10) has been exchanged for "That I might know myself and have my plans blessed by Him." Yet the Bible plainly states that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6).

Many Christians selfishly think this verse provides a formula for getting a car, house, good job and other *things* from God. Yet what a bad bargain it would be to receive the whole world instead of *Him*! God wants to reward us with *Himself*, but most Christians are seeking everything else. Yes, we do have needs in this life and He has promised to meet them. But He has told us to seek *first* the kingdom of God (which is "not meat and drink" [Rom 14:17] but Himself reigning in our hearts) and His righteousness (Mt 6:33), and whatever needs we have will be supplied. Those who seek God with the whole heart

have no anxieties! This, not psychological therapy, is the antidote for unhappy or fearful souls.

Today's world is rushing headlong to judgment. Many Christians, caught up in the mad pace, find little time for the one worthwhile pursuit both for this life and the next: knowing God. Christianity has been formularized: a few songs, some prayers, a brief, uplifting sermon, hasty parking lot greetings; then, conscience too easily appeased, a hurried departure to the real world of earthly pursuits and pleasures. How paradoxical that the lives of His followers leave so little room for God! It is not our natural bent to seek Him but rather to hide from Him. We can only seek God as He first has sought us and draws us to Himself through the wooing of His Holy Spirit in our hearts. This He will do if it is our true and deep desire.

What does it mean to seek God—and, after all, what is the use? Is He not "a God who hides Himself"? Where is God in Sarajevo? In Somalia? In the Midwest floods, and recent hurricane devastation in Florida? Where is God when we pray and have no sense that anyone is hearing or even cares? Where and why does He hide when we need Him most? Has He no pity for the weeping widow or orphan?

God is not mocked. He is too loving and wise to jump to the aid of those who, having turned a deaf ear to the witness of creation and conscience, now suddenly cry out in disaster for His help. The very tragedy prolonged may prove to be the only means of causing a stubborn heart to turn to Him at last. The cry must be deeper than a plea for mere rescue from trouble. One's utter hopelessness without God—the *opposite* of self-esteem, self-worth etc.—must be seen and the sin of self-importance and self-will confessed. And one's desperate need of *Him*, not only in the present circumstances but for eternity, must be confessed if God is to be known.

It is not easy for God to reveal Himself. It requires a passion to know Him on our part. How can He help those who, if He worked a miracle in response to their cry, would give credit to Buddha, to Allah, or to some "spirit" or idol or occult force? Reinforcing faith in false gods would not be a kindness but would only grease the road to hell. God hides Himself—yet not from those who can see, only from those who cannot. The ego of man is so inflated that it obscures the God who fills the universe, whose infinite wisdom and power are conspicuous in every leaf and star.

Men are blinded because of their own

false ideas. Most people are not interested in knowing the true God but a “god” who suits their taste, with whom they feel comfortable, and who gives them their desires. Masons, New Agers and members of many of the numerous Twelve Step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous insist that any concept of a “higher power” will do; just believe in “God as you conceive Him to be.” God will not reveal Himself to that false faith—but Satan will happily oblige to foster such delusion.

Even many professing Christians have been deceived by popular formulas taught in the church for knowing God. One of the most deadly is the belief that God or Christ can be known by visualizing them as one imagines them. These visual images conjured up in “inner healing” or “two-way prayer” sometimes even speak, and this is the fastest way to pick up an “inner” or “spirit guide”—literally a demon masquerading as “God” or “Christ” or “Mary” or whomever one visualizes. The demonization that takes place is not entered into deliberately but is a form of entrapment about which the visualizer cannot complain since he has involved himself in unbiblical techniques which cheapen God and lead in a direction that common sense ought to recognize as deadly.

The Ayatollah Khomeini declared, “The purest joy in Islam is to kill and to be killed for God!” Such is not the God of the Bible, who is love and whose followers He empowers to love even their enemies in His name. Yet the time is coming when God, no longer hiding Himself, will come forth in judgment and all flesh will know that He is God! May our passion be to know and love Him now. May our lives be characterized by a reverent fear of Him. And may we persuade those about us to know, through Jesus Christ, the only true God, whom to know is life eternal.

TBC

Quotable

All the evils of the world have entered into the Church....just as they entered into Eve...and from the same cause: namely, a desire for knowledge other than that which comes from the inspiration of the Spirit of God alone. This desire is the serpent’s voice in every man...It shows and recommends to him that same beautiful tree of human wisdom, self-will, and self-esteem...which Eve saw in the Garden.

He who dares to be poor and contemptible in the eyes of this present evil world in order

to approve himself to God; who resists and rejects all human glory; who opposes the clamor of his passions; meekly bears all injuries and wrongs; and dares to wait for his reward until the invisible hand of God gives to every one his proper place; that one will be found to be the man of true wisdom in the coming day.

William Law

The Power of the Spirit, 1761

Re-edited by Dave Hunt

(See books offered)

The plain fact of the matter is, though you can clean up the outside of the cup and leave the inside full of corruption, you *cannot* clean up the inside without cleaning up the outside also. If the heart is right, the life will be right....If the life is wrong, the heart is wrong.

Henry Gouger, 1799-1860

God is a wise husbandman, “who waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it.” He cannot gather the fruit till it is ripe. He knows when we are spiritually ready to receive the blessing to our profit and His glory. Waiting in the sunshine of His love is what will ripen the soul for His blessing. Waiting under the cloud of trial, that breaks in showers of blessings, is as needful. Be assured that if God waits longer than you could wish, it is only to make the blessing doubly precious. Our times are in His hands...He will make haste for our help, and not delay one hour too long.

Andrew Murray, 1828-1917

Q&A

Question: In Matthew, Luke and John, Jesus tells Peter that before the cock crows the next morning he will deny Him three times. Yet in Mark 14 Jesus as clearly tells Peter that the cock will crow *twice* before Peter denies his Lord. Isn’t that a clear contradiction?

Answer: It’s an *apparent* contradiction—one of several which skeptics have exploited in attempting to discredit God’s Word. If we believe the Bible is inerrant, however, we’ll take the time to uncover the explanation and learn the lesson it provides.

In this case, the explanation is quite simple. Matthew 26:34 and John 13:38 say, “before the cock crow,” while Luke 22:34

uses the negative form, “the cock shall not crow.” Obviously Christ is not referring to a particular rooster crowing but to that time when roosters crow in the morning—i.e., “at the cockcrowing,” as Mark 13:35 puts it in referring to the time of day or night (“at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning”) when Christ might return. So he warns Peter that before the usual cockcrowing the next morning he will have denied his Lord three times. And all four Gospels agree that is what happened.

Mark doesn’t contradict the other Gospels, but provides a further detail. He quotes Christ more precisely—“before the cock crow *twice*, thou shalt deny me thrice” (14:30)—then reveals (66-72) that a rooster (or perhaps several) crowed immediately after Peter denied Christ the *first* time. Luke provides more data: that “about the space of one hour” (22:59) elapsed between the second and third denials. The first “cockcrowing,” so long before the normal time and immediately after his first denial, should have brought Peter to repentance. Instead, though he had sworn he’d die for Christ, Peter denied his Lord twice more, the final time with extreme profanity (Mk 14:71). Immediately the normal chorus of crowing roosters began and Peter wept bitterly.

The lesson from these further details? We see God’s grace to Peter, causing a premature cockcrowing immediately after his first denial to prevent him from going any further. And has He not done the same at times for each of us to call us back from the brink of shame and disaster?! Sometimes we have heeded, while at other times, like Peter, we have gone headlong until, overwhelmed by remorse, we have wept in repentance. May our hearts be more open, tender and responsive in the future.

Concern (composite of several): I appreciate much of your work, but I think you’re too critical and too dogmatic. You would do well to temper your teaching with the admission that you aren’t infallible and that all you can offer is your own opinion.

Answer: If I have ever given the idea that I imagine myself to be infallible, then I apologize for such folly. The very name, *The Berean Call*, was chosen to emphasize the fact that no pastor, preacher, evangelist or biblical scholar is infallible and that all teachings must be tested against the Word of God. This ministry is no exception. We are not infallible and urge readers to test our teachings as well. Every

Christian must make up his or her own mind based upon Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We may not always all agree. The expression of varying and prayerful convictions is helpful to the body of Christ. In viewing the growing apostasy in the church and in answering questions addressed to us, we can only present the facts and the truths of Scripture as we understand them. Those with differing views may do likewise, being careful to cite specific factual or doctrinal errors. Scripture enjoins us to receive valid correction from one another gratefully.

Question (composite of several): You say that the need for self-esteem and self-love are not taught in the Bible but that we naturally esteem and love ourselves too much. Yet Jesus Christ said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." How can we obey that command if we hate ourselves? Yes, I've heard people sincerely say, "I hate myself!" Dr. Dobson and other Christian psychologists aren't the only ones who emphasize the need to acquire a positive self-worth, self-esteem, self-love and self-image. Many preachers teach the same, such as Josh McDowell, Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley and others. Who are you to disagree with them?

Answer: Any Berean comparing such teaching with God's Word will find that it doesn't pass the test. For example, Philippians 2:3 says, "...in lowliness of mind let each esteem other[s] better than themselves." Romans 12:3 warns us not to think of ourselves "more highly than [we] ought to think." Nowhere does the Bible warn us against thinking too poorly of ourselves. Human beings don't have that problem. For example, Samuel Yochelson, a psychiatrist, and Stanton Samenow, a clinical psychologist, spent six and one-half years investigating hundreds of hardened criminals and could not find one who did not think highly of himself even when plotting a crime.

No wonder the Bible frequently reminds us that we are sinners and unprofitable to God in and of ourselves. How reluctant we are to admit that truth! As Horatius Bonar wrote in his classic, *God's Way of Peace*, 150 years ago, "It takes a great deal to destroy a man's good opinion of himself...[and] even after he has lost his good opinion of his works, he retains a good opinion of his heart..." Note the difference between what Christians used to believe, based upon the Bible, and today's opinions, influenced by humanistic psychology!

Yes, there are people who sob, "I hate myself!" Common sense, however, tells us it isn't true. They may hate their status, stature, physique, ineptness, looks, job, salary, academic record or the way people treat them, but they don't hate themselves. If they did hate themselves they would be *glad* they were unattractive, poorly paid, abused etc. Psychology has convinced millions of a lie. The Bible tells the truth: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh [i.e., himself]..." (Eph 5:29).

When Christ said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," He wasn't telling us we hate ourselves and need therapy or seminars to teach us to love ourselves. If so, He was saying, "Love your neighbor as you inadequately love or even hate yourself," which makes no sense. Christ was correcting the obsession with self that is our natural bent. He was saying, "Give some of the love and attention and care to your neighbor that you give to yourself!" And who of us does not need to heed that exhortation?

You mention Josh McDowell. He has devoted two entire books to helping Christians develop their self-image, self-esteem and sense of self-worth: *Building Your Self-Image*, Tyndale, 1978 and *His Image, My Image, Here's Life* (Campus Crusade for Christ), 1984. Josh is a *magna cum laude* graduate of Talbot Theological Seminary and the author of some excellent books on apologetics; yet his ready acceptance of psychology has caused him to embrace unbiblical beliefs and even to try to use Scripture to support them.

In *His Image*, he presents three psychological essentials for a normal person: 1) a sense of belonging (acceptance by others); 2) a sense of worthiness (feeling good about oneself); and 3) a sense of competence (confidence in oneself). He didn't learn these ideas from the Bible but from humanistic psychology. In fact, most if not all of the heroes and heroines in the Bible lacked all that Josh says we need. Moses, for example, was rejected by his own people and considered himself to be both unworthy and incompetent. If there was ever a man with an abysmal self-image and self-esteem—and one who, by today's views desperately needed help from Christian psychology—it was Moses. Instead of prescribing months of Christian psychological counseling to raise his self-image, however, God said, "I will be with you!" Millions are being robbed of the presence and power of God in their lives by being turned to self: self-love, self-image, self-acceptance, self-worth, etc.

Look at Paul. Hated by the Jewish com-

munity and rejected by most of the church ("no man stood with me" - 2 Tm 4:16; "all they in Asia be turned away from me" - 2 Tm 1:15), he considered himself the chief of sinners (1 Tm 1:15) and "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8). Did God seek to build up his self-image and self-esteem? On the contrary, Christ declared that His strength was made perfect in Paul's weakness (2 Cor 12:9). Try to reconcile Paul's self-evaluation, "when I am weak, then am I strong" (v 10) and "in me dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18), with psychology's three essentials! Josh supports psychology's self-esteem, self-worth and self-acceptance with a blasphemous paraphrase from the Living Bible: "I want you to realize that God has been made rich because we who are Christ's have been given to Him" (Eph 1:18, LB). Elaborating on this erroneous interpretation, Josh says we should feel good about ourselves because God was enriched through gaining us as His children. The context, however, is all about the blessings we receive from God. Clearly, the "riches of his inheritance in the saints" refers to what God has given the saints, not to an inheritance they have bequeathed Him. Nowhere in the Bible is God enriched by man. It is man who is always benefited by God. Common sense makes that clear. God, being infinitely rich and needing nothing, cannot be enriched by anyone or anything.

Christian psychology has promoted the lie that God loves us because of some value He sees in us; and even that Christ's death proves we are of infinite value to God. In fact, He died for our sins. Spurgeon said it well:

Jesus...did not come to save us because we were worth saving, but because we were utterly worthless, ruined, and undone...[nor] out of any reason that was in us, but solely and only because of reasons which He took from the depths of His own divine love. In due time He died for those whom He describes...as *ungodly*, applying to them as hopeless an adjective as He could.

Tozer likewise wrote, "Until we believe that we are as *bad* as God says we are, we can never believe that He will do for us what He says He will do. Right here is where popular religion breaks down." Such has been the unanimous opinion of Christians for 19 centuries. It is only since psychology entered the church that the selfisms of today became popular. Let us get back to the Bible!

Inerrancy, Sufficiency & Authority

Dave Hunt

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:31-32

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable [to be used] for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Last month we noted what is clear to every God-fearing person: that the increasing evil of today's world stems from the tragic fact that mankind, following in the steps of Adam and Eve, is in rebellion against God. That rebellion, so brazenly displayed in the secular world, works most subtly under the cover of religion. It operates through false doctrines and the perversions and pious rationalizations that justify a devout disobedience to God's Word—a disobedience which, sadly, is growing even among evangelicals.

Satan's primary tactic in opposing God and evading the sword of the Spirit is not to foster atheism but religion; not to prove there is no God but to be worshiped as God. Satan's boast, "I will be like the most High" (Is 14:14), admits God's existence but exalts self to the same lordly level. Satan became, in fact, "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). He damns far more souls with the lure of power and success and with pride than with overt degradation. He didn't tempt Eve with alcohol or bestiality but with the highest ambition: to be like God. Satan's purpose is not to prove that Christ never existed, but to have his man, Antichrist, worshiped as Christ. A perverted "Christianity" is Satan's ultimate weapon.

One example of Satan's subtle tactics is found in Masonry. Its influence permeates both the world and the church. A Masonic-dominated Supreme Court legalized abortion and put Christianity out of public schools. Masonry is an anti-Christian religious cult rooted in Hinduism, occultism and other forms of paganism (see our resource materials on Masonry). Masonry assures members that through good works and obedience to its tenets they will reach the Celestial Lodge in the Sky presided over by the G.A.O.T.U (Great Architect of the Universe), which is "God as you conceive him to be." Masonic authority

Carl H. Claudy writes, "Masonry ...requires merely that you believe in some deity, give him what name you will, any god will do." Yet more than 1 million Southern Baptist laymen and clergy are in the "brotherhood" and most of them would defend it as "Christian." In fact, this year's annual convention of Southern Baptists voted that being a Mason was compatible with Christianity.

Mormonism is another astonishing example. On June 8, 1873, speaking from the Salt Lake City Tabernacle, Brigham Young said, "The Devil told the truth....I do not blame Mother Eve. I would not have had her miss eating the forbidden fruit for anything...." Another Mormon president declared, "The fall of man came as a blessing in disguise....We can hardly look upon anything resulting in such benefits [i.e., godhood] as a sin." Incredibly, Mormonism is based upon the belief that Satan's central lie is the gospel truth!

Psychology reflects the same satanic perversion. For example, in *The Courage to Create* Rollo May, who had a B.A. from Union Theological Seminary,

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly...But...in the law of the LORD...doth he meditate day and night.

Psalms 1:1-2

commends Eve for her self-assertive rebellion against God. What the Bible calls sin May calls *felix culpa*, the "fortunate fall" that emancipated humanistic psychology's Self. As we noted last month, Carl Rogers called self "the god within" and advocated worshiping at its altars. Such theories have given Christian psychology its belief in self-love, self-image, self-esteem, etc.

Mankind's essential need, according to the Bible, is not self-esteem, as we're being told, but deliverance from self, sin and Satan. Human concern is for economic, political or other physical freedoms. What man needs, however, is moral and spiritual liberation, both now and eternally. God's only and complete solution is redemption: the purchase of mankind with Christ's blood from sin's penalty and from Satan's slave market of sin. Christ declares that the practical outworking of this God-given freedom in the lives of the redeemed comes through obeying *the truth* (Jn 8:31-32).

Pilate cynically asked, "What is truth?" (Jn 18:38). Christ's response—"Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"—tells us that *the truth* differs from *facts*. Scientific *facts* are available to all mankind through observation of nature. *The truth*, which alone sets free, is known only by Christ's followers. Nobel Laureate Sir John Eccles wrote, "In the mindless universe of mere nature...there is neither justice nor mercy, neither liberty nor fairness. There are only facts; and no fact...seeks or requires a justification." Facts are true, but facts are not "the truth" of which the Bible speaks.

Christ's words in John 8:31-32 reveal three things about *truth* and *Scripture*: 1) God's Word is 100 percent true without any error ("my word...the truth"); 2) *all* truth is in God's Word ("ye will know *the truth*," not *part* of the truth); and 3) knowing the truth is contingent upon obedience to the *authority* of God's Word ("if ye *continue* in my word"—obviously not just reading or memorizing but *obeying*). These attributes of Scripture (inerrancy, sufficiency and authority) are like the legs of a three-legged stool: remove any one and the whole cannot stand.

Once faith is lost in the *inerrancy* of the Bible, for example, the door is opened to all manner of error and perversion. Liberalism long ago abandoned this essential pillar of truth, and with it went *sufficiency* and *authority*. Biblical morals hung on for a generation as tradition in a society which had lost its faith; but without that foundation "traditional morals" are now generally passé and won't be recovered without submission to God's Word.

Roman Catholicism, which denies all three (inerrancy, sufficiency and authority), provides an amazing example of the rationalizations which ensue. While claiming to stand strictly against divorce, it grants in the United States alone "annulments" by the tens of thousands each year (*National Catholic Reporter*, 8/27/93). Rome's use of psychology is particularly perverse. Many annulments are granted for "psychological" reasons; e.g., being raised in a "dysfunctional" family or being "psychologically unprepared" for marriage. Annulments often end long-term marriages involving numerous children. While Rome outwardly stands firmly against fornication, thousands of its priests upon whom it has imposed the unbiblical pledge of celibacy engage habitually in sex outside of marriage. *NCR* 9/3/93 reported, "Seven French women...companions of priests who...are forced to 'live clandestinely, for a lifetime, the love they share with a priest' [and who] represent thousands of women in similar

20. [They] asked the pope to...look into the reality faced by 'thousands of priest's companions who live in the shadows, often with the approval of church superiors, and by the children who can't know their fathers and are raised by their mothers alone or are abandoned.'"

The only remedy for such perversion, as the Reformers well knew, is *sola scriptura*. That the Bible alone is all we need to live joyful and fulfilled lives of fruitfulness pleasing to God is affirmed by Paul's assurance "that the man [or woman] of God may be perfect [all that God wants], thoroughly furnished unto *all good works*" (2 Tm 3:17).

That *sufficiency* is denied by the saying, "All truth is God's truth"—the Christian psychologist's excuse for looking outside God's Word to Freud, Jung, et al., for "truth." Yet Christ declared that "the world cannot receive" (Jn 14:17) "the Spirit of truth [who leads] into *all truth*" (Jn 16:13). Hence no unsaved person knows God's truth, which can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit through His Word to those who open their hearts to Christ. Contrary to Catholicism's and Christian psychology's claim, there is no extrabiblical source of "the truth."

Though many Christian psychologists affirm the *inerrancy* of Scripture, they all deny its *sufficiency*. Consider a paper delivered by John Coe to conventions of both ETS (Evangelical Theological Society) and CAPS (Christian Association for Psychological Studies), entitled, incredibly, "Why Biblical Counseling is Unbiblical"! In it he denounces the belief that "the Bible is the only legitimate and authoritative source" of moral values and spiritual guidance for mankind. Astonishingly, Coe sat for 16 years under the ministry of John MacArthur (who opposes Christian psychology) and taught apologetics and contemporary theology for five years at Talbot Theological Seminary. He then joined Clyde Narramore's Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology staff. His paper was so well received that Coe is expanding it into a book.

So flagrant is Coe's denial of the *sufficiency*, and thus the *authority*, of Scripture, as to claim that the Bible itself "mandates the church to develop a science of [moral and spiritual] values and human nature" from extrabiblical sources. Yet common sense recognizes that "good" and "evil" do not apply to nature. That moral values are outside of science, and thus human behavior cannot be explained by science, has been stated by numerous Nobel Laureate scientists. Erwin Schroedinger, for example, declared that science "knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity." Sir Arthur Eddington added that

to imagine that consciousness is ruled by scientific laws "is as preposterous as the suggestion that a nation could be ruled by...the laws of grammar.... 'Ought' takes us outside chemistry and physics."

In his attempt to justify Christian psychology's rejection of the *sufficiency* of Scripture, Coe declares that whatever is "natural" is good and that one can deduce a "science of [moral] values" simply from observing nature or by following one's natural impulses. Of course, nothing is more "natural" than to eat the fruit of a tree—and what could be more beneficial than to eat of a tree whose fruit is not only delicious and nutritious but which will impart the

All thy commandments are truth.

Psalms 119:151

knowledge of good and evil! As for making "natural" human behavior the standard, nothing seems more natural to modern man than fornication. Does that make fornication normal and thus "good"? Is human sacrifice normal and good because it has been practiced by many pagan societies? Homosexuals argue that homosexuality is "natural," that they were born that way. This claim is false, but so-called social science is still in flux on this issue.

The Bible's declaration that the "natural man" cannot know God's truth, which is only revealed by the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14), thoroughly demolishes the Coe/Christian psychology thesis. Observation of nature reveals only that God is eternal and infinite in wisdom and power (Rom 1:20). A personal revelation from God by His Spirit is required to know more than that. Mankind's common recognition of moral standards comes not from observing nature but from acknowledging God's laws written in the conscience (Rom 2:14-15). As Herbert Schlossberg reminds us, "A system of ethics that says human beings ought to base their behavior on nature therefore justifies any behavior, because nature knows no ethic." In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom writes,

Biologists can't even account for consciousness within their science, let alone the unconscious. So psychologists...are in an impossible halfway house between science, which does not admit the existence of the phenomena they wish to explain, and the unconscious, which is outside the jurisdiction of science....[T]he natural and social sciences [purport to] account [for] things [they] cannot possibly explain....

Far from establishing God's truth, as Coe and other Christian psychologists assert, "social science" has opposed God's Word and promoted an amoral lifestyle. For example, Margaret Mead's book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, sold millions of copies in numerous languages, was the recognized standard in anthropology for decades, and provided a key "scientific" justification for the sexual revolution which is still perverting both today's world and much of the church. The book, however, was a fraud put forth to justify her own adultery and lesbianism. More recent research in Samoa has shown that Mead's representation of an idyllic native society unspoiled by sexual restrictions was totally false. The facts about Samoan life are exactly the opposite, yet the lie continues to provide "scientific" excuse for immorality worldwide.

Last month we quoted Thomas Szasz, a Jewish psychiatrist, to the effect that Freud's motive was revenge against Christianity. Szasz adds, "The popular image of Freud as an enlightened... person who, with the aid of psychoanalysis, 'discovered' that religion is a mental illness is pure fiction." Freud's theories were founded upon his warped view that all thought, feeling and motivation have their roots in sexual cravings. His "Oedipus complex," for which no evidence can be found in the general population, clearly reflected his own obsession with incest. It makes sense only, as E. Michael Jones points out, "when seen in the context of Freud's own life."

Indeed, some of Freud's case studies put forth to support his theories are disguised autobiographical sketches. His "discoveries" reflect his own perverted sexual fantasies and obsessions, as did Jung's. Early correspondence between them involved Jung's efforts to have Freud advise him re his seduction of a patient, Sabina Spielrein. Jung had other mistresses, just as Freud was not limited to his sister-in-law, Minna Bernays. Likewise, Carl Rogers' worship of self, expressed in the theories of self-love, self-esteem, etc. which have so influenced the church, finds its roots in his rejection of Christianity and in his attempt to justify his own infidelity. There is no doubt that the entire structure of modern psychology/sociology, far from being scientific, springs in large part from rebellion against God and the sexual depravity of its honored "discoverers."

While professing Christian faith, the Clintons have long been in the forefront of dethroning God and putting a "new, liberated person" in His place. Hillary, a long-time fierce proponent of the radical

Left, chaired the New World Foundation 1987-88, ranked by the Capitol Research Center as "one of the ten most liberal foundations in the United States." It has not hesitated even to support communist causes. From 1986-92 she chaired the Children's Defense Fund, which promotes an amoral approach to sex education and other means of destroying the very moral values which most parents want to pass on to their children.

The major social theories which revolutionized society during the last 100 years were not, as claimed by academia, "scientific" advancements, but the immorality of their "discoverers" under a thin veneer of scientific language. *Peace, Prosperity and The Coming Holocaust* and *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist* document that Marx, though Jewish, was a professing Christian who turned to Satan and became the sworn enemy of God. His socialistic theory was an attempt at revenge against the One he hated. In a poem he wrote, "I wish to avenge myself against the One who rules above." A friend, Georg Jung, remarked, "Marx will surely chase [the biblical] God from His heaven!" Lenin became the Marxist god.

Most disturbing is the fact that many of today's leading evangelicals who affirm inerrancy undermine the Bible's sufficiency and authority. They seek "the counsel of the ungodly" (Ps 1:1) and insist that to do so is biblical. Satan has perverted the church by appealing to the pride that desires to be respected by sinners, and especially by the academic world. That world is hopelessly corrupt. Let us diligently look to God and His Word for guidance and stand firm for its *inerrancy, sufficiency* and *absolute authority*. TBC

Quotable

The Scriptures say that you and I have an old nature called "the flesh" that is no good, an enemy of God, proud, boastful, and [which] insists upon having its own way. It is totally incapable of doing anything that pleases God. After the old nature has been to seminary or to a Bible school, to a church, to a summer conference, or to a seminar, it is still the old nature. The old nature is the Trojan horse within our gates—it is our enemy. The only One who can deal with this enemy is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

J. Vernon McGee

A man may have great and eminent gifts...and yet be *almost* a Christian... [such] were they who will plead with

Christ, "Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils..." A man may preach like an apostle, pray like an angel, and yet may have the heart of a devil. It is grace only that can change the heart....

Matthew Mead

Q&A

Question: Recently I read an article in the CRI magazine by Ken Samples. It was about the Catholic Church and said some pretty harsh things about you....I do hope you will read the article (Part II) and will answer Samples and enlighten TBC readers as to what you did, or said, that was wrong in his eyes.

Answer: First of all, we appreciate the commitment of Hank Hanegraaff and CRI to a defense of the truth, want to work together with them to that end, and wish no public quarrel. On the extremely important and timely issue of Catholicism, however, we disagree and cannot remain silent. I call Roman Catholicism a cult because it has the major characteristics of one: 1) a false gospel of works and rituals; 2) an allegedly infallible leadership which must be obeyed; 3) the prohibition of its members to interpret the Bible for themselves; 4) the placing of its hierarchy's dogmas and traditions on a par with Scripture; 5) its claim to be the exclusive vehicle of salvation; 6) the cultic claim that members cannot be saved apart from its sacraments; 7) the anathematizing of all who reject its dogmas and traditions, etc.

I do not, however, insist that others call Catholicism a cult, and made that clear in a meeting with Ken Samples and other CRI staff. Yet Samples wrote, "Hunt impugns the character of all of those individuals and ministries simply because they disagree with his theological assessment of Catholicism." Not so! Whether Catholicism is or is not a cult is not the main issue, but its false gospel. Yet Samples spent a large part of this second article trying to prove that Catholicism is not a cult and, in fact, defending it. In response, I wrote a letter to the editor, but when they published it some of my most cogent points had been cut out.

I have pleaded with CRI, no matter what they call Catholicism, to state clearly that its counterfeit gospel is sending hundreds of millions to hell. Instead, CRI has defended Catholicism on radio and in its *Journal*, while its "criticism" has been so vague as to leave one wondering what was meant. The perception of numerous people

who have contacted us is that CRI is more concerned with defending Catholicism than with opposing it.

Here are some examples. Catholic apologist Scott Hahn was given free rein to promote Catholicism on a "Bible Answer Man" program and to defend it from callers' objections without any rebuttal from CRI to his false statements! In CRI's Fall 1992 *Journal*, Editor Elliot Miller stated, "While Catholics and Protestants disagree on many important doctrinal points, they nonetheless agree on such core doctrines as the nature of God and the person and work of Christ." The average reader would thereby conclude that Roman Catholicism is merely another denomination. After all, Baptists and Presbyterians also disagree on important doctrinal points.

Miller's statement was false. Protestants and Catholics do *not* agree about "the work of Christ." For Rome, Christ's work on the cross was neither finished nor sufficient: "For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, 'the work of our redemption is [in the process of being] accomplished'" (Vatican II, Vol 1, p 1). Nor is the ongoing sacrifice of the Mass sufficient, but Catholics must suffer for their sins here or in purgatory: "Sins must be expiated...on this earth through the sorrows, miseries and trials of this life...[or] in the next life through fire and torments or *purifying* punishments [in purgatory]" (ibid., p 63). Rome even says that Catholics may "carry their crosses to make expiation for...the sins of others" (ibid. p 65). Moreover, Vatican II "condemns with anathema" those who deny the efficacy of indulgences for "winning salvation" (ibid., pp 71,74). In Catholicism, "the work of Christ" is insufficient for our redemption.

Responding in the *Journal* to an ex-Catholic who complained that CRI, while severely condemning the "Faith movement," was soft on Catholicism, the most Miller would say was that Catholicism was "seriously problematic"—weak language, indeed, to describe a false gospel. In his fund-raising letter of January 6, 1993, Hanegraaff stated that *The Cult of the Virgin*, a book by Miller and CRI staff writer Ken Samples, helps readers "to better understand the main differences separating Catholics from evangelicals..." In fact, it deals only with Mariolatry. Is that the only difference? Silent about the horrendous errors of the Mass, indulgences, purgatory and sacramental salvation by ritual and works, the authors refer to "a new breed of 'born-again Catholics,'" to "evangelical Catholics" and "Bible-believing Catholics" (all contradictory terms), with whom

Protestants ought to maintain “positive fellowship in Christ and cooperative efforts in the common cause of Christ’s kingdom.” This CRI book unashamedly states (as did Hank in his letter) that its purpose is *ecumenical!*

Recently, on “Bible Answer Man,” Catholicism was defended again by Hane-graaff and Miller. Any criticism of it was weak and ambivalent. Both reiterated that although they had some “problems” with Catholicism, Rome’s gospel wasn’t false but, rather, “confused...semi-Pelagian...not outright heresy but a serious aberration...” Will it damn the soul? They didn’t face that question.

An ex-Catholic caller expressed his concern for the hundreds of millions of Catholics deceived by Rome’s counterfeit gospel, which he likened to “a good piece of meat with arsenic sprinkled on it.” When he tried repeatedly to elicit from Hank and Elliot a clear statement that Catholicism opposes the biblical way of salvation, they denied that it did so and reproved him.

“You’re not being fair to what Catholicism actually teaches,” countered Miller; “...they do teach that you are justified solely by God’s grace and not by any of your own merits.” On the contrary, as any ex-Catholic knows, if Elliot’s statement were true the entire structure of Catholicism would collapse, as the few quotes above demonstrate. Elliot then offered a most preposterous defense of Catholicism: that it can’t be judged by its beliefs officially stated in Trent, and that Vatican II’s affirmation of Trent came about merely because today’s hierarchy, though recognizing the mistakes of Trent, doesn’t dare to say so directly. For to do so would reflect badly upon Catholicism’s claim to infallibility. This is nothing but pure speculation on Miller’s part and begs the question. In fact, not only Trent and Vatican II proclaim in the clearest terms a false gospel of works and sacramentalism, but this is Roman Catholicism as it is declared in *The Code of Canon Law*, taught in every catechism and practiced today by its 950 million adherents. A salvation of works and ritual is the essence of Roman Catholicism inherent in its teaching, sacraments and structure and is certainly the understanding and practice of today’s Catholics.

Hank’s final comment summed it up: “We do believe that Roman Catholicism is foundationally Christian but it does undermine its Christian confession with some of its doctrines.” Undermines it to what extent? So far CRI has carefully couched its “criticism” of Catholicism in

ambiguous terms. We can only hope that it will make its position clear, one way or the other, soon.

Comment: Your last newsletter misquoted Revelation 17:9-10 to fit your interpretation. Your work is too important to be tarnished with such an error.

Answer: Your accusation is a serious one, which I don’t take lightly. Let me quote directly from the KJV so you can see that I have neither misquoted nor rewritten it: “The seven heads are seven mountains [Gr., lit. a rise of ground, hills or mountains, and no city could sit on seven high mountains so the meaning must be hills], on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.”

Certainly the King James doesn’t say that the seven mountains are seven kings, nor does it even say that the seven heads represent seven kings, though that could be implied. It says, “and there are seven kings...” NAS says “They are seven kings...” It would make no sense to say (as you seem to assume) that the heads mean mountains and that the mountains really mean kings and not mountains. Then why mention mountains at all? The most one can say is that the heads (like many other symbols—the beast itself, for example, means Antichrist, Satan and the revived Roman Empire) have a dual meaning: hills on which the city sits and also kings. No city *sits* (i.e., is located) on kings, much less upon kings who are no more or haven’t “yet come.”

The woman’s identity is carefully established beyond mistake: 1) she is a city; 2) that sits or is built (to *sit* somewhere a city must have been *built* there) on seven hills; 3) that rules over the kings of the earth; 4) that has committed fornication with the kings of the earth; and 5) is drunk with the blood of martyrs. No city except Rome and particularly Vatican City qualifies. I hope this has been helpful.

Question: This may sound like a strange question, but what can you tell me about a low-profile, nameless religious group which holds its meetings in members’ homes and rented halls? The ministers are pairs of homeless itinerants known as “workers.” Actually, I’ve heard it referred to by many names but I don’t think it has a formal title.

Answer: Though it denies any name, the organization to which you refer does have a

formal title. For Selective Service and other purposes in the U.S. it is registered as “The Christian Conventions.” Internationally, it has other official names. It is also referred to as The No-Name Church, The Two-by-Twos, The Workers, Black Stockings, Irvinites, Gospel Meetings, Go Preachers, Home Meetings, and sometimes Cooneyites. The name Cooneyites, however, is a misnomer, applying specifically to a sect which broke away from the original group. The name Two-by-Twos is used in most of the literature on the group, though the sect produces almost no material itself.

Claiming direct continuation from the times of the apostles, this religious organization (of a half million or more worldwide) was actually started in Ireland by William Irvine about 1900. Its foundational doctrine involves the belief that they alone have the Spirit and the only true understanding of Scripture; therefore, all other churches, pastors and Christians are false. Salvation is only possible (no assurance given) through receiving the gospel from its itinerant preachers, mostly women, who are called “workers.” Workers exert considerable control over members.

Here are some of their unbiblical teachings which are communicated in ambiguous ways (thereby deceiving many): 1) neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit is God, only the Father; 2) Jesus is viewed primarily as their example, not their substitute; 3) salvation is earned by self-effort, self-denial and submission to the workers’ instructions and authority; 4) their gospel proclaims that *only* through the hearing of the words of truth *from the workers* and seeing the “gospel” lived out in their lives can salvation be attained; 5) the Bible is viewed as a “dead book” unless it is “made alive” by the words and exemplary life of a worker; 6) strict dress codes, required works and prohibitions against dancing, television, movies, alcohol and tobacco are imposed as essential for salvation.

The group attracts those who are displeased with formal, often impersonal and political church organizations and who desire a more intimate and simplified religious experience. While new members initially experience a homey and friendly atmosphere, the inherent legalism of the group soon places one in cultlike bondage. We recommend that you contact Research & Information Services, P.O. Box 1685 Sisters, OR 97759 or <http://www.workersect.org>. It is staffed by former Two-by-Two members who can provide you with excellent insights from both the Word of God and their experience with the group.

Knowing & Loving God

Dave Hunt

Hear, O Israel: ...thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Deuteronomy 6:4,5

Jesus said...This is the first and great commandment.

Matthew 22:37,8

If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

John 14:23

Both the Ten Commandments given to Israel and the moral law God has written in every conscience (Rom 2:14-15) require each of us to love God with our entire being. Such a demand is laid upon us not because God needs our love, for He is infinite and lacks nothing. Nor is it because God is self-centered or proud and thus demands that we love Him above all else. He commands us to love Him with our whole heart because nothing else could save us from our incorrigible enemy, Self.

This first and greatest commandment is given for our own good. God loves each of us so much that He wants to give us the greatest possible blessing: Himself. He does not, however, force Himself upon anyone, for that would not be love. We must genuinely and earnestly desire Him. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me *with all your heart*" (Jer 29:13) is the promise of God, who otherwise hides Himself (Is 45:15). And again, "He is a rewarder of them that *diligently seek him*" (Heb 11:6).

This fervent seeking after God with the whole heart, without which no one can know Him, has always been the mark of His true followers. One of the psalmists likened his passion for God to the thirst of a deer panting for water (Ps 42:1,2). David expressed it the same way: "O God...I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee..." (Ps 63:1). What greater desire could one have than knowing God? Yet this most worthy pursuit is neglected even by Christians.

How astonishing that the infinite Creator of the universe offers Himself to such degraded creatures as ourselves! Nor is His love an impersonal cosmic force; it is intimately personal. Think of that! Such love should awaken a fervent response within us. Yet how many of us express our

love to God even once a day, let alone love Him with our entire being? Sadly, even Christians are caught up instead in the forbidden love of the world (1 Jn 2:15) and the pursuit of its deceitful rewards.

Loving God is the first commandment because our obedience to all His other commandments must be motivated by love for Him. Moreover, since God commands us to love Him with our whole being, then our entire life—yes, everything we think and say and do—must flow from that love. Paul reminds us that even giving everything one possesses to the poor and being martyred in the flames is in vain unless motivated by love for Him.

If loving God with one's whole being is the greatest commandment, then not to do so must be the greatest sin—indeed, the root of all sin. How is it, then, that loving God, without which all else is but "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1), is not even found in the course lists of our theological seminaries? How can it be that this "first and great[est] commandment" is

[Love]...seeketh not her own [self]...
1 Corinthians 13:4-5

so neglected in the church? The sad truth is that among today's evangelicals it is not loving and esteeming *God* but *self-love* and *self-esteem* which are presented as the pressing need!

I speak to my own heart. At times I weep that, like Martha (Lk 10:38-42), in the busyness of *servicing* Christ, I give so little thought or time to *loving* Him. Oh, to be more like Mary! How does one learn to love God without ever having seen Him (Jn 1:18; 1 Tm 6:16; 1 Jn 4:12,20)? Obviously, there must be a *reason* for loving God—or anyone. Yes, *reason* and *love* do go together. Love must result from more than a physical attraction, which, in itself, can only arouse a fleshly response. In addition to the outward appeal there are the inner beauties of personality, character, integrity and, of course, the other's love response. God loves without such reasons. Our love, even for Him, requires them. "We love Him, *because* He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19).

Our heavenly Father loves even those who make themselves His enemies, those who defy Him, reject His laws, deny His existence, and would tear Him from His throne. Christ proved that love in going to

the cross to pay the penalty for all, even asking the Father to forgive those who nailed Him there (Lk 23:34). Such is the love which the Christian, having experienced it for himself, is to manifest through Christ living in him: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Mt 5:44).

To love God with our whole heart and our neighbors as ourselves is not something we can produce by self-effort. Love for our fellows must be the expression of God's love in our hearts; nor can we love God except by coming to *know* Him as He is. A false god won't do. Yet at the 1993 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., Vice President Al Gore said, "Faith in God, reliance upon a Higher Power, *by whatever name*, is in my view essential." No one can love the "12-Step God as you conceive Him to be." That would be like loving some imaginary person. To know the true God *is* to love Him; and to know Him better is to love Him all the more.

Most of us have an all-too-shallow knowledge of God. Nor can our love for God grow except from a deepening appreciation of His love for us—an appreciation which must include two extremes: 1) God's infinite greatness; and 2) our sinful, wretched unworthiness. That He, who is so high and holy, would stoop so low to redeem unworthy sinners supremely reveals and demonstrates His love. Such an understanding is the basis of our love and gratitude in return and will be the unchanging theme of our praise throughout all eternity in His glorious presence (Rv 5:8-14).

There can be no doubt that the clearer one's vision of God becomes, the more unworthy one feels, and thus the more grateful for His grace and love. Such has always been the testimony of men and women of God. Job cried out to God, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor [hate] myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Jb 42:5-6). Isaiah likewise lamented, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Is 6:5).

Such recognition of their sin and unworthiness did not decrease but enhanced the saints' love for God and appreciation of His grace. The more clearly we see the infinite chasm between God's glory and our

sinful falling short thereof (Rom 3:23), the greater will be our appreciation of His grace and love in bridging that gulf to redeem us. And the greater our appreciation of His love for us, the greater will be our love for Him.

There is no joy that can compare to that of love exchanged. Nor is there any sorrow so deep as that of love spurned or ignored. How it must grieve our Lord that His redeemed ones love Him so little in return! That grief comes through in scripture passages such as these: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Is 1:2). "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer 2:32).

Even more reprehensible than forgetfulness and neglect is the teaching of Christian psychology that God loves us because we are lovable and worth it. Richard Dobbins, best known Assemblies of God psychologist, suggests that one repeat, "I am a lovable, forgivable person." Bruce Narramore boasts, "The Son of God considers us of such value that He gave His life for us." If that were true, it would not increase but decrease our love for Him and our appreciation of His grace. The Bible teaches that our love for God and our appreciation of His love and forgiveness will be in proportion to the recognition of our sin and unworthiness.

Such was the lesson Christ taught Simon the Pharisee when He was a guest in his house. Jesus told of a creditor who forgave two debtors, one who owed a vast sum and another who owed almost nothing. Then He asked Simon, "Which of them will love him [the creditor] most?" Said Simon, "I suppose...he, to whom he forgave most." "Thou hast rightly judged," replied Jesus. Then, rebuking Simon for failing even to give him water and a towel, and commending the woman who had been washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair, Christ declared pointedly, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Lk 7:36-47).

It is both logical and biblical that the more sinful and worthless we realize we are in God's eyes, the greater our gratitude and love that Christ would die for us. By whatever extent we imagine that we are lovable or worth His sacrifice we lessen our appreciation of His love. The Bible teaches that God loves us not because of who *we* are

but because of who *He* is. "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16). If God loved us because something attractive or worthwhile within us elicited that love, then, changeable creatures that we are, we could lose that appeal and with it God's love. But if He loves us because *God is love*, then that love can never be lost, for God never changes. Therein lies our security for eternity (Jer 33:3)—and all the glory is His!

We often find it difficult, especially in trying circumstances, to rest in God's great love for us—no doubt because deep within our hearts we know how unworthy we are. Christian psychology tries mistakenly to cure this sense of unworthiness by persuading us that we are worth it after all. Robert Schuller declares, "The death of Christ on the cross is God's price tag on a human soul...[It means] we really are *Somebodies!*" Not so. Christ didn't die for *Somebodies* but for *sinners*. Dobbins says,

**But whoso keepeth His word,
in him verily is the love of God
perfected....**

1 John 2:5

"If we hadn't been worth it He wouldn't have paid the price." On the contrary, the greater the price the costlier our *sin*, not our *worth*. That the sinless Son of God must die upon the cross to redeem us shouldn't make us feel good about ourselves but ashamed, for it was our sins that nailed Him there. Yet Bruce Narramore calls the Cross "a foundation for self-esteem!"

This humanistic, self-inflating false gospel is being increasingly embraced by evangelicals. Establishing the counselee's self-worth is a key concept utilized at Rapha counseling centers founded by Robert S. McGee. Anthony A. Hoekema writes, "Surely God would not give His Son for creatures He considered to be of little worth!" Thus the love and gratitude toward God that the Cross ought to arouse in us is stifled by the perverted new belief that He did it because we are worth it. Jay Adams points out the horrible error of teaching that what God does for us is "a response on His part to our significance rather than an act of His love, free mercy, goodness and grace!"

Our song for eternity will be, "Worthy is the *Lamb*" (Rv 5:12). Heaven has no place

for the erroneous belief that Christ died because *we* are worth it. Christ's death in our place had nothing to do with our worth, but with the depths of our sin, the demands made by God's justice, and His eternal glory.

Of course those who brought humanistic psychology's selfism into the church attempt to support it from Scripture. Bruce Narramore quotes Psalm 139 and suggests that the "wonderful pattern for growth, fulfillment and development" that "God built into our genes...is the ultimate basis for self-esteem." Surely the genius of the genetic code should cause me to bow in wonder and worship at the wisdom and power of *God*—but *self-esteem*? Seeing the marvels of God's creative power in my genes is no more cause for *self-exaltation* than seeing God's creative power in another's genes or in any other part of the cosmos—I didn't create it.

Paul declared, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor 15:10). No basis for self-esteem there! Dare we think that we will ever be able to erase from our memories the fact that we are unworthy sinners saved by grace? Yes, God in His grace will give us crowns and rewards and we will even hear from our Lord's lips, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant:...enter thou into the joy of thy [L]ord" (Mt 25:21; 1 Cor 4:5) But will that give us a positive self-image, a sense of self-worth and self-esteem? C. S. Lewis answers: "The child who is patted on the back for doing a lesson well...the saved soul to whom Christ says, 'Well done,' are pleased and ought to be. For here the pleasure lies not in what you are but in the fact that you have pleased someone you rightly wanted to please. The trouble begins when you pass from thinking, 'I have pleased him,' to thinking, 'What a fine person I must be to have done it.'"

Our love for God even influences whether we yield to temptation. Lust is called both "deceitful" (Eph 4:22) and "hurtful" (1 Tm 6:9) because it entices us with pleasure that is brief and involves disobedience to God and thus leads to pain and ruin in the end. Those whose focus is upon themselves think of God's commandments in terms of pleasures denied. But those who are enraptured by God's love have been delivered from self and find true and lasting pleasure and joy in obeying and thus pleasing Him. There is a joy that comes from pleasing God that is

so far beyond any pleasure of this world that temptation loses its power in comparison.

The new theology denies us this path of victory. Its joy is selfish. To obey the first and great commandment is necessarily to deny self as Christ commanded (Mt 16:24). Nor can one deny self and at the same time love, esteem, and value self. Seeing God's love as a response to my significance and worth salvages just enough value for self to deny God's truth. Let us forget ourselves, our needs and hurts, and seek to know and love God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) because of who He is and His love and grace to us. His love will then flow through us to others, whom we will then esteem better than ourselves (Phil 2:3). Such is the path to true joy (Heb 12:2). TBC

Quotable

God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them. He creates the universe, already foreseeing the buzzing cloud of flies about the cross, the flayed back pressed against the uneven stake, the nails driven....No sooner do we believe that God loves us than there is an impulse to believe that He does so, not because He is Love, but because we are intrinsically lovable....[D]eepth beneath depth and subtlety within subtlety, there remains some lingering idea of our own, our very own, attractiveness....Surely we can't be *quite* creatures.

C. S. Lewis

In all Judas' eminency and profession of Christ, he had no true love of Christ, no saving faith. Judas that preaches, that works miracles, that is often in duties with Christ, yet he is not sincere!

Anthony Burgess, 1656

O Christian! study what love is...in the Word, in Christ, in God...[and] thou wilt learn to acknowledge that he that loveth not hath not known God. And thou wilt learn, too, to admit more deeply and truly than ever before, that no effort of thy will can bring forth love; it must be given thee from above.

Andrew Murray

Q&A

Question (composite of many): I continue to hear reports that the ceremony awarding the Templeton Prize to Chuck Colson had *nothing* to do with the Parliament of the World's Religions. Some evangelical leaders have said Colson gave one of the best talks they'd ever heard. Yet you said he did not present the gospel. How do we arrive at the facts?

Answer: We did report the facts and wanted to say no more. However, inquiries such as yours continue, and require a response. Here are the facts again. In the advance information packet sent to all registrants, the sixth event listed under the heading, "Glimpses of the 1993 Parliament," was the "21st Presentation of The Templeton Prize for *Progress in Religion*" (emphasis added). The official schedule of the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions shows the Templeton Prize ceremony as the major Parliament event for Thursday evening, Sept. 2. It is pointless to argue otherwise.

The award ceremony began with a Muslim speech and chant. After Colson's talk a Buddhist led the audience in a "meditation," during which he and some of the audience went into a trance, and what he was saying became unintelligible. A Roman Catholic Church leader closed with final remarks. The committee that awarded Colson the prize included representatives from Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

The clearly stated purpose of the prize is exactly the same as the Parliament's: "to encourage understanding of the benefits of *each* of the great religions." This intent was reiterated by Templeton himself at the first news conference (New York, Feb. 17, 1993), where he announced that Colson, who was present, was the 1993 prize recipient. In response, Colson said, "I salute Sir John for establishing this award...." Would Elijah have complemented the priests of Ashtoreth, Baal, Dagon, Molech, et al., for establishing a "progress in religion" prize and have accepted it? Would Paul have accepted such a prize offered by the pagan leaders of his day? Then why excuse Colson?

Can one really justify an evangelical commending and accepting the "Templeton Prize for *Progress in Religion*"? Is Christianity merely another *religion*? Do Christians help false religions progress? Religious leaders nailed Christ to the cross. To accept an award from Christ-rejecting Muslims, Hindus, et al. for

"progress in religion" is to deny Christ and His gospel!

Colson's office claimed that accepting the prize gave Colson "a marvelous opportunity, not unlike that of Paul on Mars Hill, to present the gospel of Jesus Christ clearly and powerfully to...many who have perverted the truth." Unfortunately, in none of his news conferences or speeches did he fulfill this ideal. Moreover, it would be the height of hypocrisy and confusion to accept an award designed to promote all religions and at the same time to charge that all religions are false and that Christ alone saves. No wonder the gospel was not made plain on any of these occasions.

In his Parliament speech (page numbers below refer to the copy distributed by Prison Fellowship), though he criticized relativism and utopianism, he still fell short of presenting the gospel. He began by saying that Jesus Christ had transformed his life and that He is God and "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." A good start, but hardly the gospel, or startling to Hindus and New Agers, who believe everyone is God and that the way, truth and life is within all, etc.

As in past speeches, Chuck used vague terms acceptable to all religions: "transcendent values...moral consensus" (p 6); "moral choices...spiritual awakening...moral revival and social renewal...moral uplift...human dignity...character and creed...traditional beliefs" (pp 8,9); "Judeo-Christian heritage" (p 11), etc. Even more disturbing, he honored all religions: "religious influence...every religious tradition finds common ground" (p 4); "religious conviction...all our creeds" (p 6); "true religion and its humanizing values" (p 17), etc.

The "Enduring Revolution of the Cross of Christ" was confused with "the Western Ideal" (p 11) of political, social and economic freedoms. Colson obscured the truth by connecting Christianity with the West's economic, political and social liberty, tolerance, individual autonomy and freedom (pp 10-11) and failed to warn of God's judgment to come upon all Christ-rejectors no matter how democratic or tolerant of others they have been. He equated "Christian conviction" with do-good impulses and with Roman Catholics such as Francis of Assisi and Mother Teresa, hardly evangelicals (p 11). That "every human soul is on a path of immortality..." (p 11) was presented as Christian truth—again tainting and blurring the gospel.

That God sent "His only Son to die so

we might live" (p 12) is true but is not the gospel. Nowhere in his speech did Colson make it clear that we are sinners facing God's wrath and that Christ's death paid the penalty demanded by God's justice against sin so we could be forgiven. In fact, Colson obscured that vital truth with his final story of a prison cell occupied solely by a crucifix, which a prisoner explained as, "He's doing time for all the rest of us" (p. 18). An appealing but false Catholic gospel. Christ is not "doing time" for us. He is no longer on the cross. The debt has been paid in full!

I find it both astonishing and alarming that an evangelical leader of Colson's stature, who has written so much that is good and has opposed much false doctrine, could be drawn so far into ecumenical compromise without realizing it. It is equally alarming that not only he but other evangelical leaders would imagine that Colson presented the gospel, when its essential elements were missing. He came just close enough to the gospel for Christians to interpret his ambiguous language as meaning what they believe; and he missed it by enough so as not to offend too badly the followers of the world's false religions or to convert them. The space devoted to this subject, we believe, has been necessary. The sad facts should be a warning to all of us. Let us pray for and help one another.

Question: Is the peace pact that has just been signed between Israel and the PLO the covenant that Antichrist will confirm?

Answer: The present agreement is not the one which Antichrist will confirm, for that will be for seven years (Daniel's 70th week) and will involve the rebuilding of the temple (2 Thes 2:4) and the reinstating of animal sacrifices (Dn 9:27). The current pact and other negotiations are prophetically significant to the extent that they move Israel and the world in the direction of the final false peace. The world must reach the point of complacency (Lk 17:26-30), of believing "peace and safety" have been achieved (1 Thes 5:3); and Israel must eventually feel secure (Ez 38:11-14) so that Antichrist's destruction of Israel and the world will be "by peace" (Dn 8:25).

Arafat has stated repeatedly, even since the deal with Israel, that the Palestinian flag will soon fly over Jerusalem. His talk before the National Press Club in mid-September revealed again the sly cynicism of this evil man. He adroitly avoided giving direct answers which would condemn him.

When asked whether, if he took over Jerusalem, any Jews would be allowed to live there, he smilingly replied that the Arabs and Jews were cousins who had lived together peaceably for centuries. Then what of his campaign of hatred and murder carried out against the Jews? No one asked that question. When asked why the Jews, who had mistrusted him for decades, should begin to trust him now, Arafat replied: "Many didn't trust Jesus Christ to begin with," putting himself on a par with Christ! For such fraud and hypocrisy he received enthusiastic applause from representatives of the press.

Question (composite of many): Jack Van Impe's new video about the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope left me confused. What do you make of it?

Answer: The advertising preceding the video promised "the most stunning news in 2,000 years of Christianity...information I have uncovered and am about to reveal." In fact, Jack Van Impe uncovered nothing. He simply quoted what Malachi Martin wrote more than three years ago. This "rehashed Martin" was touted as "the most authoritative, reliable and stunning information ever released during the history and reign of 264 popes." Hardly. Papal history contains volumes of authentic information which is far more sensational.

It seems incredible that anyone could be so ill informed. In the video they present the Roman Catholic Church as the true church which is just now slipping into apostasy. The Van Impes call this "the greatest defecation within Christendom covering the last twenty centuries...the most shocking revelation in 2,000 years of church history!" The truth is that Roman Catholicism has been apostate for at least 15 centuries. Its priests, bishops, cardinals and popes have long perverted God's Word, practiced the grossest evil, bought their offices, sold salvation for money, and at least one pope toasted Satan at St. Peter's altar in Rome.

What is promoted as a thoroughly documented video "involving hundreds of hours of research" is little more than quotes from Malachi Martin's *The Keys of This Blood*, published in 1990. The villains in the plot are liberal priests, bishops and cardinals who, allegedly of late, are dragging the true church of Rome into apostasy. The reluctant hero is Pope John Paul II, staunch defender of God's truth and greatly distressed by the apostasy but unable to prevent it. To support this incredible scenario, the video is necessarily a montage of hyperbole, contradiction,

misinformation and missing facts.

For example, that the Dalai Lama was hosted by Cardinal Cooke at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York is offered as evidence of the apostasy that so grieves Pope John Paul II. Yet, unmentioned by the Van Impes, the Pope himself hosted scores of pagan religious leaders (including snake worshipers and witchdoctors) in Assisi, Italy, where he allowed his good friend, the Dalai Lama, and his monks to replace the cross on the altar of a Catholic church with a statue of Buddha and perform before it their pagan ceremonies. That the Temple of Understanding, which is devoted to formation of a one-world religion, has held meetings in St. Patrick's is offered as another "shocking" piece of evidence of the "apostasy." No mention, however, that Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, whom the video praises, were among the founders of the Temple of Understanding.

That John Paul II has enemies within his Church is supposedly the most shocking news in 20 centuries. Yet his predecessor was murdered in the Vatican (see *In God's Name* by David A. Yallop), popes have been deposed by mobs and monarchs, they have fought, excommunicated and poisoned one another, commanded marauding armies, slaughtered innocents by the thousands, hosted drunken, sexual orgies for their cardinals and concubines, etc. All the above and more is documented by Catholic historians.

The prophecies and warnings of "Mary" when she allegedly appeared at Fatima, Medjugorje and elsewhere are quoted by the Van Impes to support their scenario. Yet the anti-Christian statements of these apparitions ("All religions are the same...many souls perish because they have no one to make sacrifice for them," etc.) clearly identify them as demonic.

It is our prayer that the Van Impes, who have long been recognized for their commitment to the truth of God's Word, will see the error of promoting Roman Catholicism and its false gospel.

The Power of the Gospel

Dave Hunt

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mark 16:15

...the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth....

Romans 1:16

God's holiness and justice require that sinners be eternally separated from Him. To be cut off completely and eternally from that Love for which one was created will be to burn with a thirst that will only grow ever more unbearable. God, however, graciously and freely offers salvation from that most dreadful condemnation. "The gospel of God's grace" declares that God became a man through virgin birth, that this sinless God-man died for our sins, satisfying His own justice by suffering the eternal punishment we deserve, resurrected the third day, and that all who believe in Him are forgiven and receive eternal life as a free gift. Salvation is that simple—and wonderful—and must be preached in that simplicity.

It is not the academic credentials, brilliant oratory or persuasiveness of the preacher, but the pure gospel, that convinces hearers. We must not attempt in human wisdom and zeal to embellish, improve, or in any way make the gospel more appealing to the unsaved. The gospel, presented in its unchanging purity, is the message which the Holy Spirit honors by convincing and convicting those who hear it (Jn 16:8-11). This truth must grip evangelicals once again!

Contrary to popular belief, expertise in preaching (the "homiletics" taught in seminary) cannot help, but hinders communication of the gospel. Proficiency in public speaking or in the latest salesmanship techniques may be helpful in a secular profession but not in "the foolishness of preaching." Unless such methodologies and capabilities are laid aside to proclaim God's truth, they obscure the gospel.

Though the above may sound like an extreme and anti-intellectual view, such was the teaching and practice of the Apostle Paul. A learned rabbi, Paul was no

doubt an eloquent orator who could sway any audience. In preaching the gospel, however, he deliberately laid aside "excellency of speech" (1 Cor 2:1) and carefully avoided "the words which man's wisdom teacheth" (v 13). Knowing that his own ideas, embellishments and persuasive abilities were hindrances rather than helps, the great apostle stood before his audience "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (v 3). So must we.

Paul declared that the "wisdom of words" made Christ's cross "of none effect" (1 Cor 1:17). Therefore, he determined that his preaching would not be "with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" so that his converts' faith "should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:4-5). Many well-meaning Christians, however, do exactly what Paul avoided, convinced that the gospel and the Holy Spirit need the help of scholarship, psychological persuasion and modern promotional packaging. Consequently, the faith of many believers

...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.
1 Corinthians 1:17-21

today stands upon the wisdom of men instead of in the power of God—and can thus be undermined by human argument as well.

The gospel is being compromised and even denied by many professing Christians. President Clinton, who claims to be a Christian, said when his #2 legal aide, Vincent Foster, Jr committed suicide, "My deepest hope is that...[his] soul will receive the grace and salvation that *his good life and good works earned*" (emphasis added). At a recent prayer breakfast in which Clinton participated, Senator Kerry read John 3:1-21 (*skipping verse 16*), said Christ was speaking of "spiritual renewal" and that "in the spirit of Christ...Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, Christian" were meeting and "there is renewal...with a new President and Vice President...." Billy Graham added, "I do not know a time when we had a more spiritual time than we've

had today."

The terms "spiritual" or "spirituality" legitimize much error. "Spirituality" is now evidenced by ecumenism and enhanced by New Age techniques. *Christianity Today* (11/8/93) favorably reports upon an apparent widespread movement toward spiritual maturity. Unfortunately, in its promotion of modern "spirituality," *CT* touts Richard Foster and his "contemplative prayer" techniques which involve passivity and visualization taught by such occultists as Ignatius of Loyola (founder of the Jesuits) and Agnes Sanford. (See *The Seduction of Christianity and Beyond Seduction.*) Several articles uphold Roman Catholicism as sound Christianity. Introducing a major article, *CT's* executive editor praises Roman Catholic mystic Thomas Merton as having led the way into a deeper relationship with God, though Merton, a New Ager, rejected the gospel, without the acceptance of which one cannot know God.

It is not methodologies or techniques but truth and love which establish and mature spiritual life in the believer. Nor can genuine love of God and others spring from anything but acceptance and appreciation of the gospel (1 Jn 4:19). That "old, old story" reveals God's love. Those who preach it in truth must be motivated and empowered by that same love.

Well, you might say, I'm not a pastor or preacher, so advice about preaching the gospel doesn't apply to me. "The foolishness of preaching" includes sharing Christ with a neighbor over a fence or with a friend on the phone. Christ's command to "preach the gospel" and to "make disciples"—the so-called Great Commission of Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:18-20—applies equally to every Christian, past, present and future. That fact is clear from Christ's words, "teaching them [converts] to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20). Christ's original disciples were to teach their converts to obey every command He had given them—including preaching the gospel and teaching their converts as well to obey Christ's every command. And so down to us today. We also must obey all He commanded the original twelve.

These words of Christ correct a

number of popular errors, such as the idea that His teachings in the four Gospels are only for Israel, or only to be obeyed in the Millennium, and thus are not for the church today. Also eliminated is the idea that “the gospel of the kingdom” which Christ and the disciples preached prior to the Cross is somehow different from the gospel we are to preach today. And a major source of Roman Catholic error—that the pope is Peter’s successor and that only the hierarchy of priests, bishops, cardinals, et al., are the successors of the other apostles—is also proved false. Every convert to Christ is both commanded and empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey everything Christ commanded the original twelve and thus to act in every capacity for which He trained and commissioned them.

The gospel is the only solution to sin’s destructive effect in daily life. Yet even many evangelicals have lost their faith in the power of the gospel and imagine that something else is needed, be it enticing programs, psychological counseling or new revelations from modern prophets. Paul referred to “the foolishness of preaching” because the simple gospel he preached was despised. So it is in our day.

In contrast to the simplicity and purity of the gospel presented in Scripture, new methods and innovations are being employed today. The gospel is no longer thought to be sufficient in itself. It is now taught that believing the gospel may leave a host of demons hiding within, left over from past sins or even prior generations. The Bible calls the one who believes the gospel “a new creature” in Christ for whom “old things are passed away [and] all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). In denial of this clear truth, “deliverance” ministries have sprung up to cast demons out of Christians.

The simple gospel was all the apostles needed and used. Yet today so much else is added. Take, for example, the new belief that many Christians (especially returning missionaries) through “stress” or “burn-out” develop multiple personalities—another heresy from psychology. “Deliverance” allegedly comes by leading each “personality” to saving faith in Christ! Closely related is “Spiritual Mapping,” another new fad which *Christianity Today*

(11/8/93) calls “a complicated and controversial technique developed by missiologist C. Peter Wagner, which claims to identify satanic strongholds in a city...”

Last July saw the first ever “North American Spiritual Mapping Consultation,” offering “a methodology for discovering specific barriers to soul-winning in North American locales.” According to *National & International Religion Report* (NIRR),

The consultation was sponsored by the Sentinel Group (SG) of Lynnwood, Wash., and drew 130 invited pastors, lay leaders, and missionaries from 30 states

Repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Mark 1:15

and provinces....The ‘growing influence of new and powerful spiritual forces on the continent’ necessitates such research, said SG President George Otis, Jr who is also co-coordinator for the United Prayer Track of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement....*A Spiritual Mapping Field Guide* distributed at the conference outlined ways participants could prayerfully research the social bondages, allegiances, and spiritual barriers of their respective communities. It included 200 discovery questions, methodological cautions, and networking recommendations. SG’s Lisa Otis told NIRR that the research methods include interviews, observation, library backgrounding, and prayer logs. The group has planned seven regional meetings in hopes that results will help develop effective prayer and evangelism strategies.

Questions immediately arise. *New* spiritual forces? Is there a new breed of demons more clever or powerful than those faced by the early church? If the gospel needs such help, why doesn’t the Bible say so? Why weren’t these methods taught and practiced by Christ and the apostles? How could Paul have “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) through evangelism of the pagan Roman Empire without employing these techniques? Would Paul have been even more effective had he used “spiritual mapping” and employed the new

“methodology for discovering specific barriers to soul-winning”?

Surely Corinth, Greece’s most splendid and prosperous city, the mecca of trade between East and West, was as enslaved by Satan as any city today. The cult of Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, whose mythic example encouraged sexual promiscuity and perversion, had long flourished there. When Paul arrived in Corinth about A.D.50, the massive, columned Temple of Apollo had for 600 years dominated the commercial center of the city (where much of the meat sold for consumption was first offered to idols). Yet we find no hint that Paul engaged in “spiritual mapping” of Corinth’s demonic powers. He relied solely and entirely upon the gospel to rescue pagans from Satan’s clutches: “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).

Or take the city of Ephesus, whose wealth came in large part from the sale of images of the goddess Diana. Her temple was the center of Ephesian life and, as was always the case with idolatry, involved prostitution, sexual orgies and every depravity. If ever a people were bound by Satan and his minions it was the Ephesians. Yet without “spiritual mapping” or other “deliverance” techniques touted today, multitudes came to Christ and the church formed there was among the strongest and truest. Yes, Paul reminded them that their battle was not against flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:10-12). He gave no hint, however, that these demonic powers should be mapped or tracked or that psychological techniques for dealing with multiple personalities should be employed. The believers were to stand fast in the faith, clothed in the armor of God, their sole weapon “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v 17).

The “old, old story of Jesus and His love,” as the classic hymn says, “is ever new” and best loved by “those who know it best.” We will never advance, even in eternity, to a higher spiritual experience or understanding than that produced by faith in the simple gospel which saves us. That God loved us so much as to become

a man and, though hated, rejected, despised and crucified, died in our place to reconcile sinners to Himself will ever be, for ransomed souls, the wellspring of love, joy and worship in heaven. In all eternity we will never have a newer or better song than the “old, old story” which is ever new.

“Thou art worthy...for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” is the highest praise possible for the redeemed in God’s presence (Rv 5:9). Herein lies the secret of joy for those who inhabit heaven! Why are some Christians depressed, insecure, selfish, earthly minded and lacking love, joy, peace and victory in Christ? The “old, old story of Jesus and His love” has become old indeed to them, neglected and forgotten. They don’t need psychological counseling but a return to their “first love” (Rv 2:4). We need to meditate unceasingly upon this most wonderful truth, the simple gospel, which alone ignites the genuine love and sincere gratitude that we ought to continually express to our Lord.

It is commendable if someone, concerned to know God better, studies Greek. However, if proficiency in that language were essential for knowing God’s Word and living a more fruitful Christian life, then one would expect the Greeks to be the most Christlike and fruitful of all people and God would have had us all speak Greek. Surely the Greeks in Christ’s and Paul’s day knew their native tongue much better than today’s Greek scholars, yet they had as much difficulty living for Christ as anyone else. The love relationship God desires needs only a sincere, believing heart in which to grow.

“Oh, the wonder of it all” said the hymn-writer, “that God loves me!” It is so simple that a child can believe it, yet so profound that it will take eternity to begin to fathom the depths of that love! God’s love is revealed in Christ dying in our place. Surely those who have tasted that love must be impelled by that love to tell others of the salvation available by God’s grace. Only that appreciation of God’s love and grace aroused by the gospel transforms sinners into joyful, victorious saints—and continues to keep the saints in joy and victory now and eternally.

TBC

Quotable

True spirituality manifests itself in...the desire to be holy rather than happy....The spiritual man wants to carry his cross. Many Christians accept adversity or tribulation with a sigh and call it their cross, forgetting that such things come alike to saint and sinner. The cross is that extra adversity that comes to us as a result of our obedience to Christ. This cross is not forced upon us; we voluntarily take it up with full knowledge of the consequences.

We choose to obey Christ and by so doing choose to carry the cross. Carrying a cross means to be attached to the person of Christ, committed to the Lordship of Christ and obedient to the commandments of Christ. Such a man would rather be useful than famous and would rather serve than be served. And this must be by the operation of the Holy Spirit within him. No man can become spiritual by himself.

A. WTozer
The Best of Tozer

Of the lonely way His disciples should walk, Christ said: “Straight is the gate and narrow the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it.”

“No man stood with me, but all men forsook me,” wrote the battle-scarred apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer with his life for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world.

Truth has been out of fashion since man changed his robe of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves.

Multitudes now, in the church and in the world, applaud the courage of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness or foolishness like faithfulness today.

WANTED TODAY, men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortune and friends and life itself.

Author unknown

Q&A

Question: I’ve heard several speakers lately say that Jesus was afraid that Satan would kill Him prematurely in the Garden of Gethsemane before He could get to the cross. And that’s why He cried out, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” the “cup” being a premature death in the Garden. Is that true?

Answer: Hardly. Dying on the cross as the sacrifice for sin was the culmination of Christ’s purpose in being born into this world. The prophets had foretold it and Christ himself had confirmed it (Mt 16:21; Jn 12:32-33). Nothing and no one could have killed Him or otherwise prevented the fulfillment of His mission.

Jesus is God. Neither man nor Satan could take His life. He declared, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Jn 10:17-18).

Christ is also perfect, sinless man—the one and only God-man. As man He would not for a moment have been in fear of Satan slaying Him, for He was walking in perfect obedience to and under the complete care of His Father. To suggest such a fear indicts Christ with the rankest unbelief.

Remember, also, that after asking if the cup might pass from Him, Christ said, “nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Lk 22:42). If the “cup” He wanted to escape was death in the Garden, then by saying, “nevertheless...thy will be done,” Christ was suggesting that it might be the Father’s will for Him to die in the Garden at the hands of Satan rather than to pay for our sins upon the cross, which is unthinkable.

Nor was the “cup” the physical pain of being crucified. Many had bravely endured crucifixion and Jesus was no coward. The “cup” from which He shrank was the awful separation from God which His justice required as the penalty for sin: that His holy soul would be made “an offering for sin” (Is 53:10)—He would literally be “made [to be] sin for us” (2 Cor 5:21). His prayer, therefore, was an earnest request from Son to Father: “Might there not be some other possible means of saving sinners?” The

Father's answer was "No." We know, therefore, that Christ's death upon the cross as our sin-bearer was and is the only way of salvation. Horrible beyond comprehension, what He endured we will never know. He fully paid that penalty for us.

Question: Paul Crouch and others on TBN have referred several times to a mysterious event which is to occur June 9, 1994, when all evil will be removed from earth. What are they talking about?

Answer: According to a "Voice" which spoke "so loud and clear" to a pastor John Hinkle "that it sounded like a great bell" being rung in his ear, "Evil will be ripped from the earth" on June 9, 1994. Though this "Voice" was obviously not of God because it contradicted His Word, Paul Crouch excitedly promotes the idea and is praying for "further revelation." The revelation has already been given in the Bible. Crouch's attempt to correlate this "prophecy" with Matthew 13:24-43 betrays the astonishing credulity which characterizes those who are more enamored of "new revelation" than of Scripture. If Crouch would stop damning those whom he angrily labels "heresy hunters" and pay more attention to sound doctrine, he might come to see the importance of identifying heresy and even eliminate it from his network.

Christ's explicit explanation of what He meant left no excuse for believing this "voice." "The harvest" (v 30) is "the end of the world" (v 39) and only then will His angels "gather out of his kingdom...them which do iniquity" (v 41). Clearly, evildoers remain on earth until the end of the Millennium. That 1,000-year period ends with millions following Satan in his final attempt to take over the world and to destroy Christ (Rv 20:7-9), who has been ruling from David's throne in Jerusalem (Zec 14:9,16; Lk 1:32-33; Rv 20:4-6). We may be certain on the basis of God's Word that 1994 will not see evil "ripped from the earth" and any "voice" that says so denies the Word of God.

Will Satan, in order to deceive, engineer some counterfeit removal of evil next June? Not unless that's how he explains the Rapture. Whatever his ploy, Satan easily deceives those who follow the latest "prophecy" rather than God's Word. It is so sad to see an international TV network used

so often to promulgate false doctrine and to promote numerous false prophets who repeatedly and unrepentantly pronounce "in the name of the Lord" that which contradicts His Word and doesn't come to pass.

Question: Jesus warned that many who thought they were God's children would be "cast out into outer darkness" to spend time in "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Are these lower-level Christians who must be in an outer courtyard of heaven for a time while the more spiritual Christians go directly into God's presence?

Answer: No. There are not two levels of Christians, the lower of which must spend some time in an intermediate state of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth before they are allowed into heaven. Such an idea cannot be found in the Bible. Luke 12:46 uses "unbelievers" in place of the "hypocrites" of Matthew 24:51.

I believe that Christ's words here have a double meaning that can be applied both to Jews and Gentiles. Abraham's physical descendants are by birth potentially children of the Davidic kingdom and can thus be called "servants" in a way not true for Gentiles. But unless they have the same relationship with God through faith in Christ that Abraham had they will be lost forever. The weeping of which Christ warns is the weeping of the damned. We have an example of this weeping on the part of the rich man in Luke 16 who sees Lazarus afar off with Abraham in bliss while he is in torment.

Question: In your October 1993 Berean Call I believe you may have misrepresented the decision Southern Baptists made about Freemasonry at the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention. [They] did not vote on whether or not Freemasonry was compatible with Christianity... [but] on whether or not to receive the report on Freemasonry....

Answer: I was aware of exactly what transpired at the 1993 Convention of the Southern Baptists and deliberately stated what I did as an *interpretation* of what took place, not as a statement of the official vote. I appreciate what you say about the

vote not being whether or not Freemasonry was compatible with Christianity, but simply to receive the report on Freemasonry. I agree.

However, is accepting the recommendation of the Interfaith Witness Department that "membership in a Masonic order be a matter of personal conscience" not tantamount to saying that Masonry is compatible with Christianity? Would it not be an insult to the Southern Baptist Convention to suggest that it would approve for its members any act that was incompatible with Christianity?

So, although the report recognized that there are many "tenets and teachings of Freemasonry [which] are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist Doctrine," it did not say that *being* a Mason was incompatible. Indeed, the fact that membership was left to individual conscience must, by implication, indicate that "*being* a Mason" (which is what I said) must be compatible with Christianity. Otherwise it would be incongruous to leave that question to individual conscience.

I hope this clarifies the reason for my wording, which was intended to shock Southern Baptists into recognizing the full implications of their vote.

Being a Berean

T. A. McMahon

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Acts 17:10-11

As we approach the end of our second year as a ministry, we think it worthwhile to review two basic questions people often ask regarding the work of The Berean Call: “What exactly is a Berean?” and “What does TBC do?”

Although we’ve covered many aspects of those questions in various issues of our newsletter (and, in general, *The Berean Call* is an ongoing reflection of our work), we thought it might be helpful to our readers if we addressed “what we’re about” in some depth.

Luke writes in Acts 17:10-11 that the Apostle Paul, having left Thessalonica and recently arrived in the city of Berea, preached in the synagogue of the *Berean* Jews. Paul’s encouraging experience with the Bereans caused Luke to commend them. He wrote that they were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica because they received the word of God from Paul “with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily” to know whether or not what he had to say was true.

The purpose of this ministry is to call *believers* in Jesus Christ to be like the Bereans. They not only had a heart to hear the things of God but, more importantly, were able to discern what was truly of Him because they regarded the Scriptures as *the* authority in ascertaining the truth of what they were hearing. The Bereans practiced what Isaiah preached: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Is 8:20).

TBC’s chief concern is the spiritual welfare of the body of Christ, and in particular, the encouragement of biblical discernment. We believe the times reflect the necessity of our calling. Even a cursory review of what has taken place in the church during the last 25 years will reveal a fierce undermining of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude v 3). You

might even say that the Bereans of Paul’s day “had it easy” compared to this generation. In those days the opposition to truth was in the secular world around them—it had not yet infiltrated the church under the guise of a more enlightened or advanced Christianity. While there were pressing pagan influences as well as some heretical teachings and practices here and there, they weren’t subjected to anything like the flood of false beliefs, teachings, and practices surging in on the tidal wave of today’s Christian media.

We have a heart for saving the lost; we also have a concern for rescuing those in bondage to cults. *Our primary ministry, however, is to believers.* In many ways the church has turned to the beliefs, teachings and practices of the world and the cults, from the penchant for humanistic psychology among conservative evangelicals to the cultic affinity for godhood

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine [which] thou hast [carefully followed].

1 Timothy 4:6

and the demonstration of godlike powers among more extreme charismatics. Popular movements and teachers are influencing the church to take dominion over the earth, to set up the Kingdom as a requirement for Christ to return, to produce signs and wonders, and to solve its problems through unbiblical methods such as self-esteem therapies, twelve-step recovery programs, inner-healing rituals, “binding demons” strategies, and “Christian” mysticism. Many professing Christian leaders promote unity by demoting doctrine and encourage ecumenism to include even overt paganism. They also foster the participation of false religious institutions (Mormon, Unification, Roman Catholic, etc.) in “Christian” political causes and co-evangelism projects.

We believe our calling is to exhort the body of Christ to abide in His Word, allowing the Scriptures, through the

ministry of the Holy Spirit, to be *the* authority and *all-sufficient* resource in the life of every believer. We want to encourage fellow Christians to be *Bereans*—not followers of The Berean Call, not followers of Dave Hunt or of any other man or institution. That would be the antithesis of our ministry! The fruit we desire are believers who proclaim as Jeremiah did, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (15:16). The basic premise for our approach is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly [equipped for] all good works.

We want committed Christians to take every aspect of those two verses to heart. All Scripture is indeed *inspired* of God. The psalmist confirms, “Thy Word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (119:160). Peter tells us that the revelation of God didn’t originate from man, “but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pt 1:21).

It is profitable for *doctrine*. Paul exhorted Timothy with these words: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tm 4:16). Ignoring the Scriptures, numerous evangelical leaders today claim that a concern for doctrine causes division and therefore should be avoided for the sake of love and unity among the brethren. The Word, however, couldn’t be more specific in its opposition to such a teaching: “...[M]ark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom 16:17). Divisions are created by teachings that are contrary to sound doctrine. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 Jn 1:9). Unity in the faith is impossible without the doctrine of Christ. Without such a foundation we have no basis for the faith, for the gospel, for knowing Jesus, or for knowing anything pertinent to the Truth.

All Scripture is profitable for *reproof*.

Contrary to popular Christian self-esteem teachings, a biblical reproof is beneficial both for the individual and for a body of believers. Paul publicly reproved Peter, who, because of a fear of men (Gal 2:12), was undermining the faith of some believers by withdrawing from the Gentiles and compelling them to live under Jewish law (2:13-14). It's interesting to note that Peter did not respond by complaining bitterly that Paul's *public* correction denigrated his ministry or caused a loss of support. In fact, as Peter reflects upon his "beloved brother Paul[']s" teachings he commends them for their wisdom and value to the church.

Peter rebuked Ananias and Sapphira. As a result, the early church was infused with a wholesome fear of God and His holiness. Examples found continuously throughout the Scriptures demonstrate the value of reproof for the conviction of sin and erroneous teaching which otherwise might have gone unheeded, leading to the destruction of the faith of some.

All Scripture is profitable for *correction*. Designed for the benefit of believers, this teaching of God's Word is very much out of favor among today's church leaders. It's astounding that page after page of the Bible involves some form of correction, yet any such application among Christians is generally avoided or viewed as emotionally harmful, "negative" and "unloving." On the contrary, correction is biblical and necessary. When it is a work of the Holy Spirit, which it must be to be fruitful, it is the most loving of ministries! The psalmist writes, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head (141:5)."

Jesus was continually correcting; Peter, Thomas, His other disciples, the Jewish leaders, the multitudes, individuals who came to him, the woman accused of adultery as well as her accusers, the two on the road to Emmaus, the seven churches of Revelation, and on and on. His words in Hebrews may not be popular today but they cannot be denied: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth..." (Heb 12:5-6). Much of the New Testament is corrective in nature. It teaches us what to correct and

how to go about it.

Some have complained (a form of "correction"?) that The Berean Call corrects too much, that it majors on error rather than on teaching the truth, that it hurts individuals and their ministries by mentioning names, and that the ministry has thus become unloving and divisive. Such a development is far from our intent. And since we believe in correction, we try our best to make sure we're "walking our talk." Our prayerful intention from newsletter to newsletter is to be acutely sensitive to such concerns, while at the same time trying to be true to what the Lord has put on our heart to communicate. We guard against our corrections becoming intemperate and sincerely want them to be beneficial.

We mention the names of Christian

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.

2 Corinthians 13:5

leaders or ministries which we believe to be promoting certain errors because, in many cases, their false teachings undermine the faith of millions of Christians and must be corrected publicly. While it is possible to deal with a false teaching without "naming names," it's impossible to document its scope and impact without giving examples. Paul's naming of Peter and Barnabas, Alexander the coppersmith, Hymenaeus and Philetus, and John's exposure of Diotrophes are just a few biblical examples of public correction.

Some assert that such matters should be dealt with privately, according to Matthew 18. But those verses address matters of *personal* offense—issues between individuals, not false teachings or practices which subvert the gospel and are promoted publicly.

Our love for all who teach in the name of our Lord compels us to exhort them to reflect biblical truth and we hope and pray they will respond to our concerns. When an influential individual or ministry wittingly or unwittingly teaches something contrary to the Word of God, then recognizes the error and publicly repents and corrects that teaching, the whole body

of Christ is encouraged and edified. What man, woman or ministry of God would not want that? This seems to be Peter's heart when (after being publicly corrected) he commends the one who rebuked him and then does some correcting of his own, warning believers to beware of scripture-twisting teachers and of being led away from the faith (2 Pt 3:14-17).

Exhortation to discernment is not without certain occupational hazards, both for us and for those with whom we communicate. We must examine our hearts constantly to make sure we are ministering according to the instructions of 2 Timothy 2:24-26: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be *gentle* unto all men, apt to teach, *patient*, in *meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." Falling short of such an approach can open the way for the very antithesis of what we desire: self-righteousness, judgmentalism, a critical spirit, legalism, and "bashing" persons or ministries rather than shedding light on their unbiblical teachings and practices. Nevertheless, as we continue to apply biblical correction to our own personal lives as well as our public outreach, His grace will help us avoid such pitfalls and enable us to *speak the truth in love*.

All Scripture is profitable for *instruction in righteousness*. As most of you know, TBC is committed to the Scriptures. Our perspective is that righteousness is found in knowing God's way and in doing things God's way, according to the absolute authority of God's inerrant and all-sufficient Word. Our heart's desire is to encourage those who love the Lord to major in discernment in these days of religious confusion, delusion and deception, and to fill their hearts and minds with God's Word, the only true resource for living a fruitful and productive life.

Concluding its litany of profitable uses of the Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 declares that God's Word is *the sufficient resource* for every child of Christ to become mature in Him, its content consisting of *all* that we need to know in order to lead fruitful lives unto the Lord.

Exhorting believers in the truth by pointing them to the Person of Jesus Christ and His Word is our calling. Our heart is simply to encourage those who love the Lord to heed His words: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32).

In fulfilling what the Lord would have us do, we believe it is important to direct believers to or supply them with informative materials which will help them avoid being led away from biblical truth. The Lord has raised up a number of vessels in the Body with concerns similar to ours, and their endeavors, whether books, tapes or articles, offer tremendous insights regarding issues adversely influencing the church. Getting such excellent teachings to those who would personally benefit or use them for the benefit of others is one of our major goals. It's also our hope to expand our own resource materials. We want to communicate through a variety of ways those specific things which the Lord has put on our heart. And by getting the message out in different media (print, audio, video, radio, television), we hope to reach a greater range and number of believers.

Though TBC is presently a very small operation, our desire is to greatly expand our outreach as the Lord enables and directs. We want to make a definite impact for good, to be a true and increasing help to more and more of the millions who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. In response to present needs, we hope to sponsor regional conferences designed to inform and help pastors deal with unbiblical teachings and practices (particularly those influenced by the church's growing affinity for psychology), and conferences for general audiences dealing with critical doctrinal issues in these days of increasing compromise and apostasy. Should the Lord tarry, we believe it will be necessary to develop more effective ways and means of equipping believers in biblical discernment, as well as ways of mobilizing them to contend for the faith.

Please pray that we will "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [we] are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1-3). TBC

Quotable

I found that I loved Christ dearly. Oh, but my soul cleaved to him, my affections cleaved to him. I felt my love to him as hot as fire. But I quickly found that my great love was but little, and that I who had, as I thought, such burning love for Jesus Christ could let him go again for a trifle.

John Bunyan

Thy Word is like a garden, Lord,
With flowers bright and fair;
And every one who seeks may pluck
A lovely cluster there.
Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine;
And jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depths
For every searcher there.

Thy Word is like a starry host:
A thousand rays of light
Are seen to guide the traveler,
And make his pathway bright.
Thy Word is like an armory,
Where soldiers may repair,
And find, for life's long battle-day,
All needful weapons there.

Oh, may I love Thy precious Word,
May I explore the mine,
May I its fragrant flowers glean,
May light upon me shine.
Oh, may I find my armor there,
Thy Word my trusty sword;
I'll learn to fight with every foe
The battle of the Lord.

Edwin Hodder

Q&A

Question: I'm about ready to pack it in. There are so many so-called teachers of the Word of God out there contradicting one another that I don't know who to believe. Wouldn't I be better off just locking myself up with the Bible and look to the Holy Spirit alone as my teacher? After all, doesn't the Bible say that I don't need any man to teach me?

Answer: Peter tells us that the Bible did not have its origin in the thoughts or will of men; rather, holy men of God spoke and wrote what the Holy Spirit communicated to them (2 Pt 1:21). Not only did the Scriptures come

by the Holy Spirit, but we're told that to truly understand God's Word, we must have the Holy Spirit to teach us (1 Cor 2:11-14). So no one can deny the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit regarding both scriptural *inspiration* and *illumination*. However, by taking the position that you plan to exclude everyone but the Holy Spirit in learning what the Word of God says, you've already missed part of the Holy Spirit's instruction.

Teaching is a function of believers in Christ. The Great Commission includes the command to *teach* all nations to observe all things which Christ taught His disciples (Mt 28:19-20). One of the principal offices in the body of Christ is that of *teacher* (1 Cor 12:28); the selection of elders includes as a criterion the ability to *teach* (1 Tm 3:2); and Galatians 6:6 tells the person who is *taught* to share in all good things with him who *teaches*. At best, to deny the value of those whom God has gifted as teachers is to miss His grace and ministry to His own, through His own.

We can appreciate the frustration you have with teachers who miss the mark, either in part or for the most part. But God's Word tells us that believers are given the function of teaching "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," and this process is to continue until "we all come in the unity of the faith" as well as maturity in Christ (Eph 4:11-13). If you read on in Ephesians you will find that teachers are also given to help us grow in discernment (v 14), even to recognizing false teachers.

The Scriptures are not naive with regard to the problem of false teachers. Paul warns about them with tears (Acts 20:30,31); Peter and John also raise strong concerns (2 Pt 2:1; 2 Jn 7). When the full counsel of Scripture is considered you can see that avoiding *all* teachers doesn't solve the problem of false teachers. A godly teacher (who can instruct in discernment) is merely a vessel of the Holy Spirit; for anything to be truly worthwhile from such an individual, it must be the work of the Holy Spirit within him. However, when a teacher relies upon his own wisdom or flesh rather than the Holy Spirit, he has, at the very least, polluted the truth. Granted, human vessels are not the most trustworthy instruments, but God has chosen them for service and has given safeguards: His Word and His Spirit.

When John wrote "ye need not that any man teach you" (1 Jn 2:27) he wasn't contradicting those Scriptures previously mentioned. He was referring to false

teachers (v 26) and stating that the anointing of the Holy Spirit (v 20) would enable the believer to discern what was true and what was false. Being like the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11) is the biblical solution to recognizing whether or not a teacher is in line with the truth. Remember, they were interested to learn from Paul's teaching, but they searched the Scriptures daily to see if what he had to say was true to God's Word. Paul taught under the power of the Holy Spirit and it was the same Spirit who enabled those Berean Jews to recognize scriptural truth. That's the way it has to be for godly teachers and those who want to learn and grow in the faith, no matter how confusing and deceptive the days become.

Question: My husband loves to play golf and he mentioned that a number of his golfing friends are excited about a technique they're learning from their golf pro to improve their game. Parts of it sound okay to him but it does involve "visualization." Should he be concerned for his friends?

Answer: Visualization may or may not be something about which to be concerned. It can be a normal function which almost every person is able to do to some degree. It is the ability to "see" images in your mind. For example, if upon hearing someone talk about a chocolate ice cream cone you were able to picture it in your mind, that would be considered normal visualization. The ability to visualize is a great help to anyone who needs to picture something in his mind before executing or constructing it. Artists, designers, architects, engineers, novelists, screenwriters are only a few of the occupations which can benefit from "normal" visualization. There is also, however, "occult" visualization.

When a person tries to create or manipulate reality by mental imagery, he or she has become a participant in the realm of the occult. Getting the new car you've always wanted through visualization, for example, would involve conjuring a mental image of all the car's desirous details and keeping that image almost continuously in your mind until the physical car actually becomes your own. Occult visualization is not intended to be just a mental motivator which makes a person so consumed with the object that he will work diligently within the bounds of reality in order to obtain it. The technique is itself the means of magically manipulating reality so that somehow, in some mysterious way, the actual object becomes the property of the

visualizer.

Millions of people are naively turning to occult visualization techniques to solve their problems, yet few inquire as to the what makes the technique work. Though there are many visualization variations, the simplified, central concept is this: the true essence of all things is Mind, which is nonphysical. What people refer to as God is actually the impersonal, all-encompassing Mind of the cosmos. Because Mind/God is impersonal it can be manipulated. In fact, it must be controlled by the thoughts or mental images of personal intelligences. So visualizing something you desire to have or want to take place is believed to activate the Mind, which must then turn your thoughts or images into reality.

The visualization techniques that have been promoted to increase proficiency in sports are usually a mixture of normal and occult visualization. Since you asked about golf, here is a scenario that shows how visualization can make the transition from normal into the realm of the occult.

The proper technique of swinging a golf club is very complex, featuring a host of physical and mental requirements. Once a player has learned and physically practiced the correct motions of a swing, it's possible to improve his skill level by normal visualization. What that involves is nothing more than "mental practice." *In his mind*, a player goes through all the motions of what he must do to correctly hit the ball. He *sees* or *visualizes* himself addressing the ball, checking his position, starting his backswing, shifting his weight, noting his elbow position, etc., etc., ending with his follow-through. While there are differing views as to how helpful such mental practice is, most agree that whether mental or physical, practice is the key to improvement. In any case, nothing occult is involved so far. The normal functioning of the mind involves interactions with the body so there is nothing unusual taking place when, for example, a golfer thinks about the proper grip and then positions his hands so that they conform to the image he envisioned.

The transition to an occult technique usually takes place when the visualization instruction deals with what happens to the ball after the golfer strikes it. Some teach that visualizing the desired trajectory of the ball has a definite influence on its actual flight. The concept now leaps beyond normal mind/body interaction to include mental influence over an external object. So how does *visualizing* the ball's

flight trajectory influence the actual flight of the ball? That explanation is rarely offered in advance because it's based upon concepts which promote either a metaphysical, mind science, "new" physics, New Age, Eastern mystical, or ancient occult worldview—all of which subscribe to the belief that God is an impersonal Mind/Force.

Two basic dangers face those who get involved in occult techniques: 1) When a person participates in any form of occultism, he will at some point be exposed to and very likely be influenced by its underlying philosophy. If the person is a Christian, he has involved himself in an anti-Christian belief system and practice. 2) Because occult techniques are primarily inducements that seek to validate an antibiblical view of reality, they are sometimes empowered by demons (2 Thes 2:9) in order to deceive and win converts. Therefore, anyone who dabbles in the occult makes himself vulnerable to influence and (in the case of the unsaved) even possession by the demons who are behind occult manifestations.

This explanation has been limited to just one application of occult visualization in the field of sports (basketball, baseball, tennis and almost all the other ball sports have similar teachings). There are, however, dozens more such occult techniques being promoted in the fields of psychology, medicine, education, politics and religion (including promotions by evangelical Christians). Bringing about inner peace, world peace, physical healing, inner healing, greater creativity and intelligence, financial prosperity, and help from spirit guides (including Jesus) are just a few of the popular enticements. We hope to address some of these other aspects of occult visualization in future newsletters.

As a postscript to what's been written, if you're bothered by the fact that no scriptures have been included, it is not because none are applicable, but rather that the entire Word of God is a condemnation of the occultic worldview. From the creation accounts (Genesis) to the personal involvement of a personal God (Genesis through Revelation) with those whom He created, to the repeated prohibitions against turning to false gods and occult methods used in worshiping and contacting them (Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Revelation), to the many cautions related to the imagination (Genesis, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Romans, 2 Corinthians), the Scriptures speak categorically and absolutely regarding the spiritual dangers of occultism.

More on Being a Berean

Dave Hunt

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:15

The number of false beliefs being promoted and enthusiastically received among evangelicals is staggering and growing rapidly. Take for example a new book, *Lonely No More* by Karen Mains of The Chapel of the Air. In it she tells of acquiring a personal spirit guide and making contact, through visualization, with what Carl Jung called “the idiot child within,” whom she identifies as “Jesus Christ”! (See T. A. McMahon’s evaluation in next month’s “Q&A” section). The depth and variety of delusions which evangelicals will embrace seem unlimited, especially if cloaked in psychological jargon.

The only protection against the accelerating apostasy is an intimate knowledge of and obedience to God’s Word on the part of each individual. Being a Berean who daily searches the Scripture (Acts 17:11) to “prove all things” (1 Thes 5:21) is the surest yet most neglected antidote to error. This ministry exists not merely to point out false and foolish teachings but to call individuals to a passionate love of God’s Word as the all-sufficient guide for knowing and loving God and living and witnessing for Him.

As false doctrines gain a following and become the distinctive beliefs of particular groups, cults are born. To maintain its peculiarities each cult denies individuals the right to understand the Bible for themselves by insisting that its leadership alone may interpret the Bible and that each member must accept its interpretation and edicts as a condition for salvation. Next comes the claim that the cult has another source of revelation from God in addition to Scripture: “inspired” utterances from the cult leaders, or extrabiblical writings and traditions peculiar to the cult.

Unchallengeable and mandatory teaching comes from cult headquarters, whether it be the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Watchtower Bible & Tract Society in Brooklyn, Mormonism’s First Presidency

in Salt Lake City, the Christian Science Mother Church in Boston, or the Catholic pope and bishops in Rome. Yes, the Roman Catholic Church, like any cult, denies its members the right to know and understand the Bible for themselves. No Catholic may be a Berean! Nor is this something which Rome tries to hide.

For example, Vatican II dogmatically declares that “the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God...has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone.” Catholic apologist Karl Keating writes, “The Catholic believes in inspiration [of Scripture] because the Church tells him so—and that same Church has the [sole] authority to interpret the inspired text.” *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* explains:

When he has once mastered this principle of divine authority [residing in the Church], the inquirer is prepared to accept whatever the divine Church teaches on faith, morals and the means of grace.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 5:15

Roman Catholic apologists are holding seminars and debates around the country to deny that anyone may be a Berean. Typical are the following remarks at one such conference by a priest, Enrique Rueda: “The outlook of Roman Catholicism is diametrically...opposed to that of fundamentalists...because as Roman Catholics we do not start with the Bible...we start with the Church...” Augustine reportedly said, “I would not believe in the gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so.”

As Bereans we know immediately that Augustine was deceived. Paul wrote, “[T]he gospel...is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes” (Rom 1:16) and he never suggested that its power came from the backing of some church body! The gospel stands on its own without any reference to a church, and it carries such

convicting power that it turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, “[O]ur gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance...and ye became followers of us and of the Lord...” (1 Thes 1:5-6).

Three thousand souls were saved on the day of Pentecost without Peter saying one word about any Church. We find no attempt on the part of the early Christians, who “went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4), to prove that an infallible Church existed which endorsed what they preached. We are told what Philip preached in Samaria and what Paul preached in many places where multitudes believed. Not once was there any reference to the gospel being vouched for by some church in Corinth, Rome or elsewhere.

God’s Word is “[alive], and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12). As for the claim that the Catholic Church gave us the Bible, it obviously didn’t give us the Old Testament. Romans 3:2 tells us clearly that “unto [the Jews] were committed the oracles of God.” The inspired writings were immediately recognized and accepted as such by Israel and became available as they were written. We know Daniel was studying Jeremiah (Dn 9:2).

The prophets knew they were inspired of God. Scores of times the prophets declared, “Hear ye the word of the LORD” or “thus saith the LORD,” or “the word of the Lord came unto me saying” (Is 1:10; Jer 5:14; 13:12; 19:3; Ez 6:3; 25:3; Hos 4:1, etc.). And by the leading of the same Holy Spirit those who heard them knew the prophets were inspired—not because a group of rabbis decided it was so. By the same Spirit we know today that Scripture is inspired of God.

The Old Testament is full of references to God’s Word being known and loved by ordinary people. Parents in Old Testament times loved God’s Word, taught it to their children, wrote it on the doorposts of their houses and meditated upon it “day and night” (Dt 6:6-9; 8:3; Ps 1:2; 19:7-11; 119:97-105; Prv 30:5; Jer 15:16, etc.). Clearly it was commonly known which books were inspired and they must have been readily available. That a “young man” could understand God’s Word and be cleansed by it (Ps 119:9) is proof that it speaks to

common people and that no religious hierarchy was ever needed to authenticate or interpret it.

Timothy studied the Old Testament as a child, and he learned it not from some rabbis but from his godly mother and grandmother. Christ rebuked the two on the road to Emmaus for not believing “all that the prophets have spoken” (Lk 24:25). He would not have rebuked them had the Scriptures not been commonly known and available to all. Then it says, He expounded unto them “in *all* the scriptures the things concerning himself” (v27), indicating again that *all* of the Old Testament canon was known and available at that time.

Roman Catholicism claims that the church councils decided which books should be in the Bible. That certainly was not the way the books of the Old Testament were recognized as inspired. Moreover, it was not until A.D.397 at the Third Council of Carthage that we have the first conciliar listing of the 27 books of the New Testament. By Catholic reasoning, no one could use the Bible at all until then, for the church hadn’t yet decided what it contained. On the contrary, the New Testament canon had been accepted by consensus at least 300 years before 397. Earlier councils had quoted the books of the New Testament in arguments over doctrine without any council ever having pronounced what books were included in the canon.

How did the early Christians know which books were inspired of God? They knew in exactly the same way the Old Testament writings were recognized as inspired. Paul explains how Scripture was recognized: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor 14:37). In other words, any spiritual person (i.e., one who is indwelt by and led of the Holy Spirit) will by the Spirit recognize Scripture without any church endorsing it. That is the way it was in the Old Testament, in the early years of the church, and it is the same for us today.

Job 32:8 reminds us, “But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” Romans 1 and 2 declare that God’s revelation of Himself through creation and conscience has come to all men. God spoke to Adam, to Noah, to Joseph, Gideon and

David, et al. without any church existing. It is on the basis of the inspiration of God and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, who is able to convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment to come (Jn 16:8-11), that all mankind knows the gospel is true. Christ is “the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (Jn 1:9)—and He does so without the help of any allegedly infallible Church whose dogmas must be accepted by all! John speaks of individuals (1 Jn 2:27) being guided by the anointing they have from God. Never in all of God’s Word is there an appeal to some corporate body of leaders to make an infallible declaration of what is true. Never! In Acts 15, Paul did not appeal to an infallible group in Jerusalem whose word was law. He went there to discuss with and correct the elders if necessary, even rebuking Peter (Gal 2:1-14).

For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.

Psalms 33:4

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul indicates that the Bible contains all the doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that the man or woman of God needs to be everything God wants them to be. But Catholic apologists debating across the country insist that Paul’s “all scripture” meant only the Old Testament because that was all Timothy had.

How does a Berean respond? When the Bible says, “All scripture,” it means *all* Scripture, not merely what had been written to that time. Moreover, this is Paul’s *Second* Epistle to him, so Timothy had at least two epistles from Paul. Furthermore, Paul says, “the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tm 4:6) so he is about to die. Thus *all* of Paul’s epistles must have been written!

Ah, but they weren’t yet recognized as Scripture, says the Catholic apologist, because the Third Council of Carthage hadn’t yet met. Nonsense! The Berean notes that Peter refers to Paul’s epistles as Scripture (2 Pt 3:15-16), so they must have been accepted and in circulation. He uses the phrase, “the other Scriptures,” without having to name them, proving that the canon was agreed upon and well known as

it was being written—at least 330 years before any council listed the 27 books of the New Testament.

Roman Catholicism destroys the Berean spirit. The result has been the suppression of truth; the torture, sword and flame of the inquisitions; and the rejection of freedom of conscience and press wherever and whenever Catholicism was in power. It was the Vatican which put Mussolini in office with its 1929 *Concordat*. In exchange, Catholicism was made the official religion of Italy and it became a crime to say anything against the Roman Catholic Church. The Vatican also backed Hitler and was handsomely rewarded financially. Pope Pius XI and his cardinals praised both Hitler and Mussolini as God’s men of the hour and German and Italian Catholics were forbidden to politically oppose them. The rejection of the individual’s right to be a Berean has brought terrible consequences!

Christ said, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me” and “a stranger will they not follow” (Jn 10:27,5). He also said, “He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (Jn 8:47). He said to Pilate, “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (Jn 18:37). Paul said that the church congregation was to judge the words of the prophet to decide whether they were of God (1 Cor 14:29-31). We need to be men and women of God who know God’s Word and will not be deceived by false teachings no matter what their source.

Let us weep for and seek to win with the gospel not only those trapped in the well-known cults, but the 980 million Roman Catholics held in the grip of a false gospel that sends them to hell. They’ve been told they can’t be Bereans who understand the Bible for themselves. Challenge Catholics to compare what the Bible says with what they are being taught. Nor is it Catholics alone who need such an awakening. Protestants by the thousands blindly go along with all manner of error without knowing the Bible for themselves. Let us also challenge them.

It is amazing how influential one false teacher can be. For example, much of the aberrant theology of Hagin, Copeland, Hinn, et al. can be traced to one man, Finis Dake. His *Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible* presents, among other errors, the idea that

God the Father has a physical body similar to man's; that he eats, wears clothes and lives on a planet called heaven; that Adam and Eve flew back and forth to the moon; that Christians will continue to have children throughout eternity; and even that there will be segregation between races in heaven. Who could believe such antibiblical nonsense? Multitudes. And they accept it from the notes in a "reference" Bible which sold 30,000 copies in 1992!

Let us commit ourselves once again to be lovers of God's truth. May we say with the psalmist, "O, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps 119:97)! And let us by word and example challenge others to be Bereans as well. TBC

Quotable

If you want to enter into full fellowship with Christ in His death, and know the full deliverance from self, humble yourself.... Accept every humiliation, look upon every fellowman who tries or vexes you as a means of grace to humble you.... Let us gladly glory and take pleasure in weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10)—in all that can humble us and keep us low.... We will find that the deepest humility is the secret of the truest happiness, of a joy that nothing can destroy.

Andrew Murray

Rule for Christian Living

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever...
...you can!

John Wesley

I will seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He

will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

George Müller

Q&A

Question: I appreciate *The Berean Call*. However, the November, 1993 "Q&A" re the Jack Van Impe video contains a serious error: "Roman Catholicism has been apostate for at least 15 centuries." The "at least 15 centuries" is false and most damaging to the cause of Christ at a time when evangelicals are accepting the papal claims of apostolic succession. I shall be expecting you to correct this damaging statement.

Answer: I'm fully aware that the evil errors of Roman Catholicism developed over many centuries and that, as even Jesuit Peter de Rosa writes, "All the councils of the church from Nicaea in the fourth century to Constance in the fifteenth agree that Christ himself is the only foundation of the church, that is, the Rock on which the church rests...the great Fathers of the church saw no connection between [Mt 16:18] and the pope. Not one of them applies 'Thou art Peter' to anyone but Peter. One after another they analyze it: Cyprian, Origen, Cyril, Hilary, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine. They are not exactly Protestants. Not one of them calls the Bishop of Rome a Rock or applies to him *specifically* the promise of the Keys....[I]t was only in the year 1073 that Pope Gregory VII forbade Catholics to call anyone pope except the Bishop of Rome. Before then, many bishops were fondly addressed as 'pope' or 'papa.'... The first Bishop of Rome was not Peter...Eusebius never once spoke of Peter as Bishop of Rome...etc."

So when did the church at large become the Roman Catholic Church in distinction to the true Christians which it persecuted and killed? There is no single date; it happened gradually. Yet the roots can be traced to Constantine (313-337), who while still *Pontifex Maximus* as head of the pagan priesthood became *de facto* head of the Church, was the first to call himself Vicar

of Christ, and under whose influence the Church married the world. The paganism of today's Roman Catholicism entered the church in the fourth century and today's popes bear Constantine's three titles: Bishop of Bishops, Pontifex Maximus and Vicar of Christ. "...15 centuries" ago was 493. The apostasy was rampant. You don't want to call it the Roman Catholic Church that early, and technically you are right—but let the Catholics claim it. My statement re "15 centuries" is of no help whatsoever to Rome.

Question: You claim that the Roman Catholic Church (and presumably the Eastern Orthodox Church as well) went into complete apostasy and became the whore of Revelation 17. If so, then Christ didn't keep His promise that "the gates of hell" would not prevail against the church he founded, because for many centuries prior to the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church was the only Christian church there was. I've heard this argument used by Catholic apologists such as Matatics and Hahn. It is also used by Ken Samples in his articles in the *Christian Research Institute Journal*. It seems to make sense. How do you respond?

Answer: Very simply. The paganization of Christianity began under Constantine and the apostasy worsened for centuries. Eventually the mass of professing "Christians" were identified with what came to be known as the Roman Catholic Church. It claimed to be the one true Church and excommunicated, persecuted, killed and even tried to destroy the records of all who would not bow to its supreme authority and embrace its antichrist heresies.

Nevertheless, there were always groups of simple Christians who attempted to follow the Bible according to their consciences and who met not in the cathedrals of the "official church" but in the forests or other secret meeting places. One of the best books tracing these groups is *The Pilgrim Church*, by Broadbent.

Yes, Roman Catholicism is in total apostasy and has been for many centuries. No, that does not mean that the entire church fell into apostasy and thus the gates of hell prevailed against it, for there were always multitudes who were not part of the "whore of Babylon" as John describes her

in Revelation 17.

Question: A “repentance” by Benny Hinn of having taught error in the past and a “renunciation” thereof has been published in *Charisma* magazine and elsewhere. What do you make of it?

Answer: I cannot judge Benny Hinn’s heart, but we are required to judge his words and deeds. He has “repented” now at least three times, but each time goes back to that from which he repented. He says he no longer believes the “positive confession” he once taught. If that were true, he would oppose its teachings and teachers. Had he really repented, Hinn would actively work to deliver his many thousands of followers from these false doctrines, but he has not done so. In fact, he is still in full fellowship with the positive confession leaders and adherents.

If Hinn were seriously concerned for truth, as he now claims to be, he would recall his tapes and books that presented false teachings he says he no longer believes. Instead, they are still being sold. In fact, his “repentance” is deficient because it fails to admit the gravity of his error. “I never taught heresy,” Hinn insists. “I admit I taught some things that were aberrant...but I think heresy is too strong a word.”

Actually, he has taught much heresy. Hinn literally rewrote Job 1:21, changing “the Lord taketh away” to “the Lord never taketh away.” There are many examples, but here are a few of his other heretical teachings: “Never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, ‘If it be thy will’; no Christian should ever be sick; we Christians possess ‘power in our mouths’ to heal or kill just as witches possess it; Job tapped into the negative side of the faith force by a negative confession; Christ ‘became one with the nature of Satan’ and was ‘born again’ in hell; Christ would have sinned without the Holy Spirit and would have remained in the grave ‘if the Holy Ghost had changed His mind about raising Him from the dead’ [Jesus said, “I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again” (Jn 10:18) for He is God]; we are ‘little gods’ and even part of God with all the power of God; we are ‘little messiahs,’ everything that Jesus ever was,” etc.

Some of his statements, such as that a woman was originally designed to give birth from her side, or that Adam and Eve were super beings who could fly to the moon, are not heresy but ludicrous blunders. Yet

Hinn claimed that most of them as well as the heresies above came as direct revelation from God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. To attribute such errors to the Holy Spirit is blasphemy of which he has not repented. That Hinn’s alleged “Holy Spirit” teaches error and folly should be enough to discredit his book about “the anointing of the Holy Spirit,” yet it has been a runaway best seller. So while we don’t judge Hinn’s heart, his repentance and renunciations have to date fallen far short of truth.

Question: I recently saw an ad for *New Age Bible Versions* that carried your endorsement. Since the ad also had some pretty sensational copy, could you give your perspective of the book?

Answer: No, I can’t because I haven’t read the book yet. The “endorsement” came about based on a phone conversation I had with the author upon receiving her manuscript. As she explained various aspects of her book, I commented that if she could document what she was telling me, she would be doing a great service to the church. I also told her that the impressive presentation form of the manuscript itself should help her with publishers since they rarely receive manuscripts that well done. Somehow bits of our conversation ended up as an “endorsement” of a book which I haven’t even read: “You have done a great service to the church....Publishers never receive books this well done.”

The publisher was contacted and agreed to remove my name from all promotional copy. However, some who are promoting the book independently have continued to use what they mistakenly believe is my endorsement.

TBC plans to evaluate the now published book in the near future. Even so, we would ask our readers not to submit unsolicited manuscripts. Although we would like to encourage one and all in their writing endeavors, we don’t have the staff, time or capability to help people in their efforts to have their material published.

Nature or Personal Creator?

Dave Hunt

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, ... even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse

Romans 1:20

Billions of people around the world watched the opening ceremony of the 1994 Winter Olympics and heard environmental concerns expressed in the speeches. Actors and actresses in exotic costumes played scores of traditional Norwegian nature spirits of different shapes and sizes emerging from under the snow. The TV announcers casually remarked that Norwegians don't build on a piece of land without the approval of the resident nature spirits. It was suggested that communing with such entities facilitates correct ecological decisions. Spiritism/paganism was presented favorably to billions of viewers!

Paganism blended with false Christianity (the religion of ancient Rome after it became "Christian" under the popes) will be the new world religion when the Roman Empire is revived worldwide under Antichrist. (See *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist* and *How Close Are We?*) Of course, world political and religious unity, which must somehow include 1 billion Muslims, would be impossible without the sudden, terrifying disappearance of untold millions at the Rapture. That is not, however, to deny the importance of the apostasy and the ecumenical movement in laying the foundation for the worldwide merger of Christianity and paganism.

The twin threats of nuclear holocaust and ecological collapse will also play a vital role in uniting the world to fight for its very survival. More than 30 states have adopted laws requiring environmental issues to be taught in schools.

Underlying the environmental movement is the theory that mankind is the product of evolutionary forces inherent within the universe. The scientific humanists regard these forces as impersonal, while the classical pagan or New Ager views the world and cosmos as a living entity/goddess known as Mother

Nature or *Gaia*. Now top scientists and religious leaders are holding high-level meetings to seek joint solutions to the restoration and preservation of planet earth.

In 1985 the first meeting of the "Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders on Human Survival" brought together spiritual and political leaders from five continents and the world's five major religions to plan ecological salvation and world peace. They jointly declared, "We are entering an era of global citizenship [and a] new consciousness [which] transcends all barriers of race and religion...assur[ing] welfare and peace." Watch out when mankind thinks it has achieved "peace and safety..." (1 Thes 5:3)!

That pact led to the 1988 five-day Global Forum conference at Oxford. Religious and political leaders from 52 countries (joined this time by leading scientists) met to "join all faiths with all political attitudes." In a

God [who] made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth....

Acts 17:24

joint "Final Statement," conferees declared, "We have [been] brought together by a common concern for global survival [realizing] the essential oneness of humanity...."

The 1990 Global Forum drew more than 1,000 participants from 83 countries. Held in Moscow, it was cohosted by the first freely elected Soviet parliament, all Soviet religious bodies, the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and the International Foundation for the Survival and Development of Humanity. In his plenary address, Senator (now Vice-President) Al Gore, a Southern Baptist whose writings reflect his belief in the mother goddess, Gaia, declared that ecological problems could only be solved through a "new spirituality" common to all religions. (Gore's "new" ecumenical spirituality is revived paganism.) The "Moscow Declaration" signed by participants called for "a global council of spiritual leaders"

and the "creation of an interfaith prayer...a new communion with Nature...."

This growing pagan spirituality with its worship of creation instead of the Creator (Rom 1:21-23) is ideal for joining science and all non-Christian religions. For example, conferences of the Dallas-based Isthmus Institute draw top scientists and religious leaders to discuss "science and spirituality." Usually held at a University of Texas campus, typical conferences include discussions on the "spiritual" aspects of ecology and Gaia. Their meaning of "spiritual" is clearly pagan/panteistic and not biblical.

Pagan Carl Sagan, worshiper of the cosmos, told the Moscow Global Forum that Earth should be regarded as "sacred" to encourage treating it with "care and respect"—not because God made it, but because it (Gaia) made us. Sagan, who rejects the biblical God, says we should "revere the Sun and stars." This scientific neopaganism is called *ecotheology*. Another advocate, Professor Victor Ferkiss, says its basic premise is that "the Universe is God."

Atheist Mikhail Gorbachev is now more influential internationally than ever. His richly endowed Gorbachev Foundation USA has its offices in the Presidio (former U.S. military base) overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. A consultant on closing other U.S. military bases, Gorbachev is president of the newly formed ecological watchdog, Green Cross International, a Global Forum offspring headquartered at the Hague. He says its main purpose is "to bring nations together...to stimulate the new environmental consciousness...returning man to a sense of being a part of Nature."

To require man to act as if he's "part of Nature" is an admission that he is not. Nature's creatures need no such urging. Gorbachev has said that "conflict with nature is fundamental to our technologies." Yet conflict with nature is impossible to natural creatures. Radios, TV, cars, planes, computers, operas and art are not natural; nor are ambulances, doctors, hospitals and compassion.

If evolutionists believe their theory, then they should shut down all medical facilities and let the weak die naturally. Medically prolonging lives allows such persons to pass on their defects to subsequent generations. If evolution (the

only view allowed in public schools) is true, then we must stop trying to find a cure for AIDS, stop treating those with the HIV virus and let them die. Since AIDS is largely a homosexual disease, it must be nature's way of wiping out those who practice what is undeniably *unnatural* sex. According to nature's "survival of the fittest" approach, the sooner those with deficiencies die, the better for our species!

If stopping all assistance to the ill so that only the "fittest survive" sounds harsh, blame nature. That's her way. There is nothing more *natural* than disease, pain, death, and those calamities known as "*natural* disasters" (hurricanes, earthquakes, lightning, drought, and famine, to name a few). Gaia or "Mother Nature" is anything but kind. The evolutionist's attempt to have it both ways—denying a personal Creator yet insisting upon morals and compassion which can't come from nature—betrays the lie that is taught as fact in public schools.

Animals have no concern to help their fellows, even in the face of death. If we were a natural product of evolution, then we would accept death as a natural process. After the lion has dragged down its victim, the herd pauses in its flight and grazes while the lion eats its prey nearby. In contrast, man mourns the death of his fellows (Gn 21:16; 23:2; 1 Kgs 13:29)—and feels an inner anger against death itself. Man realizes that death is not the way things ought to be, but an enemy which has invaded our lives. Only Christ destroys death (1 Cor 15:51-57; Heb 2:14-15) against which science and religion have no real hope (1 Thes 4:13).

If evolution were true and Al Gore's tree-hugging made sense, then whatever man did, from muggings to murder to war, would be a natural act. Police, courts, prisons and criminal accusations would have to be eliminated. Animals, the wind and sea, gravity and lightning act neither morally nor immorally, but naturally—and the same would be true of man. If it is not wrong (nature has no morals) for a volcano to spew forth poisonous gases, then neither is it wrong for man-made factories or aerosols to do the same. Nor can there be any complaint if Oregon loggers wipe out the spotted owl or

whalers exterminate their prey. By destroying creatures standing in his way, man, as the ultimate predator, would only be fulfilling his evolutionary purpose as the "fittest" species which is able to "survive" at the expense of all others.

Honest logic discredits the evolutionary theory behind much of the environmental movement. No impersonal, natural force could design and produce a single cell, much less the brain. Only the God of the Bible could have brought moral man into existence. Thus the solution to man's problems is not in living harmoniously with nature, as we are being

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

told, but in being reconciled to the God who made him (2 Cor 5:18-20; Col 1:21) and in submission to His will. That truth is compromised by evangelicals who join an environmental movement run by pagan worshipers of Gaia and evolution promoters!

In 1991 Evangelicals for Social Action (Ron Sider, executive director) helped organize a gathering of scientists and religious leaders to discuss rescuing the environment. Evangelical participants, including World Vision's president, Robert Seiple, and Asbury Theological Seminary's president, David McKenna, were enthusiastic about joining a pagan movement. In May, 1992, leading evangelicals again joined a coalition of science and religion sponsored by the Joint Appeal by Religion and Science for the Environment.

Joint Appeal is based at New York's godless Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a bastion of New Age/ecumenical/antichrist deception. Its blasphemous dean, James Parks Morton, declares that "the body of Christ is the earth...." Out of the May, 1992, meeting came an environmental consortium of the U.S. Catholic Conference, the National Council of Churches, the Evangelical Environmental Network, and the Consul-

tation of Jewish Life and the Environment.

Founded in 1993 by Vice-President Gore, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, also based at St. John the Divine, has distributed tens of thousands of packets containing ecologically oriented prayers, sermon ideas and Sunday-school lessons to Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and evangelical congregations across the country. Its director is convinced that the ecocrisis will transform "what it will mean to be religious in the 21st century." Beside World Vision, other evangelical organizations involved include InterVarsity and the National Association of Evangelicals.

Thomas Perry, a Catholic priest, says the ecocrisis calls for "a new sense of what it means to be human [and] a new story of how things came to be" (a revised Genesis). Emphasis must shift from a possible heaven to caring for Earth, and ethics and morals must involve the rights of the natural world. Larry Rasmussen, Union Theological Seminary professor, calls for a "bio-spiritual faith" in which man is a part of the natural order of things "with no special claim on its resources and no special claim on God's love."

Such pagan folly is gaining an increasing following among evangelicals, who now claim that Christ's command to preach the gospel includes rescuing the environment. Such is the message of a course titled "Environmental Stewardship: A Biblical Perspective" taught at Youth With A Mission's University of the Nations at their headquarters in Hawaii. Thus Christians enter compromising partnerships with the ungodly and expend their time and efforts on caring for a temporal earth instead of preparing souls for eternity.

Yes, we ought to be prudent caretakers of the environment God has entrusted to us. Even so, many of the warnings about population explosion and holes in the ozone layer, etc. are alarmist exaggerations aimed at promoting humanist solutions. Some of the theories are highly questionable. As late as 1977, the U.S. Academy of Science warned of a coming new ice age. Now we're being warned of global warming. Moreover, most of the problems are due to the corruption of godless governments which Christ never called us to reform.

This old creation is under God's judgment and will not be rescued from it, but is "held in store" (i.e., reserved) for destruction by fire (2 Pt 3:7-12). Everything will be destroyed and God will make a "new heavens and new earth" (v13). We must live for that eternal state and warn mankind that only those saved by the redemptive work of Christ on the Cross will inhabit His new, perfect universe. TBC

Quotable

The world is unrelenting in its hostility to us, and determined to wipe out every divine principle for which we stand. It seeks to supplant creationism with evolution. It denies the sacredness of human life by abortion. It achieves the breakdown of the family unit by divorce for any reason. The purity of the marriage relationship is denied by premarital sex. Homosexuality and lesbianism are looked on as acceptable alternative lifestyles. God's chain of command in the home and in the church is ridiculed by militant feminism. Church and state are so separated as to ban the mention of God and Christ from public life entirely. Obscenity, pornography, nakedness, filth, and violence are treated with amiable tolerance. And so, drugged and insensate, the world defies every law of God and hurtles on to its fiery doom.

William MacDonald
Worlds Apart

The kingdoms of the earth go by
In purple and in gold.
They rise, they triumph,
and they die,
And all their tale is told.

One kingdom only is divine,
One Banner triumphs still;
Its King a servant, and its sign
A gibbet on a hill.

Godfrey Fox Bradby

Q&A

Question: I was literally stunned by a passage a friend read to me from a book by Karen Mains, the wife of David Mains, who hosts the Chapel of the Air radio broadcast. She is a highly influential evangelical (the book cover states that she is "chairperson of the trustee board for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA") and a very popular speaker at Christian women's conferences. So I couldn't believe my ears, and then my eyes, when I read what seemed to be her communication with a personal spirit guide. Am I reading too much into her writing?

Answer: We're afraid not. The book *Lonely No More* has many serious problems which we plan to address in a future article dealing with spiritually dangerous trends taking place in the Christian community. But for now, here is our perspective on Mrs. Mains' spirit guide.

She tells of a young man who has been appearing in her dreams. Her descriptions of him are vivid: "He was tall...well formed and trim, somewhere in his early thirties. ...His fine, dark hair fell in a thick lock across his forehead...his blue-gray eyes looking earnestly into mine." The details of his communication are specific: "'You are everything I have ever wanted spiritually,' he said before I [in the dream] started to drive away. 'You are everything I ever wanted spiritually.'" The experience, which has taken place "six or eight times a year for the last four or five years," and which has had a "positively profound effect" on her, compelled her to seek psychospiritual counsel.

Her "spiritual director," a Catholic nun and Jungian psychotherapist, confirms what her evangelical, inner-healing therapist friend and "unofficial spiritual mentor" told her: "Your male-self is certainly wooing you." Mains explains, "...this indeed is my male-self, the *animus* that I need to complement my female being, the *anima*. This psychological concept of the male-within-the-female and the female-within-the-male was developed by Carl Jung, but it has always seemed exceptionally scriptural to me."

Mrs. Mains' sessions with her spiritual director focus on her dialogue and rela-

tionship with her dream entity, revealing his name ("Eddie Bishop") and details of their past experiences together. She notes Jung's perspective "that for spiritual and psychological health a person must have a harmonious and friendly relationship with his or her unconscious" and adds, "Through the insistent initiation of the Holy Spirit, I am being forcefully guided to make rapprochement with my inner, deepest self."

What incredible *self*-delusion! The Holy Spirit's work and Jung's antibiblical concepts couldn't be more contrary to each other. Much of what Jung taught was derived from his own personal spirit guide, a demon named Philemon (see *America: The Sorcerer's New Apprentice* for Jung's heavily demonized background). And Mains is on very insidious turf here.

In a later Jungian session with her spiritual director at Cenacle, a Catholic contemplative retreat center, Karen tells of a drastic change in the entity which has been appearing in her mind. In graphic detail she describes an "idiot-child sitting at a table with other people....totally bald head lolled to one side...drooling...six, seven or eight years of age...emaciated and malnourished....sad, huge eyes....This is my idiot-child, the idiot self of my self." Her spiritual director has her close her eyes and "see the child again." She does so and begins to communicate with the image who surprises them both by revealing that it is the "Christ child." Her director, apparently tuned into the same imagery, responds excitedly, "Yes, that is what I heard also." Mrs. Mains ponders the thought that the young man and the idiot-child are both Jesus Christ who has "been attempting to woo me because an essential part of my identity in Him has been expelled from my adult development." We find that this "Christ child," whom she is instructed to always take with her, is her "spiritual authority" which she is "afraid of having" and has "rejected not only [as] a part of myself, but a part of myself that is Christ."

There are three possibilities concerning the above. One, what she has written is the promotion of her own agenda through a vehicle which she self-characterizes: "Mains, you have a whacko creative imagination." Two, her penchant for introspection and symbolism have swept her into the delusionary world of

the experiential and hopelessly subjective. This is pure Jungian hokum, nothing more. Or three, one and two have led her down the path to New Age shamanism, where, under the guise of psychological concepts and symbolism and through the occult practice of guided imagery, she has been in communication with a spirit guide—in fact, a demon appearing as an angel of light.

Even if she has thus far escaped the dangerous spiritual reality of the third possibility, though what she writes seems to indicate otherwise, she has certainly decorated a spiritual primrose path for evangelicals, particularly the thousands of Christian women for whom her book is tailored.

Question: Why is the Bible silent about mental illness except for speaking of demon-possessed persons? Could you address this subject?

Answer: The Bible does deal with madness or insanity (Dt 28:34; 1 Sm 21:13-15; Acts 12:15; 1 Cor 14:23), but insanity is not a mental *illness*. Either the Holy Spirit was ignorant of a class of *mental* sickness that has only lately, through godless humanists, been uncovered; or what we are being told today by Christian psychologists isn't true. Unfortunately much *sin* is being redefined as *sickness* and thus excused.

If Christian psychology has something vital to offer, then we are confronted with some crucial questions. How did Christians get along without psychology for 1,900 years? Why would God leave His people in such desperate ignorance; and why would He use godless people such as Freud, Jung, et al. as the channels of this "new truth"? And why would the Bible claim that it offers all we need "for life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3-4) and to be "perfect" (i.e., all that God wants us to be) and to be fully prepared for every good work (2 Tm 3:16-17) if that weren't true? Did God lie to us? And since Christ lives in our hearts (Eph 3:17) and "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:12-16) and are crucified with Him so that it is not ourselves any more but Christ living through us (Gal 2:20) and we "can do all things through Christ" (Phil 4:13), does Christ who is our very life (Col 3:4) need psychological help? If He is our "counsellor" (Is 9:6) why do we need psychological counsel? And how did

Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, the martyrs in Acts and heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11, etc., triumph without psychology?

These are serious questions. If we have any confidence in God and His Word, then the answers are obvious.

A distinction must be made between the brain (a physical organ which could have a chemical imbalance, nutritional deficiency or some structural damage), and the spirit (a nonphysical part of man). We must distinguish between medical problems involving the physical brain (for which the Bible doesn't claim to be a handbook) and spiritual problems involving the spirit and soul, the mind and will (for which the Bible claims to have given us all the guidance we need). The physical brain can be sick, but the nonphysical spirit cannot. Thus "mental illness" is a misnomer. Demon possession is something else entirely. The problem is either physical/medical or moral/spiritual. The latter may involve sin/disobedience or a lack of trust in God to fulfill what He has promised in His Word, all of which rob us of joy and peace.

We've previously dealt with this topic in depth and suggest study of those books (see especially *The Seduction of Christianity* and *Beyond Seduction*).

Question: In the Scofield Bible...we find numerous marginal references, notes between verses and footnotes stating that Rome was Daniel's strange fourth beast, that it will be revived in western Europe and produce the coming Antichrist; but in those scripture verses themselves there is no mention of Rome. When did these additions become part of the inspired word of God? And are they proof within themselves that old Rome will be revived?

Answer: Marginal notes are not part of the Bible but represent the author's personal beliefs. It is your responsibility to check Scofield (or anyone else, including this ministry) against the Scriptures just as the Bereans checked the great Apostle Paul in like manner. No, the Bible doesn't identify by name the four world empires represented by Nebuchadnezzar's image and the four beasts in Daniel 7. However, history demonstrates the accuracy of Daniel when applied to the four world empires of the Western world: Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian

and Roman—so much so that critics have tried desperately to prove that Daniel was written after the fact. And that the Roman Empire must be revived worldwide under Antichrist is also the clear inference of Scripture.

This subject is covered in detail in two of my books, *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist* and *How Close Are We?*, which provide multiple Bible references. I commend them to your study if you wish further information and explanation in this regard.

The Psychospiritual Approach

T. A. McMahon

This world we live in “ain’t heaven.” Multitudes of problems which constantly beset believers and unbelievers alike make that very apparent. But Jesus said that He came that we might have life, even a more abundant life (Jn 10:10), and His words indicate His willingness to help those who commit their lives to Him. His offer is not only incredibly wonderful (after all, He’s the almighty God!); it is the only *true* help available. God alone knows every thought, every action, every variable, how they interact, and what good or evil they will produce. The Spirit of Christ is our personal counselor. God’s Word is our only true counseling manual, containing His insights, His corrections, His tender mercies, and His healing balm for whatever afflicts our heart and soul.

Even so, a staggering number of His own want “a second opinion.”

This ominous trend taking place among today’s evangelicals is greatly diminishing an already threadbare reliance upon the Word of God. It’s particularly dangerous because much of it sounds biblical, and its chief promoters are for the most part highly influential evangelical leaders. This trend involves approaching life, solving its problems, increasing its benefits, even enriching one’s relationship with the Lord, through psychospiritual concepts, techniques and methods.

The term “psychospiritual” will not likely be found in your dictionary, so here is our definition: Simply stated, it involves adding psychology to things spiritual. That would include one or more of the following innovations: *supplementing* spiritual content with psychological teachings; *interpreting* or explaining the spiritual through psychological concepts; *validating* the spiritual through the alleged science of psychology; *integrating* the spiritual with psychology. The term applies to the spiritualizing of psychology as well. For example, transpersonal psychology, the field’s latest stage, has a vocabulary and concepts which are blatantly religious. Consider this quote in the Association for Humanistic Psychology (AHP) *Newsletter*: “AHP has always held spiritual concerns close to its heart.... We have championed the return of spirit to therapy.”

We reject all psychology which

implicitly or explicitly professes a) to have scientific understanding of the inner (mental, emotional, moral) workings of man, b) to have an objective knowledge of his nature, and/or c) to offer the cure for the problems of man’s soul. We recognize that there are endeavors which would come under the umbrella of psychology and which fall outside the above description and its related concerns. However, the very few exceptions to the multibillion-dollar field of psychotherapy and its accompanying markets are hardly a redeeming factor. Psychological counseling is a religious wolf in pseudoscientific clothing. As Martin and Deidre Bobgan have stated (and impressively documented in their many books on the subject), “psychological explanations about life and psychological solutions to life’s problems are questionable at best, detrimental at worst, and spiritual counterfeits at least.” The bottom line regarding the psychospiritual approach is—it is a delusion.

True spirituality has nothing to do with

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.... *Psalms 1:1*

psychology (1 Cor 2:11), a fake science based primarily on man’s rationalizations, i.e., self-deceptions. True spirituality isn’t something to which man’s wisdom (1 Cor 1:20) can *contribute*, nor can man *validate* the teachings of the Scriptures. As a Christian, true spirituality is a product only of our submission and obedience by His grace to His Word (Jn 14:15). The idea that man can add anything to God’s way is utter folly. Who would even dare? Yet as obvious as that answer should be, the psychospiritual delusion continues to grow.

Last summer 50,000-plus gathered in Colorado for the Promise Keepers Christian Men’s Conference. Colorado football coach Bill McCartney, founder of the organization, declared in his address, “We’re going to contest anything that sets itself up against the name of Jesus Christ.” Obviously, the coach hasn’t “scouted” psychospirituality. Two of the main speakers at the conference were psychologist James Dobson and psychology popularizer Gary Smalley. Of even more concern than what attendees heard from the speakers is the fact that each

man received a complimentary hardback copy of *The Masculine Journey: Understanding the Six Stages of Manhood* by psychotherapist Robert Hicks (foreword by psychologist John Trent).

The book, written to help “provide directions for a man’s life so that he doesn’t get lost along the way,” is mainly psychologically biased conjecture centering around six Hebrew words. In chapter after chapter, subjective insights into manhood are offered through quotes by a host of secular authors with a psychological bent, including Carl Jung, inner-healing therapist Leanne Payne, transpersonal psychiatrist/spiritualist Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, and Sam Keen, former theologian in residence at Esalen, the New Age/Eastern mystical therapeutic center south of San Francisco. Keen’s books feature vicious diatribes against biblical Christianity.

The author of *The Masculine Journey*, who is also a pastor and seminary professor of pastoral theology, demonstrates what a perverting influence a psychospiritual bias can have. Consider the following small sampling of quotes (his and others) related to just two of man’s alleged stages. The *phallic stage*: “Possessing a penis places unique requirements upon men before God in how they are to worship Him. We are called to worship God as phallic kinds of guys, not as some sort of androgynous, neutered nonmales, or the feminized males so popular in many feminist-enlightened churches.” “I believe Jesus was phallic with all the inherent phallic passions we experience as men.” This seems to be either the result of Freudian brainwashing or hanging out in locker rooms. Either way it’s blasphemous.

Regarding man’s (emotionally) *wounded stage*: “In order for men to discover what manhood is all about, they must descend into the deep places of their own souls and find their accumulated grief.” “I am convinced many men in our society today are lashing out at women, at society, at bosses, even at God—all because they do not understand the wounding experience.” “The story of Jacob...illustrates a young man having been severely wounded by a dysfunctional family system.” You have to be totally indoctrinated by inner-healing psychobabble to derive even a jot of such nonsense from the Bible.

There are just too many biblically erroneous teachings in Hicks’ book to cover here. Most involve his interpretations based upon psychology. Where do you find male

and female *categories* of emotional woundedness? or anatomically related worship? Where do you find *understanding manhood* as a key to a godly life? You don't if you simply take Scripture at its word: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28)"

At the end of the book we find this statement: "Promise Keepers wants to provide men's materials like this book...." Dr. James Dobson, on a recent radio broadcast, held out great hope that Promise Keepers would stir the coals of revival among men in this country. That is indeed a worthwhile hope, but it grieves us deeply to see that the sparks of truth are being fanned into false flames by the winds of psychospirituality. The unbiblical preoccupation of this Christian men's movement is with man himself and from man's perspective. It can only truly live up to Coach McCartney's contending for the faith exhortation by getting back to the basics of the faith. The emphasis has to be focusing on God himself, getting to know Him and His way through His Word. If not, it is at best doomed to a grace-barren, fleshly form of godliness. Sadly, attendees were encouraged in a postconference follow-up letter to purchase the study guide and to form *The Masculine Journey* study groups.

Whereas Hicks' book is designed to appeal to men, an even more destructive psychospiritual offering has been published for women. As a prolific author, television personality (*Focal Point*), radio broadcaster (*The Chapel of the Air*), and popular speaker at Christian women's conferences, Karen Mains has few peers when it comes to influence upon evangelical women. Presently she is chairperson of the trustee board for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA and on the Board of Reference of Renovaré (Richard Foster's Christian mysticism organization). Her latest book *Lonely No More* is an exercise in journaling, i.e., writing down one's spiritual experiences, thoughts, emotions, dream interpretations, communications with God (and vice versa). In it she reveals her innermost "wounds," aspirations—and has an axe or two to grind.

The psychospiritual aspects of the book are reflected primarily in its *inner-healing* foundation, a mixture of Freudian/Jungian concepts and spiritual beliefs, practices and techniques. Karen received training in inner healing at the School of Pastoral Care established by Agnes Sanford, and considers Sanford disciple and inner-healing/spiritual therapist Leanne Payne to

be one of her personal "spiritual directors" (see *The Seduction of Christianity* regarding the occultic aspects of Agnes Sanford and inner healing).

Inner loneliness and deep soul wounds, resulting from husband David's workaholicism and lack of sensitivity to her needs, from Christian males resenting her leadership qualities, and from past experiences of repressive evangelical restrictions (theological and cultural), are among the "emotional hurts" Mains attempts to deal with throughout her book. The route of psychospiritual self-therapy through which she leads the reader is

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of [pseudoscience].

1 Timothy 6:20

a deadly swamp of subjectivity infested with Jungian dream analysis, symbolic imagery, shamanic visualization, interactive communication with dream entities, projections from the (Freudian) subconscious, and mystical contemplative prayer and fasting. Her Jungian "spiritual director," a Roman Catholic nun and director of novice training, becomes her guide on her soul journey.

Karen reassures her (more than likely evangelical) reader that "spiritual directors are a part of the Catholic tradition,...who stand beside others in their spiritual pilgrimages and assist them...in the practice of gazing Godward. Some Catholic seminaries offer advanced degrees in spiritual direction." Rather than reassuring, it's particularly frightening that a woman who claims to be "a historical evangelical" and "well aware of the dangers of undisciplined subjectivity" would buy such spiritual mockery, let alone try to pass it off as beneficial in knowing God.

In qualifying her admittedly "subjective experiences of the supernatural," she offers that the experiences "must not offend Scripture, orthodox doctrine or the traditions of the historical saints who have made the pilgrimage before me." The latter two "qualifiers" might be of value to Roman Catholics but certainly not to a Berean (Acts 17:10-11). And there is abundant evidence throughout the book that her penchant for the psychospiritual has corrupted whatever biblical sense she may have had. Consider

the following:

Through my hardships I discover there's a small part of myself that hasn't grown whole along with the rest of me. It's been maimed by neglect during years of married life. I call it my "idiot-self." I'm discovering that this malnourished orphan needs to be nursed and nurtured. I must find the idiot-self creeping about in the infrastructure of my soul....Self of my self, this abandoned child is very much a part of me....I understand that in some way, I, the intuitive, introverted, feeling-proficient female, have become the substitute for [my husband] David's own female self, his anima, to use the Jungian terminology. He...functions for me as my animus....I have abdicated to my husband my own maleness....

(Concerning Mains' "malnourished orphan child within" and "Eddie Bishop," another entity which appears to her in recurring dreams, see March 1994 "Q&A.")

In addition to the book's Jungian and mystical preoccupation with self, the author offers the basic thesis of humanistic and Christian psychology: "My great concern is loving David; my great concern is loving myself. I know I will not care for him well until I learn to care for myself well." That is not the way Jesus put it nor is it the way of sacrificial love He both demonstrated and promises to live through us.

Although *Lonely No More* may be its author's most blatant exposure of what she believes, she and her husband David have championed psychospirituality for decades, from their radio and television shows to the material used in their 50-Day Spiritual Adventure for churches.

The books addressed above are merely two among hundreds like them currently offered at your local Christian bookstore. Psychospirituality is being offered by and for Christians in every medium available. It is big-time. The two top-rated Christian radio programs are hosted by a psychologist and two psychiatrists: Drs. James Dobson, Frank Minirth and Paul Meier. Christian psychotherapeutic centers, the biggest advertisers on Christian radio, overflow with believers. Psychological evaluation of those desiring to go into the mission field is becoming the rule; some missions organizations even offer or require training in psychological counseling. And with the blessing of numerous evangelical luminaries, a psychology-influenced gospel is being exported worldwide.

being exported worldwide.

Is psychospirituality what the body of Christ needs today, even though it was unknown to believers for nearly two millennia? What's the fruit of this new thing? Can it add anything of genuine spiritual value to what has been readily available from the Holy Spirit since the beginning of the church? Is it a necessary supplement in order to produce *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control* in the life of a believer? Pray and encourage fellow believers in Christ to drink from the Lord's pure, life-giving and grace-abundant waters rather than from spiritually toxic streams polluted by psychospirituality. Pray also that, just as Nehemiah was given the spiritual fortitude to throw the subversive Tobiah the Ammonite (Neh 13:4-8) and all his belongings out of God's temple, so too will God's people have similar strength and courage to jettison from His church the psychospiritual approach with all of its destructive baggage. TBC

Quotable

Men are dead to God because they are living to Self. Self-love, self-esteem and self-seeking are the essence and the life of pride; and the Devil, the father of pride, is never absent from these passions, nor without an influence in them. Without a death to self, there is no escape from Satan's power over us....

To discover the deepest root and iron strength of pride and self-exaltation, one must enter into the secret chamber of man's soul, where the Spirit of God, who alone gives humility and meek submission, was denied through Adam's sin....

Here in man's innermost being, self had its awful birth, and established its throne, reigning over a kingdom of secret pride, of which all outward pomp and vanities are but its childish, transitory playthings....

Imagination, as the last and truest support of self, lays unseen worlds at his feet, and crowns him with secret revenges and fancied honors. This is that satanic, natural self that must be denied and crucified, or there can be no disciple of Christ. There is no plainer interpretation than this that can

be put upon the words of Jesus, "Except a man deny self, and take up the cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple."

William Law, 1761
The Power of the Spirit

Q&A

Question: I have some Christian relatives who are involved with Amway. Besides "bugging" me to sign up, is there anything I should be concerned about for their sakes?

Answer: Our knowledge and experience with some aspects of Amway has given us concerns of which you should be aware. While the corporation makes the disclaimer that it is a business and does not endorse a particular religion, there is an overt Christian emphasis among most of its leading "independent" distributors, who individually may have as many as 300,000 distributors under them. Amway's business orientation and high-powered sales techniques, when intermingled with evangelizing, inevitably combine reaching people for Christ with reaching them for profit.

Many "Christian" Amway distributors concentrate their recruiting among evangelical Christians. Their instructed approach to potential subdistributors expressly avoids mentioning the name Amway in initial get-togethers (why is that?), and the pitch directed at Christians emphasizes that "by increasing their financial base they can be more effective for the Lord, in terms of time and money." What happens in numerous cases, however, is that the faith of those involved becomes intermingled with PMA and positive-confession beliefs, and the required investment in the business of a great amount of time in the initial years results in devastated families already lacking time together.

An Amway distributor becomes a teacher/model/trainer/sponsor of those whom he recruits. While this may seem to be a good opportunity to present Christian principles in a discipleship format, the training materials and particularly the reading lists promote a dangerous mixture of "Christianized" success and positive mental attitude (PMA) concepts, mind-science beliefs,

self-oriented psychology, and occult techniques and methods. The recommended book list includes such authors as occultist Napoleon Hill, PMA theologians Robert Schuller and Norman Vincent Peale, motivational speaker Zig Ziglar, motivational psychologist Denis Waitley, and positive confession writer/preacher Charles Capps.

Those in Amway make money not primarily by selling products but from a percentage of the Amway income of those they have recruited. Their recruits become subdistributors who in turn recruit others to become subdistributors and the more subdistributors, the greater the financial return. Therefore, though the company has a diversity of good product, in effect Amway sees *people* as its most important product.

Second Peter 2:3 says, "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you...." Whereas covetousness can attract anyone to any business opportunity, Amway, through its ostentatious display of material success (clothes, jewelry, cars, luxurious homes, yachts, exotic vacations) in its promotions and *Amagram* magazine, seems to major on a theme which has caused many Christians to stumble in their faith.

Question: I am confused by an ongoing debate between two brothers in my Bible study. The issue is the "eternal security" of the believer vs. the possibility that one could "fall away." What is your perspective?

Answer: Those who believe in "falling away" accuse those who believe in "eternal security" of promoting "cheap grace." The latter in itself is an unbiblical expression. To call it "cheap" is really a denial of grace, since it implies that too small a price has been paid. Grace, however, must be absolutely free and without any price at all *on man's part*; while *on God's part* the price He paid was infinite. Thus for man to think that his works can play any part in *either earning or keeping* his salvation is what cheapens grace, devaluing this infinite gift to the level of human effort.

To speak of "falling from grace" involves the same error. Since our works had nothing to do with meriting grace in the first place, there is nothing we could do that would

cause us to no longer merit it and thus “fall” from it. Works determine reward or punishment—not one’s salvation, which comes by God’s grace. The crux of the problem is a confusion about grace and works.

First of all, we must be absolutely clear that these two can never mix. Paul declares, “...if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Rom 11: 6). Salvation cannot be partly by works and partly by grace.

Secondly, we must be absolutely certain that *works have nothing to do with salvation*. Period. The Bible clearly states, “For by *grace* are ye saved...*not of works*: (Eph 2:8-10). True to such scriptures, evangelicals firmly declare that *we cannot earn or merit salvation in any way*. Eternal life must be received as a free gift of God’s grace, *or we cannot have it*.

Thirdly, salvation cannot be purchased *even in part* by us, because it requires payment of the penalty for sin—a payment we can’t make. If one receives a speeding ticket, it won’t help to say to the judge, “I’ve driven many times within the 55 mph limit. Surely my many good deeds will make up for the one bad deed.” Nor will it do to say, “If you let me off this time, I promise never to break the law again.” The judge would reply, “To never break the law again is only to do what the law demands. You get no extra credit for that. The penalty for breaking the law is a separate matter and must be paid.” Thus Paul writes, “...by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight...” (Rom 3:20).

Fourthly, if salvation from the penalty of breaking God’s laws cannot be earned by good deeds, then it *cannot be lost by bad deeds*. Our works play no part in either *earning or keeping* salvation.

Fifthly, salvation can only be given to us as a free gift if the penalty has been fully paid. We have violated infinite Justice, requiring an infinite penalty. We are finite beings and could not pay it: we would be separated from God for eternity. God is infinite and could pay an infinite penalty, but it wouldn’t be just, because He is not a member of our race. Therefore God, in love and grace, through the virgin birth, became a man so that He could pay the debt of sin for the entire human race!

In the Greek, Christ’s cry from the cross,

“It is finished!” is an accounting term, meaning that the debt had been paid in full. Justice had been satisfied by full payment of its penalty, and thus God could “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). On that basis, God offers pardon and eternal life as a free gift. He cannot force it upon anyone or it would not be a gift. Nor would it be just to pardon a person who rejects the righteous basis for pardon and offers a hopelessly inadequate payment instead—or offers his works even as “partial payment.”

Question: I just read C. Fred Dickason’s *Demon Possession and the Christian* and in it he seems to be saying that a Christian can be demon possessed. Is that the way you see it?

Answer: Concerning demonization of Christians, I’m not sure what that might mean, but I don’t find it in the Bible. I have spoken with those who can recite amazing stories from experience, but when I ask them for either biblical doctrine or example, they can give neither. Dickason also admits that it can’t be supported from Scripture. He then says that we must therefore look to experience. But experience which has no example in the Bible is dangerous indeed and should not be relied upon. Of course the Bible doesn’t include every kind of experience to which man is subject, but for something as important as demonization of Christians the Lord would surely give us careful direction.

The Bible contains *many* examples of the demonization/deliverance of unbelievers yet *not one* example involving a believer. This fact is practically conclusive evidence against the alleged modern experience of the latter. And to say that since the Bible doesn’t specifically state that a believer can get cancer, therefore it need not state specifically that a believer can be demonized, simply doesn’t follow—the analogy fails.

Moreover, if Dickason wants to go by experience, then I can tell of believers who were confused and harmed by allegedly being “exorcised.” It seemed real and convincing to them at the time, involving even the manifestation of other voices speaking out of them. Looking back on the experience later, however, they concluded that under the power of suggestion they had been hypnotized to act that way, but that actually there

had been no demons involved. (Though hypnosis can open to demonic influence.)

Next Dickason tries to say that demonization is no different, for a believer, than falling into sin. If that is the case, then why does he say that there are no examples in Scripture, when there are plenty of examples of believers sinning? But he can no more show from Scripture that demonization is theologically in the same category as falling in sin than he can show demonization of believers in the Bible.

If Dickason has really gotten information from demons as he claims in the book, then he has embraced “doctrines of demons”—and indeed, much of what he teaches in his book was learned from the demons themselves, who are “lying spirits.” That is a major weakness in his thesis—what he can’t support from the Bible he justifies because demons have told him so. Gathering information from demons is forbidden in the Bible.

The Gospel Betrayed

Dave Hunt

The most significant event in almost 500 years of church history took place March 29, 1994. Leading evangelicals and Catholics signed a joint declaration, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the 3rd Millennium." The document overturns the Reformation and does incalculable damage to the cause of Christ. The news release said:

They toiled together in the movements against abortion and pornography, and now leading Catholics and evangelicals are asking their flocks for a remarkable leap of faith: to finally accept each other as Christians...[E]vangelicals including Pat Robertson and Charles Colson joined with conservative Roman Catholic leaders today in upholding the ties of faith that bind [them]....They urged Catholics and evangelicals...to stop aggressive proselytization of each other's flocks.

John White, president of Geneva College and former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, said the statement represents a "triumphalistic moment" in American religious life....

Other evangelical endorsers include the heads of the Home Mission Board and Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination, and Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ...Mark Noll of Wheaton University...[Os Guinness, Jesse Miranda (Assemblies of God), Richard Mouw (President, Fuller Seminary), J. I. Packer and Herbert Schlossberg].

Robert Simonds, Southern California chairman of the National Association of Evangelicals, "applauded the declaration" and said he hopes it will bring "increased cooperation between evangelicals and Catholics...." But the fruit of such "cooperation" has not been good in the past. Evangelicals working beside Catholics, Mormons, Moonies, et al., for common social or political aims (for example, in Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition) will not witness to their "partners in action" for fear of offending them and breaking up the coalition. Such

compromise laid the foundation for this alliance—a development monitored closely and approved by the Vatican.

I neither impugn the motives nor question the salvation of the evangelical signers. Yet I believe the document represents the most devastating blow against the gospel in at least 1,000 years. Already the declaration is being "translated into Spanish, Polish, Portuguese and Russian for circulation throughout Latin America and Eastern Europe." Soon it will have a revolutionary impact worldwide.

Having carefully read the 25-page fifth draft marked "Not for general circulation," I appreciate the loving concern for both truth and unity expressed therein. Some key differences between Catholics and evangelicals are noted without compromise. But the most important difference—*what it means to be saved*—is not mentioned and, in fact, is directly denied.

Amazingly, the document claims that all Catholics are Christians, hold the same faith as evangelicals, and are our "brothers and sisters in Christ." If so, then the Reformation was a tragic mistake which we all must denounce! On this sad juncture in church history, the last words of Hugh Latimer ring in our conscience. Bound back-to-back to the stake with Nicholas Ridley, Latimer, England's most effective gospel preacher at that time, was heard to exclaim as the flames engulfed them, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day, by God's grace, light such a candle in England as I pray shall never be put out." How incredible that the last spark of that Reformation "candle" is now being extinguished by evangelical leaders who owe so much to the very faithfulness of such martyrs!

For 1,000 years before the Reformation, there were always groups of evangelical Christians outside the Catholic Church, *millions* of whom were slaughtered for obeying Scripture instead of Rome. Pope Pius III killed 60,000 in one day when his forces wiped out the entire town of Beziers, France, an act which he considered the "crowning achievement of his papacy." Martin Luther acknowledged his debt to these earlier martyrs:

We are not the first to declare the papacy to be the kingdom of antichrist,

since for many years before us so many and such great men (whose number is large and whose memory is eternal) have undertaken to express the same thing so clearly and plainly.

Through the example of these Vaudois, Albigenses, Waldenses and other early evangelicals, and from the Bibles they preserved, a few Roman Catholic priests and monks realized that their Church didn't preach the truth and that they and their fellow Catholics were not saved, but lost. Men like John Wyclif (1329-84), Jan Hus (1373-1415) and Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg (1445-1510) believed the gospel and began preaching it. They hoped their Church could be reformed. In response, Rome consigned many of these faithful gospel preachers to the flames. Later Luther and other Reformers, all Roman Catholics, also became convinced that neither they nor their fellow Catholics were saved. They began preaching salvation by grace through faith instead of Catholicism's false gospel of sacramental rituals and works. For this they were excommunicated and untold thousands more were martyred.

Such is the heritage of today's evangelicals, which this document now rejects. We are asked to believe that the Reformers were deluded, that like all active Catholics today they were saved but didn't know it; the tens of millions of Catholics who since then have received Christ by faith alone and left the Catholic Church have also been deceived; the whole evangelical church of today is equally deluded about what it means to be a Christian. Colson, Robertson, Bright, et al. have revised both history and doctrine.

Evangelicals would decry the complacent attitude that everyone raised in and/or attending a Protestant church is a Christian. Lost sinners need to be saved. How, then, did leading evangelicals decide that all active Catholics are Christians and must not hereafter be evangelized? The agreement states that both Catholics and evangelicals accept the Apostles' Creed: that Christ "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." That creed, however, does *not* express the gospel that saves (Rom 1:16): that "Christ died *for our sins* (1 Cor 15:3). Mormons affirm the Apostles' Creed, but they aren't Christians. Nor does affirming

it make Catholics (or Protestants) Christians.

Catholicism's false gospel hasn't changed. It diametrically opposes the evangelical view of what Christ's crucifixion and forgiveness of sins mean. Let me quote from Vatican II, Flannery's Edition, Vol. 1 (the same teaching is affirmed by the new universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church* just released by the Vatican). This is what Catholicism teaches and Catholics believe and practice today:

Christ's death earned "satisfactions and merits" which have been deposited into a "Treasury" to which have been added "the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary [and] the prayers and good works of all the saints [beyond what they needed for their own salvation]."

From the most ancient times in the Church *good works were also offered to God for the salvation of sinners....* Indeed, [by] *the prayers and good works* of holy people...the penitent was washed, cleansed and redeemed.... Following in Christ's steps, those who believe in him have always...carried their crosses to make expiation for their own sins and the sins of others. They were convinced that they could [by such good works and sacrifices] help their brothers to obtain salvation from God.... (pp 64-66)

Out of this "treasury of the Church" *salvation/redemption* is dispensed in installments by the Catholic clergy through the seven sacraments. One never passes "from death to life" (Jn 5:24) but is always earning salvation with the Church's help. In fact, excommunication is the penalty for saying one is saved and knows he has eternal life through faith in Christ's finished work. The very heart of the gospel which evangelicals affirm is denied by Catholicism in all its creeds, catechisms, canons and decrees and dogmas, and those who dare to affirm it are anathematized. Vatican II's first page declares,

For it is the liturgy [sacramental rituals] through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, *the work of our redemption is accomplished.*

So redemption/salvation is in process of being effected by Church sacraments. But Paul wrote, "In whom we *have* [present possession, an accomplished fact through Christ] redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). Hebrews 9:12 says, "...by his own blood he

entered in once [for all time] into the holy place [heaven], *having obtained eternal redemption for us.*" Redemption is finished! But that truth is consistently and insistently denied.

Even Christ's death is an ongoing process, so the Mass is not a *remembrance* of a finished work but a *sacrifice* which obtains forgiveness of sins and from which "graces and merits" flow in partial installments. This is from the *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*:

The Mass is a truly *propitiatory sacrifice* [by which] *the Lord is appeased* [and]...pardons wrongdoings and sins.... Finally the Mass is the divinely ordained *means of applying* the merits of Calvary. Christ won for the world all the graces it needs for salvation and sanctification. But these blessings are *conferred gradually and continually*...mainly through the Mass....The priest is indispensable, since he alone by his powers can change the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ....the more often the sacrifice [of the Mass] is offered the more benefit is conferred [i.e.; Calvary wasn't enough] (pp 248-49).

The Mass continues to transmit installments of grace even after one has died, as relatives buy "Mass cards" which are laid upon the altar during Mass in the name of the deceased in order to shorten purgatorial suffering. Christ's death couldn't get us to heaven, but Masses, Hail Marys, good works, "bearing one's cross" for others, etc. will do so. Earned "indulgences" also shorten time in purgatory. Charles Colson says indulgences are no longer part of Catholicism (*The Body*, p 271). In fact, Vatican II devotes 17 pages to indulgences (pp 62-79) and *anathematizes anyone who rejects that doctrine* (p 71)!

"But surely you don't deny that *some Catholics are saved!*" is the objection when one presents the truth about Catholicism. That some Catholics may be saved is possible, but that is a far cry from this document's implication that *all* are saved. And to be saved, a Catholic would have to believe the true gospel and reject Catholicism's false gospel. One can't believe two contradictory propositions at the same time: one can't believe Christ obtained redemption through His blood and also believe redemption is being accomplished through Catholic liturgy; one can't believe salvation is by faith and "*not of works*" and at the same time believe that good works earn

salvation (see quote above).

Paul declared that "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23) and need to be "saved" from God's eternal judgment upon sinners. He also insisted that one can be saved *only* by believing "the gospel of Christ" (Rom 1:16). The early church "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) with the preaching of this gospel, a gospel which Roman Catholicism has denied for 1,500 years.

I have been in contact with thousands of Catholics who were saved and left that Church. *Not one* ever heard the true gospel preached there. *Not one* was saved by being a Catholic, but by believing a gospel which is anathema to Catholics. In a recent survey of 2,000 homes in Spain only two Protestants knew the gospel, while 1,998 Catholics thought good works, church attendance, etc. would get them to heaven. In their 15 years of evangelizing in Spain, missionaries with whom I spoke had *never met one* Catholic who was saved or who knew how to be saved. Knowing that these millions of Catholics are lost causes evangelicals there to work day and night to bring them the gospel!

And now we are asked to refrain from sharing the gospel with those who desperately need it, and to assume them already saved, when their own doctrines forbid this assurance. It is outrageous that leading evangelicals have placed nearly 25 percent of the world's population off limits for evangelization! Missionaries must now leave Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy and those in Latin America —such is the tragic implication of this document!

Paul told the Philippian jailer that if he would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (that is, personally put his faith in Him as His Savior who had died for His sins and risen again) he would be saved. That being "saved" was a once-for-all transformation effected by placing one's complete trust for eternity in the finished work of Christ alone has been proclaimed by generations of preachers such as Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon and Moody and by missionary giants such as C. T. Studd, Hudson Taylor and David Livingstone. We are now being told, however, that such men and women who gave their lives to bring the gospel to the lost wasted their time if they preached to Catholics. Tell that to the millions of ex-Catholics who thank God with tears that someone loved them enough to tell them the truth!

Instead of rejoicing in these souls being saved, Colson says he and others had become “distressed by the clashes arising from the growth of evangelical Protestantism in traditionally Catholic Latin America and, more recently, in traditionally Catholic or Eastern Orthodox areas of Central Europe and Russia.” Go to Latin America, Mr. Colson, and see the paganism and spiritism mixed with Catholicism! See the tragedy of souls by the millions going into a Christless eternity because they have been deceived by Roman Catholicism! Thank God that millions of Catholics are accepting the gospel and now know they have eternal life (1 Jn 5:13)! Yet the signers of this treacherous document denounce the conversions of Catholics and ask us to stop rescuing them from hell!

We have warned of growing ecumenism, explained the difference between the false works gospel of Catholicism and the biblical gospel, and exposed the growing unity between Catholics and the very evangelicals who have signed this agreement. I have sent photocopies of pertinent sections from Vatican II, Trent and catechisms to some of these men, with no response to the issues. They cannot be excused on the grounds of ignorance.

The most tragic result of this historic development will be to prevent the gospel from being presented to lost millions who have now been wrongly reclassified by evangelical leaders as Christians. A disaster of almost equal proportions will result from this document’s endorsement of Catholicism’s false gospel, thereby encouraging multitudes to believe it. Unless we speak up boldly, the much needed warnings against some of Satan’s cleverest lies will be silenced.

If we truly love lost souls about us, no matter what their religious affiliation, we will increase our efforts to bring them the truth of the gospel before it is forever too late. Pray with us that TBC will be used mightily to bring lost souls everywhere into the light of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us together stand firm against the spiritual darkness which threatens to extinguish the candle that martyrs like Latimer and Ridley so faithfully lit.

TBC

Quotable

I am convinced that many [who call themselves] evangelicals are not truly and soundly converted. Among the evangelicals it is entirely possible to come into membership, to ooze in by osmosis, to leak through the cells of the church and never know what it means to be born of the Spirit and washed in the blood....

What we need is what the old Methodists called a sound conversion....The children of the protesters, children of the Reformation, have been brainwashed and indoctrinated by those who believe that changes have made a difference in God’s plan, a difference in Christianity and a difference in Christ. We have been brainwashed to believe that we cannot read the Bible as we used to. We must now read it through glasses colored by change. We have been hypnotized by the serpent, the devil, into believing that we no longer have a trustworthy Bible, so Protestantism is no longer a moral force in the world.

Running our Protestant world are people who talk solemnly about Christ but who do not mean what the Bible means. They talk about revelation and inspiration, but they do not mean what our fathers meant. They accept the belief that there has been change and that Christians must adjust to the change. The word used is *adjustment*. We must get adjusted, forgetting that the world has always been blessed by the people who were not adjusted....

Jesus was among the most maladjusted people in His generation. He never pretended to adjust to the world. He came to die for the world and to call the world to Himself, and the adjustment had to be on the other side.

A.W.Tozer

Q&A

Question: I’m very concerned about *New Age Bible Versions* and it has little to do with my personal bias for or against any particular version of the Bible. It’s creating division in my church. Although I don’t mind some necessary confrontation, my reading of Mrs. Riplinger’s book tells me that it is more harmful to the body of Christ than the modern versions

she warns against. What are your thoughts?

Answer: The stated purpose of *New Age Bible Versions* is to prove that there is “an alliance between the new versions [sic] of the Bible (NIV, NASB, Living Bible and others) and the chief conspirators in the New Age Movement.” The author also claims that her approach is objective and her work is heavily supported by methodical documentation.

If *New Age Bible Versions* (NABV) had both accomplished its goal and fulfilled it in the way the author stated, NABV would be of great value to the church. The book, however, not only misses the author’s professed marks, it seriously undermines her credibility and brings her integrity into question.

We’ve received a half dozen evaluations of NABV from individuals whose research we respect. Their work, much of it checked against the difficult-to-obtain sources quoted by Riplinger, has complemented our own scrutiny of Riplinger’s book.

Those who have a preference for the KJV, as we do, will find no encouragement in Riplinger’s endeavor. Her writing is driven by a misleading style and loaded with contrived “evidence.” She starts off misrepresenting people and continues to do so throughout the entire book.

For example, the introduction alerts the reader to “shocking” information which reveals New Age objectives and connects them to individuals who had some degree of influence upon modern version translations. Quotes #2 and 3, page 2, given to support the author’s thesis, feature statements attributed to Edwin Palmer, an editor of the NIV. The setup for the quotes implies a New Age connection. Yet neither quote has anything even remotely to do with New Age teachings. Quote 2 is a reflection of Palmer’s reformed theology, and #3 (“[F]ew clear and decisive texts say that Jesus is God”) is a statement of simple fact. No matter what Bible version is used, there are fewer than ten verses which explicitly state that Jesus is God, though hundreds more reinforce that basic truth. Palmer makes that clear in his writing. Yet he is maligned by false implication, and the reader is grossly deceived.

Time and space will not allow for more than a sampling of the hundreds of mistakes

in Riplinger's 690-page book. Most of the errors can be chalked up to incompetence, but there are far too many that seem to be designed to convince the reader of the author's viewpoint regardless of how lacking the proof might be, or even of how much evidence exists to the contrary.

In Chapter 1 she correctly states that the New Age is making inroads into Christianity by using terms familiar to Christians. Her example, however, is the title of the book *Communion*, a secular best-seller which describes a man's alleged contact with extraterrestrials. She claims, without a hint of documentation, that the author named it that "to make it more easily acceptable [to Christians]." The example is far-fetched at best. The title cover of *Communion* features a horrifying image of an alien that would keep even the most gullible Christian at arm's length.

Riplinger then introduces the first of dozens of comparative charts. They give the impression of presenting supportive documentation, yet rarely contain any documentation whatsoever. Her first chart lists what she says are New Age definitions compared to what she claims are correspondent teachings contained in new Bible versions. The charts are visually impressive—but meaningless without documentation. Some charts elevate faulty accusations to the level of substantial concerns; some convey the idea that all new versions are guilty of the same alleged errors, and that particular errors are rampant. Again, nearly all are without documentation. Most of the charts are incomprehensible, but that doesn't necessarily lessen their persuasive value. Charts, whether one fully understands them or not, can generate the perception that "the author knows what she's talking about and has the charts to prove it."

New Age Bible Versions collects New Age concepts, teachings and strategies and imposes them exclusively upon the modern translations; the author demonstrates her lack of objectivity by avoiding or rationalizing away the KJV's similar vulnerability. For example, new versions are accused of being New Age because they use the phrase "the Christ," while there are more than a dozen such verses found in the KJV. "The Mighty One" is said to be New Age; the KJV has four examples. References to God as "the One" in new versions indicate New Age influence, according to Riplinger; the KJV has dozens of verses where the term "One" is a referent for God (Holy One, Mighty One, Lofty One, etc.). There are too many other instances where the author fails to

apply her New Age version theories to the KJV, to assume an oversight on her part. Clearly, either they disprove her theory, or the KJV is also a New Age version—which also disproves her theory.

Perhaps the most reprehensible aspect of the book is its penchant for guilt by association, and quite often that "association" is contrived by the author. Roger Krynock sent us many examples of Riplinger's misquotations in which she, through her own construction, "terribly wrenches [the quoted words] from their contexts." R. Laird Harris, for example, is quoted to prove his New Age view of hell. Riplinger thus presents his quote: "This view [hell] has some problems. [It]...refers only to death, not to...any punishment...." She took the first quoted sentence from page 59 of *The NIV: The Making of a Contemporary Translation* and the second sentence is a misquote from page 61 of the same book. Putting the two together makes Harris say what Riplinger wants, but it's not even close to what he actually said.

Another reviewer, Rick Norris, succinctly articulates the danger of *New Age Bible Versions*: "An essential part of Riplinger's book is based on the *ad hominem* fallacy which appeals to the situation or prejudices of the person to be convinced instead of logically proving the premises that pertain to the subject under discussion." We've received a number of letters from NABV enthusiasts who share our preference for the KJV, yet seem to have let their bias override their objectivity. To them we would recommend a more "Berean-like" reevaluation.

We have little doubt that a Bible version will eventually surface that will subvert the doctrines of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), but let's be *watchful* in a way that is true to that faith.

Question: I read your "Q&A" on "eternal security" and I'm still left with this nagging question: Can an individual who made a confession of faith in Christ come to a place where he ceases to believe?

Answer: In the parable of the sower (Mt 13:18-23) we're given examples of those who have opportunity for salvation. We believe the first example represents almost everyone in the world because no one leaves this world without being presented in some compelling way the hope of salvation. As Romans 1:20 states, "they are without excuse." The analogy indicates that many are hardened against believing the gospel. The second example tells us that some will show a superficial interest in the gospel but that won't last long. The third example

relates to those who try to make the gospel fit their hope of salvation, which is man-made and worldly. Examples 1 through 3 did not *believe* the gospel. Only #4 presents an individual who truly believes the gospel and receives eternal life. Such a person then demonstrates (not gains) the reality of his salvation by showing some degree of growth and fruitfulness in Christ.

Run your question ("Can an individual who made a confession of faith in Christ come to a place where he ceases to believe?") by the above. If the "confession" fits 1, 2, or 3 it's an example in which the person never truly *believed* (1 Jn 2:19). It can't fit in example #4 because in express contrast to the others there is no allowance for ceasing to believe.

If maintaining our faith for salvation were dependent on us alone *none* could be saved. But it is dependent upon the only One who could save us and the only One who can keep us. For various reasons we may waver in our faith and have times of little fruitfulness, but sustaining our eternal security is something only God in Christ can do.

Living by Faith

Dave Hunt

Our family (Ruth, myself and our four children ages 8 to 15) “smuggled” a suitcase of Bibles into Eastern Europe in 1967. Entering Bulgaria from Turkey, we were sobered by our first sight of the Iron Curtain: the watchtowers at the border, the barbed wire, guns, dogs and grim guards. We had no way to hide the Scriptures and were searched thoroughly a dozen times, even to the lining of Ruth’s purse being ripped out. Suitcases were inspected repeatedly as guards meticulously went through the VW bus we were driving. They never opened the suitcase containing the Bibles. I believe in miracles.

The last time Ruth and I breached the Iron Curtain was in 1985, entering Russia from Finland. The guards, who literally took our car apart with screwdrivers and wrenches, found everything (we hadn’t tried to hide anything) except one Bible in my hip pocket. A few days before, an American couple coming in from Finland, with only two Russian Bibles, had been arrested and deported. Beside Bibles we had gospel tapes, a combination short-wave radio receiver, tape recorder and duplicator, nearly a dozen heavy fur coats (it was August and we were from California) for the wives of imprisoned pastors, etc. It seemed ludicrous to attempt to pass a Soviet border with such obvious contraband.

I made no “positive confession,” but offered a seemingly foolish prayer that today’s “faith” teachers would label “negative”: “Lord, I’m the worst ‘smuggler’ in the world. They have everything in their custody, but please take it through, not for our sake, but for the sake of those who desperately need it.” Suddenly, without explanation, the guards gave everything back and waved us on!

It is thrilling to read of those “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again...” (Heb 11:33-35). Up to that point, one might imagine that faith always

brings escape from adversity. Such false “faith” is taught today and sought by those who think prayer persuades God to do our bidding. But read on.

The recital of the *triumph of faith* continues: “and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all...obtained a good report through faith...” (vv 35-39).

No distinction is made between those who *escaped* by faith and those who *suffered* by faith. There is no suggestion that the latter were “negative” and could

...speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.

Titus 2:1

have escaped like the others had they only “believed” or made a “positive confession.” Clearly, it is terribly wrong to equate faith *only* with healing, blessing, success, prosperity, deliverance from adversity. Faith does not persuade God to do my will but causes me to bow to His, even to death.

While the Scripture says “the just shall *live* by faith” (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38), that may mean *dying* for Christ. Many in China and elsewhere are facing that honor once again; and it could come to us here in the United States as well, even before the Rapture if our Lord should tarry much longer. The most important fruit of faith is not the deliverance or blessing one prefers, but the igniting of such love for God that one’s greatest joy becomes obedience to His will no matter the consequences. How else could those who were tortured and killed and who suffered hunger and poverty be among the heroes and heroines of faith?

What does the above have to do with being a Berean? Everything! Some readers

may weary of our frequent warnings against false teaching and practice so rampant in the church today. “Can’t we just *live* for Christ, love everyone and not be so concerned about doctrine?” is often asked. We live by *faith*, however, and faith must have an object. *What* and *in Whom* one believes determines one’s life now and for eternity. No matter how loving and exemplary one’s conduct, if it is not founded upon God’s truth there is no stability and no reward.

Yes, some are so obsessed with finding error that they criticize almost everyone and are known more for what they are *against* than what they are *for*. We must all guard against searching for specks in others’ eyes while ignoring the two-by-fours in our own (Mt 7:3-5). One can be as clear as crystal on doctrine—and just as cold and hard. That some, however, unlovingly push doctrinal correctness but fail to live it themselves does not change the fact that sound doctrine is the only basis for true Christian living.

In pointing to himself as an example, Paul told Timothy, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions...” (2 Tm 3:10-11). Notice how *doctrine* comes first, and out of that flowed Paul’s “manner of life, purpose, faith,” etc. We can’t escape the necessity of being Bereans, sound in doctrine, by saying we’re “just going to live for Christ.”

Paul’s manner of life was rooted in the doctrine he believed, and thereby grew into that purpose for which Christ had redeemed him. He was not his own but a slave of Christ, purchased by His blood. From that doctrinal root (the truth which had gripped his heart and to which he was totally committed) blossomed a faith so strong that nothing could shake it. Thus he persevered in “longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions...” A life without such a foundation is wasted, purposeless and leads to eventual remorse.

The Jehovah’s Witness knocks on doors and tries to live a moral life in order to earn his salvation; a Christian does so out of love and gratitude to the One who paid the infinite price for his salvation and pardoned him freely by His grace. The Catholic goes to Mass because not to do so is a mortal sin that will damn him and because he advances

on his way to heaven by eating the literal body and blood of Christ offered anew as a *redeeming sacrifice* upon the altar; the Christian takes the *symbolic* bread and cup in grateful remembrance of Christ's *once-for-all sacrifice* by which he is assured of heaven.

A life that is pleasing to God must be founded upon His truth and lived in obedience thereto. As the psalmist said, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps 119:105). There is a path along which we must follow Christ (Mt 16:24); a path which Satan doesn't know and upon which he cannot touch us (Jb 28:7-8; Is 35:8-9); a path of God's protection and guidance, a path of obedient, loving service to Christ and to others—where love both lives and *speaks* the truth (Eph 4:15). How tragic (and unloving) to live an otherwise exemplary life of sacrificial service to others and yet fail to speak God's truth.

Mother Teresa provides the classic example of compassionate and charitable deeds divorced from truth. She says that her purpose is to bring her patients closer to the "God" in whom they already believe; so that a Hindu becomes a better Hindu, a Buddhist a better Buddhist, etc. (Vatican II says those of all religions are somehow saved through the Church.) She tells how to witness for Jesus:

One day they brought to our home a man with half his body eaten away. Worms crawled all over him, and the stench was so terrible....As I was cleaning him he looked at me and asked, "Why are you bothering?"

"I love you," I said...."For me you are Jesus coming in His distressing disguise."...Then...this Hindu gentleman...said, "Glory be to Jesus Christ."...He realized that he was someone loved. (*New Evangelization 2000*, Issue 9, pp 11-12)

Tragically, this "Hindu gentleman," though lovingly cared for physically, was left in his spiritual corruption with all of his superstitions and false beliefs intact. He was left in his sins to die without Christ, a Hindu who was "loved," but not loved enough to be told the truth that would rescue him from hell!

Time magazine asked Mother Teresa a number of questions in November 1989. Her answers were revealing:

Q. Here in Calcutta, have you created a real change?

A. [We've] created a worldwide awareness of the poor.

Q. Beyond showing the poor to the world, have you conveyed any message about how to work with the poor?

A. You must make them feel loved and wanted. They are Jesus for me...in disguise.

Q. What do you think of Hinduism?

A. I love all religions....

How poor must one be in order to become "Jesus in disguise"? And how much money or possessions must one acquire to cease being "Jesus"? This loving woman hides a false gospel under emotional slogans. She launches the ones she loves from a clean bed into a Christless eternity and is praised for doing so! It is wrong to preach about a future life in heaven while neglecting to help those who suffer in this present life. Yet is it not equally wrong to fail to prepare souls for heaven while caring well for their bodies on earth? Pastor John

**...let us not love in word,
neither in tongue; but in deed
and in truth.**

1 John 3:18

MacArthur visited Mother Teresa in Calcutta in August 1988 and reported the following:

We asked her questions that might reveal her spiritual state. Her answers were troubling: "I love and respect all religions"—an unthinkable remark in light of the hellishness of India's dominant religions.

"All my people die beautiful deaths," she told me. I am convinced Mother Teresa is providing false comfort to the dying." (*Masterpiece*, Winter 1988, p 6)

Yes, we dare not just mouth doctrine, but must live it. Don't forget, however, it is *doctrine*, God's truth, that we must live. Truth held in the head that is expressed only in words but not in deeds is hypocrisy. On the other hand, love without truth is sentimentality. Parents who fail to discipline their children (a veritable plague these days) do not really love them. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," Christ says (Rv 3:19). Must

we not do the same if His love is in us?

How thrilling to know that God has a purpose for our lives. Yet many Christians sink into discouragement, discontent, depression and despair, feeling that their lives are too difficult, unhappy and meaningless. That should never be the case for any true believer. But what of the elderly, bedridden, or just ordinary Christians with seemingly little influence upon others?

A life which is devoted to loving and praising God (no matter how lonely and hidden from men's eyes) may bring a greater reward in heaven than that of someone who is on radio, television, writes books, and is known worldwide. Be true to God first in all purity of heart devotion to Him, in diligent study of His Word and in prayer "without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17). Trust Him to be your strength, to live His very life through you in the power of His Holy Spirit. Such a life of faith brings joy beyond expression!

Every life impacts others. It is not enough simply to "live a good life" without standing up for the truth and contending "earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). Yes, our speech must be "always with grace" but it must also be "seasoned with salt" (Col 4:6). We must be kind, gracious, patient, loving, tender, compassionate. Yes, "love never fails" (1 Cor 13:8). But it would be a failure of love not to correct those who are straying from God's truth.

Neither the world nor the church likes correction. Many Christian parents fail to discipline their children, thinking they are being kind, sympathetic and loving by giving in to their whining demands. Parents thereby train their children to be disobedient, lazy, undisciplined, self-indulgent, lacking in concern for others and contemptuous of authority. Paul taught his "son in the faith" to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tm 2:3).

Of Christ it was said, "...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Heb 12:2). We can endure the persecution that comes from being true to Christ if we know the joy that awaits us. We can even know that joy now in the midst of trial. Christ's joy was not only in having us in His presence, but even more than that, in having done His Father's will. To know that we have been true to Him, that we have taken this talent of time and

being which He has entrusted to us (Mt 25:14-30) and have used it to His glory, brings joy not only in this life but throughout eternity.

God has made us eternal beings. Every person ever born will continue in existence forever either in the ecstatic bliss of God's presence (Ps 16:11) or in the unimaginable horror and remorse of separation from Him forever. The choices we make, the manner of life we live and our attitude toward God, His Word and others carry consequences not only for this life but for eternity. Life on earth is short; eternity never ends. That fact is awesome to contemplate and in itself should cause us to live by faith in Him.

We walk by faith. Faith is not a power to aim at God to get blessings from Him, but faith opens the heart to God's will and brings obedience to His Word. Knowing we are in God's hands and that He loves and cares for us doesn't guarantee that we may not be persecuted and even killed for His sake. But it assures us that He will be with us and will give us the grace to endure in His strength and with joy, whatever trial comes, so that He may be glorified in our bodies, "whether by life or by death" (Phil 1:20). TBC

Quotable

Time and the things of time will soon have an end; and he that in time trusts to anything but the Spirit and power of God working in his heart will be ill fitted to enter into eternity. God must be all in all in us here, or we cannot be His hereafter. What self-deception to expect to be in His heavenly kingdom in eternity, when we have resisted His claim to reign as Lord in our hearts here and now! Happy are they who know that a life of total submission to Christ and absolute dependence upon the Holy Spirit is the only choice that enlightened reason can make....

The greatest idea that we can frame of God is a conception of Him as a being of infinite love and goodness, using an infinite wisdom and power for the common good and happiness of all His creatures. The highest notion that we can form of a man who is created in the image of God is a conception of him as nearly like God

in this respect as he can be; using all his finite faculties for the common good of all his fellow creatures, lovingly desiring that all may have the happiness for which God has created them....

What could be emptier than the scholarship which sets itself up as great in Scripture interpretation, yet lacks this love which our Lord said is the very essence of all the teaching so variously contained in the law and the prophets!

William Law, 1761

Q&A

Question: I am the director of a Christian pro-life crisis pregnancy center and I am increasingly aware of, and uncomfortable about, testimonies and literature that come across my desk that insist upon the importance of "forgiving yourself." This is especially so in the area of counseling a client in the aftermath of abortion. It doesn't seem scriptural to me. My hope is that you would respond by telling me what you would say to someone who says, "I just can't forgive myself."

Answer: When a counselee has confessed her sin to God, knows she's forgiven, yet says that she "just can't forgive herself," it may be that she's just expressing remorse over a sinful act which she committed. All of us do things that offend God, hurt others and hurt ourselves, and we can come to deeply regret our sins for many good reasons. So we may carry the memories for a time, and there is nothing wrong with that (Rom 6:21) as long as guilt is no longer involved, or we don't become preoccupied with something that took place in the past.

However, those who regard "forgiving themselves" to be more than an expression of remorse, and who believe it to be a necessary condition in order to erase guilt, have been duped by humanistic psychology and are ignorant of the truth. They need to be informed of the following:

1) We sin against God and others, and are sinned against by others. The Word directs us to ask God and others for forgiveness and to forgive others. While I may *figuratively* "sin against myself" in the sense that I've harmed myself, it is impossible to *literally* sin against myself

since it is "myself" doing the sinning. Therefore, I have no basis for "forgiving myself."

2) Only God can forgive sin (Mk 2:7); only He can remove true guilt.

3) Thinking that I must or can forgive myself is a form of *self-deification*, especially when one says, "I know that God forgives me, but I just can't forgive myself." Am I a higher authority than God?

4) The delusion of self-forgiveness can also be a convoluted form of *rebellion*. It says, "Although God forgave me, I *won't* forgive myself." It says that although God will hold my sin against me no more, I'm going to hold it against me.

5) It can also be a form of *self-righteousness* or *pride* in the sense that I have overridden God's forgiveness with my decision that my sin is too grievous for me to forgive.

6) Except in cases where restitution is feasible, there is little we can do about sins of the past beyond confessing them and receiving God's forgiveness and cleansing (1 Jn 1:9; Ps 51:2,7). That's why Paul writes, "Forgetting those things which are behind..." (Phil 3:13-14). Believers in Christ are to cast off any imagined bondage to the past so that they may serve the Lord with all joy and in the grace He provides.

The woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and dried them with her hair remembered her sins; but her tears were those of joy for the forgiveness she received; and her act was an act of love for the One who had forgiven her. We're told that she loved much because she was forgiven much. Guilt ends with forgiveness; love increases with the recognition of and thankfulness for forgiveness.

One of the most wonderful things about being a Christian is that we are not bound to the sins of the past (1 Jn 1:9) and we can start each day (or hour or moment) with a clean heart before the Lord. Those under the delusion that they can't forgive themselves are rejecting what Christ has done for them and what He will do for them.

Question: I have been trying to witness to a Catholic friend who is quite knowledgeable regarding the beliefs of his Church. He makes a very big deal over the validity of "tradition" and even refers to the Scriptures to support his view. What does the Bible mean by "tradition?"

Answer: Paul reminded the Thessalonians of “the tradition...received of us” (2 Thes 3:6) and admonished them to “stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2:15). How are we to understand this?

Obviously, while the canon of the New Testament was being written there was much oral teaching not yet committed to writing. We have every reason to believe, however, that whatever was to be observed by the church down through the ages was put into the New Testament. There are two reasons for this.

First of all, every other mention of tradition in the New Testament except for the two above is derogatory and warns against it (Mt 15:2-3,6; Mk 7:3,5,8-9,13; Gal 1:14; Col 2:8; 1 Pt 1:18). Christ rebuked the Pharisees for making void the Word of God by their tradition. Peter and Paul speak of having to be delivered from tradition. Surely Christ would not leave His church with unwritten tradition which is so easily perverted! That which was taught orally and which was to be permanent for the church was put in writing. There is no oral tradition lost and waiting to be rediscovered. God doesn't work that way!

Secondly, we have examples of this in Scripture. Paul tells the Corinthians that he is putting in writing what he had previously taught them orally (“delivered unto you”) concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23). Likewise he puts in writing in the Second Thessalonian epistle what he had previously taught them concerning the Antichrist—“when I was yet with you, I told you these things” (2 Thes 2:5). *Not one* Catholic tradition can be traced back to the apostles; and Catholic tradition contradicts the Bible.

Question: I appreciated the information T. A. McMahon provided regarding the Karen Mains book, *Lonely No More*, yet I've wondered if he contacted her prior to writing what he did. Do you have a policy concerning contacting people you mention in your writings?

Answer: We have contacted many, but only twice since the publishing of *The Seduction of Christianity* have we had anything close to a worthwhile exchange

with the scores of individuals whose teachings we've addressed. Though our batting average is grievously low, we nevertheless continue to look to the Lord for reasonable opportunities.

Some feel we are biblically obligated according to Matthew 18 to contact everyone we plan to mention in what we write. Not only would that be impractical, but it misapplies that particular chapter, which deals with one believer personally sinning against another. Karen Mains did not personally sin against us. She publicly communicated her teachings to the body of Christ; we publicly addressed our objections to what she wrote in order to correct what we perceived to be false teachings.

Numerous articles and nearly a dozen books were written which were critical of *Seduction*. In only one instance that we can recall were we contacted before the articles or books were published. Nor is that necessary. Anyone who writes publicly should expect public evaluation without any private discussion. We may not agree with our critics, but we respect—even encourage—their right to review our writings. Some reviews may even bring insights that lead us to make corrections in what we've written.

In some cases it may be helpful to contact the author for further clarification of what he or she has written. However, to attempt to correct on a personal basis the false teachings of a published work without seeking public correction or repentance would leave those many Christians who were exposed to the teaching still subject to its erroneous influence.

A City on Seven Hills

Dave Hunt

...I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads....

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication....

And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains [or hills], on which the woman sitteth.

Revelation 17:3,4,18,9

A woman rides the beast that represents Antichrist and the revived Roman Empire he will rule. She is a *city* built on seven hills that reigns over the kings of the earth! John equates the readers' acceptance of this revelation with "wisdom." That insight demands our careful and prayerful attention.

Many prophecy teachers insist that the woman is the United States. No, the US is a *country*. It might justifiably be referred to as Sodom, considering the honor now given to homosexuals, but it is not "Mystery Babylon." She is declared to be a *city*.

Nor is the woman *ancient* Babylon now being rebuilt in Iraq, for it is not built on seven hills. Some other cities are, but only Rome meets all the criteria, including being *known as Babylon*. Even Catholic apologist Karl Keating confirms that Rome was known as Babylon and cites 1 Peter 5:13.¹ *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states, "It is within the city of Rome, called the city of seven hills, that the entire area of Vatican State proper is now confined."²

The woman is called a "whore" (v1), with whom earthly kings "have committed fornication" (v2). Against only two cities could such a charge be made: Jerusalem and Rome. Jerusalem was indicted for spiritual fornication by numerous prophets (Is 1:21, etc.), but does not meet the other criteria. Vatican City claims to have been the worldwide headquarters of Christianity since its beginning. Her pope claims to be the Vicar of Christ, and his Church the true Church and bride of Christ.

Christ said His kingdom was not of this world, otherwise His servants would fight. The popes have fought with armies and navies in the name of Christ to build a worldwide empire. Vatican II states that even today the Roman Catholic Church

ceaselessly seeks to bring under its control *all mankind and all their goods*.³ And in furtherance of these goals it has engaged, exactly as John foresaw, in fornication (unholy alliances) with the kings of the earth.

She is clothed in "purple and scarlet" (v4), the colors of the Catholic clergy. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* states,

Cappa Magna - A cloak with a long train and a hooded shoulder cape...[it] was purple wool for bishops; for cardinals, it was scarlet watered silk....

Cassock - The close-fitting, ankle-length robe worn by the Catholic clergy as their official garb....The color for bishops and other prelates is purple, for cardinals scarlet.... (Emphasis added)⁴

Her incredible wealth next caught John's eye. She was "decked with gold and precious stones and pearls...." (v4) Even Christ's blood-stained cross has been turned to gold, reflecting her riches. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "The pectoral cross [suspended by a chain around the neck of abbots, bishops, archbishops, cardinals and the pope] should be made of gold and...decorated with gems...."⁵

She had "a golden cup [chalice] in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (v4). *The Catholic Encyclopedia* calls the gold chalice "the most important of the sacred vessels...."⁶ That Church is known for its *many thousands* of gold chalices around the world. A recent newspaper article reported,

The fabulous treasure of Lourdes [France], whose existence was kept secret by the Catholic Church for 120 years, has been unveiled....Rumours have been circulating for decades about a priceless collection of *gold chalices*, diamond-studded crucifixes, silver and *precious stones*....

After an indiscreet remark by their press spokesman this week, church authorities agreed to reveal *part* of the collection... [some] floor-to-ceiling cases were opened to reveal 59 *solid gold chalices* alongside rings, crucifixes, statues and heavy gold brooches, many encrusted with *precious stones*.

Almost hidden by the other treasures is the "Crown" of Notre Dame de Lourdes, made by a Paris goldsmith in 1876 and studded with diamonds.

Church authorities say they cannot put a value on the collection. "I have no idea," says Father Pierre-Marie Charriez. "...It is of inestimable value."

Across the road is a building housing hundreds of [antique] ecclesiastical garments, robes, mitres and sashes—many

in heavy gold thread....

"The Church itself is poor," insists Father Charriez. "The Vatican itself is poor."⁷ (Emphasis added) [And the treasure described here is only *part* of that which is kept in *one* location, the small town of Lourdes, France!]

She has practiced evil to gather her wealth, for the "golden cup" is filled with "abominations and filthiness." Much of the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church was acquired by confiscating property of the Inquisitions' pitiful victims. Even the dead were exhumed to face trial and property was taken from their heirs by the Church. That practice, one historian writes, offered "unlimited opportunities for loot."⁸

Most of Rome's wealth has been acquired through the sale of salvation. Untold billions of dollars have been paid to her by those who thought they were purchasing heaven on the installment plan for themselves or loved ones. The practice continues to this day—blatantly where Catholicism is in control, less obviously here in the United States where (for example) one pays the Church to have a Mass card placed on the altar in the name of the deceased during Mass to reduce time in purgatory. The wealthy often leave a fortune for masses to be said for *their salvation* after their death.

In addition to such perversions of the gospel, there are the further abominations (fully documented in police and court records) of corrupt banking practices, laundering of drug money, trading in counterfeit securities and dealings with the Mafia, which the Vatican and her representatives around the world have long employed. Former *Business Week* correspondent in Rome, Nino Lo Bello, who because of its incredible wealth calls Rome "the tycoon on the Tiber," says the Vatican is so closely allied with the Mafia in Italy that "many people...believe that Sicily...is nothing more than a Vatican holding."⁹

John's attention is next drawn to the inscription on the woman's forehead: "THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (v5). Sadly enough, the Roman Catholic Church fits that description as precisely as she fits the others. Much of the cause is due to the unbiblical doctrine of priestly celibacy.

The great Apostle Paul was a celibate and recommended that life to others who wanted to devote themselves fully to serving Christ. He did not, however, make it a condition for church leadership as the Catholic Church has done, thereby imposing an unnatural burden upon her clergy that

very few could bear. On the contrary, he wrote that a bishop should be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tm 3:2) and set the same requirement for elders (Ti 1:5-6).

The doctrine of celibacy has been broken repeatedly by millions of priests and nuns, bishops, archbishops, cardinals and many popes such as Sergius III, John X, John XII, Benedict V, Innocent VIII, Urban VIII, Innocent X, et al. Celibacy has made sinners of the clergy and harlots out of those with whom they secretly cohabit. The Catholic Church has paid about \$1 billion in out-of-court settlements in the last few years for sexual sins of its clergy in the USA alone. Rome is indeed “the mother of harlots”!

History is replete with sayings that mocked Romanism’s false claim to celibacy: “The holiest hermit has his whore” and “Rome has more prostitutes than any other city because she has the most celibates” are examples. Pope Pius II called Rome “the only city run by bastards,” the sons and grandsons of popes and cardinals.

Even Catholic historians admit that among the popes were some of the most degenerate and unconscionable ogres in all history. More than one pope was slain by a husband who found him in bed with his wife. To call such a man “His Holiness, Vicar of Christ” makes a mockery of holiness and of Christ. Yet the name of each of these mass murderers, fornicators, robbers, warmongers—some guilty of the massacre of thousands—is emblazoned in honor on the Church’s official list of Peter’s alleged successors, the popes.

John next notices that the woman is drunk—and not with alcohol but with “the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus...” (v 6). One thinks immediately of the Inquisitions (Roman, Medieval and Spanish) which for centuries held Europe in their terrible grip. Canon Llorente, who was the Secretary to the Inquisition in Madrid from 1790-92 and had access to the archives of all the tribunals, estimated that in Spain alone the number of condemned exceeded 3 million, with about 300,000 burned at the stake.¹⁰ A Catholic historian writes,

When Napoleon conquered Spain in 1808, a Polish officer in his army, Colonel Lemanouski, reported that the Dominicans blockaded themselves in their monastery in Madrid. When Lemanouski’s troops forced an entry, the inquisitors denied the existence of any torture chambers.

The soldiers searched the monastery and discovered them under the floors. The chambers were full of prisoners, all naked,

many insane. The French troops, used to cruelty and blood, could not stomach the sight. They emptied the torture-chambers, laid gunpowder to the monastery and blew the place up.¹¹

The remnants of some of the chambers of horror remain in Europe and may be visited today. They stand as memorials to the zealous outworking of Roman Catholic dogmas *which remain in force*, and to a Church which claims to be infallible and to this day justifies such barbarism. They are also memorials to the astonishing accuracy of John’s vision in Revelation 17. Do not forget, that Church has not yet officially admitted that these practices were evil, nor apologized to the world or to any of the victims or their descendants. Nor could John Paul II fully apologize today because “the doctrines responsible for those terrible things still underpin his position.”¹²

“Christian” Rome has slaughtered many times the number of both Christians and Jews that pagan Rome did. Beside those victims of the Inquisitions, there were Huguenots, Albigenses, Waldenses and other Christians, massacred, tortured and burned at the stake by the hundreds of thousands simply because they refused to align themselves with the Roman Catholic Church. Listen to the leading nineteenth-century Catholic professor of church history:

The view of the Church had been...[that] every departure from the teaching of the Church...*must be punished with death, and the most cruel of deaths, by fire...*

Both the initiation and carrying out of this...*must be ascribed to the Popes alone...who compelled bishops and priests to condemn heretics to torture, confiscation of their goods, imprisonment, and death, and to enforce the execution of this sentence on the civil authorities, under pain of excommunication.* (Emphasis added)¹³

Pope Martin V commanded the King of Poland in 1429 to *exterminate* the Hussites (sympathizers with the martyred Jan Hus). This excerpt from the Pope’s letter to the King explains why popes hated independent Christians and wanted them destroyed:

Know that the interests of the Holy See, and those of your crown, make it a duty to *exterminate the Hussites*. Remember that these impious persons dare proclaim principles of *equality*; they maintain that *all Christians are brethren*, and that God has not given to privileged men the right of ruling the nations; they hold that Christ came on earth to *abolish slavery*; they call

the people to *liberty*, that is to the annihilation of kings and priests....

[T]urn your forces against Bohemia; *burn, massacre, make deserts everywhere, for nothing could be more agreeable to God, or more useful to the cause of kings, than the extermination of the Hussites.* (Emphasis added)¹⁴

Note this excerpt from Pope Nicholas I’s (858-67) instructions to the King of Bulgaria, a new convert to what he thought was “Christianity,” to force Rome’s religion upon his subjects:

I glorify you for having maintained your authority by putting to death those wandering sheep who refuse to enter the fold; and...congratulate you upon having opened the kingdom of heaven to the people submitted to your rule.

A king need not fear to command massacres, when these will retain his subjects in obedience, or cause them to submit to the faith of Christ; and God will reward him in this world, and in eternal life, for these murders.¹⁵

Why should Rome apologize for or even admit this holocaust? No one calls her to account today. Protestants have forgotten and evangelical leaders join Rome to evangelize together. They don’t want to hear any “negative” reminders of the millions tortured and slain by the Church to which they now pay homage, or the fact that Rome has a false gospel of sacramental works.

The Nazi holocaust was thoroughly known to Pius XII in spite of his complete silence throughout the war on the slaughter of Jews.¹⁶ Had the Pope protested, as representatives of Jewish organizations and the Allied Powers begged him to do, he would have condemned his own Church. The facts are inescapable:

In 1936, Bishop Berning of Osnabruch had talked with the Fuhrer for over an hour. Hitler assured his lordship there was no fundamental difference between National Socialism and the Catholic Church. Had not the church, he argued, looked on Jews as parasites...?

“I am only doing,” he boasted, “what the Church has done for fifteen hundred years, only more effectively.” Being a Catholic himself, he told Berning, he “admired and wanted to promote Christianity [Catholicism].”¹⁷

Finally, the angel reveals to John that the woman “is that great city, which *reigneth over the kings of the earth*” (v 18). Is there such a city? Yes, and again only one:

Vatican City. One eighteenth-century historian counted 95 popes who claimed to have divine power to depose kings and emperors. Historian Walter James wrote that Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) “held all Europe in his net.”¹⁸ Gregory IX (1227-41) thundered that the pope was Lord and Master of everyone and everything. Popes crowned and deposed kings and emperors, exacting obedience by threatening excommunication. Pope Nicholas I boasted, “Fear, then, our wrath and the thunders of our vengeance; for Jesus Christ has appointed us [the popes]...absolute judges of all men; and kings...are submitted to our authority.”¹⁹ In commanding one king to destroy another, Nicholas wrote,

We order you, in the name of religion, to invade his states, burn his cities, and massacre his people....²⁰

Eminent Catholic historian Ignaz von Dollinger writes, “Pope Clement IV, in 1265, after selling millions of South Italians to Charles of Anjou for a yearly tribute of eight hundred ounces of gold, declared that he would be excommunicated if the first payment was deferred...”²¹ Catholic Professor Carrerio boasted that the popes had “put down from their thrones great kings and yet mightier emperors, and set others in their place, to whom the greatest kingdoms have long paid tribute, as they do to no other, and who dispense such riches...that no king or emperor has ever had....”²²

The qualifying data which John gives us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for identifying this woman/city, is specific, conclusive and irrefutable. There is no city upon earth, past or present, which meets all of these criteria except Catholic Rome and Vatican City. Pray for the 980 million Catholics who are deceived into trusting their Church instead of Christ for salvation. May Christ’s love move you to bring the gospel to them! TBC

Condensed from a chapter in Dave’s new book, A Woman Rides the Beast, expected to be available for ordering next month.

Quotable

In view of the importance of the following topic, our quotable this month is excerpted from a reader’s letter addressed to the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in response to the signing of the joint Catholic-Evangelical

agreement not to evangelize Catholics. Perhaps other readers will be motivated to follow this Berean’s example.

I had the opportunity to ask four Catholic friends, “What must I do to be saved?” They answered thusly: 1) keep the ten commandments; 2) keep the ten commandments; 3) keep the ten commandments and, oh yes, be baptized; 4) do the best you can and pray a lot.

Since none of these is correct I decided to call the local Catholic church and ask the pastor. He told me that everyone was saved and that Muhammad, Buddha, etc. are just other names for “Jesus.”

A week or so later I heard a woman on Christian radio teaching the Book of Galatians. I discovered that she was Catholic. I wrote to her and related the above. She wrote back to me: “I have been a lifelong Catholic and *have never heard the gospel in the Catholic Church*. I was saved outside the Catholic Church and stay in it to lead others to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Recently I read an ad in the *Evansville Courier* placed there by the diocese of Evansville. The ad invited questions. I wrote to ask the same question: “What must I do to be saved?” The monsignor wrote back and told me to “Pray three times a day, the prayers can be long or short, but you must pray three times a day. It doesn’t matter what the prayers are about.”

The gospel is not proclaimed in Catholicism. Catholics do not know the gospel. They depend on good works to save them.

Q&A

Question: Our adult Bible class teacher says Jesus was half God and half man; that God can only act in response to our prayers; and that when the one prayed for isn’t healed it’s because there hasn’t been enough prayer and fasting. Are these ideas biblical?

Answer: The teacher may not be a heretic but poorly expressing the idea that God is Jesus’ Father and Mary His mother. The virgin birth is not like having an Irish father and French mother and being half-Irish and half-French. Jesus is fully God and fully man: “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tm 3:16), not half-God manifest in half-flesh. The same verse calls this a “great mystery.” Isaiah called the virgin-born child “Immanuel,” which means “God [not half-God] with us” (7:14, Mt 1:23)—“The mighty God [not half-God], The everlasting Father”

(Is 9:6).

Paul called Him “God our Saviour” (1 Tm 1:1; 2:3; Ti 1:3,4; 2:10,13; 3:4) as did Peter (2 Pt 1:1) and Jude (v 25). To be our Savior He had to be God (Is 43:11) and man (Rom 5:12-21), not a hybrid or half-breed. Ask your teacher if this is what he means.

That God doesn’t need our prayers in order to act is obvious. He did a great deal, even creating the universe without our prayers. Our prayers didn’t cause Christ to be born into the world and to die for our sins. It is not our prayers that will usher in a new universe, though God gives us the privilege to pray “Thy kingdom come.” If God could act only in response to our prayers He would be at our mercy, His hands tied most of the time, unable to do what in His infinite wisdom and knowledge He knows ought to be done but of which in our limited understanding we are ignorant or haven’t considered. Moreover, He couldn’t meet emergencies that we didn’t know would occur and thus hadn’t prayed about. That’s unbiblical and illogical.

To say that failure to be healed is due to a lack of prayer and fasting is equally foolish. That implies that we can cause God to do whatever we pray for, if we pray and fast long and hard enough—that we can impose our will upon God. What about God’s will? It also suggests that God’s will is to heal everyone every time. On the contrary, sickness and death are part of God’s judgment upon mankind for sin, which will only be abolished in the new heaven and new earth. God has something better for us than perpetuating our lives endlessly in these bodies of sin.

Prayer is one of our privileged opportunities which God provides for communion with Him, for molding us and conforming our minds to His will, and for encouraging our faith in Him by His response to our requests.

We recommend you read a detailed discussion on prayer and faith which appears in *Beyond Seduction*.

Question: I hear so much on radio and television about the last decade of this century leading up to the year 2000 being a time of unprecedented revival. Is this biblical? What do you think?

Answer: The Bible, of course, has nothing specific to say about the last decade of this century. However, it seems to teach the opposite for the last days: false prophets,

apostasy, Laodicea, evil increasing. Referring to "Washington for Jesus '88," pastor Samuel Hines, chairman of the Washington, D.C. host committee, declared that the march of tens of thousands of Christians in the nation's capital "put Satan on notice that his day is over." If so, one can only wonder what Christ meant when He raised the question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the] faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8).

Was Christ referring to a complete absence of faith or to the proliferation of a false "Christianity" that, like the weeds in His parable of the sower, will have overgrown and choked out true faith? Neither alternative bodes well for "Evangelism 2000." Satan's day is yet to come when he will rule the world through Antichrist and it will not be over until Christ comes, defeats him and locks him in the bottomless pit (2 Thes 2:8; Rev 20:1-3). To suggest that a Christian march or any other human efforts will end Satan's day is to deny the clear teaching of the Bible and to live in delusion.

One cannot fault the enthusiastic zeal, but at the same time one wonders whether the year 2000 hasn't become almost a magical symbol. Why should so much suddenly be accomplished in this decade that was never done before? Even more troubling is the silence concerning the Rapture. Has that hope been forgotten? In all of the planning there seems to be no question that the church will be here indefinitely—and that it is up to us to save the world from the very destruction which God intends to bring upon her in judgment.

Question: Christianity Today of May 16, 1994 seemed to defend Karen Mains whom you criticized for her book *Lonely No More*. They quoted T. A. McMahon and seemed to include you [Dave] among those they labeled "self-appointed heresy hunters." Do you have any response to their article?

Answer: The very label, "self-appointed heresy hunters," is an *ad hominem*, illogical, unbiblical accusation. It denies the responsibility of each Christian to be a Berean and seems to imply either that opposing heresy isn't important or that to do so one must be appointed by some central committee. Who appointed *Christianity Today* to point out heresy as they have done, for example, in the very same news section when they critiqued the *Dake Bible*?

That *CT* article credited "theologians, apologists, and scholars" with "taking a stand against teachings found in *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*." Why are those who agree with *Christianity Today* called

"theologians, apologists, and scholars," while those who disagree are labeled "self-appointed heresy hunters"? The article is demeaning and judgmental in its accusation that "self-appointed heresy hunters" as a breed are "narrow-minded, self-appointed arbiters of legalism sitting in judgment" and employ "widespread vilification... personal attacks...guilt by association, deliberate fabrication of untruths, and misrepresentation...jeremiad fashion...modern-day witch-hunt...pharisaical leadership, etc." These are irresponsible accusations without any substantiation.

Furthermore, the article didn't deal with the issues. It complained that David and Karen Mains have been misunderstood and harshly judged, but with no quotes to prove it. The issues—her false and dangerous teachings—were not dealt with. *We quoted from Karen Mains' book*. She need not blame us for the cancellations of speaking engagements. What she said in that book was obviously perceived by many others to be unbiblical and dangerous to the extent that she was no longer welcome as a speaker. She needs to recant rather than to complain about being misunderstood, but so far there is no sign of any change in her convictions.

Question: Pastor John Hinkle said over TBN that he heard God say, "On Thursday, June 9, I will rip the evil out of this world." June 9 fell on a Thursday this year. The prophecy was promoted by Paul Crouch and Pat Robertson, yet when it failed to materialize neither said a word about it. What is going on?

Answer: What is going on is false prophecy without any accountability. Paul Crouch backed this prophecy to the hilt in at least three newsletters as well as over several TV programs. YWAM "prophets" allegedly verified it. Crouch even said that if this prophecy wasn't fulfilled, it would prove that Hinkle was a false prophet! In Old Testament Israel they stoned false prophets. Today their followers just look the other way, forget the false prophecies, and eagerly anticipate the next one.

There was no excuse for Crouch or Robertson or anyone else paying any attention to what any Sunday-school child would have immediately recognized as nonsense. Evil is not some *thing* that can be "ripped out of the earth." Evil is in the human heart and for it to be removed all humans would have to be removed. Jesus said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, etc." (Mt 15:19). Paul said, "Evil

men and seducers shall wax worse and worse..." (2 Tm 3:13), not be ripped out of the earth.

Antichrist, the very embodiment of evil (2 Thes 2:4-10), is yet to come, and his reign by the power of Satan (Rv 13:2,4) will be the most evil time in history. And someone said evil would be "ripped from the earth" on Thursday, June 9?

Of course, June 9 will fall on a Thursday again in seven more years. Don't wait. That's still far too soon. Even during the Millennium there will be evil on the earth in men's hearts, manifesting itself at the end of Christ's 1,000-year reign in the attack by the nations against Christ in Jerusalem (Rv 20:7-9).

This prophecy was so obviously contrary to Scripture that those who gave it credence either don't know the Bible or pay no attention to it if they do know it. (For our newer readers, we have previously addressed Hinkle's "prophecy" in the December '93 "Q&A".)

Endnotes

- 1 Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on "Romanism" by "Bible Christians"* (Ignatius Press, 1988), 200.
- 2 *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Thomas Nelson, 1976), under the heading, "Rome."
- 3 *Vatican Council II*, ed. Austin Flannery, (Costello Publishing, 1988), vol. 1, rev. ed., 364-65.
- 4 *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Peter M.J. Stravinskis (Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 1991), 175, 178.
- 5 *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Robert Broderick (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1976), 466.
- 6 Broderick, op. cit., 103-104.
- 7 *The European*, (April 9-12, 1992), 1.
- 8 William Shaw Kerr, *A Handbook of the Papacy* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott), 241.
- 9 Nino Lo Bello, *The Vatican Empire* (Trident Press, 1968), 167, 186. See also David A. Yallop, *In God's Name* (Bantam Books, 1984); Richard Hammers, *The Vatican Connection* (Penguin Books, 1983); etc.
- 10 R. W. Thompson, *The Papacy and the Civil Power* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1876), 82.
- 11 Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy* (Crown Publishers, 1988), 172.
- 12 *Vicars of Christ*, 20-21.
- 13 J. H. Ignaz von Dollinger, *The Pope and the Council* (London, 1869), 190-93.
- 14 Cormenin, *History of the Popes*, 116-17, in Thompson, op. cit., 553.
- 15 Cormenin, op. cit., in Thompson, op. cit., 244.
- 16 Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, (McGraw-Hill, 1964), 300-304, etc. The same facts have been documented by many other authors and historians as well.
- 17 *Vicars of Christ*, 5; Lewy, op. cit., 111.
- 18 Walter James, *The Christian in Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1962), 47.
- 19 Cormenin, op. cit., in Thompson, op. cit., 369.
- 20 Cormenin, op. cit., 243 in Thompson, op. cit., 368.
- 21 Dollinger, 10-12.
- 22 Dollinger, 35.

Contending for the Faith

T. A. McMahon

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude 3

Originally, Jude wanted to share those things of the faith with his fellow believers which were common to them all. But the Holy Spirit redirected him to a matter of greater urgency. Issues of the faith, "once delivered unto the saints," were being both subtly undermined and overtly perverted. As then, so today. All saints (i.e., Christians—Eph 1:1; Col 1:2, etc.) are to earnestly contend for the teachings of the faith "given by inspiration of God" (2 Tm 3:16).

To earnestly contend for something is not a laid-back activity; the common cross-reference for that phrase is 1 Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of faith...." In both instances the meaning has to do with laboring fervently, or striving, just as an athlete would when participating in a sporting event. The sports analogy provides a very graphic illustration: good athletes must train vigorously, in keeping with the demands of their sport. Likewise, a committed Christian must spiritually condition himself in keeping with Paul's exhortation to "exercise thyself...unto godliness" (1 Tm 4:7). Paul often used the correlation between athletic endeavors and the Christian walk to show that a born-again believer's life is not a passive proposition. It requires spiritual training which includes many of the qualities that a superior athlete demonstrates: diligence, commitment, self-discipline, teachability, etc. Yet, common to the sports scene today, many of us have dedicated ourselves to being spectators—not necessarily "couch potatoes," but definitely not players.

Too often the reaction to Jude's exhortation is that contending for the faith is "best left to the experts," i.e., to scholars, theologians, apologists, or cult authorities. There are at least two problems with such an idea. First, Jude's words were not written to theological experts but to "them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called"—that is, *all His "saints"* (Jude 1,3). Second, a major aspect of contending for the faith has to do with *every saint's spiritual development*. In other words, contending for the faith isn't just for cult experts, nor does it necessarily involve arguing with or confronting others. It should

be the lifelong spiritual regimen of every believer (1 Pt 3:15).

Earnestly contending for the faith requires *the desire to diligently study God's Word*. Jesus set forth the basis of a developmental program for everyone who is committed to Him: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (Jn 8:31). Second Timothy 2:15 underscores the practical, everyday exercise for the believer: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The heart of Christianity is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Studying and applying the Scriptures is the primary way our personal relationship with Him develops; it's predicated upon knowing Him through His revelation of Himself.

Earnestly contending for the faith requires *knowledge*. We needn't become experts before we share "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," but we are to be diligent in our pursuit of the knowledge of the Lord. Though it's all too often attempted, it is nevertheless foolish to try to contend for

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

1 Peter 3:15

something when one is uninformed. Solomon writes, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints" (Prv 2:18).

Contending for the faith requires *the diligent practice of discernment*. In Hebrews 5:13-14 we find, "For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The "milk" and "meat" of these two passages are metaphors which refer to spiritual growth; limiting

ourselves to a spiritual infant's diet and program inhibits our spiritual development. However, those who exercise their senses by studying the Word of God will grow in discernment, no longer remaining "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive..." (Eph 4:14).

Earnestly contending for the faith requires *that we willingly receive correction*. Correction, however, is not a "psychologically correct" endeavor today, either in the world or in the church. It is regarded as a threat to one's positive self-image by many who promote the humanistic theology of self-esteem. It's incredible how such a worldly mindset has impacted those who should be separate from the world and whose thinking is to reflect the mind of Christ. Even a cursory search of the Bible reveals example after example of correction which would be viewed today as potentially destructive of one's psychological well-being! Was Peter's "self-esteem" psychologically damaged, and both his self-image and ministerial image irreparably harmed by Paul's public correction? Was Peter's ministry written off by most of the early church because Paul was not sensitive (or biblical—supposedly not heeding Matthew 18) enough to meet privately with Peter? Isn't that the way many in the church see things today? And what about the ego trauma felt by the publicly corrected Barnabas (Gal 2:13), Alexander (2 Tm 4:14-15), Phygellus and Hermogenes (2 Tm 1:15), Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tm 2:17-18), Demas (2 Tm 4:10), Diotrephes (3 Jn 1:9-10), and others?

Correction is foundational to the life of every Christian. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he counseled his young disciple concerning the value of using the Scriptures for correction (as well as for *reproof*!), "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tm 3:17). Correction must begin at home; that is, there must be a willingness on the part of an individual not only to be corrected by another, but a desire to correct oneself. The admonition to "examine yourself [f], whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor 13:5) is not a public survey; it requires checking ourselves out and then doing what's necessary to make things right before the Lord. Without a willingness to consider the possibility of a "beam" in one's own eye, hypocrisy will take the reins in any correction of another.

Earnestly contending for the faith requires *playing by the rules*. While some go out of their way to avoid giving scriptural correction, others turn it into a big stick, swinging it at whoever seems to disagree with their views. The Scriptures tell us (in the context of heavenly rewards) that those who

compete for a prize will disqualify themselves unless their conduct accords with the rules of the event (2 Tm 2:5). This should also be applied to the way we go about contending for the faith, especially in regard to correcting one another. The first and foremost rule is love. Biblical correction is an act of love. Period. If one doesn't have a person's best interest at heart, love is not involved. If love isn't the motivating factor in correcting one another, the approach isn't biblical.

The manner in which we correct one another is an important part of "the rules" of contending for the faith. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tm 2:24-25). Yet a stern rebuke is also biblical; the Scriptures abound with examples of such reproofs and rebukes when the situation required it. But they are a far cry from correction accompanied by sarcasm, put-downs, attacks on personal character, and anything else that puffs up the corrector rather than ministering to the one being corrected. It's ironic that the prevailing humor (TV, comic strips, etc) of this "self-esteem"-conscious, ego-sensitive generation is sarcasm, especially the put-down. Making someone else feel inferior has become the "in" way to boost one's own self-esteem.

A simple test for biblical correction here is the degree of smugness on the part of the corrector. If there's any at all—he fails. Another quick test is the "nastiness" barometer. If the one correcting treats another in a way he would object to being treated himself—he's part of the problem, not the biblical solution. To make that very point, we've been tempted to return some of the more malicious letters we've received to the writers with their own names superimposed over ours.

Earnestly contending for the faith involves *knowing what to contend for*. That which involves the direct subversion of the gospel, particularly the major doctrines related to salvation, demands our earnest concern and attention. The book of Galatians is a good example. The Judaizers were coercing believers into accepting a false gospel, i.e., adding certain deeds of the Law as a necessity for salvation. Paul earnestly contended with them, as he also instructed Titus to do (Ti 1:10-11,13). In a similar vein, we (TBC) would and do contend with those who promote or accept a false gospel of salvation (e.g., Mormons, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Roman Catholics among others).

While some issues may not seem to be related to the gospel, they may indirectly subvert God's Word, turning believers away

from the truth and thereby inhibiting the grace necessary for a life pleasing to the Lord. Psychotherapy, for example, is one of the most popular vehicles for turning Christians to the ungodly (and therefore grace-barren) solutions of men.

Contending for the faith also requires *knowing when to avoid contending*. Chapter 14 of Romans deals with matters where contending becomes contentiousness. Paul addresses situations where immature believers make issues of things which ought to remain nonissues. Some were bringing about division by contending over what foods should or should not be eaten, or which day should be recognized as a day of worship. The scriptural counsel here is: there are some things that we should not judge, being peripheral issues which do

Love never fails....

1 Corinthians 13:8

not deny the faith, matters of decision for the individual conscience (v 5). Only the Lord can judge one's heart and mind in such matters.

When Jesus discussed the signs of the last days with His disciples on the Mount of Olives (Mt 24), the first sign He cited was religious deception. Its extent today is unprecedented in history. That fact alone ought to make our regard for earnestly contending for the faith a major concern. It also means that there are so many deviations from the faith (1 Tm 4:1) to be considered, we may need to prioritize when and for what we contend. In regards to our own walk with the Lord, we are to examine everything that seems at odds with the Scriptures and make the necessary corrections. However, when it comes to biblically questionable teachings and practices being accepted and promoted by others, discernment may also include *when* and *how* to address them. These days it's not uncommon to be wrongly perceived (or in fact to merit the reputation) as one who "finds fault with everything"; so seeking the Lord's wisdom and leading is always critical to our contending being fruitfully received.

Finally, earnestly contending for the faith is not *coercing for the faith*. Too often we forget that our eternal life in Christ came to us as a free gift, a gift of God's unfathomable love which must be offered to others in love. Love is destroyed by coercion. While we may not intend to force matters of the faith upon others, it's important to regularly check our motives and methods. Earnestly contending for the faith must be carried on as a love offering. We must remember that we are merely channels of that love, and that if any change in the heart is to take place it will

be accomplished through the grace of God, who alone is the grantor of repentance (2 Tm 2:25-26).

Acts 20:27-31 contains some thoughts that many today would regard as *unbalanced* in contending for "all the counsel of God." But they are God's words, passionately communicated by the Apostle Paul to those in the church at Ephesus *and to us*: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock...For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears."

In these "perilous" last days (2 Tm 3:1), please pray that all of us, like Paul, demonstrate a passionate concern for the spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and for the purity of the gospel essential to the salvation of souls. **TBC**

Q&A

The following exchange took place between Larry Lewis, president of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Dave Hunt.

Larry Lewis (to the editor): I respond to the article entitled, "The Gospel Betrayed," by Dave Hunt in the May 1994 issue. The article critiques the document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." Unfortunately, the article is replete with error and misstatement of fact. Allow me to note and correct a few of these.

In the first paragraph Mr. Hunt states, "The document overturns the Reformation and does incalculable damage to the cause of Christ." No, the document does not "overturn" the Reformation but is, in fact, the fruition of the Reformation. At last, Catholics are admitting that Evangelicals and other Protestants are legitimate, bona fide religious groups and not perverted schisms to be treated as sects and cults.

In the second paragraph he states, "Evangelicals working beside Catholics, Mormons, Moonies, etc. for common social and political aims...will not witness to their 'partners in action' for fear of offending them." No, this is not true either. For years I have worked beside Catholics and others in the pro-life movement and often witnessed to them and have had the joy of seeing a number of them pray to receive Jesus as their Savior. It's a reckless charge that he cannot substantiate.

In the third paragraph he states, "I

believe the document represents the most devastating blow against the gospel in at least 1,000 years.” Pure nonsense! Has he even read the document? The major theme espoused throughout the document is evangelism and world missions. More space is given to these two subjects than anything else.

In the fourth paragraph he states, “What it means to be saved is not mentioned and, in fact, is directly denied.” Not so. Let me cite a few instances to the contrary: “We hope together that all people will come to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior” (p 7). “Our missionary hope is inspired by the revealed desire of God and ‘all should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth’” (p 7). Or, “The cause of Christ is the cause and mission of the church, which is, first of all, to proclaim the Good News that ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation’” (p 11). Or, “Authentic conversion is—in its beginning, in its end, and all along the way—conversion to God in Christ by the power of the Spirit” (p 21). Or, “All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ” (p 5). Isn’t “accepting Christ as Lord and Savior” what it means to be saved? (Jn 1:12)

In paragraph 5 Mr. Hunt states, “Amazingly the document claims that all Catholics are Christians, hold the same faith as Evangelicals....” No, the document says, “All who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord” are brothers and sisters in Christ. Catholics who have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are brothers and sisters in Christ and Evangelicals who have not received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are not brothers and sisters in Christ.

Again, in paragraph 5 he states, “If so, then the Reformation was a tragic mistake which we must all denounce.” No, he said that, not the document. Nowhere does the document say, suggest, or imply that the Reformation was a mistake.

In paragraph 6, he calls our attention to the thousands that have been “slaughtered” by the Roman Catholic Church, a tragic fact of history that no one can deny. Unfortunately, the Lutherans also participated in the slaughter of many during the peasants’ rebellion, Calvin consented to the death of dissenters, the Puritans left Europe to escape the persecution of the Anglicans, and Baptists split over the slavery issue. Perhaps the one greatest contribution of this document is its strong emphasis on religious liberty—the right of every denomination and every person to share their faith freely, unfettered by either church or state. In essence, it is the agreement of both Catholics and Evangelicals to allow

complete religious freedom to all people everywhere. That’s why many are calling it the most significant document since the Reformation.

In paragraph 7 Mr. Hunt notes our noble heritage of “salvation by grace through faith” and that this “is the heritage of today’s evangelicals which this document now rejects.” Total nonsense! The document clearly states that Evangelicals and Catholics do not agree in theology and doctrine and delineates clearly those points of disagreement. In fact, it clearly states, “We do not deny but clearly assert that there are disagreements between us” (p 8) and “we do not presume to suggest that we can resolve the deep and long standing difference between Evangelicals and Catholics. Indeed these differences may never be resolved short of Kingdom come” (p 9). Although we do agree on some important basics (e.g., divinity of Jesus, blood atonement, bodily resurrection, inspiration and infallibility of Scripture, second coming), Evangelicals totally reject the sacerdotalism, the Mariolatry, the sacramentalism, the magisterial authority, the idea of purgatory, etc. The purpose of the document was not to reconcile our theological differences but rather to affirm religious liberty, the right of all Christians to share their faith boldly without restraint.

Again he states in paragraph 8, “Colson, Robertson, Bright, etc. have revised both history and doctrine.” Not so. Pure poppycock!

Most of the rest of his article simply deals with the perverted doctrines of the Catholic Church, especially sacerdotalism, sacramentalism, the magisterial authority, etc. Admittedly, these are doctrinal perversions that I renounce and most Evangelicals would agree. However, Catholics are not alone in some of these perversions. Any denomination that teaches one can be saved by being baptized or that grace [is] somehow bestowed through receiving sacraments, or that one can either be saved by their good works, or after having been saved, can be lost by their bad works is also guilty of doctrinal perversion, from my perspective. Any group that teaches baptism can be administered to anyone other than a believer by any other method than by immersion is teaching a doctrinal perversion, from my perspective. At least Catholics still affirm the Virgin Birth, the blood atonement, the bodily resurrection of our Lord, His physical ascension—basic doctrines that many mainline denominations deny and repudiate.

Again, this document is not about theology—it’s about religious liberty—the right of every Christian to share their faith unfettered by church or state.

In paragraph 17, he states, “It is outrageous that leading evangelicals have placed nearly

25 percent of the world’s population off limits for evangelization! Missionaries must now leave Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy, and those in Latin America.” Again, not so! As Charles Colson said in a letter to Dr. Ed Young, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, “I have been told there is some concern that this would be a limitation on foreign missionaries which is pure nonsense. There is nothing in this document that restricts our evangelizing any unsaved people, anywhere, anytime.”

In paragraph 17, he commends the ministries of Wesley, Whitfield, Spurgeon, Moody, C. T. Studd, Hudson Taylor and David Livingstone, and then states, “We are now being told however that such men and women who gave their lives to bring the gospel to the lost wasted their time if they preached to Catholics.” Ridiculous! Where in the world did he get that idea? Evangelism and world missions is the primary thrust of the document. A theme reiterated on nearly every page. Note this citation on page 12, “To proclaim this Gospel and to sustain the community of faith, worship, and discipleship that is gathered by this Gospel is the first and chief responsibility of the church. All other tasks and responsibilities of the church are derived and directed toward the mission of the Gospel.”

In paragraph 20 he states, “The most tragic result of this historic development will be to prevent the gospel from being presented to lost millions.” No, just the opposite is true. We will now have the long hoped for and prayed for freedom to share the gospel with all people and with all nations without being inhibited and restrained, and even persecuted by church or state. I don’t expect this to happen overnight but I do believe in time we will see our freedoms enhanced and our witness more fruitful.

During the years I was pastor, I won and baptized literally hundreds of people of Catholic background to Christ, probably far more than most pastors do. I assure you, reaching Catholics for Christ is not done by Catholic bashing! The clear presentation of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, not anti-Catholic bigotry. I am happy to have added my signature along with those of Charles Colson, Pat Robertson, Bill Bright, J. I. Packer, John White, and some thirty of the most outstanding evangelical scholars and leaders in America in endorsing this historic document.

Dave Hunt: The editor of *The Berean Call* has passed your letter on to me for response inasmuch as I wrote the article to which you take such strong exception. You questioned whether I had “even read the document.” Yes, I have, and very carefully.

You contend that the document, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,” is “in fact, the fruition of the Reformation.” Do you really believe that the Reformers’ aim was to cooperate with Rome in evangelizing the world together? Wasn’t the Reformation caused by the Reformers’ belief that Roman Catholicism was a false religious system with a counterfeit gospel that was damning those who followed it? Do you really believe that the hundreds of thousands who were burned at the stake for rejecting Roman Catholicism’s false gospel would sign this document and rejoice at the opportunity of becoming partners with Rome in the “Christian Mission”?!

You exult that “At last, Catholics are admitting that Evangelicals and other Protestants are legitimate, bona fide religious groups...and not sects and cults.” Vatican II acknowledges the “separated brethren” as legitimate and urges them to come back to the one true Church. The document you signed is nothing new in that respect. Vatican II acknowledges all religions as legitimate, even idol worshippers are going to make it, through somehow coming under the umbrella of Holy Mother Church. John Paul II gathered at Assisi 160 leaders of the world’s 12 major worshippers, spiritists, animists, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, et al., and the Pope said, “We are all praying to the same God.” And you rejoice in recognition from that source? He told vast Hindu audiences in Calcutta and New Delhi that their “spiritual vision of man” was valid and that the world needed to “give heed to it.” He told Sri Chinmoy, a leading Hindu guru, “The Hindu life and the Christian life shall go together. Your message and my message are the same.” And you are pleased to sign a document that says that the evangelical message and the Catholic message are the same? If they aren’t, then how can you unite with Catholics in “The Christian Mission” of evangelizing the world?

What is new about this document is not the presumed legitimacy you imagine the Catholics have given evangelicals (without budging one inch from their heresies!), but the fact that leading evangelicals have recognized the Catholic gospel as legitimate, a gospel which the Reformers died at the stake rather than accept! Yes, the document admits there are doctrinal differences between Catholics and evangelicals, but not of such a nature as to affect the gospel. Otherwise, how could you acknowledge Catholics as Christians and join in Christian mission with them?

You say, “The purpose of the document was not to reconcile our theological dif-

ferences but rather to affirm religious liberty, the right of all Christians to share their faith boldly without restraint.” You cite: “To proclaim this Gospel and to sustain the community of faith, worship, and discipleship that is gathered by this Gospel is the first and chief responsibility of the church. All other tasks and responsibility of the church are derived and directed toward the mission of the gospel.”

Let me ask you which gospel is meant by “this Gospel” and “the Gospel”? The gospel of evangelicals and the gospel of Catholicism are divided by a gulf as vast as the distance between heaven and hell. Yet the very title of the document, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,” assumes that Catholics are just as much Christians as evangelicals, that they share the same mission and proclaim the same gospel—and therefore need not be evangelized.

You admit, “The major theme espoused throughout the document is evangelism and world missions.” Trent contains more than 100 anathemas against anyone who believes the gospel evangelicals proclaim. Vatican II reconfirms Trent and, after explaining that the Catholic faithful always “have carried their crosses to make expiation for their own sins and the sins of others” and that “From the most ancient times in the Church good works were also offered to God for the salvation of sinners” and that indulgences are meritorious helps for *salvation*, it “condemns with anathema those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.” The false gospel of Rome against which the Reformers protested has not changed, yet you say it saves, and you embrace Catholics as Christians?

I said that this document places 25 percent of the world’s population out of bounds for evangelism because it accepts as Christians Catholics who desperately need to hear the gospel. You vehemently deny that and say the document opens the door to the presentation of the gospel. Yet on page 24 it clearly states that “it is neither *theologically legitimate* [!] nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community [evangelicals] to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community [Catholics].” Is that not saying that all active Catholics are Christians and are not to be evangelized?

The document masterfully employs phrases which Catholics take one way and evangelicals another. “The gospel” is one example for which evangelicals and Catholics have two entirely different meanings, which is not admitted and the “unity” achieved is thus a fraud. It says, “We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ.” You

know that what Catholics mean by that statement is entirely different from what Protestants mean. I remind you again that the Reformers found the Catholic meaning to be destructive of souls—yet you call this a fruit of the Reformation! It calls conversion to Christ “a continuing process” and says, “we recognize our own continuing need to be fully converted.” Again, you well know that the Catholics take this to be speaking of *salvation* and the evangelicals to be about *sanctification*. It is folly if not dishonest to sign a document, pretending unity, when the parties thereto have widely different understandings of its meaning!

The document says, “we warmly commend and encourage the formal theological dialogues of recent years between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals.” It neglects to say that after years of such dialogue the Lutherans abandoned the process because they could not agree with Catholics on salvation. Do you?

The document does indeed say, as you quote in your letter, “All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ.” But again, the Catholics have one understanding of that statement and the evangelicals another. The next sentence concludes that “Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.” Luther and Calvin were already saved and didn’t know it? The Reformation was a semantic misunderstanding? Tell that to the tens of millions who have been saved out of Roman Catholicism. I challenge you to take a representative poll of Catholics, at random, coming out of Catholic churches after Mass across this country. If you can find even 1 percent who know the gospel and are trusting Christ without the works and rituals of Roman Catholicism, I will publicly apologize. But if the poll turns out as you know it will, then I challenge you to renounce this betrayal of the Reformation and the true gospel!

Finally, I am shocked at the way you pass over the millions slaughtered by Rome by saying that Protestants killed people, too. Yes, but in infinitesimally smaller numbers and during a very brief period of history. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, has had a policy reaffirmed century after century by the popes and councils of killing all who did not embrace her teachings. These dogmas are still part of official Catholic policy, which can never change inasmuch as the Church is irreformable and “infallible.” The Catholic Church has yet to admit that the torture and murder of countless millions was wrong, or to repent and apologize. That you would embrace as your partner in evangelism members of a Church which has consistently persecuted evangelicals is staggering! Your argument is not with me but with the martyrs and our Lord!

Humility, Accountability & Awe

Dave Hunt

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body...whether...good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10

I am fast approaching the allotted “threescore years and ten” (Ps 90:10). The reality of facing God and Christ, either through the Rapture or death, confronts me with increasing impact. Often, outdoors at night, looking up at the stars and contemplating the vastness of the universe, I confess to the Lord that the thought of facing Him beyond the grave strikes fear into my heart. This fleeting life, which is “even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas 4:14), will very soon have passed entirely into history with no hope of changing it. The staggering reality of eternity will encompass me.

It is not that I doubt my salvation. I have never had the slightest question about that since the night some 55 years ago when I received Christ into my heart as my Savior and Lord. There is no fear of hell or judgment, for I believe His Word that He has paid the penalty for my sins and has given me eternal life as a free gift of His unmerited grace. I have the wonderful and absolute assurance that I will “never perish” (Jn 10:28)! What I fear is the awesomeness of God himself. Who can stand in His presence!

We are such frail creatures, so pitifully blind to God’s truth, so slow to learn His will and to understand His Word and ways. We have nothing of which to boast or in which to take comfort except for His grace and love. Yet we so easily forget that we are here for only a fleeting moment; we act as though this life were all there is and that it will never end. What could be greater folly!

As such thoughts overwhelm us we discover that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prv 9:10). We realize at last that it is too late to play church or any other spiritual games. Gone is any interest in trying to impress anyone on this earth, whether that person be a leader of great influence, or just an ordinary believer. What

people think or say about us is no longer of any concern.

Yes, we must be open to valid criticism and correction that is factual and supported by God’s Word—*not in order to please men, but God alone*. We must be careful not to be defensive of our own reputations. All that matters is God’s will and glory, and what God and Christ will pronounce upon one’s life in that rapidly oncoming moment of ultimate truth. This fact, together with a constant awareness of God’s love and care, provide the motivation and direction for the way in which we must use our fast diminishing moments on this earth.

We neither seek the praise of men nor fear their rebuke. It is the Lord only whom we serve, seeking to follow His Word and to please Him alone. Yes, we must be the “servants of all” (Mk 10:44; 2 Tm 2:24; Heb 3:5, etc.), but we do it “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Pt 2:13), not “as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph 6:6).

**...sanctify the Lord God in
your hearts.**

1 Peter 3:15

To the extent that we serve men for the rewards they offer, God is not real to us. What folly to barter away an eternal reward in exchange for anything this brief life and its temporary bankrupt tenants can offer! Even the Latin poet Juvenal, from a humanistic standpoint, wrote, “Consider it the greatest of crimes to prefer survival to honor and, out of love of physical life, to lose the very reason for living.”

Christ rebuked the Pharisees with these words: “How can ye believe [be men of faith], which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God *only*?” (Jn 5:44). Why can’t we receive honor *both* from men and God? For a number of reasons. Christ said it is impossible “to serve two masters,” especially “God and mammon [riches; i.e., worldly reward]” (Mt 6:24). Those who attempt to do so find their hearts torn and consciences dulled as the things of this life and opinions of men prove to be more real to us than is God himself.

Tragically, we can be blind to the truth about our real motives because our hearts are “deceitful above all things, and

desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). What Christian has not experienced praying in public and wondering within himself whether those listening realize what a great prayer is being offered! Who has not done something virtuous, kind and seemingly selfless for the good of others and at the same time hoped that such service was noticed and admired by men? Such folly is only possible because men and their opinions loom larger than God.

If God were real to us, the opinions of men, either for or against us, and the honor or dishonor they may bestow would shrink into nothingness in comparison to God’s greatness. And as God becomes real we inevitably fear Him. This is not the fear of one who is terrorized. It is a fear out of respect, the reverent awe which is becoming of us as creatures in the presence of our Creator, no matter how confident we are of His love and the acceptance we have in Christ. And is not this sense of awe obviously lacking among those who gather in most churches? Do we not often seem to be more aware of one another than of God?

We receive so many letters from Christians who are having a difficult time finding a church where the Lord is really worshiped in Spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24) and His Word is honored. Of course, part of the fault could lie with those who can’t find a “suitable fellowship.” However, the fact that this same cry is so often heard wherever one goes indicates that there must be some truth in it. Who would dare to say that Christians in general and most churches are living up to the standard set forth in the New Testament? Yet we claim to study and know the New Testament, and pastors and teachers preach from it. How many of us have lost that glow of excitement and fervent love of Christ which characterized us when we were first saved? What went wrong?

One could point to a variety of causes. How many Christians spend as much time in prayer and Bible study as they do watching television? Has not television brought the world’s values into our homes? Christians are supposed to be *in* the world but *not of* the world. If we took an honest look at ourselves, would we perhaps see that many of us have become *of* the world to an extent that would startle us if our eyes were opened to discern it? Would the Rapture, if it suddenly occurred, interrupt

plans and ambitions that have lowered our affection from the heavenly to the earthly?

Is it possible that somehow those of us who claim to be Christians have lost the sense of the awesomeness of God's person and presence? Could it be that church has become something we do with, and even for, one another rather than for God *alone*, a pattern of going together through the same routine each week which involves motions acceptable to man rather than the worship of God? Do we act as though we are in the presence of God himself, the infinitely powerful and holy and all-knowing Creator of the universe who holds our breath in His hand; or do we act as though we are interacting with and attempting to impress and please one another?

So what do we do? Try to "feel" the presence of God or "visualize" Him or Christ? The destructiveness of the emotionalism and occultism resulting from such techniques has been dealt with in depth both in my books and this newsletter so will not be repeated here. Then how does God become real to us? Do we step out into nature and contemplate the wonders of His universe? That can be a legitimate part of bowing in wonder before God, which many psalms present to us (Ps 8:3; 19:1; 104:24, etc.)—but there is more. Without obeying His Word which reveals His character and will, we would be deceived. Therein lies another problem plaguing the church: lack of discernment and accountability to God's Word.

How easily one may be swayed emotionally in spite of evidence was demonstrated recently when a dozen evangelical leaders, after breakfast in Washington with the President, came away convinced that Clinton is a "sincere Christian." Yet no one could have more thoroughly demonstrated his opposition to the gospel than has Clinton in his national promotion of the most flagrant immorality. Having appointed about two dozen gays or lesbians and numerous other godless people to top posts, Clinton has surrounded himself with aides who defy God. Actions speak louder than words. His own immorality is cause for Christians to distance themselves from him as a professing Christian. Even eating with Clinton was disobedience to God's Word (1 Cor 5:9-11). If we are truly in awe of God we will take Him and His Word seriously,

no matter the consequences.

Only the fear of the Lord will deliver us from the fear of man and from the snare of unbiblical alliances. One often hears the naive expression, especially in justifying the new ecumenical acceptance of Roman Catholics as Christians, "Embrace all those as brethren who 'love Jesus' and 'name the name of Christ.'" Yet many cultists profess to love Jesus and almost all "name the name of Christ." One must discern what is meant by such words.

Any heresy can be made to sound biblical (and even evangelical). Those who are not aware of or are too "loving" to discern its true nature are thereby deceived. For example, consider the following message placed in newspapers last Easter by the Mormon Church:

During the Easter season we again rejoice with all of Christendom, and gratefully commemorate the resurrection

**...adorn the doctrine of God
our Saviour in all things.**

Titus 2:10

of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.... At this sacred season we solemnly testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. We know that He lives! We know that because He lives, we too shall live again!

How biblical it sounds! Yet terms such as "Savior" and "Redeemer" have an entirely different meaning in Mormonism from the evangelical understanding—and that fact is deliberately hidden. "Eternal life," which the Bible says is by a free gift of God's grace, is, for the Mormon, "exaltation to godhood" and comes by works and ritual. Nor are the Mormon "God" and "Jesus" at all Christian. The "God" of Mormonism was once a sinful man who was redeemed by another Jesus Christ who died on the distant planet where this "God-in-the-making" lived. He eventually became a full-blown "God," like untold numbers of others before him. The Jesus of Mormonism (only one of trillions on other planets) was Lucifer's half-brother in a spirit preexistence. He was not God

but came to this earth to get a body in order to become a "God." The heresy goes on and on. Obviously, this Mormon Easter ad was deceitfully designed to seem both Christian and evangelical.

Roman Catholicism is equally deceptive. Pope John Paul II told the youth gathered in Denver last August, "At this stage of history, the liberating Gospel of life has been put into your hands. And the mission of proclaiming it to the ends of the earth is now passing to your generation! Do not be afraid to go out into the streets and into public places like the first apostles who preached Christ and the good news of salvation in the squares of cities, towns and villages. This is not the time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the time to be proud of the Gospel. It is time to preach it from the rooftops."

Any evangelical would be stirred by such words to join Catholics in evangelizing the world. But what the Pope means by the gospel, as we have previously documented, is as far from the Bible as hell is from heaven. The Catholic gospel calls people to Mother Church, to Mary, to the sacraments, good works, purgatory and indulgences. The Church is "the minister of salvation." Only through her can man be reconciled to God (Mormons claim the same for their church) rather than through a personal relationship with God through Christ alone. But Catholic apologists cover up such heresies.

The recent agreement between evangelicals and Catholics was only the latest step in an ecumenism which has long been in progress. As far back as 1978 the *Dallas Morning News* (August 19) quoted W. A. Criswell (former head of the Southern Baptist Convention) as saying, "I don't know anyone more dedicated to the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity than the Catholics." Even earlier, Billy Graham had said, "I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics." The long lives of service to the Lord and winning thousands to Christ of both Graham and Criswell show that neither would knowingly compromise the gospel. They, like so many other evangelical leaders, have been deceived by half-truths. Out of concern for souls we must expose such deception.

If God is real to us, so must be His

Word. Recognizing our accountability to Him, that one day very soon we must stand before Him, makes us careful to follow His Word in all we say and do. Knowing that we are nothing brings the humility that becomes us as frail creatures of dust. Understanding our duty to contend earnestly for the faith committed to us as His saints (Jude 3) brings boldness and unflinching purpose of heart. Humility, accountability and awe at God's greatness: these remove all arrogance in our contending for the faith. We remember Paul's words: "[I]f a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal 6:1). TBC

Quotable

From all corners of the world comes a challenge to God's Word [and] against the Gospel of Christ. But we must...fulfill our duty...devoted to the defense of the Gospel....

Indeed, truth cannot be stated clearly at all without being set over against error. Thus a large part of the New Testament is polemic; the enunciation of evangelical truth was occasioned by the errors which had arisen in the churches. So it will always be....

At the present time, when the opponents of the Gospel are almost in control of our churches, the slightest avoidance of the defense of the Gospel is just sheer unfaithfulness to the Lord.

There have been previous great crises in the church. [One] in the second century, when [Christianity] was threatened by the Gnostics. Another came in the Middle Ages when the Gospel of God's grace seemed forgotten. In such times of crisis, God has always saved the church. But He has always saved it not by theological pacifists, but by sturdy contenders for the truth.

J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937)

Q&A

The following are only representative of a flood of letters we've received on this topic, some even condemning us for

"promoting the Devil's Bible!" and asking to be removed from the mailing list.

Question: I've just received a copy of Texe Marrs' newsletter that accuses you [along with Peter Lalonde, John Ankerberg, et al.] of "strongly defend[ing] the grotesque, new Bible versions" at a conference in Niagara Falls; of having "fall[en] by the wayside"; of not knowing "one thing about the false Bible versions"; and of having "allowed a ghostwriter to pen a slanderous article about [Gail Riplinger] and her book" [New Age Bible Versions] though by your "own admission" you "had not read one page of the book!" What is your response to these charges?

Answer: In addition to his newsletter this brother has sent out personal letters denouncing me for having "print[ed] scurrilous, misleading information about the work and the integrity of a Christian sister [Gail Riplinger] without one iota of personal research. This is evil and wrong.... Hunt [is] spreading lies about a book [New Age Bible Versions] which [he hasn't] even bothered to read...and [is] publishing untruths about an author of whom [he knows] nothing."

These are serious charges. Yet I wouldn't bother to answer them for my own sake and do not wish to carry on a public quarrel with those who make them. However, the Riplinger book is dividing Christians and churches across the country, and inaccurate comments by those who support her are fanning the flames of destructive extremism. Therefore, I will respond to each charge.

First of all, I am not a "defender" of new Bible versions, much less have I "strongly" defended them, and certainly not at the Niagara Falls conference as charged. In fact, I have written against the errors of modern translations. (Sep./Dec. 1992 TBC.)

Secondly, while I do not pretend to be an expert on Bible manuscripts and translations, I have given the subject considerable study, thought and prayer and am certainly not completely ignorant on the matter. To say that I don't know "one thing about the false Bible versions" and

that I haven't read a page of Gail's book and know nothing about her is simply not true. While I haven't read much of that book, what little I have read is full of errors both of logic and fact. (The foundational premise stated on page 1—that the New Age movement has an "expressed goal of infiltrating the evangelical church and gradually changing the Bible to conform to its One World Religion"—is false. I've been exposing the New Age movement for at least 16 years and have never come across such a goal "expressed" by any leader, much less by the entire movement. To prove this "New Age" premise the author is forced to resort to numerous misquotations and misrepresentations.)

The issue before us is not "KJV vs. modern versions" but the credibility of the Riplinger book and the unwarranted criticism her supporters level against godly Christians who disagree with their extreme position. I abhor the errors in modern versions, but I cannot agree that all modern Bible versions are New Age and "completely of the devil." Sadly, those who take this position denounce those who do not. Some of the letters we've received have caused our staff to comment that it would be more fitting if the KJV-only zealots were to exhibit a bit more of the grace, patience and love so clearly taught in the KJV.

Thirdly, I have never used a "ghostwriter" and never will, nor would I "ghostwrite" for others. I have written autobiographies for others and have always had my name included. Someone's name on a book followed by "with Dave Hunt" means I wrote it. If there is a "ghostwriter," the person named as author didn't write the book or article, while the real writer's name is not mentioned. That, in my opinion, is dishonest. Every article I write in TBC has my name. When T. A. McMahan writes an article, his name is on it. Answers in the "Q&A" section have never had a name attached, which indicates that no one person writes them all, but that the answers represent the view of TBC, its staff and board of directors. For a time I wrote all of the articles and all answers to questions, but the demands on my time make that impossible, though I still write the majority. I stand behind everything written in *The Berean Call*. That TBC executive director and editor T. A.

McMahon, a veteran researcher/writer of books and videos on the New Age movement, has written not only articles but answers to questions has been no secret. For example, in the opening paragraph of my February 1994 article I said, "See T. A. McMahon's evaluation [of *Lonely No More* by Karen Mains] in next month's "Q&A" section." Therefore to accuse me of using a "ghostwriter" shows an ignorance of or disregard for the obvious facts.

Fourthly, we come to the most serious charges: that "Hunt is print[ing] misleading information...is spreading lies...and publishing untruths...a slanderous article," etc. Written articles can't be "slanderous." An untruth in writing is *libelous*. But it must be false. The truth is never slander or libel. I challenge anyone to specify exactly what "lies" we have spread, what "untruths" and "misleading information" we have published about the Riplinger book or any other book, person or subject.

Those who disagree with the Riplinger book are accused by many of her more zealous supporters of opposing the KJV and of favoring modern versions. That is not our position, nor is it the case of many others. For example, David W. Cloud, one of the staunchest and most knowledgeable defenders of the KJV, devotes the major article in the latest *O Timothy* magazine to exposing the many serious errors in *New Age Bible Versions*. Before doing so, Cloud says, "I believe all modern versions are corrupted, and I stand 100% behind the King James Bible."

Yet of the Riplinger book he says, "If we had found only a few mistakes of fact or logic, we would not have been concerned enough to produce a report like this....It is the *frequent error* in documentation, in logic, and in statement of fact that gives cause for alarm....There are many good points made in the book, but it is so marred by error, carelessness, and faulty logic that it cannot be used as a dependable resource." He *documents* many examples to prove his point. T. A. McMahon's review, which I discussed with him in detail prior to publication, did likewise. Again, I challenge anyone to refute the facts and to do so graciously and without *ad hominem* attacks.

My prayer is that (before this contro-

versy destroys more relationships and churches) those who automatically denounce anyone who disagrees with the Riplinger book will pause to take a close look at the facts. A copy of Cloud's report may be obtained by writing directly to David W. Cloud, Editor, *O Timothy*, Bible Baptist Church, 1219 N. Harns Rd., Oak Harbor, WA 98277.

Question: In your July newsletter you quoted a letter about a radio Bible teacher who, though a Christian, remains in the Catholic Church in order to win others to Christ. You seemed to approve of her remaining in the RCC. Do you?

Answer: That was a separate issue which I didn't deal with, inasmuch as I don't know the person or the circumstances. Now that you've asked, however, your question is answered in Scripture where we have the perfect example from Jesus (and from the apostles who followed Him). Jesus attended the synagogue and even participated (Lk 4:16), though Judaism was apostate. So did the apostles in order to confront unbelieving Jews. They were allowed to preach there for a time but, like Jesus (Lk 4:17-30, etc.), the apostles were eventually thrown out (Acts 17:2-14, etc.).

That a person can remain in good standing as a Catholic for any length of time after becoming a true Christian raises serious questions as to (1) that person's willingness to present the gospel clearly and (2) his or her participation in Roman Catholic sacraments. The gospel can only be presented meaningfully if it is contrasted with the errors the hearers believe. (See "Quotable" above.) No one could remain long in the good graces of Catholic friends, to say nothing of the Catholic clergy, if one confronted the real issues. Nor could a true Christian participate at all in Catholic sacraments (the Mass, for example) which deny the gospel and claim to be the means of passing out grace and salvation in installments.

Longsuffering & Doctrine

Dave Hunt

Preach the word...reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine....

2 Timothy 4:2-3

Paul counseled Timothy that in order to faithfully preach the Word he *must* “reprove, rebuke [and] exhort” his hearers. Why? Because such is the message and method of God’s Word. We need continual correction in our thinking and living and that is what the Bible provides. The whole purpose of Scripture is “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction [rebuke], for instruction in righteousness [exhortation]...” (2 Tm 3:16). Yet today the Bible is seldom used in the manner that God intended. Thus the church sinks ever deeper into apostasy.

Nor is Paul’s admonition to Timothy to be heeded only by so-called “full-time” Christian workers. Is there a “part-time” Christianity? Are we not all to live for and serve our Lord 24 hours a day? God has given every true Christian the responsibility and privilege of proclaiming and living God’s truth and guarding it from compromise or perversion.

Those who devote themselves to this calling are often accused of negativism or fanaticism. Don’t be troubled by such criticism. Time is short; eternity is long. Man’s denunciations are only for this brief life, but God’s rewards are endless in glory. “If we suffer [for His sake], we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us...” (2 Tm 2:12; Rom 8:17).

False religions are popular; the truth is hated. Christ promised His disciples, “If they [unbelievers] have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Jn 15:20). And so it has always been. Clement reported “roastings, impalings and beheadings” of Christians before he fled Alexandria about A.D.203.¹ Even so, the church grew stronger. Seeing that “the heathen temples began to be forsaken and the Christian churches thronged,” the Emperor Decius, around A.D.250, massacred thousands of believers.² In A.D.303 came the “Great Persecution” under Diocletian. All Bibles and churches were to be destroyed, Christian worship was banned and all citizens were to sacri-

fice to pagan gods or die. The whole town of Christian Phrygia was wiped out.³

Yet Tertullian’s saying proved true: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” So Satan changed his tactics. He seduced Constantine, a young general, with a Hagin/Copeland-like false gospel of success. Having seen a vision of the cross, which he then affixed to his soldiers’ shields, Constantine foolishly credited Christ (whose servants were not to fight; Jn 18:36) with the crucial victory that made him emperor. While continuing to head the pagan priesthood, he called himself the Vicar of Christ (the first to do so) and led the Church into ecumenical paganism. Historian Will Durant comments:

Statues of Isis and Horus were renamed Mary and Jesus....the feast of purification of Isis became the Feast of the Nativity; the Saturnalia were replaced by Christmas....[paganism] passed like

Put on therefore...bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering...
Colossians 3:12

maternal blood into the new religion....the world converted Christianity....⁴

“Christianity” became the official state religion and was soon called Roman Catholicism. Every citizen in the Empire was required by law, under pain of death, to be a Roman Catholic. The foundation for the massacres of millions that followed was laid as early as A.D.380 with the “Edict of the Emperors Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I”:

We order those who follow this doctrine to receive the title of Catholic Christians, but others we judge to be mad and raving...nor are their assemblies to receive the name of churches. They are to be punished not only by Divine retribution but also by our own measures....⁵

As the apostasy grew, new heresies were steadily invented: the Mass and Transubstantiation, a special priest class with power over the laity, priestly celibacy, purgatory, indulgences, salvation by ritual and works, the sale of papal absolution for a set price for every evil from incest to murder, the exaltation of Mary above Jesus

and God, etc. That remains “Mary’s” status today.

Quoting Vatican II,⁶ the new worldwide *Catechism of the Catholic Church* just released by Rome declares, “From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of ‘Mother of God,’ to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs.”⁷ Catholicism’s “Mary” would have to be omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, as God is, to provide *all Catholics* protection from *all dangers* and to meet *all their needs*. Yet Catholicism’s highest authorities promote that delusion. There are thousands of shrines to Mary around the world visited by tens of millions (22 million annually visit the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe alone), but only one small shrine to Christ in Quebec, which attracts scarcely a visitor. Catholics say far more prayers to “Mary” than to God and Christ combined!

Those who tried to “reprove, rebuke and exhort” in the face of such heresies were put to death. True Christians had no alternative but to leave the official Church in response to Christ’s clear call: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins” (Rv 18:4)!

The history of the church became *the history of heresies and the persecution of those who opposed them*. Historian Peter de Rosa, himself a Roman Catholic, admits that Catholicism became “the most persecuting faith the world has ever seen.... [Pope] Innocent III murdered far more Christians in one afternoon...than any Roman emperor did in his entire reign.”⁸ Will Durant writes candidly,

Compared with the persecution of heresy [by the Roman Catholic Church] ...the persecution of Christians by [pagan] Romans...was a mild and humane procedure.⁹

The Inquisitions had been underway for *centuries before the Reformation*, and the massacre of true Christians (known variously as Albigenses, Bogomils, Brethren, Cathari, Hussites, Vaudois, and Waldenses) by the Roman Catholic Church had by then been underway for *1,000 years!* The tragic yet inspiring story of those who contended for the faith and remained true to Christ reads like a continuation of Hebrews 11.

Not content to exterminate them, Rome has maligned the memory of these faithful

martyrs with accusations of heresy, occultism and even human sacrifice. The accounts we have of their “heresy trials,” however, reveal a faith like that of the Reformers. Some of the worst tales are told of the Cathari, yet one can’t fault their historically documented beliefs:

[They] denied that the [Roman Catholic] Church was the Church of Christ; [declared that] the popes were successors to the emperors, not to the apostles...[that] Christ had no place to lay His head, but the pope lived in a palace....The Roman Church ...was the Whore of Babylon....¹⁰

Consider Samuel Morland’s *The History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piemont* published in 1658. It gives an appalling account of Rome’s attempted extermination of the Waldenses to that date. The title page promises “A faithfull Account of the Doctrine, Life, and Persecutions of the Ancient Inhabitants [of the Piemont]; Together, With a most naked and punctual Relation of the late Bloudy Massacre, 1655...[documented] by divers Ancient Manuscripts written many hundred Years before Calvin or Luther, and...Authentick Attestations: The true Originals of the greatest part whereof, are [at] Cambridge [University].”

The Waldensians’ very biblical “Confession of faith” lists the exact books of today’s Protestant Bible, which it declares to be inspired of God not because some Church council said so, but “because of the eternal and undoubted Truth of the Doctrine therein contained...besides the testimony of the Holy Spirit, who...opens the eyes of our understanding....”¹¹ Reproduced also is the Waldensians’ “humble Supplication to the most Serene and most High Prince, Philibert Emanuel, Duke of Savoy, Prince of Piemont” for protection from papal persecution:

We are not ignorant, Most Gracious Prince, that many Accusations are laid against us...to make us stink in the Nostrils of all the Princes and Monarchs in the Christian world....First, we do protest before the Almighty...before whose Tribunal we must all one day appear, that we intend to live and die in the holy Faith...of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we do abhor all Heresies ...condemned by the Word

of God. We do embrace the most holy Doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, as likewise the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds....[T]his Religion we profess ...is the Religion of our Fathers, Grandfathers, and Great-grandfathers, and other yet more ancient Predecessours of ours, and of the blessed Martyrs, Confessours, Prophets and Apostles....

[Those who would exterminate us] do it not out of zeal to God’s glory, but rather to preserve their own worldly Dignities, Pomp, and Riches; wherefore we beseech your Highness not to regard or countenance their Sayings.¹²

The Pope’s response was to increase his armies and to offer, to all who would join in the extermination crusades, absolution of all sins and passage to heaven without going to purgatory. Today, Rome no longer has the power to effect such massacres. Yet the dogmas justifying the slaughter of millions are still in force and have never been renounced. Nor has Rome’s false gospel changed.

Unable to destroy the evangelical church

Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way...

Proverbs 15:10

through Rome’s persecution, Satan is engineering a return of all Christians to the Catholic fold. Leading evangelicals have recently joined in partnership with the Church that not only killed the martyrs but sends its own members to hell with a false gospel! Robert Schuller went to Rome to get the Pope’s blessing upon his Crystal Cathedral before building it,¹³ and he advocates the return of all Protestants to Rome and papal authority.¹⁴

Protestant heresies rival Rome’s. On his “Hour of Power” TV show Robert Schuller has defined sin as “lack of faith in yourself....” He declared that “Jesus Christ...has saved me from my sin which is my tendency to put myself down and not believe that I can do it....[N]egative thinking is the core of sin....Jesus died to save us from our sins to change us from negative thinking people to positive thinking people.”¹⁵ The blood-stained “old rugged cross,” once known for

its “shame and reproach,” has become, by Schuller’s alchemy, the means to “sanctify [Christ’s] self-esteem. And he bore the cross to sanctify your self-esteem...*the cross will sanctify the ego trip!*” (Emphasis in original)¹⁶

Multitudes have been led astray by this false gospel! How appealing it is to the unsaved—and how destructive of souls! And how tragic that many evangelical leaders, far from correcting those who are leading others astray, either commend them or are silent. Influenced by Christian psychology (“always be positive”), the gospel has been revised even by some evangelicals to make it attractive to the ungodly. Earthly success is confused with salvation, gain has become godliness, and truth is trampled under the heavy boots of a proud self seeking its own glory. Where are those today who will “reprove, rebuke, exhort”?

Those who seek to obey that admonition must remember that correction is to be “*with all longsuffering and doctrine.*” Paul thus reminds us that doctrine is not a weapon for clubbing the erring into submission. It must be presented with “longsuffering.” In calling the wayward back to obedience to the Word of God we must be gracious and patient, though uncompromising of truth. One of the hazards of a corrective ministry is the temptation to be judgmental of hearts and motives and to condemn any who dare hold a different opinion.

Such is the sad case with those who denounce all non-King James Bible versions as “satanic or New Age.” Yes, there are errors which need to be pointed out, but with *longsuffering and doctrine*. Is *every verse* in any non-KJV version satanic? Clearly not. Yet some make the use of non-KJV versions an issue of disfellowship even though people are genuinely saved and edified through such Bibles. Millions of Christians daily study versions other than KJV, and their lives evidence the spiritual growth and vitality that comes from God’s Word.

Remember: “*longsuffering and doctrine*”—even in the face of martyrdom, which could become our privilege. When our time comes to pass from this scene, may we, like Paul, be able to say with all honesty and great joy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, *I have kept the faith...*” (2 Tm 4:7).

TBC

Quotable

One of the clearest proofs of the depravity of man is his implacable hatred of the only solution to his greatest problem.

Anonymous

When we cease to strive, seek, contend for and maintain the Truth, it will cease in our land and error alone shall reign.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Sin is the chief evil, and is its own punishment. Therefore, when God would give a man over as an enemy with whom He will deal no more, He gives him up to sin.

Thomas Goodwin

I dread my own heart more than the pope and all his cardinals, for within me is the greater pope, even self.

Martin Luther

Worst of all my foes, I fear the enemy within.

John Wesley

Q&A

Question: The word “Allah” as used in your September 1993 issue is not correct. The Hausa translation of the Bible in northern Nigeria uses Allah as a designation for the true God. Allah is therefore the same divine being in both Islamic and Jewish faiths and the one who became man for the salvation of mankind.

Answer: The translators, by using a term familiar to the Muslims in northern Nigeria, no doubt thought they were being helpful. But by using *Allah* in the Hausa language, they have succeeded, instead, in creating confusion. Allah is no mere linguistic designation for God, as *Dios* in Spanish or *Dieu* in French. Allah is the *name* of the god of Islam. In fact, Allah was the *name* of the chief god among the numerous idols in the Ka’aba in Mecca, which represented the deities of travelers passing through in the caravans. Allah was the god of the local Quraish, Muhammad’s tribe, before Islam was

invented. Muhammad smashed the idols but kept the black stone which is still kissed today by Muslims. He kept, too, the *name* Allah for the god of Islam (its sign was the crescent moon) in order to appeal to his own tribe.

Allah has definite characteristics: he is not a father, has no son, is not a triune being but a single (and thus incomplete) entity who destroys rather than saves sinners, has compassion on only the righteous, does not deal in grace but only rewards good deeds, has no way to redeem the lost sinners, etc. Allah is *not* the God of the Bible.

The God of Israel, too, has a *name*, YHWH, now pronounced Jehovah but more anciently as Jahweh. Most Christians are unaware of God’s *name* because the Old Testament substitutes Lord for YHWH. In Exodus 6:3 God says, “By my name YHWH was I not known to them”; and at the burning bush when Moses asked His *name*, God explained the meaning of it by saying I AM THAT I AM; thus YHWH means not just one who *is*, but the self-existent One who *is in and of Himself* (Ex 3:13-14).

The God of the Bible *is love*, an impossibility for Allah. As a single entity, Allah was lonely and could not love or fellowship until other entities came into existence. Not so with YHWH (Jehovah). He is three Persons in one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, complete in Himself and in need of no others to love and fellowship with (“The Father loveth the Son” [Jn 3:35], there is communion within the Godhead, etc.). Only of this God could it be said that He *is love* in Himself.

Allah could never say, “Let *us* make man in *our* image” (Gn 1:26) and the Muslim scholar has no explanation for this expression, which is even found in the Koran’s paraphrase of this Bible verse. We could point out other reasons, but this should be enough to show that to use in the Hausa translation the *name* Allah for the God of the Bible is a great error! In fact Allah is a false god on a par with any other pagan deity.

Question: What about the Tribulation saints? How do they get to heaven? Do they have their own rapture?

Answer: If not all, then nearly all of them are killed, for the Antichrist is given power “to make war with the saints [who come to

Christ during the Tribulation], and to overcome [kill] them” (Rv 13:7). We see their souls “under the altar” in heaven asking when they will be avenged (Rv 6:9-10). They are told they must wait “until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (v 11).

Antichrist could still be killing saints up to the very end of Armageddon. Therefore, the Tribulation martyrs who “were beheaded [i.e., slain] for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands” are resurrected as a group to reign with Christ the moment Antichrist is defeated and Christ takes the throne of David to begin His earthly rule from Jerusalem (Rv 20:4).

Of these martyrs coming back to life God’s Word says, “This is the *first* resurrection” (Rv 20:5). Yet this “first resurrection” is specifically stated to include only those slain for not worshiping the Antichrist or taking his mark, leaving out all the saints who lived and died before Antichrist. Obviously, this can’t be the *entire* “first resurrection” or Moses, David, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Wesley, Spurgeon, Moody, et al. (and even Paul who though martyred was not slain by Antichrist) will never be resurrected. Christ referred to two resurrections only: “the resurrection of life” and “the resurrection of damnation” (Jn 5:28-29), and the only resurrection that remains after this first one is “the resurrection of damnation,” which occurs when “the dead, small and great, stand before God” and are judged and sent to the Lake of Fire (Rv 20: 12-15). Therefore, “This is the first resurrection” cannot describe *all* of the first resurrection but lets us know that these martyrs are included in the resurrection which occurred at the Rapture and that they partake of its benefits as part of the church of all ages.

That the Rapture and resurrection described in 1 Corinthians 15:50-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 take place prior to Armageddon is clear from the fact that in Revelation 19:7 we have the church in heaven as Christ’s bride at the “*marriage* of the Lamb” (not the marriage *supper*, v 9, which takes place later on earth when Christ introduces His bride to those who enter the Millennium). Christ’s bride, composed of

the saints of all ages to that time, is in heaven (having been resurrected and raptured there) and comes with Him at Armageddon as Zechariah 14:5 and Jude 14 declare (“all the saints with Him”). That Old Testament saints will be part of the church seems clear also from Christ’s statement that “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (Jn 8:56) and Hebrews 11 where Old Testament saints are linked in their destiny both with heaven (v 16) and with New Testament saints (v 40).

Inasmuch as those martyred during the Tribulation are resurrected after Antichrist is “taken ...[and] cast alive into [the] lake of fire” (Rv 19:20) and Christ is on earth, they will not be raptured to heaven but gathered by angels, along with the living remnant of Jews not in Israel, into His presence on earth: “Immediately after the tribulation... shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven...they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels...and they shall gather together [to Jerusalem] his elect from the four winds” (Mt 24:27-31). The Jews so gathered will be in the earthly kingdom ruled by Christ, while the Tribulation martyrs will reign with Christ over the millennial kingdom.

Question: I would like to read in your newsletter your comments on the peace pact between Israel and the PLO.

Answer: On the one hand, it is the height of folly. On the other hand, however, it has been forced upon Israel by world pressure. The PLO has not changed. They are still committed, as is the entire Islamic world, to the annihilation of Israel. Therefore, Israel is simply providing her sworn enemies with a base of operations within her own borders!

Why, then, did Israel agree to such folly? She sells about \$12 billion a year of her products to Europe and could not survive without that income. It was to keep this trade that she went along with the peace initiative which put her in this untenable position.

Are we seeing prophecy fulfilled? Yes. Though the details of this particular development are not prophesied, it moves the world in the direction of a pseudo-peace which must be established. Paul’s statement, “...when they say, Peace and safety” (1 Thes 5:3), indicates clearly that the world must

imagine it has achieved peace. The statement that the Antichrist “by peace shall destroy many” (Dn 8:25) also indicates that a time of apparent peace must come. The PLO deal is a move in that direction.

Question: The “joy movement” headed by Rodney Howard-Browne is gathering momentum and creating confusion. Charismatics are afraid to question it because of the old teaching carried over from the shepherding movement about “not touching God’s anointed.” Can you not devote some space to this error in your newsletter?

Answer: If the Bereans of old tested Paul by the Scriptures, then Rodney Howard-Browne must face the same test—and he fails it. We must have both doctrinal teaching and scriptural example to support a practice within the church, and there is neither for this phenomenon.

There is much about laughter in the Bible: the scornful laughter of unbelief (Gn 17:17; 18:12-15; 2 Chr 30:10; Neh 2:19; Jb 12:4; Mt 9:24, etc.); the laughter of joy (Gn 21:6; Jb 8:21; Ps 126:2; Ecc 3:4; 10:19; Lk 6:21); derisive laughter by God (Ps 2:4; 37:13; 59:8; Prv 1:26) and by the godly (2 Kgs 19:21; Jb 5:22; 22:19; Ps 52:6; Is 37:22)—but nothing like this new Howard-Browne fad.

Nowhere does Scripture teach that laughter is a sign of a work of God in the heart; or of the infilling of the Holy Spirit; or that it is conducive to holy living. Nor is there any example of anyone producing laughter in others to a godly end. This is not to say that a simple believer trusting God may not receive a blessing by God’s mercy and grace at one of these meetings *in spite of Howard-Browne*. Generally, however, the experience is one of manipulation and misplaced expectation without edifying biblical teaching, and may lead to deeper spiritual delusion and disappointment.

As for “not touching God’s anointed,” that is a perverted interpretation of Scripture now widely used to defend charismatic leaders from the correction they desperately need. The phrase is first found when Saul was twice in David’s hands and his men urged him to kill him but David refused: “I will not put forth mine hand against...the Lord’s anointed” (1 Sm 24:10; 26:9,16; 2 Sm 1:14-16; Ps 105:15).

“Touching the Lord’s anointed” always

means to harm or even to kill. David would not do that—but he did rebuke Saul, and that publicly before his own men and Saul’s army (1 Sm 24:9-15) and Saul repented (vv 16-21). Thus, to use this phrase to guarantee church leaders immunity from criticism is fraudulent.

Endnotes

- 1 Clement, *Miscellanies*, II.20,125.
- 2 William Byron Forbush, ed., *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (Zondervan, 1962), 14-17.
- 3 Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church* (London, 1934), 172.
- 4 Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (Simon and Schuster, 1950), vol. VI, 75; vol. III, 657.
- 5 Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, *Church and State Through the Centuries: A Collection of historic documents with commentaries* (London, 1954), 7.
- 6 *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, gen. ed., Austin Flannery, O.P., (Costello Publishing, 1988), vol. 1, rev. ed., in *Lumen Gentium*, (21 Nov. 1964), IV.66,421.
- 7 *Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimi Potest* Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Libreria Editrice Vaticana - In U.S., The Wanderer Press, St. Paul, MN, 1994), sec. 971:253.
- 8 Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ* (Crown Publishers, 1988), 35 and jacket.
- 9 Durant, op. cit., IV:784.
- 10 Durant, op. cit., IV:772.
- 11 Samuel Morland, *History* (London, 1658), 63.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 227-28.
- 13 From tape of TBN “Praise the Lord” program (March 7, 1990).
- 14 *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, (Sept. 19, 1987), Religion page.
- 15 “Hour of Power” (April 12, 1992).
- 16 *Living Positively One Day at a Time*, 201; *Self-Esteem, the New Reformation*, 115.

The Gospel According to Talk

T. A. McMahon

There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 16:25

Some months ago I wrote a brief statement in the "TBC Notes" which was intended to encourage our readers to make time for fellowship centered around the study of God's Word. It was amazing to see the responses such a note of encouragement could bring. While many were motivated to start or join a Bible study, others were quick to point out the various problems they'd encountered in Bible studies, home fellowships and Sunday-school classes. A common and very valid complaint was against gatherings which too often looked to the fleshly wisdom of men in an attempt to interpret and understand *God's* Word. This is indeed a universal problem and it may be Satan's most effective ploy in undermining the power of the Scriptures in the life of a believer.

When my family and I began to search for a church after first moving to Bend, I remember being shocked by the acceptance of human "wisdom" as I sat in on a Sunday-school class for high schoolers. Reading from published materials, the teacher presented a hypothetical problem to which the kids were to suggest what they thought were good solutions. The problem involved a fictional teenager caught up in a sin-related situation. Of the twenty suggestions offered, only two were even close to being biblical. Just as disconcerting was the amount of time spent letting the kids "talk," "share their experiences," and "articulate their feelings" regarding the matter. The discussion left fewer than five minutes for what the Bible has to say regarding the problem. Even at that, the teacher interpreted the verses to conform to a leading Christian psychologist's view. I was already close to being depressed, and then I overheard a couple of the more assertive teens (no low self-esteem

problems here!) agree that their own solutions seemed to make the most sense. At that point I found myself in one of those "it's too sad to laugh, too absurd to cry" zones.

That high school class was simply a blatant reflection of what I have observed in many Bible studies, fellowships, and classes through the years. All too often we'd rather hear what we've conjured up rather than what God clearly says to us in His Word. It's also true that our inclination is to accept what some "authority" tells us God has said, and what He means by it, rather than to search the Scriptures for ourselves. But then, man has a long history of seeking second opinions. Even before sin impacted mankind, Eve was seduced by such a penchant: listening both to someone who spoke with authority and to her own

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Colossians 2:8

rationalizations.

The serpent's words to Eve in the Garden of Eden had two such enticements. First, there was an authoritarian challenge to God's Word: "Yea, hath God said...?" To it was added a convincing contradiction regarding God's command: "...Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gn 3:1-5). Eve liked what she heard. Second, she entertained her own thoughts on the matter: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat..." (Gn 3:6). Eve listened to Satan's talk and then finished the job with her own self-talk. Here were *Satan and self* working in a deadly combination. That partnership is just as fatal today.

Paul knew something about the seductive

and destructive effects of listening to other voices rather than listening to God. His prophecies concerning the matter reveal a heart grieving over the destruction to come upon those who were his spiritual children. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils..." (1 Tm 4:1). "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

He ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. When I think about the circumstances under which Paul wrote those words, I sometimes wonder why he was so terribly concerned. Perhaps his emotional plea had even more to do with his prophetic insight concerning our generation than his own. The local fellowships of Paul's day certainly had to be watchful regarding false teachers and erroneous doctrine; his letters to the Corinthians and the Galatians make that clear. But compared with the flood of unbiblical influences carrying believers away today, those early Christians were hardly threatened. That being true, why do we rarely hear concerned preachers echoing Paul's heart cry?

Any pastor with a true shepherd's heart is in serious trouble. Those who have a love for the truth and desire that their flocks be nurtured in all doctrinal purity face an overwhelming dilemma. Most of them have the opportunity to teach the majority of their congregations for perhaps 45 minutes, one day per week. Good turnouts during a weekday service may increase their effective teaching time to an hour and a half per week. Compare that with the fact that a large and rapidly increasing number of evangelical Christians receive upwards of ten hours per week of *additional* teaching from Christian radio and TV. Many committed believers allow their car and home radios to play throughout the day whatever the local Christian radio station has to offer; evenings often find Christian television

programs running continuously. While we do not deny that there are some worthwhile Christian TV and radio programs, what has taken place because of indiscriminate viewing practices is the development of full-blown heresy via Christian media. The religious airways have become the chief vehicle for “depart[ures] from the faith,” “seducing spirits,” “doctrines of demons,” and “perverse things.”

Many of the sheep drink in so many doctrinal aberrations from the Christian media (add books, magazines, video and audio tapes, newsletters, pamphlets and tracts) that they assume much of it is consistent with what their fellowship teaches, even if it isn't. This situation is especially true if their shepherd has no heart for “earnestly contend[ing] for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Today's pastors must make *personal discernment a teaching priority*. If they do not, even their biblically consistent preaching will be lost in the swamp of humanly and demonically inspired teachings and practices.

I remember some years ago Dave Hunt was invited to speak at a National Religious Broadcasters convention. The Lord put it on his heart to exhort his audience to take personal responsibility for what they allowed to be broadcast on their stations. In his address he went over what the Scriptures had to say about Hymenaeus and Philetus “Who concerning the truth have erred...and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tm 2:17-18). He then posed the question, “What if Hymenaeus and Philetus had their own TV or radio show today?” Sadly, the answer is: they do—though under different names and in a myriad of formats. Popular *talk* is overthrowing the faith of far more than “some.”

Though pastors and others in leadership positions may fail to act upon or teach the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:4 (“Take heed that no man deceive you”), nevertheless every believer is personally accountable to the Lord to obey His command. If discernment as an aspect of your walk with Jesus is lacking, here are some suggestions that may help.

1) Realize that the Word of God is just that—the *Word of God*. Nothing that man has to offer can either improve upon it or

add anything essential (Is 55:8-9). 2) Understand that the Holy Spirit is your teacher (Jn 16:13), and He alone can reveal the Word of God. 3) Fill your heart and mind with the *content* of the Scriptures. Immerse yourself again and again. Let the pure, living waters of God's truth wash out the pollution of worldly thoughts and erroneous teachings. 4) Test every teacher as did the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11). Steadfastness in the faith is not a product of learning from a human teacher, no matter how biblically true his teachings may be. Real confidence in what one believes comes from *directly* knowing and living what the Bible teaches, through the illumination and power of the Holy Spirit. 5) Spend more time in fellowship with the Lord, getting to know Him better and better through reading His Word, than you do listening to men talk or teach about Him.

Next to personal time with Jesus, I

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Revelation 22:1

believe *fellowship* centered around studying the Word of God is the best experience you can have to help you grow in the Lord. Yet Bible studies, home fellowships, Sunday-school classes, etc. need to be constantly evaluated. Even the best Bible study can slip away from its original intent or fruitfulness. The Scriptures, first and foremost, reveal what God wants us to know about *Him*. Do you leave each study or class knowing Him better? Many studies I've attended began with the Scriptures but then quickly became a gab session of personal experiences, what a favorite author teaches, or one's own subjective *feelings* about what the Word says. If you recognize this tendency in your study, try to encourage input which focuses on using other scriptures to help explain the verses you're trying to understand, rather than pursuing your own ideas or what someone else has said. If you want to know *what God wants you*

to know, let scripture interpret scripture.

My psychiatrist father, who died when I was in college, liked to say, “Talk is cheap... unless it's psychiatric talk.” Even back in the early sixties “therapeutic” talk was expensive. Talk has become a mania today, even within the Christian community. Christian talk shows are for the most part platforms for every thought that ever entered the mind of man—good, bad, or indifferent. For Christians who glean their doctrines from them, the talk is all too often extremely costly. What price would you put upon that which keeps you from the treasure of God's truth? Do your get-togethers to study the Scriptures resemble a call-in show? Are the opinions of so-called authorities and would-be experts given more time and honor than the clear, inspired writings of the prophets and apostles?

Secular talk shows lean heavily on psychological solutions. Christian call-in programs do likewise. Quite often they are sponsored by nationwide Christian psychology clinics or local Christian psychotherapists. Most programs are also man-centered. If you listen to Christian talk shows, use your watch and calculate how much time is spent on man and his problems vs. the time spent on getting to know the person, the characteristics, and the commands (Jn 14:15) of Jesus Christ. If you shun Christian media offerings, try the same test on your Bible study. It's amazing how the world's ways seep into the church, even when we think we're not of the world.

Though today's apostasy may seem overwhelming at times, the good news is that God's grace is sufficient to keep us on course with Him. While we are assaulted by a deluge of unbiblical deception and delusion which threatens to sweep away the fruitfulness we can have in Christ, His grace is readily available to cause that river of living water to flow from our innermost being as He promised (Jn 7:38). Our prayer is that you will desire God's Word through the teaching of the Holy Spirit and you will cause it to *flood* your heart and mind continually. That's the sure way to know and follow Jesus. That's the essence of what He is telling us in John 8:31—“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” **TBC**

Quotable

On the table side by side:

The Holy Bible and the *TV Guide*.

One's well worn but cherished with pride
(Not the Bible, but the *TV Guide*).

One's used daily to help folk decide,

No! It isn't the Bible, it's the *TV Guide*.

As pages are turned, what will they see?

Oh, what does it matter, turn on the TV.

Then confusion reigns, they can't all agree

On what they will watch on the old TV.

So they open the book in which they
confide

(Not the Bible, it's the *TV Guide*).

The Word of God is seldom read—

Maybe a verse e'er they fall into bed

Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be,

(Not from reading the Bible: from
watching TV).

So then back to the table, side by side,

Are the Holy Bible and the *TV Guide*.

No time for prayer, no time for the Word.

The way of salvation is seldom heard.

Abiding in Christ so full and free

Is found in the Bible, not on TV.

Anonymous

Q&A

Question: I've read and enjoyed many of Watchman Nee's books but *The Latent Power of the Spirit* has me concerned. He says that Adam and Eve originally had soul or mind powers that would seem supernatural to us; that these powers were "immobilized" by the Fall and now lie dormant within us, their descendants; and that the disobedient "release" of these latent powers through occult techniques produces psychic phenomena. What do you think?

Answer: We don't believe this particular view of Watchman Nee's is scriptural. Here is our perspective regarding what the Bible teaches concerning the important subject of psychic power:

1. Man was made in God's "image" (Gn 1:26-27). An image is reflected in something such as a mirror. Being like a mirror of God's glory, man was intended to reflect a reality

other than his own. It is just as absurd for a man as it would be for a mirror to try to develop a "good self-image"! If the reflection is distorted, it is because the mirror is no longer in a right relationship with the one whose image it is to reflect. There is only one possible solution: to correct this relationship. Self-image and self-acceptance and self-love psychology turns a person to himself rather than to God, where the solution lies. Man is totally dependent upon God, having been created to reflect the character of God, and not some goodness or power of his own. This would seem to argue against any "latent" psychic powers as well.

2. Satan's promise to Eve that she could "become like God" would have had no meaning to her if she already had god-like powers within herself. Furthermore, we know that this promise was a lie, which would argue against the possibility of such powers being acquired then or now.

3. If Adam, the first man, had psychic powers before he sinned, then surely Jesus, the Second Man, who was without sin, would have displayed these powers, which He did not. He always said that He himself was not doing the works, but His Father was doing them through Him. In John 1:47-51, when Jesus told Nathanael that He had seen him "under the fig tree" when this had been physically impossible, Nathanael acknowledged this as evidence that Jesus was the Son of God. Christ accepted that recognition. He didn't assure Nathanael that this was a display of "clairvoyance" made possible by the psychic powers that reside in all men. Much less did he encourage Nathanael or anyone else to develop psychic powers, as many church leaders now recommend.

4. The only supernatural powers that Christians are to exhibit are called "gifts of the Spirit." It is evident that they do not result from some latent power within man that has been awakened, but that man has once again become, through the Holy Spirit, a channel of God's life and image. Man is like a TV set, a receiver and reflector of content from outside itself. This analogy fits 1 Corinthians 12:7, which calls the display of these miraculous gifts a "manifestation" of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, then, it is not a manifestation of anything that man can call his own.

5. It would follow that the display of supernatural powers by psychics, shamans,

etc., that are not gifts of the Spirit coming to man on the conditions of repentance, redemption, faith, and obedience set forth in Scripture, must then be the *manifestation of another spirit* of a demon, or Satan himself, according to the Bible.

6. The following examples from the Bible illustrate these two possibilities:

a. Samson manifested supernatural power which was clearly not his own. It was not muscular development that enabled him to rip the entire gate and the posts supporting it right out of a city wall and carry it to the top of a hill! This was "spiritual" power displayed through a man, and it came from God.

b. The man possessed with demons in Mark 5:2-13 broke iron chains like thread. Certainly this again was beyond the capability of flesh and blood. It was the manifestation of spiritual power, but in this case from demons.

7. That Satan has great power is evident from the Book of Job. It is also clear that his power can only be displayed upon earth within bounds that God sets in individual cases. No doubt the degree to which a person turns his back upon God and deliberately steps into the occult determines the amount of psychic power that demons can manifest through him and also the control that Satan is able to exert over him.

Question: What's your view of extraterrestrials?

Answer: There are many biblical reasons for not accepting the idea of intelligent life beyond earth other than angels and demons.

First of all, it would be impossible for morally responsible humanoids anywhere in the universe to keep from sin. If they had the genuine right of choice, it must inevitably have been used to disobey God. Thus they would require salvation.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and His death is the one and only perfect sacrifice for sins ever offered in the universe (Hb 9:23-28; 10:12-14). If there are morally free agents on other planets, they would have to believe in Christ for salvation.

Thirdly, God has gone to great lengths to give us an historically verifiable record of His Son's death and resurrection at the hands of eyewitnesses and this message is

contained in a Bible which can be verified in many ways by the inhabitants of earth (geographically, archaeologically, etc.) and which would not be available to ETIs. It would seem both unfair and a violation of God's way of dealing with mankind for beings elsewhere in space to be required to believe in a Savior who was crucified on a distant planet.

Fourthly, the Bible seems to indicate that this earth is the only such place in the universe. When Satan is cast out of heaven, he comes to earth; it is on this planet that the battle will be fought resulting in Satan's defeat and imprisonment in the abyss; it is on this earth that Christ will reign for 1,000 years while Satan is locked up; it is to this planet that Satan will return when he is released; and it is on this planet that Satan will meet his final defeat and his eternal doom will be sealed.

Finally, if life happened by chance on this earth and evolved upward, then it could seemingly happen elsewhere in the universe. But if, as we believe, human life resulted from a purposeful act of God, and if sin is inevitable for such beings, and if the human soul is the prize for which Satan and God do battle, then it hardly makes sense to have this same process repeated on countless other planets throughout the cosmos.

A further discussion is available on Dave's audio tape, "UFOs: Messengers of Deception."

Stand Fast in the Faith

1 Corinthians 16:13

Dave Hunt

Sears, Roebuck & Co. has long been considered a bastion of middle-American conservatism, which the average householder could trust. It has now become a major promoter of New Age ideas. Consider the following from the October 1994 first edition of "The Women's Newsletter from SEARS":

We need to consult "the therapist within".... The following program should get you started.

First, relax. Make your mind still and quiet—an absolute blank....

Picture your problem. In the quiet stillness of your mind, let an image of your problem appear....

Meet your inner adviser....invite a very loving, wise figure into your awareness. It could be an old man or woman, a plant, a dog. Sit patiently and let an image emerge. Then talk about whatever is troubling you....asking your inner adviser for answers....

That the above is the basic technique for contacting spirit guides (demons) should be obvious to our readers, as we have thoroughly documented in the past (see especially *The New Spirituality*). Shamanism has also entered evangelical circles through Christian psychology, inner healing, "two-way prayer," positive confession and positive/possibility thinking, and is being endorsed by trusted Christian leaders and media.

Consider a 1994 book by John Marks Templeton, the wealthy Wall Street money manager. He is best known for founding and funding the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, of which Charles Colson was last year's recipient, as Billy Graham had been previously.

That recipients are selected by a panel made up of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, "Christians" and Jews and that its purpose is to "encourage understanding of the benefits of each of the great religions" should be more than enough reason for any Christian not to accept the tempting Templeton Prize. Moreover, Templeton is a leading advocate of the mind-science cults' heresies (Religious Science, Science of

Mind, Unity, Christian Science, et al.).

Norman Vincent Peale and his protégé Robert Schuller were the first to promote Templeton and his metaphysical delusions among evangelicals. Templeton's photo filled the front cover of Schuller's Summer 1986 *Possibilities* magazine. The lead article quoted Templeton that "nothing exists except God" (that's pantheism) and that "the Christ spirit dwells in every human being whether the person knows it or not" (that's universalism). In the mind-science/religious science cults it works like this: "God is all and God is good; therefore, all is good. If you see something that looks like evil, sickness, suffering or death it doesn't exist. You have been deceived by your own 'negative' thinking and need to become a 'positive' thinker."

Templeton's latest book, *Discovering the Laws of Life*, is also pure Science of Mind. Yet instead of warning against it, *Christianity Today* devoted the entire back

Take heed that no man deceive you.

Matthew 24:4

cover of its April 24, 1994 issue to an ad promoting this grossly heretical work. Headlined "Will Inspire Millions of Readers," the ad contained the endorsements from the book jacket by five "Christian" leaders. Norman Vincent Peale was, of course, one of the endorsers (he also wrote the foreword), as was Robert Schuller. Two prominent Catholics, who are also New Agers—Theodore M. Hesburgh, former president of Notre Dame University, and J. Peter Grace, head of the Knights of Malta, sworn to defend the pope—were the other endorsers, along with Billy Graham. Here are quotes from the book Graham and *CT* endorsed:

[T]he basic principles for leading a "sublime life"...may be derived from any religious tradition—Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and others as well as Christian....

We have the power to create whatever we need in our life...the power of the mind....There is a law of life that can be stated in these words: "Thoughts held in the mind will reproduce in the outer world

after their own kind."

...[A]stronauts travel[ed] into outer space...[and] did not bring back any evidence of heaven. And whereas drills had penetrated the earth, they found oil, not hell...[so] spiritual theorists...conceive of [heaven and hell] as states of mind. ...Through our choices and attitudes we create our own heaven or hell right here on earth....

Our innate goodness is an essential fact of our existence....When we perceive this truth, we will experience heaven on earth...peace and the presence of God within us.

Be honest. Be true. Love all parts of yourself...the godhood within you—the goodness within you—is in a state of becoming perfect.

The endorsements by Peale and Schuller, who have themselves taught the same mind-science lies for years, are not surprising. That *Christianity Today*, Chuck Colson and Billy Graham, however, would also endorse such satanic delusion (which they surely do not believe) is shocking evidence of today's tendency among leading evangelicals to compromise the truth and accommodate falsehood. Our readers are urged to write to *Christianity Today*, to Graham and to Colson (who praised Templeton for establishing his Prize) to ask them why they would endorse and promote such deadly heresies. Please also warn Christian bookstore owners and managers about this book. And pray earnestly that those who buy it because of such trusted endorsers will not be taken in by its seductive deception.

Unfortunately, *Christianity Today* seems to defend error instead of expose it. In a recent editorial, Philip Yancey rejects all correction as "Christian McCarthyism," the title of his article. Numerous leaders are defended for their false doctrine and not by dealing with the serious issues their critics raise, but by a dishonest whitewash.

For example, Yancey says, "Richard Foster dares to use words like *meditation* ...which puts him under suspicion as a New Ager." In fact, Foster gave detailed instructions on how to practice Eastern meditation to the extent that the visualized image of Jesus comes to life: "you can *actually* encounter the living Christ in the event, be addressed by His voice and be touched by His healing power....Jesus Christ will actually come to you."¹

Numerous Christian leaders around the world have joined Foster in his Renovaré movement for reviving Eastern mysticism in the church.

There is a similar exoneration of Karen Mains, who Yancey says has merely “written about her dream life.” He fails even to mention the occultic delusion she promotes in her book *Lonely No More*. Tony Campolo is likewise defended as unfairly criticized without mentioning his blatant heresies. Like Templeton, Campolo says that Christ dwells in everyone; that “going to heaven is like going to Philadelphia....There are many ways....It doesn’t make any difference how we go there. We all end up in the same place.”² In his latest book, in a chapter titled “Embracing the Feminine Side of God,” he declares, “I love the feminine in Jesus....There is that feminine side of me that must be recovered and strengthened if I am to be like Christ.... And until I feel the feminine in Jesus, there is a part of Him with which I cannot identify.”³ It’s “Christian McCarthyism” to point out that such ideas are unbiblical?

Templeton’s science of mind and shamanism are rampant in the so-called inner healing movement, which came into the church through Agnes Sanford, one of Richard Foster’s mentors. She taught that the “God-force” can be turned on by simply saying to it, “Whoever you are—whatever you are—come into me now!” What a great invitation to Satan! She taught that everything is a matter of thought vibrations which, if “negative,” make us ill and, if “positive,” heal us; indeed, that “positive thought vibrations” projected upon sinners can even turn them into Christians! She wrote, “A new age is being born...when love-power [projected] at the command of ministers [and others] is sufficient to change hearts....we [have] an inner source of power that can be tapped at will.”⁴ Templeton couldn’t have said it better.

According to pollster George Barna, there is a strong trend toward an “inclusive [ecumenical] spirituality,” while “evangelicals are dwindling in number,” with only 7 percent in that category now compared with 9 percent in ’93 and 12 percent in ’92. Those who call themselves “born again” (with broader beliefs than evangelicals) have dropped from 40 percent of the population in 1992 to 35

percent today.⁶

Paul warned the Ephesian elders of the coming apostasy for “*three years...night and day with tears*” (Acts 20:31). We at TBC are sometimes accused of being too concerned about heresy and apostasy. Yet in comparison with Paul’s anguish of heart we are shamefully lax. Continually on my heart, too, is Christ’s warning that the last days prior to His return would be characterized by widespread religious deception which would be a perversion of Christianity by false Christs, false prophets and a false signs-and-wonders movement (Mt 24:4-5,11, 24). Christ’s prophecy should concern us deeply, particularly when we see its fulfillment all around us. John Wimber’s Signs and Wonders movement has long promoted all of the above heresies.

That Jesus Christ as Savior of sinners is

To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Isaiah 8:20

mankind’s only hope was the announcement of the angels at His birth. For nineteen centuries the world has rejected Him, producing instead worthless solutions to the problems of war, famine, greed, crime, jealousy, rage, divorce, frustration. There is only one hope: Jesus Christ. Many profess agreement with that statement but in reality hold and promote a perverted view of Christ and His gospel.

The Christmas season reveals much of what has happened to Christianity in our day. It has become self-centered and competes with the world in appealing to the flesh. Making Christianity “fun for the kids” and “relevant” to the baby boomers dilutes its life-changing, sin-cleansing power. That Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8) tells us that He is God, that He is perfect, that He needs no updating. The gospel needs no adaptation to our modern world and its proud sophistication. We need a return to the purity of God’s truth; and, like Paul, we need to preach the pure gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2).

For all his inventions and modern developments, man has not changed in his character or behavior. He is still the descendant of Adam, fallen into sin and in need of reconciliation to his Creator. He still needs love and purpose and meaning not only in this life but beyond. Eternity is all that matters and that hasn’t changed. God hasn’t been renovating heaven to keep up with the ideas current upon earth, nor has he lowered the entrance requirements to broaden the spectrum of belief among its citizens.

God doesn’t hire a Madison Avenue advertising and promotion team to persuade us that heaven will be a nice place for retirement. Faith in Christ, with *repentance*, no longer popular even among evangelicals, is still the only entrance ticket to that eternal abode. We must love God and allow Him to have His way with us, or we would be miserable in heaven.

Heaven and hell are not states of mind, as Templeton and his cohorts imagine. They are the real and eternal destinations of every human soul and spirit. Hell is where people go who are determined to have their own way, who enjoy their own passions, who attempt to create their own universe with their thoughts. Its inhabitants are self-centered and thus utterly lonely: self has become so all-consuming that there is room for nothing else.

Christ was born the Savior of sinners. Our hearts overflow with gratitude that He who is God loves us so much that He was willing to be born of a virgin into a world which hated, despised, rejected, mocked, scourged, and crucified Him. He is still mocked and rejected by the world and that fact breaks our hearts.

But heresy mocks Him as well. It rejects Him as He really is and undermines His real purpose for coming to earth. Every true Christian should be deeply offended and concerned that serious error is being promoted not only in the world but even in seemingly sound churches and by those who are respected as evangelical leaders. It is our love for Christ in response to His love for us, and our love for the lost whom He loves and for whom He suffered and died, that causes us to rebuke heresy and to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. May we remain true to Him until He takes us home!

TBC

Quotable

Truth carries with it confrontation. Truth demands confrontation: loving confrontation, but confrontation nevertheless.

Francis Schaeffer

Christ calls men to carry a cross; we call them to have fun in His name....He calls them to holiness; we call them to a cheap and tawdry happiness that would have been rejected with scorn by the least of the Stoic philosophers...The contemporary moral climate does not favor a faith as tough and fibrous as that taught by our Lord and His apostles. The delicate, brittle saints being produced in our religious hothouses today are hardly to be compared with the committed, expendable believers who once gave their witness among men. And the fault lies with our leaders. They are too timid to tell the people all the truth. They are now asking men to give to God that which costs them nothing.

Our churches are filled (or one-quarter filled) with a soft breed of Christian that must be fed on a diet of harmless fun to keep them interested. About theology they know little....No wonder their moral and spiritual constitution is so frail. Such can only be called weak adherents of a faith they never really understood.

A. W. Tozer

We do not become holy by looking into our own hearts. There we find only corruption. But as we look away from self altogether, "Looking unto Jesus," as He is the object in which we delight, as we contemplate His holiness, purity, love, and compassion, His devotion to the Father's will, we shall be transformed, imperceptibly to ourselves, perhaps, but none the less surely, into His blessed image.

H. A. Ironside

Q&A

Question: I was always taught that "two shall be grinding at the mill, one shall be taken, the other left, etc." refers to Christ at His second coming taking the wicked

from the earth and leaving the Tribulation saints. Yet you teach this occurs at the Rapture before the Tribulation. Can you justify that interpretation?

Answer: Yes. The Second Coming occurs in the midst of Armageddon in Revelation 19. Even before Armageddon the earth is in utter devastation. Already in Revelation 6 one-fourth of the world's population has been killed. There have been famine, pestilence and earthquakes that move mountains and islands out of their place so that the earth has been practically destroyed. And at last Christ must intervene to stop the destruction or no flesh would survive (Mt 24:22).

Yet Christ says that when "one shall be taken and the other left" the conditions on the earth will be as in the days of Noah with people "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (Mt 24:38); and as in the days of Lot when "they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded" (Lk 17:28). That description doesn't fit the midst of Armageddon when Christ comes with His bride to execute judgment upon Antichrist and his followers. It can only refer to a time before the Great Tribulation, and that is when the Rapture must occur.

Comment: We've been blessed by your writings for years, but lately you've done nothing but bash Catholics. It's become a vendetta. When you're ready to give us the variety of subjects you once did, let us know and we'll get back on your mailing list—but take us off until then.

Reply: It is true that Catholicism has been a major topic in the last two years, and with good reason. Catholics make up nearly one-fifth of the world's population and comprise a much higher percentage in the Western world. They are about 25 percent in the United States and more than 90 percent in Latin America and in Spain, France, Italy, Poland, etc. Here is a huge mission field of those whose Church has deceived them with a false gospel that cannot take them to heaven. We need to love Catholics enough to tell them the good news that they can receive forgiveness of all sin (past, present and future) and eternal life through faith in Christ's finished work on the cross.

Most evangelicals don't know the truth about Catholicism; and a number of leading evangelicals are insisting that all active Catholics are saved and not to be evangelized. Some are even joining Catholics to evangelize the world. The whole issue of the evangelical response and relationship to Catholics will be one of the most important questions facing the church until the Rapture. Catholicism warrants a great deal of our attention, which we will continue to give it. Let us be in continual prayer and evangelism effort to win Catholics to Christ.

Question (composite of several): You have referred to the Albigenses as true Christians, yet every encyclopedia I've looked into says they were Manicheans who believed in a good god and an evil god, that they were involved in ritual suicide and immorality. How could you possibly have made such a terrible blunder?!

Answer: In fact, the Albigenses were true Christians, but their Roman Catholic persecutors and murderers managed to destroy most of their records and to publish lies about them that have lasted to this day. By God's grace, however, enough original documents have been preserved to prove that they were indeed genuine Christians, though modern records from the nineteenth century onward all quote the slander of their accusers.

Abraham Mellinus in his *History of the Persecutions and Martyrs* published in 1619 writes that the Albigenses and Waldenses were one and the same and were also called Catharists in some regions. The name Albigenses was given to the Waldenses in the area of Albi in Southern France. Mellinus calls them "pious, upright and moral people." P. J. Twisck in his *Chronicles* writes, "There existed the Waldensian or Albigensian brethren...very pious, orthodox and godly Christians [who were] slandered by their accusers." Jean Paul Perrin Lionnois in his *History of the Waldenses and Albigenses* quotes a manuscript dated A.D.1120 that contains orthodox sermons by those whom it says were later called Waldenses and Albigenses. *The Martyrs Mirror*, published in 1631, says that the Waldenses and Albigenses were one in belief, sometimes called Albi-Waldenses, and much the same as the

Anabaptists. Christen Martelaersboeck, writing in 1619, equates the Waldenses with the Albigenses.

Mellinus writes that the “Confession of the Waldenses and Albigenses Drawn Up By Those of Merindol and Cabriere” was sent to the King of France and publicly read “in the King’s Parliament at Paris” and it is very biblical, containing nothing that even hints of Manicheanism and the other false charges leveled against these persecuted people. Citing this creed, Mellinus says, “Thus far extends the confession of faith of the Waldenses and Albigenses...which confession...at the close of the 12th century...anticipates and refutes all the shameful doctrines which have been unjustly imputed...to the Albigenses as though they had been Manicheans.”

A letter from Oliver Cromwell (a Puritan) to the Duke of Savoy dated May 25, 1655 protests the imprisonment and slaughter of the Waldenses, whom he calls “our dear brethren in Christ.” At that time the great English poet, John Milton, wrote a poem commemorating the victims of the terrible Easter massacre of the Waldenses in 1655, in which he says, “Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints ...mother with infant...”

The first Waldensian refugees arrived in America in 1656 and the immigration continued into the 1920s. Their descendants, with us today, and the churches they founded, bear witness to their true faith and furnish additional proof of the malicious lies that Rome has hurled at them in order to cover its crimes.

The above is only a fraction of the solid documentation we have—some of it even from their Inquisitors—that the Waldenses and Albigenses were not Manicheans at all, but true Christians.

Endnotes

- 1 Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1984), 20-29.
- 2 *World Vision*, Nov. 1988.
- 3 Tony Campolo, *Carpe Diem: Seize the Day* (Word Publishing, 1994), 85-88.
- 4 Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Light* (1947 ed.), 21-22, 60, 75.
- 5 From the brochure, “What Is The Science of Mind?”
- 6 *National & International Religion Report* (Sept. 5, 1994), 4.

Faith, Works & the Holy Spirit

Dave Hunt

In our recent series of meetings in Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Russia my wife, Ruth, and I saw again that the spiritual climate is much the same worldwide. Everywhere we found joyful, victorious Christians and good evangelical churches but they are a small minority. Seventy-five percent of Russians claim to be Russian Orthodox (the Eastern counterpart of Catholicism), yet 63 percent deny the existence of God.¹ It is not much better in Western Europe. The prophesied apostasy is deepening everywhere.

Christians in Eastern Europe now face the previously unknown temptation of materialism. Once-persecuted believers are succumbing to the love of money, now that anyone may possess all that ingenuity and hard work can acquire. An emerging class of entrepreneurs has created a new anglicized word in Eastern Europe: "beezeenman." Pray for Christians in former communist lands to resist this new temptation to ape the Western ideal of the successful man and megachurch!

Dissolution of the Iron Curtain opened the door to every false doctrine and practice we exposed in *The Seduction of Christianity*. In both East and West the New Age movement and every cult, including satanism, are rampant. Thankfully, in every country we found "Bereans" who receive *The Berean Call*. Their expressions of gratitude for the warnings and teaching it provides were encouraging. Heresies we expose here quickly spread everywhere. American church leaders, through radio and TV, books and speaking tours, disseminate worldwide every new fad from Benny Hinn to Rodney Howard-Browne along with the well-entrenched errors of Christian psychology, Peale-Schuller positive/possibility thinking, Hagin-Copeland positive confession, inner healing, visualization and ecumenical "unity."

There is an international crisis of faith within the church that is changing what it means to be a Christian. God's Word is neglected, experience is valued above truth, a false and selfish "faith" is promoted, and sound doctrine and correction are despised as "divisive" and "unloving." A subtle and appealing error is spreading worldwide. One example is Pat Robertson's "Christian Coalition," which joins evangelicals,

Catholics, Mormons, Jews and even Moonies in political action. Christianity is being reduced to traditional morality and conservative politics *minus the gospel*.

The *Great Commission* (to "preach the gospel to every creature" - Mk 16:15) has become the *Christian mission* (to morally reform secular society)—a mission that anyone may join who affirms "traditional morals." One must not push the gospel on partners for that would break up the political/social-action coalition. Signers of the document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (ECT), which we analyzed and vigorously opposed (see May 1994 *TBC*), acknowledged that it grew out of working together in conservative political and moral causes. Here we confront again a controversy that will only grow in importance: what about Roman Catholicism?

J. I. Packer (like Charles Colson), in a four-page *Christianity Today* article, justified signing ECT even though he admits that evangelicals and Catholics have

**When the Son of man cometh,
shall he find faith on the earth?
Luke 18:8**

considerable "differences about salvation and the church...." Says Packer, we must together seek "to re-Christianize the North American milieu...[and] rebuild the ruins...[of] North American culture"² In fact, no such "mission" was ever assigned by Christ or pursued by early Christians!

Promoting the same error, *Christianity Today* declared that ECT "should have been prepared and signed by all evangelicals three decades ago." Senior Editor Kenneth S. Kantzer wrote, "With the spread of moral rot that destroys the roots of a free and just society, we evangelicals need to close ranks with our Catholic neighbors. And with Mormons, conservative Jews, and secularists who share our values...."³ Try to imagine Jesus or Paul in such an alliance!

The Roman Empire was utterly corrupted in government and society, yet Christ never addressed that fact. His only mention of Caesar was in response to the question of paying taxes: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt 22:21). Nor did Christ ever address the evil of the local ruler, Herod. He rebuked the

religious leaders for corruption and heresies and gave the gospel to sinners—but never suggested reforming society. Nor did the apostles lead the early church in social action. They devoted themselves to the gospel.

That devotion to political/social action encourages apostate ecumenism is clear. While admitting that "the doctrine of justification by faith...separat[es] evangelicals and all Catholics," Kantzer approves ECT's declaration that "Attempts by evangelicals to win 'converts' from Catholics...' undermine the Christian mission." What new *Christian mission* is this that denies the gospel to those who need it?! ECT bluntly says it is not "theologically legitimate" to evangelize "active" Catholics!

One would have to be blind not to perceive that much of the evangelical church is now following the same path of political/social action which Fuller Seminary has taken into compromise and ecumenism. Somewhere down this path an apostate church will welcome Antichrist. Only 35 short years ago Roman Catholicism was included among the "Modern Cults" about which Harold Lindsell warned his students in a course by that name at Fuller.⁴ Today, in spite of its false gospel of works and ritual which millions of martyrs faithfully opposed to the death, Catholicism is embraced by our most trusted evangelical leaders!

It takes considerable double-talk to lead the church down this destructive path. Thus Packer has also helped draft and signed (along with 34 other church leaders) a counter document to ECT which acknowledges "radical disagreement" between evangelicals and Catholics re "justification by faith alone as an essential of the Gospel" and "radically disagree[s] with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that unbelievers may be saved by their good works."⁵ So Catholicism is admitted to be a false works gospel. Does Packer therefore denounce ECT for calling active Catholics true Christians who are not to be evangelized? No. He "continue[s] to thank God" for ECT, which he is proud to have signed and which he calls "a good beginning...."⁶

Ironically, Christians are repeating in the church the same error which conservatives recognize and oppose in government and education. The American educational system, the world's most costly, is an international disgrace, with our students ranking last in most academic comparisons. There are about 500,000 violent incidents each month in our schools,

including serious injuries to 1,000 teachers. We have *15 to 20 times* as many students in special education classes as other developed countries. Psychologists increase their influence by inventing new “scientific” labels for what used to be known as laziness, selfishness and disobedience. Spanking is now “child abuse” and correction of any kind is avoided as “negative” and harmful to a “positive self-image,” which is the key to all “behavior modification.” The same delusions have come into the church through “Christian psychology.”

The purpose of school is to teach essential skills and knowledge in subjects which prepare students to earn a living. Psychology provides phony excuses for incompetence, rebellion and sin. No one is guilty; everyone is a victim. The heart is not evil; low self-esteem is the problem. Sin has become “mental illness” requiring not repentance but therapy. Instead of the fundamentals of reading, writing and math, educators consume vital school time teaching environmentalism, sex education (which has only made matters worse⁷), multiculturalism, self-esteem and self-importance. The only hope is a return to the old-fashioned fundamentals of teaching the essentials and enforcing discipline.

The church, too, needs to return to biblical fundamentals and God’s truth without compromise. The church is to love and worship God and to call out of this world citizens for heaven—*not* to reform society. If Christians could persuade everyone on earth to live as uprightly as Nicodemus, they would still be bound for hell—and doubly hard to convince of their need of Christ because of their splendid morality.

Society will not even be reformed when Christ himself rules the world from Jerusalem, with Satan locked up for 1,000 years and earth an Edenic paradise once again. For when Satan is released he deceives millions who make war to destroy Christ (Rv 20:1-9). The Millennium is the final proof that a perfect environment without crime or war and a righteous government are neither the solution nor God’s goal. Sin is in the human heart. Yes, God will destroy this present universe and create a new one without sin. But its inhabitants will be a new race of repentant sinners transformed through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who paid the debt for sin.

This gospel of God’s grace is denied by

every cult and false religion, including Roman Catholicism, where infant baptism removes original sin and makes one a child of God, salvation is in the church and its sacraments, redemption is an ongoing process of perpetually offering the body and blood of Christ upon its altars, and good works merit acceptance with God. We have documented these facts in prior newsletters and in my new book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*.

Sadly, in spite of the Reformation, many Protestant churches carried on some of Rome’s errors: infant baptism, baptismal regeneration and the necessity of works, if not to *earn*, then to *keep*, one’s salvation. These heresies produce two opposite results: a false assurance of salvation because one has been baptized, confirmed and belongs to the right church; or a haunting fear of losing salvation by failure to live a good enough life. Assurance is only found in trusting Christ alone *plus*

**Not by might, nor by power,
but by my spirit, saith the
LORD of hosts.**

Zechariah 4:6

nothing else.

To be saved, I must only *believe* the gospel. There is nothing else that I or any church can do for my salvation. Yes, *one* verse says, “He who believes *and is baptized* shall be saved” (Mk 16:15); but scores of verses, without mention of baptism, declare that he who believes is saved and he who does not believe is damned. *Not one* verse says that he who is not baptized is damned. Clearly we are saved by believing the gospel (Rom 1:16, etc.), not by baptism. Nor is baptism ever mentioned as part of the gospel when it is defined (1 Cor 15:1-4, etc.). We offer a tract on this subject, available upon request.

It is equally unbiblical to teach that salvation can be lost if one fails to live a good enough life, yet this error persists worldwide. Yes, the Scriptures urge us to live holy, fruitful lives for Christ, which is the norm for real Christians. And yes, the warnings to those who do not (if taken in isolation) sometimes seem to teach that one can lose his or her salvation. We also offer a tract titled “Once Saved, Always

Saved?” which goes into the relevant Bible verses in detail on this important subject.

Suffice it to say that if salvation may be lost by not living a good enough life, then those in heaven will be able to boast before God’s throne: “Christ died to *save* me, but *I kept* my salvation by the good life *I* lived, so *I* deserve credit, too, for being here.” On the contrary, salvation both in its reception and retention is all of God and all of grace through Christ—“not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:9). He will share His glory with no one (Isa 42:8, 48:11).

Faith in Christ brings liberty, joy and great peace. Yet many Christians labor under the impossible burden of trying to live up to a standard they can’t maintain in order not to lose their salvation. Christianity isn’t just difficult, it’s impossible. The only one who can live the Christian life is Christ himself. Stop trying to live it in your own strength and let Christ live it through you in the power of the Holy Spirit. Rest in Him!

There are those who reject works for their own salvation, yet work mightily to save others through fleshly attractions and techniques. Surely sinners will come to Christ if they are invited by a beautiful actress, a top athlete or popular public figure. And now we have “virtual reality.” Satan will use it for the greatest seduction ever of mankind. It will enable anyone to have the wildest adventures and even sex orgies in one’s own living room. Paul Crouch is going to be the “*FIRST to use it for the GOSPEL!*” In TBN’s December 1994 newsletter he exults, “What if at the end of the film, *Jesus Christ, Himself*, could walk up to *you* and invite you to *accept HIM?!?*” Yet in His day, multitudes confronted Jesus Christ in person, not some actor or “virtual reality,” and even so they rejected Him.

Would Paul have been more effective if he could have used virtual reality, or at least a rock band or some brick-smashing musclemen on his tour? In fact, he preached the gospel “in weakness and trembling,” and carefully avoided using human wisdom to persuade anyone (1 Cor 2:1-5). People are being persuaded to become “Christians” by fleshly means and for the prosperity or healing or better family life they’ve been promised, rather than by repentance of their sin. Let us, like Paul, devote ourselves to the pure gospel in reliance upon the Holy Spirit to convince and convict and regenerate through His Word.

TBC

Quotable

A wretched, poor and helpless worm, on Thy kind arms I fall.

William Carey, 1761-1834
The epitaph he insisted be on his tombstone

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). Poverty of spirit [is] an absence of self-esteem. Where that kind of spirit is found, it is sweet poverty...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Charles Spurgeon, 1834-1892

The man who is puffed up with self-esteem cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit.

R. A. Torrey, 1865-1928

There is a great need for a spiritual awakening in the evangelical world. Time to wake up, because the Lord’s coming is certainly near, and many, we fear, were never less prepared. Time to lament and do soul-searching in prayer, because churches in search of happiness and success (measured by attendance figures) are increasingly willing to follow the consumer-oriented society. What does the consumer want? Find out and give it to him, and you’ll be a success....Men want to enjoy themselves, be comfortable, be happy, but God wants them to enjoy Him, to be spiritual, to be godly.

Carl Knott, missionary to Spain

Q&A

Question: Dave, you have been accused lately of undermining the Bible and opposing the authority of God’s Word because you don’t insist upon using the King James Version exclusively. How do you respond to such indictments?

Answer: I will publicly defend God’s truth and expose false doctrine regardless of who teaches it, without judging hearts and motives. Heresy that is taught publicly

must be opposed publicly. But I will not publicly defend myself in response to personal attacks against me, no matter how vicious and false—and there have been some lately. In obedience to Christ I am obliged to pursue Matthew 18:15-17 privately with individuals who make false charges (though publicly) against me personally, and I have done so.

As for undermining the Bible and opposing the authority of God’s Word, the falsity of such charges should be apparent to anyone who has read my writings or listened to my talks. Anyone with doubts may read the chapter on *sola scriptura* in my latest book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, or listen to the tape of my debate with Karl Keating on that same subject, or the five-tape series of messages I preached on the sufficiency, inerrancy and authority of God’s Word. Nor is it true that I defend the modern versions and run down the King James Version. I have been living in the KJV for more than 50 years and it is the KJV which I use when I preach and teach. The record speaks for itself. In the past, on occasion, I have quoted a modern version in my books where it seemed to be more understandable to the average reader, particularly the non-Christian.

As for the KJV-only debate, I hesitate to step into that arena because whatever one says only seems to heighten the controversy. However, we have received so much mail on this topic, reflecting confusion from both sides, that I will try once again to bring some balance where I believe it is badly needed. Where doctrinal purity is not involved, we need to respect one another’s sincere differences of opinion. We must disagree courteously and in love and deal with the issues rather than attack persons or motives. There are godly and sincere people on both sides of this controversy.

Let both sides remember that *all* versions are *translations*. For the KJV to be *perfect in every word*, the translators must have had the same infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit *in their translating* as those who wrote the original Greek and Hebrew documents (2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 1:21) had *in their writing*. Claiming such inspiration for the KJV’s translators, some KJV-only advocates even denounce all other translations as New Age or of the devil. Yet the King James Bible translators themselves, far from

claiming inspiration or perfection, confessed that they had consulted other “translators and commentators” to improve their work. They acknowledged that the KJV was not perfect but could be improved, and that there were places where they were uncertain of the exact meaning of some words. They even recommended consulting a variety of translations. Why should I be castigated for agreeing with the KJV translators? The following is from the introduction to the 1611 KJV, titled “The Translators to the Reader” (note that in seventeenth-century English the “u” and “v” were reversed):

Neither were we barred or hindered from going over it again, having once done it [the work of translation]...[nor] were we the first that fell in hand with translating the Scripture into English, and consequently destitute of former helps....Neither did we thinke much to consult the Translators or Commentators, *Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greeke, or Latin*, no nor the *Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch*; neither did we disdaine to reuise that which we had done, and to bring back to the auuill that which we had hammered...vsing as great helps as were needfull....

Yet for all that it cannot be dissembled...[that] it hath pleased God in his diuine prouidence, heere and there, to scatter wordes and sentences of that difficultie and doubtfulnesse, not in doctrinal points that concerne saluation (for in such it hath benee vouched that the Scriptures are plaine) but in matters of lesse moment, that fearfulnesse would better beseeme vs than confidence ...and to resolute upon modestie....There be many words in Scripture, which be neuer found there but once...there be many rare names of certaine birds, beastes and precious stones, &c. concerning which the *Hebrews* themselves are so divided among themselves...so to determine of such things as the Spirit of God hath left (euen in the judgement of the iudicious) questionable, can be no lesse than presumption. Therefore as *S. Augustine* saith, that varietie of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures; so diuersitie of signification and sense in the margine, where the text is not so cleare, must needes doe good, yea, is necessary, as we are perswaded....They that are wise, had rather haue their judgements at libertie in differences of readings, then to be captiuated to one, when it may be the other.

So the KJV translators themselves disa-

gree with those who claim inspiration and inerrancy for the KJV. They admit their own fallibility, the imperfection of their KJV translation, give alternate readings in the margin and recommend consulting a variety of translations! This is only logical. If, as some insist, the KJV is *the* perfect translation and all others are of the devil, then the Spanish, German, French, etc. Bibles are not the Bible either! The whole world must learn seventeenth-century English and read the 1611 KJV if they would have God's Word. Nor could anyone refer back to the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts behind the KJV; for to do so in order to be more certain of the exact meaning would be to suggest that the KJV was not perfect after all. The unreasonableness of that view is obvious.

In fact, the KJV translators take up many pages of their introduction arguing that the Bible needs to be in every language so that all may read it in their "mother tongue" and thus understand it better. That fact, they say, is the justification for their labors to put it into the daily language of their countrymen. These men even argued that "the very worst translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession...is the word of God." How far they were from what some are claiming today! Of course, the KJV translators had not encountered the deliberately perverted translations of today's cults.

They were confident that while the many translations in English or other languages differed on some words and phrases, *no doctrine was affected*. (Doctrine is affected, however, in today's perverted versions such as the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Joseph Smith's Inspired Version, and a few others.) Thus, to tell the millions of people who were saved through reading the NAS or NIV, for example, and who are edified and growing in faith through daily study of such versions that they are using the devil's false Bibles, is, in my opinion, extremism and only causes division and confusion. Rather, suggest consulting the KJV as well.

I was reared on the KJV and use it exclusively in all my study and speaking, only rarely consulting other translations for comparison. Why consult other translations at all? *The KJV translators did so and recommended the practice!* In following their advice we discover that, whereas in some places modern versions

are deficient, in other places they excel. For example, the KJV at 2 Thessalonians 2:2 says not to be troubled by rumors that "the day of Christ is at hand." If one believes in a pretrib Rapture which marks the beginning of the Day of Christ, then it is not disturbing but good news if that day is "at hand." Nor need that be disturbing even if one believes in a mid- or post-trib Rapture. It would only be disturbing if the day of the Lord *had already come*, for that would mean one had been left behind at the Rapture—which is why it is obvious that Paul had taught a pretrib Rapture to these people. The KJV 1611 edition had many marginal notes elsewhere, but none here. One was added later: both the Greek and common sense required it. Today's KJV margin suggests "is now present." That changes the meaning entirely, makes sense, and admits that the 1611 edition wasn't perfect. The NAS reads "that the day of the Lord has come," and the NIV, "has already come." So a *required later revision* (one of many) in the KJV shows that the 1611 edition was not "inspired"—and the revision agrees with the NAS, the NIV and the NKJV!

Furthermore, some modern versions excel in places, *even when it comes to declaring the deity of Christ*. For example, there are eight verses in the New Testament which clearly declare that Jesus is God: John 1:1, Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1 and Revelation 1:8. The KJV is only clear in four of these (Jn 1:1; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5 and Heb 1:8), whereas the NAS and NIV are clear in seven of the eight (the same four plus Ti 2:13; 2 Pt 1:1 and Rv 1:8). For example, in Titus 2:13 the KJV says "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," while both the NAS and NIV say "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ," certainly a more definite declaration that Jesus is God. In 2 Peter 1:1 the KJV says "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," whereas again both the NAS and NIV say "our God and Savior Jesus Christ." (Actually that's what the *Textus Receptus* says in the Greek—the KJV translators simply made a mistake, which was corrected in the NKJV as well.) At Revelation 1:8 the KJV says "the Lord," whereas the NAS and NIV say "the Lord God," clearly declaring that Jesus is God.

If the situation were the other way around (i.e., the KJV clearly declared Christ

to be God in seven of the eight places and the modern versions in only four), some KJV-only advocates would surely accuse the modern versions of downplaying Christ's deity. Instead, they ignore the weaknesses in the KJV while jumping on those in other versions. It is surely helpful to the church to have the deficiencies in modern versions pointed out, and those using them should beware of such improper renderings. At the same time, however, those championing the KJV should honestly acknowledge those places where the modern versions excel.

The fact is that the KJV, NKJV, NAS, and NIV (in spite of some failings in each) clearly teach that Jesus is God, one with the Father; and all four clearly present the gospel and all of the other cardinal doctrines of the Bible if one reads the entire text and doesn't take an isolated verse here or there to prove a point. Therefore, to suggest that the NAS and NIV are "the devil's Bibles" and part of a New Age conspiracy to usher in a one-world religion by destroying God's Word is simply not true and places an unwarranted condemnation upon those who use such versions. Tragically, this faulty perception is causing confusion and division in the church. We must repeat our earlier warning that Gail Riplinger's book, *New Age Bible Versions*, is literally filled with errors and cannot be relied upon as a defense of the KJV. She even lumps the NKJV in with modern versions, whereas it is based upon the same Hebrew and Greek texts as the 1611 King James Version. **TBC**

Endnotes

- 1 *Christianity Today* (Dec. 12, 1994), 60.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 3 *Christianity Today* (July 18, 1994), 17.
- 4 George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 252.
- 5 "Resolutions for Roman Catholic and Evangelical Dialogue," drafted by Michael Horton; revised by J. I. Packer.
- 6 *Christianity Today* (Dec. 12, 1994), 34-37.
- 7 Barbara Whitehead, "The Failure of Sex Education," *The Atlantic Monthly* (Oct. 1994), 55-80.

Jesus Who?

T. A. McMahon

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

2 Corinthians 11:1-4

And [Jesus] saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

Mark 8:29

“Brother, I’m not interested in any of your divisive doctrinal talk. All I care about is knowing that a person loves Jesus. If someone tells me that, no matter what church he goes to, he’s my brother in Christ!” It didn’t seem like the right time or place to get into an argument with this individual. Nevertheless, I felt compelled at least to get a question in before the conversation ended. “When you talk with someone who tells you he loves Jesus, do you ever ask that person, ‘Jesus who?’”

After quick thought the elderly gentleman let me know that he would never ask such a question. “It wouldn’t be loving.”

Whenever I visit friends in Pennsylvania, there is a man whom I make it a point to see. He is a joy to be with, one of the friendliest men I know. Though a committed Muslim, he regards himself as an ecumenist. He’s proud of the fact that he shares some of the beliefs of both Jews and Christians. Occasionally he attends a Presbyterian church with my friends and truly enjoys the experience and their fellowship. Once in a restaurant he was expressing to me and our Christian friends his love for Jesus. He ended his proclamation with these words: “If I could tear away my flesh so that all of you could see deep into my heart, you would know how much I love Jesus.” The emotions that filled his every word were stunning; it’s uncommon to hear such a devout declaration, even in Christian circles.

Getting back to my boysenberry pie, I felt good about my friend’s expression of love when a nagging thought hit me: *Jesus who?* A brief mental skirmish took place over whether or not to ask such a question. My words, however, came out before my

mind had settled the issue. “Tell me about the Jesus you love.” My Muslim friend didn’t hesitate: “He’s the same one you love.” Before I got “doctrinal” with my friend, I thought I should try to show him why it was important to make sure we were talking about the same Jesus.

I used his neighbor, who is a great friend to both of us, as an example. He and I really love the guy. After agreeing on our mutual feelings, I began to give a description of our common friend’s physical attributes: “He’s 5’6”; he’s completely bald; he weighs 320 pounds; he wears a ring in his left nostril.” Actually, I didn’t get quite that far before objections were made. “Wait a minute... he’s easily over 6’4”, I wish I had all his hair, and he’s the thinnest man I know!” My friend added that it was obvious that we weren’t talking about the same person. “Does it matter?” I asked. He gave me an incredulous look. “Of course it does! I don’t have a neighbor fitting your description. You may know someone *else*

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

John 10:14

like that, but it’s not *my* good friend and neighbor.” I pointed out that if I truly believed the description I’d just given, then we couldn’t possibly be friends with the same person. He agreed.

What followed was my description of the Jesus I knew. “He was crucified and died on the cross for my sins. Did the Jesus you know do that?”

“No, Allah took him to heaven before the crucifixion. Judas died on the cross.”

“The Jesus I know is God himself, who became a man. Is that your Jesus?”

He shook his head. “No, Allah alone is God. Jesus was a great prophet, but just a man.” The discussion went on to many other characteristics the Bible ascribes to Jesus. In almost every case, my Muslim friend had a different perspective. Though he remained convinced that he held the correct view, the fact that our contradictory convictions couldn’t be reconciled seemed to dampen his zeal for proclaiming his love for Jesus.

Some may see my questioning as unloving—as proof of the divisiveness of arguing over doctrines. I see it as trying to clear the way for my friend to have a genuine

relationship with the only true Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ—not someone he or other men have wittingly or unwittingly imagined or devised.

Quite simply, doctrines are teachings. They are either true or false. A true doctrine cannot be divisive in a harmful way; that characteristic applies only to false teachings. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom 16:17; also Rom 2:8-9). Jesus, who is the Truth, can only be known in *truth* and by those who seek the truth (Jn 14:6; 18:37; 2 Thes 2:13; Dt 4:29). Christ himself caused *division* (Mt 10:35; Jn 7:35; 9:16; 10:19), division between truth and error (Lk 12:51).

“Jesus who?” is a pivotal question for every believer in Christ. We should first of all ask it of ourselves, testing our own beliefs about Jesus (2 Cor 13:5; 1 Thes 5:21). Misunderstandings about Him inevitably become obstructions in our relationship with Him. The question also may be vital in our fellowshiping with those who claim to be Christians. On a brief airline flight recently, a friend of mine was concerned enough to ask the person next to him some crucial questions about his relationship with Jesus. Although the young man professed to have been a Christian for four years or so and participated in a Christian fellowship for professional athletes, he didn’t really know Jesus nor did he understand the gospel of salvation. My friend led him to the Lord before the plane landed.

All too often, phrases similar to “we stand together with anyone who names the name of Christ” are emotionally charged coverings for ecumenical agendas. The fear of destroying unity plagues those who take seriously such unbiblical propaganda, even to the point of discouraging any vestige of interest in contending for the faith. Astonishingly, “Christian unity” now includes co-laboring for the moral good of society with cults “that name the name of Jesus.”

The cults’ teachings about Jesus include every unscriptural idea imaginable. The “Jesus Christ” of Latter-Day Saints, for example, couldn’t be further removed from the Jesus of the Bible. The Jesus invented by Joseph Smith and after whom he named his church is the first *spirit child* of Elohim, just as all humans, angels, and demons are spirit children of Elohim. This Mormon Jesus became flesh through physical intercourse between Elohim (God the

Father who has a physical body) and the Virgin Mary. Their Jesus is the half-brother of Lucifer. He came to earth to become a god. His sacrificial death gives immortality to every creature (including animals) at the Resurrection. However, whether an individual creature spends eternity in hell or in one of three heavens is totally up to his or her (or its) performance.

The Jesus Christ of the mind-science cults (Christian Science, Religious Science, Unity School of Christianity, etc.) is no different from any other human being. "Christ" is a spiritual idea of God and not a person. Jesus neither suffered nor died for mankind's sins because sin doesn't exist. Rather, he helped humanity to cease from believing that sin and death have any reality. That is "salvation" in so-called Christian Science.

Jehovah's Witnesses also love Jesus, but not the Jesus of the Bible. Before their Jesus was born on earth he was Michael the Archangel. He is a *god*, but not Jehovah God. When their Jesus became a man he ceased to be a god. There was no physical resurrection of the JW Jesus; Jehovah raised his spirit body, hid his physical remains, and now, once again, Jesus exists as an angel called Michael. The Bible promises that when a believer in our Lord and Savior dies, he or she immediately goes to be with Jesus (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21-23). With their Jesus, however, only 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses have that privilege—but not at death, for they are annihilated when they die. That is, they spend an indefinite period in an inactive and unconscious state, in effect, ceasing to exist. My fellowship of love with the biblical Jesus, however, is unbroken and everlasting.

Roman Catholics love Jesus. I did for twenty-some years of my life, but he was very different from the Jesus I now know and love. Sometimes he was still a babe in arms or a young boy, overshadowed and protected by his mother. When I wanted his help I made sure I *prayed* to his mother first. The Jesus to whom I pray now hasn't been a baby for almost 2,000 years. The Jesus I loved as a Catholic resided bodily in a small, boxlike tabernacle on our church altar in the form of a white wafer, while simultaneously inhabiting millions of pieces of bread worldwide. My Jesus is the (physically) resurrected Son of God; He doesn't indwell inanimate objects.

The Roman Catholic Jesus I knew was

the Christ of the crucifix, his body continually hanging on the cross, fittingly symbolic of the perpetual sacrifice of the mass and his unfinished work of salvation. Nearly two millennia ago, the biblical Jesus *fully* paid the debt for my sins. He has no need of the seven sacraments, the liturgy, the priesthood, the papacy, His mother's intercession, indulgences, prayers to and for the dead, purgatory, etc., to help save anyone. Roman Catholics who say they love Jesus, though they may call themselves charismatic Catholics, evangelical Catholics, or born-again Catholics, actually love a Jesus who is not the biblical Jesus. He's "another Jesus."

Even some who claim to be evangelicals promote a different Jesus. The so-called faith-and-prosperity teachers promote a Jesus who was materially prosperous. According to evangelist John Avanzini, whose expensive wardrobe reflects his teachings, Jesus wore designer clothes (a reference to his *seamless* robe) similar to

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.

Philippians 1:9

what kings and wealthy merchants wore. In a convoluted argument, success preacher Robert Tilton claims that being poor is a sin, and since Jesus was sinless, it follows that he must have been extremely rich. Positive-confession teacher Fred Price explains that he drives a Rolls Royce simply because he's following the way of Jesus. Oral Roberts says that because Jesus and the disciples had a treasurer (Judas), they must have had plenty of money.

In addition to preaching a Christ who was materially wealthy, many of the faith teachers, such as Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland, proclaim a Jesus who descended into hell and had to be tortured by Satan in order to complete the atonement for the sins of mankind. That's not the Jesus I know and love.

Tony Campolo's Jesus indwells everyone. Television preacher Robert Schuller presents a Jesus who died on the cross to secure our self-esteem. In support of this Jesus, Christian psychologists and

numerous evangelical preachers tell us that His death on the cross proves our infinite value to God and is the basis for our self-worth. Not only are a variety of ego-enhancing Jesuses being promoted today, but we're also being told by a psychologized "church" that the truth about Jesus may not be as important for our psychological well-being as our own *perception* of Him. That's the basis for the current teaching by psychospiritual integrationist Neil Anderson and others who promote unbiblical inner-healing techniques. We have to forgive Jesus for situations in the past where we *feel* He disappointed or wounded us emotionally. Jesus *who*?

Fellowship with Jesus is the heart of Christianity. It's not something merely imagined but is a reality. He literally indwells all who place their faith in Him as Lord and Savior (Col 1:27; Jn 14:20; 15:4). The relationship we have with Him is both subjective and objective. Our *genuine* personal experiences with Jesus are always in harmony with His objective Word (Is 8:20). His Spirit ministers His Word to us and that knowledge is the foundation for our fellowship with Him (Jn 8:31; Phil 3:8). Our love for Him is demonstrated by and increases through our obedience to what He commands; our trust in Him is strengthened through the knowledge of what He reveals about Himself (Jn 14:15; Phil 1:9). Jesus said, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (Jn 18:37). To whatever degree we believers entertain false beliefs about Jesus and His teachings, we undermine our vital relationship with Him.

Nothing can be better on this earth than the joy of fellowship with Jesus and with those who know and are known by Him. On the other hand, nothing could be more tragic than the offering of one's affections to *another Jesus*, the invention of men and demons. Our Lord prophesied that many would fall prey to that great delusion just prior to His return (Mt 24:23-26). There will be many who, because of the alleged signs and wonders they perform in His name, will convince themselves that they know Jesus and are serving Him. To them He will speak these sobering words: "...I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt 7:23). Rather than being divisive, asking the question "Jesus who?" may be the most loving service one can perform these days. The answer has eternal consequences.

TBC

Quotable

That old enemy of mankind, the devil, has no more subtle device for ruining souls than that of spreading false doctrine Outside the Church he is ever persuading men to maintain barbarous customs and destructive superstitions....

Inside the Church he is ever labouring to sow heresies, to propagate errors, to foster departures from the faith. If he cannot prevent the waters flowing from the Fountain of Life, he tries hard to poison them. If he cannot destroy the medicine of the gospel, he strives to adulterate and corrupt it....

The Divine Comforter of the Church, the Holy Ghost, has always employed one great agent to oppose Satan's devices...the Word of God...expounded and unfolded, the Word explained and opened up, the Word made clear to the head and applied to the heart. The Word is the chosen weapon by which the devil must be confronted and confounded.

The Word was the sword which the Lord Jesus wielded in the temptation. To every assault of the Tempter, He replied, "It is written." The Word is the sword which His ministers must use in the present day, if they would successfully resist the devil. The Bible, faithfully and freely expounded, is the safeguard of Christ's Church....

We live in an age when men profess to dislike dogmas and creeds....He who dares to say of one doctrine that "it is true," and of another that "it is false," must expect to be called narrow-minded and uncharitable, and to lose the praise of men.

J. C. Ryle, Warnings to the Churches (nineteenth century)

Q&A

Question: I keep encountering the teaching that water baptism has no place in this dispensation; that the entire subject of water baptism is Jewish;...that all mention of "baptism" in the Pauline epistles is baptism of the Holy Spirit; ...[and that] baptism in the gospels and the Acts applies to Jewish believers only Can you help me?

Answer: Testing this theory against the Scriptures quickly disproves it. In the Great Commission, Jesus very clearly tells the disciples (and us today) to "preach the

gospel to every creature [i.e., to every race, tribe and individual, not only to the Jews]. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk 16:15-16). It is clear that while failure to be baptized does not damn the soul (not one verse says so), and although it is not part of the gospel ("Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" - 1 Cor 1:17; see also 1 Cor 15:1-4), yet all who believe the gospel are to be baptized. Christ told the disciples to teach or disciple "all nations [i.e., not only Jews but every nationality], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt 28:19). The Great Commission required the disciples to teach their converts to obey everything Christ had commanded them (v 20). Thus each new convert was also to make disciples and teach them to obey all that Christ had taught the original twelve—which included, then and today, baptizing converts from every nation.

We have the record that every Gentile convert was baptized. The Corinthians, who were surely not all Jews but mostly Gentiles, were baptized (1 Cor 1:14-17), as was an Ethiopian when he believed the gospel (Acts 8:35-39). So were the Roman centurion, Cornelius, and his relatives when they believed (Acts 10:47-48). Likewise the Philippian jailor (a Gentile) and his house were baptized after they believed on Christ (Acts 16:30-33). There are other scriptures, but these should be sufficient to show that baptism is for today and for all (not just Jews) who believe the gospel. If this generation is to preach the gospel, which it is commanded to do, then it must continue to baptize all who believe it. If only Jews are to be baptized, then the gospel must be only for them. But that is not biblical and would leave the rest of us unsaved. The gospel is "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [non-Jew]" (Rom 1:16).

While baptism doesn't save, it is an act of obedience on the part of believers who are saved, a declaration to the world that they have been saved not by their good works but by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, of which baptism is a symbol: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:

4). Baptism is therefore inappropriate for infants who have made no choice to believe the gospel. Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 that baptism is not part of the gospel; one is saved without being baptized. But those who believe are baptized and since salvation is for all, baptism is for all, Gentiles as well as Jews.

Question: There seems to be a growing teaching that only those Christians who are living holy, victorious lives at the time of the Rapture will be taken by Christ to heaven. The rest will have to face the Antichrist and be purified by martyrdom. Is this biblical?

Answer: I agree with those who are urging Christians to live holy lives of submission to Christ, His Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. We need more emphasis upon holiness and separation from the world. However, the Bible does not teach that genuine Christians who are not living fully for Christ at the time of the Rapture will be left behind. If so, then what about Christians who at the time of their death were not living fully for Christ? They can't be "left behind." Their souls and spirits, no longer having a living body to inhabit, must go *somewhere*. If those souls don't go to heaven then where do they go? We would have to propose some kind of evangelical purgatory! And if all Christians, on the basis of their saving faith in Christ, regardless of their lives, go to heaven upon death, why would not all Christians be raptured? Moreover, if those left behind at the Rapture are purified by facing Antichrist, how will those who have previously died be purified? In fact, we will all be purified *in heaven* the same way: "For we *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor 5:10).

If one is truly a Christian, even though not living for Christ, the soul and spirit go to be with Christ at death: "absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). In heaven, the redeemed are in conscious bliss in God's presence awaiting the resurrection of their entombed bodies, which "sleep in Jesus" (1 Thes 4:14). Paul's desire was to "depart and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil 1:23), though he was willing, for the sake of those who needed his ministry, to continue "in the

flesh” serving them and Christ here on earth (v 24). Paul would not have wanted to leave this life of service to Christ and the church—and surely would not have called being with Christ “far better”—had it meant to slip into an unconscious state of “soul sleep” as some teach. It is the souls and spirits of those who died trusting in Him whom Christ brings with Him (1 Thes 4:14) to rejoin their bodies at the resurrection.

Notice that “the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air...” (vv 16-17). Surely “the dead in Christ” must mean *all* who died with faith in Christ. Therefore, “we who are alive and remain” must also mean *all* of the living whose trust is in Christ. It makes no sense nor does the Bible teach that Christians alive at the time of the Rapture must be living better lives than many who have died, in order to join them in heaven.

Question (typical of several): Dave, I’m reading your latest book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*. Your research is so thorough, your logic so persuasive, your style so interesting—by God’s grace it’s a “classic.” May God give it a wide reading. It’s not being carried here in Orange County [CA] in the stores that used to carry all your books. Are you being boycotted?

Answer: Seemingly, yes. *Many* Christian bookstores won’t carry my latest book. They will *order* it if asked, but will not stock it on the shelves where customers could see it and it would be readily available. Yet those same stores carry books such as *The Body* by Charles Colson, which calls for union with Roman Catholicism, about which it presents favorable but false information. These stores also carry books by Catholic authors such as Keith Fournier and Peter Kreeft (who also call for union with Rome and promote favorable but false information about Catholicism) as well as magazines such as *Christianity Today* and *Charisma* and *New Covenant*, which likewise carry much false data favorable to Catholicism. Yet they won’t carry an opposing view.

The *Bookstore Journal* (official magazine of the Christian Booksellers Association) presented the blatant lie in a cover article by Peter Kreeft that Catholics don’t pray to Mary, and it encourages Christian

bookstores to cater to the Catholic market. Does commercialism rule? Are profits more important than truth? Do Christian bookstore owners not care that Catholic customers are being deceived by a false gospel, and that evangelicals are being prevented from giving the true gospel to them?

It grieves me that in a land where even secular society protects freedom of conscience, speech and press, Christian bookstores would suppress the truth and deliberately keep vital, factual information from their customers. Perhaps our readers can shame their local bookstores into carrying *A Woman Rides the Beast*. What could be more fair than displaying books favorable to Roman Catholicism along with copies of *Woman* to give the other side? Please pray and do whatever you can to gain a wider circulation for the book.

Baptismal Regeneration?

Dave Hunt

Christ commanded His original disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mk 16:15). Those of every nation who believed in Christ as their Savior were to be baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mt 28:19). These *new* disciples were to preach the gospel everywhere and to baptize those who believed (v 20) through their testimony as Christianity spread worldwide.

Baptism in the early church was by immersion: “they went down both into the water...[W]hen they were come up out of the water” (Acts 8:38-39), etc. Why? Because baptism symbolizes the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection: “we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead...we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

Unfortunately, various innovations and heresies were gradually introduced regarding baptism: that one must be baptized to be saved; indeed, that baptism itself saves the soul even when administered to infants. These heresies became known as the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Most Protestants holding these beliefs today are not aware that they originated with the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages.

The Council of Trent (1545-63) stated that while Christ “merited for us justification by His most holy passion...the instrumental cause [of justification/regeneration] is the sacrament of baptism....If anyone says that baptism is...not necessary for salvation, let him be anathema.”¹ Vatican II (1962-65) reconfirms all of Trent² and reiterates the necessity of baptism for salvation,³ as does the universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church* released by the Vatican in 1993: “Baptism is necessary for salvation...the Church does not know of any [other] means...that assures entry into eternal beatitude....”⁴

Trent anathematizes all who deny that “the merit of Jesus Christ is applied...to infants by the sacrament of baptism” or who deny that by baptism “the guilt of original sin is remitted....”⁵ Today’s *Code of Canon Law* (Canon 849) declares that those baptized are thereby “freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God and...

incorporated in the Church.” Canon 204 states, “The Christian faithful are those who...have been incorporated in Christ through baptism” and are thereby members of the one, true Catholic Church.⁶

For centuries before the Reformation, baptismal regeneration was rejected by Bible-believing Christians, whom the Roman Catholic Church therefore persecuted, tortured and slaughtered by the millions. Non-Catholics taught from Scripture that baptism was only for those who had believed the gospel: “teach all nations...baptizing them [who have believed]” (Mt 28:19); “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:41); “[W]hat doth hinder me to be baptized?...If thou believest [in Christ] with all thine heart, thou mayest” (Acts 8:35-37). Infants can’t believe in Christ.

Consider Cornelius’s household: they heard the gospel, believed it and were baptized. That there were no infants baptized is also clear, for they had all

**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved.**

Acts 16:31

gathered “to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33). “[T]he Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard [and, obviously, understood and believed] the word” (v 44); and they spoke with tongues (v 46). That they had “received the Holy Ghost” (v 47) convinced Peter that they were saved. Therefore, he baptized them (v 48).

Nor can infant baptism be supported from the case of the Philippian jailor who “was baptized, he and all his” (Acts 16:33). Again there were no infants present because Paul and Silas preached the gospel “to all that were in his house” (v 32), and “all his house” *believed* (v 34) and were then baptized.

The early Reformers such as Martin Luther were Catholics who, unfortunately, retained some Catholic dogmas, among them baptismal regeneration and infant baptism. These heresies are still held by some Protestant denominations today. The issue is a serious one. If baptism is essential for salvation, then to reject that gospel is to be damned. But if salvation is through faith in Christ alone, then to add baptism as a

condition for salvation is to reject the true gospel and thus to be eternally lost. The Bible declares that it is wrong to teach salvation by faith in Christ *plus anything else*, such as keeping the Jewish law (Acts 15:24). Paul cursed (anathematized) those who taught this false gospel that damns the soul (Gal 1:8-9). A gospel of salvation through Christ *plus baptism* is equally false.

When Paul reminded the Corinthians of the essential ingredients of the gospel which he preached and by which they had been saved, he made no mention of baptism (1 Cor 15:1-4). In fact, he distinguished between the gospel and baptism: “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...” (1 Cor 1:17). He hadn’t baptized most of the Corinthians, couldn’t remember whom he had baptized, and was thankful that it had been very few (1 Cor 1:14-16)—a strange attitude if baptism is essential to salvation! Yet without baptizing them, Paul declared that he was their father in the faith: “in Christ Jesus I have begotten you *through the gospel*” (1 Cor 4:15).

Then what about Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”? All who believe the gospel are saved, so of course all who believe and are baptized are saved; but that does not say that baptism saves or that it is essential for salvation. Scores of verses declare, with no mention of baptism, that salvation comes by believing the gospel: “[I]t pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that *believe*” (1 Cor 1:21; see also Jn 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; Acts 10:43; 13:38-39; 16:31; Rom 1:16; 3:28; 4:24; 5:1; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Eph 2:8, etc.). *Not one verse*, however, says that baptism saves.

Numerous verses declare that whosoever does not *believe* is lost, but not one verse declares that whosoever is not *baptized* is lost. Surely the Bible would make it clear that believing in Christ without being baptized cannot save if that were the case, yet it *never* says so! Instead, we have examples of those who believed and were saved without being baptized, such as the thief on the cross and the Old Testament saints (Enoch, Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, et al.), to whom Christian baptism was unknown.

It is essential to realize that some baptismal texts do not refer to Christian water baptism, but to one of the seven other baptisms in Scripture. There was the baptism of the Israelites “unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:2); the “baptism of

John” (Mt 21:25; Mk 11:30; Acts 19:3, etc.), which was a baptism “of repentance” (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3; Acts 19:4, etc.); the baptism attributed to Christ before the Cross—“Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples” did the baptizing (Jn 4:1-2; 3:22); the baptism Christ had to endure of suffering and death—“I have a baptism to be baptized with” (Lk 12:50; Mt 20:22; Mk 10:38, etc.); the baptism Christ now performs on His own “with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16); the baptism by the Holy Spirit “into Jesus Christ” (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27) and thereby “into his death” (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12); and the baptism by the Holy Spirit into the church, the one body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).

Then why does the Bible say, “There is *...one* baptism” (Eph 4:4-5)? The explanation is simple but carries profound consequences: baptism of any kind occurs only *once* and is never repeated. In that sense, then, there is only one baptism. Whether one believes that baptism itself saves, or that it symbolizes salvation through identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, the fact that it cannot recur proves that one’s salvation can never be lost. For if one must get saved again as a result of losing one’s salvation, then baptism must be repeated each time—but there is only *one baptism*.

This dogma of “falling away,” like baptismal regeneration, also comes from Roman Catholicism. No Catholic can be certain he is saved; for salvation, which is by works in Catholicism, could be forfeited at any time by failure to continue to perform the works prescribed. Trent declares, “If anyone says that in order to obtain the remission of sins it is necessary...to believe with certainty...that his sins are forgiven him, let him be anathema....If anyone says that he will for certain...have that great gift of perseverance [in the faith] even to the end...let him be anathema.”⁷ While rebaptism is not practiced in Catholicism, the sacraments of penance and the Mass are said to restore saving grace and are thus repeated endlessly.

Yes, but Romans 6:4 states, “[W]e are buried with [Christ] by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead...even so we also should walk in newness of life.” That Paul is not speaking of water baptism, however, but of the spiritual reality it symbolizes, is clear, for he says that through baptism “our old man [sinful nature] is crucified with him [Christ], that

the body of sin might be destroyed.” As a consequence, he urges believers to “reckon” themselves “to be dead indeed unto sin...[L]et not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (vv 6-13).

Paul uses similar language concerning himself when he says, “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20). He is obviously speaking of that same spiritual “baptism” by which we have been placed in Christ and have thus passed with Him through death into resurrection life. If we were literally dead to sin, then we wouldn’t need to “reckon” it true or live the new life by faith; we would automatically never sin again. That a Christian may sin shows that water baptism doesn’t effect a literal crucifixion with Christ. It portrays a spiritual baptism into Christ which the believer must live by faith.

In that context, then, we can understand Peter’s declaration, “The like *figure* whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 3:21). He is no more saying that the physical act of baptism literally saves us than Paul is saying that it literally makes us dead to sin. The few difficult, isolated verses such as these cannot contradict the overwhelming number of other scriptures which are crystal clear. Water baptism, says Peter, is a “*figure*” or symbolization of a spiritual baptism into Christ effected by the Holy Spirit and which is settled forever in heaven but which must be lived out by faith while we are here upon earth.

Significantly, though Paul baptized a few, Christ never baptized anyone (Jn 4:2)—very odd if baptism saves. The Savior of the world must have deliberately avoided baptizing to make it clear that baptism has no part in salvation. Yes, Christ said we must be “born [again] of *water* and of the Spirit” to be saved (Jn 3:5), but it is unwarranted to assume that “water” here means baptism. To do so would contradict the wealth of Scripture we have seen which proves salvation is not by baptism.

Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, a rabbi to whom “water” would not mean *baptism* (which was unknown in Jewish law) but the ceremonial cleansing of someone who had been defiled (Ex 30, 40; Lv 13, 15, etc.). And that is what Christ meant. His death would make it possible to “sanctify and cleanse [His church] with the washing of water by the word [of the gospel]” (Eph 5:25-27). Christ said, “Now ye are *clean through the word* which I have spoken” (Jn 15:3). Like Christ, Paul put

water and the Spirit together, referring to the “washing of regeneration” and linking it with the “renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Ti 3:5). We are born again by the Holy Spirit and by the Word or gospel of God, which is sometimes called “water” because of its cleansing power. As Peter said, we are “born again...by the word of God” (1 Pt 1:23).

It was obviously this figure of Old Testament ceremonial cleansing which Peter communicated to his Jewish audience in his Pentecost sermon: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). It is clear from the many other scriptures we’ve given that Peter wasn’t saying that baptism saves, but that it offered a ceremonial cleansing uniquely applicable to his Jewish hearers. To be baptized was to be identified before the fanatical Jews of Jerusalem with this hated Jesus Christ as one’s personal Savior. Baptism cost family and friends and endangered one’s life, as it still does in Israel and Muslim countries. Those who are afraid to take this public stand in such cultures are even today not considered to be true believers. Thus for a Jew to be publicly baptized at that time in that culture was, in a sense, to “wash away [his] sins” (Acts 22:16), as Ananias told Saul.

“[T]he gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth [it]” (Rom 1:16). That gospel, as Paul preached it, required faith in Christ’s blood poured out in death on the Cross for the sins of the world and said nothing about baptism. To preach baptismal regeneration is to preach a false gospel that cannot save, which is why Paul cursed those who did so. The difference between faith in Christ alone and faith in Christ *plus baptism* has eternal consequences. Let us stand firmly for, and faithfully preach, the true gospel that saves. TBC

Endnotes

- 1 H. J. Schroeder, trans., *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Tan Books, 1978), 33, 53.
- 2 *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P., (Costello Publishing Company, 1988), rev. ed., 412.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 365.
- 4 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (The Wanderer Press, 1994), 224, 320.
- 5 *Trent*, 22, 23, 54.
- 6 *Code of Canon Law* (Paulist Press, 1985), 122, 614.
- 7 *Trent*, 44.

Quotable

Years ago you thought you could effect something in your life [for God]. You had energy...could organize efficiently...[had] intrepid courage, wise counsel, quick sympathy....But all this is over now, and you are compelled reluctantly to confess that the total residuum is disappointing. At the best, our Ishmaels are like wild asses' colts. And you are coming to think that the remainder of your life will never rise above the dead levels of the past, will never achieve any large success for God, will never be fruitful in the conversion of men....

Wait! [Hear what God would say]: "What nature cannot do, Almightyness can. What human energy cannot effect, the Divine Spirit will. Till now thy might has hindered Me, has forced Me to wait...My Might has been thwarted, frustrated, neutralized by thy trust in thyself. But now that this [trust in self] has passed, there is room for My Omnipotence to work, and I, the Almighty God, swear by Myself...that if thou wilt fulfill the conditions of My covenant [trust and obey], I will make thee abundantly fruitful...."

F. B. Meyer

Meet for The Master's Use

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pt 5:6). If you could see what every stirring of pride does to your soul, you would beg of everything you meet to tear the viper from you, though with the loss of a hand or an eye. If you could see what a sweet, divine, transforming power there is in humility, how it expels the poison of your nature, and makes room for the Spirit of God to live in you, you would rather wish to be the footstool of all the world than lack the smallest degree of it.

Andrew Murray, Humility

Q&A

Question: I've recently heard some rather persuasive arguments by Catholics for purgatory. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 teaches a purification by fire of believers after death. Hebrews 12:14, "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," says we

must be made absolutely pure to enter heaven, as does the statement, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8). What about such scriptures?

Answer: In 1 Corinthians 3 it is the believer's works, not the believer himself, that will be tested by fire. Nor is Paul speaking of literal fire any more than he is of literal wood and gold. He is speaking metaphorically, calling some works wood, hay, stubble (which fire burns) and others gold, silver and precious stones (which fire purifies). There is nothing here (or elsewhere in Scripture) to support Catholicism's heresy that flames in a mythical purgatory purge the individual and thereby expiate his sins. Paul is dealing entirely with the quality of works one has done for Christ and what reward will therefore be received, if any.

Elsewhere Paul says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done [i.e., works] in his body, according to that he hath done [worked], whether it be good or bad." In Revelation 22:12, Christ says, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be." Entrance into heaven is not the question, but the reward the Christian will receive in heaven, the crowns we will cast at the feet of our Lord who redeemed us (Rv 4:10).

Paul likens the Christian life to running a race for a prize: "[T]hey (athletes) do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible [crown]" (1 Cor 9:25). Paul called his converts his "crown of rejoicing" (1 Thes 2:19; Phil 4:1). There are other crowns to be earned as well: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tm 4:8); "ye shall receive a crown of glory" (1 Pt 5:4); "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rv 2:10). It is possible to slack off in the Christian life and thus lose, not our salvation, but a crown we had previously won: "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rv 3:11). Salvation is by grace alone, but the reward we receive is based upon our works, which will be tested and their quality revealed at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

As for verses such as Matthew 5:8 and Hebrews 12:14, the Scripture is clear that

we do not attain to a personal holiness or purity that qualifies us for God's presence. We are purged of sin not by our own suffering here or in some mythical purgatory, but through faith in the blood of Christ that was shed for our redemption: "when he [Christ] had by himself purged our sins" (Heb 1:3); "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission [purging of sin]" (Heb 9:22); "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth [purges] us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7); "they...washed [purged] their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb [Christ]" (Rv 7:14). There is no blood shed in purgatory (even if such a place existed) and thus no purging of sin there. The same is true of the Mass, which is called "an unbloody" perpetuation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and thus of no value in cleansing sin.

Peter declared, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, [He] the just for [us] the unjust, that he might bring us to God [not to purgatory]" (1 Pt 3:18). In contrast, Catholicism says that though Christ endured the eternal punishment for sin, we must personally suffer the temporal punishment to become pure enough to enter heaven. Not only does the dogma of purgatory contradict the Bible, but there is an obvious contradiction within the dogma itself. Christ's death, it is said, couldn't purify us because that requires personally suffering for our sins. Yet it is also taught that after our death Masses said for us, the good deeds and suffering of the living on our behalf (such as the stigmata of a Padre Pio), rosaries being said for us, etc., can reduce or even eliminate purgatorial suffering entirely—so we don't have to personally suffer after all! Amazingly, what Christ's redemptive death on the Cross couldn't accomplish, the repetition of the Mass, penance, rosaries, good works, etc. can accomplish. (For a further discussion, see *A Woman Rides the Beast*.)

Question: The papers have recently quoted several Christian leaders justifying from Scripture the murders of abortionists, such as those by John Salvi. They claim that taking a life in order to save innocent lives is a biblical principle. What do you think?

Answer: Bible truth is not understood by isolating one verse, but by taking the Bible as a whole. For example, although the

Bible commands us not to “bear false witness” (Ex 20:16; Mt 19:18, etc.), yet Rahab the harlot was commended for telling a lie that saved the lives of the two spies Joshua had sent (Jos 2:4-6). God blessed her for her faith in Him (Jos 6:17, etc.). This is not “situational ethics” but common sense and faithfulness on the side of righteousness established as a biblical principle.

Likewise, the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex 20:13), does not prohibit all taking of life. Christ explained that it means, “thou shalt do no *murder*” (Mt 19:18). The entire Old Testament indicates that taking up arms in self-defense or to possess the promised land and to protect the people of God does not violate the commandment not to *kill* because to do so is not *murder*.

As for today, Romans 13:1-4 reminds us that civil rulers in enforcing upon their citizens God’s moral laws (which are written in every conscience - Rom 2:14-15) are authorized of God to use the sword. Surely a policeman who is forced to shoot someone in order to save the lives of hostages being threatened with death is acting within the Scriptures. Likewise, a citizen could do the same as a *de facto* agent of the authorities acting in the interests of civil order and safety.

Then what about abortion foes killing a doctor to prevent him from murdering babies in the womb? The leaders of the pro-life movement *do not* believe such killings are justified by Scripture—and they are correct. Anyone joining Operation Rescue, for example, must pledge to be scrupulously nonviolent “in word and in deed.” There are a number of reasons why such killings are in fact murders and are thus prohibited by Scripture.

The obvious primary reason is that taking an abortionist’s life does not save any lives. Abortion, though wrong, is protected by civil law and there are always more doctors who will carry on this “legal procedure” in the place of those removed. It is therefore a senseless killing, and thus murder, to shoot an abortionist—and even more so to kill a receptionist and shoot indiscriminately at innocent bystanders as John Salvi did.

If an abortionist (or group of them) were aborting babies against the will of the pregnant mothers and the only way to stop the slaughter was to forcibly prevent him (or them), that action would be justified.

Such, however, is not the case. The primary guilt for abortion does not lie with the doctors performing the operation but with the pregnant women demanding the murders in their wombs. The major accessory to the crime is the government which legalizes these murders.

Obviously, abortion cannot be stopped by violent means. Doctors are replaceable, and violence against the patient would kill the baby. Biblically, the only viable opposition is to preach against abortion, provide public information and warnings concerning the fact that abortion of one’s baby is murder and will be judged by God as such; and to offer biblical counsel and alternatives to pregnant women.

Question: You said it is unbiblical to teach that salvation can be lost if one fails to live a good enough life. What about the story Jesus taught about forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-35? Can we actually claim salvation if we cling to unforgiving and bitter attitudes? It seems to me that God does require certain fruits from our lives in order for us to meet the requirement for forgiveness, sonship and heaven (Jn 15:2, Lk 13:24, Mt. 7:21-23).

Answer: There is no question that although I can’t *earn* my salvation, if the salvation Christ provided must be *kept* by my living a good enough life, then I will be able for all eternity to share the glory with Christ for my being in heaven. He provided my salvation; I kept it. What I do is then equally essential with what He does.

In the passage to which you refer, as well as all of the others which deal with the holiness, goodness or charitableness of life we as Christians are to live, the required good works are presented as *evidence* of our salvation, not the *means* by which we either earn or keep it. There is no conflict between Paul and James. Paul clearly tells us that salvation is by grace through faith and not of works (Eph 2:8-10, etc.). James just as clearly tells us that the *evidence* that we are saved comes through *works*. This does not mean that with no good works we are not saved, as 1 Corinthians 3, which we dealt with in the first “Q&A,” says, “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss [of reward]: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (v 15).

Note carefully that James is not saying

that we are saved by works, but that a professed faith (“though a man *say* he hath faith” - 2:14) that is not evidenced by works is dead and cannot save. James is warning us that a mere profession of faith can be empty, from the lips but not the heart, and that if we are not willing to live what we profess, then it is likely that we are not saved at all because our faith is not genuine.

Christ is giving us another and very practical example. He is saying that if I have truly received the grace of God, then I will be gracious to others. He is challenging us to examine our professed faith. How can I expect God to forgive me when I am not willing to forgive others? There are people who claim to be Christians, yet they have nursed a grudge, hatred, animosity against others for years because of the wrong someone has allegedly done to them. Christ here and elsewhere says that such a person needs either to repent and allow God’s love to work in his heart the same forgiveness of the other that Christ has effected for him, or he should admit that he is not saved at all.

Thank you for your question. It is an important one and should cause us all to reexamine our hearts before God. “[F]orgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us” (Lk 11:4); “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mk 11:25-26).

What About ETIs?

Dave Hunt

Many deceptive lies are instilled in the minds of today's youth via schools, literature, films and television. Popular delusions abound which deny God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Two are now held generally worldwide: 1) evolution (taught as fact in public schools); and its corollary, 2) the existence of intelligent life on other planets. If life evolved on earth by chance, then why not elsewhere? The possibility that some beings may even possess science and technology far beyond ours is extremely exciting to mankind: we're not alone in the universe!

Robert Jastrow, founder and for many years director of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies (which played a key role in the Pioneer, Voyager and Galileo space probes) suggests that life could have been evolving on some planets 10 billion years longer than on earth. Those beings could be as far beyond man on the evolutionary scale as man is beyond a worm and would seem like gods to us when we meet them—an exciting but also terrifying thought.

Serious international efforts have been underway for years to contact extraterrestrial intelligences (ETIs). In the US the program is titled Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI). Many nations pour huge investments into sending radio signals into space and listening for some coherent message in return. The Voyager spacecraft, which by now may have left our solar system to probe deeper into space, carried this message on a gold record affixed to its exterior which, it was hoped, some friendly life might encounter and as a result contact earth in reply:

We cast this message into the cosmos...this is a present from a small, distant world....We hope someday, having solved the problems we face, to join a community of galactic civilizations. [signed] Jimmy Carter, president of the USA, June 16, 1977

It is also popularly believed that beings from other planets have been visiting earth for some time in spacecraft the composition and propulsion of which our scientists can't explain. These craft are therefore called

Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs). Thousands of sightings are reported annually around the world, most of which have some earthly explanation. That still leaves numerous sightings which, upon careful investigation, seem to indicate that something "not of this earth" is visiting us for unknown reasons.

There have been several government investigations of UFOs. The results remain secret. According to files released under the Freedom of Information Act, the FBI was involved in the search for evidence at alleged UFO crash sites. However, in a letter dated September 27, 1947, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote to Air Force Major General George C. McDonald that he was directing the Bureau "to discontinue all investigative activity regarding the reported sightings of flying discs," and to refer inquiries to the Air Force.¹ Nevertheless, the FBI continued to be involved. Consider the following FBI inter-

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth....

Philippians 2:10

office memorandum dated 10/2/62 from W. R. Wannall to W. C. Sullivan: "There appears to be no necessity for additional instructions...relative to flying saucers. This matter will again be reviewed on or about 10/1/63." ²

FBI files of which I have copies include numerous reports of mysterious flying objects seen by competent observers, including Air Force pilots and FBI personnel. The great speed of the objects, the absence of any means of propulsion known on earth, and maneuvers impossible for earth craft indicate an origin beyond this planet. The reports also include observations of indentations from a heavy object as well as burned and radioactive areas where the UFOs allegedly landed. A CIA (date obliterated) memorandum from the Deputy Director to the Director of Central Intelligence states,

Reports of incidents convince us that there is something going on that must have

immediate attention. The details of some of these incidents have been discussed by AD/SI with DDCI. Sightings of unexplained objects at great altitudes and traveling at high speeds in the vicinity of major U.S. defense installations are of such nature that they are not attributable to natural phenomena or known types of aerial vehicles.³

Any possibility that intelligent life on earth or elsewhere evolved by chance can be quickly dismissed. Eminent British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle points out that "even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup" from which life is made, the chance of producing the basic enzymes of life by random processes without intelligent direction would be approximately one in 10 with 40,000 zeros after it. The impossibility of that number can be seen in the following illustration. The likelihood of reaching out and by chance plucking a particular *atom* out of the *universe* would be about 1 in 10 with 80 zeros after it. If every atom in this universe became another universe, the chance of reaching out at random and plucking a particular atom out of all of those universes would be 1 in 10 with 160 zeros after it.

Hoyle then explains why this completely impossible theory is still honored, and accuses the evolutionists of self-interest, unfair pressure, and dishonesty:

This [mathematical impossibility] is well known to geneticists and yet nobody seems to blow the whistle decisively on the theory...because of its grip on the educational system....You either have to believe the concepts, or you will be branded a heretic.⁴

In *Chance and Necessity*, Nobel molecular biologist Jacques Monod gives a dozen or more reasons why evolution could not occur. For example, the essential characteristic of DNA is its perfect replication of itself. Evolution could only occur through a DNA failure, and it is absurd to imagine evolving even a single cell, much less the human brain, from a series of random and harmful mistakes in the DNA. Yet, after giving many reasons why life could not develop by chance, Monod concludes that it *must* have.

Monod has no valid reason for his "faith." He simply refuses to accept divine creation. British Museum of Natural History senior

paleontologist Colin Patterson declares,

Evolutionists, like the creationists... are nothing more than believers themselves. I had been working on this stuff [evolution] for more than twenty years, and there was not one thing I knew about it. It's quite a shock to learn that one can be so misled for so long.⁵

A compromise belief is becoming popular in the church: that God allowed evolution to proceed, then transformed an ape-like creature into Adam. But the Bible says that the moment God breathed life into the form He molded from dust it was a man, Adam (Gn 2:7). So he couldn't have been transformed from something already alive. Furthermore, death did not invade earth until Adam sinned ("by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" - Rom 5:12), so prior species could not have gone through the alleged process of dying and "evolving higher."

Couldn't God have created intelligent life on other planets? Yes, but the Bible declares that this earth alone has intelligent physical life. It is to this earth that Satan came to spread his rebellion; and to this earth Christ came to die for man's sin. The battle between God and Satan for the universe is centered here. Christ's sacrifice on the cross purified the entire universe and heaven itself of sin (Heb 9:23):

That...he might gather together in one all things in Christ,...in heaven, and...on earth...(Eph 1:7,10).

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth...(Phil 2:10).

And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself;...things in earth, or things in heaven (Col 1:20).

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth...heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever (Rv 5:9, 13).

...all things shall be subdued unto him [Christ]...that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:28).

Contrast the above with the Mormon belief in trillions of gods, and trillions of Christs who died on trillions of planets beside our own. It is clear from Scripture

that the only reconciliation to God in the entire universe is through Christ's once-for-all sacrifice on the cross—a sacrifice that was not repeated on any other planet:

...by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us....*once* in the end of the world hath [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself....

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God....For by *one* offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified [and]...there is *no more* offering for sin (Heb 9:12,26; 10:12,14,18).

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth:...all things were created by him, and for him.

Colossians 1:16

Any intelligent created beings with the power of choice would sin. God does not need to experiment ("Man sinned, but let me try again on another planet..." etc.). Thus if there are other sinners scattered throughout the universe, God put them there intentionally. But why? Surely one planet of rebels is enough!

Sinners need redemption, and redemption for the entire universe has been provided through Christ's sacrifice on this planet. We earthlings have the testimony of eyewitnesses, archaeological evidence, historical evidence, and fulfilled prophecies. Such proofs would not be available to beings on distant planets who had to believe in a Christ who died on this planet.

Moreover, for Christ to redeem us, He had to become one of us, a man who died in our place. To redeem any beings on other planets, He would have had to become one of them also. But the Bible says that Christ is the God-Man forever; and that He died only *once*, and it was here on earth. It is upon earth that Satan will attempt to establish his counterfeit kingdom through a *man*, Antichrist. To this end, Satan may use UFOs and the belief in ETIs to establish his false Christ. (See *Whatever Happened*

to Heaven?) Interestingly, Robert Jastrow suggests that life beyond earth

...may be far beyond the flesh-and-blood form that we would recognize. It may [have]...escaped its mortal flesh to become something that old-fashioned people would call spirits. And so how do we know it's there? Maybe it can materialize and then dematerialize. I'm sure it has magical powers by our standards....⁷

What a great idea for Satan to use in putting Antichrist in power! *Who needs God and Christ if ETIs have magic powers?!* Not only spirit mediums, psychics and kooks, but now scientists, who have rejected God, are trying to contact "spirit beings," whom they believe are highly evolved entities with greater knowledge and powers than humans possess. Surely if contact were made with "friendly" ETIs, earth's leaders would want to "benefit" from their counsel and help! Syrian President Hafez Assad, long fascinated by UFOs, believes that "only an extraterrestrial power could make peace between the superpowers."⁸

But there are no physical ETIs. The only intelligent life beyond earth is all in spirit form: God, angels, Satan and demons. Satan and his minions are able to invade the physical realm. Satan put boils on Job, caused Sabians and Chaldeans to rob Job and kill his servants, caused a "great wind" to destroy a house and kill Job's children—and in each case one person was left alive to bring the news to Job. Satan took Christ to the top of a mountain and to the pinnacle of the temple. Jannes and Jambres (2 Tm 3:8) were able to duplicate by the power of Satan many of the miracles Moses and Aaron performed by the power of God.

What limits there may be upon satanic "power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thes 2:9) we don't know: Satan will cause the whole world to worship Antichrist as "God" (Rv 13:8). The fact that mankind is now open to contact and receive advice and help from demons who are manifesting as UFOs and masquerading as ETIs helps to set the stage for the last days "great delusion" (2 Thes 2:11).

It was here on earth that Christ defeated Satan on the cross, and it is here to earth that Christ will return to destroy Satan. It

is on earth that Christ will reign for 1,000 years; it is to the new earth that the heavenly Jerusalem will descend (Rv 21:1-2) and from there Christ will rule the new universe for all eternity. No other planetary civilization exists.

Satan's clever lies have one purpose: to divert man from God's truth that alone will set him free from sin and self (Jn 8:31-32). We believers in our Lord Jesus Christ must have biblical answers for our loved ones to deliver them from Satan's seductive lies, whatever they may be. Be Bereans. Know the Scriptures. Declare God's truth boldly and live it consistently. TBC

Quotable

Think gently of the erring;
You know not of the power
With which the dark temptation came
In some unguarded hour;
You may not know how earnestly
They struggled, or how well,
Until the hour of weakness came
And sadly thus they fell.

Think gently of the erring;
Oh, do not now forget
However darkly stained by sin,
He is your brother yet;
Heir of the selfsame heritage,
Child of the selfsame God.
He has but stumbled in the path
Which you in weakness trod.

Speak gently to the erring;
You yet may lead them back,
With holy words and tones of love,
From misery's thorny track;
Forget not you have sometimes sinned,
And sinful yet may be;
Deal gently with the erring, then,
As God has dealt with thee.

J. A. Fletcher, *Grace at Work*

The above is much needed, especially for those who see clearly the apostasy and the need for correction. Lest the above be misunderstood, however, or become a one-sided emphasis, we present with it the following:

The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has

become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions.

A. W. Tozer

Q&A

Question: Some well-meaning person must have sent in my name for your mailing list and I find it interesting for someone raised in the Catholic Church. My question is this: If a Roman Catholic believes wholeheartedly in the Lord Jesus Christ and is committed to serving Him as his Lord; and if he believes that the only way his sins can be forgiven is through Christ's death as atonement for those sins, and the believer's repentance, how come he is not saved? Suppose a person has salvation by faith alone, does he lose that salvation by believing in infant baptism? Does he lose his salvation by believing that communion is really the body and blood of Christ, as the Lord said it was? Does he lose his salvation if he believes in purgatory? I will look forward to reading your answer in a future issue of "The Call."

Answer: Anyone who believes the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom 1:16), is saved, whether he be called Catholic, Baptist, etc. If, however, a Roman Catholic "believes wholeheartedly in the Lord Jesus Christ," as you suggest, then he would find himself in great conflict with the doctrines and practices of his Church. It is logically impossible for a Roman Catholic to truly believe the gospel that saves and at the same time to believe the tenets of Catholicism.

Let me ask you how a person can believe that Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins is an accomplished fact of history and that He is now at the Father's right hand in heaven in a resurrected, glorified body—and at the same time believe that He exists bodily as a wafer on Catholic altars where He is perpetually suffering the agonies of the Cross and being literally "immolated in the sacrifice of the Mass" (Vatican II, Flannery, pp 102-103)? How can a person believe that Christ's redemptive work on the cross is "Finished!" as He himself said (Jn 19:30)—and at the same time believe that

the Mass is a perpetuation of Christ's sacrifice? How can one "perpetuate and make present" any past event? It is logically impossible. One may *remember* or *memorialize* a past event, but one cannot perpetuate it in the present. And why would that be necessary inasmuch as Christ's death and resurrection fully accomplished God's purpose?

Let me ask you how any person can believe that Christ does not offer Himself *repeatedly*, as were the Old Testament sacrifices (Heb 9:25; 10:1-3), but that "once... hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself... Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many" (9:26,28), "this man [Christ], after he had offered *one sacrifice* for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God... For by *one offering* he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified... there is *no more offering for sin*" (10:12-18)—and at the same time believe that the Mass is a "propitiatory sacrifice" that takes away sin and that in it "the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1367)? How can one believe, as Vatican II states, that through Catholic liturgy, "especially in the divine *sacrifice* of the Eucharist, *the work of our redemption is accomplished* [i.e., is an ongoing process]" (Flannery, p 1)—and at the same time believe that the work of our redemption was accomplished once for all by Christ on the cross, as so many scriptures clearly state (Heb 9:12; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14, etc.)? How can one believe that by simple faith in Christ one receives eternal life and the assurance of heaven as a free gift of God's grace, as the gospel that saves declares—and at the same time believe that God's grace and the merits of Christ (plus the merits of Mary and the saints—who needs them if Christ is sufficient?!) are contained in a treasury which the Roman Catholic Church possesses and from which she dispenses in installments bits and pieces of this grace (Vatican II, Flannery, p 66, etc.) for attending Mass, saying the rosary, penance, etc., etc.?

A Catholic can't believe in Christ alone but in Christ plus baptism and the sacraments and other helps given by the Church. Paul cursed the Judaizers who taught that in addition to faith in Christ's finished work one also must keep the Jewish law. That

destroys the gospel. How, then, can one believe in the gospel of Christ plus baptism for salvation and the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice and the other "sacraments of the New Law" which Trent and Vatican II say are *essential for salvation*, the necessity of the Church and its priesthood, the intercession of Mary, purgatory, indulgences, etc.? You must believe one gospel or the other; you can't believe two contradictory gospels at the same time. Whoever believes in Christ alone, is saved. Whoever believes in Christ plus *anything else* for salvation, is lost. He has rejected the gospel of Christ which alone saves those who believe it (Rom 1:16). And, indeed, those who preach this "other gospel" come under Paul's anathema (Gal 1:6-8)!

Question: I recently saw a news release put out by Charles Colson's office titled "Evangelical Leaders Resolve Differences on Evangelical-Catholic Paper." It said that in January, Colson, J. I. Packer and Bill Bright (signatories to Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium") had met with John Ankerberg, John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul and several other nonsigners and are now in agreement. This distressed me! What do you know about this meeting? Is there a compromise?

Answer: It is my understanding that Ankerberg, MacArthur, Sproul and several others of like concern (hereafter referred to as "anti-ECT group") met with Colson, Packer and Bright in an attempt to persuade these brethren to repent of having signed ECT and to renounce that document. Instead, Colson, Packer and Bright (hereafter referred to as "ECT signers") signed a "Doctrinal Statement" which affirms "the historic Protestant understanding of salvation by faith alone (*sola fide*)." There was no "agreement" or document signed by the anti-ECT group.

Unfortunately, a false impression was given by the news release, especially by its heading ("Evangelical Leaders Resolve Differences on Evangelical-Catholic paper"), which Colson supplied on his own and which shocked the anti-ECT group when they saw it. I was shocked that the anti-ECT group would agree to the news release at all, even without the misleading title. It seems that to prevent a split among evangelicals,

the anti-ECT group agreed under pressure to something which they never intended. They remain as opposed as before to ECT. In his March newsletter, John Ankerberg says, "We wish that Chuck Colson, J. I. Packer, Bill Bright and all of our other Protestant friends who signed the ECT document would delete their names from it and discard it." Sadly, the news release gives a far different impression.

Let me explain briefly. The news release says, "Out of this meeting has come the following statement," which makes it seem that all present were in accord. But what was settled, and what agreement was reached? Really nothing! The "Doctrinal Statement" which the ECT signers signed changed nothing. They claimed that belief before they signed ECT, and they still express no regret for having signed it. Nor is ECT changed by this statement.

Furthermore, the "Doctrinal Statement" includes much more. It begins by justifying the signing of ECT: "We Protestants, who signed ECT, took this action to advance Christian fellowship, cooperation, and mutual trust among true Christians..." Thus is perpetuated ECT's implication that all active Catholics believe the gospel and are thus "true Christians." Nothing could be further from the truth, as we have already documented!

While the statement says that the ECT signers do not accept "Roman Catholic doctrinal distinctives or endorse the Roman Catholic Church system," it embraces "cooperation with evangelically committed Roman Catholics" and leaves intact ECT's horrendous statement: "[I]t is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community [evangelicals] to proselytize [a Catholic term for evangelize] active adherents of another Christian community [Catholics]." What is the average person to conclude? Obviously, that all active Catholics are true Christians and "evangelically committed." And whatever Catholic beliefs and practices are not accepted by evangelicals don't affect salvation, just as there are such differences among Protestant denominations. Again, far from true!

Regrettably, the meeting and news release were a triumph for all (Catholics included) who signed ECT. The evangelical ECT signers are declared to hold to the true gospel; they are justified for having signed

ECT; that document is approved as signed, including the implication that all active Catholics are true Christians and not to be evangelized; and the anti-ECT group has dropped any objections they had to that document. That is *not* what Ankerberg, MacArthur, Sproul, et al. intended, but, unfortunately, that is the impression given. I urge the anti-ECT group to clarify their position.

Endnotes

- 1 Copy of letter on file.
- 2 Copy of memorandum on file.
- 3 Copy of memorandum on file.
- 4 From interview by AP correspondent George Cornwall, quoted from *Times-Advocate* (Escondido, CA, Dec. 10, 1982), A10-11.
- 5 *Harpers* (Feb. 1985), 49-50.
- 6 Douglas Dewar and L. M. Davies, "Science and the BBC," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, (Apr. 1943), 167.
- 7 "GeoConversation," interview with Dr. Robert Jastrow, *GEO* (Feb. 1982), 14.
- 8 Interview, *Time* (Oct. 20, 1986), 56-57.

Experience-Driven Spirituality

T. A. McMahon

In a recent editorial entitled “A Time to Build Bridges,” *Charisma* founding editor and publisher Stephen Strang seemed hopeful that the Holy Spirit was doing a great work of reconciliation. He announced that historic church rifts were being mended and that fast-growing organizations such as Promise Keepers (he publishes its official magazine, *New Man*) were breaking down denominational barriers. Strang was particularly excited about an upcoming congress designed to bring together Catholic and Protestant charismatics and featuring as speakers Benny Hinn, Pat Robertson and Rainier Cantalamessa, the personal preacher to Pope John Paul II.¹

The charismatic publisher’s follow-up editorial encouraged readers “to tear down the walls between Pentecostals and evangelicals.” He believes it is necessary for a “paradigm shift [to take place] in the thinking of those evangelicals who are paranoid about things they consider ‘charismatic’ or ‘Pentecostal.’”² A shift is indeed in process, but it is moving from sound doctrine to a unity based on feelings and from truth to error, as God’s Word is brushed aside in the current rush for the experiential.

If what has been termed “the Laughing Revival” can be used as a gauge, the shift is not only taking place; it’s in high gear. Endorsed by *Charisma* and a host of well-known charismatic leaders, this phenomenon has been widely covered by national and international media, both secular and religious. It has been characterized by mass laughter, ecstatic trance, loss of physical control, barking, roaring, grunting, moaning, alleged prophetic utterances and claims of physical and emotional healings. Those promoting this phenomenon believe it is the beginning of “the great last-days revival” which will bring about the final unity of Christendom.

One of the astounding aspects of this alleged revival is the growing number of denominational groups involved. For example, consider what’s happening at the Toronto Airport Vineyard, the flagship church of these “holy laughter” manifestations. Hundreds of thousands of

seekers—including an estimated 10,000 pastors—from all over the world have made pilgrimages to partake of the “blessing.” They include not only charismatics and Pentecostals but Baptists, Anglicans, Mennonites, Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Catholics and others.

ABC television featured the phenomenon on a network special, and reporter Peter Jennings shared this perceptive insight in his introduction of the Vineyard churches: “What you will see here is part of the fastest growing trend in contemporary Christianity. It is called experiential, or charismatic, Christianity. The idea is to come and have an emotional, often physical, encounter with God.” Later, as cameras caught people in the church ministering to one another, resulting in the already-named manifestations, Jennings made this matter-of-fact observation: “At the Vineyard there is no

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 16:25

doubt that emotional therapy is central to the ministry.”³

Many evangelicals who are critical of what they are observing are themselves slipping into a similar experience-driven spirituality through their involvement in various forms of psychotherapy. Many who deplore the obvious emotional bent of the charismatics fail to recognize that the psychologically influenced programs in their own fellowships have a common experiential base. Furthermore, a great many of the therapies applied in church-supported psychological counseling sessions are at least as experiential and often just as bizarre as what transpires at charismatic meetings.

Increasing numbers of noncharismatics are accepting them, however, because they’re convinced that what’s going on is *scientifically* valid. In view of this trend, Stephen Strang’s hope for “the barriers between charismatics and noncharismatics” to be torn down so that a “broader evangelical community” can take shape already seems to be far along the road to

prophetic fulfillment.

Jesus characterized the days just prior to His return as a time of great *religious* deception (Mt 24:4,11,23-24). He said that many would claim to be uttering prophecies, casting out demons, and performing miracles in His name, yet they would be evildoers (Mt 7:22,23). He declared that seeking after signs was a trait of “a wicked and adulterous generation” (Mt 16:4). Paul also warned that the last days would be a time of preparation for the takeover by the Antichrist and would involve satanic “power, signs and lying wonders” (2 Thes 2:9). Inevitably, the consequence of this religious deception will be the development of a false, experience-driven church which has surrendered doctrine to feeling.

Paul wrote, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...” (2 Tm 3:1-2). These verses aptly describe our present psychologized generation, where feeling good about *self* is exalted as *the solution* to all mankind’s problems. While many leading evangelicals mistakenly promote such a view, Scripture clearly shows that love of self is *central to man’s problem*. In fact, the verses that follow 2 Timothy 3:2 detail what will erupt during the “perilous times” as a consequence of loving (esteeming) self (3:3-9). Though man’s self-serving nature has characterized every generation since the Fall, none prior to this one has extolled loving oneself as *the* remedy for whatever ails the human race. And certainly it was never taught as a biblical truth, as it is today.

The Bible—through the ministry of the Holy Spirit—is the believers’ God-given resource for *discernment*, a biblically mandated necessity for withstanding the overpowering endtime religious delusion. Without discernment, we’re left only with fleshly reasonings, vain imaginations or subjective intuition.

In order for the false church to develop, a process must take place which undermines the objective basis for discernment. That process is well under way. The growing trend away from doctrinal absolutes, from conclusions based on scriptural examples, and from any biblical scrutiny or testing has created a vacuum rapidly being filled by experiential religion. This translates into

feelings becoming more and more the measure of what is of God and what is not.

That trend may be clearly seen among those who express confidence that the "laughing revival" is of God. When pressed for an explanation and for scriptural support, the responses sound more wishful than sure. Rodney Howard-Browne, a major figure in this movement, reflects its experiential nature: "You can't understand what God is doing in these meetings with an analytical mind. The only way you're going to understand what God is doing is with your heart."⁴ His sentiments are echoed by Episcopal rector Hugh Williams, who was changed by the experience and endorses it with this unwitting indictment: "Words [including God's Word?] have become meaningless in our society. Signs and wonders are what must capture our attention."⁵

Attention is certainly being captured—and at the expense of preaching the Word. All concede that when the manifestation breaks forth it is disruptive. Terry Virgo, a New Frontiers International director in England, tells us that disruption is part of God's plan. He wrote in a highly supportive *Charisma* article that the Lord gave Virgo's church the following prophecy: "Prepare yourselves for disruption." He added, "Now, I'm a preacher who puts a very high value on biblical exposition. But I have to admit that people are being changed more radically and completely through God's supernatural touch in these meetings than they ever have been through listening to me preach!"⁶

Both the prophecy and the implication of Virgo's statement run counter to the Scriptures: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tm 4:2). Sadly, Paul's Holy Spirit-given counsel is conspicuously absent in today's so-called Holy Spirit revival.

Vineyard Ministries head John Wimber, perhaps the most successful promoter of "signs and wonders" to noncharismatics today, is confident that what's taking place is from the Lord. Yet the basis for Wimber's confidence is questionable at best:

There's nothing in Scripture to support these kinds of phenomena....So I feel no

obligation to try to explain it....It's just people responding to God.⁷

That's hardly a helpful guideline for those who follow Wimber's lead in seeking after signs and wonders! In the interview with Peter Jennings, he was asked, "Are you utterly, totally convinced that [the manifestations are] always the Holy Spirit?" Wimber replied, "No. I'm largely convinced that it's the Holy Spirit, but I believe that it's a mixture of humanity and spirit." What about the demonic, and who is pointing out the difference?

Jennings noted that "at the Vineyard church we found that people were hungry for a faith they could feel." Indeed, feelings reign supreme in this realm of "signs and wonders." People are attracted to the

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Psalms 119:104

phenomenon because of emotional desires or feelings. They "operate" in that realm guided by their feelings, and their justification that God is involved is based upon their feelings.

Psychotherapy, whether "Christian" or secular, works much the same way. It is based upon humanistic theories that purport to explain and change human behavior, theories that deny the sufficiency of God's Word, that contradict one another and are ineffective. As one secular critic observed, "There are as many techniques, methods and theories around as there are therapists." Former president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, Lawrence LeShan, has suggested that psychotherapy will probably be known as *the hoax* of the twentieth century—yet the church has embraced it as a part of "God's truth" missing from God's Word!

Similar to experiential religion, psychological counseling is promoted primarily through the testimonies of those who have experienced it. Since its goal and practice are contrary to biblical truth, psychotherapy fosters an optimum breeding ground for new disciples of the growing experiential church.

Many conservative evangelical

congregations are knee-deep in experiential therapy. "Christianized" psychotherapeutically related programs and methods such as 12 steps, co dependency, inner healing, healing of memories, liferegression, rebirthing, self-esteem enhancement, human potential development, visualization, self-affirmation, etc. have become ministerial supplements. Such activities successfully play to the emotional demands of charismatics and noncharismatics alike.

Nationally recognized authors promoting one or more of the above experiential methods have heavily influenced some traditionally conservative evangelical Christian colleges and seminaries. A brief list includes inner-healing author David Seamands at Methodist Asbury Seminary; psychologist Gary Collins at Baptist Liberty University; inner-healer Leanne Payne at Wheaton College; psychiatrists Frank Minirth and Paul Meier at Dallas Theological Seminary; spiritual deliverance therapist Neil Anderson and psychologists Clyde and Bruce Narramore (and a host of others) at the schools of Talbot, Rosemead and Biola.

The bridge of experientialism between charismatics and noncharismatics is firmly in place. While it appears to be bringing about the unity which Stephen Strang, the Promise Keepers and others are aiming for, it actually destroys the only biblical basis for unity—the *truth*. The Bible alone contains God's truth, which is revealed by the Holy Spirit to Christ's sheep (Jn 10:27; 1 Cor 2:11-16). God's Word is not only "the truth"; it judges all that is false.

Certainly experiences are not necessarily evil. They are, however, all subjective and must be scrutinized by means of the Word of Truth. Peter had a tremendous *experience* when he was in the presence of God on the Mount of Transfiguration, and it's worth noting that one of the experiential manifestations that took place is noticeably missing in the "revivals" documented today: falling on one's face in *fear of God*. Furthermore, Peter makes it absolutely clear that, although he valued his personal experience, God's Word is far more trustworthy—and more necessary: "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Pt 1:19).

Without that absolute basis for objective discernment, the experiential—whether a claimed spiritual phenomenon or

—whether a claimed spiritual phenomenon or a so-called emotional breakthrough in psychotherapy—is a pathway to delusion. Even the casual observer of those who minister during today’s alleged move of the Holy Spirit can see that they have little idea of what they are doing, and even less of what will result. They claim to be “going with the flow”; that is, simply trusting the Holy Spirit. Yet they disobey the very Holy Spirit they claim to rely upon by refusing His guidance through diligent use of His inspired *manual for discernment*—God’s Holy Word.

Some charismatic leaders and psychologically oriented evangelicals who profess to acknowledge the importance of Scripture for discernment and the potential dangers of letting feelings go unchecked, are at the same time loudly proclaiming the joys of experientialism. Their rallying cry is “Scriptural or not, it must be of God.” The psychologized evangelical’s wishful thinking is similar: “Biblical or not, it must be of science.” Both seem committed to avoiding the test of God’s Word, and both are therefore joining one another on a mist-shrouded bridge of delusive unity. Pray that all those being drawn into this experiential fog will begin to see clearly that biblical *discernment* of what is truly of God (Is 8:20; Acts 17:11) is an absolute necessity for the believer in these deceptive last days.

TBC

Quotable

If a single line of Scripture can be produced to prove that the present system of things is to be marked by gradual improvement, religiously, politically, morally, or socially, then by all means be hopeful....But where is such a clause to be found? Simply nowhere. The Testimony of the Bible, from cover to cover; the distinct teaching of Holy Scriptures, from beginning to end; the voices of the prophets and Apostles in unbroken harmony, all without a single divergent note, go to prove, with a force and clearness perfectly unanswerable, that the present condition of things, so far from gradually improving, will rapidly grow worse...

C. H. Mackintosh
Notes on Deuteronomy

It is impossible but that the church of Rome must spread, when we who are the watchdogs of the fold are silent, and others are gently and smoothly turving the road, and making it as soft and smooth as possible, that converts may travel down to the nethermost hell of Popery. We want John Knox back again. Do not talk to me of mild and gentle men, of soft manners and squeamish words, we want the fiery Knox, and even though his vehemence should “ding our pulpits into blads,” it were well if he did but rouse our hearts to action.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Sermons

Q&A

Question: I've been on the fence concerning your views of self-esteem and self-love, but I think you've really missed the mark when it comes to our self-worth. I recently read *The Secret of Loving by Josh McDowell*. He's no slouch when it comes to biblical apologetics and he says we are worth the price God paid for us—the death of His Son. Doesn't that makes us of infinite value to God?

Answer: Where does it say in the Bible that mankind has value to God? Jesus did say that we are of “more value than many sparrows,” but that doesn’t support the ideas the men you mention promote. He could create trillions just like us out of nothing. It is not our great value (self-worth), but the fact that He loves us that caused Him to give His Son and caused Christ to die. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son....It doesn’t say that “God so valued the world that He gave....” Love does not love because of the value of the object. That would not be a genuine but a self-centered love (1 Cor. 13) and would detract from the biblical teaching about redemption.

God did not get a bargain. He didn’t pay equal value, or what I am “worth.” The great cost at which I was redeemed gives no cause for me to have a sense of self-worth but of shame that the consequences of my sin caused Christ to pay such a great price.

The shedding of Christ’s blood, with which we were redeemed, was not because of our “worth,” but because of our sin and the demands of God’s justice. So

the greater the price, the worse the sin. To associate this “purchase price” with the “value” to God of an object, and to make it the basis for self-worth, is neither biblical nor logical. In fact, it shows the perversion that is caused by the influence of selfist psychology.

Even from a logical point of view, the price paid for an object does not determine its worth. It only represents what someone is willing to pay for it at a given time and under given circumstances. Everything fluctuates in price, from hay to gold. Price is determined by the market, not by the thing itself.

Nothing has an intrinsic value in and of itself, so the very concept of self-worth is wrong. A painting may have been bought at great price during times of plenty. In a famine no one would give even a crust of bread for it. Value is set by circumstances independent and outside of the object. It is not an intrinsic quality of the thing itself. There is no way to attach the price paid to the object purchased. Thus, the entire idea of *self-worth* is false.

Question: What has been called the “Laughing Revival” is evidently not all fun and games. I've been told that there is a very militant side to it. Is that true?

Answer: To borrow a phrase, “There's not all joy in ‘the joy movement.’” Many who are defending the so-called holy laughter revival and other bizarre “spiritual” manifestations are doing it with an element of vengeance. For years now, Tricia Tillin of Banner Ministries (Box 23, Belper, Derbys DE56 1QR, United Kingdom) has been following the prophesies and teachings of those who proclaim that we are in the midst of God’s great last-days revival. She writes,

Those who harbor doubts about the renewal are accused of stubbornness and Pharisaical legalism; those who test the spirits are called blasphemers of the Holy Spirit; those who put questions to their elders are accused of “rebellion.”

She quotes Kenneth Copeland who strongly implies that those who resist God's move could be making a fatal mistake:

One of these days, you may just be talking to someone, asking them how

things went at church last Sunday, and they may say, Oh it was great! The glory of God was so strong it healed ten cripples, opened the ears of thirty deaf people, cured seven cases of cancer and killed Brother Bigmouth and Sister Strife....

When the fire of God begins to burn and the rivers of the Spirit start to flow...he'll either have to yield to the Spirit,...or he'll have to resist the flood of God's Spirit and be swept away (*Voice of Victory*, Oct 94).

Paul Cain's roots go back to the origins of the Latter Rain movement which was referred to as "The last great outpouring that was to consummate God's plans on this earth." As a "prophet" of the Kansas City Fellowship/Vineyard prophetic movement, he issued the body of Christ this warning: "Don't speak a word against signs and wonders and the prophetic ministry in these last days or God's zeal will chasten you!" (*Christ for the Nations*, Sept 89). Rick Joyner, another advocate of "what the Holy Spirit is doing today," added his "prophetic" challenge:

If the leaders resist this move the Lord will continue it through the congregations. These groups will begin to relate to the other members of the body of Christ and their bonds will grow stronger, regardless of the resistance or warnings of their pastors. Some pastors and leaders who continue to resist this tide of unity will be removed from their place....Some that were used greatly of God in the past have become too rigid in doctrinal emphasis...to participate in this revival. ...Those who are linked together by doctrine...will quickly be torn away (*Restoration*, May/June 88).

In *Vengeance is Ours* by Al Dager of *Media Spotlight* (P.O. Box 290, Redmond, WA 98073-0290) he documents the false teaching that those who are critical of or who oppose the "New Wave" of God's Spirit are either possessed or oppressed by a "Jezebel spirit," or are into witchcraft. He quotes Rick Joyner:

This is the year when the Lord starts to bring down the spirit of Jezebel. He will begin by calling her to repentance. Those who have become vessels for this spirit, and who do not repent, will be displayed as so insane that even the most immature Christians will quickly discern their sickness....

The source of witchcraft against us may not be the obvious satanic cults or New

Age operatives. It can come from well meaning, though deceived, Christians who are praying against us instead of for us (149-150)

Rodney Howard-Browne gave this "prophecy" last year at New Life Center: "Do not compromise. For if you compromise, you shall not only lose the anointing that I placed upon you, you shall lose your life."

These are only a few of the many indications that there is a very sobering side to what Vineyard leader John Wimber calls "a refreshing" or "a renewal."

Endnotes

- 1 Stephen Strang, "A Time to Build Bridges" (*Charisma*, Mar. 1995), 112.
- 2 Stephen Strang, "A View From the Back of the Bus" (*Charisma*, Apr. 1995), 106.
- 3 Peter Jennings, "In God's Name" (American Broadcasting Company television special, 1994).
- 4 Julia Duin, "Praise the Lord and Pass the New Wine" (*Charisma*, Aug. 1994), 26.
- 5 Ibid., 28.
- 6 Terry Virgo, "Interrupted by the Spirit," (*Charisma*, Feb. 1995), 32.
- 7 Daina Doucet, "What is God Doing in Toronto?" (*Charisma*, Feb. 1995), 26.

The Challenge of This Hour

Dave Hunt

Last year, *Am I Going to Heaven?* was published, a book that makes one weep. It was written by a Catholic nun, Sister Mary Rose McGeady, director of Covenant House, America's largest crisis shelter for children, with six locations in major cities across the country. One weeps not only for the 31,000 broken lives Covenant House seeks to mend each year, but for the greatest tragedy of all: that these youths, though many are rescued from the streets, are not rescued from hell with the gospel of Jesus Christ!

The book takes its title from the first story Sister McGeady tells, of a seventeen-year-old girl who is about to die: "She tried to lift her head up from the hospital bed pillow...but she couldn't.... 'Sister, I need to know something,' she whispered. 'Please, tell me something.' 'Anything, Michelle,' I said. 'What do you want to know?' 'Sister...am I going to heaven? Even a street kid like me?'...I bent down and hugged her, and told her I knew God had a special place for her. I told her how much I loved her, and how much I believed in her....She cried in my arms, and whispered a 'thank you.' The next day, Michelle died in her sleep."

Yes, God loved Michelle—so much that He "gave his only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16) to pay on the cross the full penalty for her sins. But, like the others who seek help at Covenant House, Michelle was not told that good news. In McGeady's entire book of heart-rending stories, there is no hint of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Hundreds of millions live and die in the Roman Catholic Church without ever hearing the gospel. Instead, they are taught that their Church, with its sacraments and indulgences and saints, will eventually get them from purgatory to heaven through countless Masses and rosaries recited for them after they die.

One must admire McGeady and other Catholic "sisters," such as Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity, who sacrifice themselves to help the homeless and dying. How kind it is to pick derelicts from the gutters of Calcutta and give them tender care. But what a tragedy that these pitiful creatures are then launched from a clean bed into a Christless eternity without being told the gospel which alone can save them! It is a

gospel which Mother Teresa, as a lifelong Catholic, doesn't know. She says she loves and respects *all religions* and wants to help those she comforts to "become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever [they] are....What God is in your mind you must accept."¹ The Pope honors her as a great evangelist. And evangelicals are joining with Catholics like her to evangelize the world!

In many false religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, there is an outright rejection of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. The more subtle enemies of the gospel preach the Cross, but in a false way. Precisely as the Bible warns (Mt 7:21-23; 24:4,11,24; 2 Thes 2:3; etc.), today's most effective enemies of Christ are those who claim to be Christians and call mankind not just to any old false religion but to a *counterfeit Christianity*.

Eastern Orthodoxy (in spite of its separation from Rome in A.D. 1054 re the authority of the pope) involves basically the same false gospel as Roman

shocking as if his father, Francis Schaeffer, before his death, had turned against the gospel he once proclaimed! Franky earnestly declares that the "Protestant concept of salvation is not the same as that taught by the Orthodox [and Catholic] Church[es]." The solemn consequences of that fact have been denied by Colson, Bright, Packer and the other signers of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT).

Having embraced the false Orthodox/Catholic gospel of church membership, ritual and works, Franky derides being "born again" as the Protestant's "meaningless...magical instantaneous 'silver bullet' solution to sin." He says we are not saved by "believing that Christ died on the cross for us [but] by *struggling to become like Christ*" (his emphasis). And this long struggle toward salvation, which "can never be achieved fully in this life," *begins* "when we receive forgiveness for our sins in Holy Baptism" (pp 205-208). Likewise, the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude [heaven]...."³

The controversy over ECT is only beginning and goes to the heart of the gospel. That Bright, Colson and Packer signed a subsequent statement at the urging of Ankerberg, MacArthur, et al., reaffirming their belief in the "Protestant understanding of salvation by faith alone," contradicts their acceptance in ECT of all active Catholics as Christians. Clearly, a serious compromise is in process on the vital issue of salvation and what it means to be a Christian!

The question facing each person is, "What must I do to be saved?" The *only* answer is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). Paul referred to the "gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13) "wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved..." (1 Cor 15:1-4). In the evangelical view, one is either "saved" or "lost." When the unsaved repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who died for their sins, they are "saved" and have the assurance of heaven. It is a once-for-all finished transaction which millions have experienced, testifying that they have, in a moment, as the Bible assures them, "passed from death unto life" (Jn 5:24) and "from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18). As a result, they "know" that they "have eternal

...I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand...

I Corinthians 15:1

Catholicism: salvation through church membership, sacraments and works. In recent years, a surprising number of evangelicals have joined the Orthodox Church. Several former staff members of Campus Crusade for Christ (Pete Gillquist, John Braun, Dick Ballew, Jack Sparks, et al.) have even become Orthodox priests. And why not? Crusade has long accepted Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy as true Christianity. As another staffer who became an Orthodox priest testifies, "During my two-and-a-half years on staff [at Crusade headquarters]...I fully participated in the nearby Greek Orthodox parish, Saint Prophet Elias....Campus Crusade encouraged my active participation...."²

One of the latest evangelical leaders converting to Orthodoxy is Frank Schaeffer. In his recent book, *Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religions*, he calls the Reformation a terrible mistake and the evangelical view of salvation a false religion. This is as

life" (1 Jn 5:13). That salvation and assurance is denounced in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Frank Schaeffer makes it abundantly clear in his book that the evangelical faith in which his famous parents raised him had to be renounced in order for him to embrace the Catholic/Orthodox faith. That honest admission proves the lie of ECT and of the very phrase "evangelically committed Catholics" found in the post-ECT five-point statement. It proves, too, the lie of such books as *Evangelical Catholics* by Keith Fournier with foreword by Charles Colson, and exposes the fraud of evangelicals joining with Catholics in "The Christian Mission" of evangelization.

Let us honestly confront the challenge of this hour. If the former Campus Crusade staffers-turned-Orthodox-priests and Schaeffer and Fournier, et al. are correct, then we evangelicals are badly deceived by a false gospel and are on our way to hell. Our only hope is to join either the Catholic or Orthodox Churches "outside of which there is no salvation." On the other hand, if the gospel evangelicals preach is biblical, then 1.4 billion Catholics and Orthodox are on their way to hell. One side or the other must convert; but both sides cannot join together to evangelize the world with opposing gospels! Nevertheless, that delusion grows.

Pope John Paul II's book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, has been a bestseller not only among Catholics but among evangelicals as well. In a recent poll, 250 evangelical leaders rated this promotion of Catholicism's false gospel as the fifth most popular book out of a list of 25! To see how shocking that rating was, consider the following typical quotes from this book:

...the ultimate purpose of his [man's] life—his salvation and divinization—found expression in the...doctrine of *synergism*. With God, man "creates" the world; with God, man "creates" his personal salvation....

Baptism and the Eucharist [are] sacraments which *create in man the seed of eternal life*. (Emphasis added)⁴

According to the Bible, it is the *gospel alone* that saves those who *believe it*. Nothing else will save. Therefore, Paul said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the *gospel*" (1 Cor 9:16). Tragically, evangelicals themselves can pervert the truth. Today's preaching of the gospel is often characterized by emotional appeals to "make a decision for Christ," without clearly

explaining the *gospel*! Multitudes, attracted to Christ because of His winsome personality and admirable character or because "He changes lives" or heals bodies and prospers businesses, have not believed the *gospel* and thus, sadly, are not saved at all.

Contributing to such deceitful sentimentality is the growing frenzy of preparation for the year A.D.2000. One example is Jay Gary's book, *The Star of 2000: Our Journey Toward Hope*. Gary networks with and commends New Agers and occultists (Robert Mueller, *World Goodwill*; John Naisbeth, etc.), yet he has been involved in leadership and planning with Billy Graham's Lausanne movement and Campus Crusade for Christ. Gary's book, in which the gospel does not appear, presents Jesus as "the Star of 2000...the greatest religious genius that ever

...for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

I Corinthians 9:16

lived...the outstanding personality of all time...one of the greatest teachers humanity has ever had...the Man of the Millennium ...history's most intriguing figure," etc. Such humanistic praise fails to identify Jesus as God who came to earth as a man to pay the penalty to rescue lost sinners from eternal judgment. Gary issues no call to repentance, but invites the world to celebrate "the most meaningful Christmas in 2,000 years...the greatest [birthday] celebration in the history of civilization."

Gary hopes that the big A.D.2000 celebration will include "the portrait of Jesus Christ inscribed on a [commemorative] coin...a 'Journey of the Magi' visitor's center in Bethlehem, complete with a planetarium...a reenact[ment]...of the journey of the Magi...with horses and camels...[an ecumenical gathering] of Christianity's 160 major traditions...in celebration of the Eucharist...." In fact, Gary suggests that one need not "embrace the theological Jesus" to find Him "worthy of a momentous anniversary tribute."

Were the entire world to engage in such a celebration, it would not be a triumph for Christ and His cross, but a tragic cover-up of the world's rejection of the salvation He offers. Yet the book is endorsed and highly

praised by such evangelical luminaries as Bill Bright, Paul Cedar (president, The Evangelical Free Church of America), Paul Eshleman (The *JESUS* Project), Joe Aldrich (president, Multnomah Bible College), E. Brandt Gustavson (president, National Religious Broadcasters)—and, of course, Father Tom Forrest (head of the Vatican's Evangelization 2000). How incredible!

For many other evangelicals, Christianity has become "signs and wonders," or "falling under the power," or laughing uncontrollably. Still other evangelicals offer a "Christianity" designed to appeal to the worldly minded and to be inoffensive to sinners: church services and "Christian" TV that out-glitz Hollywood; or the excitement of 50,000 men cheering Jesus in a packed football stadium. For others it's the quest for self-esteem and a "positive self-image," probing the unconscious for past abuses suffered that excuse present unbelief and carnality; or quietly carrying on a conversation with an imaginary "visualized Jesus."

If we are to face the challenge of this hour, we must return in repentance to the awesome God of the Bible who doesn't exist to bless our plans but demands conformity to His will. We must declare in word and by example that preparation for heaven is not in the Pharisee's "positive affirmation" but in the publican's cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk 18:9-14). It is not in the vaunted prophecies, miracles and exorcisms of those to whom Christ will say, "I never knew you: depart from me" (Mt 7:21-23), but in the grateful assurance that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save [even the chiefest of] sinners" (1 Tm 1:15).

Heaven's joy is tasted most accurately by repentant sinners at the feet of Jesus. In contrast to Simon the Pharisee who gave Jesus neither water nor towel, a sinful woman washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. Jesus used her example to show Simon that the love which will eternally radiate in heaven comes from the recognition of our sinful unworthiness, a recognition which magnifies His love in saving us (Lk 7:36-50). The more we realize our guilt and wretchedness, the greater will be our gratitude and love to Him who stooped so low to rescue us. Such is the message which the church needs to embrace once again and to proclaim to the world. Nothing else will meet the challenge of this hour.

TBC

Quotable

These are sad times, in which we live; nay, truly, there is more danger now than in the time of our fathers, who suffered death for the testimony of the Lord...for then Satan came openly...as a roaring lion...[and] his chief design then was to destroy the body: but now he comes as in the night...to destroy the soul...[to] annihilate entirely, if this were possible, the only saving Christian faith...[and] to destroy the true separated Christian life which is the outgrowth of faith (Ps 91:5-6).

He reveals himself on the one hand as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14-15), as a kind, pleasant, yea, even divine messenger, with a humble countenance...[as] the martyrs of God formerly did. His words are modest...seemingly coming from deep meditation...lest he might speak amiss or untruthfully. Meanwhile...he seizes hold and tears like a wolf in sheep's clothing, robbing the innocent lambs of Christ of their precious faith, which he pretends to be of small importance, but without which faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6), nay, without which we, according to the words of Christ, shall be condemned (Mk 16:16)....

It grieves us to the heart that we must live to see these times, and therefore speak in this wise. O Lord, strengthen our faith! Help Thy weak, trusting lambs, that they may not be led into error, nor moved from the foundations of the most holy faith.

On the other hand, through his [Satan's] instigation, the world now reveals itself very beautiful and glorious, more than at any preceding time. ...Almost all men run after her, to worship her as a queen supreme; but all are deceived thereby....Who shall escape these snares? He that would at no time be taken unawares by it, must indeed be cautious and watchful. But our very flesh seems prone to it. Here must be fasting, watching, praying, and calling upon God for help, otherwise there is no escape.

Thieleman J. van Braght

The Author's Preface, *Martyrs Mirror*
The story of the Anabaptist, Mennonite, Albigensian, Waldensian, et al., martyrs from the first century to 1660, July 27, 1659

Q&A

Question: I've recently read documentation showing that the pretrib Rapture theory originated with a Jesuit priest, Emmanuel Lacunza, in the late 1700s, was picked up by an Edward Irving of Scotland (who translated Lacunza's lengthy book from Spanish in 1826), and from Irving spread via a Margaret MacDonald to J. N. Darby and C. I. Scofield, who popularized it. Aren't you embarrassed to teach a doctrine that originated with a Jesuit?

Answer: The alleged Lacunza-Irving-MacDonald connection to Darby and Scofield has not been proved. Moreover, such speculation by MacPherson and others is pointless. Who cares where Darby and Scofield first got the idea of a pretrib Rapture? All that matters is what the Bible has to say on this subject!

I was taught a pretrib Rapture from childhood—not from the writings of Darby or Scofield, but from the Bible. As a Berean, I would not accept any belief were I not convinced that it was biblical. I hold to a pretrib Rapture because the Bible teaches it. I challenge you to check *How Close Are We?* against the Bible.

Furthermore, the claim that the pretrib Rapture was unknown in the church prior to Lacunza and Darby is not true. A sermon of uncertain authorship dating to at least the sixth century clearly presents the pretrib position. Titled "On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World," it declares, "All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins." For full documentation, contact Thomas Ice, Executive Director, Pre-Trib Research Center, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW, Suite 801, Washington, D.C. 20024, (202) 488-0780.

Question: President Clinton's appointment of homosexuals and lesbians to high office has debased our country. I have never seen a more spiritually sick America! The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that people are born gay! How would you respond?

Answer: The new *Catechism* (pars. 2357-58) condemns homosexuality as "grave depravity...contrary to the natural law...[and] Sacred Scripture." Unfortunately, it also says that its "psychological genesis remains largely unexplained"—thereby implying that homosexuality is not sin but a psychological problem requiring a psychological solution. Denying moral accountability, the *Catechism* says that homosexuals "do not choose their homosexual condition...[and] must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity." Thus the implication that "people are born gay."

That no one is born a homosexual can be easily proved. If that were the case, then God made them that way. Therefore (as many homosexuals insist), homosexuality would not be sin but perfectly natural. This view must be false, for (as the *Catechism* itself admits) the Bible condemns homosexuality as an abominable sin: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them...shall surely be put to death" (Lv 18:22; 20:13).

Nor is the condemnation of homosexuality only for Jews under the Old Covenant. It is restated to Christians in the New Testament. Romans 1:24-32 says that homosexuals/lesbians "dishonour their own bodies between themselves" (v 24), engage in "vile affections," which are "against nature" (v 26) and "unseemly" (v 27) and do so of their own volition.

Even those who reject the Bible and believe in evolution must come to the same conclusion. If evolution were true, being "born homosexual" might possibly occur, but it would require a specific foul-up in the DNA mechanism and would be *extremely rare*. That DNA abnormalities of the precise nature to cause homosexuality could repeatedly occur by chance in millions of people of every generation all over the world is preposterous! Evolution would quickly eliminate homosexuality since it works against survival of the race (homosexuals/lesbians don't reproduce).

Thus, in the secular world homosexuality has always been called "a crime against nature." Those who engage in homosexuality do so out of choice *against both their genes and conscience*, and can stop by choice as well. That homosexuals now

have a favored status, wield great power and have politicians catering to them to get their vote, can only destroy society.

Homosexuality is a choice and not in the genes; this can be seen in the fact that its prevalence among Catholic clergy is at least 10 times greater than in the general populace. Obviously, chance cosmic rays didn't zero in on Catholic priests and nuns to make them homosexuals! The cause is the unnatural rule of celibacy, forbidding normal sexual relations provided by marriage, combined with being cloistered together with those of the same sex.

The *Atlantic Monthly* estimated that "at least one-third of the priests younger than 45 were homosexuals." The *National Catholic Reporter* has cited polls estimating as many as 70 percent gays in some seminaries. One celibate priest explains clearly the reason for such high percentages among Catholic priests and nuns compared with perhaps 2 percent in the general populace:

The canon law that is taught in the seminary makes it clear who the enemy is: It's women [and for nuns, men, i.e. normal sex in marriage]. Meet a girl and you disengage. Meet a man, and it's different. The system is so d— dishonest. My hometown seminary is over 50 percent homosexual, and it's going higher. It's as bad as the hypocrisy regarding birth control. (*National Catholic Reporter*, 5/13/94)

Homosexuality is a sin which results from yielding to temptation. The likelihood is heightened where circumstances prevent normal sexual relationships; and is further compounded when conscience is dulled by the lie that homosexuality is natural and normal to some people. That pernicious lie is promoted through movies, videos, music and the media in general and is taught in public schools under government sponsorship. The approximately 50 percent reduction in life expectancy of homosexuals and lesbians and the spread of AIDS should be sufficient to make this practice abhorrent to all.

Question: The Apostles Creed says that Jesus "descended into hell." I've read your rejection of the Hagin/Copeland teaching that Jesus was tortured in hell by Satan. Did Jesus descend into hell or not? I searched and searched the Scriptures and asked several pastors

about this and still have no satisfactory answer.

Answer: In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *sheol*, meaning the place of the dead, is translated "hell" at times and at other times simply as "grave." In telling the fate of the rich man and the beggar, Lazarus, Jesus taught that before the Cross there were two compartments in sheol: one for the lost, and one for the saved, called "Abraham's bosom" (Lk 16:22). To the latter Christ went in death, as did the one thief crucified with Him, to whom He said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). There He proclaimed to the redeemed the good news of His death having paid for their sins. Those in the place of the damned could hear what Jesus said (see Lk 16:23-31); and He may even have addressed a few words specifically to them. Thus Peter writes, "He preached to the spirits [of the dead] in prison [sheol]; which sometime were disobedient...in the days of Noah" (1 Pt 3:19-20). After His resurrection, Jesus took the souls and spirits of the redeemed to heaven ("when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive" - Eph 4:8). Now the souls and spirits of the redeemed, upon death, go immediately to be with Christ ("absent from the body, present with the Lord" - 2 Cor 5:6-8), from whence He will bring them to rejoin their resurrected bodies at the Rapture (1 Thes 4:13-18).

Endnotes

- 1 Desmond Doig, *Mother Teresa: Her People and Her Work* (Harper & Row, 1976), 156.
- 2 Peter E. Gillquist, ed. *Coming Home: Why Protestant Clergy are Becoming Orthodox* (Conciliar Press, 1992), 64.
- 3 *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (The Wanderer Press, 1994), par 1257.
- 4 His Holiness, John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 75, 195.

A Cup of Trembling

Dave Hunt

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about.... Jerusalem [will be] a burdensome stone for all people....In that day will I make the governors of Judah...like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about....

Zechariah 12:2,3,6

When the above prophecies were written about 2,500 years ago, Jerusalem lay in ruins. Its history thereafter was repeated destruction, the Jews scattered everywhere and hounded to the death. Yet God brought His despised people back into their own land in 1948. And today, hanging like a millstone around its neck, Jerusalem is the number one problem the UN faces, as the prophets foretold.

Israel is insignificant in size, but formidable. America failed miserably to rescue its hostages in Iran, but Israel recovered hers from the heart of Africa and lost only one man. When Iraq defiantly went about developing nuclear weapons, Israel bombed its facility out of existence. Israel's forces could take over Cairo, Damascus and Beirut. She is indeed like "a torch of fire in a sheaf" capable of "devour[ing] all people round about."

Most of the nations of today's world refuse to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. They want it to be under international control. The Vatican has demanded the internationalization of Jerusalem for 48 years. Recently the heads of the Christian community in Jerusalem called for its internationalization. The World Council of Churches demands the same. Amazingly, Israel's leaders have secretly offered to hand over sovereignty of Jerusalem's Old City to the Vatican. Jerusalem is to become the "second Vatican of the world."¹

The Bible's more than 800 references to Jerusalem offer the only explanation for its astonishing importance on today's world stage: Jerusalem is "the City of our God" (Ps 48:1,8) chosen by Him to play a special role in human destiny. Moreover, Jerusalem is intended to be the capital of a specific land far larger than Israel occupies today—"from the river of Egypt unto...the river Euphrates" (Gn 15:18)—given by God to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as an "everlasting inheritance" (Gn 13:15; Jer 7:7, etc.).

Even the Koran designates the children of Israel as the "people of the Book" whom Moses led into the promised land and to whom that land belongs (Surah 2:63 ff.; 5:19-

24,68,70; 10:91,94; 44:30 ff.; etc.). Nevertheless, Islam insists that Israel belongs to the Arabs. Therefore, the Jewish state must be destroyed! Otherwise, Islam has been proven a false religion. That is the issue. Deceptive peace talk by Arabs serves only to position them better for the annihilation of Israel. Yes, apparent peace will be established, but it will lead to Armageddon.

To defeat this young David militarily from without is clearly a vain hope for the Arab Goliaths who have tried and failed repeatedly. She must be destroyed from within by a "peace offensive." The Arab strategy is clear: make overtures of peace, sign peace accords, and by whatever subterfuge that works gain a foothold within the borders of Israel from which to launch the final attack that will bring about her complete destruction. To imagine that the Arabs have any other intention is to be deceived.

Yet even some evangelicals are under the delusion that current negotiations are

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land ...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession...

Genesis 17:8

bringing real peace. Lately TBN's Paul Crouch and CBN's Pat Robertson have been promoting that fantasy. Supposedly God's peace is being engineered by a Muslim terrorist organization and an unbelieving Israeli leadership which is disobeying God in bartering land He gave to Israel that was never to be given up!

Yasser Arafat knows better. Early in 1994, in a speech at a Johannesburg mosque, he called for continuing *jihad* (holy war) by the Arabs to retake Jerusalem. Arafat left no doubt as to his meaning: "This agreement [between the PLO and Israel], I am not considering it more than the agreement which had been signed between our Prophet Muhammad and Kuraish." After signing a "peace treaty" with his own tribe, the Kuraish, Mohammed broke it on a pretext, killed the Kuraish leaders and conquered Mecca. So Arafat was saying that the PLO's agreement with Israel is only a step toward her conquest and is intended to be broken.

Furthermore, the conquest not only of Israel but of the world is Islam's unchangeable goal. Everyone in the West knows about the Iron and Bamboo Curtains and communism's determination to take over the world. Yet the Islamic Curtain is never

mentioned in the media nor is Islam's intention to conquer the world for Allah. There was more freedom of religion in the former Soviet Union and there remains more today in communist China than there is in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, the Sudan and other Islamic countries. The spread of Islam's mosques throughout the Western world accelerates even while Islam denies the same overt liberty for other religions in territories it controls. It is estimated that fully one-third of the world's population will have embraced this fastest growing religion by the end of this decade.

From the very beginning, Islam has been a religion of conquest. Muhammad himself led 27 invasions of neighboring towns, and during his lifetime his followers engaged in about 50 more. The conquered peoples were given the choice of conversion to Islam or death. At times, a third alternative was granted: the payment of heavy tribute. Islam converted by force the vast regions it now dominates and where conversion of a Muslim to another religion is forbidden. The penalty for conversion is death in Saudi Arabia today.

Islamic terrorists are playing out their special role in Islam's intended conquest of the world. That Islam offers those who die in *jihad* assurance of Paradise encourages the most effective terrorists, the suicide bombers who conceal on their bodies explosives which they detonate to kill Israelis. "The faces of [these] martyred [heroes] stare down at you from a thousand poster walls in Beirut and Tehran....When an Egyptian soldier named Suleiman Khater went berserk in the Sinai and killed five Israeli tourists, what did Iran do? It declared him a hero, named a street after him and set aside a day honoring him...."²

The late Ayatollah Khomeini explained, "The purest joy in Islam is to kill and be killed for God." In its war against Iraq, Iran cleared minefields by utilizing thousands of young schoolboys to walk along in front of troops and tanks. In 1982, in one minefield alone, about 5,000 children were torn to bits exploding the mines so that the army could move across the cleared path.³

Arab terrorism is passed off as the fault of a tiny minority of fanatics who are out of step with mainstream Islam and the educated Arab world. On the contrary, the Koran says in Surah 5:33 (see also 47:4) that all those who oppose Allah (i.e., non-Muslims) are to be "killed or crucified, or have their hands and feet on alternate sides cut off...." Surah 9:5 says to "slay the [non-Muslims] wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush...."

Nevertheless, the major world media remains pro-Arab and anti-Israel. That bias is demonstrated almost daily. Consider the sanitization of the terrorist organization Hamas after one of its agents blew himself up on a bus in Tel Aviv, killing 22 and wounding many others.⁴ That afternoon CNN news commentator Hilary Bowker commented that while most people think of a terrorist organization when they hear the word *Hamas*, “the group actually does quite a bit more than that...” Rosemary Hollis, an “expert” being interviewed, added, “They are part of the community. Many professionals of Hamas...will perform functions ...in the schools, or in the clinics or through the mosques...[for] the poor people.”

Other networks continued the white-wash, including America’s most watched news program, ABC’s “World News Tonight” with Peter Jennings. *The Jerusalem Post* has said, “In turning a massacre of Israelis into pro-Palestinian propaganda, no one is a greater virtuoso than ABC-TV’s Peter Jennings.”⁵ There was not a word that anyone had been killed in the bus bombing, which Jennings explained as an act of revenge for an earlier attack upon a mosque by an Israeli. Inexcusably, Jennings failed to distinguish between an impulsive outburst by a deranged individual acting on his own and a carefully planned attack by an organization which has devoted itself to terrorism with the backing of Arab nations. Hamas declares that every Muslim is obliged to aid in Israel’s destruction. Jennings described these professional murderers as “devout and politically aware Moslems” and depicted them as heroes. No blame was leveled at Hamas, but Israel was blamed for the death of one of her own soldiers, Nahshon Wachsmann, kidnapped by Hamas who, said Jennings, “subsequently died when the Israelis tried to rescue him by force.” Shame on Israel for defending herself!

Tom Brokaw was not to be outdone. From Jerusalem he presented a program called “The Story of the Israeli Fathers.” It “featured interviews with Nahshon Wachsmann’s father, Yehuda Wachsmann, and Tyassir Natsche, a ‘wealthy Arab merchant,’ the father of one of Nahshon’s kidnappers. [Commented Brokaw], ‘Two fathers in the Middle East, both grieving ...religious men, joined, for now, only in the deaths of their sons.’”⁶ One wonders by what rationale the death of the one murdered could be placed on the same level as the death of the one who kidnapped and killed him. What a masterful deception!

Of 21 Arab countries, not one is a

democracy. There is no freedom of religion, and other basic rights are often denied. One must be a Muslim, for example, to be a citizen of Saudi Arabia. Christian meetings, public or private, are forbidden. Five Christians from the Philippines were recently imprisoned for holding a home Bible meeting.⁷ The death penalty for blaspheming Muhammad has been in force in Pakistan since 1991. In the Sudan, Christians are being literally crucified. Yet Muslims living in the West enjoy the freedom of religion, of the press and of speech that is denied to non-Muslims in Arab countries. In America, thousands of its citizens, including Muslims, protested its participation in the Gulf War; but in Saudi Arabia, one of our allies for whose freedom we were fighting, the government warned that anyone protesting the war effort would have a hand and a leg cut off

**Pray for the peace of
Jerusalem: they shall prosper
that love thee.**

Psalms 122:6

or be executed.⁸ As Robert Morey explains in *Islamic Invasion* (see books we offer):

Islamic law does not recognize freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, or freedom of the press...non-Muslims...are routinely denied even the most basic civil rights....

Incarceration without due process; the use of torture; political assassination; the cutting off of hands, feet, ears, tongues, and heads; and the gouging out of eyes—all of these things are part of Islamic law today because they were part of seventh-century Arabian culture....Unless this is firmly grasped ...[Westerners] will never understand why Muslims think and act the way they do....

The denial of civil rights to women which is clearly in the text of the Quran itself is reflective of seventh-century Arabian culture and its low view of women.⁹

Anti-Semitism on the part of non-Muslims, too, is rising worldwide. A safe haven for Jews is needed, as it was in Hitler’s day. Yet as then, so now, that refuge is being refused. Israel is running out of housing space and the whole world sides with the terrorists in demanding a stop to construction of Jewish housing in “the occupied territories.” Then where are Jewish refugees to be housed—refugees from Russia, for example, where Vladimir Zhirinovskiy openly declares, “I’ll act as Hitler did...I may

have to shoot 100,000,” and captures 25 percent of the Russian vote?!

“Occupied territories”? God promised this land to His people. Anyone opposing full possession and enjoyment of Israel’s heritage is rebelling against God and comes under the curse which He established: “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee...” (Gn 12:3). Those who believe the Bible are forced to admit that the “promised land” belongs to Abraham’s descendants to whom God gave it and must pray for their peaceful enjoyment of that land.

It is not a matter of being “pro-Israel” or “pro-Arab” or “anti” either of these peoples, but of agreeing with God. Tragically, in trying to take back land from Israel, the Arab nations are opposing God and thereby robbing themselves of the blessing He promised to those who would bless

Israel. Bluster, anger and terrorism cannot change the facts. God will have His way. Unfortunately, most Israelis themselves do not believe God.

Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt and is giving back the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinians. Early in February 1995, in a brief military ceremony, Israel returned to Jordan 340 square kilometers of land.

Radio Jordan announced triumphantly, “Jordan has achieved full sovereignty over lands that Israel had occupied.”¹⁰ By such deeds, Israel is repudiating the very promises of God who gave her this land “for ever” (Ex 32:11-13; 37:25; Jer 25:4-5, etc.) and forbade her to sell it (Lv 25:23). Instead of looking to God, Israel is seeking “peace” in the most naive of partnerships with its two most implacable enemies in history, the Vatican and Islam.

Amazingly, Israel is proudly trusting in her own capabilities. In the declaration of Israel’s rebirth made by David Ben-Gurion, May 14, 1948, no mention was made of the God who had restored her to her land! Itzhak Rabin, Major General and Israeli Chief of Staff at the time of Israel’s smashing 1967 victory, boasted, “All this has been done by the Israel defense forces alone, with what we have, without anything or anybody else.”¹¹ How different was King David’s attitude, who won even greater victories and gave God all the credit. And how much suffering yet lies ahead of modern Israel until she learns to put her trust in the same One and realizes how desperately she needs David’s God! Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. **TBC**

Condensed excerpt from Dave’s book, A Cup of Trembling: Jerusalem and Bible Prophecy.

Quotable

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

David's Psalm 27:1-4,7-8,14

Jesus Christ is no security *against* storms, but He is perfect security *in* storms. He has never promised you an easy passage, only a safe landing.

Anonymous

Q&A

Question (representative of several recent inquiries): I was shocked at the response a friend recently received from Christian Research Institute (CRI) on a printed form titled "To answer your question regarding Dave Hunt." It stated, "Although we consider Dave Hunt to be a brother in Christ, we do not agree with his conclusions regarding Roman Catholicism, psychology, conspiracy theories in the New Age, and a few other areas. Dave Hunt is not a scholar, and we feel that he has not

researched these subjects thoroughly and objectively." Were you aware of this standard statement?

Answer: Yes. Several years ago my publisher complained to Hank Hanegraaff about this stock response and he was supposedly going to "take care of it." However, nothing was changed. I am saddened by such an unwarranted response. Actually, it says more about CRI than about me. I'm not a scholar? How is that defined? In spite of more than 800 footnotes in *A Woman Rides the Beast*, I'm not thorough in my research? And they disagree with every one of my "conclusions regarding Roman Catholicism"?! I'm not right on anything?! And they agree with nothing I say about the evils and dangers of psychology? Yet we met with Hank and his staff for an entire day on this subject and seemed to be largely in agreement, at least in private. Then why this complete public disagreement?

As for "conspiracy theories in the New Age, and a few other areas," I don't know to what they refer. And here we have a major problem: the lack of specifics. They condemn almost everything I've ever said or done, but *without* documentation. I don't make statements like that—not about CRI or anyone else. In fairness to me and to those who ask about me they ought to be specific and document the reasons for such serious disagreement.

Their final criticism is the harshest: that my work is not done "objectively." As well as being incompetent, am I also unfair, dishonest, biased, driven by emotion or bigotry? Apparently CRI can even pronounce judgment upon my heart! Fortunately, we serve God and not man, and the final judgment is in His hands, and before Him we must all stand very soon. May that awesome fact keep us honest, careful and Christlike in all of our service for Him.

Question: A friend of mine said you were recently in D.C. at a secular UFO conference. I didn't see it on your itinerary. What was it and why were you there?

Answer: The conference concerned how earthlings are to conduct themselves when contact is eventually made with extraterrestrials (April 1995 *TBC*). After prayer and discussion with our staff, I

accepted the invitation to participate as an opportunity the Lord had provided. It was quite an experience, like being on another planet! Many speakers and attendees claim to be in contact with ETIs and "spirit guides" and even talk to trees and other nature forms.

It seems that I was invited because some of those involved had read *The Archon Conspiracy* and were intrigued by it. I was on the "Fear Panel" and gave them plenty to fear (which none of the other panel members seemed willing to do). My paper is to be published with the conference proceedings. A few individuals thanked me for what I said and I was able to give the gospel clearly to a number in conversation.

Several of the speakers were well-known and highly regarded psychologists and psychiatrists involved in bringing forth alleged "memories" of UFO encounters and abductions under regressive hypnosis. That the conference was funded by Rockefeller money and that there was government involvement only confirmed what I have written on this subject. UFOs (whether delusionary or demonic) could well play a significant part in explaining the Rapture and in the Antichrist's takeover of the world.

Question: This morning I saw James Kennedy of Coral Ridge on TV. He spoke of a "Christian takeover of the United States and the world" as involving a "paradigm shift." Could you comment on this in your newsletter?

Answer: Pastor Kennedy has long been a leader in the Christian reconstruction movement, which I deal with in detail in *Whatever Happened to Heaven?*, giving specific quotes by him and others. I suggest you read it. A "Christian takeover of the world" is neither taught nor hinted at anywhere in the Bible. Jesus certainly didn't teach or engage in such a project nor did Peter, Paul, the other apostles or anyone in the early church. We are to preach the gospel and call disciples out of this world for heavenly citizenship, not try to "Christianize" non-Christians. Revelation 13 (as well as other scriptures) makes it clear that Antichrist, not the church, will take over and rule the world—after the church has been taken by Christ to heaven. He will control all

banking and commerce, be worshiped by the whole world and have authority and power to kill all who refuse him this homage. The purpose of the Second Coming (as distinct from the Rapture, which occurs seven years earlier) is to destroy Antichrist (2 Thes 2:8) and rescue Israel (Zec 12, 13, 14). At Armageddon, Antichrist will lead the armies of the world to destroy Israel, necessitating Christ's intervention from heaven. That hardly sounds as though a "Christian takeover" has occurred!

Question: Concerning your mention of Rahab in the March 1995 TBC, where in Scripture does it actually come out and say Rahab lied and "was commended for telling a lie"? To lie is a sin!

Answer: Rahab did lie to save the spies' lives. When the king of Jericho asked her to "Bring forth the men that are come to thee" (Jos 2:3), she told him that "about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, the men went out: whither the men went I wot [know] not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them" (v 5). In fact, she had hidden the men on "the roof of the house...with the stalks of flax" (v 6), then let them down over the wall later for their escape. The preservation of Rahab and her family was contingent upon her continuing the deception in any further questioning by the king. That arrangement was made between Rahab and the spies by mutual oath in the name of the Lord (v 12). Hebrews 11:31 is clear: "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." Receiving the spies "with peace" surely necessitated lying about their whereabouts to the king.

The Bible has other similar examples. Pharaoh commanded the killing of all male babies born to Jews, but the Hebrew "midwives feared God, and...saved the men children alive" (Ex 1:15-17) and lied to the king (vv 18-19). Their lie is told and the next verse says, "Therefore God dealt well with the midwives" (vv 20-21). God himself told the prophet Samuel to lie about his mission to Bethlehem (1 Sm 16:2); Jonathan lied to save David's life (1 Sm 20:27-29); and David himself told Hushai the lie to tell to Absalom in order to protect David and his men (2 Sm 15:34).

Question: Usually I find the "Quotable" spot excellent, but sadly this month's [March 1995] extract from F. B. Meyer did not reach the usual standard,

particularly the part where God himself supposedly speaking says, "Till now thy might has hindered me...room for my omnipotence to work...etc." I do not find such teaching in the Bible.

Answer: In fact, the Bible teaches (contrary to five-point Calvinism) that we do have the power of choice either to obey or to resist God's will. Jesus wept over Jerusalem: "[H]ow often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Lk 13:34). "I would... ye would not" surely indicates the exercise of a choice contrary to Christ's desire, an act of human will which then prevented Him from bestowing upon Israel the blessing He desired. This and numerous other passages, (Ps 81, Is 1, Rom 10:21, etc.) tell of God wanting to bless His people but unable to do so because they refused to yield to Him. If words mean anything, the Bible teaches that God's purpose for our lives can be frustrated by our rebellion. Surely Adam and Eve made a genuine choice that cost them the blessing God would have given them and caused them to be expelled from His presence. Apropos of the citation you give, Christ told Paul, "[M]y strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Clearly, then, to rely upon our own strength hinders God from being our strength and giving us the blessings He desires.

Endnotes

1. Editorial, *Jewish Press*, Sep. 2, 1994.
2. David Lamb, *The Arabs* (Vintage Books, 1987), 87-88.
3. *Ibid.*, 288.
4. *The Messianic Times*, Winter 1995, 13.
5. *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, Week ending Nov. 26, 1994, 13.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *The Baptist Challenge*, Dec. 1994, 8.
8. *Associated Press*, Feb. 2, 1991.
9. Robert Morey, *The Islamic Invasion* (Harvest House Publishers, 1992), 26, 32.
10. *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, Week ending Feb. 11, 1995.
11. *Newsweek*, June 19, 1967, 29.

The Great Snare

Dave Hunt

...do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Galatians 1:10

What a great honor and privilege it is to be a “servant of Christ,” obeying His commands, carrying on His work, representing the Lord of the universe wherever we go and what-ever we say or do, making Him known and exalting and honoring Him in a world that has rejected and even hates Him. How rewarding it is to play even the smallest part in carrying out our Lord’s purposes here on earth. What joy and deep satisfaction it brings to know that our lives are pleasing our Savior and glorifying His Father in heaven (1 Jn 15:8), and to know that the results and rewards “fadeth not away” (1 Pt 1:4;5:4) but are “eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1). Surely this “high calling” (Phil 3:14) is the greatest and most fulfilling “vocation” (Eph 4:1) and “profession” (Heb 3:1) possible! No greater goal could inspire our ambitions, absorb our energies or captivate our hearts!

Of course, Satan, our wily enemy, has devised pitfalls and hindrances to block our path or turn us aside from following Christ. Our “adversary’s” (1 Pt 5:8) tireless genius creates temptations to seduce our hearts, and false doctrines to confuse our minds. Satan would rob our Lord of the glory He deserves, deprive us of the joy and reward that comes from obeying God, and prevent us from rescuing those who are “taken captive by him [Satan] at his will” (2 Tm 2:26). However, “we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor 2:11). Satan’s only hope is to capitalize upon three innate human weaknesses: “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn 2:16).

We find all three in Eve’s temptation. She saw that the forbidden fruit “was good for food [the lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [the pride of life]” (Gn 3:6). Driven by these lusts, Eve chose self over God.

Satan tried the same tactics on Christ (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). He had fasted forty days and was faint with hunger when Satan tempted Him to “command this stone that it be made bread” [the lust of the flesh], showed Him “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them” [the lust

of the eyes], and suggested that He jump from the pinnacle of the temple so that the Jews, seeing the angels “bear [Him] up in their hands” (Ps 91:12), would fall in worship at His feet [the pride of life].

Satan’s approach with both Eve and Christ reveals his entire repertoire. Thus we easily recognize his assaults and, admitting our natural lusts which in themselves lead us astray (Jas 1:14), defeat him not in our own strength (which is impossible) but by the power of Christ within us. Christ overcame Satan by standing upon the Word of God (“it is written”) in obedience to His Father—“not my will but thine be done” (Lk 22:42). We must do the same.

Satan’s ultimate weapon is the threat of physical death. That threat, which Christ faced and overcame, confronts us with all three temptations at once. Our most basic instinct (dating back to the Garden of

...the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

John 16:2

Eden) is self-preservation. We cling tenaciously to this world because it deceitfully offers to satisfy our “lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life.” These three, said John, are “all that is in the world” (1 Jn 2:16).

The “fear of death” holds men “all their lifetime...[in] bondage” (Heb 2:15). Christ warned that “whosoever will save his life shall lose it.” He also promised, “whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Mt 16:25). In other words, if we clutch our lives selfishly to ourselves and are afraid or unwilling to give up all for Christ, we will lose the true life God has for us. However, if for Christ’s sake we obediently and lovingly abandon the life which self would have lived, He will live through us the true life for which He created and redeemed us, a life of great joy (despite trials and suffering) which glorifies God and never ends.

Just before the Cross, Christ warned His eleven disciples (and all those through the centuries who would believe in Him, including us) that the time would come when following Him would cost them their earthly lives. That prophecy came true. Literally millions of Christians have been maligned, tortured and murdered by Christ-rejecters throughout history. Such

tactics, however, failed to accomplish Satan’s purposes. As Tertullian said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” If the truth were known, perhaps more souls came to Christ and more lives were surrendered to Him through the deaths of the five young missionaries killed by Aucas in Ecuador in 1956 than had they lived. Three were dear friends of mine, and I remember weeping and agonizing in prayer, until at last, in anguish, I yielded to the fact that God knows best.

Christ’s warning included a further and seemingly unbelievable scenario: that some of those killing His followers would think they were “do[ing] God service” (Jn 16:2). That kind of persecution or martyrdom has always been the hardest to bear. It is one thing to be hated and tortured and killed by those who openly admit their opposition to Christ. It is something else entirely when persecution comes in His name from those who profess to love Him and who believe they are thereby serving God. In *A Woman Rides the Beast* we document many examples of this incredible travesty perpetrated by Roman Catholic popes who slaughtered true Christians by the millions, as well as by zealous priests who, in Christ’s name, mercilessly tortured and murdered their victims during the Inquisitions.

While Satan has not entirely abandoned violence (Christians are still being tortured and killed in strong Catholic and Islamic areas), his tactics today are more subtle and thus far more effective. Those whose bodies were imprisoned for the sake of Christ remained unfettered in soul and spirit. Theirs was the “glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21)! Today, however, bodies remain free to enjoy popularity and pleasure, while souls and spirits are bound in chains of fear—the fear of the adverse opinions of others and loss of their good will and esteem and the financial gain which popularity brings.

Solomon warned, “The fear of man bringeth a snare” (Prv 29:25). This great snare includes fear of offending, fear of being criticized, fear of losing friendship, fear of being isolated, left out, looked down upon, passed by for a raise in salary or promotion. All such debilitating and compromising fears are summarized in Paul’s statement in Galatians 1:10: “...for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” The natural desire to please others (especially those in positions of influence and power) in order to be well thought of by them is Satan’s

most effective snare in holding Christians captive so they cannot serve God. And his most persuasive instruments in ensnaring Christians are Christians themselves.

It is far easier to stand true to Christ in the face of jeers and opposition from atheists than to resist the seemingly sincere persuasions of fellow Christians who urge one to "be positive" and to avoid offending others in order to be "more effective for Christ." There is little difficulty rejecting an obviously false gospel. It is not so easy, however, to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3) against errors which are clothed in teaching that contains much that is biblical—and especially when it is supported by highly esteemed Christian leaders whose lives have evidenced much good fruit. Who can resist the praise of men and the temptation to be well liked and even to become a part of leadership in one's denomination!

How often have I agonized before the Lord in attempting to understand why so many Christians, even leaders among them, will compromise God's Word, water down the gospel and join in ecumenical partnerships which suppress the truth! Surely the desire to "please men" plays a large role. Could that explain why leading evangelicals signed that infamous document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (ECT)? Having dealt with that already, let's consider a similarly devastating example of growing apostasy.

The Catholic Herald of June 2, 1993, reported that Rabbi Howard Hirsch of Temple Shalom in Colorado Springs, and Richard Hanifen, that city's Roman Catholic bishop, were outraged that "Jewish and Catholic youth were being evangelized at school." They met with Christian leaders in Colorado Springs who agreed that such evangelization was improper. Christian students were rebuked for seeking to rescue their school friends from a lost eternity in obedience to Christ's command to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15).

A "Covenant of Mutual Respect" was drawn up in which the parties, in "a commitment to justice, mercy, righteousness and peace for all," agreed to respect one another's diverse beliefs and to avoid "polarization." Try to imagine Peter, James and John, when forbidden by the Sanhedrin to preach the gospel, signing an agreement to cease such activities out of respect for diverse beliefs among Roman citizens! Or Elijah signing

such an agreement with the prophets of Baal, or Paul with the Judaizers in Jerusalem or the pagan priests in Ephesus! Jesus would never have been crucified had he joined with the rabbis in such a deal.

The Covenant was published in the local paper as "A Message to the People of Colorado Springs." It was signed by such notables (in addition to Hirsch and Hanifen) as the president of Focus on the Family, the president of International Students, Inc., the Young Life director of Institute of Youth Ministries, The Navigators director of U.S. Ministries, and various local pastors, some evangelical, some not. Commending this amazing compromise, Lauren Libby, vice president of The Navigators, said, "It's good to see the Body of Christ unified in

For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God

John 12:43

Colorado Springs." Yes, it would be, if they were unified in truth.

Everywhere we see the powerful influence of the fear of man and the deceitful fruit of the seemingly legitimate desire to please man. It plagues every family. The hardest people to witness to are those of one's own household. To faithfully share the gospel often cuts one off from family and friends. The same pressure not to offend is found in every club, whether it be the Lions or Rotary or some other. Christians are kept from being the servants of Christ for fear of offending fellow members with the truth. Unfortunately, the same fear operates in Christian groups as well.

The fear of man holds sway in Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition where evangelicals, Catholics, Mormons, humanists and others work together for conservative political and social goals. An uncompromising witness for Christ must be avoided because it would offend some members and break up the coalition. In many such groups Christians must remain silent about that which is eternal in order to devote themselves to good causes which are only temporal.

The fear of man created the term "politically correct." Whether one is a Democrat or Republican, the party line must be adhered to for the sake of one's career. We call this invisible yet powerful

source of intimidation "the establishment." We see it in the academic world, where many a scientist knows that evolution is a fraud but is afraid to admit it for fear of losing his position. The Christian world is caught in the same snare. There are Christian leaders who agree with me when we speak in private, but who distance themselves from or even criticize me in public for fear of offending others in power.

This great snare haunts the world of Christian media. To be a guest on CBN or TBN or even Moody Radio, etc. one must avoid offending listeners and supporters, which often prevents one from speaking the truth in love from Scripture. The "Christian psychology" establishment exerts tremendous pressure in this regard. I am banned from most Christian radio and TV because what I say undermines confidence in the huge and profitable "Christian psychology" industry, which happens to provide Christian radio's largest advertising revenue and therefore must not be challenged with truth.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Mt 7:1) is offered to justify failure to oppose false teachings. Yet Jesus also says, "Beware of false prophets...by their fruits ye shall know them" (vv 15-20). So we are to recognize false teachers and beware of them, which surely would include warning others. In fact, Christ rebuked the rabbis for not judging "what is right" (Lk 12:57). Jesus said, "Judge...righteous judgment" (Jn 7:24). Thus, we *must* judge. How else can we "rebuke before all" those who sin (1 Tm 5:20)? Paul rebuked the Corinthians for failing to judge those within the church (1 Cor 5:12-6:5). He also made it clear that listeners are to "judge" and correct if necessary what is taught in the church (14:29-31).

Tragically, there is a growing tendency to present Christ in a way that appeals to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Those who "receive Christ" on that basis have believed "another gospel" about "another Jesus" (2 Cor 11:4). There is an "offense of the cross" (Gal 5:11). A gospel designed to offend no one is a fraud that damns instead of saves. We must adhere to the truth of God's Word out of love for our Lord and for the souls for whom He died. May God deliver us from the great snare of "lov[ing] the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn 12:43)! We "cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt 6:24). Let us take care to make the right choice. **TBC**

Quotable

The test by which all conduct must finally be judged is motive....Unfortunately...religious activity...can be carried on for reasons that are not good....[T]he Pharisees...prayed, but they prayed to be heard of men....They judged sin and stood against it when they found it in others, but...from self-righteousness and hardness of heart....Their activities had about them an outward appearance of holiness, and those same activities if carried on out of pure motives would have been good and praiseworthy. The whole weakness of the Pharisees lay in the quality of their motives.

That this is not a small matter may be gathered from the fact that those orthodox and proper religionists went on in their blindness till they at last crucified the Lord of glory....Many a solo is sung to show off; many a sermon is preached as an exhibition of talent; many a church is founded as a slap at some other church. Even missionary activity [and]...soul winning may degenerate into a sort of brush-salesman project to satisfy the flesh. Do not forget, the Pharisees were great missionaries and would compass sea and land to make a convert....

Not [only] *what* but *why* will be the important question when we Christians appear at the judgment seat to give account of the deeds done in the body.

A. W. Tozer

The Root of the Righteous, pp 89-91

Q&A

Question: Recently I heard some good reports about something called “The Catholic Campaign for America.” It is dedicated to bringing higher morals to our country. Shouldn’t that please every Christian?

Answer: This “Campaign” was founded in September 1991 by former Education Secretary William Bennett (who often speaks at evangelical functions) and Mary Ellen Bork, wife of failed Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork. Its stated purpose is “to increase *Catholic* [not *Christian*] influence on public policy issues.” Please understand that *Catholic* does not mean *Christian*. There is nothing in its literature

about bringing anyone into a saving relationship with Christ, but only into the Roman Catholic Church. Its board of directors includes leading industrialists of wealth and influence, some of them members of the Military Order of the Knights of Malta, sworn to defend the Pope.

In an appeal to *Catholics* to join, Mrs. Bork states, “*Catholic* Americans are...the largest religious denomination in America....Our mission is to...increase the *Catholic* electorate’s influence in formulating public policy and focus the public’s attention on the richness and beauty of *Catholic teaching*....[We will] educate the American public regarding the *Catholic perspective* through earned media opportunities and a national radio, television and print campaign and defend *the [Catholic] Church* when it is under attack....The *Catholic Campaign* for America is firmly loyal to the *Holy Father [Pope]* and *Magisterium* of the Universal *Church*....And how urgently our beloved nation needs the guidance and teaching of *our Church* today!...Relying on the intercessions of Mary, the Seat of Wisdom and Patroness of the United States, together we [*Roman Catholics*] can accomplish so much for our nation.” (Emphasis added.) Note the goal is not *Christianity* but *Catholicism*—and there is a huge difference.

There is a reason for this “Campaign’s” reliance upon Mary, which is typical. In Catholicism, Mary overshadows Christ and God. Far back, in 1792, our country was declared by John Carroll, first Catholic Bishop of the U.S., to be *under Mary’s protection*. (Unless “Mary” is greater and more loving than God, why not rely upon God’s protection? Wouldn’t that be enough? Apparently Mary’s protection is better!) In 1847, Pope Pius IX (see *A Woman Rides the Beast* for the horrors of this man) named the Catholic “Mary” as “Patroness of the United States.” As a memorial to this fact, the huge basilica of “The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception” (Mary’s alleged sinless birth and life) was erected in Washington, D.C.

Some of the official prayers offered to Mary at this shrine—and which she would have to be God to answer—include the following expressions: “[W]e put the

United States of America into the hands of Mary Immaculate....Our Mother, Patroness of our land, we praise you and honor you and give ourselves to you. Protect us from every harm....[A]cting always according to your will....[W]e dedicate ourselves to your service....Save sinners and console the dying. You are our hope, Mary, Mother of Mercy and Gate of Heaven.” (Save sinners?! Mother of Mercy?! Gate of Heaven?!)

The last prayer listed in the booklet of official prayers to be offered at this shrine says in part, “O Mother of Perpetual Help, grant that I may ever invoke your most powerful name, which is the safeguard of the living and the salvation of the dying. O Purest Mary, O Sweetest Mary, let your name henceforth be ever on my lips. Delay not, O blessed Lady, to help me whenever I call on you, for, in all my needs, in all my temptations, I shall never cease to call on you, ever repeating your sacred name, Mary, Mary. O what consolation, what sweetness, what confidence, what emotion fill my soul when I pronounce your sacred name, or even only think of you.” Wow!

Christian ecumenists such as those who signed ECT, and activists who join with Catholics, naively imagine that these are Christians who are concerned that others know Christ. In fact, as they themselves state, their concern is to turn America into a Catholic country by the grace and power of their false “Mary.” Beware!

Question: I love you very much...but feel an unbalanced prejudice against Catholics after reading much of your literature. I know that Roman Catholicism is a lie from the pit...but I don’t find edification...by focusing on their error. If you can, show me several places in the Word where false doctrine is explained...such as *how* to worship Molech...astrology, necromancy, etc. It seems to me that the Bible addresses these lies without going into great detail of the actual practices. Am I wrong?

Answer: How could I possibly have an “unbalanced prejudice” against what you admit is “a lie from the pit”?! I don’t provide historical details of the horrible practices and dogmas of Catholicism out of prejudice but out of deep concern for

souls. Yes, there have been and still are many kind and compassionate and self-sacrificing priests and nuns. Yes, the Roman Catholic Church was the major charitable institution during the Middle Ages and was often a force for good. But at the same time it destroyed souls! Even its best influences (like Mother Teresa today) led and still lead souls astray for eternity. I am therefore compelled to expose Catholicism's counterfeit gospel. It is quite acceptable for ministries to devote themselves entirely to exposing Mormonism (8 million members) or the Jehovah's Witnesses (5 million members), but to expose Rome, which has 1 billion souls in its grip, is somehow not in good taste! Ask yourself why! Unless the subtle lie is thoroughly explained it continues to deceive.

I understand your objection to giving too much detail concerning evil. I think my writing and speaking is balanced in that regard. You ask for biblical support. The Bible gives much detail concerning Satan's fall (Is 14:12-15; Ez 28:12-19) and the details of his temptation of Eve (Gn 3:1-7) and his attempt to destroy Job (Jb 1:1-2:7). There are too many accounts of idolatry and pagan practices for me to begin to list the verses, as well as warnings against them (Lv 19:31; 20:1-6; Dt 18:9-14; Is 47:8-13). The Bible goes into great detail concerning the apostasy of Israel, telling the sins of its kings and people, from the golden calf (Ex 32:1-28) to the Queen of Heaven (Jer 44:15-23); and again there are too many references to begin to list them. False doctrine is explained thoroughly and repeatedly. Almost the entire book of Galatians is devoted to describing and combating one particular false gospel.

If we are to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3), it can only be done by pointing out what is wrong with the counterfeit. Christ himself did so, explaining in detail the evil practices and false teachings of the rabbis (Mt 15:1-20; 23:5-33, etc.). In comparison to Stephen's indictment of the Jews (Acts 7:39-43, 51-53). I don't think I overdo pointing out what is wrong in order for the truth to be understood more clearly in comparison.

Question: After reading *A Woman Rides the Beast*, I thought I had it sorted out that the Serbs were the good guys and the

Croatians the bad ones, but the news makes it sound the other way around. Who are the good ones and who are the bad ones—and where do the Muslims fit in?

Answer: They're all bad guys, like the rest of us. As the Bible says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). In *Woman* I document what the media won't tell you. In 1941 Hitler set up a Nazi puppet regime, the Croatian Ustashi. The Croatians are Catholics and the Serbs are Eastern Orthodox. With priests and bishops present (some in military uniform) and with the blessing of the Vatican, the Catholic Ustashi gave the Serbian Orthodox the choice of conversion to Catholicism or death—and murdered about 1 million. The Serbs are getting their revenge today. That doesn't mean, however, that the Serbs are the good guys and the Croatians the bad ones. This sort of terror and sadism has been practiced against each other by both sides for centuries.

As for the Muslims, they are the enemies of both Serbs and Croatians, but will switch sides depending upon advantage to themselves. Islam literally calls for the takeover of the world for Allah, by violence and death. This is all documented in my latest book, *A Cup of Trembling*. It includes passages from the Koran calling for death to all who refuse to convert to Islam. Some of these verses were quoted in the July newsletter. Don't believe it when the media calls Islam a peaceful religion and explains Islamic terrorism as the work of a few fanatics who don't represent Islam. In fact, that is exactly what Islam is, a cruel and violent religion. In Saudi Arabia (our ally for whose protection we fought the Gulf War) it is the death penalty today for a Muslim to convert to another faith!

The Way of Balaam

Dave Hunt

Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam...who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

2 Peter 2:15

The story of Balaam is one of the strangest and yet most instructive in Scripture. He was a prophet genuinely in touch with God and through whom God spoke: "And God came unto Balaam and said ...the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth..." etc. (Nm 22:9,12,20; 23:4,5,16, etc.). Yet when Moab's King Balak sent princes offering to pay him to curse God's people, Balaam was only too eager to do so. Money was his real god and brought his remarkable career to its end in hell. It was Balaam who prophesied concerning Christ, "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (24:17). He was from Mesopotamia (today's Iraq), the same area as the Magi who honored Christ at His birth. Apparently these "wise men from the east" (Mt 2:1) were alerted by Balaam's prophecy to recognize and follow that star. Yet Balaam was one of the enemies of God whom the Israelites "slew with the sword..." (Nm 31:8). How can such contradictions be?

Many Bible students wonder why the angel of the Lord "stood in the way for an adversary against him" (22:22). Hadn't God said Balaam could go with Balak's emissaries? Yes, but only "If the men come to call thee" (v 20). Balaam didn't wait to be called but all too eagerly "rose up...and went with the princes of Moab" (v 21). This was not Balaam's first such deviance, for God reminded him, "thy way is perverse before me" (v 32).

Here was a confusing mixture: a man used by God in prophecy (23:16-24; 24:2-24) and used by Satan in soothsaying (Hebrew: *kawsam* - Jos 13:22). *Kawsam* is elsewhere translated "divination," which includes any technique that automatically bestows spiritual power in partnership with evil spirits. Even King Saul knew that divination comes through an evil spirit, for he asked the witch at Endor, "divine unto me by the familiar spirit" (1 Sm 28:8).

It seems clear that many of today's charismatic "prophets" derive their "power" from Balaam's occultic source. That door is opened through an unbiblical emphasis upon power, power, power: the power of the Spirit, power evangelism, signs and wonders and

miracles. To point out that *holiness* and *truth* are the foremost purposes of the *Holy Spirit* who is "the Spirit of *truth*" (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) is considered "negative." No wonder these attributes are largely missing from today's boasted "great last-days revival."

Consider Benny Hinn on TBN (with Paul and Jan Crouch laughing uproariously), telling with much merriment of a man's wig flying off when he fell "under the *power*" after Hinn touched his forehead. The man pulled the wig back on, a bit askew, got up and Hinn touched him again *just to see him fall and the wig fly off*. He did this *five times*, admitted Hinn, laughing impishly. Was this *God's power* on display? Surely not! Then what power was it that caused the man to fall repeatedly, this power that Hinn claims

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Jeremiah 5:31

to pick up at the graves of Kathryn Kuhlman and Aimee Semple McPherson? Such questions involving not only Hinn but many others must be faced seriously! Who will do so?

God's power is only for His glory. He would not allow Balaam to curse Israel (Dt 23:5; Neh 13:2). So to get the reward Balak offered, Balaam showed this evil king how to bring God's judgment upon Israel by enticing God's people into the first ecumenical union in recorded history: joint worship between Israel and the idolatrous Midianites. Ecumenism is forever identified as "*the doctrine of Balaam*, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Rv 2:14; see also Nm 25:1-3; 31:16).

God gives freely by His grace, and His servants are not to charge for passing on His blessings: "[F]reely ye have received, freely give" (Mt 10:8). Satan, however, allows his servants, like Balaam, to charge for the occultic powers he bestows. Thus the "damsel possessed with a spirit of divination ...brought her masters *much gain* by soothsaying...." The loss of this income as a result of Paul casting out the "spirit of divination" enraged her masters and caused Paul's imprisonment at Philippi (Acts 16:16-24).

The money and fame to be earned from selling occult powers offers the temptation to yield oneself to deluding evil spirits. Paul warns, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith..." (1 Tm 6:10). Judas's love of money made him vulnerable to Satan's enticement to betray our Lord: "[H]e was a thief, and had the bag [the disciples' meager money pouch]" (Jn 12:6).

Love of money was Balaam's downfall, too. His protestation, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God" (Nm 22:18), only revealed his true desires. Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pt 2:15) so much that he is the prototype of the corruption money and fame breed: "Woe unto them! for they...ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (Jude 11). Offering spiritual benefits for money is called "the way of Balaam." It prospers in the church today because multitudes are enticed to believe and obey those who promise health and wealth in exchange for a "seed-faith" offering.

In *Miracle of Seed-Faith*, Oral Roberts claims God revealed to him that the great principle of sowing and reaping so evident in the physical world also held true in the spiritual realm. One could "plant" a monetary gift in a ministry and "reap" miracles. In response to this false promise, hundreds of millions of dollars from sincere but deceived Christians have poured into the ministries of numerous "faith teachers," making them wealthy. This "way of Balaam" is the shameful root of the entire positive confession movement with its seductively popular "prosperity gospel."

This false teaching panders to the basest human lust for riches: "Jesus was rich"¹ and therefore His followers must be rich. Kenneth Hagin says that to drive an old car instead of a new Cadillac isn't "being humble, that's being ignorant [of God's laws of prosperity]."² Frederick Price agrees: "I drive a Rolls Royce...following Jesus' steps."³ Such false prophets promise a "hundredfold return" for offerings sent to them. Gloria Copeland writes, "You give [us]...\$1,000 and receive \$100,000...Mark 10:30 is a very good deal."⁴ Oral Roberts promises "**PROSPERITY MIRACLES**" (emphasis in original) for those who "take advantage of the hundredfold return..." How does this differ from Catholicism's sale of indulgences? Each is simply the way of Balaam in different form.

Gloria tells how she learned to take

authority over money and command it to come to her “in Jesus’ Name.”⁵ Balaam would be envious! The faith teachers have all gotten rich—not by giving to others, but by persuading their gullible sign-seeking followers to give to them. Peter warned of such false prophets who “through covetousness...with feigned words make merchandise of you” (2 Pt 2:3)! That no hue and cry is raised against them in the church is an equal disgrace.

Peter rebuked Simon the magician for thinking “that the gift of God may be purchased with money” (Acts 8:20). Yet the practice of charging for what only God can give has become the norm in the church. Were he living today, Simon would find that his offer to pay for the Holy Spirit’s gifts would not only be accepted but required to attend a John Wimber “Signs and Wonders” seminar to learn how to “operate in the gifts of the Spirit.” If there were no other reason to take a closer look at Promise Keepers (another Vineyard offshoot), the exorbitant fees they charge to attend their rallies would be cause enough.

The charging of fees is universal among so-called Christian psychologists. Should a troubled soul seeking salvation be billed by a church for the time it takes the pastor to present the gospel? Then why charge for “Christian counseling”? Yet a multimillion-dollar “Christian psychology” industry has been built by charging clients fat hourly fees. That fact alone is sufficient reason for dropping the “Christian” label from the psychology that has all but taken over evangelical churches, colleges and seminaries.

Christian music has also become a money-making industry. There are Christian musical groups who won’t come to a church or conference without being guaranteed a large sum to “perform.” The same is true of some leading preachers and teachers who likewise require a large guaranteed fee “to bring a word from God.” Such servants of men are obliged to please those who pay for their services. Only those who ask for nothing but who trust God and thankfully accept whatever may be given, whether large or small or nothing at all, are free as the servants of God to faithfully speak “the truth in love” (Eph 4:15).

After God had told him clearly *not* to go with Balak’s princes, Balaam persisted in prayer, hoping to change God’s mind (v 19). The faith teachers claim to do what Balaam only hoped. Hagin claims that Jesus

personally appeared to him and gave him four principles which will *always* obtain for anyone who follows them whatever he wants from God.⁶ Frederick Price more than agrees: “*You are in control!...God cannot do anything in this earth unless we...give Him permission...through prayer.*”⁷ Behold the way of Balaam promoted in the church!

Divination promises man control over nature and even over God. Paul Yonggi Cho (now David Cho) declares, “You create the presence of Jesus with your mouth...He is bound by your...words.”⁸ Robert Schuller says, “You don’t know what power you have within you!...You can make the world into anything you choose.”⁹ Mary Baker Eddy founded the Christian Science cult on this

Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering, affliction, and of patience.

James 5:10

same delusion that spiritual power operates according to fixed laws. The entire faith movement rests upon the same belief that faith is a force just like electricity or gravity¹⁰ and it obeys laws. Thus even non-Christians can use it. Hagin writes, “the sinners...were [getting miracles by] cooperating with this...law of faith.”¹¹ Cho adds, “Sokagakkai [a Buddhist sect] has applied the law of the fourth dimension and has performed miracles...”¹²

Pat Robertson describes his book *Beyond Reason* as “an effort to teach some of the basic principles that enable you to understand and experience the flow of God’s energy...and to enter the world of miracles...”¹³ He teaches that miracles work according to laws which “are as valid for our lives as the laws of thermodynamics or the law of gravity.”¹⁴ Robertson says, “[T]he metaphysical principles of the kingdom [of God], taken by themselves, can produce fantastic temporal benefits” even for occultists.¹⁵ This *is* occultism! Affirming this same error, Pope John Paul II recently bestowed his Special Apostolic Blessing upon devout Catholic Jose Silva, founder of the Silva Method, a powerful occultic divination technique which openly involves spirit guides.

To what extent are church leaders

involved with evil spirits? Oral Roberts claimed a seven-hour conversation with a 900-foot Jesus (strangely, not mentioned in his just-released autobiography) who told him to build the City of Faith Medical Center in Tulsa. This “Jesus” made false promises in exchange for money: there would be cures for cancer and other diseases if Oral’s “prayer partners” would each contribute \$240. Simple, sincere people (who still believe him today) contributed more than the \$150 million needed to complete the 20-story complex. There was no miracle, no cure for cancer or anything else Oral’s “Jesus” promised. The 777-bed medical center never had more than 148 beds occupied and went bankrupt in spite of additional millions of dollars given by gullible Christians in response to further false promises.

Had some Wall Street promoter, through similar false promises, bilked people out of a fraction of the money Oral got he would be in prison. Oral claims he was only obeying Jesus. Yet we know for certain that the 900-foot apparition was *not* Jesus, for He doesn’t lie. Did Oral hallucinate? A seven-hour conversation with a 900-foot hallucination? Hardly! Only two possibilities remain: either Oral lied, or he was lied to by a deceiving spirit. The courts can’t touch Oral. Only the church can bring him to account.

Yet Oral Roberts has lost none of his appeal on the charismatic circuit and is widely received even by evangelical leaders who ought to rebuke him. He is still hailed on TBN as a great prophet of God and celebrated by multitudes who continue to believe and support him. Tragically, Roberts is only one of many such examples that could be given. If Balaam were alive, what a field day he would have in today’s church!

Please pray for two things: (1) that Christian leaders who are respected by vast audiences on national and international radio and TV will, like Jeremiah and the true prophets and apostles of old, take the responsibility of reproof and warning against modern Balaams who are leading multitudes astray; and (2) that specific teaching from God’s Word will be widely presented to arm true believers against “the way of Balaam” in whatever form it may appear. And may those of us who have only a small voice speak out as loudly and clearly as God allows us in reproof of error and support of His truth. Finally, may our lives evidence the indwelling *Holy Spirit*, the Spirit of *truth*.

TBC

Quotable

[When] Jesus said, “Whosoever would be the greatest among you, shall be your servant” (Mt 23:11), He taught us the blessed truth that there is nothing so divine and heavenly as being the servant and helper of all....Being servants of all is the highest fulfillment of our destiny....

When I look...upon the Church of Christ in the world, I stand amazed at...how little humility is sought after as the distinguishing feature of the discipleship of Jesus...that humility is not esteemed the cardinal virtue....[Yet] it is the one indispensable condition of true fellowship with Jesus....

True humility comes when, in the light of God, we have seen ourselves to be nothing, have consented to part with and cast away self—to let God be all. The soul that has done this and can say, “So have I lost myself in finding You,” no longer compares itself with others. It has forever given up every thought of self in God’s presence ...and seeks nothing for itself. It is a soul that serves God and, for His sake, serves all....The Spirit of Him who washed the disciples’ feet makes it a joy to us to be indeed the least, to be servants one of another.

Andrew Murray, Humility

In choosing a spouse, self-denial should be a characteristic sought after. Who are better suited to wedlock than men and women who have already died to self? Already they live to serve and please Another rather than selfish desires. Even now they deny legitimate self-interests to wait upon One to whom solemn vows have been made.

*Walter Chantry
The Shadow of the Cross:
Studies in Self-Denial*

Q&A

Question - A friend who quoted what you had to say about Jay Gary’s book *The Star of 2000* has been contacted by Gary and asked to make a retraction. What should he do? [Because of the large number of leading evangelicals who continue to endorse this book we felt that this question ought to be answered publicly and frankly.]

Answer: He needs to read the book for himself and come to his own conclusions. Gary also asked for a retraction from me,

claiming that the gospel was clearly presented at least four or five times in his book. I asked him to tell me where the gospel was stated. He responded and here is my reply:

I’ve received and read with interest your letter of July 21 and stand by my statement in *The Berean Call* that “the gospel does not appear” in your book *The Star of 2000*. You mention that “chapter 3 shares the story of how the church has aimed to take the Gospel to the world by the year 2000.” True, but the gospel itself does not appear in that chapter. The gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes [it]” (Rom 1:16). There is nothing either in that chapter or in the entire book that would bring a reader to salvation in Christ. Furthermore, that chapter praises Pope John Paul II and the Vatican’s New Evangelization 2000 as well as Fr. Tom Forrest who heads it and suggests that the Roman Catholic “gospel” is the true gospel.

You also say that “part of chapter 10 addresses the unfinished task of evangelization around the world.” True, but again the gospel itself does not appear. You write of “the tremendous glory, beauty and dignity the people of the world have and can bring before God in honor of Christ” (p 121) and of inviting “others to Jesus’ celebration of civilization” (p 122). Since when was the civilization of this world worth celebrating or worthy to celebrate Jesus (your meaning is uncertain)? It also praises a Roman Catholic priest who pointed the Masai “to Jesus as the lion of the clan of Judah” (p 124). These “believers” now celebrate a dancing Eucharist and testify that “The Word of God has come to save the beautiful things we have in our customs, and...to make us better Masai.” What gospel is this?!

You quote from page 31, “God triumphs over misery, pain and evil, not through force, but through self-sacrifice on the cross,” as “a direct reference to the substitutionary atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross on behalf of sinners.” That may be what you had in mind, but it could just as well be understood as a humanistic glorification of “self-sacrifice.” Certainly the gospel is not stated. A full rebuttal of your letter would only produce further similar examples and would be redundant.

Not only is the gospel not contained therein, but your book is filled with so many

false ideas (such as the man saved to “real life” by an angel, who is gratefully painting 2,000 angels, etc.) that any feeble hint at the gospel would be obscured.

Question: In your June ’95 issue you mentioned a dying girl named Michelle to whom the Catholic sisters failed to give the gospel (not surprising since they don’t know the gospel!). You said that God loved her and that His only begotten Son on the cross paid the full penalty for her sins. If this is so, then the finished work of Christ has ultimately failed to save her. In fact, Christ did not pay the penalty for her sin, but only for the sins of His people. Matthew 1:21 is clear: “For He [Jesus] shall save His people from their sins,” not He shall save the world....

Answer: So John the Baptist blundered when he said of Christ, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29)? And perhaps the Apostle John got it wrong when he wrote, “[T]he Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn 4:14)? This is a controversial issue with sound evangelicals on both sides. I don’t want to stir up more letters than we can handle, but this subject arises so often that it needs to be addressed at least briefly.

We must neither add to nor take from Scripture and you have added “not He shall save the world.” In fact, what you attempt to deny is exactly what the Bible affirms: “[H]e is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:2); “who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Tm 4:10). It isn’t clear to me whether you are simply saying that Christ died only for those whom He foreknew would believe in Him; or whether, as a five-point Calvinist, you are saying that He died only for those few whom God elected to save. Neither idea is biblical, as numerous verses prove.

The issue is not God’s sovereignty but His love. God has the sovereign right to save or to damn whomever He will. He would be perfectly just in damning all mankind. However, the Bible makes it abundantly clear that God “is love” (1 Jn 4:16); and that He “so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...that the world through him might be saved” (Jn 3:16-17). Indeed, God is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Pt 3:9) but desires “all men to be saved” (1

Tm 2:4). The language could not be clearer.

It is not, as you suggest, that “the finished work of Christ failed to save” anyone but that many of those for whom Christ died do not avail themselves of the salvation He has procured for all. We must choose; and that we can do so is clear. Obedience would be meaningless without the power to disobey; nor could love be genuine unless it came from a heart free to reject and even to hate. All through the Bible man is called upon to choose between good and evil, between Satan and self and God, between heaven and hell, time and eternity. To teach that man cannot make that choice without God’s “irresistible grace” causing him to do so makes a mockery of God’s call to man to choose and reduces both obedience and love to programmed responses of robots.

Those who spend eternity in hell will be there not because Christ didn’t provide for their forgiveness or because God did not woo them by His Spirit but because they rejected the salvation He offered. That is their worst and only unpardonable sin which “shall not be forgiven...neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Mt 12:31-32).

Question: I’ve seen televangelists reach their hands out and ask those in the TV audience who want prayer for healing or prosperity to put a hand on theirs on the TV screen and “agree” for an answer from God. They call this a “point of contact” and the idea seems to be that this procedure opens the door to miracles. Why?

Answer: W. V. Grant has sent out an outline of his feet for recipients to stand upon as the “point of contact.” Oral Roberts sent the outline of his hand to his followers to place their hands upon as the “point of contact.” Other faith teachers have their own variations of this divination technique.

This serious error comes from a misunderstanding of Christ’s statement, “That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven” (Mt 18:19). The phrase “as touching anything” is taken to mean that the two parties must touch some object together as their “point of contact” and that doing so somehow activates the power of God. That is a form of divination!

The old English expression “as touching” found in the KJV has nothing at all to

do with “touching” an object as the faith teachers have mistakenly imagined. The Greek word translated “touching” is *perree*, which actually means “about, concerning, regarding or with respect to” and is so rendered in modern translations. For example, the NAS says, “if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask....”

Simple ignorance created the damaging error about a “point of contact” as the key to getting miracles. Yet Oral Roberts called it the “greatest discovery” he ever made. Unfortunately, that delusion has been taught by faith teachers and relied upon by millions of their followers for years, a delusion from which anyone could easily have been delivered by some Berean checking of Scripture against popular teaching.

Special Notice: CRI has revised Statement 4.102 concerning Dave Hunt to read as follows:

“Dave Hunt, who is a popular Christian author and speaker, publishes the newsletter called *The Berean Call* based in Bend, Oregon. He has written on many subjects, including the cults, end-time events, Roman Catholicism, and Christian Reconstructionism. CRI fully supports his commitment to the gospel of Christ and to testing all things by the Biblical record. He has faithfully challenged the church to Biblically discern current trends and teachings, as he did with some success in his book *The Seduction of Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1985). This does not mean, however, that we are in complete agreement with the conclusions of his studies. Hunt teaches that Roman Catholicism is a cult and the prophetic Whore of Babylon depicted in Revelation chapters 17-18.¹ He also denounces Christian psychology as teaching a false gospel.² CRI disagrees with him on these issues.³

“Enclosures: CP-0801; SP-3.275; JC-001

“1. *Global Peace and the Rise of Anti-christ* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1990); *A Woman Rides the Beast* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994); “A Cult is a Cult,” *CIB Bulletin*, June 1991. For a refutation on Roman Catholicism as the prophetic Whore of Babylon consult B. J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), pp. 104-107. [TBC: It is naive in the extreme to suggest that

anyone can “refute” in four pages what *A Woman Rides the Beast* takes 550 pages and 800 footnotes to document and which millions of Christians independent of Rome have believed for at least 1,000 years! That opinion was virtually unanimous among evangelical believers until very recently.]

“2. See, for example, “The Battle for Truth,” *The Berean Call*, June 1992; “God and Self,” *The Berean Call*, Nov. 1992.

“3. We have enclosed material on our view of Roman Catholicism. For our view of Christian psychology consult the series from the *Christian Research Journal* entitled “Psychology and the Church” by Bob and Gretchen Passantino (Part One begins with the Winter 1995 issue).”

Endnotes

- 1 Frederick Price, TBN (11/23/90); and so say Oral Roberts and many others.
- 2 Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Believer’s Authority* (Rhema Bible Church, 1984), 40.
- 3 On his “Ever Increasing Faith” program (TBN, 12/9/90).
- 4 Gloria Copeland, *God’s Will is Prosperity* (Harrison House, 1978), 54.
- 5 *God’s Will*, 48.
- 6 Kenneth E. Hagin, *How To Write Your Own Ticket With God* (Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1979).
- 7 Frederick K.C. Price, *The Word Study Bible* (Harrison House, 1990), 1178.
- 8 Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, *The Fourth Dimension* (Logos International, 1979), 83.
- 9 Robert Schuller, “Possibility Thinking: Goals” (an Amway Corporation tape).
- 10 Kenneth Copeland, interview with Paul and Jan Crouch (TBN, Feb. 5, 1986).
- 11 Kenneth Hagin, *Having Faith in Your Faith* (Rhema, 1980), 3-4.
- 12 *Fourth Dimension*, 30, 64.
- 13 Pat Robertson, *Beyond Reason* (William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), 20.
- 14 Pat Robertson, *The Secret Kingdom* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 43.
- 15 *Secret Kingdom*, 69.

The Finality of the Cross

Dave Hunt

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me....

Galatians 2:20

Anti-Christian elements in the secular world would like very much to do away with all public display of the cross. Yet it is still seen atop tens of thousands of churches and in religious processions, often made of gold and even studded with precious stones. Most frequently, however, the cross is displayed as popular jewelry hanging around necks or dangling from ears. One wonders by what strange alchemy the bloodstained, rugged cross of torment upon which Christ suffered and died for our sins became so sanitized and glamorized.

No matter how it is displayed, even as jewelry or graffiti, the cross is universally recognized as the symbol of Christianity — and therein lies a serious problem. *The cross itself* rather than *what transpired upon it* 19 centuries ago has become the focus of attention, resulting in several grave errors. Its very *shape*, though devised by cruel pagans for punishing criminals, has become holy and mysteriously imbued with magic properties, fostering the delusion that displaying a cross somehow provides divine protection. Millions superstitiously keep a cross in their homes or on their person or make “the sign of the cross” to ward off evil and frighten demons away. Demons fear Christ, not a cross; and any who have not been crucified with Him display a cross in vain.

Paul declared, “For the *preaching of the cross* is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). So the power of the Cross lies not in its *display* but in its *preaching*; and that preaching has nothing to do with the peculiar shape of the cross but with *Christ’s death upon it* as declared in the gospel. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16), not to those who wear or otherwise display or make the sign of the cross.

What is this gospel that saves? Paul states explicitly: “I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...by which also ye are saved,...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he

rose again the third day according to the scriptures...” (1 Cor 15:1-4). It comes as a shock to many that the gospel includes no mention of a *cross*. Why? Because a cross was not essential to our salvation. Christ had to be crucified to fulfill the prophecy concerning the manner of the Messiah’s death (Ps 22), not because the cross itself had anything to do with our redemption. What was essential was the shedding of Christ’s blood in His death as foreshadowed in the Old Testament sacrifices, for “without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]” (Heb 9:22); “for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lv 17:11).

This is not to say that the Cross itself has no meaning. That Christ was nailed to a cross reveals the horrifying depths of evil innate within every human heart. To be nailed naked to a cross and displayed publicly, to die slowly with taunts and jeers filling the

...whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Mark 8:34

air, was the most excruciatingly painful and humiliating death that could be devised. And that is exactly what puny man did to his Creator! We ought to fall on our faces in repentant horror, overcome with shame, for it was not only the screaming, bloodthirsty mob and derisive soldiers but our sins that nailed Him there!

So the Cross lays bare for all eternity the awful truth that beneath the polite facade of culture and education the heart of man is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9), capable of evil beyond comprehension even against the God who created and loves him and patiently provides for him. Does any man doubt the wickedness of his own heart? Let him look at the cross and recoil in revulsion from that self within! No wonder the proud humanist hates the Cross!

At the same time that the Cross lays bare the evil in man, however, it also reveals the goodness, mercy and love of God as nothing else could. In the face of such unspeakable evil, such diabolical hatred vented against Him, the Lord of glory who could destroy this earth and all upon it with a word, allowed Himself to be mocked and falsely accused and scourged and nailed to that cross! Christ “humbled himself, and

became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*” (Phil 2:8). When man was doing his worst, God responded in love, not merely yielding Himself to His tormenters but bearing our sins and taking the judgment we justly deserved.

Therein lies another serious problem with the symbol, and especially with Catholicism’s crucifix which portrays Christ perpetually on the cross, as does the Mass. The emphasis is focused upon the *physical suffering* of Christ as though that paid for our sins. On the contrary, that was what man did to Him and could only condemn us all. Our redemption came about through: His bruising by Jehovah and “his soul [being made] an offering for sin” (Is 53:10); God laying “on him the iniquity of us all” (v 6); and His bearing “our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pt 2:24).

The death of Christ is irrefutable evidence that God in righteousness must punish sin, the penalty must be paid, or there can be no forgiveness. That God’s Son had to endure the cross even after crying to His Father in agonizing contemplation of bearing our sins, (“[I]f it be possible, let this cup pass from me” - Mt 26:39), is proof that there was no other way mankind could be redeemed. When Christ, the sinless, perfect man and beloved of His Father, took our place, God’s judgment fell upon Him in all its fury. What then must be the judgment of those who reject Christ and refuse the pardon offered in Him! We must warn them!

At the same time and in the same breath that we sound the alarm of coming judgment, we must also proclaim the good news that redemption has been provided and God’s forgiveness is offered for the vilest of sinners. Nothing more evil could be conceived than crucifying God! Yet it was from the cross that Christ in infinite love and mercy prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). So the Cross proves, too, that there is forgiveness for the worst of sins and sinners.

Tragically, however, the vast majority of mankind reject Christ. And here we face another danger: that in our sincere desire to see souls saved we adjust the message of the Cross to avoid offending the world. Paul warned that care had to be taken not to preach the Cross “with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor 1:17). But surely the gospel can be explained in a new way that is more appealing to the ungodly than those old-time preachers presented it. Perhaps today’s techniques for packaging and selling could

to clothe the Cross in music or a beat or entertaining presentation such as the world uses that would give the gospel a new relevancy or at least familiarity. Psychology, too, can be drawn upon to provide a more positive approach. Let us not confront sinners with their sin and the gloom and doom of coming judgment, but explain that their behavior isn't really their fault so much as it is the result of abuse they have suffered. Are we not all victims? And didn't Christ come to rescue us from victimization and our low view of ourselves and to restore our self-esteem and self-confidence? Blend the Cross with psychology and the world will beat a path to our churches, filling them with new members! Such is today's new evangelicalism.

Confronting such perversion, A. W. Tozer wrote: "If I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is rather a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity.... The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it.... The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before that cross it bows and toward that cross it points with carefully staged histrionics—but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of the cross it stubbornly refuses to bear."

Here is the crux of the issue. The gospel is designed to do to self what the cross did to those who hung upon it: put it utterly to death. This is the good news in which Paul exulted: "I am crucified with Christ!" The Cross is not a fire escape from hell to heaven but a place where we die in Christ. Only then can we experience "the power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10), for only the dead can be resurrected. What joy that promise brings to those who long to escape the evil of their own hearts and lives; and what fanaticism it seems to those who want to cling to self and who therefore preach what Tozer called the "new cross."

Paul declared that in Christ the Christian is crucified to the world and the world to him (Gal. 6:14). That is strong language! This world hated and crucified the Lord whom we now love—and in that act it has crucified us as well. We have taken our stand with Christ. Let the world do to us what it did to Him if it will, but we will never again join in its selfish lusts and ambitions,

its godless standards, its proud determination to build a utopia without God and its neglect of eternity.

To believe in Christ is to admit that the death He endured for us is exactly what we deserve. Therefore, when Christ died we died in Him: "[W]e thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead [i.e., all have died]: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor 5:14-15).

"But I'm not dead," is the earnest response. "Self is still very much alive." Paul, too, acknowledged, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom 7:19). Then what does

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Galatians 6:14

"I am crucified with Christ" really mean in daily life? It doesn't mean that we are automatically "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11). We still have a will and choices to make.

Then what power does the Christian have over sin that the Buddhist or good moralist doesn't have? First of all, we have peace with God "through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). The penalty has been paid in full, so we no longer try to live a good life out of fear that otherwise we will be damned, but out of love for the One who has saved us. "We love him, because he first loved us (1 Jn 4:19); and love moves the lover to please the One loved at any cost. "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (Jn 14:23), our Lord said. The more we contemplate the Cross and meditate upon the price our Lord paid for our redemption, the more we will love Him; and the more we love Him, the more we will desire to please Him.

Secondly, instead of struggling to overcome sin, we accept by faith that we died in Christ. Dead men can't be tempted. Our faith is not in our ability to act as crucified persons but in the fact that Christ was crucified once and for all in full payment of the penalty for our sins.

Thirdly, after declaring that he was

"crucified with Christ," Paul added, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by [faith in the Son of God], who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). The just "live by faith" (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38) in Christ; but the non-Christian can only put his faith in himself or in some self-help program or phony guru.

Tragically, the Catholic's faith is not in the redemption Christ accomplished once and for all upon the cross, but in the Mass, which allegedly is the same sacrifice as on the cross and imparts forgiveness and new life each time it is repeated. It is claimed that the priest transforms the wafer and wine into the literal body and blood of Christ, thereby making Christ's sacrifice on the cross perpetually present. There is no way, however, that a past event can be made present. Moreover, if the past event accomplished its purpose, then there is no reason for wanting to perpetuate it in the present, even if that could be done. For example, if a benefactor pays a creditor the debt someone owes, the debt is gone forever. It would be meaningless to speak of re-presenting or reenacting or perpetuating the payment in the present.

One could well *remember* with gratitude the payment that was made, but no *reenactment* would have any virtue since there no longer remains any debt to be paid.

As Christ died He cried in triumph, "It is finished," using a Greek expression which meant that the debt had been paid in full. Yet the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God." (par 1414, p 356). That is like trying to continue paying installments of a debt that has been paid in full. The Mass is a denial of the sufficiency of the payment Christ made for sin upon the cross! The Catholic lives with the uncertainty of wondering how many more Masses it may take to get him to heaven.

Many Protestants live in similar uncertainty, fearful that they may yet be lost if they fail to live a good enough life or lose their faith or turn their backs upon Christ. There is a blessed finality to the Cross that delivers us from such insecurity. Christ need never be crucified again; nor can those who have been "crucified with Christ" be "uncrucified" and then "re-crucified"! Paul declared: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). What assurance for time and for eternity! TBC

Quotable

When Christ...cried out triumphantly, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30)...The saving work was fulfilled, completed....[A]ll who are recipients of that salvation are granted everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Christ (2 Pt 1:3)...We are complete in Christ (Col 2:10). What can anyone add to that?

But a widespread lack of confidence in Christ's sufficiency is threatening the contemporary church. Too many Christians have tacitly acquiesced to the notion that our riches in Christ...simply are not adequate to meet people's real needs....

The failure of modern Christians to understand and appropriate the riches of Christ has opened the door to all kinds of aberrant influences. Bad doctrine, legalism, libertinism, humanism, and secularization—to name a few—are eroding the foundations of the Christian faith.

John MacArthur

Preface, *Our Sufficiency in Christ*

A man must make a choice either to have God on his side or men. I am confident that if I did not say what I am about to say I should be silent from the fear of man....A sword in the hands of a child is mightier than a straw in the hands of a giant, and no amount of earnestness can be condemned when pleading the cause of God.

I will have no...complicity with Rome; because I believe Rome to be an apostate. A worshipper of Bread for God; a remover of the sovereign mediatorship of Christ; a destroyer of the true gospel, she teaches a system which, if any man believes or follows *as she teaches it*, he will infallibly be lost—he *must be*.

George Sayles Bishop

The Doctrines of Grace, 1910

Q&A

Question (composite of several): I've seen several reports that Pope John Paul II, as a salesman and chemist for I. G. Farben Chemical Company during World War II, both developed and "sold cyanide to the Nazis for use in Auschwitz; [and] after the war...fearing for his life, joined the Catholic Church and was ordained a priest in 1946..." etc., etc. Is this true?

Answer: I don't believe so. John Paul II was born Karol Wojtyla May 18, 1920 in Wadowice in southern Poland into a devout Catholic family that attended daily Mass.

He was baptized in the Wadowice parish church on May 29, 1920 (some reports say June 20), received his first communion there, served as an altar boy and in his early adult years continued to attend daily Mass. Thus the idea that he "joined the Catholic Church" after the war hardly rings true, much less that he could have been ordained a priest only one year later in 1946!

As for his activities during the war, Wojtyla moved to Krakow in 1938 to study Polish literature at the Jadjellonian University. The school was shut down in 1939 by the Nazis after their occupation of Poland. To prevent deportation to forced labor, one had to possess an *Arbeitskarte* (work card), which he obtained by finding work at the limestone quarry of the Solvay chemical works. In 1941-42 he was transferred to the water purification department (carrying lime in buckets to dump into water). During these early war years he was involved with an underground group of intellectuals, students and actors trying to keep Polish culture alive under Nazi persecution and was an actor in the Rhapsodic Theater group in Krakow, performing patriotic plays in secret.

In 1942 Wojtyla, after declaring his intention to become a priest, began clandestine theological studies. In 1944 he moved in with several other students to live and study in secret under the protection of Archbishop Adam Sapieha-Kodenski in his palace. Wojtyla was ordained a priest November 1, 1946, by the Archbishop. The documentation for the above seems solid and cannot be reconciled with the alleged I. G. Farben chemist/salesman scenario.

Question: We are in urgent need of information for our church family concerning the new Bible paraphrase by Eugene Peterson: *The Message* published by NavPress....I do not believe that *The Message* is a good translation ...yet it is promoted by Promise Keepers as well as other "big trusted" names in the Christian world. We are many here in our town who hope to be able to obtain a brochure or a position paper concerning this paraphrase.

Answer: Unfortunately, the errors in this paraphrase (it's not a translation) are numerous and serious. *The Message* cannot be relied upon to tell the truth and, in fact, is dangerously misleading. If Promise Keepers endorses it, that is one more mark against that organization.

Let me give you only a few examples. John 1:1 actually says, "In the beginning was

the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." *The Message* renders it, "The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one." That garbling is an improvement?! It is confusing at best and misleading at worst, changing the meaning. "In the beginning was the Word" is changed to "The Word was first." First before God? And what does "in readiness for God" mean? In verse 5, "the darkness comprehended it not" is rendered, "the darkness couldn't put it out," changing the meaning entirely. In verse 14, "full of grace" becomes "Generous inside and out," while "truth" becomes "true from start to finish." "Generous" and "grace" do not mean the same, nor does "true from start to finish" convey the rich meaning of Christ being "full of truth." In verse 29, "which taketh away the sin of the world" becomes "He forgives the sins of the world." There is a world of difference between taking away the sin of the world by paying the debt mankind owed, and forgiving sins!

In John 3:5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit" becomes, "unless a person submits to this original creation—the 'wind hovering over the water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life," again obscuring, complicating and changing the true meaning. In 3:17, "but that the world through him might be saved" becomes "He came to help, to put the world right again," a destructive change in the meaning. "Saved" means to be redeemed, rescued from the judgment we deserve for our sins; whereas "to help, to put the world right again" sounds like social or political reformation. In verse 36, "the wrath of God abideth on him" becomes, "All he experiences of God is darkness, and an angry darkness at that." How can anyone experience darkness from God, when 1 John 1:5 says of God, "in him is no darkness at all"? Serious error is added to serious error!

In 1 Corinthians 1:17, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" is perverted to read, "God didn't send me out to collect a following for myself but to preach the Message." It is important that Paul, a former rabbi, is a follower of Christ—*The Message* says "of God." The main point Paul makes is that baptism is not part of the gospel—*The Message* misses that completely. "Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" is changed to "...lest the powerful action at the center—Christ on the Cross—be trivialized into mere words." There is a vast difference between the eternal effect of "the cross of Christ" as the Bible states it and

“Christ on the Cross” as *The Message* puts it and Catholicism depicts it. Christ is not on the cross; the work is finished. In verse 30, “sanctification, and redemption” is changed to read “a clean slate and a fresh start”—both trivializing and misleading.

In Hebrews 11:1, “the substance of things hoped for” becomes “the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living,” a totally different meaning, with hope for eternity expunged. In verse 4, regarding the lamb which speaks of Christ, the “more excellent sacrifice” offered by Abel, the comment is interjected, “It was what he *believed*, not what he *brought*, that made the difference.” On the contrary, the sacrifice he brought was important to his belief, and without the proper sacrifice there could be no forgiveness no matter what was believed. In verse 7, “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” is changed to “became intimate with God,” again an entirely different meaning which leaves out the vital phrase “righteousness which is by faith.” In verse 16, “God is not ashamed to be called their God” is twisted into “God is so proud of them.” Never! Attributing the human evil of pride to God is blasphemy and leaves the dangerous impression that if God is proud then it isn’t so bad for man to be proud as well. In verse 35, “that they might obtain a better resurrection” becomes “preferring something better: resurrection.” Again the meaning is changed completely. It makes it sound as though resurrection is dependent upon good works. It was not a question of whether they would be resurrected, but of the reward they would receive in the Resurrection.

These are only a few among many errors, some extremely serious. It is appalling that any mere man would change or ignore the meaning of God’s Word under the vain delusion that he could improve upon what God has said and the way He has said it! It is even more appalling that a leading evangelical publisher would publish this blasphemy, Christian bookstores would sell it and Christian leaders would praise instead of denounce this perversion!

Question: Is it not true that the Roman Catholic Church gave us the Bible? This is what Catholic friends tell me and they substantiate that claim by saying that it was the early Church Councils which decided which books were to be in the canon of Scripture. Why don’t you admit this?

Answer: Because it isn’t true. Most obviously, the Roman Catholic Church didn’t

exist in Old Testament times or in the days of Christ or the apostles, so it had nothing to do with deciding what books would be in the Old Testament. Nor is there any indication that any ecclesiastical body of rabbis decided which books should be in the Old Testament. Psalm 1 speaks of “the man” who meditates on God’s Word, just an ordinary man, and not a hint that he had to consult a rabbi, either to know what constituted God’s Word or to understand it. Psalm 119:9 says that a “young man”—any young man—can heed God’s Word and thereby cleanse his way. And again, no hint that he had to look to some religious authority to tell him either what books were in God’s Word or what it meant. Christ rebuked the two on the road to Emmaus very harshly, calling them fools for not reading, understanding or paying attention to “all that the prophets have spoken.” Again that tells us that all of God’s Word at that time (the Old Testament) was readily available and could be understood by the average person.

If the Roman Catholic Church wasn’t needed to decide which books were included in, or to interpret, the Old Testament, then surely it wasn’t needed for the New Testament either. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church didn’t even exist in its present form with dominance of a “pope” in Rome over the other churches until nearly a thousand years after Christ. For the first 800 years the church councils were called by the emperors and not by the bishops of Rome, who were themselves subservient to the emperors. Moreover, no church council decided what books would be included in the New Testament. The inspired writings were recognized by consensus of the entire body of believers on the basis of the Holy Spirit indwelling them, not by decree of a council.

The writings of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (martyred 116) demonstrate a familiarity with most of the New Testament, which he quotes as authoritative Scripture. Likewise Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (69-155), quotes much of the New Testament in his letter to the Philippians. One can reproduce almost every verse in the New Testament from quotations found in personal letters written by Christians within 100 years after Christ. The New Testament was accepted and used by common consent because the same Holy Spirit who inspired its writing indwelt the Christians to enable them both to recognize and to understand it.

It was not until the Third Council of Carthage in A.D.397 that the canonical

books of the New Testament (the same 27 we have today) were listed as such. This was only after these books had been referred to as Scripture for more than 300 years both by individual Christians and as the final authority in previous council arguments against heresy. For example, the Council of Nicaea (325) argued from the New Testament books but did not list them. The Council of Laodicea (363) decreed in its 59th Canon that only canonized books of both Old and New Testament were to be read in the churches. Yet it didn’t even list them, showing that the canon had already been so well established by common consent that everyone knew the books it contained.

All of the books of the New Testament (except the five written by John) were written between A.D.45 and 75 and those by John between A.D.85 and 95. It is both historically inaccurate and absurd to suggest that more than 300 years passed without anyone being able to use the New Testament, in fact until the Third Council of Carthage gave the official pronouncement in A.D.397! Yet that is the position of Roman Catholicism, which says we cannot know which books ought to be in the Bible without the Church telling us. Augustine went so far as to say that he would not believe the gospel if the Church didn’t tell him it was true. This Catholic position is destructive of the gospel and God’s Word. Never do we read that in preaching the gospel the apostles appealed to an ecclesiastical authority in Rome or elsewhere as having attested to its authenticity. The gospel has its own power to convince those who hear it, as does the Word of God, which is “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword” (Heb 4:12).

ComPromise Keepers?

T. A. McMahon

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:35

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

John 14:23

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:31-32

Love, truth and discipleship. The Scriptures teach us that all three are inseparable. If we are truly to be Christ's disciples we will "continue in [His] word" and we will "keep [His] words." That obedience, compelled by love, will produce a love for others, a love committed to and sustained by truth.

Our feature article (*TBC*, April '94) critical of Promise Keepers' affinity for psychology and of its sponsorship of the heavily psychologized and spiritually blasphemous book, *The Masculine Journey*, brought some admonishment by a number of pastors for missing the value of a movement which could play a significant role in restoring the men of this country to godliness. Surely we wanted that as well, didn't we? Absolutely! And obviously our criticism (as well as that of many others) hasn't undermined Promise Keepers' popularity. From a mere handful of men at the beginning of this decade to an astounding 700,000 who have filled stadiums across the country this year, Promise Keepers' expansion has reached tidal-wave proportions.

Perhaps what has generated the most enthusiasm for this men's movement is the fact that our country's secular institutions, its churches, its families, and we as individuals are increasingly beset by a multitude of social and moral problems. Certainly, many would like to see PK's "promises" help reverse that trend. Its basic premise—to see men become the spiritual leaders in their homes and make a moral impact upon their communities—has wide appeal, even among secular reviewers. The organization's *desire* to help turn things around is biblical, and to its premise we

also add our "Amen!" Its *implementation*, however, concerns not only us but others who see Promise Keepers steering away from the biblical solution.

Promise Keepers began with two praiseworthy objectives. In March of 1990, then University of Colorado football Coach Bill McCartney and Fellowship of Christian Athletes director Dave Wardell had concerns that "The Church isn't reaching men as it should, to train and teach them that a man's man is a godly man." McCartney felt that "there is a special dynamic when men come together to honor Christ..." He envisioned thousands of men uniting in "stadiums across America, motivating men to 'make a difference' in their families and churches..." Wardell and McCartney's desire was to "disciple men one on one." They began recruiting others "who were disciplers of men" and who were committed to working to "develop men on a daily and weekly basis." Dave Wardell remembers, "God brought us together to

...whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Mark 8:34

both motivate men and develop relationships that would cause long-term change."¹

Discipleship, Christian fellowship, motivation toward godliness. Certainly any committed Christian would be thrilled over such an endeavor. In fact, that's what excited nearly all the pastors with whom we talked. To them this was a grand opportunity to have the men of their congregations *motivated, unified in the faith and disciplined*. So they hoped—but many are now having serious concerns that Promise Keepers is not delivering the *biblical* goods. Discipleship, Christian fellowship, and motivation toward godliness must be developed out of, and in accord with, the Word of God. Instead, PK is on a course rife with compromises. Its growing ecumenism, affinity for the psychological, reluctance to deal with doctrine, worldly promotions of the "gospel," etc., have been carefully documented in numerous articles by many concerned ministries, so this writing will be limited to one fundamental issue: discipleship.

As we noted, at its beginning Promise

Keepers stressed discipleship. However, in its zeal to unify professing Christian men, PK has decided that doctrine is a *stumbling block* to unity, rather than the *biblical basis* for it. That makes Christian discipleship an impossibility. Very simply, there is no true discipleship without doctrine: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (Jn 8:31). Doctrine tells us who Christ is, what He did, and how to be saved; and unless a person is first of all saved he cannot be disciplined. A man who believes a false gospel or in a false Christ has no basis for being disciplined.

Nevertheless, Promise Keepers makes a practice of evading doctrinal distinctions. The following is a qualifying preface in the PK Ambassador's instructional booklet: "Remember as you are going out [to contact churches and pastors on behalf of Promise Keepers], you are not representing yourself and your personal stands on a *doctrinal* issue, but representing our unique mission and participating in the task of *uniting men*" (emphasis ours).² The booklet gives "Some of the [doctrinal] issues that should not be addressed: Eternal security; The gifts of the Spirit; Baptism; Pretribulation or post-tribulation; Sacraments or ordinances." While we agree that there are some doctrines not crucial to the gospel which can be avoided for the sake of Christian unity, there are others which cannot. For example, the *mode* of baptism does not affect salvation, and its discussion is not critical; however, the false belief that baptism is a significant part of the salvation process must be addressed. Likewise, the Roman Catholic teaching that our redemption is in the process of being accomplished through the sacraments is a false gospel. Yet, Promise Keepers avoids confronting Roman Catholic and Mormon doctrines which prevent those who believe them from being saved.

PK president Randy Phillips was asked by Al Dager of *Media Spotlight*, "Considering Roman Catholic...doctrines relative to Transubstantiation, the Mass and so forth, is there anything Promise Keepers would say as to how their members should interact with Roman Catholics? Would they be allowed to challenge on those issues, to try to bring enlightenment [concerning the gospel that saves]...?"

Phillips replied, "I think you are dealing with a whole area that is not our

expertise or calling. I think there are those in the theological community that are dealing with those issues from both camps....” That’s a stunning comment. As an ex-Catholic, Phillips surely must know better; and coming from Promise Keeper’s CEO, the statement should make one greatly concerned about the ongoing development of its discipleship program.

It’s no wonder that Promise Keepers has become very appealing to Roman Catholic laymen, clergy and those in official positions; the same is true of Mormons (“News Alerts,” *TBC* June ’95). Would that be so if the false doctrines of Roman Catholicism or Mormonism were confronted for the sake of the lost souls in bondage to their belief systems? Indeed, a gospel is preached at PK conferences—but not salvation *by faith alone, through Christ alone*, or the Catholic and Mormon churches would not approve. It’s claimed that the conferences are an environment where men can experience the love of Christ and the fellowship of those who love Him. We’re told that the power of such a demonstration of love will draw men to Jesus. But Jesus who? The Jesus of Roman Catholicism who is perpetually offered for salvation on millions of altars around the world, or the Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints whose sacrifice on the cross also does not fully save?

PK’s compromising position on doctrine has many other spiritually destructive consequences. Let’s say that a Catholic or Mormon goes forward at the invitation of a conference speaker to give his life to Christ. Is he saved? Not unless he has been delivered from the false Catholic or Mormon gospel. May the PK counselor clarify that for him? Not if the counselor adheres to PK guidelines. May the PK counselor with whom he prays tell him he’s just been washed of all his sins, is now saved, and has eternal life? Not without contradicting Catholic or Mormon doctrine.

What happens, then, to this Catholic or Mormon? In keeping with an overriding concern for unity and the need to avoid an offensive impression of proselytizing, the Catholic is encouraged to get involved with his local parish and Catholic PK group, many of which are led by parish priests. The Mormon who responds to the invitation must be directed back to the fellowship of Mormons from which he came. That is the distinct understanding PK supporters among

Catholic, Latter-Day Saints and Reorganized Latter-day Saints leadership have who were interviewed by Martin Bobgan (*PsychoHeresy Awareness Letter*, Sep./Oct. ’95). Promise Keeper Catholics will continue to be nurtured in salvation earned by the “grace” dispensed through the treasury of Church liturgy, the Eucharist and other sacraments, indulgences, rosaries, prayers to dead saints, purgatory, etc. Mormons likewise will continue to trust in Joseph Smith and the occultic system of salvation he conjured. Furthermore, Promise Keepers materials for discipleship are designed not to dissuade Catholics or Mormons from their false gospel or false Christ.

But what about those conferees from an evangelical church background who recommit their lives to Christ? Wouldn’t their PK-affiliated local discipleship gatherings provide the biblical basis for

...that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Titus 1:9

teaching and growth? Not if the local groups stick with Promise Keepers guidelines and current materials. These guidelines avoid doctrinal essentials of discipleship because of *PK’s position that doctrinal differences inhibit unity*. Consequently, the materials and the “discipling” methods are heavily experiential, i.e., a mixture of encounter-group methods, psychological concepts and biblical principles, the validity of which is decided for the most part by the feelings of the participants. One PK group-study book encourages “complete acceptance: no judgment....No hidden agendas! I’m not out to change you and you’re not out to change me. Complete acceptance will create a safe place where men can really be themselves.”³ That is not biblical discipleship! Such small group “discipling” may seem to help many men on an emotional level, but if the content of their fellowship time is psychotherapeutically oriented, spiritually polluted, and doctrinally ambivalent, there is no hope of achieving what the pastors of these men say they want for them, what their wives say they want for them, and what the men themselves may indeed want: to grow strong and steadfast in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58).

After researching Promise Keepers more than a year ago, we initially thought it was a good idea caught up in a zeal without knowledge which, unless corrected, would lead the organization astray (Prv 19:2). Today, that zeal is amplified by money, numbers and power, and a militancy against those urging correction (*O Timothy*, Vol. 12, Issue 9, ’95). In calling for 100,000 pastors to join him at the PK conference at Atlanta in February ’96, Bill McCartney chided reluctant pastors, “Why wouldn’t you want to be a part of what God wants to do with His hand-picked leaders?” Promising a God-ordained time of personal (albeit highly experiential and doctrinally negligible) transformation, he declared, “I think He’s going to tear [pastors’ hearts] open. And I think He’s going to put them back together again as one. One leadership. We’ve got to have one leadership, one leadership only!”⁴

Hopefully, by “one leadership” Bill McCartney means Christ. He has always been the Head of the church and exercises His leadership through His Word, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and devoted shepherds of local churches. No new organization is necessary to establish one leadership. Yet McCartney seems to think that becoming a part of Promise Keepers brings men and churches under an essential “one leadership” that is lacking. That’s a scary statement, coming from the founder of the largest ecumenically minded movement in Christendom; coming from a former Catholic (though his statements are ambiguous about having left Roman Catholicism, which, had he done so, would officially anathematize him as an apostate) who decries making doctrinal distinctions; and coming from a man who evidently has lost his earlier concern for biblical discipleship.

Our prayer is for the local shepherds, that God would give them wisdom and discernment in their charge over and feeding of their flocks, and the strength to resist what does not line up with His Word. May they themselves oversee the *biblical* discipling of the men of their churches. Our prayer, too, is for godly wives who would encourage their husbands to grow in love and in obedience to what the Scriptures teach. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, [conduct yourselves] like men, be strong. Let all...things be done with [love]” (1 Cor 16:13-14).

TBC

Quotable

A doctrine which is needful to salvation can never be too sharply developed, or brought too fully into light....He who supposes that Jesus Christ only lived and died and rose again in order to provide justification and forgiveness of sins for His people, has yet much to learn...[and] is dishonouring our blessed Lord and making Him only half a Saviour. The Lord Jesus has undertaken everything that His people's souls require; not only to deliver them from the guilt of their sins by His atoning death, but from the *dominion* of their sins, by placing in their hearts the Holy Spirit...to sanctify them....

The notion of purgatory after death, which shall turn sinners into saints, is a lying invention of man, and is nowhere taught in the Bible. We must be saints before we die, if we are to be saints afterwards in glory....We need the work of the Holy Spirit as well as the work of Christ; we need renewal of the heart as well as the atoning blood; we need to be sanctified as well as to be justified....When an eagle is happy in an iron cage, when a sheep is happy in the water, when an owl is happy in the blaze of noonday sun, when a fish is happy on the dry land—then, and not till then, will I admit that the unsanctified man could be happy in heaven.

J. C. Ryle, 1817-1900

When we come to God, we must bring nothing but Christ with us. Any ingredients, or any previous qualifications of our own, will poison and corrupt faith. He that builds upon duties, graces, etc. knows not the merits of Christ....[You] must everyday denounce as dung and dross your privileges, your obedience, your baptism, your sanctification, your duties, your graces, your tears, your meltings, your humblings...your workings, your self-sufficiency must be destroyed. You must take all from God's hand. Christ is the gift of God....Ah, how nature storms, frets, rages at this, that all is a *gift*, and it can purchase nothing with its actings and tears and duties, that all workings are excluded, and of no value in heaven.

Thomas Wilcox, 1621-1687

Q&A

Question: In discussing what I believed were Promise Keepers' "ecumenical tendencies" with a friend of mine who is deeply committed to the organization, he said Promise Keepers' statement of faith is "enough to straighten out any Catholic or Mormon!" What do you say?

Answer: The Promise Keepers Ambassador's instructional booklet (p.10) states that PK's "Purpose Statement and Statement of Faith have been *carefully worded* to give [Ambassadors] tools to answer questions that arise" when contacting churches, pastors, priests, etc. It must be "carefully worded" so that it can be accepted and promoted by Roman Catholics. For example, Promise Keepers field representative for the upper Midwest, Steve Jenkins, is a Catholic charismatic and must be able to use the following PK faith statement in communication to satisfy both priests and evangelical pastors alike. Mormons are a slightly different story, but let's see on how many beliefs Catholics and Mormons would agree:

1) *We believe that there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.* Catholics agree. Mormons believe in a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but would differ with the doctrine that they are one God.

2) *We believe that the Bible is God's written revelation to man and that it is verbally inspired, authoritative, and without error in the original manuscripts.* Catholics and Mormons generally agree; however, Catholics deny biblical inerrancy in matters of natural science and history and add Church tradition. Mormons add other LDS books and writings as equally authoritative.

3) *We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, death on the cross to provide for our redemption, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, present ministry of intercession for us, and His return to earth in power and glory.* Catholics and Mormons agree, but add other errors which nullify these truths.

4) *We believe in the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit, that He performs the miracle of new birth in an unbeliever*

and indwells believers, enabling them to live godly lives. Catholics and Mormons seem to agree; their understanding is that the "new birth" begins at baptism but does not assure them of salvation.

5) *We believe that man was created in the image of God but because of sin was alienated from God. That alienation can be removed only by accepting through faith God's gift of salvation, which was made possible by Christ's death* (emphasis ours). Catholics and Mormons agree; however, they understand Christ's death to open the way for salvation, which is secured through obedience to the teachings of their respective churches. The wording "made possible" is contrary to what the Bible teaches (Jn 3:16; Acts 16:31; 1 Jn 5:11-13, etc.) and opens the door for Catholic and Mormon works salvation.

Roman Catholics have had no problem *fitting* the PK statement of faith into their belief system. Mormon leaders who were contacted felt that their differences with the PK statement were of a very minor nature. Since both Catholics and Mormons could sign the above, shouldn't we then conclude, as many evangelicals have, that they are brothers in Christ?

In contrast to the PK declaration, compare the following *carefully worded* yet very simple statement of faith from Mike Gendron of Proclaiming the Gospel, a ministry committed to leading Roman Catholics to the biblical Jesus Christ: *Jesus Christ, fully God, fully man, paid the complete penalty for man's sin when he died on the cross of Calvary. Any person who repents and trusts in the life, death and resurrection of Christ as his or her only hope of salvation, ceasing to trust in anything else, receives the gift of eternal life which, once granted, can never be revoked.* Catholics or Mormons who would sign the preceding in faith could not in good conscience remain within their respective churches. Neither, hopefully, would they want to.

Question: I was always taught from Isaiah 14 that Satan was a fallen angel originally named Lucifer. Recently I've been taught that isn't so, for the one being spoken of in Isaiah 14 is obviously "the king of Babylon" (v 4). Then was Satan created by God as he is now, the most evil of creatures?

Answer: Satan was not created by God as he is now. God does not create evil beings. Satan was originally as the Bible describes him in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 and elsewhere. He is a fallen cherub with great power and cunning. (The cherubims seemed to be the highest order of angels closest to God, overshadowing His very dwelling place—and Satan was originally the chief cherub [2 Kgs 19:15; 1 Chr 13:6; Heb 9:5, etc.]. Psalm 99:1 says of God, “He sitteth between the cherubims.”)

Satan still has access before the throne of God (Jb 1:6;2:1) as the “accuser of our brethren” (Rv 12:10). The day is yet future when “that old serpent the devil” will be cast out of heaven (Rv 12:9). Until then, he continues to accuse the believers “before our God day and night” (Rv 12:10).

Yes, the king of Babylon is being addressed in Isaiah 14. However, much of what is said could not apply to him at all, but only to Satan. For example, when did the king of Babylon have a position in heaven from which he fell? At times the Bible addresses Satan through ungodly earthly rulers to show that he is the real power behind them just as he will be the power behind Antichrist, of whom it is said, “the dragon [Satan] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (Rv 13:2). In fact, all these despotic and evil rulers are types of Antichrist.

That Satan is being addressed through such kings is clearer in Ezekiel 28:2-19. Here the “prince of Tyrus” is being addressed: “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering....Thou art the anointed cherub [highest order of angel closest to God]; and I have set thee so: thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (v 13-15). Obviously, none of this was true of the literal “prince of Tyrus,” but only of Satan who inspired and directed him in his ungodly activity.

Note the many similarities in Ezekiel 28 to what is said of “the king of Babylon” in Isaiah 14: “I am a God, I sit in the seat of God...” (v 2), “thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God” (v 6), etc. Clearly Satan is being addressed as the power behind both the king of Babylon and the prince of Tyrus.

Satan is “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4). Christ did not dispute his claim to own-

ership of the world system when, in the temptation in the wilderness, Satan offered to give the kingdoms of the world to Christ if He would bow down and worship him (Mt 4:8-9). Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 carry the same message.

Question: Isaiah 45:7 seems to state that God creates evil. How can this be possible if God is only and totally good? And if He does create evil, what and why would it be?

Answer: Let us look at the entire verse: “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.” How does God create darkness? Darkness is really nothing. It is not a “thing” that God created; it is simply the absence of light. No one would know he was in the dark if he had never seen light. Thus by creating light God exposes the absence of it as darkness.

In the same way, God’s perfection exposes all else as evil. By Himself being perfect in goodness, righteousness and holiness, God exposes the lack or opposite of what He is as evil. Thus sin is defined as falling “short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). In His presence the angels cry continually, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord” (Is 6:3; Rv 4:8). Although God dwells “in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1 Tm 6:16), He has written His law in the consciences of all mankind and in this way we recognize evil in ourselves and in others.

Why should there be evil at all? Created beings, being less than God, must, if they have the power of choice, inevitably think thoughts and do deeds unworthy of God and thus evil. Evil is simply the inevitable result of less than perfect choice. Why did God give mankind this power? So that man could receive His love and love Him in return. Without the ability to choose not to love there could be no such thing as love, for it must come from the heart. Nor could there be praise and worship.

It is hardly glorifying to God for robots, who cannot choose to say or do otherwise, to continually sing His praises. And for such beings to be programmed to say repeatedly, “I love you,” would be equally meaningless. Yes, “the heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps 19:1), but that “glory” pertains only to His great power and wisdom

and eternal being (Rom 1:20). There is no way that inanimate things can either love or be loved. Only personal beings could do so.

So God gave the power of choice to Adam and Eve and all mankind. Why? So that we might know and love and worship and glorify Him in the highest way. It is by our choice that we think evil thoughts and do evil deeds. God did not cause Lucifer or any angels or any of us to do evil.

How wonderful, then, that in His love and wisdom God was able to pay the penalty for our sins and thus to forgive us and make it possible for us to be in His presence, loving and praising Him eternally! And surely His love has captured our hearts and created in us a love that is real and eternal. As 1 John 4:19 says, “We love him because he first loved us.” That can only be said by beings who are also capable of choosing not to love.

Endnotes

- 1 Dr. Dave Wardell, "Promise Keepers' History," Promise Keepers document, p. 4.
- 2 "Answering Doctrinal and Denominational Questions and Challenges," Promise Keepers document, p. 10.
- 3 Geoff Gorsuch, Brothers! Calling Men into Vital Relationships (Promise Keepers/Navpress, 1994), p. 14.
- 4 Bill McCartney, addressing a PK conference at the Detroit Silver Dome, April 29, 1995.

Why Christ Came

Dave Hunt

...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1 Timothy 1:15

At this time of year we are reminded repeatedly of Christ's birth. Yet in most reminders the purpose of His coming to earth is perverted or obscured. It would almost seem that Christ came into the world not "to save sinners" but to give retail sales a huge boost at the end of each year; and to give "Christians" a mirthful holiday season with ample excuse to overindulge in rich foods and strong drink. Honor to Christ becomes so confused with the festivities that even non-Christians can heartily join in the celebration.

Similar corruptions, unnoticed, are growing in popularity year-round. The very purpose of Christ's coming (and thus of Christianity as well) is being subtly redefined. In order to get the world to accept Christ, the church has manufactured a "Christ" acceptable to the world: a moral leader of high principles whom those who have clearly rejected the real Jesus Christ can follow in partnership with evangelicals committed to the same good causes—a "Christ" whom the followers of any religion and even atheists can embrace. And, tragically, the very methods which the world uses to boost the sale of its products are being adopted to promote Christ.

This is nothing new. Multitudes who believed in Christ have mistakenly seen Him from the viewpoint of their desires rather than as He truly is. We have many examples in Scripture such as in John 8 beginning at verse 30: "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

In the verses that follow, it is shocking to see the enraged reaction of those who "believed on him." Instead of giving heed to Christ's further instructions, they repudiated His mission to save them from their sins, rejected the truth about their evil hearts and refused to repent of their rebellion against God. After heatedly arguing with Christ they even took up stones (v 59) to kill Him! Why?

These Jewish "believers" in Jesus were convinced He was their long-awaited Messiah. However, they had a false concept of the Messiah. They were ignorant of—and would not have accepted had they known—

what the angel had said to Joseph: "[T]hou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). Instead, the Jews wanted a Messiah who would rescue them from their oppressors. Deliverance from sin and self was a need they refused to acknowledge and a remedy they would not accept. So it is today with mankind.

Again in John 2, "...many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them..." (23-25). These "believers" had the same mistaken idea of the Messiah, and, knowing their hearts, Christ didn't even attempt to instruct them. Those instructions are given in Chapter 3 to a man whom Christ knows will receive them. Nicodemus

...there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Matthew 24:24

believes Christ's miracles are genuine and that His teachings are from God. Christ tells him that is not enough: the Messiah is more than a miracle-working teacher of morals. He must be lifted up on a cross and die for the sins of the world so that whoever believes in Him may be born again by the Spirit of God into the family of God.

In John 6 we encounter another group of "believers" who wanted to make Christ their king so that He would miraculously feed and heal them. They, too, rejected Christ when He explained that He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices for sin and that those who believed on Him would receive eternal life as a free gift. And so it has been down through history and remains the same in our day. Multitudes have "believed on Jesus Christ" but are not really saved because they, too, have false ideas of who He is and why He came.

Christ himself warned that many who even seemed to do miracles and prophesied in His name would not be Christians at all: "I never knew you" (Mt 7:21-23). They would claim to be Christ's not because of simple faith in Him as Savior but because of the signs and wonders they performed. Their followers, likewise, would rely upon the same counterfeit signs as evidence of true spirituality.

Christ (Mt 24:4,5,11,24), along with Paul (Acts 20:29-30) and Peter (2 Pt 2:1-3), specifically warned of these false teachers

who would lead many astray. We have documented false prophecies by the Kansas City and Vineyard prophets and by the leaders in the positive-confession movement. Doctrine is despised, truth is neglected and experience without biblical guidelines is glorified, especially *new* experiences. More than a decade ago, when John Wimber told Chuck Smith that he was going to go with "whatever works," Chuck asked him no longer to use the name Calvary Chapel and Wimber adopted the name Vineyard. There is no limit to the unbiblical phenomena that the Vineyards (and others) have since found will work.

There are other more subtle ways by which Christ's mission "to save sinners" is being perverted. Consider the March for Jesus, which brings literally millions around the world into the streets to "celebrate Jesus." This massive display of loyalty to Christ is intended to show the world that Christians are a large and powerful segment of society that can't be suppressed but must be given their rights as much as demonstrating homosexuals. Marches let the politicians know that here is a large voting block to be appeased.

In *The Star of 2000*, Jay Gary (see *TBC* June 1995) boasts that "the March for Jesus is becoming the world's biggest street party."¹ Is that really why Christ came, so that street parties could be held in His name? March For Jesus literature encourages everyone including Catholics and even Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims to join Christians in the Jesus celebration. How can those who embrace religions and philosophies that oppose Christ express appreciation for Him? Does this not produce pseudofollowers of Christ, as far from the truth as those in John 2, 6 and 8 and as much opposed to the gospel? Gandhi admired Jesus but remained a Hindu whose very admiration for his false "Christ" prevented him from knowing the real Jesus and why He came.

Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to convince the world "of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment" to come (Jn 16:8). That conviction must come through the preaching of the gospel, which demands "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Instead, a gospel is being preached today that lacks conviction of sin. No wonder that the moral standard among "Christians" varies little from that among the unsaved. "Christians" tend to have the same worldly ambitions, are attracted by the same sensual commercials, lust after the same possessions and enjoy the same entertainment. There is little example of true Christianity to convict the world.

Yes, they know we oppose abortion and

pornography, but so do many non-Christians. In fact, evangelicals are joining forces with non-Christians such as Catholics, Mormons, Moonies and others in political and social action to uphold "traditional morals." When godly leaders such as J. I. Packer confuse Christ's call to proclaim the gospel with a call "to re-Christianize the North American milieu...[and] rebuild the ruins...[of] North American culture..."² we are in deep trouble! *Christianity Today's* Senior Editor Kenneth S. Kantzer calls upon evangelicals "to close ranks with our Catholic neighbors. And with Mormons, conservative Jews, and secularists who share our values...[for] the good of society..."³ Had Christ joined the rabbis in such a coalition for moral improvement, think of the great ethical reformer He could have become and the immense good He could have accomplished—all without going to the Cross!

The truth is that Jesus did not come into the world to engage in political or social action nor to encourage others to do so in His name. He never said a word to anyone about the oppression of the Roman Empire, never rebuked Caesar or Herod for their corruption. A Messiah who would do so was looked for by the Jews and such a Christ is offered by evangelicals today as the rallying point for ecumenical unity—but that is not the Christ of the Bible nor is it the reason He came.

While addressing not a word to the political leaders, Christ rebuked the religious leaders continually. In contrast, today's church leaders expend much time and effort trying to sway politicians but refuse to correct one another. The evils of society are being attacked *in a coalition with society* while false doctrine is unopposed in the church. The call for unity under the banner of a false love that won't correct becomes one of the chief means of legitimizing the deceptions of the last days!

The latest appeal from Campus Crusade declares that Jesus is appearing to Muslims in visions and dreams. Perhaps, but so is Our Lady of Fatima, causing Muslims to believe in her. She said that many souls go to hell because there is "no one to make sacrifice for them"—a direct denial of the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, a denial which is the heart of Catholicism. "Jesus," too, appeared with her at Fatima *as a small child* to declare that there could be no peace until the world was dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of his mother in reparation for the sins committed against her. This was surely a masquerading demon! Yet every pope in the last 60 years has approved Fatima.

On TBN, Betty Eadie, a Mormon and the author of the occult best-seller *Embraced*

by the Light, said she saw Jesus in heaven and described Him as being like the *Star Wars'* "Force." Both the host and studio audience oohed instead of booed.

Yes, Jesus in heaven appeared to Stephen and Saul of Tarsus and He could do the same today. It would be interesting, however, to know what this "Jesus" who appears to Muslims looks like. Does he look like TBN's virtual-reality "Jesus" or the "Jesus" in the *Jesus* film? Hollywood never dared to portray Jesus face-on. One saw the back of His head or hand in films such as *Ben Hur*. But now a man who isn't even a Christian plays the part of God manifest in the flesh! Are those who "come to Christ" through the film coming to the real Jesus, or to the actor who plays His part?

That actor, Brian Deacon, describes himself as a "lapsed Catholic" who hasn't practiced his faith. "I've had many doubts about Jesus' teaching," says Deacon. "I'm

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:14

just an actor. I don't want the responsibility of being Jesus Christ...The character of Jesus belongs to everyone and I had to find my own voice and emotions for the role."⁴ What "Jesus" is this who attracts multitudes!

There is a growing ecumenical movement to evangelize the world by the year 2000. One of its leaders, Michael Green, has spoken at such prestigious gatherings as Billy Graham's International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists in Amsterdam in 1983. There Green suggested, "Don't talk about the new birth, talk about liberation...Identify with and befriend secular society. Become one with them..." Green suggests that Christians "can be taught...about devotion to God by Muslims or Hindus, about detachment from the passions by Buddhists, about the sacredness of nature by animists, and about goodness by atheists..."⁵

An amazing unity will be achieved under Antichrist. *National and International Religion Report* noted that Louis Farrakhan, at the Million Man March, "spoke of moral and spiritual renewal and his message sounded very much like both Promise Keepers and Pope John Paul II." Both the *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* reported that "Mr. Farrakhan's message of self-reliance is also strikingly similar to that of the predominantly white Christian conservative Promise Keep-

ers movement. Social scientists who specialize in religious trends see an overlapping that could lead to common ground between the movements at some point."

An outrageous suggestion? No more outrageous than it seemed only a few years ago to suggest that leading evangelicals would embrace Roman Catholicism as truly Christian—but it happened. Ecumenism will only grow worse. Political and social action for a good cause breaks down doctrinal distinctives and creates a "Jesus" whose mission on earth has been redefined to suit all parties. Even religions which oppose Christ as Savior can embrace Him as the greatest moral leader. Islam has done so, though it is violently anti-Christian.

William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education, and a leader in the campaign to Catholicize America, has become a hero and popular speaker among evangelicals because of his stand for "traditional values" and especially since writing *The Book of Virtues*. In his final chapter on "faith" he writes, "There is nothing distinctively Christian...in recognizing that religious faith adds a significant dimension to the moral life...Faith is a source of discipline and power and meaning in...any major religious creed. ...What Paul cites as 'the fruit of the Spirit'...has its parallels in all the major faiths..." What a diabolical downgrading of Christianity!

A recent "Doonesbury" cartoon has a pastor listing the week's activities as including a lecture on nutrition, a twelve-step program for sex addicts, aerobic male bonding, etc. When a parishioner asks, "Is there a church service?" the pastor replies, "Cancelled. There was a conflict with the self-esteem workshop." Not too far from the truth in many churches today—but very far from the purpose for which Christ came.

Christ said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Lk 5:32). No benefit can accrue from Christ's coming without acknowledging that one is a sinner and relying upon Christ alone for the remedy. That is the gospel which, though not popular, we must preach. No one can be saved until he realizes he is lost. Hearers and readers must be indicted with their awesome guilt as sinners before God; with the fact that they have lived for self and are thus in rebellion against the God who gave them life and existence. They must be convicted of their need to repent in fear and trembling of the judgment they deserve. Without that repentance, one's "faith" will inevitably be in a pseudo-Christ whose false mission failed to provide the remedy sinners desperately need now and for eternity. **TBC**

Quotable

Many Christians have the misconception that to win the world to Christ we must first...make unconverted sinners feel comfortable with the Christian message....Give them something they want. Put on a show. Entertain them. Avoid sensitive subjects like sin and damnation....The strategy is to tantalize non-Christians rather than confront their unbelief. That is altogether incompatible with sound doctrine. It is compromise with the world. James called it spiritual adultery.

John MacArthur

Reckless Faith: When the Church
Loses its Will to Discern

It is no sin to doubt some things, but it may be fatal to believe everything.

A. W. Tozer

The Root of the Righteous

When Christ hung on the Cross He not only made provision for the removal of the weight of our sin, but also for the indwelling presence of the Spirit in the heart; for joy unspeakable and full of glory; for peace that passeth all understanding; for strength to make us more than conquerors through Him that loved us; in short, He blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the Heavenly places in Himself. If you do not have these joys you are not getting out of Christianity that which God desired you to have.

Donald Grey Barnhouse

Happy Though Poor

Q&A

Question: In your opinion, why would an Israeli have wanted to kill Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin? What will be the result of his assassination upon the peace process in the Middle East?

Answer: Rabin probably won the 1992 Knesset election through his firm promises not to return to the Arabs the hard-won strategic territory essential to Israel's survival against an implacable enemy which has sworn her extermination. Nor is any piece of land so vital as the Golan Heights, which provides a location for

Israeli radar and a minimal buffer between Israel and Syrian tanks and guns. Syria's president, Hafez Assad, has sworn in his hatred of Israel, "We shall never call for nor accept peace. We shall only accept war....We have resolved to...throw you into the sea for good...." Of course, he would (as Arafat has done to get the West Bank and Gaza Strip) make a false pledge of "peace" in exchange for the return of the Golan, which would position him better for the eventual war he intends.

When he was Israel's Foreign Minister, Abba Eban went so far as to say that with the Golan in the hands of Syria the threat to Israel of extermination "has for us something of the memory of Auschwitz....This is a situation which will never be repeated in history." In a visit to the Jewish settlements on the Golan on June 10, 1992, the 25th anniversary of its capture by Israeli forces, Rabin recalled how the sacrifice of much Israeli blood had "removed the nightmare" formerly faced by the villages of Galilee "forever, forever." And he promised that never again would "these villages be under the Syrian guns."

Promising preferred status for developmental investment to the settlements on the Golan, and forecasting a bright future for that region, Rabin swore to these settlers, "It is inconceivable that even in peacetime we should go down from the Golan. Whoever thinks of such a possibility is forsaking the security of Israel." That clear pledge was made a plank in the Labor Party platform.

Therefore, it is easy to understand why Israeli patriots with any common sense at all would consider Rabin to be a traitor for reversing his pledge and giving Arafat and his PLO terrorist army a foothold within Israel and negotiating to give the Golan back to Syria. It is like committing suicide for Israel to do so. Hence the determination to kill Rabin; a foul deed which, ironically, will have just the opposite effect from that intended by his assassins. Instead of hindering the so-called "peace process," it will accelerate it.

His assassination has made Rabin a martyr. In memory of his life and death multitudes will take up the banner of "peace." In the wake of national mourning, the stark reality of 50 years of Arab

threats and determination to exterminate Israel will be submerged under irrational emotion. On the eve of his departure for the White House at the end of September to sign the latest "peace papers" (the Oslo 2 interim agreement), Arafat told Jordanian TV viewers that he was simply implementing the 1974 PLO Plan of Phases, a 10-point scheme for the destruction of Israel, the first step of which calls for gaining control of territory inside Israel. In spite of the cold facts, however, the so-called "peace process" will gain momentum and, as the Bible has foretold, lead to the near destruction of Israel at Armageddon, when Christ will intervene from heaven both to rescue Israel and to prevent the destruction of all life on planet earth.

How could Israel be so blind? An equally important and perplexing question is how the entire Western world can hide its eyes from an even larger truth. The Iron Curtain was in the news daily for decades, yet no mention is ever made in the media of the far more impenetrable and vicious Islamic Curtain. Pressure was applied to the Soviet Union and is still applied to China and other communist countries for their violations of human rights, yet the persistent violations of human rights in Muslim countries are never mentioned!

Muslims are allowed to build mosques and proselytize in the West, but no one can build a Christian church or proclaim the gospel in most Muslim countries. One cannot even have a Bible study in one's home in Saudi Arabia, where it is officially the death penalty for a Muslim to convert to another religion. It is the death penalty in Pakistan to "blaspheme" Allah. Christians are literally being crucified in the Sudan; but the United Nations, which recently condemned the United States for "human rights violations," says not a word! Of 22 Arab nations, not one is a democracy. There is no freedom of religion, of speech, of press or of conscience in Muslim countries, yet Muslims riot in the West for such freedoms when a Muslim terrorist is arrested! Christian Arabs, in Jericho and throughout the territories Israel has put under PLO control, are being imprisoned and tortured and threatened with death if they don't renounce Christ. An American citizen visiting relatives in Jericho was

recently arrested and tortured to death by Arafat's Palestine police, the sixth such known case since the PLO took over.⁶

The injustice and inequity of Muslims demanding and being granted "rights" in the West which are denied in Muslim countries is outrageous beyond comprehension! We must pray earnestly for those who suffer deprivations in Arab countries and that God will bring down the Islamic Curtain so that Bibles and the gospel may enter those lands as has taken place in Eastern Europe. Pray too (and write your congressmen and senators) that the West will act to stop the human rights violations and murderous repression of non-Muslim religions in Arab countries.

Question: Norm Geisler has recently published a new book titled *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*. It is endorsed by some of the same evangelical [Chuck Colson] and Catholic [Richard John Neuhaus] leaders who signed "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." CRI's Hank Hanegraaff (who derides "the pitiful scholarship" in *A Woman Rides the Beast*) praises Norm's book as "accurate and balanced...must reading for thinking Christians...." Have you read the book, and if so, what is your opinion?

Answer: I carefully read it as soon as it appeared. Unfortunately, due to such endorsements, this book will further the destructive ecumenical movement. Norm Geisler has done excellent work in the area of Christian apologetics. In this book, however, he engages in the same scholarly doubletalk that we are hearing on the subject of Catholicism from evangelical leaders such as Colson, Packer and Bright as well as from CRI and others involved in the countercult ministry. Geisler correctly points out grievous errors in Catholicism—but then, each time, he excuses the errors as not so serious after all.

Take, for example, his chapter on justification. Surely nothing is more central to the Catholic-Protestant controversy nor more important to the destiny of souls. On page 231 Geisler points out that Catholicism "makes works a condition of eternal life," whereas in the Bible "only one condition is laid down for obtaining eternal life: belief (e.g., Jn 3:16,36; 5:24; 20:31)." He also points out that "in direct opposition to the Catholic

position, the Bible guarantees that eternal life is a present possession of those who believe...," whereas the Roman Catholic "must await a final justification at death to know whether one has eternal life...." Again on page 233 he declares in no uncertain terms, "...the official Catholic position is unbiblical. For it insists that works are necessary for salvation...." That fatal flaw is precisely why Paul cursed the Judaizers (Gal 1:6-9) and why the Catholic "gospel" damns rather than saves.

On pages 242-43 Norm reinforces his proof that Roman Catholicism's gospel damns souls because "salvation is by sacraments...[it] is dependent on performing the works of the sacramental system." He also shows that "The Roman Catholic Church is an institution of salvation"—i.e., salvation comes through the Church rather than through Christ alone. He further declares that "The Catholic view of the Eucharist as a sacrifice vitiates [i.e., corrupts, invalidates] salvation by grace."

How astonishing, then, that having spent a 28-page chapter proving that Roman Catholicism teaches a false, unbiblical justification "similar to the error of Galatianism [Gal 1:6-9]" (p 236) and which therefore cannot save, he reverses himself and gives it his approval! Under the heading "Summary and Conclusion," his last two sentences in the chapter state, "Nonetheless, at least officially, though not in practice, Rome has always held the common Augustinian belief of salvation by grace. In this way they have avoided even more serious doctrinal error."

What could be "more serious" than a false gospel that promises heaven by works and sacraments but takes Catholics who believe it to hell!? Norm's whitewash is like saying that because rat poison only contains .4 percent poison, it could deliver a "more serious" blow to rats if it had 10 percent poison. You can't kill a rat deader than dead. Nor can there be any fate worse than hell. Apparently, in spite of the falseness of its gospel, Norm still believes that Catholicism will take Catholics to heaven and that evangelicals can therefore join Catholics in proclaiming the gospel!

Indeed, the book ends (prior to the Appendices) with encouragement to Catholics and Protestants to work together not only in social and political activism but "in fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission

(Mt 28:18-20)"! Incredibly, Norm's final two sentences state, "Catholics and evangelicals do not have to agree on everything...before we can cooperate in proclaiming the power of the uncompromised gospel (Rom 1:16)"! Yet he has proved over and over that Catholicism is a compromised and false gospel of works and sacraments which is condemned in Scripture!

At the end of the last Appendix, the book finally ends with this statement: "The bottom line, then, is...while affirming the necessity of grace, Catholicism denies the exclusivity of grace as a condition for receiving the gift of eternal life. This, in the eyes of historic Protestantism, is a false gospel." Never mind "historic Protestantism." Catholicism is a false gospel according to the Bible and in the eyes of the Lord—a fact which Norm has repeatedly proved throughout the entire book.

Then what do we make of his exhortation for evangelicals to join with Catholics in "fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission" by "proclaiming the power of the uncompromised gospel"?! At the end of 502 pages, the reader is left with the impression that in spite of Catholicism's errors evangelicals are Rome's partners in the Great Commission. Please understand! Our concern is not to pursue an academic debate with Colson, Packer, Bright, et al. Our concern is for the salvation of nearly a billion Roman Catholics, deceived by their Church and heading for a Christless eternity, while evangelical leaders make common cause with Rome, and Geisler, CRI, et al. straddle the fence.

Endnotes

1. Jay Gary, "The Star of 2000" (Bimillennial Press, 1994), 112-15.
2. *Christianity Today* (Dec. 12, 1994), 36.
3. *Christianity Today* (July 18, 1994), 17.
4. *Charisma* (Sep. 1995), 61.
5. *Foundation* (July-Sep. 1995), 10.
6. *Jerusalem Post* (Week ending Oct. 7, 1995), 1, 6.

Time & Eternity

Dave Hunt

Once again we have entered upon a new year welcomed with wild celebrations at midnight, December 31. Such festivities are questionable at best. And why celebrate the reminder that, just as a year has vanished into the past, so all too quickly must our earthly lives pass as well? That fact should bring sober contemplation and prayer rather than loud rejoicing.

Time passes and cannot be recalled. The poet wrote of her memory running "like a hunted thing down paths I cannot retrace." Time is mysterious, beyond our ability to fathom. We know some things *about* time, but what it really *is* eludes our most advanced science. Essential for change and motion in the physical universe, time will be absent in eternity. Nothing changes or ages in eternity; it is one eternal *now*, impossible for us at present to comprehend.

Won't we travel in eternity across the universe, necessitating time? Not as we understand "travel." Space as a measurement of distance between places or objects may no longer exist, or at least it will lose its meaning. There will be millions of redeemed in heaven. Will some therefore be far from Christ on the fringes of the vast throng? In fact, all will be in His immediate presence—a joy beyond our current understanding.

Already in the Millennium, our resurrected, glorified bodies, like Christ's, will no longer be part of the physical universe and will thus be changeless and timeless, able to be seen, then vanish, and to pass through closed doors and walls. "Jesus himself stood in the midst of them...but they were terrified...[thinking] they had seen a spirit...[H]andle me, and see," said Christ, "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Lk 24:36-43). Paul informs us, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44). We don't know what that means except as it was demonstrated in Christ's resurrection.

Without His resurrection there is no hope for eternity. Yet Christ's triumph over death, the very heart of our faith, is denied by some who claim to be in the faith. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) considers it no longer essential to believe that Christ rose from the dead. A book recently published by the Augsburg-Fortress Press of the 5.6 million-member ELCA, by Professor Gerd Luedemann, comes to the conclusion that the body of Jesus decayed in the grave.

A similar denial of the Resurrection comes from the highly celebrated convert to Christianity (more recently converted to Roman Catholicism), Malcolm Muggeridge. I was impressed with the great testimony he gave at Billy Graham's 1974 Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland. Then I read Muggeridge's book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, in which he said that it didn't matter whether Jesus resurrected or not. "I even prefer to suppose," he added, "that some body snatcher...drags the stone away [from the grave], and then...decamps with the body...[later] abandons the body to the vultures, who in their turn leave the bones to whiten in the sun—those precious bones!"

The apostles, then, were liars because they testified that Christ rose from the dead and

**LORD, make me to know mine end,
and the measure of my days, what it
is; that I may know how frail I am.**
Psalms 39:4

"shewed himself alive...by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). Who was this imposter, with nailprints in hands and feet and a spear wound in his side, who spent 40 days with the disciples and convinced them that he was Jesus come back from the dead? The grave was definitely empty. It is ludicrous to imagine a "body snatcher" emptying a tomb that was being guarded by Roman soldiers!

Moreover, if Christ is not risen then Christianity is just another philosophy of life like Buddhism or Confucianism. In fact, it would be worse because Christ himself promised that He would rise from the dead, that because He lived so would His disciples, and that one day He would come back to take them to heaven. Unlike Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam, whose leaders made no such claims, if Christ didn't resurrect, He is a liar and Christianity a fraud!

Our very salvation is dependent upon believing that Christ rose from the dead: "[I]f thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom 10:9). Muggeridge's book gave me one of my earliest perceptions that some who reject the very heart of Christianity pretend to be His true disciples and thus destroy Christianity from within. I was learning, to

my dismay, that the "last-days apostasy" is upon us and gaining alarming momentum.

Our calendar supposedly marks the years since the birth of Christ. Elaborate plans are being laid to celebrate Christ's 2,000th birthday in the year A.D.2000. In fact, we reach that milestone in 1996 due to a four-year miscalculation in starting the calendar. Christ was actually born in 4 B.C. There is no more reason, however, to celebrate his 2,000th "birthday" than there was to celebrate his 1,999th or any other. He changes not.

The celebration in A.D.2000 of Christ's birthday (if Christ has not yet come and it occurs) will be indistinguishable from and probably confused with the many other celebrations to be held at the same time, thus sacrificing the uniqueness of Christ and the true meaning of His coming into the world. (See *TBC* June, Sep and Dec, 1995.) For example, Robert Muller, former Assistant Secretary of the United Nations and a New Age leader, has written, "My great personal dream is to get a tremendous alliance between all the major religions and the UN...humanity should hold in the year 2000 a worldwide Bimillennium Celebration of Life...[leading to] a peaceful, happy, and godly society on earth."

Birthdays remind us that everyone and everything, due to time's passage, grows irrevocably older and will soon pass from this scene. Time moves on without regard to dates or events or human sentiments, though it makes space in a brief, elusive present for their fleeting moments before they are swallowed up in the past. One can even take comfort in that fact. I've been helped to endure many a difficult or painful situation by reminding myself that "This, too, shall pass."

There is another side to that coin. While the realization that the discomfort must inevitably end is heartening when one is in the dental chair, it has the opposite effect when one is enjoying a vacation. As surely as pain will pass, so will pleasure. And so it is with one's entire life, which, no matter how lengthy, is like "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas 4:14).

That simple fact is forgotten by *most* of us *most* of the time. Plans are usually laid as though life on this earth will never end. Solomon said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning [a funeral], than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart"

(Ecc 7:2). Does this sound morbid? It surely refutes the idea that one must always be “positive”! Moses put it like this: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps 90:12).

Thus, true wisdom involves a recognition of the shortness of our days upon earth. The fact that this life (no matter how successful and full of pleasure or how painful and difficult to endure) passes, and that eternity never passes, must temper all of our choices. Without that reminder we would live for time (with which we are too absorbed) rather than for eternity (to which we scarcely give a thought).

Yes, we need to make prudent decisions pertaining to this life. Every decision, however, must be made in light of eternity. A choice which weighs only the consequences for time and produces detrimental effects for eternity is the utmost folly. Jesus warned that to “gain the whole world” is not success but the worst failure imaginable if such earthly gain is made at the cost of one’s soul, i.e., one’s eternal destiny (Mk 8:36).

The changing of the year is the time when “New Year’s resolutions” are solemnly sworn, promises are made, hope springs once again and optimistic plans are laid for the year ahead. In his classic book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, William Law mentions two men, each completely absorbed in planning a retirement mansion. One plans to build his on earth, the other on Mars. Everyone thinks the second man is a fool. Law, however, shows that they are both fools and that the difference in the degree of their folly is only a short period of transient time. The one plans a house on Mars where he will *never be*; the other on earth where he *cannot stay*.

This is not to suggest that we should not plan for this life. No plans, however, for retirement or even for tomorrow, should be made without submitting them to God’s will. As James has written, “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow....For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil” (4:13-16).

Both Blaise Pascal and John Locke argued that if death ends it all the man who misses out on what this life offers in order to prepare for the next loses nothing eternally. However, the man who, in living wholly for this world’s

brief rewards, brings torment upon himself for eternity has gambled against impossible odds and has only himself to blame for such folly. Some 250 years ago, William Law illustrated this fact powerfully through *Penitens*, a “very prosperous young tradesman...about to die in his thirty-fifth year.” *Penitens* had this to say to friends who had come to express their sympathy:

You look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead, but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life....And yet what folly of the silliest children is so great as this?

Our poor friend Lepidus died, you know, as he was dressing himself for a feast. Do you think it is now part of his trouble that he did not live till that entertainment was over? Feast and

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

1 John 2:17

business and pleasure and enjoyments seem great things to us whilst we think of nothing else; but as soon as we add death to them they all sink into an equal littleness....

If I am now going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve that this happened to me before I was forty years of age? Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven before I had made a few more bargains or stood a little longer behind a counter? And if I am going amongst lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content that this did not happen to me till I was old, and full of riches?

Now that judgment is the next thing that I look for, and everlasting happiness or misery is come so near me, all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem vain and insignificant....But, my friends, how I am surprised that I have not always had these thoughts....

What a strange thing is it that a little health or the poor business of a shop should keep us so senseless of these great things that are coming so fast upon us! [See *The Power of the Spirit* in book list.]

Whether it be through the Rapture or through death, all of us will very soon stand before God to give an account of our lives. The longest life ends abruptly and one is suddenly ushered into eternity. Time has vanished into the past—except as choices

and words and deeds have affected eternity. Yes, how we live this brief life carries eternal consequences for good and ill. The lost stand before the “great white throne” to hear their doom (Rv 20:11-15), but Christians are also held accountable for every thought, word and deed: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10-11).

Compromise may be more difficult to resist even than sensual sin—and it is becoming increasingly necessary to compromise to retain the favor of today’s evangelical leadership. The very correction which the Bible requires is no longer acceptable. Yet everything else must be accepted. The following fax arrived at this very moment from the former host of a Christian radio talk show:

“Our show was cancelled...on Oct. 6 amidst a tremendous protest from listeners....A couple of weeks ago [my replacement] did a show on false teachings....Promise Keepers came up [from a caller], caused the usual flap ...management hauled [him] in for a dressing down and pulled him from the show....As a 30-year pro in broadcasting, I can see ‘Christian’ broadcasting

locking into a religiously correct format...and that is tragic for the body as a whole. The effort to smash free speech and thought is worse in religious media than in secular.” We have lost the vision of eternity, and heaven has become the place everyone wants to go—but not yet.

Facing eternity motivates us to be faithful and true to our Lord and His Word in anticipation of the great joy which Christ looked forward to: “...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...” (Heb 12:2). Paul urged us to “Set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:1-4). John encourages us, “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2). Again Paul holds before us a hope that makes earth’s best alternatives shrink into nothingness: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13).

The old hymn says: “These earthen vessels break, the world itself grows old; but Christ the Lord our dust will take and freshly mold. He’ll give these bodies vile a fashion like His own. He’ll make the whole creation smile and hush its groan.” That hope is worth living—and dying—for! **TBC**

Quotable

God has not bowed to our nervous haste nor embraced the methods of our machine age. *The man who would know God must give time to Him.*

A. W. Tozer
The Divine Conquest

Jesus said, “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon” (Mt 6:24). He did not say, “Ye cannot serve God and the Devil”...[which] would be almost pointless...[W]ith every movement of material progressiveness, His word becomes still more searching, more arresting...The worship of Mammon...is the deification of human will...a will that insists upon the subservience of others...[and] worship[s] a deity whose expression of god-head is mastery and whose sceptre of power is the possession of wealth.

G. Campbell Morgan
The Crises of the Christ

Death in ten thousand shapes hangs ever over our heads, and no man can elude him.

Homer
Iliad, Eighth century B.C.

In this world of corruption there is real danger that the earnest Christian may over-react in his resistance to evil and become a victim of the religious occupational disease, cynicism. The constant need to go counter to popular trends may easily develop in him a sour habit of faultfinding and turn him into a sulky critic of other men’s matters, without charity and without love....

As a cure for the sour, faultfinding attitude I recommend the cultivation of the habit of thankfulness....A thankful heart cannot be cynical.

A. W. Tozer
The Root of the Righteous

Q&A

Question: Louis Farrakhan and his Nation of Islam have been making big news lately. Is this a genuine Islamic movement or sect that is recognized as such by Arab Muslims?

Answer: No. Orthodox Muslims, whether Sunnites or Shi’ites, do not want to be identified with Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam (there are several other smaller groups who also call themselves the Nation of Islam)

but consider it to be extremely heretical. It is a fanatically racist organization which teaches that blacks are gods and whites are *the* devil. These teachings first came from “Master” Wallace D. Fard, a salesman of Arabic clothing from the Middle East who made money by convincing blacks that they ought to dress like Arabs. Ironically, Fard, to whom Farrakhan’s followers look as their first God and founder of their religion, was a *white* man! He vanished from the scene and Elijah Muhammad, who said that Fard was an incarnation of Allah, took over and the movement grew and prospered.

Today’s leader, Farrakhan, has developed further peculiarities. He claims to have been taken aboard a heavenly spaceship where he heard the voice of Elijah Muhammad, the ship’s builder, declare that one day this ship (with its fleet of 15,000 smaller ships) would destroy the white man and establish black power. Before his death (see below) Elijah M. had already made such a prophecy that failed. Farrakhan’s intention is to build a separate and independent “Nation of Islam” with its own government, military and police forces, justice system, etc. When the time comes to set up this separate nation, Farrakhan’s followers will be expected to kill any who stand in its way.

Farrakhan’s “Allah” (in contrast to orthodox Islam) is a flesh-and-blood man who created himself out of a dark substance called “electricity.” He also claims that the 24 elders in Revelation are actually black scientists, 12 of whom are gods. One of these “gods” made the white man out of his evil side. Farrakhan himself is allegedly the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6-8, i.e., the child born, the Son given, who is “Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of peace.”

Some of the doctrines of the Nation of Islam reflect its early origins in Jehovah’s Witness teachings and it has shared in some of the JW false prophecies. For example, when JWs were calling for the end of the world in 1975, Elijah Muhammad declared that Allah would destroy the white man in the 1970s. He died in 1975 and his followers claim that he is still alive and that he is Christ the Savior.

After devotedly following his teachings for 12 years, Malcolm X became disillusioned with Elijah Muhammad’s gross immorality, high living and obviously false ideas. During a pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm X saw how far from the true teachings

of Islam the Black Muslim movement was, and began to warn blacks against its errors. He was assassinated by a Black Muslim hit squad.

Blacks imagine that Muslims are their friends but fail to realize that regardless of one’s skin color, Islam demands submission and calls for the death of those who will not submit to Allah. Furthermore, the Arabs were the first slave traders to sell blacks outside Africa. For further information, see Robert Morey’s *The Islamic Invasion*.

Question: I started to read *The Gospel According to Judas* by Ray S. Anderson. He is a pastor and also Professor of Theology and Ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. The book came highly recommended but it bothered me after reading only fifty pages. Do you know the book, and if so, what is your opinion?

Answer: Endorsements on the back cover by Eugene H. Peterson and M. Scott Peck should be enough to warn any potential reader. Peterson authored *The Message*, a badly perverted paraphrase of Scripture (see *TBC* Oct 1995) and Peck, though his books are highly praised by some evangelical leaders, is a blatant New Ager who, though he deceives many with “Christian” terminology, denies the essentials of the faith—as does Professor Anderson in *Judas*.

The book is heretical from beginning to end. It denies that the gospel writers were inspired of the Holy Spirit (at least in what they said about Judas) and accuses them of promoting their own prejudices: “Perhaps the other eleven needed a scapegoat...Judas gained his reputation as a betrayer through the selective memory of his former friends. ...In telling his story they excised whatever good he had done and told us only of the bad....John remembers Judas as the one who protested the actions of the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus...then, to make sure we see the evil motive behind the action, John adds, ‘This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief...’” (p 34). Christ is even faulted for declaring that Judas was “a devil” (Jn 6:70)!

It seems that only Anderson knows the truth about the good side of Judas, a truth which the Holy Spirit dishonestly failed to reveal in the New Testament. The book presents an imaginary conversation between the resurrected Christ and the dead Judas in which he is commended by Christ for his love and

loyalty, his sin is excused as arising from that love and the betrayer is given a place in heaven. In the Bible, however, Christ calls Judas “the son of perdition” (Jn 17:12) and we are told that he went not to heaven but “to his own place” (Acts 1:25). Concerning this traitor whom Anderson excuses and places in heaven, Christ declared, “...woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born” (Mk 14:21).

Had you read as far as pages 91-92 you would have found these astonishing declarations: “Thus, when Jesus died, it was His own death that He died...the death that truly belonged to Jesus of Nazareth as a descendant of Adam....It was not the cross that introduced death for Jesus; He carried His own death with Him, as we all do from the moment of conception and birth.” What heresy!

According to Jesus would have died of old age like the rest of us had He not gone to the cross! On the contrary, the death Adam’s sin brought into the world is experienced by all of his descendants because “all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). Jesus, being without sin, could not possibly have died except for the sins of others. Indeed, He couldn’t even be killed: “No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself” (Jn 10:18).

It gets worse on the next page. Under the heading “An Unhealthy View of the Cross” we find, “If our sin is viewed as causing the death of Jesus on the cross, then we ourselves become victims of a ‘psychological battering’ produced by the cross. When I am led to feel that the pain and torment of Jesus’ death upon the cross is due to my sin, I inflict upon myself spiritual and psychological torment. Instead of the cross being a liberation from the consequences of my sin, it becomes a burden that I bear. My spiritual life can then only be trusted when it has risen out of the ashes of my own self-immolation through remorse and ‘death to self.’ With this kind of theological understanding of spiritual piety reinforced through psychological ‘self abuse,’ it’s not hard to find scripture texts that seem to support the ‘death to self’ approach to spiritual life....Under the influence of this tradition, self-esteem is considered to be rooted in sinful pride, not in authentic human selfhood.”

Yet the gospel clearly says that “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor 15:3) and that rather than loving and esteeming self we are to deny it. Many scriptures don’t merely *seem* to support “death to self”; they *proclaim* it

in great clarity. Surely Paul’s declaration, “I am crucified with Christ...” (Gal 2:20), is one of triumph, not psychological battering, showing that Anderson has missed the Cross entirely! Anderson argues that Christ’s death was because of grace and love, not because of our sin: “We’re mistaken when we think that it was our sin, not the love of God, that brought Jesus to the point of His own death.” Of course, it was both. Anderson forgets the obvious: that grace and love would not have led Christ to die unless we were sinners and He desired to rescue us from the penalty of eternal death which God’s perfect justice demanded for sin.

Much more could be said of Anderson’s other heresies. The above, however, should be sufficient to show that here is another new book sold in Christian bookstores which offers further proof that the apostasy is gathering frightening momentum. *Judas* is published by NavPress.

Question: In your Sept. 1995 Berean Call you purported to answer a question about Mt 1:21 [“He shall save his people from their sins”]. Your answer could lead one to believe (using Jn 1:29, 1 Jn 2:2, 4:14, 1 Ti 4:10 out of the context of the whole Word of God), that everyone is saved. You quoted 1 Jn 4:16, Jn 3:16-17, 2 Pt 3:9 and 1 Ti 2:4 and implied from them that God loves everyone!? I suppose then we should ignore verses like Ps 5:4,5; Prv 8:13; Mal 1:2-4 and Rom 9:11,13-24? If no one can understand God’s Word without the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14) and if Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2), how can we choose God? Romans 3:10-12 says that no one either understands or seeks God. We would all go to hell unless God chose to reveal Himself to us and to give us saving faith.

Answer: Matthew 1:21 doesn’t say that Christ will save *only* His people from their sins, or most of us wouldn’t be saved, because “his people” refers to Israel. They were the first to be called God’s elect (Is 45:4; 65:9). Again, it is Israel whom Christ referred to as the elect in Matthew 24:31, which is not describing a post-trib Rapture of the church by Christ into heaven but the gathering by angels of all Jews back to Israel at the end of Armageddon.

That God loves all and Christ died for all obviously doesn’t mean that all are automatically saved. Salvation is for

“whosoever will” (Rv 22:17; Lk 6:47) and for “whosoever believeth” (Jn 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:35; 7:38; 1 Pt 2:6; 1 Jn 5:10, etc.). Those who are lost are separated from God eternally, not because God didn’t love them enough or Christ did not die to save them but because they refused the salvation He offered freely by His grace.

You insist that “world” refers only to the “elect” in statements such as “God so loved the world” or “sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.” There is no basis for such an interpretation. Furthermore, the meaning of “all men” or “world” is undisputable in other similar verses. For example, “[Christ] is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Tm 4:10). Here the “all men” is clearly different from “those that believe” (i.e., the elect). So too with the statement that Christ “is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:2). There is no mistaking the fact that in addition to dying for the elect’s sins (i.e., “our sins”), Christ died “also for the sins of the whole world.” “Whole world” can only mean “whole world.” It cannot mean the elect because it is contrasted to them.

Nor does the fact that God must draw us to Himself by His Spirit negate a genuine response to that drawing on the part of those who are saved. The same is true of Christ’s statement, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (Jn 15:16). Every employer could say to his employees, “You didn’t choose me; I chose you.” That would only mean that the employee could not force the employer to hire him. It was the employer’s decision which determined the hiring. But the one hired still had to apply for the job and agree to the conditions of employment.

Likewise, we could not force Christ to save us. God must initiate and only He can consummate the transaction. However, it would be meaningless if we were incapable of responding to God’s offer of salvation and thus didn’t genuinely choose to believe in, receive and follow Christ in response to the conviction and wooing of the Holy Spirit.

That we consented to being saved and believed in Christ is neither a “work” nor anything to our credit. The drowning man who allows his rescuer to pull him to shore has nothing to boast of or take credit for nor has he played any role in his rescue. He can only be grateful to the one who saved him.

All the Counsel of God

Dave Hunt

I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you....Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Acts 20:20,26-27

By “profitable,” Paul did not mean monetarily advantageous, but all that is necessary and helpful for a joyful, fruitful and triumphant Christian life whenever and wherever lived. How encouraging, comforting and inspiring it must have been to those early Christians to know that “*all the counsel of God*” was available to them! Surely this is exactly what we need in our time.

Logically, this declaration by Paul is a challenging rebuke of much that is called “Christianity” today. How could Paul have kept back nothing that was profitable and taught all the counsel of God, when he was ignorant of “Christian” psychology, Twelve Step programs, inner healing, visualization, positive confession, seed faith, the laughing revival, the binding of territorial spirits, and other inventions lately considered so vital? One can only conclude that these new teachings and practices are neither *profitable* nor part of *God’s counsel!*

Those who advocate teachings outside of God’s counsel can hardly complain that NAMBLA (North American Man-Boy Love Ass’n), outspoken advocate of pedophilia, was formed in a church with a number of “Christian” leaders, both Protestant and Catholic, participating and voicing their approval of this perversion. Concerned conservatives call for a “return to traditional moral values.” Yes, but *what* “tradition” and by *what* authority? By the mutual consent of decent society? How is that defined? We desperately need to heed the counsel of God!

What could be more thrilling than having God himself as one’s personal Counselor and to be assured that the Bible contains *all the counsel of God!* That perfect counsel, of course, does not offer business success or instructions in repairing an engine, flying an airplane or operating a computer. It teaches us, as spirit beings made in the image of God (Gn 1:27; 9:6) and living in physical bodies and redeemed by Christ’s blood (Gal 3:13; 1 Pt 1:18,19; Rv 5:9), to glorify Him in body and in spirit (1 Cor 6:20) here on this earth—and prepares us to be forever in His presence.

The Bible has rightly been called “the

Manufacturer’s handbook.” “God our Maker” (Ps 95:6; Prv 22:2; Is 17:7; 45:11; 51:13; Heb 11:10, etc.) intended the creatures He made to continually consult that handbook in faith. Surely our Maker included in His operating manual every instruction needed for His creatures to function holily (Lv 11:44-45; 19:2,27; 1 Thes 2:10; 1 Pt 1:16), happily (Jb 5:17; Ps 128:2; 144:15; 146:5; Prv 3:13,18; 14:21; 16:20; 28:14; 29:18; Jn 13:17; 1 Pt 3:14; 4:14) and fruitfully (Gn 1:28; Jn 15:4,8; Col 1:10). Surely God has not overlooked any possible problem or malfunction which might befall us nor failed to provide complete instructions and the appropriate remedy.

Suppose the descendants of Adam become angry, frustrated, fearful, anxious, insecure, lonely; or suppose they feel misused and abused or useless and lacking

Many times did [the LORD] deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

Psalms 106:43

in purpose or meaning. Let them turn for counsel and help to their Maker, who knows everything about them, and to the Manufacturer’s handbook in which He has provided complete operating instructions. As David said, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Ps 56:3). Let them turn to Christ, who indwells and empowers and Whose very name is *Counselor* (Is 9:6). What further counsel or help could they need?

Indeed, until very recently the people of God looked to Him alone for their spiritual and emotional needs—and triumphed by faith. Consider the suffering Job endured without any counseling or therapy from a Christian psychologist. If he didn’t need it, then surely those who suffer far less don’t need this newly invented help today! Job’s trials and the remedy he found through trust in God and submission to His will teach us that trials must be endured for our own good, to refine and mature us; and that God himself will be with us and is all we need to carry us through.

Or consider Joseph. Misunderstood and criticized by his parents and hated by his brethren, who wanted to kill him, he was sold into Egypt. There he was falsely accused and wrongly imprisoned, to languish as a criminal. How could he have survived with no Minirth and Meier or Rapha clinics or inner healing to provide the help that so many now consider to be essential? In fact, he triumphed gloriously! Logically, then, if

today’s new remedies weren’t needed by Joseph, they aren’t needed now.

Compare anyone’s suffering today with what Paul endured: “[I]n labours more abundant, in stripes [scourgings] above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I [39] stripes...[40 lashes were fatal]. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness...hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness...[and] that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Cor 11:23-28).

Of course it was Paul’s sense of self-worth, his positive self-image and his high self-esteem that carried him through. Right? Wrong! This pitiful humanistic theory so popular in the church has proved to be so false and harmful that even the secular world is abandoning it.

Newsweek’s cover of February 17, 1992 announced its feature article in large letters: “THE CURSE OF SELF-ESTEEM: WHAT’S WRONG WITH THE FEEL GOOD MOVEMENT.” A November 23, 1995 article by a professor/researcher in Portland, Oregon’s *The Oregonian* newspaper was titled, “Note to California: Drop self-esteem, Self-control is most important....” (California, with its Self-Esteem Task Force, like leading Christian psychologists, has spent years trying to prove that self-esteem is vital, and has failed.) Based upon years of research, the author declares, “If we could cross out self-esteem and put in self-control, kids would be better off and society in general would be much better off.” This is precisely what the Bible has always said. Yet this fallacious and harmful theory is the very bread and butter of Christian psychology.

Paul called himself the chief of sinners (1 Tm 1:15), considered himself “less than the least of all saints” (Eph 3:8), unworthy to be an apostle (1 Cor 15:9), and rejoiced in his weakness. Yet he claimed to be able do “*all things* through Christ” (Phil 4:13) and to be always victorious (1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 2:14, Phil 1:20, etc.). Christ told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in [your] weakness.” Paul’s response? “Most gladly therefore...that the power of Christ may rest upon me....I take pleasure in...persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor 12:9-10).

In contrast to Paul's joy and victory through Christ alone, many of today's Christians put their trust in Christian psychology as well. Its false theories and therapies offer new comfort to the abused, confused and depressed, making it the fastest growing and most monetarily profitable movement in the church. It is now generally accepted among evangelicals that God's counsel in the Bible is deficient and needs to be supplemented with psychology.

We are plagued by the "yes, but" syndrome. Isn't the Bible God's inerrant Word? *Yes, but...I've tried it and it doesn't work.* Don't we have the leading of the Holy Spirit, and Christ indwelling to guide and empower us? *Yes, but....and silence.* Was not the Word of God, the comfort and guidance of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling Christ enough for suffering and martyred Christians during the first eighteen centuries of the church? *Yes, but...the world is more complex today and we need additional help.* The heroes and heroines of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 triumphed amidst fierce persecution without psychology. *Yes, but...you don't understand my situation...my children, my husband, my wife, my boss, the abuse I suffered as a child....*

The issue is very simple: Either "all the counsel of God" is sufficient or God has failed us. If Christian psychology, inner healing, Twelve Step Programs and today's other new techniques for deliverance truly have something of value to offer, then the Bible is deficient and for 1,900 years God left His church without the insights and tools it needed. Who would believe that?!

Like Adam and Eve, mankind still flees the voice of God, clothes itself with the makeshift garments of new theories no better than fragile leaves, and hides behind the trees of its latest excuses for unbelief and rebellion. Psychological theories come and go in a steady stream of folly. For example, *drapetomania* was the official psychiatric diagnosis of a "mental illness" that was epidemic in early America. Afflicting only slaves, it was marked by a compulsion to escape—and vanished with the Civil War.

The diagnostic and treatment record hasn't improved since. The famous Jewish psychiatrist, Thomas Szasz, called psychology "the clever and cynical destruction of the spirituality of man, and its replacement by a positivistic 'science of mind.'" He titled the book containing that statement, *The Myth of Psychotherapy*. Yet the church eagerly accepts each new theory and the dependence of Christians upon unbiblical solutions continues to grow.

One of the latest delusions is called Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), a recent "discovery" whose now prevalent symptoms had never been thus diagnosed. Christian psychologist James G. Friesen, a leader in this growing field, writes in a Here's Life Publishers (Campus Crusade) book: "The incidence is turning out to be much higher than anyone expected. The number of MPD therapists is lagging far behind the growing demand...." Some psychologists now theorize that everyone has multiple personalities and that mankind could take a great evolutionary leap forward by learning to harness this power within. Others point out MPD's connection to occult experiences and the relationship of "multiples" to the "higher self" discovered in yogic trance.¹

Friesen glibly tells us that the secret of dealing with MPD (of which the Bible says nothing) is the "perplexing" necessity of "uncovering...hidden memories." He

There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

Proverbs 19:21

admits that these alleged "memories" are "forgotten" and "usually are unbelievable":

They are awful, painful, and even grotesque events that nobody wants to discover. "That didn't happen to me!" is a common response....Friends and family can be in *denial* too. We all would like to believe those things didn't happen, but *maybe* they did.

I often say, "Because it happened to another part of you, it does not feel real to you..." (emphasis added).²

Maybe they happened? Common sense would give no credence to "memories" which didn't exist until therapy "uncovered" them and which seem unreal to the patient and involve unbelievable events that family and friends insist never happened! Friesen explains further, "Distinguishing between [multiple] selves and demons is crucial...." One wonders, then, why Jesus never followed this procedure, nor did Paul, in the casting out of many demons.

This "expert" insists that demons "are not removable until those [hidden] memories are uncovered." Yet Jesus never engaged in uncovering memories, nor did Paul when he cast out demons. Friesen adds that exorcism must be "carried out by

people with experience in both the Christian and the psychological arenas." Yet Christ and His apostles were very successful at casting out demons 1,900 years before psychology invaded the church! If Christian psychology is true, the Bible is not!

Some Christian psychologists labor to win each "multiple" to Christ. Friesen suggests that when the numerous personalities have been revealed, the therapist should "Teach the client to live life from the strong [multiple] selves, and reserve work with the injured selves to be carried out in therapy....Get every self to work for the common good. This usually means having the adult selves stay in charge most of the time, while the child selves are safely kept away from the stresses of adult living."³ It sounds more like the inmates are in charge of the asylum than a cure! One wonders why these vital instructions are missing from the "Manufacturer's handbook" and why Paul would lie about holding back "nothing that was profitable" when he left out essential help for MPDs!

Christian psychologists are the new authoritarian clergy in the church. Like the Catholic clergy, they cannot be questioned because they have a source of "truth" that supplements the Bible, and possess an expertise lacking to the layman. The most popular authors and speakers at conferences, they glibly present a new interpretation of the Bible unimagined by those "holy men of God...moved by the Holy Spirit" whom God inspired to write His Word.

How it must break God's heart to see His children seeking counsel outside of His Word! To do so is to accuse our Creator of either lacking understanding of the man and woman He made, or of not caring enough to provide everything in His instruction manual that is needed for mankind's good. So Paul, after all, *did* hold back much that was profitable and God's counsel *is* deficient?!

To encourage a passion to know and to put to use *all the counsel of God* is a major purpose of this ministry. One must know the whole Bible and not merely favorite or "positive" parts of it. May nothing undermine our confidence that God's Word is a sufficient guide for "life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3-9)! Only through heeding its "doctrine, reproof, correction, [and] instruction in righteousness" can we be "perfect [i.e., mature, complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tm 3:16-17)! TBC

Quotable

I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject [slavery] I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher...? No! No!

William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879

In the epistle of Jude we find an apostate Christendom in all its appalling forms of wickedness, just as in Malachi we find apostate Judaism.... [But] thanks and praise to our gracious God, there is always a remnant marked off from the mass of corrupt profession, and characterized by genuine attachment to Christ, to His interests, and to every member of His beloved body...[who] hold fast His word in the face of everything, are devoted to His precious interests, and who love His appearing....

[We] are directed [by Jude] to the Holy Scriptures, and to these alone...to the pure and precious word of God, that perfect revelation which in His infinite goodness He has put into our hands, and which can make a little child "wise unto salvation" and make a man "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tm 3:15-17)....

C. H. Mackintosh, 1820-1896

Truly it is evil to be full of faults, but it is a still greater evil to be full of them, and to be unwilling to recognize them.

Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662

Q&A

Question: How can you say that "hundreds of millions live and die in the Roman Catholic Church without ever hearing the gospel"? Where does it say that Christ depends on man to bring His truth to the unsaved? You implied [TBC June 1995] that Michelle went to hell because she was not told the good news [at Covenant House]. This also implies that had Michelle been told the good news, she may have accepted Christ and entered heaven. Do you really believe that Jesus does not arrange circumstances for "all" His sheep to hear His voice?

Answer: God draws to Christ (Jn 6:44) all whom He knows will believe (Rom 8:29). That fact does not exempt us from preaching Christ. We can't sit back and do nothing, with the excuse that God will get the gospel to the lost. He has given Christians the grave responsibility to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15).

Not only was Michelle, expiring on her death bed, not told the gospel, but Sister Mary Rose McGeady, head of Covenant House, gave Michelle false assurance that all would be well eternally. How tragic! Nor do any of the thousands of children who come in off the streets hear the gospel, because those who run Covenant House, "America's largest crisis shelter for children," are Roman Catholic nuns who don't know the gospel! That's why McGeady didn't give the gospel to Michelle as Christ commanded; and that was the only point I tried to make.

No, that failure did not exclude Michelle from heaven. We have elsewhere dealt with the subject of God's sovereignty and human choice and responsibility so won't repeat it here.

We have documented in this newsletter and in my books, especially in *A Woman Rides the Beast*, that the Roman Catholic Church teaches a false gospel of salvation by works and rituals. Consequently, hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics die without ever hearing the true gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. If you doubt that, survey at random a dozen Roman Catholic Churches, asking those coming out of Mass how they hope to get to heaven. If one in 100 gives the right answer, I'll apologize. This tragic fact ought to haunt evangelical leaders who signed ECT!

Question: Would you please respond to CRI's Journal articles on biblical counseling by the Passantinos? Thank you!

Answer: While warning that Christianized psychology isn't perfect, the Passantinos promote it and deny the *sufficiency* of the Bible. (Similar confusion is expressed in the December 1995 *New Covenant*, a leading Catholic charismatic magazine.) In their final article the Passantinos state,

The Biblical Counseling Movement (BCM)...falls short of a comprehensive program [quite an indictment of the Bible!]...[Dave] Hunt and some other BCM advocates take 1 (sic) Peter 1:3 out of context....The verse reads, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness...." Its context is salvation, not the details of daily human living. [Dave is not part of the BCM movement.]

On the contrary, one could hardly say that "life" means only eternal life in heaven; and surely "godliness" involves our behavior here on earth. The context continues: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that

by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature...." Peter then exhorts to diligence, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness and brotherly kindness, which are to characterize the very "daily human living" which the Passantinos claim is not Peter's subject.

Does the "divine nature" within us need psychological help? No! Peter assures us that "if ye do these things ye shall never fall..." (v 10). Paul agrees that through heeding biblical "doctrine,...reproof,...correction,...[and] instruction in righteousness...the man [or woman] of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Tm 3:16-17). The Bible is sufficient. Even the watered-down NAS says, "adequate, equipped for every good work."

The Passantinos assure us that the Bible, lacking the new wisdom of Freud, et al., is deficient in its understanding of "human nature" and therefore needs to be supplemented with psychology. They offer Christian psychology's new good news for the troubled heart: humanist apostles of psychology have discovered new truths to make up for biblical deficiency and to provide the church at last with the understanding and tools it has lacked for 1,900 years. They write,

[N]ot everything about human nature is completely explained in Scripture...we can come to a more complete, comprehensive understanding of human nature by a variety of [lately discovered] truth-gathering activities, including observation, rational evaluation, assessment, and application of what we already know to be true....

The CRI articles reflect a tragic misunderstanding of what Jesus meant by "truth" when He said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). The Passantinos consider anything factual to be part of "God's truth": "100 times 100 equals 10,000, and we can count on that as 'God's truth' because it corresponds to reality...." On the contrary, the Jews would have readily acknowledged that 100 times 100 equals 10,000—yet Christ said they would not believe the truth.

Jesus promised that through obedience to His Word His disciples would know the truth—all of it, not part of it. It takes just three verses to expose the folly of the Passantinos' (and Christian psychology's) position: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive..." (Jn 14:17); "[T]he Spirit of truth...will guide you into all truth" (16:13); "But the natural

man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14).

If the Spirit of truth guides into *all truth*, and the world cannot receive or know Him, nor can the natural man receive His truth, then the world knows not *the truth*. When Jesus said to Pilate, "I came to bear witness unto *the truth*" (Jn 18:37), He didn't mean science, much less psychology. Nor did He mean worldly wisdom when He said, "[B]ecause I tell you *the truth*, ye believe me not" (8:45). Clearly, the article reflects a false view of what Christ meant by *the truth*. Only the Holy Spirit teaches *the truth*, and only to those whom He indwells and guides. This truth alone can set men free from fear, anxiety, insecurity, selfishness, anger, frustration, a sense of hopelessness and inadequacy and the other symptoms of sin.

Paul writes, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor 2:12). The "things that are freely given to us of God" are sufficient for "life and godliness" and to make us "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." Paul continues: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth..."

In contrast to Paul, the Passantinos consider at least some of "the words which man's wisdom teacheth" to be an essential supplement to *the truth* of God's Word. God promises, however, that "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" are the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-23), *not* the fruit of *therapy*.

Question: I have seen secular newspaper articles and stories in Christian periodicals to the effect that Pope John Paul II has apologized for whatever sins Catholics may have committed against non-Catholics. [T]he Christian media seems quite happy about this. In fact, Jack Van Impe quoted the Pope's confession and said, "This is probably one of the greatest confessions that's ever been made." How do you view this?

Answer: Here is the "confession" Jack quoted on his TV program July 23, 1995: "Today I, the Pope of the Church of Rome, in the name of all Catholics, ask forgiveness for the wrongs inflicted on non-Catholics. ...May this day mark a new beginning in a common effort to follow Christ; His Gospel; His law of love; His supreme desire for the unity of those who believe in Him that they may all be one."

Remember, the Pope's "gospel" is not what Paul preached; his goal that "all may be one" must be realized only under the papacy; and the "law of love" must conform to Rome's *Code of Canon Law* of more than 1,100 pages.

In this half-hearted *apology*, which Van Impe calls "one of the greatest confessions," the Pope confesses nothing, but speaks in generalities. No Catholic priest would accept such a "confession"! Sin must be named and described. The Bible offers no example of a "confession" that says, "I repent of whatever I may have done wrong." Such a "repentance" gives no evidence either of conviction of sin or of remorse.

Furthermore, the apology is not for what the popes and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church have done, but for what ordinary Catholics may have done. The Pope apologizes "in the name of all Catholics" for the sins of "the sons and daughters" or of the "children" of the Church. There is never an admission that it was the Church itself through its popes and bishops which conceived and led the Crusades, and invented and directed the Inquisitions and other persecutions and slaughters.

Note the official apology of John Paul II from his Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millenio Adveniente*:

The Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of *her children*, recalling...when *they* departed from the spirit of Christ...[and] indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counter-witness and scandal...

One painful chapter of history to which the church must return with a spirit of repentance is that of the *acquiescence* given...to intolerance and even the use of violence in the service of the truth.

[M]itigating factors do not exonerate the church from the obligation to express profound regret for the weaknesses of so many of her *sons and daughters* who sullied her face....(Emphasis added)

The Pope dishonestly gives a false impression of where the guilt lies. Staunch Catholic, Comte Le Maistre, writing in 1815 to justify the Spanish Inquisition, says it existed "by virtue of the bull of the sovereign pontiff" and that the Grand Inquisitor was "always either an archbishop or bishop."

It was the allegedly infallible "successors of Peter" and "vicars of Christ" who invented the Inquisition and enforced it. Nineteenth-century Catholic historian R. W. Thompson declares, "Gregory IX, in 1233, handed over the office [of the Inquisition] in permanence

to the Dominicans, but *always to be exercised in the name, and by the authority of, the Pope*" (emphasis added). Present-day Catholic historian Peter de Rosa writes, "Of eighty popes in a line from the thirteenth century on, not one of them disapproved of the theology and apparatus of Inquisition. On the contrary, one after another added his own cruel touches to the workings of this deadly machine...for more than six centuries without a break, the papacy was the sworn enemy of elementary justice." Likewise, J. H. Ignaz von Dollinger, a leading nineteenth-century Catholic professor of church history, confessed: "[S]ince 1183, the view of the Church had been... [that] every departure from the teaching of the Church...*must be punished with death, and the most cruel of deaths, by fire.*" It was not the "sons and daughters" or the "children" of the Church, but the Church itself through its leaders, especially the popes, who were the enemies of freedom of religion and conscience and who conceived and enforced for centuries the torture and slaughter by the millions of all who opposed them.

The Pope's alleged "apology" is actually a cover-up that places the blame upon rank-and-file Catholics instead of upon the Church hierarchy where it belongs. The most he admits to is the Church's "acquiescence" in failing to keep her children in line.

It is a travesty to simply ask forgiveness "for the wrongs inflicted on non-Catholics" without specifying those wrongs. Such a sham apology is an insult to the millions of victims. And that Jack Van Impe would laud this "confession" betrays a blindness both to history and to the current deception of John Paul II's ecumenism! The Pope deceitfully suits his message to his audience. In Central and South America, he warns Catholics against the very evangelicals with whom elsewhere he advocates unity.

Can we forgive Rome? By the grace that God alone can give, most if not all of the millions of martyrs at the time of their cruel torture and execution surely held in their hearts the words of Jesus: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." That prayer, however, even from our Lord, is only answered when sin is admitted and His finished work upon the cross is embraced as the remedy.

Endnotes

1. Ray Grasse, *The Quest* (Autumn 1994), 38-44.
2. James Friesen, *More Than Survivors: Conversations With Multiple Personality Clients* (Here's Life Publishers, 1992), 17, 145-46, 203, 219-20.
3. *Ibid.*, 219.

Israel Update

Dave Hunt

*We looked for peace, but no good came;
and for a time of health, and behold
trouble!*

Jeremiah 8:15

*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but
in me is thine help.*

Hosea 13:9

Speaking for God, the prophet Ezekiel condemns the leaders of Israel who "have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace...which prophesy concerning Jerusalem...visions of peace for her, and there is no peace" (13:10,16). Ezekiel's prophecy surely describes Israel today. While Israel's leaders negotiate "peace" with Syria, Katyusha rockets rain down upon Galilee fired by Hizbullah terrorists backed and protected by Syria. Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlass recently called Israel "a burden unto...the world."

The so-called "peace" with the PLO is a mockery. Arafat promised to remove from the PLO charter the call for Israel's destruction, but has not. He doesn't even try to conceal his evil intentions. The day he signed the Declaration of Principles more than two years ago, Arafat assured the Palestinians over Jordanian TV that he was simply implementing the 10-step 1974 PLO Plan of Phases for Israel's destruction. The first step, now successfully accomplished, calls for obtaining territory within Israel as a launching pad for her final holocaust! Again on Jordanian TV last fall just before the Washington Summit, Arafat reconfirmed that the PLO Plan of Phases is on track.

Yet Israel continues turning over territory to the PLO, literally staging its own destruction, as Hosea foretold. The manner in which Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) depart and the Palestinians take over unmasks the delusion of "peace." Consider the recent transfer of Nablus into the hands of Arafat's Palestinian Authority (PA):

The scenes on television showed [departing] Israeli soldiers cowering in their vehicles, being stoned, spat upon, and cursed....The raging mob, gleeful and power-intoxicated, burnt Israeli flags....It is difficult to imagine a more humiliating sight [for the Israelis]....

The Nablus evacuation scenes reinforce the impression that it was only Arab force [not Israeli good will]...which has compelled Israel to withdraw.

Fatah [Arafat's own terrorist group] leaflets in Nablus hailed the Palestinian

victory over "the Nazi occupation army," boasting that it was the Palestinian fire "which scorched the ground under the feet of the monkeys and pigs." The obvious conclusion is that the same fire can make Israel flee from the rest of Palestine.¹

This is the setting for "peaceful coexistence"? Arafat has never lived up to one provision in the peace accords. He flaunts his violations in the faces of Israeli officials, who then make excuses for him and continue to rationalize his bad faith. The Cairo agreement signed nearly two years ago explicitly requires PA extradition of wanted criminals, yet Arafat ignores that provision. Instead of demanding compliance, Israel accepts the fact that the PA will

**In that day shall the Lord defend
the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and
he that is feeble among them at that
day shall be as David...**

Zechariah 12:8

never extradite terrorists. Arafat's own Fatah is one of the terrorist groups operating out of the PA territories with impunity, infiltrating Israel, then escaping back to PA hideouts. This is peace?

Arafat has placed his right-hand man, Jibril Rajoub, at the head of the PA's Preventive Security Apparatus (secret police) over the West Bank and Gaza. Rajoub, who directed the Intifada uprising, organized terrorist cells and planned attacks for years, brought in 20,000 of Arafat's terrorist thugs as "police" to keep law and order.² Referring to the new "police," a local Palestinian youth whispers, "Usually you could talk to an Israeli soldier. If you were right, he would shut his mouth. With these guys, nothing. He beats you and nothing matters...!"³

Assistant Head of Military Intelligence for Research Brigadier-General Ya'acov Amidror claims that "the entire subject of arrests and trials [by the PA] is one big farce." Among the examples he cited: "One of the Palestinians involved in the recent kidnapping of two Israeli border policemen in Kabatiya [who was allegedly sentenced to nine years at hard labor] has been freed and is acting as an investigator for the Palestinian Police...[there are] prisoners in Gaza who have been freed and continue to be involved in terror activities...."⁴

Horrible tales reminiscent of Nazi Germany or Stalin's Russia are coming out

of the so-called "liberated" areas now under the control of the PLO. Even Gideon Levy, "one of the most ardent advocates of Israeli withdrawal from Judea, Samaria and Gaza and the establishment of a Palestinian state,"⁵ now admits the terror which reigns over the Palestinian peoples themselves in territories governed by the PA. Fatah Hawks gunmen, doing Rajoub's dirty work for him, keep Palestinians terrorized by brazenly executing, in public, suspected "Israeli sympathizers."⁶

Levy has documented unbelievable stories told by terrified Palestinian victims who are impeccably anti-Israel. The widespread corruption involving "bribery, exploitation, extortion, incarceration without trial, drug dealings, car thefts, prostitution and anything imaginable" is only part of the story. Typical is the case of a 27-year-old engineer taken for "five minutes" by Arafat's security officials. He has now been in prison for nine months with no known charges against him, forbidden contact either with a lawyer or his family. His father says, "In my life I have seen the Turks, the British, the Egyptians and the Israelis. But I have never experienced this kind of situation...."⁷ This is the "liberation of Palestine" that was dreamed of for years and to which the United States, the UN and Western Europe are parties?

Or consider the experience of the loyal Palestinian family that gladly rented an apartment to a PA security officer. They gave him \$15,000 to renovate the flat. After living in it for 14 months without paying any rent, the officer had the husband arrested and demanded, and received, \$30,000 from the family for his release. The wife, who testified in secret, says that the officer, who still lives in the apartment without paying rent, has threatened to liquidate her and her family if they make any complaint. She laments, "We were happy, thinking we were being liberated from the occupation. Now God should chop off our hands which threw stones at the Jews. We brought this disaster on ourselves. Now there is no law and no justice."⁸

It is even worse for Christian Arabs, who are snatched off the streets or out of their homes, imprisoned, tortured, some to the death. Others are threatened with death if they don't renounce Christ. One Christian Arab, falsely imprisoned and badly beaten, was released only after swearing in writing that he was not a Christian. He was told that he was released because of pressure from human rights organizations aware of

his situation, but that he and his family would be eliminated at the right time.

How amazing, then, is the U.S. State Department's report that "the PA and the PLO elements under Arafat's control have abided by the[ir] commitments...resulting [in] the good faith implementation of the [agreement signed at Oslo]"! Even more incredible, the Israeli State Department recently gave the PA a clean bill of health! No less astonishing is the determination of the Clinton administration to support the PA with hundreds of millions of dollars.

As early as July 1995, *The Jerusalem Post* criticized the U.S. State Department's semiannual status reports for failing to mention that Arafat's police "kidnap, torture and kill Palestinians both in the self-rule areas and in areas under Israeli jurisdiction...shut down opposition [news]papers, arrest and torture political opponents." The situation continues to worsen as the "peace process" moves forward. Ominous was the recent arrest of Dr. Iyad Sarraj, high commissioner of the Independent Palestinian Commission for Citizens' Rights, who dared to condemn the PA's appalling abuse of human rights.⁹

There is little doubt that Yitzhak Rabin won the 1992 Knesset election by promising never to give back any of the territories that had been taken for strategic reasons in hard-fought battles against an enemy which has sworn Israel's destruction. Speaking to settlers in that area, Rabin said it would be suicide to give back the Golan Heights to Syria and he pledged never to do so.

Syria made it a habit in the past to lob shells from the Golan onto Israeli settlements in the valley below. It was down from the Golan that hundreds of Syrian tanks came pouring into Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur sneak attack that almost succeeded. Israel pushed the Syrians back far enough to place radar installations on top of the Golan and to create a buffer zone to give advance warning of any future Syrian attacks. It would be insane to return these strategic heights to the enemy which used them for attack, is still determined to destroy Israel, and provides shelter and support for anti-Israel terrorists!

After he was voted in as Prime Minister, however, Yitzhak Rabin proceeded to do exactly what he had sworn not to do. He began to negotiate with the PLO for the return of so-called "occupied territories" to their control, and with Syria for the return of the Golan. A short time before his assassination, Rabin declared, "The Bible is not a geography map...it teaches us

values." Yet he would not follow those values and rejected Israel's only claim to its land: God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants. And the Arab view of biblical geography? *Not one* Arab state issues a map (including maps sold in Jerusalem) showing a place called "Israel"! Their ultimate intention is all too clear!

Since his death, a secret memorandum was uncovered in which Rabin promised President Clinton to return the Golan to the Syrians in exchange for firm assurances of "peace." Yet Syria's determination to destroy Israel (like that of all the other Arab nations) is based upon the teachings of Islam and is thus unchangeable. "Peace agreements" are mere steps toward Israel's destruction.

Only the strength and superior performance of the IDF, together with the fact that Israel now holds strategic high ground, has

For I [the Lord] will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

Isaiah 37:35

kept the surrounding Arab nations from attacking again since the 1973 war. To give up that territory in exchange for insincere promises of "peace," and thereby to place Israel at the mercy of an enemy which has sworn her destruction, is the utmost folly. That fact was recognized by all Israel, and before his death Rabin was being loudly booed wherever he went. His assassination made him a martyr and turned the sentiment of Israel around to accept Rabin's policies and thus its own suicide.

Perhaps it was assumed that even the Golan could be safely given up because Israel possesses an estimated 200 nuclear bombs. Then, suddenly, the headlines of the last issue of *The Jerusalem Post International Edition* for 1995 read, "Peres ready to 'give up atom' after peace." For Israel to surrender its nuclear deterrent would be to present an irresistible invitation for her enemies to attack her. Obviously, Israel is talking itself into the false sense of security which is described in Ezekiel 38 as the prelude to Armageddon.

The rest of the world must bear its share of the blame for the pressure which has caused Israel's leaders to pursue the present madness. There have been, for example, 321 UN General Assembly resolutions and 49 UN Security Council resolutions condemning Israel. How many times have Arab nations been condemned for their vows to exterminate

Israel, for their military attacks and terrorism against Israel? *Not once!* Arafat, wearing a pistol on his hip, addressed the UN General Assembly and called for the destruction of Israel. Was he condemned? *No!* Look at the record again: 370 to 0! Is that a bit unbalanced? Something is radically wrong! God will surely judge the nations for this travesty!

Tragically, Israel's leaders neither believe nor obey the God who promised that land to the descendants of Jacob (Israel) and Who said, "The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine" (Lv 25:23)! Indeed, last December, Religious Affairs Minister Shimon Shetreet promised Michel Sabbah, the Roman Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem, that he would "oblige rabbis paid by the state to remove their names from a statement...in which they noted that it is forbidden [by God] to give up parts of Eretz Yisrael." As a Catholic leader,

Sabbah rejects Israeli administration of Jerusalem. Amazingly, *after Saddam Hussein's rape of Kuwait*, Sabbah, during a meeting at the Vatican, commended that mass murderer for "truly carry[ing] in his heart the Palestinian cause" and refused to concede that Saddam was "more dangerous" than President Bush.

Israel's leaders look to her enemies for help instead of to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They become partners in Israel's destruction by returning, to those who have sworn her extermination, the very land she needs for self-defense and which they will utilize in the long-prophesied final attack upon her at Armageddon.

God will have the last word. The greatest punishment for Israel because of her continued rebellion lies yet ahead: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; *but [a remnant] shall be saved out of it*" (Jer 30:7). The nations, too, will be punished for their mistreatment of God's chosen people: "I will gather *all nations* against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken....Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations,...his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives ...and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (Zec 14:1-4; 12:10).

We are told to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps 122:6). Pray, too, that God will open the blind eyes of the Israelis, that with David, Israel's mightiest warrior ever, they will say, "Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield" (Ps 33:20), and they will turn fully to Him, their Messiah.

TBC

Quotable

Let us not curse the Jews for delivering Jesus to be crucified. Let us not single out the Romans in blaming them for putting Jesus on the cross....Every one of us in Adam's race had a share in putting Him on the cross! I have often wondered how any professing Christian man or woman could approach the communion table and participate in the memorial of our Lord's death without feeling and sensing the pain and the shame of the inward confession, "I, too, am among those who helped put Him on the cross!" The prophet [Isaiah] reminds us clearly that the Saviour was bruised for "our iniquities" [53:5]....the fingerprints of all mankind are plain evidence against us.

A.W. Tozer
Who Put Jesus on the Cross?

[T]he Church indulges our desire to "feel good" instead of responding to our need to be spiritually challenged and fed through solid exposition of the Scriptures. The electronic Church in particular panders to our appetite for entertainment rather than authentic discipleship and maturity.

Joyce Main Hanks
Preface, Jacques Ellul's
The Humiliation of the Word

Individual faithfulness is rewarded with intimate fellowship with the heart of Christ ...and cheered...with the bright and blessed hope of the Lord's coming...I would earnestly and affectionately entreat you to join in petition to our ever-gracious God to stir up the hearts of His beloved people all over the world to seek a more pronounced, wholehearted, devoted discipleship; to turn away from everything contrary to His Word; to be true to His Word and to His name in this dark and evil day; and thus realize the truth...that the greater the ruin [apostasy], the richer the grace; the deeper the gloom, the brighter the outshining of individual faith.

C. H. Mackintosh, 1820-1896

Q&A

Question: Have you read the January 1996 *Reader's Digest*? I am referring to the article, "Islam's Real Agenda." Does it tell the truth...that fanatics are perverting the Koran's message?

Answer: The author, Sai'd Al-Ashmawy, former chief justice of Egypt's Supreme Court, admits the violence and terrorism

being perpetrated by Muslims worldwide. Yet he insists, "But this Islam of intolerance and violence is not...the Islam that inspires more than a billion people [1.3 billion and growing!] around the world to pray, to fast, to give to the poor, to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. My Islam is a religion of tolerance and brotherhood."

To support this assertion, Sai'd gives a selective quote from the Koran about "Jews and Christians...hav[ing] nothing to fear...." He then tries to explain away Surah 5:51 as a one-time command in a special situation, "Believers, take neither the Jews nor the Christians for your friends!" In fact, that command holds true today. Moreover, he fails to quote such passages as Surah 9:5, "slay the idolaters [non-Muslims] wherever ye find them." Nor does he quote Muhammad from the Hadith: "The last hour will not come before the Muslims fight the Jews and the Muslims kill them."

Sai'd rationalizes the Koran's call for *jihad* (holy war) against all non-Muslims as relating to "a specific episode when the Prophet prepared to attack his enemies from the city of Mecca. It was never intended as a prescription for permanent warfare against the rest of the world." The truth is somewhat different! Muhammad had made a peace treaty with Mecca and on a pretext broke it, conquered the city and slaughtered its leaders. (Arafat says he is following the prophet's example in his current "peace accord" with Israel—i.e., he will eventually break it and slaughter the Israelis.) Jihad was *not* only for that one "episode"! To spread and enforce his new faith, Muhammad led at least 27 invasions of neighboring towns himself and his followers led another 50 during his lifetime.

Islam grew and spread rapidly (almost taking over Europe in the early 700s), not because people were persuaded by truth and loving example to convert to a religion of peace, love and brotherhood as Sai'd would have us believe, but because at the point of a sword they were given the choice of submission to Allah and Muhammad—or death. And wherever Islam is in power today it operates, in obedience to the Koran and Muhammad, on the same principle of violence and suppression of all non-Muslims. It is the death penalty *today* in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan for a Muslim to convert to another religion. And even in countries where that penalty is not the official law, it is enforced wherever Islam is strong enough to do so.

Sai'd says, "Extremists call all non-

Muslim citizens 'infidels' and insist that they have no right to participate in political activities." *Extremists?* No. This practice was established by Muhammad himself and it has been the rule in Islam ever since. For example, today one must be a Muslim to be a citizen of Saudi Arabia, where Mecca is located. Suppose one had to be a Methodist (or Catholic, Mormon, etc.) to be a citizen of the United States, and any who converted from that official religion must be killed. Would not the Western world erupt in outrage?! Yet such is the situation in Saudi Arabia (the country our young men shed their blood to protect) and no objection is raised by our government, the UN or elsewhere. *There is something very, very wrong!*

Sai'd adds, "Unfortunately, many governments in the Islamic world are weak, corrupt and authoritarian...the West should always support democratic forces in the Muslim world." What democratic forces? Of the 22 Arab nations in the world today, *not one* is a democracy. Furthermore, the greater the influence of Islam, the greater the suppression of all human rights.

I appreciate Sai'd's call for tolerance and mutual respect and his desire to see democratic Islamic regimes established. That would be wonderful, but they would have to disobey the Koran in the process and change Islam completely, which is not likely. In fact, for having proposed these ideas, this brave but naive man now has to hide from Muslim fundamentalists who have called for his death.

In the same issue of *Reader's Digest* is another article titled "A Holy War Heads Our Way." It is filled with frightening facts about and examples of Islamic terrorism around the world. It documents the takeover of entire governments by Islamic fundamentalists (Islam rejects separation of church and state), the reign of terror that follows (in the Sudan, for example, Christians are literally being crucified and tens of thousands have been displaced, starved and eliminated), and the pressures being exerted toward that goal in every country (Nigeria, et al.) where Islam gains enough followers.

There is only one problem with the article: like Sai'd's, it portrays Islamic terrorists as "fanatics" (similar misinformation is widespread in the media), when, in fact, they are simply fundamentalists following to the letter the fundamentals of Islam which Muhammad himself practiced and which the Koran teaches. Islam itself is the problem.

Question: I've heard and read statements by evangelical leaders justifying their involvement in the obvious ecumenism of the A.D. 2000 movement by saying that they can work with "anyone who calls Jesus Lord." What could be wrong with this?

Answer: Such evangelical leaders have apparently forgotten Christ's solemn warning that *many* who call Him Lord are not truly His: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,...and then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you*" (Mt 7:21-23). Roman Catholics, Mormons and many others who have a false gospel nevertheless "call Jesus Lord." Obviously this statement doesn't prove that a person is a Christian and, therefore, provides insufficient basis for working together in evangelism with those who profess it.

There are other unbiblical criteria which evangelical leaders use to rationalize their increasing ecumenism. A recent letter sent out by Charles Colson justifies ECTs (and his) acceptance of all active Catholics as "brothers and sisters in Christ" on the basis of their agreement with the Apostles' Creed. In fact, the Apostles' Creed is misnamed. It was never recited by the apostles, but was invented much later. Even Catholic encyclopedias admit that it was never quoted by any of the apostles. Furthermore, it is defective in that it does not contain the gospel which alone saves (Rm 1:16; 1 Cor 15:1-4, etc.). It tells us that "Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate," but fails to tell us that He suffered for our sins, much less that such suffering was eternally sufficient!

Obviously, then, it is folly to embrace as brothers and sisters in Christ all those who "call Jesus Lord" and profess the so-called Apostles' Creed. Yet this is what Colson, Bright, Packer, Robertson, et al. have done.

Question: Your book, *A Cup of Trembling*, seems prejudiced against the Arabs. You make much of Arab terrorism but never mention the acts of terrorism by Israelis. And surely the takeover of such large amounts of Arab land by Israel is an act worse than terrorism! What about the murder of 49 peaceful Muslims in the mosque in Hebron?

Answer: You should go back and read the book again more carefully. Every piece of land which Israel has taken has been for strategic reasons in self-defense against an enemy which has sworn its total extermination. If the Palestinians had been content

with the 82 percent of Palestine they were given by the United Nations in its partition of that land in November 1947, they would have been living peacefully in their "Palestinian state" for the last 48 years. Instead, as soon as Israel declared its independence in May 1948, the regular armies of five Arab nations attacked the Jewish settlers with overwhelming force to take over the 18 percent of Palestine which the UN had allotted to them.

The Arab High Command told all Arabs to "get out" because they were going to drive the Jews into the Mediterranean, after which the Arabs could return to their own lands and take over that of the Jews as well. Please consider that the entire land of Israel (before they started giving land back) was 1/6 of 1 percent of the land the Arabs own. The Arabs have the oil, the wealth; why must they insist upon taking over this tiny, postage-stamp piece of land, too, and leaving nothing for the Jews? That is their goal!

I do not whitewash everything Israel has done. There is a huge difference, however, between the continual cries for the extermination of Israel that one hears blaring from radios in homes and in streets and sermons in mosques and media day and night throughout the Arab world, and the simple request to be left in peace that emanates from Israel. Never have I heard from Israel any cry for the takeover of Arab lands or for the extermination of Arabs. *A huge difference indeed!*

Furthermore, whereas the Israeli leadership doesn't even believe the biblical promises of that land to the Jewish people and therefore never has tried to enforce them, the Arabs persist in the most outrageously false claims to the land and are determined to enforce them with violence. Although the Koran itself (we give you the references in *A Cup of Trembling*) says the land belongs to the Jews, the Arabs insist today that the Jews have no claim upon any of it but that it always belonged to the Arabs. One could not ask for a more blatant lie.

We could give scores of examples of how unconscionably absurd are the Arab's claims (Arafat's insistence that Jerusalem was always an Arab city, telling crowds of Arabs in Bethlehem celebrating the PLO's takeover of that city just after Christmas that Jesus was a Palestinian freedom fighter, etc.). But you ask about the mas-sacre at Machpelah, so let's just use that as an example. The cave of

Machpelah is located in Hebron. The Arabs are currently trying to rid Hebron of any Jewish presence and deny any Jewish historical claim. In fact, Hebron is where David was first crowned king and was his capital for the first seven and one-half years of his reign (2 Sm 5:1-5). David was not an Arab! He was a Jew of the tribe of Judah and there was no Arab presence in Jerusalem until modern times; and even then the Jews always outnumbered the Arabs.

It was at Hebron that Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah to bury Sarah. Yet, Muslims built a mosque there and claim the cave as theirs. The cave of Machpelah is the burial site of (in addition to Sarah) Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Leah. Neither Arab nor Arab ancestor was buried there. Ishmael, from whom the Arabs claim descent, was buried many miles away. The cave obviously belongs to the Jews, being the burial site of their ancestors. The Arabs have no legitimate claim upon it, yet they insist that it is theirs!

The murder of 49 Muslims in the mosque at Machpelah was a heinous crime and it was condemned officially by the Israeli government and almost universally by all Israelis. It was the spur-of-the-moment isolated work of one deranged Israeli acting alone. In stark contrast, Arab terrorism (which takes place almost daily in Israel and around the world) is the carefully planned work of thousands of members of scores of organizations which are supported by billions of dollars in aid from Arab/Islamic countries. The terrorists are dedicated to the extermination of Israel, they make terrorism their profession, and rather than being condemned (as was the lone gunman at Machpelah), they are hailed as heroes, with streets named after them and songs sung in their honor throughout the Muslim world. *Again, a huge difference!*

Endnotes

- 1 *The Jerusalem Post International Edition* (Week ending Dec. 23, 1995), 10.
- 2 *Maoz* (July 1995), 1.
- 3 *Yeshua Report Supplement* (May 1995), 3.
- 4 *The Jerusalem Post International Edition* (Week ending Dec. 16, 1995), 1.
- 5 *Jerusalem Post* (Week ending Dec. 16, 1995), 30.
- 6 *Jerusalem Post* (Week ending Dec. 9, 1995), 6.
- 7 *The Jerusalem Post International Edition* (Week ending Dec. 16, 1995), 30.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*

The "Evangelical" Seduction

T. A. McMahon

I know much more about Roman Catholicism today than I did when I was a practicing Catholic. That's significant because the Church played a major part in my upbringing. The priests and nuns of the various grade schools and of the high school and military school I attended were precious people in my life. I still have loving memories of each of those individuals who, for a quarter century, so profoundly impacted my life. I grew up respecting those who took part in personally rearing me, and those feelings haven't changed. What *has* changed drastically, however, is what I believe about the Church to which they had dedicated their lives.

My present knowledge of Catholicism comes from two perspectives. One is my view as a born-again, Bible-believing Christian who has studied the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church; the other is the experience of one who lived for twenty-five years what he was taught by nuns and priests. That combination has been particularly helpful in recognizing a significant seduction taking place in the body of Christ during these last days before His return. Let me explain.

As I've listened intently to Catholics who dialogue with evangelicals, or to those evangelical leaders who to a large degree defend Roman Catholicism, I've noticed a couple of very disturbing points. First, the language used by Catholic apologists is largely "evangelical speak," i.e., terms and phrases very familiar to Bible-believing Christians, but not common to Catholics. They talk about being saved, born-again, taught by the Holy Spirit, having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, engaging in group Bible studies, etc. I never heard such terms when I was growing up, so why are we hearing them from Catholics now? I'm concerned that, for tactical purposes, Catholics use words or identify with practices which are meaningful to evangelicals, but without disclosing that they have a completely different meaning for the Catholic. Whatever their motives for introducing them, the practice can be very deceptive.

"Salvation by *grace*," for example, means "*without works*" to evangelicals. To Catholics, however, grace is the means by which they believe meritorious works are performed in order to "*earn* salvation." So in that rare instance when a Catholic might

claim that he also believes in salvation by grace, he does not mean what an evangelical means. The difference is not a matter of semantics but of eternal destiny.

Another of many examples is the Catholic who claims he also is "born again." That assertion would almost never be made except in conversation with an evangelical, who would no doubt be thrilled to hear those words. However, what the committed Catholic means is that he received his spiritual birth when he was baptized—either as an infant or when as an adult he converted to Catholicism. That's not what Jesus meant when He told Nicodemus he "must be born again" (Jn 3:3-8). The deliberate adoption of biblical terms which have different meanings for

...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude 3

Catholics has become an effective tool in Rome's ecumenical agenda.

My second disturbing point comes from listening to many lay-Catholic (meaning they may be *used* by the Church but don't speak officially for the Church) apologists and so-called evangelical scholars telling Protestants what Catholics actually believe. Most of what they say is impressive to naive evangelicals, though foreign to the official meaning of Catholic doctrine and common practice. For instance, the Catholic apologist claims and the evangelical scholar concurs—after checking with Catholic scholars, of course—that "Catholics don't worship Mary; nor do they pray to her as one would to God." I grew up worshipping Mary and praying to her more frequently and more passionately than to God, and so did all my Catholic friends and relatives. We did not merely slip into idolatry against the teachings of the Church; we were taught it. The rosary, with its 156 prayers to Mary, was not *our* invention. And to the thousands of other prayers to Mary you could add litanies to a legion of saints, many of whom regularly displaced my time with God the Father, and with Jesus. My experience is not unique; it's the common, everyday Catholic experience.

For all of their apologetic protestations, I would love to see Patrick Madrid, Karl Keating and others at Catholic Answers take their program (with its evangelical

additives) on a tour of the ethnic parishes where I grew up; better yet, I'd consider raising money for them to tour the local parishes of Spain, Portugal, Haiti, or Mexico. The average Catholic would not only be clueless as to what they were talking about, but would very likely stone them as Protestant sympathizers, with the local priests and nuns delivering the first volley. I'd pay double for Hank Hanegraaff, Jack Van Impe, Chuck Colson, Norm Geisler and the many other evangelicals presently fueling the ecumenical affair with Rome, to spend a week with a missionary family in any Catholic country. That might impart some reality to their vaunted scholarship!

What we see primarily in North America today is an insidious assault, an assault which has been the historic *modus operandi* of Roman Catholicism. From the time of Constantine (when Christian doctrines were compromised to oblige pagan practices in order to bring the populace under the control of Mother Church) to John Paul II's ecumenical overtures to Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, voodoos, animists, etc., Roman Catholicism has always accommodated itself to the religious culture of whatever land it purposes to physically and/or spiritually conquer.

In Haiti, for example, voodoo is practiced by the majority of those who consider themselves faithful Catholics. The same is true in African and South American countries, where demon-appeasing Santeria is the popular religious practice. In the Philippines, the overt worship by Catholics of statues is so prevalent that any suggestion of its unorthodoxy would be met by outrage. Why aren't the Catholic apologists straightening out the millions of these deluded faithful? Instead, their efforts are focused on deluding the Vatican's greatest threat to its worldwide empire—the Bible-believing, gospel-preaching church of Jesus Christ.

Many evangelicals (who are commonly perceived as church leaders because of their large ministries and high visibility via the Christian media) seem to be oblivious to this "evangelical" seduction by Rome. The problem has proliferated because of the influence which these church leaders exert over millions of evangelicals worldwide. When they give the impression that Catholics are a part of the body of Christ, the multitudes are impressed—and the pontiff rejoices. Pat Robertson is just one of a dozen or more high-profile evangelicals being seduced. His own newsletter reports,

After CBN founder Pat Robertson met with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II...[he] described their meeting as warm. "I think this meeting was historic," said Robertson, who joined with other Christian religious leaders [including Don Argue of the National Association of Evangelicals, Chuck Colson, and J.I. Packer] in greeting the Pope at the New York residence of His Eminence, John Cardinal O'Connor.

The meeting...came just hours after Robertson [led] an Ecumenical Procession at the Papal Liturgy [and was given a seat of honor at the Papal Mass] in New York's Central Park. Robertson called the Pope "a humble and caring servant of the Lord." ...Robertson presented a...letter to the Pontiff underscoring CBN's commitment to work for Christian unity and world evangelization.

Robertson also wrote that he was "encouraged" by the Pope's recent encyclical on Christian unity, *That All May Be One*, and praised the Pontiff for his recent call to Catholics to "be more committed to prayer for Christian unity...."¹

Either someone's prayers aren't being taken seriously, or Pat and the Pontiff aren't on the same page of the papal program Pat was given. In February of this year, *The Oregonian* ran two articles with the following headlines: POPE WILL FACE PROTESTANT TREND IN LATIN AMERICA and POPE ISSUES CALL TO DEFEND CHURCH'S PLACE IN CENTRAL AMERICA. The first article carried this AP summary: "The Pontiff's visit this week will include efforts to win back Roman Catholics who have converted to other churches."² The second article was even more to the point: "Directly confronting the challenge to his church's traditional dominance in Central America, Pope John Paul II accused Protestant missionaries Tuesday of sowing 'confusion and uncertainty' among Roman Catholics."³

If the Latin Americans are simply demonstrating "Christian unity" by moving around within the "Christian household," why would that upset the world's foremost ecumenist? It's upsetting because that kind of unity is not what the Pope has in mind. Months before his private meeting with Pat Robertson and other American evangelicals in New York, John Paul II told his weekly audience at the Vatican, "Christian unity will not become a reality unless all churches accept the authority Christ entrusted to St. Peter and his successors....This unity will not be fully manifested until all Christians accept Christ's will for the Church and acknowledge the apostolic authority of the bishops, in communion with the successor

of Peter."⁴

Perhaps the Pope's most effective pawns in his attempt to undo the evangelical threat to his realm are former evangelicals. They know the evangelical walk, and talk its talk. John Richard Neuhaus, for example, is the Catholic who worked with Chuck Colson in drafting the ecumenical document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." One news source described Neuhaus, in his role in dealing with evangelicals, as a former "conservative Lutheran pastor who became a Catholic priest, thus a perfect bridge figure."⁵

Scott Hahn is another very effective "bridge figure." He is a theology professor at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, and a very popular guest on evangelical radio programs across the country. Scott began one interview by gushing over the fact that his Catholic school has impressed

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.

2 John 9

leading evangelicals James Dobson and Chuck Colson. He quoted Dobson (on whom the school bestowed an honorary doctorate) as noting that "he had never seen a campus where the students take the lordship of Jesus Christ so seriously." Scott then added that Colson had nominated the Catholic university for membership in the Evangelical College Coalition because, as Professor Hahn sees it, "it really is a dynamic orthodox Catholic university that is as evangelical as it is Catholic."⁶ His name-dropping and unabated promotions were bound to impress the majority of the program's evangelical listeners.

If you have been reading this article carefully, you've probably picked up on a few big-time *coups* among Rome's ingenious seductions. Pat Robertson believes that Pope John Paul II is a "servant of the Lord." James Dobson is convinced that the Catholic students at Franciscan U. (a leading promoter of tours to Medjugorje) are under the "lordship of Jesus Christ." Colson and former Protestant (and Gordon Conwell seminarian) Scott Hahn believe that orthodox Catholics can also be evangelicals. Scott adds with great enthusiasm that his calling is to train up "Bible Catholic Christians."

Need I point out that a "servant of the Lord" and one under the "lordship of Jesus Christ" must be saved? Does the Catholic gospel of salvation by works save? Not

according to my Bible. "Bible Catholic Christians?" Where in the Bible are they going to find the Immaculate Conception (that's hers, not His), Purgatory, Apostolic Succession, the Assumption of Mary, Papal Infallibility, Transubstantiation, and on and on and on? Does Scott also train them *when* to obey Church dogma based upon tradition, as they read scriptural passages which contradict the teachings of their Church? You see, a "Bible Catholic Christian" is similar to a "Christian Science evangelical," who is only permitted to understand the Bible through the official interpretation of cult founder Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Likewise, the Bible-reading Catholic's understanding must not deviate from the interpretation of the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

By God's grace I was delivered from the spiritual delusion and bondage of Rome. It's distressing, therefore, to see my brothers and sisters in Christ begin to dance with what the entire evangelical church for 1,500 years (until very recently) called the "whore of Babylon." Even more heartbreaking, however, is the growing acceptance of the myth that Catholicism saves. This serious misapprehension was recently repeated by two Promise Keepers officials to the head of a ministry which evangelizes Catholics. Approaching his public booth where he was passing out salvation tracts for Catholics, these PK leaders began to rebuke him for giving offense to his fellow Christians. That's not only sheer ignorance but a grievous error which affects the eternal destiny of nearly a billion lost souls. Evangelicals know that not all who attend Protestant churches are saved; so why are we seeing a "hands off" policy regarding Catholics?

What's more, truly evangelical churches teach that membership in one's church or denomination is meaningless if the individual does not have a saving, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In contrast, it is one's relationship to the Church of Rome which allegedly saves the Catholic.

Our hope and prayer is that the concerns raised here will help motivate the body of Christ to actively oppose this growing seduction. In particular, our desire is to see the multitude of ex-Catholics in evangelical churches (often comprising the majority in their congregations) rekindle their zeal for the salvation of their Catholic friends and relatives. Please read this month's "TBC Notes" for further information on what you can do.

TBC

Quotable

A chorus of voices keeps harping the unity tune. What they are saying is, "Christians of all doctrinal shades and beliefs must come together in one visible organization, regardless....Unite, unite!" Such teaching is false, reckless, and dangerous. Truth alone must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity.

Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord's prayer in John 17 must be read in its full context. Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the gospel.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Q&A

Question: The Gospels are silent about the approximately eighteen years between the last time we hear of Jesus in the temple as a boy of twelve (Lk 2:41-52) and the beginning of His ministry at about thirty years of age (Lk 3:23). I have come across the report a number of times, not only in *The Aquarian Gospel*, but in newspapers as well, that during these missing years Jesus was in India studying under the gurus. The wisdom He acquired there supposedly became the basis for His ministry. Why not?

Answer: The most widely circulated report involved an alleged Nicholas Notovitch who claimed that while traveling in Tibet in the late 1800s he was told by Tibetan lamas that a record reporting the visit of Jesus existed in a Himalayan monastery. In the early 1900s another visitor to Tibet was allegedly told the same thing. However, no one capable of reading and translating such "records" ever saw them, no copy was brought to the West for examination, and now the story is that the "records" have been destroyed.

If the Bible were based upon no better evidence than that, the critics would have justifiably dismissed it long ago. Yet such speculative claims are instantly given credence by those who demand proof for anything the Bible says. That double

standard betrays an undeniable bias on the part of skeptics who claim to be interested only in the truth.

First of all, there is not a particle of historical or archaeological evidence that Jesus ever visited India, much less *studied* there. Moreover, this theory is refuted by everything that Jesus said and did during His ministry. The teachings which Jesus brought to the Jews were in agreement with all of their Scriptures (which he frequently quoted as authoritative) and without the slightest taint of either Hinduism or Buddhism. Had He studied under the Masters of India or Tibet, He would have been obligated to uphold their teaching and to honor His guru. In fact, His teachings were the very antithesis of Eastern mysticism.

Furthermore, the New Testament account, which holds together consistently, is not compatible with Jesus ever having made such extensive travels. The people in His hometown of Nazareth knew Him as "the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon" (Mk 6:3). The implication certainly is that He was a familiar hometown personality who had grown up and continued in the local community, not that He was a Jewish Marco Polo who had traveled to distant and exotic places.

Friends and acquaintances were astonished when Jesus suddenly began to travel about Galilee and preach to great crowds. To family and neighbors it was a scandal for Jesus to pose as a religious teacher. They treated Him with a contempt born of familiarity, not with the awe they surely would have given one who had traveled widely and studied in such far-off lands as India and Tibet.

Every guru who comes to the West lauds and honors his Master, for every Hindu, including the gurus themselves, must follow his own guru. Yet the alleged "Guru Jesus" never referred to His guru or quoted any religious writings except the Jewish Scriptures. He claimed to have been sent not by some "Master" in the east, but by His "Father in heaven" (Jn 5:23,30,36, etc.), a term unknown to the gurus and hated by the rabbis.

The gurus claim to be men who, through yoga and ascetic practices, have attained to the mystical "realization" that

"Atman [individual soul] is identical with Brahman [universal soul]" and have thereby become "self-realized" gods. Had Jesus studied under them, He would have taught the same delusion. Yet in complete contradiction to that impossible dream, and far from claiming to be a man struggling upward to godhood, Jesus presented Himself as the very I AM (Jahweh) of the Old Testament, the God of Israel who had stooped down to become a man: "...if ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins....Before Abraham was, I AM....Now I tell you [this] before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I AM....A little while, and ye shall not see me...because I go to the Father....I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father....*I and my Father are one*" (Jn 8:24,58; 13:19; 16:16,27-28; 10:30). (Emphasis added)

The gurus deny the existence of sin or of any absolute moral standards. Each person's *dharma* is different and an individual matter to be discovered on the mystical journey of union with Brahman. In complete contrast, Christ claimed to be the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12) whose very life exposed the evil in mankind. Moreover, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to convince the world of "sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn 16:8). Jesus announced that He had come to call sinners to repentance (Mk 2:17) and to save them from eternal judgment by His sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the whole world.

Christ's life and teachings stand in the fullest contradiction to the Hinduism He would have learned in India had He studied there and which He surely would have practiced and taught to the Jews when He returned to Israel. This theory finds absolutely no support in the New Testament record given to us by eyewitnesses.

The gurus teach a continuing cycle of death and reincarnation, whereas Jesus was resurrected as He said He would be, and He promised the same deliverance from death to His followers. Reincarnation and resurrection are opposites; one cannot believe in both. The gurus teach a continual returning to this earth in life after life to work out one's supposed *karma*, while Jesus taught forgiveness of sins by grace, thus

fitting one for heaven. To the gurus, heaven is a mystical state of oneness with the Absolute. Jesus, on the other hand, taught that being in heaven is to dwell forever in His Father's house of "many mansions" (Jn 14:1-4). The gurus are all vegetarians. Jesus ate the passover lamb, fed the multitudes with fish, and even after His resurrection ate fish as a demonstration to His doubting disciples that He was bodily resurrected and not a "ghost" as they supposed.

There have been thousands of gurus, but Jesus claimed to be the one and only Son of God, the only Savior of sinners. The gurus teach that there are many ways to God. Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6). Everything Jesus said and did opposes the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism and disproves the false claim that He studied in India or Tibet.

This fraudulent theory demonstrates once again how impossible it would be to invent a fictitious history of Jesus and to make it fit into actual events on this earth. The erroneous theory that Jesus studied in India under the gurus simply won't fit into the New Testament record at all—and if it did, the New Testament would be incompatible with the Old, instead of being its fulfillment, as it had to be. Nor would either the Old or New Testament records fit into the history of the world unless both were true. The perfect harmony of Scripture with established history is revealed by any careful and honest study of both.

Question: Referring to Christ's prophesied future reign over this world from Jerusalem, the Bible says, "[Of] his government and peace there shall be no end..." (Is 9:7). Yet the Bible also says that His reign will only last 1,000 years and that it will end with a world war (Rv 20:6-9). Which is it, forever or 1,000 years; peace or war? It can't be both. How can anyone believe that the Bible is God's infallible Word when it contains so many contradictions, and particularly on such fundamental concepts as the reign of Christ, which is supposedly the culmination of all?!

Response: There is a very simple and

obvious explanation: the millennial reign of Christ is not the "government and peace" which the Bible says will never end. That fact is clear for a number of reasons. Certainly 1,000 years is not endless, and war cannot be equated with peace. Yet most Christians imagine that the Millennium is the "kingdom" for which we are to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Mt 6:10), and which is the subject of so many biblical prophesies. In fact, it is not.

It is amazing that the obvious contradictions are ignored by Christians who persist in equating the Millennium with Christ's eternal kingdom. The critics, however, who diligently search for every seeming contradiction they can find, have noted the problem, but in their eagerness to condemn the Bible they overlook the simple solution. The Millennium is not the Kingdom.

Christ said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see...[or] enter into the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3,5). Clearly there will be many individuals during the Millennium who have not been born again or they would not follow Satan: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Rv 20:7-8). These rebels are obviously not born-again Christians! Yet only those who have been born again can be in the Kingdom.

Moreover, Paul tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 15:50). Yet the earth will be inhabited during the Millennium by great numbers of "flesh and blood" people. Here, then, is another reason why the Millennium cannot be the Kingdom.

What, then, is the Kingdom? That it is eternal indicates that it will exist in the new eternal universe that God will create after He has destroyed this one: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the

elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up....Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pt 3:10,13).

Obviously, no kingdom nor anything else on this earth can be eternal until the present universe has been destroyed and a new one created. Only then will the Kingdom have arrived which is eternal, whose peace will never end, which cannot be inherited by flesh and blood and for which the entrance requirement is being born again. As Paul informed us, "Then cometh the end [consummation], when he [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. ...And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:24,28).

Endnotes

- 1 *Frontline* (Nov. 1995).
- 2 *The Oregonian* (Feb. 7, 1996), A-3.
- 3 *The Oregonian* (Feb. 4, 1996), A-3.
- 4 Cindy Wooden, "Pope: For Unity, Churches Must Accept Papal Authority" (*Catholic Moment*, Aug. 10, 1995).
- 5 Fred Barnes, "The Orthodox Alliance" (American Enterprise Inst. Public Policy Research, 1995).
- 6 Scott Hahn, interview, "Pittsburgh Talks" (WORD-FM).

Progress in Religion?

Dave Hunt

Ecumenism and compromise are increasingly infecting the highest ranks among evangelicals. A major contributor to that trend is wealthy Wall Street money manager John Marks Templeton. We will quote from two of his books: *Discovering the Laws of Life* (1994) and *The Humble Approach* (1981, revised in 1995), referring to them as *D* and *H*, with the page numbers. Templeton is best known for having established a religion prize of larger monetary value (currently more than \$1 million) than the Nobel Prize. He explains why:

Microbes slowly evolved into worms, fishes, reptiles, and mammals. Humans did not appear until forty thousand years ago....

According to the Jesuit paleontologist and mystic Teilhard de Chardin [known as "the father of the New Age"]...there came first the sphere of mineral evolution, the geosphere; then the sphere of living things, the biosphere; and lastly the sphere of the human mind, the noosphere...[T]he human mind is so potent...that no one knows what may happen next. Evolution is accelerating....

Teilhard called for a new theology...a new, unprecedented religion....Is there evidence that minds are developing into even more miraculous spirits and souls...?

As the religious forms of traditional Judaism and Christianity are losing their powers to inform the contemporary mind, the West desperately needs religious geniuses who can create new imaginal forms....

Theologians...must begin to explore the vast unseen dimensions of our evolving universe....

The next stage of human divine progress on the evolutionary scale needs...geniuses of the spirit, blazing trails for the rest of us to follow. To encourage progress of this kind, we have established the Templeton Foundation Prizes for Progress in Religion.

Templeton has formed a religious research center called the Humility Theology Information Center for the development of "progress in religious thinking" (*H*, 130). Here are some of his comments regarding the *progress in religion* which he hopes will come out of this center:

[N]ew research presently has as its focus the development of...spiritual truth [to be] accepted worldwide regardless of the culture or...religions of any geographical or ethnic area [now, that's ecumenism!]....

I am hoping we can develop a body of

knowledge about God that doesn't rely on ancient revelations or scripture [such as the Bible!]...that is scientific...and is not disputed because of divisions between religions or churches or ancient scripture or liturgy....

The main purpose of the Templeton Foundations is to encourage enthusiasm for accelerating discovery and progress in spiritual matters....(*H*, 135-39)

According to Templeton, the world's scriptures (including the Bible) "were written...[by] men whose minds were limited by cosmologies long since discredited" (*H*, 61). Nor does the Bible accurately record the words of Christ, because those who reported them "could write down only what they understood...[as] ignorant and primitive...Jews." (*H*, 39-40).

On the contrary, Paul affirmed that every

**Thy word is true from the beginning:
and every one of thy righteous
judgments endureth for ever.**

Psalms 119:160

word in the Bible "is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tm 3:16); Peter said of the Bible, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pt 1:21); and the psalmist said, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps 119:89).

To suggest that Christianity is the one true faith and is unchangeable and must be defended as such contradicts what Templeton calls "the humble approach" in religion. In his thinking, only pride would suggest that Christianity alone is true. When people take a "humble attitude, they welcome new ideas about the spirit just as they welcome new scientific ideas...Humility opens the door to the realms of the spirit, and to research and progress in religion" (*H*, 2-3) and "is the key to progress" (*H*, 3) because it prevents the proud delusion that any religion could be totally right:

The truly humble should be so open-minded that they welcome religious views from any place in the universe that is peopled with intelligent life. Seekers following the humble approach...never...reject ideas from other nations, religions, or eras...the humble approach to theology is ongoing and constantly evolving....

In fact, at the heart of true religion is the willingness to see truths in other religions. The Persian scriptures claim, "Whatever road I take joins the highway that leads to Thee....Broad is the carpet God has spread...." (*H*, 35-36, 45)

Christ, too, spoke of the broad road; but

far from commending it, He said it led to "destruction" (Mt 7:13). Contradicting Jesus, who said, "I am the way...no man cometh unto the Father [God], but by me" (Jn 14:6), Templeton says, "No one should say that God can be reached by only one path. Such exclusiveness lacks humility....New, freer, more imaginative and adaptable creeds will have to be devised in order that man's God-given mind and imagination can help to build the kingdom of heaven" (*H*, 46,55). As for Templeton's "heaven,"

[A]stronauts travel[ed] into outer space; and...they did not bring back any evidence of heaven...drills had penetrated the earth, they'd found oil, not hell, in the depths. The definitive descriptions of the afterlife we received as children called for some revision in the light of the scientific discoveries of the modern age....Through our own choices and attitudes we create our own heaven or hell right here on earth (*D*, 208).

The very idea of "progress in religion" denies the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a religion, nor is it subject to progressive development.

Neither does Christianity maintain a friendly, ecumenical relationship with the world's religions, but opposes all of them as devices of Satan. Every true Christian, by the very tenets of his faith, must be uncompromisingly opposed to Templeton's neopagan beliefs and the prize he offers.

Obviously, it would be dishonest for anyone to accept the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion who was not in complete sympathy with its purpose and the beliefs behind it. Wouldn't the reception of the prize by any individual constitute an endorsement of what the prize represents in the mind of its founder? How could any recipient offer ignorance as an excuse when Templeton's neopagan views have been widely published for years?

Campus Crusade for Christ founder Bill Bright is the latest evangelical leader to accept the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. He joins Billy Graham, who received the prize in 1982, and Charles Colson, who received it in 1993. On that occasion Colson declared, "I salute Sir John for establishing this award and doing it in such a generous way...." Bright also joins Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu leaders, together with liberal theologians and atheists, who have received the prize as well. Try to imagine Daniel accepting an ecumenical prize from the sorcerers of Babylon, or Jesus from pagan leaders of His day!

Calling the belief that Christ is the only way to heaven, dogmatism and pride, Templeton declares, "[T]he basic principles

for leading a 'sublime life'...may be derived from any religious tradition, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and others, as well as Christian" (*D*, 6-7). Though he honors all religions, he reserves his loudest praise for two of today's worst anti-Christian cults: Unity School of Christianity and the Church of Religious Science, whose beliefs coincide with his. He commends them for viewing man as "an expanding idea in the mind of God," and for striving for "progress" in religion because, "as mind advances [evolves], the old forms [of religion] die..." (*H*, 60). He writes,

[T]he doctrinal formulations of Christianity have changed and will change from age to age....Christians think God appeared in Jesus of Nazareth two thousand years ago for our salvation and education. But we should not take it to mean that... progress stopped...that Jesus was the end of change....To say that God cannot reveal Himself again in a decisive way [through other Messiahs]...seems sacrilegious....(*H*, 48,53).

In spite of being an evolutionist, pantheist, universalist and occultist who rejects the gospel of Jesus Christ, Templeton is highly regarded and endorsed by leading evangelicals. Though he openly rejects the Bible as the unique Word of God, he served on the Board of Managers of the American Bible Society for fifteen years (*H*, 137) and on the Board of Princeton Theological Seminary (*D*, jacket). Norman Vincent Peale called Templeton "the greatest layman of the Christian Church in our time" (*D*, jacket), an amazing tribute to an anti-Christian!

One of his books (*D*), filled with the rankest anti-Christian and occult theories, was even commended on the back cover of *Christianity Today* (4/24/94), including endorsements by Robert Schuller and Billy Graham. Of that book, *CT* said in large print, "WILL INSPIRE MILLIONS OF READERS." In fact, *D* will send to hell any who believe it. *CT* has not yet apologized for misleading its readers.

Templeton and his neopagan views were first introduced to the church and promoted to evangelicals in 1986 by Robert Schuller, who continues to endorse him. Schuller's *Possibilities* magazine put Templeton's picture on its front cover, and its major article in that issue was an interview with Templeton. In it he expressed his Unity/Religious Science/New Age beliefs: "Your spiritual principles attract prosperity to you...material success...comes ...from being in tune with the infinite....The Christ spirit dwells in

every human being whether the person knows it or not...nothing exists except God." (*Possibilities*, Summer 1986, pp 8-12).

These satanic lies were promoted by Schuller as the truth, deceiving multitudes of readers. Templeton's "God" is clearly not the God of the Bible, but the god of this world who has "blinded the minds of them which believe not [the gospel]" (2 Cor 4:4). Templeton declares,

God is billions of stars in the Milky Way and He is much more....Time and space and energy are all part of God....God is five billion people on Earth....God is untold billions of beings on planets of millions of other stars....God is the only reality....

God is beginning to create His universe and allows each of His children to participate in some small ways in this creative evolution....God is all of you and you are a little part of Him. (*H*, 37-38)

...it was needful for me to write unto you [to] earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude 3

In keeping with his idea of "progress" in religion, Templeton suggests, "Maybe one of the attributes of God is change" (*H*, 52). That is indeed true of his "god," but the God of the Bible declares, "For I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal 3:6). Jesus Christ, who is God the Son, is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb 13:8). His gospel is unchanging, and Templeton or anyone else who preaches any other gospel is "cursed" (Gal 1:6-8). God's unchanging truth condemns Templeton's entire concept of "progress" in religion and the prize he offers.

Colson's office rationalized his acceptance of this prize by stating that he would use the opportunity to present the gospel. Sadly, he did not do so, and for obvious reason. (See TBC, August and November 1993, for a full report on Colson's speeches.) Simple logic and honesty dictates that it would be a double-cross of gigantic proportions and the worst kind of hypocrisy for Graham, Colson or Bright to accept a huge monetary prize from a man who is thereby hoping to promote all religions, and then to use that occasion to declare that Jesus Christ is the only Savior!

The acceptance of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion undeniably constitutes a compromise of that very faith once for all delivered to the saints, which true Christians are commanded to proclaim

unflinchingly and to defend at all cost. Rather than to accept that prize and thereby to encourage Templeton in his error, Graham, Colson and Bright ought to have presented the truth of the gospel to this deluded man in an attempt to rescue him from a Christless eternity. And what of the multitudes who have been led astray by their acceptance of this prize? We can only pray that even at this late date all three will renounce this pagan honor and return the money to Templeton with interest!

We have devoted much space to this subject in order that there be no doubt what Templeton's prize stands for and the implications of accepting it. Here we have a most astonishing example of a compromising denial of the faith at the highest evangelical levels. Such a betrayal would have been unthinkable even a few years ago.

Equally unthinkable was Jerry Falwell's participation as a speaker at a conference last December in Montevideo, Uruguay, sponsored by Sun Myung Moon's Inter Religious Federation for World Peace and Washington Times Foundation, and titled, "Christian Ecumenism in the Americas: Toward One Christian Family Under God." According to Moon's *Unification News*, February 1996, speakers in addition to Moon and Falwell included William Cenkner (Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Catholic University of America), Dr. Nilson de Amaral Fanini (President of the Baptist World Alliance), and Michael Cromartie (Senior Fellow in Protestant Studies and Director of the Evangelical Studies Project at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.). In his speech, Falwell said, "It is my observation and personal conviction that conferences and seminars like this one can be very beneficial for building bridges of communication."

"Bridges of communication"? What does that mean! Christ didn't say, "Go into all the world and build bridges of communication." He commands us to "preach the gospel"! Any lesser "communication" is compromise and a denial of our Lord. Yet evangelicals are increasingly falling into "dialogue" with Catholics and other cultists.

Many other examples could be given of similar compromise on the part of today's evangelical leaders. These should be shocking enough, however, to put us on our faces before the Lord. Let us pray for Christian leaders and for ourselves that we do not fall into the same temptations to please men instead of God and thus have on our hands the blood of those to whom we have denied the gospel.

TBC

Quotable

Truth demands confrontation; loving confrontation, but confrontation nevertheless. If our reflex action is always accommodation regardless of the centrality of the truth involved, there is something wrong. Just as what we may call holiness without love is not God's kind of holiness, so also what we may call love without holiness, is not God's kind of love. God is holy and God is love....[A] false spirit of accommodation is sweeping the world as well as the Church, including those who claim the label of evangelical.

Francis Schaeffer
The Great Evangelical Disaster

Q&A

Question: Please listen to the enclosed audio tape of several Bible Answer Man broadcasts and respond to Hank Hanegraaff's statements that (1) your book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, is pitifully unscholarly and revisionist history; (2) the Roman Catholic Church was the only Christian church in existence prior to the Reformation and therefore if it went into apostasy Christ's promise failed that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church; and (3) it is ludicrous to identify the Roman Catholic Church as the whore in Revelation 17. Could you respond in your newsletter?

Answer: I don't want to have a public quarrel with CRI. However, I have been asked so many times by people such as yourself to respond to such charges by CRI that I feel I must do so at last.

I'm astonished that the book in question could be labeled "unscholarly." Check its more than 800 footnotes for yourself (which I doubt the critics have done) and note that the sources quoted are Roman Catholic councils, catechisms, codes, encyclopedias, their own historians and some respected non-Catholic historians. Then note whether all have been quoted accurately and in context—and reach your own conclusions.

As for it being "ludicrous to identify the Roman Catholic Church as the whore in Revelation 17," that same conviction was held by Martin Luther and all of the

Reformers, plus the countless evangelical Christians martyred by Rome for 1,000 years before the Reformation. So in criticizing me, CRI is heaping ridicule upon the memory of millions of Reformers and martyrs!

Ever since the fourth century there have been multitudes of evangelical Christians who, out of conscience before God and in obedience to His Word, separated themselves from Rome and the papacy. Concerning them, Bishop Alvaro Palayo, an official of the *Curia* in Avignon, wrote grudgingly 300 years before the Reformation, "Considering the Papal Court has filled the whole Church with simony, and the consequent corruption of religion [that sounds like apostasy!], it is natural enough the heretics should call the Church the whore" (*De Planct. Eccl.* ii.28, cited in J. H. Ignaz von Dollinger, *The Pope and the Council* (London 1869), 185). Of course, Rome persecuted and killed these evangelical "heretics." In referring to these martyrs, the great historian, Will Durant, wrote, "The Roman Church, they were sure, was the Whore of Babylon...." (Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (Simon and Schuster, 1950), 4:772). Eimerius, an inquisitor appointed by Pope Innocent III 350 years before the Reformation, said of the Waldensian Christians whom the Catholic Church was attempting to exterminate (their surviving churches are a major evangelical witness in Italy today), "They claim [that] the Roman Church is the whore described in John's Revelation." Even leading Roman Catholics said the same. St. Bonaventure, cardinal and general of the Franciscans, in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, declared 300 years before the Reformation that Rome was "the harlot who makes kings and nations drunk with the wine of her whoredoms [i.e., the whore of Revelation 17]." The Reformers were certain of this and preached it and put it into their creeds. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "I would not hesitate with the Reformers of the 16th century to [say that Roman Catholicism] is, as the Scripture puts it, 'the whore.'" It is rather shocking that CRI has the audacity to label *ludicrous* the firm conviction held almost universally by the evangelical church and its martyrs for fifteen centuries!

Furthermore, CRI's claim is false that "the Roman Catholic Church was the only Christian church in existence prior to the Reformation, and therefore if it went into apostasy Christ's promise that the gates

of hell would not prevail against the church failed." On the contrary, it was not the Roman Catholic Church but those she martyred who were the real church throughout history. Martin Luther himself said, "We are not the first to declare the papacy to be the kingdom of Antichrist, since for many years before us so many and such great men (whose number is large and whose memory is eternal) have undertaken to express the same thing so clearly and plainly" (Plass, *What Luther Says*, 1:36).

If prior to the Reformation, as CRI claims (echoing the Catholic apologists, whom they admire and praise), Roman Catholicism was the true church which Christ founded, then who were the "many and such great men (whose number is large and whose memory is eternal)" to whom Martin Luther referred as having stood against Rome "for many years before" him? And who were those "heretics" and martyrs hundreds of years before the Reformation to whom Will Durant, the Inquisitor Eimerius and Bishop Alvaro Palayo (and others we don't have space to quote) referred? And to take it back even further, to whom did the "Edict of the Emperors Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I" of February 27, 380, refer as the "others" who were obviously non-Catholics? In part the edict said:

We order those who follow this doctrine to receive the title of Catholic Christians, but others we judge to be mad and raving and worthy of incurring the disgrace of heretical teaching, nor are their assemblies to receive the name of churches. They are to be punished not only by Divine retribution but also by our own measures, which we have decided in accordance with Divine inspiration. (Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, *Church and State Through the Centuries: A Collection of historic documents with commentaries* (London, 1954), p. 7).

Clearly, already in A.D.380 there were "assemblies" of Christians who claimed to be "churches" independent of Rome. Indeed, the Albigenses and Waldenses traced their heritage back for many centuries and declared not only that Rome was the whore but that they and other believers independent of Rome were "the true church." E.H. Broadbent calls these Bible-believing Christians *The Pilgrim*

Church in his book of that name:

In the Alpine valleys of Piedmont there had been for centuries [prior to the twelfth century] congregations of believers calling themselves brethren, who came later to be widely known as Waldenses, or Vaudois. ...In the South of France...the congregations of believers who met apart from the Catholic Church were numerous and increasing. They are often called Albigenses [and] had intimate connections with the brethren—whether called Waldenses, Poor Men of Lyons, Bogomils, or otherwise—in the surrounding countries, where [non-Catholic] churches spread among the various peoples.

It took more than 100 years to all but exterminate these believers several centuries before the Reformation. CRI believes and promulgates the false charges of heresy, Manicheism, etc. which the Roman Catholic Church (to justify their slaughter) has leveled against these evangelicals. They were true Christians, and are described as such in Halley's *Bible Handbook* and *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Abraham Mellinus, in his *History of the Persecutions and Martyrs* published in 1619, writes that the Albigenses and Waldenses were sometimes called Catharists and held the same creed and though called heretics were "pious, upright and moral people."

Mellinus tells us that the creed titled "Confession of the Waldenses and Albigenses" was read in the Parliament of the King of France in Paris, was orthodox and contained nothing to support the false charges Rome made against them. Having cited their creed, Mellinus says, "Thus far extends the confession of the faith of the Waldenses and Albigenses...which confession we have placed at the close of the 12th century [400 years before the Reformation] in order to anticipate and refute all the shameful doctrines which have been unjustly imputed, not only to the Waldenses...but particularly also to the Albigenses as though they had been Manicheans."

As for "revisionist history," it is not I but the Roman Catholic Church which has engaged in revision in order to justify its persecution and martyrdom of these evangelical representatives of the true church. Unfortunately, CRI and others who have not done the necessary research have believed Rome and promote its falsehoods.

They owe an apology not to me but to the Reformers and martyrs.

Question: There seems to be an increasing belief among many Christians that the Jews in Israel and most of those around the world today are not real Jews descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but descendants of the Khazars who adopted the Jewish religion. Is this true? And also, didn't most of Israel disappear when the ten tribes were lost, and weren't the rest of the Jews lost through intermarriage?

Answer: No. It is true that the Khaganor ruler of the Khazars adopted Judaism for himself and his people in the eighth century, but these "Jews" by conversion were never confused with the ethnic Jews living among them. Furthermore, when the Khazar state was overthrown in 965, the Khazars fled and soon disappeared as a people through intermarriage. The last vestiges of the Khazars in the Crimea were wiped out in about 1016 by the Greeks and Russians. There is no evidence that the Khazars intermarried with the Jews to such an extent that Jews were lost as a people. Such a theory is unreasonable because only a small fraction of world Jewry was living among the Khazars.

It is the Khazars who disappeared, and to suggest that all of the Jews all over the world were somehow absorbed by them or that they became known as Jews is neither logical nor supported by history. It is a myth that the Ashkenazim Jews of Russia and Europe are not real Jews but Khazars who migrated there when their country was overrun by invaders.

As for the so-called "ten lost tribes," that is another myth. They were not lost. We dealt with this question in the November 1992 newsletter. Both of these ideas are a form of anti-Semitism. Rather than putting the Jews in the ovens, they are exterminated by simply denying that those known as Jews are the descendants of Jacob.

No historic research is needed to recognize that all theories are false which deny that the Jews in Israel and around the world are real Jews from all twelve tribes. The Bible promises that Israel shall not cease from being a nation forever (Jer 31:35-36) and that Israel's scattered survivors will return to their promised land where the Messiah will reign over His chosen people from the throne of His father David. We

have the choice of believing the promises in God's Word or these anti-Semitic theories.

Question: 1 Corinthians 5:11 says, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer or a drunkard or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." Since Catholics are idolaters, where should a line be drawn in our social, familial, and work relationships with them? I frankly believe (and I was a strong Catholic until three years ago) that we have become far too "chummy" with Catholics. Or am I just going overboard in my new zeal?

Answer: The many Roman Catholics who become Christians find it necessary for conscience' sake to leave that church very shortly thereafter, as you apparently did. Thus Catholics encountered as neighbors or at work are in the same category as Mormons, Buddhists or atheists as far as your relationship with them goes. No more with a Catholic than with an atheist should you join in a business partnership or marry or otherwise enter into any relationship that could be categorized as being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Such alliances are forbidden (2 Cor 6:14-18).

Friendship, however, that stops short of being "unequally yoked together" is encouraged in Scripture. We should show God's love and compassion and concern for all with whom we come into contact, even those who hate us and make themselves our enemies. God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5:44-48). Jesus was "a friend of publicans and sinners" (Mt 11:19; Mk 2:15) and even ate in their homes (Lk 7:36, 14:15; Mt 9:10). Friendship may assist in winning some to Christ.

The prohibition against eating with fornicators, idolaters, drunkards, etc. is limited to anyone who "is called a brother [or sister]," i.e., one who has been part of the local fellowship of believers and has been recognized as a Christian by those outside the church. The reason is twofold: to bring about repentance on his or her part, and also to let the world know that such behavior is not tolerated by the church.

In Defense of the Faith

Dave Hunt

Imagine trying to crowd...the tremendous story of the Man of Calvary, if fiction, into a place in history already fully occupied with real and...inseparably linked happenings....

Irwin H. Linton
A Lawyer Examines the Bible

Jane Fonda was at the height of her popularity when she told an enthusiastically approving audience at Michigan State University on November 22, 1969, "I would think that if you understood what communism is, you would hope, you would pray on your knees that we would someday become communists." Of course, communists don't pray, and have imprisoned or shot those who do.

The Fondas and Ted Turners (along with millions of high school and university teachers, movie writers and directors, entertainers, news commentators, etc.) continue to popularize rebellion against God. Even many so-called biblical scholars support an atheistic view of the Bible. This last Easter the media was filled with scholarly speculation about the "historical Jesus"—speculation denying the basic tenets of Christianity. Tragically, most evangelical churches fail to arm their members against the onslaught of unbelief which they meet at every turn.

How many evangelicals (especially the youth) can convincingly debate and refute atheists, cultists, occultists and liberal theologians? The "faith" of all too many rests in their church or denomination rather than solely in God and His Word. The communist revolution worldwide grew in large part out of resentment against a "Christianity" based upon authoritarianism rather than truth.

Marx was once a professing Christian who turned to atheism. Claiming to be "scientific materialism," communism insisted that nothing existed except the physical world. Like Freud, Lenin believed man was a stimulus-response mechanism without spirit or soul. Behavior was learned from experience and could therefore be reprogrammed through "brainwashing," which psychologists deceptively call "behavior modification" to seduce a vulnerable public.

As a stimulus-response mechanism, man touches something hot or cold and learns

of "hot" and "cold." He is hit by something hard and learns about "hard." All man and his science can know is by stimulus from the physical world. Lenin's theory could be proved by challenging doubters to visualize a new prime color for the rainbow. No one could. Thus nothing could be conceived of that didn't exist, and the material universe was all there was.

There was one embarrassing flaw in the theory: the foolish fantasy about God. Where did that come from? Those despicable clergy invented "God" to deceive the masses. Communism would destroy this opiate of the people! But where did the clergy get this idea if no one can think of anything that doesn't exist? What "stimulus" caused this "God-response"? By Lenin's own theory, God had to exist or no one could ever have

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth....God created man in his own image....

Genesis 1:1,27

dreamed up the idea. Indeed!

No wonder the Bible doesn't waste its time "proving" God's existence. It starts out, "In the beginning, God created," and bluntly declares, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps 14:1;53:1). Nobelist Linus Pauling acknowledged, "A single living cell is more complex than New York City." Who then could believe that the unfathomable mystery of life and the incredible complexity of living cells, let alone intelligence and personality, could happen by chance? Yet in public schools this lunacy is official dogma, to which no challenge is allowed!

Atheistic humanism was declared to be a religion in a 1961 U.S. Supreme Court decision (*Torcaso v. Watkins*). It is the official state religion of the United States just as in communist countries, in spite of the Constitutional prohibition against the state supporting any religion. Humanism is forced upon students in public schools, while Christianity has been banned. It is tragic how many "Christian" youth, being unprepared, succumb to this official *brainwashing* and "lose their faith" in high school or university.

The Bible's claim to be the Word of God is supported by a vast body of evidence so irrefutable that no one has any excuse for doubting. The major proof which the Bible offers is the fulfillment of hundreds of

specific prophecies. We have covered some of these in past newsletters and books so won't repeat them now. Let us consider three clear prophecies which are generally overlooked.

God's declaration that Israel would be without a king, priesthood or sacrifices (Hos 3:4) remains true today. Yet God also said that Israel would keep the passover as "a feast by an ordinance for ever" (Ex 12:14); and Jews, in spite of their unbelief, have done so continuously for 3,500 years. Similar claims made by pagan religions have failed. The sacred fires tended by the Vestal Virgins in the temple of the goddess Vesta in Rome, and the sacred Zoroastrian fires of Persia, were never to go out. They burn no longer, but the passover remains.

Scripture says that the commemoration of Christ's death, burial and resurrection will not cease until His return (1 Cor 11:26); and Christians to this day keep this remembrance with the bread and wine as He commanded. Furthermore, the unbroken continuance of the passover and Lord's Supper offers a unique proof of the validity of the Bible. More than 100 years ago a Christian apologist named Leslie identified certain criteria

which, if met by *any* event recorded in writing, establish it as truly historical: 1) that the original event be visibly witnessed by many and be widely reported at the time; 2) that a commemoration start from the very beginning and continue publicly; and 3) that this commemorative act be performed continuously from that time to the present. Christianity meets all three.

The Gospels, Acts and most of the Epistles were written while multitudes were still alive who would have disproved any account that deviated from the facts as they knew them. Imagine attempting, in the small country of Israel and so soon after the supposed events, to publish a fictitious account of alleged miracles, naming persons and places. Multitudes of people who were still alive from those days and from those regions would have rejected such tales as lies.

Remember, Christianity began in Jerusalem. It was based upon the claim that this Jesus, who was hailed by multitudes as the Christ and whose miracles were spoken of all over Israel and whom the Romans had crucified, had risen from the dead the third day. The very fact that 3,000 converted on the day of Pentecost in the heart of Jerusalem, and that thousands more continued day after day to join this "new faith," is indisputable evidence that these events really happened. The opposition

did not deny the facts. Christianity was opposed only because it contradicted the authority and teachings of the rabbis.

Christianity was not a religious movement based upon ideology but upon *events* which had to have actually happened. The claims could not have been presented right there in Jerusalem and throughout Judea (that Jesus of Nazareth had healed the sick, opened blind eyes, raised the dead and Himself resurrected, leaving behind an empty tomb) unless the events had verifiably occurred. For that reason Jesus told His disciples to begin their preaching in Jerusalem, to establish the church there first of all.

That short walk outside the city wall to verify that the tomb which all Jerusalem well knew had been guarded by Roman soldiers was indeed empty must have been taken by many skeptics. The word quickly spread in confirmation of this greatest of miracles; it had put God's stamp of approval upon the claims of Jesus Christ.

Paul appealed to the knowledge of the facts possessed by the Roman officials whom he faced. Felix, the governor, had "more perfect knowledge of that way" (Acts 24:22). Far from seeing anything contrary to the truth in Paul's testimony, "Felix trembled" as Paul reasoned with him (v 25). And to King Agrippa, Paul declared,

For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. (Acts 26:26)

The last two criteria Leslie prescribes prevent the fabrication of a fictitious story years after the supposed date of the alleged event. Mark Hopkins (President Garfield's ideal university was a log with a student on one end and Hopkins on the other) applied this logic to the founding of Christianity:

For any man to have invented the New Testament after the time of Christ, and to have attempted to cause it to be received, would have been as if a man had written an account of the Revolution, and of the celebration of this day [July 4, 1776]...when [in fact] no revolution was ever heard of, and no one had ever celebrated the Fourth of July. Nor, when such a festival was once established, would it be possible to introduce any account of its origin essentially different from the true one.

But the case of...Christian[ity] is even stronger; because we have several different institutions which must have

sprung up at its origin; because baptism and the Lord's Supper have occurred so much more frequently; and because the latter has always been considered the chief rite of a religion to which men have been more attached than to liberty or to life.

There is no refuting these arguments, which secular historical evidence also supports. There is overwhelming corroboration of the New Testament in the non-Christian writings of that period, including even those of Christianity's enemies. Hopkins reminds us,

The Talmud [compilation of oral rabbinic tradition dating to about A.D.200]...speaks of Christ, and of several of the disciples, by name...of His crucifixion...that He performed many and great miracles....

[Flavius] Josephus [Jewish historian c. A.D. 37-100] lived at the time many of

If any man preach any other gospel...let him be accursed....I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Galatians 1:9, Philipians 1:17

these events...happened and was present at the destruction of Jerusalem...[and] he confirms the accuracy of...all that is said [in the New Testament]...of Pharisees, and Sadducees, and Herodians...[and of Christ's death and resurrection].

Tacitus [Roman historian and proconsul of Asia, c. A.D.55-117] tells us that Christ was put to death by Pontius Pilate...under Tiberius, as a malefactor; that the people called Christians derived their name from him; that this superstition arose in Judea, and spread to Rome, where...only about thirty years after the death of Christ, the Christians were very numerous...[and] that the Christians were subjected to contempt and the most dreadful sufferings...some were crucified; while others, being daubed over with combustible materials, were set up as lights in the night-time, and were thus burnt to death. This account is confirmed by Suetonius, and by Martial and Juvenal....

Pliny [the younger] was propraetor of Pontus and Bithynia [A.D.112]....Many [Christians] were brought before him for their faith in Christ...[and] he condemned them to death....

How strong must have been that primitive evidence for Christianity which could induce persons of good sense, in every walk of life, to abandon the religion of their ancestors, and thus, in the face of imperial power, to persist in their adherence to one who had suffered the death of a slave!

We might also refer to Celsus, and Lucian, and Epictetus, and the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, and Porphyry—who all throw light on the early history of Christianity, and all confirm, so far as they go, the accounts in [the New Testament]...as do coins, medals, inscriptions.

One becomes a bit weary of the propaganda which is taught in universities and even in many seminaries and promoted in books and the media by "experts" who declare with an air of indisputable authority that the New Testament wasn't written until centuries later and that no writers of the time confirm it. The account Josephus gives of Christ's death and resurrection, even calling Him "the Christ," has been attacked unsuccessfully by modern skeptics. Far from being refuted by his contemporaries, Josephus was honored with Roman citizenship, a statue was erected to his memory and his writings were admitted into the Imperial Library in Rome.

Fanatics have always been willing to die out of loyalty even to a secular leader or political ideology or in hope of attaining paradise thereby (the case with Muslim suicide bombers today). Even Ingersoll, however, the famous nineteenth-century atheist, admitted that no sane man would die for a lie. Yet the apostles and early Christian martyrs died testifying to *facts* (the miracles, resurrection, etc.) when they could have saved their lives by denying them.

Miracles? Hasn't science proved that miracles cannot occur? On the contrary, science can only deal with *natural* phenomena; and miracles, by very definition, are *supernatural*. In fact, miracles are *inevitable* if God is to interfere at all in the downward course of human affairs and of nature. Whenever God reaches in from outside to effect anything that is not according to the normal course of events (such as the Incarnation, salvation or raising the dead), it is a miracle.

Christianity isn't embarrassed by the recital of miracles in the Bible. On the contrary, Christianity (unlike Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, et al.) *requires* miracles and is based upon the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of Christ. Next to that, feeding the multitude or healing the sick or even walking on water follow easily.

The Resurrection is the very heart of Christianity. Yet according to the latest Barna poll, 30 percent of those who call themselves "born-again Christians" do not believe in the physical resurrection of Christ. Obviously, they lack the essential conviction that the Resurrection is a proven fact. Without that

conviction, one is not a Christian!

The arguments above are a small sample from my latest book, *In Defense of the Faith: Biblical Answers to Challenging Questions*, just coming off the press. Some readers may object that no further proof of Christianity is needed than the witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who personally know Christ as Savior and Lord. But what about those who do not know Him?

The Bible teaches that faith must be founded upon fact, not upon feelings, intuition or emotion—much less upon blind submission to some religious authority. Paul wrote, “Prove all things” (1 Thes 5:21). God himself says, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Is 1:18) and has provided abundant factual evidence in the universe around us and in His Word. Jesus, after His resurrection, “shewed himself alive...by many *infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3). Surely, then, we must be prepared to use the God-given evidence in answering the honest questions of sincere seekers. Let us meet the challenge of unbelief both within and without today’s church! **TBC**

Quotable

The Bible is not such a book a man would write if he could, or could write if he would.

Lewis S. Chafer

Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. ...When the French monarch proposed the persecution of the Christians...an old statesman and warrior said to him, “Sire, the Church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.” So the hammers of infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures. If this book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago.

H. L. Hastings cited in John W. Lea, *The Greatest Book in the World*, pp. 17-18.

Q&A

Question: I have enjoyed your books and also your column in *The Berean Call*. There is a phrase, however, that you use

regularly that I feel is not exactly a proper use. The phrase is “Christian psychology” or “Christian psychologist.” I am not splitting hairs. I think this is theologically and biblically incorrect. If you can have a Christian psychologist, why can’t there be a Christian prostitute? Or, why not a Christian automobile? There can possibly be a psychologist who is a Christian, but using the phrase “Christian psychologist” gives biblical support or acceptance to psychology, does it not? Without being dogmatic, I ask you to consider this carefully.

Answer: I have so often said that there can no more be a “Christian psychologist” than a “Christian Hindu,” that I am surprised that you would now suggest that I believe the contrary! Which only shows how careful we must be with not only what we say but exactly how we say it. Usually I put quotation marks around the phrases “Christian psychology” or “Christian psychologist” to show that they are misnomers. However, editors like to keep quotation marks to a minimum. So I may have acquiesced and allowed the quotation marks to be dropped in some cases. Also, I may have used these phrases because they are so well accepted today and expected that what I said about psychology would make it clear that I was not giving them any legitimacy. Thank you for reminding me to be more careful both with what I say and how I say it.

Question: Suddenly there seems to be a new fad: angel worship. Many books are being written about this growing fascination with angels, telling how to have a guardian angel, how to see and speak with angels and how even to command angels to help or do one’s bidding. Could you address this topic?

Answer: While the fad has caught on only recently in the world and church at large, various leaders in the charismatic and positive-confession movements have been teaching how to command angels to do one’s bidding for many years. Angels are mentioned nearly 300 times in the Bible but never in the way they are promoted in these false teachings.

In every instance when we are given insight into the work of angels it is very clear that they are exclusively under God’s command and not subject to man’s direction, desires or prayers. The Bible gives numerous examples of angels intervening in human affairs. However, it is

always because God has sent them to accomplish a specific task or purpose.

Not once in the Bible is there any example of a man or woman praying to or calling upon for help, much less commanding, an angel. Nor is there even one example of anyone praying to God to send him an angel for assistance.

The expression “the angel of the Lord” is found nearly 70 times and has been the object of considerable speculation and disagreement. Some believe that this refers to Christ in pre-incarnation appearances, because at times the “angel of the Lord” speaks as though he were God himself (Jgs 2:1; 13:17-18; Zec 12:8, etc.) However, that belief hardly fits with the fact that “the angel of the Lord” is active after Christ is born into the world, warning Joseph to take the child Jesus into Egypt (Mt 2:13), rolling away the stone from Christ’s tomb (Mt 28:2), transporting Philip (Acts 8), delivering Peter from prison (Acts 12), etc.

Angels are God’s “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). They are “sent forth” *by God*, not called down to earth by man. Therefore, we are not to concern ourselves with angels. As for the books being written about angels, which are obsessing people with this subject, let us heed Paul’s advice: “Let no man beguile you...[into] worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Col 2:18).

Question: Paul wrote that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor 14:32). Wouldn’t that mean that a prophet can prophesy at will? And if so, wouldn’t that substantiate the belief that those who have received this gift can speak in tongues at will?

Answer: No. It is the “spirits of the prophets,” not the Spirit of God, that is subject to the prophets. Thus a prophet could *prevent* himself from prophesying but could not *initiate* genuine prophecy. In stating restrictions upon the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church, Paul makes this statement to let the Corinthian believers know that the Holy Spirit does not force Himself upon anyone. Only the flesh or the devil, not the Holy Spirit, will cause disorder. No one can say, “But I *had* to prophesy or speak in tongues, I couldn’t resist the Spirit.” No, each person is able to obey the guidelines Paul sets forth. One of the clearest indications that so much of today’s alleged

“exercise of the gifts” is not of God is the disregard for these biblical injunctions, leading to the very fleshly and/or demonic manifestations which Paul sought to prevent.

Paul is *not* saying that a prophet is able to prophesy any time he so desires. Not even Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel or any of the other prophets could do so. For example, when Jeremiah desired to prophesy to the people he had to wait upon God: “And it came to pass *after ten days*, that the word of the LORD *came* unto Jeremiah” (Jer 42:7). Clearly, prophecy comes only by the empowerment and direction of God, not by the whim of man as some of today’s enthusiasts would have us believe. Nor can the gift of prophecy be taught and learned in a seminar as John Wimber has led people to believe for years. Peter declared, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pt 1:21). No one can initiate, mandate or activate the moving of the Holy Spirit!

Nor is there any distinction in this regard among the various *charismata*. Whatever the “gift of the Spirit,” it is given in specific instances to effect God’s purpose *at that time*; it does not become a power possessed by an individual which he can wield at his discretion. If someone lays hands upon a sick person, prays, and the person is instantly healed (an experience I have had on a few occasions both for myself and others), that was a manifestation of the “gifts of healing” according to God’s will. The person who prayed was the instrument God used at that time, but he does not now possess the gifts of healing so that he can heal anyone whenever he pleases. To imagine that to be the case is one of the basic errors in the charismatic movement. Consider those who imagine they have “a healing ministry” trying mightily on TV or elsewhere to manifest what they imagine is a gift they *possess*—and falling into error and bringing reproach upon the Lord as a result.

If the great prophets in the Bible had to wait until God in His own time and way and for His own purpose gave them a word, then it is a delusion for anyone today to imagine that he *possesses* any gift of the Spirit and can exercise it whenever he so desires—and that includes tongues.

To imagine that a “prayer language” can be “practiced” any time one desires is the great error of what is rightly (because of the obsession with that one

gift) called by its critics “the tongues movement.” There is no indication that “tongues” are in a category by themselves, but, like all spiritual gifts, if genuine, they can only be a “manifestation of the Spirit” (1 Cor 12:7) operating “as he will” (v 11). Beware, then, of any “tongue” or “prophecy” or other “gift” that is initiated or possessed by the human spirit!

We must thank God for any healing, miracle or tongue that is a genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Very clearly, however, those are in grievous error who promise a “miracle service” at a particular time in a church or on TV and purport to do “miracles,” or give seminars to teach how to do “signs and wonders,” or claim one can speak in tongues whenever one desires to do so. Whatever purports to be the manifestation of a “gift of the Spirit” and is not initiated by Him, but comes by the will of man, is not of God.

We do well to heed God’s warning through Jeremiah: “The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart” (Jer 14:14). Tragically, this indictment stands against all too many of those who claim to manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit today.

Question: In your response you overlooked what I think is CRI’s most legitimate objection to your thesis that the whore in Revelation 17 is the world church headquartered at the Vatican. That the whore is a city set on seven hills would eliminate the Vatican because it sits on one hill, not seven. And that hill, Vatican Hill, isn’t even one of the seven upon which Rome is built. In fact, all seven are on the other side of the Tiber from the Vatican. Are you ignoring these facts to promote, as CRI says, your own agenda?

Answer: Let’s look at the facts. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* states, “It is within the city of Rome, called the city of seven hills, that the entire area of Vatican State proper is now confined.” That confinement came about fairly recently. Almost 800 years ago, Pope Innocent III abolished the Roman Senate and placed the administration of Rome directly under his oppressive control and that of his successor popes. Even before that time, the popes had for many centuries ruled as despotic kings over the entire city of Rome and its surrounding area,

as well as over large territories across Italy, known as the papal states. It wasn’t until 1870 that Rome and the other Vatican-controlled territories were finally captured by the army of the newly united Italy. The Jews were liberated at last from Rome’s shameful ghetto and Pope Pius IX took refuge in Vatican City, which has been the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church ever since.

Nevertheless, that Church’s property and influence are not confined to Vatican City even today but extend throughout all of Rome. The Vatican owns about one-third of Rome and its influence is everywhere, through its monuments, churches and other institutions scattered throughout the entire city of seven hills. That Church proudly identifies itself as the *Roman Catholic Church*. A recent article in the *National Catholic Reporter* was titled, “Rome, where the pontiff is supreme”! It declared, “No city comes close to being so suffused with religious culture as Rome is with Catholicism. What has emerged over the centuries is unmistakably a culture of the papacy.” The article went on to refer to the monuments to Roman Catholicism found everywhere in Rome and stated that “All roads lead, sooner or later, down the via della Concilione to the Vatican....Rome is...the world’s spiritual crossroads.”

Our Sunday Visitor’s Catholic Encyclopedia adds, “...hence, one understands the central place of Rome in the life of the Church today and the significance of the title, Roman Catholic Church....Since the founding of the Church there...Rome has been the center of all Christendom.” So Roman Catholicism itself claims that the *city of Rome, because of its relationship to that Church, is the world’s spiritual crossroads...center of all Christendom!* No other city on earth claims such spiritual leadership.

At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church (and the city it occupies and with which it is identified), in violation of its claimed relationship to Christ, has been in bed with earth’s rulers in unholy alliances throughout history, qualifying it uniquely as the “whore.” No other city on earth could qualify. By its own admission, the Roman Catholic Church continues to this day, as it has throughout history, to dominate the city of seven hills. For a full treatment of the identity of the whore, see *A Woman Rides the Beast* or the audio tape set, “The Kingdom of Blood.”

The Hope of the Gospel

Dave Hunt

If ye continue in the faith...and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...which was preached to every creature...; whereof I Paul am made a minister....

Colossians 1:23

A reader writes, "Apostasy is surely gaining momentum. This is why we find it so difficult to believe in 'once saved, always saved.'" Surely a true Christian could be deceived—or the person may never have been saved. Which of these alternatives is true, only God knows: "the Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tm 2:19). We cannot judge hearts.

Yet we must judge words, doctrines and deeds: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses *contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*; and avoid them" (Rom 16:17); "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Tm 5:20); "If there come any unto you, and bring not *this doctrine* [of Christ], receive him not..." (2 Jn 1:10); "I will remember his *deeds...[and] malicious words*" (3 Jn 1:10). Such mandatory correction in the church requires us to judge words, doctrines and deeds.

We take that responsibility seriously. In our January "Q&A" we revealed the gross heresies in *The Gospel According to Judas*. Some of our readers (as we encourage them to do) wrote to the publisher, NavPress, which acknowledged that "to publish the book was a mistake," and withdrew the book and destroyed all stock. Still unexplained is how a trusted evangelical publisher could print, and leading evangelicals endorse, a book that so flagrantly perverted the gospel! We wait to see what NavPress will do to notify those who had purchased the book, what public repentance there will be by the author (a pastor!), and what discipline will be imposed by Fuller Theological Seminary, where he teaches.

Judas is not the only heresy NavPress has turned out lately, and it is still in supposed evangelical hands. The situation is even worse with the many major evangelical publishers which have been taken over by secular corporations attracted by the profit potential of Christian publishing. Truth, sound doctrine and evangelism, once paramount, are now hostages to a return on investment. Even worse is the Christian music business. The secular media is scathing in its rebuke of the \$3 billion a year

Christian book and music market, "where God and mammon mingle on easy and familiar terms":

[T]he immutable Word of God has been re-formatted for the neurotic Nineties.... Every major Christian record label is now owned by a secular media conglomerate such as Warner Brothers, Sony, or EMI.¹

Many churches are little better. The passion for popularity and growth can be as corrupting and compromising as the desire for profit. *Newsweek* declared insightfully:

"The aim...is to lure baby boomers back to church by welcoming all comers regardless of their beliefs...mainline denominations may be dying because they lost their theological integrity. The only thing worse, perhaps, would be the rise of a new Protestant establishment that succeeds because it never had any."²

The [Holy] Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God...

Romans 8:16

Ronald Potter, a black theology professor, writes, "Too many black Christians are suffering from 'theological and biblical illiteracy' because their churches emphasize emotion more than doctrine, leaving them vulnerable to the ideas of Farrakhan....Some black ministers practice a 'new radicalism,' placing racial loyalty above 'seeking and telling the truth.'"³ A secular columnist with no love for Christianity writes derisively,

Here are the exact words said to me by the senior minister of a Presbyterian Church of 1,500 members. "Just play the game...just say the sweet things they want to hear, don't upset anyone with biblical and religious scholarship. Look at this beautiful church building I've got, plus all the perks, free golf and country club memberships, big salary."

I said to him, "Jack, you're pathetic, you're a wimp. You're the problem."⁴

Salvation is "not by works of righteousness" (Ti 3:5). Thus a man's works are not always proof of whether he is saved. An unsaved Gandhi can perform seemingly good works, while a genuine Christian (such as the man in Corinth who had his father's wife) may stoop to unspeakable evil—but a true Christian will repent and be corrected. The truly saved are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph 2:10), and Christlikeness should characterize their lives. Yet it is possible for a true

Christian not to have one good work to be rewarded in eternity: "Every man's work...shall be revealed by fire; and the fire [at the Judgment Seat of Christ] shall try [test] every man's work of what sort it is....If any man's work shall be burned [consumed], he shall suffer loss [of reward]; but he himself shall be saved" (1 Cor 3:12-15).

In all of Paul's corrective epistles he never accused those whom he reproved of having lost their salvation. He did say to the Galatians, "I stand in doubt of you" (Gal 4:20). That doubt, however, arose because of their *improper beliefs*, not because of their *lack of works*. In fact, it was their reliance for salvation upon works (keeping the law) *in addition to faith in Christ* which caused Paul to question whether they were saved.

Christ died to save sinners, the Apostles gave their lives to preach the gospel, and martyrs by the millions died to keep that message pure. Today even the Church mocks the truth in the name of Christ! Representatives of the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, American Baptist, United Church of Christ, United Methodist and Presbyterian churches have *apologized for giving the gospel* to the American Indians: "Dear Brothers and Sisters: This is a formal apology...for the destruction of traditional Native American spiritual practices. We ask for your forgiveness and blessings. The spiritual power of your religion could have been a great gift to us." The United Church of Canada groveled, "Our Christian image of God is twisted and blurred. We were closed to the beauty of your spirituality. Please forgive us."⁵

Imagine Christ apologizing for dying for the sins of the world and being the only Savior; or Paul apologizing to Jews, Greeks and Romans for winning them to Christ! Behold the shameful spectacle of "Christian" leaders who so easily abandon the gospel yet refuse to back down from imposing their perverted passions upon the native world! Even the secular press rebukes such hypocrisy:

Lock up your sons, Zimbabwe. The World Council of Churches is coming to town. Its officials have secured agreement that homosexuals attending its assembly in Harare in 1998 will be allowed to indulge their desires without fear of prosecution. Homosexual acts are banned in the African nation, and punishable by 12 months in prison....Few issues could be better calculated to enrage council delegates, for whom sodomy, which, in traditional Christian teaching is a sin "which cries to Heaven for vengeance," is seen as a God-given right. Fearing that the assembly might take itself and its hard currency elsewhere, Zimbabwe has agreed to a memorandum of

understanding relaxing the law....

[T]he council would almost certainly, in other circumstances, disapprove of the "cultural imperialism" of a demand that a Third World country change its laws to suit outsiders. Couldn't these licentious clergymen...after a hard day's debate on poverty...practise a bit of chastity in the evenings?⁶

Immortality inevitably follows the compromise of biblical truth, the despising of sound doctrine and the rejection of the gospel that characterize denominations belonging to the World Council of Churches. Among WCC members is the largest Lutheran group in the United States, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), which unashamedly retains "evangelical" in its name. David W. Cloud tells of attending the installation service for an ELCA bishop presided over by ELCA head bishop Herbert Chilstrom. Cloud says that Chilstrom "spoke on environmentalism and pacifism" and addressed the Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Jewish rabbis present as "part of Christ through baptism...[and] told how he gladly blessed a rosary...[but] nowhere in his message did he speak of the cross, the blood or the atonement of Jesus Christ...[but] a false gospel of church sacraments and universalism...which will lead those who follow it to eternal Hell." Cloud continues:

The entire experience was very sad and grievous to my spirit as I observed the pageantry, the solemnity, the appearance of piety which had been put on before the service just as a woman puts on her makeup....Not a hair was out of place, nor a voice off key in the two choirs, and the massive pipe organ gave forth just the desired sounds...[but all] was contrary to the Word of God....

Our Lord warns that many who claim to have prophesied, cast out demons and worked miracles in His name will not be in heaven. He does not, however, tell them that they have lost their salvation but that they were *never* His: "I *never* knew you" (Mt 7:23)! Solemn words from the One who said, "I...know my sheep, and am known of mine" (Jn 10:14)! If Christ never knew these "Christian leaders," then they were never Christians at all! Clearly, one's salvation has nothing to do with works, no matter how great or good, but whether one *believes the gospel*.

Salvation is "by faith" (Eph 2:8; 1 Pt 1:5; 1 Jn 5:13; Rom 1:16). Hence the importance of *doctrine* and John's clear declaration that whosoever "abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (2 Jn 1:9). Paul said, "*Believe* on [rely upon] the Lord Jesus Christ [who He is and what He has done for our

salvation], and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Christ said, "He that *believeth on me* hath everlasting life" (Jn 6:47) and "shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (Jn 5:24). Those who lack assurance have not believed Christ.

Well, then, if one is absolutely certain that the moment he dies his soul and spirit will be "absent from the body,...present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8), why is the word "hope" used? "Hope" is not always uncertain. Even dictionaries also define hope as "confidence in a future event; the highest degree of well-founded expectation." Paul explains: "But if we hope for that we see not [i.e., which is future], then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom 8:24,25); the "hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Ti 1:2). Nothing could be more certain.

For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able....

2 Timothy 1:12

God's promise is declared to be *immutable*; that is, unchangeable. God has even *confirmed His promise by an oath*, swearing by Himself on His own honor. Thus the believer's "hope of salvation," far from being uncertain, is "an anchor of the soul." Consider carefully, and *believe*, the absolute certainty of God's promise:

God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon *the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast* (Heb 6:17-20).

Those Protestants who deny the doctrine of eternal security, which they disparagingly label "once saved, always saved," are unwittingly clinging to a major Roman Catholic dogma that subverted the Reformation. No Catholic can be certain that he is eternally saved. That is why prayers are offered and masses performed for the dead. However, even confession to a priest for absolution and indulgences offered by the Church are losing their appeal because after being forgiven, a subsequent mortal sin (such as failure to attend mass weekly) nullifies all past forgiveness and leaves one dangling over the

flames of hell once again.

Cardinal Krol, former spiritual leader of Philadelphia's more than a million Roman Catholics, told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that his major worries were "My salvation, getting to heaven."⁷ The Vatican's highest theological authority, Cardinal Ratzinger, expresses the same concern for his salvation. New York's Cardinal O'Connor told *The New York Times*, "Church teaching is that I don't know, at any given moment, what my eternal future will be. I can hope, pray, do my very best—but I still don't know. Pope John Paul II doesn't know absolutely that he will go to heaven, nor does Mother Teresa of Calcutta...."⁸ The latter expressed her tenuous hope at the 1993 Presidential Prayer breakfast:

One of the most demanding things for me is traveling everywhere—and with publicity. I have said to Jesus that if I don't go to heaven for anything else, I will be going to heaven for all the traveling with all the publicity, because it has purified me and sacrificed me and made me really ready to go to heaven.⁹

A medical doctor and lifelong Catholic wrote to Cardinal O'Connor and contrasted his statement of uncertainty about heaven with the absolute assurance the Bible offers to all who will "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31). Said the doctor, "After showing O'Connor's published article and my letter to our parish priest, I was relieved of [teaching] my sixth-grade CCD [religion] class....Once you discover the clear message of the Bible...[it] become[s] a barrier to remaining a Catholic."¹⁰

Anyone, whether Protestant or Catholic, who places his hope for salvation in anything (such as his ability to remain faithful to Christ, good works, sacraments, prayers, or ritual) *in addition* to Christ's sacrifice of Himself for our sins upon the cross, has not believed Christ's promise. He has rejected God's Word and has denied the gospel. How could anyone who truly understands doubt Christ's ability to save?

Here are only a few biblical promises: "These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that ye may *know* [present absolute certainty] that ye *have* [present possession] eternal life" (1 Jn 5:13); "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn 3:36); "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (Jn 10:27-28). Let us believe His promises, receive His gracious gift, and rejoice in His assurance. **TBC**

Quotable

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand.

•••

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
This is my story, this is my song;
Praising my Savior all the day long.

•••

O love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul on Thee!

Selected lines representative of the emphasis upon biblical assurance found in so many older hymns

Q&A

Question: The Toronto Vineyard church, which was the center of the laughing revival, has been removed by John Wimber from the Fellowship of Vineyard Churches. Is that not a good sign that Wimber is maturing and rejecting some of the excesses that he once embraced?

Answer: Wimber wrote the foreword to the book on holy laughter by Jon Arnott, head pastor of the now disfellowshipped Toronto Vineyard, and he is not in opposition to any of the phenomena. His objection, which caused the breach, was to Arnott's [Toronto's] insistence upon providing biblical justification and explanation of animal noises and other manifestations for which no clear correspondence in Scripture can be found.

Vineyard churches continue their involvement in "holy laughter," for example, the St. Louis Vineyard Christian Fellowship. Its pastor, Randy Clark, is the one who brought the laughing revival

to Toronto. Clark "got it" from Rodney Howard-Browne at Kenneth Hagin, Jr.'s Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa and continues to promote it worldwide. Moreover, Clark was attracted to Howard-Browne because "people shaking, falling, laughing" reminded him of what he had seen "years earlier in the Vineyard revivals." Scheduled to be a featured speaker at the 25th International Lutheran Conference on the Holy Spirit at St. Paul, MN, August 6-10, Clark is described in the conference brochure as the one who "was used of God as the catalyst for the outbreak of the Spirit in Toronto...."

Remember, Promise Keepers is a Vineyard movement. I suspect (but can't prove) that this removal was necessitated by the fact that the adverse publicity directed to the Toronto Vineyard endangered PK's reputation.

Question: Though I've read your excellent discussions on eternal security, I still need understanding of the following Scriptures: Romans 11:21,22, "...if thou continue in His goodness" sounds conditional; Colossians 1:22,23, "if ye continue in the faith," ditto; Hebrews 3:6,14 have the same idea; 2 Peter 2:20-22 speaks of those who have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord, and who were washed, being entangled again and overcome. If these apparent contractions could be covered in a future "Q&A" it would be greatly appreciated.

Answer: The New Testament contains frequent exhortations to godly living, to "continue in the faith" and to "hold fast the confidence firm unto the end" (Heb 3:6,14) and to "walk worthy of the Lord" (Eph 4:1; Col 1:10), and warns of being "cut off" (Rom 11:22). The exhortation is to two classes of people: (1) those who are false professors, in order to show them that their lives demonstrate that they do not truly know the Lord; and (2) Christians who are living in disobedience, to warn them that if they continue to dishonor their Lord He will severely discipline them. The latter could be "cut off" from fellowship with other believers, or from this life.

Peter completes his argument in the

passage to which you refer (v. 22) with these words: "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." That seems to make it clear that he has been referring to those who claim to be Christians but are not. He is not referring to "sheep" who truly belong to the Good Shepherd, but to "dogs" and "pigs" who got in among the flock for a time but didn't belong, and reverted to the behavior dictated by their unregenerate nature.

The Corinthian church was rife with division, disorder, debate, immorality and sacrilege. Never is there a hint in Paul's epistles to them, however, that such sins had cost any of them their salvation. They were disciplined as Christians: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth... for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb 12:6-8). Some who gorged themselves and became drunk at the Lord's table dishonored the Lord to such an extent, not "discerning the Lord's body," that they were cut off in death (1 Cor 11:27-34). The man who had "his father's wife"—a terrible sin—didn't lose his salvation thereby, but as a brother in Christ was cut off from fellowship in discipline (1 Cor 5:1-13); then later he was restored (2 Cor 2:4-11).

Question: Your book, *A Cup of Trembling*, claims that no real peace can come between Israel and her Arab neighbors because Islam itself demands Israel's destruction. Yet in its historic April 24 meeting the PLO's Palestine National Council voted 504 to 54 with 14 abstentions to remove from its charter all provisions calling for the extermination of Israel and even violence against her. Surely, this is the foundation for genuine peace. Doesn't that vote prove you wrong and make your book outdated? And hasn't Israel been proved the aggressor by its April 19 attack on a United Nations base in Kana, Lebanon, that killed and wounded scores of civilians?

Answer: I do not defend everything Israel does. However, the media reports failed to tell the whole truth: that more than 30

Katyusha rocket attacks in seven days were launched from within 100-200 yards of UN compounds, with the terrorists then taking shelter in the supposedly “neutral peace-keeping” bases and the UN allowing it. Nor were Katyusha rocket attacks mentioned at all, but the reports made it appear that Israel, out of the blue, launched an unprovoked attack. While one might justify CNN’s Brent Sadler’s heartrending coverage of the mass funeral for the tragic victims, one is haunted by the question of why similar coverage and sympathy are never given to the hundreds of Israeli victims of deliberate terrorism. The UN condemnation of Israel was the 371st with *not one condemnation ever voted against the Arabs for their decades of aggression and terrorism!* Such maddening bias is just one more reminder of more than 2,000 years of satanic anti-Semitism!

As for the alleged amendment to the PLO charter, here we have further misinformation by the world media. While the English translations of reports on the meeting state, “the charter is hereby amended,” the Arabic version correctly refers to an amendment to be made in the future. In contrast to the general media’s favorable reports, *The Jewish Press* declared, “Yaser Arafat pulled off what will probably go down in history as the biggest scam of the twentieth century.” The most prominent expert on Palestinian nationalism, Hebrew University Professor Yehoshua Porat, called the whole affair a deception. An editorial in *The Jerusalem Post International Edition* (Week ending May 11, 1996) pointed out that Arafat’s alleged call for “peace” was anything but friendly toward Israel. In his speech he honored terrorists and lauded Israel’s chief enemies including Hamas founder “Sheikh Ahmad Yassin... Mauritania, Sudan, steadfast Iraq [applause], Libya and my brother Gaddafi.”

Deceived by the false reports, most Israelis reacted with joy. At a benefit concert in New York for the Israeli Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta announced to an enthusiastic audience which included Leah Rabin, the assassinated Israeli Prime Minister’s widow, “Tonight, I can tell you that the Palestinian National Council has revoked the clauses in its covenant that called for the destruction of Israel.” In fact they had not and have not.

London’s *Daily Telegraph* (5/2/96) was not fooled. It said, “The puzzle remains:

how did Arafat and Peres get the entire world media to cooperate with this hoax?” Director of Peace Watch, Dan Polisar, pointed out that the PLO “only adopted a resolution that the charter must be amended without specifying which clauses would be changed, in what manner, or by what date” (*The Jewish Press*, Week of May 3 to May 9, 1996, pp. 2, 96). Yet Rabin’s successor, Prime Minister Peres, had the *chutzpah* to call Arafat’s scam “the most important historical development in our region in 100 years.” That lie was calculated to aid him politically. Nevertheless, he narrowly lost the election to Binyamin Netanyahu, who has promised that he will no longer follow Peres and Rabin in trading God’s land (Lv 25:23) for “peace.”

In his “peace speech,” Arafat made numerous ominous references to the 1974 PLO Plan of Phases, a 10-point program for the destruction of Israel. The first step is to obtain territory inside Israel from which to launch her final destruction. That Plan remains in force and Arafat has repeatedly referred to it as being “right on course.” Such is the true PLO intent and will never be changed.

Obviously, even if a new PLO Charter is someday adopted which leaves out any reference to the destruction of Israel, that destruction is still demanded in the Plan of Phases and numerous other official documents. Nor can the call for the extermination of Jews be removed from the sayings of Muhammad or from the Koran (see *A Cup of Trembling* for documentation), which remain in force as the highest claims upon Muslims worldwide. A genuine and lasting peace for Israel? Not until her Messiah reigns over the world in righteousness from David’s throne!

Question: I do enjoy *The Berean Call*. But in the February issue you so emphasized the sufficiency of “all the counsel of God” that by your own logic you eliminated your own ministry. If we are only to look to God for counsel, then what is the purpose of *The Berean Call* and the books you write? Every issue should be filtered through the Bible. Does it harmonize with Scripture or not? That should be the question. Much of so-called “Christian psychology” isn’t even based on God’s Word, and it’s called Christian. So let us “prove all things, hold fast that which

is good” (1 Thes 5:21). In other words, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water!”

Answer: Surely to emphasize the sufficiency of God’s Word should not be taken to mean that God therefore doesn’t use the church and individuals to apply that Word in compassionate and/or corrective counsel and action. If such an idea was derived from what I wrote, then I was badly misunderstood. As for not throwing the baby out with the bathwater, I don’t understand the application. Are you saying that there is at least something about “Christian psychology” that we can use? I have spoken and written about this topic in such depth that I won’t go into it again here. I have strained the water looking for a legitimate “baby,” but it isn’t there. Whatever may be of value is simply common sense or has already been stated better and more clearly in the Bible, so it does not come from psychology at all, and that corrupt system should not be given any credit for it.

Endnotes

1. *National Review* (June 17, 1996), 49-50.
2. *Newsweek* (Aug. 9, 1993), 48.
3. *National and International Religion Report* (May 13, 1996), 3.
4. *The Chieftain* (Pueblo, CO, July 22, 1995), 4B.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Daily Telegraph* (London, May 2, 1996).
7. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (February 16, 1975).
8. *The New York Times* (Feb. 1, 1990), B4.
9. *Christianity Today* (March 6, 1995).
10. “Digging in the Walls” (*O Timothy*, vol 12, issue 7-8, 1995), 35.

The Christian Mission

Dave Hunt

Rabbi Rafael G. Grossman, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, recently said, “[A]nti-Semitism is a direct result of the Christian need to convert us. Like spurned lovers, rejection turns love into hate and if you, as I have, spent most of your adult life in the Southern Bible Belt, you would well understand how real this is.”¹ The rabbi apparently doesn’t know that anti-Semitism is an abomination to true Christianity. Jesus himself was a Jew and the Bible clearly identifies the Jews as God’s chosen people whom He loves and whom all who know Him are to love and bless.

The fact is that Christians expend far more time and effort attempting to evangelize non-Jews than is spent in evangelizing Jews. Contrary to what many Jews imagine, most Americans, having rejected Christ, are not Christians. Therefore, by the Rabbi’s logic, Christians ought to hate non-Jews, as well, and even family members, for rejecting Christ. On the contrary, the person who hates another is not a Christian (1 Jn 2:9,11; 3:15; 4:20).

True Christians share the gospel out of love. If the whole world were dying of a dread disease, would it be hatred for the man who had the one sure cure to try to persuade everyone to avail himself of it? In fact, it would be reprehensible not to offer it to everyone. A Christian truly believes that Jesus Christ is God who came as a man to die (in fulfillment of the Old Testament animal sacrifices) for our sins; and that only through accepting His payment of sin’s penalty can we sinners be forgiven. Surely, though he may reject the offer, any Jew or Gentile who understands the sincerity behind it can only respect a Christian for presenting the gospel to him.

Actually, most Christians, afraid to offend, shrink from sharing the gospel with Jews. Some ministries, such as the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ), even have a *policy* of not offering the gospel to Jews. Yet Christ commanded His disciples to preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, beginning at Jerusalem (Lk 24:47; Acts 1:8).

At one time there was nearly unanimous agreement among evangelicals that their mission was to preach the gospel *everywhere to everyone* and to earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3). That faith was that Christ died for our sins in order to “deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4) and to make us citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20). Christians understood clearly that they were “not of the

world” but that Christ had called them “out of the world” (Jn 15:19); theirs was a “heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1); indeed, in Christ they were already seated “in heavenly places” (Eph 2:6).

Nowhere does the Bible tell us to reform this world. Those who seemed to be in a position to do so (Joseph as second only to Pharaoh, Esther and Mordacai under Emperor Ahasuerus, and Daniel under several kings) were used of God to preserve His chosen people, but never to reform godless societies. Christ never attempted to reform the evil world of His day, nor did the Apostles or early church engage in marches or demonstrations either for Jesus or against evil. They “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) by preaching the gospel, not by preaching “traditional morals” or protesting the world’s evil practices.

The Christian mission, then, for 1,900 years has been to call individuals out of this

Go ye therefore, and teach [disciple] all nations, baptizing them...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you....

Matthew 28:19-20

evil world and into God’s “heavenly kingdom” (2 Tm 4:18). Any “reformation” of society has been a byproduct of the transformation of *individuals* who were born again through faith in Christ and whose lives then became an influence for good. Further, for Christians to join with unbelievers to reform this world was unthinkable. Then it began to happen. An early example was Freemasonry where, astonishingly, Christians joined a pagan “brotherhood.” Leading Masonic authorities write,

Masonry... requires merely that you believe in some Deity, give him what name you will...any god will do...²

Masonry [is the religion] around whose altars the Christian, the Hebrew, the Moslem, the Brahman [Hindu], the followers of Confucius and Zoroaster, can assemble as brethren and unite in prayer...³

How could a true Christian join in prayer at such an altar?! Yet many did and still do. Nor can the “Christian” Mason stand upon the Word of God and proclaim Christ as the only Savior, for that would contradict the ecumenism in which he is ensnared. Masonry’s mystical rites are blasphemous. For example, the ritual for Knight of East and West depicts “the end of the world, when all true Masons are to receive their reward by being conducted to a throne at the right hand

of the Deity, having first been purified by washing their robes in their *own blood* [not the “blood of the Lamb” - Rv 7:14]!”⁴ Even so, large numbers of professing Christians belong to the Masons. How is this justified? Dave Thomas, owner of Wendy’s Old Fashioned Hamburgers, a professing Christian and 33rd degree Mason, explains:

I’m proud to be a Mason. I believe Freemasonry is the cornerstone of America today. It brings good people together for a common cause—helping others. And I’m proud of the great things Masons accomplish.⁵

Similar justification (the “great things” accomplished when people come “together for a common cause”) is offered by Christians “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14) in social/political activism. The *Great Commission* (to “preach the gospel to every creature” - Mk 16:15) has been redefined as the *Christian Mission* (to morally reform secular society) — a mission that anyone may join who affirms “traditional morals.” Kenneth S. Kantzer, a senior editor of *Christianity Today (CT)* wrote,

With the spread of moral rot that destroys the roots of a free and just society, we evangelicals need to close ranks with our Catholic neighbors. And with Mormons, conservative Jews, and secularists who share our values...⁶

Of course, one cannot evangelize these non-Christian partners, for that would offend them and break up the coalition.

Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition includes among its members Mormons, Moonies, Roman Catholics, Jews and anyone else with conservative politics and morals. Even J. I. Packer has succumbed to this delusion. Writing in *CT*, he transmutes Christ’s command to proclaim the gospel into a call “to re-Christianize the North American milieu...[and] rebuild the ruins ...[of] North American culture...!”⁷ *Where* does the Bible say that? Llewellyn Rockwell writes,

Christianity is now thoroughly politicized. The [Catholic] bishops and [Ralph] Reed have no trouble speaking about the importance of pro-family legislation, or the glories of religious pluralism, but they are shy about such basics as the Christian teaching on salvation. The longer the process of politicization continues, the thinner the faith gets. Political ambition causes people to water down their beliefs for the sake of gaining favor...The first stage of sell-out comes with the exaltation of political pluralism above doctrinal truth, the second

stage with the denial of doctrinal truth altogether for achieving political goals.⁸

Ralph Reed, director of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, has said, "An emerging partnership of Catholics and evangelical Protestants is going to be the most powerful force in the electorate beyond the 1990s ...[bringing together] people of faith" for the common good of the nation. Apparently any "faith" will do. It was out of such a joining in common cause that "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (ECT) was spawned. As the *New York Times* reported 3/30/94,

They toiled together in the movements against abortion and pornography, and now leading Catholics and evangelicals are asking their flocks for a remarkable leap of faith: to finally accept each other as Christians.

The signers of ECT say, "We have far more in common with conservative Roman Catholics than we do with liberal Protestants." Paul could have said the same about the Judaizers. They believed the true gospel, but simply added that one must also keep the law to be saved. Yet instead of joining the Judaizers in cleaning up the morals of society and improving the empire, Paul cursed them. Why? Because they preached "another gospel" that would damn all who believed it. Rome has added far more to the gospel than the Judaizers ever dreamed of adding.

Evangelicals who are leading the fight against immorality in society rarely oppose false doctrine in the church. Yet Christ and His apostles gave no time to crusading against the evils outside the church, but concentrated upon correction of error within.

Ironically, the one culprit which has been the major cause of the rapid and deep slide into immorality in the last forty years is generally promoted rather than opposed by those leading the crusade against immorality. That culprit is psychology.

Psychology's redefining of sin as sickness has excused immorality and thus encouraged it. Instead of being held accountable and called upon to repent, the sinner is diagnosed as in need of "therapy." Everything from disobedience to murder is excused these days as some kind of syndrome or addiction. Adulterers are now "sex addicts" whose insurance covers lengthy "treatment" at Christian psychiatric hospitals. Christ's command to "Go and sin no more" (Jn 8:11) is "too simplistic" these days.

The explosion of crime, rebellion and immorality has coincided with the exponential

growth of psychology since the early 1950s, a growth which is still accelerating. There was a 43 percent increase in the number of Americans in the 10-19 age bracket committed to psychiatric hospitals from 1980 to 1987, while the number of private psychiatric beds per 100,000 persons more than doubled in the five years from 1983 to 1988. What a growth industry! Psychology has been rightly called the only profession that "creates the diseases which it claims to cure."

The firm discipline which children need and the Bible commends (Prv 13:24; 22:15; Heb 12:6, etc.) is now called "child abuse," and children have even been taken by government agencies from Christian parents who lovingly "applied the rod." What once was recognized as laziness, disinterest, stubbornness or rebellion is now excused as some new "syndrome." The number of children diagnosed as having "learning disabilities" nearly tripled from 1977 to 1992! Difficult

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mark 16:15

children are placed on Ritalin after they and their parents have been convinced by some therapist of their abnormality, a stigma (and excuse) which will probably be with them for life. In spite of its addictive nature, disputable evidence of its helpfulness, and many reported incidents of violence and suicide brought on by withdrawal from it, Ritalin is currently being given to about 1 million American children. Whatever did we do without it?!

Inventing new kinds of "mental illness" has increased the power of psychiatrists and psychologists over society. Americans now suffer by the millions from alleged maladies that were unknown a few years ago. These are defined in the "bible of mental illness," the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM)*. When first published in 1952 it listed 112 mental disorders, compared with a half dozen 100 years earlier. DSM-II in 1968 listed 163. There were 224 in DSM-III, published in 1980. DSM-IV came out in 1994 and the list of disorders had grown to 374! Whence this raging epidemic of new mental illnesses—or are we being duped?! One newspaper editor wrote sarcastically,

Does your 10-year-old dislike doing her math homework? Better get her to the nearest couch because she's got No. 315.4, *Developmental Arithmetic Disorder*. Maybe

you're a teenager who argues with his parents. Uh-oh. Better get some medication pronto because you've got No. 313.8, *Oppositional Defiant Disorder*....I am not making these things up. (That would be *Fictitious Disorder Syndrome*)....

I know there are some cynics out there who...wouldn't be caught dead on a psychiatrist's couch....[Y]our unwillingness to seek professional help is itself a symptom of a serious mental problem. It's right here in the book: 15.81, *Noncompliance with Treatment Disorder*.⁹

These newly defined "disabilities" are creating a host of new "rights." George Will points out, "You have a right to be a colossally obnoxious jerk on the job. If you are just slightly offensive, your right will not kick in. But if you are seriously insufferable to colleagues at work, you have a right not to be fired, and you are entitled to have your employer make reasonable accommodations for your 'disability.'" In a word, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) encourages irresponsible and obnoxious behavior. The authority behind ADA is DSM-IV's nearly 900 pages of folly. Will continues:

Consider the DSM's definition of "oppositional defiant disorder" [ODD] as a pattern of "negativistic, defiant, disobedient and hostile behavior toward authority figures...often loses temper ...is often touchy...or spiteful or vindictive."

The DSM's list of "personality disorders" includes "anti-social personality disorder" [ADD] ("a pervasive pattern of disregard for...the rights of others..."); "histrionic personality disorder" [HPD] ("excessive emotionality and attention-seeking...inappropriately sexually provocative or seductive"); "narcissistic personality disorder" [NPD] ("grandiosity, need for admiration ...boastful and pretentious...may assume they do not have to wait in line"), etc., etc.¹⁰

Selfish and sinful behavior is no longer wrong but simply a sign that one is "special" and even entitled to "rights" denied to the rest of us! Is it because so many of those Christians leading the crusade against immorality in society are committed to "Christian" psychology that they fail to sound the alarm that psychology itself is the major contributor to today's growing immorality? The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, not only from the penalty of sin but from its power in our lives. The church has lost confidence in God and His Word to meet our needs. The Christian mission—yes, Christianity itself—has been redefined. Let us return to the Lord and to His Word in obedience to our mission! **TBC**

Quotable

It is possible to go through life believing that we believe [in Christ], while actually having no conviction more vital than a conventional creed inherited from our ancestors or picked up from the general religious notions current in our social circle. If this creed requires that we admit our own depravity, we do so and feel proud of our fidelity to the Christian faith. But from the way we love, praise and pamper ourselves it is plain enough that we do not consider ourselves worthy of damnation!

The poor quality of Christian faith and the uncertainties that mark the lives of a host of church members grow out of our modern evangelistic scene's absence of real repentance. So, too, the absence of repentance is the result of an inadequate view of sin and sinfulness held by those who present themselves in the inquiry room.

"No fears, no grace," said Bunyan. "Though there is not always grace where there is fear of hell, yet, to be sure, there is no grace where there is no fear of God. For the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and they that lack the beginning have neither middle nor end."

A.W. Tozer, *Renewal Day by Day*

Q&A

Question: Sunday evening you mentioned being "sure about going to heaven." Would you please comment on the following statement by Dr. A.W. Tozer in his *Renewal Day by Day*: "The man who is seriously convinced that he deserves to go to hell is not likely to go there, while the man who believes that he is worthy of heaven will certainly never enter that blessed place."

Answer: The certainty of heaven to which I referred is based upon faith in Christ and His Word which promise eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. Heaven is the believer's sure destination, not because he merits it but because of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: "I give [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish" (Jn 10:27-28); "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 Jn 5:13); etc. While confident of heaven because of what Christ has done, the believer is at the same time very conscious of his own unworthiness. It is, in

fact, the realization that he deserves hell that has caused him to turn to Christ. In contrast, Tozer is referring to "the man who believes that he is *worthy* [in himself] of heaven." That person is lost because obviously he has not believed the gospel and is not trusting in Christ alone for his salvation.

Question: You have objected to Ellen G. White's teaching on the "investigative judgment" concerning Christ's ongoing work as High Priest in the sanctuary in heaven. Then why is He called our "great high priest" in Hebrews, and what function does He perform as our High Priest in the "sanctuary" (Heb 8:2; 9:1-2; 13:11)? And why is there a temple in heaven (Rv 14:17; 15:5-8, etc.) with the "ark of his [God's] testament" in it?

Answer: This teaching is presented in her book, *The Great Controversy* (pp 479-91). She claims that in 1844 Christ entered "the holy of holies...to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits" (p 480). Atonement is defined in the dictionary as a reconciliation which comes about by expiation of or satisfaction for whatever brought enmity between the parties. It is clear from both the Old and New Testaments that our sins have alienated us from God (Is 59:2) and that "atonement" means "reconciliation with God" through forgiveness of sins. The Old Testament priests "made reconciliation with [animal] blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel" (2 Chr 29:24).

Of course, the sacrificial animals were but types and shadows of Christ, through the shedding of whose blood alone (Heb 10:1-18) this reconciliation/atonement could be accomplished: "In whom we have redemption *through his blood*, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:12, etc.). The Bible is clear: "without *shedding of blood* there is no remission [of sins]" (Heb 9:22).

Christ's blood was shed on the cross; therefore that has to be the place where atonement/reconciliation/remission of sins was accomplished. His blood is not being shed in heaven, so there can be no work of atonement going on there. E. G. White's error is similar to that of Catholicism's mass (or Eucharist), which has Christ being offered continually as a sacrifice for sins.

Obviously, then, reconciliation/atonement could not possibly have begun in 1844 in heaven, nor could it be in process in

heaven now, having been accomplished once and for all time by Christ upon the cross. Paul argues that because we have been "reconciled to God through the death of his Son," we "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *we have now received the atonement*" (Rom 5:10-11). When Christ cried in triumph, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30), He meant that the work of our redemption/atonement had been accomplished.

What function, then, does He perform as our High Priest in the "sanctuary" (Heb 8:2; 9:1-2; 13:11)? And why is there a temple in heaven (Rv 14:17; 15:5-8, etc.) with the "ark of his [God's] testament" in it? Hebrews 7:27 clearly tells us that as our High Priest he is not involved in the repetition of sacrifices as was the case with priests under the old covenant (which involved keeping the Saturday sabbath): "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice...for this he did once [by one sacrifice], when he offered up himself." His high priestly ministry in heaven does not involve sacrifice or shedding of blood and thus does not involve atonement/reconciliation, which was accomplished on the Cross. Then what does it involve?

Scripture declares that having died once for our sins, "he ever liveth [never to die again in sacrifice for sins] to make intercession" (Heb 7:25) for His own. Paul argues that there can be no condemnation for the Christian because Christ, who is appointed judge of the world (Jn 5:22; Rv 20:11-15, etc.) and is the One who condemns the lost, is "at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom 8:34). Why does He need to intercede with His Father for His own? John explains that if Christians sin, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 2:1-2). How so? Not through some act of atonement or sacrifice or shedding of blood that is ongoing now in heaven, but because of His blood shed upon the cross: "[N]ow *once*...hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many;...For by *one offering* [of Himself] he hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified" (Heb 9:26,28; 10:14).

This Seventh-day Adventist teaching denies the finished work of Christ. Mrs. White declares that Christ is still involved in making atonement "for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits"! Entitled on what basis? She doesn't explain, but the very idea denies that salvation is by grace

alone, on the basis of Christ having paid the full penalty for our sins. That payment is repudiated by White's declaration that "Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny. ...[T]hough ...forgotten by us, they will bear their testimony to justify or condemn" (pp 486-90). This is salvation by works, which is explicitly denied in Scripture. All Seventh-Day Adventists who have embraced this teaching have thereby rejected the gospel that saves.

Question: A drunk staggered up to Mr. Moody [on the street] and gave him 25 cents. A friend said, "Mr. Moody, you are not going to accept this coin!" Mr. Moody replied, "Indeed I will, the devil has had it long enough." In your May 1996 TBC you have fallen into one of Satan's traps, character assassination, by besmirching the good names of Billy Graham, Bill Bright and Charles Colson. All these good men have accepted money from the world to put these gifts to use in their dedicated labor for God. You owe these men a public apology. If not, I count you as a prime example of a hypocrite.

Answer: Neither Moody nor you nor I nor anyone else sets the standard of Christian behavior. Just because Moody did something does not mean it was right. Moody's acceptance of 25 cents from a drunk is between him and God. I don't think it was wise, for it could have caused the man to think that God needed his money or that a gift of money might help his standing before God. How much better to have refused the coin and to have explained why and used the opportunity to present the gospel! No doubt Moody did the latter, though that isn't included in your telling of the story.

There is a huge difference, however, between accepting a casual gift of money from an unsaved person and accepting the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. The latter is not a gift but a prize; and it is awarded for a specific achievement defined in its terms. Templeton did not suddenly decide, out of his generosity, to give a huge sum to Graham, Colson and Bright. It was given as an award for their having contributed to what he calls "progress in religion." He spells out precisely what he means by that, and in the May issue we documented what he means, so we need not repeat it.

I made no accusations against Graham, Colson or Bright. I simply explained what

Templeton believes about "progress in religion" and that to accept such a prize is by all reasonable standards to express one's agreement with his goals and to take credit for having furthered them. If one is not in agreement with the purpose behind the prize, then it should not be accepted.

Suppose you received an award check in the mail from the government for having rescued a family from a burning building, when in fact you hadn't done so. Wouldn't you return the check and explain that a mistake had been made? Should not Graham, Colson and Bright have also explained that a mistake had been made, that they did not agree with the very idea of "progress in religion" and had not contributed to the kind of "progress in religion" for which the prize was offered?

Far from besmirching the character of Graham, Colson and Bright, I never suggested that they were in agreement with Templeton's heresies or the purpose of the prize or that they had contributed to the "progress in religion" which he promotes. I simply reported the facts. If their character has been besmirched, it has been by their own actions, not by my honest reporting thereof.

Question: In A Cup of Trembling you mention "Jew" as if Jews were "all of Israel." But the word "Jew" only describes Judeans. When the Bible means all 12 tribes it calls them "Israel." You also stated that Jesus was a Jew;...but the Bible doesn't specifically say he was. You assert that the biblical land of Palestine was promised to the "Jewish people." You are mistaken, it was promised to all 12 tribes. The Jews of Jesus' day were not all Israelites, but Edomites, Hittites, Hivites, Canaanites, etc. None of the 10 tribes returned from the Assyrian captivity. You will have to show yourself a Berean. Enclosed is a concise list [of reference books] to get you started.

Answer: Thank you for your letter. It is not necessary to consult the many sources you listed. The Bible is sufficient. If those recognized as Jews around the world do not represent the 12 tribes of Israel, then God is a liar. He promised that Israel would "not cease from being a nation for ever" (Jer 31:35-36); that He would "bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel (Ez 39:25); and that one day the Messiah would reign over the "house of Jacob [Israel]" (Isa 2:1-

5; Lk 1:33, etc.). Christ himself promised that His disciples would reign "on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30, etc.). If those called Jews do not include all 12 tribes today, then these promises cannot be fulfilled, for there is no other people who have been preserved as a single ethnic group who could possibly be the "real Jews" or even the 10 allegedly lost tribes.

In 1 Chronicles 34 and 35 we have the revival under Josiah 100 years after the 10 tribes were carried into Assyria; and we find these same 10 tribes of Israel dwelling in their cities and worshiping the Lord. Jeremiah 2:4, Micah 3:1, etc. give the word of the Lord to the "house of Israel." Indeed, James writes his epistle "to the twelve tribes scattered abroad" (1:1); and Paul declares that in his day "our twelve tribes [were] serving God" (Acts 26:7). I'll accept what the Bible says above the historians, liberal or otherwise.

The usage of the word "Jew" in the Bible proves that after the return from Babylon all Israelites were called Jews. Over and over we have the statement that all men are either Jews or Gentiles (Rom 2:9; 1 Cor 10:32; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:11-18, etc.). There is no third category for the 10 "lost tribes" or for any other descendants of Israel. The Jews must be it! Jesus was called "king of the Jews" and didn't deny it. And He was of the tribe of Judah, so of course, as the Messiah, He was a Jew even in the narrowest sense, and had to be.

Endnotes

- 1 *The Jewish Press* (June 21, 1996), 83.
- 2 Carl H. Claudy and other authorities; for example, *Little Masonic Library* (Macony Publishing and Masonic Supply, 1977), vol. 4, 32.
- 3 Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (Charleston, SC, The Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States, 1906), 226.
- 4 *Richardson's Monitor of Freemasonry*, 161.
- 5 *Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Front cover, 9.
- 6 *Christianity Today* (July 18, 1994), 17.
- 7 *Christianity Today* (Dec. 12, 1994), 36.
- 8 *New Oxford Review* (June 1996), 17.
- 9 Mark Syverud, *Daily Messenger* (Aug. 13, 1995).
- 10 *The Bulletin* (Bend, OR, 4/4/96), A-8.

Our Hope is in the Lord

Dave Hunt

My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth....The LORD is thy keeper:...The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.
Psalm 121:2-7

The ministry the Lord has given us at The Berean Call can be lonely and discouraging. We are accused of being “negative” and criticized for criticizing, which causes us to examine our hearts frequently to be certain that we are obeying God’s call and faithfully using His Word for “doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness” (2 Tm 3:16-17).

Paul said that to “preach the Word” one must “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tm 4:2). Who is to do the reproofing today? Many reprove the world for its immorality. Many point out the errors of the cults, of obvious heretics and extreme charismatics. But what of the highly regarded evangelical leaders? Who will love them enough to call them to account from Scripture? Will you? Will I? And who will correct us?

This is a newsletter which I would rather have left unwritten. I cried out to God, “Lord, I can’t do it, I’m incapable of this task.” Then I realized with joy, “Of course! I’m a nobody who can’t do God’s work! Praise God! He delights in working through weak, unworthy vessels!” I thought of the verses quoted above and rejoiced in the fact that “my help cometh from the LORD”!

I begin thus lest the remainder of this article leave some in despair. However, there is reason for concern. President Clinton claims to be a Christian (Southern Baptist) but his words and deeds deny it. He was reprovved recently in an unprecedented letter signed by the present and all ten living past presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The reproof went as unheeded as our attempts for ten years to present lovingly, factually, biblically, and with great concern, certain grave errors of leading evangelicals. Nevertheless, we will not despair.

The Southern Baptist presidents themselves should explain why the SBC has been in “dialogue” with Roman Catholics (as have the Lutherans, Assemblies of God, et al.) for years. Christ did not say, “Go into all the world and *dialogue*.” His command was to “*preach the gospel*”! Catholics are “dialoguing” with Buddhists. A recent

Catholic-Buddhist conference in a Kentucky monastery purported to find “common ground” between Christ’s suffering on the cross and the Buddha’s “Four Noble Truths” and Buddhist meditation.¹

The phrase “politically correct” has become so familiar and accepted that few remember the dismay which it first aroused in the minds of most Americans. Almost everyone realized that right and wrong would become blurred and integrity would fall victim to vote-getting. The truth no longer mattered. False promises bought votes, encouraging politicians to lie. America had become like ancient Israel, and God’s retribution would follow:

And judgment is turned backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street.... (Is 59:14)

The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

Lamentations 3:24

A similar yet deadlier subversion has entered the church, deadlier because it affects one’s eternal destiny. Emulating the “politically correct,” Christian leaders have adopted “religiously correct” language and tactics to avoid offending anyone. We judge no one’s heart, but whether intentional or not, a disastrous deception is sweeping the evangelical church.

Inoffensive and ambiguous ecumenical terms are being used without essential clarification: *spirituality, love, faith, forgiveness, family values, traditional values, religious values, moral awakening, revival*, etc. Religions “unite” around such ideas by pretending that they mean the same for everyone, when in fact they don’t. God, Jesus Christ, redemption and forgiveness have diametrically opposed meanings for different groups. Even “Christian” must be *biblically* defined. Failure to do so often leads those who are not Christians to entertain a false hope, to their eternal loss.

Pat Robertson’s “Christian Coalition” unites Catholics, Mormons, Moonies, Jews and other non-Christians in political/social action. To justify the word “Christian” in the title, its director, Ralph Reed, claims that the Coalition is bringing together “people of faith.” That “religiously correct” phrase subtly equates *any* “faith” with “Christian”!

Similarly, Pat Robertson declares that “*People of faith* are under attack as never before...by forces which wish to destroy all religious values, all worship, and all free-

doms for Christians like you and me...[so] we must lay aside certain Protestant differences to join hands to support those things upon which we all agree...”² In fact, Coalition members hold many faiths whose “religious values” and “worship” are in opposition. It is folly to speak of “people of faith” standing together when individual faith must be abandoned to do so. And for a Christian to stand only for whatever “all agree” upon is to abandon Christ himself, whom the world hates and its religions reject or redefine. Far more than “Protestant differences” must be overlooked for Christians to join hands with non-Christians! The gospel cannot be shared with other members for fear of breaking up the coalition. And this unequal yoke is *Christian*!?

Robert Schuller is a master of “religiously correct” doubletalk. He calls upon “leaders of all religions...whatever their theology...to articulate their faith in positive terms” and to proclaim “the positive power ...of world-community-building religious values.”³ So all religions can build a new world together, “whatever their theology”? Unabashed, Schuller declares, “That’s what sets me apart from fundamentalists, who are trying to convert everybody to believe how they believe. We know the things the major faiths can agree on. We try to focus on those without offending those with different viewpoints, or without compromising the integrity of my own Christian commitment.”⁴

When did Christ say, “Preach those things the major faiths agree on”? Isn’t the gospel intended to *convert* the lost? Echoing Schuller, the Dalai Lama declared at the Catholic-Buddhist conference mentioned above that “members of different religions should not try to convert one another, but rather exchange ideas, study each other’s traditions and conduct pilgrimages to each other’s shrines.”⁵ We expect such advice from a Buddhist, but not from Christian leaders!

Schuller must know that “the things the major faiths can agree on” do not include who God is, who Jesus Christ is, the way of salvation or much else of importance. Ecumenism sacrifices the very heart of Christianity for a false “unity.” And this denial of Christ to avoid “offending those with different viewpoints” can be done “without compromising the integrity of [one’s] own Christian commitment”? That says much about Schuller’s commitment. Small wonder that, according to a recent Barna poll, 71% of Americans, 64% of those who call themselves born again and 40% of self-proclaimed evangelicals reject the idea of absolute truth!

Sun Myung Moon's front organizations (Family Federation for World Peace, Women's Federation for World Peace, Summit Council for World Peace, etc.) promote "morals and family values." It is amazing to see who will join this self-professed "Messiah" in working for these "religiously correct" goals. Moon just hosted (7/31-8/2/96) another convention in Washington, DC. The highly paid speakers (reportedly \$80-150,000 each) included former presidents Ford and Bush, Robert Schuller, Ralph Reed, Gary Bauer (president of Family Research Council, "the lobbying/research arm of Focus on the Family") and Beverly LaHaye. Entertainment was by Pat Boone and family.

Moon says that mankind fell from grace because Eve had sex with Satan, Christ failed in His mission, and Moon is the true Messiah. While evangelical speakers were careful not to offend their high-paying host with the true gospel, Moon and his wife, Hak Ja Han, boldly proclaimed their false gospel. What a denial of Christ for Pat Boone to entertain, and evangelical leaders to speak, on the same platform where the host declared that he is perfecting the work "left uncompleted by Jesus!"⁶

Consider again the 1994 document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT). Embracing Catholics as born-again Christians whom evangelicals must join to evangelize the world, ECT mocks the Reformation, which labeled Roman Catholicism a false religion of ritual and works. Roman Catholics admit that "justification by faith alone" remains "a major sticking point" between Catholics and evangelicals. Yet Charles Colson, one of ECT's architects, says, "justification by faith alone...doesn't mean today among evangelicals what it meant in the reformers' time."⁷ Guess who compromised?

The Council of Trent damned the Reformers with more than 100 "anathemas" for believing what evangelicals still affirm (in spite of Colson) about justification through faith in Christ alone. For example, "If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law [Catholic rituals] are not necessary for salvation but...that without them...men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema."⁸ "If anyone says that baptism is...not necessary for salvation, let him be anathema."⁹ "If anyone says that in the Mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God...[but] a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross [and] not a propitiatory one...let him be anathema."¹⁰ Is Trent still valid? Absolu-

lutely! Vatican II, Catholicism's highest authority, "proposes again the decrees of... the Council of Trent."¹¹ In honor of the 450th anniversary of Trent (12/13/95), Pope John Paul II declared that "Its conclusions maintain all their value."¹² Catholicism stands firm. Today's evangelicals have compromised, yet solemnly deny it.

At the recent Promise Keepers rally for pastors attended by about 39,000 in Atlanta, PK's Roman Catholic founder, Bill McCartney, declared that every Protestant and Roman Catholic was welcome to participate. Max Lucado exhorted the pastors, "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, charity." We agree. But McCartney and Lucado failed to say that in the essential of the *gospel*, Catholics and evangelicals are *not* united but diametrically opposed. The highest expression of Christianity is the Lord's Supper

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

Jeremiah 17:7

for the evangelical and the Eucharist or Mass for the Catholic. For all its talk of "unity," Rome prohibits Catholics from taking the Lord's Supper and non-Catholics from partaking of the Mass.¹³ What delusion, then, to pretend to a unity that doesn't exist and to preach an evangelical gospel at PK rallies which would bring the anathema of their Church upon any Roman Catholics who believed it!

In our May issue we covered one of the most shocking compromises by evangelical leaders in our day: the acceptances by Billy Graham, Charles Colson and Bill Bright of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, and the encouragement of other evangelical leaders in this mockery of Christ. We thoroughly documented that Templeton rejects the God of the Bible and the Bible as God's Word, rejects Christ as the only Savior, and claims that heaven and hell are states of mind we create here on earth, that truth is relative and that Christianity is no longer relevant. Yet this man is highly acclaimed in evangelical circles, and one of his books, filled with the rankest heresy, was recommended in a full-page back cover ad in *Christianity Today (CT)*.¹⁴ The deadly delusion grows with the backing of Christian leaders and media. At the same time we are condemned for addressing the problem.

Templeton believes that religion, like science, must progress until a universal

religion is developed which is acceptable to all peoples. "To encourage progress of this kind," says Templeton, "we have established the Templeton Foundation Prizes for Progress in Religion." The anti-Christian nature and purpose of Templeton's "Prize for Progress in Religion" could not be clearer!

Bill Bright received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion (progress he neither believes in nor contributed to) in a Roman Catholic Church in Rome 5/9/96. He began his acceptance speech with "Your Eminence Cardinal Cassidy," a slap in the face to the Reformers and martyrs. He went on, "The prestigious Templeton Prize, to me, because of the nature of its objective, is greater than any other prize that could be given for any purpose....I would like to thank and commend Sir John Templeton for establishing this prize..." etc. Astonishing!

Equally tragic, Bill Bright, who we have no doubt loves the Lord Jesus Christ and is dedicated to proclaiming His gospel to the world, failed to present the gospel. Like Colson's acceptance speech two years ago, Bright's lengthy speech was filled with "religiously correct" ecumenical terms: *moral standards...unseen hand of God in my life...falling in love with Jesus...personal spiritual journey...world-wide spiritual awakening*, etc. He came so close to the gospel (Christ had "an elaborate plan to redeem me"), but didn't explain that plan (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). Bright referred to "His free gift of love and forgiveness," but never explained that the forgiveness is for our *sins* and that it is only possible because Christ paid the penalty we deserve.

As I read his speech, I fell on my face weeping and cried out in agony, "O God, has the compromise and deception become so great that good men who love You will praise Your enemies in Your name and think they are proclaiming the gospel when they aren't?" We cannot help but mourn. Malachi ends with Israel in a similar state and with these encouraging words to mourners: "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard" (Mal 3:16-17).

Let us "speak often one to another," encouraging one another to stand firmly on God's Word. Our help "cometh from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." Paul asked prayer for himself that he might "speak boldly" as he "ought to speak" (Eph 6:19-20). Surely evangelical leaders today need that prayer, as we all do. Let us pray for one another and write Christian leaders, exhorting them to earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). **TBC**

Quotable

[God] *makes no promise to cowardice.* If you allow the fear of man to rule you, and wish to save self from suffering or ridicule, you will find small comfort in the promise of God. "He that saveth his life shall lose it." The promises of the Holy Spirit to us in our warfare are to those who quit themselves like men, and by faith are made brave in the hour of conflict....

Brethren, if you trim a little, if you try to save a little of your repute with the men of the apostasy, it will go ill with you. He that is ashamed of Christ and His Word in this evil generation shall find that Christ is ashamed of him at the last.

Remember, that *the Holy Ghost will never set His seal to falsehood.* Never! If what you preach is not the truth, God will not own it. See ye well to this....The Holy Ghost sends no one into the harvest to sleep among the sheaves, but to bear the burden and heat of the day...the Spirit will be with the strength of labourers, but He will not be the friend of loiterers.

But now, brethren...*believing this, we accept the obligation to preach everything which we see to be in the Word of God, as far as we see it.* We shall not wilfully leave out any portion of the whole revelation of God, but we long to be able to say at the last, "We have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." What mischief may come of leaving out any portion of the truth, or putting in an alien element!

*C.H. Spurgeon, "Final Manifesto,"
The Greatest Fight in the World,
pp 60-62*

Q&A

Question: *The leadership of our country has become so corrupt that I would think you would cry out against the evil. Yet you say nothing. How can you keep silent in the face of such blatant injustices as, for example, the murder of Vince Foster, ruled a suicide, and the obvious implications of the cover-up?*

Answer: The Roman government of our Lord's day was probably more evil than we can even imagine, yet He never addressed any of its misdeeds and

corruptions. Nor did the early church organize demonstrations against or try to influence the local rulers or Caesars in Rome. We are to preach the gospel, not attempt to reform the world, and must follow the scriptural example. It would seem legitimate, however, to address biblical criticism to those in government who, like our President and Vice President, profess to be Christians.

According to the polls, the majority of Americans have little respect for President Clinton's morals or truthfulness. Yet the same polls show that the majority favor him for another term, apparently accepting immorality as the norm. Jerry Falwell's *National Liberty Journal*, July 1996, contains two full pages of promises which Clinton solemnly made to America and subsequently broke. Yet he remains popular by making more promises!

You refer to Vince Foster's death. It is only one of *dozens* of suspicious deaths of potential key witnesses whose testimony would have incriminated the Clintons. The most prominent victim was Foster, White House Deputy Counsel, Clinton's close friend and Hillary's former law partner, whose murder was ruled a "suicide." The outrageous corruption at the highest levels in government is documented in an excellent video, *The Death of Vince Foster; What Really Happened?*, available from Jeremiah Films, (800) 828-2290.

Even a child would recognize that Foster was murdered elsewhere and his body brought to the park where it was found. There was no trace of dust on his shoes, though the body was more than 200 yards down a dirt trail from his car. A thorough search of Foster, his car and the park revealed no car keys, which were later "discovered" on Foster in the morgue after a visit by Clinton's men, Craig Livingstone and William Kennedy. There was no sign of the bullet that entered the roof of his mouth and exited the back of his head, no skull or brain fragments and almost no blood at the scene. The gun, in spite of its powerful recoil, was loosely in his hand, yet Foster's fingerprints were not on it. The lone print was not Foster's and the FBI made no attempt to identify either it or the blonde hairs and carpet fragments found on his underclothing, considering them all "unimportant." The FBI

destroyed photos showing marks on Foster's neck inconsistent with suicide. The "suicide note" which was "discovered" in Foster's briefcase after it had been searched and emptied was proved to be a forgery; and though torn into many pieces, it contained no fingerprints!

Logically, President Clinton, if no one else, would demand a thorough investigation to discover the truth about the death of his close friend. Since he didn't, one can only conclude that the truth is being suppressed at the highest level. Four more years of hostage to Clinton's character would not bode well for our country.

Question: *I have heard Dave Hunt say on a few occasions that all babies and children are saved. Now, I do not dispute this, but could you show me some Scripture which would back that statement?*

Answer: The sense of justice we have in our consciences assures us that God would not send to hell to suffer eternally for sin innocent babes who were never conscious of having sinned. In that regard surely we can rely upon Abraham's pleadings with God not to "slay the righteous with the wicked," his appeal, "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" and God's apparent agreement (Gn 18:25). We also have David's statement regarding his dead baby son: "But now he is dead...I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sm 12:23). Surely David is in heaven, so his baby son must be there also, otherwise how could David "go to him"?

Christ's attitude toward, and His statements regarding, small children give us additional assurance of their salvation: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mk 10:14); "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Mt 18:10). While I don't fully understand the latter statement about "their angels," it seems to indicate a relationship with God during their innocence. Furthermore, everyone must "receive the kingdom of God as a little child" (Mk 10:15).

Question: I read something recently that intrigued me, the claim that there is a secret message encoded in the Torah at certain letter sequences, which was impossible to discover until computers were developed to their present capabilities. Are you familiar with this theory, and if so, what do you think of it?

Answer: The methods with which I am somewhat familiar involve the Masoretic Hebrew text which forms the basis of the King James Bible. No other text provides the amazing results. One method involves changing the spacing between the Hebrew letters. An example is the recent discovery by Orthodox rabbis that by merely changing the spacing between the letters (leaving the letters in same order) in the last phrase in Genesis 15:17, "a burning lamp passed between those pieces" becomes "decreed God into Rabin evil fire fire." This is not only remarkable but awesome for the following reasons: 1) Genesis 15:7-21 records the covenant God made with Abram giving the promised land to him and to his seed and specifically identifying its boundaries; 2) Rabin had repeatedly defied this covenant, stating that he would not abide by its "geography" but would continue to barter that land for "peace"; 3) this passage was being read in synagogues around the world on the very day that Rabin was shot *twice* by an assassin.

Of course, it could be argued that the above is pure coincidence, and there is no way to prove otherwise. Each person must come to his own conclusions. There is another discovery, however, which cannot possibly be dismissed as coincidence. It involves computer searches for words at certain letter intervals which must, of course, fit a consistent pattern. The original work was done by mathematical statisticians Doron Witztum, Eliyahu Rips and Yoav Rosenberg of the Jerusalem College of Technology and the Hebrew University, and was first published in the eminent *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. The original study involved 300 pairs of related words such as "rain" and "umbrella," "hammer" and "anvil," etc. Every pair was found in close proximity a number of times. Inasmuch as these were randomly chosen pairs, the study concluded that no matter what other pairs were chosen, they, too, would be found.

This was incredible and mathematically could not happen by chance, nor could any human agency, even with the help of computers, devise a text in which the letters form words and sentences with normal meaning and contain these hidden sequences.

Continuing their research, Witztum, et al. took the names of the 34 most prominent Jewish men from the ninth to nineteenth centuries and discovered that these names were in the Masoretic Text as well, in close proximity to the date of each one's birth or death. Of course, there is no possible way that any human author writing the Torah in about 1600 B.C. could have known such data, let alone have encoded it. The researchers added the names of the 32 next most prominent Jewish leaders and again the computer found them, together with their dates of birth and/or death. The results were published in the *Statistical Science* journal, whose editor wrote, "Our referees were baffled: their prior beliefs made them think the Book of Genesis could not possibly contain meaningful references to modern day individuals, yet when the authors carried out additional analyses and checks the effect persisted. The paper is thus offered to *Statistical Science* readers as a challenging puzzle." Puzzle indeed to atheists!

Additional mathematical scholars and scientists from Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins and the Hebrew University have verified the above results after much careful checking. Of course, there are many critics who refuse to accept the study as proof of divine authorship; but no one has been able to find a flaw in the work. As a further test, for example, other Hebrew texts such as that of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* were tested and no such patterns could be uncovered. Even other versions of the Bible produced no results, only the Masoretic Hebrew Text.

I have not attended any of the seminars being given or studied the original research papers. My knowledge has come only from the articles written about this work; nor do I have the technical expertise to give an unqualified opinion. I have a mere bachelor's degree in mathematics from UCLA, and studied cryptography only as a hobby while in the military and university. Based upon that limited knowledge and experience, I see no alternative but to believe God encoded the

Torah with these and many other sequences involving modern persons and events. Their discovery in our computerized age (impossible prior to this time) would seem to offer irrefutable evidence of God's existence and His authorship of the Bible. There seems no other rational explanation.

Endnotes

- 1 "Buddhists, Catholics Find Common Ground," *Los Angeles Times* (July 27, 1996).
- 2 Pat Robertson to inquirers concerning his signing of ECT (form letter on The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc. letterhead, 4/19/94; on file).
- 3 *Orange County Register* (4/25/93), L-1.
- 4 *USA Today* (March 23, 1989).
- 5 *Los Angeles Times*, op. cit.
- 6 *Washington Post* (7/30/96; 8/1/96); *Washington Times* (8/1/96).
- 7 *Our Sunday Visitor* (June 2, 1996), 6-7.
- 8 H.J. Schroeder, trans., *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1978), Seventh Session, "Canons on the Sacraments in General," Can. 4.
- 9 Op. cit., Seventh Session, "Canons on Baptism," Can. 5.
- 10 Op. cit., Twenty-second Session, "Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass," Cans. 1,3.
- 11 Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Lumen Gentium* (Costello Publishing, rev. ed. 1988), chap VII, par 51, 412.
- 12 *Christian News* (7/10/95), 1.
- 13 *Our Sunday Visitor* (6/16/96), 16.
- 14 *Christianity Today* (4/24/94), back cover.

Learning to Discern

T.A. McMahon

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

Ephesians 4:17-21

When meeting people for the first time, I'm often asked what I do. It's a question I love to answer. Whether the inquiring individual is a believer or not makes little difference; I relish the opportunity to explain my involvement in something I believe is tremendously important, especially in these days of increasing spiritual confusion and delusion.

The conversation with a non-Christian usually goes something like this:

I work for The Berean Call.
Oh...what's that?

It's a Christian ministry which encourages readers to develop discernment. We caution them not to buy into every spiritual idea that's being promoted these days.

Interesting. Sounds like a consumer protection agency...a Consumer Reports sort of thing?

Well...in a way. *Consumer Reports* does extensive testing of products, and many people look to it as the authority of what's worthwhile and what isn't. We, on the other hand, exhort Christians to do their own personal "testing," and not to look to man or organization (ours included) as the authority.

Seems like a good idea, especially with all the religious hucksters on TV these days.

TV isn't the only problem. When you consider promoters of religious teachings on radio, in books, magazines, newspapers, even local churches, you have a mixed bag which contains some very good teachers, some false teachers, and a few out-and-out con men. We want Christians to be able to

tell the difference.

I see...but don't you think theology is too complicated for most people? By the way, what's a Berean?

The Bereans, as cited in the Bible, are our inspiration for helping Christians learn to discern what's spiritually true and what's bogus. Here's the setting. A fellowship of Jews in a synagogue in the Grecian city of Berea were visited by the Apostle Paul, who tried to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah proclaimed in the Scriptures. The Bible gives them a terrific commendation. It says that they were willing to listen to what Paul had to say; that is, they were open-minded. But, more important, they checked out whether what he had to say was consistent with what the Scriptures

**Thy word is true from the beginning:
and every one of thy righteous
judgments endureth for ever.**

Psalms 119:160

actually taught (Acts 17:10-11).

So you're saying that the Bible is the "clearinghouse" for spiritual truth?

That's what it claims. It calls itself "the Word of God," and you'd certainly be hard pressed to find a higher authority.

Hmm...I never thought about that.

The above conversation is typical of those I've had. Unbelievers are particularly intrigued. And they should be. That there is a source of information readily available which can be used to determine the truthfulness of all of today's spiritual teachings is incredible!—and the logic for such a resource is as compelling as it is simple. Since God created us, it follows that He would reveal Himself to us. While we could certainly get some general ideas about Him by surveying His creation, we should also expect specific information concerning what He wants us to know about Himself.

For instance, we may recognize that God is incredibly powerful and intelligent by observing His handiwork in nature, but that wouldn't help us fathom a host of His other personal attributes (love, mercy, longsuffering, lovingkindness, justice, etc), as well as His purpose for creation. The only way mankind can

know such specifics about Him is for Him to spell them out—which He has, in the Bible.

I'm thrilled when an unbeliever responds positively to something about the Bible, though too often it's followed by an obvious and rather disturbing query: "Well, if the Bible is the final judge of spiritual truth, why do Christians seem just as confused as non-Christians?" A speaker at a conference I attended late last year had an answer to that question which was as insightful as it was blunt. His early years were spent in a denomination which claimed to be evangelical; nevertheless, his church taught some of the most unbiblical, even bizarre, doctrines one could imagine. When asked by a stunned member of the audience how those of a "Bible-believing church" could accept such teachings, he held up God's Word and replied, "Simple. No one had *read* this book." He explained that their congregations went along with whatever *they were told* was biblical, with no particular interest in checking it out for themselves. Questions raised from time

to time were regarded as divisive and the questioners as bordering upon rebellion. That's a scary situation. Yet more alarming is the fact that such conditions are becoming prevalent among many who, regardless of their denomination, call themselves evangelicals.

Solomon's request for "an understanding heart" and the personal ability to "discern between good and bad" pleased God (1 Kgs 3:9-10). Similarly, the Lord wants us to have a love for truth and to personally seek understanding. To that end, Jesus said to His disciples that after His departure He would send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who would teach them (and us) all things which pertain to life and godliness (Jn 14:26; 15:26; 2 Pt 1:3). Paul's prayer for the Ephesians underscores the importance and the personal nature of each believer's understanding: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his

mighty power..." (Eph 1:17-19).

We "who believe" are equipped for spiritual discernment. When we became believers in Christ, He sealed us with the Spirit of truth who "guides us into all truth" (Jn 16:13). That same Spirit, who (through supernatural inspiration) has given us the Word of God, also equips us for discernment by giving us supernatural understanding (2 Tm 3:16; 1 Cor 2:10-12). Again, why aren't believers more discerning? Often, out of self-conscious fear, apathy or just plain laziness, too many are comfortably sitting in pews listening to persuasive messages without a heart to scripturally "prove all things" (1 Thes 5:21). A favorite preacher, teacher or Christian leader says so, and too often that settles it. Such an approach produces a *faith by association* which lacks the primary characteristic of true faith: *personal conviction leading to application*. If we believe even a biblical truth *because* an impressive individual says so, that aspect of our faith can become dependent upon another human being. If that person should become a reproach to Christ, what happens to our confidence in the doctrines we believed *because he* told us so?

Should we then give little heed to those who teach God's Word? No. The Scriptures tell us clearly that God has gifted teachers "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). So that calling is certainly an important one in the church. Even so, when teachers are functioning in conjunction with the Holy Spirit (*the* requisite for being fruitful), they simply point us to, and communicate to us, what the Bible teaches. No matter how learned or godly the teacher, the work of understanding is a direct operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart and mind of the believer. The best scenario for faith that has a solid basis is for us to consider what's being taught, then search the Scriptures to verify the teaching, and allow the Holy Spirit to confirm and convince us regarding God's truth.

For those whom the Lord equips, He sets forth an essential for discernment: "...If ye *continue in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). Athletes who have all the training equipment necessary for a

particular sporting event, yet fail to use what is available or to perform the required exercises, are not athletes "indeed." They have no hope of developing in the sport. Likewise, for the sake of our growth in the faith and our development of discernment, we must "continue in [God's] word." The term "continue" as used here is loaded. It means *to submit* to Christ's teachings, *to abide* in them (i.e., to let our mental, physical and spiritual life be governed by them), and *to remain* in them, becoming steadfast in the faith. "If" we will do that, we will see in our lives the fruit of being His "disciples indeed"!

Discernment comes with knowledge, and that doesn't necessarily mean the stuff that fills the heads of intellectuals, apologists or scholars. Knowing Christ personally is the heartbeat of Christianity. In other

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

words, knowledge gained through one's personal relationship with Jesus is the only means for truly understanding the Christian faith.

How do we acquire such knowledge? In the same way we develop a relationship with anyone else. We spend time with Him. We read what He has revealed about Himself in His Word. Just as it is with a friend or loved one, the more time we spend getting to know Jesus, the closer our relationship becomes. To those who call themselves His disciples Jesus says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). Since nothing of what Jesus has said could be characterized as "suggestions," it is obvious that He is referring to *all* of His teachings. So, knowing the Lord Jesus Christ personally, growing in one's personal relationship with Him, learning more and more about Him, and doing what pleases Him produce a believer who is a discerner of the things of God.

Let me give you a personal illustration of simple discernment based upon relationship. Our seven-year-old son knows Jesus personally. A month ago he watched and listened intently as I was discussing Jesus with two Jehovah's Witnesses. I kept the conversation

centered on Jesus and what it takes to be with Him forever (a hopeless situation, they reluctantly admitted, since their teachings give them no real chance of being included among the exclusive 144,000 who alone will spend eternity with Jesus). I remember thinking at the time that it would be interesting to let my son take over for me. Not that he would have (he's pretty shy), but I know that he certainly could have been very effective. My confidence stems from questioning him now and then and hearing him talk about Jesus and what Jesus did to save him. He understands, and can articulate his belief with assurance. Listening to what the JW's had to say about Jesus, it became obvious to him that they weren't describing the Jesus he knows. Even if they tried to make their Jesus convincingly biblical, my son (the youngest of our five, and very inquisitive) would have pressed them with very simple questions, innocently trying to make sure they were talking about the same Person.

Because of what my son knows about me from our seven-year relationship, he wouldn't fall for a fraudulent description of me. Neither would it be easy for these Jehovah's Witnesses to get him to accept their false Jesus (a created god), because of what he has learned in his three-year relationship with his Lord and Savior. He understands some very simple things about Jesus: that He is God, his Creator, that He fully paid for his sins through His death on the cross, and that He physically resurrected from the dead and is now alive in heaven with the Father. He also knows that he has the Spirit of Jesus in his heart. The content of my young son's faith is very simple. Even so, he is well equipped for discernment—and so is every true believer in Christ.

We are in the age of spiritual-information overload, and we know these times can be very intimidating for those who fear being misled. However, such fear is unwarranted for those who have a heart for the truth and who would be diligent in God's ways. The Lord's provision for His own is totally sufficient for discerning truth from error, and His means—the help of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of His Son—couldn't be more reassuring. So let us be Bereans...abiding in God's Word, and encouraged in the Lord! **TBC**

Quotable

A Tale of Two Sisters, or The Tragedy of Ecumenical Unfaithfulness

With heart so kind and gentle,
And sympathetic eye;
With touching, deep affection,
And loyal, tender tie—
Was LOVE betrothed to DOCTRINE
To hold him all her days:
And walk the path of gladness
United in His ways.

Her younger sister also
Had qualities as fair,
Of caring, selfless, kindness,
And warmth without compare;
Thus UNITY was drawn to
The husband of her youth:
And pledged herself for ever
To be the bride of TRUTH.

But TIME, with bitter envy,
Across the testing years,
Pursued the slow erosion
Of happiness to tears;
Till LOVE began to weary
Of DOCTRINE'S pleasant voice,
And UNITY grew cold to
The partner of her choice.

Then LOVE began to notice
The charms of HERESY,
And awed by his opinions,
She wanted to be free;
And UNITY perceived that
Her virtues were desired
By many, many others
Whose ways she so admired.

At length, two precious unions,
So promising, so blest,
Were darkened by delusion,
Disloyalty, unrest;
Till came the day of sorrows,
And rending vows of youth,
When LOVE divorced her DOCTRINE
And UNITY her TRUTH.

Author unknown

Q&A

Question: You have courageously exposed Mother Teresa's love of all religions, her denial of the gospel, her statements that each person must believe in whatever "God" is in their mind, and her stated desire to help Hindus become better Hindus, Muslims become better Muslims, etc. Yet you say she deserves our respect

for her works of charity. I have heard that even her charity is not all it seems to be. Do you have any information in this regard?

Answer: Leaving her position as the principal of a famous high school that catered to students from wealthy families, Mother Teresa chose to live among the dregs of society and devoted herself to serving the poorest of the poor. That fact is commendable. She says, "I slept where I happened to be, on the ground, often in hovels infected by rats. I ate what the people I was serving ate....I had chosen that lifestyle in order to literally live out the Gospel....I gave my life completely to God..." (Renzo Allegri, "Mother Teresa: The Early Years," *New Covenant*, August 1996, p 8).

There have been numerous reports by former workers in her clinics as well as by visiting medical doctors that the patients are not given proper medication and that the beds and furnishings and general conditions more closely resemble an extermination camp than a hospital or clinic. The reports, coming as they do from a variety of independent observers, seem beyond dispute. As one example, Mary Loudon, a volunteer in Calcutta, wrote concerning Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying,

My initial impression was of all the photographs and footage I've ever seen of Belsen [Nazi death camp] and places like that, because all the patients had shaved heads. No chairs anywhere, there were just these stretcher beds. They're like First World War stretcher beds. There's no garden, no yard even. No nothing. And I thought what is this? This is two rooms with fifty to sixty men in one, fifty to sixty women in another. They're dying. They're not being given a great deal of medical care. They're not being given painkillers really beyond aspirin...for the sort of pain that goes with terminal cancer. ... (Christopher Hitchens, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*; Verso, London, New York, 1995, pp 39-40)

We are not indicting Mother Teresa with lack of compassion or with cruelty toward her patients. The problem is her Roman Catholic belief that personal suffering helps to earn one's salvation. Many Catholic

priests and nuns, to this day, wear hair undergarments, put stones in their shoes, flagellate themselves and otherwise try to merit heaven by suffering. Poverty and suffering are not simply endured but are sought and even created. Consider this example:

[G]iven use of a three-storey convent with many large rooms...the sisters ...removed the benches...pulled up all the carpeting in the rooms and hallways. They pushed thick mattresses out the windows and removed all the sofas, chairs and curtains...People from the neighborhood stood on the sidewalk and watched in amazement.

The beautifully constructed house was made to conform to a way of life intended to help the sisters become holy. Large sitting rooms were turned into dormitories where beds were crowded together...The heat remained off all winter in this exceedingly damp house. Several sisters got TB during the time I lived there. (Hitchens, p 45)

The heat was not left off for lack of funds. Mother Teresa has bank accounts with tens of millions of dollars on deposit, so she could afford proper heat, furnishings and food and certainly all the medical attention ever needed. Yet she does without all of these "luxuries," enforces the same rule upon her "Sisters of Charity," and deprives her patients of them as well. No doubt, just as she hopes to earn her way to heaven through her own deprivation and suffering, so Mother Teresa hopes to help her patients as well to reach heaven through the suffering she imposes upon them. The morgue in Calcutta has this inscription on a wall: "I am leaving for heaven today."

In Roman Catholicism, baptism is essential for salvation. It is known that Mother Teresa's assistants secretly "baptize" patients by placing a damp cloth on fevered brows, under their breath saying the magic formula that allegedly erases original sin and gives entrance into the kingdom of God. Of course, the uncertain route leads through purgatory and additional suffering in its flames before the gates of heaven can be opened. As one investigative reporter has written concerning the operation in Calcutta,

Bear in mind that Mother Teresa's global income is more than enough to

outfit several first-class clinics in Bengal. The decision not to do so, and indeed to run instead a haphazard and cranky institution...is a deliberate one. The point is not the honest relief of suffering but the promulgation of a cult based on death and suffering and subjection.

Mother Teresa (who herself, it should be noted, has checked into some of the finest and costliest clinics and hospitals in the West during her bouts with heart trouble and old age) once gave this game away in a filmed interview. She described a person who was in the last agonies of cancer and suffering unbearable pain. With a smile, Mother Teresa told the camera what she told this terminal patient: "You are suffering like Christ on the cross. So Jesus must be kissing you." (Hitchens, p 41)

Many who have worked with Mother Teresa for years consider themselves fortunate to have escaped a cult. One of these, Susan Shields, having spent more than nine years as a Missionary of Charity in the Bronx, Rome and San Francisco, writes,

I was able to keep my complaining conscience quiet because we had been taught that the Holy Spirit was guiding Mother. To doubt her was a sign that we were lacking in trust and, even worse, guilty of the sin of pride. I shelved my objections and hoped that one day I would understand the many things that seemed to be contradictions. (Hitchens, p 44)

Contradictions abound, not the least being her association with a number of unsavory persons with whom she has been photographed and from whom she has received large sums of money and to whom she has given her blessing and endorsement. There she was in 1981, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in a photo with Michele Duvalier, wife of the infamous dictator Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") Duvalier. The occasion was Mother Teresa's reception of the Haitian *Legion d'honneur* award. In return, she praised the wonderful treatment of the poor in Haiti, when actually they were enduring a living hell. The Duvaliers had to flee Haiti not long thereafter to save their wealth and their lives.

Then we have the photo taken with John-Roger, whom at that time almost

everyone had already recognized as the most obvious of frauds, leader of the "Insight" cult known as "Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness" (MSIA). Ironically, the occasion was her acceptance of the "Integrity Award," along with a check for \$10,000, from this shameless charlatan who claimed to have a "spiritual consciousness" superior to that of Jesus Christ.

Consider one more example of the associations of this legendary woman who is almost certainly on her way to Roman Catholic sainthood and is already considered to be such by millions. The photo is with Charles Keating of Lincoln Savings and Loan, now in prison for having swindled hundreds of millions of dollars from simple folk. Keating, a staunch Roman Catholic whom Mother Teresa visited whenever in California, gave her more than a million dollars. She wrote to Judge Lance Ito requesting leniency for Keating during his trial. Here is an excerpt from the reply which Paul W. Turley, a deputy district attorney, wrote to Mother Teresa:

I am writing to you to provide a brief explanation of the crimes of which Mr. Keating has been convicted, to give you an understanding of the source of the money that Mr. Keating gave to you, and to suggest that you perform the moral and ethical act of returning the money to its rightful owners....

Ask yourself what Jesus would do if he were...in possession of money that had been stolen....I submit that Jesus would promptly and unhesitatingly return the stolen property to its rightful owners. You should do the same. You have been given money by Mr. Keating that he has been convicted of stealing by fraud. Do not permit him the "indulgence" he desires. Do not keep the money. Return it to those who worked for it and earned it! (Hitchens, pp 68-70)

That letter was written more than four years ago. To date, according to a letter I just received from now Assistant District Attorney Turley, he has never received a reply from Mother Teresa, who has made no move to return those stolen funds.

Correction or Coercion?

T.A. McMahon

Spiritual discernment is a necessity for every true disciple of Jesus Christ. Without it we would indeed be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph 4:14). We can be thankful that even in these days of spiritual information overload, we know from the Scriptures that we, as believers, have all that we need through the Holy Spirit and God’s Word to personally discern what is of the Lord and what is not. Fearfulness over being swept away by false teachings, or intimidation by false teachers, should not be the state of mind of those who belong to Jesus and who desire to grow in their relationship with Him. Hopefully, last month’s article was an encouragement to those who may have allowed such fears to establish a foothold in their lives. But what about the *application* of discernment—particularly when it comes to addressing the teachings and actions of others?

In the September ’96 *TBC*, Dave shared his grief over some recent and very disturbing occurrences of compromise by leading evangelicals, some of whom he knows well and for whom he has great personal affection. While there were a few strong objections to portions of what Dave wrote, the overwhelming response has been that of empathy by readers who are also grieved. Writing to encourage discernment and to help bring about correction is a task often akin to running a gauntlet. Even if one’s course is straight as an arrow, rarely does anyone make it through unscathed. Nevertheless, discernment leading to prayerful correction where necessary—and the willingness to be corrected—are the responsibility of every believer.

Paul had a great deal to say about discernment and correction, and he practiced what he preached. He discerned that some of Peter’s actions were not only contrary to the gospel but were forms of hypocrisy which caused Jewish and Gentile believers alike to stumble in the faith. Paul administered correction. His rebuke of Peter seems harsh according to today’s psychologized and “religiously correct” mindset. Yet the Holy Spirit presents it as God’s standard and the

absolutely righteous thing to do. Paul saw that Peter, his beloved brother in Christ (as well as his co-worker, Barnabas), in reverting to the law, “walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:14). They and others, in fear of Jewish legalists, withdrew from the Gentiles, who were considered unclean under the Mosaic law. Rather than a private dialogue which could have protected Peter’s prestige, ministry and self-esteem, Paul, “before them all,” opposed “him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal 2:11-14). If one is willing to believe God’s Word, one can only admit that Paul did the very best thing for Peter. “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which

...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Romans 14:5

shall not break my head,” the Psalmist wrote (Ps 141:5).

So how did Peter respond to Paul’s “attack?” Was there a “counterattack?” Did Peter complain that Paul was causing untold damage to his ministry? Wasn’t Paul aware that his public correction could cause a severe drop in financial support for Peter’s work? Wouldn’t unbelievers be put off by the “airing of dirty Christian laundry” or this public demonstration of discord among Christians? And wouldn’t Peter take the personal bitterness generated by Paul’s public “attack” to his grave? No!

Instead, some time later, Peter called his public disputer “our beloved brother Paul” and proceeded to commend “all his epistles,” which he tells us were “according to the wisdom given unto him” by the Holy Spirit (2 Pt 3:15-16). Amazingly, especially from today’s ego-sensitive, self-esteem-nurturing perspective, Peter included the very epistle which displayed for all time his own public “embarrassment” at Paul’s hands. Rather than causing emotional trauma, Peter’s experience affected him in a way foreign to the teachings of today’s deterministic and humanistically oriented “Christian” psychotherapists.

Roman Catholics have trouble reconciling Peter’s obvious though indirect denial of the gospel of salvation with their view of

his alleged papal *infallibility*. On the other hand, they couldn’t accuse Paul of hurting “Peter’s ministry” either financially or numerically, since Peter’s so-called successors and flock have few superiors in numbers—and none in wealth.

Paul’s approach to discernment and correction was flawless. Peter and Barnabas weren’t the only ones he admonished. To them we can add Hymenaeus, Philetus, Demas, Phygellus, Homogenes and Alexander (see 1 and 2 Timothy). The beloved John makes the readers of his third Epistle aware of the problems caused by Diotrephes. It ought to be clear to all that such warnings and public correction were what God desired. And we are to do likewise—with one important qualification.

How we do something in obedience to the Lord is just as important as *what* we do. Paul made that clear to Timothy: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Tm 2:24-26). Gentle to all, able to teach, patient, and showing meekness in dealing with opposing views are qualities in too short supply today. Sadly, the church, professing or otherwise, has had problems throughout the ages in correcting heresies Paul’s way.

Most, if not all, of the early church councils were just as much attempts to halt the *bloodshed* over theological differences as they were attempts to arrive at a unity of doctrine. At the Council of Nicea, for example, which addressed the heresy of Arianism, Constantine issued an imperial order for the execution of all those who were concealing books authored by the heretic Arius. Augustine, recognized by his contemporaries and by many today as the Church’s great apologist against heresies, was not above condoning physical coercion in defense of the faith.

Many of the Reformers did not adhere to *sola scriptura* when it came to correction. Martin Luther had a bit more to say regarding the Catholic Church than he acknowledged in his theses affixed to the door at the Castle Church of Wittenberg. In *Against the Falsely Called Spiritual Order of the Pope and the Bishops* he writes,

It were better that every bishop were murdered, every [monastery or convent] rooted out, than that one soul should be destroyed....But if they will not hear God's Word, but rage and rave with bannings and burnings, killings and every evil, what do they better deserve than a strong uprising which will sweep them from the earth? And we would smile did it happen.

Contrary to Paul's teaching, Luther added, "All who contribute body, goods, and honor that the rule of the bishops may be destroyed are God's dear children and true Christians." Incredibly (or perhaps not), in his later years Luther turned even more vicious in his reviling of the Jews.

Though John Calvin attempted to set up a biblical utopia in Geneva, he had some rather glaring lapses regarding biblical correction. Capital offenses in Calvin-ruled Geneva included many theological doctrines, which finally did one Spanish physician in. Michael Servetus was a refugee who had narrowly escaped being tortured to death at the Catholic Inquisition in Lyon, France. His freedom flight to Geneva, however, was short-lived. A few weeks after his arrival, the City Council found him guilty of Anabaptism (the rejection of infant baptism) and Antitrinitarianism, and burned him at the stake. Another champion of the Reformation, Ulrich Zwingli, condoned the drowning, for doctrinal differences, of one of his former disciples turned Anabaptist.

To the abuses of so-called Christian doctrinal correction we can add the genocidal Catholic Inquisitions throughout the Middle Ages. Thankfully, the Reformers rejected many of the false teachings of Roman Catholicism, but *in their approach to stamping out heresy* they remained very Catholic. In England, the Anglican Church heavily persecuted the Separatists, and the Separatists in turn persecuted the Baptists over doctrinal differences. In North America, Puritans hanged Quakers and corrected sin through the Salem witchcraft trials and the ensuing death sentences.

The arena of doctrinal differences sometimes fell short of being killing fields. The acid tongue was often used in personal attacks and ridicule of alleged heretics, opening the door for persecution by those who very likely needed little excuse. For instance, the biblical scholar Jerome called one adversary a "corpulent dog weighed

down with porridge." Martin Luther, after dialoging with the humble peacemaker Caspar Schwenckfeld over their differences regarding the Lord's Supper, referred to Schwenckfeld as *Schweinfeld*, the German term for *pig*.

As I hope we all know, none of the above has one jot or tittle of support from the whole counsel of God's Word. It is contradictory to attempt to *force* biblical truth on anyone. Biblical Christianity is the antithesis of coercion in any form. Why, then, do we still see many such "corrections" carried on today in the name of Christ? Catholics and Protestants continue to kill each other for their religious beliefs in Northern Ireland, Latin America, Bosnia and numerous other places. Where civil laws offer protection, current persecutions within professing

...[R]ebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

Proverbs 9:8

Christianity take less drastic forms, but even here the effects are often devastating to the victimized.

While we are hardly unique, TBC's vantage point regarding correction in the church today is at least an interesting one. Short of physical injury, we have experienced nearly the entire gamut of "Christian correction." *Christianity Today* took us to task for being a self-appointed "Inquisition," and followed that a few years ago with the charge that we were a part of "Christian McCarthyism." Television's most popular "evangelist" accused the co-authors of *The Seduction of Christianity* of writing a book that was literally "demonic, satanic, a work of the devil." On another occasion he stated that "Dave Hunt is a devil!" A well-known pastor told his congregation that it was "proven by credible sources that [*The Seduction of Christianity*] was written strictly for money so please do not buy it." A leading Christian apologist told his audience that "Dave Hunt is the most dangerous man in Christendom." The co-founder of Christian psychotherapy clinics told us personally that we were "*murderers* of Christians who need psychiatric help." TBC's work and Dave personally have been banned from much of Christian media and from numerous

churches. Dave's books, when not completely excluded from some Christian bookstores, may be found under the counter, sometimes enclosed in brown paper bags.

TBC's mail is roughly 90 percent supportive and encouraging, even when corrections are included. However, we continue to be staggered by the content of letters written by those who claim to be Christians, who tell us in no uncertain terms that some of our views were hatched in hell. While they are certainly entitled to differ with us on biblical issues, and we welcome correction, the "terms" include incredibly vile language, vitriolic attacks on Dave's person, *not the issues*, and the most arrogant and self-righteous attitudes one could imagine—all this in the "name of Christ"!

Sébastien Castellio, a school teacher in Geneva during Calvin's theocracy, despaired as he witnessed trials, tortures, and even death sentences of those who disagreed with Calvin's doctrine of predestination or his view of election or infant baptism, etc. He wrote, "To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine; it is simply to kill a man."

This meek Reformer wasn't capitulating to Rome for the sake of peace and safety; nor was he conforming to his brother-in-Christ's teachings and practices for the sake of *unity* (he fearlessly challenged Calvin's doctrines on occasion—until he was banished). He simply expressed what he understood the Scriptures to clearly teach us: the way we are commanded by the Lord to correct, rebuke, or reprove in matters of doctrine. Therefore, *how* we go about it is a critical factor in our obedience, and subsequently our fruitfulness. To libel, slander, belittle, abuse, denigrate, or intimidate is not to "defend a doctrine," it is simply to play the Christian hypocrite and to grieve the Spirit of Truth who bids us speak the truth in love, meekly and with longsuffering (1 Pt 3:15; 2 Tm 4:2).

These are perilous times; we are buffeted by every wind of doctrine. Nevertheless, by His grace our Lord Jesus Christ provides all that we need for discernment, self-correction and the prayerful, loving correction of others. Pray that all of us who call ourselves His disciples will truly abide in His Word, and that we may have a testimony similar to that of Enoch: that we pleased God in all our ways (Heb 11:5).

TBC

Quotable

...[T]ribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope....

Romans 5:3-4

For if Jesus had not been crucified none could now be saved. If there were no testing by fire then true faith would not shine forth. If the rock is not split open, then the water of life cannot flow forth. So difficulties are the means for promoting life and revival in the churches.

To carnal men, this is unfortunate, but for Christians this is like a rich banquet. This lesson cannot be learned from books. This sweetness cannot be tasted by carnal men. This rich spiritual life does not exist in a comfortable environment. Where there is no cross, there is no crown. If the spices are not refined to become oil, then the fragrance cannot flow forth. If grapes are not crushed in the vat, they will not become wine.

Portion, letter from a house church, Fangcheng, China

Q&A

Question: Please listen to the enclosed tape by Gene Edwards and give your evaluation in your newsletter. What do you think?

Answer: I listened to the tape and was appalled. Edwards is obviously a mystic who applies his own esoteric meaning to words. He says that before creation of anything, the Father, Son and Spirit “were having church life.” What he means is not clear, so we’ll give him the benefit of the doubt for that strange statement. Again, can his statement that the Godhead “made a terrible and frightening gamble” in creating mankind be overlooked as a peculiar way of speaking? But we *must* object when he says that the redeemed were planned to be “portions of the Son...portions of His being that would be given great destiny ...those separate pieces would one day come together and be one again ...these glorious, wonderful, destined and highly honored portions of His being would come back to Him.” We are not little parts of Christ! That is heresy.

Nor is it true that “God put something in this universe that would let us know

what Christ was like before creation...that we would be able to look at and know that this was what His Son was like. And that was a little lamb.” Christ is not like a little lamb! He was sacrificed for our sins as a lamb is sacrificed, but He is also called “the lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rv 5:5). Does a lion also tell us what Christ is like? Yet Satan “goes about as a roaring lion” (1 Pt 5:8). Furthermore, lambs are helpless and prone to wander, unable to find their way without a shepherd, which is why we are likened unto sheep. Surely Christ is not like that. In fact, He is also called the *Shepherd!*

Edwards goes on to declare that Christ actually was slain before anything was ever created, and “when He died, all those parts of Him died too...they were slain with Him...[and] rose with Him” before they were even created. “The old fallen creation...was slain before it was created.” He adds that “there is no creation...because He was absolutely all...there was no way to create creation without that creation being created in Him, because there wasn’t any room any place else...creation was created in Christ.” Again, the heresy of pantheism: that God is all and all is God.

Further contradictions abound: “So the Lord didn’t know what was going to happen....And then He went back to the end, where He always is...and He saw you in that great throng...of those wonderful, glorious portions of His being. One of them had your name on them (sic)...you are so beautiful, to be honored above all things ...pure and so holy...you’re not a creation at all, for you are that which cannot be created, for you have in you a life that was previous to creation ...and you belong, and always have belonged...where He is....” (Again, heresy. Only God is uncreated and always existed.)

Edwards continues, “He’s going to marry you. That’s why I’m so for sisters and not particularly interested in brothers. [Sniffing and crying by Edwards.] I’m trying to learn to be a girl....I’m going to be a girl....Sisters, be patient with us ...someday we will be like you, and then together we will be like Him...one with Him.” It is heresy to suggest that being the bride of Christ has anything to do with femaleness and thus male members of the church must become girls! In the church there is “neither male nor female” (Gal 3:28).

These are not all of the problems in the tape but enough.

Question: I heard where you denied you were a Protestant. The word we use derives from *Pro-testari*, meaning to testify for or in behalf. To then deny that you are a Protestant is to inadvertently affirm that you are not a witness for Christ. How terrible! I affirm that the history of Protestantism is the history of the true Church.

Answer: We seem to have a serious misunderstanding. So far as I know (and as the dictionaries and encyclopedias affirm), the words Protestant and Protestantism never existed until the sixteenth century, when the Protestant movement was birthed at the Reformation. The term refers specifically to those former Roman Catholics who protested against the evils and heresies of Rome and as a result were excommunicated or came out for the sake of conscience. While the term was used thereafter of those who followed in the footsteps of the Reformers and who belonged to so-called Protestant churches, it was never used of Christians who had previously existed apart from Rome and who had comprised the true church which for centuries before the Reformation had been persecuted and slaughtered by the millions by the Roman Catholic Church. Those Christians never called themselves Protestants because they had never been part of the Roman Catholic Church. Nor have I ever been part of it, nor do I call myself by any other name than “Christian,” as the disciples were designated.

I am astonished, therefore, that you would suggest that not to be a Protestant is to fail to be a witness for our Lord. Jesus told His disciples, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8). Such witness had nothing to do with protesting against the Roman Catholic system, which didn’t even exist at the time. Therefore I conclude that being a witness for Christ need have nothing to do with protesting against Rome today—though it is only proper for any true Christian to stand firmly against apostasy and error of every kind.

Question [composite of several:] In September you referred to “PK’s Roman Catholic founder, Bill McCartney.” Coach McCartney is not a Catholic, nor does he attend a Catholic Church, but a Vineyard. I assume he was raised as a Catholic, but to continue to call him one would be as erroneous as calling Mr. McMahan a

Catholic, wouldn't it? Also you say that McCartney "declared that every Protestant and Catholic was welcome to participate." I was there and heard him say that. But the context was that anybody and everybody was welcome to come to the PK conference in much the same way that anybody is welcome to come to our church's worship service on Sunday morning....Furthermore, Glenn Wagner, representing the PK speakers and leadership, clearly said to us all, "We believe in justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And if you don't agree with us on that you're not a part of Promise Keepers," and there was a thunderous applause. I would encourage you to attend at least one PK conference or even speak to one of their representatives before criticizing them. There are many Catholics, Orthodox, etc. who attend these rallies, hear a clear gospel presentation and come to know Christ. There is no need to name every false religion and explain how wrong they are...just preach what is true and they will come [to know Christ].

Answer: Bill McCartney was a lifetime devout Roman Catholic who attended Mass daily until he visited the Boulder Vineyard Fellowship, liked the pastor's preaching, and began attending there. He has never broken with the Catholic Church. If he has, then *let us hear it from him*: when he left Romanism and why—i.e., what was wrong with it that caused him to leave and why he would seek to rescue other Catholics from its errors. Any ex-Catholic I have ever known came out of that Church because of having come to know the Lord Jesus Christ personally as Savior, and thereafter desired to see other Catholics delivered from Rome's false gospel. In contrast, McCartney accepts Catholics as Christians and sees no reason to evangelize them.

In his autobiography, *From Ashes to Glory*, McCartney admits that as a "daily communicant in the Catholic Church" he "had never been encouraged to read the Bible, so...knew nothing about the Word of God" and "had been totally without a clue about what it's like to be a whole-hearted, committed Christian" (p 110). Those statements alone condemn Catholicism! He then tells what he apparently offers as his conversion story (pp 110-13) and calls himself a "born-again Catholic."

In fact, it sounds like a "dedication" of his life to Christ, as though he thinks he was already saved and is confusing "sanctification" with "salvation."

His next statement is even more confusing: "Making a profession of faith like I did may not be expected and may not even be important in the Catholic church...." An astounding declaration if he has just related how he got saved! No ex-Catholic who has come to faith in Christ as his Savior would ever say that to do so would not be essential for other Catholics. In fact, he would insist that they, like all mankind, are lost and on their way to hell until they receive Christ and look to Him alone for their eternal salvation instead of to their Church and its sacraments. Clearly McCartney has no such conviction.

As for "salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone," Roman Catholic apologists insist that this is what their church teaches. That is why it is not enough, as you suggest, simply to "preach what is true" without pointing out error. All Catholics agree that Christ died for their sins, was buried and rose again the third day and that "salvation" is received by grace. In addition, however, Catholicism teaches that "the graces and merits Christ won on the cross" can only be received by the individual through the sacraments of the Church, and then only in partial installments. No one ever gets saved and has assurance of going to heaven. Even the pope lacks that assurance, as we have pointed out. Thus even a clear gospel message at a Promise Keepers rally will likely be understood by Roman Catholics and Mormons only in the context of their religious indoctrination and therefore will not save them. The Catholic and Mormon "convert" is sent back to his church for the PK small group follow-up. The very fact that both the Roman Catholic and Mormon churches have officially declared that they find no conflict between PK teaching and their own doctrines ought to tell you that something is seriously wrong.

The Incarnation

Dave Hunt

Paul reminds us, “[G]reat is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tm 3:16). What a mystery the incarnation is! How astonishing—and yet essential to our salvation—that God, as the Hebrew prophets in the Old Testament foretold (Is 7:14; 9:6; Mic 5:2; Zec 12:10, etc.) could become a man. Nor did He, at His incarnation, cease to be God, which would be impossible. God and man now exist together in one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, the unique God-man!

Mary, a virgin when Jesus was conceived and born, knew that God was His Father, but it was too much to understand. He nursed at her breast, grew as a child, and at night His rhythmic breathing mingled with that of the other sleeping children to whom Mary gave birth by Joseph (Mt 12:47; 13:55; Mk 3:32; Lk 8:20). So “normal” was He as a child that Mary lapsed by habit into calling Joseph His father—“thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” When Jesus gently reproved her—“wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business”—she and Joseph “understood not” what He meant. Mary pondered this mystery “in her heart” (Lk 2:19,48-51).

Jesus was not popularly acclaimed in Nazareth. He was unrecognized and even hated “without a cause” (Jn 15:18,25)! Here was God himself, the Creator, walking among His creatures—and they despised Him! How deep was the alienation between God and man! Few were those who could say, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

The careful language of Scripture calls Christ “the *second* man” (1 Cor 15:47). From Adam until this One, there was never a man who deserved to be truly called “man” in the fullness God purposed. As Adam was created by God, so Christ’s body was created in the womb of a virgin: “A body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5). Here was man once again as God had intended him to be. Here, too, was God as man: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jn 14:9).

As the progenitor of a new race of those who have been born again, Christ is also called the *last* Adam (1 Cor 15:45). Those redeemed by His blood (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14),

to whom He has given eternal life as a free gift of His grace, will “never perish” (Jn 10:28). Never will there be a *third* Adam or a *fourth*. How incredible it is that God became a man; and how wonderful are the implications for us for eternity! God *had* to become a man to pay the penalty which His infinite justice required of man for sin: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Rom 5:12), so it had to be that “by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:21).

The God of the Bible created the universe out of nothing. The universe is not God nor an extension of Him, nor is He part of it. Therefore, to speak of God as “She” or to refer to “Mother Earth” or “Mother Nature” or even “Mother/Father God” promotes a grave heresy. A woman nurtures her offspring within her womb and

[G]reat is the mystery of godliness...God was manifest in the flesh...

1 Timothy 3:16

gives birth out of herself, precisely what God does not do. Nor is man, though in God’s image (Gn 1:26-27), an extension of God or part of God but a separate being entirely.

Obviously, being made “in the image of God” has nothing to do with man’s physical form, for “God is a Spirit” (Jn 4:24). Man was made in the spiritual and moral image of God. God made man’s *body* from the “dust of the ground.” Man’s *soul and spirit*, however, are nonphysical: “And the LORD God...breathed into his [Adam’s] nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gn 2:7). Reflecting the triune nature of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), man is also a triune being: body, soul and spirit. Paul wrote, “I pray God your whole *spirit and soul and body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes 5:23). And God’s Word causes a “dividing asunder of soul and spirit” (Heb 4:12). Having made man a triune being in His image, God could become a man in order to redeem His creatures.

At first, the Spirit of God indwelt the spirits of Adam and Eve. Their focus was toward God. The enjoyment of bodily pleasures and sense of their own identities was more wonderful than we can imagine because it was all to the glory of God rather than for self-gratification. When they sinned, the Spirit of God departed from

their spirits and their orientation turned from God to self. Thus we, their descendants, are by nature sensual, selfish and materialistic. Instead of the joy of fellowship with God, man finds his joy in this world’s “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn 2:16).

These three lusts are all that Satan and the world have to offer. We see them in Eve’s sin: the forbidden fruit’s delicious taste, its enticing visual appeal, and the wisdom with which it would endow her. We see them in Satan’s tempting of Christ: to turn stones into bread to satisfy his bodily hunger; to succumb to the appealing panorama of “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them”; to cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple, causing the angels to catch Him in midair and the watching Jews to worship Him (Mt 4:1-11). Unlike the first man and first Adam, the Second Man and Last Adam refused Satan’s offer.

In everyone else except Christ, the unique God-man, the battle rages between man’s flesh and God’s Spirit: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal 5:17). Even Paul acknowledged, “For the

good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom 7:18-19). Man’s spirit has become a slave to his soul and body. He can never be right—even his morality and uprightness can never be anything but the “filthy rags” (Is 64:6) of self-righteousness—until the Spirit of God indwells and rules in man’s spirit once again. Only Christ, in Whose person God and man have been united, can bring this reconciliation within man’s heart. Paul, who said, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”, declared in triumph, “I thank God [that there is deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 7:24-25)!

David exulted, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:14)! Materialism has trivialized man. Materialistic science has denied the nonphysical spirit and soul of man and turned him into a stimulus-response mechanism. It alleges that man’s thoughts, ambitions, likes, dislikes, even his sense of right and wrong and the experience of love and compassion, can all be explained in terms of electrical and chemical impulses in his brain and nervous system. Such folly was the basis for Sigmund Freud’s theories and is still behind the treatment of *mental* disorders with drugs.

Yes, the brain may be like a computer, but no computer can think on its own.

Someone must tell it what to do. What folly to imagine that thoughts originate in the brain! If so, we would be prisoners of our brains, helplessly dragged along as its chemical/electrical processes determined our thoughts and even our morals and emotions. In fact, thought is initiated by the soul and spirit, which use the brain to operate the body and to interface with this physical world of sensual experience in which our bodies function.

There are more cells in the brain than stars in the universe, and these cells make up hundreds of billions of neurons and trillions of synapses in perfect balance. Moreover, the mysterious link between the spirit of man, made in God's image, and his brain and body is forever beyond the grasp of science. Yet that connection is being tampered with by drugs in order to adjust man's behavior—behavior which was meant to reflect God's perfect purity, but instead reflects man's rebellion and sin as a child of Satan: "ye are of your father, the devil" (Jn 8:44). There are no *chemical* solutions to spiritual problems. Yet millions take drugs such as Prozac, Effexor, Valium, Ritalin, Zoloft, Paxil, etc. to deal with spiritual problems.

The Bible declares that man's inner turmoil, insecurity, lust, anger, his conflict with himself and others and any other "emotional problems" which beset him are spiritual at their root (2 Cor 7:1; Gal 5:16; Col 1:21). They result from man's rebellion against God and the wrenching separation from God which that rebellion effected in the depths of his being. Therefore, the solution to man's emotional and spiritual problems is reconciliation to God. Tragically, that solution is being set aside in favor of correcting a "chemical imbalance" in the brain with drugs.

There is no doubt that much can go wrong with the brain as a *physical* instrument. However, even secular psychiatrists admit that the brain is far too complex to be precisely "adjusted" with drugs. Although we don't endorse all of his views, Peter R. Breggin, M.D., is one of the world's leading experts on psychoactive drugs. He reminds us, "the biochemical activities that run the brain remain almost wholly shrouded in mystery. If depression...has a biological or genetic basis, it has not been demonstrated scientifically....Biopsychiatric theory remains pure speculation and runs counter to a great deal of research and clinical experience, as well as common sense...."¹ Breggin continues,

The biochemical imbalance theory is merely the latest biopsychiatric speculation, presented to the public as a scientific truth. [T]he ironic truth is this: The only known biochemical imbalances in the brains of nearly all psychiatric patients are those *caused by the treatments....Curiously, in light of so much psychiatric concern about the dangers of biochemical imbalances, all known psychiatric drugs produce widespread chemical imbalances in the brain....* (Emphasis added)

It seems foolhardy to imagine that blocking one of the brain's biochemical functions [which all psychiatric drugs are designed to do] would somehow improve the brain and mind. At the root lies a dangerous assumption that it is safe and effective to tamper with the most complex organ in the universe!²

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:16

The awesome implications of tampering with the brain are not generally recognized by those relying upon chemical solutions. Nor are Christian psychologists acknowledging the even more serious consequences of tampering with the brain's response to the soul and spirit of man, so "fearfully and wonderfully" made in the image of God!

A word of caution: We are not advocating that anyone now taking medication should stop abruptly. Psychiatric drugs can be addictive, and to stop suddenly could have serious consequences. *Any* change in medication should be only under the supervision of a physician. We are simply pointing out that *no one really knows* how drugs work or the full range of their effects. Many drugs prescribed by physicians for years have only later been found to have such devastating effects that they have been removed from the market.

The connection between the spirit and the brain and body is known only to God. The *moral* and *spiritual* consequences of tampering with the brain and nervous system through drugs could be far worse than the *physical* dangers. Consider depression, for example. Drugs too often mask the real need and hinder one from turning to Christ for the spiritual solution that can only be found in Him. In pursuing

a *chemical* solution, science ignores (because it cannot deal with it) what ought to be the first priority: getting right with God through the redemption which is in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. His incarnation united God and man in His own person; and He brings that reconciliation and union within the human spirit when He is received as Savior and invited to dwell there. Christianity (unlike Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc.) is not a set of rules for one to follow in one's own strength. Only Christ can live the Christian life, and He will live it in and through those who believe in Him. Note the wonder of what Paul said: "[I]t pleased God...to reveal his Son in me" (Gal 1:15-16). He wants to reveal His Son in us as well. That's what Christianity is!

The indwelling of Christ within the human spirit is as great a mystery as the incarnation itself. To those who trust Him and obey His Word, He becomes their very life: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal 2:20); "ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Obviously, the Spirit of Christ within needs no help from psychotherapy or drugs. What we need above all is to trust, obey and rejoice in Him. Nor does Christ promise an easy path. The Christian life is beset by trials and temptations and conflicts between the flesh and the Spirit, allowed by God to test us to see whether or not we will really trust and obey Him. As He told Israel,

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger...that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live (Dt 8:2-3).

Without the Incarnation, mankind was doomed eternally. "[A]ll have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23); and "[T]he wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23). We believe in Christ as our Savior from the *penalty* of sin. Let us also trust Him fully as the One who indwells us and will *overcome* sin in our lives. May we rejoice in "the riches of the glory of this mystery...Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27)! **TBC**

Quotable

It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error. It is better to speak the truth that hurts and then heals, than falsehood that comforts and then kills. Let me tell you something, friend, it is not love and it is not friendship if we fail to declare the whole counsel of God. It is better to be hated for telling the truth, than to be loved for telling a lie. It is impossible to find anyone in the Bible who was a power for God who did not have enemies and was not hated. It's better to stand alone with the truth, than to be wrong with a multitude. It is better to ultimately succeed with the truth than to temporarily succeed with a lie. There is only one Gospel and Paul said, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Pastor Adrian Rodgers, excerpts from talk, National Religious Broadcasters Convention, 1996

How many of us, who are engaged in the Lord's holy service, are secretly cherishing some proud purpose of excelling other men, of making a name, of securing money and applause! We will use the pulpit as a pedestal for the adulation of the world, and the cross for a post on which to hang garlands to our own glory. How often do we preach sermons, or make addresses, and attend meetings, with no other thought than to secure the recognition and goodwill of those with whom we desire to stand well! We are not willing to trust our reputation with Christ, or to be called fools for His sake....But all this must be laid aside. We must have no private purposes to serve.

F.B. Meyer, Meet for the Master's Use

Q&A

Question: Have you heard of the book titled *Rapture Shock*? It says that some true believers will not be taken at the Rapture due to sin in their lives...and are the ones referred to in Revelation as washing their garments during the Tribulation. Can you please comment on this?

Answer: There is no biblical basis for this teaching. Nor is it logical that those who happen to be alive at the time of the Rapture would be dealt with differently from those who died earlier. If some sin in a true believer's life disqualifies him or her from going to heaven, then where do those who *die* in such condition go? We would have to propose an evangelical purgatory! Our entitlement to heaven, whether taken there through death ("absent from the body ...present with the Lord" - 2 Cor 5:8) or at the Rapture, is the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross, not our works nor how fully we have lived for the Lord. From 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 we know that even those true Christians whose works do not endure God's testing fire but are all burned up at the "judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor 5:10) are, nevertheless, saved: "but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor 3:15). There is no scripture that says the saved are kept out of heaven, either at death or at the Rapture.

Question: If you have read it, could you give me your opinion of Robert Shank's *Life in the Son* (Bethany House, 1989)? Thank you very much.

Answer: I appreciate Shank's call for holiness and full submission to our Lord, allowing the life of Christ to be expressed through us as His disciples. From that standpoint, the book is a solemn reminder of "what manner of persons [we] ought...to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Pt 3:11). On the other hand, I have a number of problems with the book. I will give you my opinion, but you must decide for yourself in light of God's Word.

I cannot agree with some of Shank's statements about Christ. For example, on page 244: "The fact of His peculiar relation to God doubtless entered His consciousness only gradually, as He matured, and was a precious truth which, more and more, He grasped by faith....[A]t the age of twelve, at the time of His visit to Jerusalem, Jesus was conscious of a special relation[ship] to the Father, doubtless without any full understanding of the implications as yet. But...the first overt affirmation of His divine Sonship came to Him on the occasion of His baptism....Even so, the fact of His divine Sonship yet remained for Jesus a truth to be grasped and held fast by faith."

On the contrary, Jesus was and is both

God and man; and as God he must always have known "His divine Sonship." When the One "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mi 5:2) was brought forth in Bethlehem in a virgin birth in fulfillment of Scripture, God the Son did not cease to be all that He had ever been with the Father from eternity past. Yes, just as His human body grew so did His human understanding ("And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" - Lk 2:52), but His manhood cannot be divorced from His deity. That His deity was clothed in humanity did not cause Him to cease being God; and if God, He surely must have been aware of that fact.

Nor can I agree with Shank's rejection of the eternal security of the believer. His denial of that truth seems to arise from the belief that one must live a good enough life to keep one's salvation. Biblically, however, our security (like our salvation) is solely because of Christ's payment of our sin's penalty and His life being lived through us. Typical (in order to justify his position) is his quote of Professor John Murray of Westminster Theological Seminary:

The perseverance of the saints reminds us very forcefully that only those who persevere to the end are truly saints.... Perseverance means the engagement of our persons in the most intense and concentrated devotion to those means which God has ordained for the achievement of his saving purpose.

How can one be certain of being truly engaged "in the most intense and concentrated devotion," particularly in view of Shank's constant reminder of the deceitfulness of our hearts? If that were not cause enough for concern, Shank lists seven requirements of life without which one has no assurance that he has not fallen from grace. This is the very error (salvation by works) for which Paul reproved the Galatians: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you...? Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Paul never faults the Galatians for not living good enough lives; he faults them for looking to their good works as evidence that they are saved! And, unfortunately, this is exactly what Shank teaches.

He summarizes what he considers to be the minimal requirements of assurance thus:

It is sheer presumption for anyone to 'know' he has eternal life who is not trusting in Christ with a sincere heart [TBC agrees.], keeping His word and commandments, walking as He walked, loving the Father and His will rather than the world, loving his fellow Christians and practicing righteousness rather than sin. Anyone who presumes to have the inner witness of the Spirit under other circumstances is mistaken.

Shank's view leaves us with some serious problems, namely: (1) The requirement for "keeping saved" is uncertain. "Loving the Father and His will...loving his fellow Christians" and "practicing righteousness rather than sin" raise the question of exactly what is meant (i.e., loving how intensely and in what practical ways?).

(2) Biblical standards of the requirements he lays out can only condemn us because we can't live up to them. "Loving the Father" is not a biblical term, but rather, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Dt 6:5). Does Shank himself live up to that standard at all times? If not, then by his own rule he is lost. As for "loving his fellow Christians," again the biblical standard is much higher: "thou shalt love thy neighbour [this includes everyone] as thyself" (Lv 19:18). No one has ever done this except Christ himself! Even if I thought I had lived up to this high standard I couldn't be certain because I would have to rely upon my deceitful heart to be the judge.

(3) If I did live up to the standard Shank sets, then I could boast before the throne of God that although I was saved by grace, yet I kept myself saved by my own works. Surely that fact alone is enough to discredit the whole idea of losing one's salvation which, no matter how it is stated, must inevitably depend upon one's own works. Thus, salvation would be *kept* and *merited* by works, an idea which repudiates the gospel.

Yes, Paul did write, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor 13:5). Thus we can certainly agree with Shank that the lack of a sincere trust in Christ and a desire to live wholly for Him in holiness of life, *unless repented of*, are indications that one's eternal destiny is in

serious question. No person content to live in such condition has any basis for assurance of his salvation, and we would never encourage such a person with the statement "once saved, always saved." Such a person needs either to repent as a child of God or to get saved and become a child of God.

I would also disagree with Shank's interpretation of Hebrews 6:4-9. Rather than describing an apostate who has turned from God, I believe these verses declare that if one could fall away then it would be *impossible* to get saved again. That the example is theoretical for purposes of illustration is apparent from this final statement: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." In other words, what has been said ("If they shall fall away") is not something that accompanies true salvation. We deal with this in more depth in our tract, "Once Saved, Always Saved?"

Question: Enclosed is a response to your Berean Call in The Lofton Letter: "In his newsletter, The Berean Call (7/95), Dave Hunt, trashing Christian Reconstructionism, says a Christian takeover of the world 'is neither taught nor hinted at anywhere in the Bible,' that 'Jesus certainly didn't teach or engage in such a project....' This assertion is asinine. Be a good Berean, Brother Dave. Search the Scriptures, friend, and you will see that the earth is *already* our Lord's and that He *already* has all power over it." Could you please respond? Thank you.

Answer: Obviously, if "the earth is *already* our Lord's and He *already* has all power over it," then no "Christian takeover of the world" would be necessary and for that reason alone, exactly as I have stated, would neither be "taught nor hinted at anywhere in the Bible." So I don't know what Lofton's quarrel with me could be. Of course, if he is a Reconstructionist, as it seems, then he believes that God's power over the earth came about through Christ's death and resurrection ("All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore" - Mt 28:18-19) and that Christians, therefore, can take over the media, schools, government, etc. in Christ's name.

In fact, God has always had power not only over this earth but over the entire universe. Does that mean that everything

that happens is according to His will? Obviously not. God's "control" of the universe did not prevent Lucifer from rebelling in His very presence. God surely had all power over the Garden of Eden and its inhabitants, but that did not prevent the serpent from doing his thing nor did it prevent Adam and Eve from rebelling. Why then suggest that because all authority has been given unto Christ as a result of His death and resurrection, Christians can therefore take over the world in His name? God's kingdom does not come by force of arms but through the redemptive work of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Far from promising them that they would take over the world, Christ told His disciples that they would be hated, persecuted and killed by this world's inhabitants. And so it happened. True Christians have always suffered at the world's hands exactly as Christ foretold. The Bible states that Antichrist will set up his kingdom. In fact, the entire world will worship him. He will make war with the saints and overcome them, and finally he will lead the armies of the world against Israel, and Christ will have to intervene to stop the destruction of all flesh at Armageddon. That hardly sounds like Christians will have taken over the world.

Endnotes

- 1 Peter R. Breggin, M.D., *Talking Back to Prozac: What Doctors Aren't Telling You About Today's Most Controversial Drug* (St. Martin's Paperbacks, 1994), 34, 39.
- 2 Ibid, 34, 37, 38-40.

Political/Social Activism?

Dave Hunt

I received a heart-rending letter recently. A man wrote, "I cannot adequately describe the shock, horror, dismay, anger, grief...which flooded into my soul [upon witnessing an abortion in the film *Assignment Life*]. I could scarcely begin to comprehend the moral magnitude and awful implications of legal mass elective infanticide, or how such a thing could...happen without a huge groundswell of opposition. ...Abortion stood as the single greatest mockery of the gospel in modern history....I felt that to turn away from doing something about this most heinous evil was to abandon the least of these His brethren and thus to abandon Him...."

"But to my dismay...I have been callously told that babies who die in abortion all go to heaven anyway, so what's the fuss? Concentrate on evangelism! I have heard lame arguments stating that the church is not to reform the world, government, or society, but rather to preach the gospel...!"

"More than thirty years of civil protest, political activism, private litigation, public demonstration, and civil disobedience have failed to stem the flow of innocent blood. Finally...the actions of one Paul Hill...served to graphically reemphasize what this conflict is about. If Paul Hill had fatally shot a crazed gunman as he was preparing to shoot school children with an AK-47, he would have been hailed a hero. Instead, Paul Hill fatally shot an abortionist and his bodyguard....[W]hat moral difference exists between shooting the crazed gunman preparing to murder children in a playground and shooting an abortionist preparing to murder children in the womb...?"

"I am torn daily...between what I perceive I must do as a Christian at this point against those who kill babies for profit, and my responsibilities as a law-abiding citizen, father, and provider for my family."

I replied to this letter in part as follows: "I share your pain and horror that mothers could turn their wombs...into killing chambers, with the approval of the world's...governments. And I share your frustration and helplessness at not knowing how to stem the tidal wave of evil...which only gathers momentum in spite of all efforts to turn it back."

"You say, 'I am torn daily...between what

I perceive I must do as a Christian...and my responsibilities as a law-abiding citizen....' Surely your Christian duty is not to...gun down abortionists! You ask the distinction between that and killing a man who is about to shoot a group of children. In the first case you would rightly be condemned as a murderer; in the second, you would not. Nor does killing abortionists stop abortion...."

I went on to explain that we cannot force the ungodly to live by God's standards. Nor is abortion the only or perhaps even the worst evil. Prostitutes and homosexuals destroy the lives of untold millions of young people; drug dealers, more millions than abortionists. And what about those psychiatrists and psychologists who have devastated lives for eternity, or the atheistic

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Matthew 26:52

high school and university teachers who have corrupted the faith of millions more? Should we kill all such persons? I cannot find teaching or example in the entire Bible to indicate that Christians are to combat the world's sins except with the gospel.

At about the same time, I received an audiotape from Randall Terry (founder and director of Operation Rescue) from one of his radio programs in which he denounced my views—and asked me to repent publicly.

Here are excerpts from that program: "Somebody gave me a copy of a portion of Dave Hunt's book, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?*...and I've literally been sick in my heart over his chapter on Christian activism....[Dave says.] '*...there is not one example in the entire Bible of political or social activism ever being advocated or used by God's people...!*'"

"First of all, God said to King David, 'He who rules among men must be just, ruling in the fear of God....' God himself advocates righteous people being involved in government....[T]his man [Hunt] reads the Bible?! King Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 19:5-7) said to the judges, 'Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD....' King Jehoshaphat...exhorting the judges to judge righteously [is] political activism. Social activism: Gideon broke down the village idol that was in his dad's front yard

and destroyed it. In 1 Kings 15, a righteous king named Asa...put away the...homosexuals out of the land. He was doing battle with the homosexual movement...! Then in 2 Kings 23 we see Josiah throwing the sodomites out of the temple....He also destroyed the valley of the son of Hinnom...the precursor to abortion....He was a Christian activist!

"Remember, Dave Hunt has said, '*There is not one example in the entire Bible of political activism or social activism ever being used by God's people!*' What about in Deuteronomy 16 where Moses says, 'Choose from among you judges and officers to rule in your gates'?...Proverbs 28:4 says, 'Those who forsake the law praise the wicked; those who uphold the law resist them.' We are to resist people who break God's law. Speaking of lobbying, remember when Saul [said], that anyone who eats honey before sunset shall be put to death? What happened? All of the people surrounded him and...protected him [Jonathan]. They lobbied King Saul and saved his [Jonathan's] life.

"What about when the Apostles were arrested by the guards? The Bible says that the guards were so afraid of the mob that gathered around them that they thought they might be stoned and so they treated the Apostles gently....That was social action....King David was lobbied more than once to settle different disputes, and yet Dave Hunt says there's not one example in the entire Bible of political or social activism or of lobbying....Has this man fallen off of another planet?!...David, please...study your Bible, dear brother...."

"Romans 13 says this: 'for rulers are... the minister[s] of God to you for good...to avenge those who do evil....' Perhaps...[Hunt] would prefer Hindu standards with temple prostitution and child prostitution and women being tied to funeral pyres?...[T]his is insanity...! Colossians 1:16 says 'all things were created by him and for him, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or powers or authorities....' Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, He's over all thrones, dominions, powers...and He's put them under us, too, because we're His body, the church....Psalm 149 says this: 'With the high praises of God in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand'—talking about the people of God—'to execute vengeance on the nations...this honor have all the saints.'..."

"[T]his dear brother would rewrite the Scriptures....If you've read a Dave Hunt book...no wonder you're not doing anything!...I'm going to send him a copy of

this tape and...invite him to repent publicly...[T]his book [is] filled with error, half-truths, untruths and otherwise babble. ...Listen to this: ‘...*Christian activism is not Christian. It represents a detour from the straight path the church is to walk....It can confuse the real issues, lead to compromise and unholy alliances and divert time and effort that would be better used in proclaiming the gospel....*

“So Josiah,...your social activism that won God’s approval, fighting the homosexuals, fighting the childkillers...was all wasted time. Jeremiah, you really had your priorities screwed up...complaining about the babies being murdered. ...Hezekiah, all your work against idolatry and the abominations of your day, wasted effort....

“This is poison in the Christian community....the culture’s in the jaws of hell and the church is in a muck hole because of insane theology like this....Listen to Luke 1....Christ’s coming....of course, it saves people...but verses 70-75 talk about political freedom,...Abraham’s seed,...being able to live at peace and to serve God without fear,...in a culture that’s free from pagan rule....Part of the prophesied blessing of King Jesus’ coming was...‘and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end,’ to establish...justice and judgment upon the throne of his father, [King] David, Isaiah 9. Political freedom, cultural freedom, political justice and righteousness are all... the prophesied fruits of the coming of Jesus Christ, and David Hunt says,... ‘*There is not any example or doctrinal teaching to support the idea that Christians ought to engage in political or social activism.*’

“Brother David, I trust you are listening by tape now....I believe David is a brother but I believe he’s been deceived; and...he’s become a deceiver and these deceptions that are in this book were born in hell ...[and] when there is false teaching,...issued forth publicly, it must be rebuked...publicly. I encourage my brother to repent and to abandon this out-of-balance deceit, to study his Bible and then write a retraction....”

I appreciate Randall Terry’s forthrightness and his passion to oppose abortion. The Bible does not forbid political or social activism. It does not, however, support it. Neither Jesus, the Apostles nor the early church attempted in that way to oppose the social evils of their day. Instead, they “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) with the *gospel*.

In attempting to justify his position from Scripture, one of Terry’s major errors is in

confusing Israel and the church. Gideon, Jeremiah, David, Solomon, Asa, Josiah, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, et al. were not Christians as he claims. Nor were their actions in smashing idols, in ridding Israel of homosexuals and stopping the practice of offering children to Molech—or the setting up of righteous judges by Moses—either political or social “activism.” These were the deeds of Israel’s *leaders*, ruling God’s “chosen people,” of whom He said, “And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have *severed you from other people, that ye should be mine*” (Lv 20:26). Israel is unique: “He hath not dealt so with any [other] nation” (Ps 147:20).

And the men of Israel sticking up for Jonathan is *Christian lobbying*? Hardly. Nor did any “mob” ever “gather around” the Apostles to protect them (Acts 5:26); and even if they had, these were unbelieving

And the servant of the Lord must not strive...

2 Timothy 2:24

Jews who could hardly set an example of *Christian social action* as Terry claims. As for Romans 13, it tells us to *obey* secular rulers and says not one word about opposing them if they fail to represent God. Examples from the Old Testament of *Israel’s rulers* executing God’s law in *Israel* are no model for Christians to impose God’s laws upon Gentile society. Moreover, verses which state that God is sovereign (Col 1:16, etc.) have nothing to say about Christian political/social activism. The promises of the Messiah’s rule quoted from Luke 1 pertain to a redeemed Israel back in her land; they are not promises that the church will take over the world.

Terry’s failure to distinguish between Israel and the church is most dangerous when he quotes Psalm 149 about saints “with a two-edged sword in their hands” executing “vengeance on the nations” (is he really advocating armed violence, a return to the Crusades?! This psalm concerns Israel, not the church. Far from telling the church to take over the world, Christ said that His kingdom was not of this world, that His servants did not fight. He promised us, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me....ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world....If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying [which the world did not], they will keep yours also [obviously we won’t be

influential in the world]” (Jn 15:18-21).

Paul warned the Ephesian elders *with tears night and day for three years* (Acts 20:28-31)! Did he warn about the abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and other evils rampant in society at that time and call for political/social action to oppose it? No. He warned about the coming *apostasy* and told them to “feed the flock of God.”

Why is it that those who are so concerned about the immoral behavior of the godless all around us seem so little concerned about the false gospel of Roman Catholicism which is leading nearly a billion souls to hell, or about the heresy and unbelief within the church? A recent poll of Lutherans revealed that three out of ten doubt the divinity of Christ, the same percentage reject His resurrection, four out of ten doubt the existence of God, and seven out of ten believe that all religions lead to the same God! And only 55 percent of the representatives at the Southern Baptist Convention of Louisiana in November voted that the Bible is inerrant! Why don’t the Christian activists show concern for this unbelief which eternally damns souls?

As the letter first quoted above said, more than 30 years of civil protest and Christian activism (Focus on the Family, the Christian Coalition, etc.) have not stopped abortion. Instead of the hoped-for moral awakening, morals have declined. Crime, drug addiction, pornography, divorce, etc. increase. Scarcely 10 percent of Americans believe in all of the Ten Commandments, a third of all married Americans have had an affair, and a fifth of the children have lost their virginity by age 13. Would all of the effort that has gone into political and social action have done more good if instead it had been expended upon reaching the lost with the gospel as Christ commanded us?

My sympathy is with Randall Terry and those who work with him. I feel their concern, frustration, and pain. The question remains, however, What are we to do? We must follow Scripture. Neither Jesus nor His apostles nor the biblical early church *ever* engaged in social or political activism or advocated it. The Great Commission is not to go into all the world to reform its morals by forcing sinners to behave like saints, but to “preach the gospel” and convert sinners. And in the end, the conversion of sinners will have a far greater impact on society than all of the lobbying, protest marches and passionate appeals to morality that consume the time and energy of concerned Christians. TBC

Quotable

What is faith? It is the assurance that the thing which God has said in His Word is true, and that God will act according to what He has said in His Word. This assurance, this reliance on God's Word, this confidence is FAITH....

I get letters from so many of God's dear children who say: "Dear Brother Müller, I'm writing this because I am so weak in faith." Just so surely as we ask to have our faith strengthened, we must feel a willingness to take from God's hand the means for strengthening it. We must allow Him to educate us through trials and bereavements and troubles. *It is through trials that faith is exercised and developed more and more.* God affectionately permits difficulties, that He may develop unceasingly that which He is willing to do for us, and to this end we should not shrink, but if He gives us sorrow and hindrances and losses and afflictions, we should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that *Faith* which He is seeking to strengthen in us.

George Müller (1805-98)

Another year is dawning!
 Dear Master, let it be
 In working or in waiting
 another year with Thee.
 Another year of leaning
 upon Thy loving breast,
 Of ever-deepening trustfulness,
 of quiet, happy rest.
 Another year of mercies,
 of faithfulness and grace;
 Another year of gladness
 in the shining of Thy face.
 Another year of progress;
 another year of praise;
 Another year of proving
 Thy presence "all the days."
 Another year of service,
 of witness of Thy love;
 Another year of training
 for holier work above.
 Another year is dawning!
 Dear Master, let it be
 On earth, or else in heaven,
 another year for Thee!

Frances Ridley Havergal

Q&A

Question: I must admit to you that I'm still not 100-percent convinced of a pretrib rapture....There is one portion of

Scripture that I am unable to avoid and have a difficult time reconciling to pretrib interpretation. It is 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. It seems to be saying that the "man of sin" [Antichrist] will be revealed before we are gathered together to be with our Lord Jesus Christ in the Rapture. Please help me if you can.

Answer: Verse 1 refers to "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (the Second Coming with His saints to rescue Israel and establish His kingdom) and "our gathering together unto him" (the Rapture, when He resurrects the dead saints and catches them up to heaven and with them those alive at that time). Verse 2 says, "That ye be not soon *shaken in mind, or be troubled*, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." The phrase "at hand" is an obvious error in the 1611 KJV, which has been corrected by a marginal note in current KJV editions to read "now present." The NAS correctly translates it "has come" and the NIV as "has already come." One need not be a Greek scholar (or even refer to the Greek text) to know which translation is correct. Simple logic is sufficient.

Logically, *no one* would be "shaken in mind or troubled" to be told that "the day of Christ is at hand"—whether one's belief were pretrib, prewrath, midtrib, post-trib, or amillennial. But would someone be troubled to be told that it had "already come"? Yes. Who? *Only* those who believed that a pretrib rapture ushered in the "day of Christ." Everyone else is expecting to see at least part of the day of Christ and to face the Antichrist. Realizing they must face this trial, their attitude would be, "The day of Christ is here, so let's get on with it." But obviously Paul had taught the Thessalonians that the Rapture came first. Therefore, if the day of Christ had come, they would be "shaken and troubled" that either they had been left behind or that Paul had been mistaken. We can only conclude that Paul had taught a pretrib rapture: "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (v 5).

Verse 3 must be read carefully: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition...." It specifically says that the falling away (apostasy) must come first. Indeed, the apostasy had already come in Paul's day: "[A]ll they

which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tm 1:15); most of the epistles were written to correct error; and Paul warned that the apostasy would accelerate after his death: "[A]fter my departing shall grievous wolves enter in...not sparing the flock"(Acts 20:29). Shortly after Paul's martyrdom Jude said that heretics had already "crept in unawares" and therefore it was essential (as it still is today) to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3-4). The only question is, "How much worse will the apostasy get before the Rapture?" There is no requirement of a certain level, however, thus nothing to hinder imminency.

Must the Antichrist be revealed before the Rapture? No, Paul does not say so, though many mistakenly read that into the verse. Paul, in fact, is saying that the day of Christ cannot come without the Antichrist being revealed *in that day*. Paul states clearly that the day of the Lord will not come without 1) the apostasy coming *first*, and 2) the man of sin being revealed. It is clear the apostasy must come first. It does not say, however, that the man of sin must be revealed first. The verse allows for two possible interpretations: 1) that the man of sin must be revealed *before* the day of the Lord; or 2) that he will be revealed *in* the day of the Lord. We are driven to the latter conclusion for a number of reasons, the major one being that if the Antichrist came first we would be looking for him, not for Christ, as Scripture indicates (Phil 3:20; 1 Thes 1:10; Ti 2:13).

Furthermore, Paul goes on to say that someone was preventing the revelation of the Antichrist when he wrote this epistle and would continue to do so until he would be "taken out of the way" (2 Thes 2:7-8). Only God could prevent Antichrist from being revealed, but God cannot be "taken out of the way" because He is omnipresent. There is only one way to reconcile this apparent contradiction, and that is with the rapture of the church. The Holy Spirit came upon, was with but could also leave, Old Testament believers. David prayed, "[T]ake not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps 51:11). Thus John tells us that "the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*: because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn 7:39). At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given to indwell believers, never to leave them. It is this presence of God the Holy Spirit within His church which prevents the Antichrist from being revealed and which will be removed at the Rapture and not until then.

Question: Does Antichrist come out of the tribe of Dan? Would we know where the tribe of Dan is located today?

Answer: No scripture states that Antichrist will be of the tribe of Dan. Nor can anyone today know who is from which tribe other than for those whose names seem to identify their ancestry, such as Levi or Levy, apparently from the tribe of Levi. And, of course, there is no location for each tribe today as there once was in Israel. All twelve tribes have intermarried and are scattered around the world. This is one more reason why it is too late for the Messiah to come. He must be of the tribe of Judah and of the house of David, and it would be impossible for anyone to prove such lineage today as that which is given for Christ in Matthew through Joseph and in Luke through His mother Mary.

Question: Could you make some comment on this year being the seventieth year of Jubilee: $70 \times 50 = 3,500$ years. I know there is a Jubilee every 50 years and this year is the seventieth one. Does that have any significance for prophecy today?

Answer: The counting of years for each "jubile," as the KJV puts it, was apparently to begin with the entrance of Israel into the promised land: "When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD....in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land....And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years...forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound....ye shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land....A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you..." (Lv 25:1-11).

Tragically, Israel as a nation did not keep these seven-year sabbaths for 490 years (450 years under the judges and 40 years under King Saul—Acts 13:20-21). As a result, God eventually allowed His people to be taken captive into Babylon so that the land could have the 70 sabbaths it was owed. As for *the seventieth jubile*, we certainly are near it, but I doubt that anyone could determine for certain the exact date of Israel's entrance into the promised land and thus which year the seventieth jubile would be. Nor do I know of any scripture to tell us of any prophetic significance for the seventieth jubile.

Question: For years I have been taught and believed that the Church is "the bride of Christ," based upon Ephesians 5:23-32. Recently, however, I was asked how the church could be the "bride of Christ" when Revelation 21:9-10 specifically states "that great city, the holy Jerusalem" is "the bride, the Lamb's wife"? In addition, Deuteronomy 7:3-11 forbids the Jews to marry people from other nations (Gentiles). How could Jesus, then, "the king of the Jews" who came "to fulfill the law," possibly marry the "church" which is made up of Gentiles? In so doing it would seem He would be breaking the very law He came to fulfill. I have searched the Scriptures and haven't been able to answer this question. Can you explain this for me?

Answer: First of all, no *city* could be the bride of Christ. It could only be the redeemed who will inhabit it who are Christ's bride. These are seen at their marriage collectively to the Lamb in Revelation 19:7-8 and in their triumphal return to reign over the earth with Christ in verse 14. If these are not the church, then who are they? Nor would the fact that Gentiles can be saved and thus become part thereof mean that for Christ to be married to the church "would be breaking the very law He came to fulfill." Christ would not be marrying Gentiles because one who is saved has ceased to be a Gentile and is "in Christ...a new creature" (2 Cor 5:17). In the church there is "neither Greek [Gentile] nor Jew" (Col 3:11), for he "hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one" (Eph 2:14).

Evolution or God's Word?

Dave Hunt

Most non-Catholics were surprised when Pope John Paul II, in a paper to the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences October 23, 1996, spoke in favor of evolution. But in fact, he only reiterated Catholicism's official position. Consider these excerpts:

In his Encyclical *Humani generis* (1950), my predecessor Pius XII had already stated that there was no opposition between evolution and the doctrine of the faith about man.... Pius XII stressed this essential point: if the human body takes its origin from pre-existent living matter, the spiritual soul is immediately created by God....[T]he exegete and the theologian must keep informed about...the natural sciences...truth cannot contradict truth....

[T]he theory of evolution...has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence...of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favour of this theory.¹

No doubt the embarrassing fiasco of Galileo's trial was in mind when the Pope warned Church theologians to "keep informed about...the natural sciences...." Pope Urban VIII threatened an elderly and very ill Galileo with torture if he would not renounce his claim that the earth revolved around the sun. On his knees before Rome's Holy Office of the Inquisition, in fear for his life, Galileo recanted of this "heresy"—but not in his heart. That the sun and all heavenly bodies revolved around the earth remained official Catholic dogma, repeatedly affirmed by "infallible" popes until 1992, when the Vatican at last admitted officially that Galileo had been right.

Lest science continue to make fools of the "infallible" Church hierarchy, the Pope cautions Catholic theologians to check with scientists before interpreting Scripture. Yet Peter, whom Catholics say was the first pope, declared that Scripture is inspired of the Holy Spirit (2 Pt 1:21). Surely the Holy Spirit needs no help from scientists! If the Bible is not infallible when it speaks to science, then why trust it regarding God or salvation? Edward Daschbach, a Catholic priest, explains that to take the Bible literally would require admitting that the woman on the beast in Revelation 17 is the Roman Catholic Church! He writes,

The Church, then, does not accept...the literal interpretation of the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis....When creation-science advocates ply their fundamentalist tools to this final scriptural book [Revelation], the Church often becomes a target for vehement attack....²

Evangelicals such as Chuck Colson who have joined forces with Rome claim that Catholicism agrees with them on biblical inerrancy. On the contrary, Vatican II declares, "Hence the Bible is free from error in what pertains to religious truth revealed for our salvation. It is not necessarily free from error in other matters (e.g., natural science)" [Emphasis in original].³

This is no light matter. If the Genesis account of creation isn't reliable, then neither is the remainder of the Bible, which rests upon it; and Christ is proven not to be

**All scripture is given by
inspiration of God...**

2 Timothy 3:16

God but a mere man who foolishly took the story of Adam and Eve literally (Mt 19:4-5) and could not be our Savior. *The American Atheist* knows the issues: "Destroy Adam and Eve and original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the Son of God and take away the meaning of his death."⁴

In May, 1982, honoring Charles Darwin on the 100th anniversary of his death, the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences issued this statement: "[M]asses of evidence render the application of the concept of evolution...beyond serious dispute."⁵ The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says,

[S]pecialists...over a period of 100 years, have assembled the necessary evidence...evolution has been established as thoroughly as science can establish facts....⁶

Not so. Growing numbers of even non-Christian scientists oppose evolution. Astronomer/mathematician Sir Fred Hoyle says, "The scientific world has been bamboozled into believing that evolution has been proved. Nothing could be further from the truth."⁷ Biologist Michael Denton, author of *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, says science has so thoroughly discredited Darwinian evolution that it should be discarded. Mathematics professor Wolfgang Smith

calls evolution "a metaphysical myth...totally bereft of scientific sanction...."⁸

Colin Patterson, senior paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History, confessed, after more than 20 years' involvement, "[T]here was not one thing I knew about it. It's quite a shock to learn that one can be misled for so long." Patterson "started asking other scientists to tell him *one thing* they knew about evolution." Biologists at the American Museum of Natural History in New York were speechless. Says Patterson:

I tried that question on the geology staff at the Field Museum of Natural History and the only answer I got was silence. I tried it on the members of the Evolutionary Morphology Seminar in the University of Chicago, a very prestigious body of evolutionists, and all I got there was silence for a long time and eventually one person said, "I do know one thing—it ought not to be taught in high school."⁹

Notwithstanding, in *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578 (1978), the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional for public schools to teach creationism even as a theory alongside of Darwinism. Evangelicals rightly complain about evolution being taught as fact in public schools, yet it is also taught as fact in Catholic schools.¹⁰ In *The Catholic World Report*, Stephen F. Smith writes, "[I]n Catholic school here in the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, we were taught that Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was gospel truth."¹¹ Biochemist Michael Behe says of his days in Catholic schools,

I...[was taught] life...came from God, and...the leading scientific explanation for how He did it was Darwin's theory of evolution. I...saw no conflict with Church teaching.¹²

In his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, Oxford University zoologist Richard Dawkins, a leading evolutionist, calls biology "the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose."¹³ Indeed! One cell, the smallest living unit, could have 100,000 molecules and 10,000 intricately interrelated chemical reactions going on at one time. Cells couldn't arise by chance! Dawkins admits that every cell contains in its nucleus "a digitally coded database larger...than all 30 volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* put together."¹⁴ You can't even imagine the odds against chance creating a 30-volume encyclopedia! That's for *one* cell—and there are trillions in the

human body, thousands of different kinds, working in unbelievably complex and delicately balanced relationships!

The astronomical odds make evolution mathematically impossible. Hoyle calculated that the odds of producing *just the basic enzymes* of life by chance are 1 over 1 with 40,000 zeros after it. By comparison, the odds of plucking a particular atom out of the universe is 1 over 1 with 80 zeros. Even if each atom became another universe, the odds of plucking a particular atom out of all those universes by chance are 1 over 1 with 160 zeros. One chance in 1 with 40,000 zeros after it just to produce the basic enzymes! But enzymes perform incredible feats, which fact further compounds the already impossible odds.

Why does blood clot only at the point of bleeding and not within the veins and arteries—and stop clotting when the bleeding stops? Imagine the billions of animals that would have bled to death or been killed by improper blood clotting before this incredible process was perfected *by chance!* The immune system is even more astonishing, says Behe: “The complexity of the system dooms all Darwinian explanations....”¹⁵ And so it is with hundreds of other life systems. Remember, these complex systems must be *operational* to be of value; they couldn’t evolve in stages.

In his excellent 1996 book, *Darwin’s Black Box*, Behe documents the incomprehensible complexity of life at its most basic chemical/cellular level—a complexity unimagined by Darwin. Behe, who says evolution “should be banished,”¹⁶ demolishes Darwin’s theory by offering multiple examples at the biochemical level of intricately designed “irreducibly complex” elements which *could not have evolved*:

[Evolution] cannot explain the origin of the complex biochemical structures that undergird life. It doesn’t even try....The conclusion of intelligent design flows naturally from the data itself—not from sacred books or sectarian beliefs.¹⁷

In support of the Pope, Donald Devine writes, “Prehuman man apparently existed for millions of years....This is not a refutation of the Bible but a confirmation of it—that it took God to breathe in a soul before man could be man.”¹⁸ On the contrary! Theistic evolution, by requiring prehuman ancestors of man (for whom no evidence has ever been found), contradicts not only Genesis but the entire Bible.

Moses says that God formed Adam from “the dust of the ground,” then *later* formed

Eve from “one of his ribs” (Gn 2:7,18-22). Prehuman ancestors cannot be reconciled with that account, an account authenticated by Jesus: “Have ye not read, that he which made them in the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh?” (Mt 19:4-5). Christ confirms the Genesis account by quoting from it. Paul, too, attested to its accuracy when he declared that “Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Tm 2:13-14—see also 1 Cor 15:22, 45; Jude 14). They were not a pair of prehuman creatures into whom God infused human souls.

Furthermore, Paul says that sin entered the world through Adam, and *death by sin* (Rom 5:12). If Adam and Eve had ancestors who had lived and died during thousands (or millions) of years of evolution until God

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition...

Mark 7:13

humanized them, death would have operated on earth before Adam sinned—a clear contradiction of Genesis, of Christ’s teaching, of Paul’s preaching, and of the gospel. (New York’s Cardinal O’Connor says Adam and Eve may have been “lower animals.”¹⁹)

Evolution, this “most bloated of sacred cows,”²⁰ has been a powerful tool of Satan to persuade millions that the Bible isn’t reliable. As Berkeley law professor Phillip Johnson puts it, “The whole purpose of the Darwinian evolutionary story is to...show that you don’t need a preexisting intelligence...[for] creation.”²¹ Johnson shocked the academic world in 1991 with his book, *Darwin on Trial*. With the precision of a trial lawyer, he destroyed Darwinism and indicted evolutionists with having “abandoned the truthful and accurate reporting to which science has traditionally been committed in their zeal to extirpate and dismiss religion....”²²

Evolution would have filled the fossil record with billions of intermediary creatures, yet *not one* of these “missing links” has been found! Imagine the debris of the millions of tiny increments over millions of years it must have taken to develop lungs from gills, wings from nothing, the stomach and digestive system, eyes, kidneys, the brain and nervous system throughout the body, the blood stream, sperm and ovum for mammals, the egg and its shell for birds

and reptiles, etc. Impossibility is compounded since each of these systems is incredibly complex and could not evolve gradually, but must be fully functional to sustain life and aid in “survival”—for example, the bat’s sophisticated radar system.

How many millions of Arctic terns drowned before the first one “learned,” *by chance*, to navigate thousands of miles across the ocean? How many salmon lost their way and never made it back to their birth stream to spawn before this uncanny ability was developed? How many spiders starved before the amazing mechanism for making webs *chanced* itself into existence—and who taught spiders to use this contrivance? How many eggs of all manner of birds rotted before the instinct to hatch eggs developed? How was it learned and passed on? There are countless impossibilities for “chance.”

Today’s concern for “endangered species” contradicts Darwin. Evolution wipes out the unfit. One cannot believe in evolution and also work for ecological preservation of species. As evolution’s ultimate product, man should mercilessly stamp out every rival for survival. The contradictions are endless.

In his latest book, *Reason in the Balance*, Phillip Johnson argues that only creation by God can account for man’s moral conscience. Nature has no morals. Man’s sense of ethics and morals disproves evolution. If evolution is true, we ought to shut down all hospitals, cease all medications and let the weak die. You can’t reconcile kindness and compassion with evolution’s survival of the fittest.

But man is compelled by conscience and compassion, proof that he is made in the image of a God of holiness and love. By rejecting the overwhelming evidence of design in the world about him (Rom 1:18-32), and by refusing to obey God’s laws inscribed in his conscience (Rom 2:14-15), man has fallen victim to his own ego and to all manner of evil. Nevertheless, God loves man, and in love and grace He came to this earth through the virgin birth so that, as the perfect, sinless man, He could die in our place, paying the infinite penalty His own justice demanded for sin. It is on this basis alone—Christ’s full payment of sin’s penalty and man’s acceptance of that payment—that man can become a new creation in Christ. Let us stand true to this gospel of Jesus Christ and to God’s Word which declares it; and let us stand firm against every attempted dilution, perversion or compromise of God’s truth! TBC

Quotable

Early in the 19th century, the French Academy of Sciences declared that the Bible was wrong on at least 85 points. They said they had proofs! Today, every one of those 85 alleged mistakes has been clarified [the Bible was right, science wrong], partly because science has changed for the better. The Bible has not changed....Scientific theories have shifted as sand dunes; the Bible stands as a great rock in a weary land.

S.E. Anderson

We shall with the sword of the Spirit maintain the whole truth as ours, and shall not accept a part of it as a grant from the enemies of God. The truth of God we will maintain as the truth of God, and we shall not retain it because the philosophic mind consents to our doing so. If scientists agree to our believing a part of the Bible, we thank them for nothing: we believe it whether or no. Their assent is of no more consequence to our faith than...the consent of the mole to the eagle's sight. God being with us we shall not cease from this glorying, but will hold the whole of revealed truth even to the end.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon
The Greatest Fight in the World

Q&A

Question [greatly condensed composite of several]: I was distressed by your endorsement in your September 1996 newsletter of the secret codes in the Torah. True believers don't need this and unbelievers are not necessarily convinced. Only Genesis seems to contain them; why not the rest of the Bible? Rabbis promoting this are using it to prove that they alone can unlock the true meaning of Scripture and to oppose Christ. This is like gematria and the techniques of kabbalists to find secret messages. And to embed names of famous rabbis from the Middle Ages? Is God approving them? Furthermore, I've heard of refutations of the Torah codes. And to have Genesis 15:17 decreeing the assassination of Rabin seems to have God blessing a murder. You need to be more cautious before giving your endorsement to such things.

Answer: I appreciate the thoughtful objections. As for Genesis 15:17, the facts are undeniable: change the space between a few letters and it reads, "Decreed God into Rabin, evil fire fire." Does that have God condoning Rabin's murder? No more than the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon and the Romans, anti-Semitism, etc. which God (and Christ) foretold. He "decreed" it only in the sense that He foretold and allowed it. In this case, as I said, it could be coincidence, though unlikely.

The Torah codes, however, are purely mathematical. I gave my opinion that we must accept the testimony of mathematics experts. I have not read the articles in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* and the *Statistical Science* journal, assumed the quotations to be accurate, and relied upon the prestige of these scientists. If there is any flaw, a refutation would have been published in those journals. As yet I have heard of none. If you have a credible rebuttal, I would like to see it.

If only Genesis works, so be it. Why not? Nor are the mathematics invalidated because unbelievers remain unconvinced or rabbis seek to use the data for their own ends. I can't argue with mathematical facts, no matter who discovers, uses or misuses them. The inclusion of famous rabbis' names is no more an endorsement by God than the inclusion of Hitler and the Holocaust.

And please don't call this "gematria" (assigning number values to letters to find messages), which I repudiate. There is *no relationship*. And it cannot be likened to any kabbalistic device, so objections on that account are not valid. This is pure mathematics.

I agree with you that these hidden words are not needed by those who believe, and may not convince those who don't. On the other hand, the mathematical evidence of supernatural authorship on this basis is irrefutable, if the data is indeed valid. If you can prove otherwise, please let me have the evidence. Again, thank you for your concern and for writing.

Question: I heard you on "Janet Parshall's America." Your preachments are at great variance with the facts. The Bible was written by and about Jews. It follows that it can thus only have a Jewish perspective....Why don't you go on her program with a Jewish authentic authority and discuss their reasons for not believing in Christianity? Your refusal to do so is a powerful argument against you.

Answer: Unfortunately you didn't give your name and address so I could answer you directly. I hope you read *TBC* and will see this. I am willing and eager to go on Janet's program or any other to discuss with a Jewish authority whether Jesus is the Messiah or not and whether Christianity as taught in the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. But I have never been asked. So please don't accuse me of refusing. Perhaps you can arrange it?

Question [composite of several]: In your December article you stepped out beyond your depth by dealing with a subject on which you are not an expert. I suggest that you stick to the exposition of Scripture and avoid areas peripheral to the purpose of *The Berean Call*. There are people who really need and benefit from Prozac, lithium and other drugs; and for you to say they don't need them and that they are just not trusting the Lord enough is going to give many of them a sense of guilt. A lot of people will be hurt. Why don't you also suggest that diabetics give up their insulin? If we are exempt from brain disorders just because we are Christians, then we should also be exempt from the flu!

I agree that there are "no chemical solutions to spiritual problems," but...the drugs referred to are not primarily given to deal with spiritual problems. They are used to deal with serious affective mood disorders....For you to accuse those of us who, through no fault of our own, are afflicted with these disorders, of having spiritual problems is cruel and unfeeling...a dangerous and sinful act on your part. It is not your place to diagnose diseases of the mind (which do exist regardless of what you say). While I would never tell anyone else to take these drugs, I have indeed been helped by them....I urge you to print a retraction.

Answer: We discover again how difficult it is to avoid serious misunderstandings. Let me try to clarify those: We *did not* make any judgment of anyone taking medication or say they didn't need it and should stop (in fact, we said, "A word of caution: we are not advocating that anyone now taking medication should abruptly stop...[which] could have serious consequences"). We *did not* suggest that Christians are immune from brain disorders or that brain disorders are due to lack of faith or to a spiritual problem

of the individual (in fact, we said, "There is no doubt that much can go wrong with the brain as a *physical* instrument"). We *did not* attempt to "diagnose diseases" (in fact, we said, "Any change in medication should only be under the supervision of a physician").

Yes, we did say that all of mankind's problems are the result of his separation from God and are therefore at their root spiritual. Surely, had Adam and Eve (and all of their descendants) not sinned, *none* of today's behavioral problems or diseases would exist. We *did not*, however, suggest that every problem is due to some sin on the part of the individual experiencing it.

And, yes, we have often pointed out the difference between the *brain* as a physical organ which can therefore suffer trauma or disease and needs medical help, and the *mind*, which is not physical. Consequently, "mental illness" is a misnomer that can be used to excuse sin as sickness, avoid moral responsibility, and "treat" sin as a "psychological problem" needing therapy instead of repentance and God's help.

(Please, there is no comparison between insulin, which operates below the neck, and drugs which affect the brain. And remember, no one knows exactly how harmful these drugs are to the brain!)

It is true that I am neither a medical doctor nor an expert on drugs—nor did our conclusions require such knowledge. We simply suggested that *in at least some cases* dependence upon a drug or drugs *could* become a substitute for dependence upon the Lord; and we tried to encourage greater trust in God. I would expect Christians to agree with that.

Even the secular world recognizes the problem with pharmacological alleviation of stress or distress. For example, influential psychoanalyst Elizabeth Zetzel considers a person's endurance of anxiety and depression essential to proper emotional growth. She warns that to improve mood artificially with a pill could deny the person the very strengthening experience needed for a real solution. How much more could this be true for Christians who may too readily succumb to the temptation to take the easy way out through a drug and thus may miss the lesson of endurance and faith God wants to teach them?! We neither diagnosed nor accused anyone. We simply exhorted everyone to consider this possibility and act upon it as the Lord leads.

We also issued some warnings, because the alleged "wonder drugs" are so highly touted and so seldom are any cautions given

except in fine print. Remember, there was a time when cocaine was as highly acclaimed by the medical profession (and its benefits sworn to by users) as Prozac has been in our day. Freud took cocaine himself, sang its praises, and prescribed it for others. Only later was it banned. We lack space to provide the long list of drugs which in more recent times have been praised for a few years, only to be banned or greatly restricted as their destructiveness has been reluctantly admitted. LSD was touted by many psychiatrists as a "miracle drug," was in use for years before it was banned by the government in 1966, and some MDs still petition for its restoration.

There have been numerous cases of suicide and murder and other problems traced to Prozac. It was only licensed in 1988; already in the February 1990 *American Journal of Psychiatry*, research psychiatrist Dr. Martin Teicher "documented the cases of six depressed patients who became obsessed with violent suicidal thoughts two to seven weeks after starting treatment with Prozac. Four tried to hurt or kill themselves. The compulsion subsided after the patients went off the drug." (*Time*, July 30, 1990, p. 54). By 1991 a multitude of those damaged or destroyed by Prozac, or their heirs, had formed "Prozac Survivors Support Groups" all over America. By the end of 1992, 170 lawsuits had been filed against Prozac manufacturer Eli Lilly. Doesn't this information call for caution?

We also reminded readers that the brain is the most complex mechanism in the universe; that NO ONE KNOWS HOW THESE DRUGS WORK OR THE FULL EFFECT, ESPECIALLY LONGTERM, WHICH THEY HAVE ON THE BRAIN; and that for a physician to prescribe Prozac (or Ritalin, or other similar drugs) is not like a mechanic fine-tuning an engine. The prescription is not based on a diagnosis of the brain but most often on a *behavioral profile*. Thus Prozac is prescribed for everything from "low self-esteem" and "winter blues" to obesity, anorexia, bulimia, phobia, anxiety, chronic fatigue syndrome, premenstrual syndrome, migraines and arthritis. It is not given to "balance" the brain (in fact it causes imbalance by disrupting serotonin and dopamine) but rather to artificially improve one's feelings about oneself.

Breggin is not the only psychiatrist to criticize "biological psychiatry"—i.e., the use of drugs to adjust mood. There are many others, such as the authors of the eight essays in the 1995 book, *Pseudoscience in*

Biological Psychiatry. Critical articles have appeared in professional journals of psychiatry and psychology. For example, *Psychology Today* (Sept/Oct 1995) contained a lengthy article which concluded that "two-thirds of the cases [in all studies]...do as well with placebo as with active medication." There are no tests of Prozac and other similar drugs which prove beyond doubt that the results they produce are any better than those obtained by a placebo. Thus even if God were only a placebo, in two-thirds of the cases the patient would be as well off trusting Him as trusting the drug. Could it be easier to trust a pill, even a placebo, than to trust God?

The efficacy of these drugs is open to question, a question which has not been settled. Elizabeth Wurtzel, author of *Prozac Nation*, who has been taking Prozac every day since its FDA approval and can't get off it, writes, "A strong hardy depression will outsmart any chemical....Even on Prozac and lithium I have had severe depressive episodes."

Nor is it true that drugs are an inappropriate subject for TBC and unrelated to Scripture. The New Testament mentions sorcery four times, condemns it, indicates that it will be revived in the last days and that men will refuse to repent of it (Rv 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15). The Greek word translated "sorcery" is *pharmakeia* from which we get the word "pharmacy" or "drugs." Psychoactive drugs have long been associated with the occult, and Prozac is now very popular as a recreational drug for youth. Surely at least a warning is in order.

We desire to be helpful. Certainly we do not want to cause offense or pain, but rather to encourage a careful consideration of the medical factors and dangers involved and also a deeper trust in God.

Question: The enclosed article by John H. Coe from R.C. Sproul's Ligonier Ministries' *Tabletalk* doesn't ring true to me. It blatantly states that the Bible "alone is insufficient" and elevates what it calls "natural revelation" to the level of Scripture. That contradicts my understanding of the Bible. Could you comment on this in your newsletter?

Answer: John H. Coe of Clyde Narramore's Rosemead School of Psychology has been mentioned in *TBC* before (Oct '93). In order to justify "Christian" psychology's borrowing of the "wisdom of this world" (1 Cor 1:20; 2:6; 3:19) from Freud, Jung, et al. and calling it part of "God's truth" to supplement

the Bible, he must show that the Bible is insufficient—or abandon his profession.

In a paper titled, incredibly, “Why Biblical Counseling is Unbiblical,” Coe claims that the Bible itself “mandates the church to develop a science of [moral and spiritual] values and human nature” from extrabiblical sources. He declares that whatever is “natural” is good and that one can deduce a “science of [moral] values” simply from observing nature. This is obviously not true.

Nature has no morals; nor can science reveal morals; neither can there be a science of human nature because man is not a robot and human qualities such as love, joy, peace, choice, a sense of right and wrong, etc. cannot be explained in scientific cause-and-effect terms. Einstein confessed that science has nothing to do with religion; and Nobel Laureate physicist Erwin Schroedinger said that science “knows nothing of...good or bad, God and eternity.” Mankind’s common recognition of right and wrong comes not from nature but from God’s laws written in the conscience (Rom 2:14-15). Moreover, nothing is more “natural” than to eat the fruit of a tree, especially if it is delicious and promises the knowledge of good and evil!

In the article you enclosed, Coe accuses those who affirm the sufficiency of Scripture of having “retreated, particularly from the light of reason and natural revelation, to the island of faith, clinging desperately and unfortunately to the illusion of a Bible-alone approach to wisdom which is solely ‘from above.’” He sounds like a humanist! He declares that without natural revelation “the Bible ...alone is insufficient.” Of course, he includes in natural revelation that part of “God’s truth” which secular psychologists have allegedly discovered and which is therefore needed to supplement Scripture.

Yes, the Bible is insufficient when it comes to flying an airplane, repairing an engine, transplanting a kidney, but not when it comes to those “things that pertain to life and godliness,” all of which Peter says have been given to us in Christ (2 Pt 1:3-4). Paul says that through Scripture alone the man or woman of God is “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tm 3:17). Christ said that the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive” (Jn 14:17) and who guides believers “into all truth” (Jn 16:13). He said that those who continue in His word, which “is truth” (Jn 17:17) know “the truth” (Jn 8:32), not part of the truth, and are thereby set free, not partially free.

The Bible’s declaration that the “natural man” cannot know God’s truth, which is only

revealed by the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14), is proof that Freud, et al. had nothing of God’s truth to impart. That fact alone thoroughly demolishes the Coe/Christian psychology thesis that part of God’s truth is to be found in secular psychology. It isn’t there.

Inasmuch as all of God’s truth is contained in God’s Word, Christian psychology has nothing to offer and leads into gross error. Preventing God’s people from believing in the sufficiency of Scripture is essential for Christian psychologists if they hope to remain in business, and John H. Coe is determined to prove this thesis. How tragic that R.C. Sproul’s *Tabletalk* would join in promoting it.

Question: Jesus says that one day He will say to certain people, “I never knew you.” Doesn’t this alone prove that Jesus isn’t God? How could God, who knows everything, possibly say He never knew someone?

Answer: Obviously, Jesus isn’t referring to general knowledge about someone, but a special knowing. That special meaning is defined by Jesus: “I...know my sheep, and am known of mine....My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish” (Jn 10:14:27-28). When Christ one day says to many, “I never knew you” (Mt 7:23), He unquestionably will mean they were never His sheep, they never belonged to Him, He never gave them eternal life—not that He never knew who they were.

Endnotes

- 1 Pope John Paul II, “Message to Pontifical Academy of Sciences,” *L’Osservatore Romano* (30 Oct. 1996), 3,7.
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- 3 Vatican II, *Vatican Council II, Divine Revelation* (Knights of Columbus paraphrase edition), III.11e.
- 4 *The American Atheist* (1978), 19 as cited in *The Christian News* (Nov. 11, 1996), 15.
- 5 Daschbach, loc. cit.
- 6 *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (McGraw-Hill, 1967), 689.
- 7 George W. Cornell, “Scientist calls Darwin evolution theory absurd,” *Times-Advocate* (Dec. 10, 1982), A10.
- 8 Wolfgang Smith, *Teilhard and the New Religion* (Tan Books, 1988), 242.
- 9 Thomas E. Woodward, “Doubts About Darwin,” *Moody* (Sept. 1988), 20.
- 10 *The Times Picayune* (Florida, Oct. 25, 1996), A-30.
- 11 Stephen F. Smith, “Is Darwinism a Religion?,” *The Catholic World Report* (Dec. 1996), 50.
- 12 William Bole, “Of biochemistry and belief,” *Our Sunday Visitor* (Dec. 1, 1996), 6.
- 13 Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (England: Longman 1986), 1.
- 14 Dawkins, op. cit., 18.
- 15 Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (The Free Press, 1996), 139.
- 16 Behe, op. cit., 186.
- 17 Behe, op. cit., 192-93.
- 18 Donald Devine, *Human Events* (Dec. 13, 1996), 19.
- 19 *Los Angeles Times* (Nov. 30, 1996), B13.
- 20 Doug Bandow, “Fossils and Fallacies,” *National Review* (April 29, 1991), 47.
- 21 Russell Schoch, “The Evolution of a Creationist,” *California Monthly* (Nov. 1991), 22.
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God's Word: Our Guard and Guide

Dave Hunt

The fruitful man in Psalm 1 meditates upon God's Word "day and night," and not from a sense of duty but because it is his "delight." In his heart and on his mind continually, God's Word guards and guides him. How essential this is! Common sense and logic are helpful. However, without God's Word (which transcends human wisdom) to guard and guide us, we are susceptible to temptation and error, especially when the latter is presented convincingly "in the name of God" by those looked up to as Christian leaders.

God works through His Word: "[M]y word...shall not return unto me void..." (Isa 55:11); "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps 119:11). Satan works to snatch God's Word from the heart: "[T]hen cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart" (Mt 13:19). If it suits him, Satan quotes the Bible (Mt 4:6) and attempts to pervert it in order to deceive. He also inspires false prophets with "new revelations" which subvert the Word. We have many such "prophets" in the church today.

God's Word repeatedly warns about false prophets. We need to heed those warnings. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets" (Mt 7:15); "[M]any false prophets shall rise...and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Mt 24:11, 24). Christ clearly warns of a last-days false signs-and-wonders movement promoted by false prophets. Paul likens the latter to Jannes and Jambres, who opposed Moses and Aaron (2 Tm 3:8) with signs and wonders done by the power of Satan.

Peter warned that just as there were false prophets in Old Testament times, "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies..." (2 Pt 2:1). The Apostle John declared that already in his day "many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jn 4:1). How much more must we beware of false prophets as the prophesied last-days apostasy reaches its climax in preparing the world and a false church for the Antichrist. Knowing, loving and obeying God's Word is the only sure way not to be led astray.

Any one of the Bible's six marks of false prophets is sufficient identification: 1) through signs and wonders they lead astray after false gods (Dt 13:1-4); 2) their prophecies

don't come to pass (Dt 18:20-22); 3) they contradict God's Word (Is 8:20); 4) they bear bad fruit (Mt 7:18-20); 5) all men speak well of them (Lk 6:26); 6) they deny that Jesus, the one and only Christ, has come once and for all in the flesh (1 Jn 4:3).

How tragic that God's personal letter of love and guidance to His own is so neglected today by those who call themselves Christians! Many who profess to know God and to serve Him have little or no thirst for His Word. Instead, they seek signs and wonders, emotional experiences, new revelations, the latest "move," or the gifts rather than the Giver. As a result, they are susceptible to "every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14) and fall prey to false teachers who "through covetousness...with feigned words make merchandise" (2 Pt 2:3) of them, "supposing that gain is godliness" (1 Tm 6:5). The popular lie of "seed faith" — that a gift

And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:11

to a ministry opens the door to miracles and prosperity—deceives and promotes covetousness among millions ignorant of God's Word.

The fulfillment of biblical prophecies is the great proof of God's existence, that the Bible is His Word and that Jesus Christ is the promised Savior. The false prophecies of many of today's Christian leaders are a loud warning. Heed it! Most cults are founded upon false prophecies, which, if pointed out, offer an effective way to open blind eyes and rescue cultists.

Among the false prophets throughout history were a number of the popes. As one example, Pope Gregory XI's papal bull of 1372 (*In Coena Domini*) pronounced papal dominion over the entire Christian world, secular and religious, and excommunicated all who failed to obey the popes and to pay them taxes. *In Coena* was confirmed by subsequent popes, and in 1568 Pope Pius V swore that it was to remain an eternal law. Instead, in 1870, two months after the Vatican pronounced papal infallibility, Rome was liberated from papal dominion by Italy's army and Pope Pius IX took refuge in the Vatican, all that remained of what had been a vast empire.

Mimicking the popes, Sun Myung Moon prophesied decades ago that *he* would take over the world. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the Transcendental Meditation

(TM) movement, declared that 1975 was the first year in "The Age of Enlightenment," 1977 was "The Year of the Ideal Society," and 1978 "The Year of Invincibility of Every Nation." No comment is necessary. Herbert W. Armstrong predicted that his Worldwide Church of God would be raptured to the ancient city of Petra in 1972 and that Christ would return to the earth in 1975 (a favorite date of many cults). In the 1970s Elijah Muhammad prophesied to his Black Muslim followers that God's return to North America was imminent.

Mormonism boasts of its prophets—but they have all been false. In 1833, founding prophet Joseph Smith prophesied that the United States would suffer unparalleled multiple disasters ("pestilence, hail, famine and earthquake") which would sweep the wicked (non-Mormons) off the land, leaving Mormons safe in their Zion haven in Missouri. Instead, they fled to Utah. Among Smith's many other false prophecies was the declaration in 1835 that Christ would return within 56 years and many living then would "not taste of death till Christ comes."¹ Smith's successor, Brigham Young, prophesied that the Civil War would *not* free the slaves.

Charles T. Russell's false prophecies formed the basis for what became The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Russell declared that the Second Coming had taken place invisibly in October 1874, and the Lord was truly *present*, and that in 1914 the faithful (the 144,000) would be translated to heaven and the wicked destroyed. Armageddon (which began in 1874) would culminate in 1914 with the complete overthrow of earth's rulers and the end of the world. C.T. Russell, still on earth, died in 1916.

In the early 1920s, JWs zealously distributed on the streets and from door to door a book titled *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*. It was prophesied, "The year 1925 is a date definitely and clearly marked in the Scriptures, even more clearly than that of 1914...we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old...to the condition of human perfection."² The JWs even built a house in San Diego where the patriarchs were to live and tried to deed it to King David. (The house was quietly sold in 1954.)

In the early 1940s, JWs were declaring that Armageddon, *only months away*, would end World War II and the defeat of the Nazis would usher in God's rule on earth.³ Their book, *Children*, suggested that plans to marry and have children be postponed

until after Armageddon. It's been a long wait! Not giving up, they later prophesied that God's millennial kingdom would commence in 1975. Again JW's were told not to engage in any plans for this world, including marriage and having children. Many quit their jobs, sold their homes and dedicated themselves to going door to door.

Seventh-Day Adventism (SDA) originated with similar false prophecies about Christ's coming. (We offer an excellent book.) It began with William Miller's prediction that Christ would return in 1843 (revised to October 22, 1844). Miller admitted his error. However, SDA prophetess Ellen G. White (EGW), who had repeatedly endorsed Miller's prophecy, insisted that Christ had indeed come, but not to earth. Instead, He had entered "the holy of holies" in heaven "to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits."⁴ *Entitled?* Many quotes could be given to prove that EGW taught salvation by works. Here are a few:

Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny...though...forgotten by us, they [our works] will bear their testimony to justify or condemn.⁵

When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life...⁶

Each one of you needs to...[be] working with your might to redeem the failures of your past life. God has placed you in a world of suffering to prove you, to see if you will be found worthy of the gift of eternal life.⁷

This teaching of the "investigative judgment" is the foundational doctrine and major heresy of Seventh-day Adventism: that the atonement was not complete on the Cross but was begun in heaven in 1844 and depends upon our works. According to EGW, the blood of Christ, instead of making "an atonement for the soul" (Lv 17:11) and "cleans[ing] us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7), *brought sin into heaven*: "[O]ur sins are, in fact, transferred to the heavenly sanctuary by the blood of Christ."⁸ Thus Christ had to begin the work of cleansing the heavenly sanctuary (*of sins His blood had brought there!*) through the "investigative judgment." EGW declared that "Ministers who would not accept this *saving message*" were hindering God's work and "*The blood of souls is upon them.*"⁹ Millerites who adopted this delusion became Seventh-day Adventists.

EGW made numerous false prophecies: that "Old Jerusalem never would be built up,"¹⁰ that she would be alive at the Rapture,¹¹ that Christ would return before slavery was abolished,¹² that Adventists living in 1856 would be alive at the Rapture,¹³ and many more. Yet her writings are revered like Scripture. Number 17 of the "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" states,

The Gift of Prophecy: One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.

False prophets continue among us and

But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you....

2 Peter 2:1

are often seen and heard on Christian television and radio. For example, toward the end of 1975, Kenneth Copeland prophesied, "As you move into the month of January [1976], you shall see more of the outpouring of God's glory than...in the history of this world...limbs that have been amputated put back on by the power of God...instantly...[bald] men's hair grow to a full head of hair...eyeballs replaced where there were no eyeballs...God will cause your automobile...[that gets] 10 miles to the gallon to get 70 miles...the same old car!" These are but a few of Copeland's false prophecies, to say nothing of his false doctrines.

The false prophecies and "words of knowledge" by those associated with John Wimber and his Vineyard churches would fill several volumes. The laughing revival from Toronto and its latest variation (spreading like wildfire) in the Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, has spawned a new generation of false prophets. Failure of fulfillment is excused because today's prophets are "different" and errors are normal during the process of learning to become more proficient. Imagine Jeremiah saying, "I'm often wrong, but I'm improving!"

Benny Hinn is the most popular televangelist/healer today, and many of his false prophecies are documented in *The*

Confusing World of Benny Hinn. (See books offered.) On December 31, 1989, Benny said, "The Lord also tells me...about '94 or '95, no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America...by fire...Canada will be visited with a mighty revival that will start on the west coast of British Columbia...in the next three years." It only takes one false prophecy to make a false prophet, and Hinn's are legion. He can't even get his testimony straight. In *PTL Family Devotional* he says, "I got saved in Israel in 1968," but in a 1983 message in St. Louis he said, "It was in Canada that I was born again right after '68." Yet in *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, he says he was converted in 1972, during his senior year in high school. But he dropped out before his senior year. When was he saved?

For three years, night and day, Paul wept and warned the Ephesian elders of coming apostasy and that some of them would be among its leaders (Acts 20:29-31)! How feeble is our concern for the state of the church in comparison with Paul's! And what was the remedy he offered? Not spiritual warfare, not prayer and fasting, but obedience to God and His Word: "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace" (v 32).

There is a growing movement of "prayer and fasting for revival." It sounds so good! But the leaders of this movement refuse to heed God's Word, and promote ecumenism and heresies! We need no revival of that! We need repentance for not heeding God's Word. We need reformation, not revival! There are times when prayer and fasting are wrong. After the defeat at Ai, God told Joshua that prayer was inappropriate because Israel had sinned (Jos 7:10-13). How tragic to have a revival led by false prophets promoting false doctrines!

Not all Seventh-day Adventists embrace EGW's heresies. Pray that SDA leaders will admit to EGW's false prophecies and repent of wrong doctrines. Pray that evangelical leaders will face up to the fact that their ranks are filled with false prophets. Pray for a great outcry against unbiblical doctrines. Pray that today's evangelical leaders will faithfully correct false prophets.

And may the rest of us be faithful in our small spheres of influence. May God help us to love His Word, to meditate upon it day and night, to obey it in our daily lives, and to stand firmly against the perversion of that Word by the false prophets and false teachers of our day. May His Word truly be our guard and guide!

TBC

Quotable

Lord, give me firmness without hardness, steadfastness without dogmatism, and love without weakness.

Jim Elliot

A good many are kept out of the service of Christ, deprived of the luxury of working for God, because they are trying to do some great thing. Let us be willing to do little things. And let us remember that nothing is small in which God is the source.

D.L. Moody

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

John Wesley

If I were entirely honest every time I sang a hymn or gospel song, here's how some of the old favorites might come out: "I Surrender Some," "He's Quite a Bit to Me," "I Love to Talk about Telling the Story," "Take My Life and Let Me Be," "It is My Secret What God Can Do," "Where He Leads Me, I Will Consider Following," and "Just as I Pretend to Be."

Anonymous

Q&A

Question: Your February article about evolution was informative. However, wasn't there too much emphasis upon Catholicism's support of evolution? What about Protestants and even evangelicals? Shouldn't you have pointed out that theistic evolution is quite popular in those circles as well?

Answer: Thank you for your reminder. I didn't have room in the article to cover acceptance among evangelical leaders and media, such as the fact that *Christianity Today* supported the Pope in his endorsement of evolution. An editorial declared (1/6/97, p. 18),

John Paul II was...reminding scientists that if they were to be faithful Christians there were limits beyond which their science could not take them...no theory of evolution was acceptable...that did not

recognize the direct divine origin of the human soul.

The same support for theistic evolution was evidenced by a number of participants at a creation/evolution conference of mostly professing evangelicals at Biola University in Southern California in mid-November, 1996. While all attending agreed that God was involved in the process, there was wide disagreement on the extent of that involvement, all the way from a strict biblical creationist view to the belief (theistic evolution) that God used evolution to create various species over millions of years. (*World*, Nov. 30/Dec. 7, 1996, p. 18).

Like *Christianity Today*, Promise Keepers' official magazine, *New Man*, also endorses theistic evolution. Furthermore, *New Man* (July-Aug. 1996, p. 54) argues that whether or not God used evolution to bring man into existence is of little importance:

Remember, however, that the debate over how God created the world—through millions of years of evolutionary work or through a few words spoken over a few days—is not the central tenet of Christianity.

Christianity is, in fact, inextricably linked with all of the Bible. If any part contradicts any other part, then the whole of Scripture is undermined. If the Bible is wrong in its account of man's origin, why should we trust its teaching about man's redemption?

Like Christian psychology, theistic evolution is one more example of Christians desiring to be academically respected and thereby embracing a worldly wisdom which compromises and contradicts God's Word. What *New Man* doesn't understand, *The American Atheist* does:

But if death [of evolving prehumans] preceded man and was not a result of Adam's sin, then sin is fiction. If sin is fiction, then we have no need for a Savior...[E]volution destroys utterly and finally the very reason [for] Jesus' earthly life...If Jesus was not the Redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing. (As cited in *The Christian News*, Nov. 11, 1996, p. 15).

Adam is mentioned about 30 times in nine books of the Bible. Thus, to discredit the biblical account of Adam's creation punctures so many holes, not only in Genesis but in all of the Bible, that it can no

longer be the container of a consistent theology. For example, Luke 3:23-38 traces Christ's genealogy to Adam, and Christ is even called "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45). Both associations would be demeaning to Christ if Adam were a prehuman creature that had evolved from lower animals.

Darwin himself said, "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down." (Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (New York University Press, 6th ed., 1988), p. 154). This is precisely what we find at the biochemical, cellular level, a level of life about which Darwin knew nothing and which Michael Behe so well documents in the book we're offering, *Darwin's Black Box*.

Had Darwin known of the incredible complexity of life on the molecular and cellular level, he probably would not have proposed his theory. Since the discovery of this "black box," evolutionists, right up to the present, have maintained a total silence on this subject, a silence that speaks volumes.

Question: As a conservative evangelical Christian and Southern Baptist pastor I was troubled that you wrote [Jan '97] "And only 55 percent of the delegates at the Southern Baptist Convention of Louisiana in November voted that the Bible is inerrant! Why don't the Christian activists show concern for this unbelief which eternally damns souls?" Mr. Hunt, are you trying to say that 45 percent of those Louisiana SBC delegates are on their way to hell, and is belief in the doctrine of inerrancy a precondition for salvation...? Please clarify your position in the next issue of TBC....I question the fairness and integrity of accusing a group of people of being in unbelief, heresy, and even apostasy by rejecting the doctrine of inerrancy.

Answer: I'm sorry that what I wrote was misunderstood. I did not intend to convey that the Southern Baptists who deny the inerrancy of Scripture are necessarily lost. If they believe the gospel, they are saved eternally. What I did intend to convey was that a denial of inerrancy puts the gospel itself in question. If the Bible is not entirely true, then who is to decide which parts are valid and which parts are not? A denial of inerrancy could provide unbelievers with the excuse they seek for rejecting the gospel

and thus damn their souls. No, I did not intend to convey that the 45 percent who rejected biblical inerrancy are “in unbelief, heresy, and even apostasy,” but I do believe that a denial of inerrancy is a big step in the direction of all of these.

Question: Please take me off your mailing list. I suspect that a good friend of mine (—) put me on the mailing list. I have studied prophecy for over 20 years, exposing myself to a multitude of counselors, as Scripture encourages, and have found the preterist view to be more scriptural. Mr. Hunt appears to think that anyone who does not share his premillennial eschatology is a borderline heretic. I am beginning to be annoyed by this arrogance.

Answer: If we have ever given the impression that it is heresy not to believe “premillennial eschatology,” it was not intended. As for the preterist position that the Olivet discourse (Mt 24-25) and Revelation 1-20:6 were all fulfilled in A.D. 70 (Nero was the Antichrist, etc.), that is easily refuted.

In Matthew 24:21 Christ declares that the “great tribulation” of which He speaks will be the worst that “ever shall be.” Inasmuch as the persecution of both Jews and Christians under Hitler, Stalin, Mao and others since the 1940s has been far worse than that suffered by the Jews in A.D. 70, this verse was not fulfilled then.

Christ then warns (v 22) that “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.” Obviously this was not fulfilled in A.D. 70, for there was no danger at that time that all flesh would be wiped out. Its fulfillment can only be future. Verses 27-31 present further events which clearly did not happen in A.D. 70: the coming of Christ like lightning across the sky; the appearance of “the sign of the Son of man in heaven and His visible “coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory”; and His angels gathering “together his elect from the four winds....” Since these events have not happened, they must yet be future. I would respectfully offer this as solid evidence for the futurist position.

Question: I wondered about your explanation in the Q&A column about II Thessalonians 2:1-3. You say “obviously Paul had taught the Thessalonians that the Rapture came first,” that is, before “the Day of Christ.” It is not at all obvious....What is obvious is that the Rapture of verse 1 is included in the “day

of the Lord” of verse 2, and that the two items of verse 3 must come first....The evil person, the opponent of God in verse 4, will be destroyed by the “appearance” of the coming of Christ in verse 8. It must be, therefore, that the “lawless one” will appear before the Rapture.

Answer: I believe it is obvious that to be told the Day of the Lord had come would not distress those believing in a prewrath, midtrib or post-trib rapture, or amillennialists. Only those believing in a pretrib rapture would be disturbed, because if the Day of the Lord had already come and they were still on earth, either Paul had lied or they had been left behind. Since Paul was concerned that the Thessalonians would be distressed by such a report, it does follow logically that he had taught them a pretrib rapture.

As for verse 8, it refers to the Second Coming, an event distinct from the Rapture. There must be two events because what Christ says about His coming cannot occur in one event or in one time-frame. For example, He says that on the basis of all the signs having been manifest, those waiting will “know that it [His coming] is near, even at the doors” (Mt 24:33). Yet in verse 44 He says that His coming will be an unexpected surprise. Christ is either contradicting Himself, or He is referring to two comings: the Rapture, and the Second Coming.

He plainly tells us (Mt 24:37-38; Lk 17:26-30) that His coming will be at a time of peace, prosperity, thriving business and pleasure. Yet we know the Second Coming occurs in the midst of Armageddon when famine, pestilence and numerous disasters have already ravaged the earth and the most horrible war in history is underway. Again, He is either contradicting Himself, or is referring to two events.

Both Jude 14 and Zechariah 14:4-5 tell us that when Christ returns to the Mount of Olives He brings “all the saints” from heaven with Him. Thus, prior to the Second Coming He must have taken the saints into heaven. That could only have occurred at the Rapture, a prior and separate event.

As for the Day of the Lord, 2 Thessalonians 2:3 says that the apostasy must come first. It does not say that the Antichrist must be revealed first. It is not straining the text to interpret it as saying that the Day of the Lord will not come without the Antichrist being revealed in that day. This fits with Paul’s statement that someone is preventing the Antichrist from being revealed. The One preventing could

only be the Holy Spirit indwelling the believers, and that special presence of God could only be removed by catching away the church in the Rapture.

Endnotes

- 1 *History of the Church* (vol. 2), 182; (vol 5), 336.
- 2 “Millions Now Living Will Never Die,” *The Watchtower* (July 15, 1924), 89.
- 3 *Watchtower*, Dec. 1941.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 480.
- 5 Op. cit., 486-490.
- 6 Op. cit., 483.
- 7 EGW, *Testimonies for the Church* (vol. 3), 530.
- 8 EGW, *Spirit of Prophecy* (vol. 4), 266.
- 9 EGW, *Early Writings*, 234.
- 10 Op. cit., 75.
- 11 Op. cit., 15-16.
- 12 Op. cit., 35, 276.
- 13 EGW, *Testimonies*, 131-132.

Church, Tradition or Christ?

Dave Hunt

In a recent newspaper column, citing shocking statistics from Thomas C. Reeves's *The Empty Church*, William F. Buckley, Jr. wrote, "Presbyterians, Methodists and Episcopalians lose nearly half their young people....[A]t Harvard...the basic presumption is that Western religion is not good, and Christianity the worst. The new slur—like being *homophobic*—is being *Christo-centric*....At Princeton, the Episcopal chaplain [says]...he is not in the business of dispensing dogmatic answers ...[but] to help students out of their parents' faith and into their own."

In 1992, 12% of Americans claimed to be evangelicals. That dropped to 9% in 1993, and to 7% in 1994. The polls don't confirm the great last-days revival touted on TBN, but that today's boasted "church growth" is largely a myth; 70-80% comes from transfers between churches. Absolute truth is rejected by 71% of Americans, 64% of "born-again," and 40% of "evangelicals." Most Presbyterians and Methodists and 88% of Roman Catholics active in their churches believe one enters heaven by being good enough. And 30% of "born-again" deny the physical resurrection of Christ!

Clearly those who make up these statistics know neither God nor His Word. They have religion but not Christ. Multitudes baptized into "Christianity" as infants do not personally know Him whom to know is life eternal (Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 5:20). Loyalty to denomination substitutes for Christ. For example, *Christian News*, a Lutheran newspaper, offers some excellent articles, but its orientation is more often Lutheran than biblical. The standard is "true Lutheranism" rather than Christ. So it is with many other denominations.

Nowhere is this sectarian spirit so evident as in Roman Catholicism and Eastern (Greek, Russian, etc.) Orthodoxy. Salvation is in the Church and its sacraments instead of in Christ. There is no approach to God or forgiveness of sins except through the priesthood. The Pope complains of the mass exodus from "the Church" into "Protestant sects" of those who have come to personal faith in Christ. Karl Keating's *Catholic Answers* is the largest unofficial Catholic organization defending Roman Catholicism. Its mission is to entice non-Catholics into "becoming Catholic" and lapsed Catholics into "coming home to the Church." He boasts, "We've brought

countless people *into the Church.*"

There is nothing about bringing anyone *to Christ*, a concept unknown to Catholics, for whom Roman Catholicism is "the faith" to be defended. An ad for *New Oxford Review* in *Our Sunday Visitor* warns, "Catholicism in America could go down the tubes too if authentic Catholics don't stand up for the Faith."¹ A Catholic leader states with great conviction, "Our ancestors brought Catholicism to this country. It is our job to bring this country *to Catholicism.*"²

So it is with the "Catholic Campaign for America," founded by former Education Secretary William Bennett (now the darling of evangelicals) and Mary Ellen Bork, wife of former Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork. Its stated purpose is "to increase *Catholic* [not *Christian*] influence on public policy issues."³ There is *nothing* in its literature

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men...

Colossians 2:8

about bringing anyone into a saving relationship with Christ, but only into the Roman Catholic Church. Its board of directors includes leading industrialists and politicians of wealth and power "committed to advancing Catholic influence in public policy matters" in order to turn America back to "the Church." Mrs. Bork's letter of appeal for membership states, "Our mission is to...increase the *Catholic* electorate's influence...[and to] defend the [*Catholic*] Church....[in] loyal[ty] to the *Holy Father and Magisterium*...."

Eastern Orthodoxy is the close twin of Catholicism. Richard John Neuhaus, Lutheran pastor-turned-Catholic priest and chief architect (with Charles Colson) of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT), declares, "The Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are in essential agreement on doctrine, ministerial order and the sacraments."⁴ Geoff Thomas, in the British paper, *The Evangelical Times*, agrees that the Orthodox Church's "central beliefs are virtually identical to those of Roman Catholicism except that it rejects papal infallibility. Its priests may marry but its bishops are chosen from the ranks of the celibate."

Orthodoxy and Catholicism trust in the same unbiblical, perpetually virgin and all-powerful Mary. For example, *Traditions about the Earthly Life of the Most Holy*

Mother of God, published by a Russian Orthodox monastery in 1903, has a sinless Mary from age three serving for 14 years in the Holy of Holies in the temple (pp 55-56), fed by an angel (p 58) and giving birth to Jesus at age 15 (p 199). This "Queen of Heaven" inspired the Gospels and Epistles but was too humble to take credit. The first icon of Mary appeared miraculously in a temple in Lyddia which Peter and John had built in her honor (p 173). Christ's descent in beams of heavenly light with patriarchs and prophets to take His mother to heaven is also told (p 188).

A friend born and raised as an atheist in Moscow, Russia, received Christ in her twenties a few years ago. Her elderly grandmother, a devout Russian Orthodox "Christian" all of her life, wept because she couldn't understand "why God let that boy be crucified!" In the Orthodox Church for 81 years, she knew by heart every ritual and the order in which to kiss the icons and light the candles—but she had no idea that "that boy" had died for her sins on the Cross. Orthodoxy had so blinded her that she couldn't understand when her granddaughter gave her the gospel!

The very heart of Eastern Orthodoxy is the call to become gods through Church ritual and good works. In *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* (Baker Books, 1994), Daniel B. Clendenin explains that in Orthodox theology "Deification...is the ultimate purpose of God's creation." He quotes Orthodox saints to the effect that we "become god through union with God by faith" (p 135). "The 'science of stillness,' contemplation, and the interiorization of prayer through constant invocation of the name of Jesus are also of chief importance" (p 136). We must also "participate faithfully in the sacraments...keeping the commandments of God is indispensable: 'In the end they make a man god....'" (p 137).

Deification is a lengthy process in which the Church and its priesthood are absolutely essential. Salvation by grace through faith is vigorously opposed. *Eastern Orthodox Theology, A Contemporary Reader*, edited by Daniel B. Clendenin (Baker Books, 1995), explains Orthodox theology, with chapters by a number of leading Orthodox scholars. Yet the index contains no listing for gospel, redemption, saved, salvation, etc.

Christoforos Stavropoulos, leading Greek Orthodox scholar, explains (p 184), "In the Holy Scriptures...we read of a unique call directed to us...: 'You are gods...all of you' (Ps 82:6; Jn 10:34)...As human beings we each have this one unique calling, to achieve

theosis...to become a god, to be like God Himself...." Such was Lucifer's ambition: "I will be like the most High" (Isa 14:14)!

Psalms 82:6 is not a call to *become* gods but a declaration that men *already were* gods through Adam's rebellion ("the man has become as one of us" - Gn 3:22), which caused the expulsion from the Garden (vv 23-24). There is only one true God; all gods are false. God declares, "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth [no man-god created the universe], even they shall perish from the earth..." (Jer 10:11). Yet Kenneth Copeland and Paul Crouch (like Shirley MacLaine) insist on TBN that they are indeed gods!

Similarly, in his celebrated book, *Crossing The Threshold of Hope* (Knopf, 1994), Pope John Paul II explains that "salvation and divinization" are the "ultimate purpose" of man's life. "The divinization of man comes from God" (p 195). Likewise, the new universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, quoting St. Athanasius and St. Thomas Aquinas, declares, "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God....The only-begotten Son of God...assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods" (par 460).

Seventy-five percent of Russians claim to be Orthodox, yet 63% are atheists.⁵ In Tsarist times the Russian Orthodox Church was the official state church and its consent was required for any law to be passed. Russian Christian Radio (P.O. Box 1667, Estes Park, CO 80517) comments:

The Orthodox Church was behind the persecution of evangelical Christians long before the communists came into power... [Today] the same men [in the church] who cooperated with the Communist rulers...are still in power...

There are definite signs of a rising opposition by the Orthodox Church against Protestant evangelistic groups. ...Protestants are being accused of proselytizing and are being warned not to try to change anyone's church affiliation....

The *Dallas Morning News* (7/15/93) reported, "Dr. [Billy] Graham met with the Russian Orthodox patriarch and... [they] agreed that proselytizing was inappropriate." Russian lawmakers later voted to ban proselytizing by foreigners. The Orthodox Church opposes the gospel throughout Russia. Every morning on Russian TV an Orthodox priest urges viewers not to listen to evangelicals from the West. In Moscow young Orthodox hooligans accompanied by their priest harass evangelicals, shouting,

"We don't need your Jesus, we have our own Christianity."

Another friend writes, "Having lived and ministered in Russia for several years, I know how hard it is to get Christians in this country to understand that the Russian Orthodox religion is *not* Christianity." A false view is being perpetuated by evangelical leaders. Early in June 1996, Franklin Graham, interviewed on CNBC, declared, "[W]hether it's the Roman Catholic Church...the Orthodox Church...we'd all agree...it's Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for sin." That statement was tragically deceptive. Could Franklin be unaware that Catholicism and Orthodoxy, while using the same biblical words as evangelicals, mean something else?

In 1992, Robert Schuller launched a new organization called Churches United in Global Mission (CUGM), "to share positively the message of Jesus Christ...[in]

...Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Matthew 15:6

a spirit of unity that is truly Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, evangelical and charismatic." A friend of mine wrote from Moscow, "On his [Robert Schuller's] Sunday morning telecast he said something like, 'If being a Protestant means that I protest my Catholic brothers...[or am] against my Orthodox brothers...[or] against believers of other religions, I am not a Protestant.'"

Evangelicals coming from the West to evangelize Russians naively look to the Orthodox Church for help and are often duped. Jerry Falwell was part of a large evangelistic outreach in Moscow last year involving a tour which many Americans joined to see the "wonderful response to the gospel in the former Soviet Union." Jerry was the principal speaker at a large gathering in Moscow's Olympic Stadium. According to Russian/English-speaking attendees, he gave a clear gospel message, but the translator changed it to conform to Orthodox belief. When Jerry gave the invitation to receive Christ (offensive to Orthodoxy), the translator made it sound like a call for all who wanted to join in prayer. Many people raised their hands, leading Jerry and those with him to mistakenly believe there had been a great response to the gospel.

A further deception was the fact that a

major purpose of the meeting in Olympic Stadium was to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the martyrdom of celebrated Orthodox priest Alexander Menn. There were pantomimes and speeches by Orthodox priests honoring him and the distribution of thousands of his books in Russian. Falwell and his team had no idea of the heresies in the Russian copies because the English copy they received deleted favorable references to Buddha and Confucius, that all religions lead to God and that God had spoken through every founder of the great religions. Menn promoted evolution and the power of icons as a window to God and, loyal to Orthodoxy, rejected the biblical gospel. Josh McDowell was also unwittingly involved in a meeting in Moscow where Alexander Menn was again celebrated.

Campus Crusade for Christ has long accepted Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy as true Christianity. A former [Crusade] staff member who became an Orthodox priest testifies, "During my two-and-a-half years on staff [at Crusade headquarters]...I fully participated in the nearby Greek Orthodox parish, Saint Prophet Elias....Campus Crusade encouraged my active participation...."⁶ Frank Schaeffer (son of Francis and Edith Schaeffer) dedicates *Dancing Alone* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), the story of his conversion to Orthodoxy, to several former Campus Crusade staff members who are now Orthodox priests and who introduced him to the Orthodox Church.

Schaeffer confesses that the evangelical faith in which his famous parents reared him had to be *renounced* as a false religion in order to embrace the Catholic/Orthodox faith. Yet Colson, Bright, Packer and other evangelicals embrace Catholics as partners in the gospel! Schaeffer now calls being "born again" the Protestant's "meaningless...magical instantaneous 'silver-bullet' solution to sin." He says we are not saved by "believing that Christ died on the cross for us [but] *by struggling to become like Christ....* We are gradually saved as we are deified." (His emphasis)

We have a "church growth" and "prayer and fasting for revival" movement led by those who refuse to distinguish between biblical truth and error and who join in partnership with the proclaimers of a false gospel. No wonder the statistics reveal a growing counterfeit Christianity. Let us, by the power of God, resist the pressure to conform to today's "Christianity," and stand firmly for sound biblical doctrine. The destiny of souls depends upon it! **TBC**

Quotable

The Roman Catholic Church would be gravely misunderstood if it should be concluded that her present ecumenical adventuresomeness and openness meant that she was prepared to reexamine any of her fixed dogmatic positions. What the church is prepared to do is to take...a more imaginative and contemporary *presentation* of these fixed positions.

Cardinal Augustin Bea, president, Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity

We have in America an awesome number of persons who claim to be born-again Christians. The evidence is overwhelming that a terribly high percentage of that number could not possibly be Christians, because their lives are totally out of alignment with Christian truth.

Richard Owen Roberts, president, International Awakening Ministries

There has got to be some serious attention given to the methodologies we're using and theological things we're teaching that are fostering this [false faith]. I think the spirit of the age has infected the church, and we don't want to offend anybody.

Bill Elliff, First Baptist Church of Little Rock, AK, concerned for the many "spurious conversions"

[F]alse teachers...have success...and people bear with them. But no patience is to be exercised toward true teachers...! There is only judgment, condemnation and scorn. Hence the office of preaching is a grievous one. He who has not for his sole motive the benefit of his neighbor and the glory of God cannot continue therein. The true teacher must labor, and permit others to have the honor and profit of his efforts, while he receives injury and derision for his reward.

Martin Luther

Q&A

Question: I recently came across this reprint from the July 1992 Chalcedon Report: "On Pat Robertson's '700 Club' I see Shirley Dobson...Chairman of the National Day of Prayer Taskforce, talking about the need for prayer, which of course we do need...but Mrs. Dobson says that the National Day of Prayer 'belongs to all faiths and all people. And we're encouraging all people in their

spheres of influence to come together to pray and intercede for our nation.' All faiths?...The National Day of Prayer, run by Christians, belongs to everybody?! ...Amazing." Would you please comment on this in your newsletter?

Answer: The laws of the United States provide freedom for the practice of all religions. Therefore, anyone of whatever "faith" is entitled to pray to his or her "god" on the National Day of Prayer or on any other day, and to pray for the United States or for any other concern. That does not mean, however, that Christians should legitimize erroneous religions by encouraging those who follow false gods to be part of a day of prayer to the one true God of the Bible. To do so would be comparable to Elijah asking the prophets of Baal to join him in prayer for Israel. Such "broadmindedness" is symptomatic of the last-days apostasy which is encouraged by "coalitions" with unbelievers for allegedly good causes and should be opposed by every true Christian.

Question: What do you think of the book, *Ecumenical Jihad*, and the endorsements on the back? My pastor was at a Sola Scriptura conference in DuPage, IL last fall when [John] MacArthur [critically] presented that to the group. When he read one of the endorsements and then named Chuck Colson as the endorser, there was a loud moan from the audience. [J.I. Packer also endorsed it.]

Answer: Instead of a "loud moan," there could just as well have been a loud "of course!" Colson has made his support of Catholicism's false gospel abundantly clear for some years. In 1990 he wrote the foreword to *Evangelical Catholics* by Keith Fournier, head of Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice. (We offer my debate with Keith.) Colson's 1992 book, *The Body*, though it contained much that was good, presented false information favorable to Roman Catholicism and called for ecumenical union with Rome. In an 11/14/94 *Christianity Today* article titled "Why Catholics are Our Allies," Colson wrote, "Let that be a model for our efforts to transform society: to concentrate our forces. And let's be certain that we are firing our polemical rifles against the enemies, not against those fighting in the trenches alongside us in the defense of the Truth."

It would be shocking news to Calvin, Luther and the other Reformers (and especially to the millions Rome tortured

and slaughtered) to learn that those whom they had been so certain were the enemies of the gospel were actually their allies "in defense of the Truth"! Colson has redefined Truth as traditional morality rather than the gospel and God's Word, which is truth (Jn 17:17). As one author has said, "Chuck Colson is more concerned with fighting a 'cultural war' in America than he is with the salvation of millions of Roman Catholics...." (Mendenhall, unpublished manuscript on file).

Ecumenical Jihad is by Peter Kreeft, Boston College philosophy professor, InterVarsity author, convert to Catholicism and now one of its chief apologists. In it he admits, "Most of my Catholic students at Boston College [a Catholic school] have never heard...the gospel. When I ask them what they would say to God if...God asked them why He should take them into Heaven, nine out of ten do not even mention Jesus Christ. Most of them say they have been good, or kind, or sincere, or did their best" (p 36). (Then how can Bright, Colson, Packer, Robertson, et al. who signed "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" declare in that document that all active Catholics are our "brothers and sisters in Christ"?) Without the gospel no one can be saved, but that doesn't bother Kreeft overly much because salvation is through the sacraments of the Church. So Roman Catholics can supposedly make it to heaven without believing the gospel.

For Kreeft the gospel is not the issue. His concern is not for the salvation of souls but for morally reforming society. Like Colson, Robertson, Packer, Reed, Bauer, et al., Kreeft advocates a coalition of all religions to fight society's moral ills. This is what he means by "ecumenical jihad." He writes, "This new alliance may prove to be more unifying than anything else in the history of religions. Perhaps all the world's religions will eventually be united in this cause; but so far, in the West, we can see this army being made up of five religious groups ...who have not bought into the sexual revolution and its offspring, abortion: orthodox Catholics, Evangelical and Fundamentalist Protestants, Muslims, religious Jews, and eastern Orthodox...." (p 49).

Kreeft imagines that prayer to Allah, the moon god, and other pagan deities is just as effective in this moral battle as prayer to the one true God. He refers with approval (p 37) to the fact that at the Pope's invitation, "Representatives of all the major religions of the world met and prayed together for a peace at Assisi...such a thing had never happened before in the history of the world." (His emphasis). At Assisi there were snake

worshippers, spiritists, animists, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, native witch doctors praying to their various false gods, and Kreeft thinks this was great because they were united for “peace”! Behold today’s “Christian coalitions” and weep!

Kreeft rejoices that “Islam, our ancient foe, is beginning to become our friend.” Tell that to the Christians being kidnapped, tortured, murdered in Sudan and elsewhere by Muslims! There is still vicious suppression of Christianity in Muslim countries. He goes on to say that this “new alliance emerged most notably at Cairo....” That is where Muslims and Catholics joined forces against abortion. We see again the ecumenical power of united social action that overlooks the vital differences.

If the above were not amazing enough, hear this (p 38): “Why is Islam expanding so spectacularly...? [T]o any Christian familiar with the Bible, the answer is obvious: because God keeps His promises and blesses those who obey His laws and fear Him...[the secret is] the amounts of [Muslim] prayer.” Muslims obey God’s laws and fear Him?! No, they obey their false god, Allah, in opposition to the true God of the Bible. Yet Kreeft says God honors prayer to Allah, the pagan deity of Muhammed’s Quraish tribe who demanded human sacrifices and of whom the Koran says he is not a father and has no son (though Allah had three daughters)! And in answer to such prayers “the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 11:31) blesses Muslims and helps Islam, the chief enemy of Christianity, to spread its lies that Jesus is not God, that He didn’t die in our place but that someone died in His place, that He was taken to heaven without dying, that Islam is the one true religion, etc.? Can Kreeft have been so deceived by the declaration of Catholicism’s highest authority, Vatican II, that Allah is the God of the Bible?

We have mentioned Kreeft in *The Berean Call* before. In a cover article in the February 1992 *Bookstore Journal*, the “Official Publication of the Christian Booksellers Association” (which urged member stores to cultivate Catholic customers as “brothers and sisters in Christ”), Kreeft declared, “Catholics [don’t pray to saints, they] only ask saints to pray for them—just as we ask the living to pray for us” (p 30). That’s false and Kreeft knows it. In “The Holy Father’s Prayer for the Marian Year,” John Paul II asks Mary to do what only God can do: to comfort, guide, strengthen and protect “the whole of humanity....” His prayer ends, “Sustain us, O Virgin Mary, on our journey of faith and obtain for us the grace of eternal salvation.”

What blasphemy to ask Mary to obtain what God offers freely by His grace through Christ!

There are hundreds of other prayers to Mary, such as, “In thy hands I place my eternal salvation and to thee do I entrust my soul....For, if thou protect me, dear Mother, I fear nothing; not from my sins, because thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of them...nor even from Jesus, my Judge himself, because by one prayer from thee he will be appeased....But one thing I fear; that in the hour of temptation, I may neglect to call on thee, and thus perish miserably. Obtain for me, then, the pardon of my sins....” Again, what blasphemy!

In an earlier book, *Fundamentals of the Faith: Essays in Christian Apologetics* (Ignatius Press, 1988), Kreeft claims that the Reformation was a *semantic misunderstanding* and that Protestants and Catholics are really in agreement, though he knows that isn’t true. Referring to the unity between Protestants and Catholics that he believes is God’s will and is coming, he says it will involve (p 297) Protestants accepting the “authority of the [Roman Catholic] Church, the inerrancy of [not the Bible but] her creeds, sacramentalism, apostolic succession, prayers to saints, purgatory, transubstantiation, and even a definite papal primacy....” Thus he admits at the end of the book what he hides from his readers throughout most of it, that his intention is to win Protestants back to Catholicism!

His *Essays in Christian Apologetics* is really an apologetic against biblical Christianity and for Roman Catholicism. *Ecumenical Jihad* is simply more of the same under the enticing camouflage of joining hands for a moral renewal of society.

Question: Please watch this video tape of Jack Van Impe and tell me what has gotten into him! He used to be sound in doctrine years ago, but now he praises the Pope as an evangelical Christian, talks as though all Catholics are saved, says he loves the new Catholic Catechism because it is so sound in doctrine. Why has he changed?

Answer: Wherever I go, in this country and abroad, I’m repeatedly asked this same question. Jack Van Impe claims to be seen by millions in 25,000 cities and many other countries. Tragically, Jack is without excuse for the misinformation he is presenting to those millions. He claims to have studied Catholicism in detail and to be as well informed on this subject as anyone can be.

Yet if he were a paid agent of the Pope, Jack could not do a better job of propagandizing his viewers into Catholicism.

Rexella begins this particular program by enthusiastically saying that Jack is going to give some “shocking and surprising information....You’ve spent a lot of time in preparation for it,” she says to Jack. He replies, “I’ve been collecting articles for over a year. I study between 6 and 8 hours a day. I love to do research work. I finished the new Catholic *Catechism*...there are 2,850 points and I love much of what I’ve read in there....I just finished 602 pages in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, so we know what we’re talking about....” (He never even hints that anything might be wrong.) Jack then says that Paul commands believers to “keep the unity of the Spirit...for there is one Lord, one faith.” The implication is that Catholics and evangelicals preach the same gospel and are united in the true faith. Not so! In *A Woman Rides the Beast*, book and video, and in past newsletters, we have fully documented Catholicism’s false gospel.

Rexella then says she wants to share with viewers “some of the wonderful sermons Pope John Paul II has been preaching.” The *contents* of the sermons are not given, but only the *titles* of some sermons: “Jesus Christ, the way to conversion,” “Only Christ satisfies the human thirst,” “We must preach Christ wherever we live,” “Proclaim Christ, light of all people,” and “Faith is the greatest gift.” Rexella then reports that the Pope “stood in Rome and said, ‘I’m praying that we will have a conversion of this city to Christ.’” (The implication is that the Pope means the same conversion to Christ that evangelicals preach, which any ex-Catholic knows is not true.)

Jack then further commends the Pope: “He’s fulfilling what Jesus asked us to do...for Jesus said, in John 12:32, ‘If I be lifted up I’ll draw all men unto me.’” (Jack doesn’t tell his viewers that the “Christ” the Pope “lifts up” is the wafer he holds over his head and worships at Mass and that Catholicism’s “Christ” is continuously being sacrificed for sin, in contradiction to the biblical teaching that His sacrifice was completed 1,900 years ago at Calvary: “[W]e are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*...[and] *after* he had offered *one sacrifice for sins for ever*, [He] sat down on the right hand of God;...there is *no more offering for sin*” - Heb 10:10,12,18). Jack then quotes many salvation verses from the Bible, giving the false impression that this is the message of the Pope and Roman Catholicism.

Jack Van Impe goes on to say that at the turn of the century fundamentalism was represented by five basic tenets: 1) inerrancy of the Bible; 2) Christ's deity from all eternity; 3) Christ's virgin birth; 4) salvation through Christ's shed blood; and 5) the resurrection of Christ. He then says, "I'm glad that the Pope is preaching these and it's all in the *Catechism*...but we've not been willing to recognize our Catholic brethren and sisters because of prejudice." No, it is not *prejudice* that causes us to oppose Catholicism's false gospel of works and ritual, but concern for lost souls.

We lack space to analyze the rest of the tape, but it's in the same vein. As for all five points being in the *Catechism*, that is not true (Feb. 97 *TBC*). But it appears to be the case to those who don't understand the real meaning of the words Catholicism uses. Yes, one can find sound biblical statements in the Catholic *Catechism* and in what the Pope says; but the same is true of Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists and other cults. Consider this ad which the Mormon Church places in newspapers around the country at Easter:

During the Easter season we again rejoice with all of Christendom, and gratefully commemorate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ....At this sacred season we solemnly testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. We know that He lives! We know that because He lives, we too shall live again!

It all sounds so biblical! From this quote, using Jack Van Impe's method for accepting Catholicism, we could show that Mormons are also our brothers and sisters in Christ. The truth, however, is that the biblical terminology used has a different and unbiblical meaning for Mormons, who deliberately camouflage their counterfeit gospel beneath evangelical language. The same is true of Roman Catholicism.

For example, in the new *Catechism* which Jack commends, one finds that "God's saving plan was accomplished 'once for all' by the redemptive death of his Son Jesus Christ" (par 1067). That sounds good, but other sections in the *Catechism* declare that the benefits of that "redemptive death" are kept in "the treasury of the Church" (Vatican II) and are dispensed in installments in exchange for good works, sacraments, rosaries, intercession of saints, purgatory and indulgences. There are endless steps one must take for

salvation. The same *Catechism* clearly states, "Outside the Church there is no salvation" (par 846). But Van Impe doesn't inform his viewers of such Roman Catholic "damnable heresies" (2 Pt 2:1).

No Roman Catholic is allowed to believe the salvation verses Jack quotes so earnestly, yet he implies that they do. It is against church dogma to accept Christ's promise that whoever believes in Him "shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (Jn 5:24). New York's Cardinal O'Connor (*The New York Times*, 2/1/90) admits what Van Impe conceals from his viewers beneath the false impression he presents:

Church teaching is that I don't know, at any given moment, what my eternal future will be. I can hope, pray, do my very best—but I still don't *know*. Pope John Paul II doesn't *know* absolutely that he will go to heaven nor does Mother Teresa of Calcutta....

But the Bible says that those who believe in Christ *know* that they *have* (present possession) "eternal life" (1 Jn 5:13). Cardinal O'Connor, the Pope, Mother Teresa and Catholics in general don't believe the gospel that saves, and it is a fraud for Van Impe to pretend that they do. According to Peter Kreeft in *Ecumenical Jihad*, Catholics don't even hear the gospel from their church. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church anathematizes all who believe and preach the true gospel: "If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law (baptism, the Mass, etc.) are not *necessary for salvation* but...that without them...men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema" (Council of Trent, 7th Session, Can. 4). Jack is not telling the truth about Roman Catholicism!

The very *Catechism* which Jack says he knows so well states that "the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*" (par 1129). Why doesn't he expose this perversion of the gospel and warn Roman Catholics that their Church is leading them astray? Instead, he encourages lost souls to continue in their error!

Jack quotes Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we *have redemption* through his blood," and gives the false impression that this is what the Pope and Catholicism teach. In fact, they teach that redemption was not complete at Calvary, but is *in the process* of being accomplished through Roman Catholic rituals: "For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, the work of our redemption is [being] accomplished" [Vatican II, p 1]. Jack is

covering up Catholicism's errors.

Yes, the Pope's sermon titles sound biblical. And we can find selected quotes from the Pope that sound quite evangelical, as we can from Mormon and other cult leaders. But Jack is obligated to present the whole picture, and he does not. Why doesn't he let us know that the Pope rejects as heresy the "widespread idea that one can obtain forgiveness directly from God" and insists upon confession to a priest (*Los Angeles Times*, 12/12/84)? Jack doesn't believe that! Then why doesn't he point out such errors, instead of praising the Pope as an evangelical? Why does he suppress the truth about Roman Catholicism and pretend that it proclaims the true gospel? *Why?*

The very *Catechism* Jack praises calls Mary "the Mother of God" and declares that it is to her that "the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs..." (par 971). Surely Jack does not believe that Mary can protect all Catholics from all dangers they face and supply all their needs! To do so she would have to be God! Then why does he not, for the sake of the millions of souls he is addressing, expose and oppose such teaching?

Rexella and Jack refer repeatedly to the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, as though it were biblical. They ought rather to expose and oppose its heresies, such as the Pope's speech reported in the 1/1/97 edition supporting Rome's dogma that Mary is co-redemptrix with Christ, having united "with her Son in His redemptive sacrifice... [as] her Son's faithful co-worker for the salvation of the human race."

Brother Van Impe owes it to the Lord and to his vast audience to present the full truth about the false, anti-Christian gospel the Pope and his Church preach. Why doesn't Jack quote the Pope the many times the alleged Vicar of Christ has warned Catholics against evangelicals and their gospel? Either Jack has not studied Catholicism to the extent he claims, or he is, I regret to suggest, withholding the truth about it. Either way, the results are tragic!

Endnotes

- 1 *Our Sunday Visitor* (Aug. 4, 1996), 15.
- 2 Juli Loesch Wiley, "Time to Communicate What Catholicism Is & Is Not" (*New Oxford Review*, Jul.-Aug. 1996), 18-19.
- 3 *Church & State* (Oct. 1991), 16.
- 4 "The Religious Century Nears" (*The Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 1995).
- 5 *Christianity Today* (Dec. 12, 1994), 60.
- 6 Peter E. Gillquist, ed., *Coming Home: Why Protestant Clergy are Becoming Orthodox* (Conciliar Press, 1992), 64.

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The New Spiritual Warfare Strategies Part I

T.A. McMahon

Worldwide revival is no longer just a hope churning within the hearts of some Christians. An ever increasing multitude are fervently declaring, "It's here now, and the Holy Spirit is doing a new work to guarantee it!"

Influential leaders throughout Christendom are pointing to what they perceive to be firstfruits of the Holy Spirit in preparation for a great outpouring. The laughing phenomenon of the "Toronto Blessing" and the ministry of Rodney Howard Browne, some contend, began the process by restoring joy in the hearts of God's faithful servants. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and tens of thousands of pastors received the "imparting of the Spirit" at the Toronto Airport Vineyard and carried it across oceans and continents as well as across numerous denominational lines. Thousands of churches in England were influenced by the movement. Leaders of the Brownsville Assembly of God tell us that it was from an Anglican church on that distant shore that the "imparting" returned to this country and ignited their "Pensacola revival." With the Assemblies of God hierarchy giving enthusiastic approval, Pensacola's "anointing" has spread to a great many of the denomination's churches throughout North America.

During 1995 and 1996 many students on Christian college and seminary campuses took part in what they believed to be "a genuine revival." Christian media, both charismatic and noncharismatic, have fostered the belief that revival is dawning. Recent book titles such as *The Coming Revival*, *Revival Signs: Joining the New Spiritual Awakening*, *The Hope at Hand*, and *The Coming World Revival* not only testify that this eagerly awaited event is at our door, but point to that which practically guarantees it: *prayer*.

David Bryant, chairman of the National Prayer Committee and a leader in the Forum for National Revival, writes,

God is stirring up his people to pray specifically, increasingly, and persistently for world revival....He will not let us pray in vain. He has promised to hear and answer us fully. We can prepare for

the answers with confidence.¹

Prayer for revival, you can be sure, has been the earnest endeavor of Christians of every generation since the apostolic era. But this generation has taken it to another level. In fact, the leaders in this worldwide prayer effort call it a "strategic" level for doing spiritual warfare.

C. Peter Wagner, professor of missions and church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission, is a central figure in the promotion of this surprisingly vast and aggressive prayer-focused movement. Characterized by Wagner as "radical concepts and practices" and termed "strategic-level spiritual warfare," the approach includes some familiar prayer activities with new labels, along with some unfamiliar applications and some brand-

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken...

Deuteronomy 18:22

new tasks. The terms "strategic-level intercession," "territorial spirits," "spiritual mapping," "tearing down strongholds," "identificational repentance," and "prayerwalking, prayer journeys, and prayer expeditions" proclaim the militancy of this endeavor. International prayer warriors are taking the fight to the strongholds of Satan. Power encounters with demons are the rule, not the exception, in this spiritual battle for global revival and world evangelization.

If all of these new ideas are, to use Wagner's words, "some of the important things the Spirit is saying to the churches these days," we should indeed take heed and submit to the Holy Spirit's leading. On the other hand, what if most of these new activities are the product of misguided zeal on the part of the movement's leaders and participants?

In this two-part series we will examine the writings and teachings of those who have laid the foundation for the new spiritual warfare. In particular we will focus on C. Peter Wagner's book, *Confronting the Powers*, which appears to be the most comprehensive defense of this movement which has impacted a wide spectrum of professing Christianity. The book's list of supportive evangelical organizations and individuals is impressive, and includes Bill and Vonette Bright, Campus Crusade,

World Prayer Assembly; Ralph Winter, U.S. Center for World Mission; Thomas Wang, Luis Bush, A.D. 2000, Lausanne II; Jack Hayford, Richard Foster and many others.

Be assured that we have just as great a desire as anyone to encourage prayer in the lives of believers and to see those efforts result in genuine revival and the salvation of lost souls. At the same time, we believe it would be a spiritual tragedy of immense proportions if the already hundreds of thousands of sincere Christians now spending valuable time, energy and resources in this new spiritual preoccupation ended up being, at best, unproductive or, at worst, unwitting pawns of the adversary.

Our basic premise in evaluating the strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW) movement is to appeal to the Scriptures. Isaiah's admonition still stands: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (8:20). God's inerrant, authoritative and sufficient Word is the only objective basis a believer has for discerning truth in spiritual matters.

In establishing a beachhead for the spiritual warfare movement, Dr. Wagner would not fully agree with the above premise. While he maintains his belief in biblical inerrancy and the absolute authority of the Scriptures, he reasons that there are many extrabiblical resources for spiritual discernment, not the least of which is personally hearing from God. Wagner's entrée into the development of SLSW had such a beginning: "While in Manila, the Lord spoke to me in a voice that, although not audible, was almost as clear as if it had been: 'I want you to take leadership in the area of territorial spirits.'"² Few believers would deny that God can and does on occasion personally speak to the hearts of His own. While that experience is supported by Scripture, many would argue from the Scriptures that it is the exception rather than the rule in God's everyday guidance of believers. Certainly no doctrine can be established on the basis of one's personal, subjective word from the Lord. Thus, what is of concern is not that Wagner heard from God, but *what* he heard. Is the doctrine of territorial spirits (to be addressed in Part II) confirmed by God?

Extrabiblical revelation is the cornerstone for the development of most of the doctrines of the new spiritual warfare.

Though considered spurious not too long ago by the majority of evangelicals, extrabiblical revelation is now regarded by a growing number of leaders as necessary to fulfill God's mandate to the church today. They profess to find support for their belief in the doctrine of *rhema*. In brief, there are two Greek words in the New Testament which refer to the Word of God: *logos* and *rhema*. Although Peter Wagner acknowledges that the two words are used interchangeably, nevertheless he and others promote a distinction foundational to their doctrine: *logos* designates the *written* Word of God, while *rhema* indicates the *spoken* word of God. Regarding spiritual warfare, *rhema*, in contrast to *logos*, means receiving valid knowledge about the invisible world "from hearing the voice of God, as He communicates His thoughts directly to us as individuals." Wagner states that "Both forms of the word of God...are valid sources of knowledge, and both should be used, as God directs, to confront the enemy in spiritual warfare."³ Underscoring the fact that the *rhema* doctrine is becoming a prominent evangelical teaching, he wrote that he is

...[one] among rapidly increasing numbers of others who believe that a valid source of divine knowledge comes through what some would call "extrabiblical revelation." I daresay that the standard-brand evangelical doctrine of "logos only" that we were taught might now find a place on an "endangered doctrines" list, about to become extinct.⁴

Dr. Wagner qualifies the above by adding that any such knowledge which *contradicts* Scripture must be rejected by faithful Christians. While that may shore up the confidence of some, his extrabiblical revelation has many other problems, as we shall see; and the decisive fact remains that it has completely denied the sufficiency of the Bible (2 Tm 3:16-17; Jn 8:31-32; 2 Pt 1:3).

John Wimber, to whom Wagner refers as his mentor in the realm of signs and wonders, is presented as an example of one way in which extrabiblical revelation is authenticated; i.e., by the credibility of those who observe or experience them.⁵ Dr. Wagner tells of continuous years of suffering from headaches for which no painkiller could bring relief:

Then in 1983, John Wimber received a *rhema* word from God that the root cause

of my headaches had been a demon and that I was to drive it out myself rather than ask someone else to do it for me. I obeyed. I cast out the demon in the name of Jesus, and I have not suffered any such headaches since that day.⁶

While we do empathize with C. Peter Wagner in regard to his suffering, his example raises many questions of concern. Dr. Wagner—a Christian—had a demon? The demon had a specialty? Wagner drove it out himself? God told John Wimber to tell his friend these things? With no biblical support, that's a great deal to swallow as being from God himself. Moreover, why would Wimber's *credibility* be put forth as validating the authenticity of this *rhema* word-from-God testimony? His track record of prophecies is far less than trustworthy. In the early

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

Psalms 119:89

'80s Wimber also had a *rhema* word from God that He would heal well-known Anglican vicar David Watson, suffering from terminal cancer. Some months after Wimber's announcement, Watson succumbed to the disease.

Wagner's example in support of validating extrabiblical revelation reflects some of the teachings basic to the SLSW movement. Since demons are the focus of most of those developing spiritual-warfare strategy, they offer a great deal of information gained from extrabiblical sources. C. Peter Wagner believed he had a demon because John Wimber, Neil Anderson, Fred Dickason, Charles Kraft, Mark Bubeck and nearly all those promoting strategic-level spiritual warfare believe Christians can be demonized. Those advancing this doctrine admit that the Bible has neither teaching nor example of Christians having demon spirits. Dr. Wagner nevertheless offers extrabiblical evidence such as "personal ministry experience," "a consensus...from others who have ministered in the area of deliverance," having "seen many positive, even dramatic, results in the lives of those Christians who have been delivered from demons," and that "none of [these reasons] *contradicts* any explicit biblical teaching"⁷ (Emphasis in the original)

Although Wagner gives no details in his book regarding his self-deliverance, the strategy common to spiritual warfare circles is to ascertain the demon's name for better control purposes and then cast it out. A survey of the most popular SLSW literature reveals that in nearly every case each demon has a name which is indicative of its duty (e.g., Lust, Anger, Rebellion, Deception, Pornography, etc.). So the key, say those experienced in this, is to spiritually discern the name of the demon in order to facilitate a successful deliverance. While Wagner and others admit that methods based upon such spiritual information (often from the demons themselves) should be viewed with suspicion, that hasn't appeared to have slowed down the SLSW proponents. Why? Because they are getting results! On the other hand, as any student of military strategy will tell you, *results* aren't always what they appear to be.

One of the underlying suppositions of the strategic-level spiritual warfare movement is spiritual pragmatism; i.e., if something seems to produce good results, it must be of God. Trial and error accompanies such thinking. Wagner indicates that *experimentation* is used by SLSW people as their mode of developing "some of the more radical forms of praying..."⁸ Is this how we are to grow spiritually? Search as you may, you won't find this approach in God's Word. Deuteronomy 13 tells us that just because something works, that doesn't indicate it's good. A false prophet getting a true result may simply be the bait to lead a person astray. Subversive ministers of righteousness can be some of Satan's finest (2 Cor 11:14).

Sadly, many who are a part of the spiritual warfare movement will see our concerns as ignorance based on the presumption that we have not "been there, done that." The more charitable participants in SLSW perceive us as either "just not called to the spiritual front lines" or "pitifully blind to the dynamic things the Holy Spirit is doing in our day." On the contrary, rather than quenching or grieving the Holy Spirit, we are simply trying to point to that which the Spirit of Truth has already made clear in the Scriptures for truly effective spiritual warfare. In Part II we will address more details of this growing spiritual army and its various methods of attempting to win its battle with Satan.

TBC

Quotable

The mingling of that which is of God with that which is of man is a special form of evil, and a very effectual engine, in Satan's hand, for marring the testimony of Christ on the earth. This mingling may frequently wear the appearance of something very desirable; it may often look like a wider promulgation of that which is of God—a fuller and a more vigorous outgoing of a divine influence—a something to be rejoiced in rather than to be deplored: but our judgment as to this will depend entirely upon the point of view from which we contemplate it. If we look at it in the light of God's presence, we cannot possibly imagine that an advantage is gained when the people of God mingle themselves with the children of this world, or when the truth of God is corrupted by human admixture. Such is not the divine method of promulgating truth, or of advancing the interests of those who ought to occupy the place of witnesses for Him on the earth. Separation from all evil is God's principle; and this principle can never be infringed without serious damage to the truth. ...Satan's first effort was to frustrate God's purpose by putting the holy seed to death; and when that failed, he sought to gain his end by corrupting it.

C.H. Mackintosh, Notes on Genesis

Q&A

Question: My church seems to believe that one must be a "scholar" or a "theologian" to be a pastor or a credible Christian author or Bible teacher. It even seems to be implied that those without such degrees are not competent to question what those holding theological (and now even psychological) degrees teach from the Bible. That sounds to me like elitism. What is your opinion?

Response: I must agree with you. No degree in and of itself spiritually qualifies the one to whose name it is attached. Yet that is the mentality today, to such an extent that some pastors, authors and conference speakers are going to diploma mills to purchase (with little study) a "Dr." to put in front of their names. Just those two letters (almost no one ever asks how or where acquired) seem to elevate the individual to a new level of biblical understanding and

spiritual authority.

The Bereans certainly had no theological degrees. Yet they checked out the great Apostle Paul's preaching against Scripture and were commended for doing so (Acts 17:11). Every Christian is both qualified *and obligated* to do the same with every Bible teacher and preacher, no matter how highly regarded or academically certified. No one is immune from error or correction, and that includes this writer.

Nor were the disciples "theologians" or "scholars." Among them were fishermen, a tax gatherer, etc. The idea that those who have academic degrees from theological seminaries have thereby a monopoly on interpreting the Bible is both illogical and unscriptural. Such elitism is simply the Protestant version of Roman Catholicism's claim that its hierarchy of bishops, cardinals and popes alone can interpret Scripture.

Christian leaders should be respected and honored. This regard, however, should not be based on degrees they may have acquired, but on the extent to which they demonstrate godly lives, biblically qualified and consistent leadership, and the teaching of sound doctrine based on their study of the Word.

Question: I get confused between cults and occults and can never remember the difference between them. Could you please explain it for me?

Response: There is no such word as "occults." According to *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, the word "occult" is an adjective which means "1. hidden; concealed. 2. secret; esoteric. 3. beyond human understanding; mysterious. 4. designating or of certain mystic arts or studies, such as magic, alchemy, astrology, etc." While admittedly an adjective, "occult" is often used as a noun to designate the body of occultism in general. Some cults are involved to varying degrees in the occult (Science of Mind, Religious Science, Unity, Mormonism, Masonry, etc.)—others are not.

The central purpose in occultism is to develop paranormal powers and knowledge leading to mastery over the laws of nature and even death, and ultimately to some brand of eternal paradise and/or union with the gods or the universe. This is done through *techniques* such as Eastern meditation, yoga, drumming and dancing, hypnosis, visualization, positive thinking,

positive speaking (called "positive confession" by certain charismatic leaders), ingesting psychedelic drugs or plants such as peyote or the sacred mushroom, or other methods for achieving what is called an "altered state of consciousness" (ASC).

Yogis and witchdoctors (now called shamans) have been practicing the occult for thousands of years, achieving what anthropologists call the shamanic state of consciousness (SSC). In this state, through visualization (the most powerful occult technique), they take what is known as "the shamanic journey" to the upper or nether worlds, into the future or the past, in order to contact a spirit guide (such as Jung's Philemon), be it animal or human, as the vehicle through which this magic power is channeled through them.

Anthropologists have studied these techniques and powers around the world, from the witch doctors of the Tungus tribe in Siberia (where the word "shaman" originates), to those in Africa; and from the whirling dervishes of Islam and North American medicine men or voodoo priests of Haiti, to the yogis of India and occult magicians of all varieties virtually everywhere. Modern scientists have been studying the occult in laboratory experiments in our universities from Berkeley and Stanford to Princeton and Duke, where the occult powers have been given new benign names, such as extrasensory perception (ESP), telekinesis (ability allegedly to move physical objects with the mind), future vision (ability to foretell the future), remote viewing (ability to see what is occurring hundreds and even thousands of miles away), etc. Bam Price, an associate of former astronaut and now psychic researcher Edgar Mitchell, has noted that

The powers described by the mystics through the ages are now being described by scientists, proof that underlying the material world is a vast nonsubstantial world. The priests of old were also the scientists. Today the priest and the scientist are coming back together again. (*Los Angeles Times*, 7/28/75, Part 1, p 125).

For thousands of years it was understood that these magic powers came from spirits with whom one had to make a pact called "the magician's bargain," such as that which the demon, Mephistopheles, made with Dr. Faust in the famous drama of that name. This remains the conviction of most occultists in the Third World and many

practicing occultists in the West. However, largely through the influence of psychology (a new branch, parapsychology, devotes itself entirely to this study), these powers are now being attributed to an infinite and ordinarily untapped potential residing within all mankind, a potential which can only be awakened through the shamanic techniques mentioned above.

That belief led to what became known as the Human Potential Movement, whose origins can be traced to Esalen in the Big Sur south of San Francisco and to a number of humanistic psychologists (Fritz Perls, Abraham Maslow, et al.), who visited and lectured there. Eventually the practice of these techniques and development (or hope thereof) of these shamanistic powers became known as the New Age Movement. We have written about this in detail in *The New Spirituality*.

Man does not have supernatural powers residing within which can be tuned into and utilized through occult techniques. If man does indeed have an *infinite* potential, then he is a god. That was the lie of the serpent to Eve; and today's alleged development of so-called psychic powers comes only through demons in an attempt to make modern man believe the same lie.

Endnotes

- 1 David Bryant, *The Hope at Hand* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 231
- 2 C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers* (Ventura, CA, Regal Books, 1996) 20
- 3 Ibid., 52-53
- 4 Ibid., 55
- 5 Ibid., 59
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., 86
- 8 Ibid., 20

The New Spiritual Warfare Strategies Part II

T.A. McMahon

The term “spiritual warfare,” as used by most conservative evangelical Christians, is simply a figurative way of describing what takes place every day as they attempt to live their lives in a manner pleasing to God. The very real adversaries on the spiritual battlefield are the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the “good fight” consists of resisting temptation, overcoming personal sin, and being an effective witness for Christ. The figurative language of this term expresses the nature of the literal, temporal struggle in which all believers find themselves. At least, that’s what many if not most evangelicals would say. But this view is changing rapidly.

The military metaphor is now being taken quite literally. Prayer has been drafted and retooled with the latest technology. C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary writes, “Thousands of churches have installed prayer rooms, tastefully furnished rooms that include a phone line or two and perhaps a fax machine or a computer for e-mail. These rooms are occupied by intercessors 24 hours a day.”¹ In many cases these are dedicated “strategic-level spiritual warfare” (SLSW) rooms manned by intercessors engaged in “warfare praying for the cities of the world.” From such rooms many of the “strategies” of the new spiritual warfare can be executed.

For example, “spiritual mapping” is considered a critical strategic procedure. It involves creating geographical area maps with markings for all historically and presently significant pagan activities at a particular location. It’s claimed that by researching the area’s religious history one can learn in detail what brought it into spiritual bondage, and that this specific knowledge can lead to more effective prayer. When historical information is limited or unavailable, direct communication from God closes the gap. “Discernment of spirits is a spiritual gift that is extremely valuable, for through it spiritual cartographers are given special insights by the Holy Spirit.”²

Here is one example of how SLSW works, according to Dr. Wagner:

[It] begins by breaking the city down into neighborhoods, manageable geographical areas. In Medellin, Colombia...

they have designated 255 neighborhoods. ...Each one...is mapped in detail, showing each lot, what buildings are on the lot, what color house, and the name of the family or families who live there.

The maps are distributed to prayer groups in the city, in other parts of the country and in other countries....If at least three prayer groups report *spiritual impressions* about a particular household or place, trained workers go right in and solicit specific prayer requests for that house.

Prayer groups outside the city keep in touch through fax machines and computer modems. In Medellin, one of the participating prayer groups was a Baptist General Conference church in the United States. Even though they had no tradition of *receiving prophetic words* from the Lord, one day the group *heard clearly* that

Thus saith the LORD, learn not the way of the heathen...

Jeremiah 10:2

there was something wrong with a certain vacant lot in the neighborhood they were praying for, and they faxed the information to Medellin. A ministry team visited the lot and found five occult objects cursed and buried by witches to control the neighborhood. They were destroyed and the gospel flowed freely.³ (Emphasis mine)

SLSW focuses upon demonic activities perceived to be keeping people in bondage and preventing them from hearing and receiving the gospel. Certainly Satan and his minions do all they can to oppose the gospel. But can “five occult objects cursed and buried by witches” prevent the flow of the gospel? And what of “spiritual impressions” received by the above-mentioned noncharismatic Baptists? Was it the Holy Spirit who gave such insights to them, then later directed the ministry team to find, dig up, and destroy the objects?

To accept all of this we would have to go beyond what the Bible teaches and embrace the key doctrine of the spiritual warfare movement: that of territorial spirits.

Territorial spirits are said to be “high-ranking principalities [demons]” which “attempt to keep large numbers of humans ...in spiritual captivity.”⁴ Their control includes nations, cities, neighborhoods, industries, and religious groups. Wagner writes, “Only the Holy Spirit can overcome

the territorial spirits, destroy their armor and release the captives under their wicked control.”⁵ Strategic intercession by prayer warriors is brought to bear in situations where evangelistic efforts seem to be unproductive. Wagner recommends in such cases that “strategic-level spiritual warfare might at least be worthy of *experimentation*. Possibly a strongman [territorial spirit] *needs to be bound* by the power of the Holy Spirit given to us.”⁶ (Emphasis mine)

Binding territorial spirits is the primary SLSW method of removing demonic control. Wagner and other SLSW proponents contend that Matthew 12:29, 16:19 and 18:18 and Mark 3:27 lay the foundation for power encounters in which ruling demons or principalities are neutralized. Arriving at such an interpretation of those scriptures, however, necessitates reading them with SLSW preconceptions. If Jesus were instructing us in Mark 3:27 to enter Satan’s house and bind him in order to prevent his obstruction of the gospel, 1) He failed to follow His own counsel during His “power encounter” with Satan in the desert; 2) His instructions were terribly vague; and 3) none of His disciples bothered with the application.

Incredibly, the rationale offered by some SLSW advocates is that such spiritual warfare teaching was for good reason not specific: Christ’s words were for the most part prophetic, and meant for a later time in which the very necessary extrabiblical sources and devices such as libraries, faxes, computers, the internet, etc., would be widely available for waging spiritual warfare.

Although he encourages experimentation with SLSW methods and techniques, Wagner nevertheless issues a warning: “It is foolish, as well as dangerous, to confront the enemy by binding and loosing outside the will of God or outside His timing. ...[C]ertain spiritual powers could be too mighty for us to handle at a certain time and in a certain place.”⁷ Therefore, receptivity to extrabiblical revelation (personally hearing from God—see Part I) is extremely critical and must be nurtured in order for prayer warriors to know: *who* (by name) the territorial spirits are, *what* their particular function is, and *when* they might effectively be bound.

There seems to be no end to what many in SLSW are “hearing from the Spirit.” Prayerwalking, prayer journeys, prayer expeditions and Marches for Jesus are related forms of spiritual warfare. Leading proponents Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick define prayerwalking as “praying

on site with insight.”⁸ Locations are visited by intercessors who have researched the “spiritual” history of each place to determine specific things to pray for, or who have “spiritually discerned” strategic information obtained directly from the Holy Spirit. Prayer journeys usually involve travel to foreign cities, while prayer expeditions are often cross-country hikes taken for the purpose of strategic intercession against the nationwide rule of demonic principalities. Kendrick describes the SLSW attributes of March for Jesus as a joyful public proclamation as well as a “foray into enemy territory. God’s enemies retreat as [Jesus] arises in His magnificent processional presence during the march.”⁹

Reading through the popular literature featuring strategic-level spiritual warfare concepts, methods, and techniques has been a perplexing ordeal. Nearly all the authors were found to be terribly sincere, and some select teachings I read were quite insightful, even spiritually convicting. For instance, even the badly flawed books dealing with prayer revealed the shortcomings of my own prayer life. Nevertheless, the new spiritual warfare movement has missed the mark in so many fundamental ways that I believe it must be abandoned by its participants in order to desist from accommodating the *stratagem*s of the adversary. Here’s why.

Foremost, the concept of spiritual strategy is unbiblical. Strategy is a military term having to do with the science and planning of large-scale military operations. It involves stratagem, which Webster defines as “trick[s], scheme[s], or plan[s] for deceiving an enemy in war.” Nowhere in God’s Word is such an approach applied to the spiritual realm.

Strategy usually entails some form of direct engagement of the enemy. The fundamental tactic of the strategic-level spiritual warfare movement *requires* power encounters with demons, especially territorial spirits. With the exception in certain instances of the Lord directing deliverance on behalf of the demon-possessed *lost*, direct confrontation with demons is not the rule for believers. In fact, it is a deadly quicksand of spiritually erroneous effort.

1 John 3:8 tells us that “the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” It is the *works*; not the devil or his demons. Although Satan’s fate was sealed at the Cross, God, for His own purpose, has allowed him to continue until the Lord *himself* binds him for a time, and

then casts him into the eternal Lake of Fire (Rv 20:2-3,10). The works of the devil are lies and deception with which he “hath blinded the minds of them which believe not...the glorious gospel of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4). Satan’s works began in heaven with his own self-deluded lie: “I will be like the most high [God]” (Is 14:14). He brought his deceptions to earth to infect mankind. Adam and Eve were seduced by his lies (Gn 3:1-6), and that has been his *modus operandi* in every subsequent generation.

Spiritual warfare is not hand-to-hand combat or strategic battle in the heavenlies against spirit entities. It is contending for the truth, vanquishing false teachings, and resisting the lies. The “wrestling” of Ephesians 6:12 refers to disputations over truth (v 14), not body slamming demons. Our weapon is the “sword of the Spirit [of

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls....

Jeremiah 6:16

Truth], which is the [written!] word [*rhema*] of God” (v 17). Jesus himself used that sword against the devil: “It is written...” (Mt 4:4,6,7,10).

The strongholds of the devil to be pulled down are not literal “territories ruled by demons,” but Satan’s lies, which hold captive the minds (“every thought”) of the lost (2 Cor 10:4-5), and can even deceive God’s “very elect” (Mt 24:24). Scripture tells us clearly and simply how we are to deal with such strongholds: “...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32).

Not only has the SLSW movement missed the mark with its unbiblical mission; its militantly aggressive strategy is also dangerously erroneous. The Scriptures determine the manner and mode of dealing with Satan: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7). Again, that’s just what Jesus did (Lk 4:1-13). Over and over again the Word of God exhorts believers, not to power encounters with demons, but to *steadfastness* in the faith. Peter, who was no stranger to casting out demons, nevertheless

wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom *resist steadfast in the faith*” (1 Pt 5:8). (Emphasis mine)

Many concerned observers of the strategic-level spiritual warfare movement recognize its characteristics as being akin to shamanism (i.e., witch doctoring). Limited space allows only a sampling here. The shaman’s world is one of direct daily contact with the spirit realm. The shaman leads his people in spiritually efficacious rituals or public dances/marches to the glory of his spirits. He develops methods and techniques to overcome evil spirits, techniques he receives from good spirits, so he believes. Communication with invisible entities is totally subjective, often experimental, and always pragmatic: if it works it’s good medicine. The “good” spirits give the shaman spiritual discernment, enabling him to recognize curse-laden objects and even to “see” evil entities which could be destructive to his village. All such methods, techniques and rituals encompass sorcery and are diametrically opposed to God’s way.

When the Apostle Paul referred to Jannes and Jambres in his second letter to Timothy, the reference seems to be to their involvement in *counterfeit signs and wonders* in Pharaoh’s court. Is Paul telling us that the perilous times in the last days will see pervasive counterfeit spirituality or sorcery? Are we seeing “...a form of godliness” (2 Tm 3:5) being dispensed to the sheep by witting or unwitting shepherds of shamanism who, like Pharaoh’s magicians, “also resist the truth” (v 8)?

Major elements of the strategic-level spiritual warfare movement’s teachings and practices are either foundational to, or heavily incorporated in, many of today’s popular programs/ministries. Of the latter, some of the most influential are the Pensacola revival, Richard Foster’s *Renovaré*, the John Jacobs Power Team, YWAM’s Impact World Tour, Neil Anderson’s *Freedom in Christ* seminars, Cindy Jacobs’ *Generals of Intercession*, Dick Eastman’s *Every Home for Christ*, and George Otis, Jr.’s *The Sentinel Group*. Pray that the Lord will bring true spiritual discernment to both the leaders and followers of these programs, and to the many others caught up in the same biblical errors. Pray that God will turn them from the way of the shaman and back to His “good way” (Jer 6:16). **TBC**

Quotable

“You’re just out of date,”
 said young pastor Bate
 To one of our faithful old preachers
 Who had carried for years
 in travail and tears
 The gospel to poor sinful creatures.
 “You still preach on Hades,
 and shock cultured ladies
 “With your barbarous doctrine of blood!
 “You’re so far behind
 you will never catch up—
 “You’re a flat tire stuck in the mud!”

For some little while, a bit of a smile
 Enlightened the old preacher’s face.
 Being made the butt of ridicule’s cut
 Did not ruffle his sweetness and grace.
 Then he turned to young Bate,
 so suave and sedate.
 “Catch up, did my ears hear you say?
 “Why, I couldn’t succeed
 if I doubled my speed,
 “My friend, *I’m not going your way!*”

Author unknown

If religious literature is not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness, will reign without mitigation or end.

Daniel Webster, 1823

The truth was in Gaius, and Gaius walked in the truth. If the first had not been the case, the second could never have occurred; and if the second could not be said of him the first would have been a mere pretense. Truth must first enter into the soul, penetrate and saturate it, or else it is of no value.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon
 Morning and Evening

Q&A

Question: The pain and suffering caused by crime is bad enough. Christianity, however, has added to that pain and suffering by convincing mankind that it has rebelled against God and broken His laws. Consequently, the threat of eternal punishment haunts everyone who has come under Christianity’s influence. Wouldn’t the world be better off without these delusions to trouble it?

Answer: It is not true that Christianity has created the feeling of moral guilt and coming judgment that haunts mankind. Man is an incurably religious creature, and the religious practices which are found in every race and culture around the world all involve a sense of guilt and the attempt to erase guilt through some kind of sacrifice. Such is the case worldwide. It can be traced back in every culture through thousands of years and thus cannot be blamed upon Christianity at all.

The same is true even of those brought up in a so-called “Christian country” such as the United States. While their sense of guilt may have been reinforced through contact with Christianity, that contact is certainly not the sole source. The universal guilt that haunts even primitive man would also haunt Americans even if Christianity were unknown here. Jacques Ellul calls the idea that Christianity is to be blamed for guilt a “trite notion” and argues that

[S]acrifice, found in all religions, is propitiatory or else is a sacrifice for redemption or forgiveness. In any case, the sacrifice is substitutionary and proceeds from a deep sense of guilt....

[A]s far as situations that create guilt are concerned, you can find nothing better than the tangles of prohibitions among so-called primitive peoples. ...(*The Humiliation of the Word*, 1985, p 60)

In fact, it is Christianity alone which can deliver man from the guilt that otherwise haunts him. Turning over a new leaf and vowing to live a morally upright life in the future cannot deliver one from the guilt of past sins. True deliverance from guilt can only come through faith in Christ as the One who paid the full penalty for one’s sins and has effected a full pardon on a righteous basis. It is only then that we realize the magnitude of our guilt and can

thus thank God all the more for our salvation. Ellul put it well:

We must also remember constantly that...biblically, and in truly Christian thought, sin is known and recognized for what it is only *after* the recognition, proclamation, and experience of forgiveness. Because I have been pardoned, I realize how much of a sinner I was. Sin is shown to be sin through grace, and not otherwise, just as the abruptly freed slave realizes, as he sees his chains, how great his misery was. (*Humiliation*, p 60).

Question: The Bible tries to make morality consist of absolutes which are supposedly commanded by God. Yet most people in the world never read the Bible, so they don’t know these rules. What could be more foolish than a book which claims to be God’s Word and sets rules that most people never heard of and then condemns them for not obeying these rules?

Answer: It can be easily demonstrated that the Ten Commandments (minus the command to keep the sabbath) are written in the heart and conscience of every person. That fact accounts for the similarities in the morality of various religions. Thus it is not foolish at all for the Bible to hold mankind to these standards.

The atheist tries to discredit Christianity by showing that the applications of the Mosaic law expressed by Christ in His sermon on the mount are echoed in the sayings of a Buddha or Confucius. In fact, such similarities can be explained in no other way than that God exists and has written His law in every human conscience. And that the account of the giving of this law is found in the Bible is further proof that it is God’s Word.

The first chapter of Romans tells us that the fact of God’s existence is proclaimed and fully demonstrated in convicting evidence to every thinking person. The second chapter argues just as clearly that every man knows both that he is morally accountable to God and that he has violated the standards which God has set:

For when the Gentiles [non-Jews], which have not the law [that was given to Moses at Mt. Sinai], do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also

bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another...(Rom 2:14-15).

Those raised in different cultures adopt habits and customs and regard taboos peculiar to their society. Nevertheless, beneath the surface of seeming differences, there lies a common fabric of moral conviction which is the same for all mankind. If morality were simply a matter of custom or legislation, there would be no basis for discussing whether such practices were good or bad, right or wrong. That there is a common conscience, which though dulled or warped by generations of peculiar and even contradictory custom, is nevertheless alive within all mankind becomes immediately apparent in any discussion with those of non-Christian and even primitive pagan cultures.

Endnotes

- 1 C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers* (Ventura, CA, Regal Books, 1996), 12
- 2 C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer* (Ventura, CA, Regal Books, 1992), 154
- 3 *Ibid.*, 166-167
- 4 *Confronting*, 22
- 5 *Ibid.*, 152
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*, 155-156
- 8 Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick, *Prayerwalking* (Lake Mary, FL, Creation House, 1993), 15
- 9 *Ibid.*, 200

The Greening of the Cross

Dave Hunt

With the end of the Cold War easing the threat of all-out nuclear battle, attention has shifted to reversing the pollution that threatens us everywhere. Surprisingly, the ecological movement has become more religion than science. Thomas Berry of Fordham University calls man's ecological responsibility "preeminently a *religious* and *spiritual* task."¹ The 1990 Global Forum held in Moscow, with delegates from 83 countries, called for "a global council of spiritual leaders"² and the "creation of an inter-faith prayer...a new spiritual and ethical basis for human activities on Earth."³

Carl Sagan, the recently deceased high priest of cosmos worship, declared that "any efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the *sacred*."⁴ What could an atheist have meant by "*sacred*"? Ten years earlier he had said, "If we must worship a power greater than ourselves, does it not make sense to revere the Sun and stars?"⁵

No, it does not. Reverence does not pertain to *things* but to *persons*. To reverence the impersonal creation instead of the personal God who created us is a perversion designed for escaping moral accountability to the Creator. God indicts those who worship the creation instead of its Creator (Rom 1:18-23); and warns of the corruption of morals and behavior which results (24-32).

This pagan spirituality is ideal for uniting all religions together with science into a world religion. Al Gore, a Southern Baptist, has said that ecological problems can only be solved through a "new spirituality" common to all religions and that saving the Earth "requires reuniting science and religion."⁶ Pope John Paul II enthusiastically endorses this idolatrous partnership:

Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish. ...Such bridging ministries must be nurtured and encouraged. Nowhere is this more clear than in the current environmental crisis...It has the potential to *unify and renew religious life*. (Emphasis in original.)⁷

To suggest that science could benefit Christianity denies the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the inerrancy of Scripture and leads to the errors of the religious science cults. We explained in February why Roman

Catholicism takes this heretical view. Furthermore, science itself is turning back to the occult, as we document in my new book, *Occult Invasion*. There is no doubt that the occult will be a major factor in the coming world religion. Addressing the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations Secretary-General called the world back to the pagan worship of nature:

To the ancients, the Nile was a god to be venerated, as was the Rhine, an infinite source of European myths, or the Amazonian forest, the mother of forests. Throughout the world, nature was the abode of the divinities that gave the forest, the desert or the mountains a personality which commanded worship and respect. The Earth had a soul. To find that soul again, to give it new life, that is the essence of Rio.⁸

It takes but one more small step to Al Gore's worship of Mother Earth as the goddess Gaia. On January 23, 1997, "The Gaia

...having made peace through the blood of his cross...

Colossians 1:20

Mind Project" held a "Simultaneous Global Meditation and Prayer." The goal was to "initiate a shift in our understanding of our relationship with Gaia...in which we recognize ourselves as the living Earth's emergent self-reflexive consciousness...[and] to help...potentiate global healing."⁹

The "Gaia hypothesis" is taken seriously at gatherings of scientists seeking to restore and preserve the Earth. Goddess worship is, of course, promoted by feminists, even by some who call themselves Christians. Rosemary Radford Ruether, professor of theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, has written *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. Consider the "Re-Imagining God, the Community and the Church" conference held in 1993. One of the speakers was Chung Kyun Kyung, a South Korean Presbyterian. In her plenary address to this "Christian" gathering, Chung declared,

I want to share three images of God...and how these... [goddesses] transformed my Christianity....Kali, Quani, and Enna [are]...my new Trinity...Kali is...a Hindu image. Quani is Buddhist...Enna...is the indigenous goddess of Philippines....¹⁰ [We] are here together, in order to destroy the patriarchal idolatry of Christianity....¹¹

Instead of being excommunicated from her church and shunned by the Christian

community for such blasphemy, Chung is highly honored. The Pilgrim Press of The United Church of Christ published a book in 1995 titled *Remembering and Re-Imagining*. It was all about this conference, which the press release said "shook the very foundations of mainline Protestantism. Denounced by many, but considered the Second Reformation by others, it...was an event that revealed in many ways a new understanding of faith, of God, and community."¹²

Chung, who is in great demand as a speaker, gave a plenary address at the Seventh World Council of Churches (WCC) International Conference in Australia in 1992. One trembles even to quote her diatribe against God the Father and the Holy Spirit and her wicked perversion of Christianity. Yet the WCC delegates gave Chung a standing ovation. Ecumenical Press Service reported,

Combining verbal fireworks with a performance by Korean and aboriginal dancers, Chung rendered a dramatic evocation of a female Holy Spirit. ...[which] she linked...to that of Hagar... exploited and abandoned by Abraham and Sarah." Chung then burned bits of paper bearing the names of other exploited spirits—which she said were full of "han," the Korean word for anger...Chung said, "I also know that I no longer believe in an omnipotent, Macho, warrior God who rescues all good guys and punishes all bad guys...."¹³

Eighteen times Chung summoned the spirits of the dead who have suffered injustices and claimed that "without hearing the cries of these spirits, we cannot hear the voice of the Holy Spirit....Don't bother the Spirit by calling her all the time." Added Chung, "I hope the presence of all our ancestor's spirits here with us shall not make you uncomfortable."¹⁴

The practice of calling up discarnate spirits is common to shamanism around the world and has become part of the environmental movement. The return to nature comes through in almost all communications from the spirit world. For the shaman, the spirit entities encountered in trance are connected with the earth. Eagle Man, a modern shaman, boasts of the Native Americans' "deeply spiritual relationship with nature." He adds, "Getting back to nature will be the key to saving the planet."¹⁵

It is these very demonic "spirits of ancestors" associated with the worship of Earth which hold pagans in bondage and fear. Ancestor worship is the heart of voodoo, Santeria, Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism and almost all the "isms," including

Catholicism in its communication with and worship of the “saints,” especially “Mary.” Newspapers around the world reported,

Pope John Paul II sought common ground [in West Africa] with believers in voodoo Thursday, suggesting they would not betray their traditional faith by converting to Christianity [Catholicism]. On the second day of his 10th African pilgrimage, the Pope held a dramatic and emotional meeting with priests of the *vodun*....The Pope told the voodooists that just as they draw on their ancestors for their religion, so do Christians [Catholics] revere their “ancestors in the faith....”¹⁶

In March 1991, the Southern Baptists’ Christian Life Commission, directed by Richard Land, “held its first environmental seminar. Later that fall, the United Church of Christ convened an environmental summit for minorities....” The largest black denomination, the National Baptist Convention USA, involved itself in environmentalism at about the same time.¹⁷ Also in 1991, Evangelicals for Social Action (Ron Sider, executive director) helped to organize a gathering of scientists and religious leaders to discuss rescuing the environment. Several mainline denominations and leaders, including Robert Schuller; World Vision’s president, Robert Seiple; and Asbury Theological Seminary president, David McKenna, enthusiastically supported this largely pagan movement.¹⁸ So did *Christianity Today*, which reported favorably upon this conference without mentioning that it arose out of Moscow’s occult/New Age “Global Forum.”

One of the ecumenical environmental groups which evangelicals have joined is the “Joint Appeal by Religion and Science for the Environment.” It is based at New York’s huge Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a bastion of New Age/ecumenical/Antichrist deception, where a female “Christa” was displayed on a cross. Its appalling dean, James Parks Morton, declares, “We are increasingly being called to realize that the body of Christ is the earth—the biosphere—the skin that includes all of us.”¹⁹ Similarly, Richard Austin, one of the speakers at the EarthCare ’96 conference, declared, “Christ is fully God and fully Earth....He came to save the world...I hear the Bible calling us to redeem from destruction the Creation.”²⁰

In fact, Christ said that He was “not of this world” (Jn 8:23). He urged His own to be heavenly minded, not earthly minded (Mt 6:19-21; Lk 12:33; Jn 12:25; 18:36), and promised

to take them out of this world to His Father’s house of many mansions (Jn 14:1-6). This world is “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment...the heavens shall pass away with a great noise...the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pt 3:7,10).

Mikhail Gorbachev is now president of the ecological watchdog organization, Green Cross International, headquartered in the Hague. *Green Cross?* How dare Gorbachev or anyone else turn the Cross, red with Christ’s blood shed for our sins, into something *green*! Yet this is exactly what is happening to the message of the Cross through the environmental movement. It is a humanistic attempt to restore the lost paradise of Eden without acknowledging that the

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature [creation] more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 1:25

problem is man’s rebellion against his Creator and that Christ’s death for our sins is the only basis upon which there can be reconciliation. Christianity is subtly being redefined.

The “Greening of the Cross” is a growing movement not to be taken lightly. At the “Re-Imagining God” conference attended by many professing evangelicals, Chung Kyun Kyung summoned “the spirit of Earth, Air, and Water” and declared,

For many Asians, we see god in the wind, in the fire, in the tree, in the ocean. We are living with god, it is just energy...it is in the sun, in the ocean, it is from the ground and it is from the trees....If you feel very tired and you feel you don’t have any energy to give, what you do is you go to a big tree and ask tree, “Give me some of your life energy!”²¹

What Chung says is not far from Al Gore’s tree hugging. Nor is it unrelated to Norman Vincent Peale’s declaration: “God is energy. As you breathe God in, as you visualize His energy, you will be reenergized!”²²

Gorbachev says that the main purpose of Green Cross is “to bring nations together ...to stimulate the new environmental consciousness...returning Man to a sense of being a part of Nature.” To require man to act like he’s “part of Nature” is an

admission that he is not. Nature’s creatures need no such urging. This return to nature, however, is a powerful factor in encouraging the immorality of today’s world.

There is no “right” or “wrong” in nature. Clearly it is not “wrong” for a volcano to spue forth poisonous gases. Whatever nature and her offspring do is simply “natural.” If man is a product of nature through evolution, then whatever he does must likewise be natural. As for all the furor raised over the possible extinction of a species, such as the spotted owl, hasn’t evolution been doing away with species for millions of years? By destroying creatures standing in his way, man, the ultimate predator, would only be fulfilling his evolutionary purpose as the “fittest” species able to “survive” at the expense of all others.

One cannot logically believe both in evolution and the environmental movement. Evolutionists should neither be concerned for “endangered species” nor for the ecological well-being of this planet. If man, as a result of the evolution of his brain and nervous system, succeeds in destroying the earth in a nuclear holocaust or ecological disaster, that must be accepted as a natural act in the evolving universe.

The mere fact, however, that man can reason about ecology and the survival of species indicates that he is not the product of such forces, but, having the power to interfere with them, must have a higher origin. Man was created in the image of God. Only an intelligent Creator could have brought mankind into existence. Consequently, the solution to human problems is not in hugging trees and getting in touch with nature and listening to the earth, but in getting in touch through Jesus Christ with the God who made us and in submitting to His will.

Yes, the pollution and wanton exploitation and destruction of the environment are foolish and wrong. The folly and evil, however, of worshiping Mother Earth and treating each species as sacred and having the same rights as humans is of at least equal magnitude. Yet that philosophy is being embraced widely. As Bereans, we need to challenge Christians biblically concerning their involvement in a pagan *green* movement. And we need to take advantage of legitimate ecological concerns to explain to the unsaved their cause and the only solution in Christ. **TBC**

Condensed and adapted from Chapter 11 of *Occult Invasion: The Subtle Seduction of the World and Church*, 1998.

Quotable

We must be *separate from the emotional religious life which is always seeking for signs and manifestations*. This is a greater evil than appears at first sight. Many of God's professing children confound the Christian life with an hysterical sensationalism and a large amount of emotional and noisy manifestation. This is not the best way of serving God, or of growing in grace and in the knowledge of God. To be always on the outlook for signs and dreams, for voices and visions, for strong emotional responses, and for the ecstatic state of rapture, is not the best. And we do well to separate ourselves from such a condition, so that we may *live in the will*, ever answering with a glad Amen to the least indication of the holy will of God. The emotional manifestations which too many substitute for a deep religious life are like the yeast which Jews must cleanse from their houses before the Passover. A pious person was once asked if she enjoyed herself. She replied that she could not speak positively for herself, as she was not accustomed to dwell on the workings of her own nature, *but she enjoyed God*. We must be *separate from the activities of our corrupt nature*.

F. B. Meyer

Meet for the Master's Use

Q&A

Question: So many of the political leaders holding high office in our country are Masons that I wonder what role Masonry will play in the coming world government and religion. What do you think?

Answer: Masonry has all the elements of the coming ecumenical world religion, which will unite all religions. According to its own documents, it comes from pagan religions and occultism and involves the Mason in oaths and rituals which are a blasphemy against the God of the Bible and are opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Masonry's false gospel assures members that through good works and obedience to its tenets they will reach the Celestial Lodge in the Sky presided over by the G.A.O.T.U. (Great Architect of the Universe), which is "God as you conceive him to be." Masonic authority Carl H. Claudy writes, "Masonry...requires merely

that you believe in some deity, give him what name you will...any god will do, so he is your god" (*Little Masonic Library*, Macoy Publishing, 1977, 4:32). How is that for an ecumenical embrace of all religions!

In the initiation into the very first degree, the Lambskin represents "that purity of life and conduct which is necessary to obtain admittance into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides." In the 19th degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry the initiate is told that attachment to Masonry's "statutes and rules of the order" will make him "deserving of entering the celestial Jerusalem [heaven]." In the 28th he is told that "the true Mason [is one] who raises himself by degrees till he reaches heaven" and that one of his duties is "To divest [him]self of original sin..."

One of the greatest authorities on Masonry was Albert Pike, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Supreme Council of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in the U.S.A. and "an honorary member of almost every Supreme Council in the world" (Albert G. Mackey, 33rd degree, and Charles T. McClenachan, 33rd degree, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, The Masonic History Company, 1921, rev ed, 2:564). He authored *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* for the Supreme Council of the 33°, which was published by its authority. This compendium of official Masonic lore clearly traces Masonry to Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and other Eastern religions. Albert G. Mackey, co-author of *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, is also one of Masonry's highest authorities. In his *Manual of the Lodge* he traces Masonic teaching back to "the ancient rites and mysteries practiced in the very bosom of pagan darkness..." (Albert G. Mackey, *Manual of the Lodge*, Macoy and Sickles, 1802, p 96).

At the heart of Masonry is a secret Luciferian doctrine which a Mason only comes to understand as he reaches the higher levels. Manly Palmer Hall, one of the greatest authorities on Masonry, writes, "When the Mason...has learned the mystery of his Craft, the seething energies of Lucifer are in his hands..." (Manly Palmer Hall, *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry*, p 48). The Apostle John warned that those who deny that Jesus is the only Christ and that He came once and for all in the flesh have embraced the spirit of Antichrist (1 Jn 4:1-3). That Jesus was not the Christ, but that He had attained to the state of "Christ

consciousness" available to all mankind, is again part of Masonry:

Jesus of Nazareth had attained a level of consciousness, of perfection, that has been called by various names: cosmic consciousness, soul regeneration, philosophical initiation, spiritual illumination, Brahmic Splendor, Christ-consciousness. (Lynn F. Perkins, *The Meaning of Masonry*, CSA Press, 1971, 53).

Masonry is a secretive anti-Christian cult: its members are told what to believe and must swear, on pain of death, never to reveal to anyone what goes on behind the Lodge doors. We accuse Masonry of exactly what it claims for itself: to become the world religion. We have previously quoted in a prior issue the prayer to which "Christian" Masons assent when entering the 31st degree of the Scottish Rite: "Hear us with indulgence, O infinite Deity...Let the great flood of Masonic light flow in a perpetual current over the whole world and make Masonry the creed of all mankind." (Jay Blanchard, *Scottish Rite Masonry Illustrated*, Charles T. Powner Co., 1979, 2:320).

Question: In your January '97 newsletter you said, "Prostitutes and homosexuals destroy the lives of untold millions of young people." What exactly did you mean? It seems a rather blanket statement to me. If I tried to share this particular article with a gay non-believer, I'm not sure I'd be able to get past that one without having to convince them that you're not just another gay basher.

Answer: Just another "gay basher"? Why is it "bashing" to point out with loving concern the errors and destructiveness which have ensnared and enslaved someone? Why have the so-called "gays" become the favored minority able to demand that the other 98 percent of mankind must change their morals to accept them as normal and to whom civil government and private corporations and even churches must grant special favors and status? It seems rather that they are the ones who are "bashing" the rest of us!

As for destroying lives, first of all homosexuals do so by drawing others into their way of life, which is horribly destructive *physically*. We have given some of the statistics before. The median age of death for married men is nearly twice that of homosexuals: 75 compared with 39 (*Catholic Family News*, Apr. 1994, pp. 45,47). Only 1

homosexuals: 75 compared with 39 (*Catholic Family News*, Apr. 1994, pp. 45,47). Only 1 percent of homosexuals live beyond retirement age of 65. The average age of death for married women is 79 compared with 44 for lesbians. Homosexuals are 87 times more likely to commit suicide and 23 times more likely to die from heart attacks (Ibid.). Homosexuals account for nearly 90 percent of all AIDS cases. One who lives an exclusively homosexual lifestyle is *1,000 times more likely* to contract AIDS than a heterosexual (*Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report [MMWR]*, Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control, AIDS Program). Lethal health hazards such as “fisting” and ingestion of feces are common homosexual practices (K. Jay and A. Young, “The Gay Report,” NY Summit 1979; also see ISIS National random sexuality survey, in Cameron, et al., *Nebraska Medical Journal*, 1985, 70:296-299). Sadomasochism is practiced by 37 percent of homosexuals (Ibid). More shocking and shameful statistics could be given, but these should be enough to condemn homosexuality from a purely humanistic/social perspective. Yes, they *destroy* lives—their own and multitudes of others!

Secondly, they destroy lives morally, and thus eternally, by leading others into their own destructive sin. The tiny 2-percent minority making up the homosexual population (J. Reisman and E. Eichel, *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*, Huntington House, 1990) consistently accounts for one-third to one-half of *all* sexual child abuse (Dr. Brad Hayton, *The Homosexual Agenda*, quoted in *Focus on the Family*, 1990, p. 15; also John Leo, “A New Furor Over Pedophilia,” *Time*, Jan. 17, 1983, p. 47). A primary goal of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) is the removal of all age-of-consent laws (*National Federation for Decency Journal* (May/June 1985), p. 3. Also see Gay Rights Platform 1972). The most extensive study done to date of male sexual child abusers reveals that the average homosexual victimizes 7.5 times as many boys as the average heterosexual did girls (*Homosexuality and Child Molestation*, ch. 7, p. 42).

Christ said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent” (Rv 3:19). It is far more loving to reprove homosexuals than to “accept them.” If you truly love these misguided souls, you will point them to Scriptures which call their perversion a sinful abomination to God. And you will urge them to cease from a practice which is both unnatural and potentially lethal and which can only bring remorse and very likely a premature and painful death.

Question: As wonderfully as you research, it astounds me how the heresy of this false “Rapture” teaching has gotten so obviously by you....[T]he

Rapture teaching that you preach was started by a Roman Catholic named Manuel Lagunza in a book entitled, *The Coming of the Messiah in Hope and Glory*, published in 1812...this book fell into the hands of Edward Irving...went on to Margaret MacDonald...[and] her false teaching moved on to the Plymouth Brethren ...[and] John Darby....[The Lord] showed me that the body of Christ, for their own good, must be prepared to suffer....You in your vast studies have seen how God’s people have historically been made to suffer. Why then do you think we will be any different? This last-days doctrine of a secret “two-staged” Second Coming is one based not on truth but on wishful thinking.

Answer: We have dealt with this subject in detail in previous issues and also in several of my books, such as *How Close Are We?* and *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*. Please read them and if you have any specific objections, let me know and we can discuss them. As for the Rapture teaching coming from this or that person, a moment’s reflection would tell you that not one in ten thousand of those who believe in the Rapture ever heard of those you name, much less read their teachings and were convinced thereby. I never heard of them until the critics began writing these books. My belief in the Rapture comes right out of the Bible. It is on the basis of the Bible and the Bible alone, not the theories of men or women from the past or present, that we believe in the Rapture.

Question: In your *TBC* for September [1996] you answered a letter about David and his baby in heaven. Surely your knowledge of Scripture is not as minimal as that....[C]onsider what Christ inspired to be written in Acts 2:34: “For David is not ascended into the heavens” and verse 29: “David is both dead and buried and his sepulchre is with us to this day....” Paul wrote, “If the dead rise not...and if Christ be not raised...they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”

Answer: I’m not certain what you mean by your question. If you mean that David is not in heaven, then you are misreading the Scripture. Peter was quoting David’s statement about his Lord being exalted to the right hand of God. In that context he says that David (obviously at the time he wrote that psalm) had not ascended to heaven. That prophecy was fulfilled in Christ in His resurrection and ascension. As for David being “dead and buried and his sepulchre with us,” that is true of anyone except

Christ. He left His tomb empty. The tombs of all others (except those saints who came out of their graves and appeared to many at Christ’s resurrection before being taken to heaven - Mt 27:52-53) will only be emptied of their decayed bodies at the Rapture when “the dead in Christ shall rise” (1 Thes 4:16).

If you are teaching “soul sleep” (that those who die remain unconscious until the Resurrection), once again you misread Scripture. The rich man and Abraham were clearly conscious (Lk 16:24). To die is “to be absent from the body and present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). Surely the body itself cannot be absent from the body, so Paul can only be referring to the soul and spirit. As for this state, he calls it “far better” than being on earth (Phil 1:23), which he surely would not say if it meant to be unconscious rather than here serving Christ.

Endnotes

1. *Earth & Spirit: The Spiritual Dimension of the Environmental Crisis*, International Conference brochure sponsored by Chinook Learning Center, Seattle, WA, Oct. 19-21, 1990.
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3. Ibid., 12.
4. Ibid.
5. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (Random House, 1980), 243.
6. *The Oregonian*, Sept. 13, 1992, Forum 4.
7. *Parade Magazine*, Mar. 1, 1992.
8. Cited in *Ground Zero* (C.T. Communications, Box 612, Gladstone, MB R0J 0T0, Canada, Oct./Nov., 1996), 8.
9. From a brochure promoting the event and sent out by Marilyn Ferguson and her *Brain/Mind Newsletter*.
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13. *O Timothy*, 11:3, 1994.
14. *O Timothy*, 9:1, 1992.
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16. *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 5, 1993.
17. Laura Sessions Stepp, “Creation theories aside, they join forces to save the Earth,” *The Morning News Tribune* (May 24, 1992), A3.
18. “Religious Leaders Join Scientists in Ecological Concerns,” *Christianity Today* (Aug. 19, 1991), 49.
19. *Tarrytown News* (Nov. 1984), 5.
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God as You Conceive Him/Her/It to Be

Dave Hunt

The devastation wrought by Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.), founded in 1935, and the spread of its 12 Steps has been enormous. One can scarcely keep track of the many 12-step groups A.A. has spawned: Adult Children of Alcoholics, Debtors Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Shoplifters Anonymous (to name a few)—and even Fundamentalists Anonymous for “recovery” from fundamentalism. In a book that every Christian ought to read, *12 Steps to Destruction* (see book list), Martin and Deidre Bobgan point out, “Thousands of groups across America ...and most codependency/recovery programs utilize the Twelve Steps in one way or another....”

New Age psychiatrist M. Scott Peck (a pseudo-Christian endorsed by many church leaders) has called the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous “the greatest event of the twentieth century.”¹ *Christianity Today* says, “The 12-Step movement has tapped a profound need in people.² Best-selling Christian author Keith Miller calls the 12-Step Program “a way of spiritual healing and growth that may well be the most important spiritual model of any age for many contemporary Christians.”³

In fact, the 12 Steps of A.A. came by direct inspiration from the demonic world and they open the door to the occult by introducing members to a false god. Step 2 says, “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” Step 3 continues, “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God as we [Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Mormon, shaman, agnostic, et al.] understood Him.” In *Christianity Today*, Tim Stafford says, “The 12 Steps are Christian.”⁴ Yet they contain no mention of Jesus Christ, much less of the gospel. In fact, they are anti-Christian. An official A.A. publication says, “You can, if you wish, make A.A. itself your ‘Higher Power.’”⁵ Stafford admits that A.A. founder Bill Wilson “never pledged his loyalty to Christ, never was baptized, never joined a Christian church....”⁶ Instead, the Christian church has joined A.A!

Stafford and *CT* are pleased with A.A. to the point of suggesting that Episcopalian pastor Sam Shoemaker (who mentored Wilson) “may have made his greatest contribution through Wilson.”⁷ Yet Stafford also writes, “A.A. is pluralistic, recognizing as many gods as there may be religions....”⁸

This is a great contribution?

The Willow Creek Community Church of South Barrington, Illinois, pastored by Bill Hybels, is one of thousands of churches sponsoring 12-step programs. Willow Creek has been called “the most influential church in North America”⁹ and a model of the church for the twenty-first century. In an exhaustive study of Willow Creek, G.A. Pritchard writes,

One of the first staff members I spoke with proudly told me how more than five hundred individuals met at the church each week in various self-help groups (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Sexual Anonymous [etc.]). ...One of the requirements of these organizations was that individuals could not evangelize or otherwise teach other participants about God.¹⁰

Stafford commends 12-step groups for being “tolerant.”¹¹ Should we commend a tolerance for false gods that denies the difference between God’s truth and Satan’s lie? Note the “tolerant” rules for the 12-step programs at Willow Creek:

The Steps suggest a belief in a Power greater than ourselves, “God as we understand Him.” The Program does not attempt to tell us what our Higher Power must be.

It can be whatever we choose, for example, human love, a force for good, the group itself, nature, the universe, or the traditional God (Deity).

The code instructs, “We never discuss religion.”¹²

We are commanded to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). How, then, can Willow Creek sponsor the promotion of false gods and false gospels? Stafford says, “Christians [in A.A. groups] can express their convictions.” Yet he notes that A.A. does not allow Christians to say anything that would suggest “that others’ views of God are misguided.”¹³ So actually a Christian (like a Mason) is free to say that Jesus is *a* or *his* Higher Power, but not “*the* way, *the* truth, *the* life” (Jn 14:6). Why commend this intolerantly anti-Christian “tolerance”?

The truth is that the false gospel of A.A. suppresses the true gospel of Jesus Christ; and the tolerance it professes is only of error, while it remains intolerant of truth. Pritchard comments,

Even church members could not talk about Christian truth in these meetings.... Although the programs give lip service to

a “Higher Power,” they function as practical atheism, teaching the categories of the contemporary psychological worldview....

That Willow Creek would sponsor and advertise these programs illustrates the church’s lack of priority for educating its members in Christian truth.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Stafford writes with approval, “The 12 Steps penetrate every level of American society.” That fact is all the more reason to sound the alarm against A.A.’s false god and gospel. Referring to Bill Wilson, Stafford admits that after deliverance from alcohol, “the rest of his life was morally erratic.” Yet *CT* declares, “The 12 Steps are a package of Christian practices and nothing is compromised in using them.”¹⁵

Founder of A.A. Bill Wilson was what the Bible calls a “drunkard” (Prv 23:21; 1 Cor 5:11, etc.). Martin and Deidre Bobgan pick up the story: “After years of struggling with the guilt and condemnation that came from thinking that his drinking was his own fault and that it stemmed from a moral defect in his character, Wilson was relieved to learn from a medical doctor that his drinking was due to an ‘allergy.’”¹⁶ A.A.’s official biography of Wilson relates,

Bill listened, entranced, as [Dr.] Silkworth explained his theory. For the first time in his life, Bill was hearing about alcoholism not as a lack of will power, not as a moral defect, but as a legitimate illness....Bill’s relief was immense.¹⁷

Dr. Silkworth’s theory might have remained in obscurity had not Bill Wilson founded Alcoholics Anonymous upon it, and millions of drunks, as happy as Wilson to be relieved of accountability to God, turned that theory into a universally accepted axiom. What a relief to exchange the God who judges man’s sin for a higher power that judges no one! The fact is, however, that the theory that alcoholism is a disease is false. A leading authority in this field, University of California professor Herbert Fingarette, has written an entire book¹⁸ as well as numerous articles disproving this delusion.

Writing for Harvard Medical School, Fingarette refers to “a mass of scientific evidence...which radically challenges every major belief generally associated with the phrase ‘alcoholism is a disease....’”¹⁹ Stanton Peele, author of *Diseasing of America: Addiction Treatment Out of Control*, offers research to show that multitudes have been “brainwashed” to believe they have the disease of alcoholism — and that the result

has been to impede the normal recovery which otherwise takes place.²⁰

The facts refute Stafford's and CT's false assurance: "We [Christians] ought to use them [12-step programs] gladly. They belong to us originally. They are doing tremendous good."²¹ In fact, 12-step programs are doing great harm by turning people away from the true God to a false higher power, and by denying the sufficiency of God's Word and robbing multitudes of its transforming power. It is reprehensible for *Christianity Today*, Willow Creek, or anyone, to encourage participation in 12-step programs.

Furthermore, A.A. with its higher-power-as-you-understand-it opens the door to occultism. The official A.A. biography of Wilson reveals that for years after A.A.'s founding, regular seances were still being held in the Wilsons' home, and other occult activities were being pursued:

[T]here are references to seances and other psychic events....

Bill would..."get" these things [from the spirit world]...long sentences, word by word would come through...."²²

[A]s he started to write [the A.A. manual], he asked for guidance....The words began tumbling out with astonishing speed...."²³

So A.A.'s 12 Steps were actually *received verbatim from the demonic world*. It is not surprising, then, that the effect of A.A. upon many of its members is to lead them into occult involvement. In 1958, Wilson wrote to Sam Shoemaker,

Throughout A.A., we find a large amount of psychic phenomena, nearly all of it spontaneous. Alcoholic after alcoholic tells me of such experiences ...[which] run nearly the full gamut of everything we see in the books.

In addition to my original mystical experience, I've had a lot of such phenomenalism myself.²⁴

Wilson's "original mystical experience" was his alleged "conversion"—a classic occult encounter: "Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light. I was caught up into an ecstasy...it burst upon me that I was a free man...a wonderful feeling of Presence, and I thought to myself, 'So this is the God of the preachers!' A great peace stole over me...."²⁵

This was *not* the "God of the preachers" but the one who transforms himself "into

an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14) — a light that often transforms those involved in the occult. The experience was so profound that Wilson never touched alcohol again. Satan would be more than willing to deliver a man from alcoholism in this life if thereby he could ensnare him for eternity and inspire him to lead millions to the same destruction!

Wilson joined the Oxford Group and regularly attended its meetings at Calvary Church (NY), pastored by Episcopalian Sam Shoemaker. Shoemaker urged his hearers to "accept God however they might conceive of him...."²⁶ Here was the origin of Step 3's "God as we understood him." God does not respond to those who call upon false gods. Jesus said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Jn 17:3). God's judgment comes upon them "that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus

I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

Isaiah 43:11

Christ" (2 Thes 1:8).

The Oxford Group had been founded by Frank Buchman (a Lutheran minister). It later became Moral Re-Armament (MRA) through the mystical "guidance" that was a large part of Buchman's life and which carried over both into MRA and A.A.

MRA emphasized a mystical reception of "guidance from God," which recipients would write down and follow as though their thoughts were God's Word to be obeyed. This unbiblical and dangerous procedure is widely practiced even by evangelicals today. British author and former MRA member Roy Livesey writes, "MRA had been a stepping stone for me into the occult."²⁷ Vineyard members have been trained in much the same way by John Wimber to receive alleged words of knowledge and to prophesy.

The influence of this concept of receiving direct communication from the spirit realm (kept alive in the church today through Richard Foster and others) can be seen in A.A.'s Step 11, which calls for "meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him...." This MRA/AA relationship is acknowledged by Dick B, one of the biographers of the movement.²⁸

A.A.'s emphasis is upon the "experience" of recovery. In contrast, Christ emphasized truth as revealed in His Word: "If ye continue in my word ...ye shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). Satan insidiously uses mystical experiences for turning men from God's truth to his lies. Tragically, experience and emotion more than the Word of God seem to fuel the latest "revival" centered at the Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida.

MRA founder Frank Buchman compromised the gospel and embraced new revelations through occult guidance. As a result, MRA helped to set the stage for the New Age movement. One of Buchman's close associates during the '40s and '50s writes,

MRA was *est* and TM. It was *consciousness* raising and *sensitivity*. It was *encounter* and confrontation. Frank Buchman was drying out drunks before A.A.'s Bill W had his first cocktail. He was moving hundreds of people in hotel ballrooms to "share" with each other before Werner Erhard was born. He inspired thousands on all continents to meditate...decades before Maharishi Mahesh Yogi left India. He was indeed Mr. Human Potential, ahead of his time....Paul Tournier...has frequently expressed his debt to Buchman for much of his own approach to counseling....²⁹

MRA became active in more than 50 countries and achieved NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) status with the United Nations, which it enjoys today. Its principal conference center, located in Caux, Switzerland, is a mecca to which world leaders are drawn. The setting, high above Lake Geneva, is exceptionally magnificent even for Switzerland.

While living in the area, our family made several visits to Caux in 1966 and 1967. We met Gandhi's grandson, who was there with an "Up With People" (an MRA offshoot) singing group from India. We spoke with many whose lives had been "transformed" through impressive spiritual experiences and who had a compelling zeal to "change the world" and used "Christian" phrases, yet didn't seem to know Christ or His Word. MRA and A.A. are tragic reminders of the necessity of adhering to sound doctrine and the need for daily washing in God's Word (Jn 15:3; Eph 5:26). **TBC**

Condensed and adapted from Chapter 15 of *Occult Invasion*, 1998.

Quotable

[F]ormer Quaker and rock guitarist John Wimber, founder of the...Vineyard ministries...openly advocates a “paradigm shift” away from thinking with Western logic into the exclusively experiential way of oriental thinking....He also claims that “first century Semites did not argue from a premise to a conclusion; they were not controlled by rationalism.” (John Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1985, 74).

This is a highly erroneous and mischievous statement. Not only is it historically inaccurate but it...denigrates logic ...[and] epitomizes the considerable confusion in the Charismatic Movement in its failure to identify the difference between (unhealthy) *rationalism*, whereby the miraculous is denied and the supernatural work of the Spirit is blasphemed, and (wholesome) *rationality*, whereby the Christian exercises necessary discernment....

The ultimate first century Semite was surely the Lord Jesus Christ; yet He continually used the most devastating logic to demolish His opponents....

Never before has a “sound mind” been so necessary in the life of the Church. To substitute mysticism for rationalism is the spiritual equivalent of moving...into a black hole.

Alan Morrison

The Serpent and the Cross

Q&A

Question: Two times in your April 1997 newsletter it seems to me you have stated directly or indirectly that “we are saved by believing that Christ died on the cross for us.” I’m sure you realize that such a statement is unbiblical — never once is it stated or implied in Scripture....When you state it as you have and do, you are saying we can be saved through believing in (or faith in) something Jesus *did*, instead of faith in *the person of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Over and over the Scripture says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” It is in the person, not a thing or a deed.

Answer: That God exists and that God the Son became a man and, as Jesus Christ, lived a perfect, sinless life and performed miracles, would never save us. The *person* of Christ would never save us unless He

died on the cross for our sins, as the Scriptures foretold. When Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31), that belief necessarily included all that Jesus Christ *is* and *did* on our behalf. To believe in Jesus Christ must include who He is (that He is God, that He became man through the virgin birth, but never ceased to be God, that He is the one and only God-man, etc.) and that He died for our sins.

Question: I was amazed that under the guise of a free press, Bible believing Christians can choose to interpret and misrepresent the largest Christian denomination in the world, the Catholic Church. While it is not surprising that you dislike the Catholic Church (by its very definition Protestantism is the “protesting” of the Catholic Church teachings) it is dismaying to see untruths displayed as fact. Specifically in the article *Evolution or God’s Word?* Due to the lack of space I cannot comment on everything but will choose two of the most offensive points you make.

You speak of the “infallible” Church hierarchy, the Pope incorrectly. If the Pope spoke of “hating broccoli” for example, that would *not* be considered an infallible statement. Therefore when he speaks about evolution it is also not an infallible statement. The term infallibility can only be used in doctrines which teach about faith and morals.

I particularly love when you Protestants bring up Galileo’s trial. The Catholic Church was standing up for the Bible as Galileo’s statements were CONTRARY to Scripture. Am I not correct? The fact is that Galileo was correct so does that make the Bible wrong? Of course not. The Catholic Church teaches that Scripture is the Holy Word of God and is *free from error* no different than the teachings of Protestants. The quote you use from the Knights of Columbus PARAPHRASE version, “It is not necessarily free from error in other matters,” is not the truth as taught by the Catholic Church! Come on you quoted a paraphrase version! Why didn’t you quote the original Vatican II documents? I’ll tell you why, because that sentence “It is not necessarily free from error in other matters,” is NOT in there!

It is one thing to disagree but outright lies, i.e.: infallibility as interpreted by

this article is incorrect. Have you read AUTHENTIC Catholic sources such as *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* to see what it is the Catholic Church really believes or do you stoop to using Loraine Boettner’s *Roman Catholicism* as your source. Boettner’s anti-Catholic book holds no truth about the real teachings of the Church. The reason I can make this claim is because there are very few footnotes or footnotes from those “experts” who left the Catholic Church. If you want a fair book about what Catholicism teaches read *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* by Karl Keating. Protestants claim to have the truth, but as you stated in your article there can only be ONE truth as guided by the Holy Spirit. So Dave, which Protestant denomination should I join if leaving the Catholic Church? Which one has the truth?

P.S. I will be amazed and shocked if you print my entire rebuttal. I have the feeling you will selectively (if at all) choose phrases that can be misconstrued as you do everything in your newsletter. [TBC: This is the entire letter, untouched.]

Answer: First of all, I am not a Protestant. Neither was the Apostle Paul, yet he opposed the false gospel your Church teaches. In fact, he anathematized those who preach it (Gal 1:8-9). In contrast, your Church anathematizes those who preach the biblical gospel! The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent contain more than 100 anathemas against this true gospel. Vatican II “proposes again” all of those anathemas and contains its own anathema against anyone who does not accept the teaching of purgatory and indulgences. Do you believe that anyone who wears a scapular (commended in Vatican II) “shall not suffer eternal fire,” as the scapular states? That is a false gospel, and you are damned by your Church if you don’t believe it. I oppose the Catholic Church for the same reason Paul gave: the unbiblical gospel it gives its people and the false hope of heaven it offers. How could I not oppose any church that does that?

I have not misrepresented Catholicism. Why is any book written by a Catholic in opposition to evangelicals “fair,” but any book that is critical of Catholicism is biased? We have hundreds of letters from former lifelong Roman Catholics who have read my books and the newsletter and who

testify that we are telling the truth. You are concerned to “see untruths displayed as fact.” Are you concerned for the untruths Rome presents?

You ask, “Have you read AUTHENTIC Catholic sources such as *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* to see what it is the Catholic Church really believes or do you stoop to using Loraine Boettner’s *Roman Catholicism* as your source?” You would find on my shelves scores of official Roman Catholic books and documents, those you name and many more, all carefully studied and highlighted. My book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, contains about 800 footnotes, most of them from the official documents of your Church and from Catholic theologians and historians. Only one was from Boettner, and that was historical, not doctrinal.

I quoted from the Knights of Columbus paraphrase because it clarifies what Vatican II means. The Knights are probably better informed about Catholicism than you or I. Would these highly respected servants of the pope be allowed to put out that edition if the Church objected? Vatican II limits the inerrancy of the Bible to “that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures.” Science is outside that limit, having nothing to do with our salvation. I enclose that page from Vatican II. The same is stated in the *Catechism* (par.107). Vatican II (copy enclosed) and the *Catechism* (par. 122) also state that the Old Testament “contains matters imperfect and provisional.”

As for papal infallibility, your Church is deliberately unclear in defining that doctrine, leaving an excuse for papal errors. I enclose a copy of a section from Vatican II which states that you must submit intellect and will in matters of faith and morals even when the Pontiff does not speak *ex cathedra*. To deny what Genesis says about the creation of man also denies what Romans 5:12 says about the cause of sin and death and its remedy, and that involves the very heart of the Christian faith. Hating broccoli is an expression of personal taste. It has nothing to do with faith or morals; whereas the Pope’s pronouncement regarding evolution has everything to do with faith and morals.

I don’t follow your statements about Galileo. You say that Galileo was correct, the Bible, which you say he contradicted, was correct, and your Church was correct, which

contradicted Galileo. Galileo’s statement was not contrary to Scripture, but it *was* contrary to a false interpretation of Scripture which your allegedly infallible magisterium had made and in which it persisted. If Galileo’s statement was contrary to Scripture, then why did the Vatican, after 400 years of condemning it, say he was right in 1992? Is the Vatican now on the side of the unbelievers, siding with a theory that contradicts the Bible? No, your Church has finally admitted the truth Galileo taught, that instead of the sun going around the earth, the earth in fact goes around the sun. But your magisterium and pope have been on the side of the atheists and against the Bible in affirming the theory of evolution for the last 100 years. Will it take another 300 before they admit the truth in this case, as they did in Galileo’s?

Yes, there are many Protestant denominations and I don’t defend denominationism. We recently did an article opposing that. However, the differences between the various Baptist groups and those belonging to the Independent Fundamental Churches of America or the Evangelical Free Church, etc. are not nearly as great as the differences between various groups and individuals within the Roman Catholic Church. Surely you know that thousands of priests and nuns practice TM or Zen meditation; you have liberation theologians and many priests who, according to the polls, don’t believe in the virgin birth, etc. but they remain within the Catholic Church. Why aren’t these heretics excommunicated?

Denominations developed when groups separated over doctrinal differences, unfortunately some of them not that important. Rome, however, keeps all the heretics under her umbrella so as to keep the appearance of a unity that doesn’t exist.

We are interested in truth and that is all we desire to print. If you can prove otherwise, then please document your objections specifically.

Endnotes

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- 2 Michael G. Maudlin, “Addicts in the Pew” (*Christianity Today*, July 22, 1991), 19-21.
- 3 Ibid.
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- 19 Herbert Fingarette, “We Should Reject the Disease Concept of Alcoholism” (*The Harvard Medical School Mental Health Letter*, Feb. 1990), 4.
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- 21 Stafford, 19.
- 22 Kurtz, 275-79.
- 23 Ibid., 198.
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- 26 Stafford, 16.
- 27 Roy Livesey, *Twelve Steps to the New Age* (Bury House Books, 1995; unpublished manuscript), 21-22.
- 28 Dick B, *Anne Smith’s Spiritual Workbook* (Good Book Publishing Co., 1992), 45.
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The Seduction of Youth

Dave Hunt

With the opening of fall classes, parents (and praying friends) need to be reminded of the hazards of public school education. Former New Ager Will Baron writes, "My alienation from Christian values intensified in high school, where my teachers exposed me to...evolution, reincarnation, and extra-sensory perception."¹ The following letter comes from England: "I'm...training to be a secondary school teacher. The syllabus includes "stilling," or mystic meditation, introducing children to [power] animals and ancient spirits. The school is a mainstream state school and...is endorsing this shamanis[m]."

The crisis is global. In 1986 Robert Muller, former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and known as its "prophet of hope,"² developed a *World Core Curriculum Manual* used by educators worldwide. Muller is a Roman Catholic. He prizes a "golden crucifix given to him by Pope John Paul II."³ Muller's curriculum initiates youth into a universal occult *spirituality*. He explains:

[H]ow can one speak of a global spirituality in a world of so many religions and atheists...[even some] religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism which have no God? However, there is a common denominator when humans see themselves as part of a very mysterious and beautiful universe. From that awe emerges a spiritual approach to life. Everything becomes sacred...regarding the mysterious force which rules the universe.⁴

No "force" could rule the universe or create man with his spiritual qualities. We were created in the image of the God who "is a Spirit" and Who requires that we "worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). In man's attempt to escape moral accountability to a personal Creator, the satanic teaching that an impersonal force spawned personal beings is defended as science. Muller's embrace of this lie has not alienated him from Rome, which also praises leading occultists, as this news article attests:

Jose Silva, founder of the world-famous Silva Method [received] the Special Apostolic Blessing bestowed on him by Pope John Paul II...the Vatican has given its approval to the Silva training course. [See *The Seduction of Christianity* for an explanation of this occult technique, formerly known as Silva Mind Control.]⁵

Muller admires former UN Secretary-

General U Thant, a Buddhist/atheist, as one of his spiritual mentors.⁶ After all, the Dalai Lama is the Pope's partner in saving the world. In his farewell address to the UN, U Thant explained that global education must be *spiritual* but not religious (i.e., open to occult power, closed to truth):

I would attach the greatest importance to spiritual values...I deliberately avoid using the term "religion." I have in mind...faith in...the purity of one's inner self...With this...concept alone, will we...fashion the kind of society we want...[G]lobal education must...reach...into the moral and spiritual spheres.⁷

"Faith in...the purity of one's inner self"? The Bible warns against faith in self—and experience agrees that all men are but impure sinners. Christ's classic illustration of the self-righteous Pharisee and repentant publican tells it all (Lk 18:10-14). But plans for global

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
Colossians 2:8

education and a new world rest upon man's alleged inherent goodness and his trust in the god within. *Spirituality* without *truth* is the deadly ecumenical foundation of global education!

This theme was prominent at the Second Annual State of the World Forum in October 1996. In his plenary address, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg singled out religions as "the cheerleaders of hatred." The Forum praised Buddhism while denigrating Christianity⁸ and echoed author Duane Elgin's assertion that "knowing our connection with the consciousness of the living cosmos...[is the] foundation for the global culture."⁹ Said Gorbachev, "We envision a revolution of the mind, a new way of thinking..."¹⁰ Harvard student leader Bill Burke-White said,

This community [today's students]...has no tolerance for...fundamentalism...we were born into an awakening Earth. ...Imagine...a Global Youth Alliance...a networking of the many youth organizations that share these heart-felt visions for the new millennium....¹¹

World education leaders are determined to brainwash youth with Muller's occultism. This was evident again at Global Citizenship 2000 Youth Congress April 4-6, 1997 at Vancouver BC, dominated by

Muller. His beliefs in large part come from Djwhal Khul (a seducing spirit claiming to be a long-dead Tibetan Master and well known in the occult world). The preface to Muller's *World Core Curriculum* states,

The underlying philosophy upon which The Robert Muller School is based will be found in the teachings...in the books of Alice A. Bailey [spirit-channeled] by the Tibetan teacher, Djwhal Khul.

The Robert Muller School...is now certified as a United Nations Associated School providing education for international cooperation and peace.¹²

Muller received the UNESCO Peace Education Prize in 1989. In 1990, delegates from 155 countries met in Thailand at the World Conference of Education for All to continue planning a world curriculum, much of it adapted from Muller's (Djwhal Khul's) ideas. This demonic agenda has been backed by both Republican and Democratic administrations: Bush's America 2000 and Clinton's Goals 2000 leading to Project Global 2000. Dr. D. L. Cuddy, of the U.S. Department of Education, explains:

UNESCO AND UNICEF,...partners with Global 2000, are putting into action the initiatives developed at the World Conference of Education for All, the largest educational conference ever held.¹³

America 2000 establishes federal educational and testing standards nationwide through "Outcome Based Education" (OBE). OBE has little to do with education and much to do with indoctrinating children into "politically correct" beliefs. As *The Iowa Report* puts it, OBE and Mastery Learning (ML) are designed for "manipulating students through behavior modification...destroying their...religious values. The father of ML, Benjamin Bloom, defines good teaching as 'challenging the student's fixed beliefs...' Christian values are not acceptable...students become global citizens...."

"Outcomes" are monitored to determine whether student thinking conforms to world "norms." If not, the National Diffusion Network (NDN) distributes materials to "remediate" the deficiencies. The program is international. Jean-Francois Revel critiques France's version of OBE/ML:

[A]fter five or six years of elementary "instruction" a good third of the children...were practically illiterate...almost half of the students entering university could read but hardly understand what they were deciphering.¹⁴

The well-laid plans go back many years and are intended to climax in the year 2000. In 1934, the Carnegie Corporation funded a study on education to assist “Western civilization merging into a world order” and predicted that “a new age of collectivism [socialism] is emerging.”¹⁵ In 1958, President Eisenhower signed the first United States-Soviet education agreement.¹⁶ In 1972, Harvard University Professor of Education and Psychiatry, Chester M. Pierce, stated in his keynote address to the Association for Childhood Education International,

Every child in America entering school...is insane because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our founding fathers, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural being....

It's up to you, teachers, to make all of these sick children well—by creating the international children of the future.¹⁷

The transformation in education accelerated with the historic “General Agreement” signed by Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva, Switzerland, in November 1985. The Agreement “traded U.S. technology for U.S.S.R psychosocial strategies used to indoctrinate children, modify behavior, and monitor the people to ensure compliance.”¹⁸ Incredible! The destruction of biblical Christianity the Soviets had attempted was revealed to be the goal of education in the United States as well.

Public schools, closed to Christianity, became the experimental laboratories for the latest psychological theories and welcomed all manner of occultism, from Native American spirituality and yoga to witchcraft. Universities led the revolution against biblical Christianity. John Steinbacher rightly said, “The humanist revolution is proceeding full tilt ahead...and the ‘congregation’ for the new religion is a captive student audience....” As *Humanist Magazine* stated,

The classroom will and must become the area of combat between...the rotting corpse of Christianity...and the new faith of Humanism.¹⁹

The ultimate goal is to control the thinking of the world's citizens. But evangelical Christianity stands in the way and must be neutralized. In its place, Native American spirituality and other occult techniques of shamanism (such as visualization of inner guides) are being introduced. A dedicated humanist and occultist minority has seized

control of America's courts, public schools and media and is determined to remold the thinking of our youth.

The destruction of conscience in public schools is reflected in the amoral, evil heroes and heroines today's youth admire. Marilyn Manson's album, *Antichrist Superstar*,

...was the third top-selling CD in its first week of release [fall of 1996]. With his stage name taken from suicidal sex symbol Marilyn Monroe and serial killer Charles Manson, this ordained satanist priest and his head-banging band openly defy every moral principle. Wearing T-shirts that read “Kill God, Kill Your Mom and Dad, Kill Yourself,” the band celebrates hate, racism, sexual depravity, violence and blasphemy...as they mock God and rant against Jesus. Marilyn [Manson] said: “I'm on my way down ...I'd like to take you with me.”²⁰

In her book, *Growing Up Gifted*, Barbara Clark of the California State University system advocates the practice of yoga, visualization and the development of psychic powers. “Transcendence” comes through establishing a sense of “unity consciousness” among students by “transpersonal communication,” creating confidence in U Thant's “purity within.” God's truth is replaced by “inner knowing”:

Transpersonal communication is designed to help people learn to trust...their personal experiences and accept...these experiences as their best source of wisdom and truth.²¹

Such is the pagan and defiantly anti-Christian mentality in public schools. There is open hostility to God's truth. The latest brainwashing technique is called “consensus building.” Individual convictions are dismantled and everyone must agree upon the new global standard “for the good of all.”

Ecumenism fits that mold, but is more subtle. The “group-think” in public schools is the mirror image of the submission of mind and will demanded of loyal cult followers, including Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, et al. Forbidden to interpret the Bible for themselves, they must trust their cult/church for its interpretation and for salvation.

The joining of evangelical leaders with Roman Catholicism furthers Satan's plans. Catholicism, which has for centuries been the partner of despotic rulers, fits well into

the new world order.

To enforce the remolding of youth into the world citizen of the future, the government professes concern for the *psychological well-being* of the child. Martin L. Gross has well said that psychology's “experimental animals are an obliging, even grateful human race” and that “the schoolhouse has become a vibrant psychological center...”²² Psychology is ecumenism's final glue, providing a common anti-Christian religion that all the world (including Christians) accepts. Hear Freud's explanation to a patient:

I pointed out to him that he ought logically to consider himself as in no way responsible for any of these traits in his character...these reprehensible impulses...were only derivatives of his infantile character surviving in his unconscious; and he must know that moral responsibility could not be applied to children.²³

To replace conscience, public schools teach students to access an “inner wisdom” through techniques used by witch doctors for contacting the “spirit guides” (demons) that empower them. (Tragically, similar occult techniques have invaded the church through Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller, Yonggi Cho, Richard Foster, Calvin Miller, various “inner healers” and Christian psychologists.) The nationwide curriculum READ includes the following:

Close your eyes and breathe deeply to relax....Picture in your mind a place...ask to meet a guide. An animal, person or being will accompany you and give you whatever power you might need....

Watch...this new companion....Listen to what it says. Go wherever [it] wants to lead you. You are safe....²⁴

One can see the day when millions of “inner guides” identify Antichrist as the world savior. The false church remaining after the Rapture will believe that “unity” is more important than truth. Antichrist will be hailed as “Christ returned.” The dream of a “Christian” takeover of the world will be realized as multitudes of every nation and religion become the followers of this false “Christ” and worship him (Rv 13:8).

If ever there were a time to examine ourselves to be certain that we are “in the faith” (2 Cor 13:5) and to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3) in love and faithfulness to our Lord and to His unchanging Word, *it is now.* **TBC**

Condensed and adapted from Chapter 16, *Occult Invasion*, 1998.

Quotable

During my private prayer I remembered my impatient speech today, and this brought before me my sins in so clear a light, and with a deep feeling of sorrow and abhorrence. It showed me so clearly the necessity of an atonement, and the greatness of God's mercy, and that we live entirely by the grace of God, and are unworthy. I thought within myself, How instructive are our failures...! But this is by no means to encourage us in carelessness.

Philip M. Hahn, diary entry
Feb. 8, 1786

Brethren, let there be heart and vitality in our ministry...[and in our] gospel preaching and exhortation. Let us speak as before God...for the climax of the age is coming. Let us be men essentially of one Book...soaking the mind in it till we think of little else...who commune with God...and from His presence come forth with the divine message.

Franklin Ferguson, "God's Axemen"

Q&A

Question: I have been involved in Promise Keepers now for four years. I have brought unsaved friends to stadium gatherings and have seen them get saved. I have seen marriages strengthened. Yet the criticism continues. Isn't it about time for the critics to admit that the fruit of Promise Keepers is good and has stood the test of time and scrutiny?

Answer: I rejoice that you have seen friends saved and marriages strengthened through Promise Keepers (PK). Others have told me the same, and I praise God for the good PK has done and the desire for that good which motivates its leaders. At the same time, however, there are grave problems that must be faced honestly.

Wasn't the first Promise Keepers meeting held at the base of Mount Sinai when God gave the Ten Commandments and Israel promised to obey them? There was nothing wrong with the Ten Commandments. We, like Israel, are simply unable to keep them. How will seven more help? Who invented them? By what authority? PK presents them as the key to Christian unity and Christian living.

Whence this new revelation?

PK literature repeatedly claims that Christian growth "begins by making some promises...we intend to keep." The Bible doesn't say so, nor are these "new seven" even found in the Bible. Yet PK president Randy Phillips, in *The Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, says, "These promises...are meant to guide us toward the life of Christ and to transform us within so that we might see transformation in our homes, among our friends, in our churches, and, ultimately, in our nation." That's a huge claim for promises which don't even contain the essence of the gospel, much less doctrinal teaching upon which such a transformation could be based! If the Bible is sufficient, why do we need these new manmade rules that neither Christ nor Paul knew?

In the back of that book is a tear-out sheet to be filled in as a commitment "to live by those seven promises." Isn't this another form of Galatian legalism? Lives may be changed initially through these vows. But discouragement could also come from failure to live up to an unbiblical "commitment" made under great excitement at a rally.

Promise 5 is a pledge for men to go back and support their church. There are serious errors in many Protestant churches. Some are apostate. Yet PK tells men to support whatever church they may come from, no matter how heretical. Never are any errors pointed out or distinctions made; that would undermine the unbiblical "unity" PK fosters.

This promise to support whatever church a man attends applies equally to Roman Catholics. Promise 6 speaks of ignoring "denominational barriers" (including those between Catholics and evangelicals). When criticized for Catholic involvement, PK spokesmen have "explained" that Catholics are invited to attend in order to win them to Christ. That's at best a half-truth.

The full truth is that *from the very beginning* Catholics have been embraced as Christians along with evangelicals. Roman Catholicism has been accepted as the true gospel, and the Roman Catholic Church has been fully supported. *Our Sunday Visitor* (a major Roman Catholic newspaper) reveals, "Promise Keeper founder Bill McCartney told *Our Sunday Visitor* recently that *full Catholic participation was his intention from the start.*" (Emphasis added.)

Full participation for Roman Catholics means there is no distinction between them

and evangelicals. It was not out of conviction regarding anything wrong with Catholicism that McCartney (a lifelong active Catholic) began attending the Boulder Vineyard, but to please his family. Far from finding fault with Roman Catholicism, McCartney still supports it.

Bill McCartney claims that the church has never been united and that PK is uniting it. But Christ's prayer in John 17 is for unity founded upon the Word, upon truth and the oneness of the Father and the Son. Christ's prayer for unity was answered. All true Christians have always been united in the truth of God's Word and in the Lord in Whom they believe and Whom they love and serve. We are never told to *make* unity (as PK is attempting through compromise) but to "*keep* the unity of the Spirit" (Eph 4:3). He is "the Spirit of *truth*" (Jn 14:17) who "leads into all *truth*" (Jn 16:13). PK attempts to create a false unity apart from truth, without facing the serious differences (even heresies) which divide (and rightly so) those who call themselves Christians.

In *Seven Promises*, Jack Hayford says that the heart of Christian unity is in "the Lord's Table." He adds, "Whether your tradition celebrates it as Communion, the Eucharist, the Mass, or the Lord's Supper, we are all called to this centerpiece of Christian worship." He can't be that uninformed! Certainly McCartney knows that the Catholic Church forbids Protestants to partake of the Mass and Catholics to partake of Protestant communion. Therefore, there is *no unity* between Catholics and evangelicals in the practice of that which both claim expresses the very *heart* of Christianity! PK's pretense of unity makes a mockery both of factual truth and of biblical truth.

Ironically, Rome's exclusion of evangelicals from the Mass is found in *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) and is reiterated by the Vatican's Secretariat for the Promotion of the Unity of Christians. The latter declares that the Eucharist "signifies the fullness of profession of faith and ecclesial communion," and since true unity is lacking with non-Catholics the Mass cannot be shared with them (*Our Sunday Visitor*, June 16, 1996, p. 16).

Why cannot Catholics and evangelicals partake together of what each considers to express the heart of Christianity? Simply because their beliefs regarding it and the gospel are irreconcilably opposed!

Evangelicals believe that the bread and cup are *symbols* of Christ's body and blood; Catholics believe that the wafer (each one of millions taken simultaneously) is *literally* the body and blood of Christ whole and entire, personality, soul, spirit, divinity. Evangelicals believe they are saved for eternity through receiving Christ once for all into their hearts by one act of faith; Catholics believe that by eating the wafer they are ingesting Christ into their stomachs, and the more often they do it the more installments of "grace" they receive, though they can never be assured of heaven.

We have quoted New York's Cardinal O'Connor: "Church teaching is that I don't know, at any given moment, what my eternal future will be. I can hope, pray, do my very best — but I still don't know. Pope John Paul II doesn't know absolutely that he will go to heaven, nor does Mother Teresa of Calcutta..." (*The New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1990, p. B4). (Then what hope is there for an ordinary Catholic?)

It couldn't be clearer that Catholicism fully rejects Christ's promise of eternal life as a free gift and the assurance He gives, and in His place purports to dispense an uncertain salvation of ritual and works through its sacraments. Yet PK—like Colson, Packer, Bright, Robertson and other signatories to "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium"—pretends that such vast differences in belief between evangelicals and Catholics either do not exist or are not significant!!

Evangelicals believe that Christ meant what He said when He cried in triumph, "It is finished!" For them, the communion service is a memorial of that finished transaction. They take the bread and cup in *remembrance of a finished work*, Christ's once-for-all-never-to-be-repeated sacrifice for our sins. Catholics, on the other hand, believe that "in the *sacrifice* of the Mass Our Lord is immolated" (Vatican II, Flannery, vol. 1, p. 102), that on their altars Christ "offers himself...as really as he did on Calvary" (*Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, p. 248). Anyone who denies that the Mass is a propitiatory *sacrifice* for sin is anathematized. Hear it from Catholicism's highest authority: "If anyone says that in the Mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God...let him be anathema. If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass is...a mere

commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross but not a propitiatory one...and ought not to be offered for...the dead...let him be anathema." (Council of Trent, Twenty-Second Session, chap. IX, Canons 1 and 3.) No wonder Catholics and evangelicals cannot partake together!

The difference in belief is so great and the doctrine so important that thousands have been burned at the stake for not accepting Rome's gospel; and the more than 100 anathemas Rome pronounced against those who believe the true gospel have all been proposed again by Vatican II and still apply today. So there are men at a PK rally cheering Jesus side by side and being told that they are in unity when, in fact, the majority of them are *anathema* to large numbers of others and the truth is that they are not united at all in the gospel or in many other foundational Christian doctrines! And Catholics are told to go back and support their Church which has anathematized those whom they have hugged at the rallies and with whom they have professed unity! PK leaders surely know these facts, so their pretense at unity is deceitful.

I cannot escape the conclusion that there has been and still is a basic dishonesty at the very heart of PK which disturbs me greatly. PK finds no fault with the false gospel of Roman Catholicism but fully supports that apostate Church—yet hides that fact from evangelicals. That Catholics are told to go back and to support their church puts PK solidly in support of Roman Catholicism and all it stands for. Some of the men attending PK rallies could be wearing scapulars (as millions of Catholics do), which promise that those who die wearing them "shall not suffer eternal fire"—an abomination officially supported by Rome. They could be wearing medals for spiritual protection, praying the Rosary, praying to Mary or to some other "saint," and looking to the Catholic Church ("outside of which there is no salvation") for their salvation. They could be paying for Masses to shorten the time of suffering in purgatory for their deceased loved ones and hoping that Masses will be said for them after their death, etc., etc. None of these abominations which undermine the gospel is addressed by Promise Keepers, but men are told to go back to the Church which promotes these practices and to give it their wholehearted support. The Reformation is mocked!

PK leaders have avoided telling evangelicals (speakers, participants and others) the truth about PK's relationship with Roman Catholicism. That truth, however, can no longer be hidden. It was revealed in the cover story of *Our Sunday Visitor* for July 20, 1997. (See "News Alerts" below.)

There is much other valid criticism of Promise Keepers: that it is a Vineyard movement; that it promotes humanistic concepts from psychology; that it has multimillions of dollars in its coffers as a result of the excessive fees it charges, etc. But its ecumenical refusal to face the serious heresies in apostate Protestant churches and its full support of Roman Catholicism should be sufficient to give pause to any who are involved. Is it not time for evangelicals who are asked to speak at PK rallies to confront PK leadership with the truth?

News Alerts

Our Sunday Visitor (a Catholic weekly), 7/20/97: Anyone who watches the news knows what a Promise Keepers rally looks like: stadiums teeming with men, many visibly weeping, some dropping to their knees in emotional prayer, thousands rushing forward to publicly repent of sins ranging from adultery to embezzlement.

While there are no hard figures, some say that 10-20 percent of those men are Catholic. And, recently, Promise Keepers, a largely evangelical movement, has taken steps to attract even more Catholic men to its events and principles of discipleship.

- At its March meeting, Promise Keepers' board of directors welcomed Mike Timmis as a new member. A Detroit-area lawyer and businessman, Timmis is a longtime leader in the Catholic charismatic renewal.

- At several rallies this year, Promise Keepers has spotlighted Catholic evangelist Jim Berlucchi as a speaker.

- In June, Promise Keepers hosted a "Catholic summit" at its headquarters in Denver, sounding out Catholic volunteers and leaders from around the country.

- And earlier this year, Promise Keepers amended its statement of faith, revising the lines that Catholics had found offensive.

Promise Keepers founder Bill McCartney told *Our Sunday Visitor* recently that full Catholic participation was his intention from the start.

“Back in 1992, at our first stadium event, we very clearly stated from the podium that we eagerly welcomed the participation of Roman Catholics, and we’ve had scores of Roman Catholics attend and go back to their churches excited....”

John Sengenberger is one Catholic man raising two cheers for Promise Keepers, even as he seems to hold back the third.

As executive director of Christian outreach at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio [strongly supportive of the Medjugorje apparitions], Sengenberger cites Promise Keepers as the inspiration for the men’s conferences his own office has sponsored since 1995.

“At that time, Promise Keepers was having an incredible impact on men across the country,” he said. “It was spreading like wildfire. But it didn’t have all the things we’d want in it as Catholics.”

Sengenberger invited representatives from Promise Keepers to visit the university. “We had some frank discussions and told them we needed to see some Catholic involvement on the leadership level.”

When Steubenville hosted its first men’s conference in 1995, Sengenberger invited two Promise Keepers officials to attend: Dale Schlafer, who was at that time chairman of the board, and Glenn Wagner, a vice president.

“It was their first time in a Catholic evangelistic setting,” Sengenberger said. “They were impressed. When they were leaving, we invited them to go through our bookstore and take out any books they wanted. They went home with all kinds of theology books, Vatican II teachings....Dale took a set of the Liturgy of the Hours. The following year, he told me he’d incorporated it into his daily prayer, so Glenn asked for one, too.”

Both men returned to Steubenville for the 1996 men’s conference, where Sengenberger took them to a Eucharistic Holy Hour.

“I took them aside and explained what we were doing, how this only makes sense if you believe in the Real Presence of Jesus. That night we were down by the stage, and I remember going down on my knees, then prostrate, down on my face—and right next to me was Glenn Wagner, doing the same thing.” [TBC: Encouraged to worship the piece of bread—but prohibited as a non-Catholic from eating it at the Mass?!]

Yet profound differences remained between the evangelicals of Promise Keepers

and Catholics who were sympathetic. Last year, Promise Keepers published a “statement of faith” with lines that seemed to be crafted to exclude Catholics—or force them to reject their Catholic faith.

Section five of the Promise Keepers credo reads: “We believe that man was created in the image of God, but because of sin, was alienated from God. That alienation can be removed only by accepting, through faith alone, God’s gift of salvation, which was made possible by Christ’s death.”

“Faith alone” is a key doctrine of the Protestant Reformation. Though the phrase appears nowhere in Scripture, it was inserted by Martin Luther into his German translation of the Bible.

Concerned about this development at Promise Keepers, Sengenberger had several Catholic theologians review the statement and present their objections to Wagner last summer.

Early this year, Promise Keepers revised the statement in a way that passed theological muster with those Catholics: “Only through faith, trusting in Christ alone for salvation, which was made possible by His death and resurrection, can that alienation be removed.” [Salvation is no longer God’s gift; see next month’s “Q&A.”]

Paul Edwards, Promise Keepers’ vice president for advancement, explained that the statement of faith is a “dynamic” document, and that Promise Keepers is open to change.

“Truth and unity are equal, but in tension,” said Edwards, who was raised a Catholic but now attends a nondenominational church. “We try to present truth, not washed down, yet not truth that desolves [sic] interdenominational squabbles.”

Timmis, the Detroit Catholic now on the Promise Keepers board, added that when the group has stepped on Catholic toes, it has largely been because of insensitivity rather than malice or aggression.

“They want me to raise the sensitivity,” he explained. Moreover, “there’s a great sense of repentance for past misunderstandings, which were mostly sins of omission.”

The omissions were evident as Schlafer addressed Steubenville’s conference this past June. Though he spoke before an audience almost exclusively Catholic, Schlafer’s sources were almost exclusively Protestant: Jonathan Edwards, Cotton Mather, Increase Mather and Billy Graham.

When asked about this, Schlafer and

Edwards acknowledged the shortcoming. But Edwards, opening a bag of papal encyclicals he had bought at Steubenville’s bookstore said, “We’re trying.”

Yet the unease remains, and for some Catholics it is an unease with Promise Keepers’ very foundations—and its founder.

McCartney is a former Catholic. While he was defensive football coach at the University of Michigan, he was active in Christ the King Association, a Catholic charismatic community based in Ypsilanti, Mich., and at that time associated with the ecumenical Word of God [extreme discipleship] covenant community. He referred to himself as a “born-again Catholic.”

“The service and fellowship in Ann Arbor were a celebration every Sunday,” he recalled. But when he took the job as head coach at the University of Colorado, everything changed.

“I couldn’t find that worship in Boulder,” he said, “and my family was dying as a result. So I took them to a nondenominational church, and they immediately caught fire again.”

McCartney has since been associated with the Boulder Valley Vineyard, which is affiliated with the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, a nondenominational movement whose leaders are often accused of anti-Catholicism.

Still, as recently as 1995, McCartney was identifying himself privately as a Catholic and admitting that he still prayed the Rosary. Today, he denies both, though he praises the formation he received as a Catholic.

“I went to Catholic grade school, where I was taught the most basic catechism message: Why are we on earth? To know, love and serve God,” he said.

McCartney’s journey away from the Catholic faith remains a scandal to some Catholics, who fear that other men will follow in his footsteps.

Sengenberger acknowledges the risk. “If you’re a Catholic guy and you go to your pastor and say, ‘Hey, I had this experience, and now I’d like to do something more,’ he might not know what to tell you. There’s a chance we can lose men like that.”

But, he added, “We’re not going to stop Catholic men from going to Promise Keepers when they’re invited.”

Indeed, in 1996, 1.1 million men attended Promise Keepers’ 22 rallies, and perhaps 110,000 of them were Catholic.

“We have to be honest. This movement is doing something we haven’t been doing,” Sengenberger said. “We have to heed Vatican II, which said that anything good and true in the faith of our separated brethren belongs to the whole Church.”

The U.S. bishops’ Committee on Marriage and Family Life admitted as much in its 1996 position paper on Promise Keepers, saying that men “may be finding in Promise Keepers something they are not finding in their own Church—namely, a viable and attractive ministry to men.”

Berlucchi praises Promise Keepers for “bringing men together for fellowship and inspiration, and doing it in the context of good male environments, like stadiums, with a lot of classic male associations. That’s inspired.”

The U.S. bishops outlined a number of ways men could continue to grow once they “came home” from a Promise Keepers experience: “discussion groups, Bible study, prayer meetings, conferences, retreats, devotions....”

Sengenberger agrees that follow-up is key: “The best thing a pastor can do is affirm these men’s conversion of heart, assure them that he’d love to see them flourish in the parish. Then give them something to do. Don’t just tell them to volunteer for bingo or put a new roof on the rectory. If they find a home in their parish, they won’t go running to the [Protestant] church down the street.”

Endnotes

- 1 Will Baron, *Deceived by the New Age* (Pacific Press, 1990), 19.
- 2 Robert Muller, *New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality* (Doubleday, 1982), inside jacket front.
- 3 *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.
- 4 *New Genesis*, 134.
- 5 *The Philippine Star* (Aug. 25, 1994).
- 6 *New Genesis*, 133-35.
- 7 *The Robert Muller School World Core Curriculum Manual* (The Robert Muller School, 1986), 8.
- 8 *Christian News* (Oct. 28, 1996), 18.
- 9 Duane Elgin, *Awakening the Earth* (William Morrow, 1993), 171.
- 10 *Christian News* (Oct. 28, 1996), 1.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 12 Preface to *The Robert Muller School: World Core Curriculum Manual* (The Robert Muller School, 1986).
- 13 Berit Kjos, *Brave New Schools: Guiding Your Child Through the Dangers of the Changing School System* (Harvest House, 1995), 235.
- 14 Jean-Francois Revel, *The Flight from Truth: The Reign of Deceit in the Age of Information* (Random House, 1991), 315.
- 15 Charlotte T. Iserbyt, “The History of OBE/Mastery Learning” (*The Christian Conscience*, Oct. 1996), 31-32.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 33.
- 17 Thomas Roder, Volker Kubillus, Anthony Burwell, *Psychiatrists: The Men Behind Hitler—The Architects of Horror* (Freedom Publishing, 1995), 306.
- 18 *Christian News* (Oct. 28, 1996), 17.
- 19 *Humanist Magazine* (Jan.-Feb. 1983); cited in Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood*, (Simon and Schuster, 1990), 295.
- 20 *World* (Nov. 16, 1996); cited in *Calvary Contender* (Feb. 1, 1997), 1.
- 21 Barbara Clark, *Growing Up Gifted* (Los Angeles, CA), 100.
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- 23 *Ibid.*, 178-79.
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Revival or Apostasy?

Dave Hunt

Knowing that we are in the last of the last days, with an imminent Rapture a very real hope, our thoughts often (and indeed should) turn to the signs which Christ said would herald the nearness of His return. The signs which are most widely cited include “wars and rumours of wars ...[when] nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...and ...famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes...these are the beginning of sorrows” (Mt 24:6-8).

Unquestionably, these specific “sorrows” have been both prominent and accelerating since Israel again became a nation in 1948. Since that time, the intensity and frequency of these signs have increased like the birthpangs of a woman approaching her time of delivery, exactly as Christ foretold. However, the *first* sign Christ gave has been largely overlooked and His solemn warning neglected:

And Jesus answered and said...Take heed that no man *deceive* you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall *deceive* many....(Mt 24:4, 5)

And many *false* prophets shall rise, and shall *deceive* many...(v 11)

For there shall arise *false* Christs, and *false* prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall *deceive* the very elect. (v 24) [Emphasis added.]

Concern for this prophesied deception has marked this ministry. Let us take a closer look at the *religious deception* Christ foretold. He issued a warning: “*take heed* [beware] that no man *deceive* you.” Its seriousness is emphasized by being thrice stated. Its nature is specified: *false Christs, false prophets, and false signs and wonders*. His repetition four times of the word “many” indicates a worldwide deception of multitudes.

Paul issued a similar warning: “Let no man deceive you by any means....” He explains that the spiritual deception to which Christ referred will infect the professing church. That is evident from his words “falling away,” or apostasy:

...for that day [of the Lord] shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin [Antichrist]

be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thes 2:3).

While a true Christian cannot fall away, a false Christian can. Fall away from what? From the faith in Christ which he or she has outwardly professed without inward reality. Those few apostates who announce themselves as atheists or convert to Buddhism or Hinduism are not the concern of Christ and Paul. They are warning of a turning from the truth within the professing church. Other scriptures confirm this, as we shall see.

Paul warns us not to be deceived into thinking that the apostasy won’t come. It *must*. Such a warning can only mean that in the last days many will reject the biblical teaching that apostasy is inevitable. The false prophets to whom Christ refers will use their signs and wonders to support their false

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

Jeremiah 14:14

teaching that revival, not apostasy, is underway. Paul therefore warns not to be deceived with talk about revival: the apostasy *must* come or Christ will not return!

That fact is clarified by other scriptures. False signs and wonders will be an integral part of the apostasy. The departure from the truth will be spearheaded by apparent miracle workers, and the delusion will be made possible by a prevailing emphasis upon experience over doctrine: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tm 4:3). Christ declares,

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Mt 7:22-23).

These apostates of whom Christ speaks do not lose their salvation; they were *never saved* (“I never knew you”). Yet they are high-profile Christian leaders apparently performing signs and wonders *in the name of Christ*. Tragically, they seem to think that

their ability to prophesy and to perform wonders proves that they belong to Him. The signs and wonders are so impressive that doctrine no longer matters—exactly what we see today!

Surely these of whom Christ speaks in Matthew 7 must be the same “false Christs and false prophets” to whom He refers in Matthew 24. Moreover, the signs and wonders they are able to perform are apparently so impressive that without discernment by the Holy Spirit even the very elect would be deceived by them. Obviously, something more than mere trickery is involved. These miracle workers are backed by the power of Satan, whom they unwittingly serve in the name of the Lord.

Clearly, the Bible predicts a last-days signs and wonders movement—but it will be of Satan, thus a delusion that will deceive many. After a solemn warning that in the last days “perilous times [not revival!] shall come,” Paul makes this remarkable statement:

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these [apostates] also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith (2 Tm 3:8).

Jannes and Jambres were the magicians in Pharaoh’s court who, through the power of Satan, duplicated (up to a point) the miracles God did through Moses and Aaron. Paul thus declares that the last-days opposition to the truth will not come so much from outside the church but from those within who are *reprobate* concerning the faith, depraved men who corrupt the truth. And they do so by performing apparent miracles in Christ’s name but which (when more than mere trickery) are actually of Satan. In that way, they deceive and lead many astray—not out of the church, but into false doctrine and thus a false hope *within* the church. Satan has no more effective tactic to damn souls!

Consider the example we gave two years ago of Benny Hinn on TBN (with Paul and Jan Crouch giving full support) telling with much merriment of a man’s wig flying off when he fell “under the power” after Hinn touched his forehead. The man pulled the wig back on, a bit askew, got up and Hinn touched him again *just to see him fall and the wig fly off*. This occurred *five times*, boasted Hinn with a laugh. Was this *God’s* power on display, the Holy Spirit at work? Surely not! Then what was it—this power that Hinn claims to pick up at the graves of Kathryn

Kuhlman and Aimee Semple McPherson?

Such questions involving the whole gamut of today's revival scene, from Toronto to Pensacola, must be seriously faced! Videos of the services show people crawling on the floor, howling like wolves, barking like dogs, roaring like lions, going through bodily contortions impossible without the aid of some spiritual power, unable to speak or even remember their names when they try to give a testimony—and worse. Many of those being baptized at Pensacola seem to lose consciousness or shake so violently that they must be carried out of the baptismal tank or they would drown. Others flail about so wildly as to require several men to handle them. Such manifestations were also found in past “revivals” among the Shakers, the Mormons and many other cults. That such things could now be accepted widely as evidence of the Holy Spirit can only testify to the depths of the delusion!

Jude exhorts us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Contend against whom? Surely not primarily against godless enemies outside the church. The warning concerns those within: “For there are certain men crept in unawares” (v 4). *Crept in* can only mean inside the church.

Paul confirms Jude in addressing the Ephesian elders: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). The spiritual deception of which Christ warned would be rampant *within* the church.

In further confirmation, Christ warned His disciples that “the time cometh, that *whosoever* killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (Jn 16:2)—a most remarkable prophecy. He can't be referring to the slaughter of Christians by the Caesars or by Mao or Stalin or Hitler, for they did not believe they were thereby serving God. Yes, when the Jews killed the early Christians they thought they were serving God; so did the Roman Catholics when they slaughtered the true Christians before and after the Reformation; and so it was when Muslims killed Christians. But none of this was the complete fulfillment of Christ's prophecy.

“Whosoever” is the key. Neither the Pharisees, the popes nor the Muslims were alone in killing Christians. Others pursued them to the death at the same time. But

Christ is saying that a time is coming when *whosoever* (in other words, *everyone*) who kills Christians will think he is serving God thereby. That can only mean that a world religion to which *everyone* must belong is coming, a religion that will seek to exterminate true Christians in the name of God. John saw the same scene in the future:

And it was given unto him [Antichrist] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them....

And I beheld another beast...he exerciseth all the power of the first beast...and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast....

And he had power to...cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed (Rv 13:7-15).

To summarize, the scriptural warnings foretell the very delusion we find in our

Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

John 4:48

day: 1) a false signs and wonders movement led by *many* false prophets; 2) *many* being deceived through these seeming miracles; 3) the rejection of the biblical teaching concerning apostasy and the insistence that we are in the midst of, or at least building up to, the “greatest revival in the history of the church.” Such is the prevailing teaching today among charismatics and increasingly among evangelicals. The promise of revival will be part of the last-days deception, Paul warns, so beware. Instead, in the days preceding the Rapture there will be a great apostasy, a falling away from the faith. Don't be part of it!

That we must earnestly contend for the faith against those who have crept into the church implies that the battle is not so much one of *faith* against *unbelief*, but rather of *true* faith against *false* faith. And that, too, is precisely what we see today. Articles in leading medical journals cite studies showing that those who have *any* “religious faith” are more likely to recover from illness. *Christianity Today* recently ran a major article naively promoting these studies as though they were supportive of the truth.¹ Instead, God has been reduced to a placebo that can come in any shape, size or color.

Multitudes of Christians imagine that faith is believing that what they are praying

for will happen and that if they truly believe, they will have whatever they ask. Obviously, if things happen because one believes they will, then one does not need God. This is mind power, not the “faith in God” which Christ taught (Mk 11:22). It is faith in faith, which Kenneth Hagin and his followers such as Copeland and Price teach, calling it “the law of faith,” which even non-Christians can use to get alleged miracles.²

The great tragedy is that evangelical leaders who ought to expose error commend false prophets instead. A prime example was Norman Vincent Peale. In 1984, on the Phil Donahue program, Peale said, “It's not necessary to be born again. You have your way to God; I have mine. I found eternal peace in a Shinto shrine...I've been to Shinto shrines, and God is everywhere.” Shocked, Phil Donahue responded, “But you're a Christian minister; you're supposed to tell me that Christ is the way and the truth and the life, aren't you?” Peale replied, “Christ is one of the ways. God is everywhere.”³ Yet Peale, whose many heresies and occult practices were flaunted before the world and church, has been praised by evangelical leaders, from Billy Graham on down, and his books and magazines are read by millions of evangelical Christians!

The topic on everyone's lips and mind today is *revival*. Christian TV and radio and bestselling books persuasively argue that we are in the midst of the greatest revival of Christianity in the history of the world. Enthusiasts point to the signs and wonders occurring in such places as the former Toronto Vineyard, the Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, Benny Hinn's church in Orlando, Florida, his huge televised crusades, etc.

It comes as a shock to many to learn that the word “revival” does not appear even once in the entire King James Bible. The hope of revival which excites so many today is not even a biblical concept. Ask yourself a few questions: Is Christ not indwelling us? Is He not in our midst each time we meet? Are we not to be filled with the Holy Spirit at all times? Is not the Word of God sufficient? Why, then, run after signs and wonders as though unusual manifestations prove that God is at work, while neglecting what God has already given us? We will return to this topic in the future.

In the meantime, undertake a study to see what the Bible says. Check every source (including *TBC*) against Scripture! Be a Berean. **TBC**

Quotable

Wherever Christians meet these days one word is sure to be heard constantly repeated; that word is *revival*.

In sermon, song and prayer we are forever reminding the Lord and each other that what we must have to solve all our spiritual problems is a “mighty, old-time revival....”

So strongly is the breeze blowing for revival that scarcely anyone appears to have the discernment or the courage to turn around and lean into the wind, even though the truth may easily lie in that direction....

It is my considered opinion that under the present circumstances we do not want revival at all. A widespread revival of the kind of Christianity we know today in America might prove to be a moral tragedy from which we would not recover in a hundred years.

A. W. Tozer

Keys to the Deeper Life, pp 7-8

It is not my business as a preacher to spend my time in civil rights demonstrations, or seeking to bring a Utopia on earth....My one task shall be to preach the Word, not expecting to solve the problems of the nations until Jesus comes. Today God is calling out a remnant...in response to the preaching of the Word of God. I believe it is a sin for a Christian who knows his Bible to become greatly upset about world conditions as though God were not in control any longer.

M. R. DeHaan

Even where their religion includes a belief that Christ is coming again, they think the world is not yet good enough for that, being ignorant that God has said it is not yet bad enough for His judgment.

E. W. Bullinger

Essentially, the great work of the church consists only in saving souls from the unavoidable wreck of the world that is sure to come.

D. L. Moody

Q&A

Question: You have referred in your writings and speaking to apostasy as a major sign of the nearness of Christ’s return. Yet you have also said (or at least implied) that the apostasy had begun already in Paul’s day. In fact, you have stated that the Roman Catholic Church has been in apostasy for 1,500 years. How, then, can apostasy be the sign you claim it to be?

Answer: It is generally claimed that the Roman Catholic Church was the only representation of Christianity on earth prior to the Reformation. Even today’s evangelical leaders echo the lie of Roman Catholic apologists that, since the Roman Catholic Church was the only church prior to the sixteenth century, then if it was in apostasy, Christ’s promise failed that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church. The truth is, however, as we have documented in prior newsletters, that an evangelical church comprised of millions of true believers always existed and was persecuted by Rome. Martin Luther himself said,

We are not the first to declare the papacy to be the kingdom of Antichrist, since for many years before us so many and such great men (whose number is large and whose memory is eternal) have undertaken to express the same thing so clearly and plainly. (Plass, *What Luther Says*, vol. 1, 36).

Who were these to whom Luther referred? We have a letter dated 1429 (100 years before the Reformation) from Pope Martin V commanding the King of Poland to *exterminate* the Hussites. Jan Hus had been martyred in 1415. But for 1,000 years before that there were the Vaudois, Albigenses, Waldenses and other similar groups of evangelical Christians. These simple believers were the object of repeated crusades (larger and more numerous than those fought for the “Holy Land”) in which the popes offered “the remission of all sins to everyone who should slay a heretic” (Muston, *History of the Waldenses*, vol. i., 31, cited in R.W. Thompson, *The Papacy and the Civil Power*, NY, 1876, 489; also in E.H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church*, London, 1931, 100-101).

Down through the centuries, though the major visible Church with its headquarters in Rome was deep in apostasy, there were millions who gave no allegiance to Rome. They sought to follow the New Testament

and remain pure. Then came the Reformation. Since that time, most of these groups have gradually been absorbed by various Protestant groups. And now the Protestants are turning back to Rome (as we have documented), and the apostasy, for the first time in history, is becoming worldwide!

Question: I am concerned that you may be causing confusion for your readers ...where it concerns the Scriptures....On page 342 [*A Woman Rides the Beast*] you stated...[that] the Bible contains all the doctrine, correction, and instruction in righteousness that is needed....Then I got the January 1997 issue of *The Berean Call*...[in which you say there] “is an obvious mistake in the 1611 KJV, which has been corrected by marginal note in current KJV editions....Mr. Hunt ...please tell me where I can find the “Scriptures...given by inspiration of God...profitable for doctrine...[etc.]” when...you say the Bible has a mistake....Is the Word of God so mistaken that God now has to correct Himself in the marginal notes? I am getting weary. Every time I turn around, somebody is correcting the Scriptures...somebody says it has errors. What *did* God say if the Bible I have has errors...? Please tell me, what Bible do you own that has no mistakes in it? Could you tell me where I might be able to obtain a copy of the Scriptures with no errors?

Answer: God’s Word is “for ever...settled in heaven” (Ps 119:89) so you will find it there. You would also find it in the original copies (were they available) written by men inspired of the Holy Spirit to give us the Scriptures. God could have preserved the originals, but chose not to for His own reasons. What we now have are thousands of copies, most of them fragments of varying sizes, made from copies of copies of copies of the originals. Copyists do make some errors, no matter how careful they are. The errors are generally very small and can be detected by comparing the many copies we have with one another.

Even Gail Riplinger acknowledges, “It is obvious that the Word of God in its perfect state does not reside in any one of the ancient Greek manuscripts extant today” (*New Age Bible Versions*, p 507). She implies (pp 510-11) that the translators of the KJV were “inspired” of God to correct any defects so that in the KJV alone we now have God’s perfect Word exactly as it existed in the originals. However, those

who translated the 1611 KJV deny special inspiration and even admit that there are some words of whose meaning they are uncertain and that they consulted other translations in giving us the KJV.

KJV-only advocates make a major point that God's Word must have been "preserved" here on earth. Yet that preservation was not in any single copy we have ever found. If the KJV is it, then God's Word was not preserved in perfect form until 1611—nor do the French, Spanish, Germans, Russians, et al. have God's Word because they don't have the KJV unless they can speak English.

The KJV is God's Word. Though there may be a minor error here or there, comparing other verses dealing with the same subject will make it quite clear. There are different nuances and shades of meaning in every language, so that for many words there are no exact equivalents available to a translator. That the original Greek or Hebrew cannot (in some places) be translated directly into Swahili or some obscure primitive language does not mean that the translation those people have is not God's Word.

Question: Scriptures such as Exodus 34:7 and Numbers 14:18 seem to indicate there is such a thing as generational sin caused by the sins of our ancestors. Shouldn't we pay more attention to those who have been involved in "deliverance" ministries?

Answer: No. We should pay more attention to the context of the scriptures being used to see whether or not someone's teaching is true to God's Word. In both Exodus 34:7 and Numbers 14:18, God is dealing with a people according to His covenant of *law*. His covenant included blessings and curses; obedience brought blessings and breaking the law brought curses. Even though the sins of God's covenant people would reap destructive consequences throughout generations, nevertheless God's justice, grace and mercy were made manifest to the individual. The entire chapter of Ezekiel 18 addresses that fact: "The soul that sinneth.... The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon [the righteous], and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon [the wicked]" (Ezk 18:20).

As a basis for their insistence upon the need to "break off" iniquities of one's fathers in order to free an individual,

deliverance ministries lean heavily on Old Testament scriptures. Yet even those Old Testament scriptures look forward to Christ, the Servant who will *bear* these iniquities (Is 53:11) and pardon *all* of them (Jer 33:8).

Deliverance ministries (and others who emphasize "generational sins," "iniquities," and "ancestral curses" affecting believers) are in danger of putting *themselves* under a "curse." The New Testament clearly teaches that believers are not under the law; that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us..." (Gal 3:13). Therefore, those who impose the law upon believers deny the gospel and become subject to Paul's condemnation in Galatians 1:9: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Finally, "generational curses" are said by many of the deliverance teachers to be the implements of Satan and his demons to create problems for Christians. Supposedly, sins of our ancestors bring about curses for which demons are making us pay today. The primary problem with this teaching is that there is no example in Scripture of demons cursing anyone. God curses, not Satan. And even when Satan's instruments such as Balak try to have God's people cursed, it is of no effect (Nm 23:23). So while curses may be the demonically generated devices of fear and destruction in the sorcerer's world of animists, shamans, witches, voodoo priests and other pagans, where the church is concerned they are simply part of Satan's scam to deceive—especially experientially driven, and consequently spiritually gullible, Christians.

Endnotes

- 1 *Christianity Today* (Jan. 6, 1997), 20-30.
- 2 Kenneth E. Hagin, *Having Faith in Your Faith* (Rhema, 1980), 3-4.
- 3 *Christian News* (May 12, 1997), 11.

Death

T. A. McMahon

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

Why? Why did God give “his only begotten Son”? It is apparent in this verse that God did what He did because of His love, and He promises eternal life to every one who “believeth in” Jesus. However, the question we want to consider is, Why did God send *Jesus*?

The reason is simple: Jesus was the *perfect solution* for saving humanity. Moses tells us, “He is the Rock, his work is perfect...” (Dt 32:4), while the psalmist declares, “As for God, his way is perfect...” (Ps 18:30). What can one contribute to a perfect solution? Nothing. Whatever is added only denies its completeness. But what about religious acts such as prayer, communion, baptism, and other so-called sacramental “means of grace”? Regarding salvation, Protestant and Catholic sacraments alike are an abomination before God. (This will be addressed in a future issue.)

God alone is our Saviour (Is 43:11). Nevertheless, what was so momentous a situation that it would cause God to enter into His creation through a virgin birth, live a perfect human life, and die a sacrificial death?

The answer is sin.

Sin? Sin hardly seems all that significant these days. Even among evangelicals it is too often lost in a sea of psychological euphemisms, from “moral lapses” to “dysfunctions” and “disorders.” However, no matter how evil is made “sin-lite” by Christian humanists, it cannot be rid of its lethal consequences: “sin...bringeth forth death” (Jas 1:15).

Death began its devastation of this planet the moment sin entered the Garden. All that God called “very good” was tragically affected. Loving fellowship between mankind and its Creator was destroyed by disobedience. Yet, in the immediate aftermath of mankind’s first and worst tragedy, Adam and Eve pursued their own solutions. He blamed her; she blamed the serpent. Together they attempted to deal with their sin by hiding from God, fashioning a

covering of fig leaves for themselves. Sin sired the selfisms, beginning with self-preservation and self-consciousness.

God rejected the guilt-ridden, self-serving attempt of Adam and Eve to cover their sin. It would not do. Sin not only wrought universal devastation (Rom 8:20-22; 5:12); it brought mankind before the bar of God our Judge, who declared the death penalty to be the only payment that would satisfy divine justice. God made that absolutely clear. In setting the conditions under which Adam could respond of his own free will to his Maker, God told him the consequence of an act of disobedience: “...thou shalt surely die” (Gn 2:17). It’s doubtful that God’s requirement was

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:23

understood as a deterrent, for Adam and Eve had no experience of death. Even so, they must have surmised that to disobey would displease, even dishonor, the One with whom they had fellowship and a relationship of complete love.

God himself provided the skins of dead animals for their clothing (Gn 3:21). Since they had no prior experience of death’s “sting,” it’s likely that Adam and Eve recoiled at such a solution. Surely the covering He provided, this graphic exhibition of the catastrophe of death, spoke volumes. And it’s entirely unlikely God did anything to the skins to make them less offensive. Why? Skins pointed to a terribly grievous death which would take place in the future for Adam and Eve and their progeny.

At the same time, the animal hides must have been a very real comfort to our original forebears. Physically, the skins covered their nakedness, spiritually their shame. More than that, they were a continual reminder of the One to come (Gn 3:15) who would “put away sin” (sin *they* inflicted upon their descendants) “by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26). Adam and Eve recognized that *only* God could undo what they had done. God himself had made that clear by replacing their ineffectual covering of vegetation with a covering symbolic of

His solution: “...without shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sin]” (Heb 9:22).

Ignorance and confusion are cause for most of the world’s objections to “bloody” Christianity. The sacrificial systems of pagan and occult religions (from ancient Baal worship to today’s Santeria) are rarely seen for what they are: depraved corruptions of what God instituted. Even some who call themselves evangelicals disparage the Old Testament for its exposition of animal sacrifices. Yet what God initiated with Adam and Eve was very simple. Mankind sinned. Sin separated humanity from Him. God’s penalty for sin is death. Only the full payment of the penalty for sin could satisfy God’s justice, forgive sin, and make fallen mankind acceptable to Him.

Beginning with the animals slain in the Garden and including all the lawful blood sacrifices throughout the Old Testament period, everything *pointed* to the future sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. In themselves, the animal sacrifices were not effective. Only *faith* in what they represented (i.e., a trust in Messiah’s death and His blood shed to atone for sin) brought about acceptance by God.

Cain, however, had another idea. And like all attempts to improve on God’s way, it was folly at best, prideful rebellion at worst. Cain’s sacrificial offering of grain rather than flesh was rejected by God because 1) it was in disobedience to the Lord’s instructions, and 2) it was faithless, representing Cain’s own way of salvation, not what God’s justice required.

The way of Cain is the satanic inspiration of every false religion and unbiblical practice. Man’s bent since the Fall has been to pervert God’s way, mostly in His name, and always for some self-serving purpose: “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule *by their [own] means*; and my people love to have it so” (Jer 5:31). The ungodliness of pagan ceremonies is often obvious to Christians. Nevertheless, it is becoming more and more acceptable, as ecumenism and apostasy increase. What too few care to consider is that *anything added* by man to God’s plan of salvation is just as abhorrent to Him as the most depraved pagan idolatry. Why? To reiterate, whatever is added is a denial of His Son’s *perfect* and *complete* payment for our sins.

Letting his righteous indignation show,

the Apostle Paul chided the Galatians for allowing themselves to be intimidated by those who were adding obedience to the law as a requirement for salvation. Paul twice repeated that those who would teach or follow such teachings are “accursed” for the gospel’s sake (Gal 1:8-9). The simple accounting in the Epistle to the Galatians is very clear: Faith in Christ’s completed atonement *plus* any human work or religious observance *equals* “another gospel” which “pervert[s] the gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6-7). The calculator tape adds up to *zero salvation*. A perverted gospel saves no one.

For a few weeks in September, no doubt the greatest number ever of people throughout the world collectively focused on death. Princess Diana and Mother Teresa were esteemed by the masses, and their final destination was a topic considered by religious and nonreligious alike. As with most eulogies, where only the positive aspects of one’s life are tendered, so it certainly was with Diana. Her charitable works, if many in the secular world have any say in it, are a basis for her “canonization.” Regarding Mother Teresa, some of the religious-minded suggestions went beyond sainthood.

A Hindu professor at Creighton University Department of Business wrote, “On this confused Earth, which is busy with materialistic goal-achieving, there was only one person closest to God: Mother Teresa. She cannot die. She simply merged with the Supreme Being....Her religion of service to the needy transcended any single religion. In fact, one might say that she followed the path of *karma yoga* (selfless action) for achieving union with God.” John Cardinal O’Connor, reflecting more the Catholic mindset, said, “If *she* is not in heaven [bypassing purgatory?], then I am really terrified of dying, because of all she did.” A one-line letter to the editor of a small-town newspaper had this to say: “If Mother Teresa doesn’t have a nonstop ticket to Heaven, no one does.” In other words, if *she* didn’t earn her way in, there’s no hope for the rest of us.

Good-works salvation is hardly just a Roman Catholic belief; it’s the number one ticket to heaven in the minds of most people the world over. All the world religions, including many which profess to be Christian, require the individual to perform

certain acts in order to merit entrance to heaven or a place of eternal bliss. Hindus believe they must go through innumerable life cycles or reincarnations, paying for the misdeeds of each former life while hoping against hope that their present life will not add to their future suffering. Various yoga practices provide the ways and means to attain *moksha*, or fusion with the infinite.

Buddhism, the “in” religion of the ‘90s, involves the practice of the Noble Eight-fold Path, which is said to end cycles of suffering by abolishing all desire. *Nirvana* is reached by the perfect practice of the eight ways of right living: 1) right viewpoint, 2) right aspiration, 3) right speech, 4) right behavior, 5) right occupation, 6) right effort, 7) right mindfulness, and 8) right meditation. That this is presently the

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14

most favored religion of Hollywood is rather ironic.

There is no outside redemption in Islam; as a man sows, so shall he reap on the final day of reckoning. “Every man’s actions have We hung around his neck, and on the last day shall be laid before him a wide-open book” (Surah 17.13). Those who live according to the teachings of Islam to the best of their abilities hope to reach Paradise, most often described in terms of sensual delights. The only sure way of reaching Paradise is to be in holy war against the infidels.

Biblical Christians have far more in common with those who follow Judaism than they do with practitioners of the other major world religions. Nevertheless, the unbridgeable gap which separates true Christians from religious Jews is works salvation, i.e., keeping the Law. Whether one is orthodox, adhering strictly to the *Torah*, the *Mishna*, and the *Talmud* in order to be acceptable in the sight of God, or a conservative, with a more lenient interpretation of the *Torah*, or a reformed Jew at least hanging in there with an observance of the sabbath, all depends on the final evaluation of their moral and ethical behavior to determine whether or not they will be with God in the afterlife.

All the cults which consider themselves to be Christian have a common belief: one gets to heaven on the basis of *merit* (Jesus simply showed the way or opened the door; one must follow His lead, earning salvation as He did). Forgetting the fact that all the cults have a false Jesus and many erroneous ideas about Him, nevertheless, nearly all of them believe that He lived a perfect life in order to attain salvation. Who then can honestly say that he or she is living up to that standard?

On the other hand, there was a sinful man who went through life as a thief. In the process of being punished for his crimes, he hung on a cross near another Man who was also being crucified. Perhaps still charged with energy and pride, the thief began his torturous ordeal by joining the surrounding crowd in mocking the Man wearing a crown of thorns.

Then, as the day wore on, the thief’s view of the Man changed: a conversion took place in his heart. This criminal, this man of depravity with few if any morally or socially redeeming works to “outweigh his evil,” became a unique witness to the most spectacular event in the history of the universe: the gospel was being carried out but a few feet away. Of course, this thief wasn’t alone—yet he was one of the few to grasp what was taking place during those darkened hours.

The condemned criminal, with nothing to offer, with nothing redemptory that he could accomplish before death—no time for sacraments, for penitential ritual, for water baptism, or any other so-called salvational *means* of grace—did the only thing God requires (Rom 10:13). He simply confessed that he was a sinner and cried out in faith to the One whose pending death would pay the complete penalty for his sins, and the sins of the whole world: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Lk 23:40-42).

The immediate reply from the lips of our Lord and Savior to this thief from the dregs of humanity is the most thrilling declaration ever received by any biblical figure: “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43). Whether at death’s door or not, that same blessed assurance of eternal life with Jesus Christ is for everyone who comes to Him just as the thief did—simply by *faith alone*. TBC

Quotable

MY NAME IS WRITTEN THERE

Though humble and obscure below,
My name is there in heaven, I know.
'Tis written by the hand of God—
'Tis written with the Saviour's blood.

'Twas there before the day and night,
In beams of God's unerring light.
By Jesus' blood 'twas crimson dyed
When He for me was crucified.

Who would erase it from that page,
Unspoiled by sin, undimmed by age,
Must Calvary's marks from Him efface,
And change eternal truth and grace.

'Tis there by Jesus' worth alone,
For worth or credit have I none;
And nothing less than sin in Him
Can ever that inscription dim.

'Tis ever there—O sweet the thought!
The space it fills by blood was bought.
'Tis there by Grace, 'tis there by right,
Unsullied in the Father's sight.

Though I such love so feebly serve,
And daily worse than death deserve,
By oath, by blood, by priestly care,
My worthless name He keepeth there.

Let such as know no second birth
Labor to write their name on earth.
My joy is this, that Love Divine
On heaven's scroll hath written mine.

William Blane
Lays of Life and Hope

Q&A

Question: There are many Catholics on my wife's side of the family, and most of them know that we believe that Roman Catholicism is a false religion. However, we find ourselves in a dilemma when an important family situation comes up which takes place in a Catholic church, such as weddings, funerals, etc. We know T.A. McMahon is a former Catholic. What does he do?

Answer: In order to keep lines of communication open with unsaved relatives, I recommend doing whatever one can without compromising one's faith. It's particularly important to be available to minister to loved ones at the death of a

family member, even if that means attending a requiem Mass. The same would apply to a Catholic wedding, even though a Mass may be involved.

For those unfamiliar with Catholic sacramental rituals, all are unbiblical and most are a denial of the finished work of Christ regarding salvation. Nevertheless, as long as a believer is not worshiping in a Catholic church, but attending as a service to others—as did Naaman in the pagan temple of Rimmon (2 Kgs 5:17-19)—there is no compromise.

Question: In your September newsletter you quoted in its entirety the Promise Keepers article from the July 20, 1997 *Our Sunday Visitor* which included the revision in PK's statement of faith to satisfy Roman Catholics. I don't see how changing "accepting through faith alone, God's gift of salvation, which was made possible by Christ's death" to "Only through faith, trusting in Christ alone for salvation, which was made possible by His death and resurrection" changes anything — or that either statement is wrong. Would you please explain the difference? I don't see it.

Answer: First of all, there must be a difference or the Catholics would not have insisted upon the change. Promise Keepers has revised this statement several times. The Catholic revision includes the Resurrection, which is more biblical. But that wasn't what they were after. One must know Catholicism to understand the difference between "accepting through faith alone, God's gift of salvation" and "trusting in Christ alone for salvation."

The former is biblical and leaves no room for works. Salvation is a *gift* and must be received as such. A gift cannot be earned, paid for or merited in any way—it can only be received, and that "through faith alone." Salvation, being "God's gift," must be received directly from Him and the only requirement for receiving it is "faith alone."

The former refers to "accepting...the gift of salvation." The latter simply says that it was Christ alone who made salvation possible, but says nothing about how that salvation is accepted or received. Catholicism declares that salvation comes from the merits of Christ, but that it is only through the Church and its priesthood that the

"graces" Christ won can be received; and then only in installments which must be repeated endlessly. No one ever gets saved, no one ever receives salvation as a certainty, but one must keep coming back to the Church and its sacraments to receive further installments.

Catholicism teaches that "Christ won for the world all the graces it needs for salvation and sanctification. But these blessings are conferred [by the Church] gradually and continually since Calvary and mainly through the Mass...Consequently, the Mass is a truly propitiatory sacrifice, which means that by this oblation 'the Lord is appeased, He grants grace and the gift of repentance, and He pardons wrongdoings and sins...'. The priest is indispensable, since he alone by his powers can change the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ...the more often the sacrifice [of the Mass] is offered the more benefit is conferred" (John A. Hardon, S.J., *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* (Doubleday, 1985), pp. 248-249). Vatican II declares, "For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist [Mass], 'the work of our redemption is accomplished'" (*The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Introduction, par. 2).

The PK statement declared that salvation is a gift from God that is received by faith alone directly from God. As revised to satisfy the Catholics, it now says that salvation is based alone on the work of Christ, but leaves open how salvation is to be received. That is the difference.

Tragically, Bill McCartney, who was a practicing Catholic all of his life before he began to attend a Vineyard because his family liked it better, apparently has no conviction on how a person is saved. And he is willing to leave Roman Catholic attendees with the impression that they are no different from evangelicals and that what their Church teaches about salvation is correct. One day he, and the others who promote PK and preach at PK gatherings, will give an account to God for leading multitudes astray.

Question: Your newsletter reported that the Vatican justified expenditures for its telescope by saying it would all be worth it "if just a single alien is converted." You seemed to imply disapproval of that idea. Why? Shouldn't the gospel be given to extraterrestrials if they are encountered?

Answer: First of all, the gospel is for man, not for beings on other planets: “For God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son...that *the world* through him might be saved” (Jn 3:16-17); “Christ died for *our sins*” (1 Cor 15:3); “Christ Jesus came *into the world* to save sinners [on this planet]” (1 Tm 1:15); “he is the propitiation...for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:2), etc. So even if extraterrestrial intelligences (ETIs) existed, the gospel would do them no good. In fact, they don’t exist.

It is not the Bible but evolutionists who suggest there are ETIs out there; and the Vatican accepts evolution. Atheists believe that life happened by chance on earth and could have happened by chance elsewhere, a theory which the Vatican also accepts. On the contrary, life is created by God. If it exists on other planets, He created it — but that idea is both unbiblical and unreasonable. God didn’t say, “Adam and Eve blew it so I’ll try again on another planet and hope for better results.” God was not experimenting. Any intelligent life capable of making a choice would make sinful choices. Surely one planet of sinners is enough.

Furthermore, since “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16), He would not create intelligent beings anywhere and after they sinned do nothing to rescue them. But there is only one way for God to forgive any sinners anywhere in the universe: the penalty must be paid by God himself becoming one of them. Jesus had to become a man to redeem us. He would have to become one of each kind of ETI to redeem them. But that suggestion is antichrist doctrine according to 1 John 4:1-3 — Christ has come once and for all time in human flesh. Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb 13:8) — the unique Son of God who is God and man in one Person.

It was to this earth that Satan came to spread his rebellion and to this earth that Christ came to defeat Satan and destroy his power throughout the entire universe. It is to this earth that Christ will return to destroy Antichrist and to establish His kingdom; and from this earth He will rule the new universe. Christ died for sin only once, here on this planet and for mankind (Heb 9 and 10, etc.). His sacrifice of Himself for sin and His resurrection cleansed the entire universe of sin and made possible a new universe. The Bible has no gaps into which ETIs could fit.

Moreover, the universe is so vast that it is absurd to imagine contact with physical ETIs even if they did exist. It would take our spacecraft 90,000 years just to reach the closest sun that might have planets where life might exist. As for UFOs, it is absurd to imagine that any beings with the technology to zoom through “hyperspace” and come to Earth would either crash when they got here or engage in the multiple kidnappings and sexual examinations of humans that are alleged. UFOs are non-physical demonic manifestations. Angels and demons are out there, but not ETIs.

Question: **We are not called to social activism but to preach the gospel and convert sinners. That should have a major good effect on society—far more than social activism. The question is, what happened when there was far less social activism and far more “preaching of the gospel” by the likes of Billy Graham, etc.? It seems like things just got worse in society, just as they have when there is much less gospel and more social activism.**

Answer: Never does the Bible suggest that the gospel is going to convert the world or that the church will influence the world’s morals. The statement that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse” (2 Tm 3:13) is not conditional but unequivocal. The question is not whether the gospel will have a greater impact upon the world than social and political action. We are told to preach the gospel, not to try to change the world. Christ has assured us that we will be hated by the world, not that we will influence it for good, much less convert it. And, sadly, very few heed the gospel and are saved (Mt 7:14; Lk 13:23-25).

"I Will Build My Church"

Dave Hunt

Christ was born "King of the Jews" (Mt 2:2), was called "King of Israel" and "King of the Jews" (Mt 27:11; Mk 15:2, etc.) and acknowledged both titles (Jn 1:49-50; 12:12-15). He did not renounce His claim to David's throne even though His own people (as the prophets had foretold) "despised, rejected" (Is 53:3) and crucified Him (Ps 22:12-18; Is 53:5; 8-10; Zec 12:10). All four gospels declare that "King of the Jews" was the accusation placed on the cross (Mt 27:37; Mk 15:26; Lk 23:38; Jn 19:19). Here is Mark's account of Israel rejecting her king and demanding His crucifixion:

But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?...

But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

And they cried out again, Crucify him. (Mk 15:9-13)

The Hebrew prophets had foretold that Christ would rise from the dead and that He would come again to establish a kingdom that would never end (1 Kgs 2:45; 9:5; Is 9:7; 53:10-12; Jer 17:25; Dn 2:34-35; 44-45; 7:14, etc.). Christ has fulfilled only the first part, rising from the dead and ascending to the Father's right hand. If the remainder of those prophecies is to be fulfilled (and they must be, or God has lied) there must be a future restoration of the Kingdom to Israel as the disciples believed (Acts 1:6), as Peter affirmed (Acts 3:19-26) and as Christ acknowledged (Acts 1:6-7). Israel's future repentance, redemption and restoration are foretold often (Ezk 39; Zec 12, 13, 14; Acts 5:31, etc.). Paul prayed for Israel's salvation (Rom 10:1) and declared that "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26).

If the Muslims and other nations in the world would understand these prophecies concerning Israel's right to her land and honor them and the God who gave them, there would be peace in the Middle East and throughout the world. Instead, they will persist in their desire to destroy Israel, resulting in Christ's intervention from heaven to rescue Israel at Armageddon and to destroy Antichrist, his followers and kingdom. Most Israelis themselves do not

believe that God gave them their land and are trading it for a fool's "peace" with an enemy which has sworn to exterminate them.

Knowing that Israel would reject and crucify Him, Christ said He would build a new entity, the church. The word "church" or "churches" (*ekklesia* in Greek, meaning "called out"), occurs about 114 times in the New Testament. No Hebrew word in the Old Testament is translated "church" in the KJV. Pertaining to Israel, the major comparable words in Hebrew are *edah*, *mowed* and *qahal*, translated as "assembly" or "congregation." While Acts 7:38 refers to "the church [congregation of Israel] in the wilderness," the Bible makes a clear distinction between Israel and the New Testament church. The latter consists of both Jews and Gentiles and did not exist before Christ's death and resurrection. He

Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone...and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

1 Peter 2:6

continues to build that church even now. It was established by Him and specifically for Him: "I will build *my* church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18).

Here we have an obvious claim by Christ that He is God. Israel had been chosen by God. Who, then, but God himself, could establish another congregation of believers in addition to and distinct from Israel? Christ's statement regarding the church is similar to what He said to the Jews who "believed on him," and it has the same awesome implications: "If ye continue in *my* word, then are ye *my* disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32).

The Jews must have been stunned. How could this one dare to use such terms as "my word" and "my disciples" and claim to set His followers free? Was it not *God's* word they were to follow, and were they not *Moses'* disciples? Was He claiming to be greater than Moses—even equal to God? Whatever it meant to be His disciple, He was obviously starting something new.

Nevertheless, no one imagined that this miracle-worker intended to dispense with Israel and replace her with some other entity. That heresy would come from Roman Catholicism; and many of the Reformers would be unable to extricate

themselves from it, in spite of their clear understanding of salvation by grace through faith. The belief that the church replaces Israel remains today among Roman Catholics, among those of Reformed theology such as Presbyterians and Lutherans, and among many charismatics as well.

In its infancy, the church was composed only of Jewish believers. They had difficulty believing that Gentiles, too, could be saved through Christ and be in the church, even though the Old Testament prophets had laid that foundation (Ps 72:11,17; Is 11:10; 42:1-6; 49:6; Mal 1:11, etc.). And even when they understood the "mystery" revealed by Paul "that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph 3:3-6), some of them tried to subject the Gentiles to the Jewish law. In effect, they were erroneously making the church an extension of Israel (Acts 15:1).

Gentiles are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph 2:12). When a Gentile is saved and is added by Christ as a "living stone" to the church under construction (1 Pt 2:5), he doesn't come under the Jewish laws and customs of the old covenant. And when a Jew is saved and added to the church, he is set free from the Jewish law (the "law of sin and death") and its penalties (Rom 8:1). Both the Gentile and the Jew who enter the church through faith in Christ are thereafter under a higher law, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:2). Indeed, Christ has become their life, living out through them this new standard of holy conduct—something that was unknown in Israel even to her greatest prophets (1 Pt 1:10-12).

No one can establish himself in that sacred temple; he must be placed there by Christ alone. The living stones which He is building together to form the eternal temple do not fall in and out of the structure. We are *in Christ* and eternally secure.

The church is Christ's body, nourished by Him. Believers are spoken of as branches in the true vine, depicting a continual flow of life and nourishment from Him to them. Christ is the head of the body, which is therefore directed by Him and not by a priesthood or hierarchy of men in some earthly headquarters. The headquarters of the church is in heaven. Yet today's denominations (like the cults) all have their earthly headquarters and their traditions. They have become organizations instead of being content with being part of the organism, His body.

In the church "There is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile]...[but all are] one in Christ" (Gal 3:28). Gentiles do not become Jewish, but Jew and Gentile have become "one *new man*" (Eph 2:15). Through the cross, Christ "*abolished*" the "ordinances" which had separated Jew and Gentile. Therefore, we can confidently affirm that Gentiles are not to adopt those "ordinances." Would one of Christ's own adopt something which God has *abolished*?

Paul's epistle to the Galatians was written to correct the error of salvation partly through Christ and partly through works. A works salvation is the error of every cult, and Roman Catholicism has developed her system of religious ritual and works to the ultimate. In all of his epistles Paul comes back to the theme that salvation is all of grace and nothing of works. Herein is a major difference between Israel and the church: for the former, eternal life came through keeping the Law; for the latter, eternal life comes by faith.

The old covenant offered life to the righteous who kept the Law: "this do and thou shalt live" (Dt 8:1; Lk 10:28). But no one could keep the Law, for all have sinned (Rom 3:23). Under the new covenant (available from Adam onward), "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5). Human pride insists upon becoming righteous on its own—an impossible task. Paul mourned the fact that his people Israel, though they had "a zeal after God," yet "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:3) through the new covenant. So it is with all the cults. Roman Catholicism, for example, attempts (through the sacraments, suffering and works) to make its members righteous enough for heaven. It is the error of the Pharisee who proclaimed his righteousness to God and was not heard, whereas the publican, who acknowledged his unworthiness, was justified (Lk 18:10-14).

One had to belong to Israel (with some exceptions) to be saved; but one must be saved (with no exceptions) in order to belong to the church. The church is not a vehicle of salvation. Making that claim is a major error of most cults such as Mormonism and Roman Catholicism. Each claims salvation comes through their church. In fact, salvation is for those outside the church and only then can one become a part of it.

Salvation has always been and still is the

same for both Jew and Gentile; but God's plans are different for Israel than for the church. Jews (like Gentiles) who believe in Christ prior to His Second Coming (when He makes Himself known to Israel and all Israel is saved) are in the church. Jews who only come to faith in Christ when He appears to rescue them in the midst of Armageddon will continue into the millennial kingdom on earth and Christ will reign over them from the throne of David. Many Gentiles will be saved at that time also, but "*all Israel shall be saved*" (Rom 11:26).

The Galatian problem remains (in varying degrees) within some so-called Hebrew-Christian or Messianic congregations today. There is often a tendency to imagine that a return to Jewish customs (even by Gentiles) makes for greater sanctity. Extrabiblical traditions are honored, for example in the Seder ceremony at Passover, as though inspired of God. Scripture alone must be our guide, to the exclusion of manmade traditions, which Christ condemned (Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:9-13), as did the apostles (Gal 1:13-14; Col 2:8; 1 Pt 1:18). Traditions developed over the centuries have led to great error within both Catholicism and Protestantism.

We must ever remember that Christ intended the church to be something new and separate from Israel. It would neither partake of nor interfere with God's promises to His earthly people, promises which will be fulfilled in their time. The church would be separate, too, from Israel's religious ordinances. Here, again, the cults have gone astray.

Mormonism, for example, pretends to have both an Aaronic and Melchisedec priesthood. Roman Catholicism claims to have a sacrificial priesthood that offers Christ continually as a sacrifice upon its altars. On the contrary, in the church every believer is a priest (1 Pt 2:9) and the sacrifices offered are "praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" and "to do good" (Heb 13:15-16).

In fact, there are no longer any propitiatory sacrifices offered for the forgiveness of sins because the church was made possible by the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. That sacrifice is never to be repeated because it paid the full penalty demanded by God's justice and made it possible for God to "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). Consequently, "there is no more offering for sin" (Heb 10:18).

Israel broke the covenant God made with her. She demonstrated that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in

his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). Her sacrificial system could not take away sin, but looked forward to the unique "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). The establishment of a "new covenant" with Israel (Jer 31:31) is foretold. Animal sacrifices had opened the way for the Jewish high priest into the earthly sanctuary which was patterned after the heavenly reality (Heb 9:1-10). When Christ died on the cross, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mk 15:38), ending the animal sacrifices. Now we have a "great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God" (Heb 4:14), who, "by his own blood...obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb 9:12, 24).

Israel was given a land on earth (Gn 12:1; 13:15; 15:18-21; 17:7-8; 26:3-4; 28:13-14; Lv 20:24, 25:23, etc.), her destiny is tied to it, and she will never cease to exist there (Jer 31:35-40). Numerous prophecies promise her restoration to her land, with the Messiah, upon His return, ruling her from the throne of David (2 Sm 7:10-16; 1 Kgs 9:5; Is 9:6-7; Ezk 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Lk 1:31-33, etc.). The promise is clear that God will pour out His Spirit upon His chosen people, after which they will never pollute His holy name again and He will never again hide His holy face from Israel (Ezk 39:7, 22, 27-29; Zec 13, 14).

Israel must endure forever (Jer 31:35-38) or the prophecies of the Bible and Christ's promises to her could not be fulfilled. Christ referred to the cities of Israel in existence at His Second Coming (Mt 10:23), proof enough that the church has not replaced her. As further proof (though not needed), Christ promised His disciples that they would rule over Israel with Him in His millennial kingdom (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30).

The church cannot fulfill the prophecies to Israel, never having belonged to a specific land nor having been cast out of it or returned to it. Rather, the church comes "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rv 5:9). The hope of the church is to be raptured to heaven (Jn 14:3; 1 Thes 4:16-17, etc.), where we stand before "the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10) and then are married to our Lord (Rv 19:7-9) and are eternally with Him wherever He is (Jn 14:3; 1 Thes 4:17).

That being the case, in love with our Bridegroom and longing to see Him face to face, let us hold the things of earth lightly and live for eternity. Let us please Him alone, not following men or organizations, by faith allowing our Head to nourish, sustain and direct us and to live His life through us to His glory. **TBC**

Quotable

There is no learned man but will confess that he hath much profited by reading controversies—his senses awakened, his judgment sharpened, and the truth which he holds more firmly established. All controversy being permitted, falsehood will appear more false, and truth the more true.

John Milton

Naturally, one can hardly expect a sermon on Micaiah [who stood up against the 400 false prophets of Israel] to be... popular....If such a prospect [one who would be like Micaiah] is reading this, God bless you. The odds will be four hundred to one, the diet may be bread and water, and the orders are: "...what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak"...[but] get ready for trouble! You will be despised ...[and] hated....You will report to Heavenly Headquarters and get your orders from the Main Office...[so] think it over. You had better mean business, else your ministry will be pathetic instead of prophetic.

Vance Havner

The Best of Vance Havner, p. 109

Show the world the fruits of Christianity, and it will applaud. Show it Christianity, and it will oppose it vigorously.

Watchman Nee

Q&A

Question: In your March newsletter you blasted Kenneth Copeland, John Wimber and the Vineyard churches, the Toronto blessing, the Pensacola revival, Benny Hinn, and the current prayer and fasting movement for revival in our land. This list followed, without any noticeable differentiation, a chronicle of Sun Myung Moon, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The logical conclusion of most would be that you see them all in the same light...false religions and cults led by false prophets. Would you please confirm, deny, or explain this since many Christians would have a problem putting Pensacola and Mormonism in the same category. Please print the question in its entirety. Thank you.

Answer: First of all, I take exception to your statement that I "blasted" Kenneth Copeland, et al. I simply quoted a few of their many false prophecies. I cannot understand why I am accused of "blasting" or "attacking" for quoting Billy Graham, Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller, Charles Colson, Bill Bright, or Hagin, Copeland, and Hinn. If you don't like my quotations, please take that up with those I quoted. Is it wrong to quote what someone said and which they still affirm? Should they and their followers not be glad that I have given wider distribution to their ideas?

In the article you cite, I quoted the warnings of Jesus concerning false prophets and gave a number of examples of false prophets from Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism, etc. I followed those with examples of false prophecies by the men you name. The prophecies of Copeland, Hinn, Wimber and the Vineyard "prophets" and of the Toronto and Pensacola "revivals" to which I referred are every bit as false as any other false prophecies I cited. False is false. Moreover, the false prophets who are looked up to among evangelicals are even more dangerous because they are heeded by multitudes who would not follow the false prophets within groups readily recognized as cults.

Are you defending the false prophecies of Copeland and Hinn which I cited? And these are just a small sampling! Do you really intend to defend false prophets? I hope not.

Did I put them in the same category as Mormons, JW's, et al.? Only as false prophets. Their heresies are a separate issue.

Question (composite of several on this subject): You claim to stand firmly against heresy, yet you spoke at John MacArthur's church in November at the ExCatholics for Christ (ECFC) conference. Isn't that hypocrisy? Specifically I refer to his heretical teaching on the blood of Christ. D.A. Waite (in his book *John MacArthur's Heresy on the Blood of Christ*) documents that MacArthur says it was "not His (Christ's) bleeding but His dying" that saves us and he "diminishes the Value of the 'blood' of the Passover Lamb, making its 'death' the issue in Exodus 12." Waite shows that "MacArthur denies that Christ's 'blood' is 'efficacious' in the

forgiveness of sins and in so many ways "denies the literalness of Christ's blood and spiritualizes 'blood' into meaning merely 'the violence and sacrificial character of His death.'" Please respond.

Answer: First of all, I would speak at the Vatican if invited to do so and allowed to state the gospel clearly in contrast to the false gospel of Roman Catholicism. John MacArthur did not even convene the conference; his church facilities were contracted by ECFC and he was one of the invited speakers, as I was. Neither John nor his church told me what to say or put any limitation upon me.

Secondly, in my opinion, the accusations that have been leveled against John MacArthur concerning the blood of Christ exemplify the epitome of false charges and misrepresentation. There almost seems (though I do not want to attribute that to Waite) an unwillingness to understand what he is attempting to say. May the Lord deliver us at The Berean Call from ever falling into such misunderstanding of the true intentions and beliefs of those whom we critique!

For example, in the book to which you refer, Waite writes (pp 11-12, caps and emphasis in original): "MacArthur's Position That Christ's SHED BLOOD Was NOT 'EFFICACIOUS' TO CLEANSE FROM SIN Is in Line With the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PERVERSION. Mary Baker Eddy, in her *SCIENCE AND HEALTH WITH KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES*, 25:6-9, stated:

The MATERIAL BLOOD of Jesus WAS NO MORE EFFICACIOUS TO CLEANSE FROM SIN when it was SHED UPON THE ACCURSED TREE than when flowing in his veins as he went about his Father's business.

MacArthur is drinking at the same Satanic cesspool of doctrinal HERESY as was Mary Baker Eddy in his HERESY ON CHRIST'S BLOOD!"

In fact, MacArthur's position is the opposite of Mary Baker Eddy's: he distinguishes between Christ's blood flowing in His veins (which was not efficacious), and shed on the Cross for our sins (which was efficacious)—the very distinction which Eddy rejects. Waite has MacArthur backwards!

What MacArthur is saying is quite simple and biblical: that there was nothing in the blood of Christ itself that would

cleansed from sin; it had to be poured out in death on the Cross as the sacrifice for our sins. If Christ had given a transfusion of His blood to everyone in the world it would have saved no one. If *part* of Christ's blood had been shed on the Cross, but He had not died, His blood would have saved no one. It would not have sufficed if some blood of the pass-over lamb had been extracted and sprinkled on the door of an Israelite's home but the lamb had remained alive.

MacArthur is not denying the many scriptures which refer to the blood of Christ ("the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28); "in whom we have redemption through his blood" (Eph 1:7); "having made peace through the blood of his cross" (Eph 1:20); "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood" (Heb 13:12); etc., etc. He is simply saying that all of these verses imply *the shedding* of Christ's blood in death, without which there could be no peace, redemption, sanctification, etc.

Yes, MacArthur says that the blood flowing through Christ's veins was the blood of a man. It was not some special "God blood," for God has no blood. Was His body a special "God body"? Obviously not. Then why His blood? His flesh and blood were those of a fully human being. At the same time, He was fully God, and that is how we understand Paul's statement above.

On page 42 Waite writes, "Does John MacArthur fit into Hebrews 10:29? Has he, in your mind, (having read this entire booklet up to this point), "*counted the BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHEREWITH HE WAS SANCTIFIED AN UNHOLY THING*"? I firmly believe that he HAS!" To support that accusation, Waite quotes Kenneth S. Wuest that the Greek text of Hebrews 10:29 means "a DELIBERATE, CONTEMPTUOUS REJECTION of the Messianic sacrifice of the Son of God." It is unconscionable to make such a charge against John MacArthur.

On the contrary, MacArthur believes in the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross and in the efficacy of His blood shed there for our sins. He doesn't believe in the efficacy of Christ's blood if not poured out in death as the sacrifice for sin. Hebrews 9:22 is very clear: "...and without *shedding of blood* is no

remission." It would be heresy to believe otherwise.

Question: I started a study on the "bride of Christ" and am very bothered as to why Christians use the term! Since the primary example of the church is "the body of Christ"...how can the Lord's very own body be feminine when He is masculine? To be fair, Mr. Hunt, how could a person not steeped in religious tradition ever get the idea we are Christ's bride?

Answer: If the church is not the bride and thus the wife of Christ, then who is? To whom (if not the church) do such verses as the following refer: "for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rv 19:7), and "the Spirit and the bride say, Come....Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rv 22:17, 20)? If the bride here is not the bride of Christ, why would she be longing for His return; and whose bride is she if not His? She is called the bride because she has not yet been married to Him.

John the Baptist said of Christ, "he that hath the bride is the bridegroom" (Jn 3:29). The bride, clearly, belongs to Christ and will be married to Him in heaven (Rv 19:7-9). Who else is in heaven at this time to be married to Christ except the saints of all ages who have been caught up to heaven at the Rapture? That the bride is composed of such saints is clear, for she is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," and the "fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (v 8). Is it not the church that is expecting Christ and longing to be taken to His Father's house in heaven (Jn 14:2-3)? That promise is for none other.

That the church is the body of Christ (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12; Col 1:15) as you admit is all the more reason to believe that it is also His bride. Man and woman, when married, become "one flesh" (Eph 5:31). In the very next verse Paul writes, "This (being one flesh) is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." As the wife is with her husband, so the church is one flesh with Christ.

This entire passage (Eph 5:22-33) is about the relationship of husband and wife and it is likened to Christ and His church. You say that Christ's body "can't be feminine when He is masculine." You are separating

Christ from His body. The "one flesh" which husband and wife become is neither male nor female but something new comprised of both of them, a "mystery." So the body of Christ of which He is the head is comprised of Christ and His bride. It cannot be separated from Him but is one with Him and is neither male nor female. Indeed, because of our union with Christ in one body, Paul writes that in the church "there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ" (Gal 3:28).

The Gospel That Saves

Dave Hunt

To gain wider acceptance of the original ECT (“Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,” March 29, 1994), nineteen evangelicals (Bill Bright, Charles Colson, Richard Land, Max Lucado, Os Guinness, J.I. Packer, et al.) and fifteen Catholics (Jesuit Avery Dulles, Peter Kreeft, Ralph Martin, Richard John Neuhaus, et al.) have now signed ECT2. It would have us believe that evangelicals and Catholics agree on the gospel.

On the one hand, the document is without significance. *First of all*, the fifteen Catholic signers represent neither their Church nor its 1 billion members. There is a wide range of belief. Many Catholic priests and nuns and leading theologians are into every New Age heresy from mind science to Hinduism and Buddhism.

Secondly, the official teaching of the Church of Rome (which claims to be infallible and therefore cannot repent of its errors), and the daily practice of Catholics (who look to their Church for salvation, however it defines and offers it) are untouched by ECT2 and remain as far from the biblical gospel as ever.

Thirdly, the document itself admits that many “interrelated questions that require further and urgent exploration” remain. They include among others “the meaning of baptismal regeneration [a Catholic is “born again” in infant baptism and there is no salvation without baptism]; the Eucharist [Christ is being perpetually immolated on Catholic altars as an ongoing *sacrifice* for sin in denial of the full efficacy of His once-for-all sacrifice on the cross], and sacramental grace [“the merits and graces” Christ won on the cross are “conferred gradually and continually” through the sacraments, i.e., salvation is an ongoing process rather than an accomplished fact]; the historic uses of the language of justification as it relates to imputed and transformative righteousness [the Catholic must acquire enough righteousness to merit heaven and is always in danger of losing it, thus rejecting the truth that God “justifieth the *ungodly*” on the merits of Christ (Rom 4:5)]; diverse understandings of merit, reward [for the Catholic salvation is

assisted by works]; purgatory [in addition to Christ’s suffering on the cross, one must personally suffer for sin in order to be purified for heaven], and indulgences [one can suffer for others, and the wearing of a medal or scapular or saying Hail Marys or a Mass said in honor of the dead can reduce purgatorial suffering]; Marian devotion and the assistance of the saints in the life of salvation....” Every one of these points denies the very unity which is professed by ECT2!

On the other hand, the document is a valuable aid to Satan in his preparation of the world and a false church for Antichrist. It gives the appearance of agreement when there is none. ECT2 creates compromise by pretending that the issues separating evangelicals and Catholics are not serious, when actually they mark the divide between

...but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 1:7

heaven and hell. Typical of the contradictions inherent in the document is the statement, “we commit ourselves to evangelizing everyone....Evangelicals must speak the gospel to Catholics and Catholics to Evangelicals...‘working hard to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’...” If evangelicals and Catholics are both saved and united in the Spirit, then what does “evangelizing” mean?

The Judaizers of Galatians could have signed a similar document. In fact, theirs would have had a much shorter list of issues that “require further and urgent exploration”: the relationship of the Law to salvation. The Judaizers affirmed that Christ died for our sins, but they added that to be saved one must also “be circumcised, and keep the law” (Acts 15:1, 5, 24). Instead of signing an agreement with the Judaizers as though their heresy were merely something for “further...exploration,” Paul cursed them for preaching another gospel (Gal 1:6-8). But ECT2 makes it seem that the things upon which we differ are inconsequential. ECT2 is an even more deceptive document than its predecessor!

Paul said that “the gospel of Christ...is the power of God *unto salvation* to every

one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). He also called it “the gospel...by which also *ye are saved*” (1 Cor 15:1-2); and “the gospel of *your salvation*” (Eph 1:13). Clearly, from these and other verses, salvation comes *only* through *believing the gospel*. Christ told His disciples to go into “all the world, and preach the gospel” (Mk 16:15), a gospel which the Bible precisely defines.

Salvation has nothing to do with a church, whether evangelical or Catholic. It comes by the unchangeable, “everlasting” (Rv 14:6) “gospel of God” (Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thes 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Tm 1:11; 1 Pt 4:17). Salvation comes on God’s terms and by His grace and we negotiate the gospel neither with God nor with one another. “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn 4:14). Salvation is a work of God and His Son. We either believe it or reject it.

We don’t “dialogue” about it.

It is also called the “gospel of Christ,” (Mk 1:1; Rom 1:16; 15:19; 1 Cor 9:12, 18; 2 Cor 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; 1 Thes 3:2; 2 Thes 1:8). He is the Savior, and salvation is His work, not ours, as the angels said: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:11). Paul specifies the gospel

that saves: “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4). “I am the door,” said Christ: “by *me* if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (Jn 10:9).

The gospel contains nothing about baptism, good works, church membership or attendance, tithing, sacraments or rituals, diet or clothing. If we add *anything* to the gospel, we have perverted it and thus come under Paul’s anathema in Galatians 1:8,9!

The gospel is all about what Christ has done. It says nothing about what Christ must yet do, because the work of our redemption is finished. “Christ *died* for our sins.” He isn’t still dying, as Catholicism maintains. Christ triumphantly declared, “It is *finished*” (Jn 19:30)! Nor does it say anything about what we must do, because we can do nothing. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Ti 3:5); “for by grace are ye saved, through faith...the gift of God [is] not of works, lest any man should boast...” (Eph 2:8-9).

Instead of works, the gospel requires faith. It is the power of God unto salvation to those who *believe*. “Now to him that

worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4:5)...“that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16).

We could hardly make the Catholic position clearer than by quoting New York’s Cardinal O’Connor: “Church teaching is that I don’t know, at any given moment, what my eternal future will be. I can hope, pray, do my very best—but I still don’t know. Pope John Paul II doesn’t know absolutely that he will go to heaven, nor does Mother Teresa of Calcutta...” (*The New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1990, B4). Nor does the average Catholic know, because his Church has taught him that he *can’t* know he is saved. Official Catholic dogma could not be changed no matter how many ECTs were signed—even by the Pope himself.

Christ says, “I give unto them [My sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish” (Jn 10:28). Catholicism rejects that offer and instead offers continual installments of grace toward eternal life through the priesthood and sacraments of the Church, through wearing scapulars, earning indulgences, saying Hail Marys and praying to the saints. Such a pathway to heaven makes Christ a liar.

The gospel is a two-edged sword. It declares, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” The same verse also says, “and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn 3:36). Right here we come to the most difficult part of the gospel to accept: that those who do not believe it are eternally lost—no matter what good works they do.

The reasons for that fact are grounded in both God’s love and His justice. God loves us enough to correct us and to stand firm on what He says. Tragically, many parents mistake sentimentality for love and do not mean what they say, and thereby train their children in disobedience. “If you do that once more, I’ll spank you [or some other threat],” says Mommy. The child does it again and nothing happens. What Mommy says means nothing. But God says what He means and means what He says.

God’s justice requires that the infinite penalty for sin must be paid. In payment we would be separated from God forever, so He became a man through the virgin birth to pay the penalty for us. No one can complain against God. He has proved His love by doing all He could for our salvation. He has himself paid the penalty and on that basis can be both “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26).

Christ pleaded in the Garden, “if it be possible [i.e., if there is any other way mankind can be saved], let this cup pass from me” (Mt 26:39). We know that there is no other way or God would not have required His beloved Son to bear the full brunt of His wrath against sin. That men nailed Christ to the cross would only condemn us. But on the cross, when man was doing his worst to his Creator, Christ paid the penalty for our sins in full.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation” (Heb 2:3)? There is no escape because there is no other way of salvation! Only if we accept that payment on our behalf can we be saved. “[T]here is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we *must* be saved” (Acts 4:12); “what *must* I do to be saved?...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:30-31).

To “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” includes *who He is* and *what He has done*.

...for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!
1 Corinthians 9:16

Jesus said, “...Ye are from beneath; I am from above...if ye believe not that I AM [this is God’s name, Jahweh], ye shall die in your sins” (Jn 8:23-24). Jesus himself says we must believe that He is God, for He is; and no one less than God could save us. We must believe that the sinless One “died for our sins,” and was buried; and that He rose bodily from the grave. Only by believing this gospel are we saved. So says God’s Word.

Why couldn’t even a Mother Teresa get to heaven by good works? Because we are all sinners; and because once we have broken one of God’s commandments we “[are] guilty of all” (Jas 2:10); and “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rom 3:20). Keeping the law perfectly from now on could never make up for having already broken it.

For God to grant salvation by any other means than faith in Christ alone would be an insult to the One whom the Father insisted had to endure His wrath as the sacrifice for sin. Furthermore, God would be breaking His own code of justice and going back on His Word. No, even God himself could not save earth’s most notable “saint.” Christ’s blood avails only for repentant sinners.

In expressing concern in these pages for many heresies, we have tried to confine

ourselves to those which impact the gospel and the salvation of souls. It is because the apostles in Jerusalem “walked not uprightly according to the truth *of the gospel*” that Paul rebuked them (Gal 2:14). Tragically, the gospel is now being challenged and compromised by leading evangelicals! Yes, evangelical leaders who preach the gospel also compromise it. On January 21, 1997 Larry King interviewed Billy Graham on his program:

KING: What do you think of the other [churches]...like Mormonism? Catholicism? Other faiths within the Christian concept?

GRAHAM: Oh, I think I have a wonderful fellowship with all of them. For example....

KING: You’re comfortable with Salt Lake City. You’re comfortable with the Vatican?

GRAHAM: I am very comfortable with the Vatican. I have been to see the Pope several times. In fact, the night — the day that he was inaugurated, made Pope, I was preaching in his cathedral in Krakow. I was his guest...[and] when he was over here...in Columbia, South Carolina...he invited me on the platform to speak with him. I would give one talk, and he would give the other...but I was two-thirds of the way to China....

KING: You like this Pope?

GRAHAM: I like him very much.... He and I agree on almost everything.

KING: Are you...are you comfortable with Judaism?

GRAHAM: Very comfortable....In New York, they have had me to the Rabbinical Council to...talk with them and Rabbi Tannenbaum, who was a great friend...he gave me more advice and more counsel, and I depended on him constantly, theologically and spiritually and in every way....

KING: Mr. Graham, if you had 30 seconds during the halftime at the Super Bowl, what would you tell the audience?*

GRAHAM: I would tell them to...think about another game...the game of life, and to be sure they’re on God’s side, that God loves them and God is interested in them, and they can pray to God, and He’ll answer their prayers.”

Billy Graham has preached the gospel, souls have been saved, but on this occasion he offered a false gospel without Christ or the Cross—as he did when interviewed by Robert Schuller on “The Hour of Power” some months later. Paul said he had been “put in trust with the gospel” (1 Thes 2:4). So have each of us. Let us be certain that we keep that trust for the sake of the lost and in honor of our Lord who paid the full price for man’s redemption! **TBC**

Quotable

Men who speak for God never merge into the fog around them. Noah stood alone in a civilization of culture and progress. His contemporaries must have laughed at him as an eccentric who was... looking for the world to end. Elijah stood alone among the priests of Baal and the stooges who ate at Jezebel's table....

True prophets are solitary people; eagles do not fly in flocks. It is not easy to be a Lone Dissenter. When the messenger was sent for Micaiah he must have said, in effect, "The clergy have agreed, and you had better make it unanimous....This is a good gravy train and you had better ride it. This is the mood of the hour and you had better get with it."

The same subtle pressures today would persuade preachers to get in step with the times and ride the wave of the future. What we need are more preachers out of step with the times, more odd prophets like Micaiah....The pulpit is not a platform from which to boost the projects of men to bring in a false millennium....

Vance Havner
The Best of Vance Havner

Q&A

Question: Enclosed is a copy of *Native Reflections*, newsletter of the Wesleyan Native American Ministries, Fall 1997. What I read in it was disturbing to me. I am a full-blood Indian and I was saved and delivered from all these false beliefs that these men are now advocating. Could you respond to this in your newsletter?

Answer: The newsletter refers favorably to "the sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe" which according to Lakota tradition (now embraced by Phil Jackson, Chicago Bull's coach, who rejected his Christian upbringing) came from "the White Buffalo Calf Woman [who] brought a holy message to the people...on how to live in ways that respect and honor the interconnectedness of all things...." All things are not interconnected, nor did White Buffalo Calf Woman bring a "holy message." This myth is an unholy message of false gods. The newsletter condones paganism in order not to offend Native culture.

The newsletter mentions "Rev. Richard Twiss" (a Lakota Indian) and his concern

that native Americans (also known as First Nation people) have rejected the gospel of Christ because it has not been presented to them "within the contexts of their spiritual, traditional, and ceremonial life experiences." But for the gospel to be presented in the context of paganism and idolatry is to confuse and pervert the truth of Christ. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of God's truth being presented in the Old Testament in the context of the paganism all around Israel, nor in the New Testament in the context of apostate Judaism or in the context of the false religions of the pagan Roman Empire. Rather, the gospel opposes these religions.

The emphasis throughout the newsletter is upon the alleged need to honor "the God-given culture and way of life of the First Nation people." Typical is the statement that "It is time to affirm the Native American culture and way of life." Twiss is in the forefront of what is described as a "new movement God is setting in motion ...[a] new and exciting era of evangelism among the First Nation people...."

But Native American culture with its superstition and idolatry is no more "God-given" than is Western culture with its high-tech hedonism. Native drumming is no better than hard rock. The Bible says "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23). Native Americans were involved in sinful practices long before the white man came along, as was the white man before coming to America. Furthermore, Native culture is loaded with occult beliefs and practices, including the worship of rocks, trees and sky and of the spirits that allegedly live in these things: the very perversion Romans condemns—worship of the creation instead of the Creator.

Twiss is touted for having "worked with International Bible Society [and] Promise Keepers...[and] is a consultant on racial reconciliation for Promise Keepers." It is also stated that "Promise Keepers asked Christian Native American men to host the 'Standing In The Gap' gathering in Washington [D.C.] on October 4." Those who watched the event noted participation by a Native American in full headdress (an Indian war bonnet). Wearing the eagle feathers has a pagan and anti-Christian religious (not just cultural) meaning. Joseph Epes Brown, biographer of Sioux medicineman Black Elk, explains:

The Indian actually identifies himself with, or becomes, the quality or principle of the being or thing which comes to him in a vision, whether it be a beast, bird, one of the elements, or really any aspect

of creation. In order that this "power" may never leave him, he always carries with him some material form representing the animal or object from which he has received his "power"....

In wearing the eagle-feathered "war bonnet," the wearer actually becomes the eagle, which is to say that he identifies himself, his real Self, with *Wakan-Tanka*[the Great Spirit which Wanbli Galeshka (the Spotted Eagle) represents]. (Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 7,45).

The newsletter declares, "When we come to Christ, Jesus does not ask us to abandon one sin-stained culture only to embrace another sin-stained culture." The newsletter complains that missionaries to Native Americans made the mistake of calling the latter's culture pagan and trying to get them to adopt the white man's culture.

It is wrong to impose "white man's culture" on anyone. It is essential, however, to abandon paganism. Oddly, the flawed thesis of the newsletter is exposed in its own explanation of the difference between Indian culture and Western culture: "A Native American worldview sees life with God and the supernatural as something that surrounds them all the time...their sacred ways are felt to be inseparable from the ordinary....In Western culture's compartmentalized view of life (sacred vs. secular, natural vs. spiritual), religion is a *segment* of life, where for Native people it is a *way* of life." (Emphasis in original)

Thus the newsletter admits that Native culture is inextricably linked with native religion. Native religion is pagan and it permeates native culture. Clearly, then, the pagan elements in the culture must be abandoned if one is to come to Christ.

Abraham was called out of paganism. The Old Testament makes a clear distinction between the paganism of the nations surrounding them and the holiness to which Israel was called. Israel was condemned for trying to mix its God-given worship with the idolatry of its neighbors. There is never a hint that any culture or religion or way of life of any peoples outside of Israel was "God-given," as the newsletter claims for Native American culture/religion.

The book of Acts records the gospel being given to various cultures and always there is a clear break from paganism: "...how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God" (1 Thes 1:9). There is never a suggestion that

Christianity was to adapt itself to any pagan culture, as the quoted newsletter demands by way of special respect for Native Americans.

Here we see just one more problem with Promise Keepers. We praise God when the gospel is preached and 1 million men fall on their faces in Washington, D.C. to repent; but there is confusion because of compromise. Not only does PK embrace Roman Catholicism as the true gospel, but in its zeal for “racial reconciliation” it embraces elements of Native American paganism as well.

Question: I have forwarded a new book to you that is sure to shake the foundations of evangelicalism. It is called *How Wide the Divide: a Mormon and Evangelical in Conversation* by Craig L. Blomberg (evangelical professor at Denver Seminary) and Stephen E. Robinson (Mormon). In my opinion, this book could never have been written were it not for the years of ecumenical compromise with Rome. The book was published by InterVarsity Press. I would appreciate your review of it.

Answer: The book is a futile exercise because the Mormon Church, like the Roman Catholic Church and other cults, allows no questioning of its official doctrines. The opinions expressed by Stephen E. Robinson, the Mormon in the dialogue, are just one man’s opinion and have no weight either with his Church or with the other 9 million Mormons in the world.

There is no question that the hierarchical dogmatism and authoritarianism of the Mormon Church is comparable to that of Roman Catholicism. “Dialogue” at the level in this book is *meaningless*. As the “Ward Teachers’ Message” for June, 1945 said, “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan, it is God’s plan....When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. God works in no other way.” So why devote a book to the opinions of one Mormon who admits that he only speaks for himself?

Nor is there any question about the official doctrines of the Mormon Church. The Mormon “God” is a man (he still has a physical body, as Joseph Smith, who saw him, testified) who as a sinner was redeemed by another “Jesus” on another planet and who has a hierarchy of “Gods” (also exalted men) over him. Their “Jesus” is the spirit brother of Lucifer (of whom we are all half-brothers and sisters) and is not God from all eternity but came to this earth to get a

body in order to become a “God.” That body was formed when their “God” came to this earth and with his physical body had sex with Mary. Eternal life to the Mormon is exaltation to godhood, and, far from being the gift of God’s grace, takes much effort and eons of time to achieve—an ambition supposedly shared by every true Mormon male. Mormon women can only hope to become goddesses consigned to eternal pregnancy as they give birth to spirit beings who will eventually people another planet with another Adam and Eve, a fall into sin, and another “Jesus.” It is a process which has been going on forever and will continue ad infinitum, ad absurdum.

Lately Mormonism has put on a new mask to pose as just another Christian denomination. Its commercials on TV and newspaper ads are masterpieces of deception. We have quoted the Mormon Easter ad: “During the Easter season we again rejoice with all of Christendom, and gratefully commemorate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ....At this sacred season we solemnly testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. We know that He lives! We know that because he lives, we too shall live again!”

It sounds so biblical, but Mormonism has its own peculiar and anti-Christian meaning for each of these words. Nevertheless, Bromberg and Robinson conclude their book on page 195 with an impressive list of 12 “foundational propositions of the Christian gospel” upon which they both agree. In fact there is no agreement—yet the latest Barna Poll lists 26 percent of Mormons as born-again Christians. It is the same problem as ECT and ECT2 all over again—assuming an agreement which doesn’t exist by reason of different meanings for key words and concepts. The book pretends that because similar language is used the meaning is the same. Both authors surely know that is not the case.

The book in itself would not be worth discussing were it not for the endorsements. That is what is shocking. Ron Enroth, who ought to know better, is quoted on the front cover: “This is a landmark book!” Gordon R. Lewis of Denver Theological Seminary says, “this book is a giant step toward better understanding of some influential contemporary Evangelicals and Mormons. All can learn from this model of respectful dialogue....” (If so, Paul’s problem was that he failed to obey Christ’s command to “go into all the world and dialogue” and mistakenly thought he was to preach the gospel!)

Richard J. Mouw, president of Fuller Seminary, says, “The dialogue between Evangelicals and Mormons is long overdue. I hope this much-needed, fascinating and important book gets widely read in both communities.” Doug Groothuis of Denver Seminary is a bit more guarded: “...this significant book respectfully addresses many of the crucial points of contention between Mormons and Evangelical Christians in a way that avoids both hasty polemics and superficial agreement.” But his commendation on the back cover will lead many astray. Furthermore, the book *is* characterized by the very “superficial agreement” which he says it avoids.

One is reminded of Peter Kreeft’s book, *Ecumenical Jihad*, which we commented upon in part in April ’97. In it (p 96) Kreeft (one of the Catholic signers of ECT and ECT2) has Confucius “in the outskirts of Heaven, the place you call Purgatory....” He is God’s “prophet” on the way to heaven, the Catholic way, of course. Buddha and Muhammad are both already in heaven (pp 96-111), having been God’s prophets all along, and many of their followers (Muhammad hopes “most” of his “pious followers” will make it - p 105) are also crypto-Christians (Pope John Paul II’s description of his close buddy, Gorbachev, an atheist) who will be around the throne of the Lamb whom they rejected. Kreeft portrays Muhammad (because of his veneration of Mary and her mention 34 times in the Koran) as being “closer in spirit to the touchstone...of Catholic truth” (which Kreeft equates with Christianity) than most Protestants.

Kreeft suggests a “hidden Christ of Hinduism” (pp 156-160) and of other pagan religions; and that pagans and even atheists and agnostics may be secret believers in Jesus without knowing it (pp 156-161). And finally, he opts for Teilhard de Chardin’s idea that the transubstantiation effected by Catholic priests in the Eucharist is inexorably transforming the entire universe into one giant Cosmic Eucharistic Christ (p 158) and that ultimately everyone, including even evangelicals, will be united in the Eucharist and Mary (pp 145-155).

That J.I. Packer and Chuck Colson give their enthusiastic stamp of approval on the back cover tells us much about them that we feared but didn’t want to believe, about both ECTs and other evangelical signers, and about the apostasy that is gathering momentum.

Back to the Bible "Code"?

Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon

Many of us who love the Bible find it very easy to get excited over the possibility that a recent discovery might add more confirmation to our confidence that God's Word is just that: His inspired, specific revelation to mankind. Whether we learn of an archaeological find such as the recent unearthing of an ancient artifact supporting the historical reality of the biblical King David, or hear about the latest scientific evidence confirming the accuracy of information given in certain verses of Scripture, we are greatly encouraged in our personal faith and very often enthusiastic about sharing that evidence with unbelievers.

Since there are multitudes of Bible-believing Christians who delight in each new support for the Scriptures, it should be no surprise that there is great interest in a current attempt to prove that God is the divine author of the Bible. That interest is being stimulated by a number of bestselling books and articles appearing in major periodicals dealing with finding hidden messages in the first five books of the Bible. The primary claim is that God not only communicated through the normal text of the Scriptures, but that He designed the information in Genesis through Deuteronomy so that encoded words, hidden for more than three millennia, would be discovered by a code which could only be deciphered through the technology of computers. The result would be irrefutable scientific proof of God's hand in the Bible. We stated in past *TBC* newsletters (9/96; 2/97) that if the claim held up under valid scrutiny, we could see "no alternative but to believe God encoded the Torah...."

Here is basically how the Bible code works: Selected words are searched for by computer in a chosen version (supposedly only a Masoretic text will work) of the Torah (Pentateuch). The method uses a skip code commonly referred to as equidistant letter-sequencing (ELS), which requires the separation of the searched-for letters of the key word or words by an equal number of letters. The search scans the continuous Hebrew letters from Genesis 1:1 through Deuteronomy. Various ELS codes are

assigned until the key word is found. For example, in searching for a specific word, every fifth letter throughout the text is examined to find the letter of the word in the correct spelling sequence. If that skip sequence of every fifth letter fails to discover all the necessary letters of the key word, other equal letter-spacing searches are tried. Code sequences run from single digits to numbers in the thousands.

One author claims to have found the name of the assassinated Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in the Book of Deuteronomy by using a separation of 4,772 letters between each consonant.¹ The Hebrew text used has no vowels, therefore they must be supplied arbitrarily by the searcher. So what has taken place by computer is the selection of the Hebrew letter for "Y," followed by 4,772 consonant letters before the selection of the next key

Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning...

Isaiah 48:16

Hebrew letter for "t," which is followed by another 4,772 consonants ending at the next key letter, and so on until all the consonants (y,t,z,h,k,r,b,n) of the name are selected. Those eight consonants, by the way, are spread over 22 chapters of Deuteronomy. Then, by adding the necessary vowels to complete the word being sought, you come up with the name Yitzhak Rabin.

The modern "code" work was introduced by three Israelis: Doron Witztum, Eliyahu Rips, and Yoav Rosenberg. Witztum is said to be the world's leading code researcher. Their work was first published in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* (1988) and was updated and republished in *Statistical Science* (1994), both prestigious professional journals. Michael Drosnin, a journalist, then popularized the "code" and made many sensational claims concerning its predictive qualities, in a 1997 Simon & Schuster book titled *The Bible Code*. Numerous Christian authors are enthusiastically using the "code" to support basic faith in Christ and in the Bible as God's Word.

The fact that *Yeshua Shemi* ("Yeshua is My Name") is found encoded in Isaiah 53

and *Dam Yeshua* ("the blood of Yeshua") appears in Leviticus has been hailed by some evangelicals as the greatest discovery and most convincing proof ever revealed. Unfortunately, researchers have subsequently demonstrated that using the same methodology, "the blood of Mohammed" and even "the blood of [David] Koresh" are also found in Leviticus and many additional times throughout the Torah. (Mohammed is found 2,328 times, Krishna 104 times, and Koresh 2,729 times in the Torah, using skip sequences up to 1,000 letters.) Even Buddha is found in Genesis and Lenin and "Rev. Moon" in Daniel. Moreover, the "code" is being used by some rabbis to prove that Jesus was a false Messiah: *Yeshua* and *Mechashif* (sorcerer) and *Nabi Shekr* (false prophet) are found in the Torah with identical skip sequences and even overlapping.

If the above were not enough to raise a red flag, growing numbers of mathematicians, statisticians and scientists are disputing the validity of the "code." There is even disagreement among those who favor it. Ironically, Eliyahu Rips (a respected mathematics professor) has denounced Drosnin's book. In fact, Drosnin pulls the rug out from under his own book with this closing statement: "Is the Bible code...warning us...of a very real danger? There is no way to know. The code may be neither 'right' nor 'wrong.'" So where does that leave us?!

Many top statisticians and mathematicians are coming forward to denounce the Bible "code." For example, Shlomo Sternberg, member of the National Academy of Science and holder of the George Putnam Chair in Pure and Applied Mathematics at Harvard University, calls Drosnin's book "complete nonsense."² Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor of Old Testament Daniel Block accuses Drosnin of turning the Bible into another "Delphic Oracle...ambiguous, able to tell you anything you are looking for." Ronald S. Hendel, with a Ph.D. from Harvard (Hebrew Book Review editor for *Bible Review*), calls Drosnin's book "a journalistic hoax." Physicist David E. Thomas applied the Bible-code technique to Genesis (KJV) and found 5,812 encoded "UFOs" with dozens hovering close to or flying through the hidden word "Roswell." Thomas (in agreement with other experts) claims that with the right approach one can find anything in any

sizable piece of literature.

Although, like many interested individuals, we lack the necessary expertise in mathematics, computer science, Hebrew, cryptography, and other fields pertinent to an evaluation of all the present claims made for the Bible code, we are not so uninformed that we can't recognize some obvious problems. If God encoded the Torah more than 3,000 years ago for the generation whose technology could decipher it, what version do we decode? The claim by the most prominent decoders is that God encoded the original, and the version they used is no different.

Michael Drosnin asserts, "All Bibles in the original Hebrew language that now exist are *the same letter for letter*."³ This is simply not true. There are many spelling variations (and thus variations in letters) among the various Hebrew manuscripts. For example, while there are no significant *textual* differences that could change meanings between the Isaiah manuscript found with the Dead Sea scrolls and other later manuscripts, there are some significant *letter* differences. This is critical, because any spelling differences which developed since the original allegedly "encoded" version was inspired by God, though they do not change the meaning of the text, create havoc for the alleged "code" as presumably placed in the original manuscript. And no one has a copy of that original.

Another major obstacle to the validity of the Bible code is this: If God indeed placed hidden messages in the Torah for the purpose of substantiating His Word as being of supernatural origin, it must be demonstrated that results produced by the Bible code method (or any other verifiable method for that matter) are beyond the capacity of man, and absolutely unique to the Bible. That is a critical point in *proving* that God has done the encoding and that the cryptic messages are His. If comparable results (re content and statistics) could be produced using the same code method on other sources, obviously the claim of divine involvement and uniqueness (on that basis) would not stand.

Since the initial excitement over *The Bible Code*, applications of the skip-code sequence to secular books have produced results of significance equal to that of the Torah code research. For example, the Hebrew translation of *War and Peace* produced more than 50 "Chanukah-related words encoded in the text."⁴ *War and Peace* is an excellent piece of literature, but hardly of divine origin. The ELS method was also used in an effort to show that the Bible-code-claimed revelation of the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin was *not* supernaturally encrypted. The

researcher *using the same method* found "13 'predicted' assassinations of public figures, several of them prime ministers or presidents or their equivalents" in the novel *Moby Dick*.⁵ There is mounting evidence which indicates that when the Bible-code method is applied to any sufficiently long document, *any* sought-after message can be produced. Those are not the sort of results that would impress today's skeptical generation. In fact, the principal fruit of the Bible code phenomenon seems to be confusion.

Here the axiom well applies: Something that can prove anything, proves nothing.

It now seems clear that enough questions have been raised by competent experts (which we are not) to create serious doubt as to the "code's" validity. Our earlier willingness to go along with the "code" was based upon the assumption that it was founded upon irrefutable mathematics. That now seems clearly not to be the case. There are

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

Deuteronomy 30:11

enough qualified experts who claim to be able to refute the "code" to cause us to back away from giving it any credence.

The fact that the experts are in disagreement frees us to arrive at certain conclusions which we did not assert so long as there was "irrefutable mathematical support" for the "code." That support is now in disarray. The whole thing turns out to be too complicated to evidence the hand of God at work. As one secular authority (Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, with expertise in mathematics and physics and advanced degrees from MIT and Harvard), who has thoroughly investigated the "code" and wants to believe it, has said, "To be fair, I myself can't be 100 percent certain of the results."⁶ God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33).

The Bible, as it repeatedly states, is "sharper than any twoedged sword" (Heb 4:12) and sufficient in itself (2 Tm 3:16-17). The Bible is filled with proof that it is God's Word, proof which we have dealt with in the past and won't enumerate again in this article. Its prophecies concerning Israel and her Messiah provide irrefutable proof that the Bible is God's Word, that Israel is His people and land, and that Jesus is the Savior. We need no further proofs, but we have more. Many of these are presented in my [Dave's] 1996 book, *In Defense of the Faith*. And for those of us (and all who have gone before)

who open our hearts to Christ, we have the witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have come to know God personally through our Lord Jesus Christ and need nothing further.

Contrary to the complexity of the Bible codes, God hides His truth "from the wise and prudent" and reveals it "unto babes" (Lk 10:21). It would therefore be out of character for God to provide a "proof" so complicated that one would have to be an expert in mathematics and statistics and computers and cryptography in order to understand it—and still find oneself in disagreement with other equally qualified experts.

Nor is there any hint in the Bible of any hidden code. Rather, the Bible itself declares that God's truth is revealed *only* by the Holy Spirit and to His sheep, not to mathematicians and statisticians any more than to psychologists. The Bible code smacks of elitism. Like the cultic claim that only the first presidency in Salt Lake City (for Mormons), the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society in Brooklyn (for Jehovah's Witnesses) or the magisterium of bishops, cardinals and the pope (for Roman Catholics) can interpret the Bible, the "code" leaves the average person at the mercy of presumed experts.

The fact is that even if the "code" could be proven and the experts all in agreement, it would offer "evidence" which the Bible says would be meaningless. We are told that the most spectacular truth one could ask for—someone returning from the dead to tell what hell is like—would not be convincing to those who would not heed what God has spoken in His Word (Lk 16:27-31). The same would seem to apply to the much less spectacular Bible code. Thus it is worthless.

What we need is sound doctrine, solid teaching from God's Word—a return to the Bible, not to the Bible code. Many are now spending much time and energy chasing a hidden code to the neglect of what the Bible clearly teaches. May the Lord renew in all of our hearts a love for His Word, the diligence to study it, wisdom to rightly divide it, and the passion to live it and communicate to others the truth which sets free (Jn 8:31-32).

We may be certain that all of the examples we have of living by God's Word (Dt 8:2-3; Mt 4:4), of meditating upon it (Ps 1:1-3), of heeding it and being cleansed thereby (Ps 119:9), etc., refer to the text itself, not to a hidden code. When Paul said, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32), we know what "Word" he meant. We commend our readers and ourselves to the same. **TBC**

Quotable

When the vitality of the Word of God is missing from the pulpit, the vacuum has always been filled, sometimes by eloquence, by joke-telling, by man's philosophies, or by anecdotes. Almost anything has been pulled in to fill the void, but the godly have shunned such froth. In many ways, the setting that [Girolamo] Savonarola spoke to was like ours. The Florence of Renaissance Italy was the capital of every diversion the world offered....

But just because people have itching ears does not mean we should obligate ourselves to scratch them. Paul spoke "not with enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor 2:4)....

Early in his career, a young friend advised him [Savonarola] that his manner of preaching did not compare favorably to that of a great (and now forgotten) orator of his day. "To which Savonarola made reply, almost in anger, 'These verbal elegancies and ornaments will have to give way to sound doctrine simply preached.'"

Savonarola did not aim to impress the people with his preaching, but with the truth. In fact, his early attempts at preaching were flat and nondescript, but in time, by means of "sound doctrine simply preached," that delivery became so eloquent it both stung and stunned the world.

*John A. Bjorlie, Uplook magazine,
Nov. 1992, p. 23*

Q&A

Question [composite of several]: Your December article contained a false statement that could lead many astray: "For [Israel] eternal life came through keeping the Law...." It might be well to publish a correction as this statement could cause confusion.

Answer: My statement was, unfortunately, badly worded. Rather, it should have said that eternal life was *offered* to Israel for keeping the Law. Of course, no one ever attained to it on that basis because no one could keep the Law: "All have sinned." In fact, the Law itself contained the provision

for sin in the priesthood and sacrificial system of the tabernacle and temple, all of which looked forward to Christ, "the Lamb of God," and His sacrifice for sin. My article went on to make that clear and to state that "salvation has always been and still is the same for both Jews and Gentiles...." Therefore, as poorly worded as was that one clause, those who read the entire article would not have been led astray.

Question: I always look forward to your Berean Call and never thought I would disagree with you on anything, but—in answering a letter you said, "Jesus had human blood." If that was true, there would have been no need for the Virgin Birth. We all get our blood from our father. I enclose two pages from M.R. DeHaan's book *The Tabernacle* in which he explains that Christ's blood was "the blood of God, not the blood of a man."

Answer: Your objection and the pages you enclosed from DeHaan seem to me to go against God's Word. First of all, I find no basis either in the Scripture or in reason to understand what is meant by "the blood of God." God "is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24) and therefore has no blood. The Father has no body. It is therefore puzzling to me how anyone could assert that the blood through Jesus' veins "came from His Father" and was not human but (per DeHaan) "divine blood." What does that mean? Where do we find it in the Bible?

DeHaan claims that the expression "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pt 1:19) proves it was "the blood of God, not the blood of man." But there is no basis for such a conclusion. The Bible also says, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Ps 116:15), but the saints aren't divine. Scripture refers to "the precious ointment" (Ps 133:2) upon the high priest, but it wasn't "God ointment." The word "precious" is found 76 times in the KJV but not once does it mean "God's" or "divine."

DeHaan cites scriptures we certainly believe, which teach that redemption and remission of sins come only through the shedding of blood—but that does not prove that the blood shed is "God's blood." Again we say, God the Father is a spirit and has no blood. The statement by Paul, "the church of God, which he hath purchased

with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), shows clearly that the man Christ Jesus is fully God, but it does not say that He had some special "God blood" flowing in His veins.

We believe the Bible teaches that Jesus was fully God and fully man. He was not part God and part man, which His body surely would have been if what you and DeHaan say were true. Jesus is not a hybrid. He had to be a genuine man in order to die for and redeem us. Many scriptures make that clear, among them the following: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead" (1 Cor 15:21); "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many" (Rom 5:12-15); "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tm 2:5). Our Lord Jesus Christ is called the "second man" and the "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45,47). And He often called Himself "the Son of man" (Lk 19:10, etc.).

How could Jesus have been a genuine man if "the blood of God" flowed in His veins? His body was certainly a human body of flesh, and the blood was an integral part of that flesh, for "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lv 17:11). How could a human body have "God's blood" even if there were such blood? In fact, both His flesh and blood are declared to be *the same* as that shared by all mankind: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of *the same*; that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took...on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2:14-16).

Our redemption is through His precious blood. Therefore, the desire to make Jesus' blood into some special "God blood" is, on the one hand, understandable in human sentiment, but on the other hand it is not biblical. Our redemption doesn't come through some special divine quality of His blood, but through its being poured out in death in sacrifice for our sins. And the One who was sacrificed had to be fully man.

Question [composite of several]: In your July [97] Q&A you cannot use a parable

(the rich man and Lazarus) to support the pagan idea of the immortality of the soul. What scripture do you use to support the idea that the “soul” is a separate entity from the body? Ecclesiastes 9:5 very clearly tells us that “the dead know not any thing...” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 says that the dead in Christ are “asleep.”

Answer: Briefly regarding your comments on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and the other scriptures you refer to, we must respectfully disagree with your conclusions about the state of the dead. To speak of the dead as those “asleep” is a common metaphor and particularly applicable to someone like Paul, who was fond of using what some commentators refer to as “Paulisms.” Just one example is his usage of “letter” as a metaphor for a legalistic approach to the gospel.

You mention that the Scriptures support soul sleep. It is interesting to note how heavily supporters of this doctrine rely on passages from the Psalms and Ecclesiastes. To agree with such a conclusion, the context of these verses must be ignored. Ecclesiastes is very clear that its observations are drawn from the viewpoint of the natural man. To the limited vision of the “natural man” walking this planet, it does appear that the dead know nothing. If Ecclesiastes 9:5 is speaking as literally as some indicate, is it then literally also true that their memory is forgotten as well? Consider the implications of this. Verse 6 explains that they (the dead) do not have a portion for ever in anything “that is done under the sun.” That is all the writer is commenting on. A similar observation may be made about the psalms cited.

Further, we need to understand the clear statements in the New Testament. Paul did not say that it was better to depart and “sleep until the Resurrection,” but rather to “be with Christ” (Phil 1:23). Neither did Paul say that to be absent from the body was to be “asleep” (2 Cor 5:8).

The words used in these scriptures help us discern where the misunderstanding takes place. It involves the makeup of a man. Those who would deny the “spirit, soul, and body” (1 Thes 5:23) will certainly have trouble distinguishing the differences and implications involved. As Peter pointed out in Acts 2:34, David (his body) certainly

had not ascended into heaven. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable conclusion that David expected to see his son and wasn’t waiting until the resurrection of the body (2 Sm 12:23).

As the old hymn tells us, “’Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His word.” We must seek to avoid the trap of letting our preconceptions establish our doctrine. Consider the case of the thief on the cross. Jesus did not say, “*Today* verily I say unto thee,” but “*Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*” Neither did He say, “You will sleep today.”

Some feel that the teaching of soul sleep avoids contradictions in the Scriptures, but a few examples would seem to create a myriad contradictions. When Jesus led captivity captive (Eph 4:8), who was He leading? What about the spirits in prison? What about the story of the rich man and Lazarus? (No parable specifically names a person.) And, even if it were only a parable, what does it mean? What was Christ teaching from it? Certainly He was not teaching soul sleep. What kind of parable would talk about someone conscious and communicating in hell and intend to teach soul sleep from it? So the argument that this is just a parable does not help the proponents of soul sleep at all. Finally, what about the Old Testament references that have men in hades speaking, questioning, and otherwise engaging in actions only possible by conscious entities? (Ez 32:21-32; Is 14:9-10).

Most important, however, the Lord promised to never leave us or forsake us and that nothing could separate us from His love...even for a moment. Neither death, nor life, nor anything else! In view of the scriptures already cited, it becomes most difficult to reconcile back to the Scriptures the scenario presented by soul sleep.

Endnotes

- 1 *Bible Review* (Aug. 1997), 24.
- 2 *Time* (June 9, 1997), 56.
- 3 *Bible Review*, op. cit., 23
- 4 <http://www.math.gatech.edu/~jkatz/Religions/Numerics/chanukah.html>.
- 5 “Tracking God’s Secrets Across the Net” (*The Christian News*, 10/13/97), 22.
- 6 John Weldon, *Decoding the Bible Code* (Harvest House Publishers, 1998), 44.

"Letters" to the Apostle Paul

T.A. McMahon

We get letters. Most are very encouraging, but some take us to task for what we write. We don't mind the latter; in fact, more often than not it helps us to emulate the Bereans, making sure we are true to the Scriptures in what we present. Nevertheless, some letters mystify us. In justifying many of the highly questionable and sometimes rather bizarre teachings, practices and spiritual movements in Christendom today, the writers seem to be oblivious to what God's Word says quite clearly regarding such issues.

Since much of what we see going on in the church and the world is at its root common to what Paul experienced, we have wondered about the critical letters he might have received in rebuttal of his epistles. Still more interesting, however, what if Paul were to have received responses then that were specifically related to what is taking place now in the professing church?

With that in mind, we present the following quasi-hypothetical correspondence:

FROM THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL AT CORINTH: To Paul, an Apostle of the Christian sect. Sir. We greet you in the name of your god, Jesus. We represent your colleagues, fellow priests and ministers to the many gods whose shrines and temples bless this great culturally diverse city of ours. Our council has representatives of the disciples of Hermes, Poseidon, Athena, Heracles, Apollo, and the great goddess Aphrodite, at whose altars I serve. Our primary reason for contacting you is to let you know that you have been selected as a finalist for the "Temple Prize," a sum of money equal to your weight in gold and presented annually to the individual recognized for his outstanding contribution to progress in religion. That sum represents our appreciation for what you have accomplished. We have been amazed at how quickly your sect has grown and are confident that, should you win this rather substantial prize, you will put it to good use for the glory of your god, just as previous winners have faithfully served their deities with their reward.

In the process of narrowing down our selection, however, some troubling writings have been brought to our attention which we have been told bear your signature. These epistles seem to oppose all that our council and the highly revered Temple Prize stand for. The author of these writings refers to our deities as "dumb idols" and "devils"; he goes on at great length to warn your sect not to have any "fellowship with devils," claiming that there is only one god and there can be no agreement between him and the idols of our temples. This is all very distressing to the great cause of religious unity; yet, we are hopeful of better things from you as you hasten to resolve the concern before us. The Prize, you will be gratified to know, will be presented by the Grand Asiarch of the Temple of Aphrodite Urania, Queen of the Heavens, with the ceremony actually taking place in the inner sanctuary of our great goddess. A reception will follow for priests and worshipers of all creeds at the Unity Court of Religions.

FROM THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE STRATEGIC COMMAND CENTER IN EPHESUS: Greetings. While we have been blessed by your teachings in general, we marvel at how uninformed you are concerning spiritual warfare. You seem to recognize the powerful organization of the spirit world of demons as "principalities," "powers" and "rulers"—and we do find helpful your teaching which encourages the believer to take up "the whole armour of God," and especially "the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Yet you remain terribly vague regarding the critical necessity of confronting demons.

Since you were with us last, God has raised up individuals to teach us to bind and loose spirits, identify territorial demons, utilize spiritual mapping, develop prayerwalking, and become more effective in tearing down demonic strongholds. We have also learned how to remove generational curses through identificational repentance. How is it that you were not aware of these spiritual techniques for vanquishing our satanic enemies?

You seem to be ignorant of territorial spirits, which must be bound in order for the gospel to advance. That became clear

to us through word of your failure to convert Philippi. No wonder you could only cast a demon out of one young lady there—and even that led to your beating and imprisonment! Obviously, much strategic-level spiritual warfare was needed to bind the strongman of that city and thereby to assure your success.

We, on the other hand, have learned what brings victory. By marching around the temple of Diana here in Ephesus, our prayerwalkers have had great success in reducing the sales of her statuettes, as well as restricting the business of her shrine prostitutes. Whereas you were mute on the subject and the methods involved in spiritual warfare, we found information gleaned from converted pagan priests to be very insightful, particularly in learning the spiritual history of this great city. Our exorcisms also proved helpful, and provided us with intelligence from the demons themselves—that is, of course, after our commanding them to speak the truth.

Should you still be suffering from that "messenger of Satan," we have an eager deliverance team ready to set you free. However, we would ask you to please refrain from the feeble and questionable plea that Christ told you, "My grace is sufficient for thee." We feel that is a defeatist attitude at best, and certainly not suited for the spiritual militancy required in our times.

FROM THOSE AT CORINTH, "BEHIND IN NO GIFT" AND PROUD OF IT! Following your departure from your flock in this spiritually active Greek city, God has done a wonderful work by sending us ministers with a special anointing. The results can only be described as a revival among God's people. Yet you disappoint us greatly by making spiritual judgments from a distant place. You have missed the mark badly by not returning to observe in person the miraculous power here, the changed lives, and perhaps most tragic of all, by not coming to us *privately* before writing your destructive letters, that you might gain deeper insights through personal dialogue with us.

Because of your closed-mindedness you have missed this inspiring operation of the Holy Spirit. Whether at our love feasts or in our worship, God is working powerfully,

sovereignly and in gratifyingly spontaneous ways. While it is true that we do not fully comprehend what God is doing, and at times the manifestations seem foolish to some, nevertheless we want *more* of what He has for us, and we praise Him for the outpouring of His Spirit.

Obviously you are blind to the validity of this special *impartation* when you protest, "God is not the author of confusion," and "Let all things be done decently and in order." How is it you cannot grasp that the Lord may be working in a new way, especially one which is much more personally transforming? Have you no fear of quenching or grieving the Holy Spirit of God?

FROM THE GACMPC (GNOSTIC APOSTLES OF CORINTH FOR A MORE POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY): Dear Brother Paul. This is a most difficult letter for us to write, since the last thing we want to do is to lower your already poor self-esteem by appearing critical. However, because your self-image seems almost beyond recovery, we feel compelled to counsel you and we're concerned that your pessimistic mindset is creating a dramatically adverse effect on the churches here in Greece and elsewhere.

Perhaps you don't realize your own negativity. Here are just a few examples: To Timothy you wrote that you are the "chief of sinners"; to the Romans, that "no good thing" dwells in your flesh, calling yourself a "wretched man"; to us at Corinth, that you are the least of the "Apostles" and that you are "nothing"; and to those in Ephesus you write that you are "less than the least of the saints."

The Christianity you profess debases the value and worth of every Christian, as well as his God-given intellect. You make your own ignorance and folly apparent when you ask, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Are you not addressing a people here in Corinth among whom philosophers and counselors reign supreme? Dare you undermine their heroes? What kind of positive witness is that? Can you not recognize that all truth is God's truth and that wisdom is abundant in writings of the world's greatest minds?

Of even greater concern, however, than your embarrassing us among these noble Greeks, is the humiliating context in which you set our faith. You claim that the

Christian life involves struggles which may include hunger, poverty, homelessness, sufferings, distresses, perils, persecutions, while Christ's ambassadors are "made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." Is this your testimony as an "Apostle" who finds "joy" in all such things? We Apostles here in Corinth know nothing of the sort. *Seed* faith has brought us great prosperity; and healings abound among us because of faith in our faith.

Small wonder that our brothers and sisters did not provide for your welfare while you lived among them. By your own words you have created your dire circumstances from which Christ came to set you free; you spoke those negative conditions upon yourself. Through lack of faith you have grossly missed the success Christ achieved for His own. Do you actually think you bring hope or help to those in tribulation by proclaiming that "our light affliction...is but for a moment"? And you would have believers here and in Asia "imitate" you? God forbid!! Thankfully, we know the power of positive confession.

FROM THE ECT COMMITTEE IN GALATIA:

To Paul, our brother in our common faith. We love you, as we love all who name the name of our precious Lord and Savior. Good Paul, you have taught us so much. Yet, some here in Galatia have taken your words too literally, becoming somewhat closed-minded, even to the point of developing a critical spirit. Their un-Christian and divisive attitude has been directed at our dear friends of the *circumcision* persuasion.

Certainly that is not what you intended for us! Therefore, to make amends for these unloving brothers and to demonstrate to the religious community and to the world that we are indeed loving, we have worked feverishly to develop a document which would emphasize those things we hold in common with those of the *circumcision*. In addition, concerning the very issue upon which we still differ with the *circumcisors*, we shall continue to dialogue with them, our goal being to reach a consensus, thereby demonstrating our love through unity. We have had wonderful support for our reconciliation agreement thus far. Some of our

most inspirational and courageous leaders have signed the ECT accord, that is, Evangelicals and *Circumcisors* Together.

To expedite this historic agreement, it would be helpful if you would sign the document and in addition write a word of exhortation to our group of dissenters. You might explain to them that the term "accursed" as you applied it to the *circumcisors* (who hold to so many of the beliefs we profess) doesn't mean what they think. Surely these divisive literalists would come to their senses and realize that their strenuous objections to adding one small requirement for salvation is simply hair-splitting. Such a minor adjustment to faith is simply not worth squabbling over, and hardly a reason for separation among those who love Jesus.

Thank you for your assistance in this, and please sign and return the enclosed ECT document at your earliest convenience.

It would be great if we could all just have a good laugh at the folly of the above letters. Sadly, that's not appropriate. All the hypothetical arguments listed (and there are many more) have been taken from published defenses by today's leading proponents of such teachings, practices or activities, as well as from correspondence we've received over the years. The idea that they might address their objections to the Apostle Paul may seem ridiculous, but some today actually have condemned his writings, especially where he directly contradicts their false doctrines or endeavors. On the other hand, many if not most such proponents of "new truth" are aware that nearly all evangelicals believe Paul's writings to represent what God commands. Thus they rationalize, twist or simply ignore his teachings.

The apostasy seems to be in full swing, ranging from ingeniously deceptive subtleties to powerful seductions of the most ludicrous kind. Nevertheless, we have the Word of Truth, ministered by the Spirit of Truth and Jesus who is the Truth, to keep us on God's path. Pray "without ceasing" for your fellowship, your pastor and all those of influence in Christendom, that they would not only have a "love of the truth," but boldly speak "the truth in love." TBC

Quotable

Would you be a victor/ Over ev'ry foe,
Conquer ev'ry trial/ In this world below;
Overcome temptation/ That each day you
meet?

Keep in touch with Jesus./ He will keep you
sweet.

Many hearts are broken—/ Oft an aching
breast

Waits the message spoken/ That will give
it rest;

You perhaps can bring them/ Joy and peace
complete,

Keep in touch with Jesus./ He will keep you
sweet.

(Chorus)

Keep in touch with Jesus/ Tho' the path be
dim;

Let no cloud nor shadow/ Sever you from
Him.

Joy or sorrow greet you/ Friend or foe you
meet,

Keep in touch with Jesus./ He will keep you
sweet.

C.S. Kauffman

Q&A

Question: Enclosed is an article sent to me by a local Catholic apologist [which gives alleged data re the protection of Jews by Catholics during WWII]. If you have time in your busy schedule please check it out and let us know if it is true or a little overplayed. Thank you.

Answer: The article you enclosed paints a biased picture of the alleged pro-Jewishness of Catholics in WWII—truth mixed with error. We have never suggested that no individual Roman Catholic ever helped the Jews. There were indeed many Catholics (acting as individuals apart from their Church) who did all they could, even risked their lives to save Jews; some died as a result. It is also true that Pope Pius XII saved many Jews from death. Yet in comparison to the vast majority of Roman Catholics (many of whom were in the SS, etc.) who joined in the persecution of Jews, those who helped the Jews were a mere handful. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church did far more against the Jews and in support of the Nazis than in their favor—

and the same was true of the Pope, whose failure to act was monumental. We give much of this evidence in *A Woman Rides the Beast*.

I do not have time to analyze and respond to the entire article, but will give you some examples of its slanted reporting. It declares that “Cardinal Michael Faulhaber... delivered a sermon in defense of biblical Judaism.” That is a half-truth. In *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (which documents the involvement of the overwhelming majority of Germans, of whom a high percentage were Catholics, in the persecution of Jews in their towns), Daniel Goldhagen states,

Although Faulhaber defended the Jewish religion and the Jews who lived prior to Jesus, he made it clear that those Jews were to be distinguished from the Jews who lived after Jesus...[including] contemporary Jews. When...foreigners...assert[ed] that Faulhaber had championed German Jews, Faulhaber emphatically denied this. Before and during the Nazi period, Catholic publications, whether written for the laity, clerics, or theologians, disseminated the contemporary antisemitic litany in ways that were often indistinguishable from the Nazis'... (p. 109).

Guenther Lewy's book, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, documents from secret Nazi records an entirely different picture from the article you enclosed. He confirms the article re Faulhaber's apparently having provided “a truck for the Chief Rabbi of Munich so that he could save some of the religious objects from his synagogue” (p. 284), but he also cites Faulhaber's public silence re *Kristallnacht* and his continued public support of Hitler. Though published by McGraw-Hill, Lewy's book can hardly be found, having been mysteriously removed from almost every library in the U.S.A.

Aarons and Loftus, in *The Secret War Against the Jews*, credit Pius XII with probably rescuing “more Jews than all the Allies combined” (p. 140) but add, “Even so, the Vatican's activities were pitifully small.” The article in question would have one believe that he was the staunch enemy of Hitler and spoke out strongly against the Holocaust, when that is not the case. Aarons and Loftus document Pius XII's *support* of Hitler (beginning when, as Cardinal Pacelli, he was Papal Nuncio in Munich), as well as continued Vatican support of Hitler, its reception of huge sums of German marks

from the Nazis, that it aided Nazi smuggling of Jewish gold and smuggled tens of thousands of Nazi war criminals to South America along its Rat Lines. No hint of this in the article you sent. The true picture during WWII is not a good one for the Roman Catholic Church—to say nothing of its consistent (with a few exceptions) anti-Semitism and slaughter of Jews down through the centuries.

Sorry that I can't provide more details, but you could look up the sources I cite, as well as others such as *Unholy Trinity: The Vatican, the Nazis and Soviet Intelligence* by Aarons and Loftus, who obtained much of their information from secret U.S. intelligence files.

Question: I disagree with your statements in the December TBC distinguishing Israel from the church. Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2:11-22 that the church and Israel are “one”...one grouping of believers....Romans 9-11 describes Israel...[as] those people of all times, places, lands, nationalities, and ethnic groups who have had faith in God...Israel is not “God's earthly people” [as you describe her] but God's spiritual people, His people of faith...all believers everywhere....God's promises of land that your article referred to do not, in fact, promise His earthly physical land. Instead, they promise His spiritual people a spiritual country...heaven.

Answer: We have dealt with this in the past so I won't go into details. You are spiritualizing away the truth of Scripture. Paul refers to “my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites...whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came” (Rom 9:3-5). The word *flesh* cannot be turned into *spirit*. That the people of Israel after the flesh (the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) have existed throughout history and still exist in the present is clear. Their history is given in the Bible, including their very real possession of the promised land for centuries, their being cast out of it and scattered around the world, their persecution and their preservation—along with hundreds of clear prophecies of their return. If Israel is a *spiritual* people—all true believers everywhere—then what is that specific nation of Israel whose history the Old Testament gives in detail and which is the subject of most Old Testament prophecies? That Israel still exists today as a distinct people and nation and is once again in possession of part of the land she

was promised and once possessed in full is a fact which every news report confirms. Try to tell the Arabs that those are not the Jews living in Israel today!

Israel is described in the Bible as a distinct nation among the nations of the world. Israel as a nation and the Jews as a people are distinguished from all other peoples in hundreds of verses such as “I will give...unto you...a land....I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people....And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine” (Lv 20:24-26); “[T]he LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Dt 7:6); “And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee....And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all the nations whither the LORD shall lead thee....ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth unto the other” (Dt 28:10, 37, 63, 64); “Hear the word of the LORD. O ye nations...He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock....It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever” (Jer 31:10, 40); “And thou [Gog and Magog, et al.] shalt say, I will go up...upon the people that are gathered out of the nations....And thou shalt come up against my people Israel...in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me” (Ezk 38:11-16), etc., etc., etc.

Zechariah 12, 13, and 14 surely refer to Jerusalem as a “cup of trembling” for all nations in the last days, to Israel being attacked by all nations of the earth, to Christ coming to the Mount of Olives to rescue His people and all Israel seeing Him and believing on Him. You cannot spiritualize Israel without doing violence to history, the present facts and the Bible.

Furthermore, if Israel is the church, then why does Paul say, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel, is that they might be saved” (Rom 10:1)? To be in the church one must already be saved. That he means saved in the sense of John 3:16, Acts 16:31 and Rom 1:16 is clear: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom 10:3).

Nor does Ephesians 2:11-22 teach “that

the church and Israel are ‘one’,” as you state. It clearly says that the Gentiles are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,” but that through Christ they become part of “the household of God.” The message is not the oneness of Israel and the church but the fact that both Jews and Gentiles (as individuals through faith in Christ) are made “one new man.” There is a new entity, the church, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph 2:20).

The church came into existence only after Christ’s incarnation and glorification. If Israel was already the church, Christ would hardly have stated that it was yet to be built in the future: “I will build my church” (Mt 16:18). Identifying Israel with the church requires such a spiritualizing of Scripture that its entire meaning is changed and the major promises concerning the return of Christ to Israel to establish His kingdom on the throne of His father David become mere allegories.

Question: Revelation 21:9-10 clearly says, “I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he...showed me...the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.” The testimony here is positive that the New Jerusalem is the bride. It would be absurd to talk of the church as lying foursquare...having a great wall...12 gates, etc. If the church is the bride [of Christ]...and “the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Revelation 22:17), to whom is it that they are saying, come? Please answer me. Is not the New Jerusalem, the Bride, with all of its magnificence, saying to us the church to come enjoy the glorious place Christ has prepared for us?

Answer: John sees a huge city coming down from heaven. Obviously an *empty* city is not Christ’s bride, but its inhabitants must be, having first been married to Christ in heaven (Rv 19:7-8). There is no promise to rapture Israel to heaven, but that promise was given to the church (Jn 14, 1 Cor 15, 1 Thes 4). The bride (after her marriage to Christ) returns as the armies of heaven with Christ to rescue Israel at Armageddon (Ezk 38, 39; Rv 19:11-21; Zec 12, 13, 14, etc.). The bride can only be comprised of those who have been taken to heaven by Christ as He promised—i.e., the raptured church.

To whom do “the Spirit and the bride say come”? Twice in that chapter, both before and after this statement (vv 12,20),

Christ says, “Behold I come quickly.” Surely the Spirit and the bride are responding to this promise on the part of Christ with this affirmation, indicating that, just as He desires to come, so it is the desire of His bride that He do so, and quickly. That these words are addressed to Christ should be clear from the response in verse 20 to Christ’s promise: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Question: In your December article you said that “Jews (like Gentiles) who believe in Christ prior to His Second Coming (when He makes Himself known to Israel and all Israel is saved) are in the church.” I wanted clarification whether those saved after the rapture of His Bride (made up of Jewish and Gentile believers) are part of His church.

Answer: We are told that at the Rapture “the dead in Christ shall rise” to be caught up with the living saints into heaven. We are also told that when Christ returns at the Second Coming and His feet touch the Mount of Olives He brings “all the saints” with Him (Zec 14:5).

The Old Testament repeatedly refers to true believers as saints. Surely Abraham and David and Daniel, et al. are among the saints. They must be resurrected at the Rapture as part of the church for two reasons: (1) All the saints return with Christ at the Second Coming, so no saints could still be in the grave; and (2) the only other resurrection we read of (other than that of the unbelievers before the Great White Throne, Rv 20:13, for judgment) is in Revelation 20:4, and it involves only “them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither had received his mark....” These are the martyrs during the Great Tribulation under Antichrist, which could not include Old Testament saints.

That those martyred under Antichrist are also in the church seems clear from the fact that they are part of “the first resurrection” (Rv 20:5), which must include those raised after the Rapture. The remainder of both Jews and Gentiles who did not become believers until Christ returned at Armageddon, and were thus not martyred, continue alive on this earth in His millennial kingdom and inhabit the new earth and are therefore not part of the church, which will reign in resurrected, glorified bodies over them.

Unity and Truth

Dave Hunt

It should be quite clear to any observer of news and trends that we are heading (as the Bible foretells) for a world government and a world religion—and that the two will be united. Gone will be any “separation between church and state.” It should be equally clear that a basic requirement of the world religion (steps toward which are rewarded by the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion) will be that it must be inoffensive and universally accepted.

“Political/religious correctness” is essential to the false unity desired by this world. “Spirituality” without truth will be the rule. The world will have returned to Babel, where the “city” (i.e., the secular government) and the “tower” (i.e., the religion) were united: “[L]et us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven...” (Gn 11:4). Those who persist in the claim that some teachings are wrong will be silenced for the good of society. That trend is already reflected by TBN’s Paul Crouch, whose prayer demands immunity from correction: “God, we proclaim death to anything or anyone that would lift a hand against this ministry...”¹.

Such unity, fully realized at Babel, appeals to human wisdom. God’s response, however, was to “confound the language of all the earth: and...[to] scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (vv 6-8). At Mars Hill, Paul explained God’s purpose in so doing: “[He] hath determined...the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord...” (Acts 17:26-27).

Instead of seeking the Lord, man has sought to become the Lord of the universe. His inventive genius has fulfilled God’s pronouncement that “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gn 8:21); and has proven the accuracy of God’s dire warning: “nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (Gn 11:9). The world has grown more wicked and violent with the increase in man’s education, knowledge and technology. Truly, we are “a generation of nuclear giants but moral midgets.”

And now, in rebellion against God’s judgment at Babel, man is determined to unite the world as it was then. Lockheed Corporation has boasted in a *Scientific American* ad that through its computers it was “undoing the Babel effect” by uniting the world in one language once again. IBM and other scientific corporations have made similar boasts. It is imagined that to unite

the world would put an end to competition and conflict between nations and usher in a golden era of peace and prosperity. In fact, it will bring the reign of Antichrist and the wrath of God poured out upon this earth.

The world will never be united and at peace until Christ, the Prince of Peace, rules in person from David’s throne. And even then, after 1,000 years of His reign, millions upon millions of those who have been forced to obey will rebel against Him (Rv 20:7-9). The Millennium will be the final proof of the incorrigible evil of the human heart. The only hope is through the creation of a new race that has died in Christ, having accepted His death as its own, and which has been “born again” of the Holy Spirit to be indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. Each of these who inherit the new heavens and new earth can truly say, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God...

2 Corinthians 6:16

Christ liveth in me...” (Gal 2:20).

True unity is found only in Christ. Those who belong to Him are “one body,” having “one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all...” (Eph 4:4-6). These are His body, His church, His bride. Of them Christ said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (Jn 17:14,16). The true church could never be popular with the world, much less united with it in common cause. Christ said, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you...If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...” (Jn 15:19-20).

These few words from Scripture are sufficient to condemn the Roman Catholic Church. Its long history of partnership with and even dominion over governments (as foretold in Revelation 17:19), and the power which it wields in secular circles, mark it as apostate. The Pope receives ambassadors from all major countries who come begging favors; and he himself is received with much pomp and ceremony all over the world by heads of state, from President Clinton to Arafat or Castro. On the same basis we recognize the error of evangelicals who attempt to wield political clout through alliances with the ungodly, who seek to build a base of influence

within state and federal governments in cooperation with Catholics, Mormons, Moonies, et al.—and do it in the name of the Christ who was hated, mocked and crucified by the religious and political rulers.

In Christ’s prayer for unity He specifically said, “I pray *not for the world*, but for them which thou hast given me [out of the world]; for they are thine” (Jn 17:9). Nowhere in Scripture is there any hint that Christians are to “change the world” (which is under God’s judgment) or “meet community needs” as Promise Keepers advocates. We are to call *out of this world* “a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). Christ’s concern was for His church, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us...even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...” (vv 21-23).

Christ’s prayer was answered through the Father and Son indwelling believers by the Holy Spirit. Having become the “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26), we are united in God’s family for eternity. That unity cannot be shared outside that family. And that unity is expressed through adherence in word and deed to God’s Word and truth (Jn 17:6,8,14,17).

Never are we told to *make* unity, but to “*keep* the unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4:3) which we already have in Christ. Our lives and the doctrine upon which our lives are founded are to express God’s Word and His truth. Any deviation therefrom denies the unity which is ours in Christ. Those who are not members of Christ’s body through having believed the gospel are not part of this family, and there is no “unity” believers can fabricate to make them so.

Sadly, Promise Keepers (PK) has taken upon itself to forge such a false unity. I watched in shock and dismay as Pat Robertson, interviewing PK founder Bill McCartney, suggested that PK was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and McCartney responded that indeed it was: that the church had never been united in its history, but that PK was going to bring it all together for the first time!

Any true Christian would also have been shocked at the contrast between Christ’s prayer for unity in John 17 and the prayer for unity offered by Roman Catholic PK board member Mike Timmis at the huge October 4, 1997 PK gathering in Washington, D.C. Timmis prayed, “[W]e recognize that we do have doctrinal differences...but, Father, we will not let these differences destroy our unity...this applies to Protestants of all persuasions; it applies

to the Orthodox Church; it applies to Roman Catholics, of which I am one!"

Promise Six of the Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper pledges to ignore "denominational barriers" as of no significance. Yet at least some of the divisions between those who call themselves Christians are due to very serious doctrinal differences. We have fully documented elsewhere the fact that Roman Catholicism is a false gospel of salvation through sacraments, works, purgatorial suffering, indulgences, prayers to Mary, etc.; and which, by its very nature, offers no assurance. Such doctrinal differences create an impassible barrier to Christian unity; and, indeed, mark Roman Catholics (and the Orthodox whose doctrines of salvation are the same) as outside the family of God. It is no kindness to further delude these lost souls by embracing them as Christians.

Ruth and I had a very fruitful time in Romania last fall with good meetings in five cities, including at the University of Bucharest, a sports arena and other secular locations. The response was good, with souls saved and lives changed. Everywhere we saw the evil of the Orthodox Church, which cooperated with communism and is now persecuting evangelicals. The Orthodox Church has had no objection to its members being atheistic communists. The latest census in Romania had two categories of Orthodox: believers and atheists.

During our recent visit, with sorrow we watched the Orthodox faithful line up in a large cathedral to kiss the icons which they believe are windows to heaven, to run their fingers across the sarcophagi of "saints" as an uncertain step toward salvation, or to pay the priest for special prayers that might also bring them closer to meriting heaven. Typical was my conversation with the head priest in an Orthodox cathedral:

Dave: How can I get to heaven? Priest: You've got to pray. D: How much must I pray? P: You've got to pray all the time, everywhere. D: Can I ever know that I'm going to get to heaven? P: You can never know. The cults like the Baptists teach that you can know, but the official teaching of the Orthodox Church is that you can never know whether you'll get to heaven. D: But what did Jesus do on the cross? P (*taking me to the center of the church and pointing high up on the ceiling to a picture supposedly of Jesus*): He's looking down on all of us! (*At this point a wedding party entered. They had just been married by the civil authority and needed the blessing of the church, for which they had to pay about one month's wages. The priest had to attend to them,*

ending our conversation—one which left me weeping inside for the deluded Orthodox "believers"!)

It is unconscionable for PK to embrace Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy as the true gospel, but such folly reflects today's mood. Even the world desires religious unity. And now for the first time in the history of the church we have in PK an organization with the backing of many evangelical leaders and capable of gathering millions of men and tens of thousands of pastors in support of the most flagrant ecumenism.

In Atlanta, Georgia early last year PK gathered 39,000 pastors. The conference brought together representatives of the apostate World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches, evangelicals, Mormons and Roman Catholics, including 600 priests. PK Vice-President of Pastoral Ministry Dale Schlafer declared that this new unity is based not upon doctrine (i.e., truth) but upon relationships. By contrast, *biblical unity is a doctrine which must be defined*. Some doctrinal differences are as vast as the distance between heaven and hell.

The estimated 1 million men PK gathered in Washington, D.C. pledged a "Covenant" read by Dale Schlafer. Included was the following restatement of Promise 5: "We covenant, by Your grace, to actively support the mission of our churches. Where we have criticized our pastors, and withheld our support, we commit to follow their spiritual leadership and to pray for them daily."

What about Rodney R. Romney, pastor of Seattle's First Baptist Church? He teaches that each must "realize one's own godhood" and that "Christ meant to establish a world religion that would...synthesize every creed..."² There are hundreds of such pastors and churches. Yet PK insists that *every church*, Protestant, Roman Catholic or Orthodox, and *every pastor* must be supported. What a set-up for Antichrist and the coming world religion!

Raleigh Washington, PK vice-president, declared that "Promise Keepers have no intention of working to overcome doctrinal distinctions," which he implied are as legitimate and irremovable as "racial distinctions."³ In keeping with its roots in John Wimber's Vineyard movement, PK leaders make prophetic pronouncements, claiming the backing and inspiration of God for their ecumenical agenda and faulting anyone (layman or pastor) who does not give PK his

wholehearted support. At the recent St. Petersburg, Florida clergy conference, McCartney had the temerity to declare, "God has given me to say...that every church that names the name of Jesus is supposed to give Promise Keepers \$1,000..."

Even the worst cults "name the name of Jesus." McCartney "estimated that about 300,000 Christian churches exist in the United States, which means that a donation from each one would translate into about \$300 million."⁴ Imagine any other organization daring to state that it is God's will for every church to give it \$1,000! We don't doubt the sincerity of PK's leaders, but we doubt that they have the mandate from God to push their agenda on the church—and they do have an agenda and are pushing it.

PK now claims a self-appointed leadership over all churches and Christians. At Washington, D.C., McCartney said, "We have a plan...Baptists...Lutherans...Roman Catholics...we've been divided...but now we're being reunited...! Nobody can go out of here without the same [PK-devised] plan...every man connected to a church; *every church connected to each other...!* You've got to...say to your pastor..., 'You lead me! I put my faith in you [Romney or whomever] as my leader!'"

McCartney went on to say, "Now pastors...we are asking you to connect with the other pastors [no matter how apostate] in the community...come together in prayer...And then...call your men together, and tell them about the needs in the community...[and] meet the needs in the community...Promise Keepers is sponsoring nine pastors' conferences [in 1998]...be sure that your pastors participate...! We need a unity of command! [Under PK, of course.] We need to have everybody on the same page...! [PK's page.] Now I want you to hear this: On January the first, in the year 2000, we're calling for every church that names the name of Jesus Christ to gather at twelve o'clock noon on the state capitol [in their area]...we're asking every pastor to come with his men...We're going to...sweep this nation...! And then...Promise Keepers [in AD 2000] is going to turn and go globally!"

Great plans, but not biblical, audaciously imposed upon the church. What is most astonishing is the numbers of men and pastors who have been swept up in the PK vanguard. Let us rather "keep the unity of the Spirit" through adherence to sound doctrine in obedience to our Lord. TBC

Quotable

You must at once so purge and expel all dregs of Papistry, superstition and idolatry that you, O England! must judge and hold execrable and accursed whatsoever God has not sanctified unto you by His Word....The glistering beauty of vain ceremonies, the heaping of things pertaining nothing to edification (by whomsoever they were invented, justified or maintained), ought at once to be removed, and so trodden under the obedience of God's Word, that continually this sentence of your God be present in your heart and mouth: "Not that which appeareth good in thy eyes shalt thou do to the Lord thy God, but what the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, that shalt thou do: add nothing to it; diminish nothing from it."

John Knox

Selected Writings of John Knox, p. 595; impassioned plea to England, after the death of Bloody Mary in November 1558 ended the persecution and martyrdom of evangelicals and opened the door again to the gospel

Q&A

Question: The church I now attend is embracing some teachings of Watchman Nee. What do you know about him, and especially about his book, *The Latent Power of the Soul*?

Answer: Watchman Nee's writings, in my opinion, tend toward mysticism and though they contain some helpful insights also contain some dangerous errors. New books by Watchman Nee continued to appear while he was in communist prison in China. Compiled from various sources, they left the reader uncertain as to how accurately they reflected Nee's true beliefs. *The Latent Power of the Soul*, however, was apparently put together by Nee himself in 1933. Its basic premise (much like Benny Hinn's teaching) is that Adam was a superman with abilities at least "a million times" greater than ours (p. 15) and "possessed [of] a hidden ability which made it possible for him to become like God. He was already like him in outward appearance...." (p. 18).

On the contrary, "to become like God" was Satan's ambition. Man was to be totally dependent upon God for his very breath; and for the new man, Christ is his life. Nor was it in "outward appearance" that Adam was made in the image of God, but morally and spiritually. God does not have a body after which man's could be modeled. Nee goes on to say that with his fall Adam's miraculous "power was immobilized. He had not lost

this power...it was now buried within him...[and] such power is in every man's soul...[and] the devil [works] to stir up man's soul and to release this latent power...in order to gain control over man...the marvelous energy dormant in man's soul, the release of which...will result in the display of miraculous power even to the attaining of the status of a 'fairy' or 'buddha'....Man's soul power is Satan's working instrument, through which he works out his evil end." (pp. 20-22,33)

Nee warns Christians against what he calls "soul" power. While condemning its use, Nee agrees with the claim of today's New Agers and parapsychologists that human potential is infinite. That is not true. It was not human potential which empowered the demoniac to snap iron chains, but the legion of demons which possessed him (Mk 5:2-20). Nor did Christ, who as the "second man" and "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45,47) would have had legitimately every power of the first Adam, ever display what Nee alleges. His miracles were always a demonstration of the fact that He was "God manifest in the flesh" (Jn 1:48-51; 1 Tm 3:16).

News Alerts

The Guardian Havana, 1/29/98: Nearly everyone in Cuba, Fidel Castro included, is rumored to believe, to some degree, in Santeria, the Way of the Saints....Belief is everywhere. When you open a new bottle of rum in Cuba, you always pour some onto the ground. Not much, mind you, as you often have to pay for bottles of rum with dollars, and dollars are rare—but just enough "for the saints."

For the officially atheist population of Cuba, it is merely a superstition. But unofficially, it is a symbol signifying a primitive belief in either Catholic or voodoo saints. Or both, for they are frequently the same.

The center point of the Pope's visit was a trip to Santiago de Cuba for the coronation of the Virgen de la Caridad (Our Lady of Charity), the wooden image found floating in the Atlantic by three fishermen in 1606, with a helpful note attached to it saying, "I am the Virgen de la Caridad." It is the most sacred Catholic relic in Cuba.

The relic is also one of the most sacred saints in the Santerian canon, and the Virgen is associated with Ochun, the Yoruba goddess of love. A copy of the relic stood prominently in the *babalaw's* shrine, the part of his living room he called his power base.

The replica was next to a primitive sculpture of an African warrior, and scattered about were colored stones draped with shiny necklaces. The stones are believed to contain the spirits of both the saints and the Yoruba

gods of distant Africa.

The *babalaw* was at pains to point out as many parallels as he could with Catholicism....A Santeria ceremony...takes place in a private house. As drums summon up the saints, a makeshift "altar" is erected in the front room with a variety of offerings, including an iced cake.

There is a lot of singing and dancing. ...Most people chant in African languages, and a few people speak in tongues as the saints possess their bodies.

Our Sunday Visitor, 10/15/95: Celeste Champagne [says], "...my mother taught me about the *voodoo*—and the spirits....The voodoo is part of my life to this day—just like Holy Communion...."

Andy Antippas, a former professor of English who now devotes his time to studying the history of religion...says, "Africans...sold into slavery...brought their voodoo religion with them. Christianity [Catholicism] was forced on them. So, to appease the masters, the slaves prayed through the icons and statues of Christianity [Catholicism] to their own voodoo gods...."

On a clear day, the line...snakes through the front gate of the Lafitte Cemetery. Why? So men and women of every description and background can scratch the traditional X on the late Voodoo Queen Marie Laveau's tomb, giving impetus to their invocations for good for themselves and ill for their enemies....

Priestess Ava Jones [is] a graduate of Xavier Prep Catholic High School and Loyola University School of Law...[and] has foregone a career in law to devote her life to voodoo....She lectures frequently on voodoo and African religions to such diverse groups as the American College of Surgeons and the American Academy of Cardiology....

A call to her will often be met with, "I'm with a client now. Can I call you back?" And she will...as soon as she returns from daily Mass, and Communion."

The Sunday Times (UK), 11/23/97: The locals are already dubbing it Club Med—Club Meditation, that is, writes Andy Goldberg.

Maharishi Yogi, the diminutive Indian guru who gained fame in the 1960s for winning the Beatles over to transcendental meditation, is planning an ambitious new complex on the historic shores of the Sea of Galilee in an unusual attempt to bring peace to the Middle East.

Backed by millionaire Jewish magnates who have raised \$400 million, the ashram—or meditational village—will be home to 7,000 of the Maharishi's disciples.

Officially called the Israeli capital of One Government for One World, the village of

east-facing chalets will be set in 250 acres of spacious landscaped gardens, near the point where Jesus is said to have worked miracles 2,000 years ago.

The Denver Post, 1/31/98: If there is no peace among religions there can be no peace among nations, the famous theologian Hans Kung said.

Jewish and Mormon scholars believe the statement and did their part this week to find ways to talk to each other.

About 100 people attended an academic conference about the two groups early this week at the University of Denver, sponsored by Brigham Young University and DU's Holocaust Awareness Institute. Five Mormon and five Jewish scholars spoke.

Raphael Jospe, one of the speakers, said, "There is less reason for people to proselytize another group when they understand and appreciate the integrity of the other group."

Jospe, who formerly lived in Denver and now lives in Jerusalem, believes Mormons and Jews have a lot to talk about, including the fact that both are minorities in the U.S. population and both have suffered great discrimination from societies.

Both Jews and Mormons believe they're the "chosen people" of God, and both groups believe they have a special covenant with God.

Both believe their people are descendants of one of the 12 tribes of Israel, a belief not shared by other religious groups. "Covenant and Chosenness in Mormonism and Judaism" was the title of the conference.

Mormons consider themselves Christians, but believe that the revelations from God didn't end with Jesus, said Truman Madsen, a scholar from BYU who spoke at the meeting.

They believe their prophet Joseph Smith got later revelations, and that point separates them from other Christians.

Grand Rapids Press, 9/1/97: One of the most visible American televangelists, the Rev. Robert Schuller...through his weekly Hour of Power TV program...reaches 20 million viewers from his Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif.

The cathedral houses an organization called Christians and Muslims for Peace. ...Schuller told [Imam Alfred] Mohammed that if he [Schuller] came back in 100 years and found his descendants Muslims, it wouldn't bother him so long as they weren't atheists.

Seattle Times, 1/17/98: "I'm a believer in Christ in the Catholic Church," said Paul Knitter, a theologian at Xavier University who is coming to Seattle next week to help

Christians explore common threads of faith with people of other beliefs....

Knitter says Christians must re-examine what he calls "the one-and-only language" of the Bible if they are to have meaningful dialogue with people of other faiths....The Rev. Earl Palmer, pastor of University Presbyterian Church, said other faiths must be respected "because they're on a journey, too...."

Seattle Roman Catholic Archbishop Alexander Brunett, who chairs a national Catholic bishops' committee on ecumenism, said there are many avenues to finding common truths in religion....

"I think we can say God has expressed himself or herself in other religions that are valid in other places, at other times," said [William] Cate, an ordained Methodist minister [and director emeritus of the Church Council of Greater Seattle].

The Orange County (CA) Register, 2/9/98: No pews. No crucifix. No icons.

Chapman University's future chapel is innovative not for what it will have, but for what it won't.

The school's planned Wallace All Faiths Chapel represents the latest spiritual trend, genuinely interfaith structures that reflect growing religious diversity nationwide.

Come Feb. 27, about a dozen groups will gather at the end of Sycamore Avenue off Glassell Street and pray for the chapel.

Some plan to read Scriptures—from the Bible, Torah, Koran, Hindu texts and Buddhist sutras. Others will likely give voice to religious songs. And still others might burn incense, perform Wiccan rituals or beat drums during an American Indian dance. Their invocations will lay the bedrock for a house of worship that every faith tradition can call its own.

Interdenominational churches are increasingly part of the public landscape, and most colleges nationwide have long owned interfaith chapels. However, both formats have traditionally retained Christian features.

Chapman's \$5 million chapel will depart from that tradition.

World-renowned architect E. Fay Jones has replaced the pews with removable chairs. His blueprints show neither icons nor a crucifix. Large glass panels, the two-story structure's eye-catcher, are transparent to avoid the Christian connotations that stained glass might generate.

Jones' team also drew in storage areas for each religion. That way, groups can quickly decorate the chapel with their distinctive materials for worship.

"The students, faculty, trustees and community members on our planning

committees emphasized neutral functionality," said Ronald Lynn Farmer, a religion professor and Chapman's first dean of chapel. "This layout will allow Buddhists to meditate on their cushions and Muslims to spread out their prayer rugs."

But the story delves deeper than architecture. The chapel will highlight growing religious diversity on campus.

In the university's early years, nearly every Chapman student was white and Christian. In fact, the institution is affiliated with First Christian Church Disciples of Christ, a progressive denomination.

Today the school is home to a religious kaleidoscope. By year's end, Chapman will boast 13 faith-based groups that span at least three Christian branches, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Wicca and American Indian spirituality.

These groups have instituted the Interfaith Communications Team, meeting weekly to discuss organizational and theological issues. They've also coordinated two interfaith services.

"The first all-faiths worship (during orientation in August) convinced me that we could do more than dialogue," said sophomore Leslie Elliott, student director of spiritual programming. "People were so excited about learning from their peers. That day was the first time I saw clearly the many faces of God."

Farmer and English Professor Polly Williams, assistant dean of chapel, envision even greater interaction. They plan to sponsor lectures, seminars and study groups covering an array of interfaith topics. A variety of departments are slated to offer classes that incorporate religion....

[Jill] Greenblatt, [campus president of Hillel], and Chapman trustee Dennis Savage....cite the university's longstanding emphasis on spirituality, one of its "four pillars" of education.

v v v

TBC: Regarding all the above news articles, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 seems to summarize what's taking place globally: "...they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie...."

Endnotes

1 Trinity Broadcasting Network (11/7/97).

2 Rodney R. Romney, *Journey to Inner Space: Finding God-in-Us* (Abingdon, 1986), 24,31.

3 *Christian News* (3/2/98), 11.

4 *St. Petersburg Times* (Feb 20, 1998), 1A, 10A.

What's Happening to the Faith?

Dave Hunt

Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the] faith on the earth?

Lk 18:8

Christ raised a solemn question. If we believe Christ's coming could be soon, then we are living in the very time of which He spoke—a time when the faith would be in more danger of disappearing than ever before! Have we grasped the significance of our day and our individual responsibility to proclaim without compromise God's truth and to defend the faith?

Jude exhorts us to "earnestly contend for the faith once [for all time] delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Jude's epistle makes it clear that the faith (i.e., God's revealed truth, the gospel, which every Christian is to believe, obey and teach) never changes, that any revision or compromise thereof must be vigorously opposed and that contending for the faith is the responsibility of every Christian.

Perhaps most shocking is Jude's implication that the enemies of the faith ("certain men") will be influential church leaders. The phrase "have crept in" can only mean within the church; and "unawares" indicates that their betrayal of the faith is, astonishingly, no deterrent to their wide acceptance as Christian leaders!

Christ's warning is reaching its awful climax in our day. Examples are legion. "His Grace, Archbishop Tutu" of South Africa (of great influence worldwide) has declared, "The Holy Spirit is not limited to the Christian Church..." and of Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu, "the Holy Spirit shines through him."¹ R. Kirby Godsey, president of prominent Southern Baptist Mercer University, heavily supported by the Georgia Baptist Convention, denies the infallibility of the Bible, the unique power and authority of God, the validity of the Gospels' account of the life and teachings of Jesus, the efficacy of Christ's atonement and the uniqueness of Christ as the only Savior.²

Bill Phipps, recently elected head of the United Church of Canada (a union of Canadian Congregationalists, Methodists and the majority of Canadian Presbyterians) rejects Christ's deity, His resurrection, His uniqueness as only Savior and a literal heaven or hell.³ Rodney R. Romney, pastor of Seattle's First Baptist Church, has taught for years that we are gods, and receives New

Age messages from a "higher source," such as "this sacred place of your inner knowing...is the stepping-stone to the stars."⁴ Yet Phipps's and Romney's heresies seem quite acceptable to their denominations.

Zondervan recently published a book titled *More Than One Way? Four Views On Salvation in a Pluralistic World*—as though this were a question worth discussing! Echoing Billy Graham, who has said, "I respect other paths to God,"⁵ Leighton Ford declared, "Preach the gospel, but don't be so negative as to refuse to endorse or work with those who belong to a group that proclaims a different gospel."⁶ Of course, there are no "other paths to God" and no "different gospels" to be "endorsed."

And here is Jerry Falwell posing in a warm hug with Sun Myung Moon after speaking at a plenary session of Moon's "Christian Ecumenism in the Americas" conference in Montevideo, Uruguay.

For there are certain men crept in unawares...

Jude 4

Falwell has called Moon an "unsung hero [to] the cause of freedom" who was "to be commended" for his determination, courage, and endurance in support of his beliefs.⁷ In fact, Moon is a cult leader who opposes freedom and whose mind control tactics have enslaved his followers.

And what are Moon's beliefs which Falwell commends him for supporting faithfully? That Jesus failed in His mission, that Moon is the true Messiah, and that Jesus Christ has said, "[T]he King of Glory...our precious Lord Sun Myung Moon and his beloved bride Hak Ja Han...reign as king and queen of the entire universe...[and] I, Jesus of Nazareth, known as the Christ, bow in humility before them..."⁸ Should Moon really be hugged and commended?

That for years Norman Vincent Peale could publicly promote numerous blatant denials of the faith (as we document thoroughly in *Occult Invasion*), yet continue to be praised by Billy Graham and other evangelical leaders, is staggering! His chief disciple, Robert Schuller (who calls Peale his mentor and the man who had the greatest influence upon his theology and ministry) not only promotes Peale's heresies and occultism but continues to have the largest TV audience each Sunday of any "televangelist." That he enjoys the

continuing praise of evangelical leaders such as Graham is again a fulfillment of Jude's prophecy. Where are those evangelical leaders who are earnestly contending for the faith?

Schuller boasted to a pleased Graham that "thousands of pastors and hundreds of rabbis and...over a million Muslims a week" watch his Hour of Power.⁹ Imagine the ingenious tightrope-walking it takes to please this divergent audience! And what condition must the church be in if thousands of pastors are happy with a message that pleases rabbis and Muslims!

Schuller, whose Crystal Cathedral houses offices for "Christians and Muslims for Peace," told Imam Alfred Mohammed of the Muslim American Society that "if he [Schuller] came back in 100 years and found his descendants Muslims, it wouldn't bother him..."¹⁰ Apparently Schuller is unconcerned that Islam denies that Jesus is God and that He died for our sins (someone

else died on the Cross in His place), offers a gospel of good works for salvation, and death in *jihad* as the only sure way to the Muslim's "heaven," where the faithful are rewarded with rivers of wine (which they are not permitted on earth) and harems of beautiful virgins.

Yet Schuller's approval of Islam meets with no public rebuke from the numerous evangelical leaders who, instead, encourage and praise him. Schuller has even commended *all forms of Eastern meditation* such as TM, Zen Buddhism and yoga as valid methods for "the harnessing, by human means, of God's divine laws..."¹¹ How can church leaders of national and international recognition, to whom "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28) looks for spiritual direction, stand by in silence (or worse yet, give their approval) while such poison is fed to blood-bought millions?!

We have thoroughly documented the fact that Sir John Marks Templeton promotes Antichrist's coming world religion and offers a prize for contributing toward its development. That *Christianity Today* would promote Templeton and his occultism,¹² that Billy Graham, Charles Colson and Bill Bright would praise Templeton, endorse his Antichrist religion and accept that infamous prize for contributing to its development¹³—and that other Christian leaders such as Dobson, Swindoll, Falwell, et al. would not rebuke such betrayal of the gospel—is an incredibly flagrant rejection of the mandate to contend for the faith!

Charles Colson and Fr. Richard John Neuhaus (an apostate Lutheran before his conversion to Catholicism) engineered the ecumenical documents (ECT and ECT-2) signed by some Roman Catholic and evangelical leaders, documents which promote Roman Catholicism's false gospel of works and ritual. Colson and Neuhaus were guided each step of the way by Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, whose approval of the wording of the documents was required.¹⁴ Bill Bright's opening words of his speech in a Catholic church in Rome accepting the Templeton prize were "Your eminence, Cardinal Cassidy..."¹⁵

Cardinal Cassidy reports directly to the Pope, who enjoys the fulsome praise not only of Graham and Schuller but of Hayford, Dobson, Van Impe, Hinn, Crouch, *Christianity Today* and others. John Wimber said, "The Pope's a...real born-again, evangelical charismatic..."¹⁶ Pat Robertson enthused, "Pope John Paul II stands like a rock...in his clear enunciation of the foundational principles of the Christian faith."¹⁷ Colson and Neuhaus, the visible architects of this betrayal of the Reformation and the millions martyred by the Roman Catholic Church, become subversives on behalf of the Vatican, while Packer, Bright, Robertson and the other evangelical signatories are willing cohorts.

Colson and Neuhaus convened a meeting in October 1997 between those who signed the infamous ECT-2 and Catholic bishops from Latin America led by Archbishop Oscar Rodriguez, president of the Council of Latin American Bishops Conferences. Present also was Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York. Addressing this group, Cardinal Cassidy declared that the "Catholic Church has evangelized Latin America over a period of five hundred years. It has established the Christian Church in that continent... [and] the church that has evangelized a country or people should be held in respect by others who come later on the scene. This sense of respect would seem to require that newcomers [i.e., evangelicals] not target for their evangelizing work the active, baptized members of the Church that has been responsible for the original evangelization..."¹⁸ And evangelical leaders present acquiesced to this disingenuous statement as though Rome's soul-damning gospel saves souls!

This agreement (approved by Colson, Packer, Bright, et al.) forbids evangelicals to evangelize the 90 percent or more of those living in Latin America who were

baptized as infants into the Roman Catholic Church, a Church which teaches that baptism is essential to salvation, delivers from original sin and makes them Christians. They are looking to this Church, through its rituals and the repetition of many "sacrifices of Christ" in the Mass, to eventually get them out of purgatory and into heaven. The ECT documents place these deluded and lost souls out of bounds to the gospel. Most of the members of evangelical churches in Central and South America are converts from Roman Catholicism. What an eternal tragedy for their souls had this evil agreement been in effect and adhered to by evangelicals in these Catholic countries from the very beginning!

In his speech, Cardinal Cassidy called for "a new spirit of cooperation between Catholics and Evangelicals in Latin America..."¹⁹

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Acts 5:29

What unconscionable hypocrisy! The truth is that the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America has for centuries persecuted and killed evangelicals, viciously opposed the gospel, and done everything in its power to prevent the salvation of souls. Such tactics have proved futile (the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church) and are frowned upon in this age of emphasis upon civil rights. So Rome seduces leading evangelicals into agreeing that baptized, active Catholics (how active?) are Christians and not to be evangelized!

Those who signed ECT and ECT-2, both Catholics and evangelicals, would rightly condemn Southern Baptist Bible teacher Jimmy Carter for his recent statement that Mormons are Christians and not to be evangelized. But how is his statement that "the people in my own local church have no interest in trying to condemn...[or] to convert Mormons..."²⁰ any different from declaring that Catholics are not to be converted? Catholicism's gospel is just as false as Mormonism's.

The faith is under attack by any denial of either the inerrancy, sufficiency or sole authority of God's Word. We have documented that Christian psychology denies the latter two, while Roman Catholicism denies all three. The latter two are also denied by

the alleged new revelations being so avidly pursued within the charismatic movement. And all three are rendered irrelevant when experience is elevated above doctrine as proof of "revival" at Toronto, Pensacola and increasingly elsewhere. The very "salvation" testimony of Steve Hill, revival evangelist at Pensacola's Brownsville Assembly of God, as given on TV's "20/20," is an example of this error: "I didn't believe in God, but...out of desperation...I said, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.' I just began to say that name, and a power came through my body..."²¹

Repeating the name of Jesus in desperation is not *the faith* for which we must earnestly contend. The gospel which one must understand and believe to be saved includes: That Jesus is God ("If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins... and whither I go, ye cannot come" - Jn 8:24, 21); that He died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:1-4); that salvation must be received as a gift (a gift cannot be earned, paid for or merited - Rom 6:23); that salvation comes by God's grace, utterly undeserved and not by works (Eph 2:8-10); that Jesus, who is God from all eternity, became a real flesh-and-blood man to die in our place ("Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" - Jn 6:53—and by eat He means to believe: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" - v 47).

The gospel alone is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). A sentimentality about the Cross won't save. The torture of scourging, nails in hands and feet and thorns on brow, which men inflicted, could only condemn, not save. To be saved, one must understand and believe that on the cross Christ became the sacrifice for our sins, bearing at the hands of God ("Yet it pleased the LORD [Jehovah] to bruise him...mak[ing] his soul an offering for sin" - Is 53:10) the infinite penalty His own justice demanded. It is *only* because Christ paid that full penalty that we could be forgiven and receive eternal life.

It is not enough to mourn and weep over the compromise of *the faith* by others. Let each of us examine his or her own heart—and then *do* something to help. If tens of thousands of true Bereans would write and/or phone to exhort and encourage leaders to earnestly contend for the faith, leaders whose voices need to be heard, perhaps it would have an impact that could help to rescue multitudes before it is too late.

May it be said of each of us, as of the woman of Mark 14:8, that we have done what we could!

TBC

Quotable

The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling men of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the Cross and His precious Blood; by teaching them justification by faith and bidding them believe on a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the Brazen Serpent; by telling men to look and live, to believe; repent and be converted. This is the only teaching which for eighteen centuries God has honoured with success, and is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad.

J.C. Ryle

When a man bows before an idol of ivory, begging for salvation, and you tell him it cannot answer—is this hate?

When someone's little girl...must tell her thoughts, her emotions and temptations to an unmarried priest in the confession box, and you tell her she need only confess to Jesus—is this hate?

When a poor grieving widow pays from her meager substance for Masses for her dead husband, desperately hoping to end his pain in purgatory, and you tell her there is no purgatory—is this hate?

When one billion souls, for whom Christ died, trust a well-fed pontiff dressed in gold and fine linen to give them the keys to Heaven, and you tell them they need no one but Jesus—is this hate?

When Jesus, God's gift of love to all mankind, pointed his finger at the Pharisees and called them so many snakes—was this hate?

When the Apostle Paul stood on Mars Hill and dared tell the philosophers of pagan mystery religion that they were too superstitious—was this hate?

NO!

To free a man from Satan's chains, you must first tell him he is a prisoner. You must convince him that he is lost and without hope....There are those who call [evangelical] literature "hate literature." But they do not know the true meaning of hate.

True hatred hides the gospel in beautiful words that upset no one, and therefore bring no conviction of sin. True hatred stands in selfish silence as hell's population grows.

Battle Cry, May-June 1993

Q&A

Question: A popular Bible teacher in our area who has been highly regarded for many years within evangelical circles (not a charismatic) has begun to teach that Jesus is not our Creator, that He was only God temporarily, that He is called the Son of God because God the Father sired Him through Mary and that He is now an exalted man and only a man in heaven. Because this Bible teacher has been so highly regarded, these teachings are being widely accepted. What can you say that would be helpful in this situation?

Answer: It is tragic that so many Christians follow men rather than God through His Word. To any student of the Bible, such ideas would immediately be seen as the most obvious heresy. But because of their high regard for the teacher, those influenced by him surrender their own understanding of clear biblical teaching in deference to the leader whom they admire. That is how cults are formed.

The Bible clearly says that Mary, while still a virgin, "was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Mt 1:18), not "of the Father." The Holy Spirit is not called the Father of Jesus, yet it was through His agency that a child was formed in Mary's womb. Obviously the terms "Father" and "Son of God" contain no connotation of the Father "siring" Jesus. Indeed, God is said to have a Son in the Old Testament before Jesus was born in Bethlehem: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry" (Ps 2:12)... "[W]ho hath established all the ends of the earth [obviously, God]? What is his name, and what is his son's name...?" (Pv 30:4).

That God involves a plurality of persons is taught throughout the Old Testament as well as in the New. The very Hebrew word *elohim*, which is used for God about 2,500 times in the Old Testament, is a plural form indicating a number more than two. Having gone into this in detail in the past in books and the newsletter, I won't take time to go over it again. If you want biblical references, you may write and request our tract on the Trinity.

God says, "I change not" (Mal 3:6). Thus God the Son, who took a human body in becoming man through the virgin birth, must always continue to be God. That Jesus was God as a man in this world is clear. In the Old Testament, the God of Israel

repeatedly declares that He is the "only Savior" (Ps 106:21; Is 43:11; 45:22; 49:26, etc.); whereas the New Testament makes it equally clear that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and He is frequently called "God our Savior" (1 Tm 1:1; 2:5; Titus 1:4; 2:13, etc.). God the Father says to Christ after His incarnation ("when he bringeth the firstborn into the world"), "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever..." (Heb 1:8). And one of the characteristics of God is changelessness: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8).

That Christ is our Creator must be true because He is God. The Bible also states it clearly: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (Jn 1:3). If man was created (which he was), then he was created by Christ. And inasmuch as Christ made everything that was made, then He himself must be uncreated, and by this argument also He is God.

Question [composite of many letters]: We are very concerned about a course being taught in our church called *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. The manual is by Henry Blackaby and Claude King and it seems to be promoting what TBC has referred to as "experience-driven spirituality" (5/95). Some might even call it occultism. What is your opinion of the manual?

Answer: We have recently reviewed *Experiencing God*. With more than 2 million copies sold, it has become very popular among Christians. After an initial cursory look, there did seem to be a number of potential problems with some of the statements made by the authors. For example, they write, "I come to know God by experience as I obey Him and He accomplishes His work through me" (p. 19); "If you have trouble hearing God speak, you are in trouble at the very heart of your Christian experience" (p. 36); "Prayer is two-way fellowship and communication with God. You speak to God and He speaks to you" (p. 87); "With God working through that servant, he or she can do anything God can do. Wow! Unlimited potential!" (p. 17).

Given what is clearly a ravenous appetite for mysticism today, in the world as well as within professing Christianity, those deeply concerned with the biblical health of fellow believers see such statements as

highly toxic. Indeed, they are alarming at first glance. However, following a careful reading of the manual, these statements are not as some perceive them to be.

The heart of the manual seems to be a reminder to believers that at the time they received the gospel of salvation, they began "a personal encounter with the living Christ" (p. 212). That reality involves a developing personal relationship with God which will continue for all eternity. Since this is the thrust of the writing, the authors address the elements incorporated in a personal relationship: fellowship, intimacy, communication, love, obedience, service, knowledge, experience, etc. *Experiencing God* seeks to encourage these elements in every believer's walk with the Lord, and for that we find the book valuable.

The major problem with the manual, it seems, is not its premise, but the confusion created by its more prominent terms and statements. Not enough care is taken in the wording, especially in view of today's deceptive spiritual climate. When the authors use the term "experience," such as in "knowing God by experience," they mean, first and foremost, through God's Word: "Interpret experience by Scripture. Look to see what God says and how He works in the Scriptures. Make your decisions and evaluate your experiences based upon biblical principles. Our experiences cannot be our guide. Every experience must be controlled and understood by the Scriptures" (p. 13)... "The Bible is my guide for faith and practice" (p. 14). In other places in the manual, the term "experience" refers to what we have learned about God's character throughout our walk with Him, i.e., God working personally and practically in our lives and proving Himself as revealed in His Word.

"Hearing from God," as the authors address that subject, is far removed from the approach taken by today's contemplative mystics and Christianized mediums. Blackaby and King state emphatically, "God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways" (p. 37). Formulas, seeking signs and wonders, random Bible-verse picking, (fleece) methods, and claiming to have a word from God are all presented with caveats. In the manual, "two-way communication with God," perhaps one of the most occult sounding phrases, is not the continual dialogue with God as promoted and

taught by the various "Schools of the Prophets" cropping up all over the country. Again, the authors, seemingly oblivious to today's subjective experiential bent in society and the church, have grounded this experience upon God speaking objectively through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit's ministry, one's response in obedience, and God working in and through one's life (p. 84). There are other seemingly problematic statements in the manual but all are clarified (to some degree) by biblical support. Thus, the authors cannot legitimately be accused of promoting mysticism.

In their encouragements related to one's communion with God, Blackaby and King underscore the necessity of a growing, intimate love relationship with Jesus Christ as critical in recognizing His voice (according to John 10:4). While such an exhortation is beneficial to every believer, at times the authors give the impression that hearing from God, as Moses (and other prophets) did, could be the rule rather than the exception. Not only does that go beyond the promise of the Word; even the most compelling examples from the authors' own lives fall far short of the experiences of Moses, "whom the Lord knew face to face" (Dt 34:10)."

Finally, it's been reported that some Catholic meditative organizations are using the manual for contemplative, experiencing-God weekends. One reason for this is the almost incidental gospel introduced at the beginning of the manual (p. 8). The authors, writing primarily for believers, added an apparently hasty and even vague presentation of the gospel of salvation. This plays into the hands of mystically oriented groups who deny that salvation comes only by grace through *faith alone* in who Christ is and His finished sacrifice on the cross.

While we regard it crucial that more cautions should have been given, we commend the authors for challenging us to love God with our hearts and expecting God's hand to be evident in blessing our lives and service.

Endnotes

- 1 St. Alban's Cathedral, Pretoria, South Africa (Nov. 23, 1978).
- 2 David W. Cloud, "President of SBC University Attacks the Bible" (*O Timothy*, vol 13, issue 12, 1996), 1-7.
- 3 *World* (3/7/98), 18; United Online News, 1997 (*The Ottawa Citizen*).
- 4 Rodney R. Romney, *Journey to Inner Space: Finding God-in-Us* (Abingdon, 1986), 26,121.
- 5 *Parade Magazine* (10/20/96), 4.
- 6 Leighton Ford, interview by M.H. Reynolds, Amsterdam 1986 evangelism conference sponsored by Billy Graham (*Foundation magazine*).
- 7 *Washington Times* (*Cornerstone*, vol 26, issue 111), 19.
- 8 *Victory of Love* (Unification Church, 1992), 65-66. As cited in *Cornerstone*.
- 9 From transcript, "Hour of Power" (June 8, 1997).
- 10 *Newsday* (8/31/97); *Grand Rapids Press* (9/1/97).
- 11 Robert Schuller, *Peace of Mind Through Possibility Thinking* (Fleming H. Revell, 1977), 131-32.
- 12 *Christianity Today* (4/24/94), back cover.
- 13 *Ibid*. The reception of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion by Graham, Colson and Bright has been thoroughly documented in past issues of *TBC*, as well as in speeches by the latter two in praise of Templeton and his prize.
- 14 Introduction, "The Gift of Salvation"/ECT-2 (*First Things*, Jan. 1998), 20; *Trinity Review* (Mar./Apr. 1988).
- 15 "Acceptance Speech by Dr. William R. Bright, Receiving the 1996 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion," delivered at The Church of St. Maria in Trastevere, Rome, Italy (May 9, 1996), 1.
- 16 Former Vineyard pastor, John Goodwin, "Testing the Fruit," Tape 2 (Toronto, Canada, Apr. 1997; Discernment Ministries, PO Box 129, Lapeer MI 48446).
- 17 Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide* (Word, 1993), 279.
- 18 Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, "The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (*First Things*, Jan. 1998), 24-26.
- 19 *Ibid*.
- 20 *Deseret News* (11/15/97); *Salt Lake Tribune* (11/33/97).
- 21 "20/20" (10/9/97).

Prayer Gone Awry

With Commentary

T.A. McMahon

When does prayer cease to be a good thing? When it deviates from the clear teaching of God's Word. Tragically, just as biblical teaching regarding faith has been twisted by popular "faith" preachers, so too what the Scriptures say about prayer is being corrupted by many evangelical leaders at the forefront of the national and international prayer movement. Prayer, like faith, is so important to a Christian's walk that distorting it can make praying an exercise in futility at best, a demonic delusion at worst.

The Bible teaches us everything we need to know about prayer; and if a doctrine or practice regarding prayer is *not found in*, or is *imposed upon*, the Scriptures, we can be sure it's not from the Lord—no matter how right it may seem. There are three basic questions we must ask to help us discern the truth or error of any spiritual teaching: 1) Is it taught directly in God's Word? 2) Is it presented indirectly, especially by way of example in lives of believers found in the Scriptures? 3) Can the doctrine, even when not directly stated (e.g., the Trinity), be *clearly and substantially* supported by the Scriptures? A no or an unconvincing or wishful yes to these questions is a strong indicator that the teaching should be rejected as unbiblical.

Based upon the whole counsel of God's Word concerning prayer, we can also make specific judgments as to whether or not a doctrine conforms to God's way. For example, does it make prayer a technique or methodology? Does it require certain works, rituals, or game plans in order to be successful? If that's the case, we have denied the critical personal-relationship aspect of prayer and rendered God a law-bound entity which *must* answer our prayers because we have followed certain rules or procedures.

Incredibly, what may be the fastest growing technique-driven prayer among evangelicals today is known as "strategic-level intercession." According to its promoters it involves newer varieties of prayer such as "spiritual warfare," "territorial spirits," "prophetic acts," "spiritual mapping," "warfare prayer," "tearing down strongholds," "identificational repentance," and "remitting the sins of nations."¹ Explanations of these prayer systems are found in advocate C. Peter Wagner's book, *Confronting the Powers*, along with

definitions of other methods, including "four ways of praying in the community": praise marches, prayerwalks, prayer journeys, and more wide-ranging prayer expeditions. These, the author notes, "were virtually unknown to the majority of Christians before the 1990s...."² Certainly, they were not known by God's prophets and apostles! (See *TBC*, May '97 / June '97.)

The rationale for these new approaches to prayer sounds appealing: Satan and his adversaries are obstructing the preaching and acceptance of the salvation message and must be confronted directly and removed from their positions of power so that the gospel can flow freely. That premise fails to meet the biblical criteria presented above. Nevertheless, Peter Wagner, recognized leader in this movement and a professor at Fuller Seminary School of World Mission, insists that it must be of God because the Lord commanded him to "take leadership in the area of territorial spirits."³ He is presently Coordinator of the International Spiritual Warfare Network (ISWN) and the AD 2000 United Prayer Track.

In order to show just how far from the Bible and saneness this popular movement has strayed, we present the following excerpts (in italics) from a 12/1/97 ISWN memorandum.⁴

THE RECONCILIATION WALK. *Thousands of intercessors are doing this prayer expedition, walking all the known routes of the First Crusade, which left Cologne, Germany...on Easter 1096. The one agenda item of this massive prayer initiative is repentance—apologizing to Muslims and Jews for the atrocities committed against them by our Christian ancestors.*

This is unbiblical. Even if some true Christians participated in the Crusades along with the Catholic mercenaries and assorted indulgence seekers, it was *their* sin to confess *then*. For a nonparticipant to confess someone else's sin is a charade. While expressing godly sorrow for something which took place nearly a thousand years ago could demonstrate a Christian's sincere compassion toward a Muslim or Jew, it has nothing to do with biblical repentance.

The Reconciliation Walk is one of the highest profile acts of identificational repentance in our decade, following the principles laid out in John Dawson's Healing America's Wounds. What happens, theologically speaking, is that massive corporate repentance such as this, on the pattern of 2 Chronicles 7:14, is one of the most effective means of tearing down the strongholds of the enemy (2 Cor 10:4-5).

This has nothing to do with 2 Chronicles

7:14, which involved national Israel's confession of sin to God. The true church is not a nation, it has no ancestral line, and it has no connection to the historic sins of pseudo-Christians. This type of repentance, therefore, encompasses believing in and promoting a lie, which is what 2 Corinthians 10:5 declares *constitutes* a stronghold of Satan.

Satan has used the wounds inflicted in the Crusades as a primary stronghold to blind the minds of Muslims and Jews to the gospel for centuries. In my opinion, the Reconciliation Walk is the most promising action ever taken to open the Muslim world to the love of Christ and to the full blessing of God.

This is folly, not biblical truth which sets humans free. Very few Muslims or Jews will ever hear of this "repentance"—and those who do could take it as proof that they are right and that Christianity is wrong. Daniel did not "identify" with the sins of his people against, and apologize to, the Gentile nations for the purpose of their conversion. He confessed his and Israel's sins *to God* (Dn 9).

OPERATION QUEEN'S PALACE... *Spiritual warfare on all levels was a key to Paul's success.*

Paul knew nothing of Wagner's concept of three-level spiritual warfare (ground level, occult level and strategic level). Paul's winning souls involved none of the strategies which Wagner, Dawson, Otis, et al. propose. You find no complex game plans or hidden "keys" to success in the apostles' ministry (Col 2:8; 1 Tm 4:1; Eph 6:10-20). Paul prayed continuously, and obediently preached the gospel whenever and wherever God gave him the opportunity. That simple, Spirit-filled, persevering approach enabled him to turn "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

The ruling ["territorial"] spirit over Ephesus and Asia Minor was Diana of the Ephesians....According to Acts 19, when Paul went to Ephesus he cast many demons out of individuals and he saw a people movement among magicians. This eroded Diana's authority so much that she began to lose her power and she could no longer keep her territory in darkness.

You have to read all of this *into* the Scriptures; Diana's territorial power simply isn't in the plain text.

While we were in Turkey, Doris [his wife] and I...knew that the power of the Queen of Heaven had to be broken in order for the gospel to spread in Turkey. Doris sensed this very strongly when we prayed near the altar of Diana. The evil power is still there, and it is very strong.

Wagner theorizes that the Queen of

Heaven may be more than a regional demon posing as Diana, and that it is also the power that draws Roman Catholics to worship Mary and her various apparitions around the world. The problem here is not that Wagner is wrong (paganism's Diana and Catholicism's Mary are obviously demonic manifestations); it is his reliance on a false spiritual method of both discernment and deliverance. Catholics can only be saved through the gospel, not by assaults against the demonic Queen of Heaven.

THE VISION FOR OPERATION QUEEN'S PALACE. *Cindy Jacobs...said, "For several years we have been doing battle against the Queen of Heaven in many parts of the world. The time has come for a frontal assault. [What does this mean, and where is it found in Scripture?] Why not call together the Spiritual Warfare Network intercessors from the nations of the world for a massive prayer initiative right where one of her centers of power lies?" It turned out to be one of those electric moments. Instantly Doris, Cindy and I knew that it was God's will, and Operation Queen's Palace was born....Acts 19:34 says that for two hours the idol worshippers of Ephesus cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" I believe [God] showed us that Christians, in that very place, would one day cry out, "Great is Jesus of Nazareth!" for four hours. Ephesus was once the center of world Christianity. It is time to take that land back for the kingdom.*

Take the land back for the kingdom?? Since when did the body of Christ become a land baron? Did the early church battle over territories? Wagner and his cohorts have confused the erroneous temporal teachings and land-conquering practices of the Roman Catholic Church, the kingdom/dominion/reconstruction evangelicals, Islam, etc., with the spiritual kingdom of God (Jn 18:36).

THE CELEBRATION. *Each [Operation Queen's Palace] team of intercessors will accomplish their prayer acts, wherever they might be, in time to arrive at Ephesus on the same day....careful not to disobey any Turkish laws....no political overtones. We will not be evangelizing....no speeches, no preaching, no teaching; just prayer, praise, worship, and scripture....no overt warfare prayer because the prayer and prophetic intercession will have previously been accomplished....*

Can any of this be found in Paul's approach to saving souls? Plead with those drawn into the melodrama of this massive, costly, fruitless activity, to read Acts and Paul's epistles for themselves!

PRAYER THROUGHOUT THE COURT OF THE QUEEN. *I have a hypothesis...that the*

Queen of Heaven is the demonic principality to whom Satan has delegated the primary responsibility of...blind[ing] the minds of unbelievers to the gospel (see 2 Cor. 4:3-4). If this hypothesis is correct, Operation Queen's Palace...could be the most significant action ever taken to push back the forces of darkness....[What about the Cross?]

Since defeating Satan's demons is not the biblical prerequisite for spreading the gospel, this futile approach only plays into the hands of the adversary.

The spiritual warfare during the last week of September 1999 will be worldwide, ...massive,...precisely targeted,...synchronized, and...unprecedented....God has been training us for seven or eight years in this kind of spiritual warfare, and now is the time for a frontal attack.

Frontal attack? Chapter and verse, please! "Now is the time"? Is this why neither Jesus, the apostles, nor the early church ever engaged in this approach? It grieves us deeply that so many sincere Christians have become involved. It is both incredible and sad that the wilder, more irrational the testimonies, the greater the attraction and seduction—to which the following testifies:

THE ROLE OF OPERATION ICE CASTLE. *Ana Mendez...is the coordinator of the Spiritual Warfare Network for Southern Mexico....a proven, world-class leader in the field of prophetic intercession....a woman of God who has a remarkable gift of discernment, who hears accurately from God, and who has the courage to implement what she senses God is telling her to do, even at the literal risk of her physical life. Converted years ago as a high priestess of voodoo, Ana has known the powers of the invisible world in a deeply personal way....*

While in prayer in her [AD2000 prayer] tower, the Holy Spirit clearly showed her that a principal stronghold over the 10/40 Window [a designated mission area] was located on Mt. Everest in Nepal, and that she was to lead a team of intercessors in a frontal attack on this power of darkness, who was none other than the Queen of Heaven.

Ana, her husband, and Rony Chavez led a team of 11 who operated out of the base camp at the foot of Mt. Everest at 18,000 feet....From Ana's report: "God spoke to us that He was going to release judgment upon the iniquity and over the false religious systems of the world. He said that he was going to bring down the foundations of 'Mystery Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots.' [Really, by sending a prayer team to climb Mt. Everest?]

"[O]n September 22, 1997, an incredible climbing anointing came over the team, and

God led us through the Ice Fall, the most difficult, dangerous, and technically exacting part of the Everest ascent, with no guide but Him and no help other than from His angels. After many hours of crossing crevasses and climbing ice walls, we were about to reach the point where we had located the seat of the Queen of Heaven...[when] a huge avalanche broke loose above us, sending megatons of ice and snow crashing our way. At the last moment a huge crevasse in front of us swallowed up the avalanche [and] saved our lives...We continued toward our goal, and...took the [Queen's] throne that the Lord had showed us....That evening God spoke...: 'Go out from this mountain...because I am going to destroy everything.' The next day...all three mountain slopes which surrounded [the] Base Camp...simultaneously collapsed in the greatest avalanche ever seen on Everest."

"Climbing anointing"? No guide but Him and no help other than His angels? All of that to enable eleven (presumably novice) mountaineering prayer warriors to reach an ice-laden, extremely high-altitude physical throne of a spiritual entity, in order to pray to destroy its center of power? What spiritual powers did God destroy with "the greatest avalanche ever seen on Everest"? Is this what it takes to fulfill the Great Commission?

A significant prophecy came from one of the home-based intercessors praying for Operation Ice Castle. Before hearing any reports, she said that in prayer God had showed her that the teams in Nepal were up against a dragon (confirmed), that their prayer assault was sending arrows into the dragon...[who] did not have strength to do anything about it. I cannot help but wonder if the weakened state of the dragon (the Queen of Heaven? Satan himself?) might be due to the massive and aggressive praying for the 10/40 Window throughout this decade. [Satan, the dragon, is weakened? In fact, his kingdom grows!]

The Scriptures know nothing of these "newer varieties of prayer." In addition to this "aggressive praying" by the masses being utterly without merit, with all of its strategic-level spiritual warfare methods and techniques, it is a denial of Christ's complete victory over spiritual powers on the cross. We are told "to stand" in the armor of God against Satan's schemes, not "attack" him with fleshly schemes (Eph 6). If we open ourselves to these kinds of delusions, where will it take us?

Let us all heed God's words: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein..." (Jer 6:16). **TBC**

Quotable

The hypocrite hearkens more after eloquence than substance....The Christian looks most to the power of the word; he...weighs the matter rather than the manner, and regards the message more than the messenger. The one falls down before man, the other before God.

[C]omforts, promises, and general truths he [the hypocrite] loves; the doctrine of the cross he hates....The Christian hears all God's word, loves to be smitten...[and cries], "Search me, and try my heart."

John Fletcher

The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher (Schmul Publishers, 1974), 4:254

A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated through eternity....The same may be said of each day. When it is once past, it is gone forever. All the marks which we put upon it, it will exhibit forever....Each day will not only be a witness of our conduct, but will affect our everlasting destiny....How shall we then wish to see each day marked with usefulness...! It is too late to mend the days that are past. The future is in our power. Let us, then, each morning, resolve to send the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear forever. And at night let us reflect that one more day is irrevocably gone, indelibly marked.

Adoniram Judson

In E. Judson, *The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Anson, Randolph & Company, 1883), 14-15

Q&A

Question [composite of several]: I've been reading books and listening to tapes about the nephilim in Genesis 6. What is your belief in this regard?

Answer: The nephilim are presumed to be the race of giants born prior to the flood and their destruction was supposedly a major reason for the flood. The phrase from verse 4, "when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men," is cited to justify the belief that demons or fallen angels had sex with women to produce this hybrid race. The term "sons of God" seems to refer to angels in Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7, and appears to be in contrast to "daughters of

men." That Jude 6 refers to "angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" seems to give support to this belief, which a great many Bible scholars accept.

For myself, I cannot believe that angels or demons, which are spirits, can have sex with women and produce children. That would raise the possibility of continual "virgin" births. One would have to explain why this hasn't happened down through history and why it isn't going on today. Some say it is. If so, they ought to be able to offer proof, but I haven't seen it.

Furthermore, the statement that "...sons of God...took them wives of all which they chose" seems to indicate something more than temporary illicit sex. Yes, demons and angels can manifest themselves in apparent bodily form, but just how genuinely corporeal it is remains a question and we have no example in Scripture of such a manifestation lasting longer than a brief appearance. That these "sons of God" took wives seems to indicate a lasting relationship, which argues against the idea of demons or angels being involved.

Then who are these "sons of God"? Some say they represented the "godly line of Seth," but that idea requires considerable adding to Scripture. Adam was called a "son of God" in Luke 3:38, no doubt because he was created by God. It then seems possible that this expression could also refer to the children born to Adam and Eve before they sinned. That they had such children seems likely. God told them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth..." (Gn 1:28); and after they sinned, God told Eve, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception" (Gn 3:16). These earlier offspring would have sinned on their own, of course; but how and when and how long they lived we don't know. Having been born to Adam and Eve prior to their sin, they could be called "sons of God." Whoever these "sons of God" were, I cannot accept the idea of angels or demons taking wives!

Question: I've picked up on the internet accusations of factual errors in your book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*. Here are two of them: "Dave Hunt says (p. 117) that 'Pope Eugenius IV condemned Joan of Arc (1412-31) to be burned as a witch and heretic, but she was beatified by Pius X (1903-14) in 1909....' In fact, the pope never faced her. [Hunt also wrote,] 'In his *History of the Inquisition*, Canon Llorente, who was secretary to the Inquisition in Madrid from 1790-92 and had

access to the archives of all the tribunals, estimated that in Spain alone the number of condemned exceeded 3 million, with about 300,000 burned at the stake....' The truth is, Llorente put the death count at 30,000...." How do you respond to these charges?

Answer: Yes, Pope Eugenius IV never faced Joan of Arc personally. However, this case was too important for the Pope not to have been advised and consulted. Joan was a prize of such value that the Duke of Burgundy was paid a huge bribe to hand her over to the British. Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, was promised the archbishopric of Rouen for negotiating the deal. Joan's trial in Rouen lasted nearly four months (Feb. 4-May 30, 1431) and was conducted by high church officials. Though under British guard, Joan was a prisoner of the Inquisition and the charge was heresy.

Cauchon presided, one of his canons served as prosecutor, a Dominican monk represented the Inquisition, and some forty men learned in theology and law were added to the panel....[When] faggots were piled high in the market place of Rouen...platforms were placed nearby—one for Cardinal Winchester of England and his prelates, another for Cauchon and the judges; and 800 British troops stood on guard. (Will Durant, *The History of Civilization*, Simon and Schuster, 1950, VI:85-86)

The importance of the case for the Church (both politically and theologically) and the length of the trial make it certain that the Pope knew and gave his approval. Furthermore, the popes were in charge of the Inquisition wherever it was held. Those involved on site were agents of the papacy. It was a pope who initiated the Inquisition (Gregory IX in 1231). Writes Will Durant, "the Inquisition was now officially established under the control of the popes" (IV:779). It is a coverup to argue that because the Pope didn't personally confront Joan of Arc he therefore did not condemn her to death. He did so through his agents the inquisitors and knew what was happening. All historians agree that the popes were responsible for the Inquisition. Roman Catholic historian Peter de Rosa writes,

What history shows is that, for more than six centuries without a break, the papacy was the sworn enemy of elementary justice. Of eighty popes in a line from the thirteenth century on, not one of them disapproved of the theology and

apparatus of Inquisition. On the contrary, one after another added his own cruel touches to the workings of this deadly machine. (Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, Crown Publishers, Inc., 1988, 175-76).

But rather than to admit the horror of the Inquisitions (there were several over the centuries: medieval, Spanish, Roman, etc. extending throughout Europe, Africa and the Americas) and the fact that the popes and church hierarchy were entirely responsible for them, the defenders of Romanism try to avoid the issue by quibbling over details.

J.H. Ignaz von Dollinger, Roman Catholic professor of Church History at Munich, in his book, *The Pope and the Council*, published in the late 1860s, declared,

Both the initiation and the carrying out of this new principle [the Inquisition] must be ascribed to the popes alone....It was the popes who compelled bishops and priests to condemn the heterodox to torture, confiscation of their goods, imprisonment, and death, and to enforce the execution of this sentence on the civil authorities, under pain of excommunication. From 1200 to 1500 the long series of Papal ordinances on the Inquisition, ever increasing in severity and cruelty...runs on without a break...every Pope improves upon the devices of his predecessor....It was only the absolute dictation of the Popes, and the notion of their infallibility...that made the Christian world, silently and without reclamation, admit the code of the Inquisition, which contradicted the simplest principles of Christian justice...and would have been rejected with universal horror in the ancient Church. (191-92)

I relied upon a secondary source that said Llorente cited 300,000 deaths in the Spanish Inquisition. Other sources say 30,000. The apparent discrepancy could be explained by Llorente on one occasion giving figures for Spain and on another for Europe—or including those who, though not burned at the stake, were martyred in other ways. Concerning those martyred in Spain, *Fox's Book of Martyrs* asserts,

But the crowds who perished in dungeons of torture, of confinement, and of broken hearts, the millions of dependent lives made utterly helpless, or hurried to the grave by the death of the victims, are beyond all register...(86-87)

Instead of trying to discredit my figures, these critics ought rather to admit that the

Spanish Inquisition swallowed up far more than 300,000, whether Llorente said it or not. The so-called Spanish Inquisition was not confined to Spain. Referring to the Spanish Inquisition in Holland, one history book reports that

The number of Netherlanders who were burned, strangled, beheaded, or buried alive...for the offense of reading the Scriptures, or looking askance at a graven image, or of ridiculing the actual presence of the body and blood of Christ in a wafer, has been placed as high as 100,000 by distinguished authorities, and has never been put at a lower mark than 50,000." (*A Short History of the Inquisition*, The Truth Seekers Co., 1907, 188-89)

Of just one of the Pope's enforcers of the Inquisition, *A Short History* states,

On his departure from the Netherlands, [the Duke of] Alva boasted that he had ordered 18,600 executions for religious offenses. He said nothing of the tens of thousands massacred in other ways. The Netherlands fought 80 years for independence [from Spain and Rome] at the cost of millions of lives. In the end, the Inquisition was rooted out, and the country lost to the Catholic powers. (221)

The motive of the Catholic apologists is revealed in this statement from the same internet article: "Hunt paints the Catholic Church as the whore of Babylon at war with the Church of saints—drunk on their blood." They are trying to disprove that accusation, but history affirms it and I will stand by it. The truth is that there is no other institution, government, organization or entity in history that even comes close to the Roman Catholic Church's slaughter of the saints! Let me quote again from *A Short History* concerning the Spanish Inquisition only as it operated in the small country of Holland:

From Rome and Madrid came the orders to rack and to kill, the dungeons were filled by the spies and man-catchers as fast as they were emptied by the scaffold. Men and women were broken on the wheel, racked, dragged at horses' tails; their sight was extinguished, their tongues torn out by the roots, their hands and feet burned and twisted off between red hot irons; they were starved, drowned, hanged, burned, killed in every slow and agonizing way that the malicious inventiveness of priests could devise...hooked by the middle of the body...and then made to swing to and fro over a slow fire until

entirely roasted...all was done under the authority of the holy father, the Pope. (202, 296)

The horror of the Inquisition is beyond recital. Why, then, don't the Roman Catholic apologists acknowledge that horror, confess their shame and call upon their Church to repent of its centuries of unspeakable crimes against humanity!

In addition to the above was the slaughter by the hundreds of thousands of evangelical Christians in France known as Albigenses and Huguenots. The former (once the majority of the population in Southern France, the most prosperous part of Europe) were practically exterminated by the popes over the period of a century. As for the Huguenots, 70,000 were slaughtered in the infamous St. Bartholomew's massacre; another 200,000 killed and 500,000 fled France. When my wife, Ruth, and I were in South Africa we met descendants of Huguenots who had fled as far as that country. There were the Waldenses, the Cathari, Bogomils, Hussites and others who were slaughtered by the Roman Catholic Church by the hundreds of thousands.

Yes, we can attribute millions of deaths of true Christians to Roman Catholicism and the popes down through the centuries. No other entity in history comes close to being drunk with the blood of the saints, and that description absolutely fits the Roman Catholic Church!

Endnotes

- 1 C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers* (Regal Books, 1996), 130.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 4 ISWN, Box 63060, Colorado Springs CO 80962

The Christian Life

Dave Hunt

The just shall live by faith.

Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17;

Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38

Surely a phrase that is repeated four times in the Bible must contain one of God's most important teachings. The life God gives is only for the *just*—but who is *just*? The Bible leaves no doubt as to the answer: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecc 7:20); "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). God's law demands, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" (Lk 10:27). By that standard we have all broken God's law repeatedly and are condemned.

Nor is there any way that we, as sinners, could become *just*. Living a perfect life in the future (even if that were possible) could never merit forgiveness for sins already committed or deliver from the judgment which God's justice righteously demands. Saving a million lives in the future, for example, could never atone for having taken just one life in the past. Only God could declare a sinner to be "just"—but how could He, when His irrevocable law condemns us? For God simply to forgive the sinner would violate His own law and in itself would be unjust.

Paul, inspired of the Holy Spirit, explains how God can justly justify sinners: "Being justified freely by his [God's] grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...for the remission of sins...that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:24-26). Forgiving the sinner and declaring him *just* comes only on the basis of Christ having paid the full penalty demanded by God's justice against sin, and the sinner having accepted that payment on his behalf. It cannot come about through good deeds, church attendance, sacraments, baptism, scapulars or medals, prayers, tears, promises, charitable gifts—or anything else that pastor, priest, church, or Mary could do. Only the infinite God himself, coming as a sinless man through the virgin birth, could bear, in our place, the infinite penalty we deserved.

One cannot even begin to "live by faith"

while "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), which is mankind's natural condition. One must be made "alive from the dead" (Rom 6:13) by receiving God's forgiveness in Christ. The Christian life of faith is only for those who are "in the faith" (2 Cor 13:5). Living "a good Christian life" is not the way to *become* a Christian. Only those who *already* are Christians can live that life. Nor is it lived in order to earn heaven, which is impossible, but out of gratitude to Christ for having paid the penalty for sin.

A Christian has been "born again" of the Spirit of God (Jn 3:3-8) through "the Word of God" (1 Pt 1:23) by believing the gospel (Rom 1:16) and is a "new creature" (2 Cor 5:17) in Christ, having been "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). If we trust Him to do so, surely God will open the right doors, guide each step of

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Acts 2:28

every Christian's life, and provide the means of fulfilling the "good works" which He has ordained for each of us.

Clearly, one must first *enter* upon the Christian life by faith in Christ in order to begin to "live by faith." Paul exhorts us, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Col 2:6). And how did we receive Christ? As helpless, hopeless sinners who could do nothing for our own salvation but had to look entirely to Christ to save us. In that same attitude of unworthiness and complete dependence upon God for His grace and upon Christ to live His life through us, we live by faith the Christian life.

Christ told Paul that His strength was perfected in Paul's weakness (2 Cor 12:9). We must stop trying to be strong in ourselves, and "be strong *in the Lord, and in the power of his might*" (Eph 6:10). The battle with the forces of evil, God assures us, will be won "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit..." (Zec 4:6). There is great joy, even in great trials, in trusting Christ and seeing what He can do.

That the Christian life is to be *lived by faith* tells us that it comes supernaturally, not naturally, as we trust God and know and obey His Word. It cannot be by our own direction and strength but only under the leading and

by the power of God, who alone is the proper object of faith. Yes, the Christian life is miraculous. Expect it to be! Beware, however, of the widespread unbiblical emphasis upon, and insatiable desire for, the miraculous, which foster delusion. One of today's most prominent proponents of the supernatural, about whom we have much to say in *Occult Invasion*, writes, "And you can perform miracles if you but understand...the laws...that unlock God's power...the flow of God's energy..." (*Beyond Reason*, p 20) "We speak to money, and it comes. We speak to storms, and they cease..." (*The Secret Kingdom*, p 65) Money comes from his mailing list, and this country has experienced the worst storms in years without any intervention from him.

The most powerful evidence of God's supernatural work in our lives is found in the transformation of our character to Christlikeness. The "fruit," not of "therapy," but "of the Spirit," is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal 5:22-23). The "works of the flesh" (Gal 5:19-21), no matter how exemplary, are not acceptable to God (Rom 8:8). To live the Christian life, one must learn to "live in the Spirit" and "walk in the Spirit" (Gal 5:25).

This is not to deny the benefit of education, diligence, hard work, prudent investment, experience and sound practice in earning one's "daily bread" (Mt 6:11). Earthly success, however, though legitimate, is not the Christian's goal in life. Christ declared, "...a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Lk 12:15); "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt 6:19-21).

The fact that the Christian life is supernatural does not guarantee the "financial success" promised by today's false prophets—nor that we will be free of trouble, sorrow or pain. Positive confession leaders forget that it was from *prison* that Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:13); and in the same context he declared, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (v 11).

The Christian life is too glorious to be easy. It *must* involve trials and testings. This was true of Christ himself as well as of the apostles and early church. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall

have tribulation (Jn 16:33)....The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." (15:19-20).

Avoiding this uncomfortable truth, a "user-friendly gospel" is preached by thousands of pastors. Megachurches are created by offering an appealing "Christianity" that is guaranteed to bring success and popularity with the world, but which would not be recognized by Paul or the other apostles as the Christian life they knew. Celebrities popular with the world are paid to enter today's pulpits to endorse Christ; thereby they entice multitudes into a false Christianity. Once upon a time the Christian's heroes were missionaries and martyrs. Not today. Believers and the world now share the same role models. Today's successful church offers a Christianity guaranteed to be comfortable and which provides numerous services, from 12-step programs to psychological counseling, to escape every possible trial.

The faith by which the Christian life is to be lived and which is described as "more precious than gold" *must* be tested by temptations, trials and difficulties. Why? So that when the faith by which the just live comes through the fire of adversity it will "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 1:7) Of Christ, who "[left] us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pt 2:21) it was said, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..." (Heb 12:2). We are able to endure earthly trials because our hope lies beyond this brief life: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:17).

Those who have trusted God through deep trial testify that their faith has been strengthened and their joy increased. Having to depend totally on Christ draws us closer to Him and increases our love for Him. Any counsel, help or support we offer to those in distress should bring them *through* the trial of faith with their roots deepened in Christ (Is 43:2), rather than enable them to *escape* the very challenges God intends and the work He desires to effect in their hearts. By putting us in seemingly hopeless situations, God intends to move us from mere intellectual belief to practical trust in His provision.

In *The Power of the Spirit* William Law writes, "Whenever a man allows himself to have anxieties, fears, or complaints, he must consider his behavior as either a

denial of the wisdom of God or as a confession that he is out of His will" (pp 20-21). Many who call themselves Christians say they have trusted Christ with their eternal destiny, but seem unable to trust Him in this life—a fact which casts doubt on their relationship to Him.

God wants to test our faith now—and for good reason. Moses told the Israelites, "The LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Dt 8:2-3). Oswald Chambers said, "God wants you to understand that it is a life of *faith*, not a life of sentimental enjoyment of His blessings....Faith by its very nature must be tried....'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him'—this is the most sublime utterance of faith in the whole of the Bible" (*My Utmost for His Highest*, p 305).

"Yea, though I walk *through* the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me," wrote David (Ps 23:4). He did not expect, much less plead, to be given another path that would bypass that terrible valley, but only that God would be with him through his trial. Living by faith involves confronting the difficulties of life, which indeed may have been allowed of God to test and correct. The Christian life includes learning where we have gone astray and being willing to be corrected and brought back into obedience to God and His Word. It is often in times of distress alone that God can break the hold of that which has drawn our affection away from Him, perhaps without our even knowing it.

As we walk by faith and experience God's faithfulness in trials, praise and worship well up within us. Indeed, praise and worship are to play a significant role in the Christian life. Sadly, so many of today's praise and worship songs reflect the lack of depth in current Christianity. Congregational singing often consists of empty, repetitive choruses which have taken the place of the old hymns of the faith. Phrases are repeated again and again, such as "We worship You, Lord, we praise You, Lord, we lift Your name on high, we lift our hands, we exalt You, etc." There is much clapping and swaying to the catchy tune and beat. Yet the congregation and the "worship team" seem oblivious of the fact that instead of truly praising and worshiping, they are merely singing *words about praise and worship*, without mentioning God's character, qualities, and

deeds which evoke worship.

Sound doctrine, too, plays a vital role in the Christian life of faith. Paul's life sets the example for us all. In describing his life to Timothy, he put *doctrine* first: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions....Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tm 3:10-12). He also warned that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (4:3). We are in that day. Doctrine is despised. Entertainment and sermonettes are more popular with today's Christianettes.

The Christian leader already mentioned writes that "the Bible is not an impractical book of theology, but rather a practical book of life containing a system of thought and conduct that will guarantee success...." (*Secret*, p 44) His idea that theology is "impractical" is shared by millions. And "success"—which he, as a multimillionaire, enjoys in abundance—is now measured by the world's standards.

Our hope is in heaven and in the imminency of the Rapture which will transport us out of this evil world into His presence. In the meanwhile, our confident trust in our Lord through the trials of this life of faith demonstrate the reality of our trust in Him for eternity. A true story about Blondin, who walked back and forth on a tightrope across Niagara Falls, illustrates the point.

One day, in the crowd watching Blondin, a spectator was trying to explain to a younger man what it means to truly trust Christ. "What do you think of Blondin?" he asked. "He's the greatest!" came the enthusiastic response. "Do you think he can carry a man across and back?" "Of course," was the immediate reply. "I've seen him do it." Looking the younger man squarely in the eye, the questioner said, "When Blondin comes back from the other side, he's going to call for a volunteer. Will you be the man?" The young man turned white. "Not on your life!" he exclaimed.

Many have a similarly theoretical faith in Christ. They can sing enthusiastically about salvation, but when life's adversities strike they have no real peace and joy and run to the nearest therapist instead of to the Lord. May He give us grace to live by faith as true Christians; and may earth's trials strengthen our faith, deepen our love for God, increase our fellowship with and joy in Him, and bring honor and glory to Him for eternity!

TBC

Quotable

The fashion now is to tolerate anything lest we gain a reputation of being intolerant. The tender-minded saints cannot bear to see Agag slain (1 Sam 15), so they choose rather to sacrifice the health of the Church for years to come by sparing error and evil; and this they do in the name of Christian love.

We are under obligation to disturb all seats of wickedness, and where this is done out of sincere love for God and men, great good is bound to follow. No true work of God will suffer from the prayerful examination of Spirit-filled men. Timidity masquerading as love has allowed useless forms and unscriptural practices to persist in many a church till they have slowly smothered the life out of it and brought it to desolation.

We must not be afraid to inquire. The difficulty, of course, is to do this in a Christian spirit. It is hard to find fault without being a faultfinder or to criticize without being censorious. But we have it to do if we hope to keep the work of God pure in a day of iniquity.

A.W. Tozer, "The Price of Neglect"

Q&A

Question: Have you read *Mind Games* by André Kole, the Campus Crusade magician? I saw a review of it in *Christian News* that had your picture because Kole's book contradicts what you have written about demonic and satanic power in *Occult Invasion* and most of your other books. How do you respond to Kole?

Answer: André Kole is a very good friend whom I greatly respect. We have discussed this subject in detail and remain largely in disagreement.

However, we both agree that Satan's power is not *supernatural*, but that only God can do true miracles, which override the laws governing the universe. Nevertheless, in my opinion, Satan has *paranormal* power that cannot be explained by science or duplicated by stage magicians. When Satan, as a spirit being (who is subject to God's laws governing the spirit world), invades our physical dimension, he is able *seemingly* to defy physical laws to which we are subject. He cannot perform a genuine healing such as giving sight to someone who has no eyes, restoring an amputated limb or raising the dead (in spite

of those who think Antichrist will be raised from the dead by Satan). However, whatever Satan can inflict (as boils on Job), he can remove and thus make it seem like a genuine healing.

André says he has traveled the world investigating shamans and other occultists and has never seen them do anything that he, André, couldn't duplicate by stage trickery. He offers \$25,000 to anyone who can demonstrate psychic power which he cannot duplicate and no one has claimed that prize. In my opinion, however, while there is much fraud in the world of psychics and shamans, it cannot *all* be a hoax!

If André is right, then we must believe that the "working of Satan with all power and signs" (2 Thes 2:9) through Antichrist will be nothing but the stage magician's craft, and that when Christ warns of false prophets who will do "great signs and wonders" (Mt 24:24) He is warning us not to be fooled by stage magic. Yes, Antichrist's signs are called "lying wonders," and the false prophets' signs and wonders are designed to "deceive the very elect." Surely the lying and deceit, however, involves turning men away from the truth, not merely causing them to admire a magician's trickery!

Of these false prophets, Christ declares that they will say to Him one day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Mt 7:22). While *some* of today's false prophets use deception and have been exposed, that hardly seems to be the cause of Christ's rebuke. Rather than knowingly engaging in mere illusion, they thought they had worked miracles in Christ's name. That false prophets can indeed perform what can't be attributed to trickery is indicated by God's warning to Israel through Moses: "If there arise among you a prophet...and giveth you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass..." (Dt 13:1-2).

André is convinced that Satan has no power to enable psychics and witchdoctors and other occultists to do anything that he (André) cannot duplicate by the magician's art. I referred him to Jannes and Jambres, the magicians in Pharaoh's court, duplicating by the power of Satan some of the plagues with which God smote Egypt (2 Tm 3:8). André said they did it by the same methods he uses as a stage magician. But the Bible says that "the magicians did so with their enchantments" (Ex 7:11, 22; 8:7). If "enchantment" is simply stage magic,

one wonders why it was forbidden to God's people (Lv 19:26; Dt 18:10) and why André has made a profession out of it in disobedience to that prohibition. Obviously, enchantment must be something more.

I believe (and have expressed to André) that Satan manifested paranormal power in destroying Job's property and family and putting boils on him. André, however, insists that God himself did those things at the urging of Satan. To support that view, he quotes this statement from God to Satan: "...thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3). He also quotes Job's statement concerning the evil that came upon him: "...the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away..." (1:21).

Most Christians would interpret this as meaning that God allowed Satan to do this evil and that Satan could only do what God allowed. That view is surely supported by God's words to Satan: "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (1:12); "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life" (2:6). Nor does there seem any other interpretation to this statement: "So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (2:7). Since Satan put the boils on Job, we are justified in attributing Job's other problems to Satan's power to perform the paranormal (*not* the supernatural).

Consider the demoniac of whom we are told, "...no man could bind him, no, not with chains;...he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces" (Mk 5:3-4). This was no stage magician's *escape*. He literally *broke* iron chains which would have safely bound even the strongest man. In contrast to Samson's *supernatural* strength through the *Holy Spirit* (Jgs 13-16), this was *paranormal* strength due to "an *unclean spirit*" (Mk 5:2) possessing him. This, André could not duplicate by stage magic. André says that the musclemen on the "Power Team" do such feats. No, they have their limits; but not this man. The statement that "no man could bind him, no, not with chains" indicates that no matter how strong and how numerous the chains, he still "plucked [them] asunder," that is, he *broke* them! André may be able to effect a Houdini-like *escape* no matter how heavy or how many the chains, but he can't *break* them, nor can the "Power Team." This is demonic power that cannot be explained by magicians or scientists. (You owe me \$25,000, André!)

We are told that Satan, “taking him [Jesus] up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time” (Lk 4:5). I hardly think that André or his friends could by the magician’s art take someone to the top of a distant mountain and show them all the kingdoms of the world in a moment! And to suggest that this is how it happened is to indict Jesus with being deceived by stage magic! Clearly, the Bible indicates that Satan has power beyond human ability or explanation and that he can manifest it through human beings in order to deceive mankind into thinking it is the miraculous power of God. Seduced by paranormal power, they are led away from the true God to follow the god of this world.

Question: In your May newsletter you quoted J.C. Ryle that sound theological teaching includes “lifting up the Brazen Serpent....” What does that mean? I have always wondered why God would have Moses put a serpent (surely the symbol of Satan) on a pole for the children of Israel to look upon in order to be healed. What is your understanding of this incident?

Answer: God told Moses to make a brazen serpent, put it on a pole and to instruct the people who had been bitten with deadly serpents that whoever looked to that serpent on the pole would be healed.

Christ told Nicodemus, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15). Nicodemus, like the Jews in John 12:31-34, knew that to be “lifted up” meant to be crucified. Christ was telling Nicodemus that, as it was in the case of the uplifted brazen serpent, all those who would look in faith to Him lifted up on the cross would be saved.

But why would Christ, the Lamb of God, the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices for sin, liken His lifting up to that of the brazen serpent upon the pole? Although Satan is “that old serpent, called the Devil” (Rv 12:9), the brazen serpent was not a symbol of Satan. The “fiery serpents” were sent among the people because they had sinned grievously (Nm 21:5-7). The serpents were God’s judgment, bringing death for sin. The brazen serpent symbolized both sin and God’s judgment upon it—but more than that, the fact that through judgment

there would be salvation. Paul writes, “For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, [he] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21)

Isaiah prophesied concerning the coming Messiah, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he [the LORD] hath put him to grief: when thou [the LORD] shalt make his soul an offering for sin...” (Is 53:10). God punished His Son for the sins of the world and Christ somehow paid the infinite penalty demanded by God’s infinite justice.

Christ was punished as though He were the very sin we have all committed. Sin had to be fully judged or we could not be saved. God can’t merely make a bookkeeping entry in heaven and wipe the slate clean for all of us. The penalty prescribed by His own righteous and infinite justice had to be paid. But in Christ, God’s judgment upon sin became our salvation. This is the message of the brazen serpent lifted up in the midst of Israel, which is fulfilled in Christ on the cross, not only for Israel but for the “sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:2).

Question: I was told that at a recent Christian Writer’s Conference one of the speakers, Bill Watkins, senior acquisitions editor of Broadman and Holman, wrote the name Dave Hunt on the blackboard. He then told the audience, “If you have any of this man’s books, throw them into the trash. They are full of holes. I even debated him. Throw them away.” When did he debate you?

Answer: I called Bill Watkins, spoke with him on the phone to verify that this incident actually happened, and he confirmed it. He remains adamant that what he said about my writings was true and that he had the right to say it. I responded that he has the right to say anything but that he ought to document what he says. I reminded him that I have never made such blanket and undocumented statements about anyone and would not. I simply quote those whom I critique, give the references so anyone can check it out, and contrast what they teach with the Bible. Period. One should let the evidence speak for itself without making judgmental pronouncements. I have neither the desire nor the motive to misrepresent anyone and asked Bill to do me the favor of providing evidence of any errors in my books so that I could make the necessary corrections in the next editions. We will see what he provides.

Sadly, my critics accuse me of misquoting or quoting out of context or of “attacking” and even “destroying” brothers in Christ, but they provide no documentation. Such ad hominem accusations are unjust and tantamount to character assassination. We are interested only in the truth of God’s Word and the simple facts concerning false doctrines and practices which oppose that truth. We believe the Body of Christ needs to be warned and armed.

Oddly enough, I am criticized for allegedly criticizing others. I simply quote those things which have been written in books, spoken on radio or television or otherwise publicly declared and are therefore influencing multitudes.

As for Mr. Watkins having debated me, as I reminded him on the phone, that is not true. He assisted Keith Fournier with the book, *A House United?—Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A Winning Alliance for the 21st Century*, foreword by Pat Robertson. Fournier, a Roman Catholic and Executive Director of Robertson’s American Center for Law and Justice, had written a previous book, *Evangelical Catholics*, foreword by Charles Colson. In response to that first book, I had faced Fournier in a formal debate at Purdue University and he had not been happy with the outcome.

John Loeffler, a radio talk-show host in Denver at the time, asked me to come on his show during the 1994 Christian Booksellers Convention to debate Fournier and Watkins concerning the second book. I agreed. Fournier, however, declined. Instead, he insisted that we be *separately interviewed*, I alone the first hour and they the second hour. So on the radio Watkins and Fournier had the last word, saying anything they wanted about me and my arguments against Roman Catholicism, and leaving me no chance to respond. That was how Watkins “debated” me.

"Am I A Fundamentalist?"

Dave Hunt

"You're a *fundamentalist!*" The accusation was directed at me, a freshman in university just out of the military in 1947. From the stinging tone of contempt no explanation was needed to understand that being branded a "fundamentalist" was the ultimate insult in the proud world of academia. I replied something like this: "If to be a fundamentalist means that one adheres to the sound fundamentals of math, accounting, chemistry or whatever one's profession, then I happily accept the label. And since the Bible is literally God's Word and inerrant, embracing and standing true to *its* fundamentals is the only intelligent choice." That response only increased the frustration and fury on the part of those who had been heatedly debating me for the last two hours.

The occasion was the first meeting of "The Critics' Hour," newly organized by students and faculty to ridicule and disprove the Bible. Among the crowd of spectators were a number of Christians whom I recognized from the campus Christian club, yet not one of them spoke a word. I stood alone in that auditorium against the onslaught of arguments from every side, all in favor of evolution and atheism. Being a rather naive 21-year-old, I was shocked at the animosity so openly displayed against the Bible and the God of the Bible.

At that point in my life I had barely heard of Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of New York's First Presbyterian Church, a key figure in American liberalism/modernism, nor did I have the faintest idea of the growing rejection of the infallibility of the Bible among large numbers of those who called themselves Christians. The name of J. Gresham Machen was completely unknown to me, as was the losing battle he had fought at Princeton Seminary in the 1920s against heresy before that school went completely liberal and took most of the Presbyterian Church with it.

Satan's most effective servants are masters of doublespeak. Fosdick claimed to honor doctrine, but warned of an ever present "danger in emphasis on doctrine...." He taught that "nothing fundamentally matters in religion except those things which create private and public goodness...and social progress." Fosdick was recognized at the time by most true

Christians for the unbeliever he was. Yet Norman Vincent Peale, no less a heretic, managed to find acceptance virtually everywhere, as has his chief disciple, Robert Schuller.

The modernist takes the latest ideas of the secular world and deceitfully dresses them in Christian language. No one has pulled off that scam as neatly as have today's Christian psychologists, who somehow manage to take the anti-Christian theories of sworn enemies of the gospel and "integrate" them into theology. Peale was the first to do so. In 1937 he established a "Christian" psychiatric clinic at his church, the model for today's numerous clinics which have made fortunes for their founders.

Machen accurately pointed out that intimidation by science and the desire to obtain acceptance and respectability in the academic community had resulted in compromises that effectively neutralized

**We must believe the *whole* Bible.
That is biblical fundamentalism.**

the gospel. That passion increasingly motivates Christian schools, from Fuller to Wheaton. Machen accused liberals of "trying to remove from Christianity everything that could possibly be objected to in the name of science."²

Many of today's evangelicals seem to think scientists know more about the universe than does its Creator. The Bible suffers from God's ignorance? The result is a deadly compromise of the faith. We have seen this in the acceptance of theistic evolution by *Christianity Today*, Promise Keepers and many seminaries and Christian universities, even though it clearly contradicts the Bible and undermines the gospel (*TBC*, Mar. 1997). The same compromise is made by questioning the biblical account of the flood.

Billy Graham, who decades ago renounced his fundamentalism, recently said he was not sure Noah's flood was worldwide. InterVarsity's *New Bible Commentary* (p. 88) likewise says, "The [Bible] narrative does not directly affirm a universal flood...." To the contrary, the Bible leaves no room for such waffling:

[E]verything that is in the earth shall die.
(Gn 6:17);...every living substance...will

I destroy from off the face of the earth.
(7:4);...the mountains were covered. And
all flesh died....Noah only remained alive
and they that were with him in the ark.
(7:20-23)

God's instructions to Noah to bring two of every species into the ark only make sense if the flood was worldwide. God promised never to destroy the *earth* by water again (Gn 9:11), yet there have been many great *regional* floods. The future destruction of the world prophesied by Peter would be merely a local fire if the flood, to which he compares it (2 Pt 3:6-7), were local. Finally, Jesus likens His future worldwide judgment of all mankind to the flood (Mt 24:38-41).

We must believe the *whole* Bible. That is biblical fundamentalism. If Genesis is not accurate *in every detail*, then why trust anything else in the Bible? If the Bible is wrong about man's origin and fall, why rely upon what it says about man's redemption and eternal destiny? In fact, the Bible is 100 percent accurate in *all* it addresses.

Whether the latest science agrees with the Bible or not is of no concern to a fundamentalist. Because we trust in God, we are not intimidated by man. Only a fool would exchange God's infallible Word for the changeable and fallible opinions of men. Scientists make mistakes and are often ruled by prejudices. In his book, *Great Feuds in Science*, historian Hal Hellman documents that even the greatest scientists have been "influenced by pride, ambition, greed, belligerence, jealousy, and the undeniable urge to be right."³

Tragically, diminishing numbers of those who call themselves Christians still stand for biblical inerrancy and sufficiency, as Harold Lindsell documents in *The Battle for the Bible*. Fuller Theological Seminary is only one example he gives. Of course, biblical inerrancy is hardly an issue with multitudes in the charismatic/revival movement who rely upon experience and emotion rather than doctrine. Love for Jesus is, for many today, a wonderful *feeling* divorced entirely from the truth which Jesus declares Himself to be. In *The Bible in the Balance* (pp. 319-20) Lindsell confesses that "the term *evangelical* has become so debased that it has lost its usefulness....Maybe it would be better to accept the term *fundamentalist* with all of the pejoratives attached to it by its detractors."

Fundamentalism has gotten a bad name

for two reasons: 1) Some Christian fundamentalists are fanatics and carry separation from other Christians to unbiblical and unreasonable extremes; and 2) Muslim fundamentalists demand that everyone must adhere to the same dress and customs that Muhammad practiced in the seventh century. Devoted to Islam's goal of conquering the world by force, they are responsible for much of today's terrorism worldwide. Consequently, even Christian fundamentalists, whose law is love, are often painted with that fanatical brush.

Those who would implicitly trust and obey Christ's Word and be His true disciples (Jn 8:31-32) must be willing like Daniel and his friends to stand alone. Afraid to be different, most Christians run with the herd. Eager for this world's plaudits, they "love the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn 12:43). C.H. Spurgeon stood virtually alone, abandoned even by former students and friends, when he was censured by the British Baptist Union for his unwillingness to tolerate apostasy within that body. Shortly before his death, A.W. Tozer declared, "I have preached myself out of nearly every pulpit in North America." What an indictment of those pastors and churches!

Christ warned, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Lk 6:26). He declared that true faith in God is impossible when we "receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only" (Jn 5:44). John Ashbrook writes that the "new evangelicalism has been determined to impress the world with its intellect. It has craved the respect of academia. It has determined to earn plaudits at the fountainheads of secular learning."⁴ Carl Henry noted that "in deference to the growing mood of tolerance...the Christian belief is packaged for greater marketability."⁵

The only enemy of liberalism is fundamentalism's firm adherence to Scripture. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones bemoaned the fact that many evangelicals have moved from "preaching to sharing..." which subtly exchanges the authority of God's Word for human experience and opinion.⁶ Compromise won't help the unbeliever to see the light; it only further blinds him. Tolerance winks at man's unwillingness to bow to God's authority. Liberalism inevitably hardens itself against truth. We see that today worldwide.

The acceptance of homosexuality, professedly in the name of tolerance and liberalism, has bred an increasing intolerance of any other point of view. The entire world, which

for thousands of years viewed homosexuality as unnatural and shameful, is being forced to abandon that conviction. Homosexuals, who pleaded for tolerance, have proved to be totally intolerant now that they have power. They viciously attack, verbally and physically, any who wish to retain an independent opinion. The world has been coerced into granting homosexuals a special privileged status. This, in spite of the fact that the so-called gay lifestyle is replete with the most unhealthy practices which spread diseases that threaten society at large and cut life expectancy nearly in half. The incurable disease of AIDS, though in epidemic proportions affecting even the innocent and fatal to anyone contracting it, is granted a dangerous secrecy and privileged status because of its pervasiveness among homosexuals.

We see the same intolerance on the part of evolutionists who accuse creationists of narrowmindedness. Science is supposed to promote freedom to investigate and accept the facts. Yet in the name of science, the *theory* of evolution is forced upon every child in public schools as *fact*, while the factual evidence against it is suppressed and the biblical and rational alternative of creation by God is not allowed to be so much as considered.

On our recent trip to Russia, we were told by one of the highest officials in the education system, "For 70 years we have seen the fruit of dogmatically forcing one point of view upon students. We've had enough of that and we are eager to study the alternative." The collapse of communism left a moral vacuum which Russia is seeking to fill with moral teaching from the Bible. Paradoxically, Russian schools now welcome the teaching of the same biblical morality and creationism which is outlawed in American schools! How long this will last, we don't know. The Russian Orthodox Church, intolerant of and firmly opposed to the gospel, is seeking a return to the monopoly it once held on *religion*—and some American evangelicals are working there with this antichrist system. Pray for Russia.

"Christianity" was introduced in A.D. 988 into what later became Russia, by Prince Vladimir. He had leaned toward Islam because his 20 wives were no problem for that "faith." But its ban upon alcohol caused him to adopt Orthodox "Christianity," where alcohol flows freely (many monks and priests are heavy drinkers) and the pretentious vanity of its rituals holds a mysterious appeal. He could cut back to one "official" wife and keep the other 19 unofficially and let the liquor flow. Such was the "conversion" of Russia

to "Christianity." In 1988, the 1,000th anniversary was celebrated with pomp and ritual and Billy Graham was present to give his congratulations. He said, in part,

I am deeply honored to join with you at this historic and joyous occasion commemorating the 1,000th anniversary of the baptism of Russia, occasioned by the baptism of Kievan Prince Vladimir....⁷

Orthodoxy, like Roman Catholicism, is the sworn enemy of the gospel. The Orthodox Church has kept the Russian people in bondage and superstition, looking to it for salvation, kissing its icons, paying for prayers and sacraments. Though it rejects Catholicism's purgatory, it teaches that, by our prayers, souls can be moved from hell to heaven.

We visited, near Moscow, the main center of Orthodoxy with its seminary and many churches. Monks with whom I spoke explained that Christ's death made it possible for us to get to heaven if we were baptized and participated in the sacraments and "lived the gospel." For them, the door Christ opened is at the top of a steep stairway which we must climb by our own efforts in obedience to and assisted by the Church.

I was one of the speakers at a conference in Moscow which drew pastors and members of their flocks from all over Russia. There was an obvious eagerness to be taught from God's Word. I pulled no punches in exposing the unbiblical teachings and practices of the Russian Orthodox Church which (like the Catholic Church in the West) persecuted and killed multitudes of true Christians. Orthodoxy, which managed a partnership with both the Czars and their communist successors, pressured Yeltsin for the new law suppressing religious freedom (that law is already being implemented in small towns away from Moscow). Video and audio tapes of the conference are going out by the hundreds all over Russia. Pray for their effectiveness.

As we reminded our Russian brothers and sisters, to truly "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" unto salvation must be an all consuming conviction, not a mere preference. And where there is uncompromising conviction, opposition in all the fury Satan and the flesh can inspire will surely follow. Remembering that eternity looms before us, let us never barter God's eternal "well done" for man's approval in this brief life. The fullness of that life now and throughout eternity, for ourselves and for those we have opportunity and responsibility to influence, depends upon non-negotiable truth. **TBC**

Quotable

If you let culture make tolerance the preeminent virtue, pretty soon you won't have anything else.

George Marsden

University history professor and author of major book on fundamentalism (*Christian History*, issue 55, vol. XVI, no. 3, p 43)

The worst sin today is to say that you agree with the Christian faith and believe in the Bible, but then make common cause with those who deny the basic facts of Christianity. Never was it more obviously true that he that is not with Christ is against him.

J. Gresham Machen

1924 address, Moody Bible Institute (*Christian Beacon*, 1/17/57)

Within evangelical circles...is a growing infiltration of humanistic ideas...a growing acceptance of pluralism and accommodation. And what has been the response of the evangelical leadership? Overwhelmingly it has been to keep silent, to let the slide go further and further, to paper over the differences.

Francis Schaeffer

The Great Evangelical Disaster, p 88

As I checked in for an outpatient test at a local hospital last week, the admissions lady...inquired, "What is your religious preference?" I was tempted...to repeat what Jonah said..."I am a Hebrew, ma'am. And I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven...." But that would surely have got me sent to psychiatry rather than X ray. So I desisted.

In ancient times, they asked, "Who is your God?" A generation ago, they asked your religion. Today your creed is a preference....

According to Chesterton, tolerance is the virtue of people who do not believe in anything....When it is believed that on your religion hangs the fate of your immortal soul, the Inquisition follows easily; when it is believed that religion is a breezy consumer preference, religious tolerance flourishes....After all, we don't persecute people for their taste in cars. Why for their taste in gods?

Oddly, though, in our thoroughly secularized culture, there is one form of

religious intolerance that does survive... the disdain bordering on contempt ...[for] those for whom religion is not a preference but a conviction....

Every manner of political argument is ruled legitimate in our democratic discourse. But invoke the Bible as grounding for your politics, and the First Amendment police will charge you with breaching the sacred wall separating church and state....Call on Timothy Leary or Chairman Mao, fine. Call on St. Paul, and all hell breaks loose....

Associates of [Hickman] Ewing [White-water prosecutor who has been called a "religious fanatic" by some] defend him thus: "His open Christian faith...is left at the prosecutorial door." An interesting form of exoneration. Ewing is fit to carry out his judicial duties after all. Why? Because he allows none of his Christian faith to corrupt his working life.

Charles Krauthammer

"Will it be coffee, tea or He? Religion was once a conviction. Now it is a taste" (Essay, *Time*, June 15, 1998)

Q&A

Question [greatly condensed]: Although your December 1997 article was sound, one sentence had a faint anti-Semitic flavor that I felt was unnecessary: "The Galatian problem remains (in varying degrees) within some so-called Hebrew-Christian or Messianic congregations today." You accept your saved brethren in all churches; why are we "so-called"....? I do not have any opposition to your suggestion that there is a Galatian problem. ...[but] are you closing the door to accepting us because of some congregations who go overboard in their zeal to be so Jewish that they can reach their families and community with an acceptable Jewish gospel...? Do Chinese stop using chopsticks because they accept Jesus, or Asians stop cooking curry? Why can't you allow us to follow the calling and heritage of our ancestors as with other ethnic minorities...? Are you my brother [in the Lord] or just another harsh, unaccepting sibling who won't even listen to me?

Answer: I almost wept when I read your letter, not only because of your own pain

which it expressed but because you had so completely misunderstood me. I have a deep love for Israel and for Jewish people and have been involved in seeking to introduce Jews and Israelis to their Messiah for many years—and with some success. The suggestion that I might be even slightly anti-Semitic and unwilling to accept Jewish believers in our Lord Jesus as brethren in Christ is the opposite of the truth and most distressing.

Perhaps the adjective "so-called" was badly chosen on my part. I meant no offense, merely to suggest that "Hebrew-Christian" is neither a biblical expression nor accurately descriptive. Doesn't it imply that Hebrew-Christians are different from just plain Christians? Why not French-Christians, Swiss-Christians, etc.? The term "Messianic congregation" again seems an improper designation. Don't all Christians believe in the same Messiah? Isn't the Messiah of Israel the Savior of the world? That was all I meant. I made no blanket judgment of such groups; in fact, I often speak to and fellowship with them and have never expressed disapproval of such designations. Unfortunately, because we are determined to keep *The Berean Call* to a readable size, limited space prevented me from explaining myself as well as I should have.

Of course, your analogy of chopsticks for Chinese and curry for Asians doesn't fit because neither has any religious meaning. But I don't deny to Jewish believers in Jesus the keeping of religious feasts. I appreciate your desire to retain your Jewish customs not only because it helps to maintain contact with Jewish friends and relatives who accuse you of no longer being Jewish and of even becoming anti-Jewish, but because these customs have a deep meaning for you. Paul did the same. My concern is for the tendency of Gentiles to adopt these things. For them, they could have no such meaning, and therefore they become a *religious* connection between Jews and Gentiles, whereas we are united only in Christ, as Paul makes abundantly clear in Ephesians 2. Keeping the passover is meaningless for Gentiles.

I had no specific congregation or congregations in mind but was speaking generally. The concerns I expressed were for 1) the false assumption among *some*

such groups that the practice of Jewish customs adds a helpful element to Christianity; 2) the unbiblical adoption of Jewish customs and feasts by Gentile believers as though that makes them more spiritual; and 3) the well-meaning but improper attempts to teach the gospel from extrabiblical traditions such as the Seder. It could hardly be helpful to find certain parts of Jewish tradition which seem to support the gospel when so much contradicts it. I believe we must stick to the Bible.

Question: Recently I joined a yoga class for fitness and relaxation. During the class, mantras are used. The teacher explained the meanings such as “all is truth.” Is it wrong to participate in these mantras? Can I just substitute Christian words such as “Jesus”...? Or should I not participate in the class at all? Everyone I have asked seems to think there is no problem with this but I feel uncomfortable and do not know why.

Answer: I am glad that you feel uncomfortable about being involved in yoga. Drop the class immediately! Yoga is the very heart of Hinduism. It is sold in the West as science, but in fact is religion. It is promoted in the West as beneficial to health, but in the East it is a technique for dying. The goal is to reach *moksha*, allegedly escaping the world of illusion (*maya*) of time and sense into liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death and rebirth through reincarnation. The latter is another of Satan’s appealing lies which offers endless chances by denying God’s declaration that it is “appointed unto man *once to die*” (Heb 9:27). Many Roman Catholic priests and nuns practice yoga, and some who have become deeply involved in Eastern mysticism of various kinds, such as Thomas Merton, are highly honored among Catholics.

Yoga is a sanskrit word that means “yoking” and refers to union with Brahman, the ultimate god in Hinduism. The goal of yoga is “self-realization,” to realize that atman, the individual soul, is identical with Brahman, the universal soul, i.e., that you and god are one; indeed, that you are god but just don’t know it and need, through yoga, to discover this great “truth.” Your yoga teacher will probably deny all of this,

but he (or she) cannot deny that this practice comes from Hinduism. It was not invented in the West.

Yoga was introduced by Lord Krishna in the *Baghavat Gita* as the sure way to the Hindu heaven. Shiva, one of the most feared Hindu deities, known as The Destroyer, is addressed as *Yogeshwara*, which means “Lord of Yoga.” Hatha yoga, known as *physical* yoga, is alleged to be devoid of the mysticism in other forms. Not so. One of the most authoritative *hatha yoga* texts, the fifteenth-century *Hathayoga-Pradipika*, declares that Lord Shiva was the first hatha yoga teacher.

As for the mantras, if one of them means “all is truth,” that should give you the pantheistic Hindu connection. You know that all is *not* truth; indeed, this very idea is a satanic lie! Substitute “Jesus” as your “Christian mantra”? No! Any mantra (like the Catholic rosary) violates Christ’s command to “use not vain repetitions as the heathen” (Mt 6:7) I don’t know what mantras you have been taught, but the fact is that true yoga mantras are all the names of Hindu gods. Furthermore, the greatest yoga teachers all declare that the repetition of a mantra is a call to that god (i.e., the demon it represents) to come and possess the meditator. I have interviewed people who became demon possessed through yoga. The great yogis all warn of the grave dangers involved, even though at the same time they promote the alleged benefits.

Yes, you could benefit physically from stretching your muscles, etc. However, the spiritual price you pay is not worth it. If you are interested in physical fitness, then practice exercises designed for that, not those designed specifically for achieving union with Brahman!

One of the most popular forms of yoga in the West is Transcendental Meditation (TM). Maharishi Mahesh Yogi at first introduced TM to the West as a Hindu religious practice. He openly taught that its purpose was to produce in the meditators’ bodies “soma,” a legendary substance that would allegedly feed and awaken the pantheon of Hindu gods. But when TM was excluded from public schools and government funding, Maharishi quickly and dishonestly deleted all reference to religion and began presenting TM as pure *science*.

Such deliberate deceit says much about Maharishi’s integrity. Nothing was

changed except the labels. Former TMers have filed lawsuits asking millions of dollars in damages because of the traumas they suffered through the practice of TM. More recently, TM has practically taken over the town of Fairfield, Iowa, where Maharishi’s International University is located—and is being funded by the government in spite of its religious nature.

For further insight into yoga in general and TM in particular, please consult my latest book, *Occult Invasion*.

Endnotes

- 1 *Christian History* (Issue 55, vol. XVI, no. 3), 36
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 *The Bulletin*, (Bend, OR, 7/4/98), A7.
- 4 *New Neutralism II*, 8.
- 5 *World* (3/11/89), 7.
- 6 Ian Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith*, 667.
- 7 *Foundation* (Sep 1988), 4.

The Spirit of Antichrist

Dave Hunt

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist....

1 John 4:3a

It is often taught that Antichrist is not a man but a spirit. Though the above verse refers to the “*spirit of antichrist*,” John earlier makes it clear that Antichrist is a *person*: “...as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists...” (1 Jn 2:18). Many antichrists were already present, operating in the “spirit of antichrist.” None of them, however, was *the* Antichrist who, John assures us, will eventually come.

Paul refers to Antichrist as “that man of sin...the son of perdition...that Wicked [one]...whom the Lord...shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders...” (2 Thes 2:3-10). If this is not *the* Antichrist, who would this supremely evil man be, who will sit “in the temple of God [to be rebuilt in Jerusalem in these last days], shewing himself that he is God” (v4)? Who else but Antichrist, Satan’s world ruler, would have such authority? “And all that dwell upon earth shall worship him...” (Rv 13:3-4,8).

Paul declares, “And now ye know what withholdeth [prevents] that he might be revealed *in his time*” (2 Thes 2:6). Yet many try to identify Antichrist *before* his time. This evil man, who is almost certainly alive right now, may not even know the eventual role for which Satan has been grooming him. Nor can Satan put him into power until God prepares the way.

Two events *must* precede Antichrist’s revelation to the world. First must come the great apostasy, already underway in Paul’s day and reaching its climax in ours:

...for that day [of Christ, or the Lord, see v 2] shall not come, except there come a falling away [apostasy] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition....(2 Thes 2:3)

This verse does not teach that Antichrist must appear before the day of the Lord and thus before the Rapture, which we believe initiates that day. Paul only states that the

apostasy must come first. As for Antichrist, “that day shall not come, except...that man of sin be revealed...” Clearly the Antichrist will be revealed in “that day” and not before.

Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers of what must occur in order for Antichrist to be revealed: the *removal* of the One who prevents this revelation. At the time Paul wrote this epistle a *Person* was preventing Antichrist from being revealed; and Paul explains that this same Person will continue to do so until He is taken out of the way: “For...he who now letteth [prevents/hinders] will let [prevent], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed...” (2 Thes 2:7-8).

That God himself is the One preventing Antichrist from being revealed is clear for two reasons: 1) This One has prevented

...and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

1 John 4:3b

Satan’s takeover for more than 1,900 years; 2) Only God is more powerful than Satan. That God, therefore, who is omnipresent, will be “taken out of the way” is the key.

There is only one possible interpretation: that the Holy Spirit indwelling the believers is the One preventing Antichrist from being revealed. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came *upon* men, but did not indwell them, and could leave them. Thus David prayed, “...take not thy holy spirit from me” (Ps 51:11). We offer no such prayer today, for we are “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13) whom Jesus declared would “abide with you for ever” (Jn 14:16). Christ told His disciples, “...he [the Holy Spirit] dwelleth *with* you; and shall be *in* you” (Jn 14:17). This special presence of God, unknown on earth until the day of Pentecost, can be “taken out of the way”—but *only* at the Rapture.

Christ assures us, “He that believeth on me,...out of his belly [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water.” John explains, “[T]his spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given [to indwell permanently]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn 7:38-39). It is from heaven when He was glorified to the Father’s right

hand that Jesus, on the day of Pentecost, sent the Holy Spirit to indwell the believers permanently, exactly as He promised (“the Comforter...whom I will send unto you from the Father...” - Jn 15:26), and the church was born. Thus Peter at Pentecost declared, “Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he [Christ] hath shed forth this...” (Acts 2:33).

It is only this special indwelling presence of God, which began at Pentecost, that can be taken away—and only through the Rapture removing Christians from earth. If Antichrist appears before the Rapture, then believers would logically look for *him* first; yet we are told to look for Christ (Lk 12:35-40; Phil 3:20; 1 Thes 1:10; Ti 2:13; Heb 9:28, etc.). Nor could any other event except the Rapture unite the world under Antichrist.

Some suggest that the chaos caused by computer failures on January 1, 2000, will be the catalyst to usher in Antichrist’s world government. In our opinion, the Y2K warnings of disaster border on extremism and alarmism, which we will attempt to deal with in a future issue.

God has something far more electrifying and unifying in mind: the Rapture. In our opinion, nothing else could unite Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, atheists, communists, capitalists and everyone else—except the unspeakable terror caused by the sudden mass disappearance of millions of believers all over the world.

“Where did they go? Who took them? Will I be next?” That hysterical cry will be on everyone’s lips—from cowering individuals to the bewildered United Nations meeting in emergency session. Most terrifying of all will be the question, “How can I escape when whoever took them comes back for more?” Almost no one will believe the biblical Rapture has occurred, because of a “strong delusion” from God (2 Thes 2:10-12).

The pretrib Rapture, uniting the world in a common terror and grief, will offer the perfect opportunity for Satan to put his man into power. With God’s restraint lifted, all of Satan’s power will be unleashed through Antichrist “in signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness” (vv 9-10). Antichrist may claim to be negotiating with an intergalactic council for the return of the missing. Should he promise that

those who take his mark in hand or forehead would not be snatched from earth, multitudes would welcome that guarantee.

We believe that the Rapture (not the appearance of Antichrist and tribulation necessitating survivalist tactics) is the next event on the prophetic calendar, and that it must occur very soon. In the meantime, the “spirit of antichrist” is preparing the world and a false church for his appearing. Consider carefully what John has to say: “...try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jn 4:1). Many spirits are involved in a common anti-Christ agenda, speaking through many false prophets.

John alerts us to a foundational truth which Satan undermines in any way he can: “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (1 Jn 4:2). The denial of this truth characterizes what John calls “the spirit of antichrist.”

Tragically, this antichrist spirit pollutes the teaching of many seemingly Christian churches and leaders. Remember, the Greek prefix *anti* not only means “in opposition to” but also “in the place of.” The antichrist spirit opposes Christ under the pretense of representing Him and leading His church.

To warn of a denial “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” seems, at first, unnecessary. Very few people deny that Jesus Christ really lived. The date on coins and documents around the world attests to that historic fact. John, therefore, must have meant much more than that, as careful thought reveals.

Clearly, the phrase “is come in the flesh” indicates that Jesus Christ existed prior to His incarnation as a babe in Bethlehem. He is God the Son, one of three Persons of the Godhead (Col 2:9), “the Almighty...the Alpha and Omega” (Rv 1:8,11); the Creator of all (Jn 1:3); the eternal Word “made flesh” (Jn 1:14). “For unto us a child is born” refers to the baby Jesus. The very next phrase, “unto us a son is given” (Is 9:6), refers to the Father giving His eternal Son into the world: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...” (Jn 3:16); “the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me” (Is 48:16, etc).

This *given* Son is called “The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Is 9:6). To deny that God has come in flesh expresses the very spirit of antichrist. That spirit is manifested in the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ denial that Jesus is God. Islam and its Koran, though honoring Jesus as a great prophet, also deny His deity. So do a substantial percentage of those who call themselves born-again Christians. These people are lost, no matter how lustily they sing, “O how I love Jesus,” and how faithfully they attend church; for Jesus

himself said, “Before Abraham was, I AM” [this is God’s name, Jahweh/Jehovah, from Ex 3:14] (Jn 8:58).

The Mormon’s denial is more devious: At the time Jesus came into the world He was a spirit being, half-brother of Lucifer and of all of us in a pre-earth state. Our “Father in heaven” was once a sinful man on another planet and was redeemed by that world’s Jesus. The heart of Mormon doctrine is “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become.” The Mormon’s God is an exalted man with numerous wives through whom he has millions of spirit children who must come to earth in order to become gods, as Jesus did. The body Jesus took in order to achieve godhood was produced when “Father God” came to earth and had intercourse with Mary. Behind such teaching, writes John, is “the spirit of antichrist.”

The Roman Catholic claim that Mary is “the Mother of God” and the “spouse of the Holy Spirit” offers an even more subtle anti-Christ twist. In fact, Mary is not the mother

...the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

1 John 4:14

of Jesus as God, the Eternal Son of God *given* by the Father to be the Savior of the world. She is the mother of Jesus as man, the mother of the body the Father prepared for His Son in her womb: “Wherefore when he [Christ] cometh into the world, he saith...a body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5). Nor is she “the spouse of the Holy Spirit.” The creation by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb of the body which Jesus took when He became man had nothing to do with a relationship to her that could in any way imply that the Holy Spirit was Mary’s *spouse*.

The Mary of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, inspired by the spirit of antichrist, has been elevated above Jesus, who is almost always pictured as a babe in her arms or a child at her side. Far more prayers are said to this false Mary than to Jesus and the Father combined. Many prayers ask *her* for the salvation which Christ, who is the Savior, promises all who believe in *Him*.

Reincarnation as taught by Hinduism (or New Age) is another denial that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” It requires that He come repeatedly in other bodies in successive lives. At His incarnation, Christ took up permanent residence in human flesh; the same body that was laid in the grave was raised from the dead, never to die again, leaving the grave empty. In that resurrected,

glorified body, Christ now lives at the Father’s right hand. Yet as surely as that fact is denied by the teaching of reincarnation, so surely is it also denied by Roman Catholicism’s dogma that Christ comes in the flesh over and over to die continually on its altars as a wafer turned into His literal physical body.

Such teaching comes through the spirit of antichrist. The *sacrifice* of the Mass denies the clear teaching of the Bible: “So Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once*...after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins for ever...there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 9:25-10:18). Defying such Scriptures, Catholicism declares, “Hence the Mass...[is] a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated...in the sacrifice of the Mass our Lord is immolated...the eucharistic sacrifice is the source and the summit of...the Christian life...In the sacrifice of the Mass in fact, Christ offers himself for the salvation of the entire world” (*Vatican II, Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 3.,18.).

Through this false teaching, the spirit of antichrist has Catholics literally worshiping the wafer as God (“all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament the worship which is due to the true God”- *Ibid.*, 3.f.). They think that salvation comes gradually by repeatedly ingesting Christ’s physical body and blood—this wafer.

The errors of both reincarnation and the Sacrifice of the Eucharist are refuted by Scripture. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27) refutes reincarnation. “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many...there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 9:28; 10:18) refutes the alleged sacrifice of the Mass..

Christ’s entrance into flesh to become a man took place only once—and is *permanent in that same body*. He was not “raised” a spirit being as His disciples imagined: “Handle me, and see;” Jesus told them, “for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Lk 24:39). One must believe in the *bodily* resurrection of Christ in order to be saved: “That if thou shalt...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9); “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel...By which also ye are saved,...how that Christ died for our sins...was buried, and...rose again the third day” (1 Cor 15:1-4). No other gospel will save the soul. Let us proclaim it without compromise and thus counter the lies perpetuated by the spirit of antichrist. **TBC**

Quotable

There are two ways by which a man may lose his own soul....He may lose his soul by living and dying...like a beast prayerless, godless, graceless, faithless. This is a sure way to hell. Mind that you do not walk in it. He may [also] lose his soul by taking up *some kind of religion*. He may live and die contenting himself with false Christianity, and resting on a baseless hope. This is the commonest way to hell there is....

There are multitudes of baptized men and women who...give Christ a certain place in their system of religion, but Christ alone is not "all in all" to their souls. No: it is either Christ and the Church; or Christ and the Sacraments; or Christ and His ordained ministers; or Christ and their own goodness or Christ and their prayers; or Christ and their own sincerity and charity, on which they practically rest their souls.

If you are a Christian of this kind I warn you...your religion is an offence to God. You are changing God's plan of salvation into a plan of your own devising.

J. C. Ryle

*As cited in The Reformer,
May/June 1998, pp. 10-11*

Q&A

Question: Mr. Hunt: Having read some of your vitriolic statements against Pope Pius XII (i.e., that the Vatican "had no excuse for its Nazi partnership or for its continued commendation of Hitler on the one hand and its thunderous silence regarding the Jewish question on the other hand...") I thought it worthwhile to send along to you this editorial from the March 30 [1998] *Newsweek* [p. 35]. I don't know what level of journalistic integrity you or your staff content yourselves with, but, journalistic integrity aside, your defamation of this pope and, by implication, his predecessor, does not square with your profession of belief in the gospel. Ironic, isn't it, that it takes a public statement by the secular—and often viciously anti-Catholic—media to refute the smears by professed Christians against their brothers and sisters in the faith.

It would be comforting to believe that

Catholics might anticipate a public apology from you. However, knowing your penchant for misrepresenting those whom you oppose, including your own Protestant comrades (I have read Gary DeMar's account of his debating against you), I don't expect much....

If I should be proved wrong and you do decide to correct this injustice, I will be happy to post your retraction on the bulletin board at my parish, St. Edward's Church....

P.S. A number of my fellow Catholics and I attended a showing of your video, "A Woman Rides the Beast," at a Protestant fundamentalist church in Grand Rapids a few months ago...In the Q and A session...we had the opportunity to correct a number of misrepresentations in that video....At the end of the session, one of the leaders of this congregation came over to shake our hands and to tell us that he had now come to believe that "Catholics are Christians after all."

Answer: It must have been relatively easy to "correct" alleged "misrepresentations" in the absence of anyone who could present the abundant documentation behind the video. Had I been present that evening it would have been another matter. My public debates with leading Roman Catholic apologists are available on audio and some also on video tapes. These are formal debates governed by rules enforced by a moderator, during which my opponents have had every opportunity to point out any "misrepresentations" on my part. We offer those tapes, but to my knowledge, my Catholic opponents do not (for example my last debate with Karl Keating).

It is far more distressing that you could, apparently, so easily convince "one of the leaders of this congregation" that the Reformation was due to a semantic misunderstanding; that those burned at the stake died in vain in the mistaken belief that Roman Catholicism offered a false gospel when in fact it was really the truth; that the hundreds of evangelical missionaries who have endured fierce opposition to the gospel in Catholic countries have wasted their time; and that the millions who have been saved out of the Catholic Church and left it were already saved but just didn't know it

because "Catholics are Christians after all."

As for my "misrepresenting those whom [I] oppose," let me suggest that, rather than taking "Gary DeMar's account of his debating against [me]," you should listen to the the debates themselves since you claim to be interested in the truth. My last debate with Gary was about two months ago. Don't expect to get a copy from Gary, however, because he refuses to offer it. On the other hand, if you are really interested in the facts you may order an audio copy from us.

Your accusations that I have been "vitriolic" and guilty of "defamation" and "smears" in my statements concerning Pope Pius XII reflect the very inflammatory tone for which you criticize me. The *Newsweek* essay you sent has been in my voluminous Pius XII files since its publication. It is but one more addition to the recent misguided attempts to exonerate this Pope and the Vatican, all of them, like this one, pitifully weak because the evidence simply doesn't support the hope. This essay itself admits (exactly as you quote me) that Pius XII never spoke out publicly against the Holocaust. It quotes an editorial commendation in *The New York Times*, 12/25/41, of the Pope's public expressions in favor of peace and in opposition to war. *That* was brave of him?!

The essay quotes from the Pope's 1942 Christmas message to the world and calls him "the first figure of international stature to condemn what was turning into the Holocaust." Note the careful language: "what was *turning into* the holocaust"—not the Holocaust itself. In fact, the mistreatment of Jews had been public policy for years and the Holocaust was well underway. Yet to the Pope's shame, exactly as I have stated and the records prove, there was no specific statement in that Christmas message to which his supporters hopefully refer—*nor was there ever such a statement from the Pope*—which unmistakably exposed and opposed the deportation and extermination of Jews. He was more concerned with appeasing Hitler in order to protect his Church in Germany and to keep fascist Germany strong as a bulwark against communism than he was for the plight of the Jews.

In contrast to *Newsweek's* naive praise nearly 56 years later of the Pope's 1942 Christmas message, those suffering through Hitler's hell at the time were bitterly disappointed. For example, a letter protesting the

weakness of that Christmas message was written to the Pope on January 2, 1943 by Wladislaw Raczkiewicz, president of the Polish Government in Exile, which read in part, "Holy Father, At this tragic moment, my people are fighting not merely for their lives but for everything that has been sacred in their eyes. They...implore that a voice be raised to show clearly and plainly where the evil lies and to condemn those in the service of evil...the Apostolic See must break silence..." (*Pius XII and the Third Reich: A Documentation*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1966, by Saul Friedlander, pp. 131-33). In spite of many such pleas from various quarters, the Apostolic See, supposedly the world's watchdog on morals, did not break that infamous silence in the face of the worst evil the world had ever seen.

To support its whitewash of Pius XII, the *Newsweek* essay refers to "11 volumes on the war years published by the Vatican archives...." It fails to mention that the archives themselves, as the Vatican's official publications (*La Civiltà Cattolica*, 3/21/98, and *L'Osservatore Romano*, 4/29/98) admit, are "closed to the public and to historians." Three Jesuits (Angelo Martini, Burkhardt Schneider and Pierre Blet), given access to the archives for the Church's own purposes, authored these eleven volumes, which can hardly be considered either a fully documented or an impartial account. Dare I use the word "cover-up" with regard to the continued refusal to open the Vatican's archives? Friedlander's book quotes heavily from the Nazi archives, which he wanted to check against the Vatican's records, but was not allowed. In his foreword, Friedlander writes, "When preparing this book I attempted several times to get access to the Vatican archives, but in vain."

On the other hand, for these crucial years the Nazi archives have been exposed to the public as have many of the previously secret files of the OSS (predecessor to the CIA) through the Freedom of Information Act. These records present Pius XII in an entirely different light from the *Newsweek* essay and other recent attempts to exonerate him based upon the Vatican's self-serving account. There was an outcry on the part of Roman Catholics for the Vatican to refute Friedlander's book following its publication—and the Vatican promised to do so. More than 30 years later we finally have the release of a defense in those eleven

volumes, but no one is allowed to go to the archives themselves to check their accuracy and especially their completeness. Thus the conclusion that the Vatican has much to hide is not only based upon evidence found in other records but in its refusal to allow impartial historians to examine its own archives.

Efforts to justify Pius XII make the claim that his silence about the Jewish question was due to his fear that to renounce the Holocaust would only have angered Hitler and made it worse. That view simply cannot be sustained either by logic or history. The facts are that his silence about the Holocaust saved no one. It is more reasonable to conclude that silence over the Jewish question was maintained to protect the Church's interests in Germany and because of the Pope's belief that Germany was the Church's only bulwark against the threat of communism from the East. And this view is supported by much evidence.

It is also argued that no one, least of all Hitler, would have heeded the Pope. On the contrary, the Nazi archives bear proof that Hitler was fearful of what the Pope might say right up to the end of the war, even when German troops had occupied Italy and surrounded the Vatican. When Hitler ordered the deportation and extermination of all Jews in Rome and Italy, Bishop Hudal, who was very open in his support of Hitler, wired Berlin that snatching Jews from the very gates of the Vatican would surely force the Pope to protest publicly, even though he did not want to do so. But on October 28, 1943, State Secretary Ernst von Weizsacker was able to advise Berlin that the Pope would not make a protest but would continue to do "everything he could, even in this delicate matter, not to injure the relationship between the Vatican and the German Government or the German authorities in Rome" (Friedlander, pp. 206-207).

Furthermore, the Pope was not only silent publicly but diplomatically as well. Contrary to the propaganda put out by Vatican supporters that the Pope was silent publicly so he could work more effectively behind the scenes through secret diplomacy, there is no evidence whatsoever in the Nazi archives to suggest the he ever even made a serious inquiry concerning the Holocaust to Hitler through the diplomatic channels which remained open at all times! The

Nazi archives, which contain meticulous accounts of everything down to the amount of gold taken from the victims' teeth, "do not contain any document recording a discussion of the Jewish problem between the Pope and one of the Reich Ambassadors or between the Secretary of State and the German diplomats" (Friedlander, p 145).

That the absence of any such record was not due either to policy or oversight is evident from the fact that Nazi archives do contain the record of three very weak inquiries on the part of papal Nuncio, Msgr. Orsenigo. The first, presented 10/15/42 to Reich ambassador Ernst Woermann, passed along concern expressed by certain Jews in France and Lvov as to the fate of relatives who had been taken away. According to Woermann's notes of the meeting, the manner of inquiry was "somewhat embarrassed and without pressing the point." In the second, Orsenigo met with State Secretary Ernst von Weizsacker 11/6/42 and according to Weizsacker's notes of the meeting, "casually mentioned rumors of an impending intensification of the ordinances concerning mixed marriages [between Catholics and Jews]." The third was in August 1943 when Orsenigo met with Weizsacker's successor, Steengracht, to request consideration for a destitute 74-year-old Jewess in Amsterdam who wanted permission to join her son in London. Steengracht's notes state, "The Nuncio ...[made] the immediate comment that this was a matter that was really outside his competence and that, if nothing could be done about it, he could readily resign himself to the fact" (Friedlander, pp 145-46).

These three instances for which we have records could hardly be characterized as expressing great concern or pressure from the Vatican concerning the Jewish question! Remember, that by June 1943 more than 3 million Jews had already been killed, and deportations to extermination camps continued in a steady flow.

There is extensive documentation concerning Pius XII's collaboration with and support of Hitler and his regime, but I can only take time to cite one other source: Sister (and later Mother Superior) Pascalina, the tiny and strikingly beautiful and regal Bavarian-born nun who was often called his "mistress of the soul" and "the most powerful woman in Vatican history." She

was for more than 40 years at his side day and night as his skiing partner, his "aide, his housekeeper, his confidante, his adviser, his surrogate mother, and, in critical times, his conscience" (Paul I. Murphy, *La Popessa*, Warner Books, 1983, inside front of jacket). No one can deny her fierce loyalty and devotion to Pius XII and therefore it is all the more telling that we learn from such a source a full confirmation of all that you don't want to believe about him—and more.

Sister Pascalina was witness to his giving Hitler a large sum of church money to help launch the Nazi party when he was Eugenio Pacelli, papal Nuncio in Munich (p. 52). After Pacelli became Pius XII in 1939, Pascalina pleaded with him often to speak out against Hitler and the Holocaust, but to no avail. She was infuriated that "Pacelli's first official act as Pius XII was to court Hitler...[and] by 'the condescending message' that the Holy Father first wrote the German Fuhrer....The extremes to which the Pontiff and his clerical backers went to placate the Fuhrer were altogether appalling to her" (pp. 162-63). She personally took the official notes as the Pope discussed with the German cardinals the content of that first message to Hitler. Indeed, it had been Pacelli's popularity with the German cardinals because of his support of the Nazi regime which had no doubt swung the vote that put him in as Pius XI's successor.

That first letter from Pius XII to Hitler began, "To the Illustrious Herr Adolf Hitler, Fuhrer and Chancellor of the German Reich!" The Pope's letter went on to say, "We recall with great pleasure the many years we spent in Germany as Apostolic Nuncio, when we did all in our power to establish harmonious relations between Church and State. Now...how much more ardently do we pray to reach that goal..." (Remember, this was 1939 and Hitler's evil had been exposed to the world.)

Pius XII has been credited with saving the lives of thousands of Jews in Rome, but it was Pascalina who introduced the Pope to the idea and conceived and carried out the clever and secretive way in which this was accomplished. It was that tiny but determined nun who "risked everything for the Jews...and issued hundreds of papal identity cards...so [that Jews] could pass as Christians through Nazi lines for safety in the Vatican." Hitler agreed that the Vatican, churches and properties, including the

Pope's summer palace, Castel Gandolfo, would be off limits to Nazi inspection. In exchange for that assurance, the Pope announced to the world that Nazi troops were behaving properly.

On September 3, 1943, Weizsacker (now German Ambassador to the Holy See) sent a memorandum from Rome assuring Hitler that "Concern in the Vatican about the fate of Italy and of Germany, too, is growing...in the Pope's view a powerful German Reich is quite indispensable for the future of the Catholic Church." On September 24 Weizsacker, in another dispatch from Rome, referred to the Vatican's persistent dream "that the Western powers will realize in time where their real interest lies and will join the German effort to help save European culture from Bolshevism." On that same day State Secretary Steengracht, in Germany, noted in a memorandum preserved in the Nazi archives that Nuncio Orsenigo had "declared, of his own accord, that...only Germany and the Vatican were in a position to tackle the Bolshevik peril..."

As the war neared its end, the Pope pleaded with the Allied Forces to deal leniently with both Hitler and Mussolini. Both were Catholics to their deaths. There is no excusing the fact that Pius XII never excommunicated either of these master criminals in spite of their unspeakable evil.

The issue goes beyond Pius XII himself. He merely reflected centuries of anti-Semitism on the part of previous popes and his Church involving the most vicious persecution and death of multitudes of Jews. I hope you will post this on your church's bulletin board as promised.

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The Best Deal

T.A. McMahon

Oddball exceptions notwithstanding, everyone wants a good deal. So I have on occasion fashioned my witnessing and contending for the faith around the idea of “a good deal.” It’s not always effective, but then no approach of which I’m aware bats a thousand. Even so, I believe it has a solid biblical basis, despite my having been accused of demeaning spiritual things by using “such a crass concept.”

“What do you mean, ‘What’s my deal?’” complained the cult member at my door. It bothered him that I was implying he was there to sell me something, and that such a line of questioning reduced the spiritual significance of his mission to something “commercial.” Undeterred by his objection, I pointed out that he and his friend may not have been selling vacuum cleaners or Girl Scout cookies, but they did ring my doorbell for the purpose of getting me to “buy” what they were “selling”—and I simply wanted to know what the deal was.

It’s interesting how seldom those who are trying to sell you something tell you exactly what you want to know *when* you want to know it. (I call it the “Amway revelation,” which those of you who have been approached to become distributors will recognize.) Well, after being subjected to a burst of religious platitudes to throw off my direct line of questioning, I managed to get the conversation back on the track I wanted to discuss.

“It seems obvious that you guys are here for the sole purpose of enriching my life spiritually. True?” They both nodded agreeably. “Well, I’m very much interested in spiritual enrichment. But I don’t want you to waste your time or mine. So I’d like to hear what you have to offer... but only if you’re willing to answer my questions as simply and directly as you can.” They both agreed, and I invited them in for an “enrichment” Q&A session.

“When I asked you about your deal, I assumed that you came to my door to tell me some things that would help me in this life and prepare me for the life to

come.” They nodded. “I do already have some beliefs about that, but I’m interested in hearing what you believe—to see if your deal is better than mine, so to speak.” The two gave each other a what’s-with-this-guy look and weren’t quite sure where to begin. So I got them started.

“What must I do to get to heaven? Do I have to join your organization to get there?” After some hemming-and-hawing on their part and my chiding reminder that “direct answers” was the agreed condition for this discussion, they decided to do their best (within their trained approach) to answer my questions. Their response went something like this:

“Our organization was raised up by God because all the world’s religions

[H]is divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue...

2 Peter 1:3

became corrupt and devoid of Jehovah’s truth. Therefore, if you want to know the truth of what God requires, our organization alone has that truth.”

“That’s exactly what I want to know,” I replied enthusiastically. “What’s your deal?”

Again, straightforwardness is not part of their training so I had to interrupt them continually, restating in more concise terms what they told me. I like to do that, by the way, because it often puts in a different light what they have been programmed to present—a view they haven’t considered. It also seemed to avoid knee-jerk defensive reactions on their part. After inducing them to articulate some of the key teachings of their cult, I summed up their deal:

“So, if I’ve got this right, I need to join your organization because it’s the only way I can learn Jehovah’s will. Then if I faithfully carry out His will in obedience to the instructions of the organization for the rest of my life, I’ll be rewarded with everlasting life on earth, because there’s almost no chance

of being for all eternity with Jesus in heaven [which is reserved for and already filled by a special class of people and limited to 144,000]. If I do enough good to pass the test, God will resurrect me on earth for another test of good works and obedience which lasts 1,000 years. If I make it through that okay and at the end Jehovah deems me worthy, I will live on a renewed earth in a perfect human condition—that is, as long as I don’t rebel against God throughout eternity. Right?”

Although I had added a few things they had failed to confide, they admitted that my recap was “fairly accurate.” “That’s not what I’d call a good deal,” I concluded. Before they could respond, I began expounding upon the far better deal I had accepted.

“Before creation began, Jehovah foreknew that humanity would disobey Him (1 Pt 1:18-20; 2 Tm 1:9), breaking fellowship with Him. The penalty for sin which His absolute justice required is death—eternal separation from Him (Rom 6:23); yet His divine love and mercy provided a way for eternal reconciliation (Rom 5:11; 2 Cor 5:18). God himself became a man, Christ Jesus, who lived a sinless life and then died a sacrificial death, paying the full debt owed by sinful humanity. God our only Savior (Is 43:11) raised Jesus our only Savior (Acts 4:12; Ti 2:13) from the dead, and God’s Word tells me that the only way I can spend eternity with Him is to *believe* His death, burial and resurrection paid the complete penalty for my sins—past, present and future. Christ alone could, and *did*, save me, a salvation I received not by works but by grace through faith *alone*, according to God’s perfect plan.”

There was a momentary silence as the younger of the two Jehovah’s Witnesses seemed to be giving thoughtful consideration to my words, while the elder gave an anxious pause before hurriedly collecting his things. I could see our session was coming to an abrupt end so I kept sowing what I hoped might produce future fruit. “Your deal is not only bad, it’s hopeless. Sinful man can contribute nothing toward his salvation. The only payment God will accept for sin is death, either ours for our own sin, or the sinless

Lamb of God's substitutionary death on our behalf. Only He can save us, and He has done it fully and perfectly!"

I have a grudging admiration for Jehovah's Witnesses' zeal, and a grieving heart over their damnable deal.

Lest someone misunderstand me, I believe the foremost reason one should become a Christian is because biblical Christianity is the *absolute truth*. It is *God's deal*; everything it declares is true (Ps 119:160; Jn 17:17); and it is utterly good for us—the best. Compared to what God has revealed, man's religious endeavors and dictates are always futile—and too often a form of spiritual racketeering.

At an ExCatholics For Christ conference at which I acted as administrator, I was asked to speak with a young man who, as a recent convert to Catholicism, was considering becoming a priest. He was brought to the conference by some deeply concerned evangelical friends who hoped that something he heard there might dissuade him from his affair with Rome. The constant demands of my job afforded me only a very brief amount of time with him, and I wanted to get to the gist of why he converted to Catholicism. He, however, wanted to discuss that which gave him confidence regarding his conversion: early church history.

After listening to him for as long as I could under very pressing circumstances, I interrupted, "Look, although I'm not particularly interested in church history, I wouldn't mind discussing that with you if and when we had more time. I'm sorry, but right now I'm under the gun. In view of that, just tell me briefly the *deal* you got by becoming a Catholic."

"What are you talking about? What deal?!" was his indignant reply.

"I was told that you were a Protestant before becoming a Catholic. I assume you converted because you found a better deal in the Church of Rome. So, what's your deal now?" Unflappable and unmovable at the beginning of our discussion, the young man was now uptight, wanting no part of that line of questioning, which he indicated was demeaning and beneath contempt. Yet he didn't stomp off. Therefore, I answered my own question for him.

"I was a Roman Catholic for more than 30 years. I became a Catholic through infant baptism. That baptism removed my sin and started me on the way to heaven. Some years later, when I committed a mortal sin, I was condemned to hell for it.

Then the sacraments came to my aid. Confession got me back on the ladder to heaven, communion helped me climb it, but every time I sinned grievously I fell off, plummeting toward hell. Absolution from the priest broke my fall and the liturgy got me on the ascent again. My life was plummet, assent, plummet, assent, plummet, assent. As thankful as I was for confession, I still knew I had to personally pay for my sins, either here on earth or in purgatory in order to get to heaven. How long would I have to suffer in order to be purged of all my sins? No one could tell me.

"Would I make it to heaven? Well, yes—if...if I did not die with a mortal sin on my soul. But no one could be assured of that. Not even Pope John Paul II. Even for him, the so-called vicar of Christ, God's chief representative on earth, to think so would be verging on the mortal sin of presumption. Nevertheless, as a devout

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:14

Catholic I did all that I could to stack the odds in my favor: Masses, confessions, communions, rosaries, novenas, stations of the cross, eucharistic hours, scapulars, medals, holy water, indulgences, acts of mercy, sufferings, appeals to Mary, prayers for help from the saints, etc., etc.

"My hope was in the Church, its sacraments and rituals. But it wasn't hope at all, it was bondage to a manmade religion. It was a bad deal!"

The young convert to Rome didn't see it that way. I pray he will.

I don't know if the young man really understood the gospel (Eph 2:8-9; Rom 4:5) before his conversion to Catholicism; it seems doubtful. Then again, I've often wondered why those who claim to know the gospel and trust in God's Word have such a penchant for extrabiblical deals. The church's ravenous appetite for the lies of psychotherapy is a disheartening example.

The Bible is emphatic that it contains all that one needs for a life that is fruitful and fully pleasing to God (Ps 119:9; 2 Pt 1:3; Heb 4:12; 2 Tm 3:16-17; Jas 1:18, etc.). Every drop of its water of truth is crystal clear, thoroughly cleansing, perfectly refreshing

(Ps 34:8). Yet more and more of Christ's own are drinking from cesspools, waters polluted with the anti-Christian theories of Freud, Jung, Fromm, Maslow, Ellis, Rogers, et al., and ladled out by professional Christian therapists highly sought after for their psychological counsel.

Just before his death more than a decade ago, J. Vernon McGee met with Dave Hunt and me. He was terribly grieved as he shared that his "Through the Bible," once the most popular program on Christian radio, was being displaced around the country by shows hosted by psychologists and psychiatrists, and fraught with psychobabble. Today, Christian psychotherapists and most marriage and family counselors are the "hirelings" (Jn 10:13) of Christendom, feeding the sheep a toxic mixture of biblical teachings laced with destructive myths such as psychic determinism, codependency, self-love and all the other selfisms, repressed memories, the Freudian unconscious, occult techniques of visualization and hypnosis, inner healing, inner child and multiple personalities, birth order, 12 steps, the four temperaments, personality testing, satanic ritual abuse, grievance counseling, generational curses, and left brain/right brain, as well as being contributors to the nationwide problem of overprescribed drugs.

If something has extraordinary popularity among evangelicals, it's practically a given that it has heavy doses of the "fleshly wisdom" (2 Cor 1:12) of psychotherapy, from Focus on the Family to Promise Keepers to the Women of Faith conferences (the latter founded by Steve Arterburn of New Life [psychotherapeutic] clinics, and cosponsored by his clinics and Remuda Ranch, a treatment center for women with "psychological" disorders; more on this in a future Q&A). The sheep are being sheared both financially and spiritually as too many of their shepherds—those who claim to be committed to God's Word—stand idly by, watching a very bad deal take place.

"Be vigilant" (1 Pt 5:8), ye shepherds, exhort those whom God has placed in your care to drink from the pure water of His Word.

The world knows nothing of what it so desperately needs: true love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Gal 5:22-23). Nothing extrabiblical can supply, supplement or surpass God's deal. **TBC**

Quotable

With what holy indignation do the Apostles denounce the subtle machinations of the enemies of the gospel! In vain shall we look among those faithful servants of the Lord for anything to justify that trembling reserve which fears to say, decidedly, that truth is truth—and error is error. In what style, indeed, should perversions of the truth of God be censured? Ought they to be treated as mere matters of opinion on which we may innocently and safely differ? Or ought they to be met in a tone of solemn, strong and decided approbation? Paul warned Christians against men who arose from among themselves, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them—and instead of complimenting false teachers in his day, denounced an angel from heaven on the supposition of his preaching another gospel. And if an apostle was withstood to the face, because he was to be blamed, are the writings of those who subvert the Gospel to pass without rebuke?

Robert Haldane

“Fear of Controversy,” 1874

In this sermon I shall have to show you how often, and in how many ways, men seek other methods of cure than the only one, namely, to take the case to God. They heal their hurt slightly. They cry, “Peace! Peace!” where there is no peace, and adopt a thousand devious devices rather than the only remedy provided by the Great physician for sin-sick souls.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

“Is God in the Camp?”

Q&A

Question: While I agree with you that psychology has created more problems for the church than anyone could number, nevertheless I think there are some areas of the field that can be helpful. What do you think?

Answer: First of all, when the term “psychology” is used most people think of *psychotherapy*. That’s understandable

because psychotherapy is the most well-known field of psychology. However, there are about 50 divisions of the American Psychological Association and they run the gamut from mostly objective to extremely subjective.

The most scientifically legitimate would be the former, and that would include those fields of research or experimental psychology which use the scientific method as they collect and evaluate tangible, observable information. A psychologist who studies man/machine interface, e.g., the placement of knobs or keys on a machine or choice of letter size or color for optimum use, would be a good example of a psychological field with varying degrees of objectivity.

To the degree that they stick to quantifiable facts, evaluation, measurement and statistical psychologies are for the most part legitimate as a science. The testing of skills or abilities for placement (typing, math, hand/eye coordination, finger dexterity, etc.) where the information gleaned and reported is objective and quantitative would be valid as a psychological endeavor. Testing that deals with personality types or personal feelings or subjective views lacks the necessary statistical validity to be considered seriously. When evaluations mix the objective “*what* has taken place” with the interpretive “*why* it has taken place,” it has moved out of science and into subjective speculation.

So, regarding whatever calls itself a psychological enterprise, we would consider it to be legitimate to the degree that it can demonstrate objectivity. Clinical psychology (psychotherapy) is subjective and involves the very wisdom of *man* that God warns us against (1 Cor 2:5).

Question: What can you tell me about Our Lady of Guadalupe? How much truth is there in the story that the Virgin Mary appeared to someone in Latin America?

Answer: In brief response, the story goes that on December 9, 1531 the “virgin” appeared to a poor Aztec Indian convert to Catholicism, Juan Diego. As a “sign” to convince the skeptical acting bishop, Don Fray Juan de Zumarraga, a Franciscan, that he was to build a church in her honor, she “miraculously” imprinted her image on

Diego’s cloak or cape (*tilma*), which still hangs undeteriorated in the basilica to this day.

In 1910 she was made patroness of Latin America, in 1946 Pope Pius XII declared her to be the patroness of all the Americas, and since 1988 the annual December 12 liturgical celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe has been an official feast in all dioceses in the United States.

How much truth is in the story, the exact condition of the *tilma* and explanation for the image and its alleged miraculous preservation, etc., we cannot say. We do know, however, that whatever is true in the story (including alleged “miracles”) is from Satan and not from God, for many reasons. We give a few:

(1) The appearances and erection of the church took place on a small hill, Tepeyac, where a temple to the Mother-Goddess of the Aztecs had once stood, thus confusing “Mary” with this goddess.

(2) The “virgin” appeared to be a beautiful Mexican girl of fourteen, according to Juan Diego, the one who saw her.

(3) She claimed to be “the ever-virgin Mary, Mother of the true God...Queen of angels and men” who had “trodden on the Serpent’s head.”

(4) To this day, pilgrims to the shrine hail *Teotl Inantzin* (God’s Mother) by her Aztec title, *Coatalupej*, and sing, “She freed us from great evil, She crushed the Serpent.”

(5) Juan Diego insisted that this “Mother of God” was a member of his own race, a young Aztec girl; and her star-studded mantle and other features of the image identify her as an Aztec queen.

The true Mary does not appear as a young Aztec girl telling lies that exalt her as the Mother of God and the one who crushed the Serpent’s head, etc.

Question: I’ve noticed that you have appeared as speaker at conferences along with women speakers. Doesn’t this go against the biblical injunction that women are not to teach men?

Answer: We believe the Bible opposes women as pastors. A woman is not to teach or to usurp authority over men.

We have spoken at several conferences where a woman has also spoken. However,

the women have not presented doctrinal teaching or taken authority over men who were present. They have presented documentation of evils within the church, such as New Age teaching, psychology, Kingdom Now and Replacement teachings, etc.

It is common at many conferences for women to conduct a workshop, to present factual information, for example, and we have found them to be very efficient in doing so. In our opinion, this seems to be outside what is prohibited in God's Word.

Question: What are your thoughts on Christians who take their own lives, and what will happen to them?

Answer: What do the Scriptures say? They are certainly not silent on the subject, including the stories of those who committed suicide (King Saul and Judas, for example).

One thing is certain. The sixth commandment of the Lord says very emphatically, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex 20:13). A more accurate rendering would be, "Thou shalt not murder." This verse does not add the word "others" at the end of the command. Consequently, the prohibition covers everyone. You shall not murder others, yourself, or anyone. God alone is the Judge over His creation (Rom 9:21; 12:19; Ps 94:2).

You ask about the consequences of suicide. While the Scriptures affirm the security of the believer, the Lord Jesus also strongly warned about the loss of reward a believer may suffer because of his actions (1 Cor 3:15). Consider the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and the heroes of the faith. They all endured horrendous experiences and circumstances, with many losing their lives, but not through suicide. Samson's death involved more self-sacrifice than suicide, as opposed to King Saul, for example. Samson knew that his last act of judgment against the Philistines would result in his own death. A vast difference exists between this and Saul's cowardly attempts to avoid the consequences of his own actions (1 Sm 31:4)

Question: I know that I'll be in heaven, but I still have a fear of the moment of death, the process of dying. Can you help me?

Answer: We are aware of a poem (from the Gospel Tract Society in Springfield MO) which goes something like this: "To bid farewell to earth and its toils and troubles and pains—afraid of that? To exchange this arthritic, bent body for an incorruptible form—afraid of that? To greet loved ones who've gone before and behold their joy—afraid of that? To exchange a tear-stained vale for a land without tears—afraid of that?" Some thoughts to ponder indeed.

Consider this: If we've become faithful servants, keeping our eyes fixed not upon death but upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2), we will be less likely to succumb to the one sorrow for a believer at death: no, not even the farewell to loved ones, but the regret that while on earth we could have done more in the Kingdom.

1 Corinthians 15:26 tells us that the last enemy to be conquered is death (v. 26), that we will be raised in incorruption, not corruption; in glory, not dishonor; in power, not weakness (vv. 42-43); changed (v. 52); and in victory (v. 54)! How much better could it get?

You mentioned as well fearing the *process* of dying. None of us knows what the hours or moments before death will hold, but since the Lord has worked in our lives, superintended, orchestrated, guided and led through all the vicissitudes of this world, why would we not trust Him even more as He guides and leads us toward that glorious moment when we see Him face to face and He welcomes us Home? Would that compassion which is "new every morning" and "fails not" (Lam 3:23) wane one iota at such a wondrous hour?

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:37-39).

Y2K and Bible Prophecy

Dave Hunt

Y2K means "Year 2000," and has come to symbolize the worldwide computer-related chaos and disaster we are being assured will inevitably occur one nano-second into the new millennium. This event bears no relationship to Bible prophecy (in spite of some attempts to make it fit) and was not a subject TBC has cared to address. However, the many letters and phone calls we've received, asking for counsel in response to Y2K warnings, cause us to respond.

What is the problem? Years ago memory was very expensive so, to save space, computer programmers used only two digits to indicate the year. Thus 65 meant 1965, etc. The digits 00 coming up January 1, 2000 would therefore mean 1900 to many computers and supposedly create all manner of chaos. Computer expert Michael S. Hyatt writes,

12:01AM January 1, 2000: Your electricity goes off. Phones aren't working. The computer at your local bank crashes. Police and 911 are nowhere to be found....

Social security checks will stop coming. Planes...will be grounded. Credit card charges will be rejected. Military defense systems will fail....

The Federal Reserve will be unable to clear checks...your employer will go out of business.¹

Many respected authorities seem to agree. William McDonough, president, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, warns, "The failure to get [Y2K] right will affect the integrity of the payment system, financial markets, and...the domestic and the global economies."² Arthur Gross, chief information officer for the IRS, has said, "Failure to achieve compliance with the year 2000 will jeopardize our way of life on this planet for some time to come."

London's *Sunday Times* of August 3, 1997 declared, "This is not a prediction, it is a certainty—there will be a serious disruption in the world's financial services...[and] a millennium-induced crash of the world's stock markets around the middle of 1999." Early in 1998, Ed Yardeni, chief economic forecaster for an international investment banking firm, declared, "The Y2K virus has infected all the vital organs of our global body. A failure in one system

could corrupt other systems.... There is no silver bullet."³ Yardeni warns that in the stock market crash which he sees coming, investors "easily could lose \$1 trillion...."⁴

Newsweek for June 2, 1997 had a Y2K feature article titled "The Day the World Shut Down." Nearly a year later *Newsweek* was still pessimistic, declaring that "Unless the Bug is purged, the air-traffic-control system will do a total Cinderella on New Year's Eve [1999]...transform[ing] the friendly skies to the lonely skies."⁵ Jack Van Impe has advised his TV viewers not to fly at that time.

Like Van Impe, many noted Christian writers and speakers are sounding Y2K alarms. All agree that the most difficult and potentially dangerous problem is program-embedded computer chips. Donald S.

**God is our refuge and strength,
...therefore will not we fear...**

Psalms 46:1-2

McAlvany has been in the forefront of alerting Christians to the Y2K problem. In his February 1998 *The McAlvany Intelligence Advisor* he writes,

[N]o one knows how many non-compliant chips there are...and it is estimated that 8 to 20 billion [embedded] chips are presently in use throughout the industrialized western world....All chips must be tested....This is not possible between now and 12/31/99....

[T]he coming computer crisis...could trigger...the onset of the biggest global depression since the 1930s....

The national power grid...is completely computer dependent and may be the most important system at risk...giving us the "mother of all electrical blackouts"....

In a special 1997 report, Gary North issued this grim portent: "On January 1, 2000, the world's computers will either shut down or go haywire. So will everything dependent on them....In 1999, depositors all over the world will figure this out and will pull their money out of the banks....*The mother of all bank runs*...will bankrupt banks all over the world...."

Chuck Missler informs us that one company involved in doing deeply classified government work has a two-day training course for all of its employees, instructing them that *they should prepare for a national power blackout—not a brownout—of up to*

90 days due to Y2K..."⁶ As late as August 1998, White House Y2K czar John Koskinen "admitted that not everything will be fixed and that his goal is to keep disruptions down to a manageable level."⁷ Manageable? North warns,

Panic...will happen...on a scale unimaginable, beginning sporadically at least one year before 2000....

The millennium clock keeps ticking. There is nothing we can do to delay it. *This disaster is programmed.* If you think to yourself, "This just won't happen," ask yourself this question: "Exactly what is going to prevent it...?" Time is running out. *Don't sit there, immobilized, like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming truck.* (Emphasis in original.)⁸

Jerry Falwell's *National Liberty Journal* for October reports that "many technology experts believe that computers could begin to show signs of breakdown as early as January 1, 1999....It behooves all Americans to prepare now for what appears to be...inevitable...."

The article continues,

If you live in downtown New York [or other large city], you should probably make plans not to be there January 1, 2000....The nation's inner cities could face major looting and violence....Be sure to put away enough food and provisions to include neighbors, Christian brothers and sisters and the poor around your family dinner table....

Pastors, begin to educate your flock now on the Y2K computer problem so each family can...be prepared to help those in your community who face problems caused by Y2K. The church that can amass a large clothes closet and food supply can use Y2K to share God's love and act as servants.

McAlvany agrees: "If you have the financial means...doesn't it make sense to acquire extra dehydrated/freeze-dried food for relatives, friends, people in your church, or associates who cannot afford to do so...? Think about it!"⁹

Yes, *think* about it. How wealthy would one have to be to provide for all of one's family and special friends who can't afford to stock up for themselves? And where will all of that freeze-dried food come from when no supplier in that small and specialized industry has the production capacity to meet such demand? (Others advise Christians to arm themselves to

protect their hoard.)

We are being told to take other urgent measures "while there is still time," such as moving out of cities into select locations complete with water well, acquiring a diesel generator for power, a wood stove, stacks of wood, etc., etc. How many families are able to do that? Furthermore, chaos and panic would result if millions of people all tried to follow such instructions!

As with the Gulf War, Y2K is being tied in with Bible prophecy by some—but it simply isn't there. Ron Reese of Maranatha Ministries published a tract in mid-1998 which said in part,

In short...you do not have much time to prepare for...THE GREATEST SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND FINANCIAL CRISIS MANKIND HAS FACED...!!!

The Bible prophesies SEVERAL MAJOR MILITARY CONFLICTS during the final seven years of Tribulation...MORE THAN HALF OF THE POPULATION OF THE WORLD WILL DIE...!!! Could this computer Y2K crisis play a MAJOR role in bringing about these horrible wars...?! [Emphasis in original.]¹⁰

The Bend Ministerial Association (BMA) in the small town of Bend, Oregon (about 35,000 population) already has a Y2K committee which meets weekly. The committee chairman says, "We've read enough to convince us this could be a serious problem..." In October, a special speaker at the BMA painted a scenario of total disaster, computers crashing everywhere, no power, no water, no food on the market shelves. Pastors were urged to alert their members to buy wood stoves and generators, to stock up on wood, food, water and to have enough to share it all with unsaved neighbors who would be caught unprepared. Christians, like Joseph in Egypt, could preserve those around them and as a result win them to Christ. Pastors were also cautioned that Clinton could very well use the crisis to declare martial law, suspend elections and take complete control. And even if the United States Defense Department got its computers fixed in time (not likely), for sure the Russians would not, and on January 1, 2000 their missiles, already pointed at our cities, could launch by mistake. Local pastors were urged to get together to plan for the rescue of Bend; and, by the way, since the Mormons already had their food and water storage perfected, we should work with and learn from them.

Let's make a calm appraisal. Bend's Christian community is neither large enough

nor wealthy enough to supply the entire city, nor do missiles launch at a computer glitch. Predictions that the shelves in grocery stores will be bare and therefore we ought to stock up right now could themselves trigger hoarding that could cause the shortages. Logically, computers have nothing to do with growing wheat or apples or chickens or anything else. Nor will supermarket trucks stop running because of a computer problem, thereby letting a competitor gain an advantage! You may be certain that AT&T and the major banks and Wall Street firms and industrial giants who are in this for the money are not going to allow themselves to lose a dime because of Y2K! Many people already have credit cards expiring beyond 2000, as will many mortgages, etc.

Computer failures are nothing new. We have learned to live with and somehow to work around them. Surely most, if not all, of the Y2K glitches that will arise on January 1, 2000, will be recognized for what they are and dealt with relatively quickly and painlessly.

Furthermore, many authorities predict no disaster. Tony Hampel, group manager for Year 2000 Marketing, Sun Microsystems, Inc., says, "Year 2000 is an annoyance, a speed bump. We're overassessing the end-of-the-world aspect of the Year 2000 problem."¹¹ Alex Patelis, economist, advised the international investment firm of Goldman, Sachs, "We view Y2K as a tremor, not a quake...."¹² Rick Egelton of Harris Bank/Bank of Montreal, has said of Y2K, "The impact would be similar to the economic effects of a snowstorm."¹³ On July 13, 1998, Wall Street held a series of Y2K tests and there were no glitches.¹⁴ AT&T, Sprint, and MCI all expect to be ready and the Federal Communications Commission estimated that 98 percent of the nation's 1,400 regional carriers upon which the big three's transmissions depend would be "compliant by mid-1999."

Sally Katzen, administrator of Office of Management and Budget, told Congress July 10, 1997, "We are confident that...the year 2000 computer problem will be a nonevent."¹⁵ Vice President Al Gore stated a few weeks ago, "We have set a deadline of March 31, 1999, for the Federal Government to be in full compliance...."¹⁶ On July 14, 1998, addressing the National Academy of Sciences, the President said, "The American people have a right to expect uninterrupted service from government...." He said the Social Security Administration was already more than 90 percent ready—undermining predictions that Social

Security checks wouldn't be in the mail.

For those companies unable to complete full Y2K compliance, there are viable alternatives. The preferred method, being adopted around the world, is called "windowing," which delays needed corrections as far into the future as A.D. 2050. Rich Hoffman of the U.S. Army Materiel Command's Year 2000 team says, "It buys you time."¹⁷ In September Hoffman said the army's systems were about 80 percent Y2K compliant and "on schedule to be completely fixed by the end of this year [1998]." Anything left hanging would be "windowed" and taken care of later. Windowing effectively prevents the predicted chaos.

An inquiry to any bank provides all of the information necessary to lay Y2K rumors to rest. Members of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which insures all accounts, have on hand copies of an FDIC brochure titled "The Year 2000 Date Change: What...[It] Means to You and Your Insured Financial Institution." It explains that "Four federal regulatory agencies...are closely monitoring the progress made by banks and savings associations in completing critical steps required by their Year 2000 plans...."

As for the predicted air traffic chaos, Boeing and Airbus say their aircraft have no Year 2000 safety issues. And though only one-third of the FAA's critical computer systems had been fixed as of late September 1998, administrator Jane Garvey insisted the organization would be ready and announced personal plans to fly commercially across the country shortly after midnight January 1, 2000.¹⁸

In our opinion, there will be problems, but not nearly of the magnitude we are hearing. Fear can easily sidetrack Christians from the real tasks in these last days. Y2K has not been foretold in God's Word. This is not prophecy from an Agabus who "signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world" (Acts 11:28). It's an electronic problem with electronic solutions that are now in process.

We are not to be anxious for tomorrow but to trust in our Lord for we do not know (nor do the "pundits") what a day may bring forth (Prv 27:1; Phil 4:6-7; Jas 4:13-15). It is only prudent always to have extra food and water, flashlights, medical supplies and other items on hand that could be helpful in any emergency. Beyond that, Christ gave very specific commands and promises in Matthew 6:25-34. We suggest meditating upon that passage and obeying it. TBC

Quotable

The Christian is a man who expects nothing from this world. He does not pin his hopes on it, because he knows that it is doomed.

The Christian is not a good man. He is a vile wretch who has been saved by the grace of God. Do you think that you deserve forgiveness? If you do, you are not a Christian.

One of the best tests of whether we are truly Christian or not is just this: Do I hate my natural self?

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The Banner of Truth, Aug-Sep 1986

It is a mighty manifestation of God's grace indeed, when it can live, and act, and conquer in such hearts as ours; when in defiance of an evil nature and an evil world, and all the force and subtlety of Satan, a weak worm is still upheld...a small spark is preserved through storms and floods....

Our holiness does not consist in great attainments, but in...humiliation of heart, poverty of spirit...and dependence upon Him alone for all we need.

John Newton, to a correspondent

The Banner of Truth, Aug-Sep 1986

Q&A

Question: I am writing in response to your article about the "Spirit of Antichrist." There are two statements that I find patently wrong...The first...justifying your argument that God is the one preventing antichrist from appearing...you say, "Only God is more powerful than satan...." This is comic book theology. ...Sola Scriptura...! [A] solitary angel takes satan and binds him...and throws him into the bottomless pit (Rv 20:1ff), something that would hardly be possible if satan were as powerful as you allude. In addition, when there is war in heaven Michael and his angels physically [sic] remove satan and his allies. ...The way I see it, "he that hinders" is representative of angelic powers....Jesus gave the church authority over the devil, in Christ we are more powerful than he....

Secondly, you state the unscriptural but common misconception that the Holy Spirit only came upon Old Testament saints, but never indwelt them. 1 Pt 1:10-11...the Spirit of Christ which was in them [Old Testament prophets]...Is 63:1

...put his holy spirit within him...Ex 31:3
...filled him with the spirit of God...Lk 1:15...filled with the Holy Ghost, etc.
...Overall I appreciate receiving *The Berean Call* and find its observations to be on the mark.

Answer: The verses you present do not prove that Satan is not the most powerful being, next to God. That, *in Christ*, Christians have power over Satan, that Michael and his angels will one day cast Satan from heaven, that an angel will throw Satan into the bottomless pit does not prove that Christians or angels are more powerful than Satan. As God's agents, yes, but not in their own power. That "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil...durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9), shows that Michael in and of himself has no authority over Satan.

Yes, no single verse declares that Satan is second in power only to God. But surely this is implied by the role he plays as God's adversary: that he still has access before the throne of God where he accuses believers "day and night" (Rv 12:10); by the power he displayed in bringing Job to ruin; by his temptation of Christ in the wilderness, taking him onto a high mountain, etc., and that Christ did not dispute Satan's claim that all the kingdoms of the world are his (Lk 4:5-6); by the fact that Satan gives authority over this world to Antichrist (Rv 13:2); that he is the "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4); that even the LORD (apparently Christ in the pre-incarnate state) says, "The LORD (apparently referring to the Father) rebuke thee, O Satan" (Zec 3:2), etc., etc. This is hardly "comic book theology."

I don't see how you can say that *he* in "he [singular] that hinders" could mean "angelic powers [plural]." Nor do you give any explanation as to *how* or *why* this one who hinders is "taken out of the way" or the significance thereof. My explanation seems to be coherent and to provide answers which your critique does not.

Unfortunately, my language was careless in saying the Holy Spirit "did not indwell" Old Testament believers. But that I meant *permanently* was clarified by references to Psalms 51:11; John 7:38-39, 14:16-17, and Acts 2:33, which clearly show that the Holy Spirit could depart from Old Testament believers and that a new and permanent indwelling began at Pentecost. Your critique, however, gives no explanation for "the Holy

Ghost was not yet given" (Jn 7:39).

My interpretation gives a consistent rendering of all of these passages together, passages which you seemingly do not take into account. "He who now hinders" (i.e., prevents Antichrist from being revealed) can only be God himself who, after all, is in charge of the universe and "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). God cannot be "taken out of the way" because He is omnipresent, but the Holy Spirit permanently indwelling believers since Pentecost could be removed by the Rapture of the church — and I see no other consistent interpretation of what Paul says.

Furthermore, we are told that Antichrist will have power and authority "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rv 13:7). Surely the saints referred to could not be the church but those who come to Christ during the Tribulation after the Rapture; otherwise Antichrist would destroy the church of which Christ said "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). All on earth shall worship him (Rv 13:3-4, 8), and those who refuse to bow down to worship his image will be killed (v 15). Surely no one in the church would worship him, and thus all in the church would be killed, if the church were present. So we have further reason to say that the presence of the church hinders the Antichrist from being revealed and that he cannot take power until the church is raptured.

Question: I enjoyed your article, "The Spirit of Antichrist"...I do have a few questions...you write, "[the Antichrist] is almost certainly alive right now." Why do you believe this? Later...you write, "We believe that the Rapture...is the next event on the prophetic calendar, and that it must occur very soon." Again...why do you believe this is true?

Answer: If Antichrist "is not alive right now," then he must yet be born and grow to maturity, which would put the Rapture at least 20 and more likely 40 or more years into the future. He takes power almost immediately after the Rapture. Daniel 9:27 says he confirms the covenant for a week. That week is clearly the 70th week of Daniel, at the end of 69 of which Christ rode into Jerusalem and was killed and Jerusalem and the temple subsequently destroyed, as verses 25 and 26 declare. So verse 27 must refer to the only week which is left — the 70th. That week has been held in abeyance since Christ was rejected by

His people Israel and the church was formed; and it cannot begin to run its course until the church is removed by the Rapture.

Secondly, I don't believe the Rapture can be held off much longer because it marks the beginning of the Day of Christ, or of the Lord. Otherwise, the Thessalonian believers would not have been upset to learn that the Day of the Lord had already come (2 Thes 2:2). If so, they had missed the Rapture; but of course it had not come and Paul goes on to explain why. The apostasy had to ripen *before* that day dawned and immediately *in that day* the Antichrist would be revealed (2 Thes 2:3-4). And that day comes "as a thief" during a time of "peace and safety" when no one expects it (1 Thes 5:2-3; 2 Pt 3:10).

Christ said He would come at a time of peace, prosperity, ease, partying, no thought of God's judgment—as in the days of Noah and Lot (Lk 17:26-30)—indeed, at a time when few if any would even suspect He would come (Mt 24:44) and when not just the foolish but the whole church would be asleep (Mt 25:5). I don't see how today's pseudopeace and false prosperity, which is built upon impossible debt, can last much longer—or how the world could ever get back to this point after the inevitable crash and nuclear war. As for the Rapture being the next event on the prophetic calendar, I know of nothing prophesied which must come before the Rapture.

Question: Our grandson and some of his friends from church seem to be obsessed with the *Star Wars* film series. They trade *Star Wars* cards and play *Star Wars* games. I don't feel good about it but don't know why. Can you give me some information?

Answer: I remember when the film *Star Wars* first appeared. Rabi Maharaj (the ex-guru whose story is told in *Death of a Guru*) and I went to check it out together. We sat there poking one another in astonishment as evidence piled upon evidence that this was pure witchcraft and Eastern mysticism and that its creator, George Lucas, knew exactly what he was doing.

The Force is obviously the "god" of *Star Wars*. One thought remained after the action had faded from the screen: "May the Force be with you." We saw that on T-shirts and bumper stickers. A whole generation began to believe in this impersonal Force that can be used to empower one to do magic feats but holds no one accountable, as does the personal God of the Bible.

This is the Force of witchcraft with a dark and light side: black magic and white magic. Darth Vader and Obi Wan Kenobi were the followers of "the old religion," as one of Vader's soldiers reminded him. The "old religion," of course, is "wicca," or witchcraft. The Force with its Dark and Light side is amoral. There is no right or wrong, just alternative sides of the Force.

The "laser sword" which Luke Skywalker learned to use is a divination device (forbidden in Deuteronomy 18 and elsewhere) which only a Jedi Knight can wield. To become a Jedi Knight one must be initiated into that altered state of consciousness through which one enters the occult world.

Luke tried unsuccessfully to use the "laser sword" with his own intellect and skills. So Obi Wan covered Luke's eyes with a visor. Unable to see, Luke could instantly deflect the laser emanating from that little ball dancing about in mid-air because he "let the Force take over." This is the altered state of consciousness which opens one to possession by evil spirits.

Obi Wan is a false "Christ." After he gave his life to save his companions, he became Luke's spirit guide, speaking to and guiding him from the spirit world of demonic power.

Luke could not destroy the Death Star with his high-tech spaceship and weapons. But hearing the voice of his spirit guide, Obi Wan, whispering, "Luke, let the Force take over," he went into his altered state of consciousness, the Force possessed and worked through him, and he destroyed the Death Star—which meant nothing, because the Force was still in place with both its Dark and Light sides.

In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Yoda was a yogi. He taught Luke that his mind was actually the channel of this power, and that he could do whatever he believed he could do—which Yoda demonstrated by raising Luke's spacecraft out of the swamp with his mind. This is, of course, the witchcraft power of positive/possibility thinking and positive confession.

Luke went into the cave to do battle with Darth Vader. When he cut off Vader's head, the audience cheered. Then came a perfect Zen Buddhist twist: When the severed head was exposed, it was Luke's own head. As the popular song goes, "I am you, and you are me, and he is she, and all is one." This is the pantheistic lie of Hinduism, that in fact you are God, you are the universe. That has been experienced on drugs, in yoga or in

hypnotic trance by millions, the state of so-called cosmic or unity consciousness.

Throughout the film, a large serpent was frequently seen giving its blessing by moving in and out of the frame, again a very subtle message.

Amazingly, when Vader was finally vanquished, he joined Obi Wan and Yoda in the spirit world of Ascended Masters. Such was his reward for playing the Dark side of the Force! These three comprise the unholy trinity that would continue to guide Luke!

There is much more, but hopefully this will convince your grandson and his friends that they are being led into the occult.

Endnotes

- 1 Michael S. Hyatt, *The Millennium Bug: How To Survive the Coming Chaos* (Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1998), outside front/back jacket cover.
- 2 "Zap! How the Year 2000 Bug will hurt the economy" (*Business Week*, March 2, 1998), 93.
- 3 *The McAlvany Intelligence Advisor* (P.O. Box 84804, Phoenix, AZ 85071, Feb. 1998), 1.
- 4 "Jonathan Marshall on economics" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 20, 1998), D2.
- 5 Steven Levy, "Will the Bug bite the bull? Not worried about the millenium computer problem? The experts dare to disagree" (*Newsweek*, May 4, 1998).
- 6 Chuck Missler, *K-Ration Intelligence Report*, June 23, 1998.
- 7 "Y2K, the storm" (*World*, Aug. 8, 1998), 9.
- 8 Gary North, "A 24-page report that proves, point by point, that this is no 'Chicken Little' fantasy but a terrifying reality" (sent by direct mail to promote North's *Remnant Review* early in 1998), 16/17-25 insert.
- 9 *The McAlvany Intelligence Advisor* (Aug. 1998), 26.
- 10 "Danger! Worldwide depression! Computer bug (Y2K) crisis nears!" (tract printed and distributed by Maranatha Ministries, 1201 Idle Hills Rd., Brooklyn, MI 49230).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Jonathan Marshall, "Doomsayers rant, but Year 2000 may not be Armageddon" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 20, 1998), D2.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Michael Diamond, "Wall St. passes Y2K test without a glitch" (*USA Today*, July 14, 1998), 1A.
- 15 Testimony of Sally Katzen before U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, July 10, 1997 (<<http://www.comlinks.com/gov/kat710.htm>>, Oct. 24, 1997).
- 16 CSpan television news interview broadcast, July 2, 1998.
- 17 William G. Phillips, "The Year 2000 problem: Will the Bug bite back?" (*Popular Science*, Oct. 1998), 92-93.
- 18 Ibid., 90.

Great Among the Gentiles

Dave Hunt

For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen [nations], saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 1:11

We have often pointed out in these pages that prophecy comprises nearly one-third of the Bible. Though so neglected by most of the church, prophecy is, in fact, the cornerstone of Scripture. In Isaiah 42:8-9, 46:9-10, 48:5 and many other places God declares that He will prove His existence and vindicate His Word by telling, through His prophets, what will happen in the future and watching over history to make certain that it does.

To most Christians, prophecy involves "last days" events. Yet most biblical prophecies have already been fulfilled. These are world-shaking and history-making events foretold centuries and even thousands of years in advance—and their fulfillment has been witnessed by the entire world.

No one can honestly be an atheist or agnostic in view of the evidence Scripture provides. Prophecy fulfilled provides absolute proof that the Bible is God's Word, that the Jews are His chosen people and the land of Israel belongs to them, and that Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah and the true and only Savior of sinners (Jew or Gentile).

There are simple and often overlooked prophecies such as the declaration 3,500 years ago that the Jews would keep the Passover forever (Ex 12:14). The prophets of the goddess Vesta in Rome also swore that the sacred fires tended by the Vestal Virgins would burn forever; and the Zoroastrian prophets declared that the sacred fires in Persia would never go out. Neither remain, but the Passover is still observed, even by millions of Jews who do not believe in God or the Bible.

Then there are such well-known prophecies as Daniel 9:24-25, which foretold that "the coming of Messiah" would occur 69 weeks of years (483) after the command to rebuild Jerusalem. That command was given 100 years later to Nehemiah (Neh 2:1) by Artaxerxes Longimanus on Nisan 1, 445 B.C. And 483 years later, *to the very day* (by the Jewish and

Babylonian calendars of 360 days), Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that donkey and was hailed by multitudes as the Messiah (exactly as foretold in Zechariah 9:9) and then "cut off" as Daniel 9:26 and Isaiah 53 had foretold. He was crucified, as David prophesied (Ps 22:14-18) long before crucifixion was even known. His rejection by Israel was followed by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as both Daniel (9:26) and Jesus (Mt 24:2) prophesied.

Jews who are still hoping for their Messiah to come to Jerusalem must face the fact that we have passed the prophesied time of His coming by nearly 2,000 years. The undeniable historical fact is that these events have already taken place, exactly as prophesied.

Malachi 1:11, quoted above, is another powerful prophecy the fulfillment of which is one of the most amazing and inspiring

...the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation...to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

and undeniable in the entire Bible. Indeed, this newsletter itself and the fact that you are reading it is part of the fulfillment of this astounding prophecy.

Malachi was the last prophet to speak exclusively to Israel. Even 1 Maccabees 9:27 and 14:41 confirm that "prophets [had] ceased to appear among the people." Therefore 1 and 2 Maccabees could not have been inspired by God and consequently were not part of Scripture. Thus, Roman Catholicism, which attempts to justify purgatory and prayers for the dead from 2 Maccabees 12:45, is in grave error.

After Malachi, the next prophets of God to arise would speak both to Jews and Gentiles. The latter would hear and heed God's voice, while the Jews would continue to disobey and to pervert the Word of God. So said Israel's prophets.

About 500 years of silence followed Malachi before God sent another prophet, John the Baptist, to introduce the Messiah to His people and to the world, as Isaiah had foretold (Is 40:3). As Malachi declared (Mal 4:5) and as the New Testament confirmed, John came in the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Mt 11:14; 17:11-12; Mk 9:12-13; Lk 1:17), not as his reincarnation, as New Agers claim. Elijah, having been taken bodily alive into heaven (2 Kgs 2:11) and appearing bodily with Moses to speak with

Jesus as witnessed by three disciples (Mt 17:3), could hardly have been reincarnated into another body as John the Baptist.

Notice the setting for this verse in Malachi: Israel has sunk so deeply into apostasy that God says, "I have no pleasure in you...neither will I accept an offering at your hand" (1:10). They have "polluted" the Temple worship (1:12); they have disobeyed His commands repeatedly, even from the very beginning (3:7); they offer unacceptable sacrifices (1:14); and the priests won't even shut a door without a fee (1:10). Worst of all, God indicts Israel with despising His Holy name (1:6, 2:2).

In this context God says, "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles..." (Mal 1:11). What a shock that statement must have been to the Jews! This contradicted everything they believed!

They were a chosen people who worshiped the true God, whereas the nations around them all worshiped false gods:

Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and...I will take you to me for a people, and...ye shall know that I am the LORD your God....(Ex 6:6-7)

The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. (Dt 7:6)

For all the gods of the nations are idols....(Ps 96:5)

How, then, could God's name become great among the Gentiles? That prophecy must have stunned the rabbis. Even the disciples couldn't believe that the gospel was to go to the Gentiles. God had to speak to Peter in a vision and take him into a Gentile house (Acts 10), where He had prepared hearts to receive the gospel of Christ, in order for Peter to see that the Gentiles as well as Jews were to be in the church. Even then, the other church leaders at that time criticized Peter for having anything to do with Gentiles (Acts 11:1-3)

Let's recap the situation in Malachi's day to see how remarkable this prophecy was. Israel, God's chosen people, was indicted with being unfaithful to Him, the only true God, and with having repeatedly rebelled against Him and His laws. He had sent His prophets, "rising up early and sending them, saying [to Israel]...amend your doings, and go not after other gods," but Israel continued in disobedience (Jer 35:15, etc.). And now, Malachi was the last prophet, and his message was shocking: the God of

Israel, to whom they had been so unfaithful, would be known among the Gentile nations from one end of the world to the other—and not through them!

The language is clear and powerful. There would not be a small enclave among the Gentiles who would know Jehovah, a few converts of Israeli evangelists, but many millions *from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same!* That astonishing prophecy, so unbelievable to the Jews, has come to pass. There is no explaining away the fact that approximately 1.8 billion Gentiles in every part of this earth now claim to believe in the “God of Abraham...Isaac and... Jacob” (Ex 3:6; Mt 22:32, etc.).

Even before Malachi made it so clear, other Israeli prophets had already declared that this would happen. Referring to the God of Israel, Psalms 22:27 declares that “all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” Jewish apologists who do not want to admit that the God of Israel whom they have dishonored is truly known by millions of Gentiles try to explain away this and the many other similar prophecies by arguing that they refer to the millennial reign of the Messiah. It is true that during the Millennium “every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem [at Armageddon] shall even go up from year to year [to Jerusalem] to worship the King, the LORD of hosts...” (Zec 14:16). Yet the Scriptures make it clear that long before this time millions of Gentiles will truly know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Even more disconcerting to the Jews was the way this would come about—through Gentiles believing in the Messiah! The prophets repeatedly declared that it would be through the Messiah that the Gentiles would come to know God. That truth was already innate in God’s amazing promise to Abraham when He called him from Ur of the Chaldees: “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gn 12:3). That promise could only be fulfilled through the Messiah’s descent from Abraham and Gentiles believing in Him.

Of all the prophets, Isaiah makes most clear the connection between the Messiah, Jehovah’s “servant,” and God’s name becoming great among the Gentiles. Interestingly, the book of Isaiah, recovered with the Dead Sea scrolls, is among the most ancient Old

Testament manuscripts we have. Contrary to expectation, that manuscript turned out to be the same text that was already in our Bible. Housed in its own special museum in Jerusalem, the Isaiah scroll is proof that we have the exact words that God inspired Isaiah to write.

In Isaiah 49:6 we see that Jehovah’s servant (undoubtedly the Messiah) who is called “to raise up the tribes of Jacob” will also be “a light to the Gentiles... [and] salvation unto the end of the earth.” Remarkable! God’s light comes to the Gentiles as *salvation*—obviously through the Savior, whom Jehovah himself claims to be: “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour” (Is 43:11; 45:15; 49:26; 60:16; Hos 13:4, etc.). Isaiah explains it further:

...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Luke 24:47

Behold, my servant...in whom my soul delighteth...he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles...and the isles [see Gn 10:5, “the isles of the Gentiles”] shall wait for his law.... I the LORD...[will] give thee ...for a light of the Gentiles...” (Is 42:1,4,6).

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is 7:14).

Immanuel means “God with us.” The Messiah is God himself and thus bears God’s name. Isaiah makes it even more clear that the Messiah is God coming into the world as a man, which can only be through a virgin birth: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David...” (9:6); i.e., this can only be the Messiah who will rule Israel.

Isaiah thus declares that the Messiah, Jehovah’s “servant,” will be “The mighty God, The everlasting Father” born into this world and that God’s name will become great among the Gentiles as they believe that He is the Savior of the world. Even more astonishing, the Messiah becomes the Savior of mankind and brings that salvation to the Gentiles by

virtue of His own people rejecting Him. As a result of that rejection, He dies for the sins of the whole world:

...all the ends of the earth [i.e., Gentiles] shall see the salvation of our God....Behold, my servant...his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men [i.e., from his suffering for our salvation]....So shall he sprinkle many nations....(Is 52:10, 13-15)

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows...we [Israel] hid...our faces from him;...But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities:...and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...mak[ing] his soul an offering for sin....(Is 53:3-6, 2, 10)

The means by which the Gentiles will know and honor the name of Jehovah/Jahweh through the Messiah is clearly through the salvation the Messiah brings. After describing the Crucifixion, David declares, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD” (Ps 22:27). So it would be through the Crucifixion that multitudes all over the world would “turn unto the LORD” and God’s name would be great among the Gentiles.

The very name of Jesus means “Jehovah saves.” At His birth, the angel said, “Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). What language is this! Call Him “*Jehovah saves,*” for *He* shall save His people from their sins.” He can only be Jehovah!

Jesus the Messiah, who said, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30; 14:9), was in perfect harmony with the Old Testament Hebrew prophets when He told His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). It is through the gospel of Jesus Christ and the church which He established that God’s name has become “great among the Gentiles”!

And it is through pointing to the prophecies and their undeniable fulfillment in Jesus Christ that we are to preach the gospel of God’s grace and thereby bring salvation to the ends of the earth. Prophecies such as this should so fill our hearts with wonder, joy and confidence that the good news of the gospel literally overflows from us to those we meet! May it be so.

TBC

Quotable

We who preach the gospel must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish good will between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, or the world of sports, or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life he offers is life out of death. It stands always on the far side of the cross. Whoever would possess it must pass under the rod. He must repudiate himself and concur in God's just sentence against him....Let him not seek to make terms with God, but let him bow his head before the stroke of God's stern displeasure and acknowledge himself worthy to die.

Having done this let him gaze with simple trust upon the risen Saviour, and from Him will come life and rebirth and cleansing and power. The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the sinner; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises him to a new life along with Christ.

A.W. Tozer
 "The Old Cross and the New"

Q&A

Question: Let me first begin by saying that your ministry has been tremendously helpful to me in my studies, and in my ministry....*Occult Invasion*, next to *A Woman Rides the Beast*, is probably one of the most important works written in the history of the church....However, I am somewhat troubled by what appears to be a lack of consistency in your newsletter, by your referring to Hank Hanegraaff, Bill Bright, Chuck Colson, Billy Graham, W.A. Criswell, et al. as men who are "brothers in Christ," instead of calling them what they are, considering the fact that these men have made their position on the gospel clear. That is, they're willing to compromise the one true gospel (1 Cor 15:1-4; Gal 1:6-10) for a lowest common denominator "theology" with that harlot of Rome for the sake of a pseudo-unity of

ecumenism...I admonish you, Dave, to remain *thoroughly* consistent in your manner of defending truth, and cease calling these men "brothers in the Lord" when it's manifest that they are not. If you continue to call these men Christians, are you not denying the gospel and Christ of Scripture also...?

Answer: Exactly where to draw the line between those who are saved but compromise and those who are not saved at all (a line which you apparently have drawn to your own satisfaction) is a question with which I have often wrestled. As in everything else, we must, to the fullest extent possible, take our direction from Scripture. Without question, Paul curses (anathematizes) all those who preach a false gospel (Gal 1:6-8). It seems clear that he does not consider those upon whom he pronounces that anathema to be Christians. Paul also refers to those who preach "another Jesus" and denounces them as "false apostles, deceitful workers" and implies that they are Satan's "ministers" (2 Cor 11:13-15). Likewise, Peter denounces "false prophets...[and] false teachers...who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Pt 2:1).

The same denunciation belongs to men such as Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland and others who declare that redemption does not come through Christ's shed blood and His death upon the cross, but through His being tortured by Satan in hell. That is a false gospel upon which these men stand firm in spite of many attempts to correct them. They certainly come under Paul's curse and we do not consider them brothers in Christ. I cannot say, however, that those who do preach the true gospel yet fellowship with these false prophets and who fail to denounce the error in their false gospel are therefore also not Christians.

Roman Catholicism, too, is a false gospel. Those who proclaim it likewise come under Paul's curse. Catholicism clearly states that salvation comes only through the Roman Catholic Church and its sacraments ("If anyone says that the sacraments...are not necessary for salvation but...without them...men obtain through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema" - *Trent*, Seventh Session, General, Can 4). Catholicism also states that redemption was not accomplished through Christ's

death on the cross but is in the process of being accomplished through Catholic liturgy, especially the Mass ("For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, the work of our redemption is accomplished." - *Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Intro., 2.).

The men whom you name embrace practicing Roman Catholics as Christians — Catholics who believe and obey Rome's false gospel of sacraments and works for salvation. Yet unlike Hagin, Copeland, et al., they do not themselves preach a false gospel. They do preach the truth and many souls have been saved through their ministry. You say that "these men have made their position on the gospel clear. That is, they're willing to compromise the one true gospel (Gal 1:6-10; 1 Cor 15:1-4) for a lowest common denominator 'theology' with that harlot of Rome for the sake of a pseudo-unity of ecumenism...." It is sadly true that they compromise.

As for making "their position on the gospel clear," however, I am not aware that they have ever denied the gospel or that they themselves do not believe the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16). Nor am I aware that they preach a false gospel. They encourage those who do preach Rome's false gospel, and they call those who believe it Christians. This is reprehensible and undoubtedly leads many astray by confirming Catholics in their error. Indeed, they may thereby have encouraged more on their way to hell than they have led to Christ. Nevertheless, on that basis alone I cannot say that they themselves are not Christians. Christ will be their judge, as He is mine and yours.

I think their situation is analogous to that of Peter. In Galatians 1, Paul curses those who *preach* a false gospel; and the implication is that it is the same gospel which they have believed, and therefore they are not saved. In chapter 2:11-16, he denounces Peter for *compromising* the gospel out of fear of James and "them which were of the circumcision." In fact he says that Peter "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" by putting the Gentiles under the law. That is serious, but Paul never says that Peter is a false apostle or that he is not saved.

John warns us not even to receive into our homes those who deny "the doctrine of Christ" (2 Jn 7-10). But the men you name do not deny the doctrine of Christ. In fact,

they affirm it. At the same time, they join in an unequal yoke with those who proclaim Rome's false gospel. The contradiction is inexplicable and the compromise is scandalous—but I can no more say they are not Christians than Paul could say Peter was not.

Billy Graham is highly regarded as an evangelist, but has made serious compromises over a long period of time, so let us deal briefly with him. In 1948 Billy said, "The three gravest menaces faced by orthodox Christianity are communism, Roman Catholicism, and Mohammedanism (sic)." But by 1952 Billy was working closely with the Catholic Church and sending those who went forward at his crusades back to that apostate institution. In 1978 Billy said, "I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of Orthodox Roman Catholics....We only differ on some matters of later Church tradition." And today Billy says of the Pope, "He and I agree on almost everything."

Billy Graham has met with the Pope five times, has discussed theology with him at length, and has spent as much as a week at a time at the Vatican in discussion with Catholic theologians. Thus Billy cannot be excused as ignorant of Catholicism. He surely must know that the Pope (with whom he claims to "agree on almost everything" and any theological differences "are not important as far as personal salvation is concerned") wears the scapular, relying upon its promise to keep him from "eternal fire." The Pope looks to Mary for salvation, believes and teaches that he is offering Christ afresh each time he says Mass, denies salvation through faith in Christ without Church sacraments, etc. and is the leader of a Church that is sending hundreds of millions to hell with a false gospel. Yet Billy has called the Pope "the greatest religious leader of the modern world." In 1972 the Billy Graham organization began to commend Catholic books and literature, including the biography of Pope John XXIII. It contained hundreds of pages of the Pope's devotion to Mary and the saints, worship of the Eucharistic wafer, and his trust in the sacraments for salvation, yet Billy commended it in ads as "a classic in devotion."

Catholicism hasn't changed since Billy called it one of the three "gravest menaces faced by orthodox Christianity"; Billy has apparently changed. Why? By his own

admission he has been influenced by friendship with priests, bishops, cardinals, influential Catholics and the Pope. Of Boston's Cardinal Cushing, Billy said, "He and I became close, wonderful friends. That was my first real coming to grips with the whole Protestant/Catholic situation...." What he called "coming to grips" did not involve facts and biblical truth, but feelings of friendship.

Far from denying the gospel, however, Billy without question preaches it and many souls have been saved as a result. Yet, like Peter, he compromises. In 1978 he preached in four Catholic cathedrals in Poland, and was preaching in Cardinal Wojtyla's cathedral the night Wojtyla was made Pope in Rome. Obviously Billy was not preaching anything that would bring him into conflict with Roman Catholicism's false gospel or he would not have been welcome. As early as 1957 he said, "I have no quarrel with the Catholic Church." The ecumenical advisor to England's Cardinal Hume wrote, "We know Dr. Graham to be a truly ecumenical evangelist....Billy Graham has helped our church greatly and many have 'renewed' their [Catholic] faith under his great ministry." (Hume thanked Billy for turning over to him 2,100 names from the Earl's Court Crusade in London.) In his crusade at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Billy called people forward with these words, "Many of you want to come tonight and reconfirm your confirmation...the decision that you made when you joined the Church." That was a misleading compromise of the gospel which encouraged Catholics to continue in their lost condition with a false hope.

At his 1957 San Francisco crusade Billy insisted that Bishop James Pike open in prayer, though Pike lived in open immorality and denied the deity of Christ, the atonement and Resurrection. According to the 12/17/58 *Oakland Tribune*, of the 1,300 Catholics who went forward at that crusade, "practically all remained Catholic, continued to pray to Mary, go to Mass, and confess to a priest." Thus Cuthbert E. Allen, who had first brought Billy into Roman Catholic institutions to preach, could state in defense of having done so, "Billy Graham is preaching a...theology most acceptable to Catholics." That is *not* the gospel.

Such compromise is reprehensible. It is even worse than Peter's compromise and has continued over a much longer period

of time (46 years at least). Nevertheless, on that basis I cannot declare that Billy Graham is not a Christian, in view of the fact that he does believe and preach the biblical gospel. Nor can we say that Bill Bright, Charles Colson, J.I. Packer and others are not Christians because they have joined in partnership with Roman Catholics in ECT 1 and 2 to jointly preach the gospel.

The men you name do believe and preach the biblical gospel and do not preach the false Catholic gospel. It is incomprehensible that they deceitfully call Catholics who believe Rome's false gospel Christians and thereby encourage them in their error. But I cannot find any basis in Scripture for saying that these men are themselves not saved. I pray earnestly that they will renounce their error, and I ask you to pray for them as well.

Home to Rome?

Thomas Aloysius McMahon

In the October '98 newsletter, I wrote of an encounter I had with a young man who had converted to Roman Catholicism from an evangelical Christian background. My thrust in our conversation had to do with wanting to know his reasons. As an ex-Catholic, my personal fascination with such conversions revolves around knowing only too well what they're getting into—and even more shocking—what they've rejected.

Not long afterward I received a book packed with testimonies of evangelicals who had converted to Roman Catholicism. The title of the book (edited by Patrick Madrid) was *Surprised by Truth*, and although I was indeed greatly surprised by each personal story, *truth* was not the stunning factor. The truth by which they were so surprised had to do with each author's astonishment over the discovery that, contrary to what he or she formerly believed, and in some cases adamantly opposed, Catholic dogma is *true!* The following reflects the general sentiments of all the contributors to the book: "The Catholic Church seemed to have everything so well thought out—it was a marvelously complex and consistent belief system unparalleled by anything I had ever encountered in Evangelicalism....I believed Catholicism had the best moral theology of any Christian body..." (pp. 246, 248).

The subtitle of the book is *11 Converts Give the Biblical and Historical Reasons for Becoming Catholic*. Two of the converts originally had Catholic backgrounds but became evangelicals; one was a United Methodist, one Jewish, one a self-described Baptist fundamentalist; one had an Assembly of God background, one was Dutch-Reformed Calvinist, and four, along with Scott Hahn (who wrote the foreword), studied at conservative, evangelical Presbyterian seminaries (Gordon-Conwell and Westminster). Nearly all the contributors had been active evangelicals, either as pastors or teachers. So why did they take the road to Rome?

Bob Sungenis, former evangelical radio "Bible answer man," minces no words: "The plague of 'protestantism' has spawned thousands of quarreling sects. Time itself has shown that Protestantism is not God's plan for his Church, but rather, is a dismal failure. As a Catholic, I am now at peace, away from the roiling controversies of Protestantism, secure in the consolation of

the truth" (p. 132). Gordon-Conwell Seminary graduate Marcus Grodi writes, "As Protestants we had become infatuated by our freedom, placing personal opinion over the teaching authority of the Church. We believed that the...Holy Spirit is enough to lead any sincere seeker to the true meaning of Scripture. The Catholic response to this view is that it is the mission of the Church to teach with infallible certitude" (p. 51).

While most evangelicals are under the impression that the Scriptures encourage us to emulate the Bereans of Acts 17:11, that concept has led to a problem for these folks. T.L. Frazier notes, "Like the Bereans evangelized by St. Paul, I searched the Scriptures daily. I believe it was ultimately this practice which undermined my faith in the 'born again' religion....As time went on, I slowly began to lose faith in the Fundamentalist religious system to interpret Scripture in an

It is finished!

John 19:30

objective manner" (pp. 190,194).

Spelling out their hopelessness in personally being able to come up with an infallible interpretation of the Scriptures, all the contributors came to the same conclusion as Grodi: "Eventually I realized that the single most important issue was authority. All of this wrangling [over] how to interpret Scripture gets one nowhere if there is no way to know with infallible certitude that one's interpretation is the right one. The teaching authority of the Church in the magisterium [is] centered around the seat of Peter. If I could accept this doctrine, I knew I could trust the Church on everything else." Accept it they all do.

Nearly every testimony included a litany of favorite Catholic apologetic defenses: apostolic succession, papal authority, *non sola scriptura*, the Real Presence in the Eucharist, proofs from early Church history, baptismal regeneration, the rejection of salvation by faith alone, prayers to the saints, the perpetual virginity and sinlessness of Mary, papal authority and infallibility, etc. Taking their words at face value, their conversions only came after serious study, great anguish, and much prayer: "The more I read Church history and Scripture the less I could comfortably remain a Protestant. I saw that it was the Catholic Church—the Roman Catholic Church—that was established by Jesus Christ, and all other claimants to the title 'true Church' had to step aside....It was the

Bible and Church history that made a Catholic out of me..." (Grodi, at p. 56).

Some even had additional help. Regarding his wife's initial resistance to conversion, Paul Thigpen writes, "I entrusted her to the grace of God and the intercession of St. Ann." Former Presbyterian minister Scott Hahn turned to the Rosary for help. Julie Swenson tells us, "I was brought to the realization of the role of Mary's intercession in our conversion, and what a prominent role it was....Blessed Mother Mary! I very clearly sensed her strong maternal presence ["Mary" promises her omnipresence to all Catholics] that night and her powerful intercessory work on my behalf..." (p. 158). Tim Staples has a similar experience: "After a few minutes I felt the strong urge to ask Mary to pray for me. 'I don't know if I am doing this right, Mary. I don't know what is going to happen, but please

help me! Please pray for me!' At that moment, the peace and joy of Christ flooded my heart. I almost *felt* the prayers ascending to God from Mary, my newly-found mother....I have never doubted the Catholic faith since that day" (p. 239).

All of the critical issues raised in *Surprised by Truth (SBT)* can't be considered in this brief article (they are covered, however, in the many materials we offer dealing with Catholicism), yet there are a few which need to be addressed.

For each person in the book, and other former evangelicals they list, the most convincing factor regarding their conversion was the study of Church history. Two of the writers give the same quote from the most famous of the Protestant defectors to Rome, Cardinal John Henry Newman: "To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant" (pp. 56, 154). "This one line," says Grodi, speaking for a host of others, "summarizes a key reason why I abandoned Protestantism...and became a Catholic" (p. 56). Swenson declares, "[Newman] was right. My study of the early Church showed clearly that it was Catholic in its beliefs and practices..." (p. 154). Contributor Dave Armstrong agrees: "In the end, my innate love of history played a crucial part in my forsaking Protestantism, which tends to give very little attention to history..." (p. 251).

Well, let's give it some attention.

History, one will find, is not exactly an infallible guide, although many Catholic apologists work hard at raising it to that level. They tend to be selective to a fault. Arguably Catholicism's chief lay apologist, Karl Keating, writes regarding conclusive evidence for the belief in the communion

elements being the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ, “Whatever else might be said, it is *certain* that the early Church took John 6 and the accounts of the Last Supper literally. There is *no record* in the early centuries of any Christian doubting the Catholic interpretation. There exists *no document* in which the literal interpretation is opposed and the metaphorical accepted” (*Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, p. 238; emphasis added). Pretty definite language—however, there are *many* such documents and they’re not that difficult to find.

William Webster, an evangelical who pays a great deal of attention to Church history, points out (in *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, which we offer) that early church history presents not just the Catholic view, but most of the views we find today: “There is the literal view of transubstantiation which could be that expressed by Chrysostom; the Lutheran view of consubstantiation, which could be taught by Irenaeus or Justin Martyr; the spiritual view of Calvin, which is closely aligned with Augustine; and the strictly symbolic view of Zwingli, which is similar to that expressed by Eusebius” (p. 122). To the “symbolic view” list, Webster adds Theodoret, Serapion, Jerome, Athanasius, Ambrosiaster, Macarius of Egypt, and Eustathius of Antioch. While they are not exactly household names for many of us, we do know how highly Augustine is esteemed among Catholics. Yet he was not a fan of literal transubstantiation: “‘Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, says Christ, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.’ This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; it is therefore a *figure*, enjoining that we should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable *memory* of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us.” (*On Christian Doctrine*, 3.16.24; emphasis added)

Church history is fascinating and has value, but it’s a house of cards for anyone trying to construct infallible dogma or biblical doctrine. No Roman Catholic Church dogma of which the former evangelicals of *SBT* became practitioners was *catholic* (universal) among the early Church fathers. Even Pope Gelasius I (A.D. 492-496) denied transubstantiation. It was not officially recognized by Rome until A.D. 1215.

Although only one of the *evangelical* conversion testimonies in *SBT* gives the impression that biblical salvation was clearly understood and a profession of faith was made, all the converts are very clear about rejecting salvation by faith alone in favor of Catholicism’s gospel of meritorious works

for salvation. James Akin writes that “the simple ‘faith alone’ formula is not an accurate description of what the Bible teaches about salvation....[A]s a result of God’s grace, we are capable of doing acts of love which please God and which He freely chooses to reward. One of the rewards, in fact the primary reward, is the *gift* of eternal life” (p. 63; emphasis in original).

The idea of rewards indeed reflects the Catholic position, because a reward must be merited or earned; it cannot, however, be a “gift.” Dave Armstrong concurs with Akin when he argues, “...if a man had a free will, he did not have to be merely declared righteous in a judicial, abstract sense, but could actively participate in his redemption and actually be made righteous by God” (p. 251). Julie Swenson agonized over her former Reformed theology before becoming convinced of the Catholic dogma of being “infused” with righteousness in order to achieve salvation: “[God] doesn’t merely declare us righteous (as Luther thought), he makes us righteous....This change is an intrinsic reality, not a mere extrinsic formality—the legal fiction Luther purported” (pp. 155-156).

I learned about legal justification from God’s Word, not Martin Luther, and about the process of “infused” righteousness through my Catholic experience. So as I read through *SBT*, I kept waiting to hear the honest facts from these not-too-recently converted Catholics about what one must actually go through for the “intrinsic reality” of “infused righteousness” to get one to heaven. They never delivered.

So here is my perspective as a “cradled and seasoned” (former) Catholic: I came into the Church through no thought or effort of my own. Someone had to carry me in. My baptism opened the gates of heaven to me, closing the unofficial portal of *limbus infantum* (Limbo), where deceased, unbaptized infants are supposed to end up. With original sin effortlessly out of the way I was heavenbound with no fears, not even of Purgatory. But that would come. Concupiscence (my innate tendency to do evil) would get the better of me, and when I reached an age when I could understand I was doing wrong, and did it anyway, hell was my destination. After having been instructed in the theological facts of life, mortal sin, death, and damnation, First Confession looked good to this third-grader as a preparation for First Holy Communion. Now that which was formerly effortless and assured me of heaven was beginning to be a struggle.

I had to figure out the sins, separate the venial from the mortal, get to Confession

before the mortal sins actually did send me to hell, get to Mass, not miss the Holy Days of Obligation (missing any one of ten per year consigns one to hell), try to get from Sunday Holy Communion to Saturday Confession without committing a cardinal sin. The lust-filled teenage years were like walking over red-hot glowing coals, all too real a reminder of where I could be headed. Grace through the Sacraments was supposed to make it easier; it did not for me, nor for anyone else I knew. And I even had an edge—my (middle) namesake, St. Aloysius, was the patron saint of youthful purity!!

The prospects ahead were iffy at best. Sometimes I could even put together a couple of mortal-sin-free, grace-building weeks. But then the bottom would drop out, actually a trap door with nothing below but fire and brimstone. My hope, at the very best, was to make it to Purgatory, which was not a place where I relished going because of all the purging and suffering for sins taking place there—but at least the threat of hell would be over. I was told there were many things I could do (and that could be done for me) to lessen my time in Purgatory (although no one could have absolute confidence, since God would finally decide whether or not I was truly deserving).

Peace and joy at “Home” in Rome? Try to find even a devout Catholic who isn’t continually guilt-ridden and fearful! On the other hand, I’ve read and heard a number of positive spins on the gospel according to Rome (actually including how wonderful Purgatory will be!), but nothing that really changes what I’ve outlined. If Roman Catholicism’s salvation were true, then the above process is what the eleven converts have to look forward to.

But it’s not true, and there is a very simple reason why it can’t be. The penalty for sin is death, separation from God *forever*. The full penalty for everyone’s sins must be paid, even “venial” ones. There’s nothing we can do to acquit ourselves of the penalty. As sinners, there is no grace to assist in meriting our own salvation. There is no sufficient penance, no purification process (temporal or in Purgatory), no reparation, restitution, suffering or sacrifice of ours that will satisfy Divine Justice. Either we ourselves must pay the full penalty—death and separation from God forever—or we must receive by faith Christ’s free and complete gift of salvation. He alone completely satisfied the infinite requirements—the sinless, perfect Man and God our only Savior, who loves us beyond measure. *Faith alone* in Him, enabled by grace, is all we can do to be saved. There is no one else, no other way. **TBC**

Quotable

The central core of the Christian faith is either absolute truth or it is nonsense. Being absolute, the truths which it proclaims also claim to be eternal. If they were not absolute, if they were not eternal, they would not be worth believing. Scientific knowledge, on the other hand, is relative, relative to what at any given moment happens to have been found out about the natural world. A religion which is in constant process of revision to square with science's ever-changing picture of the world might well be easier of belief, but it is hard to believe that it would be worth believing.

C.E.M. Joad

The Recovery of Belief

Q&A

Question [composite of several]: Your recent article on Y2K and Bible prophecy was a disappointment....I encourage you to revisit the topic for your readers who trust you....You claim that predictions of bare grocery shelves could cause hoarding that will cause shortages...but they can be restocked...little harm done...those who hoarded will be in a position to help others....

—Dave, it's time you got up to speed on this Y2K thing [letter enclosed from Larry Burkett: "At midnight on December 31, 1999, the world could face the biggest technological malfunction in history...we as Christians should be prepared to minister to others...as the Year 2000 approaches...providing for their physical and spiritual needs."]. One thing is certain—when government, banks, companies tell us everything is under control, that's the only thing they can say....They don't want to cause panic. —You said, "Logically, computers have nothing to do with growing wheat or apples or chickens or anything else...." Come on, Dave, small farms are rare, large companies own huge farms and it's all controlled by computers, so is storage and shipping controlled by computers.... —A lot of people are so worried that they'll hoard food...pull their money out of the bank...sell their stocks just to be

safe. The panic could outweigh the computer problem. Our economy will be turned upside down and the folks who believed you will be wishing they had stocked up on food, etc. when it was still affordable and available....

—I work for a large hospital and they waited *way too long* to start [on Y2K]! The staff is to tell patients and families, "The hospital's computer department ...will have it fixed and ready by Jan. 2000." WHAT A LIE!

—I plead with you not to try to pacify the public with false assurances. We need to panic—yes, panic now while there's still time to prepare. I will pray for you and your ministry....

—By your skepticism you may cost lives and countless opportunities for the Body of Christ to minister to the community of unsaved, if Y2K should turn out even close to possible worst-case scenarios.

Answer: These comments are excerpted from just some of the letters we've received. They couldn't be answered individually so I've written a book (*Y2K - A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria*) scheduled to come off the press February 15, 1999, God willing. My real concern is for the panic that could be incited by what is being said and written about Y2K. This problem has been irresponsibly and wildly exaggerated in a manner that could only excite uncertainty and concern. Sadly, Christian leaders, though they mean well, have been doing most of the alarm-sounding and if panic occurs Christians will take much of the blame.

Oh, yes, after painting a terrifying "worst case" scenario, which they say is *possible*, they say, "But don't panic, keep calm, the worst-case scenario probably won't happen." But they have painted a picture, which, if it *did* occur, would be disastrous. What is the reasonable person to do? We're told, "Hope for the best and prepare for the worst." You couldn't prepare for the worst. So, if everyone prepared even for something halfway between the best and worst, banks would have to shut down and grocery shelves would be empty. Banks do not have enough cushion to give back to customers all at once even 25 percent of what they have on deposit; nor is there enough food in the supply pipelines to fill demand if customers all started to store up weeks or months of supply. So I agree with the

person who pointed out the danger and grave consequences of panic, but I don't agree that we should try to panic people into doing something! Nor should Christians whose trust is in God participate in panic buying and stockpiling.

We can't deal with everything in this small space. Electric power is crucial, so let's take that first. In November 1998, Al Gonzalez, CEO of our local Central Oregon power company, stated in a letter to all customers, "I want to assure you nearly all our computer software is Y2K compliant—and when we install new software next year, all of it will be. Furthermore, most of our main transmission/distribution equipment does not rely on computers...[we're] reviewing our entire system to ensure we are in no way vulnerable to any problem stemming from Y2K."

Our local company is part of a larger grid made up of many companies (the largest is the Bonneville Power Administration - BPA) which cooperate together in the Northwest Public Power Association. Its November 1998 *Bulletin* said, "If you were looking forward to a cataclysmic event on the power system at midnight December 31, 1999, don't hold your breath. ...From the Oregon coast to the desert of eastern Washington, utilities report they have Y2K programs in place and are intent on making the transition to the new millennium a seamless event." Brian Furumasu of BPA said, "The goal for Y2K at BPA is to make the transition into and through the year 2000 a nonevent for continuation of power services and business operations....The industry predicted a lot of problems with embedded chips, but they have not materialized." BPA has been working on this for a long time. I personally asked Furumasu what they had found that needed fixing. He said they'd found very little. I then asked, "Did you find *anything* which, had you not found it, would have shut you down on Jan. 1, 2000?" He said they had found *nothing* like that; and their many backup systems just wouldn't let it happen.

Quoting the *Bulletin* again: "Jeff Brune, Y2K project manager at Washington Water Power...said, 'We looked at over 550,000 items and fewer than 3,000 were date sensitive; of those, only 300 required remediation...*none of these* would have caused a disruption in service.'"

"We've been aware of Y2K for several

years,' [said] Dan Reeves, director of administration and finance at Peninsula Light Company. 'We've managed Y2K in our normal equipment-replacement cycle,' Reeves said. 'We have all of our equipment and software compliant and have come up with *nothing* Y2K related that *is of a critical nature*.'"

These are typical of power companies all over the world. The power grid is not going to go down. You will have power January 1, 2000. This problem has been grossly exaggerated!

Yes, but they and the banks and businesses and hospitals are all lying in order to prevent panic and so as not to upset customers—so some Christian "experts" are telling us. That is not a rational statement. There are negligence laws in every state. Any provider of service (electric power, banking, etc.) that defaults is liable for the damages it causes. The Y2K problem has been known for 25 years; there are plenty of solutions and more being invented almost weekly that cut remediation time to a fraction of what it was. (How about StepWise Solutions of Watermill, NY that zips through "4 million lines of code per hour. The resulting code compiles fully and cleanly and is ready for testing.") Therefore it would be gross negligence for any company not to be fully compliant by the year 2000. Furthermore, to lie about their progress would only increase the damages and send the corporate officers to prison. They are not lying!

Any company (bank, utility, manufacturer, supplier, etc.) that is not Y2K compliant is very likely going out of business even before the year 2000 because no one will buy their products. For example, Dallas Semiconductor, one of the world's largest makers of time-keeping chips for embedded applications, sent a letter months ago to all of its suppliers warning them that if they were not Y2K compliant by November 1998 they would be notified that contracts may be terminated, that alternate sources were being identified and would be "put in place as necessary to avoid disruptions in delivery of manufacturing or other needed materials." The business, banking, manufacturing, etc. world is a cutthroat, viciously competitive contest. These companies and their managers didn't get to where they are today by sitting on their hands. They are not going to let anyone get a competitive

advantage by lagging on Y2K!

Yes, the problem has been irresponsibly and grossly overstated. I have not found anyone in the electric power industry who, after searching through every computer system and chip they have, has found anything that would have shut them down had they not fixed it. I interviewed one of the top computer experts in the country who says he is in contact with 7 to 10 information technology managers per week of major corporations (all with annual sales over \$500 million) and he has not found *one* of them who is concerned; they all claim to have Y2K behind them. Nor in the process of going through everything have they (except very rarely) found anything that would have shut any system down. Y2K has been overstated!

Hospitals are not going to take any chances. Hewlett-Packard (HP) is the world's largest manufacturer of acute-care patient-monitoring systems, of cardiovascular ultrasound imaging systems and of clinical-information systems for critical care. HP has been Y2K compliant for some time and is making certain that all of its suppliers of parts, etc. are independently certified to be compliant also—otherwise it won't buy from them. Its systems in hospitals are Y2K compliant and it provides assistance for its customers to become compliant as well.

Consider Catholic Healthcare West, a network of 40 hospitals headquartered in San Francisco. As of the end of October 1998, engineers had tested 92 percent of its 80,000 pieces of medical equipment and "only nine machines—including a cardiac monitor, a CT scan machine and a blood analyzer — shut down." (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 23, 1998 or <http://www.latimes.com/archives/doc/rArchive/temp/temp.9876>). That is only .011 percent. This Y2K problem has been exaggerated! Staff will be watching everything like hawks at midnight 12/31/99!

We said in our November article that computers have little to do with producing food. Yes, as some letters said, many involved in raising crops, poultry, beef, hogs, etc. are fully computerized. So they are, but they could continue to function without computers by utilizing a great deal of hands-on labor. If hospitals can do it in emergency, poultry farmers can also. "Next spring [1999], Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian in Newport Beach [California] will start drills for hospital

employees on how to do their jobs, with or without technology. 'Much of patient care can be provided by personnel. Technology allows us to do our job more efficiently or in a more timely way; but care in most instances can be provided without the latest and greatest of technology,' says Mary Kay Payne, a vice president in charge of Hoag's millennial project" (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 23, 1998, pp. C1, C6).

We are warned that even if American companies get themselves in good shape foreign countries, especially those in the third world, will not make it and will drag us down with them. Most of the sophisticated equipment in foreign countries was brought there and is operated by huge multinational corporations. For example, out of HP's 120,000 employees, 51,000 are in foreign countries.

Tragically, Y2K has become an all-absorbing obsession for many Christians, taking time and effort and funds that the Lord would have us use more wisely in His service. Much more must be said and we said it in the book. Let us all do our best to prevent the panic that is being generated.

"It is Written"

Dave Hunt

This world is rampant with spiritual confusion, which steadily grows worse. There are thousands of denominations, cults and rival religions. In the clamor of conflicting voices, each claiming to speak for God and to lead to God, how is anyone to know the truth?

It is reasonable to believe that having placed the desire to know the truth within us, God will fully satisfy that desire—and in a manner that will provide certainty to every sincere seeker (Jer 29:13). Such has been His way from the very beginning.

The One who created Adam and Eve, and the universe in which they found themselves, personally conversed with them (Gn 2:16, 3:3,8). They knew His voice and understood the one commandment He had given them: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gn 2:17). But influenced by Satan, they doubted God's Word and disobeyed the One who had given them their being. The tragic result is recorded in the lamentable history of man, from the murder of Abel by his brother Cain to the multiplied murders, crimes and wars of our day.

Satan, "a liar, and the father of it [lying]" (Jn 8:44), is the ultimate self-deceived egomaniac. He boasted, "I will be like the most High" (Is 14:14). Obviously, there can only be *one* "most High." In one stroke of madness, Satan had rejected monotheism (belief in one true God) and introduced polytheism (belief in many gods). Bringing this lie to planet Earth through his first human convert, Eve, Satan became "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4), the author and high priest of every cult and false religion.

"Hath God said?" was Satan's subtle pretense at respect for God's Word. Then he posed as the religious expert and sold Eve on his false interpretation. She was pleased at finding a guru who explained away God's clear Word and told her what she wanted to hear. Ever since, Satan's lies have been more popular on this earth than God's truth—and following guru, prophet, pastor, priest or pope has been preferred to following God and His Word. When it comes to knowing and pleasing God, multitudes who think for themselves in every other area of life check their minds at the door and gullibly follow professionals.

Eden's pattern is repeated in every cult and false religion. Each has a leader who claims that he or she alone can interpret God's Word and must be followed unquestioningly. To this day, 89 years after Mary Baker Eddy's death, no Christian Science church dares to deviate from her interpretation of Scripture and each Christian Scientist still believes her satanic lie ("ye shall not surely die") that death is an illusion! Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be Bereans, checking the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society against the Bible for themselves. They *must* parrot whatever that body of proven false prophets declares. Mormons must follow implicitly the hierarchy in Salt Lake City. Likewise Roman Catholics are taught that only the Church can interpret the Bible, and Catholicism's highest authority declares,

O how love I thy law [Word]! it is my meditation all the day.

Psalms 119:97

...the faithful are obliged to submit to their bishops' decision...in matters of faith and morals....This loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given ...[to] the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra*....For the Roman Pontiff...has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church...(Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, III, 22, 24.)

This inequality between leaders and followers is another mark of a cult. Notice that Satan didn't offer Eve what he himself desired—to be "like the most High." Instead, he promised that she could be one of the gods: "ye shall be as gods [not as God]" (Gn 3:5). Satan would be the god ruling her. Both the Old and New Testaments declare that there are many gods and they are *all false*: "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment" (Ex 12:12); "there be gods many...there is but one God" (1 Cor 8:5-6).

Who are these false gods—and who worships them? Perhaps one-third of the angels followed Satan (Rv 12:4) in his rebellion. These devils (underlings of the Devil) are paganism's gods: "...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice [in their religious rituals], they sacrifice to devils [demons], and not to God" (1 Cor 10:19-20). Behind every idol is a demon deceiving and

enslaving pagan worshipers. Likewise, behind every false prophet is a demon: "try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jn 4:1). It is a solemn truth that God allows evil spirits to inspire false prophets in order to deceive those who want to believe Satan's lies (1 Kgs 22:19-23).

That the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden is not myth but history is proved by the fact that all of Eve's descendants are obsessed with the very lie she embraced. Eve passed on to her descendants the passion to become a god. It seems to be in mankind's very bloodstream.

For example, the driving force behind the world of science and technology is godlike mastery of the universe through conquest of the atom and space. That theme dominates science fiction, space movies and cartoons. The New Age/Human Potential movement (paganism/occultism in modern garb) seeks the same goal through spiritual/mystical practices which promise to awaken the alleged *unlimited* potential of godlike powers supposedly dormant within us.

So it is in Hinduism. The goal of yoga, now practiced in virtually every YMCA, is self-realization (to achieve godhood). The Mind Science cults (Christian Science, Science of Mind, Religious Science, Unity, et al.) are very New Age, as is Mormonism. I once formally debated at Boise State University two Mormons who insisted that Joseph Smith was "the first prophet of the New Age." I explained that Smith was far from the first; that distinction belonged to the serpent in the Garden.

Mormonism is founded upon the belief that the lie Satan told Eve is God's truth. Whereas Jesus called Satan "a liar," Brigham Young declared, "The devil told the truth." A more recent Mormon president, Spencer W. Kimball, said, "In each of us is the potentiality to become a god...." Mormonism's God was once a man on another planet who developed his full potential—and that is the goal of every Mormon male! The essence of Mormonism is found in its most famous statement: "As man is God once was; as God is man may become."

The serpent's lie is everywhere: "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, ...deceiveth the whole world" (Rv 12:9). The Eastern Orthodox Church declares, "Keeping the commandments...make a man god...the deification for which we were

created.” Pope John Paul II says, “The divinization of man comes from God.” Positive confession leaders such as Hagin, Copeland, Price, et al. go the serpent one better: *we already are gods*. Many have seen Benny Hinn and Paul Crouch on TBN insisting, “We are little gods!”

So sure is Crouch that Satan’s lie is God’s truth that in his *Praise the Lord* newsletter for March 1993 he stated, “If we are not ‘little Gods,’ we will apologize to you in front of ten thousand times ten thousand before the Crystal Sea!” If Crouch and those of like mind whom he has popularized on TBN insist upon being “little gods,” they won’t even be with the saints before the crystal sea. God has pronounced the doom of all who claim to be gods:

But the LORD is the true God...The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth...shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens (Jer 10:10-11).

Interestingly, the Jehovah’s Witnesses have made Christ into a little god. Unwilling to accept what the Bible says, “and the Word was God,” the JW’s corrupted New World Translation says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god” (Jn 1:1). They will tell you that “God” in this verse is, of course, Jehovah, and “a god” refers to Jesus. So JW’s have one big God and one little god. But, as the Bible plainly declares, there is only one God and *all gods* are usurpers doomed to destruction.

Back to Adam and Eve: As God had declared, they died spiritually at the moment of disobedience. Physical death took a bit longer to conquer their bodies. It takes much less time today. The Spirit of God departed from within these two rebels and Self had its awful birth. The connection is clear to selfist psychology’s self-love, self-assertion, positive self-image, glorying in one’s self-worth, etc. Once Adam and Eve had lived for God; after the Fall they lived for self. All of their off-spring are born spiritually dead, slaves of self, Pascal’s “God-shaped vacuum” gnawing within them.

After the Fall, all of the rest of the Bible is the account of God, in love, through His true prophets and the gift of His Son, calling man back to Himself and making

that reconciliation possible—and Satan attempting through deceit to keep man in the darkness and death of that horrible separation. Nor have Satan’s tactics changed. He still questions, attacks and reinterprets God’s Word through his false prophets. Moreover, Satan can only offer the same three enticements with which he tempted Eve, for these are “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn 2:16).

When Eve “saw that the tree was good for food [*the lust of the flesh*], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [*the lust of the eyes*], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [*the pride of life*], she took of the fruit....” (Gn 3:6). Jesus faced the same three temptations. Eve was well fed; Jesus had just gone 40 days without food or drink [See 06/99 and 11/99 Q&A.] Eve rejected

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Matthew 15:9

God’s Word; Jesus used it to defeat Satan, responding to each temptation with “It is written!” (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13).

Satan tempted Christ in His hunger to “command that these stones be made bread [*the lust of the flesh*].” Our Lord replied, “It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Satan then “shewed him all the kingdoms of the world” [*the lust of the eyes*] and promised to give all the “power...and the glory of them” to Christ if He would bow down and worship him. Christ’s response again was, “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” Satan then tempted Him to jump from the pinnacle of the temple so the people would admire Him when they saw the angels catch Him and lower Him safely to the ground as Psalms 91:11-12 promised [*the pride of life*]. But Jesus again replied, “It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

It is written! Knowing, trusting and obeying God’s Word is the antidote to Satan’s lies and temptations. Christ quoted the Bible as the ultimate authority and guide to living. The Bible, according to the way

Christ used it, sets the standard, makes the rules, provides guidance and causes Satan to flee. What has been written are the very words of God himself to mankind. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pt 1:21). “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” and it is sufficient to make us “perfect [mature, complete], throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tm 3:16-17). But Christian psychology, as we have documented, denies the sufficiency of Scripture and supplements and integrates it with Satan’s lies contained in humanist theories.

The great tragedy in the church today is that many top leaders, instead of standing firm upon “It is written,” doubt what God has unequivocally declared. The Pope, *Christianity Today*, Promise Keepers, Billy Graham and many other leaders, Christian universities and seminaries have all agreed that God may have used evolution to create man. Yet that theory, as we have shown, contradicts God’s Word. Graham is surely the most honored evangelical alive, yet he also doubts that the flood was worldwide, even though God’s Word declares in the clearest language that it was. Last Christmas on “Larry King Live,” Billy said concerning heaven, “If sex is necessary for our happiness and fulfillment, it’ll be there.” Again, the Bible was contradicted.

Jesus said, “It is written!” Satan can quote the Bible, too, and did so, but his application was false and Christ countered it with another scripture which refuted the perversion. Satan’s ministers also quote and pervert Scripture. The antidote to such perversion is bringing the rest of the Bible to bear: man lives not by one favorite verse twisted out of context, but “by *every word* that proceedeth from the mouth of God.”

If we misuse the Bible to support our pet theories and agendas, we will fall victim to the lies of Satan and become the followers of false gods. If we seek with our whole heart to know the true God, He will reveal Himself to us (Jer 29:13); and if we will to do God’s will, we will *know* sound doctrine (Jn 7:17) and not be led astray.

“It is written” is our anchor in the storm of false doctrine, humanistic theories and worldly temptations raging around us. We stand secure and unmovable upon God’s unchangeable, infallible and sufficient Word. May God help us to help others to do the same. **TBC**

Quotable

One of the latest injunctions of the aged Paul, just before his martyrdom, was that to Timothy: "Preach the Word!"...It is called the Word of God, because it is not of man. As God's [Word] it has both authority...to demand attention, and power to convert and save the soul....It is not to be twisted and fitted to man's preconceived ideas. It is not to be filtered through man's strainer, nor mixed with man's conceits. It is God's and *as God's* let no man dare add to it, or take *from* it, or alter it in any way....

God has not given us a doubtful and deceitful light for our path. He has not given us a bundle of truth and fable tied up together. He has not left us to our weak and discordant reason...and on this sure Word is His Church built. The doctrines of grace have neither human origin nor human support. They are altogether Divine, and are received only by the soul that becomes partaker of the Divine nature. To go, therefore, to human philosophy or to man's inner consciousness for their confirmation or explanation, is to go to the sentenced criminal to understand the excellences of criminal law....

If we honor God, we shall honor the Word He has sent, and we shall be jealous for the Word, that not one jot or one tittle of it be disturbed....It is the Word of God, and, as such, we shall not allow, for a moment, the speculations, imaginings, and guesses of men, ever so learned, to weigh a feather's weight against it....

The preacher is a proclaimer, a herald, not a college professor or an originator of theories. He has the Word given him, and *that* he is to proclaim. He is not to draw from the wells of human philosophy, but from the stream that flows directly from the throne of God. He is to tell the people what God has said. He is to hide himself behind his message, and to receive it equally with those he addresses....He is responsible as a herald to God and not to the Church....

Success is not to be reckoned by full houses and popular applause, but by converted hearts, and by the strengthening of the faith and piety of God's people. A holier life, a more pronounced separation from the world, a stainless integrity in business pursuits, a Christly devotion to the interests of others, a more thorough knowledge of the Word—these are the true signs of success which the preacher may

justly seek, even though...his people meet in a barn...and in them he will rejoice with a purer, holier joy than that which comes from numbers, wealth, or popular admiration....

If the preacher preach the Word only, he...will bathe in God's revelation and be permeated by it; and so be proof against all the shafts of ignorance and conceit.... He will not go to Pope or Council, to Calvin or Schleiermacher, to know what to preach, but his delight will be in the law of the Lord, and in His law will he meditate day and night....The Word is supernatural, and woe to the preacher who leaves the supernatural for the natural; who sets aside the sword of the Spirit to use in its stead a blade of his own tempering!

Howard Cosby, Chancellor of the University of the City of New York, some time late in the last century; in The Fundamentals, vol III, R.A. Torrey, ed., pp 168-177

Q&A

Question: In mid-October, I heard a very disturbing series by Dr. D. James Kennedy on his radio program, "Truths that Transform," with the theme of Christ in the zodiac. Dr. Kennedy drew parallels between the events and symbols relating to the Lord Jesus Christ and the various signs of the astrological zodiac. ...I was shocked...!

Answer: Unfortunately, the myth of *The Gospel in the Stars*, popularized by Joseph A. Seiss's book of that name and E.W. Bullinger's *Witness of the Stars*, has been promoted not only by Kennedy but by many other Christian leaders. Seiss's statement that the insights leading to this thesis came "in connection with his studies of the marvelous wisdom embodied in the Great Pyramid at El Giza" (p. 5) ought to be sufficient to discredit it. The alleged message found in various measurements of the pyramids is an absurdity pursued by people who delight in esoteric mysteries hidden from the less intelligent. Such delusions give the Bible false support from a source with which Scripture should not be associated. The same is true of any alleged

"gospel" in the signs of the zodiac.

First of all, the Bible says that creation reveals God's *glory and power*, not the gospel. Furthermore, its witness is "clearly seen" (Rom 1:20) and understood by everyone: "there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Ps 19:3). Yet no one would ever understand the *gospel* by looking at the stars themselves or anything else in nature. Kennedy admits, "You can look at the stars in Virgo until you are green in the face and they would never look like a woman." And even if you did see a woman and child in the stars, how would that tell you that the Son of God would be born of a virgin, much less His mission in coming to earth? The Southern Cross is the clearest sign in the stars, yet who would know by looking at it that God, having become a man, would one day die upon a cross for the sins of the world?

Seiss himself confesses, "the starry worlds...do not and cannot declare or show forth Christ as Redeemer..." (p. 13). Of course, they can't. Yet a page later he contradicts himself, logic and the Bible to say that the gospel "in all its length and breadth, stands written upon the stars..." (p. 14). Really! The word "gospel" is used 101 times in 95 verses in the Bible (all New Testament) and is *never* associated with the stars or the witness of creation. The gospel is *always* preached by men and must be made perfectly clear for it to be of any effect. The alleged gospel in the stars and symbols of the zodiac fail on both counts. In fact, the symbols of the zodiac have universally served to support occultism and astrology since the earliest times.

The Bible indicates that whereas the gospel was *foreseen* in Old Testament prophecies it only *began to be preached in its fullness* with the advent of Christ (2 Tm 1:10). Paul refers to "the *beginning* of the gospel" (Phil 4:15) and states that it had been a mystery until then "*kept secret since the world began*" (Rom 16:25). Matthew 24:14, Mark 13:10, etc. indicate that the gospel must yet be preached to all nations, so it could hardly have been already preached in the stars. It is a contradiction of Scripture to suggest that for thousands of years before it was made clear in the Bible, the gospel had been proclaimed in an oral tradition associated with the stars. Yet Seiss, overcome with unfounded enthusiasm, declared, "...all the great doctrines

of the Christian faith were known, believed, cherished, and recorded [in the stars] from the earliest generations of our race..." (p. 15). Odd that the Bible, which is our authority on the gospel, knows nothing of this.

Never once does the Bible refer to the gospel as being in the stars or related in any way to the zodiac. The prophets never mention it. Peter, though he referred to signs in the sky (Acts 2:19), didn't mention this alleged "greatest sign" in addressing a Jewish audience which supposedly would be greatly affected by "signs." Why didn't Paul, in preaching the gospel in city after city or in debating with Greek philosophers, on Mars Hill, for example, mention this great sign in the heavens at least once? He didn't. Why didn't Jesus, who quoted often from the Old Testament and used many illustrations to teach the people, refer to the gospel in the stars at least once?

The answer is obvious: there is no gospel in the stars, as anyone looking at the night sky must admit. Far from supporting the Bible, that delusion actually contradicts and undermines it. And for Christian leaders to persist in this fantasy when it contradicts Scripture can only sow confusion and eventual unbelief.

When Jesus said, "It is written," He did not refer to the stars. Nothing is *written* in the stars, and certainly not the gospel! Let us give the Bible credit for being sufficient. We dealt with this subject in more depth in the May 1989 reprint (pp. 61-62).

"Holy Father"

Dave Hunt

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said...Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

John 17:1,11

The word "holy" is always used one way in Scripture concerning God, who is holy in and of Himself; and in another way for created mankind, creatures and things which can only be called "holy" when set apart by God for His use.

Israel was called to be "an holy people unto the Lord" (Dt 7:6; 14:2; 21, etc.), different from all others. God commanded them (and us today), "be holy; for I am holy" (Lv 11:44,45; 1 Pt 1:16, etc.). The Aaronic priesthood was a holy priesthood (even their garments were said to be holy - Ex 35:21; Lv 16:4). In contrast, *all* Christians are "a holy priesthood" who offer "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 2:5), "the sacrifice of praise to God continually...." (Heb 13:15).

The children of Israel were called "saints." That this designation was given to them while they were still alive on earth and not after their death is clear: "But to the saints that are in the earth...." "O God, the heathen...have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given...unto the fowls...the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth..." (Ps 16:3; 79:1-2, etc.).

Israel broke its covenant with God before Moses came down from the mount, and that is why he smashed the tables of stone (Ex 32:15-19). Graciously, God promised to make a "new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" whereby His law would be written not in stone but in their hearts (Jer 31:31-33). Christ will rescue Israel from her enemies at Armageddon (Zec 12:10-13:1); "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26) and never disobey or displease God again (Ezk 39:7,22,29; Zec 14:9-11,20-21). These promises will be fulfilled when Christ returns to rule the world from David's throne in Jerusalem.

In the meantime, both Jews and Gentiles are called by the gospel of Jesus Christ into the church, which He has "purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28) "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rv 5:9), Jew and Gentile having been made "one new man" (Eph 2:15). Where there once were two divisions of mankind (Jew and

Gentile) there now are three: Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God (1 Cor 10:32). These "Christians" (Acts 11:26) are so called because they have been bought with Christ's blood: "...ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:19-20; 7:23), even "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pt 1:19).

That *all* Christians are saints is declared in the clearest terms. Ananias said, "Lord, I have heard...how much evil he [Saul of Tarsus] hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem" (Acts 9:13). Later Paul admits, "many of the saints did I shut up in prison" (26:10). We are told that Peter visited "the saints which dwelt at Lydda" (9:32). Paul declares that Christians should be hospitable and generously provide for "the necessity of the saints" (Rom 12:13). He refers to "the poor saints which are at Jerusalem" (15:25-26), and to "all the saints which are in all Achaia" (2 Cor 1:1), and

Holy and reverend is his name.

Psalms 111:9

writes his epistles "to the saints" at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, etc.

Christians are saints because they are "born of the [Holy] Spirit" (Jn 3:8; Gal 4:29) and sealed with that Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13; 4:30). Each Christian's body is a "temple of God" and "temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). Christians are called to live as saints who are empowered for holy living by the Holy Spirit dwelling within. Anyone who is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit is not a Christian (Rom 8:1-9).

Contrarily, Roman Catholicism insists that only the dead can be saints. The *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* says that *all* Christians were *once* called saints, but that this was "early restricted to persons who were eminent in holiness...and whom the Church honors as saints...by a solemn definition called canonization...[and] that they may be publicly invoked [prayed to] everywhere." "Early restricted" by whom?

God's Word says that *all* Christians are a holy priesthood with access to the throne of God (Heb 10:19-22) through Christ who alone is the "one mediator between God and men" (1 Tm 2:5). But Rome claims that only a special class of celibates are priests who mediate between God and men. The same *Dictionary* describes a "priest" as "An authorized mediator who offers a true sacrifice...in expiation

for...sins...men who are specially ordained as priests to consecrate and offer the body and blood of Christ in the Mass." "Authorized" by whom? Not by God! By what authority is God's Word set aside?

God's Word is "for ever...settled in heaven" (Ps 119:89). Jesus said that not "one jot or one tittle" could change in His Word (Mt 5:17-19). What shall we say, then, of a Church which casts aside Christ's holy words and revises the clear teaching of the Bible by its tradition and forces this error upon one billion souls?

Moreover, it is claimed that these unbiblical priests turn wafers into the body and blood of Christ to offer Him in a perpetual sacrifice on their altars for the sins of the world. Thereby they deny the completeness of Christ's sacrifice and His own triumphant words on the cross, "It [the sacrifice for the sins of the world] is finished" (Jn 19:30)!

This Roman priesthood has created a distance between its followers and God which it claims it alone can bridge. The salvation the Bible offers through simple faith in Christ, and a personal relationship with Him, are denied to Catholics.

They are kept in bondage to the priesthood from whom they must continually receive another portion of grace to move them a step closer to heaven. This unbiblical religious system is a tragedy which ought to break the heart and consume every true Christian with a passion to tell these deceived people the good news of the gospel.

Christ rebuked the rabbis of His day for loving "the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi" (Mt 23:6-7). In contrast, He told His own, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth [with the obvious exception of one's father by birth, who is to be honored (Ex 20:12; Eph 6:2)]; for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Mt 23: 8-11).

Only Christians may call God their Father—and He alone is to be so addressed.

The biblical truth that God is the Father *only* of Christians, *all* of whom are saints, derives directly from the fact that Christians are "born...of God" (Jn 1:13); have been "born again" (Jn 3:3-8) into the family of God, and are "all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26). God's Spirit confirms this fact to every Christian: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God...heirs of God, and

joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:16-17).

Again, in flagrant disobedience to Christ’s clear command, Rome dares to insist that its unbiblical priests be called “father.” He who said we are to call no man on earth our father declared that to disobey His Word was to reject Him: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words...the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (Jn 12:48).

Those deceived by this false priesthood are robbed of salvation as the free gift of God’s grace, which can only be received in faith and can neither be earned nor dispensed through men or a Church. They are robbed of the relationship they could have with God through Jesus Christ, and of the priesthood of all believers which Peter and Paul and Christ himself taught.

Furthermore, the popes have usurped the title that belongs to God alone, “Holy Father.” We tremble for their souls! That phrase is found only once in the entire Bible, in the verse beginning this article. It is the way Christ addressed His Father: “Holy Father.” What motive could drive mere man to take this title to himself? Tragically, through honoring the Pope with this title and looking to Catholicism’s false gospel Roman Catholics are kept from knowing the only true “Holy Father” in heaven.

Christ’s prayer in John 17 to His “Holy Father” was that Christians might all be one. That prayer was answered. All who are the children of God by being born again into God’s family through faith in Christ and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells are united on that basis. Jesus prayed to the Holy Father that His own would be “one in us...I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...” (vv 21-23). That family relationship is the *only* basis for Christian unity. We are exhorted by Paul to “keep the unity of the [Holy] Spirit in the bond of peace” (i.e., to express in our lives the unity which God has established). Never are we told to *make* or to *work towards* unity, for those who are Christ’s are already united in Him and with His Holy Father.

Again, in rejection of the clear teaching of Scripture, we find appeals such as the following in Roman Catholic periodicals: “Our Holy Father asks that we pray for Christian Unity. *‘It is essential...to be more committed to prayer for Christian unity...’* John Paul II.”

The hope of establishing this unbiblical unity under the Pope has captured the minds of the entire religious world. The ecumenical movement daily gathers momentum. Even

evangelicals have been caught up in this delusion, as we have documented. An elite priesthood of mediators between God and man, and a pope who claims to be the Vicar of Christ and is called “Holy Father,” are allegedly justified by the claim that Christ founded the church upon Peter and that the popes are his successors through “apostolic succession.” But, sadly, calling the popes “Holy Father” or “His Holiness” hardly fits the unholy lives lived by most of them.

Consider a few examples. Pope John XII (955-64) had numerous mistresses, ran a harem in the papal palace, raped women visiting St. Peter’s, blinded and murdered friend and foe alike, toasted Satan at St. Peter’s altar and was killed by a husband who found him in bed with his wife—a fate suffered by more than one pope. Pope Gregory XII’s (1406-15) first pontifical act was to pawn his tiara for 6,000 florins to pay his gambling debts. Upon purchasing the papacy, Alexander VI (1492-

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

Matthew 23:8

1503), who had committed his first murder at age 12, shouted, “I am Pope, Pontiff, Vicar of Christ!” Though he scarcely pretended to be a Christian, he was, like all the popes, deeply devoted to Mary. The crimes of this Borgia pope are beyond calculation. Sixtus IV (1471-84) licensed Rome’s brothels for an annual fee and taxed the clergy for their mistresses. He invented the idea of applying indulgences to the dead. Catholic historian Von Dollinger said of Popes Paul II, Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII and Alexander VI that each tried “to exceed the vices of his predecessor.”

In contrast to Christ, who was homeless, whose kingdom was not of this world, and whose followers didn’t fight (Mt 8:20; Jn 18:36), the popes have long lived in palaces of more than 1,000 rooms each and fought with their own armies and navies to build a worldwide empire of unparalleled wealth and power. Michelangelo wrote, “Of chalices they [the popes] make helmet and sword and sell by the bucket the blood of the Lord.” Pope Innocent III killed more Christians in one afternoon than all Roman emperors combined. *Millions* were tortured and killed by the popes.

How did such power arise? In the winter of 755 Pope Stephen III, desperate for protection from the besieging Lombards,

crossed the Alps to seek help from Pepin, king of the Franks. The Pope showed Pepin the *Donation of Constantine*, a newly created fraudulent document (as Catholic historians admit). It claimed that Constantine, the Roman Emperor, had given his “palaces, the City of Rome, and all the provinces, places, and cities of Italy and the regions of the West” to the popes.

Deceived by this lie, Pepin routed the Lombards and gave the papacy about 20 cities and much land along the Adriatic coast. It was the beginning of the papal states over which the popes would rule for centuries as tyrants.

With prosperous cities in its possession from which huge revenues came by heavy taxation, the papacy was a prize over which rival factions fought. Powerful families (Colonna, Orsini, Annibaldi, Conti, Caetani, et al.) fought to place one of their own on the alleged “throne of Peter.” (See *A Woman*

Rides the Beast.) Popes fought and killed one another for “Peter’s Chair,” excommunicated and even exhumed one another to do so. Yet each one is called the “Holy Father, His Holiness, Vicar of Christ” and is considered to be a link in the long chain of apostolic succession supposedly going back to Peter.

Six popes were put in office by a mother-daughter pair of prostitutes: Theodora (wife of a powerful Roman Senator) and her daughter, Marozia. In *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon writes, “The bastard son, the grandson, and the great grandson of Marozia—a rare genealogy—were seated in the Chair of St. Peter.” This is “apostolic succession”?

For decades the papacy was under the control of a powerful family of warlords, the Alberics of Tusculum, who would eventually boast of 40 cardinals and 13 popes issuing from that one family. It would be a mockery to say that the wealth and power that produced this remarkable familial network of popes had anything to do with apostolic succession; yet there they are on that official Vatican list of Vicars of Christ today.

The foregoing is only part of the appalling heritage by which John Paul II today claims God’s title, “Holy Father.” For his own salvation, he needs to renounce such pretense and “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” who died for his sins. May we lovingly bring the true gospel to those whom Rome has deceived. And may we, who are His rejoicing children through faith in Christ, love, serve and obey the *only* “Holy Father.”

TBC

Quotable

The Reformation was not merely a revival, it was a revolt. And ecclesiastical supremacy was the bondage from which those brave and noble men delivered us.... The Romish system represents an authority established to govern the faithful...to control not only their acts but their beliefs....As Cardinal Newman [nineteenth-century Anglican convert to Catholicism] writes: "I had no difficulty in believing it [that each wafer was Christ] as soon as I believed that the Catholic Roman Church was the oracle of God, and that she had declared this doctrine to be part of the original revelation...."

Christianity makes salvation a personal matter between the sinner and God. It is not a question of subjection to ordinances of religion, but of personal submission to the Lord Jesus Christ....But...what men crave for is *a religion*. For their "affairs" they have a lawyer; for their bodies, a doctor; and for their souls they want a priest....Instead of Calvary we have the "eucharistic sacrifice" of the mass....Ignorant women are sent to gaol [jail] for deceiving people about their future in this world, but educated men are allowed to deceive them with impunity about their future in the next....

Satan is not, as men suppose, the instigator of their *crimes*. *Religion* is the special sphere of his influence. What other meaning can be given to the awful title, "the god of this world," accorded him in Holy Writ?

Sir Robert Anderson, head, Criminal Investigation Division, Scotland Yard. In *The Bible or the Church*, Pickering & Englis, London (2nd ed.), c. 1910.

Q&A

Question: I would like to call your attention to a [federal] Legislative Act that was passed on September 28, 1998 concerning Y2K statement liability. It is the "Year 2000 Information and Readiness Disclosure Act"....You need to look at this and correct your statements [in January TBC] to your readers....My own county government announced last week that none of their computers will be Y2K ready. Our hospital announced that they will not be ready for Y2K. The Emergency 911 system will not be ready.

...You need to do more research...I appreciate The Berean Call and I thank you for it.

Answer: We sincerely appreciate our readers being Bereans and correcting us when necessary. However, I was already familiar with the Act to which you refer and it changes nothing we have said. It only prevents liability for *statements* made concerning Y2K preparedness—it does *not* absolve anyone from *failure to be* Y2K compliant in time.

It would be unconscionable (and probably illegal) for Congress to enact a law removing the responsibility, for example, of an electric utility to provide the power customers need on January 1, 2000. And why should *anyone* be absolved of *criminal negligence*? That is exactly what failure to be Y2K compliant on January 1, 2000 amounts to! There is no excuse!

The problem, how to solve it and the deadline have been well known for more than 20 years. It is therefore *gross negligence* for the hospital or 911 system or county government to which you refer not to be ready. They can be sued (the Act of Congress does not prevent that) by anyone suffering damages due to the failure which you claim they are announcing in advance. Something doesn't sound right. That anyone a year in advance would make such pronouncements (*none* of their computers will be ready?) when there are plenty of techniques available for fixing the problem in a fraction of that time (and they should have fixed it long ago), makes no sense. I would very much appreciate receiving a copy of these statements if you can provide them.

As for more research, my research has been thorough. I have stated the facts, as developments will prove. The 1/11/99 *Wall Street Journal* quoted the latest North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) report saying that Y2K will have only a "minimal operational impact" on America's power grid. (Future reports will be even better.) Worried about Russia? *Computer World* 1/14/99 reports that an American software developer, Relativity Technologies, Inc., has been awarded a multimillion-dollar contract to help the Russian government and businesses become Y2K compliant. *CNN Headline News* on January 15 took its cameras to

Dugway Proving Ground in Utah inside a huge nerve center connected to thousands of military computers declaring that they were all Y2K compliant. According to the Associated Press, 1/15/99, the Pentagon says that all computer systems critical to U.S. national defense, including those linked to nuclear weapons, will be safe from Y2K bugs before year 2000: "We will be 100 percent ready...." Such announcements will increase.

Those who warn of Y2K tell us embedded chips pose the greatest problem and it can't be solved in time. Yet those who design and install embedded systems seem unconcerned. *Embedded Systems Programming* is the premiere trade magazine on this subject. Its subscribers, the true experts, daily work in this field. Its January 1999 edition carried an editorial which stated, "Ten months ago I asked for those of you who have encountered year 2000 (Y2K) problems in embedded systems you're developing to let me know...[and] no one cited a verifiable problem." The articles planned for 1999 (including their December issue) will not even address Y2K. If the danger is as great as we are being told, why aren't the real experts concerned?

Question: Are you aware that not only Protestant critics but even some leading Roman Catholics have exposed the alleged sightings of the "Virgin Mary" at Medjugorje as a fraud? One of the best books is *The Medjugorje Deception* by E. Michael Jones, a lay leader among Roman Catholics. Have you read it? It is quite an eye-opener.

Answer: Yes, I have read the book with interest. Its back cover says, "Proponents of the apparition like to talk about its fruits, but ignore the broken families, the pregnant nuns, the poor people bilked of their money...the worst fighting in Europe since World War II, the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from Gradno, just five kilometers from Medjugorje—all of it followed inexorably from those children [the alleged 'seers'] on that hill in Bosnia in June of 1981."

Jones refers to "the burgeoning and increasingly lucrative Marian conference industry" and to "the tight circle of con men and felons who dominated the Medjugorje industry in the United States during the

early 1990s.” He says the Franciscans were involved in the slaughter of thousands of Serbians who refused to convert to Catholicism (see *A Woman Rides the Beast* for details). He shows the Franciscan leadership at Medjugorje and identifies the Franciscan University at Steubenville, Ohio (headed by Fr. Michael Scanlon) as a center of the charismatic renewal and supportive of Medjugorje, sponsoring tours to that site. Sadly, Promise Keepers has been involved at Steubenville and James Dobson received an honorary doctorate from that apostate institution.

Jones accurately reports the almost unbelievable fraud and deceit perpetrated by the seers and promoters of Medjugorje. As a Roman Catholic, however, he is blind to the equally destructive fraud and deceit perpetrated by Satan through numerous other apparitions which, unlike Medjugorje, have been endorsed by his Church. He mocks “Our Lady of Medjugorje’s” claim to be the “Queen of Peace.” Yet “Our Lady of Lourdes,” “Our Lady of Fatima” and “Our Lady” of many other authorized shrines around the world also pretend to hold the key to world peace.

Indeed, the “Mary” of apparitions embraced by Rome claims to stand between an angry Christ and this world. To rescue us from the wrath which He otherwise would pour out upon mankind, “Mary” offers *her* “peace plan” on *her* terms which involve honoring her and praying the Rosary. Obedient to the apparitions, from the pope on down Catholics urge one another to “Pray the rosary for peace!” Undeniably, the “Mary” of the Vatican-endorsed apparitions usurps the place of Christ. The true Prince of Peace (Is 9:6) is outranked by Catholicism’s “Queen of Peace.”

The satanic delusion is undeniable. A “child Jesus” sometimes appears (at Fatima, etc.) with “Mary.” Jesus was a mature man when He died for our sins; and is resurrected and glorified at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:32-33, 7:55-56). Obviously, then, the appearance of any “child Jesus” is demonic. For Catholics, however, millions of wafers are each simultaneously Christ, whom they ingest into their stomachs—so it is easy to believe that He can appear as a baby or child.

In almost all of the apparitions, “Mary” promises to be with her followers at all times, making her omnipresent like God.

Yet Catholics have no problem with this. The apparitions also promote official Catholic dogmas of salvation by works and sacraments and devotion to “Mary.” Our Lady of Fatima promises to “assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, go to Confession and receive Holy Communion, recite the rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the rosary with the intention of making reparation.” If Catholics believed Christ’s promise (“He that believeth on the Son [not in Mary] hath everlasting life” ...“and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” - Jn 3:36, 5:24), they would not look to “Mary” for assistance to salvation.

It ought to concern all Catholics (certainly someone as astute as Jones) that these demonic apparitions promulgate Roman Catholic doctrine—even the newest as it develops. The dogma of Mary’s alleged “Immaculate Conception” was only officially declared by Pope Pius IX in a Papal Bull (*Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854): that “from the first moment of her conception [she] was...preserved immune from all stain of original sin...[this] is revealed by God and is therefore firmly and constantly to be believed by all the faithful.” Thereafter, the “Mary” of the apparitions (at Lourdes, etc.) also claimed an immaculate conception and sinless life.

From that dogma Catholic theologians argued that Mary did not suffer from the consequences of sin such as disease or death, nor could she have suffered the pains of childbirth, which were also pronounced upon Eve because of sin. It was then only a matter of time that some pope would make it official that Mary was taken bodily into heaven without death. Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of Mary’s bodily assumption to heaven in his Papal Bull *Munificentissimus Deus*, November 2, 1950.

This dogma contradicts both Mary’s own confession that she needed a Savior (Lk 1:47) and Scripture: “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. ...Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 3:23, 5:12). It also impugns God’s love. Surely the creation of Adam and Eve by God was at least as

“immaculate” as Mary’s conception! If God could keep Mary from all sin during her life, then surely Adam and Eve and all of their descendants could have been kept from sin also. There would have been no sickness, sorrow, death, no need for Christ to die, and the world would still be one vast Garden of Eden.

There is another serious problem. The “Mary” of the apparitions often appears wearing a crown of twelve stars like the “woman clothed with the sun” in Revelation 12 and claims to be this woman. Popes and Catholic theologians agree. Pius XII referred to Mary in his Assumption Prayer as “clothed with the sun and crowned with stars...” Pope John Paul II also has referred to Mary in this way.

Yet the “woman clothed with the sun” suffers the pain of childbirth as she brings “forth a man child” (Rv 12:1-5). A sinless Mary would not have “cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered” (Rv 12:2).

Jones provides a unique exposé of the Catholic charismatic renewal and its Franciscan connection. Based upon the evidence he uncovered, Jones claims that “the charismatic movement became a front for lots of illicit sexual activity, and many of the priests who had resisted the siren songs of the secular ’60s succumbed to the seductions of the charismatic spirit in the ’70s.” One such priest he mentions by name: Francis MacNutt, popular on TBN and among charismatics.

In spite of Jones’s assessment, the charismatic movement has the blessing of popes and Church leaders because it has been the major factor causing acceptance of Roman Catholicism by presumed evangelicals. There are about 70 million Roman Catholic charismatics worldwide today. The Vatican loves them because their supposed baptism in the Spirit with speaking in tongues has deepened their devotion to Mary, to the Mass and to the Church. Logically, the Church which blesses charismatics deserves the same criticism which Jones unflinchingly levels at this movement—but he seems oblivious to that fact.

While Jones’s vast amount of documentation is informative, it is almost beside the point. The unbiblical declarations by all of the apparitions unmistakably mark them as either fraud or demonic.

Islam and the Gospel

Dave Hunt

The Islamic Curtain separating Muslim countries from the rest of the world is every bit as impenetrable as the Iron Curtain ever was, but who hears a word of it in the media? In Saudi Arabia, for example, which Americans died to protect, there is a total blackout on anything Christian; one cannot carry a Bible on the street or have a Bible study in the privacy of one's own home. Even in our embassy, over which the American flag flies, Christian church services are banned. It is officially the death penalty in Saudi Arabia and some other Muslim countries (and enforced unofficially elsewhere) for a Muslim to convert to any other religion.

Only Muslims can be citizens of Saudi Arabia. Even in Arab countries where *shari'a* (Islamic law) is not enforced by the government, Islam's influence prevents freedom of speech, of the press, of religion and of conscience. In PLO territories, Christian Arabs, who once had freedom under Israel, now suffer persecution, imprisonment and death for their faith. Yet neither the UN nor our own government protest such oppression behind the Islamic curtain.

Muslims build mosques and worship freely in the West, but in their own countries they deny such freedoms to others. Instead of reporting this hypocrisy, the world media cover it up. One Mideast author writes,

Islam is...more antagonistic to the Christian faith than Communism ever was....In Communist China today, Christianity still thrives. But confession of Christ by a national in an Islamic country is regarded as high treason. ...[N]ot even an official Church that a Communist government could allow is permitted...in an Islamic country. (G.J.O. Moshay, *Who Is This Allah?* Dorchester, 1994, p. 111)

Islam spread rapidly under Muhammad and his successors through *jihad* ("holy war"). Muhammad himself planned 65 campaigns and personally led 27 involving naked aggression and treachery. This incredible "evangelism" made "converts" by the millions at the point of a sword. At its peak, Islam had conquered all of North Africa and almost took over Europe.

Islam continues its conquest worldwide.

Today's invaders are millions of immigrants who make converts to Islam through misrepresentation. One sees on TV well-coifed and fashionably dressed women who claim to be converts to Islam and testify to its joys and peace-loving ways. Yet in a Muslim country they would have to be veiled with only their eyes showing, would have to wear plain black full-length robes, could not drive a car, could be one of four wives habitually mistreated by their husband, to be divorced by his mere denunciation, virtual slaves under *shari'a*. Oddly enough, Hillary Clinton, National Organization of Women (NOW), and other outspoken champions of women's rights are silent about Islam's notorious abuse of women.

Islam's earnest goal, set forth in the Koran (references given herein are from three versions) and *hadith* (Islamic written tradition), remains the same: to bring all mankind into submission (that's what

to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Mt 5:44).

Christ gave His life to save sinners, and His followers must be willing to lay down their lives to bring this good news to the world. Biblical salvation is a free gift paid for by the death of Christ, who said, "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). That command includes today's one billion Muslims. They present a tremendous (and inescapable) challenge to every Christian. But how can we bring the gospel to those who may be killed for believing it, or who may kill us for offering it to them? To die fighting infidels is the only sure way for a Muslim to gain Paradise. Yet Christ also died for Muslims, and His love compels us.

Attempts to evangelize Muslims have had little success for obvious reasons. Lately, however, a new and seemingly more fruitful approach is being adopted: using Muslim scriptures to present Christ. In this regard, several former Muslims have written some helpful material (which we offer this month).

The *hadith* attests to the virgin birth, sinless life and miracles of Christ, who is called "the Word of Allah." Some portions of the Koran, too, speak highly of Christ: that He was born of Mary as a virgin (Surah 3:45-47; 21:91, etc.); He is the highest example (43:57); and He alone is called "Isa," which means Savior (3:45). Whereas Muhammad was unable to perform miracles (17:90-96; 29:50-52, etc.), Christ did so (2:252-53; 3:49); and unlike others such as Moses who did miracles at God's command, Jesus did miracles on His own initiative (26:63, etc.), even raising the dead (3:49; 5:110; 36:78-79, etc.). Further, the Koran declares that Muhammad was a sinner (9:43; 40:55; 47:19; 48:2; 294:1-3, etc.), but Jesus was sinless (19:17-19).

In spite of the honor and reverence accorded Jesus, however, the Jesus of Islam is not the Jesus of the Bible but "another Jesus" (2 Cor 11:4)—so be careful.

While the Koran in its early passages honors at least parts of the Bible as "the Book" and both Jews and Christians as "the people of the Book," it often contradicts the Bible: It denies that Jesus is God (3:59; 62:4; 171) and that He died on the cross (4:157-58; 5:116-20) for our sins. Early tradition held that at Christ's request a look-alike disciple rescued Him from the cross by dying in His place. Other passages, however, seem to declare that Christ did

...For if ye believe not that I AM [God], ye shall die in your sins.

John 8:24

"Islam" means) and to kill or enslave all "infidels" (i.e., unbelievers in Allah and Muhammad his prophet—Surah 2:190-92; 4:76; 5:33; 9:5, 29, 41; 47:4, etc.). Islam (in obedience to the Koran and Muhammad's example) is the driving force behind most terrorism today. Muhammad declared, "The last hour will not come before the Muslims fight the Jews and the Muslims kill them."

Westerners naively accept Allah, who inspired Muhammad, as the God of the Bible. Yet Allah has no son, and rejects the Trinity (4:171), is unknowable, and was the pagan idol/god of Muhammad's tribe before he was born. Allah tells Muslims, "Take not the Jews and Christians for friends...slay the idolaters [infidels] wherever ye find them. ...Fight against those who...believe not in Allah nor the Last Day" (5:51; 9:5, 29, 41). But the triune God of the Bible wants men to know Him (Jer 9:24), a knowledge essential to salvation (Jn 17:3). Jews are His "chosen people" (Ex 6:7; Lv 20:26; 1 Chr 16:13; Ps 105:6, etc.) and Christians are His dearly loved children (Rom 8:16, 21; Gal 3:26; Eph 1:5; 5:1, etc.).

Instead of conversion by force, Christ said that His disciples did not fight because His kingdom was not of this world (Jn 18:36). Indeed, He told His disciples, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good

indeed die (3:33,55;5:117;19:33), and many Islamic scholars take that view today. The Koran denies that one person could die for another (17:13-15;35:18). Actually, it says that no “soul laden [i.e., sinner] bears the load [sin] of another.” Since Jesus was without sin, He would have to be an exception.

For the sinner to be righteously forgiven, God himself had to pay the penalty demanded by His justice; but that concept is foreign to Islam. The Koran breeds uncertainty: “Forgiveness is only incumbent on Allah toward those who do evil in ignorance [and] then turn quickly [in repentance] to Allah....Lo! Allah pardoneth...all save [except] that to whom he will not....” (4:17,106,110,116). Neither “ignorance” nor “quickly” are defined nor why Allah forgives some and not others. Nor does repentance guarantee forgiveness.

Ayatollah Khomeini declared, “Even if Salman Rushdie (author of *The Satanic Verses*) repents and becomes the most pious man of all time, it is incumbent upon every Muslim to employ everything he has, his life and his wealth, to send him to hell.” In contrast, the Bible offers forgiveness to all. Christ even died to redeem those who hated Him, and asked His Father to forgive those who crucified Him (Lk 23:34).

In real life, Allah’s forgiveness never comes in time to prevent a hand, foot or ear from being cut off as the penalty for stealing. Hundreds of Iraqis mutilated by this inhumane Islamic decree flee to camps bordering that country. Yet kidnapping requires no such mutilation because a *person* is not considered to be *property*. Fornication also requires no such mutilation, while petty thievery does.

The Antichrist (*Dajjal*) is a major topic of the *hadith*, which warns of his coming. He is called the “false Christ” who will deceive many near the end of time. The *hadith* teaches that Jesus will return at the end to destroy the *Dajjal*. Belief in “the Last Day” is an essential part of the Muslim’s faith (2:62).

Of course, seeking to win Muslims by quoting the Koran and *hadith* could imply that these Islamic writings are inspired of God. Even M.N. Anderson, who has done such excellent work, fell into that trap in *Proud to be a Muslim* at p. 6: “Although it was Gabriel [equated in Islam with the Spirit of Allah] that conveyed the Qur’an to him, he [Muhammad] was referred to the people of the Book for assurance, when in doubt concerning the Qur’an.” Unfortunately, that sounds as though the Koran was inspired of

God, and that the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) would confirm its teachings from the Bible. That implication would tragically confirm Muslims in their error.

The Koran’s contradictions of the Bible are excused by claiming that the Bible was corrupted. But the Koran was sent to stand “as a guardian” over the Bible (5:48); therefore, if the Bible was corrupted, the Koran failed. The Muslim’s Holy Book itself admits that much of its text is ambiguous (3:7); Muslims are even to ask “the People of the Book [Bible]” for enlightenment (21:7)!

The Koran also contradicts itself: Allah created everything “in the twinkling of an eye” (54:49,50), “in two Days” (41:9,12), “in four Days” (41:10), “in six Days” (7:54, 10:4;32:4), “a Day,” equaling “a thousand years” (32:5) and also “fifty thousand years” (70:4); Jesus is not the Son of God (4:171), yet He is (19:17-21), etc.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life....

John 3:36

There are scientific errors in the Koran. Even Arabian legends are recounted as actual happenings. The Koran contains much superstition and occultism, especially its references to *jinn* (genies).

In quoting the Koran and *hadith* we must avoid the impression that we are endorsing these writings. Consider Paul’s discussion with the philosophers on Mars Hill: “...as certain also of your own poets have said” (Acts 17:28). Paul was not suggesting that these writers were inspired of God—and he went beyond them to present the gospel. Likewise, we must be careful to go beyond what the Koran and *hadith* say about Jesus to present the true gospel; otherwise there is no basis for salvation.

For a Muslim to become a true Christian he must renounce Islam’s false god, Allah, and its false gospel of salvation by works. Unfortunately, the gospel is being compromised to make it appealing to Muslims. (In the West it’s being made appealing to everyone.) Many “converts” have never understood the gospel and thus have not believed that which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). The gospel is definitely *not in the Koran*. Yet Muslims are supposedly being

saved by heeding it. The author of *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam* (NavPress, 1997) gives the testimony of a Muslim “converted” to Christianity in Pakistan (p. 27): “As I was listening to the Qur’an read on the radio day after day, I heard that Christ was highly honored...and near-stationed to God. I said to myself, ‘If I wanted someone to intercede for me to God, who would be better than someone like Christ...?’ And so I prayed, ‘Lord Isa [Jesus], please come to my help. I want to devote myself to God through you. Since you are highly honored and sitting near Him, you can do it.’” The author then comments, “After that, he felt like a changed man, much happier than before....”

This is a delusion similar to that of those who say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?...and in thy name done many wonderful works?”, to whom the Lord responds, “I never knew you: depart from me...” (Mt 7:21-23). Asking Islam’s Isa to intercede for oneself will not save. One must believe the gospel to be saved: “[H]ow that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:1-4); “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:15). That gospel is not in the Koran, and there is nothing in this “convert’s” testimony to indicate that he knew or believed it.

The same author declares that “60 percent of Muslims who are approached with the methods explained in this book put their trust in Christ....” Yet Christ and His apostles experienced no such percentage of converts. Jesus said that *few* would be saved (Mt 7:13-14). The author enthusiastically refers to Muslims converted to Christ “while remaining [for years] in the fold of their Islamic community...without becoming detestable to their own communities” (p.10). But Jesus warned His disciples, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake...” (Mt 10:22; Jn 15:20). All men, except Muslims?

We want to be wise, and not to needlessly offend in our presentation of the gospel (1 Cor 10:32), whether to Muslims or anyone else to whom the Lord gives us the grace to present the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8). But there is an unavoidable offense because of Christ (Mt 26:31; Rom 9:33; 1 Pt 2:8) and the Cross (Gal 5:11). We must be careful that we actually present the gospel which one must believe to be saved. It will only damn souls if in our zeal to get the world to accept the gospel we preach another gospel acceptable to the world. **TBC**

Quotable

Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, the other a publican (Lk 18:10). There is no place or position so sacred that the "Pharisee" can not enter. Pride can lift its head in the very temple of God, and make His worship the scene of its self-exaltation....

Just when we are most anxious to have our heart be the temple of God, we will find the two men coming up to pray. And the publican will find that his danger is not from the Pharisee beside him...but from the Pharisee within....

Yes, even in the temple, when the language of penitence and trust in God's mercy alone is heard, the Pharisee may take up the note of praise, and in thanking God be congratulating himself. Pride can clothe itself in the garments of praise or of penitence....

The preacher of spiritual truth with an admiring congregation hanging on his words...the Christian giving testimony to a blessed experience, the evangelist...made a blessing to rejoicing multitudes—no man knows the...unconscious danger to which these are exposed.

Paul was in danger without knowing it. What Jesus did for him is written for our admonition....His grace is sufficient for us...too. His strength will be perfected in our weakness. Let us choose to be weak, to be low, to be nothing. Let humility be joy and gladness to us.

Andrew Murray,
in his classic, *Humility*

Q&A

Question: In his book, George Mueller tells how God uses trials to increase our faith. Such an interpretation would have to be read into the [biblical] text. Abraham's life (for example) proves that notion wrong. Otherwise, God would be a child abuser!

Answer: You seem to think that no Christian should face any trials; or that if they do come, they could only be from Satan. But was it not God who commanded Abraham to offer Isaac? Was Job wrong when he said submissively, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Paul

clearly says that God gave him a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me," and he explains why: "lest I should be exalted above measure." Paul also rejoices in the blessed result: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor 12:7,9).

Surely, if anyone was in God's perfect will it was Christ himself. Yet He endured many trials and was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Is 53:3). Indeed, He learned obedience by the things which he suffered (Heb 5:8). And Christ declared that Christians would likewise suffer for His sake: "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (Jn 15:20).

There was no greater apostle than Paul, yet he suffered "in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep...in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen ...in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst...in cold and nakedness..." (2 Cor 11:22-33).

Those who preach the "prosperity gospel" today must conclude that Paul didn't know how to make a "positive confession," or he would have prospered like they do. We would have to conclude the same concerning the heroes and heroines of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 who suffered such horrible trials. On the contrary, the trials strengthened their faith. Indeed, how else could one demonstrate one's faith without it being put to the test? Thus Peter speaks of "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold ...[which] might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ..." (1 Pt 1:7).

The Bible is literally filled from beginning to end with the thrilling testimonies of those whose faith our gracious Lord strengthened through many trials. Perhaps today's church's neglect of that part of Scripture has contributed to a warped view of living the life of faith.

Question: I understand that our Resurrection bodies will be glorious, whole and

entire, even if on earth we have suffered disfigurement, loss of limb, or other physical handicaps or deficiencies. And yet we're going to see the nailprints in Christ's hands! This seems like a contradiction as well as totally unjust and inequitable. What is your opinion?

Answer: Our physical disfigurements and pain, and the mental anguish and sorrow we endure, are because of sin that began with Adam and has plagued his descendants in ever greater measure since. Christ, the "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45), "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ...and with his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:4-5). It is because Christ died for our sins at Calvary that we will have perfect new bodies without any of the marks caused by sin upon them.

The marks of Calvary in Christ, however, will remain forever as a reminder of His love and what He endured for us. Our song will eternally be "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rv 1:5). Forever He will be the "Lamb as it had been slain" (5:6) and the throne in heaven will always be "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1).

The marks of Calvary must remain, not only to inspire us in worship and praise, not only as proof that the penalty has been paid, but as the wonderful assurance of our eternal security in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The nailprints in our Lord's hands and feet identified Him to His disciples after His resurrection; and they are the distinctive marks of His identity as our Savior for eternity.

The cross of Christ divides all eternity. There God triumphed in love over evil, in justice over sin. The marks of that suffering and triumph were the proof that caused Thomas to fall at Jesus' feet, and as he declared in worship, "My Lord and my God," so will we.

Question: I would like your comments about an incident that...has troubled me....During our visit [to the home of our Sunday school teacher and deacon] our host said he needed to locate his underground utility wires....My husband bent a metal coat hanger into a Y form and

showed how he could, through some “natural magnetic field” or “energy force,” locate the underground wire. Several other couples were present and took turns....Holding it lightly in their hands and walking around, they were amazed to see the wire jerk suddenly downward to point out the location. ...When the host called on me to try it, I declined, commenting that I felt it was a form of divination, like water witching or ouija board, etc. What bothered me was how quickly they were all involved to believe something without knowing whether it had any scientific truth behind it or superstition or worse was practicing something God forbids....

Answer: You are correct that there is no scientific basis for this practice. There is no force field that would cause a coat hanger to be attracted to and point toward an underground wire. This is called dowsing and it is indeed like water witching and is a form of divination, which is absolutely forbidden in the Bible (Dt 18:10, etc.). This is one of the easiest ways to become involved in the occult and it is astonishing how quickly it will work for almost anyone—very much like a ouija board.

More than 500,000 water wells have been located in the United States by this method, which is used around the world. It is accepted to such an extent that there was even a favorable article on dowsing in the *Smithsonian* journal of January 1996, a leading scientific magazine. No “force field” nor any form of “magnetic energy” can be responsible because *information* is being communicated. Dowsers can use any material (wood, plastic, string, metal, etc.) to find anything (oil, gold, ancient civilizations, water, electrical wires, hidden treasure, etc.). For some dowsers the dowsing instrument will bob up and down to indicate how deep one must drill, and in the case of water or oil, for example, to tell how many gallons per minute the well will produce.

An editorial in *Gold Prospector* magazine stated, “Dowsing is the easy way to get answers to your questions. You ask nature a question to which she (through your instruments) will answer with a “yes” or a “no”....For instance [in the case of gold]...the grade of the deposit; ounces per ton; width of deposit...total amount of ore

in tons.” This is divination. There must be an intelligent source of such information, and it isn’t God, for He cannot be contacted by this means and forbids its use. Satan, however, will respond and provide the desired information to draw men into his net.

As further proof that no scientifically explicable “force” is involved, dowsing is even done over maps. Bermuda was supposedly without ground water and for more than 300 years water had been caught when it rained or brought in by ships. But on October 22, 1949, sitting in Kennebunkport, Maine, Henry Gross located three well sites by dowsing over a map of Bermuda and described accurately the depth to drill, the quality of water, and the quantity per minute which each well would produce. The information supplied by Gross proved to be accurate. The wells were drilled and still provide Bermuda’s water to this day. Visitors to Kennebunkport may observe the plaque placed there in remembrance of Gross’s feat.

That your husband, the host and other Christians present would accept this occult device, a form of witchcraft, and that they could so easily make it work, should be a warning to everyone. The occult can be entered very easily—through a ouija board, for example. Perhaps your husband and Sunday-school teacher and the others would be willing to read my 1998 book, *Occult Invasion*, in which we explain more about dowsing and the many other ways in which the occult is invading and seducing both the world and the church today.

Y2K—The Real Disaster

Dave Hunt

This subject was forced upon us by the many letters and phone calls we received from frightened people. Some were on the verge of panic because of the disastrous consequences of the alleged worldwide computer crash predicted in some circles to occur January 1, 2000. So we addressed Y2K in a feature article and two subsequent Q&As.

We presented facts showing that the Y2K problem was largely overstated and would for all practical purposes be solved in time. Readers warned that I was ignorant of the subject, and that my "skepticism...may cost lives and countless opportunities for the body of Christ to minister to...unsaved." It was obvious that more had to be done to calm the rising panic in the church. To that end, I wrote *Y2K: A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria*, released in February. It documents fully what we can only summarize here.

My point of view on Y2K is no more welcome in many circles than my critique of psychology or of positive confession or of Catholicism. How appropriate for today were Christ's words to the Jews, "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not" (Jn 8:45). One of my interviews was for a Y2K national TV special. The film crew was enthusiastic, but Steve Hewitt of *Christian Computing Magazine* and I were cut out because our research undermined what the other "experts" said as well as the planned advertisements for Y2K survival supplies.

A lot of money is being made. Sadly, some of the Christian leaders sounding the alarm the loudest are profiting from their connection to, and even ownership of, firms selling freeze-dried food, generators, gold coins and other survival supplies. Already resentment and disillusionment are surfacing among those who have cashed in life's savings to buy what they will soon discover wasn't needed. Worst of all will be the backlash against Christianity and the gospel when January 1, 2000 reveals that Y2K is nothing like Christian alarmists have warned it would be.

Out of great concern for the damage which misinformation and alarmism are creating within the church, we reluctantly address this issue once again. Mounting evidence makes it clearer each day that the

predicted worldwide computer crash is not going to occur. Major manufacturers have notified their suppliers that if their products are not Y2K compliant their contracts will be canceled. No one will buy noncompliant product; and those who sell it are being sued.

In addition to nearly 200 out-of-court settlements, more than 50 Y2K-related lawsuits are working their way through the courts, with significant damages being awarded against manufacturers of equipment that won't work beyond 1999. No electric utility, bank, phone company or 911 service will be able to plead on January 1, 2000 that they just didn't get around to fixing their computers! They've had 25 years to take care of that problem and not to do so would be criminal negligence, against which there's no insurance coverage.

Reflecting irrational fears in the church, InterVarsity canceled its Urbana Conference for the end of December 1999, concerned

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalms 46:1

that flying won't be safe. Yet Jerry Greenwald, CEO of United Airlines, has promised, "We will make sure that you experience the start of the new millennium feeling as safe boarding our aircraft as you do every other day of every year." Greenwald must be absolutely certain to make such a statement. The FAA has announced that all critical components of U.S. air traffic control will be ready for Y2K by June 30, 1999; and the FAA is working with other nations to bring them into compliance. Canadian airports just passed a critical Y2K test: "It was really boring," said a spokesman. "All the systems worked well."

The American Bankers Association announced in early April that 97 percent of the nation's banks are ready for Y2K and that the 3 percent which are not will soon be forced by regulators to merge with those which are. The New York stock exchange and major brokerage firms have passed several Y2K tests. Senator Robert Bennett, whose pessimistic statements once supported alarmists, now admits that Y2K at worst will be a mere "bump in the road." Likewise, Peter de Jager, among the first to sound the alarm and once very gloomy, now says, "...the year 2000 problem no longer exists." As of March 31, 1999, the deadline set by Clinton, only

about 500 of the estimated 6,123 critical systems in all 24 U.S. government agencies were not yet Y2K compliant, but soon would be.

Media reports are often sensationalized to excite the public. An article in papers across the country in mid-March, 1999, was headlined, "Glitch at nuke plant shows perils of Y2K tests." It reported that testing for Y2K shut a nuclear plant down for seven hours. In fact, the shut-down had nothing to do with Y2K; an engineer had improperly set a test clock. There was no peril, the problem was discovered and fixed, and power continued to flow. Most local power companies are electromechanical, not computerized, and the large hydroelectric projects depend upon gravity flow of water and could be operated manually.

The truth about the unlikelihood of significant Y2K problems and the thoroughness with which the experts are nevertheless providing for every contingency is found in the technical journals. Therein we discover how the real experts view Y2K, and it doesn't resemble at all what some Christian leaders are saying.

The information provided by these journals rarely finds its way into the popular media. The following is from recent editions of just a few of these publications:

Pshaw. This stuff is beginning to look like a blatant attempt to deceive the public into fixing something that probably isn't broken. If I see many more releases blowing the whole Y2K thing out of proportion, I won't be responsible for my actions...! ("Y2K: MUCH ADO ABOUT NOT A LOT," *Computer Technology Review*, January 1999 editorial)

Major manufacturers are well underway with year 2000 software bug fixes. (*Control Engineering: Covering control, instrumentation, and automation systems worldwide*, January 1999, in two articles listing numerous Y2K solutions and dealing with the high-tech developments expected to launch the next millennium)

Year 2000 battlefield simulation [tests] ...at White Sands Missile Range...the Apache Longbow, Apache and Kiowa Warrior helicopters each fired laser-guided Hellfire missiles to successfully verify rollover of five critical Y2K dates. (*Boeing News*, Feb. 19, 1999)

Department of Defense is in "hyperdrive" to solve Y2K problem....1,673 of 2,300 critical systems were Y2K compliant last December...[NORAD ran in December a] successful three-day exercise involving...five "midnight crossings [12/31/99]" which simulated 30 "missile events"

ranging from mass attacks to single missiles. NORAD was able to respond....A similar exercise was successful for the Trident submarine-launched strategic missile system...94 percent [of DOD's mission-critical systems] will be ready by the end of [February 1999]. (*Military & Aerospace Electronics*, February 1999)

The high-tech journals seem almost contemptuous of Y2K. The media are catching on and further playing down the issue. In April, CNN's Headline News repeatedly ran the same clip about computer chips in autos (Christian "experts" have warned that trucks supplying grocery stores won't run). Mechanics and automakers explained that chips running cars [and trucks] don't care what year it is. It was suggested that owners of cars that won't start on January 1, 2000, might check the gas gauge!

In the face of all the evidence to the contrary, Christian leaders keep sounding the alarm. As a result the church is being led into the *real disaster* of Y2K: the ruined lives and testimonies, the disillusionment and shattered faith. Consider the backlash discrediting the church, our Lord, the gospel and Bible prophecy when Y2K turns out to be so much less than many have warned it *could* be. The cost will be incalculable in discredited testimonies and disrupted lives. "If it doesn't happen, you can eat or give away your freeze-dried food," is the standard disclaimer. That doesn't help those who were driven by fear to cash in retirement plans to buy a whole range of survival equipment and supplies.

Who will any longer believe those who were so certain of disaster that they organized neighborhoods, persuaded family and friends to buy generators, huge stores of food and supplies—and tied it all in with Bible prophecy and evangelism? Who will restore the shattered faith of disillusioned Christians who sold their homes to move into a country hideaway or into some "safe, self-contained Y2K Christian community" they saw advertised in a Christian publication such as Falwell's *National Liberty Journal*? We know of churches already dividing and families breaking up over Y2K, and worse could follow.

There has been a serious abuse of Scripture. A major mantra for Christians sounding the alarm is "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Pv 22:3, 27:12). That scripture has no bearing upon Y2K. Solomon's prudent man *knows* the evil that's coming and thus what to hide from. But the alarmists, after telling us how disastrous it *might* be, themselves hide behind

this specious phrase: "No one really knows what will happen." Yet they want everyone to prepare—for *what*? This uncertainty breeds "a spirit of fear" (2 Tm 1:7).

Another verse is used to make us feel guilty for not storing up vast amounts of food and supplies: "But if any provide not for ...those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tm 5:8). Yet how is one to provide for one's house without knowing the extent of the problem? If we were to prepare for six months and it were to last a year, what then?

Possible scenarios are presented, from a mild bump to total disaster—lasting anywhere from a few days to years. Gary North predicts that 1.5 billion people could die from cold, starvation, riots, etc. In *What Will Become of Us?* (The International Crisis Management Center, 1998, pp. 111-16), Julian Gregori declares,

I predict...every developed nation will fall into a seven-to-eight-year economic collapse....serious y2k computer ambushes will begin surprising Americans in mid-1999...a drastic correction in the stock market (by the end of September, 1999), and the closing of some banks. The closing of some nuclear power plants in October...the end of American lifestyles as we know them....

I predict...failures of electrical power. ...Most y2k victims will be refugees who are attempting to flee anarchical conditions in the cities...by April 2000, at least seven out of every ten Americans will lose their jobs or their present level of income. ...martial law may be imposed in late 1999....

Senator Bennett has publicly compared [Y2K] to Tower of Babel catastrophism.

Such outdated quotes continue to be offered. To cover all bases, they hold open the *possibility* of anything from mild to meltdown. "Don't panic," they tell us, even while they lay out as at least *possible* scenarios that offer more than enough cause for panic. "Hope for the best, and prepare for the worst," we're told. But who could possibly prepare for the worst? Not the elderly in retirement homes or convalescent hospitals nor even the average Christian!

What are we to do? "Pray about it," they say. Thus prayer is turned into divination: seeking a message from God about what to do, when action should be dictated by facts. It is like praying for what stock to invest in on Wall Street or asking God to reveal whether one should get out of bed in the morning. Christian alarmists can't tell us which of their scenarios will actually happen, but God is supposed to tell us.

Spurred on by such advice, many Christians testify that God has told them to sell their homes and move out into an isolated place far from any city because Y2K is going to break down social and civil order. Abandoning friends and neighbors, they have opted for the ultimate in self-interest; some even unashamedly buying guns and fortifying their hideaways and communicating only by email. They argue that they don't have the means to feed all the hungry around them when Y2K comes and must provide for their families. Some Christians, unable to change their residences, have plywood ready to nail over windows and an old car they will park in their driveway and burn January 1, 2000, so that the rampaging mobs will think the house has already been looted and will pass it by.

Yet such Christians claim to have prayed and been led of God to adopt these measures. What will happen to their faith, the faith of their families and friends, and what message will it send to the unsaved when this "guidance from God" turns out not only to be a falsehood but folly?

Other Christians are convinced this will be the church's finest hour, that Y2K will provide the greatest opportunity in history to win the lost to Christ. It is supposedly up to Christians to feed their unsaved friends and neighbors—and when they come for food and warmth they'll be open to the gospel and will be won to Christ. However, starving people are interested in food, not religion; and when desperate enough they'll do anything to get it.

The early church was specifically told by a true prophet of a coming "great dearth throughout all the world" (Acts 11:27-30). Yet under the Apostles' leadership they did not store up food to feed unsaved neighbors or seek to use this disaster for evangelism. Nor is it biblical (or logical) to attempt to do so today.

The truth is that the world right now contains millions of starving and dying people who need help and the gospel. What a delusion to wait for Y2K to provide the greatest opportunity while neglecting the challenges we already face!

So what should we do as Christians? Prudence requires a reasonable stock of supplies on hand for any emergency (earthquake, hurricane, flood). At all times we should diligently be witnessing to family, neighbors, and the wider circle of unsaved with whom we come in contact. We can trust the One who wrought our eternal salvation to bring us through this earthly scene and to our heavenly home in triumph. **TBC**

Quotable

“To remain divided is sinful! Did not our Lord pray, ‘that they may be one, even as we are one’? (John 17:22).” A chorus of ecumenical voices keep harping the unity tune. What they are saying is, “Christians of all doctrinal shades and beliefs must come together in one visible organization, regardless....Unite, unite!”

Such teaching is false, reckless and dangerous. Truth alone must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity. Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord’s prayer in John 17 must be read in its full context. Look at verse 17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the Gospel.

Charles H. Spurgeon
“The Essence of Separation”

In some...churches the man who prays first, longest and loudest gets a reputation for being the most spiritual man in the assembly....The [truly] spiritual man wants to carry his cross. Many Christians accept adversity or tribulation with a sigh and call it their cross, forgetting that such things come alike to saint and sinner. The cross is that extra adversity that comes to us as a result of our obedience to Christ. This cross is not forced upon us; we voluntarily take it up with full knowledge of the consequences. We choose to obey Christ and by so doing choose to carry the cross.

A.W. Tozer
The Best of Tozer, *Wiersbe*

Q&A

Question: How can a Christian who is honestly seeking the truth concerning endtime prophecy ever expect to come to the correct view of this matter when one considers the many positions that are held by those who are really godly saints? They hold to the essential teaching of God’s Word but differ widely when it comes to endtime prophecy. This is a serious question from one who is seeking the truth.

Answer: While these godly persons differ about eschatology, you noted that they agree upon the essentials of the faith. Biblical teaching on salvation and sanctification is

abundantly clear. In contrast, much prophecy is hard to understand—perhaps to keep Satan in ignorance thereof. Furthermore, eschatology is largely neglected, which contributes to the lack of understanding. Even godly saints often adopt the attitude, “What’s going to happen is going to happen, so why study prophecy?” Yet the Bible is about 30 percent prophecy, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rv 19:10), and a special blessing is promised to those who heed prophecy (Rv 1:3).

Christ, who rebuked the rabbis for not knowing and heeding the signs of His first coming (Lk 12:56), gave specific endtime signs by which the nearness of His second coming would be recognized—and surely He gave these signs for a purpose. Unfortunately, some prophetic writers and speakers attempt to identify details where only a broad picture is given in Scripture. Some even presume to reveal the date of the Rapture or identity of Antichrist, in spite of the fact that the Bible specifically says that no one can know the day or the hour of Christ’s return (Mt 24:36) and that Antichrist cannot be revealed before “his time” (2 Thes 2:6-9). Such attempts lead to confusion.

Further confusion is caused when some prophetic expositor tries to show that the European Union is the kingdom of Antichrist, or that God is about to destroy America for its sin, or that the Gulf War will lead into Armageddon, or that Y2K fulfills certain prophecies, etc., etc. There is a temptation for prophecy teachers to want to be the first to gain a new insight, to be “on the cutting edge” in recognizing the prophetic significance of some breaking news event, to sensationalize. Avoid novel insights. Stick to the plain language of Scripture and to the unvarnished facts.

It is a solemn matter to study God’s Word, to understand what it says (including the 30 percent that is prophecy), and to obey it. That responsibility is inescapably yours, regardless of how many conflicting opinions there are. If every person in the world disagrees with you, still you must come to your own conclusion. You are accountable to God, and when you stand before Him you stand there alone, fully responsible for your own thoughts and deeds and biblical interpretations, not for another’s.

The Bereans were commended for checking Paul out against the Scriptures and on that basis coming to their own conclusions. We must each do the same. The first principle of every cult is that a certain leader or hierarchy alone can interpret the Bible and

everyone must accept what they say. A Berean attitude is the death of all cults.

Question: What does it mean to “test the spirits” according to 1 John 4:1-3?

Answer: The usual interpretation has a would-be exorcist demanding of an evil spirit (apparently in possession of a victim) whether Christ has come in the flesh. However, this scripture has nothing to do with exorcism or conversing with evil spirits, but with identifying false prophets and their false teaching. Already in John’s day there were “many false prophets,” and John is declaring that false prophets are inspired by deceiving spirits. In 1 Kings 22:22, such a spirit is given permission by God to be “a lying spirit in the mouths” of Israel’s prophets: *one* spirit speaks falsely through *four hundred* prophets to deceive King Ahab (“there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness” - 21:25) in order to bring about his death in fulfillment of the true prophecy by Elijah.

At issue is an important doctrine: that Jesus Christ has come once and for all in the flesh, fulfilling His mission in *one* life on earth, *one* sacrifice on the cross, and *one* resurrection. This refutes two related false teachings: reincarnation and transubstantiation. The body of flesh which Christ took (“a body hast thou prepared me” - Heb 10:5) was *transformed* by resurrection power, not *exchanged for another* through reincarnation. He came in the flesh *once for all time* when He was born as a babe in Bethlehem; He does not come again and again in the flesh as priests transmute bread into His body. A lying spirit authored both of these deceitful doctrines, which are among the “doctrines of devils” (1 Tm 4:1) popular today.

Question: You claim that Gentiles should not keep Jewish religious feasts because they have no meaning for anyone but Jews. Doesn’t God call the festivals *His* festivals in Leviticus 23? The first feast of the Lord described in Leviticus 23 is the weekly Sabbath day. This is not listed as a Jewish custom, but one given by God to Israel and in turn to any Gentile who wanted to join himself to the Lord God of Israel....Should we not be keeping it today? After all, He gave nine other commands in the same breath and we all agree (except for Catholics [who ignore the prohibition against making images]) that they are binding upon us....Is it not inconsistent to teach that the Sabbath is Jewish, yet the

other nine commandments are not...that the Sabbath command is altered, but the other nine are not...? Why is it that the church in nearly all its major denominations follows the Church of Rome in this custom of renouncing Sabbath worship and replacing it with Sunday observance?

Answer: We have dealt with this before, but it keeps coming up. That God's covenant was with Israel and not with Gentiles is declared repeatedly: "He [God] sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any [other] nation..." (Ps 147:19-20); "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law..." (Rom 2:14); "...my kinsmen according to the flesh:...Israelites; to whom pertaineth the...covenants, and the giving of the law" (Rom 9:3-4); "...ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh...aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise..." (Eph 2:11-12), etc., etc.

Yes, Gentiles have "the law written in their hearts" (Rom 2:15). That this is only what God had written in every conscience since the beginning, and not the covenants given to Israel at Mt. Sinai, is proved by the fact that human conscience is limited to the moral laws. No one has it written in his conscience to keep the sabbath, much less the numerous other ceremonial instructions of God's covenant with Israel. Their absence from the conscience of mankind is further evidence that the covenants for Israel, including the sabbath, were not given to Gentiles.

Yes, in Old Testament times Gentiles could join Israel by acknowledging the Lord God of Israel and coming under the old covenant He had made with her, which included the obligation to keep the Law. But neither Israel nor anyone else could keep the Law. That is why God promised to make a new covenant (or testament) with Israel (Jer 31:31), bringing salvation to all mankind (Is 52:10), a covenant written "not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor 3:3).

Christ is the "mediator of the new testament [covenant]" (Heb 9:15), which is made possible through His death in payment of sin. Under the old covenant, animal sacrifices were offered "which can never take away sins" (Heb 10:11). They were symbolic of Christ, the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice on the cross would put an end to sin and the Old Testament sacrifices:

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;...For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified...there is no more offering for sin" (Heb 10:12-18). If you are going to keep the sabbath, then you must offer the prescribed animal sacrifices as well. In fact, those have been done away in Christ, who was the fulfillment of it all.

Under the new covenant, Gentiles do not join the nation of Israel, but both Jews and Gentiles become new creations in Christ and are joined into a new entity, the church. Before the Cross, one was either a Jew or a Gentile. Now there are three classes: Jews, Gentiles and the church (1 Cor 10:32). Paul reminds the Ephesians, "For he [Christ] is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us...even the law of commandments...for to make in himself of twain [Jew and Gentile] one new man [a Christian]..." (Eph 2:14-15).

We have not "renounc[ed] sabbath worship and replac[ed] it with Sunday observance." Saturday is still the sabbath, but it pertains to the old covenant and the old creation. That was the day God rested from His work of creating the universe. That old universe connected with the old covenant (testament) is doomed to be destroyed because of sin: "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise...all these things shall be dissolved...[but] we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pt 3:10-13).

The new universe will be inhabited only by those who have been made new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). There will be no more sabbath because there will be "no night there" (Rv 21:25) and thus neither passing of time nor counting of days as in the old creation. The lost, however, who are still under the curse of the law, having rejected Christ's payment for their sins, shall be "tormented *day and night* for ever and ever" (Rv 20:10).

Sunday is the day Jesus Christ rose from the grave, "the firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18). Those who have been born again and are thus new creatures in Christ meet on that day in His name. We are no longer under the old law "of ordinances that was against us,...[which Christ] took out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col 2:14); "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made [us] free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). Christians are held to a

much higher standard than Israel had under the old covenant. The law of commandments required human effort and could never be kept; our new standard is the very life of Christ himself. And the only way that can be achieved is not through any human effort but in the power of the Holy Spirit and the risen Lord living His life in us.

Caesar and God

Dave Hunt

Every Sunday-school child knows the story well. Hoping to entrap Him, the Pharisees and Herodians publicly confronted Jesus with an apparently unanswerable question, "Is it lawful [under the law of Moses] to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?" They had cleverly plotted to place Christ in an impossible position. If He answered "yes," He would be a stench to the Jews, who hated Roman taxes. If He answered "no," He would be fomenting rebellion against Caesar, and the Romans would crucify Him.

Jesus, "knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them...bring me a penny...." When someone presented the coin, Jesus asked whose picture was on it. When they told him it was Caesar's, Christ spoke these oft-quoted words, "Render [give] to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mk 12:13-17). His brilliant avoidance of the trap that had been carefully laid for Him left the rabbis speechless. To their chagrin, they found themselves unable either to denounce Him to the Romans or to discredit Him with the Jews.

Hatred, of course, corrupts the soul and has no scruples ("They hated me without a cause" - Jn 15:25). Thus when the Sanhedrin and their lackeys brought Jesus to Pilate after the mock trial before Caiaphas the high priest, they knowingly made this utterly false accusation: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King" (Lk 23:2). Not true. In fact, He had told His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah: "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ" (Mt 16:20).

Christ is equally misrepresented today by extremists who, in His name, advocate not paying taxes because the United States government is corrupt and the money is used for ungodly purposes. Such radicals are, themselves, guilty of the very crime with which Christ was falsely accused. Clinton and associates are no more immoral than were many of the Caesars—or popes, for that matter!

Nor is the United States government any more wicked and corrupt than was the Roman government in Christ's day—and He did not allow that wickedness as an excuse to avoid taxes. By Christ's command we are obliged to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." What is included in "the things that are Caesar's" is the only question that remains.

That Christ's reply was not crafted in order to avoid offending the Romans and Jews but was spoken in transparent truth and love is evident. In fact, had Christ feared men, He would not have been able to escape the rabbis' trap. Solomon said it well: "The fear of man bringeth a snare" (Prv 29:25). Because He feared no one, Christ could not be ensnared. And His thrilling promise remains true for us

...the world passeth away, and the lust thereof....

1 John 2:17

today: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31). The truth brings a holy fear of God; and he who fears God has no fear of man or his criticism, nor any interest in receiving man's praise.

Christ sought neither to appease nor to please either the Romans or the Jews, but only to please His heavenly Father: "I receive not honour from men" (Jn 5:41); but "I do always those things that please him [the Father]" (Jn 8:29). Moreover, Christ faithfully exposed to the religious leaders' hardened consciences (and to ours today) the very reason for faithlessness: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (Jn 5:44). That piercing question must be faced in relation to "the things that are Caesar's."

Clearly one of the things that does not belong to Caesar, and which we are therefore neither to give to him nor to receive from him, is *honor*. Only God is worthy of honor and praise (Rv 4:9-11; 5:11-14, etc.); and true honor comes *only* from God. Caesar plays God when he pretends to bestow honor; and those who play the corrupting game of either giving

honor to Caesar or receiving it from him have fallen into the very snare which Christ disdained. Yet it is a common practice today for Christian leaders to praise one another and even to give honor to the world and to receive it from Caesar in order, so they imagine, to be "more effective" for God—"having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16).

Tragically, the church of Christ has been deeply ensnared in the humanistic practice of seeking honor one of another and honoring one another. Of those who do God's work to be seen of men and thus to receive honor from them, Christ said, "They have their reward [here on earth]" and have thereby forfeited the reward which could have been theirs in heaven (Mt 6:1-6,16-18,24) had they sought honor "from God *only*." Christians honor celebrities and "key leaders," thinking they can advance the cause of Christ by getting the ungodly to wield their influence for God. To that end, Christian media makes heroes even of the enemies of the gospel, cultivates them, and caters to them, especially to the rich and famous.

Our Lord, in contrast, though without partiality, devoted Himself largely to the lowly and downtrodden. He was not tempted to avoid offending the high and mighty with an unpopular response to the ticklish question put to Him by the rabbis. In fact, His bold answer was an even more powerful condemnation of Rome than any disavowal of its taxes could have been: "Render to Caesar...and to God...." The Romans worshiped Caesar as God. Jesus was saying, "Caesar is *not* God!"

Christ's response delivered a stinging rebuke to Caesar for making such a claim. At the same time He condemned those who gave this mere man the honor that belongs to God alone. Rulers have a limited sphere of authority *under God*; while God's authority is over all and extends everywhere and eternally. The distinction Christ drew between Caesar and God carries an equally powerful rebuke for leaders of our day, both political and religious.

True, today's civil authorities make no open claim to deity. Yet God's right to rule in the affairs of men is usurped by most

governments. In North America God has been expelled from public schools and is increasingly being crowded out of public life, while the government plays God, and men acquiesce. At the same time, many who claim to be Christians have devoted themselves to establishing a partnership between Caesar and God — a partnership which Christ utterly rejected.

Ever since Reagan won the Republican nomination for president, Christianity has been equated with conservative politics, and Christians have been chasing the illusion of somehow getting Caesar, though he cannot be converted, to support God's side. To celebrate Reagan's nomination and to make certain he won the November election, about 15,000 conservatives (including several thousand pastors) gathered at the National Affairs Briefing Conference in Dallas in September 1980, determined to Christianize America by getting Christians voted into high political office. Gary North, who was a key speaker on that occasion, sees the responsibility of Christians to "rebuild our apostate civilization into the kingdom of God..."¹ Yet Christ expressed no such interest and bluntly declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36).

The incident we are considering is the only time that our Lord even mentioned the name of Caesar. Never once did He speak out against the Roman oppressors or against that evil tyrant Herod, much less organize His disciples to reclaim the world for God. The world involves "the things that are Caesar's," and is not of God. Christ saved His denunciations for the religious leaders, whom He reproved publicly in the severest terms because they misrepresented God. Christ's example is a rebuke to the time and effort spent by today's Christians on lobbying and political and social action in concert with unbelievers—while neglecting to oppose apostasy and the heresy within the church.

Christianity is commonly equated with Americanism and conservative politics. The promises God gave to Israel as His chosen people, who were to be separate from the world, are erroneously applied to the United States. Leading evangelicals seem unaware that "my people" refers to Israel, not to the church; and "I will heal their land" (2 Chr 7:14) refers to the promised land of Israel, not to the United States. There is a deliberate denial of the clear distinction between Israel and the church. And that Christians are "not of the world"

but have been called "out of this world" to be in it but not of it (Jn 15:19; 17:6,14,16) seems to be forgotten by evangelicals.

Reconstructionist George Grant writes, "The army of God is to conquer the earth, to subdue it, to rule over it, to exercise dominion."² David Chilton insists, "Our goal is world dominion under Christ's lordship, a 'world takeover' if you will. ...We are the shapers of world history. ...[Christ has] commissioned us to take over the world."³ Gary North writes, "God wants Christians to control the earth on His behalf..."⁴ Even J.I. Packer says Christians are called to "re-Christianize the North American milieu...[and] rebuild the ruins...[of] North American culture..."⁵

North explains that the church is not trying to convert the world but to persuade "the whole world [to] experience cultural blessings as a result of the spread of the gospel." He faults those who emphasize

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither, also,...saying that there is another king,...Jesus.

Acts 17:6-7

"saving souls" while neglecting "the healing of the institutions of the world..."⁶ Jay Grimstead agrees: "[It] is our task to get the view of reality in the Bible, and the view of morality in the Bible imposed upon our culture for the glory of God and the well-being of mankind, Christians and non-Christians alike."⁷ Simply put, such ambitions are unbiblical!

A similar delusion lies behind the annual "National Day of Prayer," which was observed once again on May 6. On that special day all are urged to join together in prayer to whatever god they believe in—and well-meaning Christians naively imagine that the true God will respond with blessing upon America! Elijah might just as well have invited the prophets of Baal and the priests of Molech to join in prayer for God's blessing upon Israel and upon the surrounding pagan nations. Instead, Elijah denounced the enemies of the true God and rescued their followers from destruction. But it is not considered politically correct to be that biblical today, so those of any "faith" are encouraged to continue on their way to eternal destruction.

While those promoting this day of prayer

are well-intentioned, it is utter folly to call an ungodly nation to prayer when God has clearly said, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind" (Prv 21:27). The leadership for this occasion that attempts to unite all religions in "prayer" is clearly evangelical (it has been chaired for years by Shirley Dobson and Vonette Bright) and the highest profile church leaders join in with enthusiastic approval—which only demonstrates how deep the compromise has become. For daring to take this stand, we will be criticized for "criticizing" by those who miss the point. Does it mean nothing that Christ specifically said, "I pray not for the world" (Jn 17:9)?

Why should we expect God to pour out blessing upon a godless America? Sadly, today's evangelicalism has fostered the belief that God will bless the plans of anyone who calls upon Him to do so—including godless nations as incentive for Caesar to make a concession or two to God.

Prayer breakfasts often promote this appealing lie. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and atheists are all welcomed and nothing must be said at such ecumenical gatherings that might offend those of "other faiths." Therefore, speakers

generally offer the same self-centered gospel which is being preached from many pulpits today—a gospel which leads the hearers to imagine that sin is not our problem, we just have messed-up lives which God is eager to mend. This "God's" sole purpose is to make us happy and successful. The "converts" of such endeavors are excited that by their "decision for Christ," God is now on their side and will bless their lives. God's justice, integrity, honor and glory have no part in this humanistic "Christianity." One is given the distinct impression that God is just as eager to bless Caesar if we but ask.

Christ has not commissioned us to improve this evil world, but to call out of the world for heavenly citizenship repentant sinners who are stricken with the awful guilt of their rebellion against God. He has not commanded us to "dialogue" in order to come to a mutually advantageous arrangement with the enemies of the Cross, but to preach the gospel and uncompromisingly contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. May He enable us, with pure hearts, to glorify Him and not man, and to seek the honor that comes from God *only*. TBC

Quotable

The state of the world today is nothing but an appalling monument to human failure. We have come to realize that a man can be educated and cultured and still be a beast! The whole case of the Bible is that the trouble with man is not intellectual (in the mind) but moral (in the heart). If the "grace" you have received does not help you to keep the law, you have not received grace. The Christian way is a difficult way of life. It is too glorious to be easy. The New Testament way of handling sanctification is never an appeal, it is a command.

The man whose doctrine is shaky will be shaky in his whole life. There is nothing so fatuous as the view that Christian doctrine is removed from life. There is nothing which is more practical. I always find that those who are driven with every wind of doctrine are those who are too lazy to study doctrine. I spend half my time telling Christians to study doctrine and the other half telling them that doctrine is not enough. My observation over the years is that it is the people who have not been taught the truth negatively as well as positively who always get carried away by the heresies and cults, because they have not been forewarned and forearmed against them.

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones
 "The Wisdom of Martyn Lloyd-Jones,"
 selected by Dick Alderson, *Banner of Truth*, August/September 1986.

Q&A

Question: In your article, "It Is Written," you state that at the time Satan tempted Him in the wilderness, "Jesus had just gone 40 days without food or drink." I hope this is a typo, the drink part, that is. Both references (Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13) state He fasted and He ate nothing....Jesus was physically human so how could he have gone without anything to drink for 40 days and still be alive? Or was this a miracle episode...? Where does it state that He truly went without drink as well as food?

Answer: Thank you for your correction. Nowhere does the Bible say that Jesus went 40 days without drinking. I must have been

thinking of Paul of whom it says he "neither did eat nor drink" (Acts 9:9), but that was only for a period of three days. No one on our staff (who read the articles very carefully before they are published) nor anyone else of the more than 200,000 people who read the newsletter caught this one. Thank you so much for taking the time to bring this error to our attention. We appreciate very much when our readers do indeed act as Bereans.

Question: How could it be possible for Noah and his family to have collected and housed and fed and cleaned up after all of the literally millions of different species of "every creeping thing of the earth" as well as birds and animals...the different species that dwell only in specific areas of the world like kangaroos, or penguins...? How can I tell my kids this was possible when it obviously is not...? And how did all the different races come about? They are so distinct, Africans, Asians, Chinese, Japanese, on and on...? Could you shed any light on this subject?

Answer: There would have been far fewer animals and birds 4,500 years ago, from which came all of the ones we have today. For example, we have scores of kinds of dogs today, but all of them, including the wolf and coyote, are a common species and would have come from a single pair in Noah's day.

As for races of human beings, there is only one race, not many. The very foundation of racism is false. According to the Bible we all descended from Noah and his family, who descended from Adam and Eve. The different characteristics of skin color and physical features developed genetically over time. Rather than attempting an explanation in limited space, let me recommend an excellent book we carry which goes into this subject in detail: *The Answers Book*, by Ham, Snelling and Wieland.

Question: In your March 1999 issue of *The Berean Call* you favorably quote an excerpt from Sir Robert Anderson's book, *The Bible or the Church*, in which he says, "Christianity makes salvation a...matter...of personal submission to the Lord Jesus Christ." Is that salvation? Did Paul say to the Philippian jailer, "Submit your life to the lordship of Jesus

Christ and thou shalt be saved"...? Does it really make sense to imply that in order to become a spiritual baby you must demonstrate a higher level of spiritual maturity/dedication/submission than is demonstrated by many who by reason of time in the faith "ought to be teachers" but who, in reality, due to their spiritual negligence are still such as "have need of milk"?

Answer: First of all, the way you cut up Anderson's statement changes the meaning. Here is more of the quote we presented: "The Reformation was...a revolt...[against] ecclesiastical supremacy...the bondage from which those brave and noble men delivered us...Christianity makes salvation a personal matter between the sinner and God. It is not a question of subjection to ordinances of religion, but of personal submission to the Lord Jesus Christ....But...what men crave for is...a priest....Instead of Calvary, we have the 'eucharistic sacrifice' of the mass...."

Clearly Anderson is not discussing how "to become a spiritual baby," as you suggest. Much less is he offering works to obtain salvation, as you imply. The "it" he refers to is not "salvation" but "Christianity"; not becoming a Christian, but living the Christian life after one is saved. And that involves submission to the Lord, not to a church.

Specifically, Anderson is combating Roman Catholicism's "ecclesiastical supremacy" which subjects members to decrees and rituals of men instead of to the Lord. He is stating that salvation, whether in its inception or in the "work" of living it out (Phil 2:12), is between the individual and Christ and not in obedience to the rituals and regulations of the Church of Rome. We are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, not of any ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Furthermore, one cannot be a Christian without acknowledging that Jesus Christ is God the Lord: "For if ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn 8:24). Too many scriptures make this clear to list them all. Paul told the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). He wrote to those in Rome, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:9-13). If, then, we come to Him as Lord when we are saved, thereafter we follow Him as Lord. Christ asked this

solemn question, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Lk 6:46). As His followers, we obey our Lord; not in order to be saved but out of love for the One who saved us: "If a man love me, he will keep my words..." (Jn 14:23).

Question: Could you address this [enclosed audio tape] sometime in the near future in your newsletter? Several [in my congregation] have been attending The Prophecy Club and listening to this [and other] tapes and are planning to move out of the United States shortly. One family is selling their business, home and everything they possess and heading for Belize.

Answer: I listened in dismay to the tape you sent by Tom Van Asperen, who heads "4th Angel Seminars" out of Paradise, CA. He sounds like another Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Jim Jones or Kim Miller. On the one hand, his claims are so egotistical (that he is revealing God's "very special secret" contained in "seven recently discovered last day Biblical languages which are encrypted in the original text!"), so bizarre (the United States is Israel and the prophecies of judgment in the Old Testament which were literally fulfilled for Israel will be fulfilled against America, including the practice of cannibalism because of Y2K), and so obviously false (there are already 500,000 Russian troops inside America), that for anyone to believe and follow him is inexcusable. My heart goes out in concern and sympathy to those who have been persuaded by what Van Asperen says and therefore, unable to think rationally, are entrapped by his convincing style into following him.

That there are any secret *languages* encrypted into the Bible is contrary to the Bible's own claim that any person (Dt 8:3; Ps 1:1-2) and even a "young man" (Ps 119:9) or a "child" (2 Tm 3:15) can understand the Scriptures. Furthermore, every Christian is responsible before God to know and understand the Bible for himself. It is utterly contrary both to common sense and Scripture to imagine that someone has been given a secret interpretation for the rest of us to believe and follow. This is how cults start, and we may very well be seeing the birth of another one in Tom Van Asperen and his followers.

He is warning people that the United States is shortly going to be totally de-

stroyed, six out of seven males will be killed, mothers will be eating their children, and therefore everyone must get out of this country immediately and even change their citizenship. He warns that our military system is not Y2K compliant and will therefore be helpless; it is futile to store food for Y2K because the police of the New World Order will take it away; there is only one hope: "Get out!" He recommends Belize and some are already selling everything and relocating there.

This kind of misinformation and fanaticism being offered on audio and video tapes could eventually provide government justification to shut down "Christians" or at least to censor the content of messages from pulpits, books, radio and TV, etc. Burning the American flag seems mild in comparison to persuading his listeners to flee the United States and to change their citizenship!

Van Asperen has been a frequent speaker at The Prophecy Club, which holds seminars across the country and features some of the most popular extremists. In a phone inquiry to The Prophecy Club we were told that they had received many complaints about Van Asperen and no longer offered his tapes. One could only wonder why his tapes would have been offered in the first place and why it took many complaints to finally remove them.

As for said removal, on the same day (May 5, 1999) The Prophecy Club website was still offering Van Asperen's tapes along with many others. Under the heading, "THE PROPHECY CLUB VIDEOS," the following was included:

BIBLE PROPHECY DECODED: Was taught to Tom Van Asperen by the Holy Spirit. In this 10-hour seminar, Tom will teach you the language of "Twice Speak" so you can begin to see your Bible like a brand new book. In this encrypted symbolic code language, Tom unveils the "sealed words" in the books of Daniel, Revelation, and many other important prophecies! Tom says that the messages of Dumitru Duduman line up perfectly in this decoded scripture. This is a must for the serious Bible student. Four 2° hour video tapes \$100.

SPECIAL: For \$75 receive the 200 code word list and two audio tapes on Tom's answer to the rapture called "The Secret Hiding Place" FREE!

The description of one of the audio tapes offered, *Secret Hiding Place* by Tom Van Asperen, contains this statement: "Tom

says the Code Language says there is no rapture...2-90 min. audio tapes \$10." So much for Paul's assurance that "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thes 4:13-18).

Many of the other audio and video tapes listed on the website, judging by their descriptions, are just as extreme. This is our first exposure to The Prophecy Club and it doesn't look good.

Question (representative of several): In reading your December 1998 Q&A, I wonder how you can call Bill Bright your friend and how you can "walk together" (Amos 3:3). A little leaven can be destructive, according to Galatians 5:9. I'm praying for you.

Answer: I don't understand why you fault me for calling Bill Bright my friend. Jesus was a "friend of publicans and sinners" (Mt 11:19) and He addressed Judas at the moment of betrayal as "friend" (Mt 26:50). That we don't "walk together," as you say we do, ought to be obvious. Nor can I see how you can apply "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," considering my clear and repeated public opposition to the ecumenism and errors of Bright, Graham, et al. That mystifies and saddens me. But I do appreciate your prayers.

Endnotes

1. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July-Sept. 1988.
2. George Grant, *Bringing in the Sheaves* (American Vision Press, 1985), 98.
3. David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: An Eschatology of Dominion* (Reconstruction Press, 1985), 214-19.
4. *Liberating Planet Earth*, vol. 1 of *Biblical Blueprint Series* (Dominion Press, 1987), 24, 178.
5. *Christianity Today* (Dec. 12, 1994), 36.
6. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Dominion Press, 1988), 225.
7. Jay Grimstead, Sept. 18, 1987, speech to group of pastors, from tape of the meeting.

The Sufficiency of God's Word

Dave Hunt

Christianity Today (CT) was founded in 1956 by Billy Graham (he remains Board Chairman) to “restore intellectual respectability” to Christianity through “a new generation of highly trained scholars.” Billy is pleased that CT “has helped change the profile of the American church”¹—in spite of the increasing worldliness of that “profile.” While offering some good articles, CT has fostered decreasing confidence in God’s Word and increasing reliance upon scholarly humanistic theories and methods. David Wells points out that

When *Christianity Today* began, advertising...[took] up a mere 3 to 7 percent of the space...Three decades later...advertising filled anywhere from 30 to 48 percent of the space...[including] fund-raising businesses, Sunday School peanut butter,...a gold-embossed ring that had been made...“to unite the body of Christ...” etc.

In 1959...36 percent [involved]...biblical doctrine...Three decades later...doctrinal content was...8 percent...

In 1959...a regular section...explored...biblical revelation...the person and work of Christ...the gospel and Christian salvation...By 1989, this column had been replaced by...success stories...pains of a mid-life crisis...marriage...struggling with homosexuality...with less money than we would like...with a diet.

In these three decades...[CT] moved...to a therapeutically constructed faith the central concern of which was psychological survival...Thus was biblical truth eclipsed by the self and holiness by wholeness...

By 1989...*Christianity Today*...looked like a poor cousin to *Time* magazine...[though] a little more pious....²

In 1980, CT launched *Leadership* magazine for clergy. David Wells writes,

Since this is an evangelical publication, it is quite stunning to observe that less than 1 percent of the material made any clear reference to Scripture...

The articles are single-minded in their devotion to the wisdom that psychology and business management offer and apparently as equally single-minded in their skepticism concerning what Scripture and theology offer for addressing the practical crises of pastoral life.³

CT even devoted the entire back cover of one issue to promoting a Graham-endorsed 300-page occult/science-of-mind manual: John Marks Templeton’s *Discovering the Laws of Life*. CT supports theistic evolution and Roman Catholicism, calling Pope John Paul II “the successor of St. Peter...[whom] God has called...to forge a united church...[and whose] priority to the Christian message...endear[s] him to the hearts of evangelicals.”⁴ It has defended heretical teachers, refused to be corrected itself, misrepresented its critics, and failed to include substantive response in its pages.

When CT featured a lengthy article titled “Exposing the Myth that Christians Should Not Have Emotional Problems,” I offered an article in response. It was refused. **Here is an adaptation of my response:**

The very title of the CT article misrepresents Christian psychology’s critics and attacks a straw man. Even the quotation cited

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

to support the title (“At the cross you can be made whole”) offers a solution to emotional needs; it does not deny their existence.

Claiming that the heretical “Health and Wealth Gospel [has] an insidious variation” in something he calls the “Emotional-Health Gospel,” the author of the CT article accuses critics of Christian psychology of teaching that “if you have repented of your sins, prayed correctly, and spent adequate time in God’s Word, you will have a sound mind.” Paul said it: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tm 1:7). The author says critics such as “John MacArthur and Dave Hunt” propagate views which “lead us to shoot our wounded.” This is a serious charge that surely warrants a response—which CT would not allow in its pages.

Much space is given to quoting alleged admissions by Luther and Spurgeon of serious emotional problems and citing scriptures which supposedly show that Moses, Elijah, Job, Jeremiah and Paul “suffered from depression” and that even Christ had “negative emotions.” Even if that were the case, it would not support the CT author’s thesis. Moses, Spurgeon, et al. lived long before Christian psychology was invented

and triumphed gloriously without it! Comparing the lives of past Christians with “Christianity today” shows that Christians’ lives have not improved with psychology, but rather have deteriorated badly.

The CT author declares, “We must take seriously Paul’s injunction to ‘encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men’ (1 Thes 5:14).” Again, instead of supporting the view that Christians need specialized help from trained professionals, Paul’s statement proves the opposite. He obviously believed that his injunction could be fully obeyed by Christians at that time, centuries before psychology appeared on the scene. So why should we need it today?

The issue is not whether Christians experience emotional difficulties, but what God’s remedy is. He created and redeemed us, and the Bible is His instruction manual for living. Believers throughout the ages have found God’s Word and His remedies

sufficient in every situation. Why turn to pitiful and destructive theories invented by humanists who can’t help themselves? Psychologists and psychiatrists have the highest percentage of any profession under the care of psychiatrists, committing suicide, divorcing, and on prescription drugs. Consulting them is like asking directions of someone who is himself hopelessly lost.

If “Christian psychology” has *anything of value* to offer, then that means the church lacked it for 1,900 years, and the Holy Spirit, through ignorance or oversight, left out of God’s Word part of what we need to live fruitful lives for Christ. The Bible, however, claims that it has “given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pt 1:3-11); and that “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” are “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23), not of therapy.

Problems experienced today for which people seek the help of professional psychologists are not new. The Bible is all about those who victoriously endured rejection, hatred, misunderstanding, jealousy, persecution, uncertainty and every other trial one could imagine, including martyrdom. Consider Joseph. His jealous brothers hated and sold him into Egypt. There, falsely accused of rape, he languished in prison. Did he (or any other heroes and heroines of the faith) suffer for lack of psychological counseling, which the author argues is essential today? Obviously not!

What a contrast between the triumphant saints of old and today's struggling and self-centered victims of months or years of psychological counseling! Paul testified,

...in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? (2 Cor 11:22-29)

Who today endures such trials? Why turn for help to that which for Paul was unnecessary? From prison he wrote, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content....I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me....my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:11-13,19). That same triumph can be ours today.

"I've tried that and it doesn't work," is a common complaint. Is God then a liar? To the anxious, troubled, fearful and depressed, Paul joyfully declares that God "always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Cor 2:14). Only an uncrucified self prevents that victory. Paul testifies, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..." (Gal 2:20). Surely Christ "who is our life" (Col 3:4) needs no psychological counseling! Let Him live His life through you!

One of Christ's names is *Counsellor* (Is 9:6). Could His counsel ever fail? Christian psychology rests upon the specious claim that the Bible and the indwelling Christ are not sufficient. Its "professionals" promise to make up for that deficiency. Their very craft is an affront to God and His Word!

Peter calls us to "rejoice" in every "fiery trial" because we are sharing in "Christ's sufferings" (1 Pt 4:12-13). The first Christians rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name (Acts 5:41). By the Holy Spirit, Paul commands us (with no exceptions for those who have been "abused," are "depressed" or have some new syndrome) to *always* rejoice and to be anxious for *nothing*; and he promises that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ

Jesus" if we will thankfully commit ourselves into His hands (Phil 4:4-7). This is not theory. Christians through the ages have proved it to be true—and so can we by God's grace.

Christian psychology claims that the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, sufficient in the past, are insufficient today. The *CT* author insists that churches and pastors relying solely upon God and His Word lack the expertise to deal with emotional problems; the help of professionals trained in psychology is required. Logic again deserts him:

...if my car needs the transmission replaced, do I expect the church to do it? Or if I break my leg, do I consult my pastor about it? For some reason, when it comes to emotional needs, we think the church should be able to meet them all. It can't, and it isn't supposed to. This is why the emotional-health gospel can do so much harm. People who need help are prevented from seeking it and often made

All scripture is given...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:16

to feel shame for having the problem. Thankfully, more and more people in the Christian community are beginning to realize that some people need this extra help. If professionals and church leaders can recognize the value of each other's roles, we will make progress in helping the wounded....Church leaders should get to know Christian therapists in their communities so they can knowledgeably refer people with persistent emotional problems.

It is an insult to God to suggest that "people need this extra help" which He failed to mention in His Word—an oversight which therefore must have deprived millions of believers of necessary help in past ages! There were no "Christian therapists" to whom leaders could refer their flocks in the early church. Why today? It is equally illogical to compare replacing a car's transmission or setting a broken leg with attending to one's spiritual and emotional needs. The Bible makes no claim to deal with the former, but it does claim to deal fully with the latter.

We do not deny that there are hurting people in the church. Sadly, members of Christ's body are not providing the loving care and counsel which they should. Emotional healing should take place within the context of the love and care of fellow Christians in a local body of believers.

Instead, the troubled are being referred to professionals for whom they become a means of income and who see them only during brief encounters with a meter running.

Other professions deal with the physical world. Psychology claims to heal the psyche, or soul, and thereby intrudes into the realm which the Bible claims is its sole province. The brain, a physical organ, can suffer trauma requiring medical attention. The nonphysical soul and spirit can only function properly in a right relationship with God, who "is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24). "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21) bring the needed spiritual solution.

"Christian psychology" has become so well accepted that anyone who questions its validity is accused of having no sympathy for those who suffer from emotional problems. That is a false accusation. We only say that real concern for those in need would cause one to recommend the biblical solution, which has been proved adequate by millions of believers for thousands of years. It would seem less than kindness to advise the hurting to draw instead upon worldly wisdom's contradictory theories which many psychologists and psychiatrists have come to oppose because they don't work and in fact are often destructive.

But doesn't *Christian* psychology use the Bible? Again, it is an insult to God to integrate the theories of godless humanists with the Bible—as though the wisdom of this world, which Paul said is "foolishness with God" (1 Cor 3:19), is a worthy partner for God's wisdom. There are hundreds of schools of psychology and countless therapies which conflict with each other. Which are to be called *Christian*?

Psychology textbooks contain no listing for "Christian psychology." It doesn't exist. Why? There is no Christian founder of a school of psychology which is distinctly Christian. Every psychologist or psychiatrist, whether Christian or atheist, must take the same courses, give the same answers to pass the same tests and be licensed by the same government bureaus.

In refuting Christian psychology, we are calling the church back to the simple faith which proved sufficient before psychology was invented. God's promises are still true today, and when, by faith, self is crucified with Christ, and our Lord lives within, we experience the same triumph that such faith has always produced. Let us steadfastly oppose anything which claims to supplement or improve upon God's Word and thereby denies its sufficiency in all things that pertain to life and godliness. **TBC**

Quotable

There is absolutely no evidence that professional therapists have any special knowledge of how to change behavior, or that they obtain better results—with any type of client or problem—than those with little or no formal training....Different schools of therapy offer visions of the good life and how to live it, and those whose ancestors took comfort from the words of God and worshiped at the altars of Christ and Yahweh now take solace from and worship at the altars of Freud, Jung, Carl Rogers, Albert Ellis...and a host of similar authorities.

Bernie Zilbergeld, clinical psychologist
The Shrinking of America: Myths of Psychological Change

Psychiatry...[poses] as the true faith of "Mental Health." It is a false Messiah.

E. Fuller Torrey, psychiatrist
The Death of Psychiatry

Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem. This is a good and necessary focus.

Bruce Narramore
You're Something Special

[Today's] Church indulges our desire to "feel good" instead of responding to our need to be spiritually challenged and fed through solid exposition of the Scriptures. The electronic Church in particular panders to our appetite for entertainment rather than authentic discipleship and maturity.

Joyce Main Hanks
Preface to Jacques Ellul's
The Humiliation of the Word

The devil does not understand real love and affection; but the child of God can tell the devil to his face that he loves God...and by God's good help he means to cling to God through troubles tenfold heavier than those he has had to bear, should they come upon him....In the night watches, when we are weary, and our brain is hot and fevered, and our soul is distracted, we yet confess that He is a blessed God...."Yes, that He is," say the poor and needy....A blessed God? "Yes...He loves us, and we love Him, and, though all His waves go over us...we would not change with kings on their thrones, if they are without the love of God."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon
The Metropolitan Pulpit, 1874,
Vol XIX, p 60.

Q&A

Question: A friend doesn't seem to buy the premil [pre-millennium] position yet. After reading *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* she comments, "Hunt asserts that the predominant position of the early church was premil....The fact is that all the eschatological positions develop over the course of history." We have read little by the so-called church fathers.... We have only gotten interested in eschatology since our bombardment years back with many Christians in our prior church who were frantic that we call legislators and sign petitions, and vote for "moral" Mormon candidates, etc. We just couldn't find any justification for that activity in the New Testament. Please comment.

Answer: Obviously there is something wrong with "eschatological positions [which] develop over the course of history." The Bible doesn't change, so why should eschatology change? To bolster their position, Catholics and Reconstructionists like to quote selectively from the church fathers. However, to know what the early church was taught by the Apostles and what it believed and practiced, we don't turn to alleged church fathers but to the New Testament itself.

The elders of the church at Ephesus were personally trained by Paul over a period of three years. Yet he said to them, "...of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). If elders whom Paul had trained went astray, so could other early church leaders. The only valid guide is Scripture itself.

As for the Rapture, Christ told His disciples that He was going to the Father's house, from whence He would return to take them there to be with Him eternally (Jn 14:1-6). Paul told the Thessalonians that Christ himself would "descend from heaven" to resurrect the dead believers and to catch them up with those still alive to take them to heaven (1 Thes 4:13-18). Paul reminded the Philippians that their focus was heaven and that they should be constantly *looking* to heaven for the return of their Savior and the transformation of their earthly bodies to heavenly (Phil 3:20-21). He commended the Thessalonians for *waiting* expectantly for Christ to deliver them from God's coming wrath (1 Thes 1:9-10; 2 Thes 1:7-10). The writer to the Hebrews said, "unto them that *look* for him shall he appear the second time" (Heb 9:28).

From these scriptures it is clear that the

early church was taught to look for Christ's return. That expectancy would not be appropriate if any event such as the revelation of Antichrist, the Great Tribulation or Millennium had to come first. Such verses teach imminency: that Christ could come at any moment. A post-*anything* rapture is not consistent with the attitude of the early church and was obviously developed later.

It also follows that the Rapture (Christ catching the church up to heaven) is distinct from and precedes the Second Coming (Christ returning to earth to rescue Israel at Armageddon). The former could occur at any moment but the latter cannot occur until Antichrist takes over the world. A major purpose of the Second Coming is to destroy Antichrist and his kingdom.

As for social or political action, it is very clear from the biblical record that in spite of political corruption and rampant injustice, neither Christ, His apostles nor the early church ever engaged in it. For us to do so today is to stray from both the teaching of Scripture and the example of Christ and the first Christians. We are not called to improve the world but to call people out of the world to heavenly citizenship through repentance and the new birth in Jesus Christ.

It is not only a waste of effort to attempt to persuade the unsaved to live moral lives, but it is counterproductive: it implies that God is pleased with outward behavior without an inner change of heart. In fact, the more righteous a person believes his behavior is, the less likely he is to realize that he is a sinner in need of a Savior. Christ said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Lk 5:32). That is our task as His followers.

Question: First, let me commend you on the stand you have taken to be faithful to the Word of God....But I think in your February newsletter you goofed when you said, "That the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden is not myth but history is proved by the fact that all of Eve's descendants are obsessed with the very lie she embraced...the passion to become a god." On the contrary, "...through one man sin entered the world..." (Romans 5:12)....If Eve had passed on these traits, Christ would have been tainted through His mother, Mary, since He was "born of a woman." But the sin nature...was passed on by Adam....

Answer: I know of neither biblical nor scientific basis for saying that the sin nature is passed on by the father and not by the

mother. Surely you are not adopting the Roman Catholic view that Mary had to be without sin to give birth to Christ. She said, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Lk 1:47). Only sinners need a Savior, and Mary, like every other person, was a sinner.

The entire Bible is undermined by the Roman Catholic teaching that Mary was conceived without sin and was kept from sin all her life and thus did not die (death comes by sin) and was taken alive into heaven. If God could keep Mary from sin, why not Adam and Eve—and all of their descendants as well? This world would still be a paradise without any evil and Christ would not have needed to die.

That Mary was a sinner, however, does not mean that she would have contaminated Christ. His body was created pure in her virgin womb by His Father, just as Adam's was created in the Garden. Thus He is called "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45).

Yes, "through one man sin entered the world." This does not mean, however, that the sin nature comes through the father and not the mother. It comes through both. Adam is held accountable because he was created first, was the head of the household and, though "not deceived" (1 Tm 2:14) he joined Eve in her sin. I referred to Eve because she believed Satan's lie ("the serpent beguiled Eve" - 2 Cor 11:3; "the woman being deceived was in the transgression" - 1 Tm 2:14) and that same delusion afflicts the entire human race. However, Adam and Eve were partners in sin and we are descended from both of them. Eve sinned in deliberately disobeying God and so have all of her descendants—and Adam's—without exception.

Question: Doesn't the pretrib rapture contradict the parable of the weeds (Matthew 13:30): "Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: collect the weeds and tie them into bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn." Verse 39 also says "the harvest is at the end of the age" and the harvesters are angels. A pretrib rapture also removes the grain of Mark 4:26-29 before it is ripe as required in Ephesians 4:12-13.

Answer: First of all, in these parables it is not Christ rapturing His own up to heaven but the angels gathering both wicked and righteous. Nor is there a resurrection; but both the wicked and the righteous are alive upon earth. There is nothing about the judgment of those who have died. Furthermore,

in both parables it is the wicked who are taken first.

The Rapture and resurrection must occur *before* the final gathering of the wicked from earth for Christ's promise to be fulfilled that His disciples would reign on thrones over the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:28-30). Revelation 19 records the marriage of Christ and His bride in heaven *before* He returns to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon and to destroy Antichrist and set up His kingdom. Obviously, the Rapture must have already occurred for Christ's bride to be in heaven. She accompanies Him *from heaven* to earth to reign with Him ("they shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" - Rv 20:6).

In these parables, however, the wicked are destroyed *first* and *then* the righteous are gathered—and there is nothing about a resurrection. In contrast, the rapture passages either imply (as in Jn 14) or directly include the resurrection of believers (as in 1 Thes 4:16 and 1 Cor 15:52-57)—and there is nothing about the wicked being taken at all, much less first.

There is no question that both parables refer to "the end of the age." This must be the end of the Millennium, during which multitudes of those whose hearts are evil have been allowed to live side by side with the righteous under Christ's reign on earth from David's throne in Jerusalem. It is only at the end of the thousand years when Satan is loosed that the wickedness of the hearts of those who are secretly opposed to the Lord is revealed, they follow Satan in an attack against Jerusalem and are all destroyed together (Rv 20:7-9). Then the righteous living on earth are brought into the eternal kingdom of the new heavens and new earth—over which His bride will continue to reign with Christ.

Ephesians 4:12-13 has nothing to do with either parable, with the Rapture or the judgment at the end of the Millennium. The subject in verses 11-32 is "the edifying of the body of Christ" here in this life.

Perfection is not realized until we arrive in heaven itself. So when Paul says, "Till we all come...unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," he is clearly speaking of the post-resurrection and glorified state of believers in heaven. He is not suggesting that the church must achieve this perfection on earth before the Rapture in order to qualify to be taken to heaven. There is no hint in Ephesians 4:12-13 or elsewhere in Scripture that the Rapture cannot occur until the "grain of Mark 4:26-29...[becomes] ripe"

as you suggest. The passage in Mark could better be applied to evangelism apropos of the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 and Paul's expression: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Cor 3:6).

The idea that the church must be perfected on earth is false for several reasons. The fact that the longed-for perfection does not come until the resurrection—when Christ will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil 3:20)—is clear from this and many other passages (1 Cor 15:51-57; 1 Jn 3:2; Heb 9:28, etc.). If we must be purified and perfected here on earth, when are those already in heaven through death perfected? Obviously, they and we who are caught up "together with them...to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thes 4:17) at the resurrection/Rapture will all be perfected through the transformation of our vile bodies at that time and at the "judgment seat of Christ" before which we "must all appear" (2 Cor 5:10) for the judgment of our works (1 Cor 3:12-15).

Endnotes

1. Billy Graham, *Just As I Am* (Harper-Zondervan, 1997), 286-87.
2. David F. Wells, *No Place For Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 112-13, 208-11.
3. *Ibid.*
4. "A Man Under Orders," editorial in *Christianity Today*, Sept. 6, 1985.

Love, Justice, and Truth

Dave Hunt

It is grievous to someone who loves another when the loved one spurns, ignores or responds coldly to the love offered. How God must lament in His love for the world which continues to reject Him, a world that He “so loved...that he gave his only begotten Son;...that the world through him might be saved” (Jn 3:16-17)! Not only does He love us, but He desires our love in return. Such is the nature of love, and “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8).

It is astonishing to think that being loved by the very Creator of the universe moves us so little. To know God is to love Him. But how can we love Him as we ought when we spend so little time in fellowship with Him and in meditating upon His person, work and Word?

The very first and greatest of God’s commandments to man is “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30, etc.). In putting love first, God shows that obedience to His commands is to be a joy, not a burden. Indeed, obedience that is not motivated by love is not acceptable to God: “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10; Gal 5:14). God created within us the capacity to love, and requires our love, not to tyrannize us, but because He wants to bless us. That fact often seems difficult to believe. Viewed from our limited and warped perspective, those circumstances which God allows to invade our lives often seem to us unnecessarily harsh or depriving. We are like a baby crying in its crib because a parent has just carefully taken from its hands a double-edged razor blade.

Love desires the highest good and greatest blessing for the one loved—and the most rapturous blessing is close fellowship with the one loved. Thus God says, “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). Instead, many seek the blessings they hope to receive from God and miss the true reward: the Blessor himself. The greatest gift God can give is Himself. Yet many seek gifts instead of the Giver. There is so much emphasis upon getting healing, prosperity, blessing, happiness. What a poor bargain to gain the whole world and miss God! How many would consider it a

wonderful privilege to know intimately a great personage of this world, yet neglect the offer of intimate friendship and fellowship with the Creator himself!

God’s love is a neglected topic among Christians. There is much teaching about loving one another, but little concerning God’s great love for us and our love response to Him. We often encourage ourselves in a crisis with the phrase “all things work together for good” and forget that this promise is “to them that love God” (Rom 8:28). God told Israel repeatedly, “Know therefore that the LORD thy God...keepeth covenant and mercy *with them that love him* and keep his commandments...” (Dt 5:10; 7:9; Ex 20:6; Neh 1:5; Dn 9:4, etc.). Jude writes, “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (v 21), but seminaries and Christian colleges don’t even offer a course in how to do that.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,...

Ephesians 2:4-5

Poets, songwriters and novelists agree that love is the most wonderful of human experiences. However, it has been romanticized into something one *falls into*, and therefore can just as easily fall out of because it has been divorced from its major ingredient, faithfulness. By *commanding* love, God tells us that love is a choice and a commitment. We are to love our neighbors (Lv 19:18; Mk 12:31, etc.) and even our enemies (Lk 6:27, etc.).

When love has its rightful place, all else is in harmony. Jesus said to His disciples, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (Jn 14:23). My heart is often smitten by how little I revel in His love to me and how seldom I fervently express my love to my Lord.

God cannot accept worship or praise that is not motivated by love and accompanied by the obedience which love produces. Without love for God, worship is but empty forms and phrases. There is no inherent virtue or power (*ex opere operato*—“in the act itself,” as Catholicism teaches) in liturgy or ritual: “I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats....Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me....Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth...”

(Is 1:11-14). The repetition of formulas (such as the rosary) in prayer is equally abominable. Jesus declared, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them” (Mt 6:7-8).

In fact, Paul lets us know that without love *nothing* is of value or meaningful: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,...and...have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,...and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and...give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor 13:1-3). In the Old Testament God often reminds His people Israel that their first duty is to love Him, and that if they will do so He will bless them abundantly:

Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway....I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul....I command you, to do them [all these commandments], to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you...there shall no man be able to stand before you.... (Dt 11:1,13, 22-25; Josh 22:5; Ps 31:23, etc.).

Tragically, instead of loving God, Israel turned from Him to the idols of the surrounding pagan nations (Jer 2:11), forcing Him to execute judgment upon the chosen people whom He loved. God mourned continually for His people (Ps 81:13-16; Is 48:18; 1:2-3; 65:2-3; Jer 2:32, etc.). Jesus likewise, in a clear expression of His deity, wept for Israel: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not!” (Mt 23:37).

Before we can love God He must woo and win us. He has not failed to do so; the problem is in our lack of response. We can all testify that God has been persistent in His desire to convince us of His love and to draw us to Himself. By the wooing of His Spirit, God captures our hearts with the revelation of His love. Of ourselves we don’t seek Him, but in His great love He seeks us: “Herein is love, not that we loved

God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10). As a result, "...we love him because he first loved us" (v 19). We know this by faith; yet our lives so often do not reflect its reality.

Perhaps part of the problem is that we find it difficult to believe that God, who is so high and holy, infinite in power, wisdom and knowledge, could really love us. We believe that He does, but at the same time His love seems to be more a matter of some universal principle than truly personal. The classic hymn expresses our need well:

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart,
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses
move.
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou
art;
Help me to love Thee as I ought to love!

Many Christians who love the Lord are nevertheless plagued with puzzling questions about God's love. For example, "Why doesn't God speak with an audible voice or go to greater lengths to prove His existence?" It is even claimed that no one can believe the gospel without accompanying miracles.

In fact, God has provided far more evidence than anyone needs, both in creation all around us and in our consciences. No people ever had such overwhelming evidence as Israel: the Red Sea parting before them, then swallowing up their pursuers; God speaking with an audible voice from Mount Sinai in concert with earthquake and fire on its summit; a literal pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day to guide their steps; shoes and clothes which never wore out; a gift of heaven-sent food every morning, etc., etc. Yet no people were ever so unbelieving and rebellious (Ps 81:11; Is 6:5).

Surely Christ did more than enough miracles. Nevertheless, "though he [Christ] had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him" (Jn 12:37). The problem is not in any lack of evidence or failure by God to do all He can to win us; the problem lies in the human heart.

The incorrigible nature of unrepentant hearts will be demonstrated conclusively in the Millennium, when the world is a paradise far superior to the Garden of Eden. Christ reigns in righteousness and the saints reign with Him in resurrected and glorified bodies. Satan is locked up and can tempt no one. Yet as soon as Satan is released multitudes follow him in open rebellion, attempting to overthrow Christ's rule from Jerusalem (Rv 20:1-9).

Still the argument persists: "If God really loves us, why does He allow anyone to go

to hell?" The answer is obvious. God cannot exercise love at the expense of His justice. His character cannot be divided. In view of Christ's sacrifice, no one can complain of God's judgment upon sinners who reject Christ.

How often do parents indulge their children or, having threatened punishment, fail to fulfill their promise! Not so God. He means what He says and says what He means. Any who will spend eternity in hell have only themselves to blame for having rejected the pardon God has offered through Christ's payment for their sin, for "he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2).

Consider a judge who has presided over the trial of a man accused of unspeakable crimes. The evidence has proved the defendant guilty and the law requires the death penalty. The defendant is the judge's

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.

John 15:2

own son. Brokenhearted, the father relives again his son's stubborn rebellion against him and all authority in spite of faithful discipline, the futile attempts to change his son's downward course and rescue him from destruction, and his son's persistence in living for self. The father's love is undiminished, but he also is a just judge, and love cannot compromise justice. The penalty required by the law must be paid.

Yes, love, like justice, cannot turn a deaf ear and blind eye to the truth. Love can offer neither grace nor mercy until the full truth concerning the evil which is to be forgiven has been laid bare. Thus the psalmist declares with joy, "*Mercy and truth* are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps 85:10). John testified of Jesus, "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of *grace and truth*" (Jn 1:14).

Real love corrects those loved, "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb 12:6). Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rv 3:19). If we truly love God and man, we will expend ourselves in warning the lost and rebuking those who are leading multitudes astray with false doctrine, for we are to preach the Word, reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tm 4) in order to rescue as many as possible from

God's final judgment.

Christ wept in the Garden and pleaded with His Father to deliver Him from the cross if there was any other way for man to be saved. Not because the physical suffering would be too much to bear. Nor was it His physical sufferings that saved us, but the judgment He endured as the sacrifice for our sins. He suffered the penalty demanded by His own infinite justice: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin..." (Is 53:10). Christ shrank from being made the thing He hated: "For he [God] hath made to be sin for us, [He] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21).

The answer from the Father was that the penalty had to be paid and Christ alone could pay it. For God, then, to let anyone into heaven on any other basis than the Cross would be a slap in the face to Christ.

It would also prove God, who cannot lie, to be a liar (Nm 23:19).

Christ did not die for us because we were deserving, but because of His love for us. So it was in God's choosing of Israel: "The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself... because the LORD loved you..." (Dt 7:6-8). That fact is difficult for us to understand. In our inability to comprehend, we cry out, "How can it be that the infinite God who created the universe actually loves us, not with the impersonal "love" of some cosmic energy but with a love more intensely personal than that between husband and wife or a mother for her child?"

The sad truth is that among today's Christians the emphasis is upon loving and esteeming self rather than God. One of the proponents of this concept declares, "The death of Christ on the cross is God's price tag on a human soul...[it means] we really are *Somebodies!*" In fact, Christ didn't die for "*somebodies,*" but for *sinners*. Another has called the Cross "a foundation for self-esteem"! On the contrary, that Christ had to die on the cross to redeem us should make us ashamed—and eternally grateful—for it was our sins that nailed Him there.

The sinful woman, having been forgiven much by Christ, loved Him much (Lk 7:47). The more conscious we are of the greatness of our sin, the more we will love the One who reached so deep into the mire to pick us up and bring us to Himself. Unworthy of His love and sacrifice as we are, our eternal love song will be "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood...Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (Rv 1:5, 5:12)! **TBC**

Quotable

The great defect of modern Christianity is that there is so little affection for Christ. Many hear what is called a clear gospel, and trusting the Person and work of Christ they get the assurance of the Scriptures that they will never perish, and this seems to satisfy them and they settle down upon it and go to sleep. There is not the earnest longing after Himself, the watching daily at His gates. Did it ever occur to you that Christ values your affections? You belong to Him; you are the object of His love; you are His own. Your heart is Christ's property. Is it His dwelling place? *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors* (Pv 8:34).

C.A.Coates
Milk & Honey, May 1999

A.W. Tozer once said, "The great of the kingdom have been those who loved God more than others did...." Too often our love for Jesus is sadly impersonal. We believe in His Person, we worship His Person, but we relate to Him far too impersonally....He forsook heaven's throne to become the incarnate Son of Man, to die for us, to redeem us for Himself and make us the special eternal object of His love...to make us collectively His bride and personally His beloved....Let's confess how cool and casual we too often have been in our expression of love to Him....We need the Spirit's help to love Jesus as we should....

When Hudson Taylor was once asked what was the greatest incentive to missionary work, he instantly replied, "Love of Christ." William Booth's passion for helping the underprivileged, the derelicts of society, and for world evangelization was built upon his passion for Christ....Lord, give us this passion whatever the cost!

Wesley L. Duewel
Ablaze for God

Q&A

Question: In a recent *Focus on the Family* issue the author of an article stated, "My mentor always told me not to pray for God to bless what I was doing, but to do what God blessed....When Samuel was

looking for a king, he did not consider David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, who was with the sheep in the field. Little did Samuel know that tending sheep was one of the tools God used to prepare a king." He used this to illustrate how a parent is to search for the hidden talents his or her child may possess. I don't quite get the point. Can you help me?

Answer: Perhaps you should direct your question to the author rather than to me. However, a comment is in order. Obviously, a parent should take care to discover and encourage each child's talents. But that has nothing whatsoever to do with the story of Samuel's encounter with David. Samuel was not David's father and was not seeking hidden talent in David. The article is a prime example of using Scripture to support one's own ideas rather than letting God's Word teach us.

Samuel didn't even know that David existed and had not been called by Jesse to the feast, so one cannot say that he "did not consider David" and didn't "know that tending sheep was one of the tools God used to prepare a king." And Samuel wasn't "looking for a king." Rather, he had been mourning for Saul (16:1). In fact, he was afraid that Saul would kill him if he looked for another king (16:2). One errs in depicting Samuel as searching for a king and overlooking David. God had already chosen David and sent Samuel, as the prophet, to anoint him. So the lesson the author implies is based upon a false understanding of the story.

Following God's instructions, Samuel had requested that all of Jesse's sons be present, and because he assumed Jesse had complied, he was confused when none of them met with God's approval, though God had told him that the next king was one of Jesse's sons (1 Sm 16:1). Samuel was not there to evaluate anyone, or to discover their "hidden talents," but simply to anoint the one God would designate. So again the author imposes a human interpretation upon the scripture and thus misses God's intended meaning. We have a beautiful picture of Christ in David, both in his humility and in the misunderstanding and hatred of others toward him.

David's Christlike humility contradicts the teaching of self-esteem promoted by Christian psychologists. David was the very opposite of the self-assured and self-

assertive person that so many Christians are convinced they must become to taste success. David was willing to do the menial tasks no one else wanted and sought no approval from man but only from God, an attitude which today's Christian psychologists would attribute to low self-esteem.

Nor was David's self-effacing humility and rejection by his contemporaries due to any lack of talent. Here again is a beautiful picture of Jesus. Christ was "despised and rejected of men," and it was even foretold that the Messiah would have "no beauty that we should desire him" (Is 53:2-3). Was Israel therefore to understand that the Messiah would be ugly and untalented? No! Obviously, as God incarnate, the "second man" and "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45-47) was the ultimate of perfect manhood, a flawless specimen of what God intended man to be when He created Adam and Eve. So the saying that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" was proved true: men despised Jesus and saw no beauty in Him, not because of any blemish or shortcoming in Him but because their view was warped and blighted by sin.

So it was with David who pictures Christ for us. David was not the scrawny teenager depicted in many Sunday-school materials. He was as tall and muscular as Saul, who was "head and shoulders above Israel" (1 Sm 9:2, 10:23). Otherwise it would have been foolish for Saul to offer David his armor. David refused it, not because it didn't fit him but because he had "not proved it" in battle (17:39). Though overlooked by his father and despised by his brothers and eventually rejected by Saul, David was actually the most talented and handsome man and most capable warrior in Israel: "...cunning in playing [the harp], and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely [handsome] person, and the LORD is with him" (16:18). That his brethren despised him was due to their spiritual blindness.

Though Saul loved David's skill with a harp, when war broke out he sent David back to his father because he didn't think David would be capable in battle. Apparently David's humility blinded even Saul, leader of Israel's army, to the fact that David was the most able warrior in Israel! Though he had tasted the luxuries of the king's household, David was willing to be sent back to the sheep again and never uttered a

word of complaint. And just as willingly and obediently he became his father's messenger boy to bring cakes to his older brothers who were in the army. Their false accusations against him brought no bitter reaction (1 Sm 17:28-29).

Was David's fearlessness and certainty that he would defeat the giant due to any sense of self-worth or self-confidence? No, his trust was in the Lord: "The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (17:37). Nor did David seek to build himself up in men's eyes, but his desire was to glorify God: "This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand ...that all the world may know that there is a God in Israel" (17:46).

As for looking to a mentor, Paul had his Timothy; and older men and women who are mature in the faith are told to pass on to the younger generation what they have learned from the Lord (2 Tm 2:2; Ti 2:1-6). Indeed, every Christian is commanded by Christ to "make disciples" (Mt 28:19-20). But the *Focus* author seems to accept what his mentor says without checking it against the Bible—and then passes on the error. Are we not to ask God to bless what we are doing? The psalms are full of such prayers. Surely if we are doing what God has led us to do, it is proper to ask for His blessing.

And as for doing what God is blessing, that is often not apparent until the deed is done. For 120 years there was no visible indication that God was blessing the building of the ark. Nor did Abraham's servant know that God was blessing his mission until he met Rebekah and she agreed to return with him to be Isaac's bride. The author's mentor has led him astray with a play on words that sounds great but won't stand up to the Bible, thus misinforming a multitude of readers.

Question: I am on radio across the nation and teach the Bible at Atlanta Bible College. I think that your "Nonnegotiable Gospel" is open to grave objections. I write this to be constructive. Please do give me a hearing. The definition of the Gospel is the one area where we cannot afford to get it wrong. To define the Gospel you launch into Paul...! It was Jesus who first preached the Gospel...it was exclusively about the Kingdom of God for some 25 chapters (in the

synoptics)....The Great Commission mandates that all the things Jesus taught as Gospel be taken to the nations....Paul was indeed following the Great Commission and continuing to preach the Kingdom Gospel just as Jesus had. But your Paul is in violation of the Commission if he omitted to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom....Paul obviously did not deviate an inch from the Kingdom Gospel (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31) ...1 Corinthians 15:1-3 is deceptively used by evangelicals to set Paul against Jesus. Paul said that the death and resurrection were most important parts (*en protois*) of the Gospel—he did not say it was the whole Gospel....1 Corinthians 15 is only an extremely compressed summary of some of the main points that Paul preached....Please do let me know why you choose to overlook the Gospel preaching of the historical Jesus in your definition of the Gospel.

Answer: You fault me for not including "the gospel of the kingdom" in the booklet "The Nonnegotiable Gospel," but you don't explain what it is that I have left out. You say that 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 presents only "some of the main points" of the gospel that Paul preached, but you neither explain what the other points are nor tell me where Paul taught or preached them. Furthermore, Paul's language there is very clear: "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved..." (vv 1-2). Any reasonable person could only conclude that what follows is indeed the gospel Paul preached — not "some of the main points."

The verses you cite (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31) indicate that Paul preached the "kingdom of God," but none of them even mentions that there is a special "gospel of the kingdom" or declares any other means of entering that kingdom than Jesus presented to Nicodemus: being born again through faith in Christ who died for our sins upon the cross.

Yes, in the Gospels Christ is said to preach the gospel of the kingdom, but nowhere is that gospel explained better than in His discourse to Nicodemus. Christ makes it very clear that the new birth through faith in His death for our sins is the only means of entering the Kingdom—exactly what Paul preached and what I state

in "The Nonnegotiable Gospel."

You say that "Paul obviously did not deviate an inch from the Kingdom Gospel." I agree. Consequently, we should be able to find the full gospel in what Paul preached. Paul makes that gospel abundantly clear. In his Epistle to the Galatians he denounces anyone who preaches any other gospel than he has preached, but he does not call it "the gospel of the kingdom." We find nothing in that entire epistle to cause us to believe that the gospel he preached and defended is anything other than Christ presented to Nicodemus and Paul explains to the Corinthians throughout that epistle, to the Ephesians (2:8-10, etc.) and in his other epistles.

The gospel is declared numbers of times as we follow Paul preaching it through the Acts. The same gospel is presented by Peter to the Jews from Pentecost on, including to the rabbis and to Cornelius and his household. Yet we find no special "gospel of the kingdom" mentioned anywhere. Consistently the gospel presented is that which Paul not only explains to the Corinthians in the passage which you claim is incomplete, but argues so thoroughly in his Epistle to the Romans. He goes into great detail in his treatise on "the gospel of God" to the Romans to show exactly how we are saved by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ and that this is the only basis upon which a righteous God can forgive sinners.

Are you saying that—in this entire epistle in which Paul argues for the necessity of the gospel for our salvation—he fails to include some of the essential ingredients? Hardly! Yet the phrase "gospel of the kingdom" isn't to be found in Romans. Where did he explain this gospel which you say he always preached and I have neglected?

Are you also saying that the gospel in my booklet is defective for lack of some vital "kingdom" ingredient without which souls cannot be saved? The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16). If you know something that I have left out which souls must believe to be saved, then by all means tell me what it is! This is not a theological argument between us but involves the eternal destiny of souls, so we dare not be mistaken.

What Have We Done to the Cross?

Dave Hunt

At least in part, the theme of this article was occasioned by a full-page national magazine ad for Christian jewelry. Slick color photos offer an enticing display from "The Inspired Cross Collection." The ad boasts "A beautiful line of contemporary designs for women and men in pendants, rings, earrings and tie-tacs in a choice of precious metals with or without diamonds." Credulity is strained in relating this chic indulgent jewelry to Golgotha's blood-stained cross where our Savior hung in agony for our sins!

One is aghast at the shameless commercialization which brazenly makes merchandise of the Cross and perverts it in the process. One is equally perplexed that Christians by the thousands would gladly wear such trivializing misrepresentations of eternity's most solemn and important event. Paul rejoiced that by the Cross "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14). Yet *these crosses* the world proudly wears! What have we done to the Cross!

The shape of a cross has become the universally recognized insignia of Christianity. Multitudes superstitiously imagine some magic power in making the "sign of the cross" and that the mere form of a cross will put demons to flight. However, it is the "preaching of the cross" wherein lies "the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18), not its display. And the power has nothing to do with the *shape* of the cross but everything to do with the awesome fact that upon it the spotless Lamb of God died for the sins of the world (Jn 1:29).

The biblical preaching of the Cross is "to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor 1:18), but it revolutionizes the thought patterns and lives of sinners who believe the gospel. With Paul they truly confess that they and all their selfish interests and ambitions have been "crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20)—and the only life they now desire is that of Christ living within. That was, of course, before we revised the "old, old story" to make it fit contemporary culture.

A mysterious metamorphosis has transformed the "old rugged cross," once "the emblem of suffering and shame," into the trademark of an accommodating apostate "Christianity" whose adherents are

increasingly difficult to distinguish from the world. In well-intentioned folly, we have redefined Christianity in order to offer a spiritual package appealing to worldly taste. Tragically, "converts" are often left unconverted and under the deadly delusion that they have become Christians—a misconception to which many will likely awaken only when it is eternally too late.

How did the blood-stained cross, upon which our Lord was nailed and where, hanging naked, He was mocked by those He came to save, become associated with ornate jewelry in one's "choice of precious metals, with or without diamonds"? Pondering that question, I was confronted by another, no less distressing: Why is my own understanding and appreciation of Christ and His cross so shallow and dispassionate? Why is my love

[M]y people have...forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out...broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Jeremiah 2:13

and gratitude so seldom and so feebly expressed to Him?

In facing this deplorable deficiency, one easily falls into the error of turning to the *physical* in order to fill a *spiritual* void. We focus on Christ's physical sufferings which, far from saving us, would only add to our condemnation because that is what man did to Him. What our Lord endured went infinitely deeper. God's perfect righteousness had to be vindicated, His justice satisfied, the full penalty paid, so that God "might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). We need to deepen our understanding and appreciation of redemption.

The shallow, repetitive choruses which are fast replacing the majestic old hymns are inadequate to this challenge. We need once again and much more deeply to contemplate, "O the love that drew salvation's plan./ O the grace that brought it down to man./ O the mighty gulf that God did span./ At Calvary!" To understand and appreciate what Christ accomplished for eternity upon the cross, we must see beyond the physical into the spiritual.

Paul said, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal;

but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). Obviously, Paul did not refer to physical seeing. But we have become so materialistic that we have great difficulty seeing beyond the visible. That problem plagues today's church; and there is nothing more pitiful than "worship" which finds its inspiration and expression in physical forms and rituals. It is astonishing how many have come to equate "worship" with loud and fast-paced music where the tragic poverty of the lyrics isn't even noticed because the rhythm excites the soul. Such music is essential, we are told, to attract the new generation. Will they rise to the low level of our estimation of them?

An ad for "Jerusalem 2000" in *Charisma* offers "The event of the millennium," a "worship experience" available only to the "relatively few" who join this particular tour to Israel. It promises "praise and worship...in dramatic reenactments...of the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan, Jesus walking on water at the Sea of Galilee...."

The ad continues, "Flexible installment payment plan...Commissioned by The Millennium Council...[a] coalition of Christian leaders including Pat Robertson, T.D. Jakes, and Bill McCartney...."

It sounds so special, but what the ad promises—an exclusive worship experience only for those on the tour—presumes that the spiritual is inspired by the physical. It once was quiet meditation upon the true meaning of Christ's incarnation and Cross which brought tears of inexpressible gratitude and joy. Now we must travel to Israel for a cheap "reenactment."

It is simply not true that being in Israel "at the turn of the millennium" on this particular tour creates true worship. One could have been alive in Christ's day, heard Him preach, been miraculously fed and healed by Him, yet have missed the truth He spoke. Much less will that truth grip the soul by any "reenactment" of events in Christ's life. The Holy Spirit's work of grace and power comes not by any physical stimulus. Yet, having lost the spiritual reality of the faith, and having rejected the enticing pomp, outrageously rich robes and bewitching ritual of Rome, Protestantism seeks its own visible religious arousals.

Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). True worship

is not evoked by physical means. In fact, physical objects and rituals are a hindrance to worship. This is the insidious error of sacramentalism.

Pope John Paul II plans to open a "holy" door at St. Peter's in Rome for the year 2000 and promises special indulgences reducing suffering in "purgatory" for those who pass through it. Common sense un masks the "God" who offers grace for walking through a physical door most people could never afford to reach. Even a child understands that Christ clearly said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..." (Jn 10:9). The door to eternal life is a spiritual one, and to look to a physical door robs one of the eternal life Christ offers. Nevertheless, millions are expected to make costly pilgrimages to Rome in order to walk through that "holy" door.

Unable to think deeply enough to see beyond the visible, our generation is losing the meaning and value of words. Television, videos, films and computer games have become a way of life today. Medical doctors have begun warning parents not to allow children under two years of age to watch television and to carefully supervise and limit it for others. The American Academy of Pediatrics now considers the child's "media history" to be as important as its medical history because "watching TV can affect the mental, social and physical health of young people..." (New York Times, 8/4/99)

The Bible is written in *words*, not in pictures. The first of many books written (in words, of course) to refute *The Seduction of Christianity* criticized us for opposing the growing practice of visualization and insisted that our brains think in pictures, not in words. That simply isn't true. What picture does "simply" or "isn't true" produce in one's mind? What image is evoked by words such as justice, truth, hope, holiness, God? None!

God strictly forbids any attempt to represent Him by a physical or even a mental image. God is a spirit, and man, made in His image, is a spirit living in a body. The "image" of God in which man is made is not visible; much less is it mirrored in man's physical body. We feed our physical bodies but neglect the spirit which God desires to nourish. God told His people Israel through Moses (and Christ quoted the same passage in resisting Satan), "man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (Dt 8:3).

God's Word sustains *spiritual* life. Christ is that Word (Rv 19:13). Jesus said, "...the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world...I am

the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (Jn 6:33-35). Obviously, He was speaking spiritually, not physically. Our life now and eternally depends upon understanding and believing what He said!

Boasting that communism was "scientific atheistic materialism," Lenin insisted that man is a physical stimulus-response organism and all he knows is through the stimulus of physical phenomena. Lenin knew that we cannot even think of anything that doesn't exist. (Try to imagine a new prime color for the rainbow.) Then what "stimulus" evokes the idea of God if God does not exist? Lenin couldn't answer that question.

That we are more than our physical bodies is proved by our ability to hold nonphysical ideas of truth, justice, holiness, mercy, grace, love, etc. A man complains, "There's no justice in this world!" How does he even have the concept of "justice" (or of grace, truth, holiness, selfless love, etc.) if it doesn't exist in this world? He judges what

**I am the vine, ye are the branches
...without me ye can do nothing.**

John 15:5

he sees on the basis of the invisible standard of justice which he knows innately because he is made in the spiritual image of the God who is perfect in justice and truth.

As spirits made in God's image, yet living in physical bodies and surrounded with the spiritually stifling materialism of a world that has rejected God, we desperately need the nurture of God's Word. Instead of the spirit, however, we are nurturing the carnal man ("And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal... ye are yet carnal..." - 1 Cor 3:1-3) and hardly know we are thirsting and starving. Sadly, these days in popular Christian literature, more froth than substance masquerades as drink for thirsty souls.

We need what Jeremiah experienced: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart..." (Jer 15:16). Job, too, testified, "I have esteemed the words of his [God's] mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Abundant life is produced in anyone who meditates upon God's word day and night (Ps 1:1-3)!

Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (Jn 7:37:38). What He meant and to what extent each of us has experienced the fullness of which He

spoke must be carefully weighed. John explained, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (Jn 7:37-39). Thus, to drink of Christ means to believe on Him, and the water He gives is the Holy Spirit comforting and empowering within. We clearly understand that Jesus was speaking spiritually, not physically, to the woman at the well: "Whosoever drinketh of this [well] water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn 4:13-15).

When Jesus told Nicodemus that to enter the kingdom of God he "must be born again" (Jn 3:7), He didn't mean physically, but spiritually. The same was true when Jesus said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life...Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you...he that eateth me, even he shall live by me..." (Jn 6:47,53,57). When some

disciples abandoned Him, offended at the thought of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, Christ explained, "It is the spirit that quickeneth [giveth life]; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (Jn 6:63). The eating of Christ, who is "the living bread which came down from heaven" (6:51), is no more physical than is the eating of "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"—and to imagine otherwise robs one of the spiritual truth and life Christ gives to all who believe.

One of Roman Catholicism's most deadly errors is in insisting that Jesus meant we must literally eat His physical body and drink His blood. To that end, the priest allegedly turns wafer and wine into the body and blood of a "Christ" who is still dying for our sins, though He said, "It is finished!" (Jn 19:30; Heb 10:10-18). "Christ" is repeatedly ingested into the stomach to obtain further infusions of grace, instead of by faith once and for all receiving Him and the eternal life He gives.

Even without a belief in "transubstantiation," a similar error can arise among evangelicals. At a "communion service," how many dutifully partake of the bread and cup as though the physical eating and drinking were an end in itself? Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19). How often is there only the ritual, with little *remembrance* and appreciation of the Cross? May God's Word and Christ the Living Word truly be the spiritual nourishment we delight in and count more necessary than physical food—and may we rejoice continually in the invisible truth and consummated triumph of the Cross! **TBC**

Quotable

If I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is rather a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity....

The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it....

The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before that cross it bows and toward that cross it points with carefully staged histrionics—but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of the cross it stubbornly refuses to bear.

A.W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest*

Q&A

Question: My husband and I just finished watching the video that you appeared in with Chuck Missler and Chuck Smith called “Countdown to Eternity.” I do have a question about a scripture you all quoted and expounded upon: “Many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase” (Dn 12:4b). You presented the view of travel and human knowledge exploding in the last days. But when I studied it I find that is not what that verse is saying at all! It appears that Daniel is saying that many will go back and forth through the prophets (the books of the Bible, especially the prophetic passages), and knowledge of prophetic events and things to come will increase. This apparently wrong interpretation of Daniel 12:4b reminds me of the days when “everyone” seemed to be teaching that Matthew 24:40-41 referred to people “taken” in the Rapture, but further study shows this is about Tribulation times and they are “taken” in judgment, not in the Rapture. Thanks for your comments about this matter.

Answer: I am not a Greek or Hebrew scholar, nor are most of those who claim to be. A few years of academic language study doesn’t make one an expert. But all of us can look up words in our Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance and (of most importance) compare scripture with scripture. When I do that with Daniel 12:4,

I can’t find any basis for your interpretation, though I have scholarly friends who have suggested the same. The entire phrase “run to and fro” comes from the Hebrew word *shuwt*, which could mean the going back and forth of oars to move a boat and, by implication, to travel. How is the same word used elsewhere? Here are a few examples: “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth” (2 Chr 16:9); “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem...and seek...if ye can find a man” (Jer 5:1); “run to and fro by the hedges” (49:3), etc. That sounds like travel.

Yes, you could find a verse such as Amos 8:12 where there is a running to and fro “to seek the word of the LORD.” Yet even here it is not the running of the eyes over pages of Scripture but “from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord.” It seems fully justified to understand Daniel 12:4 as meaning that travel and knowledge will be greatly increased in the last days; and we are surely seeing that!

The word “knowledge” is translated from the Hebrew *da’ath*. Yes, it is used most often for the knowledge of the Lord and His truth; but that is to be expected because that is the main topic of Scripture. However, it is also used for general knowledge and even for the vain or evil knowledge of this world and Satan: “tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gn 2:9); “Should a wise man utter vain knowledge?” (Job 15:2); “thy knowledge [referring to occult knowledge of Babylon], it hath perverted thee” (Is 47:10); “Every man [referring to idolaters] is brutish by his knowledge” (Jer 51:17), etc.

What about the context? I find nothing in it to specifically support either view. However, the rest of Scripture opposes the idea of increasing knowledge of Bible prophecy. We are told that the last days will be characterized by apostasy and a refusal to endure sound doctrine; Christ raises the question of whether He will even find faith on the earth at His return; the wise virgins as well as the foolish are sleeping, etc. This passage would be out of harmony with the whole tenor of Scripture if it suggested a great interest in studying God’s Word and an increase of the knowledge of God and His Word in the last days. Therefore, I will stick with the interpretation we presented in the video and which I believe makes sense in every way.

As for Matthew 24:40-41, if there was a day when “everyone” looked upon these verses as referring to the Rapture, that day

has passed and the majority view today is that these are “taken” from bed, field and mill to judgment. This is the view of some of my best friends. I gave an entire address on this subject at the Pre-Trib Rapture Seminar in Texas last December—a tape which should be available soon, so I won’t go into details.

If these are taken to judgment, then I don’t know where any such judgment is mentioned. It can hardly be that described in Matthew 25:31-46, for at that time “before him shall be gathered all nations.” In fact, there is no judgment mentioned in Scripture where people are snatched out of beds and from fields to be taken there. Furthermore, the conditions at the time of “snatching” are like the days of Noah and Lot, prosperity and partying and no thought of judgment, which can only exist prior to the Great Tribulation, not at the end of it, nor at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. Therefore, this being “taken” can only be referring to a pretrib rapture.

That fact is further confirmed by the Greek. The word for “taken” (“one shall be taken, the other left”) is *paralambano*, whereas the word *airo* is used in Matthew 24:39 (“the flood came and took them all away [in judgment]”). That Christ used two different words must be significant. *Airo* simply means to remove from a place. *Paralambano*, however, means to receive to oneself in an intimate manner. Yes, it is used twice in taking Jesus away to judgment (Mt 27:27; Jn 19:16). However, it is used multiple times in a comforting way: when Joseph takes Mary as his wife (Mt 1:20, 24), takes her and the child Jesus to safety in Egypt, then back to Israel (2:14, 21); Jesus takes His disciples here or there for intimate lessons (20:17; 26:37; Mk 10:32; 14:33; Lk 9:10, 28; 18:31), Barnabas takes Mark with him (Acts 15:39); the jailor took Paul and Silas and “washed their stripes” (16:33), etc. Furthermore, *paralambano* is the very same word our Lord uses in John 14:3 when He says, “I will come again and receive you unto myself.” Is He not referring to the Rapture there? Then why would He use the same word in His Olivet discourse if He meant “taken to judgment”? He wouldn’t.

Question: Are you aware of the letter dated June 22, 1943 from Pope Pius XII to President Roosevelt recently discovered in the U.S. Archives? It very clearly expresses the Pope’s opposition to allowing the Jews to establish a homeland in Palestine. If you are aware of it, do you have any comments?

Answer: Yes, the discovery and contents of the letter have been fairly widely reported, though I don't believe the letter has received the attention it deserves. For forty years there has been a controversy surrounding Pius XII. He has been faulted for his failure to speak out publicly in opposition to the Holocaust, which he surely knew was in process. Roman Catholic apologists have attempted to explain this away and pointed to his help in hiding many Jews in Italy from the Nazis. It has also been argued that had he spoken out publicly it would only have inflamed Hitler and made matters worse, in spite of the fact that it couldn't have been worse than it was. (We dealt in depth with this subject in July 1993, July 1994, and September 1998.)

It was actually Sister Pascalina (the nun who was his housekeeper and close associate and confidante for many years) who introduced the Pope to the idea of saving Jews and who conceived and carried out the clever and secretive way in which this was accomplished. Her biographer reports that she "risked everything for the Jews...and issued hundreds of papal identity cards...so [that Jews] could pass as Christians through Nazi lines for safety in the Vatican." This fact, however, is never mentioned by those praising the Pope for saving Jews.

This June 22, 1943 letter is devastating for those who have defended the Pope. In part this is what it said: "It is true that at one time Palestine was inhabited by the Hebrew Race, but there is no axiom in history [what about God's Word!] to substantiate the necessity of a people returning to a country they left nineteen centuries before. If a 'Hebrew Home' is desired, it would not be too difficult to find a more fitting territory than Palestine. With an increase in the Jewish population there, grave, new international problems would arise." His language and intent is clear.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, calls the letter "an indictment of Pius XII, because it basically says that when the Pope wanted a point of view expressed about how he clearly felt, he said it clearly. Where is a similar letter to Adolf Hitler, telling Hitler that the Vatican finds his policies against the Jews repugnant? But at the height of the Holocaust, the Vatican knew how to oppose the State of Israel."

Furthermore, we have a copy of Pius XII's first letter to Hitler upon becoming pope. In part it said, "To the Illustrious Herr Adolf Hitler, Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich! We recall with great pleasure the many years we spent in Germany

as Apostolic Nuncio, when we did all in our power to establish harmonious relations between Church and State. Now...how much more ardently do we pray to reach that goal...." Remember, this was 1939 and Hitler's evil had been exposed to the world.

As the war neared its end, the Pope pleaded with the Allied Forces to deal leniently with both Hitler and Mussolini. Both were Catholics to their death. Pius XII never excommunicated either of these master criminals in spite of their unspeakable evils. Pius XII himself merely reflected centuries of anti-Semitism on the part of his predecessor popes and Church involving the most vicious persecution and death of multitudes of Jews.

Commenting upon the discovery of this letter, Rabbi David Rosen, head of the Israel office of the Anti-Defamation League, remarked, "It has been well known for a long time of the shameful policy the Holy See maintained during that period, and this is just one [more] confirmation of that fact."

In fact, we are dealing with more than anti-Semitism. In this letter, the Pope placed himself clearly in opposition to God who throughout the entire Old Testament repeatedly promised the land of Israel to His chosen people in perpetuity. There are so many prophecies promising that God would bring the Jews He had scattered all over the world back to their promised land in the last days and that the Messiah would return to reign over them on David's throne in Jerusalem (and over the world), that the popes (who claim to be Christ's vicars) cannot be excused on the grounds of ignorance. They have, in fact, wilfully opposed the plain teaching of Scripture concerning Israel. Therefore, it is not surprising that Roman Catholicism stands in such opposition to the biblical teaching on salvation.

Question: [I received a copy of a letter addressed to James Dobson, objecting to what I had to say in the July Berean Call concerning social and political action, and too lengthy to present here. The following response addresses the main points raised.]

Answer: Thank you for the courtesy of sending me a copy of your letter to James Dobson re my July article in *The Berean Call*. Your arguments are well formed and thoughtfully presented and I appreciated the opportunity to read what you had to say. The subject of social and political activism is a difficult and controversial one among Christians who truly want to do the Lord's

will; and I do not suggest that those who disagree with me desire to obey the Lord any less than I do. I appreciate your treating my views with respect.

You make a good point that the Roman Empire was not a democracy and therefore its citizens did not have the opportunities to exercise a Christian influence in it which we have today in the United States. That would not, however, have prevented Christ and the Apostles from actively working toward improved morality and social justice. That they faced the wrath of the government and even death did not deter them from preaching the gospel, which was vigorously opposed by both religious and political leaders, so it would hardly have inhibited them from at least social activism —yet they never engaged in it. Furthermore, there are Bible examples of those who had the opportunity to exercise great moral influence over whole societies (Noah, Joseph, Naaman, Daniel, et al.), yet the Bible contains no hint that they even attempted to do so. That fact weighs heavily upon me. Perhaps you have an answer for it.

I, like you, desire to be obedient to God's Word. I cannot escape the fact that I find nothing in Scripture to support social and political activism on the part of the church. I'm not trying to argue, but ask sincerely that you (or Dr. Dobson, to whom I am sending a copy of this letter) explain why Christ said explicitly that He did not pray for the world (Jn 17:9); why He never addressed the evils of the Roman Empire or of King Herod but confined Himself to critiquing and correcting the Jewish religious leaders and His followers or would-be followers; why the Epistles are intended to correct only the church and Christians, but never involve any rebuke of the world or any instruction to believers to work for moral improvement of the world around them?

We have great detail in Acts concerning the activities of Paul, but never do we find him engaging in social action. Surely the fact that the Roman Empire was not a democracy would not have prevented him from organizing Christians to work for improved morals and justice in their cities and neighborhoods. Yet we find none of this. That fact, again, weighs heavily upon me.

Of even greater concern is the fact that today's church leaders who have dedicated themselves to opposing the immorality in secular society have so little to say in opposition to apostasy and rampant false doctrine in the church.

Why It Matters Part I

T.A. McMahon

"I don't get you people," the young lady complained. "I'm a Roman Catholic who was placed on your newsletter list, no doubt by one of my well-meaning Protestant friends. Some of the stuff you write is interesting, if not worthwhile, but I'm sick and tired of your continually picking on my Church! We love Jesus just as much as any of you non-Catholics. And why are you promoting ExCatholics For Christ? Why don't you push ex-Baptists, ex-Methodists, or ex-Presbyterians for Christ? Quit attacking us Catholics!!"

We receive a few such letters from Roman Catholics voicing their objections to what we write about their Church's beliefs and practices. That neither greatly surprises nor disturbs us. It is disheartening, however, to hear from an increasing number of professing evangelicals who are just as critical of our "attacking Catholic brothers and sisters in Christ." Even some of our longtime readers wonder why at times we seem to be "so preoccupied" with Roman Catholicism.

As many of you know, TBC is a ministry actively concerned about trends, movements, events, organizations, influential church personalities, teachings, practices, etc., which adversely affect the body of Christ. Our bottom-line evaluation of any teaching or practice is simply: Is it biblical? (Is 8:20; Acts 17:11). This is what God has called us to do, as well as to exhort believers in Christ to grow in personal discernment, that they may be encouraged to test all things by the Scriptures (2 Cor 13:5; 1 Thes 5:21).

So how does Roman Catholicism fit into this?

From a biblical perspective, nothing impacting the church today, other than possibly the influence of psychology, is more detrimental to evangelicals' understanding, application and proclamation of the gospel that saves souls than is their increasing acceptance of the Catholic gospel. In this two-part series, we will detail some of the reasons for giving this so much of our attention.

Our motivation includes: 1) Our

concern for the eternal destiny of nearly one billion Catholic souls worldwide (one in four in the United States) who are lost if Roman Catholicism teaches an unbiblical gospel. 2) Our concern over the lack of discernment, and consequently the decreasing spiritual fruitfulness in the body of Christ because Catholics are not only being accepted as fellow believers by increasing numbers of evangelicals today, but some of their false beliefs and rituals are also being assimilated. 3) Our compelling love for Christ and our obedience to His Word.

Central to this issue is Roman Catholicism's gospel of salvation. If the differences between what the Bible teaches and what the Catholic Church teaches are *insignificant*, then we are to be blamed (as

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered [handed down]: and many such like things do ye.

Mark 7:13

some have already complained) for being divisive, and therefore destructive to the unity of the faith. However, if the differences are *irreconcilable*, then the wrong belief condemns its adherents to an eternity separated from God. Are the differences significant? Are they reconcilable?

For all its serious problems, the Roman Catholic Church cannot be faulted for *misunderstanding* what evangelicals believe is the gospel of salvation, since it is spelled out in no uncertain terms in Rome's official canons and decrees. The following citations are from the Council of Trent, which met over a nineteen-year period primarily to denounce the teachings of the Protestant Reformation. Although the Council met in the sixteenth century, its decrees were reaffirmed by the Church's most recent councils, both Vatican I and II. Consider Catholicism's position on what evangelicals uphold as the gospel (that is, that salvation is by grace through faith alone in Christ alone who, through His sacrificial death on the cross, paid the full penalty for all the sins of humanity):

6th Session, Canon 9: If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification...let him be anathema.

6th Session, Canon 12: If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema.

6th Session, Canon 30: If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.

7th Session, Canon 4: If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law [canons and decrees of the Church] are not necessary for salvation but...without them...men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema.

An anathema, according to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, is a condemnation, "a formal curse, as in excommunicating a person." As the above decrees demand, Roman Catholicism requires more than faith in Christ for salvation. Obedience to the laws of the Church, regarded as "grace-enabled" works and including participation in the sacraments, is necessary for entrance into heaven. Breaking the laws (i.e., committing mortal sins) consigns one to eternal separation from God if such sins are not absolved by a priest before death.

In contrast to the Roman Catholic process of salvation through meritorious works, the Apostle Paul gives the biblical teaching that salvation is by grace through faith and not of works, but it is a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9; Rom 6:23). Paul insists that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on [Jesus Christ who] justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5). Again in Galatians: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith" (3:11). Demanding that works are necessary for salvation is an outright rejection of Christ's perfect and complete atonement for sins on the cross. Yet Roman Catholic dogma insists there is something one can and must do to complete his redemption and to be reconciled to God.

It teaches that, without personally appeasing God for one's sins through suffering here on earth and almost certainly in purgatory, there is no hope of salvation. Referring to those who have suffered for sins, Vatican II states, "They have carried their crosses to make expiation for their own sins and the sins of others" (*ID* chp 2:5). The Bible, however, declares this to be an impossibility.

Can the *unjust* justify the unjust? No. Christ alone is the justifier of the unjust (1 Pt 3:18; Rom 3:25-26). Divine justice could only be satisfied sacrificially by one who was not under condemnation for sin. Peter (whom Catholics claim as their first infallible pope) writes, "...ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, ...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pt 1:18-19). Furthermore, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Heb 9:22). Therefore, in order to remove sins according to the Scriptures, the one atoning must be sinless and his sacrifice must involve the shedding of blood. That disqualifies everyone except Jesus Christ, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14) and who "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rv 1:5). Thus not only is every penitential work by a Catholic futile, but even more grievous is the fact that it denies the *finished* work of Christ on the cross—one's only hope for salvation.

Vatican II (which many evangelicals and professing born-again Catholics wrongly assume has redirected Roman Catholicism on a more biblical and therefore more evangelically compatible course) states that "From the most ancient times in the Church good works were also offered to God for the salvation of sinners, particularly the works [i.e., sufferings and miseries] which human weakness finds hard....Indeed, the prayers and good works of holy people were regarded as of such great value that it could be asserted that the penitent was washed, cleansed and redeemed with the help of the entire Christian people..." (*ID* chp 2:5). "Penitential expiation" in Catholic teaching requires that sins be paid for by the sinner through purifying punishments. Vatican II explains:

Sins must be expiated. This may be done on this earth through the sorrows, miseries and trials of this life and, above all, through death. Otherwise the expiation must be made in the next life through fire and torments or purifying punishments....

...in purgatory the souls of those..."who had

not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions" are cleansed after death with punishments designed to purge away their debt (*ID* chp 1:2).

On the contrary, believers sing with profound thankfulness of that which the Bible tells us over and over again—Christ's sacrifice: "He paid a debt He did not owe, I owed a debt I could not pay...." God's Word declares that "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Only the blood of Jesus Christ, i.e., His death, can cleanse us from sin (1 Jn 1:7). Roman Catholicism clearly preaches another gospel condemned by Paul (Gal 1:6-9).

Some may be thinking, "Why does TBC spend so much time telling us something that is so obvious?" The primary reason is that those who see the obvious are a rapidly decreasing minority. The majority of

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Matthew 15:9

evangelicals are simply following their leaders toward Rome. *Nearly all* the highly visible Christian personalities and parachurch organizations are either blind to Catholicism's false salvation, or, for their own reasons or agendas (regarding which I hope our readers will inquire of them), they choose to dismiss this critical matter of the eternal destiny of a vast number of souls. They get very upset when we state that the Roman Catholic Church is an *enemy* of the gospel. What other term should we use? The clear denunciation of the biblical gospel by the Council of Trent, with its more than 100 anathemas (in addition to the four listed above), and reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, comes from the highest Roman Catholic authority.

So why would those who claim to be evangelicals, and whose ministries seem to be effective for God's kingdom, compromise with a Church which is the enemy of the gospel? Why would a host of evangelical leaders (Bill Bright, Chuck Colson, Pat Robertson, J.I. Packer, Max Lucado, Os Guinness, Timothy George and others) sign an agreement calling Catholics "brothers and sisters in Christ" and agreeing not to evangelize them?

Why would James Dobson accept an

honorary degree from Catholic Franciscan University? Or why would Regent University, founded by Pat Robertson, allow a Catholic bishop to say Mass on campus, or the school's president declare that his goal was "to make room for all of the historic Christian traditions, both Protestant and Catholic"?

Why would Billy Graham say in 1952, "Many of the people who have reached a decision for Christ at our meetings have joined the Catholic Church, and we have received commendations from Catholic publications for the revived interest in their church following one of our campaigns" (*Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* 9/6/52)? And add, 25 years later, "I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of Orthodox Roman Catholics....We only differ on some matters of later Church tradition" (*McCall's* 1/78)?

How is it that more than 70 percent of the chaplains for Prison Fellowship are Roman Catholic? Why did Chuck Colson, a co-developer with Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus of the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" accord, recently turn over the reins of Prison Fellowship to Michael Timmis, a practicing Roman Catholic—and why is Timmis a Promise Keeper board member?

Dallas Theological Seminary's leadership conference for evangelical pastors and seminarians is being held this month. Why would they have as a keynote speaker William Bennett, a founding director of Catholic Campaign for America, which has the following mission statement: "We are a lay Catholic movement to energize and mobilize Catholics to renew their faith and, through that renewal, to help transform American public policy, culture, and society"?

Why would Hank Hanegraaff, president of the evangelical apologetics organization Christian Research Institute, and host of "The Bible Answer Man" radio program, claim that Roman Catholicism is "foundationally Christian"?

The cries we hear from both Catholics and evangelicals are that TBC is living in the "dark ages," or that we have a "Reformation hangup," or aren't we aware that Vatican II has redirected the Roman Catholic Church along biblical lines? If their concerns are valid, we need to acknowledge it; if however such critics are mistaken, *that* should be exposed.

We will explore this aspect of the evangelical rush toward Rome further in the November issue.

TBC

Quotable

I have come to the conviction that Martin Luther made a mistake. He should have never left the Roman Catholic Church.

I am eradicating the word Protestant out of my vocabulary. I am not protesting anything. It is time for Catholics and non-Catholics to come together as one in the Spirit and one in the Lord.

Paul Crouch

Trinity Broadcasting Network,
"Praise the Lord," October 17, 1989
[The growing sentiment among evangelicals]

I don't want God ever to have to say to me, "I gave you your opportunity to tell the people and you didn't tell them. You wanted to be...liked by the people, and you wouldn't tell them."...I'd lose every friend in [this city]...I'd have you all turn your backs and walk away in cold anger from me, rather than face up to that awful moment when the cry of men and women is heard, "The summer is past [and we're not saved]...." and I know that I didn't do my part, to try to win men, to try to bring them to God.

It isn't important that you like me, but it's tremendously important that you're washed in the blood of the Lamb...that you meet God in a saving encounter before that terrible day when you'll have to cry, "The opportunity's over...."

A.W. Tozer, "Four Seasons of Life"

Q&A

Question: The April 1999 issue of James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* magazine carried a full-page promotion of the National Day of Prayer, directed by Shirley Dobson. The suggestions for participation included: "Light a scented candle in your home to remind you to pray. Put a lit candle in your window to encourage and remind neighbors of your commitment to prayer. Make a candle-lighting ceremony part of your prayer observance." Is lighting of candles in conjunction with prayer biblical? Will evangelicals now burn candles in their

churches? If lighting candles has value, why should it be confined to the National Day of Prayer? I'm confused.

Answer: We have already dealt with the unbiblical nature of the National Day of Prayer. It would be understandable for unsaved leaders to promote a day when everyone would pray to "the god of his choice." But for such an invitation to go out under evangelical leadership and that those who know the only true and living God would join in prayer with those calling upon false gods is incomprehensible. As for suggesting "a candle-lighting ceremony" as part of a "prayer service" for Christian families, perhaps it reflects the growing embrace of Catholicism.

We do not wish to be critical, but neither can we ignore the spread of unbiblical practices in the church. Putting "a lit candle in your window to...remind neighbors of your commitment to prayer" may seem innocent enough. However, it suggests worldly promotion and solidarity with neighbors who likewise burn candles to show they are praying to their gods. To thus advertise that one is praying seems also to violate Christ's clear injunction: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father...in secret..." (Mt 6:6).

The lighting of candles in conjunction with religious observances is a pagan and occult practice. To make it part of a "prayer service" would turn prayer into ritual and give the impression that candles play some role in obtaining answers from God. If not, what is the point? I am shocked and saddened to see Catholicism/paganism embraced by evangelicals!

Question: I thank you so much for the July 1999 issue, "The Sufficiency of God's Word." It is certainly true....Please tell me, is there any teaching in the Bible that says men are so different from women...? There are so many conferences for women where they are taught differently from what they teach at conferences for men....Is this scriptural? When I read in the Word that "man shall not live by bread alone," doesn't it mean man and woman...? Are all these men's conferences and women's conferences bred out of the world system of psychology? I would certainly appreciate your answer....

Answer: The Bible certainly takes into account differences between men and women, not only the obvious physical ones but in the role each is to play in the home and family and also in the church. The husband has a distinct leadership role in the family. That does not, however, mean that the wife is without influence in decision-making. The husband is exhorted to love his wife as himself; and real love seeks the blessing and honor of the one loved. Yet the woman is clearly not "to teach, nor usurp authority over the man" (1 Tm 2:11-12) in the church, and that would surely include the home. So there are some clear differences.

However, as far as salvation, one's relationship to Christ, and living the Christian life are concerned, there is no difference. As you point out, very rarely does Scripture address itself to either men or women distinctly. The reasons are obvious: all are sinners, need the same redemption and maturity in the Lord, and the basis of spiritual growth for each is the same.

The words "man" or "men" as used in the Bible almost always refer to both men and women, such as in the verses you quoted in your letter and nearly everywhere else. When Psalms 119:9 says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word," the phrase "young man" surely also means "young woman."

The "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22) is obviously for men and women equally; when Paul says "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18) he is speaking to men and women; when he writes to "the saints" whether at Corinth or Ephesus or Colosse, etc., he is writing both to men and women. It is only on rare occasions, such as when Paul addresses husbands and wives, that any distinction is made. In fact, he states that "in Christ," just as there is no longer Jew and Gentile, so there is no longer "male or female." Obviously, while physical differences remain, spiritually there is no distinction.

Spiritual life and growth, the application of God's Word, the faith that we hold and our love for God and total reliance upon Christ as our very life, all apply equally to men and women. Therefore, if there were to be separate meetings for men and women, they would be of very limited nature. Today's growing tendency to hold long conferences and workshops and

seminars specifically for men or women should be viewed with caution.

Question: In your last newsletter, you stated that "...‘my people’ refers to Israel, not to the church; and ‘I will heal their land’ refers to the promised land of Israel, not to the United States." If Christians are not God’s people, then who are they? What about Nineveh? Do you not believe that God might heal our nation just as He did Nineveh? I understand that God will not answer prayers addressed to other gods, but is it in vain to pray to Him for a national revival? You also said the “Christians are ‘not of this world’ but have been called ‘out of this world’ to be in it but not of it.” If Christians and Israelites are two distinctive people in God’s eyes, and if Christians have been called out of this world, then to where are the Israelites called? Are they destined to stay on earth during the Millennium, while Christians are not? I am confused. Would you please clarify these issues for me?

Answer: That Christians are distinct not only from Jews (“Israelites,” as you call them) but also from Gentiles (i.e., from all non-Christians) is clear: “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Cor 10:32). The gospel is both to Jews and to Gentiles; and when either believes, he or she becomes a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:8-10) and member of His body, the church (Eph 2:19-22; 5:30, etc.). Nor am I the one who said Christians are “not of this world” but have been called “out of this world.” Christ said that: “ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (Jn 15:19). Of His followers, Christ said in prayer to His Father: “...these are in the world....I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (Jn 17:11,15-16).

I don’t say it is vain to pray to God for national revival or to heal our nation. I have often prayed for that myself and it should be the heart’s desire of every Christian in this country. I only say that there is no biblical promise that such a prayer will be answered, as there is for Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Prayers for America legitimately express our longing

for God’s blessing and salvation to come upon all mankind. We are, however, to pray with understanding..

Thus, when we pray, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” we realize that will never happen until Christ returns and reigns. Yes, Christians are “God’s people”—not His earthly but His heavenly people. *The church has no land*; it is the Jews to whom God gave a specific land. God never gave America to the American Christians or Germany to the German Christians. Therefore I cannot properly apply God’s promise (that when His people cry to Him He will “heal their land”) to anyone but the Jews, His people, and to the land of Israel, which He promised to them.

To inherit the kingdom eternally on earth, Jews must have the same faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that those patriarchs had. In my opinion—and many Bible scholars disagree—everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who believes in Christ both before and after the Rapture, but before the Second Coming, will be in the church. Jews who have rejected Him but who at His Second Coming “look upon” Him and believe in Him when He descends from heaven to rescue them at the Battle of Armageddon (Zec 12:10)—like Gentiles who believe at that time as well—will continue into the Millennial Kingdom to experience Christ’s earthly reign on David’s throne. Jews, of course, will be gathered by angels “from the four winds” on earth to Israel (Mt 24:30-31). They are destined to dwell upon earth in the Millennium and in the new heavens and new earth. The prophets promised this blessing to Israel (Is 62; 65:17-25; Jer 30:8-11; 31:1-12,27-40; Ezk 34:11-31; 36:8-15, 22-38; 37:21-28; 39:21-29; Zec 12:10-14:21, etc., etc.). All of Israel will believe in Christ when He appears to rescue her in the midst of Armageddon. There will not be an unbelieving Jew left upon the earth, as the verses just referred to declare and so do many others, such as Matthew 24:13, Romans 11:26, etc.

The church, Christ’s bride, united to Him eternally always to be at His side, from every nation, including Jews, made one in Him, will rule and reign with Him both during the Millennium and throughout eternity (Mt 19:28; Lk 19:12-19; 22:30; Rv 20:4, etc.).

Why It Matters Part II

T.A. McMahon

My sister, who was helping with the inaugural ExCatholics For Christ Conference, met a friend while shopping. The conversation got around to what my sister was doing, and her friend, an evangelical, was dismayed that there would be such a conference. "After all," she explained, "my sister-in-law is a Catholic and she's saved. She has no intention of leaving the Catholic Church because that's where she's comfortable." It seems that this lady and her sister-in-law are uninformed concerning what the Bible teaches, or the Catholic faith, or perhaps both. They have a great deal of company among evangelicals who are asking: "Does it really matter?" and "Isn't TBC engaged at times in nothing more than veiled Catholic bashing?"

One of the most frustrating aspects of addressing the Roman Catholic gospel is the prevailing ignorance regarding what Catholicism actually teaches. Most evangelicals are clueless regarding Catholicism. And many practicing Catholics (including a surprisingly high number of priests and nuns) simply do not know the actual extent of the salvation requirements of their Church. Surveys of Catholics reveal the common understanding about attaining heaven: that it centers around doing works which are pleasing to God (i.e., living one's life as a basically good person), performing a preponderance of good deeds to outweigh the bad, and living up to most of what the Church teaches. Nearly all Catholics believe this affords them the best chance for getting to heaven. However, this hope falls far short of what their Church officially requires.

All Catholics "know" that it is the *Church* which saves them, but few understand what the Roman Catholic legalistic system of salvation demands. Foundationally, it is this: Refusal to obey the laws and decrees of the Church is a mortal sin which condemns one to hell if *each* such transgression is not confessed to and absolved by a priest before death. As Vatican II declared in the 1960s,

[When the Bishops are] assembled in an ecumenical council, they are, for the universal Church, teachers of and judges

in matters of faith and morals, whose decisions *must be adhered to with the loyal and obedient assent of faith.*

...when the Roman Pontiff, or the body of bishops together with him, define a doctrine, they make the definition in conformity with revelation itself, to which *all are bound to adhere* and to which they are *obliged to submit...* (*Lumen Gentium* 25-2). [Emphasis added]

Considering all the laws of the Church (a task most lawyers would find overwhelming), it's doubtful that even the most zealous Catholics know and obey every one of them. Catholics more often than not take a "cafeteria" approach to their religion, picking and choosing what laws they want to obey. For example, many reject the Church's teachings and regulations

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Galatians 5:4

regarding contraception (even abortion!), marriage to a non-Catholic, divorce and remarriage, annulments, etc. Many wrongly think the Church has done away with some of its infallible doctrines such as indulgences (yet Vatican II condemns with anathema those who reject this doctrine). Some Catholics don't believe that transubstantiation actually changes the communion wafer into the real body, blood, soul and spirit of Jesus Christ, and some refuse to believe that purgatory is a reality. Regardless of what individual dissenting Catholics think, they are condemned by their Church for rejecting its teachings.

In addition to the myriad doctrines to "all" of which Catholics are "bound to adhere" and "obliged to submit," an inordinate and often hopelessly confusing number of other requirements are imposed which also carry the penalty of damnation if not obeyed. For instance, it is the rare Catholic who attends Mass on all the holy days of obligation. Not to do so is a mortal sin, yet one would be hard pressed to find a Catholic who can name them. Recently in a debate, Dave Hunt asked a leading Catholic apologist, Robert Sungenis, to enumerate them for the audience. He

offered only three, two of which were incorrect (TBC offers this informative audio tape set). Part of the problem here for Sungenis and every other Catholic (other than their Church making this a sin which potentially separates them from God forever) is the complexity of this manmade requirement. Ten holy days of obligation are recognized worldwide, but in the U.S. only six require attendance at Mass. The conference of bishops decides which ones are abolished and which feast days are to be transferred to a Sunday. It seems rather incredible, as well as unbiblical, that having a current liturgical calendar (in order to know what days of each year attendance is required) should be necessary to qualify one for heaven!

But it's far more complicated than that.

Few lay Catholics are familiar with the Code of Canon Law, containing more than 1,750 laws which dictate Church rules and practice. Most know the laws they agree with and which ones they reject, but few Catholics understand that they have no such liberty of choice in this comprehensive legalistic system. Any ongoing conscious disobedience with regard to the commands of the Church excludes one from "the state of grace"—thus condemning one to hell. This *bondage to law* brings to mind the rebuke Jesus directed at the religious leaders of His day. From their extrabiblical *tradition* they imposed on the people "the commandments of men" (Mt 15:9), i.e., a profusion of rules and regulations. As a consequence the people are put under tremendous legalistic burdens and shut out of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 23:13).

Unlike God's immutable laws, Catholicism's extrabiblical legalities are arbitrary and variable yet carry eternally damning consequences. For example, eating meat on Friday was once a mortal sin; today, it's not. Formerly, a divorced Catholic who remarried was excommunicated; that's not the case today where changes in the laws seem to have been made in order to accommodate changes in our culture. While it is claimed that these are rules ordained by God, would our Lord make hell the penalty for generations of people, and then remove the penalty for a subsequent generation committing the same act? Not the God of the Bible.

Some Catholics have told me that they simply do not buy all the salvation

requirements of their Church: "God will sort it all out in the end!" Rather than giving one peace of mind, however, this ill-founded hope raises a troubling question: For those Catholics who reject certain teachings of their Church, why would they nevertheless accept as valid the more agreeable doctrines Roman Catholicism promotes? For example, on what basis would one who rejects the teaching that contraception is a mortal sin be confident that receiving the Eucharist as *Viaticum* at the point of death assures one of eternal life? This quandary concerning one's eternal destiny is manifest for liberal and "cafeteria" Catholics, and especially for a rapidly growing, relatively new category of those who refer to themselves as "evangelical Catholics."

According to the pamphlet, "What is an Evangelical Catholic [EC]?" written by thirty Roman Catholics (mostly priests and nuns) and published "With Ecclesiastical Permission," ECs are those who

...have come into a *personal faith* in Jesus. They are evangelical in the strictest sense of the term in that they have *received the basic gospel*, accepted Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour and are manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. [They] have a growing love and respect for Scripture as the Word of God....They would identify themselves variously as committed Christians, Charismatic Catholics, renewed Catholics, born again Catholics, or simply Catholics who love the Lord. *Surely* they are brothers or sisters in Christ of all true Evangelical Christians in the various Protestant Churches. (Emphasis added)

Are they, "surely?" Is it possible to truly believe in two diametrically opposed gospels at the same time?

Can a faithful Catholic agree with what the Bible requires for salvation—*faith alone in Christ alone*—while also agreeing that "the sacraments of the New Law [canons and decrees of the Church] are...necessary for salvation" and "without them... men" *cannot* "obtain from God through *faith alone* the grace of justification..." (Trent, 7th Session, Canon 4)? "Faith alone" is condemned by the Roman Catholic Church. Adding anything to faith is condemned as a false gospel by the Apostle Paul (Gal 1:6-9). Can an "evangelical" Catholic priest transubstantiate a piece of bread into the body and blood of Christ and then during the Mass "immolate" Him ("to kill as in a sacrifice," according to *Webster's New World Dictionary*)? Can this priest, while

celebrating the Mass, *also* deny that the Eucharist is "truly, really and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (Trent, 13th Session, Canon 1)? Evangelicals believe that the communion elements are simply symbolic, a view anathematized by the "infallible" Council of Trent. Can "evangelical" Catholic communicants believe that the Eucharist is only symbolic of Christ and *at the same time* believe that the bread and wine become "the Body and Blood of Christ"? Not while claiming to be rational!

The heartbreak in all of this is that every evangelical who loves Catholics wants to believe that they really have "received the basic gospel." But which one? Rome's or the biblical gospel? And with which Jesus do they have a personal relationship? The One who cried out from the cross, "It is finished!" (i.e., the debt is fully paid), or the one who continues to be sacrificed around the world (more than 120 million

dangerous "sects" (the Vatican term for cults).

To counter those losses, beginning with Vatican II, Rome has donned evangelical apparel and added some biblical accessories (although her unbiblical salvation remains the same). Her goal has been to seduce evangelical Christians into believing that Roman Catholicism is proclaiming the same gospel and the same Jesus, so converting Catholics is redundant at best, un-Christian at worst. Rome's success in this ploy has been astounding (see Part I for just a few examples). But haven't the modifications instituted by Vatican II, the ecumenical dialogues with Baptists, Mennonites, Assemblies of God, etc., the agreement on justification with Lutherans, and the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" accord at least demonstrated that the Roman Catholic Church is indeed changing, becoming more biblical? Augustin Cardinal Bea, president at the time of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, and ardent suitor of leading evangelicals, makes clear Rome's intentions:

The Roman Catholic Church would be *gravely misunderstood* if it should be concluded that her present ecumenical adventuresomeness and openness meant that she was prepared to reexamine any of her *fixed dogmatic positions*. What the Church is prepared to do is to take...a more imaginative and contemporary *presentation* of these *fixed positions*. (Emphasis added)

Millions of former Catholics are now attending evangelical churches. I've spoken in one church (of more than 500 members) where more than 90 percent of them were born-again ex-Catholics. Most such believers, although thankful for their own deliverance from spiritual bondage, nevertheless grieve daily over their lost loved ones. Yet what compounds their sorrow is not only the animosity shown by Catholic friends and family members because they left the Church, but the fact that too often their evangelical churches offer little or no help in reaching Catholics for Christ; some even disdain the activity as offensive and unloving. Pastors! Elders! Ministry leaders! You and your church or organization must "offend" Catholics with the truth—that they are lost—and then with the good news of what they need to *believe* to be saved! It is our heart's cry that this would matter deeply to every evangelical who claims to love Roman Catholics. Anything less is real "Catholic bashing." **TBC**

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Matthew 24:4

times per year) on Catholic altars? And what of charismatic Catholics who seem to manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Does He energize their sacraments (which deny the gospel), rituals, prayers (rosaries?), and revitalize their devotions to Mary as nearly all of them claim? No, not the Spirit of truth!

What then do we make of all this "evangelical" Catholic talk? It's part of an aggressive strategy to subvert evangelical Christianity. But why would the Roman Catholic Church even consider such a thing? The Church of Rome views itself as the visible head of Christianity; it claims authority over all who would call themselves Christians. Evangelical Christianity, which rejects Roman Catholic salvation and Rome's control in favor of the true gospel and submission to Jesus Christ personally and directly, *is* Catholicism's most productive enemy. The primary reason? Catholics hear the biblical gospel of salvation; they *believe* it and are *saved*. They then leave the Church. These conversions have been taking place for millions of Catholics around the world, and especially in Latin American countries where the Pope has called evangelicals "sheep-stealing rapacious wolves" and

Quotable

I am often surprised that Christians who have listened for years (apparently with interest and attention) to the ministry of the Word know so little of divine things. They seem to enjoy the ministry, their faces are bright in the meetings, and yet when you come to talk to them you find that very little of it has got into their souls.

I believe the secret is that they listen to what is said, but value it so little that they do not take the trouble of going to the Scriptures to verify it for themselves. Ministry has its own blessed and important place, but I do not believe any ministry will be of permanent profit to our souls if it is not followed by searching of the Scriptures. *They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily...* (Acts 17:11).

C. A. Coates

Quoted in *Milk & Honey*, May 1999

Q&A

Question [composite of several]: In the Q&A section for September you allow Pope Pius XII to take a hit for his lack of action on behalf of the Jews in the face of the Holocaust...then in your very next answer you defend your position for non-social action....Mr. Hunt, in all honesty, do you, a man who is virtually entirely silent regarding the evils of our society, really think if you had lived in Nazi Germany you would have behaved any differently...? Our Lord...told the story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate that we should help those who are victimized by the world, the flesh and the devil. ...The distinction you make between the Apostles "preaching the gospel" and "actively working toward improving morality and social justice" is a specious distinction. They and biblical exemplars like Daniel did indeed use 'the opportunity to exercise great moral influence over whole societies.'...I believe there is room in the Christian mission for service in one's community that does not compromise the gospel....God is not content with personal devotion or individual righteousness (morality), but seeks people who also look out for the interests of others....John the Baptist was beheaded finally for speaking out against Herod's choice of a wife and I believe this is one

supporting scripture that shows we can comment on political issues.

Answer: Of course, we *can* "comment on political issues," but that doesn't prove we *should*. This is a subject we have dealt with before, but since it seems to be of great and continuing interest, we will address it once again. I'm not dogmatic on this and not above correction, but I would like that correction to come from clear teaching and example in the Scriptures and not opinion. John the Baptist rebuked an evil ruler who, instead of being corrected, took John's head. If this had any influence for good upon the general populace of that day, we aren't told of it.

Is it not possible that John made a mistake which caused his until then fruitful ministry to be cut short? Had he not violated Christ's wise counsel, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Mt 7:6)? Why should we imagine that ungodly political leaders and their followers would welcome moral correction?

How can we escape the fact that Jesus, who was alive and preaching throughout Israel at that very time, never once rebuked Herod (or Caesar, et al.) for anything? *Not once for anything!* Since Christ left us an example to follow (1 Pt 2:21) and told His disciples, "Follow me" (Mt 4:19, etc.), shouldn't we consider His total absence of political and social activism an example that we are to follow? If not, why not?

Yes, Daniel is often mentioned (along with Joseph and others) as having exercised great "moral influence over whole societies." But did he? We certainly find no hint of that in Scripture. Joseph didn't convert Pharaoh or anyone else in Egypt that we know of except his own wife. There was no improvement in Egypt either morally or spiritually nor does the Bible indicate that Joseph even attempted that. Yes, no doubt it was through Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar came to believe in God (4:37), but that didn't deliver Babylon from paganism, nor is there a hint that Daniel won any of the king's other advisors or citizens to God. While we are told that "God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs" (1:9), and it is clear that Darius had great affection for Daniel, there is no suggestion that either the prince or Darius came to believe in God. In fact, Darius always spoke to Daniel of "thy God, whom thou servest continually"

(6:16,20) and referred to "the God of Daniel" (6:26) without indication that he himself had come to know the true God.

I find not one scripture upon which to base the idea that Joseph or Daniel wielded a powerful moral influence over either Egypt or Babylon. If they had, surely the Bible would have told us. If anyone was in a position to lead a movement of social and political action it was these two, yet there is no hint that they did so. In each case, they had a personal testimony only, did not attempt to change the moral climate as a whole, and were in positions of leadership in order to protect God's people, not to change either the politics or morals of the country.

We, too, should have a clear testimony and should stand true to our Lord and His Word as individuals on the job, at home, or wherever we are. But as for organized political and social action, there is a total absence of it in Scripture. Should we not take the lack of this on the part of Christ and both the Old Testament saints and the early church as an example for us to follow?

As for the Good Samaritan, this was the individual action of one person helping someone he encountered who was in serious physical need and whose life was probably endangered. Certainly we ought to help all those whom we encounter who are in need to the extent of our ability. We don't read, however, that the Good Samaritan campaigned to get others to do likewise, or set up an organization to seek out and help those in similar need across Israel or the Middle East, much less that he pressured the government to clean up its own behavior toward the needy. Nor did the Apostles or the early church engage in such activity.

Nor can I agree with you that there is only a specious difference between preaching the gospel and political and social action. The former saves the soul; the latter does not. We are commanded to preach the gospel to everyone and everywhere, but never told to engage in political and social action. We have abundant examples of the former throughout Scripture, and not one of the latter. These are not specious differences!

As for the Pope (and your question of what I would have done had I been living in Germany at that time), he was not an ordinary citizen living in Germany and his actions should not be judged as though he were. He was a moral leader

with worldwide influence. Moreover, far from being an ordinary person, the Pope claims to be the Vicar of Christ. Yet he was silent in the face of the wholesale slaughter of Christ's brethren, the Jews, God's chosen people. Furthermore, the Pope is a very powerful political leader. Ambassadors from every major country come to him seeking favors. Whereas protests by ordinary citizens would have done nothing except get them, too, sent to extermination camps, the Pope was in a position of leadership and great influence and perhaps the only one in the world who could have rebuked Hitler with some effect, but didn't even do so privately.

Do I speak out today against the evil in society? I certainly warn audiences, Christian and non-Christian, of the evils of society, with most emphasis upon the satanic traps that destroy the soul. Have I pointed out the evil of Clinton and other political leaders? Yes, but I don't spend much time on that, knowing that it is fruitless. Our entire government is corrupt because of the sin, selfishness and deceit in every human heart and which political leaders have a greater opportunity to indulge. But I don't waste time trying to clean up government. The only real hope is for these men and women to believe the gospel. I support those whom God has put in the position of having the ear of leaders and who seek to win them with the gospel. And in such cases, it should be clear that trying to improve their morals with no real foundation for doing so would not be fair to them because it would still leave them on the way to hell, nor would it be productive for society in the long run.

Question: "So he was there with the LORD 40 days and 40 nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the 10 commandments" (Exodus 34:28). It would seem from this verse of Scripture that none of your staff had read the Bible. If Jesus could not exist without water for 40 days, how come Moses could? "For this one has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who built the house has more honor than the house" (Hebrews 3:3). Please answer this question in your next edition. [This question/reproof was in response to my admission in the June Q&A that I had erred in saying Jesus was 40 days in the wilderness without food or water; and thanking the person who, as a

good Berean, brought that error to my attention.]

Answer: Your letter exemplifies two things so easy to fall into and to which we are all prone and from which we at TBC pray the Lord will preserve us in the ministry He has given us: (1) misunderstanding the point being made; and (2) resorting to sarcasm.

First, the question was not whether Jesus *could* have gone without water for 40 days but whether the Bible says so. Of course, He could have. The person who brought this error to my attention said that would have been a miracle, and indeed it would have been. And we believe in miracles. The fact is, however, that although the Bible clearly says that Moses was without water as well as without food for the 40 days on the mount, it does not say that about Jesus, but only that He was without food. Therefore, I was wrong in saying He spent 40 days without water as well as without food. We dare not go beyond what the Scripture clearly teaches.

Secondly, I'm sure you didn't really mean that none of the TBC staff has ever read the Bible. Yet it is so easy to fall prey to the temptation to minister a sarcastic jab in the process of bringing correction. We are all susceptible to such a pitfall and I pray the Lord will keep us all gracious as well as truthful.

Question: In answering a question in April, you said that the marks of Calvary will eternally be in Christ's body, but you didn't give proof from the Bible. Wouldn't such scars mar His perfect resurrection body?

Answer: Perhaps I was assuming too much on the part of readers. Sometimes my staff feels that I include too many Bible references, and in this case I left some out that should have been given.

There is no question that the marks of Calvary were in Christ's body after the resurrection when He appeared to His disciples. What other meaning could there be to His statement to the disciples when He first appeared to them, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself...and... he shewed them his hands and his feet" (Lk 24:39-40)?

To doubting Thomas He said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands [i.e., the nail holes in them]; and reach hither

thy hand, and thrust it into my side [i.e., the hole was large enough for Thomas's hand to enter]: and be not faithless, but believing" (Jn 20:27).

That He is seen in heaven as the "Lamb as it had been slain" (Rv 5:6) could hardly be without the marks of Calvary, inasmuch as that is how He was slain. I hope this is helpful.

Question: Knowing that the Word of God prophesies that the age will end with apostasy both in the world and in the professing church, does this truth leave us with no hope of a revival in the American church that would alter the social and moral state of the nation? Can there be a true spiritual awakening in America where the power of evil is turned back and a return to righteousness occurs?

Answer: We don't read of anything like that in the Bible for *any* time in history, much less in the last days. Jesus made it very clear that few are saved: "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Mt 7:14). There have been spiritual awakenings at times which have apparently influenced segments of the population, but none have lasted.

Reconstructionists misinterpret Christ's command, "Go ye therefore, and teach [disciple] all nations" (Mt 28:19), to mean that entire nations are to be discipled. In fact, discipleship is for individuals. We are to call individual disciples out of the nations as Christ has called us out. That Christians are not of this world but have been called out of the world is stated by Christ; indeed, that the world will hate those who belong to Him (Jn 15:18-20; 17:14,16). That hardly sounds like a vast number of people will be saved so that society itself is changed.

Christ, Paul and Peter all warned of apostasy in the last days, that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse," that false prophets would proliferate, that even those who call themselves Christians would not endure sound doctrine, that not only the five foolish but also the five wise virgins would be asleep at the time of the Rapture, etc. This does not mean that we should not continue to oppose heresy, to preach the gospel and seek to win as many as we can for the Lord. But rather than indicating a revival which would reform society, the Bible indicates the opposite.

King of the Jews

Dave Hunt

At this time of year multitudes of people who otherwise have little or no thought of God or Christ give lip service to the idea that more than 1,900 years ago Jesus was born in Bethlehem and “there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” (Mt 2:1-2). Oddly, many Christians who believe Jesus was born “King of the Jews” attach no literal meaning to that title, especially one that has anything to do with *Jews*. Prophecies concerning Christ ruling the world from David’s throne in Jerusalem are taken as metaphors referring to His present rule from heaven.

Jerusalem was founded by King David 3,000 years ago. No fewer than 40 times the Bible calls Jerusalem “the city of David.” There God established David’s throne forever, and on that throne the Messiah, King of the Jews, descended from David, must reign over Israel and the world (2 Chr 6:6; 33:7; 2 Sa 7:16; Ps 89:3,4,20,21,29-36, etc.). Jerusalem is named more than 800 times in the Bible and is central to God’s plans. He has placed His name there forever.

Knowing that only the Messiah, descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, can defeat him, Satan has inspired 3,000 years of anti-Semitism. Destroying all Jews would have prevented Messiah from being born. Satan lost that round. But if all Jews could be destroyed today, God could not fulfill His promises that Christ would reign as King of the Jews on David’s throne at His second coming. God would be a liar and Satan the winner. God’s integrity and eternal purposes are linked to Israel’s survival!

Yasser Arafat claims that Israel has always belonged to Arabs and that Jerusalem has been an Arab city for thousands of years. In fact, it isn’t even mentioned in the Koran. On July 15, 1889, the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* reported that of Jerusalem’s 40,000 residents, 30,000 were Jews and most of the others were Christians. In 1948, when Israel declared its independence, only 3 percent of Palestine was owned by Arabs.

Israel has its Knesset in Jerusalem. But the world won’t accept that, and foreign embassies are located elsewhere. In defiance of God and His King (Ps 2), the world has its own plans for Jerusalem.

Here we confront the broader aspects of anti-Semitism’s war against God and the King of the Jews: the attempt to control Jerusalem and God’s land (Lv 25:23). Incredibly, the United Nations Security Council

has devoted nearly a third of its deliberations and resolutions to Israel, a country with less than one-thousandth of earth’s population! The United Nations has never condemned the Arabs for their terrorism but has condemned Israel more than 370 times for defending itself. In March 1999, the European Union notified Israel again that it “does not recognize Israel’s sovereignty” over Jerusalem. In a recent papal bull on the Year 2000 Jubilee, Pope John Paul II once again rejected Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem.

We are seeing the continuing fulfillment of Christ’s remarkable prophecy that Jerusalem would be “trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk 21:24). The capture by Israelis of East Jerusalem in 1967 seemed to mark the end of the “times of the Gentiles.” But in a surprising move, Israel turned the Temple Mount back to the custodial care of King Hussein of Jordan, leaving the very heart of Jerusalem in Gentile hands. In 1994, Yasser Arafat and his PLO took control.

Roman Catholic doctrine that the nation of Israel has been replaced by that Church is spreading increasingly among evangelicals. This replacement of Israel is a subtle form of anti-Semitism. Instead of sending Jews to ovens, their significance and even their existence is denied: by some twist in history, those now commonly called Jews are supposedly not really Jews—the *real* Jews are Mormons, or British Israelites, or Catholics or Christians.

The shameful horror of anti-Semitism throughout history provides a shocking exposé of the human heart. Satan found multitudes of partners (many of whom called themselves Christians) only too eager to malign, persecute and even kill God’s chosen people. Hitler’s “final solution to the Jewish problem” was known to Roosevelt, Churchill and other allied leaders, who did nothing. Even neutral Switzerland and Sweden turned escaping Jews back to Hitler’s ovens. [See 03/00 Q&A.]

Incredibly, a typical Jordanian textbook equates Zionism with Nazism. Yet Arabs applauded and aided Hitler—and Islam pursues Hitler’s “solution” to this day. Hitlerian threats pour continuously from Muslim religious and political leaders on TV and over radios and loudspeakers in mosque and street. The battle between Jahweh, the God of Israel who loves Jews as His chosen people, and Allah, the god of Islam who hates them with a passion, is building to an awesome climax.

It is every Muslim’s *religious* duty to exterminate the Jews. Muslims dream of

destroying Israel. They name holidays and streets after murderers of innocent Israeli citizens and hold celebrations honoring terrorists. Islam’s leaders have called for a spiritual revival as the key to Israel’s destruction—and Islamic fundamentalism, which brazenly employs terrorism worldwide, is now sweeping the world.

All Islamic scholars agree it is the sacred duty of every Muslim in every age to wage *jihad* (holy war) whenever possible to force the entire world to submit to Islam. There are more than 100 verses in the Koran about fighting and killing in that quest. A Libyan cabinet minister explained, “Violence is the Muslim’s most positive form of prayer.”

In spite of his rape of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein is beloved by millions of Arabs because his scud missiles heavily damaged Israeli civilian targets and he repeatedly calls for Israel’s destruction. When Kaddafi screams, “The battle with Israel will be such that...Israel will cease to exist!” he speaks for every Muslim. Islam’s founding prophet, Muhammad, declared, “The last hour will not come before the Muslims fight the Jews and the Muslims kill them.”

Islam’s desire to exterminate Israel is taught from childhood. A Syrian Minister of Education wrote, “The hatred which we indoctrinate into the minds of our children from birth is sacred.” A ninth-grade Egyptian textbook declares, “Israel shall not live if the Arabs stand fast in their hatred.” And a fifth-grade textbook states, “The Arabs do not cease to act for the extermination of Israel.” It is suicidal for Israel to trade strategic land for “peace” with such enemies—but the world forces her.

Muhammad showed Muslims how to make “peace.” In A.D. 628 he made a peace treaty with his own Kuraish tribe. Two years later, he suddenly attacked Mecca and slaughtered every male. Arafat has publicly declared, “In the name of Allah...I am not considering it [the Israeli-PLO peace accord] more than the agreement signed between our prophet Muhammad and the Kuraish tribe....Peace for us means the destruction of Israel....” No place for the King of the Jews! This is Islam—take a close look!

Muslim nations are arming themselves with missiles capable of delivering chemical, biological and nuclear warheads. Syria has manufactured thousands of chemical warheads, has huge stores of biological weapons and has tripled its military and air power since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The whole world knows these weapons have one

purpose: to destroy Israel. But Israel also has nuclear weapons (soon to be deployed in new efficient submarines) and would use them if needed. Who will bring peace?

Christ warned of such incredible destruction that if He did not intervene to stop it no flesh would be left alive on earth (Mt 24:21-22). That remarkable prophecy anticipated today's modern weapons. No wonder the God of the Bible, who twelve times calls Himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," promises repeatedly to defend Israel and Jerusalem in the last days! Having brought Israel to birth in 1948, God will complete His purpose. He declares, "Shall a nation be born...? Shall I bring to the birth,...saith the LORD...and shut the womb?" (Is 66:8-9).

In its mad rebellion against God, the world rejects the "King of the Jews" and His promised rule of international peace from David's throne in Jerusalem, and makes its own plans. The ideal of a humanistic world government has been pursued since Babel. In 1921 the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) was established. The next year its journal, *Foreign Affairs*, stated that there would be "no peace or prosperity for mankind...until some kind of international system is created..." In 1934 H.G. Wells declared, "There must be a common faith and law for mankind...The main battle is an educational battle." Children are being educated to reject God and embrace Antichrist. In 1973, in the *Saturday Review of Education*, Gloria Steinem, feminist leader, stated that by the year 2000 "we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in Human Potential, not God."

In May 1947 Winston Churchill declared, "Unless some effective world supergovernment...can be set up and begin to reign, the prospects for peace and human progress are dark and doubtful..." In 1948, in *UNESCO: Its Purpose and its Philosophy*, Sir Julian Huxley, its first director-general, explained that "The general philosophy of UNESCO should be a scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background...to help the emergence of a single world culture..." UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently said that the "concept of national sovereignty" is being redefined and would have to be set aside. In 2000, in a step toward a world religion, "the UN will extend its peacekeeping role into spiritual territory" and call for "its first summit for world religious leaders."

No matter the form of government, rulers are selfish and oppressive. That fact has been repeatedly demonstrated worldwide. Africa threw off white colonial rule. But instead of the promised freedom, there was new bondage to black despots. Instead of

peace and prosperity, there is growing chaos, poverty, unrest and tribal and ethnic wars, with blacks killing blacks, repeated coups and revolutions that gain nothing.

Communism was once the big hope. The communist revolution in Russia was financed to a large extent by some of the wealthiest and most powerful men in America. Praising its enforced atheism, John Dewey wrote in *The New Republic* in 1928 that communism would "counteract and transform...the influence of home and Church" and ultimately would fulfill the goals set forth in The Humanist Manifesto.

It sounded so good: equality for all. But those who enforced this "equality" were tyrants looking out for their own selfish interests, who oppressed and stole from the people under them. Corruption flourished in the Soviet Union and China and still does in every communist nation.

The same has always been true of Islam. Muhammad imposed Islam with the sword. As soon as he died, much of Arabia tried to abandon Islam, but was forced back into submission in the Wars of Apostasy in which tens of thousands were killed. Nor did that bring peace. Muhammad's closest companions and relatives fought savage wars for leadership, slaughtering one another for Allah and their dead prophet. Thousands of Muhammad's followers were butchered by one rival faction or another.

Islam hasn't changed. Between 1948 and 1973, there were 80 revolutions in the Arab world, 30 of them successful, including the murder of 22 heads of state. Sunnites, the largest Islamic sect, and Shi'ites, the next largest, still fight one another. In the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, 1,000 tons of poison gas were used and there were more deaths than in World War I. Islam can't even bring peace among Muslims. Yet British Prime Minister Tony Blair has said that Islam is synonymous with "peace, tolerance and a force for good." Incredibly, the Crystal Cathedral houses a joint "Christian and Muslim Institute for peace." *Peace?*

Islamic countries are dictatorships, led by ruthless murderers and international terrorists such as Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Libya's Kaddafi and Hafez Assad of Syria. In the name of Allah they imprison, torture and kill tens of thousands of their own citizens and train and finance worldwide terrorism. In PLO territories taken over from Israel, as in every Muslim country, there is no freedom of conscience, speech, religion, election or the media.

Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and she has the problems which democracy breeds. The Holy Land

is plagued with drugs, pornography, prostitution, youth rebellion, rape, robbery and murder. Selfishness pits Israeli against Israeli. More than 200,000 Israeli women have been victims of domestic violence each year. The savagery in Israeli schools rivals that of the United States. Violent crime among Israeli youth more than doubled from 1993 to 1998. There is hostility between religious and secular Israelis and increasing disillusionment with Judaism, especially among youth.

If Jeremiah were alive today, he would warn Israel once again of coming judgment for its sin. Israel needs to repent to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But what if she were to do so? The rabbis have no forgiveness to offer repentant sinners. They've had neither temple nor sacrifices for sin for 1,900 years—exactly as foretold (Hos 3:4; Lk 21:20-24)!

Why would God prophesy and allow this condition? Only if Jesus is the Messiah who, as the Lamb of God, died for the sins of Jew and Gentile. If His sacrifice on the cross fulfilled all the Old Testament sacrifices, they are no longer needed. That is the only explanation for God having left Israel without temple and sacrifice all these years.

The Hebrew scriptures contain more than 300 prophecies telling when and where the King of the Jews would be born, all about Him, including His rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection. All were fulfilled *to the letter* in Jesus Christ. If He is not the Messiah, there is no Messiah. On the very day the angel Gabriel foretold to Daniel (Dn 9:25), Jesus rode into Jerusalem, was hailed as the Messiah as Zechariah had prophesied (Zec 9:9), then was crucified for our sins and resurrected as Israel's prophets had foretold. On the cross above His head, Pilate placed this accusation: "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Mt 27:37).

According to undisputable history and Israel's own prophets, it is 1,900 years too late to expect the *first coming* of the Messiah. Israel's only hope is His *second coming*. Tragically, it will take Armageddon for Israel to recognize her Messiah. When Jahweh personally appears to rescue Israel from destruction, every Jew alive will see that He is the man who was pierced to the death for their sins and resurrected, the very Messiah promised by their prophets, whom they have rejected. Then all Israel still alive will believe. And the King of the Jews at last "shall reign for ever and ever"! Right now He offers forgiveness, peace, eternal life and a benevolent reign on the throne of every heart that will open to Him. TBC

Quotable

However mad the resolution to revolt from God, it is one in which man has persevered ever since his creation, and he continues in it to this very day. The glorious reign of Jesus in the latter day will not be consummated, until a terrible struggle has convulsed the nations. His coming will be a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, and the day thereof shall burn as an oven. Earth loves not her rightful monarch, but clings to the usurper's sway: the terrible conflicts of the last days will illustrate both the world's love of sin and Jehovah's power to give the kingdom to his only Begotten. To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light. We may judge ourselves by this; do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us?

C. H. Spurgeon

The Treasury of David, Vol 1, p 12

Q&A

Question: I've been attending a large and growing church (about 5,000 members) in Southern California where the pastor's sermons seemed to be biblical. However, I began extra classes in the School of Ministry and found a reliance upon Kenneth Hagin's books. The second session the school's director began to talk about a "blood covenant" and "mingling" man's blood with God's. The textbooks he took this from are booklets "The Blood Covenant" by E.W. Kenyon and "Unraveling the Mystery of the Blood Covenant" by John Osteen. I am really becoming confused by the blood of Christ being somehow involved in what he claims is the most ancient and sacred covenant known to man. Can you help me?

Answer: Kenneth Hagin plagiarized some of E.W. Kenyon's writings and thus introduced his heresies into the word faith movement of which Hagin is recognized as founder. Hagin is emulated by Kenneth Copeland, Frederick K.C. Price, Paul Crouch and many other positive-confession leaders and their followers. It was Kenyon who taught (and Hagin, et al. perpetuated it) that when Christ on the cross said it was finished it was only the old covenant, not the work of redemption, that was finished. Christ had to sink into hell to be tortured by Satan three days and three nights for our salvation. Therefore, the shedding of

Christ's blood upon the cross did not atone for sin even though the Bible says we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). From this false gospel the "Blood Covenant" doctrine developed.

Supposedly the most sacred and powerful relationship man can enter into is a blood covenant which, from the beginning, has been practiced by all mankind (including pagans and witches and even the Mafia). This covenant involves the mingling of blood from both participants. This sacred mingling occurred when journalist/explorer Stanley entered into a blood covenant with powerful chieftains in Africa, supposedly thereby opening Africa to the gospel.

Allegedly, it is this most sacred of human covenants which God entered into with Abraham! Plagiarizing Kenyon, in "Unraveling," John Osteen says, "When Abraham was circumcised, he mingled his blood with God's blood." Likewise, "Jesus shed His blood on the cross, mingling the human and the divine" (p. 42). So this amazing covenant that all mankind has practiced since the beginning of time was entered into by God with the human race through circumcision and then through the Cross. That's blasphemy!

Kenyon acknowledges that Christ died for our sins and that salvation is by grace through faith. However, the assurance of our eternal reconciliation to God is not because His justice has been satisfied through Christ's sacrifice for sin, but because of this amazing covenant, which, though of human origin, God honors and entered into with mankind.

Kenyon says, "The Blood Covenant was the basis of all primitive religions.... The Blood Covenant [with God], or what we call the Lord's Table, is based upon the oldest known covenant in the human family.... Today, hundreds of tribes in equatorial Africa cut the covenant. Stanley cut the covenant fifty times with different tribes." If missionaries only realized it, "the blood covenant practiced today would open the doors in every tribe for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ" (pp. 5,7). Two men cut their arms, allow their blood to drip into a cup of wine, the wine is stirred, the bloods are mixed, then each drinks from it. "Now they have become blood brothers.... It is the one covenant that is perfectly sacred among all primitive peoples.... Stanley said he never knew this covenant to be broken in Africa, no matter what the provocation. ...The vilest enemies become trusted friends as soon as the covenant is cut.... When

Abraham and God cut the covenant, they became one" (pp. 9-10, 54).

Drinking blood is absolutely forbidden in the Bible. Moreover, the covenant must be kept by both parties: thus man is as responsible as God. Kenyon says of Abraham, "God had found a man that would keep the covenant... Abraham had proved his worthiness of God's confidence" (pp. 20-21). In fact, our salvation is by grace, not on the basis of *our* keeping a covenant. Paul said we "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:3); yet God trusts us to do our part? No man is worthy of God's confidence. This "blood covenant" is a works salvation.

At the end of the booklet, the "sinner's prayer" which Osteen asks people to pray is all about entering into a covenant with God, requiring giving up my sin as my part of the deal: "Salvation is your coming to the place where you make an unqualified commitment to God. When Stanley and the African chief cut the covenant, they... were totally committed to each other and forever bound by their covenant.... When you say, 'God, I'm tired of sin, I'm tired of the world... I make an unqualified commitment of everything I've got, spirit, soul, and body to You. I want to be a covenant-man. I want Jesus. I want to get in on what He died for,' God will save you!" (p. 45). That is not the gospel Paul preached.

Kenyon claims that at the Last Supper the disciples "knew that when they cut the Covenant with Jesus in the upper room that night, they had entered into the strongest, most sacred Covenant known to the human heart" (p. 30). Did the disciples cut themselves and mingle their blood with that of Christ? No! Following Kenyon almost word-for-word, Osteen plagiarizes, "The old Blood Covenant was the foundation on which the New Covenant was established. When Jesus said, 'This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you,' the disciples knew... that when they took the elements of the Communion with Jesus that night, they were entering into the strongest, most sacred covenant in existence. And this is what we must understand when we take Communion" (p. 51). God forbid.

So instead of the blood of Christ being efficacious because it was shed for our sins when He took the penalty His own infinite justice demanded, Christ's blood derives its power from becoming part of this "strongest, most sacred covenant" known to man, a blood covenant practiced even by pagans! The covenant provides salvation; the blood of Jesus shed for sin is only the means whereby this covenant

long practiced between men is entered into with God. What a perversion.

This sacred covenant gives magical powers to the blood of Jesus. Osteen declares, "He took the blood of the everlasting covenant beyond the stars and sprinkled it in the presence of the Father *as an everlasting memorial that God has cut a New Covenant with me and with you.*"

On the contrary, the blood of Christ was shed on the cross for our sins; it is not preserved in heaven. We have redemption in His blood because Christ paid the penalty for our sins and God's justice was satisfied. On that basis alone we are saved, not because of some occult covenant being the most sacred thing known to man. This is deadly heresy.

Question: In your October 99 newsletter, you made a comment in the Q&A section that "the lighting of candles in conjunction with religious observance is a pagan and occult practice." I beg to differ with you. God commanded the use of candles in worship of him in the Torah (Ex 25:37) and more than 50 other places in the Old Testament. The Menorah (candles) were commanded by God to be used in worship. This custom was practiced by the Jews to obey God. This is alluded to in the New Testament. Jesus is a/the [sic] light (candle). Revelation chapters 1-3 talk about candles and worship. Candles in worship are not prohibited or condemned in Scripture; in fact they are encouraged and commended. I think you need to reconsider your statement.

Answer: On the contrary, neither the word "candle" nor "candles" is ever used in the Bible in relation to worship. The words "candlestick" and "candlesticks" (prior to Revelation) refer to objects used exclusively in the tabernacle and/or temple. There was, in fact, no "custom practiced by the Jews" involving candles or candlesticks. These items were unique. Their use was solely in conjunction with the priestly duties inside the tabernacle or temple, and there were no copies of them in use outside the tabernacle or temple for the Jews to involve in any of their customs.

Any religious use today of candles or candlesticks would signify a return "to the weak and beggarly elements" of the old covenant" (Gal 4:9) with its animal sacrifices. That would be a blatant denial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Candles and candlesticks were "a figure for the time then present...in meats and drinks...and carnal

ordinances, imposed on them until...Christ being come an high priest of good things to come...by his own blood...entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb 9:1-12).

In Revelation, seven candlesticks are seen in heaven in Christ's presence. These are not used in worship but represent "the seven churches" to which Christ writes (1:20). There is one further mention of a candlestick: Christ warns the church at Ephesus to repent or He will "remove thy candlestick," i.e., no longer acknowledge it as a true church.

Candles are, however, used in witchcraft, and in Roman Catholicism as a symbol of prayer to the alleged saints. It would be unbiblical and would open the door to further error for true Christians to start to use candles as part of prayer or worship.

Question: The idea that the Antichrist will be resurrected from the dead by Satan seems to be the prevailing opinion among evangelical pretrib teachers. I would appreciate an expression of your opinion in a future issue of *The Berean Call*.

Answer: This popular idea comes from Revelation 13:3. For example, in his book, *The Prewrath Rapture of the Church*, Marvin Rosenthal states, "According to the Word of God, the Antichrist is a man who lived before. He ruled one of the seven great empires which directly impacted Israel. ...He will literally be raised from the dead. Concerning this raised ruler...the Word of God has much to say. 'And I saw one of his heads as though it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed...' (Rv 13:3)."

Note, however, that it is *one* of the beast's seven heads, not all of them, that is affected. Furthermore, the head (much less the beast) is not killed but appears "as though it were wounded to death." Seemingly, the beast could have died from this wound, but verses 3 and 12 declare that its "deadly wound was healed." So we have a *healing*, not a resurrection. I believe it is referring to the Roman Empire which has indeed suffered from a deadly wound but has never died and is being revived before our eyes.

Only God can raise the dead. Satan has no such power. At best he might pull off a "fake death and resurrection" of Antichrist, which John MacArthur suggests in his *Study Bible* as a possibility.

"Thy Kingdom Come"

Dave Hunt

This phrase is contained in the so-called "Lord's prayer," which, in fact, is not the Lord's prayer (that is found in John 17) but the disciples' prayer. It would hardly have been appropriate for our Lord to pray, "Forgive us our sins...And lead us not into temptation" (Lk 11:4). Nor is it a prayer to be repeated over and over but a *pattern* for prayer for the *disciples*: "After *this manner* therefore pray ye" (Mt 6:9). When Jesus gave this pattern for prayer He told his disciples, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (v 7). Yet the "Lord's prayer" is generally used exactly that way, repeated by rote with little thought to its deep meaning.

Contrary to some who preach the "prosperity gospel," we are not to request earthly blessings for ourselves, much less riches, but only sufficient provision for each day ("Give us this day our daily bread..."); and to be kept from sin in order to live to God's glory ("deliver us from evil...for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory"). Yet how seldom we think of His glory, while bombarding Him continually with endless requests to satisfy our own desires.

"Thy kingdom come" is the heart of this pattern for prayer, and it should be the passion of our lives. Yet for how many of us is this true? Have we not largely forgotten God's eternal kingdom in pursuit of our own temporal ambitions?

How many Christians were caught up in the Y2K hysteria and spent needless time, money and effort to assure themselves of food, warmth and protection? Sadly, the lives of many were all but ruined, their Christian testimony spoiled and our Lord and His Word ridiculed as a result of their irrational fears of a mysterious "bug" which they believed had the power to shut down the world! How much better to have heeded our Lord's admonition not to be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt 6:25-34).

Seek ye first the kingdom! Here we have the pattern of life to go with the prayer pattern. But what is this kingdom we are to seek, consumed by the passion, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10)? What did Christ mean by His frequent references to "the kingdom"?

Christ referred both to the "kingdom of heaven" (found only in Matthew) and to the "kingdom of God." Significantly, the same things are said about the kingdom of *God* in the other Gospels which Matthew declared concerning the kingdom of *heaven*. Therefore, we can only conclude they are the same.

For example, in Matthew 4:17 Jesus preaches, "Repent: for the kingdom of *heaven* is at hand," while in Mark 1:15 He says, "the kingdom of *God* is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." In Matthew's

My kingdom is not of this world...

John 18:36

presentation of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus begins with "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of *heaven*" (5:3). But in Luke, Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of *God*" (6:20). For further study, compare Matthew 8:11 with Luke 13:28-29; Matthew 13 with Mark 4 and Luke 8; Matthew 18:1-4 with Mark 10:14-15 and Luke 18:16-17, etc.

Generally it is assumed that the "kingdom" refers to Christ's millennial reign. He promised His twelve disciples, "when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel [ten tribes were not lost after all]" (Mt 19:28). Surely this is not *spiritual*, but a *literal* reign that will be established at Christ's second coming when His feet touch the Mount of Olives (Zec 14:4; Acts 1:11) as He comes to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon (Zec 12-14). Then "every eye shall see him" (Rv 1:7) coming to earth "with power and glory" and the angels will "gather together his elect [i.e., the Jews, Is 45:4, etc.] from the four winds" (Mt 24:29-31) to bring them from all over the world to Israel to share in the millennial kingdom. Having destroyed Antichrist and his kingdom at His second coming (2 Thes 2:8), Christ rescues Israel in the midst of Armageddon (Zec 12,14) and ascends David's throne (2 Sm 7:13; Ezk 37:24-

26; Lk 1:32), from which He will rule the world for 1,000 years (Rv 20:2-6).

In previous articles and books we have discussed many of the signs Christ gave to indicate the nearness of His return to earth: Israel back in her land (Ezk 38:11-23; Zec 12, 14, etc.), weapons capable of destroying all life (Mt 24:22), the technology for a world dictator to control the world militarily (Rv 13:4,7) and to control all banking and commerce (vv 16-17), etc. The fact that these signs confront us already can only mean that the Rapture, which precedes the Second Coming, cannot be delayed much longer.

There are no signs for the Rapture, which could therefore occur at any moment. This is why Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples to be ready for His sudden return which otherwise would catch them by surprise:

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come....Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Mt 24:42,44).

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.... Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not (Lk 12:35-40).

Because it is not intended to catch anyone by surprise, the Second Coming must be a separate event from the Rapture. Therefore it is preceded by many signs. Referring to His second coming, Jesus declares in the Olivet discourse, "...when ye shall see all these things [i.e., the signs He has given in the preceding verses], know that it [the Second Coming] is near, even at the doors" (Mt 24:33). When *all* signs have been fulfilled, it will be crystal clear that Christ is about to return to earth. Even Antichrist will know and will go out with his armies to repel Christ's invasion from heaven:

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war....And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS....**

And I saw the beast [Antichrist], and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet....These both were cast

alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Rv 19:11-20).

Another major sign preceding the Second Coming is a revival of the Roman Empire worldwide. This is clear from Daniel's interpretation of the image of the giant in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dn 2). It represented four world empires: the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman. Each of the first three had a successor, but the Roman Empire did not; it never died, and is in the process of being revived.

Rome was divided in two as the giant's two legs foretold: politically in A.D. 330 when Constantine moved his capital to Byzantium, which he had captured in 328 and renamed Constantinople; and religiously in A.D. 1054 between Roman Catholicism in the West and Orthodoxy in the East when Pope Leo IX imperiously excommunicated Michael Cerularius, Patriarch of Constantinople.

The ten toes on the feet attached to the two legs correspond to the ten horns on the fourth beast which Daniel 7:24 says are ten kings. Missing from history, however, is any record of ten kings reigning simultaneously over Rome. Therefore, Rome, the fourth kingdom, must be revived with ten subrulers under Antichrist. That is the worldwide kingdom which Christ destroys to establish His millennial reign. Once again this is clear from Nebuchadnezzar's image. Directly after its description of the feet and ten toes (Dn 2:40-43) verse 44 declares, "In the days of these kings [represented by the ten toes] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." A "stone cut out without hands" smashes the image, becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth (vv 34-35). These events must be future: *in the days of these kings*.

This stone can only be Christ, and the great mountain His eternal kingdom. The smashing of the image by the stone clearly means that Christ's kingdom will be established by His sudden personal intervention from heaven to destroy Antichrist's kingdom—not by the church gradually taking over the world as so many teach. What folly to imagine that the church is supposed to establish the Kingdom—or to claim as many do, that the Kingdom has already been established on earth and Christ is ruling it from heaven.

We have often warned of the solemn fact that those who expend themselves in the attempt to clean up society and to *establish* God's kingdom on earth are playing into Antichrist's hands, for *his* kingdom will be

established prior to Christ's millennial reign. In fact, a major purpose of Christ's second coming (in contrast to the Rapture in which He takes His bride to heaven) is to destroy Antichrist and his kingdom: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord ...shall destroy with the brightness of his coming..." (2 Thes 2:4-9).

Far from the obviously evil ogre he is generally thought to be, Antichrist will be so appealing and popular that "all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Rv 13:8). His kingdom will begin in peace and prosperity. Tragically, multitudes are being led astray by leaders in the "signs and wonders" movement who claim to use "miracles" to establish the Kingdom; and that only when they have done so will Christ then return to rule over the kingdom they have established in His name. Those who reject the Rapture and look for a "Christ" who comes to this earth to reign without first taking the church to heaven are setting themselves up to embrace Antichrist and his kingdom.

**Set your affection on things above,
not on things on the earth.**

Colossians 3:2

Those who believe in the Rapture cannot be enticed to look for a "Christ" who comes to rule the "kingdom" they've established. They expect "to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thes 4:17) above earth to be taken to heaven. Critics deride this belief as a "secret rapture theory," but Scripture says, "the dead in Christ shall be raised...we which are alive...shall be caught up together with them..." (1 Cor 15:51-57; 1 Thes 4:13-18) to be taken to His Father's house (Jn 14:1-3).

The great hopes being placed in the new Millennium now being celebrated (which actually begins January 1, 2001) will only increase the satanic delusions that blind the eyes of unbelievers. With Y2K conquered, and with the new software and high tech equipment developed, there will be an explosion of technology to bolster mankind's belief that it no longer needs God. Ecumenism will take giant strides and fewer believers will expect the Rapture. The Pope (Catholicism denies the Rapture) has great plans for what he calls "The third millennium of Christianity." Sadly, many evangelicals are adopting the same terminology. Ambitious plans for the new Millennium will push Christ's kingdom even further back in the minds of many believers.

Surprisingly, Christ's millennial reign is

not the ultimate Kingdom for which we are to pray. Christ told Nicodemus unequivocally, "Except a man be born again, he cannot [even] see...[much less] enter into the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3-5). We are also told that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 15:50). Yet there will be many flesh-and-blood people living during the Millennium, and among them multitudes who have not been born again of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Bible declares repeatedly that God's kingdom is "an everlasting kingdom" (Ps 145:13; Dn 4:3, 7:27); that Christ shall reign on "the throne of his father David...over the house of Jacob [Israel] for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Lk 1:32-33)...Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end..." (Is 9:7). But the Millennium lasts only 1,000 years; and its peace ends with earth's final war.

The Millennium in fact is the final proof of the incorrigible self-centered evil of the human heart. No longer can anyone complain that Adam and Eve alone had the

unique opportunity of living in Paradise and that if only *they* (the complainers) had been there *they* wouldn't have sinned. Billions will live in an even better Paradise because Christ will rule it and Satan will be locked up for 1,000 years.

Yet when he is at last released, Satan will "deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," and they will attack Jesus Christ at Jerusalem (Rv 20:7-9).

The true kingdom of God with endless peace will only come in the new heavens and new earth. Paul writes, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father" (1 Cor 15:24-28). Here we see that Christ did not refer to the Rapture when He said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mt 24:14). Obviously, the Rapture is not "the end" to which Christ referred, but that which Paul explains.

May what has been for many a "vain repetition" become a passion for prayer without ceasing: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." May our hearts turn from earth to *seek first* the ultimate Kingdom in which heaven and earth are one in the new creation, rebellion is a thing of the past and God's will alone is truly done because it has become the will of all creatures. And as that passion grows within us we will find that our wills are more and more in harmony with His because "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 Jn 3:3).

TBC

Quotable

It would be indeed a distressing comment on the misused opportunities of our lives, if at the end, we should hear Him say, sadly, to us as to Philip: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" Lead me in thy truth and teach me! Help me not only to serve thee but to sit at thy feet. May I follow on to know thee! Teach me to share the fellowship of thy Cross and Grave, that I may one day see Thee take to Thyself Thy great power and reign. Thus, finally, God shall be all-in-all!

F.B. Meyer, *Five Musts of the Christian Life*, pp. 116-17

Wherever faith has accepted the Father's love, obedience accepts the Father's will. The surrender to, and the prayer for a life of heaven-like obedience, is the spirit of childlike prayer...The children of the Father are here in the enemy's territory, where the kingdom, which is in heaven, is not yet fully manifested. What more natural than that, when they learn to hallow the Father-name, they should long and cry with deep enthusiasm: "Thy kingdom come!" The coming of the kingdom is the one great event on which the revelation of the Father's glory, the blessedness of His children, the salvation of the world depends. On our prayers, too, the coming of the kingdom waits. Shall we not join in the deep longing cry of the redeemed, "Thy kingdom come!"?

Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (c. 1860), p. 38

Q&A

Question: Enclosed is a printout from *Science Digest*. You will take notice that "the mother's blood never mingles with that of the fetus." With no contact with the mother's blood, how can the blood of Jesus be just "normal human blood"? How is Jesus' blood unique from mankind yet the same? If the blood of Mary didn't mingle with Jesus' blood, where does *His* blood come from? The average blood of humans is lacking the pure breath of God; it deteriorates. The Blood of the Lamb, on the other hand, is miraculous blood—we wash our garments in it, making them "whiter than snow...." Human blood has death in it. The blood of Jesus does not...it

isn't ordinary, it is sacred....[Many other scripture references to the blood of Christ.] Dave, I hope you will seriously consider this letter.

[After that letter was answered, a second came:] Many thanks for your answer to my letter about the Blood of the Lamb and the enclosure I sent to you from *Science Digest*....I must press you to tell me, how the blood of Jesus is *not* "God blood." If He is fully God and fully man, then how could the blood generated by such a union be limited to only one half of it?

Answer [composite of reply to both letters:] I appreciate your concern that I am not putting the importance upon the blood of Christ that the Bible does. However, that is not my intention nor is it the case. Your concern seems to center on the idea that Jesus somehow had "God blood," in spite of the fact that God does not have blood. You ask, "If the blood of Mary didn't mingle with Jesus' blood, where does *His* blood come from?" Since His blood was part of His body, it must have come into existence in the same manner as His entire body. Did He have a "God body"? God doesn't have a body, nor is there such a thing as "God blood." "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lv 17:11) and God is not a man and does not inhabit a body of flesh and blood.

You suggest that His blood must have come from God his Father or from the Holy Spirit, by whom He was conceived in Mary's womb (Mt 1:20; Lk 1:35). The body "prepared" for Him (Heb 10:5) was *created* by God in Mary's womb just as Adam's was created by God in the Garden. Jesus is the "second man" and the "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45,47). Did Adam have "God blood" and a "God body"? Then why would Christ? Christ's body did not come into existence by either the Father or the Holy Spirit physically "fathering" Him as the Mormons believe. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit have bodies or blood, so they could not pass on through Mary either body or blood in the manner of a human father.

You ask, "How is Jesus' blood unique from mankind yet the same?" We are told that God sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Does that mean that His body wasn't fully human? No. Christ's body was not some hybrid, part God and part human.

Note that the Scripture doesn't say He was in the "likeness" of a human, but not human. It says He was in the "likeness of *sinful* flesh," but without sin.

Jesus was a real man of flesh and blood. Is the blood of Christ precious? Indeed, it is because, like His entire body, Christ's blood was without sin and was shed on the cross for our sins. He is "God manifest in the flesh," but the flesh in which He was manifest was not "God flesh," for there is no such thing. It was perfect, sinless human flesh or He is not really man.

Question: Where do you get the courage to expose what you believe are false teachings of some of the best-known and most popular Christian leaders? Have you gone to each of them privately first, as the Scripture says we should? Can't correction be accomplished simply by referring to the false teachings without bringing in personalities? Is it really productive to identify by name those who teach these things? Wouldn't that instead be counterproductive by offending them and their admirers? And isn't it very costly financially by causing you to lose the support of many people?

Answer: This is the most frequently asked of any question and I am confronted with it everywhere. First of all, it is not a matter of courage but of obedience to our Lord and to His Word. We have no choice but to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3) and as we preach the Word to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tm 4:2; 3:16). There is no alternative. We dare not ignore these commands—for the glory of our Lord and for the sake of those who have been deceived and whom we must do all we can to rescue.

We believe that correction must be as public and widespread as was the erroneous teaching. This is necessary both for the sake of the teacher and for his or her followers. Error which has been taught publicly must be corrected publicly. Private discussion about it does not benefit the multitudes who have been thereby deceived. We have found private discussion to be largely unproductive. Those whom we have confronted privately seem to agree with us at the time, then continue to teach the same error.

Yes, we believe that in most cases it is necessary and productive to identify false teachers by name. How else can reprove

be accomplished? To identify false teaching in a general way is of little benefit. We must specifically identify not only the error taught but those who teach it because they are often so highly regarded that whatever they say is unquestioningly accepted without even noticing what is wrong with it—and thereby many are led astray.

The biblical requirement to go to someone alone is only when one has been *personally* “trespassed” against: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Mt 18:15). Any Christian leaders we identify by name have not offended us individually but have publicly taught what we sincerely believe to be false doctrine harmful to hearers and readers by the thousands (in some cases by the millions).

Does it keep us off radio and TV shows and take away from donations we might otherwise receive by standing for the truth and identifying those more popular than we are who teach error? Yes, but that is something we leave with the Lord. God forbid that we should ever allow such concerns to influence in any way our fidelity to our Lord and to His Word! That would be as foolish as exchanging the praise of God for the praise of men and an eternal heavenly reward for a temporal earthly one.

Question: I enjoyed your little book, *The Nonnegotiable Gospel*—so I bought several of them to hand out....But when I went through your little book again, guess what? I could not find the word “repentance” mentioned anywhere! Also at one place you said there is *nothing* for us to do. Dear brother, but there is, it is to repent....Couldn’t you...make one small change and say rather, “There is nothing for us to do *but to repent!*”

Answer: Thank you for your letter. I appreciate the point you are making that there is no call to repent in *The Nonnegotiable Gospel*. Paul preached “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21); Jesus said, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mt 9:13); the disciples, when first sent out by Jesus, “preached that men should repent” (Mk 6:12); and the early church rejoiced when they realized that God had to the Gentiles “granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

And yet the words “repent,” “repentance,” or “repented” are not found in the

entire Gospel of John, the Gospel to which evangelicals most often direct a person for salvation. Did the Holy Spirit blunder in leaving repentance out? Nor is there anything specific about repentance in the gospel as Paul defines it in 1 Corinthians 15. In fact, repentance is by no means a major theme of the New Testament. Why?

Could it be because repentance is implicit in believing the gospel? To believe that Christ died for my sins, I must believe that I am a sinner and that my sin makes me worthy of God’s judgment, which Christ took for me. Thus believing the gospel includes a turning from sin toward God through Christ. By receiving Him, I am in fact repenting through a total change of mind toward God. And God, who knows the heart, knows this without it being articulated in a certain way by the sinner when he comes to Christ.

Since the Bible doesn’t specify repentance as part of the gospel whereby sinners are saved, neither should I. I’m not saying it might not be good to preach repentance in *The Nonnegotiable Gospel*, but it would require considerable explanation. Might not requiring repentance cause some confusion? What exactly is meant by repentance? How thorough must repentance be? Must the person repent of every sin ever committed? Is he then under obligation to live a life above sin? Might this put a burden upon the sinner which he cannot bear, not yet realizing that Christ will give him the strength to live a new life? I had not consciously left out repentance, but I think it is best left that way.

Question: I noticed a rather derogatory reference to you in a recent issue of *This Rock*, a Catholic apologetic magazine edited by Karl Keating. I know you have debated Karl in the past and wonder whether he was accurate in saying that you don’t really write your books but use a ghostwriter. Could you respond?

Answer: Unfortunately, Karl did not write the truth. I’ve never used a ghostwriter. I don’t understand why he, an attorney who I always thought was therefore more concerned than most writers for accuracy, would make such an accusation. I am even more disappointed that he has not responded to the letter which I wrote to him more than five months ago. The following is from my letter to Karl:

“Although we strongly disagree on a number of vital issues, from the supreme

authority of Scripture to the basis of man’s eternal salvation, I have always respected you as a person of integrity....In your July/August issue of *This Rock* on p. 14 you call me ‘an inveterate anti-Catholic.’ Is it really fair to label as ‘anti-Catholics’ those who disagree with you? We don’t retaliate by calling you anti-evangelicals, because we want to believe you are motivated by a sincere concern for truth rather than prejudice. Can’t we have the same courtesy and respect from you?

“You then say, ‘Dave Hunt...has written many books....(Actually, I should rephrase *written*: He has his name on books that were ghostwritten for him.)’ I will try to maintain my high view of your integrity and assume that someone has led you to believe this lie. Never have I or would I pretend to be the author of anything I had not written....

“I’m disappointed, Karl. As one who ridicules my research and spares no opportunity to expose my alleged inaccuracies, should you not be more careful in your own research?

“Please do me the courtesy of publishing this letter as a correction to your false accusation.”

To date we are unaware of his having done so.

A New Christianity?

Dave Hunt

How swiftly time passes! Already we're well into the year 2000. The alleged Y2K bug (including billions of embedded chips, which were going to cause havoc) turned out to be the myth of the millennium. The contrast between fearful Christians and a confident world was embarrassing. InterVarsity canceled its huge triennial Urbana conference scheduled for the end of 1999, and Promise Keepers broke its promise to hold the largest combined gathering of Christian men in history on the steps of state capitols January 1, 2000. The world, however, didn't cancel NFL, NBA, bowl games, or millennial festivities, etc.

Those who followed Year 2000 celebrations in succeeding time zones across the globe sensed an electrifying exuberance everywhere. None of the anticipated terrorism occurred and crowds were so well behaved that for most police it was quieter than the usual Friday. Worldwide there was an exhilarating camaraderie, the expectancy of great things to come and the feeling that a new age of peace and prosperity had dawned.

Far from breaking down, modern technology has created a new electronic world without borders. Antichrist's world government is not only believable but just around some nearby corner. Multinational corporations have united this world in a way that could not have been anticipated a few decades ago. There is now no turning back. The scenario we presented from the Bible 17 years ago in *Peace, Prosperity and the Coming Holocaust* continues to unfold before our eyes.

The billions spent on Y2K fixes have laid the foundation for a new technological explosion beyond imagination. It is not surprising that Christian leaders, too, would be caught up in the euphoria, considering the growing apostasy. With high tech, who needs the Holy Spirit? Who in these times fears God? Man is now in control!

We have long warned of the accelerating ecumenism, and that few would believe in the Rapture if it did not occur by the year 2000. One can see the world church, Antichrist's bride, rising like a phoenix from the apostate ashes of professing Christianity.

One can almost trace this progression in "Larry King Live" interviews, some of which we have quoted in the past. King's present wife is a Mormon. Probably because of the Mormon belief in eternal

marriage, on Christmas night of 1998 King asked his guest, Billy Graham, whether there would be sex in heaven. The great evangelist said indeed there would be if that were important for our happiness.

In 1999, the Christmas Eve program was broadcast live from the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. Seated with King at a small table was Mormon President Gordon B. Hinckley, who, as King intended, came across as the leader of a mainline Christian denomination. Behind them was the famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir's broad loft, gorgeously festooned in flowers, the massive organ towering above. Commercial breaks contained cuts of the choir singing Christmas songs with obvious sincerity.

King's interview with Hinckley was interspersed with frequent live pick-ups of Nobel Peace Prize winner South African

**And many false prophets shall rise,
and shall deceive many.**

Matthew 24:11

Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in front of the altar in the Episcopal National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Appearing also was Robert Schuller, telecast from a field overlooking Bethlehem, Israel. To King's delight, both men supported Hinckley and Mormonism as being soundly Christian, and all three expressed enthusiastic anticipation of an inevitable agreement among all religions.

For those readers who may not be aware or have forgotten, the Mormon "God" is a man with a physical body who was redeemed on another planet by another Jesus and achieved godhood. There are supposedly an infinite number of such gods ruling other planets, and every Mormon male aspires to become a god himself, which would add millions more. Central to Mormonism is the dogma, "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." "God" is the literal father of every person on earth through one of his many wives. He had physical sex with Mary to bring forth the Mormon "Jesus," who needed a physical body to become a god. His death for our sins made it possible for Mormons to earn their own salvation, which is exaltation to godhood through good works, secret temple rituals, and further initiations after death. Thus exalted, each will make his own new earth and another Adam and Eve. Another Lucifer will cause another fall, and another Jesus will die

on a cross to make possible exaltation for more gods.

With that background, here are some excerpts from "Larry King Live," Christmas Eve 1999, with my comments.

KING: Tell us, Reverend Schuller... where you are....

SCHULLER: Where I'm sitting right now is probably where the shepherds were when the angels appeared and proclaimed the purpose of the whole faith, and that is to bring peace on earth, good will to men...I'm very interested in...doing what I can to bring peace on earth....

[Schuller seems to be referring to the absence of war for which the secular world hopes. But such peace is not "the purpose of the whole faith." Jesus provides "peace with God" (Rom 5:1) "through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). Sadly, King and his vast audience were left without that truth.]

KING: And why are you here?

SCHULLER: I've had a wonderful past few days,...several meetings—three in his home—with the leading Muslim thinker and leader in the world, the Grand Mufti of the great mosque in Damascus. [He] invited me....

KING: The idea of bringing religions together, right?

SCHULLER: Absolutely.

[Try to imagine Elijah or Christ or Paul "bringing religions together"!]

SCHULLER (continuing): I have seldom met with a man [with] whom I felt an immediate kinship of spirit and an agreement of faith and philosophy quite like I have with the Grand Mufti of the faith.

[*Agreement of faith...Grand Mufti of the faith?* Is Islam, then, *the faith* "once (for all time) delivered to the saints" for which we are to earnestly contend (Jude 3)? Or has the world's leading Muslim become the Grand Mufti of Christianity? Or are Islam and Christianity *the same faith*? Islam says Allah is not a father and has no son, denies that Jesus is God, denies His death, burial and resurrection for our sins, denies even that He died on the cross (another died in His place), claims He was taken to heaven without dying and must come back to die, etc. *The faith* taught in the Bible is vigorously opposed by Islam. Yet Schuller has said that if all of his descendants became Muslims, it wouldn't bother him so long as they weren't atheists!]

SCHULLER (continuing): I spent a great deal of time with the Chief Rabbi here in Israel,...he wants to meet the Grand Mufti, ...maybe I can get the two together....

KING: That'll be historic. Archbishop

Tutu...[what is] the scene...in Washington?

TUTU:...the National Cathedral of the Episcopal Church...is filling up for...the midnight Mass...to celebrate the coming of God into a world where God is saying, "I love you...I believe in you."

[God believes in mankind? Not according to the Bible—and why should He?]

KING: President Hinckley, do you think, really, it's possible that Reverend Schuller's dream and what Archbishop Tutu just said can happen...all peoples, all religions...can come together?

HINCKLEY: I would hope so...things are better than they've ever been...there's a new...acceptance of other religions. We must recognize that all...are sons and daughters of God...brothers and sisters...all of one great family, the family of God.

[This is Mormonism: Before we came to earth to acquire bodies, we were all born to the same "Father God" by different goddess mothers, in a spirit world where Lucifer and Jesus were half-brothers to each other and to all of us.]

KING: Reverend Schuller...what gives you hope...?

SCHULLER: We're in a totally new era. ...television...the internet ...the age of being able to indoctrinate people is finished....

[Schuller equates the gospel with "indoctrination," which he opposes. He has said, "That's what sets me apart from fundamentalists, who are trying to convert everybody to believe how they believe. ...We try to [avoid] offending those with different viewpoints...."]

KING: Bishop Tutu, would you agree?

TUTU: That's a very good assessment...just a week or so ago, there was a meeting of...the World Parliament of Religions in Capetown...all kinds of faiths represented...there is a greater measure of understanding...there are different ways of...discovering the transcendent, that God is a great deal larger than all of our faiths.

[This was a followup to the 1993 Parliament of World Religions held in Chicago with Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, snake worshipers, spiritists, animists, witches, shamans, Protestants and Catholics honoring each others' religions. It was cosponsored by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, Chicago's Lutheran School of Theology, the Evangelical Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, and with an official Vatican representative present.]

KING: President Hinckley...what gives you hope...?

HINCKLEY: We [Mormons] have come

from [persecution] to respect all across...the world....

KING: Does Bethlehem, Robert Schuller, give you encouragement...?

SCHULLER: Oh, absolutely...When the Chief Rabbi of Israel wants to meet with the top Christian and Muslim leaders...this is marvelous. When the Grand Mufti would invite me...to preach the sermon in his mosque on Holy Day...that he would sit and often hold my hand while I was talking, and here was the Roman Catholic patriarch, the patriarch of the Orthodox church and the patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Protestant minister of the town—this is a remarkable thing that's happening. And...the Grand Mufti said... religion is like rain that falls,...then the extremists...pollute the pure water....I'm very excited....I predict we're going to focus in the next millennium as religious leaders to clean up the pollution in religion....

[Obviously "extremist polluters" include Christians who stand firm for the gospel—

**But Saul...confounded the Jews
...and disputed against the
Grecians...**

Acts 9:22,29

and the cleanup will get rid of them and bring all religions together.]

TUTU: We have been given the opportunity of making a new beginning.

KING: Have you, Gordon Hinckley, forgiven those who, in the past, tormented your faith?

HINCKLEY: Yes, I think we have.

KING: Where do you get that from?

HINCKLEY: Well, it comes of the gospel. You put your faith in the Lord....

[No hint that the Mormon gospel is anti-Christian, that Joseph Smith was told by "God" and taught his followers that all Christian "creeds were an abomination in his sight"! King helped Hinckley to pawn off Mormonism as biblical Christianity, with Tutu's and Schuller's approval.]

KING: President Gordon B. Hinckley...[your] book *Standing for Something* [is] going to be released in March by Random House....What do you mean [by that title]?

HINCKLEY: This book [is] a plea to people...to be honest, to be upright, to be men and women...who have faith, who pray, who return to the virtues that made America great....Most other problems will take care of themselves if that happens.

KING: You agree with that, Reverend Schuller?

SCHULLER: Oh, absolutely. I want to thank very much President Hinckley for pointing out that Christianity has been the greatest success possible...what we need to do is return to the faith, the values of this Christ who was born 2,000 years ago....

[Mormonism exemplifies successful Christianity—the faith?]

TUTU: Christianity has been responsible for some of the most horrendous atrocities that the world has seen, and we ought to be suitably modest and humble....I do believe...we need to stand up for what is good,...[but] not in an aggressive way...[as if] we are the ones who have got the truth....

KING: Yes...“I am the Way, and the Light, and the Truth—and you're not.” We have to all get together....

[Atrocities have been committed by false “Christians,” not by true followers of Christ. As for having the truth, Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word...ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32). King's misquote of Christ and apparently faulting Him for being too dogmatic would be comical were it not so tragic.]

SCHULLER: ...we have lost humility...we religious leaders [must] begin to say, “I'm...not trying to convert other religious people to my viewpoint”....

[Schuller's false humility apologizes for Christ being the only Savior. Didn't Paul say, “I persuade men,” and aren't we to “earnestly contend for the faith”? It's the gospel by which alone men can be saved that we preach! (Rom 1:16; Acts 4:12).]

KING: ...my little nine-month-old [son] Chance is here. What do you say for his future, Reverend Schuller?

SCHULLER: I think it's going to be beautiful because he's got a mother and a father that are going to communicate to him values of positive faith....

[A Mormon mother and atheist father are great because their false faith is “positive”?]

How can leaders who ought to know better blindly pervert “the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1), promote false hopes and lead astray the millions hanging on their every word? Do they fear the rejection of men more than they fear God? Where is the fear of God? God in heaven is being mocked!

Perversion of truth brings popularity. May God deliver us from desiring that and renew in us a holy reverence for Him and for His Word. The firm commitment to stand faithfully for His truth without compromise is for the eternal welfare of those we influence, and for God's eternal glory.

TBC

Quotable

In Scripture as well as in history we read and find that the pure wholesome truth from the beginning of the world has generally been hated, reviled, and persecuted....The good pious Jeremiah, because he reproved the scribes for their false doctrine and wickedness, admonished the ignorant...urged the wicked population to repent...was called by the scribes a heretic and deceiver, and by the princes a seditionist and troublemaker. He had to bear much hardship although he was chosen of God and a prophet...and spake from the mouth of the Lord....John, a man sent from God...a burning, shining light, the messenger of the Lord, a voice crying in the wilderness...was accused that he was possessed of devils and was at last beheaded....

Jesus Christ, Himself the eternal Light and Life, was called Beelzebub, a Samaritan and devil-possessed, an insurrectionist, a transgressor of the Law, a blasphemer, a glutton and winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners...and at the last He was rewarded for all His glorious miracles, kindness, and love shown to them with a mocking robe, a crown of thorns, scourging, cross, nails and death after they had derided and blasphemed Him. How they treated Stephen, Peter, Paul, James, and the others, the Scriptures show abundantly.

At the time of the first church the Christians were called swine by some; others called them robbers of God's glory, murderers, infanticides, abominable...enemies of the human race...and of God....So it is today on every hand....False doctrine, idolatry, unbelief, willfulness, shame, and blasphemy are in control. They will not be reproved or admonished. They hate all who would in pure love at the cost of their goods and life...lead them in the way of peace, and save their souls if possible.

Menno Simons (c. 1540)
The Complete Writings of
 Menno Simons, pp 544-545

Q&A

Question [condensed to save space]: In response to [your] article I read on the internet [on someone else's website], entitled "Is Allah, of the Muslim/Islam religion, the same God of the Bible?" I would like to make a few comments and ask some questions.

Please give me chapter and verse from the Qur'an....If I do not hear from you

I will assume you have no proof and are spreading lies about Islam.

Answer: This has been discussed in these pages in the past. That Allah is not the God of the Bible is very clear. The biblical God is called Yahweh (or Jehovah) nearly 9,000 times. Yet Allah is not called by that name *even once* in the Koran. Why not, if Allah is the same God? God is also referred to as Elohim more than 2,500 times in the Bible, but again that word never appears for Allah in the Koran. Why? The God of the Bible is called "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob/Israel" (Jacob's name was changed by God to Israel later in life, so he is referred to by either name). He is the father of the Jews. The God of the Bible revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush by this name ("God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel") and told Moses, "this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Ex 3: 1-16). If Allah is the God of the Bible, why is he *never* called by these names?

The God of the Bible tells us again and again that He is the God of the Jews. Many times He is called "the God of Israel." Yet there is such hatred for Israel among Muslims! The Koran talks about Abraham and Ishmael, even claims they built the Ka'aba, but gives Isaac no prominence. The Bible mentions Isaac favorably and prominently more than 150 times. God very clearly says that His covenant is with Isaac, *not with Ishmael* (Gn 17:19-21), from whom the Arabs claim they are descended.

The God of the Bible calls the Jews His chosen people. He loves them and gave the land of Israel to them as an heritage *forever*; as hundreds of verses in the Bible declare. Islam denies this basic biblical truth. The Jews are certainly not *Allah's* chosen people! How can Allah be the God of the Bible, yet not choose the Jews?

In your Koran, as you must know, Allah commands Muslims, "Take not the Jews and Christians as friends" (Surah 5:51, Al Hil-ali, v. 54, Jusuf ali), so Allah is not the God of the Christians either. In the *hadith*, Muhammad himself said, "The last hour will not come before the Muslims fight the Jews, and the Muslims kill them" (Mishkat al Masabih Sh. M. Ashraf, 1990, pp. 147, 721, 810-11, 1130, etc.). Islam's god hates the Jews; the God of the Bible loves them as His chosen people! Allah is very clearly *not* Jehovah, Elohim, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the God of the Bible!

The God of the Bible chose Jerusalem

as His holy city. Forty times He calls Jerusalem "the city of David" and repeatedly He promises that the Messiah will be descended from David and will rule on David's throne in Jerusalem over the whole world (2 Chr 6:6; 33:7; 2 Sm 7:16; Ps 89: 3-29, etc.). Never does the Bible (or the God of the Bible) mention Mecca or Medina, but Jerusalem is mentioned more than 800 times. Yet Allah *never* mentions Jerusalem. How can this be if Allah is the God of the Bible? And how can the Muslims today claim Jerusalem as a holy city of Islam, when it isn't even mentioned in the Koran? That recent claim comes from those who want to take that city from the Jews.

That Allah has no son is further proof that He is not the God of the Bible, who definitely has a Son, as both the Old and New Testaments declare. Psalm 2 says, "Kiss the Son." Referring to the God of the Bible, Solomon says, "What is his son's name...?" (Prv 30:4). The angel Gabriel, whom Islam claims to honor, told the virgin Mary (Islam accepts the virgin birth of Jesus), "And, behold, thou shalt... bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be...called the Son of the Highest ...the Son of God...and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David..." (Lk 1:31-35). That throne is in Jerusalem, not in Mecca.

Muslims insist that the name "Allah" must be used in every language; it cannot be translated *Dios* in Spanish, *Dieu* in French, or God in English. Muslims thus treat "Allah" not as a generic word for God, but as the *name of a particular god*. In fact, Allah was the god of the Kuraish tribe centuries before Muhammad was born. You deny that he was the chief god in the Ka'aba, but you admit there were for centuries 360 idols in the Ka'aba and one of these was called Allah. What is Allah doing in a temple among 360 idols if he is the God of the Bible, who forbids idolatry? Why does Islam keep this idol temple, and why must Muslims to this day make a pilgrimage there?

That Allah was the chief idol in the Ka'aba is documented history. Let me quote one of the greatest historians:

The desert Arab...feared and worshiped incalculable deities in stars and moons. ...Now and then he offered human sacrifice; and here and there he worshiped sacred stones. The center of this stone worship was Mecca [with] the Ka'aba and its sacred Black Stone...in its south-east corner, five feet from the ground, just right for kissing....

Within the Ka'aba, in pre-Moslem days, were several idols representing gods. One was called Allah...three others were Allah's daughters—al-Uzza, al-Lat, and Manah. We may judge the antiquity of this Arab pantheon from the mention of Al-il-Lat (Al-Lat) by Herodotus [fifth-century B.C. Greek historian] as a major Arabian deity. The Quraish [Muhammad's tribe controlling Mecca] paved the way for monotheism by worshiping Allah as chief god; He was presented to the Meccans as the Lord of their soil, to Whom they must pay a tithe of their crops and the first-born of their herds. The Quraish, as alleged descendants of Abraham and Ishmael, appointed the priests and guardians of the shrine and managed its revenues (Will Durant, "The Story of Civilization," IV: 160-61).

The Ka'aba still stands, without its idols, but with the Black Stone. The pilgrimage to the Ka'aba, to...kiss the sacred stone, to run between Safa and Marwa, and to climb Mount Arafat, was practiced by pious pagan Arabs for centuries before Muhammad. Why did your prophet keep, as part of Islam, these pagan rituals?

You say "Islam is the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus...." Do you think Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, et al. journeyed to the idol temple, the Ka'aba, and kissed its Black Stone? Impossible! Not one follower of the God of the Bible would ever have gone near the Ka'aba, because the God of the Bible forbids any association with idols; and you admit (as history tells us) that the Ka'aba was filled with idols before Muhammad destroyed them all. In history and the Bible, you will find no mention of Islam or any religion like it. How could you have Islam without the Koran and Muhammad?

The only people who journeyed to the Ka'aba and kissed the Black Stone were pagan Arabs who worshiped one or more of the idols within and around it. Muhammad started a new religion called Islam to which Arabs, Persians, Egyptians, Turks and everyone else in the region had to convert at the point of the sword. They *became* Muslims, and there is no way you can say that Islam was the original religion of that or any other region.

You ask me to explain, "The God of the Bible is love, an impossibility for Allah." If Allah is a single being, as Muslims insist, then he cannot *be* love in and of himself, because he had no one to love until he created others; but the God of the Bible *is* love in and of Himself because He is three Persons but One God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit

loved and communed with one another before men or angels were created.

While the Jews know that Allah is not Jehovah, they try to say (as Muslims do for Allah) that Jehovah is a single being. If so, then why does the Bible refer to Him more than 2,500 times with the plural *Elohim* (gods)? Interestingly, however, *always with the plural noun there is a singular verb. One cannot escape the plurality combined with singularity repeatedly used.*

The famous *shema* (Dt 6:4), the most fundamental saying about God for a Jew, declares, "Hear, O Israel: *Jehovah* our *Elohim* is one *Jehovah*." Far from declaring that the God of the Bible is a singular being, the Hebrew word translated "one" is *echad*, which means a unity of several becoming one, as when God said the man and woman became "one [*echad*] flesh" (Gn 2:24); when many soldiers became "one [*echad*] troop" (2 Sm 2:25) or when two sticks became "one [*echad*] stick" (Ezk 37:17) etc.

The Bible teaches that God's very essence is love and says, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). This is not true of Allah. The Bible repeatedly speaks of God's love for man and the love we must have for Him. But love is scarcely mentioned in the Koran. Not once is "love" listed in the index of the popular Marmaduke Pickthall translation of the Koran. Of Allah's 99 attributes, love is not one. The Koran does say that Allah loves "the beneficent" (Surah 2:195), "the steadfast [and] those whose deeds are good" (Surah 3:146-48), and "those who battle for his cause" (Surah 61:4). But never does it say he loves all mankind, much less sinners; but the God of the Bible loves sinners, even those who hate Him. Allah is said to be merciful, but he does not show mercy to those who need it. The God of the Bible, however, is merciful to all, ready to forgive confessed sin.

The first of the Ten Commandments is that we are to love the God of the Bible with our whole heart; but never does the Koran say a Muslim is to love Allah. You cannot love Allah, because he is unknowable. The God of the Bible can be known and repeatedly calls upon men to know Him; but the Koran says no one can know Allah because he is too great. In spite of being infinite, without beginning and end, and the Creator of the universe, the biblical God reveals himself so that men can know Him. Jesus himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Jn 17:3). Those who don't know the God of the Bible are lost eternally. No one knows Allah.

The Bible is filled with prophecies of the coming of Messiah Jesus, but there is not

one such prophecy in the Koran for Jesus or Muhammad. In fact, the Koran was written after Muhammad came, so it could not prophesy his coming, but the Old Testament prophesied the coming of Jesus centuries and even thousands of years beforehand. The Jewish prophets in the Old Testament said the Messiah would be crucified and rise from the dead the third day. Jesus came at exactly the time prophesied and died for the sins of the world, as the Bible says over and over. But the Koran contradicts this and says He didn't die on the cross at all, much less for our sins. The Bible says that the penalty for sin must be paid and that God himself had to come as a man to die for our sins. Allah did not do that.

How does Allah save sinners? It would be unjust to forgive the guilty without the penalty being paid. Where does Allah explain the penalty? When and by whom was that penalty paid? If Allah forgives, how does he forgive? Allah simply refuses to forgive or forgives whom he will, but there is no consistent or just basis for either. No Muslim can be sure Allah will forgive him. As a Christian I know for certain that I have been forgiven all my sins and that I have eternal life as a free gift from God through the death and resurrection of Christ and that I will be in heaven—not by my good works, but by Christ paying the penalty for my sins. Allah is merciful to those who do good. The Bible says that none do good, all have sinned, and that God saves sinners if they believe in the Christ who died for them.

You ask where Allah says in the Koran, "Let us make man in our image." I don't read Arabic so can't find that exact place but I was told by an Arabic scholar that in the Arabic that is what it says. However, the God of the Bible said, "Let us make man in our image." If Allah is the same God, why didn't he say that?

There are many contradictions within the Koran, and between the Bible and the Koran. Please refer to my book, *A Cup of Trembling*, which lists some of them.

Please Contemplate This

T.A. McMahon

Suppose you were introduced to a promotion promising a direct line of communication with the Creator of the universe.

Let's say you're initially skeptical, but you also find the idea appealing. After all, who wouldn't want to be able to hear from and speak with God as though He were on one's cell phone? As you listen to the deal being pitched and peruse some of the literature, you realize that the key to this is the use of a ouija board. You push the literature aside and head for the exit.

Virtually every evangelical Christian would quickly reject the proposal, especially if he were aware that a ouija board is an instrument of *divination*, a device for contacting spirit entities, which the Bible explicitly condemns (Dt 18:10). The basic problem with divination is that, even though the diviner is sincerely attempting to contact God, the entities with which one ends up communicating are demons (posing as Jesus, God, angels, departed loved ones, aliens, gods, etc.).

Discernment regarding the above example is for the most part, as my kids would say, "a no brainer!" However, that's rarely the case in today's spiritual marketplace. In particular, the "new and improved" or "revived" ways promoted among evangelicals of communicating with God are highly deceptive and very seductive. God has given *His Word* and *His Holy Spirit* to help us discern what is of Him and what is not. It's particularly disturbing that a lethal portion of the "what is not" has entered the arena of our evangelical youth. Under the guise of "spiritual exercises that invite direct experiences with God," and with the assurance that they are "classical forms of biblical meditation," growing numbers of our "church" kids are being led unwittingly into the occult.

As I researched what I consider to be an extremely dangerous "spiritual" trend in the body of Christ, my empathy and concern deepened for the young people and youth pastors involved. I have little doubt that the motivation common to most of them arises from a desire to know God more intimately. That is not only what every biblical believer wants but, more importantly, that's what the Lord wants for us. Furthermore, no truly born-again Christian can deny the experiential aspect of his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. So

what exactly is the problem? God's way is being forsaken for man's way—and worse.

Programs and practices rife with occult methodologies and techniques have been in the works at churches and youth ministries around the country: *Taizé*, *Lectio Divina*, The Labyrinth (prayer walk), Renovaré, guided imagery, Walk to Emmaus, *Cursillo*, Centering Prayer, Ignatian Awareness Examen, The Jesus Prayer, and *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, to name but a handful. Two significant reasons for the appalling growth of these and other similar activities are that 1) they have an inside track with established parachurch organizations, and 2) increasing numbers of evangelicals are acquiring a taste for things Catholic.

Mark Yaconelli is co-director of the Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project (YMSP),

This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart...

Jeremiah 13:10

an Eli Lilly (makers of Prozac) endowed program which is introducing contemplative spirituality to young people throughout the country. He is also an adjunct professor of youth ministries at San Francisco Theological Seminary. His father is Mike Yaconelli, head of Youth Specialities, a major evangelical organization serving "more than 80,000 youth workers worldwide through training seminars, conventions, videos, magazines, and resource products."

One Youth Specialities seminar is "Sabbath: A [Contemplative] Spiritual Retreat for Youth Workers," which Mark Yaconelli leads. In an article for the popular, youth-oriented *Group* magazine, Mark states, "The YMSP approach to youth ministry pushes for a return to God-awareness...[noting] that middle school and senior high kids are hungry to encounter God directly and eager to learn contemplative spiritual practices."¹

In another article subtitled "How Spiritual Exercises Can Change Your Kids," he tells of implementing contemplative methods he first learned at "a weeklong retreat at a nearby [Roman Catholic] convent":

Our [YMSP] project churches were introduced to a number of classical exercises from the Christian tradition: Biblical meditation forms like *Lectio Divina* and Ignatian contemplation; icon prayers and other visualization prayers;

chanting; guided imagery; biblical imagination...centering prayer; and prayers of discernment.²

While I'm not questioning Yaconelli's sincerity or integrity, nevertheless for accuracy's sake his statement needs both clarification and correction. By "Christian tradition" he cannot mean biblical Christianity; these are exercises from "ancient" Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. And, as will become clear, the "biblical meditation forms" he refers to are the antithesis of the meditation presented in God's Word.

Let's begin with the term "contemplative," which is the prevalent name for the movement. Whereas contemplation normally means to think about something intently or to study it carefully, practitioners of the various contemplative methods do the *opposite*. The movement's goal is to get people beyond thinking and understanding and into the realm of *experiencing*. Adherents are taught that while reason has some value, truly knowing God can only come through experiencing Him. This approach is, at best, a corruption of what the Bible says both about reason and how a believer's personal relationship with Jesus Christ is developed. At worst, the contemplative exercises lead to the false Eastern mystical belief that man can achieve literal *union* with God, i.e., be absorbed into Him or It.

Lectio Divina (or "holy reading") is one of the basic exercises of these disciplines. A phrase or single word is chosen from the Bible. However, rather than aiding understanding through one's dwelling on its plain meaning, the word or words become mediumistic devices for hearing directly from God. The word or phrase is then "meditated upon" (*meditatio*) by being slowly repeated again and again in the fashion of a mantra (Jesus condemns as heathen "vain repetitions" in prayer [Mt 6:7]). It is then prayed (*oratio*) as an incantation, thereby allegedly healing painful thoughts or emotions. Finally, the repeated word is used to help clear one's thoughts (*contemplatio*), supposedly making one an open receptacle for personally hearing God's voice.

These biblical words are selected not for the purpose of attaining objective understanding—the "contemplator" has almost no interest in the meaning, grammatical use or context of the verses, which simply become a mechanism to aid in *listening* for subjective communication from God. It should be obvious (especially for evangelicals!) that this is *not* how the Bible

instructs us to learn or teach the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. Furthermore, classic contemplative concepts *reject* doctrine as a basis for knowing God and for receiving His salvation. Many of the movement's "spiritual masters" blame western rationalism (with its penchant for reason and emphasis upon words) for nearly destroying "our ability to *intuitively experience* our Creator."

While the contemplative movement is troubling in its antibiblical philosophies, it is downright alarming in its potential for demon involvement. Its methodologies have been the very stuff of occultism throughout the ages. A tutorial of this movement is *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, a primer for learning occult visualization (hailed by shamans as the most potent method for contacting spirit entities). In one of dozens of such exercises Ignatius instructs the reader "to picture ...Christ our Lord...standing in a lowly place in a great plain about the region of Jerusalem, His appearance beautiful and attractive."³ Though this may seem innocent, even spiritually gratifying, in *reality* it's impossible. No one knows what Jesus looks like. Moreover, this is visual idolatry (Ex 20:4-5), and a *divination* technique that opens the door to demonic spirits. We personally know former Jesuit priests (Ignatius founded the Jesuits) who report that they had been demonized by this method. The real Jesus will not respond, no matter how sincere the practitioner. Through the *imagination* the visualized Jesus (or any other personage) often takes on a life of its own and brings the practitioner into occult bondage. (See *The Seduction of Christianity* or *Occult Invasion* for more information on shamanic visualization.)

Centering prayer, a foundational contemplative technique, is a "Christianized" version of Eastern mystical meditation. Stripped of its deceptively biblical sounding terminology, it's no different from that which yogis have practiced for millennia; neither are its occult effects. For example, an instructor in the movement (who mentors two Catholic priests) tells of his recurring problem with his meditation breathing exercise:

The Spirit would flow into my heart and start burning and I couldn't get it to stop. The burning would proceed into my lungs and I could not take a deep breath for days, let alone do the breathing exercises....Do not get the idea that I was doing the exercises too forcefully. I wasn't. It

was just that the Spirit had become unleashed and I was encouraging it to flow more forcefully than my nervous system could handle. I sought medical help but the doctor couldn't find any reason for the problem. How do you tell a doctor that the Spirit has really been rough on you lately and you want to learn how to cope with it?⁴

Rough "Spirit"? Not the *Holy* Spirit! Still needing help, he wrote to a renowned Catholic monk, author of many books on contemplative exercises. The reply was revealing though not surprising. "He graciously wrote back explaining that although the end in God is the same....he had not felt the heat or the flowing of the Spirit exactly as I did but that he had read about these experiences when reading of the *kundalini* (what [Western] yogis call the fire of the Holy Spirit [Hindus actually call it the "serpent force!"]) experiences...."⁵ Similar "rough" manifestations—which wouldn't go away—have been reported at the alleged revivals of Pensacola and Toronto, causing young people and their parents to seek medical counsel.

If our small, central-Oregon town of Bend is any indication, the pied pipers of this movement are everywhere. Some of our local churches recently had *Taizé* meetings (repetitive chanting, meditative silences, candlelit rooms, etc.) for their youth. Walk to Emmaus has its local adherents. Richard Foster, who introduced shamanic visualization to evangelicals in his bestselling *Celebration of Discipline*, came to town with his contemplative spirituality-promoting organization, Renovaré. Its board of reference and speakers have included Jack Hayford, Lloyd John Ogilvie, Don Moomaw, Robert Seiple, David and Karen Mains, Martin Marty, C. Peter Wagner, Ron Sider, J.I. Packer, Calvin Miller, Fr. Henri Nouwen, Ted Engstrom, Fr. Michael Scanlon, Eugene Peterson, John Wimber, and Tony Campolo.

Not far from here, Eastern mystical guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh had his massive ashram/ranch, which the Lord graciously turned over to Young Life, the evangelical parachurch ministry. So it's grievously ironic that the speaker for their pre-opening leadership conference at the 60,000-plus-acres Wild Horse Canyon complex was former Catholic priest/present Catholic mystic Brennan Manning. His book *The Signature of Jesus* advances the philosophies and methodologies of the contemplative mystical/New Age pundits. It is Jesus to whom he attributes the occult

technique of centering prayer: "The hunger I encounter across the land for silence, solitude, and centering prayer is the Spirit of Christ calling us from the shadows to the deep."⁶ His most influential admirers (and promoters among our youth) are some of the biggest names in Christian music, including the late Rich Mullins, Michael Card, D.C. Talk, and A Ragamuffin Band—named after Manning's *Ragamuffin Gospel* (endorsed by Eugene Peterson and Max Lucado). His contemplative and "unconditional love" gospel (see Q&A this issue), however, is not the biblical gospel of salvation; therefore, neither can the Jesus who he claims appears to him be the biblical Jesus.

The problems with this bogus spiritual approach to God are too many to fit into this brief article. Nevertheless, my prayer is that those youth leaders and pastors involved, or thinking about getting involved, would *contemplate* (in the biblical sense!) the following:

Where do you find any of these methods or techniques in the Bible? Did any prophet or apostle, New Testament or Old, practice any of these "spiritual" exercises? No. Then how can these exercises be considered *God's way* of knowing Him?

How much of this movement with its mystical saints and classic works is Catholic, advancing the Catholic way of salvation? Are you interested in having your youth group follow the "check your mind at the door" teachings of St. Ignatius found in his spiritual exercises—such as, "If we wish to proceed securely in all things, we must hold fast to the following principle: What seems to me white, I will believe black if the hierarchical [Roman Catholic] Church so defines"?⁷

Have you ever found the *biblical* gospel in any of the classic or modern contemplative materials? Could there be any significance in the fact that this movement practically died out after the Reformation, only to be revived today! How does one discern whether or not the God being "heard" through the *subjective, experiential* mode of communication is truly our Lord speaking—*especially* if the authority and sufficiency of His Word is downplayed, even rejected?

Finally, if you truly love those young souls whom Christ also loved and for whom He died, will you be a Berean, *carefully checking* these things in the light of Scripture—for their sake (Acts 20:28)? **TBC**

Quotable

Alas! these five thousand years Adam's fools have been wasting and lavishing out their love and their affections upon...broken idols, upon this and that feckless creature; and have not brought their love and their heart to Jesus. O pity, that Fairness hath so few lovers!...There is so little spoken, so little written, and so little thought of my great and incomprehensible, and never-enough wondered at Lord Jesus!

Samuel Rutherford

Letters (1637), p. 121; at the time of writing this letter Rutherford was deprived of all right to preach, and was summoned to appear before Parliament on a charge of treason, but was too ill to make the journey.

And God still waits and wonders in our day, that there are not more intercessors, that all His children do not give themselves to this highest and holiest work, that many of them who do so, do not engage in it more intensely and perseveringly.

He wonders to find multitudes of His children who have hardly any conception of what intercession is....[who] know but little of taking hold upon God or prevailing with Him.

Andrew Murray

Quoted in *Scottish Protestant View*,

Q&A

Question [composite of a number of letters]: We are appalled at your lack of discernment on the issue of repentance in the January 2000 *Berean Call*. You said clearly, "...the Bible doesn't specify repentance as part of the gospel whereby sinners are saved." Any Christian knows that without repentance there is no salvation. It is the sort of teaching you have promoted that is destroying churches today and I will no longer endorse or use your materials plus will warn others of this heresy. Any presentation of the gospel must be as explicit about the need for repentance as the whole of Scripture itself is....Are we to understand you do not believe in a literal hell with actual flames? Again, another heresy! Please publicly renounce these errors; otherwise remove us immediately from your mailing list.

Answer: Thank you for your letter. I must confess, however, that I don't quite understand it. I have not denied the value of repentance. In

fact, I quoted a number of verses concerning the preaching of repentance. You fault me for saying, "the Bible doesn't specify repentance as part of the gospel whereby sinners are saved." If it does, please show me where repentance is declared to be part of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul does not summarize the gospel to the Corinthians and leave something out; he says, "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...by which also ye are saved,...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...." This declaration of the gospel that saves has no mention of repentance. I am only trying to be true to God's Holy Spirit-inspired Word.

There are dozens of gospel verses in the Bible promising salvation without any mention of repentance (Mk 16:16; Jn 1:12, 3:16, 3:36, 5:24; Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9, etc.). If there must be a call to repent as part of the gospel, then Paul failed to present the gospel to the Philippian jailor and to many others. When it says what Paul's "manner was" of preaching (Acts 17:2-3), there is no mention of repentance. That does not mean that he never preached repentance, because he did; but it was clearly not the essential element you insist upon or surely it would have had prominent mention. Nor, if I understand you correctly, did John the Apostle and the Holy Spirit present the gospel in his entire Gospel. If you are right, Jesus did not present the gospel to Nicodemus, or to the woman at the well, or to the blind men, or to Zacchaeus, et al. Zacchaeus, by the way, repented without Jesus telling him to do so. As I tried to say, I believe repentance is *inherent* in the gospel for those who believe it.

As for a literal hell with literal flames, that is exactly what I believe. Are those flames physical—or something even more horrible? Must something be physical to be *real*? Is that what you mean by "literal"? Are the soul and spirit *real*? The rich man said he was "tormented in this flame" and asked that Lazarus might "dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue" (Lk 16:24). There was literal flame and burning thirst. Was it physical, or worse? His physical body was decaying in the grave and only his soul and spirit were in hell.

I am trying to stick with what the Bible declares. How does that make me a heretic, and "destroyer of churches"? I hope this has helped you to understand what I mean and believe.

Question: In your December article you wrote that Switzerland and Sweden both turned away Jews trying to escape

Hitler's ovens. I am aware that the Swiss did just that, plus stole millions of dollars from the Jews. However, I lived in Sweden during all the war years and my family received a Jewish school teacher into our home. Other members of our family gave shelter to Jews. I remember one family of five, having left all behind, escaped in a small boat. A cousin of my father's gave them a house to live in. I never heard of any government interference in any of this. Sweden also sheltered the children from Finland all the years of the war. I went to school with several of them....I have always loved the Jewish people and it was a great joy to me that my family had helped so many of them.

Answer: Thank you for writing. I owe an apology to you and all Swedes. I was going by memory in that statement (my memory is usually accurate but I shouldn't trust it in something so important) and confused Finland with Sweden. For example, I was thinking of the boat with 53 Jews aboard, one pregnant woman, who sought asylum in Finland. They allowed the woman to give birth to her child in a hospital, then sent the boat back. In despair, three of the refugees jumped overboard on the way back and drowned. In spite of such incidents, however, Finland did provide shelter to several thousand Jews. And though Switzerland turned many back, about 6,000 were given refuge in that country. Of course, to turn even one back was heartless.

As for Sweden, however, she had one of the best records. The Nazis listed 8,000 Jews in Sweden whom they hoped to gather into their extermination program. So far as we know, none of those Jews was taken, and Sweden took in many escaping from other countries, including from Norway. Unfortunately, Sweden, which remained neutral during the war, allowed Nazi trains to pass through its territory into and out of Norway. Nevertheless, nearly 1,000 Jews were smuggled from Norway into Sweden and safety. In an amazing operation, nearly 6,000 Jews, 1,300 part-Jews and almost 700 Christians married to Jews were ferried by Danish sea captains and fishermen into Sweden, where they survived the war, leaving only about 500 Jews who fell into Nazi hands in Denmark. They were taken to Theresienstadt, but on April 14, 1945, a Swedish diplomat, Count Folke Bernadotte, negotiated the release of 423 back to Denmark and these all survived the war. Another 3,000 Jews had been taken in by Sweden from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia prior to outbreak of war.

Everyone has heard of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who came to Budapest

specifically to save Hungarian Jews on July 9, 1944. Due to the protest of Sweden's king, deportation of Jews had been halted by the Hungarian authorities the day before. Together, Wallenberg and the Swiss consul, Charles Lutz, were able to set up nearly 80 buildings under Swiss diplomatic protection where about 25,000 Jews were saved. They worked desperately while Nazis roamed Budapest slaughtering the Jews. Nearly 120,000 Jews were saved by the arrival of Soviet troops. Sadly, however, Wallenberg was summoned to Soviet military headquarters and disappeared, fate unknown.

In spite of the great care that we all take here at TBC to be 100 percent accurate, we are not perfect and this error crept in and was not discovered. Thank you for pointing it out to us, and once again I apologize for the mistake.

Question: I've been given a couple of books by Brennan Manning, and although I had some trouble with *A Ragamuffin Gospel*, I was shocked by *The Signature of Jesus*. My impression is that he is a Catholic mystic in evangelical "wool." Is he trying to pull that wool over our eyes or what?

Answer: *The Signature of Jesus (SoJ)*, it seems, is an emotionally charged primer for attracting Christians to the contemplative way of spirituality. The modern contemplative approach has its roots in the Catholic and Orthodox mystics from the fourth century through the Middle Ages. While its theology is foundationally Roman Catholic, the emphasis of contemplative prayer is on experiential methods rather than the more common devotional activities of Catholicism. For example, where most Catholics stress liturgical acts in order to draw nearer to God (pray the rosary, make novenas, attend Holy Hours, perform acts of penance, etc.), contemplatives emphasize techniques of practicing silence before God in order to experience His presence. Through his books and speaking, former Catholic priest Brennan Manning has taken contemplative concepts and techniques (along with his Catholic beliefs) to increasing numbers of evangelicals, who are his main audience.

His many unbiblical teachings are powerfully written and compelling, primarily because they are seasoned with some biblical truth. Nevertheless, the book's antiscriptural content undermines the faith for which Jude exhorts believers to contend earnestly (Jude 3).

Throughout *SoJ*, Manning takes biblical tenets and spins them in the direction of his mystical worldview. Faith, for example, is seen as a "journey...across the chasm between

knowledge and experience" (p. 18), with the experiential being preferable. Faith is advocated as belief in one's subjective spiritual experiences, and denigrated as belief in biblical doctrines, the objective content of the faith. An antidotal attitude pervades his book: "I develop a nasty rash around people who speak as if mere scrutiny of [the Bible's] pages will reveal precisely how God thinks and precisely what God wants... Instead of remaining content with the bare letter, we should pass on to the more profound mysteries that are available only through intimate and heartfelt knowledge [read "experience"] of the person of Jesus" (p.189).

Manning's own "salvation" testimony reflects his contemplative perspective: "...on February 8, 1956, I met Jesus and moved ...from belief [meaning Catholic doctrine] to faith [meaning trust in his experience]....In this first-ever-in-my-life experience of being unconditionally loved...in one blinding moment of salvific truth it was *real* knowledge calling for personal engagement of my mind and heart. Christianity was being loved and falling in love with Jesus Christ" (pp. 28-29). He offers no declaration of the gospel which must be believed for salvation. Many have "fallen in love" with Jesus (Ghandi, et. al.) while rejecting the gospel. Unfortunately, this is where Manning leaves his readers.

Abusing the Genesis account and leaning on Thomas Aquinas, Manning claims that man is "flawed but good" (pp.100,126-127, 178). This unbiblical belief is then developed into a gospel of universal acceptance and love based upon people *realizing* "their own belovedness" (p. 171). A key aspect of this gospel includes realizing the "divine" within everyone, to which the "prayer" technique will lead its practitioners: "The task of contemplative prayer is to help me achieve the conscious awareness of the unconditionally loving God dwelling within me" (p. 211).

Manning makes apparent the ecumenical and universal prospect of his contemplative gospel: "Many devout Moslems, Buddhists, and Hinduists [who] are generous and sincere in their search for God. ...have had profound mystical experiences" (p. 170). That God dwells within them and everyone else he makes clear by quoting (Catholic priest and spiritual mystic) Thomas Merton's answer to the question, "How can we best help people to attain union with God?...We must tell them that they are already united with God" (p. 211).

Although in *A Ragamuffin Gospel* Manning gives lip service to the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone, it is indisputable that his "unconditionally loving" God and "universal gospel" are devoid of God's

justice. He writes, "We experience the forgiveness of Jesus not as the reprieve of a judge but the embrace of a lover" (p. 212). His "lover," however, is not the "just God" whose *conditions* for salvation must be satisfied. God's justice demands that the death penalty for sin be paid; yet because of God's infinite love, He gave His only begotten Son to die in our place. Furthermore, our love relationship with Him is *not* unconditional: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (Jn 3:36).

Limited space prevents covering all the unbiblical teachings in *SoJ*; however, those who have his book can check out the following: He credits the "Spirit of Christ" with inviting people "across the land" to (the occult technique of) centering prayer (p.149); and leads the reader in an exercise of "centering down" (pp. 94,112,218-19); his large cast of supporting characters throughout the book are nearly all Catholic mystics, ancient and contemporary; he presents psychological fallacies such as "genetic predisposition to alcoholism" (p. 61), self-forgiveness, self-acceptance, and the humanistic classic, "If you love yourself intensely and freely, then your feelings about yourself correspond perfectly to the sentiments of Jesus" (pp.105-107,128,174-75); psychospiritual inner healing is affirmed (p. 62,233); visions of his Jesus are described (p. 181, 235); and vain repetitions in prayer are introduced before the One who condemns such a practice: "...the overhead spotlight...shines on the crucifix, and [I] stare at the body naked and nailed. Prostrate on the floor, I whisper 'Come, Lord Jesus' over and over" (pp. 47, 218). Finally, we are to "seek within" ourselves this indwelling God about whom he speaks, which includes in our prayers and worship (p. 94-95,111,150).

No. True believers are indeed temples of the Holy Spirit, but *never* does the Bible direct man to look within himself to find God.

The Signature of Jesus contains this quote: "Maybe it sounds arrogant to say we come to know Christ as we persevere in contemplative prayer." This enterprise is far more tragic than arrogance—it is simply not God's way!

Endnotes

1. *Group* (Jul/Aug, 99), 35, 39.
2. *Youthworker* (Jul/Aug, 99), 28-29.
3. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 138 Second Prelude.
4. <http://chrmysticaloutreach.com/text>
5. *Ibid.*
6. Brennan Manning, *The Signature of Jesus* (Multnomah, 1996).
7. *St. Ignatius*, 365.13.

Authority and Responsibility

Dave Hunt

There are three closely related statements by Christ to His disciples which have created much controversy over their interpretation: 1) "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19, 18:18); 2) "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching [concerning] any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Mt 18:19); and 3) "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (Jn 20:23).

In seeking to understand any passage in Scripture, one rule must govern: whatever the Bible declares, the Bible itself (not some outside authority) must interpret. It is from the Bible that we learn the gospel, about the church Christ established, about discipleship and the responsibilities, authority and power He has given to His own. Therefore, it is to the Bible that we must look to understand these things—and the Bible is understandable.

God's word is presented to all mankind. Never does the Bible suggest that a special rank of spiritual leaders must explain it to the rest of mankind; and that without such help ordinary people could not understand it. In fact, the opposite is taught in Scripture. Consider a few examples: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Dt 8:3, quoted by Jesus at Mt 4:4, Lk 4:4); "Blessed is the man...[whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps 1:1-2); "Where-withal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word...(Ps 119:9).

Notice that in each case an ordinary man (or woman), and even a young man/woman, meditates upon and obeys God's word. There is no hint that the persons mentioned needed to consult any special teacher concerning the scriptures. Therefore, we must conclude that to be the case for everyone.

The New Testament also supports this conclusion. Consider Christ's rebuke of the two on the road to Emmaus for not knowing and understanding the scriptures. That neither of them was part of the inner circle of disciples is clear, because they hurried

back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven (Judas was dead) of Christ's appearance (Lk 24:33-34). Yet Jesus rebuked these ordinary people: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Lk 24:25). He would not have used such harsh language, holding them personally accountable to know *all* that the prophets had said, unless the scriptures were understandable to ordinary people.

Those in the city of Berea (both Jews and gentiles) "searched the scriptures daily, [to see] whether those things [which Paul preached] were so" (Acts 17:11). These ordinary people were praised for not automatically accepting the great Apostle Paul's biblical interpretation, but for checking it out for themselves from the scriptures. From these and many other examples that could be given, we can only conclude that it is

**...my servant Job shall pray for you:
for him will I accept.**

Job 42:8

the responsibility of each individual to know and understand God's Word based upon what it says, not upon what some religious authority claims it means.

This fact exposes as totally spurious the claim by the Roman Catholic Church that its magisterium (the hierarchy of bishops, in concert with its pope) alone can interpret the Bible. That Church did not even exist for the Bereans to consult, much less for the two on the road to Emmaus or for anyone in Old Testament times. Likewise, the claims of any other church or cult that its leaders alone can interpret the Bible are also exposed as contradictory to Scripture.

Three things are abundantly clear: 1) the Bible has been given by God as His Word to all who will receive it; 2) it is intended to be understood by ordinary people, even by youths, without special training or looking to religious leaders for interpretation; 3) everyone is accountable to know God's Word personally, and that responsibility cannot be passed off to pastor, priest, pope or anyone else.

With this understanding, we may now consider the controversial passages mentioned above. To support the Catholic concept of a pope as Peter's successor, it is claimed that the promise in Matthew 16 of the keys of heaven and binding and loosing was addressed to Peter alone. Even if that were true, the promise of the keys is linked with the promise of binding and loosing, and

in Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23 Christ gives the power of binding and loosing, and remitting and retaining sins to *all* of His inner circle of disciples. That fact eliminates any special priority or authority to Peter and is of vital importance to our understanding of these scriptures. Why? Because whatever responsibility and authority Christ bestowed upon His original twelve was passed on to every true Christian.

That conclusion follows directly from Christ's command to His disciples to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15)...teaching them [who believe the gospel] to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Mt 28:20). Thus *all* of the promises Christ made and *all* that He taught His original disciples and commanded them to do was to be passed on to every Christian throughout history, including to us today. Obviously, the "*all things whatsoever I have commanded you,*" which every new disciple would be taught to observe, included the promises concerning the keys of heaven, binding and loosing, and remitting and retaining of sins—and the authority and power to do so.

New disciples were to make more disciples and to teach them also to observe *all things* Christ had commanded the original twelve—which included making more disciples. As a result, an unbroken chain of discipleship has come down through the centuries. Every Christian, being a disciple of a disciple of a disciple (all the way back to the first disciples), is a successor of the Apostles and is indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit to act accordingly.

Thus, the authority and power which Christ gave to the original disciples of using the keys in binding and loosing, and remitting and retaining of sins, does not belong to an elite class of leaders, but to each one who is born again of the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. But "binding and loosing" *what?* Christ said, "whatsoever." That's broad indeed. Was he, at least in part, referring to demons? Surely one would not turn demons loose! Nor is there even one example in the Bible prior to the Millennium of demons (or "territorial spirits") being "bound." Even Christ allowed those He cast out of a man to go into a herd of swine (Mk 5:1-13). Then what is meant?

Christ gave *all* of the twelve the promise of binding and loosing (Mt 18:18) and then He repeated the promise in different words in verse 19: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching

[concerning] any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Verse 20 follows: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here, at least, we understand that the binding or loosing of "whatsoever" is to be effected by asking the heavenly Father to bring to pass that which two or more Christians have agreed upon on earth, meeting in Christ's name with Him in their midst.

The promise of having from the Father what two or three agree upon echoes Christ's similar promises concerning prayer, such as, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Mt 7:7). All of these promises—binding and loosing, agreeing upon a request, or simply believing—seem very much alike. But what is meant? Christ surely does *not* mean that no matter what we bind, loose, agree upon, or ask, God will grant it like an overly indulgent grandparent. It is axiomatic that God has not turned His universe or mankind over to us to do with as we will.

James declares that God, far from giving us a blank check, does not indulge our selfish desires: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas 4:3). John writes, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight...if we ask anything according to his will,...we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 Jn 3:22, 5:14-15).

Clearly, prayer requests are granted for those who please God, and only according to His will. Who would want it otherwise? Similar limitations upon prayer must apply even to the broadest promises, such as, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Mt 21:22); "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mk 11:24); "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (Jn 16:23).

Even these broad promises involve two conditions: believing (i.e., faith in God), and asking in Christ's name. These are limiting indeed. Faith is not a power of the mind so that by believing something will happen we bring it to pass. Faith must be, according to Christ, "in God" (Mk 11:22). Thus faith is not believing that prayer will be answered, but believing that *God will answer it*. Inasmuch as God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11), genuine faith that

comes from God could never believe God for anything contrary to His will.

As for asking "in Christ's name," that phrase, sadly, is tacked onto many prayers as though it were an "Open Sesame" magic formula. On the contrary, to ask in Jesus' name is to ask in His interest, to His glory, as He would ask—and His will is always conformed to the Father's. Prayer, then, is not a means of forcing one's will upon God. Instead, it is the gracious opportunity He allows us, to have a part in furthering His will.

So it must be that in using the keys of the kingdom in binding or loosing, and remitting or retaining sins, Christ's followers act *only as the agents of His power and only according to His will*.

Can we be still more specific? Christ said, "whatsoever...whosoever." Inasmuch, however, as it can only be according to His will, He must reveal the specifics when the occasion arises. The important point is that this power and authority was

**Abraham prayed unto God:
and God healed Abimelech...**

Genesis 20:17

**Elias...prayed earnestly that it
might not rain: and it rained not...**

James 5:17

not just to Peter or just to the original twelve, but has been passed to us today, along with everything else Christ taught and commanded them.

Additionally, when Jesus healed the woman "which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years," He said to her, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity" (Lk 13:11-13). So by the gift of healing, the disciples could loose the sick from their bondage to illness; and by casting out demons they *loosed souls* from that form of bondage. Every Christian has the power, in the name of Jesus (as He would and to His glory), to do the same today.

How would one loose from and remit sins? Scripture is clear that all sin is against God, not just against another human. Therefore only God can forgive sins in the ultimate sense. Furthermore, forgiveness of sins and man's eternal destiny are a matter not only of God's love but of His justice. God himself cannot (and would not) overrule His own justice. God can forgive sins only because Christ paid sin's penalty demanded by His infinite justice (Rom 3:23-

28). And forgiveness is only for those who believe the gospel. Christ made that clear: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn 3:3-5, 36).

The Scripture which Christ read in the synagogue in Nazareth and declared to be fulfilled through His ministry foretold the Messiah declaring, "...the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings [the gospel]...to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa 61:1; Lk 4:16-21). Isaiah and Christ are saying that the loosing of those bound by sin is only brought about through the preaching of the gospel. And what else but the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16), could be the "keys of the kingdom"?

It is a delusion, then, to imagine that God has put in the hands of any man or church the power to decide who goes to heaven or hell. Indeed, how could he? In the cross of Christ alone "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7). No one, not even God himself, can remit sins on any other basis. The gospel alone opens the door to heaven, the very gospel which Christ told His first disciples to "go into all the world and preach"—and, as we have seen, the responsibility and privilege of preaching it has been passed down to us today.

It is of the utmost importance to remember that every Christian has the power to release souls from sin's penalty through proclaiming the gospel to those who will believe. This is the good news of God's grace which looses from Satan's bondage those who believe.

The "keys" are not magic. Faith is still required. God desires "for all men to be saved" (1 Tm 2:4) and He "is not willing that any should perish" (2 Pt 3:9). Yet many will indeed perish, because they persist in their rebellion and rejection of Christ. God himself cannot force anyone to love Him, because the power of choice He gave us is essential for love.

It should be our passion, therefore, to persuade as many as we can to accept God's love and forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. How tragic that so many Christians who know the gospel so often fail to present it to those around them. As our Lord moves our hearts with love and compassion for the lost, may we respond in His love and use the keys of the kingdom ever more urgently and effectively to the salvation of many souls!

TBC

Quotable

There is always the utmost danger when a man or his work becomes remarkable. He may be sure Satan is gaining his objective when attention is shown to anything or anyone but the Lord Jesus Himself. A work may be commenced in the greatest possible simplicity, but through lack of holy watchfulness and spirituality on the part of the workman, he himself or the results of his work may attract general attention, and he may fall into the snare of the devil. Satan's grand and ceaseless object is to dishonor the Lord Jesus. If he can do this by what seems to be Christian service, he has achieved all the greater victory for the time. [As one said,] "No man can at one and the same time prove that he is great and that Christ is wonderful."

C.H. Mackintosh
Cited by William MacDonald
in *One Day At a Time* for January 23

Q&A

Question [from a pastor]: Just a quick note to thank you for your newsletter and your sound biblical teaching and to ask one question....It has been my conviction for some time now that the parachurch setup...is an unbiblical foundation for ministry. I am in no way questioning what you are doing, only the way you're doing it, and am wondering if you have ever considered functioning solely under your own local church elders and as a ministry of whatever local church that is....There just seems to be no biblical basis for the parachurch ministry operating outside the one and only organization that Jesus Christ said He would build.

Answer: I appreciate and agree to a large extent with many of your concerns regarding parachurch organizations. Some seem to be accountable only to themselves and to be in business for money. On the other hand, I don't believe Jesus intended the church to be (as you seem to imply) an "organization." It is a *body* of which He is head.

Nor did Jesus, when He told His disciples to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," tell them that they must do so only under the auspices of a local church. Then was it to be under the church at large? What would that mean and how would it work?

Jesus said, "where two or three are

gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That would seem to apply to any group of believers gathered together in His name to serve Him and to propagate the gospel. Why could not a group of godly men establish a board and send out those under them for the Lord's work? Wouldn't that be under the authority of a "local church"? This is how missions around the world have functioned for centuries and I see nothing unbiblical about that in itself, so long as all they do is to the glory of our Lord and in obedience to His Word.

The Berean Call staff are under the direction of a board of godly men who control all assets, set the policies and direct the operation through the staff. I am only one of six board members, have only one vote, cannot vote on anything pertaining to myself, etc. They could vote me out at any time. No one on the board receives a salary; each of us serves on a volunteer basis. Our concern is that TBC fulfill God's will for its existence.

It so happens in TBC's case that two of the board members are elders in the local congregation which my wife and I attend, so perhaps that makes it closer to what you consider biblical. Thanks again for your concern.

Question [composite of several, some quite angry:] Your Q&A of November '99 (first one) proves you are *not willing* to be corrected....Instead of receiving correction, you say that John the Baptist "made a mistake" in reproving Herod. I sincerely believe that John the Baptist's rebuke of Herod *wasn't a mistake*....The Bible says "John fulfilled his course" (Acts 13:25) ...but you say he "cut his ministry short" by a mistake. Your reasoning is totally unscriptural and absolutely absurd on this issue! John *reproved and rebuked [Herod] in faithfulness to God's command (2 Tm 4:1-5). Felix and Drusila were living in adultery. When Paul got through with Felix he trembled (Acts 24:24-25). I think, sir, that you need to repent towards God for slandering and misrepresenting none other than John the Baptist, God's faithful servant....*

I was shocked that, in defending your position regarding [non]involvement in social justice issues, you would suggest that John the Baptist may have made a mistake when he rebuked Herod....Did Elijah also make a mistake when he rebuked Ahab for his sin? As a "burning and shining light" John not only spoke, but "he being dead yet speaks" to this generation of compromisers. We need a John the Baptist who will "cry aloud, spare not

...[and] show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

You seem to be making it like it's almost a sin to get involved in anything political...[and] to justify your point, you start by putting down a man whom Jesus considered the greatest prophet to that time, John the Baptist. You sound like Paul Crouch of TBN...saying that John the Baptist was wrong for rebuking Herod. When Scripture doesn't say that, shouldn't we be a little less dogmatic? You constantly put down Pope Pius XII for being silent about the Holocaust, yet you tell us to be silent! The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.

You say Jesus never once rebuked Herod (or Caesar), but Luke 13:31 tells us, "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." This proves that Jesus was not, like you said, silent on His opinion of a bad ruler. The Old Testament is full of prophets who rebuked the ruler of Israel....Why is *The Berean Call's* new law "Thou shalt not get involved in politics"? Jeremiah was given authority from God "against the kings of Judah" and Micaiah and Amos rattled the cage of the big boys, risking their lives in the process.

Answer: Unfortunately, in spite of several attempts, what I've said on this issue continues to be misunderstood. I'm accused of being "dogmatic" when in fact I said, "I'm not dogmatic and not above correction...." I'm willing to be corrected *from the Bible*. I appreciate your zeal, but I think you are trying to make the Bible say what it doesn't. In the verses you cite, Paul tells Timothy to rebuke Christians, not the unsaved. Nor did Paul rebuke Felix and Drusilla. Felix trembled *at the gospel*, not because Paul rebuked him for living unlawfully with Drusilla. It doesn't say Paul did that. Why not, if, as you insinuate, what John did was the norm?

Ahab was a king of Israel ruling God's people and as such was bound to serve God; Herod was not. I agree we need to show "the house of Jacob [i.e., God's people]" their sins. Did Elijah rebuke the godless nations surrounding the people of God? No. Then why should we?

Nor did I say John the Baptist was wrong. I raised the question, "Is it not possible that John made a mistake...?" That Christ declared, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than

John the Baptist” (Mt 11:11), doesn’t mean John was perfect. For example, in spite of all the evidence and his earlier confidence, he lost the assurance that Jesus was the Christ: “And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?” (Lk 7:19).

Nowhere and at no time have I said a Christian should not get involved in politics, much less that Christians should not vote, yet I’m accused of this. On the other hand, while there may be much good that could be done at lower levels such as serving on a school board, I doubt that anyone could rise very high in politics without compromising his or her Christianity or without being unequally yoked with unbelievers. The daily work by which we earn a living and the way we spend extra time is for each individual to decide before God.

Neither have I condemned social and political activism, which is the major issue we’ve discussed. I have merely pointed out four simple facts: (1) While we have both command and example in Scripture to *preach the gospel*, we have neither command nor example to attempt to reform society; (2) many Christians have become so obsessed with political and social activism that it has become their life’s devotion and their great hope; (3) sadly, many Christians who spend a major portion of their time and effort in addressing the evils in secular society exhibit little concern for the growing apostasy within the church or for the salvation of souls. Those who rebuke Clinton are strangely silent regarding false teachers and false prophets in the church—and even commend them; (4) we are commanded to “reprove, rebuke, exhort [the church and her leaders], with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tm 4:2); but instead, many spend their time and efforts trying to reform an ungodly society.

And is it fair to accuse me of imposing a new TBC law, “Thou shalt be silent concerning the evil in society...or, thou shalt not get involved in politics”? I haven’t told anyone to be silent or not to be involved, nor am I myself silent. Speak out in obedience to God’s Word as you understand it against the evils in society as a warning, especially to parents and youth; but don’t neglect to reprove the false teachers within the church as we are specifically commanded. We’ve dealt with the issue of Pope Pius XII: he was a leader of world stature whose public rebuke of Hitler could have had an impact such as your words or mine would not. He articulated clearly in writing to Roosevelt his objection to the Jews being

allowed to return to the land God promised them; but he never sent a similar letter to Hitler objecting to his murder of the Jews.

Question: I hesitate to ask this question because it will put further emphasis upon something I think TBC has given far too much attention. However, don’t you think you have expended more time and effort in dealing with the issue of Roman Catholicism than is warranted? Shouldn’t you “lay off” for awhile?

Answer: In deference to your concern, I’ll be brief and hopefully to the point. Some ministries devote themselves entirely to what are commonly known as cults (Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Science, Unity, Science of Mind, et al.) and some even expend themselves totally on just one of these cults. For example, a number of cult ministries are devoted entirely to the Mormons. There are about 10 million Mormons worldwide, perhaps 5 million JW’s, and the major cults altogether would hardly comprise 50 million. But Roman Catholics number about 1 billion. How much attention should they command? Have we really given them too much attention? Sharing your complaint, however, many of our readers have asked us to stop sending them *The Berean Call*.

Surely you would admit that the Roman Catholic’s hope of heaven is just as unbiblical (though they refer to God, Christ, the Cross, etc.) as that of any Mormon, JW or other cult member who also professes a belief in God, Christ, the Cross, etc. We have documented that fact from their own official writings and practices. Why there should be such reluctance among evangelicals to acknowledging the deadly falseness of Catholicism is a mystery to me. Tragically, because of accepting them as “brothers and sisters in Christ,” hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics will not be given the opportunity to hear the true gospel and may therefore spend eternity in hell. Should the concern for their salvation not motivate us to desire to know why their beliefs are false and how we might be able to win them to Christ? Could we ever put too much time and emphasis into something so important to so many?

Let me pose a simple question. Suppose that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) officially adopted the following: Scapulars may be efficaciously worn by their members which promise, “Whosoever dies wearing this scapular shall not suffer eternal fire”; Christ’s suffering upon the cross was not sufficient, but each sinner must also

suffer for his own sins in order to be purified to reach heaven; the Lord’s Supper, or communion, is not a memorial remembrance of a sacrifice never needing to be repeated, completed upon the Cross, but is itself a propitiatory sacrifice in which Christ, in the form of a wafer, is immolated continually for the sins of the living and dead on SBC altars; SBC pastors possess special power to transmute wafers into Christ, so that each one is simultaneously Christ whole and entire, body and blood, soul, spirit, personality and divinity, sacrificed for and ingested by the faithful as another step toward salvation; SBC clergy of priests and bishops alone can interpret the Bible and sins must be confessed to them; SBC Mass cards are sold to be placed on the altar when Mass is performed in order to reduce the time of suffering of the deceased in purgatory and open the gate of heaven; while still affirming that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose the third day, the SBC insists that faith in Christ is not enough but that no one can be saved apart from the sacraments of the SBC; anathemas are pronounced damning to hell all who refuse to accept these dogmas; etc., etc.

Can you imagine the hue and cry that would be raised by evangelicals everywhere? Would they not denounce these new SBC dogmas as unbiblical and as constituting a false gospel that will send its members to hell instead of to heaven?

Yet the Roman Catholic Church, which practices all of these and even more abominations inimical to the Bible and the gospel, is embraced as “evangelical” and its members as “brothers and sisters in Christ” who are not to be evangelized! Perhaps this tragic situation deserves even more attention than we and the evangelical church have given it.

Tolerance, Intolerance, and Truth

Dave Hunt

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption....
(2 Peter 2:19)

In the recent dispute over whether the chaplain of the House of Representatives would be Roman Catholic or Protestant, conspicuously absent was any concern for the soundness of either candidate's doctrines. Transient political expediency outweighs eternal truth. Much Protestantism is just as heretical as Catholicism, but who cares anymore what God has to say? In today's view, only intolerance would suggest that religious belief must conform to God's Word.

Suppose a true Christian became chaplain. He could hardly forget that he must please the members of Congress to retain his \$138,000-per-year salary. To declare that all who would not believe in Jesus Christ alone for salvation were eternally lost would be intolerable intolerance. Any Congressmen who publicly agreed would likely be voted out by their constituents. To examine anyone's moral or spiritual beliefs on the basis of Scripture, facts or logic is now *prima facie* proof of bigotry. Satan must be laughing. We can be honest and frank—except about that which is most important.

Presidential candidate George W. Bush, Jr. was severely criticized for having spoken at Bob Jones University, because BJU exposes Roman Catholicism as unbiblical and hopes to win Catholics to Christ. BJU's concern for the lost, though sincere and loving, is labeled "anti-Catholic." To test Catholicism by God's Word is automatically regarded as "Catholic bashing."

Succumbing to pressure, Bush apologized. Whether Catholicism is true to Christ and His Word, and whether BJU's position is biblical, was treated as apparently irrelevant. To confront that vital issue, no matter how carefully, would be political suicide. Catholics would take offense and their votes would be lost—too great a price to pay for their eternal souls.

The "Festival of Faith," held in Phoenix, Arizona, January 15, 2000, drew 35,000 people from about 400 Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox churches. When asked why Mormons were excluded, Paul Eppinger,

executive director of the sponsoring Arizona Ecumenical Council, explained that full unity among all religious groups, including "Latter-day Saints," would come in time. Never mind that Mormonism has an ascending hierarchy of numerous gods who are physical men, each a former sinner, each redeemed by one of many Jesuses on different earths, and that "salvation" involves secret rituals which exalt Mormons to become gods ruling over their own earths, each with another Adam and Eve, another Satan and fall, another Jesus to die, etc.

Mormons seem to be good family people with conservative values. And they talk about God, Christ, salvation, resurrection, eternal life—but why pretend they mean what Christians mean? How else could Jimmy Carter, prominent Southern Baptist

If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye....

1 Peter 4:14

and Bible-class teacher, insist that Mormons are Christians and not to be evangelized?

The Battle for God, which made best-seller lists, discusses "commonalities" of Jewish, Muslim and Protestant fundamentalism. Of course, it carefully avoids the "bigotry" of deciding which view might be correct. That one could write an entire book about "fundamentalists" without concern for whether the fundamentals they teach are true is a reflection of our time.

Common sense tells us that the tolerance required today toward religious beliefs would be madness if applied to any other issue. Should police be tolerant of crime, doctors tolerant of disease, judges tolerant of false testimony, etc.? Yet a tolerance is mandated in spiritual matters which in any other context would be lunacy.

Imagine a doctor who thinks it's narrowminded to give a *definite* diagnosis and suggests that one medicine or surgery is as good as another. That would be as ridiculous as an NBA or NFL player accusing referees of "intolerance" for enforcing rules! Yet God is not permitted to have any rules that *we* can't bend or revise to suit our selfish ends! No wonder that we have an epidemic of cheating in schools. If it is each person's privilege to set his or her own standards in the realm of eternal and spiritual values, then

why not in everything else? Retired school teacher B.D.L. Weide warns that "every unchecked cheater or successful rule-breaker weakens the overall mesh of society." What does "cheating" God do?

Undeniably, the entire physical universe is bound by laws which God, its Creator, has imposed. Were that not true, utter chaos would reign and nothing could exist. We see God's hand also in the animal world in the instincts He has given the smallest creatures, instincts without which they could not survive. Nor can human conscience be explained apart from God.

One often hears the complaint, "There's no justice in this world!" How do we recognize the absence of a perfect justice we have never observed? The famous "love chapter," 1 Corinthians 13, confronts us with a love so pure, so beautiful, so wonderful that it is beyond human capacity. Yet we recognize that this is love as it ought to be. We innately know that perfect justice, love, truth, etc. exist which are not of earth—proof that man was made in the moral and spiritual image of God and that the memory of that from which he has fallen is stamped indelibly on his soul and spirit.

Whatever he does and wherever he goes, man must act within the physical laws God has established to govern the physical universe. Logic, factual observation and conscience agree that God has ordained equally definite spiritual laws. It is therefore the utmost folly (though it passes for sophistication and academic prowess) to imagine that one can defy with impunity God's moral and spiritual laws. All of the evidence we see in nature and in our own hearts shouts to us that the consequence of breaking God's spiritual laws is far more severe than that of violating physical laws. One is eternal, the other temporal.

Einstein acknowledged the intricate design of the universe, but he credited this to mathematics rather than to a personal Creator. That's an appealing idea, because mathematics holds no one accountable for sin. Even though mathematics may express the design and function of atoms and molecules and thus of living cells, it could not have brought either itself or the material universe into existence. Mathematics possesses neither energy, creative power nor intelligence to *cause* anything to happen. Furthermore, mathematics has no formulas to express (much less to explain) soul and spirit, thought and emotion, justice

and truth, right and wrong, love, joy, sorrow, and anger. Einstein surely knew this, but even the most brilliant minds can be blinded by the proud passion to escape accountability to a personal God. The folly is even greater, however, of those who profess to believe in this God and yet imagine that He accepts every religion.

Just as politicians have learned to couch their enticing promises in ambiguous phrases, so religious leaders, too, have learned that one must not be “narrow-minded” if one hopes to attract a large following. Spiritual and moral generalities tickle ears and can be made appealing even to atheists. Robert Schuller, master of this strategy, declares with apparent sincerity, “That’s what sets me apart.... We know the things the major faiths can agree on. We try to focus on those without offending those with different viewpoints....” Practicing what he preaches, Schuller adroitly manages to please a weekly TV audience which includes (he says) more than a million Muslims, thousands of pastors (Catholic and Protestant) and hundreds of rabbis.

Never mind that the “major faiths” don’t agree even on God or heaven, much less on Christ or the gospel. It is apparently more important to avoid offending those in false religions than to rescue them from hell. Politicians in both podium and pulpit are experts at political correctness for popularity’s sake. The very phrase “politically correct” is a damning indictment of politics—and now it fits many church leaders as well!

One is reminded of Pat Robertson’s try for the Republican presidential nomination. He was challenged by reporters who complained that as an evangelist he would, if elected, push his evangelical beliefs. Robertson protested that he was not an evangelist, but a talk-show host, and wouldn’t push a religious agenda on anyone. How quickly expediency swallows professed convictions!

Commenting on the Bush/BJU fiasco, *The Jerusalem Post* deplored what it called “Catholic-baiting.” Careful not to take sides, it also criticized “slinging aspersions on evangelical Christian leaders” and faulted John McCain for calling Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell “agents of intolerance.” *The Post* opposed “bashing religion—any religion.” It seems that disagreement, no matter how sincere or factual, with anyone’s *religious* beliefs (other opinions are fair game), is “bashing.” In religion, one must be “tolerant” to a degree not otherwise required. Such is increasingly

the atmosphere today. True believers must confront this folly firmly for the sake of the many being led astray.

A few weeks ago I was interviewed by phone on “Spiritual Seeker,” a popular radio program. The host boasted that for two hours every Sunday night they take time to talk about God, religion and spirituality and feature a panel of “experts” to do so. “Experts” on *God*? I tried to suggest that instead of our talking about God, we ought first to consider carefully what God has said about and to us. That simple logic was dismissed.

Recently Hal Taussig, Jesus Seminar founding member and United Methodist pastor, called for “new creative myths” to replace the Bible’s outdated mythology. Modern “scholars” prefer one myth over another and even create their own? Is this a joke? Why persist in scholarly studies of myths and lies? We didn’t invent Christianity, so we can’t reinvent it.

The Bible is our only source of what

For many deceivers are entered into the world....

2 John 7

Jesus said. This is where we learn of Him, and if that record is not true, then we know nothing of Him. To speculate about whether Jesus *might* have said or done this or that is a complete waste of time.

Many so-called scholars call Jesus “a good man” but ignore His claim to be God and the only Savior. If His claims are not true, then He was either a self-deceived egomaniac or a deliberate liar, but surely not a good man! By modern standards, Jesus is the consummate bigot for saying, “I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6).

Had the followers of Jesus simply presented another god to add to the Roman pantheon, that would have been accepted. But they declared, “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we *must* [not *may*] be saved” (Acts 4:12). On that point they would not compromise, because they loved the lost and they knew that the gospel of Christ offered man’s only hope of salvation. For that intolerant attitude many were tolerantly thrown to the lions.

The watered-down gospel many preach today is of a tolerant “God” who exists solely for our benefit. We are not told to come as repentant sinners confessing our guilt

under the just condemnation of a Holy God. Instead, we are persuaded to “make a decision for Christ” because everything will work out better for us if we do. That is not the gospel.

To believe Christ died for our sins is to acknowledge that we are vile sinners, that God’s penalty for sin is just, and that Christ’s death has paid that penalty in our place. Trusting Jesus for salvation involves turning from one’s sin. It is irrational to imagine that Christ took the penalty so that we could continue in sin. As Paul says, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (Rom 6:1-2).

The promise that whosoever believes in Christ “shall not perish” (Jn 3:16) implies that if we do *not* repent by turning to Christ through believing in Him, we *shall* surely perish. The promise that he who believes in Christ “shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (Jn 5:24) is only good news to those who realize that they are under condemnation.

Yes, unrepentant sinners are “condemned already” (Jn 3:18).

The insistence in so-called free societies upon an irrational tolerance actually exerts an intolerant totalitarian pressure. We see this with homosexuality and evolution. One may make statements only in favor of these beliefs and is branded a bigot or hateful or “antiscience” for saying anything to the contrary. Homosexuals influence a huge voting block, and evolutionists control the schools; hence the power both wield over society.

“Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame...” (Phil 3:19) perfectly fits those who reduce man to an animal and/or hold “Gay Pride” parades to flaunt practices that cut life expectancy nearly in half and would destroy the entire human race were we all to embrace them. In their intolerance of correction, whatever they crave to satisfy their lusts becomes the rule. No higher authority than one’s basest desires is acknowledged. Seemingly, man has evolved into a little god. We’re back to the lie of the serpent in the Garden. In fact, that is what this “tolerance” is all about: rebellion against the God who created us.

God’s laws and His way of salvation are not ours to revise. Christians must preach an uncompromising gospel, totally relying upon the Holy Spirit to reach and convict the lost. This is the only “intolerance” of which the world should be able legitimately to accuse a Christian—and it ought to be our badge of faithfulness. **TBC**

Quotable

There is a namby-pamby effeminate kind of Christianity...telling the sinning world that they are not to be blamed....“Don’t tell the drunkard that he’s guilty, he’s got a disease.” A disease that he purposely and deliberately drank out of a bottle...knowing what it would do to him....

...The modern gospel doesn’t say too much about sin. It makes an awful lot about a whimpering Savior who whimpers over people...excuses them, tells them, “Hush, hush, don’t mention your sin. I died for you upon the tree....” This is not the [Christianity] of the New Testament, ...It’s a...watered-down, perfumed kind of Christianity, that parades a pathetic...Christ up and down in front of people who scorn Him....Sin is your own fault, and it’s my own fault if I sin, it’s not an excuse so I can say it was an accident or it’s a disease,...I can’t help myself, I’m a poor weak man. The cynical irony of the sinful life is that the ones who get us into our difficulties...prevent us from seeing...the executioner on the way...the black hole...that leads to hell below. ...Remember, young man, the ones that lead you into sin can never lead you out....

A.W. Tozer, “Four Seasons of Life”

Dear God, Why didn’t you save the children in Littleton? Sincerely, Concerned Student....

Dear Concerned Student, I’m no longer allowed in schools. Sincerely, God.

Carole Matson

Orange County Register, 2/2/00

Q&A

Question: A popular theologian on radio... states that in 1 Corinthians 6:19 when Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit being in us he is using a figure of speech and that the Holy Spirit is not spatially present within the believer...that the indwelling is best described as a relationship...as one would say, “My beloved ones will always be in my heart.” I have always believed that the Holy Spirit, after the new birth...literally abides within the believer in the same way that my soul and/or spirit lives “spatially” within my body. I understand...the use of the word “spatial” is awkward, at best, when attempting to describe the “location” of a spirit being. But is it not correct to say that a human spirit dwells spatially in a body...? I understand that God the Holy

Spirit is omnipresent and not limited by time and space, but does He not literally dwell within each believer? Is God joined to me like I’m joined to the Rotary Club in outlook and beliefs, or is it an actual supernatural union as I have always believed the Scriptures teach? Have I been so far afield in my understanding of this doctrine all my life?

Answer: We don’t understand how the human soul and spirit live within the body, but they do. Paul describes death as the departure of the soul and spirit from the body to be with Christ in heaven: “absent from the body...present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). Paul desired to “depart, and to be with Christ...” (Phil 1:23). He contrasted that with abiding “in the flesh” (v 24), again showing that the soul and spirit literally dwell within the body while it is alive, and leave it upon death. Of course, we can’t pinpoint a “location” of the soul and spirit within the body. That the souls and spirits of the redeemed who have died are literally with Christ in heaven is further indicated by the statement that they come with Christ to be reunited with their bodies at the resurrection and the Rapture (1 Thes 4:14).

We have biblical and logical reason to believe that the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit within the believer, which brings life to spirit, soul and body, is no less in each person’s body than is the human soul and spirit. Our bodies, for example, are called “the temple of God” (1 Cor 3:16-17); the “body is the temple of the Holy Ghost” (6:19). Paul is specific regarding the body: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ [bodily] from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom 8:11).

That there is something more than a mere relationship, such as “My beloved ones will always be in my heart,” is quite evident. The believer does indeed have such a relationship, but it is voluntary and by faith, as when Paul prays for the Ephesians, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17). That also would be true of the analogy Christ makes of the believer’s relationship to Him as that of a branch in a vine (Jn 15:1-10), thus drawing its life and sustenance for victorious living from Christ. This is a faith relationship, and thus the cutting off of the branches that don’t bear fruit and throwing them into the fire (v 6) is due to failure to live by faith a fruitful life; it does not mean that salvation has been lost.

It is clear that there is an indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit, however, which

is neither established nor maintained by faith. Never are we told that to be saved we must believe that Christ and the Holy Spirit come to live within us. That we are born of the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:13, 3:3-8; 1 Jn 3:9, etc.), baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13), sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13) and indwelt by the Holy Spirit is not ours by faith. It is a work God does in all who believe the gospel and who are born again. Indeed, we are told that this indwelling (“the Spirit of God dwell in you...if Christ be in you” - Rom 8:9-11) is proof of our salvation and the assurance that we will be raised from the dead. Again, “Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates” (2 Cor 13:5).

Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit “dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Jn 14:17). Surely this difference between being *with* and *in* which occurred at Pentecost is more than a deepening fellowship. It cannot relate to the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, which is always true. Jesus promised that those who believed in Him would have flowing out from within themselves “rivers of living water” (Jn 7:38). John explains, “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (v 39). This promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit was so different from the relationship which the Holy Spirit had to the great prophets of the Old Testament that, in comparison, the Holy Spirit had not yet even been given! This indwelling is referred to as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Though “spatial” may not be the proper word, surely God has created a permanent indwelling of the Spirit of Christ and of the Holy Spirit within believers’ bodies — and by faith He lives in our hearts.

Question: I came across a website maintained by “Dial-the-Truth Ministries” with the following critical statement concerning you and a number of others:

“The ‘profitcy’ teachers listed below are bitter critics of Gail Riplinger’s outstanding book, *New Age Bible Versions*. Yet, as they themselves have admitted, they never read the book! These men should be told that the Bible has a lot to say about bearing false witness. Here’s a collection of actual quotes by these ‘learned men.’

“I have not read Gail Riplinger’s book.” Dave Hunt, *The Berean Call*.

“...have not read Riplinger’s book, but I trust Dave Hunt, and he says it is inaccurate.” Peter Lalonde, *This Week in Bible Prophecy*.

“I have not read her book but Dave Hunt has told me that Gail Riplinger lies and cannot be trusted.” Arno Froese, *Midnight Call*.

“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” (Matthew 15:14)...

You seem to bear a lot of responsibility in prejudicing Christian leaders against a good book, yet without having ever read it! Isn't it time to repent?

Answer: The internet has become a dangerous source of misinformation. Anyone can put anything on it and somehow it seems to carry a convincing authority. I don't even look to see what is being said about me. TBC resources are available for all Bereans to personally verify what I have said. In this case, how disappointing that a ministry called “Dial-the-Truth” would promote misinformation. Inasmuch as this particular attack is not only upon me but others who have relied upon what I have said, I'll respond briefly. Here are the simple facts we presented in these pages some years ago (see TBC for Feb, May and Sep '94, and Oct '97).

Gail Riplinger sent the manuscript of her book to TBC. I phoned her to say that we don't review manuscripts and offered to send it on to my publishers for their consideration. In the conversation I asked her what the book was about. She said it revealed that Westcott and Hort were occultists, modern translations were part of a New Age plot, etc. I replied, “If you can document that, you have done the church a great service.” When the book was published, advertising for it carried the following endorsement: “‘You have done the church a great service,’ Dave Hunt.” I objected on the grounds that I had not given such an endorsement. Riplinger claimed I had. I responded that I would never endorse a book written by someone I didn't know and which I hadn't even read. I had plainly told Riplinger at the time of our conversation that I had not read her manuscript.

After the book was published, I read it carefully and found many problems. There are several excellent books pointing out the serious errors in the modern translations, beginning with the two basic manuscripts from which all are taken, *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*. Riplinger's, unfortunately, is not one of them. My critiques of her book in response to questions have been based upon my careful examination of it. Just as I would not endorse a book I had not read, I would be equally irresponsible to

offer specific criticisms of a book I had never read.

Yet I'm still being accused of critiquing *New Age Bible Versions* without having ever read it. One is almost forced to conclude that the critics are not interested in truth but in maintaining false accusations. Hopefully “Dial-the-Truth Ministries” will pull this particular piece from its website.

A Great Betrayal

Dave Hunt

This is being written in Slovakia where we have just come by all-day train from the Czech Republic. Ruth and I are in Europe on a speaking tour that first took us through Germany, Austria and Switzerland by car. We began in Augsburg, Germany, at a fellowship of dear believers founded by a U.S. military chaplain and American military personnel stationed nearby during the Cold War. Our hearts were greatly moved to visit once again parts of Europe where the Reformation began and where so many were martyred for “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

For 1,000 years before Luther, Europe saw persecutions, burnings and drownings of evangelical Christians who had never been Catholics and were not called Protestants. That term would only later be attached to those excommunicated from the Church for protesting its evils. A movement among priests and monks calling for a return to the Bible began many centuries before Luther. Priscillian, Bishop of Avila, could be called the first Reformer. Falsely accused of heresy, witchcraft, and immorality by a Synod in Bordeaux, France in A.D. 384 (seven of his writings which refute these charges have recently been discovered in the University of Wurzburg library in Germany), Priscillian and six others were beheaded at Trier in 385 and many martyrdoms followed. Jumping ahead to the late 1300s, John Wycliff, “morning star of the Reformation,” championed the authority of the Scriptures, translated and published them in English and preached and wrote against the evils of the popes and transubstantiation. Jan Hus, a fervent Catholic priest and rector of Prague University, was influenced by Wycliff. Excommunicated in 1410, Hus was burned at the stake as a “heretic” in 1415 for calling a corrupt church to holiness and the authority of God’s Word.

Such early reformers set the stage for Martin Luther’s Reformation. Luther himself said, “We are not the first to declare the papacy to be the kingdom of Antichrist, since for many years before us so many and so great men...have undertaken to express the same thing so clearly...” For example, in a full council at Rheims in the tenth century the Bishop of Orleans called the Pope the Antichrist. In the eleventh century Rome was denounced as “the See of Satan” by Berenger of Tours. The Waldensians identified the Pope as Antichrist

in an 1100 treatise titled “The Noble Lesson.” In 1206 an Albigensian conference indicted the Vatican as the woman “drunk with the blood of the martyrs,” which she continued to prove.

Provoked by the licentiousness he had seen in the Pope and clergy in Rome, and by the sale of indulgences as tickets to heaven (financing construction of St. Peter’s Basilica), on October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his *Disputation on the power and efficacy of Indulgences* (known as *The Ninety-five Theses*) to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. Copies translated from the original Latin were widely distributed, inciting debate all over Europe about the sale of forgiveness of sins.

Augsburg was especially significant for us because of its unique history. On October 12, 1518, arrested and summoned to Rome

But to him that worketh not, but believeth...his faith is counted for righteousness.

Romans 4:5

by order of Pope Leo X, Luther was held at Augsburg for trial before Cardinal Cajetan. Refused an impartial tribunal, Luther fled for his life by night. On January 3, 1521, a formal Bull was issued by the Pope, consigning Luther to hell if he did not recant. Summoned by the Emperor, who pledged his safety, Luther appeared before the Imperial Diet in Worms on April 17, 1521. Asked to retract his writings, Luther replied,

I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything....I cannot do otherwise; here I stand; may God help me,

Now an outlaw by papal edict, Luther fled again and was “kidnaped” on his way back to Wittenberg by friends who took him for safekeeping to Wartburg Castle. From there he disseminated more “heresy” in writings that further shook all Europe. Luther insisted upon the Bible’s sole authority. He rejected justification before God through rosaries, pilgrimages, prayers to saints, scapulars, medals, crucifixes, or one’s merits or works of any kind. He rejected the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice, insisting instead that it was a remembrance of the sacrifice completed at Calvary. Inconsistently, however, while proclaiming faith apart from works, he retained a belief in baptism as essential for salvation and

efficacious for infants who obviously are incapable of faith.

Rome’s determination to eliminate Lutheran heresy, as expressed in the second Diet of Speyer in March 1529, provoked a number of independent princes to assert the right to live according to the Bible. They expressed this firm resolve in the famous “Protest” of April 19, 1529, from which the word “Protestant” was coined.

The Imperial Diet was convened in Augsburg for a thorough examination of Protestant heresies. The Augsburg Confession (composed by Melancthon in consultation with Luther) was read June 25, 1530, before 200 dignitaries of Church and state. Luther dared not appear. The Confession, condemned by Rome, has been foundational to Lutheranism ever since. Incredibly, leading Lutherans have now joined with Rome, thus betraying the very truths for which Luther suffered so greatly.

In Augsburg on October 31, 1999 (“coincidentally,” the very day in 1517 that Martin Luther publicly nailed his theses to the door), representatives of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) signed a Joint Declaration on Justification (JD), disclaiming previous differences. Headlines such as “Joint Declaration Virtually Ends Reformation Argument” appeared around the world. Luther was wrong after all. The date (Oct. 31) and place (Augsburg) of signing JD seemed deliberately chosen to emphasize the LWF’s surrender of Luther’s convictions. Rome was vindicated at last.

Upon the 49-member LWF Council’s earlier unanimous vote to accept JD, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson (an LWF vice president) led the Council in singing “Now Thank We All Our God.” Swedish Archbishop K.G. Hammar called it a “big day for the Lutheran world.” Indeed, what could be bigger than renouncing the Reformation and discrediting Luther?

The JD was the fruit of 30 years of dialogue between Lutheran and Catholic theologians. If justification by faith in Christ is that complicated, who can be saved? When the Philippian jailor cried, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul did not reply, “Do you have about 30 years for me to explain it?” He said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). The biblical gospel allows no theological “dialogue.”

In signing JD, Lutherans surrendered;

Catholics changed nothing. The Vatican has refused to rescind any of the more than 100 anathemas still in effect against those who proclaim justification by faith in Christ alone, without RCC sacraments. Yet JD deceives both Protestants and Catholics into believing that the Reformation arose out of a misunderstanding of true Catholicism.

Undeniably, the belief and practice of one billion Roman Catholics around the world (ignored by JD) remain precisely what they always were. That fact renders JD's careful and complex theological language meaningless. Catholics still pray to Mary for salvation, and they still believe that the "merits and graces Christ won on the cross" can only be received in small installments which never fully save and which come only through the sacraments of the Church. They still flagellate themselves and offer good works and suffering to earn their salvation.

Here in Presov, Slovakia, where we had our last meetings, we visited the hill "Calvary" overlooking the city. Similar "Calvaries" are found throughout the country. On top is an ancient Orthodox church and leading to it is a steep and tortuous path passing a number of shrines to various "saints." On special holidays thousands of Catholic and Orthodox faithful make their way up that hill, many on their knees. This is not the smooth stone or cement—hard enough on knees—traversed continually at Fatima, Portugal and at other shrines. Presov's way of suffering is made of jagged stones, and I winced at the thought of the bleeding and bruised knees painfully endured to earn heaven, a delusion promoted and blessed by the Church. Nor is this the Middle Ages, but present-day Catholic "salvation" as practiced worldwide.

Catholics still wear scapulars and medals to open heaven's door and look to Mother Church to offer Masses after their death to release them from "purgatory." They still pray to "saints" such as Padre Pio, whom they believe suffered to pay for others' sins and thereby redeemed multitudes through the stigmata he bore for 40 years. Indeed, several hundred thousand of the faithful filled St. Peter's Square May 2, 1999, when John Paul II beatified Pio. This is Catholicism as it has been practiced for 1,500 years, unchanged by JD or ECT. Wittingly or not, evangelicals who sign such documents are endorsing these pagan practices and encouraging a billion Roman Catholics in a false hope.

The very practice of offering indulgences (which opened Luther's eyes to the evil

of Rome's gospel, which he denounced, and against which he labored so diligently) is still a vital and official part of Catholicism—a fact strangely ignored in JD and ECT. Even while Lutheran/Catholic negotiations were being finalized, the Pope was promising more indulgences for the year 2000. The major purpose of indulgences is to shorten time and reduce suffering in purgatory, a false doctrine which Pope John Paul II has frequently upheld. For example, at the Vatican on August 4, 1999, the Pope explained again that "we cannot approach God [i.e., enter heaven] without undergoing some kind of purification [through one's personal suffering in addition to what Christ suffered on the cross]. Every trace of attachment to evil must be eliminated, every imperfection of the soul corrected...and indeed this is precisely what is meant by the Church's teaching on *purgatory*." Those signing JD and ECT (proclaiming Catholics as "fellow Christians") are thus mocked.

On Christmas Eve 1999, John Paul II

If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;...

John 15:20

opened a "holy door" at St. Peter's (and subsequently three others at basilicas in Rome) through which pilgrims journeying from around the world have been walking in order to gain forgiveness of sins. The Church boasts that this practice was begun in 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII. In *Unam Sanctam*, in 1302, an infallible Bull still in force today, Boniface made absolute obedience to the Pope a condition of salvation. To this JD and ECT are also blind and mute.

Boniface was so evil that Dante buried him in the lowest depths of hell. A mother and her daughter were simultaneously among his mistresses. Slaying some 6,000 inhabitants, he utterly destroyed the beautiful city of Palestrina with all its art and historic structures dating back to Julius Caesar, and reduced it to a plowed field which he sowed with salt. Why? Palestrina's Colonna had become the Pope's enemies and he gave indulgences (yes, *indulgences*) to those who helped destroy them. John Paul II must know all this, yet he and his Church trace his alleged "apostolic succession" back through such monster popes, of whom Boniface was by no means the worst.

The Reformation has left a structure of

state churches (Catholic and Lutheran) across Europe, whose pastors and priests receive their salaries from the state paid through taxing all citizens, a fact which only increases resentment against "Christianity." Slovakia will soon sign a Concordat with the Vatican giving the Roman Catholic Church special status, privileges and influence. Recently a pilgrimage of state and religious leaders, headed by Slovakia's President Rudolf Schuster, went to Rome for an audience with the Pope. Delegates bowed before him and some kissed his ring. Included among the delegates were the heads of the Baptist Union and of other supposedly evangelical churches. My first meeting in Presov was to have been held at the local Apostolic church. Upon arriving I was told that the meeting had been moved to Calvary Chapel because the Apostolic pastor who had invited me had been thrown out for exposing Rome's false gospel.

The Reformers and their creeds and more recent stalwarts of the faith such as Spurgeon and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones have consistently called the popes anti-christs. Not that any pope ever was or ever will be *the* Antichrist, Satan's political world ruler. But the popes have always been the very antithesis of Christ. The Pope is welcomed by presi-

dents, kings, and prime ministers, and hailed by millions wherever he goes; whereas Christ was mocked by a mob crying, "Away with him, crucify him!" Christ had one robe, in which He slept on the ground the night before His crucifixion because He had no house; the Pope has hundreds of the finest silk robes embroidered with gold and lives in more than one palace, two of them with 1,100 rooms each. Christ gives salvation as a free gift which He paid for in full by His sufferings on the cross; the Pope claims partial salvation is dispensed through sacrificing Christ upon RCC altars (thousands of times each day). The contrast between Christ and His professed "Vicar" could not be greater.

There is a betrayal, not only of Luther's convictions and the Reformation by leading Lutherans, but of Christ and the gospel by leading evangelicals. It was heartbreaking for us to see the apostasy and godlessness where the martyrs died by the millions to preserve a gospel which is being denied not only by their unbelieving descendants but by church leaders who profess Christ. Time is running out, but it is not yet too late to rescue those who will hear the truth. May the Lord lead us to them everywhere.

TBC

Quotable

In these days when conflicting religious voices are heard like a Babel speaking in so many different tongues, the corporate recovery of Christendom is hopeless.

Lehman Strauss

If there be no way to find Christ than by leaving the Laodicean church, then the sooner it be left the better.

G. Campbell Morgan

....I don't care what...Plato thought about [redemption], Jesus Christ is the One who saves me....He's the One who transforms me. He's the One who stands with bleeding hands pleading for me. He's the One who shall speak and raise me from the dead....So I don't care what...they say in New York University or Columbia....The man who is a Christian...says, "Did Jesus Christ say that? Then I'm going to obey it." And all this he acts upon and lives by in his total life.

A.W. Tozer, "The Marks of a Christian"

Q&A

Question: Recently I was presented some information defending the traditional Friday crucifixion.... "The day of preparation" (Lk 23:54) could only refer to Friday before the Sabbath since no work of any kind could be done on the Sabbath... [which was known as] "the High Sabbath." To us three days and three nights generally means 72 hours, but...this could mean any part of the first day, all of the second day, and any part of the third day. In several passages (the majority) it is said Jesus would rise "on the third day." If the resurrection occurred after a full 72 hours (three days) it would have been on the fourth day. The Jews put guards to make the grave "secure until the third day" (Mt 27:64) not until the fourth day. Please respond.

Answer: There are several errors in the points you make in defense of a Friday crucifixion. First of all, you deal with the days and not the nights. The problem is with the three *nights*, not with the three *days*. A Friday crucifixion would give three days (one full day and part of two others), but *not three nights* as required. Next, you say that the only "preparation" was for the regular Friday/Saturday sabbath. Not

so. In fact, we are told specifically that it was *not* in preparation for the regular sabbath, but "It was the preparation of the *passover*" (Jn 19:14). That means that the passover lambs were being slain. That was the "evening" of Nisan 14. They would be cleaned and roasted with fire and eaten that night after sunset, beginning Nisan 15.

Third, you call the regular Friday/Saturday sabbath "the High Sabbath." In fact, the regular weekly sabbath was never called a "high day." The language in John 19:31 ("For that sabbath day was an high day") clearly distinguishes this special sabbath from the regular weekly sabbaths. Nisan 15 began the seven-day feast of unleavened bread. Its first day was a sabbath with a "holy convocation" and "no manner of work shall be done..." (Ex 12:16). The passover was the most important of all the feasts, so obviously this was the "high" sabbath to which John refers.

Only once every seven years would the "high" sabbath coincide with the regular Saturday sabbath. In A.D. 32 the first day of unleavened bread, the night when the passover lamb was eaten, occurred on Thursday. Nisan 14 ended at sunset Thursday, and this fits perfectly with Christ riding into Jerusalem on the donkey the previous Sunday, which would have been Nisan 10 when the lambs were taken out of the flock and kept under observation for four days. It is thus no coincidence that Christ, God's perfect Passover Lamb, presented Himself to Israel on Nisan 10. The tenth being on a Sunday ("Palm Sunday"), the fourteenth, when the passover lambs were being slain all over Israel, fell on Thursday—and that is when "Christ our passover" (1 Cor 5:7) was nailed to the cross and slain by "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel" as foretold (Ex 12:6).

This special sabbath went from Thursday sunset to Friday sunset; the regular sabbath from Friday sunset until Saturday sunset, so the women could not get to the grave until Sunday morning.

You seem to assume that a Thursday crucifixion would mean Christ would have been in the grave 72 hours. No, the 72 hours and a full three days would not have ended until nearly sunset Sunday. So just as you explain was needful, Christ rose "on the third day" if He rose Sunday *morning*. But He was three *nights* in the grave as well as three days, which was absolutely necessary (Jon 1:17, Mt 12:40).

Question: I have read and profited from your excellent book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*. ...And yet, 1 John 4 gives us a

scriptural "litmus test" for recognizing the difference between the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist...**To the best of my understanding, the Roman Catholic Church *does* emphatically teach and confess the truth of this doctrine [that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"] as distinguished from the many pseudo-Christian cults which explicitly deny it. If that is the case, then doesn't it follow that the Spirit of God must still be speaking in some fashion through the Roman Catholic Church, and that it cannot be considered completely apostate?**

Answer: Thank you for your encouraging remarks concerning *A Woman Rides the Beast*. I don't understand, however, what you mean by "completely apostate." Apostate is apostate. If a church preaches a false gospel that damns the soul (as Catholicism, like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, does) is it any consolation that it does affirm *some* truth (as all three do)? Obviously not. A false gospel that damns the soul is a false gospel that damns the soul even if some elements of it may be biblical.

Does the Roman Catholic Church pass the test of 1 John 4, "every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God," and therefore "cannot be considered completely apostate"? No. The English "is come" in the King James follows the Greek construction, which means "came once for all time." The body that Jesus took when He "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14) was resurrected and He still occupies that body in glory, and will forever.

This fact obviously eliminates reincarnation. It also eliminates the Roman Catholic Mass. In that alleged "sacrifice" it is claimed that Christ comes again and again "in flesh" through priests turning wafers into Jesus Christ, whole and entire, body, soul, spirit and divinity, to be ingested into the stomachs of the faithful for the forgiveness of their sins.

Furthermore, even if the Roman Catholic Church passed this test, that would not mean that she preaches the true gospel of Jesus Christ, which, of course, she does not. First John 4 does not say that to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh means that everything else this person or group may say is therefore also of God. Balaam said much that was from God, even giving valid prophecies, but he also said much not from God and is in hell today.

Yes, Roman Catholicism does teach some truth: that Jesus is fully God and fully man, born of a virgin, died for our sins on

the cross, rose the third day and is coming again. Yet even the truth which it teaches it perverts: Mary is the immaculately conceived, ever virgin “mother of God,” Jesus is still dying in the sacrifice of the Mass, and His death upon the cross nearly 2,000 years ago was not sufficient to save but He must be “immolated” perpetually on Catholic altars, and ingested into one’s stomach to provide increments of salvation. Such teachings constitute “another gospel” and warrant Paul’s anathema (Gal 1:6-9).

Question [condensed]: I quoted *The Berean Call*...to a missionary in France who...used to be a student of mine in Dallas Theological Seminary. He then quoted for me the Promise Keepers rep in France who had a different group of “facts” from those given in TBC, written by T.A. McMahon in October ’99. He said, “PK is struggling with how to include true Christians while ‘weeding out’ false doctrines and ‘other gospels....’ We believe that truth and unity do not have to be mutually exclusive; in fact, the Bible is clear that both live in the same home....Mr. Timmis is the only Catholic board member PK has ever had—and he recently resigned. However, the ministry continues to investigate theological common ground with Catholics and the possibility of having Catholic speakers in 2000....All men who work for or represent PK must be in agreement with our Statement of Faith, which says that it is ‘only by faith, trusting in Christ alone,’ that salvation is possible.” Dave, I always tell everyone how accurate you are with your sources and I still believe that. So if you can make any observations....I pointed out to him the way language was being used...to “hide” the truth about PK’s practices and beliefs. There are so many hidden “messages” in the phrases PK uses for defending itself! But did you realize that your printed remarks re Timmis were out of date? I lose a lot of credibility when I quote something that is not accurate!

Answer: Thank you for your letter. No, we did not realize that Mike Timmis had left Promise Keepers’ board. Following up on your letter, however, we confirmed that fact. It means little that he is no longer on the board. The fact that he reveals PK’s full acceptance of Roman Catholicism. And to suggest that they are considering “the possibility of having Catholic speakers in 2000” gives a false impression. They have already used Jim Berlucchi, a Roman

Catholic speaker.

As you noted, the PK rep’s response is less than forthright. Is it possible that he is not informed? The truth is that from the beginning PK has been closely tied in with Roman Catholics and they have been in prominence at many rallies, including the large one at Washington, D.C. There Bill McCartney declared, “We have a plan... Baptists...Lutherans...Roman Catholics...we’ve been divided...but now we’re being reunited...!” Indeed, *Our Sunday Visitor* of July 20, 1997 quotes Bill McCartney that “full Catholic participation was his intention from the start.” It’s a bit late, and certainly less than forthright, to claim they are “investigat[ing] theological common ground with Catholics....” Why do they downplay the Catholic connection?

Furthermore, the rep doesn’t tell you that “only by faith, trusting in Christ alone for salvation” was (to satisfy Catholics) a revision of the original statement of faith (“accepting through faith alone, God’s gift of salvation”). There is a big difference. Obviously, the change was important to the Catholics or they would not have insisted upon it—further proof of their influence upon PK. One can’t merit a gift, so works are excluded by the original statement. But the Catholic salvation, though purchased by Christ, is received gradually through participation in church sacraments and is merited by good works. The gift of biblical salvation is received by one act of faith directly and entirely from God through Christ. Catholic salvation is dispensed in installments to the faithful by that Church. In a Q&A (Nov. ’97), I dealt with this in some depth.

His statement that “truth and unity do not have to be mutually exclusive, in fact the Bible is clear that both live in the same home,” is rather pathetic. Of course! The whole point is that unity is *only* based upon truth. We don’t unify around error or simply for the sake of a phony “unity” in spite of serious doctrinal differences. And there are serious doctrinal differences between the biblical gospel and the Roman Catholic gospel which exclude *any possibility of true biblical unity with them!* In fact, official Roman Catholicism comes under Paul’s anathema in Galatians 1 because it is “another gospel” which damns those who believe it.

Further re Mike Timmis, we verified that (though he isn’t even listed on their website) he has indeed taken Colson’s place at the head of Prison Fellowship. This fact was confirmed by phone with PF. Of further interest is the fact that Chuck Colson,

Michael Timmis and Jim Berlucchi (PK’s Catholic evangelist) are scheduled speakers along with two Catholic priests at the “Catholic Men’s Conference” to be held June 9-11, 2000 at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, heavily involved with the Marian apparitions at Medjugorje and with PK.

Question: You are still taking a lot of hits for being right about Y2K. Even when you’re right you’re accused of being wrong. How does it feel and how do you explain this?

Answer: I have neither hurt feelings nor any explanation for what has been said and written in criticism of my Y2K position. I have been accused of saying that anyone who prepared for Y2K was not trusting God. Not so. I consistently said everyone ought to have two or three weeks of supplies on hand because an emergency (hurricane, earthquake, flood or who knows what) could arise at any moment and that to use “trust in God” for not preparing would be like walking across a busy highway without looking in both directions. Hank Hanegraaff said, “Dave Hunt was right, but for the wrong reasons.” I’d like to know what those “wrong reasons” were. Rick Miesel likened my reasons for saying Y2K would be little or nothing to “a couple of teenagers on a roof with a weathervane...[saying] there would be no hurricane....Dave Hunt...may as well have flipped a coin—heads, no problem; tails, computer crashes.” Why such derogatory statements are made, I don’t know. In fact, my book, *Y2K: A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria*, was filled with factual data from computer experts as well as sound logic based upon how the business world works—for profit.

That was what formed the basis of my opinion. That there was panic, that many Christians as well as non-Christians lost a great deal, that many lives were turned upside down, because of sincere warnings by concerned leaders, is a tragic fact. Let us finally put Y2K behind us and move on.

Women of the Faith

T. A. McMahon

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee [Timothy], being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that is in thee also.

2 Timothy 1:3-5

And that from a child thou [Timothy] hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:15

Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice are mentioned in God's Word for something quite simple yet so very consequential. They are given as examples to be followed by every generation from the time of Christ's death, burial and resurrection until at least His return, and perhaps through the Millennium. What exactly did they do? They taught their children the Scriptures.

Lois and Eunice were women of *the* faith, the content of which "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). This objective, biblical content which they lived out and taught was able to make their children "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Take your pick: brain surgeon, corporate CEO, head of state, world-class athlete, university professor, peace negotiator, research scientist, etc.—there is no more significant "job" than that performed by Timothy's mother and grandmother. Not that other functions are without value; it's just that all other occupations quickly pale when compared to the significance of teaching children the true ways of God.

Let me insert a couple of further qualifiers before I continue: 1) This article is meant to be an encouragement and exhortation to women, and in no way do I mean to relieve men of any of their spiritual responsibilities in the home. 2) I have no doubt some women do hold meaningful positions while also ministering the Scriptures to their children.

3) Many single women throughout the ages have been latter-day Loises and Eunices to multitudes of children through their work in youth Bible studies, orphanages, Sunday-school classes and so forth.

Regardless of a woman's involvement in personal ministry, the most critical aspect of teaching young ones (or anyone) is imparting knowledge of "the holy scriptures." No more, no less. This may sound too obvious for comment, yet it is in this very thing that many women miss the mark. In fact, it is an apparent indifference toward "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15) which, as in the past, continues today to adversely affect women's ministries in general (not that men's ministries are immune!). The basic problem is allowing

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalms 119:103

unbiblical information, no matter how it is derived, to undermine biblical truth. While rampant today, this is hardly a new problem.

In Genesis, chapter 3, we find Eve being seduced by Satan. He begins his deception by raising doubts as to what God had clearly said. Eve takes the bait, even the serpent's denial of the consequences God would impose, and then *adds* something of her own to God's specific instructions (Gn 3:3). The result of Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience, as we know, was disastrous for all mankind. Continuing to draw upon unbiblical "wisdom" has wrought further destruction for each successive generation, and much of professing Christianity is now in apostasy due to the rationalizing and well-intentioned supplementing of God's Word.

Eve allowed herself to be seduced by the serpent's guile. Dispensing with God's objective command, she was driven by an inclination toward self and all its brood—self-love, self-indulgence, self-improvement, even self-deification (Gn 3:5): "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" (Gn 3:6). This is "...the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of

life," which the Apostle John tells us "is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 Jn 2:16). She, her husband, and their progeny became slaves of their own self-will, led along the way "which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prv 14:12).

While the Bible has many heroines of the faith, my concern here is with the problem among women of letting their own intuitions and feelings draw them away from God's will. For example, Sarai's *own way* (Gn 16) of producing offspring for Abraham, rather than obeying God's way, created enemies who plague the Jews to this day. Lot's daughters' incestuous way of continuing their family line produced the Moabites and the Ammonites. The women of the former seduced the men of Israel, causing the death of 24,000; the latter violently opposed Israel from the time of Abraham until the days of Judas Maccabeus. Job's wife had her own recommendation for remedying his suffering: "...curse God and die" (Job 2:9). Certainly there were those shining examples such as Deborah, Abigail, Rahab, and Esther; and on the other hand numerous men in the Bible who failed God even more miserably than Sarai, et al. However, the point not to be missed here is that intermingling unbiblical ideas with biblical truth in an attempt to solve life's problems—or even to worship God—has dire consequences.

The 1800s produced women with great religious fervor who nevertheless led multitudes of Christians astray. Ellen G. White's mixture of biblical instruction with her own counterfeit visions and faulty teachings have established erroneous doctrines within Seventh-day Adventism, including the Investigative Judgment which denies Christ's finished work on the cross for salvation. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, revamped her own Congregational beliefs into a Christianized version of Hinduism. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, cofounder of Theosophy, a mixture of spiritualism and eastern mysticism, enticed many nineteenth-century professing Christian women into her forerunner of the New Age movement, a westernized religious trend which is mostly led and certainly dominated by women. But perhaps the woman who has had the most adverse influence on modern Christianity was the daughter of

Presbyterian missionaries to China, Agnes Sanford.

Agnes epitomizes the chief concern of this article. Although reared by parents who taught her the Bible “from Genesis to Revelation,” she was never satisfied with what God had to say. Dr. Jane Gumprecht is an evangelical Christian and medical doctor whose background growing up in a Religious Science cult (Unity Church) enabled her to write a very insightful book (*Abusing Memory: The Healing Theology of Agnes Sanford*), which we offer. It addresses Agnes’s many New Age and otherwise biblically erroneous teachings. Jane writes,

Sanford was a free spirit. Her rebellion against orthodox Christianity led her to rely on personal experience over what God says in His Word. Several times in her books she expressed the thought, “experience comes before theology.”

Sanford’s preference for the experiential led her into worshipping in a Buddhist temple (which she conjectures resulted in her own demonization); teaching occult visualization; promoting Jungian psychotherapy; believing that Jesus became a part of the collective unconscious of the human race; characterizing God as a “Force”; seeing the makeup of the world in terms of thought vibrations; and claiming that through visualization we can create virtue in people, forgive them of their sins, and heal them, all from a distance and without their knowledge. In Sanford’s *The Healing Light*, she explains to a non-Christian mother how visualization in the name of Jesus can help her transform her troublesome youngster into the child she wants her to be.

Sanford’s many books and School of Pastoral Care spread her false teachings and therapies throughout the church, greatly influencing leaders such as Richard Foster, John and Paula Sandford, Morton Kelsey, Francis MacNutt, Ruth Carter Stapleton, Leanne Payne, Karen Mains, Rita Bennett and David Seamonds. Agnes singlehandedly began the Inner Healing movement, with its terribly destructive healing-of-memories techniques. This not only became a chief therapy of many Christian psychologists but was highly promoted by the Vineyard Fellowships, initially by Kenn Gulliksen, the movement’s founder, and later by John Wimber, who recommended the writings of Sanford and her inner-healing disciples. Most recently, many churches of the Foursquare denomination, founded by “pastor” Aimee Semple McPherson, have

been fostering Sanford’s unbiblical methods through Cleansing Streams, a rather costly inner-healing program utilizing videos, workbooks and a “spiritual” weekend laden with psychotherapeutic encounter-group methods.

The inclination of women toward things emotional, subjective and feeling-oriented has not been lost on those who would make a buck in the popular spiritual marketplace. Not too long ago I attended a “Women of Faith” conference in Portland, Oregon. The conferences are the brainchild of businessman Stephen Arterburn, founder/chairman of New Life Clinics, the national Christian psychotherapy chain. Marquéd as a relationship-building seminar, the event featured the “dream team of Christian communicators”: Gary Smalley, Larry Crabb, Kevin Leman, Neil Warren, Leslie and Les Parrott and Becky and Roger Tirabassi. Entertaining? Somewhat. Gary Smalley was engaging and had a few cute stories; Larry

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Psalms 119:104

Crabb did his Elvis impression by singing “Are You Lonesome Tonight?” to four of the speakers’ wives. Helpful to the couples who came with real relationship problems? Not in the least!

For a day and a half, 10,000-plus persons, paying a minimum of \$90 per couple, were sold a host of psychological “how-to’s” to fix their sex life, mate’s problems, self-image, etc. The bewildering complexity of the methods offered was compounded by each speaker contributing his or her own “steps” to success, some in disagreement with the other performers, some even contradicting themselves at times. Few references were made to the Scriptures; sin was mentioned only twice over the entire length of the conference and never in any biblically viable context.

Writing for the November-December 1999 issue of *PsychoHeresy Awareness Letter*, Debbie Dewart gives her impression of the 1999 Women of Faith conference in Anaheim, California, where nearly 20,000 attendees paid \$50 each and 1,500 more paid \$25 to watch from overflow areas via television. She noted that

...the presentation [by “celebrity”

Christian women] was primarily entertainment directed toward the senses. There was no...intensive teaching from any text of Scripture, and no mention of sin, repentance, or man’s depravity as presented in the Bible....Instead of sound doctrine, believers are fed the “junk food” of contemporary psychotherapy, couched in Christian terminology that deceives the unwary.

While this particular conference did not have psychologists as speakers, New Life Clinics and its associated business, Remuda Ranch, which treats women’s eating disorders, had their psychologically beguiling booths available around the Anaheim complex. After all, at the heart of “Women of Faith” (certainly based upon its founder’s perspective) is “faith” in the efficacy of psychology.

These troubling developments compel me to ask crucial questions of the women reading this article. In the spirit of Lois and Eunice, are you women of *the* faith? Is your faith “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3)? Are you indeed Christ’s disciple, according to His exhortation to *abide* in His Word, which He says will enable you to “know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:32)? Is His truth that which you are loving (2 Thes 2:10) and learning and teaching? Or are you taking in the so-called wisdom of mankind...or worse (1 Tm 4:1)? Test yourselves in this.

Is God’s Word unequivocally your “lamp” and your “light” (Ps 119:105)? Is what He says your bottom line? Or are even your group Bible studies mostly occupied with the latest opinions of “celebrity” Christians ...or “Christian” psychology? Bible studies ought to be the school of *God’s* teachings—where searching out scripture verses to help interpret other scriptures is the key to comprehending the Word of God. Sadly, in many Bible studies today, extrabiblical sources, personal experiences and particularly feelings have become the favored components in Bible interpretations.

Jesus says of His own, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (Jn 10:10). That life is in Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). In His prayer for us to His Father, Jesus specifies the only way in which those who truly know Him can live their lives pleasing to God. He said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (Jn 17:17). Lord, may we all heed Your words and grow in Your love. TBC

Quotable

Charles Shultz, the talented creator of Snoopy, Charlie Brown, Lucy, and Linus Van Pelt, and the whole “Peanuts” gang, brought out a book of cartoons of young people in a church or young people’s meeting setting. It is called *Young Pillars*. One of the cartoons shows a gangly teenage boy on the phone, apparently saying to his girl friend: “I’ve begun to unravel the mystery of the Old Testament—I’ve started to read it.”

It’s surprising how many believers read books about the Bible—commentaries, word studies, dictionaries, geographies, sermons, etc., and spend too little time in the sacred text itself. By all means use these and other sound biblical helps—but remember that’s all they are—helps.

William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad
Enjoy Your Bible! p.15

Q&A

Question [obviously condensed by necessity]: I was intrigued by...the second of the letters you printed, the one that began with “What has the Catholic Church done to make you so hateful?” I think I can help with a more objective perspective. ...The lead article in December’s issue, “The King of the Jews,” was so poorly written I sent a copy of it to the friends who introduced me to TBC. I marked on it all the obvious examples of stereotype I could find—and they were numerous. I was shocked that you could seemingly write that all Muslims are terrorists. I lived five years in West Africa and had numerous friends who were Muslim, but only one seemed to me to have any potential of becoming a terrorist. But the concern of this letter...is your tendency to make sweeping generalizations and stereotypes. I suspect this is part of the problem that exists in your dialogue with Catholics. ...Stereotypes and generalizations (intentional or subliminal) are the bases for prejudice, racism, hate and pride....Depending on your current relationship with Karl [Keating] and others, an apology may be in order. You might find that a desire to know how things you may have said affected them may open the doors to a fruitful dialogue and...maybe even to a deepening friendship.

Answer: Thank you for your letter. You say

you marked on the December article “all the obvious examples of stereotype” and sent it to your friends. I’d like to see those examples. It may surprise you (since you suggested that I look to “a third party” to give me some objectivity) that ten or more people go over my articles very carefully and give me their suggestions for improvement. Oddly, not one said a word about “stereotypes” or “generalizations”! You give me one example: that I “write that all Muslims are terrorists.” I couldn’t find where I said or even implied that. I did say that “Islamic fundamentalism...brazenly employs terrorism worldwide.” That is a fact. How does stating that fact set up “stereotypes” or claim that all Muslims are terrorists?

I gave numerous quotations from the Koran and from leading Muslims to the effect that it is the *religious* duty of every Muslim (obviously all Muslims do not live up to their religion any more than do all Catholics or all Protestants) to destroy Israel; I stated that *all* Muslim scholars agree it is the sacred duty of every Muslim in every age to wage *jihad* to cause the entire world to submit to Islam. Do you accuse Muslim scholars of stereotyping? I mentioned that “there are more than 100 verses in the Koran about fighting and killing in that quest.” I presented the facts from history that Islam was spread with the sword, and documented as much as possible in a brief article that this is still the official teaching of Islam to this day. Where is the stereotyping? That you have known Muslims (as have I) who were kind and loving people does not change the official and fundamental teaching of Muhammad, the Koran or Islam’s leaders today.

You accuse me of “stereotypes and generalizations...[which] are the bases for prejudice, racism, hate and pride.” A serious charge indeed—so serious that for my own good I hope you will supply specific examples so that I can apologize where needed and avoid such error in the future.

You characterize Islam as having some apparently minor “theological error” and say “but at least they believe in God.” In fact, their Allah is not God and I hope by now you understand that from reading the February Q&As. You suggest the same unimportant “theological error in Catholicism” and add, “but at least they believe in Christ crucified.” Yes, but their “Christ” is crucified perpetually on their altars and is transmuted into a wafer for ingestion into the stomach. Furthermore, the “merits and

graces” He won on the cross can only be received in installments via Roman Catholic sacraments plus good works, prayers to “saints,” the wearing of medals and scapulars, etc., leaving one in need of purification in purgatory before entrance into heaven. Theirs is not the Christ of the Bible nor the biblical gospel that saves.

As for apologizing to Karl Keating, I surely would if I were aware of a need to do so. If you know of something I have said or done for which I should apologize, please tell me.

Your letter emphasized “grace.” Does grace mean to ignore facts and to cover them over by accusing those who present them of “stereotyping and generalizing”? I trust you will send a copy of this letter to your friends.

Question: I recently received a refund from TBC for my order for *The Changing Face of Islam in America*. I’m impressed that you would do this without my requesting it, and without asking me to send the book back. I look forward to the more detailed explanation you promised as to your reasons.

Answer: It was extremely disturbing to us that we recommended and sold this book. It shows once again that we are fallible humans and is a reminder to our readers to personally check everything out from the Bible. In this case it wasn’t someone writing in and complaining who pointed out the problem, but three of our own staff who read the book and brought to our attention things in it that we could never endorse. I must personally share the blame, perhaps the largest part, when due to the pressure of time constraints I approved it without sufficient care.

What are the problems? There are surprisingly many. Here are a few examples:

On page 9 we read, “I agree that learning the beliefs of a Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or some other religious person is essential for Christians to deepen their understanding of the biblical view of God.” Obviously not true. Learning about false gods is hardly *essential*. We deepen our understanding of the biblical God through believing and obeying His Word and fellowshiping with Him.

On page 10 the error is compounded: “It is our hope and prayer that this book will motivate others to immerse themselves in the world of Islam...” The authors intend this as a means of witnessing more

effectively to Muslims. The motive is good. However, one need not “immerse” oneself in false teaching, but rather in the truth, in order to win others to Christ.

On pages 14-16 we are told of the arrival of black Muslims as slaves from Africa and how Christianity was forced on them. The reader is given to understand that the Statue of Liberty has thereby become a symbol of oppression and that the depiction of the U.S. as “the Great Satan” by Muslim leaders is justified. There is no mention that Muslims themselves were the chief slave traders, or that Muhammad approved of holding slaves and owned many himself. Furthermore, the fact that Islam was viciously forced upon millions and that *jihads* led by Muhammad enslaved multitudes is suppressed and shrugged off as a “missionary method.”

On page 45 we have the assertion that “the concept of *jihad* is usually misunderstood” and should not be thought of as “holy war.” It is presented as “a missionary philosophy very different from that of modern Christians.” We are then told that history has been distorted and that Islam was not really spread with the sword to the extent that Christian apologists have stated. The book justifies *jihad* as springing from the sincere desire to help heathen get to heaven, etc. We are also told that “Christianity’s advance throughout the world... was far more like what we think of as *jihads* than were the actual *jihads*, in most cases.” Not so. The conquests by Charlemagne, the Crusades, etc. were vicious, but there is no basis for suggesting that the Islamic conquest was kinder and gentler.

Overall, in their desire not to offend Muslims and to avoid stereotyping them, the authors go too far in the other direction. While their statement that most Muslims are not terrorists is true, they give the false impression that terrorism is considered fanatical in Islam. In fact, it is a direct result of the teachings of Islam and was engaged in by Muhammad himself and encouraged in his followers. Islam was spread with the sword and anyone true to Islam must hold the same determination today, but the authors fail to emphasize that fact. The Crusaders, though they had the cross on their shields and banners, were acting in direct violation of all that Christ taught, practiced and intended for His disciples. On the other hand, the Islamic invaders conquering country after country with the sword were acting in perfect obedience to and harmony with the teaching and example

of their prophet Muhammad and the Koran.

The many errors and misrepresentations in the book were overlooked in our enthusiasm at finding a book which uniquely promised to give a clear picture of Islam in America. Unfortunately, it distorts that picture and even presents a favorably false view of Louis Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam. We have a grave responsibility to our readers. A huge volume of correspondence and our heavy schedule are no excuse for this book passing our scrutiny; and the fact that it did so is a sad lesson that will cause us to be more careful in the future.

Who is Jesus?

Dave Hunt

Currently in vogue are highly publicized and widely disseminated conferences and TV programs featuring “experts” allegedly examining evidence to discover who Jesus really was. *Larry King Live* did a program July 6 titled “Who is Jesus?” Peter Jennings hosted a TV special June 26 titled “The Search for Jesus.” Academia has been involved for some time. An Oregon State University (OSU) “Jesus at 2000” symposium February 8-10, 1996 was televised live across America “to explore what scholars have to say about the man described as a mystic, a healer and the Son of God.” Presenters, (according to publicity) were “six of the most renowned religion scholars in the world...” OSU also hosted “God at 2000,” televised live February 10-12, 2000 and featuring more “scholars” to offer a “new image of God for the twenty-first century”—as though God were a myth we’ve concocted to give ourselves false comfort and man needs a new God with a more modern appeal. If so, forget it!

One senses a bit of elitism in the implication that scholars have an advantage over the rest of us in knowing Christ. So God is partial to the highly educated? Never are these “experts” promoted as humble servants of God who know our Lord and are walking in obedience to His Word. Instead, emphasis is upon their academic prowess. Their Ph.D.s are flaunted as a license to revise, demean, contradict and defy God’s Word.

God is not impressed with this world’s academic credentials. What a tragedy, then, that the church has come to value the wisdom of this ungodly world so highly that Christian schools and even seminaries compromise the truth in order to be credentialed by the enemies of the Cross. God has other criteria entirely.

While scholarship can be beneficial in secular matters, it has nothing to do with knowing, obeying and pleasing God. Abraham, “the Friend of God” (Jas 2:23), was no scholar. In fact, the wisdom of this world is an actual hindrance in knowing God and the things revealed by the Spirit of God. Paul wrote, “...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe...we preach Christ crucified...unto the Greeks foolishness...For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God...that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor 1:19-29; 3:19).

Jesus said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3); “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes...for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Lk 10:21). The very opposite of this humble walk with God characterizes the scholarly “experts.”

God declares, “I dwell...with him...that is of a contrite and humble spirit...to this man will I look, even to him that is poor [lowly] ...and trembleth at my word” (Is 57:15; 66:2). But far from trembling at God’s Word, the “biblical scholars” of the Jesus Seminar, and others to whom the media looks for their supposed expertise about God and Christ, elevate themselves as judges over the

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...

Proverbs 9:10

Bible to pick it apart.

In that process they violate the most basic common sense by imposing their prejudices upon Scripture. What these alleged scholars do would never be tolerated in a court of law. Though born 1,900 years too late to have been present, they have the audacity to contradict the account of eyewitnesses—and millions of people take them seriously as though they can with impunity re-invent past history. One is reminded of the classic satire Soviet citizens whispered in Iron Curtain days: “The Soviet Union is the only country with an unpredictable past.”

If these scholars believe in a god at all, he can’t do miracles. So the Red Sea couldn’t possibly have opened for the Israelites to cross on dry ground; the walls of Jericho couldn’t have fallen down as described by Joshua, who was there and saw it; Jesus couldn’t have literally walked on water, healed the sick, raised the dead, fed 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes, died for our sins or risen from the dead (there must be another explanation for the empty tomb). Such unbelief is broadcast to the world as fact, while those who could prove the Bible to be true are rarely allowed to make their case. As a result, millions believe that the Bible is a collection of myths, just as Jennings portrayed it.

Prestigious symposiums, carried over radio and TV and reported in the press,

explore new myths about God and Christ for modern man. Given the wild enthusiasm which has greeted the Harry Potter fantasies, the scholars seem to be right in tune with the times. A new myth which everyone could accept could form the basis for a new world religion unifying the world—something Jesus did not attempt to do. He came not “to give peace on earth...but rather division” (Lk 12:51).

The world, however, wants a man who will bring peace and unity. Who could accomplish that but the Antichrist, as the Bible foretells? Jesus said to the Jews, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (Jn 5:43). These scholarly conferences and TV specials only help to prepare the world for that man of wickedness.

During the internet discussion following Jennings’s skeptical humanistic program someone asked, “Why didn’t the rabbis or Roman authorities produce Jesus’ body if He was still dead?” Jennings replied, “I confess this is much too complicated a subject for me...” Yet

this is the very heart of Christianity. How could any program supposedly defining Jesus minimize the Resurrection? Jennings referred to the great impact for good that Jesus and His teachings and example have had throughout the world. But if His first followers were liars and tried to establish that a dead man was really alive, what does that say for His influence? Jennings evaded the issue by saying, “The question of the Resurrection is perhaps the most delicate one.”

Jennings claimed that the majority of those interviewed for the program were Christians. The designation “Christian” was applied only to Christ’s disciples (Acts 11:26). To be a Christian, one must be a disciple/follower of Christ, believing in Him and obeying His teachings. The scholars argue that the New Testament isn’t accurate, so we are not sure who Christ was, what He did and what He taught. If so, then to call oneself a Christian is both fraud and folly. How can one be an obedient follower of someone about whom no accurate record exists of who He was, what He did or what He taught?

Jennings said the “Search for Jesus” was “one of the most enriching experiences of my journalistic life...as we have gone in search for what we can know about Jesus the man.” Yet his “search” replaced the record of eyewitnesses with speculation. Asked why he had picked a late date for the writing

of the Gospels, Jennings replied, “We relied on the historians and scholars.” No, he relied upon certain scholars who don’t believe the Bible, ignoring multitudes of those equally qualified who could prove it is true.

Jennings was also asked why his program was “so lopsided in favor of those who reject the historical accuracy of the gospel accounts” (even the Catholic priest was also an unbeliever) and why his report “presented more speculation than fact.” He replied that “for those who take the Gospels as literal truth...the real power lies precisely in the fact that Jesus’ birth story, for example ...fulfills the prophecies and proves He was the Messiah.” But he never explained why on TV he had ignored this proof.

One of the Jennings experts (John Dominic Crossan, “the best-known Jesus scholar in the world” and co-founder of the Jesus Seminar) was asked why the program “did not include more ‘conservative’ scholars.” He offered the excuse that “we have always heard the other [conservative] side.” No, we have been hearing far more from his side, that the Gospels are “a metaphorical story, not an historical story” and that the early Christians “would not let His [Christ’s] death end His movement...but insisted [falsely] that God had vindicated Jesus by raising Him from the dead.”

When asked why attention was not given to the encounter with the risen Christ that converted Saul of Tarsus from persecutor of the church to its chief apostle, Crossan skirted the question. He admitted that the scholars of the Jesus Seminar don’t even agree among themselves, and their conclusions are decided by majority vote. This is scholarship?

Skepticism is valuable in preventing one from being taken in by fraud. Cults thrive because multitudes are so gullible as to follow (in spite of false prophecies and teachings that directly contradict the Bible) some authoritative religious leader: a Joseph Smith, a Mary Baker Eddy, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, a pope or Muhammad or almost anyone who claims alone to have the truth. Any rational person, however, should demand solid evidence before trusting his eternal destiny to a religious belief.

The Bible proves its validity with facts and real events of history prophesied thousands of years in advance, the fulfillment of which the world has witnessed. The same cannot be said for the Koran, Hindu Vedas, sayings of Buddha or Confucius, the Book of Mormon or for any other religious scriptures. Irwin H. Linton says it

well in *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*: “To doubt is not sin, but to be contented to remain in doubt when God has provided ‘many infallible proofs’ to cure it, is.”

These scholars give the impression that no intelligent person could possibly believe the Bible. On the contrary, many of the greatest minds in history (some of whom make present scholars look like mental midgets) have claimed that the Bible offers irrefutable proof of all it declares. So testified Daniel Webster, surely one of the greatest minds of recent centuries, who believed in Christ’s virgin birth, deity, miracles, death for our sins and resurrection.

No one is better trained to examine evidence than members of the legal and law enforcement professions—and many of the greatest lawyers, judges and criminologists, humbly trembling at God’s Word, have testified to faith in Christ based upon the evidence which they themselves have critically examined. Among these we find Sir Robert

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.

Psalms 119:89

Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed...

Proverbs 13:13

Anderson, head of the Criminal Investigation Division of Scotland Yard. Surely Anderson was one of the most capable investigators ever. His books are classics, especially *The Coming Prince*. It proved that Christ fulfilled the amazing prophecy in Daniel 9 foretelling the very day the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and be hailed as such, then four days later be crucified. Anderson’s *Daniel in the Critics’ Den* confronted the critics’ attempts to discredit the book of Daniel’s amazing Bible-validating prophecies.

Lord Caldecote, Lord Chief Justice of England, declared, “...the New Testament... makes an overwhelming case...as a matter of strict evidence, for the facts therein stated...[including] the resurrection...” Lord Lyndhurst, one of England’s greatest legal minds, declared, “I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet.” Professor Thomas Arnold, renowned English historian, said, “I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort...than [that] Christ

died and rose again from the dead.”

Likewise Simon Greenleaf, co-founder of the Harvard Graduate School of Law (according to US Supreme Court Chief Justice Fuller, “the highest authority cited in our courts”), after making an exhaustive examination of the evidence, embraced Christ as Saviour. Greenleaf wrote *Testimony of the Evangelists* (see Quotable), in which he declared that the Bible stood every test of evidence a court of law could impose and challenged fellow members of the legal profession to examine it honestly.

Many religious zealots have died as martyrs—but the martyrdom of the Apostles was unique. They died not only because of love and loyalty to Christ, but *testifying to facts at the very foundation of Christianity: the virgin birth, deity, miracles, sinless life, death for our sins and resurrection of Christ*. No man is fool enough to die for what he knows are lies. The Apostles all went to horrible deaths without even one of them buying reprieve by retracting his testimony concerning Christ.

Had we space, we could quote a host of the most eminent scholars, scientists, historians and lawyers echoing those quoted above in affirming on the basis of a careful examination of the Bible that it is true in every word. Why did not Jennings (and why do not the other TV specials, movies, conferences and symposiums lately “searching for the historical Jesus”) call such witnesses to produce the overwhelming evidence for the validity of the Bible? Are they really concerned for truth?

Paul argued rightly that if Christ did not rise from the dead, He and the other Apostles were liars. These alleged scholars are saying that indeed the Apostles were liars, but that what they taught with their lies was so good that it has changed the world for the better. This makes no sense. How could lies possibly be the foundation for the greatest influence for good in all of history?

In fact, “the greatest story ever told” is all true. We must be convinced of this fact not just emotionally but on the basis of the solid evidence God has graciously provided in His Word. And as Christ’s true disciples let us pass on this evidence to those in our churches, schools and homes. We must also use the evidence in our proclamation of the gospel, offering those we win to Christ a solid basis for their faith. Let us “search the Scriptures daily” to grow in His grace, love and Word, and let us communicate the irrefutable truth to others in the power of His Spirit.

TBC

Quotable

The apostles declared that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin and faith in Him could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted...in the face of the most appalling terrors....

Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but...bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments and cruel deaths. Yet...all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution....

They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith....It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact....

If they are supposed to have been bad men, it is incredible that such men should have chosen this form of imposture; enjoining...unfeigned repentance, the utter forsaking and abhorrence of all falsehood and of every other sin. It is incredible that bad men should invent falsehoods to promote the religion of the God of truth.

Simon Greenleaf

Testimony of the Evangelists

Q&A

Question: Mark 14:12 says, “And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?” Later that night he was betrayed. So how could Jesus be the Messiah the Lamb, if He was not crucified until a day after the passover lamb was slain? Mark 15:1 says, “in the morning,” so it had to be the next day, a day after the passover, that Jesus was slain.

Answer: I have answered that question in previous newsletters (the most recent being in June 2000) and in my books, but will do so here briefly once more. The Jewish day begins at sunset, thus it begins with *night*, followed by morning, and the following afternoon is called the *evening*. The day “when they killed the passover,” 14 Nisan, began after sunset Wednesday. That night the last supper was eaten. The passover lamb was not slain until the following

afternoon in the *evening* of 14 Nisan (Ex 12:6), before sunset marked the beginning of 15. Then the lamb would be roasted and that *night* (v 8), after sunset and thus 15 Nisan, it would be eaten.

The fifteenth was the first day of the seven-day feast of the passover and unleavened bread and was a “high sabbath.” Thus John states that when Jesus was on the cross “it was the preparation of the passover [i.e., the lambs were being slain],” and explains further, “The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation [of the passover], that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.” In A.D. 32 when Jesus was crucified, the high Sabbath went from Thursday evening to Friday evening, followed by the weekly sabbath from Friday evening to Saturday evening, so the women could not get to the grave until Sunday morning.

The last supper was held “before the feast of the passover” (Jn 13:1-2), on the *night* of 14 Nisan in the upper room where the disciples began their preparation. The passover lamb would be slain the following afternoon (the *evening* of 14 Nisan) and eaten that night. But Jesus would not participate because He would be betrayed right after the last supper, brought before the rabbis, then taken by them early in the morning of the fourteenth to Pilate and finally crucified in the afternoon (evening) of 14 Nisan just when Israel’s passover lambs were also being slain.

The morning (14) following the last supper when the rabbis took Jesus to Pilate, no one in Israel (including Christ and His disciples) had eaten the passover because the lambs would be slain that afternoon (at the same time Jesus was crucified): “...they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover” (Jn 18:28). I hope this clarifies it.

Question: It seems that Calvinism is gaining in influence and as a result is causing controversy and even division in some churches. I think this is an important subject and I don’t recall you ever giving your opinion. Would you please do so in the Q&A section?

Answer: In fact, I have dealt with this subject in at least two books, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* (pp. 235-37), and *How Close Are We?* (pp. 132-34) and briefly in *TBC* of March and July, 1993, as well as

July 1995. We attempt to focus on whatever affects the gospel, and I do not consider five-point Calvinism as a “false gospel.” It does, however, involve unbiblical teaching. I have fine evangelical friends who are Calvinists. We’ve argued without changing anyone’s view and left it there.

However, it is important whether man is totally depraved or can through the wooing of the Holy Spirit make valid moral and spiritual choices; whether God wants only a select few called the “elect” to be saved or whether He wants “all men” to be saved (1 Tm 2:4; 2 Pt 3:9); whether Christ died for the sins of the “elect” only or for the sins of the whole world (Jn 1:29; 1 Jn 2:2). In order to discuss these differences we need to remove some common misunderstandings.

First of all, one who rejects Calvinism is not necessarily an Arminian. Many non-Calvinists believe in eternal security but object to Calvinism on other grounds. Next, it is not a question of God’s sovereignty. God is the Potter, we are the clay, and the clay cannot complain about how God uses it. The question is whether God in His sovereignty has given man the power to make genuine moral and spiritual choices or whether man is totally depraved and cannot choose God or good. It is biblical that we cannot come to God or Christ unless He draws us by His Spirit. But when He does draw us, do we truly respond, or is our response in receiving Christ imposed upon us by “irresistible grace”? Do we really love God from our hearts (love requires choice) or are we deluded if we think this is the case?

Nor is the issue whether mankind deserves hell. We *all* deserve to go to hell and God would be fully justified in sending everyone there eternally. The question is whether God wants anyone to go to hell. The Bible says that God “is not willing that any should perish...” and that He prepared “everlasting fire” not for humans but “for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41). In contrast, the God of Calvinism wants many to perish. If He did not, He would extend irresistible grace to all and all would go to heaven. Which is the God of the Bible?

Adam and Eve surely were not “depraved,” much less “totally depraved” as Calvinism asserts for man today. So it was not depravity that caused Adam and Eve to rebel in sin. One wonders why God did not extend to them Calvinism’s “irresistible grace” so that there would have been no ensuing sin, sickness, suffering, etc. One also wonders why Christians who have believed in Christ through irresistible grace don’t live perfect lives. Are some Christians,

such as Paul, giants of the faith because God causes them to be that way, and are others failures because God for His own mysterious reasons doesn't give them sufficient grace? What, then, is the purpose of the judgment seat of Christ, and what are the rewards God gives to believers if He is the one who causes some to live more fruitful lives while withholding that grace from others who then are destined to live less fruitful lives? Is there no responsibility on man's part? Are we robots?

God is sovereign, always has been and always will be. His sovereignty, however, did not prevent Satan's rebellion in heaven or Adam's and Eve's rebellion in the Garden. Choices were made that were not according to God's will. It is not God's will that this world be filled with corruption, abortion, murder, lust, wars, etc. He allows it, but this is not His perfect will. Calvinism, however, seems to overstate God's sovereignty to the point that all evil must in the end be blamed upon Him. Why? Totally depraved man can do nothing but sin unless God keeps him from it, which He could (if He would) for all mankind with irresistible grace.

Yes, God can do what He desires. He could send us all to hell because that is what we all deserve. However, an innocent reader taking the Bible at face value, giving the words their ordinary meaning, would surely be led to believe that God genuinely wanted to save the whole world and that Christ came to die for the sins of the whole world and to offer salvation to all. This would seem to be stated by multiple verses containing phrases such as "which taketh away the sin of the *world*...For God so loved the *world*...that the *world* through him might be saved...I came not to judge the *world*, but to save the *world*...to be the Saviour of the *world*...etc. (Jn 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:47; 1 Jn 4:14). And reading other verses containing such phrases as "*whosoever* heareth these sayings of mine...*whosoever* will come to me...that *whosoever* believeth in him...*whosoever* committeth sin...*whosoever* believeth on me...*whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord...*whosoever* believeth on him...*whosoever* will, let him take the water of life...etc. (Mt 7:24; Lk 6:47; Jn 3:15-16; 8:34; 12:46; Acts 2:21; Rom 10:11; Rv 22:17), the average reader would surely believe that "*whosoever*" means anyone without limitation, not a special class of people called the elect. Taking at face value statements such as "Come unto me *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden...who will have *all* men to be saved...who gave himself a ransom for

all...the Lord is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance...etc. (Mt 11:28; 1 Tm 2:4-6; 2 Pt 3:9), the same reader, again, believing that "*all*" means *all* and that "*any*" means *any*, would conclude that God lovingly and freely offers salvation to everyone.

The Calvinist, however, because of his belief in total depravity and irresistible grace, requires that God must not only draw sinners to Himself but make them accept Christ. The Calvinist thus arrives at an esoteric understanding rather than the ordinary one. He concludes that "*all*," "*any*," "*world*," "*whosoever*" etc., though these words *almost always* mean what they say, *sometimes* mean only the elect. When? Whenever Calvinism requires it.

Isn't this an artificial view imposed on Scripture rather than derived from it? That it is foreign to Scripture seems apparent from the fact that Calvinism requires the entire Bible to be reinterpreted in a way that does violence to the ordinary meaning of words. Repeatedly God pleads with men, "choose ye this day whom ye will serve," but no one can make such a choice except God *causes* them to choose Him through irresistible grace. Over and over God pleads with His people Israel through the prophets to repent and turn from their sin so He won't have to judge them. He weeps over Israel, defers His judgment, sends more prophets to warn and finally and reluctantly pours out His wrath. But all the time He is pleading with a people to repent who are totally depraved and therefore can't repent unless He extends irresistible grace to them. Yet He withholds it, all the while condemning them for doing the only thing they can do and which He alone could prevent by extending grace but mysteriously won't.

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem: "How often *would I* have gathered you together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but *ye would not*." Christ could not state more clearly that He truly wants to bless them and that they have rejected Him. But Calvinism changes the whole picture. If they are totally depraved, then they can't believe in Him unless He causes them to do so through irresistible grace. So "*would I*" and "*ye would not*," for the Calvinist, really mean "*I would not*" and "*ye could not*." If they could only reject Him because they are totally depraved, why does He weep and plead while withholding from them the irresistible grace they need to obey His pleadings? This is not the understanding that a thinking person would derive from reading the Bible. It is an unnatural imposition to support a dogma.

If I should hold a rope 30 feet above a man at the bottom of a well and plead with him earnestly to take hold of it so that I could pull him out, wouldn't he think that I was mocking him? And if, in addition, I were to berate him for not grabbing the rope, would he not begin to wish he could grab me by the throat? And how could I maintain to any reasonable persons that I really wanted to bring the man up out of the well but that he was the one who wasn't willing? So how can God really want to save those to whom He doesn't extend irresistible grace—that being the only means whereby they can believe the gospel?

Isn't the doctrine of Calvinism really a libel on the character of God? Does it not present a God who does not love everyone enough to want all to go to heaven, a God who sent Christ to die only for the elect and not for all? Yet no basis can be given for why God (who is impartial) would elect one and not another (nor is there anything in any of us to cause God to elect us at all).

For the Calvinist to take verses which clearly say God loves the whole world, that He is not willing that any perish, that He wants all to come to the truth, etc. and to say that "*world*" and "*any*" and "*all*" only mean the elect is to impose on those verses a view which perverts the meaning of what is being said and conflicts with the rest of the Bible. We have at least one verse where this artificially imposed meaning won't hold: "And he is the propitiation for *our* sins: and not for *ours* only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*" (1 Jn 2:2). Surely "*our*" / "*ours*" must be the elect and the "*whole world*" must be everyone else.

It could not be said in plainer language that Christ's blood was shed not just for the elect but for the sins of the whole world. Limited atonement thus collapses and with it much of the rest of Calvinism. God is vindicated as a God who *is love*, who truly loves all so much that He has done everything needed to save the whole world. Christ paid the penalty for all; the Holy Spirit seeks to convict and draw all. Therefore, anyone who is in hell for eternity is there not because God could have saved them by extending irresistible grace but did not. They are there because they rejected the salvation God provided and freely offers to all.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!

Dave Hunt

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it...

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord...

And they...shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Luke 19:41; 13:34-35; 21:24

Jerusalem is undisputably, year after year, the top news story in the world. That fact reflects the fulfillment of multiple prophecies concerning this remarkable city and its unique place in God's will. The ongoing actualization of these prophecies in our day is absolute proof that God exists, that the Bible is His Word and that the Jews are His chosen people.

The very fact that Jerusalem is mentioned more than 800 times in the Bible makes it worthy of special attention. This unique city is the only one upon which God has bestowed His distinctive blessing and protection (Ps 132:13-14), and the only city for whose peace we are commanded to pray (Ps 122:6). God says He has chosen Jerusalem as the place where He has put His name forever (2 Chr 6:6; 33:7; Ps 46:4; 48:1-8; 87:3). The new heavens and new earth will contain "the city of my God...new Jerusalem" (Rv 3:12; 21:2). That there will be a "heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22) but no "heavenly" New York, Paris, London, Damascus, Cairo, etc. speaks volumes.

After decades of pleading with Israel to repent of its idolatrous rebellion, God pronounced through Jeremiah His reluctant judgment upon His city and upon His land (Lv 25:23). Daniel referred to "the word of the LORD...to Jeremiah the prophet" (Jer 25:3-11), that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dn 9:2).

Two views (the second is correct) define the prophesied 70 years of desolations: 1) that it began with the first taking of captives to Babylon about 605 B.C. (2 Chr 36:6-7) and ended with the Edict of Cyrus around 536 B.C. (Ezr 1:1-4, etc.), allowing Jews to return

to Jerusalem; or 2) that it began with the destruction of the temple and the city in 586 B.C. (Jer 52:7-14) and ended with the temple's completion about 516 B.C.

That the temple was restored and sacrifices resumed at the end of 70 years is established history. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that after the Messiah had come and been "cut off" (i.e., killed, "but not for himself") the temple and Jerusalem would be destroyed again (Dn 9:25-26). This post-Messiah destruction would leave the Jews for "many days without a king...and without a sacrifice..." (Hos 3:4). Obviously, something would prevent the temple from being rebuilt! As quoted above, Jesus explained that the Gentiles would control Jerusalem.

For 1,930 years since the A.D. 70 destruction of the temple, Christ's words (proving that He is God the Messiah - Isa 9:6). have

**...a child is born...his name shall be...
The mighty God, The everlasting Father,
...there shall be no end [to His rule] upon
the throne of David...
*Isaiah 9:6-7***

been fulfilled in history, and their continued fulfillment today is at the heart of the Middle East crisis. Control of Jerusalem was the major issue breaking down recent peace talks at Camp David. Sadly, neither the Israelis nor the Arabs in their "peace" negotiations give heed to what God has decreed for His land and His city. Were the world to take the Bible seriously, real peace would be instantly established. Former UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed the world's true intent toward Israel: "The Jews must give up their status as a nation and Israel as a state, and assimilate as a community in the Arab world."

Popes throughout history have opposed God's prophecies and promises concerning Jerusalem. The Crusaders captured Jerusalem from the Muslims *for the Church*, not to restore it to the Jews to whom God, as the Bible repeatedly declares, had given it as a possession forever (Gn 13:14-15; 17:8; Lv 25:23; Jer 31:35-40; Ezk 37:26, etc.). Pope Urban II, organizing the First Crusade in 1096, called the Jews "an accursed race, utterly alienated from God" and urged the Crusaders to "start upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre to wrest that land from the wicked race and *subject it to yourselves.*" Urban II's offer of full forgiveness of sins for Crusade participants brought forth hordes of volunteers who, under the banner of the Cross, massacred Christ's earthly

brethren, the Jews, by the thousands all along the route to Jerusalem. The Crusade leader, Godfrey of Bouillon, vowed to avenge the blood of Jesus upon the Jews, leaving not one alive. Upon taking the City of David, the Crusaders chased the Jews into the synagogue and set it ablaze.

Coming to modern times, Theodor Herzl records in his diary that when in 1904 he asked Pope Pius X to support the Zionist cause, the Pope replied, "We cannot prevent the Jews from going to Jerusalem, but we could never sanction it." In 1919, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, Vatican Secretary of State, said, "The danger that frightens us the most is that of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine." A 1928 Vatican decree refers to Jews as "the people formerly chosen by God." The Second Vatican Council in 1965 affirmed the centuries-old claim that "the Church is the new people of God..." We have quoted [TBC, Sep. '99] the June 22, 1943 letter to President Roosevelt from Pope Pius XII which said in part, "If a 'Hebrew Home' is desired, it would not be too difficult to find a more fitting territory than Palestine. With an increase in the Jewish population there, grave new problems would arise." So the "vicars of Christ" and their Church have consistently opposed the fulfillment of God's promises to His chosen people!

That Jerusalem would be "trodden down of the Gentiles" has been a fact of history, exactly as Christ foretold. The Babylonians held Jerusalem, then the Medes and Persians. Alexander the Great took it for the Greeks in 333 B.C. Later the Egyptians and Syrians alternately had it until the Romans under Pompey captured Israel in 64 B.C. and held it into the fourth century A.D. In the seventh century Islamic invaders took control, to be replaced near the end of the eleventh century by the Crusaders. They held Jerusalem until Saladin (Sultan of Egypt and great Muslim warrior) retook the city in 1187. Later the Islamic Mamelukes of Egypt possessed Jerusalem. Then the Ottoman-Turkish Empire ruled for about 400 years. The Turks sided with Germany in World War I, so the Allied victors gave Britain a mandate in 1917 to administer the region.

Central to the Middle East conflict today is the issue of the so-called Palestinian people. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), headed by Yasser Arafat since 1969, claims to represent them. To this day, the PLO declares, "The struggle with the Zionist enemy is not a struggle about Israel's borders, but about Israel's existence."

The PLO is an Islamic terrorist organization. It trained most terrorists around the

world: Idi Amin's murder gangs who killed about 300,000 black Christians in Uganda; the Italian Red Brigades; German Baader-Meinhof gang; the Iranian Revolutionary Guards; terrorists in Latin America, etc. Arafat committed his first murder at age 20. Under him the PLO became the most vicious and bloodiest terrorist organization ever known. It holds records for the biggest hijacking (4 aircraft at once), the largest number of hostages (300 at one time), the largest ransom extorted (\$5 million from Lufthansa) and the greatest number and variety of targets (40 civilian aircraft, five passenger ships, 30 embassies or diplomatic missions, and massacres of school children), etc. The Palestinian Prize for Culture was recently awarded to Abu Daoud for his book telling how he planned and murdered eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics!

The PLO's terrorism against Jordanian civilians was so vicious that King Hussein chased them into Lebanon. There the PLO wiped out the Christian towns of Damur, Beit Mallat, Tall Abbas and others. Its reign of terror went largely unreported. The international press was cowed into silence by the brutal murder of those who dared to tell the truth: Larry Buchman and Sean Toolan of ABC-TV, Mark Tryon of "Free Belgium Radio," Robert Pfeffer of *Der Spiegel* and others. About 300,000 Lebanese civilians were murdered in the PLO's rape of that country before the Israelis expelled them. Yet Israel was painted the villain!

Incredibly, Arafat and his PLO murderers have been sanitized and lionized by world media. John Paul's recent trip to Bethlehem was in response to Arafat's invitation to join him there to celebrate "our Jesus Christ." *Our* Jesus Christ? Arafat says Jesus was a Palestinian freedom fighter against Israel, and the Pope smiles and blesses him! John Paul II has warmly received Arafat in Rome many times. This ruthless, sadistic terrorist and murderer was given the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994 and is honored as the champion of justice for the Palestinian people.

Palestinians? There *never* was a Palestinian people, nation, language, culture, or religion. The claim of descent from a Palestinian people who lived for thousands of years in a land called Palestine is a hoax! That land was Canaan, inhabited by Canaanites, whom God destroyed because of their wickedness. Canaan became the land of Israel given by God to His people.

Those who today call themselves Palestinians are Arabs by birth, language, and culture, and are close relatives to Arabs in surrounding countries from whence most of

them came, attracted by Israel's prosperity. The name Palestine comes from the *Philistines*, who were not Semites, but invaded Canaan from Crete and parts of Asia Minor. Yet Arafat, an Arab, claims that ancestry.

In A.D. 130, the Romans rebuilt Jerusalem as a pagan city with a temple to Jupiter where the Jewish temple had stood. Provoked to rebellion, about 500,000 Jews were killed and thousands sold into slavery. The Romans angrily renamed Israel "Syria Palaestina." Jews living there became known as Palestinians. During World War II, the British Army had a Palestinian Brigade made up entirely of Jewish volunteers. The Palestinian Symphony Orchestra was all Jewish, and *The Palestine Post* was a Jewish newspaper.

In 1948, Arabs who had fled from Israel (attacking Arab nations had broadcast, "All Arabs get out!") began to claim they were the true Palestinians and that the land of Israel had always belonged to them. World media eagerly promotes that lie. Yet in 1948, Arabs owned a mere 3 percent of so-called Palestine.

Israel's claim to the land goes back 4,000 years to Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah in Hebron. There Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah are buried. In Hebron David was crowned king. This sacred Jewish site has *no relationship* to Arabs or Muslims. Yet Muslims claim Hebron as their own, built a mosque to keep Jews and Christians from visiting the cave, and are determined to drive out every Jewish resident.

For 3,000 years Jerusalem was the capital of Israel. Temple Mount on the summit of Mount Moriah is the heart of Jerusalem. This 35-acre parcel arouses such explosive passions that it could trigger World War III at any time. This is where Abraham built an altar to offer his son Isaac to God. That spot was purchased by King David from Ornan the Jebusite to build there an altar to God. There Solomon built the first temple. In its place now sits the Dome of the Rock, a monument to Islam's unbiblical and irrational claim that Abraham offered, not Isaac, but Ishmael.

Perpetuating a Muslim lie, Ikrema Sabri, mufti of Jerusalem, declared again early this August that the Temple Mount is Islamic and "not subject to negotiations." Given its 3,000-year Jewish history and importance to Christians, on what basis should Muslims control this site? That Jerusalem is not mentioned once in the Koran exposes the lie of Islam's claim to any part of Jerusalem as a holy site.

Today we see the continuing fulfillment of Christ's remarkable prophecy that

Jerusalem would be "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk 21:24). UN Resolution 181 in 1947, supported by the Vatican, declared that Jerusalem must remain an international city. Israel's Knesset is there. But nations locate their embassies elsewhere in Israel. No other country is forbidden to decide its own capital! The European Union repeatedly says it "does not recognize Israel's sovereignty" over Jerusalem. By what right do Gentile nations claim Jerusalem as their international city?

In 1998, the Vatican's foreign minister called the Israeli presence in East Jerusalem "illegal occupation." In a papal bull on the Year 2000 Jubilee, John Paul II again rejected Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. In mid-February 2000, the Vatican signed an agreement with the PLO calling for "international guarantees" to keep Jerusalem under international control.

Muslim nations have spent billions since the Yom Kippur War for missiles carrying a variety of deadly warheads. These are not defensive weapons. They exist for one purpose: to rain death and destruction upon Israel, so that Muslims can possess the land God promised the Jews. The new borders imposed by the Oslo Accords (1993) allow Katyusha rockets to be moved to within deadly range of Israel's narrow heartland which holds 70 percent of the Jewish population, 80 percent of its industry, its only international airport and its most important military installations.

As the "peace process" continues, Arabs murder and torch the homes of fellow Arabs suspected of cooperating with Israel. Muslim terrorists who kill Jews are honored with streets and holidays named after them! Yet Israelis dream on of peace with those who have sworn to exterminate them! An ad in *The Jerusalem Post* for "The Jerusalem Heights Penthouses" reads, "As Close to Heaven as You Can Ever Get."

When will "the times of the Gentiles" end? Clearly, not until the Gentile nations are defeated at Armageddon. Just ahead lies "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 30:7). The armies of the world, led by Antichrist, will be brought to Armageddon by Jahweh to punish them for mistreatment of His people Israel (Ezk 38:16-18)—and to discipline Israel for her unbelief.

No wonder Christ wept over Jerusalem! For 1,900 years, as Hosea foretold, Jews have had no sacrifices for sin. We are driven to one of two conclusions: either God has abandoned them—or the Messiah's once-for-all death for sin has fulfilled and replaced animal sacrifices. Let us pray that Israel will awaken to the truth.

TBC

Quotable

In the attempt...to enhance our ethical and moral sensibilities, people have often appealed to the humanities....I am skeptical about this....[Remember] that people returned from a day's work as guards in the concentration camps and then put Mozart on their gramophones....

June Goodfield, "Humanity in Science"

As you go out into the world...remember that I, an old man, who has known only science all my life long, say to you, that there is nothing truer in all the universe than the scientific statements contained in the Word of God.

Professor J.D. Dana, at the time the greatest living scientist, addressing a Yale U. graduating class

Q&A

Question: I read that in his recent meetings in the Philippines, Benny Hinn had crowds of one million per night, and similar crowds in Africa. He seems to be the most popular preacher in recent memory, even more so than Billy Graham. Some evangelical leaders accept and praise him. Jerry Falwell commends Hinn warmly. Yet you offer a book, *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, which...confuses the body of Christ by portraying Hinn as a false prophet. Why?

Answer: Isn't accurate information vital concerning someone as popular as Benny Hinn? *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn* documents many of Hinn's false prophecies, deceptions, heresies, occult practices, etc. He supposedly repents, then goes back to the same thing and frequently changes his story.

He even changes his testimony: "I got saved in Israel in 1968" (*PTL Family Devotional*, Dec. 1981); "It was in Canada that I was born again right after '68" (1983 message in St. Louis); "I got saved in high school in February 1972...during my senior year" (*Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, 1990); "I never said I was a senior..." (*Christianity Today*, 10/5/92). Which, if any, is true?

In March 1995, in Springfield, MO, Hinn said, "...in South Africa I saw a man blow on somebody and the man fell, and I thought, 'Boy, that's a good idea! [That's why] I began to blow...in ignorance....'" Yet in *The Anointing* (p. 89), Hinn had said, "Some have asked me what I'm trying to do when I throw or blow at them....*God*

told me to do it...."

Hinn has had more revelations and seen more visions than anyone, including John in Revelation. He claims that angels appeared in his bedroom every night for a year. In the Bible, angels appeared infrequently and always for a reason. Angels just enjoy observing Benny? He has also seen God and Jesus, even smelled God. Following is a summary of *some* of the *many* false prophecies Hinn declared "directly from God" in Orlando on December 31, 1989:

A great revival movement will be birthed in Orlando in mid-'90s to bring God back into American classrooms. The mid-'90s will see a new move of God to shake the world with the last great revival. Many will be raised from the dead. Angels will come knocking at your door. About '94-'95 God will destroy the homosexual community of America with fire. A new disease will arise from South America birthed from a new drug from South America and many will die. God will bring America to its knees by economic collapse. An earthquake will hit the east coast of America and destroy much in the '90s. Not one place will be safe in America from earthquakes in the '90s.

Not one of the December '89 "God-given" prophecies came to pass! Shouldn't Hinn be disciplined as a false prophet by the church? Yet the more false prophecies he declares, the more heresies he proclaims, and the more bizarre the experiences he relates, the larger his following becomes. Even absurdities such as the following over TBN pass unnoticed: "...the Lord just told me, and I don't know if this is true or not."

Many leave Hinn's meetings not only spiritually seduced and with empty pockets, but worse off physically. A man Hinn had "slain in the Spirit" fell on a prostrate elderly woman and broke her hip, resulting in her death. The lawsuit was settled out of court. At a South Africa crusade a man collapsed; Hinn said the Lord told him the man would be okay, but he died in the ambulance.

An elderly Hinn follower was turned away from one entrance to ARCO Stadium in Sacramento, CA because she had not given enough money to enter there. Later, on the stage she was "slain in the Spirit," and while she was lying on the floor a huge man, likewise "slain," landed on top of her, breaking her leg. In 1993 in Basel, Switzerland, Hinn prophesied over a man with cancer that he had many years to live. He died two days later. In Nairobi, Kenya early in May 2000, four patients released from a hospital to attend Hinn's "Miracle Crusade" died while waiting for prayer.

Hinn has rebuked "the spirit of cancer"

and the "devil of death and of debt" so many times without any result that it would be laughable if so many weren't deceived.

Earlier this year 3,000 church leaders such as Jack Hayford, Rex Humbard, and Jerry Falwell honored Hinn for 25 years of ministry. Humbard lauded Hinn as "the most illuminating man...of detecting and feeling the moving of the Holy Spirit that I've seen in my 68 years of God's work [and] one of the greatest Bible teachers that God ever let live." On TBN this "greatest of Bible teachers" scorned doctrine as "sick stuff" and said, "I don't discuss doctrine." Even TBN's Paul Crouch has referred to sound doctrine as "doctrinal doo-doo."

Hinn prowls about on stage, growling as if demon-possessed, breathing out heavily, "If I don't release this power I'll explode!" In a guttural voice he curses those who dare to question him, curses their children and threatens that if he had a "Holy Ghost machine gun" he'd "mow down" critics. He searches for a verse in the Bible that would allow him to kill them! "Fire!" he roars, to knock people down. When one falls he demands, "Pick him up!"—then knocks him down again and again. This is the Holy Spirit?

Jerry Falwell appeared with the many false prophets at the 25th anniversary celebration of Hinn's ministry. He said,

Pastor Benny and I are friends....He came [to Lynchburg] and we had a wonderful day together...in conversation about what God is doing....I wish you and Susan and your four children a blessed, blessed next 25 years....When I look at your crowds in those coliseums, all I see are those 18-year-old high school seniors and I want all of them at Liberty University...!

How many more false prophecies and victims and how much more heresy will it take for Falwell, Hayford, et al. to stop encouraging and endorsing Hinn? And when will respected leaders be concerned enough to correct him and to warn the church?

Question: In spite of your criticism of Roman Catholicism, the Pope did come clean with a fervent confession of past wrongs, even apologizing to the Jews. I don't see how you can deny his sincerity. I hope you'll now update your writings and remove any reference to past persecutions of Jews, the inquisitions, etc.

Answer: I have indeed updated *A Woman Rides the Beast* to include this alleged confession and the Pope's trip to Israel, etc.

The front page of *L'Osservatore Romano* (official Vatican newspaper) for March 15, 2000 carried this headline: HOLY FATHER CELEBRATES "DAY OF PARDON." The article said, "On Sunday, 12 March...Pope John Paul II...asked the Lord's forgiveness for the sins...of the Church's sons and daughters."

Said the Pope, "We are all invited to make a *profound examination of conscience*..." [Emphasis in original] Surely a profound examination of conscience would uncover specific details of wrongful deeds. Yet the Pope's "confession" gave *no* specifics.

To make certain that all sins have been enumerated at confession, the priest requires specific details, and he probes the penitent with leading questions which pollute the minds of innocent children with ideas until then unimagined. The official catechism (par 1456) declares, "All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent self-examination are conscious must be recounted by them in confession, even if they are most secret..." John Paul II, however, spoke only in generalities about—

...infidelities to the Gospel committed by some of our brethren...the divisions which have occurred among Christians ...the violence some have used in the service of the truth...the distrustful and hostile attitudes sometimes taken towards the followers of other religions...ethical relativism, the violations of the right to life, disregard for the poor in many countries. [Emphasis in original]

The Pope gave neither the names of the guilty (*brethren*) nor an account of their misdeeds. Yet this whitewash of a Church "drunken with the blood...of the martyrs" (Rv 17:6) was hailed by the media and even by many evangelical leaders as an act of great courage, integrity and humility.

This pretended apology mocks the memory of the millions of victims of papal Rome throughout the ages. There was not a word of sympathy or contrition for the victims of her inquisitions, no mention of her crusades against innocent Jews and Christians throughout Europe, or papal wars of extermination against Hussites, Albigensians, Waldensians and Huguenots and of countless other victims of such cruelty as would make even a Hitler blush. Nor was there a word about the crimes of numerous unbelievably villainous popes. John Paul II's "confession" engaged in hypocrisy of the highest degree; it swept centuries of brutal wickedness under the carpet.

Heinous crimes were committed in obedience to and under the leadership (indeed,

at the insistence and urging) of the Church itself through its popes, cardinals, bishops and priests. The Inquisitions were conceived and directed by the popes themselves and involved diabolic tortures which were forever being ingeniously "improved" to make them more excruciating, the better to exact confession and recantation of alleged heresies of which multitudes were falsely accused. Some of the torture chambers with their cunning instruments for causing the most agonizing suffering are still available for viewing by curious tourists throughout Europe. Eighty supposed vicars of Christ, one succeeding the other, supervised and insisted upon this horror. It was the popes, aided by the bishops, cardinals and priests, who inspired and directed the Crusades which brought about the slaughter of Christians, Jews and Muslims—even offering special indulgences to those who would execute this mayhem.

These horrors are indisputable history. Yet Rome has never admitted to, repented of or asked forgiveness for these crimes. If the popes themselves were innocent of the slaughter, why didn't John Paul II cite evidence that they, threatening interdicts, excommunication and anathema to the "perpetrators," ordered it to stop? Though kings and princes trembled under papal edicts, there is no such evidence.

The Pope's hypocrisy reached new heights in his claim that "a thorough and fruitful reflection" of sins had "led to the publication...of a document [the product of "numerous meetings of the subcommission and...plenary sessions..." held in Rome from 1998 to 1999,¹] of the International Theological Commission, entitled *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*. Yet the document's Introduction declares its purpose is "not to examine particular historical cases..." In all of its 19,000 words not one guilty party is named, nor is one sin described. A confession without a clear recital of sins is a fraud.

The entire document reflects the Pope's hypocritical avoidance of any culpability on the part of the Church:

...faults committed by the sons and daughters of the Church...acts imputable to the children of the Church...the Church should become ever more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children...John Paul II's appeal to...mark the Jubilee Year by an admission of guilt for the sufferings and wrongs committed by her sons and daughters....²

The "confession" mourns the "division" in Christendom, implying that the Church of Rome is the one true church and "unity"

means rejoining her. Always the Pope and supporting documents distinguish "between the indefectible [sic] fidelity of the Church and the weaknesses of her members..."³

In *Memory and Reconciliation*, Pope John Paul II is quoted as offering "hope that the Jubilee of 2000 will be the occasion for a purification of the memory of the Church from all forms of 'counter-witness and scandal'...of the past millennium." The Pope seems to have accomplished that "purification of memory" without confessing to anything. The complicity of evangelical leaders in this sham through their praise for the Pope is scandalous.

This document to which the Pope refers with such approval is cunningly crafted to avoid the damning truth. The torture and slaughter of millions of Christians, Jews and Muslims is whitewashed as "the use of force in the interest of truth..." Pretentious phrases such as "historical judgment...historical evaluation...ethical discernment...the principle of conscience...moral responsibility...the principle of historicity" mask cruel reality with a facade of self-serving pharisaical piety.

Reference is made to "the hostility or diffidence of numerous Christians toward Jews...a call to the consciences of all Christians today, so as to require an act of repentance...[for] the injury inflicted on the Jews..." Such platitudes only add insult to injury in light of the centuries of virulent persecution and wholesale murder perpetrated by the Roman Catholic Church against those to whom the Bible refers as God's chosen people and Christ's brethren. The Pope has portrayed a spotless and guiltless Church which is sincerely concerned over some undefined guilt attached to her "sons and daughters." Amazingly, the media buys the delusion, and evangelical leaders, in their eagerness to support ecumenism's counterfeit unity, credit the Pope with laudable contrition.

End notes

- 1 *L'Osservatore Romano* weekly edition in English, 15 March 2000, "International Theological Commission—Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," 1.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 1,2,3, etc.
- 3 *Ibid.*

Mary Who?

T.A. McMahon

A few months ago I was asked by Grizzly Adams Productions/PAX Television Network to appear in a documentary with the tentative title "The Mystery of Fatima." For those not familiar with the subject, it is claimed that in 1917, Mary, the mother of Jesus, appeared to three young shepherd children in the rugged hills a few miles west of Fatima, Portugal, giving them secret messages to be revealed at a later date. Growing up Catholic, I was very aware of the apparitions of Fatima, and like most of my Catholic grade-school friends, I had anxieties about what we perceived to be secrets too frightening to imagine.

The video production company was looking for a critic, and I reluctantly decided to be interviewed. My reluctance had to do with how things rarely turn out the way one would hope, especially when dealing with secular productions. Based upon the interview, the program (which I have yet to see) could well have me crying out with Job, "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me" (3:25).

The appeal of Mary is a growing phenomenon which needs to be addressed biblically, having spread far beyond the traditional borders of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Mary, who has at least a thousand times more shrines dedicated to her than even her Son, is rapidly becoming the "queen of ecumenism," someone whom diverse religions can honor, rally around, and even worship without offending their respective theologies. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that "A growing number of Americans from all Christian denominations are reaching out to the Virgin Mary as a comforting conduit of spirituality and a symbol of peace in troubled times. ...It's not just Catholics who are interested in Mary and following the apparitions..."¹

Surprisingly, apparitions of Mary even appear in Islamic countries, where multitudes of Muslims turn out to honor her. For example, in the late 1960s thousands witnessed "a lady composed of light" who was holding a baby as she seemed to be moving across the roof of a Coptic Orthodox church on the outskirts of Cairo, Egypt. "Several nights each week, thousands of Muslims fell to their knees on prayer rugs spread wherever space permitted, and wept before the 'magnificent, wondrous,

glorious form of Our Lady from Heaven.'"² While such a reaction may seem puzzling to western Christians, there is a substantial basis for it. An entire chapter (Maryam) in the Qur'an and numerous other verses therein, as well as hundreds of *hadiths*, pay homage to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Islamic scholar Aliah Schleifer writes in her book *Mary the Blessed Virgin of Islam* that Mary is esteemed above the most revered women of the Muslim faith, including Muhammad's two favorite wives Khadija and Aisha, and his daughter Fatima. According to Schleifer, one *hadith* quotes Muhammad as saying he would take Mary as one of his wives in heaven: "The Messenger of God said, 'God married me in Paradise to Mary...'"³ Schleifer concludes,

[Jesus] answered..., My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God, and do it.

Luke 8:21

From the perspective of the classical Muslim scholars, Mary, in the Qur'an and Sunna, is a symbol that brings together all revelation. As a descendant of the great Israelite prophets, the bearer of the word, the mother of Jesus, and as traditional Sunni Islam's chosen woman of the worlds, Mary is symbolic of the Qur'anic message that revelation has not been confined to one particular people.⁴

In addition, the fact that an apparition claiming to be Mary appeared near a place named for Muhammad's favorite daughter has endeared millions of Muslims to "Our Lady of Fatima." In 1992 *The Fatima Crusader* reported that more than 500,000 followers of Islam turned out to honor a statue of the Fatima Mary in Bombay, India.

It would seem that at least some apparitions of Mary share the Muslim's respect for the Islamic faith. Our Lady of Medjugorje, who has made numerous appearances in the wartorn area of Bosnia and Herzegovina (where Roman Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox are killing one another), allegedly communicated to one of the visionaries, "Tell this priest, tell everyone, that it is you who are divided on earth. The Muslims and the Orthodox, for the same reason as Catholics, are equal before my Son and I [sic]. You are all my children."⁵ Catholic Archbishop Fulton J.

Sheen, popular television evangelist of the late '50s and early '60s, predicted that Mary would be the key to reconciling the faiths of Rome and Mecca.

Mary has played a key role in the conversion to Catholicism of some of that Church's leading apologists such as former Reformed theologian Tim Staples and Scott Hahn, a graduate of the evangelical Gordon-Conwell Seminary and former Presbyterian minister. Staples credits "the Lord and his Mother" with helping him convert to Romanism. He writes, "I had despised for so long the Catholic belief in Mary's intercession. But...I finally gave in to her loving call..."⁶ For spiritual assistance in his conversion Hahn turned to praying the rosary, in which 153 of 170 prayers are offered to Mary. He writes in his conversion story, "I proceeded to pray [the rosary], and as I prayed I felt more in my heart what I came to know in my mind: I am a child of God. I don't just have God as my Father and Christ as my brother; I have His Mother for my own."⁷ Franciscan University, where Hahn is a professor, is one of the foremost promoters of tours to the shrine of Our Lady of Medjugorje.

More and more Protestants are becoming attracted to Mary. The historic St. Thomas Episcopal Church in New York City prominently displays a statue of Our Lady of Fifth Avenue. The late John Cardinal O'Connor and Orthodox Archbishop Peter were on hand for its dedication in 1991. Charles Dickson wrote a popular little book in 1996 encouraging a reconsideration of Mary among evangelicals. In *A Protestant Pastor Looks at Mary*, he points out that Luther and Calvin were more agreeable toward Mary than later generations of their followers. Dickson quotes from a letter Luther wrote to the Duke of Saxony: "May the tender Mother of God herself procure for me the spirit of wisdom profitably and thoroughly to expound this song of hers." One enthusiastic Amazon.com reviewer writes, "[Dickson's] book is SUPERB!...this book by a Protestant is the BEST book about the Holy Virgin I have read to date. This book made me cry and it made my spirit laugh. After reading this book, few people will be able to deny Mary's role in the lives of ALL Christians... [and] how the Rosary is for ALL Christians. ...This book also helps construct a bridge between Christian groups. It attempts to establish some much

needed common ground (with lots of success). Will Protestants and Catholics ever be able to agree about Mary? Well, this book sure will help that happen!"

In response to the question, "Will Protestants and Catholics [or Muslims, for that matter] ever be able to agree about Mary?", a more basic question must be asked: "Mary who?"

The Mary of the Orthodox Church was sinless but not conceived immaculately. The Mary of Islam is confused with Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron, whose father was Amram. She is not the Mother either of God or of the Son of God ("Allah has no son" – Surah IV:171). The Mary of Catholicism was immaculately conceived, the Mother of God, a perpetual virgin, Mediatrix between God and man, and the Queen of Heaven.

Then there's the Mary of the Bible.

For anyone who has an interest in learning the truth about Mary, the only trustworthy account is to be found in the Scriptures, where information is presented by those who knew her personally and, more importantly, whose writings were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Fewer than 90 Bible verses address the life of Mary. In them we find a wonderfully humble servant of the Lord who rejoices in Him as her Savior (Lk 1:47). Obviously her heart was not "immaculate" nor was she conceived without sin because her Son, *her Savior*, came not for the sinless but "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10). The Catholic Church seems to be confused over this issue of Mary's sinlessness because it considers her to be the woman of Revelation 12, "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." This specific imagery is reflected on innumerable statues of Mary around the world. Yet the Bible says this woman gave birth in pain and travail (Rv 12:2), and pain and labor are part of God's judgment on *sinners* (Gn 3:15-16). So either the (recently beatified) "infallible" Pope Pius IX, who engineered her immaculate conception into Church dogma, was wrong about Mary's sinlessness, or the "infallible" Pope Pius XII and numerous other Catholic theologians were wrong about Mary being the "woman" of Revelation 12:1-2.

Mary's ministry was simply the birth and nurturing of the child Jesus. Once He reached adulthood, she played no influential part in His earthly service. It's at the wedding feast of Cana, which began the public ministry of Jesus, that her last words are recorded. Fittingly, she tells the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you,

do it" (Jn 2:5). There is no doubt that she is exemplary among biblical saints as a model of obedience and submission to the will of God, especially in the appointment to which she was called. In keeping with the words of John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I *must* decrease" (Jn 3:30), Mary faded into the background.

Search the Scriptures as you will and you will find no leadership role for Mary among the Apostles. She taught no doctrine. We never hear of the Apostles seeking her out for counsel. Other than the gospels, Mary is mentioned only once in the New Testament, where the Book of Acts tells us of her simple participation in a prayer meeting along with her sons. The teaching that Mary was a perpetual virgin is also contradicted by many other verses (Mt 12:46; Mk 6:3; Jn 7:3,5; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19; Ps 69:8; etc.).

When you compare what the apparitions around the world say and do in claiming to be Mary, you get, to borrow a phrase, a Mary "quite contrary" to the one presented

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above...

Exodus 20:4

in Scripture. In subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways the apparitions are given to self-aggrandizement and self-promotion—all to the devaluation of Jesus—and their instructions are often antibiblical and anti-Christ. The "Mary" who spoke to Father Gobbi, the founder of the Marian Movement of more than 100,000 priests, declared, "Each of My statues is a sign of a presence of Mine and reminds you of your heavenly Mother. Therefore it must be honored and put in places of greater veneration..."⁸

Consider Our Lady of Fatima: "Say the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world....Pray, pray, a great deal, and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell because they have no one to make sacrifices for them....God wishes to establish in the world the devotion to My immaculate heart. If people do what I tell you, many souls will be saved and there will be peace."⁹

This is not the humble and submissive Mary of the Bible. The rosary invokes prayers to Mary ten times for every one for the Lord; Jesus is the Prince of Peace; only Christ's once-for-all sacrifice saves souls from hell; neither is Mary's heart immaculate, nor are we to be spiritually devoted to anyone other than our Lord and Savior. The

Marian apparitions present a status for Mary which is without support or precedent in the Scriptures. The Apostle Peter, a contemporary of Mary and regarded by Catholics as the first pope, wrote nothing about her. The Apostle Paul, through the Holy Spirit, gave more specific instruction in living the Christian life than any other writer in the Bible, yet made no mention of the alleged importance of devotions or reparations to Mary. In contrast to the apparitional Mary who claims to have been "conceived without sin," Paul called himself "the chief of sinners," yet God made him the most productive figure of the New Testament after Christ. The Apostle John, who wrote the last book of the Bible and was given the care of Mary by Jesus himself, says nothing about venerating her.

The apparitions are clearly not the mother of Jesus, although they make every attempt to be perceived that way. Many appear as a young woman bearing an infant. So who's this child? Jesus was in His thirties when He returned triumphantly to His Father. Obviously, the apparitional Mary has the superior position in the relationship; what small child would not be obedient to his mother? Moreover, rather than as a helpless babe, the Bible exalts Jesus as the King of kings, Lord of lords, Creator of the universe, the glorified Son of God, God manifested in the flesh!

Apparitions are the primary source of many major Catholic liturgies, rituals, and dogmas. The Brown Scapular which "releases souls from purgatory" came from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in 1251; in 1830 an apparition introduced the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception along with the Miraculous Medal; the Dominican Order claims its founder initiated the devotion of the rosary through the counsel of an apparition of Mary in the thirteenth century.

Although mankind is being drawn into every kind of spiritual deception in the last days before the return of Jesus, it is especially sad that the real mother of Jesus, the remarkable "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38), is so terribly misrepresented, thereby drawing millions away from her Son. In the Gospel of Luke (11:27-28) we find a well-meaning woman saying to Jesus concerning His mother, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" Had the Mary we know from Scripture been present, we can be certain that she would have added a hearty amen to her Son's poignant response: "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" May our obedience to God's Word be our passion. TBC

Quotable

Objection is often raised—even by some sound in the faith—regarding exposure of error as being entirely negative and of no real edification. Of late, the hue and cry has been against any and all negative teaching. But the brethren who assume this attitude forget that a large part of the New Testament, both of the teaching of our blessed Lord himself and the writings of the apostles, is made up of this very character of ministry—namely, showing the satanic origin and, therefore, the unsettling results of the propagation of erroneous systems which Peter, in his second epistle, so definitely refers to as “damnable heresies.”

H.A. Ironside

Q&A

Question: I know God’s Word is infallible and inerrant, but I can’t reconcile Jeremiah’s statement that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years either with history or the Bible. When did this 70-year period begin and end? Nor can I get it straight concerning Darius, Cyrus, the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra’s time and the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah.

Answer: The entire subject of the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem seems to contain several apparently hopeless contradictions. I have learned that God allows seeming contradictions to force us to dig deeper and in the end to have our faith strengthened thereby.

First of all we encounter the apparent contradiction about the duration of Daniel’s time in Babylon. Daniel 1:21 says, “Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus....” But 10:1 says, “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel....” If Daniel continued only unto the first year of Cyrus, how could he still be alive and receiving revelations in Cyrus’s third year?

Obviously 1:21 can’t mean that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus. The statement is made because it was in his first year that Cyrus allowed the Jews to return. Thus we are told that Daniel lived to see the return of the captives under Cyrus. That the first wave of captives returned in the first year of Cyrus is stated clearly in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-4, 5:13 and 6:3.

This brings us to what appears to be a hopeless contradiction due to the fact that Cyrus II, known as Cyrus the Great, ruled from about 550-529 B.C. The first year of his reign, in 550 B.C., would be much too early for a return of the captives to Jerusalem if that indeed marked the end of the 70-year desolation thereof. Even if we count from the first carrying away of captives into Babylon in 605 B.C., that gives only 55 years instead of the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 25:3-11; Dn 9:2). We could legitimately extend the period to the first year of his reign in Babylon, which he captured in 539 B.C. This is undoubtedly when the decree was given and what is meant by “the first year” of his reign (he had no jurisdiction over the Jewish captives until then) but that would still leave us 4 years short of the necessary 70-year desolation.

However, it seems clear that the first wave of returnees to Jerusalem by Cyrus’s decree, resulting in the commencement of temple reconstruction, did not end the 70-year desolation. Eight years after the death of Cyrus, Daniel is still praying for the restoration of Jerusalem (Dn 9:1-19) in the first year of Darius. Cyrus died in 529 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Cambyses, who in turn was succeeded by Darius in 521 B.C. (after an eight-month interlude of a usurper in 522 B.C.). So at least 18 years after the first wave of captives returned to Jerusalem and began to rebuild the temple, Daniel is still fervently praying for an end to the desolation of Jerusalem (Dn 9).

Obviously, then, the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem is not considered by Scripture to have ended with the decree of Cyrus allowing the captives to return. The unfounded belief that the desolation ended at that time creates this confusion. While we are told at least four times that this decree was given in the first year of Cyrus (the first year of his reign in Babylon), nowhere is it stated that this decree marked the end of the prophesied desolation of Jerusalem.

That the desolation did not end at that time becomes clear from a careful reading of the book of Ezra. The foundation of the temple had no sooner been laid than opposition arose. The adversaries “weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building...frustrate[d] their purpose, all the days of Cyrus...until the reign of Darius...” (Ezr 4:1-5). Although Cyrus no doubt had good intentions, apparently after giving the decree he was too preoccupied to make certain that it was

being effected in Jerusalem. The captives had been allowed to return, and the fact that they were frustrated in building the temple was overlooked if ever reported to him. Verse 6 tells of the opposition during the reign of Ahasuerus (known as Cambyses in secular history). Verses 7-23 refer in more detail to the decree by Artaxerxes, which caused the work of the temple to cease “by force and power.” This Artaxerxes was also known as Smerdis, a usurper, who seized the throne in 522 B.C. and was murdered eight months later and was succeeded by Darius. The suspension of temple reconstruction held “unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia” (Ezr 4:23-24). Now we see the answer to Daniel’s prayer with the restoration of temple construction in 521 B.C.! The temple was then finished “in the sixth year of the reign of Darius” (Ezr 6:15), in 516 B.C.

Thus the 70-year desolations are actually counted from the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. until its completion in 516 B.C., exactly 70 years. All of the apparent contradictions disappear and the biblical account perfectly fits a very complex scenario, further reason for absolute confidence in whatever else the Bible has to say.

Question: Recently the Moody Radio devotional, *Today In The Word*, contained the following from the “Moody Radio Pastor,” Don Cole, to which I would like your response: “Q - Where is the biblical justification for 1) nuns; 2) purgatory; 3) confessing to a priest; 4) worshipping the Virgin Mary? I am anxious to hear your explanation. A - Your anxiety must remain unrelieved. Every item on your list is a Roman Catholic belief or practice, and I cannot speak for the Roman Catholic Church. Then why do I include your question on this page? To make two points: that treatment of Roman Catholic doctrine by some Protestants is not always accurate, and that it is unfair for us Protestants (evangelical in my case) to do a monologue about somebody else’s beliefs.” I was shocked! Are you?

Answer: Yes. Have you written to Moody Radio? They should be held accountable. Would Cole give the same response if asked about Mormons or Jehovah Witnesses? That “treatment of Roman Catholic doctrine by some Protestants is not always accurate” is doubtless true, but hardly an excuse for Cole himself not to give an accurate and biblical appraisal. If he knows of inaccurate handling of Roman Catholicism, why

doesn't he correct false information? Is this not an important subject considering the fact that there are about 1 billion Roman Catholics in the world, that nearly every true Christian has a Catholic friend, neighbor or relative, and that these billion souls are deceived by the belief that their Church will eventually get them into heaven through its priesthood and sacraments? Shouldn't evangelicals be concerned for these lost souls? And wouldn't accurate information about their false hopes and beliefs be helpful in bringing them to Christ?

For the Moody "Radio Pastor" to avoid giving a biblical response to a vital question by saying that he "cannot speak for the Roman Catholic Church" is irresponsible! No one is asking him to speak for the Roman Catholic Church. That would hardly be necessary. The Roman Catholic Church has spoken for itself in numerous official documents which declare quite clearly its false gospel which is taking hundreds of millions to hell and which Paul solemnly cursed (Gal 1:6-9). Rome's official teaching concerning the specific subjects referred to by the questioner ought to be clearly explained, and its "damnable heresies" (2 Pt 2:1) and unbiblical practices contrasted with what the Bible teaches. Presumably this is what the questioner hoped would be done. That Moody's "Radio Pastor" has so little concern for bringing the truth in this important matter to his vast radio flock is unconscionable!

Sadly, his statement that "it is unfair for us Protestants (evangelical in my case) to do a monologue about somebody else's beliefs" sounds like a veiled criticism of those who have spoken out against Roman Catholicism, no matter how biblically and factually. It is certainly far less than his listeners have a right to expect of a man who calls himself their radio pastor.

Monologue about somebody else's beliefs? By this comment, he has ruled out every book ever written to expose the cults and denied the right of any pastor to answer anyone's questions concerning the rampant heresies deluging the world and church today! Is quoting the cult, its leaders and false prophets a *monologue*?

We don't judge Cole's heart, but his statement seems to shirk his God-given duty to expose today's deepening apostasy and ecumenism. Jude exhorts us to "earnestly contend for the faith once [for all time] delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). How is it possible to defend the truth without critiquing the lies which oppose it, many of which are subtly cloaked in enough

"Christianity" to deceive even mature believers at times? Shame on Moody Radio! We hope that many of our readers will take the time to bring this to Moody's attention and will pray for the radio staff.

Question: There is much talk about the Jewish temple being rebuilt in Jerusalem, but it seems to be mostly speculation. Is there any solid basis in Scripture for believing that the temple will be rebuilt?

Answer: That there is a strong desire on the part of the Jewish people to rebuild the temple and to reinstate animal sacrifices is a fact—all the more astonishing in view of the 1,900 years that have passed since the temple's destruction in A.D. 70 and the fact that so few Jews and even Israelis believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Can tradition be that strong? The Israeli soldiers who took the old wall and temple mount in 1967 wept uncontrollably. Religious Jews around the world look to this 35-acre parcel in the heart of old Jerusalem as the holiest place on earth, while secular Jews (the majority worldwide) see it as symbolic of Israel's survival. The temple will be rebuilt! Of course, there will have to be an astonishing change of heart in the Muslim world.

As for biblical support for the above, there is no question. Paul tells us in 2 Thesalonians 2:3-4 that "the man of sin," when revealed, "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." On this basis alone we know that the temple must be rebuilt for the revelation of Antichrist. He will eventually be worshiped as God by the whole world: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life...." (Rv 13:8). An image will be made of him and all who will not bow down and worship his image will be killed (vv. 14-15). Where would that image be placed but in the newly reconstructed temple where Antichrist will sit, declaring himself to be God?

Surely this is the event to which Christ referred: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand.) Then let them which be in Judaea flee to the mountains....For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not...nor ever shall be" (Mt 24:15-22). Daniel's remarkable prophecy was first fulfilled in June, 168 B.C., when Antiochus Epiphanes defiantly polluted the altar of burnt offering by sacrificing thereon swine flesh and dedicating the

temple to the pagan god Jupiter Olympius. Christ confirmed a double fulfillment, the second one being the Antichrist's desecration of the temple during the Great Tribulation.

That Antichrist will enforce a "peace" agreement on the world, part of which will include the rebuilding of the temple and return to animal sacrifices, is clear from Daniel 9:27. Equally clear is the fact that in the "midst of the week" (three and one-half years into Daniel's seventieth week, i.e., in the midst of the seven-year tribulation period) Antichrist will doublecross Israel, causing the sacrificial system to be aborted, and will place his image in the temple:

And he shall confirm [enforce] the covenant with many for one week [seven years]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate. ...shall take away the daily sacrifice...shall place the abomination that maketh desolate...and from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand, two hundred and ninety days [three and one-half years to the end of the Great Tribulation plus another thirty apparently to cleanse the temple]" (Dn 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

Endnotes

- 1 *L.A. Times*, 12/25/98
- 2 *Fatima Prophecy*, Ray Stanford
- 3 Schleifer, *Mary the Blessed Virgin of Islam*, 64
- 4 *Ibid*, 100.
- 5 *Medjugorje Day by Day*, Richard Beyer, Ave Maria Press, 1993
- 6 Patrick Madrid, *Surprised by Truth*, Basilica Press, 1994, 239-40
- 7 <http://kutai.kinabalu.net/scotthahn.html#journey>
- 8 Fr. Don Stefano Gobbi, *To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons*, 1998, 383
- 9 *Our Lady of Fatima's Peace Plan from Heaven*, Tan Books and Publishers, 1983, inside back cover

The Call to Discipleship

Dave Hunt

When our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth He repeatedly said to those who would listen to His Word, "Come, follow me" (Mt 19:21; Lk 18:22, etc.). Large numbers of the Jews, because they or a relative or friend had been healed or fed by Christ, followed Him wherever He went: "And there followed him great multitudes of people...and he healed them all..." (Mt 5:1; 8:1; 12:15; 13:2, etc.). So large and eager were the crowds that He and His twelve disciples "could not so much as eat bread. And...his friends...said, He is beside himself" (Mk 3:20-21).

Christ's call to follow Him is extended to all mankind. No hint that Jesus was not sincere in saying, "If *any* man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (Jn 7:37). What He still offers to *all* is the same "living water [of] everlasting life" which He offered to the woman at the well (Jn 4:10-14).

Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41-42) and mourned, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children...as a hen...her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Lk 13:34). He thereby identified Himself as the God of Israel who had pleaded with His people throughout their entire existence to repent and turn to Him: "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up and early sending them...(Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19, etc.). "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me...Oh that my people had hearkened unto me...!" (Ps 81:11-13).

The multitudes who followed Him were called disciples. Some were genuine, but most had selfish motives and eventually forsook Him. Yes, even Christ himself had a very high dropout rate. Jesus said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (Jn 6:70). He was referring to Judas, who would betray Him.

The number of supposed disciples who remained true to Christ was comparable to the low percentage of true disciples today among those professing to be Christians. If we were to add up all of the millions whom Robertson's CBN, Crouch's TBN, Billy Graham, Benny Hinn and other evangelists and major denominations declare they have won to Christ in the last twenty years, the

total would indicate that all of America had been converted. Knowing each heart, Jesus declared, "...there are some of you that believe not...From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (Jn 6:64-66).

From the multitudes, Christ "chose twelve, whom also He named apostles" (Lk 6:13) and trained personally. They failed Him often: Peter and Andrew began to follow twice before they finally remained with the Lord. The first time was when Andrew, who had first begun to follow Jesus, introduced Peter to Him (Jn 1:37-42). They soon left Him; Jesus found them "casting a net into the sea" and said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:18-22). Their partners, James and John, who were "mending their nets," also began at that time to follow Christ. It

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:27

wasn't long until once again they all went back to the old life, but Christ persisted and found them a third time, discouraged and "washing their nets" after fishing all night and catching nothing. He got into Peter's boat, told him where to throw his net, and so many fish were caught that the net broke. Peter fell down before the Lord, acknowledging his sinful unworthiness, and Peter, Andrew, James and John finally "forsook all, and followed him" (Lk 5:1-11).

The insincere throng of signs-and-wonders seekers of Christ's day has its modern counterpart in the huge crowds attracted by "miracle crusades" and televangelists promising prosperity for "seed faith" offerings.

The Bible calls Christ's followers "disciples." That plural word is found 244 times in 232 verses; "disciple," 29 times in 27 verses. Thirty-one of these are found in the book of Acts. Quite clearly "disciple" is the biblical designation of a true believer. The word "disciple" is related to discipline and identifies one who is seriously committed to learn, obey and follow.

Today, however, the word "disciple" has fallen into disuse in favor of the word "Christian"—a rather vague designation which almost anyone can adopt and which, as a result, has become almost meaningless. Multitudes who think of themselves

as "Christians" live undisciplined lives without any intention of obeying the One whom they insincerely call Lord. Even heretical cults claim to be Christian.

Many consider America to be a "Christian nation." The word "Christian" appears only twice in the Bible; the word "Christians," once. This label was actually invented by the world as an accusatory and derogatory nickname marking Christ's disciples for persecution and often for death.

Thus Peter wrote, "if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pt 4:16). Knowing that choice would cost him everything, King Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). In those days there were few pretenders. Churches then were not filled with hangers-on gathering for social or business reasons (that began with Constantine 200 years later) or because they liked the choir, or the pastor's sermons were uplifting or the people were all so friendly and made one feel welcome and important.

In much of the church today, there is little fear of God, little conviction of sin, and hardly the mention of God's holiness and His dreadful justice with which one dare not trifle. Unfortunately, salvation is frequently presented without explaining why it is needed. One cannot get saved without realizing one is lost. There must be conviction of sin, sorrow and repentance toward a holy God who hates sin but loves the sinner.

Referring to a good shepherd, Christ declared, "The sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow...for they know not the voice of strangers" (Jn 10:4-5). As the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep, Christ said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (Jn 10:11, 27-28).

How can anyone claim to be one of Christ's sheep and to have received the eternal life He gives, yet not heed His voice and follow Him? He said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord...[Then I will say,] I never knew you" (Lk 6:46; Mt 7:22-23).

Most of what is called Christianity today has been made too popular to be genuine. Church growth is sought through surveys and worldly marketing techniques. Of course, worldly methods breed worldly people. Judging by some churches today, one would think that when someone

offered to follow Him, our Lord would have called out to His disciples: "Peter, sign him up quick! John, get her into the choir! James, make him an elder, he's got money." To remain popular with this unregenerated crowd, many pastors offer inoffensive and pleasing sermonettes which create only Christianettes.

We entertain our youth, instead of calling them to take up the cross and follow Christ. We're afraid that if we set the standard too high we'll "lose" them—and thereby we lose them for eternity! Rather than those who give up their lives for Christ, the heroes and heroines held up to "attract" today's youth are mostly professional athletes, pop musicians or movie stars, paraded on stage as though to say, "Look who Jesus has on His side! Doesn't that make Christ appealing?" The Christianity represented by most of the contemporary Christian entertainment industry would shock the early disciples, who would also consider today's popular gospels of prosperity to be heresy.

In his book, *True Discipleship*, William MacDonald quotes an American college student, converted to communism and writing from Mexico to his fiancée to break off their engagement:

We communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money can buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty personal selves into a great movement... compensated by the thought that each of us...is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind. The communist cause is my life—my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night....Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas, actions according to how they affect the communist cause....I've already been in jail for communism...if necessary I'm ready to go before a firing squad.

Isn't the cause of Christ far better and greater? Why don't we drop entertainment and challenge our youth with something worth living for, even dying for if need be? Dying? Yes, Christ expected that His disciples' lives be expendable for Him and that each take up his cross, ready if need be to die (Mt 10:38-39; 16:24; Lk 14:26-27). The most repeated verse in the New Testament is "whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Mt 16:25; 10:39; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24; 17:33; Jn 12:25).

When Christ was arrested in the Garden,

"all the disciples [like many today] forsook him, and fled" (Mt 26:56). Peter even denied his Lord with cursing and swearing (Mt 26:74; Mk 14:71). But the Lord forgave and restored him (Mk 16:7; Jn 21:15-19; 1 Cor 15:5), as He graciously does for us.

In giving up our lives in exchange for the life Christ would live through us, we find true life—a life of joy and fruitfulness. C.T. Studd wrote,

I had known about Jesus dying for me, but I never understood that if He died for me, then I didn't belong to myself.... If I belong to Him, either I had to be a thief and keep what wasn't mine, or else I had to give up everything to God. When I came to see that Jesus Christ had died for me, it didn't seem hard to give up all for Him.

I was raised in a very devout family and a sound fellowship of believers. Yet discipleship was not considered to be for everyone; it was only for the more spiritual who

...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed...

John 8:31

aspired to a deeper commitment. Biblically, however, if one is not a disciple, one is not a Christian: "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). We need to return to this biblical identification and its reality.

Christ commanded the original twelve to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel..." (Mk 16:15) and thereby to make more disciples, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20). Obviously the "all things" new disciples were to be taught included that *they also* make disciples and teach them "all things" Christ had commanded the original twelve. In other words, each new disciple is responsible to make other disciples and to teach them to observe all things Christ commanded the original twelve (Mt 28:20). One can hardly tell others to do what one neglects to do oneself.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders that some of them would teach perverse doctrines in order to "draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). The same problem confronts us today in church leaders who compete with each other to establish a following. Tragically, all too many who call themselves "Christians" are more willing to follow a popular leader than to follow Christ.

Christ didn't promise His disciples financial prosperity or popularity, but persecution: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven..." (Mt 5:11-12). "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Lk 6:26). "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you....If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." (Jn 15:18-21). Does not the absence of the persecutions that Christ promised raise serious questions concerning today's Christianity in America?

Has Christianity become a brief game called "church" that we play on Sunday morning and then our duty is done? And unlike other more popular games (NFL, NBA, NHL, etc.) where overtime makes it all the more exciting and enjoyable, woe to the preacher who extends this game into even a brief overtime! How many churches find very few at their midweek prayer meeting because priority is given to more important matters? In a recent survey of teenagers, eight out of ten called themselves Christians. Yet, of 19 goals, they ranked highest the establishing of relationships and achieving a comfortable lifestyle! Being deeply committed to the Christian faith ranked fourteenth and being personally active in a church ranked sixteenth.

Following Christ is not a trial subscription but a commitment for eternity. Discipleship has nothing to do with joining a church but everything to do with knowing, loving and following Christ.

Christ didn't say, "Follow someone or some church claiming they represent Me." He said, "Follow me....Learn of me" (Jn 1:43; Mt 11:29). We go to His Word to learn of Him. Each of us is expected to know it thoroughly. Yet many who think of themselves as Christians scarcely study the Bible seriously, expecting the pastor and Bible teachers to do that for them.

Along with Christ's "follow Me" was His promise, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:19). Yet many who call themselves Christians have little concern for winning the lost to Christ, instead letting days and even weeks go by without telling another person about Christ and the salvation which He procured at Calvary and offers to all.

May the Lord stir each of our hearts to follow Him fully. It is our prayer that this newsletter not be mere information but that it ignite us all to devotion and action. **TBC**

Quotable

[TBC: the following quotes reveal that not much has changed, except for the worse.]

This age of novelties would seem to have discovered spiritual power in brass bands and tambourines....The tendency of the time is towards bigness, parade, and show of power....Jesus said "Preach the gospel to every creature." But men are getting tired of the divine plan; they are going to be saved by the priest...by the music...by theatricals....Well, they may try these things...but nothing can ever come of the whole thing but utter disappointment and confusion. God dishonored, the gospel travestied, hypocrites manufactured by the thousands, and the church dragged down to the level of the world.

C.H. Spurgeon

The Church of God has gone into the entertainment business! People must be amused, and as the church needs the people's money, the church must supply the demand and meet the craving! How else are godless hypocrites to be held together? So the picture show and entertainment...take the place of the gospel address and the solemn worship of God. And, thus, Christless souls are lulled to sleep and made to feel "religious" while gratifying every carnal desire under the sanction of the sham called the church! And the end? What an awakening [in eternity]!

H.A. Ironside

Q&A

Question: The Bible does seem to state a number of times that the Jews (the people of Israel) are God's chosen people. They mean something special to Him. I don't understand, however, why there even had to be a "chosen people." Can you explain this?

Answer: To bring the Messiah into the world is one reason for a "chosen people." The Messiah had to come through a special line of descent; He couldn't be a member of all races. One particular group of people had to be chosen, and God had to keep them isolated and identifiable in order to fulfill prophecies concerning Messiah's coming first of all to them and their rejection of Him. Numerous prophecies were given so that there would be no doubt as to

the identity of the Messiah and His mission. His genealogy was an important factor in His identity.

Another reason for a "chosen people" is that God needed a special people through whom He could reveal Himself and also to show, in them, the relationship He wanted with all nations. Yes, He wanted to bless all nations, but in order to do so He must start with a particular people.

The Jews were also chosen to receive and preserve God's laws. They were chosen to be a holy people. They were chosen to be an example of both God's discipline and His grace. By their history of continued rebellion and God's patience with them, the Jews have provided assurance that God does not go back on His promises and is infinite in grace and mercy.

Another major reason God chose a special people was to prove His existence to the world by foretelling through His prophets centuries and even thousands of years beforehand exactly what was going to happen to them. We have gone into this in detail biblically and historically in several books, among them *A Woman Rides the Beast*, *A Cup of Trembling* and others.

To summarize briefly, God promised the people of Israel the land of Canaan; when He brought them into the land He warned them that if they disobeyed Him they would be cast out and scattered everywhere. They would be hated, persecuted, and killed as no other people (anti-Semitism is a phenomenon unparalleled in history), but God would not let them be totally destroyed. After hailing the Messiah as He rode into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass, bringing salvation, Israel would reject Him; He would be crucified, and Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed once again and the Jews scattered to every nation in the final diaspora. Nevertheless, they would be amazingly preserved as an identifiable, ethnic group of people and brought back into their land in the last days. At that time, as God foretold 2,500 years ago, He would make Jerusalem "a cup of trembling" and a "burdensome stone" around the necks of the nations of the world. Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

We have seen in our generation, exactly as prophesied, Israel's restoration as a nation to her own land (actually a small part of it thus far), the determination of the world not to let Israel have sovereignty over Jerusalem, the repeated attacks against her by her Muslim neighbors, and Israel's triumph each time through God's

preservation. Today Jerusalem (and especially the Temple Mount) is a burdensome stone around the necks of all the nations of the world, as the news continually reports. The Bible tells how it will all end, but the world is unwilling to believe and to submit to God's plan.

None of these proofs would have been possible without there having been a "chosen people." There is much more in Scripture, but space limitations govern.

Question: Mormons practice baptism for the dead and cite 1 Corinthians 15:29 as justification: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" Mormons claim they follow the Bible literally, and that evangelicals don't. The Roman Catholic Church also believes that Masses and novenas for the dead help to reduce their time in purgatory. Why don't evangelicals obey the Bible and practice baptism for the dead? And wouldn't this verse indicate that something could be done for the dead after all?

Answer: In 1 Corinthians 15, known as "the resurrection chapter," Paul uses three principal arguments for the Resurrection: the fact 1) that Christ rose from the dead and was seen by numerous competent and credible witnesses (vv 5-11); 2) that if Christ is still dead, the Apostles are liars, Christianity is a fraud and there is no salvation for mankind (vv 12-18); and 3) that if there is no life beyond the grave, then Christianity is the most miserable religion (v 19) because we are called to deny ourselves in this life in hope of the promised life to come.

Arguing from a purely logical standpoint, Paul suggests that one can also infer the resurrection of the body from the fact that after a seed is placed into its "grave" in the ground it comes back to life in a new body. He further points out that mankind has an intuitive recognition that death is not the end. As evidence of this he offers the practice of baptism for the dead engaged in by non-Christians of that day as something that would not be followed without belief in a resurrection.

Inasmuch as Paul refers to baptism for the dead in this manner, how do we know that the early church didn't follow this practice which Paul definitely says was current at that time? There are several reasons. First of all, there is no instruction telling how such a practice should be observed. Nor is there even one example in the entire Bible of believers baptizing for

the dead. Furthermore, the statement that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27) would indicate that it is too late after death to do anything for the deceased. Only judgment follows.

Finally, we have the language Paul uses in this passage which makes it clear that in verse 29 he is not referring to Christians at all, but to pagans. Throughout this chapter leading up to the statement about baptism for the dead Paul uses the pronouns “we,” “you,” “our,” “your,” and “ye,” referring to himself, the Apostles, and the Christians to whom he was writing (vv 14, 15, 19, etc.). At verse 29 the pronoun abruptly changes to “they”; then at verse 30 it reverts to “we” again.

Clearly those referred to as “they” in verse 29 are not the Christians he refers to as “you” and “we” in the preceding and following verses. Inasmuch as “they” are clearly someone other than Christians, they can only be the pagans among whom the believers lived. And it is a historical fact that baptism for the dead was indeed practiced throughout the Roman Empire, but not by the Christians.

Question: The pain and suffering caused by crime and sickness is bad enough. Christianity, however, creates worse suffering by threatening mankind with hell for having broken God’s laws. An irrational fear of eternal punishment haunts those who come under Christianity’s destructive influence. The world would be a better place without such delusions!

Answer: Contrary to your suggestion that Christianity creates an irrational fear of eternal punishment, it alone delivers from such fear all who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. No one lives in fear of God’s judgment for one’s sin who believes that Jesus Christ paid the full penalty. Christ promised that all those who believe in Him *have* eternal life and they will *not* “come into condemnation” but have “passed from death unto life” (Jn 5:24). All who believe that promise are thereby delivered from the very fear which you blame upon Christianity.

Nor do those who have heard and rejected that gospel worry very much about God’s judgment. If they were truly concerned, they would have accepted His offer of mercy. Take a poll of those who were once under Christian influence but who rejected the gospel and you will find individuals who have little if any fear of judgment because they don’t believe in it.

The truth is that those who know little or nothing of Christianity are the ones who are haunted by fear of coming judgment. All non-Christian peoples, from pagans to idolaters, have that fear. Conscious of their sin but without hope in Christ, these poor people visit the witchdoctor or rely on fetishes or amulets, or make some other attempt to earn salvation and to appease whatever gods or spirits they imagine exist. When such people believe in Christ they are delivered from such fear.

Religious practices among all non-Christian peoples everywhere and at all times in history always involve a sense of guilt and the attempt to erase it through some kind of sacrifice, sacred pilgrimage or other ritual. Such practices are quite similar worldwide and can be traced back for thousands of years before the advent of Christianity and therefore cannot be attributed to it.

Perhaps you came to your conclusions by observing Roman Catholics, whom you thought were Christians. Many if not most of them are indeed plagued with the very hopeless sense of guilt to which you refer. This is because Catholicism dogmatically claims that the Church dispenses the graces of Christ through its sacraments—graces which can be lost by failure to live up to its rules—and thus there is no way to know for sure that one will make it to heaven.

Therefore, Roman Catholicism involves its members in many forms of attempted appeasement of God in order to earn heaven and/or lessen one’s punishment. For example, endless Masses offered on behalf of the dead are paid for by their survivors (often until the money available for payment runs out) in the hope of lessening the purgatorial suffering of the deceased. There is no peace in this practice.

Several times we have quoted the late Cardinal O’Connor of New York stating that neither he nor Pope John Paul II nor Mother Teresa (nor anyone else) could know with certainty what their eternal destiny might be. He declared this to be official teaching of the Church, and indeed it is. Obviously, such a dogma creates the very fear to which you refer—*but this is not Christianity!*

We need know nothing more than this to identify Roman Catholicism as a non-Christian pagan religion. There are priests and monks and nuns today who (just as in the Middle Ages and Dark Ages) wear haircloth undergarments, put rocks in their shoes, flagellate themselves and otherwise endure self-inflicted suffering in the hope of earning forgiveness of sins and becom-

ing worthy of heaven. Millions of Roman Catholics all over the world make pilgrimages to shrines (some walking for miles on bloody knees), light candles, pray to saints in heaven, wear scapulars and medals and employ crucifixes and other means of appeasing God in the hope of thereby meriting God’s forgiveness.

True Christianity delivers from guilt and fear of judgment. The gospel promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life as a free gift of God’s grace, not by works or sacraments, but to all who will believe. Catholicism involves numerous pagan practices; and the fear of the judgment it creates cannot be laid at the door of Christianity.

Joy to the World

T.A. McMahon

“Joy to the world! The Lord is come:/ Let earth receive her King!/ Let every heart prepare Him room,/ And heaven and nature sing!” These lyrics are familiar to untold millions, and especially at this time of year they’re introduced to thousands more. Multitudes can hum the tune, many can rattle off the words, yet few know what they mean. Biblical Christians rejoice at the message this song communicates because most of us understand its meaning. Nevertheless, too often we miss the mark in our explanation to the world of this and other such songs.

Assuredly, the “world” craves joy. Yet the prospect quickly dissipates when people are uninformed regarding the conditions for “joy to the world” (e.g., salvation found only in Christ).

Having been involved in Christian schools both as a teacher and the parent of five children, I’ve sat through more than a few holiday performances aimed at witnessing to lost loved ones, friends, and neighbors. As delightful as these presentations were, however, rarely if at all was the gospel made understandable. Not that the “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Lk 2:10) wasn’t reflected somewhat in the plays, or even followed up by the school principal or church pastor through a brief message and a recitation of the sinner’s prayer. But rarely was the gospel adequately *explained*. That’s a serious omission, especially in this biblically uninformed, post-Christian generation.

Let’s take some samples from a typical gathering at a Christian school play. In attendance to see their fourth-grade, born-again nephew are Uncle Allen and Aunt Zelda. Both were born to parents who were products of the 1960s. Allen was raised in a social/liberal Episcopalian home; he’s a cultural Christian who knows some of the “what” of Christianity but none of the “why.” Zelda’s parents, hippies in their college days, had vowed not to “push” religion on their kids; as a consequence, she is an experientially prone New Ager by default and knows almost nothing about Christianity. The audience is dotted with those of diverse religious understanding, yet they

are relatively clueless about the gospel.

The play presents some solidly biblical content. An “angel” tells Mary, “...thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end...” (Lk 1:31-33). In another scene an “angel” gives more of the details of the good tidings to Joseph: “...fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:20-21). Later,

**I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my soul shall be joyful in my God;
for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.**

Isaiah 61:10

the little girl playing Mary declares joyfully, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Lk 1:46-47).

If the audience is listening at all, most will have picked up some important details related to the “joy” referred to above: *Jesus was born of Mary; the conception was of the Holy Ghost; Jesus is God’s Son; He will save people from sin; His kingdom is eternal*. Allen is vaguely aware of most of this; Zelda finds some of the points intriguing but they make little sense to her.

At the end of the play the school principal quotes John 3:16 and adds that, as wonderful as the birth of Jesus was, the *purpose* of His birth was that He would live a perfect life and then go to His death sacrificially in payment for the sins of the world. The principal then asks those in the audience who would like to receive Christ as their personal Savior to repeat with him a prayer of acceptance. I have no doubt that at many such events there

are those whom the Holy Spirit has prepared through conviction and understanding, that they might respond to the gospel and receive eternal life. But others like Uncle Allen and Aunt Zelda may not have enough information to comprehend the offer of biblical salvation. Too often evangelicals wrongly assume that unbelievers get the message.

Let me give some answers to basic yet critical questions about the gospel which I’ve heard through the years from people like Allen and Zelda. Many non-Christians in the Western world are aware of only two things about Christianity: Jesus, its central figure, was born in Bethlehem and died on a cross. What they need to know is that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (i.e., God, who became a man without ceasing to be God), was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, then died a sacrificial death for the sins of the world on a cross outside Jerusalem.

Okay...but why?

Why would God become a man? Why would He then die sacrificially?

The reason is found in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Everything God created was perfect. Adam and Eve reflected that perfection both physically and morally. As creatures of free will who were to respond to Him in loving obedience, God gave them a simple test of their love, a condition with eternal consequences: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gn 2:16-17). They failed. God’s clear penalty—death—consequently infected all of creation. “Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation....For all have sinned” (Rom 5:18; 3:23). Spiritual death, i.e., separation from God for eternity, was immediate, and hastened the onset of physical death.

So what could Adam, Eve and their descendants do? There was nothing they could do except suffer the penalty God’s justice demanded for sin: the destructive consequences of sin in this life, and upon death, separation from God forever.

That’s it? Are there no other options? Just one: the Good News. God promised that He himself would pay the penalty His

divine justice demanded! Romans 5:18 explains, "...by the righteousness of [Jesus] *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life."

Why couldn't God simply have forgiven Adam and Eve and let them get on with their lives? Why make such a big deal over a piece of fruit? These last questions would come from someone like Uncle Allen, who had some exposure to Christianity but never gave it much consideration. His liberal church would have talked a lot about God being love and full of mercy but would have said little or nothing about His justice. God's solution for mankind's problem is a demonstration of His divine and absolutely perfect love, mercy—and justice. The penalty for sin cannot be assuaged; God would be less than just were He to let sinners off without the full penalty being paid. So where does His love and mercy fit in? John 3:16, which may be the best known scripture verse, makes it clear: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." He became a man to pay the penalty Himself, "that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). "For if, when we were [His] enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom 5:10-11). That is surely the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Then what must one do to partake of such joy? That was the desperate question asked by the Philippian jailer. No doubt he was impressed after witnessing his stripped and severely beaten prisoners, Paul and Silas, stirred to sing praises to God in spite of their suffering. He asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:30-31). That declaration is continually repeated throughout the scriptures. Consider the following from just one book, the Gospel of John: "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name"; "whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have eternal life"; "whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; "he that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth* not the Son shall not see life";

"he that...*believeth* on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; everyone [that] ...*believeth* on him may have everlasting life"; "if ye *believe* not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"; "he that *believeth* on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and *believeth* in me shall never die." (1:12; 3:15-16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:40; 8:24; 11:25-26).

That's it? Just believe? It's our only option. First, Christ paid the penalty in full. His declaration from the cross was unequivocal: "It is finished." In the Greek the term is *tetelestai*, which was found marked on bills of sale during the time of Christ and meant "paid in full." In 1 Timothy we're told that Christ "gave himself a ransom for all." A "partial" ransom would fall short, setting no captives free. Second, there is no work that we can do which can contribute to our salvation. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5). The Apostle Paul admonished the Galatians for thinking they could add something to that which Christ had *completely* accomplished for them: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit [by faith], are ye now made perfect by the flesh [by works]?" (Gal 3:3).

Third, salvation is a gift from God at Christ's expense. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). Any attempt to pay anything for a gift is foolish at best, a rejection at worst. Fourth, the penalty for sin is separation from God forever: "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord..." (2 Thes 1:9). Although it is something we finite beings can't comprehend, nevertheless the scriptures declare that Jesus, because He is both infinite as God and our substitute as man, paid that penalty through "the suffering of death...by the grace of God...[tasting] death for every man" (Heb 2:9).

What a glorious God we have, one who calls all men, women and children everywhere to repent of their own attempts to save themselves, and to turn by faith alone to His Son Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21) that they may receive the gift of salvation which is provided in Him alone. To quote one of my own children, "There's no gooder news!"

In Dave Hunt's latest book, *An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith*, he underscores the critical necessity for explaining the gospel and gives this helpful instruction:

The one true "gospel of God's grace," which God offers as our *only* salvation, has three basic elements: 1) who Christ is—fully God and perfect, sinless man in one Person (were He less, He could not be our Savior), 2) who we are—hopeless sinners already condemned to eternal death (or we wouldn't need to be saved), and 3) what Christ's death accomplished—the full penalty for our sins (any attempt by us to pay *in any way* rejects the gift of salvation God offers.)

Without at least a basic understanding of these essentials, a true acceptance of the biblical gospel of salvation is impossible. How can one place trust regarding eternal destiny in something he doesn't understand and in Someone he doesn't really know?

For the believer in Christ, experiencing God's joy is all by His grace. It's "unspeakable...and full of glory" (1 Pt 1:8). Sometimes it's unexpected, but mostly it's the result of doing His will. There is no situation in which we find ourselves where the joy of the Lord cannot prevail. Biblical examples are plentiful of joy abounding under the worst possible conditions. The reason is simple. Not only has God saved us (our ultimate joy), but He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb 13:5). Furthermore, His grace is more than sufficient (2 Cor 12:9).

If our own joy meter isn't registering where it ought to be, here's the scriptural solution: Joy increases as we grow in our personal relationship with Jesus. It also increases as we love and serve others for the sake of their salvation. Jesus himself endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him, i.e., our salvation (Heb 12:2). Just knowing that the Creator of the universe has died for you and me *personally* is cause for indescribable rejoicing. There is no barrier—time or circumstance—to delighting in God's goodness. Better yet, we can be witnesses to it anytime and anywhere! Paul's joy thrived in bringing others to Christ: "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thes 2:19-20).

Lord, increase our joy by helping us to reach the lost (Acts 20:24), that they too may understand and receive Your joy. "As it is written [Rom 10:15], How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" **TBC**

Quotable

When the church stoops so low as to acknowledge the wisdom of this world, who will observe any distinct testimony for God? All sinks down to one common level, and the enemy will have his own way. In this way the voice of truth is hushed and God is forgotten. The attempt to accommodate truth to those who are of the world can only end in complete failure. Let truth stand upon its own heavenly height; let saints stand fully and firmly with it; let them invite sinners up to it; but let them not descend to the low and groveling pursuits and habits of the world, and thus rob truth of all of its edge and power. It is far better to allow the contrast between God's truth and the world's ways to be fully seen, than to identify with them, when they really do not agree. We may think to commend truth to the minds of worldly people by an effort to conform to their ways; but, so far from commending it, we in reality expose it to secret contempt and scorn. The man who conforms to the world will be the enemy of Christ, and the enemy of Christ's people. Let us shake off the world's influence, and purge ourselves from its ways.

We have no idea how insidiously it [the world's influence] creeps in upon us. The enemy at first weans from really simple and Christian habits, and by degrees we drop into the current of the world's thoughts. What is needed is the single-minded devotion of people to whom the Lord is everything and the world is nothing. May we, with holy jealousy and tenderness of conscience, watch against every approach of evil.

C. H. Mackintosh

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Q&A

Question: It seems to me that TBC is saying about Catholics that if a person believes that Christ's work on Calvary is absolutely necessary for salvation, and in faith requests the grace that Calvary made possible, but in addition believes that salvation is received incrementally in the sacraments and performance of good works, such a person is not saved. I believe you are adding to the gospel another requirement, i.e., a correct understanding of the doctrine of grace....If a belief that the sacraments are

somehow necessary for salvation causes a person who has faith that he is saved because of Christ's atoning work to be not saved, would this not exclude Luther, who according to *TBC* June 2000 "retained a belief that baptism is essential for salvation"? My feeling about Catholicism is not that the gospel is absent but that it is accompanied by so much unnecessary paraphernalia that a sincere person might not find the gospel in all the clutter....

Answer: The Bible is very clear that we are saved through believing the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Rom 1:16). If, as you say, "a sincere person might not find the gospel in all the clutter" of Catholicism, then that person cannot be saved because he cannot believe a gospel he cannot find for the clutter. No, I am not "adding to the gospel" that a person must have "a correct understanding of the doctrine of grace." I am simply saying what the Bible says: that a person must have an understanding of the gospel to be saved, for one cannot believe what one does not understand. Anything that obscures the gospel prevents those who hear this "cluttered" or "Jesus-plus" falsified gospel from being saved. Paul cursed those who added that in addition to faith in Christ one must keep the law of Moses. Catholicism has added far more, and thus those who believe it are even further from believing in Christ through the true gospel.

Yes, for a Lutheran (like a Roman Catholic or Calvinist) to believe that he was saved through being baptized as an infant and that he has merely "confirmed" this fact later is a false gospel that will not save. The Bible clearly teaches believer's baptism: "What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest" (Acts 8:36-7). An infant has not heard and believed the gospel and thus doesn't qualify for baptism. Baptisms of the household of Cornelius (Acts 10) and the Philippian jailor (Acts 16) are cited to justify the practice of infant baptism, but those baptized had believed the gospel. Yet Calvin taught not only that infant baptism saves, but that baptism by a Roman Catholic priest saves—an odd belief for one of the leaders of the Reformation!

Yes, Christ did say, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" (Mk 16:16). But scores of verses say "he that believeth shall be saved" and "he that believeth not shall be damned." Not one, however, says,

"he that is not baptized shall be damned." Paul could hardly remember the few whom he had baptized at Corinth. He stated, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor 1:14-17) and that he had "begotten [them]...in Christ Jesus...through the gospel" (4:15)—and there is no mention of baptism when Paul declares the gospel, as in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Question: Wycliff, Hus, Luther, Calvin, and others were truly reformers in the sense of what they undertook to do, to reform the Roman Catholic Church. They failed to accomplish this; the RCC stands unreformed to this day, so why do we refer to their era as the Reformation? What did they reform? Was it the thinking of the people?

Answer: It is true that there was no reformation of the Roman Catholic Church. The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent make it very clear that the Church remained firm in its rejection of everything the Reformers desired, and damned them to hell for their beliefs. There was, however, a "reformation" of the thinking of millions in that day and subsequently. While we cannot agree with all that the Reformers taught, at least they succeeded in challenging the Pope and his magisterium and Church to the extent that multitudes were delivered from bondage. From believing that only through the Roman Catholic Church and its interpretation of Scripture and its sacraments could one get to heaven, multitudes began to study the Bible for themselves and were saved through faith in Christ through the true gospel. That would seem to be reason enough to call the leaders of this movement of deliverance from Rome "Reformers."

Question: Increasingly I'm hearing the "call to take back our land." For example, on September 2 there was a large gathering in Washington, D.C. called "The Call DC." It was advertised as follows: "THE SUMMONS IS OUT. MULTITUDES HAVE HEARD THE CALL TO FAST AND PRAY IN DC. Two generations will stand and take back our land. Now that's revolutionary." I saw this ad in "Global Prayer News" from Colorado Springs. Can you comment?

Answer: First of all, I don't understand the phrase "take back our land." America is not the promised land of Israel which God gave

to His chosen people. There is no scripture declaring that God gave America to the American Christians or Germany to the German Christians, etc. Nor is there in the entire Bible any encouragement, much less command, for Christians to take over any land on earth. Thus, if Christians ever possessed this land in the past, it was without the sanction of God. We know, however, that Christians *never* possessed America. Many settled here in the attempt to find freedom of expression and worship, but there were also many non-Christian settlers. It is quite clear that many who signed the Declaration of Independence were at best deists who referred to “providence” but did not have in mind the one true God of the Bible, nor did they know Christ as their Savior.

I have not seen the literature of which you cite merely the headlines. However, I have seen similar material. Usually its call to “take back the land” is based upon applying to the church today the promises God gave Israel. When He said, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you” (Jos 1:3), He was speaking specifically to the Israelites about the land of Israel. He was *not* speaking to Americans about America, and it is improper to attempt to apply that scripture in such a way.

Yes, God said, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chr 7:14). However, “my people” specifically meant Israel, and “their land” meant the land of Israel. While we may learn general lessons from this scripture about prayer and repentance, it is absolutely unbiblical for Christians today to attempt to apply this promise specifically to themselves and the land in which they live.

Consequently, marches on Washington (or elsewhere) and prayers intended to aid in taking America “back” are unbiblical and will not be honored by our Lord. Rather, one ought to pray for revival in the church and the rescue of souls from judgment. The U.S. has had professing Christians as president and in many other high offices, without overall progress toward godliness in this country. What lost Americans need is the gospel, not coercion toward a godly lifestyle characterized by “family values” and “traditional morals.” If all Americans

could be persuaded to live by such values and morals, they would still be on their way to the lake of fire and perhaps would be even harder to reach with the gospel because of self-satisfaction with their good lives.

Question: I have trouble coming to grips with the idea that God uses trials to increase a believer’s faith and trust in Him. This seems to be out of character with a God who is love. Can you help me get a better handle on this matter?

Answer: The writer of Hebrews declares in no uncertain words that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:6). James 1:17 tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Paul in turn says that God gave him a “thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2 Cor 12:7). He further explains that he asked God to remove it and the Lord said no (vv. 8-9). Paul gave some medical advice to Timothy to help relieve this young man’s stomach problems and his “often infirmities” (1 Tm 5:23). Why did Paul not heal Timothy like so many others? The answer is obvious. Just as God’s gift of a “thorn” to Paul was accomplishing a specific purpose, so too did Timothy’s affliction.

David was willing to walk through the “valley of the shadow of death” (Ps 23:4) because God was with him. This same verse also says, “thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” Consider the implication here. While the shepherd’s staff was used to gently pull a wayward sheep back into the fold, the rod was used to drive off predators and even at times to direct straying sheep with a judicious whack or two. If a sheep were prone to wander, the shepherd might break its leg. He would then set it in a splint, and during recovery the sheep must of necessity remain close to the shepherd and afterwards would stray no more. What some might mistakenly regard as a cruel act (or abuse) is really a gift of life. In the midst of severe judgment, Jeremiah wrote down God’s declaration: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer 29:11). Many faithful Christians are able to echo the testimony of the psalmist: “Before I was afflicted I went astray...” (Ps 119:67).

Yes, Jesus promised joy, peace, happiness *in Him* (not in the world). While

promising that tribulation would come, He gave us the promise that He had overcome the world (Jn 16:33), not that He would necessarily remove our affliction. Paul and the rest of the apostles testified of the myriad troubles that came their way. And even though their “outward man perish,” yet their “inward man is renewed [or strengthened] day by day” (2 Cor 4:16).

While it is not always easy to see how problems can strengthen a believer’s faith, the Apostle Paul testifies to such a fact (vv. 17-18; 5:1-21; 6:1-10, etc.). The scriptures are full of examples (neatly summarized in Hebrews 11) of those who through trial, troubles, and great loss were brought closer to God. And this does not exclude the deliverance from afflictions (Ps 34:19). We too must all walk in faith.

Of even more concern is your assertion that you are unable to find these things in Scripture.

The Living Word of God

Dave Hunt

Inspired of the Holy Spirit, Paul declared, “For the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,...so that they are without excuse” (Rom 1:20). God has provided to humble observers of the universe ample evidence for His existence, evidence available in every culture and time in history. Thus there is no excuse for rejecting the witness of creation. No wonder the psalms twice declare bluntly, “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” (Ps 14:1; 53:1).

Christians have long pointed to the works of creation as proof of design and thus of a designer, i.e., Creator. Atheists have insisted that science would solve all questions about the cosmos and thus do away with the need for a God to explain anything. And they have persisted in this delusion in spite of the fact that, with each discovery science makes, the evidence for God becomes ever more irresistible.

Every door science opens reveals ten as yet unopened doors. While knowledge of the universe is expanding exponentially, the unknown expands even faster, like receding images in a hall of mirrors. Scientific discoveries overwhelmingly necessitate a power and wisdom, without beginning or end and infinitely beyond human comprehension, which alone could have brought all into existence.

Nowhere is the evidence for God stronger than in life forms, especially since the discovery of the electron microscope and invention of computers. Investigating the molecular level of life, we have discovered that its intricate design and ingenious function are beyond imagination. Reflecting that fact 3,000 years in advance, David said, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully *made*: marvellous are thy works...” (Ps 139:14). Observing the astonishing design and function even of microbes or insects, let alone human bodies, one is forced to admit that David was right: we could not have evolved, we could only have been *created*.

Even such a determined proponent of evolution as Richard Dawkins confesses that living things “give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.”¹ He even admits that the nucleus of every cell (the smallest living unit, of which there are trillions in the human body) contains “a

digitally coded database larger, in information content, than all 30 volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica put together.”² Just the mathematical odds of getting millions of letters lined up in the right order by chance is off the possibility chart.

For life, something even more amazing is involved than the chance aligning of billions of chemical molecules in the right order. Dawkins refers to a *digitally coded database*! This is recent terminology never imagined by Darwin. Not only must the DNA molecules be put together correctly, but they must, like letters, express *information* in a *language* providing instructions to be followed.

Each person at the moment of conception begins as a single cell. How does that cell know what to do to construct a body composed of trillions of individual cells of different kinds and different functions? Most school children know the answer: imprinted

[M]y word...that goeth forth out of my mouth...shall accomplish that which I please... Isaiah 55:11

Preach the word... 2 Tm 4:2

in that original cell are instructions for the construction and operation of the human body—instructions which will be followed unerringly. DNA replicates this blueprint into every cell produced. And every cell, amazingly, will know which part of those directions it is to follow.

Today’s school child also knows that DNA has an incredible capacity for storing *information*. The information contained in DNA the size of a pinhead would fill a stack of books 500 times as high as the distance from earth to the moon! It would take tens of thousands of desktop computers to store and process that amount of data.

The world’s fastest supercomputer is now being completed. It is called “Blue Gene” and will perform one quadrillion (1 with 15 zeros after it) calculations per *second*! It is being built to map the three billion chemical letters in the human genome, equal to a 100,000-page run-on sentence of operating instructions for a human being. All put together by chance?

Blue Gene’s first task will be to figure out how the body makes *just one protein molecule*. To solve that problem it will run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for a full year! Yet the body, following the instructions imprinted in DNA, creates a protein molecule in a fraction of a second. Were the instructions which this computer will take a

year to understand arrived at by random processes? All this for just one protein molecule! “The probability of the required order in a single basic protein molecule arising purely from chance is estimated at one chance in 1 followed by 43 zeros. Since thousands of complex protein molecules are required to build a simple cell, probability moves...outside the realm of possibility.”³

It takes many different kinds of enzymes (made of protein) to decode/translate the genetic information encoded into DNA—and the enzymes are independently encoded to do this. So it would do no good for evolution (even if it could) to imprint genetic information on DNA; *at the same time* it would have to independently encode the enzymes to translate it. DNA and the enzymes to decode it could not “evolve” over a period of time. All must be in perfect working order from the start. At the molecular level evolution is a bad joke!

Years ago the conundrum was, “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” Now it’s “Which came first, protein or DNA?” It takes protein to construct DNA, but it takes DNA to make protein. Obviously, both were created at once; neither could have evolved.

But the lesson of DNA points far beyond the statistical impossibility of it all somehow falling together through random processes over great time. The three billion chemical letters express *information* in a *language* which must be read to be usable! A language necessarily involves ideas framed within grammatical rules and can be created and expressed only by *intelligence*. This moves us beyond statistics and matter into another realm, involving issues—and issues cannot be comprehended by tissues.

Language expresses *thoughts*—and thoughts are *not physical*! They may be articulated in physical form, such as sounds or words and sentences on a page or the coded chemical letters in DNA. Obviously, however, the thoughts being conveyed by the language are independent of the material upon which they are expressed. A sentence may be written on paper, wood, sand, a computer chip, or audio tape, but none of these originated the message. It *must* have an *intelligent, nonphysical source* independent of the physical means of storage or communication. The Bible, of course, says that the God who encoded the DNA is a spirit (Jn 4:24).

The fact that life is created and functions by language originating from an intelligent, nonphysical source forever finishes evolution. There is no way that chemicals could put together intelligent

thoughts in a language that contains the instructions for constructing and operating even a single cell, much less the trillions of cells in the human body! The fact that DNA is designed to replicate itself precisely and only fails to do so through destructive error eliminates even theistic evolution.

We are driven by science and logic to admit that life in any form can have its source only in a God who is independent of the material universe. That there cannot be more than one source is proved by the uniformity and universality of the language. These inescapable facts refute not only atheism but pantheism and polytheism, the major delusions of paganism.

DNA, of course, does not *understand* the information encoded into it. It is a mechanism built and programmed by the Originator of the encoded language to follow His instructions automatically. And the most complex mechanism built by DNA is the human brain. More advanced than any computer yet built by man, it contains some 100 billion nerve cells connected by 240 miles of nerve fibers involving 100 trillion connections.

For all of its complexity, the brain no more originates or understands what it is doing than does DNA. The brain does not originate thoughts. If it did, we would have to do whatever our brains decided. On the contrary, we (the real persons inside) do the thinking and deciding, and our brains take these non-physical thoughts and translate them into physical actions through a connection between the spirit and body that science can't fathom.

Wilder Penfield, one of the world's leading neurosurgeons, describes the brain as a computer programmed by something independent of itself—the mind. Science cannot escape the fact that man himself, like his Creator, must be a nonmaterial being in order to originate the thoughts processed by the brain. But man did not originate thought *itself*. He did not create himself nor give himself the capacity to think. The Bible says that God, who is a spirit, created man "in his own image" (Gn 1:27), that man is a "living soul" (2:7), i.e., a nonphysical being made like unto his Creator, capable of thinking thoughts and making decisions. This ability makes him morally responsible to God. To escape that responsibility is the sole reason for atheism.

Not only has science failed to do away with God, but the latest data from computers and the examination of life at the molecular level confirm what the Bible has always said. Christians have wondered for centuries what was meant by the Word of God

dividing even between "the joints and marrow" (Heb 4:12). Now we know that the language God has encoded in the DNA in the act of creation does exactly that. But God communicates to man in his spirit in a higher language which "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (4:12). This Word of God is "for ever...settled in heaven" (Ps 119:89).

Long before modern science, David wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth *speech*, and night unto night sheweth *knowledge*. There is no speech nor *language*, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their *words* to the end of the world" (Ps 19:1-4).

It becomes ever more thrilling and increasingly glorifying to God to allow Scripture to expound upon the essential role language plays in all creation. Genesis 1 tells us that God *said*, "Let there be light," etc. The New Testament tells us that "the

spiritual life by the *Word* of God through the Spirit of God into the family of God: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn 3:6); "Being born again...by the *word* of God, which liveth and abideth for ever...And this is the *word* which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pt 1:23, 25); "the *word* of faith, which we preach" (Rom. 10:8). The psalmist said, "thou hast magnified thy *word* above all thy name" (Ps 138:2).

Miraculously, the children of their "father the devil" (Jn 8:44) can become the "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26). Yes, "now are we the sons of God..." (1 Jn 3:2). After receiving spiritual life from Him through believing His *Word*, we are capable of and "must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24).

One can see the serious error of looking to physical things like baptism and the communion wafer for spiritual life. Yes, Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (Jn 6:53). Clearly, by eating and drinking He meant believing; "he that believeth on me shall never thirst...every one which...believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (vv. 35-40). As He explained to those who could not understand, "...flesh profiteth nothing; the *words* that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (v. 63).

Man's existence as a nonphysical being does not end with the death of his material body. For the Christian, death means a temporary separation for both soul and spirit "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). That separation ends when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven [and] bring with him" the souls and spirits of those who have been in His presence while their bodies have been asleep in the grave. "With a shout" He will call their bodies from the grave to rejoin their souls and spirits, the living believers shall be transformed and "caught up [raptured] together with them...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Cor 15:50-53; 1 Thes 4:13-18). Fantastic? No more so than creation!

His bride, snatched from earth and taken to His Father's house as He promised (Jn 14:1-3), after the "judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor 5:10), will be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white" and married to her Lord (Rv 19:7-8). The One who returns triumphantly to the Mount of Olives (from which He ascended - Acts 1:9-12) leading the armies of heaven as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,"...wearing "a vesture dipped in blood,...is called *The Word of God*" (Rv 19:11-16). TBC

[T]he sword of the Spirit...is the word of God...

Eph 6:17

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..."

Col 3:16

Word was God. All things were *made* by him..." (Jn 1:1-2). Later we read, "the worlds were framed by the *word* of God" (Heb 11:3). And the universe is "by the same *word*... reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pt 3:7). Jesus said, "the *word* that I have spoken...shall judge him in the last day" (Jn 12:48).

Man's capacity to study and understand DNA language is proof that he is a nonphysical being like the Originator of DNA, thus capable of a spiritual relationship with the Creator which is far different from that of any part of man's body. His ability to form conceptual ideas and to express them in speech allows man to receive communication from his Creator in *language* which man (but not animals) can understand and obey. And conscience tells us when we disobey. The Bible says that believing and obeying this communication from God is absolutely essential for spiritual life. Moses declared 3,500 years ago, "[M]an doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (Dt 8:3).

Since Adam's rebellion, his descendants are by nature all "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) and must be born again to

Quotable

Indeed, Einstein pointed to the nature and origin of symbolic information as one of the profound questions about the world as we know it. He could identify no means by which matter could bestow meaning to symbols. The clear implication is that symbolic information, or language, represents a category of reality distinct from matter and energy...

If something as real as linguistic information has existence independent of matter and energy...it is not unreasonable to suspect that an entity capable of originating linguistic information is ultimately non-material in its essential nature. [Thus] materialism, which has long been the dominant philosophical perspective in scientific circles...is *fundamentally wrong*.

John R. Baumgardner, Ph.D., in Ashton, ed., In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation

How dreadful a thing it is to allow ourselves to get into a condition of soul in which we are unable to bear distinct testimony against the ministers of Satan. "We must," it is said, "be liberal; we must not hurt people's feelings." But truth is truth, and we are not to put error for truth. Nothing but a secret desire to stand well with the world will ever lead to this careless method of dealing with evil.

It is urged, "We must present truth in such an aspect as will attract," when what is really meant is that truth is to be made a kind of variable, elastic thing, which can be turned into any shape, or stretched to any length, to suit the taste and habits of those who would fain put it out of the world altogether.

Truth, however, cannot be thus treated; it can never be made to reduce itself to the level of this world. Those who profess to hold it may seek to use it thus, but it will ever be found the same pure, holy, faithful witness against the world and all its ways...

All this is deeply solemn. We know of few things more dangerous than intellectual familiarity with the letter of Scripture where the spirit of it does not govern the conscience, form the character, and shape the way. What we have now is a cool indifference on the part of Christians to the Scriptures...Christians may quote scripture after scripture, but it seems no more than the pattering of rain upon the window: human reason is at work, the will is dominant, self-interest is at stake, human opinions

bear sway, and God's truth practically is set aside. We want to tremble at the truth of God, to bow down in reverential submission to its holy authority in all things. A single line of Scripture ought to be sufficient for souls on any point...

All the need of the Church of God, its members, and its ministers, has been fully provided for [in God's Word]. How could it be otherwise? Could the mind of God have devised, or His finger sketched, an imperfect guide? Impossible! We must either deny the divinity or admit the sufficiency of the Book. We are absolutely shut up to this alternative. We must set a higher value than ever upon the truth and warn, in most urgent terms, against every influence, whether of tradition, or nationalism...It is imperative that we keep the truth of God—treasure it in our hearts—and submit to its authority.

C. H. Mackintosh, cited in Uplook, October 2000, pp. 18-19

Q&A

Question: I have been trying to witness to a Catholic friend who is quite knowledgeable regarding the beliefs of his Church. He claims that the "apostolic tradition" of the Catholic Church has the same authority as the Bible, that the Bible can't be understood without tradition, that it was passed down through history, that the Catholic Church has been its careful guardian, and that evangelicals lack a full understanding of God's truth because they reject tradition. I can see how this idea would undermine the Bible as the basis of our faith. Yet he quotes the Bible (such verses as 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:16) to support the authority of tradition. How do I respond to him?

Answer: Make him this simple, honest offer: If his Church can prove that just one of its traditions came from the Apostles, I (Dave Hunt) will become a Roman Catholic; and if it can't, he must admit that his Church is in serious error. Absolutely no "apostolic" tradition held as such by Roman Catholics today came from the Apostles. Catholic traditions and dogmas such as the Mass, rosary, prayers to Mary and the "saints," Mary's immaculate conception and ascension bodily to heaven, purgatory, indulgences, etc. developed gradually over the centuries. Moreover, they directly contradict Scripture and therefore must be rejected. God does not contradict Himself.

Obviously, without a voice recording

(impossible until recently) there was no way of preserving an oral record. That simple fact alone eliminates any possibility of oral apostolic tradition surviving in pure form today. And even with a voice recording, who could identify the voice of any apostle? Clearly, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to put in *written words* all of their infallibly inspired teachings to be passed on to subsequent generations. Such teachings are an integral part of the Bible, for which we have overwhelming evidence (both internal, external, and prophetic) that it is indeed the Word of God.

Of course, while the canon of the New Testament was in the process of composition, much of the apostles' teaching had only been given orally. That's what Paul meant by "the tradition...received of us" (2 Thes 3:6). He admonished them to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2:15). It is equally clear, both biblically and logically, that whatever oral teaching was for the church down through the ages was put into writing and included in the permanent New Testament record. The apostles' teaching certainly has been preserved nowhere else.

Can we identify apostolic teaching first given orally and then written as part of the New Testament scriptures? Yes. Paul repeats to the Corinthians in writing what he had previously taught them orally ("I [already] delivered unto you") concerning the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:23). Likewise he puts in writing to the Thessalonians what he had previously taught them orally concerning the Antichrist: "[W]hen I was yet with you, I told you these things" (2 Thes 2:5). Other examples could be given, but these should prove the point.

The faith which we are to defend against error is found in the Bible, not in tradition. We are assured that all *Scripture* is inspired of God, but no such assurance is given for *tradition*, for the obvious reasons given above.

Instead of promoting extrabiblical tradition, the Bible *condemns* it. With the exception of 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6, *every* mention of tradition in the New Testament (there is no mention in the Old) condemns it. Both Peter (1 Pt 1:18) and Paul (Gal 1:13-16; Col 2:8) reveal its errors and testify to their own deliverance from it.

Far from augmenting and being equal to God's Word, as Rome insists, tradition is always exposed as contradicting it. Christ rebuked the Pharisees for voiding the Word of God by their tradition (Mt 15:2,3,6; Mk 7:3,5,8,9,13). There is not one biblical example of legitimate tradition from Old

Testament times which the Jews were to follow. Surely, then, neither does the New Testament need supplemental tradition. Rome's traditions (like those of the Jewish rabbis) have only led her astray.

For centuries, God's Word has been under attack from without by atheists and critics of all kinds. The critics have now slipped inside seminaries and churches to continue their attack. More deadly than easily recognized frontal assaults is the subtle undermining of God's Word from within, and thus of the faith based upon it.

Roman Catholic tradition undermines God's Word, first of all, by contradicting it. By so doing, it presumes that the Bible is not infallible. Furthermore, that tradition is needed to supplement God's Word presumes that the Bible is not sufficient.

Nor are Rome and the rabbis alone in rejecting the Word of God in favor of tradition. Most denominations follow pet traditions having no basis in the Bible: dress codes, the way in which worship is conducted, church organization, etc. And usurping the authority of the Bible worldwide is a whole new set of extrabiblical traditions introduced by "Christian" psychology, including a new professional priesthood with its own confessional and rituals. We need to get back to and obey the Bible with absolute confidence that in it God has given us all we need for life and godliness.

Question: I realize that some investigation of cults and the occult and false teachings in the church is necessary if we are to rescue those who are thereby deceived. But it would be too disquieting for my soul to spend enough time to investigate and understand every current error. How far is one obligated to go in explaining what the Word means to those who have been led astray? In my own experience, nothing anyone could tell me would have made any difference until God himself opened my heart.

Answer: The time one spends pointing out error and attempting to persuade others of the truth depends upon one's God-given ministry and the people whom the Lord brings across one's path. Confronting and correcting error is apparently considered by God to be an important ministry, since so much of the Bible is devoted to it. Much of Christ's teaching was corrective, as are all of the Epistles. Paul corrected Peter publicly, named those who were leading others astray, and continually combated error. We must do the same if we are to obey God's Word and contend earnestly for the truth.

We are told to be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pt 3:15). Sometimes that asking may come in the form of a challenge from two Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses knocking at one's door, or from a colleague at work who is a Buddhist or Muslim. One needs at least a minimal understanding of opposing beliefs, but most important is the gospel. Paul was conversant enough with the Greek philosophers to be able to dispute with them in the marketplace and on Mars' Hill. In fact, he disputed daily (Acts 17: 17,23). Sunday-school classes and youth groups ought to train our youth to such an extent that they can stand toe-to-toe with atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, cult members, etc. and confound them, not so much by pointing out their errors, as by presenting the truth.

You say nothing could have convinced you until the Lord opened your heart. But didn't God use someone's words and efforts in that process? We must be ready always to be used of God in the same way.

Christ set the example for us to follow. He was gentle with those who had been deceived, but He sternly rebuked the rabbis who had perverted God's Word by false teaching, and He did so *publicly*.

One need not become an expert on cults and false religions. Many who thought that was their calling and immersed themselves in such studies have become obsessed with false teachings to such an extent that they have fallen by the wayside for lack of nourishment in God's Word. Love the Lord your God and His Word, study it daily, meditate upon it with the intent of being always prepared to "preach the Word."

The Bible itself is the sword of the Spirit. Therefore, our primary focus should be on knowing God's Word and presenting it convincingly in the power of the Holy Spirit. A workable knowledge of the cults and false religions should only take a secondary place.

Endnotes

- 1 Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (Longman, England, 1986), 1.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 3 Jerry R. Bergman, in *In Six Days*, John F. Ashton, ed. (New Holland Publishers, 1999), 29.

What a Sovereign God Cannot Do

Dave Hunt

One of the most common expressions one hears in Christian circles, especially for reassurance when things aren't going well, is that "God is in control, He's still on the throne." Christians comfort themselves with these words—but what do they mean? Was God not "in control" when Satan rebelled and when Adam and Eve disobeyed, but now He is? Does God's being in control mean that all the rape, murder, war and multiplied evil is exactly what He planned and desires?

Christ asks us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10). Why that prayer if we are already in God's kingdom with Satan bound, as John Calvin taught and Reconstructionists claim today? Could a world of rampant evil really be what God wills? Surely not!

"Wait a minute!" someone counters. "Are you suggesting that our omnipotent God is unable to effect His will upon earth? What heresy is this! Paul clearly says that God 'worketh all things after the counsel of his own will' (Eph 1:11)."

Yes. But the Bible itself contains many examples of men defying God's will and disobeying Him. God laments, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Is 1:2). The sacrifices they offer Him and their evil lives are obviously not according to His will. We are told that "the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God" (Lk 7:30). Christ's statement in Matthew 7:21 shows clearly that everyone doesn't always do God's will. That is implied also in Isaiah 65:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:17-19, Hebrews 10:36, 1 Peter 2:15, 1 John 2:17 and many other scriptures. In fact, Ephesians 1:11 doesn't say that everything that happens is according to God's will, but according to "the counsel" of His will. Clearly the counsel of God's will has given man freedom to disobey Him. There is no other explanation for sin.

Yet in his zeal to protect God's sovereignty from any challenge, A.W. Pink argues earnestly, "God fore-ordains everything which comes to pass....God initiates all things, regulates all things...." ¹ Edwin H. Palmer agrees: "God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen....He has

foreordained everything 'after the counsel of his will' (Eph 1:11): the moving of a finger...the mistake of a typist—even sin."²

Right here we confront a vital distinction. It is one thing for God, in His sovereignty and without diminishing that sovereignty, to give man the power to rebel against Him. This would open the door for sin as solely man's responsibility by a free choice. It is something entirely different for God to control everything to such an extent that He must effectively *cause* man to sin.

It is a fallacy to imagine that for God to be in control of His universe He must therefore foreordain and initiate everything. Thus He causes sin, then punishes the sinner. To justify this view, it is argued that "God is under no obligation to extend His grace to those whom He predestines to eternal

[F]reely ye have received, freely give.

Matthew 10:8

[L]ove one another, as I have loved you.

John 15:12

judgment." In fact, however, obligation has no relationship to grace.

It actually diminishes God's sovereignty to suggest that He cannot use to His own purposes what He doesn't foreordain and originate. There is neither logical nor biblical reason why a sovereign God by His own sovereign design could not allow creatures made in His image the freedom of genuine moral choice. And there are compelling reasons why He *would* do so.

Many an atheist (or sincere seeker who is troubled by evil and suffering) throws in our faces, "You claim your God is all-powerful. Then why doesn't He stop evil and suffering? If He could and doesn't, He's a monster; if He can't, then He isn't all-powerful!" The atheist thinks he has us cornered.

The answer involves certain things which God *cannot* do.

But God is infinite in power, so there must be *nothing* He can't do! Really? The very fact that He is infinite in power means He *cannot* fail. There is much else which finite beings do all the time but which the infinite, absolutely sovereign God cannot do *because He is God*: lie, cheat, steal, sin, be mistaken, etc. In fact, much else that God cannot do is vital for us to understand in meeting challenges from skeptics.

Tragically, there are many sincere questions which most Christians can't answer. Few parents have taken the time to

think through the many intellectual and theological challenges their children increasingly face, challenges for which today's youth find no answers from so many pulpits and Sunday-school lessons. As a result, growing numbers of those raised in evangelical homes and churches are abandoning the "faith" they never adequately understood.

Is sovereignty and power the cure-all? Many Christians superficially think so. Yet there is much for which sovereignty and power are irrelevant. God acts not only sovereignly, but in love, grace, mercy, kindness, justice and truth. His sovereignty is exercised only in perfect harmony with all of His other attributes.

There is much that God cannot do, not *in spite of who He is*, but *because of who He is*. Even Augustine, described as the first of the early so-called Church Fathers who "taught the absolute sovereignty of God," ³ declared, "Wherefore, He cannot do some things for the very reason that He is omnipotent."⁴

Because of His absolute holiness, it is impossible for God to do evil, to cause others to do evil or even to entice anyone into evil: "Let no man say when he is

tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted, neither tempteth he any man..." (Jas 1:13-14). But what about the many places in Scripture where it says God tempted someone or was tempted? For example, "God did tempt Abraham" (Gn 22:1). The Hebrew word there and throughout the Old Testament is *nacah*, which means to test or prove, as in assaying the purity of a metal. It has nothing to do with tempting to sin. God was testing Abraham's faith and obedience.

If God cannot be tempted, why is Israel warned, "Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God" (Dt 6:16)? We are even told that at Massah, in demanding water, "they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us or not?" (Ex 17:7). Later they "tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust... they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Yea...they provoked the most high" (Ps 78:18, 56, 41).

God was not being tempted to do evil, He was being provoked, thus His patience was being tested. Instead of waiting upon Him obediently to meet their needs, His people were demanding that He use His power to give them what they wanted to satisfy their lusts. Their "temptation" of God was a blasphemous challenge forcing Him either to give in to their desire or to punish them for rebellion.

When Jesus was "tempted of the devil"

to cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple to prove the promise that angels would bear Him up in their hands, He quoted, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Mt 4:1-11). In other words, to put ourselves deliberately in a place where God must act to protect us is tempting Him.

James goes on to say, "but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Temptation to evil does not come from without but from within. The man who could not possibly be "tempted" to be dishonest in business may succumb to the temptation to commit adultery and thus be dishonest with his wife. It is said that "every man has his price."

God was not tempting Adam and Eve to sin when He told them not to eat of a particular tree. Eve was tempted by her own lust and selfish desire. Even in innocence man could be selfish and disobedient. We see this in young infants who as yet presumably don't know the difference between right and wrong.

Additionally, there are a number of other things which God cannot do. God cannot deny Himself or contradict Himself. He cannot change. He cannot go back on His Word. Specifically in relationship to mankind, there are some things God cannot do which are very important to understand and to explain to others. One of the most fundamental concepts (and least understood by "religious" people) is this: He cannot forgive sin without the penalty being paid and accepted by man.

Are we saying that in spite of His sovereignty and infinite power God cannot forgive whomever He wills, He cannot simply wipe their slate clean in the heavenly record? Exactly: He cannot, because He is also perfectly just. "So are you suggesting," some complain, "that God wants to save all mankind but lacks the power to do so? It is a denial of God's omnipotence and sovereignty if there is anything He desires but can't accomplish." *In fact, omnipotence and sovereignty are irrelevant with regard to forgiveness.*

Christ in the Garden the night before the cross cried out, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." (Mt 26:39). Surely if it had been possible to provide salvation any other way, the Father would have allowed Christ to escape the excruciating physical sufferings of the cross and the infinite spiritual agony of enduring the penalty His perfect justice had pronounced upon sin. But even for the omnipotent God there was no other way. It is important that we clearly explain this biblical

and logical truth when we present the gospel.

Suppose a judge has before him a son, a daughter or other loved one found guilty of multiple murders by the jury. In spite of his love, the judge must uphold the penalty demanded by the law. Love cannot nullify justice. The only way God could forgive sinners and remain just would be for Christ to pay the penalty for sin (Rom 3:21-28)

There are two other matters of vital importance in relation to man's salvation which God cannot do: He cannot force anyone to love Him; and He cannot force anyone to accept a gift. By the very nature of love and giving, man must have the power to choose. The reception of God's love and of the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ can only be by an act of man's free will.

Some argue that if it were God's will for all men to be saved, the fact that all are not saved would mean that God's will would be frustrated and His sovereignty over-

I have loved thee with an everlasting love...with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

Jeremiah 31:3

turned by men. It is also argued that if man can say yes or no to Christ, he has the final say in his salvation and his will is stronger than God's will: "The heresy of free will dethrones God and enthrones man."⁵

There is nothing in either the Bible or logic to suggest that God's sovereignty requires man to be powerless to make a real choice, moral or otherwise.

Giving man the power to make a genuine, independent choice does not diminish God's control over His universe. Being omnipotent and omniscient, God certainly could so arrange circumstances as to keep man's rebellion from frustrating His purposes. In fact, God could even use man's free will to help fulfill His own plans and thereby be even more glorified.

God's grand design from the foundation of the world to bestow upon man the Gift of His love precludes any ability to force that Gift upon any of His creatures. Both love and gifts of any kind must be *received*. Force perverts the transaction.

The fact that God cannot fail, lie, sin, change or deny Himself does not in the least diminish His sovereignty. Nor is He any the less sovereign because He cannot force anyone to love Him or to receive the

gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. And from man's side, the reverse limitation prevails: there is nothing anyone can do to merit or earn either love or a gift. They must be given freely from God's heart without any reason other than love, mercy and grace.

Wonderfully, in His sovereign grace, God has so constituted man and has so designed a gift that man may receive it voluntarily by an act of his will and respond in love to God's love. Someone has said, "The free-will of man is the most marvelous of the Creator's works."⁶ The power of choice opens the door to something wonderful beyond comprehension: genuine fellowship between God and man for eternity. Without a free will man could not receive the gift of eternal life, thus God could not give it to him.

Pusey points out that "Without free-will, man would be inferior to the lower animals, which have a sort of limited freedom of choice....It would be self-contradictory, that Almighty God should create a free agent capable of loving Him, without also being capable of rejecting His love...without free-will we could not freely love God. Freedom is a condition of love."⁷

It is the power of genuine choice from man's own heart and will which God has sovereignly given him that enables God to love man and for man to receive that love and to love God in return "because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). It is impossible that the power of choice could challenge God's sovereignty since it is God's sovereignty which has bestowed this gift upon man and set the conditions for both loving and giving.

Suggesting that God would be lacking in "power" (thus denying His sovereignty) if He offered salvation and some rejected it is missing the point. Power and love do not belong in the same discussion. In fact, of the many things which we have seen that God cannot do, a lack of "power" is not the reason for any of them, nor is His sovereignty mitigated in the least by any of these.

Thus for mankind to have been given by God the power to choose to love Him or not and to receive or to reject the free gift of salvation, far from denying God's sovereignty, is to admit what God's sovereignty itself has lovingly and wonderfully provided.

May we willingly respond from the heart to His love with our love, and in gratitude for His great gift proclaim the good news to others.

TBC

Quotable

Read me, therefore, ye read me, and compare me with the Bible; and if thou findest my doctrine and that book of God concur, embrace it, as thou wilt answer the contrary in the day of judgment....Self-flatteries, self-deceivings, are easy and pleasant, but damnable. The Lord give thee an heart to judge right of this book, right of thyself, and so prepare for eternity....

John Bunyan
The Strait Gate, *To the Reader*

In looking back over the past 50 years I have watched the evangelical world grow and grow. Having become the establishment, evangelicals have accommodated the world at almost every turn rather than confront evil....If we do not lovingly draw lines in our churches and schools, many evangelical organizations will be lost from Christ's cause forever.

Francis A. Schaeffer, quoted in *The Bibliion Bible Expositor*, 23: 5.

Q&A

Question: Whenever I sneeze in a public place, someone almost always says, "Bless you." I've heard Christians say this, too. Is that okay?

Answer: This is an old pagan superstition going back to the time when it was commonly thought that the soul and/or spirit left the body when someone sneezed. The "Bless you" would supposedly keep that from happening, or at least immediately bring the spirit back into the body. Everyone knows that is not true, yet even Christians habitually go along with this tradition, smiling and thanking some unsaved person for bestowing a "blessing." Instead, take the opportunity if possible to ask how a sneeze qualifies anyone for a blessing and explain that blessing comes only from God and the greatest blessing is salvation through Jesus Christ.

Question: In your book, *In Defense of the Faith*, I liked your explanation of "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Is 45:7). You explained that darkness is not something God created, but the total absence of light; and that just as light reveals darkness, so God's holiness reveals evil—it is not something God causes people to do. I liked that

explanation. But what about Amos 3:6, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

Answer: The Hebrew word there translated "evil" is *ra*. It primarily means adversity, affliction, calamity, distress, but it can also mean sin. Of these two possible meanings, how do we know what is meant in a given instance? The context will tell you.

In this short book of Amos, *ra* appears seven times; only twice (5:14,15) does it mean sin, the other five times (3:6; 5:13; 6:3; 9:4,10) it means judgment from the Lord. The Lord tells Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (3:2). As His special people they have known His protection; no calamity, adversity, affliction or distress could come upon them except the Lord allowed it. Now they will know His judgment. God will bring *ra* upon them as punishment: "I command the sword, and it shall slay them [the disobedient people of Israel]: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil [*ra*], and not for good (9:4)."

"Evil" in Isaiah 45:7 is also "*ra*". It could be understood to mean calamity or affliction. That would seem appropriate because the phrase "I make peace, and create evil [*ra*]" contrasts peace with *ra*. Surely *ra*, as calamity or destruction is the opposite of peace, just as darkness is the opposite of light. In *Defense* I took the most difficult understanding, that of *ra* as sin. Even with that meaning it is clear that God is not the author of sin.

Question: In Zechariah 5:9, who are the two women with wind in their wings, like wings of a stork? This is how the world and especially Catholics believe angels look. But I have believed that all angels are male. Please comment. Are there other mentions in the Scriptures of these women with wings? Are they evil?

Answer: In Zechariah 5 we first meet a flying roll, explained to be "the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth..." (5:1-3). It brings God's judgment upon sinners (v. 4). Then we see an ephah (a basket of large measure) with a woman sitting in it which "is wickedness" (vv. 5-8). Then the two women appear with wings and carry the ephah and its wicked occupant to the land of Shinar. This land is mentioned seven times in the Bible. It seems to be part or even all of Babylonia, the center of false religion and the home of spiritual wickedness. The woman (wickedness) in the ephah

establishing a house in Babylon could signify the revival of evil religion in relation to the woman on the beast (or could be that woman) in Revelation 17 whose name is MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT....The two women seem to be in sympathy with her if not co-workers for spiritual wickedness.

The women are not angels, which the Bible refers to as "men" when they appear. That does not mean angels are male. God made humans "male and female" (Gn 1:27) and He told them to "be fruitful, and multiply" (1:28). The Bible never says God made angels male and female or told them to multiply. In the Bible angels *never* appear as women.

In the TV program, *Touched by an Angel*, popular with the ungodly and even with Christians (it has been promoted in *Christianity Today*), angels are represented as both men and women. Their message is antibiblical and ecumenical. Della Reese, the chief angel, says, "We deal in spirituality. That's a God thing." In other words, any kind of "spirituality" and any "God" will do.

While a major Catholic newspaper, *Our Sunday Visitor*, like *Christianity Today*, is pleased with the TV show, *Time* pointed out that "These mighty messengers and fearless soldiers [one angel wiped out an army of 185,000 - 2 Kg 19:35]...have become Kewpie-doll cherubs...all fluff and meringue, kind, nonjudgmental...available to everyone like aspirin."

In 1989 Benny Hinn prophesied that it would be commonplace for angels as young men to come knocking at Christians' doors. On TBN in 1993 he claimed that the activity of angels would accelerate among Christians and that each Christian could have 6,000 angels at his disposal. Equally unbiblical was his claim over TBN that angels appeared in his bedroom every night during the entire year of 1974—for what purpose? Hinn didn't say. Even in the secular TV show, angels at least have a mission, as they always did in biblical appearances. Word-faith teachers speak of learning to "command" one's angels to bring wealth. The Bible warns against a fascination with angels (Col 2:18) and that seems to be a problem today.

Question: How can you believe both in God's foreknowledge and that man has the power of choice? If God knows ahead of time that Mr. A is going to do something, how can Mr. A decide for himself? Isn't foreknowledge the same as predestination?

Answer: The biblical doctrine of foreknowledge simply states that God knows

everything that will happen before it happens—which as God He must know. Prophecy, in which God reveals His foreknowledge, is the major part of Scripture, the great proof that God exists and that the Bible is His Word (Is 42:9; 43:10; 46:9-10; 48:5, etc.). Prophecy is also the foundation of the gospel (Rom 1:1-3; 1 Cor 15:1-4, etc.).

Scripture never says or even implies that God knows all beforehand *because He has caused it*—much less that He must cause it in order to know it. The future is as plain to Him as the past.

The future is part of time, which is part of this physical universe. God is not part of the universe (which He created out of nothing), but He is separate from it. Perhaps He observes the universe from the outside, including past, present and future time, seeing it all at once. It is not necessary for us to know *how* God knows the future, but we know He *must*.

Scripture makes it clear that God is no passive observer, entirely disinterested in events taking their own course in the universe He has created. He keeps a watchful eye and plays an active part because He has an eternal purpose for all creation. He exerts His influence upon men and events in order to create the future which He desires. He makes no last-minute emergency adjustments but has eternally foreknown whatever He would do to implement His plans: “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18).

Predestination and foreknowledge cannot be the same. God’s foreknowledge doesn’t make things happen. To know something in advance is not the same as predetermining that it will happen. Nor does God need to predestine something in order to know it will happen. Were that the case, God would not be infinite in His knowledge.

There is a vast difference between saying that God fully *foresees* everything that will happen and *allows* much that is not His perfect will—and saying that God *predetermines* everything that occurs and it is therefore all just as He would have it. The latter view makes man a mere puppet and God the cause behind all wickedness and sin.

Luther asserts that “God foreknows and wills all things.” He argues that if this is not true, then “how can you believe, trust and rely on His promises?”¹ The answer is, “Quite easily. We rely upon God’s promises because He is God and cannot lie.”

Furthermore, it is neither logically necessary nor biblical that unless God wills all things He cannot make and keep promises. Clearly, what God promises and

determines to do He will do regardless of the will or actions of man or nature. That He is able to protect us and bring us to heaven does not require that He must will every event that swirls about us—only that He must have known them and taken them into account in effecting His eternal purpose.

You ask how God’s foreknowledge and man’s free will could both be true. Surely whatever God foreknows will happen, *must happen*, or His foreknowledge would be wrong. Nothing can prevent what God foreknows from happening, so a person might ask, how can man be a free moral agent? Even though God may be looking in upon time from outside, doesn’t the fact that He knows the future eliminate man’s choice? If the future must happen, as God knows it will, isn’t everything predetermined?

Claiming that the issue of free will was the very heart of the Reformation and of the gospel itself, Luther dogmatically declared that it was impossible for God to foreknow the future and for man at the same time to be a free agent to act as he wills. Believing firmly in God’s foreknowledge, Luther wrote *The Bondage of the Will* to prove that the very idea of man’s free will is a fallacy and an illusion. In fact, *Bondage* is full of fallacies, both logical and biblical, which I point out in *Sovereignty, Mercy, and Love*, my book in defense of God’s character, currently in process of publication.

Calvin states no less dogmatically than Luther that foreknowledge leaves no room whatsoever for free will. Period. We are astonished that Calvin repeatedly makes fallacious, unbiblical statements; and doubly astounded that so many leading evangelicals continue to praise him for being so logical and such a great exegete.

If God cannot know by His foreknowledge what every person will think and do by their free will, then He is not God. Moreover, the fact that God is able to allow man freedom of choice while still effecting His eternal purposes unhindered is all the more glorifying to His sovereign wisdom, power and foreknowledge.

What is future to us may not be future to God: He sees not only our past but our present and future as already having happened. From this understanding, God’s knowledge of what in our experience hasn’t yet happened would have no effect upon its occurrence and therefore would leave us free to choose.

Even Augustine (known as the father of modern Catholicism), whom both Calvin and Luther admired, clearly affirmed that there is no incompatibility between God’s absolute sovereignty and foreknowledge

and man’s free will:

Therefore we are by no means compelled, either, retaining the prescience of God to take away the freedom of the will, or, retaining the freedom of the will, to deny that He is prescient of future things, which is impious. But we... faithfully and sincerely confess both.²

We don’t accept something because someone, no matter how great their reputation, says it. The Bible is our authority. We believe that what we have said here is scriptural, but each reader must be a Berean and come to his or her own conclusions on the basis of Scripture alone.

1 Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (trans. J.D. Packer and O.R. Johnston (Fleming H. Revell, 1957), 83-84.

2 Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* (n.p.n.d.), V. 10.

Endnotes

- 1 Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Baker Book House, 1984), 240.
- 2 Edwin H. Palmer, *the five points of Calvinism* (Baker Books, 1999), 25.
- 3 C. Norman Sellers, *Election and Perseverance* (Schoettle Publishing Co., 1987), 3.
- 4 Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* (n.p.n.d.), V. 10.
- 5 W.E. Best, *Free Grace Versus Free Will* (W.E. Best Books Missionary Trust, 1977), 35.
- 6 Junius B. Reimensnyder, *Doom Eternal* (N.S. Quiney, 1880), 257; cited in Samuel Fisk, *Calvinistic Paths Retraced* (Biblical Evangelism Press, 1985), 223.
- 7 Edward B. Pusey, *What Is Of Faith As To Everlasting Punishment?* (James Parker & Co., 1881), 22-23; cited in Fisk, op. cit., 222.

The Love of God in Christ

Dave Hunt

When truly expressed from the heart, “I love you” is undoubtedly the most wonderful declaration one can hear or speak. Many husbands and wives, parents and children, as well as brothers and sisters in Christ, however, fail to express their love often enough to one another—and not just in words but in deeds. That we can love others and receive their love is only possible because we were created in the moral and spiritual image of God, who “*is love*” (1 Jn 4:8).

Sadly, that image with its innocent and pure capabilities has been deformed by sin. Man still loves, but imperfectly; so that lust is often mistaken for love. Self-love, long concealed beneath sweet words, can leap suddenly from its hiding place when least expected to destroy what had seemed so beautiful until that unguarded moment. Love for others cannot coexist with love for self. Great effort may be made to support both, but the burden eventually becomes too great.

To all mankind God has repeatedly said, “I love you!” Even to rebels who hate Him and reject the salvation He offers to all in Christ? Yes! True love is not just toward the lovely or lovable or those who love in return. Love does not find its source or reason in the loved one but in the heart of the lover. God says to Israel, His chosen: “The LORD did not set his love upon you ...because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest...but because the LORD loved you...” (Dt 7:7-8). He turns Balaam’s curse into a blessing “because the Lord thy God loved thee” (Dt 23:5).

But Israel would prove herself to be singularly ungrateful and disobedient. Surely, that “charity [*agape* love] suffereth long, and is kind” (1 Cor 13:4) was fully demonstrated in God’s dealings with Israel. For centuries God bore her idolatrous rebellion, sending His prophets to plead with her to repent, before finally destroying Jerusalem and casting her out of the promised land. Hear His lament: “I sent unto you my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not...to turn from their

wickedness....Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth...” (Jer 44:4-6). Even in His anger for her sin, however, God pledged to bring Israel back into the promised land in the last days. The fulfillment of that promise has been witnessed by the whole world.

It cannot be denied that God’s love for Israel was not just for the few faithful among her, but included those who would despise His love and perish (though He wanted to forgive and bless them had they been willing). That fact is often made clear: “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies ...[and] fed them also with the finest of wheat...” (Ps 81:11-16).

...I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.
Jeremiah 31:3

God is infinite in all of His qualities. Therefore, His love must be infinite in its “breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” which He desires us to “comprehend with all saints” and “to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that [we] might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:18-19). That the infinite Creator loves each individual He has created with a personal passion is beyond our comprehension—yet it is true, for “*God is love.*”

Love is the very essence of God’s being. Liberals have long tried to portray the God of the Old Testament as angry and vengeful and to credit Jesus with introducing the idea of the loving Father God of the New Testament. In fact, God is “from everlasting to everlasting (Ps 90:2)...I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6).

At Mt. Sinai where the law, just given, was broken by Israel’s grievous sin, Moses pleaded with God, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” (Ex 33:18). God replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee...and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy [i.e., mercy and grace cannot be demanded or earned, but come at God’s initiative]” (v. 19).

“And the LORD passed by before him

[Moses], and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty [i.e., the penalty *must* be paid]...” (Ex 34:6-7).

God’s kindness, which He extends to all, springing as it does from His infinite love, is called “lovingkindness.” David writes, “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings” (Ps 36:7). Through Jeremiah, the prophet of judgment, God declares, “I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth...” (Jer 9:24).

The love we are to express to one another and to the lost, our “neighbors” with whom God gives us fruitful contacts, is described in 1 Corinthians 13, the “love chapter.” Clearly, Paul is portraying God’s supernatural *agape* love which He expressed in giving Christ for our redemption. The love Paul describes is beyond human capacity—but it rings true to our hearts and consciences.

God’s perfect selfless love is formed within the human heart only by the new birth. Jesus told His disciples, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you...By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Jn 13:34-35). Why did Christ call this a *new* commandment? The standard was no longer to be the Ten Commandments, but the life of Christ (“*as I have loved you*”).

The Ten Commandments called upon man to obey in his own strength, thereby revealing the impossibility to do so and thus the necessity of salvation in Christ. Now Christ himself lives in believers to express His life through them. Such is the amazing transformation of the new birth which Christ introduced to Nicodemus and which is for all who believe in Him. Yes, the secret is simply to *believe*, for “the just shall live by faith” (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38).

That Christ was living in believers (“that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” - Eph 3:17) would be the great proof that He had truly risen from the dead. Could John have had anything else in mind when he wrote, “If we love one another, God

dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 Jn 4:12)? When Saul of Tarsus heard Stephen ask God to forgive those who were stoning him—“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60)—it was an echo of Christ’s “Father, forgive them” (Lk 23:24) from the cross! Stephen’s cry of loving intercession must have thundered continually in Saul’s conscience.

Struck blind by that “light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun,” Saul heard a voice of infinite authority demanding, “Why persecutest thou me?” When he asked, trembling, “Who art thou, Lord?” the terrifying and convicting response came: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” (Acts 9:3-6; 26:13-15). Yes, Jesus Christ was alive, not only in heaven at the Father’s right hand, as Stephen under that hail of stones had declared in Saul’s hearing (7:56), but He was most certainly living in those who proclaimed Him risen from the dead. That very declaration by former cowards who had fled to protect their own skin was itself the only explanation for Peter’s fearless indictment of his huge audience on the day of Pentecost: “Jesus of Nazareth... approved of God among you by miracles...ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified...” (Acts 2:22-23).

Now, as a believer indwelt by the risen Christ, “...a new creature [with] old things ...passed away...all things...new” (2 Cor 5:17), Paul had been born again of the Spirit of God and His Word. Thereafter he testified, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

From that moment, the passion that burned in the heart of the Apostle Paul was the very love of God in Christ for the lost: “For the love of Christ constraineth us;...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us:...be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:14, 20). That love took him tirelessly throughout the Roman Empire, proclaiming the gospel to all who would hear. This he did at the cost of great suffering (and eventually his life); “...in every city...bonds and afflictions [await] me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy,

and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:23-24).

With Christ living in him, and compelled by the very supernatural love which had caused Christ to die for all of our sins on the cross, Paul was willing to die if need be in bringing the gospel to others — further proof that Christ had risen and was living in him.

What has happened to the kind of passion Paul had for the lost? Where is it today?

It is so easy for us to be satisfied with attending our church fellowships, singing lustily, praying now and then for those in need and doing periodic good deeds. Yet the rush of today’s computerized, fast-paced world leaves little room in our hearts for Christ’s commission to “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel...” (Mk 16:15). Do we view with Christ’s love and

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

1 John 4:11

through His eyes those we meet daily?

Most important of all, however, as the Quotable reminds us, is our love for and adoration of our Lord. The gospel is the message that “God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16). How can we present the gospel of God’s love unless His love dwells in us?

“As I have loved you” is still the measure of Christian love today, the love He expressed when He said, “Father, forgive them.” Nor could we imagine that Christ was thereby declaring a love which He had only for those He knew would believe on Him. Surely few if any of those who mocked, scourged and nailed Him to the cross, or among those making up the jeering and cursing throng of onlookers and passersby, ever came to faith in Him. Nor is there reason to believe that any of those who hurled the stones at Stephen, or among the Pharisees who goaded them on, ever came to faith in Christ. Yet Stephen, like his Lord, lovingly asked the Father to forgive them all. Such is God’s

love for the lost, a love that is not of this world and which Christ will express through us if we will trust Him to do so.

When John writes, “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God... for God is love” (1 Jn 4:7-8), he can only be referring to the indwelling supernatural love of Christ. It is like no other. It does not fall in and out of love according to the emotional whim of the moment. It is “everlasting” and experiences no change. Shakespeare said it well, “Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds.”

Not only does God’s love not change, but it is all inclusive. There is no basis in Scripture or in the conscience all men possess to imagine that God does not love all mankind but that He only loves a select few. God’s Word gives abundant and repeated testimony that God loves the entire world exactly as John 3:16-17 says: “For God so loved the world, that he..sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

Love is not partial; it plays no favorites, but gives itself wholeheartedly to all and grieves over those who reject it. We are even to love our enemies, and our neighbors as ourselves. Surely God’s love would not meet a lower standard than that which He has set for man. Indeed, Christ prays to the Father, “that the love wherewith thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them” (Jn 17:26). In other words, we are to love others with the very love which God the Father has for the Son and puts within us by faith. Thus we can be certain that God’s love is at least as selfless, impartial and broad as our love is to be.

Let us therefore bring the message of God’s infinite love and lovingkindness to the world about us and demonstrate that love to all. Whatever difficulties we may face, we can be confident that God loves us still. We are in the hand of Him who promises that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). May we, like Paul, give ourselves wholly to His purpose: “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before...press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).

TBC

Quotable

Make time each day just to worship the Lord, for I believe that the highest goal for every believer is not evangelism, but worship. See that it becomes your number one priority. You will find that evangelism and every other Christian activity is easier in consequence. Give worship first place, above intercessory prayer, and simply enjoy God because He is God. Worship, Tozer comments, is the missing jewel of the evangelical church. If it is lacking in your life you are probably experiencing a power shortage.

Our motivation as we march into battle is love...unless we have love, our Christian lives are not only dull and painful, but noisy and worthless...Yet within ourselves we cannot generate the love we need, for very few of us brim over with charity. This is not a cause for guilt, however, though it may be a sign that we need to repent of the hard feelings we have harbored against [any]. We need rather to turn to Christ and ask him to fill us with his love.

George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilization, No Turning Back, p. 89.

Q&A

Question: In the November 2000 issue, you state correctly, “The Christianity that is represented by most of the contemporary Christian music and attractions would shock the early disciples...” I couldn’t agree more. But you also classify “the way in which worship is conducted” as “pet traditions having no basis in the Bible [Jan 2001].” This seems to be endorsing the so-called “contemporary worship” and its “contemporary music.” The “anything goes” scene seems to violate the biblical principle of 1 Cor. 14:40 [“let all things be done decently and in order”]. It has rather given credence to a phony “Christianity.” You should clarify your position.

Answer: In these pages we have more than once mourned the replacement of the old hymns of the faith (filled with challenging, correcting and edifying biblical doctrine) by shallow, repetitive choruses in which the rhythm moves the feet and hands but the words too often offer little for either the head or heart. As for the style of music, I am not a musician and cannot comment, and specific “rules” would be hard to apply. However, it often seems that much (though not all) of

what is known as “contemporary Christian music,” rather than reverent and worshipful and reflecting a wholesome awe before our God, must be loud with a raucous beat and played and sung by “performers” with dress and manner to match. The real question is whether the music we offer and the attitudes of our hearts would be acceptable in heaven before the throne of God and the Lamb. That criteria, I believe, is something which today’s Christian musicians (and their pastors and elders as well) ought to pray about and ponder seriously, whether performed at concerts or as a “worship team” in a church. Yes, too often it seems a *performance* to impress audiences rather than worship offered to God.

My comment about following tradition in worship concerned “the way in which worship is conducted...” Obviously, that is all I could address because I cannot look into anyone’s heart. A true believer led of the Holy Spirit could be worshiping the Lord “in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:23), as Christ said we must, *in spite of* what everyone else in the congregation may be doing. I did not describe nor criticize any way in which worship is conducted anywhere as not being biblical, nor did I commend any way of conducting worship as more biblical. I merely said that the way in which worship is conducted is often according to a tradition that is peculiar to certain denominations. Unquestionably, various denominations and independent fellowships of Christians have their own traditional peculiarities in this regard.

Surely I would not then be suggesting that everyone adopt some “contemporary” way of worship which in itself has already become another “tradition.” New tradition is no better than old tradition. My concern for myself and for others is that “worship” can become more a matter or *form* than of the *heart* so that the form is all many know about “worship.” The Bible dictates no form. We are to remember Christ in His death in partaking of the bread and cup, which remind us of His body broken and blood poured out for our sins; and we do this “till he come” (1 Cor 11:26). We are thus reminded of His resurrection and His promised return to take us to His Father’s house of many mansions (Jn 14:1-3). But no order of service is prescribed, only (as you stated) that all should be done “decently and in order”—to which our consciences and the Holy Spirit in our hearts bear witness as well.

Question: In his classic *The Bondage of the Will* Martin Luther responds (pp. 153, 158, 160) to Erasmus’s charge that if God commands us to do something (like believe the gospel) that we cannot do, He is mocking us. This was your exact charge in your August “Berean Call.” I really find it odd that such a critic of Roman Catholicism as you would fall into their very errors on free will! How can you deny that Luther’s arguments are logical and biblical?

Answer: I don’t find Luther either logical or biblical on this point. He argues that God is “trying us, that by His law He may bring us to a knowledge of our impotence...” (p. 153). He says that Erasmus is implying that “man is able to keep the commandments” (p. 154).

In fact, all men keep at least some of the law most of the time. It is of no value that I am shown my impotence to keep the law fully, unless there is a remedy for sin. That remedy is the gospel, which requires belief in Christ as the One who paid the penalty for my sins. The fact that I cannot perfectly keep the law does not prove that I cannot believe the gospel.

Luther argues, “For if it is not we, but God alone, who works salvation in us... nothing we do has any saving significance prior to His working in us.” Of course, we can’t earn our salvation, but that doesn’t prove we cannot receive salvation as a gift of God’s love. Throughout his entire treatise Luther confuses the ability to *will* with the ability to *perform* and mistakenly imagines he has disproved the former by disproving the latter. Every procrastinator proves the vast difference between *willing* to do something and *doing* it. For salvation we need only to be willing—Christ does all the saving.

Erasmus argues that for God to command man to do what he cannot is like asking a man whose arms are bound to use them. Luther responds that the man is “commanded to stretch forth his hand...to disprove his false assumption of freedom...” (p. 161).

God did not merely command. He earnestly pleaded and sought to persuade man through His prophets, promising and giving blessing for obedience and bringing destruction for disobedience. Furthermore, we have numerous examples throughout Scripture of prophets and kings and ordinary persons, from Enoch to Noah to Abraham to David and onward, whose obedience was commended by God.

In Proverbs, Solomon urges his son to

“know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity ...” (Prv 1:2-3). He declares that “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning” (v. 5) and he exhorts, “...whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (3:11-12). Is Solomon giving this wise counsel just to show that man’s “will is bound”? I think not.

Solomon’s repeated exhortations could well be read daily by Christian parents to their children. Are these proverbs not all appeals to the will? How else could one heed the voice of wisdom except by willing to do so? That the Lord corrects and that an earthly father corrects is not, as Luther disparagingly insists, simply to show that no correction is possible, but because the wise son will heed instruction by an act of his will.

We search *Bondage* in vain to find where it deals with the literally hundreds of biblical passages, from Genesis 24:58 to 1 Samuel 1:11 to 2 Samuel 6:21-22 to Psalms 4:8; 5:2-3; 9:1-2; 18:1; 30:1 and on through the entire Bible, which clearly indicate that man can indeed will to do God’s will. When Jesus says, “If any man will do his [God’s] will, he shall know...” (Jn 7:17), is He not appealing to “any man” to willingly desire God’s will? Is it not the ultimate cynicism to suggest that Christ is simply showing us that we can’t will to do God’s will?

The clear biblical passages where men express their willingness to obey and please God and prove it in their performance are conspicuous by their absence from the entire text of *Bondage*. Nor does Luther acknowledge, much less deal with, the fact that of the dozens of times the words “bondage” and “bound” occur in Scripture, not once are they used in reference to the human will.

Luther’s *Bondage* proves neither that the will is bound nor by what. Nor does it show how the will is supposedly *unbound* so that man may believe the gospel. Even the drunkard at times determines with his will to be sober. It is not the will that is in bondage but that the man’s bodily desires overcome his will. Yet many have willed to be free of alcohol or tobacco and have been successful even without becoming Christians.

Far from proving the bondage of the will, Paul’s declaration, “for to *will* is present with me; but how to perform...I find not...the good that I *would* I do not...O

wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:18-24), proves that it is not the *will* that is bound but the *man* because of the sin in his body. Paul doesn’t say, “Who shall deliver my will from its bondage?” He says, “Who shall deliver me from this body of death?”

Once it is admitted that man has a will, it is impossible to maintain either that it is in bondage or to explain how it was delivered except by its own choice. No one is made willing against his will but must have been willing to be made willing.

I am only trying to be true to God’s Word. Luther gives some excellent arguments against salvation by works, but faith is not a work. In fact, the Bible continually contrasts faith and works. Nothing could be clearer than “to him that worketh not, but believeth” (Rom 4:5).

Question: I am a concerned Christian from the “Open Brethren.” In your gospel message you emphasize that salvation is based on the fact that Christ “paid the penalty for our sins.” Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance has no entry for “penalty,” nor did Jesus or the Apostles ever mention that a penalty for our sins was paid. If I ask fellow Christians where to find this view in the Bible either they are perplexed (they don’t know the answer or they imply that I am not saved. Since you use that statement so often in your gospel presentation, I pose that question to you.

Answer: Nor is the word “trinity” in either the Bible or *Strong’s*, yet it is a basic teaching of Scripture. Was not the casting of Adam and Eve out of the Garden a penalty for their sin? Isn’t the death which came upon Adam and Eve and upon all of their descendants to this day also a penalty for sin that would continue in eternal separation from God without His pardon? In declaring, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezk 18:13, 20)...sin bringeth forth death (Jas 1:15)...the strength of sin is the law” (1 Cor 15:56), is Scripture not saying that death is the penalty for sin?

Does not a penalty have to be paid? Granted, the Bible nowhere uses the exact terminology we would today about Christ paying the penalty for sin. But isn’t that what is implied when it says “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his

stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5), or “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor 15:3), or “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9) as well as in many similar verses? If death is the penalty for sin and Christ died for all, then surely He paid the penalty in full for all of us or we would have to pay that penalty ourselves.

Our salvation is a matter of God’s justice, “that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). I don’t understand your objection to saying that the penalty was paid. Is not that the force of Christ’s triumphant cry from the cross, “It is finished [*tetelestai*]!,” meaning paid in full? I am grateful that Christ paid in full the penalty for my sin and sins so that God can be just in pardoning me, the sinner! There is no other means of salvation.

Is Punishment Eternal?

Dave Hunt

There is a growing movement among professing Christians towards universalism: the belief that everyone will finally be saved. One can empathize with those who hold this opinion. Eternity is *forever*. No matter how just the penalty, *endless* punishment seems cruelly excessive. The very thought of the Lake of Fire being the *eternal* abode of any creature, no matter how evil, is humanly repugnant.

Could God who “is love” (1 Jn 4:8) really sentence *anyone* to eternal punishment? Would He not find a way, somehow, for all eventually to be saved? The Bible must be our guide. But does the Bible in fact teach that those who leave this life without Christ are lost forever?

Jesus warned of hell repeatedly, referring to it fourteen times. Peter refers to it three times, James once, and the four times it is mentioned in Revelation make up the balance of the twenty-two times the word “hell” occurs in the New Testament. Jesus referred to hell as a place of torment in a “fire that never shall be quenched” (Mk 9:43-48). That sounds like eternal punishment—but for whom?

With one exception, there are two Greek words translated as hell in the New Testament: *hades* and *geenna* (*gehenna*). The word *hades* is rendered “hell” eleven times and is the counterpart of the Hebrew *sheol*, the only word for hell in the entire Old Testament. *Sheol* was where the souls and spirits of the dead went upon the death of the body. Since the same word is used for the abode of all the dead, *sheol/hades* must have accommodated both the lost and the saved. That this was indeed the case, and that their condition and experience were drastically different, is clear from biblical usage of these words in both Old and New Testaments.

For example, David’s prophetic declaration, “thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*” (Ps 16:10), was quoted by Peter as referring to the Messiah: “thou wilt not leave my soul in *hades*” (Acts 2:27-31). Thus, *sheol* and *hades* were the same place and must have been occupied by the redeemed since the Messiah was there while His body lay in the grave. That the lost were also there, but in a separate area, is clear from Christ’s statement that when the rich man died, “in *hades*

he lift up his eyes, being in torment....” That in his torment he could see Lazarus and Abraham in comfort (Lk 16:19-31) further indicates that the redeemed were also in *hades* yet distinct from the damned. That part of *hades*, which Christ referred to as “Abraham’s bosom,” must have been the “paradise” in which Jesus promised to meet the believing thief on the cross that very day (Lk 23:43).

At His resurrection, Christ emptied “paradise” and took those waiting there to His Father’s house of “many mansions” (Jn 14:2). He is presently in heaven at the Father’s right hand (Acts 7:55-56; Heb 1:3; 8:1, etc.). The souls and spirits of believers who die today are taken immediately into Christ’s presence in heaven rather than to the former “paradise.” Paul referred to the

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.

Titus 2:11

state of death as being “absent from the body...present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8); he spoke of his own desire to leave this body of flesh and to “be with Christ” (Phil 1:22-24). Moreover, he declared that at the Rapture, when Christ descends from heaven, He brings the souls and spirits of the dead saints “with him” (1 Thes 4:14). They must therefore have been with Him in heaven awaiting the day when they would be reunited with their resurrected bodies raised incorruptible from the grave.

It is thus clear what Christ meant when He said, “the gates of *hades* shall not prevail against it [the church]” (Mt 16:18). This statement is often misunderstood to mean that the gates of *hades* are somehow on the move, attacking the church—which hardly makes sense for gates. However, it does make sense if the redeemed were within those gates when Christ made that statement. The “gates of *hades*” could not keep Christ from emptying “paradise” and bringing the church to heaven after purchasing her with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

The other word rendered “hell” in the New Testament is *geenna*. That this refers only to that side of *hades* where the damned were confined, and still are, is also clear. Jesus referred to “*geenna* fire” (Mt 5:22) and warned that it would be better to remove a

hindering eye or hand and to “enter into” heaven than to have all one’s body parts “to be cast into *geenna*, into the fire that never shall be quenched” (Mt 18:8-9; Mk 9:43-47, etc.). Clearly, only the damned are ever in *geenna*, which must therefore be that part of *hades* where the lost are confined.

“Death and *geenna*” will be “cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death” (Rv 20:14). There the “devil...the beast and the false prophet...shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rv 20:10). There, also, “those who worship the beast and his image” during the reign of Antichrist “shall be tormented with fire and brimstone...and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever” (Rv 14:9-11). Thus the final fate of the lost who have been *geenna*’s inhabitants awaiting their “resurrection unto damnation” (Jn 5:29) is “the second death”—i.e., eternal separation from God and from true life.

Hades was emptied of the redeemed when Christ, the forerunner (*prodromos*, like the lead runner in the Olympics - Heb 6:20), ascended into heaven and “led captivity [i.e., captives] captive” (Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8). As the saved are taken to heaven to “ever be with the Lord” (1 Thes 4:17), so the lost will be taken to the Lake of Fire to be separated from God forever.

Surely the Lake of Fire must be what Christ referred to as “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41)—i.e., it was not intended for humans. It is thus the greatest of tragedies that any humans go there. However, those who become the followers of Satan are forever with him in the Lake of Fire just as the followers of Christ are forever with Him in heaven. Inasmuch as these same words are used, if “eternal” only means “temporary” for the damned, then it would have to mean the same for the redeemed. Thus, if there were an escape from the Lake of Fire, heaven would not be permanent either.

Having established that just as the Bible teaches eternal bliss for the redeemed, so it also teaches eternal punishment for the damned, let us consider the question with which we began: Why must this be so, and how could a God who “is love” (1 Jn 4:8) ever allow it to happen?

The “why,” of course, is explained in part because, although the body of man is temporal and subject to deterioration and destruction, the soul and spirit of man exist forever. Of man’s creation we read that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of

life; and man became a living soul” (Gn 2:7). The Hebrew for “soul” throughout the entire Old Testament is *nephesh*, and for “spirit” is *rooakh* (*ruach*). In the Greek of the New Testament “soul” is translated from *psuche* and “spirit” from *pneuma*. These words have a variety of possible related meanings, but the biblical meaning is clear from the way they are used.

Man is body, soul and spirit, not just body and soul/spirit: “I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus” (1 Thes 5:23); “piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit” (Heb 4:12). Lacking space to distinguish between the soul and the spirit, we must be content with understanding that these together constitute the thinking person as distinct from the inhabited body.

The old materialism with its view that nothing exists but matter is no longer tenable even for secular science. Thoughts and intelligence are demonstrably not physical. The body has only been the means whereby the thinking, nonmaterial person living within has been able to function in the physical universe. When the body dies there is no reason either in logic, science or the Bible to suggest that the soul and spirit cease to exist. The fact that, as a thinking and experiencing being composed of soul and spirit, man is nonmaterial requires an eternal destiny from which there is no escape.

That we are eternally accountable to the God who created us and as sinners are separated from God in His perfect holiness is rational, biblical and clear to every person’s conscience. Separation from the only source of life brings both physical and spiritual death. Man’s only hope is God’s love and grace; there is nothing he could himself do to heal this breach between himself and his Creator.

The question then becomes why God, who revealed Himself to Moses (on the very mount where He gave the Law) as “...merciful and gracious, ...forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin” (Ex 34:6-7), doesn’t just forgive the whole human race and give everyone a fresh start? That question is especially puzzling in view of the numerous statements in Scripture that God sent His Son “that the world through him might be saved” (Jn 3:17), that He desires “all men to be saved” (1 Tm 2:4) and is “not willing that any should perish...” (2 Pt 3:9).

If God is so loving why doesn’t He universally forgive everyone? Love is only part of God’s character. He is also infinitely

and perfectly just. How can God forgive someone who admits no guilt? How can He forgive those who insist that there is nothing for which He needs to forgive them? And would it not be the utmost folly to do so? If in His mercy and grace God simply passed over human rebellion, would that not be condoning evil and even encouraging it? Would that not in itself undermine God’s control of His universe?

God’s laws are essential to governing the physical universe. The moral beings who have the power to act destructively must also be governed by laws, or chaos would reign. If He would go back on His moral laws, who could have any confidence in anything else that God has said or would say?

Christ asked His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10). Surely that fact indicates that all is not as God desires it to be on this earth. Men are in rebellion

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 3:36

against Him. Forgiveness can only be in accord with God’s justice.

In fact, God has provided and offers pardon and new life to everyone—but it can only be on a righteous basis. God’s love cannot nullify His justice, as we have often reminded our readers and as everyone knows in his conscience. God’s justice demands a penalty for sin. Only through Christ’s payment of the full penalty on the cross has forgiveness been made possible. Pointing forward to this fact, John the Baptist declared of Christ to his own followers: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). Yes, “he is the propitiation [atoning sacrifice]...for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:2). The problem is that multitudes are not willing to accept God’s pardon on a just basis but want Him to forgive them unjustly.

Moral laws are even more important and impervious to compromise than physical laws. Every miracle such as the Red Sea opening, Christ walking on water or turning water into wine, the sun standing still for Joshua, etc. flies in the face of the laws of physics and chemistry. However, to override the laws that govern physical events

does not affect God’s moral character. But God himself cannot override His moral laws because it would be contrary to His very character and Being.

Jesus says, “The Word that I have spoken shall judge him in that day” (Jn 12:48). God has spoken and cannot go back on His Word. The problem with rebellious man is that he is not willing to let God be God but insists that the Creator should abdicate control of His creation, renounce His moral character and laws and allow man to take over the universe and govern it his way.

But surely love accepts man as he is, does it not? That is the false and destructive humanistic idea of “love” promoted by the secular world. Those who insist that love should “accept” them as they are know nothing either of love or of common sense. A mother’s love causes her to care for her child from the moment it is born. It makes no more sense to imagine that a mother’s love would be content with a child’s remaining in ignorance because it didn’t want to learn, or with the child’s love for nothing but junk food as it grows up, than that her love would “accept” her child’s desire to destroy itself with drugs, prostitution or criminality.

Yet God is expected to “accept” rebellious man just as he is? “Love” that leaves the loved one in a condition of less than the best is not true love.

On the contrary, real love desires the best and corrects those who are destroying themselves. Even of those whom He has redeemed and who have believed on Him, Jesus says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rv 3:19).

The words “acceptance” and “tolerance” are abused and have become the mantra of those who want to be left alone to destroy themselves. Such is the desire of multitudes; they want God to leave them alone so they can do their own thing. In the end, that is exactly what God reluctantly does. After pleading with them and trying to persuade them to accept His forgiveness (which can only be given on a righteous basis through Christ’s payment of the penalty for their sins), He gives them their desire and leaves them alone—for eternity!

That God did not give in to man, go back on His Word, or change His standards of righteousness and justice, but stood by His Word, will eternally be to His glory. Therefore, God will be glorified even in those in hell. That is a horrible thought but one to which we are driven both by Scripture and reason.

TBC

Quotable

Even testing for correction is administered in divine faithfulness. The child of God is exhorted in Hebrews to “despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:5,6). He knows what is needed to bring us to that place of repentance and yieldedness to His divine will...dear Christian, never despair—you are in *His care*. The glorious exhortation to cast “all your care upon him: for he careth for you” (1 Pt 5:7) is given specifically for the believer who is in deep distress.

*D.W. Costella, “The Fiery Trial,”
Foundation, May-June 1996, pp. 15-16.*

[Referring to the many souls being saved in America and Britain:] By how unlikely instruments has God been pleased to work from the beginning! “A few young raw heads,” said the bishop of London, “what can they pretend to do?” They pretended to be *that* in the hand of God, that a pen is in the hand of a man...to do the work whereunto they are sent...just what the Lord pleased.

*John Wesley (c. 1780), Sermons on
Several Occasions, 1831, pp. 98*

Q&A

Question: In the March 5, 2001 *Christianity Today (CT)* a Promise Keepers ad caught my eye. It occupied two pages declaring in large print, “David was a pipsqueak.” On the left was a picture of a youngster aiming a slingshot made from a forked stick and elastic band. On the right-hand page smaller print continued to describe David: “He was only a shepherd...an errand boy, bringing lunch to his brothers. He wasn’t the strongest. He wasn’t the biggest....The king thought he was a joke.... But David had EXTREME FAITH...and he turned the tide of a war. Promise Keepers challenges you to a life of extreme faith....”

Two pages later was another ad showing the feet and lower legs of Goliath just outside a tent door while inside was a tiny, scrawny “David” with a sling and stones studying “rock trajectory” from a computer. Do you have any comments?

Answer: In spite of generations of Sunday-school lessons depicting David in that way, he was anything but a scrawny pipsqueak!

Sadly, the Promise Keepers leadership lacks either discernment or integrity, willing to abandon Scripture to make a point. And why didn’t the editors of *CT* notice the obvious error?

Saul was taller than all Israel “from his shoulders and upward” (1 Sm 9:2; 10:23). That he offered his armor to David indicates that David must have been about the same size. David didn’t reject Saul’s armor because it was too large, but because he “had not proved it” (17:39). Although overlooked by his father and despised by his brothers, David was described by one of Saul’s servants thus: “a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him” (16:18). How can it be that the mighty warrior who killed Goliath continues to be portrayed in Christian circles as a scrawny teenager?

Question: We are told that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8); and that “a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night” (Psalms 90:4). What does this mean? Is there any special prophetic significance that might tell us how close we are to the Lord’s return?

Answer: There is no prophetic significance. The phrases, “with the Lord” and “in thy sight” are the key to understanding this rather simple and straightforward declaration: God is outside of time and therefore in His sight time is meaningless. Thus Paul can say that we are already seated “together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6).

As we noted last month, God, being independent of time, sees not only what to us is past, but also our present and future as already having happened. Thus His foreknowledge of what in our experience hasn’t yet occurred would have no effect upon its happening and would leave us free to make genuine choices.

Here is what John Wesley said in a sermon more than 200 years ago: “There is no such thing as either foreknowledge or afterknowledge in God. All time, or rather all eternity (for time is only that small fragment of eternity which is allotted to the children of men), being present to God at once, He does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another; but sees all things in one point of view, from everlasting to everlasting. As all time, with every thing that exists therein, is present with Him at once, so he sees at once whatever was, is or will be

to the end of time.” (John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 1831, p. 39)

Question: I have long wondered what Paul meant when he said that he and the other apostles were “the last appointed unto death.” Did that mean that no one else after them would ever be martyred for their faith? If so, he was wrong.

Answer: Paul was not wrong when he wrote these words: “For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Cor 4:9). Some argue that Paul and the other apostles thought that the Rapture would occur in their day. Not so. Although he taught believers to expect the Rapture at any moment (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Thes 1:9-10; Ti 2:13, etc.), Paul knew that he would be martyred before it occurred: “For I know...that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in...” (Acts 20:29); “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tm 4:6). Likewise Peter wrote, “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle...I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance [i.e., he was putting in writing what he had taught them orally]” (2 Pt 1:14-15). Thus we see that the Apostles did *not* expect to be raptured but knew they must each die for their Lord.

Christ declared that His disciples in all ages would be hated by the world and suffer the same as He had at its hands (Jn 15:18-21); Paul implied that Christians would continue to suffer martyrdom (Rom 8:35-37), and warned that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tm 3:12). We know that has been the case throughout history and even greater numbers of believers will be killed by Antichrist (Rv 6:9-11; 13:7,15; 20:4). Obviously, then, Paul did not mean that the Apostles were the last who would be martyred for Christ. They were the last who were “appointed unto death;” i.e., who *must* die for Christ.

The Apostles *had to be martyred* to provide one of the great proofs of Christ’s ministry, teaching and resurrection. Followers of various religions have been martyred out of fanaticism or loyalty to their leaders and beliefs. The Apostles, however, died not only out of love for Christ but in testimony of vital facts: Christ *did* heal the sick, He *did* raise the dead, walk on water, feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, rise from the dead, etc. The fact that not

one of them in facing death retracted anything to save his life is powerful evidence for the validity of the four Gospels and Book of Acts. It was thus essential that they die as martyrs, and they were the last for whom this was the case.

Question: The November 2000 issue of *The Berean Call*, “The Call To Discipleship,” was exceptionally good.... Having said that, I am a bit nonplussed by a statement you make in the January 2001 issue...[in which] you seem to be suggesting that Christian schools are following pet traditions having no basis in the Bible when they have dress codes which give guidelines in the realm of decency, modesty, and morality. Shouldn't they set high standards? Should not churches also set high standards for youth in the area of godliness in attire?

Answer: You misunderstood me. I am not opposed to dress codes for Christian schools (and secular schools could benefit from them also). I simply objected to “tradition” becoming the rule. If what you or your school or church follow is due to tradition, then it could not be based upon the Bible, could it? If you follow the Bible, then you don't need tradition. My complaint was against traditions that take the place of the Bible and become their own standard of worship, spirituality, morality or godliness. It is good for a Christian school to have a dress code that is based upon, as you put it, “decency, modesty, and morality” according to God's Word and the conscience God has given us.

Question: I recently received a copy of the oath which Jesuits take. It is so blasphemous and evil that it is almost unbelievable. It is supposedly part of the Congressional Record of the House of Representatives. If that is true, which I presume it is, how can anyone argue with such documentation?

Answer: This oath has been circulating for years. We must take great care that what we say about friend or foe is accurate. Yes, this oath is part of the Congressional Record, H-1523, February 15, 1913 — not, however, as the Oath of Jesuits but allegedly as that of the Knights of Columbus.

Copies of this alleged oath were circulated by one Thomas S. Butler, Republican, in his contest against Eugene C. Bonniwell, Democrat. The Congressional Record contains Bonniwell's complaint that Butler libeled him during the campaign by circulating a false document which was alleged to be

the Oath of the Knights of Columbus (of which Bonniwell, a Roman Catholic, was a member) but was in fact not authentic. Congress made no judgment as to the oath's authenticity, nor does the record contain any proof from Butler that it was in fact authentic. Unless someone can prove that this is indeed (or was at that time) the oath taken by Knights of Columbus, it should not be stated that it is.

Question: Whether or not to enforce the death penalty continues to be a controversial subject not only among non-Christians but among Christians as well. Should a Christian president or attorney-general uphold the death penalty?

Answer: The death penalty very clearly was established by God from the beginning (subsequent to Cain): “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast...and at the hand of man...will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gn 9:5-6). “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death...; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die” (Ex 21:12-14). “And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death” (Lv 24:17). “So shall ye not pollute the land wherein ye are: for the blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it” (Nm 35:30-33). “Thine eye shall not pity [a murderer], but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee” (Dt 19:11-13).

While the above were directives given specifically to Israel, the fact that the Ten Commandments (except for keeping the Sabbath) have been written in every human conscience (Rom 2:14-15), and that “Thou shalt not commit murder” is one of these commandments, would indicate that the death penalty should be upheld today by those governing in human affairs, who are to be “the minister[s] of God...to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom 13:4).

Even godless rulers are held responsible by God to execute His justice, as Romans 13 makes very clear.

Christians, however, are not part of this world but have been chosen out of the world (Jn 15, 17; 1 Jn 2, etc.). They are under the law of Christ as to their individual conduct and the affairs of the church; as to their civil duties they are under the law of the land in which they live and are subject to “Caesar,” as Jesus himself declared:

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's” (Mt 22:21, etc.).

Whether a true Christian should even aspire to the office of President is a question that each must answer before God in his own conscience. How much compromise must be entered into even to get to that office can only be imagined, and then the compromise must be continued in working with the ungodly, in receiving and being friendly with godless rulers such as Arafat as well as in attempting to apply righteousness to a populace which wants anything but to obey God and His laws.

The Hope of His Calling

Dave Hunt

Toward the end of the 1980s there was great enthusiasm and confidence among many Christian leaders that the world would be evangelized by the end of the year 2000. Numerous programs targeted that seemingly propitious date. In ecumenical fervor, evangelicals and Catholics joined together in a "new evangelization" that would supposedly present to Christ a world more Christian than not at the beginning of the new millennium. As anyone would realize who heeded Scripture, it wouldn't happen—and it didn't. The world is more pagan today than ever, and the "third millennium of Christianity," so highly touted, is daily more apostate. The attempt to make Christianity popular has perverted it.

Yes, history has seen times of apparent great revival—not as a result, however, of Christianity's popularization, but in the face of fierce opposition and severe persecution. Author Wesley Brady writes, "On innumerable occasions, the meetings of the Wesleys, Whitefield and other itinerant preachers were attacked by drunken, brawling rabble armed with...clubs, whips, clods, bricks, staves, stones...and rotten eggs. Sometimes they procured a bull and drove it into the midst of an open-air congregation; sometimes they contented themselves by producing noise with bells, horns, drums and pans to drown out the preacher's voice...and not infrequently they expended their fury in burning or tearing down the houses, and destroying or stealing the...possessions of the preacher's followers.

"John Wesley [sometimes] narrowly escaped with his life...while Whitefield, covered with blood...was rescued in the nick of time from the brutal fury of an Irish crowd at Dublin....Without regard to age or sex, [the persecutors] pelted whole congregations with showers of dirt and stones. Many they beat mercilessly with clubs." (*England: Before and After Wesley*, p. 106). Before his death, however, Wesley saw great fruit from his labors as he presented the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. To a large extent, England became a nation that loved Christ and sent missionaries to the ends of the earth.

Today, however, England is in a sorer state than before Wesley and Whitefield. Larger numbers now worship in mosques than in Christian churches. Holland, once

a stronghold of morally austere Calvinism, is heedless of God and attracts billions of dollars in tourist trade by its licensed brothels and legalized homosexual and lesbian marriages.

The Dalai Lama was welcomed into the pulpit in Geneva, Switzerland, where John Calvin used to preach to what many thought (and some still imagine) was the ideal Christian society. The cathedral's dean, William McComish, General Treasurer of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, called the Dalai Lama "His Holiness," praised his "spirituality" and declared that Calvin's cathedral was "becoming a home for a new religious centre to experience understanding between the world's major faiths."

The same downward path has been observed in the United States. In their beginnings, for example, the YWCA and

[If] any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...all things are become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

YWCA were truly Christian; they are anything but Christian today. All of America's first universities were Christian: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth, the University of Pennsylvania, etc. Today they are not only atheistic but anti-Christian.

Harvard was founded in 1636 to train evangelical ministers. Its divinity school is now headed by a Roman Catholic priest and prides itself on being open to anything—except evangelical Christianity. With 18,000 students, an endowment of \$13 billion and an annual income of \$1.6 billion, Harvard is now a bastion of liberalism, pro-abortionism, radical feminism, relativism and militant anti-Christian rhetoric.

Yet not only Reconstructionists but most charismatics and many evangelicals are still boasting that Christianity is growing stronger through a last-days great revival and will eventually take over the world. Yes, it will, but it will be a false "Christianity" headed by Antichrist in partnership with the Vatican—the woman riding the beast of Revelation 17. One would have to be both spiritually and physically blind not to see this rapidly growing development, exactly as the Bible foretells it.

True Christianity was never intended to take over the world but to call out for heavenly citizenship those who would heed the gospel. Christ's solemn question, "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the

true] faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8) hardly promises a growing, much less dominant, Christianity in the last days. Instead, only a "little flock" will inherit the kingdom (Lk 12:32), having entered through that "strait gate" along the narrow way "which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Mt 7:14). These are the "faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph 1:1; Col 1:2; 2 Ti 2:2; Rv 17:14, etc.) and hated by the world (Jn 17:14).

Today, persecution of true believers in much of the world is far more prevalent than in Wesley's time, with more martyrs for Christ in the twentieth century than in the previous nineteen. Is that cause for discouragement? No. In fact, Christ said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you....Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven..." (Mt 5:11-12; Lk 6:23).

Our hope and our inheritance is not in this world, for we are "partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1). As

Christ told the first disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you....The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." (Jn 15:19, 20). In our travels in Eastern Europe in Iron Curtain days we were asked by Christians why they were being persecuted when Christianity seemed to be so popular in America. A good question!

The best antidote to the mistaken beliefs that keep so many of today's Christians oriented toward an imagined conquest of this world is found in Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead..." (Eph 1:17-20).

And what is "the hope of his calling" to which Paul referred? Peter tells us very clearly: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ

Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pt 5:10). Our calling which we have in and through Christ Jesus is unto God's *eternal glory*! Nothing could compare with that! What could it mean and how is it possible?

God created man "in his own image, in the image of God created he him..." (Gn 1:27). It was, of course, in His spiritual image, not in a physical image, for "God is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24). The wonder, happiness and perfection of the relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed reflected a heavenly love, patience, compassion, goodness, generosity, grace, mercy, peace, gentleness, selflessness, meekness—the very character of their Creator lived out in His creatures. Nothing to compare with the pure love and rapturous companionship these two daily experienced has thereafter been seen on earth!

Then sin entered that garden, bringing death (Rom 5:12). That beautiful relationship between Adam and Eve, and between them and their Creator, was destroyed. Adam blamed Eve, Cain murdered Abel, and humanity has gone downhill ever since. The glorious image of God in which man had been created was marred. Thus sin is defined as coming "short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). The glory of God's character once expressed so beautifully through the first man and woman became a receding memory that must have haunted them with a remorse which we cannot even begin to understand.

Christ is called, in the precise language of Scripture, "the second man." There was no one after Adam's fall who deserved to be called a "man" until "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tm 2:5) came into this world in a body prepared for Him (Heb 10:5) in the womb of the virgin Mary. When Pilate led Christ forth and pronounced to the mob, "Behold the man!" (Jn 19:5) he did not realize what he was saying. Here was God's perfect man! The "second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor 15:47)! And He brings from glory to a fallen race the hope of glory, for through His death for our sins the image of God can be restored.

Again in the rigorous parlance of God's Word, Jesus is called "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45). Yes, He is the second Adam, but He is also the last. There will never be a third or fourth, etc. He is not only the progenitor of a new race of born-again believers. Christ is God's final solution. Sin will never mar God's new creation.

The first man, Adam, was made in the image of God but lost that likeness through the sin of rebellion. The second man, the

last Adam, bears that image in a permanent perfection that the first Adam could not know. The man Christ Jesus is "the brightness of his [God's] glory, the express image of his person" (Heb 1:3). Just as the descendants of the first Adam inherited his warped and defiled image, so those who become Christ's descendants by faith will be brought into His Father's house in His perfect and glorious image! Those who receive Christ have been predestinated by God "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29).

Christ, having paid the penalty for all sin and thereby having "[taken] away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29), has "abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tm 1:10). "For as in Adam all [of his descendants] die, even so in Christ shall all [of His descendants] be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22). He will bring "many sons into glory" (Heb 2:10) "in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom 6:5). "For

Till we all come in the unity of the faith...unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:13

our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body..." (Phil 3:20-21).

Understanding the hope of His calling provides both the motivation and faith to begin, increasingly, in advance of heaven, to realize this glorious prospect in our lives here below, for "...every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 Jn 3:3). Paul said it like this: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth..." (Col 3:2-5).

This glorious calling for both Jew and Gentile to become the children of God and to dwell eternally in heaven was unknown to Old Testament saints. Paul called it "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." His passion was to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus..." (Col 1:26-28). That heavenly perfection will be fully realized only at

the Rapture: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and...when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). What a hope, to be like Him eternally!

In the meantime, we are to become more and more like our Lord as "we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). Recognizing our failure to glorify Him as we should in our bodies and spirits, which are His (1 Cor 6:20), we long not so much for crowns or rewards but *to be like Him*.

Surely Paul said it for all of us: "...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13-14). It is not enough to look forward with eager anticipation to that day when we shall see Christ and be fully like Him. We are here

and now to "press toward the mark for the prize" of this high calling—for ourselves and for others as well. Concerning this "hope of glory," Paul declared, "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col 1:29).

Always there must be that balance between the working of God's miraculous power in and through us and our working together with Him: "...work out [not for] your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:12-13). Paul gave everything he had to be and do all that God intended for him: "I follow after [to] apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus..." (3:12).

When bygone failures would haunt us, God's solution is clear: "forgetting those things which are behind...press toward... the high calling..." We do not dwell on the past, nourishing the regrets that would imprison us. All is under the blood of Christ; and we dishonor Him by continuing to be burdened with that which He has forgiven and forgotten.

Our joy is in the future prospect of realizing the hope of His calling, of being forever with Him and like Him in His eternal glory. A foretaste of that glory can be realized here below in ever greater measure through Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17). May the hope of His calling grip us and propel us onward and upward in fulfilling His will here below as we await His coming!

TBC

Quotable

How Readest Thou?

Christ's question must concern
 Each eager praying one who would discern
 The real meaning of the Book of books
 When through its pages he with patience looks.
 Some read to bring themselves into repute,
 While showing others who they can dispute.
 And others read it with uncommon care,
 But all to find some contradiction there.
 Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed,
 Thus understand but little that they read,
 And every passage of the book they bend
 To make it suit their own determined end.
 'Tis one thing, friend, to read the Bible through.
 Another thing to read, to learn and do.
 'Tis one thing, too, to read it with delight
 And quite another thing to read aright.
 Jesus said, "What does it say —
 how readest thou?"
 (Luke 10:26)

Author Unknown

The outcome of trials and griefs is His to shape in ways we cannot imagine. But History, even our personal history, will be seen to be His story. And Divine Love and Wisdom, working in harmony, could take human lives punctuated with human failure and weave chapters that complement perfectly the story of salvation into which He has woven our lives. It will be breathtakingly beautiful when He signs His name at the end.

Archie Ross, longtime missionary to Africa, 2000

Q&A

Question: *Record, Feb/Mar 2001 (magazine of The American Bible Society) had an article titled, "Adam and Eve in the Garden of Truth," which presented the story of the Garden of Eden as a myth. The article, written by Barclay M. Newman, senior translations officer for the American Bible Society, said that "Genesis offers no hint that the narrative of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was intended literally as a 'true' story...[but] it should be understood figuratively as a 'truth' story." Do you have any comments?*

Answer: For something that isn't "true" to express the "truth" it would have to be a

parable. There is no hint that any part of Genesis is intended as a parable or as anything less than literal history. Nor is there any hint anywhere else in Scripture that the story of creation and of Adam and Eve is not literally true. Christ certainly believed it was true, and if He was wrong on that, why believe anything else He said?

Adam is mentioned about 30 times in 10 books of the Bible. Nowhere is there the slightest suggestion that what is stated about him is not literally true. If death was here before Adam (through evolution, etc.) and was not the direct result of his sin and God's judgment upon it (as the Bible clearly states), then the gospel is not true. As soon as one begins to "adjust" Genesis to accommodate science (as has been done, for example, by *Christianity Today*, by Hugh Ross, a popular guest of James Dobson, and by Billy Graham, Promise Keepers, and others who accept theistic evolution), the Bible ceases to be God's authoritative Word.

That the American Bible Society should reject the literal accuracy of part of the Bible is not surprising. Sir John Marks Templeton, founder of the Templeton Award for Progress in Religion, a rank unbeliever, occultist and anti-Christian, was on its Board of Managers for 15 years. That fact may say more about the leadership of that Society than the quoted article.

Question: *You justify God for sending people to hell because He has provided salvation for them in Christ. That won't do. Millions and probably billions will still spend eternity in hell....God knew that. How could a good God create anyone who He knew would suffer eternally?*

Answer: God wants no one to go to hell. He has provided salvation for all—in Christ, whom He sent into the world "that the world through him might be saved..." (Jn 3:17). He is not "willing that any should perish" (2 Pt 3:9), but desires "all men to be saved" (1 Tm 2:4). Those in hell have only themselves to blame for rejecting the full forgiveness of sins and eternal life offered to all as a free gift of God's grace through Christ's payment of the penalty for their sins.

Why would God create those He knew would reject the gospel? Why didn't God, who knows all in advance, create only those who would believe the gospel and leave uncreated those who would reject Christ?

The human race can't be so divided. Those who reject Christ are the parents or children, cousins, aunts and uncles of those

who believe. Not to create unbelievers would also eliminate believers.

God will be glorified in those in hell [see *TBC*, April 2001] because He did not back down from His desire to bless billions in His presence for eternity; nor did He go back on His Word and compromise His justice by unjustly forgiving those who rejected the salvation He freely provided. There is no way to fault God for creating mankind. He loves all and wants to bless all eternally.

Question: *I enjoyed your article, "The Living Word of God." However, if the brain doesn't originate thought, what about dreams, which are visualized thoughts? What about insanity? What about drugs acting on the brain and changing behavior?*

Answer: The brain is a computer which the real person within uses to operate the body. If the brain originated thought, we would have to do whatever it decided. That is clearly not the case. *We* decide.

Solomon said dreams come "through the multitude of business" (Ecc 5:3). While we sleep the "computer" plays back composites of what we have said, thought or done. Insanity could represent a foul-up of the physical brain mechanism. As a spiritual problem, apparent insanity could be rebellion against God, against the truth of God, an attempt to escape reality and its responsibilities, a deliberate means (in one's warped thinking) to gain one's own selfish ends by manipulating others, etc.

Psychoactive drugs simply distort brain functions and thus change behavior. Neither insanity nor drugs negate the fact that the brain is a computer.

Question (composite of excerpts from several pastors): *I have appreciated The Berean Call over the years and your stand against the error rampant among evangelicals today. However, your recent attacks upon Calvinism, a subject about which you reveal your ignorance, and your arguments against the sovereignty of God, can no longer be tolerated. Please remove me from your mailing list, and I am advising the members of our church to have their names removed as well. Why did you even find it necessary to address Calvinism? That was your undoing.*

Answer: In spite of long appreciating our stand for truth and against error, the moment we discuss Calvinism you throw away the

agreement of many years? That puzzles me! Nor have I attacked Calvinism. Is no one allowed to give a sincere teaching from Scripture on sovereignty, man's responsibility and ability to choose? Have Calvinists a monopoly on such truths so that they are off limits to others?

You say I am ignorant of and incompetent to address Calvinism. Is Calvinism so special that few can understand it? Do its teachings come from the Bible? I've been studying the Bible for more than 60 years. Should that not equip me to look at Calvinism as well as anything else in light of Scripture?

There are hundreds of books written in favor of Calvinism. Must I be muzzled from making a biblical response? Wouldn't open discussion of issues be beneficial without cutting ourselves off from true Christians over differences? I find this attitude among so many Calvinists as though they are an elite group who alone can understand aright the mysteries of sovereignty, grace, depravity, atonement, etc. Why is that?

You say that I "raise arguments against the sovereignty of God." On the contrary, while you may disagree with my views, I stand firmly and biblically, as I see it, *for* the sovereignty of God!

As for my understanding of Calvinism being inadequate, if you could visit my study you'd see scores of books I've gone through on this subject written by leading Calvinists both past and present. I am probably far more conversant with John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* than at least 90 percent of Calvinists. It is all highlighted in red, having been read and studied very carefully. I've done the same with the writings of Augustine, who, in spite of being the father of modern Roman Catholicism (highly honored recently by the Pope), was the source of most of Calvin's ideas. Calvin quotes him more than 400 times in his *Institutes*, repeatedly stating, "By the authority of Augustine." I believe that any Christian has the right (indeed, responsibility) to check Calvin and everyone else against the Bible as the Bereans checked out Paul—and we ought to be able to do it frankly without being denounced and disfellowshipped.

Question: Are you familiar with the book, *John Paul II, A Tribute*, produced by *Life*? The foreword was written by Billy Graham. In it he tells (as he also related on "Larry King Live") that he was preaching at Cardinal Wojtyla's cathedral in Krakow,

Poland the very night Wojtyla was voted in as the new Pope in Rome. Graham calls the Pope "the most influential moral voice of our time" and commends him for "his compassion for all who suffer and his strong commitment to social justice" and for calling "young people...to commit their lives to Christ...." Comments?

Answer: Anyone, Catholic or Protestant, recognizes that by commending the Pope and Roman Catholicism as the true faith (which he has done repeatedly and publicly on many occasions), Billy Graham has implicitly renounced the Protestant Reformation. His embrace of Catholicism implies that the Catholic bishops were actually in biblical agreement with their victims and preached the same gospel as evangelicals preach today. Yet they anathematized and burned Protestants, and Rome honors them for having done so

I am not criticizing Billy Graham for his commendation of the Pope and Catholicism. He is entitled to his opinion. Nor can anyone rationally accuse me of "attacking" him. I am simply pointing out what his staunchest admirers must admit: If Graham is right that the Roman Catholic Church preaches the true gospel that saves souls, all the Reformers were wrong and the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation was a huge semantic misunderstanding which for centuries has needlessly divided true Christians. Take your pick: either Graham is right or the Reformers were, but not both of them.

Furthermore, if Catholicism is the true gospel, then what must be said of the hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics who have been convinced over the last 500 years that Rome's gospel is false, who have believed the true gospel and left the Roman Catholic Church? If Graham is right, they are absolute fools. They should have stayed in the Catholic Church—which is exactly where Graham sends all Roman Catholics who come forward at his crusades.

Far from attacking Billy Graham, I am only reminding us that the Reformation involved serious differences carefully thought out and maintained at great cost by both sides. If Graham is justified in his praise of the Pope, then hundreds of millions of both Catholics and Protestants have been victims of a giant hoax for the last 470 years. Moreover, both the hundreds of thousands of martyrs who died rather than embrace Rome's false gospel and those who burned them at the stake or drowned them for rejecting Catholicism were all

deluded. According to Billy Graham, there was no basic disagreement then nor is there now on anything of importance.

Graham's good friend, John Paul II, with whom he says he is in essential agreement concerning the gospel, held a commemoration in December 1995 on the 450th anniversary of the opening of Trent, in which he said that all of its Canons and Decrees (including the more than 100 anathemas denouncing evangelical Christians for rejecting Rome's gospel) continue in full force and effect. The Pope has said he is not prepared to remove any of those anathemas.

Whether John Paul II is truly, as Graham describes him, "the most influential moral voice of our time," depends upon whether "moral" includes more than opposition to homosexuality, abortion, pornography and the usual targets. If, however, one also considers it immoral to lead one billion astray for eternity by offering them a false gospel, the Pope must be the most immoral person alive.

Why Evangelize Roman Catholics?

T.A. McMahon

“Why would you want to do that?” inquired the sweet-spirited lady sitting next to me on a flight to New Orleans. Holding a Reaching Catholics For Christ card which I had given her, she was surprised that anyone would consider Roman Catholics a mission field. “In my younger days,” she confided, “I had a few problems with Catholicism,” but she felt that the Catholic Church had changed “quite a bit” since then. Admitting that her knowledge of Catholicism was limited, she nevertheless spoke optimistically about her Catholic neighbors, her sister’s Catholic husband, and her grandchild’s Catholic wife. Based upon her conversations with them, she was confident that they all knew the Lord “well enough to be saved.”

“Do you think all of the one billion Catholic souls around the world truly know and have accepted the gospel of salvation?” I asked sincerely. “Of course not. I rather doubt that everyone in my Baptist church is saved, either. But it’s different with those I just mentioned,” was her tentative response. By God’s grace, what followed was an engrossing hour or so of questions and answers regarding Roman Catholic salvation in light of the Scriptures. But I was encouraged; before too long this dear lady admitted that her hopefulness for those whom she cared about had overshadowed her ignorance of what they truly believed. Sadly, her dilemma is rather commonplace among evangelical Christians today.

Actually, it’s worse than that.

Too often these days, trying to convince evangelicals that nearly all Catholics are lost seems more difficult than convincing Catholics themselves that they need to put their trust in Christ alone for their salvation. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that most high-profile evangelicals (Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Chuck Colson, Robert Schuller, Hank Hanegraaff, Paul Crouch, Jack Van Impe, Pat Robertson, Bill McCartney, and many more) promote the idea that Roman Catholicism is definitely within the boundaries of biblical salvation. More than once have I been accused by evangelicals of being part of a “thankfully shrinking minority” and “out of step with highly respected Christians.” In other

words, “If *they* don’t have a problem with it, what’s *your* problem?” The problems in fact are far beyond the scope of this brief article, but please, if you are truly concerned about the salvation of Catholics, give the following your prayerful consideration.

The most grievous aspect of the growing acceptance of Romanism is the effect it has on outreaches to Catholics. Missionaries returning from largely Catholic countries are sometimes cautioned by their support-church pastor to “go lightly” on negative experiences with the Catholic Church, as though it were appreciably different here, which is certainly not the theological case. While it’s a blessing to note that each spring-time hundreds of evangelical churches send thousands of our youth across the border for missions-to-Mexico ministry, few, if any,

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Romans 4:5

of these young, one-week-only “missionaries” have been given any instruction about the religion of the people they are hoping to help win to Christ. Even more inexplicably, many of these churches supporting missionaries in Catholic countries are reluctant to help their own congregations understand what Roman Catholicism teaches so that they might become more effective witnesses in their own community. Is sharing the gospel with our Catholic neighbors, friends, relatives and co-workers a less important outreach?

Then again, is it really necessary? Aren’t the teachings and practices of Roman Catholicism close enough to essential Bible doctrines to render any attempt to evangelize faithful Catholics both unwarranted and offensive to “our brothers and sisters in Christ?” Growing numbers of evangelicals feel that way.

Youth Specialities (YS), perhaps the most influential organization among American evangelical youth leaders and pastors, has scheduled a Catholic priest (whose own speciality is “break[ing] down the walls of denominationalism by building unity”) as their 2001 Conference general session speaker. Thousands of evangelical and Catholic teens will also be instructed by YS co-owner Mike Yaconelli in how to “use

meditations, prayer, and [Ignatius Loyola’s spiritual] exercises from the Christian tradition [read ‘Catholic’] to nurture your soul.” Based upon our mail, by the way, we’ve seen a great increase in the numbers of letters from grieved evangelical parents regarding the marriages of their children to practicing Catholics. But wouldn’t that be a good thing, if indeed, they are our brothers and sisters in Christ?

On the other hand, the Bible teaches that a person is saved by faith alone in Christ alone.¹ This is so because only Christ could pay the penalty for our sin, which He did *in full*. There is then *nothing* we can do for our salvation except put our trust in Him. Any attempt to add anything to our Lord’s finished work on the cross 1) is a denial of His complete atonement, 2) is a rejection of His “free gift” of eternal life, and 3) presumes that we can pay something for our salvation, which is impossible. Why impossible? Because the penalty for sin is *death*, spiritual separation from God forever (Gn 2:17). That infinite penalty cannot be paid in part. Death, physical or spiritual, doesn’t function on a partial basis—you’re either dead or you’re not. Only Christ can save us from so great a penalty.

Catholicism, however, teaches that there is much a person can and must do to help pay the penalty and gain entrance to heaven. He must be baptized. He must receive the sacraments. He must expiate his own sins by suffering here on earth and/or in purgatory. Prior to his death he must be absolved (by a priest) of every previously unconfessed mortal sin. When a Catholic claims that he too believes in salvation by grace alone, he is saying that *through* the Roman Catholic Church, *through* its saints and its sacraments, God provides the grace necessary for him to do the works required to merit eternal life. Yet the Bible teaches that salvation is “*through faith...not of works...it is the gift of God*” (Eph 2:8-9). If you pay for a gift, it’s no longer a gift; man’s works can have no part in his redemption. Yet if a Catholic were to believe this biblical truth, his Church would condemn him. The “sacred, infallible, and *irrevocable*” decrees of the Council of Trent declare (and every Catholic therefore must obey or be condemned to hell) that “If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification...let him be anathema [i.e., condemned].”²

Catholics are taught that the cleansing fires of purgatory exist for the punishment of their sins “so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.”³ Again, this is a teaching which every Catholic must believe (even though it rejects Christ’s sacrifice in full payment for sin): “If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.”⁴

The Catholic Church imposes damnations (more than 100 specific anathemas are listed) upon Catholics who decide *not* to accept some of its teachings and practices. While liberal, lax, and even biblically leaning Catholics attempt to justify their contrary-to-official-belief views, they are mutinying against their Church which (according to Roman Catholic dogma) is their only means to heaven. The laws of the Roman Catholic Church, however, explicitly condemn those who hold “mutinous” beliefs. In other words, if a Catholic hopes to gain eternal life as a Catholic, he *must* abide strictly by his Church’s proclaimed infallible rules. This manmade religious system does not tolerate a pick-and-choose approach to its faith.

Most evangelicals (other than former Catholics) are not aware of how Catholic beliefs and practices *critically* differ from the Bible’s teachings. For example, the Holy Eucharist, which Baptist Bill Clinton and Methodist Hillary received at a Catholic Church in Africa not too long ago, is the *antithesis* of the biblical remembrance of Christ’s death and resurrection instituted by our Lord. This Catholic ritual, referred to as “the Sacrament of sacraments,” is a *total rejection* of who Christ is and what He accomplished on Calvary’s hill. In the Mass the priest (and only a priest) is said to transform a wafer of bread into “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*”⁵ “For in the sacrifice of the Mass Our Lord is immolated [killed as in a sacrifice] when ‘he begins to be present sacramentally as the spiritual food of the faithful under the appearances of bread and wine.’”⁶ The Catholic Church teaches that Christ is fully

present in each of the wafers—millions offered simultaneously around the world each day—for as long as they exist (even though the leftover consecrated bread/body often putrefies—in direct contradiction to the biblical prophecies that His body would never experience corruption).⁷

If you have ever wondered why some of the great teachers/preachers of biblical faith have referred to the Catholic Mass and Eucharist as an “abomination before God,” and why many saints of old chose to be burned at the stake rather than give credence to such a terrible perversion, I hope it’s becoming tragically clear. What every Catholic is participating in is an occult ritual in which a man calls down the resurrected and glorified Christ from heaven, changes His body into a pre-crucified, pre-resurrected body, then turns bread into His body and blood, and kills this Christ on an altar. It is beyond ironic that

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Mark 7:7

daily Catholic priests do what their Church historically has blamed and persecuted the Jews for having done once.

Since this Eucharistic ritual claims to “re-present” all that Christ suffered for our sins, Jesus must undergo the same experience millions of times every day. Worse yet than the unending brutality and mockery He must suffer is the *continual* experience of the agony of separation from His Father, which caused Jesus to “sweat...as it were great drops of blood...” and to appeal to His Father to “remove this cup from me” if it were possible (Lk 22:44,42). Hebrews is unequivocal in rejecting this ritualistic Catholic travesty: “[Christ] needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice...for this he did *once*, when he offered up himself”; “So Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many”; “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*” (Heb 7:27; 9:28; 10:10). And Peter, regarded by Catholics as their first pope, writes, “For Christ also hath *once* suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pt 3:18).

All Catholic communicants *must* believe they are eating the “real” flesh and blood of Jesus, otherwise they commit a mortal sin: “If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist are contained truly, really and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ, but says that He is in it only as a sign, or figure or force, let him be anathema.”⁸ One of the many reasons we cannot take John 6:53 *literally* (“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you”) is that doing so would constitute cannibalism and the drinking of blood, which both the Old and New Testament specifically forbid. Even Augustine, the father of modern Catholicism, rejected the literal interpretation for this reason.⁹

Finally, Catholics must worship the “consecrated host” (wafer) as God: “If anyone says that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship of *latría* [worship given only to God]... or is not to be set publicly before the people to be adored and that the adorers thereof are idolators, let him be anathema.”

¹⁰ The Catholic weekly *Our Sunday Visitor* reported that one of Promise Keepers’ top evangelical executives was so overwhelmed by the “Real Presence of Jesus” at a Franciscan University Eucharistic Holy Hour adoration that he was compelled to prostrate himself before the sacred host.¹¹

Considering only the few Catholic teachings which have been presented in this article, if every Bible-believing, born-again Christian reading this doesn’t find them troubling enough to care about the eternal destiny of every Roman Catholic, they should sincerely examine their own understanding of the gospel of salvation. I’m hopeful that there are many who do see the serious problems and are willing to encourage their pastors and elders to teach their congregations to actively evangelize Roman Catholics. For those in the Northeast, Word of Life at Schroon Lake, NY, will be hosting a Reaching Catholics For Christ Conference this September. RCFC (reachingcatholics.org) has been formed for the specific purpose of helping equip evangelicals to witness to Catholics. Please pray that in these last days before the Lord returns, He will give His church a loving burden for the salvation of one billion Roman Catholics.

TBC

Quotable

The man whose doctrine is shaky will be shaky in his whole life...those who are driven with every wind of doctrine are those who are too lazy to study doctrine. My observation over the years is that the people who have not been taught the truth negatively as well as positively always get carried away by the heresies and cults....

The Christian way is a difficult way of life. It is too glorious to be easy. The Christian is sorrowful, but not morose; serious, but not solemn; sober-minded, but not sullen; grave, but never cold or prohibitive; his joy is a holy joy; his happiness a serious happiness. The great need in the Christian life is for self-discipline. This is not something that happens to you in a meeting; you have got to do it! All moodiness is wrong for the Christian; we must snap out of it. There are no short cuts in the Christian life—no patent remedies. The ultimate test of our spirituality is the measure of our amazement at the grace of God.

If all the churches in the world became amalgamated, it would not make the slightest difference to the man in the street. He is not outside the churches because the churches are disunited, he is outside because he likes his sin, because he is a sinner, because he is ignorant of spiritual realities. He is no more interested in this problem of unity than the man in the moon!

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, quoted in The Banner of Truth, Aug/Sep 1986

Q&A

Question: I have appreciated *The Berean Call* and read it eagerly each month as soon as it arrives. I was disappointed, however, that you never said a word about the huge ecumenical gathering of Roman Catholic and Protestant charismatics last June in St. Louis. It seemed to me to be a major event because of the fact that the tongues movement has been the main bridge to Rome (“We speak in tongues and so do they, so we are one”). So I watched for something in TBC about this but it never came. Was there a reason why you never mentioned it?

Answer: We just don’t have room for all we would like to discuss. It is difficult, out of so much that is happening, to choose what to report, given our limited space. The event

you referred to was called “Celebrate Jesus 2000” and was held last June 22-25. This was the sixth ecumenical charismatic conference sponsored by the North American Renewal Service Committee (NARSC). The first in Kansas City in 1977 had about 50,000 participants while St. Louis had about 15,000. Each has been one more repudiation of the Reformation by alleged Protestants and one more triumph for the Roman Catholic Church.

Speakers were mostly Catholic priests, nuns and lay leaders and included presumed Protestant leaders such as Ted Haggard, pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, a major center for the spiritual warfare movement worldwide; Jack Hayford, pastor of Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California; Stephen Hill, who led the revival at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida; John Kilpatrick, Brownsville pastor; Richard Roberts; Pat Robertson; Steve Strang, publisher of *Charisma* magazine; and Thomas Trask, General Superintendent of The Assemblies of God. Try to imagine such a conference featuring Martin Luther, John Calvin and other Reformers as speakers along with Roman Catholic priests and lay leaders!

NARSC claims to be “committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and striving for unity in the Body of Christ.” David W. Cloud attended St. Louis as a journalist (davidwcloud@worldnet.att.net). His comments tell the shocking story: “One would think that a conference allegedly dealing with world evangelism would be clear about the message of salvation, but this was not the case. Nowhere was the gospel defined in the conference literature. None of the speakers during the main evening sessions defined the gospel. Many of them referred to it, but none of them plainly described what salvation is in such a manner that the listeners would understand how they needed to be born again. Why was this? Because the meeting is ecumenical...and there are a variety of gospels that are believed. To have clarified the gospel would have destroyed the ecumenical unity.

“I took my own survey during the three days in St. Louis....I focused on the Roman Catholics, since we were told that these particular Catholics love and know the Lord. These are the evangelical Catholics we have heard about. I asked the following simple question of each individual: ‘When were you born again?’ Not one Catholic that I interviewed gave me a scriptural answer to

this most important question. A nun from Notre Dame said, ‘I’ve always been in love with God.’ A woman who teaches...at the Franciscan University of Steubenville said she was born again either when she saw a miraculous light shining around the priest at her first Mass when she was 15 years old or at her first charismatic retreat in 1972. A representative of the Chariscenter USA told me he was born again when he was baptized as a teenager and that his children were born again when they were baptized as infants. A representative of Marian Publishers was very puzzled when I asked him the question. He told me that ‘born again’ is not a Catholic term. I reminded him that Jesus used the term in John 3. He then told me that he was born again when he was baptized as a baby and also when he was confirmed. One of the founders of the Signs of the Times Apostolate told me she was born again when she was baptized, confirmed, and when she rededicated her life to God at age 21. Joseph, a “lay brother” in a Catholic order, told me he was born again when he attended a charismatic meeting in the 1970s...and that it was a gradual thing of becoming serious about God. A Catholic man who grew up in a Baptist church told me he was born again at confirmation.

“One of the key speakers at these conferences is Tom Forrest, a priest headquartered in Rome [who] works closely with John Paul II as the head of Evangelization 2000. Forrest brought the concluding NARSC message in New Orleans in 1987, in Indianapolis in 1990, and again in St. Louis. His descriptions of evangelism illustrate the confusion which surrounds the gospel in the ecumenical / charismatic movement. In a message at New Orleans, for example, he said that he evangelizes by walking through the streets of Rome praying the ‘mysteries of the Rosary’ for the people he passes...yet he is exalted as a Spirit-filled, evangelical Catholic. In Indianapolis, Forrest said that he praises God for purgatory because he knows that unless there is a place where his sin can be purged he cannot go to heaven.

“[But] sin is purged through the blood of Christ shed at Calvary...the one and only place where sin is purged. If purgatory is necessary...Christ did not die for all our sins...[and] if He did...purgatory is a lie.”

In New Orleans where at the invitation of Reinhard Bonnke many thousands of these supposedly Spirit-filled evangelical Catholics stood to get saved, Vinson Synan

(Chairman of the NARSC Executive Committee and Dean of the School of Divinity of Pat Robertson's Regent University) was asked how it could be that so many "Spirit-filled" participants were willing to pray to receive Christ for the first time. He suggested that most of them probably thought they had been asked to renew their "baptismal vows." When asked why "something as major as the definition of the gospel itself and what...brings about the conversion of a lost soul" wasn't made clear, he responded, "Well, you know, it took me 52 years to come to my understanding of what Pentecostal theology is. And it probably took Dave [Sklorenko, Roman Catholic Director of the New Orleans Conference] 48 years to understand what his is. We can't in one night get a crystal clear understanding on the part of everyone, because we come from different traditions." When pressed as to why the Conference leaders didn't clarify such important misunderstandings, he replied, "Well, we don't have time to do that."

This is typical of the entire ecumenical union with Rome. A major purpose is supposedly to evangelize the world together, but evangelicals are willing to join in a partnership with those who don't know the gospel and aren't themselves saved. So it was with ECT, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (signed by Colson, Packer, Bright, Robertson, et al.), which declared, "We thank God for the discovery of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ." Martin Luther would be shocked by this full embrace of all Roman Catholics as true born-again Christians and who are not to be evangelized. The subsequent documents signed in the interest of "clarification," have changed nothing. Incredibly, the "evangelical" signers of ECT signed later documents which contradicted it but have never removed their names from ECT and still support it. Confusion? Words have lost their meaning—and the lost are left to trust in false gospels.

Question: I noticed a picture of President Bush with Kirbyjon Caldwell, pastor of a huge Methodist church in Houston. This pastor seems to be growing in influence and power. Do you have any information about him? Is he an evangelical?

Answer: Kirbyjon H. Caldwell, named "one of *Newsweek's* 100 Americans to watch for the new century," has attended Robert H.

Schuller's "Institute for Successful Church Leadership" for sixteen years and follows in the footsteps of Schuller and the latter's mentor, the late Norman Vincent Peale. Caldwell is the pastor of Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston, described as the "spiritual home for more than 12,000 members." President Bush endorsed Caldwell's 1999 book, *The Gospel of Good Success*, with these words: "Kirbyjon Caldwell is a true 'Point of Light' in our community. A man of faith, a civic activist, he is a powerful influence for good. When you read *The Gospel of Good Success*, Pastor Caldwell's faith comes shining through and one feels stronger and better for that."

As for what that "faith" may embody, it is certainly *not* "the faith once delivered to the saints" for which we are to "earnestly contend" (Jude 3). Caldwell declares in his book, "We're a lean, mean Kingdom-building machine, with over 120 'ministries' serving the community seven days a week. There are ministries for everything from job placement and financial planning to weight loss and alcohol rehabilitation...that help somebody step out of the herd and become a leader of his or her own life. The story of Windsor Village is prayer coupled with action, and proof of the incredible power of this combination stands one mile from our church: The Power Center...our 24-acre, 104,000-square-foot, multi-use business complex designed to address the multi-faceted needs of our community. The Power Center is our Church's physical manifestation of Holistic Salvation....*The Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, the BBC, NBC-TV, and other media have hailed The Power Center as an entrepreneurial incarnation of the twenty-first-century Church....My mission in this book is to show you how to use the principles of Holistic Salvation to create an internal center of power in your own life....The first baby step toward Holistic Salvation is to realize that God wants you to be successful—blessed with a bounty of Good Success!"

The true gospel that saves souls is conspicuously absent from the pages of *The Gospel of Good Success*. Caldwell's "Holistic Salvation" that is designed to bring wealth and success in this temporary world is presented in detail, but not a word is to be found about biblical salvation for eternity. If President Bush says Caldwell is a "true 'Point of Light,'" we will have to take his word for it, with the disappointing realization that the

"light" Bush commends doesn't point to Christ, salvation and heaven but to humanistic success as the world measures it.

Endnotes

- 1 John 1:12,15-16,36; 5:24; 6:40; 8:24; 11:25-26; Romans 3:22; 4:5; 5:1; 10:8-13; Eph 2:8-10 (to name a few).
- 2 H.J. Schroeder, trans., *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Tan Books, 1978), 43.
- 3 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (The Wanderer Press, 1994), 268.
- 4 *Trent*, op. cit., 46.
- 5 *Catechism*, op.cit., 346.
- 6 *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Costello Publishing Company, rev. ed. 1988), 102-103.
- 7 Psalms 16:10; 49:9; Acts 2:27.
- 8 *Trent*, op.cit., 79.
- 9 William Webster, appendix 8 of *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 195, footnote 17; citing Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (n.p., n.d.), 3:16:24.
- 10 *Trent*, op. cit., 80.
- 11 *Our Sunday Visitor* (July 20, 1997), 10-11.

"In Christ Jesus"

Dave Hunt

"We appreciated the Bible in our room last night," I told our B&B (bed-and-breakfast) host in Northern England as he served us the traditional "full English breakfast." "It's the first time we've found one in a B&B. Does that mean you're a believer?"

"I'm a Christian," he replied firmly.

"An Anglican?"

"Yes, of course." There was no mistaking the conviction in his voice.

A brief but lively discussion followed. Our host earnestly supported Prince Charles's intention to change the oath he would take upon becoming king from "Defender of *the* faith" to "Defender of faith." He insisted the change was justified because of England's multicultural society and assured us that Muslims and Buddhists and anyone else all worshiped the same God as Christians. His "Christianity" was really Anglican churchianity—and any "faith" would do.

Our B&B landlady of the previous night had also affirmed that she was Anglican, and in a tone that implied there was nothing else to say. We probed to find whether she had a personal relationship to Christ, but learned only that her family had been Anglicans for generations, that her husband was "church warden" (a fact which seemed to her more than sufficient to establish her "Christian" credentials) and that everyone was excited to meet the new bishop, making his first visit to their country parish. Again it was churchianity to the max, a "Christianity" seemingly without Christ.

An ecumenical blindness to the truth that Jesus Christ and what He accomplished is the essential heart of *the* faith was typical among those with whom we spoke. We visited the only (and pitifully small) Christian bookstore in a medium-sized town. I asked the dear lady in charge whether the store was evangelical. "Oh, yes!" she replied. "And is it ecumenical?" She assured me that it was and added, "All the churches are happy with what we sell."

So many of the earnest people who attended the conference where I spoke in Nottingham told us, "We can't find a church that teaches sound doctrine! Each month *The Berean Call* is like an oasis in a desert!" Yes, there are some good fellowships of believers here and there, but this is

not the England of C.T. Studd, Hudson Taylor and George Mueller from whose shores so many heroes of the faith went forth with the gospel to the four corners of the earth. Today there are more Muslims worshiping Allah in mosques than even pseudo-Christians attending churches—and that disparity is growing.

The modern world is but the sad continuance of Adam's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. There Lucifer, speaking through a serpent, destroyed man as God had made him by destroying man's relationship with God—an intimate bond which man (having been made in the image of God) must have with his Creator or die. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned..." (Rom 5:12). What eternal repercussions from just one

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all....

1 Timothy 2:5-6

sin! And today, "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan,...deceiveth the whole world" (Rv 12:9) into carrying on as though any god will do. Indeed, Satan has become "the god of this world [who blinds] the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, ...should shine unto them" (2 Cor 4:4).

As with sin, so the gospel, too, began in the Garden with God's immediate promise to send the Messiah, born of a virgin. This seed of the woman would deal a deadly blow to the Serpent (Gen 3:15), restoring man to full fellowship with God to live eternally in new heavens and a new earth (2 Pt 3:10-13; Rv 21:1). It was crystal clear that "the seed of the woman" *alone* could accomplish this redemption and reconciliation. Nor could any of the seed of Adam assist Him in the least!

Roman Catholicism's Cult of the Virgin and goddess worship in pagan religions has been a common lie of the Serpent worldwide in order to prevent faith in the Messiah *alone* and to subvert the gospel of God's grace. Roman Catholic Bibles for centuries proclaimed that the woman herself (not Christ) would destroy the serpent. Genesis 3:15 was rendered: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and

thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." (The Douay-Challoner Text, The Catholic Press, Inc., Chicago, 1950.) The same text identifying Mary as the conqueror of Satan is found in a huge Catholic Family Bible published in the late 1700s. It contains the notice that "to guard against *error*, it was judged necessary to forbid the reading of the Scriptures in the vulgar languages, without the advice and permission of the Pastors and spiritual guides whom God has appointed to *govern his church*, Acts xx.28, Christ himself declaring: *He that will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican*, Matt. xviii.16. Nor is this due submission to the Catholic Church (*the pillar and ground of the truth*, I Tim. iii.15) to be understood of the ignorant and unlearned only, but also of men accomplished in all kinds of learning..." [Emphasis in original.]

Although most modern Catholic Bibles render Genesis 3:15 properly, their glorification of Mary obscures the truth. For example, *The Family Rosary Commemorative Edition of the Catholic Bible issued in remembrance of The Marian Year* [1954] has "TO JESUS THROUGH MARY" engraved in gold on the front cover. Just inside is a full-page picture of "Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted;" then comes a prayer to Mary from "His Holiness Pope Pius XII [see Index of TBC reprints]...recited for the first time...[at] the Basilica of Saint Mary Major." The prayer includes the following: "Enraptured by the splendor of your heavenly beauty...we cast ourselves into your arms, O immaculate mother of Jesus...confident of finding...a safe harbor from the tempests which beset us...O conqueror of evil and death...bend tenderly over our aching wounds...protect the holy Church.... Receive, O sweet mother, our humble supplications [that] we may repeat before your [heavenly] throne the hymn that today is sung in earth around your altars: 'You are all beautiful, O Mary! You are the glory, you are the joy, you are the honor of our people.' Amen." Glory, joy and honor belong to Mary before *her* throne and altars?!

Why did God allow the Serpent to bring this disaster upon mankind? And having brought it, why has he been allowed to continue to seduce the descendants of Adam and Eve? Why wasn't the Serpent destroyed immediately? To destroy the Serpent/Satan wouldn't restore mankind to fellowship with God. Man had sinned and the penalty pronounced by God had to be paid. Christ pleaded with His Father in the Garden to

allow Him to escape the horror of bearing the sins of the world if salvation could come any other way. The Father's answer was firm: the full penalty had to be paid—and Christ *alone*, God and man in one person, could satisfy the claims of Infinite Justice.

If Christ paid the full penalty for the sins of mankind, why isn't all mankind reconciled to God? Eternal death came through man's willful choice: reconciliation must be by choice as well. God created man with freedom to obey or to rebel—and rebellion having occurred, that freedom must be exercised in repenting and turning to God. Christ has paid the penalty in full. The pardon is effective, however, only for those who are willing to admit their guilt and receive forgiveness on the righteous basis provided.

All that fallen sinful man can ever have from God must therefore come only in and through Jesus Christ, the virgin-born "seed of the woman." No assistance from any of the seed of Adam (including Mary) is either possible or needed. The New Testament phrase "in Christ Jesus" occurs repeatedly (numerous other declarations without that exact phrase consistently reiterate the same truth), reminding us that everything we have or could have is *only* in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. That truth is often reiterated: "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24); "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39); "blessed...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3); "his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:7); "now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13); "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:11); "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:14); "his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19); "the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tm 3:13); "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tm 1:1); "the grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tm 1:9); "in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tm 1:13); "the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tm 2:1); "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tm 2:10); "through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tm 3:15), etc.

Christians themselves are said to be "*in Christ Jesus*": "There is...no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1); "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:2); "of him are ye in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:30); "we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10); "to

all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi" (Phil 1:1); "that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Col 1:28); "the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes 1:1); "the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus" (1 Thes 2:14); "peace be with you and all that are in Christ Jesus" (1 Pt 5:14), etc.

"Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21) are essential to salvation: "that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish...He that *believeth on the Son* hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth not the Son* shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn 3:16, 36)...He that heareth [heeds] my word, and *believeth on him* that sent me, hath everlasting life (Jn 5:24)...*by him* all that *believe* are justified" (Acts 13:39)...*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31); "the children of God by *faith in Christ Jesus*" (Gal 3:26), etc.

The Bible could not state more clearly or more emphatically (and does so repeatedly)

**As ye have therefore received
Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye
in him.**

Colossians 2:6

that the *only* reconciliation to God and the *only* means of blessing from God is through Jesus Christ *alone*. Therefore all religious efforts, prayers and good deeds are in vain for gaining salvation and God's blessing. Yet the blessings we receive *through Christ Jesus* do not flow to us automatically without faith and even effort on our part. The Christian life of victory is not simply imposed by God's sovereign power apart from the believers' faith and obedience as "labourers together with God" (1 Cor 3:9). Paul writes, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:12-13); "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col 1:29).

We can do nothing but by the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, however, we must give ourselves willingly and wholeheartedly to the grace God is working in and through us: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification..." (1 Thes 4:3); "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ

Jesus concerning you" (1 Thes 5:18). Sadly, not every Christian fulfills God's will by living a perfectly sanctified life at all times and always giving thanks to God "in everything."

God's will is being violated continually by unbelievers disobeying the Law and by believers failing to live as they should. Surely, "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (1 Jn 2:1) expresses the will of God for every Christian. Yet no Christian fully lives up to God's will: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. ...If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8,10).

Numerous scriptures make it clear that while grace is unmerited we must accept and respond to it. Even Christians could fail to accept and properly cooperate with God's grace: "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor 15:10); "We...beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor 6:1); "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tm 2:1).

There is no question that God sincerely desired to bless Israel. Nevertheless, she refused His grace and placed herself instead under His judgment by her rebellion and idolatry. God's desire for Israel, as for all men, was good: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil..." (Jer 29:11). However, because the blessings of His grace were contingent upon Israel's response, she reaped instead the judgment of God. We are even told that by their rebellion they "limited the Holy One of Israel" (Ps 78:41). Think of that—limiting the omnipotent, sovereign God! Indeed, we are told that the rabbis "rejected the counsel of God against themselves" (Lk 7:30). Christians, too, can limit the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives by rejecting His will, living for self, and thus forfeiting empowerment for ministry.

Surely shallow and unfruitful lives of so many among genuine believers could not be the best that God desires for them! May our hearts be filled with gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ for who He is, and what He has done. May we rejoice that all we are and have and could ever be, to God's glory, is in and through Him *alone*. And let us honor Him with our lips and lives so that others will turn in repentance and faith from idols to the true and living God. TBC

Quotable

God can do nothing for us from without, only by what He can put into the heart. Of all that Jesus is and does as High Priest in heaven I cannot have the least experience, but as it is revealed in the heart. The whole work of the Holy Spirit is in the heart. Let us draw nigh with a true heart....

Andrew Murray, The Andrew Murray Collection No. 2, p. 51

God wants us to know the new birth from above. He wants us to know the meaning of our salvation...to be filled with His spirit...to reflect the glory of the One who has called us into His marvelous light. If we fail in this respect, then it would have been better had we never been born...! How utterly tragic...to know that God intended us to mirror His beautiful light and [instead] to have to confess that we are shattered and useless, reflecting nothing!

A. W. Tozer, Whatever Happened to Worship, pp. 99-100

Q&A

Question: In the April issue of *The Berean Call* you used all kinds of antiquated structural forms such as with verb endings (killeth, hath, shalt, wilt); possessive adjectives (mine, thine); subject pronouns (thou, ye)....It reminds me of a verse I memorized in my youth: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth..." (Jn 3:8). It makes me tongue-tied just thinking about it. The use of such language leaves the impression with your readers that you believe that kind of language usage is more acceptable before God, or, worse yet, that God talks like that. Maybe you like King James English because you have some qualms about the accuracy of modern-day translations of the Bible. But please don't take it out on your readers by using structural forms which for hundreds of years have not been a regular part of American speech.

Answer: First of all, I did not use that kind of language. You can only be referring to my quotations from the Bible, which I took pains to provide accurately. Secondly, you make far too much of the alleged difficulty

of such language. School children in Europe learn several languages, including the dead language Latin. Operas and literary classics still use Elizabethan language and the audiences or readers don't complain but seem to appreciate it.

Prefer a Bible in today's English if you wish, but you'll be hard pressed to find one that is an accurate translation from the *Textus Receptus*. This is what the New King James claims to be, yet I find some of it to be inaccurate, such as its change of the key word "imagination" into "intent," etc. The King James Bible is classic English, unsurpassed in its beauty of expression. Stay with your modern English if you must, but allow the rest of us who enjoy the King James Bible to retain it—and have no fear that today's youth can't handle it.

No, there is no suggestion that "God talks like that," nor have I ever heard this complaint from anyone else. On the other hand, perhaps King James English brings some reverence to the reading of Scripture which is lacking in today's English. I think we could do with more reverence.

Question: Undoubtedly the hottest selling book at the moment in Christian circles is *The Prayer of Jabez* by Bruce Wilkinson. It has sold nearly 4 million copies and according to wide publicity is revolutionizing the lives of thousands all over the world. After reading it I came away with some serious misgivings. What is your opinion?

Answer: 1 Chronicles 4:10 tells us, "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested." This is a good prayer which God answered for Jabez because it was His will to do so, not because there is something special about the prayer itself as Wilkinson would have us believe. Nor is there anything in the passage to indicate that these words should be prayed by anyone else or that it must necessarily be answered for anyone else—much less for *everyone* as the author insists.

Yet Wilkinson has daily been repeating this prayer "word for word" for more than 30 years and claims that as a direct result his life has been filled with blessing. On James Dobson's radio program he declared that anyone who prayed Jabez's prayer for two weeks would see his life transformed.

The back cover of the book promises, "...discover how the remarkable prayer of a little-known Bible hero can release God's favor, power, and protection. You'll see how one daily prayer can help you...break through to the life you were meant to live." There is no biblical basis for such extravagant claims which undoubtedly have enticed many readers.

Actually, there is considerable good in the book. The author has much to say about being submissive to God's will and leaving to the Lord what blessings He will provide. Yet the book also contradicts that idea and could easily lead readers to believe that the Jabez prayer is a way of getting what they want from God. Consider the following: "Why not look at the globe and pick an island...then take over the island for God...ask God for Trinidad...and a DC-10" (p. 33). Such demands supposedly will be answered if only you daily repeat the Jabez prayer. Wilkinson points to his own success and declares, "I'm living proof" that the Jabez prayer has extraordinary power (p. 87). The success stories of others are also used as "proof." But cults and other religions have success stories too!

While Wilkinson gives emphasis to spiritual blessings, nothing of that nature can be derived from the prayer of Jabez. In fact, Jabez asked for purely physical blessings of two kinds: the enlarging of the territory he would possess in the promised land; and to be kept from harm. There are many far more spiritual prayers in the Bible!

Even without turning to the Hebrew, the meaning of the word "evil" from which Jabez asks to be kept is clear because he adds, "that it may not grieve me!" Evil in the sense of moral wickedness can do nothing but grieve the people of God. The evil Jabez refers to is *ra* in Hebrew, which means affliction, adversity, calamity, personal disaster. Contrast this with the "deliver us from evil [Greek, *poneros*]" in the pattern of prayer our Lord gave us. There, instead of physical harm or loss, *poneros* has the meaning of moral wickedness. But Jabez's prayer has no concern for that. It is obvious which is the more spiritual prayer!

There are scores of at least equally good prayers recorded in the Bible and expressed by many others whom God also blessed. Why single out Jabez's prayer as better or more likely to be answered by God than prayers by David or Paul, or even Christ? The author offers the appealing suggestion that *this* prayer allows one to be a bit "selfish" and to ask God for personal blessing and

abundance: “I want to show you that such a prayer is not the self-centered act it might appear, but a supremely spiritual one and exactly the kind of request our Father longs to hear” (p. 19). On the contrary, “supremely spiritual” hardly fits.

Even more enticing is the author’s claim that this is “a daring prayer that God *always* answers...it contains *the key* to a life of extraordinary favor with God” (preface; emphasis added). This, too, is misleading and unbiblical. There is no biblical basis for the claim that a *prayer* in and of itself without a life of obedience always brings God’s “extraordinary favor.” Consider in contrast what John says: “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because* we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 Jn 3:22). Or consider James: “The effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man availeth much” (Jas 5:16). Yet no such conditions apparently are required for this incredibly effective Jabez prayer!

It is extremely captivating to be handed a prayer that God *always answers* with great blessing. Everyone would want such a prayer, especially since it guarantees personal blessing that Wilkinson says can legitimately be rather selfish. The author offers readers a mantra to be repeated, verbatim, and endlessly. Not God, but the *prayer of Jabez* automatically brings blessing! Faith is turned from God to a formula. This prayer is guaranteed to work because it is “a brilliant but little-understood strategy for...a blessed life” (p. 63)! *Strategy?*

In spite of patches of good spiritual counsel in the book, we fear that it promotes false ideas about prayer. Warning against “vain repetitions,” Jesus gave a *pattern* for prayer: “after this *manner* therefore pray ye” (Mt 6:7-15) and included an admonition about a heart attitude that would prevent any prayer from being answered. Wilkinson offers a set prayer to be repeated verbatim so often that, though not so intended, it could become meaningless rote.

Question: Everywhere I turn I find the “Alpha Course.” It is advertised in Christian media and on billboards and in church bulletins. I have friends who say they were filled with the Holy Spirit and really came alive in Christ through taking it. At the same time, I’ve met people who obviously were not saved and yet had “gotten the Holy Ghost” at the intensive weekend. What is the “Alpha Course” and what is your opinion about it?

Answer: The Alpha Course is the creation of Nicky Gumbel on the pastoral staff of Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) Anglican church in England. From a small beginning about 10 years ago, it exploded after the “Toronto Blessing” came to HTB in 1994. Recently its success has been phenomenal because of its ecumenical appeal and acceptance by almost every denomination. Alpha refers often and favorably to Roman Catholicism and is very popular in the Roman Catholic Church. Gumbel admiringly quotes Pope John Paul II and other leading Roman Catholic clergy, believes that Catholicism is the true gospel and, having read Vatican II, finds nothing wrong with it. Alpha is endorsed by a host of church leaders, including Robert Schuller and Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey (“I think it’s superb”), who tolerates gays in the Church of England, seeks full unity with the Roman Catholic Church and believes that Hindus share a common spiritual walk with Christians. Sadly, it is also praised by many evangelical leaders such as J.I. Packer, Os Guinness, Luis Palau, Gordon Fee and Leighton Ford.

While much that Alpha offers is evangelical and biblical, in the final analysis it gives one the impression that it is not truth but experience that matters most. Alpha conversions seem to be to a Christian lifestyle rather than to Christ through the gospel. Alpha’s proof of the gospel is not the Word of God, conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit and broken repentance, but the display of supposedly supernatural power, primarily in healing and speaking in tongues.

Testimonies refer to being baptized in the Spirit, a new prayer life and interest in the Bible and in going to church, including increased enthusiasm for the Roman Catholic Mass, how great Alpha is and how it changed lives—but Christ, His payment for sin, repentance and salvation are scarcely mentioned. There is little said about sin and God’s judgment, but the message is almost entirely about God’s love and blessing. On the video Gumbel tries to lead those giving testimonies about Alpha into saying something about Christ and basically fails.

The major feature is the special weekend when the Holy Spirit is “received.” The teaching on “How can I be filled with the Spirit?” puts much emphasis upon the gift of tongues. The training manual instructs, “Encourage the person to start to speak in another language....” There are numerous instances of those who are clearly not saved but who nevertheless “get the Holy Spirit,”

which Gumbel promises can be experienced in a manner compatible with any view.

Gumbel was so powerfully indoctrinated into the Toronto Blessing that it felt like 10,000 volts of electricity going through his body. HTB has been the center from which Toronto’s charisma has spread throughout England and the Continent. Alpha endorses the animal noises and being “thrown, literally, across the room” allegedly by the Holy Spirit to lie “on the floor, just howling and laughing...making the most incredible noise.”

The above should provide enough information to show that Alpha has some serious problems.

"Good Tidings of Great Joy...to All People"

Dave Hunt

Those of us old enough to have lived through World War II remember the ebb and flow of anxiously awaited "good" news and fearfully anticipated "bad" news. After the attack on Pearl Harbor precipitated America's sudden entry into the conflict, it was a long time before Americans had much to cheer about. As the battle in Europe and then in the Pacific finally turned in favor of the Allies, in the United States one particular radio commentator, Gabriel Heeter, endeared himself to listeners with a welcome phrase that became his famous trademark: "Ah, yes, I've got good news tonight!"

"Good news" for one side was, of course, "bad news" for the other. The end of the war was, in a sense, good news to both sides, even to the losers, because it ended the destruction, maiming and death. But there was no consolation, even for the "winners," whose loved ones had become part of war's lamentable statistics. In war there are no winners.

Even in times of what this world calls "peace," eventually everyone runs out of whatever good news an earthly life can bring and becomes at last part of the statistics marking the sorry history of mankind caused by sin and its penalty. God alone offers enduring "good news" of a unique nature—*always* good to *everyone* who hears it. That news concerns the eternal remedy for the sin which has separated man from God, brought the horror of evil and suffering plaguing man ever since his rebellion in the Garden of Eden, and ultimately brings eternal doom. Tragically and inexplicably, this best news of all brings joy to so few because it largely falls upon deaf ears. And even more tragic, many of those who say they have believed the gospel have little enthusiasm in sharing the joy with others.

When his parents gave the future radio commentator the name of Gabriel, little did they realize how fitting it would be one day. The angel Gabriel is predominantly associated in Scripture with good news, especially concerning the Messiah. It was this special messenger from God who told Daniel the very day on which the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, then to die for His people's sins (Dn 9:25-26). It also was Gabriel who told Zacharias that his wife would give birth to the special

prophet who would prepare Israel for the Messiah. And again it was Gabriel who announced to the virgin Mary that she would be with child of the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Messiah. It therefore seems likely that it was also Gabriel who, when the time came, announced that miraculous birth to the shepherds. This was the beginning of the gospel on earth.

The gospel is a New Testament term which never occurs in the Old Testament. It is translated from the Greek *euaggelion*, meaning a good message or good news. There is no indication, either from the word itself or from its usage, that this good news from God is for certain people only and not for all. The gospel is to be preached in "all the world...to every creature [i.e., every created person]" (Mk 16:15). Therefore, by very definition of the word itself, it must be

...believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory....

1 Peter 1:8

good news to every person in the world who hears it.

Thus the "angel of the Lord," in announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds, declared, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:10). *All people!* It could not be more clearly stated, and that by an angelic messenger from God, that the gospel is a bonafide offer of salvation to all mankind and to which all may respond. How else could it possibly offer "great joy...to all people"?

There are those who attempt to make "all people" mean "all *kinds* of people," but that is not what the angel said—and if it were what he meant, he would have said so. In agreement with the angel of the Lord's announcement of good news to *all people*, we are told repeatedly that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...that the world through him might be saved" (Jn 3:16-17); "God our Saviour...will have all men to be saved...the man Christ Jesus...gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tm 2:3-6); "he is the propitiation...for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2); "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn 4:14), etc.

Nowhere in all of Scripture do we find a clear statement to the contrary: that the good

news of salvation in the gospel is not for all. That unhappy theory was arrived at by speculation, not from any direct statement in God's Holy Word. To know that a Savior was born to save only a select few would hardly bring "great joy" to those who were excluded (if indeed there were such) from the salvation procured by His death, burial and resurrection for the "sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). And yet there are some who insist that the "good tidings of great joy" are only for a select few and in so doing sincerely believe they are honoring God and His Word.

Paul declared that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16). There is no clearer statement that salvation through being "born again" into God's family as His children comes only by believing what Paul called "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13) and "the gospel...by which also ye are saved" (1 Cor 15:1-2). Paul defined that gospel as "how that Christ died for our sins according to the [Old Testament] scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the [O.T.] scriptures; and that he was seen [alive by many]..." (1 Cor 15:3-5).

Believing this "good tidings" is the prerequisite to regeneration, i.e., being born again (Jn 3:3-7) into God's family.

It is right here that many stumble over the gospel's simplicity. "All you have to do is believe?" they demand incredulously. Yes. The gospel is not about what we must do, but what Christ has done. Furthermore, what could man do to obtain forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God? Let us be honest: *nothing!*

It is only pride of Himalayan proportions and fiercely stubborn unwillingness to face the horrible truth about ourselves and the glorious truth about God that could possibly foster the delusion that we could do anything at all to contribute to our salvation. Does God need anything from us? Could we give God anything that did not first come from Him? Have we not corrupted everything God has given us so that returning it to Him as though it were of value would only be an insult?

The issue is not only God's love but His justice. Love and the desire to forgive cannot remove the penalty God has pronounced upon sinners. He cannot go back on His word, but the penalty must be paid in full for anyone to go free. God himself cannot adjust heaven's books (Rv 20:12), which record each sin and spell out each one's eternal doom. The "ticket" for violation of God's law has been written out on each one of us and it must be paid. That payment was made

for all by Christ on the cross.

Our redemption is entirely Christ's work. That there is nothing more even for Him to do He declared unequivocally and triumphantly from the cross: "It is finished!" (Jn 19:30). Every attempt to offer good deeds, prayers, penance, or sacraments in order to gain favor with God is a blasphemous denial of the sufficiency of what Christ has done. Our standing before God and all that we will ever be or do for Him or enjoy in His presence is only in Christ and because of what He has done for us in bearing the penalty for our sins.

While the word "gospel" does not occur in the Old Testament, the words Saviour and Redeemer are found frequently. Repeatedly the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob makes it clear that He is the One to whom these titles and accompanying responsibilities and glory belong. That the Messiah, the Savior of the world, had to be God himself, come as a man through a virgin birth, was made clear by Israel's prophets and rings true to the understanding and conscience which God has given to every man. Who else could be the Savior but God alone?

The declaration by Isaiah is unmistakably definitive: "For unto us a child is born [the babe in Bethlehem], unto us a son is given [the Son of God (Ps 2:12; Prv 30:4) who has existed eternally and can only be God (Mic 5:2)]; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David...even for ever" (Is 9:6-7).

Israel's Messiah is the One who God has promised will reign forever upon the throne of David. Thus there could be no doubt that this prophecy refers to Him. Yet this child born in Bethlehem of a virgin was and is "the mighty God" and "the everlasting Father." Again, Israel's prophets could not have stated more clearly that the Messiah would be God himself, come as a man through a virgin birth. Who else, indeed, could save us from sin's penalty pronounced by God in righteous judgment!

Yet the rabbis and the people of Israel accused Christ of blasphemy and attempted to kill Him by stoning when He declared, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30-31) and "Before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn 8:58-59). They knew exactly what He meant: "thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (Jn 10:33). Tragically, they did not know their own messianic scriptures that the Messiah could be

none other than God himself.

As clearly and emphatically as Jahweh declares that He is the only true God, so He also declares that He is the Messiah, the only Savior and Redeemer. Here are only a few of such references: "before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour" (Is 43:10-11); "O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Is 45:15); "thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me" (Hos 13:4); "and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Is 60:16); "O LORD, my strength and my redeemer" (Ps 19:14); "And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer" (Ps 78:35); "As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel" (Is 47:4); "Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name" (Jer 50:34), etc.

Despite the absence of the word "gospel" in the Old Testament, the gospel is

**Now the God of hope fill you with
all joy and peace in believing....**

Romans 15:13

promised there in the prophecies concerning the Messiah who, as the Lamb of God (Ex 12:6; Is 53:7, etc.) would die for our sins. As Peter told the first Gentile converts, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43). Paul explains further: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39).

Paul declared that the message he preached was "the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1). And as absolute proof of the authenticity of that gospel, he pointed to the Old Testament prophecies identifying the coming Messiah and telling of His redemptive mission. The climax of Paul's message was the irrefutable fact (to which the Jews themselves were witnesses) that every messianic prophecy had been fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

This "gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy [Old Testament] scriptures,) concern[ed] his Son..." (Rom 1:1-3). "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son...to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal 4:4-5).

Paul's *modus operandi* was to reason "out of the scriptures" using the Hebrew prophets to prove that "this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ" (Acts 17:2-3). That proof is still valid today so that no one can honestly deny the truth which is in Jesus Christ. Yet so few Christians use the incontrovertible witness of prophecy in preaching the gospel. In our preaching and witnessing we need to return to the message of prophecy fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth with which the Apostles "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

Paul did not apologetically "dialogue" as though there were anything to discuss or some compromise to be made. He "disputed...in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily..." (Acts 17:17). Because he loved an argument? No, but because judgment lies ahead for unbelievers: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..." (2 Cor 5:11).

The prophecies are so many and so clear and so precisely fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth that no one can deny the evidence. Paul "confounded the Jews... proving [from their own scriptures] that this is [the] very Christ [foretold]" so "the Jews took counsel to kill him" (Acts 9:22-23). Likewise, he "disputed against the Grecians" who obviously could not refute the evidence Paul presented, so "they went about to slay him" (Acts 9:29).

"Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Is that great joy reflected in our lives and in our daily contact with others? Do those around us sense the excitement bubbling within us because we intimately know the infinite Creator of the universe as our loving, heavenly Father who guides our steps into the glorious fulfillment of His will? Has the exquisite wonder of sins forgiven and the priceless gift of eternal life as children in God's very own family gripped our hearts so that all else is nothing by comparison? Or are we so enamored with and entangled in this fleeting, failing, futile, finite earthly life that we have lost the great joy of anticipation of being in His presence at any moment and for eternity?

May we, like the angel, be the source of good tidings of great joy to all with whom the Lord leads us into contact. May our hearts overflow in love and gratitude to Him for who He is and what He has done in our redemption. And from that overflow may Christians by God's grace and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit spread this great joy to the whole world through the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **TBC**

Quotable

The gospel declares...deliverance from our complicity in this rebellion against God, our love of darkness, our devotion to all of the worldly ideologies that authenticate our rebellion....

David F. Wells, God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams, p. 172

The sin of the church isn't that it's rich, but that it hasn't the compassion to throw even a few evangelical crumbs to starving Lazarus at the gate....We have built for ourselves big beautiful buildings...where cozy Christians sit on padded pews, living in luxury...while sinners sink into Hell!

Ray Comfort, Someone Left the Cake Out in the Rain, p. 180

1 Peter 1:7: In our pathway here below, we must never confuse the "ways" of God with the "purposes" of God for His people. His ways with us may lead us through great trials of our faith, but His purpose is ever and always that we might be brought into eternal happiness and blessing through His love for us.

Paul Leonard Klassen, M.D., 1969
The testimony of Ruth Hunt's terminally ill brother as he awaited his Homegoing

Q&A

Question: Thank you for your recent critique of Martin Luther's *The Bondage of the Will*. This is an important step in the right direction of exposing the true teachings of Martin Luther, as well as John Calvin, both of whose writings clearly show that they believed that the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Table were the "means of grace" whereby a person is born again and receives forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Enclosed is my "Memento and Certificate of Baptism" and my daughter's "Certificate of Holy Baptism," both as babies into the Lutheran Church. As you can see, my certificate was printed by the Missouri Synod's Concordia Publishing House and reads, "In Baptism full salvation has been given unto you; God has become your Father, and you have become His child." My daughter's reads, "You are a child of God because God has made you His child through this act. All of God's promises

belong to you as you live under Him in His Kingdom." [Copies of these certificates may be viewed at www.thebereancall.org.]

You must know that Luther's Catechism, used in every Lutheran Synod, declares concerning the "Sacrament of Baptism," that "it works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare." It also states regarding the "Sacrament of the Altar" [the Lord's Supper], "namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words."

This false sacramental gospel kept my parents from ever telling me that I was a sinner and needed a Savior. They thought that I had received eternal life in baptism. I am positive that there are millions of Lutherans believing the same thing my parents did and which I was taught and believed for many years.

I was saved at age 45 when I finally heard the true gospel and believed it....Martin Luther protested some of the obvious error and corruption in the Catholic Church, but kept the sacraments as the means of grace by which a person must be saved. This is taught from his Catechism in every Lutheran Church today.

Furthermore, like the Roman Catholics, both Luther and Calvin and their followers at that time persecuted our true spiritual forefathers, the Anabaptists, who refused to submit to baby baptism or to acknowledge the physical presence of Christ in the bread and wine at the Lord's Table. We believe that millions of souls are at stake because of this false teaching and have wondered for some time why you have never confronted Luther's errors in your writing or speaking. Would you be willing to address this issue in the Q&A section of *The Berean Call*?

Answer: Thank you for this needed challenge. Lack of time has kept me from addressing Lutheranism sooner, but we must take the time because we agree with you that the eternal destiny of millions of souls is indeed at stake. Most evangelicals are ignorant of the amount of Roman Catholicism carried over into the Reformation in Lutheran and Calvinist churches. I am currently finishing a book about Calvinism (it also deals briefly with Luther) in which one chapter is titled, "Calvinism's Surprising Catholic Connection."

Luther was an Augustinian monk and Calvin a devout Roman Catholic steeped in the teachings of Augustine. Incredibly, both

of these leading "Reformers" admired and continued to follow Augustine until their deaths. It is even more incredible that evangelical leaders today hold Luther and Calvin (and Augustine) in such high regard. Augustine is celebrated as the greatest "saint" of the Roman Catholic Church, responsible for most of what Rome practices to this day. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin quotes Augustine more than 400 times, often with the phrase, "by the authority of Augustine." Both Luther and Calvin taught that infant baptism (even if performed by an ungodly, unbelieving Catholic priest) brought forgiveness of sins and made one a child of God. That is why Lutherans and Calvinists despised, persecuted and even killed the Anabaptists who, like you, having been truly born again through believing the gospel of Christ, were baptized as believers. While Lutherans and Calvinists, like Catholics, no longer burn at the stake, many of them still despise and persecute former members who are saved and baptized as believers, as you can testify.

Just last week in New York a man showed me the excommunication letter he received from his Missouri Synod Lutheran Church for having believed the gospel and having been baptized as a believer. He told me of the persecution he has received from church leaders, family and former friends. The Bible is clear: "...what doth hinder me to be baptised?" The answer was "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" (Acts 8:35-39). Clearly, faith in Christ (impossible and therefore unnecessary for a baby) is the prerequisite to baptism.

Even the verse always cited to justify the false doctrine of "baptismal regeneration" ("he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" - Mk 16:16) requires believing the gospel *before* one is baptized. The fact that babies cannot believe the gospel reveals the error of infant baptism, of which there is not one example in the entire Bible. Babies who die go to heaven, those who grow old enough to understand the gospel must either accept or reject Christ.

The two major passages used by proponents to support infant baptism concern the salvation and baptism of Cornelius's household (Acts 10) and that of the Philippian jailor (Acts 16). It is *assumed* that in each case there must have been infants and even babies present and baptized. In each case, that assumption is both unwarranted and contrary to the facts.

In Acts 10:44-47 it was the sign of speaking in tongues which caused Peter and those with him to realize that all "who heard

the word” had believed and been saved. This passage clearly teaches that there were no infants present (or if there were, they were not baptized) because infants could not have understood and believed the gospel as was the case with all whom Peter baptized. Moreover, baptismal regeneration is once again excluded by the fact that these new converts had “received the Holy Ghost” *before* being baptized (10:47).

In Acts 16:30-33 it is equally clear that there were no infants present, much less baptized. Paul’s statement to the jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (v 31) implies that salvation was for those in his house who like him believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The statement in the next verse that Paul and Silas “spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house,” proves there were no infants present. One does not preach the gospel to babies. All in the house must have been old enough to hear, understand and respond to the gospel in faith and were therefore baptized as believers.

Calvin even taught that infant baptism, if one believed in it, was the one sure way to know one was of the elect; and that the children of the elect didn’t even need to be baptized but were already children of God. Their baptism was not for regeneration but merely to recognize they were already in the church. Calvin also taught not only the real physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist but that the elements were spiritual food for sustaining the believer’s spiritual life. I doubt that many Calvinists today (certainly not those whom I know) would agree with Calvin on these points, and probably most would be shocked to know that Calvin believed such heresies.

This is a serious matter. Why should the Calvinist youth, when he is old enough to understand, be challenged to believe the gospel, inasmuch as he has been considered to be one of the elect since he was born? Confirmation merely confirms what infant baptism — or being born into a Calvinist family — already accomplished. Indeed, what need would there be to preach the gospel to *anyone* since the elect are regenerated without it and the non-elect, being “totally depraved,” cannot understand or believe it?

So it was with you, raised a Lutheran. You did not hear the gospel in the Lutheran Church — and had you heard it, why should you think you needed it, since you had become a child of God with sins forgiven through baptism as a baby?

The above teachings of Lutheranism and Calvinism constitute a deadly heresy which has deluded (and continues to delude) millions into thinking they were on their way to heaven while actually headed for hell. It must be exposed and opposed just as firmly and clearly as the false gospel of Roman Catholicism, to which it is closely related.

Question: On several occasions Benny Hinn and others have prophesied that Christ would bodily appear at a Hinn crusade. Might that really happen?

Answer: The Bible speaks repeatedly of the bodily appearing of Christ to His own as a climactic future event which comes at the Rapture and not before. Paul declared, “there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,... and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his [Christ’s] appearing” (2 Tm 4:8). The “blessed hope” which Christians eagerly anticipate is “the glorious appearing” of Christ (Ti 2:13). This takes place at a Benny Hinn Crusade? John writes, “when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 Jn 3:2). To imagine this longed-for event occurring at a Hinn crusade raises that false prophet to the level of Christ, lowers this crowning heavenly event to earth’s level and robs it of its majesty and power. That Hinn could voice such an absurd and unbiblical boast, that Paul Crouch and others on TBN could give their approval, and that multitudes of gullible followers would be so enthusiastic over this false prospect is a sad commentary on the biblical illiteracy plaguing the church today.

Question: Is it really biblical for you or anyone else to point out others’ faults? Isn’t this judging when we are not to judge? Doesn’t the Scripture say that the servant is to be left to the correction of his master who is Christ?

Answer: In the past we have dealt in depth with “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Mt 7:1). For that part of your question I refer you to our Newsletter Reprints and Index of prior issues. It is not a matter of pointing out “faults,” but of correcting unbiblical doctrine and behavior. Publicly taught doctrinal error must be corrected publicly for the benefit of those who have been misled thereby. In fact, correction should be a major goal of any teaching from God’s Word. Paul tells Timothy that the very purpose of Scripture is “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tm 3:16). Indeed, the major part of the 22

epistles involves correction!

It is impossible to teach sound doctrine and to instruct in righteousness *without* warning concerning what is false. Thus Paul declares that to “preach the word” one must “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tm 4:2). And reproof and correction are incomplete without specifically identifying the offenders. How many of today’s popular Christian leaders are being true to God’s Word in this regard? Could that be a major missing element in today’s church, explaining at least in part why so many “will not endure sound doctrine” (1 Tm 4:3-4)?

Does it Matter?

Dave Hunt

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be....Surely I come quickly” (Rv 22:12,20). These, Christ’s last recorded words, confirm His earlier promise: “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn 14:2-3). Paul refers to the fulfillment of this promise: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, ...and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive...shall be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thes 4:16-17).

In response to these promises from Christ, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Rv 22:17), to which John adds his glad “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Who is this Bride? After declaring that husband and wife are “one flesh,” Paul explains: “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:22-32).

Neither the words of Christ and John nor those of the Spirit and the Bride would make any sense if this coming to catch away the believers to Himself had to await the appearance of Antichrist (prewrath view) or the consummation of the Great Tribulation (post-trib view). A post-anything coming of Christ for His bride simply doesn’t fit these words of Scripture. If the Great Tribulation must occur first, for the Spirit and the Bride to cry “Come, Lord Jesus!” would be like demanding payment on a debt that wasn’t due for seven years!

A post-anything rapture flies in the face of many scriptures which clearly demand a coming of Christ that could occur at any moment. Christ himself said, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord...” (Lk 12:35). Such a command would mock us if Christ could not come until after seven years of tribulation.

That the coming which Christ’s bride longs for will bring the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the living into new bodies is clear not only from 1 Thessalonians 4, but from other passages such as “...from whence [heaven] also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil 3:20-21). Many other passages also call

upon believers to watch and wait expectantly. Such exhortations make sense only if Christ could catch His bride to heaven at any moment:

...waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:7); ...ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven... (1 Thes 1:9-10); Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of...our Saviour Jesus Christ (Ti 2:13); ...unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time... (Heb 9:28); Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord (Jas 5:7); etc.

Opinions about the Rapture do not affect salvation—but we should seek to understand what the Bible says. The early church was clearly expecting Christ at any

Christ the firstfruits [of resurrection]; afterward they are Christ’s at his coming.

1 Corinthians 15:23

moment. To be watching and waiting for Christ if Antichrist must appear first would be like expecting Christmas before Thanksgiving. Yet Christ exhorted, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh ...Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mt 25:13; Mk 13:36-37).

Nor does the following from Christ fit a post-trib coming: “Therefore be ye also ready: for *in such an hour as ye think not* the Son of man cometh” (Mt 24:44). It is absurd to imagine that anyone who had survived the Great Tribulation and had seen the prophesied events (the plagues and judgment poured out upon earth; Antichrist’s image in the temple; the mark imposed to buy and sell; all killed who would not worship Antichrist’s image; the two witnesses in Jerusalem killed, then resurrected and caught up to heaven; Jerusalem surrounded by the world’s armies, etc.), and who had counted the foretold 1,260 days, could possibly imagine at that hour that Christ was not about to return! There is simply no way to reconcile a post-trib coming of Christ with His warning that He would come when He would *not be expected*.

That statement alone distinguishes the Rapture (catching the church up from earth to heaven) from the Second Coming (to

rescue Israel at Armageddon), for the latter will surprise almost no one. In contrast to His warning that even many in the church will not be expecting Him, numerous scriptures foretell another coming of Christ when all the signs have been fulfilled and everyone knows that He is coming. To unbelieving Israel, Christ declared, “when ye shall see all these things, know that it [My coming] is near, even at the doors” (Mt 24:33). Even Antichrist will know: “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army” (Rv 19:19).

Either Christ is contradicting himself (impossible!) or *He is speaking of two events*. Christ says He will come at a time of peace and prosperity when even His bride will not expect Him: “Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Lk 12:40). Not only the foolish, but even the wise, will be asleep: “While the bridegroom tarried, they *all* slumbered and slept” (Mt 25:5!).

Yet Scripture says that the Messiah comes when the world is almost destroyed by war, famine and God’s judgment and Israel is about to go down in defeat. Then, Jahweh declares, “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced” (Zec 12:10) and all Jews alive on earth will recognize their returning messiah as the “mighty God, the everlasting Father” (Is 9:6) who, exactly as their prophets foretold, came as a man, died for their sins, and has come again, this time to rescue Israel. Of this climactic moment, Christ declares, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Mt 24:13). Paul adds, “And so all Israel [still living] shall be saved...” (Rom 11:26).

It is inescapable that two comings are yet future: one that could catch even His bride by surprise, and another that will hardly be a surprise to anyone. These cannot be the same event. But where does the New Testament say that two comings remain? Every Christian believes in two comings: Christ came once to earth, died for our sins, rose from the dead, returned to heaven and is coming again. Yet nowhere did the Old Testament say there would be two distinct comings.

That fact caused confusion for the rabbis, for Christ’s disciples, and even for John the Baptist. “Filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Lk 1:15, 41, 44), John had testified that Jesus was “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). Yet this last of the Old Testament prophets, of whom there was none greater “born of women” (Lk 7:28),

began to doubt: “Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?” (Lk 7:19).

Only one coming of the Messiah was anticipated. He would deliver Israel and establish His kingdom upon David’s throne in Jerusalem. Thus the rabbis, soldiers and jeering onlookers mocked Him on the cross (Mt 27:40-44; Mk 15:18-20, 29-32; Lk 23:35-37)! In spite of all the miracles He had done, the disciples likewise took His crucifixion to be conclusive proof that He could not have been the Messiah. The two on the road to Emmaus said, “...we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Lk 24:19-21)—but now He was dead.

Christ rebuked them for failing “to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken” (Lk 24:25). That was the common problem—failure to consider *all* prophecies. Israel had a one-sided view of the Messiah’s coming (and still does today) which allows her to see only His triumphant reign and blinds her to His sacrifice for sin. Even many Christians are so obsessed with thoughts of “conquering” and “dominion” that they imagine it is the church’s responsibility to take over the world and to establish the Kingdom so that the King can then return to earth to reign. They forget His promise to His bride to take her to heaven, from whence she shall return with Him to help rule the world.

How could Christ come from heaven to execute judgment upon earth “with ten thousands of his saints [i.e., multitudes]” (Jude 14) if He had not first taken them to heaven? Here we have another reason for a pretrib rapture. Amazingly, Michael Horton, in *Putting Amazing Back into Grace* (p. 198), imagines that 1 Thessalonians 4:14 refers to Christ’s Second Coming “with the saints” (“so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him”). On the contrary, it is the disembodied souls and spirits of physically dead believers which Christ brings at the Rapture to be reunited with their bodies at the resurrection and takes them and the transformed living to heaven. At the Second Coming it is *living* saints who have already been resurrected and previously taken to heaven whom He brings with Him back to earth.

Prior to Christ’s return with His saints there has been a wedding in heaven of the Lamb to His bride (Rv 19:7). Having undergone the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10, etc.), the saints are “arrayed in fine linen, clean and white” (Rv 19:8). Surely they must also be the army “clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (19:14) that comes with Christ to destroy Antichrist.

When were they taken to heaven? Certainly not at the Second Coming, for that would leave time neither for the judgment seat of Christ nor for the wedding. The Rapture *must* be a prior event.

Those who are looking forward to meeting a “Christ” with their feet planted on this earth have forgotten that the true Christ will catch us up to meet Him in the air and take us to His Father’s house. They have forgotten, too, that Antichrist will establish an earthly kingdom before the true King returns to reign. Sadly, those who are working to establish a kingdom on this earth are preparing the world for the counterfeit reign of “that man of sin.”

How could anyone in Old Testament times have known that there would be two comings of the Messiah? By implication only. Either the prophets contradicted themselves when they foretold that the Messiah would be rejected and crucified and yet that He would be hailed as King and reign upon David’s throne forever—or

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

James 5:8

they were speaking of two comings.

There was no way to put into one event what the prophets said. There simply *had* to be two comings of the Messiah: first as the Lamb of God to die for our sins, then as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Hos 5:14-15; Rv 5:5) in power and glory to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon.

And so it is in the New Testament. Notice the many contradictions unless these are two events: 1) He comes *for* His saints and at a time when no one expects Him; but He comes *with* His saints and at a time when everyone knows He is coming; 2) He doesn’t come to earth but catches the saints up to meet Him in the air (1 Thes 4:17); but He comes to this earth, His “feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” (Zec 14:4) and the saints come to earth with Him; 3) He takes the saints *to* heaven to His Father’s house of many mansions to be with Him (Jn 14:3); but He brings the saints *from* heaven (Zec 14:5; Jude 14); 4) He comes for His bride at a time of peace and prospering, business and pleasure (Lk 17:26-30); but He comes to rescue His people Israel when the world has practically been destroyed and in the midst of earth’s worst war, Armageddon.

Christ declared: “And as it was in the days of Noe...they did eat, they drank, they married wives;...also as it was in the days of Lot;...they bought, they sold, they planted, ...they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven...Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed [to His own]” (Lk 17:26-30). These world conditions at the Rapture could only be before the tribulation period; they certainly could not be at its conclusion!

Rapture? Critics claim that the word “rapture” isn’t even in the Bible! In fact, it is and has been since Jerome’s fifth-century Latin Vulgate translated the Greek *harpazo* (to snatch suddenly) as *raeptius*, from which “rapture” comes. The KJV renders *harpazo* “caught up.” That is what Christ promised in John 14—to catch us up to heaven.

Other critics parrot Dave MacPherson’s myth that a pretrib Rapture came from Darby early in the nineteenth century, who learned it from a Margaret MacDonald, who got it from Edward Irving, who learned it from the writings of the Jesuit Emmanuel Lacunza. That is simply not true (see Reprints, June 1995). A number of much earlier writers expressed this belief. One is Ephraem of Nisibis (306-73), well-known in Syrian church history. He stated, “All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord...” That sermon was popularly circulated in several languages.

Yes, there *is* a post-trib coming: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days... they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt 24:29-30). For His angels to “gather together his elect from the four winds” (vv. 29-31) is certainly not Christ himself rapturing His church to heaven, but the gathering of scattered Israel back to her land at the Second Coming.

Christ associated evil with the thought that His coming would be delayed: “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming” (Mt 24:48; Lk 12:45). Again, that statement is senseless if the Rapture is post-trib.

There is no greater motive for holy living and diligent evangelism than knowing that Christ could take us to heaven at any moment. May the Bride awaken from her sleep, fall in love again with the Bridegroom, and from her heart and by her daily life call out continually, “Come, Lord Jesus, come!”

TBC

Quotable

What we need very badly these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now as they know they must do at the last day. For each of us the time is surely coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will all be swept away....It would be a tragedy indeed to come to the place where we have no other but God and find that we had not really been trusting God during the days of our earthly sojourn. It would be better to invite God now to remove every false trust, to disengage our hearts from all secret hiding places and to bring us out into the open where we can discover for ourselves whether or not we actually trust Him...time is running out on us.

A.W. Tozer

The Root of the Righteous, pp. 50-51

While it is true, God is more than able to supply our every need in any age...I can also understand how any thoughtful persons, particularly parents, would dread what is to come, if indeed we Christians were required to face Antichrist before we face Jesus. [But] the Holy Spirit promised us...that "Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come" (Rom 5:9; 1 Thes 1:10; 5:9). The pretrib message is a reassuring message of "comfort"...I see no "comfort" in believing that Jesus is coming—after we have gone through the worst time of suffering the world has ever known...described in awful detail in Rev. 6-19.

Tim LaHaye

Pre-Trib Perspectives, July 2001

Q&A

Question: John Armstrong recently said, "You read Dave Hunt's newsletter and you would think that anybody who signed ECT was questionably Christian and certainly being used by the devil to destroy the faith... There is no care exercised in context of what men are saying and what they mean by it. And that's what I am strongly opposing in my comments—this lack of context and lack of charity and lack of proper use of terms." Would you please respond?

Answer: This is a serious and blanket charge which, if true, condemns my writings and for which I ought to be held accountable. Yet Armstrong gives no context or even one

quote to support his accusations. He seems rather to exemplify the very "lack of charity and lack of proper terms" of which he accuses me. Perhaps most ironic of all, the title of the conference where he said this was "A Passion for Truth."

Question [condensation of 8 pages]: On pages 75 and 178 of your book, *In Defense of the Faith*, there are some sensational claims...that call into question your legitimacy as a serious and knowledgeable author...One...is that the book of Daniel "foretold the very day (April 6, A.D. 32) that Jesus would ride into Jerusalem...and be hailed as the Messiah"...and that "Daniel foretold the splitting of the Roman Empire into two parts (East and West) centuries before it occurred...." To make a sensational claim without giving the basis for that claim is, of course, characteristic of tabloid writing.... [N]owhere in the book of Daniel did I find any basis for the claim...that Daniel gave details about the Roman Empire and Jesus. ...The real concern of the book of Daniel [is] the plight of the Jews in Palestine at the time of the cruel oppression...of Antiochus Epiphanes.... Thus the logical reason for the book of Daniel [is] to offer encouragement to the Jews of Palestine during this terrible period of persecution....

It would take an absolute lack of knowledge of the historical facts...not to understand which four great kingdoms Daniel is concerned with....They are the Babylonian...Median...Persian...and the Grecian.... You appear to be making historical claims without a knowledge of pertinent historical reality. I would like to hear what you have to say to justify your claims.

Answer [condensation]: While perhaps I should be flattered that you studied my book *In Defense of the Faith* so carefully, and happy that you studied Daniel also, I have the impression (I hope I'm wrong) that you investigated with the purpose in mind of disproving rather than discovering, eager to show that I lack the scholarship you admire.

Unfortunately, your dating of Daniel during the days of Antiochus Epiphanes is speculation....Where is the scholarly proof for this idea, proof which you say I lack in my writing? The book purports to have been written by Daniel, not centuries later by someone who pretended to be Daniel and dared to write in the first person the words of a man he didn't know and to tell details of a life he had not lived as though he had lived it. What "comfort" would it have given the Jews for a book suddenly to appear in

their time which claimed authorship centuries earlier and thus on its very face was an obvious fraud? Nor is there even a hint that Daniel was written to encourage the Jews.

Clearly, the major thrust of the book is not encouragement, but prophecy. That stage is set by the dream God gave Nebuchadnezzar specifically to make known "what shall be in the latter days" (2:28) and it carries all through the book (8:17, 19; 9:24; 10:14; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9, 13); as well as the revelation of God's eternal kingdom which shall replace earth's succeeding kingdoms (2:44; 7:14, 27, etc.); and the time of the coming of the Messiah (9:25) who will rule God's kingdom. Failing to recognize the prophetic purpose of Daniel, you attempt to fit it all into history, though much of it is yet future and concerns what the Bible calls the latter time or last days. Your purely historic approach leads you to a number of false conclusions.

Focusing upon "kings," you attempt to correlate everything Daniel says with historically identifiable rulers. Hence your claim that I fail to understand history. On the contrary, while you do verify that Daniel foretells with amazing accuracy events that actually occurred during the reign of the Seleucid kings, you eliminate from your thinking the possibility that Daniel was at the same time foretelling events far beyond that time period—in fact those that will occur in the "last days" prior to Christ's Second Coming.

Though there is some reference to kings, and details that history verifies, the main thrust of Daniel concerns *kingdoms*. It is clearly stated that the prophecies depicted in the image and the four beasts refer to *four kingdoms* (2:39-40; 7:23) which would exist in sequence, the first, Babylonia, being conquered by the second, that by the third and that by the fourth. You say that none of the kingdoms following Babylonia are named (yet you name them). In fact the first two *are* named: Medo-Persia and Grecia, in that order, with some details given of the kings within Medo-Persia and of its conquest by Grecia (8:20-21; 10:20; 11:1-4).

Faulting me for allegedly failing to understand history, you erroneously imply that the Babylonian Empire was succeeded by the Median Empire and that by a Persian Empire, making these the second and third empires of Daniel, and Grecia the fourth. There is no possibility of Media being the second kingdom. The Median empire was scarcely worthy of the name. Will Durant writes (vol. I, p. 351) of the kingdom which Cyaxares (greatest of the Median kings)

established (it took in Assyria, Media and Persia): “Its tenure [little more than a generation] was too brief to permit of any substantial contribution to civilization, except...as it prepared for the culture of Persia. To Persia the Medes gave ‘the law of the Medes and Persians’.” The Medes were a group of tribes taken over by the Pars (Persians) in a rebellion led by Cyrus in 550 B.C. (some say 553 B.C.) and only then did the Medo-Persian army begin its conquest, capturing Babylon in 539 B.C., then Egypt. Clearly, the Median Empire, which you say succeeded Babylon, had ceased to exist and had become a Medo-Persian Empire *before* the fall of Babylon. You yourself acknowledge that “Cyrus conquered the kingdom of the Medes in 550 B.C. and then the Babylonian kingdom in 539 B.C.” Thus Babylonia was succeeded by Medo-Persia, the second empire, to be succeeded by Grecia as the third.

There is no question that the Grecian Empire was succeeded by the Roman Empire, so the latter must be Daniel’s fourth and unnamed kingdom. Surely it is reasonable to consider that its two legs depict its division into two parts. That division occurred politically in A.D. 330 when Constantine moved his capital to Constantinople, and religiously in A.D. 1054, when Pope Leo IX excommunicated Michael Cerularius, Patriarch of Constantinople, leaving Roman Catholicism in the West and creating Eastern Orthodoxy in the East, a division which remains to this day.

And now to the prophecy concerning Jesus. Obviously He is not named by Daniel, but His fulfilling this and numerous other prophecies proves He is the Messiah. Daniel’s reference “unto the Messiah the Prince” must therefore predict the coming of Jesus. That it is not His birth or the beginning of His ministry but His entry into Jerusalem to which Daniel refers can be deduced inasmuch as that was the first (and only) time that He was openly declared to be the Messiah by a large group of followers and that declaration was publicly accepted by Jesus.

The angel Gabriel told Daniel that this coming of Messiah would occur “69 weeks” (483 years) after “the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” You say, “I have encountered no explanation of the reason for calling the ‘weeks’ in Chapter 9 a period of seven years.” Let me give you some. First of all, what is prophesied is for the last days and surely Gabriel did not intend to indicate that the long-prophesied “last days” with the many preceding and attendant events would have arrived and

all prophecies for Jerusalem and Israel, including the Messiah dying for sin and reigning on the throne of David, would be concluded within 70 weeks (fewer than 18 months) from the command to rebuild Jerusalem! That is foolish on its very face. It would take longer than that just to rebuild Jerusalem.

Secondly, the word translated “weeks” is *shabuwa* and literally means “sevens,” so it could legitimately mean seven years as well as seven days. But verse 9:2 clinches it. Daniel tells us that from reading “books” (no doubt Exodus 21:2; Leviticus 25:1-7; 26:34-43; Deuteronomy 15:1-2; and 2 Chronicles 36:21) he has just understood the reason Jeremiah foretold that God’s judgment would cause 70 years’ desolation of Jerusalem (Jer 25:11-12). The above (and other) scriptures inform us that when God brought His people Israel into the promised land He told them that there would be a sabbath not only of days but also of years. Every seventh year they were to release all fellow Hebrew slaves, forgive all debts owed by fellow Hebrews and let the land lie fallow for a one-year sabbath. For 490 years they disobeyed that command: therefore, in judgment God made them slaves, took everything away from them and removed them from the land so that it would lie fallow for 70 years to catch up on the sabbaths it had missed.

Having just come to this realization, Daniel is prepared to understand when Gabriel tells him there is another period of 490 years (70 sevens) ahead for Israel and Jerusalem, and at the end of that time every prophecy pertaining to her would be fulfilled as foretold. Christ did come at the end of 483 years and was “cut off.”

The 70 weeks are very clearly said to be measured “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem...” (Dn 9:25). Having searched the Book of Ezra, you declare that “nowhere is anything said in Artaxerxes’ decree about rebuilding the city of Jerusalem.” Your error is elementary: you apparently ignored the Book of Nehemiah. There we are told (2:1) that “in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes [Longimanus]...” Nehemiah begged the king, “send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers’ sepulchres [i.e., Jerusalem], that I may build it...let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river. And the king granted me.... Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king’s letters” (2:4-9). This surely is the “commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” referred to in Daniel 9:25.

As you know, Artaxerxes Longimanus

ruled from 465 to 425 B.C. So the date Nehemiah provides is Nisan 1, 445 B.C. Calculate it yourself, not forgetting leap years and the fact that the Jewish year was 360 days, and you come to April 6, A.D. 32, the very day Christ rode into Jerusalem. If your dates for Longimanus and your calculations vary from the above, it can’t be by more than a year or two—certainly far from the date of 55 B.C. which you allege, and certainly well within the period of Christ’s life upon earth, which is well established. As for the suspension of the seventieth year, I have dealt with that in detail elsewhere.

A Moment For Truth

Dave Hunt

America awakened September 11 to appalling scenes on TV of passenger planes deliberately crashing into the towers of the World Trade Center and into the Pentagon. Stunned disbelief gave way to the question, who could so carefully plan and efficiently execute such incredibly inhumane destruction and slaughter? What cause could so powerfully motivate educated and trained individuals to sacrifice their own lives and the lives of so many total strangers in this manner? In the minds of civilized people these men were unbelievable fanatics. But were they?

Could one call the spiritual leader of an entire major country a “fanatic,” a man universally recognized as properly representing his religion? Who would know his religion better than the spiritual leader himself? Such was Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini when he declared, “The purest joy in Islam is to kill and be killed for Allah.”¹ Is that fanaticism?

And could you call the founder of a major world religion a fanatic? Muhammad, who with his followers slaughtered thousands in establishing and spreading Islam, said of Muslims, “Who relinquishes his faith, kill him....² I have been ordered by Allah to fight with people till they testify there is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his messenger.”³ Was Muhammad a fanatic? Are they fanatics who obey him today in exacting the death penalty upon Muslims (as in Afghanistan, the Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan) who for the sake of conscience convert to another religion?

Do we need a new definition of “fanatic”?

There is a certain hypocrisy in the new outrage with which America and the world now view terrorism. History’s bloodiest, most vicious and successful terrorist, Yasser Arafat, has been given the Nobel Peace Prize and embraced as a world statesman. He is proof to would-be imitators that terrorism pays big. The United Nations, European Union, and countless world political and religious leaders have sided with him in his terrorism against Israel. Arafat and his PLO held the record for the largest hijacking (four aircraft in a single operation)—which has just been equaled, the greatest number of hostages held at one time (300), the greatest number of people shot at an airport, the largest ransom collected (\$5 million paid by Lufthansa), the

greatest variety of targets (40 civilian passenger aircraft, five passenger ships, 30 embassies or diplomatic ministries plus innumerable fuel depots and factories), etc.

⁴ Instead of being tried by an international tribunal as were the Nazi and Serbian leadership, Arafat’s bloody exploits gained for him acceptance as a leader for peace!

In his brief speech to the nation the morning of the 12th, President Bush declared that the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. were “acts of war.” Indeed, they were—*jihad* (“holy war”). He said that “freedom and democracy are under attack [but] we will not allow this enemy to win the war by...restricting our freedoms.” Is it a mere coincidence that the freedom of speech, religion, the press, and of vote and conscience which we hold so dear in America are suppressed in *every* Muslim country?

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear....

Psalms 46:1-2

Who dares to make the obvious connection between this declaration of war against America, and the declaration of war against the entire world by Muhammad in the seventh century, a part of Islam ever since? Since its inception, *jihad* has been waged by Islamic warriors to spread that religion of violence and hatred. Islam does not change. Rioting Muslim mobs invariably chant in their “fanaticism,” “Allah is great! Allah is great!”

In the wake of this terrible act of “holy war,” our President and Congressional leaders referred to God numerous times and invoked His blessing in tracking down the perpetrators of this infamous deed. The God of the Bible to whom they referred is not Allah, the god of Islam, whom the attacking terrorists served so faithfully!

We may be certain that the hijackers were not Israelis or evangelical Christians. Never! The simple but horrible fact is that only the religion of Islam could supply the motivation for what they did. Why are Muslims responsible for most terrorism in the world today? There is a definitive and foundational reason.

It would be extremely naive to imagine that terrorists who are willing to blow themselves up in Israel or to crash a plane at the loss of their own and many other lives do so for some commendable humanitarian cause. The courage comes solely from a

unique doctrine of Islam. Abu-Bakr, the first Caliph to succeed Muhammad (and one of the few to whom Muhammad promised Paradise without martyrdom), declared that even if he had one foot in Paradise he could not trust Allah to let him in. The only sure way in Islam of achieving Paradise is to sacrifice one’s life in *jihad*. Yes, suicide is forbidden as self-murder. But to sacrifice one’s life in killing infidels carries the highest reward.

And what reward does Paradise bring to the *jihad* martyr? He is promised a palace of pearls in which are 70 mansions; inside each mansion are 70 houses and in each house a bed on which are 70 sheets and on each sheet a beautiful virgin. He is assured that he will have the appetite and strength of 100 men for food and sex. This is the fantastic dream that is fed to Muslim boys from earliest childhood. This motivation alone gives the reckless courage and determination to train and execute terrorist deeds in which they sacrifice their lives in bringing death and destruction to “the enemies of Allah.”

America has been called “the Great Satan” by Muslim leaders around the world. Thus the strike at America was a strike for Allah against his chief enemy.

Palestinians danced in the streets to celebrate the destruction in America, shouting victory to Allah. The day before the attack CNN showed routine footage of third-grade children in a West Bank school chanting death to Israel. Only indoctrination into Islam makes possible such incredible scenes and the terrorism they celebrate.

Though people of good will naturally recoil from attaching blame to a major world religion itself, we can no longer afford such sentimentality. No longer dare we allow Islam to escape its undeniable responsibility. Yet former President Bush called Islam a peace-loving religion.

The devastating acts of war by Islamic terrorists against the United States were greeted by naive statements from well-intentioned government leaders to the effect that we must distinguish *between* terrorism perpetrated by extremist groups and Islam *itself* which is peaceful. Yet there are more than 100 verses in the Qur’an advocating the use of violence to spread Islam. In the Qur’an, Allah commands Muslims, “Take not the Jews and Christians as friends....Slay the idolaters [non-Muslims] wherever ye find them.... Fight against such...as believe not in Allah...” (Surah 5:51; 9:5,29,41, etc.). Though most Muslims would shrink from obeying such commands, this is official Islam and it cannot change without admitting that

Muhammad was a false prophet and murderer.

Several years ago Steven Emerson produced for PBS an excellent video titled *Jihad In America*. Its cameras went directly inside cell groups associated with mosques here in America where eager young Muslims were being recruited for *jihad* against the United States. Muslim leaders are shown giving speeches about bringing America to its knees through terrorism and making cold-blooded statements such as the following from Fayiz Azzam in Brooklyn in 1989: "Blood must flow, there must be widows, orphans, hands and limbs must be severed and limbs and blood must be spread everywhere in order that Allah's religion stand on its feet!" Yes, *Allah's religion* is the motivation!

In Kansas, in 1988, another leader recruiting Islamic holy warriors against the United States exults, "O, brothers! After Afghanistan [where Muslim "freedom fighters," aided by the CIA, drove out the Soviets and installed the brutal Taliban regime] nothing in the world is impossible for us any more! There are no superpowers or minipowers. What matters is *will power* that springs from our religious belief!" Yes, *religious belief*, the particular belief of Islam, is the only motivation capable of inspiring such "fanaticism."

At the beginning of the video, Emerson, who had tracked international terrorism for the prior ten years, reported on what he called "networks of Islamic extremists" inside the US. He accurately warned that "for these militants *jihad* is a holy war, an armed struggle to defeat nonbelievers, or infidels, and their ultimate goal is to establish an Islamic [worldwide] empire." Yet he later backpedaled into the incredible statement that "Islam as a religion does not condone violence; the radicals represent only themselves—an extremist and violent fringe...." That is simply not true. It is not because men are Arabs or extremists that they turn to terrorism, but *because they are devout Muslims*. Yet who will face this obvious fact?

Hatred of Israel and the call to destroy America for supporting her are also underlying themes of the terrorists seen in the documentary. Another Muslim leader in the US declares that Washington's Capitol Hill is "Zionist-occupied territory," that the Jews control Congress, and that the United States deserves what it gets so long as it continues to support Israel.

Referring repeatedly to "Islamic holy warriors," the video documented as clearly as could be done that Islam is the driving force behind terrorism. Astonishingly, however, the narrator and counter-terrorism experts being interviewed repeatedly declared that Islam was not to be blamed but only the "fanaticism" of certain individuals. For example, Paul Bremer, former Ambassador-at-Large for counter-terrorism for the State Department, said it is "important to make a distinction...the vast majority of Muslims and Arabs are peace loving."

It is true that the vast majority of Muslims are peace loving and would protest that they oppose terrorism. Our sympathy is with them. However, should they not ask themselves why they follow a religion founded upon violence which from its very inception has been spread with the sword? Under Muhammad's leadership in the seventh century, thousands of Arabs (and many Jews and Christians) in the Arabian Peninsula were killed by Islam's fierce "holy warriors" to force that religion upon the Arab world. Upon Muhammad's death, most Arabians abandoned Islam, imagining that they were free at last. Swiftly, tens of thousands of Arabs were slaughtered in the Wars of Apostasy, which forced Arabia back under Allah. From that base Islam was spread everywhere with the sword.

On radio and TV, during that black Tuesday in September which we can never forget, we were repeatedly told by well-intentioned government officials that we must be careful not to blame Islam for what a few fanatics had done. In fact, terrorists act in direct obedience to Muhammad, the Qur'an, Allah and Islam. While nominal Muslims reject the idea, all Islamic scholars agree that it is the religious *duty* of every Muslim to use violence whenever possible to spread Islam until it has taken over the world.

We need to face some simple questions: Is not the attempt to force them into Islam the cause of the cruel enslavement, torture and slaughter of millions in southern Sudan? Is not Islam the driving force behind the murderous and destructive riots against Christians in Nigeria, Indonesia, Pakistan and elsewhere? Is it not the enforcement of Islamic law that makes the Taliban deny all civil rights to those under its control in Afghanistan?

And what is it but Islam that unites the otherwise divided Arab world in an implacable and unreasoning hatred against Israel?

No Arab map in the world admits Israel's existence. It is only Islam's *claim* that Ishmael, not Isaac, was the son of promise and that the Holy Land belongs to them which unites Arabs in the "fanatical" determination to destroy the Jews.

There is a natural reluctance to accept any statement which seems to be a prejudiced attack upon a world religion. *It is the fear of such prejudice which prevents the world from facing the truth.* But is it prejudice to state the plain facts? No, it is not—but it is difficult to face the truth that Islam itself is a religion of violence and that those who practice it are not extremists and fanatics in the ordinary sense of those words, but sincere followers of Muhammad.

The world has sided with Islam in its false claim to the land of Israel, which is now inaccurately called Palestine. This promised land, given to Israel by the God of the Bible, was lived in by Jews continuously as their homeland for the last 3,000 years, and they are the only people to have done so. In recognition of that undeniable historic fact, all of "Palestine" was to be given to the Jews for a national homeland by a 1917 ruling of the League of Nations. But steadily the Jews were betrayed by Britain's administration of this mandate (and the demise of the British Empire can be dated from that betrayal); the land was parceled out to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, etc. Israel is now accused of "occupying" as an enemy land which actually has been theirs for 3,000 years. The come-lately "Palestinians" are sustained by the world in the lie that they are the original owners of this land. As a result, terrorism is perpetrated not only against Israel but now in this latest act against the United States to apply pressure to force Israel out of its rightful land and to spread Islam around the world.

We have arrived at a defining moment when truth could triumph if the world would recognize that terrorists are not "fanatics" but *devout fundamentalist Muslims who are earnestly following their religion*. This recognition could bring fresh sympathy for Muslims of all nationalities who are tragically trapped in that system. The exposé of the truth could embarrass Muslim nations into opening the Islamic Curtain and allowing freedom to enter their borders. It could be a new day of open evangelism for the world where not force but love and reason permit each person to determine the faith he would embrace from his heart.

Let us pray to that end.

TBC

Quotable

Without doubt the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God....That our idea of God correspond as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance....A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God....

The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he sees at once that these... cannot concern him for very long; but...the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation...to love God with every power of mind and soul, to obey Him perfectly, and to worship Him acceptably....

Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry....The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him....The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him—and of her.

A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Q&A

Question [the question was too long to include, but is apparent from the answer. Daniel contains key messianic prophecies as well as referring to the last days and Antichrist. For that reason it has been under attack by skeptics for centuries. Therefore we thought it worthwhile to include this response to the second letter from the writer who attacked the authenticity of Daniel in last month's Q&A.]

Answer: I will overlook your demeaning language and many accusatory and derisive expressions such as “unaware of scholarship...ignore the importance of accuracy in detail in order to make points... use material out of context for effect...conveniently ignored...wishful thinking...ulterior motive ...propensity for making unsubstantiated presumptions ...cynical... irrelevant and

nonsensical...pontificate...reflex bigotry... absurd claim...figment of your imagination ...fondness for the dogmatic ...satisfied that you have God and His messages all figured out...,” etc. In spite of the profusion of such insulting *ad hominem* attacks upon my integrity, I will still assume that you write in good faith, and will make one more attempt to reply reasonably.

No, I did not ask you for “scholarship that supports the dating of Daniel to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.” I asked for *proof*. Instead, you quoted the *opinions* of some scholars but neither they nor you offer proof to support these beliefs. In fact, all the proof is to the contrary. I am aware of the skeptical dating theories of Driver and the scholars you quote. Daniel’s prophecies (re the breakup of Alexander’s empire under four generals, the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes and the pollution of the temple) had to be placed after the events to avoid the fact of prophecy from God which skeptics reject. Are you trying to justify a late date for the same reason? This once popular theory has withered under more recent investigation and discoveries.

I could quote many scholars of equal or better credentials who offer *evidence* that Daniel was written (as it claims) in the sixth century B.C. The Aramaist Franz Rosenthal calls for such a date. British Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen showed that 90 percent of the Aramaic in Daniel dates to the fifth century B.C. or earlier and that the Persian and Greek “loan words” could likewise precede the fifth century B.C. Some syntactical forms in Daniel didn’t survive beyond the fifth century, making a later date impossible. University of Liverpool Semiticist Allan Millard agrees. Leading Aramaist E.Y. Kutscher has demonstrated that Daniel’s Aramaic word order is Babylonian, not Palestinian, rendering impossible the date and location you assert. Other experts contradict your scholars. The discovery of the Qumran fragments of Daniel has strengthened the evidence for the early date as Old Testament scholars such as Gerhard Hasel affirm.

The internal evidence in Daniel and elsewhere in the Bible is overwhelming for the earlier date. In Ezekiel 14:14,20, God speaking through His prophet puts Daniel on a par with Job and Noah and in 28:3 extols his wisdom. Rather odd if Daniel was not Ezekiel’s contemporary but the pseudonym for some unknown character who would pull off a blatant fraud some four centuries later by writing a mere fiction in order to give comfort to the Jews suffering under Antiochus! Your

reference to Vietnam and implication that I have not been in a war (I was in WW II) are irrelevant.

Your “evidence” for this late date is that the Jews were oppressed and needed comfort. Wouldn’t they find better comfort in something written by the real Daniel? The book claims to have been written by a man carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar and gives details of his life as a consultant to kings through the reigns of Darius and Cyrus. If not true, it’s a total fraud so why waste time studying it?

You accuse me of having “no respect for such scholarship.” Should I respect “scholarship” that is based upon unsubstantiated theories and makes a mockery of common sense by turning Daniel into a work of fiction by a pseudo-author four centuries after the fact? You object to my saying that the book of Daniel “must have suddenly appeared” at the late date you favor. You say its “final composition [was] around 168 B.C.” Evidence, please! If that were the case, then it must have appeared at that time. It could hardly have appeared before it was written. “Composition” in 168 B.C. is amazing considering that Daniel had been in the Greek Septuagint since its translation about 80 years earlier from an even earlier Hebrew copy. Yes, it seems to have been in the Hagiographa, but that had nothing to do with placing the date in which it was written but was because the rabbis considered it to be a “dangerous” book that zealots used to justify uprisings as supposedly fulfilling Daniel’s prophecies. Certainly the Qumran community regarded the book of Daniel as prophetic. Jesus called Daniel a prophet (I’ll take His Word over scholarly opinions) and spoke of a yet future fulfillment beyond that by Antiochus Epiphanes for the abomination foretold by Daniel: “When ye...see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place...” (Mt 24:15).

Yes, it was Cyrus who sent the Jews back saying that God “hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem.” “House” meant temple, not the city, which was not restored at that time. That is why Nehemiah wept—because Jerusalem remained in ruins: “the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire” (Neh 1:3). This destruction had remained from the days of Nebuchadnezzar. There is no question that Jerusalem was restored under Nehemiah. You say the king simply gave Nehemiah “his permission.” In fact, he sent “captains of the army and horsemen” to accompany Nehemiah to whom he had given “letters...to the governors beyond the

river” and to “the keeper of the king’s forest” to supply timbers, etc. I hardly think those receiving these letters would consider them to be mere “permission” from the king, but orders to be obeyed. You say I *must* identify this as the command to rebuild Jerusalem referred to in Daniel 9:25 in order to make my dates work out. Well, this *was* the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the dates *do* work out! I’m just accepting the simple facts. Why are you so reluctant to do so?

You say the people suffering under Antiochus would not have wondered when the book was written, but would have been happy just to be comforted. What “comfort” was there in the vision of the image, in the mysterious four beasts and in Gabriel’s prophecy that the Messiah would be “cut off” and the temple and city destroyed again? You say that a book in the first person telling events that happened *to the writer* four centuries earlier is not a claim that the book was written then?! I’m amazed! It was not a matter of “determining if Daniel was a fraud,” it would have been obvious. As for risking their lives to preserve the book, they would do so because it was God’s Word, not for the selfish reason that it brought comfort. Comfort from fiction? If it isn’t God’s Word, forget it!

Question: God is omniscient and He knew, before He created man, that many would choose to reject Christ and therefore seal their own fate of eternal damnation. Knowing this, God still chose to create man. Why? Isn’t this a selfish, unloving act? Let me give an analogy. A childless woman ...knew if she got pregnant she would have twins...one would be perfectly healthy...the other with a disease that would cause perpetual pain. Should she bear these twins? I’ve been asking this question for over twenty years. No one...has given a satisfactory answer. If God had not created mankind, no one would be condemned to hell, ever! Did God have a choice to create or not to create man? Since God knew all in advance, how can we accept the creation of man as an act of love and goodness?

Answer: I answered a question very similar to yours in the May *Berean Call* Q&A. You might go back and read it. Your question ought to be addressed to Calvinists. Theirs is the God who not only created billions whom He knew would go to hell, He actually predestined them to eternal torment, giving them no choice in the matter, and did so for His “good pleasure.” According to many Calvinists (and

John Calvin himself) God is responsible for every thought, word and deed that ever happens. Thus He actually *causes* sinners to sin, yet condemns those who commit the sins that He causes them to commit!

R.C. Sproul, Jr. writes, “God wills all things that come to pass. God desired for man to fall into sin...God created sin.” [*Almighty Over All* (Baker, 1999), p. 54.] This is not the God of the Bible. And that is why your analogy of the mother who will have twins, one of whom will have a disease that will cause continual pain 24 hours each day, doesn’t hold. Whether to bring these two into the world would surely confront a potential mother with an unanswerable choice—but that is not the situation with God’s creation of mankind. Sinners are not helpless victims, but willful rebels whom He loves and for whom He has provided a salvation that they have rejected.

Those who will go to hell are not hopelessly suffering from an incurable disease that holds them in its grip. On the contrary, they *could* choose heaven, but instead send themselves to hell. For your analogy to fit, a doctor must have offered to cure the twin suffering from the disease and the twin rejected the cure. That changes the analogy.

Now the question becomes should God refrain from creating beings who will spend eternity in infinite bliss in His presence because some of their relatives (without whose creation the others could not exist) will stubbornly refuse the salvation God will provide? I don’t believe that those who will reject Christ should, because of the hell they will bring upon themselves, be able to prevent the creation of those who will receive Christ and spend eternity in the joy of His presence and bring joy to His heart as well.

Of course, God had a choice whether to create man; of course He knows the future and all that creation would bring to each creature; and, yes, I believe God is above reproach of any kind in creating man, for it was not His will that any perish or even that any suffer what sin has brought into the world.

Question: In the July Berean Call, in the Q&A section...you said that some of the NKJV translation is inaccurate, referencing the use of the word “imagination.” In every reference to the word “imagination” that I found in the KJV it was cross-referenced as “intent” or “thought.” The NKJV uses “intent” or “thought” as the better translation. This is inaccurate?

Answer: Imagination is a very important word in the Bible. Read, for example, Genesis 6:5, 11:1-9 and Jeremiah 13:10 and 14:14, etc. It plays a key role in the occult and is different from intent (you may intend to do something but stop short of conceiving in your mind how it will be accomplished). The execution is the fruit of imagination, which conceives and visualizes how to perform the deed. God scattered the builders of the tower of Babel because whatever they imagined they would be able to perform, not because all that they intended they could perform. It takes more than intent or desire or ambition to do something.

It is one thing to intend to go to the moon and another thing to conceive in the creative imagination how that can be accomplished. Furthermore, it is one thing to intend a crime and another for the criminal to actually conceive how he will perform it. The desire to rob a bank falls far short of imaginatively planning it, which is essential to effect the desire.

Endnotes

1. David Lamb, *The Arabs: Journey Beyond the Mirage* (Vintage Books, 1988), 287; David Reed, “The Unholy War Between Iran and Iraq” (*Readers Digest*, August 1984), 389.
2. Quoted on authority of Ibn ’Abbas in *Sahih of al-Bukhari* (Part 9), 19. Attested by numerous Islamic scholars.
3. *Ibid.* (Part 1), 13.
4. John Laffin, *The PLO Connections* (Transworld, 1982), 18.

The Value of Prophecy

T.A. McMahon

A little less than a year ago I was invited to speak at a prophecy conference and gladly accepted because my prior experience (a men's retreat) with the fellowship had been both fruitful and great fun. However, a week or so after accepting the invite this hit me: I'd never spoken on prophecy before! Worse yet, other than some general biblical teachings, what did I really know about prophecy? Then came an even more unsettling question: "What's my attitude toward prophecy?"

My "attitude" at that time could be described as mixed at best. While I could get excited about those prophecies which were quite straightforward, too many others, it seemed to my uninformed mind, verged on the cryptic. Then too there was my bias against the teachings of some "prophetic ministries" which launch from a biblical platform but too often end up in a *speculation* tailspin.

On the other hand, I was aware that 30 percent of the Bible includes predictive prophecies, and they certainly must be included for good reasons. So I made it my task to learn what those reasons were—not only for my growth in understanding God's Word but in the hope of edifying the conference attendees. Or, falling short of that, at least avoiding the descriptive term "embarrassment" on a post-conference evaluation card. It's interesting to consider what circumstances the Lord will allow in our lives in order to teach us something.

So what have I learned? Let's begin with the fundamentals. Prophecy has two biblical meanings. In a general sense, the term refers to everything God has to say to His *rational* creatures. The Bible, therefore, as God's specific revelation to mankind, is a completely prophetic book (2 Pt 1:19-21). It is His *forthtelling* us things we could not know otherwise. Prophecy also includes His *foretelling*, or telling us ahead of time what will take place. The ability to predict the future, which, as we said, pertains to nearly one-third of the Scriptures, is declared by God to be a major proof that He alone is God: "...I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet

done" (Is 46:9-10).

Nearly all predictive prophecy deals with Israel and the First and Second comings of the Messiah. In fact, God tells the Israelites that they will be a *sign* to the world, glorifying Himself in and through them (Is 46:13). In Isaiah 43:10 God declares to them, "Ye are my witnesses...and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." In other words, God will use them and their land to be "witnesses" both to themselves and to the world, not only that He exists, but that He is actively involved in shaping the history of Israel, as well as bringing about His purpose for all of mankind. Prophecy declares God's plan in advance. And the purpose is that we all may "know" Him, and "believe" in Him, and "understand" that He alone is God. Prophecy is compelling proof not only for the existence of God, but that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be—

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Isaiah 42:9

His Word!

Here is a sampling of God's *prophetic witness* through Israel: He declared to Abraham (Gn 12:1; 15:18), and then to Isaac (Gn 26:3), and after that to Jacob (Gn 28:13) that He would give them the land "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gn 15:18), and that this Promised Land would be theirs and that of their descendants forever (Jos 14:9). It is a fact of history, as the book of Joshua records, that the Israelites took possession of the land God promised. While His promise was irrevocable, He nevertheless warned them that should they cease to obey Him He would cast them out of the land for a time: disobedient Israel "shall be plucked from off the land whither [they go] to possess it" (Dt 28:63). They were and He did—resulting in the Assyrian captivity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Babylonian captivity of the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

Jeremiah prophesied that the captives would return from Babylon to Jerusalem "when 70 years [were] accomplished" (Jer

25:12). Even so, a still more devastating dispersion of the Jews was foretold: "And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Dt 28:64). This, the last major diaspora, took place when the Roman army under Titus utterly destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Not only have the Jews been widely dispersed as the Bible predicted; God's Word also gives details as to how they would be treated: "And I will...deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them" (Jer 29:18). We know this today as anti-Semitism, yet it was first prophesied by Moses (Dt 28:37) 3,500 years ago!

It would seem that this dispersion, along with accompanying persecutions and attempts at annihilating the Jews, would have placed God in an untenable position. After all, He *promised* unconditionally to Abram (Abraham) that the Promised Land "which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gn 13:15). The Lord declared also that while Israel would not go unpunished, He would "not make a full end of thee," but would "save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob [Israel] shall return" (Jer 30:10-11).

That a scattered and persecuted minority could live for two thousand years or more among other races without being absorbed into them (especially when doing so could have avoided endless repression), and remain a uniquely identifiable ethnic group, is inconceivable—certainly beyond chance and without precedence in world history. Add to that astonishing fact that they would then be gathered from around the world and brought back to the land God promised to them more than three millennia ago. Yet as the world knows, this took place "officially" in 1948 when Israel was recognized as a sovereign nation.

Concerning this prophesied restoration, the Bible gives numerous related details of what would take place when the Jews returned to their land. Among these, the Book of Isaiah states that "[The Lord] shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (27:6); and Hosea adds that the Israelites "shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." In the late 1800s a visiting Mark Twain noted that the Holy Land was

almost entirely barren, yet since the return of the Jews agriculture has become one of Israel's top economic enterprises. This small country is now the leading exporter of fruit and vegetables to Europe, even shipping flowers to Holland!

The Hebrew prophets also foretold that restored Israel would exhibit an awesome military capability: "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left....In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David *shall be* as God, as the angel of the LORD before them" (Zec 12: 6,8). Even a cursory review of Israel's three wars to protect itself from being destroyed by the surrounding Arab countries provides overwhelming proof that they are a fulfillment of Zechariah's God-given words. The 1948-49 war following its independence had Israel hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned; her astounding victory, therefore, was nothing short of miraculous. The 1967 Six-day War, against overwhelming odds, was won so quickly and so decisively by Israel that *Newsweek* featured an article about it titled "Terrible Swift Sword." The 1973 Yom Kippur War found Israel again outnumbered and this time, because the attack came during its religious holiday, caught by surprise. Yet despite suffering heavy casualties, these beneficiaries of God's promise routed the combined Arab forces.

One last prophetic item regarding Israel and Jerusalem (from among the hundreds that could be given) has to do with its standing in the world today. Circa 480 B.C., Zechariah wrote that Jerusalem would become "a cup of trembling...a burdensome stone for all people" (12:2-3) This prediction was particularly astonishing because at the time it was made, the situation in Jerusalem makes it seem foolish at best. A portion of the Israelites had only recently returned from captivity in Babylon to a Jerusalem which had been desolate for 70 years. Its walls were destroyed, its fields fallow, and the remnant faced problems in even rebuilding the temple because they were unable to ward off the continual harassment by local Samaritans. Yet nearly 2,500 years later Jerusalem has indeed become "a cup

of trembling" for this anxious world, a "burdensome stone" which, unless the problems there are resolved, everyone knows could bring nuclear conflagration upon the entire planet.

God is the God of prophecy. He is also the God of our salvation; and the former points to and underscores the latter. Israel was chosen of God for the primary purpose of bringing His Messiah into the world "that the world through him might be saved" (Jn 3:17). When the Apostle Paul went on his missionary journeys, his approach in each city he visited was first to enter the Jewish synagogue and preach that Jesus was the Messiah whom God had promised. In the synagogue of the Greek city of Berea, the Jews were commended not only for listening to what the apostle had to say, but more specifically because they "searched the scriptures daily, [to discern] whether those things [he said concerning the Messiah] were

And the scripture [foresaw] that God would justify the heathen through faith...

Galatians 3:8

so" (Acts 17:10-11). Although we don't have the details of what he preached, we do know that there were hundreds of messianic prophecies to which he could refer.

No doubt he listed for them the prophetic criteria *necessary* for wannabe messiahs to qualify as God's Christ, the Savior of all mankind: He must be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2); He must be from the tribe of Judah (Gn 49:10); His lineage must be from King David (Is 11:1); He must be born of a virgin (Is 7:14); He must demonstrate a miracle-filled life (Is 35:4-6); He must die for the sins of the world (Is 53:5,6,10); He must be three days and nights in the grave (Jon 1:17); He must be resurrected from the dead (Ps 16:10).

Only Jesus qualified.

For those first-century Bereans desiring more information about the Messiah's sacrificial death, Paul could have supplied so many descriptive details from Old Testament prophecies (written as long as 1,500 to 400 years before the event) that it would have seemed to them as if they had been there themselves. Consider the following: Daniel

gives us the exact day the Messiah will enter Jerusalem to be hailed as Israel's King (9:25). Zechariah tells us He will be riding upon a donkey (9:9) and that He will be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (11:12); the betrayal will be by a friend (Ps 41:9). Isaiah predicts He will be silent before His accusers and then smitten and spat upon (53:7; 50:6). Moses indicates that He will be crucified (Dt 21:22-23). The psalmist tells us that the crowds present at His crucifixion will scorn and mock Him, and shake their heads at Him (22:7-8; 109:25); that His friends will watch from afar (38:11); that soldiers will gamble for His clothes (22:16-18); that for His thirst they will offer Him gall to drink (69:21); His hands and feet will be pierced (22:16); none of His bones will be broken (34:20); the very words which He will cry out to the Father are given (22:1; 31:5). Zechariah writes that His side will be pierced (12:10). Isaiah declares that He will die among thieves (53:9,12) and that He will be buried in a rich man's grave (53:9). Moreover, Isaiah gives the reasons that the Son of God went to the cross: He was "wounded for our transgressions"; "the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all"; and "thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Is 53:5, 6,10). Once again, *only Jesus qualifies to be our Savior.*

What then of all the prophecies yet to be fulfilled? Since what was predicted regarding Christ's First Coming was *perfectly* fulfilled, we can be absolutely confident God will bring to pass *all* that He has foretold.

So, to borrow two phrases from Romans, what profit is there in prophecy? Much in every way. The Lord tells us, "...who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it,...and the things that are coming, and shall come.Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it?* ye *are* even my witnesses"(Is 44:7-8). Biblical prophecy assures us that God exists, and that He alone knows "the things that are coming," and we who have faith in Him have no reason to walk in "fear." More than that, we are to be God's "witnesses," using biblical prophecy as a testimony to the revealed truth of the Scriptures and proof that faith alone in Jesus, His only begotten Son, is mankind's only hope for salvation. Let us therefore eagerly share the good news, "the gospel of God (which he *promised afore by His prophets* in the *holy scriptures*), concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 1:1-3).

TBC

Quotable

...it may be seen with the utmost clarity what is the nature of...*dissipation*. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! It is the very quintessence of atheism...added to natural ungodliness. It is the art of forgetting God; of being altogether "without God in the world," the art of excluding Him... out of the minds of all His intelligent creatures. It is a total studied inattention to the whole invisible and eternal world...to death, the gate of eternity, and to the important consequences of death, heaven and hell!

John Wesley, "Walking by Sight and Faith," Sermon CXVIII

William Tyndale was right when he declared that "a ploughboy with the Bible would know more of God than the most learned ecclesiastic who ignored it."

Josh McDowell
Evidence that Demands a Verdict

Q&A

Question: I have heard a number of Christian leaders say that the attack September 11 on the World Trade Center and Pentagon seems too much like Revelation 18 to be a coincidence: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen...how much she hath glorified herself...and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her....And the kings of the earth...shall bewail her ...when they shall see the smoke of her burning...saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth...made rich by her, shall stand afar off...weeping and wailing." Could September 11 be at least a partial fulfillment of these verses since so many prophecy teachers have equated America with Babylon? After all, this was the center of world trade; the New York Stock Exchange and United Nations are located there, etc.

Answer: We must be careful to base any opinion as thoroughly as we can upon the Word of God. Clearly, this recent event has nothing to do with Revelation 18. Chapters 17 and 18 both speak of Babylon revived and then destroyed. In Chapter 17 we are told that the woman riding the beast is MYSTERY BABYLON. Is this America? Certainly not. She is not a country, but a city built on seven hills (17:9,18). Could that be New York? No. The angel gives John at

least 14 descriptive characteristics which identify this woman beyond question. This is a city that existed in John's day, ruling over the kings of the earth, was drunk with the blood of the saints and would continue until destroyed. That this city was guilty of fornication with the kings of the earth could apply only if it was a spiritual entity which claimed fidelity to God—certainly not true of either New York or the United States. In both the book and the video, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, we have identified this woman beyond question as the Vatican in its ultimate role as head of the false world church, bride of Antichrist.

Yes, billions of dollars were lost when the World Trade Center fell, but this was nothing compared to what lies ahead. Nor was "Babylon" destroyed. New York will recover, the stock market will recover, America will recover. That must be—because the Rapture will take place, according to Christ, at a time of peace and prosperity with buying and selling, building and planting, marrying and partying, etc. (Mt 24:37-42; Lk 17:26-30).

What is the significance of the September 11 attack? It could be a step toward the false peace that must be in place prior to Armageddon and in the direction of both the one-world religion and government. In the discussion of terrorism by the UN General Assembly October 4, the ambassador to the UN from Tajikistan said that no imaginable tragedy or disaster could unite the world as the events of September 11 had done. A tremendous unity was expressed by all in their determination to track down all terrorists, and to place outside the pale of civilization, and treat as such, any country that harbors terrorists. Of course, many countries expressing such sentiments have promoted terrorism. Most international terrorists come from Saudi Arabia or Egypt, none thus far from Afghanistan—bin Laden is a Saudi, as are the guards who surround him. It will be interesting to follow developments. So far the world seems to have been shaken out of its dream to take action that could lead to a new era of "peace and safety" that will, of course, eventually be shattered but must prevail at the time of the Rapture.

We are hearing that "Judaism, Islam and Christianity share the same values and have a common spiritual heritage," as the ambassador for the Northern Alliance opposing the Taliban declared. Of course, this is false, but being brainwashed with this lie could add impetus to the lie which Roman Catholic popes and Rome's official documents have been declaring for years: that Allah is the same God whom Christians

and Jews also worship. Certainly huge strides are being made in the direction of the world religion over which Antichrist will preside, leading to his worship by all except those who refuse to take his mark. So to that extent these events have prophetic significance even though there are no prophecies which could be directly tied to them.

Question: In your October newsletter you denied that Islam is a religion of peace and claimed that terrorism is not only condoned by it but a legitimate means by which it operates. Yet Islamic scholars on radio and TV say that Islam opposes suicide so that these terrorists could not have been Muslims at all; and that the Qur'an condemns taking innocent lives. In fact, the Qur'an clearly states that there is "no compulsion in religion" (Surah 2:256). That statement alone proves the falseness of the charges you have leveled against this peace-loving religion. Not only Muslim leaders, but American government and church leaders as well contradict you. I expect you to retract your October article and to apologize publicly to all Muslims.

Answer: I appreciate your concern, but I must disagree and will explain why. I spent some time recently with a Palestinian who told me that all I said was true. He had been trained from childhood to hate Israel and to desire her total annihilation, so much so that even now that he has become a Christian he finds it very difficult to purge all of this past hatred from his heart. I have heard this from more than one similar source. He told me that this hatred was an integral part of Islam, at least as he learned it in East Jerusalem. I have two friends right here in Central Oregon, one from Pakistan and the other from Algeria, both of whom after becoming Christians had to go underground and only with some effort escaped from those countries with their lives.

The fact that Muhammad and the Qur'an call for the death penalty for any Muslim who turns from Islam to another religion seems to deny the verse you cite about there being no compulsion in religion. What is the truth? We certainly know that Islam was forced upon tens of millions with the sword and that Islam maintains itself today in many countries by threatening with death all who would think for themselves and choose what faith to embrace, based upon the evidence. So how could the Qur'an deny "compulsion"?

In fact, Muhammad received contradictory "revelations," depending upon the

circumstances. (The Qur'an contradicts itself many times and on important issues, as we document in *A Cup of Trembling: Jerusalem in Bible Prophecy*.) The verse you cite was "inspired" when the "prophet's" new religion was just being launched and Islam was too weak to compel anyone to follow it. But later he received other "revelations" about using not only force but killing in order to bring the whole world into submission to Islam. The sword was the "evangelistic tool" for Islam's fierce evangelists. Islamic scholars offer two differing explanations for this particular contradiction. Some declare that this verse (and others like it) was "abrogated" by later revelations such as "Whoso desires another religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him..." (Surah 3:85); "Slay the idolaters wherever you find them" (9:5); "O Prophet, struggle with the unbelievers and hypocrites and be thou harsh with them" (9:73), etc. Others admit, as I have indicated, that "no compulsion" was a temporary revelation due to conditions, and that it can apply even today in those places, times and circumstances where Islam is not strong enough to use force. Thus in the United States, Islam presents a face of peace, but when it is strong enough it will turn to war. The terrorists are the advance troops.

As for the claim that those who hijacked and crashed the passenger planes could not have been Muslims because Islam condemns suicide, common sense should have immediately unmasked that piece of misinformation to every viewer and listener. To sacrifice one's own life in the process of striking at Allah's enemies was nothing new. This kind of "suicide" has long been an honorable Islamic practice.

In the war between the followers of Islam's two major sects (Iraq's Sunnis and Iran's Shi'ites) young schoolboys were sent to walk ahead of troops to clear minefields. In one incident alone, about 5,000 children were torn to bits so the army could move across the cleared path.¹ The Ayatollah Khomeini assured these innocent children that if they were killed in the battlefield they would go directly to Paradise.² It is this teaching of Islam which provides the unusual courage to sacrifice one's life in the destruction of infidels.

Hundreds of suicide bombers, *all* of them devout Muslims and *none* who were not, have died in Israel and elsewhere during the past ten years. All were promised Paradise for killing themselves to murder "infidels" (i.e., those who will not repeat the formula, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet"), and all have

been celebrated as heroes. Their families are extremely proud of them and are often handsomely rewarded financially. Never has a word of protest been raised in all of these years by the leading Islamic scholars in Afghanistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia or other Muslim countries. Yes, suicide is forbidden as self-murder. But to sacrifice one's life in the process of killing infidels gains a Muslim the highest reward.

Question: Compared with your condemnation of a peace-loving religion whose followers have done so much good in the world, I prefer Robert Schuller's loving approach. He has preached in several mosques and has had a Muslim imam in his pulpit and on his worldwide program, "The Hour of Power." He acknowledges that Muslims worship the same God and have a common faith with Christians. Shouldn't we try to find common ground and work for unity rather than to tear others down as you have so often done? And isn't it rather hypocritical for you to throw stones at Muslims for having fought wars in defense of Islam and Allah when the Israelites took over Canaan with the sword and the Crusaders killed Muslims and Jews?

Answer: Islam's fierce warriors did not merely fight "in defense of Islam and Allah." They carried Islam with the sword outside Arabia by conquering Iran, Iraq, Syria, et. al., all the way to the border of China, and in the other direction across North Africa, took Spain and were turned back in France as they tried to take over all of Europe. This series of aggressive, expansionist invasions with force of arms was *an act of defense*? If you believe that, then we have nothing to discuss.

Israel did not try to convert with the sword anyone to faith in Jahweh. "Faith" forced upon anyone is not faith. Nor were they commissioned by God to take over the world. They were given a "promised land" of limited area with defined borders (Gn 15:18-21) and this was only because the wickedness of its inhabitants was so great that God in His righteousness had to wipe them out, as He had done to all mankind with the flood.

The Crusaders were not Christians but Roman Catholics who fought to take for Rome the land God gave to the Jews. They did so believing the unbiblical promise of Pope Urban II, who organized the first Crusade—similar to the promise of Paradise for *jihad's* martyrs—that if they died in that venture they would go straight to

heaven. This was the only real assurance of eternal life they could have as Catholics. The Crusades were carried out in direct *disobedience* to the Bible, to Christ's commands and to His example and that of the Apostles. But Muslims employ violence to spread Islam in *obedience* to the Qur'an, to Muhammad and to Allah and following Muhammad's example. The Crusades were the very antithesis of Christianity, whereas *jihad* is the very heart of true Islam and its long established method for making "converts"—a huge difference!

I am still praying, as I have for years, that the true nature of Islam will be exposed to the world. Islamic nations are now declaring vehemently that Islam is a peaceful religion which does not condone terrorism and stands for freedom. Perhaps that will embarrass Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia to open its borders, to allow some freedom, to relax its cruel hold on its citizens—at least to the extent that the gospel may enter and those people who have been held in the iron grip of Islam will be allowed to come to a decision concerning faith and God which is not imposed upon them under the threat of death.

Endnotes

1. *National & International Religion Report*, December 26, 1994, 2.
2. David Reed, "The Unholy War Between Iran and Iraq," *Readers Digest*, August 1984, 39.

Peace on Earth

Dave Hunt

A “multitude of the heavenly host praising God” announced the birth of Jesus with this declaration: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Lk 2:13-14). God was offering peace *on His terms* to a world deserving His judgment. Nor could this holy God forgive man except through the full payment of the penalty for sin which His own justice required. And that could only be accomplished by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The Son of God, eternally one with the Father, became a man through the virgin birth and “made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col 1:20). He is the world’s only hope!

Hundreds of promises by Hebrew prophets inspired of Jahweh had foretold the coming of the Messiah, His life, teaching and miracles, His rejection by His own people, His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to the Father. The Babe born of a virgin in Bethlehem that night would prove His identity by fulfilling all. Foretold too, and now fast approaching, was His triumphant return to reign forever in Jerusalem on the throne of His father David (Is 9:6-7; Lk 1:32-33).

No angels heralded the births and no prophecies foretold the lives and deaths of Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad or anyone else. Nor did these “messiahs” rise from the dead. Christ’s grave is empty; theirs are occupied by the dust of their remains. And peace? Muhammad fought wars to force conversion of all Arabs to his new religion under threat of violent death. Islam’s millions of converts were won with the sword. That same bloody sword keeps Muslims imprisoned today.

The town of Yathrib (later renamed Medina, “home of the Prophet”), in which Muhammad (A.D. 570-632) would be born (and where he was buried), had been founded by Jews. He killed every male Jew and sold the women and children into slavery. In Saudi Arabia, to this day, no Jew is allowed. Muhammad planned 65 campaigns of plunder and death against Arabs and personally led 27 of them, forcing all of Arabia to submit to Islam in the name of Allah.

Islam’s prophet commanded, “He who relinquishes his faith, kill him!” That penalty is still the rule in Islam (though not always enforced). Executions are announced on Saudi radio and TV in advance and carried out before cheering crowds in Riyadh’s

“chop-chop” square. In October 1993, for example, a father and son were publicly beheaded for having believed in Jesus Christ. No non-Muslim place of worship may be built, and while it is technically legal to have a prayer meeting or Bible study in the privacy of one’s home, participants could be jailed or deported. Such is the “freedom” and “peace” Muslims intend to force upon the entire world. Yet Muslim nations who, in the name of Allah, have supported terrorism now claim to be against it as America’s coalition partners.

Only one of Christ’s disciples, Peter, swung a sword. He ineptly cut off an ear. Christ rebuked him, healed the man’s ear and declared that His kingdom is not of this world and that His servants don’t fight in the cause of the gospel (Jn 18:36). Popes and crusaders, proving they were not

“...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”
Romans 5:1

Christ’s servants and not of His kingdom, fought wars to establish a vast kingdom very much of this world, killing Jews, Muslims and true Christians in the process.

Upon Muhammad’s death, Arabians abandoned Islam en masse. Abu Bak’r, Muhammad’s successor, and his fierce *jihad* warriors, killed tens of thousands of Arabs, forcing them back into the “peace” of Islam. But Christ’s disciples, shunning the sword, preached peace with God through faith in Christ and His sacrifice for sin—and died testifying to His miracles and resurrection as facts they had witnessed and could not deny. Clearly no one is fool enough to die for what he knows to be a lie.

Islam’s “martyrs” kill themselves while spreading terror through murdering innocent women and children. Suicide bombers are heroes whose images look down on admiring throngs throughout the Muslim world. Incredibly, just hours before the attack on America on September 11, *Al-Hayat-Al-Jadida*, Arafat’s PLO-controlled newspaper, wrote, “The suicide bombers of today are the noble successors of the Lebanese suicide bombers who taught the U.S. Marines a tough lesson....These suicide bombers are the salt of the earth ...the most honorable people among us.” And now Arafat supports the war against terrorism?

To become a Muslim one need only repeat the *shahada* (creed), “There is no

god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.” Millions have done so under threat of death. How can Muslims imagine that sincere “faith” is produced under such intimidation? Common decency and common sense recoil. Like Herod, who sought to kill the baby Jesus, so Muslims today are killing those who believe in Him. Here, reported by International Christian Concern (ICC), are a few recent accounts from one small part of Indonesia:

The day the Jihad warriors attacked, we ran toward the jungles. My father quickly tired...the attackers...took his own machete and cut him to pieces...it was my Muslim neighbor who did this...!

The Islamist group Laskar Jihad ...proclaimed over loudspeakers its goal to exterminate all Christians [and] have posted this on their website.

To avoid being slaughtered we agreed to be circumcised to become Muslims. We still held Christ in our hearts....

Because of the help the Jihad received from the military...more than 400 people were slain and another 120 drowned while trying to escape in a boat.¹

Just as the Allies turned a blind eye and deaf ear to the Nazi holocaust until it was too late, so we have forsaken today’s victims of the holocaust which Muslims have perpetrated for nearly 1400 years ever since Muhammad. Had we acted in defense of the victims in Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and elsewhere, we might have preempted the September 11 attacks. Will our response continue to be selfishly selective, or will we diligently pursue Islamic terrorism until we have stopped it everywhere?

Peace through Islam? The Muslim world has more unrest, uprisings, riots and assassinations than all the rest of the world together. Muslims betray and kill not only non-Muslims but fellow believers in bloody coups and brutal civil wars (the current fighting in Algeria has taken thousands of lives).

In Nigeria and the Philippines, as in Indonesia, mobs screaming “*Allahu Akbar!*” (Allah is great!) attack Christians, killing and maiming thousands while burning down hundreds of churches and homes. *This is happening today.* In the Sudan the Muslims from the north have brutalized and slaughtered millions of non-Muslims in the south and sold thousands into slavery. There is an active slave trade today in many Muslim countries.

Not only the terrorists who attacked America on September 11 but the vast majority of terrorists around the world are

Muslims. Lest anyone suspect that fact to be more than coincidence, there is a rush to insist that Islam is “peace.” Shakespeare would reply, “Me thinkest thou protesteth too loudly.” Nor can the whitewashers offer *one* example of when, where or how Islam has ever brought peace into this world. There are none—but there are hundreds of examples of wars and violence caused by this “peaceful” religion.

Israel is blamed for the violence in the Middle East. Yet the Arab world was full of hatred and violence long before modern Israel came to birth. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali admitted that in three decades “more than 30 conflicts between Arab states have erupted.”² In the first 25 years following Israel’s independence, there were “30 successful revolutions in the Arab world and at least 50 unsuccessful ones [and] 22 heads of state and prime ministers were murdered.”³ None of this violence among Muslims could be blamed upon the “existence of Israel.”

Islam firmly rejects Christ, the One whom God gave to the world to bring peace. The Qur’an calls Jesus *Isa*, probably from Muhammad hearing Jews contemptuously refer to Him as Esau. Islam’s central teachings in the Qur’an and *hadith* (tradition of equal authority to the Qur’an) directly oppose Christ and His salvation.

Islamic scholars all agree that *Isa* is not the Son of God and was not crucified for our sins. There is general consent that Allah put a likeness of *Isa* upon one of His disciples, probably Judas, who died in *Isa*’s place. Taken alive to heaven (in one version), *Isa* is covered with feathers and flies with angels around Allah’s throne until the time he returns to marry, have children and die a natural death!

Islam makes it clear that *Isa* is not divine and certainly not the Son of Allah (that Allah could have a son is denied sixteen times in the Qur’an). Though in the Qur’an he was born of a virgin, did miracles including raising the dead (Surah 3:45-49), was sinless and even the word of God, *Isa* is clearly *not* the Jesus Christ of the Bible. And yet some Christians imagine they can win Muslims to Christ by presenting Islam’s *Isa*.

Bethlehem is where David, Israel’s greatest king of the past, was born, as was the Messiah who will reign on David’s throne forever. Bethlehem has nothing to do with the Muslims or Arabs, yet they lay claim to it just as they do to all of the land that was promised to Israel and in which the Jews have lived for the last 3,000 years. And today the PLO, pursuing Islam’s false claims, has taken over Bethlehem and

turned it from peace to such violence that most tour groups no longer visit the place of Christ’s birth. The Israeli army has had to bring tanks into Bethlehem.

The September 11 terrorist attack exposed a shocking hypocrisy. Suddenly millions of people (who for years had no time for God) began talking and singing about Him—of course, any god would do—and attending or tuning in to prayer services. There was little recognition that God has moral standards, is grieved with our behavior and wants something more from us than just crying out for Him to “bless America” on our terms. Few seem concerned that America pollutes its youth and the world with R-rated movies, immoral videos and TV programs, slaughters millions of unborn babies (some murdered with only a few inches of the head barely held inside the birth canal) and mocks God with homosexual parades flaunting in His face the grossest perversion. Clearly, in these areas there is some truth in Muslim complaints against our immorality. It seems to have been taken for granted that, as soon as disaster struck, God would answer our prayers at our convenience. Such impertinence should be an embarrassment before the whole world and send a collective shudder through all Americans.

We are deeply grieved for the victims and survivors who have suffered such great loss. We love our country and are loyal to it. That is why we are concerned that America, which has long forgotten God, repeatedly broken His laws and flaunted its immorality in His face, imagines that without true repentance it can so easily merit His blessing. Should we not ask who this God is to whom we cry in deep distress, and what He expects of us if we are to receive His help?

Recent memorial services have featured representatives of many different gods. *Imams* praying in Arabic praise “Allah, the only true god” (we have shown that he is *not* the God of the Bible), joined by Buddhists for whom there is no God, Hindus for whom there are millions of gods (take your pick), and “Christians” who have forsaken God and His Word. The assumption is that God doesn’t care how He is addressed or what caricature of Him forms the basis of one’s “faith.” But the biblical God does not answer to any but His own name and is not pleased to be identified with false deities which represent demons: “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God” (1 Cor 10:20).

Christ said, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Jn 7:37). The Ethiopian who *asked* to be baptized was

told the only condition: “If thou believest [in Christ] with all thine heart...” (Acts 8:37). God does not force anyone to believe in and serve Him. (Faith and love are not aroused by fear.) God pleaded with His people Israel to repent, wept when they didn’t, and urged, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Is 1:18).

But there is no reasoning in Islam, only a blind submission under threat of death which breeds the fanaticism of raging mobs out of control wreaking mayhem almost daily in Muslim areas around the world. Who can forget the mobs in Pakistan chanting their support of Osama bin Laden, or the school children in Gaza chanting death to Israel? Peace necessarily involves freedom. *Not one* Muslim country offers the freedoms we hold dear in America (of the press, of vote, of religion, etc.) because Islam cannot survive where men are free to choose. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.

Paul said, “we persuade men” (2 Cor 5:11), not with a sword, but with irrefutable evidence. Paul “confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22). Apollos “mightily convinced the Jews...publicly, shewing [proving] by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:28). Lacking such proof, Islam resorts to violence.

The joyful liberation of Afghanistan has demonstrated that multitudes who were forced to submit did so only out of fear. Hearts and minds had never changed.

By employing intimidation and threats, Muslims prove that Islam cannot persuade with love and truth and dare not engage in serious discussion. That fact is the best reason for them to abandon terror and force. That the death penalty is required to keep Muslims in the fold proves Islam’s inability to win hearts and minds. Muslims need to recognize that Islam presents itself as a big bully without any valid claim upon the hearts, minds and souls of its followers or would-be converts.

Let us pray that in the wake of the September 11 attacks the world will recognize the obvious dishonesty of Islamic countries suddenly claiming they are against terrorism, whereas, the day before, they supported and praised it. Let us pray that millions of Muslims will have their minds and hearts opened to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us pray, too, that Islamic countries will at last allow their citizens—so long held in the bondage of fear—freedom of conscience and of faith, and that many will receive Christ. And let us do our part to bring this to pass. **TBC**

Quotable

Few have lived to equal John the Baptist. His blows fell with a thud and a sharp edge that shook the oaks of Bashan. But his axe was heavier than the weak muscles of “this generation.” It had been forged in the wilderness and its edge was guaranteed not to turn. The modern counterpart is seen as an improvement on the rough and heavy one that John used. It is lighter and more highly polished...much easier to swing...but what sort of trees can it fell?

When John wielded his axe in Matthew 3, he made the chips fly. That rough-looking man...who ate no dainties...produced trembling in the hearts of the people and a confessing of their sins. This is the need of the times: men of God, skilled in the use of the axe of the Word...not just playing in the woods...

We need men who...hold not men’s persons in admiration...who travel the world as strangers and pilgrims...who willingly suffer the loss of all things for the Master. There is a widespread outcry nowadays against hard strokes. But...the blows of a man of God are worth their weight in gold.

Franklin Ferguson, “God’s Axemen,” Counsel, March-April 1997

Q&A

Question: After reading *A Woman Rides the Beast*, especially the chapter about Pope Pius XII and his treatment of the Jews during WWII, I began to see articles about how Pope Pius actually helped the Jews. Today, I read the enclosed article on the internet website, World Net Daily, and am wondering if you are reconsidering what you wrote about the Pope or if you still hold to your original findings? I believe you are concerned for the truth, as I am.

Answer: Unfortunately the article you enclosed gives no facts but only tells of certain persons who claimed that the Pope saved many Jews. Catholic apologists for the Pope have been searching for many years to find proof that he did indeed oppose Hitler and worked to rescue Jews. We know he never spoke out openly. His defenders insist that he worked behind the scenes. Yet no record of such has been found in all the Nazi archives, and the Vatican archives are “closed.” If there were proof in the Vatican files they would long ago have brought that forth—but nothing has been revealed. Nowhere do we find

evidence of the Pope using his office to pressure Hitler into stopping the Holocaust.

We know the Pope was not bashful and could speak out when he so desired. The Nazi archives have yielded his letter to Hitler in 1939, astonishingly flattering in view of the fact that Hitler’s intention to exterminate the Jews had been clearly stated and persecution had begun. The American archives yielded the Pope’s June 22, 1943 letter to President Roosevelt in which, with the smoke of incinerated Jews hanging over Europe, he argued against allowing the Jews into “Palestine”—in direct opposition to hundreds of promises from God recorded in Scripture that He would bring Israel back into the land He gave her! (See TBC, Sep. ’99, for both letters.)

I have dealt with this subject a number of times in our newsletter. In the Index to *TBC Reprints* for the last 15 years you will find more than a dozen references to Pope Pius XII. I’ve seen no evidence to cause me to change what I’ve already written. You may want to read *TBC* on this subject again.

Question: Could you please deal with the Openness Theology debate that is going on right now? One of the main proponents is Gregory Boyd, pastor of Woodland Hills Church, member of the Baptist General Conference and professor at Bethel College and Seminary.

Answer: You will find his views clearly set forth in his book, *God of the Possible: Does God Ever Change His Mind?* (Baker Books, 2000). Boyd attempts to agree with the biblical teaching that God “perfectly knows” the future, while at the same time claiming that from God’s point of view there is “nothing definite [in the future] for God to know” (p. 16). Thus God didn’t know how evil Hitler would actually be or all the evil he would do because it wasn’t in concrete in the “future” for God to know. Of course, this would mean that God has to adjust His plans and actions as events develop. On the contrary, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18). Therefore, God *must* have known mankind’s every thought, word and deed from eternity past or He could not have known all He would do.

Boyd’s argument is that rather than the future being “exhaustively settled from all eternity,” it is at least “partly open.” Of course the future is “partly open” from man’s perspective, or man would not have any choice in anything. To deny this would be fatalism, which is both unbiblical and contrary to common sense and daily experience.

Obviously, God is free to *cause* events as He sees fit according to *His* will—but He does not cause *all* events, or He would be the cause of evil. Yet such was Calvin’s claim.

The fact that God knows what Mr. Jones will do tomorrow *does not cause* Mr. Jones to do it. God’s infinite *knowledge* of all things, past, present and future, is neither inhibited by man’s freedom to act nor does it conflict with man’s freedom of choice.

Boyd’s problem is that, like Calvin and Luther and most Calvinists and Lutherans today, he imagines that “if God foreknows a future event, it must either be because He determined it or because it is an inevitable effect of past or present causes...We hold that God determines (and thus foreknows as settled) *some*, but not *all*, of the future...The open view is the only option that avoids ...the contradiction of asserting that self-determining free actions are settled an eternity before free agents make them so.” (pp. 23,91).

To assert, as Boyd does, that God could not know what man, by his own choice, might do in the future, is to deny God’s omniscience. That would place upon the infinite God a finite limitation which would be both unbiblical and illogical.

I have dealt with this question in the past (see TBC, Feb. and Apr. ’01) and do so more extensively in my forthcoming book, *What Love is This? - Calvinism’s Misrepresentation of God*.

Question: The Bible clearly says we are “the sons of God” (1 Jn 3:2) and Christ calls us “brethren” (Heb 2:11-12). That’s fantastic! I’ve heard it preached that we are sons of God just like Jesus was the Son of God and therefore as He said He could lay down His life and take it again, so can we. Christ must have surrendered Himself to the death of the cross long before He was crucified; and so must we deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Him.

Of course, we fail, but wasn’t it possible for Christ to have failed also? If not, then He couldn’t have been truly tempted, or be an example for us. The Bible says He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). A major temptation I have faced has been to doubt that I’m truly God’s child. I’ve had to renew my faith through the Word again and again that I am indeed a child of God.

If Christ, as the Bible says, was tempted in every way we are, wouldn’t that mean that He also had to keep renewing His faith that He truly was the Son of God? I’m not suggesting that He ever doubted it, but wasn’t it

a walk of faith for Him so that He had to believe what the Bible said about who He was? I'm confused and I really want to be led of the Spirit in this matter.

Answer: It is commendable to desire to be “led of the Spirit” as to whether to go to a foreign field or to serve the Lord at home, what job to take, where to live, etc. But when it comes to the doctrine of Christ, we don’t speculate and ask God to guide our thoughts—we go to His Word, trusting His Spirit to give us understanding. Not only the best but the *only* way to dispel your confusion is to see what the Bible says. Yes, there are some things that are difficult to understand and the Bible does say “great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...” (1 Tm 3:16). But He reveals His truth to us by His Spirit through His Word (1 Cor 2:10-13). A little common sense is also essential.

Both the Bible and common sense tell us that while Jesus calls us brethren, that does not mean we are *exactly* like Him. We are “of the earth, earthy”; He is “the Lord from heaven” (1 Cor 15:47). We *become* sons of God—indeed, through Christ alone (Jn 1:12); He *is* the Son of God from all eternity, absolutely unique, God’s “*only* begotten Son...” (Jn 1:14; 3:16; 8:58, etc.).

We begin our existence as “flesh and blood” creatures of time (Heb 2:14) through sexual union of a man and woman and natural birth, whereas He exists “from everlasting” (Mic 5:2), was born into this world of “a virgin” (Is 7:14) so that as a man “through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). His mission on earth was “to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt 3:15), to “fulfill the law” (Mt 5:17-18) and to fulfill “all things ...written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms” (Lk 24:44) concerning Him.

There are many more contrasts between Christ and us. Let’s not get carried away like Morris Cerullo, Kenneth Copeland, Paul Crouch, Benny Hinn, et al. concerning what it means that we are Christ’s “brethren”! Man was made “in the image of God” (Gn 1:26-27), but there is a vast difference now and for eternity between man and God!

A major part of the prophecies Christ came to fulfill involved dying for our sins and rising again. That is what He referred to when He said, “No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Jn 10:18). This statement by Christ could only refer to His death, burial and resurrection and cannot be applied to

ourselves. None of us has power literally to lay down his life and take it again. Nor can we apply this “spiritually” to the injunction to deny self and take up the cross to follow Him. There is no application to taking up one’s life again—that would be a reversal of taking up the cross to follow Christ.

When it says He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15), the Greek word *piradzo* is used, which can mean temptation to sin but also has the meaning of being tested like gold in a fire, not because it might burn but to prove its purity. Christ was *tested* in every way possible to prove His perfection. He said, “the prince of this world [Satan] cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Jn 14:30). There was nothing in Christ that was in the least bit susceptible to or attracted by sin. Sin confronted Him but He did not have to struggle against it as we do to resist a temptation.

We cannot fail when tempted if we rely upon Christ living in us. Nor did He need “faith” to know that He was the Messiah. He is God from all eternity, one with the Father. He did not cease to be God when He became man. John wrote of Christ that at the same time He was on earth in His incarnation, He was “in the bosom of the Father” (Jn 1:18); and Christ referred to himself while here on earth as “the Son of man which is in heaven” (Jn 3:13), declaring that He was still omnipresent as God.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://persecution.org/concern/2001/04/pl.html>.
- 2 *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1982; cited in Ramon Bennett, *Philistine* (Jerusalem: Arm of Salvation, 1995), 27.
- 3 John Laffin, *The Arab Mind* (London: Cassell, 1975), 97-98; cited in *Philistine*, 28.

Defying the God of Israel

Dave Hunt

Abraham is called “the friend of God” (Jas 2:23), an expression used of no other person in the Bible. As a result of that relationship, God made an “everlasting covenant” with His special friend (Gn 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Ch 16:16-18; Ps 105:8-12; 118:9, etc.) that extended to Abraham’s descendants for all time.

This covenant involved (1) the promised land and (2) the promised Messiah. Only in the Messiah could God fulfill His pledge to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: “in thee [and in thy seed] shall all families [or nations] of the earth be blessed” (Gn 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). As for the land, God’s promise was clear: “For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Gn 13:15); “...the LORD made a covenant with Abram,....Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river...Euphrates” (Gn 15:18); “...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession...” (Gn 17:7-8).

Abraham had several sons: Ishmael through his wife Sarah’s Egyptian maid, Hagar; Isaac through his wife Sarah; and six others through Keturah, whom he married after Sarah died (Gn 25:1-2).

Sarah was unable to bear children. Neither she nor Abraham could believe God’s promise that she herself would bear him a son (Gn 16:1-4). Abraham was satisfied with Ishmael and begged for God’s covenant to be fulfilled in him (Gn 17:18). But Ishmael was an illegitimate child, born through the unbelief of Abraham and Sarah, and not the son God had promised to them. Rejecting Abraham’s plea, God emphatically declared, “Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son...; thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael,...I have blessed him....But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee...” (Gn 17:19-21).

That Isaac, miraculously born to both Abraham and Sarah, was the one through whom God’s promises of the land and of the Messiah would be fulfilled, and that Ishmael *was not* the son whose descendants would possess the promised land, is so clearly and repeatedly declared in Scripture that it cannot be honestly disputed. Yet the Arabs, who claim to be descended from Ishmael, lay claim to the promises given by God to Isaac and through him to the Jews. Islam’s claim that

Ishmael was the son of promise not only contradicts Scripture but irrationally gives an illegitimate son priority over his half-brother, the true heir.

Distinguishing Isaac beyond dispute from the other sons born to Abraham, God called Isaac the “only son” of Abraham and commanded that he be sacrificed on Mount Moriah (Gn 22:2). It was Isaac who, in submission to God’s command, willingly allowed his father to bind him upon the altar, and whom God delivered at the last moment when He had proved the complete obedience of both father and son (Gn 22:1-14). This is the testimony of Scripture from the God who “cannot lie” (1 Sm 15:29; Ps 89:35; Ti 1:2, etc.) and whose “gifts and calling...are without repentance” (Rom 11:29).

Isaac had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Contrary to custom of the time, instead of

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick...

Psalms 124:2,3

Esau, the firstborn, God chose Jacob, the younger son, through whom His promises would be fulfilled. Before these twins were born, God specifically revealed to their mother, Rebecca, the destiny of their descendants: “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people...and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gn 25:23). The prophecy did not pertain to Jacob and Esau as individuals (Esau never served Jacob in his lifetime) but to the nations that would descend from them. The Arabs come from both Ishmael and Esau because the latter and his descendants intermarried with the descendants of Ishmael (Gn 28:9).

The Jews, in contrast (isolated in Egypt for 400 years and brought as an identifiable ethnic group into the promised land), are the descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. The promise of the land and of the Messiah was renewed by God to Isaac: “Unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries,...in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...” (Gn 26:3,4). Also, to Jacob (Israel) God said, “...the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;...and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gn 28:13,14).

Indisputably, the land of Israel (“from

the river of Egypt unto the great river... Euphrates” - Gn 15:18-21) was given to the Jews forever. God declared, “The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine...” (Lv 25:23). In blatant disobedience, Israel’s leaders have been trading land for “peace” with Arafat, who has sworn to exterminate Israel. Israel has abandoned the biblical conviction expressed by her first premier, David Ben Gurion:

Our right to this Land in its entirety is steadfast, inalienable and eternal....This right...cannot be forfeited under any circumstance...[Israelis] have neither the power nor the jurisdiction to negate it for future generations to come....And until the coming of the Great Redemption, we shall never yield this historic right. ¹

To further make certain that all mankind understands that the Jews are God’s chosen people, the word “Israel” dominates the Bible, appearing 2,565 times in 2,293 verses. In contrast, Arabians are mentioned only ten times.

Anyone who claims to believe the Bible must acknowledge that there is only one nation and one people—the Jews alone—to whom God ever gave a land and specific, perpetual promises. The Jews are the only people still existing as a nation, though scattered, whose genealogy is preserved in Holy Scripture and who are identifiable in the world today. Were that not the case, there would be no fulfillment to hundreds of God’s promises and He would be a liar.

We have documented in the past that Jahweh of the Bible and Allah of the Qur’an are *not* the same (see especially the Q&A section of TBC Reprints for Feb. 2000). Twelve times Jahweh calls himself, or is referred to as, “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.” An overwhelming 203 times in 201 verses (from Ex 5:1 to Lk 1:68), Jahweh is called “the God of Israel”—*never* the God of Ishmael.

In contrast, Islam and Allah express hatred for Israel and all Jews. That fact alone is enough to distinguish Jahweh from Allah. The Qur’an and authoritative Islamic tradition cited in the *hadith* vilify the Jews repeatedly:

Because of the wrongdoing of the Jews...We have prepared for [them] a painful doom” (Surah 4:160-161); Allah hath cursed them [the Jews] for their disbelief (4:46); Allah fighteth against them. How perverse are they! (9:30); Ignominy shall be their portion where-soever they are found... (3:112); The resurrection of the dead will not come until the Muslims will war with the Jews and

the Muslims will kill them;...the trees and rocks will say, O Muslim...here is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.²

Sadly, the Arabs, persisting in the false claim that Ishmael was the legitimate son of promise, have rebelled against God's Word. Their jealous hatred of the descendants of Isaac (exacerbated by the teachings and example of Muhammad and Islam) has left a blot on the history of mankind unequalled even by that left by Hitler.

In Muslim lands for 1,300 years, Jews suffered from inhumane treatment and periodic bursts of violence. Take only one country, Morocco, as an example of what occurred everywhere under Muslim rule. Jews were forced to live in ghettos called *mellahs*. One historian writes that rape, looting, burning of synagogues, destruction of Torah scrolls and murder were "so frequent that it is impossible to list them."³ As only one instance of many, in Fez, in A.D. 1032, about 6,000 Jews were murdered and many more "robbed of their women and property."⁴ Such slaughter continued periodically in Fez and throughout Morocco (as in other Muslim countries). Interestingly, the fierce persecution of 1640 in which women and children were murdered was called the *al-Khada*. Chouraqui (p 39) says that Jews suffered "such repression, restriction and humiliation as to exceed anything in Europe."

Most Jews today do not believe God's promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Nevertheless, there has always been a nucleus through the centuries who did believe His promises—and even recognized and admitted that the dispersion of Jews was God's judgment on their sin. Maimonides, the famous Jewish physician and philosopher, whose family had fled from Islamic persecution in Spain to, of all places, Fez (and who himself had to flee from Morocco later), wrote in his "Epistle to Yemen" in 1172,

It is...one of the fundamental articles of the faith of Israel that the future redeemer of our people will...gather our nation, assemble our exiles, redeem us from our degradation....On account of the vast number of our sins, God has hurled us in the midst of this people, the Arabs, who have persecuted us severely...as Scripture has forewarned us....Never did a nation molest, degrade, debase, and hate us as much as they....⁵

Such persecution has continued against those few thousand Jews who have not yet escaped Muslim lands. In a letter dated July 10, 1974, to then UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, Ramsey Clark

declared, "Jewish people living in Syria today are subjected to the most pervasive and inhuman persecution....Young women and children are harassed in the streets. Old people are knocked down. Homes are stoned....They are forbidden to leave in peace and cannot remain in dignity....Many have been arrested, detained, tortured and killed."

Muslims falsely claim that the animosity toward Jews is the result of the founding of the state of Israel. This is so obviously not the case that this lie ought to be an embarrassment. The Qur'an's official religious denunciations of Jews existed more than 1,200 years before Israel's rebirth. Joan Peters, in her invaluable book, *From Time Immemorial*, writes (p. 72),

The late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia told Henry Kissinger [a Jew] that "...Before the Jewish state was established, there existed nothing to harm good relations between Arabs and Jews...." Ironically, no Jews were allowed [since Muhammad

**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
they shall prosper that love thee.**

Psalms 122:6

killed or sold them all into slavery] to enter or live in Saudi Arabia [still true today]. Jordan's King Hussein stated, "The relationship that enabled Arabs and Jews to live together for centuries as neighbors and friends has been destroyed by Zionist ideas and actions." Yet the Jordanian Nationality Law states that "a Jew" cannot become a citizen of Jordan.

Jordan annexed to itself most of that part of "Palestine" which UN Resolution 181 had assigned to the "Palestinians" in November 1947, destroyed every Jewish house of worship and expelled all Jews months before the state of Israel was born.

The hatred against Jews by Muslims in obedience to Muhammad, and the wicked support thereof by much of the world (which we have documented more fully elsewhere), continues to this day in the satanic determination to wipe out the state of Israel. This hatred provides the key to Middle East problems, which would be solved if the Muslims and the world would accept and obey the clear language of the Bible.

Of course the secular world in its gross immorality and selfish pursuit of the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:16) demonstrates continuously its rebellion against God.

Even the ungodly know, too (Rom 1:32), that all who engage in these things will be held accountable by "the judge of all the earth" (Gn 18:25; Jn 5:22; Rv 20:12-15). There is another grave disobedience to God, however, amounting to open defiance, in which almost the entire world is united: the support of Ishmael's descendants to establish a "Palestinian State" within Israel.

The willful persistence in this illegitimate claim, and its support by the rest of the world, constitutes rejection of the clear testimony of Scripture and rebellion against God. These twin crimes have created the Mideast crisis facing us today. Abba Eban in *Personal Witness* records that when President Truman wanted to recognize Israel, Secretary of State George C. Marshall stated angrily: "They don't deserve a state, they have stolen that country."

The dual fulfillment of biblical prophecies concerning Israel as chronicled in the daily news is approaching its foretold climax in our time—the last of the "last days." Our important new video, *Israel, Islam and Armageddon*, offers powerful graphic footage documenting these prophecies' historical background and the broad sweep of their modern consummation, especially through Nazism and its close partner and now successor in anti-Semitism and terrorism, Islam.

Today's fulfillment of biblical prophecy in current events is a topic of great interest to non-Christians, offers irrefutable proof of God's existence and that the Bible is His infallible Word to mankind, and is a valuable tool in evangelism. We hope that our readers will take advantage of the materials we offer for this purpose.

The prophesied burden of Israel and Jerusalem continues to grow heavier until it threatens to crush the whole world under the weight of a global conflict. Tragically, that conflict has already manifested itself globally in the despicable scourge of international terrorism. Here, too, Israel is the scapegoat.

Jahweh claims repeatedly that He is the *only true God*: "Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God" (Is 44:6,8). Jahweh also declares, "beside me, there is no saviour" (Is 43:11; Hos 13:4). Isaiah foretold that the promised Messiah who would come to pay the penalty for sin demanded by His justice would be "The mighty God, The everlasting Father" (Is 9:6). Thus Jesus declared, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30). He warned that all who denied His identity as Jahweh the Savior would die in their sins and be separated from Him and heaven forever (Jn 8:21-24). We need to make this gospel clear.

TBC

Quotable

All agree we are living under frightening conditions. The scientists and smartest men are the “scaredest”; and even those of us not smart enough to be that scared, have to resist a tendency to feel that nothing can be done....Only Bible-believing Christians—if there be any other kind—are not on the brink of despair....They believe that the mighty Son of God “will not fail nor be discouraged until He has established righteousness and peace upon the earth....” When the Jews, “Scattered like dust among the nations,” as Moses told them they would be...find themselves coming together like the dry bones of Ezekiel’s old battlefield vision, and drawn irresistibly into the maelstrom of their final trouble in their old home; when Jerusalem is a “burdensome stone” to all [and] Gentile nations are seized with premonitions of impending, cataclysmic disaster...[the end is near]....

Evangelical Christians desire with all their hearts to mitigate the world’s present miseries....And we believe that the best and only way to do this is to carry out the orders of the Captain of our Salvation and complete His campaign plans [the gospel to all nations] while we pray and look for His return....

Irwin H. Linton, A Lawyer Examines the Bible, Appendix J

Q&A

Question: I know that false faiths abound, but I don’t find edification in focusing on error. Show me in the Word where false doctrine is explained. It seems to me that the Bible addresses Satan’s lies without going into detail of the actual practices.

Answer: We at The Berean Call take no pleasure in exposing and documenting false dogmas and practices. We only do so to expose error, out of deep concern for souls. Yes, there are many kind, compassionate and self-sacrificing Muslims who oppose terrorism. Yes, the Roman Catholic Church was the major charitable institution during the Middle Ages, often promoting morality and education—and most Catholics today do not know most of Rome’s official dogmas (but they still rely upon that Church and its clergy to get them out of purgatory and into heaven). Yes, many Mormons and Moonies espouse “traditional morals.” We do not oppose individuals, but the false gospels they preach.

You ask for biblical support concern-

ing exposure of evil and false doctrines. The Bible gives much insight concerning Satan’s fall (Is 14:12-15; Ezk 28:12-18), the details of his temptation of Eve (Gn 3:1-7) and of his attempt to destroy Job’s trust in and relationship with God (Job 1:1-2:7). There are too many accounts of idolatry and pagan practices and warning against them to list all the verses (Lv 19:31; 20:1-6; Dt 18:9-14; Is 47:8-13, etc.). The Bible goes into great detail concerning the apostasy of Israel, telling the sins of its kings and people, from the golden calf (Ex 32:1-28) to the Queen of Heaven (Jer 44:15-23); and again there are too many references to list.

Most of the epistles were written to combat heretical teachings that crept into the early church. False doctrine is explained thoroughly and repeatedly. Almost the entire book of Galatians is devoted to describing and combating a false gospel.

To “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3) must include pointing out what is wrong with the counterfeit. Christ himself did so, explaining in detail the evil practices and false teachings of the rabbis (Mt 15:1-20; 23:2-33; etc.). Our exposure of error is moderate in comparison to Stephen’s indictment of the Jews (Acts 7:39-43, 51-53). And considering the fact that Paul, out of concern for coming apostasy, for “three years...ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31), we could hardly be accused of extremism in our earnest attempts to point out what is wrong in order for the truth to be understood more clearly in comparison. Our motive is to rescue souls from eternal doom.

Question: You have favored Israel in your articles and books, with little sympathy for the Palestinians suffering under enemy occupation for the last 35 years since Israel invaded and took over the West Bank and Gaza. Millions still live in pitiful refugee camps and after more than 50 years are not allowed to return to the homes from which the Israelis expelled them in 1948. Isn’t it understandable that after such long oppression by a foreign power in their own land the Palestinians are driven as a last resort in sheer desperation to the extreme measures of suicide bombing? Why do you favor their oppressors?

Answer: Oppressors? Most Palestinians would rather live under Israel (the only democracy in the Middle East) than in Arafat’s police state! Have you heard Israelis calling for the destruction of Palestinians? Israel never attacks them except

in retaliation for their attacks and to defend its citizens. It was not Israel who attacked anyone in 1948, but six Arab nations who attacked her. Israel was satisfied with what little territory the UN gave it and only wanted to be left in peace. Have you forgotten the facts? Since the Arabs wanted Israel’s annihilation in 1948 and have daily renewed that vow ever since, why should Israel trust them at all? Yet Israel has been forced to negotiate with an enemy dedicated to its total destruction.

Israel has subsequently given back 90 percent of the territory it took in self-defense against an enemy that has continually attacked it and calls daily for its annihilation. It offers to give back more—but only if the Arabs will acknowledge its right to exist. So far they have not been willing to make even that concession. Why isn’t Israel’s desire to have its enemies renounce violence and admit that it has a legitimate right to exist the most reasonable and minimal request one could make? Why won’t the PLO accept this reasonable condition?

Israel’s very existence is considered to be illegitimate because of the Islamic teaching that the “promised land” belongs to the descendants of Ishmael, not those of Isaac. In *From Time Immemorial* by Joan Peters, which we offer, you will find hundreds of footnotes citing Arab leaders calling for Israel’s destruction and rejecting her very existence. The following from the PLO National Charter reveals a perverse mindset:

Claims of historical or religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history and the true conception of what constitutes statehood. Judaism, being a religion, is not an independent nationality. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own; they are citizens of the states to which they belong.

Zionism is a political movement originally associated with international imperialism and antagonistic to all action for liberation and to progressive movements in the world. It is racist and fanatic in its nature, aggressive, expansionist and colonial in its aims, and fascist in its methods. Israel is...a geographical base for world imperialism placed strategically in the midst of the Arab homeland to combat the hopes of the Arab nation for liberation, unity and progress. Israel is a constant source of threat *vis-a-vis* peace in the Middle East and the whole world. Since the liberation of Palestine will destroy the Zionist and imperialist presence and will contribute to the establishment of peace in the Middle East, the Palestinian people

look for the support of all the progressive and peaceful forces, and urge them all, irrespective of their affiliations and beliefs, to offer the Palestinian people all the aid and support in their just struggle for the liberation of their homeland. (PLO Charter, paras. 20,22)

As for the “Palestinian” refugees, it was the attacking Arab military that told them by radio to leave Israel while they moved in and wiped out the Jews. There was an even greater exodus, however, of Jews fleeing Muslim countries where they had been persecuted and killed for 1,300 years since the advent of Islam. That flight eventually brought about 820,000 Jewish refugees into Israel, more than twice as many as the number of Muslims who fled from Israel during the 1948 war of independence.

Tiny Israel absorbed not only the 820,000 Jews fleeing from Muslim lands but several million more immigrants from about 80 other countries. Yet Arab countries with 700 times Israel’s land mass and billions of dollars in oil revenues have steadfastly refused to absorb any “Palestinian refugees.” Since it was well known that Syria was seeking immigrants, Joan Peters asked Syrian officials, “Why not give the land to those Palestinian Arabs who would choose to accept your offer?” She reports that the answer was “always the same. As one of the Syrians responded angrily, ‘We will give the land to anyone—the Ibos, the Koreans, Americans ... anyone who comes—anyone but the Palestinians! We must keep their hatred directed against Israel.’” (p. 406)

The latter are deliberately kept as pawns on display in squalid camps with the insistence that they must be allowed to return to a “Palestine” which is part of what was the land of Israel in the days of Joshua and David. The hypocrisy of the so-called “Palestinian refugee” problem is scandalous. In the last 100 years, there have been about 100 million displaced persons who have fled from their homelands as refugees into neighboring countries. For example, when India was given its independence more than 7 million Hindus fled from what had become East and West Pakistan, while about the same number of Muslims fled from what had just become independent India—a total of about 15 million refugees. No one has called for their return to the homes from which they fled. No one has called for a return of any of the tens of millions of other displaced persons. No one ever calls for that. There is only one exception, the “Palestinian refugees,” even though Israel has absorbed more than twice

as many refugees of its own from Muslim countries. If the “Palestinians” should return to Israel (which would destroy it), then why isn’t there an equal cry for the Jews to be allowed back into Muslim lands from which they fled? In fact, the Jews would not want to return!

Question: Why have American leaders and world media turned against Yasser Arafat and are blaming him for suicide bombings in Israel, even though he has tried his best to prevent them and has arrested as many of those responsible as he can locate? Isn’t that like holding our government accountable for the acts of every criminal in our country?

Answer: As we have shown in past issues, Arafat is the bloodiest and most vicious terrorist in history. He and his PLO still hold all the records for the most people taken hostage at one time, the largest number of bombings, torture, rape, hundreds of thousands killed, etc. Yet he has been white-washed not only by the liberal media but also by our State Department and political leaders. In 1986, 47 U.S. senators (including Al Gore) signed a petition to have him arrested and tried as a mass murderer. Yet when Gore was vice president, he received and honored Arafat in the White House. The world is reaping the destruction it has sown in allowing Arafat to represent “justice” and “peace.”

Benjamin Netanyahu writes, “Under Arafat’s rule...Palestinian Islamic terrorist groups...run summer camps in Gaza that teach Palestinian children how to become suicide martyrs....” (Benjamin Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies Can Defeat the International Terrorist Network* [Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001], xv). On September 11, just hours before the attack on America, Arafat’s state-controlled newspaper, *Al-Hayat-Al-Jadida*, declared, “The suicide bombers of today are the noble successors of the Lebanese suicide bombers who taught the U.S. Marines a tough lesson.... These suicide bombers are the salt of the earth...the most honorable people among us.”

Arafat runs the PLO territories like the other Muslim dictators and more tightly than most. Just a word from him and anyone is picked up and summarily executed. There is no freedom of speech or conscience, yet huge rallies are held openly in which Hamas is praised and mobs chant the names of suicide bombers as their heroes.

Indeed, suicide bombers are the most honored people in PLO territory. Arafat’s

newspaper has “wedding announcements” from families who are rejoicing over the “marriage” of sons to the “black-eyed” virgins in Paradise through their martyrdom by suicide in Israel, killing innocent women and children in the process. And you ask why Arafat, who is a terrorist himself and who has sheltered, encouraged and trained suicide bombers, should be held accountable? I am astonished.

It is true that our government and police are not able to stamp out completely the mafia and all criminals. However, our government does not encourage, shelter, sponsor and finance criminals as Arafat does for the Hamas, his own *fatah* and other terrorist groups within the PLO territories. Now he is supposedly cracking down on Hamas and other terrorists whom he has praised and supported for years. If he really does so, he will be going against the Palestinian psyche and it could well be his end.

Endnotes

1. “BETRAYAL,” American Friends of Women For Israel’s Tomorrow, Norfolk VA, (757) 857-4708, ad in *The International Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 30, 2001, 11.
2. Moshe Ma’oz, *The Image of the Jew in Official Arab Literature and Communications Media* (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976), 14.
3. Andre Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa* (Philadelphia PA 19680, 51).
4. H. Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa* (Leiden, Netherlands, 1974), 108.
5. Isadore Twersky, ed., *A Maimonides Reader* (New York, 1972), 456-57.

Justice and Justification

Dave Hunt

For many years God has been more or less barred from America's public schools and public life. Then came the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Suddenly the word "God" was back in public vogue. Political leaders were falling over themselves to assure everyone that they were part of the "God team." Even some members of the ACLU were mouthing the new national mantra, "God bless America." Of course it was still politically incorrect to identify the one true God. In order to create a coalition against terrorism, it is insisted upon more vehemently than ever that Allah of Islam is also the God of Israel and Christianity (which we have thoroughly refuted in these pages).

In the days of the Caesars, the invocation and celebration of gods was a popular pastime, and any god would do. Christians would never have been thrown to the lions or turned into human torches had they not faithfully declared that there is only one true God and that salvation is in Christ alone.

Any audience today will applaud Jesus, the humble ex-carpenter from Nazareth who stooped to wash his disciples' feet. But the speaker who insists upon Christ's declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6), is accused of being "narrowminded" and confronted with the absurd claim that Jesus never spoke these words. Public oaths are solemnly taken with a hand on the Bible, but that sacred book's saving message of salvation through Christ alone is suppressed as a threat to "unity."

Yes, some political leaders at times clearly identify Christ as the only Savior, God-become-man, crucified for our sins and risen from the dead—but only to sympathetic Christian audiences. Rare is the politician who will say the same to secular audiences. Fear of reduced popularity and lost votes brings compromise.

For a time following September 11, radio and television gave top billing to an almost endless series of memorial services for victims of the terrorist attacks. Carefully avoided in such gatherings was the significant fact that the hijackers were all Muslims who had planned and executed their mass murder in the name of Islam's Allah—exactly as Muslims, following Muhammad's example,

have done from the beginning of Islam. It is not politically correct to point out that Muslim clergy ask the same Allah to bless America whom terrorists invoked to destroy her. Had the hijackers, instead of being Muslims, been Christians or Israelis, that fact would have been trumpeted around the world.

By careful design the memorial services displayed the myth of the "oneness" of all religions. Evangelicals prayed alongside the clergy of false religions such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and others, giving the impression that all believe in the same "God" and are on their way to heaven. Evangelicals who willingly participate in this deception make the gospel of no effect and deny Christ.

America's pursuit of the terrorists is backed by a coalition of nations which,

**...there is no God else beside me;
a just God and a Saviour...**

Isaiah 45:21

incredibly, includes some of the most notorious sponsors of Islamic terrorism. Anyone who disturbs this "harmony" is shunned as "divisive" and un-American. Unity has become the fantasy of the hour.

America has united in beseeching God's blessing, but remains unwilling to define by which "God" or on what basis a blessing could be bestowed. Almost no one wants to publicly face the simple question concerning which "God" is capable of blessing America, and how or why He should do so.

Clearly, whether there is one true God or many is just as important as whether any God exists at all. Nor is it rational to ignore the vast differences between Buddha, Muhammad and Jesus Christ, as well as between Allah, Jahweh, Hinduism's millions of gods, or some "higher power." (No "power" could create rational beings. Powers don't think.) Nor is it reasonable to imagine that the true God answers to the name of any false god and doesn't care what attributes are assigned Him.

If we desire God's blessing, it is only reasonable that we obey Him. Human *opinions* about how to obtain God's blessing are of no value. Yet they are solemnly pronounced by this or that religious authority whom billions follow without consulting God himself.

The first question that must be asked of any church, religion, guru or supposed

spiritual guide is this: "Where do you get your authority?" Anyone claiming to speak for God must have verifiable proof. Fancy robes and altars, beautiful cathedrals, ancient traditions, venerable institutions, inspiring sacraments, works of charity, number of followers, or length of existence prove nothing at all!

If God himself has not spoken, and spoken in a way verifiable and understandable by all, then we are at the mercy of every charlatan who comes along with an alleged vision or revelation. It is not only foolhardy but inexcusable to follow any church, religion or spiritual leader from Muhammad to the pope who fails to provide *absolute proof* of passing on God's very words to man. This simple, commonsense criteria eliminates every world religion from Buddhism to Shintoism to Islam and Catholicism, et al., along with their sacred writings and traditions. Only biblical Christianity even dares to offer absolute proof—and it does so irrefutably. We have set forth that proof in other articles and books so we will not repeat it here.

To gain God's blessing cannot be as simple as saying, "God bless America." Yet in all the memorial services and confident expressions of God's favor, scarcely a word has been said about man's failure to obey what God has written upon every conscience. America has thrown God out of public schools; ridicules, maligns and misrepresents Him in film and media; murders babies in the womb by the millions; flaunts before Him rampant fornication, homosexuality, divorce, pornography and all manner of evil—then asks His blessing! Common sense recognizes that God will not condone man's open rebellion, and that the consequences must be severe.

Rejecting the truth God has revealed to everyone, man perverts the witness of creation and conscience and creates his own gods. The very appeal of the "Star Wars Force" or some "higher power" is that a force, being impersonal, cannot hold one morally accountable but, like atomic power, can be used by man to his own ends. Clearly, God has to be a *personal* Being to create and relate to mankind.

The Bible gives the factual account of Lucifer's rebellion in heaven itself and how Eve believed the lie that she, too, could become one of the gods. To this day that lie remains the great hope and motivation of mankind. The remainder of the Bible is a recital of the devastating consequences of that rebellion, and the working out of God's plan to restore mankind into the "new heaven

and...new earth” (Rv 21:1) which He has planned in His love and grace.

To eat some fruit from a tree seems a small thing, but that simple act was rebellion against the Creator. God had clearly warned, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gn 2:17). Death is separation from God, the source of life. Spiritual death (God’s Spirit withdrawing from man’s spirit) came immediately to Adam and Eve and eventually bore fruit in their physical death. All of Adam’s descendants are born into the same state of spiritual separation from God and with bodies that begin to die from birth.

Even worse is the “second death,” which brings eternal separation from God to those who reject Christ. Those who believe on (receive) Christ escape the second death (Rv. 2:11; 20:6), which is further described as “the lake of fire” (Rv 20:14; 21:8).

The issue is God’s justice. Man’s God-given concept of justice is independent of cultural traditions or taboos. By what God has written in our consciences we know that justice is not a creation of legislatures, court systems, judges or juries, much less of religious bodies. Indeed, it is by the higher standard which God has put within all mankind that we judge all laws and legal decisions as being just or unjust.

Yet in every non-Christian religion, there is a universal reliance upon *works* for being justified before God—works that could not remove the guilt of even a traffic ticket. Religions offer sacraments, the influence of alleged saints or angels, good deeds, medals, scapulars and other paraphernalia along with vestments, holy orders and a multitude of other contrivances. None of these could remove the penalty for breaking a human law, yet we are told that they can effectively “appease” God.

Obviously, any religion, church, religious institution or spiritual leader is not from God which promises reconciliation with God through good deeds, ceremonies, liturgies or observances which would not even clear the guilty before an earthly court. “Appeasement” of the gods has nothing to do with justice. The very offer of anything to appease any honest earthly judge would be repugnant to him and is even more so to the true God in heaven.

Only when we turn to the Bible do we find both a diagnosis of the human problem and a just remedy that rings true to conscience. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel (Gn 32:28) is above appeasement and does not make deals or compromise

His perfect justice. Having created man in His image, God declares that the standard by which everyone is judged is nothing less than His own perfection. The Bible defines sin as coming short of God’s glory and pronounces all the world guilty: “Now we know that what...the law saith, it saith...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God....For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:19-23). Whether one claims to be a Christian or a Muslim or follower of any other religion, or of none, there is no question that no one on this earth has lived up to the perfect standard of God.

Conscience tells us that no matter how much He loves and pities them God cannot simply remove the penalty He has decreed in order to forgive sinners. To do so would be going back on His Word, making what He had formerly said a lie, and “God is not a man, that he should lie;...God...cannot lie” (Num 23:19; Ti 1:2). The penalty which He has pronounced upon sin must be paid.

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Romans 4:5

The ultimate question, then, is how can God, who is perfect in holiness and justice, possibly forgive man’s sin? Not one of the world’s religions even faces up to this dilemma, much less offers a solution. Only the God of the Bible solves this problem. Confronting the issue, Paul finds all the world, Jew and Gentile, guilty of breaking God’s Law, and points out that keeping the Law perfectly in the future (even if possible) could not bring forgiveness for past violations. That is why God says, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Is 64:6).

Christ alone paid on our behalf the full penalty which His own infinite justice demands. Thus God can forgive sinners righteously:

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood [shed for our sins], to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past...that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus...a man is justified by faith without the deeds

of the law” (Rom 3:21-28).

There is no question, as we and others have thoroughly documented from the Qur’an, *hadith*, and 1,300 years of history, that terrorism and violence in order to force the world into Islam, and threats of death to prevent defections, always have been the very heart of Islam throughout history and remain so today. Concerned for the “bad image” terrorism is giving their religion, Muslims point to the millions in that faith who are “peaceloving.”

We offer the same challenge to Muslims that we offer to professing Christians. If one claims to be a Christian, one must follow the teachings of Christ. It is dishonest to invent one’s own brand of “Christianity.” And so it is with Islam. How can anyone claim to be a Muslim, yet fabricate his own peaceful version of Islam in contradiction of the teachings and example of Muhammad that perpetual *jihad* must be practiced to convert the entire world by force?

Furthermore, Islam, like Hinduism, Buddhism and all other religions, provides no just basis for God to forgive sin. The terrorists who flew hijacked planes into their targets September 11, and the Palestinian terrorists still attacking Israel in spite of Arafat’s deceitful promises, have been deluded into imagining that suicide and murder gain entrance into heaven. Too late they discover that Islam’s “Paradise” is actually hell.

In order to forgive sinners, God had to come to this earth as a man to die for the sins of the world: “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9). While it fulfilled prophecies and identified Him as the Messiah, simply being nailed to a cross would not in or of itself bring forgiveness. The payment of the full penalty was accomplished by Christ, our substitute, suffering the complete judgment we all deserve: “...he was wounded for our transgressions,...bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes [wounds] we are healed...the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is 53:5, 6).

Because pardon and eternal life are not physical but spiritual, man cannot obtain this gift from God by any physical means, but only by receiving Christ into his heart by faith. Even though Christ has paid the full penalty for sin, only those who by faith receive Him as their Savior benefit from His sacrifice on the cross. For the sake of the lost all about us, let us declare this truth without compromise in the face of a deceitful and deadly “unity.” **TBC**

Quotable

Servant of Christ, stand fast amid the scorn
Of men who little know or love thy Lord;
Turn not aside from toil; cease not to warn,
Comfort and teach. Trust Him for thy reward:
A few more moments' suffering, and then
Cometh sweet rest from all thy heart's deep
pain.

For grace pray much, for much thou needest
grace;
If men thy work deride—what can they
more?
Christ's weary foot thy path on earth doth
trace;
If thorns wound thee, they pierced Him
before;
Press on, look up, though clouds may gather
round;
Thy place of service He makes hallowed
ground.

Have friends forsaken thee, and cast thy
name
Out as a worthless thing? Take courage then;
Go, tell thy Master; for they did the same
To Him, Who once in patience toiled for them:
Yet He was perfect in all service here;
Thou oft hast failed; this maketh Him more
dear.

“The time is short”: seek little here below;
Earth's goods would cumber thee, and drag
thee down;
Let daily food suffice; care not to know
Thought for tomorrow; it may never come.
Thou canst not perish, for thy Lord is nigh,
And His own care will all thy need supply.

*John J. Penstone,
“The Servant's Path”*

Q&A

Question: I have been receiving your newsletter for a couple of months now and am somewhat dismayed that you have singled out Lutherans as being problematic without regard to what synod you refer to....I am a Missouri Synod [LCMS] Lay Minister who is alarmed at some of the definitely non-Christian elements that the LCA and ELCA have [adopted]. The LCMS has safeguards built in and whenever a church or group does not teach the Word of God as it is rightly divided...that church or group is asked to leave the Synod.... Take Seminex for example...[its] instructors were teaching a false gospel...[and] were thrown out of the LCMS. I also want to remind you

that the efforts of Dr. Martin Luther resulted in the clean break from the RCC with the Pope making a contract on Luther's life....In the future make sure you identify which group you are referring to as there are many people in the [Missouri] Synod who do not like the way they have been castigated by you without cause.

Answer: Thank you for contacting us. I'm sorry that you felt I misrepresented Lutherans. I hold Luther in high esteem for his stand against Roman Catholicism, but unfortunately he clung to much Catholicism that remains in Lutheranism today.

You referred, I assume, to the August Q&A section. You suggest that I should be careful to identify the synod because yours (the Missouri Synod) does not go along with the heresies of LCA, ELCA, Seminex, et al. In fact, I was not referring to such heretical departures from the Word of God as these hold to, but to heresies (in my opinion) which are held by all Lutherans as taught in Luther's *Small Catechism*, which I understand is used in all synods.

Moreover, in that Q&A we identified your synod. We stated the fact that the “Memento and Certificate of Baptism” from which we quoted was “printed by the Missouri Synod's Concordia Publishing House.” We also noted that it read, “In baptism full salvation has been given unto you; God has become your Father, and you have become His child through this act....” That is not the teaching of the Bible.

Further, in that Q&A we referred to a man who had shown me the letter of excommunication he had received from his Missouri Synod Lutheran Church for having been baptized after getting saved. We then cited many scriptures showing the clear biblical teaching that one is saved only by believing the gospel, and only after that is one to be baptized. Such faith is not possible for infants. Nor does the Bible teach regeneration through baptism for anyone, babe or older person.

Question: There has been a good bit of talk in the media recently about Islam undergoing a reformation much like the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Supposedly that would make for a “kinder, gentler” Islam. Is that possible? And if so, wouldn't you have to retract the harsh accusations you've made against Islam?

Answer: The Protestant Reformation was provoked by the wide and longstanding

departure of the Roman Catholic Church from Scripture into heretical teachings and practices. The Reformation was all about getting back to the Bible. A major cry was “*sola scriptura!*” Like Islam, wherever it had the power, the Roman Catholic Church for more than 1,000 years forced its false doctrines upon the populace under penalty of death. Its false gospel offered heaven through baptism, sacraments, indulgences, the wearing of scapulars and medals and other good works. The popes matched the Muslim promise of Paradise for the *jihad* martyr by offering a plenary indulgence and instant entrance into heaven for all who died in the Holy Land Crusades. Such practices were directly contrary to the teachings of the Bible and the example of Christ and of the early church. Returning to the sole authority of Scripture through the Reformation brought freedom from religious oppression.

A reformation of Islam to bring it back to the uncompromising teachings of the Qur'an and to follow faithfully the example of Muhammad does exactly the opposite. Instead of bringing freedom from oppression, it intensifies the oppression that Islam has always exerted over non-Muslims through forced conversions and over Muslims through threat of death for converting to another faith.

In fact, an Islamic “reformation” has been in process for many years. It grew out of the defeat of the Arab armies that attacked Israel when it declared its independence in 1948, and accelerated with the humiliating defeats of 1967 and 1973. It was decided that Allah had not blessed the Muslim armies as he had at the beginning of Islam because Muslims had strayed so far from orthodox Islam. Defeat would turn to victory if the Muslim world would return to the teaching of the Qur'an and of Muhammad in the *hadith*—and follow the examples of his life and the lives of his early successors who were able to spread Islam through conquest by the sword all the way from Spain to India and China.

The Islamic “reformation,” then, does not produce a “kinder, gentler” Islam, but an Islam that is stronger and absolutely uncompromising. It involves a revived commitment to the teaching that Muslims must conquer the world and impose their religion and way of life upon all mankind to the glory of Allah.

Such was the goal of Osama bin Laden and his *al-Qaeda* network, and it was to this end that the hijackers of September 11 sacrificed their lives. A return to true Islam as taught in the Qur'an demands perpetual

jihad with the sword—even against fellow Muslims who are not willing to live by strict Islamic law (*shari'ah*). Such is the goal of any number of fundamentalist Islamic groups, and a takeover by them is feared by semisecular regimes in Islamic countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and even Saudi Arabia. The only way to make Islam “kinder and gentler” would be to abandon the Qur’an and the teaching and practice of Muhammad—to invent a new Islam. But what would that prove?

Question: Were Adam and Eve created perfect? If so, how could they sin? If they were created with a will that could choose to sin, how could they have been perfect?

Answer: The Bible says that “God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gn 1:31). Never is it said, however, that Adam and Eve were perfect. That word is applied to man, but never to mean without sin. To Abraham God said, “...walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gn 17:1); of Job it is said “...that man was perfect and upright” (Job 1:1); Jesus commanded, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Mt 5:48); Paul says that Scripture is given “that the man of God may be perfect” (2 Tm 3:17); etc. The meaning is maturity and a heart that desires to please God and do His will—but not without the possibility to sin. The Bible clearly says, “For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl 7:20), and “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Sin is coming short of the glory of God, in whose image Adam and Eve were created. Only God is perfect in the full sense of being without the possibility of sinning. Thus Jesus said, “...there is none good but one, that is, God” (Mt 19:17).

Adam and Eve must have been created with the power of choice, or God would not have given them a command and punished them for disobeying it. No one, not even Eve who was deceived by Satan, Judas of whom it is said that “Satan entered into him” (Jn 13:27), or Ananias and Sapphira whose hearts “Satan filled...to lie to the Holy Ghost” (Acts 5:3) can blame his or her sin on the devil; nor does God ever tempt man to sin (Jas 1:13), much less cause anyone to sin. All are without excuse.

If Adam and Eve were forced (or even tricked) into doing something against their will, they could hardly be held accountable,

nor could that act be called sin. It makes even less sense that God would have caused them to sin. Thus God would be the author of evil and we would have the contradiction of God telling them not to eat of the tree, causing them to do so, then punishing them for disobeying Him—a thought repugnant to human conscience and logic. Yet such, sadly, is the teaching of Calvinism. In his highly recommended book, *the five points of calvinism*, Edwin H. Palmer declares, “God...causes all things to happen that do happen...the beating of a heart ...laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist—even sin” (p. 25).

You also said that you understood that the “sinful nature was passed down through Adam” but weren’t sure why. You asked, “Why wouldn’t Cain and Abel be born in the same sinless, perfect state [as Adam]?” The Bible says Adam’s sin brought death upon all of his descendants, but not that sin is passed through the father rather than mother. Surely it is passed through both. The difference between Adam and Eve and all of their offspring is a simple one: the former were created by God in a state of innocence and intimate fellowship with Him. No doubt the Spirit of God dwelt within their spirits in close communion. When they sinned, the Spirit of God departed, bringing immediate spiritual death, which affected their bodies and eventually brought physical death. As the children of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel could only be born into the state of sin, separation and death that had become the condition of their parents. And so it is with all of us.

Question: Did you see the PBS documentary, *Islam: Empire of Faith*? In contrast to programs that PBS and other networks produce about Christianity, which always take the liberal, Bible-denying perspective, the documentary was amazingly respectful toward that religion [Islam]. None of the scholars interviewed questioned the authenticity of the Qur’an. The spread of Islam during the Middle Ages was presented as being the result of wise planning and leadership. There was little or no mention or criticism of forced conversions at the point of a sword. Your comments on this program would be welcome.

Answer: We have already dealt with this subject in depth. I suggest that you obtain copies of past newsletter articles as well as my book, *A Cup of Trembling - Jerusalem*

in Bible Prophecy, and others which we offer on this topic. Unfortunately, Gardner Films in association with PBS did not make a true documentary that presents the facts, but a whitewash of a religion driven by hate and spread by violence since its beginning—history which we document thoroughly. In his book, *Unholy War* (pp. 196-97), Randall Price declares, “Muhammad was a terrorist who launched a campaign of conquest against his own people (Arabs) and especially against the Jews.... One of the principal aims of Islamic holy war is the liquidation of the Jewish people, the total destruction of Israel, and complete sovereignty over *Al-Quds* (the Jerusalem of Islam).”

PBS did not even come close to telling the awful truth about Islam, past or present. Consequently many people have been led astray by the misinformation this video has spread.

Where's Your Head...and Your Heart?

T.A. McMahon

The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us that we ought to have the same mind about things that Jesus has. In telling us we “ought,” he is also telling us that we *can*. But wait! What exactly does that mean?

Obviously, it doesn't mean that we can develop a mind with the capabilities of Jesus, who is not only a perfect, sinless Man, but also our infinite God, the Creator of the universe. Even on their best day, that's not the stuff of fallen, finite beings! What we can do, however, is to develop the same kind of *attitude* toward things that Jesus had. Philippians, Chapter 2, verses 6 through 8, makes it clear that “mind” in verse 5 refers to His attitude of humility. Furthermore, the Greek word for “mind” in verse 5 (*phroneo*) is used in other places and is translated “regard,” “savour” or “think.” In Colossians 3:2 *phroneo* is translated “affection” and we are told to “set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” The implication here is that our minds are to have a bias toward—even a passion for—the ways and things of God.

More and more these days, after reading about, hearing or seeing highly respected Christians compromising the faith with regard to false religions and occult practices, I find myself mostly muttering (but too often loudly uttering), “Where are their heads in this?!”

I realize that there are biblical issues which are not as simple as we would like, and true believers in Christ are not always of the same opinion regarding some points of doctrine. On the other hand, we are seeing today what amounts to a shocking disregard for very simple, fundamental teachings of the Bible by those who claim to be Bible-believing Christians.

The unbiblical, thoughtless reaction by evangelical pastors in coming to the aid of allegedly moderate Islamic leaders since September 11, 2001 has become all too common to be newsworthy. Under the aegis of “gaining respect for another's religion,” numerous evangelical churches have had Muslim clerics speak from their pulpits and Muslim faithful fellowshiping and sharing

their beliefs at church functions, even pot-lucks. Is this a tough one regarding biblical discernment? Hardly. Is there even a hint of “respecting another's religion” in any of the sixty-six books of the Bible? Not one! Would the Bible then have us love Muslims? Absolutely. And to love them biblically means to treat them personally as those whom Christ loves and for whom He died. We are to do no less than reflect His love in all our interactions with them. But it's the anti-thesis of love to convey the message, explicitly or implicitly, that their religion will do anything other than keep them separated from God now and for all eternity.

Islam rejects the Jesus of the Bible; it rejects His deity; it rejects His death, burial, and resurrection as the full and only payment for humanity's sin; it rejects Christ's words:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus....

Philippians 2:5

“I am the way, the truth, the life; no man comes to the Father except by me” (Jn 14:6). Coming to the conclusion that Islam rejects God's only way of salvation hardly requires a Ph.D. in theology. So where are the minds of more than a few evangelical leaders in this?

Has Bill Hybels, pastor of the Willow Creek Community Church, and considered the genius behind the “seeker-friendly” church growth movement, written off the fundamentals of the faith? A month after the September 11 tragedy, a Muslim cleric, Faisal Hammouda, shared Hybels's pulpit for a discussion about Islam. The *imam* and pastor discussed strong ties between Christianity and Islam, and the congregation was impressed. They learned from the charming Hammouda that *jihād*, more often than not, was an *individual* “holy war” to overcome personal weaknesses such as a sweet tooth. Seriously? Hybels was concerned that there “are some Christians spreading rumors and half-truths that the Qur'an encourages violence.” It may be that Pastor Hybels has never read the many verses in the Qur'an condoning and commanding violence (especially for temporal and eternal rewards) and that he simply was misinformed. However, when Hammouda claimed that Muslims “believe in Jesus,

more than [Christians] do in fact,” Hybels knew enough to disagree. Yet he didn't seem to have the *heart* to tell the congregation that Islam's “Jesus” is someone invented by Muhammad, and therefore can't save anyone. That lack of disclosure by the pastor was not inconsequential. How many among the thousands who attended the “seeker-friendly” service left with the same enthusiastic feeling noted by one church member: “I didn't know they believed in Jesus”?¹ What of those who came seeking the truth?

Hybels's mentor in ministry is Robert Schuller, whose compromises with Islam are notorious. From personally preaching in the mosque of the Grand Mufti in Damascus, to allowing the Islamic leader's cleric son to preach from his own pulpit, these things are nothing new for someone who sponsors “Christians and Muslims for Peace” at his Crystal Cathedral. Exactly where his head is in all of this can be ascertained from a statement he made to an official of the Muslim American Society. He said that “if he [Schuller] came back in 100 years and found his

descendants Muslims, it wouldn't bother him....”² Perhaps Schuller has been influenced by his good friend, Billy Graham, who said, “I think Islam is misunderstood, too, because Mohammad has a great respect for Jesus...And I think we're closer to Islam than we really think we are.”³

While some might regard pastors Hybels and Schuller as rare examples of compromising the basics of the faith, certainly their influence among evangelicals cannot be questioned. Willow Creek Community Church is the largest evangelical church in America. Schuller's “Hour of Power,” which Graham helped him begin and continues to enthusiastically support, is the number one evangelistic TV program worldwide. Here's another troubling question: Where then are the heads of the sheep these pastors shepherd, and the thousands of evangelical pastors from around the country who flock to their conferences? At the very least, most are critically confused about the simple, biblical gospel.

Another indication of the mindset of many evangelical Christians is their favored response to the Harry Potter series of books and motion picture. Following our live call-in broadcast of *Search the Scriptures Daily*, in which J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* was the featured topic, a distressed young girl

called to tell us that most of her friends and teachers at her Christian school were fans of Harry Potter. Where are their heads in this? Apparently, the same place where highly influential evangelical leaders such as Chuck Colson and James Dobson are. Initially, Colson touted the moral attributes of the books, such as “courage, loyalty, and a willingness to sacrifice to one another,” as “not bad lessons in a self-centered world.” In an amazing combination of ignorance and rationalization, he states that the magic of *Harry Potter* is “purely mechanical, as opposed to occultic. That is, Harry and his friends cast spells, read crystal balls and turn themselves into animals—but they don’t make contact with a supernatural world.”⁴ Some time later in a Prison Fellowship “Breakpoint” commentary (which followed some pro-Harry Potter articles), Colson modified his position: “Now personally, I don’t recommend the Harry Potter books or the movie....” A subsequent *moral* conviction? Perhaps, but he followed up that statement by recommending that his readers should look to Connie Neal’s book, *What’s a Christian to Do With Harry Potter?* as an aid to discernment.⁵ Neal writes, “There is such a wealth in these stories that Christian parents should seize upon.”⁶ An interviewer described her as “a born-again Christian” and “the best known evangelical proponent of the J.K. Rowling canon.” While she may be at the top of the list, she has plenty of company. A *Christianity Today* editorial explained, “Author Rowling has created a world with real good and evil, and Harry is definitely on the side of light fighting the ‘dark powers.’”⁷ So let’s have a hearty “amen” for *white* witchcraft!

Wheaton College professor Alan Jacobs certainly seems to be saying that very thing: “The question of what to do with magic powers [in the *Harry Potter* series] is explored in an appropriate and morally serious way.” Incredible! Jacobs’s school is described in the same secular article as “the evangelical Harvard.” Irony aside, what does it take to understand the Holy Spirit-inspired words of the prophet Samuel: “For rebellion is as the *sin of witchcraft*” (1 Sm 15:23)?

The context of that rebuke by Samuel to King Saul has to do with *obedience*. God gave Saul specific instructions, against which he rebelled, i.e., he disobeyed. Read Saul’s excuses when he is confronted by God’s prophet (1 Sm 15:15); this leader of

the people accommodates them and rationalizes how they were going to use what God told them to “utterly destroy” as a means of glorifying Him. James Dobson’s Focus on the Family ministry, arguably the most popular source of guidance among evangelicals, features a number of articles on Harry Potter. The most comprehensive one, “What Shall We Do With Harry?”⁸ bears a strong resemblance to Saul’s rationalizations. It certainly accommodates the people: convincing reasons are given both to appreciate and to deprecate *Harry Potter*. A little something for both sides.

More significantly, the article exhorts its readers to use the Harry Potter books and film as a means to “engage the culture with a critical Christian thoughtfulness”: “...we’ve taken too simplistic a view of what our reaction must be to the problematic elements of *Harry Potter*.” A more balanced approach that will impress the world is being

Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

Psalms 86:11

recommended. (This is the foundational mindset of Focus on the Family’s advocacy of Christian psychotherapy, by the way.) The article, which is confusing at best, subversive to the Bible at worst, acknowledges that “God hates the practice of witchcraft” (Dt 18:10) but it avoids the *simple* yet critical issue: obedience. How does one “balance” obedience?

Where are their heads in this?

Too often, disdainful simple answers has caused those critical of the sufficiency of Scripture for “all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of [Jesus]” to miss what should be obvious (2 Pt 1:3). Consider, for example, today’s most popular trend for helping people—and the fact that it is *used in many evangelical churches*. It is the 12 Steps program, originated by the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. It’s certainly biblical for Christians to help people. However, Christians, as the name implies, are to help people according to the teachings of the Christian manual, the Word of God. That entails obedience to what God says. It also involves rejecting what He tells us to reject.

A.A.’s official biography indicates that Bill Wilson received the details of the 12 Steps through spirit dictation. Scripture condemns communication with familiar spirits. The Second and Third Steps encourage turning one’s life over to a “Higher Power” and “God as we under[stand] Him.” *Any* higher power? Yes! *Any* idea of God? Yes! How about that of a Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Animist, Satanist—or anyone else’s idea, for that matter? Sure. What about making Jesus Christ one’s Higher Power? Fine, but only as long as a person who does that is respectful of the Higher Powers of others. Does anyone see a simple, idolatrous problem here? But what about evangelicals just using the *methodology* the familiar spirit gave to Bill Wilson? Simple again: God condemns the source, and the approach is contrary to the way He wants to transform our lives. Furthermore, why turn to such a spiritually toxic system? Where are evangelical pastors’ heads in this?

“Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.” How is it that Christians, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, can be blind to very clear and simple teachings of Scripture? Here’s a seemingly tougher one: How is it that Solomon, the wisest man (other than Jesus) to walk the face

of the earth (1 Kgs 3:12), who was used of the Holy Spirit to write three books of the Bible, could be blind to the sin and gravity of idolatry and thus end up suffering the destructive consequences? The answer is that even his godly wisdom couldn’t keep his heart right before the Lord. In the Book of Job we’re told, “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom; and to depart from evil *is* understanding” (28:28). Solomon was astonishingly selective regarding *some* things in his life when it came down to “the fear of the Lord.” He didn’t have the *mind* of Christ in *all* things; that is, in his thinking, attitude, affection, etc. he was not devoted first and foremost to *obeying* God.

Wisdom and knowledge are terribly important; but devoid of one wanting the will of God they become the very things we distort in order to satisfy our own lusts. Pray for today’s evangelical shepherds who are succumbing to “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16) in their teaching, and especially for their sheep, that they (and we as well) may have the mind of Christ, which is a heart to know and *obey* the truth. TBC

Quotable

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have...” (Heb 13:5). Is it not deeply humiliating, beloved friends, that the best of Christians should need to be cautioned against the worst of sins? May the consecrated become covetous? Is it possible that the regenerate may drift into misers? Alas, what perils surround us, what tendencies are within us!...

Covetousness is a vice of a very degrading kind, and it is therefore the more surprising that those who have a renewed nature, and in whom the Spirit of God dwells, should require to be warned against bowing down their souls before it, and yet...once and again the saints are warned against “covetousness, which is idolatry.” As long as Israel is in the wilderness she is not out of danger from the golden calf. There is no superfluous text in the Bible....alas, the best of saints may be betrayed into the basest of sins...

It appears from our text that the children of God need also to be exhorted to cherish that most simple and natural of virtues—contentment....O Lord, thou knowest us better than we know ourselves, for thou understandest what poor, faulty things even thine own children are. The best of men are men at best. Unless the grace of God keep us every moment, and defend us from the temptations of our many foes, we would utterly perish from the way. Great need have we to say, “The Lord is my helper,” for if He be not so, we will fall a prey to covetousness and discontent.

C.H. Spurgeon

From the sermon, “A Vile Weed and a Fair Flower,” quoted in *Free Grace Broadcaster*, Winter 1999

Q&A

Question [composite of several]: I am deeply concerned about the increasing frequency of articles and comments in TBC that are harshly critical of Calvinism....To disagree with us on theological issues is understandable. But to verbally attack “us” (and that unnecessarily...as you did in the October 2001 Q&A section) because of our theological understanding is quite another. Please remember that we are your brethren in Christ, not a bunch of Moonies....And in the December 2001 issue of TBC an unidentified person made a blatantly inaccurate and defamatory

editorial comment following the Associated Press item of 11/14/01...that said, “Whether it’s the Catholic Inquisition or Calvin’s Geneva or one of today’s Islamic states, ‘a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still!’” The inescapable conclusion is that Calvinism is equally oppressive and erroneous as Roman Catholicism and the Taliban demonic Islamic “faith.”

Answer: Thank you for your letter. I appreciate your concern. However, you seem to have misunderstood what was said. For example, the editorial comment to which you object refers specifically and very pointedly to “Calvin’s Geneva,” *not* to Calvinism in general or to Calvinists. Yet you have made that connection.

I think, also, that if you would read again the editorial remark (made by T.A. McMahon) you would see that he is not equating even Calvin’s Geneva with the Taliban and the Inquisition—although Calvin was widely known as the “Protestant Pope of Geneva.” The only connection he has made between them is *the common attempt to force people to change their belief*.

We assume that what we write will be read carefully and with understanding and that our meaning will not be misunderstood. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. We can only write as clearly as we are able and hope that our readers will graciously credit us with what we actually say and not read into it any unintended accusations against their beliefs.

If you are familiar with “Calvin’s Geneva”—the scores who were burned at the stake, the floggings and torture and banishment of those who disagreed with John Calvin—then you would understand what was said and that Calvinism in general and Calvinists of today were not the subject. If you are not familiar with what occurred in Geneva under John Calvin, then please consult some accurate and unbiased historical accounts for yourself.

It grieves me also to be accused of “less than honest scholarship” and of using “lopsided, unbalanced” arguments “present[ed]...in such a prejudicial way...” and of being “anxious to prevent...an investigation” by individuals of the facts and of “attacking us [Calvinists] with misrepresentations and distortions.”

I repudiate such motives and tactics. If you can support these charges with specific examples, I will publicly repent and apologize.

Question: In one of your recent talks that I attended, you quoted “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” and “The wages of sin is death.” You then said that this means “separation from God forever.” On what grounds do you define “death” as an immortal existence? Re total annihilation vs. ever-burning hell, we do not believe that “the natural man” has innate immortality because of scriptures like: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezk 18:4); “but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt 10:28); and “He that converteth the sinner from error shall save his soul from death” (Jas 5:20). Please give scriptures proving that “mortal man” is really of and by himself immortal!

Answer: Unfortunately, your definition of death and immortality does not agree with the Bible. In the very day that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit they died—but they were not annihilated, as you define death in your attempt to escape the biblical statements about eternity in the “lake of fire.” What did it mean that Adam and Eve were dead, yet still living? Spiritual death brought instant separation from God the moment Adam and Eve rebelled against Him by eating of the forbidden fruit. In this earthly life, however, there is hope of that spiritual separation being ended by reconciliation with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for sin and “tast[ed] death for every man” (Heb 2:9). Those who reject Christ will experience “the second death” (Rv 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8), which is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (Rv 19:20; 20:10,14,15).

Your idea of “immortality” assumes that the lost must be immortal in order to exist eternally in hell. Not so. The word “immortal” occurs only once in the entire Bible (1 Tm 1:17) and is a description of God who alone is eternal, having neither beginning nor end: “Who alone hath immortality...” (1 Tm 6:16). The immortality that God gives to man refers to the new body that can never die (1 Cor 15:53,54), received by the redeemed. Angels, demons, Satan and mankind were created, and therefore have a beginning. There is not one verse in the Bible, however, to indicate that their existence ever ends—but endless existence is never referred to as “immortality.”

Jesus said, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (Jn 5:25). He was, of course, referring to the spiritually dead hearing the gospel and receiving eternal life. Those who reject the

gospel remain in spiritual death. Of them Jesus said, "The hour is coming [clearly a future "hour," because He leaves out the phrase "and now is"], in the which all that are in the graves...shall come forth" (Jn 5:28,29). This is the yet future resurrection of the saved at the Rapture to eternal life in heaven; and later (after the last rebellion at the end of the millennial reign of Christ) of the damned to eternal death in the lake of fire.

John clearly states, "I saw *the dead* [i.e., those who remained in spiritual death by rejecting the gospel], small and great, stand before God..." (Rv 20:12). This is at the end of the world, the final judgment. These people are both spiritually and physically dead, but they are not annihilated. Instead, they are standing before God and being judged according to their works to determine the level of punishment each will eternally endure. Those standing in that judgment have been taken from hell itself ("and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them" - Rv 20:13). The lost are "dead" and in hell, but they are still conscious. At the final judgment they are brought forth to stand before God, then cast into the lake of fire—and there is never a hint that their consciousness will ever end.

Christ tells us of these poor souls through the story of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus. This is not a parable, because He never used names in a parable, but is about real people who have lived on this earth and died. Even if you were to turn it into a parable, what would it illustrate? The very thing you don't want to believe, i.e., that the punishment of the lost is eternal: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rv 20:14). When "death and hell" are "cast into the lake of fire," the "rich man" to whom Christ referred will be among these doomed because he went to hell when he died: "...the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments..." (Lk 16:22,23).

In warning about hell, Christ referred to the "fire that never shall be quenched" (Mt 18:8,9; Mk 9:43-48). We are told that in the lake of fire "the beast and the false prophet ...shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rv 20:10). We have every reason therefore to believe that the lost who are taken from "death and hell" to the final judgment and then cast into the lake of fire will also be tormented in that flame forever. This can only be the "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41) which Christ warns man to avoid at all cost.

We dealt with this subject in detail in

the article for April 2001, which you may have saved or will find in the Reprints we offer with an Index.

Question: I've heard you say that after the Rapture everyone on earth will be united. To do what?

Answer: They will be united, first of all, in a world religion and they will worship both Satan and the Antichrist. Scripture teaches that everyone (except those who believe the gospel and reject Antichrist and as a result are executed for their faith) will worship "the dragon...and...the beast..." (Rv 13:2-4).

Secondly, the world will be united in a world government under Antichrist. He is given power "over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (v. 7) so that "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, [must] receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rv 13:16,17).

They will also be united in the "strong delusion" with which the Lord will afflict those who "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes 2:11,12). Clearly, mankind will unite under Antichrist to do his will, to pursue evil desires, and to oppose the true God.

Question: "Sleep" seems to be a key word in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. What does "sleep" mean in that context?

Answer: The term is actually "which sleep in Jesus" (v. 14). "Sleep" is often used to signify "death": "the maid is not dead, but sleepeth" (Mt 9:24); "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him ...[T]hey thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (Jn 11:11-14). Sleep is only necessary for bodies, which tire, but not for souls and spirits. Therefore, "sleep" can only refer to the body, which is "sleeping" in the grave awaiting the resurrection. While the body is dead and in the grave, the thinking person who lived in that body is still conscious, now freed from bodily limitations and constraints. The phrase "sleep in Jesus," refers to believers who have died trusting Christ, secure in Him for all eternity.

Though the rich man's dead body lay in the grave, his "soul and spirit" (1 Thes 5:23; Heb 4:12) were conscious in hell and in torment (Lk 16:19-31). But the Christian's soul and spirit, when separated from the

body through death, go immediately into the presence of Christ: "absent from the body,...present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8); "...having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil 1:23,24).

Unquestionably, Paul is expressing the desire for his soul and spirit to depart the flesh of his body in order to be with Christ in heaven. And just as obviously, he expects to be conscious in the presence of his Lord. To be "with Christ" could hardly mean anything to someone who was unconscious! Nor could Paul possibly consider an unconscious state of so-called "soul sleep" as being "far better" than remaining alive to serve Christ and the church!

The statement "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thes 4:14) refers to the souls and spirits of believers in Christ whose bodies have been "asleep" in the grave. These souls and spirits have been present with Him in heaven in that "far better" state of "absent from the body, present with the Lord." Paul declares that the souls and spirits of those who died with faith in Christ are reunited with their resurrected bodies, which are raised to life at the Rapture—then caught up to heaven with those in Christ who have not died but are likewise transformed into Christ's image at that glorious moment.

Endnotes

- 1 *Chicago Tribune*, 10/12/01.
- 2 *Newsday*, 8/31/97.
- 3 "Talking with David Frost," 5/30/97.
- 4 *Peoria Journal Star*, 11/17/01.
- 5 *Breakpoint*, 11/19/01.
- 6 *The News & Observer* (Raleigh NC), 12/21/01.
- 7 *Christianity Today*, cited in *Peoria Journal Star*, 11/17/01.
- 8 <www.family.org.pplace/pi/harrypotter/A0018569.cfm>

Come, Lord Jesus!

Dave Hunt

In 2 Samuel, beginning in Chapter 13, we are introduced to a tragic sequence of events in King David's life. God's fourfold judgment for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, is about to come upon him (2 Sm 12:1-4). David's son, Amnon, forces himself upon one of his sisters, Tamar, committing incest. David's favorite son, Absalom, takes vengeance and has Amnon killed, then flees from David's wrath.

Joab craftily engineers Absalom's return to Jerusalem, and the latter proceeds to turn the hearts of the people of Israel away from David. That accomplished, Absalom "sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron" (2 Sm 15:10). This was the city where David had first been crowned king (2 Sm 5:1-5).

Upon learning that Israel has rejected him in favor of Absalom, David leaves his throne to the usurper and flees from Jerusalem with his 600 mighty men and many servants (2 Sm 15:13-22). In allegiance to David, the priests Zadok and Abiathar, together with the Levites bearing the ark of the covenant, seek to join the procession fleeing Jerusalem.

David, however, demonstrates again why God said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:22). He tells the priests, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again...but if [not]...let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (2 Sm 15:25, 26). David then arranges for Ahimaaz the son of Zadok and Jonathan the son of Abiathar to act as spies and bring vital secret messages to him (15:27-29).

David is told that Ahithophel is part of Absalom's conspiracy. This genius had been David's chief advisor and was probably the most brilliant strategist the world has ever seen: "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom" (16:23). David instantly offers a prayer that goes to the heart of the matter. It is a model for us today of insight, brevity and effectiveness: "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (15:31).

Almost immediately, Hushai the Ar-

chite, loyal friend and longtime counselor, appears "with his coat rent, and earth upon his head" (v. 32). David recognizes in him the answer to his prayer: not a miracle but a means. Often we ask God to do for us what we could have a part in doing for ourselves if we would use what He provides! David tells Hushai, "...if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king...then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel" (vv. 33, 34). And so it would be.

Ahithophel urges Absalom, "Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed...and I will smite the king only" (17:1,2). Ahithophel's counsel was the only possibility. But playing on the reputation of David and his men as invincible warriors,

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth...

Psalms 46:9

Hushai cautions, "The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time...thou knowest thy father and his men [are] mighty men...chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps...thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people....Behold, he is hid now...[W]hen some...be overthrown...who-soever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. And he...whose heart is...of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men. Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee...as the sand that is by the sea for multitude...that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him...as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one" (17:7-12).

Absalom and his men are attracted by the thought of having hundreds of thousands united to attack David's 600 men, and they accept the counsel of Hushai that "the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel" (v. 14). The latter knows that if David and his men have time to get some food and rest, all the men of Israel will not be sufficient to defeat them.

Ahithophel is a tragic figure—a master strategist whose amazing career has been driven, not by love for the God of Israel and loyalty to David whom He has chosen to be

king, but by his love for outwitting Israel's enemies and being admired as the brains behind the phenomenal success God has given to David. The fact that the despised shepherd boy David defeated Goliath and the Philistines simply by faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has never gripped the soul of Ahithophel. For him, there are no more challenges in serving David after Israel's enemies have all been defeated—whereas guiding Absalom's revolt will bring him out of virtual retirement and into action again.

Ahithophel apparently sees in Absalom's rebellion the opportunity for new demands upon his genius. Here is an exciting task worthy of his remarkable talents. But now his wise counsel has been rejected. Knowing exactly what the outcome will be, he doesn't hesitate a moment: "And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass...gat him home...put his household in order, and hanged himself..." (17:23).

David, too, knows that all Israel is no match for his 600 incredible warriors, one of whom "lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time" (2 Sm 23:8); another "smote the Philistines until...his hand clave unto the sword:...and the people returned after him only to spoil" (23:10); still another slays 300 at one time (23:18). David pleads with his invincible army, "Deal gently for my sake with...Absalom" (18:5). And so it happens precisely as Ahithophel, Hushai and David have foreseen: under Absalom's leadership, Israel suffers a stunning defeat.

In spite of David's passionate plea, Joab kills Absalom in order to remove any further challenge to David. Israel is ashamed of her disloyalty to her rightful king but doesn't know what to do. Perhaps recognizing God's judgment upon his own sin, David weeps inconsolably in seclusion for Absalom: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sm 18:33).

Joab, who for all his perversity is a man of keen insight, rebukes David: "Joab...said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants...for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died... then it had pleased thee...if thou go not forth [to the people], there will not tarry one with thee this night....Then the king arose, and sat in the gate....And all the people came before the king: for Absalom had fled every man to his tent" (2 Sm 19:1-8).

The people remember that David, after all, has delivered them from the Philistines and other enemies and has ruled them well. With Absalom dead, the word spreads quickly,

“Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?” (v. 10).

Even though Absalom has been defeated, David will not go back to his throne in Jerusalem until the hearts of the people have changed toward him and they welcome his return. But David is not idle. He sends Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, to the elders of Judah to say unto them, “Ye are my brethren...my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?” (19:11, 12).

This appeal “bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.” Only then “the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king...” (19:9-15).

Surely this story has prophetic implications for the last days in which we find ourselves. In spite of those who claim that God is finished with Israel and that the church is the “new Israel,” scores of prophecies foretell a full and final restoration of Israel in her land, with the Messiah ruling over her forever on David’s throne. This restoration must be yet future because nothing that comes close to these prophetic promises has ever occurred in Israel’s history (we will add italics to highlight the permanence of these promises as further evidence that the fulfillment is yet future):

“He that scattered Israel will gather him...they shall come and sing in the height of Zion...they shall not sorrow *any more at all* (Jer 31:10-12)...the city [Jerusalem] shall be built to the Lord...it shall not be plucked up nor thrown down *any more for ever* (Jer 31:38,40)...As a shepherd seeketh out his flock...so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered...and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land,...And I will set up one shepherd over them,...even my servant David;...he shall be their shepherd....And they shall *no more* be a prey to the heathen,...they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.... (Ezk 34:12, 13, 23, 28). And I will...do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD...neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people *any more*....(Ezk 36:11, 15). A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:...This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden (Ezk 36:26, 35). I the LORD [will] build the ruined places and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it and I will do it....(Ezk 37:36). And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt;...they, and their children, and their

children’s children *for ever*: and my servant David shall be their prince *for ever*...My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them *for evermore* (Ezk 37:24-28). So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name *any more*....[T]he house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God *from that day and forward*....Neither will I hide my face *any more* from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD (Ezk 39:7, 22, 29).

David is one of the clearest Old Testament types of Christ. Therefore, we can see prophetic implications concerning the Second Coming of Christ in the incident from 2 Samuel cited above. This fact becomes even clearer in the passage from Ezekiel 37. That the promised Messiah is referred to as David reflects the fact that He is the ultimate “son of David” who will reign upon David’s throne in Jerusalem over restored Israel and the world forever.

...if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation.

2 Samuel 15:25

Zechariah gives further details in enlarging upon these prophecies: “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; ...Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations,...And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem...my God shall come, and all the saints with thee....And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,...” (Zec 14:1-5; 12:10a).

Clearly God is speaking—but what could He mean that He has been pierced by Israel? And why does He seem to refer to another when He goes on to say, “...and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son...” (12:10b)? They pierced “me,” says God, but they will mourn for “him.” Do not the words of Christ explain this when He says, “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30)?

Israel’s mourning can only be in remorse for having “pierced” her God. But how is that possible? Only if God himself had become a man through a virgin birth and had been rejected and crucified as Isaiah foretold: “Behold, a virgin shall

conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]” (Is 7:14); “For unto us a child is born,...a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder [i.e., He is the Messiah who will reign]: and his name shall be called...The mighty God, The everlasting Father,...” (Is 9:6); “He is despised and rejected...wounded for our transgressions...bruised for our iniquities:...and with his stripes we are healed” (Is 53:3-5). Furthermore, only on the basis of the Messiah, who is God himself, paying the penalty for our sins could Zechariah go on to say that, as a result of Israel’s recognition and mourning, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1).

Surely Israel stands today in relation to the coming “David” where she stood in relation to the original King David after his rejection. Upon being rejected, Jesus said, “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mt 23:39). That will indeed happen in the midst of Armageddon as Israel, attacked by the armies of the entire world under Antichrist, faces annihilation and cries out in desperation for her Messiah. He comes to rescue her and they see that He is a man who was pierced to the death and is risen again, the very Jesus they have despised and rejected, as their own prophet Isaiah foretold so clearly (Is 53).

Could we also find application for the church? Christ has promised to come and take us to His Father’s house of many mansions (Jn 14:2,3). Could it be that, as David waited for Israel to invite him back, Christ will return only when His bride earnestly calls upon Him to do so? The Absaloms of this world have captured the hearts of Christians everywhere. We are in the midst of apostasy. The last thing many Christians want is the Rapture because it would interfere with their earthly plans.

Christ foretold that “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (Mt 25:5, 6). *Is it not time for that cry to resound throughout the church?* Could this be why Revelation ends, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come....Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rv 22:17, 20)? *When will the church “speak a word for bringing back the king”?* Let us who “love his appearing” (2 Tm 4:8) sound the midnight cry: “Behold the bridegroom cometh! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” And let us urge many others to join us in this plea to our Savior. TBC

Quotable

It is hard enough to fight the devil, the world and the flesh, without private differences in our own camp. But there is one thing that is even worse than controversy, and that is false doctrine tolerated...and permitted....There are times when controversy is not only a duty but also a benefit, and it is a plain scriptural duty to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.”

The apostle Paul...was beaten with rods, stoned and left for dead, chained and left in a dungeon, dragged before magistrates, barely escaped assassination, and so pronounced in him were [his convictions] that it came to a point when the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica declared: “*These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.*”

God pity those pastors and Christian leaders whose main objective is the growth of their organizations and whose main concern is lest their “boats be rocked.” **THEY MAY ESCAPE CONTROVERSY, BUT THEY WILL NOT ESCAPE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST** [emphasis his].

J.C. Ryle (1817-1900), Anglican bishop who withstood Rome

Q&A

Question: One of my favorite hymns says, “Amazing love, how can it be, that thou, my God, shouldst die for me!” It goes on to say, “the Immortal dies!” How could God die? And if He did, who held the universe together?

Answer: Christ is both God and man in one Person. Surely He didn’t cease to be God when He died for our sins. Then did God die? Some suggest that Christ died as a man but not as God. But there is no biblical basis to separate His deity from His humanity so that Jesus did *this* as a man and *that* as God. We dare not restate Scripture in a way that lessens the mystery of the Incarnation.

Paul writes, “[G]reat is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...” (1 Tm 3:16). Everything that Jesus did was a manifestation of God as a man. As God manifest in the flesh, He rebuked the storm; as God manifest in the flesh, He died on the cross.

If Jesus were not God, the great I AM, He could not be our Savior. The God of Israel declares, “...beside me there is no saviour”

(Is 43:11). The babe born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem was “The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Is 9:6). Were He less, He could not pay the infinite penalty through His death for the sins of the world.

Could the Immortal die? In fact, only the Immortal had life to lay down. But if God died, who held the universe together? The Bible doesn’t say “God died.” God is a triune Being. Christ, who is God and man in one Person, died, but the Father and the Holy Spirit didn’t “die.” Yes, Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30). But “the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn 4:14); the Father did not incarnate and suffer crucifixion. The eternal Son, one with the Father, became a man “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9).

Death is a state of separation, not unconsciousness. “In hell” the rich man “lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom...” (Lk 16:23,24). “Abraham’s bosom” (16:22) was surely the “paradise” where Christ promised the believing thief on the cross that they would be together that very day (Lk 23:43)—fully conscious as were the rich man, Lazarus and Abraham. Surely Jesus could sustain the universe from paradise!

A more difficult question would be, “How did Jesus, as a fetus in Mary’s womb or a babe nursing at her breast, run the universe?” We must accept the Incarnation as a mystery beyond human understanding. Jesus told Nicodemus, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (Jn 3:13). Whether in grave or womb, the incarnate Son of *man* was also “in heaven” because He is God eternally omnipresent.

Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). Never was there a time when Christ was not fully God. The same Jesus who did the miracles also died on the cross and is now in heaven. Our Lord Jesus Christ who is God and man in one Person, died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures—and this is the gospel whereby we are saved if we believe it sincerely in our hearts (1 Cor 15:1-4; Rom 10:9).

Question: I believe that Islam is a religion of tolerance and peace. Your criticism of Islam contradicts our President and other high-level members of government here and abroad as well as both Christian and Muslim leaders. Isn’t it time to admit you’re wrong?

Answer: Presumably, non-Muslims who equate Islam with peace and tolerance are simply ignorant. Muslim leaders, however, who do so are knowingly saying whatever is expedient for the furtherance of Islam’s goal of world dominion. They know many verses like this in the Qur’an: “When you meet the unbelievers, then it is smiting of the necks [strike off their heads]...” (Surah 47:4). Muslims have historically spread Islam through conquest, whenever and wherever they could. It is either confess that “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet” or lose one’s head. As Islamic authority Ahmad Hasan az-Zayat states in *Al-Azhar*, Cairo, Egypt, “Holy war [*jihad*] is...a divine obligation. The Muslim [knows] his religion is a Qur’an and a sword...”

All nineteen terrorists who attacked America last September 11 were devout Muslims acting “in the name of Allah.” Logically, I thought the attack would expose Islam’s violent nature. Instead, Muslim leaders have become popular speakers in high demand and Islam is being hailed as a religion of peace and tolerance. More than 30,000 Americans have converted to Islam since 9/11/01! ¹

One such speaker is Imam Fawaz Damra. A local TV station aired a tape of Damra promoting “a Palestinian Holy War” with “rifles [aimed] at the sons of monkeys and pigs, the Jews.” The Qur’an declares that some Jews were turned into apes and swine (Surah 5:60). Damra called the broadcast an “outrageous” attempt to “discredit” him—but the exposé didn’t reduce his popularity. ²

As in all Muslim countries, in the hundreds of Islamic schools across America (many subsidized by Saudi Arabia) Israel’s existence is not admitted on any map. The Washington Islamic Academy just outside Washington, D.C. has 1,300 students. Its eleventh-graders study from a textbook which states that on “the Day of Judgment... Muslims will fight and kill Jews, who will hide behind trees that say, ‘Oh Muslim, Oh servant of Allah, here is a Jew hiding behind me. Come here and kill him.’” ³ These are *Muhammad’s* words!

On the Oprah Winfrey show of October 5, 2001, Queen Rania of Jordan said, “The important thing is the spirit of Islam. That is all about tolerance...and human dignity. ...Islam...doesn’t impose anything on other people...” She must know that Muhammad said, “He who relinquishes his faith, kill him” and that, in obedience, Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries where *shari’a* (Islamic law) is enforced execute Muslims who turn to another religion. Muhammad

said there could be only one religion in the world. He wiped out the Jews in Arabia and no Jew is allowed there today. In Saudi Arabia only a Muslim may be a citizen; no non-Muslim place of worship may be built and non-Islamic worship is forbidden, even in the sanctity of one's home. This is "tolerance"?

I challenge anyone to give *even one* example of where Islam has *ever* brought peace and tolerance. There are none. There are more revolutions, assassinations and terrorism in Muslim countries than in all the rest of the world, Muslim against Muslim. From 1948 to 1973 there were 80 revolutions in the Islamic world, 30 of them successful, including the murder of 22 heads of state. Egypt's Anwar Sadat, a Muslim, was assassinated by the Muslim Brotherhood. East Pakistan rebelled against West Pakistan in 1971 and became Bangladesh. In the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, 1,000 tons of poison gas were used and deaths numbered more than in World War I. This is peace?

Sudan's Muslim government in the north has killed about 2 million black non-Muslims in the south, enslaved thousands who are sold to other Muslim countries (Khadaffi buys them for \$15 each), and brutally oppresses and tortures in trying to force everyone into "peaceful and tolerant" Islam. In Nigeria, where sixteen of the nineteen northern states have adopted *shari'a*, thousands of non-Muslims are being killed and hundreds of churches burned down. In Indonesia, Christians are being killed daily and churches and villages are being destroyed by Muslims who are determined to force everyone into Islam. This is tolerance?

In Algeria about 100,000 people have been slaughtered in the last decade, Muslim against Muslim. Our task in Afghanistan will be to bring peace among its warring factions. The rival warlords are all Muslims who kill one another in the name of Allah. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had to call upon non-Muslims to bring peace. If Islam is peace, why must "infidels" obtain it for Muslims!

There are repeated appeals for tolerance toward Muslims in this country. But those who make such appeals never mention the oppression and slaughter of non-Muslims in Muslim countries. How much longer do we accept this one-way street? Shouldn't every mosque in the West be shut down and allowed to reopen only when Muslim countries provide comparable freedom? Tell your Senator and Congressman!

Muhammad claimed that Allah had

commanded him to "fight against all people until all confess there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet." Islam must take over the world and that includes America. Abdulrahman Alamoudi, director of the American Muslim Council, told a conference of the Islamic Association for Palestine, "[T]he United States will become a Muslim country, even if it takes 100 years." Said Alamoudi, "I have been labeled by the media in New York a supporter of Hamas [part of Arafat's *fatah*, and responsible for most of the terrorism in Israel]. I wish they added that I am also a supporter of Hezbollah [Party of Allah]." ⁴ The latter has been responsible for countless Katyusha rocket attacks upon Israel, the kidnaping and murder of many Americans, and for the bombing of the American Marines barracks in October 23, 1983 causing the death of 241 Americans.

The freedoms we grant Muslims in America are being used to destroy those very freedoms. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), with ties to terrorists, is organizing Muslim voters: "Our goal...is to register more than 100,000 new Muslim voters over the next eight months." Ibrahim Hooper, CAIR spokesman, explained that he "wants to see the United States become a Muslim country." ⁵

Don't be deceived by the peaceful face Islam currently shows in America. Professor James A. Beverley of Toronto writes, "In 1999 I had lunch with an American whose identity I must conceal lest I place his life in renewed danger...[Because] he no longer believed in Islam...he abandoned his faith. As a result, he received death threats—not in Sudan, or Libya, or Iraq, but in the United States." ⁶

Islam is "peace and tolerance"? Never has such a blatant and destructive lie been believed by so many. Every Christian must see that this lie is refuted and the truth about Islam made known as widely as possible. Otherwise the consequences will be horrible beyond our imagination.

Endnotes

1. *The Washington Times*, Jan. 16, 2002.
2. Rachel Zoll, "Pre-attack rhetoric coming back to haunt Muslim clerics" (*Daily News*, Oct. 27, 2001), p 20.
3. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,4666100,00.html>.
4. http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=26545.
5. *Ibid*.
6. James A. Beverley, "Is Islam a Religion of Peace?" (*Christianity Today*, Jan. 7, 2002), pp 41-42.

"One Thing"

Dave Hunt

The above phrase appears seventeen times in sixteen verses in Scripture. Two of these occurrences concern the *one thing* Christ demanded of the rabbis as a condition of his answering their questions: whether the baptism of John was of God (Mt 21:24; Lk 20:3,4), and whether it was lawful to do good on the sabbath (Lk 6:9). If they were not willing to be honest in such basic matters, He would be wasting His time trying to reason with them. He knew the rabbis were not sincere but were only trying to find something for which they could accuse him.

We would save much time and effort if we were to follow Christ's example. Yes, Peter exhorts us to "be ready always to give an answer to every man" who asks a reason for our faith (1 Pt 3:15). Paul, however, admonishes, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle..., apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;..." (2 Tm 2:23-25). We must distinguish between those who have a genuine hunger for truth and those who only want to argue and would waste our time.

There is also *one thing* that every Christian, no matter how young in the faith, must know and to which he must bear witness. The man born blind, to whom Christ gave sight, told the critical rabbis simply, "...*one thing* I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (Jn 9:25). This physical healing was followed by a spiritual healing of the darkness of sin when Christ revealed himself to him: "Jesus...said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said...it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him" (Jn 9:35-39).

Testifying to the *one thing*, the new believer grows in appreciation of Christ and what He has done. Appreciation begets worship, and the Lord responds by revealing Himself in ever greater measure in a fellowship of love that overflows in fruitful witnessing. Sadly, some believers are still babes after many years. Their first simple faith has scarcely grown, and their appreciation of Christ is so meager that they

have little of Him to share with others. For them witnessing is painful rather than the overflow of a heart filled with Christ's love.

The temporal physical healings Christ performed speak of that which is spiritual and eternal. Commissioning Paul to bring spiritual sight and life through the gospel, Christ sent him to both Jews and Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). Every Christian has the same high calling, yet how few fulfill it!

Could it be that the great lack in our lives is a deeper appreciation and love for Christ expressed in continual true worship from the heart? We can be so busy *servicing others*

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

Psalms 42:1

in the name of Christ that we have no time to commune with and *worship Him*. That was Martha's problem, who we are told was "cumbered about much serving..." In contrast, her sister Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word." When Martha complained to Jesus about Mary not helping her, our Lord replied, "...*one thing* is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:38-42). Unquestionably, Christ puts worship ahead of service.

Surely what Christ calls the *one thing needful* must still be of paramount importance to each of us today. In contrast, the *one thing* Peter mentions seems a bit puzzling: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this *one thing*, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pt 3:8). Why does Peter (inspired of the Holy Spirit) attach such importance to this particular information?

Some have tried to tie Peter's exhortation to the rather mysterious prophecy for Israel, "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight" (Hos 6:2). Equating one day with a thousand years, and counting from Israel's rejection and crucifixion of Christ, some have suggested that the Second Coming, when Israel is raised up from apostasy to

faith and Christ's thousand-year millennial reign on David's throne begins, would occur around A.D. 2032 (and thus the Rapture around 2025). That may be—but there is no proof. Such an interpretation seems rather like the very date-setting against which we are warned!

What Peter says sounds profoundly like that which Moses declared: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Ps 90:4). This statement seems to negate the above speculative interpretation of Hosea 6:2. Instead, it says something of which we can be absolutely certain and which agrees with Peter's declaration. Surely *one thing* that every person who would know the true God (Jer 9:23,24) must realize is the fact that the Creator exists outside of time.

What is to us a day—or a thousand years, yesterday when it is past, or a fleeting watch in the night—is all the same to God. Time is part of the physical universe, while the God who created all from nothing is no part of creation. Nor is the universe (as Eastern mysticism and most occult systems teach) an extension of or part of God. Time is meaningless in eternity. It did not exist prior to "the beginning" in Genesis 1:1, and will not exist in the new heavens and new earth.

Peter is saying that understanding this *one thing* is foundational to our faith. Why? Because it tells us that God's foreknowledge leaves man free to make genuine choices. The fact that God has known from eternity past what each person who would ever exist would ever think, say or do is in no way the *cause* of these things. To suggest (as some have) that foreknowledge and predestination/ election (Rom 8:29; 1 Pt 1:2) are identical (i.e., that God only knows what will happen in the future because He has willed it) is to deny His omniscience. We have dealt with this subject in the past (see Q&A, Feb and Apr 2001) and do so in more depth in my new book, *What Love Is This?*, so we won't deal with it further here.

Joshua presents *one thing* more that is equally instructive for us today. Among his last words to Israel is the comforting reminder that "not *one thing* hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you" (Jos 23:14; and Solomon in 1 Kgs 8:56). Joshua goes on to warn Israel, however, that "as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon

you all evil things,...” (Jos 23:15). In this day of psychological seduction when everything must be “positive” and anything “negative” must be avoided, surely we need more than ever to be reminded that the God who brings promised blessings must be just as true to His Word in bringing the judgment upon sin which He has also promised. This fact is seen in the last two glimpses we have of Christ in Scripture: first on a “white horse” and finally on a “great white throne.”

Astride the white horse He confronts, judges and destroys Antichrist and the world’s armies at Armageddon. On the great white throne He judges the lost who have rejected His sacrifice for their sins and are all condemned by their own words and works. “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” (Rv 19:11); “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away;...and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rv 20:11-15). All before the great white throne are “dead” and have come from “hell.” Thus the issue is not salvation but the punishment which they are to endure eternally. Their final judgment is inescapable and eternal because it flows from God’s righteousness and integrity and is according to His immutable Word. Jesus warned those who heard Him, “the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge [you] in the last day” (Jn 12:48).

David, shepherd and sweet psalmist of Israel, prophet and king who offered priestly praise, is one of the clearest types of Christ in all of Scripture. He had so much to commend him. His great courage—even as a youth to grapple with and defeat a lion and bear (1 Sm 17:32-36) and to confront and kill a giant before whom the armies of Israel covered in fear—was founded upon a proven and unshakable faith in the God of Israel: “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps 27:1).

David was a man of great wisdom and compassion, and his tremendous leadership ability was coupled with humility. Although David sinned grievously, God called him “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22; 1 Sm 13:14). We understand why when we

read his psalms. David’s passion was that *one thing* which centuries later Mary of Bethany (Jn 11:1, Lk 10:42) would also desire: “*One thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple” (Ps 27:4).

The *beauty* of the Lord! What intimacy David must have had with the infinite Creator to speak in such terms! Surely he was sitting at the feet of the God of Israel, the Lord of hosts, as surely as a simple worshiper named Mary centuries later would sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His word. We ought to do the same.

When have you and I last exulted in the *beauty* of our God who created beauty and gave us the capacity to appreciate it? But God is a Spirit (Jn 4:24); David was referring to a spiritual beauty more wonderful

Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty:...

Isaiah 33:17a

than anything seen with the human eye and which can only be appreciated with the eye of faith. Only then can the prayer expressed by the hymn be realized in our lives: “Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me...”

Paul’s passion was the same; nothing could compare with knowing Christ, nor could anything be allowed to stand in the way of reaching that goal: “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung...” (Phil 3:8). His heart’s cry was “That I may know him” (v. 10)!

But Paul takes us a bit further in his desire to experience “the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death...that I may apprehend [lay hold upon] that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Paul expresses the overriding passion of his life: “...this *one thing* I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13, 14).

We discussed this high calling in *TBC*’s

May 2001 article. As Peter explains, God has “called us unto his eternal glory” (1 Pt 5:10), the full restoration in Christ of all that was lost in Adam—and much more. Paul’s one great desire was to attain to the fullness of all that God desired for him. That desire reflected David’s passion. To spend time in Christ’s presence meditating upon Him causes us to become more like Him in every way (2 Cor 3:18) until finally, when we meet Him in glory, “we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:1-3).

There is *one thing* which was literally applicable to a particular man but which is only spiritually applicable to us today. To the rich young ruler who claimed he wanted to follow Christ, our Lord declared, “*One thing* thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me”

(Mk 10:21; Lk 18:22). Clearly, the issue was not the young man’s salvation, but rather service to Christ. The gospel does not require selling *anything*, much less giving *everything* to the poor in order to be saved. Works have nothing whatsoever to do with salvation: “For by grace are ye saved, through faith;...not of works...” (Eph 2:8, 9).

Nor was Christ pronouncing a rule which everyone must follow. He was exposing this young man’s heart; and, sadly, his love for his riches kept him from following our Lord and from the heavenly reward he might have gained.

What would the Lord say to each of us today? Is there *one thing* standing in the way of true worship and serving Him fully? *One thing*, perhaps, that looms so large that it prevents Christ from having preeminence? (Col 1:18).

Does He say to us through His Word, “*One thing* thou lackest”? Perhaps we are not serving the Lord as we should, not spending as much time as we should in personal Bible study and prayer. There could be many ways in which we fall short. But what would the Lord point out as the *one thing* that might be the key to everything else?

May we be able to say with David and Mary and Paul, “*One thing* do I desire: to love You more, Lord, to know You better, to be able to present You and Your truth more clearly, to be all and only what You have planned for me from eternity past!”

Could any true Christian desire anything less? **TBC**

Quotable

The more we realize...that we are all bought with the same precious blood, that we are all in the same Spirit, that the same life of the risen Jesus is in us, that we are all heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and shall before long enter into the glory of God—if these things were more present to our hearts, how loving, kind, and forbearing would the children of God be!

We are left here to be representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world....All the members of the heavenly family should remember the precious blood that bought them, and love one another whilst on the way to their Father's house.

The George Müller Treasury, quoted in *Free Grace Broadcaster*, Winter 1997, pp. 29, 30

Human learning and great abilities are common to heathens as well as to Christians; and great actions are performed as well by infidels as by believers. *It is love only which proves the sure test of a sound Christian....*“God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16).

John Arndt (1555-1621), quoted in *Free Grace Broadcaster*, Winter 1997, p. 33

Q&A

Question: In your February 2001 newsletter you stated that a sovereign God does not overcome a person's free will in regard to justification. But if God has not irresistibly overcome my will, why did I believe in Christ and someone else didn't? If I am able to believe the gospel without God regenerating me first, couldn't I take credit for believing and boast in heaven?

Answer: Salvation is a free gift of God's grace for which Christ paid the full price on Calvary. Have you ever taken credit for any gift someone has given you? Wouldn't it be equally absurd for a helpless, lost sinner to take any credit or to boast for simply receiving God's free gift of eternal life?

God has provided salvation in Christ, offers it freely, and man is responsible to accept or reject it: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life;...” (Jn 3:36); “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,...” (Acts 16:31); “...the gospel of Christ...is the power

of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;...” (Rom 1:16); “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely...” (Rv 22:17); etc.

In salvation, God shows no favoritism. He “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16); and God “commandeth all men everywhere to repent:...” (Acts 17:30, emphasis added). He would not command us to repent if we couldn't.

Why do some believe and others do not? Either God has from eternity past predestined some to heaven and others to hell; or God has given man the ability to choose so that from his heart he can believe in Christ and love God and receive God's love.

The Bible leaves no doubt which of these is true. It declares that God desires “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4) and “is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pt 3:9). I tremble for anyone who blasphemes God who *is love* (1 Jn 4:8) by declaring that He created billions of people without any hope and predestined them to eternal doom!

Question: Have you read *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* by Norman G. Finkelstein? He could hardly be accused of anti-Israel bias. Yet he refutes Joan Peters's book you offer, *From Time Immemorial*, calls it “a threadbare hoax” and proves it. Shouldn't you pull Peters's book from your catalog, apologize to your readers and give a full refund to all who bought it?

Answer: No. I have read Finkelstein's book. That his parents survived the death camps is no proof that he would not be biased against Israel. Many “liberal” Jews around the world oppose Israel. Finkelstein is one of them: His thesis is that “Zionism is a kind of Romantic nationalism fundamentally at odds with liberal values...” (p. 1).

His critique of Peters's immigration statistics seems convincing. His anti-Israel bias, however, is so blatant that there is good reason to doubt whatever he says. Even statements by Israeli soldiers (saying they don't hate Palestinians and regret having to use force) are turned against them. Finkelstein insists that their concern is not for Palestinians but for the damage done to their own souls (pp. 114-16). He likens Israeli soldiers to the Nazis who, after torturing their victims all day, claimed they had nothing personal against Jews but were just doing their duty (pp. 116-20)!

His prejudice screams from every page in absurdities, such as the claim that the very existence of a “historical homeland of the Jewish people” would render “the Jewish people ‘alien’ to every other state/territorial unit, thus sanctioning the claims of anti-Semitism” (p. 14). Doesn't everyone, from American Indian to Finn to Zulu, claim a “historical homeland”? He even supports Arab imperialism, which claims the entire Middle East for the “great Arab nation,” with no room in it for Israel to exist!

Finkelstein echoes the preposterous PLO Charter: “Zionism is a political movement organically associated with international imperialism and antagonistic to all action for liberation and to progressive movements....It is racist...and fascist...a geographical base for world imperialism placed strategically in the midst of the Arab homeland to combat the hopes of the Arab nation for...progress....Claims of historical or religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history....” Talk about revisionism!

Finkelstein rejects the very existence of a nation called Israel “whose proprietorship would be Jewish” (p. 10). Isn't Germany under German proprietorship? Or France under French? But it is not allowed that there should be a Jewish state which would serve as the homeland for a people who were repeatedly thrown out of their land by aggressors and for centuries persecuted and killed all over the world!

Yes, Israel has flaws—but compare its treatment of Arabs living inside Israel with the brutal abuse of Jews in Muslim countries for 1,300 years! Even today no Jew can set foot in Saudi Arabia or be a citizen in any Muslim country, whereas about 16 percent of Israel's voting citizens are Arabs. If they could choose, most “Palestinians” would much rather live under Israeli rule than under the PLO, where raw hatred of Israel is promoted from earliest childhood and anyone accused of “collaboration” with Israel is lynched. Finkelstein gives none of these facts favorable to Israel.

He condemns Israel for favoring Jews who have endured centuries of persecution worldwide. Doesn't Switzerland favor the Swiss, Turkey the Turks, etc.? Sadly, Israel discriminates against Jews who believe in Jesus and will not allow them to immigrate and become citizens. This is wrong—but the solution is not to destroy Israel.

Finkelstein blames Israel for every problem. Even the June 1967 Six-Day War is blamed upon “Israel's provocation of Nasser...” (p. 124). In May-June 1967 our family was in Egypt and saw firsthand that

the entire Arab world was preparing to annihilate Israel. From Israel's very inception the Arabs had sworn to exterminate her. On May 15, 1948, the Arab League declared, "The Arabs intend to conduct a war of extermination and momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades." (That determination is even stronger today.) To Egypt's National Assembly March 26, 1964, Nasser denounced "the very existence of Israel." On March 8, 1965, he boasted, "We shall enter [Palestine] with its soil saturated in blood." Shortly thereafter he declared, "We aim at...the eradication of Israel."

On May 16, 1967, Nasser ordered UN peace-keeping forces to leave the Sinai. By May 18, Egyptian troops were massed in the Sinai on Israel's border and Syrian troops had done the same on the Golan. The "Voice of the Arabs" broadcast boasted that "The sole method we shall apply against Israel is total war, which will result in the extermination of Zionist existence." On May 20, the Syrian Defense Minister declared, "Our forces are now entirely ready...to explode the Zionist presence in the Arab homeland...to enter into a battle of annihilation." On May 22, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to all Israeli shipping. It was an act of war. On May 27, Nasser threatened, "Our basic objective will be the destruction of Israel. ...We will not accept any coexistence with Israel..." On May 30, he announced, "The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are poised on the borders of Israel...while standing behind us are the armies of Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan and the whole Arab nation..." Iraq's president thundered, "This is our opportunity to wipe out the ignominy which has been with us since 1948. Our goal is clear—to wipe Israel off the map." In fact, no Arab map then or now shows Israel's existence. About 250,000 troops and more than 2,000 tanks and 700 aircraft were poised around Israel for the imminent battle. [Mitchell G. Bard, *Myths and Facts*, 2001, pp. 80-82.]

Yet Finkelstein gives none of this evidence and insists that Israel provoked a war of annihilation! In fact, it was Israel's mere existence, from its very beginning, that had provoked the Arabs' hatred. Israel had no option but to strike first.

This book purports to tell the truth about the conflict in the Middle East. Yet there is not a word about Arafat or his infamous great uncle, Haj Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in the 1920s, nothing about the terrorism and riots he organized against Jewish settlers, his partnership with Hitler and Himmler, his *fatwah* calling upon Arabs to "rise as one man and kill the Jews

wherever you find them," his unblushing boast that the Arabs had the honor of finishing what Hitler had begun, etc. Nothing is said about the PLO, its hatred and terrorism, its torture and murder of thousands in Lebanon, the continual threats to exterminate Israel. Frankly, I can't trust anything Finkelstein has written.

Question: I am sadly disappointed to find that everything you have to offer is for sale, and compelled to correct you as a Christian. I can see making money to support your ministry, but when even your old issues and newsletters are for sale, this is not biblical. I sincerely desired to study your beliefs and divide the word of truth.

Answer: You are disappointed that everything The Berean Call offers is for sale. In fact, that is not the case. The newsletter is sent out free to a mailing list of about 100,000, including more than 5,000 international at about 40 cents each. Not only do we not charge a subscription; we don't ask for a contribution, trusting the Lord for that. About 2 percent of our readers contribute, carrying the load for the rest.

Nor do we "sell" old issues. Anyone desiring a particular copy of a back issue is welcome to a reprint of it at no cost. Also if information is desired on a particular subject, we are happy to send it free, so long as we have something in our files that would be helpful.

By "old copies," perhaps you meant our Reprints and Index. These are not old, left-over copies. Each year all prior newsletter articles and Q&As are reformatted, printed and packaged, including an updated and comprehensive index. They come binder ready with labels, and to date they cover 16 years of articles and Q&As. Yes, we do need to charge for this expensive and time-consuming project, and many people appreciate having it available.

We pay for airtime on more than 300 radio stations, ask for nothing from listeners, and receive very little from them. We also provide a lending-library service making most of our books and videos available to anyone in the U.S. (Requirements: a three-item limit, return in three weeks and pay only return postage.)

We tithe 10 percent of our gross profit on sales. This is given out in books, videos and other materials sent gratis to many prisoners and overseas individuals and ministries who cannot afford to pay for them, as well as cash contributions to needy ministries.

I trust that you now have a better understanding of our vision for The Berean Call and how it is prayerfully operated in dependence upon the Lord, together with the prayers and gifts of God's people.

Evangelicals & Catholics: The Next Generation?

T.A. McMahon

Recently I returned from a conference sponsored by the Wheaton College Graduate School Department of Bible and Theology and InterVarsity Press. Titled "Catholics and Evangelicals in Conversation," the event brought together 14 theologians from both traditions, including Catholics Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, and Richard John Neuhaus, co-ordinator with Charles Colson of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (ECT). Leading evangelicals included Timothy George, Dean of Beeson Divinity School, and J.I. Packer, well-known author of *Knowing God*. However, before sharing my observations concerning the significance of the conference and the increasing influence of ECT, let me share my experiences with the students of Wheaton College.

First of all, I took nearly all of my meals on campus just for the opportunity of dialoguing with students. Only a few with whom I talked attended the conference, but all of them thought it was a very good thing to build relationships between Catholics and evangelicals. The closest point to an objection came from a student who felt the conference was no more important than a "conversation between Baptists and Methodists." That was a stunner to me. Was I talking to young people whose thinking was the exception rather than the rule, on a campus with a widespread reputation for being evangelical? To get a better representation, at the end of the conference I drafted a survey and spent the afternoon roaming the campus interviewing about 100 more students.

I asked them to categorize themselves one of three ways: a) they knew almost nothing about Roman Catholicism; b) they had a general understanding about what Catholics believed; or c) they were pretty knowledgeable about the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Only a few felt they knew little about the Catholic Church; the overwhelming majority put themselves in category "c." Then I asked, "Based upon what you know about Roman Catholicism, do you believe Catholics need to be evangelized, i.e., presented the biblical gospel of salvation?" Two said yes. A few acknowledged "probably," and one thought it wouldn't be a bad idea. The rest responded with an emphatic *no*, including a young man who was a former Catholic.

My final question (given the responses,

in retrospect it seemed inane) was this: "Have you ever had a class here in which you were taught about Roman Catholicism, and then encouraged to witness to Catholics?" All but one student said no. Excitedly I asked the young man to tell me the name of the class and his professor. "Oh," he said, "it wasn't a class—it was my soccer coach!"

I rarely get depressed, but this moved me to the fringe of that condition. Could it really be that this next generation of evangelicals is convinced there is *no significant difference* between Catholics and biblically born-again Christians? Even my talks with some students who were attending the conference from Covenant College, Taylor University, and Moody Bible Institute indicated a lack of real understanding of the gospel of Rome. But how prevalent is this? (I would greatly appreciate anyone with access to a school claiming to be evangelical to try out my survey on campus and let me know the results.) More importantly, what might be the consequences of such a lack of understanding among our young people? Before we address those questions, however, let's clarify the fundamental (and *critical*) difference between Roman Catholic salvation and what the Bible teaches about salvation.

Catholic salvation, i.e., qualifying for heaven, is a lifelong process. It begins with the sacrament of Baptism; nearly all of one billion Roman Catholics are baptized as infants. Catholics refer to their baptism as the sacrament through which they are "born again" or justified and through which they first receive "sanctifying grace." This grace is necessary in order to be *eligible* to earn salvation, which is why Catholics claim to be "saved by grace alone."

The sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation are crucial to staying and growing in the state of sanctifying grace. Also contributing to this salvation *process* are a host of extrabiblical teachings and practices (liturgies, indulgences, sacramentals, good works, sufferings, penances, rituals, prayers, Mass and Holy Day of Obligation attendance, etc.) which are said to bolster one in grace. All that, however, can be lost by committing a "mortal sin," which *eradicates* the sanctifying grace required for entrance into heaven. If a Catholic dies without sanctifying grace, he or she is condemned to hell for eternity. Upon confession and a priest's absolution of a mortal sin or sins, Catholics are restored to the state of sanctifying grace and rejustified. Upon their death they enter purgatory, where they must be purified from all their temporal sins through suffering its purging flames.

Roman Catholicism teaches that every

person must *become* perfectly righteous before he or she can enter heaven. Meritorious works and the expiation of one's own sins contribute to one's *infused* righteousness necessary for eternal life with God.

My survey of the Wheaton students did not include details of *what* they knew about Roman Catholicism, so whether or not they really comprehended the basics of Catholic salvation is uncertain. On the other hand, if they indeed understood Rome's teachings (as most claimed), I'm very concerned about their understanding of the biblical gospel.

The gospel of salvation as taught in the Scriptures is exceedingly profound, yet very simple. Although created originally in perfection and without sin, Adam and Eve nevertheless sinned against God, bringing condemnation upon all mankind. The divine penalty imposed upon all sinners is death, i.e., separation from God for eternity; and because He is perfect in justice, the penalty had to be paid. Yet God is also perfect in love and mercy; therefore He became a Man in order to save mankind through His perfect life and substitutionary death. The Bible proclaims that all who turn to God and by faith receive His gift of salvation are *declared* perfectly righteous in His sight and will spend eternity in heaven with Him. What Christ accomplished on the cross (being God's perfect Lamb who alone could take away the sin of the world) is *imputed* to everyone who puts his trust in Him.

A number of important issues separate Roman Catholicism from evangelical Christianity. However, the most critical issue presents a chasm so wide that it cannot be bridged by any ecumenical span—and that is "faith."

The Bible states repeatedly and unequivocally that a person is saved by faith and only by faith. The reason, like the gospel itself, is simple: only Jesus, who is both God and Man, could pay the infinite penalty required by God's justice. Faith in Him and His finished work on the cross, then, is mankind's *only* means of salvation. That is not only what the Bible teaches, but logic and reason demand the same conclusion. What can we do to assist in something which God says He alone can do and has done? Any such attempt to add anything to Christ's perfect atonement is a *rejection* of God's salvation. Yet Roman Catholicism majors on "finishing" the finished work of Christ. It teaches that man must merit heaven through his own "grace-assisted" good works, sufferings, obedience to Church laws, receiving the sacraments, expiating his own sins, and on and on. Furthermore, the Catholic Church claims that it alone possesses the treasury from which

are dispensed the graces necessary for salvation.

Again, it troubles me deeply that our next generation of evangelicals appears unable (or unmotivated) to discern between the gospel Paul preached, which alone saves, and what he called “another gospel,” which can save no one. That false “gospel,” by the way, was an attempt to add circumcision to faith in order to be justified. Paul was so troubled by this *one* addition that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he condemned all who preach such a gospel. Yet the Catholic Church condemns all who reject their hundreds of additions to faith which it says are necessary for salvation!

How could this evangelical generation become oblivious to the clear teaching of Scripture? Well, there are lots of contributing influences. Postmodernist ideas such as “truth is relative” and “one point of view is as valid as any other” are prevalent in our culture and particularly in our schools; consequently, they have been easily assimilated by evangelicals young and old. Seeking after truth, then, hardly becomes a worthy pursuit.

Many of today’s youth have been persuaded that the division between Catholics and Protestants is the archaic product of a past age of bigotry and ignorance. And sadly, there are still enough examples around today to give this thesis credence. Furthermore, tolerance has been the social rallying cry for the last decade or so, and therefore anything that smacks of intolerance (regardless of its basis) must be avoided at the very least. If you think this isn’t typical of your own evangelical kids or their peers, ask them if they see any problem with one of them deciding to marry a Catholic. I can almost guarantee that their first response will not be what the Bible says about being unequally yoked with an unbeliever, nor concern for the Church’s insistence that the children be baptized and raised Catholic. Rather, it will be how “intolerant” (even bigoted!) it is to impose a view that would keep apart two people who love each other. I have a few letters from brokenhearted evangelical parents whose children decided upon such a rationale.

However, the strongest influence regarding the current attitude about Catholicism among sincere evangelical young people is not from the world, but from the professing evangelical church. You would be hard pressed to find among highly visible church leaders more than a few who speak out against the growing ecumenical bond-building between Catholics and evangelicals. That ratio would be very similar among evangelical pastors. It is also rather tragic that those who

understand the issues biblically fail to address it in their churches and therefore fail their young members because of their reluctance to “offend” by instructing them accordingly.

So who can blame this generation? Their favorite music groups celebrate the Pope at the Catholic World Youth Day event. The largest of the national conferences for evangelical youths and youth pastors invites priests as the keynote speaker and a workshop leader. Catholic parishes around the country are thrilled to have their young people participate (there’s obviously no fear that they will be converted). The hot item at one such conference last year was introducing kids to the contemplative approach to spirituality, a practice which draws almost entirely upon teachings of Catholic mystics. Most of the popular parachurch ministries, rather than evangelizing Catholics, work with them as Christians. These ministries include Prison Fellowship, the Billy Graham Association, Campus Crusade, YWAM, Promise Keepers, InterVarsity Fellowship, and Focus on the Family.

Chuck Colson, J.I. Packer, Luis Palau, Robert Schuller, Hank Hanegraaff, Pat Robertson, Billy Graham, Elisabeth Elliot, Paul and Jan Crouch, Jack Hayford, Jack Van Impe, Benny Hinn, Norm Geisler, and a host of others have furthered the belief that although there are differences between Catholics and evangelicals, they are after all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In addition to the blatant disregard for what the Bible teaches, the organizations and individuals mentioned above (hardly an exhaustive list) are influencing our young people (and others as well) to abandon a billion souls in bondage to a false gospel.

Then there is ECT.

The original “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” document was presented to the public in 1994. The Catholic participants/signers were esteemed representatives of the Church, including John Cardinal O’Connor and now Cardinals Francis George and Avery Dulles. Evangelical participants/signers were also highly influential church leaders (among them Chuck Colson, J.I. Packer, Pat Robertson, Bill Bright, and Jesse Miranda). Although there were cases of strong protest from the evangelical community, characterizing the document as a “compromise” and “betrayal” of the gospel, these were lost in the praises from Christian and secular media (from *Christianity Today* to the *Wall Street Journal*). The perception left with most people was that ECT had made great strides in resolving the issues which “divided

Christianity at the time of the Reformation.” The document itself seemed to be designed to give that impression.

Although no information was presented from either side to substantiate changes in doctrinal positions (which had separated them for 450 years), nevertheless the language of the document *implied* great strides forward without compromise. While ECT encourages unity among all “1.7 billion Christians,” it specifically applies to Catholics and evangelicals, whom it confidently calls “brothers and sisters in Christ.” However, it never establishes how one becomes a brother or sister in Christ, or for that matter, one of the 1.7 billion “Christians.”

The goal for both communities is “working and witnessing together in order to advance the one mission of Christ.” How do two entities with contrary gospels witness together “to advance the one mission of Christ”? That’s never brought to light. In fact, it’s buried beneath the propaganda of ecumenical enthusiasm and feigned fidelity: “We reject any appearance of harmony that is purchased at the price of truth. Our common resolve is made imperative by obedience to the truth of God revealed in the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, and by trust in the promise of the Holy Spirit’s guidance....” This is self-delusion or worse.

Although the first ECT document was clearly a sham, offering what it didn’t (and couldn’t) deliver, nevertheless it was terribly successful. It spawned a perception of new “Christian unity” which both church and world embraced with delight. And why not—in this day when *image* is everything, and *substance* is for a few experts to decipher?

Our impressionable next evangelical generation was in middle school when Chuck Colson and Richard John Neuhaus first presented ECT. That was followed by ECT II, “The Gift of Salvation,” which furthered the image of “Evangelicals and Catholics Together.” The third phase of ECT will reportedly examine the authority of Scripture alone in light of Christian tradition. Thus the ecumenical line of the “emperor’s new clothes” is being firmly established in the eyes of evangelicals. Although ECT is biblically “naked,” few will be able to resist its having been paraded down the fashion runway of the Cliff Barrows Auditorium in the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton. The price, however, is the forsaking of a billion Roman Catholic souls and revising the gospel of Christ.

Next month we will cover details and implications of the “Catholics and Evangelicals in Conversation” conference. **TBC**

Quotable

In these days men have left off faith. The spirit of the martyrs is not in them. Opinions have taken the place of convictions; and the result is a liberality which is the offspring, not of humility and love, but of indifference or doubts. Opinions are our own, and should not be too firmly held. Truth is Divine, and is worth living for and dying for.

But what is truth...? Listening to the discordant voices that abound on every side, men are content to give heed only to the points on which the greater number appear to be agreed....Faith is impossible....Was it for this that the Son of God lived and died on earth...?

How different from the spirit of the age is the language of the inspired Apostle! "Though we or *an angel from heaven* preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Such warnings in Holy Writ are not the words of wild exaggeration....The man who would force his opinions on others is a boor. He who would die for his opinions is a fool. But Christianity has not to do with *opinions*. It is founded on fact and Divine truth; and faith based thereon is the heritage of the Church....We can have no toleration for the veiled skepticism which is passing for Christianity today....We do not *think* this or that: we know.

Sir Robert Anderson, *The Gospel and Its Ministry*, Preface

Q&A

Question: You say, "...Calvinists teach that God is the author of sin...." Dave, this is a falsehood....That you are in error in this is so glaringly obvious I keep wondering why I have to keep pointing these things out to you....Calvinists indeed teach that God foreordains sin, that God decrees sin, that God is the cause of sin, but they also teach that this does not make God the author of sin.... That Calvinists teach that God is not the author of sin is an irrefutable statement of fact! Dave, I am not going to back off on this. You keep bringing up that Calvinists teach that God decrees everything, foreordains everything, causes everything, including sin, all of which are accurate. However, the Calvinists that teach these things also say and teach that this does not make God the author of sin. So once

again I exhort you to please refrain from misrepresenting what Calvinists teach.

Answer: You agree that Calvinists "indeed teach that God foreordains sin, that God decrees sin, that God is the cause of sin...." In spite of quoting Boettner ("God has foreordained the entire course of events in this world..."), you claim, "but they also teach that this does not make God the author of sin." Could there be a clearer contradiction?

There are endless quotes to show Calvinism's teaching that God's "foreknowledge amounts to necessity...he has decreed that [events] are so to happen...all events take place by his sovereign appointment" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III: xxiii, 6); "God wills all things that come to pass...God desired for man to fall into sin...God created sin." (R. C. Sproul, Jr., *Almighty Over All*, p. 54); "God foreordains everything which comes to pass...initiates all things, regulates all things...." (Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 240); "All things that happen...come to pass because God ordained them...every evil thought, word, and deed in all of history...He has foreordained everything...the mistake of a typist—even sin...." (Palmer, *the five points of calvinism*, pp. 24, 25, 82, 97-100, 116); "...the counsels and wills of men...move exactly in the course which he [God] has destined...there cannot be a greater absurdity than to hold that anything is done without the ordination of God...men do nothing save at the secret instigation of God...what he has previously decreed...and brings to pass..." (*Institutes*, I: xvi, 6,8,9; I: xviii, 1).

In view of these and many other unequivocal declarations by Calvin and others that God is the *cause* of everything that occurs, including *sin*, how can I be charged with falsehood for saying that Calvinists say God is the *author* of sin? To support this allegation you offer numerous quotes (which I know only too well) in which Calvinists insist that God is *not* the "author" of sin. I acknowledge that Calvinists don't directly say in so many words that God is the author of sin, but it is indisputable that they identify God as sin's author by their teaching that "God foreordains...decrees... and is the cause of sin." *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* defines "author" as "one who produces, creates, or brings into being; the beginner, creator, or first mover of anything." By this definition, Calvinism's God is unquestionably the *author* of sin! Can you explain how God can foreordain, decree and cause sin without

being its author? Calvinists cannot escape the logical consequences of their teaching by simply denying it to be so.

Question: Excellent job on your tape about Reformed theology and the critique of John Calvin. But on the concept of predestination and God choosing some for heaven and others for hell, which you vigorously oppose, could you please explain your view in the context of Romans 9:11-23: "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated....For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion....So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy....Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?...Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." If this doesn't mean that God predestines some individuals to heaven and others to hell, what does it mean?

Answer: Leading Calvinists such as R. C. Sproul and John Piper consider this to be an absolutely conclusive scripture proving predestination to heaven or hell. Clearly, however, neither salvation nor damnation is the subject, but God's use of individuals and nations in His service. Paul says, "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated..." (Rom 9:13). Where is that *written*? God did not say that to Rebecca. It is written *only* in Malachi 1:1-4; 3:6, which Paul is quoting. Nor is Malachi referring to Jacob and Esau, much less to their individual salvation or damnation, but to the nations, Israel and Edom, descended from them. Were that not the case it would be a false prophecy, since Esau never served Jacob during their lifetimes.

It is also clear from what God told Rebecca that her two sons are not the subject: “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people...and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gn 25:23). This prophecy was perfectly fulfilled in the nations descended from Esau and Jacob. In their “proofs” (such as those given by James White or Piper) that this is a prophecy concerning the salvation and reprobation of the two individuals born to Isaac and Rebecca, Calvinists ignore Genesis 25:23; it would refute their theory. The entire story and subsequent developments in Genesis make it very clear that the salvation or damnation of Jacob and Esau is not foretold but rather God’s election of Jacob’s descendants to a preferred place of blessing and usefulness. It does not say that the younger shall be saved and the elder lost but that the *elder shall serve the younger*.

Other than the two references in Malachi and Romans, we are only told once that God loved Jacob (Ps 47:4) and no comparison is made to Esau, nor are we told in the entire account of his birth and life that God hated the latter. Moreover, “loved” and “hated” are comparative terms in Hebrew and have nothing to do with salvation. The fact that the choosing of Israel for God’s service is by grace is certainly reinforced by the rebellion of that nation throughout her history. Yet God’s blessing still rests upon her and will come to full fruition in her final restoration at the Second Coming when Christ returns to destroy Antichrist and rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon and reigns over Israel and the world from the throne of David.

In all of the biblical references it is consistently more than clear that the election of Jacob and rejection of Esau had nothing to do with the *salvation or damnation* of either individual or of their descendants. For the Calvinist to use these passages to that end is simply faulty exegesis.

Question: I’ve been pondering a question that only leads to more questions: “What should I expect from a relationship with Jesus?” Some would tell me that the sky is the limit when it comes to God. Not only does He want to take control of my life and guide my every thought and action, but He will heal me of my sicknesses, make me prosperous, and protect me from all harm. And yet, when tragedy strikes, a loved one dies, or the paychecks just barely cover the bills,

these same individuals are left searching for explanations. At the other end of the spectrum are those who would say that a relationship with Jesus is all about matters of the heart. I should set my mind on things above, think in spiritual terms, and not be so concerned with physical needs and wishes. But, based on what I’ve read in the Bible, this hardly seems like the complete picture of a relationship with the Lord either. When it comes to believing in Jesus and His offer of salvation, I know that I cannot prove His existence, and I accept Him by faith. But when it comes to understanding a relationship with Jesus and His interaction and/or intervention in my daily life, I find it more difficult to just accept everything by faith. For instance, I’ve met Christians that like to “name it and claim it,” who are quick to say that “God did this” and “God did that” in answer to prayer. Maybe He did. Maybe He didn’t. How are we to know? And what should we expect?

Answer: First of all, we *can* prove that God exists, that the Bible is God’s Word and that Jesus Christ is the true and only Savior of sinners, that he died for our sins and rose the third day and is in heaven, soon to return. Faith is not a leap in the dark. I must have proof for the basic elements of faith, which are those I just listed. Otherwise a Muslim or Buddhist or Mormon, concerning his religion and holy books, could “take it by faith” as well and be lost.

Consider Acts 1:3, 9:22, 18:28, etc. where we have Christ *proving* himself alive, and Paul and Apollos *proving* that Jesus is the Christ.

There is also much that I can’t prove and must take by faith, such as the Lord’s daily guidance. Oh, He gives much evidence (I could tell you hundreds of encounters the Lord has given me that could not be the result of chance, but which I could not *prove* were of God). Fellowship with the Lord is a matter of the heart and mind, but should bear visible fruit in godly living (love, joy, peace, etc. - Gal 5:22).

“Name it and claim it” is the pathway to disaster. We don’t tell God what to do or what to give us; we submit ourselves to His holy will in *everything*. There is nothing so thrilling as to be in God’s will and see Him at work in and through us. There are trials as well as triumphs. Paul longed to know Christ better and prayed that the Ephesians

would be inspired to know the “hope of his calling” (Eph 1:18).

Meditate on the Word of God, tell Christ frequently that you love him and want to love him more, get to know him better, and give living for him everything you have and are—and you will have plenty of evidence of his reality.

I would recommend two of my own books: *An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith* and *In Defense of the Faith*. These books could be helpful in strengthening your faith and understanding.

Evangelicals & Catholics: Dialogue unto Death

T.A. McMahon

The Bible tells us clearly that the last days before the return of Christ will be marked by apostasy and the rise of the world religion of Antichrist (2 Thes 2:3,4; Rv 13,14). Yet for multitudes of Christians, including many who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the actual fulfillment of that prophecy seems hardly likely. A number of things today *seem* to run counter to such an anti-Christian end-times scenario.

Lately, evangelical Christianity is experiencing a rise in acceptance. Less than a decade ago evangelicals were near the top of the those-you-would-least-want-to-live-next-to list. Certainly President George W. Bush's brand of Christianity, along with his ecumenical overtures and "faith-based" initiative, has helped to alter the perception of evangelicals as being "narrowminded and intolerant." Increasing numbers of evangelical churches are reaching mega-proportions, with more than a few the size of (and favorably likened to) shopping malls. Contemporary Christian music has become the rising star in the music industry. Nearly all the large evangelical Christian publishing companies are now profitable subsidiaries of massive secular corporations. For example, media mogul Rupert Murdoch (HarperCollins Publishers, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Fox TV, etc.) would hardly have acquired Zondervan if Christian books were not moneymakers. More than all of this, however, is the public's awareness and approval of the supposed settling of historic differences between Protestants and Roman Catholics. So wouldn't all this growing interest and appreciation for things Christian be counterproductive to an antichrist religion?

It might seem so—if the Antichrist and his religion were only a frontal attack against anything that smacks of Christianity. However, as Dave Hunt pointed out in his 1990 book, *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*,

While the Greek prefix "anti" generally means "against" or "opposed to," it can also mean "in the place of" or "a substitute for." The Antichrist will embody both meanings He will cunningly misrepresent Christ while pretending to *be* Christ. And by that deceit he will undermine and pervert all that Christ truly is.

His "Christianity" then will be a counterfeit, "having a form of godliness, but denying

the power thereof" (2 Tm 3:5). Furthermore, the Antichrist's *religion* won't just pop onto the scene the day he does. Rather, he will fit into it, just as one slips into a tailmade suit. This theology was first presented in the Garden of Eden as a perversion of God's Word and has spread like a virus ever since.

In fact, it began as a *dialogue*.

Satan started the process of conditioning humanity when he entered into conversation with Eve, persuading her to turn from God's truth to her own subjective evaluation of what she *felt* He had said. But God's command had been explicit and simple. Adam and Eve were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; to do so would bring certain death (Gn 2:16,17). Notice the absoluteness of God's statement and its consequence; yet notice Eve's addition and rationalizations (Gn 3:3,6). The serpent's cunning questioning of her understanding ("Yea, hath God said...?") induced her to reconsider what God *meant*. After all, "the tree was good for food... pleasant to the eyes, a tree to be desired to make one wise." Surely God wouldn't want to withhold such "benefits" from His creatures.

Satan's *modus operandi* has never changed: to get humans to deny the absolute truth of what God says and to look to their own (read *relative, subjective, experiential, self-serving, sinful*) understanding.

No doubt because it is crucial to our walk of faith, twice in Proverbs we find these words: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death" (14:12, 16:25). The solemn meaning is clear: When man interprets God's Word to suit himself, its lifegiving truth is blatantly rejected (2 Cor 3:6). Consequently, destruction and death (separation from Him) follow. This is a pitfall inherent in ecumenical dialogues which have as their goal the unification of professing Christian groups, and which extend in some cases even to non-Christian religions.

What then of "Catholics and Evangelicals in Conversation," a conference recently presented at Wheaton College and sponsored by its Department of Bible and Theology and InterVarsity Press? (See last month's issue for some background information.) It was a further development, and the first public endeavor, of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (ECT), which Chuck Colson of Prison Fellowship and Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus organized in 1994. Highly influential Catholic clergy and evangelical leaders had participated in ECT

in the hope of developing closer ties and greater collaboration in activities of common interest to both traditions, especially working together for the moral good of society and winning souls to Christ. Neuhaus reminded the Wheaton conference attendees that the most significant declaration in the original ECT document had been "the simple statement that we [Catholics and evangelicals] recognize one another as brothers and sisters in Christ."

Indeed, so convinced were all of the conference speakers regarding one another's membership in the Body of Christ that this supposed faith was treated as a foregone conclusion rather than a question for discussion! According to Richard Neuhaus, our being "brothers and sisters in Christ" is the foundational premise "which drives the entirety of the ECT effort."

But what of that premise? *Are* all Catholics and evangelicals brothers and sisters in Christ? If that is indeed the case, it would be important to know the basis for this relationship. None of the ECT documents tells us explicitly. The Catholic Church teaches that salvation is only through the Sacrament of Baptism. The Bible declares unequivocally that it is only through faith. Some Catholics may come to biblical faith in Christ, but that would be *in spite of* the soteriological teaching of Rome—not because of it. Moreover, as the new believer recognizes the Bible's clear opposition to the beliefs, rituals, and practices of Catholicism, he must reject them in order to be consistent with God's truth. So, if one is not born again of the Spirit by grace through faith alone as the Word of God teaches, he or she is not a member of the family of God.

Catholic teachings on salvation cannot be reconciled to the Bible. What we have here are two gospels: the biblical gospel, and, in the words of the Apostle Paul, "another gospel" (Gal 1:6,7) which can save no one. Emphasizing that point, Paul *twice* calls the preachers of such a gospel "accursed" (Gal 1:8,9). How then could any true evangelical advocate the partnership in *winning souls to Christ* proposed in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*? He could not. But that fact has neither deterred the participants of the ECT dialogue nor dampened their enthusiasm.

At the Wheaton conference, J.I. Packer shared the following: "What I dream of and long to see is evangelicals and Roman Catholics standing together on the same platform to tell the world that Jesus Christ is the Savior whom everybody needs." He

then amplified his vision:

I dream of those who respond to that good gospel word being taken through what would be a revived *catechumenate* [a basic instructional program in the faith], a matter, incidentally, on which Roman Catholics, I think, have got further in these last few years than evangelicals have. A revived *catechumenate* that is a grounding for new converts in which they are told that for the first year or two years they should postpone the question of which church they are going to identify with, and simply concentrate on getting the benefit of ministry of the Word and Christian fellowship in whatever churches in their part of the world provide these. Catholic or Protestant. And it might be either.

He left no doubt as to his commitment to the Evangelicals and Catholics Together dialogues:

If through ECT there was for the future less evangelical *apartheid* in relation to Roman Catholics than there has been in the past, and less Roman Catholic triumphalism...and more of Roman Catholic and evangelical together[ness] in the re-Christianizing of society and the re-evangelizing and discipling of the world community which is so largely drifting away from Christianity, then I should feel that we have not failed. That's what I hope for and pray for, and it's to that effort that I for one hope that God in this whole project will prosper what we're doing, keep us from folly, and enable us to be as influential in these ways as [best] we can be.

Sound doctrine is the bane of ecumenical exchanges, and will inevitably give way to "dreams" supported by experiences and what "seemeth right unto a man." Why? Because the purpose of such conversations is convergence, i.e., togetherness. Biblical doctrine (what God says) is absolute, inflexible. It doesn't dance to the tune of ecumenical dialogues. When concerned appeals were made to the specific teachings of Scripture during Q & A segments of the conference, most in the audience seemed annoyed. Speakers' responses ranged from "Hey, come on...cut us some slack here!" to chiding any who dared to suggest that those representatives of various Christian traditions down through history having an unbiblical understanding of essential doctrines were not fellow believers. Timothy George, one of the evangelical developers of the ECT documents, as well as a Wheaton Trustee, committee member on the World Council of Churches, and (along with J.I. Packer) an

executive editor of *Christianity Today*, was quoted as follows:

To think that [early formulators of Roman Catholic dogma] Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas...are all consigned to perdition because they do not properly define justification in precisely Reformation terminology—is that not to deny the grace of God and God's sovereignty? It is, in short, to turn justification by faith alone to justification by doctrinal erudition alone, which is another form of justification by works.

No. We're not to judge anyone's heart, nor use the Reformation as our standard—simply the Scriptures (Is 8:20).

In his talk, Neuhaus presented another criteria:

In the pro-life movement and in the Charismatic Renewal, in all these ways evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics were in fact encountering one another in a way that they could not, without sinning against the Holy Spirit, [refrain from] acknowledging what was an encounter with brothers and sisters in Christ. That's the reality. Then it's just up to the theologians and the church bureaucrats and so forth to get accustomed to that reality and try to understand it.

Following Neuhaus's address, in which he presented his own dream of "full communion" of all Christian denominations with Rome, I asked him who would be *in charge* when this full communion took place. He replied that it was not plausible for everyone to "pack up and return to the [Roman] Catholic Church." He felt such a thing would do "great injustice" to the gifts and works of the Holy Spirit which have manifestly flourished over the last 500 years "outside the boundaries of the Catholic Church." He sees "full communion" as a "new thing" which acknowledges "the Apostolic Deposit," the "Petrine Ministry... Peter among us [i.e., a Vicar of Christ] to keep everybody in communion." He then candidly added,

But what would it look like and who would call the plays? Please God, it would not look like the bureaucracies of Protestant denominationalism. Please God, it would not look like the wrangling, debased forms of democratic governments and argumentative church assemblies where faith and morals are thrown open to vote. Please God, it would not mean domination by a conclave of elderly Italian prelates, as too often has been the case in the Catholic Church...There wouldn't even be something we would call the Catholic Church, that is, certainly not the Roman Catholic

Church. There would simply be the Church of Jesus Christ—East and West.

This is what ECT and other ecumenical dialogues are all about. While I grant the sincerity of many who participate in such conversations, I'm astonished that they don't see the glaring eschatological implications. Although repeatedly professing their desire for unity based only upon the truth found in Jesus Christ, ECT's goal of "togetherness" has blinded them to what the Bible clearly says about religious unity in the last days. Where is organizational "full communion" found except in the one-world religion of Antichrist?

Biblical unity in Christ, the true fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ, can only come about by grace through faith (Eph 2:8). Anything added, Paul tells us, is a rejection of the gospel. Jesus will deny ever knowing those who have come to Him on any other terms but His own, even though they *sincerely* cry, "Lord, Lord..." (Mt 7:22,23).

Having been a Roman Catholic for 32 years, an evangelical for 25, and one of the founders of Reaching Catholics For Christ (RCFC), I was inclined during the panel discussion to reprove the evangelical speakers for their participation in ECT. Instead, however, I simply identified myself and my association with RCFC * (which was met with indignant groans) and directed my question to the evangelicals (only Timothy George was absent) as follows:

The Philippian jailor of Acts 16 cried out to Paul, "...what must I do to be saved?" The response was both simple and explicit: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' What *else* is necessary?

Only two panel members responded. Both dodged the biblical imperative. Why would these *evangelicals*, including J.I. Packer, not instantly respond, "Nothing!"? Because if that were taken seriously, it would quickly end the dialogue unto death with Rome—a false church which has continued to add to the gospel for more than 1,500 years.

Let your loving conversations with Roman Catholics be to this end: to help them understand and receive the biblical gospel of salvation. **TBC**

All quotes are taken from the audiotape series "Catholics and Evangelicals in Conversation," available from Wheaton College.

* T.A.'s identification of himself and RCFC, as well as his question to the evangelical panel members and their responses, was not included on the panel discussion tape, because (he was told) of a failure to record the first 11 minutes of the session.

Quotable

The Inquisition was the masterpiece of infernal craft and malice, and its deeds were far more worthy of fiends than men. If the church of Rome could at this moment ...become a pure community, ten thousand years of immaculate holiness and self-denying philanthropy could not avail to blot out the remembrance of the enormous crimes with which the Inquisition has loaded it. There is a deep and indelible sentence of damnation written upon the apostate church by avenging justice...registered in heaven; nor can any pretenses to present liberality reverse the condemnation...its infamy is engraved in the rock for ever...[The Roman Catholic Church] wallowed so greedily in oppression, torture, and murder in her palmy days, that the foam of human gore hangs around her wolfish fangs, and men will not believe her to be a gentle lamb, let her bleat as she may.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, The Sword and the Trowel, II:113-14, 116

Q&A

Question: My church is raising funds by a “faith promise.” The promise to give what one doesn’t have and can’t afford is supposed to allow God the opportunity to supply it. Isn’t this presumption and pressuring people? Praising the “faithful” who miraculously got the right amount, the pastor shames those whose “faith” has failed. They feel condemned and even go into debt sometimes to live up to the pastor’s expectations. Is this biblical?

Answer: The so-called “faith promise” is neither taught nor practiced in Scripture, but is a pressure tactic invented by men. The words “faith” and “promise” occur together in the same thought only eight times in the Bible: Romans 4:13,14,16,20; Galatians 3:14,22; Hebrews 11:9,39. In each case God is the one making the promise, and the faith referred to is our trust in Him.

What you describe is a technique for persuading people to pledge more than they otherwise would if they had to give it immediately. It is used by many churches and ministries, especially those on radio and TV. While we cannot judge hearts, we can judge the method by Scripture, and it fails that test.

There is an old saying which, though not a quote from the Bible, echoes its teaching: “Where God guides, He provides.” That is a major reason that we at TBC rarely mention our needs and avoid soliciting financial support. If the Lord is guiding us—and that is all we desire, just to do His will—we are certain He will move the hearts of His people to provide what is needed.

In saying that, we know there will be tests and trials that may overwhelm us. We have faced some and they have caused us to cling ever closer to our Lord. We appreciate your prayers that we will clearly discern and faithfully follow His perfect will in fulfilling the ministry to which He has called us. And our prayer is the same for all those who know and love Him.

Question: It’s great you’re rebuking the errors of Calvinism. But here’s my problem: Luther was wrong (baptismal regeneration; infant baptism). Calvin was wrong on the same point. I just read a history of the Anabaptists who disagreed with Luther and Calvin on baptism, but also disagreed with them on *sola fide* and the role of works in salvation [and] sided with the Catholics on that one! So who, of all the Reformers, was right?

Answer: The Reformers and Anabaptists were partly right and partly wrong. Each contained groups with many variations in doctrine. Anabaptists saw from Scripture that baptism is only for believers. The Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip to baptize him. Philip replied, “If thou believest [in Christ] with all thine heart, thou mayest” (Acts 8:37,38). Nor did Philip baptize him by putting a wet hand on his brow or by sprinkling (which the Reformers carried over from Catholicism), but “they went down both into the water...”

Most Anabaptists had been baptized as infants, either as Catholics, Lutherans or Calvinists. When they were born again through faith in Christ, they were biblically baptized as believers, recognizing that as infants they knew nothing of the gospel. For being baptized “again” they were persecuted and even martyred by all three state churches: Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist. Today those who become Christians out of these systems through faith in Christ and are then baptized as believers, though no longer martyred, often are shunned by family and friends and in some cases disowned.

Unfortunately, some factions within the early Anabaptist movement at times

reflected extreme tendencies. The “new baptism” became the means to a “new reformation” that would transform Zurich, for example, into the “Little Jerusalem” and bring perfection to the world. A biblical truth was turned into what J.H. Merle d’Aubigné, in his *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (A.D. 1846), described (pp. 418-20) as “lamentable disorders...Some burnt the New Testament, saying: ‘The letter killeth, the Spirit giveth life.’”

Anabaptists Thomas and Leonard Schucker, who lived near St. Gall, were known “for their fanaticism.” After a night of “convulsions, visions, and revelations” along with much wine, Thomas “propheesied” over Leonard, then cut off his head, “exclaiming, ‘Now the will of the Father is accomplished.’” He then ran through the streets of St. Gall shouting loudly, “I proclaim...the day of the Lord!” The same blow that killed Leonard killed Anabaptism in St. Gall. Thomas, of course, was executed by the civil authorities.

Zwingli’s polemic against Anabaptism remains the chief argument of Lutherans and Calvinists today. He insisted that “Children born of believing parents are children of God, like those who were born under the Old Testament, and consequently may receive baptism. Baptism under the New Testament is what circumcision was under the Old; consequently, baptism ought now to be administered to children, as circumcision was....Those who are rebaptized crucify Jesus Christ afresh.”

The city of Münster, Germany, was taken over by fanatical Anabaptists who commanded all to be rebaptized, leave Münster or die. They intended to create a “New Israel” ruled by a certain John of Leyden, whom they crowned “king of the whole earth.” So-called “revelations” spawned growing errors, including polygamy. Under siege by the bishop’s troops, the inhabitants fought bravely until a traitor opened the city to the attackers. “Then began the slaughter [and] none were spared. A band of 300 defending themselves desperately in the marketplace were promised safe conduct to leave the city if they would lay down their arms. They accepted these terms...and they perished with the rest....John of Leyden and other leaders were publicly tortured and executed in the place where he had been crowned....

“Advantage was taken of these events to apply the hated name of Anabaptist to all who dissented from the three great Church systems [Catholicism, Lutheranism,

and Calvinism] and, by pretending that [all Anabaptists] were of the same mind as those...in Münster....Though they [most Anabaptists] were of godly and kindly life, they were described as guilty of conduct which existed only in the vile imagination of their accusers, that the cruelty of their murderers might be condoned." (E.H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church*, pp. 194-99; see offering list.)

Not all of the Anabaptists were by any means guilty of the fanaticism that characterized some. One of the chief leaders was former Catholic priest, Menno Simons, the Dutch Reformer (c. 1496-1561). Many among his followers (known as Mennonites) have departed far from the truths Simons believed, practiced and taught. But we must not judge Simons by those errors any more than Christ should be judged by the errors of His supposed followers. Nor can we judge the original Anabaptists by the belief and behavior of their modern descendants—much less by their enemies' false accusations. Broadbent (p. 200) quotes Menno Simons: "[F]or seventeen years...I have opposed and striven against it [the Münster teaching]...by voice and pen..."

Simons's followers were repeatedly accused of being "heaven-stormers," that is, of meriting heaven by works. Simons responded, "...we have always confessed, and by the grace of God ever will, that we cannot be saved by means of anything in heaven or on earth other than by the merits, intercession, death, and blood of Christ..."

(*The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, Herald Press, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, p. 569). He also states that the Scripture condemns "all who prove plainly by their deeds that they do not confess the saving grace of God, do not believe in Christ Jesus, and according to Scripture abide in damnation, wrath and death" (p. 328). He is reflecting Christ's own words in Matthew 7:15-23 and John 3:36.

Simons's concern was the loose living into which many Lutherans had quickly fallen, and he exhorted believers to avoid sinful behavior which would call into question the genuine nature of their salvation. Christians of our day would do well to call themselves to the same accountability.

Question: I've been noticing a trend in my church. More and more, the time designated as "worship" is being taken up by repetitive choruses with little content that would actually promote worship. Also, shouldn't at least some time be given to worship in prayer—not petitioning God

but praising and thanking Him? Today's "worship" allows no time for individuals to express publicly or even silently from their own hearts personal worship and praise to their Lord. This disturbs me. Am I being too critical?

Answer: You can find what we have said on this subject in the Reprints for August and October 1992, July 1998 and March 2001. I am often grieved as a church's "worship team" leads the congregation in shallow, repetitive choruses *about* worship but *without* real worship. My heart cries out at the spiritual poverty of those who so earnestly repeat words such as "we've come to worship you...to praise you...we love to praise you...to worship you...we lift your name on high," etc.

Worship is not words about worship but about our Lord. Praise is not saying "we praise you." We worship and praise the Lord when we speak or sing of who He is and what He has done that causes us to bow in wonder and worship—something largely missing from contemporary songs.

Is it the catchy tunes which cause so many groups to replace with shallow, repetitive lyrics the old hymns so rich in sound doctrine (and which evoke true praise and worship)? Consider these few lines from two of the many comparable hymns unthinkingly abandoned. The words "worship" and "praise" do not appear, but hearts are bowed in both:

Son of God, 'twas love that made Thee
Die our ruined souls to save.
'Twas our sins' vast load that laid Thee,
Lord of Life, within the grave;
But Thy glorious resurrection
Showed Thee conqueror o'er the tomb;
So the saints by Thy protection
Through Thy work shall overcome....

O Head once filled with bruises,
Oppressed with pain and scorn,
O'erwhelmed with sore abuses,
Mocked with a crown of thorn!
O Head, to death once wounded
In shame upon the tree,
In glory now surrounded
With brightest majesty,

Thou Lord of all, transcendent,
Thou life-creating Sun
To worlds on Thee dependent,
Yet bruised and spat upon!
O Lord, what Thee tormented
Was our sins' heavy load;

We had the debt augmented,
Which Thou didst pay in blood....

Sadly, many of today's young Christians—including the "worship teams"!—have never heard such stirring words, and as a result are suffering from spiritual malnutrition.

And, yes, surely there ought to be a pause in the singing for those present to offer up to our Lord in their own words the praise, worship and thanksgiving overflowing from their hearts. But today's concept of "worship" seems to be nonstop repetitious singing with little content, and often the louder the better. We need time to think—and we need to have something presented that is worth thinking about deeply!

Redemption/ Atonement

Part I

Dave Hunt

The first law of thermodynamics states that energy, the stuff of which the universe is made, can neither be created nor destroyed. Two conclusions follow: (1) the total energy in the universe remains constant; and (2) energy must be self-existent and eternal—exactly what the Bible says about God. Is science promoting energy as “God”?

The second law of thermodynamics states that while total energy remains constant, usable energy and order continually decrease as entropy increases. Common sense tells us that all fires eventually burn out. Neither our sun nor the other stars could have been burning forever. There must have been a time when neither stars nor the energy of which they consist existed. Clearly, the universe had a beginning, as the Bible declares: “In the beginning...” (Gn 1:1).

The conflict between these two laws poses a serious problem for science. Energy could not have been here forever as the first law implies, or, according to the second, ages ago it would have reached the state of maximum entropy, but it hasn't. The contradiction can be resolved in only one way: since energy could not have been created by any means known to science, yet has not always existed, it must have been created by God.

Matter, life and intelligence could not arise spontaneously from nothing. Therefore, all that now exists was created either by a self-existent eternal *energy*, or by a self-existent eternal *Person*. The first choice is eliminated by the second law of thermodynamics, because *energy* itself and all things it produces deteriorate. Furthermore, whereas energy is physical, there is a demonstrable nonphysical dimension to human existence. Nor could energy, being impersonal, create personal beings such as man.

We are driven to the conclusion that some *One* always existed, an infinite *Person* without beginning or end, who is capable of creating out of nothing the entire universe and all the creatures in it, including man. Our finite minds cannot conceive of God always having existed. Yet we know He *must* exist eternally or nothing would exist. And He must be outside of time for a number of reasons,

including human freedom of choice in spite of His foreknowledge, which we have shown in the past.

Science says the universe began with a “Big Bang.” But what was the source of that energy? It could not have existed forever or (according to the second law) it would have reached maximum entropy before it “banged.” Obviously the energy from which the universe is made came into existence simultaneously with the universe a finite number of years ago. It could not have arisen out of nothing by any natural process and thus its origin had to be supernatural. Accurately, the Bible says, “God said, Let there be...” (Gn 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26); “...the worlds were framed by the word of God...” (Heb 11:3a). That God made the universe out of nothing is also clear: “...things that are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb 11:3b). It has taken science thousands of years to catch up with the Bible.

Did God create the universe in a sudden

**For the invisible things of him
from the creation of the world
are clearly seen...so that they
are without excuse.**

Romans 1:20

burst of energy? We don't know. We do know that a “Big Bang” could *never* produce the digitally organized database imprinted on the single cell (the size of the period at the end of this sentence) with which each human life begins. This immense store of self-replicating information (with enzymes that check for copy errors and correct them) directs the construction, operation and differentiation of tens of trillions of cells as different as those in the heart and hair—an incredible feat which science can't even begin to unravel.

The written instructions are encoded so that only the proper protein (of which there are tens of thousands of types) can decipher it. Darwin knew nothing of DNA or the structure and operation of the cell, today's knowledge of which has relegated his theory of evolution to the trash heap of absurdities, where it belonged from the beginning. If the simplest cell were broken into its chemical components, the odds that they would ever come back together in the right way is 1 chance in 1 followed by 100,000,000,000 zeros—and the human body has *trillions* of cells.

With a retina which solves in a fraction

of a second complex equations that would occupy a supercomputer for 100 years, the human eye's 100 million light-sensitive cells send information through a million fibers of the optic nerve to the brain. We can't produce optical instruments that come even close to the human eye. A newly discovered starfish has more than 1,000 eyes, each with a lens at least ten times better than anything science has yet been able to construct—and all evolved independently yet simultaneously by chance? Please!

The human brain, with its 100 billion nerve cells linked by 240,000 miles of nerve fibers and 100 trillion connections, storage capacity 1,000 times that of a Cray-2 supercomputer and operating at a thousand trillion computations per second, is even more incredible than the eye, whose optical impulses it translates into three-dimensional images to which it directs numerous parts of the body to react instantly. *And all this was produced by a “Big Bang” plus chance, eons of time and survival of the*

fittest? But until they worked, the eye and brain could not aid in survival—thus the “evolution” it supposedly took to create this incredible optical/intelligence system produced millions of intermediate stages in the right succession by pure chance without any “survival of the fittest!” Yet in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, evolution continues to be promoted as fact by the media and taught—in fact mandated—in our schools!

Instead of a spontaneous “Big Bang” of previously nonexistent energy that suddenly created itself, the Bible introduces us to the Creator, a personal God who always existed and was able to make the universe out of nothing by speaking the word. Science and reason demand the very God the Bible presents.

In contrast to the pitiful gods of the world's religions which hold their followers in darkness, superstition and fear, the Bible describes God exactly as He must be: self-existent (“I AM THAT I AM” - Ex 3:14), eternal (“the eternal God is thy refuge” - Dt 33:27; “from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” - Ps 90:2); and a personal Being who wills (“this is the will of God” - 1 Thes 4:3; 5:18; “by the will of God” - Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Tm 1:1; and many other verses), who thinks (“my thoughts are not your thoughts” - Is 55:8), has personal emotions (“God is angry with the wicked every day” - Ps 7:11; “we love him, because he first loved us” - 1 Jn 4:19; “I was grieved with that generation” - Heb 3:10, etc.), and speaks (“the Lord spake” is found 144 times, “the word of the Lord”

is found 258 times in Scripture, etc.).

Except for God's unique qualities (self-existence, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, perfection, sinlessness, etc.) man reflects, though imperfectly, God's characteristics listed above. "God created man in his own image..." (Gn 1:27), but not physically, because God "is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24). Thus man must also be a spirit living in a physical body. There is no other explanation for man's intellectual abilities (to form conceptual ideas and express them in words, etc.) inasmuch as intelligence, thoughts, will, emotions, etc. are not physical but spiritual. That easily proven fact (which we touch upon in the following Q&A) involves serious consequences from which physical death provides no escape: "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27); "...the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments..." (Lk 16:22,23).

We have proved in the past that man is a nonphysical soul and spirit living in a physical body ("I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body..." - 1 Thes 5:23). Bodies, being material, are subject to the second law above, begin to die from birth, deteriorate and eventually return to dust: "...dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gn 3:19).

But the spiritual part of man which thinks and makes choices—man's soul and spirit, invisible to physical eyes—is not subject to entropy and *must* continue to exist forever. As Paul declared, "for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). The fact that death does not end human existence carries awesome eternal consequences. God is perfectly holy and by his very nature must punish sin by banishing the sinner from his presence.

Sin is defined as coming "short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). When Adam and Eve sinned, they immediately "knew that they were naked..." (Gn 3:7a). It wasn't that they suddenly realized they had never worn clothes; they had been stripped of the spiritual glory that clothed them upon their creation in God's image.

Their sense of nakedness was a new and frightening awareness of God's holiness in contrast to themselves as sinful rebels: "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13). Adam and Eve "sewed fig leaves together [for] aprons" (Gn 3:7b). Unable to cover their spiritual nakedness, they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (v. 8).

God had given them the easiest command

possible: not to eat of one—only *one*—of the thousands of trees in the garden where He had lovingly placed them. The Spirit of God had withdrawn from their seditious spirits, bringing immediate spiritual death, which also affected their bodies and finally resulted in physical death. This harsh penalty was not for "stealing some fruit" but for rebelling against God.

Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden lest they "take also of the tree of life,...and live forever" (Gn 3:22). While the physical fruit of that special tree, if eaten continuously, could have caused their bodies to live forever, it could not restore spiritual life through bringing God's Spirit back into their spirits. God will not perpetuate man in his sinful condition. How much more wicked would man be if he knew he would never die!

In spite of man's sin, God loves him and is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pt 3:9). In infinite love, He would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge

**His blood that flaming blade
must quench,
His heart its sheath must be.**

Hymn, author unknown

of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4). He desires for all mankind a *full and eternal* restoration to the glory in which Adam was created—and in a new universe where sin can never enter.

But how can that be done?

God cannot "clear the guilty" (Ex 34:7). *Cannot?* (see "What a Sovereign God Cannot Do," *TBC*, Feb '01) Isn't He omnipotent? Yes, but He is also perfectly just. God's love, compassion and mercy cannot override his justice, which will not allow sin to be forgiven unjustly. Nor will God's integrity allow him to go back on his Word that "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

Man's forgiveness and restoration involve the very nature of both God and man. It is no mere figure of speech that man was made "in the image of God." We have often used the analogy of a mirror, which exists solely to reflect another image. Note the folly of the popular delusion even among evangelicals of developing a "positive self-image." What vanity and pride for a mirror to concern itself about its "self-image"! Rather, the mirror needs to exhibit a faithful likeness of the one whose image it was designed to reflect.

Sinful man must be reconciled to a

holy God and brought back into an intimate relationship so that the very life of God becomes once again the life of man—or man's doom is eternal. The first three chapters of the Bible tell of man's creation in God's image and of the defacing, deforming, and defiling of that image through man's sin and separation from God. The rest of the Bible is all about the reconciliation of man to God.

This reconciliation comes about through what the Bible calls "redemption" and "atonement." It is a thrilling love story of God's willingness to leave His glory to become a Man through a virgin birth, to be rejected, misunderstood, hated, falsely accused, mocked, scourged and nailed to a cross—and as He hung there to take upon himself the sins of the world, suffering the penalty for all mankind demanded by his perfect justice.

This love story involves One who is called "the second man...the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45-47). Since Adam, no one who walked this earth was a man as God intended, until Christ was born in Bethlehem of the virgin Mary. He is the progenitor of a new race and thus He is the second Adam. But because there will never be another, He is called "the last Adam."

When Adam was cast out of the garden, God guarded the tree of life with "Cherubims, and a flaming sword" (Gn 3:24). Mankind fled that sword in complaint against the harshness of the "death penalty" decreed by God upon sinners. In love, the second man, the last Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, took that sword of God's judgment in His own heart for us. Thus He became "the way, the truth, and the life" which alone leads men back to God (Jn 14:6).

We'll continue with atonement/redemption in the next two newsletters. That study must of necessity begin in the *Old Testament*. Its Levitical sacrifices are pictures of and preparation for the sacrifice of Christ, who would be hailed by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). In the Old Testament "redeemer" is found all 18 of the times it appears in the entire Bible. "Atonement" is found 80 of the 81 times *it* appears. And "redeemed" is found 55 of its 62 appearances in Scripture. Paul preached "the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) [i.e., the Old Testament]..." - (Rom 1:1,2).

And in this study we will discover anew the glorious truth of God's love for all mankind and His redemptive plan for all who will believe the gospel. **TBC**

Quotable

The following statements by Charles Haddon Spurgeon show how little has changed:

We are only at the beginning of an era of mingled unbelief and fanaticism. The hurricane is coming. Men have ceased to be guided by the word, and claim to be themselves prophets. (*Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 29:214)

The new religion [the belief that the Bible is not entirely, but *contains*, God's Word] practically sets "thought" above revelation, and constitutes man the supreme judge of what ought to be true. (*The Sword and the Trowel*, 1888, p. 43)

If it is left to me to discriminate and to judge how much of this Book is true, and how much false, then I must myself become infallible or what guide have I? (*MTP*, 36:10)

If we doubt God's Word about one thing, we shall have small confidence in it upon another thing. Sincere faith in God must treat all God's Word alike; for the faith which accepts one word of God and rejects another is evidently not faith in God, but faith in our own judgment, faith in our own taste. (*MTP*, 36:303)

Q&A

Question: James White has caught you red-handed misrepresenting Spurgeon in your book. You claim that Spurgeon "rejected Limited Atonement." You support that assertion with a quote of rejection of any "limit to the merit of the blood of Jesus...." Yet you omitted clear statements in the very section from which you quote that "the intent of the Divine purpose fixes the application of the infinite offering...we do not believe that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are for ever damned." Anyone who knows anything about Spurgeon knows that he taught Limited Atonement. How much longer do we have to wait to see in print your admission of your inexcusable misrepresentation of Spurgeon?

Answer: Spurgeon was torn between what he called "hyper-Calvinism" and the Word of God. In the quote I give he very clearly says, "In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore....Once admit infinity into the matter, and limit is out of the question." He then goes on to

deny "that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never could be saved, and some of whom were even in Hell when Christ, according to some men's account, died to save them....The intent of the Divine purpose fixes the application of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work."

Spurgeon seems to be contradicting himself. How could the "merit" of the atonement be unlimited unless Christ died for all? If He paid the penalty only for the sins of the elect, then the merit of His death is finite, being confined to a definite number. What did he really mean? I think I have good reason to believe that this is just another case of what one historian explained as "The...old Calvinistic phrases were often on Spurgeon's lips but the genuine Calvinistic meaning had gone out of them."¹

I think we find the key to Spurgeon's real beliefs in his opposition to what he called "hyper-Calvinism." His preaching sparked the "duty-faith" controversy in which he was accused of holding Arminianism. The controversy raged in England for some years and took its name from Spurgeon's teaching that it was the "duty" of every person to have faith in Christ.

If Spurgeon believed in "particular redemption," as the quote above seemed to indicate, it was a peculiar kind. He pressed upon all his hearers the duty of believing the gospel: "Read, write, print, shout—'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.' Great Saviour, I thank Thee for this text; help Thou me so to preach from it that many may come to Thee, and find eternal life!"²

Spurgeon claimed, "I have all the Puritans with me...without a single exception."³ Even the Synod of Dort had declared, "As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called....[God] seriously promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to him and believe on him." That hardly sounds like the Particular Redemption elsewhere taught by Dort. Such are the contradictions inherent within Calvinism, which tries to maintain that God offers salvation to all, even to those whom He has predestined to eternal doom.

But the contradictions were more apparent in Spurgeon's preaching, contradictions which were "regarded among many of the Particular Baptists as symptoms of defection from Calvinism."⁴ His chief opponent was James Wells (referred to privately by Spurgeon as "King James") who for 30 years had been the most popular and

powerful Particular Baptist pastor south of the Thames until the arrival of Spurgeon at New Park Street. He pressed his attack to prove that Spurgeon was an Arminian with such damning quotes as this from the sermon "Future Bliss": "Oh! Dear souls...if you believe in your Christ you are elect; whosoever puts himself on the mercy of Jesus...shall have mercy if he come for it." Wells argued that "such words quietly set election aside, and rest the whole matter with the creature..."⁵

Am I caught red-handed misrepresenting Spurgeon? I don't think so.

Question: I've long wondered about Balaam's statement concerning Israel: "...lo, the people....shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Nm 23:9). Was that ever fulfilled, or is it for the future?

Answer: Balaam is one of the most enigmatic—and tragic—characters in Scripture. He was inspired of God ("the spirit of God came upon him" - Nm 24:2) to make genuine prophecies. He foretold the star that the wise men followed at the birth of Jesus (24:17). Yet he was killed by Israel at God's command (31:1-3, 8, 16) and is in hell (2 Pt 2:15-22; Jude 11; Rv 2:14).

His prophecy about Israel not being reckoned among the nations was first of all a reiteration of what Moses understood (Ex 33:16), as God had declared: "I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people....that ye should be mine" (Lv 20:24, 26). And as a prophecy, it has literally come true in our day.

Israel has been a member of the United Nations for more than 50 years. As the only democracy in the Middle East, she surely deserves to be treated at least as well as the oppressive Muslim dictatorships all around her. Instead, she is treated as an outcast by the very UN that helped birth her. Of the UN's 189 member nations, 188 (including terrorist regimes) are allowed to take their places for two-year rotating terms on the UN Security Council. Syria came on again on Oct. 8, 2001. Israel is the *one exception*—the only state not reckoned among the nations which are allowed so to serve.

Question (composite of two related questions): I enjoy your magazine so much! I have always wondered why some people believe in Christ and are willing to live for God and others will not. Where does the will come from? In the May 2002 issue of *TBC* one of your readers asked you the question, "Why did I believe in Christ and someone else didn't?" It

seemed to me that you only toe-danced around the question in your response. ...Either the difference...is in God, or in man. If the difference is in man, we have cause for boasting [and] that very assumption cannot help but permeate our theology....

Answer: We are either stimulus/response mechanisms automatically responding to various stimuli in the way we have been programmed, or we are autonomous with the power to choose for ourselves. If the former, then the “reason” people respond in certain ways to anything could be scientifically explained on the basis of their chemical and mechanical composition and prior conditioning. That this is not true is the commonsense experience of everyone and is easily proved by the fact that thoughts and choices are not physical. Such concepts as “justice,” “truth,” “morals”—or the very “will” about which you inquire—have neither texture, taste, smell, sound or visibility and are thus unrelated to the physical universe of space, time or matter. Therefore thoughts (including choices) do not come from the brain. If they did, you would be the unhappy prisoner of your brain: “What will my brain decide that I should do next?!”

Thus the answer to all questions about the will is beyond any outside rational explanation. The will originates with the nonphysical thinking person living in the body, i.e., the soul and spirit. Why one person chooses to do this and another chooses not to can be answered only by the individuals making those choices. Why is one person an atheist and another believes in God? Ask them. Why does one Christian live more fully for our Lord than another? Ask them. They have not been programmed to do so by God, but each has his own reasons.

Could God create such autonomous creatures and still remain sovereign? Why not? Being omniscient, he knew from eternity past every choice that would be expressed in thought, word and deed by every person who would ever exist. Does the fact that he knows what everyone will do before they do it *cause* them to do it? Of course not. Time is part of the physical world of which God is not a part. He created everything out of nothing and he himself exists outside of time, space and matter. What to us is past, present and future is all the same to God, who sees all from outside.

You are right. Either God controls everything we say and do, or we make our own choices within the freedom He has given us. That God *can* cause us to do what he

wants could hardly be questioned. He could manipulate circumstances in such a way as to leave us no alternative, or he could force us to do something against our will. He cannot, however, force us to *will* to do anything contrary to our will, or he would be going against his own will by destroying the will he gave us.

If God takes such control that He causes everything man does, then clearly God is the cause of all sin and suffering. Even though God allows man to make his own choices, but *could* cause creatures with a will to willingly do His will, and He didn't exercise that power to stop evil and cause man to do only good, He would be responsible, and thus to blame, for all sin and suffering. Man could then be blamed for nothing, since whatever he did would be willed by God—and whether he went to heaven or to hell would have been predestined by God with no choice possible to man.

The real issue is God's love and character. The end of all Calvinist erudite arguments and references to Hebrew and Greek is this: that God doesn't love everyone, that Christ didn't die for everyone, but that God takes pleasure in damning billions whom he has predestined to eternal torment and from whom he deliberately withholds the regeneration, grace and faith without which they could not be saved. Is that the God you believe in? That is certainly not the God of the Bible. He *is love* and is not willing that anyone perish but desires the salvation of all.

I did not “toe-dance” around the issue. I explained that either God controls man's choices and deeds, or man does. You opt for the former, thus making God the author of evil and the cause of eternal suffering for untold billions in hell as Calvinism teaches. I believe that is a libel against the holy, loving God of the Bible who would never condone evil, much less cause it.

Calvinism is forced into this defamation of God by its irrational and unbiblical view that if man can choose to believe in Christ he has control of his destiny and could boast of choosing heaven instead of hell. On the contrary, the fact that man willingly receives the pardon God offers neither gives him control nor any cause for boasting. God controls the destiny of all men. This is His universe, he created us, and he makes the rules. He pronounced his righteous judgment upon man's sin; and he also provided through Christ the full payment of the penalty His justice requires. On the basis of that payment He offers forgiveness to all who will repent of their

sin and accept the pardon and eternal life his love and grace provide.

Receiving the gift of forgiveness and eternal life offered in Christ Jesus involves neither payment nor merit on man's part and thus nothing of which he can boast. Salvation is all of God. Nor does man's ability to choose snatch his destiny from God and put it in his own hands. It is God who makes the rules and thus is in control. Whether man chooses to believe in or to reject Christ, the consequences of that choice are decided by God alone.

Q&A Endnotes

- 1 A.C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (Baptist Union Publications Dept., 1947), 204.
- 2 C.H. Spurgeon *Autobiography* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 1:225-26.
- 3 C.H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 7:148.
- 4 Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 55.
- 5 James Wells, *Earthen Vessel* (1857), 155.

Biblical Redemption/ Atonement

Part II

Dave Hunt

Before man was created Satan had already rebelled and taken countless angels with him. How many angels and how long before, we don't know. Tragically, the insurrection spread from heaven to earth. At Satan's enticement, the first man and woman defied their Maker, bringing destruction and death upon this new race which God had created in His image.

This mutiny had not caught God by surprise but was proceeding exactly as He had foreknown. He was still on the throne of the universe. How could man rebel against God's absolute authority? Clearly, God had sovereignly given man the ability to submit to Him willingly in love. The ability to say yes, however, was meaningless without the equal ability to say no. Thus the door God opened to loving submission could be slammed shut in willful revolt—as Adam and Eve had done.

Some Christians suggest that God willed for Adam and Eve to break His commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge. Yet sin of any kind is contrary to God's will. He must therefore have *allowed* sin to enter this world in order to further His ultimate purpose for mankind, all of whom He loves with an infinite love—the only kind of love that God, who *is* love, bestows.

The anarchy that began with one seemingly small act of disobedience quickly led to Cain's murder of his brother Abel, and rapidly grew to such monstrous proportions that "every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually." That God had neither decreed nor caused man's sin is clear: "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth;...it repenteth me that I have made them...but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gn 6:5-8).

Couldn't God simply have forgiven Adam and Eve and given them a fresh start? No. There were several reasons why that could not be done. First of all, to do so God would have had to go back on His word. He had sworn that the penalty for disobedience would be death—i.e., eternal separation from Him, the source of life. God's perfect justice demanded the payment of that penalty. For God to set the penalty aside

would undermine His integrity, put everything else He said in question, and make Him a partner in man's sin. No matter how much God loved man and desired to forgive him, His infinite love could not nullify His equally infinite justice.

Right here in the first chapters of the Bible we are confronted with key issues that have been debated among philosophers and theologians for thousands of years. Why would God create creatures whom He knew would rebel against Him and who would thereby be doomed by His holiness to eternal punishment? There was no other way because the rebels would be parents, children, aunts, uncles, etc., of the billions of redeemed who would blissfully dwell in God's loving presence forever. The latter could not exist without the former and all would be given equal opportunity to believe the gospel.

But being all-powerful, why couldn't God have kept Adam and Eve and all of their descendants from sinning? Atheists argue, "If God is too weak to stop evil and suffering, then he isn't God. And if he is powerful enough to stop it and doesn't do

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 1:29

so, then he is a monster. Thus evil and suffering disprove the existence of God."

That argument becomes nonsense in view of the obvious fact demonstrated by everyday experience: man's Creator has given him the intelligence to come to his own conclusions and the prerogative to make his own choices. Without those abilities, humans could neither love God nor one another. For God to stop all evil, He would have to override the will He gave mankind; but that would turn man into a robot programmed to live a meaningless life. Such "well-behaved" puppets would not be to God's glory. Only creatures with a will could truly glorify God with voluntary worship, obedience and love coming from the heart.

"Power" could not abolish sin and the suffering it produces without destroying the sinner, because the heart cannot be changed by force. *Neither the will nor love can be coerced.* If God *caused* man to do either good or evil, then the "choice" to do so would not be man's but God's. It is axiomatic that, in spite of His infinite power,

God could not *cause* man to cease from evil, but must seek to *persuade* him in love and mercy.

Yet there is an entire school of Christianity which declares that God *could* stop all evil and suffering but it pleases Him not to do so. How do they justify attributing to God this grave lack of love and compassion toward those He *could* rescue but instead predestines to damnation? They argue that 1) He is sovereign and can thus do as He pleases; 2) He is not obligated to save anyone; and 3) we cannot judge Him by our standards.

None of these defenses speaks to the issue. A sovereign can "do as he pleases" in some respects, but not morally. In fact, the more absolute a sovereign's power, the greater his moral responsibility to show compassion to those whose destiny he controls. Sovereignty cannot excuse a lack of love—nor could or would God who *is* love hide behind His sovereignty for such an end. We are commanded by Christ, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,...That ye may be the children of your Father which is in

heaven..." (Mt 5:44,45). One neither loves, blesses nor does good by leaving to suffer those whom one could rescue, much less predestines them to eternal torment. Such behavior by a man would be condemned, so it surely cannot be attributed to our "Father which is in heaven," whom we are to emulate.

Nor is mercy motivated by obligation but by compassion; and it is "according to his mercy he saved us..." (Ti 3:5). God told Moses, "I will...be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Ex 33:19). Far from *limiting* His mercy, which "is over all his works" (Ps 145:9), God is simply saying that no one can *demand* His mercy. It flows without constraint from His love.

As for judging Him by "our standards," the very standards of love and kindness to which we hold one another are written in every human conscience by God who is more loving, not less, than we could ever be. First Corinthians 13, the "love chapter," presents a love so far beyond man's ability that it could only be *God's* love. And it is a denigration of that perfect and infinite love to suggest that God would act toward anyone with less kindness, compassion and love than He expects of us, His creatures.

If a doctor had a sure cure for a plague that was wiping out the human race, yet supplied it only to a select few, leaving multitudes to die needlessly, he would be justly condemned. Jesus said, "Be ye therefore

merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Lk 6:36). Surely God is no less merciful than we are commanded to be. Therefore, any theological system is false which presents God as less loving, kind and compassionate than man’s God-given conscience and biblical commands tell him he ought to be.

We have already noted (*TBC*, Feb ’02) much which a sovereign God *cannot* do—and not *in spite* of who He is but *because* of who He is. He cannot lie, go back on His Word, or deny Himself; He cannot sin, be wrong, ungracious, unmerciful or unloving. Nor can He be unjust. Therefore, He cannot forgive sinners without the full penalty demanded by His justice having been paid. And that is where redemption and atonement enter.

Simply to forgive Adam and Eve for their sedition would not only have been unjust but it would not have solved the basic problem. To give man a fresh start would change nothing. The rebellion would merely recur again and again as often as God forgave.

The willful disobedience of Adam and Eve had contaminated beyond repair the entire human race. God would have to start all over again. But for Him to create another Adam and Eve would only result in the same failure being repeated. The race of man already in existence had to be rescued. But how?

God must become a man—infinite God and perfect, sinless man in one Person—and Himself pay for all mankind that infinite penalty which His justice demanded for sin. And for God to become a man and die in our place would be possible only because God is a triune Being: “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn 4:14). The Son, not the Father or Holy Spirit, would die in our place.

The Messiah-Redeemer could not be born on earth until “the fulness of the time was come...” (Gal 4:4). His miraculous virgin birth could come only after a long period of preparation. That preparation would involve revealing the awfulness of sin, establishing a system of sacrifices that would point to the redemption the Messiah would accomplish, and providing many prophecies concerning the Messiah and His ministry which would identify Him beyond question when at last He came.

The first prophecy of the One who would redeem mankind was pronounced as doom upon the deceiving serpent in the hearing of Adam and Eve immediately following

their sin: “the woman...her seed [i.e., virgin-born]...shall bruise thy head [a mortal wound]...” (Gn 3:15). Further prophecies will be considered next month.

The first picture of redemption was given when God killed animals, shedding their blood that their skins might cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. The penalty of death had to be exacted: “...without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]” (Heb 9:22); “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lv 17:11). Ingesting blood would perpetuate the forfeited life, denying both the penalty and solution, and was therefore forbidden to Jew (Lv 17:14, etc.) and Christian (Acts 15:20). That prohibition is defied by Roman Catholicism’s claim that her priests change the Eucharistic wafer and wine into the body and blood of Christ to be ingested by the faithful. Christ’s blood was poured

And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

John 1:36

out in death at Calvary, never to be taken up again. His resurrected body is of “flesh and bones” (Lk 24:39), without blood.

Old Testament sacrifices and examples pictured the coming sacrifice of the Messiah. Christ explained that even the brass serpent on the pole in the wilderness (Nm 21:6-9) pictured his death upon the Cross (Jn 3:14). Of the first primitive altar, God commanded, “...thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar” (Ex 20:24-26). No human effort was acceptable. The blood of the sacrifice alone could temporarily cover sin before the Cross. Babel was the ultimate rejection of God’s plan of redemption: instead of a blood sacrifice, steps of man’s own making were the path to heaven.

We can only mention a few of the major Old Testament offerings which pictured the sacrifice of the coming Messiah. The most frequently sacrificed animal was the lamb, always a type of the Messiah: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin

of the world” (Jn 1:29). There was the “ram caught in a thicket by his horns [i.e., Christ alone had the power to pay sin’s penalty]” which God provided to Abraham in the place of Isaac (Gn 22:8-13). There was the passover lamb sacrificed to deliver Israel from Egypt. It had to be “without blemish, a male of the first year” (Ex 12:5), picturing Christ’s perfection and sinlessness. Its blood was applied “to the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein” the children of Israel were sheltered, eating the lamb (v. 7): “And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (v. 13). The lamb was to be eaten “roast with fire” (v. 9), picturing the full heat of God’s wrath against sin which Christ would bear in our place.

The entire book of Leviticus is devoted to instructions regarding the various sacrifices that temporarily covered sin until the Messiah came. All foreshadowed Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice which alone could redeem mankind. The tabernacle (and later the temple) in which these sacrifices were offered “was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts, and sacrifices...meats and drinks, and divers washings...until the time of reformation [i.e., the advent and sacrifice of Christ]” (Heb 9:9,10).

As we noted last month, the foundation for biblical teaching concerning redemption and atonement is laid in the Old Testament. There the word “redeemer” is found each of the 18 times it appears in the Bible; “atonement” is found 80 of the 81 times and “redeemed” is found 55 of 62 times. *Not one* of the Old Testament pictures of redemption or atonement was effective for only a select group. *Every* sacrifice and feast day picturing Christ under the old covenant was for all Israel (even though most rejected the provision). This is true from the observance of the sabbath (“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” - Heb 4:9), to the passover (“For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” - 1 Cor 5:7), to the day of atonement (Lv 23:27), including *every sacrifice* in the tabernacle and temple.

This background helps us to see that, exactly like the Old Testament sacrifices which looked forward to the Cross, so Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary was not limited to a select group but was efficacious for all who would believe.

TBC

Quotable

Tyndale wrote, “The Scribes and Pharisees had thrust up the sword of the word of God into a sheath of glosses.... Now, O God, draw this sharp sword from the scabbard. Strike, wound, cut asunder the soul and flesh, so that man...may be in peace with thee to all eternity!”

The [Roman Catholic] Bishop of London was bitter, complaining that the word of God in the common language of the people would “infect and contaminate” them....He preached against the translation...the King having decreed that the version must be destroyed by fire, and that all those who kept or read it must be punished....In 1527 the Archbishop...set up a fund, to which the bishops contributed, to buy as many copies as possible and then destroy them by fire....The profits of the merchants, the printers and booksellers now soared, which in turn led to the printing of more and more copies. By this means England was flooded with the New Testament in English....

One of the reasons why Rome had managed to hold Europe in the grip of superstition through the long Dark Ages, was that the common people could not read the Scriptures for themselves. They had to rely on the priests to tell them what the Latin Bible said, even though many priests could not read the Latin. ...Tyndale...gave the people of England the opportunity to read the New Testament for themselves...[and they] seized the opportunity...with both hands.

David Gay, *Battle for the Church: 1517-1644*, pp. 35-37

Q&A

Question: Arafat can’t last forever. What do you think will happen when he is gone? Could this bring peace? When will that be in relation to the Rapture?

Answer: Biblical prophecy gives a broad picture, but not the details of what will happen in the Middle East. We must avoid speculation based upon daily news. In spite of many problems, I think the present situation worldwide is peaceful and prosperous enough to fit Christ’s description of false peace and relative prosperity at the time of the Rapture: “They did eat, they drank, they married wives,...until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went

out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (Lk 17:26-30). Certainly these words could not be describing the Second Coming in the midst of Armageddon, nor a post-trib Rapture coming at a time when the world is practically destroyed after at least 3-1/2 years of famine, pestilence, and war.

Likewise Paul, referring to “the day of the Lord,” which I believe begins with the Rapture, writes, “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thes 5:1-3).

Prophecies concerning Israel relate not to the Rapture but to Antichrist’s attack at Armageddon. Israel apparently escapes much if not most of the worldwide destruction poured out by God’s wrath during the Great Tribulation. Israelis are described as “them that are at rest, that dwell safely...the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the [promised] land... in the latter days” (Ezk 38:11-16). Antichrist has imposed upon the world the rebuilding of the temple: “And he shall confirm [enforce] the covenant with many for one week [seven years]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease [breaking the covenant]...” (Dn 9:27).

Antichrist “shall devour the whole earth” (Dn 7:23) and “all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world...” (Rv 13:8). He will enforce a false peace: “...he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes [Christ]; but he shall be broken without hand [at the Second Coming]” (Dn 8:25).

Thus, as Scripture indicates, a false peace (probably without Arafat) must eventually be established for Israel. When and how, I do not know, but I believe it will be very soon and that the present upheaval in the Middle East is a necessary preliminary.

Question: We had a young Muslim man view the Jesus video and we read the Ten Commandments to him. He was greatly impressed by the “values” and “human rights” taught by Jesus. Eventually he was baptized. Through his witnessing to other Muslims via internet chat rooms, he learned of the slaughter of the Canaanite women and children by the Jews in

the Old Testament....He felt this was the origin of the Israeli current “slaughters” and now rejects parts of the Old Testament as Jewish perversions while accepting the New Testament. He is so troubled now and seems to have lost “the joy of his salvation.” How do we counsel him?

Answer: Being impressed with “values” and “human rights” taught by Jesus and being baptized does not save anyone. I will assume that this young Muslim knows the Lord, though you’ve given no evidence. There are some killings in the Old Testament by Israel that were never commanded by God and were in disobedience to Him.

Beginning with Muhammad, Muslims have killed millions of men, women and children to spread Islam in the name of Allah and continue that slaughter today. The 3,000 killed in the name of Allah by the 19 hijackers last September 11 were a drop in the bucket compared to those millions killed by Muslims throughout history. In just the last decade 2 million have been killed in Southern Sudan by the Muslim government in the north, and thousands are still being killed by Muslims there and in Indonesia, Nigeria, Algeria, Iraq, Iran and elsewhere. We have dealt with this in the past.

Genesis 15:13-16 explains that God could not give Israel the land of Canaan for another 400 years because “the iniquity of the Amorites [and other Canaanites] is not yet full.” But the day came when the perversions and sins of these people were so great that God was forced by His righteousness to annihilate them—and He used Israel to execute that judgment. In contrast to the slaughter over the centuries in many countries by Muslims as they forced Islam upon those they conquered, Israel was given a specific land with defined boundaries (vv. 18-21). They were not to take over the world or to convert anyone at the point of a sword. Israel’s conquest of Canaan was a special situation for which we must trust God’s judgment that the commanded extermination of its inhabitants (which Israel failed to accomplish) was necessary.

Every word in the Bible is inspired of God, is true, and the Old Testament history is recorded for our understanding. If this former Muslim rejects some of the Bible, Old or New Testaments, then he, rather than God and His prophets, has become the authority instead of the Bible. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old, so if there were errors in the Old, then the New would be also in error. The Bible must be taken as a whole because every part testifies to the truth of the rest of it.

Find out, first of all, whether he truly has believed in the Christ of Scripture.

Question: I was not aware until recently that, like Lutherans, those who claim to be of “Reformed” faith, such as Presbyterians, practice infant baptism. Do they believe that baptism saves the infant? They say it is like circumcision for Jews. Is this biblical?

Answer: Luther and Calvin had been Roman Catholics and carried much Catholicism (including sacramentalism) over into the Reformation. Every Lutheran church follows Luther’s *Small Catechism*, published by Concordia Publishing House of the Missouri Synod. Here is what it says (emphasis theirs):

242....By a Sacrament we mean a *sacred act*—A. Instituted by *God Himself*; B. In which there are *certain visible means connected with His word*; and C. By which God *offers, gives, and seals* unto us *the forgiveness of sins* which Christ has earned for us....243....There are *only two* such Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper....251. How do you prove that infants, too, are to be baptized...? A. Because they are *included* in the words ‘all nations’....B. Because Holy Baptism is the *only means* whereby infants, *who, too, must be born again, can ordinarily be regenerated and brought to faith*....253. What...does Baptism give or work? A. It works *forgiveness of sins*....B. It delivers from death and the devil....C. It gives eternal salvation....

Calvin likewise taught that “God in baptism promises remission of sins...let us therefore embrace it in faith” (*Institutes*, IV: xv, 17). He taught that the gospel was no sure way of bringing people to Christ because not everyone hearing it was among the elect; but that everyone who was baptized was among the elect if he believed in his baptism—and children of the elect were automatically elect. He taught that through baptism (even though performed by an unbelieving Roman Catholic priest), “God, regenerating us...ingrafts us into the fellowship of his Church, and makes us his by adoption...” (*Institutes*, IV: xvii, 1). This is sacramental salvation by works as practiced in Roman Catholicism and was brought into “Reformed theology” by Calvin as well as by Luther. Calvin derided Anabaptists for being rebaptized as believers because they “deny that we are duly baptised, because we were baptised in the papacy by wicked men and idolaters...” (*Institutes*, IV: xv, 16,17).

In the *New Geneva Study Bible* (p. 38),

R.C. Sproul argues for the efficacy of infant baptism, likening it to circumcision. He is following Calvin who wrote, “The promise ...is one in both [circumcision and baptism]—viz....forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. And the thing figured is one and the same—viz. regeneration....Hence we may conclude, that everything applicable to circumcision applies also to baptism...it is incontrovertible, that baptism has been substituted for circumcision, and performs the same office” (IV: xvi, 4).

Calvin’s and Sproul’s analogy won’t hold for several reasons. First of all, circumcision did not produce regeneration or effect forgiveness of sins or salvation, but was for all physical descendants of Abraham. For Jews only it was a sign of the old covenant that involved the land and was inappropriate for Gentiles. Nor did circumcision have any spiritual significance without the same faith in God that Abraham had. Even Ishmael, a rank unbeliever and outside Israel, was circumcised. Furthermore, it is a common medical practice for many non-Jewish male children to be circumcised today.

Sproul (*New Geneva Study Bible*, p. 1740) tries to argue for household baptism from Acts 10:47,48 and 16:31-33. It is clear from the verses, however, that only those who believed the gospel were baptized. Cornelius told Peter that everyone present was there “to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33). “The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.” The Gentile converts began to “speak with tongues and magnify God” and Peter “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (10:44-48). All who were baptized had heard and had believed the gospel (impossible for infants) and had spoken in tongues as a sign to the Jews that Gentiles also could be saved. Clearly, no infants were baptized.

As for the Philippian jailor’s household, Paul and Silas “spake...the word of the Lord...to all that were in his house” (Acts 16:32). Once again, there were no infants; only those were present who were able to understand and believe the gospel. And it is such persons who were then baptized as a result of their faith in Christ.

The Ethiopian asked, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” (Acts 8:36,37). Infants can’t understand or believe the gospel and thus cannot biblically be baptized.

That only those who have believed the gospel are to be baptized is also clear from Christ’s command to His disciples: “teach

all nations, baptizing them” (Mt 28:19); and “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk 16:16). Those who teach baptismal regeneration point to the latter verse for support. Note, however, that whereas a multitude of passages offer salvation through faith alone with no mention of baptism, neither here nor anywhere else does Scripture indicate that those who believe but are not baptized are not saved.

Biblical Redemption/ Atonement

Part III

Dave Hunt

We can truly say with Paul, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tm 1:12). All we who love Christ deeply talk with Him constantly; He is our Lord, dearest friend and Savior. We have authenticated His Word over and over in its archaeological, historical, internal, external and prophetic proofs and in its witness to our conscience. Times without number we have experienced the fulfillment of its promises to us in our daily lives. Nothing could ever justifiably shake our trust in Him.

Yet even some Christians are plagued with doubts and in need of encouragement from other believers through God’s Word. There are non-Christians, too, who sincerely seek answers to legitimate questions. They ask us for solid *reasons* for our faith, and we must be “ready always to give an answer” (1 Pt 3:15).

Most troubling to many is the problem of evil. The outrageous malevolence and cruelty we see daily in the news brings unspeakable agony of mind, body and soul and should break the hardest heart. What unbearable tragedies Adam’s having eaten of the forbidden fruit continues to produce each day! If God is good, why *any* evil and suffering?

This seeming enigma divides even evangelicals. Some say it is not for us to ask—but what do we tell those seeking answers? Others say that God *could* stop all evil and suffering but it does not please Him to do so: it is a manifestation of His grace that He saves *anyone*.

But His Word says that He “is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works” (Ps 145:9). Should we not seek answers from His Word?

God invites us to reason from His Word (Is 1:18). Let us *reason* about these questions. It is unreasonable that sin and suffering could be the will of God who “is love” (1 Jn 4:8)! He commands us to meet the needs of everyone we can, to love even our enemies—yet He doesn’t love and meet the needs of suffering humanity? Impossible! God calls Israel’s sin and idolatry “this abominable thing that I hate” (Jer 44:4). How could anything that God hates ever be His

will, much less be caused by Him?

The unspeakable wickedness of mankind in Noah’s day “grieved [God] at his heart” (Gn 6:6). Evil is not God’s will, or it could not grieve Him. Evil is the will of evildoers. Then why does God allow it? That can only be because He sovereignly gave man the right to choose whether to love or hate, to do good or evil, to obey His laws written in every conscience, or to disobey. Without that ability to choose we could not obey the first commandment, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart” (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37)—nor could we love one another.

Heart? That word expresses a common understanding: “I promise with all my heart....” To end sin would take a change of man’s heart. How could God change man’s heart without destroying his right to choose? The door to evil opened by Adam’s

**For by one offering he hath
perfected for ever them that are
sanctified.**

Hebrews 10:14

faithless rebellion could only be closed by faith: “...if thou shalt...believe in thine heart...thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9).

To stop evil, God was going to wipe everyone from the face of the earth. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gn 6:8)—otherwise none of us would be here. *Grace?* Would God look the other way and ignore Noah’s sin? “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (Rom 6:1,2). That would turn “the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4). God’s grace does not corrupt His own justice.

If the power of choice had opened the door to sin, could that door ever be closed while the ability to choose remained? Couldn’t those who chose to believe change their minds? Wouldn’t heaven itself be in danger if the redeemed still had the power of choice? A rebellion led by Lucifer eons ago had taken place in God’s very presence. Why not again?

How could our salvation be made eternally secure? Does our ultimate destiny depend, finally, upon our continued faithfulness? If so, wouldn’t we be able to boast that we were in heaven, or at least remaining there, due to our own efforts? In fact, *Christ* keeps us secure (Jn 10:27-30).

Some Christians teach that salvation and security cannot be by faith or we could

boast of our having believed. But faith is not a work: “...by grace...not of works” (Eph 2:8,9); “...that worketh not, but believeth...” (Rom 4:5). Nor do we have any alternative: “he that believeth not God hath made him a liar” (1 Jn 5:10); “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). Christ is our life (Col 3:4).

In the Old Testament we have the patterns, pictures and promises of the redemption that would be accomplished in the New Testament. The Bible could be proved to be the Word of God simply on the basis of the consistency, all through its pages, of God’s plan of redemption. This was presented over a period of 1,600 years by 40 inspired authors most of whom lived in different times and cultures and never met one another to compare what they said. Thus Paul preached “the gospel of God (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures)...” (Rom 1:1,2).

Why an Old and New Testament? Because Israel, to whom the first testament (or covenant), was given, broke it even before Moses descended from Mt. Sinai, where God had written His Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone. That is why Moses smashed the tablets in anger (Ex 32:1-19). Nor could *anyone* keep the first covenant, which required perfect obedience. We have all broken it. A new covenant was needed.

For rebelling against God, Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden, bringing death upon themselves and all their descendants (Rom 5:12). They lost the glory that had clothed them upon their creation (Rom 3:23), becoming “naked”—not just physically but morally and spiritually. God shed the first blood to provide Adam and Eve with a physical covering of skins (Gn 3:21). That first animal sacrifice initiated a system of blood sacrifices as a temporary spiritual covering for believers.

God made it clear that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb 9:22) of sins. Obediently, Abel sacrificed lambs from his flock while his brother Cain offered to God the harvest his *own efforts* produced in his field. God accepted Abel and rejected Cain. In jealous anger Cain killed his brother. This first murder issued from a religious quarrel which has never ended. Ever since, the Abels who approach God on His terms have been persecuted and killed by the Cains who practice a religion of works and rituals.

It should have been clear to all that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4). The very fact that these sacrifices had to be repeated proved their inadequacy. They

were only a picture of the One of whom John the Baptist would one day declare, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). God would become a man through a virgin birth to pay, *in our* place, the penalty for sin demanded by His infinite justice. He alone could pay that debt.

Tragically, multitudes have clung to that picture, perverted it and rejected its fulfillment in Christ. Millions of nature-worshipping pagans, not only in primitive societies but living in modern cities, continue today to offer plants and animals in secret ceremonies and some even offer human sacrifices to appease nature or their gods. Pagan groups within the American armed forces have their own chaplains. All the world's religions (including those falsely claiming to be Christian) are allied against biblical Christianity.

Years ago in the visitor center at the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City the guide brought us to a bronze statue depicting an ancient altar with a man and a woman, clothed in animal skins, kneeling on either side. The altar held an offering of fruits, vegetables and wheat, while at its base, very much alive, reclined a lamb. "This is Adam and Eve," said the guide, "presenting an offering to God." I asked, "Why have they rejected Abel's offering and are presenting *Cain's*?" The guide seemed confused and promised to check with Church leaders. Shortly thereafter this piece of bronze was removed. Mormon "communion" is bread and water, not the wine that speaks of Christ's blood shed for our sins.

Redemption would come through a "chosen people" (Dn 11:15), the Jews, who would flagrantly disobey God, be despised by all mankind, and despise and reject the Savior whom God would send to them. They would therefore display God's grace, mercy, love and forgiveness—and His justice—as no others could. In them would be fully demonstrated that salvation is by grace, not of works or merit, and is for *whosoever will believe*.

In rejecting and crucifying Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles helped to fulfill God's plan: "For they...because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets...have fulfilled them in condemning him....But God raised him from the dead....And we declare unto you glad tidings...the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled...[and] through this man...all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law

of Moses" (Acts 13:26-39).

In this sermon Paul tied the New Testament gospel to Old Testament pictures and prophecies. It was the model Paul himself followed everywhere and it should be ours today. Our faith in Christ is solidly based upon the entire Bible: "*according to the scriptures*" (1 Cor 15:1-4).

The tower of Babel (Gn 11:1-9) was the rejection of God's offer of salvation in the attempt to climb to heaven on steps of man's making. Every cult, human religion and false "Christian" sect have this in common: man's attempt to appease God by works and rituals—from paganism's potions and candles to Catholicism's transubstantiation and scapulars.

Millions of Roman Catholic faithful still wear the brown scapular of "Our Lady of Mt. Carmel," with its printed promise that "anyone who dies clothed in this [scapular] shall not suffer eternal fire; and...they shall

...let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great:...

2 Samuel 24:14

be saved." Pope John Paul II has worn one since childhood. Mormons wear an undergarment with Masonic markings to aid their salvation. For both Catholics and Mormons, Christ's sacrifice is deemed insufficient.

There is a deadly mixture of truth and error within many professing Christian denominations. Catholics, Calvinists and Lutherans trust in Christ and His sacrifice on the cross, *plus* infant baptism, for the new birth and cleansing from sin. They also disregard the prohibition against drinking "any manner of blood" (Lv 7:27; 17:10; Acts 15:20).

Catholics believe that their priests change the physical bread and wine of communion into the literal body and blood of Christ so that their Eucharist is the continual offering of Christ—in spite of the fact that "Christ was *once offered*...after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...there is *no more* offering for sin" (Heb 9:25-10:18).

Though rejecting transubstantiation, Lutherans claim that Christ is physically present and eaten in these elements. They believe that "in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given...." Calvinists deny the real presence, but claim that through these elements they partake of the physical body and blood of Christ and

"nourish [their] spiritual life...the body of Christ is the only food to invigorate and keep alive the soul...the same is spiritually bestowed by the blood of Christ..."²

A teaching is growing within the church that salvation is only for a select group for whom alone Christ died. However, the patterns, pictures and promises in the Old Testament offered salvation to *all* who would believe. This was unquestionably true of the Passover, Day of Atonement, and Levitical sacrifices. *None* were limited to an "elect."

"*All*...were under the cloud...*all* passed through the sea...[and] did *all* eat the same spiritual meat;...and did *all* drink the same spiritual drink...that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:1-4). When Isaiah said, "All we like sheep have gone astray," surely by *all* he didn't mean *some* of Israel. Likewise, when he followed that statement with "but the

Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," it could only mean that the coming Messiah would pay the penalty for the sins of all. All Israel was offered deliverance from the serpent's poison through looking in faith to the bronze serpent lifted up on the pole (Nm 21:8). And Christ made a direct connection between that event and His sacrifice for the sins of the world (Jn 3:14,15).

The sacrifices were offered for all Israel, yet this did not guarantee that all Israel would be saved. Salvation was *offered* to all; it was up to each person to accept or reject it: "but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb 4:2). Tragically, salvation was both offered and available (as it is today through the gospel) to many who are now in hell through unbelief.

God said, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Is 1:2); "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom 10:21). Stephen indicted the rabbis and all Israel with these words: "ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

The angel proclaimed "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people..." (Lk 2:10). We have good news to announce to every person (Mk 16:15). All who receive Christ in faith are born again by God's Spirit (Jn 1:12,13) as children of God into His own family (Gal 3:26). Our hope is in the One who is able to present us "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Indeed, "faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thes 5:24). TBC

Quotable

Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced...more true than the truth itself. One far superior to me has well said..., "A clever imitation in glass casts contempt, as it were, on that precious jewel the emerald...." Lest, therefore, through my neglect, some should be carried off, even as sheep are by wolves, while they perceive not the true character of these men, because they outwardly are covered with sheep's clothing (against whom the Lord has enjoined us to be on our guard), and because their language resembles ours, while their sentiments are very different.

Irenaeus of Lyons, The Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So Called (Adversis Haereses-original Greek fragments), A.D. 180

Q&A

Question: Jesus said, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Mt 24:34). How long is a generation? Was that the "generation" that saw Israel restored to her land in 1948? If so, how much more time do we have before the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy? Aren't we running out of time?

Answer: God told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves for "four hundred years" and would enter Canaan "in the fourth generation" (Gn 15:13-16). Was a "generation" 100 years, and thus we have until 2048? Moses said, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten" (Ps 90:10), so had a generation gotten shorter, and we only have to wait until 2018?

There is no basis for thinking that Christ meant the "generation" which would see Israel restored to her land. Furthermore, Israel hasn't been fully restored yet. We know He didn't mean the generation then alive, for that would have been a false prophecy. Preterists say Nero was the Antichrist, and that "all these things" prophesied by Christ in Matthew 24:1-33 came to pass in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem, and that Israel no longer has any place in the prophetic scheme. Preterism is easily disproved.

Christ said a tribulation was coming that would be worse than anything before or after

(Mt 24:21). The tribulation of A.D. 67-70 was nothing compared to Hitler's slaughter of 6 million Jews. Verse 22 says, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." Surely there was no danger that the weapons available in A.D. 70 might wipe out all flesh, nor was the tribulation cut short on that account. Verses 29-31 mention signs in the heavens, including everyone visibly seeing "the Son of man coming...with power and great glory" and the angels "with a great sound of a trumpet...gather[ing] together his elect...from one end of the heaven to the other"—none of which occurred in A.D. 70. The "generation" alive in Christ's time did not see the fulfillment.

Both John the Baptist and Christ referred to Israel in a special way as a "generation": "generation of vipers" (Mt 3:7; 23:33); "an evil and adulterous generation" (Mt 12:39); "this wicked generation" (12:45); "wicked and adulterous generation" (16:4); "faithless and perverse generation" (17:17); "evil generation" (Lk 11:29), etc. *That generation*—Israel as a whole in unbelief and rebellion against God and His Word—will continue until all is fulfilled. That will be when "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him..." (Zec 12:10).

Surely this is the Second Coming with Christ visibly returning to earth in power and great glory at the end of the greatest tribulation the world will have ever seen, at a time when atomic and other modern weapons could wipe out all flesh. He intervenes to rescue Israel and to stop the carnage, and "a fountain [is] opened to the house of David...for sin and for uncleanness" (Zec 13:1). God says, "I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more....So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward....Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel..." (Ezk 39:7, 22, 29). "So all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26) and that "generation" of unbelief and rebellion will have passed away with the fulfillment of the Matthew 24 prophecies.

Question: While I find it difficult to believe that God could be the cause of evil, there seems to be some pretty strong support for this idea from Scripture. Have you read *No Place for Sovereignty: What's Wrong with Freewill Theism* by R.K. McGregor Wright? He agrees with Calvin and Luther that man has no free will and that God causes everything that occurs. He shows that even to reason with

someone proves there is no free will: "...if the will bows to the logic of a valid argument, has it not given up its autonomy?" On page 180, Wright quotes, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (Jn 1:3), showing that evil had to be made by God. But he excuses God from causing sin by saying that "God is not responsible for evil in the sense that he is not answerable to anyone" (p. 201). How do you respond to Wright?

Answer: Far from "giving up its autonomy" to a "valid argument," the will (aided by reason) decides to accept the argument and on that basis to act reasonably. This proves, not disproves, the will.

While much that Wright says is true, and his summation of philosophical and religious thought in Chapter 1 is informative, his book contains numerous false premises, irrationalities and unfounded conclusions—too much to deal with briefly. Yes, God is answerable to no one but Himself. However, this fact is irrelevant to Wright's argument because God's holiness will not allow Him to sin. Surely the God who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not [cannot] look on iniquity" (Hab 1:13), and who "cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (Jas 1:13), would not cause any of His creatures to sin or to be involved in any way with sin! Causing men to sin would make God the sinner's partner and equally culpable.

The very suggestion that God would predestine and cause man to sin is contrary to the Bible and repugnant to our God-given conscience. Sin and wickedness is contrary to God's will and thus could not have been willed by Him. This is so clearly established in Scripture that it needs no further proof here. Therefore any teaching that God causes sin must be false. There are hundreds of scriptures which refute Wright's, Luther's and Calvin's error in this regard.

Yes, "without him was not any thing made that was made"; however, sin and wickedness are not "things," but actions of people. Christ made very clear the source of evil: "For...out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,..." (Mk 7:21-23). Likewise, James declares that "man...is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (Jas 1:14). Man, not God, causes sin.

Question [condensation]: I obtained a copy of Edwin Palmer's book, *the five points of calvinism*, and...he does say that "...God has foreordained sin." But why

“...God has foreordained sin.” But why did you...fail to tell your listeners just how Palmer arrived at his conclusion? Well, of course I don’t *really* wonder...it would not have served your purpose, which apparently is to use any means, however disingenuous, to discredit Calvinism. A pastor friend...explained that...you have a “burr under your saddle” when it comes to Calvinists...Wrestling verses and comments out of context is...most unbecoming of a man of God. You get away with it because of the credibility you have, and...most...would not be inclined to... check out the sources you quote, as I have. Your arguments regarding Calvinism involve a level of sophistry that would ill become a schoolboy...A man of your position should be scrupulously forthright when handling the things of God...

With regard to the account of Joseph ...[Gn 45:8] says that *God* did it....Why then do you distort this teaching? Do you hope to gain favor with your people by ridiculing Calvinists...? God’s foreordination of all earthly events is spelled out in so many places in Scripture that I hardly see how you could not be aware of them....But God, while governing these events, cannot be held accountable for them.

In Westminster [Confession] III:1 we read, “God from all eternity did...ordain whatsoever comes to pass; *yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin....*” The Belgic Confession (Article XIII) has this to say: “...God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed....”

Bro. Hunt, I can’t believe that you are not familiar with these statements....I can only conclude, therefore, that you are willfully withholding this information from your congregation at large....Any number of your listeners see through this pretense at scholarship [and] recognize that you are being...dishonest....One might wonder, do you “plant” questions [in *The Berean Call*] to provide yourself an occasion for a diatribe against Calvinism?

Answer: Thank you for your letter and the concern you express. I confess it was troubling to be accused of “a level of sophistry that would ill become a schoolboy...disregard[ing] contextual material...hop[ing] to gain favor by ridiculing Calvinists...willfully withholding this information from your [my] congregation at large...reluctance to be candid about these

matters...‘a burr under your [my] saddle’ with regard to Calvinism...pretense at scholarship...being disingenuous, even dishonest...,” etc., etc.

I don’t resort to such *ad hominem*, but sincerely attempt to stick to the facts, documenting everything with contextual quotes and footnotes. You offered no quotes to support your accusations. Sadly, with few exceptions, most of the Calvinists who write to me make similar unsupported charges. For example, see James White’s response to my book, *What Love Is This?*

As God is my witness, I did not want to write this book, and did so reluctantly and only after I carefully and prayerfully studied God’s Word (in relation to Calvinism) plus scores of Calvinist writers. I have conscientiously done my very best to be accurate both biblically and in quoting any authors. It is therefore disconcerting to be accused of deliberate dishonesty.

You claim that I take out of context Palmer’s statement, “It is even biblical to say that God has foreordained sin.”¹ Not so. Repeatedly he declares that “God is back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen...the moving of a finger [God is “behind” and *causes* that finger to be lifted in an obscene gesture?...]...the mistake of a typist [the typist did not make a mistake? God *caused* the mistake?]-even sin.” Every sin is *caused* by God? On the contrary! He hates sin, commands man not to sin, and it is a libel of the character of God to charge Him with *causing* sin.

Yet Calvin wrote, “He [God] has decreed that...all events take place by his sovereign appointment...²everything done in the world is according to his decree...³so ordained by his decree.”⁴ Boettner said, “[God] creates the very thoughts and intents of the soul.”⁵ In other words, the most wicked sins men commit are conceived, predestined and caused by God! Calvin states, “The first man fell because the Lord deemed it meet that he should...”⁶ Sproul agrees, as he must in order to maintain TULIP: “God desired for man to fall into sin...God created sin....God wills all things that come to pass...”⁷

For Calvinists and their creeds, after declaring scores of times that God *causes* sin, then to say that He is not the *author* of sin is a contradiction too obvious to discuss further (*TBC* Jun ’02, Q&A).

I’m dishonest? Palmer paraphrases Genesis 45:8 as “You did not do it.” No, Joseph says, “it was not you that *sent me hither*, but God.” Of course they did it. God did not cause Joseph’s brothers to hate him and to sell him into slavery. But He used their evil to bring Joseph into Egypt for

His purposes.

It is one thing to say that Christ was crucified according to the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” and something else to say that God *caused* the hatred and evil in the hearts and actions of those who did it. In specific situations, to fulfill His will God is able to use man’s determination to sin, but He does not *cause* men to sin in those situations; much less is He the instigator of *every evil thought, word and deed*, as Calvinism teaches.

Q&A Endnotes

1. Palmer, *the five points of calvinism*. (Baker Books, 1999), 82.
2. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), III:xxiii, 6
3. *Ibid.*, I:xvi, 6.
4. *Ibid.*, III:xxiii, 7
5. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1932), 32.
6. Calvin, *Institutes*, III:xxiii, 8.
7. R. C. Sproul, Jr., *Almighty Over All*, 54.

Part III Endnotes

1. *Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism* (Concordia Publishing House, 1971).
2. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), IV: xvii, 1-10.

Catholicism & Islam: Ties That Bind

T.A. McMahon

The above title became a source of controversy when I used it for a talk given at a recent prophecy conference. What I found curious about the commotion was that it came from Catholics (and some evangelicals) who had yet to hear my presentation. Furthermore, the title reflects the hope and prayers of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. Rome has been tilling this "common ground" with Islam for decades, as evidenced by the 1994 Vatican publication, *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds Which Unite Us: 16 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. Why, therefore, would anyone be upset by my simply repeating what the Roman Catholic Church very much desires?

Actually, the real controversy stems from confusion created by the Church of Rome herself. In her zeal to be the spiritual voice of the world's religions, she talks out of both sides of her ecumenical mouth. Regarding her relationship to Islam, not only has she made to those of the Muslim faith some theological overtures which contradict Christian orthodoxy, but even worse, there are ties between the two religions which go a lot deeper than most people realize. Let's first consider some commonalities between the two faiths.

Starting with the number of adherents, Catholicism and Islam each exceed one billion, nearly all of whom enter their respective faiths as infants. More than 16 million babies are baptized into the Roman Catholic Church each year. It's a family thing. My sisters and I were baptized as Catholics because our parents were Catholics, and they and their siblings were baptized into the Church because *their* parents were Catholics. That's the primary way the faith is propagated.

Practically speaking, although baptism is not part of Islam, all children born into a Muslim family *are* Muslims. Their official "confirmation" follows as soon as they are able to confess the *shahada* ("There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger"). This baby-oriented process for increasing their ranks has been a motivating factor in the Vatican/Saudi-sponsored lobby against UN endeavors to introduce contraception and other methods of population control, especially in third-world countries.

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today; Catholicism is the largest religious body among those professing to be Christian. If the number of followers was a good measure for selecting a religion, then

Islam and Catholicism would definitely be the way to go. However, the Bible has no such yardstick. Rather, Jesus said, "[W]ide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Mt 7:13,14).

Most people are aware of the veneration and even worship of Mary found among Roman Catholics, but not many know that much the same deference exists among Muslims. A chapter in the Qur'an is named after Mary ("Surah Maryam"). From the outskirts of Cairo to Bombay to Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, hundreds of thousands of the Islamic faith have congregated wherever processions carry her statues and where her apparitions are said to have appeared. She is esteemed above the most revered women of the Muslim faith, including Muhammad's two favorite wives, Khadija and Aisha, and his daughter Fatima. The *hadith* teaches that Muhammad selected

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! [legalists!] for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Matthew 23:13

Mary as his first wife upon entrance into Paradise (for more about Mary and Islam see "Mary Who?" in *TBC* Oct '00). One of the most popular Catholic apparitions of Mary is referred to as Our Lady of Fatima.

Catholic and Islamic prayers have many similarities. For the Muslim, praying to Allah five times a day is altogether an act of obedience, and the prayers are always repetitive. As one former Muslim puts it, "It's hardly intimate communication with Allah;...it's done more to escape the punishment due to those who neglect prayer." Most prayers prayed by Catholics are also rote and repetitive, saying the rosary being the best example. Repeating 16 "Our Father's" and 153 "Hail Mary's" is far from personal communication. Furthermore, when a Catholic goes to confession the priest assigns rosaries as severe punishment, or penance, for one's sins.

Prayer beads were a part of Islamic devotion to Allah long before an apparition of the Blessed Lady taught St. Dominic to pray the rosary beads in the thirteenth century. Prayer beads, by the way, are a stock item in ancient and modern paganism. On an ironic note, Catholic Church historians

credit the prayers of members of the Confraternity of the Rosary for a major naval victory over the Turks, which "saved Europe from the Mohammedan peril."

Catholics and Muslims regard pilgrimages as a means of obtaining favor from God. The *hadj*, one of the five pillars of Islam, is a required (one-time) journey to Mecca. For Catholics, pilgrimages historically have been acts of religious purification, often induced by the promise of indulgences. Multi-millions of Catholics travel yearly to hundreds of shrines (nearly all dedicated to Mary) located throughout the world. The Crusades were indulgence-stimulated attempts to regain Jerusalem from the infidel Muslims in order to re-establish Catholic pilgrimages. Incidentally, the Church of Rome offered the crusaders full pardon from purgatory should they die trying to liberate the Holy Land. Similarly, Islam offers rewards in and assurance of Paradise to those who die in religious battles (*jihād*), including suicide bombings.

Roman Catholicism recognizes Allah as the God of the Bible. In 1985, Pope John Paul II declared to an enraptured audience of thousands of Muslim youths, "Christians and Muslims, we have many things in common as believers and as human beings.... We believe in the same God, the one and only God, the living God...."

But how is that possible?

Historically, Allah was a pagan idol, supreme among many idols worshiped by Muhammad's Quraish tribe long before he was born. Will Durant in his classic, *The Story of Civilization*, writes,

Within the Ka'aba, in pre-Moslem days, were several idols representing gods. One was called Allah; three others were Allah's daughters, al-Uzza, al-Lat, and al-Manat. We may judge the antiquity of this Arab pantheon from the mention of Al-il-Lat (Al-Lat) by Herodotus [fifth century B.C. Greek historian] as a major Arabian deity. The Quraish paved the way for monotheism by worshiping Allah as chief god....

Archaeological evidence uncovered in Arabia is overwhelming in demonstrating that the dominant pre-Islamic religion was the worship of the moon god, Allah. Muhammad simply eliminated the other 300-some deities, including Allah's daughters, making Allah supreme while retaining many of the pagan rituals and symbols associated with him. For example, the crescent moon was the symbol of the moon god from the time of the Sumerians and the Babylonians through the time of Christ and

right up until Muhammad's arrival. It's hardly a coincidence that Ramadan, the Muslim time of fasting, begins and ends at the time of the crescent moon. Nearly all of the moon god rituals and other idolatrous practices, including kissing the Black Stone, praying toward Mecca, running around the temple and between the two hills of Safa and Marwa, were pre-Islamic rituals.

Catholicism's zeal to relate to Islam makes one wonder how honest it is about its own perspective on God, based on the "Sacred Scripture." God is referred to as Yahweh or Jehovah about 9,000 times in the Bible. Never is He thus referred to in the Qur'an. He reveals himself in the Scriptures as "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob/Israel." He is the Father of the Jews, "the God of Israel." In the Qur'an, Allah never refers to himself that way. God calls the Jews His "chosen people." He gave them the land of Israel as a heritage "forever": "And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever" (Ezk 37:25). God's covenant is with Isaac (Gn 17: 19-21), while Muslims believe Allah's covenant is with Ishmael.

Allah has a completely different attitude toward the Jews than does the God of the Bible. Allah commands his followers to "Take not the Jews...for friends" (Sura 5:51). While the Jews are referred to in the Qur'an as "the people of the book" (i.e., the Bible), if they refuse to convert to Islam they must pay a tribute tax to their overlords and become subservient to them: "Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, and forbid not that which Allah hath forbidden by his messenger, and follow not the religion of truth, until they pay the tribute readily, being brought low" (Sura 9:29). According to the *hadith*, which most Muslims regard to be nearly as authoritative as the Qur'an, Muhammad is quoted as saying, "The last hour will not come before the Muslims fight the Jews, and the Muslims kill them." Again, the *hadith* says that, related to the Day of Judgment, Muslims will fight and kill Jews, who will hide behind trees that say, "Oh Muslim, Oh servant of Allah, here is a Jew hiding behind me. Come here and kill him." Catholicism has its own grievous and well-documented history of slaughtering the Jews.

Further comparisons between Jehovah and Allah demonstrate clearly that they cannot be one and the same. Jehovah has a Son: "And we have seen and do testify that

the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn 4:14). Allah has no son: "And say: Praise be to Allah, Who hath *not* taken unto Himself a son, and Who hath no partner in the Sovereignty..." (Sura 17:111); "Allah hath not chosen any son, nor is there any God along with him" (Sura 23:91). Whereas God the Father declared from heaven concerning Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17), Allah of the Qur'an condemns such a belief: "...the Christians say: Messiah is the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouths. They imitate the saying of the disbelievers of old. Allah's Curse be on them, how they are deluded away from the truth!" (Sura 9:30 - The Holy Qur'an www.orst.edu/groups/msa/index.html).

While there are both clear and critical differences between the biblical God and Allah, nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Church accepts them as one and the same God. The following quote is from Vatican II:

The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own.

Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devoutly evoke. Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting (*Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II).

Consider carefully the above quote (taken from what the Roman Catholic Church claims is an *infallible* council) and you will realize what truly binds Catholicism and Islam together: *They both have a Jesus who cannot save their souls.* The Qur'an teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross: "And because of [the Jews] saying, We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger—They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain" (Sura 4:157). Vatican II may give Muslims credit for "venerating" Jesus, but in fact, it's a bogus Jesus. Sadly, Catholicism also has a false Christ. It teaches that His death on the cross was not sufficient for our salvation. Not only must His sacrifice (which, according to the Scriptures, was

offered *only once* to take away our sins *completely* [Heb 9:28]) be "re-presented" as a daily sacrifice for sins on altars around the world, but Catholics must expiate their own sins through sufferings here on earth and in purgatory.

Finally, Vatican II spells out clearly what Islam and Catholicism regard as their hope for salvation: "...they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting." *This is works salvation.* In Islam, a person is accountable for every thought, word, and deed. His or her life is to be lived according to what is pleasing to Allah as found in the Qur'an and the *hadith*. In addition, there is *shari'a*, which is the body of rules that attempts to cover the *totality* of Islamic religious, political, social and domestic life. Breaking such laws involves various forms of temporal punishment. At the Last Judgment Allah will determine one's eternal destiny as He places one's good and evil works on the divine scale: "Then those whose scales are heavy [with good deeds], they are the successful. And those whose scales are light are those who lose their souls, in hell abiding" (Sura 23:102,103). The *hadith* vividly describes the tortures of hell.

A friend of mine, James McCarthy, produced a video titled *Catholicism: Crisis of Faith* in which he interviews about a dozen people leaving Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. He simply asks them on what basis they expect to get to heaven. Only one made any reference to Jesus. The overwhelming response was that they felt they were pretty good people, and were fairly confident that their good deeds outweighed their bad ones. Although the Catholic Church states that it is only by God's grace that one can enter heaven, it becomes very clear that what is meant is that grace is required *to enable one to do the works which qualify one* for heaven. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, they "obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ" (par 1821) and they "can merit for [them]selves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life" (par 2027).

Pope John Paul II addressed a Catholic community in Turkey with these words: "I wonder if it is now urgent, precisely today when Christians and Muslims have entered a new period of history, to recognize and develop the spiritual bonds that unite us." No! What is "urgent" is that Catholics and Muslims be set free from the spiritual *bondage* of attempting to qualify for heaven by their good deeds. Pray that their hearts would be open to receive the gift of eternal life (Rom 6:23).

TBC

Quotable

The troublesome *Satanic Verses* have their origins in the Qur'an [Suras 22:51; 53:19-23]. Muhammad first said that al-Lat, al-Uzza, and al-Manat [traditional daughters of Allah, the moon god] were deities. Later, he changed his teachings and indicated that his thinking had been corrupted by Satan....Muslims believe that Allah did not reveal himself but revealed his will....It is a metaphysical impossibility to be in a personal relationship with Allah. He is distant and removed from creation and creatures....

George W. Braswell, Jr.
Islam, Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power, p. 45.

I remember two holy women who used to come to my meetings....I could tell by the expressions on their faces they were praying for me....“You need power” [they said]....And there came a great hunger in my soul....I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York—oh, what a day!—I cannot describe it....I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world....

Dwight Lyman Moody, quoted in V. Raymond Edmond, *They Found the Secret: 20 Transformed Lives That Reveal a Touch of Eternity*, p. 101.

Q&A

Question: I attended a conference recently where it seemed to me that you thought (though you didn't push it) that Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe Armageddon. It seemed clear that the other speakers believed that these chapters describe an earlier battle (they seemed uncertain as to whether it would come before the Rapture or in the middle of the Great Tribulation). I looked up Armageddon in several commentaries and Bible dictionaries and not one of them seemed to agree with you. Upon what do you base your rather lonely position?

Answer: As Bereans we must check out every teaching from God's Word and come to our own conclusions. I have discussed this issue with a number of prophecy teachers at various conferences. The main reason they all give for their position is that it will take seven months to bury the dead after the war described in these chapters and seven years to burn the weapons. They don't believe this burying and burning could occur during the millennial reign of Christ and therefore the war can't come at the time of Christ's Second Coming.

Obviously, however, since the Great Tribulation lasts seven years, to avoid burning weapons during Christ's reign the battle would have to come before the Rapture—an unbiblical requirement because it does away with imminency of the coming of Christ for His church. Furthermore, there is no biblical or logical reason why weapons could not be burned during the Millennium.

The evidence that this is Armageddon is simply overwhelming. The war described in these two chapters is one and the same and is clearly the cause of a climactic coming of God himself to this earth: “It shall come to pass...saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face....Surely...there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel...the fishes of the sea...fowls of the heaven...beasts of the field...all creeping things...and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence...the mountains shall be thrown down...every wall shall fall...” (Ezk 38:18-20). The worldwide shaking at God's presence is almost impossible for us to imagine. This is climactic for planet earth!

Moreover, the fact that at this time the final redemption of Israel occurs (which is described in Zechariah 12) is also clear: “So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more....(Ezk 39:7); So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward...(v. 22).” Verse 29 is conclusive: ...“for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.”

Ezekiel can only be describing the fulfillment of Christ's statement, “But he that shall endure unto the end [nothing to do with hanging onto Christ for salvation but a promise to those left alive at the end of Armageddon],...shall be saved” (Mt 24:13), and Paul's statement concerning “the fullness of the Gentiles” (Rom 11:25)—i.e., end of Gentiles trampling Jerusalem underfoot (Lk 21:24): “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion

the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom 11:26).

Ezekiel 39:28 leaves no doubt that ungodliness for Jacob (i.e., Israel) has come to an end: “Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.” This has not happened yet. Although millions of Jews have returned to Israel, nearly 10 million remain scattered all over the world. Ezekiel is describing the final gathering of every Jew left on planet earth back to Israel to be with their Messiah at His Second Coming, to which Christ referred: “Immediately after the tribulation...he shall send his angels...and they shall gather together his [Jewish] elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mt 24:29-31).

Surely Zechariah is describing the same event: “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle;...Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations.... And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem....[M]y God shall come, and all the saints with thee....And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son....In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 14:1-5; 12:10,11; 13:1).

There are two purposes for Armageddon: to punish the nations for their hatred and abuse of Jews; and to punish Israel for her rebellion against the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and rejection of her Messiah. Two-thirds of all Jews on earth will be killed and those left alive will be brought to such hopeless desperation at this “time of Jacob's trouble” (Jer 30:7) that they will cry out for the Messiah to rescue them as Jesus foretold: “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mt 23:39). That will indeed happen in the midst of Armageddon as Israel, attacked by the armies of the entire world under Antichrist, faces annihilation. In response to this cry, Christ comes to “shorten” those days “for the elect's sake” or “there should no flesh be saved” (Mt 24:22) and to rescue Israel. They will see that Jahweh is a Man who was pierced to the death and is risen again, the very Jesus they have despised and rejected as their own prophet Isaiah foretold so clearly (Is 53)—and all Israel will repent and believe in Him.

Surely this finale for Israel and all nations, including the ultimate redemption of Israel, can happen only at Armageddon, not at some previous time.

Question: You teach that upon death Christians go to be with Christ. And yet the Bible says they rise from their graves at Christ's return. How can they be in heaven and rise from their graves, too?

Answer: Man is not just the body that dies and is laid in the grave awaiting the resurrection, but is made up of "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thes 5:23; Heb 4:12). We are told that upon death we are "absent from the body [this could only be the soul and spirit—if we are only a body, the body can't be absent from the body]...present with the Lord" (Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:8) and that "them also [the souls and spirits of the redeemed] which sleep in Jesus [their bodies "sleeping" in death, waiting to be awakened at the resurrection] God will bring with him [at the Rapture]" (1 Thes 4:14). At this time "the dead in Christ shall rise" (4:16) to be reunited with the souls and spirits which have been "absent" in heaven. The bodies, of course, will be transformed: "the dead shall be raised incorruptible...this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:52,53).

This is what the resurrection is all about, the great hope of every Christian—second only to the hope of not dying: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...we shall be changed" (1 Cor 15:51,52); "the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words" (1 Thes 4:16-18).

Question: You teach that God is not the creator of evil....Hear God: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Is 45:7)....The reason, of course, is that the creation is a step-down process. ...The Creator is perfectly cyclic whereas creation is semicyclic. All those with eternal life have shortfall and must be with Christ to get eternal life from Him. They must be "added to" from time to time as there is no immortality in themselves; only God is immortal....Perhaps you will answer this in your newsletter, for God tells us that He creates evil.

Answer: First of all, God is not "perfectly cyclic," whatever you mean by that, for He

says, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal 3:6). As for having eternal life "added to" Christians, that is an impossibility. Eternal life is complete, everlasting, and nothing can be added to it or taken away; it doesn't wane, lessen or wear out—nor do those who have received eternal life and belong to Christ need to have anything "added" but are complete for eternity.

Secondly, the Hebrew word here translated "evil" is *ra*, which does not mean moral evil but primarily disasters or trials which God creates from time to time for discipline or punishment. But even if the subject is moral evil, the verse you quote has the answer within itself. God "creates" evil the same way that He "creates" darkness. Darkness is not a "thing" which God makes. It is revealed by light to be the *absence* of light. In the same way, "evil" is not a "thing" that God creates with any existence in itself. Sin is defined as coming "short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23)—and it is God's perfect holiness which *reveals evil by contrast*.

Christ declared, "...out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mk 7:21-23). God only "creates" evil in the same way that light "creates" darkness—by exposing it for what it is by His holiness. He is not the cause of evil or wickedness, which comes from the heart of man. Evil is likened to darkness many times in Scripture. And we are told that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5).

An Appeal to Reason

Dave Hunt

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow....If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured....”

Is 1:18-20

Thus God sought to reason with Israel to turn from her rebellion to receive the salvation He graciously offered her. He sent His prophets again and again to plead with His people to repent, but they would not. Thus God scattered them worldwide to be hated, persecuted and killed by the millions in an orgy of anti-Semitism that still continues, now directed especially at the partially restored nation of Israel.

God still offers salvation to the world, warning in His Word that His holiness will compel Him to pour out His judgment upon those who flaunt their rebellion in His face. Lovingly He pleads, but does not force anyone. He wants true Christians, as His servants, to reason with unbelievers as Paul did with Governor Felix: “of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). Felix “trembled” but put Paul off because it wasn’t “convenient” to submit to Christ.

Paul asked the believers at Philippi to pray that he would be “delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for not all have faith” (2 Thes 3:2). Those who turn their backs on the faith without which it is “impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6) are unreasonable and wicked. The rejection of the revelation which God has given all mankind—in creation, conscience and His Word—leads to wickedness and is the cause of all sin and suffering. Dostoevsky in *Brothers Karamazov* writes, “Without God everything is permissible and crime is inevitable.”

Mankind has every reason to respond to God’s love. *Every reason!* Yet most people, no matter how well educated, intelligent or confident of their capabilities, are *unreasonable*—and prove it by living unto themselves day after day, forgetful of God. Such is the way of this world; and it often characterizes even those who claim to belong to Christ.

According to the latest polls, the vast majority of Americans claim some “religious faith”—and a far higher percentage attend church in the U.S. than in any other

country. Yet their “faith” is generally little more than personal preference—hardly a *reason* for one’s hope for eternity! Most religious people are as *unreasonable* in their “faith” as those who reject God are unreasonable in *their* unbelief.

Yet everyone, even an atheist, exercises a form of “faith” daily. From a doctor’s prescription in a hand we can’t read, a pharmacist mixes compounds whose names we can’t pronounce; then we ingest it by “faith.” We all must trust others (pilots, for instance), putting our lives in the hands of people who know what we don’t know and can do what we can’t do—and who sometimes make fatal mistakes.

When it comes to spiritual truth and the question of where one will spend eternity, there is no margin for error. Faith in a false god or religion cannot be rectified after death. The *opinion* of any pastor, priest, rabbi or church is worthless. God alone has the final say. This is *reasonable* beyond question (see *TBC* Jan ’01 and Jun ’02 for simple proofs that God exists).

It is *unreasonable* to believe that man is

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Matthew 15:9

nothing more than his material body and that death ends one’s existence. The conceptual ideas which we express in words are not physical, nor are we. The paper and ink conveying this article have nothing to do with the ideas being expressed. They could just as well be communicated by audio- or videotape, by radio, or Morse or binary code.

Only a nonphysical intelligence—not *matter*—can form conceptual ideas and express them in words. Neural activity in brain cells does not originate our thoughts or we would be at the mercy of our brains: “What will my brain think up next?!” Wilder Penfield, one of the world’s leading neurosurgeons, declared, “The brain is a computer programmed by something independent of itself, the mind.”

This nonphysical entity which we call “mind” belongs to the soul and spirit living temporarily in the body of which the brain is but a part. The nonphysical person who makes autonomous choices is as independent of the body as the thoughts which he originates and expresses in words. This thinking mind is also referred to in the Bible

hundreds of times, from Genesis 6:5 to Revelation 18:7, as the “heart”: “keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prv 4:23); “O fools, and slow of heart to believe...all the prophets” (Lk 24:25); “If thou believest with all thine heart...” (Acts 8:37); “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9).

The body returns to dust, but the decision-maker who lived within it for a time is an endless being and will experience either eternal bliss or eternal agony, depending upon the choices made in this brief life. Therefore, one must be absolutely certain *before one dies* of where one will spend eternity. After death it is too late to repent.

Yet most people either don’t think about eternity, delay until it is too late, or follow a church or spiritual leader without adequate investigation on their own.

To take a chance on eternity, to trust in a vague hope, to be anything less than absolutely certain is the most *unreasonable* thing one could do. And yet this is the situation for most people. Ask the average person what he or she thinks happens after death, and the vast majority will admit they aren’t sure. To arrive at death’s door without certainty of where it leads is the height of folly. Such persons act *unreasonably*.

Darwin would be shocked to see his theory shattered by DNA, a recent discovery. We each begin as a single cell smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. Instructions for building the body are encoded in the DNA in an ingenious language which only certain protein molecules can read. These are instructions to that microscopic cell (and to all those it will produce) for manufacturing trillions of living cells out of nonliving materials and arranging them in the precise relationship with one another to eventually function as a human body.

Obviously, the DNA itself did not originate (and can’t even read) the information it carries. Those words point irrefutably to an Intelligence which alone could design the body. This “instruction manual” could not grow out of a series of chance evolutionary developments over billions of years. Such a theory is totally *unreasonable*. Yet it is forced upon schoolchildren around the world by bigots who are so insecure that they will not allow an alternate view to be expressed. Their partners in pushing God out of His universe claim to believe in Him

but forget Him constantly. This is most *unreasonable!*

Weep with Job: "...my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house...count me for a stranger...an alien in their sight...they whom I loved are turned against me" (Job 19:14-19). So much for human fidelity. But God did not forsake Job.

Hear God's tragic lament: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but...my people doth not consider...they have forsaken the LORD...(Is 1:2-4); [M]y people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer 2:32). Nevertheless, God continues to plead in love and mercy—but His patience has limits.

That this world pursues its political plans, and individuals their ambitions for this brief life, scarcely acknowledging that God exists, is beyond comprehension. That the God who created this universe and graciously gives us "life and breath and all things" that we possess (Acts 17:25) should have so little place in our thoughts is ingratitude that cries out to the heavens. In a word, it is *unreasonable*—an unreasonableness that flaunts itself in the face of God and His appeal to reason with us.

The entire human race is given over to unreasonableness. The universe assaults our consciousness daily on all sides with a panoply of the most obvious and undeniable evidence that it had to have been produced by a Master Designer and Creator. To deny the evidence and to persist in flaunting evolution in God's face is *unreasonable* in the extreme!

In spite of finding no shred of evidence to support their theory, and in spite of the fact that the scientific evidence against it mounts with each new discovery, evolutionists persist in denying their Creator. Stubbornly they scour the earth to find evidence to justify their rebellion—and, failing to find any, manufacture it. This is dishonest as well as *unreasonable!*

To deny that God produced the instructions within DNA and to insist that natural selection produced the eye and brain, when they could not contribute to survival until they worked, is the epitome of *unreasonableness*. To promote the lie that thousands of insects, bugs and species of fish and animals somehow evolved one into another, and that this process left innumerable stable varieties with no intermediary forms, when there ought to be trillions if evolution is true, is *unreasonableness* of the most

corrupt kind.

And what of the thousands of kinds of plants from ivy to trees, flowers, fruit, melons, berries, each fulfilling a unique role—to say nothing of the bees and other flying creatures that pollinate them, etc., etc.? To suggest that these somehow evolved from one another without leaving any evidence is inexcusably *unreasonable!*

Homosexuals and lesbians flaunt their perversion in "Gay Pride" parades. *Pride* for a disgusting depravity which cuts life expectancy by 40 percent or more and would result in the extermination of the human race if everyone adopted it?! Are they hoping that cloning will perpetuate their kind? This is one more sinful example of the *unreasonableness* plaguing mankind.

Multitudes who call themselves Christians deliberately disobey Christ's basic teachings and His example. Numbers of pastors and theologians profess to teach from a Bible which they deny is infallible and sufficient, or claim that portions of it are

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Psalms 119:130

inspired but no one can be certain what God has really said. This again is *unreasonable*.

To demand "tolerance" in morals is the height of *unreasonableness*. One can't even play a game without rules. Suppose an NFL player who was whistled down for an infraction calls the referees "intolerant" and claims that he was "sincere," and therefore immune from the rules. This is ludicrous. Yet multitudes do exactly that with God. They carry on as though no matter what they think, say or do He will suspend His justice and allow them into His heaven if they claim to be *sincere*. Such people (and there are millions of them, including many who call themselves Christians) are incredibly *unreasonable*.

Recently I was in the hospital overnight for an operation to eliminate a periodic "flutter" in my heart. I enjoy talking with the nurses and doctors about what really matters. I was shocked at how many nurses declared, "I can believe whatever I want."

My response was, "Undo the I.V., let me out of here!" That reaction met with perplexity: "What do you mean?"

"I'm not staying in a hospital where

nurses and doctors can believe whatever they want!"

"I meant about religion. Obviously there are definite medical procedures..."

"Oh, there are rules for caring for the body, but for the eternal soul and spirit, you can believe anything? God has no rules for admission to *His* heaven? That's *unreasonable!*"

Such is the irrational thinking engaged in by the majority of people today. They can be very sensible and careful about things in this life, but when it comes to eternity they literally throw reason to the winds. We must confront them with their unreasonableness and on God's behalf attempt to reason with them about eternity and salvation.

The night before His crucifixion before a jeering mob, this despised and rejected Christ, having no home, slept on the ground in the one homespun robe He possessed. Yet more than a billion people are convinced that a man who is cheered by huge crowds wherever he goes, who has hundreds of the finest silk robes embroidered with gold, who lives in a Vatican palace of 1,100 rooms, and has a summer palace of the same size and numerous other residences—that *he* represents the One who hung naked on the cross. That is as *unreasonable* as one can be.

Sadly, most people, though they expect others to "be reasonable," are not reasonable themselves when it comes to the soul, spirit, God and eternity. Most religious people are content to let pastor or church or some other religious leader or guru tell them what to believe—they don't take time to check it out for themselves. This, too, is *unreasonable*.

Peter declared that we are to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh...a *reason* of [our] hope" (1 Pt 3:15). Our faith in Christ should be so evident that we will be asked this question often. And our reply is not to be a "testimony" of how we were saved (though that is worthwhile), but the *reason* for our confident faith—"sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed..." (Ti 2:8).

The God of the Bible provides more than sufficient reasons for believing in Him and in His Word. He invites mankind to reason with Him. He forces no one to accept the salvation He has provided in Christ. He wants our hearts. May our lives and words convince many of the truth and reasonableness of "the faith once [for all] delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). **TBC**

Quotable

His justice is like a flaming sword unleashed against thee....So exact is justice, that it will by no means clear the guilty. God will not...hold thee guiltless, but will require the whole debt...unless thou canst make a Scripture claim to Christ...but never had rebels such a gracious prince....

O sinners, see what a God you have to deal with... "Return unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will return unto you...." His mercies are beyond all imagination...if thou wilt but turn.

Joseph Alleine (1634-1668)
An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners,
pp. 106,168.

If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness, will reign without mitigation or end.

Daniel Webster, 1823

The religious revolt of the sixteenth century rescued the Bible from the Priest: God grant that the twentieth century may bring a revolt which shall rescue it from the pseudo-critic and the pundit.

Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918)
Daniel in the Critics' Den (Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d., c. 1902) p.149.

Q&A

Question: In your September newsletter you stated, "Before man was created, Satan had already rebelled and taken countless angels with him." In October you state, "A rebellion led by Lucifer eons ago had taken place...." It almost sounds like you hold to some form of the "gap theory." The Bible tells us that "from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female" (Mk 10:6). Creation had a beginning, and "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth..." (Ex 20:11). I believe it is quite clear that the angels were created as well in those six days. God summed it up saying, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (Gn 2:1). This "host" certainly could

include the angels (Neh 9:6, Ps 103:20-21, 1 Kgs 22:19, 2 Chr 18:18, Lk 2:13). God said the serpent was "made" just as the beast of the field (Gn 3:1) and was "perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created" (Ezk 28:15). Where is the scriptural evidence that Satan rebelled "before man was created ...eons ago" as you have stated? In the beginning of the creation, after the sixth day God said "everything" that He had made was "very good" (Gn 1:31). Or are you implying a special creation of the angels at a different time and place before "the beginning of the creation"?

Answer: Thank you for your question. You have clearly put much thought and study into it in the spirit of a Berean. However, I think you make some incorrect assumptions.

First of all, the statement, "the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (Gn 3:1), does not include Satan as a "beast of the field." It includes the physical serpent in the garden through which Satan spoke. While he is called "that old serpent," he is not a literal, physical snake that was created with the other creatures. When Satan came into existence cannot be derived from this passage.

Secondly, you seem to assume that the creation of "the heaven and the earth" (Gn 1:1) includes what Stephen described as "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56) and what Paul called "the third heaven" (2 Cor 12:2) where God dwells. The words "heaven" and "heavens" are used both for the physical heavens related to earth and which are part of the physical universe (the atmosphere surrounding earth, and the space containing stars) as well as for heaven, the "Father's house," which has neither physical nor spatial relationship to earth. Surely the "place" where God dwells, which is neither physical nor part of the physical universe, must have always existed and was never created, certainly not at the time of Genesis 1:1. This is also where angels dwell.

I think it is clear that the creation described in Genesis refers only to the physical universe. The heaven or heavens described there are part of the universe. Thus "host" of heaven in Genesis 2:1 refers to the stars, not to angels. In the many other places in Scripture it is also clear from the context when "heaven/heavens" refers to the physical realm and when it refers to God's presence; and when "host" refers to stars and when it refers to angels. You seem to

assume, however, that "host of heaven" *always* means angels, which is clearly not the case; for example: "as the host of heaven cannot be numbered" (Jer 33:22).

Therefore, the statements, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gn 1:31), and "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (2:1), as well as "from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female" (Mk 10:6), refer to the physical universe which had a beginning, not to the dwelling of God and angels nor to angels themselves.

We have no biblical reason to believe that angels were created simultaneously with the physical universe and man. When were they created? We are not told. I can't take the space to cite the many scriptures in both Old and New Testaments which show such a close association of angels with God that it would seem odd indeed if they did not exist until the physical universe was created. You can look up these scriptures, as I know you will. Surely the positions of power which angels manifest in the book of Revelation seem to be of a more permanent nature than to have originated with the creation of the universe and man. One function of angels is to praise God and to surround His throne. It hardly seems reasonable that there would have been no angels to worship and serve God before the physical universe (of which they are not a part) was made.

There even seems to be a hint that man's creation came about as a result of Satan's rebellion. Surely man plays the key role in the final defeat of Satan. We see this in the part played by Job in the controversy between God and Satan. Paul tells us that we "wrestle ...against spiritual wickedness in high places [i.e. heaven?]" (Eph 6:12). Man, who overcomes Satan "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Rv 12:11) even seems to be involved in the final ouster of Satan: "there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon.... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan..." (12:7-9).

If angels were created before the physical universe, how long before would it have been? God has existed forever. Therefore, I think it reasonable that angels have been in His presence for "eons" of time by earth's reckoning, and also that Satan probably rebelled long before man was created. At least such a statement is neither unbiblical nor unreasonable.

Question: Is “Remote Viewing” as promoted by Ed Dames on Art Bell’s program valid or demonic?

Answer: Ed Dames is a retired U.S. Army Major who heads Psi Tech, which offers Remote Viewing to the civilian market. He was involved for two years in a military unit devoted to this occult practice. You will find numerous references to him and to Psi Tech on the Internet.

Many others are involved in this practice, one of the best known being Professor Courtney Brown of Emory University who has also been on Art Bell several times (transcripts are available). Brown uses Remote Viewing to observe and contact alleged extraterrestrial intelligences (ETIs). In *Cosmic Voyage* he claims that “at least two alien civilizations have been, and continue to be, intimately involved with Earth humans.” Brown heads Farsight Institute, which offers a free course in “Scientific Remote Viewing.” This is about as scientific as a crystal ball or ouija board and uses the same occult powers.

Angels and demons are the only “ETIs” in existence, if one wants to call them that. We have shown that fact from Scripture and reason (see *TBC* Dec ’94, April ’95 and July ’95). I deal with this entire subject in depth, including Dames and Brown, in *Occult Invasion*. It provides almost encyclopedic information on occult practices not only in the world of education and science, but in psychology (both secular and “Christian”) as well as promotion of the occult among professing Christians, including leading evangelicals.

Malachi Martin (now deceased), Jesuit priest and onetime professor at the Vatican’s Pontifical Biblical Institute, was on the *Art Bell Show* with Dames. In *Occult* we provide excerpts from a transcript of the discussion the two had in which they both admit the “possibility” of occult involvement through Remote Viewing, including demon possession. Dames gives some frightening examples from his military experiences with this practice. But both also agree that the “safeguards” Dames utilizes for Remote Viewing prevent possession. Martin, who wrote *Hostage to the Devil* about possession and exorcism from the Roman Catholic point of view, is particularly enthusiastic about such “safeguards.” He commends Dames for his healthy fear of evil entities and for his trust in “angelic and divine protection.”

Remote Viewing has been used to locate lost persons, downed aircraft, etc., and has been scientifically verified to work through

experiments conducted by SRI (formerly Stanford Research Institute). No “powers of the mind” can produce this phenomenon. Shamans have been “remote viewing” for thousands of years through so-called “spirit guides.” The Bible calls them “familiar spirits” and forbids contact with them because they are demons.

Dames explains that before he learned “professional techniques” he needed “faith [in] a higher power...my God to protect me,” but that now he can protect himself. Martin, whom leading evangelicals have described as a Christian (in a radio debate with me, he admitted that he wore a scapular), commended Dames: “I’m speaking as a priest...you are overshadowed by a godliness which I can only ascribe to my Savior...,” to which Dames replied, “I’m also a simple Christian.”

The deception blinding both Dames and Martin can only be attributed to “the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the world” (Rv 12:9), also described as “the god of this world [who blinds] the minds of them which believe not...” (2 Cor 4:4). For further information about Remote Viewing, please consult *Occult Invasion*.

Question: What hope do Muslim women have in eternity? Do they go to “paradise” and if so, it must be a different place from where the men supposedly go.

Answer: Women are *said* to have rights to Paradise that are equal to men’s. However, while the *jihad* martyr is promised many virgins and a special position in Paradise, no such promise is made to women. It is not known where the dark-eyed *houris* promised to the martyrs come from, but there is no comparable promise to women. Oddly, however, there have been at least two women suicide bombers in Israel in recent months, a rare phenomenon.

Paradise is very uncertain for anyone except the *jihad* martyrs—and there are no promises of male sex partners for a woman martyr. For a Muslim, male or female, to reach Paradise, good deeds must outweigh bad in Allah’s scale on the Last Day judgment.

Anyone with common sense knows this idea is ludicrous. No earthly court would rule that saving the lives of two people would cancel out murdering one, or that driving within the speed limit more times than exceeding it would cancel out a speeding violation. Women especially are given little hope in this regard.

Liwa al-Islami magazine (August 13,

1987, p. 21) reports that Muhammad said, “Oh assembly of women...you [comprise] the majority of the inhabitants of hell in the day of resurrection.” The authoritative *hadith* (Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 7, p. 96), quotes Muhammad: “I saw hell...the majority of its dwellers were women.”

If the *jihad* martyr was married, it would seem that his wife (or wives) could not join him in Paradise even if the scale balanced in their favor, for how could they compete with the many perpetually virgin *houris* he is promised?

How tragic that the Muslim is afraid (the penalty for leaving Islam is death) to believe in Christ, who alone paid the penalty for the sins of the world so that no one need go to hell.

"If Any Man Thirst..."

Dave Hunt

If any man thirst. What "thirst" is this? Blaise Pascal said, "I count only two men rational: the man who loves God with all his heart because he has found Him, and the man who seeks God with all his heart because he has as yet found Him not." By those criteria, most of mankind are not rational. The average person who claims to believe in God (as does the vast majority in America) is too preoccupied with himself to give God much time or serious thought.

Pascal was only agreeing with Scripture, which declares that thirst for God should be man's normal experience: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God..." (Ps 42:1,2); "O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary" (Ps 63:1).

How many of us who call ourselves Christians have this passion for God? How is it possible that we can fail to love with all our hearts the One who is our Creator and Redeemer, who loves us "with an everlasting love" and has drawn us to Himself "with lovingkindness" (Jer 31:3)? Does our loving, heavenly Father really have our hearts' full affection? Is it possible that He grieves over some of us as He did over Israel: "my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer 2:32)?

A man made in the image of God and cut off from Him by sin should be conscious of great spiritual thirst. Though many try to ignore or to slake it with that which can never satisfy, there is an acute sense in every man's innermost being that something is seriously wrong, that something vital is missing. Because God made us for Himself, there is in all men an emptiness that nothing in this temporary physical world can fill. Only God himself can satisfy that otherwise insatiable longing. And those who have experienced the wonder and satisfaction of that thirst-quenching drink of first acquaintance, thereafter drink of Him ever more deeply.

Offering to satisfy this thirst, God cries out to all mankind: "Ho, everyone that

thirsteth, come ye to the waters...come, buy wine and milk without...price. Where-for do ye spend money...and your labour for that which satisfieth not?...Hear, and your soul shall live..." (Is 55:1-3). Obviously the reference is not to physical water, wine, or milk—much less to so-called "holy water" supposedly blessed by a priest. This water must be drunk by the soul and spirit, and its source can only be that "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rv 22:1).

Thus Isaiah the prophet goes on to say, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground...

Isaiah 44:3

abundantly pardon" (55:6,7). God promises, "ye shall seek *me*, and find *me*, when ye shall search for *me* with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). Who would seek with all his heart but the person who thirsts for God with the passion of a hart seeking a drink after being pursued by a lion?

Tragically, man's natural tendency is not to seek the true God to whose will we must submit, but a false god that will magically fulfill selfish ambitions. There is a vast difference between praying for God to grant one's fleshly desires, and submissively praying for that which God in His wisdom and love knows that one needs.

Hear the sadness in God's heart: "Be astonished, O ye heavens...and be horribly afraid...For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out...broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer 2:12,13). The poet wrote: "I tried the broken cisterns, Lord, But O the waters failed. E'en as I stooped to drink they fled, And mocked me as I wailed."

Christ promised to quench this thirst in the hearts of all men. By that very promise He declares that He is the "fountain of living waters" whom Israel forsook and as a people still rejects today—as does almost the entire world. To the woman at

the well Jesus said, "Whosoever drinketh of this [physical] water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn 4:13,14). Is that lifegiving flow springing up within us to give life to those all around us who desperately need Him?

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, "Jesus stood and cried...If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive...)" (Jn 7:37,38). Again Jesus is declaring that He is the very God of Israel who in the Old Testament called all mankind unto Himself to quench their spiritual thirst. Christ can only be referring to the thirst for God which the psalmists expressed so poignantly—and He is calling all mankind to come and drink of Him.

The quenching of this thirst is the major topic of the last two chapters of the Bible: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rv 21:6). He "that sat upon the throne" (21:5) is the One making this promise, who also calls Himself the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (v. 6). This expression is found three more times. In Revelation 1:8, the Alpha and the Omega calls Himself "the Almighty." That phrase is found 43 other times in the Bible, all in the Old Testament, always in reference to the God of Israel, Creator of the universe. In this 44th and last time, it is very clear that "the Almighty" is Jesus Christ, yet also the God of Israel, exactly as He said: "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30).

When John turns "to see the voice" of the Alpha and Omega, he sees Christ in His glory: "...one like unto the Son of man,...out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword....And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he [said], Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that...was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore..." (Rv 1:12-18).

In 21:6 the "Alpha and Omega" is "he that sat upon the throne" (Rv 21:5) "of God and of the Lamb" (22:1) and who makes each overcomer His "son" (Rv 21:7)—clearly a reference to God the Father. The fourth time we have this expression is in 22:13, and there again, the Alpha and Omega is very clearly "Jesus...the root and the offspring of David" (22:16), reminding us again of His oneness with the Father (Jn

17:21-23). Significantly, this is God's final appeal to all mankind: "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (22:17).

This is a promise of everlasting life and of never thirsting in hell's unquenchable fire, that fire which caused the rich man to cry out in pain for even a drop of water. Though he asks that it be put on his tongue, his physical body is in the grave. Is he still deceived by the materialism that deluded him all of his life and caused him to selfishly pursue riches? Or is he expressing at last a longing for that living water which he rejected and can never taste?

Those who take their first drink of God, through faith in Christ and His sacrifice for sin, drink unto eternal life, and in that sense never thirst again. But there is a *continual* drinking to maintain spiritual life and health and strength. Just as the physical body needs water ceaselessly, so the redeemed soul and spirit need to drink of Christ continually—ever more deeply and with ever-increasing joy and satisfaction. And that drinking of Christ will continue throughout eternity:

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;...For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes (Rv 7:14-17).

How do the soul and spirit drink? How can we experience greater fullness of Christ who also said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (Jn 6:53)? Surely we no more ingest His physical body and blood than the spiritual water He offers is H₂O! This eating and drinking is by faith: "He that believeth on me shall never thirst" (Jn 6:35).

Truth is spiritual and the words which communicate it "are spirit, and they are life" (6:63), the very "word of life" which Paul said it is the duty of Christians to keep "holding forth" (Phil 2:16). In the past we have seen that all words are spiritual. Thus the understanding is by the soul and spirit, not the body.

Language in its very nature is non-physical. Concepts such as justice and truth are beyond the reach of the five senses. Yet conceptual ideas, though not physical, can *describe* the physical universe as well as the universe of spirit. And because man lives in

a physical body in a physical universe (both of which are temporary) and understands physical things, God presents spiritual truth in physical metaphor, analogy, symbolism and parable.

Einstein declared that matter and energy could not possibly give meaning to symbolic language. Thus linguists refer to the unbridgeable chasm between matter and meaning as the "Einstein gulf"—a gulf impossible for evolution to bridge. Though imprinted upon matter (such as the ink and paper you are reading), information exists independently of matter and energy, and can only originate from a nonmaterial intelligent source, i.e., from a mind.

We have previously reminded readers that the construction blueprints and operating instructions for the complicated chemical mechanisms and sophisticated feedback controls responsible for operating even the tiniest microscopic living organism are

Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them,...and gavest them water for their thirst.

Nehemiah 9:20

written in a coded language on the amazing substance called DNA. That the DNA itself could not be the source of this information is indisputable. Furthermore, the linguistic fact that random change in coded language does not result in improvement, but in rapid and chaotic deterioration, is the final spike driven through the coffin and the very heart of the satanic theory of evolution.

Man is a nonphysical and eternal being inhabiting a temporary physical body. Even the most primitive peoples are aware of this, and it is a fact easily proven, as we have seen in the past. Yet professing Christians who, of all people, ought to recognize and live by this truth, often deny it in practical daily living and even in their religious beliefs and practices. Man's attachment to this temporary life and its deceitful pleasures and empty possessions blinds him to the spiritual and eternal dimension of reality.

This is most easily seen in the Roman Catholic reliance upon the supposed holiness and power of physical things such as scapulars, medals, relics, robes and vestments, while rejecting spiritual truth. There is great trust in alleged "holy water"

while neglecting the "water of life" (Rv 21:6; 22:1, 17) which Christ offers freely to all. Millions of pilgrims journeyed from around the world to obtain supposed forgiveness of sins by walking through the four physical "holy doors" opened by the Pope for the Jubilee Year 2000, while failing to believe Christ's spiritual promise: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..." (Jn 10:9).

Many Protestants are equally guilty of relying upon the physical act of baptism for salvation (even infant baptism) and the physical elements of bread and wine for spiritual food, as both Calvin and Luther taught. Even evangelicals often fail to understand the spiritual truth presented in Scripture. What does it mean in practical, daily terms to drink continually of Christ? What does He mean that those who drink of the water which He gives will have within them "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life"? Is there something that we Christians are missing in Christ's promises concerning this living water which is Himself?

The communion bread and wine are to be taken "in remembrance" of Christ (Lk 22:19). Otherwise there is no value in eating and drinking the physical elements. A worthy "remembrance" requires deep meditation and communion with the Lord. Yet there is seldom time allowed for that spiritual essential in the concern to complete passing the physical elements from hand to hand—and keeping up with the "worship team."

Of course we need not be "at church" to meditate upon our Lord in all that He is and has done for us. How often do we ask Him for a deeper understanding and appreciation of Himself? How often do we tell Him that we love Him with all our hearts? Is it Christ for whom we thirst, or something else that will pass away and which we certainly can't take with us into eternity? David said his one desire was "...to behold the beauty of the LORD..." (Ps 27:4). We each need to ask ourselves, "What do I know of the beauty of the Lord and of enjoying His presence in my life?"

Jesus promised, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Mt 5:6). He who is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30) should be the moment-by-moment object of our thirst and its continual satisfaction. And as a result, may that "well of living water" within overflow from us to satisfy the thirst of many others.

TBC

Quotable

Wherein do evangelical Churchmen fall short of their great predecessors in the eighteenth century? They fall short in doctrine. They are neither so full nor so distinct, nor so bold, nor so uncompromising. They are afraid of strong statements. They are too ready to fence, and guard, and qualify all their teaching....Only let the evangelical ministry of England return to the ways of the eighteenth century and I firmly believe we should have as much success as before.

Bishop J.C. Ryle, from *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* (Banner of Truth, 1978), pp. 430-31

Oh, that God would write in characters of fire on the hearts of his people those pregnant words, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Thomas E. Peck, quoted in Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), p. 214

Q&A

Question: The amount of time you invested in your careful writing of *What Love Is This?* was well spent. How I needed this information! I have one question....In 2 Timothy 2:24-26 Paul talks about God granting people repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth....What is this talking about? Would you address this passage sometime?

Answer: Here is that scripture: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth...that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." Obviously, Paul doesn't believe that some are predestined to heaven and others to hell, or such a general prayer for sinners would be both senseless and blasphemous.

Christ commissioned Paul to go to Jews and Gentiles "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26: 18). Paul declared that "the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of

them which believe not..." (2 Cor 4:4). And he warned that during the reign of Antichrist God will send upon those who "received not the love of the truth...strong delusion that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned..." (2 Thes 2:10-12). They willfully rejected the love of the truth to follow Satan's lies. In sending them a strong delusion God is only helping them to believe the lie they wanted to believe. "Sinners are taken captive at his [Satan's] will" because they willingly believed his lies in rejection of the truth.

Therefore Paul suggests a specific prayer for the lost: that God would help them not to believe the lie they want to believe but would help them to understand and in repentance admit the truth. The prayer Paul suggests does not ask God to sovereignly regenerate sinners and give them the faith to believe the gospel—but to help them to understand and admit the truth. What they do with that understanding will be up to them, for they must from their hearts embrace the truth in order to "recover themselves out of the snare of the devil...."

Question: I am enclosing some alarming literature from a very large and influential "evangelical" missionary agency....I was in shock because until they came out of the closet regarding [anti-]Zionism I supported them financially. I am hoping you might help in rebuking the false doctrine presented, and spread the word among Christians about this. Thank you.

Answer: The organization to which you refer is Christian Aid Mission and the information is presented over the signature of Bob Finley, Chairman and CEO. It is some of the worst anti-Israel propaganda and blatant misinformation that I have ever seen. The errors are too many to cite them all. I'll mention a few.

First of all, he peddles the common myth that Ashkenazi Jews are really Khazars and not Jews at all. This has been refuted genetically by experts such as Dr. Neil Risch of Stanford U. Department of Genetics and Dr. Harry Ostrer of the Department of Genetics, New York U. Medical School, who show that Ashkenazis are ethnic Jews from the biblical twelve tribes.

Next, Finley accuses "a few Ashkenazi Zionists [of] trying to take over parts of Palestine through acts of terrorism about 70 years ago...." He claims that since 1940 they "have killed, driven out or displaced over two million of the original residents of

Palestine." This is false. Many Arabs came into Israel to feed off the prosperity created out of desert and swamp by industrious Jews reclaiming the land God gave them, which the League of Nations and entire world recognized was their national home and which Britain was to facilitate under the Balfour Declaration. Arabs rioted and murdered Jews in acts of terrorism under the leadership of Haj Amin el Muhammad Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, the great uncle, mentor and model of Arafat, who changed his name to hide his relationship.

In contrast to Finley's badly inflated 2,000,000, about 400,000 Arabs fled Israel in 1948, while 800,000 Jewish refugees entered it from Arab lands where they had been brutalized for 1,300 years since the advent of Islam. As any student of the Bible knows, the land is Israel, not Palestine, and its "original residents," because of their wickedness, at God's command were replaced by Israel.

Though often slaughtered, enslaved and chased out, Jews have resided in Israel for more than 3,000 years and must be considered "the original residents." Today's "Palestinians" are descended from Arabs who immigrated to Israel over the last 100 years to take advantage of Jewish development of the land. Even today those living in Palestinian territory cannot support themselves but must go into Israel for jobs, even though the West has additionally offered Arafat billions of dollars specifically to create jobs for his people.

Finley reduces the accurate figure of 6,000,000 Jews by 90 percent and refers to "600,000" killed by the Nazis. He says not one word about the 2 million killed by Muslims in Sudan or about the thousands of Christians being killed by Muslims and hundreds of churches being destroyed in Nigeria and Indonesia today. There is no mention of the Arabs' continual public vow to exterminate the Jews, nor that Muhammad killed every Jew in Arabia and said that the last day would not come until the Muslims killed every Jew on earth. Incredibly, Finley claims that "during the Seventh Century...virtually all the remaining Hebrews...accepted Mohammed as 'that Prophet' foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15. Thus was Judaism merged into Islam." This is not history but absurdity!

Finley claims that everything is the fault of those "phony" Khazar Jews. He makes no mention of suicide bombers killing civilians in Israel and elsewhere, nothing about 9/11/01, etc. It is Israel's alleged murder and robbery of "hundreds of thousands of Palestinians," and Christian support of "Zionist expansion," that

has “cut off millions of Muslims from their previous receptivity to the gospel.” There was no “previous receptivity”! Muhammad said, “Whoever relinquishes his faith, kill him!” The death penalty for conversion to any other religion is what prevents Muslims from hearing the gospel.

Finley promotes preterism. He claims that “Matthew 24:15-21 refers to the destruction of Palestine by Roman armies from 67 to 70 A.D.” In fact, this land was not called “Palestine” until the Romans angrily renamed it that in A.D. 135 after the Jewish uprising in response to their building a temple to Jupiter on Temple Mount. Christ declared, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world...no, nor ever shall be.” It is indisputable that Hitler, Mao and Stalin ushered in a period of tribulation both for Jews and Christians at least 20 times worse than that of A.D. 70, which therefore could not have been the greatest that “ever shall be.”

Christ also said, “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved...” (Mt 24:22). There was no danger that all flesh on earth would be wiped out by the weapons available in A.D. 70. Nor were the sun and moon darkened, nor did the Son of man come “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;” nor did His angels “gather together his elect from the four winds,” as Christ foretold would happen “immediately after the tribulation of those days...” (Mt 24:27-31). Finley is just plain wrong.

Incredibly, he denies any “prophetic significance to occupation of Palestine” and declares that “biblical promises do not apply to ‘Jewish people,’” whom he claims “took their language with them from Khazaria...” In fact, the same Hebrew spoken in King David’s time is the official language of Israel today.

Finley denies the facts of history. Even though the United Nations in Res. 181, 11/29/47 gave the Jews only 18 percent of what had been promised to them and the other 82 percent to the Arabs, there were riots against Jews, and the Arab League broadcast its intention to exterminate all Jews. That intention is still pronounced by Muslim leaders worldwide.

Israeli settlers fought off an enemy determined to annihilate them and with whom they only wanted to live in peace. The descendants of Arabs who did not flee Israel in 1948 comprise about 16 percent of Israel’s voting citizens today. Some are even members of the Knesset. In contrast, no Jew can be a full citizen of any Muslim

country, or even set foot in Saudi Arabia. Israel has never threatened its neighbors, and every piece of land they have taken has been in self-defense against an enemy which has started war after war of intended extermination. Yet Finley dares to blame Muslim atrocities on “anti-Semitic Zionist aggression” and claims that “evangelical endorsements” of such have “brought a wave of persecution upon the churches which should never have happened.” In fact, beginning many centuries before Zionism was heard of or Israel reborn as a nation, Muslims have slaughtered Christians throughout history to spread Islam by the sword.

Finley concludes his unconscionable barrage of anti-Semitic misinformation with his last heading, “Muslims stirred up by Zionist terrorism.” So it is not the Muslims who are the terrorists, but the “Zionists”? There has to be something more than ignorance involved here!

Question: With regard to the item on page 3 of the September 2002 *Berean Call*...you had to add to the Word of God...to make your point. To Daniel 9:27 you added the words, “breaking the covenant,” and this concept is in no way found in the original text....To Daniel 8:25 you added the words “at the Second Coming,” in order to make this appear to be a prophecy concerning a future Antichrist. Here again, there is nothing in the text about the Second Coming of Christ...you had to add to the Word of God to try to make it appear plausible.

Answer: Your claim that I added to God’s Word is most serious. I would never do so. The words you say I added are in brackets [], which you surely know indicates a commentary that is not part of the quotation. Comments, interpretations, and observations re Scripture are a normal part of teaching—not additions to God’s Word.

You say Christ confirmed a covenant with Israel for Daniel’s 70th week. What covenant? In the midst of the week He “caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease”? When did that happen? “He” in Daniel 9:27 can only refer to the nearest previous person, “the prince that shall come” after Messiah is cut off (v. 26), whose people would “destroy the city and the sanctuary”—a prophecy of the Roman destruction of A.D. 70. Titus could not have been the “prince that shall come” because he made no such covenant. This must refer to Antichrist. It certainly was not fulfilled

by Christ during His earthly ministry. At least that is reasonable, thus I am not reading into this passage something that isn’t there.

Logically “the sacrifice and the oblation” could not be “caused to cease” had they not been resumed upon the rebuilding of the temple by the imposition (the meaning of the Hebrew) of the covenant for the 70th week. None of this has happened, and certainly not during Christ’s earthly ministry. I am not “adding to the Word of God” in coming to this conclusion, but it follows as a reasonable commentary upon these scriptures.

My insertion of “at the Second Coming” was *in brackets*, not the way you quote me in your letter. When did “Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C.,” as you claim, “stand up against the Prince of princes [i.e., Christ]” and was “broken without hand” (Dn 8:25)? It didn’t happen. Disagree with me, if you wish, but once again I did not add to God’s Word when I simply indicated that this must be Antichrist destroyed by Christ at the Second Coming. “Without hand” is surely a reference to the “stone...cut out without hands” which destroys the image and becomes the mountain that fills the whole earth and is the kingdom established by Christ (2:34-45) at His Second Coming. It certainly hasn’t happened yet and can only be future.

Cry Out For Liberty

Dave Hunt

God promised that the Messiah, who would redeem mankind from Satan's power and sin's penalty, would be a virgin-born Jew (Gn 3:15; 12:3; Is 7:14; 9:6, etc.) who would reign forever on King David's throne in Jerusalem. To defeat God, Satan must inspire the annihilation of the Jews. Anti-Semitism, the satanically inspired persecution and slaughter of Jews like no other people all through history, was foretold in the Bible (Dt 28:37, Jer 29:17-19, etc.).

Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (1.2 million killed) was followed in A.D. 135 with 985 towns wiped out and 580,000 slain. The situation eased under some Caesars, worsened under others. Constantine (280-337) briefly granted Judaism equal status with other religions—but after becoming a "Christian," he oppressed the Jews. Succeeding Roman emperors continued the persecution.

The popes, successors to the Roman emperors, continued the oppression. Inspired by Pope Urban II (1096), Crusaders murdered Jews all along their route and in taking the Holy Land. Church Councils such as Vienna (1311), Zamora (1313) and Basel (1431-33) strengthened anti-Semitism as official Roman Catholic doctrine. More than 100 anti-Semitic Church documents were published between the sixth and twentieth centuries.

During the Church-dominated Middle Ages, Jews were driven out of nearly every European nation including England. Where could they go with no country of their own? Somehow, they clung to life, confined to ghettos.

Islam's founder, Muhammad (570-632), killed every Jew in Arabia except for the few who escaped. In North African and Middle Eastern countries, following the Muslim conquest in the seventh century, there was endless brutalization, pillaging and massacre of Jews.

As the Romans had done with Jerusalem in A.D. 135, any city designated a "holy city of Islam," such as Kairouan in Tunisia in the thirteenth century, was made Jew-free.¹ What Islam modeled was repeated in Nazi Germany as one village or city after another was declared *Judenfrei*.

In the German elections of May 1928, the Nazi party, aided by Vatican funds given to Hitler by Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (who later became Pope Pius XII), gained its first

twelve seats in the Reichstag. From that time a reign of terror spread across Germany that would enslave Europe. On January 1, 1930, Hitler's Stormtrooper terrorists killed eight Jews, the first victims of the Nazi era. "Jews were molested in public places, and synagogue services were constantly interrupted..."² In the 1930 elections, with Hitler's "Brownshirts" intimidating voters, the Nazi seats rose from 12 to 107.

On January 30, 1933, a political compromise made Hitler, then 43, Germany's Chancellor. He swiftly established a Nazi dictatorship with no dissent allowed. *Mein Kampf* had promised an end to the Jews, who were now beaten in the streets, their stores looted, then boycotted.

The reaction outside Germany was brief and muted. Mass rallies were held in New York's Madison Square Garden, Paris's Trocadero and London's Queen Hall to

**...where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is liberty.**

2 Corinthians 3:17

protest Germany's growing anti-Jewish pogroms. But an uncaring world turned a blind eye to the Holocaust, which still haunts all who have a conscience.

By 1934 the campaign to create "Jew-free" villages was spreading. Jews were driven out of all professions and education. In the growing terrorism, Stormtroopers would enter a village, smash and loot Jewish shops, trample the Torah in the synagogue, and assault and kill Jews in the streets. Frightened and bewildered Jews fled to neighboring towns, only to be expelled again—and eventually taken to extermination camps.

For centuries, Jews had been fleeing Europe to return to their ancient land. There, in the 1920s and '30s, funded by the Nazis³ and aided by the British "peace-keepers," anti-Jewish riots were led by Haj Amin al-Husseini,⁴ Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, terrorist, friend and admirer of Hitler and Himmler—Arafat's great uncle, mentor and model. The Mufti, to whom Hitler on Nov. 21, 1941, promised "a solution for the Jewish problem"⁵ similar to what he was pursuing in Germany, was "personally responsible for the concentration camp slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Jews..."⁶

During World War II, Haj Amin fled to Berlin, from which place he broadcast,

"Arabs rise as one man and slaughter the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases Allah..." Jews fought on the side of the Allies; the Arabs joined Hitler. As a reward he promised to exterminate the Jews in their countries as he was doing in Europe. But in February 1945, when Allied victory was certain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon declared war on Germany—an act required before March 1, 1945, by any country that desired to join the newly organized United Nations.

On Nov. 29, 1947, after 6 million Jews had perished, a briefly conscience-stricken UN, in Res. 181, gave them 18 percent of the ancient land of Israel, *misnamed* "Palestine," all of which the League of Nations, recognizing its "historical connection [to] the Jewish people," had allotted for their national homeland. *The Mandate for Palestine*, July 24, 1922,⁷ was to be administered by Britain under the Balfour Declaration.

Unhappy with being given 82 percent of what the world had admitted belonged to the Jews (and demanding it all), "employing outside forces and arms from Arab states as distant as Iraq,"⁸ Arabs rioted, plundered and murdered Jews, encouraged by the British, who were hoping for an excuse to abandon their mandate to establish the Jewish homeland.⁹ Britain's betrayal of the Jews, beginning in the 1920s in favor of the oil-rich Arabs, brought about the end of its empire on which the sun "never sank"—another fulfillment of God's warning, "I will curse him that curseth thee" (Gn 12:3).

Something worse than Nazism was rising—an Arab religion called Islam, which centuries before had forcefully conquered most of the world. This time its monopoly of oil was its major weapon. When Israel declared its independence in May 1948, it was instantly attacked by the regular armies of six Muslim nations, whose leaders publicly vowed to annihilate every Jew. Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, promised, "This will be a war of extermination..."¹⁰ "Palestine," like Arabia, was to be made Jew-free.

Muslim leaders, both political and religious, more openly than Hitler, repeatedly call for the *extermination* of all Jews (see Q&A, May 2002). Islam requires the death of all Jews before its "Last Day" judgment can occur. On November 23, 1937, Saudi Arabia's King Ibn Saud said, "for a Muslim to kill a Jew...ensures him an immediate entry into Heaven..."¹¹ PLO leader Farouk Kaddoumi vowed, "This Zionist ghetto of Israel must be destroyed."¹² Palestinians

marching in support of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait chanted, "Saddam, you hero, attack Israel with chemical weapons."¹³

An Arabic translation of *Mein Kampf* is a bestseller today in Palestinian Authority territory.¹⁴ Textbooks in Syria lead pupils to the "inevitable conclusion...that all Jews must be annihilated."¹⁵ Calls for annihilation of Jews still resound throughout the Muslim world, such as the Friday sermon in Gaza's Zayed bin Sultan Aal Nahyan mosque, October 14, 2000, by Ahmad Abu-Halabia: "The Jews...must be butchered....Have no mercy...kill them...and those Americans who...established Israel here, in the beating heart of the Arab world..."¹⁶ Sheikh Ibrahim Mahdi vowed in a sermon on Palestinian television June 8, 2001, "Allah willing...Israel will be erased...the United States will be erased...Britain will be erased...Blessings to whoever put a belt of explosives on his body or on his sons' and plunged into the midst of the Jews..."

Incredibly, Zionism (the belief that Jews have a right to their national homeland) was condemned as racism by UN General Assembly Res. 3379 on November 10, 1975. Sixteen long years later (12/16/91) that vote was reversed over Muslim protests. Yet Zionism is still a capital crime in Iraq.

Few, whether Jews or their enemies, acknowledge that the Middle East conflict involves the "last days" reestablishment of God's chosen people in the land He promised to them. Today's events were foretold in biblical prophecies that validate the Bible beyond dispute as God's Word. As prophesied, Israel has become what President Eisenhower called "the most strategically important area in the world."

When it became a nation once again, about 800,000 Jews (nearly double the number of original "Palestinian" refugees) fled to Israel from the horror they had long endured in Muslim countries. Here is the tally of Jews in various countries in 1948 and today: Algeria 140,000/75; Egypt 75,000/200; Iraq 150,000/100; Lebanon 20,000/50; Libya 38,000/none; Morocco 265,000/5,800; Syria 30,000/150; Tunisia 105,000/1,500; Yemen and Aden 63,000/150, etc. Following the Six-day War (1967), the UN Security Council determined to investigate the treatment of Jews in Arab countries. Syria, Iraq and Egypt, however, refused to allow entrance of the investigative commission.¹⁷

We now look back with disbelief and shame upon the Nazi era and the barbaric

determination to exterminate a race. In contrast, the Islamic world looks back with approval. Their only regret today is that Hitler didn't finish his intended annihilation of all Jews. As Egyptian newspaper columnist Ahmad Ragab wrote, "Thanks to Hitler, blessed memory....Although we do have a complaint...his revenge on [the Jews] was not enough."¹⁸

At the same time, much of the Muslim world denies the Holocaust. As University of Gaza history lecturer Dr. Issam Sissalem declared: "...they are all lies...no Dachau, no Auschwitz!...the holocaust was against our people..."¹⁹

"God created man in his own image" (Gn 1:26,27) with the capacity to choose whether to love and obey God or to rebel against Him. God desires our willing obedience in love; but love cannot be forced. Liberty to choose is essential for love. Seeking to win man's heart, God pleads, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Is 1:18).

In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David...

Zechariah 12:8

In contrast, Satan enslaved man with lies. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (Jn 8:34). Tyrants enslave their fellows. The worst offense of the Caesars, the popes, the Muhammads and Hitlers and all who still follow their example is not the enslavement of flesh and blood but the tyrannical attempt to conquer the human soul and spirit. There is no reasoning with tyrants.

There is not one Muslim country today where basic God-given liberties are enjoyed. Saudi Arabia abstained from the International Declaration of Human Rights adopted 12/10/48 by the UN. An Islamic Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by Muslim nations on 9/19/81. The "rights" it offers are all according to Shari'a (Islamic Law exactly as the Taliban practiced it) and the *Sunnah* (the example and way of life of the Prophet...).²⁰

Saudi Arabia, Islam's Holy Land, has accomplished what Nazi Germany aimed for: a Jew-free country. In obedience to Islam's founding prophet, Muhammad, no Jew is allowed in Saudi Arabia and only Muslims can be citizens. This is Nazism resurrected! There should be an

international cry of outrage! Yet there is silence.

Any question as to whether the hijackers, the Taliban and suicide bombers are fanatics or real Muslims is easily dispelled—as is the delusion spread by President Bush and other political and religious leaders that Islam "is peace and tolerance." One need only look at Saudi Arabia. There stands Islam's holiest site, the Kaaba in Mecca, to which each Muslim must make a pilgrimage (*hajj*) once in his lifetime. There Islam began, is headquartered and demonstrated.

In Saudi Arabia one may see what daily life would be like in America and Europe if Islam could fulfill its goal of taking over the world. A woman cannot drive a car or even leave her house without her husband's permission and a male relative to escort her. No non-Muslim place of worship or any public expression that does not agree with Islam is allowed. To question Islam is a crime, and for a Muslim to convert to any other religion carries the death penalty.

This is not "fanaticism." It is Islam. Muhammad said, "Whoever relinquishes his faith, kill him." Upon Muhammad's death, thousands of Arabs attempted to abandon Islam, into which they had been forced by the sword. In the "Wars of Apostasy" tens of thousands of former Muslims, all Arabs, were killed in bringing Arabia back under Islam.

All Muslims ought to be ashamed! The leadership of Saudi Arabia ought to be ashamed! How can Muslim countries sit in the United Nations and talk of freedom when they won't allow it? How can Muslims take advantage of the liberties in the free world to build their mosques and worship freely, to speak out against any who disagree with them, while knowing in their hearts that the religion they promote would suppress those very liberties if it took over?! This is hypocrisy of the highest order!

For years there has been an ongoing holocaust in Muslim countries. More than 2 million non-Muslims, mostly Christians, have been killed in Indonesia, Nigeria, Sudan, and elsewhere, with hundreds of churches destroyed. Must we wait until this Islamic holocaust reaches *6 million*? There ought to be an immediate international cry of outrage and revulsion!

We are including names and addresses of political, media and religious leaders. We ask every reader to make copies of this article and/or insert, and send it, with a cover letter of protest, to as many of these leaders as possible. Let us act before any more are slaughtered.

TBC

Quotable

The spread of the churches [early 17th century] in Austria and the surrounding States was marvelous; the accounts of the numbers put to death and of their sufferings are terrible, yet there never failed to be men willing to take up the dangerous work of evangelists and elders....While some were being [martyred], the others who were waiting their turn sang and waited with joy the death which was theirs when the executioner took them in hand....

Such steadfastness constantly aroused astonishment...as to the source of their strength. Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches attributed [it] to Satan. Other believers said, "They have drunk of the water that flows from the Sanctuary of God, from the well of Life...God helped them to bear the cross and they have overcome the bitterness of death...."

E.H. Broadbent, The Pilgrim Church, 173. (See offering list)

Q&A

Question: I wrote to you to point out that you were in error in saying that in 1948 the Arabs broadcast orders to the Palestinians that they should flee their homeland. I sent you documentation showing no such broadcasts ever took place....Since that time, you have released a video entitled *Israel, Islam and Armageddon* which repeats the same lie.... All of us can make a mistake, but I have a real problem when someone takes the time to politely write to you and supply documentation pointing out a factual error in your materials, and yet you go on repeating the same errors. Sorry, but if you have to spread lies in order to make your point on the Palestine question, then your opinions do not carry any weight with me. As a Christian bookstore owner, I have sold and promoted your books over the years. But based on your...use of demonstrated falsehoods to "prove" your points, I have to question the reliability and accuracy of everything you have published....I do not intend to purchase any more of your books for my bookstore. I suspect that this is the only type of protest that you and your organization would understand.

Answer: Here is only part of the proof that I did *not* spread lies "about the Arab radio broadcasts." On April 22, 1948, Aubrey Lippincott, U.S. Consul-General in Haifa,

stated that "local mufti-dominated Arab leaders [were urging] all Arabs to leave the city, and large numbers did so" (*Foreign Relations of the U.S. 1948*, Vol. V. [GPO, 1976], 838). *The Economist* 10/2/48 reported, "Of the 62,000 Arabs who formerly lived in Haifa not more than 5,000 or 6,000 remained. Various factors influenced their decision to seek safety in flight...the most potent...were the announcements made over the air by the Higher Arab Executive urging all Arabs to leave...[and] that those Arabs who remained in Haifa and accepted Jewish protection would be regarded as renegades." *New York Times* 5/3/48 reported that "The mass evacuation, prompted partly by fear, partly by orders of Arab leaders, left the Arab quarter of Haifa a ghost city...." *Middle Eastern Studies* 1/86 reported that The Arab National Committee in Jerusalem ordered women, children and the elderly in various parts of Jerusalem to leave their homes and warned, "Any opposition to this order...is an obstacle to the holy war...and will hamper the operations of the fighters in these districts."

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Said declared, "We will smash the country...Arabs should conduct their wives and children to safe areas until the fighting has died down"(Myron Kaufman, *The Coming Destruction of Israel* [The American Library Inc., 1970], 26-27). Syrian Prime Minister Haled al Azm admitted, "Since 1948 we have been demanding the return of the refugees....But we ourselves are the ones who encouraged them to leave" (*The Memoirs of Haled al Azm* [Beirut, 1973], Part 1, 386-87). On April 3, 1949, Near East Broadcasting Station of Cyprus said, "...the Arab Higher Committee encouraged the refugees' flight...." (Samuel Katz, *Battleground—Fact and Fantasy in Palestine* [Bantam Books, 1985], 15). The Jordanian newspaper *Filastin* 2/19/49 reported, "The Arab States encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies." Another Jordanian newspaper, *Ad Diofaa* 9/6/54, quoted a complaining refugee: "The Arab government told us: 'Get out so that we can get in.' So we got out, but they did not get in." According to the New York Lebanese paper *Al Hoda* 6/8/51, "The Secretary-General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, [gave] brotherly advice to the Arabs of Palestine to leave their land, homes and property and to stay temporarily in neighboring fraternal states, lest the guns of the invading Arab armies mow them down." Further similar documentation can be found.

You based your information on a 32-page booklet by a Jewish but anti-Israel

group....that there was "theft of real estate and personal property from the Palestinian Arabs by the Jews in 1948." Shouldn't you at least question this assertion, considering the fact that it was the Arabs who attacked the Jews? The Arabs refused to accept the UN partition of so-called Palestine even though it gave them 82 percent of the territory, all of which the League of Nations and Allied victors of World War I had promised to Israel. The regular armies of six Arab nations attacked the new state of Israel with the declared intention of annihilating all Jews.

The Jews did not attack the Arabs. That fact should help to evaluate Arab claims about "theft of real estate and personal property." The Arabs publicly threatened to take every square yard of land belonging to the Jews and to kill every one of them! Did that booklet mention these facts?

In contrast to Arab vows to annihilate the Jews and take all of the land (as Islam requires), Haifa's British police chief, A.J. Bridmead, reported in April 1948, "Every effort is being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab population to remain." *The New York Times* of 4/23/48 reported a foreign visitor's observation: "In Tiberias I saw a placard affixed to a sealed Arab Mosque that read, 'We did not dispossess them...the day will come when the Arabs will return...let no citizen touch their property.'" It was signed by the Jewish Town Council of Tiberias. Did your source give such facts?

Never have the Jews threatened to wipe out Arabs. The "Palestinians" would have had their State had they not attacked the Jews, refused to recognize the right of Israel to exist and rejected every peaceful solution ever offered. On 4/4/88 *Time* commented, "Had Egypt, Syria and the other Arab nations accepted Israel's right to exist in 1947, the Palestinians could have been living for the past 40 years in a state of their own." During the 19 years in which Jordan held East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Egypt held the Gaza Strip (1948-67), there was never a word about a "Palestinian State." Why didn't the Arabs form that state then? Instead, they put the refugees in pitiful camps and have kept them there ever since.

The truth is that there were twice as many Jewish refugees who fled Arab countries, where they had endured the most horrible treatment for 1,300 years since the advent of Islam. Israel's 650,000 settlers absorbed 800,000 refugees into normal life, but Arab nations with 700 times the land refused to absorb 400,000 refugees.

"Theft of real estate and personal property from the Palestinian Arabs"?

On the contrary, Israel's Proclamation of Independence, issued May 14, 1948, said, "In the midst of wanton aggression, we yet call upon the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the State, on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions. We extend our hand in peace and neighborliness to all the neighboring states and their peoples...."

The response came from Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, who said in an interview over BBC the next day, "The Arabs intend to conduct a war of extermination and momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres...."

Yet Israel kept its word! The Arabs who remained in Israel comprise 16 percent of the voters today, with full citizenship rights, and some Arabs are even members of the Knesset. In contrast, no Jew has such rights in any Arab or Muslim country, and a Jew isn't even allowed to enter Saudi Arabia!

Question: I recently discovered that friends have become part of a growing group of professing Christians who sincerely believe that the so-called "white races" are the ten lost tribes. How can I convince them otherwise?

Answer: This is a revival of the old "British-Israel" myth based upon the unbiblical idea of "Ten Lost Tribes" (see *TBC*, Nov. '92, May '96). Anyone who wants the truth need only read 2 Kings 15-17 re the carrying away by Assyria of the ten tribes, together with 2 Chronicles 30-34, to see that many if not most of the members of those tribes had returned, and took part in the revivals under Hezekiah and Josiah. Though some individuals have intermarried with Gentiles, the ten tribes continue to this day, and not in hidden form, but recognizable as Jews—though we don't know to which tribe each person belongs.

Nearly 200 years after the ten tribes were carried into Assyria, God gave Ezekiel a vision of the future division of the promised land "according to the twelve tribes of Israel" (Ezk 47:13). Christ told his disciples they would judge "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30). Paul referred to the "twelve tribes" as all in existence in his day (Acts 26:7); and James addressed his epistle to "the twelve tribes...scattered abroad" (Jas 1:1).

Ezekiel 38 and 39 refer to the battle of Armageddon as involving what God calls "my people of Israel." The term "Israel" is used throughout Isaiah, Jeremiah and

Ezekiel as a designation for all twelve tribes. In 39:28 God declares: "I...caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there."

This can only be the final gathering of every Jew left on earth back to the promised land of Israel for the Messiah's millennial reign (Mt 24:31). No one can say that "the white races" were taken out of the land of Israel, were scattered among "the heathen," are now in the process of returning there (Ezk 38:12) and will at the Second Coming all be taken there by the angels, leaving none of them outside of Israel. There wouldn't be room for "all the white races" in Israel!

Question: You have said that on Nisan 1 in the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, Nehemiah received authorization to rebuild Jerusalem and that, in keeping with Gabriel's promise (Dn 9: 25), 483 years later to the day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey. That should have been the 1st of Nisan in A.D. 32—you say it was the 10th of Nisan. Isn't this a discrepancy?

Answer: You raise an obvious point which I had never thought of before. I often say, "483 years to the day"—which would not be the case if Nehemiah received the authority to rebuild on Nisan 1, because we know that Jesus had to ride into Jerusalem on Nisan 10, the day the lambs were taken from the flock; and He had to be crucified in the "evening" of the fourteenth (Ex 12:6)—and so it happened.

While it was Nisan 1 in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Neh 2:1) when Nehemiah petitioned the king, that could not be the date of the "commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Dn 9:25)—a fact overlooked not only by me but by Sir Robert Anderson and Josh McDowell, who quotes him in *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (pp 180-81).

It is doubtful that Artaxerxes instantly wrote out the authorization the moment Nehemiah made the request. There must have been procedures to follow that would have taken time.

In verse 6 of chapter 2 Nehemiah says, "I set him a time," obviously meaning when he was going to be ready to leave for Jerusalem. No doubt the king's authorization would have carried that date. Nine days to prepare to go seems reasonable, making his departure and the date of the authorization the 10th of Nisan. Thus Christ's triumphal entry to Jerusalem, 483 years later to the day, would have been on the 10th of Nisan. This is reasonable and must have been the

case because Christ had to present himself to Israel on Nisan 10, the day the Passover lambs were taken from the flock and kept for four days under observation before being killed on the fourteenth, the very day that Christ was crucified—Thursday, not Friday, as we have documented.

Thanks again for bringing this to my attention.

Endnotes

- 1 D. Cazes, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israelites de Tunisie* (Paris, 1888), 83-4.
- 2 Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust* (Henry Holt and Company, 1985), 29-30.
- 3 From captured Nazi records, as part of documentary evidence submitted to UN May '47 by Nation Associates of New York, *Arab Higher Committee: Its Origins, Personnel and Purposes*, 5.
- 4 Arab Higher Committee, 4-7.
- 5 From the Mufti's private diary; cited in Arab Higher Committee.
- 6 *Ibid.*, cited in Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial* (J. KAP Publishing, 1984), 363.
- 7 www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH00pr0
- 8 Harry Sacher, *Israel: The Establishment of a State* (London, 1951), 235; cited in Peters, 12, fn 11.
- 9 Colonel R. Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary, 1917-1956* (London, 1959), 81-2.
- 10 Interview on BBC, May 15, 1948.
- 11 Official British document, Foreign Office File No. 371/20822 E 7201/33/31.
- 12 *Newsweek*, Nov 17, 1975, Mar 14, 1977.
- 13 Associated Press, Aug 12, 1990.
- 14 Middle East Media and Research Institute (MEMRI).
- 15 Meyrav Wurmser, *The Schools of Ba'athism: a Study of Syrian Textbooks* (MEMRI, 2000), xiii.
- 16 Mitchell G. Bard, *Myths and Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2001), 195.
- 17 Maurice Roumani, *The Case of the Jews from Arab Countries: a Neglected Issue* (World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries, 1977), 34.
- 18 *Al-Akhbar* (Egypt), Apr 18, 2001.
- 19 PA TV broadcast, 11/29/00.
- 20 *Islamic Declaration of Human Rights*, explanatory notes, 1.

Islam's Peace

Dave Hunt

That Islam is “peace and tolerance” is the most popular lie in the world today. Intellectuals in the West who defame Christ parrot the most fatuous praise of Muhammad, in spite of his legacy of murder, pillage and rape. A Sesame Street-type Arabic TV program features children training to be suicide bombers and chanting “Death to Israel”—for peace, of course. Reporter Ann Coulter suggests, “Inasmuch as liberals are demanding that Americans ritualistically proclaim, ‘Islam is a religion of peace,’ Muslims might do their part by not killing people all the time.”¹

That our leaders promote this lie, and that so many believe it without *one fact* to support it, bodes ill for America and the world. We only ask Muslims for *one example* of where and when Islam *ever* brought peace and tolerance—and please don’t threaten us with death (the standard Islamic persuasion) for asking!

Never forget that Muslims slaughtered and conquered “for Allah” from Spain to China. These Arab conquests (*defensive* battles, they claim) were “more rapid than the Roman, more lasting than the Mongol...the most amazing feat in military history.”²

Islam’s founder, Muhammad, began his career attacking rich caravans passing near his base in Medina. The first three assaults failed. The fourth succeeded because the victims were surprised by an ambush during Ramadan. Arab tribes had long refrained from aggression in that “holy month.” Muhammad, however, had received a “revelation” authorizing plunder and murder in Allah’s name during this special time of peace (Surah 2:217). Another absolved the Muslims of killing: “Ye slew them not, but Allah slew them” (Surah 8:17).

Most Muslims don’t realize that in observing Ramadan and the annual pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca, they follow what pagan Arabs practiced for centuries *before* Muhammad was born (see *TBC* Feb ’00). Had President Bush known the truth instead of the misinformation fed to him by Cleveland State University law professor David F. Forte,³ he might not have hosted a White House dinner honoring “the holy month Ramadan,” nor flattered Muslims saying “all the world continues to benefit from this faith and its achievements.” *Benefit?*

Challenged to do miracles like Christ, Muhammad could do none. On March 16,

624, near Badr, he led 300 warriors in a vicious attack against a large Meccan caravan protected by a force of 800. Some 40 Meccans were killed and 60 taken prisoner to a loss of only 14 Muslims. This amazing victory was seen as the attesting “miracle” Muhammad needed. As a result, the ranks of Muslims swelled with those eager to share in future plunder.

Having proved himself the prophet of Allah with the sword, Muhammad sealed his apostleship with more than twenty murders, beginning with al-Nadr, an old enemy from Mecca. Taken captive in the battle at Badr, he pleaded that the Meccan Qur’aish tribe would never kill captives. Muhammad had him beheaded anyway, justifying the deed with another “revelation”: “It is not for any Prophet to have captives until he hath made slaughter in the land” (Surah 8:67).

Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, peace; and there was no peace...

Ezekiel 13:10

Much of the growing Muslim wealth came from robbing and killing Jews, causing “the disappearance of these Jewish communities from Arabia proper”⁴—justified by a further “revelation” (Surah 33: 26,27). To this day, by law no Jew may set foot in Saudi Arabia.

A number of poets were murdered at Muhammad’s behest for having mocked him in verse. The first was the poetess Asma bint Marwan, stabbed to death by Umayr while she was nursing her youngest child. The poet Abu Afak (reportedly more than 100 years old) was murdered next. Then came the Jewish poet Ka’b bin al-Ashraf. A timely “revelation” said all poets were inspired of Satan (Surah 26:221-227).

Does it bother today’s Muslims that murder, rape, plunder and slavery of innocent people were the accepted way of life upon which Islam was founded and still operates? Apparently not. Ka’b’s murder (the account slanted with fictitious details) is justified on a popular Muslim website, revealing Islam’s peculiar meaning of “peace” and “justice”:

Ka’b had become a real danger to the state of *peace* and mutual *trust* which the Prophet was struggling to achieve in Madinah....The Prophet was quite exasperated with him....This was all part of the *great process*...which helped to make Islam

spread and establish it on foundations of *justice and piety*.⁵ [Emphasis added]

Christ left Christians “an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not...[but] bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness...” (1 Pt 2:21-24). But the Muslim must follow the example of Muhammad who killed all who dared to disagree with him!

A Christian must “know” God (Jer 9:24; Jn 17:3), “love” God with all his heart (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37, etc.) and “believe” in Christ in his heart (Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9). The God of the Bible wants man’s trust and affection without coercion.

In contrast, Allah can be neither known nor loved. Nor does one even have to believe to become a Muslim. Under threat of death, one merely recites aloud, “There is no *ila* (god) but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.” This “conversion without faith” was established when Abu Sufyan, a Qur’aish leader, upon surrendering Mecca in 630 to Muhammad and his superior army, admitted that he doubted the latter’s prophethood. He was warned, “‘Accept Islam and testify that Muhammad is the apostle of Allah before your neck is cut off by the sword.’ Thus [without believing] he professed the faith of Islam and became a Muslim.”⁶ This pattern is followed today: confess or die!

Upon Muhammad’s death in A.D. 632, many Arabs attempted to abandon Islam. Abu Bakr (the first caliph to succeed Muhammad) and his warriors in the infamous Wars of Apostasy killed tens of thousands of ex-Muslims, forcing Arabia back into Islam. Muhammad had commanded, “Whoever relinquishes his faith, kill him.” Islam is still enforced this way under *shari’a* (Islamic law) in Saudi Arabia and wherever Muslims are able to do so. This is *peace and tolerance*?!

The Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights was announced at the International Conference on the Prophet Muhammad and his Message held in London in April 1980. It declares, “Islam gave to mankind an ideal code of human rights fourteen centuries ago...based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah [teachings and practice of Muhammad]....” *Human rights?* What deceit!

Abu Bakr was succeeded as caliph by Umar Abu Hafsa. His armies took Damascus

in 635, Antioch in 636, Jerusalem in 638, Syria in 640, Egypt and Persia in 641. Entire cities were massacred, such as Behnesa, Fayum, Nikiu and Aboit in Egypt, Tripoli in North Africa and Euchaita in Armenia. Carthage was razed to the ground. In 644, Umar was murdered.

Uthman ibn Affan, the third caliph, consolidated and expanded the growing Islamic empire. A son-in-law of Muhammad, he standardized the Qur'an, burning all rival copies over protests of those still alive who remembered different readings and missing verses. Among these was Muhammad's favorite wife Aisha who, by the way, never veiled her face. Uthman, too, was murdered by a rival Muslim faction. Prevented from being buried in a Muslim cemetery, he was buried at night by friends, ironically, in a *Jewish* cemetery.

Islam divides the world into *dar al-Islam* (the house of peace) and *dar al-Harb* (the house of war). To bring "peace," Allah commands, "I shall cast terror into the hearts of the infidels. Strike off their heads! (Surah 8:13); Slay the idolaters wherever you find them...(9:5); O Prophet, struggle with the unbelievers and hypocrites and be thou harsh with them...(9:73); Believers, make war on the infidels that dwell around you..." (9:123). Perpetual *jihad* is commanded until all the world is under *shari'a*. Nor would that bring peace, because Muslims fight among themselves, as history testifies.

The fourth and last of the "rightly guided" caliphs was Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. Accused of complicity in Uthman's murder, he never fully established his rule. Aisha supported a rebellion against him, resulting in the Battle of the Camel in which 10,000 were killed. Ali won, but was murdered in 661.

Wars of succession pitted Qur'aish against Bedouins, Umayyads against the Hashimite followers of Ali, etc. Most of Ali's family were killed by rival Muslims in 680. Mecca was besieged by troops of Yezid, an Umayyad; the Ka'aba (later restored) was burned to the ground, its Black Stone split into three pieces. Mecca was taken in 692 by Abd-al-Malik (who in 691 had built the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem to replace the Ka'aba). He united Muslims once again by force and Islam continued its conquests.

In 712, Muslim raiders under Muhammad Qasun began the invasion of India, demolishing temples and palaces and massacring, as in Constantinople, where the streets ran with blood. "The massacres perpetrated by Muslims in India are unparalleled in

history, bigger in sheer numbers than the Holocaust...."⁷ But Islam is "peace!"

The Umayyad caliphate ruled the Muslim world until 749 when all of the Umayyads were murdered by the rival Abbasids, except one survivor, abd-al-Rahman, who fled to Spain where he established an independent caliphate. Thus began the Abbasid caliphate, which lasted until 1258 in spite of intrigue, assassinations and uprisings—all peaceful, of course.

The double-cross and murder of Muslims at the hands of Muslims continues to this day. Scarcely a Muslim regime is *not* ruled by a dictator who seized power from other Muslims, as in Syria and Iraq. The ten-year revolution in Algeria has cost 100,000 lives. In Afghanistan, rival Muslim warlords fight one another. "Infidels" have to intervene there as in the Gulf, to enforce peace among "peaceful" Muslims.

Muslims loyal to the murdered Ali and

But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
Isaiah 57:20

his sons are called Shi'ites (the majority in Iran). The others are called Sunnis and comprise the majority elsewhere. These two factions have long demonstrated that "Islam is peace" by fighting one another, as in the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq when more people were killed than in World War I.

Muslim conquests involving multiple massacres of literally millions continued for more than 1,300 years. Under the Abbasids the Islamic empire reached its zenith of power, prosperity and learning.

In Spain (to which Muslims point as an example of their tolerance) the garrison of Mueza was slaughtered in 920; Pamplona was put to the sword in 923; then Cordova, Zaragoza and Merida, with all adult males killed and women and children enslaved. The Jews of Granada were butchered in 1066, 34 years after 6,000 Jews had been slaughtered in Fez, Morocco. In 1146, Islamic Fez was put to the sword by rival Muslims, the Almohads, who conquered much of North Africa after annihilating the Almoravides (another Muslim faction) with about 100,000 massacred, another 120,000 killed in Marrakesh, and similar slaughters elsewhere—all gestures of "peace."

The 400-year rule of the Ottoman Turks

saw forced kidnappings of young boys into Islam and slavery, causing parents to mutilate children to make them undesirable. Under the Ottomans, being Greek, Armenian, Serb or any other non-Muslim was to live in daily fear of murder, rape, torture, genocide. To this day, Serbs and Bulgarians loathe Turks and Bosnians.

When Sultan Murad III died, his son Muhammad had all nineteen of his brothers murdered and the seven of his father's concubines who were pregnant sewn into sacks and thrown into the sea. The successor of Murad IV had all 300 women in his harem sewn into sacks and thrown into the Bosphorus. Like so many other Muslim leaders, he was murdered—peacefully.

The persecution of Jews in Roman Catholic Europe was mild compared to what Ottoman Christians endured for four centuries. More than a million Armenians were slaughtered in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first of the twentieth centuries, as well as many thousands of Jews, Greeks, Assyrians, Lebanese, et al. Tragically, the oppression and bloodshed were often condoned by Western powers, particularly England and at times America. In the great 1915 genocide, "women came with butcher knives [to] gain that merit in Allah's eyes that comes from killing a Christian."⁸ The

destruction of Smyrna in September 1922 with the deliberate massacre of nearly 300,000 inhabitants is another example of Islamic "peace." English, American, Italian and French battleships anchored in the harbor repelled fleeing victims who swam out to them for help.⁹

The popular "explanation" that Osama bin Laden and other terrorists are not Muslims, but fanatics, is a rebuke to the Qur'an, to Muhammad, and to Islam itself. As Trifkovic writes (p. 127), "Thirteen centuries of...suffering and death of countless millions, have been covered by the myth of Islamic 'tolerance'...." The West winks at the blatant denial of basic human rights and support of terrorism by Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries—even favors Islamic terrorists in Chechnya, Cyprus, Bosnia, Kashmir, Kosovo, Macedonia, Sudan and East Timor.

Our politically correct delusion is leading to disaster. Tragically, the gospel is kept from Islamic countries by the failure of Western governments to admit and confront the truth about Islam. Please continue to inform yourselves, to protest to our leaders, to pray for God's intervention, and to be witnesses for Christ to Muslims in our country.

TBC

Quotable

The family...is now collapsing....In a video-saturated culture in which, to play on Auden's lines, "[A]nguish comes by cable./ And the deadly sins/ can be bought in tins/ With instructions on the label," film and television now provide the [basic] values that were once provided by the family...children are lifted away from the older values like anchorless boats on a rising tide....

Evangelicals, no less than the Liberals before them...have now abandoned doctrine in favor of "life"...have lost interest...in what the doctrines of creation, common grace, and providence once meant for Christian believers, and even in those doctrines that articulate Christ's death such as justification, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation. It is enough for them simply to know that Christ somehow died for people.

David F. Wells, No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology? (Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 84-87.

Q&A

Question: Is Islam's aggression any different from the routine bloodshed of the Old Testament? Israel claimed then to be following God's orders, as Muslims claim to follow Allah's.

Answer: There is a *huge* difference. Muslims claim to follow Allah. He is *not* the God of the Bible (see Q&A Feb '02). Muhammad claimed that Allah commands Muslims to "fight against all people [worldwide] until all confess there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger."

By contrast, Israel was not commanded to convert anyone under threat of death, nor to take over the world, but to exterminate the Canaanites because of their wickedness and to possess that specific land. It's boundaries are stated in Genesis 15. Held captive in Egypt, Israel was restrained from invading Canaan for 400 years because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gn 15:16). Only then did the evil of these people reach such proportions that God's holiness forced Him to use Israel to annihilate them.

Muslims also point to Crusader killings in the name of God and Christ. That slaughter of Jews and Turks, however, was in *disobedience* to the Bible and to the teachings and example of Christ.

The murder of millions of both Christians and Jews by Muslims all through history,

and today's terrorism, are in *obedience* to the Qur'an, Allah, Muhammad and the example he and early Muslims set. What a difference!

Question: Enclosed is an article that kind of "blind-sided" me by a thought I'm having trouble with, i.e., why aren't evangelicals today warning Jews about the eventual slaughter of most of them who return to Israel?

Answer: The author, Gary DeMar, insists that Christ's statements in Matthew 24 were all fulfilled in A.D. 70. Nero was the Antichrist, Christ returned as the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem, and we are now in the Millennium with Satan locked up. We offer a debate (audiotape or CD) which I had with DeMar on this very topic (see offering list).

He interprets Christ's statement, "this generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled," to mean the generation living at that time. That is impossible, however, because "all flesh" could not have been destroyed with weapons of that day (Mt 24:22), angels didn't gather the elect (v. 31), etc. The way both Christ and John the Baptist used "generation" makes Christ's meaning clear: faithless, perverse, wicked, rebellious generation, generation of vipers, etc. In other words, Israel as a whole will continue in unbelief, rebellion against God and rejection of her Messiah until all is fulfilled. Only when Christ returns to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon will all living Jews believe (Mt 24:13; Rom 11:25,26) at last, and that unbelieving generation will have passed away. That is when the angels will gather all Jews back to Jerusalem where the Messiah will reign over them on David's throne at His Second Coming.

Other scriptures agree. Ezekiel 38:11-16 refers to a people, who once were scattered but have been brought back into their land and dwell in apparent safety, being attacked by the armies of the world commanded by Antichrist. Verses 17-23 tell us that God has brought these armies against Israel (see also Zech 14:1) in order to punish them for their treatment of His people the Jews, and in order to make Himself known to them in great power and judgment. Ezekiel 39 tells of the destruction of these armies and of Israel's redemption: "Israel...will not...pollute my holy name any more" (v. 7); "the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward" (v. 22); "for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel" (v. 29). These statements agree with Zechariah 12-14, which tells of

Israel's turning to the Lord at His Second Coming: "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced..." (Zec 12:10). Christ's statement about His angels gathering His elect from the four winds back to Israel is simply a further explanation of "I...the Lord their God...have gathered them unto their own land, and have *left none of them any more there*" (Ezk 39:28). The present return of Jews to their own land is only a prelude to this final gathering at the Second Coming.

That most Israelis don't yet believe sets the stage for their coming to faith when Christ intervenes to rescue them. DeMar claims that those who encourage Jews to return to Israel are bringing them into a trap where they will be killed at Armageddon. Yes, two-thirds of all Jews alive at that time will be killed; however those who are willing to believe the truth will not perish, but will be kept alive for Christ's return.

Moreover, since two-thirds of all Jews on earth will be killed, and only about 40 percent live in Israel, more will be killed outside of Israel than within. Thus, Israel is probably the safest place for a Jew.

Question: I can't thank you enough for *What Love Is This? My husband and I began attending a Southern Baptist...Sunday school class. The teacher is a die-hard Calvinist...I brought up some objections and was informed that I should email him instead of disrupting the class. I've experienced sleepless nights [from their]...claim that I am being prideful by believing that I had a part in receiving salvation. If I...crawl on my hands and knees to beg forgiveness of a holy and mighty God—how can that cause me to feel pride? Anyway...thank you, thank you, thank you...for the book.*

Answer: The fact that you believe, says Paul, *eliminates* boasting (Rom 3:27,28).

Salvation is God's gift. Receiving a gift gives no reason to boast. The power of choice to receive Christ is God's sovereign gift. Without free will we could not love God or one another or commit sin.

Calvinists say free will would "limit God's freedom." They limit God! If God's sovereignty can't handle man's free will, He is limited indeed.

Go through the Old Testament and see the many, many times the concept of a free will is found. Those who brought the materials with which to build the tabernacle were to do so of their "own will." The expressions "own will," "freewill" and "freewill-offerings" are found numerous

times: Lev 1:3, 19:5, 22:18,19,21,23,29; 23:38; Nu 15:3, 29:39; Dt 12:5,6; 16:10, 23:23; 2 Chr 31:14; Ps 119:108, etc. Never is there a hint that those exercising their free will had cause to boast.

Question [condensed]: You said the massacre of Arabs by Jews at Deir Yassin in 1948 “didn’t happen.” Jewish historian Benny Morris...says that it was mainly due to atrocities such as Deir Yassin that the Palestinians fled their homeland in 1948 (not because of some Arab radio broadcasts [as you claim] telling all Arabs to get out). I enclose...a brief article from the website of the Australian Jewish Democratic Society [by Roni Kresner]....It must be frustrating...to realize that you are one of the few people...who knows what really did or didn’t happen at Deir Yassin....David Ben Gurion apologized to King Abdullah of Jordan for what happened at Deir Yassin, and the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem excommunicated those who took part....

Answer: I won’t repeat what I have fully documented re Arab leaders themselves telling “Palestinians” to flee. I have not said that no civilians were killed at Deir Yassin. I said there was no “massacre.” Re-examine the facts more thoroughly, and please be reasonable. Jews are human. They have suffered far more through the centuries than any other people, and with a patience that should be admired, not criticized.

There are conflicting reports of what happened. Yes, the Israelis apologized. Tell me for which of the thousands of deliberate and unprovoked murders of Jews the Arabs have apologized! Instead, suicide bombers and others who deliberately kill Jewish civilians are praised! Are you not concerned for that? Four days after Deir Yassin, a Jewish convoy of doctors, nurses and wounded on the way to Hadassah Hospital was ambushed and massacred. Why not mention that as well?

Deir Yassin is repeatedly trotted out as though it represents many other “atrocities.” Where? They aren’t named. As one Jewish author writes, “The error which may have been made at Deir Yassin is constantly being thrown in our faces. Ah, but we have undergone...a thousand Deir Yassins...not only in Russia, Germany or Poland, but also at the hand of Arab people; yet the world has never been upset over that...!”

Deir Yassin overlooked the route into Jerusalem along which the Israelis were attempting to bring water and supplies to

besieged Jews. Before attacking this strategic village the Irgun and Lehi warned in Arabic any civilians to leave, and many did. The Jews left an escape route open during the battle, and the Lehi itself evacuated forty of the elderly and children. Does that sound like an intended massacre?

Of course, the Irgun were “aggressive.” This was war. A fierce house-to-house battle caused many Jewish casualties. This, in the “non-belligerent village” Kresner describes? There were *combatants* in the village from as far away as Iraq! Some feigned surrender, then opened fire. Many disguised themselves as women. One such, when captured, pulled out a pistol and killed the Jewish commander. “His friends, crazed with anger, shot in all directions and killed the Arabs in the area.” (Uri Milstein, *History of Israel’s War of Independence*, University Press of America, 1999, p. 276). On BBC, Abu Mahmud, a Deir Yassin resident in 1948, said “there was no rape.” Hazam Nusseibi who worked for the Palestine Broadcasting Service in 1948 told BBC that the fabrication was a “mistake...[hearing] that women had been raped at Deir Yassin, Palestinians fled in terror” (“Israel and the Arabs: The 50 Year Conflict,” BBC).

Question: The Lord has used both you and Mr. McMahon to truly impact me and drive me into the Scriptures. I adamantly condemn the way professing believers, regarding your views of Calvinism, have treated you. However, with all due respect, Mr. Hunt, I think you must shoulder some responsibility for the way that your book has been received....I wonder at what point you are no longer “fighting the good fight” but beginning to sow discord among believers. Why don’t you just state your position on this issue and then move on to the many heresies plaguing the church in these last days? There are godly men and women on both sides of the free-will vs. election issue.

Answer: I respect your belief that I shouldn’t mention these matters again. Have you made the same appeal to Calvinists who continue to promote their doctrine in pulpits, books, and media? We don’t respond in the Q&A section to every letter, but when enough interest is shown we are compelled to reply. In the case of Calvinism, the mail has indicated an overwhelming interest, and continual questions demand a response. I think we would be negligent not to do so.

It seems that you have not read *What Love Is This?* or you would know that I, too,

hold the biblical doctrine of election and predestination. Look in your concordance under freewill, voluntary, will, willing, willeth and wilt to see that the Bible presents freedom of choice as sovereignly having been given to man by God.

In the Old Testament, note the many, many times a choice is put before mankind. Does “whosoever will may come” mean what it seems to say?

Endnotes

- 1 www.jewishworldreview.com/cols/coulter.html
- 2 Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (Simon and Schuster, 1950), IV: 188.
- 3 *Imprimis* (Oct 2002), 2-6; Serge Trifkovic, *The Sword of the Prophet: The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam* (Regina Orthodox Press, 2002), 83-84 (See offering list).
- 4 W.N. Arafat, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1976, 100-107.
- 5 www.islam101.com/people/companions/maslamah.html
- 6 Cf. Ibn Hisham, part 4 of his *Biography of the Prophet*, cited in Trifkovic, *Sword*, 48.
- 7 Trifkovic, *Sword*, 112.
- 8 Michael J. Arlen, *Passage to Ararat* (Ruminator Books, 2002), 224.
- 9 Nicholas Gage, *Greek Fire* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), cited in Trifkovic, 125.

To Whom Shall We Go?

T. A. McMahon

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

John 6:67, 68

Have you ever been convicted by Peter's response to his Lord and Savior? I have. There are times when I catch myself not going to Jesus. It's not that I intentionally want to "go away" from the Lord; it's just that He's not always my first choice in everyday situations. So when verse 68 comes to mind, especially after having turned elsewhere and reaped less than gratifying results, another thought pops into my head: I must be stupid!

Why didn't I turn to the One who has the "words of eternal life"? He is, after all, the God of all creation, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, the Alpha and the Omega, perfect in all His attributes, which includes omniscience. By comparison, the *best* input I can get from the world is the equivalent of being handed a paddle while going over Niagara Falls.

Some would argue that going to God in certain circumstances is fine, but you wouldn't go to Him to learn how to fix your plumbing or rebuild the carburetor on your truck. While there were times when I turned to Jesus for help in (literally) bailing me out of an "I'll-do-it-myself" plumbing solution, I recognize that His Word is not a *manual* for home repair, auto mechanics, open-heart surgery, and so forth. Even in those endeavors, however, it is a very good idea to seek the Lord for His grace and mercy.

While not instructing mankind in everything, the Bible *is* the only true, objective source of information for knowing God and living one's life in the way He requires. Not only does it touch upon all aspects of how we live; it certainly bears upon everything having eternal value. The Apostle Peter tells us that "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, . . . his divine power hath given unto us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness. . ." (2 Pt 1:2, 3). That would seem to cover everything worth being concerned about. Again, Peter exclaimed, "You [Lord] have the words of eternal life." His "words" are found in the Holy Scriptures. So, if we call ourselves Bible-believing Christians, shouldn't we,

then, be those who continually go to the Bible for "all things that pertain unto life and godliness"?

Sadly, that is not the case for most evangelicals. Mirroring the world around them, they seem to have an appetite for psychological counsel. A major reason for this attraction is that, along with the masses, they have the erroneous idea that the substance of clinical counseling is the stuff of science. Certainly the fact that the purveyors of this so-called medically related, scientific wisdom have advanced degrees and are professionals would cause one to think so. However, psychotherapy is not and cannot be a scientific endeavor. The most obvious reason for this is that its subject is human behavior, a study which defies scientific certainty.

True science can only concern itself with

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.... Psalm 1:1

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Psalm 119:105

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. Psalm 119:9

Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever. Psalm 119:160

Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation.... Psalm 25:5

...O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. Psalm 40:11

the physical side of man—those things governed by physical laws, e.g., physics and chemistry. The nonphysical (man's mind) is out of bounds to those in lab coats, for mankind's will and emotion mock the scientific method. Psychotherapy nevertheless maintains its clinical façade because of its pseudo-medical terminology. For example, one might think that a person's problematic "mental health" indicates that he is "mentally ill," and therefore he ought to see a doctor and possibly be committed to a "mental hospital." However, a mind (or anything mental), being nonphysical, cannot be ill; neither can it be examined by a doctor in a hospital for "mental patients." These terms *sound* scientific and have influenced multitudes to think of psychotherapy in terms of medical science, but in reality

they're nonsensical.

If psychotherapy isn't truly the *scientific* pursuit of humanity's mental, emotional and behavioral wellbeing, what is it? It's talk. Rhetoric. Conversation! Research psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, in his book *The Myth of Psychotherapy: Mental Healing as Religion, Rhetoric, and Repression*, burns off clinical psychology's scientific mist: "In plain language, what do patient and psychotherapist actually do? They speak and listen to each other. What do they speak about? Narrowly put, the patient speaks about himself, and the therapist speaks about the patient. . . . Each tries to move the other to see or do things in a certain way." This, then, is neither brain surgery nor any other form of medical intervention; nor is it rocket science. In other words, a Ph.D. or M.D. is not a necessary requirement to handle the medium of "talk." Yet wouldn't advanced degrees make one more effective in the psychotherapeutic conversation process? No. The many research studies comparing the effectiveness of professional therapists versus nonprofessionals have given equivalent results. In other words, nonprofessionals do as well as professionals.

If the medium of psychotherapy—talking and listening—doesn't depend upon advanced classes in conversation in order to be effective, what does one study to earn a Ph.D. in clinical psychology? Theories about human behavior, mostly: What Sigmund Freud gleaned from Greek dramas, his speculations about infantile sex, psychic determinism, and the unconscious; Carl Jung's beliefs about archetypal images, the occult and the collective unconscious; Alfred Adler's "masculine protest" and "inferiority complex" concepts; Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology, "hierarchy of needs" theory and New Age obscenities; B.F. Skinner's stimulus-response behavioral dogmas; Eric Fromm's godless view of love; Arthur Janov's primal scream; Carl Rogers' client-centered therapy, Fritz Perls' Gestalt, and a legion of other speculative ideas.

What then of these theories? Have they, over the years, formed an historic body of knowledge from which developed true and helpful insights regarding mankind's nature and remedies for the problems of life? To the contrary, the field of psychotherapy is its own lunatic asylum! If you think that's a little harsh, check out the lives of any of those mentioned above. Freud was a cocaine addict who lusted for his own mother. Jung was suicidal and communed with a demon. Rogers abandoned

his cancer-stricken, dying wife for another woman, but relieved his guilt by contacting her through a ouija board after her death. Rogers later ended his own life through assisted suicide. And the list goes on. (“Physician, heal thyself” comes to mind.) In addition, there are more than 450 different (often contradictory and utterly bizarre) psychotherapeutic systems and thousands of methods and techniques.

Karl Popper, regarded as the preeminent scholar in the area of philosophy of science, concluded, after a lengthy study of psychotherapy, that its theories, “though posing as sciences, had in fact more in common with primitive myths than with science,” and that “these theories describe some facts but in the manner of myths. They contain most interesting psychological suggestions, but not in testable form.”¹ Eighty leading educators, writing in *Psychology: A Study of a Science*, edited by Sigmund Koch, concurred: “The entire subsequent history of psychology can be seen as a ritualistic endeavor to emulate the forms of science in order to sustain the delusion that it already is a science.”² Martin and Deidre Bobgan, prolific authors and critics of psychotherapy, summarize the scene today: “The entire field is amassed in confusion and crowded with pseudo-knowledge and pseudo-theories resulting in pseudoscience.”³

The information critical of psychotherapy is hardly hidden from public view. Neither is it the work of conspiracy groups or wild-eyed fundamentalists. The only mystery is why so few are paying attention, especially those who claim to be Bible-believing Christians—and pastors. Moreover, in psychotherapy the values, favored theories, and beliefs of the therapist rule. The client must conform to what the therapist presents for the process to be effective, and a willing client is normally quite receptive to whatever is presented. So whether or not the client’s problem is resolved, he has been influenced, even co-opted, by the value system of the therapist.

Many evangelical pastors are either intimidated by, or infatuated with, psychotherapy. Somehow these shepherds have been convinced that their lack of education and training in the therapeutic process has rendered them incapable of effectively addressing the mental, emotional, and behavioral problems of their flock. So what do they do? Most become referral services for their local psychotherapeutic community, “Christian psychologists” or otherwise, and others go

back to school and add a psychology credential to their theology degree. They may preach and teach the Word on Sundays and Wednesday evenings, but, to their shame, they have unintentionally or intentionally communicated to their congregations that the Bible is inadequate when it comes to problems regarding how we live and relate to others. But surely they wouldn’t refer a person to a psychotherapist for something so mundane as not getting along with a spouse or another family member, or not feeling good about himself, or being depressed, or problems of lust or greed or bitterness or self-control—or would they? *Yes, that’s mostly what psychotherapists deal with, and the church provides their clients!*

Any problem that *can’t* be “cured” through *talk* is out of psychotherapy’s league. Evangelical pastors, who are usually good talkers, and better yet, talkers of “good,” seem to have missed this. But what

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Jeremiah 6:16

they also miss, which should be more obvious to them, and critically so, is the heart and soul of psychotherapy: self.

Secular counseling begins and ends with self; professional “Christian” counseling begins and ends with Christianity interpreted through “self” theories. The result of both is antithetical to what the Bible teaches. There is not a verse from Genesis to Revelation which gives *one hint of support* for the “self” concepts of psychology—even the Christianized versions which have flooded the religious marketplace throughout the last few decades. Self is the problem, and there is no manmade cure, talking or otherwise. Throughout its pages, the Word of God is both implicit and explicit on the subject. Matthew 16:24 issues the mandate: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,” and 2 Timothy 3:1, 2 warns that generation which makes self both its redemption and redeemer: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves....” Thanks to the overwhelming influence of psychology, and Christendom’s complicity,

we are in those “perilous times.”

Someone once observed, regarding the capitulation to psychotherapy, that “the church has sold its birthright for a pot of beans.” Yes and no. There is definitely a sellout involved; but beans are nutritious, whereas psychotherapy is toxic to its core. Its modern beginnings with Freud were based on deceit, as historians have well documented. His professional progeny have simply added and subtracted ingredients to his stew of delusion. Nevertheless, Christian psychotherapists assure us that there are healthy benefits involved because “all truth is God’s truth,” and some of the luminaries of psychology mentioned above have contributed such morsels of truth. What exactly those extrabiblical truths are, we’ve yet to be told. However, even if these so-called “truths” were real, they would have to be served up in the poisonous broth of psychotherapy.

Twice in Proverbs we are told, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Prv 14:12; 16:25) God obviously wanted that repeated for us, perhaps especially for this humanistically oriented generation which majors on what *seems* and *feels* right. But the critical issue is that “man” has become the judge of what is right, and the consequence is death, i.e., separation from God. This is the lie which the serpent fed Eve—that she herself could, like God, be the arbiter of what was good and what was evil. Just as God said it would, death resulted from the choice Adam and Eve made. We have a similar choice today: God’s Word and His way, or the way that seems right to a man.

If we truly know and love the Lord, there is no other way for us. Not only is God’s Word sufficient for all things that pertain to life and godliness, but He has also sealed every born-again believer with His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to enable us to live our lives in a way which is fruitful and pleasing to Him. Furthermore, all believers are called and equipped to minister to one another. The Epistle to the Galatians (6:2) tells us that we are to bear one another’s burdens, and 2 Timothy 3:17 declares that Scripture thoroughly prepares us for every good work. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32). Later, in a prayer for us, Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). So where else are we going to go? He alone has the words of truth and eternal life.

TBC

Quotable

There is a peace that reigns even in sorrow,
Of hope surrendered, not of hope fulfilled;
A peace that does not look upon tomorrow,
But calmly on the storm that it has stilled.

A peace that liveth not in joy's excesses,
Nor in the happy life of love secure;
But in faith's strength the heart possesses,
Of conflicts won while learning to endure.

A peace there is in sacrifice concluded,
A life subdued, from will and passion free;
It's not the peace that over Eden brooded,
But that which triumphed in Gethsemane.

Author unknown, quoted in a recent letter from a prison inmate

Islam is a religion in which God [Allah] requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sent His son to die for you.

Attorney-General John Ashcroft
[This is clearly the truth, but, sadly, under pressure from Muslims, he backed off and said he only meant the 9/11 hijackers.]

Q&A

Question: It seems to me that Karl Keating, in *The Usual Suspects*, demolishes...the major foundation of the Reformation and Protestantism, "*sola scriptura*." He points out, as did Cardinal Newman more than 100 years before, that "for Timothy, Scripture was [only] the Old Testament....If Paul's comment [2 Timothy 3:16, 17—the favorite Protestant 'proof' text] really implies *sola scriptura*, then it implies that the Old Testament alone is sufficient as a rule of faith. Does any Christian believe that? Of course not" (pp 52, 53). I challenge you to try to refute this conclusive argument.

Answer: It is amazing that Catholics have praised Newman's pitiful fallacy for more than a century. For Timothy the Bible was only the Old Testament? Hardly. This is Paul's *second* epistle to him, so Timothy has both First and Second Timothy. Moreover, that this is Paul's *last* epistle is also clear from his statement, "I am now ready to be offered...my departure is at hand....I have finished my course" (2 Tm 4:6,7). Clearly, then, *all thirteen* of Paul's epistles were in existence.

And so was the book of Acts, authored by Luke. It must have been written prior to Paul's death or it would have recorded

his martyrdom. Likewise for the gospel of Luke, the "former treatise" (Acts 1:1); and also Peter's two epistles, because in his second, Peter refers to Paul and his epistles (2 Pt 3:15,16) as though the latter is still alive. In existence also were the gospels by Matthew, Mark and John—written by those "which from the beginning were eyewitnesses" and had "set forth in order a declaration of those things [concerning Jesus] which are most surely believed among us" (Lk 1:1, 2). In fact, far from the Old Testament being all that was available, the entire New Testament, except for the three epistles of John and Revelation, had been written.

But even if *none* of the New Testament had been written, Paul's expression "all scripture" surely refers to all of the Bible, not just to what had been written up to that time. When Solomon writes, "every word of God is pure" (Prv 30:5); the Psalmist writes, "the word of the Lord is right" (Ps 33:4); "thy word is settled in heaven" (119:89); "thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name (138:2); or Isaiah says, "the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Is 40:8) or "trembleth at [thy] word" (66:2); or Jesus says, "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Lk 11:28), etc., etc., no one would imagine that reference is being made only to scriptures which had been written up to that time.

As for whether this passage teaches that God's Word is sufficient, Keating avoids 2 Timothy 3:17 which states, "That the man [or woman, boy or girl] of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." It couldn't be clearer that nothing else is needed for instruction in living the Christian life and being all that God wants us to be.

The subtitle of Keating's book is *Answering Anti-Catholic Fundamentalists*. He uses the term "anti-Catholic" numerous times. Yet he relentlessly attacks evangelical beliefs. How is it that evangelicals are "anti-Catholic" while Catholics who oppose us are not "anti-evangelical"?

In fact, Keating is even willing to lie in order to discredit evangelicals. He persists in accusing me of using T.A. McMahon as my ghostwriter. This is in spite of repeated denials from both myself and McMahon, the huge difference in our writing styles, and the obvious absurdity of McMahon allegedly writing about 30 books in my name for which he has received neither recognition nor compensation, and none in his own name (we have written two together). Keating could verify the truth if he desired. I have suggested that he

ask the publishers of my books and speak to the staff at The Berean Call, who surely know who writes what, but he has refused, claiming that "anti-Catholics" are all liars.

Sadly, Keating was told this falsehood by Norm Geisler, who persists in this lie in spite of being challenged to speak the truth. I can understand Keating's motivation: to destroy the reputation by any means of those who expose Catholicism's errors. I do not understand Geisler's motivation.

Question: The Bible says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Then why do I so often fail to do His will and to please Him? I more often please myself by doing my own will. Why?

Answer: The previous verse says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." We don't "work *for* salvation," but must work *out* the salvation God has given us. Paul declares that "we are his [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:9,10). It is God's will that we should do good works—but it is our responsibility to do them.

Created in a beautiful garden, Adam was "to dress it and to keep it [and] freely eat" its fruit (Gn 2:15,16). God gave Adam the ability, but he had to harvest and eat the fruit. God didn't do it for him.

So it is with the life we are to live by faith in God and in obedience to His will. God's work in us neither overrides our will nor our efforts, but guides and empowers us as we obey Him. Just as Adam failed to do God's will, we too fail at times. God had a provision for Adam's sin, and He has one for ours as well: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9).

Why do we so often seek our own will? Whether we live for Christ or for self depends upon our understanding and faith. Christ loves us so much that He paid the full penalty for our sins which His justice demanded. When this fact becomes more real to us than this passing world, we become overwhelmed with love for Him and the desire to do His will. When we really believe that this life is brief and eternity is unending, the shortness of time in relation to eternity compels us by logic and even self-interest to live for eternity. The life we live day by day depends upon what we really believe.

Paul's passion was to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." To that end he said, "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col 1:28, 29). Understanding, faith and love provide the foundation for a partnership in which God is able to work mightily in us as we work diligently and trust Him.

Question: The Bible clearly says, "broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Mt 7:13). How has God "won" if there are more souls in hell than in heaven?"

Answer: Are you sure there will be "more souls in hell than in heaven"? The verse you quote refers to those who reject the narrow way to life—it does not refer to those who die in infancy or to aborted babies. If these, having neither sinned nor rejected the gospel, are indeed purchased by Christ's sacrifice for the sins of the world (as I believe they are), on that account alone there could be more in heaven than in hell because of the high infant mortality rate in most countries where the gospel is little known.

Furthermore, even if no one went to heaven, God has "won." He did not compromise His justice but insisted that the penalty be paid and allows no one into heaven who has rejected Christ's payment on their behalf. Christ conquered Satan by living a sinless life of perfect obedience to the Father—and then by laying down that life in full payment for sin. God has proved both His love and His justice, both His mercy and holiness. In the cross, God has won the victory over Satan, sin and death, and has made it available to all who will receive it as the free gift of His grace.

Question: Enclosed is an article from *Christian Research Journal*, 25:1, titled, "Allah Does Not Belong to Islam," directly contradicting your Q&A of Oct. 1994. Would you please comment on this, even though the question about "Allah" has been asked of you before?

Answer: Helen Louise Herndon writes: "Allah is the God Arab-speaking Christians worship. The Arabic Bible is replete with the word *Allah*, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation. Jesus Christ is even called the son of *Allah* in the Arabic Scriptures....*Allah* is simply the word or term for God....No other term exists in Arabic for the God Christians claim to be the one, true God....*Allah* is equivalent

to the English *God*, the French *Dieu*, or the Spanish *Dios*....We can join our Arab brothers and sisters in Christ who often say, '*Allah* be praised!'"

To the contrary, Allah is the *name* of a well-known pagan deity—not the generic term for the English *God*, the French *Dieu*, or the Spanish *Dios*, as CRI claims. The generic word is *Ilah*—and it is used for God throughout the Qur'an. For example: "Allah! There is no God [Ilah] save him....Allah is only one God [Ilah]" (Surah 2:255; 4:171, etc.). This is also clear from the declaration, "There is no God [Ilah] but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger."

Allah is a contraction of *Al-Ilah*, meaning the chief god. Allah was the chief god in the Ka'aba, a pagan temple that held more than 300 idols.

Of Allah the Qur'an says, "Far is it removed from his transcendent majesty that he should have a son" (Surah 4:171). Then it is blasphemy to a Muslim as well as to a Christian for the Arabic Bible to call Jesus "the Son of Allah"! It is tragic that CRI would promote this delusion.

Allah was the Moon god who, by his spouse the sun goddess, had three daughters: Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat. The crescent moon still marks the beginning and end of the "holy month, Ramadan," as it did centuries before Muhammad. Its presence on minarets and Arab flags is one more piece of evidence marking Islam as a continuation of long-established Arab paganism. Muhammad carried the rituals associated with the Ka'aba and Ramadan over into Islam almost exactly as pagan Arabs had practiced them for centuries.

Muhammad's tribe, the Qur'aish of Mecca, were guardians of the Ka'aba. They collected the fees charged to those of other tribes who came there to worship their gods, and were known as "the people of Allah" before Muhammad was born.

Though Muhammad smashed the idols, including the one representing Allah, he kept the Ka'aba and its chief god, Allah, for the followers of his new religion, Islam, to continue to worship. In fact, for some time pagans devoted to Allah mingled with Muslims on the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca and the Ka'aba. Finally, Muhammad issued an ultimatum: no non-Muslims allowed at the Ka'aba, and he gave them four months in which to become a Muslim or die. To this day, participation in the pre-Islamic rituals involving the Ka'aba is the highpoint of the *hajj*, which Muslims must perform at least once in a lifetime.

Endnotes

1. Karl Popper, "Scientific Theory and Falsifiability," *Perspectives in Philosophy*, Robert N. Beck, ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1975), 343,346.
2. Sigmund Koch, "The Image of Man in Encounter Groups," *The American Scholar*, Autumn 1973, 636.
3. Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *Psychoheresy*, (Eastgate Publishers 1987), 31.

Great is the Mystery

Dave Hunt

In spite of thousands of years of inquiry into the universe, and the super technology of today's computer-aided science, we still know almost nothing in comparison to all there is to know. We don't know what energy is, or what gravity or light or space are. Referring to the physical universe, British astronomer Sir James Jeans declared that "we are not yet in touch with ultimate reality."

Much less do we know what life is. Living things are made up of chemical machines. The secret of life, however, lies not in the correct combination of the chemicals of which living things are built. Science seeks to discover how life is imparted to otherwise dead matter, hoping to reverse the death process and thereby create eternal life. But that secret will never be found by examining living creatures because the life they have is not their own.

We now know what Darwin never imagined, that life is based upon *information* encoded on DNA (See *TBC Aug '02*). Indisputably, no information is originated by the medium in which it is communicated (printed page, audio or video tape, DNA, etc.).

Information can originate only from an intelligence. Clearly, the information that provides the instructions for constructing and operating the incredibly small and complex machines which make up living cells could only originate with an Intelligence beyond our capacity to comprehend.

Jesus claimed to be the Source of life: "I am the resurrection, and the life" (Jn 11:25)—and He proved it by laying down His life and rising from the dead. He said, "No man taketh [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself...and I have power to take it again..." (Jn 10:17, 18). And so He did.

There is, however, something more vital than physical life. Unquestionably, there is a nonphysical side to man. Words and the conceptual ideas they express (including those imprinted on DNA) are not a part of the dimensional, physical universe. The idea of "justice," for example, has nothing to do with and cannot be described in terms of any of the five senses. It lies in another realm.

Thoughts are not physical. They do not originate from matter nor do they occupy space. Our brains do not think, or we would be the prisoners of that few pounds of matter inside our craniums, waiting for the next

orders it might give us. Man has not only physical but "intelligent" life. What could be its source?

Of Jesus, John said, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (Jn 1:4). Christ declared, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn 8:12). The reference is not to physical light but to the spiritual light of truth—another abstract concept without any relationship to the physical universe.

"Truth" takes us beyond animal life; it has no meaning for animals. Their "intelligence" knows nothing of love, morals, compassion, mercy or understanding but is confined to instinct and conditioned responses to stimuli. B.F. Skinner tried to fit man into the same mold, but our ability to form conceptual ideas and express them in speech cannot be

And God created...every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:21

explained in terms of stimulus/response reactions. There is an impassable chasm between man and animals.

Intelligence is nonphysical because it conceives of and uses nonphysical constructs which clearly do not originate with the material of the brain or body. This takes us beyond the physical universe into the realm of spirit. We do not know what a soul or a spirit is, or what it means that God "is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24) who "created man in his image" (Gn 1:27).

God has given us sufficient proof in what we *can* verify to cause us to trust completely whatever His Word declares concerning things we cannot fully comprehend. That is where faith enters. There is much which, although we cannot understand it, we know is true. This is the case, for example, with the fact that God is without beginning or end. It boggles our minds, but we know it must be.

While seeking to unravel the secrets of the universe, science neglects its Creator. The universe can lead man only to a dead end, since ultimate knowledge is hidden in the God who brought all into existence.

Though not idol worshipers in the primitive sense, scientists, university professors, business executives and political leaders,

no matter how brilliant, who do not know Christ fit the description in Romans 1 of those who reject the witness of the universe and worship the creation instead of the Creator. It is possible for Christians also to be caught up in this same materialistic ambition and to miss *what God offers us in Himself*.

Paul's earnest desire was that all believers might attain unto "the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2, 3).

Our knowledge of both the physical and spiritual is limited at best. But one day we will fully know when we are with Christ in our glorified bodies: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor 13:12). When in His presence we wholly know Christ as He truly is, all limitations will have vanished, even our lack of power to fully overcome sin: when we see him, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). Knowing Christ is everything!

Secular knowledge pursued in our universities looks in the wrong direction. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ can never be discovered by scientific inquiry but can only be revealed by His Spirit through His Word to those who believe in Him.

The concept of one true God who exists eternally in three Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is rejected even by some who claim to be Christians. Yet this is taught all through Scripture, in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Consider: "I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I..." Surely the speaker who has been in existence forever must be God himself. Yet He declares, "the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me" (Is 48:16). We cannot comprehend the mystery of the Trinity; yet that is no more reason to doubt it than to doubt anything else that we know is real but cannot comprehend.

If God were a single being (as Muslims believe Allah to be and most Jews believe Yahweh is), He would have had to create creatures in order to experience love, fellowship and communion. The biblical God *is* love in Himself, manifesting plurality in the Godhead: "The Father loveth the Son..." (Jn 5:20). God must be one; but He must comprise both singularity and plurality.

Only God could pay the infinite penalty His justice demands for sin. But that would not be just, because "God is not a man..."

(Nm 23:19). The incarnation is therefore essential—but impossible if God were a singular being. “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn 4:14). It was Jesus who died on the cross, not the Father nor the Holy Spirit.

Neither could a mere man, being finite, pay that infinite penalty. All through the Old Testament, Yahweh declares that He is the only Savior (Is 43:3,11; 45:15,21; 49:26; Hos 13:4, etc.). Thus Jesus had to be Yahweh but also a man. When God the Son became a man He did not and could not cease to be God. Jesus was both God and man.

How could God become a man? Again that is only possible through the Trinity. The Father didn’t become man, nor did the Holy Spirit. Even though we cannot understand this, we know it must be so. The penalty for our sins is infinite because God and His justice are infinite. Consequently, those who reject Christ’s payment on their behalf will be separated from God forever.

How evil could arise in God’s “good” universe (Gn 1:31) is a mystery—“the mystery of iniquity” (2 Thes 2:7). It will reach its fullness in Antichrist through whom Satan will rule the world. In Antichrist, Satan will be manifest in the flesh, as God was, and is, in Christ.

Satan must be brilliant beyond our comprehension, apparently second only to God in power and understanding. It is a mystery that Satan, having known intimately the holy and glorious presence and power of God on His throne, could ever have dared, much less desired, to rebel. How could he have imagined that he could ever defeat God? Surely this is a great mystery!

Satan was not raised in a “dysfunctional family” or in a ghetto, nor was he “abused as a child.” None of the standard excuses for rebellious and selfish behavior accepted by today’s Christian psychologists applies to Satan—or to Adam and Eve. To accept any explanation for evil that doesn’t fit them is to be deceived. Certainly today’s popular diagnosis of “low self-esteem” or a “poor self-image” was not Satan’s problem!

Scripture says he was lifted up with pride: “O covering cherub....Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty” (Ezk 28:17). He is apparently a self-deceived ego-maniac, blinded by pride in his own power and abilities.

Here is the mystery of iniquity: In the very presence of God, in the heart of the cherub closest to God, the ultimate evil was conceived. By one fateful choice, the most beautiful, powerful and intelligent angelic being became for all time the ultimate in

evil: the arch enemy of God and man, the “great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Rv 12:9; 20:2).

Paul warns that a man should not become an elder until he is mature in the faith, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tm 3:6). This tells us again that pride was Satan’s downfall—and is man’s besetting sin as well. “Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prv 16:18).

It is also a mystery that Eve would believe the serpent’s lie contradicting what her gracious Creator had said. Adam was not deceived (1 Tm 2:14). No doubt out of love for Eve and not wanting to be separated from her, he joined her in disobedience, knowing the consequences. It remains a mystery, however, that *anyone* would rebel against God, that *anyone* would choose the pleasures of the moment in exchange for

As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

Proverbs 10:25

eternal separation from God.

The heart of this mystery is the autonomy of intelligent created beings who clearly have something called self-will. At least some angels (Satan and those who joined his rebellion) and all men have the power of choice. In deciding upon beliefs or actions, though evidence may be weighed, ultimately reason is set aside in order to bow before the throne of self. We are our own worst enemies.

Self had its awful birth when Eve made the choice of disobedience for all of her descendants. Christ said there is no hope except we deny self (Mt 16:24). And the only way that can be done effectively is to embrace the cross of Christ as our own so that we can say with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...” (Gal 2:20).

The solution to evil through the incarnation is also a mystery: “...great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tm 3:16).

“*God was manifest in the flesh.*” What a mystery! God could become a fetus in Mary’s womb? John the Baptist as a 6-month-old fetus leapt in the womb of Elizabeth in recognition that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah. Amazing!

“*Seen of angels.*” These heavenly beings

must have watched in astonishment. The One whom they had known as God the Son, one with the Father, for at least 4,000 years by earth time (we know not how much earlier angels were created), was growing in the virgin Mary’s womb, soon to be born a babe needing a mother’s milk and care—truly man, yet at the same time truly God. Mystery of mysteries!

“*Believed on in the world.*” The Apostle John speaks in awe of this One whom “we have heard...seen with our eyes...looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)” (1 Jn 1:1, 2). In his Gospel John says, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

Yes, “*Believed on in the world.*” Certainly John believed, as did Paul, that Jesus the Messiah of Israel was truly “God manifest in the flesh.” To be a Christian one must believe that Jesus Christ is God come as a man to redeem us. What love to come from so high to stoop so low—to be rejected, hated, misunderstood, mocked, maligned, stripped, scourged and crucified by those He came to redeem!

“*Received up into glory.*” His sacrifice accepted by the Father, He is glorified at the “Father’s right hand” and interceding there for us (Rom 8:34). But even before that great meeting in His presence in the Father’s house, “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [we] are changed into the same image...by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18).

Surely if the incarnation is the great mystery of godliness, then for us to live godly lives we must have Christ dwelling within us and living His life through us: “Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach...” (Col 1:27, 28). This is the “hope of his calling” which Paul prayed that the Ephesian saints would understand. Peter explains that God “hath called us unto his eternal glory” (1 Pt 5:10). We are going to be like Christ. The glory that the disciples beheld in Christ will be manifested in us!

We are transformed by His Word, the Word of Truth upon which we feed for spiritual nourishment. The written instructions which God spoke into DNA and which are essential for physical life present a powerful picture of the “words that...are spirit, and...life” (Jn 6:63). This is the living Word of God which when believed (1 Pt 1:23-25) creates and nourishes spiritual life. **TBC**

Quotable

Erase all thought and fear of God from a community, and selfishness and sensuality would absorb the whole man. Appetite, knowing no restraint, and suffering, having no solace or hope, would trample in scorn on the restraints of human laws. Virtue, duty, principle, would be mocked as unmeaning sounds. A sordid self-interest would supplant every feeling; and man would become, in fact, what the theory of atheism declares him to be—a companion for brutes.

McGuffey Fifth Reader, designed for the ten-year-olds of our American frontier

Symbolic information, or language, represents a category of reality *distinct* from matter and energy...[M]aterialism...long the dominant philosophical perspective in scientific circles, with its foundational presupposition that there is no non-material reality, is simply and plainly false....

The implications are immediate for the issue of evolution...[S]ymbolic language [is] the crucial ingredient from which all living organisms develop and function... An intelligent Creator is unmistakably required...Despite all the millions of pages of evolutionist publications...there is in reality no rational basis for such belief.

Professor Ker C. Thomson, former Director of the U.S. Air Force Terrestrial Sciences Laboratory, *In Six Days: why fifty scientists choose to believe in creation* (see offering list)

I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.

Sir Isaac Newton, shortly before he died, *Great Ages of Man: Age of Kings*, Time-Life Books, 1967.

Q&A

Question: Who is Jesus talking to in Matthew 7:22, 23? Nominal Christians? People who “think” they’re Christians? Born-again Christians who messed up?

Answer: This scripture is a solemn warning! Those He addresses apparently were accepted and honored by many as Christian

leaders and seemingly did great exploits in Christ’s name. They even seem to be sincere in telling Christ: “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

Jesus (who says, “I know my sheep”- Jn 10:14) declares, *I never knew you*, so they were *never* true Christians (His sheep) “who messed up.” To call them “nominal Christians” hardly fits. They do seem to “think” they are Christians, but clearly never understood the gospel. Obviously, they are false prophets.

Works, no matter how seemingly miraculous, are not the basis of salvation and cannot provide assurance of salvation. Their plea ought to have been, “Lord, You promised eternal life to those who believe in You. We believed and are saved by faith, so You can’t turn us away.” The true gospel was neither the emphasis of their “ministry” nor the basis of their assurance.

Sadly, we find the same dominant emphasis upon “miracles,” or signs and wonders, within much of the charismatic and “faith teaching” and “positive confession” sectors of the professing church today. Take heed!

This is a powerful scripture for eternal security. If salvation could be “lost,” surely Christ would have said to at least one of them, “You were doing well until you lost your salvation.” He says that to *none of them*. They never had salvation to “lose.”

Question: I am puzzled by your statement in the January [’03] Q&A: “the land is Israel, not Palestine...” The term “Palestine” is used four times in the Bible. In Exodus 15:14 it is synonymous with the land of Canaan. In Isaiah 14:29, 31 it identifies the whole region, including both Judaea and Samaria. In Joel 3:4 it denotes the coastal areas of the eastern Mediterranean. The name “Palestine” was used universally by all people, including Jewish people, to indicate that whole area during the British mandate period from 1918 to 1948. Please explain your view.

Answer: The Hebrew word in these four places is *pelensheth*. This small region was also referred to as Philistia (Ps 60:8; 87:4, 108:9). It was clearly *not* “synonymous with the land of Canaan” and did *not* indicate “the whole region, including both Judaea and Samaria.” On the contrary, it referred specifically to the land of the *Pelishtee*, or Philistines, in the same location but a bit larger than the Gaza Strip of today, named

after the Philistine city of Gaza. Their other cities were Ashdod, Gath (home of Goliath), Gerar and Ekron. They were not Semitic people, but invaded Canaan by sea from across the Mediterranean and occupied that particular area before the Israelites arrived.

Thus even the Philistines were not the “original inhabitants of the land,” but displaced others just as they were eventually displaced by Israel. Nor can the Arabs living there today (who are Semites) claim any ethnic, linguistic or historical relationship to the Philistines or on any other basis justify calling themselves Palestinians.

Exodus 15:14, 15 makes it clear that Palestina is *not* “synonymous with the land of Canaan.” On the contrary, “the inhabitants of Palestina” are distinguished from “all the inhabitants of Canaan.” It is also clear that Isaiah 14:29, 31 do *not* refer to the land of Israel from the fact that the passage promises blessing to Israel and pronounces destruction upon Palestina (along with Babylon, Assyria, Moab, et al.). To “kill thy root... [and] slay thy remnant” (v. 30) foretells the end of Palestina (i.e., the Philistines and their descendants). This is in clear contrast to “the LORD hath founded Zion [Israel]” (v. 32), and the many promises of Israel’s everlasting possession of that land.

The “whole region” of the promised land is called “the land of Israel” 31 times in Scripture. Scores of other times “Israel” means *both* the people *and* the land. It is an insult to God and to His people to whom He gave this land to call Israel after her chief enemies, the Philistines!

Sadly, most Bibles promote this fraud. Maps in the back of the Scofield reference Bible show “Palestine under the Maccabees” and “Palestine in the time of Christ.” In fact, the land God gave to His chosen people was known only as *Israel* until A.D. 135, when the Romans angrily renamed it Palestine after the Philistines to spite the Jews (see *TBC reprints Sep ’00*). Let us not honor Israel’s enemies by calling the promised land of Israel, which God says is His land (Lv 25:23), by the pagan name “Palestine”! And let us oppose the fraudulent claims of those today who illegally call themselves Palestinians.

Question: I love The Berean Call—but as a good Berean I also check up on you. One book on Islam which you don’t offer is *Silent No More*, by Paul Findley, a member of congress for 22 years. It gives a different perspective than your

newsletter. He presents Islam as peaceful, gives proof in the form of many Muslim leaders in this country who are good citizens supporting democracy, and provides example after example of the severe discrimination Muslims have suffered in America because of stereotyping. Have you read this book?

Answer: Yes, I have read the book with interest. The bits of useful information it contains are outweighed many times over by its misinformation. It is blatantly pro-Muslim and anti-Israel. For example, he complains that “Capitol Hill has been devoid of balanced discussion of Middle East policy for nearly fifty years” because of the strength of the Israel lobby, especially the American Israel Public Affairs Council (AIPAC). Unmentioned is the fact that “balanced discussion” is impossible in Muslim countries and the attempt could endanger one’s life. No Arab map even shows Israel’s existence, and every Jew must be destroyed before Islam’s “last day judgment” can occur. That’s balanced?

In page after page, Findley expresses great concern for discrimination against Muslims in our country and “the slaughter of Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo” (p. 109). He overlooks entirely, however, the daily hatred and mistreatment by Muslims, resulting in the slaughter of at least two million non-Muslims in the last ten years. Focusing on the comparatively mild “discrimination” against Muslims in America, the book remains silent about the brutal oppression and murder of non-Muslims in Muslim countries!

There is much praise (p. 25) for “harmony, compassion, justice, and liberty” as the “main objectives of Islam” and its “commitment to human rights.” *This is not true.* Muhammad began his career with more than 20 murders and built his power by attacking caravans and villages, slaughtering those who would not submit, killing every Jew in Arabia and banning them (no Jew can enter Saudi Arabia to this day). Many *Arabs* were killed in Islam’s conquest of Arabia. When Muhammad died in A.D. 632, Arabs tried to abandon Islam. *Tens of thousands* were killed in the Wars of Apostasy, forcing Arabs back into Islam. From there it spread by the sword to become the largest empire in history.

Findley completely neglects such basic facts. He claims to have discovered in “the Islamic world...a culture based on honor, dignity and value of every human being, as well as tolerance...deeply ingrained in the Islamic religion.” He met many kind

Muslims (kind to him as a congressman) and on that basis he ignores the teachings of the Qur’an and of Muhammad, the violence of Muhammad and his successors and the bloody history of Islam involving the slaughter of literally *millions* in its conquests. He frets that “widely held stereotypes grossly distort public perceptions of Muslims” and denies Islam’s relationship to terrorism. He praises organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah as peaceful and humanitarian (yes, Hezbollah does provide social services to thousands of Lebanese Shiites) and claims that “the pro-Israel bias of government leaders” is why “both groups are included in the State Department’s list of terrorist organizations (pp. 82, 83). He even claims that the “military assaults [of Hezbollah] have been almost entirely defensive, confined to Lebanese soil” (pp. 82, 83).

Such misinformation leaves one breathless. Yes, it was on “Lebanese soil” that a Hezbollah truck bomb killed 240 U.S. Marines. But the bombings in Argentina, for example (of the Israeli embassy in 1992, killing 29, and a Jewish community center in 1994, killing 95), were far from Lebanon. They reflect Hezbollah’s goal of the destruction of Israel. Its own website declares, “Hezbollah’s ideological ideals sees [sic] no legitimacy for the existence of ‘Israel’” (hizbollah.org/english/frames/index_eg.htm). In 1995 alone there were 344 attacks carried into Israel against Israeli troops and positions: 270 instances of artillery fire, 64 detonations of explosive charges and two frontal assaults on IDF positions, etc.—all defensive, of course, and all on Lebanese soil inside Israel!

He is pleased that “the PLO is rarely used as a code word for terrorism...the American people are better informed about the organization and PLO leader Arafat’s efforts to achieve a just peace through negotiation” (p. 82). In fact, the PLO has been responsible for more terrorism than any other organization, including the deaths of hundreds of thousands. “*Just peace through negotiation*”? Is this a joke? The PLO charter declares Israel’s existence to be illegal. Arafat has publicly declared his intention to destroy Israel and has demonstrated it so many times that Findley’s praise seems surrealistic. Suicide bombers, trained, paid and praised by Arafat and targeting innocent civilians, are an odd form of “negotiation” for peace (see *TBC* Sep ’00 and Jan ’02).

Gross misinformation abounds on almost every page. Claiming to be a Christian, Findley has no concept of biblical Christianity. He writes that “Islam

accepts both Christianity and Judaism as religions based on divine revelation. As Christians become more aware of this relationship, they will begin to speak of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic heritage...a close kinship exists between Christianity and Islam” (p. 35).

In fact, Islam teaches that Jews and Christians corrupted the Old and New Testaments, which originally were exactly like the Qur’an. When Muslims had the power, they almost always persecuted (sometimes to the death) Jews and Christians. Islam claims that the “promised land” belongs to the Arabs and not to the Jews. It also claims that Jesus is only a prophet, second to Muhammad, and that rather than Jesus dying in our place, someone died in His place; that He was taken to heaven alive, etc. Such denials of Scripture make any thought of linking Islam with either Christianity or Judaism perverse.

The book is an inexcusable propaganda piece to whitewash Islam of its aggression and destruction of basic human rights—a travesty foisted on readers!

Temporal "Correctness" Eternal Incorrectness

Dave Hunt

Is "political correctness" deliberate lying or voluntary insanity? How do we explain the lie (with *no* example to support it, and *hundreds* refuting it) that "Islam is peace"? Without violence, by which it began, spread, and now maintains itself, Islam would be an obscure cult, not a world religion.

Islam made "converts" with the sword from France to China. With stunning swiftness and ferocity, Islam's insatiable sword—"more rapid than the Roman, more lasting than the Mongol [in] the most amazing feat in military history"¹—compelled nations to submit to Allah. The massacres were larger in sheer numbers than Hitler's holocaust. Historian Will Durant calls Islam's conquest of India "probably the bloodiest story in history."

Yet the politically correct lie persists that Islam "is peace." After murdering Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, the PLO was invited to *participate* in the Olympics! For decades the International Federation of the Red Cross has honored Islam's Red Crescent but refused to recognize Israel's Magen David Adom. For speaking out against this fraud, Bernadine Healy was forced to resign as president of the *American Red Cross*.

One thing is certain: though "political correctness" may deceive for a time, it will inevitably betray even in this life those who employ it—and will surely bring God's judgment in the eternity which lies ahead. Truth will finally assert itself.

In the *Wall Street Journal*, Eliot Cohen of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies said, "an hour spent surfing the Web will give...the kind of insights [into Islam]...found during World War II by reading *Mein Kampf* or the writings of Lenin, Stalin or Mao. Nobody would like to think that a major world religion has a deeply aggressive and dangerous strain in it...but uttering uncomfortable and unpleasant truths...defines leadership."

Israel's Proclamation of Independence May 14, 1948 stated: "We extend our hand to all neighboring States and their peoples in an offer of peace...and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land...placing our trust in the Almighty..."

That olive branch was trampled by the regular armies of at least five Arab nations

attacking Israeli settlers, while Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League declared, "This will be a war of extermination..." The fact that to *exterminate* Israel is *required* by Islam makes real peace in the Middle East impossible—but political correctness will not admit it. By God's grace and promise, Israel was not and will not be exterminated.

For "peace," however, Arab nations demanded that Israel retreat to the tiny, indefensible territory given to her by the UN, a small fraction of what the League of Nations had set aside in 1922 as the Jewish homeland. If that principle were universally adopted, aggressors could never lose by attacking their neighbors!

In the 1948-49 war, Jordan captured East Jerusalem and the West Bank, while Egypt took the Gaza Strip, ending more than 3,000 years of continuous Jewish presence. The Jordanians and Egyptians systematically destroyed all evidence of Jewish history, including villages and synagogues, drove out all Jews and made the sale of land to Jews a capital offense. "Occupied territories"? Yes, by Arabs!

These areas became nests for terrorist attacks against Israel. Egyptian Foreign Minister Muhammad Salah al-Din explained, "The Arab people...declare: We shall not be satisfied except by the final obliteration of Israel..." Egyptian President Nasser added, "...we demand vengeance, and vengeance is Israel's death."

Incredibly, Israel kept trying to get along with her enemies, hoping for "peace." Like nothing else, the dream of Middle East peace breeds the self-deluding, politically correct desire not to "offend" aggressors.

Israel has doggedly pursued peace along a path strewn with the wreckage of hope betrayed. In September 1978, Egypt, Israel and the U.S. signed the Camp David accords under which Israel gave the Sinai back to Egypt. In fact, more than 90 percent of the land Israel acquired in self-defense against an enemy sworn to exterminate her has been given back. She has offered to give more, including a "Palestinian state," on the condition that her right to exist be recognized—to which Muslims, by Islamic law, *cannot* agree. Yet Israel is blamed for failing to make peace!

The West was thrilled March 26, 1979 when President Carter hosted the signing of a "peace treaty" by Israel's Menachem Begin and Egypt's Anwar Sadat. Carter wanted to quote one verse each from the Bible and the Qur'an about peace. There are some 400 such verses in the Bible, but his speech writers could find only *one* in

the Qur'an.

Carter declared: "In the Koran, we read: 'But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God...' [Surah 8:61]. So let us now lay aside war... We pray God...that these dreams will come true."

Islam's "dream," however, is not what Carter and Israel envisioned. The verse says "Allah," not God—and Allah hates Jews! Surah 8 is titled "Spoils of War." Verse 65 says, "O Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight..." Verse 67 says, "It is not for any prophet to have captives until he hath made slaughter in the land." The *only* "peace" offered is to those vanquished in *jihad* (holy war) who surrender to Muslim warriors. "Peace" in Arabic comes from the word *salam*, which means submission—unlike the Hebrew *shalom* which means genuine peace among friends.

Neither Arafat nor *any* Arab leader has the authority to abrogate Islamic law by signing an agreement allowing Jews to rule territory which Islam once possessed. In A.D. 641 Muslims conquered what the Romans had renamed "Palestine" in A.D. 135. It cannot be relinquished, nor can any other land once held by Islam, *from France to China*. Nor can *any* non-Muslims rule over Muslims *anywhere*—and that includes the United States! This is a central doctrine which every Muslim learns at the mosque.

Dividing all of the world into *dar al-Islam* (the house of peace) and *dar al-Harb* (the house of war), Islam requires unceasing *jihad* until the entire world submits to Allah. Ahmad Hasan az-Zayat, modern Islamic authority, writes in *Al-Azhar*, "Holy war is... a divine obligation. The Muslim's...religion is a Qur'an and a sword..."

According to *shari'a* (Islamic law), there can never be peace, only a temporary cease-fire, between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. This fact is found in any number of texts such as *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* by Professor Majid Khadduri, a Muslim expert on Islamic law. As Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic recently said, "There can be no peace or coexistence between the Islamic faith and non-Islamic societies..." This is Islam! But political correctness will not admit the unpleasant truth.

Lying to promote Islam is considered honorable. On October 14, 1988, Arafat condemned all forms of terrorism and recognized Israel—on paper. The Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991 paved the way for secret PLO-Israeli talks in Oslo. On September 13, 1993, Prime Minister

Yitzak Rabin and Arafat signed the Oslo "Declaration of Principles" and Israel recognized Arafat and the PLO.

In Cairo on May 4, 1994, Arafat and Rabin signed the "Jericho First" Peace Accord, implementing Oslo. Shimon Peres exulted on *Voice of Israel Radio*, "Today we have ended the Israeli-Arab conflict—Utopia is coming!" He had forgotten the frequent calls for an end to Israel by Arafat and other PLO leaders, such as this by Arafat's deputy, Abu Iyad: "It is our right that we should have...an independent Palestinian state...as a base from which to liberate Jaffa, Akko and *all* of Palestine."² Another aide had earlier said, "The struggle with the Zionist enemy is not a struggle about Israel's borders, but about Israel's existence."

Apologizing for Oslo, Arafat told Muslim audiences that he was following the Prophet's example by entering into a *temporary ceasefire* that would lead to Israel's destruction. In A.D. 628, Muhammad's treaty of Hudaibiya—a 10-year ceasefire with the Quraish of Mecca—set the legal precedent. Two years later, on a pretext, with an army of 10,000 he took over Mecca with its Ka'aba. Such a ceasefire is agreed to only when the Muslims are too weak to pursue conquest.

The "peace process" is an Islamic ploy by Arafat. Oslo required him to remove from the PLO Charter the call for Israel's annihilation. When he announced that the clause had been revoked, Rabin's widow proclaimed in great joy, "The Palestinian National Council has revoked the clauses in its covenant that called for the destruction of Israel!" Rabin's successor, Prime Minister Peres, hailed this "most important historical development in our region in 100 years." In fact, it was a "hoax," as London's *Daily Telegraph* (5/2/96) declared. The clause had not and has not been removed.

Arafat continues to call openly for Israel's destruction. Such diatribes were put on a video by Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee Ben Gilman, who offered to show them in a press conference September 21, 1995. *No one from the press was interested!* Even more disturbing, Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., Itamar Rabinovich, pleaded with Gilman not to air the tapes³—it might hinder the "peace process"!

Netanyahu writes, "...my party and I were virtually isolated in our warning that Arafat would not keep his word...We were widely castigated as enemies of peace...Our argument was that handing Gaza over to Arafat would immediately create a lush terrorist haven..."⁴ Of course, he was right.

The Friday sermon (live on TV) at

Gaza's Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan mosque on October 14, 2000, included, "Have no mercy on the Jews...kill them...and those Americans who...established Israel here, in the beating heart of the Arab world." That very day two Israeli reservists who made a wrong turn into Ramallah were beaten to death and torn apart by a screaming mob near Arafat's headquarters, bringing cheers as the nauseating savagery was shown live on Palestinian TV. The next day on TV, Dr. Ahmad Abu-Halabia of the Islamic University of Gaza said, "The Jews...must be butchered and killed...Have no mercy...no matter where they are...kill them and those Americans who are like them." Need we give more examples?

On June 8, 2001 Arafat declared another "ceasefire." A few days later, Sheikh Ibrahim Mahdi declared on Palestinian TV, "Allah willing...Israel will be erased...the United States will be erased...Britain will be erased...Blessings to whoever waged jihad for the sake of Allah. Blessings to whoever put a belt of explosives on his body or his son's and plunged into the midst of the Jews." This is Islam—and the West had better awaken to that fact!

As the "peace process" continues, Palestinians murder and torch the homes of fellow Arabs suspected of cooperating with Israel. Muslim terrorists who kill Jews are honored by having streets and holidays named after them.

The self-delusion has now reached new heights in the "road map" for peace which Russia, the U.S., EU and UN intend to force upon Israel and the "Palestinians."

This Quartet "calls upon Israel to take concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable Palestinian state...the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 must end..." President Bush has set the abandonment of the use of terror *forever* and the establishment of a free democratic society as a condition for a Palestinian state. Sham "Palestinian elections" have deceived the world before.

Arafat has never kept one provision of Oslo, Wye, etc.! Why would he honor an accord the Quartet gets him to sign? The afternoon of the historic handshake with Yitzak Rabin on the White House lawn, Arafat's name appeared near the top in a list of "world terrorists released by a congressional committee."⁵ He is one of the most evil mass murderers in history. Yet he was given the Nobel Prize for Peace, and Clinton and Gore received him as a world statesman in the White House.

Arafat comes from a long line of devout Muslims and does *everything* in the name of Allah. Therefore, no matter

what "peace" agreements he signs, he must seek the destruction of Israel (a state which no Arab map even admits exists) as commanded by Allah through Muhammad. The same holds for all true Muslims, from Chechnya to California!

Too few Christian leaders have the courage to speak the truth as did Jerry Falwell on *60 Minutes*: that Muhammad was a terrorist, and, as Franklin Graham has said, that Islam is "very evil and wicked." (Unfortunately each backed down later.) Too many church leaders practice political correctness, though Islam is as anti-Christian as it could be. It denies Christ's deity, His death for our sins on the cross and His resurrection—and has persecuted and killed millions of Christians throughout its history.

Yet Billy Graham insists, "Islam is misunderstood...Muhammad had a great respect for Jesus, called Jesus the greatest of the prophets except himself. I think we're closer to Islam than we really think we are..." Yes, as close as the distance between hell and heaven! Criticizing Falwell and Franklin Graham for speaking the truth, *Christianity Today* declared, "Islam would not have become the second largest world religion if it were...as thoroughly evil as these comments suggest."

Robert Schuller has called Islam "Christian." He recently basked in praise at a Villa Park, Illinois mosque where he declared that he had come to realize that "asking people to change their faith was utterly ridiculous." Coming to the defense of history's most cruel and violent religion, Schuller insists:

This is a time to guard against attacking religion...It has been my honor to become acquainted with the power leaders of positive Islam. And there is and has been a strong anti-Islam propaganda loose in this world.⁶

"Positive" Islam? Muhammad never heard of it! "Anti-Islam propaganda"? No one could give Islam a worse name than Muhammad and the Qur'an have done from the beginning. Yet Colin Powell, echoing President Bush, insisted, "We must leave Islam out of this. It is a peaceful religion."

Prior to September 11, many warnings went unheeded, such as those from a 1998 blue-ribbon National Commission on terrorism. Today we are repeating the same mistake by refusing to take *Islam* seriously. And the church is neglecting the largest mission field in the world, either as "too dangerous," or under the illusion that Allah is the God of the Bible and that Muslims are "closer to us than we realize." May God deliver us! **TBC**

Quotable

Afraid? Of what?
To feel the spirit's glad release?
To pass from pain to perfect peace,
The strife and strain of life to cease?
Afraid—of that?

Afraid? Of what?
Afraid to see the Savior's face?
To hear His welcome, and to trace
The glory gleam from wounds of grace?
Afraid—of that?

Afraid? Of what?
A flash—a crash—a pierced heart?
Darkness—light—O heaven's art!
Each wound of His a counterpart!
Afraid—of that?

Afraid? Of what?
To do by death what life could not?
Baptize with blood a stony plot
'Til souls shall blossom from the spot?
Afraid—of that?

E.H. Hamilton

From the Liberality that says that
everybody is right;
From the Charity that forbids us to say
that anybody is wrong;
From the Peace that is bought at the
expense of Truth—
May the good Lord deliver us.

J.C. Ryle

Q&A

Question: I have often heard you say that God does not bestow spiritual gifts through physical means, but only through spiritual means. This is logical, but I have a question. Why then did Jesus tell His apostles in Mark 9:29, when they were unable to drive out a particularly stubborn unclean spirit, that “this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting”? This seems to contradict your position.

Answer: Prayer is certainly not a “physical means.” Nor is prayer a magic technique that frightens demons away. Prayer is petitioning God to intervene, while at the same time submitting to His will rather than trying to impose one’s will upon Him. Nor could fasting be a “physical means” unless it were the direct or indirect cause of obtaining answers to prayer.

Fasting has no such powers, and does not appease God or earn from Him an answer to prayer. In prayer man humbles himself before God. Fasting adds to that humility (Ps 35:13). It also demonstrates one’s earnestness by setting aside the normal desire and need for food, and the time involved eating, in order to more completely devote oneself to petitioning God. The humility of submission to and dependence upon God for His mercy is further demonstrated by clothing oneself in “sackcloth and ashes,” as practiced at times in the past along with fasting (Es 4:1,3; Jer 6:26; Dan 9:3; Jon 3:6; Mt 11:21).

Scripture says, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas 5:16). Fasting is a mark of fervency; it is not a physical means of obtaining a spiritual gift.

Question: The Bible makes it very simple as to what one must believe in order to be saved. The Ethiopian eunuch merely said, “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). Upon that confession, he was baptized. Romans 10:9 says, “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” From Paul’s delineation of the gospel, one need only believe that “Christ died for our sins...was buried, and rose again” (1 Cor 15:1-4). Yet I have heard you say that to be saved one must believe in His virgin birth, His deity, His sinlessness, etc. How can you justify this?

Answer: I believe this is a serious matter. Let me explain why. That the virgin birth, deity of Christ, etc., are not mentioned every time the gospel is briefly summarized in Scripture doesn’t mean that they are not essential elements which anyone who is to be saved must believe. Every detail need not be specifically mentioned, because each would be understood from having been stated elsewhere.

Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 is only a summary, and not the full gospel that he preached to the Philippian jailor, or which Jesus explained to Nicodemus, to the woman at the well, or to others. Surely, to “preach Christ” necessarily means more than merely saying that someone called Jesus Christ died in our place, without explaining who He is!

The very scripture upon which you rely (1 Cor 15:1-4) contains the vital phrase “according to the scriptures”—which surely includes all that the scriptures have to say relating to the gospel. Surely Paul and Silas preached the full gospel in “the word of

the Lord” (Acts 16:32; 1 Pt 1:25). How can we ask someone to believe in Jesus without explaining fully who the biblical Jesus is? Would not this be “another Jesus” and “another gospel” (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6) against which Paul warns?

You suggest that if someone believes in an undefined “Jesus Christ,” he is saved and will eventually discover that the Jesus he believed in was virgin born, was truly God come as a man, lived a sinless, perfect life, paid the full penalty for our sins upon the cross, etc. Suppose this person, upon being told that truth, doesn’t believe it! Jesus himself said very clearly, “if ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins” (Jn 8:24). Or suppose that this “convert” dies before he learns that Jesus is God?!

We are making false converts by not clearly preaching the full gospel according to the scriptures. This is a serious matter, because “the gospel...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). This statement itself means that if someone believes something less than, or more than, or otherwise contrary to, the gospel, he is not saved.

Yes, many come to Christ with an imperfect understanding. Yes, God who knows whether the heart is sincere and who wants all to be saved will reveal Himself to earnest seekers, but that is no excuse for being vague or inaccurate in our presentation of the gospel.

Question: Could the Gog-Magog battle come at the start of the Tribulation? Would that be what allows Israel to rebuild the temple? Where does the war on terrorism fit into this whole picture prophesied for the last days?

Answer: You can’t be referring to the “Gog-Magog battle” mentioned in Revelation 20: 8, because that very clearly comes at the end of the Tribulation. However, since in that scripture the expression “Gog and Magog” signifies all the armies of the earth, it is reasonable to understand Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 in the same way. That battle, therefore, will not merely be an invasion of Israel by a Russian-Arab coalition, as usually stated, but by all of the world’s armies under the leadership of Antichrist. God declares that He will draw them there to destroy them for their evil treatment of His people, the Jews, and thereby demonstrate to the world that He is God (Ezk 38:16-23).

Clearly this battle could only come at the end of the Tribulation and must therefore be Armageddon. From the climactic language used in Ezekiel 38 and 39, this

could not possibly be a previous or lesser battle. Every creature, even “the fishes of the sea and...creeping things,” will be shaken by God’s manifest presence upon earth, and “the mountains shall be thrown down, and...every wall shall fall to the ground...” The nations will know at last that Yahweh is the true God.

Describing Israel’s final redemption, Ezekiel 39 offers further irrefutable proof that this battle is Armageddon: “So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more...(39:7); So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward...(v. 22); Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD” (v. 29). Inasmuch as Israel and individual Jews continue to displease God until the great repentance and turning to Him at His Second Coming, this *must* be that awesome event.

Ezekiel’s description of Armageddon, climaxed by Christ’s Second Coming to deliver His people Israel, agrees with Zechariah’s prophecy: “In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem....And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced....In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness....And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends....And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts...shall be cut off and die....And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them...they shall call on my name, and I will hear...I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God....For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle....Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations....And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives....And the LORD shall be king over all the earth...” (Zec 12:8-14:21).

The climax of the war of Armageddon with the defeat of the world’s armies brings the miraculous final gathering of the Jews from everywhere on this earth back to Israel: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days...shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall

gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mt 24:29-31). Christ is not describing a “post-trib” rapture but a “post-trib” gathering of “Israel mine elect” (Is 45:4): “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Mt 24:13). Paul stated the same truth in these words: “...blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom 11:25-27).

In other words, *every Jew* on the face of the earth who is still alive at the Second Coming of Christ, when He intervenes to prevent the destruction of all flesh (Mt 24:22) and to destroy Antichrist, will believe in Christ and will be miraculously brought by angels to Israel, never to be scattered again. There, from the throne of His father David, Christ will reign over Israel and the world. And here we have further proof that Ezekiel 38 and 39 (though the vast majority of evangelicals reject this view) refer to Armageddon: “Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there [i.e., among the nations to which I had scattered them]” (Ezk 39:28)!

As for the war on terrorism, we must beware of trying to find a special place in Bible prophecy for every major news development. Not everything that happens is a specific fulfillment of God’s Word. The war on terrorism could very well turn out to be one of many steps toward a world government. Certainly it is creating a new cooperation between nations such as we have never known in history. Where it will lead, however, is still uncertain.

I believe we are on the way to the false peace foretold in Scripture (Ezk 38:8, 11-16; Dn 8:25; 1 Thes 5:3) and that this will happen sooner than later. The war on terrorism could very well play an important role in that process, but this new development, while of great importance, is certainly not specifically prophesied in the Bible.

The rebuilding of the temple and the re-institution of animal sacrifices therein will be *imposed* by Antichrist upon the world at the very beginning of Daniel’s 70th week (Dn 9:27). In the midst of this week of years, Antichrist will reveal his real purpose by putting his image in the temple and forcing the world to worship him as God (2 Thes 2:4; Rv 13:14,15).

Endnotes

- 1 Durant, op. cit., 188
- 2 Kuwaiti paper, *Al-Sachrah*, 1/6/87.
- 3 *Jerusalem Post*, 11/25/95, 30
- 4 Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism*, 114
- 5 “Terrorists and policemen,” *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, 10/3/93
- 6 *Orange County Register*, “Commentary” section, 9/14/01

Feasting upon Christ

Dave Hunt

We have previously shown that conceptual ideas expressed in words are not physical. Those who doubt this fact must answer the following questions: How much does morality *weigh*? How does ethics *feel* to the *touch*? What is the *taste* of justice, the *odor* of holiness, the *sound* of honesty, the *visible appearance* of truth? Obviously, each of these words expresses a concept which has no physical qualities, is not describable in physical terms, and must therefore be nonphysical.

All thoughts, even of physical things, are nonphysical. This self-evident fact does not deny the reality of either the mental dimension or the material universe, but it clearly separates one from the other.

Psychics claim to be able to bridge this chasm and to transcend time. Hinduism and related forms of mysticism, such as Christian Science and other “mind sciences,” attempt either to create the physical with mental ideas and images or to deny objective reality with the claim that all existence is in the mind. Half-believing these lies, parapsychologists endeavor to establish a *scientific* link between the mental and physical and to discover how to manipulate the latter with the mind. We have dealt with such matters in *Occult Invasion* and will not do so here.

Since all thoughts are nonphysical, no thought could have a physical source. Therefore, thoughts and ideas do not originate with the brain, a physical organ. Undeniably, the mind is not physical—yet it has a mysterious connection to the brain which science cannot fathom.

Matter, including the brain, cannot think. Ideas must have an intelligent source which is distinct from the physical world. Nor can matter arrange itself into words and sentences expressing conceptual ideas.

Yet this is exactly what we find with DNA. There, stated in a precise language, encoded for decoding by certain protein molecules, is a complete manual of *written* instructions (imprinted on the single cell from which we each begin physical life) for constructing and operating each of trillions of individual cells and forming them into a body. Unquestionably, DNA was conceived of and put into process by an Intelligence far beyond the grasp of human minds.

DNA alone is sufficient to prove the eternal existence of God, the Creator of all. The

theory of evolution is the desperate grasping at straws by those who “did not like to retain God in their knowledge” and whom He therefore “gave...over to a reprobate mind...” (Rom 1:28).

Inasmuch as thoughts are nonphysical, their intelligent source must also be nonphysical. Certainly this is true of the Supreme Intelligence: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24). Therefore, man, created in the “image of God” (Gn 1:26, 27; 9:6) with the capacity to conceive conceptual ideas and to communicate them in words to other intelligent beings, must be a nonphysical intelligence living in a physical body. No one can honestly deny this simple fact—a fact which, by the way, further reveals the lie of evolution. The human soul and spirit comprising man’s nonphysical intelligence and personality could never evolve from *matter*.

“I’m feasting on the living bread, I’m drinking at the fountainhead. And whoso drinketh, Jesus said, shall never, never thirst again.”

Author unknown

Thoughts have a spiritual source. We know that physical bodies grow old and eventually die and decay in the grave because of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the law of entropy. There is no reason, however, to believe that the nonphysical person, who originated the thoughts and made the choices, ceases to exist when separated from the body by death. That thinking person who made his own moral decisions is logically, biblically and justly accountable to his Creator-God for every thought, word and deed—and one day will give that account and reap the consequences.

The soul and spirit—the cognitive person who was created “in the image of God”—is clearly not subject to physical laws, and therefore continues in conscious existence eternally. As Paul declared, “the [material] things which are seen are temporal; but the [nonmaterial] things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:18).

William Law said it well nearly 300 years ago in *The Power of the Spirit*: “The time of man’s...grasping after positions among men or amusing himself with the foolish toys of this vain world can last no longer than he is able to eat and drink with the creatures of this world.” Far from being the end of human existence, however, death brings man before

God in judgment: “...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). The Bible often declares that man continues to exist eternally, either in heaven or in hell. There are many warnings of eternal punishment (Ps 9:17; 55:15; 139:8; Prv 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:24; Is 5:14; 14:9, 15; Ezk 31:16-18; 32:27; Am 9:2; Rv 20:13-15, etc.).

More than any other part of Scripture, the recorded words of Christ warn of the judgment and eternal punishment that follow death for those who persist in rebellion against God during their physical existence (Mt 5:22, 29,30; 10:28; 11:23; 18:7-9; 23:15, 33; 25:46; Mk 9:42-48; Lk 16:19-31, etc.). Likewise, Paul and the other apostles warned of eternal judgment and hell (2 Thes 1:9; Jas 3:6; 2 Pt 2:4; Rv 19:20; 20:10,14,15, etc.).

It is the nonphysical and eternal part of man, the soul and spirit, to which Scripture is addressed. By contrast, most of man’s efforts and attention are concerned with his temporary physical needs and pleasures. The physical so consumes human thought that spiritual truth is obscured by the sensual. And to this fact all of the world’s religions bear eloquent testimony!

Paganism is dominated by fetishes, idols, ornate altars, robes, candles, elaborate ceremonies, and repetitiously chanted secret formulas. All of these are part of a superstitious attempt to influence the nonphysical spirit world by physical means. It is clearly a continuance of the lie with which the Serpent deceived Eve: that through eating physical fruit she could gain spiritual blessings, including immortality and godhood (Gn 3:1-7).

That very delusion became the foundation of all false religions (including pseudo-Christianity). Israel also succumbed to this deception, worshiping the counterfeit gods of her idolatrous pagan neighbors in ornate temples containing extravagant altars set in sacred groves upon “high places” (Nm 33:52; 1 Kg 3:2,3; 2 Kg 15:35; 2 Ch 33:19; Jer 3:2; 7:30-34; Ezk 16:16-43; Am 7:8,9, etc.), bringing God’s judgment (Lv 26:30-33, etc.). For example: “...king Ahaz...saw an altar...at Damascus: [and]...sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar...according to all the workmanship thereof. And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus....And when the king was come from Damascus, [he]...approached to the altar and offered thereon” (2 Kg 16:10-12).

Much of the professing “Christian church” of today continues to pursue the same abominations. Most obvious is Roman Catholicism, with its sacred instruments of worship made of precious metals mounted with jewels, its rich altars, statues, ornate

cathedrals, priests presiding over elaborate rituals and dressed in luxurious vestments and outlandish hats—as though such temporal *things* merit God's eternal favor. Physical symbols (bread and wine) were turned into Christ himself, with the delusion that ingesting them (Him?) into one's stomach brings forgiveness and eternal life by installments.

Sacramentalism, both Catholic and Protestant, brushes aside the commonsense understanding of the inviolable separation between the physical and spiritual. Christ's words are ignored, even defied: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (Jn 6:63). Instead, it is as though Christ actually said, "The flesh is the key. Physical religious objects are doorways to God's power, and words have spiritual value only when used in the church's rituals."

One of the most miraculous provisions for Israel throughout its decades in the barren wilderness was the water that came from solid rock—a Rock which apparently was always at hand wherever they journeyed. Paul says, "they did all drink the same spiritual drink...of that spiritual Rock that followed them..." (1 Cor 10:4). *Spiritual drink...spiritual rock...that followed them?* Paul explains, "and that Rock was Christ." Not that Christ was literally a rock, of course, but the rock and the water which miraculously flowed from it represented Christ and the spiritual water of life which He would provide through His redemptive work on the Cross.

Earnestly trying to turn His people's attention from physical water for the body to spiritual drink for thirsting souls, God exhorted a rebellious Israel, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,...Seek ye the LORD while he may be found..." (Is 55:1,6). In clear declaration of His deity, Christ claimed to be that spiritual water of eternal life, the spiritual Rock and the Lord of Israel himself: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly [inward being, soul and spirit] shall flow rivers of living water. (...[T]his spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive...)" (Jn 7:37-39). He repeatedly made it clear that spiritual eating and drinking is through *believing* in Him.

To the woman at the well Christ makes the same claim: "Whosoever drinketh of this [physical] water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the [spiritual] water that I shall give him shall never thirst...the water that I shall give him shall be in him

a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn 4:13,14). Obviously, Christ did not offer to satisfy her physical thirst with physical water, but her spiritual thirst with the gift of eternal life, which she could only receive by faith in Him alone.

In His temptation by Satan in the wilderness, Christ quoted the words He had spoken to the Israelites through Moses: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Dt 8:3; Mt 4:4; Lk 4:4). The manna miraculously given to Israel throughout its wilderness journey, like water out of the Rock, was one more symbol of the spiritual provision they could receive by believing His words.

There is a clear distinction—yet at the same time an illuminating parallel—between physical bread which sustains the physical body and nonphysical words which sustain the soul and spirit. Christ often used something physical to illustrate a spiritual truth: "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12); "I am the door...the good shepherd...the vine, ye are the branches" (Jn 10:7-9, 14; 15:5, etc.). Never, however, did He suggest that the physical thing itself had any spiritual power. *And that is the grave error of sacramentalism.*

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

Psalm 42:1

In presenting Himself as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises to Israel, Christ made the most powerful, yet often overlooked, declarations of His deity. A mob of hungry Jews, interested only in the healing of their bodies and the filling of their stomachs, wanted to "take him [Jesus] by force, to make him a king" (Jn 6:15). Seeking to turn them from the physical to the spiritual, Jesus claimed to be the One to whom the manna and water out of the Rock pointed: "[H]e that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst....Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead...I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn 6:35, 48-51).

At this point, Catholicism makes its gravest error: transubstantiation. Insisting that Christ is not speaking spiritually but physically, Catholics boast that they take Him *literally* when He says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink

his blood, ye have no life in you" (Jn 6:53). Thereby, Catholicism misses the "spirit, and...life" (v. 63) given to those who accept by faith the salvation He offers through His becoming a man and dying for our sins. Blind to the spiritual, it claims that its priests have the power to turn bread and wine into Christ's physical body and blood—again and again. Instead of believing that Christ paid sin's penalty in full by one sacrifice on the cross, they claim to perpetually sacrifice Him and to physically ingest His literal body and blood.

A similar mistake is made even by many who rightly deny the error of believing that the communion bread and cup are Christ's physical body and blood. They imagine that there is *spiritual power* in the physical act of partaking of these elements. But Christ established this ordinance as an act of *remembrance*: "this do in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19, 20; 1 Cor 11:24, 25).

The physical act itself has value only in pointing to the spiritual truth which it represents. For believing participants, it is a reminder to carefully and prayerfully consider again Christ's sacrifice of himself for our sins on the cross. To unbelieving observers, it is a proclamation of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ for their sins as well, though they have rejected Him: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew [proclaim] the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor 11:26).

While the incarnation and Christ's payment of the penalty for sin in order to redeem a Bride is a "great mystery" (Eph 5:32), it is revealed in ever deeper measure to those who feed upon Him through meditation upon the "Word of life" (Phil 2:16; 1 Jn 1:1). How it must grieve our Lord that so many of us, redeemed at great price with His blood poured out at Calvary, have such a feeble appreciation of Him, the eternal Son of God "come in the flesh" (1 Jn 4:2,3; 2 Jn 7). This is why our worship is so shallow, so inadequate, in expressing His eternal pre-incarnate majesty as God, the infinite love manifest in his incarnation and sacrifice for sin, and the glory to which He has ascended and where He will one day receive us in His likeness.

Failure to feast continually upon Him is the reason that our lives reflect so little of Christ "who is our life" (Col 3:4). May we believe and rejoice in His promise: "[W]hosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rv 22:17). And with deepening understanding and increasing love for Him, may we help others to experience the joy and abundance of the life there is in Christ for those who feast upon "the bread of life."
TBC

Quotable

Evolutionists, while rejecting miracles such as God creating life, must conjure miracles of their own to make Darwin's theory work....The Big Bang itself violates natural law [and] represents the instantaneous suspension of physical laws, the sudden abrupt flash of lawlessness....

James Perloff, Tornado in a Junkyard: The Relentless Myth of Darwinism, pp. 29, 123.

But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened."

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Nobel Prize winner, *Eternity* (October 1985), p. 24.

And when the lusts of the flesh have had their last day, and the pride of life has only a dead body to inhabit, the soul of man which remains will know at last that it has nothing of its own....Then all that man has or does will either be the glory of God manifested in him or the power of hell in full possession of his soul....

When the time comes that he must take his leave of earthly treasure and honors, then all the stately structures which genius, learning, and proud imagination have painted before his eyes...must bear full witness to Solomon's "vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

William Law, The Power of the Spirit, p. 148.

Q&A

Question: In your May article you said that the angels [at the time of His incarnation] had known Christ "as God the Son, one with the Father, for at least 6,000 years by earth time...." I'm sure you must have meant 4,000 years.

Answer: Thank you for pointing out this error, which we have now corrected in the reprints. Everything in the newsletter is read by a number of staff members before it goes to press. This is an obvious mistake which we all missed. Thank you again!

Question: Is faith a gift from God? In two of your books you state it both ways, supporting both with the same scripture reference, Ephesians 2:8. "When God gives the faith to know for certain that He is going to grant our request...only then can we believe that we receive [it] from Him" (*In Defense of the Faith*, p. 185). But in *What Love is This?* on page 361 you say, "...the subject of the preceding seven verses is *salvation*, not *faith*...It is not *saving faith*, but *being saved* that is God's gift." Which is it?

Answer: Just as our life and breath and all that we are comes from Him, faith, too, is a gift from God. There is, however, a special gift of faith which causes us to know beyond any doubt that God will answer a particular prayer. Ordinarily, we can only pray "according to thy will" and trust Him for the outcome. But there are times when we know by a God-given confidence that a prayer is going to be answered. These are rare occasions—at least in my life. Such faith is not the subject of Ephesians 2:8 and that reference was a bad choice. Thank you for pointing that out.

Yes, the subject of Ephesians 2:8-10 is not faith, but salvation, a salvation that is ours by faith without works.

Question: You say that Islam is a violent religion and that Christianity is not. Yet the Old Testament is full of commands by God to kill pagans—sometimes men, women and children. How can I justify this when I witness to Muslims?

Answer: The Old Testament is not "full of commands to kill pagans." God told Israel to destroy all of the inhabitants of Canaan because of their wickedness. Yet that didn't occur until 400 years after He promised their land to Abraham's descendants. Only then was their wickedness so great that God's holiness forced Him to wipe them out. There are a few other instances (Sodom, Gomorrah, et al.) when God's judgment required a people's destruction, but always because of their depravity and His holiness.

God always limited those killed. He told Israel to destroy the Canaanites—not to fight the whole world as Allah commanded Muhammad and as Islam requires to this day. Furthermore, God's gift of Canaan to Israel had nothing to do with Christianity. Christ's teaching and example, and that of His apostles, was the very opposite of the violence against unbelievers which Muhammad practiced and which Islam requires of his followers whenever and

wherever they are able.

Question: You say that Allah is a contraction of *al-ilah*, meaning "the chief God." So why couldn't that be the same as "the most high God" in the Bible (Genesis 14:18-22, etc.)? And since Muhammad destroyed all of the idols in the Ka'aba, denounced polytheism, and Islam rejects idolatry to this day, how can you associate it with paganism?

Answer: For centuries before Muhammad was born, Allah was the *al-ilah* (chief god) among the more than 300 idols in the Ka'aba. Allah was the moon god, who had no son but three daughters, al-Uzza, al-Lat and Manat (see TBC reprints for Feb '00, April '03). Allah was represented by one of the idols in that pagan temple. Yet Islam blasphemously teaches that this sanctuary for false gods was built by Abraham and Ishmael. Surah 3:96,97 claims that the Ka'aba was "the first Sanctuary appointed for mankind...where Abraham stood up to pray; and...pilgrimage [*hajj*] to the House is a duty unto Allah for mankind, for him who can find a way thither."

There is no claim in Islam that the Ka'aba, as Abraham (supposedly a Muslim) allegedly built it, was without idols, or that they were added later, justifying Muhammad in smashing them, including the one representing Allah. Yes, he did away with *that part* of paganism—yet he retained every other pagan ritual that had long been associated with the Ka'aba; only the idols themselves were no longer present.

In A.D. 622 Muhammad fled to Medina in the *Hijrah*, from which the Muslim calendar dates. In 628 (A.H. 6)* he returned with some followers seeking to join in the worship at the Ka'aba. The Meccans, who at the time were stronger than he, would not allow it. Out of that encounter came the Hodaybiya Treaty, a ceasefire for ten years, which remains the rule for Muslims to this day. No permanent "peace" can end the perpetual *jihad* between *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-Harb* (non-Muslims). Only if the Muslims are not strong enough to continue their attack is a ceasefire (temporary cessation of *jihad*) allowed, and then for no longer than ten years. It can be broken at any time that the Muslims have regained the power to do so. (This fact of Islamic law makes a joke of any "peace" documents Arafat or anyone else may sign with Israel pursuant to Oslo or the current "Road Map to Peace.")

As part of the Hodaybiya Treaty, Muhammad and his followers (the Muslims of

Medina) were allowed to make their *hajj* to Mecca the following year. This they did, joining pagan Arabs in ceremonies which had been associated with the Ka'aba for centuries. The next year (A.H. 8) Muhammad captured Mecca and with it the Ka'aba. Thereafter, Muslims continued to mingle with pagan Arabs in the *hajj*.

Eventually, however, the Prophet gave the pagans four months in which to convert to the new religion or be killed. Thereafter, only Muslims were allowed to approach the Ka'aba, now purged of its idols—a restriction which holds to this day. In A.H. 10, the year of his death by poisoning, Muhammad led his followers in the traditional pagan ceremony, making it part of Islam. Thus Muslims continue today in the same rituals practiced by their pagan ancestors for centuries before Muhammad was born.

These pagan practices associated with the Ka'aba were sanitized by identifying them with Abraham, David and the prophets. Because Islam falsely claims to be the original and only true religion, all of the early Bible characters from Adam to Jesus are wrongly portrayed in the Qur'an as Muslims. (Allegedly, the Bible has been corrupted, or it would read just like the Qur'an today.) That would mean that the Israelites who conquered Canaan were Muslims and therefore all of so-called Palestine and Jerusalem have a Muslim history, belonged to Muslims in the beginning and belong to Muslims today! (Yet the Qur'an itself says in Surah 5:3 that Islam began with Muhammad.)

The elaborate ritual which pagans practiced to aid in their salvation is still continued by Muslims for the same purpose. While on the *hajj*, upon approaching Mecca, one must prepare oneself several miles outside the city through purification rituals. Only then may one proceed to the sacred mosque al-Masjid al-Haram and kiss the sacred Black Stone embedded in the eastern corner of the Ka'aba within the mosque's interior courtyard. One then goes around the Ka'aba three times at a run and four times at a slow pace, each time touching the Yamani corner, where another sacred stone rests, and kissing the Black Stone again. Muhammad said the latter came down from heaven "as white as milk, but was made black by the sins of the children of Adam."

The pilgrim then goes to Maqam Ibrahim where Abraham supposedly prayed toward the Ka'aba, repeats two prayers, returns and kisses the Black Stone again. He must then drink from the sacred well of Zem Zem from which, supposedly, Hagar and Ishmael drank. Leaving the mosque by one of its 24 gates, he climbs the nearby Mt. as-Safa while reciting from the Qur'an. From there he runs back

and forth seven times to the summit of as-Marwah, commemorating Hagar's search for water. It is now the evening of the sixth day and he returns to Mecca, circumambulates the Ka'aba again and remains in Mecca. On the seventh day he attends a sermon in the Great Mosque, and on the eighth proceeds to Wadi Mina to another ritual and spends the night. On the ninth day he climbs Mount Arafat for the rite of "standing" (*wuquf*) where Adam and Eve supposedly met after being expelled from the Garden. Prayers are recited and a sermon on repentance attended before he hurries to Muzdalifah, a place between Mina and Arafat, in time for sunset prayer.

The next day prayers are recited again at Muzdalifah, and then the pilgrims proceed to Wadi Mina, where they throw seven stones at each of three pillars representing Satan, while reciting "In the name of Allah, the Almighty, I do this in hatred of the devil and his shame." Then follows the sacrifice of a goat or lamb in commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice of Ishmael (not Isaac) according to Islam.

Is this paganism? Of course it is, yet it remains the holiest part of Islam, and Muslims who have participated in the *hajj* (required at least once in a lifetime) testify to the transforming spiritual experience of this pagan ritual. Polygamy, easy divorce, and slavery are only some of the other pagan practices retained in Islam along with numerous superstitions. One of the latter was Muhammad's warning, "If any of you wakens up from sleep, let him blow his nose three times. For the devil spends the night in a man's nostrils."

Question: Your February 2003 article was wrong about Christ reigning in Jerusalem. His throne will not be there (Acts 2:22, 25-28). David sees Him sitting at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:30-35). The Jews are scattered even today (Deuteronomy 28:64). We are in the church age...believers have been born into the kingdom....All authority has been given to Him, not will be given.

Answer: This grievous error denies hundreds of scriptures promising full restoration of Israel in her land, with Christ reigning on David's throne over Israel and the world (see Ezk 35-39, for example, and many others). Israel is the earthly people and kingdom; the church is the heavenly. Don't confuse them (see 1 Cor 10:32).

The bias and special intent of Randy Blackaby in the article you enclosed from *Truth Magazine* is self-evident. He points to Luke 3:27 to find the name Shealtiel

(actually Salathiel in KJV). But instead of accepting that his father was Neri, he goes to 1 Chronicles 3:17 to show that Shealtiel's father was Jeconiah. But Shealtiel of 1 Chronicles 3:17 is *not* the Salathiel of Luke 3:27, whose father is clearly stated to be Neri!

Blackaby doesn't seem to realize why the genealogy in Matthew is different from that in Luke. The former is through Joseph, the latter through Joseph's father-in-law (i.e., Mary), as the margin notes. He disregards the fact that Jesus, as "the second man" (1 Cor 15:47), was created by God in the womb of a virgin (as Adam was from dust). "The only begotten Son of God" did not "inherit" sinful "genes"!

Blackaby then contradicts himself by saying that Jesus "was the Son of David—the true king." Yet he tries to "prove" that Jesus was "precluded from ever being a king *in Judah*." But David was King of Judah and over all of Israel. Mary was promised that Jesus would "reign over the house of Jacob [Israel] for ever...on the throne of his father David" (Lk 1:32,33).

David's throne was not in heaven but in Jerusalem. David never ruled from heaven, nor will Christ rule over Israel restored to her land from heaven, but from earth. In heaven He is the groom and the church His bride. He does not rule over His bride as king.

If the kingdom of God is already on earth, we must be in the slums! Do you think the prayer for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven is already answered?

* A.H. = "anno hijrah" or "in the year of the Hijrah."

Mormon Fiction

T. A. McMahon

Not long after leaving my screenwriting career in Hollywood, I was hired to assist on a documentary produced by a Christian film company. The subject was Mormonism and the company's initial screenings were not very successful. They hoped that my film experience and input would help improve the project. I was familiar with the theology of Mormonism through my previous work on a documentary addressing multiple cults; so after reviewing the docudrama a couple of times, my solution was to re-edit the film so that it focused primarily on the *doctrines* of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—simply what Mormons believe. That hardly seems like a brilliant idea, or even a particularly interesting one. Perhaps—but then you may not be familiar with the teachings of Joseph Smith and LDS's so-called Apostles and Prophets.

Historians have marveled at how quickly so many people flocked to Joseph Smith's new theology. Within a decade he had thousands of followers. A principle reason for this rapid rise in popularity was Mormonism's startling and distinct contrast with what the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and various other Christian denominations believe. To begin with, Smith taught that most of the beliefs of Christianity had become hopelessly corrupted, including the Bible, and that which had been supernaturally revealed to him would restore God's truth. The main attraction, however, was *theological novelty*.

Today the LDS Church has taken a different tactic involving new name preferences (play down "Mormonism," play up "Church of Jesus Christ") and other strategies (e.g., create an image of being a part of mainstream Christianity through advertising campaigns). It's working. After Islam, Mormonism is now the fastest growing religion in the world, although little has changed doctrinally from the Church's novel beginnings.

Mormonism teaches that God has a physical body and lives on a planet near a star called Kolob. He is but one of an infinite number of Gods, each ruling over his own world located somewhere in the universe. Supposedly, each God has untold numbers of goddess wives who produce millions of spirit children. Amazingly, these spiritual offspring of God and his goddesses must then be birthed through physical beings (non-gods) on earth. This obtains for them the physical bodies necessary to become Gods and goddesses, who create and rule over their own worlds. Polygamy was a

major part of Mormonism. It met the need for producing bodies for the spirit babies birthed by multiple mother goddesses. It is still practiced among Mormon sects today. The Latter-day Saints' focus on the family has more to do with the Church's biblically unorthodox theology than with domestic well-being.

According to LDS teaching, Jesus was one of those spirit babies (as was his spirit brother Lucifer, who became Satan). The conception of Jesus was unique but not virginal; God, who is physical, had intercourse with Mary. Furthermore, since producing children is critical to a Mormon male's progression to godhood, Jesus had children through the women (the sisters Mary and Martha, Mary Magdelene, etc.) who accompanied him. Supposedly, he married them at the wedding feast of Cana.

And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

2 Timothy 4:4

Mormonism's salvation accommodates nearly everyone in one "heaven" or another. The death of Jesus on the cross was redemptive only in that it provided physical resurrection (bodies) for all. Obeying the commandments and performing Church duties and rituals are necessary in order to reach the Celestial Kingdom. Those who fall short of such requirements may still enter in as Celestial servants, and, if not, they can abide in the Terrestrial Kingdom. Moral non-Mormons may spend eternity in the Telestial Kingdom. Hell is a purgatory-like place and is eternal only for those few who commit the "unpardonable sin," such as apostasy. Nearly everyone has a chance to improve his eternal status after death.

Although we've heard the saying, "Truth is stranger than fiction," Mormonism seriously challenges this idea. The most sacred scripture of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is The Book of Mormon, which reads like rather bizarre but poor fiction trying its best to be taken as revealed truth. If that opinion sounds a bit "intolerant," bear with me.

The Book of Mormon claims to be a record of two migrations of ancient people to the Americas: the family of Jared around 2000 B.C. and, 1,500 years later, the family of Lehi. The first migration supposedly took place when the Tower of Babel was being constructed. A central character, curiously

referred to only as the "brother of Jared," is instructed by God to build eight watertight, rudderless "barges" to carry people and animals (including bees and fish) to the promised land. The brother of Jared realized that breathing and seeing might become a problem aboard the all-wooden, "tight like unto a dish" crafts and asked God for some design modifications. God told him to bore a hole that could be plugged in the top and bottom of the barges for air, and to place a shining stone in the end of each vessel for light. Chapter 2 of Ether states that the barges were tossed about and "buried in the depths of the sea" many times. This rather implausible sea journey (even for a supernaturally guided one) took nearly a year and delivered the people to the uninhabited Americas. There the Jaredites grew from 30 or so to multiple thousands and then perished because of their wickedness.

In the second migration to the promised land, Israelites left Jerusalem around 600 B.C. on a single vessel guided by a supernaturally provided "brass ball." Soon after their arrival, Lehi's sons, Laman and Lemuel, rebelled against God; they and their followers were cursed by God, which resulted in "a skin of blackness to come upon them." They were called Lamanites, and Mormonism claims that these dark-skinned Hebrews are the original ancestors of the Native Americans of the Western Hemisphere. The followers of Nephi remained "white, exceedingly fair and delightful" and throughout their history these groups were at enmity with each other.

Shortly after his resurrection, the Book of Mormon claims that Jesus came to America, where he taught the Nephites the gospel (of works salvation), ordained disciples and gave instructions concerning the sacraments of communion and baptism.

Around the fifth century A.D., the Lamanites finally destroyed all the Nephites so that only the dark-skinned people remained in the Americas. Following the final battle, the last surviving Nephite, Moroni, finished recording on plates the events of his people and hid them beneath a rock on the Hill Cumorah (located in upstate New York). Approximately 1,400 years later Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith, Jr., giving him the location of the "gold plates" and instructing him to translate them into English.

The process of translation involved Smith's putting a "seer stone" into a hat and covering the opening with his face. The stone would then glow, Reformed Egyptian symbols would appear, and the English rendering would manifest below them. Smith dictated the translation and the image remained until

it was transcribed correctly. Written in the introduction to The Book of Mormon are these words of Joseph Smith: "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."

Is this "the most correct" book on earth? The veracity of that statement is critical to the faith of 11 million members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The 10th President of the Mormon Church, Joseph Fielding Smith, made plain what is at stake: "Mormonism... must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground..." Yet when the "ground" of his having been "a prophet of God" is examined reasonably, it begins to look more and more like swampland.

The errors found within the Book of Mormon have filled volumes. Even the LDS Church has made thousands of corrections since the book's first edition in 1830. Some problems, however, can't be resolved without expunging major parts of the book. For example, first and second Nephi were supposedly recorded in the fifth century B.C.; yet, astonishingly, these books quote passages from the New Testament, which was written in the *first century A.D!* The book recorded by Alma dates between 92 and 53 B.C., yet uses the word "Christians." Acts (covering the timespan A.D. 33-62) tells us that name was first used in Antioch to refer to the followers of Christ. Moreover, Nephi, supposedly a Hebrew prophet writing from America, used Greek terms such as "Christ" rather than "Messiah." It's also more than odd that these transplanted Hebrews knew far more about Jesus prior to his coming (and alleged later visitation to America) than their brethren in Israel did, while at the same time, details in the Book of Mormon regarding the Mosaic and Levitical laws are almost nonexistent. One glaring example: the necessity of keeping the Passover is neither endorsed nor even mentioned. All of this adds up to an obvious New Testament bias on the part of the writer of this Mormon sacred scripture.

There is a great deal of circumstantial evidence that Joseph Smith had more than supernatural assistance in compiling the Book of Mormon. Speculative writings concerning the origins of the Indians were popularized in his day through such works as Ethan Smith's *The View of the Hebrews* and the writings of Rev. Solomon Spaulding. These and other relevant works were

certainly available to the Mormon prophet. However, his plagiarism of the Bible is the most convincing indication that Joseph Smith fraudulently produced the Latter-day Saints' holy writ. Jerald and Sandra Tanner's *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible* provides exact quotes and parallels found in both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. They write, "...in the Book of Mormon we have Lehi, the father of Nephi, quoting from the New Testament book of Revelation almost seven centuries before it was written!" Thousands of other examples follow. Furthermore, some KJV quotes include italicized words not found in the Hebrew, Greek or Latin manuscripts from which they were translated, but were inserted by the A.D. 1611 translators simply to clarify the text. Did the inspiration process include translating Reformed Egyptian, written by Hebrew-speaking scribes, into the centuries-later King James

today. The science of DNA supplies such proof—which will stand up in a court of law. It is now possible to trace a person's DNA back through centuries to accurately determine one's ancestry.

There is a stunning new video now available on this subject titled *DNA vs. The Book of Mormon*, which is both groundbreaking and powerful in its simplicity. Among the featured scientists is Dr. David Glenn Smith, a molecular anthropologist and researcher from the University of California at Davis who has studied Native Americans for 30 years, and whose lab is this country's leading test center for Indian genetics. Here is his view, as well as the consensus of scientists in his field: "If you look at genes in Native Americans... they came from their ancestral populations... You can look for those genes in Jewish populations but you don't find them... they don't coincide *at all*. The homeland of Native Americans is East Asia."

The video includes anthropologist and Mormon scholar, Thomas Murphy, who summarizes the dilemma for the LDS Church: "...we don't have a single source from ancient America outside the Book of Mormon validating a single place, a single person, a single event... We don't have any of that, so the problem that DNA poses for the Book of Mormon, in a sense, exemplifies the difficulties that we already have... There's never been any evidence that would show us that there had been an Israelite migration to the New World. Not in genetics or for that matter in any other source, historical, archaeological, or linguistic."

If there was no Israelite migration, then there were no Nephite or Lamanite people; therefore, Joseph Smith was a fraud and the Book of Mormon—"Another Testament of Jesus Christ"—is patently false. Worse yet, it is soul-damning fiction. That's the grievous plight of millions of Latter-day Saints faithful to Joseph Smith's teaching.

If the opportunity arises for you to interact with Mormons, please don't avoid them. Christ *died for them*. Although most Mormons cling to their false faith in the Book of Mormon based upon feelings (a "burning in the bosom" experience), their irrationality is being confronted more and more by irrefutable evidence from science. Increasing numbers are facing the fact that they were duped by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, et al. Show them the love of the biblical Jesus by being informed about their beliefs and, most importantly, share with them the truth which set you free (Jn 8:31,32). Pray for a mass exodus from the bondage of Mormonism. **TBC**

**Sanctify them through thy truth:
thy word is truth.**

John 17:17

English (including some Greek and Latin terms) complete with italicized words, or did Joseph Smith simply contrive the Book of Mormon together with ample help from a KJV Bible and other sources?

The Bible has been scrutinized, analyzed and criticized for thousands of years, yet *nothing* has been exposed which undermines the Book that declares itself to be God's Word. Moreover, mountains of evidence from diverse fields of study support its claims of supernatural origin.

Nothing of the kind can be said for the Book of Mormon. Archaeologists have found nothing to support the land, cities, monuments, or peoples the book presents. History, anthropology and linguistics are likewise silent. But one field, molecular biology, has had much to say lately, and it's not good news for defenders of the Mormon faith.

The introduction to the Book of Mormon underscores an important claim made by this alleged sacred text: "After thousands of years, all [i.e., the white Hebrew descendants of Lehi] were destroyed except the [dark-skinned] Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians." When Joseph Smith was young, one of the popular mysteries of his day was the origin of the Native Americans. It made for interesting speculation but seemed far beyond the possibility of proof. Not so

Quotable

In some circles, the fear of controversy is so great that preachers, and congregations following after them, will settle for peace at any cost—even at the cost of the truth, God’s truth. The idea is that peace is all important. Peace is a biblical ideal (Rom 12:18 makes that clear: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with everybody”), but so is purity. The peace of the Church may never be bought at the cost of the purity of the Church. That price is too dear.

But why do we think that we can get along in this world or for that matter, even in the Church, without conflict and controversy? Jesus didn’t. Paul didn’t. None of the preachers of the apostolic age who faithfully served their Lord were spared controversy. Who are we to escape controversy when they did not? The story of the advance of the Church across the Mediterranean world from Jerusalem to Rome is a story of controversy. When the gospel is preached boldly, there will be controversy. The life of Paul is a life of controversy. Tradition tells us that every apostle, except John, who was exiled for his faith, died a violent death.

Jay Adams, *Preaching to the Heart*, p. 17.

Q&A

Question [composite of several]: I must disagree with your very excellent article on “One Thing” [May ’02] in which you said concerning the rich young ruler, “The issue was not the young man’s salvation, but rather service to Christ.” In fact, salvation is in view and not service, for this ruler asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Answer: Thank you for your letter. Yes, the young ruler did ask what he should do to inherit eternal life. But there was nothing he could do. Having already broken the law, keeping it perfectly in the future (even if that could be done) would not pay for past sin or justify anyone.

Though he claimed that he kept the law perfectly, that wasn’t true, for “all have sinned.” Nor was Christ giving him conditions for salvation, for “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rom 3:19-23).

If “selling all and giving to the poor” is essential to salvation, then none of us is saved. It was Christ’s means of revealing to the young man his love of riches and

that he didn’t love his neighbor as himself. Certainly Christ was not telling him that if he sold all he had and gave to the poor he would be saved. It would merely be the means of starting to follow Christ.

I appreciate your thoughts. You make a good point. Thank you very much. Most of all, we appreciate your prayers that the Lord will use us to His glory and to the salvation and edification of many.

Question: What about the observance by Muslims of Ramadan today? President Bush honored it, as did Clinton and others before him. You said last month that the *hajj* simply carries on pagan practices. But isn’t the Holy Month of Ramadan with its fasting between sunrise and sunset purely Islamic?

Answer: No. Ramadan was practiced by pagan Arabs for centuries before Muhammad was born. Both history and the Qur’an confirm this. During Ramadan, Muhammad received the first inspiration for the Qur’an: “The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur’an...” (Surah 2:185). Equally interesting is Surah 2:217: “They question thee (O Muhammad) [about] warfare in the sacred month. Say: Warfare therein is a great (transgression), but to turn men from the way of Allah, and to disbelieve in Him and in the inviolable Place of Worship [is] worse than killing....”

Obedying this “revelation,” Muhammad led his followers in attacking a caravan during that “sacred month,” surprising the pagan Arabs who for centuries had refrained from fighting in that period. This was Muhammad’s first success after three previous failed attacks upon caravans—the start of his rise to power as others joined him in Islam to share in the booty.

President Bush hosted an Iftaar dinner for Muslim leaders at the White House last November honoring what he called “the holy month of Ramadan.” In his speech he said, “According to Muslim teachings, God first revealed His word in the holy Qur’an to the prophet, Muhammad, during the month of Ramadan.” To call Allah “God,” the Qur’an “holy” and God’s “word,” and to honor Muhammad as “the prophet” is inexcusable. Bush further extolled Islam: “The world continues to benefit from this faith and its achievements.” In fact, this “faith” is the bloodiest religion the world has ever seen, being responsible for the slaughter of many millions of persons in the past and of most terrorism worldwide today. Please write to our President to complain about his continued praise of Islam.

Question: The most obvious fallacy of your book, *What Love Is This?*, is its denial to God of the freedom to choose whom and in what way He will love. John MacArthur, J.I. Packer and others have pointed out that we may love in different ways and degrees (love for one’s husband or wife is different from love for one’s neighbor or for ice cream), yet your book insists that God’s love is the same for all people.

Answer: The analogy doesn’t fit. Love to friend or foe must still be love. But Calvinism insists that God “loves” those He has predestined to eternal torment before they were even born. That isn’t love! John MacArthur, Jr. writes: “He [God] loves the elect in a special way reserved only for them. But that does not make His love for the rest of humanity any less real” (*The Love of God*, p. 16). Can he be serious?! Those for whom Christ *didn’t* die, from whom He *withholds* salvation and whom He has *predestined* to eternal torment, God nevertheless loves because He gives them earthly benefits? Is it rational to say that God loves *in any way* those He has predestined to eternal doom? Of what value would it be to own the whole world for a few short years if eternity will be spent in the lake of fire?!

Calvinism denies that John 3:16 says God loves all mankind, for that would mean He died for all—heresy to Calvinists. But some Calvinists are embarrassed into saying that God loves everyone, though the tenets of Calvinism deny it. Thus we have contradictions, such as the following from John Piper: “Every time the gospel is preached to unbelievers it is the mercy of God that gives this opportunity for salvation” (*What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 14). Preaching the gospel gives “opportunity for salvation” to those for whom Christ didn’t die and whom God predestined to eternal torment before they were born? Yet such madness is Calvinism’s only defense.

Question: In your June article you took a rather dim view of the “road map to peace” that the U.S., EU, UN and Russia are promoting in the Middle East. Yet real progress is being made between Israel and the Palestinians. Isn’t there some hope for genuine peace over there, or must this horrible conflict continue indefinitely?

Answer: However long it takes, the world must reach the point where “they

say, Peace and safety..." (1 Thes 5:3). That is when "sudden destruction shall come upon them and they shall not escape." That both this "peace" and the destruction will come when Israel feels secure, just before Armageddon, is clear: "the land of unwalled villages...them that are at rest, that dwell safely...without walls, and having neither bars nor gates...the people that are gathered out of the nations...when my people of Israel dwelleth safely..." (Ezk 38:11-14).

We have already documented that no permanent peace between Israel and the Arabs/Muslims is allowed by Islamic law. Thus the so-called agreement now being negotiated only involves a temporary "ceasefire." No Muslim has the authority to agree to anything more than that. Bush is going to press for recognition of Israel's right to exist (which so far the Arabs/Muslims have refused to acknowledge). Such an agreement would be contrary to Islamic law and thus beyond the authority of Arafat or any other Muslim to agree to, much less to enforce.

It is acceptable, however, for a Muslim to lie in order to further Islam and its conquest of the world. That would be the only way that a Muslim leader could sign such an agreement. Both Bush and Israel must surely understand this fact. Yet both seem willing to live in a make-believe world when it comes to "peace" in the Middle East.

The coming false peace will be guaranteed and enforced by Antichrist. Whether the Rapture is so near that this "peace" will grow out of the current negotiations is speculation. But the scriptures make it clear that "peace" will eventually be established in conjunction with the rebuilding of the Jewish temple and reestablishment of the Jewish sacrificial system (Dn 8:25; 9:27). That will ultimately lead to Armageddon as Antichrist ends the temple sacrifices, puts his image in the temple and demands that the world worship him as God (2 Thes 2:4; Rev 13:14,15).

Question: Doesn't Calvin's assertion that the children of the elect are automatically elect open up a huge can of worms? In thousands if not millions of family trees there must be at least one believer—that is, one person who, perhaps centuries ago, by Calvin's definition, was one of the elect and was enabled to believe. By Calvin's own reasoning, every son or daughter of that parent, as long as he or she didn't "manifest to the contrary" (whatever that means) would also be

among the elect, and thus all their descendants after them. Surely one could find a believer somewhere in the genealogy of most people in the Western world. Upon tracing that line forward to all of the sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, greats, great-greats and onward we would find that practically everyone, at least in the Western world, was and is one of the elect! That causes me to wonder why we are surrounded by so much immorality, considering the vast number of elect in the world throughout history and today. Is there something wrong with this picture?

Answer: I'm sure most Calvinists, seeing the logical consequences, would object to your scenario. The section of Calvin's *Institutes* (IV: xvi, 21-32) from which you arrived at this idea is rather complex and contradictory. On the one hand, Calvin presents baptism of infants as the sure means of their salvation, provided they have faith in their baptism when they mature (xv, 3).

On the other hand, he declares that "Our children, before they are born, God declares that he adopts for his own [without baptism]....In this promise their salvation is included....How much evil has been caused by the dogma...that baptism is necessary to salvation..." (xv, 20); "children of believers are not baptised, in order that...they may...for the first time, become children of God, but rather are received into the Church by a formal sign, because, in virtue of the promise, they previously [i.e., from birth] belonged to the body of Christ" (xv, 22); "...God is so good and liberal to his people, that he is pleased...to extend their privileges to the children born to them" (xvi, 15); "whereas children, deriving their origin from Christians, as they are immediately on their birth received by God as heirs of the covenant, are also to be admitted to baptism" (xvi, 24); "it is no slight stimulus to us to bring them [children] up in the fear of God, and the observance of his law, when we reflect, that from their birth they have been considered and acknowledged by him as his children" (xvi, 32).

The child's subsequent faith in his baptism would not effect salvation inasmuch as regeneration/salvation must precede faith; and regeneration seems automatically to be passed from elect parents to their children, who are themselves elect. Moreover, the elect cannot be lost. This doctrine, however, is titled "Perseverance of the *Saints*," not perseverance of *God*, and can only be certain for those who maintain good works—a contradiction. You certainly point out a

problem for Calvinists to ponder. Perhaps we will hear from some Calvinist readers who will give us their answer.

Defying Their Creator

Dave Hunt

The latest Gallup Poll (July 25-27) showed a significant drop in support for homosexuality among average Americans. Yet the aggressive “gay” minority (about 1-3 percent) continues to force itself upon the world and the church. Governments defend and the media promotes homosexuality as normal. There are two new cable TV shows, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (about five homosexual men) and *Boy Meets Boy* (foxnews.com, 8/07/03).

New York City’s Department of Education invested \$3.2 million in America’s first “high school for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students” (foxnews.com, 7/28/03). Talk about segregation! State Sen. Ruben Diaz has filed suit in the state Supreme Court claiming the school violates state anti-discrimination policies (foxnews 8/18). Over many objections, Michigan U. continues to offer the state-funded course, “How to be Gay: Male Homosexuality and Initiation.”

Each year on April 9, teaching in America’s public schools is interrupted to promote homosexuality. The 2003 “Day of Silence” was sponsored by GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), which organizes “gay” clubs in public schools and “Safe Zones” in rooms marked by an inverted pink triangle. GLSEN aggressively intimidates America’s public schools into teaching the acceptance of homosexuality and enforcing “special rights” for homosexual teachers and students.

What was legally known for centuries as the “crime against nature” and practiced in secret is now boasted of and displayed brazenly. The Bible calls it *wickedness*: “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners...exceedingly” (Gn 13:13). This sin, known for centuries as “sodomy,” is so hateful to God that He “rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire...the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace” (Gn 19:24-28).

In June, after the U.S. Supreme Court (*Lawrence v. Texas*) struck down Texas’s anti-sodomy law, homosexuals paraded with placards reading, “CELEBRATE SODOMY.” Clearly, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:18). America is going the way of Sodom and Gomorrah and will taste God’s wrath if she doesn’t repent.

God abandons homosexuals and lesbians “unto vile affections...women [defying] nature...men with men...receiving in themselves that recompense of their

error...” (Rom 1:26,27). Life expectancy is cut almost in half, the body severely damaged, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) proliferate.

Seventy percent of new AIDS infections occur among men. Sixty percent of these are by male-to-male sexual contact. AIDS was once exclusive to homosexuals, who spread it to the IV-drug-using community. From there it spread to heterosexuals. “AIDS education” is mostly gay propaganda, with homosexuals unwilling to admit their role in the epidemic.

In a meeting at the UN in August, openly gay U.S. Congressman Barney Frank (D, MA) promised homosexuals that he would seek trade sanctions against countries that oppose UN rights for “gays.” Princeton U. professor Anthony Appiah said religion stands in the way of homosexuals. Delegates agreed on a strategy to advance their agenda worldwide by attacking Christianity.

Sponsored by the UN Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Employees, the meeting was attended briefly by Kofi Annan, UN Sec’y Gen., and was supported by Carol Bellamy, Exec. Dir. of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Mocking born-again Christians, Canadian Member of Parliament Svend Robinson promised a worldwide lobbying campaign to revoke sodomy, age-of-consent, and other laws which deny same-sex marriage and adoption rights to homosexuals, etc.

Every June, Disney Corporation welcomes homosexuals to “Gay Days,” open to all, including children. The depravity exhibited is indescribable. “Gay Days” began in 1990 as one day with 3,000 attendees. Now a week-long, round-the-clock affair, it draws more than 125,000 revelers from many nations to Orlando’s 40-plus citywide events—and prospers in spite of a Southern Baptist boycott and Pat Robertson’s prophecy of God’s imminent judgment. Hotel owners, the media, the Mayor of Orlando and the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners offer “Gay Days” participants a hearty welcome. Each year it grows larger.

In 1998, Tel Aviv became the first Israeli city to sponsor a “gay pride parade”—unmindful of the nearby ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah! Other Israeli cities have followed. On August 1, 2003, under its new mayor, Ron Hildai, Tel Aviv-Jaffa (Israel’s financial center) granted same-sex couples the same rights as those legally married.

Worldwide, millions of homosexuals and lesbians celebrated in gay pride parades June 29—750,000 in San Francisco alone. Corporate sponsors of the parades included Wells Fargo, Bank of

America, Verizon, IBM, United Airlines, Anheuser-Busch, drug companies, etc. At the Atlanta parade, which drew 300,000, a gay spokesperson boasted, “...gay sex is...not illegal anymore!”

Well-financed, well-organized, and flushed with victory, homosexuals are on the offensive worldwide. Introducing its views to be incorporated into the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, The International Gay and Lesbian Association (IGLA) exulted, “...for our organization...to address the Convention on behalf of Europe’s lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities...is an important symbol of the immense change taking place in European society....Even 10 years ago our presence at [such] an event...would have been unthinkable. Centuries-old patterns...are breaking up...we can no longer speak of ‘the family’ as [only] a married heterosexual couple and their children...and the EU Charter must [recognize] this social reality.”

Such basic concepts as “family” must now accommodate the desires of a tiny deviant minority! The entire world’s rejection for 4,000 years of homosexuality as harmful and unnatural must be laid aside. And the rationale is always the same: elimination of “discrimination.” Will it one day be “discrimination” to deny pedophiles their “rights”? Are today’s offending Catholic priests just slightly ahead of their time?

President Bush affirmed on July 29 that marriage is “between a man and a woman.” Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave (R, CO) proposed as a Constitutional amendment: “Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman....” But *The New York Times* includes same-sex unions with its wedding announcements, and the Sept.-Oct. issue of Condé Nast’s *Bride’s* magazine features homosexual weddings.

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien says the “evolution of society” requires Canada to redefine marriage to include “the union of same-sex couples,” and MP Svend Robinson says to defend “traditional” marriage is “unbelievable.” An Ontario court ruled that restricting marriage to a man and a woman is unconstitutional and discriminatory. In 1997, Canada prohibited a Focus on the Family video giving facts about homosexuality. A Saskatchewan man was recently fined \$5,000 for placing a newspaper ad with Bible verses condemning homosexual acts.

Marriage between one man and one woman was instituted by God. Yet churches now bless “same-sex marriages.” That term

is a travesty. This is not marriage as God established and blessed it! There is no bottom to depravity's depths once God's Word has been abandoned as the final authority.

In contempt of God's Word, the newest Episcopalian Bishop from New Hampshire, V. Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the worldwide Anglican Communion said, "that [homosexuality] goes against...Scripture does not necessarily make it wrong" (*The Washington Post*, 8/5/03). So man's Creator can't define right and wrong?!

The 56-year-old Robinson left his wife 13 years ago to live with his homosexual "lover." The marriage into which Robinson and his wife had entered under solemn vows of fidelity for life was instituted by the Creator when He joined Adam and Eve: "God blessed them" (Gn 1:28) and said "a man...shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gn 2:24). Jesus added, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt 19:6). Paul declared, "let every one of you...so love his wife even as himself" (Eph 5:33).

Robinson's fellow bishops who voted him into office brushed aside the fact that God "made them male and female" (Gn 1:27; Mt 19:4): Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. They approved Robinson's violation of the solemn promise he had made to his wife before God and man. Incredibly, the fact that Robinson and his male "partner" have lived in "faithful union" of perverted sex helped to *qualify* Robinson for this high church office! Yes, "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tm 3:13).

Bishop Robinson? Not by God's authority and blessing! "A bishop [Gr. *episkopos*, meaning "elder"] must be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children..." (1 Tm 3:2; Ti 1:6). No mention is made *anywhere in the Bible* of a "faithful monogamous homosexual relationship." Even normal sex outside marriage disqualifies one from associating with other Christians: "...any man that is called a brother [who is] a fornicator...with such an one [don't even] eat...put away from yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor 5:5-13).

As "political correctness" now rules the world, so "religious correctness" (offend God, not men) is taking over the church. The Creator's will must not interfere with man's desires. The heirs to Eden's rebellion aim to dethrone the Creator. Prophecy is being fulfilled: "[they] take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords

from us" (Ps 2:1-3).

After millennia of hatred, jealousy, murder and wars, man still won't admit the fault is in himself. He blindly insists he can create peace in his own heart and the world. No delusion could be greater, as 5,000 years of human history prove. "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our LORD Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21) is the only solution.

And nowhere does this moral mutiny express itself so blatantly as in homosexuals' growing defiance of their Creator. Upon creating man in His own image "male and female...God said...Be fruitful, and multiply..." (Gn 1:27,28). This first commandment (to bear children) homosexuals and lesbians, "without natural affection" (Rom 1:31), refuse to obey. Defying their Creator, rejecting the normal function of the bodies God made, they flaunt their perversion in His face.

"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps 127:3). God's "heritage" and "reward" is proudly despised by homosexuals. Paul describes them as those who "did not like to retain God in their knowledge" and whom, therefore, "God gave...over to a reprobate mind..." (Rom 1:28).

"Gay pride"? Proud of a way of life that produces no offspring and would therefore exterminate mankind if adopted by all? This "pride" presents homosexuality to public schoolchildren as something desirable that they ought to "try" in order to see whether this is their "sexual orientation." And cries of "discrimination" suppress the horrifying medical statistics.

It is not "discrimination" to protect society. Yet courts are finding ways, with the help of self-deluded psychologists, to excuse almost every crime. Criminals are now "victims" of circumstances—and this alleged "victimhood" justifies even what used to be called murder. How long will it be before pedophilia and incest are acceptable?

The "Reverend" Richard Kirker, general secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (Gene Robinson will preside over a session of its October conference in Manchester, England) has declared: "Sexual orientation is a gift of God and no one should invoke their faith to justify discrimination." God's gift of sex between male and female is in the genes and physical structure. "Orientation" is a matter of choice, as proved by the fact that as many as 70 percent in some Roman Catholic seminaries are practicing homosexuals, and high percentages prevail in prisons where men live in close proximity and

normal sex is impossible. "God made me this way" expresses homosexuals' *rejection* of the way God made them, as thousands of those delivered from this perversion through faith in Christ testify.

"Gays" have managed to be categorized as a persecuted minority even though their "difference" is by choice, not by birth. They have adopted this aberrant behavior voluntarily and now claim it as a badge of special privilege. They call attention to what makes them "different," boast about it and flaunt their offensive behavior in the face of society.

False statistics are often used to foster sympathy for "gays." Homosexual "Project YES" conducted seminars (paid for by tax money) in four Miami-Dade County Public Schools, allegedly to counter the "epidemic...of suicide and violence toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth" by making schools "safer for gay students."

A "YES" brochure claims that "33% of teenagers who commit suicide are gay or lesbian" (to say nothing of its other false "statistics"). Yet during a significant test period in Miami-Dade County, *not one* of the adolescent suicides involved homosexuals. Of 120 consecutive teen suicides in New York City, only three involved homosexuals and for *none* of these was homosexual involvement central to the suicide.

Sweden, a "liberal utopia," blesses homosexuality as normal. Pending legislation will outlaw any teaching (even by pastors quoting the Bible) that homosexuality is wrong, with penalties of up to four years in prison.

The Roman Catholic Church declares that homosexuals are "born that way" but can't explain why so many join its priesthood! In fact, the unbiblical rule of celibacy imposed upon priests and nuns helps to foster this perversion. *CBS News* recently obtained a 1962 document from secret Vatican files written by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani requiring that sexual abuse by priests be kept a secret at all costs. Larry Drivon, a lawyer who represents victims, calls it "an instruction manual on how to deceive and how to protect pedophiles...to avoid the truth coming out."

The truth is, there would be no AIDS epidemic and no risk of STDs if the world obeyed the biblical command for one man to be married to one woman for life, with sex only within that union. End of AIDS epidemic. Period. But the world rejects God's solution. As homosexuals lead the rebellion against their Creator, the entire world is ripening for judgment. TBC

Quotable

“Come now, and let us reason together,” was the Divine appeal to His people in the old time, even in days of apostasy. And coupled with that appeal was the Divine lament, “My people doth not consider....” The word “consider” means using their intelligence, and thinking for themselves, instead of blindly following their religious leaders....

In his exposition of the parable of Matthew 12:43-45, Dean Alford...[writes]: “Strikingly parallel with this runs the history of the Christian Church. Not long after the Apostolic times, the golden calves of idolatry were set up by the Church of Rome. What the effect of the captivity was to the Jews, that of the Reformation has been to Christendom. The first evil spirit has been cast out. But by the growth of hypocrisy, secularity and rationalism, the house has become...swept and garnished by the decencies of civilization and discoveries of secular knowledge, but empty of living and earnest faith. And he must read prophecy ill who does not see under all these seeming improvements the preparation for the final development of the man of sin, the great re-possession, when idolatry and the seven more wicked spirits shall bring the outward frame of so-called Christendom to a fearful end.”

Sir Robert Anderson, The Bible or the Church (c. 1910), pp. 3,4; 9,10

Q&A

Question: You seem to discount the value of studying Greek and Hebrew in order to be able to understand the Bible better. A friend of mine is trying to persuade me to go to seminary in order to learn the original biblical languages. Why shouldn't I?

Answer: If the Lord leads you to seminary, by all means go. But let's be practical. How many years of study and experience do you think the translators of the King James Bible had in order to qualify them for that job? How long would it take a beginner to learn Greek and Hebrew well enough to discover where these men made a poor translation (if they did) and to improve it? Does your friend, or do you, intend to reach that level of expertise? Is that remote possibility worth the time and effort?

If you say that Greek is a richer language than English, and that knowing it would give you a deeper understanding, I won't argue. But wouldn't the time you'd have to spend learning Greek to any beneficial level be better spent in studying the Bible itself on

your knees, seeking understanding from the Holy Spirit, and getting to know Him and His Word? Comparing scripture with scripture, and using a good concordance, you can see how the same Greek or Hebrew words and expressions are used in different passages. The Bible interprets itself.

I have been told lately by several Calvinists that I can't understand the Bible—not even John 3:16—because I don't know the original languages. If so, then neither does the average Christian, but must look to experts to interpret it for him—experts who therefore stand between him and God. Far from biblical, this is elitism similar to Roman Catholicism, which discourages ordinary members from studying the Bible because only the magisterium (bishops in concert with the Pope) can interpret it.

Saying this doesn't make me popular and offends some of my dearest friends. But a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew has been elevated so highly that one must conclude that the Wycliffe Bible translators have wasted their time all these years. Why translate the Bible into native languages if these people still couldn't understand it because they don't know Greek and Hebrew? Wouldn't it be more efficient and less time consuming to teach Greek and Hebrew to native peoples so they could read the Bible in those languages instead of translating it into their native tongues? May the Lord give you wisdom in coming to your own conclusions.

Question: In your June 2003 letter...you answered a question about whether the Gog-Magog battle could come at the start of the Tribulation. The first sentence of your answer is incorrect for two reasons....From Revelation 20:7 we catch the time reference to this mention of Gog and Magog. It is clearly *after* the Tribulation when Satan is released, *not* at the end of the Tribulation, which you state. Also you say Gog and Magog means all the nations of the world....

Rosh in Ezekiel 38 is a linguistic root for Russia. God is...economical with words, and would just say “all nations” if He meant that.

Another mistake...you say, “the rebuilding of the temple and the reinstatement of animal sacrifices therein will be imposed by the Antichrist upon the world at the very beginning of Daniel’s 70th week according to Daniel 9:27.” You have just made God a liar if He doesn’t do it your way! Where does it say that [Antichrist] imposes this...? I just don’t see a scriptural basis....He may just be a great politician and allow [the sacrifices] until he has the

power to rescind them for the worship of himself....

Your interpretation has God the Father defending Israel...yet at the same time Jesus Christ returns with the saints...defeats all the nations of the earth now gathered against the believers (not Israel as a whole, the remnant). But clearly the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the last battle, not one in which God the Father is the focus as in Ezekiel 38-39....[He] is going to intervene on behalf of Israel to deflect a nuclear/WMD [weapons of mass destruction] attack from Gog and Magog and their allies. From that point on, Israel knows who saved them and many become believers in God the Father, not in Christ. Some believers call upon Christ...and that ushers in the Second Coming....Clearly, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the last battle, not the one in Ezekiel 38-39.

Finally, I find it troubling, especially in light of 9/11 and the constant threat of WMD, that you seem not to believe that it will take a major nuclear exchange in the Middle East, or that [plus] WMD, to create an atmosphere of “one worldness” for the Antichrist. He may be powerful, but...survival is the only motivation that will unite the world under anyone. That may require massive death, before the Antichrist gets his way (for a short time), then human nature will again take its course.

Answer: First of all, the Hebrew word *Rosh* (as a proper noun) isn't even found in Ezekiel 38! It's the name of one of Benjamin's sons (Gn 46:21) – and this is the *only* time it appears in the entire Hebrew Bible. The same word as an ordinary noun or an adjective occurs 598 times: 349 times translated as “head,” 91 as “chief,” 73 as “top,” 14 as “beginning,” 10 as “captain,” etc. The idea that in Ezekiel 38:3 it somehow refers to Russia is wishful thinking, popularized by numerous prophecy teachers.

In Ezekiel 38:3, the RSV and KJV render *rosh* as “chief prince”: “O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal....” The NKJV and NASB render it “prince of Rosh”: “O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.” But the word *rosh* means “prince,” so it can't mean “prince of Rosh.”

The word *Rus* is related to the Finnish name for Sweden, *Ruotsi*. It referred to Vikings, the *roosmenn* (rowing men) who came down the Dnieper and Don rivers from Scandinavia and became the Slavs. “Russia” only dates back 1,000 years or so and has no relationship to the Hebrew word *rosh*, which goes back at least 4,000 years.

My first “mistake,” which you point out, was an obvious slip of the pen. In fact, you made the same one in your letter: “*after* the Tribulation when Satan is released, not at the end of the Tribulation.” Like me, you meant *Millennium*, but wrote *Tribulation*. The Gog and Magog battle in Revelation 20 so clearly follows Christ’s millennial reign (“when the thousand years are expired” – Rv 20:7) that I obviously intended to say “at the end of the *Millennium*” and *not* at the end of the *Tribulation*. I was showing that the questioner couldn’t possibly have meant the “Gog and Magog” battle of Revelation 20 but the battle of Ezekiel 38, which many claim is not Armageddon but a previous invasion of Israel by Russia and her allies—apparently your view.

In the June 2003 Q&A, I simply pointed out that the battle described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 could come *only* at the end of the Tribulation because, as a result, all Israel will be converted to Christ and never displease God again (39:7, 22, 29). Furthermore, God himself comes to earth to rescue Israel. You say that couldn’t be Armageddon because then Jesus rescues Israel. This is one more Old Testament proof that Christ’s statement, “I and my Father are one,” was what the prophets had said about the Messiah. In Isaiah 9:6,7 the promised Messiah is both the Son and “The mighty God, The everlasting Father.”

Zechariah 12:10 foretells the Messiah rescuing Israel at Armageddon, yet it is Yahweh speaking: “they shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for *him*....” We ask the Jews, “When was Yahweh pierced?” And we ask the so-called Jehovah’s Witnesses, “When was your Jehovah pierced?”

So it is Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world, who returns in Ezekiel 38 to rescue Israel and is recognized as the Messiah and Lord they have so long rejected. Now He comes not as the Lamb but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah in power and glory, so that “the fishes of the sea...fowls of the heaven...beasts of the field...all creeping things...and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at [His] presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down...” (38:19,20).

You rightly say that “survival is the only motivation that will unite the world.” But the “massive destruction” of the world’s armies to which you refer from the Ezekiel 38 and 39 battle would hardly unite the world against the God the survivors know has just conquered the world: “nations...shall know that I am the LORD” (38:23).

In fact, the world will already have been united under Antichrist. Ezekiel 38 and 39

describes a concerted attack by all nations against Israel—and the climactic language of God’s miraculous intervention with *all Israel* saved and *every Jew on earth* brought back to Israel, etc., does not allow for the nations to regroup and attack Israel once again. After that total defeat, recovery and new attack is inconceivable. Thus this *cannot be* a previous battle; it can only be Armageddon itself and Christ’s Second Coming.

You ask where in Daniel 9:27 it says that the Antichrist *imposes* the covenant. The KJV has “confirms,” but the Hebrew word is *gawbar*, which appears 25 times in the Old Testament, and nowhere else is it translated even close to “confirms.” Fifteen times it is translated as “prevail,” four times as “strengthen,” twice as “great,” and the remainder as “stronger,” “mighty,” “exceeded,” and “valiant.” Clearly, this is not some political compromise the Antichrist is able to work out, as you suggest, but something he in fact *imposes* upon the world. *Gawbar* agrees with the absolute power the Antichrist wields, as shown in Revelation 13, and the fact that the entire world worships him and cannot oppose him.

The unifying threat of destruction to which you refer must come from outside the world to unite all mankind against what will be perceived as a common extraterrestrial enemy. Nothing but the Rapture with its mass disappearance of tens of millions of people would unite everyone against what they would perceive as a mysterious, other-worldly power.

If God doesn’t do it “my way,” He will be a liar? No, if He doesn’t do it the way He has foretold in Scripture, He will be a liar. We have no doubt that He will fulfill His Word. The prophecies are there and we must seek to understand them.

Why not just say “all nations” to save words? The Bible sometimes uses redundancy for emphasis. Furthermore, the mention of specific nations in Ezekiel 38 gives a contemporary authenticity to the prophecy for our day because these nations still exist after 2,500 years and are already in an anti-Israel alignment.

You say “many [Israelis] become believers in God the Father, not in Christ...” In fact, Chapter 39 declares that every Jew on earth (“my people Israel”—39:7; “the house of Israel”—39:22; “I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel”—39:29, etc.) will believe and will all be brought back to Israel: “Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left *none of them* any more there” (39:28).

This can only be Armageddon and Christ’s Second Coming to redeem Israel.

Pre- or Post-Trib Rapture

Dave Hunt

The Rapture of the church involves all believers being caught up to heaven—those just resurrected, together with those alive at the time (1 Thes 4:13-18). If it occurs at the beginning of the tribulation period, then clearly Christ’s Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon is a separate event. According to Zechariah 14:3-5, “all the saints” must accompany Christ back to earth. But if the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, it must be simultaneous with the Second Coming, making them one event. Which is it: two events separated by seven years, or one event with two diverse purposes?

This question, though it has nothing to do with the gospel of salvation, divides much of the evangelical church. Happily, it can be settled rather easily. The descriptions in Scripture of the Rapture and Second Coming respectively are so different in so many details that they could not possibly be describing the same occurrence. We can’t cover all of these distinctions, but here are a few:

1) At the *Rapture*, Christ does not return to earth but catches believers up to meet Him above the earth, taking them directly to heaven: “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn 14:3); “caught up...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thes 4:17).

In contrast, at the *Second Coming* Christ returns to this earth to rule Israel and the world from David’s throne in Jerusalem: “his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem” (Zec 14:4); “the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Lk 1:32,33); “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him....The armies which are in heaven followed him....Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and shall rule them with a rod of iron” (Rv 19:11-15).

2) At the *Rapture* there is a resurrection of *all* believers who have died up to that time: “the dead shall be raised incorruptible” (1 Cor 15:52, 53); “the dead in Christ shall rise first...” (1 Thes 4:16).

In contrast, at the *Second Coming*

there is no resurrection until Antichrist is defeated, he and the false prophet have been “cast alive into a lake of fire” (Rv 19:20) and Satan has been bound in the “bottomless pit [for] a thousand years” (20:1-3)—none of which is even remotely related to the rapture of believers to heaven. Then, to “the first resurrection” which occurred at the Rapture are added a unique group: “them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands...they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (4, 5).

3) At the *Rapture*, the bodies of living believers (like those who are resurrected) will be changed to become immortal: “We

Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

Luke 12:56

shall not all sleep [i.e., die], but we shall all be changed...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [who are living] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:51-53); “we which are alive...shall be caught up together with them [the resurrected saints]...to meet the Lord in the air [clearly requiring immortal bodies]” (1 Thes 4:17).

In contrast, at the *Second Coming* all of the saints return with Christ from heaven and will therefore already have been changed into immortality: “the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (Zec 14:5); “I saw heaven opened [and one] clothed with a vesture dipped in blood...and the armies which were in heaven followed him [to] smite the nations” (Rv 19:11-15).

4) The *Rapture* occurs during relative peace and prosperity, when the world does not expect judgment from God: “And as it was in the days of Noah [the last thing they expected was God’s judgment]...they did eat, they drank...married wives...were given in marriage [and as in] the days of Lot...they bought, they sold...planted...buildd...Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” (Lk 17:26-30).

Again in complete contrast, the *Second Coming* occurs in the midst of the worst war the world has ever seen and following the greatest devastation this planet has

ever suffered or ever will: “then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world...nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” (Mt 24:21, 22); “behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed...power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger...There was a great earthquake...every mountain and island were moved out of their places...[men] hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks...for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rv 6:8-17); “and the four angels were loosed...to slay the third part of men” (9:15); “and the...sea...became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. And...the rivers and fountains of waters...became blood...the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and...men were scorched with great heat...and...there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth....And every island fled away and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail [of large stones]...every stone about the weight of a talent” (16:3-21); “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True....And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen....And I saw the beast [Antichrist], and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and...the false prophet [and they] were cast alive into a lake of fire...” (19:11-21).

5) The *Rapture* occurs when conditions in the world seem to indicate that all is well, when very few expect Christ to return and He catches even the church by surprise: “of that day and hour knoweth no man...in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Mt 24:36, 44).

In contrast, when the *Second Coming* occurs, not even Antichrist is caught by surprise—the many visible signs alert everyone that Christ is right at the door: “when ye shall see all these things, know that it [Christ’s coming] is near, even at the doors” (Mt 24:33); “the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse” (Rv 19:19).

6) The *Rapture* occurs when the church is sleeping, with little expectation of the Lord’s return: “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept” (Mt 25:5); “Watch ye therefore...lest coming suddenly he find you

sleeping” (Mk 13:35, 36).

In contrast, the *Second Coming* occurs at the end of the Tribulation in the midst of worldwide devastation and hopeless distress; the Antichrist and his armies are attacking Israel, much of Jerusalem is already captured (Zec 14:1, 2), and Israel is on the verge of annihilation. It is inconceivable that the church, if it were still here, would be slumbering in complacency and under the delusion that “surely Christ wouldn’t come now”!

7) Since the *Rapture* instantly takes us, without dying, out of this world of sin, pain and sorrow to be forever with Christ and like Him, never more to grieve Him, it is called the “blessed hope”: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13); “every man that hath this hope” (1 Jn 3:3).

In contrast, the *Second Coming* (or a post-trib rapture at that time) could hardly be called a “blessed hope,” inasmuch as very few Christians (if the church were still here) would survive to enjoy it. Having refused to receive the 666 mark of the beast “in their right hand, or in their forehead” and therefore being unable to “buy or sell,” and refusing to “worship the image of the beast [they would] be killed” (Rv 13:15-17). It makes no sense to suggest that if you can secretly eat out of enough garbage pails to avoid starvation and still keep one step ahead of Antichrist’s world police death squads, “Blessed hope! You’ll be raptured at Armageddon!”

8) As for the *Rapture*, unquestionably, the early church was taught to expect it at any moment and to eagerly watch, wait and look for Christ’s return, when He will catch all believers up into His Father’s house to be with Him eternally: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that *wait* for their lord...” (Lk 12:35, 36); “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we *look* for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil 3:20); “...ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to *wait* for his Son from heaven...even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thes 1:9, 10); “*looking* for that blessed hope” (Ti 2:13); “unto them that *look* for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28). One does not watch, wait and look each day for something that

cannot happen until Antichrist’s advent or the end of a seven-year tribulation. Thus, there must be a coming of Christ that could happen at any moment.

In contrast, the *Second Coming*, by very definition as described in Scripture, cannot be expected momentarily. Therefore, none of the scriptures just quoted concerning watching and waiting and looking for the Lord could refer to the *Second Coming* or to a post-trib rapture of the church. These scriptures could therefore refer only to a *pre-trib* rapture.

9) The pre-trib *Rapture* has a powerful, purifying effect upon those who have this hope in Him. The fact that it is to be expected at any moment can only mean that it must come before Antichrist is revealed and before the Tribulation. If Christ could come at any moment, there is no time to waste, no time to delay witnessing, no time to indulge in sin with the idea of repenting

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Matthew 24:46

and changing one’s ways later: “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 Jn 2:28); “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (3:3).

In contrast, anticipation of the *Second Coming* (or a post-trib rapture at that time) could hardly have a purifying effect, because it can’t take place for at least seven years—plenty of time to delay witnessing, getting right with the Lord and holy living until later. In fact, the Lord said that believing he couldn’t come at any moment would have the *opposite* effect from purifying believers: “If that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants...and to eat and drink and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come at an hour when he is not aware (Mt 24:48, 49; Lk 12:45, 46).

10) The *Rapture* is not only an event that we are to expect momentarily and to eagerly anticipate, but we are to *ask* our Lord to come immediately. Here is how the Bible ends: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come....Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rv 22:17, 20).

In contrast, the *Second Coming* is not of such a nature and timing that we could ask Christ to effect it right now. Since Christ obviously cannot return to the earth in judgment to rescue Israel, stop the destruction at Armageddon and destroy the Antichrist along with his kingdom and his armies until the end of the Tribulation, for us to cry out to Christ, “Come, Lord Jesus!” would be like demanding payment on a debt that isn’t due for seven years. Yet, “the Spirit and the bride” *do* cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus.” We can only conclude that there must be a coming of Christ that could occur at any moment. It cannot be the *Second Coming* or a post-trib rapture. It can only be a pre-trib rapture.

11) There are at least two events which occur in heaven for which the church must be present and which, therefore, cannot take place until the *Rapture* occurs: the judgment seat of Christ, and the marriage of the

Lamb to His bride: “for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom 14:10); “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10); “the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted [to] be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white [as a result of her cleansing at the judgment seat of Christ]” (Rv 19:7, 8). Both these events occur prior to Christ’s return to earth and thus demand a prior rapture.

It is clear that the *Second Coming* cannot occur until these two vital events, which demand the presence of the church in heaven, have taken place. It is only after the Lamb has been married to His bride that she accompanies Him back to earth to rescue Israel and to destroy Antichrist and his armies: “And the armies which were in heaven followed him...clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (Rv 19:14).

We know not why the Bridegroom tarrys, but exactly as He foretold, the church is asleep. In that context, our Lord added: “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (Mt 25:6). May each of us be listening eagerly for that cry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Indeed, we ought to be sounding it aloud, for the Lord could come *at any moment* to take us to Himself. So let us watch and wait and look for Him in eager anticipation—and encourage others to do the same. It will have a purifying and motivating effect in our lives. **TBC**

Quotable

I grew up believing in this [evolution] Myth....But the Myth itself asks me to believe that reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended byproduct of a mindless process....[T]he Myth thus knocks from under me the only ground on which I could possibly believe the Myth to be true. If my own mind is a product of the irrational, how shall I trust my mind when it tells me about Evolution?

C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*,
p. 89

We cannot find any logical and adequate solution of the sin-question in the five Classics of Confucianism, the Vedas of the Hindus, the Zend Avesta of Zoroastrianism, or the Koran of Islam. When Joseph Cook...at the [first] Parliament of [World] Religions in Chicago [1893] challenged the priests of the ancient religions to answer Lady Macbeth's question: "How cleanse this red right hand?" all the priests were dumb.

Henry Clarence Thiessen,
Introduction to the New Testament,
p. 84

Q&A

Question: A neurosurgeon, whom you quote often, applied electric currents to the brain's surface....Probing some areas would trigger whole memory sequences, [even] a familiar song that sounded so clear, the patient thought it was being played in the operating room....It seems that memory is physical [yet] you say thoughts even about physical things are nonphysical....If memory is part of the brain, then I can't see why thoughts, too, can't be part of the brain....If memory is nonphysical and has a physical source, then I can't see why thoughts can't have a physical source too (i.e., the brain).

Answer: First of all, even the memory of a physical event must result from its having been observed by a nonphysical intelligence or there would be no memory imprinted upon the brain, which in itself neither observes, thinks, nor understands. Memory, like other ideas, involves thought, and thoughts are clearly not physical because they involve nonphysical ideas such as truth, justice, perfection, etc. Amazingly, however, because of the mysterious connection of the mind to the brain, what the mind thinks is recorded upon the brain.

Obviously, no event of itself creates memories. Nor is the mechanism (whatever it may be, such as a video camera) by which a memory is recorded, the *source* of either the event or a memory thereof. Thus the brain is no more the *source* of memories physically stored on it than a video or DVD or audiocassette or computer is the *source* of sights and sounds physically stored on it.

Dr. Wilder Penfield, to whom you refer, described the brain as "a computer programmed by something independent of itself, the mind." That a computer (or the brain) can have implanted on its physical structure "memories" of ideas or events, does not mean that the computer (or brain) *originated* such ideas or events. Just as an intelligence that exists outside and is independent of the computer must put into it whatever "memory" it has, so it is the mind (the independent intelligence) that imprints memories on the brain. Simple logic tells you that if thoughts originate with the brain, then the person living in that body is not doing the thinking but is at the mercy of the brain—and who will monitor the brain to see whether its thoughts are accurate?

The physical brain serves many essential functions, but in all of them it is either directed by the mind or operates as an integrated part of autonomic body systems. The brain is not an *intelligence*. The fact that memories are physically recorded in certain parts of the brain and can be awakened by an electrical stimulus of such areas does not say that the brain either originated *or even knows the significance* of these memories. In the case of an event that was observed, both the awareness of the event and a comprehension of its relevance requires a nonphysical mind. A memory has no existence without a mind to recognize and give it meaning.

Question: In the July Q&A you said "the only begotten Son of God [did not] inherit sinful genes"! Pregnancy is via the woman's egg and the man's sperm. In this case, it appears that Mary would supply the egg and her half of the genes, and the Holy Spirit would supernaturally impart the other half of the genes, to make Jesus a fully human male as well as fully God. So if it is true that half of Mary's genes were involved, and if sin is inherited in the genes, then Jesus would have had a sinful nature. We know that isn't right, so the only other conclusion is that sin is imparted via the father's genes that cause blood type....It is obvious that the genes which

the mother and father contribute to the body have nothing to do with the spirit and soul that the Holy Spirit creates in each body that God allows to be born. In Isaiah 53:10 we are told that Jesus' soul would be a sin offering, but Hebrews 10:10 says we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told that Jesus became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him; and 2 Peter 2:24 says Jesus bore our sins in His own body. I believe Jesus put away my sins at the cross, but when I try to explain it to someone, it seems to get confusing when I tell them God cannot partake of sin because of His holy nature.

Answer: You correctly state, "the genes which the mother and father contribute to the body have nothing to do with the spirit and soul which the Holy Spirit creates in each body" at conception. But in Christ's case, we have no reason to believe that Mary's genes were involved at all, much less that the reason He was born of a virgin was because, as you suggest, "sin is imparted via the father's genes that cause blood type." You assume that "Mary would supply the egg and her half of the genes, and the Holy Spirit would supernaturally impart the other half of the genes...." Scripture doesn't say so. Yes, twice the expression "conceive" is used, but simply as a common term, not to explain the process.

Jesus is called the "second man" (1 Cor 15:47) and the "last Adam" (v. 45). Just as Adam needed no mother to contribute "half of the genes," neither did Christ. The "first man" was created by God without father or mother. It is therefore proper to conclude that, although Mary's womb and blood contributed to the nourishment and growth of the One to whom she gave birth, she had nothing to do with the physical origin of the body of this "second man." He was created in her womb, just as God created Adam.

As for Christ's sacrifice for sin, the fact that, as you say, "God cannot partake of sin" would not prevent Christ from bearing God's judgment upon the sin of all mankind. Yes, Scripture speaks both of His body and soul being offered for sin. God's judgment upon mankind eternally in the lake of fire will not be so much physical as spiritual—a fact which we see in Christ's bearing of that judgment on the cross. Our salvation comes not merely in His being nailed to a cross in fulfillment of remarkable and specific prophecies, but in what Isaiah tells us: "...the LORD hath laid

on him the iniquity of us all...It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin..." (53:6, 10).

That "the iniquity of us all" was laid upon Him did not mean that He "partook" of our sin in any sense. The phrase "he made him to be sin for us" can't mean that Christ literally became "sin" itself, for sin is not an entity or some *thing* for Christ to "become." Sin is the willful act of people. Second Corinthians 5:21 can only mean that Christ was punished *as though He were sin itself*, that is, He endured the full judgment which His own holy and righteous law required for all the sins of every person who will ever live. Christ did not partake of that sin in any way, did not become sinful, but endured its just punishment, declaring, "it is finished"—i.e., the penalty is paid in full.

Question: What is your opinion of "generational sins" as supported by Bill Gothard? This teaching is splitting our church. Can you help?

Answer: A number of popular authors and speakers, such as Neil Anderson and others involved in "deliverance" ministries, promote various forms of this teaching. Part of the so-called "deliverance" process involves probing the past to find "connections" and "delivering" the person from alleged occult involvements among his or her ancestors.

Simple logic says that probing into the past to uncover "lost memories" of former traumas, as in psychotherapy or the Christian brand known as "inner healing," is a vain pursuit for two reasons: 1) one can never be sure of the accuracy of such memories, due to a lack of objective verification; and 2) if one "lost memory" could have such a heavy influence upon the person's thinking, emotions and conduct, who can say that there may not be other "memories" of equal or greater importance that likewise need to be recovered and "worked through" endlessly? Moreover, this practice clearly violates the biblical injunction, "forgetting those things which are behind" (Phil 3:13), and inhibits pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (v. 14).

So it is with generational curses. If these actually exist, then we face the hopeless task of digging them all out. How far back does one attempt to go? Surely there are hidden sins in the ancestry of everyone. My father was from England and my mother, though Canadian, had similar ancestry.

Who knows what involvement with Druids lies hidden in my genealogy! My father's mother was from Norway, so the worship of Nordic demons must also permeate my background. I could never uncover it all. And to pronounce a generic "deliverance" over that which is unknown seems both bizarre and phony.

Furthermore, the violation of Scripture is just as clear here as in inner healing. To search for occult influences in the past as though they had some power over which one needed to be delivered is the same violation of "forgetting those things which are behind." In addition, all of the above deny the basic fact that the Christian's sins were laid upon Christ and paid for by Him; he has been born again by faith in Christ, "old things are passed away...all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). Let us therefore "go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works..." (Heb 6:1).

Question: The Qur'an mentions Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus, John the Baptist and other biblical characters, as well as many events recorded in the Bible. But the Bible wasn't translated into Arabic until 40 years after the Qur'an was written! Wouldn't this prove divine inspiration of the Qur'an?

Answer: No, it would not, for several reasons. Islam already makes the claim that the Qur'an is a miracle book inspired of Allah through the angel Gabriel because Muhammad was allegedly illiterate and couldn't have read the Bible, even had it been in Arabic. The truth is, Muhammad was acquainted with many Jews and "Christians" of various sects. Whatever of biblical history and characters he put into the Qur'an, he learned from oral accounts—not from divine inspiration.

Furthermore, Muhammad got it nearly all wrong in the Qur'an. Some of the stories taught to him were false, some were garbled, and he managed to confuse them even more. Thus the Qur'an contradicts the Bible not only in doctrine but in history.

For example, in the Qur'an Noah had a fourth son, who refused to enter the ark and drowned in the flood (Surah 11:42,43). Incredibly, the Qur'an says that Abraham was to sacrifice Ishmael, not Isaac, and Abraham and Ishmael built the Ka'aba, a pagan temple, in Mecca. Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's wife instead of his daughter, and the golden calf was made by a Samaritan (seven centuries before Samaritans existed). The story of the red heifer in Numbers 19 becomes a fantastic tale of a yellow cow in Surah 2:67-71. Mary gives

birth to Jesus under a palm tree (19:21-27), and she is confused with Miriam, sister of Aaron and Moses: "Oh sister of Aaron!" (19:28). The Qur'an denies that Christ was crucified, and says He was taken alive to heaven (4:157, 158).

These are only a few of the contradictions between the Qur'an and the Bible showing that the Qur'an was surely not divinely inspired! Nevertheless, on May 14, 1999, Pope John Paul II bowed to and kissed a copy of the Qur'an presented to him by Shi'ite and Sunni leaders from Iraq during a Vatican audience with Rafael I. Bidawid of Baghdad, Patriarch of the Chaldeans (an Eastern rite Aramaic speaking branch of Roman Catholicism).

Spirits of the Lie

T.A. McMahon

It's disturbing, but not surprising, that humanity is so vulnerable to lies. Moreover, the bigger or more outrageous the lie, the more effective it seems to be. Evolution is a prime example of a lie that is received enthusiastically. Then there is psychology's teaching that humans are innately good; the growing conviction that homosexuality is simply an alternate lifestyle; the propaganda that Islam is a religion of peace and that there is a legitimate, historic Palestinian people; and the belief that humans have infinite potential and can become gods. The "accepted frauds" list seems to be endless.

Mankind's penchant for being duped can be traced back to his beginning in the Garden of Eden. Satan, speaking through a serpent, seduced Eve into believing she could become like God through rejecting God's will in favor of her own (Gn 3). This was the devil's own prospect, which he, as Lucifer, deceived himself into believing (Is 14). Lies are most appealing when baited with ways and means of improving one's situation. Incredibly, Lucifer and Adam and Eve, while in a perfect state and in perfect environments, desired something *more* for themselves. The self-serving thoughts of Eve's heart are revealed as being in opposition to what God had specifically forbidden: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gn 3:6). Adam's and Eve's acceptance of a lie from a spirit speaking through an animal brought death and destruction into God's perfect creation.

Satan's scheme began by encouraging Eve to doubt what God had said, followed by a flat denial of what He indeed had commanded. He then left her with the impression that God withheld from her something that would enable her to be like Him: in other words, God's only interest in humans is to keep them from realizing their god-like potential. That lie has been the devil's basic appeal in seducing mankind down through the ages. The Bible characterizes Satan (whose name means "adversary") as the father of lies, who deceives the whole world (Jn 8:44), and his fellow demons as his co-workers in the same game plan. Although God's Word doesn't go into great detail about the realm of spirit entities, it clearly warns

us of the deceptive and destructive nature of demons. We're to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil [and his demonic minions], as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pt 5:8). Having rejected that warning, mankind is more involved today in ways that open one up to contact with spirits than at any time in history.

Introduced to the West in the last century under the banner of the New Age movement, Eastern mysticism has provided a veritable marketplace of methods and techniques for "communing with the gods," with drugs and meditation as the common vehicles. Today, temples for interacting with any of the millions of Hindu gods are found worldwide, including the suburbs of many U.S. cities. I visited a very large temple outside Chicago, one well attended by upper-middle-class suburban dwellers, with many of its worshipers arriving in late

If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

John 8:36

model Mercedes and SUVs. Yoga meditation, which opens one up to spirit beings, is standard fare at YMCAs and athletic clubs; numerous evangelical churches have started their own classes under the oxymoron, "Christian Yoga." The so-called science of Transcendental Meditation (TM) has initiated hundreds of thousands throughout the West, giving them mantras for calling upon Hindu deities. Religions such as Santeria, Vodoun (voodoo), and Macumba, in which ritualistic sacrifices are made to gain favors from the spirits, have attracted increasing numbers of those not usually given to superstition, e.g., doctors, lawyers, business executives, college professors, etc. Occult visualization, perhaps the most effective technique for obtaining a spirit guide, is taught in hospitals for healing purposes, in natural childbirth classes, in sales and business management seminars, by local golf pros, and in kids' basketball and soccer camps (see Dave Hunt's *Occult Invasion*). It is a favored technique among those who practice "Christian" mysticism, known within evangelical circles as the "contemplative movement." Inner-healing teachers professing to be Christians recommend visualization for communicating with Jesus, who they claim "will appear."

Contact with nonphysical entities claiming to be extraterrestrials is so accepted

today that the tragic event of the suicides of the Heaven's Gate cult members, who died "in order to be taken aboard," is seen as an anomaly. UFOs, which are nonphysical, are regarded by millions as vehicles of higher intelligences who will save humanity from destruction. The promises made by these nonphysical "ETIs" are the same throughout the world no matter who contacts these so-called space beings. Furthermore, the various methods of contacting spirits, whether through drugs, meditation, visualization, chanting mantras, ouija boards, or simply a desire for communication by an act of the will, always produce a similar antibiblical message.

One of our staff members had a recent encounter with the owner of a business near our ministry. Since he heard her use the phrase "Praise the Lord," he asked her if she were a believer. Her response startled him: "Yes...I'm a shaman!" She explained that she believed in many "lords." The term "shaman" comes from the language of the Tungus tribe in Siberia and refers to the tribal medicine man, or witchdoctor. The shaman's main function is to contact the spirits in order to gain assistance for his people. Anthropologists are intrigued by the fact that in every part of the world where shamanism is practiced, it is basically the same. That consistency among diverse people groups (who have never had contact with one another) is compelling evidence for the reality of the spirits with whom they interact. It also supports the biblical claim that there is a central, and evil, source for the content and power obtained from the spirit realm.

Today we have shamans of all kinds from Bend to Beverly Hills and all points east, west, north and south. Our national park guides are delighted to introduce visitors to the sweat lodges, vision quest, and other shamanic trappings of Native Americans. White, middle-class "shamans" are popping up all over the place, much to the disdain of those who see their pursuit as "inauthentic" and the "exploitation of Native American culture." Evidently, the *spirits* are not cultural purists, given the glowing reports that multitudes of non-indigenous Americans have contacted their "power animals," or spirit guides, simply by reading the books and following the techniques and directions of the less-than-authentic shamans! Rarely, if ever, do you read in such books that problems may arise, or that the spirits may not be as all-wise and all-wonderful as advertised.

I recently interviewed a man who had spent most of his life communing with spirit

entities. There is no doubt as to his “authenticity.” He was a shaman, a medicine man and chief of his Yanomamo tribe, who reside deep in the Amazonian rain forest of Venezuela. At odds with the lie promoted in anthropological circles—that the lives of primitive tribes-people are pure, natural and Eden-like and therefore best kept from outside influence—Chief Shoefoot and his people’s violent, fear-filled existence is documented in a book titled *The Spirit of the Rain Forest*, written by Mark Ritchie (available from Island Lake Press – 1-800-245-1022).

As a young boy, Shoefoot was singled out as one sensitive to the spirit realm and subsequently initiated into the sorcerer’s world. Again, a shaman is one who, through knowledge and power obtained from the spirits, heals and guides his people. Although the initial process of enabling him to contact the spirits was brutal, involving days of food-and-water deprivation and having someone force hallucinogenic drugs into his system by blowing them up his nose, the spirits he met were at first benign and curiously captivating. His initial impression was that many of them inhabited and spoke through plants and especially through animals (reminiscent of the ploy first introduced in the Garden of Eden and supportive of the lie of evolution that all living things are related and equal). Shoefoot’s desire in all of this was to serve the needs of his tribe; therefore, he followed the counsel of the spirits, even when to do so seemed at odds with common sense.

At the beginning, help from the spirits was somewhat encouraging, yet it always seemed tainted with unresolved problems, or worse. For example, sicknesses among the Yanomamo children, which the spirits too often had trouble healing, were usually blamed on powerful curses placed on the village by a rival tribe. The usual spirit-provided solution to offset the curses was to murder, rape and pillage the suspected foes. The abduction of women was commonplace for such raids. Yet whether it was to retrieve their stolen women or simply to exact revenge, violent payback was only a matter of time. The knowledge supplied by Shoefoot’s spirits often proved to be less than trustworthy, causing his tribe to live in confusion and constant fear of their enemies.

Not only did Shoefoot grow weary of the excuses from the spirits when their counsel went awry, but some spirits were of such a vicious nature that they wrought mayhem and death among his people.

During drug-induced rituals where these spirits might make their presence known, the men needed to hide their weapons to prevent the spirit-controlled warriors from killing one another. At one point of near hopelessness concerning his inability to improve the deteriorating condition of his people, Shoefoot increased his drug intake in order to go deeper into the spirit world to find more trustworthy and benevolent spirits. That led to even more *wicked* spirits (Lk 11:26), greater frustration, and intense despair. However, during his dark spiritual journey, he was made aware of a powerful Spirit, who, he was told, was the enemy of his spirits and his people. Ironically, the location where this Spirit, Yai Pada, dwelled was a beautiful place of abundance and peace, the very blessings Shoefoot desired for his tribe and for himself. Since he had been lied to so often by his spirits, he was driven to know if they were telling him the truth about Yai Pada.

Fulfilling His promise given to all humanity through the prophet Jeremiah, “And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (29:13), the Lord led Shoefoot to a missionary named Joe Dawson, one of the very few foreigners able to speak the Yanomamo language. Joe taught Shoefoot about Yai Pada, the God of the Bible. He taught him that sin made us all God’s enemies, yet Yai Pada loved us so much that He sent His Son to pay the full penalty for our sins, and by admitting our sinfulness and putting our trust in Jesus and our faith in what He accomplished for us, we could have peace with the God of Peace. Moreover, he was told that all who believe in Jesus will spend eternity with Yai Pada. Shoefoot’s testimony (found in detail in *Spirit of the Rain Forest* and in a rough but powerful video, “*I’ll Never Go Back!*” *A Shaman’s Story* from Don Shire Ministries – 715-484-2017) of how Jesus delivered him from his bondage to sin and to his spirits is a testimony to the truth of God’s Word.

I asked Shoefoot through interpreter Mike Dawson, Joe’s son, who grew up among the Yanomamo, how he would answer a skeptic who thought his experiences with the spirits were nothing more than hallucinations brought on by the drugs he took. Shoefoot’s 70-something-year-old eyes sparkled at the question; he enjoys responding to challenges by skeptics, especially when he speaks to university anthropology students. It’s ironic that this “primitive” man considers the highly educated anthropologists who study his people naïve at best, deceived at worst. He told me of knowing shamans who

had many of the *same* spirits he had had, yet, unlike him, they did not come to know them as a result of taking drugs. Whether the contacts were made with a clear mind or in a drug-induced state, descriptions and details were nearly always identical—they all communed with the same spirits.

Mike added that we of the sophisticated West have trouble relating to a culture in which spirits, i.e., demons, are a real, everyday part of life. However, that doesn’t mean they’re necessarily exclusive to the dense jungles of the Yanomamo. He said that on one autumn trip to the U.S. with Shoefoot, he was shocked as his friend, the former shaman, continually pointed out representations of spirits he had known being featured across America as it celebrated its most financially successful holiday: Halloween. Some time later, Shoefoot was given a sampling of TV’s Saturday-morning cartoon characters and power figures. It was more of the same. He was not aware of the worldwide popularity of the *Harry Potter* books, which introduce children to sorcery and encourage them in the practice of witchcraft. As Mike explained this series of books to him, he was grieved that so many young people were being set up for the suffering and bondage that had tormented his own people.

Shoefoot’s subjective experiences in a culture dominated by lying spirits are readily substantiated when compared with other demon-driven lifestyles throughout the world. Furthermore, they are consistent with what God’s Word says about such spirits. The prince of “the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12) is a devourer of human souls, who also delights in their physical destruction through depravity and disease. The technologically advanced societies on this planet may be able to ward off the latter, but they will reap the far worse temporal and eternal bondage of their souls. The culmination of this will take place under the demon possessed and empowered Antichrist. However, the preconditioning for that event, which began in the Garden of Eden and has become widespread in our day, will manifest itself in an increasingly demonized society and an apostate Christianity, as the Apostle Paul warns: “Now the [Holy] Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tm 4:1). The world, blinded and bound by “the god of this world,” is ripe for every form of contact with spirit entities and will reap its horrendous consequences.

Lord, give us a love for the truth, and a heart to rescue those in bondage to the lie. TBC

Quotable

“And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him” (Lk 24:14-16).

Does it not often happen that when we come together...our “communications” are anything but what they ought to be? It may be gloomily moping together over the depressing circumstances which surround us—the weather, the prospects of the country, the state of trade, our poor health, the difficulty of making both ends meet—anything and everything, in short, but the right thing.

Yes, and so occupied do we become with such things that our spiritual eyes are holden (restrained), and we do not take knowledge of the blessed One who in His tender faithful love is at our side, and He has to challenge our vagrant hearts with His pointed and powerful question, “What manner of communications are these that ye have?”

C. H. Mackintosh

Servant of Christ, stand fast amid the scorn
Of men who little know or love thy Lord;
Turn not aside from toil; cease not to warn,
Comfort and teach. Trust Him for thy
reward:

A few more moments’ suffering, and then
Cometh sweet rest from all thy heart’s deep
pain.

J.J.P.

Q&A

Question: You say that “the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (2 Pt 3:10) refers to the Rapture. If so, why does Revelation 16:15 use the same terminology (“Behold, I come as a thief...”) in relation to Armageddon?

Answer: Other scriptures (Mt 25:1-13; Lk 12:35-40, etc.) suggest that the Lord will come when the church is asleep and least expecting Him. Scripture contrasts the Rapture with the Second Coming to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon, which is certainly not as a thief.

Far from being caught by surprise, the Jews still alive at the end of the Great Tribulation will have no excuse for not knowing that the Lord is at the very door: “when ye shall see all these things [fulfilled], know that it [His coming] is near, even at the

doors” (Mt 24:33). In fact, everyone will know He is coming in judgment. Antichrist will go out with his armies to do battle with Christ: “I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse...” (Rv 19:19).

Certainly Revelation 16:14 (“the battle of that great day of God Almighty”) and 16:16 (“gathered them together into...Armageddon”) both refer to the battle in Revelation 19. That seems reason enough to assume that verse 15 also refers to Armageddon. But “Behold, I come as a thief...” cannot refer to Christ’s rescue of Israel at Armageddon, which is not as a thief—verse 15 can only refer to the Rapture.

Why would Christ suddenly change the subject to the Rapture between two verses about Armageddon? He seems to be warning that those who are not taken to heaven at the Rapture will be on the wrong side at Armageddon. I can think of no other reason for this interjection, which otherwise would create a contradiction that we know cannot exist.

Question: Calvinists complain that in *What Love Is This?* and also in your newsletter you make no distinction, but quote hyper-Calvinists as though they represent all Calvinists. Is that really fair?

Answer: Those claiming to be moderate Calvinists and who accuse others of being hyper-Calvinists actually believe the same thing but often cover up that fact by contradicting themselves and Scripture. It is like the controversy between Gordon H. Clark and Cornelius Van Til. Clark accurately said it was irrational to teach that God sincerely desired the salvation of those whom He had from a past eternity predestined to eternal torment. Clark was accused of making logic rule over Scripture. On the contrary, to pretend that Scripture says that God loves all mankind but has predestined multitudes whom He could have saved to eternal torment is twisting the Bible to further an unbiblical theory.

“Moderates” call it extreme Calvinism to say that John 3:16 means that God only loved the elect. They acknowledge, with Calvin himself, that “world” there really means “all mankind.” Yet they insist (with Calvin) that Christ died only for the elect. But it is both irrational and unscriptural to say that God loves *all* but gave Christ to die only for *some*. Paul declares that the supreme proof of God’s love is the substitutionary death of Christ (Rom 5:8). How then can it be said that God loves those for

whom Christ didn’t die, whom He never intended to save, but whom He predestined (reprobated) eternally to the lake of fire?

The “moderate” claims to reject “double predestination” as hyper-Calvinism, i.e., he only believes in predestination to heaven, not to hell. But if God predestined only some to heaven, has He not thereby consigned all others to hell? Semantics aside, the truth is that Calvinism and hyper-Calvinism work out the same in the end.

Arguments fly between the supralapsarians (who believe that the decree of election and reprobation predates man and sin) and the infralapsarians (who believe that the decree only came *after* man and sin). But James said, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning...” (Acts 15:18). God inhabits eternity. There is no before and after in His decrees, for they are as eternal as He is.

Spurgeon was guilty of similar contradictions. He scolded what he called “our older Calvinistic friends” (hyper-Calvinists) for changing Paul’s clear declaration that God wants “all men to be saved” (1 Tm 2:4) into “all sorts of men”¹—as do James White and other Calvinists today. Spurgeon accused the so-called hyper-Calvinists of turning “who will have all men to be saved” into “who *will not* have all men to be saved...”

Spurgeon went on to declare, “As it is *my wish*...so it is God’s wish that all men should be saved; for assuredly, he is not less benevolent than we are.”² Yet Spurgeon *at times* taught particular redemption, i.e., that “Christ had not died for all.” God sincerely desires all men to be saved, yet didn’t give His Son to die for all? This is unbiblical and irrational.

John MacArthur attempts to solve this embarrassing contradiction by claiming that there is a difference between “God’s will of decree (His eternal purpose) [and] God’s will of desire. There is a distinction between God’s desire and His eternal saving purpose, which must transcend His desires.” Where does the Bible make such a distinction—and how could it be? Calvinism denies that a man’s choice has anything to do with his eternal destiny, but that God sovereignly regenerates whom He will. Commenting on “desires all men to be saved” (1 Tm 2:4), MacArthur writes, “In His eternal purpose, He chose only the elect out of the world (John 17:6) and passed over the rest [whom He desired to save], leaving them to the consequences of their sin...”³

Here again we have an attempt by a “moderate” Calvinist to distance himself from “hyper-Calvinism.” But in doing so, he entraps himself in the absurdity that God

(who in Calvinism can save anyone He desires to save) predestined to eternal doom some whom He *desired* to save.

John Piper vainly attempts to recover sanity in the discussion by claiming that God has “two wills,” and that it is not “divine schizophrenia” for God to will that “all persons be saved (1 Tm 2:4) and...to elect [only] those who will actually be saved...”⁴ Incredibly, he says, “Every time the gospel is preached to unbelievers, it is a mercy of God that gives this opportunity for salvation.”⁵ Then preaching the gospel gives “opportunity for salvation” to those for whom Christ *didn't* die, whom God *never* had any intention of saving, and whom He, in fact, has *already predestined to eternity* in the lake of fire? This is one more oxymoron into which moderates fall in trying to distance themselves from “hyper-Calvinists”!

Sproul, also a “moderate,” admits that “If some people are not elected unto salvation then it would seem that God is not at all that loving toward them...it would have been more loving of God not to have allowed them to be born.”⁶ The phrases “not at all that loving” and “more loving” are meaningless regarding either love or God. Love is love. To escape this fact, J.I. Packer claims that God acts with different kinds of love toward different people.⁷ Calvinists point to the difference between a man's love for his wife or child and the love he has for a close friend. A similar difference is suggested between the love Christ has for the elect and His love for others.

We admit to different kinds of love—but it is *no kind of love at all* to predestine to eternal torment anyone who *could just as well* have been predestined to eternal bliss. Calvinists say God could have everyone in heaven if He so desired. That my love for a neighbor differs from my love for my wife is true. But if I murder my neighbor, such distinctions become meaningless: I have proved that I don't love my neighbor at all! The hyper-Calvinist is simply being consistent, refusing to resort to contradictions in order to cover up the truth about what Calvinists really believe.

Question: On page 233 in *What Love Is This?* you say, “Calvin seems to be denying the eternal Sonship of Christ and His eternal oneness and equality with the Father.” This is false. In the *Institutes* (I:xiii, 7), you will see that Calvin states unequivocally that “the Son...is himself the eternal and essential Word of the Father.”

Answer: Here we have one more example

of the contradictions into which Calvin fell at times. I quote him as follows: “he did not become the Son of God by living righteously, but was freely presented with this great honour, that he might afterwards make others partakers of his gifts” (III: xxii, 1.). For Christ to have “become the Son of God,” having been “freely presented with this great honour,” there must have been a time when He was not the Son and then became the Son.

Which statement are we to believe—the one at I: xiii, 7, or the one I just quoted? It is certainly as legitimate for me to quote one of these as for you to quote the other. I will let you try to reconcile this contradiction—and the many others.

Endnotes

- 1 C.H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol 26, 49-52.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Word Publishing, 1997), 1, 862.
- 4 John Piper, “Are There Two Wills In God?” in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Baker Books, 2000), 107.
- 5 John Piper and Pastoral Staff, “TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff” (Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 14.
- 6 R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986), 32.
- 7 J.I. Packer, *Still Sovereign*, op. cit., 283-84.

“Behold the Lamb of God”

Dave Hunt

Islam teaches that on the “last day” (which literally cannot come until Muslims have murdered all Jews on earth) all Muslims whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds will enter Paradise. Following the example of their prophet Muhammad, killing non-Muslims, especially Jews, is among a Muslim’s best deeds. Dying in the process of killing any non-Muslim in *jihad* is the only assurance of Paradise that Islam offers. This is the tragic lie that motivates suicide bombers in Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere to deliberately target defenseless women and children.

Many who call themselves “Christians,” both Protestants and Catholics (though they may eschew the slaughter of Jews), have basically the same hope of reaching heaven by doing more good (in their estimation) than evil. Even elementary justice recognizes the folly of such an expectation.

No earthly court of law would annul a speeding ticket because the defendant had driven more miles within the speed limit than exceeding it—or set a killer free and reward him for saving the lives of more people than he had murdered. Surely such an outrageous concept, repugnant to the human conscience, would not justify anyone in the eyes of the infinitely holy and righteous Judge of the universe!

No matter how many “good deeds” a person may have done, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23) and by His perfect standards are “condemned already” (Jn 3:18). Nor can the One who says, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal 3:6) and whose Word “For ever...is settled in heaven” (Ps 119:89) go back on His Word: “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the [Word] that is gone out of my lips” (Ps 89:34).

We know that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8) and that He desires to “have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4). But He is also infinitely holy and righteous and cannot condone sin. He has declared, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezk 18:4, 20); and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). That sentence stands. “He cannot deny himself” (2 Tm 2:13).

Then how can God pardon sinners from eternal punishment without violating His own perfect justice? Would He not encourage sin and become an accomplice by forgiving the guilty? And how could He cancel the judgment He has pronounced

without undermining His integrity?

Scripture declares that whoever breaks even one commandment “is guilty of all” (Jas 2:10). Why? Disobedience of any of the Ten Commandments, no matter how slight it may seem from our perspective, is rebellion against God—and that is the essence of all sin. That being the case, how could the infinitely holy God fulfill His loving desire to forgive sinners?

This is the central issue. Yet this vital question isn’t even asked in Islam or Hinduism or any of the other world religions. They all promote the popular delusion that an excess of good deeds outweighing the bad will tip the scales of justice in the sinner’s favor. But that isn’t justice!

Clearly, keeping the law perfectly in the future (even if possible) could never make up for breaking just one law in the past. Is the failure to recognize that fact the fatal flaw in all religions? In fact, no thinking person could persist in this delusion. Men knowingly wink at such religious fraud in

**...Behold the fire and the wood:
but where is the lamb for a burnt
offering?**

Genesis 22:7

order to drive from conscience the awful fear of the consequences of rebellion against a holy God.

No, this deceit is maintained by stifling the convicting truth—the truth that God has placed in every conscience. Pride refuses to face the terrible implications of man’s guilt before God. Nor can Islam, Buddhism, false “Christianity,” or *any* human religion afford to admit the truth. It would lose its power over the masses if it confessed that it had nothing to offer, and that God alone could provide forgiveness to sinners.

Forgiveness of sin? How is that possible? Guilt, punishment, and pardon are clearly matters of justice—and justice cannot be set aside even by love, mercy, or grace. God’s righteous justice requires that sin’s penalty be paid in full. Any religion claiming to influence God to forgive sin is a fraud!

The penalty for the violation of God’s perfect law, which God’s infinite justice demands, is necessarily infinite. Finite man would be separated from God, eternally suffering to pay that impossible debt.

Only God himself, who alone is infinite, could pay the infinite penalty. But how could He? He is not one of us. If only God

could become a man...! And that is exactly the wonderful plan of salvation that unfolds throughout the pages of God’s Holy Word, the Bible—and *only* there.

Biblical prophets foretold that God himself would come to this earth through a virgin birth: the seed of the woman “shall bruise thy [Satan’s] head” (Gn 3:15); “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]” (Is 7:14); “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...and his name shall be called...The mighty God, The everlasting Father...” (Is 9:6).

The Qur’an says that Allah is ever merciful and forgiving, yet he offers no just basis for such forgiveness. The Qur’an comes from one man, Muhammad, who claimed to be inspired by Allah speaking through Gabriel. Muslims rely upon Muhammad and the Qur’an, although the Qur’an itself exhorts the “Prophet” to confess his sins day and night (Surah 40:55, etc.) and declares that Allah changes his mind: “Such of our revelation as we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring [in its place] one better or the like thereof” (Surah 2:106); “We put one revelation in place of another...” (16:101).

In contrast, the Bible came to us via about 40 men over the course of 1,600 years. Thus for each of its writers we have 39 other witnesses from different cultures and different times in history. Most of them never met. The only thing they had in common was the claim of being inspired by Yahweh, the one true God of “Abraham...of Isaac...and of Jacob” (Ex 3:15, plus 11 more times), the “God of Israel” (Ex 5:1, plus 202 more times). Their writings are harmoniously integrated with intricate themes developed from one to another in a manner that proves divine inspiration.

One theme running throughout from Genesis to Revelation is the crimson thread of God’s plan of salvation. This is carefully unfolded in deepening revelation from writer to writer—and supported by hundreds of prophecies that have been fulfilled without change or failure. God has left no doubt that He himself has come to earth through the virgin birth to pay the infinite penalty His own justice demands for sin, providing a just and eternal salvation.

Salvation for sinful man was part of God’s plan from all eternity. He knew that Adam and Eve would believe the serpent and that all their descendants would continue in that rebellion. God’s promise of forgiveness, however, is continually renewed through His prophets.

The means of salvation comes ever more

clearly into focus through the unfolding picture presented in the Old Testament sacrificial system. It begins with the sacrificing of animals to provide the skins with which God clothed Adam and Eve after expelling them from the Garden. It was a temporary covering, not full forgiveness: "...the blood of bulls and of goats [can't] take away sins" (Heb 10:4).

The promised Savior was called the Messiah. That He would have to give His own life for the sins of mankind was pictured repeatedly in the sacrifices of innocent animals—especially the offering of a spotless, unprotesting lamb. We first meet the lamb as Abel's sin offering. Cain's insistence upon offering, instead, the efforts of his own hands was a clear rejection of God's salvation and a prototype of all religions that have followed. The persecution throughout human history of those who obey God was also foreseen in Cain's murder of his brother, Abel, because Abel's slain lamb was accepted while Cain's good works were not.

Repeatedly, a sacrificed lamb pictured the promise of the true Lamb of God, who would give "himself a ransom for all..." (1 Tm 2:6). That the Lamb would be the very Son of God was also foreseen. As Abraham led his son Isaac up Mount Moriah to sacrifice him there at God's command, believing that God would raise him from the dead, Isaac asked, "...where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" In faith, Abraham responded, "God will provide himself a lamb..." (Gn 22:8).

That promise runs through the Bible: "the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me" (Is 48:16); "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn 4:14). Failing to understand their own prophets, and thinking that the Messiah would immediately take the throne of David, most Jews didn't realize that He had to come first as the promised Lamb to be crucified for their sins in fulfillment of the Levitical offerings. Only upon His Second Coming in power and glory would He establish an earthly kingdom.

The sacrifice of a lamb and sprinkling of its blood upon the "two side posts and on the upper door post" of their houses (Ex 12:7-13) caused the destroying angel to pass over the Israelites when God's judgment fell upon Egypt, bringing Israel's deliverance from cruel slavery, and still celebrated as Passover by Jews worldwide.

Sadly, exactly as the prophets foretold, Israel mocked and crucified the "holy one of God," whom even the demons recognized (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34)! Few heeded John the

Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29).

In contrast, there is *no* just basis in Islam for forgiveness of sin. And even in Catholicism, which makes much of Christ's crucifixion, its sufficiency is denied by the claim that in the "sacrifice of the Mass" He is being perpetually offered. Thus the penalty is never paid on Catholic altars. For if it were, as Scripture says, the Mass would have "ceased to be offered...the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb 10:2).

The continual offering of the supposedly "transubstantiated" body and blood of Christ on Rome's altars rejects clear biblical declarations that "Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many....[W]e are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once*...after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins for ever, [He] sat down on the right hand of God....[B]y *one* offer-

And I beheld...a Lamb as it had been slain...

Revelation 5:6

ing he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified....[T]here is no more offering for sin" (Heb 9:25-10:18). Every attempt to add to or to perpetuate Christ's once-for-all sacrifice on the cross is a denial of Christ's triumphant cry, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30).

As in false "Christianity," so in all the world's religions, the penalty for sin is never paid but hangs over worshipers' heads like a sword of Damocles: "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom 3:20). Only Christ could and did pay the penalty of sin—but how can believing in Him justify a sinner? Paul confronts that very question: how could God "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:26)? He answers that there is nothing we can do but accept the sacrifice of Christ, which God has accepted on our behalf, and thereby we are "justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:28): "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31)—"for by grace are ye saved through faith...not of works..." (Eph 2:8-10).

Many who claim to believe in Christ insist upon adding their own efforts in partial payment for their salvation. But salvation is a gift: "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23). To attempt to pay for salvation

with church membership, prayers, or good deeds is an insult to Christ, who paid the full price—and is a rejection of the gift of God's grace.

Some claim that Christ did not die for all mankind but only for those predestined to salvation, leaving the rest to eternal torment. Yet every picture of Christ's sacrifice in the Old Testament was for *all* Israel. But every Jew was not saved, because all did not *believe*. Salvation is by faith.

The Passover was not only for all Israel but for all Egyptians also, who would in faith kill a lamb and apply its blood to their houses. The manna was for all Israel; no one was left out. So it was with the water out of the rock: "[they] did all drink the same spiritual drink [from the rock]...and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:4). And so it was with the Day of Atonement, all Levitical sacrifices, etc. These were for all Jews and for any strangers who would believe.

There was never a hint that any sacrifice or other provision from God was for only a certain elect group.

We need not speculate whether John 3:16 means that God so loved all the world that He gave Christ to die for *all*. Christ settles that issue by introducing His cross to Nicodemus with another example from the Old Testament: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:14, 15). Indisputably, being healed by looking to the serpent, exactly like all other Old Testament provisions pointing to Christ, was not for a limited number within Israel but for *all who would believe*.

So it is with every picture of the coming Lamb of God. Isaiah declares, "all we like sheep have gone astray..." (Is 53:6). This is an indictment of every person in Israel, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). In equally clear language, Isaiah adds the good news: "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all..." (Is 53:6). Just as *all* have gone astray, so Christ died for *all*: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (1 Tm 1:15). Satan tries to snatch these "good tidings of great joy...to all people" (Lk 2:10) out of the hearts of those who hear it, "lest they should believe and be saved (Lk 8:12).

Let us stand upon God's Word, proclaiming to *all* the world that a Savior was born in Bethlehem, "the lamb of God," to bear away the sin of the world; that He died on the cross for the sins of *all*; and that the gift of eternal life is offered freely to *all* who will receive it in childlike faith. **TBC**

Quotable

We [Arab leaders] brought disaster upon...Arab refugees...bringing pressure to bear upon them to leave [Israel in 1948]... We have rendered them dispossessed... accustomed them to begging...[lowered] their moral and social level...We exploited them...in the service of political purposes.

Khaled Al-Azm, Prime Minister of Syria, *Memoirs*, 1:386-87, cited in *From Time Immemorial*, Joan Peters, p. 16 (see offering list)

We...threw them into prisons [refugee camps] similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live.

Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), former prime minister of the Palestinian Authority, *Wall Street Journal*, 6/5/2003

In demanding the return of the refugees to Palestine [i.e., Israel], the Arabs intend that they shall return as masters....More explicitly: they intend to annihilate the state of Israel.

Muhammad Saleh ed-Din, Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs, *Al-Misri*, 10/11/1949, cited in Peters, p. 22

Q&A

Question (composite of several): In the October Q&A you wrote: “Jesus is called the ‘second man’ (1 Corinthians 15:47) and the ‘last Adam’ (v. 45). Just as Adam needed no mother to contribute ‘half of the genes,’ neither did Christ....Although Mary’s womb and blood contributed to the nourishment and growth of the One to whom she gave birth, she had nothing to do with the physical origin of this ‘second man.’ He was created in her womb just as God created Adam.”

Yet Scripture never refers to Him as a created being but as the One through whom all was created. Furthermore, Scripture compels us to believe that Mary was not just an incubator or surrogate mother to Jesus. How else can we explain the many references to “the seed of the woman...seed of Abraham...seed of David,” etc.? Why is she called His “mother” if she contributed no more to His human origin than Joseph?

Perhaps genes from Mary affected by the Fall involving defects, disease and death were repaired to their original perfection, that God’s Lamb would be “without blemish.”

Moreover, the titles of “second man” and “last Adam” refer to Christ in resurrection, not incarnation. This is abundantly clear by their context in 1 Corinthians 15.

Answer: Yes, it is in 1 Corinthians 15 that Paul refers to Jesus as “the last Adam” (v. 45) and “second man” (v. 47). However, the Resurrection is not the only subject. Moreover, if “second man” and “last Adam,” refer to Christ in resurrection, who was the “first man” to be resurrected? Surely not Adam.

Christ is likened to Adam in two ways: 1) He is the “second man” who was sinless, without father or mother—perfect man as God intended man to be. No one since Adam deserved to be called “man” until Christ was virgin born. 2) Christ is the “last Adam” because He is the progenitor of a new race. It is not through His resurrection alone that He is either the “second man” or “last Adam,” but through His sinless origin, perfect life and redemption of sinners—and His resurrection. Certainly these two phrases do not derive their meaning *exclusively* from the Resurrection.

You suggest that “genes from Mary affected by the Fall...were repaired to their original perfection, that God’s Lamb would be ‘without blemish.’” That seems far more speculative than my belief that “a body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5) indicates that Christ’s body was created supernaturally in Mary’s womb, just as Adam’s was created by God. It seems biblical and reasonable that Christ’s physical perfection comes from God’s creation of His body rather than from some unnatural perfection in Mary, a sinner in need of salvation.

I don’t know the creative process that God used in preparing Christ’s body, but I don’t think it was a mere “fertilization” of Mary’s egg. Whatever the process, it was supernatural. Nor would the phrase “the seed of the woman” require Mary’s egg. That term is used a number of times to refer simply to “offspring”: Gn 13:16; 17:10; Lv 20:3,4; 21:21; Jer 22:28-30; Mt 22:24; Jn 8:33, etc. Likewise, “of the seed of David” (Rom 1:3; 2 Tm 2:8) would be satisfied by Mary being His mother through carrying Him in her womb and giving birth to Him, without any genes coming from her. Why would that be necessary?

In no case am I suggesting that Christ was a created “creature.” We are talking about the body, not His eternal Being. I think the view that Christ’s body was created by God in Mary’s womb is implied by such phrases as “a body has thou *prepared* for me” (Heb 10:5), “the Word was *made* flesh” (Jn 1:14) and “*made* a little lower than

the angels” (Ps 8:5; Heb 2:9)—and no more suggests that Christ was a “creature” than do these statements. Your suggestion of an alteration in Mary’s genes so that Christ could be sinless is close to Catholicism’s error that Mary had to be sinless in order to give birth to the sinless Son of God. She mothered the body of His incarnation; she is not the mother of the eternal Son of God. She is His mother by carrying Him to full term and giving birth to this One who is truly man, yet truly God.

Gabriel’s statement, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee” (Lk 1:35), is compatible with my view and certainly does not deny it. Surely Gabriel’s words to Joseph, “that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Mt 1:20), could as well be a creative act as the fertilization of an egg by the Holy Spirit. To me, the latter seems to lessen the miracle of a truly virgin birth.

Anyway, we agree that our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, eternally co-equal and co-existent with the Father, was supernaturally given a body and thus became man in Mary’s womb without ceasing to be God. I think it is splitting hairs to demand that “prepared” can’t mean “created.” We don’t know the process by which Christ’s body was “prepared,” only that it was a supernatural, miraculous, special act of God. That sounds like creation to me. And why not? Certainly “creating” Christ’s body in Mary’s womb would no more make Him a “creature” than “preparing” it. I can’t explain either, nor can I distinguish them.

Question: The following is a post that Phil Johnson of MacArthur’s radio program *Grace to You* put on a web page called “ezboard” on 8/22/03: “Dave Hunt distributes a videotape of a lecture on Calvinism he gave at Greg Laurie’s church, in which Hunt says this: ‘Don’t get angry with me if I quote someone. I didn’t say it; they said it....For example, a good friend, John MacArthur, Jr.... Ten years ago you wouldn’t have known he was a Calvinist, but it comes out more and more....He wrote a book in 1996 called *The Love of God*. Basically, it tells you God doesn’t love everybody. And his study Bible came out in 1997—it’s a Calvinist treatise.’ Of course, Hunt is lying. MacArthur’s book expressly argues against the hyper-Calvinist notion that God is utterly devoid of any love for the reprobate. But Hunt deliberately gives the impression that he is quoting MacArthur verbatim.”

Do you have any comments?

Answer: First of all, no rational person would imagine that I am “quoting MacArthur verbatim” in saying that “*basically* it [MacArthur’s book] tells you God doesn’t love everybody.” Much less would anyone imagine I am “deliberately giv[ing] the impression that [I am] quoting MacArthur verbatim.” Yet Johnson has made the same accusation repeatedly, including in a letter to T.A. McMahon, adding, “It is precisely that sort of deliberate misrepresentation...that has caused so many people to question Mr. Hunt’s integrity.”

In specific response, I wrote the following to Johnson in a letter dated June 29, 2003—seven weeks before he repeated the same false accusation on his website: “...of course he [MacArthur], like other Calvinists, repeatedly states that God loves everyone. In spite of that, his book, *The Love of God*, basically says that God doesn’t love all. Yes, he says, ‘God’s love is for the world in general, the human race, all humanity’ (p. 86). As evidence, MacArthur says, ‘...the fact that God promises to forgive...and even pleads with sinners to repent—proves His love toward them’ (p. 15). He can’t be serious! It proves God’s love for Him to plead with spiritual corpses who can neither hear nor respond and whom He has not sovereignly chosen to believe in Him (*Saved Without A Doubt*, pp. 58, 59) and from whom He withholds the grace to believe and for whom Christ didn’t even die?! Please tell me in what way and how God loves those who ‘by his eternal and immutable counsel...it was his pleasure to doom to destruction’ (Calvin, *Institutes*, III: xxi, 7)! You dare to call that love?!”

“Of course, John MacArthur is basically saying that God doesn’t love everyone. If ‘God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom 5:8), then how does He show love to those for whom Christ didn’t die and whom He has predestined to eternal torment? That this is the teaching of Calvinism, I document by quoting many Calvinists. Here are just a few: ‘[B]y his eternal providence they were before their birth doomed to eternal destruction’ (*Institutes* III: xxiii, 3); ‘...is he not able to do the same for others [i.e., save the non-elect]? Assuredly He is’ (A.W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 50); ‘If some people are not elected unto salvation then it would seem that God is not at all that loving toward them’ (R.C. Sproul, *Chosen By God*, p. 32); ‘Calvin taught that God...hated the reprobate and planned their sin and damnation’ (Robert A. Morey, *Studies in the Atonement*, p. 296); ‘some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life’ (Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 104); ‘this view intensifies God’s

love, by limiting it only to those who believe [what a contradiction!]. That sure beats the indiscriminate, general benevolence we seem to be hearing much about today’ (Michael Scott Horton, *Putting Amazing Back Into Grace*, p. 96), etc., etc.

“If a man claims to be loving and kind, seemingly demonstrates it by providing shelter and food, and then tortures and murders the person he housed and fed, would you credit him with loving that person? How can MacArthur say that God *loves* those whom He *could* save but instead has predestined to damnation? Rationally, no matter what else MacArthur says, he *is* teaching that basically God doesn’t love everyone. Refute my reasoning, if you can, but don’t call me a liar!”

“You claim that I say that God is obligated to save everyone. Apparently you haven’t given my book a fair reading either. God is not obligated to do anything for anyone. I say that repeatedly. It is not a matter or obligation but of love—and love does not depend upon obligation.

“In *What Love Is This?* I quote a number of Calvinists (Piper, Packer, et al.) who attempt to show that God loves those whom He has predestined to eternal damnation. I spend several pages showing that it isn’t rational to insist that God loves *anyone* whom He has predestined to eternal torment before they were even born. If you think it is, *please explain to me how and in what way God ‘loves’ such persons.*”

“MacArthur says God loves everyone. But his *basic teaching* is that God only loves the elect. Yes, he says that God loves different people in different ways—but it isn’t love *at all* to withhold salvation from *any* whom He *could* save, much less to predestine them to eternal torment before they were even born. If you disagree with me, at least be fair enough to present my biblical argument and then to disprove it—but don’t accuse me of dishonesty and misrepresentation and distortion! You are the one who is distorting my position.

“You argue, ‘Either Spurgeon spoke “unequivocally” or he “contradicted himself.” Both cannot be true.’ Of course both can be true! That’s why it’s a contradiction. He unequivocally says one thing and then says the opposite. You’re the expert on Spurgeon. You know his contradictions. I present a number of them in my book and have given you examples in this correspondence. But you accuse me of misrepresenting Spurgeon and being unwilling to admit it. That isn’t true.

“You accuse me of ‘imputing to [Calvinists] things they have never said, and refusing to let their own words speak for

themselves....’ Again, a harsh accusation and a very serious one. But you offer no evidence, no proof, no documentation, no quotes. Yet I offer hundreds of quotes of dozens of Calvinists with references so readers can check the context for themselves. I let their own words speak for them, then contrast that with God’s Word, which says the contrary.”

Phil Johnson has never responded to my sincere request for him to explain how God could truly love those whom He has chosen not to save, even though He could save all. The very title of my book, *What Love Is This?*, asks a sincere question to which no Calvinist has yet given a rational or biblical response.

"Road Map" to Armageddon

Dave Hunt

The "Quartet" of Bush, Putin, UN, and EU is determined, through a division of land, to bring a "just and lasting peace" into the Middle East between Israel and her neighbors. Assuming they are sincere and not just working for their own interests, their mental state must be on a par with those who gave the Nobel Peace Prize to Yasser Arafat, a mass murderer, habitual liar, and the world's leading terrorist, who has done more than anyone to destroy world peace. How thankful the West should be that Al Gore (who repeatedly, as vice president, warmly received Arafat into the White House) is not there now as president!

In fact, Muhammad, whose word cannot be changed, imposed upon every Muslim in every age the duty of exterminating all Jews. Only then can the "Last Day" (the climax of Islam) arrive. That fact makes "peace" between Israel and Muslims impossible—ever. Any apparent "peace" agreements signed by Muslim leaders are not worth the ink in their signatures! In the ten years prior to the signing of the Oslo Accords, 211 Israelis were killed by terrorists; in the ten years since, about 1,200 have been killed and 5,000 wounded.

No Arab/Muslim political or religious leader can contradict Islam's founding prophet. Thus to continue to pursue a negotiated "peace" in the Middle East is the height of folly! Yet Western political and religious leaders continue to hold out that vain hope and to force concessions upon Israel that pave the road to her destruction!

Modern Israel occupies a relatively small piece of land. Arabs possess 700 times as much, with vast amounts of oil and minerals. Why are they determined to possess tiny Israel too? *Islam* says it belongs to them!

A sovereign Jewish state proves that Muhammad was a false prophet, and that Allah is not God. Muslims must destroy Israel!

Both the Bible and Qur'an agree that 4,000 years ago God gave the Promised Land to Abraham and his Israeli descendants. Yet, the Arabs claim ownership through Ishmael, Abraham's first son. But God declared that not Ishmael, but Isaac, who would be born to Sarah, was the son and heir He had promised (Gn 17:15-21).

Like his father, Isaac also had two sons, Esau and Jacob; and again the Lord rejected the firstborn and gave the inheritance to the second—so the inheritance flows from

Abraham to Isaac and on to Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. Twelve times Yahweh calls Himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," declaring, "this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Ex 3:15). More than 200 times, from Exodus 5:1 to Luke 1:68, Yahweh is called "the LORD God of Israel."

Muslims claim that the Bible was corrupted by later revisions. However, the Bible's thousands of manuscripts, historical and prophetic accuracy, and the intricate integration of themes from Genesis to Revelation (none of which the Qur'an can boast!) reduce such a claim to nonsense. Furthermore, the Qur'an itself *supports* what the Bible says concerning Israel's claim to the Promised Land:

"Remember Allah's favor to you... He...gave you what he gave no other of his creatures. O my people, go into the Holy Land which Allah hath ordained for you" (5: 20, 21); "We made a covenant of old with the Children of Israel" (Surah 5:70); "We brought the children of Israel across the [Red] sea, and Pharaoh with his hosts pursued them..." (10:91). "...[B]ut we drowned him and those with him all together. And we said unto the Children of Israel...dwell in the land [and] hereafter...we shall bring you...out of various nations" (17:103, 104); "[W]e delivered the children of Israel...from Pharaoh... We chose them, purposely, above all creatures" (44:30-32); "favored them above all peoples" (45:16); etc.

The territory God gave to Abram (later renamed Abraham by God) and to his descendants was not "Palestine," but Canaan: "Into the land of Canaan they came" (Gn 12:5, 6). There were no "Palestinians" from whom those who take that name today claim to be descended: "the Canaanite and Perizzite dwelled then in the land" (13:7).

Abram remained there the rest of his life: "...Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan" (13:12). God told him, "For all the land...to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (13:15); "...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Gn 17:8).

Abram settled in Hebron in Canaan and "who built there an altar unto the LORD [Yahweh]" (13:18)—not to Allah. Ten years later, Ishmael (the product of Abraham's and Sarah's unbelief) was born to him through Sarah's maid, Hagar. Fourteen years later, when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90, Isaac was born in Hebron to Abraham by his wife Sarah, exactly as God had promised.

Thirty-seven years later, at the age of 127, Sarah died. Abraham was still living

in Hebron, having been there more than 70 years. To bury Sarah, he bought the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite (23: 1-20).

Thirty-eight years later, at the age of 175, Abraham died. Isaac and Ishmael buried him in Machpelah next to Sarah. Isaac lived in Hebron 110 more years. Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah were also buried in the cave of Machpelah.

Abraham had entered Canaan 400 years after the flood and 300 years after the Tower of Babel. It was sparsely settled, the land was his for the taking, and he, Isaac, Jacob, and their families, lived there more than 300 years before temporarily moving to Egypt to escape a famine. There, for 400 years they were slaves, just as God had said, until the Canaanites became so wicked that He was forced to destroy them. God used Israel for that task, giving them Canaan as an everlasting heritage (Gn 15:13-16), as He had promised.

God referred to Isaac as Abraham's "only son" (Gn 22:2). Thus Ishmael was not buried in Machpelah, but where he had settled far away, having "died in the presence of all his brethren" (Gn 25:17, 18). No Arab or Muslim was ever buried in Machpelah.

Arabs can't claim a pure descent from Ishmael. Ishmaelites intermarried with Midianites (Jgs 8:5,12,22,24), Edomites (Gn 28:9), and Hittites (26:34; 36:1-4). In contrast, during 400 years as slaves in Egypt, the Israelites became an identifiable ethnic people who were led *en masse* into Canaan. We know who they are today.

Denying Israel's God-given heritage, Yitzhak Rabin, who had secretly promised Clinton he would give up the Golan, declared, "The Bible is not a geography book." Shortly thereafter, he was assassinated, preventing him from giving to Syria the most strategically vital part of Israel.

It was not Arabs but Hebrews who settled in ancient Hebron and all of Canaan, creating Israel, whose kings ruled from Jerusalem over an empire stretching from the Sinai to the Euphrates. Around 600 B.C. they were conquered by the Babylonians and scattered to many nations.

Chased out of their land under God's judgment in the Babylonian dispersion, and later twice by the Romans, numbers of Jews always returned. This despised people continued living in Israel under the oppressive heel of various occupying foreign invaders for another 2,500 years. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared itself an independent nation once again. The Jews once again possessed their own land, as God had promised—but only that small

fraction of it that had been allotted by the UN partition on November 29, 1947.

In contrast, the Arabs *never* lived in Canaan, but settled in the Arabian Peninsula. Not until the seventh century A.D., through the Islamic invasions, did Arabs come in any significant numbers into the land of Israel, which, in A.D. 135, the Romans had angrily renamed Syria-Palestina, after Israel's chief enemy, the Philistines.

The so-called Palestinians of today are Arabs whose ancestors came from Arabia. They are a Semitic people, with no relationship either to the Canaanites or the Philistines, who were not Semites. It is a blatant lie that today's "Palestinians" (who at the same time claim descent from Ishmael) are descended from the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan, which God promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their heirs.

David was first crowned king in Hebron and ruled there seven years before moving his throne to Jerusalem. This ancient city has no significance to Arabs/Muslims. Yet they have built a mosque at Machpelah, have forbidden access to Jews, and, at various times in history, have massacred Jews living there. Today Muslims are attempting to force out the few remaining Jews. They claim all of "Palestine" and state that Israelis are occupying land that belongs to them! And this fraud is the foundation for a so-called road map to peace!

President Bush, as a Christian, ought to tremble at God's solemn warning that He will destroy all who *divide* His land (Joel 3:2). Yes, *His* land: "the land shall not be sold [or traded] for ever: for the land is mine" (Lv 25:23)! Quartet, take heed: you are defying the God of Israel and will not escape unpunished!

Those who make "peace" by taking land from Israel, which God gave her, will be destroyed: "[A]ll that burden themselves with it [Jerusalem] shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it" (Zec 12:3).

On September 13, 1993, under the triumphant gaze of a smiling President Clinton, Arafat signed, with Yitzak Rabin, the Oslo Accords on the White House lawn. The ink was scarcely dry when Arafat began publicly apologizing in Arabic to Muslims around the world. In fear for his life (remember Anwar Sadat's murder by fellow Muslims for making "peace" with Israel), Arafat pleaded that he was only following the example of Muhammad and the Islamic law he established.

In A.D. 628, Muhammad led a few of his followers (recent converts to the new

religion of Islam) from Medina back to Mecca, hoping to join thousands of pagan Arabs in the *hajj*. This annual pilgrimage to the Ka'aba (Islam, incredibly, claims it was built by Abraham and Ishmael!), with its elaborate ceremonies, had been practiced by pagan Arab tribes for centuries before Muhammad was born. He was turned back by the Meccans, but both parties signed a 10-year ceasefire known as the Treaty of Hudaibiya, as part of which Muhammad relinquished his claim to being "the prophet of Allah."

This treaty allowed Muhammad the next year (A.D. 629) to lead a group of Muslims in the *hajj*. They joined thousands of "infidel" Arabs in the same pagan ceremonies that their ancestors had practiced for centuries (See *TBC* Q&A July '03 for the rituals).

In 630, Muhammad broke the ceasefire on a pretext and took over Mecca. At first, he allowed pagan Arabs to continue in the *hajj*, mingling with the new Muslims in the ancient rituals. Then he gave the pagans four months in which to convert to Islam or be killed. Thereafter, no non-Muslims were allowed into Mecca, as is true today.

So it is with Ramadan, which President Bush (like previous U.S. presidents) and other western leaders naively honor as a "holy Muslim holiday." Beginning with the first sighting of the new moon in the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar, Ramadan was celebrated by pagan Arabs in honor of Allah, the moon god, for centuries before Islam. To the *hajj* and Ramadan, Muhammad added the horror of *jihād* and commanded Muslims to take over the world. That belief has cost millions of innocent lives and drives terrorism today.

Those promoting the Road Map to Peace are following a history of good intentions on the part of Israel and the West, which invariably have been betrayed by the Arabs/Muslims and have steadily made Israel's position more untenable. American presidents, one after another, have cajoled Israel into compromise after compromise with Arab/Muslim leaders that could only have been uproarious jokes as far as the latter were concerned. Always, the good intentions of Israel and the West have led only to their further humiliation.

Pursuing their impossible peace initiatives, world leaders defy the God of Israel and of the Bible. As the "heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing [and] the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Ps 2:1-2), those with "ears to hear" (Dt 29:4; Ezk 12:2; Mt 11:15; 13:9, etc.) detect the terrifying sound

of laughter: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision" (Ps 2:4).

We are in the late stages of the awesome fulfillment of Bible prophecy, behind which lies the omnipotent hand of God himself: "*I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem...*" (Zec 12:2, 3).

That remarkable prophesy is being fulfilled today. *Never before in history* have all those surrounding Israel been united to destroy her. This significant development in history and Bible prophecy has come about through the rise of Islam.

Bush wants a "democratic, viable" Palestinian state living in peace with Israel, but no democracy exists, *or can exist*, in a Muslim society. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. Bush is trying to create democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq. If that could happen, it would shake the entire Muslim world. Islam cannot survive in freedom. No wonder there is such fanatical opposition from Muslims worldwide, even for the capture of that sadistic mass torturer and murderer, Saddam Hussein. Muslims hold 80 percent of the world's political prisoners.

America's precipitous withdrawal from Lebanon 20 years ago, fleeing from known Syrian/Iranian-sponsored terrorists instead of pursuing them, encouraged the terrorism rampant today worldwide. Can Bush really, with terrorist partners, stand up against the evil of terrorism? When will he admit that it is endemic to Islam? Will the strategic (politically correct?) time ever come for telling the truth? It remains to be seen whether the U.S. can eliminate terrorism, when our State Department secretly opposes Israel and favors Arabs.

The Bible foretells a false peace, by which Antichrist will "destroy many" (Dn 8:24,25). Tragically, Israel will be deceived, tear down the security wall now being built, and drop its guard, opening the door to "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 30:7) and Armageddon (Ezk 38:11,12,14,16). Two-thirds of all Jews worldwide will be killed (Zec 13:8,9). Those who survive will believe in Christ and be saved when He rescues them and they recognize the crucified, resurrected Lord as their Messiah and God (Zec 12:10; Mt 24:13; Rom 11:25,26).

We must not abandon Afghanistan or Iraq. I receive letters from missionaries there who say, "The minute the American and British troops pull out, we are dead!" It is time for Christians to pray as never before—and to do all they can to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to both Muslims and

Quotable

Wolfe’s smooth, engaging book chronicles the rise of the megachurch, both its sociology and its theology. While virtue is important, sin is couched in the language of therapy, not theology. Wolfe himself, a non-believing Jew, writes: “But somehow I am not pleased with this retreat from sin, for the ease with which American religious believers adopt nonjudgmental language and psychological understanding of wrongdoing is detrimental to anyone....”

David Wolpe, senior rabbi at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, in his review of Alan Wolfe’s book, *The Transformation of American Religion*

[TBC: That an unbelieving Jew and a rabbi are concerned with the decline of biblical truth in the professing evangelical church in America ought to sound an alarm for all Christians.]

Research continues to reveal a steady theological collapse among professing Christians in America. Secularists, liberals, and Muslims do not need to fear conservative Christians, says Dave Shiflett in *The Wall Street Journal*. They [conservative Christians] don’t really believe that there is such a thing as the heathen, tending to believe instead that every religion is equally valid.

Gene Edward Veith, “Unbelieving born-again,” *World*, 12/6/03

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof [i.e., the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation]...they will not endure sound doctrine....

2 Tim 3:5; Rom 1:16; 2 Tim 4:3

Q&A

Question: I agree with your statement in the October TBC that “the genes the mother and father contribute to the body have nothing to do with the spirit and soul that the Holy Spirit creates in each body at conception.” Wouldn’t that mean, however, that God is responsible for creating a soul with a sin nature? Something is wrong here. Can you help me?

Answer: God created Adam’s and Eve’s soul and spirit, but He did not give them a sin nature. They sinned because they had the power of choice and rebelled against God. The Holy Spirit indwelt the spirit

within Adam and Eve. When they sinned, the Holy Spirit withdrew, leaving them spiritually dead. Their offspring, therefore, had souls and spirits *without* the indwelling Holy Spirit, having inherited spiritual death from Adam and Eve.

Question: The same logic must be applied to the phrase, “thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Ps 2:7; Heb 1:5, 5:5) as you apply to Calvin’s declaration that “in the very head of the Church we have a bright mirror of free election...[Christ] did not become the Son of God by living righteously, but was freely presented with this great honor....” Why do you insist upon Calvin being self-contradictory on this point when he was using a biblical phrase?...I would encourage you to completely drop that section [on p. 233 in *What Love Is This?*] accusing Calvin of such damnable and sickening heresy....

Answer: Thanks for your concern for accuracy in my book *What Love Is This?* I must, however, disagree with your defense of Calvin’s likening what he calls Christ’s alleged “election” to sonship, to election of certain people to salvation. You quote, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Ps 2:7), from several translations (one would be enough), as well as the quotation of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5.

You then claim that this statement refers to a time when “Christ became the Son of God.” When would that have been? It must have been in eternity past, because Christ was clearly the Son of God before being born into the world (“and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” - Prv 30:4; “a child is born [the babe through Mary]...a Son is given [the eternal Son of God incarnate] - Is 9:6). But there is no point in eternity that could be called “this day.” Time began with the creation of the universe (Gn 1:1). Furthermore, we agree that Christ, who is “the same yesterday, and to day and for ever” (Heb 13:8), is eternally the Son of God. Therefore, there could have been no time when “Christ became the Son of God” as Calvin states and you contend in his defense.

Do we then have a contradiction in Scripture? Of course not. Psalm 2:7 is not referring to Christ becoming the Son of God at all. That never happened. He *always* is the Son of God. Paul tells us that the phrase in Psalm 2:7, “this day have I begotten thee,” refers to His resurrection: “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up [resurrected] Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art

my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Acts 13:33). This agrees with His being called “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18).

Sadly, Calvin was simply wrong on this point as on many others.

Question: We appreciate your ministry so much. You have been a great help to us. Could you please address the church growth movement, specifically the purpose driven church and [purpose driven] life branch of it. This has come into our church and we are more than uneasy about it. Please help us understand what is going on in this huge movement that seems to be exploding all over the world.

Answer: I deal with this somewhat in next month’s article. It is so important, however, that either Tom or I will have to do a full article (or perhaps more) dealing with it in depth. We cannot give at the moment the full answer which your thoughtful question deserves. Please be patient with us.

Question: Why does Revelation 17:8 (and maybe Revelation 13:8, depending on the translation used) refer to those “whose names were not written in the book of life from the creation of the world...”? Could that, coupled with Psalm 69:28, Revelation 3:5, and Revelation 22:19 mean that the names of all mankind are in the Book of Life, then later blotted out one by one as each Christ-rejecter crosses the line of final renunciation? I always thought that only after we believed the gospel were our names written in the Book of Life. If this were not the case, wouldn’t Calvinists say, “See! He has already chosen those whom He will save; their names are already written down before the foundation of the earth!”?

Answer: Several verses speak of God blotting or not blotting names out of the book of life: “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life” (Rv 3:5); “God shall take away his part out of the book of life” (Rv 22:19); “...if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written...Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book” (Ex 32:32,33).

These references to blotting out of the book of life allow only two possibilities: 1) everyone’s name is written in the book of life from eternity past, indicating God’s desire for all to be saved, until they have irrevocably rejected Christ, when their name is blotted out; or 2) when a person gets saved, his name is placed in the book

of life for the first time, and when He later turns against Christ, his name is blotted out. Neither of these fits Calvinism. The first denies that God intends to save only a select elect, and the second denies the eternal security of the redeemed.

References to those “whose names *are* in the book of life” (Phil 4:3; Rv 21:27) and those “whose names *are not* written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rv 13:8; 17:8; 20:15) offer no clue as to how or why names are written or are not written there. They only tell us that at the end of history some names will be found and some names will not be found written therein. But the fact that names can be and in fact are blotted out of the book of life is clear.

Of the two alternatives above, since the second one, which allows for some of the redeemed to lose their salvation, contradicts Christ’s clear promise (“shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” - Jn 5:24), we must opt for the first. Comparing all of the verses, we can only conclude that, in keeping with God’s desire that all be saved, from eternity past every person’s name is written in the book of life of the Lamb, slain from before the foundation of the world. Whose names are blotted out? The names of those who refuse to yield to the wooing of the Holy Spirit. For this sin, there is no forgiveness (Mk 3:28,29; Lk 12:10).

Thus there is nothing in what Scripture says about the “book of life” to give any comfort to Calvinists, but only discomfort.

Question: Why does Revelation 18:24 say that in her (the Roman Church) was found the blood of prophets, and of saints and of all that were slain upon the earth? Clearly some people were slain by robbers, wild animals, Muslim terrorists, etc.

Answer: Christ makes a similar statement: “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth...all...shall come upon this generation” (Mt 23:35,36). Why would one generation be considered guilty for all the murders committed against the “righteous”? For the same reason that by simply partaking of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden, and death came upon all mankind. No matter how small their “crime” may seem, it was rebellion against God—and that is the essence of all sin.

Moreover, Christ is not speaking of one particular generation of people living at any particular time in history. He used

“generation” in a descriptive sense: “generation of vipers” (Mt 23:33); “faithless and perverse generation” (Mt 17:17; Mk 9:19; Lk 9:41); “wicked generation” (Mt 12:45); “evil and adulterous generation” (Mt 12:39), etc. Those who are characterized by unbelief, evil, and rebellion against God are guilty of every sin. Thus James says, “whosoever shall...offend in one point [of the law], he is guilty of all” (Jas 2:10). Breaking even one of the Ten Commandments in any way is rebellion against God, which could not be forgiven by a righteous, holy God except by Christ’s payment for sin upon the cross. Thus it cannot be said that Christ died only for the sins of certain people and not for others. He had to pay for Adam’s sin, that is, for sin itself.

Consequently, the false church, which has promulgated a false gospel that sends to eternal damnation those who believe it, is guilty of the death of everyone (i.e., of death itself). Just as Adam’s sin brought death upon all, so the denial of the only remedy by the false church maintains the power of that universal death.

Question: In TBC of July 1998, you responded to a question concerning the fact that Bill Watkins, senior acquisitions editor of Broadman and Holman, had told an audience to throw away your books as worthless, full of holes, etc. You indicated that you had spoken with him and asked him, as a brother in Christ, to provide you with documentation of any errors in any of your books so that you could make necessary corrections. Did he ever do so?

Answer: No, I am still waiting to hear from him. The same is true of other critics who, in talks or on websites, book reviews, etc., make sweeping accusations that my books are full of spurious Bible interpretations, misquotes, false accusations, and so many lies that my writings cannot be trusted. Almost invariably, they give no examples and never respond to my request for documentation to prove their charges. As for the few examples that have been given, I have answered them, but my responses are disregarded and the same charges persist.

The Vanishing Gospel

Dave Hunt

One of the greatest sorrows for lovers of God is the fact that the vast majority of mankind selfishly and ungratefully live day after day without even thinking of the Creator to whom they owe their existence and who holds their eternal destiny in His hands. So it is even with many who claim to know Him. How often do *you* tell God you love Him, and thank Him for His love and grace and the salvation He has given you in Christ? When was the last time?

The miracle of our bodies with their trillions of unfathomable cells and chance-defying organs such as the eye and brain, the ingenious design displayed in nature, and the mystery of soul and spirit loudly declare: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gn 1:1) and He made man "in his image" (1:26-28). Yet most people embrace the outrageous fraud of evolution.

This world's contemptuous disregard of its Creator makes me weep for His sake; and, as the old song says, "causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble" for the judgment that is coming upon mankind! "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Ps 9:17). And *forget God* they surely have.

Paul declared: "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind [to] all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness...[They are] haters of God...inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents...without natural affection...who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death...do the same, [and] have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom 1:28-32). The connection is undeniable between the evil foretold for "the last days" (2 Tm 3:1-7) and the godless "lifestyles" popularized on trendy TV shows.

Hollywood has long glorified and exported all manner of ungodliness. The marketing of evil provides billions of dollars in profits through promoting youth rebellion; sexual "freedom" and wanton perversion; mutilation of the body; obscene, suicidal, and murderous lyrics; and gangland and satanic clothing. Could Sodom and Gomorrah have been much worse?

Homes are invaded and families destroyed by immoral, corrupting media, leaving consciences "seared with a hot

iron" (1 Tm 4:2). Many Christians enjoy what would have shamed and embarrassed them a few years ago. An estimated 50 percent of professing Christians have been attracted to internet pornography.

And to attract those thus corrupted, many of the largest and fastest-growing churches mimic the world in "seeker-friendly" and "youth-oriented" services that exploit sensuality and compromise the truth. *The Christian Science Monitor* (12/30/03) reported that "megachurches are good at reaching young people raised in an entertainment-saturated culture....Many have...a rock-concert feel to them....[At the] largest congregation in the United States, with more than 25,000 attendants each weekend...Victoria Osteen steps to the podium in front of 16,000 cheering Sunday worshipers and proclaims: 'We're going to rock today!'" *Worship Leader* (Nov-Dec '03) reported, "...the Jesus People erected [a] worship ritual...from the preeminent communal ceremony of their generation—the rock concert."

Through "contemporary Christian music" and "contemporary worship," the

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:25

church has been converted to the "religion" of the world! Some of the largest presumably evangelical churches have designed their Sunday morning services based upon what the ungodly want. Missing are the fear of a holy God's wrath against sin, trembling repentance, and grateful faith in Christ, the eternal God who became man through the virgin birth to suffer the full penalty of God's judgment in our place. Seeker-friendly churches must not "offend" with the Truth, but pamper with the flattering "gospel" of self-esteem, self-love, and positive thinking—a "gospel" that cannot save. As Paul foretold, "they will not endure sound doctrine..." (2 Tm 4:3).

Creating large, rich churches is not new. In *A Woman Rides the Beast*, we show that the Roman Catholic Church—the world's largest and wealthiest—grew out of a marriage between the Roman world and the church, making "Christianity" the state religion. Historian Will Durant explains, "...the world converted Christianity.... [Paganism] passed like maternal blood into the new religion, and captive Rome captured her conqueror" (*Caesar and Christ*, 657, 672).

Roman Catholicism grew by wedding itself to the dominant pagan religion in Italy, Spain, Latin America, Africa, the Philippines, etc. Haiti is said to be 85 percent Catholic and 110 percent Vodoun. New Orleans, "the most Catholic city in America," (*Our Sunday Visitor*, 10/15/95) is its voodoo capital.

And now, "Protestantism" is creating megachurches by merging with the "new paganism" in today's culture—a culture that is becoming ever more anti-Christian and anti-Israel.

In blatant defiance of God and His Word, the nations have robbed Israel of most of the land God gave His chosen people as "an everlasting possession" (Gn 17:8). In further insolence, and sadly under the leadership of America's Christian president, the world is determined to give more of Israel's land to Arabs/Muslims as a reward for their hatred of Christ and religious vows to exterminate the Jews. And Islam intends to take all.

Today's world doesn't need more entertainment and "positive" messages assuring the "hurting" that God loves, forgives, "accepts them as they are," heals their "inner child," and has an exciting plan for their lives. Mankind needs the changeless convicting truth that leads sinners to repentance and salvation. God's holy character has not changed; the separation between man and God caused by sin—and the judgment to come—have not changed; nor has God's remedy in Christ been outdated and revised. On these basic facts the Bible is clear and uncompromising.

Like the father with the "prodigal son" (Lk 15:11-32), a gracious God is ever eager to embrace repentant sinners. But His holiness and justice allow pardon only for those who accept the blood of Christ poured out upon the Cross on their behalf.

We must preach the gospel *everywhere* to *everyone* (Mk 16:15). It must be believed for *anyone* to be saved from eternal separation from God: "the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16); "there is none other name...whereby we *must* be saved (Acts 4:12); "what *must* I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Acts 16:30,31). The warning is solemn and clear: "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn 3:36).

Yet Robert Schuller (whose *Hour of Power* reaches 20 million viewers weekly) declares, "We have to find God in our own way..." (*Larry King Live*, 12/19/98).

Rewriting the Bible, Schuller turns God's solemn warning, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," into *Believe in the God Who Believes in You* (Thomas Nelson Publishers). Paul had "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:3)—but God believes in us?

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tm 1:15). Yet Schuller, self-proclaimed "founder of the church growth movement" (his annual Institute for Successful Church Leadership has attracted tens of thousands of pastors from around the world), claims that "attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition" is an "unchristian strategy" which is "destructive [and] counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise..." (*Christianity Today*, 10/5/84)!

David F. Wells writes, "In another age, Robert Schuller's ministry...might well have been viewed...as comedy....Sin, he says with a cherubic smile, is not what shatters our relationship to God [but] that we do not esteem ourselves enough. In the Crystal Cathedral, therefore, let the word *sin* be banished....Christ was not drawing a profound moral compass in the Sermon on the Mount; he was just giving us a set of 'be (happy) attitudes'..." (*No Place for Truth*, p. 175).

We are commanded to "preach the word...reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tm 4:2). God's Word is the foundation of our faith—yet that foundation is being undermined. "Christian psychology" takes the theories of atheists such as Freud, Jung, Rogers, Maslow, et al., and repackages their lies as truth that improves God's holy and perfect Word.

Bruce Narramore, following in his uncle Clyde's footsteps, admits, "Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem. This is a good and necessary focus" (*You're Someone Special*, Zondervan, p. 22). Yet Paul warned against thinking too highly of oneself (Rom 12:3) and urged, "let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil 2:3). But that was before today's church surrendered to the surrounding culture.

Attempting to build large and successful churches, many of today's pastors draw upon secular motivational speakers' advice designed to foster worldly success. Tragically, this is the basis of much that is offered by Rick Warren (a graduate of Schuller's Institute—see April 2004 "Supplement," p. 712), the most popular and influential "church growth" guru today, whose methods and example are being followed by literally tens of thousands

of fellow pastors worldwide—and by millions of lay readers of his books.

Warren does offer much sound advice in *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*. Commendably, he attempts to support most points with "nearly a thousand quotations from Scripture" (*Life*, p. 325). But the "scriptures" he quotes are speculative paraphrases such as *The Message* (see TBC Q&A Oct. '95) by Eugene H. Peterson (NavPress).

"Every word of God is pure" (Prv 30:5), we "live...by every word of God" (Lk 4:4), and are "born again...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached..." (1 Pt 1:23-25). Yet *The Message*, like other paraphrases, substitutes man's words for God's words! Peterson says that *The Message* is "not...a word-for-word conversion" of God's Holy Word into modern language but *what he thinks God's Word means*—not a translation but an *interpretation* (Introduction).

Self-realization is anti-Christian. All this is vigorous paganism, it is not Christianity. Jesus Christ's attitude is always that of anti-self-realization. His purpose is not the development of man at all; His purpose is to make man exactly like Himself, and the characteristic of the Son of God is not self-realization but self-expenditure.

Oswald Chambers

What audacity to rewrite the Bible! Yet such shameless perversions of God's Word are Warren's major support for his thesis.

Paraphrases based upon "dynamic equivalency" partake of two destructive errors: 1) instead of translating the *words* of Scripture, they interpret in modern language what they believe are the *ideas* presented; and 2) they dumb down the language to make it "understandable."

Interpretation is proper in sermons and commentaries, which listeners/readers can compare to the Word of God. *The Message*, however, is offered as "This *version* of the New Testament..." (p. 7), misleading readers into thinking they have the *Scriptures* in their hands. Even J.I. Packer and Warren W. Wiersbe praise *The Message* as Scripture (back cover)—which it is not.

John 3:17, for example, "that the world through him might be saved," reads, "He came to help, to put the world right again." "Saved" means redeemed from the judgment we deserve for our sins, and fitted for heaven—but "to help" merely assists our efforts. And "to put the world right again" sounds like social or political

reform! Such flagrant perversion of God's Word permeates *The Message*—and Warren turns to it for support.

Such paraphrases rewrite Scripture in simple language to make the *ideas* understandable. But there is much depth in God's Word that even the most mature Christian finds difficult. The "deep things of God" are revealed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:10), not by simplifying God's words. Peter said that in Paul's epistles were "some things hard to be understood..." (2 Pt 3:16). Obviously the depth of Scripture is lost in *simplifying* it.

The Purpose Driven Life never presents the biblical gospel, which alone saves. Readers are told to "learn to love and trust God's Son, Jesus" (p. 37); that if they "have a relationship with God through Jesus," they needn't fear death (p. 40); that "your identity is in eternity, and your homeland is heaven" (p. 48); and that "Real life begins by committing yourself completely to Jesus

Christ. If you are not sure you have done this, all you need to do is *receive* and *believe*" (p. 58).

None of the essential elements of the gospel—that man is a sinner under God's judgment, that Christ is God and man through a virgin birth, that He paid the penalty for our sins, that He resurrected the third day—is given (1 Cor 15:1-4). Readers are offered "friendship" with God through believing in a "Christ" who went to the cross because He "would rather die than live without us" (p. 79)! That is *not* the gospel!

The reader is told that his genetic makeup, physical features, talents, personality, the details of his daily life, etc., are exactly what God has foreordained: "God prescribed every single detail of your body...He planned it all for *his* purpose..." (pp. 22, 23). "You're just what he wanted to make" (p. 25). Not so. The cumulative effects of man's rebellion have created a pool of genetic distortions in humanity resulting in a deformed world with distorted beings that God never intended.

Warren justifies this fatalistic view from *The Living Bible*: "You [God]...scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe" (Ps 139:16)—not even close to what that verse actually says! Is every *sinful* thought and deed exactly what God has planned?! Men are not sinners but puppets if everything is exactly what God has decreed.

Let us be careful to "preach the word" and "obey the word" and allow Christ the "living word" to live through us as we offer sinners the biblical "gospel of God" (Rom 1:1) that truly saves. And let us "earnestly contend" for this unchangeable faith (Jude 3). TBC

Quotable

We are living in days when standing for the truth is considered an act of intolerance. Being willing to compromise is considered an act of graciousness. Being loose with the truth is [considered] better than standing for the truth.

G. Christopher Willis, quoted in Milk & Honey, October 2003

“[Tomorrow, as my guest on the *Hour of Power*] in the Crystal Cathedral, you will offer your first public prayer.”

Robert Schuller to agnostic Larry King, on Larry King Live, Dec. 19, 1998

I found many volumes of business management and pop-psychology on [Hybels’ Willow Creek] staff members’ bookshelves, but I never found a volume of classical theology....More than five hundred individuals met at the church each week in various [12-step] self-help groups (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Sexual Anonymous)....The steps suggest a belief in a Power greater than ourselves, “God as we understand Him”...whatever we choose...human love, a force for good, the group itself, nature, the universe, or the traditional God...individuals could not evangelize or otherwise teach other participants about God. [Hybels’] weekend messages drew heavily on psychological principles....

G.A. Pritchard, Willow Creek Seeker Services [a thorough 1-year study], pp. 273-74

Q&A

Question: Do you think Judge Roy Moore was right in his actions to resist the removal of the Ten Commandments from his courtroom? If so, why?

Answer: Yes. The Ten Commandments belong in every courtroom in every country as the foundation of mankind’s entire legal system. Of course, the courts are supposed to enforce the innumerable legislated regulations known as “the law of the land” in each country. But those who make and enforce such laws are “ordained of God” to uphold “the ordinance of God [as] minister[s] of God...to execute [God’s] wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom 13:1-4). There is no other basis for law.

If there were not one true God who

created the universe and made man in His image, then “right and wrong” would be as meaningless for man as for animals. But “right” and “wrong” are eternal absolutes, independent of majority opinions, legislated regulations, or court decisions. They reflect the very character of God and are written by Him in each heart and mind. Every conscience bears witness to that fact—a fact that proves beyond question the validity of the Ten Commandments and that they belong in every courtroom. This is the standard by which every person, regardless of religion or culture (unless his conscience is perverted), judges his own and his fellows’ conduct, and all human laws and court decisions as well.

It was in obedience to this law of God written in his conscience that Judge Moore rightly disobeyed the decision of a human court. He followed the apostles’ example: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), and God will reward him.

The only possible complaint would be that Moore included the fourth commandment: “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex 20:8). This is the one exception to the fact that every human conscience bears witness to “the law written in [every] heart” (Rom 2:14,15). No one has a conscience to keep the Sabbath. That was for Israel only, and its inclusion is the only basis for any complaint of “religious bias.” On the other hand, it is part of the Ten Commandments as a historic document.

Tragically, the removal of the Ten Commandments and Judge Moore is just one more step in denying the Creator and attempting to take over His universe, bringing His righteous judgment upon this increasingly wicked world. Yet, the Qur’an is displayed in the lobby of the New York City Police Department headquarters.

Question: A Calvinist gave me six verses not dealt with in *What Love Is This?* How do you respond? I am not a Calvinist and am looking for more insight. The verses are: Acts 3:16; 11:18; 18:27; 1 Corinthians 12:9, 13; 2 Peter 1:1.

Answer: In 1 Corinthians 12:13 (“all made to drink”), there is nothing to support Calvinism. Paul is referring to Christians: those “baptized into one body.” The subject is the working and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church, not salvation, much less predestination or election. Nor does “made” mean “forced.” If we were made to drink of the Holy Spirit in the sense of being forced, then all Christians would live perfect Spirit-filled lives, and there would be no purpose

for the judgment seat of Christ with “fire [to] try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor 3:13) or for rewards. This verse doesn’t teach Calvinism.

The metaphor “to drink” defines “made.” Drinking requires faith, effort, and cooperation on the part of those through whom the Holy Spirit works. If grace is “irresistible,” bending the will of “totally depraved” sinners and causing them to believe the gospel, why doesn’t it cause them after they are saved to live perfect lives? If all is of God and nothing of man, then the human experience is just a giant puppet show—which every conscience knows is not the case.

In fact, Calvinists ought to avoid this verse because of the word “all” and its clear connection as well as contrast to what Paul said about Israel: they were “all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:2-4). Yet many of them “were overthrown in the wilderness” (v. 5).

What can the Calvinist say? Were some never saved in the first place? Then how is it that all were baptized and partook of Christ? Were some once saved but lost their salvation? Neither scenario fits Calvinism. Surely some were true believers, most were not. Yet all were delivered from Egypt, all partook of the Passover lamb, all partook of the same spiritual food and drink, etc.

James White avoids 1 Corinthians 10:2-4, as does Boettner. None of the 13 contributors to *Still Sovereign* touches it, and both MacArthur’s Study Bible and Sproul’s Geneva Study Bible ignore the obvious problem for Calvinism. Admitting that it is “an embarrassment to those of the Reformed persuasion,” Dillow attempts to face the problem in *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (pp. 54-59), but is ambivalent. R.T. Kendall declares that all of those who came out of Egypt were saved and are in heaven—clearly not true. God was going to wipe them all out for their sin (Ex 32:10), many were executed for their rebellion, and many were swallowed by the earth and went “down quick into the pit” (Nm 16:30)—surely into hell.

Clearly, there were no “elect” within Israel who alone were chosen for salvation. Salvation was offered to every Israelite without exception. That is why Calvinists avoid the Old Testament pictures of Christ’s coming sacrifice (as James White does in my debate with him in book form: *Debating Calvinism: five points, two views*). None of the Old Testament examples fits any of

the five points of Calvinism. Furthermore, many who were delivered at the Passover from Egypt were slain by God; and many who were healed through looking in faith to the serpent lifted up were lost eternally.

Books by Calvinists avoid the Old Testament when it comes to God's dealings with Israel, the Passover, the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, and the Levitical sacrificial system. Why? Because they were for *all* of Israel, thus refuting "limited atonement," i.e., that Christ died only for the elect. There is no hint of an elect within Israel who alone were the recipients of God's grace. To the Calvinist, the word "made," fits irresistible grace. But *all* Israel were made to drink of that Rock; yet *all* were certainly not believers, most perished in the wilderness, and many were judged instantly for their sin.

As for the other verses, Acts 3:16 says "the faith which is by him" and 11:18 says "God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life...." Of course, faith and repentance *are* from God, as is everything we enjoy. This does not say, however, that repentance or faith are given to only a select group, much less that either is irresistibly imposed upon anyone. Every breath that anyone draws is a gift from the One who "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25)—but man must do the breathing.

The same applies to the other three verses, "them that have obtained...faith" (2 Pt 1:1); "which had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27), and "faith by the same Spirit" (1 Cor 12:9). The Calvinist tries to make faith a special gift of God given to only the elect, and only after they have been sovereignly regenerated by God. On the contrary, *never* does the Bible say that faith is sovereignly given by God; *always* faith is credited to the individual (Mt 9:22; 15:28; Mk 10:52; Lk 7:50; 17:18, etc.). Eleven times Scripture refers to "*thy* faith," 24 times to "*your* faith" as well as to "*our* faith...*my* faith...*their* faith...*his* faith," etc.—but Calvinists avoid these scriptures in their books.

Question: Was there any other way for God to forgive our sins besides the Cross? If there was, why didn't He use it—or did He?

Answer: No, there was not. You know the scriptures: "I [Jesus] am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6); "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12); "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salva-

tion..." (Heb 2:3); "the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16), etc.

In the Garden, Christ pleaded with His Father: "If it be possible [for man to be saved any other way], let this cup [i.e., the Cross] pass from me" (Mt 26:39). The answer was "No, there is no other way."

We have broken the law of our infinitely holy Creator. The penalty for sin is separation from Him in eternal torment. He cannot compromise His justice without condoning our sin, thereby breaking His own law and becoming as guilty as we are.

There was only one way that God "might be just" and yet justify sinners (Rom 3:26): the penalty must be paid in full. Only Christ, who is both infinite God and man, could pay that penalty for mankind. And He did. Salvation is a gift of God's grace to all who believe on and by faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior. There is no other way—nor could there be.

Question: While Jesus was in the womb of His mother, who was sustaining all of creation?

Answer: Jesus, of course. He is God, One with the Father, unchangeable, eternal, and could never cease to be God, the Creator and sustainer of all (Jn 1:3; Col 1:17; Heb 1:2, etc.). He is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8). This is a great mystery beyond human comprehension.

So as a fetus in Mary's womb, Jesus was still the infinite God. No wonder Paul wrote, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tm 3:16). We don't understand it, but we know it is true. There is no other way to account for creation and redemption.

Question: We know that the biblical God's proper name is Yahweh, a Hebrew word. How can one who speaks only Arabic know the biblical God's proper name? What is God's proper name in Arabic, or Chinese, etc.?

Answer: Just as our English Bible gives the meaning of the Hebrew, Yahweh (God's name), as "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex 3:14), so that phrase would be found in the language of every Bible translation. The reader would learn the Hebrew name Yahweh by looking this verse up in a concordance.

There is no word-for-word equivalent of Yahweh in other languages. Therefore,

just as we who speak English refer to God's name as Yahweh, so would those who speak other languages. Of course, if the translation of the Bible into some language were inaccurate, there would be a problem. Such is the case in the Arabic Bible, which uses "Allah" on the pretext that it is the only word for God in Arabic, when *ilah* is the generic word for God.

The Seeker-Friendly Way of Doing Church

T. A. McMahon

The “seeker-friendly,” or “seeker-sensitive,” movement currently taking a host of evangelical churches by storm is an approach to evangelizing through application of the latest marketing techniques. Typically, it begins with a survey of the lost (referred to by a leading church in this trend as the “unchurched,” or “unchurched Harry and Mary”). This survey questions the unchurched about the things their nearby place of worship might offer that would motivate them to attend. Results of the questionnaire indicate areas of potential changes in the church’s operations and services that would be effective in order to attract the unchurched, keep them attending, and win them to Christ. Those who have developed this marketing approach guarantee the growth of the churches that conscientiously follow their proven methods. Practically speaking, it works!

Two churches are seen as models for this movement: Willow Creek Community Church (near Chicago), pastored by Bill Hybels, and Saddleback Valley Community Church (south of Los Angeles), pastored by Rick Warren. Their influence is stunning. Willow Creek has formed its own association of churches, with 9,500 members. Last year, 100,000 church leaders attended at least one Willow Creek leadership conference. More than 250,000 pastors and church leaders from over 125 countries have attended Rick Warren’s Purpose Driven Church seminars. More than 60,000 pastors subscribe to his weekly email newsletter.

We visited Willow Creek Community Church not too long ago, and it seems to have spared no expense in its mission to attract the masses. Looking past the swans gliding across a mirror lake, one sees what could be mistaken for a corporate headquarters or a very upscale shopping mall. Just off the sanctuary is a large bookstore and an extensive eating area supplied by a food court with five different vendors. A jumbotron screen allows an overflow crowd or those enjoying a meal to view the proceedings in the main sanctuary. The sanctuary itself is spacious and high tech, complete with three large screens and state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems for multimedia, drama, and musical presentations.

While impressive, Willow Creek is not unique among mega-churches with

a reach-the-lost-through-whatever-turns-them-on mindset. Mega-churches across the country have added bowling alleys, NBA regulation basketball courts with bleachers, exercise gyms and spas, locker rooms, auditoriums for concerts and dramatic productions, and Starbucks and McDonald’s franchises—all for the furtherance of the gospel. Or so it is claimed. Although it’s true that such churches are packing them in, that’s not the whole story in evaluating the success of this latest trend in “doing church.”

The stated goal of seeker-friendly churches is reaching the lost. Though biblical and praiseworthy, the same cannot be said for the *methods* used in attempting to achieve that goal. Let’s begin with marketing as a tactic for reaching the lost. Fundamentally, marketing has to do with profiling consumers, ascertaining what their “felt needs” are, and then fashioning one’s product (or its image) to appeal to the targeted customer’s desires. The hoped-for result is that the consumer buys or “buys into” the product. George Barna, whom *Christianity Today* calls “the church’s guru of growth,” claims that such

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Jeremiah 6:16

an approach is essential for the church in our market-driven society. Evangelical church-growth leaders are adamant that the marketing approach can be applied—and they have employed it—without compromising the gospel. Really?

First of all, the gospel and, more significantly, the person of Jesus Christ do not fit into any marketing strategy. They are not “products” to be “sold.” They cannot be refashioned or image-adjusted to appeal to the felt needs of our consumer-happy culture. Any attempt to do so compromises to some degree the truth of *who Christ is* and *what He has done for us*. For example, if the lost are considered consumers and a basic marketing “commandment” says that the customer must reign supreme, then whatever may be offensive to the lost must be discarded, revamped, or downplayed. Scripture tells us clearly that the message of the Cross is “to them that perish foolishness” and that Christ himself is a “rock of offense” (1 Cor 1:18; 1 Pt 2:8). Some

seeker-friendly churches, therefore, seek to avoid this “negative aspect” by making the temporal benefits of becoming a Christian their chief selling point. Although that appeals to our gratification-oriented generation, it is neither the gospel nor the goal of a believer’s life in Christ.

Secondly, if you want to attract the lost on the basis of what might interest them, for the most part you will be appealing to and accommodating their flesh. Wittingly or unwittingly, that seems to be the standard operating procedure of seeker-friendly churches. They mimic what’s popular in our culture: top-forty and performance-style music, theatrical productions, stimulating multi-media presentations, and thirty-minutes-or-less positive messages. The latter, more often than not, are topical, therapeutic, and centered in self-fulfillment—how the Lord can meet one’s needs and help solve one’s problems.

Those concerns may be lost on increasing numbers of evangelical pastors but, ironically, not on some secular observers. In his perceptive book *This Little Church Went to Market* (see resource materials), Pastor Gary Gilley notes that the professional marketing journal *American Demographics* recognizes that people are

...into spirituality, not religion. ...Behind this shift is the search for an experiential faith, a religion of the heart, not the head. It’s a religious expression that downplays doctrine and dogma, and revels in direct experience of the divine—whether it’s called the ‘Holy Spirit’ or ‘cosmic consciousness’ or the ‘true self.’ It is practical and personal, more about stress reduction than salvation, more therapeutic than theological. It’s about feeling good, not being good. It’s as much about the body as the soul. ...Some marketing gurus have begun calling it ‘the experience industry.’” (pp. 20-21)

There’s another item that many pastors seem to be missing in their excitement over “growing your church through attracting the lost.” Although numbers seem to rule in this seeker-friendly mania (an amazing 841 churches in this country have reached the “mega” category, with 2,000 to 25,000 weekend attendees), few have realized that the sizeable increase in church attendance is *not due to the influx of the unchurched*. During the last 70 years, the percentage of this country’s population attending church has been relatively constant at about 43 percent. A spike of 49 percent in 1991 (years prior to today’s initial seeker-sensitive enthusiasm) gradually declined, returning to 42 percent in 2002 (www.barna.org). From

where, then, do those mega-churches, which have outfitted themselves to accommodate the unchurched, get their members? Mostly from smaller churches that aren't interested in or that can't afford the fleshly attractions. And what of the supposed horde of unchurched Harrys and Marys who have been assembled? They constitute a very small part of mega-church congregations. During his year of researching Willow Creek, G.A. Pritchard, in his book *Willow Creek Seeker Services* (Baker Book House, 1996), estimated that the targeted unchurched made up only between 10 and 15 percent of the 16,000 or so who attended weekend services!

If this percentage is typical among seeker-friendly churches, which likely is the case, a rather disturbing situation has developed. Thousands of churches here and abroad have completely restructured themselves as *outreach centers* for the unchurched. This, by the way, is not biblical. The church is for the maturing and equipping of the saints, who then *go out* to reach the lost. Nevertheless, seeker-sensitive churches have turned to entertainment and conveniences in order to attract Harry and Mary and make them feel comfortable in their new church environment. In order to keep them coming back, they have avoided the thorough teaching of Scripture in favor of positive, uplifting messages designed to make them feel good about themselves. As unchurched Harry and Mary continue to attend, they get only a vague hint of biblical truth that might bring conviction of sin and true repentance. Worse yet, they get a *psychologized view* of themselves that undermines that truth. However, as grievous as that situation is, it doesn't end there.

The vast majority of those who attend seeker-friendly fellowships profess to be believers. Yet most were drawn to those churches by the same worldly allurements that were meant to entice the unchurched, and they continue to attend, being fed the same biblically anemic diet created for the wooing of unbelievers. At best, they receive the skimmed milk of the Word; at worst, pabulum contaminated with "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tm 6: 20). Certainly a church can grow numerically on that basis, but *not* spiritually. Furthermore, there is no opportunity for believers to mature in the faith in such an environment. In defense of seeker-sensitive churches, some have argued that mid-week services are set apart for discipleship and getting into the meat of Scriptures. If

that indeed is the case, it's a rare exception rather than the rule.

As we've noted, most seeker-friendly churches focus much of their time, energy, and resources on accommodating unchurched Harry and Mary. Consequently, week after week, the entire congregation is subjected to a diluted and leavened message. Then, on Wednesday evening, when a fellowship is usually reduced to quarter or a third of its normal size, would it be reasonable to assume that this remnant is served a nourishing meal featuring the meat of the Word, expositional teaching, and an emphasis on sound doctrine and discipleship? Hardly. We've yet to find a seeker-friendly church where that takes place. The spiritual meals offered at mid-week services are usually support group meetings and classes for discerning one's spiritual gifts or going through the latest psycho-babble-ized "Christian" bestseller such as *Wild at Heart* rather than the study

**Blessed is the man that walketh not
in the counsel of the ungodly, nor
standeth in the way of sinners....**

Psalms 1:1

of the Scriptures.

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of the seeker-friendly approach to doing church is an attempt to impress the unchurched by looking to and quoting those regarded as the experts in solving all their mental, emotional, and behavioral problems: psychiatrists and psychologists. Nothing in the history of the church has undermined the truth of the sufficiency of God's Word for "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3) more than the introduction of the pseudo-science of psychotherapy. Its thousands of concepts and hundreds of methodologies are unproven, contradictory, unscientific, and thoroughly unbiblical, as we've documented in our books and in previous articles. Pritchard observed that at Willow Creek "Hybels not only teaches psychological principles, but often uses the psychological principles as interpretive guides for his exegesis of Scripture....King David had an identity crisis, the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to do self-analysis, and Peter had a problem with boundary issues. The point is, psychological principles are regularly built into Hybels' teaching" (p. 156).

During my own visit to Willow Creek, Pastor Hybels gave a message that began

with Scripture and addressed the problems that result when people lie. However, he mustered his chief support regarding the harmful consequences of lying from psychiatrist M. Scott Peck, the author of *The Road Less Traveled* (Simon & Schuster, 1978), who declared in that book (pp. 269-70), "God wants us to become Himself (or Herself or Itself)!"

Saddleback Community Church likewise is entrenched in the psychotherapeutic. Although claiming to be Christ-centered rather than psychological, it has one of the largest conglomerations of Alcoholics Anonymous-based 12-Step recovery programs in the country. The church sponsors more than a dozen support groups, such as Adult Children of Chemically Addicted, Codependency, Co-Addicted Women in a Relationship with Sexually Addicted Men, Eating Disorders, and so forth. Each group is normally led by someone "in recovery" from the "addiction," and the resource materials for understanding the "disorder" include books mostly authored by psychiatrists and psychologists (www.celebraterecovery.com). Although "in denial" about his use of "pop psychology," much of it permeates Rick Warren's work, including his seven-million best-seller, *The Purpose Driven Life*, which is largely about self-fulfillment, promotes *Celebrate Recovery*, and is sprinkled with psych references such as "Samson was co-dependent" (p. 233).

The overriding message from psychologically driven Willow Creek and Saddleback is that the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit are insufficient for delivering a person from a habitual sin and for transforming his or her life into one that is fruitful and pleasing to God. Again, what these churches say and do is exported to hundreds of thousands of church leaders around the world.

A large part of the evangelical church has developed a pleasure-laden, cruise ship mentality, but it will result in a spiritual Titanic. Seeker-friendly church pastors (and those tempted to climb aboard) need to get on their knees and read the words of Jesus to the church of the Laodiceans (Rv 3: 14-21). They were "rich, and increased with goods," yet failed to recognize that in God's eyes, they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Jesus, standing outside their church, where they had unwittingly displaced Him, offers them *His counsel*, the truth of His Word, which alone will enable them to live their lives for *His pleasure*. There can be nothing better here on earth, and for all eternity. TBC

Quotable

This age of novelties would seem to have discovered spiritual power in brass bands and tambourines....The tendency of the time is towards bigness, parade, and show of power....Jesus said "Preach the gospel to every creature." But men are getting tired of the divine plan; they are going to be saved by the priest...by the music...by theatricals....Well, they may try these things...but nothing can ever come of the whole thing but utter disappointment and confusion. God dishonored, the gospel travestied, hypocrites manufactured by the thousands, and the church dragged down to the level of the world.

C.H. Spurgeon

The Church of God has gone into the entertainment business! People must be amused, and as the church needs the people's money, the church must supply the demand and meet the craving! How else are godless hypocrites to be held together? So the picture show and entertainment...take the place of the gospel address and the solemn worship of God. And, thus, Christless souls are lulled to sleep and made to feel "religious" while gratifying every carnal desire under the sanction of the sham called the church! And the end? What an awakening [in eternity]!

H.A. Ironside

Q&A

Question: Are there any more prophecies to be fulfilled before Jesus can rapture the church?

Answer: No, and there never were. Jesus taught that He could come at any moment: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Mt 24:44); "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning...like unto men that wait for their lord..." (Lk 12:35,36). So did Paul: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour..." (Phil 3:20); "...ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven..." (1 Thes 1:9,10); "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ..." (Ti 2:13); "...unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time..." (Heb 9:28).

Obviously, if believers were to watch, wait, look for, and expect Christ at any

moment, there could never have been any signs that had to be fulfilled before the Rapture. The signs are for the Second Coming—and they are very much in evidence today, which means that the Rapture must be close.

Question: What significance did September 11 have in Bible prophecy?

Answer: There are some who attempt to tie this event in with the fall of Babylon the Great in Revelation 18. If that is true, then we have all missed the Rapture, because the events of Revelation 18 take place afterwards. The destruction of the World Trade Center and the attack on the Pentagon drew nations together in a coalition to oppose terrorism worldwide. Another step was thereby taken in preparation for the coming one world government. The memorial services that followed 9/11 featured Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu clerics together with Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish clergy. Even evangelical leaders participated officially in the memorial services. The impression was given that all were praying to the same God. These services were another step in the direction of the coming world religion.

There was no specific significance, however, that could be identified in Bible prophecy.

Question: In your Q&A of Dec. 2003 (re: Phil Johnson/John MacArthur) you wrote, "Refute my reasoning if you can, but don't call me a liar." As an avid reader of about everything you write (except *What Love Is This?*—I'm a Calvinist), I made marginal notes. One reads, "Dave's right, MacArthur's Calvinism is not consistent." But later, I also wrote, "Dave doesn't understand Romans 4:16, *It is by faith that it might be by grace.*" My friend and mentor, Dave, I cannot tell you how much I appreciate you and your work...but you are mistaken about Calvinism. Please allow me to help you a bit: 1) Man is as spiritually dead as a dog is physically and cannot respond to any kind of stimuli. Man is totally depraved. 2) But God loved and chose some whom He would save. 3) Those whom He loved, He would grant to be born again. Faith and repentance are inseparable graces granted simultaneously with the new birth. There you have it. I have tried to refute your reasoning. P.S. You are right to challenge these pseudo-Calvinists concerning their claims that God loves everyone, even if He doesn't choose [to save] everyone.

Answer: I don't understand Romans 4:16? No, I understand it well. Paul points out that Abraham was justified *without* works *before* the law as proof that salvation is not by works but by God's grace. That "it is of faith, that it might be by grace," simply reflects the fact that grace and works are mutually exclusive (Rom 11:6) as are faith and works (4:5).

Instead of what Paul clearly says, amazingly in 4:16 you claim to find Calvinism's peculiar definition of total depravity, its idea that God doesn't love all, and its teaching that God must sovereignly regenerate the spiritually dead so that He can then give them faith to believe. There is nothing even remotely related to such doctrines in Romans 4:16 or anywhere else in Scripture.

You declare that "faith and repentance are inseparable graces granted simultaneously with the new birth." How do you find that in Romans 4:16? It is neither there nor anywhere else in the Bible—nor in Calvinism! *Granted simultaneously?* On the contrary, Calvinism claims God must first regenerate the spiritually dead, and only then can He give them faith to believe the gospel: "Therefore all men...without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit...are neither able nor willing to return to God..." [Synod of Dort]; "The Reformed view of predestination teaches that before a person can choose Christ...he must be born again...one does not first believe, then become reborn..." [R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, p. 10]; "A cardinal point of Reformed theology is the maxim, 'Regeneration precedes faith' [Sproul, *Chosen*, p. 72]." A.W. Pink insists, "A man is not regenerated because he has first believed in Christ, but he believes in Christ because he has been regenerated." I could quote many others declaring the same. Do you have another Calvinism?

Contrary to Calvinism, the Bible repeatedly puts faith first: "...that *believing* ye might have life" (Jn 20:31); the Galatians had *become* "the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26); "Being born again...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pt 1:23-25), "them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb 10:39), etc., etc.

Of course, the new birth is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"—but it is to those who "received him...believe[d] on his name" (Jn 1:11-13).

You say, "God loved [some] and chose some whom He would save." You deny that God loves all, that He would have all men to be saved, and that He offers salvation to all

by grace through faith. You misrepresent and malign the God of the Bible and make Him less loving than we must be!

You err in equating spiritual death with physical death. The physically dead can't believe, but they can't sin either. The spiritually dead *can* sin and also can hear and believe: "The hour...now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (Jn 5:25); "he that *believeth* in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live..." (Jn 11:25), etc.

Question: Please comment on this new bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*. It claims the Bible was collated by Constantine and a vote of the Council of Nicea, which did away with the gospels that spoke of Christ's humanity and embellished gospels to make him godlike. The Council voted to establish Him as "Son of God." The Dead Sea Scrolls prove that the modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ [in order] to solidify their own power base. The "Holy Grail" was revealed by Da Vinci in his painting of the Last Supper when he painted Mary Magdalene on Jesus' right. The "secret" that is being hidden is that Jesus was married to Mary and they had a child. The "Priory of Zion" secret society claims this is a royal bloodline that still exists. They worship the female deity, Mary Magdalene. My concern is that young Christians could be misled and the bias of non-Christians against the church and Bible strengthened.

Answer: This is sensational nonsense, which many are more willing to believe than the truth. There was no vote at the Council of Nicea concerning the books of the Bible. They were simply quoted by both sides. The Old Testament had been settled centuries before Christ, and no vote was needed for the New Testament. It was not until the Third Council of Carthage 72 years later that the first conciliar declaration in this regard would be made. Christians knew and agreed by consensus upon the New Testament.

Yes, the Council of Nicea did put down the heresy of Arius, who denied that Jesus was God. But they settled the matter from the Bible and not by Constantinian edict. The Old Testament itself proves Christ's deity. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls was almost a complete copy of Isaiah, which turned out to be exactly the same as the copies the church already had—and it clearly declares Christ's deity. No one could tamper with the Old Tes-

tament, of which we have the Septuagint dating back prior to 200 BC—and it agrees with the New Testament. The historical and prophetic accuracy of the Bible and its doctrinal unity from Genesis to Revelation proves it has never been revised in any way.

That Da Vinci painted a woman into the Last Supper is disputed—but what would it matter if he did? He wasn't there and is not the authority. "Holy Grail" is more nonsense and sensationalism. That Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene is more of the same. You put your finger on the obvious bias—denying Christ's deity while elevating Mary as goddess.

Prove that this book is foolishness? It contradicts the Bible, which we know is the truth, and therefore it must be false. The Bible is filled with historical and prophetic proofs for which there is not enough space to recite here.

Question: In Hebrews 6 it says, "if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance...." Doesn't the word "again" mean that they had already fallen away and repented at least once? Yet I've heard you say that this passage is one of the strongest for *not* falling away! Can you explain?

Answer: The phrase, "to renew them again unto repentance," does not mean that they have fallen away and are being *renewed* again. The "again" refers to being saved after having fallen away. That this could not happen even once, however, let alone multiple times, is clear from the phrase, "...impossible for those who were once enlightened...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance..." (4-6).

The author doesn't say "*when* they shall fall away," but "*if*." Why would it be *impossible* to get saved again if salvation could be lost? Two reasons are given: 1) "they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh"; and 2) "put him to an open shame."

In other words, if the crucifixion of Jesus 1,900 years ago was not enough to keep one saved, and if salvation could be lost, then Christ would have to be crucified again for one to be saved again. Furthermore, if Christ purchased salvation at a price we could never pay, then gave it to us to keep, He would be held up to "open shame" for such folly, which would be like giving a fortune to a two-year-old for him to keep.

This section about "falling away" is proved to be hypothetical—something that could never happen. Look at the way it ends: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accom-

pany salvation, though we thus speak" (v. 9). In other words, falling away does not accompany salvation.

God is Love

Dave Hunt

Today, exactly as the Bible prophesied, man grows ever bolder in his defiance of God. One basic element common to the rejection of Christ in the world and contempt for sound doctrine in the church is the lack of *musings*, i.e., thinking and reasoning carefully, especially about God, His Word, and His will. Instead, the chief pursuit of the world—and, sadly, of many Christians—is amusement. We are too busy entertaining ourselves to think of God. As atheism rejects theism, so amusement stifles musing.

Let's swim against the tide and muse together. God called to Israel: "Come now, and let us reason together...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword..." (Is 1:18-20).

That cry comes repeatedly from God's heart, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth...I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel...doth not consider" (Is 1:2,3).

God's reiterated pleadings for Israel to repent surely indicate that He was not the cause behind their sin. He had not foreordained their rebellion and judgment. They were not doing His will. The God of Israel reasons in vain with His chosen people: "I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not...Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth..." (Jer 44:4-6). Obviously, God had not predestined their wicked behavior and doom, or He could not have called their idolatry "this abominable thing that I hate."

Nor is the selfishness, jealousy, and hatred; the fornication, adultery, and divorce; the homosexuality, lesbianism and rejection of marriage as God ordained it; abortion and other murders; ethnic and religious wars and other violence so rampant in today's self-centered world any more God's will than was the wickedness in Noah's time. That world was destroyed in the flood. Today's world is ripening for an even worse outpouring of God's wrath against sin.

Man was made in God's image (Gn 1:26,27)

—not physically but spiritually. "God is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24) with no physical form. Man was to reflect the moral and spiritual character of God in all that he thought, said, and did. Eden's Garden was not only a paradise of physical beauty and abundance beyond our imagination, but also a spiritual paradise as well—a bit of heaven on earth.

What a glorious relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed! The Garden was a symphony of God's glory expressed in the exhilarating oneness of a man and a woman joined in that first marriage by God himself: the ecstatic, untainted happiness of selfless love displayed in words and deeds of continual kindness, thoughtfulness, grace, mercy, pure goodness, and compassion, each seeking only the other's joy in the wonder of intimate companionship!

When His creation of the universe, the animals, and man was finished, God pronounced it all to be "very good" (Gn 1:31). Then what went so horribly wrong? How could man, made in the image of God, have such deep hatred against his Creator and

In this was manifested the love of God toward us...that God sent his only begotten Son into the world...

1 John 4:9

such determination to take his own way and flaunt his rebellion before the compassionate and holy God to whom he owes his very existence?

The Bible calls this enigma "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thes 2:7) and declares that its secret source is in the depths of man's heart: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within..." (Mk 7:21-23).

The heart is not only the seat of the emotions but of the will—like a fortified castle to which each person holds the only key: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prv 4:23).

I will never forget the interview on TV of a Canadian who had been arrested in Saudi Arabia and falsely accused of terrorism. Under continuous torture, he "confessed his guilt" before he was released. That terrifying experience taught him two things: 1) torture can be so excruciating that the strongest person can be made to "confess" to *anything*, even that he murdered his

mother, or God; and 2) yet no torture, no matter how unbearable, can make the victim *believe* what he is forced to confess.

There is a place deep inside where the real person guards his secret thoughts and true intentions. Solomon warns his son that what a man *says* is often a deceit to hide what he really *is* inside (Prv 23:6-8).

The Bible repeatedly calls this inner stronghold "the heart" or "the will." Without it, one has no individuality—nor could one love another or receive love. God has so made us that even He cannot force us to believe anything. He reasons with us in the gospel to persuade us of the truth; but, sadly, most people do not listen to reason and insist upon pursuing the broad road to destruction though they know where it leads.

The world is filled with stubborn, disobedient youths who've grown up in rebellion not only against their parents but against all authority, especially God. The carrot of amusement that is offered even in the church has only led them further from in-depth thinking, i.e., musing. The result is "unreasonable and wicked men [who] have not faith" (2 Thes 3:2).

The hidden bastion deep within can be either the throne of a selfish tyrant ruling others, or the seat of selflessness poured out for others in genuine love and compassion: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Mt 16:25); "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit..." (Jn 12:24).

God did not make us robots. In spite of the denial by Luther, Calvin, and many evangelical leaders today, God gave man a will to freely choose to love or to hate Him, to receive Christ as Savior and Lord or to reject Him. God wants man to trust Him so fully and to love Him so deeply as to give Him the keys to this inner fortress of the heart, holding nothing back: "my son, give me thine heart" (Prv 23:26).

God doesn't want to trick us or to superficially persuade us by our emotions. He wants to win our hearts with His truth and love. "Know therefore...in thine heart...the LORD he is God" (Dt 4:39); "thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Dt 6:5); "The LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Dt 13:3). God's command for all to love Him with the whole heart proves His love and desire for all mankind to be saved. It would be unreasonable for God to command any to love Him whom He does not love enough to

do all He could to save them, but has instead predestined to hell.

“Only fear the LORD, and serve him...with all your heart...consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed” (1 Sm 12:24, 25); “turn ye even to me with all your heart...rend your heart, and not your garments” (Joel 2:12, 13); “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest [be baptized]” (Acts 8:37); “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9).

Creation’s most powerful witness to its Creator is found in DNA. Digitally organized instructions for building and operating trillions of cells as one body are inscribed upon DNA in encoded language that only certain protein molecules can decode. Everything written has an author! And the author of this amazing pool of intricate information could only be an infinite Intelligence, the One who created and sustains all by “the word of his power” (Heb 1:3).

The rebellion of Satan and man brought destruction to the entire order in the universe. The ongoing result has been natural disasters and a growing pool of disease and deformities among men and animals: “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together...” (Rom 8:21, 22). Even some cells no longer follow the instructions encoded in the DNA, resulting in cancer.

In spite of overwhelming and indisputable evidence bombarding him daily, man refuses to obey his Creator. He is thus a spiritual cancer on the earth, doing “that which [is] right in his own eyes” (Jgs 17:6).

God would be justified in wiping man from the earth—which He almost did with the flood. We would not be alive today had Noah not “found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gn 6:8). And why is God gracious and merciful to rebels? Only because of His boundless love revealed in Christ Jesus!

Christ’s sacrifice for sin is the great proof of God’s love for all mankind: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). The unspeakable horror of sin is revealed in the creatures’ mocking, scourging, and nailing their Creator to the Cross. And as sinful, rebellious man does his worst, God’s love shines all the brighter: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34)—and to answer that prayer, the Father punishes Christ in full for the sins of the world, past, present, and future.

In loving response to rebellious man, who desires to tear Him from His throne, God sent His Son to become a man through the virgin birth and to pay the full penalty His own infinite justice required for sin. Indeed, He could do no other. What? *Could do no other?* Yes, for “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8,16).

There is a vast difference between saying that God is loving, and that God *is love*. The words, “God is,” are coupled with many glorious promises—and warnings: God is “thy refuge” (Dt 33:27); “my strength and power” (2 Sm 22:33); “gracious and merciful” (2 Chr 30:9); “a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1); “my defense” (Ps 59:17); “good to Israel” (Ps 73:1); “faithful” (1 Cor 1:9; 10:13); “true” (Jn 3:33); “a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29), etc. But these expressions describe how God *acts*, not what God *is*.

Love is the very essence of God’s being. He cannot but love. Though love that is truly selfless is rarely seen on earth, every

...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Romans 5:5

person *knows* that such love is of God. That recognition is like a haunting memory deep in man’s heart of a paradise long lost.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they suddenly realized that “they were naked” (Gn 3:7). Not that they were without clothes (see *TBC*, Feb and Oct ’02), for that had been true since their creation. Made in the image of God, they must have been clothed in the very light of God: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5). It has been well said that “we are like mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright at all, depends entirely upon the sun [Son] that shines upon us.”

Sin stripped the first man and woman of all that God had intended for them as creatures made in His glorious image. The reflection of His glory no longer shone out through them. They were spiritually and morally naked. What a tragedy! And today man is still naked before his Creator, missing the glory that once clothed his first parents: “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

The love, which is God’s very essence, is missing because we have been separated from Him by sin. There is a bitter aching in the heart that nothing but God himself can satisfy. God is calling us to be reconciled to

Him: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13).

Most members of our tragic race turn to everything but God in an attempt to satisfy the longing that only He can fill: “Be astonished, O ye heavens...and be horribly afraid...saith the LORD. For my people have...forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns...that can hold no water” (Jer 2:12,13).

Some, however, will not be satisfied with anything less than God himself. With the Psalmist, they cry, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God...” (Ps 42:1, 2). This is not a thirst to have one’s “needs” met or to see miracles that excite the flesh. This is a deep thirst to know God himself in such a close relationship as to become all that He desires one to be. Is this the passion of your heart—of mine?

In Christ’s prayer to His Father, He expresses the earnest desire that God’s perfect love would indwell and be manifest through those who know and love Him: “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (Jn 17:26). What a prayer from the heart of the One who longs to bring “many sons unto glory” (Heb 2:10) in His likeness (1 Jn 3:2)! Hear David’s earnest expectation: “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Ps 17:15).

This is more than a restoration of the love that Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden. That intimate relationship they had known with their Creator could be, and was, lost. What the new creature in Christ is brought into is infinitely better and can never be lost. Christ told a troubled Martha: “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Lk 10:42).

Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would come to a full understanding of “the hope of his calling” (Eph 1:18). Wonder of wonders, God will eternally restore naked sinners “unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1 Pt 5:10)!

The new birth through faith in Christ begins a new and eternal life. Christ lives in us, but we must diligently partner with Him: “work out [not work *for*] your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12,13); “whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Col 1:29).

May we each have that same steadfast purpose in our hearts as we eagerly await His return.

TBC

Quotable

The time is short: seek little here below:
 Earth's goods would cumber thee,
 and drag thee down;
 Let daily food suffice; care not to know
 Thought for tomorrow; it may never come.
 Thou canst not perish, for thy Lord is nigh,
 And His own care will all thy need supply.

(J.J.P.)

Nor does God require of His children great skill or learning: it is only love which he regards. If this be sincere and fervent, free from disguise and dissimulation, God takes more pleasure and delight in it, than in all the knowledge and wisdom, in all the art and talent that any man upon earth, in his best works, can possibly exhibit. Wherever this divine love is wanting, there all wisdom and knowledge, all works and gifts, are altogether unprofitable. They are accounted vain and dead, as a mere body without life (1 Cor 13:1-2).

John Arndt (1555-1621)

Q&A

Question: I heard you recently express concern that an actor played the part of Jesus in the Mel Gibson movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. There have been many movies that portrayed Christ, yet I don't recall hearing you complain about them. What about the *Jesus* film that has been the means of millions coming to Christ around the world? Why are you just now becoming concerned?

Answer: I have consistently opposed attempts to portray Christ in film and other visual media. My reasons are rather simple. If you carried in your wallet a picture that you took out several times a day to look at in order to remember and honor your wife or husband—but it wasn't a picture of that person at all, but of someone else—wouldn't your spouse be justifiably upset?

Literally hundreds of pictures of "Jesus" exist by different artists, famous and otherwise: "Christ Crowned with Thorns," by Dutch painter Jan Mostaert, c. 1510, in the London National Gallery; "Crown of Thorns," done about the same time by

Italian painter Correggio; "Christ Carrying His Cross," by Italian and Spanish painter El Greco, 1580, in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art; "Head of Christ," by Rembrandt, 1655, held in the Picture Gallery, Berlin; "White Crucifixion," by Russian painter Marc Chagall, 1938, Art Institute of Chicago; "Head of Christ," by Warner Sallman, 1940, copyrighted by Warner Press, Inc.; the pitiful, any-person androgynous "Jesus of the People" that won the *National Catholic Reporter* contest against about 1,700 other entrants in 1999, etc., etc.

These alleged "portraits" are all different. Which one is the true Christ? Not one! Then what is the point for an artist to paint or for you to honor an image of "Christ" that is not what He really looked like—and certainly is not as He appears now in glory?! To whatever extent any depiction (portrait or by actor on stage or film) isn't accurate but influences your thinking, you have been led astray.

What must Jesus think of these misrepresentations! If your wife or husband would not be pleased with your carrying the picture of another to remind you of him or her, is Christ pleased by those who claim to love Him honoring so many phony representations?!

Moreover, is not Jesus God himself? Tell me why pictures pretending to represent Jesus are not a violation of the commandment not to make an image of God, even in our minds. Is this any better than the Israelites embracing idols as representations of Yahweh? You say you don't bow before pictures of Jesus. But you do look upon them as representing Jesus, do you not? If not, why have them?

The error is even worse when someone dares to portray Christ on the screen. Of himself, Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn 14:9)! What actor playing "Jesus" would dare to say that? Yet they are attempting to portray in their flesh what Paul described as "without controversy great is the mystery... God was manifest in the flesh..." (1 Tm 3:16). What audacity! And what of those who watch with approval and are influenced by such portrayals?

Jim Caviezel felt that in order to accurately portray Christ in *The Passion* he had to ingest the wafer turned into "Christ" in the Mass each day. Would that help?

After viewing movies, many sincere people see in their minds the actor who played "Christ" every time they think of Jesus. Does that please our Lord? I will leave that to your conscience.

Question: I have been disturbed for some time by the "praise and worship" music in my church—even to the point of looking elsewhere. But I seem to find the same thing everywhere I go. So much of it seems shallow and repetitive. I long for the old hymns that had doctrinal content and really bowed me before the Lord in worship and filled my heart with praise to Him. Am I just old-fashioned? Help me.

Answer: We are hearing this anguished cry from increasing numbers of people. Let me try to explain the basic problem as clearly as I can, hoping that some "praise and worship" leaders or pastors will at least give it some serious thought and prayer.

The abandoned hymns were composed by men and women of God who were mature in the faith, had often suffered much for Christ, and wrote from deep experience and biblical knowledge. Today's church has substituted choruses composed by those who are mostly young both in years and in the faith. They have little to offer except catchy tunes, a snappy beat for clapping, loud noise, and very little of true reverence for our Lord—hardly appropriate for entering God's holy and awesome presence. This is not true of all, but of most.

Sadly, today's "worshippers" seem content to sing over and over, for example, "I will sing of your love forever," or "I love to praise you, Lord," or "We have come into your house to worship you," or similar empty phrases. Why are they empty? The focus is more upon self than upon God—what I'm giving *Him* rather than His love and grace to me.

To repeat, "I will sing of your love forever," is not singing of His love at all. You are only saying you are *going* to sing of His love. Stop *promising* to sing of His love and do it! Sing of His love! Recite what He has done, how much He has loved you, and tell Him how much you love Him and *why*.

The same is true of "I love to praise you, Lord" or "We've come to worship you." This is neither praise nor worship, but merely *saying* that you love to praise Him or are going to worship Him. If so, then let's praise Him and worship Him! Praise is not saying you love to praise, nor is worship promising to worship. Let's really do it!

How? Let's express mature love and praise for Him, for His love, His character, and what He has done for our redemption.

There are so many powerful hymns that praise Him for His love and express our love and gratitude to Him! Here are sample excerpts: "The love of God is greater far

than tongue or pen can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell...to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky!" Or, "Son of God, 'twas love that made thee die our ruined souls to save; 'twas our sins vast load that laid thee, Lord of Life, within the grave...." "Down at the cross where my Savior died, Down where for cleansing from sin I cried, There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name!" "He is coming as the Bridegroom, coming to unfold at last the great secret of His purpose, mystery of ages past; and the Bride, to her is granted in His beauty now to shine, as in rapture she exclaimeth 'I am His, and He is mine!' Oh! What joy that marriage union, mystery of love divine; sweet to sing, in all its fullness, 'I am His, and He is mine!'"

What about a current favorite, "I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice to worship you, O my soul rejoice. Take joy, my King, in what you hear. Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear"? Is that any better? Slightly. At least it says, "I love you, Lord." But to say, "I lift my voice to worship you" is only an empty *promise* to worship—not actual worship. Asking the Lord to take joy in what He hears and hoping it will be a sweet, sweet sound in His ear is offering nothing. How about singing words that would bring Him joy and actually *be* a sweet sound in His ear! But the song contains none of what it seems to promise.

In contrast, consider the following: "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood? Died He for me who caused His pain—for me who Him to death pursued? Amazing love, how can it be, that Thou, my God, should'st die for me!" Or, "Down from His glory, ever living story, my God and Savior came, and Jesus was His name...a man of sorrows, tears and agony....What condescension, bringing us redemption; that in the dead of night, not one faint hope in sight; God, gracious, tender, laid aside His splendor, to stoop to woo, to win, to save my soul...! Without reluctance, flesh and blood His substance, He took the form of man, revealed the hidden plan. O glorious mystery! Sacrifice of Calvary! And now I know He is the great I AM! O how I love Him, how I adore Him! My breath, my sunshine, my all in all. The great Creator became my Savior, and all God's fullness dwelleth in Him!"

Question: Obviously, there are many Christian teachers on radio and TV

whose teaching is misleading or unbiblical. Should we avoid them, or learn what we can from them that is biblical? Who is safe to listen to? Whom do you recommend on radio, TV or in books that is the most biblically reliable?

Answer: There is a horrible mixture of truth and error being taught by Christians in pulpits, on radio, TV, in magazines, and in books. Whether or not one should continue to "eat the fish and spit out the bones," as is often said, depends upon the nature and extent of the error in each case. We at The Berean Call cannot set forth any rules. The Lord and His Word will have to be your guide.

Of course, there are those whose heresies are so many and so serious that you should avoid them entirely. However, the Lord has not called us here at TBC to approve or disapprove of individuals, much less to lead boycotts. We have been called to teach biblical truth, to warn of error as we see it, and to attempt to teach readers to discern truth and error by whomever it is taught.

Question (composite of several): I disagree with your answer in TBC February issue regarding the actions of Judge Roy Moore. He should have obeyed the order to remove the Ten Commandments as if it were from God. In Acts 5:29, the disciples had been specifically commissioned by God to preach the Gospel. If they were ordered not to, it would be against God's command, and they were therefore correct in saying that they must obey God rather than men. But moving a stone out of a courthouse in no way conflicts with what God wants for us. Therefore, your quoting of Acts 5:29 was in error.

Answer: Thank you for your thoughtful letter. You make a good point about Judge Moore's obligation to obey the authority over him, which is constituted by God. You correctly state that the only exception would be if the governing "authority requires us to go against God's commands." I agree.

You say that I misused Acts 5:29. But I believe that the disciples' continuing to preach Christ in disobedience of the commandment not to do so, given by constituted authority, is an exact parallel and set a valid precedent for Judge Moore to follow. Jesus had said that "the rabbis sit in Moses' seat" and are therefore to be obeyed. That the apostles gave the reason for disobeying this command as "we ought to obey God

rather than men" applies, I believe, in the case of Judge Moore as well.

The apostles were commanded to refrain from preaching in Christ's name, but obeyed Christ's command to do so. Judge Moore was commanded to remove the display of the Ten Commandments from a public place where, in fact, they ought to be displayed as a witness to the fact that God has written these very commands in every human conscience. He likewise refused for the same reason.

The display of the Ten Commandments was not on private property belonging to a business. It was public property and a courthouse where law is supposed to be upheld. The law of any land must be based upon the Ten Commandments given by God to all mankind (minus the Sabbath observance) and engraved on every human conscience. It was more than "moving a stone out of a courthouse."

Judge Moore was not an employee preaching the gospel on his employer's time. That would not be ethical. No time was taken from his duties by the display of these commandments.

We disagree, but praise God, can do so amicably.

Supplement

In the Feb. '04 issue of *TBC* we stated that Rick Warren was a graduate of Robert Schuller's Church Growth Institute. It is unclear whether or not Warren actually graduated. He did attend the Institute, according to a 2002 *Christianity Today* article and was listed as a 1997 Schuller Institute faculty member.

When Schuller developed his principles of church leadership and growth, he decided that appealing to man's self esteem was the best way to draw them in. Norman Vincent Peale advised him to modify the gospel to fit this new method. In response, Schuller called for a new reformation, going from a theocentric (God-centered) to a "human need" approach, certainly radical surgery to the body of historic and biblical theology. Warren seems to follow Schuller in this.

Showtime for the Sheep?

T.A. McMahon

(Excerpts from the upcoming book)

Introduction: As soon as Mel Gibson's directorial end-credit popped up on the black screen, I made a dash up the aisle while searching my jacket pockets for my cell phone. . . . As I ran from the theater, my mind was also racing with thoughts about what I had just experienced. Moments later I was at my car talking to a Seattle TV news reporter shortly before she was to go on the air. She knew from The Berean Call's website that we had had some reservations about the film prior to seeing it, and she wanted our critical perspective after we had viewed it. . . .

I don't remember exactly what I said, but as I recall it went something like this: "Having spent a number of years in the movie industry, particularly as a screenwriter, I appreciated Mel Gibson's craftsmanship in bringing his personal vision of Christ's crucifixion and death to the screen. Technically, it's a superb movie. On the other hand, as one who loves and studies the Scriptures, I would not let Mel lead a Bible study in my home. His vision does not square with the Word of God."

Of course, that was just one filmgoer's rushed and somewhat emotional reaction. My drive home that evening was more of the same. My mind was still racing. Concerns I'd had previous to seeing *The Passion of the Christ* were colliding with images from the big screen itself. . . .

If what I related above seems to be a bit too emotional to allow for objectivity about this subject, I appreciate that concern. Let's hope I can get past that initial reaction. . . . and get on with a presentation of content that is the result of objective reasoning. Common sense may also contribute, but *biblical sense* is my goal. I hope that readers will also be aware of their own emotional biases as they come into play. That may not be easy for any of us. After all, for the most part, I'll be discussing a *movie*. Try quantifying, "I loved it!"; "I hated it!"; "It made me laugh"; "It made me cry"; "It changed my life"; "It put me to sleep"; "It's the greatest film ever made"; "It stunk!" Opposing reactions such as these toward movies of all kinds have kept spouses from talking to each other for hours, if not days. Emotions are the lifeblood of the film medium. The more a movie captures the emotions of its audience, the more effective the movie.

Tens of thousands of tickets were purchased by evangelical churches and

organizations so that their members could attend Mel Gibson's theatrical production of an historical event recorded for us in Scripture—the most important of all time and eternity. . . . The list of endorsers for *The Passion* seemed to lack no well-known Christian leader. Denominational lines quickly disappeared in the wake of widespread enthusiasm. A massive herding of the sheep was taking place throughout Christendom, and the flocks were being (and continue to be) driven to a *movie*. Is that a good thing?

On the other hand, there are many believers (including those who have not seen the film) who are taking advantage of the notoriety of *The Passion* to share the *biblical Jesus and His gospel of salvation* with anyone who wants to talk about the movie. That's a great thing!

Chapter 11—Another Gospel? Some critics of *The Passion of the Christ* dislike it because of the extreme violence it portrays. A critic from *Newsweek* called it "the Gospel according to the Marquis de Sade." *The New Yorker* reported the movie to be "a sickening death trip, a grimly unilluminating procession of treachery, beatings, blood and agony." An article in the *Hollywood Reporter* [noted]: "...Flesh is flayed in grotesque detail. Body fluids spurt in exquisite patterns. . . . [T]he key figure here, Jesus himself (a game, blood-crusted Jim Caviezel), is such a punching bag for most of the movie that the filmmakers lose sight of his message."¹

Critics are certainly entitled to their opinions, but I don't think the filmmaker lost sight of *his message*.

Nationally known movie reviewer Roger Ebert, who gave *The Passion* his top rating, writes: "The movie is 126 minutes long, and I would guess that at least 100 of those minutes, maybe more, are concerned specifically and graphically with the *details of the torture and death* of Jesus. This is the most violent film I have ever seen" (emphasis added).² Ebert said in a final note: "It will probably be the most violent [film] you have ever seen. This is not a criticism but an observation. . . . but [it] works powerfully for those who can endure it."³

In what way does the movie "work powerfully"? Movie magic and theology! Mel has ushered the viewer into *his vision* of the physical sufferings and death of Jesus, which he believes were necessary for a sinful humanity to be reconciled to God. As a gifted filmmaker, he put together everything that he knew to be effective in his medium to best convey (and convince others of) his *theological understanding* of

what took place. Yet, sadly, this film misses the punishment for our sins that Christ endured from God and focuses exclusively on the physical sufferings inflicted by men—which could never save but only condemn us. This tragic misunderstanding is the very heart of the movie and must be corrected by anyone seeking to evangelize those who have been stirred to interest by viewing Gibson's film.

All of this didn't spring from his imagination overnight. He combined his lifetime of experience in Catholicism with his last dozen years of studying the Passion, and packaged it in his film craft. Mel gave some of the background to Ray Arroyo of EWTN (Global Catholic Network):

ARROYO: I want to talk for a second about the violence. . . . Why did you decide, "I want it to be this brutal?"

GIBSON: I don't think it's as brutal as it really was. . . . I stopped way short of what I think probably really happened. However, it is brutal. It is graphic. . . . I don't know—it *should* be shocking. . . .

ARROYO: You didn't just throw—slap this together. You spent a lot of time studying flagellations, crucifixions. . . . tell me a little about that study.

GIBSON: Oh, gosh, I mean there's a lot of books you can read on the subject, not the least of which was Anne Emmerich's [*The Dolorous Passion*], in which she talked of these things. It's like, well, vicious. Also, even in more recent times, there's medical guides that have sort of gone into it. . . .

ARROYO: No man could have survived it.

GIBSON: No, I don't think so. No, the divine was definitely at work here.

I agree with Mel. The divine was definitely at work—not, however, in the sense in which Mel believes, nor in the focus upon which he has devoted so much of his time, thought, energy, finances, and *faith*. All he sees and attempts to portray is human brutality vented upon Christ, because Catholicism emphasizes *physical* suffering, whether in this life or in purgatory—but the physical cannot pay the penalty for sin.

Let's consider *only* what the Bible says about the matter. . . . The first verse that most Christians commit to memory is John 3: 16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This verse raises some questions that need to be answered: 1) why does God love us—"the world"? and 2) why give His Son? The basic answer to number one is: It's not

because there's anything lovely in us, but because of God's infinite attribute: "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). Question number two is answered partially within the verse itself. *Believing* in His Son is necessary to avoid perishing (i.e., being separated from God forever) and to gain everlasting life (i.e., being with Him forever).

But that leaves us with some other questions that are critical to a basic understanding of the gospel—the good news of why Jesus came: What's the problem?! What was so serious that God had to send His Son to solve? *Sin*. The Bible tells us that "all have sinned" and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 3:23; 6:23). Everyone is a sinner; we're all reaping the destruction that sin produces; and, left on our own, every sinner is presently separated from God and will be forever. Mankind has a hopeless problem that he cannot solve. Only God can provide the solution. But why send His Son? Why not just forgive everyone and start fresh? It has to do with God's attributes. One is love, as we've seen, and another is *justice*: God is "a God of truth...just and right is he" (Dt 32:4). God declared to the first man that the penalty for sin is death (Gn 2:17). The Creator of the universe *set* this penalty, and His perfect justice demands that this penalty—this *infinite* penalty—be paid.

Since every man is a sinner and is therefore under eternal condemnation, there is nothing he can do about the penalty except to pay the eternal consequences. Divine justice must be satisfied. However, God is also love, and in His perfect love He provided the solution for the justly condemned. That's the good news! God became a Man: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14); "...the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tm 2:5) in order to pay the penalty due all humanity. As the Scriptures clearly indicate, Jesus, who is very God and perfect Man, and who will never cease to be God and Man, needed both attributes to be our Savior. He had to become a Man to die physically, and He had to be God in order to pay the infinite penalty that God's perfect justice required.

We can readily understand that Jesus had to die physically, "for without shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sin]" (Heb 9:22). But since the full punishment includes *spiritual separation* from God forever, our finite minds cannot comprehend how Jesus could pay that penalty on the cross. Yet we know it must be so. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Christ "by the grace of God should *taste death* for every man." He *became sin for us* (2 Cor 5:21), and the wrath of God due every sinner was poured out on Him (Jn 3:36).

In the three hours on the cross, Christ somehow experienced the punishment due every sinner. Or did He? If He only suffered *physically* and died *physically*, then the "everlasting punishment" due for sin that Jesus spoke about (Mt 25:46) wasn't covered. But the words that Jesus exclaimed from the cross tell us that He indeed covered everything: "It is finished!" That term in the Greek (*tetelestai*) was written on bills of sale during the time period of our Lord, and it translates, "Paid in full." Through the full payment by Him, "all that believe are *justified* from all things" (Acts 13:39). We were "bought with a price" (1 Cor 7:23), and through His *eternal* payment He "obtained *eternal* redemption for us" (Heb 9:12). Only an infinite God could pay that price (see Q&A).

The most important "scene" in the Scriptures (as far as revealing the divine penalty that Christ had to suffer) took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. In contrast to the terse and limited accounts (less than ten verses in *all* the gospels address His being scourged or crucified) and the scarcity of details regarding His physical suffering in the gospels, the description of what took place in the Garden is the *only* "up-close-and-personal" revelation of the *suffering* and internal agony of Jesus: "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mk 14:36); "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Lk 22:44).

Was Jesus agonizing over the physical suffering that He knew He was about to experience at the hands of men? No. Thousands of men before and after Him suffered scourging and crucifixion—some hanging on their crosses for days in prideful defiance. Were scourging and being nailed to a cross the worst possible tortures men could devise? Not even close. What Christian martyrs experienced during the inquisitions was unspeakably worse. All tortures were designed to cause the most horrific pain and suffering possible while managing to keep the victim alive. Martyrs in Islamic countries have had their bodies roasted and their skin peeled completely off their torsos. Whatever men did to torture Jesus only demonstrated the wickedness of the human heart. It contributed nothing toward satisfying divine justice.

Jesus offered the above prayer three times to "Abba, Father." *Abba* is a very intimate term that is sometimes translated as "Daddy." He knew the price He was about to pay: separation from His Father. Although we can't fathom how great the

love that exists between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we get an inkling of it in the reaction of Jesus. His heart agonized so intensely "that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood." But it didn't stop there. He became "sin for us!" It was for us that He suffered the wrath of His Father. It was for our sakes that "it pleased the LORD [Jehovah God] to bruise him; *he* hath put him to grief" (Is 53:10). Jehovah made "his *soul* an offering for sin" (emphasis added). To comprehend such love is beyond us, but having even a sense of it is enough to fill our hearts with profound gratitude for all eternity.

Between the sixth hour and the ninth hour, darkness descended over all the earth (Lk 23:44) and Jesus cried out (something He never did throughout the physical abuses of scourging and crucifixion!), "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). This was when our "ransom" was paid (1 Tm 2:6). "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Lk 23:46). Charles Wesley wrote something wonderful to ponder, but steeped in the mystery of godliness: "Amazing love, how can it be, that thou my God, should'st die for me?"

It is clear from the Scriptures that man can have no part in his own redemption. Logic tells us the same. An evangelical friend of mine had a conversation with a nun. She told him they both had much in common, with this one difference: he believed that Jesus paid 100 percent of the penalty for salvation. She believed that Jesus paid 99 percent, and as a Catholic she needed to pay the remaining 1 percent. Is that possible? What is one percent of eternal separation from God? She and Mel (as did I, growing up Catholic) focus on a redemption that cannot save them or anyone else. It is a rejection of Christ's unspeakable gift—something that only He could, and did, pay completely. Nevertheless, that's the Gospel of Rome:

Every man has his own share in the Redemption....In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ.

John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, no, 19.

Is this the sort of teaching that an evangelical would want communicated in his church or Bible study? What about the teachings regarding Mary? What about sending anyone to a movie to absorb Mel's vision? Would that in any way be related to turning the sheep over to a "hireling"? **TBC**

Quotable

[Idolatry] is a pestilence that walks in the Church of Christ...that sin which God has especially denounced in His Word...to which the Jews seem to have been most inclined before the destruction of Solomon's temple....It brought on Israel the armies of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon...scattered the ten tribes, burned up Jerusalem, and carried Judah and Benjamin into captivity. It brought on the Eastern Churches...the living death in which...Asia Minor and Syria are buried....

The cause of all idolatry is the natural corruption of man's heart...that great family disease...a craving...after something he can see, and feel, and touch [to] bring his God down to his own crawling level...a thing of sense and sight. He has no idea of the religion of heart, and faith, and spirit.... There is a natural...tendency in us all to give God a sensual, carnal worship...to devise visible helps...in our approaches to Him, and ultimately to give these inventions of our own the honour due to Him....

[Already] in the fourth century, Jerome complains, "images have come in...passed to the Christians from the Gentiles." Eusebius says, "We do see that images of Peter and Paul, and of our Saviour Himself be made...Pontius Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the fifth century, caused the walls of the temples to be painted with stories taken out of the Old Testament; that the people beholding and considering these pictures might the better abstain from too much surfeiting and riot. But from learning by painted stories, it came by little and little to idolatry.

St. Paul dwells on this subject....If any Corinthian called a brother was an idolater, with such an one "not to eat" (1 Cor 5:11). "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of our fathers" (10:7). He says again... "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (10:14)....John closes his first epistle with the solemn injunction, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 Jn 5:21).

J.C. Ryle,

Warnings to the Churches, 1877

Q&A

Question: A friend recently got involved with something at his church called The Alpha Course. It convinced him that by learning certain techniques one "can hear directly from God." What is The Alpha Course? Is it widespread?

Answer: God's power can no more be "activated" by techniques than can His love. This is science, not faith, and applies to the physical, not the spiritual. Scientific methods release and control the physical power in the universe. That there must be "principles" for scientifically releasing "spiritual power" is the error of "Christian Science" and other positive mental attitude cults and courses. Alpha is one of the newest and most popular.

This delusion, rampant in false religions such as witchcraft, was brought into the evangelical church by Norman Vincent Peale (who claimed that "Positive Thinking" equals "faith") and his chief disciple, Robert Schuller (who claims the same for "Possibility Thinking"). Peale wrote: "God is energy. As you breathe God in, as you visualize His energy, you will be reenergized...! Just as there exist scientific techniques for the release of atomic energy, so are there scientific procedures for the release of spiritual energy through the mechanism of prayer....As in any...science one must learn...the formula for...receiving this power." Schuller, who calls Peale his "mentor," teaches basically the same.

The Bible teaches that "the just shall live by faith" (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38), not by "techniques" or "principles." Yet Pat Robertson, like other "positive confession" teachers (Hagin, Copeland, Hinn, Price, Cerullo, Hickey, Meyer, Crouch, Roberts, et al.), describes his book, *Beyond Reason*, as "an effort to teach some of the basic principles that enable you to...experience the flow of God's energy [according to laws] as valid for our lives as...the law of gravity." Says Pat, "You can perform miracles if you but understand...the laws...that unlock God's power...We speak to money, and it comes. We speak to storms, and they cease...when you confess...success, [it] will come to you....[T]he Bible is not an impractical book of theology, but a system of thought and conduct that will guarantee success." (These quotes and more, with sources, are found in *Occult Invasion*. See offering list).

The Alpha Course is another form of "religious science," with millions of followers in thousands of churches, Catholic, Protestant, and evangelical. It was conceived by Nicky Gumbel of Holy Trinity Brompton Anglican Church in England after Gumbel got the "power" through the "Toronto Blessing," later passed on to Steve Hill, who started the "revival" at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida. Alpha has been endorsed by church leaders, from Robert Schuller and the Archbishop of Canterbury to J.I. Packer and Leighton Ford.

Alpha presents the gospel at times, but its "conversion" is more to a "Christian lifestyle" than to Christ the way, the truth, and the life; and its major aim is impartation of "supernatural power," especially healing and speaking in tongues. Participants look forward above all to the big weekend when they will receive Holy Spirit empowerment. I remember the "testimony" of a man devoted to Eastern Mysticism who "got the Holy Spirit" that weekend—but clearly remained unsaved.

Question: You claim that the payment for sins was not through the physical sufferings of Christ inflicted by man, but spiritual sufferings endured at the hands of God. Yet Isaiah 53:5 says "...and by his stripes we are healed." The NASB has, "...and by his scourging we are healed." Please admit your error!

Answer: The NASB is wrong. The Hebrew *chabburah* translated "stripes" occurs six other times (Gn 4:23; Ex 21:25; Ps 38:5; Prv 20:30; Is 1:6) and it *never* means Roman scourging. Do you really think (as Mel Gibson's film erroneously attempts to show) that Roman soldiers' torture of Christ paid the eternal penalty for all of the murders, rapes, wars, hatred, jealousy, and unimaginable evil committed by billions of people during the history of mankind? Sinful soldiers can't mete out to the Holy Son of God the righteous punishment for the sins of the world!

Peter specifically says Christ paid for our sins *on the cross* (1 Pt 2:24), not when scourged. It was *during those 3 hours of darkness on the Cross* that God laid on Christ the infinite penalty for the sins of the world—and only when He had paid for our sins in full did He cry in triumph, "It is finished!" Not because of His scourging, but as a result of what Christ accomplished *on the Cross*, the rocks were split, the earth quaked and the veil of the temple was ripped open (Mt 27:51).

First Peter 2:24 indicates that the healing by "stripes" is not from disease (as some teach) but from sin: "Who his own self bare our *sins*...." That this refers to spiritual punishment is clear: "thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Is 53:10). Like the soul, sin itself, though expressed in physical acts, is *spiritual*: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness..." (Mk 7:21,22).

Salvation is *spiritual* and can only be

by faith. To receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life as a gift from God is the greatest spiritual good conceivable. Physical punishment executed by sinful men could never make that gift possible. Thus the physical stripes Christ received in fulfillment of prophecy could not pay the penalty for sin; only God's spiritual punishment could do that.

Healing from sin and its penalty is what the gospel is all about: "How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3)—not that "Christ died for our physical ailments." The promise, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31) clearly pertains to salvation from sin, not from disease. Christians in general are neither healthier nor live longer in this life than unbelievers—but we have eternal life.

The Hebrew noun *chabburah* translated "stripes" is singular in Isaiah 53:5, indicating *one blow from God* wounding Christ "for our transgressions," bruising Him "for our iniquities"—not the many stripes of scourging that were a major focus of Mel Gibson's attempt to show that Christ's physical sufferings paid for the sins of all mankind. Do you really believe that what Christ physically endured in the scourging and crucifixion was equal to what sinners will endure for all eternity in the lake of fire?

There is nothing in any of the four gospels (other than crowning Him with thorns and mocking Him as a king) to indicate that Christ's scourging and crucifixion were any worse physically than that suffered by thousands of others. That "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead" (Mk 15:44) contradicts the idea that Christ was scourged and tortured within an inch of His life. Thus the statement that "his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Is 52:14) could not be due to unusual physical beating, but to such intense spiritual agony that His features were so distorted that it was awesome to behold.

The idea that the physical suffering Christ endured at the hands of men paid for the sins of the world is neither biblical nor rational for at least four reasons: 1) Christ didn't come even close to suffering more physically than any other person. Some men hung in agony for days on crosses, the Assyrians flayed their enemies alive, some victims of the Inquisition were roasted for hours over a slow fire, and the Inquisitors competing to develop the most excruciating torture—sometimes even bringing victims back from the brink of death, letting them heal, and then torturing them again; 2) if the physical "stripes" paid the penalty for sin, Christ's physical tormenters would

have played a vital role in our redemption and would in a sense be our co-redeemers (and what if they failed to torment Him *enough* to save us?!); 3) the punishment for those who reject Christ is eternal, but those who scourged and crucified Christ were incapable of inflicting eternal punishment; and 4) physical suffering could never adequately cause the moral and spiritual pain which must be involved in the just punishment of sin—in fact, it would obliterate it.

The error that physical scourging paid for our sins is also refuted by Scripture's declaration that Christ "made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20), not "the blood of his scourging," which took place before He was led to Golgotha. We are "justified by his blood" (Rom 5:9), which includes His death. Had he merely bled but not died, we could not be saved. The phrase "shedding of blood" (Lv 17:11; 2 Chr 29:24, etc.) always means death, not wounding as in scourging—and this is the only means of atonement: "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb 9:22).

Christ "by himself purged our sins" (Heb 1:3). While this could not be without the shedding of His blood at the hands of others, there was something which He alone had to do to purge us from our sins. That could only have been to endure eternal punishment at the hands of God which no man could exact from Him—something far worse than the "stripes" of scourging.

Christ's spiritual sufferings for sin are beyond our understanding and Scripture only hints at them: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me...? smitten of God, and afflicted...wounded for our transgressions...bruised for our iniquities...the chastisement of our peace was upon him...the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...for the transgression of my people was he stricken...it pleased the LORD to bruise him...thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...the travail of his soul...poured out his soul unto death...he bare the sin of many...he hath made him to be sin for us, [he] who knew no sin..." (Ps 22:1; Is 53:4-6,8,10-12; 2 Cor 5:21), etc.

Christ's sweating in spiritual agony "as it were great drops of blood" (Lk 22:44) and pleading with His Father in the Garden to be spared "this cup" (Mt 26:39,42) could not have been in dread of the scourging and crucifixion (as implied in the film) which thousands of others also endured. "This cup" from which He shrank could only have been that He would be "made sin for us"—that He would "bear our sins in His own body" and be punished by God to the full extent demanded by His justice for

the sins of the entire world. During those three hours of darkness on the Cross, all the "waves and billows" of God's wrath against the sins of all mankind rolled over Him (Ps 42:7; 88:7; Jon 2:3).

Isaiah declares that Yahweh "bruised [Him] for our iniquities." It is unbiblical and irrational to suggest that the Roman soldiers were guided by God in each blow as God's means of punishing Christ for sin. Christ said, "No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself" (Jn 10:18). It is God's law which men have broken, He pronounced the penalty and He alone can execute it in righteousness. Therefore, the payment for our sins could only have been through the punishment Christ endured at the hands of God, not men.

Christ had to be more than mere man: He had to be God manifest in the flesh to endure the eternal punishment due for the sins of all mankind in the three hours of darkness. We are told that He "by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb 2:9). That had to include the "second death"—eternity of punishment in the lake of fire which is yet future for the lost. This could not have been at the hands of the Roman soldiers who scourged and mocked Him, but only at the hands of God.

Endnotes

- 1 Honeycutt, Kirt, *The Hollywood Reporter*, as quoted in the *Santa Barbara News-Press*, 3/25/04.
- 2 Ebert, Roger, *The Bend Bulletin*, section B, 3/25/04.
- 3 Ibid.

Christ Died For Our Sins

Dave Hunt

In desperation, the Philippian jailor cried, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul’s reply was simple: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). The great apostle said nothing about baptism or sacraments, candles, incense, church attendance, reforming one’s life, or anything else being necessary or even helpful for salvation. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible makes it clear that there is nothing a sinner can *do*, much less *must do*, to pay the infinite penalty required by God’s justice. One can and need only believe in Christ, who paid the penalty in full: “It is finished” (Jn 19:30)!

Scripture could not be clearer: “[T]o him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the *ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4:5); “For by grace are ye saved through faith...*not of works*, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8,9). To attempt to do anything for one’s salvation beyond believing “on the Lord Jesus Christ” is to deny that Christ paid the full penalty for sin on the cross and to reject God’s offer on that basis of forgiveness and eternal life as a free gift of His grace. Clearly, we can be saved *only by faith in Christ*—but exactly what does that mean? What must one believe?

Suppose someone claims to be a “Christian,” believes in Christ as a historical person and the best of men, admires and seeks to follow Christ’s selfless example, is emotional about Christ’s suffering and death on the cross, and regularly goes to church. Yet he thinks it doesn’t matter whether or not Christ was virgin-born, or whether He is God come as a man to die in full payment for our sins upon the cross, or whether He rose from the dead. Is such a person saved? Does he really “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”? Or does he admire and believe in “another Jesus...another spirit...another gospel” (2 Cor 11:3,4)? Does it really matter, or are we just “splitting hairs”?

Paul declares that “the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). So believing “the gospel of Christ” gives salvation. But is believing the gospel the *only* way to be saved—and if so, what is the gospel? Peter declared, “There is none other name under heaven given among

men, whereby we *must* be saved” (Acts 4:12). No answer is given to the question, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...” (Heb 2:3)? There is no escape except in Christ: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6).

Yet nowhere, in one place, does the Bible define the gospel of Christ fully. Yes, the gospel is “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again [from the dead] the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3,4). But this declaration by Paul says nothing, for example, about Christ being born of a virgin or being the Son of God.

Common sense tells us that Paul’s statement, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31), does not mean merely to believe that there was once a man

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 3:17

called Jesus Christ. Obviously, there must be much about Christ not included in that brief statement, but which Paul had already explained to the Philippian jailor. One could not “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” if a false understanding were held about Him.

Christ warned a group of Jews, “ye shall...die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come...if ye believe not that I am *he*...” [*he* is in italics, added by the translators] (Jn 8:21,24). “I AM” is the name of God that He revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14) and that Christ clearly claims for Himself: “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30). Isaiah declared prophetically that the Messiah who would be born of a virgin (Is 7:14) would be “The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Is 9:6). Christ’s language is precise. He doesn’t tell the Jews, “Before Abraham was, I was.” He says, “Before Abraham was, *I am*” (Jn 8:58). He is the self-existent One without beginning or end, “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rv 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13).

So we have it from the lips of Christ himself that in order to be saved, one must believe that He is God come as a man through the promised virgin birth. Of course, that makes sense. No one but God could be our Savior. Repeatedly, Yahweh,

the “God of Israel” (203 times from Ex 5:1 to Lk 1:68) declares that He is the only Savior (Is 43:11; Hos 13:4, etc.). Thus, to be saved, one must believe that Christ is God. To deny this essential is to reject the gospel that saves.

Believing that Christ resurrected is also essential for salvation: “[I]f thou shalt...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9). Yet there are pastors and seminary professors who believe neither in Christ’s deity nor in His resurrection. They teach “another gospel” that will not save—and millions seem willing to believe such false teachers instead of the infallible Word of God. The doom of both teachers and followers is on their own heads because they have rejected the very salvation that Christ obtained upon the cross in dying for our sins.

And here we face another essential of the gospel that must be believed for one to be saved: “that Christ *died* for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3). His being *scourged, abused, beaten, or mistreated by men*—or even *crucified*, though in fulfillment of prophecy—could not pay the penalty for sin and would not save us. Christ *died* for our sins. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezk 18:4, 20); “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Salvation comes through Christ’s death. *Death* is the penalty for sin, and Christ had to pay that penalty for all mankind in full. In full? Isn’t death just death? Could it be worse than we imagine? Indeed, it is!

While we dealt briefly last month with the distinction between the physical sufferings inflicted by men and the spiritual sufferings at the hands of a holy God against sin, this subject is of such importance that we ought to consider it further. Sin is a moral, spiritual problem involving God’s law and man’s rebellion against God. That Christ’s suffering for sin was not just physical but spiritual is clear: “when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...he shall see of the travail of his soul...he hath poured out his soul unto death” (Is 53:10-12); “Christ...through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God” (Heb 9:14).

Just before Judas betrayed Him, Christ “took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you...[T]his do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance

of me” (Lk 22:19,20; 1 Cor 11:24,25).

Most Christians periodically take the bread and cup as Christ commanded. Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches teach that the bread and cup are Christ’s literal body and blood offered on their altars and that He is continually suffering for sin. The Bible declares that Christ: “*once...hath...appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...was once offered to bear the sins of many...after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified...there is no more offering for sin* (Heb 9:26, 28; 10:12, 14, 18); Christ...*once suffered for sins* (1 Pt 3:18).

If Christ, as Peter says, “is gone into heaven,” where Steven saw Him when he was stoned to death (Acts 7:55,56), how can He continue to be offered (immolated) on Roman Catholic altars? What of Catholics who really love Christ, believe that He died for their sins, but have believed Catholic doctrine that the wafer becomes the body and blood of Christ and that He continues to be offered? Could they be saved in spite of such ignorance or misunderstanding? What are the limits of the error that can be held within the gospel, and does it matter? Would it matter if they believe that Christ died for our sins yet participate in the “sacrifice of the Mass,” imagining that Christ is still being offered for our sins and that they are ingesting Him into their stomachs when they take that wafer and cup? Yes, Scripture says Christ “suffered *once*” for our sins—but is it so serious an error to believe that He continues to be offered? Yes, it is!

Christ’s offering of Himself to the Father for sin took place on the cross: “who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pt 2:24). So, again, it was not in being scourged that Christ bore our sins. He endured something far worse than physical suffering. In the garden, in dread anticipation of that horror, “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lk 22:44).

When we take the bread and cup as Christ commanded, we do so not to receive forgiveness of sins (as Catholics and Orthodox imagine), or nourishment for the soul (as Luther and Calvin taught), but gratefully in remembrance of Christ in the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross. It is so easy to imagine that in the physical participation of eating and drinking we have done our “duty” to the Lord once again in commemoration of

His physical suffering—and to fail to take adequate time to meditate upon what He spiritually “once suffered for sins, [He] the just for [us] the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pt 3:18).

And here again we see the vital importance of distinguishing between the physical suffering our Savior endured at the hands of men, and the punishment He endured from God: “...the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief...” (Is 53:6,10).

As we noted last month, it would be absurd to imagine that sinful rebels against God were His servants in executing His justice upon Christ. How would they know just how hard to strike and how many blows to give Him? And how could physical suffering pay the spiritual price of eternal separation from God that sin merits? Christ said,

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead...

Hebrews 9:16-17

“I lay down my life...no man taketh it from me” (Jn 10:17,18). Thus the soldiers could not and did not kill Him. But Christ *died* for our sins—so again, what the soldiers did could not have paid for our sins.

“Christ *died* for our sins according to the scriptures.” We tend to think of death as physical, but surely it is much more. Death is first of all spiritual separation from God—which ultimately causes the separation of the soul and spirit from the body in physical death. Adam was warned, “In the day that thou eatest thereof [of the forbidden fruit] thou shalt surely die” (Gn 2:17). He did not die physically that very day but nearly 1,000 years later. Adam and Eve must therefore have died *spiritually* on that very day. They suddenly realized that they were aliens in the garden of Eden, separated from God by their sin, and they tried to hide from Him among the trees (Gn 3:8)—dead to God in their spirits.

All of the descendants of Adam and Eve inherit this spiritual death. We are born “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). Physical death began its process in Adam and Eve the very day they sinned. We are born sinners. Thus our bodies begin to die

from the moment of birth—a fact for which medical science has no explanation.

No person (except Christ) has yet experienced the utter horror of death in its fullness. That will only occur after the final judgment: “death and hell...and whosoever was not found written in the book of life...were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Rv 20:14,15). Christ became a man so that He “by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9). Therefore, His death on the cross had to include the “second death.” Thus Christ endured on the cross the eternal suffering that all mankind face in the lake of fire! This could only have been at the hands of God, not at the hands of man.

“The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23)—not merely temporary physical separation of soul and spirit from the body, but eternal separation from God. Therefore, in suffering for sin, Christ must have experienced the horror of the eternal separation from God that was due to all mankind. No wonder He cried out in agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Ps 22:1; Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34)?! No physical suffering, especially at the hands of sinful men, could mete out that awful penalty. Sin is a moral, spiritual problem involving God’s law and man’s rebellion against God. Both the punishment and the solution can only be spiritual.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that in addition to Christ’s suffering the eternal penalty, we must suffer the “temporal” punishment for sins, either in this life or in purgatory—and few Catholics expect to escape the latter. Supposedly, the flames of purgatory are the means of purging our sins. Here again we have confusion over spiritual and physical suffering, a denial of Christ’s finishing the work of our redemption, and the attempt to earn in part one’s salvation. Scripture unequivocally declares: “[Christ] purged our sins [then] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:3); “without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]” (Heb 9:22); “[Christ] washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rv 1:5).

Recognition that what Christ suffered for our sins was far beyond any physical suffering should increase our gratitude to Him. The deeper our understanding, the greater will be our appreciation for what Christ suffered in our place. May the Lord awaken in our hearts an overflowing river of praise and gratitude so that we continually express our love to the Father for giving His Son, and to Christ for enduring the punishment

Quotable

The plain truth is that *false doctrine* has been the chosen engine which Satan has employed in every age....Unable to prevent the Fountain of Life being opened, he has laboured incessantly to poison the streams which flow from it....False doctrine soon overspread the Primitive Church after the death of the Apostles....False doctrine in the middle ages so completely overspread the Church, that the truth as it is in Jesus was well nigh buried or drowned. During the last three centuries before the Reformation, it is probable that very few "Christians" in Europe could have answered the question, "What must I do to be saved?"....False doctrine since the days of the Reformation has continually been rising up again....

*J.C. Ryle,
Warnings to the Churches, 1877*

Q&A

Question: In the feature article of your Sept. '03 newsletter you wrote: "Gays' have managed to be categorized as a persecuted minority even though their 'difference' is *by choice*, not by birth. They have adopted this aberrant behavior *voluntarily* and now claim it as a badge of special privilege" (emphasis mine). In an otherwise extremely well written piece, this is where I believe you have erred. The vast amount of *male* homosexuals never "voluntarily chose" to become homosexuals. (Lesbianism is an entirely different issue.) Nor is it genetically encoded. Evidently, something happens in the early stages of the child's development—*long* before a "conscious choice"....I work in an industry that is replete with homosexuals, and I have had long and candid conversations with some who have become my friends....I hope you will give the enclosed article by Prager a careful perusal.

Answer: Thank you for your letter and the enclosed articles by Dennis Prager. I respect his intelligence and careful reasoning and read what he said with interest. You fault me for saying that homosexuality is a choice, and you say that Prager refutes this. In fact, he does not refute what I said, but supports it.

Prager states that very few homosexuals have not had sex with women and that the vast majority have unquestionably *chosen* their lifestyle for one reason or another. He suggests that there is a very small percentage

for whom this may not be true, but the full explanation for their homosexuality remains uncertain.

Your statement that homosexuals are created in God's image is of no more validity to your argument than to say that criminals were created in God's image. In fact, Adam is the only one created in God's image, and that image has long been distorted by human rebellion and the effects of sin long practiced to the extent that it is hardly recognizable (Gn 1:27; 5:3).

But even if we accept your statement fully, what does it mean? Surely you are not implying that homosexuality is part of "God's image" in which man was made! Couldn't a shoplifter say that he or she is made in God's image and has no choice because the urge to do so is too strong to resist, began at an early age, and has a name: kleptomania?

You express not only sympathy but an apparent acceptance of the very perversion that the Bible condemns in the strongest language, with no excuses allowed. Even Prager admits this and points to biblical condemnation (in contrast to widespread historic homosexuality in all cultures except among Jews) as one proof that God inspired the Old Testament.

We have two choices: to "accept" homosexuals as "normal" (which Prager, in agreement with the Bible, rejects), or to try to rescue all from this way of life. I think you would agree with me upon the latter course of action.

Question (composite of several): A number of us think you have given more than enough attention to the subject of Calvinism. This should not be the focal point of your ministry! It is time to move on to more edifying subjects; you are only adding fuel to the fires of division. You admit there are good Christians on both sides—so let it go at that.

Answer: I appreciate (and share) your concern lest too much attention be given to debating Calvinism. But I am confronted by a dilemma. Almost everywhere I look in God's Word, one's understanding of the passage depends upon whether or not one is a Calvinist. That's a fact I can't escape, no matter how much I'd prefer to ignore it!

For biblical understanding, one must either accept or reject Calvinism's view that God predestined before their birth all men either to heaven or to the Lake of Fire. Much of Scripture involves God's pleadings with Israel to repent. I must either believe that He sincerely desires to

bless them all (in which case Calvinism is false)—or that He is mocking those whom He has predestined to eternal torment and from whom He withholds the very grace they need to repent. How can I study the Passover and deliverance from Egypt, the Levitical sacrifices, the passage through the Red Sea, water out of the Rock, daily manna, etc., without recognizing that these provisions, which picture Christ's sacrifice, were for all of Israel and not for an elect among them—and thus that Calvinism can't be true? How can I read of the serpent lifted up in the wilderness for the healing of all who believed (not for an elect within Israel who had been *predestined* to believe) without recognizing that here also Calvinism opposes the plain teaching of Scripture?

And how can I overlook the fact that Christ used this incident to explain His sacrifice on the Cross, which must likewise have been for all, and not for an "elect" predestined to believe from eternity past? Moreover, how can I overlook the additional fact that in none of the Old Testament types of Christ and His sacrifice for our sins *was anyone first regenerated* before they believed, as Calvinism claims must be the case?

I'm not trying to argue, but only to share my dilemma. I can't ignore God's Word! Christ's exhortation to pray "Thy will be done..." is cruel and misleading if Calvinism is true, and thus rape, murder, war, lust, etc., are all exactly what God decreed according to His sovereign will—and is a genuine and earnest appeal only if Calvinism is false, and men, by their own free will, continually go against God's will. What do "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Jos 24:15), "if ye be willing and obedient" (Is 1:19), and a host of other similar scriptures mean? They are misleading if Calvinism is true, and honest appeals only if Calvinism is false. Is "whosoever will may come" a genuine invitation to all, or is it misleading—because only the predestined elect can come? Paul earnestly tried to persuade all the lost whom he encountered to repent and believe. Was he wasting his time, because Christ hadn't died for most of them and they had already been damned before they were born—or does salvation depend upon one's willingness to believe? The meaning of much of Scripture hinges upon whether Calvinism is true or false.

I agree—we don't want Calvinism to be "the focal point of our ministry." I don't think it ever has been. At the same time, however, we can't ignore the fact that the Bible repeatedly deals with these issues.

In any study of the biblical teaching of redemption, the love of God, and manifesting that love in our lives, we must either decide for Calvinism or against it. Surely, since I am to be merciful as my Heavenly "Father also is merciful" (Lk 6:36), it matters whether God is merciful to all or just to an elect.

Isn't it important whether God loves all and wants all to be saved, or damns multitudes whom he *could* save? How can I preach the gospel without deciding whether it is a genuine offer of salvation for all or for only the elect?

Some of my good friends are Calvinists, but we don't break fellowship over our disagreement. Yet are not these issues of vital importance? How can I ignore them? I don't want to perpetuate a quarrel, but I must deal honestly with God's Word. I hope this helps you to understand my sincere dilemma and why I can't just ignore Calvinism.

Question: What might be included in "the strong delusion" in 2 Thessalonians 2:11? And is it already here, or does it only take effect after the Rapture?

Answer: Paul says that the "delusion" specifically causes those who "received not the love of the truth" to be deceived by the "lying wonders" performed by Antichrist ("that Wicked...whose coming is after the working of Satan") and by his "deceivableness of unrighteousness..." (2 Thes 2:8-10). Clearly, this applies to those left behind at the Rapture in a world ruled by Antichrist; but it would seem that their rejection of the truth preceded and prepared them for "that man of sin" (v. 3,4) and thus could occur, at least to a lesser degree, before the Rapture.

The delusion causes "that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned" (v. 11,12). Revelation 13:2,4,8 say the world will *worship* both "the beast" (Antichrist) and "the dragon [Satan who] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Thus we could conclude that the lie is Antichrist's claim that he is God: "he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thes 2:4). The lie would seem to be the total delusion under Antichrist and the false prophet, which would include taking his mark and bowing down to his image. All who do so are damned (Rv 14:9-11).

Question: Will Antichrist be a Jew (just as Judas, a fellow Jew, betrayed Jesus)? If so, will he be of the tribe of Dan (Danish)?

Answer: Danes are not Jews and therefore cannot be from the tribe of Dan! The

argument for Antichrist being Jewish is not because Judas was a Jew, but because it is speculated that Israel would only accept a Jew. Unquestionably, Israelis will embrace Antichrist as their deliverer: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43). But why must he be a Jew?

The majority in Israel today would receive anyone as their Messiah who brought peace—whether he were Jew or Gentile. That Antichrist will establish a false peace that will deceive Israel seems clear: "them that are at rest, that dwell safely...having neither bars nor gates...that are gathered out of the nations...that dwell in the midst of the land [of Israel] (Ezk 38:11-12); and by peace shall [Antichrist] destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand" (Dn 8:25).

Antichrist could be Jewish, but he need not be. He must, however, according to Daniel 9:26,27, be born within the borders of the ancient Roman Empire: "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [temple] and he shall confirm the covenant [for peace and rebuilding the temple]...for one week [seven years]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease..."

The "covenant" must have provided for rebuilding the temple; the sacrifices could only be stopped if they had started, and for that the temple is essential. Surely the Muslims, UN, EU, and USA would never all agree to the rebuilding of the temple unless it were *forced* upon them—and that is the meaning of the Hebrew. Of course, only Antichrist empowered by Satan could impose this upon the world. (Israel will imagine he is their friend, whereas he has the temple rebuilt because he intends to sit in it declaring that he is God and demanding that all mankind worship him.)

The "people of the prince that shall come," who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, were, of course, the Roman armies under Titus. Thus Antichrist, whether Jew or Gentile, must have been born within the boundaries of the ancient Roman Empire. It would be fruitless and a waste of time to speculate regarding the identity of Antichrist (who can only "be revealed in his time"—2 Thes 2:6), though that has always been a popular pursuit for many.

Why?

Dave Hunt

Most parents have been frustrated (or amused) by a small child's persistent question, "Why?" repeated almost endlessly. Every attempted answer brings yet another inevitable, "But *why?*" Even young children recognize that there must be a reason for everything. The relentless "Why?" reflects the instinctive search for an ultimate answer beyond which there are no more questions. For some, this natural curiosity begins a search for God, the One who promised, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). Too often, however, the search is never with the whole heart; and what may have begun as honest seeking soon sours for one invalid reason (excuse) or another.

As children grow older and disappointment turns into cynicism, many lose interest in vital questions and their lives center around worldly trivia. The God-implemented spiritual thirst of the soul for the One who "is love" (1 Jn 4:8) and who made man for Himself, and for the spiritual "water of life" that only Christ can give (Jn 4:14; 7:37-39; Rv 22:17), is misunderstood as a thirst of the body for something physical. What should be an echo of "my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:2; 84:2) becomes "I thirst for money, sex, pleasure, success, expensive clothes, and gourmet food"—and the emptiness worsens.

In high school and university, trusting students "learn" that there is no truth, there are no absolutes, no ultimate answers, everything is relative—so what is the point of anything? The gate to eternal life is too narrow for their taste ("O taste and see that the LORD is good" [Ps 34:8] seems mystical, foolish), so they join the multitudes on the broad road "that leadeth to destruction" (Mt 7:13-14). Life becomes a vain pursuit of fleshly enjoyment for the moment—and many churches, tragically, pander to this deadly obsession with pleasure and fun. They offer shallow, unchallenging teaching to attract the young "to Christ."

There are few (even among Christians) who give much thought or serious preparation to eternity—yes, *eternity*. Whatever work of the Holy Spirit (convincing and convicting "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" - Jn 16:8) has taken root in the heart is stifled by the "care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Mt 13:22). And

the older one gets (with little exception), the slipperier the slope that slides into *death*.

There are, however, many unsaved people who cannot escape the sober realization that this brief life ends all too soon—and who fear what lies beyond. They crave sound answers to serious questions that haunt them in moments of reflection. It's not more trivia that fills daily life that they seek, but the ultimate answers to life's most important questions. It is to these persons that Peter tells us we must be ready *always* to give a "reason" for the hope we have in Christ (1 Pt 3:15). The Lord has led me to many such persons, often the one sitting next to me on an airplane, or a taxi driver, or...who knows?

Most people who have thought seriously about life and death know that God exists. For those in doubt, we can prove God's existence quickly (see *TBC*, Aug '02). Most people have no real hope of heaven, so would prefer to believe that death is the end. That delusion is easily dispelled. We can prove that

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not...

Ecclesiastes 12:1

we are non-physical beings who continue into eternity even after the physical body we lived in is laid in the grave (see *TBC*, Aug '02). This fact leads to serious consequences that must be faced in this life. To wait until after death is obviously too late, for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..." (Heb 9:27).

For those who recognize that the grave doesn't end one's existence, Satan has other lies such as spirit survival and reincarnation—again easily refuted (see *TBC*, Sep '98). It is the thought of judgment and *eternal* punishment that most non-Christians (and even many who claim to be Christians) find most difficult to accept. And closely related is the troubling question of why a good God would allow sin and suffering.

Right here we are forced to disagree with Calvinism's claim that everything that happens—every tragedy and wickedness—is exactly what God willed from eternity past. That belief would seem to justify the atheist's complaint: "If your 'God' can't prevent all suffering and evil, he is too weak to be God; and if he can and doesn't, he is a monster unworthy of our trust."

Of course, the simple answer is that God is not the cause of evil. Man is. Yes, but God *allows* evil. Is that any better than causing it? Obviously, there is a huge difference. Only one explanation of the horrible state of this world rings true to conscience and is declared in the Bible (and here again we find ourselves in conflict with our Calvinist friends). God gave man a free will so that we could willingly and with understanding love Him and each other and not be brutes ruled by instinct; or worse, mere puppets with God pulling the strings.

Thus, the only way to eliminate evil from this world would be to annihilate the human race because, as Jesus said, "Out of the heart [of man] proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries..." (Mt 15:19). The damning truth that "the heart [my heart, your heart] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9) is not easy to face. We love to blame everyone else—a trait psychology encourages by teaching that it is never *my* fault but the fault of parents, society, circumstances, "tough breaks," etc. The first step toward a cure is to take the blame ourselves and willingly face the consequences.

So man is a sinner, and sin must be punished. What the Bible declares makes sense and every conscience knows it: whatever the penalty prescribed by the law, it must be paid. If God did not punish sin, He would be condoning it. A major problem in our society today is that lack of punishment results in revolving doors on prisons, marriage vows that have become meaningless and are broken with scarcely a twinge of guilt or remorse, no dread of consequences, and little sympathy for others because consciences have been "seared with a hot iron" (1 Tm 4:2). This is the world *man* has made. It is not the world God created.

Man was created in the image of God to reflect the very character of God in every thought, word, and deed. But he was to do so knowingly and willingly, not as a robot or wind-up toy. He had to have a free will so that he could voluntarily and in love fulfill God's purpose for his existence.

Adam and Eve willfully chose to disobey God, thereby destroying themselves as God had made them. Sin is coming "short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). No amount of good deeds in the future could pay for sinning in the past. By very definition of who He is, God could not tolerate rebellion in His universe. He immediately cast

Adam and Eve out of the idyllic paradise He had created for them—but not without graciously and lovingly offering them an alternative. They and their descendants could be reconciled to Him, on His terms, of course—or they could suffer eternal separation, not just from the Garden but from His holy presence. The choice was theirs and their descendants' to make.

Having been created for fellowship with God who had given them life and who alone could sustain it, separation from Him was, of course, the sentence of death. God had made that clear from the beginning. He had given Adam and Eve the easiest command possible—out of the hundreds (and perhaps thousands) of trees in the garden, they were to abstain from eating the fruit of just one. That's all, only one! And God clearly warned, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gn 2:17). Death was not in the fruit but in the disobedience.

One can't even play a game without rules. Surely it is only reasonable that God should have rules in His universe. Without physical laws, the universe (if it could even exist) would be unimaginable chaos. That man is a moral being requires moral rules, and to allow them to be broken without punishment would bring moral chaos. We see this on a small scale in families where well-meaning but foolishly indulgent parents, by not punishing their children consistently each time they break the rules, train them to be rebels. The child quickly learns that it can have its own way and soon ruins life for everyone.

Life itself teaches us how foolish it is to ask why there should be punishment for sin. Every person understands why this must be, whether they admit it or not. And right here we encounter a serious roadblock to faith for many people. Unquestionably, the Bible teaches that the punishment for sin is *eternal*. Jesus clearly warned of hell and referred to "hell...fire that *never* shall be quenched" (Mk 9:45).

"Why?" comes the inevitable complaint. "Why should the punishment for sin be *eternal*? That seems too harsh! Why can't God punish us for varying lengths of time depending upon each one's sins, and then forgive us? Why would God sentence anyone, even a Hitler, to *eternal* punishment? Why must the Lake of Fire be *eternal*?" The answer is found in who God is and in the fact that "God created man in his own image" (Gn 1:27). Let us consider carefully what that means.

The penalty for sin is death. Obviously, death separates from life—but life comes from God, so death separates from Him, the Life-Giver. Thus, there is no cure for death except for the sinner to become pure and holy in God's sight in order to be reconciled to Him. Contrary to the Roman Catholic belief in the purging of sin in the flames of some imaginary "purgatory," no punishment of the sinner could ever cleanse him of his sin.

God is perfect in holiness and cannot fellowship with sinners. It's not a question of policy—whether or not a soft attitude would encourage sin. It's a matter of who God is, the very nature of His being. He cannot compromise with evil, cannot go back on His word. *Cannot?* Yes, *cannot*: "He cannot deny himself" (2 Tm 2:13). And that is why the penalty for sin is *eternal* death—not extermination, but separation

**Wherewithal shall a young man
cleanse his way? by taking heed
thereto according to thy word.**

Psalm 119:9

from God forever!

Willful defiance of God cannot be tolerated. This is not harshness on God's part; it is the inevitable consequence of sin. A breach of God's moral laws can no more be allowed than a breach of the physical laws. The outcome is demanded by the very nature of the act itself and by the God who has been defied. The law of gravity cannot suddenly be reversed (just in this case, please!) for a person falling from the top floor of a 50-story building, whether he fell accidentally, jumped, or was shoved.

God has pronounced the penalty for sin. If He went back on His Word, how could we believe anything else He said? By the very definition of who God is and by the nature of sin, the penalty for sin must stand. But man cannot possibly pay it; only Christ could, and He did. The proof that He paid the penalty in full is that He conquered death and rose from the grave. The only remedy for death is *resurrection*. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (Jn 11:25-26).

No one has yet experienced death in its

awful fullness and finality—its utter separation from God, the "lake of fire...the second death" (Rv 20:14)—no one, that is, but Christ, who "taste[d] death for every man" (Heb 2:9). No wonder, as He took our place under God's just judgment, He cried out in agony from the Cross, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).

The rich man in hell is a pitiful example of spiritual blindness unto death. He had spent a lifetime attempting to satisfy his innate spiritual thirst for God with riches and success. And now in hell, he cannot escape that tragic delusion. His physical tongue is in the grave with his dead body, but he imagines it is parched with physical thirst—and he asks Abraham to send Lazarus with just "the tip of his finger" bearing a drop of physical water to cool his "tongue" (Lk 16:24). He disdained the "water of life" when God offered it, and now in hell, he

doesn't even recognize the nature or cause of his thirst. All of his life he sought to physically quench a spiritual thirst, and now that thirst will burn forever for the water of life that he despised when it was available to "whosoever will" (Rv 22:17).

Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (Jn 7:37); and of the rabbis He said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (Jn 5:40). A physical drink of water tastes so good for the same reason that thirst hurts so bad: water is essential to our physical bodies. So it is with the water of life. It is absolutely essential for the life of the soul and the spirit. Thus, the Lake of Fire will be the torment of a burning spiritual thirst beyond description *for the same reason* that heaven will be a satisfaction beyond our present imagination.

The burning thirst that can't be quenched in the Lake of Fire will never end for the same reason that the unspeakable ecstasy in heaven will not cease for all eternity: "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). God made us for Himself, for His love, His joy, His companionship. To be separated from Him in death is to agonize in endless torment for what the redeemed in heaven experience.

May we fully awaken in this life to the truth of our eternal inheritance so that we may love and praise our Lord as we ought, without waiting until heaven to do so. And may we be used of God to awaken many unsaved to come to Christ and drink of the water of life while they still have the opportunity.

TBC

Quotable

Imagine the One who is so infinitely high being so intimately nigh to each one of us, as miniscule as we are in the universe!

Author unknown

During the latter part of 1968, a young Christian in Prague, Czechoslovakia, witnessed to another young Czech named Jan Palach. There seemed to be genuine interest on Jan's part, and so the Christian promised to deliver a New Testament to him. He was filled with good intentions but he let weeks pass before he even obtained the New Testament. Then he kept delaying its actual delivery. On January 16, 1969, Jan Palach stood in St. Wencelas Square, poured gasoline over his body and set himself afire. He never lived to see the New Testament that had been promised to him. Good intentions are not enough....Amy Carmichael wrote, "The vows of God are upon me. I may not stay to play with shadows or pluck flowers till I my work have done...."

William MacDonald, One Day at a Time, 1998, p. 149

Q&A

Question: How do I counsel my unbelieving sister about yoga?

Answer: She has been deceived and must be willing to face the truth or there is no deliverance. With its breathing exercises and limbering-up positions, yoga is promoted in the West as a way to enhance health and better *living*—but in the East it is understood to be a way of *dying*, indeed *the way* to escape this world of time and sense and to unite with the infinite. Thinking they are buying *health*, millions are unwittingly embracing *Hinduism* and opening themselves to the occult.

Hatha Yoga is supposedly safe because it is *physical* yoga. But all yoga is Hinduism. All of the positions and breathing exercises are specifically designed for yoking with Brahman, the universal All of Hinduism. If the goal is physical fitness, one should use exercises designed to that end, not one designed for reaching godhood. An authoritative Hatha Yoga text, the 15th century Svatmarama's *Hathayoga-Pradipika*, lists Lord Shiva as the first Hatha Yoga teacher.

The average yoga instructor never mentions (and may not know about) the many warnings in ancient texts that "Hatha

Yoga is a dangerous tool." One can be possessed by a Hindu deity (demon) through the altered state of consciousness induced by this practice.

One of the most ancient *religious* practices is being passed off as *science*. Yoga was introduced by Lord Krishna in the *Bagavad Gita* as the sure way to Hindu heaven; and Shiva (one of the most feared Hindu deities, known as "The Destroyer") is addressed as *Yogeshwara*, Lord of Yoga. No wonder yoga can be so destructive. In *Yoga Journal*, Ken Wilbur, a yoga expert known as the "Einstein of consciousness," warns that Eastern meditation, no matter how carefully practiced, involves "a whole series of deaths and rebirths...rough and frightening times."

David Pursglove, transpersonal therapist for decades, warns that Eastern meditation can produce "Frightening ESP and other parapsychological occurrences...out-of-body experiences [encounters] with death and subsequent rebirth...awakening of the serpent power (Kundalini)...violent shaking and twisting...." The *Brain/Mind Bulletin* warns that "such experiences are common among people involved in Yoga, [Eastern] meditation...."

Consider a typical letter from one of our readers: "My daughter, age 43, for the past 10 years has been involved with Hatha Yoga, and at the present time she is experiencing exactly what you describe in *Occult Invasion*, p. 225 ["violent shaking, hallucinations, murderous impulses... uncontrollable rage...trying to commit suicide..."]. She would like to give up yoga and be released from the spirit of her last teacher that is currently inflicting excruciating pain upon her. We've taken her to several doctors, but they have been of no help. Her mother and I are at our wit's end.... Please help."

Question: You claim that Christ became a man to pay the penalty His justice—demanded for our sins. Why would He have to become a man? Why would God go to all that trouble, when as God He could have just forgiven us?

Answer: I deal with this somewhat in this month's article. God's love, grace and mercy cannot override His justice. The penalty He has pronounced for sin must be paid. For a judge to fail to mete out the sentence demanded by the law would make him a partner in the crime. God cannot waive the penalty He has pronounced. That would make Him a liar and mean that He gives His approval to the very sin He has

condemned. It would be contrary to God's very nature and being to do so.

Why did Christ have to become a man in order to pay the penalty for sin? Man sinned, the penalty has been pronounced upon all mankind, and must therefore be paid by man. But no finite man, being a sinner under the penalty himself, could pay the infinite penalty for all mankind. Thus, God had to become a man. If Jesus were not God and man in one person, He could not have paid the penalty for the sins of the world.

No religion in the world offers such salvation, or could offer it. Yet many who call themselves Christians reject what the Bible teaches and what our consciences know about sin and its penalty. Churches and cults, such as the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, offer "salvation" by means that no court of law would accept: rituals, sacraments, works, and prayers in payment for sin. Catholics imagine that Mary will get them into heaven, and to that end seek her favor. I expose such folly in this way: Suppose I am in jail awaiting trial. You warn me that the judge is strict. I reply, "Don't worry, I'll get off—I know the judge's mother!" We call that corruption, rightly condemned in earthly courts. Certainly God will not allow it in His heavenly court!

Question: Why do Christians worship on Sunday? I see no biblical basis to omit one commandment. I must settle this, because I want to obey the Lord.

Answer: We addressed this in the May '99 *TBC*. Critics claim that Constantine (or the Roman Catholic Church) changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Who cares? No one has the power to change the Sabbath. It was and always will be Saturday. But Christians do not *worship* on the Sabbath, the day in which God rested from His work of the first creation. We are not part of that old creation, but each Christian is "in Christ...a new creature: old things are passed away...all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, the first day of a new week, the "firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18), the progenitor of a new race of born-again men and women. That is why we meet together to worship the Lord on Sunday, "the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7).

Question: Don't people in different cultures differ on what they think is right or wrong? How can all mankind be held to one standard when there is such a wide variety of opinion concerning morality?

Answer: I don't know where you get the idea that different cultures have "a wide variety of opinion concerning morality." In fact, that isn't the case. The Bible declares that God has written His moral laws (the Ten Commandments minus the Fourth about keeping the Sabbath) in every human conscience (Rom 2:14-15). This common moral understanding in spite of differences in culture is one of the many proofs that man did not evolve but was created in the moral and spiritual image of God.

Of course, various cultures develop customs, some of which violate God's laws. Yet even cannibals cannot escape the realization in their conscience that they are doing wrong. They simply justify themselves because this is the way it is done in their society, but they still know it isn't right. Don't you think the Nazis knew in their conscience that it was wrong to murder Jews and others? They managed to justify themselves because they had become hardened to the truth; but deep inside, they still knew what was right and what was wrong. So it is with all mankind, regardless of their race, religion or culture.

Question: Is the woman called "mystery Babylon" in Revelation 17 the city of Babylon that is being rebuilt in Iraq?

Answer: As far as I know, ancient Babylon, partially rebuilt by Saddam Hussein, is no longer being rebuilt. Of course, the forces occupying Iraq are using some of Babylon's structures for housing the military command. Last September the U.S. Commander, Lieutenant General Richard Sanchez, presided over a ceremony in Babylon where the U.S. Marines handed over control of central Iraq to Polish forces—but that is a far cry from Babylon becoming what is portrayed as "Mystery Babylon" in Revelation 17-18. Some evangelical leaders have referred to such recent events there as though of great prophetic significance, but I see none.

Ancient Babylon, though somewhat restored through the efforts of Saddam prior to the American-led invasion, was in ruins for about 2,300 years, during which time it did not meet *any* of the criteria identifying "Mystery Babylon" in Revelation 17-18: a city on seven hills that rules over the kings of the earth; a spiritual entity that has committed fornication (i.e., spiritual harlotry) with earth's rulers; that is drunk with the blood of the saints martyred for Christ; whose colors are purple and scarlet; the smoke of her destruction can be seen by sailors in the sea; a city whose commerce

has made merchants rich, etc. On the other hand, during these 2,300 years while Babylon was in ruins, Vatican City and Rome as headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church (also for some centuries secular Rome at the head of the Roman Empire) have fulfilled *all* of these identifying criteria. It would take many years for a rebuilt Babylon in the Iraqi desert to catch up to Rome in these respects—highly unlikely in my opinion.

Rebuilt Babylon is being touted as the eventual headquarters of Antichrist. That seems rather remote. Furthermore, the beast upon which the woman (Mystery Babylon) rides will "hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Rv 17:16). How can Babylon be the world headquarters of the Antichrist, yet he will destroy it? That hardly makes sense—but it does make sense that the Antichrist, who will at first need a partnership with the Pope and his church because of its worldwide structures, popularity, and power, will eventually turn against and destroy the whore when he no longer needs her and he sets himself up as "God" to be worshiped by all mankind.

Question: How can we know what God says without hearing through a human source and therefore making it a human opinion? How can we be sure that we are hearing what God says and not just what some religious leader tells us God said?

Answer: You have asked one of the most basic and important questions possible! Sadly, most people are perfectly willing to follow what some man says God said. I tell people who are sincere about this question to go to the Bible first. It claims to be the only true Word of God—and that all other "scriptures" are false, as are the religions they espouse. If we can prove the Bible is true, then we have saved a lot of time.

In fact, we can prove the Bible is true in many ways. The chief proof is found in prophecy, which is unique to the Bible. There are no prophecies of any substance to be found in the Qur'an, for example, or in the Hindu scriptures, the sayings of Buddha or of Confucius, etc. And biblical prophecies are not about obscure events, but foretell centuries and, in some cases thousands of years in advance some of the most significant occurrences in world history. We have no space to go into them here, but you will find these prophecies discussed in detail in past issues of *TBC* (Jul '92, Feb '98, Aug '01, Nov '01, Dec '03) as well as in some of my books, such as *A*

Woman Rides the Beast, In Defense of the Faith, An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith, Countdown to the Second Coming, and When Will Jesus Come?

Our entire ministry is based upon calling everyone to study the Bible and not to accept anyone else's interpretation, including ours. We have every confidence that those who sincerely seek the truth and examine the Bible carefully will come to know the true God. The God of the Bible makes this promise: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). We are assured that "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6).

Taste and See

Part 1

Dave Hunt

We have discussed in the past the deadly religious materialism known as sacramentalism: the belief that material things and rituals channel God's grace and spiritual power to men. Such is the serious error of "transubstantiation," the idea that the Roman Catholic clergy can and must change wafers and wine into the body and blood of Christ to make the "Sacrifice of the Mass" effective. That Church damns to hell all who reject this dogma: "If anyone says that by the sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred *ex opere operato* [by the act itself], but that faith alone in the divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace, let him be anathema [eternally damned]." This "New Law" comprises 1,739 rules in more than 1,000 pages of the Vatican's *Code of Canon Law*.

The Bible, however, teaches that God's grace, whether in salvation, sanctification, or provision for living to His glory, comes to man by faith: "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph 2:8); "the just shall live by his faith" (Hab 2:4; Heb 10:38); "we walk by faith" (2 Cor 5:7), etc. Physical things of this world may *illustrate*, but they cannot *substitute for or play the part of*, the spiritual realities of God and of His grace, which one can only receive by faith.

Such is also the error of "baptismal regeneration": the belief that baptism has efficacious power and is *essential* for salvation. Not only Catholics, but generally Lutherans, Calvinists, and others also partake in varying degrees of this heresy through the practice of infant baptism. We have quoted Luther's small catechism (followed by every Lutheran group today, including the Missouri Synod): "Holy Baptism is the only means whereby infants...can ordinarily be regenerated...it works forgiveness of sins...delivers from death and the devil [and] gives eternal salvation..." Calvin said, "God in baptism promises remission of sins...regenerating us...makes us his by adoption...let us therefore embrace it in faith."

On the contrary, there is no *spiritual power* in water (or anything physical) or in its "sacramental" use. Man is not just a body, but eternal soul and spirit—yet this world gives the dying body all of the attention. Sadly, this is also true to a large

extent among professing Christians. Such religious materialism robs its followers of truth and life.

We need *spiritual* life—and *physical* things or ceremonies involving them are not the means to this end! One might just as well trust in the "good luck" of a rabbit's foot as to hope for spiritual benefit from a Catholic scapular, medal, crucifix, or relic of an alleged "saint." And how much "worship" is created by the lordly pastoral robes and other religious accoutrements even in evangelical churches? As Christ said, true worship of God can only be in "spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24).

Yes, there was a physical tabernacle (which became Solomon's temple) that contained special objects used by the priests in worship and service before God. But these were specifically designed by God for the Jews as "patterns of things in the heavens...the figures of the true" (Heb 9:23-24). Far from there being any spiritual value in

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Romans 3:28

those objects and sacraments themselves, they were "a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect [but were] carnal ordinances, imposed...until the time of reformation" (Heb 9:9,10). That time came nearly 2,000 years ago with the fulfillment of these types in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

These all pictured various aspects of the coming sacrifice of Christ through which alone forgiveness of sins, salvation, and reconciliation to God could come. These "carnal ordinances" were done away after Christ had fulfilled them: "But Christ [not] by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood...is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself...Nor yet that he should offer himself often...for then must he often have suffered...but now once...he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:11-28). Thus, the inner "veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mt 27:51) the moment Christ's

sacrifice on the cross was complete.

Hebrews chapter 10 declares that the fact that Old Testament sacrifices had to be repeated day after day proved that they could never pay the penalty for man's sins. The writer argues, "For then would they not have ceased to be offered?" (10:1,2). Nor can the Roman Catholic "sacrifice of the Mass" pay for sins, as its endless repetition proves.

These Old Testament representations are then contrasted with the true sacrifice of Christ: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified...there is [therefore] no more offering for sin" (10:12-18). Our Lord's cry from the cross, "It is finished," was His triumphant declaration that He had paid the full penalty for the sins of the world!

One either accepts Christ's payment and the forgiveness and home in heaven He purchased with His blood and offers to all who will receive Him, or rejects Him and spends eternity in the Lake of Fire, personally bearing God's infinite judgment.

To accept Christ's payment, one must *believe* on Christ: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31); "by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph 2:8). Believe what?

The gospel: "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures...was buried, and...rose again the third day according to the scriptures..." (1 Cor 15:1-4). The gospel alone is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16).

These simple and familiar truths are forgotten, compromised, perverted, and corrupted among many who claim to be "born-again evangelicals"—and even despised today as too boring to attract youth. But this "sound doctrine" is (1 Tm 1:10; 2 Tm 3:16; 4:2-5; Ti 2:1) essential to "life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3). For this we must "earnestly contend" (Jude 3); it is our life! But how is "sound doctrine" related to the simplicity of the gospel?

For Christ to fulfill the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies as proof that He was the promised Messiah, and to pay the infinite penalty for all mankind, He had to qualify in a very special and vital way: He must be eternally God, without beginning or end; the One who became and *is* forever, through the virgin birth, a true flesh-and-blood man—God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Tm 3:16).

Jesus clearly declared the necessity of believing that He is God: “if ye believe not that I am [i.e., the I AM of Ex 3:14—*he* is in italics, added by the translators], ye shall die in your sins [and] whither I go, ye cannot come” (Jn 8:24, 21). Yet there are thousands of those who claim to be “born-again” Christians who deny that Christ is God. They are not Christians. By Christ’s own words, they will not be with Him in heaven. We must warn them!

Christ makes clear the necessity of believing that He is both God and a real flesh-and-blood man: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (Jn 6:53). *Eat His flesh, drink His blood?* Could He have meant that *literally*? In fact, “eating” and “drinking” are metaphors for coming to Christ and believing on Him: (Jn 6:35, 40, 47-51). This can only be what He meant by, “he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (6:57).

Catholics, Lutherans, and many Calvinists take this statement to mean that the physical body and blood of Christ must be ingested into the stomach. This is supposedly possible for Catholics through the magic of “transubstantiation,” for Lutherans through “consubstantiation” (i.e., that the bread and wine simply *are* Christ’s physical body and blood), while Calvin taught that the ingested bread and wine impart Christ’s physical body and blood to believers.

The error, though lethal, is simple: failure to realize that Christ, as always when speaking to the multitude (Mt 13:34), was teaching spiritual truth through a physical illustration. When He said, “I am the light of the world” (Jn 8:12), or “I am the door” (Jn 10:7), or “I am the good shepherd” (Jn 10:14), or “I am the true vine” (Jn 15:1), did anyone who heard Him then, or should anyone now, imagine that He was speaking literally? Of course not—and for good reason! For Christ to be a literal, physical light, door, shepherd, grapevine, piece of bread, etc., would not only be absurd but of *no spiritual and eternal benefit* to anyone!

Thus when Christ said, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jn 6:35), Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists all admit that He didn’t mean He was a physical loaf of bread. Nor could he have been speaking of *physical* hunger or thirst. Obviously, then, when He went on to say, “This is the bread which cometh

down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die” (Jn 6:50), He neither meant physical bread nor physical death nor physical eating. He was communicating eternal spiritual truth.

So it must be also when He said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (6:51), “Living bread” is clearly a metaphor, as is His statement that this “living bread” is His “flesh.” Clearly, the “eating” is symbolic of believing that “Jesus Christ is come [once and for all] in the flesh” (1 Jn 4:2,3). He is both God and man in genuine human flesh. That much should be clear.

Yet when Christ goes on in the same breath to say, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (Jn 6:53), Rome insists

**Therefore being justified by faith,
we have peace with God through
our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Romans 5:1

that He means literally eating and drinking His physical body and blood! But His blood was poured out for sin on the cross and His resurrected body has no blood in it for anyone to drink. Nor could anyone “eat” His resurrected, glorified body that He inhabits at the Father’s right hand. And to imagine putting Him back in His pre-resurrection body so He can be physically “eaten” is to engage in fantasy and blasphemy! Furthermore, to ingest Christ’s physical body and blood into one’s stomach would no more bring spiritual life than to ingest any physical food.

Yet Rome declares that although Christ is at the Father’s right hand, her priests can bring Him back in His pre-crucifixion body onto Catholic altars to be “immolated” (made to suffer His sacrifice on the cross) again and again for sin. That grievous error robs those who believe it of the spiritual truth and eternal salvation Christ offers—and gives them instead bread and wine in their stomachs!

That same misunderstanding caused the Jews to complain, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (Jn 6:52). Rome thinks it

solves the dilemma through transubstantiation, so that the body and blood of Christ are ingested “under the appearance of bread and wine.” But Christ made it clear that He was speaking *spiritual* truth: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (6:63). Words and the ideas they express are not physical but spiritual.

Satan turns man to the physical and blinds him to the spiritual. God explained to the Jews that He caused them to hunger in the wilderness in order to teach them that “man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD...” (Dt 8:3). Israel failed the test and was so completely absorbed in physical lust that she missed entirely the *spiritual* reality God wanted His people to enjoy: “My people have...forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns...that can hold no water” (Jer 2:13).

In contrast to Israel’s failure, Christ in His temptation in the wilderness did not yield to Satan’s promises of earth’s kingdoms with their possessions and power. He quoted the liberating truth, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Lk 4:4). This is the Word upon which we are to “meditate day and night” (Ps 1:2), by which we are “born again...which by the gospel is preached” (1 Pt 1:23, 25).

Christ declared that He was the living word and that all of the Word of God spoke of Him. No wonder Jeremiah said: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart...” (Jer 15:16). We need, moment by moment, to heed the Psalmist: “O taste and see that the LORD is good...” (Ps 34:8)! We, too, would then cry out, “My soul thirsteth for God...” (Ps 42:2). For some “holy water” that He offers? No, but for a deeper knowledge of Himself!

May Paul’s passion be ours: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death...” (Phil 3:10)!

We want to come back to this theme again next month. In the meantime, let us meditate day and night upon Christ and upon the Father and His Word. In the process, we will discover that we are “feasting on the living bread [and] drinking at the fountainhead,” as the old hymn says. **TBC**

Quotable

A good many are kept out of the service of Christ, deprived of the luxury of working for God, because they are trying to do some great thing. Let us be willing to do little things. And let us remember that nothing is small in which God is the source.

D.L. Moody

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

John Wesley

Light after darkness, gain after loss,
Strength after suffering, crown after cross.
Sweet after bitter, song after sigh,
Home after wandering, praise after cry.

Sheaves after sowing, sun after rain,
Sight after mystery, peace after pain.
Joy after sorrow, calm after blast,
Rest after weariness, sweet rest at last.

Near after distant, gleam after gloom,
Love after loneliness, life after tomb.
After long agony, rapture of bliss!
Right was the pathway leading to this!

Francis Ridley Havergal

Q&A

Question: I've heard it said that 2 Peter 3:10-12 gives proof that the Bible is scientifically infallible, contrary to what the Roman Catholic Church teaches. All I want to know is how those verses give that proof.

Answer: These verses refer to the destruction of this present universe in order to create a "new heavens and new earth." The means of destruction is described specifically as the universe being "dissolved" in a "fervent heat" that will burn up the very *elements*. The English "dissolved" is translated from the Greek *luo*, which is found 46 times in 40 verses in the New Testament. Taken together, these 46 usages consistently indicate that the meaning of this word is a loosing, letting go, or undoing of something that otherwise is held together or in place—a scientifically accurate description of the loosing of the force that holds the nucleus of the atom together.

All matter is made of atoms, which consist of negatively charged electrons orbiting around a nucleus composed of

positively charged protons and neutrally charged neutrons. Of course, the negatively charged electrons are held in orbit by the positively charged protons because of the electro-magnetic attraction between positive and negative charges. But since like charges repel one another, what holds the nucleus together, since it is composed of positively charged protons?

Physicists have hypothesized what they call the "strong force," which overcomes the electromagnetic repulsion that otherwise would push the protons apart and destroy the nucleus of the atom. Without this mysterious force, the entire universe would dissolve in one giant ball of fire—exactly what Peter describes. Colossians 1:17 says that everything consists in Christ, held together by His power (i.e., "strong force"). If He lets go of the atom, the present universe will cease to exist.

The Greek word Peter uses describes the way science indicates the universe would be destroyed—by loosing the protons from the force that binds them together and thus dissolving the atom itself. It may be going too far to suggest that these verses in themselves offer proof of the scientific validity of the Bible, but when one puts them together with many other verses we certainly do have that proof.

The greatest proof, of course, is prophecy fulfilled. This is what God himself points to as proof of His existence and that the Bible is His Word (Is 46:9-10, etc.)—and that Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, is the true Messiah and only Savior of the world. The theories and explanations of science change, but God's Word never changes—and prophecy fulfilled is an objective fact that cannot be denied.

Question: Most of your arguments against Calvinism hang on the false idea that man must have a free will in order to love God, to receive His love, and to love others. Man can choose to receive or reject Christ, and thus decide his own eternal destiny. If that is true, then we have a serious problem: Will man lose his free will in heaven? If not, what would prevent someone from deciding to rebel in heaven? After all, Satan was the most beautiful, powerful, intelligent being ever created. All he knew was the presence of God—yet he rebelled!

Answer: You pose an important question. However, Satan was never redeemed with the blood of Christ, so he had no basis for loving God or for gratitude to Christ for dying in his place.

In contrast, the love of God and the

sacrifice of Christ will ever be before the redeemed. Our Savior will throughout eternity bear the marks of Calvary, reminding us of the infinite price He paid in love for our redemption. The very throne in heaven is forever "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rv. 22:1). Thus we could never lose our love and gratitude for Him founded upon His loving payment for our sins.

Nor was Satan ever born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He is a special case, with no possible comparison to the redeemed. Christ is in us ("Christ in you, the hope of glory" – Col 1:27) and we are in Him ("created in Christ Jesus unto good works" – Eph 2:10). The Christian is "in Christ... a new creature: old things are passed away... all things are become new. And all things are of God" (2 Cor 5:17,18). Sometimes we don't live like new creatures in Christ or as if Christ were in us and we in Him—but everything here on earth that prevents us from fully realizing the perfection into which we have been created anew in Christ will no longer be present in heaven.

There won't be any temptation to sin, no reason to rebel against our loving God and Savior; it wouldn't make sense. Furthermore, Satan himself is the great tempter of men—and he will have no access to heaven or to our thoughts.

You may respond, "But no one tempted Satan! The Bible never says we must be tempted, but that 'every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed' (Jas 1:14). What could prevent our own lust from enticing us in heaven?"

Scripture explains that the flesh lusts against the Spirit "so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal 5:17). This is what Paul meant when he said, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do [because of] the law of sin which is in my members [body]" (Rom 7:19-23).

Describing this inner conflict as the reason why Christians sometime sin, Paul expresses the frustration of one who loves his Lord and wants only to please Him, but fails in the flesh: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Rom 7:24,25).

In heaven, we will no longer be in these bodies of sinful flesh that are in conflict with the indwelling Holy Spirit. We will be in resurrection bodies like Christ's. For the new creatures in Christ, there will be no more temptation to sin. Then, at last, we will experience the fullness of what John wrote: "Whosoever is born of God doth not

commit sin...he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 Jn 3:9).

Question: At our Bible study last night here in prison we were talking about all believers appearing before the judgment seat of Christ to have their works judged. The study book we were using said that this judgment will take place after the rapture of the church and uses 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 to support this. I've always believed this myself but now I'm wondering, why can't the believer appear before the judgment seat of Christ after death rather than waiting for the Rapture?

Answer: Perhaps there is a simple misunderstanding. I don't know the study book, but doubt that it indicates that those who die are waiting in heaven for the Rapture to occur so their works can be judged. Is this stated specifically? If so, another reference should have been given.

It is obvious that those who are alive at the Rapture can only appear before the judgment seat of Christ *after* they have been taken to heaven. Thus it would seem odd to make a point of a post-rapture judgment, if the study book does so. There is no reason, however, why those who have died would not be judged by our Lord immediately upon being taken into His presence. Certainly the idea that they must wait until everyone arrives in heaven cannot be derived from the proof text you say is given.

A scripture that might be interpreted as teaching a post-rapture judgment of the redeemed would be where Paul declares that everyone's works will be tried by fire to determine individual rewards: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it" (1 Cor 3:13). If "the day" refers to a specific day for all believers, then that would indicate judgment after the Rapture for all. But if "the day" refers to a *personal* time of judgment for each person, then the judgment would occur upon death.

Question: Isaiah 65 from verse 17 onwards seems to be about the Millennium. You have said, "Israel is the earthly people and kingdom; the church is the heavenly." Does this mean there will be no church during the Millennium? I had always assumed I would be there. Am I wrong?

Answer: The Rapture of the church marks the beginning of the seven years of great tribulation, after which the Millennium begins. I believe that all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who have believed on Christ,

either prior to or during the Great Tribulation, but before His visible return at the Second Coming, make up the church—the heavenly people. Those who only believe in Christ upon seeing Him return to earth in power and glory to destroy Antichrist and his kingdom will remain on earth into the Millennium—and for eternity will be the earthly people.

Included in the Rapture and first resurrection, then, would be the Old Testament saints, whether Jew or Gentile. Those who "sleep in Jesus" [i.e. have died in faith in Christ and whose souls and spirits have been in heaven with Him] will Christ "bring with him" (1 Thes 4:14) to be reunited with their resurrected bodies. They and those still alive at that time will be "caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air" (4:17), and Christ will then take them to His Father's "house [of] many mansions" as He promised in John 14:2-3.

When Christ's feet touch the Mount of Olives at the Second Coming (Zec 14:4) He brings "all the saints" from heaven with Him. It is inconceivable that Abraham, David, Daniel, Isaiah, et al., are not among the "saints" in heaven and who come with Christ as part of the armies of heaven to destroy Antichrist and his kingdom and to reign with Him during the Millennium. When were their souls and spirits clothed with new bodies to accompany Christ at His second coming? That could only have been at the resurrection of those who "sleep in Jesus" and the Rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4.

The statement, "this is the first resurrection" (Rv 20:5) refers only to those "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God [i.e., were martyred under Antichrist]." What about the rest of the redeemed who died prior to the Great Tribulation? They couldn't be resurrected at the end of the Great Tribulation because they don't qualify as martyrs killed by Antichrist. This is one more reason for a pre-trib rapture.

Thus the phrase "the first resurrection" can only mean the completion of the resurrection that occurred at the Rapture—which could only have been prior to the Great Tribulation: otherwise, there is no resurrection of anyone except those who are killed by Antichrist. That these martyrs are included in "the first resurrection" would mean that they are part of the church, the heavenly people.

Those who come to faith in Christ only as a result of seeing Him at the Second Coming obviously are not killed (and thus not resurrected) but will remain alive into the Millennium and will live forever on earth. They are the earthly people for eternity. They will receive new bodies at

the time this present universe is destroyed and the new heavens and new earth are created.

The church will also be on earth during the Millennium, but not as participants in earthly affairs. They will reign with Christ over the earthly people.

Taste and See

Part II

Dave Hunt

Last month we noted David's enthusiastic exhortation, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Ps 34:8). When David wrote this psalm, he was a fugitive from King Saul, who was searching with an army to kill him. Yet his heart was filled with rejoicing as he continued to trust and praise God. How was that possible under such circumstances?

Taste God! Is that what gives faith to trust Him? What did David mean?

Clearly, he was not referring to taste buds in the mouth, much less to physically eating God, who is a Spirit (Jn 4:24).

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to Satan in His temptation: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4). Obviously, He didn't mean that God has a literal mouth. Though conveyed by means of something physical, words themselves are not physical. Eating the pages of the Bible would not bring the truth written thereon into the heart—it would only cause indigestion in the stomach.

Neither David nor Jesus was denying (as do Christian Science and other Mind Science cults, Hinduism, New Ageism, etc.) the reality of the physical world. They were not teaching that our minds create our circumstances. They were using material things as illustrations in order to lead us into spiritual reality. How else can God convey spiritual truth to us when all we know is the observable universe? And therein we have a problem.

We must take care not to make the mistake of Nicodemus. When told that he had to be "born again" to enter heaven, this astute rabbi thought Christ was referring to biological birth. Incredulous, he demanded, "How can a man...enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (Jn 3:3,4).

Jesus replied, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (Jn 3:12). As long as we remain in these bodies, descriptions of familiar physical things provide the only language available for teaching heavenly things that we do not yet know.

What does it mean to "taste" God? Of course, David was not speaking of anything physical being ingested into our stomachs! "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him

must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). David could only have been using a physical illustration to refer to something spiritual: a deepening appreciation of God in the process of worshiping Him in spirit and in truth as Jesus said we must.

Yet literally chewing and swallowing the paper pages of Scripture would be no more absurd than imagining one was chewing and swallowing the literal body and blood of Christ at a Roman Catholic Mass. Although Jesus said, "He that eateth me...shall live by me" (Jn 6:57), Catholicism teaches that He meant eating His physical body and drinking His physical blood. So the priest, by the magic of "transubstantiation," supposedly turns a wafer and wine into the literal body and blood, soul, spirit, and divinity of Christ—which misses entirely what Christ meant.

The wafer (supposedly now "God") is worshiped and then eaten! A large wafer is put in a monstrance and paraded before worshiping crowds, then left on display in a church for the faithful to bow before it and

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 119:103

spend time "in Christ's presence"! Sadly, those who thus grasp at the physical rob themselves of the spiritual truth and blessing Christ intends.

And what about non-Catholics by the millions who also fail to realize the joy and strength of the spiritual truth the Word of God conveys? Dutifully attending church on Sunday morning is all they know of God, while His Word lies neglected much if not all of the week and is rarely meditated upon in the heart. May David's challenge move us deeply, and may we enter into what he meant: "O taste and see that the LORD is good!"

Worship is not a repetitious exercise of rituals and formulas. These create a veil that actually prevents us from enjoying the presence of the Lord. Worship is the heart poured out in gratitude and awe, expressing our appreciation of who He is and what He has done for us by His grace through Jesus Christ.

David said, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). That is not the pleasure and joy of this world but of heaven. Those who love this world and feed upon its pitiful

attempts at satisfying human longings would be uncomfortable in heaven and would not consider it a place of pleasure and joy at all.

We cannot "taste and see that the LORD is good" without having a taste for Him. A taste for God, as for anything else, must be developed. How? By an act of the will, we begin with obedience to the very first command: "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27). How can we do this?

We follow God's instructions: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Dt 6:6-9; 30:6, 16-20).

With "all thine heart...all thy soul...all thy might," leaves nothing for any competitors for my affections. May I not love my wife, my children? Yes. Every love is legitimate that is in harmony with my love for God; every affection is blessed that deepens my love for Him; every pursuit into which I invest my strength is to His glory that is in harmony with God's will. My life and that of my family is to revolve around my love for God, and His Word is to be the subject of our conversation continually. What a glorious life!

David didn't develop his taste for the Lord in a day. He fed upon the Word of God until to him God's "judgments" (i.e., His statutes) were "Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps 19:10).

The quotables this month are from authors who lived in past centuries. One stands in awe of some of these writers. How did they develop such a deep understanding and appreciation, such an appetite for God and His Word, that most Christians lack today? They invested time, effort, and devotion in communion with God and in meditating deeply upon His Word—time that few are willing to invest today because loving God is not high on their list of priorities.

God did not promise to reveal Himself to the casually curious but to those who would seek Him with "all [their] heart" (Jer 29:13). Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine

heart..." (Jer 15:16). Sadly, the actual words God spoke are no longer palatable to many of those who call themselves Christians. Indeed, few today know what the genuine Word of God tastes like.

We are raising a generation on the spiritual junk food of religious videos, movies, youth entertainment, and comic book paraphrases of the Bible. The Word of God is being rewritten, watered down, illustrated, and dramatized in order to cater to the taste of the carnal mind. That only leads further into the wilderness of doubt and confusion.

We are being led away from the Word of God (upon which, by faith, we must feed) through "dynamic equivalency" paraphrases, supposedly more easily digested "translations" such as *The Message* by Eugene Peterson (to which we've referred in the past) that cast aside the sacred words from God's mouth and put men's words in their place. Nelson Publishing's *Revolve Bible* for teenage girls is designed like a fashion magazine, because the real Bible is "too big and freaky looking." Not to lose a lucrative market, Zondervan created *True Images* for teen girls and *Revolution* for teenage boys.

Retreating even further from the pure written Word that came from God's mouth, "Christian" movies claim to make the Bible more interesting and dynamic by having it acted out on the screen (including actors playing the part of Christ himself and thus pretending to be "God manifest in the flesh"). The words that "proceed from the mouth of God" are being trashed, and in their place we are being given words that proceed from men's minds. How can we check the validity of what is being taught in the church today? The Bereans checked Paul's message by searching the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11)—but those are being taken from us and the words of men put in their place.

When David referred to God's Word as "Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps 19:10), what did he mean? The Bible is literally filled with such metaphorical expressions, *none* of which is intended to be taken literally but spiritually. This is true from Genesis to Revelation, with a consistency from different authors both in the method and message that furnishes overwhelming proof of the Bible's divine origin.

When the Psalmist said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path," he meant neither a physical light

nor a physical path. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God" (Ps 42:1,2). Surely the Psalmist does not mean that literal water such as a deer drinks would quench the thirst of the soul. He is referring to a spiritual drinking of God by faith—a deepening appreciation of God through meditation upon His written word and communion in the Holy Spirit.

Christ told the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst..." (John 4:13,14). Obviously, the "water" Christ gives has nothing to do with quenching physical thirst—nor is it to be sprinkled upon anyone, but we are to *drink* it. It would do no good for a priest to "bless" physical water and call it "holy water." Holiness is a spiritual reality to which the physical can never attain: the two exist in different realms.

For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see...

Matthew 13:17

Unquestionably, the term "drink" shows human responsibility. Almost the last words by Christ in Scripture were, "And whosoever will...take the water of life freely" (Rv 22:17). He provides the water of life; we must drink it. Are you and I *drinking* of God and of Christ moment by moment? Can we say with the Psalmist, "so panteth my soul after thee, O God"?

O taste and see! This is David's cry under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to all of us. He tasted and wanted us to enter into the same "joy unspeakable and full of glory." That this truth receives no help from an artist's rendering of "Christ" or an actor "playing" Jesus in a religious movie is made more than clear: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pt 1:8). Jesus told Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (Jn 20:29). We are literally being robbed of this Christ-promised blessing when well-meaning artists paint pictures of "Jesus" and actors attempt to portray Him on the screen.

When Scripture declares, "But we see

Jesus" (Heb 2:9), it does not refer to earthly portrayals. "Having not seen" with our physical eyes, but looking with the eyes of faith, we adore Him and become more and more like Him: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). Yes, it takes much time to meditate upon God's Word and to commune in prayer with Christ and feed upon "the living bread" (Jn 6:51). And the more time we spend in this pursuit, the sweeter He will be to our taste.

How did David know that in God's presence is "fulness of joy [and] pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11)? Had he already been to heaven? God had become so real and precious to David that his passion was, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple [I will] offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing...praises unto the LORD" (Ps 27:4-6). Of course, he did not mean an earthly house or temple such as Solomon would build, nor did he mean a physical beauty of the Lord.

But wouldn't it have helped David to have some great artist's rendering that supposedly resembled God to look upon? No! Such idolatry would have led him astray and is an abomination, because God is a Spirit and has no physical form. Thus, any attempt at physical depiction is forbidden.

Yet it is an established custom in the Roman Catholic Church and even among the vast majority of evangelicals to have "pictures" of God "manifest in the flesh [Christ]" (1 Tm 3:16) painted by famous artists—pictures that don't even look alike, are pure speculation, and thus could only be misleading. Furthermore, such pictures attempt to depict Christ as He looked before His crucifixion and resurrection, whereas He doesn't look like that anymore but as He appeared to John (Rv 1:12-18). Indeed, Paul declared, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor 5:16).

David explains in this psalm what it means to taste and see that the Lord is good. We seek Him, look to Him, and cry to Him in our need, and we trust Him no matter how impossible the situation or how deep the valley of testing. Thus we experience the intimacy of His loving care, protection, and provision, causing His praise to be continu-

Quotable

I have sought to follow the Laws of Evidence as applied to documents in our courts of law...I hold...that the evidence of manuscripts and versions and of the Egyptian, Babylonian and other documents outside the Bible confirms the *prima facie* evidence of the Biblical documents...both as to text and meaning; and that this text and meaning cannot be...changed simply [by] the opinions of men of our generation...I contend that our text of the Old Testament...is what it purports to be and what Christ and the apostles thought it to be...the Word of God and the infallible rule of faith and practice.

Robert Dick Wilson, A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament (1926), Professor of Semitic Philology, Princeton Theological Seminary, fluent in over 40 Semitic languages, one of the greatest scholars of all time, pp. 6-7

I could not look at any good thing between the earth and skies, which man might not trample on...If the Creator does not depart from his usual method, he will not compel me to receive any favor [but] leave it possible for me to turn away from...*the offer of heaven*...from everlasting joys...[In] whatever direction I looked, common-sense, reason, and reflection pronounced a solemn amen to every doctrine taught in that fearful and precious book [the Bible]....

There is no unkindness in the call, if I am invited to think of a habitation...exceedingly beautiful, where death can never enter, and where the tear-drop was never seen...a world where want was never known...the song is always singing...I am not unwise if I ask, "How am I to get there?"

If I am told that those who desire this prize are directed to express their wishes for it to One who can hear the lowest whisper, I cannot say there is any great difficulty in such an undertaking.

If I am told that this Hearer of requests once became MAN, and that all...I have done wrong...he bore in his own body on the tree, that I may escape suffering, I can never say the offer is not a kind one. If all are invited to apply, I am included in the number.

David Nelson, M.D., The Cause and Cure of Infidelity (1841), pp. 392-94

Q&A

Question: How can we know what God says without hearing through a human source? How can I know I am really hearing from God and not from a man or from my own imagination?

Answer: You ask one of the most important questions there is, yet it is one to which most people give little thought because they are willing to take the word of some man or church or cult that claims to be speaking for God. You dare not trust your eternal destiny to someone who claims to be God's mouthpiece, no matter how sincere he seems to be and no matter how large or ancient the church that gives him his authority.

The question you must ask yourself is whether you really want to hear from God, even if He says something you don't like. Many people claim to be seeking God, but they are not seeking the true God, who will tell them where they are wrong, but a "god" who will tell them what they want to hear and give them their desires.

The Bible claims repeatedly to be the Word of God. We have given proof for that fact in this newsletter many times and in many ways. We would be happy to send you copies of those proofs. Contact us and we will help you: by phone at (800) 937-6638, or at our web site, www.thebereancall.org.

God promises, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). Seek Him with all your heart (this is the most important search you could ever undertake) and He will reveal Himself to you in His Word and in your heart and conscience. You need have no doubt on this issue.

We recommend that you start your Bible study with John's gospel and continue on through Acts and Romans, then go to Genesis and carry on. God expects you to study His Word diligently. Of course, you have every reason to do so. Your eternal destiny depends upon knowing Him and believing on Christ who paid the penalty for your sins. My latest book, *Seeking and Finding God*, deals with the very question you have asked. You may find it helpful.

Question: In the June Q&A in dealing with homosexuality, you stated, "Adam is the only one created in God's image." Yet 1 Corinthians 11:7 states, "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God...." This does not negate your statement, but it probably needs some more explanation....

Answer: Adam was definitely created in

the image and likeness of God: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him..." (Gn 1:26,27). There is an interesting change of pronouns that reflects the trinity: from "us...our...our" to "his." There is both plurality and singularity in the Godhead: three persons, one God.

Adam and Eve, of course, were the only people created, period. Their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, et al., and all the rest of mankind were not "created" by God but were begotten of parents through natural processes that God created for perpetuating the race, just as with animals. We come into the world by normal birth, not directly by God's creative act as was the case with Adam.

We are dying beings from the moment of our birth, with disease already in our bodies and many imperfections. We cannot say that we are the same men and women as God created Adam and Eve to be.

Moreover, we are spiritually dead from birth, meaning that our spirits are dead to God, not indwelt by the Spirit of God as were Adam and Eve. They were created by God. We can be recreated by simple faith in Christ.

Question: You said that Jesus had no blood in His resurrected body. But He has flesh and bones. The Bible says that the life of the flesh is in the blood, so how can He have flesh without blood? Don't bones make blood for the body? Also, He ate food. What would be the purpose of food with no blood to pick up the nutrition?

Answer: Yes, Christ has a body of "flesh and bones" (Lk 24:39), but there is no blood in His body, because it was all poured out for sin upon the cross. The rest of the very verse you quote declares that fact: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lv 17:11).

The life of the natural flesh was in the blood, but that body is transformed in resurrection: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44). The old flesh that gives us such trouble will be no more after the resurrection, but we will have "spiritual" bodies like Christ's. We couldn't die if we wanted to!

Christ now lives in "the power of an endless life" (Heb 7:16), and "being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Rom 6:9). So it will be with us, for we shall be "in the likeness

of his resurrection” (Rom 6:5).

The old creation is done away in Christ and we are a new creation: “...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor 5:17).

Christ told Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side...” (Jn 20:27). If Christ had blood in His body He would be bleeding from five wounds. There must be a gaping hole in His side for Thomas to have been able to thrust his hand into it! Forever He will bear the marks of Calvary as a constant reminder of the cost of our salvation.

Yes, Christ ate “a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb” (Lk 24:42,43)—not because He was hungry or needed to eat in order to stay alive and have energy, but to show the frightened disciples that He was not a ghost as they imagined. We do not know how a “spiritual body” functions—it can walk through walls and instantly transfer itself from place to place to place. But there is no need of food to nourish bodies that cannot die.

Question: You stated (TBC, May '04) that the Hebrew noun *chabburah*...is singular in Isaiah 53:5, indicating *one blow from God*.... I pointed out to you that this very word is unmistakably plural in the Hebrew, which means that both your statement and the inferences you drew from it are false....You are very quick to point out errors of scriptural fact to others. If you are unwilling to retract an obvious and provable error which has certain theological consequences possibly uncomfortable to you, I cannot see that you are in a different category from the dozen or so “teachers” I have already left with my sandal dust on their wingtip shoes. A cover-all, “We’re not perfect,” is not sufficient when you have misled people on a matter of fact. Please either retract your error publicly, prove to me that I am in error, or remove us from your mailing list. He that is not faithful in little things may not be trusted to be faithful in much.

Answer: I know nothing about Hebrew. My comment was based upon the word of someone who I presume does know Hebrew, John MacArthur. You will find this statement re Isaiah 53:5 on p. 1038 of his *The MacArthur Study Bible*: “**by his stripes we are healed.**” The stripe (the Hebrew noun is singular) that caused His death has brought salvation to those for whose sins He died [a Calvinistic statement, by the way, indicating that Christ

did not die for the sins of the world, but only for the sins of the elect predestined to salvation]....”

Let’s assume that MacArthur in his study Bible is wrong and that *chabburah* is plural, meaning a number of blows. That would not change the fact that the bruising that effected our salvation was from God, not from men. The context is clear. Verse 4 contains the clause, “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” Verse 5 declares that He was “wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities....” Verse 5 itself declares that the wounding, bruising, chastisement, and “stripes” were for our sins and effected forgiveness and peace with God. A beating from men could never do that. Verse 6 explains that this wounding and bruising was because “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Verse 7 refers to what *men* did. It is clear that He was stricken “for the transgression of my people” (v. 8)—again, something man could not do. Verse 9 refers to His burial, and verse 10 clearly says that “it pleased the LORD to bruise him,” and that the Lord made “his soul an offering for sin.” Verse 11 refers to the “travail of his soul,” obviously because of his soul being made “an offering for sin.” And verse 12 again declares that “he bare the sin of many.”

Clearly, the entire context of Isaiah 53 is about God punishing Christ spiritually for the sins of the world. Surely Peter gives the proper interpretation of Isaiah 53:5, when in quoting “by whose stripes ye were healed,” he explains, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pt 2:24). Christ was not bearing the sins of the world when men were scourging Him. It was only when God laid our sins upon Him and made His soul an offering for sin that the penalty for the sins of the world was paid – and that was on the cross. Christ did not receive blows from men on the cross, but from God for our sins, which is why He cried out in agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1; Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34).

So I was mistaken in putting too much emphasis upon MacArthur’s view that *chabburah* is singular in Isaiah 53:5. But it doesn’t matter. The blows, single or plural, by which we are healed of our sin’s penalty, were clearly from God and not from men. It is neither biblical nor rational that sinful Roman soldiers could possibly mete out God’s righteous judgment in holy wrath for sin. Much less could physical punishment at the hands of men possibly pay the infinite penalty for sin that billions of sinners would otherwise endure for eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Let the Biblical Buyer Beware!

T.A. McMahon

Today's church is experiencing two new and deadly influences: "biblical" marketing and "biblical" movies. Nothing in recent history has impacted evangelical Christian churches as pervasively and powerfully as these phenomena.

"Biblical" marketing is an attempt to use the latest sales concepts and marketing principles to attract the lost in the hope that they will be won to Christ. The approach begins with a survey and an analysis of the community in order to discover what would motivate the lost to attend a local church. Once the survey is evaluated, the structure of the organization is conformed to accommodate the stated desires of the unsaved. Such changes usually include key elements that will make the lost feel more comfortable: a contemporary and entertaining style of music, a positive, non-convicting, feel-good message with dramatic illustrations and stimulating programs oriented more to the flesh than to the spirit. One of the theories is that the more the church reflects the culture familiar to the lost, the more likely it is that they will continue to attend.

The potential problems with such an approach have been addressed in more detail in the February and March 2004 issues, but it's important to reiterate that the gospel *cannot* be marketed to the lost. Why not? Because the biblical gospel doesn't fit into what marketing is all about. All basic definitions of marketing emphasize that the customers themselves are the priority; their particular wants and perceived needs must be identified. The customer's satisfaction is critical and he must be accommodated—even to the point of making "positive" changes in the product, i.e., self-indulging modifications.

It should be obvious to anyone with a basic understanding of God's Word that the biblical gospel is clearly at odds with a marketing approach. The gospel is the gift of eternal life for all those who come to the end of themselves, who recognize that they are sinners separated from a holy God and that there is absolutely nothing they can do to merit salvation. Self-oriented desires, i.e., "felt needs," "making the customer feel good about himself," and all other such marketing devices are the *enemies* of the gospel of grace.

The Apostle Paul, whom God inspired to present the gospel with absolute clarity throughout his epistles, wrote, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tm 1:15). That understanding must be in the heart of anyone who would receive Christ.

Try a massive marketing campaign with such a message today. Any ad agency would laugh it to scorn! Is it possible that Paul could have missed a more effective "felt needs" approach? Or perhaps the time was just not right to introduce marketing the gospel? Hardly. Paul not only knew his day, but the Holy Spirit gave him a view of our day: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves..." (2 Tm 3:1,2). Our self-serving bias began at mankind's fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, and the focus on self has risen to "perilous" levels as the Lord's return draws near. Again, marketing to *self* is not the way to introduce biblical salvation. Self itself is the problem.

Astonishingly, pointing out this very simple yet fundamental error of attempting to market the gospel is all too often met with responses such as: "Yes, but our church is using it with great success"; "If just one person gets saved, it makes no difference what your arguments are!"; "The church needs to adopt twenty-first century methods to speak to our twenty-first century culture!" Somehow, for many Christians, when the subject is of a spiritual nature, unreasonableness is acceptable if not preferred. But what if the subject turned secular, and involved, say, an investment opportunity, and it was recommended that the following new formula (backed up by a host of personal testimonies) would substantially increase one's bank account: "two plus two equals five"?

The blinding influence of greed aside, Christians would reject the proposal outright because it simply didn't add up. Furthermore, even if it initially began to produce big returns, nearly everyone could see that those foolish enough to invest in such a program would soon reap the disastrous consequences of a foundationally unsound endeavor. On the other hand, when it comes to fundamental errors regarding the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), there is a growing tendency for believers to take a leap beyond reason, common sense, and, ironically, biblical sense.

Part of the problem is that aggressive marketing nearly always produces impressive results. At the very least, it generates activities and excitement that are interpreted as a proof of success. As a friend of mine puts it, "Most church-growth schemes do produce nickels and noses!" In going about God's business, however, the Lord is very clear that He wants us to do things His way. The prophet Jeremiah warned, "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (2:13).

What makes today's so-called biblical marketing approach far more ominous than

other secular trends and fads that the church has implemented in the last century is the *core philosophy* from which the marketing approach is drawn. It is basically a management theories system that is humanistic and transformational, which means that the purveyors of this philosophy are working toward solving community problems (and ultimately the world's) *without God* by getting people to think in a new way (i.e., their way). Their objective is to produce a humanity that has exchanged a *mindset* for a "mindflex;" that is, those willing to give up fixed beliefs (such as biblical doctrines and absolutes) in order to pursue the middle ground in the hope of reconciling differences that hamper "building relationships." The goals are peace, harmony, inclusiveness, and tolerance, for the greater good and productivity of the community.

Although the goals and methodology certainly sound good in general (and even better when mixed with biblical terminology and ideals), they are "a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prv 14:12). Proponents of "systems theory" thinking have targeted the church as an agent for transforming society—but certainly not according to the "narrow way" Jesus declares in Matthew 7:13,14. The church itself must undergo a transformation: from being Christ-centered, submitted to His Word and *only* His solution for mankind's salvation, to a man-centered endeavor in support of humanity's social welfare. *Contenders* for "the faith" (Jude 3) must become simply "people of faith," working for the "good of society." Since pastors and pastoral staff members are the teachers and trusted leaders of their congregations, they are potentially the ideal agents for this transformation. The process is gradual and seductive, beginning at a very pragmatic level, with church growth being the magnet. Marketing and management systems principles are promoted, and the pastors are exhorted to function as "corporate managers" and "change agents" of their churches.

Evidence of this trend is manifest throughout Christendom, most particularly in the "seeker-friendly way of doing church." The two men most influential in spreading the marketing/management systems (with their globalist and communitarian goals) to evangelical churches are Peter Drucker, whom the business world recognizes as the elder statesman of modern management theories, and Bob Buford, head of Leadership Network, an organization that trains pastors and staffs of large churches in marketing/management principles. Buford also heads up the Peter Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management.

In an extensive interview with Drucker,

Christianity Today notes their wide influence: "Over the last 20 years Drucker has had a good deal of interaction with what he calls 'pastoral' churches. These include megachurches like Bill Hybels's Willow Creek or Rick Warren's Saddleback Community. Bob Buford's Leadership Network has invited Drucker to speak to conferences of large-church leaders and has linked them to many pastors seeking [church-growth] advice."¹ Rick Warren is especially taken with Drucker's concepts: "I read everything Peter Drucker writes. His book, *The Effective Executive*, is a favorite I re-read every year."² Drucker, in turn, is gratified to see his humanistic concepts take hold in increasing numbers of churches and parachurch organizations, which he regards as playing a new and central role in a new form of society.³ Willow Creek, according to Drucker, stands out as an example of "what business can learn from non-profits," and Saddleback's mega-church model, he states, is "the most significant phenomenon of the second half of [the twentieth] century." Would the undiluted teachings of Christ ever win such acclaim from the secular world?

No doubt few of the biblically oriented churches and pastors that are participating in this systems-theory laden approach to church growth understand what they are buying into. Nevertheless, they have (wittingly or unwittingly) taken on worldly baggage and are headed down a road littered with anti-biblical means and methods. How far-reaching is the damage? Simply go to the Willow Creek and Saddleback websites to get a sense of their influence.

Warren's book, *The Purpose-Driven Life* (which is peppered with General Systems Theories concepts couched in pseudo-biblical language—check our website or contact us for a detailed critique of *TP-DL*), has sold upwards of 15 million copies (used by organizations from the White House staff to the Oakland Raiders). Over 20,000 churches have participated in "40 Days of Purpose." More than 320,000 pastors and church leaders (including Catholics and Mormons) from around the world have attended "Purpose-Driven" seminars, while 115,000 pastors subscribe to "Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox," which gives access to his sermons and guidance in how to "group-develop" sermons with other pastors. Willow Creek, with its Association of churches numbering around 10,000, is another major herald of integrating this management/marketing approach into church life, which one discerning critic perceptively labeled "Outcome-based religion."

Surely Warren and Hybels are aware of the roots of what they are promoting. Why are they and hundreds of thousands of shepherds (many, I'm sure, from Bible-oriented churches) leading their flocks down this path

paved by man's methods and means? Where is biblical discernment? Where is awareness of what they are feeding their sheep? By trusting in men, are they leading them to "[conform] to this world" (Rom 12:2) and unintentionally directing them away from the *Word*?

Then there is the second pervasive influence—the "biblical" movie.

Is the world in the church and the church in the world to such an extent these days that most believers can no longer discern biblical truth from religious counterfeits? It was disturbing enough that the evangelical church became the primary audience for Mel Gibson's intentionally Roman Catholic movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. But it was utterly shocking that reviews of the movie by evangelical Christian leaders, scholars, and (incredibly) apologetic organizations called it "biblically accurate"!

Not even fifteen minutes into the film the audience was subjected to a host of Gibson's screen interpretations of the writings of a soon-to-be-canonized "Saint"—an eighteenth-century nun, whose mystical visions were received from spirit apparitions. It opens in the Garden of Gethsemane, where the Jesus character appears terribly anxious over the *physical* sufferings he knows he's about to endure, followed by Satan tempting him (wrong angel in the wrong garden!) and directing a large serpent toward the praying "Christ" that he crushes with his foot, followed a little later by the Jesus character being dragged along by soldiers who then pitch him off a bridge from which he dangles by his chains while being given the opportunity to confront the traitor Judas, who was hiding beneath the bridge. Criticism directed at the unbiblical content of the above scenes and the multitude of others, equally unbiblical, throughout the movie was answered by evangelicals claiming "artistic license" on director Gibson's behalf—while at the same time declaring the film to be faithful to Scripture. How does one reconcile "artistic license" with "biblical accuracy"? (See *Showtime for the Sheep?* for a detailed critique.)

As with "biblical" marketing, here again we have problems that go deeper and will have long-term effects upon the church. For all the adverse influence of *The Passion*, biblical critics took some comfort in the hope that its impact on the church would be limited to the time of its theatrical run, which lasted only a month or so. In other words, out of sight, out of mind, resulting in limited spiritual damage. Alas, wishful thinking. The recently released DVD/video sold 4.5 million copies the first day, thanks to an aggressive marketing campaign directed at the church. First-year sales are predicted to exceed 20 million. (Amazon.com, the largest "bookstore" in the world, offers *The Passion of the Christ/The Purpose-Driven*

Life discount package—their two bestselling religious items!) This means that evangelical churches throughout the U.S. and abroad will be using what Gibson calls his "very Marian film" as an ongoing resource for their Sunday school programs, Bible studies, Wednesday evening group meetings, outreach programs, and so forth.

Even more troublesome, however, is the enthusiasm *The Passion* has created for allegedly presenting the Bible visually. Why is that a problem? Interpreting the Scriptures in a visual medium is the most subjective and least accurate of any method of presenting God's Word. No matter how dramatic and emotionally moving a biblical production may be, it nevertheless is *not* God's Word but a series of *interpretations*: how a film director personally "sees" what is declared in the Bible, how an actor *thinks* a biblical character would act (including the God-Man Jesus!), how the art director and set decorator *imagine* the scenes of thousands of years ago to have appeared—the details of which (for God's own reasons) the Bible does not supply. That's only a partial list of man's additions to God's Word, to which *nothing* must ever be added.

Concerning "biblical" marketing or "biblical" movies, the bottom line for the believer is this: Do we want to do things God's way or man's way? Will the Bible be our absolute authority in how we go about living our lives, growing in the faith, and sharing that faith with others—or not? The Lord tells us that in His Word He has given us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him" (2 Pt 1:3). Why, then, are we turning to the world's means and methodologies? Could it be that in opting for the unbiblical process of pragmatism (because it seems to work), we don't see that we are essentially turning away from the Scriptures?

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4). It's imperative that in these days marked by the church's obvious appetite for the world, that we hunger for His objective Word, not the subjective opinions of men. If paraphrase Bible versions are a plague upon biblical literacy (which they are indeed), then visual Bible "versions" sound its death knell. Weep for our next generation, which is now being progressively weaned off the *written* Word of God.

Let us all take to heart and mind the sobering words of God to Israel: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." (Jer 6:16). Let the biblical buyer beware.

TBC

Quotable

[Explaining why the early Christians faced such fierce opposition]: [Their] religion... was exclusive. It denied... every article of heathen mythology, the existence of every object of their worship. It accepted no compromise... It must... overthrow every statue, altar, and temple in the world. It [cannot] be said that a design so bold as this could in any age... be carried [out] with impunity....

This was not setting forth... some new competitor for a place in the Pantheon, whose presence might be discussed... without questioning the reality of any others; it was pronouncing all other gods to be false, and all other worship vain.... This was not what it would be in popish countries, to add a saint to the calendar, [but] to abolish and tread under foot the calendar itself.

Wm. Paley (1743-1805), The Evidences of Christianity, pp. 12-13

True it is that a great part of the most ancient records... treating of... the antiquity of those churches have been industriously sought after and committed to the flames by their bloody persecutors... so the truth... might lie... in perpetual silence. Nevertheless, God has been so gracious... in preserving... by miracle, many authentic pieces... compiled and written by the ancient inhabitants in their own proper language [and this history was drawn from such documents]....

These churches of the Valleys of Piemont remained united... with that of Rome so long as it retained the true religion which was planted throughout all Italy by the Apostles, their disciples and successors. But when the church of Rome began to corrupt itself, and would by no means be persuaded to retain the purity of Apostolic doctrine and divine worship, then those of the valleys began to separate themselves from them, and to *come out from amongst them, that so they might not be partakers of their sins, nor receive of their plagues* [Rev 18:4] and this is evident by divers very ancient manuscripts... which do directly strike at and oppose the errors of the church of Rome.

Samuel Morland, The History of The Evangelical [Waldensian] Churches of the Valley of Piemont (London, 1658), III, pp. 8-9

[The Waldenses of northern Italy were in full fellowship with and had the same doctrines as the Albigenses in southern France, and other primitive churches that Rome maligned and destroyed.]

Q&A

Question (from a Muslim): Doctors tell me that I have cancer and only 2 months to live. I am only 45 years old and know nothing about God. Is Muhammad alive and can I trust him and pray to him? Is Jesus alive and can I appeal to Him? How can I go to heaven? I do not have time to study religion. I need urgent help. I am dying!

Answer: I am sorry to hear this, but death comes, sooner or later, to all mankind—and after that comes judgment. Jesus died for you, for your sins, so you could be forgiven. He is God who became man without ceasing to be God. Even the Qur’an admits that He never sinned. He rose from the dead, is alive, and gives forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe in Him. He is your only hope.

Muhammad was a sinful man. The Qur’an tells him to confess his sins to Allah—but Allah is not the true God and never claims to have a just basis for forgiving sin. Islam says to do the best you can, hoping that at the “last day” your good deeds will outweigh your bad. You know that no court on earth would allow such injustice. You can’t even pay for a parking ticket by parking legally the next time! To save the lives of a hundred people from drowning would not make up for murdering one! We cannot pay the penalty for breaking the law in the past by keeping it in the future. If you lived a perfect life from now on (even if that were possible), you thereby could not make up for having sinned in the past, because you get no “extra credit” for doing what the law requires. “Good deeds” cannot nullify “bad deeds”—and that Islam offers such fraud proves that it is a false religion.

Muhammad is dead, cannot hear your prayer, and can do nothing for you. Muhammad’s grave in Medina is still occupied with whatever remains of his dead body. Christ’s tomb at Jerusalem is empty; He rose from the dead. No one could kill Jesus Christ, but He willingly gave up His life for your sins; Muhammad was poisoned by the widow of a man he murdered. Muhammad did not die for anyone’s sins but for his own.

Muhammad promised paradise as a reward from Allah to those who die in *jihad*. But your conscience knows that any “god” who rewards suicide bombers with paradise for killing innocent women and children is not the true God and is unworthy of your trust. Muhammad also promised paradise without dying in *jihad* to a select few, of

whom Abu Bakr, his father-in-law and successor at the head of all Muslims, was the first. But Abu Bakr said that even if he had one foot inside paradise, he could not trust Allah, who might push him out!

Common sense tells you that Muhammad, a sinner, had no right to promise paradise to anyone. He deceived those who believed him. God alone decides our eternal fate, and that can only be on the basis of justice. The penalty His law demands must be paid.

We have all broken God’s laws and are unable to pay the penalty because God’s justice is infinite, and we would suffer in hell forever. Since Christ is God and man in one person, He was able to pay that penalty for all mankind. You cannot earn His forgiveness; you only need to believe on Him as your Lord and Savior, and you will live forever with Him in heaven. Trust Christ and rest in His promise.

God says that He loved the world so much that “he gave his only begotten Son [Jesus Christ], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Believe in Him and accept this endless life!

Question: Is it biblically wrong to watch or to own *The Lord of the Rings* or any of that series?

Answer: This series is all about occult powers—some from evil creatures and some from supposedly good beings or spirits. The rings themselves supposedly have “magic” powers, but this is outright occultism. Those in favor of these books and movies attempt to see true spirituality and the power of God in them. In fact, the way even the supposed “good” powers operate is the antithesis of how the true God works. Sadly, any “spiritual” lesson one may learn from these films would only lead one astray.

There is no “power” in these movies that offers a biblical picture of God (nor could there be). Whether you watch or own them is up to your own convictions and conscience before the Lord. I certainly would not!

Question: Where does the apostate ecumenical church fit into the events of the last days?

Answer: The Antichrist is not an atheist or irreligious. On the contrary, he causes the Jewish temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt and the sacrifices to be resumed. Of course, his intention is to double-cross the Jews, stop

the Jewish sacrifices, put his own image in the temple, and demand to be worshiped as God—which he does.

Antichrist will, I believe, pretend to be Christ. Therefore, for at least a time, he needs the apostate church as much as she needs him. Furthermore, the apostate church already has in place the institutions worldwide through which Antichrist can work. In the end, however (as stated above), Antichrist will turn against and destroy the Vatican and her consorts.

Question (from an anonymous “concerned” Catholic): I have noticed with a great deal of growing alarm your singular obsession with the Spanish branch of the Inquisition...and this most especially in your debates. It is my fondest and most ardent prayer that the information enclosed herein you will actually read with an OPEN MIND. I also pray that it will cure you of your obsession once and for all. [Enclosed were seven pages by Phil Porvaznik, well-written, with the air of expertise and authority denying my A Woman Rides the Beast quote of Canon Llorente, Secretary to the Inquisition in Madrid, that “in Spain alone the number of condemned exceeded 3 million, with about 300,000 burned at the stake.” He then quotes me as responding that “Instead of trying to discredit my figures, these critics ought rather to admit that the Spanish Inquisition swallowed up far more than 300,000, whether Llorente said it or not.” Then follows a series of quotes from a number of authors criticizing Llorente’s figures and defending the Inquisition as not as bad as commonly reported, one author even calculating that less than 2,000 were burned. Porvaznik adds an impressive bibliography. Especially criticized is my statement that millions of true Christians were killed by Rome in the 1,000 years before the Reformation.]

Answer: You refer to “the Spanish branch of the Inquisition”—an admission that there were other inquisitions also. In all, the various inquisitions lasted about 600 years—and I didn’t even deal with them. You don’t like my figures for Spain. I didn’t even mention the 30,000 “secret Jews” (i.e., Jews accused of only pretending to convert) killed in Spain (See *The International Jerusalem Post*, April 16, 2004). The Spanish Inquisition went as far as Holland, where more than 30,000 were killed. My wife’s ancestors were Dutch Mennonites who fled the Inquisition in Holland. In France, 70,000-100,000 Huguenots were slaughtered in

one event known as St. Bartholomew’s massacre, beginning the night of August 24, 1572, and lasting about a week. The Pope (Gregory XIII) had a medal struck of an angel exterminating the Huguenots with a sword and commissioned the Italian artist Vasari to paint a mural in commemoration, a painting that still exists in the Vatican. Another 200,000 or more Huguenots were killed in other massacres, and from 500,000-1,000,000 fled France. We have found their descendants as far away as South Africa.

The “Inquisition” would have to include even the Crusades, during which many thousands of Jews were killed all across Europe and on into the “holy land.”

The first pope to inaugurate the Inquisition (at one stretch, 80 popes in a row continued to sponsor it) was Innocent III, who, in what he called “the crowning achievement” of his papacy, wiped out the city of Beziers, France. Estimated fatalities range from 20,000 to 60,000. It took the popes about a century to exterminate the Albigenses, of whom Peter de Rosa, a Catholic (*Vicars of Christ*, p. 73), says that “hundreds of thousands” were put to death in southern France—to say nothing of the Waldensians of northern Italy, the extermination of the Hussites—and on and on it goes.

I’m surprised at the time and effort exerted in selective research by Porvaznik to bring the figures of those killed in the Inquisitions down to a few thousand, when there are single events such as the slaughter of Beziers or St. Bartholomew’s massacre, etc., that are so well established and involve hundreds of thousands. What is your point?

It is disappointing that neither from you nor from Porvaznik have I heard a word of remorse for the horrors perpetrated by your Church down through the ages, to say nothing of the innocent lives destroyed by the thousands through the pedophilia presently in the news. You ought rather to mourn its wicked record than to persist in defending a church that is “drunk with the blood of the saints”!

Endnotes

- 1 “The Business of the Kingdom,” Tim Stafford, *Christianity Today*, 11/15/99.
- 2 www.jobsnorthwest.com/stories/story_970901.htm.
- 3 “The Business of the Kingdom,” Tim Stafford, *Christianity Today*, 11/15/99.

Loving God

Dave Hunt

Jesus was asked by a lawyer who was trying to trap Him (insincerely addressing Him as “Master”), “[W]hich is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus replied, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mt 22:35-40).

Christ was quoting scriptures (Lv 19:18,34; Dt 6:5) that divide the Ten Commandments into two parts: 1-3, which He designated as “the first and great commandment,” and 5-10, as the “second” commandment. The first three (Ex 20:2-7) involve reverence and worship of God; then comes the special treatment of the sabbath (8-11), which Christ purposely ignored; and the last six (12-17) deal with human relationships.

The fourth commandment, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy...” (Ex 20:8-11), was conspicuously absent from Christ’s teaching and example. He and His disciples were often accused of breaking the sabbath. Christ replied that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath, and that He was Lord of the sabbath.

Resting on the seventh day was prescribed only for Israel (Ex 31:17; Ps 147:19-20; Mal 4:4, etc.). The other nine commandments are written in every conscience: “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law [the entire law given to Israel alone], do by nature the things contained in the law [they] shew the work of the [moral] law written in their hearts...” (Rom 2:14,15). But God has not written in *anyone’s* conscience to keep the sabbath holy.

Resting on the sabbath reminded Israel that God created the universe in six literal 24-hour days and rested on the seventh. This commemoration of the old creation was given to Israel, to whom God promised a special place on this earth in Christ’s millennial kingdom. Those in the church (whether Jew or Gentile), who are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) and who look forward to the destruction of the old and the creation of the “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1), do not celebrate the old creation. Instead, following the example of the early church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2), they meet together to worship on the first day of a new week, the day of our Lord’s resurrection as “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18), looking forward to their own resurrection

to be forever with and like Him.

Christ’s declaration that “on these two commandments [which do not include keeping the sabbath] hang all the law and the prophets” tells us a great deal. Unfortunately, Seventh-day Adventists have so emphasized keeping the sabbath (though they don’t keep it as commanded to Israel) as to make it not only their distinctive but the litmus test of who is following Scripture. They even declare that “Sunday worship” is the “mark of the Beast.” Then the early church, including Paul, took that mark!

Inasmuch as to love God with all one’s heart, mind, and soul is, according to Christ, the greatest commandment, surely not to do so would be the greatest sin—a fact that must concern us all! Yet this vital truth is rarely emphasized in pulpits, on Christian radio, television, or in Christian books. How can that be? Surely each one of us must share some of the blame and should repent before the Lord for failing to love Him as we ought.

Part of the explanation for this glaring deficiency is that to love God one must

**He sheweth his word unto Jacob,
his statutes and his judgments unto
Israel. He hath not dealt so with
any nation...**

Psalms 147:19-20

know Him intimately—and that takes more time than most Christians are willing to devote to their Lord and Savior out of their busy and worldly schedules. Not that love for Christ is entirely lacking—it just doesn’t rate very high on the “to-do list” of most church-goers. Nor does attending church each Sunday change that outlook.

Today’s great emphasis upon “growth” has all but crowded out fervently loving God in “seeker friendly” churches. Humbly worshipping “in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:23), with all honor given to God and none to man, doesn’t attract so-called “seekers.” The wisdom of the hour, influenced by the world’s marketing and promotion techniques, dictates that creating large churches requires giving “worshippers” what they want. But isn’t a large church to be preferred over a small one, and wouldn’t the ends justify the means? That idea is not found in Scripture.

It should be obvious to any thinking observer that today’s “worship music” is designed to please man, even the carnal and unsaved, and not God. In *The Purpose Driven Church* (p. 279), Rick Warren boldly declares, “We use the style of music

the majority of people in our church listen to on the radio... contemporary pop/rock.” This is the world’s music, and it draws the worldly into the church.

In plain words, the music in purpose-driven churches is not chosen because it pleases God, but man. Purpose-driven worship is less about worshipping God than about entertaining the “worshippers.” That is its deliberate design. Thus, the music and the entire “program” (like any secular performance) must appeal to the audience rather than to the One whom they are supposedly worshipping!

In *Born After Midnight*, A.W. Tozer declared, “Much singing... has in it more of romance than it has of the Holy Ghost. Words and music [don’t reflect] the reverent intimacy of the adoring saint, but the impudent familiarity of the carnal lover.” Nor are those churches that are driven by the new “purpose,” which has become the vision of tens of thousands of today’s pastors, the only ones that have turned worship upside down and inside out. The same is true of thousands of other churches that have forgotten the fact that worship, far from being for *our* enjoyment, is supposed to be directed toward *God!* Rare is the awesome reverence that befits those bowing in His presence to sing His praise. The attitude, dress, and sensuality of many “worship teams” and their “music” would not be tolerated for a moment by God before His throne!

Worship on earth should be the beginning of what we will continue for eternity in heaven. Any “worship” that would not be appropriate before God’s throne should not be allowed in any church. Our song throughout eternity will be “unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rv 5:13). Instead, the contemporary Christian music industry is almost all about money, popularity, and glorifying the “artists.” It is a performance. Is God as interested in performance as are the fans? Or does He desire our worship?

Seemingly forgotten, in church as well as in daily life, is the command to love God with all of one’s heart, mind, and soul. Undeniably, this *command* (God did not give us *suggestions*) is to all mankind, not just to an “elect” who have been pre-chosen for heaven. A command requires obedience and commitment; it does not wait for feelings. Loving God is not a Hollywood romance—“falling in love” only to fall out again. Obedience begins with a determination to obey.

There is a popular teaching that multitudes, whom God could have saved had

He so desired, have been predestined to eternal torment before they were born. If that is true, it cannot be said that God loves those whom He has thus doomed. Nor is it reasonable that these whom God, according to this teaching, does not love should be commanded to love Him! Are ungodly sinners to be more loving than God?

John declares: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). Thus, those whom God does not love have no basis for obeying this command. But the command is for all, proving that God indeed loves all and truly desires all to be saved. The command to love God is an invitation to rebellious sinners to repent and return to Him.

That all are commanded to love God makes it very clear that the Father did not send the Son to die in a limited atonement for only a select group but for all. Yet there are those who insist that when the Scriptures say "who will have [desires] all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4), what is really meant is "not all men but all *kinds* of men"—or that God "has two wills: a will of desire and a will of decree." Because all are to love Him, we know that the God who *is* love indeed loves and desires the salvation of all.

Yes, God loves even a Hitler as well as an innocent child, because He *is* love (1 Jn 4:8, 16) and cannot but love man whom He created, no matter how rebellious and hateful toward God. Surely the love of the infinite God must itself be infinite. That fact was proved at the Cross, where Christ paid sin's penalty for all mankind, asking His Father to forgive even those who nailed Him there and who mocked Him in His agony. It is only in gratitude for such divine love that we can love God as we ought.

The command is to love God "with all thine heart." We are to be devoted wholly to God! The hundreds of usages of this word in the Old and New Testaments make it clear that the "heart" was created in man so that he could willingly and lovingly yield it to God in response to His love. Man is not a puppet. He is a voluntary, knowing participant *with* God.

To be saved, one must believe the gospel with one's whole heart (Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9). In the gospel, which we must believe to be saved, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

There are those who deny that man has a will and who insist that God must *cause* him to do whatever he does. Neither Scripture nor human experience supports this belief.

In fact, Scripture presents both sides: God moving upon the heart, and man willingly giving himself in obedience and love.

The Psalmist prays to God, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies" (Ps 119:36); but he also says, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end" (Ps 119:112). Deuteronomy 30 begins, "the LORD... will circumcise thine heart... to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and...soul" (v. 6). But the rest of the chapter is all about man's willing response: "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments...if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul" (v. 10); "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee...to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways...that thou mayest live and multiply...But if thine heart turn away...ye shall surely perish...therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the LORD

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

Proverbs 23:26

thy God...and obey his voice, and...cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (15-20).

Sometimes both sides are given in the same verse: "...every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it" (Ex 36:2).

Yes, there are some verses that sound as though God must do it all: To Israel in the wilderness of Sinai He says, "Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive...eyes to see...ears to hear" (Dt 29:4); "God gave him [Saul] another heart" (1 Sm 10:9); of those who followed Saul in the early days, "whose hearts God had touched" (1 Sm 10:26); David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps 51:10), etc.

But there are many more verses that place the responsibility fully upon man: "with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD" (1 Chr 29:9); "thy law is within my heart" (Ps 40:8); "My heart is inditing a good matter" (45:1); "The fool hath said in his heart" (53:1); "My heart is fixed, O

God" (57:7); "pour out your heart before him" (62:8); "set not your heart upon..." (62:10); "even to such as are of a clean heart" (73:1); "I will praise thee, O Lord...with all my heart" (86:12); "Harden not your heart" (95:8); "Blessed are they that...seek him with the whole heart" (119:2), etc.

There are many similar scriptures that put the responsibility for loving and obeying God squarely on man without any hint of God causing or even helping the willing and loving heart. For example: Ex 35:5, 21, 29; Lv 1:3; 19:5; 22:19, 29; Dt 10:12,13; 11:13; 13:3; Jos 22:5; 1 Kgs 11:2; 1 Chr 28:9; Ezk 33:31; Dn 1:8; 1 Cor 7:37; 1 Pt 1:22, etc. But tragically, this God-given ability to choose has been perverted by some who are highly honored in the church.

In his book, *If It's Going To Be, It's Up To Me* (pp. 142, 146), Robert Schuller has said: "Connect with this Higher Power. Listen to the call of your heart of hearts to become a believer in God...Connect with me and come to love and listen to the God within you." Yet God says, "The heart is deceitful...and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9), and Christ declared, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries..." (Mt 15:19).

God's loving offer of salvation is not to a select elect but to all. In love, He calls the most ungodly sinners to repent and to turn to Him with the whole heart: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Is 55:7); "ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13).

Christ promises salvation to all who will come to Him in faith: "If *any man* thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (Jn 7:37); "Come unto me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Surely such love ought to awaken within each of us the passion to love God with our whole heart!

Hymns written by those who knew and loved the Lord intimately and expressed it eloquently and with sound doctrine have been cast aside. This rich heritage has been replaced by shallow, repetitive lyrics joined to the pop/rock that Rick Warren says the world loves. We need to recover this spiritual treasure and to sing again in loving gratitude and with reverent awe of "the love that drew salvation's plan...the grace that brought it down to man...the mighty gulf that God did span, at Calvary!" **TBC**

Quotable

Let me state the cause of my burden. It is this: *Jesus Christ has today almost no authority among the groups that call themselves by His name....* “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” is the church’s national anthem and the cross is her official flag, but in the week-by-week services of the church and the day-by-day conduct of her members someone else, not Christ, makes the decisions [and] decide[s] the moral standards...objectives and all methods employed to achieve them. Because of long and meticulous organization it is now possible for the youngest pastor just out of seminary to have more actual authority in a church than Jesus Christ has....

The Lordship of Jesus...has been relegated to the hymnal where all responsibility to it may be comfortably discharged in a glow of pleasant religious emotion....That the Man Christ Jesus has absolute and final authority over the whole church and over all its members in every detail of their lives is simply not now accepted as true by the rank and file of evangelical Christians.

A.W. Tozer, The Best of A.W. Tozer, 1978, pp. 88-89

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you...” John xiii, 34.

“Even as I have loved you...” is the command of Him who asks nothing that He has not provided, and now offers to bestow. It is the assurance that He expects nothing from us, that He does not work in us. “*Even as I have loved you* and every moment am pouring out that love upon you through the Holy Spirit, EVEN SO do ye love one another.” The measure, the strength, and the work of your love you will find in Christ’s love to you.

Andrew Murray, Like Christ, 1895, p. 127

Q&A

Question: Why do the terrorists behead the hostages? Is that just for the effect it causes, the horror and fear it creates, or is there some other reason?

Answer: There is a precise reason: beheading is prescribed by the Qur’an for the purpose of forcing the entire world into submission to Allah. It is the penalty meted out to those who refuse to become Muslims: “Now when ye meet in battle those who disbelieve, then it is smiting of the necks...” (Surah 47:4).

That is why beheading of non-Muslims was practiced by Muhammad and his early followers, and all through the history of Islam in its slaughter of millions, from France to China. The same is true today in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Sudan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and anywhere else Muslims have the power to do so. Those who perpetrate this outrage against human rights and dignity are zealous Muslims who would deny that they are terrorists. They simply claim to be following Allah’s command and the example of Muhammad and his successors.

If the hostages who’ve been executed by terrorists in Iraq or elsewhere had been willing to become Muslims, they would have been spared. However, that option was probably not even offered, because it would undermine the threat of death used for bargaining purposes. The practice of beheading is a public notification that these are Muslims acting in obedience to Allah with the intention of terrifying the entire world into converting to Islam.

Question: From a broadcast of *The Bible Answer Man*, Hank Hanegraaff seemed to be in full agreement with the idea that most of the promises to Israel are fulfilled in Christ and the Church. Is he correct?

Answer: Absolutely not. Even a superficial reading of the Bible passages, along with minimal biblical knowledge and a little common sense, reveals the fallacy of this claim by so many who believe that the church has replaced Israel! Scriptures such as Joshua 21:43-45 simply declare that all of God’s promises to Israel about giving her the land of Canaan had been fulfilled. But there are hundreds of other promises to Israel contained in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, et al., which were not even given until centuries after Joshua and, therefore, could not possibly have been fulfilled in Israel’s initial conquest of Canaan. Moreover, there were many other promises from God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long before Joshua, which were not and could not have been fulfilled in Joshua’s day.

Consider God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, “In thee [and in thy seed] shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gn 12:3; 26:4; 28:14), referring to the Messiah, who came more than 1,000 years after Joshua. And what of the promises of Messiah’s coming to redeem Israel and all mankind given to Israel by her prophets centuries after Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land? Surely their fulfillment was yet future in Joshua’s day. Indeed, the

promise of redemption through the Messiah has not yet been completely fulfilled even today, as the gospel is still going out around the world.

God gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and to his seed “for ever” (Gn 13:15) by “an everlasting covenant” (Gn 17:7, 19; 1 Chr 16:17, etc.) for “an everlasting possession” (Gn 17:8)—and, by their very nature, it will take eternity to fulfill those promises. These (and many others) were promises for Israel and could never apply to the church, yet that is the claim of those who, like Hank, teach that God is finished with Israel and that the Great Tribulation occurred under Nero.

Hundreds of other promises were given to Israel centuries after Joshua’s day and thus could not have been fulfilled at that time: “the time of Jacob’s trouble... he shall be saved out of it” (Jer 30:7); two thirds of all Jews will be killed (Zec 13:8,9)—this, the worst tribulation that Israel and the world will ever have seen, must be “shortened [or] there should no flesh be saved” (Mt 24:21,22). Moreover, God promised Israel and David that his throne would be established “for ever” (2 Sm 7:12-16) in Jerusalem, which, though destroyed (Dn 9:26; Mt 24:2; Lk 21:6, etc.), would be restored (Jer 31:38-40; Ezk 37:26-28; Zec 14:11-16, etc.)—clearly not fulfilled in Joshua’s day, when Jerusalem didn’t yet belong to Israel.

None of the many promises God made long after Joshua died regarding Jerusalem could have been fulfilled at the time of Joshua 21:43-45. Jerusalem became the subject of numerous promises to Israel, which are still being fulfilled: “the city of God... God is in the midst of her” (Ps 46:4-5); “the joy of the whole earth... the city of the LORD of hosts... God will establish it for ever” (Ps 48:1-8, etc.), “trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk 21:24). And what of the many prophecies that Israel would be scattered among all nations (Dt 28:64; Neh 1:8; Am 9:9, etc.), preserved and brought back (Dt 30:3, etc.), and that “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom 11:26)? Clearly, none of these had come to pass at the time Hank says all promises were fulfilled. Many promises are still future and could not possibly apply to the church but only to Israel.

And what of Jerusalem being made a “cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem” and “a burdensome stone for all people” (Zec 12:2,3)? And what of God making the governors of Judah like “a torch of fire in a sheaf [to] devour all the people round about” (12:6) and God bringing “all

nations against Jerusalem to battle” (14:2), the Messiah returning to rescue Israel (12: 9,10), every Jew being supernaturally brought back to Israel with not one left among the nations (Ezk 39:28; Mt 24:30,31)? And what of Christ establishing His rule over the earth on David’s throne, with Israel being fully restored to sinless fellowship with Him and to her land with endless peace (Is 2:1-5; 9:6-7; Ezk 34:11-16, 23,24; 36:8-12, 15; Zec 14:9-21)? These were all fulfilled at Joshua 21:43-45? Hardly!

The astonishing claim that all of God’s promises to Israel had already been fulfilled in Joshua’s day reveals the depths of the delusion that grips those who insist that Israel no longer has any significance in God’s purposes.

Question: You said that the blood of Jesus shed during the beatings by Roman soldiers was not efficacious for our salvation but that the blood shed on the cross was. Since that, too, was caused by Roman soldiers driving nails into His hands and feet, and a Roman spear piercing His side, why did the blood shed on the cross cleanse our sins but the blood of the scourging did not?

Answer: I did not suggest that Christ’s blood that was shed through His scourging and the crown of thorns had *nothing* to do with our salvation. I simply stated that it was not *sufficient* for our redemption. I pointed that out because Gibson’s movie gives the false impression that Christ’s suffering, endured at the hands of Roman soldiers, paid for the sins of the world. In fact, it was Yahweh who laid upon Christ our sins; and it was God’s bruising of Christ that meted out the penalty that purchased our redemption. “Stripes” is a wrong translation in the KJV, as elsewhere. The Hebrew word is singular and indicates one blow from God in bruising Christ “for our iniquities” (Is 53:5).

For that position, I was criticized by a number of “experts” who wrote to correct me. Thankfully, some genuine Hebrew experts (from Seminary professors who teach Old Testament Hebrew, to Jews who are fluent in Hebrew, to other scholars) wrote to declare unequivocally that the Hebrew word translated as “stripes” is indeed singular.

Scripture is clear that Christ “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20). Whenever the shedding of blood is mentioned, it means the death of the victim: “Christ *died* for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3).

Question: I’ve heard prophecy teachers say that New York (and perhaps even America as a whole) is “mystery Babylon,” the woman riding the beast in Revelation 17 and 18. They point to the evil of America, the Statue of Liberty (a pagan goddess) guarding New York harbor and supposedly blessing America, etc. What do you think of this?

Answer: America may be Sodom prophetically, but it is not “Mystery Babylon” depicted by the woman riding the beast. The truth is rather simple. First of all, the woman is a *city*, not a country: “that great *city*, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Rv 17:18). This fact alone eliminates the United States. God’s people are warned, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (18:4). Must we all move out of the United States? Hardly. The reference is to a religious system in which Christians are to have no part, not to a geographical location one must leave.

That the United Nations has its headquarters in New York does not mean that the city of New York rules over the world. Rome of the Caesars, followed by Rome of the popes, ruled over the known world of its day for many centuries. New York is of recent origin. Ancient Babylon in Iraq has been in ruins for 2,300 years, so it doesn’t qualify either, even if rebuilt.

The angel tells John, “I will tell thee the mystery of the woman...” (17:7). There are 14 identifying features given in these two chapters that make the identity of the woman very clear. We deal with them in *A Woman Rides the Beast*.

Question (From three Muslims): In Christianity, it is taught that everyone is born a sinner. If that is true, then how can God accept us in heaven [since] that is a sinless place? According to what standard are we judged worthy or unworthy to enter paradise/heaven? What is good enough? God requires sinless perfection, which we can never attain to by our works. Will He accept something less? How can He?

Answer: Your question goes to the very heart of the difference between true biblical Christianity and Islam (and all other religions). The issue is God’s infinite justice in relation to man’s undeniable sin and outright rebellion against God. As the Bible says, “All have sinned [and] the wages of sin is death” (Rom 3:23; 6:23). Even if it were possible, living a perfect, sinless life in the future could never pay the penalty

for sins of the past. Justice does not work that way.

Islam (like every other world religion, and much that calls itself Christianity) urges its followers to do good (the greatest “good” is to die in *jihad*) in the hope that their good deeds will outweigh their bad ones in the “last day” judgment. Of course, there is no court of law on earth that would release anyone from the penalty prescribed by the law because they had done “more good than evil.” Nor will God accept such a plea from anyone, including Muhammad. As for suicide bombers, they cannot pay for their sins by committing suicide, and especially not by killing innocent people in the process. It does not speak well for either Muhammad or Allah to make Paradise the reward for committing murder!

Jesus Christ, who is God, became a man through a virgin birth, lived a perfect sinless life (in contrast to Muhammad whom the Qur’an commands to confess his sins), and died for our sins on the cross, paying the penalty that God’s infinite justice demanded for the sins of all mankind, and resurrected from the dead. On this righteous basis, God offers a just pardon of all sins for those who believe that Christ paid that penalty and rose from the grave.

God So Loved...!

Dave Hunt

How wonderful to think that I am tenderly loved by God, the infinite Creator of the universe! That fact, if true, is so awesome that our finite minds are overwhelmed by the thought. But isn't this too good to be true? How can I be sure that God loves *me*? And what does that really mean?

When I was a boy in Sunday school, we used to sing in simple faith,

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Is this favorite song of children biblical? Indeed it is!

Mothers brought young children to Jesus and the disciples drove them away. Did the stern disciples think these children were not among the "elect"? No, the disciples had never been taught such a concept by Jesus. Their problem was the same pride and lack of love with which Christ indicted the Pharisees: "ye have not the love of God in you" (Jn 5:42).

Jesus took the children and blessed them, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:14).

Christ said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). Therefore, we know that the tender love and compassion toward these children displayed by Christ was the revelation of the Father's own heart of love toward all.

Is it possible that these particular children were a peculiar group in special favor with God? There is no indication of that at all. What Christ did and said for them could only have reflected His love for "all the children of the world," as the song says.

But when we are no longer innocent children—when we know we have sinned and are accountable for every thought, word, and deed—what then? Does God love us still, though we are hopelessly unworthy of His love? Could that be true? If not, there is no hope of salvation for anyone.

It is utterly impossible that finite, imperfect sinners could ever be worthy of God's infinite, perfect, and holy love. If God is to love us at all, it cannot be

because of who *we* are, but *in spite* of who we are and only because of who *He* is.

"God is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16). Love is the very essence of His being. Therefore, He cannot but love all. And He has proved that fact by giving the Son of His love to die for the sins of the world.

The Scripture declares that the great manifestation of God's love is the gift of His Son: "For God *so loved the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son... God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... In this was manifested the love of God toward us... God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him... hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us..." (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 3:16; 4:9,10, etc).

This truth of God's gift of a Savior to the world was announced at Christ's birth as "good tidings of great joy [for] all people" (Lk 2:10). Yet many claim

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

that Christ died only for the sins of a select group called "the elect." They are thus the only ones to whom the birth of Christ could possibly be the source of "good tidings of great joy."

This teaching, which is growing in popularity and influence in the church, declares that "so loved the world" really means, "so loved *part* of the world." Clearly, if Christ did not die for all, then God couldn't have loved all, because the manifestation of His love is the death of His Son. There is no biblical basis for saying that God loves or ever loved those for whom Christ didn't die.

Some who hold this doctrine, however, attempt to say that God really loved everyone but not with the special love He reserved for those for whom Christ sacrificed Himself upon the Cross. But a professed "love" that does not do all it can to rescue the one loved is not truly love. It is like hypocritically saying to the "naked and destitute... depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled" but not giving them what they need (Jas 2:15,16).

Worse yet, many who hold this doctrine

unashamedly declare that God predestined multitudes to eternal torment before they were even born—multitudes He *could* have saved had He so desired. They say that God's love is displayed in His patience and temporal kindness toward all. No matter how much sunshine and rain, however, or other earthly blessings He might have given these non-elect, it would be irrational to say that God loved them in any way whatsoever.

Christ declared, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Lk 6:36). There is no question that we are to be merciful to all, even to those who hate and mistreat us. This can only be because God is merciful to all. If not, then in emulating our Father in heaven we need not be merciful to all either. Nor can it be said that it is merciful for God to fail to provide salvation for all who need it. Therefore, we can be certain that God loves all and has provided salvation for the entire world.

Another children's song says,

O if there is only one song I can sing,
When in His beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song in eternity be,
"O what a wonder that Jesus loves me!"

What a wonder indeed!

Paul exulted, "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20)! How could Paul be certain that God's love was for him? Did he have a special revelation that he was among "the elect"? Or had he simply embraced a love that the Bible declares is for all? It is of little value to exult in God's love unless one can be certain that this love is indeed for him.

Always a mixed multitude gathered to hear Christ. They were not confined to a select group called the elect. Many never would believe the gospel and are in hell today. Yet to all of them Christ said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you..." (Mt 5:44). This command was based upon the glorious truth that such is God's attitude toward all.

Christ declared that even sinners love and are kind to those who love and are kind to them. Surely God, who is infinite in love, would be no less benevolent to sinners and to those who make themselves His enemies than He commands us to be. We see this love in Christ, who prayed to the Father to forgive those who crucified and mocked Him (Lk 23:34). For that prayer to be answered, the Father had to make Christ's payment for sin available to all who would accept it.

Numerous scriptures declare that God loves all and desires the salvation of all. Such scriptures are adroitly sidestepped by those who deny that Christ died for all. Even such crystal clear scriptures as the following are explained away: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth...who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tm 2:4,6).

Regarding that verse, Spurgeon complained, “I was reading just now the exposition of [one] who explains the text so as to explain it away [as] if it read, ‘Who *will not* have all men to be saved....’ [In fact], the passage should run thus—‘whose wish it is that all men should be saved....’ As it is *my* wish...so it is God’s wish that all men should be saved; for, assuredly, he is not less benevolent than we are” (Charles H. Spurgeon, “Salvation by Knowing the Truth,” (www.apibs.org/chs/1516.htm, 16 January 1880).

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that the only reason all are not saved is not because there are some whom God did not desire to save, but because they refused the salvation He provided in Christ. As the Law was for all, so salvation is provided for all those who break the Law and who thereby come under God’s judgment.

Surely the Ten Commandments are not for a select group but for all mankind. Indeed, Paul declares that “the Gentiles, which have not the law...shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness...” (Rom 2:14,15).

The very first commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Mt 22:37,38). It is unreasonable as well as unbiblical that God should command those to love Him with all their heart for whom Christ did not die and to whom, therefore, God did not manifest His love. How can they (whom God does not love) be commanded to love Him?

The Bible declares, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). The only way anyone can love God is in response to His love. Thus, if there are those for whom Christ did not die (and to whom, therefore, God’s love was not manifested), they are under no obligation to love God. Yet all are so commanded. Therefore, Christ must

have died for all.

Scripture assures us repeatedly that Christ “is the Saviour of all...specially of those that believe” (1 Tm 4:10); that Christ “by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9). The reference is not merely to physical death but to “the second death...[eternity in] the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rv 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). Only God could take that punishment for the world. Only He could “[bear] our sins in his own body on the tree [Cross]” (1 Pt 2:24) and thereby “take away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29).

This is why the Savior had to be “The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Is 9:6). Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30). To pay the penalty that His own infinite justice demanded for every sin from Adam to the end of the world, He had to endure the second death of

**And hope maketh not ashamed;
because the love of God is shed
abroad in our hearts by the Holy
Ghost which is given unto us.**

Romans 5:5

eternal punishment in separation from God for all mankind who would ever exist. This He did on the Cross in those hours of darkness when He was heard to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1; Mt 27:46)!

The Old Testament sacrifices in Israel were a picture of the sacrifice that “the Lamb of God” (Jn 1:29, 36) would make of Himself to satisfy God’s judgment upon sin. He alone could “through the eternal Spirit [offer] himself without spot to God” (Heb 9:14, 25), He “the just for the unjust [us], that he might bring us to God” (1 Pt 3:18).

God’s relationship to Israel presents a picture of the relationship God desired for all mankind. Espoused to God, Israel committed adultery with many lovers—yet He begged her to come back and He would forgive and restore her (Jer 3:1-3; 4; etc.). That He loved her and desired to bless her but could not because of her rebellion is repeatedly made clear: “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways” (Ps 81:8-16); “I have nourished and brought up

children, and they have rebelled against me” (Is 1:2)!

God calls Israel His vineyard and indicts her for producing wild grapes in spite of the tender care He has showered upon her. Hear the cry of His heart: “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Is 5:4). Such a question would be a mockery if Israel had not acted in willful disobedience but was actually doing what God had decreed!

Christ uses the same illustration: “Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down.... And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not...cut it down” (Lk 13:7-9). The rabbis knew that He was indicting them. At the same time, He was reaffirming God’s willingness to forgive if they would repent and turn to Him.

What a statement by Christ: “For God *so loved the world...*” (Jn 3:16)! That phrase, “*so loved*,” indicates a love so fervent that it is beyond expression. Christ said, “The Father loveth the Son” (Jn 3:35; 5:20), and He refers fondly to “the love wherewith thou hast loved me” (Jn 17:26). This must be an infinite love.

The love of God to all mankind also had to be infinite to cause Him to give His only begotten Son to die for us “that we might live through him” (1 Jn 4:9). Paul exults in the “...great love wherewith he [God] loved us” (Eph 2:4). As great as His love for His Son is, so great must be God’s love for all mankind to sacrifice His Son for our salvation.

John exclaims, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 Jn 3:1). How important that we revel in and understand and experience the love of God and, in the power and assurance of that love, declare it to the world.

Isaiah declares, “It pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Is 53:10). The Father was pleased to bruise Christ with the judgment we deserved for our sins, because He so loved us. May we stand firmly upon God’s Word and declare this infinite love without compromise to all mankind through the gospel! **TBC**

Quotable

What is the reason that so many Christians are wasting their lives in the terrible bondage of the world instead of living in the manifestation and the privilege and the glory of the child of God...? There is one answer: it is *self* that is the root of the whole trouble...the life of Christ must take the place of the self-life; then alone can we be conquerors...If you trusted God and Jesus, you could not fall—but you trust yourself.

Andrew Murray, from a series of addresses in 1895 later revised and published as *The Indwelling Christ*, n.d., pp. 27-28

Many would like to unite church and stage....When the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that the people seek something else in the way of delight. Lacking bread, they feed on ashes; rejecting the way of the Lord, they run greedily in the path of folly.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “Another Word Concerning the Down Grade,” *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1887

God save you from the sin of paring down the gospel to suit the pride of men; God grant that you may deliver your message straight and full and plain. Only so, whatever else you may sacrifice, will you have one thing—the favour of the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. Gresham Machen

Q&A

Question: I’ve heard that Rick Warren is a graduate of Robert Schuller’s Institute for Church Growth and that his teaching is merely Schuller’s Possibility Thinking slightly reworded. Internet sites accuse Warren of continuing to teach at and to support Schuller’s annual leadership Institute. Is that true?

Answer: The correct name of this annual event is the Robert H. Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership. As far as I know, Rick Warren has had nothing to do with this event since he was a keynote speaker in January 1997.

No reflection on Warren, who didn’t invite them, but that conference was attended by more than 80 gay and lesbian pastors and lay

leaders from the Metropolitan Community Churches, who took Schuller’s training to help their churches grow. Schuller has also embraced Unity (one of the most deceptive and anti-Christian cults) and spoken at the dedication of at least one of their churches (in Warren, Michigan) as well as at their headquarters in Lees Summit, MO, sharing his church growth techniques to help Unity deceive more of the gullible in their slide into hell.

Rick and his wife, Kay, attended Schuller’s Institute for Successful Church leadership during his last year in seminary. “He had a profound influence on Rick,” Kay says. “We were captivated by his positive appeal to nonbelievers” (*Christianity Today*, 11/18/2002).

Schuller calls Muslims “Christians,” says we should not try to change anyone’s “religion,” went to Rome with plans of the Crystal Cathedral to obtain the “Holy Father’s” blessing before building it, has shared his pulpit with Catholics, atheists, agnostics, and occultists, some of whom, such as Larry King, a Jewish agnostic, Schuller has asked to pray (See *TBC* reprints for further information).

Schuller has denied the gospel and the Lord so many times that it is difficult to understand how any Christian leader could ever consent to be on the same platform with him, much less speak in his church. Nevertheless, the keynote speakers announced for January 24-27, 2005 include Jack Hayford, Bill Hybels (as usual), Ruth Graham, and Kirbyjon Caldwell (an attendee for many years and whose 1999 Schulleresque book, *The Gospel of Good Success*, does not contain the gospel of salvation—see *TBC* 6/’01). The theme for 2005 is “Finding and Fulfilling Your Mission: Proven Principles for Success.”

The similarity between Schuller’s teachings and Warren’s “Purpose Driven” ideas cannot be denied. Warren has obviously patterned his approach to a “successful church” after what he learned from Schuller.

Warren’s *The Purpose-Driven Life*, which has sold more than 20 million copies and has been followed in its “Forty Days of Purpose” program by thousands of congregations, tells the reader that he is exactly the person God made and intended him to be. Missing is anything to convict the sinner of his rebellion against God and the coming judgment. It is all about success and fulfillment in this life. This humanistic approach is very appealing. No wonder corporations and athletic teams study it (NASCAR, Coca Cola, LPGA, Oakland Raiders, etc.). It echoes Schuller.

Consider the following from Schuller: “I don’t think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence, counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than...attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition” (*Time*, March 18, 1985). “To be born again...we must be changed from a negative to a positive self-image—from inferiority to self-esteem...” (Schuller, *Self-Esteem: the New Reformation*, p. 68); “If Christianity is to succeed...it must cease to be a negative religion and must become positive” (p. 104); “The classical error of historical Christianity is that we have never started with the value of the person. Rather, we have started from the ‘unworthiness of the sinner...’” (p. 162).

Warren begins *Purpose* with “the value of the person,” a theme repeated throughout. Although not guilty, as is Schuller, of outright contradiction of the gospel, Warren does a masterful job of removing from it anything that those who need it might find offensive. Anyone familiar with Schuller’s writings recognizes an undertone of the same compromise in *The Purpose-Driven Life*.

We’re not suggesting that Warren holds any of Schuller’s heresies. Yet, like Hybels and other “church growth” gurus, he has definitely adopted many of Schuller’s compromises and methods. When Schuller claims that he is the father of the church-growth movement, it is no idle boast.

The watered-down Schuller approach, designed to offend no one, is even reflected in Saddleback’s doctrinal statements regarding, for example, “sin”: “Every person, although endowed with the image of God, inherited a disobedient heart from Adam, the very first man. This attitude of disobedience (called sin in the Bible)—unless rectified through Christ—forever keeps man from forming a relationship with his Creator.”

Missing is any explanation of Christ’s payment on the Cross for sin. Nor does not “forming a relationship with his Creator” even come close to “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn 3:36); “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rv 20:15).

Like Schuller, Warren encourages everyone to attend his pastor-training programs, including Mormons, Catholics, Jews, and women pastors, in spite of the SBC ban on the latter. “‘Why be divisive?’ he asks, citing as his model Billy Graham....”

Question: I live in Bermuda and read with interest what you said in *Occult Invasion* (p. 43) about Henry Gross dowsing over a map of Bermuda while in Kennebunkport, Maine, and locating three well sites on the map, which were drilled and which produce much of Bermuda's water today. Yet many people here have their own private wells.

Answer: The plaque citing this event has been on that wall in Kennebunkport for many decades, and I have never heard of its claim being challenged by any authority.

My wife, Ruth, and I were recently in Bermuda, where I was the speaker at a church conference. While there, I talked with Mark Rowe, the head hydro-geologist for the Bermuda Water Works. He knew the story of the three well sites allegedly located by the dowser and said that two were very productive, but the water in the third was brackish. These remain the major sources of public drinking water, but they cannot supply the need.

As you know, every home has a specially designed roof for catching rain water that is piped into storage tanks below, supplying much of the drinking water consumed. Imported bottled water is in huge demand.

Yes, there are about 3,000 private wells, but it is unlawful to drink from any of them. The water they supply can only be used for non-drinking purposes, whereas the wells located by Henry Gross as he dowsed over the map produce drinking water. Other dowsers have in like manner located buried cities and minerals on maps.

There is no rational or scientific relationship between lines drawn on paper forming a map and anything in the ground the map represents. Such information can only come from a nonhuman source. Inasmuch as God has forbidden divination such as dowsing (Dt 18, etc.), the data must come from a demonic source.

Occultists have a tendency to exaggerate. In this case, however, the story seems to be basically true.

Question: What do you think of the Euro coins issued by the Vatican containing the image of Pope John Paul II?

Answer: The Vatican is not only a city but a state as well. Every state in the EU is allowed to have the images it desires on its own money. Far more interesting are the Euro coins, paper bills, and stamps with pictures of a woman riding a beast.

Question: Sir, if today you die, are you 100 percent sure you would go to heaven? How can I, a Muslim, have that assurance?

Answer: I am 100 percent certain because of the teaching in the Bible. I know the Bible is the Word of the one true God for many reasons: it is archaeologically and historically verifiable, it has hundreds of prophecies that have been fulfilled centuries and even thousands of years after they were recorded, it rings true to the conscience, and I have experienced in my own life the fulfillment of the salvation it offers.

There is no way that any sinner could pay the infinite penalty for his sins. All religions attempt to appease the gods or spirits with various occult ceremonies and sacrifices—but such efforts wouldn't even pay for a traffic ticket and surely won't be accepted by God. It is a matter of justice. The "ticket" has been written out on every one of us because of our sin, and the penalty has to be paid.

Islam has no solution for sin. No one in Islam paid the penalty for mankind. The Qur'an commands Muhammad to confess his sin, but that wouldn't remove his guilt. Muhammad couldn't even pay for his own sins, much less for those of others. Dying as a suicide bomber won't pay for sin. Any religion that offers paradise for committing suicide and murdering innocent women and children in the process is false and ought to be condemned.

We have the record of eyewitnesses and many proofs that Jesus Christ is God come to earth through a virgin birth and that He paid the penalty for our sins in His death, literally resurrected, ascended to heaven, and is coming again. He offers forgiveness of sins and an eternal home in heaven to all who will believe on Him. There is no other way.

Question: If only those in the church are resurrected and taken to heaven at the Rapture, when do Old Testament saints get resurrected? If at the Rapture, then wouldn't they be in the church?

Answer: Before Christ's resurrection, the souls and spirits of Old Testament believers went, upon death to "Abraham's bosom" (Lk 16:22,23), where Christ's soul and spirit went upon His death as did the believing thief crucified with Him: "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). When Christ ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He took these believers with Him.

It cannot only be those who died in faith

in Christ since His resurrection, but Old Testament believers as well, who are described as the "saints" who come back with Christ at the Second Coming to the Mount of Olives (Zec 14:4,5; Jude 14), those who "sleep in Jesus" (1 Thes 4:14) and "the dead in Christ" (v. 16) resurrected at the Rapture. If Abraham, who "rejoiced to see [Christ's] day" (Jn 8:56) and David and Isaiah, who foretold the Crucifixion and Resurrection, are not raised from the dead at the Rapture, they never will be resurrected.

The only other mention of a resurrection of believers is of those who "were beheaded [by antichrist]... which had not worshipped the beast" (Rv 20:4), completing the "first resurrection" (Rv 20:5). Old Testament saints must therefore be resurrected at the Rapture, and are in the church.

All Jews and Gentiles who believe on Christ before the Second Coming are in the church. Those who (whether Jews or Gentiles) only believe when they see Christ return at Armageddon will continue alive into the Millennium as the earthly people.

They Knew Him Not

Dave Hunt

Any person of ordinary intelligence, anywhere and at any time, can know that God exists as the Creator of the universe (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-20, etc.). Such a person also has a conscience in which God has written His moral law (Rom 2:14-16), knows that he or she has broken this law many times, and realizes that there must be judgment from God as a result. When the gospel is preached, the sinner knows by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit that this is the truth and is the only means of escape from the wrath to come.

There are, however, many persons who resist the witness of creation and of conscience. We should be prepared to reason with them. God offers to all: "Come now, and let us reason together...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow..." (Is 1:18). We must be "ready *always* to give an answer to *every man* that asketh...a *reason* of the hope that is in [us] with meekness and fear [of the Lord]..." (1 Pt 3:15).

We give skeptics valid reasons why we accept the Bible as God's Word by faith—but it is not a blind faith. As Peter indicates, there are reasons for our faith. There are many proofs for the Bible without which we could not demonstrate to unbelievers that it is infallible. Not that we can understand everything Scripture says. That God is the I AM (Ex 3:14), for example, without beginning or end (Ps 90:2; 103:17; 106:48) who created the universe out of nothing (Heb 11:3) is more than our finite minds can understand, but we know it *must* be.

Everything in the Bible that we are able to verify (historically, scientifically, prophetically, etc.) has proved to be true. It is therefore reasonable to believe whatever else the Bible says that we cannot verify. Statements that are beyond our comprehension and thus unverifiable include that God is a Spirit (Jn 4:24), that man is made in His moral and spiritual image (Gn 1:26,27) and is body, soul, and spirit (1 Thes 5:23), that Christ will rapture us from earth to heaven as promised (Jn 14:3; 1 Thes 4:13-18), and that there is a final judgment and a lake of fire—where the damned will be eternally.

As we have often pointed out, prophecy is the great proof that God exists, that the Bible is His Word, and that Christ is His Son and man's only Savior. Prophecies

were given to indisputably identify the Messiah. Proof does not, however, guarantee faith. There must be a willing heart. In spite of hundreds of prophecies proving that Jesus was the Messiah, the Jews rejected Him and remain largely in unbelief today.

We've often given many proofs that the Bible is true. We have not emphasized, however, that, with few exceptions, Scripture honestly reveals the flaws and sins of the best saints—even when such facts could have been avoided. Such honesty gives the ring of truth to Scripture. One of the strangest accounts concerns the disciples' unbelief in the face of Christ's resurrection. In fact, their skepticism and apparent unwillingness to believe, even when Christ met them face to face, seems so unlikely that no fiction writer would have dared to portray it.

Christ indicts His disciples with "hardness of heart" (Mk 16:14). They did not believe, even when Christ appeared to

mother's womb" (Lk 1:15)—expected the Messiah to set up His kingdom when He first came to Israel. Christ's crucifixion shattered their faith. How could He have been the promised Messiah?

Yet numerous prophecies made it clear that the Messiah's first coming would be as the Lamb of God to be crucified: "they pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps 22:16); "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (Zec 12:10). The prophets declared that He would be "despised and rejected... wounded for our transgressions... taken from prison and from judgment... cut off out of the land of the living... his grave [would be] with the wicked" (Is 53:3,5,8,9) and that He would rise again the third day (Ps 16:10; Jn 2:19; Mt 12:39,40).

Moreover, they also had to ignore the many times Christ himself had told them plainly that He was going to be crucified and rise from the dead the third day.

After Christ's resurrection, the angels at the tomb reminded the women: "Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words" (Lk 24:6-8). We do not have the record of every time the Lord declared this to His disciples, but it must have been more often than the recorded instances.

At least seven different occasions on which He made His death and resurrection plain to His disciples are recorded in the Gospels: (Mt 16:21; 17:22,23; 20:17-19; Mk 8:31,32; 9:31,32; Lk 13:32,33; Jn 12:32-34). Here are some examples: "For he taught his disciples, and said...the Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and...he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him" (Mk 9:31,32); "Behold...all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again" (Lk 18:31-33); "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly" (Mk 8:31,32; Lk 9:22).

Sometimes Christ veiled His speech: "There came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart

The heavens declare the glory of God...There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

Psalm 19:1,3

them (Lk 24:36-38). Yet one of the thieves crucified with Christ believed in His resurrection, or he would not have asked, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Lk 23:42).

The disciples' doubts were without excuse in view of the many Messianic prophecies. That they could be so blind to the Scripture, even after being taught personally by Christ over several years, should cause us to re-examine ourselves lest we be guilty of the same.

There is a similar rejection of truth today, even among those who claim to be Christians. Many who say they are "born again" (including seminary professors and pastors) are not even saved. A December 2003 Barna poll revealed that 35 percent of those who claimed to be "born again" didn't believe Christ rose from the dead; 26 percent said all religions are equal; and 50 percent said good works would get a person to heaven.

All of the disciples as well as the rabbis—and even John the Baptist ("Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" - Lk 7:19-20), who was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his

hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected...for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” (Lk 13:31-33). Obviously, He was referring to His death and resurrection.

Another time, the Pharisees asked, “What sign shewest thou unto us...? Jesus answered...Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said” (Jn 2:18-22).

The rabbis knew what Christ meant. Yet they sought false witnesses to twist His words at His trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin: “At the last...two false witnesses...said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days” (Mt 26:60,61). They knew, however, that He referred to His resurrection: “Now the next day...the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first” (Mt 27:62-64).

The disciples’ unbelief is itself unbelievable. Jesus spoke at length with two followers on the road to Emmaus, yet they knew Him not. Yes, it says that Christ appeared “in another form” to them. That phrase, however, does not mean that He disguised Himself. It refers rather to the disciples’ unbelief that blinded them. Luke explains: “But their eyes were holden that they should not know him” (Lk 24:16).

That they knew Him not didn’t mean that He was unrecognizable but that He was the last person they expected to see. Had they known the Scriptures, they would have been certain that He had resurrected. For that ignorance, Christ rebuked them sharply, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning him-

self” (Lk 24:25-27). Would He reprimand us as well for our ignorance of “all that the prophets have spoken”?

What a Bible study these two experienced as they walked with this amazing stranger! Yet having learned the prophecies concerning the Messiah from the Lord himself, they still knew Him not! Faith is a matter of the heart, and they were “slow of heart to believe...” We need to ask the Lord to search our own hearts to be certain that we, too, are not blinded in certain areas by unbelief.

At supper, “their eyes were [at last] opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Lk 24:31,32). Faith, though inexcusably slow, came at last through the scriptures Christ had revealed.

Not to know the Lord Jesus Christ

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days...

Acts 1:3

carries serious consequences. It means a false view of the Savior and thus a false hope of salvation. We must believe in the true Christ of God if we are to have eternal life and be in the Father’s house of many mansions for eternity. As Christ declared in His high-priestly prayer to His Father, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Jn 17:3).

He said to the rabbis, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (Jn 5:39,40). He still extends the offer to all, “Come unto me...and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28).

Though so grateful to Christ for casting out of her “seven devils” (Mk 16:9), Mary Magdalene remained ignorant of prophecy and blind to Christ’s many assurances that He would rise from the dead. In spite of Christ appearing and speaking to her beside His empty tomb, she didn’t recognize Him because she was blinded by a needless grief caused by unbelief: “She turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepst thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her [with mild reproof], Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith...go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father...” (Jn 20:14-17).

Mary Magdalene “went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not” (Mk 16:9-11). The two disciples with whom he walked to Emmaus rushed back to Jerusalem “and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart...” (12-14).

The key to our lives as Christians today is how clearly we “see” by faith the resurrected Christ. Those who saw Him physically during His time on earth did not necessarily have an advantage over us. Remember Christ’s words: “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (Jn 20:29).

Yes, “Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face” (1 Cor 13:12). Then at last, “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2). Nevertheless, our desire even now should be to see Him ever more clearly with the eyes of faith. As we behold Him, we become more and more like Him.

David, who only had a fraction of the scriptures we have, nevertheless “fore-saw the Lord always before [his] face” (Ps 16:8; Acts 2:25), “behold[ing] the beauty of the LORD” (Ps 27:4). Surely we can do the same: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18).

Like David, Paul’s passion was to “know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death...[to] press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:10-14). What better passion could we embrace for the year 2005, or for whatever portion thereof the Lord will grant us?

TBC

Quotable

America's mainline Protestant churches are...turning their political policy-making over to fringe leftists whose deepest instinct is to blame America and pummel Israel...The latest disgrace is the Presbyterian Church's...ending [its] investment in multinational companies that the church believes [cause] the sufferings of the Palestinian people [by dealing with Israel]...Apparently they cast a stern moral glance around the world, look for possible abuses in China, North Korea, and Iran, and seeing [none]...focus once again on Israel...The United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), plus the reliably leftist National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches [during] 2000 to 2003 [issued] 197 human-rights criticisms...37 percent were aimed at Israel and 32 percent at the United States...The fixation on Israel left little time and inclination...to notice the most dangerous violations of human rights around the world. Not one nation bordering Israel was criticized by a single mainline church...No criticisms at all were leveled at China, Libya, Syria, or North Korea.

America is [seen] as a malignant force in the world, while Israel is seen as nothing more than a dangerous colonial implant of the West... Anti-Americanism is an old story in the mainline church bureaucracies. During the 1970s and 1980s, these churches generally ignored human-rights abuses in the Soviet Union and focused instead on the United States as the primary source of abuse....

John Leo, U.S. News & World Report, 10/18/04, p 81

Q&A

Question: James White, on his Alpha & Omega Ministries web page, said that you had "repeatedly agreed in the past" to a "live debate" with him but have gone back on your word and now refuse. What do you have to say?

Answer: "Repeatedly agreed in the past" to an oral debate? When? He refers to speaking to me at my book table at a conference just after publication of *What Love Is This?* We did indeed agree to a debate. Later, we agreed to do the debate in a book. Since that book was published, I never agreed to an additional debate. It would be redundant. I don't know what that would accomplish.

White continues to claim (as on our recent radio discussion) that I agreed to an oral debate and went back on my word. In fact, the only references to an oral debate have been one-sided false statements by White, claiming that I agreed to one.

Just after the first edition of *What Love Is This?* was printed, White put on his website an open letter in response. Here is part of my reply from our website: "James, you and I have agreed on the phone today to put this debate in writing in the form of a book...That will allow the arguments to be studied more carefully by readers than is possible in oral debates...In the book we will have the opportunity to lay out our opposing views clearly and concisely from the scriptures so that readers can weigh them carefully."

The debate in book form is far more useful than an oral one. This I agreed to, and it was done. A written debate gives both parties time to think clearly and to express their views to the very best of their ability. Readers can go at their own pace, back and forth between the arguments, carefully and calmly. James and I each took several months to express our views as clearly as we could. I am happy with the book and see no value in an additional oral debate.

Question: Rick Warren hypes different "venues" for different styles of worship and music in his church in order to reach and accommodate people with differing tastes. He claims to take this from the NIV translation of Acts 5:42, which refers to "temple courts." I couldn't find this in any other Bible. Is he reaching a bit here?

Answer: I do not question Warren's Christian sincerity. Sadly, however, in this instance (as throughout his book), he has misapplied Scripture. As you noted, one of his basic teachings involves "Multiple Venues," by which he means a number of different facilities in the same church, where a variety of styles of music and worship can be offered in order to appeal to people with different tastes. The emphasis thus unavoidably becomes pleasing the audience rather than pleasing the One whom they desire to worship.

In his attempt to support this practice from the Bible, Warren is forced into some serious errors. For example, he declares: "On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the Word of the Lord" (Acts 13:44 - NIV).⁷ We want to gather all South Orange County together to hear

the Word of the Lord. How do we get that many people gathered together? The same way they did in the New Testament: by using Multiple Venues."

But, Paul *never* used multiple venues to attract people by offering varied styles of music and worship in different places, as Warren does at Saddleback. Nor did the early church ever use this practice upon which Warren now places such emphasis. Yet the early church grew faster with new converts and edification than Saddleback—a fact that Rick is frank to admit.

Warren turns to Acts 13 for support. Yet this huge crowd came together not for the music that was offered (there was none) but to hear what Paul, empowered by the Holy Spirit, had to say in his preaching—and they all gathered together in one place (one "venue"), not in many. There weren't different styles of music and worship for those with differing tastes. Neither this passage nor any other portion of Scripture can be used to support such a practice.

Rick believes different venues breed success. Such misuse of God's Word ought to cause grave concern among God-fearing church leaders. And part of this pattern is the fact that to find biblical support for his teachings, Warren must draw from a wide variety of alleged translations and paraphrases, some of which (like *The Message*) we have documented to be perversions that actually change the meaning of Scripture in many places!

As you note, Warren quotes "temple courts" from the NIV. This is the *only* translation or paraphrase (out of dozens available) that refers to "court" or "courts" in this verse. In contrast to the NIV, all other translations or even paraphrases (including his favorite, *The Message*) simply say, "temple." Why use a "translation" that is so clearly wrong that it isn't supported by *any* other?

There is nothing in the Greek from which the NIV could translate "courts." No wonder that word is found in *no other* translation! Yet Rick uses this erroneous translation and declares: "Circle the letter 's' at the end of 'temple courts.'" But the word "courts" with the letter "s" is *not* in the Greek and should not be in *any* translation! Yet upon this error rests the "temple courts of Jerusalem" building campaign that culminated on Thanksgiving with so many millions of dollars contributed for new construction at Saddleback.

Furthermore, the Scripture is clear that the disciples did not practice different venues at the temple, but "were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1).

Peter preached that Pentecost sermon in which 3,000 (Acts 2:41) were saved. Quite clearly, he preached to this huge crowd in one place. And far from various musical styles being the means of attraction, it was the miracle of the disciples speaking in languages they had never learned that drew the crowd. As far as we know, there was no music at all, much less a variety to attract people with different tastes, as is being practiced now at Saddleback.

Yes, there were four courts in Herod's temple: the Holy Place was called the "court of the priests," there was the court of men, the court of women, and the court of Gentiles. But the divisions were to separate different classes of people, *not to separate different "styles of music and worship," as Warren implies, in order to support what he does at Saddleback!* Indeed, there would be no way for Jews to teach in the Gentiles' court or for men to teach in the women's court or for any of the disciples to gather in the priests' court. Furthermore, the separation of priests from ordinary people, of men from women and Jews from Gentiles would contradict the "unity of faith" that Warren is trying to achieve and certainly would not fit into his "venues" program!

In attempting to promote a practice he finds successful, Warren is misleading his congregation and readers. Many other examples could be given, such as on pages 9 and 10 of *A Purpose Driven Life*, where his enthusiasm for *40 Days* causes him to make unbiblical assertions. He claims "David was transformed by Goliath's forty-day challenge." In fact, David was present only *one* day—the *forty days* of challenge were over when he arrived and had no effect upon him. Rick says, "the spies were transformed by *forty days* in the Promised Land." In fact, ten rebelled and *forty days* had no significance.

Rick further says, "Jesus was empowered by *forty days* in the wilderness." Hardly! Rather than teaching from the Bible, Warren seems prone to manipulate it to support his latest ideas.

The book's success has given Warren numerous media interviews, including some on national television. Sadly, he fails to present a clear gospel to these huge audiences that the Lord has given him. One would have to question whether Rick is fulfilling the purpose for which God has given him such opportunities.

Finally, in conjunction with his teaching that God has endowed every person with a special talent and has a unique purpose for their lives (which he claims can be discovered by following his "Forty

Days of Purpose" program), Warren cites, "We should make plans—counting on God to direct us" (Prv 16:9 – *TLB*). But *The Living Bible* actually contradicts what God said. Here is the real Bible: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." To plan one's future life is contrasted with God's direction of a step at a time. Furthermore, *never* does the Bible say that we should make our own plans and "count on God to direct us." How can He direct us if we have already made our own plans? It is such planning on our own that this verse actually warns against.

Question: There are three things that I'm not quite settled on: 1) Are the Arabs truly descendants of Ishmael; 2) Though "Allah" is said to be another name for God, it seems that it would be clearer to use the word "Allah" in speaking about the Muslim god, and if speaking of the biblical God to simply use "God"; 3) Why does the Qur'an use the third person plural, "we," instead of I, when Allah is speaking? Any information you can give me on these issues will be greatly appreciated.

Answer: The Arabs have Ishmaelite blood in them, but they are not of pure descent from Ishmael (as Jews are from Isaac and Jacob). The descendants of Ishmael were a nomadic people prone to take wives of those with whom they traded. They populated a broad region across North Africa, eventually settling in the Arabian Peninsula where they became known as Arabs. They intermarried with the Midianites so that sometimes the designations "Midianites" and "Ishmaelites" are used interchangeably (Jgs 8:1,12,22,24). They also intermarried with Esau's Edomite descendants (Gn 28:9), who intermarried with the Hittites (Gn 26:34,35).

After Islam became the official Arab religion, imposed by the sword, there was a further dilution of Ishmaelite blood through Arabs taking to themselves wives from the many nations they conquered and enslaved in the Muslim conquest from France to China. Nevertheless, Arabs are looked upon generally as the descendants of Ishmael.

Allah is not just "another name for God"! (See Q&A in TBC for April & July 2003, etc.) Allah is a contraction of *al-ilah*, meaning "the chief god." There were more than 300 gods in the idol temple in Mecca, known as the Ka'aba. Allah was the chief god, the god of the Quraish tribe, the tribe that controlled Mecca and made a fortune from the pilgrims who came to visit their

various gods in the Ka'aba.

Yes, it would be proper to use "Allah" when speaking of the god of Islam. You may use "God" for the God of the Bible. But "Allah" is the *name* of a specific god, whereas "God" is not the name but a generic term. His name is Yahweh, as He declared to Moses (Ex 3:14-16). (See Index to Reprints).

As for why the Qur'an uses the third person plural when Allah is speaking, I have asked Muslims and have never received an explanation. Since the Qur'an is very explicit that Allah is a single entity, this is simply one more contradiction to add to the many others in that book.

Consumer Christianity Part I

T. A. McMahon

What do I mean by consumer Christianity? Generally, it is any attempt to build the kingdom of God or build up the individual Christian (or attract the potential convert to Christianity) by means and methods that appeal to the flesh, i.e., the deceitful and self-serving heart of man. It had its beginning in the Garden of Eden when Satan manipulated Eve into disobeying God while believing she was enriching herself (Gn 3:1-6).

More specifically related to what's taking place today, consumer Christianity is an endeavor to help Christian churches grow in size and become more effective through the application of business principles, marketing strategies, and management concepts. It characterizes the most popular venture in Christendom today, which should seem rather odd, if not disturbing, to anyone who has an understanding of both "consumerism" and "Christianity." Why? Because these terms are antagonistic to one another.

Consumerism in the business sense is a concept based upon customer satisfaction, which is the key to any successful commercial enterprise. The product or service must be tailored to the wants and perceived needs of the customer, or there is no sustainable profit. The consumer rules, because where there is no customer, there is no profit and, therefore, no business. God rules in biblical Christianity. It is His revelation to humanity regarding "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3). Simply put, biblical Christianity encompasses all that is necessary for mankind to know and do in order to be reconciled to Him, to please Him daily, and to live with Him for all eternity. It is not a business endeavor and, in fact, has no relationship to business or its associated marketing concepts.

Any attempt to enhance the practice of biblical Christianity by means of business principles is, at best, adding futile methodologies to God's Word. At worst, such an attempt rejects the sufficiency of the Scriptures in favor of works of the flesh, quenches the Holy Spirit, and subjects one to the deceptions of, the service of, and in the end, the bondage of the god of this world. In any case, it leads to spiritual destruction in the church and

has eternal consequences.

Consumer Christianity is at the heart of the church-growth movement, and its deadly effect is found among all denominations (as well as pseudo-Christian cults). Many evangelical churches have committed themselves wholeheartedly to a marketing approach aimed primarily at attracting the lost, who are viewed as potential customers. As unbelievers attend the church and mix with new and long-standing members, the consumer concept unavoidably spreads to the entire congregation. This inevitably affects the preaching, music, Sunday School programs, etc., which in turn produces a biblical shallowness throughout the congregation.

More often than not, the business approach has been successful in adding numbers to a church. Tens of thousands of pastors across the U.S., and thousands more internationally, have been influenced by high-profile ministries and have put to use their various marketing methodologies for soul-winning and church growth.

**Blessed is the man that walketh not
in the counsel of the ungodly, nor
standeth in the way of sinners, nor
sitteth in the seat of the scornful.**

—*Psalm 1:1*

Is that the biblical way to win souls and effect growth in the church?

To some biblical Christians the answer is an obvious "No!" But to increasing numbers who also claim to hold to the Bible as their authoritative and all-sufficient source of God's truth, "No" has given way to "Possibly...Perhaps..." or "Let's be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water!" Well, let's strain the water to see if there is indeed a baby to rescue.

Is consumerism supported by the Scriptures? Did God shape His Gospel to gratify the worldly desires of humanity? Are there some things in the Bible that should be strategically avoided in order not to put off "potential" believers? Does God's Word reflect a concern that people might take their "business" elsewhere if their felt needs aren't being met? Does the Bible tell us to make the truth more acceptable by feeding it to the lost in diluted or entertaining forms? And is it really the gospel that saves if it's altered to cater to non-Christians? If any believer even remotely thinks so, I fear that the thinking of the world has grievously influenced his

understanding of the Bible.

Certainly, pastors ought to know better, yet in most cases where consumerism has infected a church, they have been instrumental in implementing it. The pastors to whom I am referring here, and am most concerned about, are those who consider themselves to be biblical, who sincerely want to see souls saved, and who honestly want to fulfill their calling and ministry in a way that is pleasing to God. How could such a shepherd of the sheep be drawn into consumer Christianity?

The process often develops subtly. Let's say a pastor loves his church members and wants them to be happy. He also wants them to grow spiritually, and he is always looking for ways for new sheep to be added to his flock. When conflicts arise or growth expectations are not realized, solutions to such problems are often sought from others who have been seemingly successful regarding those issues. The recommended remedies almost always involve some form of accommodation.

For example, a very common church conflict today is that of different tastes in music, which is usually resolved by establishing separate services—one with traditional hymns and one featuring contemporary songs. As that alteration seems to satisfy most members, many pastors are encouraged to add more souls to their church by combining the attraction of contemporary music with seeker-sensitive (appealing and non-threatening) messages presented in a convenient and casual Saturday evening service. Innovative programs are then formulated to sustain the interest of would-be converts and motivate the rarely active church members, with particular emphasis on entertaining activities to attract the youth and keep them coming.

Pastors tell me that they reluctantly glean ideas from the world in order to compete with the world that they might reach the lost in order to save them from the world. They're aware of the irony of that approach but argue that it's the only way to avoid preaching to empty pews. The preaching, by the way, is often shortened and supplemented by visuals, skits, and music productions.

This is a path that, though seemingly harmless at first, leads to the broad road of consumer Christianity. Although we empathize with pastors who feel compelled (some even coerced by church politics) to go down that thoroughfare, it is paved with biblical compromises and headed for a spiritual dead end.

This church-growth enterprise is hardly new to Christianity. It is a chronicle of doing

things man's way rather than God's way. Fourth century Emperor Constantine has yet to be equaled in successful strategies for "growing the church." He professed to have become a Christian and induced half of the Roman Empire to do likewise. This era of compromises made by the Emperor (the self-appointed "Vicar of Christ"/"Bishop of bishops") in order to draw in new converts is characterized by Will Durant in *The Story of Civilization* as a time in which "the world converted Christianity."¹ Another historian writes, "Far from being a source of improvement [over the persecution the Christians previously suffered], this [political] alliance was a source of 'greater danger and temptation'...[I]ndiscriminately filling the churches [with pagans]...simply washed away the clear moral landmarks that separated the 'church' from the 'world.'"²

One millennium later, Martin "Luther saw and felt [religious] Rome utterly abandoned to money, luxury, and kindred evils," writes Edwin Booth. "He was stunned and unable to understand it."³ Nevertheless, he and others did something about it. The clarion call of the Reformation was "*Sola Scriptura!*" and, although "Scripture alone" wasn't followed entirely, God's Word and His way were restored as the authority and rule of life for millions deceived by the devastating compromise that became the Roman Catholic Church.

Consumer Christianity has never been a one-way affair. It takes both a deal maker and a deal taker. Tetzel, the sixteenth-century Dominican monk and the "P.T. Barnum" of the sale of Indulgences, was a master manipulator. Even so, his job was made all the easier by "indulging" the self-serving natures of his Catholic customers. Both rich and poor alike were willing to pay anything to avoid the flames of Hell and Purgatory.

Protestantism has had its own share of both spiritual rip-off artists and consumers ripe for the picking. Whereas Tetzel's "fund raising" was instrumental in building St. Peter's in Rome, the "health and prosperity" evangelists of the twentieth century (many still going strong today) helped build Trinity Broadcasting Network into the largest religious television network in the world. By distorting and turning the biblical doctrine of faith into a power anyone can use to obtain wealth and healing, these con men and women have personally amassed fortunes at the expense of the biblically feeble and illiterate, as well as from those "...whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in

their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil 3:19).

During the last fifty years, those most susceptible to the schemes of religious charlatans were professing Christians who had an affinity for spiritual *experiences* rather than *sound doctrine*. They were usually found among the Pentecostals and Charismatics. Most thoughtful, doctrine-conscious Christians seemed to be immune to the "seed faith" come-ons of an Oral Roberts or the blasphemous "Holy Spirit" power displays of a Benny Hinn, two leaders among a host of other "signs and wonders" promoters.

However, spiritual gullibility has found fertile soil—or, more pointedly, a widening swamp—among those who traditionally have fostered biblical discernment. Although the seductive methodologies are slightly different, the basis for an effective spiritual deception is the same: no Christians, evangelical or otherwise, are

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

—1 John 2:17

impervious to "...all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life..." (1 Jn 2:16). Furthermore, the only safeguard against such deception—the reading of and obedience to the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit—is being systematically diluted throughout the evangelical church.

Church history has demonstrated the necessity of adhering to God's Word; when that takes place, holiness and fruitfulness follow. When biblical Christianity is adulterated (by adding the methods of men) or abandoned altogether, man's religious distortions prevail, leading the professing church into spiritual anemia and blindness: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prv 14:12). There is also a correlation between the depth of a church's reliance upon the Scriptures and its acceptance of heretical beliefs and practices. As a church reaches a shallow state with regard to biblical understanding, the ability of its members to discern false teaching becomes practically impossible.

Consumer Christianity's most deadly effect is what it does to the presentation of the gospel of salvation, the only hope

a person has to be reconciled to God. It is nearly always a subtle sales pitch featuring all the wonderful things God has for mankind: He loves them so much and desires to have them spend eternity with Him, and they are significant and of infinite worth. This then becomes the reason for Christ's sacrifice on the cross. That mixture of truths and self-indulging distortions is followed by a brief "sinner's prayer" being repeated by those who were persuaded by the enticing offer. This method has become so commonplace that it's difficult for some Christians to recognize any problem, let alone realize how misleading it is with regard to a person truly being saved.

How so? Let's start with someone who is genuinely saved and work backwards. Everyone who is born again by the Spirit of God has a new heart, one filled with God's love, for Him and for others, as well as for His teachings. He or she is a new creation, and although not perfect in these things, there resides within that person a heart that desires to please God rather than self.

One explicit example of this is found in Luke 7:36-50, involving the woman of sinful reputation who entered the home of Simon the Pharisee, where Jesus was invited to dine. She washed His feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and kissed them repeatedly. Jesus declared of her that she loved much because she was forgiven much.

These passages teach how essential *conviction of sin* is in coming to Christ. The self-righteous and self-serving Pharisee had little or no conviction of sin and therefore sought no forgiveness. The woman, on the other hand, gave no thought to herself or the disdain with which she was regarded by the dinner guests. Her thankfulness that Jesus would and did cleanse her of her sins compelled her to die to self and live for Him.

The gospel according to consumer Christianity, on the other hand, must make its appeal *to self*, emphasizing things (both true and distorted) that meet the felt needs of the lost. This seriously restricts all but a hint of any biblical doctrines that would bring about conviction of sin. What's the problem? Jesus came to save sinners, not consumers.

In the next newsletter, we will further examine how some of today's consumer-oriented concepts and methods are taking hold in the evangelical church while perverting long-established teachings and practices based on the Word of God. TBC

Quotable

The world is perishing, the church is failing, Christ's cause is suffering, Christ is grieving on account of the lack of wholehearted Christians bearing much fruit. [Are] you ready to be His disciple in His own meaning of the word...? Let our desire be nothing less than perfect cleansing, unbroken abiding, closest communion, abundant fruitfulness—*true* branches of the true Vine.

Andrew Murray, The True Vine, p. 75

Leading a man to Christ is only the start of the process: we must ensure that the man is grounded in Scripture, loved, and encouraged in the faith...a major part of spiritual growth is precisely a good grasp of doctrine. Without it you will be swayed and confused by each new idea...But more than this, sound doctrine is a splendid avenue to a deeper knowledge of God himself, for doctrine concerns the nature and purpose of God...

George Verwer (founder of Operation Mobilization), No Turning Back, p. 59

**From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices, weakenings,
Not thus are spirits fortified,
Not this way went the Crucified.
From all that dims Thy Calvary,
O Lamb of God, deliver me....
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.**

Amy Carmichael

Q&A

Question: President Bush recently said of someone who had just died, "May God rest his soul." What did he mean?

Answer: The only rest for the dead is in heaven—and whether one will be there or not is determined prior to death. If the person is not in heaven, he will never be at rest, and it is too late to ask God to "rest his soul"! If he is in heaven, then it is an insult to ask God, who has given him rest, to rest his soul. Maybe this is the politically correct thing to say, but it isn't biblically correct.

Question: We have a rare difference of opinion concerning your assertion that Old Testament saints are a part of the Church resurrected at the time of the Rapture. Certainly, they are saved by faith alone in the shed blood of Christ.... However, they are, as John

the Baptist described himself, "friends of the Bridegroom" (John 3:29). The Church, Christ's Bride, was born on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). At the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, He will have many "friends" in attendance.

Answer: I appreciate your position, but there are serious problems with it. Old Testament saints could only be resurrected at the Rapture:

1) We know that their souls and spirits were in "Abraham's bosom" (Lk 16:22), or "paradise" (Lk 23:43), until Christ took them to heaven (Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8; Heb 6:20). They will still be there when Christ resurrects the dead saints at the Rapture. I find no basis for thinking that Christ will leave their souls and spirits unclothed in heaven (2 Cor 5:1-9) and not bring them with Him to rejoin their resurrected bodies. The Bible makes no such distinction between Old and New Testament saints. At the Rapture, "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thes 4:14). I can't imagine that Abraham, who, Christ said, "rejoiced to see my day...and was glad" (Jn 8:56), or John the Baptist, who declared Him to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29), did not die with faith in Christ, looking forward to redemption through Him.

2) Thus they must be among "them which sleep in Jesus," whose bodies Christ will resurrect at the Rapture. If not, they would never be resurrected, because the only other persons who are resurrected are those who died as martyrs at the hands of Antichrist (Rv 20:5,6).

3) The only time the bodies of those whose souls and spirits are now in heaven could be resurrected is at the Rapture of the church, caught up to heaven with them. Then why wouldn't they be part of the church?

I don't think that John's describing himself as the friend of the bridegroom was intended to distinguish between himself and the church, but between him and Christ. As for "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven/God" being greater than John the Baptist (Mt 11:11; Lk 7:27, 28), surely that can't mean that John (and the other prophets) are not in the kingdom of heaven/God. Rather, it refers to the difference between Old Testament prophets and saints (while they lived upon earth) upon whom the Holy Spirit came but could also leave—and the simplest believer since the Cross, who is permanently indwelt with and empowered by the Holy Spirit and Christ.

Question: In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren tells us that "when the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation to evangelism....He said in essence, "The details of my return are none of your business. What is your business is the mission I've given you. Focus on that...! What we do know for sure is this: Jesus will not return until everyone God wants to hear the Good News has heard it...(Matthew 24:14). If you want Jesus to come back sooner, focus on fulfilling your mission, not figuring out prophecy" (pp 285-6). Warren seems to avoid the subject of prophecy and biblical teaching concerning the last days. Do you get this impression?

Answer: It seems so. He misapplies Scripture in a number of ways to support his thesis. First of all, Matthew 24:14 doesn't say (as Rick implies) that the Rapture cannot occur until "everyone God wants to hear the Good News has heard it" [a Calvinist idea]. It says, as he quotes, "Then the end will come"—and surely the Rapture is not "the end" (1 Cor 15:24-28). So it isn't true that we can hasten the Rapture by preaching the gospel more diligently, though we should. Of course, "Speculating on the exact timing of Christ's return is futile...." But Rick uses that true statement to seemingly do away with all prophetic teaching—which certainly involves much more than the Rapture, and never involves "the exact timing" thereof.

He supports his downgrading of prophecy with Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." It was 33 verses earlier, however, that the disciples asked Christ what would be the signs of His future coming, the destruction of the temple, and the end of the world. Neither on this occasion nor at any other time did Christ "switch the conversation" from prophecy to evangelism. In fact, Christ responds to the disciples' questions with a *lengthy teaching on prophecy* that involves this entire chapter and the next! Prophecy is the major emphasis of the Bible.

It seems that the Lord has greatly blessed and used Rick Warren, and no doubt he is sincere. But instead of allowing the Bible to teach him and his followers, he often imposes upon it his own ideas. We hope that he will reconsider and turn from such tactics. To that end, we sent him a copy of this Q&A as proposed before it was published, so that

he could inform us of any misconceptions we may have and could make the proper corrections if any were needed. (We never received a response.)

Question [representative of several]: In the newest edition of *What Love is This?* you make a very interesting claim on page 264: “The Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as comments from early church writers, indicate that the first 15 chapters of Acts were probably written first in Hebrew. The Greek would be a translation. Some scholars claim that going back to a ‘redacted Hebrew’ version, based upon word-for-word Greek-Hebrew equivalents, would render Acts 13:48 more like ‘as many as submitted to, needed, or wanted salvation, were saved.’” I’d like to know where the Dead Sea Scrolls refer to the Book of Acts, and which early church writers and conservative Christian scholars were of the opinion you express.

Answer: I offer no footnotes for this brief paragraph because the source or sources are not important. The phrases, “were probably written” and “some scholars claim,” show that I am not presenting my own opinion gathered from personal research. I am only stating (as something of possible interest for anyone who may wish to pursue it further) that certain people believe this idea. My argument, however, is in no way dependent upon such opinions.

Yet James White treats this paragraph as of major importance and has even attempted to recruit critics to confront me about this in my meetings. Certainly, any basis for the idea that the first 15 chapters of Acts were originally written in Hebrew is tenuous at best—but that doesn’t matter. The fact that some people (including some scholars) believe this to be the case is all that I stated, but it is clearly not relevant to my arguments. It was not wise to include this brief speculative statement and it will be deleted from the next printing.

The three pages I devote to Acts 13:48 offer many solid reasons for rejecting this verse as evidence that certain persons are predestined to salvation and the rest of mankind is predestined to eternal torment. A multitude of scriptures refute this Calvinist theory. None of the many reasons I put forth for my understanding of this passage rests in even the remotest sense upon the opinion of certain persons that the first 15 chapters of Acts may have been originally written in Hebrew.

Thus it is rather sad that James White has spent so much time refuting a casual statement upon which I place no essential importance, while avoiding the major scriptures and arguments I set forth. This is a continuation of the same *modus operandi* to which I called attention in my closing argument in our co-authored book, *Debating Calvinism*:

White relies on a few passages whose interpretation is arguable. His strongest case that God predestined only an elect to salvation comes from Acts 13:48 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13. Yet his interpretation does not fit God’s character as so clearly established throughout all of Scripture.

Hundreds of scriptures (I have cited scores of them) declare in the clearest terms that God loves and desires the salvation of all. Some of these White explains away by interpreting “world” as “elect,” and “all men” as “all *classes* of men.” “Whosoever” suffers a similar fate—along with God’s love. But dozens of scriptures to which I called his attention won’t allow such mishandling, so he didn’t respond to them in this debate—nor did he refer to them in *The Potter’s Freedom*.

White claims to go by all of Scripture, but he repeatedly cites the same few texts....Pointing to God’s sovereignty as justification for His predestination of multitudes to damnation whom He *could* save, White refuses to consider the hundreds of scriptures in which God pleads with Israel and all mankind to repent and turn to Him.

How can God be sincere in pleading with and offering salvation to those whom He has from eternity predestined to eternal torment? Spurgeon, whom I am accused of misunderstanding and misquoting, said, “Now, was God sincere...? [U]ndoubtedly....He sent his prophets, he entreated the people of Israel to lay hold on spiritual things, but they would not....”

White selectively offers Paul’s quotation of Psalm 14 in Romans 3, that none seek after God, as proof of man’s *inability* to seek God. Yet he sidesteps scores of exhortations for men to seek God, assurances that if they sincerely seek they will find Him, and the many examples of those who have sought and found.

White has no rebuttal for Christ’s exhortation to “strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Lk 13:24), for the prodigal’s repentant “I will arise and go to my father” (Lk 15:18), for good ground being an “honest and good heart” (Lk 8:15), for faith being attributed to individuals (Mt 9:22; 15:28; Mk 10:52; Lk 7:50; 17:18, etc.), etc.

Non-Calvinists can assure all men, “God loves *you*, Christ died for *your* sins.” We know that all are saved eternally

who believe His promise to “whosoever will”!

Years ago, White accused me of maligning Calvin by reporting his un-Christian conduct in Geneva and said he would refute such “calumnies.” I’m still waiting, as I am for any Calvinist to explain how God could be said to love those whom He *could have saved* but for whom the Father didn’t even send the Son to die.

Endnotes

- 1 Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (Simon and Schuster, 1950), Vol. III, 657.
- 2 Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (University of California Press, 1967), 213.
- 3 Edwin P. Booth, *Martin Luther: the Great Reformer* (Barbour Publishing, Inc., Urichsville, Ohio).

Consumer Christianity Part II

T. A. McMahan

Consumerism was introduced to humanity in the Garden of Eden. Satan had a self-serving concept that he wanted to sell to a potential customer who had no need—one who, living in a perfect environment, had it all, materially and spiritually. His strategy (comparable to the prevailing methods of 21st-century marketing) was to create a desire where no real need existed, convincing Eve not only that she needed something more but that what she had was somewhat deficient. Moreover, in an effort to beat the Competition, Satan began his pitch by sowing doubt regarding God’s command and its resulting penalty for disobedience.

By calling God a liar, the adversary no doubt rattled Eve’s trust in Him: “And he said unto the woman, Yea, *hath God said*, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?...And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.” Then, in the wake of further maligning the Lord’s character, came the irresistible “do it for you” sales pitch: “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gn 3:1,4,5).

Consumerism, being all about profit, must include a profit-oriented buyer as well as seller. Eve certainly had her own desires stirred, for without them, no sale could have been made: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Gn 3:6). Thus, the cry of the soul of consumerism, “How will it profit me?” birthed itself in Adam and Eve and all their descendants.

Consumer Christianity is a mentality or methodology that attempts to enrich Christians both temporally and spiritually, as well as to attract converts to the faith, through ways and means that are true neither to the Word of God nor the work of the Holy Spirit. Whether introduced subtly or overtly, wittingly or unwittingly, it always involves what appeals to humanity’s fallen nature. Furthermore, consumer Christianity ultimately indulges and glorifies self rather than God.

History is replete with instances of man’s consumerism and selfism. Let’s briefly survey the history of God’s chosen people, the Jews (Dt 14:2), and His church (Ti 2:14), for a few such examples by those who should have known better. Sarai, Abram’s wife, attempted to solve her childless circumstance by coming up with *her own way* to have the son that God had promised (Gn 16:2,3); “her” child Ishmael by her servant Hagar became the son of grief for the Jews to this day. Centuries later, right after the Israelites had experienced God’s deliverance from the Egyptians in spectacular ways, they nevertheless formed a golden calf to worship in order to gratify their immediate spiritual desires. God’s response to Moses was that they had thereby “corrupted themselves” (Ex 32:4-7). Joshua was deceived and made peace with the Gibeonites, contrary to God’s command; his presumption of doing good for his people was in reality rank disobedience: “And the [Israelites] took of their victuals, and asked not counsel

I AM COME IN MY FATHER’S NAME, AND YE RECEIVE ME NOT: IF ANOTHER SHALL COME IN HIS OWN NAME, HIM YE WILL RECEIVE.

—John 5:43

at the mouth of the LORD” (Jos 9:14). The entire book of Judges characterizes God’s people during that time period as having a consumer mentality: “...every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jgs 21:25). Later, David’s “eyes” for Bathsheba led him to satisfy his lustful felt needs in spite of what it would do to his personal relationship with God.

The New Testament gospels and epistles abound with examples of consumer “Christianity.” Peter’s objection to what Jesus said He would have to suffer for our salvation demonstrated more than just fleshly sympathy; Jesus intimated that it was disobedience of a satanic nature (Mt 16:21-23). Furthermore, Christ’s response to Peter defines what consumer Christianity is all about: “for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Our Lord’s other disciples were also given to the “what-could-best-benefit-me” mentality.

Blinded by self-interest to what Jesus told them of His impending suffering and death, James and John reacted by seeking an elevated position in His coming king-

dom: “Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory” (Mk 10:37). The Apostle Paul rebuked Peter, who, along with Barnabas, drew back from the Gentiles in order to accommodate those of the circumcision (Gal 2:11-14). Paul identified his own struggles, as well as ours, with putting self before God: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom 7:18,19). He then declared his solution, which is the believer’s *only* solution: the Spirit-led life in Christ (Rom 8:1).

Consumer Christianity, whether manifested in the early churches or in today’s assemblies (from mega-churches to home fellowships), is simply doing things man’s way rather than God’s way. The history of the church from the first century on is a distressing chronicle of true and false Christians deviating from the Word of

God, doing what seemed right in their own minds while professing to be doing it in the name of Christ and to His glory. Although the results have often been spiritually devastating, God has been faithful, merciful, and longsuffering with His own. As we draw near to the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, however, consumer Christianity will so transform the professing church that it will be shocking to any true believer unless, of course, he or she has been desensitized by the gradual acceptance of many of the appealing “new products and processes” (i.e., unbiblical teachings, practices, and worship forms) being “sold” today.

Following the Rapture of the Bride of Christ to be with Him (1 Thes 4:16-18), a professing Christian church will remain that has been groomed to accept the Antichrist. This apostate church does not just appear overnight, but its preparation has been ongoing for two millennia and will increase with great intensity up until the Rapture of truly born-again Christians. The deception at that time will be like nothing humanity has ever experienced, including Hitler’s seduction of, and absolute control over, civilized, highly educated, and technologically sophisticated Germany. What will be the major difference? This deception will be worldwide and, more astonishingly, *facilitated by God himself*.

After giving information about the coming apostasy and the Antichrist, “whose coming is after the working of

Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,” the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, further explains why the deception will be so pervasive and powerful: “...because they received not *the love of the truth*.” He then gives us reason to be astonished: “And for this cause *God shall send them strong delusion*, that they should believe a lie” (2 Thes 2:9-11). This “strong delusion” affecting the lost is comparable to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. It neither induced sin nor subjugated Pharaoh’s will; yet it allowed circumstances to develop that his wicked heart could not resist.

There is no reason to assume that *only* “them that perish” (v. 10) will be caught up in the Last Day’s delusion. As we’ve noted from the Scriptures, many of the heroes and heroines of the faith at times opted for their own ways rather than God’s way. They let their own desires override God’s only antidote for spiritual delusion: a love for the truth. As it was then, so it is even more today, as the apostasy gathers unprecedented momentum.

In the third chapter of Second Timothy, Paul speaks prophetically, identifying some of the characteristics that we need to urgently heed concerning the end-times deception: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...never able to come to the knowledge of the truth...[A]s Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth” (2 Tm 3:1-8).

Let’s consider these things in light of what is taking place in evangelical churches today. Humanistic psychology, with its emphasis on self-love and its brood of other selfisms, has become an accepted and promoted doctrine among pastoral counselors and “Christian” psychologists. Prosperity evangelists have turned covetousness into God’s foremost commandment for millions of professing Christians. Seeker-friendly churches are working at filling their pews with lovers of pleasure while discouraging (and in many cases dismissing) lovers of God. Purpose-driven churches are marketing formulas of godliness in place of the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. The growing adulteration of God’s Holy Scriptures in the form of subjective paraphrase and visual “translations” is creating both a resistance to the truth and an anemia regarding spiritual discernment. Finally, regarding the

ingredients of apostasy, the magicians “wowed” those crowding Pharaoh’s court with their pagan showmanship, mystical presence, and counterfeit signs and wonders (Ex 7:11,12). So, too, are we seeing entertainment, experientialism, and contemplative (Catholic) mysticism seducing multitudes of churches that formerly majored in preaching, teaching, and sound doctrine.

Has “strong delusion” made inroads into the evangelical church? If you don’t think so, you may have difficulty finding another explanation for the following agenda and participation at the 2004 National Pastors’ Convention.

This event, sponsored by Youth Specialties (America’s most influential evangelical organization for youth pastors and leaders) and Zondervan (publisher of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, the *NIV-Message Parallel Bible*, and evangelical distributor for Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the*

AND THROUGH COVETOUSNESS
SHALL THEY WITH FEIGNED WORDS
MAKE MERCHANDISE OF YOU...

—2 Peter 2:3

Christ DVD) began its daily program with contemplative prayer (see “Please Contemplate This!” *TBC* Mar ’00) and “Yoga & Stretching” exercises. Emerging church liturgies based upon Roman Catholic and Orthodox rituals and sacramentals were introduced, including daily “labyrinth prayer” opportunities. The latter is a meditative prayer walk around a circular, maze-like pattern copied from a floor design found in Chartres Cathedral. This mystical Catholic ritual dates back to the Middle Ages, when it became a substitute for journeying to the dangerous, Muslim-controlled Holy Land in order to trace the “Passion route” of Jesus. As Catholics walked the labyrinth and meditated on the sufferings of Christ in their imagination, they obtained the same indulgences (pardons that would shorten their time of suffering in Purgatory to expiate their sins) for making the actual pilgrimage.

The Convention’s evening programs included Christian comedy acts, The Jesus Painter (who “paints portraits of Christ in under 20 minutes”), “Tribe Church Drumming Experience,” “Personal Emotional Health Discussion,” an “emergent Pub with Live Music,” and “Late Night

Contemplative Prayer Services.”

The greater percentage of speakers were practitioners of mystical Christian prayer and worship forms (referred to as “authentic faith”), and the rest appeared to be advocates of, or at least encouragers for, the development of new methodologies and liturgies for the emerging culture of the 21st century. One topic was titled “A New Theology for a New World.” The double-location conference attracted thousands and featured many influential church leaders, including Gordon MacDonald, Henry Cloud, Brennan Manning, Dallas Willard, Joseph Stowell, Howard Hendricks, Gary Thomas, Tony Campolo, and Rick Warren. The 2005 convention promises to be more of the same, with Christian contemplative, experiential, and emerging church headliners such as Richard Foster, Calvin Miller, Philip Yancy, Ruth Haley Barton, Doug Pagitt, and Dan Kimball.

Most of Christianity, according to the Scriptures, will progress into an apostate church as the return of the Lord draws near. Jesus said to His disciples, “It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!” (Lk 17:1). He later posed this question: “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Lk 18:8) The implied answer is *no*.

How could this happen? The essential “love of the truth” is being extinguished by “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn 2:16). The professing church, consisting of true and false believers, increasingly turns to the world’s ways—its hedonistic philosophy, its evolutionary pseudoscience, its self-oriented psychology, its consumer-driven business methodologies, its religious ecumenism, and its pagan spirituality. Ironically, some have turned to these things in sincerity as a means of enriching and spreading “Christianity.” Nevertheless, the result is consumer Christianity in any and all of its self-serving forms, when “every man [does] that which [is] right in his own eyes” (Jgs 17:6).

As for the signs that would adversely affect the generation at His Coming, Jesus *warned* that His disciples should “take heed that no man deceive” them (Mt 24:4). If we are not the generation that is living in the time of “strong delusion” in preparation for that day, how much worse can it get? Pray that His Body of believers will increase in their love for His way, His Word, and His truth.

TBC

Quotable

Religion has become jolly good fun right here in this present world, and what's the hurry about heaven anyway? Christianity, contrary to what some had thought, is another higher form of entertainment. Christ has done all the suffering. He has shed all the tears and carried all the crosses; we have but to enjoy the benefits of His heartbreak in the form of religious pleasures modeled after the world but carried on in the name of Jesus.

History reveals that times of suffering for the Church have...always sobered God's people and encouraged them to look for and yearn after the return of their Lord. Our present preoccupation with this world may be a warning of bitter days to come. God will wean us from the earth some way—the easy way if possible, the hard way if necessary. It is up to us.

A.W. Tozer, The Best of A.W. Tozer, p. 57

Q&A

Question: What is repentance—the same as faith? How do you explain its absence in John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; Galatians; Acts 16:31, etc.? You have written in *An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith*, p. 223, that those “living in sin” have no right to assurance of salvation. Is assurance based on behavior or on the objective promises of God’s Word? Please clarify where you stand on “Lordship salvation,” which ties salvation and assurance to faith and repentance as conditions for eternal life.

Answer: Faith is the only condition of salvation: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” To be saved, one must only believe the gospel. That is the promise of God’s Word.

As for repentance, I agree that the word is not in the Gospel of John, nor in Paul’s definition of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, etc. But Paul did preach “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21); and Jesus said, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Lk 13:3). Yet to overemphasize repentance could lead the unsaved person to imagine that he somehow must reform his life before he is acceptable to God and can be saved.

Jesus didn’t ask the woman at the well to repent, nor did He ask repentance from the woman taken in adultery, or from Nicodemus, or from any of the disciples

that He called to follow Him. But He brought them to repentance. It is innate in the publican’s guilty cry under conviction of the Holy Spirit, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Lk 18:13)! In believing the gospel and thereby accepting Christ as Savior in His sacrifice for sins, one is admitting to being a sinner worthy of God’s judgment, to being sorry for his sin and desiring deliverance from its penalty. In that very act of faith in Christ for dying in one’s place, there is repentance and turning from sin to the Savior.

Your question reworded what I wrote. I didn’t say that those living in sin “have no right to assurance of salvation.” I said, “We offer no comfort or assurance to those living in sin; we don’t say, ‘You’re okay because you once made a decision for Christ.’ Instead we warn, ‘If you are not willing right now to live fully for Christ as Lord of your life, how can you say that you were really sincere when you supposedly committed yourself to Him...in the past?’ And to all, we declare with Paul, ‘Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...’ (2 Cor 13:5).”

In that section of the book, I refute the ideas that one must be baptized, speak in tongues, etc., in order to be saved. I specifically say, “Are we not then saved by our works? Indeed, not.... Good works bring rewards; a lack of them does not cause loss of salvation. The person who hasn’t even one good work (*all* of his works are burned up) is still ‘saved; yet so as by fire’ (1 Cor 3:13-15). We would not think such a person saved at all.... Yet one who...has no good works...if he has truly received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, is then ‘saved as by fire’....”

What I wrote is certainly not a promotion of “Lordship salvation”—the idea that if one is not living in complete obedience to Christ as Lord, then one is not saved. I don’t believe that John MacArthur, who is accused of teaching this doctrine, means that good works save. Rather, he is saying that works are an indication of whether a person is saved or not. Scripture declares that not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord,” is saved. It is not only what one *says*, but what one *believes in the heart*—and the heart is deceitful. Jesus himself warns that many, calling Him Lord, will claim to have done great works in His name and yet have never been saved (Mt 7:21-23).

Many “make a commitment for Christ” and later turn away because they had not been sincere. The person who has fallen into sin and would like to turn from that sin, but it has a strong hold on him, may

be a Christian. But the person who is living in sin, doesn’t care, and claims he is saved because he once made a “decision for Christ” was probably never saved. It would be wrong to comfort such persons with, “You believe in Christ, so you can’t be lost no matter how you live.”

Neither you nor I know anyone’s heart. People stand before witnesses, swear their undying love, then divorce the one to whom they made the vows. Did they really understand the seriousness of the vows they made? In their hearts, did they really intend to keep them? So it can be with those who claim to receive Christ or to believe in Him. For some, these are just words they repeated. The faith and conviction has not touched their hearts. God alone knows the heart. But a good indication of whether or not one’s faith ever was real can be found in present attitude and actions.

In my book I did not say (nor have I ever) that if a person is not living for Christ, he is not saved. I said then, as now, that one’s attitude of heart and actions are a good indication of whether one ever really understood and believed the gospel. Those who are not living for Christ but claim to be saved ought to be warned to repent, as many scriptures declare.

Question: TBC has referred to the rebuilding of the temple in which the Antichrist will sit, etc. Has no one noticed that the verse reads, “He will sit in the temple of God...”? If the Jews rebuild the temple... will it be the temple of “God”? I don’t think so.... It seems more reasonable that the Antichrist will make his way into the Church, from which he will demand to be worshipped.

Answer: You raise a good question and your argument has some appeal to human reason—but it is not supported by Scripture. Jerusalem was still called “the holy city” even when unholy people in it practiced unholy things (Mt 4:5; 27:53). Jerusalem never ceased to be the “city of God” (Ps 46:4; 87:3), in spite of being trodden underfoot by the Gentiles through the centuries (Lk 21:24). It will remain “the holy city” during the Great Tribulation, though still trodden “under foot” (Rv 11:2).

You question whether a temple rebuilt by unbelieving Jews with Antichrist’s blessing could still be the “temple of God.” The temple in existence during Christ’s day was built by Herod the Great. He was an Idumean, a most ungodly, wicked tyrant, murderer of the innocents, and of countless others. Yet the Bible

called the temple Herod built, “the temple of God” (Mt 21:12), and Christ calls it “my Father’s house” (Jn 2:16). In further contradiction to your thesis, the temple that will be rebuilt by the Jews under Antichrist during the Great Tribulation is called “the temple of God” (Rv 11:1).

When Solomon built the temple, it was indwelt by God, who manifested His holy presence in the cloud of His glory (1 Kgs 8:10-11). This “temple of God” was on the summit of Mt. Moriah, now known as Temple Mount. It was defiled, destroyed, and rebuilt. And in each rebuilding, it was still the temple of God.

Paul’s statement that Antichrist will sit “in the temple of God,” (2 Thes 2:4) cannot mean, as you claim, that “Antichrist will make his way into the Church, from which he will demand to be worshiped....” The church is the body of Christ with no physical location wherein Antichrist could take a seat for this declaration—but the rebuilt temple will provide such a place.

Question: In the September 2004 Q&A, you responded to criticism of your claim that Adam was the only one created in God’s image. Could you please clarify this: 1) Are you saying that Eve was not created in God’s image; 2) how do you explain 1 Corinthians 11:7 in light of Genesis 5:3? Are we ALL created in God’s image or were Adam and Eve the only one’s created in God’s image? What is God’s image? What does it mean?

Answer: We can only go by what the Bible says. We are told, “So God created man...in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gn 1:27). “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul....And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam...and he took one of his ribs, and...the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (2:7,21).

Adam, made in the image of God, lived for some time alone except for his animal friends—a friendship that lacked real understanding and satisfaction—before God made Eve out of one of his ribs. She was created by God in His image just as Adam had been, though the manner of her creation was different. In contrast, their children, grandchildren, et al., did not come into existence by a special creative act of God, but by natural procreation. They were in the image of their parents—an image that had been marred by sin and death. As

this natural procreation of birth and death continued, the human race gathered an increasing gene pool of disease and deformity as the moral decay worsened. We are pitiful creatures compared with what Adam and Eve were at the beginning.

Jesus declared, “God is a Spirit” (Jn 4:24). Therefore, “in God’s image” does not refer to physical qualities, for God has none. The image of God in which Adam was made can only be moral and spiritual, giving man the capacity to know, love, and commune with God—and to know in his conscience when he is disobeying God and is thus alienated from Him. All mankind inherited the “image of God” in which Adam and Eve were made—not in its original perfection, however, but corrupted and distorted by sin, which the Bible defines as coming “short of the glory of God.”

Being made in the image of God gives man the ability to form conceptual ideas and express them in words. This places man on the other side of a chasm that separates him from animals—a chasm that no evolutionary process (even if there were such) could ever cross. This impassable barrier was referred to by Mortimer J. Adler in his 1967 still-in-print book, *The Difference of Man and the Difference it Makes*. At that time, Adler, a University of Chicago philosophy professor, co-founder of the Great Books of the Western World, and an editor of the Encyclopedia Britannica, was an agnostic. He later became a professing Christian. Such reasoning in the search for truth is only possible because man was made in the image of God, who says, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Is 1:18).

Question: In the July Q&A, a reader asked about counseling an unbelieving sister about yoga. While you gave some very pertinent information about the dangers of this practice, you did not mention the primary responsibility of sharing the gospel and other scripture relevant to her arguments in order to turn her to the Lord. Trying to convince someone intellectually of the need of salvation is usually a losing argument, in my opinion.

Answer: Thank you for reminding me and our readers that faith comes by hearing “the word of God (Rom 10:17). I assumed that readers understood that, but perhaps I assumed too much. I provided valuable information about yoga, its origins, and its dangers, that should have been enough to cause anyone involved in this Hindu practice to be ready to hear the gospel. But I failed to mention the gospel.

To present the gospel to unbelievers in the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, we must give proof to those who may not even believe that the Bible is God’s Word and why it must therefore be heeded.

An apologetic must be employed, at least to some extent, to convince the unbeliever. To Jewish audiences that he met on his travels, Paul used their scriptures to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah foretold by their prophets—because every Jew at that time believed the Scriptures. Today, however, most Jews don’t believe the Bible to be God’s Word. Therefore, in presenting the gospel to them, as to unbelievers, we must take the apologist’s approach that Paul used with the Greeks on Mars Hill.

We have just revised and improved *Seeking and Finding God*. I wrote this for myself to have something convincing to give to unbelievers who may be skeptical about God and the Bible. I highly commend it to others. The revised and expanded second printing should be available by mid-April.

"Noah Found Grace"

Dave Hunt

Atheists argue that according to the "myth" of the Garden of Eden, evil had too innocent a beginning to be the root from which all the wickedness on this earth could possibly have grown. Adam and Eve merely ate some forbidden fruit—an act hardly worth getting upset about. "Eve talked me into it, Lord, and I did it to share with her, but I only took one bite....But the serpent deceived me, Lord; I thought it would make me wise...and it was delicious and nutritious."

How could such a simple act bring the horror of selfishness, jealousy, lust, hatred, rage, revenge, crime, war, disease, suffering, and death that has plagued mankind ever since? The biblical claim seems absurd! For this one tiny mistake, God was so upset that He threw them out of the Garden and sentenced them to death? Why couldn't God have just forgiven them—given them another chance? Wouldn't that have been reasonable?

The answer to that question is what the Bible is all about. The question itself reflects an easy-going attitude toward sin and a lack of respect for authority that permeates our society and has even penetrated evangelical churches. "Give me one more chance" became the mantra of the human race, repeated endlessly by everyone from disobedient children to the worst criminals pleading with the judge. God knew that "one more chance" would only encourage evil-doers. But parents, schools, courts, parole boards, psychologists, and well-meaning do-gooders are still honoring this lame excuse—and with devastating results.

A raging epidemic of what the Bible calls "sin" has ravaged mankind. The courage to face that truth, however, is sadly missing from most of today's pulpits. Few dare call it rebellion against our Creator for which we need to repent. God's judgment and the coming day of reckoning are much too negative to hold the interest of modern congregations. Talk about God must be positive, uplifting, reassuring. None of this "separated from God by sin" talk will do. The "unchurched" are not going to be attracted to church if they are confronted with suggestions of guilt. Sermons should inspire listeners to feel comfortable about God and about themselves. And they must be short, entertaining, and related to the "good life" the world dreams of attaining.

Yet the "good life" isn't life at all, but a plastic bubble defined by sit-coms and TV commercials, sold to us by a whole industry of denial and designed specifically to insulate us from the awful truth of which the Spirit of truth would convict us: "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn 16:8). The game is to glorify sin, mock the family, and pretend that suffering, sorrow and death aren't part of "our world," or at least to push them into another compartment that doesn't have to be dealt with just yet.

The real world is inhabited by self-centered descendants of the original pair, who rebelled against God under the leadership of the serpent. What popular pulpits must avoid at all cost, however, is the horrible truth that man has been the devil's follower and in his service from the very beginning. We'll solve our problems with technology, another committee, another day in court, another peace conference, more catchy slogans, positive self-affirmations, and a little religion of whatever

BY FAITH NOAH, BEING WARNED OF
GOD OF THINGS NOT SEEN AS YET,
MOVED WITH FEAR, PREPARED AN
ARK TO THE SAVING OF HIS HOUSE...

—Hebrews 11:7

brand seems appealing at the moment.

God had spoken in wisdom and love, His creatures had rebelled—and "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Sm 15:23). This has been the history of mankind. The world is getting worse, not better, and God's judgment is soon going to fall. But unlike Adam and Eve, who were ashamed and tried to hide from God, their descendants openly defy Him and flaunt their mutiny in His face. They have thrown God off this earth and would tear Him from His throne in heaven if they could.

The trees of the Garden behind which Adam and Eve sought to hide have metamorphosed into an asphalt jungle of high-rise apartments and office buildings, with every monument to human achievement crowded with inhabitants who desperately need to repent and return to God on His terms through faith in the One who died for their sins. Scattered throughout the jungle have always been the mushrooms of religion, some more poisonous than others. And now something new has appeared—giant mushrooms spreading everywhere: mega-churches filled with congregants who are being taught a "positive" way to hide from

God. He is praised with the lips, but there is no repentance toward Him or real faith in Christ as the Savior of sinners.

Instead of exposing modern culture's contempt for God and righteousness and its glorification of sin, the church embraces its decadence as a packaging that will make the "gospel" acceptable to those who don't know they need it. Our needing Christ as a shelter from the storm of God's wrath against our sins is not mentioned. The appeal is not to come to Christ to obtain forgiveness and to be rescued from eternity in the Lake of Fire—but to become happier on earth. Christianity is packaged as "spirituality," a popular commodity today, and sold as a good deal that anyone who wants to be "blessed" would accept. The real issue, however, is sin, not self-esteem, self-love, self-image, etc.—but as we mention in the Q&A, not only the world but the church, too, is peddling the snake oil of self-enhancement as the cure-all.

Nor is this self-centered message confined to today's "seeker-sensitive" churches. Much of the evangelical church in America is preoccupied with "growth," while millions suffering for Christ in much of the world are forgotten. The hundreds of thousands who are being slaughtered by Muslims in southern Sudan, in northern Nigeria, in Indonesia, and Christians suffering in other Muslim countries would be aghast if they knew that a major concern of Christians in America is how to feel good about themselves—and that when they don't, they have the comforting option of therapy from Christian psychologists!

Genesis chapter 6 presents an astonishing picture: not many generations after the creation of Adam and Eve, their descendants (to whom they surely had passed along the story of their expulsion from the Garden) are so evil that God is ready to destroy them all. And He would have done so but for one man: "but Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gn 6:8). Only one man out of millions obtained grace from God!

How can that be? Does God reserve His grace for a select company? No, God's grace is freely offered to all; it cannot be earned or merited or it would not be grace. So why was it only Noah who "found grace"? To find, one must seek (Mt 7:7; Lk 11:9). Noah was the only one who sought God's grace! Noah knew that he was a sinner and needed God's grace—and he alone sought and found it.

Hundreds of times in the Old Testament this same Hebrew word (*matsa*), which is here translated "found," is given the same

clear meaning: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found (*matsa*), call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Is 55:6, 7); "And ye shall seek me, and find (*matsa*) me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13).

We must recognize our guilt in the face of God's holy perfection, and come to Him in deep repentance seeking His grace, not to earn or merit it, but to obtain mercy at His throne of grace (Heb 4:16). Instead, the church offers God's favor to achieve happiness, success, and earthly blessings. We don't really appreciate God's grace until we realize that His righteous judgment is hanging over this present world as it was in Noah's day. "Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth...it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger" (Zep 2:3).

We desperately need to understand something of the magnitude of sin, of evil, and of gross wickedness in this world if we are to appreciate our redemption. God's love, grace, and mercy shine all the brighter against the awful reality of evil. Indeed, the very existence of evil is a powerful proof of God's existence and holiness. God says, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil..." (Is 45:7). God creates evil? Yes, the same way that light exposes darkness.

A person who was born, lived, and died in total darkness in a cave deep beneath the earth would not know that he lived in the dark until someone came into the cave with a light and the darkness was revealed. In the same way, God's goodness, perfect holiness, and righteousness reveal evil for what it is. Without God and the conscience He has given us we would not recognize evil. Indeed, evil makes good shine all the brighter—and this world is full of evil.

I've just finished writing a book titled, *JUDGMENT DAY: Islam, Israel and the Nations* [available in June]. It is a shocking exposé of evil beyond one's wildest imagination manifest especially as anti-Semitism and hatred of Israel on the part of Islam and all nations—including Israel's frequent betrayal by even the United States. God's judgment is coming upon the entire world for its mistreatment of His chosen people. He declares, "I will also gather all nations [that includes America], and will...plead with [punish] them...for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and

parted my land [as every 'peace proposal' has done and Bush's road map to peace intends]" (Joel 3:2).

Evil is at its worst when it poses as good and justifies itself with lies. For example, consider the full-page, truth-defying diatribe against Israel, masquerading as a special news report in the *National Catholic Reporter* (4/26/96), which justified Islam's murder and mayhem and blamed Israel for mistreating "Palestinians" in the city of Hebron. (This is where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives were buried, but not one Arab or Muslim. Yet Muslims have taken control and built a mosque there.) It says trouble started when Jews "began moving into Hebron 20 years ago." In fact, though chased out periodically by invaders, Jews have been there for 3,000 years. Arabs only arrived after the seventh-century Muslim conquest and immediately began to brutalize the Jewish residents for failing to convert to Islam.

IN THOSE DAYS THERE WAS NO KING IN ISRAEL: EVERY MAN DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES.

—Judges 21:25

That mistreatment has continued for more than 1,300 years.

In the vicious pogrom in Hebron of 1929 (one of many), synagogues were desecrated, 67 Jews were murdered, and the rest forced to flee. Jews were slaughtered all over "Palestine." Typical of what happened was the following report from the British police chief of Hebron:

On hearing screams...I went up a sort of tunnel passage and saw an Arab in the act of cutting off a child's head with a sword. Seeing me, he tried to aim the stroke at me but missed...I shot him...Behind him was a Jewish woman smothered in blood, with a man I recognized as an Arab police constable named Issa Sheril from Jaffa...standing over the woman with a dagger in his hand. He saw me and bolted into a room close by and tried to shut me out—shouting in Arabic, "Your Honor, I am a policeman." I got into the room and shot him. (Cited in Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, p. 315)

Years later, cautiously and fearfully, some Jews began moving back into one of their most sacred cities, a city where their patriarchs are buried. In 1948, Israel was attacked by six Arab nations. Jordan

captured the West Bank and with it, Hebron. All Jewish residents were summarily expelled, synagogues destroyed. Only when Israel retook Hebron in 1967 could Jews return—and the *National Catholic Reporter* castigates them for doing so and blames the 400 Jewish residents under siege from 120,000 Muslims for causing trouble! Evil is praised as good—and seeker-friendly sermons don't even acknowledge its existence!

The persecution of Jews in Roman Catholic Europe was mild compared with what Christians and Jews endured for 1,300 years in Muslim countries. The slaughter included more than 1 million Armenians in the last decades of the nineteenth and first of the twentieth centuries—at times with the tacit approval of Western powers. In the great 1915 massacre, "Turkish women were given the dagger to give the final stab to dying Armenians in order to gain credit [with] Allah for having killed a Christian."

In Ataturk's destruction of Smyrna (leaving nothing but the Turkish suburb) in September of 1922, about 200,000 Armenian and Greek inhabitants were massacred while English, American, Italian and French warships anchored in the harbor repelled fleeing victims who swam out to them for help. The Western powers didn't want to offend Muslim Turkey! In his must-read book, *The Blight of Asia*, George Horton, U.S. Consul in that doomed city and eyewitness to the unspeakable cruelty of Islam, writes, "One of the keenest impressions which I brought away with me from Smyrna was a feeling of shame that I belonged to the human race." Shades of Genesis six!

In its foreword, James W. Gerard, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, describes Horton's book as "the whole story of the savage extermination of Christian civilization [by Muslims] throughout the length and breadth of the old Byzantine Empire..." Horton himself writes, "This process of extermination was carried on over a considerable period of time, with fixed purpose, with system, and with painstaking minute details; and it was accomplished with unspeakable cruelties..."

Sin is a horrible fact, in spite of the aversion that popular preachers have for facing its reality. The "positive" sermons in today's mega churches make a mockery of the judgment that God will shortly unleash upon this wicked world. To lull sinners into thinking that all is well is to fatally deceive those for whom Christ died and to keep them from repenting and finding refuge in Christ from the wrath to come. **TBC**

Quotable

O Lord, Thy fingers fashioned Calvary's hill;
Those skull-like stones were surely Thine
intent.

Well did'st Thou know, Thy Body dead and
still
Would crown its slopes and ev'ry rock be rent.

O Lord, 'twas in Thy mind, the tree was born,
With living strength to point men up to Thee.
Yet did'st Thou know, Thy members strained
and torn
Would hang from lifeless wood, and lifeless
be....

O Lord, 'twas Thou, who molded common
dust;
Breathed forth Thy life into this house of clay.
Yet did'st Thou know mankind, corrupted,
must
Thine own pure vessel mar and cast away.

O Lord, my parts were written with Thy pen,
Ere I was formed within my mother's womb.
Lord of my life, 'twas I who slew Thee then,
My sin and curse inscribed, which sealed Thy
tomb....

Enough O Lord! Thy conquest is complete.
Thy love foreknew yet bore the shame for me.
Mine outpoured soul shall lave [wash]Thy
pierced feet;
Thy great forgiveness bind my soul to Thee.

*Geoffrey Bull, From the days of solitude in
Chungking, while confined there by the
Chinese Communist Army in spring 1951*

Q&A

Question: I recently read the March 2005 Ladies' Home Journal (LHJ) column by Rick Warren and was greatly disturbed. Although he mentioned God (which "God"?), the entire article was devoted to teaching us how we can better love ourselves. What possible use could this be to the multitudes of unsaved readers of this magazine? There is also a link that takes readers to the Ladies Home Journal "Spirituality" website that seems to embrace every new age idea possible. Comments, please.

Answer: This "Learn To Love Yourself" column was Rick's third in LHJ. The first was December's "The Purpose-Driven Christmas." The second was February's "The 'I'm So Busy' Epidemic." The fourth is coming up in April: "Live a Passion-Driven Life."

Rick has been handed a great opportunity to share the gospel with the unsaved—but so far he hasn't. The closest was in December: "...thank God for His Christmas gift to you: He sent a Savior." Rick doesn't define either God or Savior, so the meaning is up to the reader's personal taste. And the perversion of those tastes is evident from the fact that LHJ offers every conceivable New Age, occult, and mystical "spirituality" program. Listings include Eastern meditation, dream interpretation, rediscovering one's "spiritual self," the "New Spirituality," Yoga, being "spiritually tuned in," and hypnosis.

Every column has some reference to God's love, comforting everyone no matter what their beliefs. But the essential truth is missing: that the proof of God's love is the sacrifice of His Son for our sins (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 4:10; etc.). The Cross is left out entirely.

Each column has some commonsense advice about setting goals and priorities, and vague references to "spirituality"—the sort of thing one might get from a horoscope in an astrology column, or from a Chinese fortune cookie: "Go on that school field trip with your child"; "Put your relationships high up on your 'to do' list"; "Go for your dreams. Transform your passion into a PAYCHECK"; "Learn to let go of...resentment, jealousy and prolonged anger"; etc., etc.

The March column about which you inquired sounds like an echo out of one of Robert Schuller's books from 20 years ago. We've been criticized for saying that Rick is teaching pop psychology, but there it is for anyone to see. That's not biblical! Rick is riding the crest of great popularity at the moment and, like Schuller, is careful not to present any biblical truth, no matter how essential, that might offend the secular world. Instead, he tells his readers what he knows they want to hear, not the truth they need. Yes, he mentions "God," but a humanistic "God" who is very "positive" about everyone.

The March title, "Learn to Love Yourself!" is the opposite of what the Bible teaches and is a far cry from "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," which Christ said is the first and great commandment (Mt 22:37-38).

Rick advises his readers, "To truly love yourself, you need to know the five truths that form the basis of a healthy self-image." That's humanistic language, not biblical, and hardly fits with what men of God have said about themselves: "Now

mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6); "Woe is me! for I am undone!" (Is 6:5); "Of whom [sinners] I am chief... less than the least of all saints" (1 Tm 1:15; Eph 3:8), etc.

Rick lists "five truths," none of which is either a "truth" or biblical: 1) Accept yourself; 2) Love yourself; 3) Be true to yourself; 4) Forgive yourself; and 5) Believe in yourself. He begins *The Purpose-Driven Life* by saying, "It's not about you." In fact, that book turns out to be all about you—and we see the same in his columns in LHJ.

He says, "God accepts us unconditionally...." This is the humanistic plea of a homosexual, lesbian, fornicator, or one living in sin unmarried with a "partner," who says to parents and concerned friends, "Just accept me as I am, love me unconditionally." In fact, God wants to save us from sin and self and make us new creatures in Christ—but one would never get that idea from Rick's LHJ columns.

Rick says we should love ourselves—just the opposite of the Bible's command to love God and neighbor. *Never* does Scripture exhort us to love ourselves! "Be true to yourself," is more humanistic doubletalk. He advises, "Get to know yourself." The Bible says I need to turn from myself to God. My passion should be to know Him. These columns are shallow, false, unbiblical, and lead readers astray.

"Forgive yourself" is again totally humanistic. He talks about God forgiving us, but doesn't explain that He can only do so because Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Rick makes it sound as though God is so magnanimous that He will forgive anything we think, say, or do—no big deal, nothing to be concerned about. Yet Scripture says, "Fear God, and keep his commandments... for God will bring every work into judgment..." (Ecc 12:13, 14).

There is no reason to fear the "God" Rick talks about—He simply accepts us no matter what we do. Rick gives the impression that everyone has a "good buddy" relationship with God, there is no separation from Him by sin, and certainly no need for Christ as mediator with God, dying for our sins. Rick hides the truth behind sweet words from those who need it most. We need to pray for Rick that he will rise to the opportunities God has given him, and present the truth instead of warmed-over pop psychology, of which the world already has too much—they certainly don't need more from those who are supposed to preach the Word!

Question: Last night on *Larry King Live*, Billy Graham spoke about the pope.... Here is some of the transcript. Please let your readers know what BG said and what you think of it:

GRAHAM: I appreciate the opportunity of saying a word about the Pope... he has been the greatest moral and spiritual leader of the last 100 years.

KING: Really? Why do you put him that high?

GRAHAM: I've been to see him several times. I was preaching in Krakow in [his] cathedral...as his guest...at the time he was [in Rome] being made Pope...I don't know anybody else that I could put as high as he is. He's traveled the whole world, giving his version of the Gospel and spreading the Catholic faith....I was with him...three times at the Vatican.... And on one occasion I asked him to pray for me, which he did....He is the leader, spiritual and moral, of our generation.

Answer: This is nothing new. In *Occult Invasion* [see resource pages], I give the transcripts of even more shocking statements by Billy Graham on *Larry King Live* and on Schuller's *Hour of Power* many years ago. I've never heard him refer, however, to the Pope's "version of the gospel and spreading the Catholic faith." Is Graham finally admitting that there is a difference between Catholicism and the true gospel? If so, he still praises the Pope for his "version of the gospel" and calls him the "greatest spiritual leader." Billy has led many people to Christ, but he has also led multitudes astray with his praise of the Pope and Roman Catholicism.

People think that Billy Graham has changed, and excuse him because he is elderly. But he has been making similar statements for more than 50 years. He has said that he [Billy] preaches the same gospel as the Roman Catholic Church, that he and the Pope agree on almost everything and that any differences are not material as far as the gospel is concerned—that his beliefs are basically the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics. Catholics who go forward at a Billy Graham Crusade are "counseled" by priests and nuns. All of the names of Catholics who go forward are sent to their parish. I have files from bishops and cardinals in various cities saying that having a Billy Graham Crusade in town is the way they get "the lapsed Catholics back into the Church."

Billy had been invited to Cardinal Wojtyla's cathedral in 1979 to preach. He gave several sermons there while the Cardinal was in Rome being made Pope.

Obviously, Graham didn't say anything that Polish prelates didn't endorse. *Decision* magazine showed a picture of Billy on that same trip welcoming pilgrims to the shrine of the black virgin (the Pope's favorite "Mary") at Jasna Gora. It seems that Billy doesn't want to offend anyone, doesn't want to say that anything is wrong—not even Sir John Marks Templeton's one-world Antichrist religion, which Billy has also praised (as have Chuck Colson and Bill Bright).

The Roman Catholic gospel denies that Christ's sacrifice was sufficient. Its priesthood "immolates" Him on Catholic altars over and over in the "sacrifice of the Mass." A Catholic is anathematized if he dares to say that he knows he is saved. He is anathematized if he says that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was sufficient to procure forgiveness of sins and a home in heaven. He is anathematized if he denies that the Mass is an ongoing propitiatory sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the living and the dead, etc. We have dealt with this so often in books, tapes, debates and in the newsletter that I won't go into it again.

We have reported the ecumenism of the Pope, his gathering of Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, animist, Shintoist, etc. leaders for "prayer" and declaring that they are all praying to the same God, his statements to Hindus in India that the world needs to give heed to their great spiritual traditions, his statements to voodoo priests in Africa that just as they worship ancestors so the Catholics pray to ancestors also and that voodoo practitioners could easily embrace Catholicism, etc. Our readers know the facts. How can Billy Graham, who also knows the facts, call the Pope the greatest moral and spiritual leader of the century? In fact, he *is* the greatest leader the world has yet seen, but of the ecumenical move toward the one world religion of the Antichrist!

Question: Aren't you making the gospel too complicated by saying that Catholics are not saved even though they believe in the crucified and risen Christ?

Answer: It is the Roman Catholic Church that has complicated the gospel. Anyone who truly believes the simple gospel that Paul declared ("that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures..." — 1 Cor 15:1-4) is saved.

But to the simple gospel Rome has added baptism, good works, penance, the

sacrifice of the Mass, prayers to Mary and the saints, suffering in purgatory, Mass for the dead to get them out of purgatory, extreme unction (last rites), holy water, candles, rituals, etc. These are all means to salvation according to Rome. It would be very unlikely that a Roman Catholic would not believe in at least some of these heresies. Anyone who believes to any extent in anyone or anything whatsoever for salvation in addition to Christ's finished work on the cross has rejected the gospel, which "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16) and is not saved.

Death of a Pope

Dave Hunt

The recent worldwide outpouring of grief upon the death of Pope John Paul II was unprecedented. Mourners ranged from his humblest adherents to the most powerful political and religious leaders of our day, including France's President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. California Governor Schwarzenegger called the Pope "a beacon of virtue, strength and goodness." Former President Clinton called him "a man of God," while former President Bush said that his "adherence to liberty and freedom...gave people a real anchor."

Russia's President Putin honored John Paul's "spiritual and political legacy." President Bush called him "one of history's great moral leaders." Billy Graham called him "perhaps the most influential voice for morality and peace in the world during the last 100 years." Yet the Pope called Arafat, one of the worst terrorists and mass murderers of modern times, "Your Excellency," and never rebuked him for his slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent people around the world. Nor was the Pope's "moral leadership" reflected in the lives of most of his admirers. *The Houston Chronicle* noted that "Italians who stood in line for hours to say farewell to their Holy Father have contracepted their way to the lowest birthrate in the world." During his visit to California in September 1987, the famed hillside Hollywood sign was altered to read "Holywood"—yet Hollywood never missed a beat and remains anything but holy.

In June 2004, George W. Bush went to the Vatican to remind John Paul II that their moral values were the same and to gain support from America's 65 million Catholics in the upcoming election. South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun called the Pope "an apostle of peace." New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark ordered flags flown at half-mast for "one of the truly influential figures of the 20th century."

Such universal praise raised serious questions about the Pope's claim to be the "Vicar of Christ." After all, Christ was and still is "despised and rejected" (Is 53:3). He told His disciples that if they were true to Him, they would receive the same treatment from the world: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me...the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." (Jn 15:18-20).

John Paul II outdid most politicians in playing all sides. During his 1987 visit to

Los Angeles, he told Rabbi Emeritus Harvey Fields of Wilshire Boulevard Temple and the late Rabbi Alfred Wolf that everyone serves the "same God...no matter what their religion." Yet in Latin America in February 1996, he warned Catholics against Protestants and urged those who had left the Church to come back. In the name of "ecumenism," he declared that full unity could not be realized until all religions were subject to Rome!

In 2000 the Pope met with the President of Israel, visited the Wailing Wall, where he inserted a prayer, and assured Israelis that "the Catholic Church...is deeply saddened by the hatred, acts of persecution and displays of anti-Semitism...by Christians..." Yet he only apologized for what "Christians" have done, and never admitted the truth: that it was the Church itself and its popes that had compelled Catholics to persecute Jews.

Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel told CNN that John Paul II "will have a very important place in Jewish history..." Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (and Jewish leaders worldwide) called the Pope "a man of peace and friend of Israel..." Even *U.S. News & World Report's* Editor-in-Chief, Mortimer B. Zuckerman, usually so perceptive, praised the Pope for having "recognized the State of Israel," overlooking the fact that he had been pope for 16 years before he did so in 1994, 46 years after Israel's rebirth as a nation—and just after giving the PLO a permanent office at the Vatican.

Muslim leaders also lauded the Pope. Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim Chaplain at Georgetown University, said that Islam (which calls for Israel's annihilation) had lost a great friend. Consistently (as in his papal bull on the Year 2000 Jubilee, etc.), John Paul II rejected Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. More than ten times (at the Vatican and papal palace in Castel Gandolfo) he warmly received Arafat, Israel's most vicious enemy, visited him at his palace in Ramallah, and sided with Arafat and the PLO against Israel.

Of course, praising the deceased and overlooking blemishes is usual at funerals—but even evangelical leaders joined the "all praise to the Pope" chorus. The few who told the truth were condemned by the rest. For responding to a listener's question as to whether the Pope was in heaven, Christian talk show host Marty Minto was fired by Pittsburgh's WORD radio station, an affiliate of Salem Broadcasting. Yet the truth is that the Pope himself did not know whether he would go to heaven, and could give no assurance to others—a rather shocking fact about the head of the world's largest church who claimed to be Christ's vicar on earth!

John Cardinal O'Connor declared: "Church teaching is that I don't know...what my eternal future will be. I can hope, pray, do my very best—but I still don't know. Pope John Paul II doesn't know absolutely that he will go to heaven, nor does Mother Teresa of Calcutta..." Cardinal John Krol, as spiritual leader of Philadelphia's more than one million Catholics, admitted that his personal major worry was about "getting to heaven." Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), who headed the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, watchdog of Catholic orthodoxy (Holy Office of the Inquisition), and successor to John Paul II, expresses the same uncertainty of salvation—as he must.

Like the Pope, the Church that he led firmly rejects Christ's promise of "eternal life" (Jn 3:16) to all who believe on Him, that they have "passed from death unto life" (Jn 5:24) and "shall never perish" (Jn 10:28). Its priesthood offers endless Masses and prayers to Mary and favorite saints (thousands will be said for the dead pope), encourages pilgrimages to various shrines, and extends other means of gaining the same indulgences to shorten suffering in purgatory, a fact that upset Martin Luther and sparked the Reformation.

In a book highly rated by 250 evangelical leaders, the Pope wrote, "Baptism and the Eucharist...create in man the seed of eternal life." Rejecting the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and His triumphant cry, "It is finished!" (Jn 19:30), the documents of Vatican II begin thus: "It is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, 'the work of our redemption is [still being] accomplished.'" Rome anathematizes anyone who dares to confess the very assurance of a finished salvation that the Bible repeatedly promises (1 Jn 5:13).

Catholicism's premier "televangelist" before his death, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen (whom John Paul II called "a loyal son of the Church" and whom Billy Graham praised as "the greatest communicator" of the last century), hoped that "the Virgin" would welcome him to heaven because of his more than 40 pilgrimages to her shrines at Lourdes and Fatima. Pope John Paul II was likewise totally devoted to Mary, especially to "our lady of Fatima," whose apparition declared that "All religions are the same...many souls perish because they have no one to make sacrifice for them," a clear denial of the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. His Apostolic Letter of Oct. 16, 2002, ends with these words:

I entrust this Apostolic Letter to the loving hands of the Virgin Mary, prostrating myself in spirit before her image in the

splendid Shrine built for her by Blessed Bartolo Longo, the apostle of the Rosary. I willingly make my own the touching words with which he concluded his well-known Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary: "O Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God...tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary of Pompei, O dearest Mother, O Refuge of Sinners, O Sovereign Consoler of the Afflicted...."

Rushed to the hospital, having taken two bullets during an assassination attempt on May 13, 1981, the Pope groaned in Polish, "Madonna, Madonna...!" He often repeated the words, "Victory...will be...through Maria." He credited "Our Lady of Fatima" with saving his life on that occasion in Rome and from a bayonet-wielding Spanish priest in 1982, while visiting Fatima, Portugal, to thank her for rescuing him from death. But his favorite "Maria" was the "Black Virgin" of Jasna Gora in Poland—where Billy Graham himself welcomed pilgrims after preaching in Wojtyla's cathedral while Wojtyla was made Pope in Rome. In a February 1980 addendum to his Last Will and Testament of March 6, 1979, John Paul II entrusted "that decisive moment [of death] to the Mother of Christ and of the Church [and] of my hope....In life and in death, Totus Tuus through the Immaculate." Embroidered inside all of his robes was the phrase, *Totus tuus sum Maria*, "Mary, I am all yours."

The Rosary, which he urged Catholics to pray continually as the means to world peace, offers a false gospel of salvation through Mary. An "apparition" at Fatima claiming to be "Our Lady of the Rosary" declared, "Say the Rosary every day...pray a lot and offer sacrifices for sinners [Christ's sacrifice was not enough]....Only I will be able to help you....In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph." The Rosary concludes:

HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

It is clear, however, that Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus, "her

firstborn Son" (Mt 1:25), but had sons and daughters through her husband, Joseph (Mt 12:46,47; 13:55,56; Mk 3:31; Lk 8:19,20; Jn 2:12; Acts 1:14) — and that she was not a special conduit of blessing from Him to others (Mt 12:40-50; Mk 3:33-35; Lk 8:19-21; 11:27,28). There is *no biblical record* of anyone ever praying to Mary or of her interceding with Christ for anyone's salvation.

Among Roman Catholicism's popular "15 Promises of Mary," are the following: "The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary, shall not perish....I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary. Those who are faithful to recite the Rosary shall...at the moment of death...participate in the merits of the Saints in Paradise." Tragically, hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics have been turned from faith in Christ alone for salvation to trusting Mary and the Rosary, as did Pope John Paul II! They will not receive salvation from Christ so long as they trust Mary or any other "saint" for it.

In "The Holy Father's Prayer for the Marian Year," John Paul II asked Mary to do what only God can do: to comfort, guide, strengthen and protect "the whole of humanity...." His prayer ended, "Sustain us, O Virgin Mary, on our journey of faith and obtain for us the grace of eternal salvation." Faith in the only Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is both conspicuously missing and denied by such a prayer!

John Paul II often referred to "the salvation of souls through Mary Immaculate." Urging all Christians to accept Mary as their mother, the Pope declared that Christ's words to John from the Cross, "Behold thy mother!" (Jn 19:27), revealed the "authentic meaning of Marian worship...." Claiming that "Mary is the path that leads to Christ," the Pope urged all Christians "to make room [for Mary] in their daily lives, acknowledging her providential role in the path of salvation." He always wore the scapular (a practice that originated from an apparition of "Our Lady of Mt. Carmel" to St. Simon Stock in A.D. 1251, and was confirmed by subsequent popes such as Pope John XXII in 1322), trusting in the promise written upon it that "whosoever dies wearing this Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire." It is irrefutable logic that anyone, who in simple faith has trusted Christ for the salvation He provides, would consider it not only unnecessary but an abomination to wear such a piece of cloth!

In view of these well-known facts, the praise heaped on the Pope upon his death by evangelical leaders is incomprehensible! Incredibly, Billy Graham praised John Paul II for "his strong Catholic faith."

Increasing numbers of evangelicals are joining Colson, Packer, Billy Graham and others in accepting as fellow Christians Roman Catholics who embrace this false gospel. Mark Oestreicher, president of Youth Specialties, called the Pope's death "a key point in history where we have the opportunity to embrace [Catholics as] fellow children of God." That is like failing to set up flares and warning signs for motorists traveling along a highway where a bridge is out and waving them on to their death instead!

Richard N. Ostling, long-time Senior Religious Correspondent for *Time*, called John Paul II "probably the most popular pope ever among America's evangelical Protestants...." Dan Betzer, pastor of Fort Myers' First Assembly of God, enthused: "I have long been an admirer of the Pope. His prayer life is an example to us all. He has lived a godly life....His death will leave a great void in the kingdom of God." Pat Robertson said that "the most beloved religious leader of our age [has passed] from this world to his much deserved eternal reward."

Like Billy Graham, Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptists' Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, emphasized that any disagreements Protestants may have had "with John Paul II are [irrelevant] to the foundations of the faith." Land praised the Pope's "staunch defense of traditional Christian faith...." Yet John Paul II on more than one occasion gathered together for prayer witch doctors, spiritists, animists, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and other leaders of world religions, declared that they were all "praying to the same God," and credited their prayers with generating "profound spiritual energies" that would create a "new climate for peace."

We dare not trifle with the eternal destiny of souls. Peter, whom Rome falsely claims was the first pope, declared that "there is none other name [than Jesus Christ]...whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Not Mary, not Buddha, not anyone but Christ! But John Paul II relied upon Mary for salvation and protection and taught his flock to do the same. We pity him and them for this error.

It is too late to pray for the dead pope's soul—but we owe it to our Lord and all mankind still living to give them the good news: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn 3:16,17). **TBC**

Quotable

I consider it my duty to warn my people and all the friends of Israel that...the most terrible war [is coming] against the people of Israel as a direct result of...giving away to the enemies of G-d our Holy Temple Mount and the...Biblical areas of Israel.... We read in the prophetic Scriptures of Ezekiel and Zechariah about the terrible Gog and Magog war which is going to come on the people of Israel...in the time of redemption...when the Messiah...will appear [to] be the eternal King of Israel. This war will also open a new moral and spiritual page in the history of Israel. After this war the people of Israel will not be the same people....

Gershon Salomon, leader of Israel's Temple Mount Faithful, The Voice of the Temple Mount, Autumn 1995, pp. 2,7

Now we are in Jerusalem, never to be divided...never to pull out from the most ancient and sacred place in Jewish history. Jerusalem is a commitment to our history [and] future. Jerusalem is the symbol of Jewish resurrection. And as such it will survive forever in the hearts...and in the actual life of the Jewish people.

Ehud Olmert, mayor of Jerusalem, in interview with Randall Price, November 10, 1995, cited in Randall Price, Jerusalem in Prophecy, pp. 63-64

Q&A

Question: Dave, I am distressed by some of the ideas expressed [in *The Berean Call*]. The Lord Jesus and his followers were and remained observant Jews.... Another distortion [in *TBC*] is that Paul dismissed the Torah. [No, he] is not telling Jews to disobey the Torah but making it easier for Gentiles to come into the Messianic movement. Paul's warning against triumphalism on the part of the Gentiles has been ignored by most of the church who [are] pushing the sons of Jacob offstage [moving] the sons of Ishmael into their place...so Arabs are Israel and Jews are not...."

Answer: How can you imagine that *The Berean Call* holds to such ideas? We often express the opposite. Yes, "Jesus and his followers were observant Jews" before the Cross, but they did not "remain observant" after the Cross concerning anything that prefigured salvation. Of course, they kept the Passover and feasts that identified

them with their Jewish history—but not the Sabbath (Rom 14:1-17; Col 2:16, etc.), nor the priestly sacrifices. Even prior to the Cross, Jesus (the Lord of the Sabbath) and His disciples didn't keep the Sabbath according to the understanding of the rabbis, for which they severely criticized Him (Mt 12:1-13; Mk 2:23-28; Jn 5:8-11, etc.).

The legal system under which Jews were held ("law of commandments contained in ordinances") was "abolished" at the Cross (Eph 2:14-22). The Levitical sacrifices for sin were all fulfilled and done away with in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. This fact is beyond question: the "veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45). Christ offered the "one sacrifice" that could take away sin, and therefore did away with all of the Levitical sacrifices, which were mere types (Heb 9:23-26; 10:1-22; etc.).

You say that Paul was "attempting to make it easier for Gentiles to come into the Messianic movement." Your terms "Messianic Jews" and "Messianic Movement" are not found once in the Bible. Jews and Gentiles who claim to be part of such a "movement" have departed from Scripture! Sadly, these popular terms seem to imply that Gentiles aren't really Christians in the full sense until they adopt Jewish observances. You don't like the term "Christians," but it is biblical (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pt 4:16). Though it was a derogatory appellation at first, the followers of Christ seemed to accept it.

Question: I complained to Jack Van Impe that on TV he appears to embrace Catholicism [with] its false gospel of sacraments and works, etc. He replied that while Protestant denominations teach false doctrines, the Catholic Church is getting back to its roots concerning the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. Well, I'm upset! The greatest lie in the history of Christendom is that Christ's sacrifice wasn't sufficient to forgive all sins and you need penance, purgatory, Mary, indulgences, baptism, Mass in installments to make up what Jesus' death did not cover. He says that when he heard hatred dripping from the lips of those who criticize Catholics, he decided just to preach the truth. What can I do?

Answer: It is wrong to hate anyone. We are to speak the truth in love and grace, seasoned with salt. But Jack is not speaking the truth when he supports Roman Catholicism. He uses the faults

of some who oppose its false teaching in the wrong spirit to excuse himself from bringing correction in the right way. Unfortunately, instead of correcting Roman Catholics in order to rescue them from hell, he tells them they're okay.

He claims that the Catechism of the Catholic Church is mostly biblical. In fact, it is filled with the unbiblical teachings of Rome. Jack called the Pope a born-again Christian. He knows better, so how he can with good conscience so badly lead Catholics and others astray is a mystery. God knows his heart, but we must judge what he says.

No Bible-believing person could ever call the Catechism of the Catholic Church even 20 percent biblical! Instead of rescuing Catholics with the truth, Jack is encouraging them with flattery on their way to the Lake of Fire, robbing multitudes of salvation in Christ!

Question: I agree that our only creed is the Bible, but we are not to separate ourselves from the brethren [but] to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace....I don't believe that anyone can say "I simply rely on God's Word" and then ignore the fellowship of the saints from generations long past. To do so puts one in peril regarding the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. You should seek...and welcome the insights given to saints long ages past by the Holy Spirit....None of us must ever put ourselves above the Faith once for all delivered to the saints....We should take refuge in the "historic Christian faith" as affirmed by many godly men throughout Church history.

Answer: How do I "seek the judgment of the saints down through the centuries"? Where did they record them? And who are these godly men from ages past? Must I search out their writings? And since they disagree with one another, how do I arrive at the majority view, and why should that be the rule? Where could I better find "the Faith once for all delivered to the saints" than in the Bible, where it was recorded by men of God inspired of the Holy Spirit? Or where would we better find "the fundamental doctrines of the Bible" than in the Bible itself?!

I appreciate your concern, but your advice, sincere though it may be, is not wise. Why, in order to find out what the majority believed, must I search through books written long ago by mere men when I can go to the Word of God itself, where the truth is written in clear

language that is “sharper than any two-edged sword”! And so to the Bible I will go and, like the Bereans, will stand upon it regardless of what others may say.

Question: You have wasted so much time researching and writing about Calvinism that you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Aren't Calvinists Christians? Isn't it shameful to cause division in the body of Christ by arguing over moot points such as predestination and total depravity? Please respond.

Answer: I can't confess either to having wasted time on this subject or that it involves “moot points.” In fact, I believe it is of the utmost importance and I am astonished at the unwillingness of the vast majority of Christians either to take the time to study it or to recognize the basic issue. What is the basic issue? It is the question of whether God truly desires for all men to be saved and gave His Son to pay the penalty for sin and thus has made salvation available to all who will receive it—or whether God created billions of people and predestined them to eternal punishment *whom He could just as well have brought to heaven*. I don't think anything is more important!

Calvinism gives atheists a legitimate reason to reject a God who causes a select elect to believe the gospel but deliberately places billions outside of His “irresistible grace” because He wants them to suffer for eternity. That is not the God of either the Bible or of the conscience that the true God has given to all mankind! This is the issue, and it is the reason we titled the book *What Love Is This?*!

Question: How does the rise of Islam fit with the revival of Rome? The woman riding the beast represents a world religion headed by the Vatican. Can you see Islam ever uniting with Rome?

Answer: Yes. The Vatican has long been “dialoguing” with Muslims to realize such unity. Muslim leaders have already joined with Rome to oppose abortion. Many Muslim leaders are ecumenists. On May 14, 1999, a delegation of “Christian” and Muslim leaders from Iraq visited the Pope in Rome. They gave the Pope a special copy of the Qur'an. He kissed it and expressed his reverence for it.

Official Catholic declarations claim that the Muslims worship the one true God. For example: “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the

Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Moslems:...and together with us they adore the one, merciful God...” (Vat II, Lumen Gentium, II, 16). Conspicuous by its absence is any reference to Jews as worshipers of Yahweh, while Muslims are put in “first place.” Rome accepts anyone of any religion as long as they give allegiance to the Pope.

Your question, however, pertains to true Muslims, for whom there can be no compromise with any non-Muslims, religious or not. How will these be united into a one world religion and government under the Vatican and Antichrist?

Only one event could bring this about: the sudden disappearance of perhaps 100 million people from this planet through the Rapture of true Christians. Terror would grip the entire world, causing the most violent enemies to unite against the common extraterrestrial enemy that has apparently snatched slaves from Earth and in all likelihood will return for more.

This worldwide hysteria will be Satan's opportunity to put into power the man “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish...” (2 Thes 2:8-12). Antichrist will seem to have the answer to the crisis, and the world will follow wherever he leads.

At the beginning, he needs the false church (the woman who rides the beast), along with the Vatican's worldwide network. He will claim to be God and “all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rv 13:8). But when he is established and no longer needs the woman, he will destroy her.

Question: Several scriptures lead me to believe that after we are in the New Jerusalem with our Lord, there is still evil elsewhere. That Revelation 21:27 says that evil will in no way enter the New Jerusalem leads me to believe it will still exist...outside “are dogs...” Please explain.

Answer: Peter refers to the “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pt 3:13). No evil can enter into God's new creation. It cannot exist just outside the gates of the New Jerusalem. The fact that “without are dogs, and sorcerers...” (Rv 22:15) doesn't mean just outside the gates, but outside of God's new creation and in outer darkness (Mt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

Correction: In the March 2005 issue of The Berean Call “Q&A” section, Dave referred to Herod the Great as the murderer of John the Baptist. A sharp reader pointed out that it was Herod Antipas, his son, who killed John. Dave apologizes for this error, which also got past all of the TBC staff.

Judgment Day Approaching

Dave Hunt

Israel is the major topic of the Bible. The word "Israel" occurs 2,565 times in 2,293 verses. More than enough prophecies have already been fulfilled in Israel's unique history to prove that "the God of Israel" (203 times) is the true God. In Zechariah 12:2-3, He declares:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

This is an amazing prophecy not only that Jerusalem, which was then in ruins, would become a burden to the whole world, but that all of Israel's neighbors would be united against her. They have fought one another in the past. Yet today, for the first time in history, "all the people round about" are united by Islam to destroy Israel.

For more than 50 years, Israel's neighbors have launched surprise attacks against her and she has proved too strong militarily, even though they outnumber her forty to one. God said, "I [will] make...Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood...and they shall devour all the people round about..." (Zec 12:6). Soundly defeated every time, her Muslim neighbors feign a desire for peace, hoping to deceive and ultimately destroy her—a strategy established by Muhammad.

The real battle is not between Arabs and Jews, but between Allah and Yahweh. There is no question of the outcome, but it will be costly for both sides: Israel will be severely punished for rebellion, and her enemies will be destroyed.

Exactly as foretold, Jerusalem is a burden to all people of the world. More than 60,000 individual votes have been cast in the UN against Israel. This tiny nation with one 1,000th of the world's population has occupied one-third of the United Nations' time—a burden indeed!

Skeptics accuse Christians of trying to fit current events to the Bible, claiming that no one recognized such prophecies until Israel was formed in 1948. On the contrary, for centuries most evangelical Christians have preached from the Bible

the return of the Jews to their own land. Even John Owen, a leading Calvinist, wrote in the 17th century: "The Jews shall be gathered...into their homeland."¹ This was also the opinion of the poet John Milton, of John Bunyan, Roger Williams, Oliver Cromwell, and many others.

Martin Luther wrote: "If the Jews are Abraham's descendants...[they should be] back in their own land [with] a state of their own. But...[they are] scattered and despised."² He therefore wrote off the Jews as God's chosen people and persecuted them. But today the Jews *are* back in their own land after 2,500 years of being scattered worldwide, speaking Hebrew just as King David did 3,000 years ago. No other people have returned to reestablish their own nation and language after being cast out of their land for such a period of time.

Some prophecies applicable only to our day are frightening, foretelling God's judgment. The language is often graphic:

If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies...my sword shall devour flesh... (Dt 32:41,42). For, behold, the LORD will come...to render his anger with fury...by his sword... (Is 66:15,16). And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other...they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried.... (Jer 25:33)

The question is often asked as to whether the United States (or Canada, Australia, et al.) is in Bible prophecy. Of course! Scripture declares that *every nation* in the world will join together to invade Israel in the last days and be destroyed in the battle of Armageddon: "I will gather all nations [surely *all* includes America] against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken.... Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations..." (Zec 12:9; 14:2-4).

But wouldn't the United States be spared for being Israel's friend? In fact, the U.S. State Department has often been against Israel. This was true in the Yom Kippur War. In a sneak attack (October 1973), 80,000 Egyptians overwhelmed 500 Israeli defenders along the Suez and 1,400 Syrian tanks swept down the Golan with only one Israeli tank in service to oppose them. Israel was taken by surprise. Most of her armed forces were on holiday. The initial success of the attackers so electrified the Arab world that nine other Arab states rushed to get in on the slaughter.

Historian David A. Rausch writes:

"Jordan's King Hussein sent two of his best armored brigades to Syria. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait financially underwrote the huge cost while sending thousands of troops to fight the Israelis. Kuwait lent her British-made Lightning jets to Egypt. Libya's Muammar Qaddafi turned over forty French-made Mirage III fighters and 100 tanks. Iraqi MiG fighter jets as well as tank and infantry divisions fought on the Golan Heights, while a squadron of Iraqi Hunter jets were utilized by Egypt. Arabs predicted the extermination of the Jewish state and the 'liberation' of Palestine...."³

The Soviet Union blocked any UN attempt at a cease-fire and reformed the Arab forces with armaments and supplies by sea and air. It was the closest Israel ever came to being defeated. But when the war ended, the Israeli tank columns were on the outskirts of Damascus and Cairo and could have taken those cities had they not turned back. Tragically, Israel suffered about 3,000 dead—which would be comparable to the U.S. losing 150,000. Except for a series of miracles from God, Israel would not have survived.

Where was her friend, the United States? Dozens of notices were sent to the Nixon White House by America's National Security Administration (NSA) that an Arab Pearl Harbor was about to be launched against Israel. Nixon sat on them. Kissinger hid at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York the day of the attack and waited another three days before convening the UN Security Council. Declining to rush desperately needed military supplies to Israel, the White House said it had to be careful not to upset the Arabs and cause an oil crisis.

Six years earlier, on June 8, 1967, the fourth morning of the "Six-day War," the USS Liberty, an electronics eavesdropping vessel, arrived off the Sinai coast and began to suck in every Israeli military communication, relaying it all to the British Secret Service's giant computer installation on Cyprus. From there, complete maps of every Israeli military move were transmitted in advance to the Arab armed forces. With that help, the Arabs might have been able to use their overwhelming numerical superiority to turn the tide of the war. Israel had no choice except to put the Liberty out of commission. Of course the media screamed about this "cold-blooded attack." No one believed Israel's public excuse that the Liberty had been mistaken for a hostile Egyptian ship—and neither the U.S. nor Israel has publicly told the truth.

Yes, the United States, too, will attack

Israel and will be punished at Armageddon. God declares plainly that He will bring *all* nations against Israel to destroy them:

In the latter days...I will bring thee against my land...my fury shall come up in my face...there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel...the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things [on] the earth, and all the men [on] the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence...[all nations] shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezk 38:16-23)

This is terrifying language! What causes this “great shaking” of the entire planet and every living creature upon it? God is personally coming to earth as He did at Mount Sinai when He gave the Law—and He is going to take vengeance upon the enemies of Israel!

There are two specific reasons for God’s judgment: “I will also gather all nations ...into the valley of Jehoshaphat [between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, where God miraculously destroyed invading nations without Israel lifting a finger (2 Chr 20:10-25)], and will plead with [punish] them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have [1] scattered among the nations, and [2] parted my land” (Joel 3:2).

Of course, all nations have participated in persecuting and scattering the Jews from country to country for 2,500 years. The second reason for God’s judgment falling on *all* nations, however, is something that has only occurred within our generation: “they have...parted [divided] my land.”

Israel has been overrun by invaders many times—but never did any conqueror divide the land. The victor does not share its spoils with others. Since World War I, however, all nations have joined to divide the land of Israel.

The 1917 Balfour Declaration, the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, and the 1922 Declaration of Principles by the League of Nations all recognized that the land that had become known as “Palestine” (since the Romans renamed Israel in A.D. 135) belonged to the Jews. It was set aside to become the national homeland of the Jewish people “internationally guaranteed, and...formally recognized to rest upon ancient historic connection.” Of course, history ties Israel to all of “Palestine.”

Britain was given the mandate to see that the Jews were safely settled there. The discovery of huge reservoirs of oil under Arab lands caused Britain to keep Jewish immigrants out and let in tens of thousands

of Arabs. Just when millions of Jews desperately needed a haven to which they could flee from Nazi Germany, Britain’s 1939 White Paper limited Jewish immigrants to 10,000 per year for a maximum of five years, plus an additional 25,000 “refugees” during that period—then the door to Palestine would be shut entirely to the Jews. Since the Nazis had marked for extinction 11 million Jews in Europe, the quota of 25,000 defied God and conscience.

A year earlier, President Roosevelt had gathered delegates from 32 countries in Evian, France, to discuss the worsening plight of the Jews. Roosevelt made it clear that the United States would do nothing. Britain said there was no room in Palestine and it was not to be discussed. Professing their great sympathy for Europe’s Jews that everyone knew were to be exterminated, the nations offered various excuses why they could do nothing to intervene.

Hitler shrewdly declared, “We...are ready to put all these criminals at the disposal of these countries...even on luxury ships.” When the conference ended with the Jews completely abandoned, Hitler mocked the participants: “It was recently regarded as wholly incomprehensible why Germany did not wish to preserve in its population...the Jews...[yet these] countries seem in no way anxious to [receive them] now that the opportunity offers.” The entire world was Hitler’s partner in destroying the Jews!

In 1944, Hitler offered to sell to the allies 500,000 Hungarian Jews for \$2 each—and no one would take them! England said there was “no room” in Palestine for them! In 1943, Britain and America had agreed to say and do nothing about the Holocaust, fearful that if pressed, Hitler would dump the Jews on his critics. The Allies steadfastly refused the repeated urgent appeals from Jewish organizations to bomb the rail lines going in and out of the extermination camps. God will judge all nations!

After the war, a trickle of emaciated survivors of Hitler’s death machines sought to reach “Palestine” in half-sinking ships. Some who got within sight of the land God had given to them as an everlasting inheritance (1 Chr 16:15-18) were driven back by the British navy and put into internment camps on Cyprus. Many who did manage to find shelter within what would become the new Jewish State of Israel were rounded up by the British and removed to those camps. Britain created Jordan out of most of the Promised Land. The demise of the British Empire, upon which “the sun never

sank,” can be counted from the time Britain betrayed the Jews—one more fulfillment of the prophecy, “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee...” (Gn 12:3).

When the UN finally voted to partition Palestine on November 29, 1947 (UN Res. 181), God’s “chosen people” received about 13 percent of the land that had once belonged to them! Thus Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled that all nations would join to divide Israel. The only part of that prophecy remaining to be fulfilled is the judgment on the nations for having “parted” God’s land: “The land shall not be sold [partitioned] for ever; for the land is mine” (Lv 25:23).

God’s anger is growing hotter against the nations of this world for robbing Israel of what He gave to her. Yet in continued defiance of God, every peace proposal that the West has imposed upon Israel has involved further dividing of God’s land. President Bush, a professing Christian, originated the so-called “road map to peace,” which calls for a further dividing of the land of Israel. He ought to tremble and repent, as should President Putin, the EU, and the UN, who have joined Bush to make up the “quartet” sponsoring this plan.

On her part, Israel has been willing to give away more and more land in exchange for promises of “peace” from the PLO in spite of the fact that its charter calls for the destruction of Israel and that its maps and those of the entire Arab world do not even acknowledge Israel’s existence. The fact that Israel has been forced to do so by the West is no excuse. For this she will be punished severely in what is called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7). Yes, God will deliver her, but only after two-thirds of all Jews on earth have been killed (Zec 13:8,9).

There is no more appropriate place and way to destroy the nations that have abused Israel than when they, in the spirit of Satan, come to effect once and for all what Hitler called the “final solution to the Jewish problem.” Believers are to meet together to encourage and exhort one another from Scripture, “so much the more, as ye see the day [of judgment] approaching” (Heb 10:25). Fulfilled prophecies are heralding that day as never before. **TBC**

This article contains excerpts from Dave’s book, JUDGMENT DAY! which is available as a downloadable eBook or hardcover edition. Visit us online at: www.theberean.org.

Quotable

If the Saudis have the right to travel to Western countries and build mosques [they've built thousands and many are centers for terrorist activity and spreading hatred of the West], then we should have the right to engage in open missionary activity in Saudi Arabia or anywhere else [and] proclaim our ideas of Western freedom and an open society, whether this offends other countries' rulers or not. We have no obligation to "respect other cultures" and ideas when those cultures and ideas lead to human suffering, misery, and servitude....

Islam is a collective psychosis seeking to become global, and any attempt to compromise with such madness is to become part of [it]. No one who believes that jihad is the right or duty of all Muslims...promotes adoption of Shari'a law or reestablishment of the caliphate, should be allowed to settle in any Western country, and every applicant should be asked. The passport of anyone preaching jihad should be revoked. This may be called discrimination but the quarrel is not of our choosing.

Islam, in Muhammad's texts and its codification, discriminates against us. It is extremely offensive. Those who submit to that faith must solve the problem they set themselves. Islam discriminates against all "unbelievers." Until the petrodollars support a Kuranic revisionism that does not, we should go for it with whips and scorpions, hammer and tongs [and] act together before it is too late.

Serge Trifkovic, The Sword of the Prophet, pp. 299, 301

We are fighting a religious war, and knowing it is the first step in winning it. Our refusal to acknowledge this...because it might offend our Muslim and Arab friends, or...a politician might lose the Muslim vote here at home—does not make it untrue. We can't duck this...[there are] governments that publicly condemn terrorism but make deals with the radicals who run the madrasses and incite violence and jihad against the West, including Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, United Arab Emirates....

The United States doesn't want Israel to defeat its enemies. The reason...is bizarre but true. There is a small but powerful Palestinian lobby inside the State Department who reason that Israel is part of the Middle East problem. This crowd says the Palestinians are simply defending

themselves, that the Palestinians need representation. These bleeding hearts, misguided government workers...are wrong.

Colonel David Hunt, U.S. Army (Ret.), Fox News military analyst, They Just Don't Get It, p. 59

Q&A

Question: In your article on the Pope's passing you said, "like the Pope, the Church he led firmly rejects Christ's promise of eternal life." Contradicting your statement, the May 2005 *Christianity Today* bears an American evangelical missionary's testimony that the Pope's message was "the clearest presentation of the gospel that I ever heard." The Pope also gave Billy Graham the invitation he needed for his crusade in a country where evangelicalism was considered cultic. Bill Bright and Campus Crusade were able to accomplish far more in Poland with his help and assistance. The Catholic youth organization, Oasis, even adopted Campus Crusade's evangelical materials as part of its curriculum, and the soon-to-become Pope defended the relationship between Campus Crusade and Oasis in 1977, allowing the evangelical-influenced curriculum to continue being distributed. Shouldn't we thank the Lord for the gospel of the late Pope?

Answer: The Pope was the head of the Roman Catholic Church, a Church that proclaims a false gospel of salvation through prayers to Mary and various "saints," works and rituals, purgatory, medals, scapulars, and the Mass that denies Christ's once-for-all-time sacrifice on the Cross and its sufficiency. The late Pope was the leader in proclaiming this false gospel, which has sent billions to the Lake of Fire while promising them heaven (after an uncertain amount of time in purgatory, from which the Church will deliver them through countless Masses for a price). I will let you try to reconcile the claim of the *CT* article to which you refer—that the Pope was truly an evangelical Christian—with the truth that I present about him and his beliefs in my May article. I gave ample evidence that no matter what the Pope's public relations statements to evangelicals, he had no hope of salvation through faith in Christ but looked to Mary to get him to heaven.

I'm no expert on Poland, having only been there once for a series of meetings in a number of cities—but I do know the

Bible and the gospel. At one meeting in Warsaw, the Campus Crusade Director for Poland stood up and defended the Roman Catholic Church. I met with the leader of the Catholic Charismatic Movement in Poland, who admitted that his church had a false gospel centered in the Mass and Mary. I brought to Bill Bright's attention the fact that all of his staff in Ireland were practicing Roman Catholics. He thought I would be pleased that they were getting Catholics to embrace Christ through the *Four Spiritual Laws*. I told him that every Catholic already believed these "*Four Laws*," but other things they believed nullified the gospel and that Campus Crusade was only reinforcing Catholics in Rome's false gospel. That is the same situation that Campus Crusade embraced in Poland. These are not the only places that Campus Crusade has compromised with false gospels. As you may know, they licensed the Catholic Church to make its own version of the *Jesus* film including a purely Roman Catholic ending.

Christianity Today praises a Polish Roman Catholic youth movement called "Oasis" known for its "spiritual" retreats attended by thousands. It was founded in communist times by Franciszek Blachnicki, a priest who had become a close friend of then Cardinal Wojtyla of Krakow, who became Pope John Paul II. The article mentioned that Blachnicki had had a "conversion" experience in a Nazi prison. If he had been converted to Christ through the biblical gospel, then he would never have become a Roman Catholic priest presiding over the Mass that denies the gospel. What he really believed is clear. The *CT* article states that Oasis retreats that Blachnicki organized involved "spiritual renewal exercises structured around the mysteries of the rosary"—to which Wojtyla was also devoted all of his life. I explained the Rosary in the May article: it derives from apparitions of the alleged "Virgin Mary" and focuses upon her instead of on Christ, looking to her for protection and eventually salvation.

The *CT* article also mentions that Wojtyla opened the door to Billy Graham to hold his crusades in Poland. We have quoted Graham in the past, declaring that his beliefs were basically the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics and that any differences in belief between him and the Pope were not important as far as salvation was concerned. He consistently referred Catholics who came forward at his Crusades to the nearest Roman Catholic Church. To show that Bright

and Graham were not “theologically naïve,” the article mentioned that Trinity Evangelical Divinity School professor Norman Geisler was recruited by Crusade as guest speaker for a joint Crusade/Oasis Polish summer retreat. After returning from Poland, Geisler wrote of his trip in *The Christian Herald*: “What I experienced was a dynamic, joyous, Christian, and evangelistic community of believers who were more eager than most American evangelicals I know to learn and live the Word of God.” *CT* went on to say that “Geisler described that summer as the most gratifying experience of his then 25-year ministry.” One can only wonder, why Geisler refused to sign ECT (which accepted Roman Catholics as evangelical Christians) and rebuked those who did.

I’m sure that whatever Graham and Geisler preached in Poland, it did not correct Catholicism’s false gospel. Had Oasis youth believed that Christ paid the full penalty for our sins on the Cross, they would have left that Church. And had Blachnicki preached this, he would have been cast out.

The *CT* article declares, “Certainly John Paul II’s biggest accomplishment was his ecumenism”—as though that were good! I pointed out that his ecumenism gathered leaders of world religions such as Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, et al., for prayer and declared that they all believed in the one true God.

The facts I presented in my article prove that the late Pope was *not* a true Christian trusting in Christ alone for his salvation. Posing as the friend of evangelicals in the U.S., he vigorously opposed them in Mexico. He was an ecumenist uncertain of his own salvation and willing to embrace followers of any religion who would submit to Rome. Indeed, he was the guiding hand behind Chuck Colson and Catholic priest John Neuhaus in their composition of ECT.

I’ll let you reconcile these two faces of John Paul II. You might ask the opinion of former Catholics who received Christ and had to leave that church (there are millions), and let them explain the facts.

Question: Why would anyone who has died need to get their body back in the resurrection? We will be spiritual beings in heaven. If it is because we’re coming back to reign on earth with Christ in the Millennium, couldn’t God just take some dust and give us a new body? He is God. Also, I can’t imagine a God of love, which He is, giving back some people a deformed body.

Answer: If the resurrection left dead bodies behind in the grave, it wouldn’t be a resurrection. For there to be a resurrection, the body that died must be raised to life again. Our resurrection is because of and like Christ’s: we will be “in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom 6:5). The disciples thought He was a “spirit,” but He said to them, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Lk 24:39).

Nor will God give anyone back “a deformed body”—or a baby body, or an old, worn-out body. We will all have perfect bodies just like Christ’s. We will not be “spiritual beings in heaven,” but we will have spiritual bodies, able to handle things and to be handled and even to eat as Christ did to prove to His disciples that He was not a spirit—yet able to walk through walls and to transport oneself instantly from one place to another no matter at what distance (Jn 20:26-29).

Question: Revelation 20:9 says that Satan will be loosed and will deceive many nations who will then come against the saints and Christ in Jerusalem. Would you agree that these are the same raptured and martyred saints that will reign with Christ for 1,000 years?

Answer: Yes. Those who have come to faith in Christ before the Great Tribulation have been raptured and are in heaven during that time of God’s wrath upon earth. Multitudes will come to faith in Christ during the Great Tribulation and will be martyred for their faith (Rv 6:9-11). They will be resurrected at the end of that seven-year period (Rv 20:4), but not raptured, because Christ has returned to earth to reign on David’s throne. Both those who were raptured and returned with Christ at His Second Coming in their resurrected and glorified bodies, and the Tribulation martyrs who are resurrected at the Second Coming, will rule and reign with Christ for 1,000 years. They are the “saints” who, together with Christ, are the objects of the attack upon Jerusalem.

Incredibly, millions (“the number of whom is as the sand of the sea” – Rv 20:8) remain rebels, and they are the ones who attack Jerusalem when Satan is loosed. Thus the Millennium will be the final proof of the incorrigible evil in the human heart. In spite of the fact that Satan is locked up for 1,000 years so that he cannot influence those on earth, and that no evil can be

practiced anywhere, and in spite of the fact that Christ is present on David’s throne in His resurrected and glorified body revealing the fullness of His power as God, and in spite of the fact that the saints are ruling along with Him in their glorified and resurrected bodies—yet when Satan is loosed, the world follows him again just as Adam and Eve did in the beginning.

Those attacking Jerusalem are not after the new converts all over the earth, but direct their hatred at Christ and His throne and the glorified saints ruling with Him from Jerusalem.

Endnotes

- 1 Cited in Bridges for Peace website, May 21, 2004.
- 2 J. Randall Price, paper delivered at the Pre-Trib Study Group Conference, December 6, 2004.
- 3 David A. Rausch, *The Middle East Maze: Israel and Her Neighbors* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 57.

It Had to Be

Dave Hunt

Not only skeptics and atheists but also many who call themselves Christians often complain, “Why didn’t God make a perfect world without sin, suffering, or death? If He is all-powerful, surely He could have done that if He had so desired!” This common protest rests upon a very simple misunderstanding: the failure to recognize that God has given to all mankind the power of choice. It is self-evident that without this universal ability we could neither love God, nor one another, nor receive love—and compared with faith and hope, love is the “greatest” (1 Cor 13:13). Nor is it a question of God’s *power*. Love is a choice that must come from the heart; therefore, even God, with His infinite power, cannot force anyone to love Him or it would not be love. Choosing to love self and this world, instead of the God of infinite love who created us, is clearly the cause of all evil.

Yet many Christians offer no answer to this diatribe against their Creator. They hide behind God’s sovereignty and imagine they are pleasing Him when they attribute to Him loveless attitudes and actions totally contrary to their God-given conscience and to His character as revealed in His Word. Such misguided capitulation to irrationality by intelligent, morally accountable beings is dishonoring to God and is rightly scorned by sincere skeptics. “Sovereignty” is neither reason nor excuse for failure to love, much less for creating suffering and death that need not have been. How many evil tyrants have used this same excuse!

Could God have made a world inhabited by beings with the power to choose good or evil, to love or to hate, in which no one would ever have made the wrong choice and no one would have been hateful or vindictive, but unflinching loving and kind? Obviously not, if they were truly free to choose for self instead of for Him and others. Could He have created a universe in which beings who are less than Himself would never make a choice that was less than God-like or in which beings who could do what they wanted to do would never rebel against Him? No, that would be impossible. Beings who were less than God (as are all created beings) could not live up to God’s perfection—and to sin, for those made in God’s image (Gn 1:27), is to come “short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

Obviously, if God *could* have made

moral creatures capable of loving Him yet never sinning, but *did not* do so, He would be to blame for creating a world vulnerable to evil, pain, sorrow, and death. No such world, however, could exist from an original creation. God is blameless for the evil that man has wrought upon earth. Yet how often has a grieving wife, husband, mother, father, grandparent, or child lashed out in anger to blame God for the death of a loved one? Blame Eve and Satan who deceived her, and Adam for going along, though he knew better (1 Tm 2:14), but don’t blame God.

It was inevitable that Adam and Eve would sin by a misguided selfish choice that could not be blamed upon their Creator. If they were to be able to love and be loved, this is the way it had to be.

God did not *cause* them to sin, but He knew they would. Therefore, even before the universe was created, God’s Son, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, was prepared to come to earth as a man through a virgin birth and in love to die

“But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.”

—Acts 3:18

in man’s place in order to pay the full penalty for the sins of every person who would ever live.

It is beyond our comprehension, but inescapably true, that from all eternity Christ looked forward to the Cross, which He would one day endure “for the joy that was set before him” (Heb 12:2). Significantly, the book that decides the fate of the damned is called the book of life “of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rv 13:8). In the unthinkable but inevitable horror of man’s murder of God’s Son, the real face of evil was unmasked, the true heart of man—“deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9)—was laid bare, and God’s eternal justice and love were demonstrated beyond dispute for all eternity to ponder. In *the* crime of all ages, man despised, rejected, humiliated, scourged, and nailed his Creator to a cross. Thus the rebellion of self hidden in the human heart—the raw passion to tear God from His throne if possible—was revealed, and God’s loving response silenced all legitimate complaint.

When mankind, incredibly, was venting its full hatred upon its Creator, God

responded in love and forgiveness, submitting not only to the unjust treatment man imposed but also to the punishment of infinite justice against the sins of the world, interceding even for those who mocked and crucified Him: “Father, forgive them...they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Only by the full payment being made to satisfy God’s justice could God “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). We cannot doubt God’s wisdom, nor can we fault His love. Therefore, we know that this is the way it had to be.

It is self-evident that without the God-given power of choice, no one could be held morally accountable for anything and the very terms “right” or “wrong” would be meaningless. Nor could anyone experience God’s love, or love Him or other human beings. Thus, no creature incapable of moral choice could possibly know God himself, for “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Believers who have responded to God’s love through the gospel are likened to a “bride” that will be married to and become Christ’s wife (Eph 5:22-32; Rv 19:7-9), having from their hearts said “I do” to Him for eternity.

Christians who try to escape intelligent discussion of this most vital issue have forgotten, if they ever knew, that God welcomes sincere questions and has given us all the answers in His Holy Word. He invites all mankind, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Is 1:18); and He has commanded those who know Him to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh...a reason” for the eternal hope we have in Christ (1 Pt 3:15).

Every parent knows that each child is a unique individual with a mind of its own, who cannot be forced to behave in a certain manner but will inevitably, sooner or later, make free choices for its own selfish reasons. No one can live another’s life. Each person is morally accountable to choose good or evil—an inescapable responsibility that Eve imposed upon all of her descendants by disobeying God and eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Nor can imperfect beings always make the morally good choice. Most tragic of all is the fact that even though a child has been well taught and knows right from wrong, it may still self-destruct, and there is nothing that could have been done to prevent that from happening.

What mother or father whose child dies of an overdose of drugs, or in a wreck caused by excessive speed under the influence of alcohol, or in the electric chair for

murder, or is confined to prison for life (or even a day) wanted that to happen? Nor does God “take pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezk 33:11), but wants “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4). He cannot, however, force Himself upon us any more than a parent can force a child to willingly make the right choice.

The God who created this world and mankind to live in it no more desires anyone’s doom than parents desire the suffering and untimely deaths that so many children bring upon themselves. Listen to God’s lament as He pours out His heart over disobedient Israel, His chosen people, as a father would weep for his children: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more...” (Is 1:2-4).

Every thinking person knows that God cannot honestly be blamed for the evil rampant in the world. It exists because of choices that its victims themselves have made—choices that in many cases parents faithfully warned against and as their children grew older pleaded with them to avoid. Yet Martin Luther wrote an entire book, *The Bondage of the Will*, denying that anyone has the power of choice. John Calvin, too, in his zeal for God’s sovereignty, also denied this essential human ability. Even many of today’s most popular Christian leaders deny free will to mankind—including the ability to make the most important choice of all: whether to believe the gospel, which alone saves the soul. Thus, in their view, God is ultimately to blame for everything, although they attempt to deny the obvious conclusion to which this unbiblical theory leads.

It is patently simple that to deny man free choice exonerates him from moral accountability and makes God the cause of evil. No matter how we try, we can never escape the fact that we each make genuine choices of our own free will when we decide to do or not to do this or that. This includes choosing whether to submit to God’s will or to take our own way, and whether to receive

Christ as Savior or not. We all know this to be true; we choose of our own free will between conflicting options many times each day—and God can be blamed for none of these choices or their consequences.

When He made man, God knew that He would have a world of rebels on His hands, billions of little egomaniacs who would each want to willfully take his own way—billions who would need to be redeemed and who would each have to choose between self and God. When Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6), He was explaining the entire situation from eternity past to eternity in the endless future. Jesus alone could be the way back to God. This is the way it had to be.

God knew from the very beginning what was going to happen. He was not taking a risk by creating beings with the power of choice—He knew they would rebel against

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

—Habakkuk 2:14

Him. And He knew that there was only one way for them to be redeemed from the penalty they would bring upon themselves: His “only begotten Son” (Jn 3:16), the Son of His love, must come to this earth as a man and die in their place, paying the full penalty that infinite Justice would exact against sin. And from all eternity, the Son knew that as well. It had to be.

We can’t imagine what it really means that the Son *always* knew that He would be born into this world as a babe, would live a perfect, sinless life as only He could, be hated without cause, be rejected and despised by His own people, the Jews, to whom He would come as one of them, and that they, with the willing cooperation of the Roman Empire, would crucify Him. Of course, the truth of our redemption goes far beyond our capacity to comprehend. We are told that “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many” (Is 53:11). That seems a cryptic statement.

What could knowledge have to do with paying the penalty for our sins? Obviously, without full knowledge of every detail (including motivation) of every shameful, violent, appalling sin

that would ever be committed from all eternity—without full knowledge of the penalty His own justice required—God’s “righteous servant” could not pay the full debt that mankind owed for its wickedness and thereby “justify” all who would believe on Him. Indeed, He would be punished as though He were sin itself: “for he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, [he] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21). What love, what mercy, what grace!

Christ’s triumphant cry on the Cross, “It is finished!” takes on greater significance when we understand that He had eternally anticipated that moment: “This man [Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified...Now...there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:12, 14, 18). At last, it was all behind Him—the penalty paid once-for-all and in full for all mankind!

And how clearly and blasphemously does the Roman Catholic “Sacrifice of the Mass” deny Christ’s triumphant cry, “It is finished!” Its priesthood claims to turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ and to “immolate” Him millions of times on Catholic altars to be ingested into the stomachs of those who believe the lie that they are actually eating Christ. In fact, He is now in heaven in His resurrected, glorified body, exalted at the Father’s right hand!

The sins of the redeemed have now been forgotten, no longer to be remembered again (Heb 8:12, 10:17). Yes, books in which every sin is recorded will be opened at the Great White Throne judgment—but that is for those who rejected Christ and the pardon He obtained for their sins. At the final judgment, all who refused to accept Christ’s payment for their sins will be cast into the Lake of Fire to be tormented eternally by a conscience that can no longer hide behind the excuses with which it had deluded itself while on earth. The pain will include not only the full realization of the horror that their sins have wrought for themselves and others, but also the crushing load of audacious evil that they nourished in their rebellion against the God who created them. Sadly, not the least of the torment will be the eternally haunting realization that they could have been forgiven and in heaven had they not rejected Christ and the payment He made in infinite love for their sins.

TBC

Quotable

Life, life of love poured out, fragrant and holy!
 Life, 'mid rude thorns of earth, stainless and sweet!
 Life, whence God's face of love, glorious but lowly,
 Shines forth to bow us, Lord, low at Thy feet!

Grief, grief of love that drew hate's every arrow!
 Grief that Thy suffering heart only could meet!
 Grief, whence Thy face of love, shining in sorrow,
 Draws us, adoring, Lord, low at Thy feet!

Death, death of stricken love, wrath's sea exploring!
 Death, Life's mysterious death—Deep meeting deep!
 Death, whence Thy bursting heart fills ours outpouring
 All, all in worship, Lord low at Thy feet!

Samuel Webbe (1740-1816)

Q&A

Question: Most pre-tribulationists believe that 144,000 Jews are protected by God during the seven years of tribulation (Revelation 7:1-8) by receiving "God's seal in their foreheads." If the seven seals of Revelation are part of the tribulation period, then why do the Jews have to wait until after the sixth seal to receive God's mark of protection?

Answer: The answer is fairly simple: they haven't been commissioned until then, so there were as yet no 144,000 chosen by God to seal "in their foreheads." Whatever disasters have happened on earth prior to this time, these 144,000 have been spared. It is only at this point that they are chosen (other than in God's foreknowledge), so there was no way to seal them for protection before. From that point on, they "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rv 14:4).

Question: If all the demons were bound in the netherworld at the time they chose to follow Satan, where did the ones come from who are in the world today?

Answer: The ones "who are in the world

today" are the same ones to whom you refer, the only demons of whom I have any knowledge—and that is very slim. Clearly, demons were not "all bound in the netherworld at the time they chose to follow Satan." In fact, I don't think any of them are bound there yet. You remember that the legion of demons complained to Jesus, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time" (Mt 8:29)? That "time" is when they will be thus bound one day along with Antichrist, Satan, and the false prophet—but that time has not yet come.

Then what of the statement that God "spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment..." (2 Pt 2:4)? I think "hell" refers to their ultimate end, not to where they are now.

"Chains of darkness," I believe, refers to their spiritual state rather than a condition of being bound in a particular place. That they are in "chains of darkness" means that there is no hope for them ever to know or to be delivered by the truth from their just condemnation.

Question: Because Moses had a wife from one of the Arab tribes while in his exile from Egypt, aren't some of his offspring of Arab heritage, or has that been mud-died by years of intermarriage? I read that Arafat was descended from Muhammad, an Amalekite descended from Ishmael. Are these people born to be unsaved if they come from those who are not from God's chosen? Many became Muslims. Do they have no opportunity to be saved because of their heritage?

Answer: The fact that Moses had a black wife (it doesn't say she was either an Arab or an Amalekite) would have been so diluted through the centuries as to be of no significance today in the genetic composition of the Jewish race. Yes, Arafat was distantly related to Muhammad. He dropped his real name, Hussein, to hide his relationship with his great uncle and mentor, Haj Amin Mohammed Effendi al-Husseini, vicious terrorist leader and partner with Hitler, appointed Mufti of Jerusalem by the British in 1921.

As for being "an Amalekite descended from Ishmael," I have never heard that idea. The Amalekites are first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 14:7, were in Canaan when the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt (Nm 13:29; 14:25, etc.), smote the Israelites when they presumed to go into the promised land without God's bless-

ing (Nm 14:45), oppressed the Israelites in the days of Gideon (Jgs 6:3, 33), and are described in David's day as an ancient people who "were of old the inhabitants of the land" (1 Sm 27:8).

The Lord through the prophet Samuel commanded Saul to destroy them all (1 Sm 15:3), which he failed to do and was slain by one of them (2 Sm 1:6-10). David smote most of them, and 500 men of the tribe of Simeon killed any survivors in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah (1 Ch 4:41-43). Thus Muhammad could hardly have descended from an extinct people!

Nor are there any "people born to be unsaved if they come from those who are not from God's chosen." This is one of Calvinism's darkest doctrines: it is unbiblical, irrational, and unjust, because it damns multitudes to eternal punishment before they are born and gives them no opportunity to accept or reject Christ, making it pointless to preach the gospel. To say that Muslims are not given an opportunity to be saved because of their heritage is not true.

Romans 1 and 2 make it clear that all mankind have the witness of creation and conscience. If they reject this witness, they would also reject Christ, even if they heard the gospel repeatedly—as many in America do, to their own destruction.

Question: I saw on CSPAN, May 21, a Muslim scholar who was lecturing to a large and receptive audience concerning a reformation he says is taking place within Islam today. He claims that there is a growing reaction among Muslims against the violence of extremists who are giving Islam a bad name. He likened this to the Christian Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries and pointed out that all religions have exhibited a violent streak on the part of fanatics from time to time so that Islam is no different from other religions in this regard. Have you noticed this reaction among Muslim leaders and wouldn't it be a good thing if Islam could experience a true reformation?

Answer: In my latest book, *Judgment Day: Islam, Israel, and the Nations*, I document a recent and growing movement within Islam that decries violence and is slowly gaining strength. It is, however, a movement among intellectuals and thus is unlikely to affect the masses of ordinary Muslims. It has been brought about by the embarrassment among primarily educators and the media, caused by the

fact that so much of Islam is completely contrary to the conscience that God has given to all mankind and that even Islam cannot totally subdue or corrupt.

Furthermore, it is impossible for Islam to experience a “reformation” like the 16th-century Christian Reformation. This is because the latter involved getting back to the true teachings of the Bible, which brings salvation and the “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance” (Gal 5:22,23) that it produces. Any “reformation” that would return Muslims to the true teachings of Islam would have the opposite effect and would only *increase* violence and terrorism.

In fact, such a “reformation” within Islam is already underway, involving a return to the fundamental teachings of the Qur’an and the example of Muhammad and his early successors, the “rightly guided caliphs.” It calls for exterminating the Jews and beheading all others who refuse to convert.

Terrorists are not extremists, as the Muslim reformers try to say, but they are fundamentalists who practice true Islam as Muhammad founded and practiced it and as the Qur’an requires. No “reformation” of Islam could possibly do away with terrorism. Islam itself would have to be changed completely by scrapping Muhammad as its prophet and the Qur’an and Hadith as its authoritative holy books. Any attempt to do that would pit Muslims against each other in a never-ending bloodbath.

As for all religions having a history of violence, that is true. But biblical Christianity is not a religion, nor has it been involved in violence. The crusaders could not have been true Christians or they would not, under the banner of the Cross, have killed innocent and defenseless Jews all along the way to Jerusalem and throughout the entire land of what was once Israel and had become known as “Palestine.”

Any violence done in the name of Christ is a violation of His teachings and example. Violence and terrorism done by Muslims, however, are in obedience to the teachings of the Qur’an and of Muhammad and the example he set.

Question: On Sunday, April 17, 2005, I watched Jack Van Impe’s program on TV and sent him a letter [of protest] because of some of his statements. I am enclosing a copy of that letter and of [his] reply... He states that over 100,000 Protestants were put to death by other Protestants

because they were immersed [baptized], or because they proclaimed the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. Have you ever read from history such a claim?

Answer: No, but Jack is not known for his accuracy. He may be thinking of what became known as the “Peasants’ War”—a violent uprising by the peasants against the landowners, nobles, and clergy, seeking redress for a multitude of wrongs. Luther addressed the lords on behalf of the peasants and urged the latter to avoid violence. The peasants, however, continued to commit so many outrages against the nobles and princes that Luther issued a further violent pamphlet, “Against the Robbing, Murdering Hordes of Peasants,” advising that they ought to be massacred like mad dogs. About 100,000 peasants were slain.

This was not, however, Protestants killing Protestants for practicing baptism by immersion or for proclaiming the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth as Van Impe says.

And what is the point Jack is trying to make? For years, although an ex-Catholic who ought to know better, he has been promoting Roman Catholicism as the true gospel and the Pope as an evangelical Christian. Yet the Pope looked to Mary, not to Christ, for salvation and wore the brown scapular all of his life, relying upon the promise made by an apparition of “Mary” that is written upon it (known as the “Sabbatine privilege”) to take from purgatory to heaven the Saturday after their consignment in that place of torment all who die wearing it.

If Van Impe is referring to Anabaptists killed by Lutherans and Calvinists, they amounted to a fraction of his 100,000. Nor would that persecution ever justify or cover up the slaughter of millions of true Christians by the Roman Catholic Church.

In his letter to you, Van Impe commends the Catholic Church again. He needs to be honest with himself, with the Lord, and with his audience, and acknowledge that Catholicism is a false promise of heaven that is sending hundreds of millions to hell—and that his approval thereof has only deceived additional multitudes and increased the numbers heading for the Lake of Fire. One day he will stand before the Lord and give an account for this duplicity.

Question: Is Isaiah 3:24-26 a dual prophecy, referring both to the destruction at

the hands of Babylon and the Nazi Holocaust?

Answer: No. That could not be the case because, according to this passage, Israel would be in her land when this destruction took place, and it would come about through a war: “Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.” The six million Jews killed in the Holocaust did not die as a result of a war against Israel, which had no gates to “lament,” not having yet been restored to her land. In fact, it was probably the Holocaust that stirred a short-lived sympathy, which caused the nations to designate land for modern Israel.

The Bible Is God's Word!

Dave Hunt

God never adjusts Himself or His Word to the tastes of men. He never changes anything to appeal to the corrupt appetites of the ungodly in any age—no must come to Him on His terms. He commands all men everywhere to repent because of coming judgment (Acts 17:30, 31). “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD...” (Is 55:7). There is no softening of the gospel to make it “seeker friendly.”

Many claim to seek God but never find Him. Yet He has promised: “Ye shall seek ME, and find ME, when ye shall search for ME with all your heart” (Jer 29:13). The true God must be sought on His terms. It is not a question of music, videos, or other gimmicks to attract the youth, or of icons, candles, rituals, or other embellishments to create an aura of “sacredness.” The truth asks no props, only our fervent desire. The earnest seeker must come to God in repentance and cry out to Him for mercy.

God has spoken in His infallible Word. We must honor what He has said. Truth is not negotiable. Yet many Christian leaders promote wicked Bible versions such as Eugene Peterson’s *The Message* (NavPress, 1993; see *TBC* Oct ’95) that pervert God’s Word. Men like Peterson have no conscience about changing what God says, replacing His words with their own.

Peterson is praised for this perversion by many Christian leaders such as J.I. Packer, Warren Wiersbe, Jack W. Hayford, and Richard Foster, founder of the *Renovaré* Movement and General Editor of the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2005). Foster loves *The Message* because it supports that movement. Peterson is “Consulting Editor, New Testament” of the *Renovaré Bible*. He reduces much of Paul’s vital treatment of the gospel in Romans to metaphor, which he says is the “opposite [of] precise use of language” (p. 2045).

The *Renovaré* movement’s major purpose is to subtly lead the church back into the occultism of the mystics of the early Roman Catholic Church through “spiritual disciplines” and “spiritual formation.” The *Renovaré Bible* is a major effort in that direction. A host of “scholars” contributed commentaries, among them Bruce Demarest, Professor of Theology at Denver Seminary; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Tremper Longman III, Professor of Biblical Studies

at Westmont College; Earl F. Palmer, pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, WA and on the Board of Trustees of the long-apostate Princeton Theological Seminary (as was Sir John Marks Templeton).

The *Renovaré Bible* includes the Apocrypha and declares, “Most of the Church throughout much of history has accepted the Deuterocanonicals as Scripture...”¹ Not as *Scripture*. Nor were these 13 books, written during the time between Malachi and the birth of Christ, ever accepted by Israel as inspired. Indeed, 1 Maccabees states that God was not speaking through prophets and apologizes for its errors (9:27 and 14:41). Obviously, anything written during that silence from God could not be Scripture.

From the Apocrypha, the Roman Catholic Church justifies purgatory, prayers for the dead and their eventual redemption through a propitiatory sacrifice (thereby justifying the Mass), purchase of forgiveness of sins, worship of angels, prayers to the “saints” and their ability to intervene. Yet *Renovaré* asserts, “The Deuterocanonicals do not affect any central doctrine of the Christian faith.”²

The Apocrypha were never quoted by Christ or by His apostles, though the Old Testament is quoted in the New more than 250 times. Even *Renovaré* does not put the Apocrypha on the same level as the Bible but as helpful for “spiritual formation.” Then why include it in the same volume as Scripture—and without any warning concerning its heretical teachings?!

The *Renovaré Bible* introduces what it calls “Spiritual Disciplines” to help one’s “spiritual formation.” Neither term is found in the Bible. *Renovaré* declares that the purpose of this study Bible is the “discovery, instruction, and practice of the Spiritual Disciplines.” In fact, many of these are occult “disciplines” not found in Scripture but advocated by the mystics as a means of getting in touch with God. Foster has been a major influence in seducing today’s church with the same practices—and now has edited a Bible for the express purpose of justifying this seduction.

A number of commendable “Spiritual Disciplines” are mentioned, and some that are not commendable: “solitude, confession... meditation and silence... secrecy, sacrifice, celebration.” These innocent words have a special meaning for Foster. Explaining his view of “celebration,” he writes: “We of the New Age can risk going against the tide. Let us with abandon...see visions and dream dreams...The imagination can release a flood of creative ideas [and] be lots of fun” (*Celebration of Discipline*, Harper & Row, 1978, p. 170).

In the West, meditation means to think deeply about something, but in the East it means to empty the mind in order to open it to the spirit world, leading to mystical experiences of “God.” Purporting to reject Eastern mysticism, Foster says, “Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind in order to fill it.” He seductively suggests: “John was ‘in the Spirit on the Lord’s day’ when he received his apocalyptic vision (Rv 1:10). Could it be that John was trained in a way of listening and seeing that we have forgotten?...Let us have courage to...once again learn the ancient...art of meditation” (*Celebration*, pp. 14,15). The idea that John had a special technique for hearing from God is heresy of the worst sort, but foundational to *Renovaré’s* promotion of “spiritual disciplines” and “spiritual formation”!

The arousal of the imagination through fantasy and visualization is a major theme in Foster’s *Celebration*. He acknowledges that “prayer through the imagination” was taught to him by Agnes Sanford, who popularized “inner healing,” a major source of much of the occultism in the Charismatic movement. (For documentation of her full-blown occultism, see *TBC* July ’89.) We have dealt with these errors in detail in *The Seduction of Christianity, Beyond Seduction, and Occult Invasion*.

Foster writes in *Celebration*, “In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body...Reassure your body that you will return...Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator. Rest in his presence. Listen quietly [to] any instruction given” (p. 27). This is astral projection and occult contact through the imagination and is the major technique used by shamans to contact their spirit guides.

Yet Foster claims that it leads to Christ and God: “Take a single event [from Scripture]. Seek to live the experience, remembering the encouragement of Ignatius of Loyola (Jesuit founder) to apply all our senses to our task...represent to your imagination the whole of the mystery...as an active participant...You can actually encounter the living Christ in the event, be addressed by His voice...touched by His healing power...Jesus Christ will actually come to you” (p. 26). *Not so!* You cannot call Jesus Christ from the right hand of the Father to appear to you—but any demon will be happy to pretend to be Jesus.

In like manner, the *Renovaré Bible* honors Catholic heretics and occultists as “saints” and their writings as a framework within which to understand Scripture. *The*

Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola are endorsed even though they involve occult techniques that have caused many to be demonized (see *TBC* Mar '00).

Sadly, the *Renovaré* explanatory notes deny the Divine authorship of much of Scripture—even that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Yet they hypocritically declare, “We read the Bible literally, from cover to cover...[and] in context.”³ *Renovaré* claims that Genesis 1-11 is neither historic nor scientific,⁴ and that the entire book of Genesis is merely a collection of myths:

Genesis began as an oral tradition of narrative stories passed down from generation to generation....These stories [gradually] took on theological meaning....Over time [they] were written down and collected together (Gen 12-50), and a prologue (Gen 1-11) was added....Borrowing from other creation accounts...stories with parallels to ancient Near Eastern religious narrative and mythology were reshaped with monotheistic intent....These strands of varied materials were gathered and edited into the written text....⁵

What wickedness for Christian “scholars” to unite with skeptics to declare that Genesis, which is foundational to the Bible, is just an edited compilation of mythology and folk tales! If Genesis is not literally inspired of God, then how can we have confidence in any other part of the Bible? What about Paul’s statement that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tm 3:16), or Peter’s “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pt 1:21), or Christ’s many quotations from Genesis and references to “the things that Moses commanded” (Mt 8:4; 19:7; Mk 1:44; 7:10; 10:3, 4; 12:19, 26; Lk 16:29-31, etc.)?

Contrary to *Renovaré*, the Bible itself declares in numerous places that *under the inspiration of God* Moses wrote the Pentateuch: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book...and Moses wrote all the words of the LORD...and Moses wrote this law, and delivered it...unto all the elders of Israel....And...Moses...commanded the Levites...put it in...the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God...” (Ex 17:14; 24:4; Dt 31:9, 25, 26, etc.).

“The law of Moses” is referred to repeatedly (Jos 8:31-32; 23:6; 1 Ki 2:3; 2 Ki 14:6; 23:25; 2 Chr 30:16; Ezr 3:2; Ne 8:1; etc.). Jesus called the Pentateuch “the law of Moses” (Lk 24:44). The Gospel of John is filled with affirmations that Moses was a prophet who wrote much Scripture (Jn 1:17, 45; 5:45, 46; 7:19-23, etc.).

Of Daniel, the *Renovaré Bible* declares, “We do not know who wrote it or exactly when it was written...it was most likely

partially written during Antiochus Epiphanes’ persecution of the Jews in Babylon, which began with the desecration of the Temple in 167 B.C.”⁶ So it is the work of an imposter pretending to be Daniel 400 years after the fact! To escape admitting that Daniel prophesied centuries in advance the breakup of Alexander’s empire under four generals, the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the pollution of the temple, skeptics had to invent a later date for these prophecies. *Renovaré* echoes this lie, robbing Christians of an essential proof of the validity of the Bible and depriving the unsaved of life-giving truth!

Daniel is written in the first person, telling events that happened to the writer four centuries before 167 B.C.: “When I...Daniel, had seen the vision (8:15)...I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days (8:27)...In the first year of Darius...I Daniel understood (9:1.2)...I Daniel was mourning three full weeks (10:2),” etc. (For evidence that Daniel authored his book in the sixth century B.C., see Q&A Sept and Oct '01.)

The *Renovaré* “scholars” continually downplay the powerful Old Testament prophecies of Christ (pp. 22, 32, 1375, 1377-8, 1384, etc.). The key prophecy in Isaiah 9:6-7 of the coming Messiah, who is “the mighty God, the everlasting Father,” is said to speak of “human agents” (p. 997).

The notes reduce Isaiah’s prophecies to “tradition” (pp. 982, 983), would have us believe that much of that book was not written by Isaiah (there are “three authors”—pp. 982, 1068), and even deny that chapter 53 prophesies Christ’s sacrifice for our sins (p. 984)! *Renovaré* describes the book of Isaiah as “poetic imagination...Isaiah imagines,” etc. The *Renovaré* “scholars” declare, “The prophets of Israel are not to be thought of primarily as...predictors of the future...they were poets” (p. 1079). Through poetry, Jeremiah attempts “to make sense of the events of his day...” (p. 1080). Blasphemy!

Renovaré rejects the powerful prophecies of Daniel, including the proof of 9:24-26 that Jesus is the Christ. There is not a word about the image foretelling the four world kingdoms and revival of the fourth (Roman Empire) under ten heads (2:36-45) to be destroyed by the Messiah when He sets up His everlasting kingdom. Nor is there a word about the future apocalyptic significance of the four beasts of Daniel 7 coinciding with Revelation 13. The wrath of God poured out upon earth during the Great Tribulation (*Renovaré* avoids that term) are described as “natural disasters straight out of Exodus” (p. 2268). Yet even the magicians in Egypt told Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” (Ex 8:19).

All of the major prophecies so crucial in proving the Bible to be the Word of God and Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah are either not commented upon, or are spiritualized away as pertaining to the “faith community” and its “spiritual formation.” There is no recognition of the great prophecies in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc., of Israel being brought back into her own land in the last days, and that she must endure forever (Ezk 35-37, etc.). For example, the powerful prophetic promise from God to bring back the Jews scattered around the world (Jer 31:8-14) is interpreted as a promise to all homeless people (nothing about Israel), and God’s promise that Israel can never be destroyed (31:35-37) is ignored!

Israel is treated as having been replaced by the church. Incredibly, the valley of dry bones brought back to life in Ezekiel 37, which is clearly declared to be “the whole house of Israel” (37:11), is interpreted as the birth of the church at Pentecost! Ezekiel 38-39 is not about Armageddon, with real armies attacking the nation of Israel back in her land in the last days to be rescued by the Messiah, but is about “dark forces” always at work in the world.

There is no commentary at Revelation 1:7 about the Second Coming of Christ (p. 2269), no evidence of belief in the Rapture; only that Christ will one day “return and overcome the wicked powers” (p. 2266). Revelation is reduced to a “pastoral letter meant to sustain the suffering and hearten the weary faithful” (p. 2267). The Antichrist and False Prophet (Rv 13) are de-personalized as “dark forces of evil” (p. 2281). The woman on the beast (Rv 17) has no prophetic significance but “embodies those institutions that across the ages have sold themselves to the dark forces...” (p. 2284). There is nothing about the city that it is clearly said she represents. So the fall of Babylon (Rv 18) “pictures the ultimate collapse of all human institutions given over to the lust for power...” (p. 2285).

The marriage of the Lamb to His bride (Rv 19) is not a real event in heaven but “symbolic of the many different celebrations that bring joy and jubilation” into our lives (p. 2287). The thousand-year reign of Christ (Rv 20) is not a real event, and the armies of the world coming against Christ and the saints at Jerusalem after Satan’s release merely symbolize “the armies of darkness [which] surround us” (p. 2288).

This “Study Bible” is one more step on the slippery downward path into deepening apostasy. The Bible is being mocked in the church. Let us stand firmly, vocally, and actively in defense of God’s holy, infallible, inerrant, and sufficient Word! **TBC**

Quotable

Christianity...walks with strong step and erect frame...kindly, but firm...gentle, but honest...decided, but not churlish. It does not fear to speak the stern word of condemnation against error, nor to raise its voice against surrounding evils...[and] does not shrink from giving honest reproof...It calls sin sin, on whomsoever it is found....

Both Old and New Testaments are marked by fervent outspoken testimonies against evil. To speak smooth things in such a case...is not Christianity. It is a betrayal of the cause of truth and righteousness...Charity covereth a multitude of sins; but it does not call evil good because a good man has done it; it does not excuse inconsistencies because the inconsistent brother has a high name and a fervent spirit....

Horatius Bonar (1808-89)

There is freedom to choose which side we will be on [good or evil] but no freedom to negotiate the results of the choice...By the mercy of God...[the gospel message] announces the good news of redemption accomplished in mercy; it commands all men everywhere to repent and...to surrender to the terms of grace by believing on Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. We must all choose whether we will obey the gospel or turn away in unbelief....Our choice is our own, but the consequences of the choice have already been determined by the sovereign will of God, and from this there is no appeal.

A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy

Q&A

Question: You have serious differences with Karl Keating, the head of Catholic Answers. I've seen the video of your debate in Detroit. [See offering list.] But he made a special report titled, *Endless Jihad: The Truth About Islam and Violence*, to "Expose the Little-known Threat Posed by Radical Islamists." The six-page ad agrees with you about Islam. Shouldn't we join forces with Roman Catholics against Islam?

Answer: No. The ad uses the terms "militant/militants," "radical Islam/radical Islamists," "extremist/extremists," "fanatics," etc., more than 20 times. He fails to point out that Islam itself is the problem, not its extremists

or fanatics. That fact is crucial in combating this violent, anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-Semitic, and anti-Israel religion. We must expose the truth of what Islam really is, has done, and continues to do. We must counter Islam with the truth of God concerning salvation for all in Christ alone.

Yet Vatican II recognizes Islam as a valid religion that worships and serves the true God of the Bible. How can Islam be faulted, if Muslims worship the one true God? Keating quotes John Paul II in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, blaming the denial of religious freedom upon "fundamentalist movements." The Pope meant evangelicals, but Keating inserts "Muslim" between "fundamentalist" and "movements" to make it appear that the Pope had Muslims in mind, which was not true.

The Roman Catholic Church lacks the moral basis to judge Islam, having slaughtered millions of true Christians and Muslims as Islam has slaughtered non-Muslims by the millions. The gospel alone can rescue Muslims—yet Rome adds so much to it (the Mass, holy water, relics, prayers to Mary, purgatory, transubstantiation, infant baptism, etc.) that we can no more partner with them than with Mormons, Muslims, Hindus, et al.

Question [from Scotland]: In *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*, you admit that the signs for the Second Coming have only manifested in the last 60 years (establishment of Israel, weapons capable of destroying all flesh on earth, apostasy, ecumenism, multinational economy, etc.). Without these signs the Second Coming could not have taken place, so the Rapture, which precedes it by seven years, could not have occurred. Thus your teaching of imminency must be wrong.

Christ couldn't have raptured His Church in the 1700s, for example, since the conditions of Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians, Revelation, etc., were not present: nation of Israel in her own land, weapons of mass destruction, global economy, apostasy, world religion, etc. The Lord can come at any time now, but couldn't have even 70 years ago. I want to believe that the Rapture was imminent from the very beginning until now, but how can you defend that doctrine?

Answer: Israel could have been brought back into her land and all of the conditions necessary for Great Tribulation events could have been pulled together in short order at any time in history. We can't

imagine how this could have happened, but God could have caused it, no matter how impossible it seems to us today. He is the God of the impossible, able to do anything, and that must include these developments as well, at any time.

Question: In your recent article, you said that the USS *Liberty* was picking up Israeli military communications during the Six-Day War in 1967, relaying them to Britain's giant computer installation on Cyprus, from which complete maps were generated and sent to the Arab armed forces, giving them information of Israeli troop positions and movements that could have prolonged the war at great cost of lives or even caused an Israeli defeat. I asked about this from someone who has a USS *Liberty* website. He replied, "The account you mention is baloney...originally written by Anthony Pearson in his soundly discredited book, *Conspiracy of Silence*....Pearson's version was picked up and repeated by Loftus and Aarons in a travesty called *The Secret War Against the Jews*"....

Answer: Thank you for your letter. I am always open to valid correction, which this is not. There is one glaring error, however, which neither you nor anyone else has pointed out: I said that the USS *Liberty* was sunk by the Israelis; in fact it was only put out of commission.

It is not true that "Pearson's version was picked up and repeated by Loftus and Aarons in...*The Secret War Against the Jews*." Out of 91 footnotes, only 3 refer to Pearson's book in the 26 pages they devote to this incident—and this was the basis of their report?! Ridiculous!

The author of an article on the website to which you refer states, "John Loftus and Mark Aarons boast a long list of 'investigative' reports, mostly about Nazis, Jews, and plots against Jews. *The Secret War* is one more effort in this growing genre...over 500 pages of print and more than 120 pages of source notes and bibliography to 'expose' a long list of mostly unprovable crimes against the Jewish people and the Jewish state told confidentially by anonymous and unidentifiable 'old spies.'"

The scornful reference to "this growing genre" betrays a strong anti-Israel and anti-Semitic bias and resentment that anyone should even mention plots and crimes against Jews—yet they have suffered more than any other people in history! Does he even accept the Holocaust? Anti-Semitism is further confirmed by his response to Aarons'

and Loftus's statement that the ship was off the Israeli coast. He scoffs: "The only 'Israeli coast' in sight was land the Israelis had captured just before we arrived."

In fact, the Gaza Strip was part of the "Promised Land" given to Israel by the "God of Israel" 4,000 years earlier. Egypt captured it during the 1948 War, and Israel had finally taken it back. During the 19 years that Egypt held this area, and Jordan held East Jerusalem and the West Bank, no one mentioned a "Palestinian State," which could have been formed. Instead, the Arabs themselves put the "Palestinians" in refugee camps, deliberately nourished their hatred of Israel, and turned them into terrorists murdering innocent Israeli civilians.

The *Liberty* incident is shrouded in secrecy. No one can *prove* anything. We can, however, use simple logic, starting from what all agree upon. For example, all agree that Israel knew the *Liberty* to be an American ship, yet deliberately attacked and put it out of commission. That makes no sense if its mission were friendly or neutral. What would be Israel's motive?

Some suggest that Israel wanted to draw the U.S. into the war by claiming that the Egyptians or Syrians sank the ship. For this unlikely ploy to work, the *Liberty* would have had to be sunk quickly in a surprise attack, leaving no surviving witnesses. Yet the contrary is clearly the case, as both sides agree. Nine reconnaissance flights over the course of the morning, giving the ship plenty of time to report them, hardly constitutes a surprise attack! The only sensible explanation is that Israel was making certain of the *Liberty*'s clandestine mission.

Furthermore, it is clear that Israel did not intend to sink the ship when it finally attacked at 2:00 PM, but only to destroy its intelligence capability. The Israeli Air Force is among the best in the world. It could have sunk the *Liberty* swiftly in one strike. Instead, the Israeli pilots strafed and napalmed the deck to wipe out the communication antennas, and sent a torpedo into that part of the hold housing the electronic intelligence center.

No logical reason has been given by the critics why this American ship that Admiral Thomas Moorer described as "the most sophisticated intelligence ship in the world in 1967" was off the coast of Israel four days into a war between Israel and the Arabs surrounding her! The Israelis must have had urgent security reasons for attacking this American ship and incurring the wrath of their only ally and chief

supporter—and the White House, caught betraying Israel, had good reason not to defend it. Aarons and Loftus offer the only sensible explanation, and it is supported by testimony of both Israeli and American former intelligence personnel.

The website you quote pooh-poohs "anonymous and unidentifiable 'old spies'" as a source. So these highly regarded and long-established authors have simply been lying for years, citing from fictitious sources invented details not only about the *Liberty* incident but dozens of other intriguing stories as well? Absurd! Remaining "anonymous and unidentifiable" is the nature of spies, active or retired.

Critics of Aarons and Loftus provide no rational explanation for the deliberate Israeli attack on a known American ship, or for the established cover-up originating at the highest levels of the Israeli and U.S. governments. The mystery dissolves with the knowledge that American fighter planes from two aircraft carriers already on their way to the rescue were *called back by direct order from the White House*—and the fact that the U.S. went along with Israel's phony excuse that they mistook the *Liberty* for an Egyptian ship.

This statement by Admiral Thomas Moorer is revealing:

U.S. military rescue aircraft were recalled—not once, but twice—through direct intervention by the Johnson administration. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's cancellation of the Navy's attempt to rescue the *Liberty*, which I confirmed from the commanders of the aircraft carriers *America* and *Saratoga*, was the most disgraceful act I witnessed in my entire military career.²

Or was the real disgrace a U.S. betrayal of Israel to curry Arab favor, and *that* was the reason for a cover-up? There is no other rational explanation. Web pages abound pressing for Congressional investigation, many by survivors of the *Liberty* attack, criticizing the government for not telling the truth and accusing the U.S. of a cover-up at the highest level. Top Naval officers, such as Admiral Moorer, have demanded an investigation—to no avail. Why do these legitimate demands meet only silence? Moorer calls the *Liberty* incident "one of U.S. history's most shocking cover-ups."³ These facts support what Aarons and Loftus were told by "the old spies." There is no other explanation.

All of the information put forth by eyewitnesses confirms that the attack was deliberate on a ship that the Israelis knew

was American. That undeniable fact, together with the conniving insistence of both the U.S. and Israelis that it was all a case of mistaken identity, has aroused the anger of survivors, as it well might. It has also added fuel to a hatred of Israel that was already simmering. One group of survivors declares: "We are NOT anti-Semitic. We ARE anti-Israel. We know that Israel has controlled the American congress for years...to the point where 34 dead sailors can go un-investigated!"

An unwillingness to face the truth forces the critics into such absurdities. So the White House and Congress are, after all, mere pawns in the hands of the Israelis? Anyone who believes that is obviously blinded, if not by anti-Semitism then by anti-Israelism, which is simply the former by another name.

The web page from which you quote cites James M. Ennes, Jr., a naval lieutenant aboard the *Liberty*. Did Ennes know the *Liberty*'s secret mission? Would he tell the truth about it if he knew? Clearly, most of the crew had no idea why Israel attacked. To them it was deliberate murder. Far from avoiding Ennes's eyewitness account, Aarons and Loftus cite it in support.

Endnotes

Article Endnotes:

- 1 Richard J. Foster, ed., *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), xxx.
- 2 *Ibid.*, Foreword, xvii.
- 3 *Ibid.*, General Introduction, xxxi.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 14-15.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 13-15.
- 6 *Ibid.*, From the introduction to Daniel, 1245, by James M. Rand.

Q&A Endnotes:

- 1 Exodus 5:1 and 202 other places.
- 2 *Stars & Stripes*, January 16, 2004.
- 3 *Ibid.*

Bless the Lord

Dave Hunt

We look to God to bless us, and hope and pray that He will, especially when we have some urgent need. But who ever thinks of blessing God? Yet the repeated usage of this expression in Scripture makes it clear that we are to do so; and that something more than words of praise must be involved—God is to be genuinely blessed with a gift from man that is of great value. Yet David’s description of blessing God seems to put it beyond human capacity: “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Ps 34:1-3). Mere men can magnify and exalt the infinite God who brought them into existence? That seems impossible.

Surely such pitiful creatures as we are can’t bless the Holy God, the infinite Creator of the universe, who has all and controls all! That’s too much to imagine! We are nothing and have nothing: all belongs to God. As King David said concerning the offerings Israel brought for building the temple, “for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD...for all things come of thee...of thine own have we given thee...O LORD, our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own...” (1 Chr 29:11, 14, 16). We can only give to God what He has in His grace and mercy given to us. As the hymn says,

Naught have I gotten but what I received;
 Grace hath bestowed it since I have
 believed.
 Boasting excluded, pride I abase,
 I’m only a sinner saved by grace....
 This is my story, to God be the glory,
 I’m only a sinner saved by grace!

Naked we came into the world, and naked we will leave it (Job 1:21). Then what do we have of our own that we can give to God and thereby bless Him? Surely nothing! Yet we read many times in the Bible of those who “blessed the Lord,” and we, too, are frequently exhorted to do so. Moreover, the language of Scripture seems to indicate that each of us has something unique that God created and gave to us—something priceless that we must willingly give back to Him, otherwise we lose all! The gift with which we can bless God must be something that He would otherwise never have—something He could not take from us and could not create as His own! And in returning this to God, we exalt and magnify and bless Him.

This biblical teaching presents one of the most powerful lessons we must each learn.

Yet, sadly, it is right at this point that we confront a deep conflict among Christians—a volatile difference of opinion over the sovereignty of God that we would rather avoid. Yet this vital issue can’t be escaped, for we face it throughout Scripture. The disagreement is not whether God is sovereign. Both sides agree that He has always been “in total control” of this entire universe, still is, and always will be. The argument (yes, that is, unfortunately, what it too often becomes) involves the question: “What does it *mean* that God is sovereign and in control of His universe?”

Christians take great comfort in reminding themselves, especially in times of distress, “God is still on the throne—He’s in control.” That is true—but seemingly forgotten is the fact that God was on the throne and in control when Satan rebelled and took many of the angels with him. God was surely on His throne and in control when Adam and Eve disobeyed the one commandment He had given them, and by their willful, rebellious sin, brought suffering and death upon

Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

Psalm 21:13

all their descendants even to this day. So it was when Cain murdered his brother, Abel, in cold blood, and when “every imagination of [man’s] heart was only evil continually... the earth [was] filled with violence” (Gen 6: 5, 13), and wickedness was so great that God repented of creating man.

We all agree on God’s total sovereignty, that He is unquestionably still on His throne and in control of the entire universe. Yet at the same time, evil increases while sorrow, suffering, disease, and death ravage the creatures He made in His image and over whom He mourns in love and pity. Why should that be?

Surely God is not happy that evil plunders His creation! In fact, He was so unhappy at the wickedness in Noah’s day that He would have destroyed mankind had not Noah found grace in His eyes. No one could say that the universal fact of evil gripping all of creation like a fatal plague was just the way God wanted it or that He had predestined it to be so! He has wept for 3,000 years over the sins of His people Israel, sending His prophets day and night, year after year, warning them to repent so He would not be forced to pour out His wrath upon them (Jer 7:3, 25; 11:7;

25:4,5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4, etc.), pleading over and over, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”

Surely, if God hates sin—and He does—it could not be something He wills. Yet this is the story of mankind throughout all of history, with wickedness only increasing in spite of God’s pleadings and warnings. Today’s advancing technology only gives man a loftier platform from which to shake his puny fist in his Creator’s face. Obviously, the fact that God is on His throne and in control of the universe doesn’t mean that rebellion can’t occur or that we may not suffer sickness, sorrow, pain, loss, and death. The question is, who is willing to surrender themselves to God to the point of saying with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him...” (13:15)?

No greater contradiction could be conceived than to say that the wickedness God hated then and hates now was, and is, what He desired and presently desires for mankind. Who would dare to say that the inevitable damnation and eternal torment of billions of His creatures in the Lake of Fire demanded by His holiness and justice is just the way God wanted it to be?! Yet there are those who say exactly that, declaring that God doesn’t love all or want all to be saved, that Christ did not die for all, and that God *predestined* those billions to suffer eternally. Those who teach this are sincere people and mean well, but they are making God out to be less loving and merciful than we expect of one another.

How do they justify this doctrine? Its proponents earnestly believe they are defending God’s sovereignty. Failing to understand that evil is something God *allows* but doesn’t *will*, they mistakenly imagine that if anything could happen (good or evil) that God did not will, it would mean that He was not sovereign. They refuse to consider the obvious fact (supported by hundreds of Bible verses) that God sovereignly gave man the moral responsibility and power of obeying or disobeying Him, of loving or hating Him. Unless this is true, obedience and reward, disobedience and punishment, love and hate—and much of the Bible itself—have no meaning.

The fact that God is sovereign need not mean that nothing can happen that He doesn’t will. If that were the case, then we would have to conclude that God wills the very evil that He hates—an obvious contradiction not only in logic but in character. Confusion at this point justifies the sneering complaint of the atheist who claims he cannot believe in God because of evil: “If your God can’t stop all evil and suffering, He is too weak to

be God. And if He can, and doesn't, He is a monster not worthy of our trust!"

There is, of course, one obvious answer to this dilemma, and only one: that God in His sovereignty has given mankind the genuine power of free choice and will not take it back. God can pressure, persuade, or plead with man, but He cannot force him against his will or He would destroy the very creature He made. Remember the exchange of letters over the Columbine massacre:

Dear God, Why didn't you save the school children in Littleton, Colorado?
Sincerely, Concerned Student.

Dear Concerned Student: I am not allowed in schools. Sincerely, God.

This world of sin, suffering, and death is not God's doing; it is what morally responsible man has irresponsibly wrought in opposition to God's will. Or else why would Jesus teach us to pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10)? Why would it be commendable to surrender to God with these words, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk 22:42), if nothing except God's will can happen anyway?

If ever young men were surrendered to God's will, it was the five missionaries martyred by the Auca Indians on January 8, 1956. Their theme song was, "We rest on thee, our shield and our defender. We go not forth alone to meet the foe. Strong in thy strength, safe in thy keeping tender, We rest on thee, and in thy Name we go." My wife and I stood at the piano with Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, and Ed McCully after Sunday dinner at Jim's uncle's home and, with Marilou McCully accompanying, sang together this song of trust and praise. It was our farewell to Jim and Pete just before they sailed to Ecuador. Ed and his wife stayed on a few months longer to finish a medical missionary course before rejoining Jim and Pete.

Ed was my closest friend. It was an almost shattering blow to learn of the deaths of these three soldiers of the cross (along with two others whom we didn't know) who had entrusted themselves into God's loving hands. The fact that God was on His throne and in control did not prevent what seemed a horrible disaster at the time—but brought much glory to His Name and many redeemed souls into His family in the years since.

God could not force these young men to delight in His will even to the death—this was the passion of their hearts. Nor could He force those of us left behind to praise Him in spite of what we could not understand, or to trust Him to bring good out of evil. Our surrendered trust and praise was something God

could not take from them or us, but which blessed Him when we voluntarily gave it to Him. God was magnified and exalted by the glad giving of our hearts in submission to His will, trusting that He knows what is best.

The first use of the phrase, "Bless the Lord," is an exhortation to Israel: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee" (Dt 8:10). In other words, we are to give to God the grateful thanks He deserves for His gifts to us. It must not be perfunctory praise, a formula repeated in order to get more blessings. The thanksgiving must proceed sincerely from the heart in recognition of our unworthiness and total dependence and trust.

Heartfelt gratitude that praises Him for who He is and for what He has done—while recognizing that we are undeserving of the least of His mercies—cannot be programmed or coerced by God. Such praise must come from our hearts. Thus it is something of our

**For to their power, I bear record,
yea, and beyond their power they
were willing of themselves.**

2 Corinthians 8:3

own with which we can each bless God in return for His great blessings to us.

David called upon the people of Israel to provide the necessary materials to build the Temple. When he saw that they brought abundantly and "willingly to the LORD [he] rejoiced with great joy [and] blessed the LORD before all the congregation [saying] Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.... Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name... for all things come of thee, thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness" (1 Chr 29:9-17).

In the revival under Nehemiah, the Levites commanded the people, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.... Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram... and gavest him the name of Abraham... and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, [et. al] and hast performed thy words..." (Neh 9:5-8). Then follows a lengthy

recital of how God took the Israelites out of Egypt, sustained them in the wilderness in spite of their rebellion, and brought them into the Promised Land; how they disobeyed, were restored, then rebelled again, went into idolatry, were forgiven and restored—the cycle continuing until God cast them out in reluctant judgment. The very acknowledgment to God of His patient pleadings year after year and His righteousness in judging Israel's sin brings a blessing to Him that He could not force from anyone. It must be offered willingly from the heart.

David was continually urging himself and all Israel to "bless the LORD." He declared, "In the congregations will I bless the LORD" (Ps 26:12), indicating that blessing the Lord is not to be given only from our hearts to Him, but ought to be done publicly also. Furthermore, we are to bless the Lord ceaselessly. Again, David is our example: "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Ps 34:1-3).

How often do we "bless the Lord"? How often do we recall the ways He has guided us, provided for us, kept us from yielding to temptation, protected and sustained us? How often have we thanked Him for all His mercies and told Him we love Him? Have you done that today? Have you communed with Him from a heart overflowing with gratitude and praise? That blesses Him!

We remember the Lord when we have needs and cry out to Him to bless us—but do we remember to bless Him when all is going well? God laments, "My people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer 2:32). Is life so busy that God's people don't have time to praise and thank the Lord from their hearts for His goodness and grace?

Or has life become so filled with efforts to cover every financial contingency, to realize one's full earthly potential, and finally to retire comfortably, that without realizing it we are finding our hope in this world rather than in God?

God laments through Jeremiah: "Be astonished, O ye heavens... be ye horribly afraid, be very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out... broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer 2:12,13). Let us bless the Lord at all times from the very depths of our being! Thereby we not only bring joy to our God but become wells of living water springing up into everlasting life, overflowing to others.

TBC

Quotable

God sovereignly decreed that man should be free to exercise moral choice, and man from the beginning has fulfilled that decree by making his choice between good and evil.

When he chooses to do evil, he does not thereby countervail the sovereign will of God but fulfills it, inasmuch as the eternal decree decided not which choice the man should make but that he should be free to make it...Man's will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign... would be afraid to...bestow moral freedom upon His creatures.

God moves undisturbed and unhindered toward the fulfillment of those eternal purposes which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began...with infinite wisdom and perfect precision of action. No one can...turn Him aside from His plans. Since He is omniscient [and] sovereign...there can be...no accidents...no breakdown in authority; and as He is omnipotent, there can be no want of power to achieve His chosen ends....

Within the broad field of God's sovereign, permissive will the deadly conflict of good and evil continues with increasing fury. God will yet have His way [but] as responsible beings, we must make our choice in the present moral situation.

A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Q&A

Question: Do you believe the Bible teaches traducianism or creationism, i.e., does God create a new spirit for each person at the time of conception, or is Adam's spirit the only one that God created out of nothing?

Answer: The soul and spirit of Adam, the first man, like his body, were created by God who "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gn 2:7). Is each baby's soul and spirit created by God, or by a natural process? "Traducianism" claims the latter: "the soul [and spirit] as well as the body is begotten by reproduction from the substance of the parents."

If such were the case, then souls and spirits, like bodies, would come from and be composed of matter, which makes no sense. How could physical matter produce nonphysical souls and spirits? It couldn't. Eve's spirit would have come from Adam's rib out of which her body was created; but that would not be natural

"reproduction." Either God was the first to clone a human—or He created Eve's soul and spirit out of nothing as He did Adam's.

That the latter is the case for all seems clear, for at death "...the spirit [of man] shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecc 3:21; 12:7). Therefore, God creates a new and unique soul and spirit for each person. This apparently occurs at conception, not at birth.

Question: In the July '05 Letters section, "TF of Ireland," a self-proclaimed "Calvinist," acknowledged that Tom and Dave are saved. Is it possible for someone who believes only in the soteriology of Calvin to be saved? Specifically, that God has to first change a person's heart. Then...with the gift of grace, faith and salvation in Ephesians 2:8-9, man afterwards, by God's decree, will come to Him (John 6:37), and fulfill God's requirement for him to believe and repent. Again, assuming that the fruits and works that follow are genuine, could this soteriology allow for salvation, apart from attributing any part of it to man's free will (John 1:12-13)? Can you extend a statement of being a fellow believer to TF (and other Calvinists) as he has to you?

Answer: I have been criticized for spending too much time on Calvinism, but I cannot ignore questions such as yours. Yes, there are many shades and colors of Calvinists. Like Lutherans, many but not all Calvinists (most Presbyterians) have been baptized as babies. They believe, as did many of their parents, that infant baptism saves. Calvin even declared that the children of the elect are themselves automatically among the elect—and whether one's parents were elect or not, if one was baptized as a baby, even by an unsaved Catholic priest, that act made one a child of God. "Confirmation" only confirms this delusion. Obviously, anyone believing such a false "gospel" is not saved.

Rejection of infant baptism for salvation was one of the two charges brought by Calvin as the prosecuting attorney and for which Servetus (only one of dozens executed for alleged heresy in Geneva under Calvin) was convicted and burned at the stake. Calvin was never baptized as a believer after his separation from the Catholic Church but opposed such baptism

as "heresy worthy of death." Surely a multitude of Calvinists have been led into hell by following Calvin's teaching that infant baptism marks one as among the "elect," just as circumcision marked male Israelites as among God's chosen people.

One can easily see the relationship between "infant baptism saves without believing the gospel," later to be "confirmed," and the teaching that the elect are regenerated by God without even knowing it and then given faith to believe the gospel as a sovereign gift in order to be saved without any act of their own will. Is this a false gospel? Of course it is! The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that salvation is for "whosoever will" (Dt. 18:19; Ezr 7:26; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:5, 24; Rv 22:17, etc.). Man must come to God of his own free will and offer himself willingly. This is stated dozens of times in the Old Testament alone (Lev 22:18, 21, 23; 23:38; Nu 15:3; 29:39; Dt 12:6, 17; 16:10; 23:23; 2 Chr 31:14; Ezr 1:4; 3:5; 7:13, 16; 8:28; Ps 119:108, etc.).

You cite Eph 2:8-9, but *faith* there is not the gift—salvation (the subject of the entire passage) is the gift of God. *Faith* is a feminine noun, while the demonstrative pronoun *that* ("*it is*" is not in the Greek) is neuter and could not refer to faith. The Greek will not permit "faith" to be the gift. Moreover, "your faith" ("according to *your faith*" - Mt 9:29; Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 15:17, etc.) is found 24 times; "thy faith" 11 times; and the disciples are rebuked for not having faith, etc. These are odd expressions, if faith is not one's own but only from God.

Calvinists emphasize "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (Jn 6:37) and "no man can come to me, except the Father...draw him" (v. 44). They forget that those given by and drawn by the Father still must *come, take, eat, and drink* of the water and bread of life, which is Christ. Throughout Scripture, the emphasis is upon *coming* of one's own will. In John 6, the emphasis is upon believing, coming, eating, and drinking—clearly the responsibility of the person. Yes, the Father draws and gives, but to eat and drink requires an act of one's will—God does not force-feed anyone, but the Calvinist avoids this fact.

There is no regeneration before faith in Christ, as dozens of verses declare. Yet Calvinism says regeneration precedes faith—clearly unbiblical and irrational. The Bible states: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (Jn 20:31); "Being born again...by the word

of God...and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pt 1:23-25).

We are regenerated by believing in Christ. But Calvinism insists upon regeneration before one believes—a "regeneration" that gives life without believing the gospel! Are we regenerated twice? Without believing the gospel, there is no new birth, no life in Christ, so Calvinism's "regeneration" as a prerequisite for receiving the gift of faith from God in order to believe the gospel is unquestionably heresy.

Ah, but we are "dead in trespasses and in sins," quotes the Calvinist to justify this doctrine. Yet even A.W. Pink rejected equating spiritual death with physical death. If the spiritually dead cannot hear, understand, and believe the gospel, but first must be regenerated, then the entire Bible becomes nonsense. God's countless appeals to mankind to repent and come to Him are a mockery if those to whom He speaks are dead and cannot hear—if they are totally depraved and cannot repent and turn to Him without the grace He withholds while blaming them for not repenting. The dozens of verses in which God commands all mankind to seek Him and in which He promises that all who seek Him with all their hearts will find Him—these become a mockery if the unsaved cannot seek God and if He only extends the grace to seek Him to an "elect." God pleads endlessly through His prophets not only for Israel to repent but declares, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Is 45:22). Yet no one can respond to His pleas unless He regenerates them first, which He refuses to do for multitudes with whom He continues to plead—and rebukes and punishes them for not doing what they can't do?

Calvinism makes a mockery of God's Word. It has Joshua crying to those who can't choose, "choose you this day whom ye will serve"; and it has Christ pleading with men, "come unto me," while withholding the ability to come.

You counter, "But all are commanded to keep the Ten Commandments though none can, so what is the difference?" God does not cause a select group to keep the Law and leave the rest in their sin. All sin and are condemned, and all need salvation. According to Calvinism, God *could* save everyone if He so desired, but chooses to save only some, i.e., whoever is saved and whoever is lost is because God willed it, not because they chose. So you believe in a God who deliberately damns millions (perhaps billions) whom He *could* save if He so desired. This is the issue. Calvinism

maligns God's character, making Him less loving than He requires us to be!

We are clearly told that He "will have all men to be saved" (1 Tm 2:4). Of that passage, Spurgeon said, "I was reading just now the exposition of [one] who explains the text so as to explain it away [as] if it read, 'Who *will not* have all men to be saved....' [In fact,] the passage should run thus—'whose wish it is that all men should be saved....' As it is *my* wish...so it is God's wish that all men should be saved; for, assuredly, He is not less benevolent than we are" ("Salvation by Knowing the Truth," 16 Jan 1880).

Commenting upon 1 Timothy 2:4, John MacArthur attempts to justify Calvinism by saying (in his study Bible) that God has two wills in conflict, a will of desire, a will of decree: He wills for all to be saved but doesn't decree it! So God frustrates His own will? Amazing!

Calvinists quote Jn 1:13: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" to "prove" that man's will has no part to play in regeneration, but that God regenerates the elect, then causes them to believe. Of course, no one can give himself the new birth; but verse 12 makes it very clear that God regenerates only those who "received him [and] believe on his name."

Search through books by today's leading Calvinists. Old Testament examples of Christ and His sacrifice for sin are almost totally missing (in MacArthur's *The Love of God*, Piper's *The Justification of God*, White's *The Potter's Freedom*, etc., etc.). Why? Because these "ensamples...written for our admonition" (1 Cor 10:11) utterly refute Calvinism. *All* Israel were sheltered by the blood of the Passover lamb, *all* went through the Red Sea, *all* were led by the pillar of fire and cloud, *all* partook of the manna and of the water from the rock, etc.—but all were not saved. So Paul declares that Christ "is the Savior of *all men*, specially of those that believe" (1 Tm 4:10).

Calvinists say "world" means "the world of the elect" in Jn 3:16. They avoid verses 14-15 with which Christ introduces the Cross: that just as the serpent was lifted up so that *whosoever* would look to it would be healed, so He, Christ, would be lifted up so that *whosoever* would believe on Him would be saved. There is no indication that the serpent (that was lifted up to bring healing to those who looked to it) was for an elect within Israel—it was for *whosoever would look in faith*.

Could someone who believes this false gospel of Calvinism be truly saved?

Fortunately, many Calvinists (you among them) were saved before becoming Calvinists. They now malign God by saying that He is pleased to damn multitudes though He *could* save all—and that He predestines multitudes to the Lake of Fire before they are even born. But having believed the gospel before becoming Calvinists, they "shall not come into condemnation, but [have] passed from death unto life" (Jn 5:24). Those who only know the false gospel of Calvinism are not saved, while those who are saved and ought to know better but teach these heresies will be judged for doing so.

Question: In both your books and the newsletter you have spoken against Christians practicing yoga. The 5/19/05 *Christianity Today* online has an article in which the author testifies that yoga has never had any negative effect on her because she considers it merely to be stretching exercises and her focus is on the Lord, not on some Hindu deity. She notes that Paul says that a believer may have perfect liberty to eat meat sacrificed to idols. Why wouldn't this passage apply to yoga as well? Aren't you keeping many from a helpful and healthy exercise by warning against yoga?

Answer: We could give far more testimonies of those who have been demonized or driven to suicide or suicidal thoughts through yoga. Tragically, increasing numbers of evangelical churches are sponsoring classes in yoga. Having dealt with this in the past (see *TBC* Aug '98), and because we have a book on this subject coming out in a few months, I won't go into details. In simple terms, if one desires to be physically fit, one should adopt exercises specifically designed to fulfill that end. If one desires to realize one's innate godhood (self-realization) and achieve union with Brahman (the universal soul), then practice yoga, which is specifically designed to accomplish that end. Of course, there is no such "realization," but Satan and his demons are capable of leading the gullible into this delusional state.

“A Way Which Seemeth Right...”

T. A. McMahon

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

I recently attended the Celebrate Recovery Summit 2005 at Saddleback Church in Southern California. The primary purpose of the conference was to train new leaders who would return to their churches and inaugurate the Celebrate Recovery (CR) program. Saddleback’s pastor, Rick Warren, describes CR as “a biblical and balanced program to help people overcome their hurts, habits, and hang-ups...[that is] based on the actual words of Jesus rather than psychological theory [emphasis added].”¹

As a long-time critic of psychological counseling and 12-Steps therapies in the church (see *The Seduction of Christianity* and archived TBC newsletter articles and Q&As), I was pleased to have the opportunity to learn firsthand from those who are leading and/or participating in the program, to better understand what was intended in CR, and to see how it is implemented. What I learned right away was that the 3,000 or so in attendance had a tremendous zeal for the Lord and an unquestionable sincerity in desiring to help those who were struggling with habitual sin. This was my impression in all of my interactions—with individuals, in small groups, in workshop sessions, and in the general worship sessions. The CR Summit lasted three (eight-to-nine-hour) days and covered nearly every aspect of Celebrate Recovery.

Nevertheless, other thoughts ran through my mind as I reviewed whether or not I had missed something significant in my previous criticisms of 12-Steps recovery therapies. Is Celebrate Recovery’s 12-Steps program truly different—that is, “biblical and balanced...rather than psychological”—as Rick Warren believes? Furthermore, is he simply naïve when he says in his “Road to Recovery” series of sermons, “In 1935 a couple of guys formulated, based upon the Scriptures, what are now known as the classic twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and used by hundreds of other recovery groups. Twenty million Americans are in a recovery group every week and there are 500,000 recovery groups. *The basis is God’s Word* [emphasis added].” Or is Celebrate Recovery another alarming example of a way that seems right to a man but one that is turning believers to ways and means other than the Bible to solve their sin-related

problems? Let’s consider these questions in light of some A.A. and 12 Steps background information.

To begin with, 12-Steps programs are not just a Saddleback Church issue. Increasing numbers of evangelical churches are sponsoring Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.) meetings and/or creating their own self-help groups based upon A.A.’s 12-Steps principles. Bill Wilson, one of the founders of A.A., created the 12 Steps. Wilson was a habitual drunk who had two life-changing events that he claims helped him achieve sobriety: 1) he was (mis)informed by a doctor that his drinking habit was a disease and was therefore not his fault, and 2) he had an experience (which he viewed as spiritual enlightenment) that convinced him that only “a Power greater than” himself could keep him sober. Attempting to understand his mystical experience, he was led into spiritism, a form of divination condemned in the Scriptures. His official biography indicates that the content of the 12-Steps principles

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

Jeremiah 6:16

came to him “rapidly” through spirit communication. Certainly *not* from God.

Celebrate Recovery began 14 years ago at Saddleback and is used in more than 3,500 churches today, making it evangelical Christianity’s most prominent and widely exported 12-Steps church program. Warren considers CR to be “the center of living a purpose-driven life and building a purpose-driven church” and recently announced that Chuck Colson’s Prison Fellowship would begin implementing CR in every prison where the ministry is functioning.

Celebrate Recovery is a very complex methodology that attempts to bring biblical adjustments to the 12-Steps program originated by A.A. and utilized in numerous other “addiction” recovery programs. The complexity, however, applies to the setting up and implementation of the program as well as to the strict rules that govern its execution. Although there are many problems related to “making it work,” there is only space in this article to address some fundamental issues. Let’s begin with the implications regarding the name of the program.

Reflecting A.A.’s influence upon CR, the term “Recovery” is significant. All

those in A.A. are “recovering” alcoholics, who, according to A.A., never completely recover. Recovery is a term that primarily denotes a process of physical healing. A.A. teaches that alcoholism is a disease for which there is no ultimate cure. Although CR rejects A.A.’s view of alcoholism as a disease and calls it sin, the title nevertheless promotes the A.A. concept in contradiction to what the Bible teaches. Sin is not something from which a believer is “in recovery.” Sin is confessed by the sinner and forgiven by God. The believer is cleansed of the sin right then. “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Ps 32:5).

At the 2005 Celebrate Recovery Summit, every speaker introduced himself or herself in the A.A. “recovery” mode, with this “Christianized” difference: “Hi, I’m so and so...and I’m a believer in Jesus Christ who struggles with issues of (alcohol, drug, codependency, sex, or whatever) addiction.” The audience then applauded to affirm the individual for overcoming the “denial” of his or her habitual sin. Not to confess some “addiction” or specific sin struggle raises suspicions of “being in denial.” Throughout the three-day conference, there was never a hint from any of the speakers that anything about A.A., 12 Steps, or CR might not be biblical. Moreover, where Celebrate Recovery programs were not available, those “in recovery” were encouraged to attend A.A. or N.A. meetings.

Rick Warren, on video, reassured the Summit attendees that CR was no man-made therapy. He insisted that CR was based upon the “actual words of Jesus Christ from the eight Beatitudes, which parallel the 12 Steps” and identified his own “Higher Power: His name is Jesus Christ.” I don’t find “Higher Power,” which is a misrepresentation of God, in the Bible. Nor can I fathom why a Bible-believing Christian would want to promote Bill Wilson’s concept and methodology. Why not simply rely on what the Bible teaches?

Is God’s way completely sufficient to set one free from so-called addictions? Did A.A.’s founders provide a more effective way? If so, what did the church do for the nearly 2,000 years prior to Bill Wilson’s “spiritually enlightened” way to recovery? Moreover, if Wilson’s method really works, why are some in the church trying to add Jesus as one’s Higher Power and the Beatitudes to it? On the other hand, if the effectiveness of the 12-Steps program is questionable at best and detrimental to the gospel and to a believer’s life and growth in

Christ, why attempt to “Christianize” such a program? It is imperative that all believers ask themselves whether or not they truly believe that the Scriptures and the enablement of God’s Holy Spirit are sufficient for “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pt 1:3). A rejection of this biblical teaching is the only possible justification for turning to ways the Bible condemns: “the counsel of the ungodly” (Ps 1:1) and “a way which seemeth right unto a man.”

How dependent is Celebrate Recovery upon (with minor modifications) A.A.’s 12 Steps? Completely! Those going through CR’s small group take from 12 to 16 months to complete the 12-Steps program. Many go through more than one small group and often become leaders in one while attending others. Without Bill Wilson’s principles, the CR program would be reduced to a handful of misapplied Bible verses. Tragically, the most obvious biblical problem with such an approach to overcoming habitual sins seems to be dismissed by all 12-Steps advocates: the Bible never offers a by-the-numbers *self-help methodology* for deliverance from sin or for living a sanctified life. God’s way involves obedience to His *full counsel* and maturity in Christ through the enablement of His Holy Spirit.

Warren’s CR program views the 12 Steps as generally compatible with Scripture yet seeks out verses that appear to biblically reinforce each step. In doing so, however, scriptural interpretations are forced upon concepts that either have no direct relationship to the Bible or that pervert the true interpretation of the scripture intended to support the particular step. CR’s attempt to use the Beatitudes as biblical principles for overcoming habitual sins, for example, is a serious distortion of the Word of God.

Search as you may, you’ll find no commentaries that even hint at such a use of the Beatitudes. Why? Simply because the Beatitudes all have to do with seeking the Kingdom of God and nothing to do with solving an individual’s so-called addictions. Again, why try to legitimize from Scripture Wilson’s “ungodly counsel” from “seducing spirits [bringing] doctrines of devils” (1 Tm 4:1)?

Consider, for example, the “Beatitudes justified” first three steps: (1) We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors. That our lives had become unmanageable. “Happy are those who are spiritually poor.” (2) Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. “Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (3) Made a decision to

turn our life and our will over to the care of God (modified from A.A.’s “God as we understood Him”). “Happy are the meek.” This is more than a misdirected attempt to sanctify (in Rick Warren’s words) Bill Wilson’s “biblically vague” 12 Steps.² It both abuses the Scriptures and reinterprets Wilson.

In these *foundational* steps, Wilson is summarizing his beliefs based upon his experiences as a “recovering alcoholic.” He felt “powerless” because he believed alcoholism was an incurable disease that consequently made his life “unmanageable.” Since he couldn’t “cure” himself (although millions do without 12-Steps or other therapies!), he put his faith in “a power greater than ourselves,” whom he called God, and “understood” Him by fabricating Him out of beliefs discovered in his study of different religions and religious experiences. That’s more than “biblically vague.” It’s a false religion.

So why would Celebrate Recovery or the multitudes of other Christianized 12-Steps groups try to reconcile the Word of God with Wilson’s definitely erroneous and demonically inspired methodology? The deluded response is: “Because it works!” But does it?

Pragmatism is the fuel that powers “the way that seems right” and governs much of what is being lauded in the church today. Not only is this unbiblical, but too often there is nothing beyond enthusiastic testimonials to support the claim that something actually works. The reality for the 12-Steps program of A.A. and N.A. is that there is no research evidence proving that they are more effective than other treatments. Furthermore, the most extensive studies related to “addictions” conclude that most drug and alcohol abusers recover without any psychotherapeutic treatment or self-help therapies.³

The many problems inherent within a Christianized 12-Steps program—and particularly Celebrate Recovery—are too numerous for this brief article. Yet, consider these observations: CR is highly promoted as completely biblical and not psychological, yet the key speakers for CR Summit 2005 were clinical psychologists Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud. Psychologist David Stoop, the editor of *Life Recovery Bible* (CR participants’ mandatory paraphrase Bible, polluted with psychotherapy commentary), is a favorite speaker at Saddleback’s CR Large Group meetings. The CR leadership manual advises, “Have Christian psychotherapists volunteer their time to help instruct and support your leaders.”⁴

CR’s entire program content is marbled

with psychobabble such as this “solution” from its Adult Children of the Chemically Addicted group’s dogmas: “The solution is to become your own loving parent... You will recover the child within you, learning to accept and love yourself.”⁵ This is biblical?! Honoring the psychologically contrived “disorder” of codependency, CR’s Codependency and Christian Living group made this humanistic and biblically false statement: “Jesus taught... A love of self forms the basis for loving others.”⁶

A.A.’s 12-Steps methodology, along with its antibiblical psychotherapeutic concepts and practices permeates Celebrate Recovery, yet no one at the Summit with whom I spoke seemed concerned. CR’s small group meetings are the antithesis of the way the Bible instructs mature believers to help those young or struggling in the faith to grow. Pastors and elders can be small group leaders, but not for teaching purposes. No leader may biblically instruct or correct but may only affirm the “transparency” of the participant sharing his feelings. “Cross-talk,” or comments by others, are prohibited to allow the freest expression possible. Much of this “expression” reinforces psychotherapeutic myths. The two-hour meetings usually open with the spiritually anemic Serenity Prayer and the recitation of the 12 Steps. Leaders are drawn from those who have completed one or more 12-Step groups. Some leaders work through one “addiction” in a small group while leading another group. It’s not unusual for a leader to put in eight to ten hours in CR functions per week, every week. Serious Bible study and discipleship are not part of the Celebrate Recovery “biblical” emphasis.

Let no one think that presenting these critical concerns about Celebrate Recovery in any way lessens the biblical obligation (Gal 6) of the church to minister to those struggling with habitual sin. The issue is not whether we *should* minister, but *how* we should minister: man’s way or God’s way? Man’s way, or a *mixture of biblical teaching and ungodly counsel*, is contrary to God’s way. Man’s way leads to death. Applying Scripture to man’s way leads to a slower death, akin to what would result when pure water is added to a toxic drinking fountain. We desperately need to take heed to God’s admonition through the Prophet Jeremiah: “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer 2:13). **TBC**

Quotable

The man who is intimate with God is never intimidated by man.

Leonard Ravenhill

Who would wish to dwell among the nations, and to be numbered with them? Why, even the professing church is such that to follow the Lord fully within its bounds is very difficult. There is such a mingling and mixing that one often sighs for “a lodge in some vast wilderness.” Certain it is that the Lord would have his people to follow a separated path as to the world, and come out decidedly and distinctly different from it. We are set apart by divine decree, purchase, and calling, and our inward experience has made us greatly to differ from men of the world; and therefore our place is...in the narrow way where all true pilgrims must follow their Lord. This may not only reconcile us to the world’s sneers, but even cause us to accept them with pleasure....Only let us be found in the number of the redeemed, and we are content to be odd and solitary to the end....

Charles H. Spurgeon

*Lamb of God! our souls adore Thee while upon Thy face we gaze;
There the Father’s love and glory shine in all their brightest rays;
Thy almighty power and wisdom, all creation’s works proclaim;
Heav’n and earth alike confess Thee as the ever great “I AM.”*

*When we see Thee as the victim nailed to the accursed tree,
For our guilt and folly stricken, all our judgment borne by Thee,
Lord, we own, with hearts adoring, Thou hast loved us unto blood;
Glory, glory everlastings be to Thee, Thou Lamb of God!*

*Lamb of God! Thou now art seated high upon Thy Father’s throne;
All Thy gracious work completed, all Thy mighty vict’ry won.
Every knee in heav’n is bending to the Lamb for sinners slain;
Every voice and harp is swelling,
“Worthy is the Lamb to reign!”*

James G. Deck (1807-1884), Hymns of Worship and Remembrance

Q&A

Question: In a recent book, a well-known prophecy teacher writes, “I have never been able to fully embrace the traditional viewpoint of conscious, eternal punishment. It seems to impugn the character of God....He is a God of righteousness, holiness, and justice, but is eternal suffering justice...? The concept of eternal torment seems to run contrary to biblical examples. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah...suddenly and quickly...Noah’s evil world...suddenly and quickly....[Thirdly] it seems to contradict a descriptive phrase...to describe Hell...‘the second death...’ How can Hell be a ‘second death’ if it consists of eternal, conscious torment? [Fourthly] Hell is a place of destruction (Matthew 7:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:9, et al.). Fifth, there is a difference between eternal punishment and eternal *punishing*...a judgment that continues eternally, or...a judgment with eternal consequences....Revelation 14:9-11 [does not] speak of eternal torment [but] ‘the smoke of their torment’ ascending forever. [But] Isaiah 34:10...says the smoke of Edom’s destruction will ‘go up forever.’ I have been to Edom...seen its destruction. But there was no smoke ascending to heaven. The reference to eternal smoke is obviously symbolic...Edom’s destruction will give eternal testimony to how God deals with a sinful society....I believe the Bible denies the immortality of the soul....In 1 Timothy 6:15,16 Paul says that God alone possesses immortality. First Corinthians 15:53 teaches that THE Redeemed will not become immortal until the time of their resurrection....There is no need to believe in an eternal Hell if the soul is not intrinsically immortal. And it isn’t.... Justin Martyr (A.D. 114-165) [says] the souls of the unrighteous will suffer only as long as God wills, and that finally their souls will pass out of existence. [I believe the damned] will be cast into the lake of fire (Hell) where they will suffer a time of torment in proportion to their sins. Then they will experience the ‘second death’ (death of body, soul and spirit).” Please help me to discern.

Answer: The above arguments are seriously flawed. The fact that the sinners in Sodom and Gomorrah and in Noah’s time suffered swift physical destruction does not prove that they have not been suffering spiritual torment ever since,

in Hell! Of course, no man, but “God alone has immortality.” But when was immortality ever required for suffering in the Lake of Fire? Without immortality, we have physical life; and even after physical death we continue to exist: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). Judgment can’t be pronounced on those who no longer exist—and judgment pronounced must be meted out in punishment. The author of the book denies that it is eternal but gives no Scripture—only faulty reasoning.

If both spiritually dead people and physically dead people are still alive, what does it mean to be “dead”? Spiritual death separates from God; physical death separates from the body and from all those who are still physically alive. The physically dead who believed on Christ and thus were united to God before they died continue to exist in heaven in eternal bliss (“and so shall we ever be with the Lord”- 1 Thes 4:17).

Upon death, those who rejected Christ and the salvation He provided for them go to hell to await their judgment; but even while awaiting the final judgment, they experience horrible torment: “the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments” (Lk 16:22,23). Obviously, then, the fact that man doesn’t have immortality is not a valid argument against eternal existence in the Lake of Fire. Sin brought death to Adam’s spirit and eventually to his body, and so it has always been with his descendants. But the fact that man is doubly dead—first spiritually, then physically—does not mean that he ever ceases to exist.

Physical “death” no more means *cessation of being* than does spiritual “death”—nor is there ever any hint anywhere in the Bible of any end either to the bliss of the redeemed or to the torment of the damned. The writer suggests that because today there is no physical smoke ascending from Edom in spite of Isaiah 34:10 saying that “the smoke of Edom’s destruction will ‘go up forever,’” therefore, the statement in Revelation 14:9-11 concerning those who worshiped the beast—that “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever”—isn’t to be taken literally. But Isaiah was no more speaking of physical smoke arising from ruins on earth than he was of physical torment lasting forever on earth. “Smoke” was symbolic of their spiritual torment in the Lake of Fire, and that “smoke” will indeed ascend for ever and ever.

We are clearly told that “the devil... the beast and the false prophet...shall be tormented...for ever and ever” (Rv 20:10).

Where? In the lake of “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41; Rv 20:14,15). It would neither be biblical nor reasonable to believe that although the devil and his angels will be tormented therein “for ever and ever,” their followers, having been placed in this everlasting fire, will be there only for a temporary time. The writer makes the Lake of Fire to be like purgatory for the Catholic: temporary punishment in proportion to one’s sin. But never in the many times that Christ refers to the punishment of the damned (“weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth” – Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk 13:28) does He ever offer the hope that it is only temporary.

That every man “is judged...[and by implication punished] according to their works” (Rv 20:13) refers to the severity of the punishment, not to its duration. That it must be eternal is because God himself is eternal, His righteousness infinite, and His judgments immutable. Death is the punishment for sin, not cessation of being. Eternal death is separation from God and all others to face alone the stark horror of one’s rebellion against one’s Creator and the fact that the forgiveness He offered was rejected.

While admitting that death doesn’t end anyone’s existence, he claims that the existence of the damned after death is only temporary—long enough to punish them “in proportion to their sins.” But this theory is never stated in the Bible. The “wages of sin is death,” which is separation from God just as physical death separates from the body. Those who are spiritually dead enjoy physical life for a time. But after physical death comes judgment—and their “everlasting punishment” (Mt 25:46), as he admits—a “second death” in the Lake of Fire. It could hardly be called “everlasting” if one day it will be as though it had never been, with all sinners having ceased to exist. Punishment for breaking the infinite law of the eternal God must be eternal.

Question (representative of several): In your May Q&A, you objected to the use of the terms “Messianic Jew” and “Messianic movement” as not biblical. The Jerusalem council settled the issue that there would be a distinction between Gentiles and Jews in observances and practice....Jesus Christ is the same for Jew and Gentile unto salvation, yet observances can be different....I would differ with your explanation of Jesus and His followers not being observant Jews after the cross. The apostles did continue

to observe Sabbath after the cross (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4, 11; two Sabbaths at Antioch, one Sabbath at Philippi, three Sabbaths at Thessalonica, seven to eight Sabbaths at Corinth). The feasts of Scripture were to be everlasting for the Israelites and could be partaken of by the strangers among them. Most were everlasting observances, and...will continue in the future....God does not change His mind (Leviticus 23:14, 21; Zechariah 14:16-19). As a Gentile in a “Messianic” congregation, I have the liberty to keep these Feasts.

I think the writer of the question you answered was expressing the frustration he or she has regarding churches [where] a Jewish believer...is made to give up their identification as a Jew upon joining a predominantly Gentile congregation...told that they should not celebrate Hannukah or Passover [but] must defer to Christmas and Easter, which is not in Scripture at all. God wants Jew and Gentile to be together in harmony, not replacing anything Jewish with something non-Jewish. This has been done throughout history...pushing Jewish people far away from the gospel. Jesus was a Jew, lived a Jew, died a Jew and will return a Jew. The church in many cases portrays Him stripped of His identity as a Jew....There is no argument that the sacrifices were completed in Him, once and for all, and all has been accomplished for us to receive His free gift of eternal life.

Answer: I am sorry if there are any Christians who want Jews to deny their heritage as the chosen people of God descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were delivered from Egypt and brought into the Promised Land. That is wrong. Yes, the stranger who became a Jew through keeping the law, including being circumcised, was to keep the feasts of the Lord. But for a Gentile to keep those feasts today would be a fraud. His ancestors were not delivered from Egypt by miracles and brought into the Promised Land to inherit it, nor has he joined the nation of Israel.

None of the verses you list declares that the Apostles kept the Sabbath but only that they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Obviously, that was because the Jews gathered together there on that day, and this was the best way to reach them with the gospel. Now in the early days, the apostles did observe the law and keep the feasts in order not to offend the unsaved Jews. This was only, however, for the sake

of winning them to Christ: “For though I be free from all...yet...unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law...I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:19-23).

There are many warnings against becoming entangled in Jewish observances: “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike....He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it” (Rom 14:5,6). That passage certainly closes the door for Jew and Gentile upon obligatory observation of the Sabbath or any other Holy Day.

As for “Messianic Jew,” the very term makes a distinction between Jews and Gentiles that does not exist in Christ. Am I a “Messianic Gentile”? There is neither Jew nor Gentile; we are one in Christ.

End Notes

1. *Celebrate Recovery Summit 2005 Handbook*, 61.
2. *Celebrate Recovery Senior Pastor Support Video*, 2003.
3. *The Harvard Mental Health Letter*, Vol. 16, No. 12, 1-4; See also: www.stats.org/issuerecord.jsp?issue=true&ID=8.
4. *Celebrate*, 31.
5. *Ibid.*, 342.
6. *Ibid.*, 350.

Victory in Christ

Dave Hunt

Due to his transforming encounter and continual communion with the risen Christ, Saul of Tarsus “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) and established many of the early churches (2 Cor 11:28). His epistles account for nearly one-third of the New Testament. What an amazing transformation—for the “chief of sinners” (1 Tm 1:15) to become the “chief apostle” (2 Cor 12:11,12)! What could have changed Saul from “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1) to becoming one of them, knowing that he, too, would be hated, persecuted, imprisoned, beaten, and eventually martyred? What “recovery program” helped Paul in this remarkable deliverance and consistent, triumphant life, so that he could say, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1)?

Was there a “Murderers Anonymous” or “Persecutors Anonymous” that helped Paul along the path of “recovery” from his wicked past? Was he part of a “small group” of former haters of Christ who found comfort and support in weekly confessing to one another that they were still struggling with impulses to oppose Christ’s church? How else could Paul declare in triumph, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20)?

If such questions are absurd, what does that say of today’s “recovery programs”?

In fact, neither Paul, nor his fellow apostles, nor *anyone* in the early church, nor *much* of the millions who loved Christ so much and were so fervent for “the truth [as it] is in Jesus” (Eph 4:21) followed any “recovery program” at all yet were “faithful unto death” (Heb 11). The early church was made up of *former* “fornicators...idolaters...adulterers...effeminate...abusers of themselves with mankind [i.e., homosexuals/lesbians]...thieves...covetous...drunkards...revilers [and] extortioners...” After listing these sins, Paul reminds the Corinthians, “And such *were* some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9-11). There is not a word about any special programs to keep them “recovering” from their sordid past.

Is it surprising that such wicked people, without any “recovery programs,” were

completely delivered from deeply ingrained evil habits to live victoriously in Christ? Of course not! Such transformation is what our Lord promised to *all* who would believe in and obey Him! This is the normal Christian life that missionaries for centuries have seen lived out by converted natives in the darkest and most pagan areas of the world.

Even in the asphalt jungles of today’s world, multitudes are being instantly delivered from “addictions” of every kind and are living victoriously and joyfully for their Lord. It all begins with confessing one’s guilt before God and believing that Christ paid the full penalty His justice demanded for sin. Immediately follows the glorious new birth—becoming branches in Christ, the True Vine (Jn 15), who becomes the very life of those who know, love, and obey Him. Newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word (1 Pt 2:2), feed upon it, and begin to grow. Then comes responsibility to live out by faith what God is doing in one’s heart:

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue...knowledge...temperance...patience...godliness...brotherly kindness...charity...that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind...and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore...brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall... (2 Pt 1:5-10)

But Christianity has lately fallen into the hands of leaders who have lost confidence in the sufficiency of Christ, His Word, and the Holy Spirit to live the life of Christ through them and others. They have also destroyed the confidence of their followers. That lack of faith spawned “Christian psychology” (borrowed from godless humanists who were themselves drowning in sin), with its multiple therapies that the early church never heard of and, without any of them, triumphed gloriously. From this godless source came the many “recovery programs” that are even more popular among Christians today than simple faith in Christ and His Word.

The victorious new life that Christ promised and will Himself live within all who know and trust Him is available to every Christian and requires no special program—just simple faith and obedience. The problem with all “therapies” is that they inherently deny the sufficiency of Christ and His Word to save, sanctify, and keep the worst of sinners. Thus, it is

hypocritical for a “program” to claim to be biblical when its very existence denies what the Bible teaches and what the early church knew and proved to be sufficient.

Paul refers to the way unsaved Gentiles live as “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God...given...over unto lasciviousness [and] uncleanness with greediness” (Eph 4:17-22). Addressing the believers, he says, “But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus...” The truth we have been taught must be lived out in our lives. This can only be by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Yet Paul continues in language that makes our responsibility clear:

Put off...the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour...let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour...Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth...grieve not the Holy Spirit...Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us...But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting...but rather giving of thanks. For this we know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words...ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light... (Eph 4:22-5:8)

There is not a word about any programs to assist in the above. Methods and techniques not found in Scripture that would supposedly suppress the fleshly desires that plague even Christians seeking to live for Christ had not yet been invented in Paul’s day. Why are they needed today? They aren’t! Isaiah was very blunt: “If they speak not according to this Word [i.e., Scripture]...there is no light in them” (8:20). But today the Scripture is being denied.

Certainly no one in the early church (or for centuries thereafter) even imagined that there could possibly be a need among

Christians for anything but Christ himself—His cleansing blood and power—to triumph over sin, Satan, and the world. A fervent love for Christ enabled millions for nearly 2,000 years to follow their Lord faithfully, even unto martyrdom, with joy. The secret of their victory has and will be declared to cowering demons and rejoicing angels and as a testimony to the universe for all eternity: “They overcame him [‘the great dragon...called the Devil, and Satan’] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rv 12:9, 11).

Christ declared, “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Jn 14:23). Love is the greatest motivating power in the universe. It caused Christ to bear, at infinite cost, the judgment deserved by those who hated and crucified Him—because He loved them. True love would sacrifice anything, including one’s own self, for the one loved. No “addiction,” lust, or selfish desire can overcome love! Those who claim to be Christians, yet who need some special “deliverance ministry” or “recovery program” to keep their behavior in line with what Christ has commanded, either don’t know Him or do not love Him as they ought. So says the Word of God.

To Christians consumed by a passionate gratitude and love for Christ, victory has always come through simple faith in God’s promise: “There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not [allow] you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13). So it has been with the redeemed through the centuries—and ought to be today.

Yet in all ages there have always been those for whom Christ alone through the power of His Word and Spirit was insufficient—who said, in lack of love and unbelief, “I’ve tried, but it doesn’t work; I’m a special case; things are different today; I need some additional help.” Some of them became monks and tried to suppress the flesh by abusing it, living in caves and depriving themselves of the blessings God gave to all to be freely enjoyed with thanksgiving, even flagellating themselves, in order (so they thought) to become holy. Many well-meaning Roman Catholic and Orthodox priests and monks still do this today. It’s not their sincerity that we doubt but their true knowledge of Christ and their love for Him, which are the only remedy.

Many of the so-called “desert fathers” (See TBC Extra, Oct ‘05) adopted occult techniques, later popularized as the *Spiritual*

Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. They thought that if they could visualize Christ and biblical events in their imagination, the Bible would become more real and they would mature spiritually. That delusion is still promoted by many Christian leaders today such as Richard Foster, Calvin Miller, Karen Mains, and others. Foster enticed thousands with the deceitful promise of spiritual maturity through occult methods such as the following in *Celebration of Discipline* (R. Foster, Harper and Row, Pub., 1978, pp. 24-27):

[Begin] with a daily period of from five to ten minutes...learning to “center down”...[using] two brief exercises...The first [is] called “palms down, palms up”... placing your palms down as a symbolic indication of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have to God. Inwardly you may pray “Lord, I give to You my anger toward John. I release my fear of my dentist appointment...I surrender my anxiety over not having enough money to pay the bills...my frustration over trying to find a baby-sitter for tonight.” Whatever it is that weighs on your mind...just say, “palms down.” Release it...After several moments of surrender, turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord... “I would like to receive Your divine love for John, Your peace about the dentist appointment, Your patience, Your joy.” Whatever you need, you say, “palms up.” Having centered down, spend the remaining moments in complete silence....

Another meditation aimed at centering oneself...seated...comfortably, slowly become conscious of your breathing [to] get in touch with...the level of tension within. Inhale deeply, slowly tilting your head back as far as it will go. Then exhale, allowing your head slowly to come forward until your chin nearly rests on your chest. Do this for several moments, praying inwardly something like this: “Lord, I exhale my fear...I inhale Your peace. I exhale my spiritual apathy. I inhale Your light and life.” Then, as before, become silent....

After you have gained some proficiency in centering down, add a five- to ten-minute meditation on some...tree, plant, bird, leaf, cloud, and each day ponder it carefully and prayerfully. God...uses His creation to show us something of His glory and give us something of His life...as Evelyn Underhill [says]...begin with that...contemplation which the old mystics sometimes called the “discovery of God in His creatures.”

Having practiced for some weeks with the two kinds of meditation listed above, you will want to add the meditation upon Scripture....Take a single event...Seek

to live the experience, remembering the encouragement of Ignatius of Loyola to apply all our senses to our task. Smell the sea. Hear the lap of water along the shore. See the crowd. Feel the sun on your head and the hunger in your stomach.... Francis de Sales [says] “represent to your imagination the whole of the mystery on which you desire to meditate as if it really passed in your presence....” As you enter the story...remember that since Jesus...is not bound by time, this event in the past is a living present-tense experience for Him. Hence, you can *actually* encounter the living Christ in the event...Jesus Christ will actually come to you.

This is, of course, rank occultism. The visualized “Jesus” often takes on a life of its own and does indeed “speak.” This is *not* the Lord Jesus Christ come down from the right hand of His Father in heaven, but a seducing spirit, exactly as Paul warned would occur: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...” (1 Tm 4:1, 2). There is no excuse for falling into such delusion, which is so contrary to the Word of God.

The early Christians lived in the expectant faith that Christ, “who is our life” (Col 3:4), would live that life through them in victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil (1 Jn 2:12-17). Christ promised: “Because I live, ye shall live also” (Jn 14:19). Then why does the church adopt techniques that come from worldly wisdom in order to gain “deliverance” from so-called addictions?

For Paul, every temptation and carnal desire was swept aside by his overpowering passion: “that...Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death” (Phil 1:20); “that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death...that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:10-14). Is this not what we ought to hold before ourselves to empower our lives to forsake all for the love of our Lord?

As the chorus says, “After all He’s done for me; after all He’s done for me, how can I do less than give Him my best, and live for Him completely; after all He’s done for me!” This is the response of true love, and it will prevail over all **TBC**

Quotable

Now, if you can...give up all competition with respect to other objects, if you can stand aside from the race which too many other ministers are running and say, from your heart, "Let those who choose to engage in such a race divide the prize; let one minister run away with the money, and another with the esteem, and a third with the applause, etc. I have...a different race to run; be God's approbations the only prize for which I run, let me obtain that, and it is enough." If you can, from your heart, adopt this language, you will find most of your difficulties and sufferings vanish.

But...it is almost impossible to persuade any man to renounce the race, without cutting off his feet...This God has done for me; this He has been doing for you. And you will, one day, if you do not now, bless Him for all your sufferings as I do for mine. I have not suffered one pang too much. God was never more kind than when I thought Him most unkind—never more faithful than when I was ready to say, "His faithfulness has failed..."

Anything is a blessing which prevents us from running the fatal race, which we are so prone to run—[anything] which first convinces us we are nothing, and then makes us willing to be so.

*Edward Payson, early in the 1800s, letter of advice to a fellow minister, in *They Knew Their God*, Lillian G. Harvey, Vol Six, p. 68*

Q&A

Question: I don't see the requirement in the Bible for the seven-year Tribulation to follow immediately after the Rapture. Most prophecy speakers suggest a time gap between the Rapture and the revelation of the Antichrist. Why do you maintain the "no gap" belief?

Answer: The church is taken to heaven to remove her, as Christ promised, from "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world..." (Rv 3:10). There would be no point in doing that even days—much less months or years—ahead of time. Paul declared that Antichrist could only be "revealed in his time" (2 Thes 2:6); and that time would come as soon as he who now hinders has been "taken out of the way" (vv. 7,8)—obviously referring to the Holy Spirit indwelling believers, who are being removed at the Rapture.

The sudden miraculous removal from earth of perhaps 100 million people (it could be more or less) would create worldwide panic and terror. That event is the only thing that could unite the entire world under Antichrist in abject fear of a common enemy. He may well claim to know where the missing have been taken and may promise to prevent the snatching away from earth of those who take his mark and follow him. Logically, Antichrist's take-over must happen within a very few hours of the Rapture.

Satan would have to act quickly to take advantage of this unique act of "terrorism" that will terrify and unite the world as nothing else could! With no Scripture to specifically support a waiting period, I see no reason for proposing one.

Question: In 2 Corinthians 1:8-10, Paul speaks of the hope he has of his future deliverance from the great trouble he had in Asia, deliverance by "God which raiseth the dead." He expects to be delivered by the resurrection...Paul will rejoice with and over the Corinthians not when he goes to heaven but "in the day of the Lord Jesus," when the saints are resurrected. He says that our confidence is in "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you...." Isn't it strange that if we are to "go to heaven" the Bible never explicitly says so? It speaks often of the resurrection...of the...day of our Lord [and] of the dead who are described as sleeping, but never of anyone rejoicing in heaven.

Paul expected to be presented to the Lord on that day...[not] when he died and went to heaven. He says, "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God...eternal in the heavens...our house which is from heaven..." (2 Corinthians 5:1,2). Notice it is a house (resurrected body) FROM heaven, not IN heaven. And when did Paul expect this house from heaven to be given to him?...Verses 6-8: "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord...we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." From what Paul has said about the resurrection, the day of the Lord, his rejoicing on that day, being clothed with a resurrected body, to be "absent from the body...present with the Lord" is not to be in heaven immediately upon dying but in his new body at the resurrection.... In verse 10 he says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

When will that be? When Christ returns, raises our bodies and establishes His Kingdom: "...the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom..." (2 Timothy 4:1)! Paul said he wished to be clothed with a new tabernacle...rather to be present with the Lord than in his present body. The moment after Paul dies, the next thing of which he will be conscious is the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the gathering of the saints. In all humility, I would suggest that those who use 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 to "prove" that the dead are conscious in heaven are twisting the scriptures.

Answer: In 2 Corinthians 1:8-10, Paul refers to trouble he had in Asia, from which he was delivered. This is past and accomplished, having nothing to do with the resurrection. He trusts also that the Lord will likewise deliver them from future troubles. His reference to "God which raises the dead" does not mean that deliverance from trouble in Asia will be deferred until he is raised from the dead—it is a recognition of God's great power.

The fact that Paul will rejoice "in the day of the Lord Jesus" because of the resurrection of the body in final victory over death does not even imply, much less say (as you suggest), that he will be in an unconscious state after his death and will not rejoice until that time.

The Bible never speaks of our going to heaven? Are you suggesting that the "Father's house [of] many mansions" to which Christ promised to take us (Jn 14:2,3) is not in heaven?! Paul's declaration that we will be caught up "to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thes 4:17) does not say that Christ will take us to heaven?! Then where will we "ever be with the Lord"? I know you believe in the Rapture, so perhaps you mean that *other than at the Rapture* there is nothing about taking us to heaven.

Consider this: "...the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom [and] comforted" (Lk 16:22-25). Jesus told the believing thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). Clearly, believers before Christ's resurrection were taken to the "paradise," where Abraham (and presumably all other believers) resided in conscious bliss. The fact that before Christ's ascension the place to which the believing dead went is distinguished from heaven is proof enough that upon death believers were always taken

to a place of conscious existence. If all were unconscious until the Rapture, there would be no need to distinguish between where they went, then and now. Surely, Paul's declaration, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord [who we know is in heaven]" could only mean that "paradise" was emptied at the resurrection, and, from that time on, believers who died were not taken there but to heaven, as it is today.

Furthermore, Paul declares that those who "sleep in Jesus [i.e., who died with Christ] will God bring with him" (1 Thes 4:14) to be reunited with their resurrected bodies at the Rapture. "Bring with him" from *where*? Obviously, from heaven, where they must have been with God and Christ. This again clarifies what Paul meant by "absent from the body, present with the Lord."

And no "rejoicing in heaven"! Certainly those in heaven who "shall reign on the earth," as Christ promised His disciples, and who sing the new song in front of the throne unto the Lamb who was "slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rv 5:9) are rejoicing! Will the marriage of the Lamb to His bride (Rv 19:7,8) be a somber affair, with no rejoicing?! The Bible says, "Let us be glad and rejoice...for the marriage of the Lamb is come"! Perhaps you mean there will be no rejoicing in heaven before the Rapture. But David said, "In thy presence is fulness of joy..." (Ps 16:11). That sounds like rejoicing in heaven long before the Rapture.

The statement that our new bodies are "from heaven" doesn't mean they were formed in heaven but that they are created by the God from heaven. Of course, we only get new bodies at the resurrection; but this doesn't mean that our souls and spirits, which are "absent from the body, and... present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8), have been unconscious in His presence. What would be the point of being "present with the Lord" in an unconscious state? And why would Paul desire this with such passion? To say that "absent from the body...present with the Lord" means "not in heaven immediately...but in [a] new body at the resurrection" makes no sense. How can we be "absent from the body" and at the same time be in a new body?! Clearly we must be present with the Lord during the time we are "absent from the body."

If Paul, at death, could only look forward to knowing nothing until the resurrection, why did he write: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21)? To be unconscious and know nothing is gain compared with serving Christ? Why did

he have "a desire to depart and to be with Christ" and call that "far better" if he would be unconscious until the resurrection?

Proof that "absent from the body, present with the Lord" means to be consciously in Christ's presence isn't confined to 2 Corinthians 5:6-8. As mentioned above, Christ told the believing thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). What would "paradise" mean to an unconscious person? Surely "paradise" was "Abraham's bosom," where the beggar Lazarus went upon dying (Lk 16:22). Abraham was conscious, as was "the rich man in hell." How will "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God [cry] with a loud voice" for vengeance upon those who killed them if they are unconscious (Rv 6:9-11) until their resurrection?

That Christ "shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tm 4:1) does not refer to the "judgment seat of Christ" for the saints but to a judgment of the lost on earth when "before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them...as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Mt 25:31-46). The judgment of the saints for reward or loss takes place in heaven. Obviously, that will have to be after the Rapture, when all the saints are there—but it doesn't mean that those who previously died are *unconsciously* "with Christ"!

Question: When I read your comment about the Amalekites being extinct, I wondered about Haman, a descendant of Amalek. Doesn't that prove they were not completely extinct?

Answer: There might have been a surviving Amalekite here and there in those days, but that does not mean that Amalekites survived in any numbers, even at that time. Certainly there is no group today that would claim descent from the Amalekites.

Question: Recently I heard a pastor use the phrase "falling away" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) to mean "departure" or "rapture." This is the subject that Paul is addressing in 2 Thessalonians 2:1. The pastor stated that all of the following references in the New Testament use the word "departure" to mean "turn away or go in another direction" and not "rebellion or apostasy": Luke 2:13; 8:13; 13:27; Acts 5:37,38; 12:10; 15:38; 19:9; 21:21; 22:29; 2 Corinthians 12:8; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 3:12. So what departure do you think we find in 2 Thessalonians 2:3? J. Vernon McGee stated both views.

Answer: I do not understand the distinction the pastor was attempting to make. Is not "to turn away or go in another direction" the same as "rebellion or apostasy"? With all due respect to this pastor and McGee, I don't see why anyone would leave an opening for two opposing views. A falling away is something that people do, not something done to them. The Rapture is done to us, not something we do. We can depart from sound doctrine, but we cannot depart from this earth to heaven—Christ must catch us up. The word *apostasia* (translated "falling away" in 2 Thes 2:3), which means to defect, forsake, or depart from, could not mean the believer's defection, forsaking, or departure from earth to heaven. Nor by any stretch of the imagination could *apostasia* mean the Rapture!

Wonderful Love

Dave Hunt

Recently, I have been ever more convicted of how pitifully inadequate my understanding and appreciation really is of God and His love. But isn't it to be expected that our understanding of the infinite God and of His love that "passeth knowledge" (Eph 3:19) would be lacking a great deal? Indeed not. The Lord declared that we are to glory in our understanding of Him who exercises "lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth..." (Jer 9:24). *Understanding* of the infinite God? That seems impossible! Yet this is His desire for us. The same glorious One who said to Abraham, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gn 15:1), desires to reveal Himself fully to us by His indwelling Holy Spirit!

Why, then, is our understanding of and love for God so feeble? The answer is not hard to come by if we pause to take an honest look at our lives. What and whom do we really seek? What is our ambition, our passion? Is it not for the *things* of earth rather than for *Him* whose throne is in heaven? Though we would deny this indictment with our lips, do we not often demonstrate its shameful truth with our lives?

Depending upon the type of work we do, we may have to concentrate on our tasks and not be able even to think of our Lord during our business or labor. Others of us could be rejoicing in the Lord while we work. But what about going to and from work? And what about when we are at home? How much of our time there that we could have used to enrich our fellowship with our Lord is wasted on TV, novels, games, and other trivial pursuits of which we will be ashamed when we see Him face to face?

If we truly want to know God, He must be our number one priority. Did He not promise, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13)? *With all your heart!* Could that be the problem? The New Testament likewise testifies that in coming to God we must believe that He rewards "them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). *Diligently!*

Where is our passion for God and Christ? Do those of us who claim to know and love our Lord seek diligently to know Him better? Do our lives echo the psalmist's heart, "My soul thirsteth for...

the living God" (Ps 42:2)? Do we share the passion that was Paul's: "That I may know him....I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:10, 14)?

In all honesty, how many of us have any real concern or exert any great effort to keep the very first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mt 22:37)? Jesus called this not only the first, but the "great commandment" (v. 38). Have we forgotten that fact? In seeking to live for our Lord and to avoid sin, have we overlooked the worst sin of all, failing to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind? When did you last express your love to Him as the passion of your heart?

We may not miss a church service, (though rare are such individuals today). We may sing lustily and sincerely of our love for our Lord in company with others of the "faithful few." And that is commendable. But let the last "Amen" sound at a "worship" service and conversations

AND THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL, THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THEE THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST, WHOM THOU HAST SENT.

—John 17:3

immediately and automatically turn to everything but Christ and God. How much "fellowship" after a church service consists of breathless and excited sharing of the wonders of God's love? Why not? How much is taken up with everything else? Is this not how we reveal our hearts, our true love?

God tenderly reminded Israel, His chosen, "I remember...the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness...Israel was holiness unto the LORD..." (Jer 2:2,3). But then He sadly lamented, "My people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer 2:32). Worse than that, they had turned from the true God, who had delivered them from Egypt, brought them through the Red Sea on dry ground, fed them with manna, subdued their enemies, and brought them triumphantly into the Promised Land. Turned from Him to what? Incredibly, to worship idols of wood and stone! They had forsaken the "fountain of living waters" to scavenge a sip from broken and contaminated cisterns that could hold no water (2:13)!

Reluctantly, Christ rebuked the early

church at Ephesus: "Thou hast left thy first love" (Rv 2:4)! What heartbreaking sadness that must have caused our Lord! What about you and me? Have we told Him, from overflowing hearts, that we love Him—today, this week, this month? And beyond what we know intellectually and profess with our lips—what is the reality that our lives demonstrate day after day? Do our actions contradict our words? Do our shallow lives reflect the poverty of so much that passes for "worship" in many churches today but is little more than the repetition of pitifully empty expressions from new song writers? Although sincere, many are not spiritually mature enough to be writing replacements for the old hymns of the faith written by people who knew the Lord for many years and expressed their love and appreciation for God and Christ so well. It's not the *style*—it's the words and the lack of real depth so often expressed in contemporary "worship."

I grieve over the shallowness of today's popular "worship" songs that have replaced discarded hymns of doctrine and depth. For example: "I love you, Lord [that's good to profess], and I lift my voice to worship Thee; O my soul, rejoice. Take joy, my King, in what You hear. Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear." But what "sweet, sweet sound" has He heard? Nothing except a profession of love so empty that it has no expression of His great goodness to show genuine understanding and appreciation that would gladden His heart. Consider, in contrast, the depth of gratitude expressed in one of the hundreds of hymns that has been cast aside:

O teach us, Lord, Thy searchless love to know, Thou who hast died! Before our feeble faith, Lord Jesus, show Thy hands and side, that our glad hearts, responsive unto Thine, may wake with all the power of love divine.

Thy death has brought to light the Father's heart and ours has won. And now we contemplate Thee as Thou art—God's glorious Son. And know that we are loved with that great love that rests on Thee in those bright courts above.

Thy flesh is meat, Thy blood, blest Savior, shed is drink indeed. On Thee, the true, the heavenly living bread, our souls would feed. And live with Thee in life's eternal home, where sin, nor want, nor woe, nor death can come.

Jesus said that to have eternal life we must know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ..." (Jn 17:3). How could we know

Him without knowing His wonderful love? And how could we truly know the infinite love He proved on the Cross without our hearts overflowing in love and gratitude and praise? Paul's prayer for the Ephesian saints (and surely for us today) was that "ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph 3:17-19). Another past hymn writer put it like this: "It passeth knowledge, that dear love of thine, Lord Jesus, Savior, yet this heart of mine would of thy love in all its length and breadth, its height and depth, its everlasting strength, know more and more!"

What praise and thanksgiving we owe Him for His "great love wherewith he loved us" (Eph 2:4)! We believe in God's love; we talk and sing about it and at times are tearfully overwhelmed by its magnificence. And yet I am overcome with shame because my highest thoughts and most eloquent words fall so far short of expressing from my heart the response that such wonderful love deserves. My constant cry is, "Lord, fill my thirsting heart with a deeper revelation of Yourself and Your wonderful love so that I may give You the praise and love of which You are worthy!"

When I pause to seek deeper understanding and appreciation, it seems beyond comprehension that the infinite God would love *me*—and not with a generic love but with an intimate, personal passion just for *me*! The hymn writer asks,

Love sent my Savior to die in my stead.
Why should He love me so?
Meekly to Calvary's Cross He was led.
Why should He love me so?
Why should my Savior to Calvary go?
Why should He love me so?

In awesome wonder, we realize how unworthy we are of the least of His mercies. We recognize that this burning question of why He loves us finds no answer within ourselves. *Nothing in us* could in the least merit His infinite and pure love, which is far beyond our highest thoughts.

The answer to that question, of course, is found in 1 John 4:8, 16: "God is love"! He cannot *but* love all—because love is the very essence of His nature. But that fact does not in the least diminish the wonder of or depersonalize His love that is so high and yet its intimate passion reaches so low to embrace sinners, even those in rebellion against Him! From hymns buried in the

past, long cast aside by today's "worship teams," comes the glorious refrain:

What condescension, bringing us redemption;
That in the dead of night, not one faint hope in sight;
God, glorious, tender, laid aside His splendor,
Stooping to woo, to win, to save my soul!
Without reluctance, flesh and blood His substance,
He took the form of man, revealed the hidden plan.
O glorious mystery! Sacrifice of Calvary!
And now I know He is the great I AM!

The chorus of that song expresses the response of redeemed hearts to such wonderful love: "O, how I love Him, how I adore Him—my breath, my sunshine, my all in all! The great Creator became my Savior, and all God's fullness dwelleth in Him!"

The fact that God's love "passeth knowledge" and yet can be known is not surprising. Indeed, it is testified to by our experience in this sinful world. Even human love is mysterious beyond our comprehension. That is because it comes from the heart—and "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). The divorce rate among professing evangelical Christians is about the same as among the unsaved: about 50 percent. These are husbands and wives who once solemnly, sincerely, and with high hopes pledged their love until parted by death, yet at some point found life so unbearable with the one they had passionately loved that they broke their word.

Those who remain faithful, in spite of all, learn that love is not merely an emotion but a sworn commitment that builds character when it is kept. And that faithfulness, in the face of trials that test it, strengthens love itself. So it is with our love for God. There will be trials that will cause us to doubt His love, and other attractions that will compete for the affections belonging to Him alone. When doubts arise, when fears press in, or when lust invades to unseat Christ from the throne in our hearts, we need only contemplate Calvary to find that nothing can compete with His love for us. Echoing from 150 years ago come words that break our hearts:

Lord, Thy love has sought and found us
wand'ring in this desert wide.
Thou hast thrown Thine arms around us,
for us suffered, bled and died.
Hark! What sounds of bitter weeping
from yon lonesome garden sweep?
'Tis the Lord His vigil keeping,
whilst His followers sink in sleep.

O blessed Lord, what hast thou done? How vast a ransom giv'n?
Thyself of God th' eternal Son, the Lord of earth and heav'n.
Thy Father, in His gracious love, didst spare Thee from His side;
And Thou didst stoop to bear above, at such a cost, thy bride.
Unseen, we love Thee; dear Thy name; but when our eyes behold,
With joyful wonder we'll exclaim, "The half hath not been told."
For Thou exceedest all the fame our ears have ever heard.
How happy we who know thy name, and trust Thy faithful Word!

How could a holy God justly forgive sinners? That was the problem facing God, which His love overcame. Again the echo of a hymn comes out of the distant past to thrill our hearts:

Wonderful love that rescued me, sunk deep in sin.
Guilty and vile as I could be, no hope within.
When every ray of light had fled, O glorious day!
Raising my soul from out the dead, love found a way!
Love found a way to redeem my soul.
Love found a way that could make me whole.
Love sent my Lord to the Cross of shame.
Love found a way—O praise His Holy Name!

And let us not forget what it cost not only the Son but His Father: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." The Father gave the Son of His love to be mocked, falsely accused, abused, scourged, and crucified by His creatures. Out of His infinite love for us, He laid on His Son the sins of the world, punished Him as though He were sin itself, and caused Him to endure the eternal Lake-of-Fire suffering for the individual sins of all mankind that would ever exist. He loved *us* that much? Yes! Think of that—meditate upon it!

We cannot even imagine the anguish of both Father and Son, expressed in that incomprehensible cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1; Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34). And it was all so that we who deserved nothing but eternal punishment could be forgiven! That the Father and Son would love sinners that much is beyond our comprehension—but it ought to awaken a response of love and gratitude within our hearts that will change our lives forever! May it be so to His glory and the salvation of souls! **TBC**

Quotable

God does not expect us to give up, to give in, to accept the church as it is and to condone what is happening. He expects His believing children to measure the church against the standards and the blessings promised in the Word of God. Then, with love and reverence and prayer and in the leading of the Spirit of God we will quietly and patiently endeavor to align the church with the Word of God...

None of us is as concerned as we should be about the image we really project to the community around us. At least not when we profess to belong to Jesus Christ and still fail to show forth His love and compassion as we should.

We who are fundamentalists...have gained the reputation of being...great fighters for the truth...we are obligated to stand up for the truth and to contend for the faith when necessary. But we can do a whole lot more...by being Christ-like than we can by figuratively beating [others] over the head...If we are led by the Spirit of God and if we show forth the love of God this world needs...we become the "winsome saints" [and] those around us will know that Christ is living His life in us.

A.W. Tozer, Whatever Happened to Worship?, pp. 10-11, 99

Q&A

Question [composite of several]: Was this a misstatement, or do you really believe what you said in your September Q&A: "Those who only know the false gospel of Calvinism are not saved"?

Answer: The original question was, "Is it possible for someone who believes only in the soteriology of Calvin to be saved?" As I said in my response, there are many Calvinists who were saved before they became Calvinists or who have believed the true gospel in spite of their Calvinism—but "those who know only the false gospel of Calvinism are not saved." If all one believes is that infant baptism saves, as Calvin taught (and which is the case with many Calvinists), one is certainly not saved. If a person believes that he was saved through infant baptism, how is it possible for him, without relinquishing that false belief, to truly be saved by believing the gospel? He has no need of the true gospel, having

already been forgiven his sins and made a child of God through infant baptism. He may affirm at his confirmation that Christ died for his sins, but he still believes that the benefit of that sacrifice came to him through infant baptism long before his "confirmation" of this lie.

How could that false faith save? If it does, then the many former Catholics, Lutherans, and Presbyterians who realized they weren't saved through their infant baptism, and who put their faith in Christ, were born again, and then baptized as believers, have been deluded. But they would vehemently deny that they were saved all the time in spite of their faith in infant baptism! And they would reject Calvin himself as an "ex-Catholic"—because he continued to rely upon his infant baptism for salvation, he declared that being baptized as a baby was the sure way of knowing one was among the elect, he opposed those who got saved and were then baptized, he banned Anabaptists from Geneva in 1537, and he even had some burned at the stake for this belief.

Am I denying that Calvin was saved? No, only God knew his heart. But if all he believed was (as he taught) that Christ died only for the elect, and that his infant baptism into the Roman Catholic Church proved that he was one of the elect, then he never got saved no matter how eloquently he wrote about Christ's sufferings on the Cross for our sins.

If all one believes is that one has no choice—that it is God who *causes* some to believe and not others, and that one must be unwittingly regenerated by Him and only then given faith to believe the gospel—how can such a person make a genuine choice to believe in Christ? How could that person, consistent with this Calvinist belief, ever have the assurance offered in 1 John 5:13? No matter how simple and strong his faith in Christ might seem to be, how could he be certain that such "faith in Christ" was truly given to him by God after He had regenerated him?

If all one believes is that Christ died only for the elect but not for all—how can that person be certain that Christ died for *him* and that his faith in Christ is not presumption? How can he believe the true gospel that "if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink...let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Jn 7:37; Rv 22:17), if he really believes that he is totally depraved and unable either to hear the invitation or respond to it? Calvin even said that God

gives a false sense of assurance to the non-elect the better to damn them. If one's most basic belief denies the very assurance Scripture offers, how can it be said that one believes the gospel promise of "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31)?

That a person may believe the true gospel and thus be truly saved in spite of believing the false gospel of Calvinism may be possible. But I don't see how one could sort out the fact that contradictory beliefs were being held. What does one really believe?

Question: When the Rapture occurs, will we leave our clothes behind us in a heap where we were when Christ caught us up to meet Him in the clouds?

Answer: We certainly will not take our earthly clothes with us to heaven—nor our tooth fillings, prostheses, etc. But I see no reason why one's false teeth or artificial hips would be visibly left behind. They would simply disappear along with the rest of one's natural body (including all of the medical repairs and patches) in the instantaneous transformation when "we shall all be changed...and this mortal shall have put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:51-54).

Likewise, when we change from earthly clothes to heavenly robes, why would anything be left behind? Some suggest that our clothes will be visibly left behind in a heap to show that we have been raptured to heaven. But that doesn't fit with the fact that a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thes 2:11) will be given to those left behind. Everything will be *changed*, not *abandoned*.

The only thing Elijah left behind was his mantle, and that was deliberate as a sign that his authority and power had been passed on to Elisha. No, we will not leave our clothes behind in a heap—they will disappear, just as we will, without a trace. This is my opinion—you have to make up your own mind. But the Scripture doesn't make this absolutely clear, so don't spend a lot of time studying and least of all arguing about it.

Question: How can a non-Calvinist explain 2 Thessalonians 2:13? Isn't it quite conclusive that those to whom Paul wrote had been "chosen [unto] salvation"—i.e., predestined to heaven?

Answer: That scripture states, "...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Does that mean

they had been predestined for heaven? Absolutely not.

The clear message of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation is that all mankind have been “chosen to salvation” by the God who would “have all men to be saved...” (1 Tm 2:4), who is “the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe” (4:10), and whose Son “gave himself a ransom for all” (2:6). The fact that one has been “chosen” to salvation does not mean that one has been predestined for heaven, but that one is a sinner, and all sinners have the opportunity to believe the gospel—which most refuse to do.

Christ said to His disciples, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas...that should betray him...” (Jn 6:70-71). Clearly, the fact that Judas was one of those chosen to be a disciple did not guarantee that he would fulfill that calling. He was morally responsible to follow Christ by faith. Through his own choice, he did not do so and is now in hell.

The same biblical truth is demonstrated also in Israel: “The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself...” (Dt 7:6). That “choosing” did not automatically assure that every physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would necessarily live the part. Unfortunately, Israel as a whole did not fulfill that calling but went into sin, and God had to cast her out of the land.

From these and other scriptures, it is clear that being “chosen” to salvation does not *bring* salvation: one must still believe the gospel in order to be saved. That fact is further made clear by the rest of the verse: “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Though “chosen to salvation,” the *means* of salvation is not the choosing by God, but it is the individual’s “belief of the truth.”

Question: In your book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, I noticed that you don’t make any reference to some key passages about Mary: Lk 1:28, 48; Rev. 12. Why not?

Answer: In Luke we read: “Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women...from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” I had no intent to avoid these passages and no reason to do so. They contain nothing that would in the remotest way support the false position to which the Roman Catholic Church has elevated Mary.

The fact that Mary was chosen to be the mother of Jesus when He was born

into the world is the clear teaching of the Bible. That she should, therefore, as Christ’s mother, be highly favored and blessed among all women is only reasonable as well as biblical and is not denied in any degree by true Christians. To recite these undisputed facts would have been irrelevant to the message of the book.

The claims in Roman Catholicism that Mary was conceived and lived without sin, that she was bodily taken into heaven without dying, that she helped to redeem us with the sorrows of her heart in concert with Christ’s sufferings on the Cross, that all grace flows from God to Christ and from Christ through Mary to mankind, that she is the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of Mercy, that prayers should be offered to her as the mediatrix between men and Christ, that she is the Mother of and in charge of the Church, that she obtains whatever she asks from Christ now in heaven and therefore we ought to go to her with our needs, etc., etc., are all false, and none of them has any support whatsoever in the verses you cite nor in any other part of Scripture.

As for Revelation 12, here again the Roman Catholic Church defies both Scripture and logic in its claim that the “woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” is Mary. The apparitions of Mary (all of which are demonic) have at times appeared in this form in support of this false doctrine.

It is quite clear from Scripture that the “woman” depicted here is symbolic of Israel, through whom the Messiah had been promised and would come into the world. The “great red dragon,” of course, is Satan, who has sought to destroy the Messiah down through history by destroying all Jews. These attempts are recorded in the Bible (Pharaoh’s decree that all male babies should be killed upon birth—Ex 1:16; Queen Athaliah’s attempt to destroy “all the seed royal” when Joash was hidden from her—2 Ki 11:1; the attempt by Haman to have all Jews killed—Est 3:8-15; Herod’s attempt to kill the Messiah—Mt 2:16, etc.). Secular history also offers proof of Satan’s determination to destroy all Jews: the destruction of Jews by the Roman Catholic Church, by Muslims upon the decree of Muhammad, by Hitler, the intent to destroy Israel today, etc.

There is no question that Mary could not possibly be the woman in Revelation 12. She never “fled into the wilderness [into] a place prepared of God” (12:6). Furthermore, she does not fit the false

Mary of Roman Catholicism who was without sin. Pain in childbirth was pronounced by God upon all women as a result of sin. Yet this woman “being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered” (12:2). How could she be the sinless Catholic Mary?

Earnestly Contend

Dave Hunt

Hundreds of fulfilled prophecies prove God's existence, that the Bible is His inerrant Word, the Jews His chosen people, and Jesus of Nazareth the promised Messiah who died for our sins, has resurrected, and is coming again. Yet prophecy is neglected by most Christian preachers and writers. No wonder that the "last-days" apostasy warned of in God's Word is now upon us with a vengeance!

The few who do teach prophecy, when referring to "last-days signs," seldom mention apostasy. Yet when asked by His disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming...?" (Mt 24:3), Christ three times warned that the major sign would be apostasy, with false prophets and false Christs using false "signs and wonders" to deceive (24:4-5,11,24). That warning was echoed by Paul (2 Tm 3:8) and by Jude, who said we must "earnestly contend for the faith...once delivered to the saints" because "certain men [have] crept [into the church] unawares...ungodly men...denying...God, and...Christ" (Jude 3-4).

"False Christs"?! There have been many in our day, from Jim Jones to David Koresh. Numerous gurus in India claim to be "Christ." The false "Christs" presented by novels, videos, and movies have multiplied since *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The "Jesus" of *The DaVinci Code* is a fraud. The "Jesus" of ABC-TV's *Judas* confessed that he "blew it" in chasing the moneychangers out of the Temple. The media bombards us with false Christs!

That evangelical leaders called Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* "biblically accurate" is distressing. It was almost entirely unbiblical: A sinful man pretending to be the One who declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" and whom Paul described as "God manifest in the flesh"; this Hollywood "Christ" stomping on a huge serpent slithering into Gethsemane, and Satan tempting Him there; the two Marys wiping up "Christ's" blood with linens supplied by Pilate's wife; "Christ," knocked off a bridge on the way to Calvary, dangling from a chain and confronting Judas hiding beneath; "Saint Veronica" giving her veil to "Christ" to wipe his face, and the image of his face remaining on it as the first icon; a raven plucking out the eye of a thief on an adjoining cross; the endless beatings by Roman soldiers, giving the false impression that Christ's physical suf-

ferings paid for our sins, etc. *None* of this is in the Bible! Nor was there even a hint of the true payment for sin: "The LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all...it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," etc. *The Passion* portrayed a false gospel of mostly myth!

The Bible is being "improved" by script writers, movie directors, and actors, who are replacing the actual "incorruptible...word of God" by which we are "born again," with dramatic representations. The entire New Testament is now on video, which may soon be the only "Bible" youth know. Who will earnestly contend?

For three years, "night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31), Paul warned the Ephesian elders about coming apostasy. Who warns about apostasy today? Rick Warren wouldn't dare for fear of losing his following. A prophesied apostasy doesn't fit Warren's plans and popularity, nor does it fit the mushrooming growth of other mega churches—or does it? Is the Bible wrong—

AND FOR THIS CAUSE GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE....

—2 Thessalonians 2:11

or is this the apostasy foretold? What is the real condition of the church? A recent Barna poll revealed that 71 percent of Americans, 64 percent of "born-agains," and 40 percent of "evangelicals" reject absolute truth.

Paul faithfully declared "all the counsel of God [holding] back nothing" (Acts 20:20,27). But the church today, like the world it mimics, believes the lie that to be "successful" one must always be "positive." Thus, most of the Bible is avoided. Were Jeremiah or any other prophets "positive"? Was Jesus "positive" when He said, "...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3,5)? He repeatedly warned about hell. From which Christian leaders do we hear such warnings today?

Watching TBN, or reading James Rutz's *MegaShift* ("A megashift of spiritual power...is about to...put [the world] into vastly better shape...A whole new form of Christianity promises to bring a far greater impact than the Protestant Reformation"), would lead one to believe that the real sign of the last days is a worldwide revival (the "latter rain outpouring of the Spirit") fueled by miraculous "signs and wonders." The Bible, however, calls it a deadly delusion

led by false prophets.

Peter Howard, executive assistant to Bishop Michael Sheridan, head of the Catholic Diocese of Colorado Springs, warned Catholics not to attend Protestant services. In "positive" response, Ted Haggard, Senior Pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs and president of the 30-million-member National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), said, "New Life doesn't try to 'convert' Catholics" and would never discourage its members "from becoming Catholic or attending Catholic Mass." The 16th-century Reformers would be aghast!

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was the response of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) to the Reformation. It pronounced more than 100 anathemas against the true gospel, damning to hell all who believe it. For example: "If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law [Catholic rituals] are not necessary for salvation but...men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema."

On December 31, 1995, honoring Trent's 450th anniversary, Pope John Paul II declared: "Its conclusions maintain all their value." Those who claim that Christ paid the full penalty for sin on the Cross, who deny the necessity of suffering for one's sins in purgatory, and who reject indulgences to shorten that suffering are still anathematized by Rome. Yet in *The Body* (1992), Charles Colson denied that indulgences are still offered by Rome. I sent him the seventeen pages on indulgences from Vatican II, including Pope Paul's anathema upon those who deny indulgences today. Colson never acknowledged his error, which has led multitudes astray.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association published a special "Crusade Edition" (1962, 1964, 1969) of *Halley's Bible Handbook* and boldly removed Halley's careful documentation of the evil of the popes and the slaughter of true Christians. Zondervan published a revised edition of *Halley's Bible Handbook* in 2000, which likewise eliminated references to the RCC's heresies and the millions of evangelical Christians slaughtered by Rome. Instead, it says: "The Roman Catholic Church responded to the Protestant Reformation by reforming and renewing itself."

When challenged about its lies, Stan Gundry, Zondervan's Vice President and Editor-in-Chief responded, "The purpose of the rewriting was...to give a more balanced portrayal of the history of Christianity." Whitewashing Roman Catholic doctrine and practice and leaving out the slaughter of millions of Christians gives a "more balanced"

history?! And who owns Zondervan, publisher of *The Purpose-Driven Life*?

In 1988, Zondervan and its NIV Bible were purchased by Harper & Row Publishers (now HarperCollins Publishers), who put out pro-homosexual books such as *Making Out, The Book of Lesbian Sex and Sexuality* ("Beautifully illustrated with full-color photography...") and others! HarperCollins is a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's The News Corporation which owns Twentieth Century Fox and Fox Broadcasting. The latter produces some of the most immoral, anti-family shows on television. Murdoch—to whom Pat Robertson sold the Family Channel (paid for by CBN donors) for \$1.9 billion—was knighted by the Pope after donating \$10 million for a new Catholic cathedral in Los Angeles. And Rick Warren claims to be Murdoch's pastor.

Christian publishers have put profits ahead of sound doctrine and have made a lot of money by giving customers what they want instead of the biblical truth they need, selling out to the world monetarily as they already had morally. Isn't this the opposite of contending for the faith?

On October 31, 1999, in Augsburg, Germany, representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and of the RCC signed a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). The Reformation was overturned! Colson says, "Justification by faith alone...doesn't mean today among evangelicals what it meant in the reformers' time." The gospel has changed?!

For 1.1 billion Roman Catholics nothing changed. They still pray to Mary for salvation and wear her scapular, which declares, "Whosoever dies wearing this scapular shall not suffer eternal fire." What an insult to Christ! The very doctrine of indulgences that sparked the Reformation remains a mainstay of Catholicism. Mocking JDDJ, John Paul II opened four "holy doors" in Rome and offered plenary indulgences for walking through them. (Catholic pilgrims came by the millions to do so, rejecting Christ as the only door to eternal life!)

Kneeling beside the Pope in front of the first "holy door" opened was George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury and spiritual head of the Church of England. John Stott said, "Evangelicals should join [the] Church of England in working toward full communion with the Roman Catholic Church."

Do we believe the entire Bible or just the "positive" parts of it? Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see [or enter] the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3,5). Peter said that a man is "born again...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached"

(1 Pt 1:23-25). Without believing the gospel one is lost eternally (Rom 1:16; Acts 16:31, etc.). Haggard affirms "the necessity of being born again...." Yet he accepts Catholics as Christians who have been born again by infant baptism!

What is the faith (gospel) for which we are to "earnestly contend"? Paul defines it as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ *according to the Scriptures*. Surely that involves who God is, who Christ is, the problem between God and man, the only means of man's forgiveness by God, and the eternal consequences for those who reject the biblical gospel—all according to the Scriptures.

The entire Word of God is foundational to the faith. Sadly, the church and world are being robbed of the pure Word of God by professing evangelicals. Eugene Peterson's *The Message* (NavPress, 1993) changes God's Word into the "social gospel," downgrading salvation to earthly improvement. (See *TBC* Oct '95; Feb '04.) The *Renovaré* "Bible" rejects divine inspiration and prophecies about Israel and Christ. (See *TBC* Aug '05.)

The subject of Israel takes up most of the Bible. Its history and prophets lay the foundation for the Messiah's identity and mission. If the Bible is not 100 percent true about Israel (as many evangelicals claim), we cannot believe what it says about Christ and our "redemption through His blood."

For decades, Billy Graham has declared that his beliefs are "essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics...." He praised Pope John Paul II as a preacher of the true gospel and for "his strong Catholic faith," hailing him as "the greatest moral and spiritual leader of the last 100 years.... I don't know anyone else that I could put as high as he is. He's traveled the whole world...spreading the Catholic faith....He and I agree on almost everything."

It is indisputable that John Paul II, though praised by evangelicals, trusted Mary instead of Christ for his eternal destiny. (See *TBC* May '05.) Yet, like Graham, Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptists' Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, emphasized that any disagreements Protestants may have had "with John Paul II are [irrelevant] to the foundations of the faith." Land praised the Pope's "staunch defense of traditional Christian faith...." Pat Robertson enthused, "Pope John Paul II stands like a rock...in his clear enunciation of the foundational principles of the Christian faith." Jack Van Impe has hailed the Pope as a staunch Christian and defender of the faith. J.I. Packer, a signatory to ECT, called John Paul II "a fine Christian man" and declared, "Catholics are

among the most loyal and virile brothers evangelicals can find these days."

Who will obey Jude's injunction to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints"? Not Rick Warren. Nor has Billy Graham ever raised a voice against those who deny the faith. Charles Dullea, Jesuit Superior of Rome's Pontifical Biblical Institute, urged Catholics to attend Graham's crusades because "A Catholic will hear...no word against Mass or Sacraments or Catholic practice." Graham called the Mass "a very beautiful thing...straight and clear in the gospel I believe...." He recommended a biography of Pope John XXIII as "a classic in devotion." Yet it contains page after page of John XXIII's devotion to Mary and the Saints, worship of the host, and trust in the sacraments for salvation.

Billy Graham hailed Bishop Fulton Sheen as the "greatest communicator of the 20th century." Though Sheen preached a false gospel, Billy exulted in their "common commitment to evangelism" and thanked Sheen "for his ministry and his focus on Christ." Yet Sheen's hope of heaven was in his 40 pilgrimages to Marian shrines at Fatima and Lourdes. When Sheen died, Billy said, "I... look forward to our reunion in heaven."

Many evangelical leaders who generally preach the true gospel, commend, approve of, and praise those who preach a false gospel. Is it any less damning to souls for Billy Graham to praise and endorse Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller, Pope John Paul II, and others who preach a false gospel than to preach it himself?

In *The Body*, Chuck Colson called for union with Rome. In an article titled, "Why Catholics are Our Allies," he wrote: "And let's be certain that we are firing our polemical rifles against the enemies, not [allies] fighting in the trenches alongside us in the defense of the Truth." It would shock the Reformers (especially the millions Rome tortured and slaughtered for their faith in Christ) to learn that the enemies of the gospel were actually their allies "in defense of the Truth"!

Just as His people Israel, to whom He sent His prophets to warn them of their apostasy and its dire consequences, would not listen, so it is today in the church. Glad to follow any pied piper who plays an enticing tune, and unwilling (and one day unable) to hear the Lord, millions dance merrily on to judgment. Time on this earth will soon end. Let us earnestly contend for "the faith once delivered unto the saints"—and thereby rescue many before it is forever too late. And may our example give renewed courage and conviction to many others. **TBC**

Quotable

If any one note is dropped from the divine harmony of truth the music may be sadly marred. Your people may fall into grave spiritual diseases through the lack of a certain form of spiritual nutriment, which can only be supplied by the doctrines which you withhold.... We must preach "the whole truth," that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works....

Since conversion is a divine work, we must take care that we depend entirely upon the Spirit of God, and look to Him for power over men's minds. [If] we were more truly sensible of our need of the Spirit of God, should we not...pray more importunately to be anointed with His sacred unction...? Do we not fail in many of our efforts, because we practically, though not doctrinally, ignore the Holy Ghost...? [We] are instruments in His hand, and nothing more.

C.H. Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, pp. 336-37

Nothing goes further to help one understand the Bible than the purpose to obey it.... Nothing clears the mind like obedience; nothing darkens the mind like disobedience. To obey a truth you see prepares you to see other truths. To disobey a truth you see darkens your mind to all truths.

R.A. Torrey, How To Succeed In the Christian Life, pp. 60-61

Q&A

Question: Thanks for your powerful and poignant article for December. However, it is unfair to paint a sweeping generalization that "so much that passes for 'worship' in many churches today...is little more than the repetition of pitifully empty expressions from new song writers."

Isn't the most important issue whether the heart of the musician pleases God? Christian artists that are creating musical "milk" but whose hearts are pure may also be "precious in His sight."

Even wrestle with sacred "Christmas" music. Could we not argue against singing those carols since the holiday itself is of pagan origin and not "scriptural" and most of the music is shared with the Antichrist Catholic Church? And isn't even this a matter of the heart and personal conviction, rather than a doctrinal absolute?

Answer: I expressed my personal opinion out of deep concern for the shallowness of so

much "worship." While I said that beat and style are not my complaint, some popular "contemporary music" has a worldly rebelliousness to it and even a hypnotic beat that any witchdoctor would recognize as what he uses to call up spirits. But I'm only dealing with the words.

Yes, the hearts of Christian artists who "are creating musical 'milk' [may be] pure and 'precious in his sight.'" But worship songs for the entire congregation ought to glorify God and the person and work of Christ to the fullest extent possible. Why offer something inferior when so much that is far better is available?

Regarding the songwriter who lacks the maturity and appreciation of the Lord and is unable to give us anything but "milk" (no matter how pure his heart), let him mature before his music is considered worthy to lead others. While worship is "a matter of the heart and personal conviction," I disagree that doctrinal content is secondary. How can the heart be right if the doctrine is wrong? Tragically, many if not most "worship teams" have little or no acquaintance with the solid hymns of the faith and don't even know what they are missing.

Some "Christmas" songs are equally shallow and unbiblical. My criticism is the same for them.

Question: You and Tom both wrote good, factual articles in *TBC* and did ten radio programs about Rick Warren and *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Then, at his invitation, you [Dave] attended a pastors conference at Saddleback, and when you returned you seemed to have softened your position. As you know, Warren has had a column in the *Ladies' Home Journal* for nearly a year. I have yet to find the gospel in any of them!

What he does present is pop psychology exactly like Robert Schuller, yet you say he has broken all ties with Schuller. Here is just one example from his March 2005 column: "Self-esteem still wobbly...? These five simple truths will show you that you don't need to be perfect to be priceless.... To truly love yourself, you need to know the five truths that form the basis of a healthy self-image: Accept yourself; Love yourself; Be true to yourself; Forgive yourself; Believe in yourself."

This is typical of the non-sequiturs Warren offers. He promises five "truths" but gives five things to do, none of them a truth. This is pop psychology that even numerous secular psychologists and psychiatrists have refuted—and it contradicts

the clear teaching of Scripture. Warren's "accept...love...be true to...forgive...believe in yourself" blatantly opposes Christ's "except a man deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, he cannot be my disciple" (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23, etc.).

How can you say Warren loves the Lord and has a passion for souls when his actions do not support such a claim? I think many people have been confused by your apparent change from criticizing Rick Warren to apparently supporting him.

Answer: Thank you for your concern. Hearing Rick in person and talking with him face to face gave me a different opinion from the one I had formed by reading his books and watching him on video. I would still say that he is a sincere Christian who genuinely desires the salvation of souls. That he so seldom, and then usually only obliquely, presents the gospel is an inexcusable contradiction—but that can be said of many Christian leaders. Joel Osteen has built the largest church in America (30,000 each weekend) by doing the same thing!

Rick's defenders told me that he wanted to gain the attention and trust of *Journal* readers before giving them the gospel—but he hasn't done so. [See Q&A Apr. '05.] Instead, as you say, he has given them the lies of pop psychology—again inexcusable. He can't be that ignorant—certainly not after reading the Bible for years. I had hoped through personal contact with Rick to help him. That opportunity seems to have passed. His huge success makes any admission of error increasingly difficult.

Rick is not alone in the promotion of psychology's deadly selfisms. They are now common fare in the church. Nor is he alone (and perhaps not the worst) in partnering with Roman Catholics and promoting AA's occult 12 Steps. That does not excuse Rick. But shouldn't we question the commitment to Christ and the gospel on the part of Billy Graham, Chuck Colson, and Bill Bright (all three praised Sir John Marks Templeton and his prize for progress toward the Antichrist's world religion and failed to give the gospel to the vast and needy audiences when they accepted that prize); J.I. Packer and every other signatory to ECT; Josh McDowell, David Jeremiah, James Dobson, and every Christian psychologist, and all who accept and promote their lies? Sadly, Rick is merely a reflection of the church of today.

I am not excusing Rick Warren. I believe he is a genuine brother who has been led

into compromise in order to reach a wider audience—but with what? He seems to be only part of a compromise of biblical truth that has enlisted Christian leaders as never before in history and is playing into Satan’s plan to *produce a false church for Antichrist*.

In his December 2005 article, Warren encouraged *Journal* readers to “offer a taste of God’s peace to those who’ve lost hope... by following the example of Jesus.” It was good advice for Christians, but deadly deception for unsaved readers. The *Ladies’ Home Journal* is one of the ten largest magazines in America with about 14.5 million readers. Millions of women who desperately need the gospel that will take them to heaven were instead treated to Warren’s P.E.A.C.E. plan to improve life on earth: “Plant faith communities [any ‘faith’ will do whose adherents are willing to follow the plan]; Equip leaders [for earthly secular tasks]; Assist the poor [for a better life on earth]; Care for the sick [but what about the soul?]; Educate the next generation [for this brief life].” We credit Rick and his wife, Kay, with having tender hearts for the physical needs of the poor, uneducated, and dying, and for good works that put many of us to shame. But we fault them for hiding the gospel from those who need it and who without it will perish for eternity!

Question: Have you heard of John Piper’s philosophy of “Christian Hedonism”? It is becoming more and more popular (especially among Christian youth) and I believe it to be a very dangerous teaching. Is Piper’s philosophy biblical?

Answer: Piper writes, “Those who know me best know that I am a Christian Hedonist... my desire to be happy is a proper motive for everything I do. I do what I do because I think it will make me happier in the long run.” This is the ultimate selfishness and it contradicts the Bible!

Christ said: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Mt 22:37-38). If I love God because it will make me happy, that is not love at all. I must love God for who He is and because of His infinite love for me (“We love him, because he first loved us”—1 Jn 4:19) in paying the penalty for my sins in the purchase of my redemption.

Christ said we cannot be His disciples unless we deny ourselves, take up the Cross, and follow Him (Mt 16:24-25). How can I deny myself to make myself happy? That is like Buddha, whose greatest desire was to escape desire. For Piper to say that

our highest goal is to make ourselves happy undermines loving God and denying self.

Yes, God has designed us and His law so that if we obey Him we’ll be happiest. But if we obey God *because* it will make us happy, we have prostituted obedience to self. Piper’s “Christian Hedonism” makes the pursuit of pleasure and joy the highest commandment and says that God punishes those who fail to make the pursuit of joy their highest priority.

Piper justifies his theory not from the Bible but from the Westminster catechism: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” But the Bible never talks about “enjoying God,” much less that this is why man was created. Solomon says that to “fear God, and keep his commandments...is the whole duty of man” (Ecc 12:13). Not a word about “enjoying God” being the “chief end of man.”

To replace loving God with pursuing one’s own joy as the first and greatest commandment makes man more important than God and will ruin those who adopt this philosophy. It takes little knowledge of Scripture, and little common sense, to realize that anyone who makes his own joy his highest motive will make the wrong choices in life!

Piper’s “Christian hedonism” won’t fit Job’s “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). The Psalmist’s “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God...” (Ps 42:1-2) becomes rank selfishness if the legitimate reason for seeking God is personal happiness. “Christian hedonism” will not help those struggling with fleshly lusts that seem so much more desirable at the moment than any “joy” that might result from resisting temptation.

Question: I have heard a number of prophecy teachers state that there could be a gap of weeks or even years between the Rapture and the beginning of the 7-year tribulation period. Why couldn’t there be?

Answer: Referring to Antichrist, who will sit in the temple and declare himself to be God, Paul explained, “ye know what withholdeth [prevents] that he might be revealed in his time...he who now letteth [hinders] will let [hinder], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed...” (2 Thes 2:4-8).

The only One who was alive in Paul’s day (“now hinders”) and will still be alive when Antichrist is revealed (“will hinder”) and Who could prevent Satan from putting

Antichrist in power is God himself. But God is omnipresent so He can’t be “taken out of the way.” Paul can only be referring to the Holy Spirit indwelling Christians (a new phenomenon beginning at Pentecost – Jn 7:37-39). That presence of God will be removed when Christ fulfills His promise to His own, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn 14:3). Therefore, Antichrist cannot be revealed until the church has been removed by the Rapture.

But how long after? Paul indicates that as soon as the Holy Spirit, whose presence indwelling Christians has been hindering Antichrist from taking power, is removed, “then shall that wicked be revealed.” Not only is it logical that Satan will act quickly once the church is gone, but he must. Only the sudden, terrifying disappearance of perhaps 50-100 million persons from this earth could unite the entire world under Antichrist and cause the world to worship him. Nothing else could do it. Satan won’t let that opportunity pass! So I believe that the Great Tribulation under Antichrist and the rule of Satan will begin immediately after the Rapture.

Shameful Ironies!

Dave Hunt

Martin Luther is remembered and widely honored today in much of the world—certainly throughout the West. The recent movie about his life was a Hollywood success that attracted large secular audiences in spite of its religious content. Luther stood up courageously against the false doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church despite Pope Leo X's determination to arrest and burn him alive at the stake. He had been disillusioned while visiting the Vatican and seeing the hypocrisy and open immorality among the clergy from priest to pope. The final straw was Rome's selling of indulgences for supposedly releasing one's dead relatives from purgatory to enter heaven. The infamous sales pitch that raised millions of dollars promised, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." The proceeds from this shameless scam paid for repairing and enlarging St. Peter's Basilica. That awesome structure stands today as a monument to the false gospel that Church still regularly preaches!

Disillusioned and furious, Luther wrote his *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* (known as "The Ninety-five Theses") and nailed it to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. Copies were widely distributed in several European languages, shaking Europe, inciting heated debate, sparking the Reformation and the exodus of millions from the Roman Catholic Church—and hopefully bringing salvation to many of them.

Although Luther retained some of his Catholicism, his bold declaration before the Imperial Diet at Worms (in stark contrast to the attitude of so many Christians today) has inspired millions: "I am bound by the Scriptures...and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything...here I stand; may God help me." That he really meant what he said is proved by the fact that it should have cost him his life had not some powerful German princes taken up his cause and protected him in protest against Rome—an event from which we get the designation "Protestant."

Desperate to maintain the Church's totalitarian authority, Catholic bishops and cardinals launched a counter-Reformation defining Church doctrines and demanding obedience thereto at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Its Canons and Decrees (see Resources) denounced the sole authority of Scripture affirmed by Luther, denied salvation by faith in Christ without Church sacraments and

good works, and basically rejected everything the Reformers asked the Church to accept in submission to God's Word. Trent pronounced more than 100 anathemas (excommunication/damnation) against all who accepted any Reformation teaching. It was costly to stand for the truth of God's Word in those days, and many thousands would not compromise their convictions in spite of torture and death.

We are in great need of a revival of such unwavering conviction today. It will not come, however, without an awakening of an individual hunger and thirst after righteousness (Mt 5:6) and deep passion for our Lord and for His Word. Sadly, the truth of God is not only neglected and compromised today but is actually undermined by many whom millions of Christians look up to as evangelical leaders. Tragically, multitudes are being prepared to follow the great delusion that will befall those who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thes 2:8-12).

Is the fifteenth-century Reformation and Rome's opposition to it at that time merely interesting history with little relationship to the church and world today? Hardly! The battle continues and has reached a far deadlier phase. A growing delusion has deceived multitudes into embracing ecumenical compromise while imagining that they are still on the Lord's side.

In 1962, at the opening of Vatican II in Rome, Pope John XXIII affirmed, "I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent." Vatican II itself "proposes again the decrees of the Council of Trent." On 12/31/95, honoring the 450th anniversary of the opening of Trent, Pope John Paul II declared, "Its conclusions maintain all their value."

Regardless of what a Catholic friend, a liberal priest, or a professor at a Catholic university may say, Trent remains the official teaching of Rome and has been reconfirmed many times since by the highest Church authority. Here are only a few of Trent's anathemas, all of which were renewed by Vatican II, The Code of Canon Law, and the current Catechism of the Catholic Church, and which remain today as the official teaching of Roman Catholicism, sustaining the inflexible dogmas of that "infallible" Church, regardless of statements by anyone to the contrary:

- If anyone denies that by...baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted [or] denies that...[the] *justice, sanctification and redemption*...of Jesus Christ is applied both to adults and to infants by the sacrament of baptism...let him be

anathema.... (Rome's emphasis)

- If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law [i.e., the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church] are not necessary for salvation...and that without them...men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema....

- If anyone says that baptism is...not necessary for salvation, let him be anathema....

- If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out...that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema....

- If anyone says that the sacrifice of the mass...wherein that life-giving victim by which we are reconciled to the Father is daily immolated on the altar by priests...is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross but not a propitiatory one...offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities, let him be anathema.

No bolder nor clearer rejection of the Bible and the gospel of Jesus Christ could be declared. This brief sample presents the actual teaching of Roman Catholicism as it is taught to and practiced by hundreds of millions of Catholics today. There is no disputing the fact that this is a false gospel, which, sadly, holds Roman Catholics in bondage on their way to the flames—not of a "purgatory" invented by popes, but to the eternal Lake of Fire. How can those who profess to admire Luther and the Reformation defend Catholicism?

Given these indisputable facts, no evangelical could call Roman Catholics born-again Christians. The shameful irony is that so many evangelical leaders and their followers, while claiming to honor the Reformation and its gospel of salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ, at the same time close their eyes to the truth and act as though the Reformation never occurred and as if Catholics believe the biblical gospel. Have we forgotten that those who do not believe the gospel are eternally lost? Will their endless doom be on our hands?

Shameful ironies abound. Although the Roman Catholic Church no longer burns opponents at the stake (a practice now repugnant even to the secular world), it still maintains every false teaching and practice opposed by Luther and his fellow Reformers, thereby deceiving countless millions. It still teaches salvation through baptism, good works, and

the other sacraments mediated by Mary as the “doorway to Christ”; it still offers indulgences at a price for release from purgatory to heaven; and it still rejects the final authority of Scripture! All of the anathemas pronounced by Trent against Protestant beliefs remain in full force and effect. Yet many of Luther’s modern followers now embrace Roman Catholicism as the true gospel!

On 10/31/99, representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed a Joint Declaration (JDDJ) declaring that they had resolved the major differences that caused the Reformation. Not *one doctrine or practice had changed* in the Catholic Church. While Lutherans were congratulating themselves on this wonderful “agreement,” Pope John Paul II was offering special indulgences unto salvation for the year 2000. Had Martin Luther been alive, he would have denounced the traitors leading the church that bears his name and would have nailed his “Ninety-five Theses” to the door of the Lutheran World Federation headquarters! How can we explain the blindness leading to this unconscionable betrayal of the Reformation, and of Christ and His Word?

Five years earlier, no less shameful, evangelical leaders (Bill Bright, Charles Colson, Os Guinness, Richard Mouw [president of Fuller Theological Seminary], J.I. Packer, Pat Robertson, John White [former president of National Association of Evangelicals], et al.), had endorsed “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium” (ECT). It calls for evangelicals to join Roman Catholics in evangelizing the world, and states, “We thank God for the discovery of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Nor was ECT anything new, but the culmination of a compromise of truth that had been growing within the evangelical movement for a long time. For at least 40 years prior to ECT, Billy Graham had been declaring that his beliefs were basically the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics, and that he and the Pope agreed on almost everything, including the way of salvation! The same stance had long been adopted by evangelical universities such as Westmont and Wheaton, publications such as *Christianity Today* and *Charisma*, organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth With A Mission, and World Vision, as well as by other evangelical institutions and leaders. Highlighting evangelicalism’s schizophrenia, Wheaton, which has a large Center and Museum honoring Billy Graham and which hires

short-term Catholic professors, last year fired a popular professor for “converting to Catholicism,” while calling him “a gifted brother in Christ”!

Martin Luther and the other Reformers would have died at the stake rather than sign such documents as JDDJ and ECT! How do we explain today’s denial of all that the Reformation stood for by those who claim to honor it and to follow in the faith of the Reformers? Attempting to fathom such spiritual schizophrenia, *The New York Times*, in its March 30, 1994, announcement of ECT, had written:

They toiled together in the movements against abortion and pornography, and now leading Catholics and evangelicals are asking their flocks...to finally accept each other as Christians. In what’s being called a historic declaration, evangelicals... joined with conservative Roman Catholic leaders...[and] urged Catholics and evangelicals to stop aggressive proselytization of each other’s flocks. John White, president of Geneva College and former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, said the statement was a “triumphalistic moment” in American religious life after centuries of distrust....

The gospel of Jesus Christ, by which alone one is born again (1 Pt 1:22-25) is being denied. That is the issue, with the eternal destiny of souls hanging in the balance. While they did not personally sign ECT, Bill Hybels and Rick Warren, like so many other evangelical leaders, give the appearance of full cooperation and agreement with Rome. In violation of the clear command of Scripture to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), neither Hybels nor Warren nor most other evangelical leaders, including Billy Graham, will use their huge influence to bring any warning or correction—to Rome or to anyone else!

Even Islam is defended as a valid “faith” that Rick Warren cooperates with in working (through his P.E.A.C.E. Plan) for what he calls a “New Reformation.” In its advancement, he says he “would trust any imam or priest or rabbi....” Do we no longer believe the gospel and that those who reject it are eternally lost?

John Paul II denounced everything the Reformation stood for, yet he, too, is highly honored by those who still praise Luther. How can we honor two diametrically opposed beliefs at the same time? Have “Christians” gone mad?! Words have changed their definitions, contradictory convictions are simultaneously professed, and truth is re-defined to suit anyone’s

taste. We are adrift on an ocean of meaninglessness without rudder or compass—yet nearly everyone praises our “progress.” Exactly like the world, the church (“rich, and increased with goods” – Rv 3:17) willingly blurs the essential differences between God’s truth and Satan’s lies. Oh, yes, evangelical leaders still claim to affirm God’s Word, yet who stands up against the false doctrines made popular by today’s “Christian” radio and TV or against the “mother of harlots” (Rv 17:5) as did Luther?

Though lip service is still given to the Reformation, the deep convictions that birthed it have been compromised. The hour grows late and the evangelical church desperately needs to face some honest questions: 1) What was the purpose of the Reformation? 2) Was its uncompromising affirmation of biblical truth appropriate in Luther’s day but not now? 3) What did it stand for at that time, at the cost of so many martyrs and so much suffering, that should now be denied? 4) Have Jesus Christ and His gospel changed? 5) Has any belief or practice changed in the Catholic Church that would justify evangelicals embracing Catholicism as the biblical gospel?

While evangelicals are literally thumbing their noses at the Reformers, a powerful Reformation of Islam is gathering momentum in the Muslim world. Urgent calls go forth to abstain from the fleshly immorality of America, “the Great Satan.” After the stunning defeats by Israel in 1948 and 1967, imams began to preach that Allah was not happy and that Muslims must get back to the Qur’an and true Islam. The result has been a growing awakening of fundamentalist Islam with its accompanying terrorism.

At the same time, the “Christian” West sinks into ever-deepening depravity. As one example, Howard Stern’s foul mouth and glorification of immorality have made him the highest paid radio personality in the U.S. That movies, television, and radio shows continue to grow ever bolder in their mocking of biblical truth and promotion of homosexuality and other shameful perversions only reflects what the vast majority of Westerners, including Catholics and Protestants, want and enjoy.

The Bible hasn’t changed. God hasn’t changed. The gospel hasn’t changed. Has our hope changed? Instead of “looking for that blessed hope...the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13), are we looking instead to “Christian” politicians for salvation? The evangelical church today is in the mood of accommodation, unity, compromise. Are these the “perilous times” (2 Tm 3:1) ominously foretold in Scripture? **TBC**

Quotable

The devil is but a whetstone to sharpen the faith and patience of the saints.

Samuel Rutherford

The church that sets out to spiritualize the world will soon find that the world will secularize the church. When wheat and tares compromise, it is the wheat that suffers. Light and darkness, right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error are incompatible, and when they compromise it is the light, the right, the good, and the truth that are damaged.

W. Graham Scroggie, born 1877, twelve times the Bible teacher at the famous Keswick, England conference, They Knew Their God, Vol 5, 194

Q&A

Question: Based upon 1 Sam 28:19, where are King Saul and his sons now?

Answer: The spirit of dead Samuel, apparently allowed to appear by God for a special purpose in this particular case, said to King Saul, "...and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines." It is possible that by "with me" Samuel simply meant that Saul and his sons would die. On the other hand, Saul had once been the anointed king of Israel and he and his sons had served Israel well for a time. There had been much to commend Saul at first and indications that he knew the Lord God of Israel. Though he had sinned and was punished in being removed from the throne and dying because of that, Saul and his sons (especially Jonathan) may have been true believers in Yahweh and could be in Heaven.

Question: On 11/30/05, Pope Benedict XVI declared to 23,000 people in St. Peter's Square in Rome, "Whoever seeks peace and the good of the community with a pure conscience, and keeps alive the desire for the transcendent, will be saved even if he lacks biblical faith." Could this explain how pagans throughout history who never heard the gospel could be saved?

Answer: Everyone in every culture and time in history knows from abundant evidence that the universe was created by a God infinite in wisdom, power, and purity (Rom 1). God promises, "And ye shall seek

me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). He will reveal Himself to everyone who truly seeks *Him*.

Not everyone, however, who claims to seek God, is seeking the true God. Most "seekers" are seeking a false god of their own imagination that will give them what they want. This is a flaw in the "seeker friendly" church growth movement: giving people the "religion" they want instead of the convicting truth they need. The Athenians claimed to be seeking truth; but when Paul on Mars' hill revealed the true God to them, "some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." Very few believed (Acts 17:32-34).

The truth will never be popular. Many Jews, confronted by biblical proof, knew that Jesus was the Messiah but did not want their false view of the Messiah disturbed. So Jesus said, "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not" (Jn 8:45). Benedict XVI did not tell his fawning audience the truth but what they wanted to hear (2 Tm 4:3,4).

The Pope's words are unbiblical and misleading. Having a "desire for the transcendent," does not equal seeking the one true God. Nor can seeking "peace and the good of the community" be equated with receiving as personal Savior the One who "made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). Nor has anyone a "pure conscience": "There is none righteous, no, not one...all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God..." (Rom 3:10, 23). God has written His law in every conscience and every person knows that he has broken that law many times. When Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," the woman's accusers, "convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one..." (Jn 8:7-9). The Pope and his Church offer false hope to sinners.

Question: Do you know of the book, *Blood Brothers*, by Elias Chacour? The author is a Palestinian "Christian" (a Greek Catholic Priest), who's been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three or four times. The book states, "In 1948 after a United Nations resolution, the country of Palestine became the sovereign state of Israel."

Answer: Such are the kinds of lies that the world favors over truth. We document in *Judgment Day!* that both the land of "Palestine" and a "Palestinian" people are myths. The Promised Land was Canaan, given by God to Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob and their descendants. At God's command, because of the wickedness of the Canaanites, the children of Israel conquered Canaan and it became the land of Israel. In A.D. 135, the Romans angrily renamed Israel, "Provincia Syria-Palestina."

For the next 1,820 years, Jews living there were called "Palestinians." Repeatedly evicted, the Jews always came back. Arabs never lived there in any numbers until the seventh-century Muslim conquest—and even then very few ever settled in "Palestine," which lay barren and largely neglected, as God had foretold. The 1917 Balfour Declaration, 1919 Paris Peace Conference, and 1922 Declaration of Principles by the League of Nations all designated the territory known as "Palestine" to be restored to the scattered and persecuted Jews as their national homeland. Britain was given the mandate to oversee this plan, but betrayed the Jews and favored the Arabs for oil.

We quote Arab leaders testifying at the UN and elsewhere into the late 1950s that "Palestine" was "a Zionist invention" and that Jews were the Palestinians. Then Arabs changed their tune and in 1964 founded the "Palestine Liberation Organization." For the first time in history, Arabs claimed that they were descended from the "original Palestinians" (a non-existent people) and that the Jews were occupying their land.

Yet during all the centuries that the Muslims through conquest controlled the entire Middle East (ending with the 400-year Turkish Ottoman Empire), there was never a word of a Palestinian State nor did any Arabs ever claim to be Palestinians. They had little interest in that barren place until the Jews began (with the "Zionist" movement) to turn swamps and deserts into farmland—then they moved in as Britain, violating its mandate, kept Jews out (even Holocaust survivors) and let the Arabs in by the tens of thousands. Britain created Jordan out of two-thirds of the land promised to the Jews.

The so-called "Palestinians" are Arabs who claim descent from Ishmael, Abraham's first (but illegitimate) son. Ishmael's father was a Chaldean, his mother an Egyptian, and when Abraham arrived in Canaan (there was no such place as Palestine) it had already been settled for centuries by Canaanites. What a fraud for the descendants of Ishmael (half Chaldean, half Egyptian) to pretend to be descended from the "original Palestinians"!

Those who claim to be "Palestinians"

today have no unique language, culture, religion, ethnic heritage, but are indistinguishable from their Arab relatives living in the nations around them. In contrast, there are many distinct ethnic peoples who have legitimate claims to a national homeland and to whom the world shows little sympathy. Consider the following:

The Basques...live in the northwestern region of Spain...a unique people with a language and culture that has no relationship to anything else in the world. They have been fighting to be liberated. But Spain—most vociferous in the promotion of a “Palestinian homeland”—refuses. An independent Basque homeland would not endanger Spain in any way....

The Kurds...are a distinct group [living] in a land that is part of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Armenia. They have been fighting for independence for centuries, but it has never been granted. An independent Kurdistan would not endanger the countries that now occupy it....

The Tibetans...are a distinct people, unique in language and religion. They have been annexed by China...an independent Tibet would not [threaten] China. Does the UN support the [Basques, Kurds and] Tibetans in their quest for independence? Of course not. (*U.S. News & World Report*, FLAME, April 11, 2005, 81.)

Yet the pressure continues from the United States, UN, EU and rest of the world (which will soon bring God’s judgment – Joel 3:2) to squeeze Israel into an ever smaller territory and to expand at her expense the territory of enemies whom the whole world knows do not acknowledge Israel’s right to exist (no Arab map anywhere shows Israel) and who have sworn to annihilate her. And the lies continue in support of this gross injustice, even from those who call themselves “Christians.”

Question: Stanley Hilton, a former chief of staff for Bob Dole, has said he possesses documents showing Bush personally ordered the attack on 9/11. It was impossible for planes hitting the Twin Towers so near its top to bring it down, especially in an implosion. There had to have been explosive charges carefully set beforehand. I’ve seen a video that shows the planes in slow motion approaching and crashing into the towers, and there are no windows, these are not passenger planes with people aboard—it was a set-up.

Answer: I’ve watched that video. Those who love “conspiracy” theories and want

to discredit Bush and the U.S. government hold it up as “proof.” That it cannot be true, however, is so obvious that those using it to further their theories ought to be embarrassed, if not ashamed.

If these were not the scheduled American and United flights with passenger lists, what happened to those flights? Were the airlines in on the conspiracy, too? They have collected insurance for the destroyed planes, so were the insurance companies also part of this cover-up? And what of the missing passengers who were booked on those flights? Are they, too, part of the massive conspiracy, hiding somewhere? What of the families and friends who mourn their deaths?

And if these planes were empty of passengers but filled with explosives, and not piloted by Muslim hijackers eager to die in *jihad* in order to gain paradise and Allah’s special reward of countless virgins for their pleasure, who were the pilots and what was their motive?! Who would have volunteered to commit suicide in this manner so that Bush could have an excuse for attacking Afghanistan and Iraq as alleged?

I must conclude that this theory is an absurdity!

Question: You desperately need to study the Greek Bible, both Old and New Testaments. You undoubtedly know that the Passover at the Exodus from Egypt was “everlasting.” Why, then, did it change at Christ’s crucifixion? As for the “everlasting” covenant with Abraham...Christ was the “seed” of Abraham and the fulfillment of all Old Testament eschatology [and] Paul wrote that there is no difference in Jews, Gentiles, male or female, slave nor free, but in the Church all belong to Christ (Gal 3:28). Israel was ended! The old covenant became obsolete (Heb 8:13).

Your “faultless” doctrines come ultimately from Jewish thinking. Are you sure that you are not Jewish...? Your eschatological errors didn’t significantly exist in Christendom until Edward Irving, John Darby, the Plymouth Brethren, et al., came along with Jewish ideas. Will Christ rule over Israel and the world from Jerusalem? Absolutely not! “Israel” has reemerged as the beast system in Revelation....

Answer: We must be reading different Bibles. The Passover did not “change at Christ’s crucifixion.” The “last supper” was not the “last Passover” because it was

not the Passover at all but “before the feast of the Passover” (Jn 13:1). (The morning after the last supper Israel had not yet eaten the Passover nor had the lambs yet been slain – Jn 18:28.) The “last supper” was held the night after sunset marked the end of Nisan 13 and beginning of the 14th (the Jewish day went from sunset to sunset). The 14th was “the day of unleavened bread, when the passover [lamb] must be killed” (Lk 22:7) by all Israel before sunset in the “evening” (Ex 12:6), i.e., the afternoon following the last supper.

During the night that began the 14th the disciples started the lengthy preparation for the Passover in the upper room, where they ate supper together. All leaven had to be found and removed in preparing for the Passover supper to be held the following night. The main “preparation,” of course, was the slaying of the lamb, which occurred the next afternoon (as prophesied) when Christ was being crucified (Jn 19:14). There was no lamb slain for the last supper as there would be the following afternoon for the Passover.

The Passover is a memorial of the deliverance of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt, a historic event that nothing can change and that will be commemorated forever. That it is still kept by Jews alone proves that it was their ancestors, not Arabs’, who were slaves in Egypt for 400 years then delivered—irrefutable proof, therefore, that they, not Arabs, are the “seed” of Abraham who inherited the land of Canaan (Gn 15:13-16) that became Israel, and which belongs to them to this day.

Psychology And The Evangelical Church

T. A. McMahon

Nothing in the history of the modern church has induced believers to abandon their faith in the *sufficiency* of God's Word like the pseudo-science of psychological counseling. Consider the following: the evangelical church is a primary referral service for counseling psychologists and psychiatrists. Many large churches have licensed psychotherapists on staff. Mission agencies are requiring their missionary candidates to be evaluated and approved by licensed psychological professionals prior to being considered for service. Christian psychologists and counselors are often better known and more respected by evangelicals than preachers and teachers. Who has not heard of psychologist Dr. James Dobson?

Most evangelicals are convinced that psychotherapy is scientific and is necessary to supply what is lacking in the Bible regarding man's mental, emotional, and behavioral needs. When I use the term, "psychotherapy," what I am referring to is psychological counseling, clinical psychology, and (non-biological) psychiatry. I may also use the general term "psychology." I recognize that there are some areas of psychology that are clearly distinct from psychotherapy and may have scientific merit and value, e.g., those fields that study perception, man-machine interface, ergonomics, some educational psychology, and so forth. They are, however, a very small percentage of the entire industry of psychology, which claims to have scientific insights into the mind of man.

So what's the problem with psychotherapy? According to numerous scientific studies, it rarely works (and then only superficially) and is known to be harmful. From a biblical perspective, it is an antichristian, religious counterfeit. Both conclusions will become quite apparent as we proceed.

Given the significant influence it has had on the church, the psychological way compared to the biblical way should be an issue of critical concern for all those who believe that the Word of God is their authority and that it is completely sufficient for "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). How do these two ways compare?

They couldn't be more at odds. The basic theories of psychological counseling are contradictory to what the Bible teaches about the nature of man and God's solution for his mental, emotional, and behavioral

problems. Psychotherapeutic concepts regard humanity as intrinsically good. The Bible says that other than Jesus Christ, man is *not* good but was born with a sinful nature, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Psychological counseling often promotes the belief that problems adversely affecting a person's mental and emotional welfare are determined by circumstances external to the person, such as parental abuse or environment. The Bible tells us that a man's evil heart and his sinful choices cause his mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Psychotherapy attempts to improve the self through concepts such as self-love, self-esteem, self-worth, self-image, self-actualization, etc. The Bible teaches that self *is* humanity's main problem, not the solution to the ills that plague mankind. And it prophetically identifies the chief solution of psychological counseling, self-love, as the catalyst to a life of depravity. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves..." (2 Timothy 3:1).

The Bible teaches that reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ is the only way for man to truly remedy his sin-related mental, emotional, and behavioral troubles. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he [Jesus Christ] reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in [God's] sight" (Colossians 1:21,22).

Psychotherapy has shipwrecked the faith of many regarding the sufficiency of the Bible. Because psychologists claim to have insights into the nature of man and also methods for change not found in the Bible, it follows that the Bible cannot be sufficient for counseling or addressing believers mental, emotional, and behavioral needs.

Psychotherapy has sold the church the lie that psychology can be integrated with the Bible. That ought to be scandalous to any thoughtful believer. Since psychology and the Bible are fundamentally in opposition to one another, it should be obvious that there can be no real integration of their teachings. Moreover, if the Bible, the Manufacturer's handbook, isn't sufficient to cover all things that pertain to life and

godliness, then His created beings must look elsewhere for their mental, emotional, and behavioral welfare. And if they must look elsewhere, then the Bible's claim to be authoritative, inerrant, and sufficient is also false.

How influential is psychotherapy in the church? It would be rare indeed to find a topical sermon with no supposed insights from psychology. Typical would be Willow Creek church near Chicago, whose influence is national and international through its 10,000-member association of churches. One researcher of church-growth methods who spent a year at Willow Creek observed, "[Pastor Bill] Hybels not only teaches psychological principles but often uses the psychological principles as interpretive guides for his exegesis of Scripture.... King David had an identity crisis, the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to do self-analysis, and Peter had a problem with boundary issues. The point is, psychological principles are regularly built into Hybels' teaching." Rick Warren's record-breaking *The Purpose-Driven Life* furthers the acceptance of psychology in the church by including such psychobabble as "Samson was co-dependent" and "Gideon's weakness was low self-esteem and deep insecurities."

Why this psychologizing of Christianity? Well, primarily because the church has been sold three erroneous ideas:

- 1) Psychotherapy is a scientific endeavor;
- 2) Counseling is for professionals only;
- 3) Christian psychology reconciles science and faith.

Let's look at each of these. *First*, psychotherapy is not a scientific endeavor. Martin and Deidre Bobgan report in their book, *The End of "Christian Psychology"*: "Attempting to evaluate the status of psychology, the American Psychological Association appointed Dr. Sigmund Koch to plan and direct a study which was subsidized by the National Science Foundation. This study involved eighty eminent scholars assessing the facts, theories, and methods of psychology. The results of this extensive endeavor were published in a seven-volume series entitled *Psychology: A Study of a Science*." Dr. Koch sums up the panel's findings in these words: "I think it is by this time utterly and finally clear that psychology cannot be a coherent science."

Dr. Karl Popper, regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of science, after a thorough study of psychotherapy, declared:

“though posing as sciences [psychotherapy] had in fact more in common with primitive myths than with science [and] resembled astrology rather than astronomy.”

Secondly, counseling is *not* for professionals only. Psychotherapy, thanks to Freud and some others with medical backgrounds, has terms and concepts that falsely give the impression that they have to do with medical science. An understanding of the term “illness” is key to seeing through this mirage.

Can one’s mental process—that is, his thinking or behavior—literally be ill? Our brains, which are physical, can certainly be, but our *minds*, which are nonphysical, can’t be ill. So the term “mental illness” is a misnomer—a myth. Furthermore, with exceptions in the area of psychiatry, psychotherapists do not address the organic or physical problems of their clients.

So, what do psychotherapists do? Well, mostly they talk and listen. Research psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Szasz spells it out for us: “In plain language, what do patient and psychotherapist actually do? They speak and listen to each other. What do they speak about? Narrowly put, the patient speaks about himself, and the therapist speaks about the patient....Each tries to move the other to see or do things in a certain way.”

I assume that most evangelicals, whether in the pulpit or pew, can certainly handle the medium of counseling—which is simply talking and listening! But, few of us are trained professionals. We don’t have an advanced degree in talking and listening, nor have we studied theories about human behavior, which are nothing more than the opinions and speculations of godless men. Furthermore, there are more than 500 different (often contradictory and sometimes utterly bizarre) psychotherapeutic systems and thousands of methods and techniques.

So, as nonprofessionals, we missed out on all of that knowledge-so-called. But still, aren’t professionals more effective than nonprofessionals in helping people with their problems? No!

After reviewing the research comparing trained and untrained psychological counselors, researchers Truax and Mitchell report: “There is no evidence that the usual traditional graduate training program has any positive value in producing therapists who are more helpful than nonprofessionals.”

Consider the conclusion of a lengthy research project conducted by Dr. Joseph Durlak:

Overall, outcome results in comparative studies have favored nonprofessionals.... There were no significant differences among helpers in 28 investigations, but nonprofessionals were significantly more effective than professionals in 12 studies.

The provocative conclusion from these comparative investigations is that professionals do not possess demonstrably superior therapeutic skills, compared with nonprofessionals. Moreover, professional mental health education, training, and experience are not necessary prerequisites for an effective helping person.

Best-selling author, psychologist Dr. Bernie Zilbergeld, writes in his book, *The Shrinking of America: Myths of Psychological Change*: “...most problems faced by people would be better solved by talking to friends, spouses, relatives or anyone else who appears to be doing well what you believe you’re doing poorly.... If I personally had a relationship problem and I couldn’t work it out with my partner, I wouldn’t go and see a shrink. I would look around me for the kind of relationship I admire....That’s who I would go to. I want somebody who’s showing by his life that he can do it.”

Now that’s just good commonsense advice from a man who understands the field of psychotherapy. Yet, in this “perilous time” for the church, many (and the numbers continue to grow) have abandoned not only “common sense,” but worse yet, they have discarded their biblical mandate, which is to minister to one another through the Word of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit. They’ve been intimidated by myths and have turned from the truth.

Finally, Christian psychology cannot reconcile science and faith. Why not? Because psychology is not a science, nor can it be Christianized. Of course, there are Christians who are licensed professional psychotherapists, but there is no recognized branch or stream of psychology identified as Christian.

Consider this statement representing the view of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies:

We are often asked if we are “Christian psychologists”...We are Christians who are psychologists but at the present time there is no acceptable Christian psychology that is markedly different from non-Christian psychology. It is difficult to imply that we function in a manner that is fundamentally distinct from our non-Christian

colleagues...as yet there is not an acceptable theory, mode of research or treatment methodology that is distinctly Christian.

How then do licensed psychotherapists who are Christians function? They selectively draw from the concepts learned during their secular education and training and attempt to integrate them into their Christian belief system. Yet, the concepts are all antithetical to the biblical way of ministering to a believer’s problems related to overcoming sin and living a life that is fruitful, productive, and pleasing to the Lord.

You have to wonder why a Christian would turn to any of these wisdom-of-men approaches that were conceived by people who were so obviously anti-Christian. Freud considered religion an illusion and was known to have a hatred for Christianity because of what he believed to be its anti-Semitic teachings. Others, such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, were blatant New Agers and occultists. Yet, consider this quote from a leading Christian psychologist: “Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem. This is a good and necessary focus.” Not according to the Scriptures!

The Book of Nehemiah gives us a picture of what’s happening in the church. Nehemiah (his name means “Jehovah is our comforter”) is a type of the Holy Spirit. God sends him to rebuild and strengthen Jerusalem. Under the guise of helping Nehemiah, enemies of Israel attempt to subvert the restoration. Incredibly, the priest gives one such adversary, Tobiah, a room within the Temple. So it is with so-called Christian psychology today.

How serious is this psychologizing of the church? Although devastating even now, Scripture tells us it will far exceed what we can imagine. The Apostle Paul is emphatic in his warning (2 Timothy 3:1-5) that “in the last days” man’s condition will be “perilous.” That warning begins with a characteristic that is the cornerstone of humanistic psychology and which Paul indicates (verses 2-5) is the source of a host of evils: self-love. Next month, we will consider the prophetic aspects of psychology and Christian psychology as they contribute to the formation of the apostate church and the religion of the Antichrist. [TBC: *Parts of this article were taken from the DVD Psychology and the Church: Critical Questions...Crucial Answers. See our resource materials.*]

TBC

Quotable

God has not promised His people a smooth voyage—only a safe landing. Heaven is not always angry when He strikes; for He most chastises those whom most He likes.

W. Graham Scroggie, spoken from experience after many trials including being dismissed as pastor from two different churches, *They Knew Their God*, Vol 5, 192-93

He has no enemies, you say? My friend,
your boast is poor:
He who fights valiantly in the fray of
duty, that the brave endure,
Must have made foes. If he has none,
small is the work that he has done.
He has opposed no traitor's stand; Has
rescued none from Satan's hand?
Has never turned the wrong to right?
He's been a coward in the fight!

—Anonymous

Q&A

QUESTION: Does your mention in the January 2006 TBC of the “terrifying disappearance of perhaps 50-100 million persons from this earth” (at the Rapture) indicate your belief that approximately one out of a hundred of earth’s inhabitants are genuine heaven-bound believers?

ANSWER: My figure was an estimate—only God knows hearts. About one-third of earth’s inhabitants (two billion) claim to be Christians. Fifty percent of these are Roman Catholics and twenty percent are orthodox. They all follow the same false gospel (that cannot save) of salvation through works, baptism and the other sacraments, the intervention of Mary and the other “saints,” etc. They are lost, yet many evangelicals rob them of salvation by calling them our “brothers and sisters in Christ” and refusing to confront them with the biblical gospel.

A high percentage of so-called protestants who call themselves Christians do not believe the gospel that saves. Jesus said that the way was narrow and the gate strait that leads to life and that few would be saved (Mt 7:13,14; Lk 13:23,24).

The Lord warned that some who seemed to be first would be last (Mk 10:31) and that many who thought they had done miracles in His name would be doomed for eternity in

spite of claiming to have known and served Him (Mt 7:21-23). It behooves each of us to examine his or her own heart as Paul commanded (2 Cor 13:5).

QUESTION: I recently purchased one of TBC’s devotional calendars, *Apples of Gold*. I was very concerned by the commentary on John 12:32. The paragraph above the verse asked, “Is it the Holy Spirit or the Father who draws us?” In John 12:32, Jesus plainly said, “I, if I be lifted up...will draw all men unto me.” To change the meaning of this verse this way borders on blasphemy. Frankly, I am very displeased and would like an explanation from you.

ANSWER: The comment on the calendar for that day says: “Is it the Holy Spirit or the Father who draws us? It is possible that any disagreement lies in semantics. God is a Spirit, declares the scripture (Jn 4:24) and He is also holy (Ps 22:3). Therefore, we might be splitting hairs to argue that the Father draws us and the Holy Spirit never does. Indeed, as fallible humans we would have great difficulty in trying to fully compartmentalize the functions of the Godhead!”

John 12:32 then follows below by itself, not as though the comment above were explaining it but as the verse for the day.

Yes, John 12:32 says that Christ draws all men. But Christ also said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him” (Jn 6:44). Thus, we can neither say that only Christ draws sinners to Himself or that only the Father does so. Obviously, it is both. Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30).

What about the Holy Spirit? Surely there is no schism in the Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. Neither acts independently of the others. That would be impossible. What one does, all do in unison. Yet there seem to be different functions within the Godhead. The Trinity is a mystery that we cannot fully fathom.

I don’t see that the “meaning of the verse [has been] changed.” If I misunderstand your objection, please explain further.

QUESTION: I’ve been surprised at the worldwide stir created by the Danish cartoons about Muhammad—not only by the predictable outrage, riots, and violence from Muslims but by the attention it has received in the non-Muslim world. Should such cartoons have been published? Do they do more harm than good? What is your reaction?

ANSWER: The Danish cartoons are very mild compared with those regularly published in Muslim countries. Almost daily, Muslim cartoons mock Christians, Christianity, Jews, and Judaism, depict Jews as Nazis, as rats, as cannibals eating flesh of Arabs and drinking their blood, etc. These are habitually enjoyed by the very Muslims who rioted to protest the Danish cartoons. This is worse than dishonesty—this is the ugly truth revealed of how Islam corrupts the human mind and spirit. The riots have ripped off the “Islam is peace” mask before a horrified West still reluctant to identify the real enemy!

The media (including Fox News) claims that rioters and terrorists represent a very small fanatical Muslim fringe. Not true! As Condoleezza Rice charged, Muslim leaders organized and urged the rioters on. The same Muslim countries that publish the worst anti-Semitic and anti-Christian cartoons are boycotting Danish goods. Malaysia made possession of the cartoons a crime. Such pressure must not succeed in imposing Islamic demands upon the West!

Palestinian gunmen took over the EU office in Gaza City, where an Imam at the Omari Mosque told 9,000 worshipers that the cartoonists should be beheaded; Danish embassies in many countries have been sacked and some burned, and Danish flags torn down and burned along with products from Denmark; Western businesses have been attacked; the death toll was still rising when this was written.

The Qur’an and Islam trash Christianity, denying Christ’s deity, that He died for our sins, that He resurrected, etc. Christianity is outlawed in Saudi Arabia (our “friend and ally” and the largest financier of terrorism!). By Saudi law, no Jew may enter Saudi Arabia. Any Jew who did, would be torn apart as the frenzied “Palestinian” mob in October 2000 literally tore apart with bare hands the two Israeli reservists who made a wrong turn into Ramallah. The murderers danced in joy while displaying for TV their victims’ entrails held high in bloody hands—and all the while shouting, “Allahu Akbar,” Allah is the greatest! Christians and Jews are persecuted and killed *in the name of Allah* wherever Muslims have the power to do so. And these are the self-righteous people who riot over a few cartoons!

In 1977, an English photographer secretly filmed the public execution in Saudi Arabia of Princess Mishael bint Fahd bin Mohammed (shot six times in the head) and her boyfriend, Khalid Muhallah (beheaded), but Western governments squelched the film. Carter opposed its airing on PBS. Bill Clinton recently warned

of “rising anti-Islamic prejudice”—but he is silent about Muslims killing hundreds of thousands of non-Muslims and destroying thousands of churches in Indonesia, Nigeria, Sudan, et al.! That’s going on right now.

To the Muslim, terrorism is peace. Those who blow up innocent women and children are heroes rewarded by Allah with non-stop sex with countless virgins in paradise. Nor is the declaration by Iran’s president that Israel must be wiped off the map anything new. In *Judgment Day!* we provide dozens of quotes from Arab/Muslim leaders over the past 60 years demanding the same. No Arab map even shows Israel’s existence. And Muslims riot to protest a few cartoons!

The God of the Bible says, “Come now, and let us reason together...” (Is 1:18); but there is no reasoning with Islam. All it knows is force. If the West weakens and gives in to the rioters once more, where will it end? The rioters demand that the cartoonists be beheaded. Suppose Muslim countries threaten to withhold oil until this happens? Will the West comply?

Muhammad declared that Allah had commanded him to fight all non-Muslims until “all people” had yielded to Islam. Every Muslim, no matter how “moderate,” is obligated to join this fight. What if the riots will not cease and oil will not flow until the entire world confesses, “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet”? What then?

Intimidated by the threat of violence or an oil embargo, the West has toadied up to Islam by promoting the lie that Islam is peace, even though it flies in the face of 1,400 years of history and mocks the millions slaughtered by Muslims. The West must finally take an unyielding stand for justice and truth. Sadly, President Bush is one of the foremost in catering to Islam.

The cartoons originated last September in the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*. Muslims in Denmark made no protest. Months later, the cartoons were spread throughout Muslim countries, and Imams rallied the rabble to riot. The cartoons can be viewed at michellemalkin.com/archives/004413.htm. One shows Muhammad standing at the gate of heaven and greeting a line of newly arriving suicide bombers, “Stop! Stop! We ran out of virgins.” It legitimately asks what “God” would give a reward in heaven for murdering innocent women and children (repugnant to any normal conscience), as well as where these hundreds of millions of virgins come from to reward Muslim jihadists over the 14 centuries of Islam’s bloody history.

The cartoon most often cited shows

Muhammad wearing a turban bomb. And those who support suicide bombers complain?! Muhammad established Islam with terrorism, attacking caravans and villages for plunder and killing all who would not convert to Islam. Had bombs been available, he surely would have used them. Islam was spread from France to China by violent conquest at the cost of millions of lives. Today’s riots are consistent with Islam’s history.

Violence and terrorism are endemic to Islam. It makes “converts” by the threat of death and holds them by fear. The penalty for attempting to leave this “religion of peace” is death. Worldwide terrorism is encouraged by a cowering and obsequious West that has licked the boots of Islam to keep the oil flowing. Truth, justice, and right have been sacrificed to evil on the altar of compromise, intimidation and fear.

In 1989, when Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini demanded the murder of British author Salman Rushdie for exposing the “Satanic Verses” in the Qur’an, other publishers should have supported him by also publishing the book. Instead, he has been in hiding to this day.

Yasser Arafat, with the blood of millions on his hands, was given the Nobel Peace Prize and a standing ovation at the UN when he called for Israel’s destruction. France treated him like a hero in his dying days and was rewarded by thousands of Muslims going on a rampage of anarchy last year in the worst riots since the 1789-99 Revolution. We have given Muslims full freedom in this country and allowed them to build thousands of mosques which become centers for terrorism. Our reward was 9-11!

It is encouraging that this time Western media and governments are not all surrendering to Islam’s bullying threats! Other newspapers in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and even in Jordan have republished the cartoons in support of the Danish paper. Had Salman Rushdie been supported like this, we would not be in today’s intimidated position.

Danish Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen has refused to apologize, stating that the government cannot interfere with freedom of the press—a concept anathema to Islam—but he fails to mention the far worse and continuous Muslim cartoons. Shamefully, British Foreign Minister Jack Straw criticized European media outlets for republishing the caricatures. Such cowardice will only encourage more suicide bombings in Britain. In the meantime, some Muslim leaders are backing off in embarrassment as Islam is being exposed and the West is refusing to be intimidated further.

There are hopeful signs that the West will no longer stomach the lie that Islam is a religion of peace! Let us pray that the world will awaken to the truth about Islam and will begin to expose and oppose it vigorously before it is too late.

QUESTION: The Qur’an specifically forbids freedom of religion, demands a state religion, and advocates the violent overthrow of all non-Muslim governments, which includes the United States. Then how can President Bush praise the Qur’an as the Word of God and boast of adding it to the White House library?

ANSWER: That is a logical question that every citizen ought to ask the President. He carries “political correctness” much too far! Millions of Americans ought to inundate the White House with complaints. He thinks he is pacifying the Muslims. In fact, he is only encouraging them to believe that no matter how much terrorism they effect, the United States will continue to blame it all on “fanatics” and “extremists” and continue in its delusion that “Islam is peace.” Muslims see this as a sign of weakness to be exploited.

Psychology In Prophecy

T. A. McMahon

I recently gave the title of this article as the topic for one of my messages to an individual who was putting together a prophecy conference. An obvious pause on his end of the phone line told me that he was trying to imagine how psychology might possibly fit in with the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple, the Great Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and other events and individuals that are common subjects at prophecy conferences. When his lack of response began to approach that awkward stage, I slowly and deliberately quoted 2 Timothy 3:1, 2: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves..."

"Go for it!" was his immediate response.

Although the conference organizer didn't know exactly how I was going to treat the subject, he immediately recognized the fit from the phrases: "the last days...perilous times...lovers of their own selves." It's very disturbing (yet understandable, as we will see) that most evangelicals (especially pastors) have missed the Apostle Paul's very clear, even strident, warning about the perils of self-love and its connection to psychology in the last days.

To better understand what Paul's concerns were, we need to start with a definition of the term "self." It simply means the person himself. It's *me*—and all that comprises me. Being a lover of my own self, then, means that I love me, first and foremost. Self fills up my heart, my mind, my will, my consciousness. Self, prior to salvation in Christ, is an autonomous being doing its own thing in rebellion against God. For believers in Jesus who are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), self should be in submission to Him. A true believer denies himself daily, takes up his cross, is crucified with Christ—and yet he lives, with his life being in *Christ* by faith (Matthew 16:24; Galatians 2:20).

Why did Paul put such an emphasis on *self* as an issue of critical concern in "the last days"? Hasn't "self" been mankind's common problem ever since the first act of disobedience against God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3)? Wasn't Satan's seduction of Eve a lying appeal to enhance her "self"? Satan: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (3:5). And didn't Eve fall for his lies of

self-gratification and *self-deification*? And wasn't *self-preservation* an obvious product of Adam and Eve's sin as they shifted the blame away from themselves? Adam: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree..." Eve: "The serpent beguiled me..." (3:12, 13). Obviously, *self* took center stage in the life of mankind from the first act of sin on earth and thereafter!

Yet Paul indicates a special emphasis on self in the "last days." Although self-seeking and self-serving have been dominant characteristics of mankind as far back as the Fall, it has only been *since the rise of modern psychology* that self has been proclaimed as *the solution* to all of our mental, emotional, and behavioral ills. This was a new development of the 19th century that became inevitable as Darwinian "scientists" began promoting their own theory of man's origin. Why inevitable? Well, as God "lost" His position as mankind's Creator, He eventually was replaced altogether. Evolutionary theory eliminated any necessity for God, since all life, we were told, came about through *natural* processes.

THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND DESPERATELY WICKED: WHO CAN KNOW IT? I THE LORD SEARCH THE HEART...

—JEREMIAH 17:9-10

Taking God out of the picture of life left us with only "self" (or "Self"), resulting in *humanity* becoming the measure of all things. That, however, has left evolutionists/humanists with a dilemma.

On the one hand, man has been "relieved" of his accountability to his Creator; on the other hand, he's left by himself to solve all of his problems. This evolutionary and humanistic belief posits that within man is the ultimate and necessary potential for coming up with these solutions. *The Humanist Manifesto I* declares, "Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement." If the solutions are not within self, then godless mankind has nowhere else to turn, and, consequently, humanity has no hope. But we are assured by today's psychotherapists that the cures for humanity's ills are indeed found within mankind. Thus, Paul's prophetic warning regarding the "last days" being "perilous times" and characterized primarily by men being "lovers of their own selves" is more fitting to our time than any other period in history.

Replacing God with self leads to the

central dogma of the religion of psychology: mankind is innately good. Psychotherapy is an exercise in futility unless innate goodness resides within man at his very core. Here's why: if man has an evil nature, as the Bible teaches, then it's impossible for him to change himself. In other words, if I'm innately evil, I will *always* be evil because there is nothing within me to *enable me to change*. But if I'm *good* within but am experiencing problems of living, then through various psychological methods or techniques, I should be able to tap into, utilize, or realize that goodness and thus remedy the adversities I experience. All the psychotherapeutic selfisms, from self-love to self-esteem to self-image to self-actualization to self-realization—and ultimately to self-deification—are predicated upon the innate goodness of one's nature.

Humanistic psychology—to which *all* psychotherapies are related—is the pseudoscientific belief system of the Antichrist, who is the personification of human evil. The basics of his religion were introduced to mankind by Satan in his seduction of Eve (turning her away from obedience to God and toward her own self-interests, even godhood—Genesis 3) and culminate in a man, the Antichrist, setting himself up in the temple of God to be worshiped as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). It's all about the worship of self.

This Humanist/Self religion of the Antichrist does not just suddenly appear on the scene when the Antichrist is revealed. As noted, the religion of selfism has been in development since the Garden of Eden. Moreover, it can be seen in the Tower of Babel and the idolatry of the Gentiles throughout the Old Testament and is prevalent in all the religions of the world today.

Only biblical Christianity stands against the exaltation of self that ties all other religions together. The Bible declares self to be evil and hopeless and says that man's salvation can come only from God as it is received by faith in Jesus alone, who satisfied divine justice by His full payment for the sins of mankind, according to the Scriptures. All other religions look to self to obtain salvation, ultimately through one's own efforts, whether by rituals, sacraments, meditation, liturgies, good works, and so forth. Human achievement versus Divine accomplishment—this is the critical difference between man's way of salvation and God's way.

The Apostle Paul's caveat about the "last days" is directed at believers, warning them and indicating the peril that will follow the practice of loving themselves. Therefore, it's rather shocking to witness the humanistic "self" concepts of the apostate religion of

the Antichrist taking hold in unprecedented fashion within evangelical Christianity. Last month we quoted a well-known Christian psychologist who credited humanistic psychologists and New Agers Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow for helping evangelicals to recognize their “need for self-love and self-esteem.” That certainly cannot be derived from the writers of Scripture! Nevertheless, there have been many influential professing Christians who have wittingly or unwittingly sown the seeds of the humanistic self-love teachings so far and wide and for so long among Christians that the heresies have taken root and their deadly fruit has been eagerly consumed throughout the church.

Norman Vincent Peale is widely recognized as the one who pioneered the merger of theology and psychology that became known as “Christian psychology.” Consistent with his humanistic beliefs, which he spread through his nationally broadcast radio sermons and his highly popular *Guideposts* magazine, he explained that people “are inherently good; the bad reactions [sin?] aren’t basic.” Robert Schuller, whose “Possibility Thinking” reflected (his mentor) Peale’s “Positive Thinking,” both of which mirror the teachings of the Mind Science cults, sent 250,000 copies of his book, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, to pastors all around the U.S. Schuller’s “Hour of Power” is the world’s most popular religious television program. Yet to millions, his humanistic views presented under the guise of Christianity are not recognized for their blasphemy: “Jesus knew his worth, his success fed his self-esteem.... He suffered the cross to sanctify his self-esteem. And he bore the cross to sanctify your self-esteem. And the cross will sanctify the ego trip!”¹ Could the Antichrist himself add anything more unbiblical?!

Sadly, many conservative evangelical preachers and teachers of note such as Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley, Josh McDowell, Anthony Hoekema, Norm Geisler, and others, bought into, taught, Christianized, and further popularized the concepts of self-love, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-image. It is the “new priesthood” of Christian psychologists, however, with credentials that falsely imply the anointing of science, that has convinced both shepherds and sheep of the legitimacy of the theories and methods of humanistic psychology. Among the swelling numbers of highly regarded, degreed professionals who teach the church what they have gleaned from “the counsel of the ungodly” is Dr. James Dobson, who, no doubt, is and has been the most influential individual among evangelicals for the last

quarter-century. Concerning self-love and self-esteem he writes:

In a real sense, the health of an entire society depends on the ease with which its individual members can gain personal acceptance. Thus, whenever the keys to self-esteem are seemingly out of reach for a large percentage of the people, as in twentieth-century America, then widespread “mental illness,” neuroticism, hatred, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and social disorder will certainly occur....²

If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, it would provide each one of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need.³

Right behind Dobson in terms of his influence in the church today is Rick Warren. Although he has distanced himself of late from one of his early mentors, Robert Schuller (Warren was a frequent speaker

FOR ALL SEEK THEIR OWN, NOT THE THINGS WHICH ARE JESUS CHRIST’S.

—PHILIPPIANS 2:21

in the nineties at the Robert Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership), his article in *Ladies’ Home Journal* titled “Learn to Love Yourself” (see *TBC* 4/05) is classic Schuller—and *pure humanistic psychology*. Warren lists “five truths,” none of which is either a “truth” or biblical: 1) Accept yourself; 2) Love yourself; 3) Be true to yourself; 4) Forgive yourself; and 5) Believe in yourself. Yet these humanistic, antibiblical doctrines have been taught so often from so many pulpits that most Christians, when presented with what the Bible actually teaches about self and the selfisms, are either shocked that they’ve been misled or bitterly resent hearing the truth.

Although I could not adequately cover in this brief article the details of how terribly subversive and destructive humanistic psychology (especially as championed in “Christian” psychology) is to Bible-believing Christians, here are a few concerns that we all need to seriously and prayerfully consider: *One*, humanistic psychology’s theories came from the atheistic, anti-Christian founders of psychotherapy, whose concepts qualify for what the Scriptures condemn as “the counsel of the ungodly” (Psalm 1:1); *Two*, the humanistic

emphasis upon loving and esteeming self rejects the biblical commandment to “deny self,” which Jesus admonished us to do in Matthew 16:24; *Three*, the increasing focus on esteeming one’s self gradually distorts a believer’s understanding of the truth regarding the sinful nature of man and hides *conviction of sin* in a morass of humanistic rationalizations; *Four*, the subjective *feelings* orientation of humanistic psychology undermines the absolutes of God’s objective truth; and *Five*, as the leaven of humanism grows in the mind of a believer, his interpretation of the Scriptures gradually shifts from what God has indeed said (Genesis 3:1) to “a way which seemeth right unto a man...” (Proverbs 14:12). Scripture tells us that man’s ways, i.e., all his self and humanistic teachings, “are the ways of death,” a death that separates a believer from the truth and robs him of his faith and fruitfulness.

How “perilous” will all of this become in these “last days”? Consider the following and, should the Lord tarry, weep for your children. Generally, evangelical youth recognize the pseudo-science and myths of evolution, thanks to the instruction of organizations such as the Institute for Creation Research and Answers In Genesis, as well as numerous other apologetic ministries, creation scientists, gifted teachers, and so forth. Although the battle continues to rage in this area, not many evangelical young people go off to college intent on becoming “evolutionists.”

Yet what of the *pseudo-science* and *myths* of psychology? Who is teaching our children about *that*? Certainly not the rapidly growing, 50,000-member American Association of Christian Counselors, whose main goal is the “integration” of psychotherapy and Christianity. How serious is this ignorance of the evil of psychology for our young people? The prestigious *Princeton Review* reports that psychology is the number two career choice for all those attending college. It’s even *more* popular in professing Christian universities, from Liberty University on the East coast to Fuller Theological Seminary on the West coast and nearly all that reside between.

Who is telling the truth to our children? Not Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family, who ironically advises, “Christian psychology is a worthy profession for a young believer, *provided his faith is strong enough to withstand the humanistic concepts to which he will be exposed...* [emphasis added].”⁴ Weep and pray for our next generation of evangelicals who are being led into the humanistic priesthood of what is tragically and deceptively called Christian psychology. —TBC

Quotable

The following writers were personal friends of Dave and Ruth Hunt before being martyred by the Auca Indians. Ed McCully was Dave's best friend:

Ah, tolerant generation, who pays the prophets and fondles them who are sent unto you...woe. Cursed be your Judas embrace. Damned be your friendliness... it lays shattering condemnation on your prophets....Damned be this cool tepidity.... Father, make of me a crisis man. Bring those I contact to decision. Make me a fork [in the road], that men must turn one way or another on facing Christ in me.

—Jim Elliot

I stood by the bed of an 18-year-old Indian boy in the eastern jungle. I watched him vomit blood and...die. As I stood looking at his lifeless form lying on bamboo sticks on the dirt floor of the hut, I was to realize more fully what Paul meant in 1st Thessalonians five: "Ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." I will not forget the screaming-chanting wail of these heathen folk as they beat their breasts and mourned for two days and nights. It was a pathetic picture of "no hope." Tonight I pray...that God will spare the lives of these Indians until He enables us to bring them the message of hope, of eternal life, of salvation in their own language.

—Ed McCully

I am longing now to reach the Aucas if God gives me the honor of proclaiming the NAME among them....I would gladly give my life for that tribe if only to see an assembly of those proud, clever, smart people gathering around a table to honor the Son—gladly, gladly, gladly! What more could be given to life?

—Pete Fleming

Q&A

QUESTION: Having served my last tour in the international political arena in the D.C. area, I completely concur with your answer re the Tribulation in *TBC* Jan. '06—up to the last sentence, which says: "I believe that the Great Tribulation under Antichrist...will begin immediately after the Rapture." However, does not the signing of a 7-year security treaty with Israel mark the actual start of the "Great Tribulation" period (Daniel 9:27)? Considering the chaos which ensues from the Rapture, it

would seem that the Antichrist...will need several days (maybe even weeks or a few months) to consolidate his power and convince Israel and her enemies to sign the 7-year covenant with him—or else. Thus...it would seem prudent to assume that some time will elapse between the Rapture and the 7-year Tribulation.

ANSWER: What you say sounds reasonable. The common teaching today is that it could take years, for which I find no basis in Scripture. This idea reduces the Rapture almost to a non-event for earthlings. However, the Hebrew in Daniel 9 says that the Antichrist will *impose* the seven-year covenant upon the "many" (i.e., not just upon Israel but the world). He will not merely "confirm" it, as the KJV says. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8, the only hindrance to Antichrist being "revealed" is the presence of the Holy Spirit indwelling the members of the body of Christ here upon earth. We can't even imagine the terror at every level of society and government caused by the mass disappearance of millions—nor the incredible satanic power and seduction immediately displayed.

Since it is the worldwide crisis of a *mass disappearance, terror, and his satanic power* that will catapult Antichrist into world dictatorship, I believe that his takeover will be within a few hours at the most—not days or weeks.

QUESTION: I'm a member of a would-be megachurch that follows Rick Warren's ideas in order to become the largest church in my town. The pastor quotes *The Message* and the *NLT*. Vineyard songs are our "old hymns." The issue, of course, is whether we are becoming apostate by trying to be "seeker-friendly" on Sunday....Would you please do an article on the nature of sin...? The user-friendly churches...appealing to people who don't feel particularly guilty, define sin as having self on the throne..., rather than being "fully devoted disciples...." The Reformation targeted guilt-driven Roman Catholics. It told them to quit trusting...sacraments and indulgences and instead to trust only in the Lord's sacrifice as their remedy for guilt and fear of hell. It emphasized that He... took upon Himself the sin nature of the world...and was punished by separation from the Father. His divine Nature overcame the sin nature and separation.... [My church] emphasizes that the sin which Christ died for was...failure to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor

as yourself. So their motto is "Loving God, Loving People." Repentance is defined as changing your paradigm from self-preservation to living for and being all about Jesus....[So they] preach repentance from sin as "step into a new relationship with the Lord which will transform you...." This illustrates why I believe that megachurch apostasy has to do with a misconception of the nature of sin and why I would like to see *TBC* do an article on sin. Is sin who you are or just how you behave; is weeping over one's sins an essential step to salvation, or does it just come later?

ANSWER: Thank you. I agree that conviction of sin and repentance are scarcely preached today. Of course, Christ did not take "upon himself the *sin nature* of the world" but "the *sin* of the world" (Jn 1:29). Nor was it His "*divine nature* [that] overcame the *sin nature* and separation...." It was His payment of the penalty for sin that saves us. To tell the sinner that he can "step into a new relationship with the Lord which will transform [him]" is not the gospel Paul preached and by which his hearers were saved through believing the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and resurrected "according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:2-4).

If one is not convinced that one is under God's judgment because of sin, one cannot be saved: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (1 Tm 1:15). Christ himself made it clear: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). I agree that the "gospel" preached today in many "evangelical" pulpits is more an improve-your-life message than passing from death to life and being delivered from eternal punishment through Christ's payment for sin (Jn 5:24).

This false gospel could bring many new members into seeker-friendly churches who think they're on their way to heaven but are not. That is a tragedy. As you imply, sin is what I am, not just what I do—the latter results from the former. It is good to be so repentant as to weep over one's sins—but nowhere does the Bible require weeping in order to be saved.

QUESTION: In the Dec '05 issue of *TBC* there is an important, if not intentional, misrepresentation of fact which merits rectification. The statement that John Calvin taught that Infant Baptism saves betrays a regrettable ignorance of

Calvin's beliefs. Here is what he really taught, quoting from the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Commenting on 1 Peter 3:21..., Calvin declares, "For he [Peter] did not mean to intimate that our ablution and salvation are perfected by water, or that water possesses in itself the virtue of purifying, regenerating, and renewing; nor does he mean that it is the cause of salvation, but only that the knowledge and certainty of such gifts are perceived in this sacrament," Vol. 2, page 513. Again: "We acknowledge, therefore, that at that time [speaking of one baptized as an infant] baptism profited us nothing, since in us the offered promise [of forgiveness of sin which baptism signifies] lay neglected. Now when, by the grace of God, we begin to repent, we accuse our blindness and hardness of heart of having been so long ungrateful for his great goodness" (Vol. 2, p. 522).

From these statements, it is made obvious that although John Calvin practiced infant baptism, as did John Wesley [et al.], he can no more be justly accused of teaching baptismal regeneration than they.... Let me close with a final quote from Calvin's *Institutes*: "For what is a sacrament received without faith, but most certain destruction to the church? For seeing that nothing is to be expected beyond the promise, and the promise no less denounces wrath to the unbeliever than offers grace to the believer, it is an error to suppose that anything is conferred by the sacraments than is offered by the word of God and obtained by true faith. From this another thing follows—viz., that assurance of salvation does not depend on participation in the sacraments, as if justification existed in it. This, which is treasured up in Christ alone, we know to be communicated, not less by the preaching of the gospel than by the seal of the sacrament, and may be completely enjoyed without this seal" (Vol. 2, p. 501). For the sake of manly fairness and Christian honesty, I request you publish this clarification of our Protestant, Reformed position.

ANSWER: In his *Institutes*, Calvin contradicted himself, and you have only quoted him selectively. Your first quote comes close to a denial of what I said, which was, "If all one believes is that infant baptism saves, as Calvin taught...one is certainly not saved. If a person believes that he was saved through infant baptism, how is it possible for him, without relinquishing that false belief, to truly be saved by believing

the gospel? He has no need of the true gospel, having already been forgiven his sins and made a child of God through infant baptism...." Your second (p. 522) only says that infants don't *understand the value* of baptism, not that it has no value.

Your third quote merely says that salvation is possible by believing the gospel without the sacraments, not that baptism cannot or does not save. Now let me quote Calvin: "...at whatever time we are baptised, we are washed and purified once for the whole life...we must...recall our baptism...so as to feel certain and secure of the remission of sins...it wipes and washes away all our defilements" (IV: xv, 3). Again: "God in baptism promises the remission of sins, and will undoubtedly perform what he has promised to all believers. That promise was offered to us in baptism, let us therefore embrace it in faith" (IV: xxv, 17). And, "We have...a similar promise given to the fathers in circumcision, similar to that which is given to us in baptism...the forgiveness of sins and the mortification of the flesh.... We deny...that...the power of God cannot regenerate infants.... Let God, then, be demanded why he ordered circumcision to be performed on the bodies of infants...by baptism we are ingrafted into the body of Christ (1 Cor xii.13). [Therefore] infants... are to be baptised..." (IV: xv, 22; xvi, 3, 4, 8, 10, 17-32). I give these quotes in *What Love Is This?* on pp. 41, 388, 430, among others, and I hold Calvin to these statements. This is a Catholic dogma, yet it was carried over into many "reformed" churches and remains there today.

Furthermore, Calvin never tells of the moment that he renounced the false gospel of Catholicism and believed the true gospel. He extols the sacraments, says they can be performed only by the clergy (including Roman Catholic), and accepts infant baptism by a Catholic priest as efficacious. If he ever renounced Catholicism's false gospel, when did this occur? And how could he have, considering that he banned from Geneva (1537) and persecuted the Anabaptists who, though raised Catholics, believed the biblical gospel and as a result were born again and baptized as believers?

The fact that Calvin was only baptized once—as an infant—and that he persecuted as heretics those who were baptized as believers, contradicts entirely what you think the quotations you cite mean. Moreover, one of the two charges (brought to the court by Calvin himself) for which Servetus was burned at the stake was his rejection of infant baptism for salvation. Calvin goes into great detail justifying this charge

against Servetus and repeatedly scorning Servetus for rejecting the efficacy of infant baptism for salvation. Please read again pages 79-85 of *What Love Is This?* where I cover the subject thoroughly.

QUESTION: Why didn't the disciples recognize Jesus after the Resurrection?

ANSWER: The disciples' unbelief (He was the last person they expected to see) was no doubt a large factor. Moreover, the scripture explains that "their eyes were holden [prevented from seeing]..." (Lk 24:16). We are also told that he "appeared in another form..." (Mk 16:12). His resurrection body was a transformation from the one they had known before. It was glorious, but He was veiling that glory. His resurrection body had amazing qualities. Consider John's description of Jesus in Revelation 1—but that was only one aspect. In Revelation 5, the angel calls him "the Lion of the tribe of Juda[h]," but when John turns to see this "Lion," he sees a "Lamb as it had been slain." God's throne is eternally "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rv 22:1). It is all quite beyond our comprehension or explanation.

Endnotes

1 Schuller, Robert, *Living Positively One Day at a Time*, Revell, 1981, 201; *Self-Esteem, the New Reformation*, Word Books, 1982, 14-15.

2 Dobson, James, *Hide or Seek*, Revell Pub., 1974, 12-13.

3 Dobson, James, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women*, Tyndale House, 1975, 60.

4 Dobson, James, *Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions*, Tyndale, Wheaton, IL, 1989, 497.

Lamb of God

Dave Hunt

The Bible claims to be the Word of the only true God. In addition to historical, archaeological, and scientific proofs, there are numerous internal proofs. No such evidences exist for other "sacred writings." The Bible was written during 1,600 years by 40 prophets, most of whom lived in diverse cultures, at different times in history, yet who never contradict but complement each other. For the Qur'an, Muslims must take the word of Muhammad, just as the Book of Mormon rests solely upon Joseph Smith's word. But every biblical prophet is confirmed by 39 other prophets, and they condemn the "scriptures" of every religion!

It would be difficult for a single author to avoid contradiction when dealing with such a lengthy period of detailed history involving so many individuals and nations and covering such a wide variety of subjects as does the Bible. But 40 different prophets writing with one voice over a period of many centuries? There can be only one explanation: divine inspiration!

Hundreds of prophecies uttered centuries and even thousands of years before their fulfillment are the irrefutable proof God offers of His existence, and these identify beyond question His Word to man—a proof absolutely unique to the Bible. Besides proving that the Bible is God's Word, fulfilled prophecies develop themes woven like golden threads through the entire tapestry of Scripture.

One of the major themes is redemption: the only means by which a holy God can justly forgive and be reconciled to His creature, man. The Bible denounces all of the world's religions as inspired by "the god of this world [Satan]" (1 Cor 10:20; 2 Cor 4:4). They all teach that their god or gods can be appeased by works and religious rituals. The Bible alone is clear in its declaration that salvation "is the gift of God [a gift cannot be earned or merited]....Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us" (Eph 2:8; Ti 3:5).

God's Word allows no room for accommodation, dialogue, or compromise. Truth does not concede anything to error and has nothing to discuss with lies. Yet for many years, the Roman Catholic Church has been in "dialogue" with Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims, all of whose religions diametrically oppose the Bible. (A Catholic-Buddhist conference in a Kentucky monastery purported to find "common ground" between Christ's suffering on the cross, the Buddha's "Four

Noble Truths," and Buddhist meditation—*Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1996). How is such confusion possible? Because centuries ago, Catholicism, like the non-Christian religions, developed a "Christian" system of works and sacraments for salvation. And for many years now, Baptists and evangelicals (whose ancestors broke away from Catholicism during the Reformation) have been in "dialogue" with the Roman Catholic Church. Meanwhile, at the UN and at the leadership level of most "faiths," the clamor for a one-world religion is growing ever louder.

Biblical Christianity stands alone against the ecumenism that every religion will eventually embrace under Antichrist. The Gospel is separated from all religions by the uncompromising declaration of every biblical prophet that for God to forgive sins and reconcile man to Himself, the penalty for sin must be paid in full. That penalty is death (eternal separation from God, the giver and sustainer of life), and it was pronounced upon

AND LOOKING UPON JESUS AS HE WALKED,
HE SAITH, BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!

—JOHN 1:36

the entire human race: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die....For the wages of sin is death..." (Ezk 18:20; Rom 6:23). This penalty cannot be waived even by God himself, who is bound by His eternal Word. But God sent His Son to become a man through a virgin birth to suffer in our place the punishment He had pronounced upon mankind.

The fact that the payment for sin can be made only by a sinless victim is an integral part of the theme of redemption all through the Bible. Clearly, no sinner can pay for his own sins: "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination..." (Psv 21:27). Salvation can only be by God in grace crediting Christ's death in payment for the sins of all mankind to those who accept salvation on His terms. This is seen in the animal sacrifices Jews were to offer. The fact that these sacrifices had to be repeated over and over proved that they were only temporary anticipations of a true sacrifice, which God would eventually provide: "For the law...can never with those sacrifices [bring perfection]. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?" (Heb 10:1,2).

Furthermore, from A.D. 70 to the present, Jews have been unable to offer the sacrifices that were established by God's specific instructions in the Torah. This fact carries very serious consequences, especially since the destruction of the Temple and the

resulting cessation of sacrifices did not happen by chance but were God's judgment upon rebellious Israel as His prophets foretold: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice..." (Hos 3:4,5). Jesus declared that Gentile control over Jerusalem would continue until Armageddon: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk 21:24). This is a remarkable prophecy still being fulfilled, as we document in *Judgment Day*.

So how can Jews (or Gentiles) receive God's forgiveness, since the Levitical sacrifices He specifically commanded ceased nearly 2,000 years ago and are still impossible today? The answer to that question is given in the theme of redemption that flows through Scripture.

Central to this theme are the numerous references to a lamb as a redemptive sacrifice for sin. The first sacrifice that God accepted was the lamb offered by Abel (Gn 4:2-4; Heb 11:4).

The fact, however, that animal sacrifices were only a picture of a coming sacrifice, which alone could fully atone for sins, was clear from the very beginning for two obvious reasons: 1) animal life was never equated in value to human life; and 2) as we have already seen, animal sacrifices had to be repeated, proving that they could not remove the guilt of sin.

Yet, the Old Testament prophetic pictures present amazing insights. The offering of Isaac by Abraham on an altar is a classic example. Muslims claim that Ishmael, not Isaac, was the son offered—an obvious lie because it doesn't fit Islam. Allah is not a father, has no son, Islam has no redemptive sacrifice, and denies Christ's death for sin.

God's command to Abraham, however, to offer his "only son Isaac" (Gn 22:2), has undeniable prophetic meaning in relation to the biblical sacrifice of God's "only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16). Father Abraham's offering of Isaac on an altar has meaning only in relation to the biblical account of Father God offering Christ on the Cross for man's sins. Nor could it be a coincidence that the very place where God told Abraham to offer his son became the site of the Jewish Temple and its sacrifices. Islam tries to steal this also by saying that it was from the place where "Ishmael was offered" that Muhammad ascended to heaven. That unbiblical claim, however, has been recently discredited by Muslim authorities. (See *Judgment Day*)

In Abraham's cryptic response to Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Gn 22:7), the mystery seems to deepen: "God will provide himself a lamb" (v. 8). God himself will be the sacrificial lamb for man's

redemption? Did Christ refer to this statement when He declared, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (Jn 8:56)? Isaiah revealed both that the coming Messiah would be God's son: "unto us a son is given" (Is 9:6) and also that He would be YAHWEH, called "the God of Israel" 203 times in the Bible: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father" (Is 9:6)! A baby born to a virgin would be God's son and at the same time would be the Father?! Yes. As Jesus declared, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30).

Isaiah also foretold that the Messiah would be the promised lamb sacrificed for the sins of the world: "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...[H]e is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Is 53:6,7). No wonder John the Baptist, when "looking upon Jesus as he walked...saith, Behold the Lamb of God...which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29,36). The intricate interrelationship between scriptures by so many different prophets from Genesis to Revelation is awesome!

The most complete Old Testament prophetic picture of the coming lamb is in the Passover. The detailed instructions settled in advance the controversy at the root of today's conflict in the Middle East over the land that God promised to Abraham: "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee...all the land of Canaan [there was no such place as "Palestine"!], for an everlasting possession..." (Gn 17:8). Because Ishmael (though illegitimate) was Abraham's firstborn son, the Arabs, who claim descent from Ishmael, say they are the "seed" of Abraham to whom the Promised Land was given. The Bible, however, clearly says that Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob are the "seed" and true heirs (Gn 17:19; 26:3,4; 28:13; 1 Chr 16:15-18, etc.). According to the Bible, the claim of Arabs and Muslims to this disputed land is a fraud—yet the UN, EU, USA, et al., accept it as the basis for a "peace" that defies the God of Israel!

Muslims say that the Bible was changed by Jews and Christians. That won't fly. The God of the Bible defines the seed that inherits the land so clearly that any "change" would be impossible: "...thy seed [i.e., that inherits the land] shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years....But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again..." (Gn 15:13-16).

The Jews, not Arabs, were slaves in Egypt for 400 years, then were brought "in the fourth generation" into the land of Canaan. Arabs did not come into "Palestine" until

the brutal seventh-century-Muslim invasion after Jews had lived there for more than 2,000 years. This is irrefutable history proved by the Passover.

Israel's deliverance came about through God's judgment in ten plagues upon Egypt, the final one requiring the sacrifice of a lamb by any who would escape that doomed land. That event was ever after to be commemorated with the Passover supper first eaten that historic night: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial....[W]hen your children shall say unto you, What mean ye...ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover... when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses" (Ex 12:14,26,27).

Who keeps the Passover? Not Arabs! Only Jews keep it worldwide to this day. When an event witnessed by many people is immediately commemorated with a special remembrance kept ever after, we have proof that it happened as memorialized. The annual Passover proves the slavery of Israel in Egypt and her deliverance, as the Bible declares, and

BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST, AS OF A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH AND WITHOUT SPOT.

—2 THESSALONIANS 2:11

that the Jews are therefore the heirs of Abraham with title to that land by a deed God signed 4,000 years ago and recorded in Scripture.

Non-Jews have neither right nor purpose in keeping the Passover; yet it has become popular for Gentile Christians to celebrate the Jewish "seder." True, the Passover lamb pictures Christ, the Lamb that Abraham told Isaac God would provide—but so did each Levitical offering, yet Christians don't offer those, so why would they celebrate the Passover? It commemorates ancestral deliverance from Egypt, in which Gentiles have no part.

But wasn't the "Last Supper" the Passover, and didn't Christ give it new meaning, to be celebrated continually until His return? "A new meaning"? Impossible! The Passover feast with roast lamb has historic significance involving an "everlasting covenant" (Gn 17:7; 1 Chr 16:15-18, etc.) concerning the Promised Land. That meaning cannot be changed. Jews (not Gentiles) are commanded by God to keep it "for ever" (Ex 12:14). Christ Himself could not give a "new meaning" to the Passover!

Furthermore, the Last Supper was not the Passover. It occurred the night "before the feast of the passover" (Jn 13:1) and without a lamb. The next morning, the rabbis were still keeping themselves undefiled so they could "eat the passover" (Jn 18:28). That afternoon,

when Christ was on the Cross, it was still "the preparation of the passover" (Jn 19:14)—i.e., the lambs were being sacrificed to be eaten in the Passover supper that night.

But didn't Christ say, "I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Lk 22:15)? Yes, but "this passover" is not the Passover with roast lamb to be kept only by Jews in memory of deliverance from Egypt. "This passover" was something new inaugurated by Christ to be kept with bread and wine (in memory of His body broken and blood shed) by all who believe on Him (Jews and Gentiles). Why did Jesus, then, call it a "Passover"? Because as Israel was delivered by the death of a lamb from Egypt, so it commemorates deliverance for believers from sin, this evil world, and judgment to come, through the true "Lamb of God": "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew [proclaim] the LORD'S death till he come" (1 Cor 11:26). Paul said, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7).

If animal sacrifices could not pay for sin, what was their purpose? They were physical illustrations of spiritual truth beyond our present comprehension. Christ continually used the physical to symbolize the spiritual: ("drink of the water that I give...I am the true vine...the door...the bread of life...except you eat my flesh and drink my blood," etc.). We do the same today. For example, we sing hymns about being "washed in the blood of the Lamb." We are not speaking literally. Grievous error enters when symbol is made substance, such as Catholicism's eating of the wafer that is believed to be Christ's physical body. That would be like swallowing pages of the Bible in order to "feed upon God's Word" (Dt 8:3; Jer 15:16; 1 Pt 5:2, etc.)!

The significance behind the sacrificial lamb goes far beyond our highest thoughts. In John's vision, he is told that "the Lion of the tribe of Juda...hath prevailed to open the book." Turning to see the "Lion," he sees "a Lamb as it had been slain..." (Rv 5:5,6)! How can a powerful lion appear as a newly slain lamb—and in what way could Christ be seen as such in heaven?! Of the heavenly city, we are told that "the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rv 21:23). The Bible ends with reference to the eternal "throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1,3).

We can only fall down in prostrate wonder and gratitude, rejoicing that one glad day we will join the redeemed around that throne in the eternal chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (Rv 5:12). At last we will "see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2) and understand fully, having been transformed into His image for all eternity!

TBC

Quotable

Government is not a solution to our problem, government is the problem.... Abortion is advocated only by persons who have themselves been born.... I believe the best possible social program is a job.... The government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it.

—President Reagan

If we were entirely honest, wouldn't some of the favorites we sing most lustily sound rather like this: "I Surrender Some"... "He's Quite a Bit to Me"... "Where He Leads Me, I Don't Always Follow"... "Jesus is Some of What I Need"... "I Sort of Love You, Lord"... "Just as I Pretend to Be"...etc.!

—Anonymous

Keep faithful in your work. Let your aim be as steady as a star. Leave the world alone to brawl and bawl. You may be assaulted, wronged, insulted, slandered, wounded and rejected. You may be abused by foes, forsaken by friends, and despised and rejected of men. But with steadfast determination and unfaltering zeal, pursue the great purpose of your life that He has given you and the object of your being, until at last you can say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

—Anonymous

Q&A

QUESTION: I found an organization on a website whose members call themselves "Born-Again Mormons." They claim to be true Christians who reject most of the doctrines of Mormonism, and their Statement of Beliefs looks pretty good. But one of their main philosophies is that they must remain in the Mormon Church in order to evangelize the lost within that body. Is this possible? What do you know about them?

ANSWER: Some saved Catholics also say they want to remain in their Church to evangelize. It doesn't make sense. One's very presence at Mass or during the sacraments of the Mormon Church implies full agreement therewith. And how could one partake without endorsing the false doctrines underlying the sacraments? Impossible! A Catholic partaking of Mass is eating a "Christ" who is still suffering, is being immolated and offered for sin, did not pay the full price of our redemption on the Cross, and has been

turned into billions of wafers to be ingested repeatedly into the stomachs of members to propitiate their sins.

Likewise, the Mormon partaking of the sacraments is agreeing with church teaching behind them and with the prayers and hymns; that Christ is a created being and half-brother of Lucifer (actually there is an unlimited number of "Christs" and "Lucifers" out there somewhere on an infinite number of other "earths") who could not and did not pay the full penalty for sin through His death; that one must work for one's salvation, which is exaltation to godhood, etc. Yet the head of this movement says he partakes of the Mormon sacraments while opposing the doctrines upon which they are founded. Furthermore, the sacraments are forbidden by official church doctrine to any non-member or even to a member not in good standing, but he has found a local church that winks at official rules.

Contradictions abound! The leader of the group was, at his request, excommunicated several years ago, but now is trying to get back in to "evangelize" from within, so he once rejected what he now wants us to accept. Obviously, to stay in the Mormon Church (or the Catholic Church, et al.) gives the appearance of approval. In fact, "Born-again Mormons" do approve of the church and its activities but not of its doctrines, and they imagine they can change the latter from within: "We believe that the doctrinal LDS Church is in error but that the physical organization remains beneficial. We are not out to destroy the physical church but seek to confront and help remove any doctrines which demand anything more than faith in Jesus Christ for salvation."

Yet the church is founded upon and embodies its doctrines. Belonging to the church requires approval of its doctrines. One cannot oppose the foundation while supporting what is built upon it. Nor can one attend and participate without seeming to approve the doctrines upon which church services and activities are based. The website says, "We seek to overthrow any and all non-biblical LDS doctrine and replace it with Christian Truths from a position of activity inside the Church." This is self-contradictory and self-defeating.

Furthermore, like the Watchtower (Jehovah's Witnesses) the Mormon Church is a cult. Anyone who openly questions its false Christ, false salvation, and other false doctrines (much less opposes them) would be excommunicated just as one would be excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church for openly opposing its false gospel. A true Christian could only remain inside the

Mormon Church dishonestly and in dishonor of his Lord.

The website, bornagainmormon.com, argues that just as "Jack-Mormon" is an accepted term to Mormons, so "Born-again Mormon" may be applied in a similar way." No, the two terms are not similar at all: "Jack Mormon" is a Mormon who doesn't practice; "born-again Mormon" is one who isn't a Mormon but pretends to be. The website goes on to explain: "we use the term Mormon the way a Jew uses the word Jew, a woman uses the term Woman, or a South African uses the title of South African." But the analogy fails. One is born a Jew, woman, South African—a fact that has nothing to do with one's beliefs. Though some Mormons say they were born Mormons, to be a Mormon is a matter of one's beliefs, not birth.

These people seem to be sincere Christians, but they are very confused and are confusing Mormons and non-Mormons alike. Recently on TV the leader said: "I am not going to...try to discern whether you are talking about the real Jesus or the false Jesus. When you say you are talking about Jesus I believe that opens the door to the true Jesus Christ." This could not be more irrational and unbiblical!

Paul said that believing in "another Jesus [and] another gospel" opens the door not to truth but to devilish error (2 Cor 11:2-4)! The same leader also said that he would "not use Bible verses or talk about doctrine...[but] just talk about Jesus." So the Word of God is avoided because the truth might offend! But one cannot "talk about Jesus" except as defined by sound doctrine. Furthermore, Peter declares that we are "born again...by the Word of God...which by the gospel is preached" (1 Pt 1:23-25). This group claims to oppose the false doctrines of the Mormon Church—but how can Mormonism be effectively opposed without communicating that fact and presenting the truth from the Bible?! Confusion, confusion!

Here we have one more example of apparently well-meaning Christians hoping to get people saved with an inoffensive gospel that can't save. We have given many examples, from Joel Osteen's Sunday sermons to Rick Warren's series of articles in *The Ladies' Home Journal*. This delusion seems to be spreading, from President Bush's politically correct whitewash that calls Islam a religion of peace, to the religiously correct omission within today's church of anything offensive to unbelievers. We need to oppose this error and stand for the truth!

QUESTION: I recently saw the documentary, *End of the Spear*. The willingness of

these five missionaries to lay down their lives to get the gospel to the Aucas convicted me of my own shallow commitment. Though it moved me in places, however, the film was a huge disappointment.

That a gay activist was chosen to play the part of one of the missionaries is shocking. But the greatest disappointment was that the gospel—that all have sinned and that Christ is God who became a man and paid the penalty demanded by God’s justice for our sins—was missing! The transforming power of the gospel and faith in Christ was never explained as the reason for the change in the lives of the Aucas!

Nor does the film depict the godly lives of these men. Jim Elliot was unfairly and dishonorably portrayed as a reckless buffoon; the missionaries never prayed, read their Bibles, mentioned Jesus, or conversed about God. No church services were shown or even implied. These five young men could have been Peace Corps workers or anthropologists, rather than missionaries. The film could have been promoting pacifism or nonviolent response to persecution. Am I too harsh?

ANSWER: I saw an earlier version, not the final. The film does a disservice both to the missionaries (three of whom were dear friends of mine) and to the Lord for whom they gave their lives in response to His giving His life for them and for the Indians. I don’t know who wrote the script or produced the film, but this is obviously part of a growing movement to water down the gospel by removing everything that would “offend” the nonbeliever. Such a “gospel” saves no one. The film as you describe it is an insult to the five martyrs, dishonoring to their Lord, and misleading to viewers!

QUESTION: [The questioner is a 10-year-old boy.] From reading 2 Kings 24:8-17 and 25:27-30, I wonder whether Jehoiachin might have repented to the Lord while he was in prison. Although chapter 24 tells that he “did evil in the sight of the Lord,” 25:27-30 says that when King Evil-merodach began to reign over Babylon he took Jehoiachin from prison, gave him a throne above the other kings in Babylon, and a daily allowance for his needs until his death. I don’t think that God would have given him this throne if he had not repented—would He?

ANSWER: I commend you for studying the Bible so diligently. However, advancement in and recognition by the world is not always a sign of God’s blessing, though it could be.

Wasn’t God’s blessing upon Daniel demonstrated by the authority given to him in Babylon? Yes, but God blessed Daniel because of his godly life and also to put him in position for a specific purpose in God’s plan, as well as to give us the Book of Daniel.

Nothing of that nature is related about Jehoiachin: neither a godly life nor usefulness to God in Babylon. I think we would be told if that were the case. Everything we read about this man indicates that, like most of the kings of Israel and Judah, he would not repent no matter what judgment from God came upon him. The world rewards those who please it in rebellion against God. This was probably the case with Jehoiachin, though we can’t be sure.

Certainly there is no hint that Evil-merodach (Amel-Marduk in Babylonian) was a servant of God, as we are told concerning Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar. Without more information, we dare not speculate about Jehoiachin’s or anyone else’s repentance.

QUESTION: In Genesis 11:1-9 Nimrod builds the Tower of Babel in the land of Shinar. In Zechariah 5:5-11, the city needs to be rebuilt on its base. What keeps that city from being rebuilt now? The river still runs by there to make it a hanging garden city. I know Rome fits the description to many people in some ways, but I wouldn’t confine myself to that possibility alone when I read other scriptures that apply to Babylon. Many people believe that the “temple” that the Antichrist will desecrate is the Dome of the Rock. That is not a temple, it’s a mosque. What do you think?

ANSWER: The Dome of the Rock could not be desecrated by the Antichrist because it is already an abomination to God, so there is nothing to desecrate—and certainly nothing in Babylon. We are clearly told that Antichrist will “sit in the temple of God...” (2 Thes 2:4), and that could only be the Jewish Temple rebuilt on Temple Mount. It must happen. We have shown why the Muslims will want the Dome moved to Medina where it belongs, making way for the Temple. (See *Judgment Day*)

Could the ruins of Babylon in Iraq (now under reconstruction) become the headquarters for the Antichrist? Anything is possible. It would, however, seem highly unlikely that Antichrist would establish his headquarters in such an inconvenient place. There is not and never will be a deepwater port on the Euphrates next to Babylon. Yet upon her destruction, sailors and ship owners made wealthy by Babylon’s demand for goods of all kinds (who are apparently coming and

going in and out of her port at the time) can see the smoke of her destruction (Rv 18:17-19).

There were originally no chapter divisions between Revelation 17 and 18. Both concern the same city. Some of the same descriptive elements given in Revelation 17:2,4 are repeated in 18:3,9,16. And the description given in 17 identifies the woman as Rome/Vatican/false worldwide church of the last days—not as a rebuilt Babylon in Iraq. (See *TBC Jul/Aug ’93* and *A Woman Rides The Beast*)

Cosmos and Creator

Dave Hunt

President Bush has said, “We are proud of our space program....We have undertaken space travel because the desire to explore and understand is part of our character....Using the Crew Exploration Vehicle [CEV—not yet built], we will undertake extended human missions to the moon... living and working there for increasingly extended periods....[W]e will then be ready to take...human missions to Mars and to worlds beyond...we’ll develop new power generation propulsion, life support, and other systems that can support more distant travels...human beings are headed into the cosmos!”

It was an inspiring speech cheered by NASA. But a little honest reflection reveals the simple truth: the vast distances in the cosmos present an impassable barrier to our grandest ambitions. The Voyager I “space probe” travels about 335 million miles per year. If it survived, it would take it about 162,000 years to reach Alpha Centauri, the nearest star system in our galaxy where there might be some planets. It would take our space craft about 1.3 billion years to reach the closest galaxy outside our Milky Way, the Sagittarius Dwarf Elliptical Galaxy, and more than three billion years to reach the next closest galaxy, the Large Magellanic Cloud Galaxy.

How could such distant dreams benefit anyone alive today? Shouldn’t we admit the humbling fact that vehicular “space probes” are hopeless outside our Solar System? “Headed into the cosmos”? Bold words, but utterly ridiculous!

Well, we’re sending radio messages into space, and they travel at the speed of light, 186,000 miles per second. That’s fast, but not fast enough to “head into the cosmos.” At that speed, it would take 100-150,000 years to cross our galaxy, the Milky Way, and thousands to billions of years to reach other galaxies, of which there may be a trillion. Why continue to delude ourselves?

Radio reaches Alpha Centauri in 4.3 years, so we could theoretically have a reply in less than 9 years. We’ve been listening for intelligent radio sounds since 1960, and nothing so far. There are only three other star systems with the possibility of a radio reply in less than 100 years, and then the distances mount rapidly: 130 years for Aldebaran (brightest star in Taurus), 150 for Regulus (brightest star in Leo), over 500 years for Spica (brightest star

in Virgo), nearly 800 years for the Pleiades, 3,000 for Orion, 12,000 for the Crab Nebula, etc. Most of the stars in the Milky Way are many thousands of years away by radio contact. In 1974, a radio message was aimed at a huge cluster of stars known as M13, but it will take 25,000 years for the message to get there and another 25,000 to receive a reply.

Do such projects represent time, effort, and money well spent? Refusing to acknowledge the Creator, who offers instantaneous access to Him, science persists in attempting to explore the impossibly vast universe it won’t admit He made. Our strongest telescopes can’t even show us the universe as it is today but as it was long ago when the reflected light we see began its journey toward us. What blind pride drives this madness?!

Some astrophysicists argue that gravity seems to act instantaneously throughout the universe; and therefore, if we could achieve gravitational propulsion systems, we could travel almost anywhere in the universe in a moment of time. But most space scientists (and NASA) agree that the speed of light, which has proved to be the maximum for particles in accelerators, cannot be exceeded by physical objects.

Much science fiction (even by professed Christians such as C.S. Lewis) has popularized the idea that intelligent beings similar to man populate other planets in the universe. Billy Graham, who accepts evolution as one way God may have created man, has said: “I believe there is life on other planets....I can’t imagine that we’re the only one [planet] that has life. That would be an...egotistic thing for us to say.” As for preaching the gospel on other planets, Billy said, “I’d love to, but nobody’s invited me...I don’t think I could speak their language....” What *gospel* would that be?

Billions of dollars are being expended to contact intelligent life “out there” in the hope that “we are not alone.” The Voyager spacecraft carried this message from President Carter, dated June 16, 1977: “Of the 200 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy, some...may have inhabited planets and space faring civilizations. If one such civilization intercepts Voyager...here is our message: We...hope some day...to join a community of Galactic Civilizations. This [is] our determination...in a vast and awesome universe.” That is absurd according to the Bible, yet the scientific and academic community—and many Christians—take it very seriously.

Carter claims to be a Christian. Yet the hope he holds out for earthlings is to “join

a community of Galactic Civilizations”? That’s hardly what Jesus meant by His Father’s house of “many mansions” (Jn 14:2,3)! Carter’s “hope [and] determination” caused me to title a book, *Whatever Happened To Heaven?*

Evolutionists reason that if life could happen by chance on earth, it could have happened on millions and perhaps billions of other planets—and the challenge is to find it. But life could never happen by chance. This fact is backed by overwhelming scientific proof, although most scientists ignore it in their desire to escape accountability to the Creator.

This scientific evidence demands an inescapable conclusion: the earth is uniquely fitted for life, and the universe is designed to sustain it. During the first-ever manned orbiting of the moon, William Anders announced, “For all the people on Earth the crew of Apollo 8 has a message we would like to send you... ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth....’” Anders, followed by Jim Lovell and Frank Borman, broadcast back to earth the first ten verses of Genesis (though Anders inadvertently skipped verse 3).

After their return to earth, a reporter asked Borman whether he had seen God out there. He replied, “No...but I saw His evidence.” Wernher von Braun, German World War II rocket scientist, who became the father of America’s space program and first director of NASA, put it like this: “One cannot be exposed to the law and order of the universe without concluding that there must be design and purpose behind it all.” In a letter to the California State Board of Education (9/14/72), von Braun wrote:

My experiences with science led me to God....Prove the existence of God...? Must we really light a candle to see the sun...? The better we understand the intricacies of the universe...the more [we] marvel at the inherent design upon which it is based.

While the admission of a design...ultimately raises the question of a Designer (a subject outside of science), the scientific method does not allow us to exclude data which lead to the conclusion that the universe, life and man are based on design.

To be forced to believe only one conclusion—that everything in the universe happened by chance—would violate the very objectivity of science itself.

It is in...scientific honesty that I endorse the presentation of alternative theories for the origin of the universe, life and man in the science classroom.

God created Adam and Eve to “populate the earth” (Gn 1:28). When they rebelled and had to be expelled from the Garden, God

didn't moan, "They let me down. I'll try again on another planet." God knew that Adam and Eve would sin—and He knew how He would redeem mankind. Christ is called the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rv 13:8). As von Braun said, "God deliberately reduced Himself to the stature of humanity in order to visit earth in person, because the cumulative effect over the centuries of millions of individuals choosing to please themselves rather than God had infected the whole planet."

Any intelligent, morally responsible beings with the power of choice would inevitably sin. It would therefore make no sense for God to "start over" with other Adams and Eves on one or thousands of other planets. That would only fill the universe with more rebels. Because "God is love," He would be compelled to redeem sinners by paying the infinite penalty for sin in the place of finite creatures who would otherwise suffer His just judgment eternally. In order to pay for their sins in their place, the Creator would have to become one of them. Obviously that fact limits redemption (and thus creation) to one race of intelligent, morally accountable beings. There could only be salvation for man, so God would not create others.

Christ became a man to redeem mankind. He couldn't also have been born as other creatures on other planets to redeem them. God has only one Son to give, and He gave Him to this world (Jn 3:16). He promised to take those who believe on Him to His Father's house of many mansions (Jn 14:2,3), bringing "many sons unto glory" (Heb 2:10) "in his image" (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10). He can do this only for the human race, of which He eternally is a member.

The vastness of this universe and the mind-boggling numbers of galaxies and stars make it all the more astonishing that one tiny planet is the focus of God's attention. And the more we learn of the universe, the clearer the amazing fact becomes that God created it all for earth and its inhabitants! (See *The Privileged Planet* in offering list.)

Most staggering of all, the Creator himself became a man on this earth through a virgin birth in order to reveal Himself to mankind, *knowing full well that they would reject, mock, and crucify Him*. Von Braun said: "When God became a man...the stage was set for a situation without parallel in the history of the earth. God would visit creatures and they would nail Him to the Cross!" Yet, in loving response to man's heartless rejection and hatred, Christ asked the Father to "forgive them," and He gave His life to personally pay the penalty even

for the sins of those who crucified Him! What love! What mercy! What grace!

Death ends physical life, but not our existence. If it did, we wouldn't need a Savior and should rather follow the philosophy, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." But the Bible says that after death comes judgment (Heb 9:27). That's why we need salvation—to rescue us from eternal punishment for our sins. As von Braun said, "Everything science has taught me...strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death...."

The Bible repeatedly declares that the universe gives proof of an infinite Creator to every thinking person; and that everyone's conscience knows God's laws and that we all have broken them repeatedly (Rom 1,2). Common sense also tells us that the penalty for breaking the law even once cannot be paid by keeping it perfectly in the future or by any number of good deeds. Defying this obvious fact, religions offer various schemes (really scams) for appeasing God through ritual or good deeds. Those who persist in such religious dishonesty violate their own consciences and reject the forgiveness they inherently know they cannot merit but that only God could provide. Therefore, they cannot be excused because they never heard that Christ paid the full penalty for their sins when He died. They have rejected what the universe and conscience plainly tell them.

The Bible provides hundreds of prophecies (which we have given in detail in the past) concerning the coming Messiah/Savior: His ancestry is foretold; the place of His birth; the very day He would ride into Jerusalem and the beast upon which He would ride; His rejection by the Jews, and by the world; His crucifixion; His resurrection and ascension to heaven; the resurrection and Rapture of the redeemed to heaven; His return to earth to reign, etc. These prophecies identified without question Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Those who knowingly deny these facts and reject Him are doubly condemned.

It was on Planet Earth that Christ was born as a man, lived, died, and it is to the earth that He will return. According to the Bible, this earth is the center of the universe. All of God's future plans involve mankind. Man was made in the image of God (Gn 1:26,27). Redemption is all for him. Scripture declares, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..." (1 Tm 2:5).

Christ offered "one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Heb 10:12)—His work of redemption

was forever completed. That cosmic event, which defines all of history, happened on earth to redeem mankind. It is through Christ's death on this planet and through "the blood of his cross" that peace was made, enabling God to "reconcile all things unto himself...in earth [and] in heaven" (Col 1:20). It is in Christ (by virtue of His death and resurrection) that God will "gather together in one all things...which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (Eph 1:10). It is through Christ's death on the Cross that Satan has been defeated, that heaven itself has been cleansed, and that a new universe will be created without sin—and there God will dwell with man, on earth, forever.

To earth Satan came to destroy God's creation, and to earth the "great dragon... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" (Rv 12:7-10) will be cast down from heaven. The final battle between God and Satan will be fought for earth's destiny, and the enemy of God and man will be confined to "the lake of fire...and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" along with his followers (Rv 20:10-15).

Most astonishing of all is the fact that on this miniscule planet is a tiny city that is very precious to the Creator of this vast universe. That city is Jerusalem, mentioned 811 times in the Bible and *not once* in the Qur'an—a fact that exposes Muslims' claim to Jerusalem as a brazen lie. In this "holy city" (Neh 11:1; Is 48:2; 52:1; Mt 4:5, etc.), Christ was welcomed as the Messiah by hundreds, and perhaps thousands, lining the road from the Mount of Olives as He made His triumphal entry through the Eastern gate—an event celebrated ever since as Palm Sunday. Four days later, the same mob cried "Away with him, crucify him, we will not have this man to reign over us"—and He was nailed to the Cross on Jerusalem's outskirts.

This is the city God loves and wants to bless, but which has rebelled against Him repeatedly. This is the "city of God" (Ps 46:4; 87:3), the city to which God sent prophets day after day, week after week, year after year, pleading for repentance. This is Zion, "the city of David" (2 Sm 5:7; Neh 12:37; Is 22:9, etc.) over which Christ wept, and which God finally destroyed because of its wickedness, but has promised to fully restore.

God still watches over Jerusalem. For denying its place in His plan for the universe, He will punish all nations. This is the city that, in fulfillment of prophecies uttered thousands of years ago, has become a burden to the entire world. It is to Jerusalem that (God willing) we will turn our focus more fully in July. **TBC**

Quotable

How does the branch bear fruit? Not by incessant effort for sunshine and air; not by vain struggles for those vivifying influences which give beauty to the blossom, and verdure to the leaf: it simply abides in the vine, in silent and undisturbed union, and blossoms and fruit appear as of spontaneous growth.

How, then, shall a Christian bear fruit? By efforts and struggles to obtain that which is freely given; by meditations on watchfulness, on prayer, on action, on temptation, and on dangers? No. There must be a full concentration of the thoughts and affections on Christ; a complete surrender of the whole being to Him; a constant looking to Him for grace.

Christians in whom these dispositions are once firmly fixed go on calmly as the infant borne in the arms of its mother...In spiritual as in temporal matters they take no thought for the morrow; for they know that Christ will be as accessible tomorrow as today...Their hope and trust rest solely on what He is willing and able to do for them; on nothing that they suppose themselves able and willing to do for Him...

Such is the "exchanged life," the abiding, fruitful life, the life that is Christ, which should be the possession of every believer. Galatians 2:20 should be, and can be, a glorious reality.

—Harriet Beecher Stowe, in the booklet, *How to Live on Christ*, a copy of which Hudson Taylor sent to every member of the China Inland Mission.

Q&A

QUESTION: What does the Bible mean when it says the disciples "forsook all and followed him"? Is everyone called to full-time ministry? Does God allow us to have any possessions at all? How can a person support and raise a family while at the same time "forsaking all"? With all my heart I want to follow the Lord wherever He leads me, and I don't want to shrink from whatever the cost, but I'm getting confused about what that means.

ANSWER: We commend you for a sincere concern that most Christians don't want to face. We must not blunt the sharpness of the Sword of the Spirit; but neither do we want to misapply God's Word. Bill MacDonald quotes George Verwer: "Either the Bible means what it says or we

should throw it away." But what does the Bible mean by what it says? That remains a sincere question not only on this but on other scriptures.

To "forsake" is obviously not the same as to "abandon" or to "give away." If it were, then we would abandon all clothes and walk around naked; abandon all food and have nothing to eat; give away all furniture and have no bed, chairs, or tables; give away all money and have to depend upon the gifts of others who hadn't "forsaken all," etc. Well, that would be ridiculous extremism, most would say. But how is "extremism" defined? The Bible means what it says—but what does it mean?

"**FORSAKE ALL!**" can be a condemning challenge when coupled with the phrase, "All means *all!*" But the one saying this probably has *something* that hasn't been given away or abandoned: perhaps a car, the pallet he sleeps on, at least some clothing, etc. Must a carpenter give away all of his tools, a painter all of his brushes, a farmer his plow—and have no means of income? If not, how can they say that they have forsaken *all* to follow Christ? If one gives away beds and bedding and uses only a sleeping bag on the floor, one still has not abandoned *all*. Common sense is required to understand the Bible.

Bill MacDonald writes, "The command to forsake all has tremendous shock value. It awakens us from the lukewarm, cream puff, cotton-candy, Christianity 'lite' we have today. [But] forsaking all is not the same for a couple with a large family as it is for a single person. It is not the same for the owner of a company that requires assets as for the employee. Single person or married couple should get down on their knees and ask, 'Lord, what is this going to mean in my (our) life?' Then as the Lord begins to finger material possessions, they should be willing to forsake them and put the proceeds to work for the Lord and for the blessing of never-dying souls."

Comparing scripture with scripture and taking all of the Bible in context, one can see that we are to hold nothing as our own, but all belongs to the Lord to be used as He leads—and not misused or abused: "use this world, as not abusing it" (1 Cor 7:31). It isn't the possession of things, or the quantity or quality of them, but the heart attitude. However, Bill MacDonald reminds us, "The heart attitude is important, but...it has to be translated into action." As Paul said, "I know both how...to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil 4:12).

Jesus and James both cursed the rich. But what does "rich" mean? "Poor" in the West would be "rich" in many places. Yes, James curses the rich, but not for the amount of their money or possessions. It was rather for living for self and pleasure and holding back wages by fraud (Jas 5:1-6). Jesus says, "Woe unto you that are rich... (Lk 6:24); and He declares, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:25). We are still left with the question, "How much money or possessions makes one rich? How good a house or car is too good?" Jesus gave no such measurements but condemned "them that trust in riches" (v. 24). Not money, but "the love of money," is "the root of all evil" (1 Tm 6:10). Caution here: we must ask God to search our hearts.

Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned favorably in every gospel. He is called a "disciple" (Mt 27:57), an "honourable counsellor" (Mk 15:43), a "good man, and a just" (Lk 23:50,51), and again, "a disciple [secretly, until he claimed the body of Jesus]" (Jn 19:38-42). Yet he was a "rich man" (Mt 27:57) and is not criticized for being rich. Had he not been rich, he wouldn't have had an extra empty tomb to give to Christ, nor would the prophecy have been fulfilled that Christ would be "with the rich in his death" (Is 53:9).

We are commanded to work (2 Thes 3:11-14), and that implies income. We are supposed to give to the poor, which would be impossible if we had nothing to give. A man who provides not for his own family "hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tm 5:8). Paul spoke of the "collection for the saints," which was to be taken on the first day of each week (1 Cor 16:1,2); and he never suggests that they retain nothing for themselves, but praises them for their "liberality" (v. 3).

Yes, but didn't the early church "sell their possessions and goods...as many as were possessors of lands and houses, sold them, and...laid [the proceeds] at the apostles' feet" (Acts 2:45; 4:34,35)? It cannot mean that they sold their dwellings and lived in the street; or sold their farms and had no means of income. They must have sold extra lands and houses they didn't need. A prayer meeting for Peter's release from prison was held in "the house of Mary the mother of John," and it was large enough to accommodate "many" (Acts 12:12). Paul as a prisoner in Rome lived "two whole years in his own hired house" (Acts 28:30). John writes as though each Christian family lives in its own house (2

Jn 10). The fact that Christians live in their own houses (not necessarily rentals), and that the church often met in the homes of Christians is mentioned many times: Acts 2:46; 5:42; 8:3; 10:6,17,32; 20:20; 21:8; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 1:11, etc.

Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (Mt 6:19). But Paul said that parents ought to "lay up...for the children" (2 Cor 12:14). Does Paul contradict Jesus? No. Christ defines a "treasure" as something that one's heart is set upon (Mt 6:21). And Paul says, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2); so it is not the value or amount of possessions that is wrong but setting one's affections upon them, unwilling to give them up. As MacDonald says, "Attitude has to be translated into action." And he adds, "People who forsake all should not be judgmental of others. Others who do not agree should not judge those who in their simple faith forsake all."

You ask whether all are called to "full-time ministry." Of course we all are, but not to the same ministry. Being a Christian is a full-time calling. We must represent Christ as His ambassadors everywhere, at every moment. That is, we must *live* for Him always. Christ lives in every Christian; He has become our life—and that cannot be true part-time. Defining and living what that means is up to each individual as they study the Word and are led by the Lord, humbly and in full submission to His will.

Obviously, we are not all called to be preachers, writers, traveling evangelists, overseas missionaries, etc. Whatever job we have, we are to be His witnesses while giving our employer our best on the job, for which he is paying us. Paul used the analogy of a body. There are many members with different functions. He asks, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" (1 Cor 12:29,30). The implied answer is clearly, "no." Failure to recognize this simple fact has been the cause of much error and abuse among Pentecostals and Charismatics.

We each have a ministry, but not the same. We are all witnesses for Christ and the gospel, to let Him live His life in and through us, and to testify to His grace and love and salvation with our lives and with our lips. This can be no less than a "full-time" ministry!

QUESTION: How could God allow such cruelty to befall mankind, such as the

ignorant millions in India suffering starvation, pain, disease, etc., brainwashed into a false religion?

ANSWER: I sense the pain of your heart. There are some key words in your important question; the first is, "allow." This is not the world as God wants it to be or made it to be; it is the world that man has made in his rebellion and that God has allowed.

Why would God "allow" sin, suffering, idolatry, etc., all of which will lead to eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire? The biblical answer is clear: He has given man the power of choice. Without free will, we could neither love one another, nor God, nor respond to His love for us. Love is the highest expression of God's character and of His image in the man whom He created. Obviously, love must come from the heart, or it is not love. The ability to love would be meaningless without the ability not to love and even to hate: obedience is meaningless unless one has the option and ability to disobey.

Rejecting free will, the Calvinist says that this evil world is exactly as God predestined and causes. But the very conscience God has given us will not allow such a wicked charge against God who "is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16), who is "good to all: and his tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps 145:9), and who desires "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4). That many will suffer in the Lake of Fire for eternity is not what God desires for *anyone*!

Your next key word is "ignorant." On the contrary, God has given each person the witness of creation and conscience. No matter at what time in history or in what place and society anyone is raised (even in the pagan Far East, like India or China, where one-third of earth's population lives), the Bible says that "they are without excuse" (Rom 1:19,20). No one is totally "ignorant"—and to those who obey the light God has given them, more light and grace will be given. But those who reject the light of creation and conscience, which God has given to all, are given up by God to their own willful perversions.

Your third key word is "brainwashed." In fact, no one is a pawn of Satan without first having rejected the light God has given them in creation and conscience. Even then, Satan may need to do little, because "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (Jas 1:14).

The world in Noah's day was so far from what God desired it to be that "it repented the LORD that he had made man,

and it grieved him at his heart" to such an extent that He said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth..." (Gn 6:6,7). Indeed, God destroyed everyone except one man and his family, Noah, who "found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (v 8).

Jesus said that in the last days just before His return, conditions on the earth would be as they were "in the days of Noe [and] in the days of Lot" (Mt 24:37-39; Lk 17:26-30). So we know that the world of sin and suffering you describe is not God's doing. Has He allowed it? Yes. But the only other alternative would have been to destroy mankind. We are glad that He did not, because many like Noah have found grace by accepting salvation in Christ Jesus—and there is a new universe coming, entirely without sin or suffering!

QUESTION: I read a report that the SSA had been issuing benefit checks that include "666." If this is true, how important might this be to us?

ANSWER: It is of no importance. I do not know precisely what that number means or the role it will play, but it is "the number of the beast [antichrist]" (Rv 13:17), and he is not in power today—so this could hardly be his mark. He can only be "revealed in his time" (2 Thes 2:6-8) after the Rapture. Only "then shall that Wicked be revealed" (2 Thes 2:8). Obviously, the number 666 occurs once in every thousand checks issued and has no significance. Even if 666 is a group or batch number, it cannot be of any significance because Antichrist didn't impose it.

O, Jerusalem!

Dave Hunt

Israel is the major topic of the Bible, occupying most of its pages. The many prophecies concerning its past, present, and future are vital in understanding God's Word. Sadly, they are ignored, explained away, or simply rejected by the vast majority of professing Christians, a growing number of whom insist that Israel has been replaced by the church.

Yet Jeremiah declares that Israel will never "cease from being a nation" (Jer 31:35-37); in just one sermon Paul refers to Israel as an ongoing entity three times (Acts 13:17, 23, 24); and on the twelve gates of heavenly Jerusalem are written the names of "the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (Rv 21:12)—so ten tribes were not lost after all!—along with the names of "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" in the foundations (21:14). Unaware that "replacement theology" is one of several Roman Catholic doctrines that clung to Luther, Calvin, and other leading reformers, it is accepted by many as Reformation theology.

Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all who believe on Him, is, of course, the most important subject in Scripture—yet without Israel, there would be no Savior. Jesus is a Jew, descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through King David, giving Him the right to rule Israel and the world. He was born in Israel, lived there all of His days on earth, and (with few exceptions) ministered solely to Jews: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). He commanded His disciples, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles...but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:5, 6). After the Cross and Resurrection, however, He commanded them to take the gospel "into all the world" (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15)—but the gospel remains "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16).

Last month we saw that the incredible vastness of space makes it impossible for mankind to penetrate even the fringes of the cosmos either by vehicle or radio. How staggering, then, that the Creator has selected this tiny planet and one small city on it to be eternally the center of the universe. Bypassing thousands of larger cities with greater beauty and natural resources, God chose Jerusalem, saying, "I will put my name [there] for ever" (2 Ki 21:7; 2 Chr 33:7).

God declared that in the last days He would cause Jerusalem to be "a burdensome stone for all people" (Zec 12:3). For that to become true, there had to be a worldwide organization. The United Nations

was formed in 1945 in time to vote Israel back into existence after 1,800 years of destruction and dispersion. And Jerusalem has become such a burden that the UN has spent one-third of its time debating and condemning Israel, a minuscule nation that represents merely one one-thousandth of earth's population. Finally, World War III will be fought over Jerusalem as Antichrist's armies seek to frustrate God's plans for her and to accomplish at last Hitler's "final solution to the Jewish problem" with the destruction of Israel and all Jews worldwide.

Twice in the Bible Jerusalem is called "the city of our God" (Ps 48:1, 8), twice the "city of God" (Ps 46:4; 87:3), eight times "the holy city" (Neh 11:1; Is 48:2; 52:1; Mt 4:5, etc.), and once "the city of the LORD of hosts" (Ps 48:8). God has decreed that never will there be a city to rival Jerusalem! It is mentioned 811 times in the Bible but not once in the Qur'an, showing the lie that it ever was sacred to Muslims. Only after Israel's rebirth was this bogus claim invented to justify Muslim attacks against Israel as an "occupying power." The USA, UN, EU, et

THEY SHALL COME WITH WEEPING, AND... I [WILL] LEAD THEM: I WILL CAUSE THEM TO WALK BY THE RIVERS OF WATERS IN A STRAIGHT WAY, WHEREIN THEY SHALL NOT STUMBLE: FOR I AM A FATHER TO ISRAEL...
—JEREMIAH 31:9

al., accept this lie as the basis of a "peace" they intend to force upon Israel with Muslim neighbors determined to destroy her.

Jerusalem's entire history, including its destruction and ultimate restoration in the "last days," was pronounced by ancient Hebrew prophets and by Jesus Christ ("There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"—Mt 24:2; "the city shall be built...it shall not be...thrown down any more for ever"—Jer 31:38-40). Still in process, in the face of fierce opposition from the world and Satan, the ongoing fulfillment of these prophecies (none of which could possibly apply to the church) is the greatest proof God gives of His existence and that the Bible is His infallible Word—a vital proof that replacement theology rejects.

That Christians would deny God's purposes for Israel is beyond comprehension. Equally incredible, throughout history Israel herself has rejected God and the blessings He would impart. This rebellion has persisted in spite of spectacular displays of God's power and protection: the parting of the Red Sea, guidance by a pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day, water from a rock, fresh manna daily, hearing God speak with an audible

voice, seeing the walls of Jericho come down, and the miraculous defeat of armies far superior to its own, etc.

This inexcusable unbelief continues today on the part of most Jews worldwide, as well as in the church. The vast majority of Jews persist in rejecting Christ as their Messiah in spite of His fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies that prove His identity beyond dispute. As their own Hebrew prophets foretold, the Messiah has come and has been rejected by His people and the world. Moreover, they even join heretical replacement theologians in refusing to acknowledge God's hand in preserving the Jews as an identifiable ethnic people and bringing them back into their land after 2,500 years of dispersion.

Nothing so exemplifies God's passionate desire to bless Israel, and her determined rejection of Him and the blessings He wants to bestow, as does Christ's anguished lament over Jerusalem. Viewing the city of God from the Mount of Olives, He wept over her: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Lk 13:34).

The New Testament records only one instance of Christ weeping over Jerusalem. How, then, could He claim to have wept over her countless times? Clearly, He was claiming to be the God of Israel, who sent His prophets repeatedly: "And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them...yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD" (Jer 25:3-7).

As for replacement theology, yes, there are many similarities between Israel and the church: both are called God's "elect" (Is 45:4; Mt 24:31; 1 Pt 1:2); both are called to be a "peculiar people" separated from the world (Lv 20:24-26; Dt 14:2; Ti 2:14; 1 Pt 2:9); both were to be hated and persecuted (even to the death) by the world (Ps 119:161; Ps 143:3; Mt 24:9; Jn 15:20; 17:14); and both are called to holiness (Lv 20:7; 1 Pt 1:15).

However, there are many distinctions: Israel is promised a country and a city on this earth, the church a home in heaven. Israel will be ruled by Christ; the church will rule Israel and the world with Him. Two-thirds of all Jews on earth will be killed under Antichrist (Zec 13:8-9); but the church will not be on earth at that time, having been married to Christ in heaven (Rv 19:7, 8). Israel will recognize Christ for the first time at His Second Coming; the church will arrive with Him from heaven in triumph (Zec 14:4, 5; Jude 14) as His bride, never to leave His side.

Israel has always been in almost total unbelief, even in the days of Moses (Ps 81:8-

13), but the church was faithful at the beginning and only goes into apostasy in the “last days” (Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thes 2:3). In spite of the complaint that the Israelis don’t deserve to be there because of their rebellion and rejection of Christ, their unbelief is no worse now than when God first brought them into the land under Joshua. Israel constantly rebelled and worshiped idols even under Moses on the way to the Promised Land.

Israel will come out of apostasy in a total transformation and restoration on this earth (Ezk 36, 37); but the church sinks ever deeper into apostasy until the Rapture (Acts 20:29-31; 2 Thes 2:3; Jude 3, 4, etc.) and will only be perfected in heaven. Israel had already fallen away from the very beginning: the church began well but is in the process of falling away as the apostasy worsens in the last days. At my recent meetings in many places throughout England, a large percentage of those attending had fled apostate churches.

As Israel went into idolatry, adopting the gods of the nations around her, so the church, through the growing ecumenical movement, embraces false doctrine. Englishmen, whose forebears stood firmly against Rome’s grievous heresies in spite of flame and sword, now boast of their unity with the whore of Babylon. While there I thought repeatedly of Hugh Latimer and Nicolas Ridley, in 1555, bound to the same stake at Oxford for refusing to accept the alleged “transubstantiation” of a wafer into the literal body of Christ. As the flames mounted, Latimer exclaimed, “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day by God’s grace light such a candle in England as I trust shall never be put out.” Tragically, that flame is barely visible. The 16th-century Reformation that transformed England and Europe is now repudiated by the vast majority of Christians and church leaders.

Billy Graham says his beliefs are basically the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics. He claims that the Mass is “straight and true to the gospel” and boasts that the RCC has welcomed him everywhere. Chuck Colson, an architect of ECT, advocates joining Rome and attends Mass with his Roman Catholic wife. Rick Warren, James Dobson, et al., surely know better, yet work with Catholics and their Church and give no warning that Catholicism is the road to hell. I’d like to see these men visit Lourdes, France (as Ruth and I have just done) without being grieved in their spirits and smitten in their consciences.

Our hearts broke for these poor deceived people arriving at Lourdes in a continual stream by the thousands each day, many in wheel chairs or on pallets. As the long line

moves slowly through the grotto, where “Mary” appeared to Bernadette in 1858, hands reach out to caress its walls, hoping to receive a healing or blessing. Some are whispering under their breath the “Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes: ‘O Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy, you are the refuge of sinners, the health of the sick, and the comfort of the afflicted....By your appearance at the Grotto of Lourdes you made it a privileged sanctuary where your favors are given to people streaming to it from the whole world....Therefore I come to you with limitless confidence.... Obtain, O loving Mother...my requests...I will endeavor to imitate Your virtues, that I may one day share in Your glory.’” *Mother of Mercy...refuge of sinners...Your glory? What blasphemy!*

This Catholic “Mary” is the dominant figure everywhere one turns. Jesus appears only as a babe in her arms (even in heaven!), hanging on the Cross, or lifeless on her lap at the foot of the Cross. In the main cathedral, behind the altar hovers a huge “Mary,” with the words, *Par Marie*

THE LORD HATH APPEARED SAYING, YEA, I HAVE LOVED THEE WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE: THEREFORE WITH LOVINGKINDNESS HAVE I DRAWN THEE. —JEREMIAH 31:3

à Jésus [“Through Mary to Jesus”]. Yes, Jesus is the acknowledged mediator with God, but Mary is the only way to Jesus. Any exaltation of Jesus is conspicuously absent. On hundreds of the stones with which the cathedral has been built are inscribed praises of and prayers to “Mary.”

Thronged of deluded souls, bearing candles of many sizes (purchased nearby at varying prices), walk the 100 yards or so past the grotto to two rows of adjoining metal stalls, where candles are put into position and lit with the flame of another to add to the continual conflagration. Thousands of these candles burn simultaneously, day and night, the melting wax dripping down through the grill into metal boxes that are replaced with empty ones and wheeled back to the factory to be recycled into more candles to make more money for the Church. Above and behind the candles in each section are written the words in several languages: in French—*Cette lumière prolonge ma prière* [“this light extends my prayer”].

The devout followers of “Mary” can also purchase Masses to be said for one’s “intention” somewhere in the world. Outside the fenced grounds, the town streets are lined with shops whose cash registers

are ringing up sales of indulgences, crucifixes, and all manner of holy hardware that the Church has devised for passing on blessings from the “Virgin”—at a price. Among the biggest sellers are varying sizes of plastic bottles shaped like the “Virgin Mary” to be filled with water from the sacred spring.

Israel’s apostasy, including idol worship, is no worse than what Rome practices and with which evangelicals have joined in ecumenical partnership. The world is in rebellion against God, but so is the church. Proof of that rebellion is everywhere.

In one Normandy cemetery, I stumbled heartbroken through hundreds of the more than 9,000 stark white marble crosses marking, in perfect rows, the graves of men who died in the June 1944 invasion that freed Europe. Each marker bears the name, rank, outfit, and date of death. Unable to fathom such horror, I sobbed uncontrollably, my chest heaving, crying out, “Lord, why did you make man? You knew all the evil and suffering that would result. What is the point of these crosses? How many of these men believed in the Christ who died for their sins?”

Here and there was a white marble Star of David. A surprising number of these monuments had no names but only the caption, “Here rests in honored glory a comrade in arms known but to God.” I thought of the many who were not resting but were in agony in the flames of hell.

And once more, with heaving chest and irrepressible sobs, I gasped again and again, “Why, Lord? Why?”

I knew that God had created man to bestow His love and blessing upon him. This present evil world is not what God made and He cannot be blamed for it. This is the world man has made in defiance of God, by trying to act as his own God.

My sobs were only an echo of the cry of God’s own heart—which should touch ours. The Father grieves over this world, whether for the centuries-long rejection of His love by His chosen ones, the Jews, or for the apostasy of today’s “Christian” church, or for the lost who thumb their noses at His offer of forgiveness for their sins and eternal life in His presence.

Let us pray that true repentance will yet come to the church and to the world to gladden the Father’s heart and that Christ will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

We hear the lament *O Jerusalem!* echoing through the centuries undiminished, though Jew and Gentile crucified Him there. Now He weeps for the entire world. May we as envoys of His compassion do all we can to rescue as many as possible before it is forever too late. —TBC

Quotable

The church is a workshop, not a dormitory; and every Christian man and woman is bound to help in the common cause.

—A. MacLaren

Keep about your work. Do not flinch because the lion roars; do not stop to stone the devil's dogs; do not fool away your time chasing the devil's rabbits. Do your work. Let liars lie...let the devil do his worst; but see to it that nothing hinders you from fulfilling the work that God has given you....He has never bidden you to defend your character. He has not set you at work to contradict falsehood [about you] which Satan and his servants may start to peddle. If you do those things, you will do nothing else; you will be at work for yourself and not for the Lord.

—Anonymous

People need to be helped, not entertained....The Gospel that Paul preached was of "help" (Acts 16:9-10). When Apollos ministered in Corinth he "helped them much which had believed through grace..." (Acts 18:27). Apollos had eloquence, knowledge, courage, and zeal, but he could never have helped the saints except for the corrective ministry of the tent-maker [Aquila] and Priscilla, his wife (v. 26).

—W. Harrison, Assembly Testimony, Nov/Dec 1966

Q&A

QUESTION: In Isaiah 14:16, isn't the "king of Babylon" referred to as Lucifer? And in Ezekiel 28, isn't the "prince of Tyrus" being addressed? Yet I've heard these passages explained as being all about Satan. What do you think?

ANSWER: It is clearly stated that the "king of Babylon" is addressed in Isaiah 14:4 and "the prince/king of Tyrus" in Ezekiel 28:2,12. So these passages are not "all about Satan," but they definitely concern these rulers. Satan, too, is being addressed, both separately and in the person of these kings.

For example, it could never be said of the king of Babylon: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning" (Is 14:12); nor could it be said of the prince/king of Tyrus, "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God....Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth" (Ezk 28:13, 14). These words can apply only to Satan.

In fact, he is presented as the one who

motivated and empowered these evil kings. Satan showed Christ "all the kingdoms of the world" and boldly declared that if Christ would worship him, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them..." (Lk 4:5, 6). Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan..." (v. 8), but He did not deny Satan's ownership of the world, nor his authority to give it to whomever he would.

So in these two passages Satan is identified as the one who put these rulers in power and was behind their evil deeds—and he as well as they will be punished by God.

QUESTION: Do you think that in Genesis 10 and 11 Nimrod is a type of Antichrist?

ANSWER: We are told, "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (Gn 10:10). As the apparent builder and first ruler of the city of Babel surrounding the Tower of Babel, the first world government, and first world religion, Nimrod could typify Antichrist. Yet we know almost nothing about him except that he was "a mighty one in the earth...a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Gn 10:8-10). He is a very limited type of Antichrist.

Many believe that Babylon, built around the Tower of Babel, must return to power and influence. I've given the reasons why I don't believe Babylon in the Iraqi desert will be the headquarters of Antichrist, so won't repeat them here. In *A Woman Rides the Beast* and elsewhere, I list the fourteen reasons the angel gives John as to why the great whore of Revelation 17 and 18 is Rome, the Vatican, and the false world church headquartered there.

The woman is not the Antichrist, and she is called "mystery Babylon." That alone is sufficient to remove any support for the idea of Babylon (which all agree will be destroyed by Antichrist) being Antichrist's headquarters. Why would he destroy his own headquarters? That makes no sense.

Babylon is that woman, whom Antichrist needs at the beginning but against whom he turns, and he and the "ten horns...upon the beast [i.e., the ten kings under him typified by the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image—Dn 2:44; 7:24]...shall hate the whore, and shall...eat her flesh, and burn her with fire....And the woman [mystery Babylon] is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. [S]he shall be utterly burned with fire" (Rv 17:16-18; 18:8). Rome ruled the world through the Caesars and, subsequently, through the popes, whereas Babylon in Iraq has been in ruins for 2,300 years, and thus fits none of the criteria given in this passage.

QUESTION: What is your advice and opinion regarding Christians being active in the anti-abortion movement, i.e., picketing, demonstrations, etc.? Or do you recommend a different approach to this issue?

ANSWER: Abortion should be opposed in preaching, writing, and speaking by Christians. Even non-Christians ought to oppose it, and many do, for the purely moral reasons that have been written by God in every person's conscience (Rom 2:14-16). How could anyone ever have approved of partial-birth abortion, for example? The baby is turned around in the womb so that it comes out feet first, and, with a small part of the crown of the head technically inside the birth canal, an insertion is made and the brains sucked out. A few more inches and the courts would call it murder. And not to call it murder then—or earlier in the womb—is a wickedness for which America and this world will receive God's just punishment.

We are not, however, in favor of joining with Catholics, Mormons, atheists, humanists, or any other non-Christians in protest marches or other activism, whether against abortion or for or against anything else. We are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers in any endeavor.

Such alliances necessarily silence a real Christian's witness for Christ. Why? How can I witness to the Mormon on my right side and the Catholic on my left and the atheist just behind me, when to do so would offend them? Being true to Christ and His Word would break up the coalition I must join to engage in such activities.

We ought to stand against abortion in every biblical and effective way that we can as true believers without joining unbelievers in any "action" they wish to take. But our primary role is to preach the gospel and make disciples for our Lord—not to become absorbed in trying to make a godless world behave like Christians.

QUESTION: George Mueller tells how God uses trials to increase our faith. But Abraham's life (for example) proves that notion wrong. Otherwise, God would be a child abuser!

ANSWER: The command to offer Isaac was not a "trial" to help Abraham's faith grow; it was a test of his obedience (Gn 22:1), and he passed it well, confident that God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:17-19). Isaac's being bound on the altar was not child abuse. He was carrying the wood, so was more than a child, strong enough to have resisted and at least to

have run away. There is no record that he attempted this, nor of any struggle. Isaac's willing submission to his father is a beautiful picture of Christ's willing submission to His Father's will, in allowing Himself to be mocked, scourged, beaten, and nailed to that cross—and then to bear the wrath of God in punishment for the sins of the world. Abraham seemed to have some comprehension of that great coming sacrifice. Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Abraham replied, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." (Gn 22:7, 8). What else could Christ have referred to than this statement by Abraham when He told the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (Jn 8:56)?

QUESTION: I understand that our resurrection bodies will be glorious, whole, and entire, even if on earth we have suffered disfigurement, loss of limb, or other physical handicaps or deficiencies. And yet, we're going to see the nail prints in Christ's hands! This seems like a contradiction as well as totally unjust and inequitable. What is your opinion?

ANSWER: The marks of Calvary that Christ will bear throughout eternity are not in any way disfigurements to be regretted or healed. They will seem exceedingly beautiful and attractive to us—the eternal reminder of His love and sacrifice and the cost of our redemption.

QUESTION: How can the dead rise from their graves if they're already in heaven?

ANSWER: It is the bodies that are dead, not the souls and spirits. Paul declares that at death the believers are "absent from the body... present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). The dead bodies of those who "sleep in Jesus" [i.e., whose bodies "sleep" in the grave but whose souls and spirits are in heaven] will rise to be reunited in immortality with the souls and spirits that return with the Lord from heaven (1 Thes 4:14-16).

QUESTION: Will people be born throughout eternity and procreate?

ANSWER: Jesus said that those "in the resurrection neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25). Of course, there will be some who never died and were therefore not resurrected. He included them and all who will be in the new heavens and new earth when He said, "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world...neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Lk 20:35).

QUESTION: The Bible code continues to be popular and causes confusion in my own mind and for others. What do you have to say about this?

ANSWER: We have dealt with this in the past (see *TBC* Feb '98). If there are verifiable mathematical patterns in the manuscripts that could not come about by chance, they could constitute proof of divine authorship—but we don't need it. Did God put them there to impress modern man, who would be the first to discover them? But why would He do that, when we have so much more that anyone may find and understand? We have more than enough internal proofs by way of prophecy fulfilled and the unity of 40 different authors, most of whom had no contact with one another, etc.

As for hidden messages in the Bible, that is clearly *unbiblical*. How could anyone, past or present, live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Dt 8:3; Mt 4:4, etc.), if some of God's Word is hidden and only accessible through a computer and special software? How could Jeremiah have said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them" (Jer 15:16); or the man in Psalm 1 meditate on God's Word day and night if some of it was inaccessible to him? Much that Psalm 119 (which is all about God's Word) has to say would not make sense if parts of what God has said to man weren't yet available and wouldn't be until centuries later, with the advent of computers?

Christ's rebuke to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus for not believing "all that the prophets have spoken" (Lk 24:25) is sufficient to prove this theory wrong. He surely would not have scolded them for not giving heed to all that the prophets had spoken if parts of what the prophets had said were hidden in a secret code that could only be read with computers. The idea that there are hidden messages in God's Word contradicts that very Word.

QUESTION: My husband teaches a men's Bible class in a Baptist Church. He wanted to teach a separate Bible class on Prophecy and was told the subject would not be well received. Why?

ANSWER: Nearly 30 percent of the Bible is prophecy, so to omit that is to miss a great deal! Indeed, prophecy provides the essential proof that the Bible is God's Word and that Christ is the Messiah. It tells us of future events and is the backbone of the Bible. To avoid prophecy is to deliberately consign oneself to ignorance and is almost like thumbing one's nose at God and His Word.

I don't know why this church avoids prophecy, but I can give you some of the most common excuses offered by others. Some argue that prophecy is too confusing, creates speculation, involves so many symbols that it is impossible to understand, and could therefore only cause division. Of course, none of these objections is valid.

The greatest prophecy book is Revelation. It promises a special reward to him "that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (Rv 1:3). I would encourage your husband to persist in his biblical and God-honoring desire. Perhaps the church would discover that there is a prejudice against prophecy only because there is ignorance concerning it.

God of Jacob, God of Israel Part One

Dave Hunt

According to the latest *Fox News* polls updated June 26, 2006 (other polls basically agree), “fully 92 percent of Americans say they believe in God”; only 5 percent say they don’t, while the remaining 3 percent are not sure. In *How We Believe*, Michael Shermer, director of the Skeptics Society and publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, claims that “Never in history have so many, and such a high percentage of the [American] population, believed in God. Not only is God not dead as Nietzsche proclaimed, but he has never been more alive.”

This statistic, however, is not as encouraging as it sounds. When we ask what respondents mean by “god,” very few believe in—much less know—the *God of the Bible*. Yet belief in a false god is no better and could be even worse than believing in no God. For many, “God” is simply a “higher power.” Higher than what? *Power*? What kind? And how could a “power” of any kind have the infinite intelligence (or *any* intelligence) to design the atom, the universe, imprint the written instructions in a coded language on DNA for constructing and operating every cell, and create intelligent, personal beings with a moral conscience and a passion for purpose?

The very thought of a “power” creating *anything* is ridiculous! Then why is belief in a “power” so appealing? Did the *Star Wars* slogan, “May the Force be with you,” have that much influence? It went a long way toward changing movie fans’ thinking, especially among American youth. Of course, this has always been a popular idea because a power/force can’t impose moral laws, demand obedience, or judge and punish anyone—instead, it can be used for one’s own ends. Clearly, the true God who created us for a purpose holds mankind responsible for creation’s witness to His existence and for obedience to the moral laws He has implanted in every conscience (Rom 1:18-25; 2:14-16). He will not be *used*.

Furthermore, just as human beings are jealous of their individual identities, obviously the true God would insist on being properly identified. He will neither reveal Himself to, nor enter into a relationship with, anyone who will not acknowledge Him as He truly is. Nor will He look with broad-minded favor on those who call Him a “higher power.” To do so is an insult to

the true God! The God of the Bible (whose existence we have infallibly proved in prior articles) declares to wayward Israel, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13). Those who hope to find a god that suits their imagination will not find the true God.

It is common sense that the true God would only reveal Himself to sincere and earnest seekers who want to know Him in truth in order to obey Him. The first prerequisite to knowing God is the willingness—indeed, the passion—to know Him as He really is, not as one imagines or would like Him to be. It is no less idolatry to create an imaginary god in one’s mind than to make one out of clay, wood, or stone. So, who is the true God who proves Himself by unfailingly foretelling the future in the Bible?

As we have seen in past articles, the Bible identifies Him as “the God of Israel” 203 times, “the God of Jacob” 28 times, “the God of Abraham” 17 times, and “the God of Isaac” 13 times. Never is He called the “God of any other ethnic group.” These

YE ARE MY WITNESSES, SAITH THE LORD,
AND MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN
THAT YE MAY KNOW AND BELIEVE ME, AND
UNDERSTAND THAT I AM HE....

—ISAIAH 43:10

designations are foundational to everything the Bible teaches, including the very character of God. To profess to believe in God and at the same time to hold a prejudice against God’s chosen people, the Jews, or against Israel, which turns these clear biblical identifications into meaningless titles, casts doubt upon whether one really knows the true God.

In His refutation of the Sadducees’ denial of the resurrection, Christ’s primary argument was based upon God’s statement to Moses: “I AM...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Ex 3:14,15). Clearly, this was the identity of the true God then; it is now and will be forever. God never changes.

Notice Christ’s reasoning: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God....[H]ave ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mt 22:29-32).

Christ is saying that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will not live eternally through a

resurrection, then it would be a mockery for God to be identified with them eternally. He would be the God of, and have identified Himself with, beings of limited existence—scarcely a blip in eternity. To be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, if they no longer existed, would demean God.

If the nation of Israel is dead, or has been replaced by the church and does not have an eternal future, then the very term “God of Israel” would not be to God’s glory but a slur upon His character in view of His many promises that Israel would never cease to exist. Yet that is the position taken by those who say that Israel has been replaced by the church. In *The Last Disciple* (p. 88), Hank Hanegraaff has a key character say, “The covenant between God and Israel was broken with the rejection of His Son.”

Hank gives no explanation how an “everlasting covenant” could ever be broken, nor how Israel’s rejection of Christ could break a covenant that was not conditional upon her accepting Him, for which there were never any conditions Israel had to fulfill, and which God said He would bring to completion in the last days.

Indeed, at the same time that God promises eternal blessings to Israel in a full restoration in the last days, He also recites her unfaithfulness to Him without a hint that the many sins of Israel and the Jewish people would be any deterrent to His fulfilling all of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

...the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them...the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever...I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen...be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel...in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities...For I will...gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land...and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD....I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. (Dt 1:8; Jer 7:7; Ezk 36:11, 22-26, 32-36)

Here again, as elsewhere (as we have said), it is quite clear that there are no conditions for Israel to fulfill, but God will, for the integrity of His name, fulfill every promise in spite of Israel’s rebellion against Him. Furthermore, the prophets foretold that the Messiah would be rejected by Israel and crucified, yet in all of those prophecies there is never a suggestion that because of

this rejection God would break His everlasting covenant with Israel. The covenant was made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—not with their descendants (Gn 12:1-3; 15:7, 18-21; 17:7, 8, 19, 21; 26; 28:13; 1 Ch 16:14-18, etc.); it was never conditioned upon the obedience of their descendants, and therefore could not possibly be broken by anything those descendants did or failed to do. It is a slap in the eternal God's face to say that Israel has been replaced!

Scripture records literally hundreds of promises from God that Israel *as a nation* would never cease to exist (Jer 31:35-37, etc.). These cannot be annulled even by God himself. To do so would make Him a liar. Nor can they be spiritualized away as though the land of Canaan, which became the land of Israel, could simply mean the heavenly inheritance of the church.

It is irrefutable that Israel once possessed a physical, historical land that was given to her by God's eternal decree. It is equally an historical fact that she was expelled from this land by God himself for her rebellion. And it is no less an historical fact that Israel became a nation once again, May 14, 1948, and that millions of Jews have since returned to that Promised Land from more than 100 countries, just as Scripture foretold. This can be nothing less than the beginnings of God's promised restoration of Israel so that her latter end would be better than her beginning. A very few of God's many promises follow:

Unto thy seed will I give this land...forever...from the river of Egypt unto the...river Euphrates....I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee...for an everlasting covenant.... And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession...for unto thee [Isaac], and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father...the land whereon thou liest, to thee [Jacob] will I give it, and to thy seed.

Be ye mindful always of his covenant...which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant....Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance....(Gn 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:7,8; 26:3; 28:13; 1 Ch 16:14-18)

Citing the hatred of Israel's neighbors at that time, Psalm 83:3,4 foretells the Muslims' openly and oft-stated plan to wipe Israel off the map: "They have taken crafty counsel against thy people....Come, and

let us cut them off from being a nation...." In the same effort to destroy her, Christian denominations have initiated a boycott against companies that do business with Israel.

Replacement theologians such as D. James Kennedy, R.C. Sproul, and many others allied with them have rejected modern Israel as of any significance in the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In "An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel," they declare:

The inheritance promises that God gave to Abraham...do not apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel....The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the "Holy Land" cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua. [See *Judgment Day*, pp. 276-77]

AND SO ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED: AS IT IS WRITTEN, THERE SHALL COME OUT OF SION THE DELIVERER, AND SHALL TURN AWAY UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB....

—ROMANS 11:26

An *everlasting* covenant fulfilled under Joshua, who only lived 110 years?! Hundreds of "promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament" had not even been foretold by Israel's prophets until centuries after Joshua died! Even the prophecies made by Moses during the lifetime of Joshua that Israel would sin and be cast out of the land were not fulfilled "under Joshua." This declaration by Kennedy, Sproul, et al., is such a defiance of the God of Israel that one finds it unbelievable coming from biblical "scholars"! Here is the Word of the Lord:

Therefore, behold, the days come saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, the LORD liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt [in Joshua's day]; But, the LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country [Russia et al.], and from all countries whither I had driven them....(Jer 23:7,8)

This is being fulfilled in our day. When God told Moses that He would destroy Israel and make of him a great nation, Moses reasoned with God that He would be going back on His Word if He did that, and

His critics would say that He was not able to keep His promises. If even one failed, it would reflect on all His other promises (Ex 32:9-14). Yet today, growing numbers of those who claim to be Christians are declaring that God's eternal covenant with Israel has been annulled!

If the everlasting covenant that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob swore to these patriarchs of Israel is not kept, then God has denied Himself. The same holds true for the literally hundreds of promises God has made that He would restore Israel fully to her land. If just one fails, then God has denied Himself and is not worthy of our trust. Here are a few of the many that could be cited:

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock...so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered...and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel...in a good pasture....I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away...therefore, will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey....I will set up one shepherd over them...even my servant David [i.e., the Messiah]....And I the LORD will be their God...there shall be showers of blessing...they shall be safe in their land...no more be a prey to the heathen...none shall make them afraid....And...I will...do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD...neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more...for I will...gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land...that I have given unto Jacob...and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes...and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore....(Ezk 34:12-16, 22-28; 36:11, 15, 24, 27; 37:25-28)

If "everlasting," concerning Israel, doesn't mean *everlasting*, then how can we trust the promise in John 3:16 of everlasting life to those who believe on Christ? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, is the only true God. The Messiah promised to Israel by Jewish prophets of God came 2,000 years ago. He is the Savior of all who believe on Him as the one who, in fulfillment of what the Hebrew prophets foretold, died for the sins of the world, rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father's right hand. He is coming in power and glory to punish the world for its abuse of His people Israel and to rule the world from David's throne in Jerusalem. Let us stand firm on the truth of Scripture and preach the true gospel of God, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. TBC

Quotable

God, being who He is, must always be sought for Himself, never as a means toward something else....Whoever seeks God as a means toward desired ends will not find God....

The mighty God, the maker of heaven and earth...will not aid men in their selfish striving after personal gain....Yet popular Christianity has as one of its most effective talking points the idea that God exists to help people get ahead in this world.

A.W. Tozer, Man: The Dwelling Place of God, pp. 56-57

Ironically, those who seek their ultimate value in the next world are the only ones able to do much good in this one.

Herbert Schlossberg, Idols for Destruction, p. 333

Promoting or accepting the right of people to abortion on demand is accepting a utilitarian view of human life—if the fetus is not useful or convenient...then we may dispose of it. Once we accept this utilitarian outlook...that man has no inviolable right to life—then none of us can be safe from annihilation.

Dr. Paul Adreini, affiliated with the Mayo Clinic, cited in David Hocking, The Moral Catastrophe, p. 30

Q&A

QUESTION: I asked a pastor at Rick Warren's church about the end times and the nation of Israel. Here is the response I received: "As you probably know, those with a strongly dispensational view of the end times believe that Jesus must return to the literal temple in Israel. This strongly affects one's politics, because for Jesus to return to the literal temple in Israel, there must still be an Israel, and Israel must control the temple area that is not the Dome of the Rock mosque.

"We teach that there are a number of views of the end times that are equally biblical. Because of this, our belief that the nation of Israel has a right to exist is not based on end time theology. It's based instead on our respect for Jews as the people of God, and the clear rights that God gives to nations in the Bible. We also believe strongly in the teaching in Romans 11 that there will be a great ingathering of the Jewish people to faith in Christ. Whatever plan God wants to use to bring as many of the Jewish people

to himself as possible is the plan we'll rejoice in!

"...we support Israel's right to exist, but more out of respect for Jews as God's people than out of any dispensational theology."

I would appreciate your reaction to this attitude toward the nation of Israel.

ANSWER: You are right that the issue is the *nation* of Israel, not Jewish people in general. From the reply you received, Saddleback Church does not believe the many clear promises Scripture makes—not to some Jews scattered around the world, but to Israel itself—that she *must* and *will* continue to exist as a *nation*. Saddleback's position surprises me because Rick Warren personally put *Judgment Day* into President Bush's hands (for which I am grateful).

(By the way, I'm almost certain that Rick supports the pre-trib position, but this question is about Israel and has nothing to do with the Rapture.)

What does it mean to support Israel's right to exist "out of respect for Jews as God's people"? As we prove beyond dispute in *Judgment Day*, it is precisely *because* the Jews are God's chosen people that the God of the Bible made hundreds of promises to preserve, protect, bless Israel, and restore her fully in her land so that her end will be better than her beginning. These promises are unambiguous and are the only biblical basis for Middle East peace now and always.

For Saddleback (or any other Christians) to ignore God's promises to Israel in Scripture is to thumb one's nose at God. To refer to "dispensational theology" is beside the point. It is irrefutable that God has promised Israel an eternal inheritance in the land He gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These promises are so clear that they cannot be misinterpreted no matter what one's eschatological or dispensational position.

What does it mean to support Israel's right to exist based on "the clear rights God gives to nations in the Bible"? What rights does the Bible give to Germany, or France, or the USA, et al., to exist? None! Is *that* all the right Israel has to exist? Within what borders? So the "Palestinians," too, have biblical rights to the land God gave to Israel?! And there are several "equally biblical" views?! God is being defied!

Israel was only voted into present existence by the UN in 1948; the Arabs rejected the UN decision and attacked Israel, swearing to annihilate her. They have continued

to insist that Israel is occupying their historical land. In fact, the Arabs are occupying Israel's historical land! There is no way to settle this matter except for the world (including Arabs and Jews) to accept what the Bible says. But the paper you received from Saddleback treats God's promises as questionable "dispensational theology."

Contrary to Saddleback's granting Israel "the clear rights that God gives to nations in the Bible," the Bible itself declares that Israel is in a different category from all the other nations. Three times Israel is called "the apple" of God's eye (Dt 32:10; Lam 2:18; Zec 2:8). God promises the nation of Israel that He will bless those that bless her and curse those that curse her (Gn 12:3). No such promises were ever given to any other nation. To suggest that Israel only has the rights that God has given to all nations is a shocking rejection of clear biblical teaching! God distinctly tells Israel that He has "separated [and] severed [her] from other people" (Lev 20:24,26) and that she will not be "reckoned among the nations" (Num 23:9) because He has chosen her to be "a special people...above all people" (Dt 7:6).

God promises repeatedly, "O Israel...I am with thee...to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee" (Jer 30:10,11). How can any Christian who takes the Bible seriously say that Israel has rights no different from other nations and that alternate views about Israel's status today and in the future are all biblical?!

God promises to bring His chosen people back from all the countries where He has scattered them and to bring about a special "rebirth" of Israel as a nation. We have certainly witnessed the fulfillment of that promise by Israel's rebirth in 1948 and the subsequent immigration of millions of Jews to Israel from more than 100 countries—something unprecedented in the entire history of the world!

To believe in a last days "great ingathering of the Jewish people to faith in Christ" has nothing to do with Israel but with the church, and they are separate entities. Furthermore, it is only through God's reestablishment of Israel to the Promised Land that Israel will be restored to faith in Him.

The battle right now is between Islam (which says Israel must be destroyed) and the God of the Bible (who promises to preserve the nation of Israel forever). The God Christians believe in is called "God of Israel" 203 times in Scripture. Israel is the major topic of God's Word. To be wrong about Israel is to miss most of what the Bible says! If the Muslims' determina-

tion to destroy Israel is successful, then we will have to renounce Christianity as based on lies and all become Muslims! This is the issue. I think it is a bigger one than anything Rick Warren has addressed; and I pray that he will take the leadership in speaking out on Israel's behalf from a biblical viewpoint!

QUESTION: Based upon Gal 2:20 ("I live by the faith of the Son of God"), some teach that Christ had to have faith in God like any of us—that He did miracles by faith in God, was the perfect example of the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—and thus we can do the same—and that it is by the "faith of the Son of God" that we live the Christian life. But what faith did the Lord have, or need to have? As God in the flesh, He was very God and also very man. As a man, did He have to have faith in Himself as God? When He did "...the works which none other man did....," was this by faith in God, or by His power as God? Please give me your thoughts on this subject.

ANSWER: As you noted, those who teach this doctrine derive it from the KJV's "by the faith of the Son of God." This is not a wrong translation. It is simply old English and the KJV's peculiar way of saying "by faith in." Thus, the New King James renders it "faith in," as does every other translation I could locate. English words continually change their meaning, so it is not surprising that the KJV could be misunderstood in some places.

The KJV's old English sometimes means the opposite of that word's meaning today. For example, "He who now *letteth* will *let*" (2 Thes 2:7) today means to "allow." But it comes from the Greek word, *katecho*, which literally means "to hold down." In today's English it would be, "he who now restrains." So it is rendered in the New King James and elsewhere.

Thus, this doctrine that we live by "the faith of Christ" is based upon a mistaken understanding of the old English, which would be quickly cleared up by consulting other translations. "The Comparative Concordance" of *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* shows, on p. 145, that this clarification was made in the revised edition of the KJV—not only in Gal 2:20 but at 3:22 and elsewhere. I am not endorsing the revision of the Authorized Version, largely controlled by modernists such as Westcott and Hort, who were intent upon destroying the truth. In relation to Gal 2:20, however, no such motive could be ascribed for changing "faith of Christ" into "faith

in Christ." Indeed, I cannot imagine what "living by the faith of Christ" could possibly mean!

As you point out, the corollary of this teaching is the equally erroneous belief that Christ, while on this earth, lived by faith as an example for us. On the contrary, He told us to "have faith in God" (Mk 11:22)—but He *is* God and doesn't live by faith in Himself. Nowhere do I find that Christ lived by faith. Yes, He said, "the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do... I can of mine own self do nothing...but the will of the Father which hath sent me...the words that I speak, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (Jn 5:19, 30; 14:10, etc.). But this is not something applicable to the Son only in His incarnation as a man. It is the consequence of His being eternally one with the Father and of the unity within the Godhead. Likewise, the Holy Spirit does nothing on His own (Jn 16:13).

Christ did miracles by His intrinsic power as God. When He told Nathanael that He had seen him under the fig tree where he was sitting when Philip called him, Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God" (Jn 1:49)! Jesus didn't say, "You can't draw that conclusion from the power I display; I simply do miracles by faith in God like any believer can." So this teaching demeans Jesus and refuses to recognize His many declarations of His deity, which the rabbis understood and for which they crucified Him.

Is Christ living by faith in heaven today and somehow His faith is imparted to us? Of course not. Is it His continuing faith since returning to heaven that sustains us? If so, then how do we account for the many sins and failures of Christians? He is God and shares the throne of the universe with the Father, of whom He said, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30). How would this alleged "faith of Christ" express itself in our lives? It surely couldn't be automatic. Must we have faith in "the faith of Christ" rather than in Him, as Scripture exhorts us? Peter refers to "the trial of your faith" (1 Pt 1:7). Jesus tells us to "have faith in God" (Mk 11:22). We are told repeatedly that our faith must be in Christ and in God. We must believe the gospel.

Furthermore, Christ often used the phrase, "thy faith" in speaking to those who put their trust in Him. Sinners are told to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Jn 3:16; Acts 16:31, etc.). Paul everywhere preached "faith toward [or in] our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). I cannot find anywhere in Scripture where we are told

to have faith in the faith of Christ. This is simply a misunderstanding of old English and is an unfortunate embarrassment to those who preach it.

God of Jacob, God of Israel

Part Two

Dave Hunt

Last month we noted that the only true God, the Creator of the universe and all things therein—the God of the Bible—has linked His name with and tied His integrity to Israel. Yet many evangelicals, including well-known leaders, insist that Israel is of no significance to God any longer, having been cut off for rejecting Christ and now having been replaced by the church. There are even groups (not only among white supremacists or cults such as Herbert W. Armstrong’s die-hard followers today) who persist in the ridiculous theory that the “Ten Lost Tribes” of Israel migrated to the British Isles and that therefore all those of British descent are the true Jews today. Some go so far as to say that all of the “white races” are the true Jews—as though not only England but all of Europe and Russia was uninhabited wasteland until these remnants of the “Ten Lost Tribes” settled there.

We have proved that the ten tribes taken to Assyria (2 Ki 17:6-23) were not “lost” but make up most of those called Jews today (see 2 Chr 34,35; Q&A Nov ’92, May ’96). Far from Israel being cut off, hundreds of prophecies foretell Israel’s importance in world affairs in the last days, the attack of all the world against her at Armageddon, her rescue by the Messiah, and her glorious final restoration in the Millennial Kingdom. Nor is there ever a reference to Israel anywhere in Scripture that could possibly be interpreted as meaning the British Isles or the British people, much less the “white races”!

Most of the more than 2,000 references to Israel or Israelites in the Bible and the thousands of prophecies (already fulfilled or yet to be fulfilled) pertain to the historical land of Israel in the Middle East, whose boundaries are clearly described (Gn 15:18-21), or to the people who lived there for nearly 2,300 years, were cast out under God’s judgment, and will be brought back by God so that not one ethnic Jew will be left outside Israel (Ezk 39:27-29).

We know who the Jews are today by DNA testing. The Israeli Immigrant Liaison Bureau requires DNA tests where there is some question as to the authenticity of claimed Jewish ancestry. Such tests would draw a complete blank if applied to the average person of British descent, and prove British-Israelism to be utter folly. No

other ethnic group without its own land and scattered around the world for more than 2,000 years has or could maintain its DNA identity as have the Jews.

It is not important to know who is an American, German, Arab, Greek, et al. In contrast, it is vital to know who is a Jew. Why? About 70 percent of the pages of Scripture are taken up in recounting Israel’s history and prophesying her future: her continued and unrepentant rebellion against God, His reluctant and long-delayed but finally severe discipline (the worst of which is yet to come), the Jews’ worldwide dispersion, their re-gathering from all over the world back into their own land in the Last Days, hundreds of prophecies concerning Israel’s present key role in world affairs, of her greatest trial just ahead (Jer 30:7) when two-thirds of all Jews on earth will be killed (Zec 13:8,9), and of her final restoration under the Messiah (Zec 12-14). Unquestionably, Israel is the major subject of God’s Holy Word. To be wrong about Israel is therefore to be wrong on almost everything in the Bible.

The One whom the Bible 203 times calls “the God of Israel” has sworn by an everlasting covenant that Israel (three times called the “apple” of His eye—Dt 32:10; Lam 3:18; Zec 2:8) will *never* cease to exist as a *nation*: “Therefore fear thou not... O Israel...though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I... will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (Jer 30:10,11). “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city [Jerusalem] shall be built...it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever” (Jer 31:38-40). The language could not be clearer here and throughout God’s Holy Word.

These and hundreds of other promises from God to Israel recorded in Scripture are a sharp rebuke to those such as Hank Hanegraaff, D. James Kennedy, R.C. Sproul, et al., who teach that the church has replaced Israel. “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day...moon...and... stars by night...if those ordinances depart from before me...then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever...” (Jer.31:35,36); “While the earth remaineth...day and night shall not cease” (Gn 8:22); “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger...and I will bring them again unto this place [Israel], and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God...so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them” (Jer 32:37-42).

Israel has failed to fulfill her calling to be an example to the world of holiness in dedication to God (Lv 20:20-24,26; Dt 6:4,5; 7:6, etc.). While there are many believing Israelis, some even within the military, Israel today as a whole remains as wicked and godless as America and the rest of the nations. God’s “chosen people,” living once again in the Promised Land in fulfillment of many specific biblical prophecies, refuse to honor in their daily lives the God of their fathers who has brought them there. Even in the present distress related to Gaza and Lebanon, the vast majority of Israelis trust in their own arms and determination instead of trusting the only One who can protect them and has promised to do so.

The triumph of tiny Israel in every war and against impossible odds is admitted by many in the IDF as defying ordinary explanation. Military officers giving pep talks to new recruits often tell of amazing events they have witnessed in past wars, but rarely is God’s intervention hinted at, even when no other explanation would be possible. Israel as a whole has not yet been humbled to the point of acknowledging what the Psalmist prophesied: “If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say...when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick.... Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth...Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Ps 124:1,2,6,8). At Armageddon, however, this prophecy will become a reality to all who survive.

In contrast, Britain, along with America, will be among those “all nations” that God will gather and destroy at Armageddon (Jer 30:11; Jl 3:2; Zec 12:9, 14:2, etc.) for their mistreatment of Israel, and especially for dividing His land. In fact, Britain played a key role in robbing Israel of its land and giving most of it to the Arabs for oil. Both Britain and America have betrayed Israel many times, and the U.S. State Department and British Foreign Service have opposed Israel from the beginning, as we document in *Judgment Day*. Those facts alone prove the lie of British Israelism.

So why would God faithfully help faithless Israel? He makes it clear to Israel from the very beginning, “...because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out...from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt...” (Dt 7:8). As we noted last month, referring to her ultimate restoration and blessing (which He has promised through the Messiah), the God of Israel declares: “Thus saith the

Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen...be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel...I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it" (Ezk 36:22,32,36, etc.). In spite of Israel's present disregard of Him, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex 3:15,16 and ten other places in the Bible) is fulfilling His promises to those patriarchs through their descendants—and the day is coming when all Israel who survive Armageddon will believe.

Most Jews worldwide await the Messiah's first coming, unaware that He already came and was rejected and crucified. Jesus warned the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43). Tragically, it will take Armageddon for the surviving Jews to repent, turn to the God of Israel, and embrace the One who comes in His Father's name. In that greatest distress ever faced by Israel, God declares that the one-third whom He will bring alive "through the fire...refine[d] as silver is refined...as gold is tried [shall] call on my name, and I will hear them" (Zec 13:8,9).

When they see with their own eyes the Messiah come to rescue them, and discover to their shame who He is, "...they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him...a great mourning in Jerusalem..." (Zec 12:10-14). Why such extreme sorrow at being rescued by the Messiah? The God of Israel declares: "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (12:10)!

At Armageddon, when Yahweh comes to the rescue, He reveals Himself as the One whom Israel has pierced! Pierced?! When and how could Israel pierce the One who told Moses, "there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex 33:20)? God, "a Spirit" (Jn 4:24), cannot be pierced—but the Messiah coming as a man could be. Jesus, who fulfilled every Messianic prophecy, was pierced on the cross. Why was He crucified? For claiming to be God (Jn 10:30-33)!

Yahweh is speaking in the first person, yet two persons seem to be involved: "...they shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for *him*..." This *him* seems to be another person—and yet He must have been pierced because they mourn for Him—so He must also be Yahweh! Is Yahweh two persons? In fact, He declares Himself to be three in one! Consider this: "I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I..." (Is 48:16). Surely the one speaking must be God because He has been speaking from

the very beginning. Yet He adds, "The Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me" (Is 48:16). Here we encounter God, the Lord GOD, and the Spirit of God.

Could this be what the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle John to write, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"? Surely this One called the "Word," who already existed at the beginning and *is* God, must be the same God to whom Isaiah refers who speaks from the beginning.

But the similarities in these two verses don't end there. Both raise almost identical questions. In Isaiah, how can God be *sent* by God; and in John, how can God be *with* God? There is only one solution: the Messiah must *be* God. When Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30), the Jews accused Him of blasphemy. When they picked up stones, Jesus asked why they wanted to kill Him. Their instant reply was, "for blasphemy...thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (vv. 31-33). For the Messiah to declare His deity was the ultimate heresy, worthy of death? No!

According to the Hebrew prophets, the Messiah *had* to be God and, at the same time, the Son of God. If God has a Son, who *Himself* is God and one with His Father, that would dissolve the rabbis' objections. We encounter God's Son a number of times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Speaking prophetically, the Psalmist presents God as declaring of one who is to come, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Ps 2:7). Jehovah's Witnesses and others who deny Christ's deity take this as referring to Christ's birth on earth as the beginning of His existence. That cannot be the case, however, because God speaks of His Son as already existing and warns a God-defying world, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry...Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (v. 12).

That the Son of God already existed before His incarnation is clear from a number of other statements by the Hebrew prophets. Solomon quotes the prophet Agur asking this question: "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment?" The obvious answer is "God." Then he asks, "what is his son's name..." (Pv 30:4), proving that the Son of God already existed at that time. Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into a huge furnace so hot that the flames killed those who threw them into it. Nebuchadnezzar, astonished to see these three Hebrews walking alive in the flames, observes another with them and in wonder exclaims, "the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dn 3:25)!

While promising salvation through the coming Messiah, Yahweh repeatedly declared that He himself was the only Savior: "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior" (Is 43:11); "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Is 45:22). And yet this salvation goes to "the ends of the earth" by another who must Himself be God and the Messiah: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Is 49:6). Of whom does God speak?

Unquestionably, the Hebrew prophets all agree that God exists as a tri-unity: three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) but one God—and that in the Messiah He becomes man without ceasing to be God. Christ's claims that He was God and man, and one with His Father, agree with the prophets. Isaiah declared: "For unto us a child is born..." (Is 9:6). This refers to His humanity, derived, as foretold, from His virgin mother, Mary: the "seed" of the woman (Gn 3:15). But Isaiah adds, "unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder...Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David..." (9:6,7). Surely the Son given must be the already-existing Son of God—and He must be the Messiah, because He will rule on David's throne.

But Isaiah declares that the Messiah is God! His name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God." And He is also "The everlasting Father." Here is the same mystery: God is both Father and Son, and He alone is the Messiah! Most Jews still refuse to recognize this identity of the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." This is one place where they agree with their bitterest enemies, the Muslims. The Qur'an condemns to hell anyone who believes in the Trinity (Sur 5:72-74)!

So the fact that Yahweh has come as a man who was pierced to the death, resurrected, and has returned to rescue Israel at Armageddon is in perfect agreement with the Hebrew prophets. When Israel sees her God in this form coming to her rescue, it will be painfully clear that He has been to earth before, where He was rejected and pierced to the death. So Jesus was only echoing the prophets when He said to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as He was being "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Is 53:7) on the way to the Cross: "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mt 23:39). At last they will understand "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"—and "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26)! **TBC**

Quotable

[It has been said] that the more a man has in his own heart the less he will require from the outside; excessive need for support from without is proof of the bankruptcy of the inner man. [Thus] the present inordinate attachment to...entertainment is evidence that the inner life of modern man is in serious decline. The average man has...no inner strength to place him above the need for repeated psychological shots to give him the courage to go on living....

The [fantastic] growth of the amusement phase of human life [is] a threat to the souls of modern men. It has...greater power over human minds and human character than any other educational influence on earth, [a] power almost exclusively evil, rotting the inner life, crowding out...eternal thoughts which would fill the souls of men....[It] has grown into a veritable religion...against which it is now dangerous to speak....

For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it [as] a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience...divert[ing] attention from moral accountability....But of late...she appears to have join[ed] forces with...the great god Entertainment....So today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven. Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly crowding out the serious things of God...and hardly a man dares raise his voice against it.

From *The Best of A.W. Tozer, 126-128*

Q&A

QUESTION: I would say that my eschatological beliefs line up with what I read in the Berean Call. I am unequivocally a premillennial pretribulationist, and a futurist regarding prophecy. Yet, I thought you went beyond the eschatological ring and broke its pugilistic rules when you committed a “low-blow” against those you mentioned in the August 2006 TBC in the Q&A who “hold a prejudice against... Israel,” implying that their views “cast doubt upon whether one really knows the true God.” Are you saying a belief in replacement theology seriously brings into question whether they are truly saved or not? I can’t believe that you consider one’s view of the events of the Last Days to be critical to one’s salvation. Or do you?

ANSWER: Thank you for asking. Perhaps

my language was not as precise as it ought to be and therefore others may have the same question. No, I did not say that “one’s view of the events of the Last Days [is] critical to one’s salvation.” I have never included eschatology in the gospel. My concern was with God’s identity and glory. I wrote: “...the Bible identifies Him as ‘the God of Israel 203 times, the God of Jacob 28 times, the God of Abraham 17 times, and the God of Isaac 13 times.’ These designations are foundational to everything the Bible teaches, including the very character of God. To profess to believe in God and at the same time to hold a prejudice against Jewish people or against Israel that turns these clear biblical identifications into meaningless titles casts doubt upon whether one really knows the true God.”

I pointed out the fact that “In His refutation of the Sadducees’ denial of the resurrection, Christ’s primary argument was based upon God’s statement to Moses: ‘I AM...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations’ (Ex 3:15). Clearly, this was the identity of the true God then, is now, and will be forever. God never changes.”

Christ was saying that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not resurrected to exist eternally, then their names could not be part of the eternal name of the eternal God. This was Christ’s logic and I simply adopt it with respect to Israel as a nation descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Reasoning as Christ did, I argued: “If the nation of Israel is dead, or has been replaced by the church and does not have an eternal future, then the very term ‘God of Israel’ would not be to God’s glory. Instead, it would be a slur upon His character in view of His many promises that Israel would never cease to exist. Yet that is the position taken by those who say that Israel has been replaced by the church.”

I didn’t say that before anyone can believe the gospel we must explain that God is “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” or they can’t be saved. I am saying that when one professes faith in Christ and in the One who sent Him, but later, through prejudice against Jews or Israel, refuses to accept God as He reveals Himself in relation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the nation descended from them, doubts are legitimately raised as to whether this person truly knows the true God. My point is that in countering Replacement Theology we need to focus on the identity and character of God, His name, and His promises to those whom He first called “chosen...to be a special people

of God unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Dt 7:6).

QUESTION: My wife and I look forward each month to *The Berean Call*. We... praise the Lord that someone is still contending “...for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Your Dec. 2005 article, “Wonderful Love,” was especially uplifting [but] I question where you say, “He [God]...caused Him [Christ] to endure the eternal Lake-of-Fire....” That would certainly make the “little god-Kenneth Copeland” very happy [considering] his teaching...that Jesus had to fight the devil in hell for three days and nights and be “born again” to purchase our redemption. I am wondering WHICH book of the Bible you got that from?!

ANSWER: It is foundational to the gospel that Christ experienced the suffering of the Lake of Fire for every person who would ever be born. Christ’s declaration, “It is finished [*tetelestai*, meaning ‘paid in full’]” surely indicates that He suffered what all mankind were doomed to suffer for their sins. That must include the Lake of Fire eternally.

Our Lord became a man “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9). Inasmuch as the Lake of Fire is “the second death” (Rv 20:14) that all of the damned will suffer forever, Christ must have suffered that eternal penalty for all mankind. If not, there would still be something for the redeemed yet to pay. But that cannot be the case for those who “shall not come into condemnation; but have passed from death unto life...” (Jn 5:24).

That Christ endured the *pains* of the Lake of Fire does not mean that He suffered *in* the Lake of Fire. The teaching of Copeland (and others) that Christ suffered in hell is false doctrine! He bore our sins *on the cross*; it was *from the cross* that He cried in triumph, “*Tetelestai!*”; and we are redeemed by His blood shed in His death *on the cross*.

QUESTION: I liked your May article. You emphasized the theme of the lamb that runs through Scripture. Doesn’t *The Message* downplay if not eliminate the lamb in Hebrews 11:4? How can so many evangelical leaders recommend Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*, published by NavPress, when it does such violence to God’s Word!

ANSWER: God says, “By faith Abel [“a keeper of sheep” (Gn 4:2)], offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was

righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb 11:4). *The Message* says, "By an act of faith, Abel brought a better sacrifice to God than Cain. [So far, so good.] It was what he believed, not what he brought, that made the difference. That's what God noticed and approved as righteous."

On the contrary, the sacrifice Abel brought from his flock is what the Bible emphasizes! Peterson substitutes his own words for God's, and he dares to call what he has authored "another version of the Bible"! Clearly, Hebrews emphasizes what Abel brought ("sacrifice...gifts...it") and says it was offered "by faith." Moses likewise emphasizes the offering: "And Abel...brought of his firstlings of the flock....And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering...but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Gn 4:4,5). The entire emphasis is on the offering: Abel's was accepted by God, Cain's was not!

Peterson's perversion of the Bible implies that the offering is unimportant and that it was only what Abel *believed* that mattered. How do we know what he believed? By his offering! Christ "was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). Our faith is in Christ who "offered himself without spot to God" (Heb 9:14) for our sins. The offering is central to our faith. Here, as elsewhere, Peterson changes the meaning entirely, robbing readers of the truth!

Considering in what great detail God describes Old Testament offerings, Peterson's view is heresy! He tampers with a major theme of Scripture and the meaning behind it—the Lamb slain for our redemption. Peterson gives us *his* words, not the "word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD" (Dt 8:3) and "endureth for ever" (1 Pt 1:25). Yet he deceitfully passes it off as "Bible." The Psalmist rejoiced, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps 119:89). We rejoice that Peterson cannot "improve" God's Word up there!

How can so many church leaders praise Peterson's mutilation of the Bible! Endorsers include: Richard Foster, Jack W. Hayford, J. I. Packer, Rick Warren, and Warren Wiersbe. Ask them why they endorse this perversion that ought to be denounced. How can true Christians take this mutilation of God's Word lightly?! Christians must awaken to the corruption taking root in the church, rise up in protest, and hold accountable those who are responsible. Surely a firm stand for truth is long overdue! We hope and pray that *TBC*'s readers will act decisively! (For a partial list of

perverted quotations from *The Message*, see www.theberean.org.)

QUESTION: As a long-time fan of TBC, I was terribly disappointed by your negative remarks about the movie, *End of the Spear*, in the May Q&A. You stated, "The film does a disservice both to the missionaries...and to the Lord...is an insult to the five martyrs, dishonoring to their Lord, and misleading to viewers!" In fact, nothing could be further from the truth!

Dave, the next time you critique a movie please see it first. Missionary Nate Saint's son, Steve Saint, championed this film....The Waodani themselves also approved of and cooperated with these filmmakers....

ANSWER: Go back and read my response once again and you will see that I did not claim to judge *End of the Spear* without seeing it. My response was based entirely upon what a questioner said who had seen it. My reply to him used phrases such as "what you portray" and "the film as you describe it."

His opinion of the movie (after seeing it) differs markedly from yours—and in your letter you don't respond to his objections that I quoted. You refer to "production values...tight script, gorgeous cinematography, beautiful score, a compelling story and fine acting." Similar compliments could be given to many ungodly movies. Nor do your objections to what I wrote have any relationship to the question I was asked and to which I responded.

The critic stated: "The greatest disappointment was that the gospel—that all have sinned and that Christ is God who became a man and paid the penalty demanded by God's justice for our sins—was missing! The transforming power of the gospel and faith in Christ was never explained as the reason for the change in the lives of the Aucas!" You did not refute that. Indeed, you made no reference at all to the film's gospel content or lack of it.

He said, "Nor does the film depict the godly lives of these men. Jim Elliot was unfairly and dishonorably portrayed as a reckless buffoon; the missionaries never prayed, read their Bibles, mentioned Jesus, or conversed about God. No church services were shown or even implied. Viewers could mistake these five young men for Peace Corps workers or anthropologists rather than missionaries. The film could just as well have been the promotion of pacifism or nonviolent response to persecution." You

refuted none of these serious objections.

You say that "the missionaries...were whole men and women who loved their spouses, got pregnant, raised families, celebrated birthdays, danced, laughed, and lived life more abundantly." That such things were beautifully portrayed could be said of many secular films and has no relationship to what ought to be the heart of a Christian film. He complained that the film did not have the gospel and that it did not portray the Christianity that these missionaries lived. Not only do you not refute this criticism, you don't even address it! I hope others who view this disappointing movie will have more discernment.

Psychology and Doctrines of Devils

T.A. McMahon

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” —1 Timothy 4:1

In my two previous *TBC* articles this year (Mar and Apr '06), I addressed the destructive influence psychological counseling is having on the evangelical church. Simply put, the church has turned from God's Word to man's bankrupt theories in attempting to resolve mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. The greater part of the church no longer believes what the Scriptures proclaim: that God, in His Word, has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). The results, sadly, are what one might expect: there is often little statistical difference between those who profess to be Christians and those who do not, regarding the number of divorces, the reliance upon psychological counseling theories and methods, living together outside of marriage, illegitimate childbirths, pornography, sexual and physical abuse, and so forth.

Although such consequences are shocking, they shouldn't be surprising to anyone who believes the Bible. Twice in the Book of Proverbs we are told, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Death throughout Scripture implies separation, whether of the soul and spirit from the body in physical death or, in another sense, the separation of light from darkness and truth from error—and ultimately, from God eternally. Just as the body without life corrupts, so do one's life choices result in corruption when they are separated from God's truth.

Psychology, with its psychotherapeutic counseling, has been embraced by evangelicals more than almost any other unbiblical endeavor that has entered the church in the last half-century. “Christian psychologists” are generally more popular and influential than preachers and teachers of the Word. What evangelical in America doesn't know of psychologist Dr. James Dobson? The psychologically oriented American Association of Christian Counselors boasts 50,000 members. The evangelical church is one of the leading referral services for secular counselors (whether they claim to be Christians or not!). Like their secular counterparts,

the second-most popular career choice for students at Christian colleges is psychology. What makes this information truly shocking is the fact that the roots, concepts, and many of the psychological counseling practices come from “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

First Timothy 4:1 is a prophetic verse. It foretells that “in the latter times,” that is, the time near the return of our Lord, “some will depart from the faith.” This is supported by other verses such as Luke 18:8: Jesus asked, “...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” The implied answer is no. Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, declares under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that a “falling away” from the faith will characterize the Last Days. But haven't many professing Christians departed from the faith since the time of the Apostles? Yes. The rest of the verse, however, indicates a condition that is unique to our present day. Those who profess to be Christians will give “heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

Doctrines of devils are designed to undermine what is taught in the Scriptures. They reflect the strategy that Satan instituted in the Garden of Eden when he seduced Eve into disobeying God. The chief of the seducing spirits began his direct communication with Eve by raising doubts in her mind as to what God had commanded: “Yea, hath God said...?” (Genesis 3:1). The serpent's dialogue with her led her to believe that God had lied to her: “And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die.” Although God instructed Adam and Eve that the punishment for disobeying Him by eating the fruit of a certain tree in the Garden would be death (Genesis 2:17), Satan twisted that around, making God not only a liar but also the one who was withholding what they needed for their self-improvement and for realizing a supposed higher potential.

Genesis 3:1-5 contains Satan's basic strategy for the seduction and destruction of mankind. His deception began by *questioning* God's Word, and offering tempting alternatives. Eve responded by believing Satan, *rejecting* God's Word, and turning to her own self-interests. The enticements were so desirable to the flesh, including immortality, enlightenment, godhood, and knowledge (Genesis 3:5), that she eagerly embraced the lie. At that tragic moment in the history of mankind, self became a god, an autonomous rebel bent on doing its own thing. What Satan offered to Eve, he likewise has presented to all of her descendants, with similar success. His deadly allurements—*immortality, enlightenment, godhood, and*

knowledge—comprise the foundational teachings of “doctrines of devils.”

Even in a cursory review of psychotherapeutic concepts, Satan's primary lies are clearly revealed. Teachings (i.e., doctrines) such as the following are found in nearly all psychotherapeutic theories. *Immortality*: There is no death in the sense that it should be feared. Materialist psychotherapists teach a judgment-free mortality; spiritually oriented counselors claim that we either evolve to a higher consciousness or reincarnate to improve our next temporal state of being. *Enlightenment*: Knowing the self, who we are, why we do what we do, and how we change, all open the critical gate to establishing our mental wellbeing. Some systems teach that our problems of living are determined by traumas related to our past (including past lives), our parental upbringing, our environment, or our having been oppressed by religious dogmas. *Godhood*: The solution to humanity's problems is found within the self. Self is deified, whether directly or indirectly. For instance, psychology's “self-actualization” is a process that leads to self-deification, which ultimately replaces any need for salvation outside humanity. *Knowledge*: The deification process for humanity involves methods of plumbing the depths of the unconscious, which is alleged to be the infinite reservoir that holds all mysteries of life.

Sadly, these doctrines of devils now permeate “Christian psychology.” Few evangelicals realize that these demonic teachings were introduced to the “founding fathers of psychological counseling” *literally* by “seducing spirits.”

It was Sigmund Freud who declared that “religion is the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity.” Furthermore, there is evidence that Freud hated Christianity, which he erroneously regarded as anti-Semitic. How then would this atheistic rejecter of organized religion advance doctrines of devils? By founding the “religion” of psychoanalysis. None of Freud's theories, whether psychic determinism or psychosexual development or belief in the unconscious, have *any* scientific validity; moreover, they are religious beliefs that are antithetical to the doctrines of the Bible. Research psychiatrist Thomas Szasz had Freud primarily in mind when he declared, “...modern psychotherapy...is not merely a religion that pretends to be a science, it is actually a fake religion that seeks to destroy true religion.”¹

Given the fact that psychoanalysis and its associated concepts are so diametrically opposed to biblical Christianity, there's no

doubt that Freud's "fake religion" is the product of "doctrines of devils." Furthermore, a strong case could be made that Freud's theories came both directly and indirectly from "seducing spirits" through the techniques he employed in analyzing his patients. He put them into altered states of consciousness through hypnosis and the highly suggestible technique of "free association." Early on, when he was formulating some of his theories, Freud was a regular user of the mind-altering drug cocaine for his bouts with depression.² Calling it his *magical drug*, "he pressed it on his friends and colleagues, both for themselves and their patients."³

Psychiatrist and historian Henri F. Ellenberger's classic work, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, reveals, "Historically, modern dynamic psychotherapy derives from primitive medicine, and an uninterrupted continuity...through the exorcists, magnetists, and hypnotists that led to the fruition of dynamic psychiatry in the systems of Janet, Freud, Adler, and Jung."⁴ Psychotherapy is a modern form of shamanism, which explains why psychiatrist E. Fuller Torrey rightly observes, "The techniques used by Western psychiatrists are, with few exceptions, on exactly the same scientific plane as the techniques used by witchdoctors [medicine men and shamans]."⁵

Shamanism is all about contacting spirit entities to gain their help, wisdom, insights, and so forth. In an interview with a former Yanamamo shaman who resides in the Amazonian rain forest of Venezuela, I was told rather bluntly that his spirit guides were liars and deceivers, from his first contact with them through ingesting hallucinogenic drugs until they left him when he turned to Christ. Their lies reinforced what he wanted to hear. It seems the same for Freud, whose concepts were a reflection not of science but rather removing his own guilt and satisfying his flesh. Freud's theories were based mainly upon his own personal problems, most of which were sexual perversions.

In Freudian thought, the "unconscious" is a God-replacement realm without laws and judgment; *morality* is an oppressive neurosis-generating structure imposed by society and organized religion; *sexual freedom* (including adultery, homosexuality, incest, etc.) is paramount for normal mental health; *dreams* are symbolic messages from the unconscious and can be scientifically interpreted through psychoanalysis. These beliefs represent doctrines of devils. Although a materialist, Freud acknowledged the existence of spirit entities. He was influenced from that source, either indirectly, through

his patients, or directly, through his own drug use, the ancient statuettes he used to help him write,⁶ and other techniques he used to explore the unconscious.

The life and works of psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung clearly reveal that his psychological theories came directly from the "seducing spirits" Paul warns about in 1 Timothy 4:1. Jung is far more popular today among professing Christians than Freud (the atheist) because of his perceived affinity for religion and things spiritual. However, though his father was a Protestant pastor (who seriously doubted his professed faith!), Jung was anti-biblical and resentful of organized Christianity from his youth. His early symbolic visions revealed Jesus as a Dark Lord and God defecating on a cathedral. His mother's side of the family was heavily involved in spiritualism. His grandfather, pastor Samuel Preiswerk, conducted ongoing séances to commune with his deceased first wife, with his second wife and daughter (Jung's mother) participating. The latter, who had bouts of insanity, reserved two beds in the Jung home for visiting ghosts. Jung's doctoral thesis (published in 1902) was based upon séances conducted by his 13-year-old cousin, whom he placed in an altered state of consciousness through hypnosis in order to contact his and her dead ancestors.

In 1916, Jung's household experienced an assault by demonic beings who claimed to be dead Christian Crusaders from Jerusalem. They were seeking counsel on redemption and were greatly distressed that their Christianity had left them in a hopeless condition. They would not leave Jung's home until he began writing advice to them, which he received from one of his many spirit guides, his mentor Philemon, the "old man with horns of a bull."⁷

Richard Noll, a lecturer in the History of Science at Harvard University and a clinical psychologist (who declares that he "is not a Christian of any sort"), makes some stunning observations in his book on Jung titled *The Jung Cult*. He argues that Jung's "psychological theories of the collective unconscious and archetypes are essentially masks, a pseudoscientific cover to hide the practices of what was essentially a new religious movement in which Jung taught people to have trance visions and to contact the 'gods' directly."⁸

Jung's teachings are doctrines of demons, gleaned directly from seducing spirits: the *unconscious* and the *collective unconscious* represent an impersonal form of God; *archetypes* are viewed as psychological rationalizations for demons, the *anima* and *animus*

are terms for the female and male entities within each person; *psychological "types"* are determined characteristics within our make up. Jung promoted all things occult, including astrology, alchemy, the I-Ching, mysticism, necromancy, visualization, dream interpretation, the active imagination, yoga, meditation, etc. Incredibly, his theories and recommended practices are endorsed in the teachings of some of the most influential people in evangelical Christianity. In many cases, ignorance is the principle reason, yet the demonic lies are nevertheless readily promoted and accepted among the sheep.

Rick Warren's 30 million copies of *The Purpose-Driven Life* include Jungian concepts, such as psychological "types." Saddleback Church's "Celebrate Recovery" program (see *TBC* Oct '05), which has been exported to 4,500 churches and Prison Fellowship Ministries, is based on A.A.'s 12-Step principles. A.A. co-founder Bill Wilson received the 12 Steps during the time he was in contact with spirit entities. He later wrote a personal letter to Carl Jung thanking him for his influence:

...[A.A.] actually started long ago in your consulting room, and it was directly founded upon your own humility and deep perception.... You will also be interested to learn that in addition to the "spiritual experience," many A.A.s report a great variety of psychic phenomena, the cumulative weight of which is very considerable. Other members have—following their recovery in A.A.—been much helped by [Jungian analysts]. A few have been intrigued by the "I Ching" and your remarkable introduction to that work.

Warren is not the only witting or unwitting promoter among evangelicals of what Jung learned from demons. He is just the most successful and the best known. Others include Christian psychologists, inner healers, and pastors. Jung's occult methodologies, especially his demonically inspired techniques of visualization, guided imagery, meditation, and working with spiritual directors, are foundational to the Emerging Church interests of evangelical youth and the contemplative movement supported by Richard Foster, Eugene Peterson, and a multitude of others.

This astonishing development in the evangelical church is symptomatic of the abandonment of God's Word. The result will be the advancement of the apostate "Christian" church. The antidote is found in Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." **TBC**

Quotable

Either Christianity is true or it's false. If you bet that it's true, and you believe in God and submit to Him, then if it IS true, you've gained God, heaven, and everything else. If it's false, you've lost nothing, but you've had a good life marked by peace and the illusion that ultimately everything makes sense. If you bet that Christianity is not true, and it's false, you've lost nothing. But if you bet that it's false, and it turns out to be true, you've lost everything and you get to spend eternity in hell.

Popular paraphrase of "Pascal's Wager"

If the views that some men hold are correct, it is plain we never ought to have had any Reformation at all. For the sake of peace, we ought to have gone on worshipping the Virgin, and bowing down to images and relics to this very day. Away with such trifling! There are times when controversy is not only a duty but also a benefit, and it is a plain Scriptural duty to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

J.C. Ryle, Anglican Bishop who defended the gospel in valiant opposition to Rome

For grace pray much, for much thou needest grace;
 If men thy work deride—what can they more?
 Christ's weary foot thy path on earth doth trace;
 If thorns wound thee, they pierced Him before;
 Press on, look up, though clouds may gather round;
 Thy place of service He makes hallowed ground.

John J. Penstone, from his poem "The Servant's Path"

Q&A

QUESTION: In the August TBC you lump D. James Kennedy and R.C. Sproul with denominations that have promoted a boycott against companies doing business with Israel. Dr. Kennedy has taken no part in such boycotts.

ANSWER: No, denominations that "have initiated a boycott..." were mentioned in one sentence, Kennedy and Sproul in the next. I was specific that the latter "have rejected modern Israel as of any significance in the

fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

There was no link between boycotting denominations and these two Calvinists. I gave no reason to imagine that Kennedy and Sproul promoted any boycott against Israel. I simply showed that their teachings re Israel reject God's "everlasting covenant" (Gn 17:7, 19; 1 Chr 16:17, etc.) with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, denying God's repeated promise of the land of Canaan to these patriarchs and their descendants for an "everlasting possession" (Gn 13:15; 17:8; 48:4, etc.).

QUESTION: I appreciate your books. But sometimes you make no sense at all—like your answer in the Q&A section of the Oct. 2005 TBC. You state, "Death is the punishment for sin, not cessation of being." You are contradicting Scripture! Obadiah 16 says, "...and they [the heathen] shall be as though they had not been," and again concerning the devil himself in Ezekiel 28:19, "...and never shalt thou be any more."

If sinners are alive in hellfire forever, then sin itself will also exist forever. Yet in 1 John 3:8 it says, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

ANSWER: Your mistake is a simple one. You take these verses as applying to existence in eternity, but in the context they clearly apply to temporal existence on earth.

Obadiah is prophesying of the day when the wicked will be destroyed from off the earth. That the wicked never cease to exist, however, is very clear from many scriptures. For example, "...the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments..." (Lk 16:22-24). Although the rich man "died," he has not ceased to exist—nor will he or the rest of the wicked ever cease to exist, as many scriptures declare. "Death and hell [where the rich man now is] were cast into the lake of fire" (Rv 20:14); "and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Rv 14:11); "these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Mt 25:46); "hell...the fire that never shall be quenched" (Mk 9:43-48), etc. For punishment to be "everlasting," those being punished must also exist forever. If the "everlasting punishment" of the wicked is not eternal, then neither is the "everlasting life" promised to believers.

As for the devil, Ezekiel 28:19 does not say he will cease to exist. Consider: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into

the lake of fire and brimstone...and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rv 20:10). Thus the Lake of Fire must be what Christ called "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41). For the devil to be punished "for ever and ever," he would have to exist "for ever and ever." Ezekiel 28:19 simply says he will never be allowed on earth again.

Moreover, Christ consigns the "goats on the left" to the same "everlasting fire" as "the devil and his angels." The "lake of fire," by the way, is called "the second death" (Rv 20:14). Those who are in it must, therefore, be "dead." "Death and hell are cast into the lake of fire" (Rv 20:14). Clearly, however, they have not ceased to exist. Christ says "these shall go away into everlasting punishment..." (Mt 25:46), in conscious existence, though "dead."

You also say, "If sinners are alive in hellfire forever, then sin itself will also exist forever. Yet in 1 John 3:8 it says, 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.'"

You lose me here. No one is sinning or doing "the works of the devil" in the Lake of Fire—not even the devil himself! How much more fully could the works of the devil be destroyed than for Christ to confine the devil and all of his followers to the Lake of Fire? Christ put an end to sin by paying its full penalty. Having redeemed those who believe the gospel, Christ will ultimately bring them, transformed, into heaven, where they will never sin again.

QUESTION: Why do we celebrate Sunday as the Sabbath, when it was falsely changed from Saturday by Constantine?

ANSWER: The seventh day of the week, Saturday, was and will always be the Sabbath. Constantine had no authority to change it. Sunday is *not* the Sabbath.

Constantine, a sun worshiper, is given credit for causing Christians to worship on Sunday instead of Saturday. Not true! Christians met on Sunday from the very beginning. Although the disciples went into the synagogue on the Saturday Sabbath to preach the gospel, it was on the "first day of the week [Sunday], when the disciples came together to break bread [i.e., for communion]" (Acts 20:7). It was also "the first day of the week" that they had the "collection for the saints" (1 Cor 16:1,2), further evidence of when they came together to worship the Lord.

We meet on Sunday for the same reason: it is the day Christ rose as the firstborn

from the dead (Col 1:18), the "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45), the progenitor of a new race of born-again believers.

The Sabbath was the day God rested from creating this temporal universe. We are in a new eternal creation where "all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). Our rest is Christ (Heb 3,4), not the Sabbath. We have dealt with this question in depth in the past. (See *TBC* for May '99, Nov '04, May '05.)

QUESTION: If the Rapture occurs before the...so-called "Tribulation period" of seven years, how did the multitude from every nation, etc., get into heaven in Revelation 7:9-17? There is only one rapture/resurrection, not two! Also, don't the first six seals of Revelation correspond directly with Christ's appearing in power and His angels gathering together His elect after the Great Tribulation and the cosmic disturbances in heaven (Matthew 24:30-31)? Also, if the seven churches in Rev. 2-3 are "overcomers," what trial do they overcome? I believe it is the Great Tribulation when Satan's man, Antichrist, sets up his image in the temple and demands worship. I feel the "true church" (Philadelphia type) will be protected through the Great Tribulation, but there will be some martyrs....

ANSWER: The multitude "which no man could number, of all nations...clothed with white robes" are also seen in Revelation 6:9-11. These are "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held..." Not "some," but an astonishing number world-wide, will be killed by Antichrist during the Great Tribulation! These "souls" are not yet resurrected, having come to heaven through martyrdom *after* the resurrection and Rapture.

Of those martyred we read, "And they overcame him [Antichrist] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rv 12:11). Their resurrection comes not at the Rapture (already past—1 Cor 15:49-57) but at the end of the Great Tribulation: "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years...this is the first resurrection" (Rv 20:4,5).

This is the resurrection only of those killed by Antichrist. There is nothing about the Lord descending from heaven or of the living being caught up with those

resurrected to meet Christ in the air (1 Thes 4:13-18). Christ has already returned to the Mount of Olives at His Second Coming and defeated Antichrist and his armies at Armageddon (Ezk 38:18-20; 2 Thes 1:8; Rv 19:11-21). Yet this is called "the first resurrection." Why? Because those resurrected at this time are also in the church like those resurrected at the Rapture.

No, the opening of the six seals in Revelation 6 occurs at the beginning of the Great Tribulation; but Mt 24:30,31 concerns the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation. As for the "true church" being preserved through the Great Tribulation, it won't even be on earth then but in heaven, married to Christ (Rv 19:7,8). The fact that the bride is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white" shows that the Judgment Seat of Christ is past. Following the wedding (19:11-13), Christ's bride returns with Him in the armies from heaven "clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (v. 14). Christ at the Second Coming brings "all the saints with [Him]" (Zec 14:4,5), described as "ten thousands of his saints" (Jude 14). Clearly these "saints" must have been raptured to heaven in order to return with Christ at the Second Coming. I have dealt with the precise timing of this event in a number of books. (See *Countdown to the Second Coming*)

You seem to believe that only those who face Antichrist are called overcomers. Not so. All Christians are to "overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). All true believers are to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil (1 Jn 2:12-17). John exhorts every believer to overcome Satan, and declares that we overcome the world by our faith (1 Jn 5:4,5).

QUESTION: When a man gives a solid gospel message, should he be applauded? What does it mean when the Bible says God will not share His glory?

ANSWER: I personally do not like to be applauded at any time for anything (it embarrasses me), knowing that I am unworthy of praise, either from men or from God. If we do anything well, it is only by God's grace and goodness. Furthermore, Christ said, "I receive not honor from men.... How can ye believe [be men and women of faith], which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" (Jn 5:41-44).

Christ says that the reason we "have not the love of God" (v. 42) and our walk of faith is not what it should be is because we receive honor of one another. And because we receive honor of one another,

we seek not honor from God alone. That is the problem.

Christ declares that there will be no praise (honor) from God for those who receive honor from men. Our motive can be pure only if we look to God alone for honor. We may seek honor from God, but not for honor's sake. As a child, in its innocence and simplicity, desires to please its father, so we ought to desire to please our heavenly Father. When He will say, "Well done" (Mt 25:21), it will be to His glory and we will rejoice that we have pleased Him.

So what about applauding someone who has presented a message from God's Word in a worthy manner that has thrilled the hearts of listeners? I see no objection so long as the applause is for the truthfulness of the biblical message to God's glory and the speaker does not accept any honor for himself. The danger is that the speaker may compromise the truth or soften the message God has given him in order to have praise from men. Christians have compromised because "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn 12:42,43).

The fact that God will not share His glory (Is 42:8; 48:11) does not mean that He will never praise or exalt us for what we have done, for many scriptures say that He will: "...and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor 4:5); "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11, 18:14). It means that no one can take credit to himself for anything good he does; the glory belongs to God, our enabler and our only hope: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom...the mighty in...his might...the rich...in his riches: But...in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me..." (Jer 9:24-25).

Endnotes

1. Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Psychotherapy* (Doubleday, 1978), 27-28.
2. Martin Gross, *The Psychological Society* (Random House, 1978), 234-36.
3. Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Volume I (1856-1900)* (New York: Basic Books, 1953), 81.
4. Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (Basic Books, 1970), 48; back cover.
5. E. Fuller Torrey, *The Mind Games: Witchdoctors and Psychiatrists* (Emerson Hall, 1972), 8.
6. Shirley Nicholson, *Shamanism* (The Theosophical Publishing House), 58, as cited in Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *The End of "Christian Psychology"* (East Gate Publishers, 1997), 105.
7. C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Pantheon Books, 1963), 190-92; 182-83.
8. Richard Noll, *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), xi-xii.

A Call to Repentance

Dave Hunt

It is now nearly 500 years since October 31, 1517. We need a new Reformation—this time more biblical and thorough. We are drowning in “political correctness.” Having changed from a president who couldn’t define “is,” we have one who persists in calling Islam “peace” in the face of mountains of evidence to the contrary. What the Bible clearly calls sin is whitewashed as “alternate” styles of living. Nothing is wrong, so nothing is right. The church has joined the world, the gospel has been compromised, and we think God doesn’t care. Elijah’s words come across 3,000 years of history to rebuke us as he did Israel:

How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. (1 Ki 18:21)

More than 90 percent of Americans claim to believe in God. About 80 percent call themselves Christians. But when asked to define God, the answers range from “Mother Earth” to a “higher power.” Even many who claim to be born again deny that Jesus Christ is the “only way to God.” About 70 percent of Americans, 64 percent who call themselves born again, and 40 percent of self-proclaimed evangelicals *reject the idea of absolute truth*. And most of those who claim to believe in absolutes have fallen victims to a universal reluctance to speak the truth.

In a prophetic description of our day, God warned: “And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.... And he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him....” (Is 59:14,15).

Even the church has forgotten that the God of the Bible is “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Ex 3:15,16, and 11 more times). No matter what one thinks of Jews, God chose them as a “special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Dt 7:6), the “apple of His eye” (Dt 32:10; Lam 2:18; Zec 2:8). He gave them the land of Canaan “from the river of Egypt unto...the river Euphrates” (Gn 15:18) to be their “everlasting possession” (Gn 17:7,8; 1 Chr 16:16-18, etc.), promising that Israel’s latter end would be better than her beginning (Ezk 36:8-38; 37:21-28, etc.), and that she would never cease to be a nation (Jer 31:35,36). He declared that the land of Israel was *His land* never to be sold (Lv 25:23) and that all nations would be punished for dividing His land (Joel 3:2). *This is God’s Word!*

World leaders (including professing Christians, President Bush and Condoleezza Rice) have openly defied God by dividing His land, giving most of it to Arabs who fraudulently call themselves “Palestinians,” claiming that Israel is occupying *their* land. In fact, they have stolen land God gave to Israel. (See *Judgment Day*.) Forgotten is God’s promise to Abraham: “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gn 12:3). Both the world and the church have spurned this promised blessing and are calling God’s curse upon themselves for their treatment of Israel! We call upon Western leaders and Muslims to repent of their atheism, false gods, and rebellion. God might then have mercy on today’s world as He did on Nineveh.

Like politicians, religious leaders, too, defy God. In 2002, D. James Kennedy, R.C. Sproul, and dozens of others declared that Israel has no special title to land in the Middle East, having been replaced by the church. They claimed that all of God’s “land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua.” One trembles at their defiance of God, who has said: “Behold, the days come...that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, the LORD liveth, which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land” (Jer 23:7,8).

The obvious fulfillment of such promises today (not in Joshua’s day) rebukes those who say that the church has replaced Israel! In the last 60 years, Jews have returned by the millions to Israel from more than 100 nations. Those who deny God’s promises to Israel for today need to repent!

It is shocking how many Christian organizations oppose Israel. We have exposed Bob Finley, Christian Aid Mission’s founder, for his anti-Semitic revision of history, lies against Israel—even blaming her for Muslim terrorism and exonerating Islamic murderers of Israeli women and children. (See Q&A Jan ’03.) The Mennonite Central Committee, having worked in “Palestine” for more than 50 years, has nothing good to say about Israel, whom it condemns for its “occupation” of Palestine and for its “58-year-old denial of fundamental rights for nearly seven million Palestinian refugees”—a false accusation.

World Vision (WV) is one of the largest Christian relief and development organizations in the world, with an annual budget of \$1 billion. WV helps “Palestinians” but not Israel, for whom it has nothing but criticism. Nearly 3,000 of its 22,500 staff don’t even

pretend to be Christians. Many are Muslims. WV says, “They share our values.” What does that mean? Isn’t the gospel of Christ, which alone brings salvation, the greatest blessing WV could bring anywhere? But WV doesn’t share the gospel. How could it? Material aid is given, but neglected is Christ’s warning that to gain the whole world and lose one’s soul is to lose all! World Vision needs to repent or stop pretending to represent Christ.

Christians seem prone to jump on every folly invented by “science” for doomsayers and publicity-seekers. Christian leaders are joining the “global warming” hoax to support Gaia, or Mother Earth. Yet Earth was probably far warmer before the flood, when life flourished as never since; there was a Medieval Warm Period AD 800-1300; Earth has been both colder and warmer than now in the last 100 years; and as recently as 1940-1975, the warnings were all about the coming *ice age*.

A network of evangelical leaders recently issued an urgent warning about global warming titled, “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action.” It was signed by more than 20 NAE board members and about 80 other Christian leaders, most of them heads of Christian colleges, denominations, or other organizations (among them Timothy George, Jack Hayford, Duane Litfin, Brian McLaren, David Neff, Ron Sider, Jim Wallis, Rick Warren, and Thomas Wang). It echoes Al Gore’s one-sided film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, widely refuted by climatologists. Those interested should read the speech delivered by Senator James Inhofe on the Senate floor September 25, 2006 (<http://epw.senate.gov/speechitem.cfm?party=rep&id=263759>).

Paul warned Timothy (and us today) that *the faith* would be opposed by false “science”: “avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith” (1 Tm 6:20,21). The theories of local flood advocates and theistic evolutionists have invaded our Christian colleges, churches, and media. This is false “science” opposing God’s truth, and it has so much biblical and scientific evidence against it that supporters ought to be ashamed and repent. The Bible states: “the mountains were covered...all in whose nostrils was the breath of life...died....Every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground” (Gn 7:20-23, etc.); “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Pt 3:6). Yet John Stott writes, “The flood seems to have been a comparatively local—though widespread—disaster,” and Billy Graham agrees.

Evolution has been thoroughly refuted by true science (See *In Six Days* and *In the Beginning* in Resource Pages). Theistic evolution (“Progressive Creationism”) slanders God’s character by having Him use such a cruel, inefficient, and tedious method of “creation.” Yet Hugh Ross writes, “[M]y acceptance of Adam and Eve as historical is not incompatible with my belief that several forms of pre-Adamic ‘hominid’ seem to have existed for thousands of years previously....It is conceivable that God created Adam out of one of them....”

So Christ’s mother may have been descended from primal slime and soulless brutes as even John Ankerberg (like Graham and Dobson) apparently believes? The Bible declares that death entered the world through Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12), not through “natural selection,” which filled the earth with dead bodies before Adam “evolved.” Those who hold this wicked theory need to repent on their faces before the Creator!

We have previously referred to the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*, touted as “THE BIBLE AS IT WAS INTENDED TO BE” in a two-thirds-page ad in *Christianity Today* (Jul ’05), next to the masthead declaring that Billy Graham was the founder and J.I. Packer one of the Executive Editors. In its notes, 50 “biblical scholars” declare that the first 11 chapters of Genesis, foundational to the entire Bible, came from “Near Eastern religious narrative and mythology [and] were reshaped with monotheistic intent”! Yet Jesus and the apostles referred to Adam and Eve, the creation, and the flood as historical (Mt 19:4, 24:38; Mk 10:6; 13:19; Lk 17:26-32; Rom 1:20, 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22, 45-47; Col 1:16; 1 Tm 2:13; Heb 1:10, 9:4, 11:7; 1 Pt 3:20; 2 Pt 2:5,6; Jude 1:14, etc.).

The *Renovaré* “scholars” treat Israel as replaced by the church, consider the prophets as poets, deny that the Pentateuch was written by Moses, Isaiah by Isaiah, Daniel by Daniel, etc. But Jesus and the apostles treated all of the Bible as inspired of God (Mt 12:40, 42, 23:35; Lk 24:27, 44,45; Rom 15:4; 2 Tm 3:15-17; 2 Pt 1:19-21, etc.). *Renovaré* downplays the powerful Old Testament prophecies, which are the foundation of *the faith* and vital to the salvation of mankind—even denying that Isaiah 53 foretells Christ’s sufferings for our sins! The contributors, endorsers, and those who read this “Bible” need to fall on their faces and repent for their mockery of God’s Holy Word!

Christian publishers began to put profits ahead of sound doctrine, made a lot of money by giving readers what they wanted instead of the biblical truth they needed, then sold out to the world monetarily as they already had spiritually. Zondervan is now owned

by Fox News and Rupert Murdoch, twice knighted by the past pope and a member of the Pontifical Order of St. Gregory the Great. He has consistently made TV shows aimed at destroying the family and pursues his godless ambitions through a vast empire, of which “Christian publishing” has become one part. Murdoch published *The Purpose-Driven Life*, and Rick Warren has claimed to be his pastor.¹ We don’t have space to name other major “Christian” publishers who have also sold out to the world (see TBC Extra Page Aug ’06). It is too late to stop this trend now.

The Roman Catholic Church has been in apostasy for 1,300 years while persecuting and killing true Christians. It has never repented of this evil. Though it proclaims a false gospel of indulgences, Christ being sacrificed in a wafer over and over, and prayers to Mary and the “saints” for salvation, it is now enjoying the support of leading evangelicals in a way that would have shocked true Christians only 50 years ago. Those involved in this seduction of lost souls need to repent in deep sorrow.

Nearly 50 years ago, Billy Graham declared, “Anyone who makes a decision at our meetings is...referred to a local clergyman—Protestant, Catholic or Jewish.”² For more than 50 years, Billy has affirmed Roman Catholicism as the true gospel and has sent Roman Catholics who come forward at his crusades back to the Catholic churches they had left. Billy praised John Paul II as a preacher of the true gospel³ and declared that he and the Pope agreed on almost everything. Yet John Paul II (as does his Church) looked to Mary instead of Christ for salvation. In his Last Will and Testament of March 6, 1979, he entrusted “that decisive moment [of death] to the Mother of Christ and of the Church [and] of my hope....” His Apostolic Letter of October 16, 2002, ended thus:

O Blessed Rosary of Mary...our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away...the last word from our lips will be your sweet name...O Refuge of Sinners....

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptists’ Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, praised John Paul II’s “staunch defense of traditional Christian faith....”⁴ Pat Robertson enthused, “Pope John Paul II stands like a rock...in his clear enunciation of the foundational principles of the Christian faith.”⁵ Jack Van Impe hailed the Pope as a staunch defender of the faith and calls the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* biblical.

Billy Graham has praised Bishop Fulton Sheen as the “greatest communicator of the

20th century,”⁶ Though Sheen preached a false gospel, and his hope of heaven was that Mary would let him in because of his 40 pilgrimages to Marian shrines at Fatima and Lourdes,⁷ Graham expressed his gratitude to Sheen “for his ministry and his focus on Christ.”⁸ When Sheen died, Billy said, “I...look forward to our reunion in heaven.”⁹

J.I. Packer, a signatory to “Evangelicals and Catholics Together,” who called John Paul II “a fine Christian man,”¹⁰ had already many years ago declared, “Catholics are among the most loyal and virile brothers evangelicals can find these days.”¹¹ As early as 1992, in *The Body*, Chuck Colson called for ecumenical union with Rome. Likewise John Stott has said, “Evangelicals should join...in working toward full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.”¹² These men and many others need to repent for endorsing a false gospel that has led multitudes to hell.

There are so many false prophets on radio and TV (most of them on TBN) that we couldn’t begin to name them all. The most popular today is Benny Hinn, praised by evangelical leaders (including Jerry Falwell). Hinn’s false prophecies are too many to recite. One is enough: on December 31, 1989, claiming that he was in the very throne room of God, Hinn declared: “The Lord also tells me...about ’94 or ’95, no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America...by fire....”¹³ It didn’t happen. Yet the more false prophecies he utters, the larger Hinn’s following grows and the louder do Paul Crouch and his TBN dupes praise him.

Robert Schuller said that if all of his descendants became Muslims, it would not bother him. Multitudes who call themselves Christians and are not have heaped to themselves false teachers who tell them what they want to hear.

Some of the worst heretics and practitioners of the occult, while claiming to be Christians, have gotten together in what they call the Chrysostom Society. It began with Richard Foster, Calvin Miller, and Karen Mains, joined later by Eugene Peterson. “They felt it was really important to just get together, write together, and believe in each other as practitioners of a craft to the glory of God.”¹⁴ It is a “craft,” all right.

Truth has been assassinated by political correctness, the gospel has fallen victim to “we must not offend other religions,” God is being mocked, and eternal souls are being robbed of the salvation that is only in Jesus Christ. That tragedy prevails in nearly all churches. Let us weep and repent for the church, for our country, for ourselves, and speak the truth in love. TBC

Quotable

The chief danger that confronts the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, heaven without hell.

William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army, in late 1800s

As you leave the whole burden of your sin, and rest upon the finished work of Christ, so leave the whole burden of your life and service, and rest upon the present inworking of the Holy Spirit.

Give yourself up...to be led by the Holy Spirit and go forward praising and at rest, leaving Him to manage you and your day. Cultivate the habit...of joyfully depending on and obeying Him, expecting Him to guide, to enlighten, to reprove, to teach, to use, and to do in and with you what He wills.

Count on His working as a fact, entirely apart from sight or feeling. Only let us believe in and obey the Holy Spirit as the Ruler of our lives, and cease from the burden of trying to manage ourselves; then shall the fruit of the Spirit appear in us to the glory of God.

Harold Wildish, British Bible teacher and missionary to Jamaica, in mid-1900s

Q&A

QUESTION: What is your opinion of al-Qaeda's threats to Pope Benedict XVI for quoting a Byzantine emperor who claimed that the teachings of Muhammad were "evil and inhumane" and who objected to "spreading Islam by the sword"? Muslims have reacted by throwing firebombs at churches and threatening the West: "We will break up the cross, spill the liquor and impose head tax, then the only thing acceptable is a conversion to Islam or be killed by the sword"! Aren't they simply confirming what the pope quoted?

RESPONSE: The Byzantine emperor whom the pope quoted spoke the truth: the teachings of Muhammad were and still are "evil and inhumane." The Qur'an, which Muhammad claimed he received by revelation from Allah through the angel Gabriel, has more than 100 verses commanding the use of violence and slaughter to take over the world, such as: "Slay the idolaters [i.e., all who reject Allah as the only god and Muhammad as his prophet] wherever ye

find them...besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush..." (Surah 9:5); "O Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty steadfast they shall overcome two hundred...a hundred...shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve..." (8:65). "It is not for any Prophet [i.e., Muhammad] to have captives until he hath made slaughter in the land" (8:67- given by "inspiration" to Muhammad when he needed justification for beheading captives, as Muslims still do today), etc. (For further documentation, contact TBC).

It is historical fact, as I document in *Judgment Day*, that Muhammad not only engaged in "spreading Islam by the sword" but that to do so remains a central doctrine and practice of Islam, as it has demonstrated for nearly 1,400 years. The unchanging goal of this "religion of peace" is to violently force the entire world into submission to Islam and to kill those who refuse to convert. In their conquests from France to China, Muslims slaughtered many millions (killing more in India alone than Hitler killed)!

For Muslims to insist that Islam is a religion of peace, and to riot, burn, and kill whenever the truth is exposed, is a travesty upon history, common sense, and human dignity. This hypocrisy is of such Himalayan proportions that it ought to be denounced by world leaders and media until Muslims prove their peaceful intentions by renouncing force! There ought to be an international outcry by government and religious leaders and the media demanding the removal of Muslim nations from the United Nations until they renounce the violence that has always been and still is an integral part of Islam! Instead, Western leaders (including President Bush) grovel before Islam and apologize for speaking the truth lest Muslims go on more murderous rampages to prove how peaceful they are.

The pope's inexcusable apology for "offending" Muslims with the truth is a further example of how the West continues to be intimidated by Muslim threats and encourages their hypocritical denial to themselves and to the world of the horrible truth about Islam. Muslims ought to be ashamed that their "god" promises rewards in Paradise for murdering innocent women and children.

One would be hard pressed to find terrorism anywhere in the world for which Islam and Muslims are not responsible. Yet they persist with their incredible lie equating Islam with peace and threaten anyone who tells the truth: "If you dare to criticize Islam as a religion of violence, we will kill you to prove that it is a religion of peace!"

The shameful fact that Western leaders from Bush to Blair to Chirac to Billy Graham and the pope keep on praising Islam as a religion of peace because of such threats is a betrayal of their responsibility. This surrender to Islam's blackmail will inevitably result in the complete Islamization of the Western world with the loss of the freedoms we hold dear. In fact, Islamization has almost reached the point of no return in Europe and especially in Britain—and the United States is not far behind.

QUESTION: In the Q&A section of TBC (10/05), you say, "Upon death...He provided for them to go to hell to await their judgment; but even while awaiting the final judgment, they experience horrible torment." So you have God causing "horrible torment" before judgment. This makes no sense.

You also claim that "eternal death is separation from God and all others..." although Scripture clearly says "...he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rv 14:10).

You misunderstood the writer by saying the punishing is the same as the punishment. The punishing has a beginning and an end. The punishment—death—is eternal!

RESPONSE: I did not say that the lost experience "'horrible torment' before judgment," but before the "final judgment." The rich man in hell says he is "tormented in this flame"—long before the Great White Throne final judgment. So he was (and still is) tormented "while awaiting the final judgment."

Clearly, the damned are in torment before the final judgment, for which you accuse God of injustice. Yet God punishes those still alive before they get to hell. The Bible has many examples: the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.

David said that he could not escape God even by fleeing to hell (Ps 139:7). But surely God is not in hell except in the sense of His omnipresence, which we cannot fully understand. Nor does "In the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," mean that the damned are not separated from angels and the Lamb. As for Christ, He is God and therefore omnipresent.

The wicked are separated from God by their sins even while alive: "your iniquities have separated between you and your God..." (Is 59:2). There was separation ("a great gulf fixed" - Lk 16:26) between Abraham and those in paradise with him, and those on

the other side.

Likewise, those in the Lake of Fire are certainly separated from the redeemed in heaven as well as from God and Christ.

I fail to see the difference between punishment and punishing. Nor is God's "punishment" only death, but the "second death" in the eternal torment of the Lake of Fire.

QUESTION: Why does violence by Muslims increase during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan? It was during Ramadan 2006 that hundreds of Iraqi police were poisoned, obviously by Muslims.

RESPONSE: The increased violence was exactly as expected. We are engaged in a war to the death—not against terrorists and extremists who, as President Bush insists, have "hijacked a peaceful religion," but with Islam itself—a fact that the West refuses to acknowledge. The "politically correct" lies, so popular in the West, must be abandoned. We are losing this war and will continue to do so until the West faces the truth that our enemy is not terrorism perpetrated by Muslim "extremists" but the violent religion of Islam itself!

Ramadan is not, in fact, an Islamic holy month. Not only is it not "holy," but it did not originate with Muhammad and Islam. Pagan Arabs had observed it for centuries before Muhammad was born. Arab tribes had traditionally refrained from fighting one another at that time. So, why do Muslims fight and kill during Ramadan?

Muhammad began his violent career in Medina, then called Yathrib, a city founded by Jews, in which he killed all of the males and enslaved the women and children. He established himself as the Prophet of Islam with more than 20 murders of those who opposed him, especially poets, whom the Qur'an says are inspired by Satan (Surah 26: 221-26 — a special "revelation" from Allah to justify Muhammad's murders).

Muhammad's first three attacks upon rich caravans passing near Yathrib on their way to Mecca were a failure. Then he received another timely "revelation" from Allah, added to the Qur'an, that Muslims could fight during Ramadan (Surah 2:217). His first military success followed. The caravan he attacked was caught by surprise during the agreed-upon "time of peace." That great success caused Arabs to flock to Muhammad to get in on the booty by joining this new religion of "peace" that allowed fighting during Ramadan!

Muslims still seem to think that Ramadan is a good time for surprise attacks, as we

have just seen demonstrated in Iraq and other Muslim countries. Shiites blow themselves up in Sunni mosques as their sure way to paradise, while Sunnis blow themselves up in Shiite mosques as their quick way to paradise. Of course, Sunnis say the attacking Shiites went to hell, while Shiites say the same of Sunni suicide bombers who attack them.

Nor is the concept of Muslims killing Muslims anything new. Three of Muhammad's first four successors were killed by fellow Muslims. And as this "religion of peace" spread, it only got worse. Through the centuries, hundreds of thousands of Muslims have been killed by fellow Muslims—exactly as they are doing to one another today not only in Iraq but in Afghanistan, Algeria, Pakistan, and wherever Islam exists.

From 1948 to 1973, there were 80 revolutions in the Islamic world, 30 successful, including the murder of 22 heads of state. The Muslim Brotherhood threatened to kill Egypt's Nasser and succeeded in assassinating Anwar Sadat, a deed that Arafat applauded. In 1971, East Pakistan rebelled against West Pakistan (both Muslim states) and became Bangladesh. In the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, Muslims used 1,000 tons of poison gas against one another and killed as many as died in World War I. Literally *thousands* of young school boys died walking through mine fields to clear them for troops with the promise of paradise for becoming "martyrs." In 1990, we "pagans" had to rescue Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim nations from Iraqi Muslims demonstrating Islam's peacefulness.

Islamic violence during Ramadan began with Muhammad and is supported in the Qur'an. There is *not one example in the entire world* of Islam ever having brought peace to anyone anywhere except by killing or enslaving the opposition!

QUESTION: I must disagree with your stand on working against abortion and other widespread American ills. I am commanded in Scripture to "overcome evil with good"....I don't see how I can refuse an opportunity to work against evil just because a Muslim or Catholic may also be doing this work....I agree that we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers....But I can't control who might also want to boycott, march, or vote as I do in protest of various evils.... I can plant a seed toward their seeing the Light. And if they never respond, I am being obedient in protesting evil and seeking to see that good prevails.

RESPONSE: As I stated in the July 2006 Q&A, abortion is evil and should be opposed in preaching, writing, and speaking by Christians.

You have misinterpreted and misapplied Romans 12:21. The context (vv. 17-20) is all about not acting in revenge against someone who has personally wronged you: "Recompense to no man evil...avenge not yourselves...if thine enemy hunger, feed him...." This is one way we are to overcome evil with good.

As for being an overcomer in an evil world, we are told: "...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 Jn 5:4). I find neither command nor example in Scripture calling me to engage in social action to help unbelievers "overcome" any evil on this planet.

Neither Christ, the apostles, nor the early church led or participated in any public protests against any evil practices, though evil of all kinds (including abortion) was rampant throughout the Roman Empire in their day. Christ commanded us to go into all the world to preach the gospel, which calls men to forsake the world and become citizens of heaven. He told His disciples: "...ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (Jn 15:18-20).

As reasonable as your view sounds from man's perspective, I cannot find one verse in the Bible to support it.

Endnotes

1. Marc Gunther, *Fortune Magazine*, October 31, 2005.
2. *San Francisco News*, November 11, 1957.
3. *Saturday Evening Post*, January/February 1980.
4. Adelle M. Banks, Religion News Service, April 11, 2005.
5. Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide* (Word, 1993), 279.
6. Ad for *Sheen Gems: The Best of Fulton J. Sheen* video, vol 1-2, quoting Billy Graham.
7. *The Woman I Love* video (Clifton, NJ: Keep the Faith).
8. Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (HarperSanFrancisco/Zondervan, 1997), 692-93.
9. *Nashua Telegram*, December 10, 1979.
10. Take Heed Ministries, Belfast Northern Ireland, March 1999.
11. *Christianity Today*, May 17, 1985.
12. Arthur Johnston, *Battle for World Evangelism* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1978), 328.
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14. *Mars Hill Review*, 1995, "A Conversation with Eugene Peterson."

The Day Christ Was Born

Dave Hunt

We are not referring to December 25. That may or may not be when Christ was born. There are conflicting theories: 1) that December 25 was set by Christians to counter the Roman Saturnalia celebration each December 17-23, which “led to widespread drinking and debauchery, so that among Christians... ‘saturnalia’ came to mean ‘orgy’”; 2) that early Christians set the date of December 25 by assuming that Mary visited Elizabeth immediately after her (Mary’s) conception, and then calculating the time of Elizabeth’s conception as six months earlier (Lk 1:23-25)—based on Jewish records and tradition concerning the schedule of priestly temple duties and Zacharias’s “course of Abia” (Lk 1:5)¹; and 3) that it replaced the feast of Saturnalia, as Will Durant claims,² which is probably the most popular criticism of the date.

Regardless of the day, Christ’s virgin birth into this world as a babe was an event of such stupendous proportions that Paul declared: “great is the mystery...” (1 Tm 3:16)! The Creator of all (Jn 1:3) entered into His creation as one of its creatures, knowing everything He would suffer at the hands of those rebels that He had brought into existence through Adam and Eve. The hatred, misunderstanding, false accusations, abuse, rejection, mockery, and finally, the scourging and crucifixion that He would endure from those who owed their very existence to Him had long been foretold by Hebrew prophets *under His inspiration*.

His mother, Mary, was not “the spouse of the Holy Spirit,” as Roman Catholicism says. She was the spouse of Joseph and not a polygamist. The “Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8) humbled Himself to live as a baby, child, man, and finally unto “the death of the cross” (Phil 2:5-8). As a child, he was subject to his “parents.” When Mary or Joseph asked the boy Jesus to do some menial task, He didn’t respond, “Who do you think you’re ordering around? I’m *God!*” He quickly and humbly did their bidding.

Joseph was not His father, yet the child Jesus lived such a normal life that even Mary, who had at first pondered much in her heart (Lk 2:51), fell into the habit when speaking to Jesus of referring to Joseph as “thy father” (Lk 2:48). Joseph was certainly the head of the household, and the child Jesus obeyed him.

The One who had made the universe out of nothing and who knew every particle—from

the innermost depths of each atom to the outermost reaches of the cosmos—confined Himself to an obscure life in a small home and carpenter shop in Nazareth. There, as Joseph’s bright young apprentice, He “learned” to fashion wood with crude tools and became known as “the carpenter’s son” (Mt 13:55). His workmanship and creativity must have been fantastic. We are told nothing about those early days, except for His visit to the temple at the age of twelve (Lk 2:41-52), when He astonished the rabbis and reminded Mary and Joseph that His *real* Father had sent Him into this world for a special purpose.

AS MY FATHER HATH SENT ME, EVEN SO SEND I YOU. —JOHN 20:21

It was infinite love beyond our comprehension that caused our Lord to leave the glory and power He had rightfully known for eternity as God the Son, to become a man in order to purchase a bride with His own blood. He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10). When He accepted that mission from His Father (“my Father hath sent me”—Jn 3:17, 10:36, 20:21; Heb 1:6), our Lord well knew that the incarnation would not be temporary but eternal. He forever became one of us but without sin.

On David’s throne in Jerusalem, as Israel’s promised Messiah, He will “reign over the house of Jacob for ever” (Lk 1:33). He remains “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tm 2:5), the only mediator between God and man, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). For all eternity He will bear the marks of Calvary, and heaven’s throne will forever be “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rv 22:1).

How could anyone have known who He really was, since His glory was veiled in human flesh? Any true believer of that day, who was in touch with God, knew the Word, and looked for the Messiah, would have known Him. Daniel 9 and Nehemiah 2 plainly told everyone who was willing to read and understand that it was the prophesied time for the Messiah to come. Anna the prophetess and Simeon, a devout Jew who looked for the Messiah, both recognized Him immediately, even as a baby (Lk 2:25-38).

Though there was some excuse for not knowing Him as a child, there was no defense for not recognizing Him after He began His ministry. The miracles alone that He did were sufficient to prove that He was the Messiah. And He must have been a very special person. Even the officers sent by the Pharisees to arrest Him acknowledged, “Never man spake like this man” (Jn 7:46)!

Who could have failed to realize that here was “God...manifest in the flesh” (1 Tm 3:16)? Almost everyone! Very few recognized and admired the God-likeness of Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, their innate sinfulness despised His purity. Of the vast majority, in fulfillment of prophecy (Ps 35:19, 69:4, 119:161), Christ sadly declared, “They hated me without a cause” (Jn 15:25). It seems incredible!

John the Baptist recognized that Jesus was sinless: “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” (Mt 3:14). Yet later, even he doubted (Lk 7:19), in spite of all of the proofs God had given him (Jn 1:33,34). The Apostle John was one of the few who recognized Him: “We beheld his glory...as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth....That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested...” (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1,2).

Tragically, “though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him” (Jn 12:37). The Pharisees knew that His miracles were genuine, that He had raised Lazarus after four days in the grave; but they still justified themselves in determining to kill Him *and Lazarus* to preserve their positions of leadership. No wonder God declared, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9).

The devils recognized Him during His ministry, even though they may not have known who He was as a babe: “I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God” (Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24). Jesus did not cast out demons in the name of the Father but by His own authority, and they obeyed Him (Mt 8:28-32; Mk 1:25; Lk 4:35).

The universe, which He as the eternal Word had spoken into existence, knew and obeyed His voice. He calmed storms with a word (Mk 4:39). Yet even then His disciples did not know who He was. They were afraid and “said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (4:41)?

Jesus said, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Jn 17:3). That does not mean that any neighbor acquainted with Him as a child when He grew up in Nazareth had eternal life. It means to know Him in spirit and in truth—the way that we must worship God (Jn 4:24). It is not enough to say the words with one’s lips (“I love you, Lord... I worship you”) but to know and love Him

in one's heart as He truly is.

Even though Jesus is God, and Mary is the mother of Jesus, that does not make her the "mother of God," as Catholicism teaches. Nor did she remain a virgin. The birth of her "firstborn son" (Mt 1:25) in Bethlehem was not the birth of Christ as God but of His human body, soul, and spirit—"a body hast thou prepared me" (Heb 10:5). She was the honored mother of the man Christ Jesus. But she was not the mother of the eternal Son of God, who created this universe, is one with the Father, and "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14).

Christ existed as God's Son long before the incarnation (Ps 2:12; Prv 30:4; Is 9:6; Dn 3:25, etc.). He had, from all eternity, ruled with the Father on His throne as the Son of God: "Unto the son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom" (Heb 1:8).

Mary had the unique honor of being the means by which the Son of God became man—but she was not the mother of the eternal One who had created the universe. She wasn't the mother of the Son of God, "whose goings forth have been from...everlasting" (Mic 5:2). To call Mary "the mother of God," as official Catholic doctrine teaches, is the worst blasphemy possible.

Paul makes a particular point of saying, "He was...seen of angels." They witnessed the unfolding of this mystery. We are not told the angels' thoughts or whether they had any advance notice of the incarnation, but Christ's birth into the world as a man must have been a mystery even to the "multitude of the heavenly host" that praised God at Christ's birth (Lk 2:13).

Could this really be the One they had worshiped as the eternal Word, the Creator of all—and here He was a helpless baby in Mary's arms nursing at her breast?! Could that be possible? Yes, there was the command: "When he bringeth the firstbegotten into the world...let all the angels of God worship him." (Heb 1:6). What a mysterious occurrence that day when Jesus was born!

Paul calls this most amazing and important event in the history of the universe not only a great mystery—but *the* mystery: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tm 3:16). The mystery of godliness was unveiled in the incarnation of Jesus Christ!

Invading this rebellious planet from heaven itself came the only perfectly godly man who would ever live. All the rest of mankind are sinners. Eternally, those in heaven

will be sinners—saved by grace.

Yes, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"—except for one man. It is a great mystery how anyone who is fully man, as Christ is, could live without ever sinning. Yet Scripture assures us: He "did no sin" (1 Pt 2:22); "who knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21); and "in him is no sin" (1 Jn 3:5).

Indeed, it was not possible that Christ could sin. He faced every temptation, but He never had to struggle to keep from yielding. Sin had no attraction for Him: "The prince of this world [i.e., Satan] cometh, and hath nothing in me" (Jn 14:30). There was nothing in the "Holy One of God" (Lk 4:34) that was in the least attracted to sin.

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD,
AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY
CREATURE. —MARK 16:15

He left us "an example, that [we] should follow His steps" (1 Pt 2:21). But how can we follow the steps that lead to the Cross? If we are to be godly, the only godly One must live in us: "I travail in birth...until Christ be formed in you" (Gal 4:19). It must be "not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal 2:20). But how can He indwell sinners? This is another part of the "mystery of godliness."

There was only one way mankind could be redeemed from the penalty of eternal death. For a Holy, righteous God to justly forgive sinners, the full penalty for sin must be paid (Rom 3:9-28). A sinless man, undeserving of death, would have to die for the rest of mankind: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19).

Although the eternal Son of God, through the virgin birth, became fully man, He remained fully God. As sinless man, He could justly die for sinners. And only as infinite God could He pay the full penalty for the sins of all mankind. Even as a fetus in Mary's womb, He did not cease to be the One who said, "I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal 3:6). This is the most difficult part of the mystery. We cannot understand it, but we believe it because God says it—and we realize there was no other way.

As God and man in one person, Christ took the full weight of God's wrath upon sin for all mankind. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). He tasted "death for every man" (Heb 2:9). That had to include "the second death," which all who refuse to believe on Him who died for them will endure for eternity in the Lake of Fire (Rv 20:11-15).

Calvinism, however, teaches that Christ

died only for an elect whom God had predestined to heaven. It claims that God loves the entire world—but not with the same kind of "redeeming love" for all: those who are predestined to eternal torment are loved with a lesser love, but loved nevertheless, because God blesses them in this life with sunshine and rain, etc. That is why we titled the book, *What Love Is This?* It is not love of *any kind* to fail to rescue any who could be rescued. Calvinism claims that God could save everyone if He so desired, but doesn't. That is not love.

The parallel Old Testament passage to "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23) is "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way..." (Is 53:6). Isaiah adds, "and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The iniquity of all who "have gone astray" [i.e., who have sinned] was laid on Christ at the Cross.

Christ said that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:14,15). Poisonous serpents were sent by God as punishment for Israel's sin. Those bitten were dying. The serpent is a picture both of Satan and of sin that has bitten all mankind unto the death. God's remedy was: "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and...[not an elect among those dying, but] every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. [It] came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten *any man*, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Nm 21:5-9—emphasis added).

Christ said that just as all who had been bitten could look in faith upon the brazen serpent and live, so all who have sinned can look in faith to the "Lamb of God [on the Cross] tak[ing] away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29), and receive eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. That is the good news of the gospel. We need to proclaim it everywhere.

What a day it was when Christ was virgin-born in Bethlehem! And what a day it is when He comes to live eternally in the hearts of those who believe on Him! This is the victory of godliness that every Christian should be experiencing—yet many do not know all that is theirs in Christ. Let us live godly lives and proclaim the good news to all. **TBC**

Endnotes

1. Richard Ostling, Associated Press, http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2004/12/23/special_reports/religion/21_50_1412_22_04.txt.
2. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1950), VI 75, III 657.

Quotable

Temptation doesn't come from God but from within....It's not God...Satan, his demons, or the world's evil system that entice us to sin....it is our lustful nature.... Our flesh, our fallen nature, has a desire for evil...even though we've been redeemed and have received a new nature, we still have an enemy within. The resident passion of the flesh, not God, is responsible for our being tempted to sin.

John MacArthur, Truth for Today, 323

It must be the settled purpose of your heart to will nothing, design nothing, do nothing, but so far as there is reason to believe that it is the will of God. It is as great rebellion against God to think that your will may ever rightly differ from His as it would be to boast in His universe that you have not received the power of willing from Him....To think that you are your own, or at your own disposal, is as absurd as to think that you created yourself.

William Law, The Power of the Spirit, 20

Q&A

QUESTION: Solomon declared: "Wisdom crieth without....Turn you at my reproof....Because...ye have set at nought all my counsel...I will mock when your fear cometh...and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind....Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer..." (Proverbs 1:20-30). How does wisdom "cry aloud" in everyone's ears and finally mock those who won't listen? How can all mankind hear her voice and be held accountable for not heeding her counsel?

RESPONSE: Wisdom must be the voice of God in every conscience (Rom 2:14,15). The frightening declaration that those who reject her will eventually agonize over their folly is a solemn warning of the eternal torment of tortured consciences in the Lake of Fire.

Only after he was in hell did the rich man see clearly the horror and selfish folly of his sinful life of self-indulgence—but it was too late. The wisdom that had insistently tried to reprove him in his conscience and that he had despised all of his life was what he longed to heed in hell—but it was too late. Wisdom, which he had spurned, taunted and mocked him, as it will for eternity! So clear was his understanding

in that place of torment that he wanted to warn others of the horrible fate they were bringing upon themselves by their rejection of God and His laws written in every conscience.

Though he knew there was no remedy for himself, he begged Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, "lest they also come into this place of torment" (Lk 16:27,28). In harmony with wisdom's voice in Proverbs, Abraham rejected the rich man's argument that his brothers would take heed if Lazarus returned from the grave: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Lk 16:31).

What an indictment of folly! What an exposé of the stubbornness of the human heart! And what a stinging rebuke to those in the charismatic movement who claim they were taken to heaven and/or hell and commissioned by God to come back to tell of their experience! And what a denunciation of their gullible admirers on TBN, from Paul and Jan Crouch on down, who honor their unbiblical tales!

QUESTION: Why does world opinion (UN, EU, Russia, media, etc.) generally go against Israel, and why is it often so viciously backed by false accusations? Is this of any significance for today, or is it merely what God foreordained?

RESPONSE: God did not foreordain anti-Semitism and the hatred of Israel rampant in the world—and He will severely punish those persons and nations guilty of it. He *foretold* this hatred, but He does not *cause* it. As John MacArthur says above and as Jesus declared, evil comes from the human heart: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man..." (Mt 15:19,20).

Of course, Satan does all he can to stir up anti-Semitism and hatred of Israel. As we explain in *Judgment Day*, Satan's only hope to escape his final doom is to destroy Israel. He has made the destruction of Israel and the extermination of all Jews one of the foundations of Islam; he has persuaded Europe and most of the rest of the world to believe the lies of the Arabs who claim to be descended from the original "Palestinians" (a people who never existed); and he is persuading not just the D. James Kennedys, Hank Hanegraaffs, and R.C. Sprouls but increasing numbers of Christians that the church has replaced Israel.

Why would Satan be immune from God's judgment if Israel were destroyed?

The answer is simple. God has made hundreds of promises to preserve the Jews and to bring them back into their own land, where He will never allow Israel as a nation to be destroyed (Jer 31:31-40; Ezk 36:22-38, etc.). It is to Israel restored in the last days that Christ will return to rescue His people at Armageddon and to reign over them and the world from the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Without Israel, there could be no Second Coming. God would have been proved a liar by His failure to fulfill His hundreds of promises to Israel and would have lost the moral ground for judging and punishing Satan and removing him and his man, Antichrist, from the earth. Satan would be firmly in control of the world and its inhabitants for eternity. The Rapture would have occurred, and the church would be safe in heaven.

With no people of Israel for Christ to return to and rule over, with no throne of David in Jerusalem upon which He could reign, the world would be under Satan's control for eternity. No new heavens and new earth would be possible.

QUESTION: Why should Christians care about the Middle East in general, and specifically about Israel?

RESPONSE: As stated above, this is the key issue upon which the future of earth and heaven—indeed, the entire universe—depends. God has tied His name and integrity to Israel. He is called the God of Israel 203 times and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob 12 times. Depending upon what happens in the Middle East, God will either be vindicated or discredited. His name and integrity will either be upheld in perfect purity and power, or He will be disgraced as a liar who cannot make good upon His promises to His people Israel. That's how important the regathering and ultimate blessing of Israel is!

If the Muslims, UN, EU, et al., succeed in destroying Israel, the integrity of everything God has said throughout His Word would be placed in question. If "forever" and "everlasting" don't really mean forever in relation to Israel ("all the land...to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever"—Gn 13:15; "I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee...all the land of Canaan [not 'Palestine'—there was no such place] for an everlasting possession"—17:8; "the covenant which he made with Abraham...Isaac...Jacob...Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan..."—1 Chr 16:16-18, etc.), then how can we be sure that the promise of "everlasting

life” (Jn 3:16, etc.) means forever?

If Satan were stronger than God and able to make God a liar by preventing His promises to Israel from being fulfilled, then how could we ever be secure, even in heaven itself, from Satan’s schemes and power?

Such is the importance of Israel and what happens in the Middle East. There is a real battle going on between God and Satan for the eternal destiny of planet Earth and of all mankind. Wake up, pray for God to tear down the Islamic curtain (more vicious and impenetrable than the Iron Curtain ever was) so that Muslims can hear and receive the gospel without fear of being killed for their faith. Firmly oppose Islam and replacement theology, pray for the salvation of Jews and Muslims alike, and do all you can to bring the gospel to them and to the whole world.

QUESTION: A friend belongs to the United Pentecostal Church and believes in “Jesus only,” rejecting the Trinity. Jesus says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. These people don’t believe in the Holy Spirit at all. Isn’t that blasphemy? Could United Pentecostals be Christians? How could they even believe in the true God?

RESPONSE: We have just revised our tract on the Trinity, so I suggest you get some copies of that. In that tract, I think you will find all the information you need about the Trinity to prove that the God of the Bible is a triune Being of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three persons but One God. This is taught in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

Could someone be saved who believes that baptism should be in the “name of Jesus only,” that Jesus alone is God, and that “Father” and “Holy Spirit,” refer to modes of manifestation, or to offices, not to persons? That is a good question. Let us see what the Bible says.

Obviously, to lead someone to Christ, one need not first explain the Trinity. The gospel as defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 declares that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...” (1 Cor 15:3,4). There is no mention of the Trinity or even that Christ is God. Yet Christ declared, “If ye believe not that I am [i.e., “that I am the I AM, Yahweh”—“he” is in italics, meaning that it was supplied by the translators], ye shall die in your sins” (Jn 8:24). Obviously, then, although we are only told of one brief statement by Paul

and Silas to the Philippian jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31), they surely had already explained who Jesus Christ is, or “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” would have been meaningless.

Of course, United Pentecostals believe that Jesus is Yahweh, so they would seem to believe John 8:24. Yet John tells us, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 Jn 9). To abide in the doctrine of Christ, one must have both the Father and the Son—surely not as modes or offices but as distinct persons.

John begins this epistle extending “mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love” (v. 3). It is quite apparent that both the Father and Son are individual persons of the Godhead and that both are involved in our salvation.

In the Garden, Christ prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mt 26:39). To suggest that Christ is praying to an “office” or to Himself reduces the Bible to nonsense. The doctrine of Christ includes His relationship to His Father.

I don’t see how those who deny that the Father is a real person within the Trinity can be saved because, according to John, if they don’t abide in the doctrine of Christ, they don’t have God. This is not some obscure error to be overlooked. It is of vital importance to deliver these people from this grievous heresy.

QUESTION: Was Israel’s response to Hizballah “disproportionate,” as the critics say?

RESPONSE: This issue already seems to be ancient history, which shows how fast time passes and how quickly one forgets. Let me ask you a question: “What should the United States do if Canadians or Mexicans were shooting rockets across the border at us and our citizens were being killed? What kind of response should be made in such circumstances. Our leaders must respond in kind in the manner most calculated to stop the attacks and deaths of innocent people. This is what Israel did.

Israel responded with great restraint under very difficult conditions. Hizballah [which means “the army of Allah”] hid the terrorist attackers within groups of civilians, even launching their rockets from civilian apartments. Israel has the weapons to make

short work of their surrounding enemies (God said He would make them like fire to devour their enemies round about, and that promise has been fulfilled—Zec 12:6). Instead, to save Lebanese lives and at the increased cost of their own lives, Israeli troops went in on the ground to fight the terrorists hidden among civilians.

Who does the world condemn? Israel, of course. All the problems in the Middle East are blamed on Israel—supposedly caused by her very existence. That hatred is sponsored by Satan.

Water of Life

Dave Hunt

As God's unique creation, we live in physical bodies in a material universe that will pass away, "for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). God desires to reveal to us the world of the eternal, the world unseen by physical eyes. While still earthbound, we are to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" and to set our "affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:1,2).

But how can God convey spiritual truth to fleshly minded earth dwellers who, because of sin, are separated from Him and know nothing and desire nothing except the material world? He must, with physical terms familiar to us, bring us to a clear understanding of and earnest desire for spiritual truth and reality. He communicates through words, often with figurative language.

The physical realm has been consistently used by God from the very beginning (starting with a tree in the Garden of Eden) to convey spiritual truth. Paul shows us how to interpret God's object lessons:

For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written...If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things...? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. (1 Cor 9:9-14)

In His parables, Christ spoke of trees and fruit, grapevines and grapes, shepherds and sheep, sowers, seeds and bread, wind and weather, birth and death, fire and torment, etc. But there is no more powerful picture in all of Scripture than that of water and thirst. There is no life without water. The need for water to sustain life is signaled by thirst, which can be tormenting and soon fatal if not satisfied.

The seemingly unlikely Samaritan woman (why would He go out of His way to meet her!) whom Christ, by His arrangement, encountered at the well, was obviously very thirsty for a fulfillment that she couldn't find. Like most of mankind, she did not understand that her thirst was spiritual and that nothing physical could

satisfy it. But our Lord knew her heart.

He talked to her about water and thirst: "Whosoever drinketh of this [well] water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (Jn 4:13,14). There was an authority about this stranger that made her believe what He said. She thought He was referring to a special water that would permanently end her bodily thirst: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

In fact, He was going to expose a life of disappointments and regrets: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither."

"I have no husband," was her evasive reply.

Christ's response must have shocked and cut her to the heart: "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband...."

"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet!" was her dumbfounded reply. How did He know the intimate details of her life?

The conversation that followed exposed her spiritual thirst. Christ revealed to her that He was the Messiah she awaited. That revelation gripped her heart. She believed on Him and ran into the city to tell the amazing news that the Messiah stood at that moment at Jacob's well. In her haste to testify for the One who had revealed and satisfied her spiritual thirst, she "left her waterpot" (4:28) and its unsatisfying contents.

When the Bible says that in our natural state inherited from Adam we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), one knows instinctively that the reference is not to physical death. We receive physical life at our birth into this world, but tragically, we are born into the spiritual death we inherited from Adam. Responsible adults have until their physical death to receive spiritual life by being born again into God's family by His Holy Spirit through the gospel. If not, they will remain spiritually dead in the torment of eternal separation from God.

Christ gives a hint in physical language (through the story of the rich man in hell) of the unbearable spiritual thirst created by that separation: "I am tormented in this flame," the sinner exclaims (Lk 16:24). The torment of that eternal separation was endured for each of us by our Lord on the Cross as He suffered the agonies of hell. He cried, "I thirst....My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?!" The spiritual torment of the damned is even more excruciating than physical pain could ever be.

Most of earth's inhabitants do not realize that they are nonphysical beings, dead to God by birth but temporarily occupying physical

bodies. Desperately thirsty for spiritual life, which can be received only from God on His terms, they seek unsuccessfully to satisfy that thirst with earth-bound possessions and pleasures. After Paul turned from rejection of Christ to faith in Him, he rejoiced in what only the Christian can know: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). It is the inward man that lives by the spiritual food and drink that God's Word offers.

Nor do most people realize that their physical death will not end the existence of the soul and spirit that had inhabited their body. Death ends the opportunity that life has provided for us to surrender to God willingly, for: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27).

Materialism's passionate lust for popularity, pleasure, wealth, and power is what drives the West, from Wall Street to corporate board rooms to academics to athletics. The advertising world and Hollywood play on that lust with tantalizing enticements aimed at youth to make each new generation more the children of Satan than their parents before them. Over and over, God's unchanging Word is proven true: "For all that is in the world [is] the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:15-17).

Satan deceives billions of souls with false religions that seem to offer an escape from fleshly lusts but in truth only lead their followers into hell. Muslims turn their backs upon Western materialism and are willing to die in jihad—except for those who come to the West while pretending to remain true to Islam; and excepting, of course, the despotic, wealthy, self-indulgent rulers of Muslim countries who never offer themselves or their children as jihad martyrs. But what do suicide bombers hope will be their reward? A "paradise" that offers everything they condemn in the West: unlimited sex, abundance of every delicacy that fleshly appetites could desire, rivers running with wine (forbidden to Muslims in this life), and superhuman capacity to indulge in the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" non-stop.

Other millions have been caught in the delusion of Hinduism's Eastern mysticism, which seems to reject worldly lusts but is founded upon the same ultimate selfish pride that captured Eve's heart: the desire to become a god. Gurus from the East became wealthy by selling godhood through self-realization to millions in the West, religion packaged as yoga and Eastern meditation—a deception now sweeping through

the church as well. Yet, as we document in *Yoga and the Body of Christ*, the gurus were themselves the victims of the very “lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes” from which they promised their followers an escape. These “god-men” proved again the truth of Scripture: “While they promise them [their followers] liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption” (2 Pt 2:19).

These agents of Satan promise fulfillment of the passion inherited from Eve of becoming one’s own god and gaining every fleshly desire. The New Age Movement, promising its own godhood of mind power to achieve every selfish ambition, and picking up where the hippy revolution left off, repackaged Eastern mysticism as “Human Potential,” trapping millions more with “the pride of life.” It stirred a brief flurry of interest in the “spiritual” dimension and left in its wake shattered souls closed to God. Their mantra remains, “I’m spiritual but not religious”—i.e., don’t push your religious rules on me.

The latest movement, “the New Atheists,” is led by famous evolutionist Richard Dawkins and his understudy, Sam Harris. They declare that belief in God is not only a great delusion but an evil from which the world must be delivered—and they are determined to do it. Their books rank high on *The New York Times* best seller list. They ridicule those who believe in God, using arguments like the following, from Sam Harris:

Of course, people of faith regularly assure one another that God is not responsible for human suffering. But how else can we understand the claim that God is both omniscient and omnipotent...?

If God exists, either He can do nothing to stop the most egregious calamities, or He does not care to. God, therefore, is either impotent or evil. Pious readers will now execute the following pirouette: *God cannot be judged by merely human standards of morality*. But, of course, human standards of morality are precisely what the faithful use to establish God’s goodness in the first place....

If He exists, the God of Abraham is not merely unworthy of the immensity of creation; he is unworthy even of man.

There is another possibility, of course... the biblical God is a fiction. (Excerpt from *An Atheist Manifesto*, www.truthdig.com)

Apparently, God is responsible for every child’s refusal to eat his peas and neglect of his homework and for every heated lovers’ quarrel and selfish action. He ought to make everyone behave like perfect saints? If God had made mankind robots programmed to do whatever He dictated, then He could be

blamed for not stopping evil, suffering, and death—but there would also be no love. Every person knows that he has the power of choice, uses it continually, even to the point of being able to shake his fist at God, curse Him, and live in total rebellion of His laws written in every conscience—and is therefore without excuse.

But how could the power to choose that makes it possible for us to love one another account for the suffering of innocent children by disease, starvation, abuse? What about “natural disasters” such as tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, poisonous snakes and insects, animals preying upon and eating one another and man, etc.? Can these be blamed on human rejection of God?

The Bible makes it clear that the entire universe was affected by Adam’s sin and joining Satan in his rebellion against God: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now” (Rom 8:22). Deliverance from this curse will come in part during Christ’s Millennial reign on earth (Is 11:7; 65:25)—and completely in the new heavens and new earth:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...and there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him....” (Rv 21:1; 22:3)

But how could a loving God be so vengeful as to torment those who reject Christ in the flames of the Lake of Fire forever? This is not God’s choice for mankind. He loves us so much that He made His love the essential ingredient of our very existence. Thus, to be in the fullness of His love would be ecstasy; to be finally and without possible recovery separated from Him would be torture. That is why hell will be such torment for the same reason that heaven will be such exquisite pleasure and joy.

The best way to describe this spiritual reality in terms that we can understand is with water and thirst. Water tastes so good because it is essential to our life. Thirst hurts so bad for the same reason. God did not create us to be thirsty but to drink of His love. It is no more reasonable to blame God for our follies, failures, and sorrows than it is to say, “The Devil made me do it.”

A school of fish is swimming contentedly in a lake. One of them sees a man sitting in a chair on the shore, holding a fishing pole, and smoking a cigar. “Now that would be really living!” exclaims the fish. Moved with envy, it leaps out onto the bank. Exhausted, trying desperately to grab a fishing pole and get onto a chair, the

“fish-out-of-water” gasps its last.

Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris walk by, leading a group of atheists on a “trashing God” tour. Pointing to the fish, flopping in the dirt and gravel, gills opening and closing in vain desperation, Dawkins declares in triumph, “What kind of a ‘god’ would create a fish to suffer like that!”

The atheists continue discussing with great enthusiasm how evolution, natural selection, and survival of the fittest (inefficient and cruel to the core) have so marvelously produced creatures like themselves with such wisdom that they can analyze the cosmic forces that spawned them and damn the God they say doesn’t exist.

God did not make the fish to “suffer like that.” He made the fish to swim in water, its God-given habitat. But the fish was not content with what God had made it and tried to do its own will. Nothing could be more reasonable than for the Creator to be in charge of His universe—but man has rebelled.

Just as God created the fish to swim in water, so He created man to swim eternally in the ocean of His love. He so constituted us that our highest enjoyment—indeed our very life—would be in receiving His love and loving Him in return. But we rejected His love, spat in His face, and defiantly went our own way. God alone knew the endless torment we would suffer as a result of our rebellion, and gave His Son to pay the penalty for every sinner

Jesus described the “lake of fire” (Rv 20:15), the rebels’ final end, as a place of unbearable burning thirst. God did not intend for any human to go there. The Lake of Fire was not made for man but “for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41). From the beginning of the Bible to the end, God continues to plead, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rv 22:17).

Heaven is for those who have accepted the offer to drink continuously of the water of life: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb...” (Rv 22:1). In contrast to the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk 13:28) by those in the Lake of Fire, those in heaven, we are told, “...shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.... For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rv 7:16-17). Let us live in the joy of that promise in the days ahead and bring this good news to all who will hear. **TBC**

Quotable

A major national poll...by one of America's leading researchers...commissioned by AiG [Answers in Genesis]...as a follow-up to the results of an alarming Barna Research poll of 2002 and a Southern Baptist poll...clearly shows that...many have left the church because they no longer believe the Bible is the absolute Word of God...

Ken Ham, Answers Update, Vol 13:11:2

Seeking after imaginary happiness, creating to ourselves a thousand unnatural needs, amusing our hearts with false hopes and insatiable passions, envying one another, we bring distress of every sort upon ourselves. Let any man...consider how foolish he has been...he will then realize that nothing is so unbecoming in any man as self-exaltation and pride.

William Law, The Power of the Spirit, 145

Q&A

QUESTION: In July you said Christians should not join non-Christians in pro-life activities because they would be “unequally yoked....” Wouldn’t that preclude involvement with secular schools, Scouts, 4-H [and]any activity [with] the general public? Yet our Lord told us to let “our lights shine before others,” that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (Matthew 5:16). Should the Israelites have rejected the help of King Cyrus in Ezra because they would have been “unequally yoked”?

RESPONSE: How can we let “our light shine” by joining the ungodly in their moral crusades? Is their light shining too?

School is required by law—abortion protests are not. If you wish, protest abortion with Christians, not with the unsaved. Wouldn't your “light shine” brighter then?

Public gatherings hardly “yoke” you with the crowd. Separation from the world can be carried to an extreme, as Paul warned, “for then must ye needs go out of the world” (1 Cor 5:9,10). As for scouts, 4-H, etc., that is where one's light could really shine so that other members would encounter their peers whom they could look up to but who are “not of the world” (Jn 15:19; 17:14-16) and who testify for Christ.

We are called to “preach the gospel,” not to reform society. But if you preach the gospel to unsaved protesters, they will

accuse you of disrupting unity.

Cyrus was chosen of God (2 Chr 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-8). Jews would have disobeyed God had they not accepted his assistance.

QUESTION: In a recent sermon, our pastor said, “Free will is not a biblical term.” Is that true? Please explain.

RESPONSE: Free will to obey or disobey, love or hate, submit or rebel, is not only biblical but essential to man's relationship to God. He calls us to love, obey, serve, and worship Him and to do so by choice: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Jos 24:15). God would not be glorified in any obedience, worship, or love that did not come willingly from the heart.

Jesus said, “The first and great commandment [is] thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Mt 22:37,38). The fact that love comes from the heart, soul, and mind proves that it must be an act of free will. Love must be willingly given and received—or it isn't love. Our Lord said the second command was to love our neighbors as ourselves and “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mt 22:40). Thus, without the capacity to love God and fellow humans we cannot obey the Bible.

Your pastor says that free will is “not a biblical term”? But that concept appears 17 times in the Bible! The same meaning is expressed in other words. “Free offerings” is found twice (Ex 36:3; Am 4:5), as is “a voluntary offering” (Lv 7:16). All are to be brought “voluntarily unto the LORD” (Ezk 46:12).

The first offering in Leviticus (a pattern for all) was to be brought by the worshiper “of his own voluntary will” (Lv 1:3,4). The many “freewill” offerings were to be given by the individual “willingly with his heart” (Ex 25:2). Those who gave materials for building the tabernacle were to bring them with “a willing heart” (Ex 35:5).

Christ declared: “If any man will [i.e., wills to] do his [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (Jn 7:17). The Bible ends with an offer it repeats or implies many times. “And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rv 22:17). Scripture could not be clearer on this point. Free will is biblical and essential.

QUESTION: The words, “carnal Christian,” sound like an oxymoron. From passages such as Ezekiel 33, Matthew 7:19-23, I can't see “carnal Christians” in heaven. People use 1 Corinthians 3

to prove that all professing Christians will be saved no matter what they do. But John MacArthur in his study Bible says this primarily refers to evangelists and pastors. I think a viable interpretation...is that the work they are doing is... evangelizing and helping the Body of Christ to grow in its knowledge of Him. If they give a false gospel, the convert will be burnt up because he doesn't have Christ as a foundation. If the builder tries to build up other Christians with false teachings...those teachings will be burnt up...and the builder will not receive a reward. The builder will be saved, but his works will be burnt...I don't think this passage proves that there will be unrewarded carnal Christians in heaven.

RESPONSE: On the contrary, Paul is not referring *only* to “evangelists and pastors,” nor does *MacArthur's Study Bible* say so. Three times Paul says “any man” and once “every man.” It is the man's works (not his “converts”) that are tried by fire (v. 13) and it is the works that are burned, not “converts” to a false gospel.

You believe “carnal Christian” is an “oxymoron”? Paul introduces the idea, beginning with himself (Rom 7:14). Though he calls the Corinthians carnal, yet he also calls them “brethren” and “babes in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1-4).

“Carnal” is a biblical term describing those who are living in “envy, strife, and divisions.” Paul accuses them of condoning fornication and of going to law in secular courts against each other. He warns them against prostitutes and various other sins unbecoming of Christians. He even declares that a person could have been so carnal that all of his works will be burned up—yet “he himself shall be saved” (1 Cor 3:15).

I agree that this passage doesn't prove that all professing Christians will be saved no matter what they do. *Professing* is not enough. After making it clear that Christ is the only foundation, Paul refers to those who “build upon this foundation” (1 Cor 3:10-12)—i.e., real Christians.

There won't be any carnal Christians in heaven because “when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 Jn 3:2). But we are not told that carnality will keep anyone out of heaven. If one must live a perfect life in order to get to heaven, no one would make it. Paul wrote most of his epistles to correct error in the church. But he doesn't say that even the most carnal Corinthians are not saved. Paul stands in doubt of the Galatians, not because of carnality but because he

questions whether they believed the true gospel (Gal 4:11,19,20).

QUESTION: What is the difference between soul and spirit? Do they both go to the Lord when we die? Please explain.

RESPONSE: Most Christians use the words interchangeably. Scripture makes a distinction. Paul writes, “I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless...” (1 Thes 5:23). The Word of God pierces “even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit” (Heb 4:12). Soul and spirit must therefore be two different parts of a human being made in God’s image.

“Soul” in the Old Testament is always the Hebrew *nephesh*, a living, breathing creature. In numbering people in the Bible, reference is to so many souls—never to so many spirits. In the New Testament, “soul” is always *psuche*, the Greek equivalent of *nephesh*. “Spirit” is the Hebrew *ruwach*, meaning breath; and the Greek equivalent is *pneuma*. Soul and spirit are difficult to define. Yet every person knows what is meant by “evil spirit,” “disembodied spirit,” “spirit of man,” “Spirit of God,” etc.

The expression “my soul” is found 126 times and almost always is very personal, as though it is the center of man’s self-consciousness. Through the soul, we recognize and indulge ourselves: “I will say to my soul...thou hast much goods laid up for many years...eat, drink, and be merry” (Lk 12:19).

That the soul goes to heaven is clear: “thou wilt not leave my soul in hell” (Ps 16:10); “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were [beheaded] for the word of God...” (Rv 6:9; 20:4). The same is true of the spirit. As He died, Jesus said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). Luke writes, “They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59).

In contrast to the soul’s self-awareness (1 Cor 2:11,12), the *spirit* has understanding and wisdom. This is where the Spirit of God indwells man and is the center of man’s awareness of and communion with God. “Sensual” could be associated with soul but not with spirit. “Soulish” is neither in the Bible nor the dictionary, but if it were, it would have a carnal connotation and nothing to do with God. On the other hand, “spiritual,” found 23 times in the Bible, always means heavenly minded, godly, holy—never self-centered.

QUESTION: In November, you expressed displeasure with D. James Kennedy,

R.C. Sproul, and others, who teach that Israel “has no special title to land in the Middle East, having been replaced by the church.” Unbelieving Israel was always cut off, whether in ancient times, Christ’s day, or our own; the kingdom has always been the blessing given to another “nation” (composed of believing Jews and Gentiles).... These saints, make up that holy nation Peter calls the body of Christ. Scripture nowhere affirms that unbelieving Israel...shall receive... a millennial Canaan whose boundaries reach the Euphrates.... Jeremiah 23:7-8... relates to the return from Babylon...not Israel reconstituted in modern history. Moreover, this text includes...a Messianic prophecy that must be contextualized with verses 7 and 8....

RESPONSE: Literally hundreds of scriptures contradict your position. God promised Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their seed everlasting possession of a physical land on this earth with prescribed boundaries (Gn 11:31; 12:1,5,6,7; 13:15; 15:7, 18-21; 17:7,8; 26:3-5; 28:13,14; 35:9-12; 1 Chr 16:15-18, etc.). For example: “I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gn 17:7,8). No such promise of possession of a particular land on this earth was ever given to the church! Israel possessed this land for centuries. How could the church, whose inheritance is in heaven, replace physical Israel on earth?

The Israelites, with few exceptions, were *always* in unbelief: in Egypt, through the desert, in the land—yet God remained faithful and patient. He disciplined but never disowned them. He warned that He would cast them out of the land if they did not repent and turn to Him. He said they would be scattered to every nation, hated, persecuted, and killed like no other people, which they were and are to this day. He promised to bring Israel back into her land in the last days, which He is doing—and that she would never cease to be a nation (Jer 31:35,36). None of this fits the church.

You say that Jeremiah 23:7-8 refers to the return from Babylon. How can “... from all the countries whither I had driven them” mean one country, Babylon? Those living in Israel today have come there from over 100 countries in a literal fulfillment of Jeremiah 23:7-8. God said that in that day, no Jew would be left outside Israel: “I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them [among other nations] any more” (Ezk 39:28; Mt 24:31)—but only a remnant returned from Babylon.

Yes, “unbelieving Israel has no special title to the land.” But Israel must return to her land in unbelief because it is there that they come to faith when the Messiah rescues His people in the midst of Armageddon (Zec 14:1-4). Every Jew alive will “look on [Him] whom they have pierced [and] there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David...for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 12:10-13:1) and “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom 11:26). That did not happen at the return from Babylon!

If the church is Israel, then “All the church shall be saved” when Christians look upon the One “they have pierced.” Paul was willing to go to hell if that would save Israel, his “kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom 9:3). None of this describes the church! His “prayer to God for Israel [was], that they might be saved” (Rom 10:1). Those in the church are not yet saved?

You say, “Israel was always cut off... the kingdom has always been the blessing given to another ‘nation’ (composed of believing Jews and Gentiles)....” Was the Davidic kingdom, therefore, really the church, living for centuries in that land “from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates”? The church never was promised a land, never occupied a land, never was cast out of that land for her sin, never was promised that she would be brought back into it. The church is not Israel!

Weaning Evangelicals Off the Word—Part 1

By T.A. McMahon

Apostasy is rampant within the evangelical church today. At least that's my perspective as one who has observed religious trends and developments for three decades. Before I present my specific concerns, let me define some terms. The use of the word "evangelical" in this article simply refers to those who would say that the Bible is their authority in all matters of faith and practice. "Apostasy" consists of those teachings and practices that are contrary to the Word of God yet seduce and deceive both professing Christians and true believers. "Biblical apostasy" is a falling away that will result in a false Christianity under the control of the Antichrist: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away..." (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Although the culmination of the Apostasy takes place after the Rapture of the church, various aspects of this apostate religion have and will continue to ensnare many believers throughout its development.

At a certain point in the future, there will be a total rejection of biblical Christianity, succeeded by the religion of the Antichrist; it will maintain a *vener* of Christianity that will prove acceptable to all religions. This perversion of Christianity doesn't just suddenly happen once the Antichrist appears. The deception process began long ago in the Garden of Eden with Satan's seduction of Eve, and it is becoming more and more of a corrupting influence within Christianity as the time of the appearing of the false messiah, whom the entire world will worship (Revelation 13), draws near.

Satan began his dialogue with Eve by planting seeds of doubt regarding what God had commanded: "Yea, hath God said...?" (Genesis 3:1). This opening line of the Adversary has been the basis ever since for his principal strategy in inducing rebellion against God. Its implications impugning the character of God and sanctioning the rationalizations of man seem endless: Why would God keep something good from you?; Is He *really* in charge?; Does *He* make the rules?; You misunderstood His commands; There are no absolutes; You need to consider what He says from your own perspective, and so forth. Eve, although reiterating God's command for the most part, adds her own erroneous thought to what God actually said: "...neither shall ye touch it" (3:3).

This is what happens when dialogues take place regarding absolutes: the truth is either added to or subtracted from.

Tragically, many Christians see nothing wrong with rewriting God's Word. They are perfectly content with Bible versions that have done exactly that.

In response to Eve, Satan blatantly rejects God's warning that death would result from sin: "You will *not* surely die." Making God out to be a liar or dismissing Him altogether has always been Satan's game. The Serpent then convinces Eve that obeying God's command would rob her of enlightenment, godhood, and knowledge—and thus severely limit her potential: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (3:5).

Variations of these basic lies from the one who was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44) have successfully deceived humanity throughout history. "Yea, hath God said...?" (Satan's direct attack upon God's Word) has even led both professing and true Christians into the Apostasy.

Questioning or rejecting what God has said in the Scriptures is at the heart of instigating religious rebellion. The reasons should be obvious: 1) If the Bible cannot be trusted as God's specific communication to mankind, then we are left with nothing more than man's opinions and guesses about God and what He desires; 2) Finite humanity's speculations about its infinite Creator are not only terribly erroneous—they are evil, because they are generated by man's sinful, self-serving nature; 3) Even a true believer could be led into darkness without the light and lamp of God's Word (Psalm 119:105).

Although the Bible has been under various attacks for centuries, the latest "Yea, hath God said...?" strategy may be the Serpent of Old's most deadly. The process involves weaning evangelical Christians away from the knowledge of, an understanding of, and a dependence upon the Word of God. The objective is to produce biblically shallow Christians who are *functionally illiterate* regarding what the Bible teaches, and who therefore have no accurate basis for, or interest in, discerning biblical truth from error. By "functionally illiterate" I mean that such evangelicals know how to read, and they have Bibles (of some sort), but they rarely read them, preferring to get their biblical content from some other source.

Conditioned by a subversive weaning process, these biblically shallow Christians have little or no concern about doctrine. They major in the *experiential*, with their feelings almost exclusively determining what they believe. The Apostle Paul, speaking prophetically of the Last Days, seemed to have these specifically in mind: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound

doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3,4). Sensual "lusts" of the flesh and imagination are implied here.

A couple of decades ago, the extreme Charismatics and Pentecostals would have been the obvious reference point regarding Paul's warning, given their obsession with healing, prosperity, and a spirituality energized by seeking after signs and wonders. Today, experiential Christianity has extended far beyond the bounds of what was considered a fringe evangelical element. It now pervades the entire church, including those denominations and movements once known for their conservative doctrinal views and biblical adherence. They have vigorously blocked the lying signs and wonders seduction at their front doors while opening wide their side entrances and youth rooms to the purveyors of the experiential in less obvious yet equally disastrous forms.

Before examples of today's antibiblical experiential Christianity are presented, it needs to be understood that true Christianity is both *doctrinal* and *experiential*. It includes a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that begins when one has understood the doctrine (i.e., biblical teaching) of salvation—the Gospel of Christ—and has accepted it by faith. When this happens, the Spirit of Christ indwells that person (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30, Romans 8:9). As one understands all that He did for us, true love for Jesus follows.

Then, as one grows in his relationship with Jesus through knowing and obeying the Scriptures, one's affection for Him increases. Furthermore, as one matures in the faith, the fruit of the Spirit is increasingly manifested: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. These certainly involve the experiential. So what is the problem, then, with experiential Christianity?

The chief error today in the evangelical church is that experiences (feelings, emotions, passions, intuitions, etc.) have become the guide for entering into and attempting to establish true spirituality. Rather than subjective feelings and emotions being present as a *result* of one's adherence to sound doctrine, they have become the *judge* of whether or not something is truly Christian. Instead of testing a teaching or practice or situation by the Word of God, the arbiter becomes "how one feels about it." This puts the human imagination in the seat of judgment. That thought alone should provoke an emotion in the heart of every Bible-believing Christian: sheer horror! Doctrinally

however, it's even more frightening.

Twice in the Book of Proverbs, in almost exactly the same terms, we are told, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). In other words, if a man goes by what he thinks or feels, independently of and in opposition to what God has declared, the consequences for him will only generate destruction. Death is separation, the spirit and soul from the body; moreover, the ways of death include separating man from the light of God's truth. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

Experientialism (what *feels* right to man) is a leaven working its way through the entire church as it undermines biblical truth. Today there are many infectious manifestations, with heavy emphasis upon the following: signs and wonders, faith-healing and prosperity, *logos* vs. *rhema*, the new apostles and prophets, kingdom-dominion, redeeming-the-culture missions, strategic spiritual warfare, inner-healing, 12-steps, Christian psychology, evangelical social-activism; ecumenism, church growth, purpose-driven, emerging church, contemplative/mysticism, church entertainment, contemporary worship, culturally accommodating Bible versions, and visually translated Bibles. All of these movements are in opposition to the clear teaching of God's Word, yet multitudes follow them eagerly.

Although these diverse endeavors often overlap in terms of concepts and methods, they share a common trait: while giving lip service to the Scriptures, they all, whether through ignorance, self-delusion, or planned deceit, critically subvert its teachings. The way that seems right to a man—the way that *feels* right, produces numerical growth, *seems* more spiritual, moves one emotionally, appears to move God on one's behalf, brings people together, makes people *feel* closer to God and better about themselves, is more positive, fills more pews, impresses the world, is not judgmental, etc.—that way is systematically eliminating any concern for sound doctrine in the church. This is experientialism in opposition to doctrine among evangelicals, and it has the church helping to usher in the Apostasy.

There is not enough space in this article to explain all the movements listed above. We have been writing about most of them for years. Many of them can be found by searching TBC's website for related articles or the books we offer. Although they are connected at times by individuals, similar methodologies, or goals, the basic glue that essentially

holds all of the movements together is the propensity for subjective experience over the written Word. All are working from this same unbiblical premise.

Extreme Charismatics and Pentecostals have a foundational teaching that God's mode of communication today is to speak outside the Bible directly to His people, particularly through a new breed of apostles and prophets. This "new way" is called the *rhema* of God, a supposed contrast to *logos*, which is categorized as the old written form. One of its foremost leaders, C. Peter Wagner, claims that God is instructing the church in new ways of doing things through His modern prophets. Therefore, the Bible is of little or no value for judging what's being promoted. This teaching is not only antibiblical but it has been the catalyst for the most spiritually spurious rituals of the last century, from the proliferation of false prophets to the so-called binding of territorial spirits to taking dominion over cities, countries, and ultimately the world "for the Lord."

Hearing from and drawing experientially closer to God through techniques (e.g., occult visualization and meditation) is the practice of today's evangelical contemplatives and mystics. Richard Foster and others have derived their so-called spiritual formation approach from Catholic "saints" and mystics. Foster created *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* to biblically support his mystical approach, yet its commentaries libel the Scriptures and demean sound doctrine. Foster introduced Eastern mystical techniques to the church decades ago in *Celebration of Discipline* (quickly adopted as mandatory reading for Campus Crusade leadership). Now his spiritual formation agenda is foundational to the Emerging Church, a widespread movement of 20-to-30-year-old evangelicals who are attracted to the sensual liturgies (candles, incense, chanting, vestments, rituals, statues, icons, etc.) of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy as a supposed means of enhancing their spiritual formation.

Eugene Peterson, a contributor to *The Renovaré Bible*, has his own extremely popular Bible version (*The Message*). Experientialism through alleged poetic license is blatantly manifested throughout this humanistic and culturally acceptable perversion of God's Word, which Rick Warren has done much to promote. Consider Matthew 16:25 in *The Message*: "Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self." Try finding any hint of one's "true self" in any other Bible translation of this verse! This is the leaven of psychotherapy (which is wholly experiential and subjective) that

has permeated the church.

Although on guard against the biblical abuses of the Charismatics, even the most conservative evangelical churches have been seduced by the self-oriented and feelings-sensitive methodologies of psychology. Nothing in contemporary Christianity has raised the cry of "Yea, hath God said...?" in challenging what the Scriptures clearly teach as has so-called Christian psychology. From psychobabble-ized and Christianized 12-Steps programs (e.g., "Celebrate Recovery," which Saddleback has spread into thousands of churches) to the occult-ridden inner-healing ministries (e.g., Elijah House of John and Paula Sandford) to the humanistic self-teachings of Focus on the Family, the psycho-spiritual leaven spreads unabated.

The seeker-sensitive church-growth movement has pushed experientialism (and its close kin, pragmatism) into overdrive through the power of marketing. Sound doctrine, necessarily, is left by the wayside while churches meet the "felt needs" of consumers who are targeted as potential Christians.

Conviction of sin doesn't feel good, nor does it sell well. The wishful thinking of a purpose-driven church that would attract the lost by turning to the world's methods has become a Titanic that has ignored warnings and jettisoned its compass of the doctrine of Christ. While the orchestra searches for a contemporary chorus replacement for "Nearer My God To Thee," the vessel is sinking into the depths of compromise while dispensing temporal lifejackets to save the world from its problems. This is the way that seems right to the world and to an astounding number of those who profess to believe the Bible.

Ironically, our day is seeing *more* Christian media and entertainment, and *more* Bibles of every sort. Yet, the result is a corruption of God's truth because there is no heart for sound biblical doctrine, especially since marketing departments are now leading the way! At best, the evangelical church in the U.S. reflects the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14-17): rich and increased with experiential goods that can only yield shallow Christians; at worst, it has become a willing contributor to the end-times delusion.

Yet even in the face of so troubling a situation, we have reason to be both encouraged and fruitful, that is, *if* we will obey Paul's inspired exhortation: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee [from the growing apostasy]" (1 Timothy 4:16). Let us pray for one another to that end. TBC

Quotable

Our Lord Jesus is ever giving and does not for a solitary moment withdraw His hand as long as there is a vessel of grace not yet full to the brim....He is a sun ever shining; He is manna always falling...a rock in the desert, ever sending out streams of life from His smitten side; the rain of His mercy is always dropping; and the well-spring of His love is constantly overflowing....

Who has ever risen from His table unsatisfied, or from His presence unfulfilled?... Every grain of sand which drops from the glass of time is but the tardy follower of a myriad of mercies....

How shall my soul extol Him who daily...crowns me with lovingkindness? O that my praise could be as ceaseless as His bounty! Miserable tongue, how can you be silent? "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, excerpted from *Uplook*, October 2006

We cannot withhold our conviction that the professing church is as much damaged by laxity and indistinctiveness about matters of doctrine within as it is by skeptics and unbelievers without. Myriads of professing Christians nowadays seem utterly unable to distinguish...what is true and what is false.... If a preacher...is only clever and eloquent and earnest...he is all right, however strange...his sermons....They...cannot detect error.

Bishop J.C. Ryle, one of the strongest defenders of the evangelical faith within the Church of England, 1816-1900

Q&A

QUESTION: When will "every eye see Him" (Revelation 1:7) and every knee bow (Philippians 2:10)?

RESPONSE: This will not occur at the Rapture, because at that time Christ does not come to earth but catches up His espoused bride to meet Him in the air. Only the redeemed who are taken to heaven will see Him: "Looking for that blessed hope...the glorious appearing of...Jesus Christ..." (Ti 2:13); "When he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 Jn 3:2), etc.

It will be at the Second Coming, when He returns to earth in power and judgment that "every eye shall see him...and all kindreds of the earth shall wail..." (Rv 1:7). Then "every knee should bow...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:10,11), etc.

QUESTION: [similar to several others]: While I was in a Baptist church

I heard nothing but "whosoever will may come," "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved," "as many as received Him..."—all of this from man's standpoint. I don't remember any emphasis on the sovereignty of God, election, foreknowledge, predestination or the work of the Spirit drawing to salvation. When our Baptist pastor came under the teaching of some Presbyterians and began teaching these things, it caused a stir in our church. I asked, "God, which am I supposed to believe?"

I was helped greatly by Horatius Bonar's *God's Way of Holiness* and by Jonathan Edwards's view of the will. That man has been endowed with a free will by his Creator is undeniable. But what makes the will make its choices? According to Edwards...our choices are determined by what we think is the most desirable....

[But] the mind of the sinner never thinks God to be a good choice....So unless the Spirit of God moves upon the person and the mind is changed through the miracle of the new birth, our mind... will lead us away from God. Yes, Jesus invites us to come to Him (John 7:37)... but who is it that wills to come? Only... the Father and the Holy Spirit [can] cause...the renewed sinner [to] embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Even Jesus said, "No man can come to me unless the Father...draws him" (John 6:44).

In view of this, the controversy between brothers in Christ...could be put to rest....I appreciate your stand for the truth [but] am grieved with the ongoing controversy over Calvinism and the free will of man.

RESPONSE: I respect your earnest concern. Bonar and Edwards were highly esteemed Christian leaders, but the Bible, not any man, is our authority.

You say that God gave us "free will"—but then you ask, "what makes the will make its choices?" If something or someone "makes the will make its choices," free will is not free. You say that no one has a desire to come to Christ until they are regenerated and "the Father and the Holy Spirit...cause...the renewed sinner to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior." Surely you see the grave contradiction!

If Calvinism is true, God mocks the vast majority of mankind. He calls, "Come unto me," to those who can't respond because He doesn't cause them to come. Yet He will send them to the Lake of Fire for not

coming, even though He could have caused them to come! The literally hundreds of times in the Bible that God calls men to repent and weeps over Israel through His prophets are a further mockery. And He damns forever in the Lake of Fire for not believing the gospel those who *can't* believe unless He regenerates them and gives them the faith—and yet He refuses to do so? Is this the "God" in whom you believe? I hope not.

Of course, God is sovereign and can do whatever He pleases, and we cannot complain. But He assures us that He loves the entire world (Jn 3:16) and would "have all men to be saved" (1 Tm 2:4). Indeed, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16). But this Calvinist God damns multitudes He *could* save. The biblical God does all He can to bring *all men* to Himself, but each one must choose. Of Israel, He laments, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Is 5:4). Jesus wept, "How often would I...and ye would not!" (Lk 13:34).

The word "freewill" appears 17 times in the Old Testament. Calvinists deny free will. They say that only those whom God causes to repent and believe the gospel will do so. Only after He has "regenerated" the sinner can God supposedly, by "irresistible grace," give him faith to believe. But the Bible says, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rv 22:17).

Calvinism says we must be regenerated before God can cause us to believe. The Bible says we are regenerated by believing the gospel: "being born again ('regenerated')...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached..." (1 Pt 1:23-25). John writes, "that believing ye might have life [i.e., be regenerated] through his name" (Jn 20:31). The Bible teaches a new birth through believing the gospel. Calvinism teaches that "regeneration" comes by an act of God before the sinner even believes the gospel. That is clearly not biblical.

This is not "hyper-Calvinism" but the Calvinism of "moderates" such as John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, John Piper, D. James Kennedy, et al. They say that God loves all men—but has a "different love" toward those for whom Christ didn't die and does not want in heaven and thus will not regenerate. That is hardly love, which is why we titled my book, *What Love Is This?* Have you read it? In it I deal with your question in depth. You would benefit from its thorough treatment of the subject.

Does God really want all mankind to be saved (as the Bible says) or just a select elect? Did Christ die for all (as the Bible says) or just for a select group? These are

vital questions that deserve our attention. On our radio programs (*Search the Scriptures Daily*), all available on our website, and in our articles and Q&As of the past 20 years, you won't find an undue emphasis on Calvinism.

You say I deal with Calvinism too much. Yet you complain that only Calvinists talk about the sovereignty of God, election, foreknowledge, predestination, or the work of the Spirit drawing to salvation. Must we remain silent in the face of false views that are presented on these important subjects? Everywhere I go, Christians tell me that Calvinism is causing confusion and division in increasing numbers of churches.

I appreciate your concern and often tell the staff that I prefer not to mention Calvinism—but we try to answer the questions we are asked. I have attempted to avoid direct reference to Calvinism unless absolutely necessary. Ironically, you have caused me to respond to these things once again.

QUESTION: [composite of several]: You object to the idea that there was any death, even of animals, prior to Adam's sin. Yet the scripture you use says "...by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Death passed upon all men. Animals are not mentioned and certainly don't sin. What would preclude animals from dying prior to the fall? You also insist that creation took six literal 24-hour days. Yet Peter said, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). This seems to indicate that God's idea of a day can include much more than 24 hours. Please respond in TBC.

RESPONSE: First of all, the words "day, day's, days', and days" are used thousands of times in the Bible. How can you say that Peter was referring not to any of the other usages but only to the "days" in Genesis 1? And if that really were the case, how can you change his "thousand years" to *billions* of years in order to accommodate the pseudo-scientific evolutionary process? You can't justify that belief from Scripture. This is eisegesis, not exegesis. Had secular science not come up with this idea, surely no one reading the Bible ever would have. And why did secular science do this? Solely because evolution requires *billions of years*. So this is an evolutionary theory, not a biblical one.

Secondly, 1,500 years before Peter, Moses had said: "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past,

and as a watch in the night" (Ps 90:4). Was Peter contradicting Moses? How long is a thousand years with the Lord—a day, or a watch in the night? It can't be both.

Obviously, neither Moses nor Peter said that a day equaled a thousand years with God—and they certainly didn't declare that the six days of creation actually covered billions of years! Both of these spokespersons of the Holy Spirit are simply pointing out that God dwells outside of time and that what seems like a long, long time to us is nothing with God. One cannot read any more than this into these two passages.

As for animals dying *before* Adam's sin, which brought God's judgment of death upon the entire creation, God had pronounced everything He had created as "very good" (Gn 1:31). It seems unreasonable that He would call fighting and eating one another and the death of animals or any other creatures "very good." You are correct that Romans 5:12 doesn't mention animals. But Romans 8:19-23 clearly states that all of creation shared in the curse pronounced upon Adam for his sin and will be delivered from that curse upon "the manifestation of the sons of God" at the resurrection of the redeemed.

QUESTION: Given the ecumenical thinking of many evangelicals today and the acceptance of Roman Catholics as Christians, how would you answer people who say you don't need to evangelize Catholics because they are as saved as we are?

RESPONSE: First of all, one would never say that Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, et al., are all saved. There are many unsaved in the average church congregation. Many Protestant churches have unsaved pastors and few if any real believers as members. This would be true among many churches, even among those that once preached the gospel.

So even if their Church were biblical, Roman Catholics would need to be evangelized. But the situation is far worse. That church not only has not preached the true gospel but has actively and often violently opposed it for more than 1,500 years! Some apostate Protestant churches and denominations still have statements of faith that include the true gospel—but not the Roman Catholic Church. Its doctrines, as stated irrevocably by Church Councils and catechisms, plainly deny the true gospel and teach a false gospel instead.

Yes, Rome does officially teach that Jesus Christ is God, that He came to earth

through a virgin birth, that He died for our sins on the Cross, rose from the dead the third day, and is coming again. But each of these statements carries an unbiblical meaning according to their beliefs: Mary is still a virgin; Jesus is still a babe or hanging on the Cross; forgiveness of sins through Christ's death and resurrection comes only through the Church, its priests, its sacraments (beginning with infant baptism for salvation), and through Mary, the "saints," and good works. The sacrifice of the Mass is essential, during which bread and wine are allegedly transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ to be ingested by the faithful for forgiveness of sins.

Not even the Pope can be sure of his salvation. Roman Catholics represent the largest mission field, badly neglected, as we explain in *A Woman Rides the Beast*, which has led many Catholics to Christ and out of that false church.

Weaning Evangelicals Off the Word—Part 2

By T.A. McMahon

Last month, in part one of this series, we quoted the Apostle Paul speaking about how Christians would view doctrine in the time prior to the return of Christ for His church: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3,4). Obviously, biblical doctrine will not be looked upon favorably. The implication is that doctrine will be regarded as rather burdensome, something that Christians of the future won’t want to “endure.” Conforming to sound doctrine involves spiritual discipline, thoughtful diligence, and making choices based on God’s Word that go against the desires of the flesh.

What is sound doctrine? Very simply, it is the teachings of God, including His instructions, His precepts, His commandments—in short, it is every word that He says from Genesis to Revelation. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). Yet in the Last Days, many if not most Christians will not endure sound doctrine.

So what will be left? Apostasy—a form of Christianity that is a mere shell of what the Bible teaches. It will accommodate the lusts of the flesh under the guise of godliness, as Paul tells us in his second epistle to Timothy. Furthermore, there will be an ample supply of persuasive Christians around who will, wittingly or unwittingly, subtly and not so subtly (but nonetheless surely), subvert sound doctrine. And the process is already well underway.

As we pointed out in part one, Satan’s chief strategy in the seduction of mankind is to undermine, pervert, distort, corrupt, libel, denigrate, and deny the Scriptures by any and every means he can. The end product of his mission will be an apostate religion and church in which its adherents will worship and follow the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness whom Satan will empower. Fulfilling his mission involves a rather simple formula that was terribly effective in the Garden of Eden and throughout the Old Testament and Apostolic times. It has continued throughout church history right up to our present day: to induce humanity to deviate from and then ultimately reject what God has said. Adam and Eve were the first to succumb. An inherited sin nature made their offspring easier prey for

the adversary, the devil, who goes about as a roaring lion, “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

God continually declared to the Israelites that if they obeyed Him they would be blessed, and if they walked in disobedience they would suffer the devastating consequences of their sin: their separation from God, and God’s separation from them, the loss of righteous guidance and protection, and the various disciplinary actions of God, including being subjected to His wrath. Israel’s wilderness experiences in Exodus and through the cycles of rebellion and repentance in the book of Judges testify to the fact of God being true to His word and His warnings. Deuteronomy seems to be an exercise in redundancy as Moses again and again issues God’s instructions to the children of Israel and cautions them to *carefully* obey what He has commanded. It wasn’t just a matter of law, but of *life*: “And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life” (Deuteronomy 32:46,47).

Samuel, the prophet and judge, echoes Moses’ exhortation more than three centuries later: “Serve the LORD with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain” (1 Samuel 12:20,21). Not only is turning from God a pursuit after vanity, something worthless, but the process itself is wickedness: “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Samuel 15:23). Samuel’s inspired analogy underscores not only the evil of rebellion as it relates to idolatry but it provides insight that helps us recognize Satan’s *inducements* to disobedience that are prevalent in the church today.

Idolatry was the dominant issue. The children of Israel were commanded not to make graven images or gods of silver or gold (Exodus 20:3,4,23). What was their reply? “All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exodus 24:7). Yet days later, when Moses failed to return from Mount Sinai and fear set in, they turned from the words of God to what they supposed would better meet their emotional and spiritual “felt needs.” They fashioned a physical object to worship—a golden calf.

Although their act was unmitigated rebellion against God, let’s consider what very likely influenced their thinking. Their spiritual leader had disappeared. Panic gripped them. They were more comfortable with the physical forms of worship learned from the Egyptians than with instructions

from an invisible God. Perhaps Aaron thought the best way to pacify the people was to give them something their physical senses could relate to—something *experientially* reassuring.

What’s wrong with taking a wholistic approach, i.e., meeting the needs of body, mind, and spirit? Wouldn’t their worship of a *physical* thing, as well as the *spiritual* stimulation of ritual, be “acceptable,” as long as it was directed toward the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Aaron must have thought so. He crafted a golden calf, built an altar, oversaw the liturgy, and dedicated the feast “unto the Lord.” The Israelites’ response was a precursor to the spirit of religious ecumenism and compromise, so prevalent in our day, which is also based upon lies: “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 32:4).

We urgently need a biblical understanding of what idolatry comprises. Old Testament examples and the admonitions against it are given by God. Why would they be relevant for us? Because the evangelical church today is following Aaron’s example! Most Christians would define idolatry as “whatever takes the place of God in our lives.” True. Yet, too often, that rather general answer fails to help us understand the ways and means by which idolatry works. Consequently, we may not have the discernment necessary to be on our guard against it.

Why is idolatry so critical? Let’s start with the obvious: The Bible defines idols as false gods (Psalm 96:5). They are items of deception and, even worse, the creations of men and devils. To worship them is delusion. The veneration itself often consists of debauchery and depravity, ritual activities completely given over to the physical senses. Idolatry involves materialism and experientialism, totally oriented toward the flesh. The so-called gods are physically represented and sensually worshiped. Most evangelicals know all this, but what many seem not to understand today is the *nature* of idolatry and how it subverts our worship of the true and living God.

The worship God desired from the Israelites, His people whom He set apart to receive His Messiah, stands in stark contrast to the religious endeavors of the heathen nations. Rather than giving them images, Moses spoke the *words* of God to them, and then he wrote the words in a Book. “And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD...and he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people” (Exodus 24:4,7). He told them (then wrote it down) that the making of images to represent God is condemned: “Thou shalt not make unto thee

any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Exodus 20:4-5).

Why would God give such a command? Because no image that man could ever draw, engrave, paint, sculpt, fashion through any medium, or conjure up in his mind could truly represent Jehovah God. He is *infinite* (1 Kings 8:27). He is *spirit* (John 4:24). He is *invisible* (John 1:18). Even the God-prescribed places of worship were drastically different from their pagan counterparts. There was nothing physical to worship! The Holy of Holies within the tabernacle, and later in Solomon's temple, contained not the *image* of God but the *Word* of God, represented by the Ark of the Covenant. Contained within the Ark was the Testimony of God, the second set of tablets written by God's own hand (Deuteronomy 10:1,2). Again, by the design of God, the emphasis is on *the Word*.

God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through words, not images. In like manner, worship must be through *His Word*, according to *His Word*.

No doubt He selected words because they are best suited to convey precisely what He wants mankind to know and to do. Words have definite meanings and can be interpreted objectively. Only words, spoken or written, can come close to accurately communicating attributes of our transcendent God and His divine nature. On the other hand, worship aroused by imagery is based upon the imagination rather than upon the teachings of Scripture. Religious images can at best only convey information in a symbolic and superficial way. Their interpretations are mostly subjective, experiential, and rely mainly upon the imagination of the observer. The message of the Bible, however, is not about aesthetic gratification but about our redemption; it's not about our *feelings* but His *truth*, which images can never express but only oppose. Jesus prayed to His Father for His disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word is truth*" (John 17:17).

The theology of the Bible is instructional. It is given in words so that man can understand it. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7). The Bible encourages faith that is founded upon evidence, logic, and reason. No image-reliant belief system can make those claims, and when the people of the Book turn to religious imagery, they are abandoning reason and following idolatry. That happened to the Israelites throughout their history, including when they were

instructed by God to make a bronze serpent as a *symbol* that ultimately pointed to Christ's death on the Cross, in payment for the sins of the world. They later turned it into an object of idolatry and as a consequence God told them to destroy it (2 Kings 18:4).

Throughout its history, Christendom has likewise succumbed to idolatry through imagery and liturgical ritual. Roman Catholic tradition credits St. Veronica as having captured the image of Christ upon her veil, which supposedly became the source for later icons, paintings, and engravings of Jesus. St. Veronica continues to be venerated today when Catholics observe the ritual of the Stations of the Cross. Eastern Orthodoxy developed icons of Christ, Mary, and the Saints as devices for mystically transcending the temporal through imagery that enables one to "spiritually see" indescribable divinity. In the ninth century, the Russian Orthodox Church incorporated icons as a central part of their worship, including a form of divination known as "praying through the icons." Again, this is religious rebellion, which the Scriptures tell us is as the sin of witchcraft.

The Emperor Constantine did much to introduce idolatrous imagery into Christianity in order to appease the multitudes of pagans he coerced into joining his newly favored religion of the realm. It was during the Middle Ages, however, that the Roman Catholic Church greatly increased its use of visual imagery. Religious statues, paintings, reliefs, the display of relics, as well as expanded liturgies with the use of luxurious vestments, incense, candles, and processions were increasingly emphasized to encourage the participation of the mostly illiterate population. Rather than educate the people, the Church of Rome fed them an experiential, visual theology that prolonged their ignorance of the Scriptures and bred superstition. By God's grace, Gutenberg's printing press in the fifteenth century and the Reformation in the sixteenth century were instrumental in helping to turn those who "protested" against the abuses of the Catholic Church back to the Bible.

Astonishingly, the evangelical church is progressively sliding into idolatry as it turns from the Word of God to visual imagery. A goal of the American Bible Society is to put the entire Bible on video to accommodate our visually oriented generation (which has little interest in reading). *The Jesus Film*, a dramatic representation of the Gospel of Luke, has been the staple of Campus Crusade's overseas evangelical efforts. The very Catholic movie *The Passion of the Christ* became a runaway box-office hit, largely due to the overwhelming support

it received from evangelicals. Biblically conservative mission organizations such as Gospel for Asia are using Mel Gibson's Hollywood production as part of its outreach program. Millions of *The Passion of the Christ* DVDs were purchased by evangelical churches for their Sunday schools, Bible studies, and small group meetings.

Religious movies are on the rise (e.g., *The Nativity Story*, *One Night with the King*) as evangelicals "partner" with Hollywood and demonstrate that they are an eager and profitable market. One pastor, whose church bought out theaters for private showings of *The Passion* (which produced only "one conversion") repented. He came under the conviction that rather than partnering with, his church was, in fact, "pimping for Hollywood." As true as that may be, and as praiseworthy as his repentance was, if he doesn't understand the serious nature (as explained above) of attempting to represent God's Word in dramatic visual form, he is vulnerable to repeating the same error with visual idolatry.

This is not a blanket condemnation of the film/video medium, but films cannot be used to present the Scriptures visually without becoming idolatrous. Not only are the images historically false (they are conjured up from the imagination of a screenwriter or director) but they must also conform to the mechanics of the medium (acting, cinematography, art direction, lighting, music, sound effects, etc.), which are designed to manipulate the senses and the emotions for dramatic purposes (see *Showtime for the Sheep?*, www.thebereanall.org for a more detailed explanation).

Biblical movies are just one trend among dozens that are contributing to weaning evangelicals off the Word of God and producing biblically illiterate Christians. This is especially true regarding our visually oriented youth. In the final part of this series, we want to give more extensive examples of movements within evangelical Christianity that are aggressively turning our next generation away from the Scriptures and toward an idolatry of experientialism.

We serve a merciful God who can rescue a soul out of the darkest of circumstances but who will not support by His grace man's religious ways and means in their attempts to serve Him. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 55:8). To the degree that we deviate from *His way*, we are lapsing into idolatry. As Jesus explained, "God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). **TBC**

Quotable

God loves broken things and broken people. As Vance Havner wrote, "It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that sheds forth perfume. It is Jacob limping from Jabbok who has power with God and men. It is Peter weeping bitterly who returns to greater power than ever."

William MacDonald, The Forgotten Command: Be Holy, 195

Out of the heart "are the issues of life...." As our thoughts are, so are our affections... our prayers, and all else.... God... knows the thoughts and judges them.... In what does the difficulty of Christianity lie [but] in keeping of the thoughts in bounds. Without this, all religion is but "bodily exercise." Papists may mumble over their prayers, hypocrites may talk, but this is godliness.

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), The Vanity of Thoughts, 28

Careless seems the great Avenger;
history's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness
twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong
forever on the throne—
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and,
behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keep-
ing watch above His own.

James Russell Lowell, 1819-1891

Q&A

QUESTION: I love *TBC*. It keeps me informed on the issues that the fundamentalist sect of Christianity is concerned with.... I'm an "informed atheist"...in that I'm just as knowledgeable about the Bible, its god and related subjects as either Dave or T.A. Tell Dave I read *In Six Days*. That book confirmed why sectarian religious views and science are incompatible. I was saddened at the waste of the 50 authors' minds. As you are aware, the greatest enemy of religion is reason (Martin Luther), for it exposes "faith" as the emperor's new clothes that it is. All one has to do to overthrow atheism...is to obey Paul when he says the gospel isn't word only, but a demonstration of the Spirit's power. How hard can it be for an *In-Six-Days* god to put arms, legs, and other missing body parts on the fine Christian men/women who were deceived by Bush to fight for God and

country in Iraq? Perhaps Biblegod could "stop" the sun—which Hezekiah says is a "light" thing...Even something as easy as causing an iron axehead to "swim" will suffice. How hard can any of this be for a real God? (Humans making excuses for their God's inaction is unworthy of a real, divine being.) Man has invented close to 6,000,000 gods! All of you at *The Berean Call* are atheists concerning all but one! I have simply added that one to the pile of would-be gods. Love your newsletter.

RESPONSE [as promised in Letters section last month]: Apparently TBC hasn't helped you but has only given your atheist mill more grist for mocking God. That fact either reflects our incompetence—or your unwillingness to admit the truth that would bow you before your Creator. You are not as knowledgeable about the Bible as you think you are. Instead, you exemplify the scripture that says, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tm 3:7).

We encourage readers to "search the Scriptures daily." Neither the Scriptures nor TBC promotes "sectarian religious views." If you knew the Bible as well as you claim, you would know that it is not about religion. The words "religion" and "religious" are found only seven times in the entire Bible—six times referring to false religion, and only once to true religion—which is not what you think it is. You think science and religion are at odds, yet the National Academy of Sciences says they are not.

You say that faith is unscientific, "the emperor's new clothes." But hundreds of top scientists, past and present, disagree with you. William D. Phillips, who won the 1997 Nobel Prize in chemistry, once said that so many of his colleagues were Christians that he couldn't walk across his church's fellowship hall without "tripping over a dozen physicists...." You seem to be out of touch with science and scientists. Has your atheism blinded you to the truth?

Astronauts are scientists. The crew of Apollo 8 (William Anders, James Lovell, and Frank Borman) have all been inducted into the Astronaut Hall of Fame. They were the first humans to circle the moon, and on the evening of December 24, 1968, broadcast back to earth their reading of the first 10 verses in Genesis. They introduced this passage about God creating the universe with these words, "For all the people on Earth the crew of Apollo 8 has a message we would like to send you."

Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were

the first men to walk on the moon. The first food or drink ever ingested on the moon was the bread and wine Aldrin had brought to celebrate communion. And you say science and religion are incompatible and mock believers as unscientific? You are really out of touch!

As for "sectarian religious views," not one of the 50 scientist authors of *In Six Days* promotes such. These Christians are all competent scientists, respected in their fields, from Biology to Physics, Biochemistry to Genetics, Mathematics to Geophysics, Botany to Geology, etc.

Your suggestion that scientists must be atheists contradicts the facts and reveals either ignorance or prejudice. The greatest scientists of all time, the founders of science, nearly all believed in God. Among believers were: Aggasiz, Bacon, Bell, Boyle, Copernicus, Cuvier, Descarte, Fabre, Faraday, Joule, Kelvin, Kepler, Maxwell, Mendel, Newton, Pascal, Pasteur, and too many others to name. Boyle even left a fund to support lectures refuting atheism that still continue at Oxford today. Newton published more material devoted to the Bible than about mathematics and physics. Is your ignorance showing, or is it just prejudice?

You claim to know the Bible yet say that "the greatest enemy of religion is reason"? You haven't heeded God's challenge: "Come now, and let us reason together" (Is 1:18). Perhaps you overlooked the many times that Paul *reasoned* with Jews and Gentiles *from the Scriptures*. Or maybe you've forgotten that Peter reminds believers always to be ready to give a *reason* for why they believe (1 Pt 3:15).

It is irrational to blame God for what Bush or any other man does in His name. And it is equal folly to blame God for wars and other evil and suffering in the world. This is not the world God made but the world *we* have made in our selfish rebellion against Him. Of course TBC doesn't honor the false gods that foolish men have invented. But even if there were a billion, that would be no reason to say there could not be one true God.

QUESTION: Have you read former President Carter's new book *Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid*? Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center has said that Carter's book is "blatantly one-sided and unbecoming of a former president." I was wondering what your thoughts are.

RESPONSE: Yes, I've read that brazenly anti-Israel book. Israel is blamed for

everything, the Arabs are whitewashed. Arafat is called “a strong leader...well-educated...[who] turned much of his attention to raising funds for the care and support of the refugees and inspiring worldwide contributions to their cause.” No mention is made that Arafat and his PLO murdered thousands, or that he siphoned off billions for his Swiss bank accounts, lied continually, and never kept *one* promise that he made to Israel. Carter writes as an unabashed promoter of PLO and Muslim lies, which he passes off as the informed truth, for example: that Arabs, PLO, or “Palestinians” have never threatened Israel, have always wanted peace and have done all they could to effect it, and that the land of Israel belongs to them as descendants of the original inhabitants—none of this true!

Carter dares to say that the Israeli kibbutz dwellers in 1948, who had few and inferior weapons, were “better armed” than the regular armies of the six Arab nations (600,000 against 60,000) who attacked Israel with tanks and planes, of which Israel had none. He says it was “the continuing state of war between Israel and its neighbors [that] caused many Jews to flee Syria, Iraq, and other Arab countries to Israel.” No, it was 1,300 years of perpetual persecution and murder of thousands that caused Jews to flee to Israel when it became a nation and offered the first refuge they’d ever had.

Carter’s claim that in 1993 Arafat and his PLO “recognized the right of Israel to exist in peace and security...renounced the use of terrorism [and] those articles of the PLO covenant that deny Israel’s right to exist” is not true. He blames “Israeli repression” of Palestinian rights for the terrorist attacks against Israel, exonerating the Arabs. He accuses Israel of imposing “apartheid” upon the “Palestinians” and says, “Peace will come...when the Israeli government is willing to comply with international law... by accepting its legal borders.”

Carter is scandalously dishonest. In fact, Israel *accepted* the borders set by the UN in 1948. “Palestinians” could have been living in peace for the last 60 years, had they done likewise. Instead, the Arabs refused to accept the existence of an Israel of *any* size, attacked to annihilate her, and have sought to destroy her ever since. Any land Israel ever took was in self-defense against an enemy that will not recognize her existence (no Arab map in the world shows Israel). Why should Israel retreat to the indefensible borders dictated by the UN in 1948 (as Carter advocates), which the Arabs refused to accept?

Never in history has an attack upon any country *other than Israel* been for the purpose of annihilation, which has been sworn to repeatedly by the Arab world. Muslims must destroy Israel—or renounce their religion, Allah, Muhammad, and the Qur’an. Never was any nation *except Israel* blamed for failing to make peace with an enemy whose openly stated and irreversible goal was its total destruction. Never was a nation so pressured by the world to surrender territory taken in self-defense as has been Israel. Carter’s book justifies the Muslim desire to destroy Israel in order to make “peace.” In contrast, we give you the shocking truth in *Judgment Day*.

QUESTION: Our church says you must speak in tongues or you don’t have the Holy Spirit. Is tongues for all?

RESPONSE: Not a single verse says that the sign of having “received the Holy Spirit” is to speak in tongues. No one can be saved without being indwelt and sealed with the Holy Spirit. A Christian has been “born again...of the Spirit” (Jn 3:7,8) and “by one Spirit...baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). Those whom Paul asked, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost...?” (Acts 19:2-4) were not yet Christians. They were followers of John the Baptist and had never heard the gospel of Christ until Paul explained it to them.

Paul asks a rhetorical question: “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing?” (1 Cor 12:29,30).

The obvious answer is, “No. Not every Christian is an apostle, prophet, teacher, worker of miracles, healer, etc.” There is no reason for the next two questions to have a different answer: “Do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” Of course not—unless all are apostles, prophets, and workers of miracles.

The spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 are said to be distributed by the Holy Spirit when and to whom He wills. “Tongues” is part of this list. Just as no one can prophecy or heal at his own initiative or power, so no one can speak in tongues except as given *at the time* by the Holy Spirit. A basic error of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements has been to put tongues in a different category—a “gift” that one can “learn,” should continually “practice,” and can use whenever one pleases. That is not biblical.

One might as well practice walking on water or raising the dead as “practice speaking in tongues.” We do not get any gift from

God by *practicing*. That false teaching has led multitudes astray and causes “tongues speakers” (including leaders) so often to fall into immorality.

“Tongues” is the most dangerous gift. One could hardly deceive anyone to believe that he was raising the dead or restoring a missing limb. But it is quite easy to deceive oneself and others into thinking one is speaking in tongues. Millions have been and still are under this delusion, with serious consequences evident everywhere.

QUESTION: Why is Israel giving up land—and when will she once again have all the land God promised her?

RESPONSE: The United States, UN, EU, and most of the world have been pressuring Israel ever since 1948 to give back the land she was forced to take in self-defense when attacked by Muslim neighbors determined to annihilate her. Tiny Israel is blamed for the terrorist attacks and wars that Arabs start. She depends upon Europe to buy her produce and upon the world to buy her electronics. If the nations boycotted her products (as some Christian denominations have advocated), how could she survive? Although Israel is under God’s judgment for centuries of rebellion against Him, she is also under His protection. There can be no other explanation for the fact that she exists today.

Israel will only possess in peace all the land God promised her when Christ intervenes at Armageddon to rescue her, all Israel believes He is the Messiah, and He sets up His kingdom over her and the world on the throne of David. This is declared clearly in Ezekiel 36-39, Zechariah 12-14, and elsewhere.

Why Everything Is the Way It Is

Dave Hunt

The prevailing view in today's media, public schools, and surrounding society is that the Bible isn't true, no educated person believes in God, and science is the key to life's mysteries. The lie of evolution becomes so deeply implanted that deliverance is increasingly difficult.

The world rejects "God says" and accepts "science says" as the ultimate truth. Few realize that science cannot answer the important questions: why the universe and life exist, and why every child knows the difference between right and wrong and believes that God exists until taught "better."

Few know what leading scientists admit. Max Planck, father of Quantum Theory, declared: "Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature."¹ We don't know what time, space, matter, or energy are—much less the soul and spirit.

Why? cannot be addressed to the universe but only to its Creator. One cannot reason with an earthquake or a hurricane. There is no sympathy in "Nature." Nobel laureate Erwin Schrödinger, one of the architects of quantum mechanics, wrote:

The scientific picture of the real world around me is...ghastly silent about all that... really matters to us...It knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity....

Whence came I and whither go I? That is the great unfathomable question...for every one of us. Science has no answer to it.²

Science knows nothing of truth—only physical facts. Lee Smolin, founding member of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Canada, has said: "When a child asks, 'What is the world?' we literally have nothing to tell...."³

The question *why?* irritates atheists because the maker decides the purpose for whatever is made. Without a Creator, neither the universe nor life has any meaning. Without God, there is no reason for a rose bud or for the dew that makes it shimmer in the morning sun—or for anything else that we hold dear and enjoy, including human existence itself.

Why is everything the way it is? Because God is the way He is. But who is this God? Is he Zeus of the Greeks, Brahman of the Hindus, Allah of Islam? Does it matter? Can't we just acknowledge a "higher power"? *Higher* than what? *Power?* No

impersonal "power" could create personal beings. Nor could any "force" conceive and write in words on DNA the directions for constructing and operating all living things.

Atheism leads to numerous absurdities promoted by otherwise intelligent people. Sir Francis Crick, Nobel laureate as co-discoverer of the DNA language, begins his book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*:

You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.⁴

If this is the way the universe made us, why does Crick call it *Astonishing?* He knows it is contrary to common sense. Yet to cling to his atheism he must persist in such madness. However, most people would firmly object to Crick's description. Any thinking person knows he weighs choices carefully, experiences joys, sorrows, hopes, ambitions, fears, remorse, and regrets that are very real. But "science says" is a holy mantra that causes every knee to bow—except those who will not worship Baal (1 Ki 19:18). Biologist Richard Lewontin defiantly boasts:

We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs... for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.⁵

Arch atheist and outspoken enemy of God, Richard Dawkins, claims that we are merely vehicles through which "selfish genes" perpetuate themselves. Yet he says genes have no foresight. They do not plan ahead. Genes just *are*. He also states, "Much as we might wish to believe otherwise, universal love and the welfare of the species... are concepts that simply do not make evolutionary sense."⁶ What an admission!

If evolution makes us incapable of true love, morals, or ethics, *why* do we admire these qualities? How can we be so *unnatural*, if we are the offspring of nature? Crick and Dawkins seem embarrassed that many of the human qualities that everyone possesses could not have been produced by evolution. We do not think and act like we should if we were evolved from lower creatures.

The language component in the human gene "is identical in every particular to [that in] a snail. [Only] the *sequence* of building blocks is...different...."⁷ The organizational genius behind DNA is breathtaking. Using the same four letters for plants, animals, and man, distinction is maintained not

only between all kinds of living things but between individuals of each kind. This ingenious arrangement sets bounds which make it *impossible* for DNA of one kind of life to change into DNA of another kind.

Unquestionably, the DNA language, which is the basis of all life, did not and cannot evolve. The similarity between man's DNA and that of all animals is no more evidence that man evolved from animals than is the similarity in human and plant DNA evidence that we evolved from plants.

Evolution did not make us. God made us. But atheists cling to evolution as an escape from accountability to God. Darwin's theory was his revenge against the god he could no longer believe in, the "god" that had allowed his daughter, Annie, to die. Darwinism's atheism prevents science from knowing *why* things are as they are. Without God there is no answer to the *why* for anything. Yet here we are in a vast and awesome universe and common sense cries out for a *reason* for its existence and ours.

Why is everything the way it is? Only because God, who created it all, is the way He is. And why is God the way He is? Because, unlike the capricious gods of non-Christian religions, God revealed Himself to Moses thus: "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex 3:14). Consistently the Bible's God declares, "I am the LORD, I change not (Mal 3:6)." God is outside of, and untouched by, the time and change so evident in our world.

Dawkins says, "Genes just *are*." No, genes are not self-existent and eternal. They had to have a Maker. God alone has no maker but is the Maker of all: self-existent, uncreated, unchanging, perfect, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. For God to be God, this is who He must be.

Why is everything the way it is? Because God, who made all, is the way He is. Of the newly created universe, we read: "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gn 1:31). Why was everything "good"? Because God who made everything is good: "There is none good but one, that is God" (Mt 19:17).

Even in its present corrupt state, much in the universe is still so beautiful that it thrills and moves us deeply because the God who made it is beautiful. David wrote: "I seek [to] dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord..." (Ps 27:4). We need greater appreciation of God's beauty!

Why is there some apparent "good" even in a Hitler or a Stalin? Nazi extermination camp guards who had presided over the murder of Jews all day could come home at night, kiss their wives, play with their

children, and enjoy listening to Wagner. This is because God, who is good, made man in His image (Gn 1:26,27). Although sin separated all mankind from a holy God, a remnant of the image of God in which we were created remains. Yet everything man touches, even love, is corrupted.

The man who persuades a woman to live with him without marriage tells her, "I love you." But what he may mean (perhaps unknown even to him) could be, "I love myself, and I want *you*." Only too late they may discover that this is what both of them mean by "love."

Why the blight, rot, and death that taunts us everywhere? This, too, is because God is the way He is. Without God, whose character reveals and condemns it, there would be no sin; and without God's law written in man's conscience, there would be no knowledge of sin: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (Is 45:7).

How could a good God create evil? The same way the God who is light creates darkness. A person who was born and died in a cave in total darkness would not know he was in the dark until someone shined a light. The light suddenly reveals the darkness for what it is; and God's holy perfection reveals evil for what it is. The haunting memory of paradise lost lingers elusively in man's heart. Why must it be this way? Because the God who is good is also holy and just—and man, made in His image, rebelled.

What about eternal torment in the Lake of Fire? That, too, is because God is love and God is just. He created man to live forever in the joy of His love—not as an "extra" but as man's very life. Those who reject God's love consign themselves to the eternal torment of a burning thirst for the One who made them for Himself. Heaven will be the eternal satisfaction of the living water flowing "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rv 22:1). Hell will be eternally dying from burning thirst for God, the horror of fully knowing one's sin and rebellion, and the realization that one is there only because of rejecting Christ.

"God is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16). Love is the essence of His being. He loves us and wants to forgive us; but He is also holy and just. For God to forgive sinners without the full penalty being paid would contradict His justice and make Him our partner in evil. Christ fully paid that penalty for our sins—but the pardon must be willingly and gladly received. God will not force anyone into heaven.

Atheists scoff, "How could a good God create this evil world? If God can't stop suffering and death, He is too weak to be

God; and if He could but doesn't, He is a monster unworthy of our trust." In fact, this is not the world God made but the one we made in rebellion against Him. Don't blame God for what we have done to His once-perfect world!

Why did God allow man to rebel? That fact, too, is true because "God is love." We can neither receive and enjoy His love nor love Him in return (or love one another) without the power of choice. Love is from the heart. The ability to say "yes" means nothing without the equal ability to say "no." Tragically, Adam and Eve, chose to say "no" to God and to follow Satan. The entire universe suffers as a result: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now...waiting..." (Rom 8:20-23).

Those who reject the truth reject God. Sir David Attenborough, producer of decades of TV programs promoting evolution, argued:

The God you believe in...an all-merciful God created...a parasitic worm...that can live in no other way than in an innocent child's eyeball [in West Africa]?⁸

No, that is not the way the universe was at the beginning. And during the millennial reign of Christ, the world will be restored to its original condition, without animals devouring one another, without microbes and parasites preying on other living things: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb... the leopard shall lie down with the kid... the calf and the young lion...together; and a little child shall lead them....The lion shall eat straw like the ox...the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD..." (Is 11:6-9).

In Christ alone, and His payment of the penalty for our sins upon the Cross, we find reconciliation to God and ultimate meaning and purpose. "All things were made by him..." (Jn 1:2). O mystery! The babe born in Bethlehem was and forever is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father" (Is 9:6). Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30).

How can we understand and better know this infinite God? He made us for Himself, and we naturally thirst for Him: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God..." (Ps 42:2). Yet those in rebellion foolishly attempt to quench that thirst in earthly possessions, pleasures, and pride. It was to reveal God to man as the only One who could fulfill that inner longing that Jesus, God's "only begotten" Son (Jn 1:14; 3:16, etc.) was born into this world.

The suffering that Christ endured at men's hands revealed the evil in all of our hearts.

That suffering, which we inflicted upon Him, could not save us. It was the punishment for our sins that Jesus suffered on the Cross under God's wrath against sin that made it possible for all to be forgiven who believe on Him. It is because He fully paid that penalty in our place that He can say, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (Jn 7:37).

He who was born of a virgin and fully man is also fully God: "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col 2:9); who being the brightness of his [God the Father's] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power...by himself purged our sins..." (Heb 1:3).

Paul declared, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tm 3:16). Though now we only dimly understand ("we see through a glass darkly [and] know in part"—1 Cor 13:12), we have the glorious promise that the more we by faith look upon, meditate upon, and understand our Lord Jesus Christ, the more clearly we see Him and become like Him: "But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18).

The revelation of Christ, for which our souls thirst, thrills us increasingly as we more clearly understand who He is in all His fullness and what He accomplished to reconcile us to Himself. Something of His glorious person is beautifully expressed in Graham Kendrick's hymn:

Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity,
In perfect harmony—the man who is God;
Lord of eternity, dwells in humanity,
Kneels in humility, and washes our feet.

Father's pure radiance, perfect in innocence,
Yet learns obedience to death on a cross;
Suffering to give us life,
Conquering through sacrifice—
And as they crucify, prays, "Father, forgive."

Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible,
Love indestructible in frailty appears;
Lord of infinity, stooping so tenderly
Lifts our humanity
To the heights of his throne.

Oh, what a mystery—Meekness and
majesty;
Bow down and worship,
For this is your God,
This is your God!

Quotable

Countless “Christians” today believe...“because it works” (pragmatism), because they “feel it is true in their experience” (subjectivism), because they sincerely believe it is true “for them” (relativism), and so on....The Christian faith is not true because it works; it works because it is true. It is not true because we experience it; we experience it—deeply and gloriously—because it is true.

Os Guinness, Time for Truth, 58

When the Christian life becomes a lifestyle and no longer a relationship with a Person—rather than growing in the grace and knowledge of the Savior, we will develop in the art of refining, polishing, and perfecting the flesh. Then we can have the programs and activities, methods and formulas, strategies and procedures, systems and theologies, political involvement and community service...religious causes...“how-to” seminars and self-help books...and even outstanding character qualities—all without Christ as our sufficiency! Our flesh is very creative and knows how to make itself appear and act spiritual. But it is still the flesh, and it is rotten to the core!

Jerry Benjamin, Simply Singular: Is Christ Prominent or Preeminent?, 22-23

Q&A

QUESTION: Enclosed is a booklet by Harold Camping titled, *What Must I Do to Become Saved?* I would appreciate your opinion about what he says.

RESPONSE: Harold Camping is a confused man who is leading many astray. He owns and controls everything that is said on Family Radio Network (40 + stations and 100 + translators). His unbiblical teaching goes out in 23 languages by short wave. Very little outside ministry is aired on his network. He believes that the church replaced Israel and that the Church Age ended in 1988; God is done with organized churches, we are to worship only in our homes, listen to Family Radio, and follow Camping. In these fellowships there is no authority except Camping’s teachings, no baptism, no breaking of bread.

In 1992 he wrote and self-published *1994?*, which predicted that the world would end September 6, 1994. When that didn’t happen, he decided (as did Ellen G. White of the Seventh-day Adventists

for 1844 and Charles Taize Russell of the Jehovah’s Witnesses for 1874, then 1914), that the date was right but the interpretation wrong. Then, in 2002, Camping published *The End of the Church Age...and After*. He says the Bible’s meaning is progressively revealed, and much previously unknown is now being revealed through him. The “end of the world” will now be 2011. So says his 2005 book titled *Time Has an End: A Biblical History of the World, 11,013 BC - 2011 AD*. He’s way off on the “BC” also.

His background is Dutch Reformed and his Calvinism dominates the booklet mentioned: You can’t know whether you are one of the elect for whom Christ died—you can hope you are, but there is nothing one can do about it. Admitting this hopeless fact is required for salvation. He says:

God...can save an elect individual at any time....The only requirement is [to] be under the hearing of the Bible. At the moment of salvation, God gives that individual spiritual ears and a new eternal soul. Thus, a baby [as Calvin said] can be saved as readily as a mature adult....At an appropriate time...God will cause this person to actually experience the wonderful fact of salvation [and] a new resurrected soul.

Under the heading on page 17, “What Must I Do to Become Saved?”, he responds: “I cannot do anything....I must patiently wait upon the mercy of God....It is entirely possible that I, too...could be one of those who are chosen by God to become saved.” He says that verses such as, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” don’t tell the sinner how to get saved. Why? “When God is speaking to unsaved people, He is speaking to spiritual corpses [but] one here, one in another place...begins to believe...finds in their life a strong desire to obey the Bible [because] Jesus [has] created within them a new soul [with] eternal life...because they had been chosen by God from before the beginning of creation.”

So the “good news” we preach to the world is not that anyone may believe on Christ and be saved but that *maybe* one was elected unto salvation. We can’t know for sure, but if we’re one of the elect, God will give us a new “resurrected” soul and cause us to believe and to love His Word.

Some of the most revered Christian leaders of today teach this same Calvinism but more subtly. We hear, from around the world, of Calvinism infiltrating evangelical churches and causing division. We also hear of many, including leaders, being rescued from Calvinism through reading *What Love Is This?*

QUESTION: John Hagee says we should not witness to the Jewish people; God will take care of them. Is this biblical?

RESPONSE: Speaking at the last Pre-trib Seminar in Dallas, Hagee said he had never taught this. In fact, he has taught it a number of times. The *Houston Chronicle* (4/30/88, sec. 6, p. 1) quoted Hagee, “I’m not trying to convert the Jewish people to the Christian faith...trying to convert Jews is a waste of time.”

It only takes a few Bible verses to expose this serious heresy condemned by Paul in Galatians 1. The first Christians were all Jews. Peter preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost to Jews. The early Christians and apostles thought the gospel was *only for Jews* and preached “the word...unto the Jews only” (Acts 11:19). God had to give Peter a vision to get him to preach to Gentiles (Acts 10:9-16). In every town Paul entered, he first went into the synagogue, where he preached to the Jews, and only when they rejected the gospel did he turn to the Gentiles (Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14-46; 14:1; 17:2, etc.). Why did he always offer salvation to the Jews first? Because, as we are clearly told, “the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation...to the Jew first...” (Rom 1:16).

QUESTION (Representative of several): I was listening to the *Bible Answer Man* when someone called in to ask Hank [Hanegraaff] about Dave Hunt. Please respond to what he said (from a transcript): “Dave Hunt has been a popular Christian author...and I think it’s ironic that his organization is called *The Berean Call*, because the Bereans were counted as being more noble by the apostle Paul because daily they examined the scriptures to see if what he was saying was so....If you examine...what Dave Hunt is saying...you will find out that he errs quite consistently in his interpretation of scripture.

“He, for example, will tell you that the great whore of Babylon in Revelation 17 (he wrote a book about it) is the Roman Catholic Church, so he is slandering an already vulnerable target....This statement is absolutely reprehensible. I’m going to point this out in a book that I just finished which is called, *The Apocalypse Code*....

“He is also a sensationalist. He was right about Y2K for all the wrong reasons...he imposed his dispensational theology, his rapture theory...on Y2K to come up with a particular interpretation of Y2K and I debunk that in a book

that I wrote called *The Millennium Bug Debugged...I wrote this book and came to the same conclusion, which was that Y2K was not going to be a big problem... but a lot of people were jumping on it and making all kinds of interpretations about it, but they were doing it [by] imposing their particular model of eschatology on the scripture as Dave Hunt did when he wrote *A Woman Rides the Beast*. So yeah, this is a guy that you need to be very careful with because if you test what he says in light of scripture you'll find out that he gets it wrong more often than not."*

RESPONSE: Whenever Hank is asked about me, this is his standard response. It is slanderous. I gave a more detailed response 11 years ago (*TBC Q&A* May 1996).

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest, wealthiest, and most powerful institution in history and the world today. Yet Hank describes it as a "vulnerable target." What?! I'm *slandering* it by identifying it as the whore in Revelation 17-18? The angel gives to John fourteen identifying characteristics that fit the Vatican (and nothing else) perfectly. This is how Luther and the Reformers and the thousands of true Christians down through history whom the RCC slaughtered (including even some Roman Catholic leaders) have always identified the "whore." Of these martyrs, the great historian, Will Durant, wrote, "The Roman Church, they were sure, was the Whore of Babylon." Eimerius, an inquisitor appointed by Pope Innocent III 350 years before the Reformation, said of the Waldensian Christians, whom the RCC was attempting to exterminate, "They claim [that] the Roman Church is the whore described in John's Revelation." Even St. Bonaventure, cardinal and general of the Franciscans, in his commentary on the Apocalypse, 300 years before the Reformation, called Rome "the harlot who makes kings and nations drunk with the wine of her whoredoms." D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "I would not hesitate with the Reformers...to [say that the RCC] is, as the Scripture puts it, 'the whore.'" When I tried to explain this to Hank and his staff many years ago, they accused me of inventing a new idea unknown in history. Their guffaws nearly drove me out of Hank's office.

My book, *Y2K: A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria?*, was published before Hank's. He says my Y2K book was based upon my "dispensational theology...rapture theory"? He only needed to read the back cover ("Dave Hunt argues that...Y2K has no

direct relationship to biblical prophecy"), to realize that this is a baseless charge.

For the first 165 pages I quote the doomsayers, Christian and secular, who were predicting that millions would die. I analyze the problem from a purely technical and practical basis, quote the experts, top bankers, and IT managers who were not concerned at all, and explain why Y2K was not going to be any problem. I point out the folly of church leaders who were organizing Christians to store up food and water with which to rescue unsaved neighbors and thereby win them to Christ. The churches in our own town, led by a "Y2K Preparedness Committee," were going to rescue Bend from disaster. This was the biggest thing in the church for months. I won't name the popular Christian leaders who promoted this craze, nor those who accused me of causing a complacency that would kill millions.

It was not until page 166 that I dealt with Y2K from a biblical standpoint because so many Christian leaders were warning the inevitable computer crash would usher in a cashless society and the reign of Antichrist. Really? A cashless society would need computers, and so would the Antichrist to control the world. I pointed out the folly of trying to tie every apparent war or disaster to Bible prophecy and quoted the predictions of Christian leaders and prophecy teachers making Y2K a part of Bible prophecy. I wrote: "Sadly, each time a correspondence has been attempted between a current event and a specific biblical prophecy and the event failed to live up to that expectation (as in the case of the Gulf War), Bible prophecy was discredited....There is a great danger of the same disillusionment occurring again when Bible teachers link Y2K with Bible prophecy.... Throughout this book we provide sufficient documentation to show that there will not be a general failure of computers on January 1, 2000. Yet a surprising number of Christians say that God has been confirming the worst Y2K disaster scenario to them by revelation and dreams."

Only on page 182 did I chide Christians for being so obsessed with Y2K that they had forgotten their hope of heaven and instead of looking for the Rapture were spending their time, money, and efforts preparing to survive Y2K on earth. For the next 20 pages I show that the Y2K disaster predictions, far from fulfilling biblical prophecy, contradicted it. Then I go back to the technical reasons why Y2K was not going to be what the alarmists were saying.

I hope that Hank's accusations that I was "right about Y2K for all the wrong reasons [and] imposed [my] dispensational...rapture theory...on Y2K to come up with a particular interpretation of Y2K," as well as his claims relative to the "whore of Babylon" will at last be put to rest.

QUESTION: I've told unsaved friends that the Qur'an, Book of Mormon, etc., are false additions to the Bible. They asked me, "What is different about the many Old Testament books added to the Torah, and the New Testament to the Old?"

RESPONSE: The Qur'an, Book of Mormon, etc., make no claim of being part of the Bible, contradict it completely, and obviously have different authors. The entire Old and New Testaments agree with, foretell and/or fulfill each other, and clearly have the same Author.

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2. Erwin Schrödinger, quoted in *Quantum*, 81.
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4. Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1994), 3.
5. Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," *The New York Review*, January 9, 1997, 31.
6. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford University Press, 30th anniversary edition, 2006), 2.
7. Dawkins, *Selfish*, 22.
8. M. Buchanan, "Wild, Wild Life," *Sydney Morning Herald*, The Guide, March 24, 2003, 6.

"They Have Forsaken the Lord"

Dave Hunt

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. — Isaiah 1:4-7

Most of us fail to grasp the depths of depravity into which the United States—and the world—are rapidly sinking, provoking a merciful and patient God to judgment. The evidence is overwhelming. Yet we're blinded to the truth like the proverbial frog in the pot that is slowly, by small degrees, being brought to a boil. Deceit is everywhere, and lies pass for truth. The major promoter of abortion calls itself *Planned Parenthood*. By what perverted logic can a husband and wife who deliberately murdered in the womb what would have been their baby be called its "parents"? Shouldn't the organization that inspired and assisted in this foul deed rather be called "Planned No Parenthood"?

Murder in the womb is cloaked under the innocuous label of "Pro-choice" while at the same time denying any choice to the victim. The "Campaign for Healthy Families" was the group that defeated a proposed ban on abortions in South Dakota. To what "healthy family" do aborted babies belong? In 2006, the National Abortion Federation complained that the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act would "impose... burdens on teens seeking abortion" by requiring minors to get parental notification to cross state lines in order to get one!¹

And how do teens get into this predicament? By the immorality held up in a wicked society as a desirable sign of "maturity." To brainwash teenagers with the lie that they can get away with anything that is *their* choice is evil. God no longer is allowed to have any opinion in the world He made! Our choice overrides His. America has "forsaken the Lord" and is sowing the seeds of its destruction. God cannot withhold His judgment without becoming a partner in our sins.

Between 1960 and 1990, out-of-wedlock births in the USA increased more than 500 percent (from 5.3 percent to 28 percent), single-parent families tripled, about 50 million babies were murdered in the womb, and violent crimes increased 500 percent. About 16,000 crimes occur on or around school campuses each day! In 2005, 37 percent of births were to unwed mothers, up from 36 percent in 2004 and 28 percent

in 1990. The report stated that "The overall rise reflects the burgeoning number of people who are putting off marriage or are living together without getting married." Are these the "Healthy Families" that the amoral campaign of that name is building by supporting abortion?

Homosexuals not only flaunt their sin in public, they are fêted, wooed, indulged, and thanked by politicians for their votes. It's Sodom and Gomorrah again—or worse! In January 2007, Christian Vanneste, an MP in France's ruling party was fined nearly \$4,000 for saying that homosexuality is "inferior to heterosexuality" and would be "dangerous for humanity if it was pushed to the limit." Of course, these are the facts. But daring to express the undeniable truth unleashes the wrath of police and courts in their zeal to protect the feelings of a favored class that complains of being offended.

Homosexuals and lesbians don't procreate as God commanded mankind to do. The Creator's very first commandment to Adam and Eve was, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth..." (Gn 1:28). "Gays" defy God's very first words to mankind. They seek not children but pleasure, to the exclusion of all else. And in their self-absorbed folly, they taunt us with "gay pride." Are they proud that their lifestyle is not only "dangerous" (it shortens the lifespan by 24 years²) but that it would abruptly end the human race if universally adopted? What madness supports this celebrated perversion?

Vanneste is appealing his case to the European Court of Human Rights, a likely exercise in futility. Truth used to be a sure defense in a lawsuit. Today truth is irrelevant: the issue is whether a "protected minority" or a special interest group feels offended. Vladimir Bukovsky, a former Soviet dissident, warned that "the EU's enforcement of political correctness was a symbol of the Union's slide toward a similar [Soviet-like] oppressive regime."

On October 10, 2004, in Philadelphia, eleven evangelical Christians were arrested and jailed for peacefully witnessing for Christ at a "gay parade"—four of them for quoting Bible verses while walking a public sidewalk. In Germany, a priest faces jail for publicly criticizing abortionists, and in Holland, 'fornicators' and 'adulterers' are protected classes and cannot be criticized.³

On October 6, 2006, *LifeSiteNews* reported, "The gloves have come off; the Parliamentary debate in Canada has moved beyond homosexual 'marriage' and on to refusing freedoms for those with religious beliefs opposed to homosexuality and those with conscientious reasons for opposing

it."⁴ Hundreds of other examples of "political correctness" gone berserk in defense of immorality throughout the Western world could be cited, space permitting.

What is happening today reflects a long history. Visiting Holland, Germany, France, and England, countries where the Protestant Reformation challenged Roman Catholicism, which had held the entire Western world in its iron grip for centuries, is inspiring but at the same time disheartening. It is thrilling to visit the Wittenberg Castle Church, where the Reformation began. It held one of Europe's largest collections of religious relics—some 19,000 accumulated by Frederick III. Pilgrims viewing all of them would receive indulgences that would allegedly shorten their time in purgatory by 5,209 years⁵—the largest reduction obtainable in one place outside of Rome.

Of course, these poor souls never suspected that on January 1, 1967, over the signature of Pope Paul VI, their infallible Church would issue its "Apostolic Constitution on the *Revision of Indulgences*," admitting centuries of false promises, undoing the reduction of the purgatorial sufferings deceased Catholics thought they had purchased, and making new requirements they couldn't possibly fulfill, having been dead and presumably still in purgatory after 400 years of torment in its flames.⁶

This was the madness that ruled the Middle Ages. There were tiny vials of "true milk from the Virgin Mary's breasts," pickled fingers and toes of this or that "saint," and enough pieces of wood in Europe venerated as parts of the "true cross" to build a cathedral. Even toenails of "saints" were worshiped by the deluded devout. Peter's toes were uncommonly prolific. There were enough "certified trimmings" in Europe's cathedrals to fill a gunnysack. The biggest scam was selling "indulgences" to release deceased relatives from purgatory—and who would refuse to buy Aunt Maria's release from the flames! From such blood money, St. Peter's Basilica was repaired and expanded to its present form.

No matter how well one knows the story, it is always an emotional experience to stand at the Wittenberg door. There, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his \, known as the 95 Theses. By 1518, copies in other languages had been read throughout Europe, arousing rage against the Roman Catholic Church. Luther's brave challenge at the risk of his life shook the church and world of his day. Oh, that it would happen again—not just to Catholicism (which hasn't changed), but to Protestantism as well!

Visiting those areas of Europe and

remembering the impact of Luther's simple paper is deeply moving—but at the same time discouraging. Everywhere, one sees the ruins that the Reformation has left in its wake: apostate state churches scarcely attended, mostly dead and a reproach to Christ instead of the centers for proclaiming the gospel they once were. "Christian" Europe has assuredly forsaken the Lord and is beginning to reap in earnest the fruit of the rebellion it has been sowing for a long, long time.

The liberalism of England's universities, media, and courts undermined any sense of God-given morality that had barely survived from the days of Luther and Calvin. "Multiculturalism" is the new faith—a multiculturalism that embraces every religion and creed. There is, however, one exception: the culture of the host country, England. Why? Because it is Western and has a Christian heritage. That, above all, is not acceptable. Islam most assuredly is *in*, and Christianity is *out*.

In fact, it was the rejection of Christianity that opened Britain to the amoral liberalism prevalent in its courts, media, and universities that now favors Muhammad over Christ and is sowing the seeds of its own destruction.

The most disheartening—even frightening—experience each time one returns to Britain and Europe is to see firsthand the evidence of the "new reformation" sweeping those countries and the world today. A fresh Islamic invasion (already far more effective than the military invasion that was turned back at Poitiers-Tours in 732 and Vienna in the 18th century) is changing the face of England, France, Holland, Germany, and the other countries that supported the first Reformation. The new privileged "minority" are the Muslim immigrants, many of whom have come in obedience to Muhammad's command (which all Muslims everywhere are obligated to obey in the name of Allah and Islam) to take over the entire world by violence, if necessary. They mostly refuse to be integrated into the societies they invade, retaining their own customs and language, while demanding "rights" (including welfare support of multiple wives) from the country they intend to destroy. The protection of the West's liberal laws assists terrorists in the commanded takeover. Imam Abu Baseer, a leading religious supporter of al-Qaeda, confessed:

One of the goals of immigration is the revival of the duty of jihad and enforcement

of their power over the infidels. Immigration and jihad go together.⁷

Christianity and Christ may be mocked in the West, but no word must be whispered (for fear of violent reprisals) against Islam. One city in England is already 75 percent Muslim and has a Muslim mayor. Non-Muslims move out, property values plummet, allowing more Muslims to move in at bargain prices. Islamists boast that they will eventually have a string of Muslims-only cities in a crescent shape stretching across the heartland of England. They insist that this "crescent" will be ruled by *sharia* (Islamic law), as in Saudi Arabia, where women are publically stoned to death (if the family doesn't kill them first) for "allowing" themselves to be raped; no non-Muslim place of worship may be built; those who convert from Islam to any other religion are beheaded; and Islamic law rules an Islamic state. This is Islam's intent for the entire world.

The cost of opposing Islam or Muhammad far exceeds the judgments decreed by liberal courts against anti-abortionists or anti-gays—a cost that has already mounted into thousands of lives and billions of dollars. We've seen it in murder, mayhem, and destruction through riots in Paris, trains blown up in Madrid, subways and buses exploding in London, planes flown into the Twin Towers in New York, and Shiites and Sunnis slaughtering one another with a ferocity and cruelty that proclaims to the world—if the world were not afraid to listen—that Islam is *not* a religion of peace. Yet, in spite of such overwhelming evidence, the same old political correctness insists that all of this horror is in the cause of "peace" because Islam *is* peace—and woe to anyone who dares to correct that lie!

Incredibly, after 9/11 and again after the London bombings of 2005, government instructions were for police "to avoid doing anything to alienate Britain's Muslims." As a practical matter, "this meant the police had to deny the nature of Islamist terrorism altogether."⁸

"This was why, on the day that four Islamist suicide bombers blew themselves and more than fifty London commuters to bits, the Met's deputy assistant commissioner, Brian Paddick, stood before the television cameras and made the noteworthy comment: 'As far as I am concerned, Islam and terrorists are two words that do not go together.'"⁹ Such whitewashing of Islam by high officials has become the scandal of the century. As Melanie Phillips, author of

Londonistan, so perceptively points out:

Britain is in Denial. Having allowed the country to turn into a global hub of the Islamic jihad...the British establishment is still failing...to acknowledge what it is actually facing and take the appropriate action. Instead, it is deep into a policy of appeasement of the phenomenon that threatens it...in a panic-stricken attempt to curry favor and buy off the chances of any further attacks....¹⁰

Though they knew that London had become a headquarters for Islamic terrorism worldwide, the British police "even after 9/11...still took no action against Islamist extremists embedded in London..." The willful blindness to indisputable facts was incredible.

"Over the years, the governments of India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Israel, France, Algeria, Peru, Yemen, and Russia, among others, lodged...protests about the presence in Britain of terrorist organizations or their sympathizers....Egypt denounced Britain as a hotbed for radicals..."¹¹

The reason for this insanity was in the multiculturalism (every culture and religion is equally good—except for Christianity, which must be jettisoned because of its narrow-minded claim that Jesus Christ is the only way to God). In a word, British society has lost its moral foundation, as Phillips explains:

The underlying message in the classroom is that there is no historical truth at all, and whatever had happened in the past [including the crucifixion of Christ for our sins and His resurrection] was only a matter of opinion....At the heart of this unpicking of national identity lies a repudiation of Christianity, the founding faith of the nation and the fundamental source of its values, including its...profound love of liberty....For the secular elite, Britain is now a "post-Christian society"; and insofar as this is not yet the case, this elite is determined to make it so. Under the rubric of multiculturalism and promoting "diversity," local authorities and government bodies are systematically bullying Christianity out of existence....¹²

Whether in the world or the church, we see much the same thing happening in America. Anything is acceptable—except biblical Christianity. Public schools accommodate witches, homosexuals, and Muslims promoting their beliefs and practices. But Christianity, in the name of freedom, is outlawed. Let us not give up the fight for biblical truth, earnestly contending for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. **TBC**

Quotable

And is it not obvious that, just as it is a crime to disturb the peace when truth reigns, it is also a crime to remain at peace when the truth is being destroyed?...

Weaklings are those who know the truth, but maintain it only [when] in their interest to do so, and [otherwise] forsake it.

Blaise Pascal

People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith and delight in the Lord. We drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.

D.A. Carson, For the Love of God, vol. 2

Q&A

QUESTION: Does the International Genocide Treaty prohibit preaching the gospel? Could someone be prosecuted under it for saying that homosexuality or Islam are condemned in the Bible?

RESPONSE: This Treaty was adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the UN General Assembly, 12/9/48, and went into force 1/12/51. It made a law of the declaration by the General Assembly in Res. 96, 12/11/46, making genocide a crime.

You ask, "Could someone be prosecuted under it for saying that homosexuality or Islam are condemned in the Bible?" In a word, yes, because the definition is broad enough to include almost anything. So far, however, this has not been done. The only prosecutions involved Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

Under the treaty, genocide includes any defined action "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group through causing serious...*mental harm* to members of the group [emphasis added]."

Although this provision has not been brought into play against preachers of the gospel who give the whole counsel of God, it could be any time the UN decides to do so. Whatever persecution and prosecution may come in the future, let us be faithful now—and also when the time comes.

QUESTION: Does today's "Signs and Wonders" movement relate to the signs and lying wonders of 2 Thessalonians 2?

RESPONSE: Yes. Jesus warned specifically that in the last days false prophets and false Christs would appear, performing lying signs and wonders in His name: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt 7:22,23).

This is a solemn warning. These are not New Agers or other occultists or Satanists. They must be professing Christians accepted as leaders. Yet these "miracle workers" never were true Christians. Christ says, "I...know my sheep" (Jn 10:14), but to these He says, "I never knew you."

Paul must be speaking of the same false prophets: "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tm 3:8). Jannes and Jambres were the magicians in Pharaoh's court who withstood Moses by duplicating, either through trickery or by the power of Satan, the miracles God did through Moses: "The wise men and the sorcerers [and] magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments" (Ex 7:11,22; 8:7). They were not able, however, to duplicate the miracle of the lice and told Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God..." (8:19).

The major emphasis of TBN and many of its stars is on "signs and wonders." Most are obvious frauds, yet enough apparent miracles occur at their meetings to deceive multitudes. One of the first responses to *The Seduction of Christianity* was Chairman Oral Roberts's* 1986 organization of positive confession preachers called "International Charismatic Bible Ministries [CBM]." Paul [David] Yonggi Cho was International Honorary Chairman; Jack Hayford* was Vice Chairman; others included Kenneth Copeland* (Secretary), Marilyn Hickey,* Tommy Barnett,* Jamie Buckingham,* Charles Capps, Morris Cerullo, Paul Crouch, Mike Evans, Kenneth Hagin, Sr.,* Benny Hinn, Larry Lea, Francis McNutt, Mike Murdock,* John Osteen,* Earl Paulk,* Fred Price, Richard Roberts,* Jerry Savelle,* Stephen Strang,* Hilton Sutton,* Robert Tilton,* Casey Treat, Bob Weiner, and Ralph Wilkerson. (*Founding Trustee)

Their home page describes them as "a group of men and women in leadership

positions for charismatic people of God... who believe in and preach the importance of SIGNS and WONDERS in the life of the church today...sharing methods, revelations, prophecies and teachings in the fullness of the Holy Spirit; and personal encouragement from one minister to another."

In their charter, they promised not to correct one another. The banner behind the speaker at their conferences proclaims, "Love and Unity Through Signs and Wonders." In these pages, we have documented some of Oral Roberts' lies, outright fraud, and false prophecies. If those who are members of CBM are not of the same breed, why have they not risen up to reprove Roberts, and why do they continue to support and praise him?

QUESTION: I've read most of *What Love Is This? I believe in man's free will and right of choice. However, when I read Luke 1:13-17, especially verse 15, I cannot reconcile the pre-conception appointment of John with the free will of man. I'm aware that there are other divine appointments of a similar vein; these seem to remove human choice from one's personal destiny. Your insight would be appreciated.*

RESPONSE: Actually, there is nothing in these verses to negate John the Baptist's free choice. All that is described is God's call upon his life—the task for which God had chosen him—but *he didn't have to obey it*. That was a great honor, for which he was empowered by the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, but *he had to be willing*.

Nor was this choosing by God to salvation and heaven. John was chosen for a certain task. Of course, he had to become a believer in order to fulfill that task, but that was up to him. The Old Testament prophecies only identify this chosen one by the ministry he would fulfill: "the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD" (Is 40:3); "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me...[in the spirit of] Elijah the prophet...he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal 3:1; 4:5,6).

The messenger, however, is not named. Had John not been willing, God would have raised up someone else. But since God knows the future, He knew that John the Baptist would undertake the mission He would give him. The fact that God knew what John would do does not mean that God *caused* him to do it, yet that was what Calvin and Luther both insisted upon.

Though chosen of God to be the forerunner for Christ, John had to choose to obey as the Spirit would lead. Remember, Judas was also chosen but rejected his appointed ministry and betrayed the Lord: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (Jn 6:70).

QUESTION: You keep saying that Jesus is coming soon. Yet Revelation says that every tribe, language, and ethnic group will be in heaven. There are many people groups that have had no opportunity to hear the gospel. How does that square with your teaching of an imminent return?

RESPONSE: Believers are told repeatedly throughout the New Testament to be ready for Christ to come at any moment: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning...like unto men that *wait for their lord...*" (Lk 12:35-36); "...in heaven; from whence also we *look for the Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Phil 3:20); "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to *wait for his Son* from heaven... even Jesus" (1 Thes 1:9,10); "*looking for that blessed hope...the glorious appearing of... our Saviour Jesus Christ*" (Ti 2:13); "...unto them that *look for him* shall he appear the second time..." (Heb 9:28), etc.

Surely, "loins girded about...lights burning" indicates imminency. If the early church was to wait and look for Christ to come from heaven, there could not have been any prior event that had to occur first. It would be senseless to be in an attitude of waiting and looking for Christ at any moment if He couldn't come until Anti-christ had appeared or until the end of the Great Tribulation.

The Bible ends with the cry from the bride, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rv 22:20). To express that desire if Christ couldn't come until some other event or events had first occurred would be the mockery of demanding payment on a debt not yet due.

There is no question about it: imminency is the teaching of the New Testament. Then what about representatives being in heaven, as you say, from "every tribe, language, and ethnic group" if many groups haven't even heard the gospel yet? How could the Lord rapture His own until at least one had gotten saved from every people group?

You are limiting God. Did a missionary get the gospel to Enoch, Job, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, David, et al.? Through the witness of creation and His law written in their consciences, God has always been able to bring those with open

hearts to Himself out of every tribe at any time in history.

Furthermore, babies who die in innocence go to heaven. Of his baby that had just died, David said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sm 12:23). Therefore, there are already in heaven many from every people group that ever existed, having died as infants in innocence.

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Love, Justice, and Judgment

Dave Hunt

Most of the world has little concern for the Nazi Holocaust with its 6 million victims, or for the earlier Muslim holocaust of far more millions from France to China, or the more recent Islamic outrages of 9/11, and the ongoing slaughter in southern Sudan, which almost daily adds to the 2 million already slain there by Muslims practicing *sharia* imposed by Khartoum. Some, however, cannot forget the sacrifice of innocent lives and are tormented by the question, "How could a good God allow such untold suffering?" At a "Candlelight vigil...for a peaceful world" at Harvard Divinity School,

The...words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were rehearsed [and] those of Mohandas Gandhi. A song about the Rwandan massacre was recited, with the wrenching appeal to a silent God—"Where were you?"¹

God was right where He's been for thousands of years: eager to bless mankind but restrained by His wisdom and integrity from rewarding unrepentant rebellion. The Creator loves mankind too much to surrender the world to proud fools. If He does not fulfill His warnings of judgment, who could believe His promises of blessing?

But is God really silent? Or is the world deaf to His voice? How is it possible to overlook Christ's loving plea from the Cross, "Father, forgive them..." (Lk 23:34)? Yet, how can we bring together that prayer with Christ's solemn declaration that "the Father...hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (Jn 5:22)? Can love, justice, and judgment coexist?

How can we reconcile the idea of Christ willingly suffering for the sins of the world with "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather...them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 13:41,42)? Why would Christ, whom "the Father sent...to be the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn 4:14), send people to hell for whom, with infinite and sacrificial love, He died in payment of the penalty for their sins?

How can we fit "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16) into the fact that God "hath appointed a day, in...which he will judge the world in righteousness [by Jesus Christ]..." (Acts 17:31)? Judgment that will sentence perhaps billions to eternal torment doesn't seem to

agree with David's grateful praise: "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps 145:9). How could the "tender mercies" of a God who is "good to all" consign *anyone* to eternal doom?

Can we really wrap in one package "For God so loved the world" (Jn 3:16) with "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rv 20:15)? How about, "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pt 3:9) and the "great white throne" judgment (Rv 20:11,12)? Surely multitudes will perish, being taken directly from that final verdict to the Lake of Fire. Is God contradicting Himself?

If God is really "good to all" and is sincerely "not willing that any should perish," why doesn't He welcome everyone to heaven? Why must so many spend eternity in the Lake of Fire? Couldn't there be another way? Has man's choice brought a just doom upon his head? Shall we blame God—or His creatures—for eternal punishment? Where is God's love?

Unquestionably, the Bible teaches love, justice, and judgment. But must God's justice and judgment trample on His love? How can "the gift of God is eternal life" (Rom 6:23) agree with "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn 3:36)?

These are vital questions, which we must contemplate prayerfully if we are to understand and know God as He desires: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer 9:23,24). What do lovingkindness, judgment, and eternal doom have to do with one another?

The Cross of Christ is the only answer to such questions. Does God really love us? "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8); "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 Jn 4:9). Christ said, "For God *so loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..." (Jn 3:16). How great God's love for all mankind must be to give His son "into the hands of sinners" (Mt 26:45) to be rejected, falsely accused, mocked, despised, spat upon, and nailed to a cross—yet to make that cross the means of man's salvation!

Consider the awesome and incomprehensible statement, "Yet it pleased the

LORD to bruise him [to] make his soul an offering for sin..." (Is 53:10). God the Father was *pleased* to punish Christ for the sins of the world, even for the sins of those who would curse God and mock and reject His Son? Yes! We must ponder such questions if we are to understand God.

No greater proof could be given of the evil that lurks in every human heart than what man did to Christ. And at the same time, the Cross is the greatest possible proof of God's love and desire to bless all mankind. No wonder Paul rejoiced, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14)! In life's trials, defeats, and losses, those in whom Christ is truly Lord can take refuge in Paul's logic: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom 8:32).

Solomon declared, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding" (Prv 4:7). We have the promise, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God...and it shall be given him" (Jas 1:5). God wants us to understand His character and will, to meditate deeply upon the means and the price of our redemption—and in the Cross "to behold the beauty of the LORD" (Ps 27:4) as we otherwise could not.

Is there anything more wonderful in the history of the universe than God's gift of His only begotten Son to the world? How can we be content with only a shallow understanding of the Cross? No wonder we lack the depth of gratitude Christ's sacrifice deserves. And how tragic that we could ever allow an entire day or even more to pass without expressing our deep heartfelt thanks to our God for mercifully and graciously saving our souls!

I think often of the words, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Sometimes it causes me to *tremble, tremble, tremble...*" Yes, we were there—it was our sins he "bare...in his own body on the tree" (1 Pt 2:24). The earth shook, rocks were ripped asunder by God's hand, and angels must have trembled with rage to see such despicable creatures treating their Lord with hatred and contempt! Time and eternity were split in two. Heaven and earth would never be the same. The universe and course of history were forever drenched in the shed blood of Christ!

And today, the world could not care less about that all-defining event. How grievous it is that mankind in general never thinks of, never honors, and never acknowledges the God who gives life to all. Governments

imagine they can do whatever they please. Political and religious leaders, thinking they are in charge of this world, meet in their international conclaves to make peace on earth—and God is left out of the entire process. All man wants is a religious “blessing” upon his plans, and any god will do.

Incredibly, many who claim to believe on Christ are foremost in mocking Him. He promised to send the “Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive” (Jn 14:17), to lead us “into all truth” (Jn 16:13). In flagrant contempt and unbelief, declaring that the world has another source outside God’s Word of “the truth [that] shall make you free” (Jn 8:32), the evangelical church has turned aside to psychology, the “wisdom of this world,” which God “hath...made foolish” (1 Cor 1:20). And those who preach this foolishness are looked up to by evangelicals worldwide as the most insightful authors and conference speakers.

Christ said, “because I live, ye shall live also” (Jn 14:19). What did He mean? This was Christ’s thrilling assurance that He would live His resurrection life in those who put their trust in Him. Paul rejoiced, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...” (Gal 2:20). He referred to “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27), declaring that “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).

Imagine, then, the contemptuous insult and brazen slap in the face to Christ when those in whom He dwells as their very life complain that the life He desires to live in them doesn’t suit them. Adding unbelief to insult, they claim that His Word is not true, that His promises don’t work for them! Who can fathom the unthinkable tragedy that those purchased by His blood, to whom Christ wants to impart “life...more abundantly” (Jn 10:10), turn to Freud, Jung, Rogers, Maslow, Adler, et al. (atheistic anti-Christians to a man), for help in living the Christian life! Could there be a more hurtful rejection of our Lord by His own, whom He has redeemed with His blood?

That arch heretic, Norman Vincent Peale (who said on national TV that there are many other ways to God besides Jesus Christ) was praised by Billy Graham and other church leaders. It was Peale who brought psychology/psychiatry into the church some 70 years ago. For decades, the entire evangelical community rejected this enemy intrusion as heresy destructive of the faith before succumbing to its siren song. Today, secular psychology and psychiatry, the most atheistic of all professions, are the darlings of the evangelical church.

How could this happen? It happened through baptizing psychology by attaching the word “Christian” to it. That deceit convinced Christians of the outrageous fiction that God’s Word does not provide sufficient guidance for today’s living but that we need additional help from rank unbelievers and Christ haters in order to live for Christ. As *Newsweek* reported long ago:

Christians are realizing that being born again is no vaccine against mental and emotional illness. One result: Christian psychotherapy, a for-profit movement aimed at mining new markets by offering evangelicals a Bible-based approach to problems from anxiety and depression to sexual abuse and schizophrenia.

“We use the same teachings and principles as other psychiatrists,” says psychiatrist Steven Schultz, medical director at LifeCare’s Ft. Worth center. “But we do it in the context that we’re Christians.”²

What a damning confession; and what delusion! There is no “Christian context” for psychotherapy, which didn’t exist until 1,800 years after Christ paid the penalty for our sins and the gospel began to be preached (Mk 1:1; Phil 4:15). Schultz could not have said more clearly that, for Christian psychotherapists, Paul’s “Christ in you, the hope of glory” is an empty slogan without meaning for today’s Christians! Besides, if everyone believed on Christ, found “peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20), and obeyed His Word, *the truth* would make them free (Jn 8:31,32)—and psychiatrists and psychologists, “Christian” or not, would be unable to earn a living for lack of clients. That “for-profit” growth industry is jealously protected and promoted by its adherents at the eternal cost of souls!

Under the leadership of some “crept in unawares” (Jude 4), the steady decline in respect for and defense of “the faith once delivered to the saints,” though foretold, is utterly staggering! Hundreds of examples could be given. The YMCA and YWCA, begun as Christian organizations, are now strongholds of yoga and godlessness and as far from the gospel of Jesus Christ as possible this side of hell. The Reformation’s gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone has been betrayed and wed to Roman Catholic works and rituals by Lutherans, Calvinists, and others who practice infant baptism for salvation and boast of the “real presence” of Christ in the bread and wine of remembrance. “Protestant evangelical biblical scholars” quoted in the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* openly reject the inspiration, authority, and prophecies of Scripture—yet are

highly praised by evangelical leaders. (See *TBC*, Aug. 2005.)

All of America’s first Universities (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth, et al.) were founded by Christians as centers for spreading the gospel of Christ to the glory of God. Instead, these schools today proclaim atheism and false religions. As only one example, Harvard was founded in 1636 to train evangelical ministers. Today, its Divinity School prides itself on being open to any religion. Recently headed by a Roman Catholic priest, its current dean is a scholar of Islamic history highly regarded by Muslims. The director of its Center for the Study of World Religions, a scholar of Buddhism, has rewritten the Sunday school chorus to say, “Buddha loves me! This I know, for the Dharma tells me so.” With its multi-billion dollar income and endowments and backing by Christians, Harvard and its Divinity School are bastions of liberalism, ecumenism, pro-abortionism, radical feminism, relativism, and anti-Christian rhetoric. And this is progress toward a greater truth?

Man thinks he is in charge of the universe. He believes that the God who made it is supposed to honor the serpent’s promise of Godhood to Adam and Eve, step back, and let man run the show. God has been letting man do just that for 6,000 years, except for answering righteous prayer, intervening appropriately on behalf of His own, and executing judgment when absolutely necessary, as in the case of Israel, to maintain His integrity.

How can we wrap love, justice, and judgment in the same package? Jesus said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rv 3:19). If God were not absolutely faithful in fulfilling His warnings of judgment, who could believe His promises of forgiveness and blessing? Love, justice, and judgment do go together. There is no justice without judgment and no love without justice.

It would no more be love for God not to punish evil than to fail to rescue those caught in Satan’s net. But salvation can come only on the righteous basis of the penalty being fully paid—and then only for those who accept that payment by Christ on their behalf. And that saving faith in Christ can only come in the confession that He was justly punished in our place.

May the love of Christ constrain us to weep for the lost and present the gospel to all who will hear. And in accepting the life He gives, let us live no longer unto ourselves but “unto him which died for [us], and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). **TBC**

Quotable

We have oversimplified the gospel. The first fatal flaw is the missing emphasis on *repentance*. There can be *no* true conversion without *conviction of sin*.... We sugar-coat the gospel when we de-emphasize man's lost condition.... It is useless to tell unconvicted sinners to believe on Jesus—that message is only for those who *know* they are lost. We have forgotten that the message is *repentance toward God* as well as *faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*.

A *second serious omission* is a missing emphasis on the *Lordship of Christ*....

A *third defect* in our message is our tendency to keep the terms of *discipleship* hidden until a decision has been made for Jesus. Our Lord never did this. The message He preached included the *cross* as well as the *crown*.... We popularize the message and promise fun.

The *result of all this* is that we have people believing without knowing what they believe [with] *no doctrinal basis* for their decision. They do not know the *implications* of commitment to Christ. They have never experienced the mysterious, miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. (Author's emphasis.)

William MacDonald, "Evangelical Dilemma," *Milk & Honey*, 4/07, p.4

The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before that cross it bows and toward that cross it points with carefully staged histrionics—but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of that cross it stubbornly refuses to bear.

A.W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest*, p.60

Q&A

QUESTION: I have read your articles on replacement theology and Israel. You stated that Gentiles observing the festivals and other Torah laws were frauds. Could you please explain?

RESPONSE: That is not what I actually said, nor would I accuse those who sincerely think they are doing God's will of being "frauds." I would reserve that term for those to whom it properly applies. What I did say, in October 2005, was that "for a Gentile to keep those [Jewish] feasts today would be a fraud"—and I stand by that.

The Passover, for example, was clearly to be kept by Jews as a "memorial" of the deliverance of their ancestors from slavery

in Egypt and as proof that they were the chosen people of "the God of Israel" to whom that land belongs today. It would, therefore, be improper for Gentiles to celebrate the Passover—and the same is true of the other Jewish feasts. Though all relate to the gospel symbolically, they are specifically for Jews to keep as part of their heritage in relation to the land God gave to them alone.

And yes, I have made it clear that I reject categorically the very word "Messianic." It is confusing and is not found in the Bible. To speak of a "Messianic Movement," or "Messianic Christians," or "Messianic Jews," etc., is not biblical. Such expressions were never used by Christ, the apostles, or the early church. Yet one gets the impression from "Messianic" believers that they are being *more biblical* by using that term.

The Hebrew word *Messiah* (*mashiah*) appears only twice in the Old Testament, both in the same passage (Dn 9:25,26). The Greek form of it, *Messias*, appears only twice in the New Testament (Jn 1:41; 4:25). In Israel, prophet, priest, and king had to be anointed with a special oil symbolic of the Holy Spirit. The words "Messiah" and "Christ" signified *the Anointed One*, in whom all three offices would be fulfilled.

In contrast to only four appearances of "Messiah/Messias" in the entire Bible, the word "Christ" (Gr. *Christos*) occurs hundreds of times in the New Testament. So it would seem more biblical to refer to "Christ Movement," or "Christ Christians," or "Christ Jews" than to "Messianic." That word purports to call us back to the Jewish roots of our faith. Unfortunately, "Messianic-whatever" implies that observing Jewish practices ensures that one will be closer to God—and it often becomes an excuse for imposing the law and Jewish observances upon Gentile Christians. This is unbiblical and something Paul combated in his epistle to the Galatians.

The gospel is all about Christ, who died for the sins of the world. Everyone, Jew or Gentile, must believe on Christ in order to be saved. All who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ in response to the gospel have embraced the Messiah—but not in the exclusively Jewish sense of the Anointed One who will rescue Israel at Armageddon and reign on the throne of David forever.

The term "Messianic Christian" makes an unbiblical distinction between two classes of Christians: "Messianic" and "Non-Messianic." Yet Jews and Gentiles who believe the gospel have been made one in Christ. If one is a Christian, whether

Jew or Gentile, he has believed on Christ the Messiah as Lord and Savior. There is no other basis of salvation. What more could the "Messianic Movement" offer? Obviously, nothing.

The gospel that the apostles preached and that we are to preach doesn't even have the word "Messiah" in it. The gospel is that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:1-8). It would not be more biblical to preach, "Believe on the Messiah, who died for our sins." The early church was all Jews, but it is never called "Messianic."

Scripture refers to "Jews...Gentiles...the church of God" (1 Cor 10:32). "Messianic" describes none of these three. Both Jews and Gentiles who believe on Jesus before He comes visibly at Armageddon are in the church; Jews and Gentiles who do not receive Christ as Savior and Lord until He appears at the Second Coming will inhabit the earth for eternity—Jews in the special relationship to their Messiah promised to Israel, Gentiles as part of the nations that remain on earth (Rv 21:24; 22:2) along with Israel but distinct from her.

Again, it is presently impossible for anyone to be "Messianic" because all who believe on Christ (Jew or Gentile) are in the church, with Christ ruling as Lord in their hearts. They are part of the bride that will rule and reign with Him eternally. They will not be among the Jewish subjects in the Kingdom over whom the Messiah will reign on the throne of David. To call some Christians "Messianic" is not biblical but confusing.

QUESTION: I am a regular listener to your "Barian Call" radio program. Recently...Dave said that for someone to practice speaking in tongues would be as foolish as to practice raising the dead. This argument is so puerile...I am kind of disappointed in you.

Surely, just as we might give different kinds of gifts to one another, so in the Spirit realm, gifts are not the same. We receive the gift of speaking in tongues by faith and unless we hold on to our faith and practice...in no time the gift is gone....Your comments that day actually went to attack the roots of my faith. I thank God my faith in Him can never be shaken....You should always consider very carefully what you are dishing out to your hearers. Some of them are babes in the Kingdom, and comments like that can destroy them and their faith.

RESPONSE: Just so you'll know, we are not "the *Barian* Call" but the *Berean* Call. We call ourselves and others to be like "the Bereans" living in the town of Berea (now known as Verria) in Macedonia who "searched the scriptures daily" to make sure that Paul's teaching was biblical (Acts 17:10-12). We encourage readers, listeners, and viewers to *Search the Scriptures Daily* (the name of our radio program) to see whether our teachings and those of others are according to God's Word. In the remarks on the radio to which you objected, I was following the Bible, not someone's interpretation of it. First Corinthians 12:4-31 makes clear:

1) While there are "diversities of gifts," it is the "same Spirit...same Lord...[and] the same God which worketh all in all" (vv. 4-6). To "practice" any gift God imparts is neither taught nor is it reasonable. From Genesis to Revelation, no man of God ever "practiced" what God empowered him to do nor was ever instructed to do so.

2) The words "practice," "practices," and "practiced" are found only seven times in the Bible, *always associated with evil*. You were taught to "practice" speaking in tongues by men, not by God in His Word. Now that you know that the idea of "practicing" a gift of God (including tongues) is unbiblical, will you follow men or God?

3) "Tongues" is one of nine "gifts" described by Paul as "manifestations of the Spirit" (v. 7). Quite clearly, none of these gifts is for every believer: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret (vv. 29, 30)?" Each of these questions demands a negative response. Tongues is no more a gift that all are expected to manifest than is the gift of prophecy, healing, or miracles. Yet many teach that tongues is the one gift that is for all. Some say that one is not filled with the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues; others believe that only those who speak in tongues are saved. The Bible never says so. Again, you must decide whether to believe God or men.

4) It is equally clear that each of these gifts, being "the manifestation of the Spirit...given to every man...severally as He will" (vv. 7, 11) is not under any man's control but under the control of the Holy Spirit. This clearly taught biblical fact means that the individual can no more speak in tongues any time he desires than he could heal the sick or raise the dead any time he desired. That fact also prohibits "practicing."

QUESTION [Representative of several]: Recently, in answering a question about the gifts of the Holy Spirit you said that

speaking in tongues has led many, including charismatic pastors and evangelists, into immorality. I take exception to that harsh statement. Why did you say it?

RESPONSE: You are misquoting me. This is from the March 2007 Q&A:

One might as well practice walking on water or raising the dead as "practice speaking in tongues." We do not get any gift from God by practicing. That false teaching has led multitudes astray and is a large part of the reason why "tongues speakers" so often fall into immorality, whether televangelists, pastors, healers, or ordinary Christians.

I did not say that "speaking in tongues" is the problem (which it could not be if genuinely from God) but that the false teaching that one can do it any time one pleases and that it is gotten by "practicing" it leads many astray and into immorality. This has to be true because the refusal to obey the clear teaching of Scripture is rebellion against God and His Word. In that attitude one is almost guaranteed to yield to temptation.

Biblically, those who imagine that they can "speak in tongues" any time they please are in a state of self-delusion. They are either imagining they are speaking in tongues or are faking it to their own self-deception or are demonically inspired. Such a state of self-delusion is the perfect set-up for Satan to work further wiles.

If what I state here is not biblical, then show me from the Bible itself.

QUESTION: During the year and months before "Y2K," many Christian leaders wrote books warning believers to "prepare" for the disasters that were to come on January 1, 2000. In your book, *Y2K: A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria*, you were one of the very few that were correct. Why were so many mistaken?

RESPONSE: The facts were clear that the gloom and doom prophecies were wrong. Nor did that scenario fit Bible prophecy. Some may have been tempted to be on "the cutting edge," and that hope blinded them to the facts. Others may have been deceived by the cries of alarm that were being sounded by business and computer experts worldwide. Some were tempted by the money they could make out of this disaster—and they made a lot!

The Ministerial Association in our small town of Bend, Oregon was convinced by the "experts" that their stockpiled provisions and generators shared with unsaved

neighbors would help to lead them to Christ. I can't explain why so many leaders in the church were deceived and deceived others. That experience should be a warning to us all.

It took little research to know that nothing was going to happen. Many IT managers went along with the propaganda in order to get their Board of Directors to update computer equipment.

Nor did it take any expertise to recognize that Y2K didn't fit biblical prophecy. Prophecy teachers promoting Y2K hinted that a computer crash would usher in the Antichrist and a cashless society. But Antichrist would need computers to control the world—and a cashless society would surely require computers. Why so many Christian leaders promoted this delusion is a question that even they may not be able to answer and that God alone knows.

Endnotes

1. Alec Solomita, *Harvard University Gazette*, November 7, 2002, from its archives.
2. Kenneth L. Woodward with Susan Miller, "These Souls Were Made for Shrinking: 'Christian therapy' is winning more converts," *Newsweek*, September 14, 1992, 60.

The Secret Seduction

Dave Hunt

The latest occult scam to capture the imagination of the West is called *The Secret*. The book by that name, a top *New York Times* bestseller, has quickly sold more than 6 million copies and the DVD over 2 million copies. Both contain numerous errors, misrepresentations, false premises, and false promises. Who cares? You should. With the following information, you could rescue someone from hell.

The numerous misrepresentations begin with the title itself. *The Secret* is not a secret at all, but recycled Hinduism, shamanism, and New Age folly. One of many huge lies is its claim: "You create your own reality with your mind." This was the serpent's false promise to Eve—the promise of godhood (Gn 3:5). Embracing that delusion cost Eve and her descendants Eden's paradise—and would have barred mankind from heaven had not Christ died for the sins of the world. In the 6,000 years since Eden, the serpent's promise has not been fulfilled in *even one person's life*.

Misinformation and false claims follow one another in a dizzying parade of absurdities. Sprinkled throughout the book and DVD is the claim that the Secret is scientifically proved to be true. For example, "It has been scientifically proven that an affirmative thought is hundreds of times more powerful than a negative thought."¹ When? Where? How?

No scientific tests ever measured positive and negative thoughts, nor could there be any such tests because thoughts are nonphysical and their "power" cannot be measured. Thoughts exist outside the realm of physical science. Nor is there any such thing as "mental science" or a "science of the mind." That fact is only one of many reasons why psychology could never be a science, in spite of decades of claiming that it is.

The bait on the hook of *The Secret* is stated repeatedly: "*The Secret* gives you anything you want: happiness, health, and wealth....You can have, do, or be anything you want....We can have whatever it is that we choose."² Common sense replies, "Thanks, but no thanks." But millions being introduced to the Secret are excited and eager to make it work for them.

The foundational lies are basically that there is no personal God who created the universe and who makes laws that man must obey. The universe has always been here, yet we create it with our minds through numerous occult laws that exist to

serve our selfish desires. One of the most enticing is "the law of attraction": whatever thought (health, wealth, disaster, gain, loss, pain, joy, etc.) you hold in your mind, you will attract to yourself as a reality of your life. We are all gods who create our individual destinies with our thoughts.

The amorality of the Secret ought to be evident to anyone who stops to think. Hitler was no more responsible for the Holocaust than were its victims who collectively created it with their minds. So it was with the Titanic, every crash of a plane, and the victims of every rape and murder.

The book and DVD are based upon nothing more than statements of a number of supposed experts in the area of success motivation and positive thinking. Who are they? A "nonaligned, transreligious progressive...spiritual luminaries...teacher of spiritual metaphysics...Feng Shui master...successful business leaders...founders of the New Thought movement...a modern-day spiritual messenger, et al." They are certainly not in the same class as Jesus Christ, who proved His deity with His sinless life and miracles, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. The "experts" cited and quoted in *The Secret* are not a group into whose hands anyone should trust their lives, much less their eternal destiny.

In the book and DVD, like a broken record, the same appealing but transparent lie is repeated over and over: "There isn't a single thing that you cannot do with this knowledge...the Secret can give you whatever you want...if you see it in your mind, you're going to hold it in your hand...you create your life with your thoughts...your thoughts are seeds, and the harvest you reap will depend on the seeds you plant...your life is in your hands...what you think about you bring about....You will attract everything that you require. If it's money you need you will attract it...like Aladdin's Genie, the law of attraction grants our every command...the moment you begin to 'think properly'...this power within you that's greater than the world...will take over your life...feed...clothe...guide...protect...direct you, sustain your very existence. If you let it. Now that is what I know, for sure...."

Now this is what I know for sure: while the historic individuals named and quoted in the book and DVD achieved some temporary material possessions and success, they all failed in that which is far more important: health. Yes, most, but not all, maintained a satisfactory level of good health most of their brief lives, but the health of every one of them eventually failed. One mark of failure they all share: they all died. In the end, the Secret could

not keep them alive, though they tried every technique it offered. And those proponents of the Secret still alive today will inevitably suffer the same fate.

According to what these supposed masters of the Secret all declare with great confidence, they should not have died. If the Secret were true and they properly applied it—"The Secret can give you whatever you want"—they should all still be alive. In fact, none of the masters of the Secret even exceeded the normal life expectancy—but they surely should have if the Secret were true. The obvious fact is that the Secret is a deception that offers a false hope, which continues to deceive mankind—and an unconscionably amoral hope at that.

Let's take a quick look at some of these "masters of the Secret." Ralph Waldo Emerson is one of the most highly praised. He declared, "The secret is the answer to all that has been, all that is, and all that will ever be." But Emerson lived in a state of deteriorating health and financial need for his last 10 years. He died at age 79. Surely he wanted to live a longer, healthier, happier life. Why didn't he hold such thoughts and, by the law of attraction, bring what he wanted into actuality? For the same reason that no one else ever has or ever will. "The Secret" is a lie from Satan, "the father of lies" (John 8:44). It keeps those who believe it from faith in the true God and the salvation He provided for sinners through Christ's sacrifice for the sins of all mankind upon the Cross.

What about Prentice Mulford, another of the supposed masters of the Secret and a founder of the New Thought movement, which is based upon the same delusion? He said that there is a material mind and a Spiritual mind; a lower self and a higher Self, and the latter receives thoughts from the "Supreme Power."

But that "Power" failed him. It gave him the thought that he wanted to be a member of the California State Assembly. Mulford was nominated, but lost the election. Why didn't his thoughts bring about his desire? The Secret, and New Thought, its mirror image, didn't work for him, one of the "experts" held up as an example in the book and DVD. Finally, the Secret failed him entirely: he died at the age of 57—surely a shorter life than he had hoped to live.

Or what about Wallace Wattles, a diligent student of the Secret most of his short life and another founder of New Thought? His most famous book was *The Science of Getting Rich*, yet he lived most of his life in poverty. This crowning achievement of his life was published in 1910. He died in 1911 at the age of 51. Wouldn't he have wanted

to live longer to see the success of that book and to write more about the marvelous benefits of “the Secret,” though it failed him? But he couldn’t add one minute to his life. The Secret didn’t work for Wattles, one of its chief proponents.

The book and DVD also contain factual errors. The statement is made that through applying the Secret, the Babylonians, “became one of the wealthiest races in history.” No, it was through their military might at the cost of the lives, torture, and slavery of multitudes of victims. Babylon was one of the *cruelest* empires in history. And this commends the Secret? Thankfully, Babylon is no more. Why did it fall? Did the Secret fail the Babylonians, or did they fail to apply it? The evidence is overwhelming: the Secret is a lie.

This delusion that reality is created by the mind has been offering false hope to mankind for thousands of years. It is the standard teaching of Christian Science, the Church of Religious Science, Unity School of Christianity, New Thought, and other Mind Science cults. Never before, however, has it been packaged so attractively and cleverly for promotion to the general public as in *The Secret*. Disillusionment of multitudes will follow.

Most of the quick spread of this new presentation of the ancient and well-known supposed Secret is due to promotion by Larry King and Oprah Winfrey. Millions of their fans bought the book and DVD. On April 5, 2007, Oprah Winfrey discussed *the Secret* with alleged nonphysical entities “channeled” by *Secret* promoter, Esther Hicks. As we have often shown, so-called “spirit communication” with the dead that used to occur in séances (strictly forbidden in the Bible as demonic – Deut 18:11, Lv 20:6) is now called “channeling” and has long been promoted openly on radio and TV.

Anyone with even a small amount of common sense would recognize many moral and practical problems. What *The Secret* promotes is completely amoral and self-centered: “The law [of “attraction”] responds to your thoughts, no matter what they may be....People who have drawn wealth into their lives...think thoughts of abundance and wealth...nothing else exists in their minds.” “You’ve got to feel good about money to attract more to you....Start to say and feel...I am a money magnet. I love money.” (The Bible says not money itself but “the love of money is the root of all evil” – 1 Tm 6:10).

What about selfless love, kindness, mercy, goodness, charity, compassion, generosity, sharing with others? Such thoughts would interfere with the single-minded goal

of drawing wealth to oneself. The Secret, believed and applied, cannot help but increase one’s selfishness and bring those applying it into conflict with one another.

Let’s say that “Jones” believes that the Secret will give him anything he wants. Wanting to be the president of the X corporation where he works, and using the “law of attraction” to get what he wants, Jones holds in his mind the thought, “I am the president of X Corporation.” Will Jones’s thoughts oust the current president and put himself in his place? Suppose there happen to be twenty other ambitious and avaricious people, from factory workers to janitors, from secretaries and bookkeepers to the vice president, who also want to be president of X corporation and are each relying upon the Secret’s “law of attraction” to fulfill their passion. To help accomplish their selfish desire, they each visualize themselves in the president’s chair behind the big desk in his plush office. Will the Secret simultaneously make each of them the president? Who will win this battle of minds in the selfish competition that this ancient, amoral, alleged secret has spawned?

One of the supposedly successful practitioners of the occult principles who is quoted in the book, Lisa Nichols, is described as a “powerful advocate of personal empowerment”—more selfishness. She says, “Thank God that there’s a time delay, that all your thoughts don’t come true instantly.”³ What “God” does she mean? Where would God fit into a universe He neither made nor controls and that is being recreated by human thoughts continually—a universe that stands ever ready to give mankind whatever selfish desires are directed toward it?

Advocates of the Secret and New Thought do not believe in the personal, living God of the Bible, who asks for man’s love and submission to His will. Their god is impersonal, a sort of *Star Wars* Force or universal Mind that has no mind of its own but exists solely to give us whatever we want. Joe Vitale is another one of the expert practitioners of the Secret quoted in the book and DVD. On *Larry King Live* a caller asked, I’m just curious, where does God come into “the Secret”?

Vitale responded, “God is all of us. God is the secret and everything about it. This is a law from God.”⁴ This, of course, is nonsense, the ancient religion of pantheism: you’re God, I’m God, the tree is God, everything is God. Then “God” is both good and evil, death as well as life, has no morals, etc. If everything is “God,” then “God” means nothing. Pantheism is

virtual atheism.

Another ancient occult technique used by shamans for thousands of years is visualization: the belief that a mental picture held firmly in the mind will eventually manifest itself in the physical universe. Of course, this too is a delusion. No one has ever been able to demonstrate this ability. If we all had the power that *The Secret* promises, ours would be a terrifying existence with billions of Darth Vaders and Obe Wan Kenobies zapping one another with mind power!

Many Christians, as we have seen, teach basically the same occultism taught to C.G. Jung by “familiar spirits” (1 Sm 28:9; Is 8:19). Yonggi Cho has taught and practiced the same for years, as have numerous Christian psychologists and charismatic leaders. Visualization to create one’s own reality was the heart and soul of all that Norman Vincent Peale taught and practiced: “The idea of imaging...has been implicit in all the speaking and writing I have done....”⁵ Robert Schuller has long taught the same occultism: “I have practiced and harnessed the power of the inner eye and it works.... Thirty years ago we started with a vision of a church. It’s all come true.”⁶

Cho, pastor of the largest church in the world, claims that the Holy Spirit told him that he must visualize a clear picture of what he was praying for, or his prayer could not be answered. But all Cho could hold in his mind was the gross outline of what he wanted; he could not “see” or even imagine the atomic structure of these objects, which was their underlying reality.

Anyone who is willing to believe that mankind creates the universe with its collective thoughts (or that any individual, by visualization, can bring into existence anything that would be part of daily experience) has willfully given himself over to Satan and is susceptible to any other lie he offers. Obviously, the universe was here before man. To believe that the vast expanse of the cosmos with its trillions of stars and moons that no man has ever seen, including the many subatomic particles no one has even imagined, is all being created and held together with the collective thoughts of humanity, is to commit intellectual, moral, and spiritual suicide.

Those who believe such lies as *The Secret* offers have deliberately turned from the true God who has revealed Himself in each conscience and in the universe He made and have opened themselves to demonic delusion that will eventually lead them to eternal separation from the God who loves them and the Christ who died to redeem them. Let’s rescue as many as we can!

TBC

Quotable

If you will but ask yourself why your brand of Christianity is hardly recognizable as related to...primitive Christianity, your own heart will tell you that...you never thoroughly intended to live as they lived and to die as they died....

Did you but have this intention to please God in all your actions, as being the happiest and best choice for life in this world, you would find yourself as unwilling to deny Christ with your life as you are now unwilling to deny Him with your lips.

William Law, The Power of the Spirit, edited by Dave Hunt (See offering list)

Q&A

QUESTION: When Lazarus died, he went to "Abraham's bosom." He "lifted up his eyes," but his body was in the grave. The thief on the cross died and went to "Paradise" with Jesus "in the heart of the earth." Christians who die go to be with Christ in heaven but won't get glorified bodies until the resurrection. In the millennium, a child will die being 100 years old and will go...where? After the millennium, the New Jerusalem descends to earth. This is not for all believers but only the church. Can you sort this out?

RESPONSE: Our spirits that separate from our bodies at death and go to be with Christ to await glorified bodies at the resurrection are not blind, deaf, and dumb until then. God, angels, Satan, and demons are all spirits and can see, think, hear, speak—and so can the human spirit, separated from its body, whether in heaven or in hell. "There is a natural [physical] body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44). Such was the condition of the rich man, (conscious, in torment, seeing, speaking). Lazarus and Abraham were in the place Christ called "paradise," where He, the believing thief, and Old Testament believers went upon death.

At His resurrection, our Lord emptied paradise and took its occupants to heaven. Since then, at death, believers' souls and spirits have gone directly to be with Christ in His Father's house of many mansions (Jn 14:2). Souls and spirits of all those "who sleep in Jesus" [i.e., died in faith in Christ] are waiting in heaven for the resurrection of their bodies that will be transformed into His likeness at the Rapture.

To speak of a hundred-year-old as a "child" does not mean that person is immature physically or mentally but that to die at 100 during the Millennium would be like being cut off in childhood. Those

dying that "young" must be wicked and taken instantly to hell to join the "rich man" and multitudes of others in torment.

Revelation 21 reveals the "new heaven and new earth" after the final judgment of the wicked (Rv 20:10-15). They will then all be in the Lake of Fire, not intended for mankind but "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41). Jews or Gentiles who believed on Christ, but not until they saw Him at the Second Coming, are not in the church but will dwell on earth eternally: in their natural bodies during the Millennium and in new bodies on the new earth with access to the new Jerusalem but not as its residents (Rv 21:24). Jews saved at the Second Coming will eternally dwell in the promised land of Israel on the new earth (Gn 17:8; 1 Chr 16:14-18; Ezk 32:21-28; 39:27-29; Zec 12:10).

Jews or Gentiles who believed on Christ before His visible appearing ("blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" - Jn 20:29) are the bride, the church. They inhabit the new Jerusalem, are always with Christ, and have full access through Him to the throne of God in heaven.

This is how I "sort this out." But you Bereans must search the Scriptures daily to come to your own conclusions.

QUESTION: How will the world (especially the Antichrist) explain the Rapture—particularly in light of so much publicity around the *Left Behind* series?

RESPONSE: The sudden mass disappearance worldwide of 100 million (or maybe more) of earth's inhabitants will cause a panic beyond anything we can imagine. I believe that all of the babies and small children (of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, etc.) will also vanish, taken to heaven at the same time.

No matter how familiar with the *Left Behind* series, whoever "received not the love of the truth...believed not the truth... God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned..." (2 Thes 2:10-12). I don't think that necessarily means they have specifically rejected the gospel of Christ. It could also mean they have rejected the witness of creation and conscience.

Neither the *Left Behind* series nor any other books or DVDs will benefit any such person. Of course, hundreds of millions (almost all Muslims, most Roman Catholics, multitudes of followers of other false religions, and atheists) who never knew and rejected the truth will have the opportunity to believe and will be martyred for their faith under Antichrist.

Antichrist's explanation of the Rapture is not important. What is important is the fact that all will be deceived by it who oppose the truth.

QUESTION: One of our staff who reads incoming letters writes, "After reading your articles, Dave, and responses to letters about Calvinism, a Calvinist writes that your theology confuses him. He says that you don't understand the L in TULIP, that Calvin held the same interpretation as you do on John 3:16—that Christ did indeed die for all mankind but that, of course, His sacrifice on the Cross only benefited those who believed on Him.

He claims that your eschatology says that everything that happens has been predetermined by God based upon His foreknowledge—a contradiction of your view that we act by free will. He also charges that to teach that the Rapture could happen at any moment leads to a "why bother?" attitude, promotes apathy in the church, and results in the deterioration of society because it causes the church to cease from being salt and light as the Lord commanded—and asks you, *what love is this that you approve?*

Referring to Christ's statement that no one knows the day or hour of His return, he asks why you seem so obsessed with trying to figure out exactly that and implies that you emphasize this because it sells books. He asks why you work so hard at dividing God's people rather than uniting them. He is concerned that you cut up those who stand for sound doctrine and says that instead you ought to expose the Benny Hinn, Copelands, Schullers, et. al., and the *Da Vinci Code*.

RESPONSE: Such letters are helpful. It is discouraging, however, that someone could have been reading my books and articles in our newsletter, yet have missed so fully what I have said. I have *never* tried "to figure out...the day or hour of Christ's return," much less been obsessed with such a pursuit. I have often pointed out how unbiblical and foolish that would be.

His accusation that I have failed to expose and warn the church about the Hinn, Copelands, Schullers, et al., is most astonishing. I have devoted entire books and newsletters to doing that—so much so that I have been criticized for spending too much time in such exposés.

My teaching that Christ could take His church to heaven at any moment is biblical, as I have often documented. Anyone who knows the Bible ought to agree, so I won't go over that again. Furthermore,

how could believing that the Rapture could occur at any moment cause “apathy in the church, resulting in the deterioration of our society”? It does the opposite. It tells us to work day and night, spread the gospel far and wide, oppose apostasy and awaken the church because our opportunity to do that could end at any moment!

Nor have I ever worked “hard at dividing God’s people rather than uniting them.” Jesus himself caused “a division among the people” wherever He preached (Jn 7:43, 9:16, 10:19). In fact, Christ said He came to bring division (Lk 12:51)! By teaching sound doctrine, we bring division between those who stand for truth and those who oppose it. And in the process, we endeavor to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” in the only biblical way—in the “one body...one Spirit...one hope...one Lord...one faith...one baptism...one God and Father of all...” (Eph 4:2-6).

As for his complaint that I misrepresent John Calvin, perhaps he hasn’t read the third and expanded edition of *What Love Is This?* After the first printing of that book, Calvinists threw numerous false charges at me, including that I misquoted Calvin, Spurgeon, Arminius, and others. The third edition responds specifically to each of the Calvinists’ complaints, sprinkling my answers throughout the book in the very places where they claimed I was in error. I expanded my quotations of Calvin, Spurgeon, Arminius, et al., to show that I had not misunderstood nor had I misquoted any of them.

Yes, at times Calvin said that “world or many” (Is 53:12, Mk 14:24, Jn 3:16, etc.) meant all of mankind. But he so often said the opposite that he could not have meant what this man thinks he meant the few times he seemed to include not just the elect but all mankind (as in his Commentary on John 3:16). For example, Calvin said, “for, (as he [God] hates sin) he can only love those whom he justifies [i.e., the elect].”¹ Then John 3:16 could not mean that in love God gave His Son to die for the sins of the entire world.

I agree that Calvinists deserve credit for much of the Christianity of early America, for founding Christian universities, etc. But one cannot praise Calvinism by contrasting the spiritual condition of the church of that day with the apostasy in the church today without including the apostasy in the majority of today’s Calvinist churches.

It is not true that I teach “that everything that happens has all been predetermined by

God based upon His foreknowledge.” That doesn’t even make sense. God wouldn’t need foreknowledge to predetermine everything. He would just predetermine it. But God has not predetermined everything that happens in our world. That is Calvinist doctrine. Its denial of man’s free will makes a holy God the author of all evil.

Both Paul and Peter link election and predestination with God’s foreknowledge but not the way he suggests. Paul writes, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). Peter declares, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...unto obedience...” (1 Pt 1:2). Those whom God, by foreknowledge, knew would receive Christ were elected/predestined to certain blessings. The Bible does not teach that God causes some to believe and refuses to give saving faith to others.

QUESTION: In *What Love Is This?* you quoted Tozer on page 102: “So when man exercises his freedom [of choice] he is fulfilling the sovereignty of God, not canceling it out.” In the May issue you gave statistics about the moral depravity of American society and said the judgment of God cannot be long in coming upon them....By your definition...are Americans not fulfilling the sovereignty of God? And if so, wherein lies the justification of the impending judgment of God on them? How different is such a God from the Calvinistic God who refuses salvation to some people, only to turn around and condemn them for rejecting the salvation He withholds from them?

RESPONSE: You misunderstand Tozer. He was saying that in exercising free will, man uses the power of choice that God gave him. That does not mean (as you seem to think) that what men choose to do is *caused* by God’s will because He sovereignly gave them the power of choice. That can’t be true, or the free will God gave to man wouldn’t be free after all.

That same misunderstanding of sovereignty and free will (the latter expression is used 17 times in the Old Testament) clouds what you say about God’s judgment upon America. You seem to think that *what* Americans do must be *according* to God’s will because He sovereignly gave them freedom to choose. Not so. Man is accountable to God for what he willfully does and will be punished for the sin he freely chooses. The fact that God *allows* man to choose does not mean that

God is the author of what he chooses.

The huge difference between the biblical God and the Calvinist God is clear. The biblical God punishes men for rejecting the salvation He provided for everyone, which all *could* have accepted by their free will—and punishes them for their sins, which are contrary to His will, none of which they *had* to commit but *chose* to do so.

But the Calvinist God condemns to hell those whom He *could* save if He so desired but for whom He sovereignly chose not even to have Christ die and from whom He deliberately withholds the salvation He pretends to offer them—and punishes them for not accepting. Yes, that’s a *huge* difference.

Endnotes

1. Rhonda Byrnes, *The Secret* (New York: Atria Books, 2006), 1.
2. *Ibid.*, 22.
3. *Ibid.*, 194.
4. *Larry King Live*, March 8, 2007.
5. Norman Vincent Peale, *Positive Imaging* (Fawcett Crest, 1982), Introduction.
6. Robert Schuller booklet, *The Power of the Inner Eye*.

Q&A Endnotes

1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III: xi, 11.

An Eternal Perspective

Dave Hunt

As part of the fallen nature inherited from Adam and Eve, all mankind is plagued with an endemic “earthlymindedness.” Locked into that perspective, men “call their lands after their own names” (Ps 49:11) as though their days on earth will never end. Of course, we all intellectually recognize that our time on earth is temporary, but we still think and act as though it were not. No wonder Moses wrote, “So teach us to number our days [i.e., to truly understand their brevity], that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps 90:12).

Death is a fate that we all imagine we will somehow avoid, at least for quite a while—until some serious illness or accident strikes without warning as a shocking wake-up call. In fact, no matter how healthy one may seem at the moment, death is always only a breath away. The very fact that this is an unpleasant subject we don’t like to think or talk about proves Moses right. We need God’s help through His Word to fit our few days into an eternal perspective.

Solomon said, “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart...” (Ecc 7:2). But modern funerals, with their beautiful flowers and kind remembrances of the deceased, seem almost designed to keep the mourning to a minimum in order to help the living remain detached from the unspeakable event that has drawn them together. We cannot bear, for ourselves or for others, to dwell upon the fact that death inevitably puts its terminating stamp upon every earthly passion, position, possession, and ambition.

He lives as a fool who forgets the solemn reminders that Scripture gives of the brevity of this life. Even Homer’s eighth century BC *Iliad* declared: “Death in ten thousand shapes hangs ever over our heads, and no man can elude him.” Death comes with the same regularity as birth. One is greeted with joy, contentment, and great satisfaction. The other is fought off as an alien intruder come to rob us of that to which it has no right. When, always too soon, it overtakes those whom we love, we understand the anger expressed in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* that anyone should ever become “Food for so foule a Monster.”

No matter how long a life the deceased may have lived, those who are thoughtful

understand Lady Capulet’s inconsolable grief as she laments over Juliet: “Death lies on her like an untimely frost upon the sweetest flower of the field.” Still, we try to ignore the irrepressible truth that we as well, and all too soon, will be swallowed up by that same “foule monster.” Death seems especially nonthreatening when all is going well.

In one of Christ’s parables, a rich man’s fields yielded so abundantly that he told himself, “I have no room where to bestow my fruits....I will pull down my barns, and build greater....And I will say to my soul... thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said...Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Lk 12:16-21).

The brevity of life is not the most serious consequence of death. More sobering still is what the Bible warns will follow: “after

O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?

—1 CORINTHIANS 15:55

this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). For us as Christians, death has lost its sting because of Christ’s death and resurrection on our behalf. Yet who can say that he or she has always lived in a way that would give one confidence to face the judgment seat of Christ without any regrets or shame and only with joy? I’m sure there will be tears of deep sorrow and remorse on that day.

I am often overwhelmed by the solemn and fearsome reality that grows nearer every day of standing before my Lord and Savior at last. I know that His love to me is infinite and eternal, but as well as being my Redeemer, He is my Creator to whom I must give an account of what I have done with the brief life He has committed to my use! Thankfully, we are assured that God “shall wipe away all tears” from our eyes (Rv 7:17; 21:4) and every true believer “shall...have praise of God” (1 Cor 4:5). Tears will give way to the eternal joy of sins forgiven through Christ’s full payment of sins’ penalty.

Atheists try to convince themselves and others that “when you’re dead, you’re dead; that’s the end of all sensation.” Yet the universal and overpowering conviction has persisted in every culture since the

dawn of time that death does not end human existence. The fact that man is a spiritual being who survives the death of the body in which he temporarily lives on earth is a basic human instinct that can be denied only with great effort. Moreover, even apart from Scripture, the scientific validity of this universal belief is easily proved.

It is undeniable that our minds can hold intangible ideas such as truth or justice or grace. Mankind understands and applies hundreds of similar nonphysical concepts daily. These common concepts defy physical description, have no physical properties, do not occupy space, and are clearly not part of the scientifically observable universe of time and sense. Obviously, nothing physical could originate and hold such thoughts—a fact that eliminates the brain as the source of any thinking at all. We do not wait for the brain to tell us what it wants us to do! We—the persons of soul and spirit living within each body—initiate our thoughts.

In fact, all thoughts are nonphysical. No thought of any kind has any spatial location or any physical substance. The conclusion is inescapable: man is a nonphysical being living in a temporary, physical body. Not his brain but man himself is the originator and guardian of his thoughts.

Though death separates man from the house he has inhabited on this earth, the spirit and soul, which are his real self, do not and cannot cease to exist. What about animals? While we have bodies much like theirs and a superficial physical likeness in many ways, which has spawned the ridiculous and unscientific theory of evolution, there is a great and eternal difference between mankind and the animal world. What is it? As Mortimer J. Adler (a brilliant former atheist and now professing Christian) points out in his book, *The Difference of Man, and the Difference it Makes*, man’s ability to form nonphysical conceptual ideas and to express them in speech confines all non-human life to the other side of a chasm that evolution could never bridge.

The fact that our thoughts do not originate with the brain can be proved in many other ways. For example, it makes no more sense to credit the physical brain with morals and ethics than to speak of an “honest liver” or an “immoral kidney.” Nor can anyone absolve himself from any thought or deed by saying “my brain made me do it.” Clearly, the selfless and volitional commitment of love, the appreciation of truth and beauty, the loathing of evil, and

the longing for ultimate fulfillment do not arise from any quality of the atoms, molecules, or cells that comprise any part of the body—including the brain.

Inasmuch as the real person inside depends upon the body for no more than temporary housing and the means of functioning in this physical universe, there is no reason to believe that death ends a person's conscious existence. We are driven rather to conclude that death releases the soul and spirit from its bodily confinement to experience another even more real dimension of being.

Without doubt, death ends our bodily existence. But the death of the body cannot end the existence of the soul and spirit, which were not part of it. They resided within and made the conscious and willful choices for which, not the body but the thinker responsible for thoughts, words, and deeds, will be held accountable.

Some 250 years ago William Law portrayed a "very prosperous and busy young tradesman" who was "about to die in his thirty-fifth year." The young man had this to say to the friends who came to express their sympathy:

You look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead, but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life.... And yet what folly of the silliest children is so great as this?

Our poor friend Lepidus died...as he was dressing himself for a feast. Do you think it is now part of his trouble that he did not live till that entertainment was over? Feast and business and pleasures and enjoyments seem great things to us—but as soon as we add death to them they all sink into an equal littleness....

If I am now going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve that this happened to me before I was forty years of age? Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven before I had made a few more bargains or stood a little longer behind a counter?

And if I am to go amongst lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content that this did not happen to me till I was old, and full of riches...? Now that judgment is the next thing that I look for, and everlasting happiness or misery is come so near to me, all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem vain and insignificant....

But my friends, how I am surprised that I have not always had these thoughts...! What a strange thing it is that a little health or the poor business of a shop should keep us so senseless of these great things that are coming so fast upon us!

The tragic person who commits suicide imagines that he is putting an end to his existence with its pains and sorrows. In fact, he is launching himself into what could very well be eternal torment. One of the memories that may torment him the most for eternity will be that he rejected the forgiveness of sins that Christ purchased for him and doubly sealed his righteous doom by throwing away his own life and with it his last chance to be saved!

Through the lives and deaths of two men, Christ describes the two destinies, one or the other of which everyone faces at death. This is not a parable about fictitious people but a true story because one of the characters is named—something Christ never did in His parables. He declared:

...a certain rich man...clothed in purple and fine linen...fared sumptuously every day...[and] a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table....The beggar died [and received a royal welcome by

PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS

—PSALM 116:15

Abraham among the redeemed]. The rich man also died [all the riches in the world will not extend one's life a nanosecond]... and in hell [Gr., *hades*] he lift[ed] up his eyes, being in torments (Lk 16:19-31).

No matter how long it lasts, this life is very short at best. James said, "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas 4:14). Moses declared, "for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps 90:10). Compared with the endless ages of eternity, man's average lifespan is nothing at all. When we live life from this eternal perspective, we clearly see the folly of trading a few short years of pleasure, popularity, and power for eternal torment in the Lake of Fire. As Christ said, it's a shortsighted, bad bargain: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mt 16:26).

Even as a young man, Moses made his choice from an eternal perspective: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt..." (Heb 11:24-27). In

contrast, many a soul has traded eternity in heaven with the Lord for momentary earthly rewards.

Momentary? Yes. Satan showed Christ "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (Lk 4:5). From an eternal perspective, a moment is how long the kingdoms of this world last. Surely, he is a fool who barter an eternal reward in heaven for the fleeting momentary honors that can only be had from Satan, "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4), by denying the Lord.

It is easy for us to see the vanity of earthly honors in the case of Daniel, whom Belshazzar offered to be "clothed with scarlet, have a chain of gold around [his] neck, and be the third ruler in the kingdom" (Dan 5:16). Daniel wasn't even being asked to compromise his beliefs to receive these honors. Daniel's response was, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another" (v 17). He knew that the kingdom would fall in a few hours.

Nevertheless, at Belshazzar's command, "they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation...that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom..." (v 29). This was one of the shortest lived promotions in history! Nor can any reward that this world may offer last any longer in comparison to eternity.

"Give thy rewards to another," should be the Christian's response in the face of every temptation to seek or to accept the praise of men. Sadly, the church has an entire stable of the horses of temporal honors that many Christian leaders love to ride in pride's parade. How many pastors, preachers, authors, and Christian leaders have phony doctorates in front of their names—and even insist on being called by that title, which they basically purchased from a diploma mill. It is a scandal among evangelicals today! They would never have been tempted by such vanity had they kept an eternal perspective.

Nor can anything so motivate us to share the gospel of Christ with others as the same eternal perspective. Each soul we meet is an eternal being who will never cease to exist but will either enjoy eternal bliss in God's presence—or eternal torment. May I, and each Berean, keep that eternal perspective firmly in our hearts. May we seek to rescue as many as we can from the broad road that leads to destruction, bringing them onto the narrow way that leads to life everlasting. **TBC**

Quotable

The Cross of Christ is the most revolutionary thing ever to appear....It stands high above the opinions of men and to that cross all opinions must come at last for judgment.

A.W. Tozer

He who always waits upon God is ready whensoever he calls. He is a happy man who so lives that death at all times may find him at leisure to die.

Owen Feltham

He whose head is in heaven need not fear to put his feet into the grave.

Matthew Henry

Q&A

QUESTION: The enclosed copy of Mart De Haan's "Been Thinking About It" column in *Our Daily Bread*, June 07 issue, raises serious questions in my mind. He seems to be saying that Matthew was mistaken in his writings concerning fulfillment of certain prophecies. As if the Holy Spirit would cause Matthew to write in error! I would be interested in your opinion.

RESPONSE: The article is good, once we get past the title ("Missing Prophecies") and introductory first page. Though he does not deny all biblical prophecy, Mart alleges that *most* "prophecies" that Christians for centuries have cited as proof of the Bible and of Christ as the Messiah aren't really prophecies at all, thus sowing doubt in readers' minds. He is saying that millions of Christians, who for centuries have believed these prophecies, have been mistaken. That claim puts him in a class by himself!

His opening lines troubled you: "I grew up hearing that one of the strongest reasons for believing in Jesus is that He fulfilled hundreds of predictions in the Jewish Scriptures. Years later I found myself wondering where *most* of those prophecies were. *More often than not*, when I checked the sources for myself I found obscure or mysterious statements, written in the past tense, and referring historically to someone other than a future Messiah" [italics added].

Of course, much prophecy doesn't directly claim to be prophecy. For example, the Passover is a historical event that happened to Israel, but it is also prophetic, portraying Christ as the Lamb of God

who would die for the sins of the world. Abraham preparing to sacrifice Isaac is history (Gn 22:1-14) and is not presented as prophecy—yet it clearly foretells the Father offering His Son on the same Mt. Moriah some 2,000 years later. Abraham's servant finding a bride for Isaac (Gn 24) is a beautiful portrayal of the Holy Spirit seeking a bride for Christ; the story of the brazen serpent raised up on a pole in the wilderness (Nm 21:5-9) to heal those who would look upon it in faith who had been bitten by the poisonous snakes clearly foretold Christ lifted up on the Cross for the sins of the world. Christ himself said: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:14,15).

De Haan would not disagree with these prophetic portrayals. He does a good job of pointing out that much of Israel's history is also prophetic of the birth, life and ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ. That would have been fine had he left out the introduction that casts doubts and reads like it was written by a rank unbeliever. (By the way, this column has been published in a new *Been Thinking About* book.)

He offers just *one* example of the *many* prophecies he says don't hold up under scrutiny: "Matthew says this [Christ's being taken as a child to Egypt then back to Israel by Joseph and Mary] happened 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son.' But where is the prediction? Matthew happens to be quoting the ancient prophet Hosea [11:1] who, in context, was looking back to the birth of the nation Israel rather than forward to the birth of a personal Messiah."

Wrong. Both were in view—one past, the other future. Israel is called God's "firstborn" but never His Son. Any mention of the Son of God refers (and can only refer) to the Messiah. For example, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Ps 2:7) refers, Paul tells us, to Christ's resurrection (Acts 13:33). "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry" (Ps 2:12) can't possibly refer to Israel. Nor could "Israel" be the answer to the question, "What is his son's name?" (Prv 30:4)! The same is true of "unto us a son is given" (Is 9:6). This can only be the eternal Son of God come as a man. Nebuchadnezzar marveled that, of the four men walking around in the flames, "the form of the fourth [was] like the Son of God" (Dn 3:25)! That definitive

term refers only to the Messiah, so this is a valid prophecy, and De Haan is simply wrong when he says that "called my son out of Egypt" refers to Israel.

Even more serious is what he says about Matthew (and by implication all Scripture). De Haan says Matthew is wrong in declaring that "called my son out of Egypt" foretold the events recorded in Matthew 2:12-15. Then he implies other "errors" that he doesn't cite: "the gospel writer Matthew repeatedly claimed fulfillments [of prophecy] where most of us would probably agree there are *no clear predictions* [italics added]." So we decide that Matthew was wrong whenever we *disagree*?!

No, De Haan is wrong. Worst of all, he is either accusing Matthew and other Bible prophets of not being inspired in some of what they wrote; or he is accusing the Holy Spirit of making mistakes so that the Bible He inspired is wrong in certain places. We can only assume that Mart didn't realize what he was saying.

QUESTION: When God created the earth it was good, so hell could not have been "in the heart of the earth" but was created after Adam's sin. Surely hell couldn't be in the heart of the earth in the sinless new creation. Where will the eternal Lake of Fire be located?

RESPONSE: We are not told the location of the Lake of Fire and waste our time and run the risk of getting into serious error when we speculate about things that the Holy Spirit has not seen fit to tell us in Scripture.

The inhabitants of hell, hades, or Sheol are disembodied spirits. Therefore, they have no physical form or "location," nor would that be required wherever they spend eternity. Why certain verses seem to "locate" hell somewhere in the heart of the earth is beyond my understanding.

This manner of speaking may be to show a contrast from "heaven," always depicted as above. It can't be "located" in space but in another dimension of existence beyond our present understanding.

Without speculating about what is beyond us, we accept the Bible by faith. Surely the Lake of Fire can't be in the new heavens and earth, where evil cannot enter.

QUESTION: (Combination of several): The Lord frequently singles people out for severe treatment. What about the person who continually sows good seed but reaps a whirlwind? Or the person who has always done the right thing

but is in penury? Esau didn't sin in the womb, yet before he was born God hated him, predestined him to eternal torment, and blessed Jacob, the cheat. Is this a good God? The mistreatment I so often get confirms Calvinism's doctrine of pre-election. I sometimes wonder why I keep trying when all I get is cursing from the Lord whom I have tried to please for so many years.

RESPONSE: No one has been guided by God to mistreat you in order to confirm a false Calvinist doctrine! I sympathize with how you feel, but aren't you setting yourself up as more righteous than God? You misunderstand the verse "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom 9:13). This is not "written" in Genesis but in Malachi 1:2-3: "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau...." God is not referring to Jacob and Esau as individuals (as Calvinists erroneously insist) but to the *descendants* of Esau and Jacob: Edom and Israel. God hated Edom because of the way they treated Israel (which He knew would be the case before Esau's birth), and He continued to love Israel, in spite of all, because of His irrevocable promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis 25:21-23 confirms Malachi one. God tells Rebekah, pregnant with twins: "Two *nations* are in thy womb, and two *manner of people* shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." Clearly this is not about Jacob and Esau as individuals, but the nations and peoples descended from them! Otherwise, it would have been a false prophecy. Esau never served Jacob, but the nation Edom became subject to the people of Israel. The Bible does not teach that God predestined Jacob for heaven and Esau for hell! That Calvinist doctrine is not only wrong but maligns God's character! You were not cursed of God from eternity past!

Either you continue to excuse your "hard luck" and business and personal problems as caused by God's curse upon you as not one of the elect; or you confess and repent of maligning God in your heart all these years and of blaming Him for your problems, and begin to take responsibility yourself.

You complain against God for blessing that schemer, Jacob. But the Bible says that Esau "despised his birthright" (Gn 25:34), whereas Jacob valued it highly. No doubt both of these young men had heard of God's promise passed down from their grandfather Abraham and from their

father Isaac: that this was an everlasting inheritance to a land their descendants would live in forever and ever, and even that the Messiah would be born from one of their descendants. But Esau despised it. Furthermore, Jacob must have been told by his mother what God had said to her about the descendants of the elder serving the descendants of the younger, which would surely mean that Jacob would inherit the blessing. Isaac must have heard this from Rebekah, so he, too, knew beforehand the will of God in this matter.

The way you formerly praised and worshiped the Lord was commendable, but only what He deserves from such pitiful creatures who are totally dependent upon Him. Why these trials have come upon you, I don't know. I have faced many seemingly hopeless trials out of which I learned a great deal. You might start with Deuteronomy 8:1-3, where God tells the Israelites that He led them through the wilderness and caused them to hunger and thirst to show them what was really in their hearts. God wants to restore you to Himself; He wants you to humble yourself before Him instead of seeing yourself as more righteous than He is and blaming Him for cursing you with disaster and predestining you to hell. God did not do that, and you need to repent of having even thought this of Him!

Weaning Evangelicals Off the Word - Part 3

T. A. McMahon

The previous two parts of this series (*TBC*, 2/07, 3/07) made some observations that should be of great concern to those who consider themselves Bible-believing Christians. Paul warned that there would come a time when “sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3,4) would give way to what “seemeth right unto a man” (Proverbs 14:12) in determining what is true. There will be apostate “teachers” who advance an experiential mode that panders to the lusts of the flesh, promoting self-serving “fables” or myths. Furthermore, these “deceitful workers” and lying “ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:13,15) would draw upon the teachings of “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1). Paul certainly had such teachers in mind as he warned the Ephesian elders that after his departing “grievous wolves” would enter among them and teach “perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29,30). There is no doubt that these verses are being fulfilled in our day.

Although there are far too many examples of apostasy influencing the church today to cite in this brief series of articles, there is one spurious trend that encompasses nearly all of what the above verses address. It’s called the Emerging Church Movement (ECM). The ECM is a development among evangelicals that appears to have some worthwhile goals: 1) It professes to speak to today’s culture about the relevancy of Christianity and the value of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and 2) It desires to keep young evangelicals continuing in the faith. The movement involves a number of churches (mostly non-denominational), some supportive ministries and parachurch organizations, and the support of a number of prominent evangelical leaders and authors.

The ECM has no official organization or leadership, although some of its adherents have “emerged” as recognized leaders and spokesmen. For many of those helping to promote the movement, their motivation to “try something different” grew out of the frustration of their own very limited success in evangelizing and discipling young people. Some of the leaders were in seeker-sensitive and purpose-driven churches, and they saw firsthand that their church-growth marketing schemes were not effective for drawing those in their late teens, 20s, and early 30s. The main fare of most consumer-driven churches features

contemporary music with shallow, repetitive choruses, topical 30-minutes-or-less sermons (mostly psychology-based), a host of social programs to attract the lost (and the fleshly nature of Christians), and “Bible studies” that address everything but the Bible (see “Consumer Christianity I & II”, *TBC*, 2/05, 3/05). For a surprising number of young adults, that was a spiritual turnoff.

In his book *The Emerging Church* (with contributions and endorsement by Rick Warren), Dan Kimball relates his own breakthrough in overcoming the frustrating experiences in trying to motivate the young people in the evangelical church where he was youth pastor. He tells about watching a concert on the youth-oriented MTV network late one night that was a candlelit, all-acoustic performance. Recognizing that MTV certainly knows its audience and the youth culture, he refashioned his church’s youth room into a subdued, “catacombish,” candlelit environment and had the worship band use acoustic guitars, forgoing their usual flashing light show and loud electric music. He was delighted by the reaction of one usually unresponsive teen who said, “I like this. This was really spiritual.”

That was an epiphany for Kimball. As he expanded the service with what he considered more “authentic Christian” elements and liturgy, it attracted hundreds, young and old alike. He is convinced he’s found what the church of today needs: “As the emerging church returns to a rawer and more vintage form of Christianity, we may see explosive growth much like the early church did.”

On the contrary, the “explosive growth” in the early church came from an approach that is almost nonexistent in the ECM. Peter’s confrontational address to the crowd on Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 is directly at odds with the *modus operandi* of the emergent leaders. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter’s preaching brought conviction of sin, repentance, and belief; 3,000 came to Christ that day. Kimball’s “vintage form of Christianity,” featuring rituals, ceremony, candles, incense, prayer stations, and images to create a spiritually experiential atmosphere for evangelicals is “vintage” only in the sense that it is an imitation of the later unbiblical Eastern Orthodox and medieval Roman Catholic liturgies. The early New Testament church knew nothing of this idolatrous and sense-oriented worship.

Ironically, emergent churches around the world, in their attempt to “reconstruct” the church, are passing each other like ships in the night. Kimball’s efforts at spiritual

stimulation by introducing to young evangelicals the liturgical bells and smells of Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and high-church Episcopal and Presbyterian rituals, stands in contradiction to some European cathedrals and churches going emergent. Europeans are trying to revive their congregations, deadened by centuries of imagery and ritual, by covering their gothic interiors with decorated drapery, exchanging the organ and traditional hymns for electric guitars and contemporary choruses, and adding throw pillows for comfortable seating to create a seeker-friendly environment. These churches are abandoning the very things that are “spiritually” alluring to American emergent evangelicals. Regarding both sensual approaches, Scripture tells us, “the flesh profiteth nothing.”

In reading the works of the ECM leaders, we would agree with many of their criticisms of current Christianity. There is plenty to oppose as apostasy and the abandonment of the Word increases in Christendom. The ECM’s corrections, however, rather than having restorative value for the church, are just as contrary to the Scriptures. Even worse, they go far beyond subtly “weaning evangelicals off the Word” to rendering the Bible and its doctrines as *the enemy* when it comes to drawing the world in general and, specifically, our postmodern culture, to the love of Jesus.

The Emergent Church Movement claims to desire—above all things—to show the love and life of Christ to a culture that is distrustful of the Christianity it perceives as oppressive and absolutist. We’re assured by ECM writers that “numbers of postmoderns are attracted to Jesus but detest His church” and can therefore be reached by the emerging church approach. It professes to be more amenable to the culture, more viable in its practice of Christianity, and truer to what Jesus had in mind for His church on earth.

Admirable—but let’s see how true it is to the Scriptures. As Isaiah exhorted, “To the law and to the testimony [i.e., God’s Word]: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

First of all, one has to wonder what a postmodern—a person characterized chiefly by his or her general disdain for authority and absolutes, particularly those dealing with moral issues and religion—thinks about this “Jesus” to whom he or she is supposedly drawn. The critical question is “Jesus who?” Is it the *biblical* Jesus they

like, the one who declared absolutely, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6)? What about the *authoritarian* Jesus, who announced, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” (John 15:10)? His words weren’t referring only to the Ten Commandments but rather to every *instruction* He gave. Is that the Jesus a postmodern desires? What about the Jesus who gave mankind an ultimatum: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36)?

The biblical Jesus certainly does not accommodate postmodernism, which is one more example of humanity’s rebellion against its Creator. The good news is that Jesus offers deliverance from the delusion of postmodernism, as well as all the other man-centered *isms*: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31,32). The bad news is that the emerging church approach attempts to accommodate Jesus and the Scriptures (actually “another Jesus” and a corrupted and emasculated Word) to our postmodern culture.

Although some regard the Emerging Church Movement as nothing more than a passing spiritual fad among young evangelicals, its potential for shipwrecking the faith of our next generation (should the Lord not yet return for His saints) is staggering. Here are just a few of the faith-destroying beliefs as espoused in the writings of the emergent leaders. First of all, foundational to the ECM is the subversion of the Bible. It’s akin to Satan’s scheme to destabilize Eve’s trust in what God commanded: “Yea, hath God said...?” (Genesis 3:1). They give lip service to the importance of God’s Word while undermining its inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency.

Rob writes in *Velvet Elvis*, following 22 pages of weakening the authority of the Bible (making statements such as “It is possible to make the Bible say whatever we want it to, isn’t it?” and “With God being so massive and awe-inspiring and full of truth, why is his book capable of so much confusion?”): “[L]et’s make a group decision to drop once and for all the Bible-as-owner’s-manual metaphor [i.e., God’s specific instructions for mankind]. It’s terrible. It really is.... We have to embrace the Bible as the wild, uncensored, passionate account it is of experiencing the living God.”¹ No! “Holy men of God spake

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pt 1:21).

His view, common to most emergent writers, is that the key to the authority of Scripture is one’s interpretation, and that is most authoritative when the interpretation takes place in a community and validated by a “group decision”: “Community, community, community. Together with others, wrestling and searching and engaging the Bible as a group of people hungry to know God in order to follow God.”²

Although we find thousands of times throughout the Bible clear, direct, and absolute commands prefaced by phrases such as “Thus saith the Lord” and “The word of the Lord came to me,” we’re now told that understanding and obedience to what God said are subject to a community’s interpretation. Consequently, ECM churches disdain preaching and authoritative teaching, yet they delight in discussion, causing some to dump the pulpit in favor of a dialogue-led Starbucks environment. As the goals of the community change, we’re told the interpretation may also change.

The claim that the ECM approach has not jettisoned sound doctrine is either a delusion or an outright deception. This becomes clear when one asks for a biblical position on an issue. Kristen Bell acknowledges in a *Christianity Today* emerging church article, “I grew up thinking that we figured out the Bible...that we knew what it means. Now I have no idea what most of it means, and yet I feel like life is big again—like life used to be black and white, and now it’s in color.”³ Brian McLaren, the most prominent of the emergent leaders, echoes Bell’s “doctrine” of avoidance regarding what the Bible says about homosexuality:

Perhaps we need a five-year moratorium on making [doctrinal] pronouncements. In the meantime, we’ll practice prayerful Christian dialogue, listening respectfully, disagreeing agreeably. When decisions need to be made, they’ll be admittedly provisional. We’ll keep our ears attuned to scholars in biblical studies, theology, ethics, psychology, genetics, sociology, and related fields. Then in five years, if we have clarity, we’ll speak; if not, we’ll set another five years for ongoing reflection.⁴

TBC has received numerous letters from parents and evangelical pastors who find their young people seeking out emergent churches for the “new” experiences, which they offer in abundance: religious art (primarily impressionistic images of “Jesus”), “biblical” films, rituals based upon Catholic/Orthodox liturgy, community, personal relationships, contemplative spirituality

and mysticism (some include yoga), Bible dialogues, ecumenical interaction with “people of faith,” a social gospel, plans to save the planet, restore the kingdom, and so forth.

Regarding the seductive nature of such things, few evangelicals, young or old, have a defense. Too many function as biblical illiterates, meaning they know some things about the Bible and are capable of reading it but simply haven’t made any effort, outside of following along with their pastor’s teaching on Sundays. They are the spiritual con man’s delight.

Satan’s seduction of Eve began subtly, “Yea hath God said?” It was a confusion tactic, setting her up to believe his lie and reject what God had said: “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.” That was his punch line to destroy the human race. Eve fell for it; Adam went along.

One finds a strikingly similar approach in the writings of the ECM leaders in regard to destroying faith in the gospel: Brian McLaren leads with doubts about what God had said:

The church latched on to that old doctrine of original sin like a dog to a stick, and before you knew it, the whole gospel got twisted around it. Instead of being God’s big message of saving love for the whole world, the gospel became a little bit of secret information on how to solve the pesky legal problem of original sin.⁵

He says elsewhere, “I don’t think we’ve got the gospel right yet. What does it mean to be saved?...None of us have arrived at orthodoxy.”

British emergent leader and Zondervan author Steve Chalke delivers the punch line that unabashedly rejects the essential gospel belief that Christ paid the full penalty for the sins of mankind necessary to satisfy divine justice. Incredibly, he condemns that doctrine as a form of “cosmic child abuse” and a “twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith.”⁶ This is where these emergent pied pipers, wittingly or unwittingly, are seductively leading our youth.

Hopefully, the above will move you to prayer and action regarding the biblical strengthening of your own children and the youth in your fellowship. If you need more motivation (this brief article allowed me to give you only the tip of the “emerging” iceberg), see Roger Oakland’s book *Faith Undone: The emerging church...a new reformation or an end-time deception?* **TBC**

Quotable

How sadly possible it is to take delight in conferences and conventions, to feast on all the good things that are brought before us, and yet to be unprepared to go out from them to self-denying efforts to rescue the perishing; to delight in the rest of faith while forgetful to fight the good fight of faith; to dwell upon the cleansing and the purity effected by faith, but to have little thought for the poor souls struggling in the mire of sin....If we can wash our feet while He is...alone upon the mountains, is there not sad lack of fellowship with our Lord?

J. Hudson Taylor, from Union and Communion

Why is the church weak? Why are individual Christians weak? It is because they have allowed their minds to become conformed to the "spirit of this age"....They have forgotten what God is like....

James Montgomery Boice

Q&A

QUESTION: Mr. Hunt, a question has been troubling me as long as I've been a Christian...and I've never heard a sensible response. How can God send the overwhelming majority of humanity into everlasting conscious torment? I know there must be punishment and justice, but the traditional view on this seems cruel and not consistent with God's loving nature. Undeserved eternal joy in His presence for believers shows God's love—but never-ending pain and torment from the God who "is love"?

RESPONSE: This question bothers many. John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul all taught everlasting punishment (Mt 3:12; 18:8; 25:41, 46; Mk 9:43-48; Lk 3:17; 2 Thes 1:9). If the suffering in the Lake of Fire is not everlasting, then neither is the joy of heaven because the same Greek word for "everlasting" is used for both.

An equally troubling question would be why eating some fruit merited Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden, instant spiritual death, and brought the physical death, disease, destruction, pain, wars, and sorrows that mankind has suffered ever since. Isn't that contradictory and a denial of "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8, 16)? No, it is *because* of His unchanging love and character.

God is also holy and just. In love, He warned Adam and Eve of the dire consequences of disobedience. To go back on

His Word would make Him a liar. Why would we believe anything else He said?

Let's start with "In the beginning God created..." (Gn 1:1). All that followed must be *because of Him*. Because He *is love*, He made man in His image so that man could eternally love God and his fellows. God is an eternal Being. Thus, man, made in His image, could never cease to exist. God's loving purpose was that man would forever dwell with Him in intimate fellowship and love—not that he would suffer forever in the Lake of Fire.

God knew what Adam and Eve and their descendants would do—but He did not predestine man to sin nor to be in torment eternally. The Lake of Fire was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41). God "will have [i.e., desires] all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth....Christ Jesus...gave himself a ransom for all..." (1 Tm 2:4-6). Salvation is for "whosoever believeth on him" (Jn 3:16). To forgive Christ-rejecters would undermine both God's integrity and His justice.

No one who spends eternity in the Lake of Fire (and many will) can blame God. They will have sent themselves there. In love, God designed man so that His love would not be "an extra" but as spiritually essential to life as water is physically essential. The analogies of water and thirst are used repeatedly in Scripture: "My soul thirsteth for God" (Ps 42:2); the rich man in hell likened his torment to thirst, begging for a drop of water on his tongue, saying, "I am tormented in this flame" (Lk 16:24). It is obvious that he didn't mean physical water, a physical tongue (his body was in the grave), or a physical flame, but something even more real.

The rich man was suffering from the spiritual thirst that sin's separation from God has brought and that Christ came to quench. But he had rejected Christ, trying to find satisfaction in food, sex, wealth, possessions, position, etc. Jesus told the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst," and He said to the Jews, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (Jn 7:37). The final invitation in the Bible is "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rv 22:17). Clearly, such passages refer neither to physical thirst nor to physical water.

Spiritual thirst results from sin's separation from God. Most people foolishly seek to satisfy that thirst with things of this world. Those who seek after God find true satisfaction in Christ. The central feature

of heaven is "a pure river of water [obviously not physical] of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rv 22:1).

On earth, there is much to distract and tempt both saint and sinner, dulling true satisfaction for believers and turning them from God. For unbelievers, that thirst is seemingly satisfied without God—until they die. Separated from their bodies, from all companionship and earthly enticements, they can no longer dull conscience or escape the innate thirst for God. That thirst will torment them eternally with regret and remorse as the horror of their sins is revealed in the fire of God's purity, holiness, truth, and justice.

QUESTION: I met you years ago. I'm 21, attending a Nazarene university, am at home in the Messianic Jewish community, and believe that Yeshua Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God, and Savior. But I've been struggling... is God fact or fiction...? I was taught Liberalism in public high school and that contributed a lot to these doubts. I had a good breakthrough with God last Wednesday, felt Him move in me and comfort me, but the feeling didn't last very long, though I know it was real. My mother retold to me her testimony of being saved out of the hippie movement...and seeing the Shekinah glory. That gave me peace... yes, God is real after all. I just wish I could see such a manifestation...as my dad and so many others have. Then I thought: "Just because God is real, does that make Him right?" The devil and demons are real but wrong...so how can we be sure God is right? I want more than anything to prove these doubts wrong and regain my confidence, once so strong, and I know you are the right person to ask.

I need God so badly...I want nothing else but Him for the rest of my life—but I have all these worries and doubts.... I've prayed and prayed and thought doubts were conquered but I guess not. Do you know what to do?

RESPONSE: Many young people in evangelical homes and churches have similar doubts but hide them. First of all, don't look to feelings—they fade or change, as you know. Experience is no better. All Israel experienced going through the Red Sea, the Shekinah glory day after day, daily manna, water out of the rock, audibly heard God declare the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai,

promised to obey, yet rebelled.

“We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). Does that mean without proof? No, otherwise the Mormon, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, etc., could “walk by faith.” No matter how ridiculous the belief, “believers” could say “I have faith.” We could not reason with a JW, atheist, or even a Satanist who also has “faith.”

Feelings? Mormons have a “burning in the bosom.” *Experiences?* I’ve met people all over the world who’ve had the most amazing and seemingly miraculous experiences possible, but many were into the occult.

For true faith, God has provided three powerful witnesses: *creation*, *conscience*, and the *Bible*. The sun has not been in the sky forever or it would have burned out by now. The same is true of all the other stars in the universe. So there was a time when the universe did not exist. *Nothing* existed because *things* (matter) wear out. Nor do we get *something* out of *nothing*. There is only one sensible possibility: *someOne*, without beginning or end and with the power to create all from nothing, has always existed. This fact is beyond our comprehension; but we are driven to it by all we know. There is no other alternative! No atheist or liberal, no inner doubts, can change these facts.

Everything is made of energy, but energy, being a *thing* itself is not eternal but part of the material universe subject to the law of entropy and thus had a beginning. Nor could energy plan, design, and create the incredibly complex and intricately related parts of even a single cell, much less place on every cell in written language the DNA instruction manual that every cell (plant, animal, or human) must follow and without which there is no life. No physical life exists without written *words!*

Words convey information, and that can only come from an intelligence. The information on DNA requires an infinite Intelligence! The Law of Biogenesis says, “Life only comes from life,” as Pasteur proved. The so-called Big Bang (which didn’t happen) would have sterilized everything a trillion times over. No life could have come out of that ball of fire!

So our Creator, who always existed, must have been the source of all life. As I said, no atheist or liberal can change these facts. There are no sound arguments against the above. The very first verse in the Bible presents what all mankind is driven to, no matter how reluctantly: “In the beginning, God created....” There

exists an eternal Being who is our Creator. The first verses in John declare that Jesus Christ is the Creator and that “in him was life” (Jn 1:4), and He is called THE WORD OF GOD. On this basis alone, we would believe the rest of the Bible; but there is more: *conscience*.

Why are you worrying about whether God is right or wrong, good or evil? Because all humans made in God’s image innately have these concepts. Morals and ethics didn’t come from energy, which knows nothing of right or wrong, nor from a Big Bang or from the molecules in your brain.

Again the Bible explains: “the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts ...accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom 2:15). Mankind lives for self in violation of conscience, like a cancer cell no longer following the DNA. Jesus said: “Ye must be born again.” Peter explains, “Being born again...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pt 1:23-25). Unless the rebel believes the gospel and is reborn into harmony with the Word of God, he remains a cancer that must be cut out of God’s universe.

Finally, *prophecy* is the supreme way God proves His existence and the infallibility of His Word. Hundreds of prophecies foretell the entire history of Israel, many already fulfilled, the rest in process of fulfillment. No one can deny this! As for Christ, there are scores of specific prophecies foretelling His coming that prove His identity that no one can refute.

Put your faith in the One who has revealed Himself in *creation*, *conscience*, and His infallible Word, especially through *prophecy*, and no doubts can come.

QUESTION: I have read most of your articles over the years. Perhaps I missed something, but if Christ was crucified on Thursday, then the high Sabbath that began the 7-day feast of the Passover would have been followed immediately by the weekly Sabbath. When could the Jewish leaders have asked Pilate to seal the tomb...and the women have bought linens and spices to wrap His body...without violating either of these back-to-back Sabbaths?

RESPONSE: Here’s the picture. The Jewish day begins with *night* right after *sunset*, not with *morning* right after *sunrise*. No leaven may be in the home during the seven-day feast of unleavened bread that begins with the Passover supper. All leaven must be removed beforehand.

This is done during a time called “the days of unleavened bread” (Acts 12:3).

The final 24 hours just before the Passover supper are called “the day of unleavened bread”—the day (Nisan 14) “when the Passover [lamb] must be killed” (Lk 22:7) by “the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel...in the evening” (just before sunset—Ex 12:6) to be eaten “that *night* [just after sunset] roast with fire” (v. 8).

Of course, Christ’s disciples would need all of Nisan 14 (which began with night just after sunset) to prepare the “Upper Room” for the Passover supper the following night, removing all leaven and preparing a lamb slain just before the next sunset, to be eaten that night (not knowing that Christ would have been crucified). It was during the night that preceded the slaying of the lamb the next afternoon that Christ was betrayed: “the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread...” (1 Cor 11:23). The “last supper,” from which Judas went out to betray Christ, was not the Passover supper. The next day, the rabbis had not yet eaten the Passover (Jn 18:28).

Surely the rabbis would have obtained permission to guard the tomb immediately after Pilate’s death sentence. They had no time to lose because of these two Sabbaths approaching. The women would have procured the spices and linens immediately for the same reason before the two pending Sabbaths.

Endnotes

1. *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 044-45, 062-63.
2. *Ibid.*, 053.
3. Andy Crouch, “The Emergent Mystique,” *Christianity Today*, November 2004, Vol 48, No 11, 36ff.
4. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/leaders/newsletter/2006/cln60123.html>.
5. Brian McLaren, *The Last Word and the Word After That* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 134.
6. Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 182-83.

Toward the Prize

Dave Hunt

Paul was a man of fervent prayer, with a seemingly endless list of dear ones on his heart. To the believers in Rome, even before he had been there, Paul wrote, “without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” (Rom 1:9). Likewise, to those at Ephesus whom he knew well, “I...cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Eph 1:16). The number of believers he mentioned by name in his epistles and for whom he daily prayed supported his statement: “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?” (2 Cor 11:28,29).

Of course, Paul’s prayers expressed much that he desired God to provide for various believers. First and foremost in his heart, however, was one passion he had for all believers everywhere and in every time of history—and that would include us today. He expressed it in various ways in his epistles. Here it is in his prayer for the Ephesians:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him [to] know what is the hope of his calling [and] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.... (Eph 1:17-20)

Paul wanted believers everywhere to know and understand God’s ultimate eternal purpose for them. His prayer was not that this purpose would be accomplished one day in eternity. There was no question about that, nor could Paul’s prayer play any part in its ultimate realization. God had already determined to accomplish this goal for every Christian without fail, and He would do it by the very power with which Christ was raised from the dead. That it will be realized for every true Christian is as certain as our salvation. What was it, then, for which Paul prayed? That we would here and now in this present life know and understand “the hope of his [God’s] calling.”

What is this hope? And if it unfailingly will be realized for eternity in glory, no matter what we may do or not do, why is it so important that we understand it ahead of time? Herein lies one of the key elements in a victorious life of fruitfulness to the glory of

God and fullness of Christ’s joy and ours.

The Apostles understood this hope well. Paul declared that we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2). This passage and many others make it clear that “the glory of God” is not only something that will surround us in heaven but it will be revealed *in us*: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). He calls it a “mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints” (1:26). The fact that this promised “glory” is future and as yet unseen is likewise clear: “What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:24,25).

Paul referred to “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” as “that blessed hope” (Ti 2:13). How does that relate to “the hope of our calling?” Why would the hope of Christ’s appearing at last to His own, in glory, be specially blessed?

We don’t look to our own reasoning and speculation in seeking to understand the

I LIVE; YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME.

—GALATIANS 2:20

Christian’s ultimate hope. We search the Scriptures, and the more deeply we understand, the more clearly we see that the Bible is indeed the Word of the true and living God, one integrated love letter to mankind from Genesis to Revelation.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth....” On the sixth day, “God created man in his own image” (Gn 1:1,27). That statement has nothing to do with man’s physical body, male or female, for “God is a Spirit” (Jn 4:24). We can only conclude that man was made in the spiritual image of God to manifest to the universe the beauties of God’s holy character: His selfless love, compassion, grace, gentleness, patience, holiness, and moral purity—as well as the power of choice. The latter, of course, was essential if man was to love God and his fellows—but that power, necessarily, opened the door for man to choose for himself rather than for his Creator!

In Adam’s irrational and unthinkable rebellion against the God to whom he owed his very existence, Self (the autonomous self as “god”) had its awful birth and, in partnership with Satan, has been trying to take over

mankind’s destiny ever since. Battles rage within and without as each individual Self competes not only with God but with every other Self for supremacy: conflict between husbands and wives, children and their siblings, parents and children, in a cacophony of “I, My, Me, Mine.”

The moment man rebelled, the Spirit of God departed from man’s spirit, and the image of God in which man had been created was shattered. Self was left to the unhappy loneliness of its insane pride. Imagine worms boasting of their power and glory and one gets a picture of the pitiful creature called man, mired deeply in sin, parading his positive self-image and self-esteem before the throne of God!

Jesus declared that the only hope for any man was to “deny himself [that wicked Self born in Eden], and take up his [individual] cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24-26; Mk 8:31-34; Lk 9:23). In defiance of our Lord’s command, Christian psychology (which is trustingly looked to for guidance by almost the entire evangelical church) declares that man’s great need is, instead, to nourish and cherish the Self. Rejecting Christ’s command, the evangelical church now follows Christian psychologists, who have become the new infallible priesthood. They have brought into the evangelical church the foolish wisdom of the world (1 Cor 1:20) with the excuse that “all truth is God’s truth.” That mantra confuses mere facts of logic or science with “the truth” found only in “the word of truth” (Ps 119:43; 2 Cor 6:7; Eph 1:13; Col 1:5; 2 Tm 2:15; Ja 1:18), which alone “shall make you free” (Jn 8:32).

Rather than denying self, “Christian psychology,” thinking it can improve God’s infallible and all-sufficient Word with the theories of atheistic anti-Christians, coddles rebellious Self with the offer of “self-esteem, self-love, self-acceptance, self-image, self-improvement, self-assertion,” and all the other selfisms, ad nauseam. Bruce Narramore admits that these theories are not found in “the word of truth,” but Christian psychologists have borrowed them from Christ-defying humanists:

Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem. It is a good and necessary focus.¹

James Dobson’s ministry is built upon this same humanist foundation. We have quoted him saying that Christian psychology is a good career for any young Christian to aspire to, “provided their faith is strong

enough to withstand the humanism to which they will be exposed." So the evangelical church, under the influence of Christian psychologists, has been reduced to reliance upon humanists for instruction in how to provide essential moral and spiritual counsel, which the Holy Spirit somehow failed to include in the Word of Truth, even though it claims to give us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3).

How can so many Christians turn from the clear teaching of Scripture to Satan's lies? There is widespread ignorance of God's Word in the evangelical church. Even worse is the eagerness to follow the world in contemptuous disregard of what the Bible unmistakably teaches. Much of the blame must be placed upon Christian psychologists, who have led the way in this rebellion. The effect is everywhere. Robert Schuller (who for years has had the largest TV audience each Sunday morning), in a book with an introduction by his mentor, arch heretic Norman Vincent Peale, boldly defies God:

Self-love is a crowning sense of self-worth. It is an ennobling emotion of self-respect... an abiding faith in yourself. It is sincere belief in yourself.

It comes through self-discovery, self-discipline, self-forgiveness and self-acceptance. It produces self-reliance, self-confidence and an inner security, calm as the night.²

Self has taken the place of God. Sadly, the specious belief that humanists can teach us how to counsel from the Bible through psychological techniques is widely accepted among evangelicals today. Church leaders are taking their flocks into one false teaching after another (from the avid pursuit of "signs and wonders" to numerical growth at the expense of sound doctrine). Many such errors have been exposed in these pages. Here again Self, inflated by Christian psychology, is the culprit. Jesus said, "If any man will [i.e., wills to] do his [the Father's] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (Jn 7:17). Scripture will not be understood nor sound doctrine valued and defended as long as Self has not been denied in surrender to the will of God.

In our lives, we need God. We need the Holy Spirit. We need Christ as our very life itself, allowing Him to restore in and express through us the image of God in which we were created. We have forgotten heaven and become enamored of this world, living our lives as though the only plans God has for us pertain to earth. Yes, some of our works seem good and spiritual: preaching

the gospel and giving out tracts, writing Christian books and making Christian films, building missionary organizations, larger churches, and Christian universities, doing charitable deeds—and on and on it goes, keeping us so busy serving the Lord that we can scarcely find time to love and worship Him.

Believing the lie that one can become so "heavenly minded" as to be of "no earthly good" (surely Christ was the most heavenly minded man who ever lived, yet He was also the most earthly good!), we have lost sight of "the hope of his calling." I do not minimize the lust, self-indulgence, entrapment in sin, failure to pray, neglect of Bible study, the forsaking of Christian fellowship, and the carnality that is rampant today among those who claim to be born-again evangelicals. These failings, however, are easily recognized by anyone who knows the Lord and has a modicum of conscience.

It is a deadly error, however, to imagine that victory over these sins comes through getting "busy for God." No matter in what we are falling "short of the glory of God," the problem is the same: we have lost sight of (or perhaps never understood) what Paul says is "the hope of our calling."

Perhaps no one served Christ as wholeheartedly as Paul. At the same time, no one loved Him more. Consider carefully Paul's explanation of the secret of his life: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13,14). Paul then exhorts, "Be followers together of me..." (3:17). What is this prize that we should all be pressing toward, as Paul did?

Clearly, it is not an individual award given to a "winner" in competition for excelling others. The prize is "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" itself that Paul desired for all Christians to understand and press toward. This "high calling" is why Christ died and rose again for us! Peter explains that "the God of all grace...has called us unto his eternal glory" (1 Pt 5:10). Falling short of that glory is the biblical definition of sin (Rom 3:23). The restoration of that glory is fully assured in eternity for every true disciple of Christ, yet we are to pursue it even now. Laying everything else aside for this goal was the secret of Paul's remarkable life!

Of Christ it is written, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2). That joy was twofold: knowing that He had faithfully accomplished what the

Father had given Him to do; and "bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb 2:10) in His very image. The "hope of his calling" is the joy set before us: the joy of at last fully becoming all that the Father's heart of love desires for us so that Christ will "see of the travail of his soul [and] be satisfied" (Is 53:11).

The "hope of his calling" is beautifully expressed in this old hymn (excerpted here) written by John Nelson Darby, one of the founders in the early 1830s of the so-called "Plymouth Brethren":

And is it so? I shall be like thy Son? Is this the grace which He for me has won?

Father of Glory (thought beyond all thought), In glory to His own blest likeness brought!

O Jesus, Lord...myself the prize and travail of Thy soul! Yet it must be!

Thy love had not its rest were thy redeemed not with Thee, fully bless'd.

That love that gives not as the world but shares all it possesses with its loved co-heirs.

Nor I alone: Thy loved ones all, complete, in glory round Thee there with joy shall meet;

All...for Thy glory like Thee, Lord: object supreme of all, by all adored...

The heart is satisfied, can ask no more: all thought of self is now, forever, o'er.

Christ, its unmingled Object, fills the heart: in bless'd adoring love its endless part.

Father of Glory, in Thy presence bright all this shall be unfolded in the light!

The angel Gabriel told Daniel, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dn 12:3). John explained when and how this transformation would occur: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2).

Though that transformation will not be fully realized until we see Him face to face, yet even now, though "we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor 13:12), we are, as we keep our eyes upon Him, being "changed into the same image from glory to glory...as by the Spirit of the Lord." Let us lay all else aside to press on toward the prize "of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

TBC

Quotable

More evil is done to the cause of Christianity by its adherents than its opponents, for the world often contrasts a Christian's profession with his practice. They argue rightly that if Christianity is what we claim it is, it ought to make a difference in the life.

James Spink, cited in William MacDonald, The Forgotten Command: Be Holy

The inconsistencies of Christian people, who while professing to believe their Bibles were yet content to live just as they would if there were no such Book, had been one of the strongest arguments of my skeptical companions.

Hudson Taylor, cited in William MacDonald, The Forgotten Command: Be Holy

If you have looked at your resolutions, endeavors, workings, duties, qualifications, etc., more than at the merits of Christ, it will cost you dearly....Christ alone can be the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

Thomas Wilcox, 1621-1687

Q&A

QUESTION: In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, after describing the rapture (4:13-17) Paul refers to this event as the "day of the Lord." Acts 2:20-21, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 and 2 Peter 3:10 also show that the rapture and the day of the Lord are the same event. Matthew 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 appear to indicate that believers will still be here at the mid-point of the trib when Antichrist is revealed. Lastly, Matthew 24:29 and Acts 2:20-21 talk about the sun, moon, and stars at the time of the day of the Lord, and Revelation 6:12-13 uses the same language to describe the opening of the sixth seal. Then in Revelation 7:9 immediately following the opening of the sixth seal it makes reference to a great multitude in Heaven that no one could count. This leads me to believe that the rapture (day of the Lord) takes place after the abomination and at the opening of the sixth seal. Am I wrong?

RESPONSE: I don't find your conclusions in the verses you cite. First of all, an event (the Rapture) is not a day (the day of the Lord). The Rapture, coming when not expected (Mt 24:44; Mk 13:32-37; Lk 12:40) and "as a thief" (Rv 3:3, 16:15), marks the beginning of the day of the Lord, which

also comes "as a thief in the night" (1 Thes 5:2). But the Rapture doesn't occur simultaneously with the destruction of the old universe and creation of the new, which also happens in "the day of the Lord" (2 Pt 3:10). Far too much occurs during that day (the Rapture, millennial reign, destruction of old and creation of new universe, etc.) for it to be a 24-hour period.

Acts 2:20,21 refers to a particular "great and notable" part of the "day of the Lord..." before which, not during which, "the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon into blood" (2:20). A "falling away [apostasy]" must precede the day of the Lord (2 Thes 2:1-3); and 2 Peter 3:10 states that the old universe will be destroyed during the day of the Lord. None of these verses indicates that the Rapture and day of the Lord "are the same event."

Matthew 24:15-22 does not refer to Christians but to Jews, specifically those "which be in Judea" (Mt 24:16). Second Thessalonians 2:3 refers to the falling away that comes first [i.e., before the Antichrist is revealed in the day of the Lord]. This verse makes it clear that the falling away comes before the day of the Lord, and the revealing of the Antichrist in that day. The Rapture must occur, removing the church, and only "then shall that Wicked [i.e., Antichrist] be revealed...whose coming is after the working of Satan..." (2 Thes 2:8,9). The next few verses refer to those who will be deceived by Antichrist "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion...that they all might be damned..." (2:10-12). There is no hint that true Christians are even on earth. They all have been taken in the Rapture and Paul is referring to a world of unbelievers who have been left behind.

Matthew 24:27-31 refers not to the Rapture when believers are caught up to meet Christ in the air, but to the Second Coming when His feet touch the Mount of Olives and angels gather back to Jerusalem from all over the world "his elect" [i.e., the 1/3 of the Jews who have survived the great tribulation and are left alive when Christ returns to take the throne of His father David—Ezk 39:28 and Zec 13:9]. This occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation and has nothing to do with the Rapture. By the way, when His feet touch the Mount of Olives, Christ brings "all the saints" (Zec 14:5) from heaven with Him—so the Rapture must have already occurred to take them up there. Of course this must be the case, because the Judgment Seat of Christ must have occurred in order for the bride to be "arrayed in fine

linen, clean and white" to dress her for the wedding in heaven" (Rv 19:7,8). Only after these two events in heaven can the Second Coming take place (19:11-21).

Revelation 7:9 refers to the same group we saw under the altar at 6:9-11. They have not been Raptured to heaven but are the souls of those martyred under Antichrist asking when they will be avenged. They are told that will not occur until the other martyrs have been killed. Then they will be resurrected together at the Second Coming (6:11; 20:4,5).

QUESTION: Regarding your article on replacement theology and Israel in the Q&A of June 2007, since our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and all His disciples kept the Jewish festivals ("With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" - Luke 22:15); Paul commands "keep the feast" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8); he hurried to Jerusalem to celebrate another Jewish holiday (Acts 20:16); he told the Colossians that the Jewish festivals were a shadow of the Messiah, good reason to celebrate them (Colossians 2:16-17); the Jewish festivals are "statutes forever" (Leviticus 23:14); and at the last supper Christ declared that He would someday drink the Passover Cup anew with His followers in His Father's Kingdom (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25); and since neither God nor Jesus makes any distinction between Christian Jews or Gentiles regarding these festivals, could you please explain your statement: "...for a Gentile to keep those [Jewish] feasts today would be a fraud."

You state that Jewish feasts "are specifically for Jews to keep..." but I fail to find any Scripture that so states or even so implies. Do you mean that Jesus's statement at the Last Supper about drinking the cup anew with His followers in His Father's kingdom only applied to Jewish followers...? I still don't see where observing the Jewish holidays and feasts is prohibited in the Scriptures. Are you saying that it's ok for Jewish Christians to celebrate Jewish festivals, but not for Gentile Christians to do so? Please explain.

RESPONSE: You read your own ideas into Matthew 26:29 and Mark 14:25. Jesus did not say "Passover Cup" but "fruit of the vine" as also in Luke 22:18. Most of your misunderstanding comes from failing to recognize that the Last Supper was not the Jewish Passover but a new remembrance of Himself that Christ inaugurated for the

church: it was not in memory of deliverance from Egypt but the deliverance “the Lamb of God” (Jn 1:29) who is “Christ our passover” (1 Cor 5:7) would effect on the Cross, the lamb foretold in Exodus 12:6 that the “whole assembly of the congregation of Israel [would] kill...in the evening.” That is why He called it “*this* passover” (Lk 22:15)—to distinguish the Old Testament picture from the New Testament reality.

When Paul said “let us keep the *feast*,” he was not referring to the Jewish Passover but to “*this* passover” involving “Christ our passover” in remembrance of Himself that Christ initiated at the Last Supper, which was not the Jewish Passover. That idea is a grave misunderstanding. We’ve been over this before in previous *TBCs*, but here it is again.

John 13:1 says the Last Supper was “before the feast of the Passover.” Had it been the Passover, no one would have thought that Judas went out to buy anything (13:29), for all stores would have been closed on the “high Sabbath” that began the seven-day feast with the Passover supper. Furthermore, the Last Supper couldn’t have been the Jewish Passover because the next morning the rabbis hadn’t yet eaten the Passover (Jn 18:28), and later, that “morning after,” it was still “the preparation of the passover” (19:14).

There was no Passover lamb at the Last Supper because the lambs were not slain until the following afternoon—when Christ was dying on the Cross, as it had to be in fulfillment of Scripture. Christ’s “this do in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:25) was not a command for Christians to keep the Jewish Passover with a new meaning. Read Exodus 12 again. There is no way the Passover could be given a new meaning for Christians (Jews and Gentiles) while retaining its primary meaning for Jews—and why should it? Never was it said that the wine drunk at the Passover was a symbol of blood, either of the Passover lamb’s or of Christ’s. Christ inaugurated something entirely new, unrelated (except symbolically) to Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

The gospel has nothing to do with keeping Jewish feasts. Though symbolic of much that pertains to the gospel, the feasts are part of the law of Moses, not to be observed by Christians (Acts 15:24-29). They provide pictures of Christ and the gospel but are primarily and eternally related to Israel, the Promised Land, and the coming Messianic kingdom—not to the church. Gentile believers on Christ have no reason to, as Paul put it, go back “to the weak and beggarly elements” (Gal 4:9) of the law.

The Passover was always a remembrance specifically for Jewish persons of the fact that God miraculously delivered their ancestors from Egypt. Those who keep it today (only Jews do, not Arabs or “Palestinians”) prove to the world their descent from those God delivered from Egypt and led into the Promised Land. That land belongs to Jews, not to those who fraudulently claim to be descended from the original “Palestinians” and accuse Jews of occupying their land. It would destroy the proof and change the meaning for Gentiles to keep the Jewish Passover, which does not pertain to them at all!

QUESTION: In the July 2007 Q&A, you stated: “Revelation 21 reveals the ‘new heaven and new earth’ after the final judgment of the wicked (Revelation 20:10-15).... Jews or Gentiles who believed on Christ, but not until they saw Him at the Second Coming, are not in the church but will dwell on earth eternally: in their natural bodies during the Millennium and in new bodies on the new earth with access to the new Jerusalem but not as its residents (Revelation 21:24). Jews saved at the Second Coming will eternally dwell in the promised land of Israel on the new earth (Genesis 17:8; 1 Chronicles 16:14-18; Ezekiel 32:21-28; 39:27-29; Zechariah 12:10). Jews or Gentiles who believed on Christ before His visible appearing (‘blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed’ - John 20:29) are the bride, the church. They inhabit the new Jerusalem, are always with Christ, and have full access through Him to the throne of God in heaven.”

Did you state in another article many years ago that believers during the new heaven and earth who are not part of the church will be able to have babies to fill the earth in obedience to Christ’s command to replenish the earth? This will either stop when earth is full or populations will be removed to other planets. I don’t find any reference of such a thing in the Bible. Further, why won’t believers, though not part of the church, have full access to the throne of God and what does full access mean? I thought access would be unlimited and that the throne of the Trinity would be among men, not in the current heaven any more.

RESPONSE: No, I never stated that anyone would bear children in the new heaven and new earth. Believers have new bodies like angels and “neither marry, nor are given in marriage” (Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25;

Lk 20:35). Nor will humans inhabit other planets, in spite of Billy Graham’s hoping to preach the gospel on other planets during the Millennium.

Revelation 21:24-27 tells us of the new Jerusalem in eternity: “The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it...kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it....” These clearly come in and out of it as visitors, not as residents. The glory of God is manifested there, but the only mention of the throne of “God and of the Lamb” locates it in heaven, from whence the new Jerusalem descends to earth (Rv 21:2,5,10; 22:1,3).

Endnotes

1. Bruce Narramore, *You’re Someone Special* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 22.

2. Robert H. Schuller, *Self-Love, the Dynamic Force of Success: Learn to Love Yourself—the secret of happiness in life, in love, in everything you do* (New York: Hawthorn Books, W. Clement Stone, 1969), 32.

"When We See Him..."*Dave Hunt*

There are many proofs, which no one can refute, that the Bible is the Word of the true God, who is the Creator of mankind and of the unfathomable universe in which we find ourselves. Although the hundreds of unailing Bible prophecies are the most powerful proof, one of the most obvious is the amazing *consistency* found in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Remember that most of the prophets through whom it was written lived at different times in history, in different cultures, and never met one another. The only rational explanation for this consistency is what they all declared with one voice: that they were each inspired of the one true God. These claims were not hidden or tentatively stated but boldly and repeatedly affirmed.

For example, in the Pentateuch alone the declaration is made literally hundreds of times that Moses was reporting what God had said directly to him "face to face" (Ex 33:11; Num 14:14; Dt 5:2-5; 34:10). Biblical prophets were not inspired indirectly through an angel (as both Muhammad and Joseph Smith claimed they were) but declared that they had personally heard from God himself! Like Moses, Israel's many other prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, make this claim hundreds of additional times. More than 60 times Ezekiel swears that "the word of the Lord" came to him with the command to pass it on to mankind. So it was with the other biblical prophets.

The Book of Job is believed to be the oldest book in the Bible, yet the major biblical themes of redemption, resurrection, and the Second Coming are clearly expressed. This is done in perfect harmony with all that would be declared by prophets of God in the remaining pages of Scripture over the next 1,600 years. Consider this powerful and pointed declaration:

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another....(Job 19:25-27)

Here Job clearly declares that his physical body will be resurrected, even after being eaten by worms in the grave. He also knows that the Redeemer who will make this possible is an eternal Being who will one day come to earth and that he (Job), in

his resurrected body, will see the infinite God for himself. So it must be for us also. This is an awesome, even frightening, prospect, which, were it more real to us, would transform our lives!

Could the Redeemer, also called the Savior, to whom Job refers, actually be God? He doesn't say so directly, but the implication is there. Like later prophets, Isaiah makes it very clear: "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour....Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Is 43:11; 45:22). So God, the Creator of all, is the Savior who becomes a man through a virgin birth and dies for our sins on the Cross! How can that be possible?

Prophets who lived after Job, in writing additional Scripture, added detail upon detail but never contradicted what was said before or what followed later. In many cases they contributed additional Scripture without having seen what had previously been written—and still without contradiction. By comparison, there are no prophecies at all in the Qur'an, the Hindu Vedas, Bhagavad-Gita, sayings of Buddha or Confucius, or in the scriptures of other religions, all of which contain many internal contradictions. Prophecy is unique to the Bible, and it is *the great proof* that is overlooked by most preachers and apologists.

The Bible's perfect internal consistency is presently our focus. The first mention of the promised virgin-born Redeemer/Messiah/Savior (called the woman's seed) coming to earth is found in God's pronouncement of judgment upon the serpent who beguiled Eve: "Her seed...shall bruise thy head [a death blow]" (Gn 3:15). Rebellion brought death not only to Adam and Eve but to all their descendants, separating mankind from the Creator. Temporary reconciliation to God was granted in the death of sacrificial animals: first in the death of animals to obtain skins with which God covered Adam's and Eve's nakedness when He cast them out of the Garden and withdrew His presence from them (3:21-24); then in the lamb that Abel, and presumably Adam and Eve, offered as a sacrifice to cover their sins until the Messiah would come and pay the full penalty (Gn 4:4).

In Isaiah, the mystery of the Redeemer unfolds further. A baby boy would be born, who is both the Son of God and God the Father: "A child is born...a son is given [whose] name shall be...the mighty God, The everlasting Father" (Is 9:6). The Son and the Father are One, as Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30). This eternal One, "whose goings forth have been from

of old, from everlasting," would be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). He would ride into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass and be hailed as the Messiah (Zec 9:9) exactly 483 years (Dn 9:24-26) after the command had been given to restore Jerusalem from its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. That edict by world emperor Artaxerxes Longimanus was given on the first of Nisan, 445 BC (Neh 2:1-10). The fulfillment of this prophecy, therefore, had to occur on April 6, AD 32. That very day—now celebrated as Palm Sunday—Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

The theme of the Lamb, which begins in Genesis as a promise of the coming Messiah who would pay the penalty for the sins of mankind, is progressively and consistently developed by prophets and apostles throughout the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt was through the blood of the Passover lamb. The promise of Redemption through a coming One who would die in sacrifice for our sins continued through the Levitical sacrifices. Its fulfillment in the Messiah began to take shape with John the Baptist's declaration of Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29)—and it will culminate with the focus of heaven on the Lamb slain for the sins of the world (Rv 5 and 6), and God's eternal throne finally revealed to be "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rv 22:1).

In spite of the prophesied enthusiastic welcome that Jesus of Nazareth received on that first "Palm Sunday," the prophets foretold that the Messiah would immediately be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zec 11:12,13), rejected by His own people, and crucified (Ps 22:14-16). That prophecy was given 500 years before crucifixion was known. The prophets declared that three days later the Messiah would rise from the dead, show Himself to His disciples for 40 days, then ascend to heaven.

No one could qualify as the promised Redeemer without fulfilling all of these and many other prophecies. There are no rivals offering their Messianic credentials. These prophecies and many others given in the Bible to identify beyond question the Messiah were fulfilled by only one Man. The many irrefutable prophecies and their fulfillment prove that Jesus Christ, and He alone, is the Messiah. Yet most Jews refuse to this day to accept what their own prophets foretold—and they remain in unbelief, as do the vast majority of Gentiles.

In preaching the gospel to their Jewish contemporaries after Christ's resurrection, the apostles recited these and numerous

other detailed prophecies given in advance so that the Messiah could be unmistakably recognized when He came. They pointed to what all in Jerusalem knew: that these prophecies, given centuries and even thousands of years before to identify the Messiah, had all been fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. For two thousand years, these facts have been the solid foundation of the Christian's faith that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah of Israel, Savior of the world, crucified for our sins, resurrected, now in heaven, and soon to return to catch up His own to be with Him in the Father's house forever. He is also coming as the judge to punish the unrepentant—a part of the gospel often overlooked.

Presenting this proof was the *modus operandi* of the apostles in preaching the gospel (Acts 17:2,3); and this remains the way, though neglected, that we are to preach it today. Incredibly, the prophetic foundation of the gospel is scarcely referred to by most pastors, preachers, and evangelists. Instead, lost souls are offered testimonies of celebrities and athletes and invited to "dialogue," as though unchangeable truth can be revised to make it acceptable to an alleged "post-modern" generation. The only "Scripture" most of today's uncertain souls know is an emasculated, paraphrased "Bible," rewritten to eliminate conviction of sin and catering to the rebellion of those who insist upon having the gospel modified to suit their unbelief. God will not accommodate their rebellion!

Of them, the Scripture says there is "no fear of God before their eyes" (Ps 36:1; Rom 3:18). That indictment applies also to many of today's most popular televangelists, as well as to their followers whose ears they tickle. If they believe in God at all, that alleged belief is scarcely reflected in the ministries and lives of Benny Hinn, Oral Roberts, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Pat Robertson, the Robert Schullers (father and son), the Crouches, et al. They, and many others like them, demonstrate by what they say and do and by their praise of one another and their scorn of God's eternal truth that they don't really believe in God or expect to see Jesus and give an account to Him one day. To face God and Christ in judgment cannot be a real prospect for such men and women, or their lives and preaching would reflect a holy fear that is totally absent!

Indeed, not only most unbelievers but most professed Christians as well do not live as though they really expect, like Job, to stand before God as their holy, righteous

Judge—at least not soon. Being caught up to heaven in the Rapture one day, which is supposed to be the "blessed hope" (Ti 2:13) eagerly anticipated by every true Christian, is increasingly denied by many evangelical leaders and their followers. Nearly all Presbyterians, as well as Calvinists of other varieties, and even many so-called watchdogs (such as Hank Hanegraaff) who claim to guard the church from error, firmly oppose an imminent Rapture and insist that the church has replaced Israel.

There are, of course, many evangelicals who preach sound biblical truth yet deny it in their lives. The prospect of soon seeing Jesus, whose eyes are "as a flame of fire" and at whose feet John, the disciple whom Jesus loved (Jn 13:2,23; 20:2; 21:7,20), fell "as dead" (Rv 1:17), ought to arouse the fear of God in our hearts! I think of this often, and I tremble. On the one hand, the prospect of suddenly finding ourselves in the glory of Christ, the One who loves us so much that in great agony He suffered for our sins, thrills us and fills us with excitement and joy—but at the same time it ought to fill us with awe and life-changing fear. Yet how often do most of us even give this imminent possibility a passing thought? Shame!

The irreverent and ignorant attitude of many pastors and their followers is betrayed in their confident and casual talk about "hanging out with Jesus" in heaven, as though He's just one of the guys instead of the Creator of the universe! He knows our every thought, word, deed, and motive. At last, standing before our Lord at His Judgment Seat, we will see, revealed in the light of His perfect holiness, the blackness of our deceitful, desperately wicked hearts (Jer 17:9,10). He will wipe tears of shame and remorse from our eyes, never to be remembered again, enfolding us in His infinite, eternal love.

The awesome reality of being in heaven, falling on our faces before Christ and the Father on their throne, does not grip us as it should. It all seems far away and unreal, obscured by good health, the prospect of earthly joys, and the delusion that we have unlimited time to experience them.

The hope of being snatched from this world at any moment, if really believed, would have a powerful purifying effect upon us. Most of what seems so important to us in our busy lives would become exceedingly embarrassing in its pitiful triviality if the light of eternity shined upon it. Take your highest ambition, most irresistible lust, your greatest pleasure, dearest passion—and as soon as you add death to these things they sink into nothingness.

How sad that death must stare us in the face before we receive this wisdom.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, where "we must all appear...that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10), the issue will not be salvation or hell but reward or loss. There we, the Bride of Christ, will be given pure white robes of righteousness for the wedding!

Though "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23), wonder of wonders, the "God of all grace...hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Pt 5:10). Our Father's goal is not only to have us in heaven but to transform us into the glorious image of His beloved Son. The glory that Adam lost was pale compared to the glory that the redeemed will reflect as a display to the universe for all eternity.

That transformation should be in process now for each of us. We are, in fact, being changed into His image "from glory to glory." Our progress is disappointingly slow, however, because "now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face" (1 Cor 13:12). As we behold Him by faith, we are changed into His image "by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). David's greatest desire was to continually behold "the beauty of the LORD" (Ps 27:4). Is that the passion of your heart—of mine? It ought to be.

This poem was found in Darby's Bible after Christ called him home:

Low at Thy feet, Lord Jesus,
This is the place for me;
Here I have learned deep lessons:
Truth that has set me free.
Free from myself, Lord Jesus,
Free from the ways of men;
Chains of thought that have bound me
Never can bind again.
None but Thyself, Lord Jesus,
Conquered this wayward will,
But for Thy love constraining,
I had been wayward still.

When we see "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8) *in glory*, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). So it is our failure to see Christ clearly while we are here below that hinders us from being fully transformed into His image. We are blinded by this world.

One day soon, however, by death or by the Rapture, the veil will be removed. We will be with Him and shall see Him as He *really* is. When that clear understanding awakens within us, we will truly be like Him. What a glorious, eternal day will have dawned at last.

TBC

Quotable

Here I am, Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage Pagans of the wilderness [far] from all...earthly comfort...even to death itself; if it be but in Thy service and to promote thy Kingdom....

I declare, now that I am dying, I would not have spent my life otherwise for the whole world.

David Brainerd. Before age 30, he died taking the gospel to American Indians. More than any other individual he was responsible for the great 19th-century missionary revival.

We who preach the gospel must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish good will between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, the world of sports or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.

A.W. Tozer, from Man: The Dwelling Place of God

Q&A

QUESTION: In the Q&A of August re Mart De Haan, you said that God never called Israel His Son. But in Exodus 4:22-23, God calls Israel “my son, even my firstborn.” In Jeremiah 31:9, Ephraim is called God’s “firstborn,” but in Joshua 17:1, Manasseh is the firstborn. Romans 8:29 calls Jesus the firstborn. How many “firstborns” of God are there?

RESPONSE: What I said was true, but I wasn’t precise enough. Mart De Haan was right that *historically* Hosea 11:1 was about Israel being delivered from Egypt, but he denied Matthew’s *prophetic* application. A major reason for God’s calling Israel His son and firstborn was to foretell Christ’s coming out of Egypt as a child. My objection was Mart’s claim that Matthew was wrong.

Yes, God calls Israel “my son” (Ex 4:22,23) two or three times. However, the term “Son of God” is found 45 times in the Bible and *always* refers to Christ. Although called the “firstborn,” never is Israel “the only begotten Son of God.”

What is said of Christ could not be said of Israel. Matthew, inspired of the Holy Spirit, wasn’t wrong!

Manasseh was the firstborn of Joseph, but Jacob bestowed the blessing and rank of the firstborn upon Ephraim (Gn 48:12-20). Jesus is “the firstborn of every creature” (Col 1:15) by rank; and He is “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18)—the first one resurrected never to die again.

QUESTION: In your radio talks about yoga, you warned against “emptying-the-mind”-type of meditation such as TM, where initiates are...given names of Hindu gods as a mantra....Some very prayerful people meditate with what could be called a “mantra”...repeating the name “Jesus” over and over. The Jesus prayer repeats, “Lord Jesus, Son of the Father, have mercy on me a sinner.”

If God has made us so that repeating a divine name invites the Spirit into our heart and soul, then what better form of prayer than to use this technique to invite the risen Christ into our hearts? You are branding some deeply committed Christian prayer warriors as heretics or enablers of demonic possession....People with a far more intimate prayer life than mine have described a type of prayer... where they just rest in the presence of the Lord....If God...gave silent meditation the power to bring us into closer communication with Christ, who dwells in each of us, I would be very careful about condemning the practice....

Meditation has been used by Christians for centuries....Some amazing Christian “pray-ers” were...called the Desert Fathers...who fled to the desert to escape Roman persecution and lived lives of prayer. Look at the litanies in the Psalms where people...chanted the multitudinous names of God....

I would simply ask God for discernment to know what comes from Him and what does not....Meaningful prayer is hard enough for most people without closing out a practice that can bring people more into touch with the Lord.

RESPONSE: Our authority is the Bible. Our example is not the “Desert Fathers” or “prayer warriors” but Christ and the men and women of God in His Word. As for “prayerful people” who meditate by “repeating the name ‘Jesus’ over and over,” Jesus himself commanded, “When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do... (Mt 6:7). Repeating the name “Jesus” over and over is surely vain repetition. Never did anyone in the Bible “pray” like that—it isn’t prayer. Nor is there any instruction to follow this heathen practice!

Repeating “Lord Jesus, Son of the

Father, have mercy on me a sinner” is vain repetition. You admit that Christ dwells in every believer. Then why these vain repetitions for “inviting the risen Christ into our hearts”? It is a sign of immaturity, unbelief, and an insult to Christ to keep asking Him to “forgive us sinners.” He paid the full penalty for our sins and wants us to live by faith in the joy of His victory, not to repeatedly beg forgiveness without confession of specific sin.

Who says that “God has made us in a way that sitting quietly and saying a divine name invites the Spirit into our heart and soul”? Not the Bible. By “meditation,” the Bible does not mean to sit in silence with a blank mind, but to think deeply upon God’s works (Ps 77:12; Ps 143:5) and upon His “precepts, statutes, word” (Ps 119:15, 23,48,78,148 etc.), with the intent of gaining wisdom and understanding (Prv 4:7). This is the very opposite of the prayer/meditation you commend.

Not I but the Word of God is critical of the unbiblical prayer techniques used by those whom you call “deeply committed Christian prayer warriors.” Prayer comes from the heart and flows from faith in and fellowship with God. When the disciples asked, “Lord, teach us to pray,” He gave nothing like these “prayers” you praise.

You refer to “litanies in the Psalms where people...chanted the multitudinous names of God.” I find nothing like that in the entire Bible. The word “chant” appears only once and it is a heathen practice. Nor does God have “multitudinous names.” His one name is Yahweh, (I AM, the self-existent One). References to Jehovah Jirah (the Lord our provider), Jehovah Rapha (the Lord our healer), etc., describe God’s attributes; they are not other *names*.

QUESTION: In your article concerning Messianic Jewish practices and/or Messianics...you write on a subject that you are not really qualified to speak on....It is correct that the Passover was given to the Jewish people as a remembrance of the Exodus and...was obligatory to Jews only....However, as part of our freedom in the Messiah, both Jews and Gentiles may observe it or not and you have no biblical authority to say otherwise.

When you say that you “reject categorically the very word ‘Messianic,’” you are showing the very ignorance you have affirmed elsewhere: that you have no knowledge of the original Hebrew and Greek. You...reject the word because “it is not found in the Bible.” Do you realize how foolish that argument is? The word “rapture” is not found in the Bible, nor the word “Trinity”....

The terms “Messianic” and “Christian” mean the same thing, but one originates from a Hebrew source, the other from a Greek source....To be strictly biblical, you should drop the word “Christian” and use the term “saints....” You also say, “Unfortunately, ‘Messianic-whatever’ implies that observing Jewish practices insures that one will be closer to God—and often becomes an excuse for imposing the Law and Jewish observances upon Gentile Christians.” This is simply nonsense. Those who make such claims will be a small minority. Many of us Messianic Jews do not impose the Law and Jewish observances on anyone including ourselves since we firmly believe the Mosaic Law ended at Messiah’s death...you are free to do it or not and you cannot claim it is forbidden [without] a clear Scripture...and [there is none].

Jesus is the Messiah and Jesus is the Christ...one is free to use the term “Christian” or “Messianic” and both mean the same thing. But we Jews who suffered heavily at the hands of those who called themselves “Christians” choose not to identify ourselves unnecessarily with the persecutors. “Messianic” does not carry that kind of baggage and we are free to use it...and you have no biblical basis for claiming that it is not a permitted word....

One other incredible statement you make is, “it is presently impossible for anyone to be ‘Messianic’ because all who believe in Christ (Jew or Gentile) are in the church, with Christ ruling as Lord in their hearts.” This is an incredibly ignorant statement....You may just as well say it is “presently impossible for anyone to be Christian, because all who believe in Christ...etc.”

Again, you have written an article you are not really qualified to speak to and was certainly not helpful for those of us who are dispensational and Messianic Jews....Based upon the letters I am getting, you have disturbed a lot of people....In the future you might want to stay in your own area of expertise....Dispensationalists have not understood the position or role of Jewish believers in this age, and the kind of article you have chosen to write will [not] help the matter.

RESPONSE: Thank you for attempting to educate me about “Jewish believers.” Yet by this very term you undermine your argument! Your frequent use of “Messianic” proves that this adjective, which is *only* used of Jews and *never* of Gentiles, makes

an unbiblical distinction. We were made one at the Cross according to Ephesians 2, so why should one distinguish “Jewish believers” from Gentile believers? My point was that this unbiblical distinction is exacerbated by the expression, “Messianic believers.”

Your repeated accusation is unbiblical that even to discuss this issue is to step outside my “own area of expertise” and that I am “not really qualified to speak to it.” Isn’t this subject dealt with in the Bible? Of course! So you suggest that there is a part of Scripture to be discussed only by those who have an “expertise” that I lack? This is both elitist and unbiblical!

Quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, our Lord tells Satan, “Man [not a rabbi, a Ph.D. in theology, or a Hebrew expert, but *any* man] doth not live by bread only, but by every word...of the LORD...” As an ordinary man, therefore, I can both understand and live by *every word* of God! Similarly, not just a rabbi, Greek and Hebrew expert, seminary graduate, etc., but any man [or woman, boy, girl] is qualified to meditate day and night on the “law of the LORD” (Ps 1:1,2). Even a “young man” (not only a DTS professor) is qualified to heed the Word of God and thereby “cleanse his way” (Ps 119:9). Obviously, to eat and live by and to heed and be cleansed by the Word of God, one must understand it. This anyone can do with an open Bible, an open heart, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Yet only those who have “expertise” can understand and apply God’s Holy Word?

You say that “both Jews and Gentiles are free to observe [the Passover] or not to observe it...” It takes no “expertise” to know that this isn’t true. Concerning the Passover, God said to all Israel, “Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever...to thee and to thy sons for ever” (Ex 12:14,24). That’s a command to all Jews, saved or unsaved. The reason is vital: this offers present proof that those keeping the Passover are descended from the slaves in Egypt, who were freed by the death of the lamb and were led *en masse* into the Promised Land (12:26,27). This forever settles any controversy over so-called “Palestine”! The Passover is a testimony that those keeping it are descended from those miraculously delivered from Egypt (Ex 12:26,27) and that the land belongs to them and their heirs for ever! That proof is lost, however, if Gentiles also keep the Passover.

Of course the words “rapture” and “trinity” are not in the Bible—but the concepts are clearly taught there. In contrast, the idea that there is something special about

Jewish believers in Christ, who therefore qualify to be called “Messianic,” is contrary to Scripture. You say that “Messianic” and “Christian” mean the same thing. Not by their usage they don’t. You would not refer to a “Christian Christian,” but the term “Messianic Christian” is accepted. That belies what you say. I sympathize with the antipathy Jews have toward “Christians,” but that is based upon a gross misunderstanding fostered for generations. Isn’t it time that Jews who know better should explain to their fellow Jews that the Nazis and all others who have ever persecuted and killed Christ’s brethren, the Jews, were not true Christians?!

Of course, any Jewish believer may call himself “Messianic.” I only attempted to explain the problems that this designation of certain followers of Christ causes. You have received letters saying that I have confused the issue. I also have letters from former members of Messianic fellowships who agree with and thank me.

According to the Scriptures

Dave Hunt

The Bible makes uncompromisingly clear to all mankind its claim to be the infallible, inerrant Word of the only true and living God. It denounces all other gods and scriptures as false, as well as the religions they represent. Of Jesus, God's Word declares, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn 3:36). Peter told Jewish religious leaders (and was beaten, imprisoned, and killed for testifying to Christ's resurrection): "There is none other name...given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Such unequivocal statements cannot be misunderstood. Jews would not have been persecuted and killed had they presented Yahweh as just one more god to be added to the Roman Pantheon. Christians were considered an even greater threat because in obedience to Christ they preached the gospel everywhere and thereby "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Even they would not have been persecuted and killed had they presented Jesus Christ as merely one of many possible saviors. It was their firm proclamation of Christ's claim, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6), that threatened Caesar and aroused such vicious hatred. Today, however, to avoid the objectionable exclusivity of their faith, "Christians" often compromise and many ecumenically deny the biblical gospel.

Christianity is a biblical faith, and the Bible is not an "ecumenical" book. It makes no compromise with any of the world's religions. Those who support ecumenism to any extent, no matter how loudly they defend their orthodoxy, are not Bible-believing Christians. At worst they are deliberate frauds; at best they are confused into simultaneously professing two contradictory beliefs (syncretism). Which do they really believe? Speaking out of both sides of their mouths is a popular ploy today of both political and "Christian" leaders.

Anyone is free to invent any new religion—but not free to call it Christianity. That faith is founded upon facts: Scripture, history, and prophecy, all of which are a matter of clear record and none of which can be changed. These facts cannot honestly be denied.

What must we say of "Christian" leaders

and even entire denominations that do not follow Christ and His Word? We have exposed many by name and have documented in these pages their inexcusable hypocrisy and deceit, which must be summarily rejected. Away with all duplicity!

Whoever (Bush, Rice, et al.) insists that Islam is a "religion of peace" and that Allah is the God of the Bible is either deceived or lying. Islam has its founding prophet, Muhammad, who began his career with numerous murders, attacked peaceful villages and caravans, and beheaded hundreds who surrendered in exchange for his sworn promise of peace and safety. Islam has its scriptures (the Qur'an and Hadith) and 1,350 years of the bloodiest and most violent history of any religion ever known, including the merciless slaughter of millions (more millions in the take-over of India than Hitler killed in all of Eastern and Western Europe).

We fully document the truth about Islam in *Judgment Day*, which every Berean ought to donate to his or her local public library. One can only say that all those (from Bush and Rice on down) who turn a blind eye to the indisputable truth about Islam and call this violent religion "peaceful" are engaged in a cover-up.

It is indisputable that today's Islamic terrorism may not honestly be blamed upon "extremists." This is true Islam as it always has been from the beginning! Terrorists are sincere Muslims following both the teaching and example of Muhammad, the obedient example set by his loyal followers, and Islam's scriptures, which command the take-over of the entire world and death to all who will not convert. True, not every Muslim is a terrorist, but nearly every terrorist is a Muslim!

The scriptures and history of any religion are a matter of permanent public record that cannot be disputed, much less reinvented. Both those who attempt to do so (whether with Christianity or Islam) and those who accept and pass on their lies are guilty of the same deceit.

While terrorists are genuine Muslims who follow Muhammad and the Qur'an, the Crusaders were not biblical Christians. They followed Rome, not Christ and His Word. The popes had their own agenda of world conquest by force. Crusaders waved the Cross but denied Christ by killing His brethren, the Jews, wherever they went. Attempting "in the name of Christ" to retake the "Holy Land" from the atrocity-committing Islamic invaders violated Christ's declaration to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world [or else] would my

servants fight" (Jn 18:36).

Yes, Israel was commanded to wipe out the Canaanites, a particular people in a very small part of the world with clearly defined borders—to execute God's judgment upon their unspeakable wickedness and perversion. Israel was not told to "convert" them or anyone else with the sword nor to take over the world by violence—as both the Qur'an and Muhammad (claiming an edict from Allah) declared from the beginning to be Islam's mission. This fundamental teaching of Islam cannot be changed without renouncing Islam.

Equally important to understand is the fact that the Bible, in contrast to the so-called scriptures of every religion, gives the proof of its claims. I don't say "every other religion" because biblical Christianity is not a religion; it is a *relationship* as children to a loving Father, which every true Christian has with God through Jesus Christ.

The God who inspired the Bible through His prophets and is presented therein does not demand "blind" faith, as Richard Dawkins and other atheists blasphemously assert. He offers proof and is willing to reason with skeptics and unbelievers, if they will honestly do so: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD..." (Is 1:18). Faith in God and in His Word is the only reasonable response to the questions with which the universe confronts us and to the answers God provides in Scripture. Peter reminds us that true followers of Christ do not threaten unbelievers but are "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh...a reason of the hope..." we have in Christ (1 Pt 3:15).

We have proved these facts so often in this newsletter that I will not repeat the proof now. The major proof, of course, that God offers of His own existence and that the Bible is His Word is prophecy. It foretells events centuries and even thousands of years in advance. Biblical prophecy is always fulfilled right on time in every detail. (Those not familiar with these proofs may go to www.thebereancall.org.)

Prophecy is absolutely unique to the Bible, being found in no other religious scriptures (though some contain false prophecies). Israel's prophets offered hundreds of prophecies concerning the promised Messiah so that He could be identified beyond question when He came as a humble, virgin-born child. After the resurrection, the apostles preached the gospel to everyone and everywhere, as Christ had commanded them. The two primary pieces of evidence were: 1) their own personal sworn testimony as eyewitnesses of what Christ taught and did

(including His crucifixion and resurrection), though it cost them their lives as martyrs for refusing to ecumenically deny the truth they knew; and 2) the many prophecies in Scripture given centuries in advance, which were fulfilled to the letter in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

There was no excuse for all of Israel not to have been anticipating and not to have welcomed Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah. How could they have closed their eyes to the fact that this healer of thousands, who did so many miracles witnessed by multitudes (even raising the dead), who was the talk of all Judea and Galilee, had arrived at the very time their prophets had foretold the Messiah's coming? The precise day (Dn 9:25; Neh 2:1-9) that He would present Himself to Israel, riding on "the colt...of an ass" (Zec 9:9), was the date Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (now celebrated as "Palm Sunday"), was hailed by mobs lining the road down from the Mount of Olives (Mt 21:2-11), then, four days later, was crucified—a shocking twist but exactly as foretold (Ps 22:14-18; Zec 12:10). Then the resurrection!

Unquestionably His body was gone, the tomb empty, in spite of the platoon of Roman soldiers guarding it. Frank Morison, (who, as a skeptic, examined the evidence, determined to disprove the resurrection), presented a fascinating story in his book *Who Moved the Stone?* He showed beyond doubt that the only possible explanation was the resurrection, exactly as the disciples testified, though it cost them their lives to do so.

America is no less guilty than Israel for her rejection of Christ. We have even more proof today than the Jews had then. A false Christianity's perversion and rejection of the gospel has stricken America with a blinding madness. Nowhere is that more clearly seen than in the attempt of "Christians" to embrace Islam as a partner religion. The president sought to curry Muslim favor by boasting that he had welcomed into the White House library a copy of the Qur'an—an aggressively anti-Christian document. How could any sane person sincerely insist that Islam's Allah, who hates Israel, is the biblical God who 12 times calls himself "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...this is my memorial throughout all generations" (Ex 3:15,16), and who 203 times is called "the God of Israel"?

Surely, with so many advisors (many of them professing Christians), Bush must know that the Qur'an aggressively opposes *every foundational Christian doctrine*. Excusing themselves because of the President's example, church leaders persist in

attempting to embrace Islam as a peaceful partner with Christianity. Yet the Qur'an contains more than a hundred exhortations to convert the world by violence. Sixteen times it declares that Allah is not a father and has no son, denies that Christ is God, declares that He did not die for our sins but someone died in His place, denies the resurrection, and declares that belief in the Trinity sends one to hell! All of this (and there is much more of the same genre) makes Allah the God of the Bible and Islam the friend of Christianity?!

At a recent student panel of "Pluralism at Harvard" (moderated by William A. Graham, Dean of the Divinity School), Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and director of the Pluralism Project, who speaks approvingly of Islam, reminded the audience:

By the mid-1990s there were governors...and mayors who were recognizing Ramadan...[In] 1996...President and Mrs. Clinton invited members of the Muslim community to the White House to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan....In subsequent years we are seeing an increasing presence of this religious phenomenon in the American religious landscape...the observance of Iftar in the Pentagon....Madeline Albright hosted an Iftar at the State Department for the first time in 1998....A week ago, we had President Bush holding an Iftar dinner at the White House [his seventh!]....[On] the White House home page there's a whole list of Ramadan events....

Persisting in the lie that Islam is peace is like the United States responding to Nikita Krushchev's "We will bury you," with "We know you'll do it peacefully."

Muslims continue to kill thousands of Christians in Algeria, Indonesia, Nigeria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, etc., and to burn down Christian churches wherever they can. More than 3,000 churches have been destroyed in the last three years in Indonesia, 2 million killed in Southern Sudan for refusing to convert, plus thousands elsewhere. Muslims further demonstrate the true meaning of "Islam is peace" by continuing to slaughter one another in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told the "World Without Zionism" conference, October 26, 2005, that "Israel must be wiped off the map." He has repeated this threat of "Islamic peace" elsewhere. All of the high profile Islamic political and religious leaders of "peaceful Islam" have for at least 70 years boasted that they will soon achieve their long-standing ambition to

annihilate Israel. Arafat declared, "Peace for us is the destruction of Israel"—and he was given the Nobel Peace Prize! Those holding this wicked passion seem unaware that three times the God of the Bible calls Israel "the apple of his eye" (Dt 32:10; Lam 2:18; Zec 2:8) and declares that He will protect her.

Millions of evangelical Christians were tortured and murdered by the Roman Catholic Church throughout history, yet many forgave their tormentors with their dying breath. Their modern successors, however, stricken with the ecumenical truth-denying insanity we've been describing, insist that Roman Catholicism is the same as evangelical Christianity, though it preaches a gospel of salvation through rituals, works, prayers to the dead, suffering in purgatory to pay for one's sins, and submission to the pope.

The few verses that we have quoted above make it clear that God does not "dialogue" with man, as though He might be willing to take some suggestions and modify the gospel to suit His deluded and wicked creatures. Christ agonized in the Garden because He was going to be "made...sin for us... [i.e., treated as though He were sin itself] that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21). The full penalty for sin had to be paid, and Christ would pay it for all mankind. All God's wrath against sin was going to be poured out upon Him as He took our place.

Jesus pleaded with His Father not to make Him suffer this agony if sinners could be rescued any other way: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." (Mt 26:39). No other way was possible. The full penalty had to be paid, and He was the only one who could pay it. So Christ, in love for His Father and for us, submitted to His Father's will. In fact, Christ's suffering the infinite agonies of an eternity in the Lake of Fire for our sins had already been foretold by the prophets. This was the gospel [good news] that Paul preached: "how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day *according to the scriptures*" (1 Cor 15:1-4).

The New Testament explains, "That he, by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb 2:9). That death would have had to include the experience of the "lake of fire [which is] the second death" (Rv 20:14) for all mankind for eternity.

May we stand firm in our love for all, robbing no one of heaven by compromising the biblical gospel, which alone is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16). TBC

Quotable

The peace which our Lord wants us to enjoy is that which He Himself enjoyed: the same restfulness in danger, the same equanimity in troublous circumstances... freedom from anxiety... We share his unruffled serenity... and we shall rejoice to find “God’s greatness flowing round our incompleteness; round our restlessness, His rest.”

Amid the gathering tempest that filled my soul with dread,
He drew me to His bosom and gave His peace instead.
And thus in loving-kindness, He unto me hath shown,
My need to day, and ever, is just Himself alone!

Avis B. Christiansen (1895-1985), author of many hymns such as Blessed Redeemer, It Is Glory Just to Walk with Him, Jesus Has Lifted Me, Love Found a Way, Victory in Jesus

My King Jesus...hath broken upon the poor prisoner’s soul like the swelling of Jordan...a great high spring-tide of the consolations of Christ have overflowed me.... I care not for fire nor torture. They have sent me here to feast with my King.... The Bridegroom’s love hath run away with my heart. O love, love, love! O sweet are my royal King’s chains!

Samuel Rutherford, letter from prison, Aberdeen, 22 November 1637

Q&A

QUESTION: You were right when you said [on *Search the Scriptures Daily*] there will be lots of Christians left behind to face the tribulation because though saved, they were not ready for the first rapture according to Matthew 24:42, Luke 21:36, and Revelation 3:10. When questioned about what you said, you changed your mind, so I thought I would correct you with an understanding of a partial rapture.

RESPONSE: No, I did not change my mind. It was a slip of the tongue, which Tom immediately brought to my attention. I quickly corrected my error, which is clear on the video. I have never believed in a partial rapture. It is not biblical.

For there to be a partial rapture, there must be a Protestant purgatory for those who died in a state unworthy to be raptured.

No longer on earth, they can’t repent and live in a manner, as you say, “worthy of heaven.” How will they qualify to be taken to heaven?

A partial rapture contradicts the gospel. We are promised heaven on the basis of Christ’s full payment for our sins on the Cross, and His resurrection—not for living a good-enough life. It is in heaven at the judgment seat of Christ (not in some interim place) that we will be judged for our works: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body [i.e., in life on earth], whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). Paul has explained this in another way in 1 Cor 3:11-15. The issue is not salvation but reward or loss of it. Even if none of a man’s works come through the fire of God’s evaluation, “he himself shall be saved....”

You also argue for a post-trib rapture, deny that the “restrainer” (2 Thes 2:7) is the Holy Spirit indwelling believers, misunderstand that taking all believers to heaven in the rapture only removes God’s presence in believers who were raptured but does not remove the omnipresence of God, which always is. The Holy Spirit will still convict and save those who are not guilty of having “believed not the truth...” (2 Thes 2:10-12).

These and other related issues that you raise have all been explained in my books and previous newsletter articles, so I can’t take time to discuss them further. For help in locating books and articles, call our office.

QUESTION: You have three debates scheduled for the end of February near Toronto, Canada: with a Hindu, a Muslim, and an atheist/humanist, one right after the other—quite a challenge! What will be your main points in opposing atheism/humanism?

RESPONSE: I will need much prayer. I can do nothing in my own wisdom and strength.

We live in an incredibly complex universe on an earth teeming with life, all of which science has been studying and attempting to explain for centuries. We are told that no scientist believes in God anymore. Yet the brilliant men who laid the foundation for modern science (Bacon, Boyle, Dalton, Descarte, Faraday, Joule, Kelvin, Kepler, Maxwell, Mendel, Newton, Pascal, Pasteur, et al.) were *theists*, who saw the hand of God in His orderly creation making science possible.

Newton, regarded as the most original and influential thinker in the history of science, “wrote and published more works on interpretation of the Bible than on mathematics and physics.”¹ Only lately have atheists aggressively taken the position of spokespersons for science.

Even Stephen Hawking admitted, “It is difficult to discuss the beginning of the universe without mentioning the concept of God.” “Fritz” Schaefer, director of the Center for Computational Quantum Chemistry, University of Georgia, third most quoted chemist today, has said:

The significance and joy in my science comes in the...moments of discovering something new and saying to myself, “So that’s how God did it!” My goal is to understand a little corner of God’s plan.²

A significant number of Christians are among top scientists and modern Nobel laureates. William D. Phillips, for example, winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, “once quipped that so many of his colleagues were Christians that he couldn’t walk across his church’s fellowship hall without ‘tripping over a dozen physicists....’” Professor Richard Bube of Stanford says, “There are [proportionately] as many atheistic truck drivers as atheistic scientists.”³ But among Nobel laureates, the number who recognize the hand of God in the universe is very high.

The atheist must explain everything without God, which science cannot do. Everything is made of energy, but science cannot tell us what energy is or how or why it came into existence. Stephen Hawking asks, “Why does the universe go to all the trouble of bothering to exist?” *Why* is a question that atheism cannot answer. Matter simply exists; it contains no explanation of why. The maker’s purpose provides the meaning for anything that is made. Unless there is a Creator, the universe and all in it, including mankind, has no purpose or meaning. Atheists confess this fact.

Today’s most famous atheist, Richard Dawkins, boasts of the consequences of atheism: “There exists no objective basis on which to elevate one species above another. Chimp and human, lizard and fungus, we have all evolved over some three billion years by...natural selection.”⁴ No evolutionist could argue with this repugnant statement.

Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the structure of the DNA molecule, as an atheist and evolutionist, begins his best-known

book with this statement: “The Astonishing Hypothesis is that ‘You,’ your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”⁵ The average person would reject such nonsense. He knows that he is not just a bag of molecules but a thinking person, who carefully weighs choices, experiences joys, sorrows, hopes, fears, remorse, and regrets. Crick’s atheism traps him in a net of meaninglessness.

Attempting to describe the physical world, science provides names and categories but can’t tell us what anything really is. Energy, electron, gravity, space, time, life, and death—what do they mean? What is life; what is its source? How is it imparted to lifeless matter—and why does it depart so quickly? As Nobel laureate Erwin Schrödinger said, “[Science] is ghastly silent about all...that really matters to us.... It knows nothing of...good or bad, God and eternity.... Whence came I and whither go I? That is the great unfathomable question.... Science has no answer to it.”⁶

Atheism “explains” that the universe began with a sudden, almost infinite, burst of energy called the “Big Bang.” But science can’t tell us where this energy came from, why it got together and exploded at that particular moment—nor how out of a giant explosion the orderly arrangement, from molecules to galaxies, occurred.

Furthermore, atheism faces dozens of “which came first, the chicken or the egg?” conundrums that stop evolution before it can even start. For example, DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is what makes protein, yet DNA is itself made of protein. So, which came first: the DNA that makes protein or the protein out of which DNA is made?

There is no life without DNA, but DNA itself has life. What came first, the DNA that is essential for life or the life that is essential for DNA? Living cells are made up of incredibly complex nano-chemical machinery, and some of this machinery synthesizes DNA. So, which came first, the DNA without which there could be no cell or the cell without which there could be no DNA?

The problem of “origins” is one of the major questions for which science has no answer. The most amazing thing in the universe is life, but science neither knows from whence life comes nor what it is. There is no life without enzymes, although they themselves are not living things. And there are no enzymes without life because it takes life to produce them. Which came

first—the enzymes without which there can be no life or the life without which there can be no enzymes? The enzymes that make the amino acid histidine contain histidine. Which came first—the histidine or the enzymes that manufacture it, which themselves contain histidine?

Many different enzymes are required to translate the genetic information encoded on the DNA. Yet the enzymes are themselves encoded by DNA. Thus, the genetic code cannot be translated except by products of translation. This is a vicious circle that allows for only one conclusion: the molecules that encode the information and those that decode it existed simultaneously *from the beginning*. That fact cannot be explained by any gradual natural process. It requires an act of creation by God. Yet the major motive of Darwin (who knew nothing of DNA) was to prove that God was not needed to explain life and the universe.

As noted, the incredible nano-chemical machinery in the cell is responsible for synthesizing DNA. But it is the DNA that carries the code that constructs and operates the cellular machinery. Which came first, the DNA that carries the information for producing each cell or the machinery in the cell produced by DNA, which must first make the DNA? Obviously, both had to exist simultaneously from the very beginning or neither would exist. That fact requires a creative act of God.

The genetic code has vital editing machinery, which is itself encoded in the DNA. What came first, the machinery that edits DNA or the DNA that produces the editing machinery?

Again, the DNA molecule is made of protein; but it is the DNA by which alone protein is produced. DNA cannot function without at least 75 pre-existing proteins—but only DNA can produce these 75 proteins. The machinery to convert the DNA information into the protein is itself made of the protein it alone can produce. There is only one sensible answer to the classic question, “Which came first?” Obviously, God.

The Law of Biogenesis, which Pasteur proved, states, “Life only comes from life.” That ended the superstition of “spontaneous generation.” The alleged Big Bang would have sterilized everything a trillion times over, making it impossible for any life to exist thereafter.

How could life come out of death? Of Jesus Christ, one with the Father, who created everything, the Bible says, “In him was life” (Jn 1:4).

QUESTION: From “God created man in his own image” (Genesis 1:27), I like your application that the most perfect image is seen in a mirror and that man is like a mirror designed to reflect God. Since a mirror’s only purpose is to “reflect a reality other than its own,” you show the folly of a mirror trying to develop a “good self-image,” exposing the “self-image” error that psychology has brought into the church. But then you say, “If there is something wrong with the image in the mirror it needs to get back into a right relationship with the One whose image it was designed to reflect.” Shouldn’t the mirror rather look to its owner to clean, polish it, and place it in the right position to reflect what it’s supposed to?

RESPONSE: No illustration is perfect. This one simply shows that developing high self-esteem and a good self-image turns one away from God and to oneself—and how unbiblical and foolish such a concept is.

Endnotes

1. Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 162.
2. *U.S. News & World Report*, December 23, 1991; See also <http://www.leaderu.com/real/ti9501/big-bang2.html>.
3. Charles Colson, “BreakPoint Commentaries; Health & Science: The Nobel Scientists,” http://www.breakpoint.org/listing_article.sp?ID=4918&print=1.
4. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 30th anniversary edition, 2006), Foreword to the First Edition.
5. Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1994), 3.
6. Erwin Schrödinger, quoted in *Quantum Questions*, ed. Ken Wilbur (Boston, MA: New Science Library, Shambhala, 1984), 81.

The Only True God

Dave Hunt

As we all know, the “Lord’s prayer” was never prayed by our Lord. It was a *pattern* for prayer: “After *this manner* therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name...” (Mt 6:9). To repeat these words over and over (instead of using them as a pattern for prayer from the heart) would be to disobey our Lord and to engage in what He strictly forbade: “vain repetition” (6:7).

Certainly this prayer is only for those who know God as their heavenly Father. It is a grievous error common to pseudo-Christi- anity to assume the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. The typical Unity church service, for example, includes this affirmation repeated in unison, “I am a child of God and therefore I do not inherit sickness.” Such “positive confessions” have led multitudes astray. Paul declared that we *become* “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26).

The fact that this relationship with God as one’s Father does not come by natural birth is clear. To those who boasted of being “Abraham’s children,” Christ countered, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Jn 8:44). The rebellion of Adam and Eve, by which they became the followers of Satan as “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), made the devil the patriarch of mankind.

That is why Christ told Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3). This spiritual birth is an absolute requirement, allowing no exceptions. No one will be in heaven who has not been “born again,” both “of water and of the Spirit” (v. 5).

There is a common abuse of this prayer among American athletic teams. A high percentage of teams across America (especially in high school football) pray the “Lord’s Prayer” either before or after games. Attitudes of participants vary from skepticism, to suppressed ridicule, to a shrugging acquiescence to something that might now and then bring “good luck.” This American tradition is an abomination to God.

Phil Jackson, one of the most successful coaches in NBA history, turned from the Pentecostalism in which his co-pastor parents raised him to Zen Buddhism and the occultism of Lakota Indian “spirituality.” Yet he still repeats the “Lord’s prayer” and has for years encouraged his teams to do so without knowing God or Christ. This unbiblical practice has been one of Satan’s

major tools of deception.

Confusion reigns over what it means to be “born again.” The teaching is rather common that Christ’s words, “of water,” refer to the protective amniotic water sac that breaks in natural birth, while “of the Spirit” refers to being born of the Spirit of God at the second birth. The latter is true, but the former is false.

Everyone enters via the amniotic fluid into the human race. “Born of water” must mean more than that. It would be redundant to say that in order to be born again one must have already been born once. Furthermore, that doctrine would place an unbiblical restriction upon entrance into heaven! Such a proposition would mean that there would be no salvation for anyone who had not experienced natural birth. Thus no fetus that died by whatever means before coming to full-term delivery could be considered a real person eligible for the second birth and heaven, thus allowing abortion at any stage.

The biblical teaching of the “new birth” (becoming a “born-again” Christian) has caused much controversy. Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and others believe this occurs at baptism. As previously noted (see *TBC* 8/04), every Lutheran church follows Luther’s *Small Catechism*. At baptism (usually as a baby), one receives a certificate stating, “In baptism full salvation has been given unto you; God has become your Father, and you have become His child through this act...”

In fact, the Bible teaches that baptism (like the “Lord’s prayer”) is only for those who have believed the gospel. Baptism testifies to the faith by which one was born again. Otherwise it is meaningless. Infant ‘ defies Scripture, denies the gospel, and is a major net by which “the god of this world” gathers multitudes into his kingdom, providing them with false assurance that prevents them from seeing their need to receive Christ as Savior and Lord.

How could a church defend baptizing an infant that cannot understand or believe? It was necessary to claim some efficacy, as the Catechisms say, “in this act of baptism...” This occult lie of spiritual power innate in and released by baptism, burning a candle or incense, doing rituals, priestly hand motions, voice tones, etc., has been for thousands of years the essence of ritual magic, witchcraft, paganism, etc., which anthropologists now call shamanism.

This pernicious delusion is also known as sacramentalism—a heresy so vital to Roman Catholicism that it has its own Latin term: *ex opere operato* (i.e., “in the act itself”). To deny this doctrine concerning any official

sacrament is to deny Roman Catholicism, for which the penalty is automatic excommunication (tantamount to being sentenced to hell). Here it is from *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: SEVENTH SESSION...third day of March, 1547, DECREE CONCERNING THE SACRAMENTS...CANONS ON THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL* [still in full force]:

Can. 4. If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary for salvation but...that without them or without the desire of them men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema.

Can. 8. If anyone says that by the sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred *ex opere operato*, but that faith alone in the divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace, let him be anathema.

The grievous heresy of sacramentalism continues to seduce in various forms most “Reformed” churches. R.C. Sproul, for example, justifies infant baptism by likening it to circumcision: “The scriptural case for baptizing believers’ infants rests on the parallel between [O.T.] circumcision and N.T. baptism as signs and seals of the covenant of grace....The Old Testament precedent requires it” (*Geneva Study Bible*, p. 38).

The Ethiopian to whom Philip had just preached Christ from Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:29-35) asked, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” (8:36,37). Philip then baptized him—not by sprinkling or pouring water over him but, obviously, by immersion, for “they went down both into the water” (v. 38). Baptism publicly declares one’s faith, identifying the believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. One does not sprinkle dirt on a corpse. One buries it.

If “born of water” does not refer to amniotic fluid or to baptism, what could it mean? The second birth is by the Spirit of God and by water (Jn 3:5), symbolic of the Word of God, as in “the washing of water by the word” (Eph 5:26), and “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (Jn 15:3). When we believe the gospel, we are regenerated and washed clean. “He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Peter declares: “Being born again...by the word of God... which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pt 1:23-25).

Having been brought into the family of God, we address Him as “Father” in prayer. In His high priestly prayer (the true “Lord’s

prayer” that Christ prayed), He declared, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Jn 17:3). So the new birth involves knowing *the only true God*—not being “born again” through baptism, especially of infants.

There are millions of so-called gods and numerous prayers to each of them in the various religions they represent. The Bible condemns every one in unmistakable terms:

For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens....Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name....[F]ear before him, all the earth....[H]e cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. (Ps 96:5-13)

Such language is ridiculed by the “New Atheists” such as Richard Dawkins, who says the atheists must “spread the good news. Evangelism [to convert the world to atheism] is a moral imperative.” Although the Bible clearly distinguishes Christianity from all religions and separates their leaders (Buddha, Muhammad, et al.) from Christ, who is unique, atheists make no such distinction. Consequently, most of their arguments are irrelevant.

The Bible denounces *all* religions as instruments of Satan to keep mankind in darkness, shut off from the light of the gospel by which alone one can be saved, for “the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2 Cor 4:4).

Atheism is just one of the world’s religions, and Satanic blindness is reflected in its arguments against God and Christianity. A recent secular article about the New Atheists was titled, “The Church of the Non-Believers.” And it *is* a church—a church to which everyone *must* belong, if atheists get their way. In their religious fervor to destroy “religious faith” and to convert the entire world to their religion, they are blind to the true faith that motivates biblical Christians.

Dawkins says, “Faith is one of the world’s great evils....[It is] belief that isn’t based on evidence [and] the principal vice of any religion.” Francis Collins, however (in charge of the Human Genome Project involving 2,300 scientists), who turned from unbelief to faith in Christ, says that Dawkins’ definition of faith “certainly does not describe the faith of most serious believers of history nor of most of those of my personal acquaintance.”

Many famous scientists, Nobel Prize winners, and some of the greatest historians and legal experts have turned from atheism to faith in the resurrected Christ—not by mystical or emotional experience but from

verifiable evidence. The early pioneers in science, like Kepler, claimed that it was precisely their conviction that there was a creator that inspired their science to ever-greater heights.

“Religion is not only wrong; it’s evil,” atheists fume, unaware that biblical Christianity is not a religion but a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Leading atheists harangue against religion, blind to the fact that the Bible is not about religion. In its more than 1,000 pages, the phrase “religious faith” is not found *once*, the word “religion” appears only five times, and the word “religious” twice. All but two of these seven references are critical of “religion.” Furthermore, in these few times that it mentions religion, the Bible never means what atheists foolishly denounce.

In their war against God, Dawkins and his fellow crusaders dishonestly equate Christian “fundamentalists” with murderous Muslims. In fact, atheists are themselves fundamentalists, seeking to impose their warped interpretation of the fundamentals of science on the world.

Nor can the New Atheists be ignorant of the fact that the fundamentals of Islam (according to the Qur’an, Hadith, the dogmas and example of Muhammad, and 1,300 years of history) teach that Islam must be forced upon the entire world by murdering all who refuse to submit to Allah. Christ taught and lived entirely otherwise. Yet the New Atheists persist in equating Islam and Christianity simply because each is considered to be a “faith.” Such irresponsible accusations permeate their arguments.

Yes, some who have called themselves Christians (Roman Catholic popes, Eastern Orthodox leaders, crusaders, numerous televangelists, et al.) have been guilty of all manner of evil. In the process, they have violated the teachings and example of Christ. But Muslim terrorists follow both Islamic teaching and the example of Muhammad and his successors who tortured and slaughtered millions from France to China for 13 centuries. Today’s terrorism is just a hint of what Islam would continue to do if it could.

The fundamentals of true Christianity promote love, freedom of choice, and forgiveness, not hatred and violence. The latter are the trademark of fundamentalist Islam. To equate the fundamentals of Islam with those of Christianity is reprehensible.

Atheists also perversely equate Christianity with the fanaticism and violence of the Crusades and Inquisition. Yet the crusaders were not biblical Christians; they violated everything Christ taught and

slaughtered His brethren, the Jews, everywhere they went. It is gross dishonesty to attribute the crusaders’ misconduct to biblical Christianity.

From the days of Christ, multitudes of Christians have never given allegiance to Rome but to the Bible and to Christ alone. They were martyred by the millions by the church of Rome for centuries before the birth of Luther. From the 16th-century Reformation onward, millions of Roman Catholics embraced faith in the Bible and Christ alone and were martyred by the hundreds of thousands by the popes and their armies. To fail to distinguish between martyrs and their murderers is unconscionable.

The New Atheists, led by Dawkins, call themselves “the brights” and look upon theists as dimwits. Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg recently said, “The world needs to wake up from the long nightmare of religion....Anything we scientists can do to weaken the hold of religion should be done, and may in fact be our greatest contribution to civilization.” Richard Dawkins says: “I am utterly fed up with the respect we have been brainwashed into bestowing on religion.” *Religion?* As we’ve seen, atheists are tilting at windmills.

In their fervor to convert the world to their religion, atheists betray their complete ignorance of biblical Christianity. The Bible is not a religious book and does not promote “religion.”

Many Christians try to be “scientific” by adopting theistic evolution as *compatible* with Christianity. Their compromise does not impress atheists. Unashamedly, Dawkins declares that “evolution must lead to atheism” and “the atheist movement has...a moral imperative...to aggressively spread the good news....”

Dawkins declares, “Should [theists] be free to impose their beliefs on their children? Is there something to be said for society stepping in?” This is dangerous totalitarian talk that makes one fear for parents and children alike.

James Perloff put it well: “But remember; ‘The princess kissed the frog, and he turned into a handsome prince.’ We call that a fairy tale. Evolution says frogs turn into princes, and we call it science....Is that science? Or is it, like the fraud of Piltdown Man, the forgeries of Haeckel’s embryos, the misrepresentations of *Inherit the Wind*, and the coercions of the Supreme Court, merely part of a long effort to deny God?”

Atheists who end up in hell cannot blame the God they hate for excluding them from heaven. We need to rescue as many as we can from atheism’s lies. **TBC**

Quotable

And now I would ask you...who is the most powerful prelate in all England? He surpasses all the rest in his diligence. I can tell you. For I know him well...it is the Devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all others; he is never out of his diocese... call for him when you will, he is always available....But alas! The devil by the help of that Italian bishop yonder [the pope], his chaplain, has labored by all means that he might frustrate the death of Christ and the merits of his passion.

Hugh Latimer, most fruitful evangelist in England at the time, preaching to more than 1,000 sitting on the grass at Whitehall, residence of King Edward VI, the "British Josiah." Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer were among several hundred protestants burned at the stake by Edward's half-sister, "Bloody Mary," who claimed the kingdom after his death and turned England back to Catholicism.

Q&A

QUESTION: I recently read "A Common Word Between Us and You," signed by 138 Muslim scholars, clerics, and intellectuals from all over the world. They claim common ground shared by Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The statement was well received by scholars at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. Moved by the "Muslim hand of conviviality and cooperation extended to Christians worldwide," they extended their "own Christian hand in return, so that we may live in peace and justice, loving God and neighbors."

Yale's scholars claim that Christians sinned against Muslims in the Crusades, and still do so by our "excesses in the war on terror." They say that if we could achieve religious peace with Muslims, world peace would likely follow.

The "common ground" between us is supposedly "love of God and neighbor." Muslims say their God is "The Infinitely Good and All-Merciful." Yale scholars agree that the Bible tells us "God is love" in 1 John 4:8. The "open letter" quotes Muhammad: "None of you has faith until you love for your neighbor what you love for yourself." The Yale Center compares this to 1 John 4:8 and 20.

The Yale scholars also state that when "freedom to worship God according to one's conscience is curtailed, God is dishonored...and neither God nor

neighbor is loved." Haven't you been a bit rough on those trying to establish peaceful cooperation between Christians and Muslims? Romans 12:18 tells us, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Many Muslims want peace. Can't we accept the olive branch they offer? Many Christian leaders have signed this agreement.

RESPONSE: *Common ground...olive branch...religious peace?* Islam says Allah is the only true God. Sixteen times the Qur'an says Allah is not a father and has no son. But the very foundation of Christianity is that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world..." (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:14, etc., etc.) The Qur'an says Christ is not the Son of God, did not die for our sins on the cross—someone died in His place, so He did not rise from the dead, and anyone who believes in the Trinity goes to hell. What common ground is there with those who reject every Christian distinctive?

Muhammad teaches love for neighbor? His career included murders of hundreds of innocent people (all "neighbors" by Christ's definition) during scores of unprovoked attacks upon villages and caravans involving robbery and murder. This horror has been multiplied thousands of times by sincere Muslims following the Qur'an and Muhammad's example, slaughtering and torturing untold millions from France to China for 1,300 years.

This unequaled mayhem and murder is still justified by Muslim historians and clerics as true "Islam, Allah be praised!" When the twin towers came down, hundreds of thousands of Muslims around the world danced in the streets shouting, "Allahu Akbar!" [Allah is the greatest!]. The same cry rang in the streets during the Muslim riots in Paris, the Muslim riots over the Danish cartoons, and when two Israelis made a wrong turn into Ramallah and were literally torn apart by a frenzied mob, etc. Mobs, during binge after binge of destruction of property and innocent lives, always scream praise to Allah. And Allah is the "common ground" for peace?!

Christians mistreated Muslims in the Crusades? The crusaders were not Christians but Roman Catholics to whom (to match Islam's promise of paradise for Muslims dying in *jihad*) Pope Urban II promised escape from purgatory to heaven for dying in the fight to recover the "Holy Land" (not for Israel but for the Church!). They disobeyed Christ in fighting for an earthly kingdom and killed every Jew they

encountered. Christ and Christianity cannot be blamed for what these deceived pawns of Rome did!

Muslims had attacked and captured North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, et al., 400 years earlier and had been torturing, enslaving, and slaughtering innocent and peaceful civilians for centuries before the crusaders finally struck back. Yale can't be ignorant of history! These "scholars" are suppressing the truth to promote a lie!

Excesses in the war on terror? At least the British and Americans follow the rules of warfare and punish their own troops if they misbehave. Compare that with vehicles loaded with explosives detonated in markets, suicide bombers in mosques, every devilishly clever deception possible to kill and maim, torturing and beheading prisoners—and we are guilty of excesses?! Anyone who thinks we are in Afghanistan and Iraq for anything other than "as much as possible" to find some means of living peacefully with these morally blind monsters is wrong.

Freedom to worship God according to the dictates of one's conscience?! Yale scholars and evangelical signatories suggest we are preventing this? We give Muslims full religious freedom in the West. We let them build mosques by the thousands, though in many they hide terrorists and plot our destruction. How do Muslims respond? Everywhere they gain control, all non-Islamic religions are suppressed and often prohibited, Christians are killed and churches destroyed by the thousands from Nigeria to Indonesia to Pakistan. In Saudi Arabia you can't carry a Bible on the street, cannot build a non-Muslim place of worship, or even worship the God of the Bible in the privacy of your home. You must be a Muslim to be a citizen! There is no freedom of the press, of speech, of religion, of worship. Any Muslim who converts to any other religion is beheaded in public. Where is the extended olive branch?!

Islam's Allah is "The Infinitely Good and All-Merciful"? Tell that to the many millions enslaved, tortured, and slaughtered in his name! Muslims killed more just in India than Hitler killed in all of East and West Europe and North Africa! Muhammad claimed, "Allah has commanded me to fight against all people until all people confess there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet." Terrorists today are not "extremists" but true Muslims, obedient to Allah and following Muhammad's example. "Peace" is for those who submit to Allah! Some olive branch!

I am shocked by the leaders who joined

Muslims in signing this document, which betrays Christ and the gospel for a phony promise of “peace” from the enemies of God and Israel! Sadly, here are some of them: Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, George Verwer, Robert Schuller, John Stott, Brian D. McClaren, David Neff, Richard Mouw, Richard Cizik, David Yonggi Cho, et al.

QUESTION [Excerpt of letter from leader of large Messianic congregation]: Are you forbidding Gentile believers to celebrate Jesus, our Passover Lamb, in a Passover setting [Q&A 6/07;10/07]? It is one of the most beautiful things, and most prophetic, that the end-time church is rediscovering its heritage in Israel.... In the Millennium all nations, both Jew and Gentile, will have to celebrate the Hebrew Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles—Zechariah 14:16-21). Are we not free to keep or not keep one day above the rest?

RESPONSE: You are saying that for Gentiles to keep the Jewish Passover is a truth lost to the church and now being restored in this “end-time.” Yet the “Last Supper” was not the annual Jewish Passover in remembrance of Israel’s deliverance but a new “Passover” feast for the church to keep “on the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7), in remembrance of the death, burial, and resurrection of “Christ our passover” (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 5:7).

Exodus 12:14 commands ethnic Jews to keep the Passover “a feast by an ordinance forever.” The fact that Jews alone keep the Passover is the great proof that they are the chosen people to whom the Promised Land was given for an everlasting possession: “When your children shall say...what mean ye by this service?...[Y]e shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s passover... when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses” (vv. 26,27). No Gentile could say that to his children—reason enough for Gentiles not to keep this Jewish feast with its special meaning! This is specifically for the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and for no one else. So says the Bible.

Moreover, for Gentiles to keep this feast weakens its intended proof. Christians (whether Jews or Gentiles) celebrate “Christ our Passover” in the breaking of bread “on the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7), as did the early church. The Jewish believers also kept the Passover once a year as commanded.

The fact that all nations will be forced to keep Sukkot during the Millennium does not justify Gentiles keeping the Passover.

Nor does it illustrate freedom to keep or not to keep one day above the rest. Nor does Romans 14 refer to the Passover.

QUESTION: I love your newsletter and radio program but I have to take exception to your statement [Dec ’07 article] that for Christ to taste “death for every man would have to include the experience of the ‘lake of fire’ [which is] the second death.” Jesus suffered physical death on the cross and went immediately to the Abraham’s bosom/Paradise side of Sheol/Hades. As He said to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in Paradise,” not hell/gehenna/lake of fire. Yes, God did turn his back on Jesus—hence his words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” but Jesus did not actually experience the “lake of fire,” which was not opened for business yet. The first persons to go there will be the Antichrist and the False Prophet (Revelation 19:20). Your statement came too close to the false teaching of Kenneth Copeland.

RESPONSE: No, I was as far from Copeland’s heresy as the East is from the West. Copeland actually says, “Satan and every demon tortured Christ in the depths of hell”—not “lake of fire.” But Satan is not the proprietor of either place and will be tormenting no one; he himself will be tormenting continuously forever in the Lake of Fire (Rv 20:10). Copeland’s worst heresy, and that of others like him, is that our salvation comes from Satan torturing Christ in hell during the three days His body was in the tomb. That is not the gospel that saves!

Nor did I say that Jesus went to the Lake of Fire to suffer for our sins. On the Cross He paid the full penalty for sin, shouting in triumph, “Tetelestai” [paid in full!]. The KJV translates it as “It is finished!” Furthermore, redemption is through “the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20).

Scripture declares, that “he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9). Being “cast into the lake of fire... is the second death” (Rv 20:14).

How could Christ “taste death for every man” without suffering “the second death” that every sinner will endure eternally in the Lake of Fire? He couldn’t. I believe what the Bible plainly says. But how could He suffer the torment of the Lake of Fire while on the Cross? Consider carefully:

1. Physical death is not sin’s full penalty: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but *after this* the judgment...” (Heb 9:27). How can eternal punishment of the soul and spirit be physical? Death separates man from his

body and opens the door to judgment and eternal punishment.

2. Punishment in hell and the Lake of Fire cannot be physical but moral and spiritual. I’ve been accused of not believing in real flames in hell and the Lake of Fire by those who think that only physical flames could be real. Then neither God, who is “a spirit,” nor Satan, angels, demons, or man’s soul and spirit are real!

3. Is the “water” of eternal life that Jesus offered to the woman at the well and that He offers to each repentant sinner not real because it isn’t physical? Then why must the flames of eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire be physical to be real? The rich man was tormented in the flames of hell, but only his soul and spirit were present—his physical body was rotting in the grave.

4. Surely, the fire of God’s holiness, justice, and judgment, by which “every man’s work shall be made manifest...of what sort it is” (1 Cor 3:13), cannot be physical but moral and spiritual. Real? Yes, far more real, terrifying, and tormenting than physical fire could ever be, as the conscience can find no more excuses but is confronted with the stark reality of what sin really is and the horror of its rebellion against God and rejection of Christ and the sacrifice He made on the Cross. I believe *that* is the horror Christ endured on the Cross for every person who would ever be born as He cried in agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?!”

Evangelical Mysticism?

T. A. McMahon

I find myself increasingly grieved these days by what I see taking place among those who profess to be evangelicals. I know the term “evangelical” has undergone radical changes regarding its meaning and practice. Yet when I use the term, I’m going by a very simple definition: I’m referring to those who claim to accept the Bible alone as their authority for knowing and receiving God’s way of salvation and for living their lives in a way that is pleasing to Him.

Thirty years ago, it was young adult evangelicals who were used wonderfully by the Lord to help open my eyes to the fact that I was eternally separated from God and that the religious system I was depending on to get me to heaven was a false hope. That wasn’t easy for me to accept at the time. Although my commitment to the Roman Catholic Church had weakened during my late twenties, the attitude “I was born a Catholic, I’ll die a Catholic” was woven into the fabric of my mind.

As I think back on those days, I recognize that I was a young man in bondage. Certainly, I was in bondage to sin, as is everyone who is not born again. But there was another bondage that also gripped me: the bondage of Roman Catholic tradition, with its sacraments, liturgies, rituals, and sacramentals. Not only were such things unbiblical—they were works of the flesh and devices of demons. In my own life, as well as throughout the history of the Church of Rome, they were soul-gripping superstitions advanced under the guise of spirituality.

I trusted in relics of dead so-called Saints; holy water; making the sign of the cross; votive candles; baptism for salvation (infant or otherwise); a “transubstantiated” piece of bread alleged to be Christ; apparitions of Mary; a scapular; a “miraculous medal”; statues and images of Jesus, Mary, and the saints; endless Rosaries, Novenas, the Stations of the Cross; abstaining from meat on Friday; Lenten abstinences; the Last Rites to get me into Purgatory and indulgences to get me out of Purgatory; Mass cards; graces dispensed from Mary; the confessional, with absolution of my sins by a priest; penance and personal suffering to purify me of my sin; worshipping a piece of bread at the Eucharistic Holy Hour; the Holy Father as the Vicar of Christ on earth, etc., etc. Therein lies a bondage that few evangelicals understand.

Many brush these things aside as non-essentials of the Christian faith or minor

theological aberrations unique to Catholicism. Not true. They are essential to the gospel that Rome declares—a gospel of meritorious works that the Bible condemns (see Galatians, Romans, Ephesians, et al.) as a rejection of the completed substitutionary atonement of Christ our Savior. Catholicism’s Tradition, which is declared to be equal in authority to Scripture, is made up of those things (such as cited above) that are necessary for, or supportive of, a Catholic’s entrance into heaven.

According to the Word of God, anything that is added to Christ’s finished work on the cross is a denial of the gospel: that Christ paid the *full penalty* for the sins of humanity.

The Roman Catholic Church, which claims infallibility in its Councils and theological teachings, clearly and emphatically denies the biblical gospel. The Council of Trent declares:

6th Session, Canon 9: If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification...let him be anathema.

6th Session, Canon 12: If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified: let him be anathema.

6th Session, Canon 30: If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.

7th Session, Canon 4: If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law [canons and decrees of the Church] are not necessary for salvation but...without them... men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification...let him be anathema.

“Anathema,” in these decrees (which are still in force), damns to hell anyone who rejects the Roman Catholic Church’s false gospel of works.

Starting with the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, where only superficial changes were made (because infallible dogmas cannot be changed!), Rome launched an ecumenical program aimed at seducing Protestants worldwide and, specifically,

evangelicals in the United States. The goal was and is to bring all of Christendom under the rule of the Roman Catholic Church with the pope as its spiritual head. Predictable progress has been made in Europe and the U.S. among liberal denominations that have long abandoned the Scriptures. Astonishing, however, is the success the scheme has had among American evangelicals.

Billy Graham was the first and most notable evangelical to support Catholicism’s ecumenical efforts. Others followed, including Bill Bright, Pat Robertson, J. I. Packer, Timothy George, Robert Schuller, Hank Hanegraaff, Benny Hinn, and Jack Van Impe. Evangelicals and Catholics Together, under the leadership of Chuck Colson and Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus, declared Catholics and evangelicals to be “brothers and sisters in Christ” and exhorted them to work together in spreading the gospel. Obviously, and conveniently, that gospel was never defined.

Although the acceptance of things Roman Catholic among evangelicals grew steadily over the years after Vatican II, it increased exponentially with the popularity of ultra-conservative Catholic Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*. His dramatization of one of Catholicism’s most sacred rituals, The Stations of the Cross, so captured the hearts of evangelicals that their eagerness to purchase mass quantities of tickets accounted for the movie’s great financial success. Following that achievement, *Inside the Vatican* made this insightful observation: “For evangelicals, the film has given them a glimpse inside the Catholic soul, even the traditional Catholic soul. Many evangelicals, reflecting on what they saw in the movie, say they are beginning to ‘get’ the whole Catholic thing: Lent...the ashes on the forehead...no meat on Friday...the sorrowful mysteries...the Stations of the Cross...the emphasis on the Eucharist...the devotion to Mary...the enormous crucifix hanging above every Catholic altar. They may not be rushing out to buy rosaries, necessarily, but some of the things no longer seem so strange, so alien.”¹

What evangelicals also “got,” which their leaders enthusiastically endorsed as “biblically accurate,” were numerous scenes based upon the imagination of an 18th-century Catholic mystic, the portrayal of Mary as co-redemptrix in the salvation of mankind, and a very Catholic gospel that has Christ atoning for sin by suffering the unrelenting physical tortures of the Roman soldiers.²

The Passion of the Christ had a stunning effect on evangelical youth and youth

pastors. Not only did “[Catholic] things no longer seem so strange, so alien,” but they were showing up in the youth ministries of evangelical churches. The Stations of the Cross ritual became popular, although it needed to be downsized from 14 stations to 11, eliminating some stations that were too foreign to Scripture (such as Saint Veronica capturing the image of Christ’s bloodied face on her veil). Prayer altars were erected, featuring icons illuminated by candles and fragranced by burning incense, and prayer labyrinths were painted on large tarps placed in church basements or cut into church lawns. For young evangelicals too often raised on empty, repetitive worship choruses little different from secular music, and religious instruction leaning heavily upon entertainment to keep them interested, the Catholic and Orthodox liturgies seemed far more spiritual.

This all became “spiritual” fodder for the Emerging Church Movement (ECM), much of it a reaction against the consumer-oriented marketing approach to church growth popularized by Robert Schuller, Bill Hybels, and Rick Warren. Many ECM leaders, most of whom have evangelical backgrounds, saw Catholic ritual and mysticism as a necessary spiritual ingredient that was lost for evangelicals at the Reformation. *Sola Scriptura* was a major rallying cry of the Reformers against the abuses stemming from Roman Catholic tradition; the Bible as one’s only authority practically shut down the influence of the Catholic mystics known as the Desert Fathers.

Yet Catholic mysticism has returned with a vengeance. Its occult techniques can be found nearly everywhere, from Youth Specialities to Richard Foster’s *Renovaré* organization to Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Life*. “Many Christian leaders started searching for a new approach under the banner of ‘spiritual formation.’ This new search has led many of them back to Catholic contemplative practices and medieval monastic disciplines,” Brian McLaren writes approvingly.

Tony Jones, co-editor of *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* has written a manifesto of mysticism for emerging churches titled *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life*. Jones’s acknowledgement of those who supported his effort reads as a *Who’s Who* of emergent leaders, not to mention the Catholic priests he thanks and the ancient Orthodox and Catholic mystics he quotes. What then is this mysticism they are promoting?

Catholic mysticism is thoroughly subjective and experiential. Like its parent,

Eastern mysticism, it claims that God can neither be known nor understood through human reason but only *experienced* subjectively through various techniques. It is the antithesis of what the Bible teaches: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 1:18); “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7); “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him” (2 Peter 1:3). Furthermore, the goal of mysticism is union with God, i.e., the merging of one’s soul into God. This is an impossibility that reveals mysticism’s pantheistic and *pantheistic* roots, that God is everything and is in everything. No. God is infinite and transcendent, absolutely separate from His finite creation.

The Sacred Way endorses numerous mystical techniques that are gaining acceptance among evangelicals today. An awareness and understanding of them is therefore critical for discernment. *Centering Prayer* utilizes a single word (e.g., “love” or “God”) upon which one focuses to clear the mind of all other thoughts. The belief is that the so-called pray-er will hear directly from God in his silence before Him. Tony Campolo declares, “In my case intimacy with Christ has developed gradually over the years, primarily through what Catholic mystics call ‘centering prayer.’ Each morning, as soon as I wake up, I take time—sometimes as much as a half hour—to center myself on Jesus. I say his name over and over again to drive back the 101 things that begin to clutter up my mind the minute I open my eyes. Jesus is my mantra, as some would say.”³

The *Jesus Prayer* has the pray-er repeat a sentence such as “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me” continuously, hundreds—even thousands—of times. The repetition supposedly fixates one’s mind upon Jesus. Yet it blatantly rejects His command not to use vain repetition in prayer as the heathen do (Matthew 6:7). Moreover, its constant repetitions turn prayer as a form of communication with Jesus into an act of nonsense.

Lectio Divina, meaning “sacred reading,” is a technique that is far removed from normal reading and studying of the Bible. Its methodology aims at going beyond the objective meaning of the words and the straightforward instructions to that which transcends normal awareness. Jones writes, “As you attend to those deeper meanings, begin to meditate on the feelings and emotions conjured up in your inner self.”⁴ He then summarizes this

mystical contemplative technique: “True contemplation moves beyond words and intellect and into that ‘thin space’ where time and eternity almost touch. It’s in moments like these that some of the greatest [Catholic] saints in the history of the [Catholic] church have had a ‘mystical union’ with Christ.”⁵ It’s clear from God’s Word that the spirit with which they had a “mystical union” in their contemplative altered state of consciousness was not Jesus.

Ignatian Examen is an occult visualization technique taught by Ignatius Loyola, who founded the Jesuits in the 16th century. His exercise teaches one to visualize oneself in the presence of Jesus and then interact with Him during his earthly events, e.g., “at the Last Supper and the Garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the cross, and laying Jesus’ body in the tomb.”⁶ This has one adding content to Scripture from his imagination and opens a person to demonic manipulation (2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:8).

Prayer Labyrinths are concentric paths created by the Catholic Church in the 13th century to experience in one’s imagination Christ’s *Via Dolorosa*, or “walk of sorrows,” when He carried His cross to Calvary’s hill. Rather than subject themselves to the dangers of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem during Holy Week, Roman Catholics in Europe could gain the same indulgences (to shorten their time in Purgatory) by walking labyrinths at certain cathedrals while prayerfully meditating upon Christ’s crucifixion. Likewise, observing the “sacred” ritual of the Stations of the Cross became a substitute for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

As a former Catholic, it’s hard for me to fathom the evangelical church buying into the religious occultism of Roman Catholicism. It makes no sense. Visit any country where that religion is taken seriously. What becomes obvious is a people who are in the bondage of superstition. On the other hand, I shouldn’t be surprised. Apostasy is growing rapidly, the religion of the Antichrist is taking shape, and mysticism, whether it’s the Catholic variety, the Sufism of Islam, yoga and the gurus of Eastern mysticism, the Shamanism of native religions, or otherwise, is a common yet powerful magnet that draws all religions together.

We need to be watchmen on the wall as we see this evil invading the church, warning especially—should our Lord delay His return—our next generation of believers. They are the clear targets of this mystical seduction.

TBC

Quotable

Correction from January 2008 "Quotable": Hugh Latimer, most fruitful evangelist in England at the time, preaching to more than 1,000 sitting on the grass at Whitehall, residence of King Edward VI, the "British Josiah." Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer were among several hundred protestants burned at the stake by Edward's half-sister, "Bloody Mary," awarded the throne in the place of Lady Jane Grey, the previous queen. Mary had Lady Jane Grey beheaded. She then sought to turn England back to Catholicism.

Follow-up Quote:

The last words of Lady Jane Grey, age 16, at her beheading, February 12, 1554, having refused freedom if she embraced Catholicism. From the scaffold she spoke earnestly to the spectators: "Good people, touching the procurement of the crown on my behalf, I do wash my hands thereof before God. I did not desire it...Bear me witness...I do look to be saved by no other means, but by the mercy of God in the blood of His only Son Jesus Christ...and I confess when I did know the word of God, I neglected the same, loved myself and the world, and thereby this...punishment is worthily happened to me, and yet I thank God that in His goodness He hath thus given me time to repent."

Kneeling down, she asked permission and quoted all of Psalm 57. It begins, "Be merciful unto me, O God...for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge..."

Laying her head on the block, she said, "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The British Josiah, N. A. Woychuk, Gen. Ed., 120-22

Q&A

QUESTION: I believe we are born into sin and with a sin nature but are not sinners from birth. Although David said he was conceived in sin, he did not say he was born a sinner. I can tell a group of adults and teenagers that we are all sinners but not a group of small children.

RESPONSE: That depends upon what you mean by "small children." Put a plate of cookies on a table in front of a group of children, no matter how small, and watch each of them grab what small hands will hold and push others out of the way to get

them! But that innate selfishness (which is a major sign of a sin nature) does not send them to hell when they are still toddlers.

When his baby son born to Bathsheba died, David knew he was with the Lord, not in hell: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sm 12:22,23). Though a baby's sin nature manifests itself almost from birth, the baby lacks the understanding to make it morally responsible and it will not be punished for what it commits in innocence.

QUESTION: I admire what you've done to silence the awful teachings of Calvin. But in your latest Berean Call you again just cite 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 as the gospel as though one verse will suffice. Paul said that those items were "amongst things of first importance." But what has happened to the gospel as defined and preached by Jesus? Why don't you start by defining the gospel as Jesus did in Mark 1:14-15? Luke 4:43 ought to be our mission statement, since it was Jesus'. For Paul, that same "Kingdom of God" gospel is still the heart of everything (Acts 28:23, 31). Hebrews 2:3 makes Jesus the model preacher of the gospel, but evangelicals have forgotten this.

RESPONSE: We've corresponded about this before and we both remain firm in our beliefs. Nevertheless, I'll try once again. I cite 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 because there Paul more clearly and fully spells out the gospel in detail than is done anywhere else in the Bible: "...which I preached unto you...ye received...wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved...that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures...was buried...rose again the third day according to the scriptures...was seen..."

In Mark 1:14-15 Christ offers Himself as king to Israel, "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God...the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." He certainly does not, however, define or explain the "gospel of the kingdom." Nor does He do so in Luke 4:43.

So we need to define the "gospel of the kingdom," and that is where we differ. Paul says the gospel he preached and declares so clearly in 1 Corinthians 15 is what he "received." From those who were apostles before him? No, but from the Lord himself. The fact that Paul knew what he knew of the gospel, and following Christ by extensive direct contact with the risen Lord, is very clear from Galatians 1:7-9, 11-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

The "gospel of the kingdom" that Jesus

and the disciples preached at that time and the miracles that He did to confirm it were specifically for Israel. During His time on earth, Christ said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24); "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities [obviously in Israel] also: for therefore am I sent" (Lk 4:43). John chapter 4 indicates that Samaritans were apparently included.

Something changed at the Cross: not the gospel but those to whom it was to be preached. Christ sent His disciples where He had avoided going: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). This is our commission today. With Paul and the other apostles, "we preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23) to Jew and Gentile.

Christ is the king not only of Israel but also of the universe. We are calling the lost from "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rv 5:9) to enter the kingdom under the lordship of Christ—a kingdom not headquartered in Jerusalem and pertaining only to Israel but headquartered in heaven and preached worldwide. We preach what Paul preached: "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21) to everyone who will heed the call.

QUESTION: Does God have a distinct role for Gentile and for Jewish believers during the Millennium?

RESPONSE: Jewish believers who are not part of the church (i.e., did not believe in Christ until they saw Him in the glory of His Second Coming) will inhabit the complete land of Israel (Gn 15:18-21; 17:7,8; 1 Chr 16:15-18, etc.), where Christ will rule over them and the world from the restored throne of David in Jerusalem.

Gentiles who have become believers will live in the rest of the earth as part of what will still be known even in the eternal "new heaven and...new earth" (Rv 21:1) as "the nations of them which are saved" (21:24).

QUESTION: You have criticized Islam's sponsorship of terrorism and have asked the question, "What kind of God gives entrance into paradise and rewards for killing innocent women and children?"

Unbelievers also could say that the God of the Bible commands murder: Deuteronomy 2:34, 13:12-16; Joshua 8:25; 1 Samuel 27:8; Numbers 31. God commanded destruction of entire populations, cultures, and people. How can you condemn Allah and not Yahweh?

RESPONSE: Israel was not commanded to take over the entire world and to kill all who resisted (as Allah commanded Muhammad) but was given a specific land because of the extreme evil and demonization of its people. Israel was not commanded to “convert” them, much less with the sword, but to kill them all because God deemed that necessary and just.

All but one of the scriptures you cite involve the land of Canaan, which God promised to Israel but delayed giving to them because the people were not evil enough to justify their destruction: “The iniquity of the Amorites [i.e. Canaanites] is not yet full” (Gn 15:16). Deuteronomy 2:34 pertains to the destruction of the Amorites. God did not arbitrarily wipe out the Canaanites. The nations who occupied Canaan followed gods, goddesses, serpent worship, lewd fertility cults with prostitute priestesses, and nature religions. The evil of all of these religions is unmentionable. God held back their judgment for many centuries and only released Israel from slavery specifically to wipe them out when he could no longer delay their just punishment.

Deuteronomy 13:15 orders the execution of those who had led Israelites into the worship of false gods, all of whom represented demons. Israel could not be allowed to be seduced into the very thing for which the Canaanites were being destroyed. Joshua 8:25 tells of the destruction of Ai, a Canaanite city, as commanded. In 1 Samuel 27:8, David is slaughtering more Canaanites, all of whom were to be killed by Israel, thus executing God’s judgment upon them for their wickedness.

The destruction of the Midianites in Numbers 31 is a different case. They were descendants of Abraham by Keturah, whom he married after Sarah’s death. They were not Canaanites, nor were the children of Israel given their land. They had sent their young women to seduce Israel’s young men, whom they enticed into immorality and the worship of their gods. God executed this severe punishment to teach His people the seriousness of turning from Him to demonic deities.

QUESTION: I’ve heard that Awana is drifting toward mysticism in the way they are ministering to children. What do you know about that?

RESPONSE: *Perspectives on Children’s Spiritual Formation* is offered by the Rorheim Institute, Awana’s leader and parent development network. The book presents four different models on “how

faith is cultivated in children,” with each author critiquing the three other models. Awana’s participation in this “debate” is through Greg Carlson and John Crupper, executives at the Rorheim Institute. They present the “Instructional-Analytical Model,” which is basically how Awana goes about teaching children: encouraging them to read, study, and memorize the Scriptures.

Concerns that Awana is “drifting” toward mysticism stem not from what Carlson and Crupper *present* regarding their organization’s approach; that approach is solid and biblical. However, their critique of the “Contemplative-Reflective Model” is far too conciliatory, especially in a book that showcases Catholic mysticism.

In the explanation of the Contemplative-Reflective Model (C-RM), we’re told, “This school [of thought] is dominated by contemplative prayer. Centering prayers are typical. Their purpose is to occupy and free the mind so that one can dwell with God” (p. 37). Wheaton professor Dr. Scottie May, the author of the C-RM, is commended by the editor for “an excellent book [that she co-authored, teaching the] use of contemplation...and guided imagery in programming children’s ministry” (p. 38). In *Perspectives* she writes, “The model seeks to assist them in finding the quiet place within themselves—a place that all children have—where they can sense the presence of God and hear his voice” (p. 46). May recommends “purposefully altering traditional religious education by introducing connatural knowing [i.e., through feelings and intuition] to young children so that they may *encounter* [emphasis in original] God rather than initially being taught about him” (p. 59).

Although Carlson and Crupper rightly object to some key points in May’s mystical model, they naïvely give the impression that the Contemplative-Reflective model has something to offer, even quoting favorably Richard Foster, arguably the foremost advocate of Catholic mysticism in the church. Compounding the confusion, they commend “the Contemplative-Reflective Model [as an] important tool in helping provide a balanced development of the Christian spiritual life” (p. 87). Here they are showing their ignorance of the occultism rooted in mysticism.

Since the Rorheim Institute offers the book to prospective Awana leaders and parents, there’s also a grave concern that these leaders and parents will select some of the unbiblical content of the models

(including the child-development psychobabble) as helpful to their local programs.

Yet in spite of all of the miscues of Awana’s involvement in *Perspectives on Children’s Spiritual Formation*, based upon our correspondence with the organization, we’re encouraged that the ministry wants no part of mysticism, other than to be better informed so that it can better defend against it. Hopefully, it will stay true to the Scriptures, which it has done admirably on behalf of our children for six decades.

Endnotes

1. *Inside the Vatican*, March/April 2004, 24.
2. See T. A. McMahon, *Showtime for the Sheep?* (The Berean Call, 2004).
3. Tony Campolo, *Letters to a Young Evangelical* (New York, NY: Perseus Books Group, 2006), 20.
4. Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 53.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, 92.

Ancient-Future Heresies

T. A. McMahon

Here's an idea. Let's go back through historical church eras and glean from such time periods those issues deemed to be of value in the development of the Christian faith. Let's review the first-century church, the church between A.D. 100 and 600, then consider the medieval era (A.D. 700 to 1500), followed by the Reformation period (A.D. 1500 and later), and so on. To be effective in this endeavor, it's important to have a good understanding of the cultural context in which the Christians of each era practiced their faith. In addition, we'll need to study the Church Fathers and gain the insights they provided. Why? Well, those who are promoting this "re-presenting the past" believe that today's Christianity will greatly benefit as it "re-invents itself" in order to effectively bring the message of the gospel to the postmodern world. If you think this may not be a good idea, you could be labeled a "traditionalist," one whose faith and practice is inflexible and out of touch with our rapidly changing culture—and church.

That's the view that *Christianity Today* (CT) has of what's going on in evangelical Christianity. In introducing its February 2008 feature article with a cover-page declaration, "Lost Secrets of the Ancient Church: How evangelicals started looking backward to move forward," CT senior managing editor Mark Galli writes:

You might say a number of CT editors have a vested interest in this issue's cover story. David Neff, Ted Olsen, Tim Morgan, and I have been doing the ancient-future thing for many years, at Episcopal and/or Anglican parishes. And if this were not enough immersion in the topic, in his spare time, David Neff heads up the Robert E. Webber Center for an Ancient Evangelical Future, founded by the father of the ancient-future movement.

Acknowledging the magazine's inherent (and *historic*) bias, Galli notes that "the ancient church has captivated the evangelical imagination for some time [yet] it hasn't been until recently that it's become an *accepted fixture* of the evangelical landscape. And this is *for the good*" (emphasis added). That, of course, is Galli's opinion and, sadly, a growing multitude of influential Christian leaders agree.

Robert E. Webber, who died last year, is certainly the "father of the ancient-future movement," and his many books have provided encouragement and content for leaders of Emerging Church fellowships.

As a Wheaton College professor for three decades, he also played a significant part in influencing that evangelical institution's capitulation to ecumenism, particularly its support of Roman Catholicism (see *TBC* 7/02, 6/02 by T.A. on ECT at Wheaton).

Webber wrote in his book, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Post-modern World*, "Currently, Western society is in a transition from the modern world to a postmodern world...shifting us toward the affirmation of new values...resulting in a whole new culture and rais[ing] new questions about the way a biblical Christianity is to be understood and communicated."¹ The solution for Christianity to be viable in this cultural transition, Webber contends, is to "recover the universally accepted framework of faith that originated with the apostles, was developed by the [Church] Fathers, and has been handed down by the church in its liturgical and theological traditions."²

This Church Fathers' "framework of faith," along with "its liturgical and theological traditions" is found primarily, according to Webber, in the era of "Classic Christianity," between A.D. 100 and 600. And it was to that church age that most of the speakers at the 2007 Wheaton Theology Conference on "The Ancient Faith for the Church's Future" sang their praises. CT describes what took place at the Billy Graham Center in the Cliff Barrows Auditorium, including taking the audience through prayers from the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (also known as the *Book of Sacraments of the Church of Rome*), a fifth-century book of Catholic liturgy containing the priest's instructions for celebrating the Eucharist and recommending them for worship in today's Protestant churches. One speaker promoted the Catholic "medieval fourfold hermeneutic," which emphasizes the nonliteral interpretation of the Bible, and another "gleefully passed on the news" to this highly receptive crowd "that Liberty University had observed the liturgical season of Lent."

The writer of the article then asks, "Had Catholics taken over?" in this former bastion of conservative evangelicalism. His answer is NO! This Wheaton College conference was simply evangelicals looking to the past for "rich biblical, spiritual, and theological treasures to be found within the early church" as supplied by the early Church Fathers.³

Are evangelicals truly paying attention to the Church Fathers? University professor D. H. Williams, author of *Evangelicals and Tradition*, substantiated "the recent upsurge of evangelical interest in patristics (the study of the Church Fathers): 'Who would have thought, a decade ago, that one of the most vibrant and serious fields of Christian study at the beginning of the 21st century would be

the ancient church fathers? There has been an opening of new avenues...[created] by the almost overnight popularity of bishops and monks, martyrs and apologists, philosophers and historians who first fashioned a Christian culture 1,500 years ago.'"⁴

Although these developments may seem shockingly new to some and seem to have sprung up overnight, *Christianity Today* gives some preparatory background (see also "Evangelical Mysticism?" *TBC* 2/08). The article quotes Robert Webber from his then controversial 1978 book *Common Roots*: "My argument is that the era of the early church (A.D. 100-500), and particularly the second century, contains insights which evangelicals need to recover." CT notes that 25 years later Webber rejoiced in his book *Younger Evangelicals* that they [emergent fellowships] "want to immerse themselves in the past and form a culture that is connected to the past..."

Nearly a decade earlier than *Common Roots*, a number of Campus Crusade leaders went on their own "recovery" of ancient liturgies, specifically from Eastern Orthodoxy. Peter Gillquist, Jack Sparks, Jon Braun, and others left Campus Crusade to form what was a forerunner of today's ancient-future-emergent movement. They turned to the writings of the early Church Fathers "to practice a more liturgical form of worship than in their previous evangelical background."⁵ They called their movement the New Covenant Apostolic Order and, later, the Evangelical Orthodox Church.

In 1978, Quaker and CT advisory editor Richard Foster wrote *Celebration of Discipline*. His book, which introduced Catholic and occult meditative techniques to evangelicals, sold more than a million copies and was selected by *Christianity Today* as one of the top ten books of the 20th century. Foster later formed Renovaré, an organization dedicated to teaching spiritual formation through the mystical beliefs and practices of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Desert Fathers. Eugene Peterson (CT editor), author of the very popular paraphrased Bible, *The Message*, was the New Testament editor of the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*.

These developments are foundational to today's Emerging Church phenomenon and indicate that such roots will carry it well beyond its merely being a fad among today's evangelical youth. More recent support (noted in last month's *TBC*) is the change in attitude among evangelicals toward Roman Catholicism fostered by "Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," an endeavor of Chuck Colson and Father Richard John Neuhaus (both CT

editors) and the stunning success (thanks to evangelicals) of Mel Gibson's extremely Catholic *The Passion of the Christ*.

Is any of this "for the good," as *Christianity Today* declares?

Let's both reason from the Scriptures, and simply be reasonable (Isaiah 1:18). The Ancient-Future search to discover gems from "Classic Christianity" comes up short by a century—the century in which the New Testament was written. The critical difference should be obvious. The writers of the New Testament were *inspired by the Holy Spirit* as they penned God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21,22). What writings from A.D. 100 and later can claim such inspiration? None. But we're told that some were disciples of or lived at the time of the apostles. True, but proximity to the apostles is hardly a guarantee against heresy nor does it come close to inspiration. Furthermore, much of the first-century-written New Testament reproduced and corrected errors that had *already entered the church!*

Remember the Apostle Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders, who were certainly closer to Paul than any of the so-called Church Fathers:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:28-31)

Again, why this attraction to the ancient Church Fathers? Could any of them say with Paul, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9)? We can trust his God-breathed words *completely*. On the other hand, it takes very little scrutiny of men like Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Justin Martyr, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, and others, to see their flaws, let alone their heresies. For example, Origen taught that God would save everyone and that Mary was a perpetual virgin; Irenaeus believed that the bread and wine became the body and blood of Jesus when consecrated, as did John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem; Athanasius taught salvation through baptism; Tertullian became a supporter of the Montanist heresies, and a promoter of a New Testament clergy class, as did his disciple Cyprian; Augustine was

the principal architect of Catholic dogma that included his support of purgatory, baptismal regeneration, and infant baptism, mortal and venial sins, prayers to the dead, penance for sins, absolution from a priest, the sinlessness of Mary, the Apocrypha as Scripture, etc.

It's not that these men got everything wrong; some, on certain doctrines, upheld Scripture against the developing unbiblical dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless, overall they are a heretical minefield. So why seek them out?

Worse yet are the Desert Fathers and the Catholic mystics. Anthony the Great, known as the father of Christian monasticism, is the most revered of the Desert Fathers. According to Athanasius, the devil fought Anthony by afflicting him with boredom, laziness, and the phantoms of women, which he countered by becoming a hermit and isolating himself for years inside a tomb. He communicated with the outside world through a crevice that enabled him to receive food and to offer spiritual advice. Supposedly, the devil, upset by his holiness, would come and beat him unmercifully.

Later mystics were no less bizarre—or *unbiblical*. Benedictine nun Julian of Norwich, a favorite of evangelical mystic wannabes and "Christian" feminists, believed in universal salvation, that God was *in* all things, referred to God as "Father-Mother," and experienced intense visions of heaven and hell. Her most famous saying became a positive mental attitude mantra: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." Like Anthony, she had herself walled off from society, living for 20 years in a cell attached to a church, where a small window provided access to food and a view of the church altar and of the Eucharist.

Could these hermits and mystics really interest evangelicals? *Christianity Today* says they do. Referring to "monastic evangelicals" and the "new monasticism," an insert in its cover article observes how "growing numbers of evangelicals" are "taking their newfound love affair with Christian tradition" beyond "books and talk" and are "now experimenting with advent candles [and] sampling [Catholic] practices associated with Lent..." *CT* credits Richard Foster's *Devotional Classics* as possibly fueling this latest trend, and it notes that Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, and a number of emerging church writers have "been calling evangelicals to monastic models as a guide for the future."⁶

As a former Roman Catholic, I am staggered when I see who and what *Christianity Today* is blatantly promoting. Robert Webber, for example, writes in *Signs and*

Wonders of an experience that changed his Protestant life. He received the Eucharist (allegedly the "actual body and blood of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine") while at a Catholic retreat center: "You might say I was surprised by joy!...I had never had an experience like that in my life...I had been in dialog with another worship tradition, and I was surely the richer for it!"⁷ Thousands of steadfast biblical Christians were martyred for refusing that idolatrous and gospel-denying "worship tradition."

Campus Crusade leader-turned-Orthodox-priest Peter Gillquist explains the "mission" he and those who joined him are on: "Our desire is to make North America Orthodox!" As former conservative evangelicals, they believe that "if we [could] become Orthodox, then anyone in North America can!" Furthermore, due to their apologetics and evangelism training, "...we represent a strong force for *Orthodox* evangelization....And we know there are many others just like us who if given the time and persuasion will join the Orthodox ranks just as we have."⁸

Will this soon pass? No. It's all part of related agendas that are building the end-times apostate church (Revelation 13:8). Its tools are experientialism, subjectivism, mysticism, and dominionism, all of which aggressively and obstinately subvert the Word of God. They are intentionally (in some cases unwittingly) being used to work out Satan's primary scheme against God and mankind (Genesis 3:1: "Yea, hath God said...?") as they undermine His Truth. Is God doing anything about it? Yes. As evidenced by what's been presented here and so much more, He is sending "strong delusion" among those who have not a "love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10,11).

We desperately need to heed the words of Jesus in Revelation chapters 2-3 that give critical warnings to churches that profess to be His. To Laodicea, which very likely represents the last church age before His return, He declares,

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Revelation 3: 19-22)

Quotable

Summoned to appear before the diet [legislature of the Holy Roman Empire at Worms] to be condemned to death, and called upon to recant, Martin Luther defiantly declared: “This shall be my recantation at Worms: Previously I said the Pope was the vicar of Christ. I recant. Now I say the Pope is the adversary of Christ and the apostle of the Devil.”

Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: The Life of Martin Luther, p. 139

To the emperor he replied: “Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and council, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

Bainton, p. 144

Q&A

QUESTION: According to Ephesians 4:5, there is “one baptism.” What is that “one baptism”?

RESPONSE: Actually there are seven baptisms in Scripture: 1) the baptism of the children of Israel “unto Moses in the cloud and in the [Red] sea”; 2) “the baptism of John [the Baptist]...unto repentance” (Mt 21:25; Lk 3:3; Acts 19:3); 3) Christ’s baptism by John in Jordan; 4) the baptism of believers “with the Holy Ghost and with fire” by Christ (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16); 5) the baptism of the Cross in which we all share (Mt 20:22; Lk 12:50; Gal 2:20); 6) the believers’ baptism with Christ into His death, burial, and resurrection symbolized in believers’ water baptism (Acts 8:12, 36-38; Rom 6:3, etc.); 7) and the baptism by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).

Then why does Paul say there is “one baptism”? Because each of the seven occurs only once. Furthermore, they all testify to the “one faith” (Eph 4:5,12).

QUESTION: “And so all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26). What does this mean...only those Jews alive at the time of the Second Coming? What about Jews who have already died?

RESPONSE: It cannot mean every Jew who ever lived because “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). There is no second

chance. Those who die rejecting Christ, Jew or Gentile, are lost eternally.

Romans 11:26 can only be for Jews alive at the Second Coming who believe when they see Him—and all will.

QUESTION: What “transformation” will the Lord Jesus effect in the bodies of believers alive on earth at the end of the Tribulation to fit them to live in the Millennium?

RESPONSE: None. No believers will be left on earth after the Rapture. There will probably be millions who, never having rejected Christ, will believe during the Tribulation. Most of them will be martyred for their faith and will be resurrected at the Second Coming (Rv 20:4). They will have new bodies and will be part of the church.

Both Jews and Gentiles who become believers during the Tribulation will continue on earth during the Millennium in their same earth bodies, so no transformation is needed. Yes, earth’s inhabitants during that period will live much longer (Is 65:20), perhaps some the entire 1,000 years, but I think that will be a manifestation of God’s grace and of the cleansed earth, not of super bodies.

QUESTION: [From an interview of Joel Osteen by Chris Wallace on Fox News, 12/23/07]:

C.W.: And what about Mitt Romney...? Is a Mormon a true Christian?

J.O.: Well, in my mind they are. Mitt Romney has said he believes in Christ as his savior, and that’s what I believe...I am not the one to judge the little details of it. So I believe they are....Romney seems like a man of character and integrity to me. I don’t think anything would stop me from voting for him.

RESPONSE: Osteen is either astonishingly ignorant about Mormonism or about biblical Christianity, or both. Here are just a few of the facts about Mormonism that he apparently considers to be “little details” of no importance—raising the solemn question whether he is a true Christian himself.

The “god” Romney believes in is only one of an infinite number of such “gods” whom, in distinction to the others, Mormons identify as “the god of this world,” one of Satan’s titles (2 Cor 4:4). He is a glorified once-sinful man who was “redeemed” by another “Jesus” who died on another cross on another planet (one of an infinite number of each in Mormon theology). Over eons of time, this Mormon man, having gone through the temple cer-

emonies on that “earth,” died. His spirit ascended through further temple-like initiations and finally became the “god” who created this earth on which we live.

Mormonism teaches, “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become.” Joseph Smith holds each Mormon’s destiny in his hands. His successor, Brigham Young, warned, “No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter the Celestial Kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith...He holds the keys...” (*Journal of Discourses*, 7:289). Another Mormon President, Joseph Fielding Smith, declared, “[There is] no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith...” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol 1, pp. 189-90).

Romney is going through the essential secret temple ceremonies. As a “temple Mormon,” he wears the magic “temple garment underwear” day and night for protection from evil. He has the ambition to become another god who will create its own earth with another Adam and Eve and fall. Sex with his many wives will produce a multitude of spirit children (including another spirit “Jesus” and “Lucifer”), another “Mary” for him to have sex with to provide a body for the “spirit Jesus” to inhabit in order to become a god after dying on another “cross,” etc. Mormons such as Romney must believe this fiction in order to get to Mormon heaven.

The “Christ” Romney believes in, (making him the “Christian” Osteen says all Mormons are), was the half-brother of Lucifer in the pre-existent state. They were each born to the same polygamous “father god” but probably to a different one of his many, many wives.

Brigham Young said, “The devil told the truth [about becoming gods]. I do not blame Mother Eve...for...eating the forbidden fruit.” Like Joseph Smith, he taught that only polygamists can become gods (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 132).

The salvation and “eternal life” Romney looks forward to is exaltation to polygamous godhood, which could take eons of time after death. Woodruff, fourth LDS president, declared, “If we were to do away with polygamy...then we must... give up our religion altogether...” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol 13, p. 166).

Among the many bizarre Mormon beliefs: when the gods with their physical bodies have sex with their many “goddess” wives who also have physical bodies, the babies they produce to populate the earth (that this “heavenly father god” created) do not have physical bodies but are spirits. Yet, oddly enough, babies born to people

on earth have physical bodies.

Thus, each spirit baby produced by the gods in heaven must come to earth to inhabit a newborn baby in order to get a physical body—as did “Jesus.” Mormons have large families because so many spirit children, youth, or grown-ups wait anxiously in heaven for bodies to live in on earth.

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt explained why we don’t remember our pre-existent spirit state in heaven: our spirit bodies had grown so large that when they were squeezed into a baby’s body on earth it caused a loss of memory.

Romney’s Jesus Christ was not born of a virgin but to the “Mormon Mary” after the “god of this world,” in his man’s body of flesh and blood, had sex with her. For documentation of the above (and much more), see *The God Makers* book and or DVD.

I don’t think that a man who bases his hope for eternity upon such delusion could possibly be fit for the White House.

QUESTION: There seems to be an increase in the reporting among Christians of dreams and visions involving encounters with dead loved ones. Here’s an excerpt from a recent story:

Last night while she was sleeping [her brother, David, killed in an accident] came to her in a dream and talked with her for a long time. This was not the first time he let her know that he was with her. Last night she asked David if there really was a heaven. He told her yes. She asked David to come to their mother. He replied that it was easier for him to come to her.

What do you think of such stories?

RESPONSE: First of all, she doesn’t say that David appeared in a vision when she was awake but in a dream. There is a huge difference. There are examples in the Bible of God speaking both ways. Is God speaking to her through David? No.

It is not unusual for a grieving sister to dream about a dead brother. Yet there seems to be something that makes these “dreams” seem real. At least she sees them that way and wants to believe it. This is dangerous because “David” is posing as a special messenger to her, explaining what heaven is like. Shouldn’t she rather look to the revelation God has given us in the Bible for answers to such questions?

The danger is that the “David” who appears apparently repeatedly in dreams will be looked up to as an oracle bringing truth she couldn’t know any other way. These “dreams” have already become necromancy. She looks upon them as a means

of communication with David, who is dead. This is absolutely forbidden.

QUESTION: What do you believe will be the event that will cause Iran, Russia, et. al. to attack Israel in the Magog invasion?

RESPONSE: My views on Ezekiel 38 and 39 do not agree with the majority of so-called prophecy teachers who see this battle either just before the Rapture or not long afterward during the tribulation period, with Russia and her Arab allies attacking Israel and their armies being destroyed. I disagree. This is the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation involving all nations of the earth. I believe that for many reasons.

Israel (“the people that are gathered out of the nations...”—Ezk 38:12) has, immediately after the Rapture, signed a seven-year deal with Antichrist (Dn 9:27) guaranteeing them peace under his protection. Feeling secure, they dwell “without walls...bars nor gates” (38:11). They think he is their friend because he causes the temple to be rebuilt. In fact, he plans to put his image in the temple and demand that the world worship him as God (2 Thes 2:4).

While Russia and Arab allies are specifically named in Ezekiel 38, notice that these nations have been drawn there by God in fulfillment of prophecy. Thus, to identify them fully we must look beyond Ezekiel 38 and 39 to prophecies that fit this scenario. The prophecies that fit indicate that all nations of the world will attack Israel, having been drawn by God for the specific purpose of being severely punished by Him for what they have done to His chosen people (Ps 2); “I will also gather all nations...into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with [punish] them there” (Jl 3:2); “I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it...I will make the governors of Judah like...a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about...” (Zec 12:3,6), etc.

“My fury shall come up in my face...the fishes of the sea...fowls of the heaven...beasts of the field...all creeping things...all the men...upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence...” (Ezk 38:18-20). God is personally coming to earth to fight for Israel. This is no preliminary event: it has to be the grand finale—Armageddon!

All Israel is saved: “I will not let them [Israel] pollute my holy name any more....

So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward....Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there....For I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel...” (39:7,22,28,29). Again I say, this is the grand finale!

Why do the nations attack Israel? Why have Jews been hated, persecuted, and killed as no other people? This is the dying gasp of anti-Semitism, the all-out attempt by all the world’s armies to effect at long last Hitler’s “final solution to the Jewish problem.”

Endnotes

1. Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Baker Academic, 1999), 15.
2. *Ibid.*, 17.
3. Mark Galli, “Lost Secrets of the Ancient Church,” *Christianity Today*, February 2008, 23.
4. *Ibid.*, 24.
5. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical_Orthodox_Church.
6. Galli, *Christianity*, 28.
7. Robert Webber, *Signs and Wonders* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Publishing Group, 1992), 5.
8. Peter Gillquist, “Arrowhead Springs To Antioch: Odyssey To Orthodoxy,” *The Word*, October 1987.

Justice, Forgiveness, and Transformation

Dave Hunt

The Bible declares, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." After the creation of all else, God said, "Let us make man in our image....So God made man in his image." He then created Eve, a wife for Adam, and gave them the easiest command possible: of the innumerable trees of delicious fruit He had planted in the Garden paradise, there was only one of which they were not to eat: "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gn 2:9). It could have borne any variety of fruit. There was no spiritual power in the fruit of this tree any more than in any other fruit just like it.

The command not to eat of that particular tree was a test of His creatures' obedience. Disobedience even in such a simple thing would be rebellion for which they would be cut off from God, the giver of life, resulting in physical and spiritual death and expulsion from His presence forever.

Critics find it incredibly cruel that eating forbidden fruit should result in today's world of painful and deadly diseases, poisonous insects and reptiles, the suffering of innocent babies and children, wars, murders, rape, theft, and other horrors that continue, in pain and sorrow, to spell out human history. Yet Adam and Eve's seemingly insignificant act was done in defiance of their Creator. The rest, as they say, is history—the history of persistent rebellion against the God who created mankind to be the recipients of His love and blessing.

Here we are today, 6 billion-plus little egos, reaping the awful consequences of our own selfishness. We cannot blame God for today's world but only ourselves. This is not the world God made but the one we have made in our defiance of Him.

It is said that President Bush is a born-again Christian who prays on his face before God every morning. Yet Bush calls Islam a "religion of peace," even though it is the most vicious religion in history, responsible for the slaughter of untold millions—a slaughter that continues today worldwide. How can Bush be a true Christian and tell such a lie, not once but repeatedly? He calls Muhammad (the founder of this murderous "faith" and himself a murderer of many) a prophet of the true God—and the Qur'an the Word of God! Bush can hardly be ignorant of the fact that sixteen times the Qur'an denies that Jesus is the Son of God. It also denies that He died on

the Cross for the sins of the world, denies the resurrection, and every other Christian doctrine. Yet Bush praises Islam?

Where is the practical evidence in everyday leadership that Bush is following Christ with his whole heart and not just playing both sides for political purposes? The rebellion that began with Satan in heaven and spread to Eden is rampant in America and worldwide. Neither God nor Christ is honored in the United Nations. What country's leaders actually seek and follow the guidance of the Creator of all? America is right where Israel was when God lamented, "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter" (Is 59:14).

As Creator of His universe, God must rule. Satan led a cosmic rebellion in heaven, taking many angels with him. Tragically, man followed this insurrection that God will not tolerate. No ruler can allow anarchy—this is why treason warrants the death penalty. How infinitely worse is a revolt against the Lord of the Universe!

God has written His moral laws in every human conscience (Rom 2:14,15). We each know when we continue the rebellion. Sin is high treason against the Lord of the Universe. Thus God told Adam and Eve that in the day they rebelled against Him they would "surely die." All of their descendants have likewise failed the "obedience test."

The Bible warns, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). If treason against an earthly government warrants the death penalty, how much more would high treason against the Lord of the Universe warrant eternal separation from the Life-giver! Jesus himself decreed for rebels eternal banishment from His presence into "outer darkness [where] there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

Does God sentence us to a severe but temporary punishment, then welcome us into heaven as having been "purged" of our sin in physical flames? On the contrary, the Bible says that Christ "by himself purged our sins" (Heb 1:3). If we could be purged of sin in any other way, then why did Christ die on the Cross? This erroneous idea of being purged of sin by torment in fire is common to both Roman Catholicism and Islam. The latter's concept of hell sounds as though Muhammad borrowed it from Catholicism's purgatory.

In Catholicism, the "purging" occurs in a place called purgatory, invented by Pope Gregory the Great in A.D. 593. Roman Catholicism declares that if one has not suffered sufficient "sorrows, miseries and

trials of this life" then "expiation must be made in the next life through fire and torments or purifying punishments..." ("Apostolic Constitution on the Revision of Indulgences," Vatican II).

The idea that physical fire consuming one's body could have a morally purifying effect (affirmed by both Catholicism and Islam) is not only heresy but unreasonable. Evangelicals, too, accept the idea of torment in physical fire as a fitting eternal punishment for moral and spiritual rebellion against God. That concept has numerous problems.

Bodily immersion in fire (as Islam, Catholicism, and many evangelicals propose) would cause such unbearable pain that it would be impossible to have a moral or rational thought. There couldn't even be a sincere regret for sins committed—only an overwhelming rage against the "God" who would torture in this manner and the desperate promise of anything in order to get relief. Of course, promises made under such duress would be worthless!

If those in the Lake of Fire have physical bodies (which the rich man in hell did not), their bodies would be consumed instantly. Thus, the "God" torturing them would have to instantaneously and continuously reconstitute their bodies to maintain the physical torment. This is the hell of Islam: "...cast into the Fire: As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise" (Surah 4:56). The body is much more than skin, so this makes no sense. Yet Catholics and even some evangelicals have a similar view.

The question is often asked, "What about the bodies of evildoers mentioned in John 5:28-29? And what about 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God....The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them' (Rv 20:12,13)? Doesn't that sound as though their bodies have been resurrected?" No, it couldn't be. Nothing is said in these passages about "the dead" having bodies. How could those standing before God in judgment be described as "dead" if they had been raised body, soul, and spirit? Only through Christ's resurrection is death conquered. The bodies of the redeemed alone partake in that victory.

The fact that the dead are "judged... according to their works" (Rv 20:12) surely means nothing unless they are punished "according to their works." How could that happen through the torture of being thrown into the Lake of Fire? Will Hitler be in a hotter section? But how could physical bodies suffer greater or lesser heat in the split

second of consumption? And how could degrees of physical torture distinguish between sins of so many different kinds and the motivation behind each? Physical flames could not do that.

The rich man in hell did say he was tormented in a flame; and death and hell will one day be cast into “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....The lake of fire...where the beast, and the false prophet...shall be tormented...for ever and ever” (Mt 25:41; Rv 20:10,14). But the “devil and his angels” have no physical bodies, so how could physical flames, to which they would be impervious, have been prepared for them? The rich man’s body was in the grave, not in the flames of hell, even though he spoke of his tongue.

Certainly, the fire that shall “try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor 3:13) is not physical. It must be the “fire” of God’s justice, holiness, purity, and truth that exposes motives and would surely torment the conscience of the damned forever. This alone could constitute the flames in the Lake of Fire. No longer is any excuse plausible even to the most perverted. With no tree to hide behind, no fig leaf to cover, and standing naked before God, the flame of His justice burns the conscience with supernatural conviction. That eternal torment will be beyond anything we could imagine.

The Qur’an has far more to say about hell than does the Bible. Qur’anic descriptions are vivid and terrifying. Hell is for those who reject the teachings of the Qur’an (Surah 5:86). And like Rome’s purgatory, every Muslim must spend at least some time in hell (S 19:71,72). Some “will abide therein forever” (S 2:217), while others will be delivered after they have sufficiently suffered in the flames: “Whoso is removed from the Fire and is made to enter paradise, he indeed is triumphant” (S 3:185, etc.).

Of the rich man, Jesus said, “In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments” and begged for a drop of water to be placed on his tongue (Lk 16:23,24). That strange request betrayed confusion between the physical and spiritual/moral, since his body and its tongue were rotting in the grave. Having sought pleasure, joy, and fulfillment in the physical alone to the exclusion of the moral and spiritual, the rich man was apparently locked into that delusion for eternity.

Why wouldn’t torment in the Lake of Fire bring the most hardened sinner to repentance and thus to salvation? As already noted, if physical, the pain would be too severe to allow any rational thought, much less a genuine free-will response to the gospel, even if offered. Biblically, it is

too late. After death comes “judgment” (Heb 9:27), not a second chance.

Every parent knows that a child caught in disobedience will tearfully repent and promise the moon to escape punishment. The same is true of criminals. I helped a former chairman of the Federal Parole Board write his biography. He learned that prisoners begging for parole could bring one to tears with their apparently sincere promises to “go straight” and never return to prison. Yet very few fulfill such promises. Prisons have revolving doors, with a high percentage of “graduates” returning to continue the lesson they never learned.

The United States, with by far the highest per capita church attendance in the world, also has the highest percentage of its population behind bars at any time. This reflects both the fact that many criminals live more luxuriously in prison than they did in the outside world—and that prison sentences for criminals are not biblical. Instead, God requires restitution to the victim, and that has a morally restorative effect for the offender. Of course, most people never commit a crime that sends them to prison, but they could be engaging secretly in adultery, fornication, lust, homosexuality, envy, pride, jealousy, etc., and “repent” only when caught.

A number of high-profile religious leaders, both Catholic and evangelical, have within the past few years been exposed for committing horrible sins and have supposedly publicly repented, some with tears. The shame is hard to recover from and the suspicion can never be removed that no matter how sincere the repentance may seem to be, it didn’t come because the one exposed was truly repentant but was merely embarrassed at being caught. If the sin had remained hidden, would the person have come forward to repent, or would he have continued to enjoy the sin in secret? God alone knows the answer to that vital question (Jer 17:9).

There is no way for any sinner, no matter how repentant, to cleanse his heart! God knows that we cannot change from what we are to the new creation He wants us to be. For God to justly forgive, the penalty must be paid. Since it is infinite and pronounced by God upon all mankind, no one but God himself could pay it. But that would not be just, because He is not one of us. So God became a man through the virgin birth to take our place under His wrath, paying the penalty for everyone’s sins so that all could be justly forgiven.

The penalty of eternal death having been pronounced by God even He cannot change. Why? Whatever God says is a

reflection of His holy character. For God to go back on His word even once would undermine His perfection. If He could change His mind once, why not twice, or three times—or any number of times? If He only once broke His Word, we could never again rely upon what He says. The possibility would always remain that He might change His mind again—and again.

But this is impossible: “I am the Lord, I change not....For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” (Mal 3:6; Ps 119:89).

In contrast, Allah says, “Such of our revelations as we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring (in place) one better or the like” (Surah 2:106).

The redemptive work that Christ accomplished on the Cross is the foundation of our faith and for that very reason it is the object of continual attacks aimed at discrediting it. Islam, in the Qur’an, denies that Christ is God come as a man (though it affirms the virgin birth) and denies that He died on the Cross, much less that He paid or even could pay the penalty for others (Surah 4:157-8). The very concept of Christ, the sinless One, dying in the place of sinners is attacked not only by Islam but by atheists who claim it violates the principles of justice.

In Romans 3:21-26, Paul argues the justice of Christ’s death as the substitute for all mankind. His conclusion sounds as though he has fully proved it: “...that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (v. 26). Paul gives no explanation why this, which seems so contrary to all human reason, could be true.

To understand, consider Barabbas and Paul. The former was the only one who ever lived who could say that Christ literally died in his place. What a testimony he could have given! But Christ’s death in his place effected no transformation in his heart but merely set that criminal free to live for himself. In contrast, Paul testified, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Those who truly believe on Christ as Lord and Savior are accepting His death as though it were theirs. The life that one once aspired to live for self has been crucified with Christ, and His life has been accepted in exchange. Faith in Christ effects a miraculous transformation in the believer’s heart that can only be described as being “born again...of the Spirit” (Jn 3:3-8). Those who do not know Christ in this way can receive Him by faith right now and begin this new life that will last for eternity! **TBC**

Quotable

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop
At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,
To lose one's health is more.
To lose one's soul is such a loss
That no man can restore.

Robert H. Smith (1832)

When we come to God, we must bring nothing but Christ with us. Any ingredients, or any previous qualifications of our own, poison and corrupt faith. He that builds upon duties, graces, etc., knows not the merits of Christ...If you [are to live by faith], you must every day renounce as dung and dross (Phil 3:7,8) your privileges, your obedience, your baptism...sanctification...duties...tears....Nothing but Christ must be held up. Every day your workings and self-sufficiency must be destroyed.

Thomas Wilcox (1621-1687)

Q&A

QUESTION: I was saved as a result of your presentation of the gospel in *The Seduction of Christianity*. I love you and appreciate you beyond words. But in response to a question in May 2007, you said, "You are limiting God. Did a missionary get the gospel to Enoch, Job, Noah, Abraham...? Through the witness of creation and His laws written in their consciences, God has always been able to bring those with open hearts to Himself..."

My mind went to Romans 10:13-15. Doesn't that passage contradict your assertion? Hasn't God limited Himself to using the preaching of the Gospel as the means to salvation?

RESPONSE: I ask again, who preached the gospel to the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews 11? Do you think that every Old Testament saint understood the gospel to the same extent that it has been revealed to us today through the fullness of the Scriptures? Even the prophets didn't have the full gospel. They understood through animal sacrifices that an innocent substitute had to die for the guilty—but did everyone realize all that was entailed? Peter tells us:

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who

prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. (1 Pt 1:10,11)

Go back and read the full chapter of Romans 10 again. It doesn't say that a preacher is essential. Paul's question is rhetorical: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Note that after saying, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," (Rom 10:17) he adds, "Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world [nothing about a preacher]."

That declaration echoes what Psalm 19:1-4 says about the witness of all of God's creation: "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." Paul hammers the same theme: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse..." (Rom 1:20).

In other words, people everywhere in all times of history know from the universe about them that God exists as Creator. Romans 2:14-15 makes it clear that every person anywhere in the world and at any time in history also knows in their God-given conscience that they have broken His moral laws and that even if they could live without sin in the future that could never wipe away the guilt of having violated conscience in the past. The Holy Spirit witnesses in every heart that God is love and that He must have a just solution. Seekers cry out to know Him, and cast themselves upon His mercy.

Although He was speaking primarily to Israel through His prophet Jeremiah, the Lord made it clear that He will reveal Himself to anyone who seeks Him with his or her whole heart: "And ye shall seek me [the one true God], and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13).

A common objection one hears from atheists and even from those who say they believe in God but want an excuse for rejecting Christ is, "What about those who have never heard about Christ? Are you saying they are condemned to hell for their ignorance?" No. They are condemned on the basis of what they know, not because of what they don't know.

Those who reject the witness in their hearts of creation and conscience are not going to receive Christ when they hear the

gospel, no matter how clearly preached—and for God to impose it upon them, knowing they won't believe, would only add to their condemnation. Remember what Abraham said to the rich man in hell, who was sure that if Lazarus came back from the dead and witnessed to his brothers they would believe: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Lk 16:31).

Never mind "What about the heathen who have never heard?" What about the person asking the question, who probably has heard the gospel multiple times yet continues to reject Christ? The United States especially is filled with millions of such people.

God will get the truth to every person who sincerely seeks Him. This is His promise, and we can count on that. So those who claim to have sought the Lord without finding Him have never truly sought for Him with their whole heart. Either they are lying or God is.

So what about the need for a preacher? God promises to reveal Himself to every honest heart, and He can do it in miraculous ways. He sent an angel to prepare Cornelius and to call Peter to his house. And in that process the Lord showed the following to Peter: "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness [according to the light he has], is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34,35). I'll let you interpret that for yourself.

QUESTION (A composite of many, many questions—too many to deal with singly—concerning the Rapture and the "last trump."): The sounding of the "last trump" very clearly calls the dead from their graves at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52). Since the Rapture and the resurrection of "those who sleep in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) occur simultaneously, the "last trump" must signal the moment of the Rapture and would seemingly be heard by all the redeemed at that moment. Wouldn't the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15) be the "last trump," and wouldn't that tell us the time of the Rapture—i.e., the mid-point of the Great Tribulation?

RESPONSE: I can't say that the seventh trumpet, sounded by the seventh angel (Rv 11:15), occurs at mid-trib, much less that this marks the resurrection and Rapture of the saints. First Thessalonians 4:16 refers to the "trump of God" but does not identify it as the trumpet sounded by the seventh angel. A

number of remarkable events are described as occurring when this seventh trumpet is sounded (Rv 11:15-19), but the resurrection and Rapture are not mentioned, which seems odd if they do occur at this time—nor do they seem to fit this timing.

The first three chapters of Revelation are about events happening to the church on earth. Then suddenly a “door is opened in heaven” (Rv 4:1) and John is commanded, “Come up hither....” That is the last we hear of the church on earth. From that time forward, the scene shifts to heaven except for the Second Coming, with which the Great Tribulation and Revelation both begin: “Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him...” (Rv 1:7).

There are numerous reasons for a pre-trib Rapture. Check the *TBC* reprints for more information on this subject.

QUESTION: In a recent newsletter, Dave Hunt refers to being “born of water” and being “born of the Spirit” as both being the spiritual birth of a person. Could you please explain that position further?

RESPONSE: There can be no question concerning “born of the Spirit.” It is the expression “born of water” that raises questions. Certainly it cannot mean baptismal water, inasmuch as Paul clearly shows there is no link between baptism and the gospel of salvation: “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor 1:17). Of course, infant baptism and baptismal regeneration of any kind are grave heresies. Salvation requires faith, and baptism is only for those who have believed the gospel (Acts 2:41; 8:37; 10:47,48, etc.)—impossible for a baby.

The Word of God, of course, of which the gospel is a vital part, is credited with effecting the new birth: “Being born again... by the word of God...the word which by the gospel is preached” (1 Pt 1:23,25). God’s Word is depicted in many ways. It is the seed sown in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8: “The seed is the word of God” (Lk 8:11). It is also the living water of eternal life: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Jn 7:37); “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst...” (Jn 4:14); “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rv 22:17). It is also shown to be like water that cleanses from sin in the process of the new birth: “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (Jn 15:3); “washing of water by the word...” (Eph 5:26).

No water other than the water of life in the Word of the gospel can be meant by the phrase, “born of water.” Moreover, this

water of life of the Word of God is essential to the new birth.

QUESTION: Are you aware of Pastor Hagee’s new book, *In Defense of Israel?* He says that Jesus did not present Himself to the Jewish people as the Messiah at His first coming, an unbiblical statement. I have also heard that he believes the Jewish people will be saved another way than for Gentiles. Please comment.

RESPONSE: I have not read this book so can only comment on what you have said about it, which, by the way, agrees with the criticisms I have read on the internet by those who have read the book and are concerned with its many errors. Nor is this the first time this issue has surfaced.

Even the secular press has reported his heresy. *The Houston Chronicle* (4/30/88, sec. 6, pg 1) quoted Hagee, “I’m not trying to convert the Jewish people to the Christian faith...trying to convert Jews is a waste of time....I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.... Everyone else needs to believe in Jesus... but not Jews. Jews already have a covenant with God that has never been replaced by Christianity....” This secular newspaper added this comment, “John Hagee, fundamentalist pastor from San Antonio and friend of Israel, is truly a strange fish.... The man has a mission. He’s out to attack anti-Semitism. He also believes that Jews can come to God without going through Jesus Christ.”

To whom did Peter preach the gospel on the day of Pentecost, if not to Jews? The early Christians and apostles thought the gospel was *only* for Jews, and preached “the word...unto the Jews only” (Acts 11:19). God had to give Peter a vision to get him to preach to Gentiles (Acts 10:9-16). All through Acts, in every town he entered, Paul first went into the synagogue, where he preached to the Jews, and only when they rejected the gospel did he turn to the Gentiles (Acts 9:20; 13:5,14-46; 14:1; 17:2, etc.). Why did he always offer salvation to the Jews first? Because, as we are clearly told, “the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation...to the Jew first...” (Rom 1:16). It’s Paul or Hagee.

Hagee must know that Paul kept the Torah perfectly, yet he counted that effort as self-righteousness, no better than dung (Phil 3:4-9). Hagee probably makes statements like this to keep on the good side of the Israeli government, to whom he is somewhat of a hero for the many large tours

he leads to Israel and the financial support he gives. Can his Christian supporters be blind to the truth—or doesn’t it matter to them that Hagee is withholding the gospel of salvation from Jews, robbing them of heaven?!

I was present at a meeting in December 2006 when Hagee publicly denied not only that he presently believes in a special way of salvation for Jews but that he had ever taught a “dual covenant.” Yet this teaching is in his published writings and has never been renounced.

Faith Is Strengthened by Challenge

Dave Hunt

While a student at UCLA 60 years ago, I carefully read everything I could find written by atheists and skeptics against the Bible and Christ. Why? I wanted to know their best arguments, the better to refute them. I still keep track of the latest atheist thinking.

I have never had the slightest doubt that the Bible is in every word inspired of the Holy Spirit, nor have I ever doubted my salvation since the day I personally received Christ at a summer camp just before entering the tenth grade. Nevertheless, wasn't it dangerous for a young student only four years old in the Lord to read the arguments of those determined to destroy every Christian's faith? No. How could any argument be dangerous to one who is clothed in the whole armor of God? And of what value is armor except in combat?

My attitude was and still is like that of David, who was ashamed that the armies of Israel would tremble before Goliath. Without hesitation he stepped forward with complete confidence in the God who had proven Himself to be faithful (1 Sm 17). For David, the size of the giant was irrelevant.

David demanded of Israel's trembling soldiers, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?!" To David such fear and lack of faith were incomprehensible. He did not consider confronting Goliath a heroic deed for which he should be praised. Not to defeat Goliath was unthinkable.

David warned Goliath that the Philistines were defying the God of Israel: "I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied [who] will deliver thee into mine hand...." Nor did David approach Goliath cautiously. He "ran toward the army to meet the Philistine....[He] put his hand in his bag" into which he had just placed "five smooth stones out of the brook" (because Goliath had four giant brothers), "and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead...and he fell upon his face...."

Back to my student days at UCLA: what was the effect upon me of reading the leading atheists' best arguments against God? As a young man, naïve in so many ways, the more I read of atheists' pitiful attempts to defend their faith (yes, atheism is a faith), the stronger my faith became in the Bible as God's infallible Word, and the greater my love grew for the Lord Jesus

Christ, who purchased my redemption.

Sadly, many of today's Christians follow the example of Israel's armies rather than David's. Fearful of a challenge by adversaries of God and His Word, they excuse themselves from engaging in "the good fight of faith" (1 Tm 6:12) because they are "not knowledgeable enough," or this is "not their calling," etc. This is not pleasing to our Lord. The person who avoids open discussion with skeptics out of timidity or fear of being proven wrong has forgotten Peter's exhortation: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready *always* to give an answer to *every man* that asketh you a *reason* of the hope that is in you with *meekness and fear*" (1 Pt 3:15—Italics added for emphasis).

"Meekness"? Yes, in recognition of the fact that our confidence is not in our own inadequate intellect and abilities but is in the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us to help the questioner to understand and to win him or her to Christ. "Fear"? Yes, because God knows our every thought and motive, hears our every word, and is the unseen witness of our every deed—and we will one day give an account to Christ as our judge. We testify for our Lord, not as "holier-than-thou-know-it-all" condemners of the unsaved but as ones who, in His love and meekness, seek to deliver from the "snare of the devil" those who have been "taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tm 2:23-26).

No Christian is excused from this solemn duty. Moreover, on-the-job training is the only way to learn. I remember in my early days of witnessing on university campuses, returning home, falling on my knees, and crying out, "Father, I didn't know how to respond to some of the questions thrown at me. Lord, please show me the answers so I'll be ready next time." Winning souls to Christ is the most worthwhile and satisfying thing a Christian can do, and we learn by doing. Abraham's servant said, "I being in the way, the LORD led me..." (Gn 24:27).

Science (now almost completely controlled by atheists, whom the media recognizes as the sole scientific spokespersons), has given atheists far more ammunition against faith in God and His Word (as have the ongoing moral failures of Christian leaders) than they had when I was at university 60 years ago. Moreover, atheists, skeptics, and critics today are far more numerous, outspoken, belligerent, and organized in their hatred of God.

A few years ago, Madalyn Murray O'Hair was almost the only recognizable voice and face of atheism in America. Within a short time, atheism's female Lone Ranger was wielding amazing influence

through the courts. In 1963, the Supreme Court ruled 8-1 in her favor, banning Bible reading in public schools. In 1964, *Life* magazine called her "the most hated woman in America." In 1965, she became the founder and president of American Atheists and founding editor of *American Atheist Magazine*. On Christmas Eve of 1968, *Apollo 8*'s crew (the first men to orbit the moon) read back to earth the first ten verses of Genesis (In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...etc.), O'Hair threatened to sue and effectively removed Bible reading from space. In 1984, she was "chief speechwriter" for pornographer and blasphemy defender Larry Flint's failed presidential campaign.

In 1995, O'Hair, her son Jon Garth Murray, and her granddaughter Robin Murray-O'Hair (daughter of William Murray, who had become an evangelical Christian) disappeared from American Atheists offices. The office manager, David R. Waters, had stolen the organization's money, murdered the three, and buried their bodies on a remote Texas ranch. In 2003, at the age of 56, Waters died in a Federal prison medical facility of lung cancer.

There's a new breed of atheists today. Its leaders are intelligent scientists and university professors. These "New Atheists," as they are called (or "Brights," as they call themselves, relegating theists to dimwittedness), have organized worldwide and have their own popular radio and TV programs. Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens (known as the new atheists' "Four Horsemen") are selling millions of copies of their books in numerous languages. Atheism is the new tsunami, with growing numbers eager to deny Christ and joining this latest wave of unbelief.

Atheism has become a major threat to the church. New Atheists tend to be articulate and belligerent. They are aggressively engaging in "atheist evangelism," determined to stamp out every vestige of belief in God, which they insist is not only "stupid" but "wicked."

Most churches have little to offer their members (especially the youth) to counter this sweeping tide of unbelief. Much of the apologetics against evolution from only a few years ago is no longer suited to deal with current developments in the field. *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*, which we hope will come off the press by November, will be a great help and ought to be read by every Christian.

The clever DVD, *The God Who Wasn't There*, is just one example of what the New Atheists are successfully doing in their

attempt to destroy faith in God. The voice-over (v.o.), an unseen narrator, takes viewers into a huge Christian school (1,800 students K-12) in the Los Angeles area. The camera zooms in on a particular seat in the chapel, and v.o. (a former student now atheist co-producer) says, "That's where I sat the first time I was born again." The camera moves to another seat and v.o. says, "That's where I sat the second time I was born again."

With further mockery, the film proceeds to cleverly but dishonestly discredit the Bible and misrepresent true faith in Christ—and then issues "the blasphemy challenge." Christ's declaration is quoted: "...him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost...shall not be forgiven" (Lk 12:10), then viewers are challenged to face a video camera, blasphemously declare their contempt for God and Christ and that they have no fear of hell because it doesn't exist. Those who send in a personal copy of their video receive a free copy of the DVD they have been watching.

What has been the result? Thousands, mostly young people, have responded, and *The God Who Wasn't There* is spreading like wildfire.

What can Christians do? Take this attack upon the Truth seriously, and ask the Lord to help you rescue many. Study God's Word daily to be certain that your own faith has a sound biblical basis. Then learn how to deal with the atheists' arguments.

In obeying 1 Peter 3:15, you will be confronted by numerous "scientific" objections. Evolution and natural selection have been Satan's major means to lead multitudes astray. In response to the claim that "evolution is a proven fact," simply ask questions: 1) Every living thing is made of energy. What is energy and where did it come from? Science can't tell us. Before we can discuss whether evolution is true, we must know what energy is and its origin. Isn't it unfair to make definitive pronouncements about evolution without knowing what is evolving? 2) Natural selection can only work on living things, but it *cannot create life*. Only a living cell can create a living cell, and it does so by replicating itself. How did the first cell get life? When science explains what life is and its origin (which it has failed to do), only then can we discuss evolution. Until then, evolutionists are attempting to construct an edifice in the air without any foundation.

The science of mathematics, upon which all other science rests, irrefutably disproves both atheism and evolution. We need a brief review of math in order to proceed. For example, ten to the second power is expressed as 10^2 . It means 10 squared, which

is 100. Ten to the 4th power (10^4) is not twice as much as 10^2 , it is actually 100 times larger. So 10^4 means one with 4 zeroes after it. The "2" and "4" are called exponents. Thus 10^8 means one with 8 zeros after it. It is not twice 10^4 but 10,000 times greater (i.e. add four more zeroes). This is what is known as increasing "exponentially." The numbers quickly become too large to comprehend.

This is why huge numbers must be expressed by exponents. It is much easier to write 10^{10} than to write 10,000,000,000; easier to write 10^{50} than to write a one with 50 zeroes after it. Imagine trying to multiply such numbers! But expressed exponentially, it is easy to multiply. One simply adds the exponents. Thus 10^3 (1,000) multiplied by 10^6 (1,000,000) equals 10^9 (1,000,000,000).

To show how things increase exponentially, suppose you tear in half a piece of paper, put one piece on top of the other and tear the two in half, then keep doing this 50 times. Think this could be done by hand? No! The number of resulting pieces is expressed mathematically as 2^{50} . If the paper was 1/500th of an inch thick, multiplying that thickness times 2^{50} tells how tall the stack of paper would be. Any guesses? It would be nearly 35,539,770 miles high!

When it comes to life, the mathematics become even more impossible to imagine.

Science doesn't know what life is and can't explain how life arose from the chaos of an explosion that sterilized the entire cosmos a trillion times over. "Natural selection" is no help. It can neither create life nor assist the first living thing to start functioning.

The first living cell would have had to come about by *pure chance*. But this is mathematically impossible—and there is no arguing with mathematics.

There are approximately 10^{80} atoms in the cosmos. Assuming 10^{12} interatomic interactions *per second per atom*, and 10^{18} seconds (30 billion years) as twice the evolutionists' age of the universe, we get 10^{110} ($80+12+18$) as the total number of possible interatomic interactions in 30 billion years.

If each interatomic interaction produced a unique molecule, then no more than 10^{110} unique molecules could have ever existed in the universe. About 1,000 protein molecules composed of amino acids are needed for the most primitive form of life. To find a proper sequence of 200 amino acids for a relatively short protein molecule has been calculated to require "about 10^{130} trials. This is a hundred billion billion times the total number of molecules ever to exist in the history of the cosmos! No random process could ever

result in even *one* such protein structure, much less the full set of roughly 1000 needed in the simplest form of life.

"It is therefore sheer irrationality...to believe that random chemical interactions could ever [form] a viable set of functional proteins out of the truly staggering number of candidate possibilities. In the face of such stunningly unfavourable odds, how could any scientist with any sense of honesty appeal to chance interactions as the explanation for the complexity we see in living systems? To do so with conscious awareness of these numbers, in my opinion, represents a serious breach of scientific integrity" (John R. Baumgardener, Theoretical Division of Los Alamos National Laboratory. See *In Six Days*, pp. 224-25).

Remember, the simplest *physical* structure upon which natural selection might operate *must happen by chance*—and it can't.

When anyone says that an eye, for example, couldn't happen by chance, Dawkins responds in an offended tone, "Well, of course an eye couldn't happen by chance! Natural selection is the very opposite of chance!" But Dawkins doesn't mention that natural selection is impossible without some living thing that can replicate itself.

For atheism, nothing exists except matter, of which all living things are composed. The physical brain cannot originate ideas because ideas such as "justice" or "truth" have no material substance nor do they occupy space. Many leading scientists reject materialism. It cannot explain the most important concepts that make life meaningful—but atheism and evolution are wholly materialistic. Sir Arthur Eddington pointed out the difference between physical laws that *must* be obeyed and moral laws that *ought* to be obeyed. He said, "Ought takes us outside the laws of physics and chemistry." The mind that originates non-physical ideas must be nonphysical and could therefore not evolve.

One can refute evolution without becoming an expert. David refused *physical* armor in confronting Goliath. His only weapons were the sling and the stones, with which he was so familiar, along with his faith in the only true God. Being challenged in our own faith, whether by atheists, those of false religions, or any other "giants," can be a very useful tool in strengthening our understanding of *why* we believe what we believe.

As you step into the battle for truth, God will supply all you need, and your faith will grow ever stronger in Him. The church needs more "Davids"—men and women ready to be used in defense of the truth against the "giants" of unbelief. **TBC**

Quotable

The Christian life is not a “self-improvement” program in which I “add Jesus” to my life in order to become a better...more successful person. When Christ saves someone, He does not grant that person a fresh start...He gives that person a new life—His life!

This current age is perilous not because of...threats of terrorism, ungodly lawmakers, pro-active judges, insecure economy, conflicts among nations, or even the activity of Satan. No, the real problem is that Christ is being subtly moved from His proper place of preeminence to that of prominence. We...include Christ in our lives and even give Him a part in the ministry, programs, and messages of the Church—but is He preeminent?

Jerry Benjamin, Simply Singular: Is Christ Prominent or Preeminent? Little Nugget Series (www.thebereancall.org)

It is the folly of our day that we think we can have none of His kingship in this life, yet have some claim to part of His Kingdom in the next. But for those who reject the rule of the Lord Jesus now, there is only the fearful expectation of the fury of the wrath of God, the Judge of heaven and earth.

Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)

Q&A

QUESTION: I recently read your article titled “Cosmos and Creator” (6/06). In that article, you say the *Voyager* space probe would take thousands of years to reach the closest star system, Alpha Centauri. This information is true... but you must consider the near-term possibilities of reaching nearby star systems in much shorter amounts of time. Proposals for nuclear-powered spacecraft and laser-driven ships [could result] in travel times to Alpha Centauri on the order of a few decades.... I am a firm believer in God, but I am disconcerted when I see the bashing of science and exploration in articles such as “Cosmos and Creator.” I am a young student [17 years old], and I one day hope to explore space and witness the amazing universe God has created. But the publication of articles [like yours] ridiculing the God-instilled desire to explore and expand only aid in the darkening of an otherwise bright future.

RESPONSE: *Voyager I* and *II* are about to run out of power, soon to become very expensive junk drifting in space. If *Voyager I* retained its power, it would take 77,000 years to reach Alpha Centauri. You say that with new propulsion systems on the horizon it could be done in decades.

How many “decades”? Two or three? When do you think this might be accomplished, given the design engineering and financing involved? One hundred years? It’s taken the world 50 years since Sputnik to get to where we are today. Because Alpha Centauri is only four light years away, and the Milky Way is 100,000 light years across, if it took only one week to get to Alpha Centauri, it would take 25,000 weeks, or about 500 years, to cross our galaxy with your new propulsion system. How will the crew stay alive?

I don’t want to dampen your youthful enthusiasm and optimism, but some things are impossible. Even at the speed of light, it would take 100,000 years to cross our galaxy and trillions of years to reach the farthest star systems. You say you “hope to explore space.” Even at *ten times* the speed of light, it would take you 10,000 years to cross our galaxy—to say nothing of the question of how the crew could live that long. Even at *50 times* the speed of light, it would still take *2,000 years* to cross the Milky Way, and you would scarcely have touched the fringe of space!

I did not “bash” either science or exploration; I simply gave the facts as I am giving them to you now. Sit down, take a deep breath, and finally admit that although “with God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26) the same cannot be said for man. The old joke may be apropos right now:

A group of scientists got together and challenged God, “We no longer need you as an explanation for anything. We can do every ‘miracle’ you ever did.” God listened very patiently, then asked, “Can you make a man?” The scientists said, “No problem. You made a man out of dirt—so can we.” “Not out of *my* dirt,” said God. “You get your own dirt!”

Far from “ridiculing the God-instilled desire to explore,” I commended what has been accomplished in exploration of our solar system—and the future possibilities available. But I pointed out the simple fact that there are an estimated 200 billion star systems like ours in this galaxy and a trillion galaxies in the cosmos, many of them larger. So if we eventually understood perfectly every detail about our solar system, we would only have in our computers

one-two-hundred-billionth-of-a-trillionth of a sample of the cosmos, rather too small to be of any value.

Let’s say you broke the world record in the 100-meter race. With that feat accomplished, you decide that you are going to high-jump 100 meters. You chide those who attempt to tell you that to jump that high is impossible, as you have just chided me: “The publication of articles like yours ridiculing the God-instilled desire to jump ever higher only aid in the darkening of an otherwise bright future.”

People would tell you to get real! But the ambition to explore even the tiniest part of the universe is more like believing that one day high jumpers could clear the bar at 1,000 meters. Some things are simply impossible.

QUESTION: Why do you say that no life exists anywhere in the universe but on Earth? I am a born-again Christian, but I don’t understand why God couldn’t have made other “earths” or other life forms elsewhere in this vast universe. The Hubble Space Telescope recently found methane gas (an organic compound) in the atmosphere of a planet light years away from Earth. Methane is often one of the signs of life on our planet. Why not on another?

RESPONSE: If you are truly a “born-again Christian” as you claim, then you believe that Christ made our salvation possible by paying the full penalty for our sins. You also must believe that in order to do so He had to become a genuine man—body, soul, and spirit. He is the only God-man, fully God yet fully man in one person at the same time.

In that light, what about life on other planets? If you were an atheist evolutionist (Dawkins admits that evolution made an atheist out of him), life on other planets seems logical. Without God, life must have happened here by chance, so why couldn’t life arise spontaneously from similar lifeless chemicals on other planets? But as a Christian, you believe that God created Adam and Eve and that for there to be other similar creatures with body, soul, and spirit, and the free will to love and obey God but also to rebel, He must also have created them.

Why would God create such beings? Would it be because He hoped that the next “Adam and Eve” would not use their free will to take their own way? You must know that any created beings less than God (who was not created) would make less-than-perfect choices and inevitably

rebel, seeking to be like God. They would be susceptible to the same temptation from Satan that destroyed the human race. Surely God would love them and want to forgive their sins, but in order to do so He would have to become one of them and die for their sins.

God knew that Adam and Eve would rebel and He made provision for that. He wouldn't "try again and again" to create a perfect creature who would not sin. That would be impossible because everywhere that there were humanoid creatures, it would be true of them as of us, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Why couldn't Christ's death on this earth be sufficient for the salvation of others on other planets? You know the answer. Christ became a man in order to redeem *men*. Believers are "the body of Christ." How could other humanoids on other planets also be "the body of Christ" who is "the same, yesterday, today, and for ever"? I think you know.

QUESTION: How can you be sure that your interpretation of the Scriptures is correct, especially when it comes to things that no one can really explain? In an article you wrote in June of 2006 titled "Cosmos and Creator" you made the following statement: "Carter claims to be a Christian. Yet the hope he holds out for earthlings is to 'join a community of Galactic Civilizations'? That's hardly what Jesus meant by His Father's house of 'many mansions' (Jn 14:2,3)! Carter's 'hope [and] determination' caused me to title a book, *Whatever Happened To Heaven?*"

You question Jimmy Carter's Christianity, yet you make decisive judgments about the interpretation of biblical quotes?! What gives you the right? Do you honestly believe that you are capable of deciding the intended meaning of the Holy Bible?

RESPONSE: This question troubles me. If by reading I cannot discern "the intended meaning of the Holy Bible," then who can? Was it written only for some elite? Must we trust a pastor, priest, denomination? The Roman Catholic pope and magisterium? How could I or you or anyone else today know to whom to look for the correct interpretation of the Bible? If you are suggesting that no one can know, then God has given us a worthless book.

The Council of Carthage, held in A.D. 397, was the first one to specify the New Testament scriptures that by consensus had

already been recognized by the church. Had Christians been waiting for four centuries to know which books to read? Did they have no guidance individually from God's Word? Almost the entire New Testament can be reconstructed from individuals' private letters that have survived from the first and second centuries and from scriptures inscribed on broken pottery placed on hearths, or inscribed on tombstones, etc. It is clear that there was a consensus of which writings were Scripture and which were not. No official pronouncement was needed.

The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures indwells true believers, and that is how we know that the Bible is inspired of God and that the Qur'an or Book of Mormon, etc., are not. Paul writes, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor 14:37). It was upon this basis that the early church recognized genuine Scripture and rejected the rest. And so it must be for us today.

QUESTION: If you had time to give only one argument against atheism and evolution, what would it be?

RESPONSE: There are numerous scientific proofs refuting these pretensions. DNA contains written instructions for life, encoded in a language, which could come only from an infinite intelligence, and which had to be in place before the first cell came into being. Yet in spite of such facts, Francis Collins, who headed the Human Genome Project for ten years and should therefore be the ultimate expert on DNA, remains an evolutionist even after becoming a Christian. Scientific proofs, no matter how conclusive, seem insufficient.

Instead, I would use what God himself offers as the proof of His existence and the infallibility of His Word. What is that? His prophetic declarations concerning future events: "I am the LORD:...new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them....I am God...and there is none like me, declaring...from ancient times the things that are not yet done..." (Isaiah 42:8,9; 46:9,10, etc.).

There are hundreds of prophecies about Israel—even more than for the Messiah. God offers these as the major proof of His existence. For example, Joel 3:2 declares that in the last days God will "gather all nations" to Jerusalem to punish them for 1) their hatred and persecution of His people Israel; and 2) for dividing His land. Israel was conquered many times by

various nations but never divided until the United Nations did it. UN Resolution 181 is called "the partition of the land." It divided Israel, giving 87 percent to the Arabs (for oil) and 13 percent to the Jews, although the League of Nations' 1922 Declaration of Principles had said that all of "Palestine" belonged to the Jews.

Resolution 181 also designated Jerusalem as an international territory never to be under the sovereignty of the Jews, fulfilling Christ's declaration that it would "be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk 21:24). In *Judgment Day*, we thoroughly document the fact that the UN, EU, American presidents, and the Vatican are all joined in the attempt to force Israel to submit to international rule over Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 23:7-8 declares that the big news in the last days will no longer be Israel's deliverance from Egypt under Moses but the Lord's gathering back into their land His people Israel from "the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them...."

Zechariah 14:2 declares that in the last days all the nations surrounding Israel will be allied against her. In fact, throughout history the surrounding nations have never been united together in anything but have fought one another. In our day, however, the impossible has happened: just as God foretold, all are united against Israel by Islam.

These prophecies are too clear to be denied—and there are hundreds more. The evolution-creation argument will never be settled scientifically. Although it is helpful to give the numerous scientific reasons for rejecting evolution, we need to use the irrefutable proof God has given us. Many Bible prophecies are so simple, so clear, and their fulfillment so undeniable, that we need to rely primarily upon this superweapon our Lord has provided—not only in combating false science but in winning the lost through the gospel. Remember that Paul continually declared that the gospel was "according to the scriptures" (Rom 1:1-5; 1 Cor 15:3, etc.).

"Paul Disputed..." Acts 17:17, etc.

Dave Hunt

One need not read far in the Bible to realize that it is definitely not an ecumenical book. In "the Great Commission," Christ commanded His disciples to make disciples of "all nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Mt 28:19,20). This is a sacred trust from Christ himself that places a grave responsibility upon everyone who claims to be a Christian.

If language has any meaning, then every true disciple today must be a disciple of a disciple...all the way back to the original disciples, and obligated to obey the same commands Christ gave to them. No one was ever authorized by Christ to change this commission—and certainly not to change the gospel—yet this has been and is being done. What must our Lord think of church leaders despising His Word?

Truth is independent of time, space, and matter, and never changes. It has no location in the physical universe; it exists in the nonphysical realm of the soul and spirit. The indisputable fact that the brain is not the mind, with which we understand truth, provides one of the simplest proofs that we are nonphysical and eternal beings living temporarily in physical bodies. This solemn fact raises a question that most do not like to face. Preferring to give their attention to pleasures and plans related to this temporal world of the five senses, that which is of paramount importance is put off to "a convenient season" (Acts 24:25), which never comes. Every person must answer the great question: Where will my soul and spirit (the real "I" that is my unique self) be when this temporary dwelling in which I have lived these few years lies "moulding in the grave?"

To deny the existence of soul and spirit, materialists (which all atheists are) attempt to identify mind and all thought and ideas with the physical brain. Declaring that "materialism is dead," physicist Sir Arthur Eddington proves that fact quite simply:

In science...law...means a rule which is never broken....Thus in the physical world what a body does and what a body ought to do are equivalent; but we are well aware of another domain where they are anything but equivalent. We cannot get away from this distinction....The laws of logic do not prescribe the way our minds think; they prescribe the way our minds

ought to think....However closely we may associate thought with the physical brain, the connection is dropped as irrelevant as soon as we consider the fundamental property of thought—that it may be correct or incorrect.

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is "the way, the truth, and the life." Truth does not change, thus "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8). Yet many church leaders in our day (like multitudes of others throughout history) have taken it upon themselves to change almost everything. Some have done so by rewriting the Bible, as did Eugene Peterson in *The Message*; others, such as Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller, by "positivizing the gospel," and others by "modernizing" Christianity. The Emergent Church movement has done so under the guise of restoring "original Christianity." They have only restored earlier traditions of men, which, in the days of the apostles, were already far from the truth. Only the New Testament—not "early church history"—gives the record of true biblical Christianity.

There is no justification to say, "Times have changed" so we now need "new truth" to meet the challenges of today's post-modern world. It is a delusion to imagine that going back to the thought and practice of the "early historic church" will make us more spiritual or restore first-century Christianity. Searching through "ancient church history" is not going back far enough. We need to go all the way back to the Bible.

Each true disciple has been given a sacred trust, having received in an unbroken line of succession through earlier disciples Christ's original "commission" to His first followers: to obey and to teach others to obey everything Christ taught them. No research is needed—only a simple understanding of, and faith in, God's Word—to recognize the brazen revision of the Great Commission underway. This is seen in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of many Protestant denominations, and especially in the Roman Catholic system, which the original humble fishermen-disciples would denounce were they here today.

Incredibly, John Hagee, in a letter dated May 12, 2008, to Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Rights, "apologized for calling the Roman Catholic Church 'the apostate church' and 'the great whore.'" But that's what Luther and all the Reformers called it in keeping with God's Word! Nor was this a recent off-the-cuff remark but a consistent declaration over many years. In a shameful "about-face," Hagee declared, "I want to

express my deep regret for any comments that Catholics have found hurtful." Isn't Christ a "rock of offence" (Rom 9:33) and His cross an "offence" to unbelievers? Must we apologize for offending with the truth? Must we withhold the truth of the gospel to avoid offending those who need it? Isn't the Bible (not the hurt feelings of sinners) our unchangeable standard?

Let's be honest—Hagee's apology that denied the truth was political fence-mending by "one of John McCain's highest profile supporters from the religious right." It was not for the sake of Christ but for the presidential hopes of McCain. In apologizing, Hagee called the use of these terms in Revelation "a rhetorical device long employed in anti-Catholic literature and commentary." Now he must apologize to the Lord for calling "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him" (Rv 1:1) "anti-Catholic rhetoric"! It is only fitting that on May 22 McCain distanced himself from Hagee, who then withdrew his endorsement.

Instead of remaining true to Christ's commands, many of today's church leaders teach and practice "Christianity" as though the Great Commission were, "Go into all the world and try to find as much agreement with the major religions as possible, being careful not to criticize any 'faith,' but join with them in ecumenical union to abolish poverty, hunger, and disease." That sounds so appealing and it seems such a worthy cause that entire denominations have been swallowed up by this satanic heresy.

Isn't "satanic" a bit strong? No. Satan was the first to ask, "Yea, hath God said?" His followers are identified by ignoring, defying, or changing God's unchangeable truth. One might be put in jail for such harsh language. Not now, but that day may yet come sooner than we imagine.

To claim to know what God has said, to follow it, and to boldly oppose the errors taught by those who diverge from God's truth, is today's unforgivable sin both in the world and in the church. The mood worldwide is definitely toward both political and religious unity at any cost. As this movement gathers increasing momentum, anyone who has the moral and spiritual integrity to uphold the Bible will be seen as worthy of imprisonment and eventually death for standing in the way of global unity, the one hope to which the world and church still cling in desperate partnership.

As for true Christians, any compromising ecumenical agreement is rendered impossible by Christ's firm declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man

cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6). There is no way to soften that statement. True to their Lord, the apostles declared: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). As their successors, we must proclaim the same.

In contrast, Satan’s religious lackeys, true to their master, cry, “You can’t say that!” His many other servants in legislative bodies and courts are determined to make it an international crime to suggest that any recognized “faith” (no matter how contradictory to every other) could possibly be in any error. The Bible could soon be outlawed as condemnatory of all non-Christian religions. But this is the nature of the Bible, and for that we make neither apology nor “religiously correct” adjustments. Simon Greenleaf, one of America’s greatest legal minds, who turned from agnosticism to faith in Christ, declared nearly 180 years ago:

The religion of Jesus Christ aims at nothing less than the utter overthrow of all other systems of religion in the world; denouncing them as inadequate to the wants of man, false in their foundations, and dangerous in their tendency....These are no ordinary claims; and it seems hardly possible for a rational being to regard them with [merely] a subdued interest; much less to treat them with mere indifference and contempt.

We do not follow anyone except our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles. Paul declared, “Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me...even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1). Our Lord continually referred to and quoted the Old Testament, the only Scriptures that existed in His day and all that was needed to proclaim the gospel then and now: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk 24:27).

We should follow His example in witnessing for Him, as Paul did. He preached “the gospel of God (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:1-4). The true gospel is founded upon *hundreds* of prophecies that *cannot* be changed. Woe to those who tamper with “the gospel of God”!

Declaring that the gospel he had preached was “according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3,4), Paul affirmed once again that

the gospel is so firmly founded in the entire Old Testament that it could not be altered without destroying the Scriptures. This is the testimony of the entire Bible. Those who dare to change God’s Word in any way have denied God himself. They are saying that God did not know the future, that His plan of salvation is no longer adequate for modern man, and that today’s theologians must patch up the mess in which Christ has left His church. In other words, the God of the Bible is not the true God. As T.A. McMahon has pointed out (02/08; 03/08), the Emerging Church leaders have declared that everything must “be reinvented” to arrive at a new theology adequate for our day.

Paul did not seek religious or political *rapprochement* with anyone. He and Silas were accused of having “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). The apostles made no alliances; they followed the orders Christ had given them. They knew and uncompromisingly proclaimed “the truth [as it] is in Jesus” (Eph 4:21) with boldness and great power and with much disputation.

Disputation? Yes! That word describes much of the apostles’ life and ministry, and especially Paul’s, but is being trampled under the boots of the marching “seeker friendly” ecumenists. The fact that Paul and the early church leaders and martyrs spent so much time publicly disputing tells us much about what is lacking among Christians today, or shall we just call it *Christianity Today*? Consider these religiously incorrect, uncompromising, “negative” declarations—founded upon prophecy:

STEPHEN: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost...[w]ho have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.” (Acts 7:51)

PETER: “Thy money perish with thee... Thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness....” (Acts 8:18-24)

PAUL: But Saul...confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. (9:22)

PETER: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” (10:43)

PAUL: “Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus....For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day... fulfilled them in condemning him....And

when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree....” (13:23,27,29)

PAUL, as his manner was...reasoned with them out of the scriptures...(17:2); Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him (17:17); He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks. (18:4,19)

APOLLOS mightily convinced the Jews... publicly, shewing [proving] by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. (18:28)

PAUL went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading...” (19:8); ...disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus [for] two years; (19:9,10); “I...by the space of three years...ceased not to warn [about coming apostasy] every one night and day with tears” (20:31); And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled (24:25); Persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets.” (28:23)

I recently engaged in three debates in Toronto: with a Hindu leader of a large temple, with an atheist philosophy professor, and with a Muslim imam, who debates Christians worldwide. Is this what Christians are supposed to do? Is it productive? How can we obey “live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18) while disagreeing with opposing beliefs?

The scriptures above show that disputing with unbelievers was Paul’s life and ministry. He said we are to follow him. How else can we faithfully fulfill our commission?

There is no revelation more affecting than this, that God is of such a nature that the misery of fallen man has constrained Him to lay aside His heavenly glory, to become man, to bear all our sin and sorrow, and by death vanquish death and give to dying sinners eternal and divine life. Everyone who by faith receives this life is under the same necessity as He from whom he derives it, so that, on this account, every Christian is naturally a missionary. He hears in his soul as an impelling command, the words: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (E.M. Broadbent, from *The Pilgrim Church*)

Each true disciple must heed the Great Commission to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Pt 3:15). The Lord will give those with willing hearts the opportunities, wisdom, humility, grace, and power to be true to His calling. **TBC**

Quotable

It is a tremendous thought that even God Himself cannot...prevent me from defying and denying Him, and would not exercise His power in such a direction if He could, and could not even if He would.

A.T. Pierson, A Spiritual Clinique

Now I leave off to speak any more to creatures, and turn my speech to thee, O Lord. Now I begin my intercourse with God, which shall never be broken off. Farewell, father and mother, friends, relations! Farewell, the world and all delights. Farewell, meat and drink. Farewell, sun, moon, and stars! Welcome, God and Father! Welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, Mediator of the New Covenant! Welcome blessed Spirit of grace, God of all consolation! Welcome, glory! Welcome death!

With the noose around his neck, having already been tortured mercilessly, and having testified for Christ to the throng of onlookers, these were the last words of Hugh MacKail, 25-year-old Scottish minister, hanged for refusing allegiance to the British king as head of the church and unflinchingly remaining true to Christ alone.

Q&A

QUESTION [Composite of several]: I was greatly troubled by statements in April's article that only believers will be resurrected physically. Why then does it say "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5)? If this is the "first resurrection," does that not imply a "second"? You mentioned John 5:29 and said, "but it couldn't be [that unbelievers] will be resurrected." But the verse says the dead "shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Then there's Acts 24:14-15. "And have hope toward God...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." The Old Testament is also consistent in noting that "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

What about Matt 18:8-9, which talks about cutting off the hand or the foot rather than the whole body being cast into hell? Revelation 20:13 very plainly says "the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and

they were judged every man according to their works." This does not sound like scriptural support for only the saved having a physical resurrection. You have always been so consistent in upholding the Scriptures. Don't you think you should reevaluate your position?

RESPONSE: Neither biblically nor logically can it be argued that the term "first resurrection" necessarily implies a "second." In fact, the phrase "second resurrection" is not found in Scripture. In John 5:28-29, Jesus said, "All that are in the graves...shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." The implication is certainly not that these resurrections are similar. Because the resurrection of life involves the body, that does not imply that the resurrection of damnation involves bodies at all. The term "first resurrection" is found only in Revelation 20:5-6. It is described there as including only "them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark" (20:4). This can't include "the dead in Christ" resurrected seven years earlier at the Rapture (1 Thes 4:13-18). Since that resurrection occurred prior to the one mentioned here, why is this called "the first resurrection"? It can only be to show that this is not a separate second resurrection but the culmination of the "first."

The "resurrection of damnation" is not even mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15. Wouldn't it seem odd, if you are right, that "the resurrection chapter," which provides the most detailed discussion in the Bible of a bodily resurrection, says nothing about a physical bodily resurrection of the damned? Everything this chapter says could apply only to the redeemed, not to the damned. For example: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (15:42-44). This "spiritual body" is the resurrection body of the redeemed, exactly like Christ's "spiritual body." It could be seen and handled and could ingest food, yet it could walk through walls and go anywhere, including heaven, in a moment.

Man is body, soul, and spirit—a triune being reflecting in part the triune nature of his Creator. The moment Adam sinned, he died ("In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"—Gn 2:17). His body,

soul, and spirit were instantly cut off from God, the Creator and only source of life.

Adam and Eve immediately knew that the Spirit of God had left them. The moral and spiritual image of God in which man had been created (Gn 1:26,27) was irreparably marred, a fact that quickly manifested itself. Adam blamed both Eve and God ("The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree"—3:12). Eve blamed the serpent ("The serpent beguiled me"—v. 13). The "don't admit guilt, excuse yourself, blame others" game continues to this day. The body also died instantly, though the process of dying that begins the moment we are born took much longer then than now.

You misquote me as saying, "but it couldn't be [that unbelievers] will be resurrected." In fact, I wrote, "Nothing is said in these passages about 'the dead' having bodies. How could those standing before God in judgment be described as 'dead' if they had been raised body, soul, and spirit?"

Another passage refers to the resurrection of the damned: "The sea gave up the dead that were in it...death and hell gave up the dead which were in them..." (Rv: 20:13). This scripture says nothing about bodies. Certainly the rich man didn't have a body to come out of hell; there are no bodies in graves or in the sea. They've all been consumed. Then what came forth? The souls and spirits of the dead, which are all confined to Hades, no matter where they were buried. What about the bodies? Nowhere does it say that the bodies of the damned are raised. Ask yourself why this *must* be?

Obviously Matthew 18:8 and 9 do not refer to physical hands and eyes and bodies. Jesus is not suggesting that hands be literally cut off nor eyes literally plucked out. Therefore, neither is He saying that physical bodies are literally thrown into hell. That was not true for the rich man, and we know that there are no bodies in hell. Consequently, Christ's figurative language cannot provide the basis for saying that the physical bodies of the damned come out of the grave.

As for the bodily resurrection of the redeemed, that is as essential as Christ's bodily resurrection. Why? The wages of sin is death, the body dies, and "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:26). Christ conquered death by paying the full penalty for our sins and rising triumphantly. If the bodies of the redeemed are left rotting in the grave, death has not been conquered. Would the damned also be physically resurrected because Christ

conquered death? Do unbelievers share in the power of His Resurrection?

Of course not! They are still in death's grip as they are brought forth to judgment: "I saw the *dead*, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened... and the *dead* were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rv 20:12). "Dead" seems a strange designation for those who have been resurrected body, soul, and spirit. The resurrected redeemed are never called "dead"!

Christ conquered death for the redeemed, not for the damned! This "working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Eph 1:19-21) was the greatest display ever of God's power. The redeemed share in Christ's triumph and therefore are raised bodily.

In contrast, the damned could not have been raised bodily, or death would not have conquered their bodies. Nor can death, the penalty for sin, ever release their bodies because they have rejected Christ, "the resurrection, and the life" (Jn 11:25).

The only possible argument for a bodily resurrection of the damned would be so they could be eternally tortured in physical flames. So say Islam and Catholicism, but that is not biblical. The torment of the damned will mean something that physical pain could not produce: the terror and guilt of being confronted with the "exceeding sinfulness" of their sin in the presence of Christ who died for their sins. Like Adam and Eve after they rebelled, the damned will have nowhere to hide from God's justice. The overwhelming moral and spiritual conviction of the exceeding wickedness of their hearts will burn for eternity in the conscience that God gave them and that they refused to heed but can no longer escape.

How could physical fire "try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor 3:13)? It couldn't! Then how could the fire of God's holy wrath against sin be physical? Everyone knows that to spank teenagers would not bring correction but anger and resentment. Is that because teenagers can stand the pain? No, but it is because physical pain has no moral or spiritual benefit.

The damned will be eternally tormented by the conviction of the sin of trampling upon the blood of Christ, accompanied by the hopeless realization that their doom didn't have to be, that God and Christ did all they could to rescue them by paying the full penalty for sin and pleading with them to receive the pardon and salvation Christ

purchased and freely offered—and now it is forever too late.

Nowhere in 1 Corinthians 15, the "resurrection chapter" (or anywhere else in Scripture) is there anything about bodies of the *damned* being raised. The bodily resurrection of Christ is offered as proof that the redeemed will be raised bodily: "they that are Christ's at his coming" (15:23). How could it be proof that the damned will also be raised bodily? Christ's resurrection signals the destruction of death, "the last enemy" (15:26). The damned have no part in Christ's triumph over death and are repeatedly spoken of as "the dead," never as "the living"!

What kind of triumph over death would Christ's resurrection have procured for the damned to be raised bodily so they might be tortured endlessly in physical flames? This doctrine gives occasion for those who hate God to denounce Him.

No one can complain against the justice of the damned being tormented eternally by the horror of what they have done, from which there can be no release. Otherwise, Hitler would have escaped the judgment by committing suicide. But what is either the purpose or justice of being tortured physically for eternity? I can't find a single biblical explanation.

I hope this answer has helped to explain what I believe the Bible teaches on this matter. As always, you must be as the Bereans and search these things out for yourselves and come to your own conclusions based on what the Lord shows you in His Word.

QUESTION: I was wondering if you might share your interpretation of 1 Peter 2:8 regarding the use of the word *tithemi* as applied to the faithless *apeitheo*. How does this reconcile with the clear statement in 2 Peter 3:9 that God does not will anyone to perish? I searched for a reference to this in your book *What Love is This?* (which I found very helpful) but couldn't find it.

RESPONSE: In 1 Peter 2:8, Christ is called a "stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient [*apeitheo*]: whereunto also they were appointed [*tithemi*]." Yet 2 Peter 3:9 declares: "The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Putting these verses together, you ask how God can simultaneously will that no one perish yet appoint some to stumble at His Word? Or, to phrase it differently, how can God "not be willing that any should perish" yet appoint some to disobedience

and thus to judgment?

First of all, one must realize that God does not control all behavior and beliefs of men. Such teaching is an unbiblical Calvinist doctrine that makes God the author of evil, robs man of the power of choice and thus of the ability to love, and robs God of His love. He allows men to pursue their wicked ways on earth and only intervenes to rescue the righteous or to draw sinners with the gospel—which He continually does for all mankind, though most refuse His offer of salvation. Of course, God can overrule man's will to effect His own purposes, but He cannot change the rebel's heart. If He could, then the "first and great commandment...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mt 22:37,38) is of no purpose. Why would God command men to love Him if they have no free choice but must be programmed to obey Him?

The fact that God doesn't *will* for anyone to perish doesn't mean that no one *will* perish. The prayer Christ taught His disciples to pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10), is proof enough that much if not most of what happens on earth is not God's will. God does not will that anyone sin; men sin freely of their own will. The fact that He has appointed rebels to judgment does not mean that He caused them to sin so that He could punish them for their disobedience.

The *very few* scriptures that seem inconsistent with God's love and man's power of choice must be interpreted in the context of the overwhelming number of scriptures (scores of them) that clearly echo "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16). Yet Calvinism declares that God *could* have all of mankind in heaven if He so desired but that He sovereignly chooses to send the vast majority to the lake of fire. *What Love Is This?!*

Let's take another closer look at the clause, "being disobedient [*apeitheo*]: whereunto also they were appointed [*tithemi*]." *Apeitheo* clearly means willful, deliberate disobedience. Therefore "appointed [*tithemi*]" cannot mean that God predestined, much less caused, their disobedience. It can only mean that He allowed it.

In the Name of Jesus

Dave Hunt

Last month we noted that a major part of Paul's ministry was spent in disputing, reasoning, and persuading (Acts 19:8, 26; 28:23) in synagogues and market places (Acts 17:2, 3, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8), in religious schools (19:9), and wherever debates were held, such as on Mars Hill (17:18-34). Paul tells us that we are to follow his example, so Christians should be earnestly reasoning with and persuading others of the truth of the gospel as the Lord gives opportunity. Friends, neighbors, perhaps family members are on their way to a Christless eternity. Let us try to help them!

Time is short. Whether by death or the Rapture, we're all leaving this world soon.

We also saw with equal clarity that the Bible does not promote ecumenism of any kind or any other compromise of the faith. We are to "earnestly contend for *the* faith," a clause that cannot be twisted to mean, "emphasize what we have in common and avoid controversial differences so that we can all work together for the common good." That may sound commendable, but it is not biblical and is shameless disobedience to our Lord's command.

The early church made no alliances with apostates, heretics, or non-Christians, even for seemingly good causes. There is no time to waste, and we must decide our priorities. Will we spend our time and resources in partnership with the world in political and social action, or will we preach the gospel and earnestly contend for *the* faith once for all committed to the saints?

From Genesis to Revelation, we are instructed to stand firm, following the Lord with pure hearts, not turning from the narrow way. Christ's command to every Christian was and still is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). This is every Christian's marching orders.

Earnestly contending for the faith does not mean arguing over moot points that are not essential to the gospel. We must be patient with differences of opinion on minor matters of doctrine and practice. Yes, Paul openly rebuked Peter to his face before the church at Galatia, but his rebuke concerned the gospel, which cannot be changed one iota: "I withstood him to the face...when I saw that they [the believers who had been led astray by Peter's compromising in order to placate the Jews] walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel..." (Gal 2:11-14).

We must stand up for God's truth and not compromise. Sadly, we have Christian leaders today who not only disobey but even dare to revise what God has clearly written in His Word!

We cannot make what we think will be acceptable "small adjustments" to God's way of salvation. If we tamper in the slightest with the gospel, we are despising God's Word and jeopardizing the eternal destiny of souls! The unchanging and unchangeable "gospel of Christ [not the latest revision of it]...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth [it]" (Rom 1:16). This is the only way of salvation. Jesus said that for anyone to "see [and] enter into the kingdom of God [i.e., be saved] he...must be born again" (Jn 3:3, 5, 7). Peter declares that we are "born again...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached" (1 Pt 1:23-25).

No wonder we must proclaim the gospel. Only in believing this Word from God can anyone be saved. Tragically, as we have repeatedly documented in these pages, the gospel is being tampered with and compromised by many who claim to believe and preach it. Passages of Scripture such as the above, which are crystal clear in the duty they impose upon every Christian, are being willfully set aside to avoid "offending" the unsaved. How can someone's hurt feelings be compared with an eternity separated from God in the torments of the damned?

We have quoted John Hagee (Q&A, 4/08) declaring: "I'm not trying to convert the Jewish people to the Christian faith...trying to convert Jews is a waste of time...Everyone else needs to believe in Jesus...but not Jews. Jews already have a covenant with God that has never been replaced by Christianity..." [The Houston Chronicle (4/30/88, sec. 6, p. 1)].

In stark contrast, Paul was absolutely certain that unless they believed the gospel, Jews, like anyone else, would be eternally lost. So concerned was he that he would have gone to hell in their place if that would have saved them (Rom 9:1-5). He declared, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh....My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom 9:1-3; 10:1).

Apparently, Paul did not know what Hagee knows, which, had he known it, would have removed Paul's concern for the salvation of Jews. One wonders when and how Hagee received this revelation that Jews don't need the gospel and whether he thinks the Bible ought to be revised in that respect. That would involve changing

so many scriptures that I doubt it could be done.

When Paul proclaimed, "The gospel...is the power of God unto salvation" he added, "to the Jew first..." (Rom 1:16). Christ commanded His disciples to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15), which surely must have included Jews. In fact, they were to "begin at Jerusalem" (Lk 24:47), which Peter did obediently on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 Jews (with maybe a few Gentiles among them) were saved.

Although Christ's own words, as well as many other scriptures, plainly said that the gospel was for all mankind, the apostles were certain that the gospel was only for Jews. In order to persuade them to preach to Gentiles, the Lord had to give Peter the vision of the sheet let down from heaven with all manner of unclean animals in it (Acts 10:9-20).

The language of Scripture is so clear that those who withhold the gospel from the Jews are guilty of willful disobedience.

In addition to Hagee, there are other highly esteemed church leaders guilty of the same, among them apologist Ravi Zacharias. As the 2008 Honorary Chairman of the National Day of Prayer, Ravi composed a generic prayer suitable for anyone. It does not contain the name of Jesus, which was left out, we are told, "so as not to offend the Jewish participants."

We have previously pointed out the unscriptural nature of a "National Day of Prayer," which, though led by Christians from the beginning, has encouraged non-Christians to join in by praying to their own god or gods. Can anyone imagine that when a disciple asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1), Christ included a generic prayer for all "people of faith" to whatever "higher power" they espoused?

Let's test Ravi Zacharias's model prayer against reason and Scripture to see how hopeless it is to craft a prayer for all "faiths." It begins, "Holy Father..." Repeatedly, the Qur'an says that Allah (Islam's god) is not a father and has no son. Already, the Muslims are offended. The "Holy Father" to whom Ravi refers is the God of the Bible, who is called "the God of Israel" 203 times.

The Muslims would be worse than offended. They would be highly incensed. Allah hates Jews, and Islam teaches that every Jew on earth must be killed before any Muslim can be resurrected. If that happened, it would be a great embarrassment to the "God of Israel"! He couldn't just change His name; He would have to admit to being a false god and Allah the true one.

The God of the Bible is jealous for the

honor of His holy name. To Moses He declared: "I AM...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Ex 3:13-16). Jesus confirmed that this was God's name (Lk 20:37). But Islam opposes Israel, and Allah hates Jews.

Islam teaches that what the entire world once understood to be the land of Israel was actually given by Allah to the Arabs/Muslims. As we show in *Judgment Day* this belief exposes the fraud of "Palestinian" negotiations with Israel for "peace." It reveals the fact that the trips to the Middle East by Bush and Rice, as well as by EU, UN, and Vatican representatives, are futile.

The Islamic world has drawn the entire non-Muslim world into a false "peace" effort, which so-called Palestinians and their Muslim brethren hope will lead "peacefully," step by step, to the utter destruction of Israel and, finally, to the extermination of all Jews on earth.

Ravi's prayer ends, "In God's holy name...." What does "In God's holy name" mean to Muslims and to millions of Americans who are non-Christians? The National Day of Prayer makes as much sense as Elijah calling apostates in Israel, who worshiped Baal and other false gods, to join with the followers of Yahweh in praying for "God's" blessing upon Israel! If the followers of various religions are praying to different gods (which they are), then what is being accomplished? Is this uniting America? Yes, but only in confusion and deceit.

What about leaving out the name of Jesus from this model prayer in order not to offend Jews? Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached *in his name* among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem..." (Lk 24:47). Nothing could have been more offensive to the Jews. Wouldn't it have seemed logical to the disciples to hold a meeting to discuss this command and to decide that using the name of Jesus—especially at that sensitive time just after the crucifixion—would be counterproductive and probably arouse hatred and maybe get them killed? No, the issue was not how to please the audience but obedience to Christ.

In obedience to their crucified and resurrected Lord's command to preach *in His name*, the disciples boldly proclaimed the truth *in the name of Jesus* where that name was despised and where to obey their Lord would mean hatred, persecution, and even death. Without compromise, they indicted

the Jews with having rejected and crucified Christ, though He dearly loved His brethren after the flesh and mourned over their unbelief. Peter did not preach a special gospel to the Jews. He declared, "Jesus of Nazareth...approved of God...by miracles and wonders and signs...ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain..." (Acts 2:22,23).

There is reluctance today to state the facts as Peter did. "It wasn't the Jews who crucified Christ, but the Romans" is offered in evangelical circles in order to avoid giving offense to Jews. Peter was there. He knew the facts as no one living today could know them. Inspired of the Holy Spirit, he indicted his fellow Jews with having crucified God's Son. Of course, the Romans nailed Jesus to the Cross, but it was at the insistence of those, stirred to hatred by their rabbis, who cried, "Let him be crucified."

Pilate objected, "Why, what evil hath he done?" But the mob "cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified...his blood be on us and on our children" (Mt 27:22-25). The truth is that in response to the haunting question posed in that old spiritual, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" we must all, Jew and Gentile, confess with repentant hearts, "Yes, I was there. It was for my sins that Christ died!"

Is the gospel for the Jews? Let Hagee and all others who have any doubts where Jews stand in relation to the gospel take note of Peter's specific language, "Therefore let *all the house of Israel* know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

It was likely the next day, at a gate of the Temple and in the name that Ravi Zacharias purposely kept from Jewish participants in the National Day of Prayer, that Peter and John healed a man who had been a hopeless cripple "from his mother's womb" (3:2). They commanded him, "*In the name of Jesus Christ* of Nazareth rise up and walk" (3:6).

Arrested for this good deed and standing before the religious hierarchy, they were asked, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel...be it known unto...all the people of Israel, that by *the name of Jesus Christ* of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead...doth this man stand here before you whole....Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (4:7-12).

The council commanded Peter and John "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (4:18). Tragically, it takes far less than that to stop some of today's Christian leaders from speaking in the name of Jesus; they do it on their own initiative for the sake of money and popularity. May God deliver us all from ever succumbing to such shameful motivation.

The response by the apostles to this threat was instant and fearless: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (4:19,20).

The miracles being done in the name of Jesus through the apostles caused growing multitudes to believe on Him. The high priest and his cronies "were filled with indignation, and...put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go...speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (17:5-20).

Meanwhile, another larger council was called, and officers were sent to the prison to bring the apostles before them again. The officers found that the prison was secure, the doors locked, but the apostles not there—they were obediently teaching in the temple. The apostles were brought again to the council and reminded of the warning they had been given not to preach in the name of Jesus. Peter responded, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (5:29). They continued testifying for Christ and His resurrection. "And daily in the temple, and unto every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (5:40-42). The rabbis' reaction was to "take counsel to slay them" (5:17-33).

The apostles were beaten and released after one more warning "that they should not speak in the name of Jesus." Did they obey men rather than God? No. They rejoiced that "they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

Centuries ago, Joshua challenged the people of God, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Jos 24:15). We are faced today with the same choice. To obey our Lord may be costly in terms of money, prestige, and influence—but the issue is really time vs. eternity, God vs. man. That should not be a difficult choice to make.

When we at the Berean Call are denounced by critics for daring to disagree with popular Christian leaders, we simply point to the Bible and reply, "Check it out there!"

TBC

Quotable

It is time for us Christians to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are “defeated” by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient! It might be well if we stopped using the terms “victory” and “defeat” to describe our progress in holiness. Rather we should use the terms “obedience” and “disobedience.”

Jerry Bridges, The Pursuit of Holiness

William MacDonald explains that the expression “those who are accounted worthy to obtain that age [the millennium]” does not suggest that any people are personally worthy of heaven: the only worthiness sinners can have is the worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Those are counted worthy who judge themselves, who vindicate Christ, and who own that all worthiness belongs to Him.”¹

William MacDonald, The Believer’s Bible Commentary, comment on Luke 20:35

1. C.A. Coates, *An Outline of Luke’s Gospel*

Q&A

QUESTION: A recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the May 15, 2008, California Supreme Court’s overruling of the ban on same-sex marriages was greeted with joy by the homosexual community as well as by many religious leaders:

“At Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church of Pasadena, the mood was celebratory Sunday, with Mendelsohn’s ‘Wedding March’ played at services in honor of the decision. But at the Islamic Society of Orange County, Imam Muzammil H. Sidiqqi told his congregation during Friday prayers that the high court’s decision was a severe disappointment and goes against Islamic teaching.

“‘The ruling is a violation of God’s law,’ Siddiqi, an authority on Islamic law, declared. ‘I hope all people of faith—Jews, Christians and Muslims—speak up against this.’

“The Rev. Susan Russell, pastor of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, who celebrated her union with her partner in an official blessing ceremony two years ago, told her congregation as they cheered, ‘The justices have ruled in favor of the sanctity of marriage and against bigotry. This is good news for all Californians.’

“[In the article] William McKinley,

president of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley...said the ruling was applauded on his campus, though he felt some trepidation lest a new culture war be provoked.

“**Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis (a rabbi for more than 50 years) said that his religion is evolving. ‘It’s one of the most exciting parts of seeing religion as not static and inflexible but as sensitive to different times and different information and different knowledge. What in the world did people in biblical times know about homosexuals?’**

“**At Second Baptist Church in Los Angeles, the Rev. William Epps...has given no thought to the Supreme Court Ruling. ‘Traditional Baptist Churches would not embrace same-sex marriages,’ Epps said, although he would be happy to devote a Bible study session to the matter if anyone wanted it.**

“**What would he do if a homosexual couple asked him to marry them now?**

“**‘I’d have to prayerfully think about it,’ Epps said. ‘It would be something I would have to seriously grapple with.’”**

Dave, what is your reaction to the above?

RESPONSE: For the Universalists, anything goes, just as any “god” is acceptable. The Muslim at least follows his religion, but his using the phrase “people of faith” (a favorite with President Bush and many others) reveals his ecumenical confusion. He imagines that “Jews, Christians and Muslims,” being “people of faith,” would all agree—ignoring the clear contradictions between their so-called “faiths.” Jude 3 tells us that we are to “earnestly contend for *the* faith... once [for all time] delivered to the saints.” Christ declared, “Have faith in *God*,” so there is no true faith without acknowledging the one and only true God. Paul declares that there is “*one* faith,” and that fact exposes the folly of “people of faith.”

The Baptist pastor’s response is puzzling. He says “traditional Baptist Churches” are against same-sex marriages. Why not heed the Bible instead of Baptist tradition? Has Baptist tradition become a higher authority than God’s Word? It is very clear that marriage was instituted by God and is to be between a man and a woman. No one has the authority to change what God has said, so what does he have to pray about! The word “marriage” is being corrupted to mean an ungodly and perverted “union” between two men or two women—and the world and the church are going along with this corruption both of language and morals.

Homosexuals are pressuring the world and the church to accept as “normal” this perversion, which contradicts the marriage institution sanctified by God. Yet the court’s ruling is seen as honoring “the sanctity of marriage and [being] against bigotry”! The followers of what they once dared to call “an alternate lifestyle” have managed to make it not an “alternative” but the new norm and even especially virtuous.

It is a shame and disgrace that the world and the church could stand by while “Gay pride” parades are feted, when, in fact, if the world adopted this way of life, it would be the end of the human race. Homosexuals don’t procreate, thus rejecting the very first commandment God gave: “Be fruitful, and multiply” (Gn 1:28). Is their refusal to obey God something to promote or be proud of?

The Pacific School of Religion rejoices, and the rabbi is happy, too, that religion is moving with the times—as though the Scriptures were not written by holy prophets inspired of God but were the product of the times and prevailing “culture” and subject to improvement. If this is truly the case, then of course they ought to change with the changing times. The gospel, however, cannot change.

Those who accept, promote, or practice this rebellion against their Creator will suffer severe consequences, both in this life and in the “judgment” that comes “after this [i.e., upon death]” (Heb 9:27).

Homosexuality has somehow attained a favored status in society. The court ruling was hailed as “good news for all Californians”—meaning that everyone who practices this perversion is not only normal but somehow laudably living on a higher plain than what the world has for thousands of years considered to be normal and natural. For centuries, homosexuality was known (and often prosecuted) as “the crime against nature”—and so it is. Now it’s considered a mark of courage to “come out of the closet.”

QUESTION: Which comes first, the nations starting to come against Israel more aggressively or the reconstruction of the Temple?

RESPONSE: I don’t think that either one of these two events depends upon or is related to the other. Nations have been aggressively trying to destroy Israel for thousands of years. That opposition has been fervently practiced in the UN for the past 60 years.

Antichrist will be the world ruler when the Temple is rebuilt, and it will have

been by his approval. There will probably have been a false peace brokered before Antichrist takes over the entire world. As a result of this seeming approval of Israel by Antichrist, persecution will have eased briefly only to return with greater intensity as Satan realizes that his time is short.

QUESTION: I just read about Tony Blair's interfaith movement to end religious conflict. The article says, "The Tony Blair Faith Foundation will fight extremism, organize faith groups against poverty and illness, and educate people worldwide about religions other than their own." Bill Clinton opened the event. Rick and Kay Warren are on the advisory committee along with Baptists, Muslims, Jews, and soon a Catholic Cardinal. How can Rick Warren, who claims to be a born-again Christian, be part of something like this?

RESPONSE: To "organize faith groups" is just another variation on this same theme of "people of faith." Ecumenism must be one of Satan's favorite delusions because he uses it so often. This is ecumenism put to work in the "good cause" of a social gospel. Biblically, no born-again Christian should be involved.

The social "gospel" agenda of Rick and Kay Warren, as evidenced by Rick's P.E.A.C.E. plan, is ripe for biblical compromise and unwittingly contributes to the development of what the Bible prophesies will be the Antichrist's one-world religion.

Rick is determined to stamp out disease, hunger, poverty, and crime—a noble but impossible task that Jesus never gave to His disciples. Rick is mobilizing "people of faith" to do this. It is the old "social gospel" repackaged but now far more dangerous because of the ecumenical thrust. Jesus told us that our job is not to make a "better world" for our grandchildren to enjoy but to "preach the gospel" and thereby to call people out of this world for heaven.

QUESTION: Could you please interpret the meaning of Psalm 102? I was told to read Matthew 5:1-12 and Ecclesiastes 1 and 3. I truly would like to know your thoughts.

RESPONSE: Psalm 102 is titled "A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD." We may each, Jew or Gentile, apply it to ourselves. However, it is primarily about Israel, the affliction she has endured through the centuries because of her rebellion against the Lord, the hope of

her restoration, and the Messiah's Millennial reign from Jerusalem.

Matthew 5:1-12, of course, is a practical guide to Christians living here and now—but in view of the coming kingdom. The relationship to Psalm 102 should be clear. Ecclesiastes 1 and 3 take a different approach. The key phrase in Ecclesiastes is "under the sun." If that is forgotten, one could imagine that death is the end of existence and we should get all we can out of this life, living for self to the max. Of course, the message is the exact opposite: that life "under the sun" has nothing lasting to offer, for all is "vanity and vexation of spirit."

Solomon brings it all together in the last two verses: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments....For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc 12:13,14).

I think you can see how all of these scriptures tie together.

QUESTION: What about the popular idea that we must "plead the blood" over a situation or one's home, room by room?

RESPONSE: The phrase "plead the blood" does not appear once in all of Scripture. The word "plead" is found 30 times but never in association with blood. Just before each meeting of the discredited "revival" at the Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, teams would pray over each seat and "bind the demons" that might be lurking in them.

This is an unbiblical practice. The Bible contains no record of its ever being used by any apostle, prophet, or any other believer. Paul and the other apostles preached in many demonic places without once reciting this mantra. It is a vain practice that opens the door to much error, fanaticism, and spiritual bondage, needlessly giving attention to Satan and demons. Do not engage in it.

QUESTION: Jesus' healings in Matthew 23-25 appear to be separated into different categories but under one heading, "all sick people." The problems are listed: "divers diseases...torments...those possessed with devils...those which were lunatick, etc. What is "lunatick"? Does it refer to a medical, or mental problem?

RESPONSE: The different categories have no significance except to show that *all* were healed who came to Christ.

The word "lunatick" occurs only twice

in the Bible, both in Matthew: 4:24 and 17:15. It is the same as our word, lunatic, which means insane. In Matthew 4:24, there seems to be no demonic involvement because "lunatick" is distinguished from "those which were possessed with devils." The Bible indicates that one can become irrational due to wrong thoughts, imaginations, jealousy, etc., and we are told to "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Yet in Matthew 17:15, it is made very clear that the "lunatick" in this case was demon possessed because "Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him."

We are not dealing here with a medical diagnosis, because science cannot discern demonic possession. These verses would lead one to conclude that there probably are many persons today diagnosed as insane who will spend the rest of their days in a heavily medicated stupor, when all the time the problem is demon possession and they need spiritual deliverance.

Unfortunately, a psychiatric hospital would not look with favor upon a Christian, even a close relative, coming in to cast a demon or demons out of a patient. In fact, such a person would be prevented from any contact with the patient.

Hello, Dalai...

T. A. McMahon

Who is the Dalai Lama and what is he all about? And why should *TBC* even consider this Tibetan Buddhist “holy man,” whom *Time* magazine selected to top its list of the 100 most-influential people in the world today? Well, he is a religious figure who has captured the interest—and in many cases the hearts—of millions of people, including multitudes who profess to be evangelicals. It is the latter group’s involvement that is most disturbing and adds impetus to our need to examine his beliefs. An attraction to religious “celebrities” with false beliefs is not something new among evangelicals, especially as we see apostasy growing exponentially and ecumenical developments taking place that will eventually usher in the one-world religion of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:8). Here are a few recent examples.

When we addressed our concerns about Mother Teresa in past *TBC* articles and columns, we received numerous letters objecting to our “attacking such a godly woman who loves Jesus.” Simply put, the Jesus whom Mother Teresa professed to love is not the biblical Jesus. John MacArthur discerned that clearly when he visited her in Calcutta. Surrounded by images of Hindu deities hanging on the walls of her facility for ministering to the sick and dying, she signed a Bible for MacArthur that reflected her deep yet erroneous Catholic beliefs: “May you enter into the heart of Jesus through the Virgin Mary....”

The Catholic Virgin Mary is the doorway to the Catholic Jesus. This “Jesus” is reduced to an infant when appearing in Marian apparitions, a Jesus who did not pay the full penalty for the sins of mankind, who continues to be sacrificed daily upon millions of Catholic altars, whose body, soul, and divinity are transubstantiated into a piece of bread (which is then ingested by more than a billion Catholic faithful in order for them to grow in holiness and merit heaven), a Jesus who is worshiped as a fragment of bread at Eucharistic Holy Hour ceremonies. These are only a few of the teachings that characterize the Jesus of the Church of Rome as clearly “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4). Mother Teresa’s beliefs also reject the words of the biblical Jesus, who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). On the contrary, she said:

We never try to convert to Christianity those who receive our help, but in our work we bear witness to the love of God’s presence and if Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, or agnostics become for this better men—simply better—we will be satisfied.

(*Life in the Spirit: Reflections, Meditations and Prayers*, pp. 81-82)

If in coming face to face with God we accept Him in our lives, then we are converting. We become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever we are....What God is in your mind you must accept. (*Mother Teresa: Her People and Her Work*, p. 156)

It came as no surprise that *Christianity Today* applauded her future sainthood.

Pope John Paul II was also a spiritual icon for many evangelicals. The accolades that poured forth from conservative Christian individuals, ministries, and organizations were stunning (see “Death of a Pope,” *TBC* 5/05). It was as though no thought was given to the gospel, or, more pointedly, the fallacious gospel that the pope championed. Of course, many evangelical leaders over the past three decades have worked overtime to diffuse and confuse the critical differences between Rome’s false salvation and belief in the biblical gospel, without which no one can be saved.

For example, Pat Robertson, in paying homage to the deceased pontiff, said that “the most beloved religious leader of our age [has passed] from this world to his much deserved eternal reward.” On what basis? Certainly not by the religious system of works that he headed up. The names and organizations (which we have documented over the years) involved in this subversion of biblical truth in favor of Roman Catholicism are a shameful evangelical *Who’s Who* list: Charles Colson, J. I. Packer, Rick Warren, John Hagee, Hank Hanegraaff, Bill Bright, Richard Land, Timothy George, Richard Foster, Wheaton College, InterVarsity Fellowship, NavPress, Zondervan, Campus Crusade, *Charisma* magazine, and *Christian Research Journal*. The list goes on.

Billy Graham had nothing but praise for his long-time friend John Paul II and in particular for “his strong Catholic faith.” Furthermore, he declared that there were no essential disagreements between them theologically. One of the “essentials” of the pope’s life was his total dedication to “Mary, the Queen of Heaven,” in whom he put his hope for salvation. Graham was certainly aware of his friend’s vain commitment to Mary. Even more puzzling, however, is the fact that early in his ministry Graham denounced Catholicism along with Communism and Islam as three of

the world’s greatest evils. What changed? Certainly not Roman Catholicism. Yet, in a shocking turnaround, Graham’s crusades began to be promoted and financially supported by the Catholic Church—including being staffed by nuns and priests as counselors, a practice that still continues today. *Christianity Today*, which Graham founded, has been without doubt the most persuasive vehicle in undermining critical doctrinal differences between evangelicals and Catholics, as it has long fostered the mutual acceptance of one another as “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

What, then, of today’s most honored religious figure, Tenzin Gyatso, the proclaimed reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama (meaning “oceans of wisdom”), who preceded him? Pope John Paul II gave him center stage in 1986 when he gathered world religious leaders to Assisi, Italy, to pray for world peace. Astonishing many Catholics, the pope allowed the Dalai Lama and his monks to perform their prayer ritual before a statue of Buddha placed upon the altar at the church of St. Peter at Assisi. It certainly confused those who understood that Tibetan Buddhists do not believe in God. So to whom was the Dalai Lama praying? We’ll get to that momentarily.

We’re told that Tibetan Buddhism may be beyond the ability of the Western mind to understand. That’s an understatement: its utter complexity, contradictions, and confusion have no geographical boundaries. Nevertheless, Tibetan Buddhism contains a number of beliefs that correlate with false religions in the West. Its ancient history involves shades of Darwinism. Frescoes in the oldest monastery and throughout the country illustrate the belief still held by many today that the origin of the Tibetan people resulted from the mating of a god-like ape with an ogress, a female monster. The simian offspring of that union eventually evolved into the ancient Tibetans.

Tibetan Buddhism itself is a complicated mixture of *Bon*, which consists of animist and shamanic beliefs and practices, and Buddhism. Fusing the two defies any sense of congruity, and rationalizations vary widely depending upon one’s bias toward spirit-driven *Bon* beliefs or the more philosophical concepts of Buddhism. For example, the Dalai Lama once remarked to a Catholic priest that the chief difference between their beliefs was that he as a Buddhist did not believe in a personal God. On the other hand, as a Tibetan Buddhist, he believes in personal deities and spirits—and lots of them. This is more than evident as he travels the world inducting hundreds of thousands

(including thousands in U.S. cities) into the Kalachakra Tantra Initiation.

Kalachakra is both a Tantric deity and a meditation practice; the former is a manifestation of Buddha, who is called upon to lead the initiate into becoming a *bodhisattva*, or enlightened god, a status claimed for the Dalai Lama. Note what takes place in this 12-day Kalachakra Initiation ceremony. Monks create a sand mandala seven feet in diameter, which becomes home to 722 gods and goddesses during the ritual. From his throne, the Dalai Lama, as the master of the initiation, asks permission to begin the ritual from Tenma, the supreme earth spirit who rules over the local spirits. Not all the spirits want to cooperate and must be placated by the monks through chanting, dancing, and the sounds of bells, gongs, and horns. The Dalai Lama then makes an offering to the spirits to thank them for their assistance. On the tenth day, he invokes the god Kalachakra to open the eyes of the initiates, who have taken vows never to reveal the secret teachings. The experience is described as being “reborn” as the participants enter into Kalachakra’s universe of enlightenment. At the closing, the Dalai conveys his gratitude to the gods and goddesses for their participation and bids them return to their sacred homes.¹

This man with the winning smile is a shaman. He refers to himself as a simple monk, although we’re told he is a god-king, and he, like the pope, is to be addressed as “His Holiness.” He mediates between humans and spirit beings, of which there are a multitude of varieties, from those who are considered helpful, to those who are unspeakably evil and malicious. The life of the average Tibetan is one of continually seeking rituals of appeasement directed at these nonphysical beings who play havoc with them by bringing about sickness, poverty, crop failure, livestock deaths, ignorance, possession, insanity, and so forth. No matter what philosophical or psychological spin the Dalai Lama puts on his theology and practices for his American audiences, the Bible clearly teaches that he is trafficking with demons and “the god of this world,” Satan himself (2 Corinthians 4:4).

As with his fellow Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Mother Teresa (*TBC*, 3/87;7/90;5/94;5/95), closer scrutiny of his life shatters what most people naïvely presume about his beliefs and practices. Candid interviews with Tibetans now living under a repressive Communist regime acknowledge that they nevertheless have more freedom and opportunities now than when they were under the theocratic feudal system controlled by the god-kings

and their monks and priests. Critics of the Dalai Lama have raised substantial questions, implying that what he is communicating to the West is at great odds with his traditional religion. This religion includes urging holy wars between Buddhists and non-Buddhists; regarding Christianity, Judaism, and particularly Islam as enemies of Tibetan Buddhism; the establishment of a global Buddhist theocracy under a world ruler; and the sexual abuse of young women in tantric rituals.²

The Dalai Lama appears to be oblivious to all of the above. He is also highly selective regarding what he will share with different audiences about his spiritual teachings, e.g., his religious instruction to achieve enlightenment through tantric meditation and his shamanic rituals for invoking help from deities and keeping demons at bay.

Recently in Seattle, at the five-day Seeds of Compassion Conference, he taught audiences how to become more compassionate. Billed as an educational event for instructing children and supported by insights from child psychologists, his message was simple: people must change their thinking and actions and cultivate inner strength. Could it be that the self-help approach works better in the West than this shaman’s usual rituals invoking help from the spirit realm? The event drew nearly 150,000 people (including 15,000 school children), many of whom no doubt were so enamored with the global religious figure that they will likely pursue the Dalai’s deeper religious teachings for achieving the virtue of compassion. He is the number one evangelist for Buddhism in the world today, and he’s gaining support from professing Christian leaders worldwide, including conference participants Archbishop (and arch-heretic) Desmond Tutu and Emerging Church leaders Doug Pagitt and Rob Bell. This ecumenism is consistent with liberal theology and with the pervasive emergent doctrine that we can learn much from other religions about Christ and the gospel.

As stated at the beginning of this article, the apostate church and religion that will be led by the Antichrist is in full development. It will accommodate every religious belief system in the world other than biblical Christianity. Though some religions appear to be quite different from others, upon closer inspection they often reveal similarities that will help draw them together. We previously noted the shared characteristics between Catholicism and Islam (see “Catholicism and Islam: Ties That Bind,” 11/02). Tibetan Buddhism and Roman Catholicism also have much in

common. They each have clerical hierarchies, they have celibate priests and nuns, they both pray to dead entities (spirits, deities, or saints) for assistance, they use prayer beads and offer repetitious prayers, and both employ relics of the dead and sacred rituals as a key for achieving spiritual goals. Most striking, however, is the extremely popular goddess of Tibetan Buddhism, Tara. She is described in various Buddhist teachings in terms much akin to the Catholic Mary: she is the Mother of the Buddhas, she is a saviouress, she hears the cries of those in misery and is a more approachable deity to whom the laity have direct access, she guards her devotees as she leads them to enlightenment, and she also appears to them in apparitions. Tara is a bodhisattva, a supreme goddess, whose principal attribute is compassion and who is the primary resource in imparting that virtue to humans. One might wonder why “His Holiness” failed to recommend his chief “deity of Compassion” to assist his audiences at the Seeds of Compassion Conference.

Yet considering their many differences, all the religions of the world (excepting biblical Christianity, which is not a religion) share a very foundational principle: salvation (or its equivalent, e.g., nirvana, paradise, moksha, the higher afterlife, etc.) is attained through *human achievement*. This is apparent in all the varied attempts to satisfy, placate, appease, mollify, become one with, or reach God, Brahman, Allah, the gods, the goddesses, the Queen of Heaven, the Force, the Universal Mind, etc.

The various endeavors for attaining salvation include sacrifices, following karmic laws, yoga meditation, church attendance, obeying rules or keeping commandments, observing sacraments, secret rituals, liturgies, being a good person by doing more good than evil, and so forth. None of these pursuits can add one iota to obtaining a person’s salvation, according to the Bible. Furthermore, they all reject the absolute truth that Jesus Christ alone provided salvation to all mankind by doing what only the perfect, sinless God-Man could accomplish. He satisfied God’s perfect justice by paying the complete penalty for every sin of mankind. There is nothing anyone can do for salvation except receive our Savior’s unfathomable gift of eternal life with Him by grace, through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8,9).

As Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Pray that those attracted to the smiling monk will heed Peter’s sober warning. **TBC**

Quotable

It is easier to serve God without a vision, easier to work for God without a call, because then you are not bothered by what God requires; common sense is your guide.... You will be more leisure-hearted if you never realize the call of God. But if once you receive a commission from Jesus Christ, the memory of what God wants will always come like a goad; you will no longer be able to work for Him on the common-sense basis.

Oswald Chambers

The Christian who is zealous to promote the cause of Christ can begin by living in the power of the Spirit and so reproducing the life of Christ in the sight of men. In deep humility and without ostentation he can let his light shine. The world may pretend not to see, but it will see, nevertheless, and more than likely it will get into serious trouble with its conscience over what it sees.

A. W. Tozer

Q&A

QUESTION: Will you please answer the following questions? Is it scientifically true that our minds are composed of two parts, the conscious and the subconscious mind? Is it true that the subconscious mind is the one that regulates most of our actions? Is it true that the subconscious mind is also in charge of our learned behavior?

RESPONSE: First of all, the mind, which is the realm of our thoughts, is a nonphysical part of the human makeup. It is not to be confused with the brain, which is a physical organ within the body. Since the mind has no physical properties, it is beyond the scrutiny of science.

The idea that we have a subconscious or unconscious mind that determines or influences our behavior is a myth spawned by Sigmund Freud, who some contend came up with the theory while under the influence of cocaine. That was his drug of choice for his own depression and one he highly recommended. Even if something did take place in a realm called the unconscious, there is no way to validly discern what those thoughts may have been. It should be obvious that a supposed unconscious region of the mind that determines our conscious thoughts and actions can be no more than speculation, and self-serving at that.

In their book titled *Therapy's Delusions*:

The Myth of the Unconscious and the Exploitation of Today's Walking Worried, Richard Ofshe and Ethan Watters write:

While it is clear that we all engage in out-of-awareness mental processes, the idea of the dynamic unconscious proposes a powerful shadow mind that, unknown to its host, willfully influences the most minor thought and behavior. There is no scientific evidence of this sort of purposeful unconscious, nor is there evidence that psychotherapists have special methods for laying bare our out-of-awareness mental processes. Nevertheless, the therapist's claim to be able to expose and reshape the unconscious mind continues to be the seductive promise of many talk therapies.

Christians have been drawn into the false belief in the subconscious because of the influence of psychological counseling in the church, especially among so-called Christian psychologists and those who promote inner healing. The result of this completely unbiblical pseudo-scientific concept is that man cannot be held responsible for sinful actions because they were determined without his conscious involvement. Moreover, the outcome leads to a field day of excuses for our sin nature.

The unconscious, or subconscious, is foreign to biblical instruction. God's Word deals with humanity on the basis of conscious behavior over which everyone has control, and thus all are held accountable. There are certainly areas that are a mystery to us related to the heart, mind, will, and emotions, and what the Bible calls the "mystery of iniquity," or sin. But these are beyond man's explorations and are only known by God: "Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men:); The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart..." (2 Chronicles 6:30; Jeremiah 17:9,10).

QUESTION: We read your book *Showtime for the Sheep?* and agree with your position that the Bible cannot be translated into film or video without critically distorting it. According to your analysis of the medium, you leave little doubt that such an endeavor cannot be accomplished without succumbing to the forbidden practice of adding to or subtracting from the Word of God. However, is it your position that movies, videos, the writing of fictional stories, and acting in dramatic stories are also unbiblical? This is a concern for us because we know

some very creative young people who are considering fictional writing, acting, and the entertainment business in general as a career.

RESPONSE: As you gathered from *Showtime*, I have a number of years of experience in "showbiz." This certainly has given me some valuable insights that I can pass on to you and that I hope you may find helpful. But then there is the bottom line: does the Word of God address the subjects? Absolutely, but we're not going to find a specific verse that says yea or nay to a career in the entertainment industry or writing novels or becoming an actor. It does, however, cover them in general, as it does all of life's issues.

One verse I'm thinking about is 2 Peter 1:3: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue...." So we simply evaluate a potential career or endeavor based upon what Scripture tells us would be consistent with a life pleasing to God.

Let's start with writing fictional stories. I'm not aware of any verse that indicates that storytelling is contrary to the Word. The question is, does the story, with all of its elements, reflect consistency with biblical truth? A writer who is a follower of Jesus must make sure he or she is not communicating anything that undermines or contradicts God's Word.

What about acting? I don't know of a verse that condemns portraying a character in a dramatic story. Again, similar questions must be asked. Do the role, the story, and all of its elements reflect that which is consistent with biblical truth? If that's not the case, then a Christian would be dishonoring, even disobeying, the Lord by participating.

I believe those form a basic criteria, yet the issue can get far more complicated. For example, in the process of writing a story and getting it published, there may be pressures by publishing editors to add elements to make it more attractive to potential readers, providing worldly appeal yet detracting from the story's original Christian witness. Although that may be uncommon in book publishing, it's the norm when a novel is made into a movie.

Similarly, screenplays may start out fulfilling the basic criteria above, but once it is sold to a film company, the writer usually loses control of his story. The end product is the result of input from studio executives, producers, a director, actors,

and a host of others. In this collaborative secular medium, which is primarily profit driven and often morally bankrupt, it would be rare for the resulting movie to maintain the integrity of the original script.

The challenge for an actor who wants to honor the Lord in such a career is terribly difficult. Consider how few movies there are today that reflect a biblical worldview. That certainly doesn't allow for many opportunities to develop one's acting abilities; the chances drop even more, considering the competition for parts in the few films that may be acceptable. Furthermore, even when a story presents the consequences of evil that support what the Bible teaches, that presentation of evil through its characters may be so graphic (involving sex, nudity, violence, filthy language, etc.) that it would be a compromise of one's faith to portray such a character.

The entertainment industry is incredibly seductive, and I know numerous Christian friends and acquaintances whose faith and walk with the Lord were wrecked because of their involvement in "Hollywood," which is both a system and a place that the world has acknowledged as "sin city." I also know a few who have traveled that spiritual minefield with some success, yet not without experiencing many "battle wounds" in the process. There are a small number of Christian film companies that have had control of their final product and were able to keep their films' integrity intact, but fewer still that were able to be successful in a secular industry that controls the marketplace. Numbers-wise, that doesn't bode well for a potential career in producing, directing, acting, screenwriting, and many of the other creative film arts.

Nonetheless, any biblical Christian who is considering a career in the entertainment industry—in my view and from my experience—must be grounded in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), must be totally submitted to the Lord (Galatians 2:20; James 4:7,8), and must be thoroughly convinced by faith (Romans 1:17) that God has called him or her into such an endeavor.

QUESTION: I'm confused by a book that is very popular among my circle of Christian friends. It's titled *The Shack*, and although it is endorsed by some leading evangelicals, I was freaked out by it and couldn't actually finish it. I don't understand how anyone thinks he can put God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in a fictional situation and then have

them speak the words out of his own imagination. Isn't this dead wrong?

RESPONSE: Yes. It's also blasphemy. Here is a definition of that word from *Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*: "[It] is an injury offered to God, by denying that which is due and belonging to Him, or attributing to Him that which is not [true to] His nature." *The Shack's* author, William P. Young, conjures up God the Father as a hip-talking, now-and-then crude black woman referred to as "Papa," Jesus as a sometimes inept good ol' boy enamored with His humanity and creation, and the Holy Spirit as a wisp of a woman from Asia, who gardens and collects tears. Shouldn't that be enough to turn off or offend those who profess to truly know the God of the Bible? Evidently not. Christians have pushed sales of *The Shack* to beyond one million copies at this writing.

Idolatry is another major abomination of the book. Young manufactures out of his own imagination an image of God and the Holy Spirit. That is condemned (Exodus 20:4) by God for understandable reasons. Any attempt by finite, fallen man even to hint at a material image of Deity would result in an absolutely false representation, let alone an offensive caricature of Almighty God. Furthermore, these two Persons of the Trinity are Spirits, who never appear in physical form, certainly not as females (nor in drag, which the Scriptures condemn!), nor are they ever referred to as female.

The Shack is clearly the work of a false prophet. The sense in which we're using the word "prophet" here is not that of declaring forthcoming events but rather speaking forth the words of God (2 Peter 1:20,21). The dialogue Young has created for his fictional God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is heretical and a defamation against the character of the Persons of the Godhead. For example, Papa declares to the central figure, "Well, Mackenzie, don't just stand there gawkin' with your mouth open like your pants are full." Jesus, who can't seem to restrain his giggles and chuckles, after receiving a kiss from Papa and loving "her" earthiness, declares, "She's a riot." "Mack's" interaction with *his* "trinity" is part-time funfest, part-time inner healing methodologies and catharses, and part-time God explaining Himself (which He left out of the Bible!), and all of it intermingled with hugs, kisses, and other displays that reveal them to be *so much like us*.

The audacity of anyone putting his own words in the mouth of God, Jesus, or the

Holy Spirit (under the guise of fiction or not) is beneath contempt. Incredibly, that hasn't deterred conservative evangelical leader Gale Erwin, charismatic leader James Ryle, Emerging Church writer Jim Palmer, and evangelical celebrity Michael W. Smith from endorsing *The Shack*, and many Christians can't seem to get enough of its "make me feel better about myself and God" talk.

Cultists have written volumes claiming to speak for God; now we have it in the church! Ravi Zacharias wrote three supposedly apologetic books not too long ago featuring Jesus in conversation with Buddha, Oscar Wilde, and Confucius. Eugene Peterson, whose *The Message Bible* majored in substituting his own words for God's, is the featured endorser of *The Shack* ("This book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* did for his. It's that good!"). No, "this book" is one more instrument of Satan's grand scheme to undermine the Word of God for this generation, the basis of which began in the Garden of Eden with his seductive words to Eve: "Yea, hath God said...?"

Space prevents me from further exposing the rampant heresies, psychobabble, and the pervasive denigration of God, His Word, and His church throughout *The Shack*. But then, if what has been presented above isn't reason enough to reject the book, or an appeal to be a Berean, it's unlikely that a few more pages of input will be either convincing or convicting, especially for the many who claim their lives have been forever changed by this work of antibiblical fiction.

Endnotes

1. The Kalachakra Initiation explained: <http://www.buddhanet.net/kalini.htm>.

2. The Shadow of the Dalai Lama: <http://www.trimondi.de/EN/deba03.html>.

The Shameful Social Gospel

T. A. McMahon

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

Romans 1:16

For various reasons, Christians of different sorts have tinkered with “the gospel of Christ” as though it needed adjustments. Not major alterations, most will tell you, but just some minor tweaking here and there. The changes often begin by one’s declaring that there is no real change involved, simply a shift in emphasis. Yet, no matter what the rationale may be, the end result is being “ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”

To be “ashamed of the gospel” covers a number of attitudes from being totally embarrassed by it to thinking one can improve upon it a bit to make it more acceptable. One example of the former is the recent claim by an Emerging Church author that the teaching regarding Christ’s paying the full penalty for the sins of mankind through His substitutionary death on the Cross is irrelevant and viewed as “a form of cosmic child abuse.” More subtle examples include trying to make the gospel seem less exclusive, and the “softening” of the consequences from which the gospel saves mankind, such as the wrath of God and the Lake of Fire.

Prevalent among many religious leaders who profess to be evangelical Christians (i.e., Bible-believing Christians) is the promotion of a gospel that is acceptable to, and even admired by, people throughout the world. Today, the most popular form of this is the social gospel.

Although the social gospel is common to many new movements among evangelicals, it is not new to Christendom. It had its modern beginning in the late 1800s, when it developed as a way to address the various conditions in society that caused suffering among the populace. The belief was, and is, that Christianity will attract followers when it demonstrates its love for mankind. This could be best accomplished by helping to alleviate the suffering of humanity caused by poverty, disease, oppressive work conditions, society’s injustices, civil rights abuses, etc. Those who fostered this movement also believed that relief from their conditions of misery would improve the moral nature of those so deprived.

Another driving force behind the introduction of the social gospel was the escha-

tological, or end times, views of those involved. Nearly all were amillennialists or post-millennialists. The former believed that they were living in a (symbolic thousand-year) time period in which Christ was ruling from heaven, Satan was bound, and they were God’s workers appointed to bring about a kingdom on earth worthy of Christ. Post-millennialists also believed they were in the Millennium, and their goal was to restore the earth to its Eden-like state in order for Christ to return from Heaven to rule over His earthly kingdom.

The social gospel, in all of its assorted applications, helped to produce some achievements (child labor laws and women’s suffrage) that have contributed to the welfare of society. It became the primary gospel of liberal theologians and mainline denominations throughout the 20th century. Although its popularity alternately rose and fell as it ran its course, it was often energized by the combination of religion and liberal politics, e.g., Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement. Midway through the last century and later, the social gospel influenced developments such as the liberation theology of Roman Catholicism and the socialism of left-leaning evangelical Christians. It is in this present century, however, that the social gospel has gotten its most extensive promotion. Two men, both professing to be evangelicals, have led the way.

George W. Bush began his presidency by instituting the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. His objective was to provide government funding for local churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious ministries that were providing a social service to their community. Bush believed that programs run by “people of faith” could be at least as effective as secular organizations in helping the needy, and perhaps more so because of their moral commitment to “love and serve their neighbor.” As he prepares to leave office, he has declared that he considers his Faith-Based program to be one of the foremost achievements in his tenure as president. Presidential candidate Barack Obama stated that, should he win the election, he will continue the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

Rick Warren, the mega-selling author of *The Purpose-Driven Church* and *The Purpose-Driven Life*, has taken the social gospel to where it’s never been before: not only worldwide but into the thinking and planning of world leaders. Warren credits business management genius Peter Drucker with the basic concept that he is executing.

Drucker believed that the social problems of poverty, disease, hunger, and ignorance were beyond the capability of governments or multinational corporations to solve. To Drucker, the most hopeful solution would be found in the nonprofit sector of society, especially churches, with their hosts of volunteers dedicated to alleviating the social ills of those in their community.

Warren, acknowledging the late Drucker as his mentor for 20 years, certainly learned his lessons. His two *Purpose-Driven* books, translated into 57 languages and selling a combined 30 million copies, reveal the game plan for what Drucker had envisioned. Warren had local churches implement this vision from his books through his enormously popular 40 Days of Purpose and 40 Days of Community programs. To date, 500,000 churches in 162 nations have become part of his network. They form the basis for his Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan.

What is his P.E.A.C.E. plan? Warren’s presentation of the plan to the church is found at www.thepeaceplan.com. On video, he identifies the “giants” of humanity’s ills as spiritual emptiness, self-centered leadership, poverty, disease, and illiteracy, which he hopes to eradicate by (P)lanting churches, (E)quipping leaders, (A)ssisting the poor, (C)aring for the sick, and (E)ducating the next generation.

Warren uses the analogy of a three-legged stool to illustrate the best way to slay these giants. Two of the legs are governments and business, which have thus far been ineffective, and, just like a two-legged stool, cannot stand. The third very necessary leg is the church. “There are thousands of villages in the world that have no school, no clinic, no business, no government—but they have a church. What would happen if we could mobilize churches to address those five global giants?” Warren reasons that since there are 2.3 billion Christians worldwide, they could potentially form what President Bush has termed a vast “army of compassion” of “people of faith” such as the world has not yet experienced.

In addition to the *Christian version*, Warren has an expanded *inclusive version* of the P.E.A.C.E. plan that has drawn support and praise from political and religious leaders and celebrities worldwide. At the 2008 World Economic Forum, he declared, “The future of the world is not secularism, but religious pluralism....” Referring to the ills besetting the world, he declared, “We cannot solve these problems without involving people of faith and their religious institutions. It isn’t going to happen any other way. On this planet there are about

20 million Jews, there are about 600 million Buddhists, there are about 800 million Hindus, there are over 1 billion Muslims, and there are 2.3 billion Christians. If you take people of faith out of the equation, you have ruled out five-sixths of the world. And if we only leave it up to secular people to solve these major problems, it isn't going to happen" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGytW4yh0C8>).

To accommodate working with people of all faiths Warren has revised the "P" in his P.E.A.C.E. from "planting evangelical churches" to "(P)romoting reconciliation" and the "E" from "equipping [church] leaders" to "(E)quipping ethical leaders." Warren has elsewhere acknowledged his practical shift to pluralism: "Who's the man of peace in any village—or it might be a woman of peace—who has the most respect?...They don't have to be Christian. In fact, they could be Muslim, but they're open and they're influential, and you work with them to attack the five giants [to which he has added global warming]." He quotes a secular leader who affirms what he's doing: "I get it, Rick. Houses of worship are the distribution centers for all we need to do."

Warren has joined the advisory board of Faith Foundation, established by former British prime minister and recent Roman Catholic convert Tony Blair. The Foundation's goal is to further understanding and cooperation among the six leading faiths: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jewish. How does the Cross fit into this ecumenical gathering? It doesn't. Critical to achieving that ecumenical goal is the elimination of the problem of *exclusive* religions, a concern articulated by one of the World Economic Forum panelists: "There are some religious leaders in different religious faiths who, in seeking to affirm their own faith and its authenticity and legitimacy...deny other people their faith with its legitimacy and authenticity. I don't think we can keep going like this without... spawning the kind of hatred we are all here to try and solve. I think it's up to us to hold the clergy's feet to the fire of whatever faith. That we insist that we affirm what is beautiful in our own traditions while at the same time refusing to denigrate other faith traditions by suggesting that they are illegitimate, or consigned to some kind of evil end."

The Bible declares all the religions of the world to be "illegitimate" and "consigned" not to "some kind of evil end" but to their *just* end. Only belief in the biblical gospel saves humanity: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name

[Jesus Christ] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved;...He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Acts 4:12; John 3:36).

The history of the social gospel is, in nearly every case, a sincere attempt by Christians to do those things that they believe will honor God and benefit humanity. In every case, however, the practical working out of "benefiting humanity" has compromised biblical faith and dishonored God. Why is that? God's Word gives no commission to the church to fix the problems of the world. Those who attempt to do so are starting out under a false premise, "...a way which seemeth right unto a man," not *God's* way. So where can it go from there? "The end thereof are the ways of death," i.e., destruction (Proverbs 14:12). Furthermore, the problems of the world are all *symptoms*. The root cause is sin.

What percentage of the "people of faith," who comprise all religions and make up five-sixths of the world's population, understand and accept the gospel—the only cure for sin? Or how many of the 2.3 billion "Christians" in the world believe the biblical gospel? The numbers tumble down exponentially. "Yes, but...they are a massive volunteer force and distribution outlet of resources for slaying the giants of world suffering!" What does it profit the billions of "people of faith" who may alleviate some of the world's symptoms yet lose their very souls?

The social gospel is a deadly disease for "people of faith." It reinforces the belief that salvation can be attained by doing good works, putting aside differences for the common good, treating others the way we want to be treated, acting morally, ethically, and sacrificially—and that doing so will endear humans to God. No. These are self-deceptive strivings that spurn God's salvation, deny His perfect standard, and reject His perfect justice. Salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." In fact, it is "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8,9). Jesus declared Himself to be condemned humanity's only hope for reconciliation with God: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). There is no other way, because God's perfect justice demanded that the penalty for sin for every human ("for all have sinned"—Romans 3:23) be paid. Only the perfect, sinless God-Man could and did pay that infinite penalty in full by His death upon the Cross. Only faith in

Him reconciles a person with God.

The shameful social gospel today not only promotes "another gospel," it helps prepare a kingdom contrary to the teachings of Scripture. "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). He will return from heaven (John 14:3) to "rapture," or catch, those who believe in Him (His bride) up into the clouds and take them to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The kingdom that remains on the earth will be the kingdom of the Antichrist.

Consistent with its amillennial/postmillennial beginnings, the efforts of the social gospel are earthbound in their attempted restoration of the kingdom of God. Eugene Peterson has infiltrated that heresy into his *Message Bible*: "God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again" (a perversion of John 3:17).

Rob Bell, in his book *Velvet Elvis*, reflects the "fix the earth" eschatology of nearly all Emerging Church leaders: "Salvation is the entire universe being brought back into harmony with its maker. This has huge implications for how people present the message of Jesus. Yes, Jesus can come into our hearts. But we can join a movement that is as wide and as big as the universe itself. Rocks and trees and birds and swamps and ecosystems. God's desire is to restore all of it...The goal isn't escaping this world but making this world the kind of place God can come to. And God is remaking us into the kind of people who can do this kind of work."

For Emerging Church leader Brian McLaren, this is the future way of life for the Christian. In an interview July 28, 2008, on *ChristianPost.com*, he said: "I think our future will also require us to join humbly and charitably with people of other faiths—Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, secularists, and others—in pursuit of peace, environmental stewardship, and justice for all people, things that matter greatly to the heart of God." No, what matters to the "heart of God" is "that all should come to repentance" and believe the gospel.

Anyone who puts his hope in this social gospel, which employs "people of faith" to make "this world the kind of place God can come to," needs to heed the words of Jesus in Luke 18:8: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" People of *all faiths*, yes, but certainly not *the* faith, for which Jude exhorts true believers to earnestly contend. Lord, help us all not to be ashamed of Your gospel!

TBC

Quotable

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). There is a great difference between prayer and the life of prayer. Almost everyone prays, but very few pray without ceasing. This is the habit of devotion. This is the altar of incense ever burning in the Holy Place. This is the fragrance of a heart that lives in the presence of the Holy One, and breathes the very life of God. This is the deep undertone of a sanctified life. It is from this that the sweetness, the gladness, the holiness, and the helpfulness come. Lord, teach us the habit of prayer, the prayer that springs spontaneously from the heart, and which neither secular duty, satanic temptation, nor the waves of sorrow, can interrupt, but which is only stimulated by the things that try us, until every experience becomes transformed into an occasion for communion and fellowship with God.

A. B. Simpson

Q&A

QUESTION: Would you please help me to understand Philippians chapter 1, verses 15-18: “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.” It seems like this opens the door to anyone who “names the name of Jesus.”

RESPONSE: Paul, who pointedly warned the Corinthians against receiving “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4) whom he did not preach, could not therefore be giving license to anyone who preaches a false Christ. No, Paul’s concern here was the motivation of the heart of those who preached the biblical Jesus. Some were envious of other Christians and/or their ministries. Though resentful, their message about Jesus Christ was true to the Word of God. In their methods of ministering, however, they wronged Paul or others who were receiving more attention, who were being more highly thought of, or who had a larger following, etc.

The attitude of those who preached “Christ of contention, not sincerely” involved selfish ambition. They even went beyond inwardly delighting in Paul’s incarceration in Rome to somehow implying

that his imprisonment was his own fault, thereby attempting to discredit him among their own supporters and those of Paul.

Paul, however, although he often corrected individuals and ministries that were deviating from the truth of God’s Word, held preaching Christ *in truth* as paramount. His love of Christ and the gospel transcended his own suffering—in particular, the afflictions generated by envious Christians—yet by God’s grace he could declare, “Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

QUESTION: I recently read an article on *onenewsnow.com* in which T.A. McMahon was quoted as being in opposition to what Rick Warren is doing to encourage Christians to help solve many of the problems that have plagued the world. I’m surprised that anyone who calls himself a Christian would object to his humanitarian efforts. Isn’t Pastor Warren simply exhorting us to fulfill the numerous verses in the Bible that would have us demonstrate our Christianity by our good works?

RESPONSE: One of the main purposes of *The Berean Call* is to encourage believers to check out what they are being told or taught against what is presented in the Scriptures. That is not only what I encourage, it’s what I try to do in my own life. The articles quoted me accurately as I challenged the biblical basis for what Rick Warren is promoting. No matter how sincere someone’s “humanitarian efforts” may be, if they are not supported by the Word of God, they constitute “a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

Warren has a goal of trying to solve the most pervasive ills of the world (poverty, disease, ignorance, the environment, etc.) through the involvement of “people of faith,” i.e., those who follow the world’s various religions. Initially (it seemed), his agenda was intended only for Christians and, supposedly, evangelical churches that would prioritize sharing the gospel in addition to doing good works. That later changed to allow the potential inclusion of the 2.3 billion people of every religious grouping that calls itself Christian (Catholics, Baptists, Orthodox, Mormons, Lutherans, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Unitarians, etc.). Now it includes *all religious people groups* (amounting to five-sixths of the world’s population) and their houses of worship as distribution centers for the goods and services required to meet the needs of the suffering world. This is Warren’s 50-year global P.E.A.C.E. plan.¹

The practicality of what Warren hopes to do is rife with problems that I doubt many of Warren’s supporters have considered. For example, what religious group is in charge of this global religious operation, and which one will manage it at a regional and local level? Doctrinal differences are no small matter. Catholics today are persecuting evangelicals and Pentecostals throughout South America. Sunnis are killing Shiites and vice versa. Hindus are attacking Christian missionaries. Muslims are murdering Jews and burning Christian churches. Beyond that, and should there be some successes, who is given the glory, and who is to be thanked? Allah? Buddha? Jehovah? The Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints? Ganesha, the Elephant God, or Shiva, the Destroyer?

Warren addressed an audience of diverse religions at the World Economic Forum recently and presented his P.E.A.C.E. plan. He brought up the motivation for doing good, i.e., relieving the suffering of humanity, and noted that *his* motivation was Jesus Christ. He acknowledged that this wasn’t *their* motivation and then added that it mattered little to him what their motivation was as long as they “did good.”² “Good works” is the common denominator that Rick hopes will bring about the cooperative efforts necessary for his P.E.A.C.E. program to be successful. Successful according to whose standard? The world’s or God’s?

The critical question here is: Are Warren’s humanitarian efforts true to the teachings of the Word of God or not? Good works aside for the moment, the fundamental issue is whether or not the Bible teaches an *exclusive God* and *the one way* of salvation. That is certainly its claim from Genesis to Revelation. Consider the following among hundreds of verses: “I am the LORD, and there is none else, and there is no God beside me.” (Isaiah 45:5); “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour” (Isaiah 43:11); “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13); “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name [Jesus Christ] under heaven given among men, whereby we *must* be saved” (Acts 4:12); “I [Jesus Christ] am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

If there is no other true God but the God revealed in the Bible, and if salvation comes only through Jesus Christ—as the Scriptures declare—then all other gods and other ways of salvation are false, with

no hope for their followers. That's not a message that paves the way for collaboration among the world's religions. One of the panelists sitting next to Warren at the Davos World Economic Forum complained that those who claim that their faith is the only true faith, and who deny the legitimacy of other religions, breed hatred and obstruct the cooperation that is imperative among people of faith who are working for the common good. Warren made no comment.

Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that God's salvation is received only by grace through faith, and that it is "not of [good] works, lest any man should boast." This belief is contrary to that of all the religions of the world; salvation for their followers is earned, obtained, realized, accomplished, etc., by their good works. To encourage that delusion today is akin to patting the lost on the back for working for the "common good" while ushering them into an eternity separated from God and subject to His wrath and the everlasting torments of the Lake of Fire.

The Bible makes a clear and continual distinction between the saved and the lost, the lives of the regenerate and the unregenerate, and those who are born again spiritually and the spiritually dead. There is nothing "good" the lost can do to please God (Romans 3:10-18). "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). They can neither receive nor know the "the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). They walk "in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17-19). They are "dead in trespasses and sins," subject to "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:1,2). They are God's enemies (Romans 5:10).

It is for these reasons that the Apostle Paul tells us, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Corinthians 6:14,15). The believer is exhorted to minister *to* unbelievers—but not *with* them.

Far from being a pride issue among Christians, every believer knows that he or she was once in the condition the verses above describe. Moreover, believers know

full well that it is only by God's grace and mercy that anyone can be saved, and that salvation is freely available to whosoever will receive God's gift of eternal life with Him.

Christians certainly can be—and have been—wonderfully involved in humanitarian efforts as witnesses of the love of Christ. Titus 2:14 indicates that those who are saved are to be "zealous of good works." Ephesians 2:10 tells us that Christians have been saved "unto good works." However, that witness can be quickly compromised as it accommodates man's way of accomplishing man's objectives rather than following the Scriptures. Furthermore, there is not a hint from the life of Christ or the acts of the apostles of any model or organized program for the church directed at eradicating poverty, disease, environmental abuse, ignorance, etc.—all symptoms of the sin condition of the world and the sin nature of mankind. The gospel is mankind's only hope. Therefore, anything that does not conform to the biblical gospel and to the truth of the Word of God in attempting to aid mankind, no matter how sincere, is a disservice of eternal proportions leading to dreadful consequences.

Jesus warned those who *in His name* believed they had "done many wonderful works" yet not according to "the will of my Father which is in heaven": "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Endnotes

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGytW4yh0C8>.

2. Ibid.

Confronting the Enemies of God

Dave Hunt

In the time leading to the November elections and for months thereafter we will be subjected to a barrage of promises from politicians—promises, many of which will almost certainly not be kept. At the same time, atheists, who deny there is any purpose or meaning to life (but then what is the point of elections, an education, or any other endeavor?) are riding the crest of a new wave of open rebellion against God that seems to be gathering popular momentum.

Democrats in particular are promising change. Everything is going to get better under their leadership. This has ever been the promise of new administrations, even of dictatorships. Sometimes it seems to look good for a while until the usual human imperfections take over.

Such was the case with the French Revolution. It began with excitement and high hopes for a new beginning for a financially and morally bankrupt France. It was to have ushered in a golden age of economic, political, and social reform with liberty for all. That noble goal disintegrated into a Reign of Terror scarcely equaled in modern history.

Nearly all of the political dreamers, who in their idealism had helped to foment the Revolution and had sought to purify it as they saw it veering off course and spinning out of control, perished as its tragic victims at the hands of fellow revolutionaries. Not the least of these victims was Madame Roland, a member with her husband of the more moderate Girondist faction of the revolutionary movement. The two had presided in their Paris home over a salon of socially prominent intellectuals.

As the Revolution gained momentum and became more radical, the Girondists fell out of favor. In the frenzy of idealistic fervor, Madame Roland was arrested (her husband succeeded in escaping). While confined in a prison for several months, she was offered many secret plans for her escape but refused them all. Her fate was sealed when the Girondist leaders, after a seven-day trial, were found guilty of counterrevolutionary activities and were executed on October 31, 1793.

Madame Roland's trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal followed on November 8. Pronounced guilty of "conspiracy against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, and the liberty and safety of the French people," and allowed no word in her own defense, her execution was set for that very afternoon.

Carried by cart to the foot of the guillotine in the Place de la Revolution, she mounted, with head held high, the stairs to the platform. Before placing her head on the block, Madame Roland bowed to the sculptor David's famous statue of Liberty nearby. "Oh, Liberty!" she exclaimed. "What crimes are committed in thy name!" These were her last words to a France gone mad.

Hearing of her death, her fugitive husband set out for Paris on foot to make one last appeal for the Revolution's leaders to live up to its popular slogan, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." At last, too weak to continue the journey, Jean Roland took his own life in a lonely field.

The Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century had prepared the way for the French Revolution and largely shaped its policies and ideals. Maximilien Robespierre came to power shortly after the Revolution began. He led in curbing the power of the Roman Catholic Church, reducing its property holdings and wealth, imposing limitations on the clergy, and turning France into a largely atheistic country. The Revolution brought atheism out of the salons of the wealthy and into the streets of Paris. As with the Communist Revolution later, the denial of God became a major driving force. French society remains largely atheistic to this day, though the vast majority still call themselves Catholics.

The fact that many of the popes were among the most evil monsters in history has never seemed to faze more than a small minority of Roman Catholics. My files are filled with accounts of pedophilia and other evils practiced by Rome's clergy long before these crimes finally gained public attention. Nor have Roman Catholic leaders been alone in their hypocritical denial with their lives of what they professed with their lips. Protestant leaders have been guilty as well, from Jim and Tammy Bakker (who once reigned over a vast "Christian" domain from their PTL television studios) to Ted Haggard (discredited pastor of a 12,000-member church in Colorado Springs and head of the 30,000-member National Association of Evangelicals)—and many more like them.

Such reprobates have given Christ and Christianity a bad name, but unfairly so. They should not be looked upon as representing Him because, like the Crusaders, their deeds violated the teachings of Christ and mocked the perfect, sinless example He demonstrated with His life. Nor are recent examples of trusted religious leaders professing one thing and living another anything new. Christ rebuked the Jews of His own day by quoting one of their prophets:

Ye hypocrites, well did [Isaiah] prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.... In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Mt 15:7-9; Is 29:13)

Atheists repeatedly insist that no one needs God to act morally. We do not deny that an atheist can act in a moral manner. It is asserted that moral actions are the result of natural selection—that they arose because of their survival benefit and have nothing to do with actual right and wrong or with a nonexistent "god." But moral *acts*, if they are the product of evolution, have no moral *basis*. The atheist, though he claims to be as moral in his actions as a Christian, is acting out of selfishness or for momentary expediency, not for morality's sake. This is a far cry from the selfless love the Bible ascribes to God and requires from those who claim to be His followers. Nobel laureate Sir John Eccles said:

The facts of human morality and ethics are clearly at variance with a theory that explains all behavior in terms of self-preservation and the preservation of the species.¹

Atheists are so confused about morals that they are backing human rights for apes. And why shouldn't they? Richard Dawkins, in his crusade against God, could not say it more clearly:

There is no objective basis on which to elevate one species above another. Chimp and human, lizard and fungus, we have all evolved over some three billion years by a process known as natural selection.²

Does a chimp, lizard, or fungus know anything of morals? Isn't that deficiency a sufficient basis for elevating humans above a fungus? This is an incredible statement to be made by any rational person, but Dawkins is dead serious! As a leading atheist and evolutionist, how could he be consistent and say anything else? How is it possible that the scientific world, as well as the public at large, actually believe this nonsense and honor this man as a scientist and scholar? How has this insanity become science? Give atheism full credit!

According to Dawkins, the history of mankind is nothing more than the history of a colony of chimpanzees—or garden slugs, for that matter! What of art, music, science, libraries, universities, museums? All are meaningless in evolution!

Nor can we blame Hitler or the underlings who ran the extermination camps for simply doing what was programmed into their genes by natural selection. If our sense of what is right and wrong, ethical and moral, is in our genes, how can evil be blamed on anyone?

Or how can anyone be commended for doing good? If one's sense of right and wrong is the result of chemical reactions in the brain, why should we honor such standards?

Jonas Salk believed this pitiful nonsense and earnestly expressed its hopelessness: "We do not have to survive as a species. What is important is that we keep evolving."³ How can our evolution be important if it doesn't matter whether or not we survive as a species? The Declaration of Independence attributes the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" not to nature but to nature's *God*.

Equality is nowhere found in nature. It could never be the outcome of evolution through natural selection. Moreover, consciousness has neither physical qualities nor location anywhere in the physical world, so how could it evolve?

Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard professor of biology, wrote:

Souls represent a subject outside the magisterium of science. My world cannot prove or disprove such a notion, and the concept of souls cannot threaten or impact my domain.

He couldn't be more wrong! The soul that he admitted might exist is nonphysical, and its existence does not end with the death of the body. No part of the physical body thinks. The brain certainly does not initiate our thoughts. No one wonders what one's brain might think of next.

The soul and spirit are the real person—the one who makes the choices, is conscious, and is accountable to God for every thought, word, and deed. The soul and spirit, being nonmaterial, are not subject to the laws of physics and chemistry and will therefore continue forever, either in joyful union with the Creator or in the horror of eternal separation and remorse.

Gould went on to say:

I surely honor the metaphorical value of such a concept [soul] both for grounding moral discussion and for expressing what we most value about human potentiality: our decency, care, and all the ethical and intellectual struggles that the evolution of consciousness imposed upon us.⁴

But wait—consciousness is not physical, so how could it evolve?

Sadly, the only thing that evolutionists can acknowledge when it comes to morality is that it is some kind of metaphorical representation—but of what? How do "metaphorical representations" *evolve*? A metaphor is supposed to be a clearer way of conveying an idea, but what idea? Evolutionists cannot admit that morals have any reality or meaning

in themselves. Of course this must be their thinking, because atheists are materialists. Those who accept such doubletalk have lost the very "soul" to which Gould referred. Nor could Gould have explained what he meant by "soul." It certainly has no physical substance. When the evolutionist enters the realm of morality, he has nothing meaningful to say. He acknowledges the existence of nothing but matter. Clearly, this view leaves out most of what is dear to the human heart. What is the physical description of truth, or of ideals, or of hope, or of meaning? If everything began with a Big Bang and has simply proceeded randomly from that point, from whence would it derive meaning? Evolution cannot supply meaning to anything that it supposedly produces.

Although it may seem that the enemies of the Lord are impervious to our best arguments, we can be certain that they cannot forever escape their God-given consciences. Though it may not get their attention until they die, at that moment the truth they have ridiculed for so long will come crashing in upon them in convicting power. Then will begin the eternal horror that Jesus repeatedly warned about: "There will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51, etc.).

Solomon declared, "The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly" (Prv 20:27). This is the conscience that no one can escape in the end, though it may be stifled for a time by the deceitfulness of one's heart. David expressed what must be the desire of every person who loves the truth, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23,24).

God's Word promises, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prv 1:7). Twice David warned, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps 14:1; 53:1). Today's *new atheists*, while winning millions, make it very clear that they hate God. What should the reaction of God's people be?

The Psalmist declared that if Israel had only hearkened to God and walked in His ways, He would have "subdued their enemies, turned [His] hand against their adversaries," and blessed them abundantly. (Ps 81:11-16). David wrote, "Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Ps 139:21,22). *Perfect hatred?*

Paul explains that evil exists in the world because God has revealed Himself to all

mankind and they not only have refused to honor Him, but they have turned against the Creator that every thinking person knows exists (Rom 1:18-23)—and *actually hate Him*. Here is Paul's inspired description of today's world of Christ rejecters:

And even as they did *not like to retain God in their knowledge*, God gave them over to a reprobate mind...being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, *haters of God*, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. [Emphasis added] (Rom 1:28-32)

The key phrase, "haters of God," is prophetic of our day. It is particularly manifest in the new wave of aggressive atheism led by the "four horsemen" of the "New Atheists" (Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris). These four are leading a new and growing movement that declares that belief in God is not only beyond credulity but wicked and must be stamped out for the good of mankind.

Our day is witnessing a new phenomenon unheard of in the past: books by atheists are selling by the millions. This includes not only those by authors openly declaring themselves to be God haters but by many who hide their atheism in intriguing fiction such as *The Golden Compass*, or the *Harry Potter* series (although J. K. Rowling professes to be a Christian), and even stories supposedly based on fact but that are full of clever lies, such as *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Secret*, etc.

What are Christians to do? Isaiah speaks of these days and what the Holy Spirit will do, in which scenario we must surely play an important part. If ever there was a day when "the enemy has come in like a flood" it is now. Isaiah foretells that when that happens, "...the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Is 59:19). The word "him" can only refer to a personal being, and that must be Satan.

This is a very real battle, of which most Christians hardly seem aware. Many of the books of only 20 years ago written by creationists and other Christian apologists, although excellent at the time, are not up to refuting what the New Atheists are writing today. By God's grace, *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny* is being written specifically to confound God's enemies of today. Your prayers to that end would be much appreciated. **TBC**

Quotable

A new Decalogue has been adopted by the neo-Christians of our day, the first word of which reads “Thou shalt not disagree;” and a new set of Beatitudes too, which begins “Blessed are they that tolerate everything, for they shall not be made accountable for anything.” It is now the accepted thing to talk over religious differences in public with the understanding that no one will try to convert another or point out errors in his belief.

Imagine Moses agreeing to take part in a panel discussion with Israel over the golden calf; or Elijah engaging in a gentlemanly dialogue with the prophets of Baal. Or try to picture our Lord Jesus Christ seeking a meeting of the minds with the Pharisees to iron out differences.

The blessing of God is promised to the peacemaker, but the religious negotiator had better watch his step. Darkness and light can never be brought together by talk. Some things are not negotiable.

A.W. Tozer, Gems From Tozer, 47-48

Q&A

QUESTION: Could you please tell me how “you alone” were given the authority to interpret Scripture “without error,” since you show in your writings that persons who do not agree with you are “false teachers.” At least the pope admits that he believes that he is infallible in the teaching of faith and morals and the interpretation of Scripture when he is speaking “ex cathedra.” Why aren’t you brave enough to admit that you believe you are infallible, since you act just like the pope? At least he is not a hypocrite. Second Peter 1:20 states that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.” Why do you claim in your book *A Woman Rides the Beast* that the Catholic Church is this woman? Peter forbade this! He also warned of people who “twist the scripture to their own destruction”—people just like you!

RESPONSE: You seem to be troubled by many grave misunderstandings. *Never* have I even implied, much less stated, that “I alone have the authority to interpret Scripture without error” or that I’m “infallible.” *Never* have I said that anyone was wrong or a false teacher because of disagreeing with me.

Individuals or churches are teaching false doctrine not because they disagree

with me but when they contradict the Bible. Who is to decide what is the correct interpretation of the Bible? *Never* does the Bible suggest that any special authority exists either within or without the church that alone can interpret the Bible.

Every true Christian has been born again by believing the gospel and is indwelt with the same Holy Spirit who inspired “Holy men of God” (2 Pt 1:21) to write the Bible. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, every true Christian can understand what the Bible says and doesn’t need any special authority to interpret it. Claiming that they have such authority is one of the many false doctrines of the Roman Catholic pope and magisterium. John tells us: “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you” (1 Jn 2:27).

This is the clear teaching all through both Old and New Testaments. For example, God told Israel, “Man doth not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Dt 8:3). Notice that it just says “man.” He needn’t be a rabbi or have any special education, experience, or other unique qualifications, nor does he need to consult such persons in order to understand and live by the Bible. Apparently any man (or woman) who knows God and His Word can understand what the Bible says.

Consider also, “Blessed is the man... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Ps 1:2). Again, an ordinary man, without any special education or other qualifications except, of course, that he knows God and His Word, can meditate upon, understand, and benefit from Scripture. Likewise, Psalm 119:9 clearly declares that even a “young man” without any assistance from anyone to interpret it can understand and heed God’s Word and thereby “cleanse his way.” Furthermore, even a young child can learn and understand the Bible. Paul wrote to Timothy: “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tm 3:15). Was his father a rabbi who taught him? No, his father was a Greek. He was taught by his “grandmother Lois and [his] mother Eunice” (2 Tm 1:5).

Why do I “claim in...*A Woman Rides the Beast* that the Catholic Church is this woman?” That book gives 14 identifying characteristics from Revelation 17 that clearly identify this woman as the Roman Catholic Church. You couldn’t read that book without being convinced. If you

have any specific objections after reading it again, please let me know and I will be happy to discuss them.

QUESTION: In the June 2008 issue of *The Berean Call*, you make the statement, “Everyone knows that to spank teenagers would not bring correction but anger and resentment. Is that because teenagers can stand the pain? No, it is because physical pain has no moral or spiritual benefit.” If it has no moral or spiritual benefit, why would the Proverbs so avidly promote the use of the rod?

RESPONSE: We read, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.... Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.... Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die” (Prvs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13,14).

It seems clear that Solomon is referring to young children, who can certainly benefit from physical discipline, if it is administered in love and moderation.

QUESTION: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...,” Hebrews 10:25 says. In these days of false teaching and apostasy, it’s sometimes hard to find fellow believers who continue in biblical teaching. Many are reading the latest book or want to get together to watch a “Christian” comedian or video. If one is unable to find suitable fellowship according to biblical standards, what is the alternative? Is it sinful to separate to the point of being secluded?

RESPONSE: I don’t know your specific situation, but whether in a church fellowship or not, and especially if you have children, you must daily have home Bible instruction and prayer. Don’t depend on a “church” to fulfill this need. If your present church is lacking in sound biblical teaching, discuss your concerns with your pastor and/or elders in a non-confrontive way. At the same time, be faithful in serving the needs, both physical and spiritual, of your present brothers and sisters in Christ.

As a last resort, separation may be necessary. Others may wish to join you in a home fellowship. I can think of many large churches that had such small beginnings.

Above all, guard against Elijah’s plaint, “I, even I only am left” (1 Ki 19:10). Remember instead that Paul found soul-satisfying fellowship with his Lord even

in prison (Acts 16:25). May God bless and lead in your decision in this matter.

QUESTION: I watched one of your videos recently where you were praising the Jews. Do you realize that these Antichrists hate the Christian faith? As an Orthodox Christian, I object to their Talmud, their attacks on our beloved Savior, His Holy Mother, etc. Why do you and other evangelists support these enemies of our faith?

RESPONSE: Please watch the video again. I have no more reason to *praise Jews* than *Gentiles*. I cannot support everything Israel does. It is a goddess country and most of its citizens are rank unbelievers, with a high percentage of atheists among them. The same is true of the United States. But there are also huge differences.

Jews are God's chosen people to whom He promised perpetually (Gn 17:7,8; 1 Chr 16:15-18, etc.) the land of Canaan "from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates" (Gn 15:18). Gentiles are never called God's chosen people nor has any special land been given to any of them. The Bible identifies the true God, creator of heaven and earth, 203 times as "the God of Israel," 12 times as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and many times as "the God of Jacob," etc.

Furthermore, of the Jews God says, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee..." (Gn 12:3). You should be very careful of what you say about this unique, chosen people.

QUESTION: [In]The Left Behind series, every prophecy teacher that addresses Antichrist says that Antichrist will rise from the dead. If this were true, then everyone that goes before the judgment seat of Christ because they worshiped the Beast and took his mark (666) could claim salvation because they believed God.

Why was the world terrified when the two witnesses rose from the dead? Jesus said that His rising from the dead would be the "sign of the prophet Jonah," proving that He was the Christ.

Satan's seed that receives the deadly wound to the head happened on the cross....The Beast deceived those on earth; and they made an image of the Beast that it lived. They are the living, breathing image of the Beast that took his mark, 666, with Satan as the head, just as Christians are the living, breathing body of Christ, with Jesus as the head....

RESPONSE: I agree that Antichrist will not be killed and rise from the dead (Rv 13:1-3). Only *one* of his *seven* heads was "*as it were* wounded unto death" and "his deadly wound was *healed*..." [emphasis added]. This was *not a resurrection* but a *healing* that will cause all the world to "wonder" (Rv 13:3). I don't know why so many prophecy teachers claim that Antichrist will be resurrected. Physical resurrection comes only to those who belong to Christ and participate in "the power of his resurrection..." (Phil 3:10).

Your comment that "everyone that goes before the judgment seat of Christ because they worshiped the Beast and took his mark (666) could claim salvation because they believed God" is incomprehensible, as is much of the rest of your letter. All who "worshiped the Beast and took his mark (666)..." are damned (Rv 14:9-11). They will be cast into the "lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are" (Rv 20:10).

QUESTION: Today much is made of "prayer walking," "prayer drives," etc. in communities. Yet the Bible says "enter your closet to pray." Please comment.

RESPONSE: The Bible has much to say about prayer, and you will find *TBC's* comments on those scriptures in the *Reprints*, which has an index. "Prayer drives...in communities," like the National Day of Prayer, call unsaved to join believers on Christ in prayer, which is like Paul asking fellow Roman citizens to join with the church in prayer—the worst kind of ecumenism.

As for private prayer, Christ said, "Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men....They have their reward [the praise of men]. But...enter into thy closet...shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Mt 6:5,6).

Christ does not say that this is the only way to pray but one way to curb our pride. Never does the Bible suggest that certain techniques such as those you mention (and others) are to be adopted because they have any special power with God.

"Prayer walking" is part of the "Spiritual Warfare Movement," which began at the 1989 Lausanne II evangelism conference in Manila attended by 4,000 evangelical leaders from around the world. C. Peter Wagner says, "While in Manila, the Lord

[told] me... 'to take leadership in the area of territorial spirits....'" This involves "Spiritual Mapping," (to "identify" the demon controlling an area of a city or country in order to "bind" it in the name of Jesus) and a host of other "techniques" that God "revealed" to leaders of this unbiblical movement.

C. Peter Wagner (at that time teaching world missions with John Wimber at Fuller Seminary) became the coordinator of the International Spiritual Warfare Network. To defeat the powers of darkness through strategic "spiritual warfare," special prayer teams were sent to the northern-most, southern-most, eastern-most, and western-most points of every continent. In 1989, YWAM's John Dawson wrote *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds*, giving a "fivefold approach to bringing down our cities' [demonic] strongholds..." In the foreword, Jack Hayford called it "a book of Holy Spirit insight...."

Similar books kept coming off the press. Typical was one edited by Wagner titled *Breaking Strongholds in Your City: How to Use Spiritual Mapping to Make Your Prayers More Strategic, Effective, and Targeted*. Yet in the 20 years since this movement began, not one city has been "taken for God." Instead, some of the leaders have lost the spiritual battle in their own lives to sexual sins. Yet the books continue to sell and seminars and conferences continue to arouse excitement and anticipation...for how much longer?

Endnotes

1. Sir John Eccles, with Daniel N. Robinson, *The Wonder of Being Human—Our Brain and Our Mind* (New Science Library, 1985), 71.
2. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), Foreword to the first edition.
3. "A Conversation with Jonas Salk," *Psychology Today*, March 1983, 56.
4. From Gould's treatise on NOMA.

"Until the Day..."

Dave Hunt

In 1983, I wrote a book titled *Peace, Prosperity, and the Coming Holocaust*. The first chapter was called, "A Contrary Scenario," which I based on my understanding of Scripture. Here was the situation as I recall it: interest rates in the U.S. were over 20 percent; the stock market was around 700 on the DOW, and the experts were predicting a crash that would make 1929 seem like prosperity; the housing market was dead, with tens of thousands of houses unsold and apartments vacant; the most popular books in Christian bookstores were about "the death of the dollar, the imminent international financial collapse, the pending Soviet attack on Israel, etc." Gloom and doom prevailed.

In that first chapter, I gave my opinion based on Scripture that the doomsayers' predictions were wrong: Reaganomics would work, prosperity was on the way, and there would be no imminent invasion of Israel. Unknown to me at the time, the Soviets had placed a cache of their weapons in Lebanon for a million-man invasion army. Israel hauled it all out, thousands of truckloads, after their invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 to stop the incessant shelling of Israel and to quell terrorism.

This "contrary scenario" held true for 25 years. Then came the current worldwide financial near-collapse after years of building "prosperity" on impossible debt. Very serious problems have bankrupted banks and businesses, have put tens of thousands out of work, and have adversely impacted millions of hard-working citizens. Of course, the problems are being "solved" by governments printing money and accumulating more debt. Where is this taking us now?

Some are fearing the possibility of another 1929-like stock market crash and Depression. Most economists, however, doubt that this could happen with all of the new regulations that are being put into place. Above and beyond worldwide financial problems, my real interest is in the Rapture, which I still believe could happen at any moment.

Christ declares that the days just before the Rapture will be like the days of Noah and Lot. Notice, however, that although those were times of gross immorality, He doesn't even mention that fact. Here are His words:

And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives,

they were given in marriage, *until the day* that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but *the same day* that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Lk 17:26-30, Mt 24:37-39; 44)

In the case of Noah and Lot, judgment and destruction fell instantly after the believers were taken out. But that scenario does not fit with what the Bible tells us will follow the Rapture: further prosperity and even greater persecution of Jews worldwide.

No Old Testament illustration perfectly conveys the full New Testament prophecy. In Noah's and Lot's day the phrase, "until the day" or "the same day" meant within that very 24-hour period. The New Testament has in mind "the day of the Lord" that begins with the Rapture, includes the Great Tribulation and the Millennium, and ends in the new heavens and new earth.

Christ's warning is centered on the fact that the Rapture ("Noah entered into the ark...Lot went out of Sodom...") will come at a time when even professing Christians will be taken by surprise! It will be at a time when the return of Christ to gather His own into His Father's house of "many mansions" (Jn 14:1-3) will be the last thing most Christians are expecting or even hoping will occur. False prosperity will make many Christians reluctant to leave earth for heaven ("Let the Rapture occur before I die, but not yet!"). It will be a continuation of the spirit of Laodicea, which has played a major role in the apostasy into which the church has been sinking ever deeper since the end of World War II.

We could almost say that this spirit has been present from the beginning of the church after Christ ascended back to heaven, having spent 40 days with His disciples in His resurrected body. That was a glorious time for His bewildered followers to come to know their Lord in a new way, to remove any lingering doubts from their minds, and to get them started in fulfilling the "great commission" that He had given to them.

Oddly enough, in spite of fierce opposition and persecution, the thousands of new disciples were not eager to leave their homes and jobs in order to obey their Lord's parting command to "go...into all the world, and preach the gospel..." (Mk 16:15). It was still too comfortable for them in Jerusalem. It

took the "great persecution" that followed the stoning of Stephen to scatter the disciples "abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria..." (Acts 8:1). Far from going into hiding, as the eleven had done on resurrection day, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where [not "giving their testimonies" but] preaching *the word*..." (Acts 8:4). The church thrived under persecution. This was a time of real growth, which the "church growth movement" (that Schuller in a 1974 book claims he began and of which he said Bill Hybels was his most successful student) eventually corrupted.

From the very beginning, "prosperity" has been a dangerous condition for most Christians to handle. The "health and wealth...name it and claim it" gospel, which Copeland learned from Kenneth Hagin, Sr., and which he claimed the Lord commissioned him to preach, has been promoted by the Crouches and the heretics and frauds of various stripes that they have sponsored on their worldwide TV network. This supposed "gospel" has always been wrong, but with "Christian" television and publishing promoting it to an apostate church, the deadly Laodicean mentality that has been germinating for centuries is now in full bloom. Being "rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing," unknown to the "little flock" that Christ left behind and to whom He promised the kingdom (Lk 12:32), has become a sign of God's blessing in today's "growth-industry Churchianity."

The Rapture is almost a forgotten hope. Most Christians are too comfortable on this earth to be willing to leave it for heaven. Matthew 24 is a key chapter in understanding the timing of the Rapture. Verse 34 has generated heated controversy: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." This is also recorded at Luke 21:32. The disagreement centers around the meaning of the phrase "this generation." There are three possible interpretations of that phrase:

1. Preterists hold that by saying "this generation," Jesus referred to those living on earth at that time and that the Matthew 24 prophecy was fulfilled within that generation in the AD 70 siege and destruction of Jerusalem. That is clearly wrong because in those days all flesh was not in danger of being wiped out (v. 22) by bows, arrows, swords, and spears. Today's weapons could turn this earth into a glowing ember, devoid of any life, drifting silently through space. Much more is included in Christ's warning that didn't occur at that time: the greatest tribulation ever for Jews, (v. 21, since exceeded by the Holocaust, with

even worse yet to come, ultimately bringing full repentance and salvation to Israel—Zec 12:8-13:9). Nor did any of the events foretold in verses 27-31 take place in AD 70.

2. Others think that Jesus meant the generation living on earth when Israel returned to her land in 1948. How could “generation” in that sense be defined? Surely it couldn’t include those not yet born. It must be a generation already established and still alive—and this particular one is now nearly gone.

In my opinion, Jesus was not talking about either of the above. There is a third possible meaning, which I would respectfully suggest. The key is the way Jesus, John the Baptist, and Peter all used the word “generation.” The Bible is its own interpreter: “generation of vipers” (Mt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; Lk 3:7); “evil generation” (Lk 11:29); “evil and adulterous generation” (Mt 12:39); “wicked generation” (Mt 12:45); “wicked and adulterous generation” (Mt 16:4); “faithless generation” (Mk 9:19); “faithless and perverse generation” (Mt 17:17; Lk 9:41); “adulterous and sinful generation” (Mk 8:38); “untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).

Scripture indicates that although many individual Jews will be saved, Israel as a whole will continue in unbelief and rebellion against the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When will Israel at last repent and return to faith in the only true God, the God of Israel? Not until the armies of the world, led by Antichrist at Armageddon, have pushed Israel to the brink of defeat. That is when Christ himself in His “Second Coming” will return visibly to earth and destroy Israel’s enemies (“every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him”—Rv. 1:7).

All Israel will repent of their departure from the Lord of hosts and rejection and crucifixion of her Messiah, and “all Israel shall be saved...” (Rom 11:26). There will be an unprecedented time of mourning in Israel (Zec 12:10-13:1) as every Jew alive will realize that Jesus Christ, the one they crucified and had despised ever since, died for their sins and is the Redeemer whom their own prophets had promised.

As for the church, anyone who knows God’s Word has mourned the fact that for decades we have been steadily sinking ever deeper into apostasy such as few men and women of God could have imagined only fifty years ago. There are a multitude of causes, but a major one is the way God’s Word is despised today, even by some who call themselves Christians, and even by many church leaders. What God has

inspired “holy men of God” to put down in writing and that the canon of Scripture comprises is looked upon as boring and must be presented in ways that will appeal to the modern mind. We have movies and DVDs by the dozens dramatizing “thus saith the LORD.” For one’s teaching from the Word of God to be recorded onto a DVD is one thing. To present the Bible not in the pure words of Scripture but by a dramatization thereof on a DVD is an abomination. Imagine the pride of anyone who attempts to “improve” the Holy Word of God! These revisionists, instead of improving actually trivialize, mutilate, and destroy what God has said.

Many Christians, especially their children, are so enamored with TV that they can’t sit still to read the Bible. Christ is called “the Word of God.” He is the “Living Word”...the “word of truth” (Ps 119:43), “word of life” (Phil 2:16). Never is He called the “picture” of truth. We are “born again... by the word of God...the word which by the gospel is preached...” (1 Pt 1:23, 25). There are scores of such verses.

Let’s try to modernize a bit for this new generation: “born again by the DVD of God...the living DVD...the DVD of truth... the DVD which by the gospel is preached, etc.” Paul told Timothy to “preach the word” (2 Tm 4:2). He didn’t say “Revise or dramatize the word”! This is not a matter of semantics. It’s the difference between God’s way and man’s way, between life and death!

We dare not succumb to the apostasy that has invaded the church. As Amos declared, there is a famine for the *Word of God*—not because it is not available to hungry readers but because it is not being preached in many churches that only a few years ago were sound in doctrine and truly preached the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. The flock has been fed phony “translations.” Surely we are seeing “a famine...of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11). Not only is God’s Word not being preached, but most of those who think they are doing so are using false “Bibles,” to the detriment of their souls and those of their hearers.

Eugene Peterson is a case in point. He dares to call *The Message* “another version of the Bible” when in fact it perverts the Bible! T.A. McMahon has brought us up to date on Rick Warren (*TBC*, 9/08). The compromises that Rick has made, relative to the gospel, break my heart. I have been reluctant to put him in the same category as such enemies of truth as Peterson, yet *The Message* continues to be Rick’s favorite

“Bible” (see *TBC* 4/04 for quotations from *The Message*). He has influenced millions to follow his example in following Peterson. He now seems to believe that it is more important to give lost souls food and medicine for *this life* through his P.E.A.C.E. Plan than to give them the gospel for *eternity*, more blessed to give them physical and temporal blessings than to lead them to heaven.

We must ask ourselves repeatedly whether we truly believe that Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and whether we live according to His words. Can we say with Paul, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”? Do we really believe that this gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes” and that the world is lost without Christ? Has the full and awesome meaning of that fact truly gripped our hearts and minds? I speak to my own heart first.

TBC has thoroughly and often exposed the false gospel of Roman Catholicism that is still sending countless millions to hell. Yet in spite of excellent exposés by others as well, the Catholic “gospel” gains an ever-wider acceptance among evangelicals. There used to be many sound authors and leaders who powerfully opposed Roman Catholicism. Now scarcely anyone raises an objection to this religious system that has likely sent as many to hell as has Islam. One becomes exceedingly weary reminding evangelicals from Billy Graham to Rick Warren that Roman Catholicism is damning billions—especially when these two men lead the evangelical church in embracing Catholicism as just another way to heaven.

Didn’t the Lord in “the great commission” command His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? Has that command ever been revoked? Absolutely not. It still holds for every Christian today. But which gospel should one preach? The gospel has been so perverted, compromised, and Catholicized that the power of God unto salvation has been taken out of it for fear of giving offense. Would those in hell thank us for sparing them the offense that would have taken them instead to heaven?

Do we withhold the gospel from the unsaved for selfish reasons? Are some of us ashamed of the narrow gate that the gospel forces us to present to those who prefer the broad road to destruction? The Word of God is clear: “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Prv 29:25).

Time is short and eternity is forever. We need to reexamine our hearts and begin to live as though we really believe this. **TBC**

Quotable

Our reverence for the great Author of Scripture should forbid all mauling of his words. No alteration of Scripture can...be an improvement. The gentlemen who see errors in Scripture may think themselves competent to amend the language of the Lord of hosts; but we who believe God, and accept the very words he uses, may not make so presumptuous an attempt.... Do we know the sacred volume half so well as we should know it...? Is it not possible that we still meet with passages of Scripture that are new to us? Should it be so? Is there any part of what the Lord has written that you have never read?

The Greatest Fight in the World, C.H. Spurgeon's Final Manifesto, pp. 22-23

“Who was I to write another version of the Bible?”

Eugene Peterson [author of The Message Bible], recalling his first thought when NavPress approached him to write a contemporary rendering of the Bible

Q&A

QUESTION: Oxford professor Richard Dawkins has been getting so much attention lately that I picked up his book, *The God Delusion*. In one chapter he questions the historical accuracy of the four gospels, points out many supposed contradictions, even says the gospel writers are unknown and “almost certainly never met Jesus personally,” and finally declares the gospels to be fiction! I’m a simple person (Dawkins would call me “unsophisticated”) and have no trouble resting on Bible verses such as “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,” and “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar,” but I’m concerned that there are a lot of folks whose faith could be shipwrecked by Dawkins’ lies. They need evidence to rescue them with the truth. Is it a worthwhile pursuit for a simple Christian with the Bible and a high school diploma even to try to stand against this educated atheist?

RESPONSE: Of course it is! Christ declared, “If ye continue in my word...ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32). Your confidence is not in your education or intelligence. Remember David’s rebuke of the armies of Israel, who were trembling before Goliath and

afraid to confront him one on one: “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine to defy the armies of the living God!” He did not approach the giant cautiously in awe or fear but ran toward him with bold confidence. As the Philistine derided him, David shouted, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand.” We need that same unshakable confidence in the Lord today!

If you truly know the Lord, know His Word, and are walking with Him, you have all you need to put Dawkins to shame. Don’t be awed by this man. He’s bluffing. He is no expert on the “historical accuracy” of the four gospels. He has read some critics who start with the assumption that the Bible is not what it claims to be and then try to prove it.

Plenty of books have been written proving the historicity of the Bible that clearly reveal the lie in Dawkins’ libel of God’s Word. I’ve written much about the overwhelming proof for the authenticity of the Bible. But let’s take an even simpler approach. Think with me for a moment.

The claims of critics who attack the authorship of the Bible are preposterous. They literally charge that the Bible is a deliberate fraud from beginning to end! They say, for example, that Daniel didn’t write the book that bears his name. It was written centuries later by an imposter. Where is their evidence?

They are sure that miracles can’t happen, so the story of the three Hebrews walking about in a blazing furnace without so much as their hair being singed couldn’t possibly be true. Nor could Daniel have survived in a den of hungry lions, so that story must also be fiction. Such is the “evidence” the critics offer. Of course, this is just what Dawkins is looking for, and he passes it along as though he has verified everything alleged by the critics he quotes.

The Book of Daniel contains accurate prophecies concerning events recorded in history that actually occurred four centuries after Daniel’s time. The critics don’t believe in God-inspired prophecy; therefore what the Book of Daniel says about Antiochus Epiphanes, for example, could not have been written by someone named Daniel who lived in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, who was an eyewitness and participant in the events recorded in the book bearing his name, and who received the prophecies in that book from God. “Daniel” had

to be some unknown imposter living 400 years later. The Book of Daniel must be discredited, or readers would begin to believe in Bible prophecy and miracles and thus in God. Discrediting the Bible is what Dawkins is interested in, not the truth that would expose his atheism for the folly that it obviously is.

So it must be, say atheists, with the entire Bible. The level of preposterousness is beyond belief. It would mean, for instance, that there is not an honest author among the biblical writers; they are all liars! It must be one long spoof from Genesis to Revelation. The disciples must have been fictitious characters; Jesus probably never existed; Paul made up a different gospel from that which Jesus preached...and on and on this nonsense goes.

For such a huge fraud to be so well coordinated, century after century, *someone* must have been in charge to oversee the deceit! This being must be timeless and must have at least intermittent access to men’s minds. Who could that have been?

The deliberate lies and duplicity that atheists attribute to the authors, who claimed to have been inspired by God to write down the Scriptures, are beyond credibility. Yet the biblical writers sound genuine. Peter solemnly swears, “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables...but were eyewitnesses...” (2 Pt 1:16). John says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes...and our hands have handled... declare we unto you...” (1 Jn 1:3). He solemnly swears, “This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true” (Jn 21:24). Atheists insist that this was written centuries later by a liar pretending to be John! What could his motive have been, and who paid him?

Luke also testifies, “Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses...it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee...most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed” (Lk 1:1-4). Luke, too, is lying? It would take more faith to believe this ridiculous conspiracy story than to believe the truth.

Furthermore, if these are all liars and the prophecies were written after the fact, why didn’t they make the fake prophecies clearer, as cheats surely would have done?

QUESTION: Matthew 11:11 has bothered me for years: “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” I don’t understand it.

RESPONSE: When Satan and his demons have been thrown into the Lake of Fire, never to be released, and the kingdom of God and of heaven (they are the same) has been established for eternity, spanning from earth to heaven, the very least in that future eternal state will be greater than the greatest saint or prophet was while living on earth. Christ is giving us a little glimpse of how much better heaven is than the best earth can offer.

We get hints of this all through Scripture: “When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2); “the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory...” (1 Pt 5:10) Nothing like this has ever been said of the greatest saints alive on earth.

Now let’s look a bit further at what the disciples asked and at the prayer Christ taught them to pray, which the church for centuries has erroneously called “the Lord’s prayer.” It’s really the disciples’ prayer.

They ask: “Lord teach us to pray” (Lk 11:1). His response was: “After this manner...pray ye...Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:9). Our own hearts and day-by-day experience assure us that God’s kingdom has not yet come because His will is most assuredly not yet done on earth as in heaven. We are not yet “in the kingdom” to which Christ referred, or this prayer would be meaningless.

We should use this pattern often in our prayers. The answer to this prayer will not come until this future kingdom has been established.

QUESTION: Daniel C. Dennett (one of the “Four Horsemen” of the New Atheists) explains how Charles Darwin’s book *Origin of Species* clearly shows how natural selection is a key factor in the creation (Dennett’s word) of new species. He admits that Darwin’s ideas about natural selection were little more than “musings” or “speculations,” but he also claims that in more recent times scientists have “clearly demonstrated” the veracity of this concept. I’m having a hard time finding anything anywhere to back up this claim. Dennett makes broad generalizations such as, “Anyone...who doubts that the variety of life on this planet was

produced by...evolution is ignorant...” and “What else could account for evolution, if not the mechanism [natural selection] that [Darwin] had described?” This seems to be the approach that many atheistic scientists take. Rather than actually offering evidence, they present their ideas as fact. Millions of years and small, successive modifications are called upon to “explain” the “creation” of new species. My question is this: How does this qualify as science, since it is admittedly based on speculation; and has anyone ever come up with any proof that this could possibly happen? Why are we, and our children in public schools, being forced to accept something as fact that is so subjective? These “experts” feel free to make any “claim” that they want and we are to buy into it because “they say so”?

RESPONSE: We do not doubt “natural selection” up to a point, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with “creating new species.” That is impossible. Nor do we have to be experts on genetics to know this. All we need is common sense and some knowledge of the elementary facts. Modern dogs come from the wolf, for example, and there are many varieties, from Great Danes to tiny Chihuahuas. Some atheists, to cheat a bit, call these different species. No, they are all dogs, deliberately created through selective breeding. The capability to do this is not a scientific invention. It is in their genes (DNA) and has always been in their genes; no new information has been added.

Genesis chapter 1 repeats the phrase several times, “after its kind.” There is a barrier between “kinds” of living creatures, and that is defined by the DNA. “After its kind” is a clear declaration by God that evolution from one “kind” to another can never occur! Nor can any atheist produce an example of new information being created in the DNA.

The DNA alphabet is the same for every living thing, from plants to fish to birds, to animals and humans. Much is made of the similarity in the DNA of chimps and that of humans. Based on the DNA, Francis Collins, former head of the Human Genome Project, even claims that men and mice are descended from a common ancestor. Similarity in DNA, however, does not support evolution through natural selection. DNA prevents evolution from ever occurring. DNA defines each “kind.” For evolution from one species to another species to occur, the DNA would have to be changed radically. DNA is information written in words. Information can only

originate from an intelligence by specific intent. There is no other way to create a new species (“kind”).

Richard Dawkins (the leading light of the New Atheists) was asked on camera how new information could be added to the genome. Looking back, he was not happy with his response, so he devoted an entire chapter in two different books (*A Devil’s Chaplain* and *Unweaving the Rainbow*) to show how new information could enter a genome. He failed utterly. We deal with DNA in detail in *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*, due for release in early 2009.

The "Jesus" the World Loves

T. A. McMahon

What do you think of Jesus? That's a question I've asked at times to engage non-Christians in conversation about Him for the purpose of witnessing. A fairly typical response used to be that He was a religious teacher who did a lot of good, said many good things, and they usually concluded with a belief that He was a very good man. I then could ask, "Did you know that He claimed to be God?" When looks of puzzlement followed, I would explain that He couldn't be a "very good man." In claiming to be God, He was either self-deluded or an outright fraud—that is, unless He was telling the truth. More often than not, that thought, raising the issue of being accountable to God, would bring our conversation to an awkward end. At least it had provided the opportunity to plant some seeds that I hoped would grow into conviction. Most people aren't comfortable with the truth about Jesus.

Those who *profess* to be Christians quite often have ideas about Jesus that are just as wrong as those people who are not Christians. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus is a created god and that He is also Michael the Archangel. Mormons believe Jesus is the spirit brother of Lucifer and that He was married and had children. The followers of Christian Science and the Religious Science religions believe that Jesus was simply a man upon whom the "Christ empowerment" came. Roman Catholics believe that the bread and wine of the Eucharist can be transubstantiated, or changed, into the literal body and blood of Jesus, who is then ingested into one's stomach. Lutherans believe that Jesus is *consubstantiated*, or present, "in, with, and under" the bread and wine of communion. Such unbiblical beliefs are a mere handful among hundreds promoted by various Christian denominations and cults. Yet what is even more appalling is that an inquiry about Jesus today among those who call themselves evangelicals (Bible-believing Christians!) too often reveals "another Jesus" and a "false Christ." How does that happen?

Let's start with how one comes to a true knowledge of, and relationship with, Jesus Christ. It begins with a simple understanding of the gospel¹ that Jesus is God,² who became a Man³ in order to save mankind from everlasting separation from God⁴ that resulted from man's sin.⁵ Jesus satisfied the perfect justice of God⁶ by His

once-and-for-all payment for the sins of humanity⁷ through His death on the Cross.⁸ His resurrection from the dead⁹ assures the salvation of all those who acknowledge before God their sin¹⁰ and their hopelessness in saving themselves,¹¹ and who by grace through faith¹² accept Christ's sacrifice on their behalf¹³ and His free gift of eternal life.¹⁴ This is how one is reconciled to God¹⁵ and born again spiritually.¹⁶ This is how one's relationship with the biblical Jesus Christ¹⁷ begins.

Although that relationship is supernatural in that every true believer in Christ is indwelt by God,¹⁸ it nevertheless progresses, as any good relationship does, by getting to know the person with whom one has a relationship.

The primary way a relationship with Jesus develops is by reading the revelation of Himself given in His Word. This is the only way to obtain specific information about Him that is objective and absolutely true. In addition, not only is the content of Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit,¹⁹ but that same Spirit of Truth is given to believers to understand that content.²⁰ How then could those who profess to follow God's Word come up with erroneous ideas about Jesus? Regrettably, many are getting their information about Jesus from sources outside the Bible or second hand from those who claim to be teaching what the Bible says about our Lord.

To demonstrate how ludicrous a relationship dependent upon such sources of knowledge is, consider what might happen to a husband and wife who try to form an intimate relationship with each other by relying on the insights of other people who claim to know them. That's a sure recipe for failure, yet Christians often run to extrabiblical sources for their knowledge of Jesus.

The amazing popularity of the book *The Shack* (TBC Q&A, 8/08) among evangelicals is just a recent example of someone depicting a Jesus who is foreign to the Bible and worse. What does the author think about Jesus? He characterizes Him in a way that may make some people feel more comfortable with Him, yet the Jesus of *The Shack* is clearly a false Christ. He's a "good old boy," who likes to fix things and takes "pleasure in cooking and gardening." He laughs at crude jokes, is a bit of a klutz, engages in trout fishing by chasing one down as He runs on water, carves a coffin for the body of a little girl, and enjoys kissing, hugging, and laughing with the two other members of the "Trinity." The book is filled with dialogue from the characters of God the Father (portrayed as an overweight Afro-American woman), the Holy Spirit (a petite

Asian woman), and Jesus. All three speak as the "oracles of God," giving insights and explanations neither found in nor consistent with Scripture. Some enthusiastic readers say the words and interactions with the Godhead have comforted them, answered difficult questions about their faith, and made the person of the Lord seem all the more real to them.

The reality is that out of his own imagination the author has put *his* words into the mouths of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which are then perceived by multitudes as "thus saith the Lord." This is not only a bogus secondhand source but the arrogance of false prophecy at least and blasphemy and idolatry at worst. It is man, making God in his own *fallen* image.

More influential among evangelicals than *The Shack* is Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, which became a huge box-office success, thanks mostly to evangelical support. Available now as a "definitive edition DVD," it features, for those who want the official Catholic theology of the film explained, a discussion with director Mel Gibson, along with a Catholic apologist and two Catholic priests who were the film's theological consultants. The movie has a false gospel, a false Christ, and is loaded with supposedly biblical scenes from the minds of Gibson and a Catholic nun given to mystical hallucinations. Yet it continues to be used extensively by evangelical churches, especially during Lent and Easter week.

In response to "What do you think of Jesus?" millions who saw the movie now mistakenly believe that: He was confronted by Satan in the Garden of Gethsemane; He was thrown from a bridge by His captors and dangled from a chain; His image was captured for posterity on the veil of a woman named Veronica; as His cross began to fall, it levitated to keep Him from hitting the ground, and, most contradictory to the gospel, it was the merciless scourging He suffered that paid for the sins of humanity.

These are only a few of the unbiblical images that the world and many in the church have added to their perception of Jesus. Movies are today's most popular form of disseminating superficial information and misinformation. Feature films about Jesus and God have put erroneous ideas about them into the hearts and minds of the masses: *Jesus Christ Superstar*; *The Last Temptation of Christ*; *Bruce Almighty*; *The Da Vinci Code*; *Judas*; *Oh God!*; *Oh God, Book II*; *Jesus of Nazareth*, to name but a few.

What about "more biblically accurate" Bible movies—those that take the words

directly from Scripture, for example? When you have an actor portraying Jesus who says only the words of Jesus that are found in the Bible, does that make the portrayal more accurate? More accurate than what? Does the actor actually *look* like Jesus, or *talk* like Jesus, or *reflect the godly demeanor* of Jesus? More critically, can he accurately imitate the God-Man, the Creator of the Universe, the One in whom all things consist? Even if he could, which is impossible, it would still be an imitation! Furthermore, he will leave millions, including believers, with an image of a false “Christ.”

A few such movies are sincere attempts at communicating the content and stories of the Scriptures through *visual media*. Although sincere, they are doomed to failure regarding truth. Why? In addition to what was noted above, the Bible is an objective revelation from God given in words. All attempts at visually translating those words abandon objective revelation in favor of subjective interpretation. Take a passage of Scripture, for instance, and have five people give their understanding of the verse based upon the context, the grammatical structure, and the normal meaning of the words. More often than not, the interpretations will be quite similar. Should one of the five come up with something very different, it can be corrected by simply checking it out objectively against the context, grammar, and accepted definitions of the words in the passage. On the other hand, what if five artists were to translate the passage visually? The result would be five very subjective and quite different renderings. Even if only one artist visually translated the verse and four people tried to interpret the image, you would likely have four different views because the medium has no objective criteria comparable to that of words. Are you getting the “picture” here? Imagery is not the way to communicate objective truth.

God did not draw pictures on the tablets He gave to Moses. His continual command to him and to His other prophets was to *write down His instructions*. Visual imagery was at the heart of pagan worship used by people whose lives centered around idols—the chief by-product being unbridled superstition. The same was true of the medieval Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, who fed their followers images rather than teaching them to read and write (as the Jews had done successfully from the time of Abraham). Even today, superstition continues to be rampant within those visually oriented religious systems.

Where does the world get its ideas about Jesus? Most non-Christians only know what

they’ve picked up from sources they regard as Christian, although rarely is the content biblical. More than a billion Muslims, for example, hold a view of Jesus that Muhammad gleaned from questionable Christians. The Qur’an states that Isa (Jesus) is not the Son of God because Allah has no son. Isa’s birth took place under a palm tree, and, while still a babe, he cried out from his cradle that he was a servant of Allah, who had given him a revelation and made him a prophet. He did not die upon the cross; someone took his place—all in contradiction to the Bible.

Many Jews put stock in the alleged Talmudic stories that oppose the gospel accounts. They have been taught that Jesus was an illegitimate child who was born to a harlot and a scoundrel. Declaring himself to be the Messiah, he performed healings by sorcery and consequently was stoned and then hung on a tree for his magic and blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God.

Hindus have added Jesus as one more avatar, or god, among their 330 million gods. All of their gurus who have become popular in the West—from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to Rajneesh—preach their own “Jesus.” Buddhists, such as the 14th Dalai Lama, regard Jesus as a *bodhisattva*, or enlightened god, among multitudes of gods reincarnated for the service of humanity.

Incredibly, the above erroneous beliefs about Jesus are fostered within professing Christianity by a popular practice among Emerging Church fellowships. Some invite the followers of the world religions for “conversation” in order to learn more about Jesus from a pluralistic perspective. The goal seems to be to establish a Jesus who is acceptable to people of all faiths—or no faith. A common refrain heard from the Emergent communities is “We love Jesus but not His church.” Certainly, as the church has compromised with the world, there is much not to like. Yet sadly, for many, it is neither the biblical Jesus whom they love nor the biblical church that they support. Some are under the delusion that Jesus is becoming more respected in our culture. That has never been the case for the Jesus revealed in Scripture.

It is hard for anyone who has a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ to accept that the world hates Him, this One whom we love so much. It was difficult for me, and I still struggle with that. How could anyone reject the One who loves us more than we could ever comprehend, and whose sacrifice for those He created is so wonderfully unfathomable? Such hatred is often masked and develops progressively and by stealth. It is found in Satan’s strategy that

began with “Yea, hath God said...?” His dialogue with Eve provided a ripe opportunity to subvert the truth about God and His command. Eve bought the Adversary’s lying alteration of God’s character and his denial of the consequence of disobedience. Her offspring down through the ages have done likewise.

Yet that reality in the guise of condescension and mockery nearly moved me to despair as I reviewed a particular episode of Fox TV’s *The Family Guy*. The program (presented by the same network that created “Fox Faith” to market movies to Christian families) featured a Jesus character who left heaven to get away from his “nit-picking, overbearing father”; who proves his “deity” by changing meals into ice cream sundaes and enlarging a woman’s breasts; who walks on water to fetch a five-dollar bill; who appears on *Jay Leno* and an MTV award show; who goes Hollywood, gets drunk at a party, and lands in jail, and who comes to the conclusion that he’s not mature enough yet to help the world. I immediately searched for protests from Christendom against this Fox TV top-rated program. There were found neither cries of outrage nor weeping for those who blasphemed and ridiculed the only One who could save them. Some Christians offered uneasy rationalizations that Jesus certainly must have a sense of humor. That’s the Jesus the world wants.

My mind raced to the Garden of Gethsemane, thinking about our Savior on His knees in prayer before the Father, where in His anguish He sweat as it were great drops of blood. He would become sin for us. Our Creator would take our sins upon Himself and experience the eternal penalty due every soul. Although He would be triumphant in paying for the sins of mankind, He nevertheless cried out to the Father that if there was any other way to save humanity, to let this cup of separation pass. But there was no other way.

I thought of the Lord of Glory hanging upon the cross on Calvary’s hill, with the mockers about Him. Yet He died for them—and for those who mock Him still.

Pray that we who truly know Him would not drift from Him because of “another Jesus” conjured up by the world, our own flesh, or the devil. Pray also that the Lord will enable us to reflect the true character of Christ in our words and deeds; that He will help us to show the world the true Jesus, who, being God, came in the likeness of man, was treated as though He were sin itself, and satisfied the divine justice of God by dying upon the Cross, thus providing salvation for all of mankind. **TBC**

Quotable

In the name of your own soul and its own salvation, in the name of the adorable victim of that bloody and agonizing sacrifice whence you draw all your hopes of salvation; by Gethsemane and Calvary, I charge you, citizens of the United States, afloat on your wide sea of politics, there is another King, one Jesus; the safety of the state can be secured only in the way of humble and whole-souled loyalty to His person and of obedience to His law.

A. A. Hodge, 1887

The following Questions and Responses are from past (pre-1997) issues of The Berean Call. We decided to include them in this final issue of 2008 because they are still being asked of TBC today. We hope you will be blessed by Dave's answers to these timeless issues.

Q&A

QUESTION (COMPOSITE OF SEVERAL): We can't seem to find a church in our area that has godly leadership and biblical preaching. We feel so alone and now just read the Bible and pray at home. What should we do? How do we find a "good" church?

RESPONSE: It is a sad commentary on the state of the church that we receive many such queries.

What marks a "healthy" church? Crucial to the answer is Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst...." Christ himself must be the central focus—not a pastor, gripping sermons, a strong missionary emphasis, exciting youth programs, compatible fellow members, or even agreeable doctrines, important as all these factors are. A fervent love for Christ and a heartfelt corporate worship of His Person must be the primary mark of a healthy church.

The early church was thus characterized. It met regularly on the first day of the week in remembrance of His death. That weekly outpouring of praise, worship, and thanksgiving had one purpose—to give God His due portion. It isn't primarily a matter of *my* need, *my* edification, *my* enjoyment or *my* spiritual satisfaction, but of *His* worth in my eyes and the eyes of the church.

As I see it, our secondary focus should be our opportunity for servanthood with a

corporate body of believers. I give myself to a needy, imperfect people for whom I can pray, for whose needs I can concern myself in practical ways, to whom I can be an encourager and a minister of the Word, and among whom I can demonstrate and work out Christ's desire that His own "might be one." This fellowship is commanded: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb 10:25). Is it our joy to gather with God's people in intercessory prayer and study of the Word, or is Sunday-morning-only quite enough? A healthy church will not only gather unto Him, but with each other.

Lastly, I need to assess my own spiritual needs. The shepherds must provide the spiritual food that will nurture the flock, that it might be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tm 3:17). That's a big order and requires, of course, a teachable flock that loves the Word and is in willing subjection to it. The shepherds must also guard the flock of God by keeping out false and dangerous doctrines contrary to the truth. They must adhere to the pure Word of God as the only authority for faith and morals.

You say, "Wonderful! Lead me to such a church." Remember, however, the order of priority: Worship (do you worship sincerely, wholeheartedly, and in a manner satisfying to the object of that worship?); Servanthood (do you serve, even as Christ gave us an example, with humility and with joy?); Personal needs (are you growing, maturing, taking on Christ's character?).

The final decision as to your church affiliation must be, prayerfully, yours. Is your personal worship of the Savior so joyful and satisfying a thing both to you and to Him that it supersedes other considerations? Do your opportunities for service render your fellowship sufficiently meaningful and significant? Or do doctrinal concerns or lack of biblical preaching and teaching cancel out the other two? You must seek the Lord for His answer. God's comforting assurance remains: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

QUESTION: We are in urgent need of information for our church family concerning the Bible paraphrase by Eugene Peterson: *The Message* published by NavPress....I do not believe that *The Message* is a good translation...yet it is promoted by Promise Keepers as well as other "big, trusted" names in the Christian world. We are many here in our town who hope to be able to obtain a

brochure or a position paper concerning this paraphrase.

RESPONSE: Unfortunately, the errors in this paraphrase (it's not a translation) are numerous and serious. *The Message* cannot be relied upon to tell the truth and, in fact, is dangerously misleading. If Promise Keepers endorses it, that is one more mark against that organization.

Let me give you only a few examples. John 1:1 actually says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." *The Message* renders it, "The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one." That garbling is an improvement?! It is confusing at best and misleading at worst, changing the meaning. "In the beginning was the Word" is changed to "The Word was first." First before God? And what does "in readiness for God" mean? In verse 5, "the darkness comprehended it not" is rendered, "the darkness couldn't put it out," changing the meaning entirely.

In verse 14, "full of grace" becomes "Generous inside and out," while "truth" becomes "true from start to finish." "Generous" and "grace" do not mean the same, nor does "true from start to finish" convey the rich meaning of Christ being "full of truth." In verse 29, "which taketh away the sin of the world" becomes "He forgives the sins of the world." There is a world of difference between taking away the sin of the world by paying the debt mankind owed, and forgiving sins! In John 3:5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit" becomes, "unless a person submits to this original creation—the 'wind hovering over the water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life," again obscuring, complicating, and changing the true meaning. In 3:17, "but that the world through him might be saved" becomes "He came to help, to put the world right again," a destructive change in the meaning.

"Saved" means to be redeemed, rescued from the judgment we deserve for our sins; whereas "to help, to put the world right again" sounds like social or political reformation. In verse 36, "the wrath of God abideth on him" becomes, "All he experiences of God is darkness, and an angry darkness at that." How can anyone experience darkness from God, when 1 John 1:5 says of God, "in him is no darkness at all"? Serious error is added to serious error!

In 1 Corinthians 1:17, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel!"

is perverted to read, “God didn’t send me out to collect a following for myself but to preach the Message.” It is important that Paul, a former rabbi, is a follower of Christ—*The Message* says “of God.” The main point Paul makes is that baptism is not part of the gospel—*The Message* misses that completely. “Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” is changed to “...lest the powerful action at the center—Christ on the Cross—be trivialized into mere words.” There is a vast difference between the eternal effect of “the cross of Christ” as the Bible states it and “Christ on the Cross” as *The Message* puts it and Catholicism depicts it. Christ is not on the cross; the work is finished! In verse 30, “sanctification, and redemption” is changed to read “a clean slate and a fresh start”—both trivializing and misleading. In Hebrews 11:1, “the substance of things hoped for” becomes “the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living,” a totally different meaning, with hope for eternity expunged. In verse 4, regarding the lamb, which speaks of Christ, the “more excellent sacrifice” offered by Abel, the comment is interjected, “It was what he believed, not what he brought, that made the difference.” On the contrary, the sacrifice he brought was important to his belief, and without the proper sacrifice there could be no forgiveness no matter what was believed.

In verse 7, “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” is changed to “became intimate with God,” again an entirely different meaning which leaves out the vital phrase “righteousness which is by faith.” In verse 16, “God is not ashamed to be called their God” is twisted into “God is so proud of them.” Never! Attributing the human evil of pride to God is blasphemy and leaves the dangerous impression that if God is proud then it isn’t so bad for man to be proud as well.

In verse 35, “that they might obtain a better resurrection” becomes “preferring something better: resurrection.” Again the meaning is changed completely. It makes it sound as though resurrection is dependent upon good works. It was not a question of whether they would be resurrected, but of the reward they would receive in the Resurrection.

These are only a few among many errors, some extremely serious. It is appalling that any mere man would change or ignore the meaning of God’s Word under the vain delusion that he could improve upon what God has said and the way He has said it! It is even more appalling that a leading

evangelical publisher would publish this blasphemy, Christian bookstores would sell it, and Christian leaders would praise instead of denounce this perversion!

QUESTION: Though I’ve read your excellent discussions on eternal security, I still need understanding of the following Scriptures: Romans 11:21-22, Colossians 1:22-23, Hebrews 3:6,14. Second Peter 2:20-22 speaks of those who have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord, and who were washed, being entangled again and overcome. Please explain these apparent contradictions.

RESPONSE: The New Testament contains frequent exhortations to godly living, to “continue in the faith” and to “hold fast the confidence firm unto the end” (Heb 3:6,14) and to “walk worthy of the Lord” (Eph 4:1; Col 1:10), and warns of being “cut off” (Rom 11:22). The exhortation is to two classes of people: (1) those who are false professors, in order to show them that their lives demonstrate that they do not truly know the Lord; and (2) Christians who are living in disobedience, to warn them that if they continue to dishonor their Lord He will severely discipline them. The latter could be “cut off” from fellowship with other believers, or from this life.

Peter completes his argument in the passage to which you refer (v. 22) with these words: “But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” That seems to make it clear that he has been referring to those who claim to be Christians but are not. He is not referring to “sheep” who truly belong to the Good Shepherd, but to “dogs” and “pigs” who got in among the flock for a time but didn’t belong and reverted to the behavior dictated by their unregenerate nature.

The Corinthian church was rife with division, disorder, debate, immorality, and sacrilege. Never is there a hint in Paul’s epistles to them, however, that such sins had cost any of them their salvation. They were disciplined as Christians: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth... for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (Heb 12:6-8). Some who gorged themselves and became drunk at the Lord’s table dishonored the Lord to such an extent, not “discerning the Lord’s body,” that they were cut off in death (1 Cor 11:27-34). The man who had “his father’s wife”—a terrible sin—didn’t lose his salvation thereby

but as a brother in Christ was cut off from fellowship in discipline (1 Cor 5:1-13); then later he was restored (2 Cor 2:4-11).

Endnotes

1. Romans 1:16
2. John 10:30-33
3. 1 Timothy 2:5
4. John 14:6, John 3:16-17
5. Isaiah 59:2
6. 1 John 2:2
7. Hebrews 10:10-12
8. Hebrews 12:2
9. Romans 1:3-4
10. 2 Corinthians 7:10
11. Romans 5:6
12. Ephesians 2:8
13. John 3:15
14. Romans 5:18
15. John 3:3
16. Galatians 2:20, 1 Peter 1:23
17. Colossians 1:27
18. 1 Corinthians 6:19
19. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
20. John 16:13

The Power of His Resurrection

Dave Hunt

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers is very specific. He asks God to bestow upon them a deeper knowledge and understanding of Christ that we do well to seek for ourselves. This is not something that one can learn in a seminary or even in a Bible study or from reading devotional books. Paul's desire for them was that they would willingly receive from God "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ" (Eph 1:17-23).

Specifically, Paul prays that they would know the "exceeding greatness" of the power that God wanted to demonstrate in their lives. His explanation of this power is most instructive. Paul tells us about it in Philippians 3. It was, in fact, what he desired so much for himself. He called it the "power of his resurrection" and declared: "[Oh] that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Was Paul uncertain of his salvation, concerned that he might not qualify for the resurrection of believers at the Rapture? Hardly! He is telling us that the Resurrection of Christ is not only a historical event that we look back to with satisfaction and joy. It is the greatest event in the history (past, present, or future) of the entire cosmos!

The greatest event that the universe will ever see is also one of the most difficult to understand. We mention it so casually, but here is the hinge upon which all history hangs and is forever divided. The division of time ought to be not only BC (Before Christ) and AD (meaning After Christ); it ought to be BR (Before the Resurrection) and AR (After the Resurrection).

With modern telescopes and the means of apparently probing farther into space than ever before, David's words in Psalm 19 take on deeper meaning: "The heavens declare the glory of God...." Creation is the greatest visible expression of power, and we bow in awe and worship when we think of the infinite God behind all that we can see. But Paul says that is *nothing* in

comparison to the power displayed in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and this is the great power that Paul desired for the Ephesians to experience in their daily lives.

In fact, Paul tells us that the Resurrection is the greatest display of God's power ever to be demonstrated, nor can it ever be surpassed. We need to understand why this is so and why Paul prayed as he did. After all, "In [Christ] was life" (Jn 1:4). Jesus said, "I have power (*dunamis*) to lay down [my life] and...to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father." (Jn 10:18) Then why did it take such power to raise Christ from the dead?

During His life on earth and before His own resurrection, Christ had raised many from the dead. Those resurrected, such as Lazarus (Jn 11:1-43) and the widow of Nain's son (Lk 7:11-16), died again after some days or years, to await the resurrection of all believers at the Rapture.

How could the Giver of life, by whom all things were created (Jn 1:3), be killed? Here we have a seeming contradiction. Christ

I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live...

—John 11:25

himself said, "No man taketh my life from me...I lay it down of myself" (Jn 10:18). Yet Peter indicts the Jews with having killed Jesus: whom "ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). In addressing the rabbinical council, Stephen uses even stronger language: "of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers..." (Acts 7:52).

The answer to the question of why it took the greatest power ever displayed to raise Christ from the dead can only be found in relation to the death He died.

God had declared that the penalty for sin is death, which is eternal separation from Him. Isn't that rather harsh? Adam and Eve were driven out from the garden paradise by their Creator, who had placed them there, for the seemingly minor infraction of eating some fruit. How could that be worthy of eternal punishment?

We have such a careless view of sin, looking at the act alone and forgetting against whom the act was committed. The sin of Adam and Eve was not merely eating the forbidden fruit. It was deliberate defiance of and rebellion against the One who had created them and the entire universe.

From our viewpoint, David's sin of adultery, murder, and lying was far more reprehensible. But David knew what sin was: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps 51:4).

At its heart, sin is deliberate treason, open and defiant rebellion against the Creator and Ruler of the universe. We need to remember this fact. Most Christians who, when convicted by conscience, fall on their faces and confess their sins are not really confessing the horror of what they've done. It is not enough to repent of the deed. We must confess also that, no matter how trivial we think the act was, we have repeated Adam and Eve's treason *against the Lord God*. Without that admission deeply felt as a conviction in our hearts, the confession is incomplete.

Now we begin to understand why it took the "exceeding greatness of God's power" to raise Christ from the dead. The hymn writer put it well, "'Twas our sins' vast load that laid Thee, Lord of life, within the grave."

What does that mean? How could our sins have been laid upon the sinless Christ? This certainly was not accomplished by Pilate's condemnation of Christ nor in the scourging and being nailed to a cross by godless Roman soldiers. Yet this is what that unbiblical film, *The Passion of the Christ*, portrayed—and it was praised by thousands of evangelicals including hundreds of leaders.

What really happened on the Cross not only could not be portrayed in a movie but by omission was denied. Isaiah wrote, "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Is 53:10). Clearly, what men did to Christ had no part at all in the LORD's bruising Him and making His soul a sacrifice for sin. There is a moral and spiritual dimension to sin that Christ had to endure for every individual, and none other could.

Not only did our Savior have to be perfectly sinless to pay for the sins of others but He had to be infinite. No one less than God could accomplish this satisfaction of justice. But the penalty had been pronounced against *mankind*. Thus, God, though infinite, could not pay that penalty unless, without ceasing to be God, He became fully *man*. This is what the one and only virgin birth was all about.

Atheists complain that it would be unjust for an innocent party to pay the penalty for the guilty. That would be true were it not for another dimension to the Cross. For those who believe, God considers Christ's death and resurrection to be as their own.

A miraculous inner transformation occurs, which Christ promised and which He called being “born again” (Jn 3:3-16). That’s not a cliché but reality.

Pilate could not have known what he was saying when he presented Christ to the howling mob: “Behold the man!” This was man as God had intended him to be. Paul called Him the “second man” and also the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45,47). In other words, from Adam, freshly created by the hand of God in the Garden, to Jesus, the last Adam, freshly formed in the womb of a virgin, there was no one of whom it could be said, “Behold the man as God intended him to be.”

“Sins’ vast load,” which would have held mankind in the Lake of Fire forever, could be fully endured by the infinite One upon the Cross, where He stood between God and Man. If Infinite Justice had not been satisfied through Christ’s full payment for our sins, He could not have come out of that grave.

The penalty for sin is eternal banishment from God’s presence and from His entire universe into the Lake of Fire. That is what high treason against the Creator of all merits in His court. One of the greatest horrors of the Lake of Fire will be the fact that even in that place of torment, these haters of God find no escape from Him. He is there in the consciences of the damned, consciences that will no longer find any excuse behind which to hide. There will be no escape from the truth they rejected, and that will haunt them eternally. David said, “If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there” (Ps 139:8).

It would be impossible for any finite being to pay the infinite penalty demanded by God’s infinite justice. No man attempting to pay for his own sins could ever finally say, as Christ declared in triumph on the Cross, “It is finished! The debt has been paid.” But the penalty *must* be paid in full. How else can the prison gates of justice be torn open?

In the Book of Job we get some inkling of the very real struggle between Satan and God for the cosmos. “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them” (Job 1:6). In that amazing account, we are given an insight into what is involved in this battle between God and Satan. It is a conflict of cosmic proportions for control of the universe, and man is the prize that both sides seek. This is a very real battle for man’s heart and affection. Nor is there any guarantee that God will triumph in every individual case.

With the gift of free will, every man has an individual choice to make concerning which side he will join in this battle.

Christians have a vital role to play in Satan’s ultimate defeat: “They overcame [that old serpent, the Devil - Rv 12:9] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rv 12:11). With the love of Christ in our hearts, we follow the example that Christ himself left to us: “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pt 2:21-25).

Satan continues to enter God’s presence boldly, as he did in Job’s day. How do we know? He still accuses the brethren before the throne of God day and night and will do so to the very end (Rv 12:10). As we’ve said before (and it bears repeating), Satan is like a lame duck president. He can still walk the corridors of power unopposed and wield considerable influence behind the scenes. He has not yet been thrown out of heaven,

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

—1 Corinthians 15:19-20

but that day is coming soon:

There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (12:7-9)

How will Satan finally be cast out? An old hymn expresses clearly and beautifully what scripture portrays: “In weakness like defeat, He won the victor’s crown; Trod all our foes beneath His feet by being trodden down. He Satan’s power laid low; Made sin, He sin o’erthrew. Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so, and death, by dying, slew.”

Satan cannot understand how Christ, through meekness and seeming weakness, could triumph over him. Everything about the Cross confuses him. First he inspired Peter to prevent Christ from going to the Cross: “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (Mt 16:21-22). We know that Satan inspired Peter because of Christ’s reply: “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Then

he inspired Judas to betray Jesus to the rabbi so that they could have Him crucified: “Satan entered into him [Judas]” (Jn 13:27). Satan doesn’t understand to this day.

In my opinion, Satan really thinks he could be the final victor in this battle for the hearts and minds of mankind. And why not? He offers what he has trained man’s greed and lust to desire: wealth, possessions, hedonistic pleasure, free sex, popularity, fame, drugs and alcohol in abundance, and satisfaction of every lustful desire. Yet multitudes choose instead to follow Christ, though He offers hatred and rejection by the world, with persecution and suffering—but eternity in His presence, where there is true happiness: “In thy presence, is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

And what of those who make the wrong choice and opt to join Satan in committing treason? God does not take pleasure in punishing the wicked (Ezk 33:11), but each one’s punishment must be suited to the crime. When one reads what the atheist leaders say about God in blatant and defiant rebellion, we know they would tear Him from His throne if they could. They *hate* God. It is clear that torment for eternity in the Lake of Fire for their treason will at last be the reaping of what they have sowed.

Consider the following from Richard Dawkins, leader of the New Atheist movement, in a debate with John Lennox, a fervent Christian, also an Oxford professor and scientist with two earned Ph.D.s, who in his closing remarks testified to his faith in Christ and to our Lord’s resurrection: “Yes, well, that concluding bit,” said Dawkins, lips curled in contempt, voice dripping with venom, “rather gives the game away, doesn’t it? All that stuff about science and physics... that’s all very grand and wonderful, and then suddenly we come down to the resurrection of Jesus. It’s so petty, it’s so trivial, it’s so local, it’s so earthbound, it’s so *unworthy* of the universe.”

Yet God calls the Resurrection the greatest display that could ever be known of His majesty and power. How pitiful is this vitriolic outburst from Dawkins! This pagan, who obviously worships creation instead of its Creator (Rom 1:21-23), is beside himself with rage. This expression of his hatred of God will mock him eternally (Prv 1:20-33), while heaven will ring with the eternal yet ever new song of praise to God and the Lamb: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” **TBC**

Quotable

The Word of God is quite sufficient to interest and bless the souls of men throughout all time; but novelties soon fail. "Surely," cries one, "we must add our own thoughts thereto." My brother, think by all means; but the thoughts of God are better than yours. You may shed fine thoughts as trees in the autumn cast their leaves; but there is One who knows more about your thoughts than you do, and He thinks little of them.

"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." To liken our thoughts to the great thoughts of God would be a gross absurdity. Would you bring your candle to show the sun? your nothingness to replenish the eternal all? It is better to be silent before the Lord, than to dream of supplementing what He has written.

The Greatest Fight in the World: C. H. Spurgeon's "Final Manifesto," 12-13

Q&A

QUESTION: Sam Harris (one of "The Four Horsemen" leading the "New Atheists") writes: "According to the most common interpretation of biblical prophecy, Jesus will return only after things have gone horribly awry....It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that if the city of New York were suddenly replaced by a ball of fire, some significant percentage of the American population would see a silver lining in the subsequent mushroom cloud, as it would suggest to them that the best thing that is ever going to happen was about to happen: the return of Christ." Why would Jesus have to use some huge catastrophe in order to make his appearance on earth? And why would Christians rejoice over such a tragedy, with complete disregard for the lives lost?

RESPONSE: In more than 50 years of speaking at prophecy conferences and both reading and writing many bestselling prophecy books, I have never encountered Harris's bizarre idea. He displays the grossest ignorance of the Bible I have ever seen, especially from someone who claims to know it and who dares to ridicule it.

Where did Harris get this "most common interpretation of biblical prophecy"? It contradicts the Bible and maligns God's character and that of Christians!

A tiny fringe group of Christians may hold such an unbiblical and God-dishonoring view. No Christian would rejoice at the destruction of New York or any

other city. Statements like these erode any confidence one might have otherwise had in the accuracy of Harris's accusations. Could his books be worth reading?

A major mistake is his failure to distinguish between the Rapture (which occurs during a time of false peace and prosperity and takes true Christians to heaven) and the Second Coming (when Christ rescues Israel at Armageddon and destroys those who are attacking to destroy her). The Great Tribulation ends in the siege of Jerusalem. At that time there could be a nuclear exchange. This is not, however, a necessary condition for the Second Coming.

QUESTION: Sam Harris argues, "The idea that the Bible is a perfect guide to morality is simply astounding, given the contents of the book....We must also stone people to death for heresy, adultery, homosexuality, working on the Sabbath, worshipping graven images, practicing sorcery, and a wide variety of other imaginary crimes. Here is just one example of God's timeless wisdom: 'If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son, or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods,"... you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him; but you shall kill him, your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people'" (Deuteronomy 13:6, 9). This is supposed to represent a "loving God?" How can you defend this?

RESPONSE: As usual, this criticism from Harris displays his ignorance of the Bible and leaves common sense far behind. It also reveals an open hostility, prejudice, and an unwillingness to have his ignorance remedied. He is not interested in truth but only in tearing down the Bible and turning as many people against it as he possibly can.

First of all, these commands were for Israel, not for any other nation, either then or since: "He hath not dealt so with any other nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them" (Ps 147:19-20). Israel has a special relationship with God: "The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." He commanded Israel to obey His laws and warned that if they persisted in rebellion He would cast them out of the land He had given to them and would scatter them

to every part of the earth. They would be hated, persecuted, and slaughtered unmercifully, suffering more than any other people in history. Dozens of prophecies written 2-3,000 years ago accurately foretold the Holocaust and also Islam's attempt to destroy Israel today.

On the basis alone of fulfilled prophecies concerning Israel, we have more than sufficient proof of the existence of God to convince anyone who is willing to face the truth. "The God of Israel" (an expression found 203 times in the Bible) promised that He would not let the Jews be wiped out. He would preserve a remnant and, in the "last days," gradually restore them to their rightful land, though surrounded by enemies vastly outnumbering them and bent on their destruction. In this remarkable prophecy God has linked Himself eternally with Israel. What an embarrassment it would be to the "God of Israel" if Israel no longer existed! Do you want to prove that God does not exist? Then wipe out the Jews. To do that you would have to wipe out Israel. I pity any man or nation that tries!

As for the penalties that God prescribes, which Harris imagines reveal God to be a monster, governments in every culture have by necessity dealt severely with those who attempt to overthrow them. This is high treason, and the penalty is death.

If God exists and is truly the Creator, then surely He, more than any earthly government, is entitled to make the rules. This He has done by establishing physical laws that hold the universe together, and then by writing moral laws in every conscience. What Harris lists are all acts of treason against the Lord of the universe. Yet the Creator is not allowed to mete out severe punishment, including the death penalty, against rebels guilty of intending to overthrow His rule?

Satan was the first to commit high treason, and he apparently took one-third of the angels with him. God is patient in His dealings with men, but those who persist in rebellion, as do atheists such as Harris, will, unless they repent, be banished from God's universe, and consigned to the Lake of Fire eternally. (See *TBC*, 4/08 article; 6/08 Q&A for what that means.) Treason committed by humans will be tolerated for a time, perhaps even for the whole of one's life—but after death comes judgment.

QUESTION: Sam Harris writes, "Every devout Muslim has the same reasons for being a Muslim that you have for being a Christian. And yet, you do not find their reasons compelling. The Koran repeatedly

declares that it is the perfect word of the creator of the universe....Can you prove that Allah is not the one true God? Can you prove that the archangel Gabriel did not visit Muhammad in his cave? Of course not!" How can one tell which "holy book" is true and which is not? Isn't it one man's word against another man's?

RESPONSE: We can prove that each of Islam's claims is false. Harris displays abysmal ignorance both of Christianity and of Islam. There are many profound differences and only a few superficial similarities. The "God of Israel" inspired 40 different prophets over a period of 1,600 years to write the Bible. Most of them never met any of the others, yet their prophecies all agree with and supplement one another. There are no prophecies in the Qur'an, any more than in the Hindu Vedas or sayings of Buddha. Every one of the 40 biblical prophets has 39 independent witnesses, most of whom lived in different cultures and times in history and never even met one another, yet their testimonies agree. This is a powerful witness to the truth of the Bible.

For the veracity of the Qur'an, there is only one—Muhammad. He began his career with more than 20 murders and perpetuated his power by murdering thousands more through disciples following his example. This evil continued until his death. Islamic historians admit that far from dying like Jesus Christ as a willing sacrifice, Muhammad died ignominiously, poisoned by the widow whose husband he had murdered.

Christians have a multiplicity of prophecies and witnesses, testifying to Christ's sinlessness. The Qur'an itself urges Muhammad to confess his sins, but, at the same time, it admits the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Proof of the Bible is found in hundreds of prophecies recorded centuries before their fulfillment. The Qur'an has none.

Many eyewitnesses have attested to the fact of Christ's resurrection. Some of the greatest legal minds and many historians declare that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is established on such solid evidence that it would stand up in any court. Islam has nothing comparable.

QUESTION: In Christopher Hitchens's *God Is Not Great*, he says that the magnificent, irreducible complexity of the human eye is not evidence for a Creator but cites "the ineptitude of its 'design'" as proof for evolution. He quotes Dr.

Michael Shermer, who claims that "a simple eyespot with a handful of light-sensitive cells...developed into a recessed eyespot...then into a pinhole camera eye...then into a pinhole lens...then into a complex eye." Shermer goes on to say: "The anatomy of the human eye, in fact, shows anything but 'intelligence' in its design. It is built upside down and backwards, requiring photons of light to travel through the cornea, lens, aqueous fluid, blood vessels, ganglion cells, amacrine cells, horizontal cells, and bipolar cells before they reach the light-sensitive rods and cones that transduce the light signal into neural impulses—which are then sent to the visual cortex at the back of the brain...." Hitchens says, "It is because we evolved from sightless bacteria, now found to share our DNA, that we are so myopic...we must never forget Charles Darwin's injunction that even the most highly evolved of us will continue to carry 'the indelible stamp of their lowly origin.'" My question is: For optimal vision, why would an intelligent designer have built an eye upside down and backwards?

RESPONSE: I have a question first of all for Hitchens. Can he prove that we "evolved" from sightless bacteria? It is true that we all share the same DNA alphabet, even with carrots and garden slugs; but human DNA is far more complex. Nor is DNA all that makes us human and separates us from all lower creatures. What part of the DNA spells out appreciation for poetry, the ability to compose an opera, or to write like Shakespeare or Dickens? Where does the DNA spell out the genius to define the mathematics to engineer the construction of a high-rise building or to design the space capsule that landed on the moon? None of these abilities comes from DNA, nor even from the brain, but from the nonphysical mind.

Hitchens is determined to support his atheism at any cost, and that makes him so eager to accept anything that seems to do so that he is blind to the many facts to the contrary. The truth is that Shermer, upon whom Hitchens relies, has the facts twisted. He recites the standard theory of evolutionists concerning the origin of the eye from "a simple eyespot with a handful of light-sensitive cells...then into a pinhole camera eye...then into a pinhole lens...then into a complex eye."

Evolutionists all repeat this same recital as though it has been established by fossils, but that is far from the case. It doesn't take

a genius to realize that this is pure speculation. A child could ask simple questions that neither Shermer nor Hitchens could answer: What is an eyespot? How did it develop? Many cells on our body are "light sensitive" but none of them will turn into an eye—why this one?

How and why did it develop a "recessed eyespot"? How did it make the huge leaps from "eyespot" to a "pinhole camera eye" then into a "pinhole lens"—and how could it have been called a "camera" before it had a "lens"? At what point did these partial developments begin to benefit the organism enough to aid in its survival? How did they avoid being wiped out by natural selection before they became part of a functioning whole?

As for the eye being badly designed, ophthalmic scientists have denounced this idea. Dr. George Marshall, for example, Sir Jules Thorn Lecturer in Ophthalmic Science, University of Glasgow, declares: "The [belief] that the eye is wired backward comes from a lack of knowledge of eye function and anatomy.... [T]he nerves could not go behind the eye, because that space is reserved for the choroid, which provides the rich blood supply needed for the very metabolically active retinal pigment epithelium (RPE). This is necessary to regenerate the photoreceptors, and to absorb excess heat. So...the nerves [must] go in front instead.

"Inverted wiring is necessary for vertebrate eyes to work...the direct opposite of what evolutionists claim would be the 'correct' wiring. [In fact], the evolutionists' claim is actually undercut by their own assessment of squid eyes, which despite being 'wired correctly,' don't see as well as vertebrate eyes....

"Interestingly, anyone with excellent eyesight is said to have 'eyes like a hawk,' which are 'backwardly wired,' not 'eyes like a squid.' The excellent sight provided by these allegedly 'wrongly wired' eyes makes [evolutionists'] objections absurd.... [The] claim that the nerves obstruct the light has been falsified by very new research by scientists at Leipzig University....

"Not only is the inverted wiring of our eyes a good design, necessary for proper functioning, [but] it is also coordinated with an ingenious fibre optic plate. So the vertebrate eye has the advantage of a rich blood supply behind the receptors without the disadvantage of nerves blocking out light. Such fine coordination of parts makes sense with a Master Coordinator, while it's a puzzle for evolutionists." (<http://creationontheweb.com/content/view/5214/#endref1>)

Divine Opportunities

T. A. McMahon

I consider any opportunity to be willingly used of the Lord to be a foretaste of heaven. But that didn't come to mind as I stared at the hospital room ceiling, taking stock of my situation following surgery. I was thinking more about all the plastic tubes and bags attached to different points of my body, as well as the twenty-or-so staples holding part of me together. I was also wondering why the Lord allowed this to happen to me. Surely He knew that in my present condition I couldn't fulfill the ministry to which He had called me. Furthermore, my friend Dave Hunt had just been diagnosed with prostate cancer while he was struggling to recover from a replacement of an artificial hip that deteriorated after a decade of use. Why would God allow us both to be afflicted? Truthfully, compared to what I knew others were suffering, I'm embarrassed to use the term "afflicted," but thinking of others occupied little, if any, of my thoughts at the time. My primary focus was my own condition.

Great news from my surgeon was soon disturbed by an incidental complication. The technique used in the successful removal of a portion of my colon along with a large tumor (that against all odds proved to be cancer free!) had resulted in nerve damage to my bladder. It had stopped functioning. My thankfulness for God's mercy in my not having to deal with cancer quickly got lost in a host of unsuccessful catheter trials, which led to months of self-catheterizations. The only Scripture verse I could think of when informed that I would have to undergo the latter procedures three to four times a day, perhaps indefinitely, was Job 3:25: "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me...." True, but not exactly comforting.

Another Bible verse came to mind many times during my ordeal—one that I had previously preached, taught, encouraged others by, wrestled over, and ministered with, over the years: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). That familiar verse came home to roost as I lay on my hospital bed. What possible "good" could come of this experience? *Not much*, I thought—given I couldn't see beyond my discomfort, occasional pain, fear, worry, anxiety,

and my worst-case-scenario-stimulated imagination.

Before I completely buried myself in the pit of self-preoccupation, however, the Lord got my attention. It must have been a thought from Him because I certainly wasn't on that page: "Why don't you shift your focus from yourself so you can see some of what I'm doing in all of this?" Conviction pierced my heart immediately. There was no follow-up "why?" or "yes, but"—it was simply "yes, Lord," from a guilty party blinded by himself. Nothing has impacted my life like that in recent years.

What followed from that point had a transforming effect on me. I began to see and learn things that I knew of from Scripture but that were rarely a part of my practical experience. I believe I grew more in the Lord in the last nine months than I had in many years prior. I had a taste of the Lord's superintending of my life when I was helpless (I'm sure He does a great deal more of the same even when I think

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

—Isaiah 55:8-9

I'm able!). Let me share some of what He taught me, especially with those of you who, like me, are among the first wave of baby boomers dealing with the destructive consequences of our aging bodies.

A friend gave me a Scripture verse (in jest, I thought) that captured what the Lord was doing (I believe) through my physical and spiritual trials: "He maketh me to lie down..." (Psalm 23:2). That described my condition perfectly, and I wasn't thrilled about it, but here is one of the first things I learned. One of my daily prayers is that the Lord will provide opportunities for me to be used of Him. I couldn't see that happening in my condition, flat on my back, with bags and tubes sticking out of my body.

To me, "opportunities" meant being able to minister to someone. What I learned is that the Lord has another way to use us. He allowed me to become the opportunity for *someone else* to minister. That disturbed my attitude of self-sufficiency. I was also humbled by the fact that this revelation

wasn't exactly new to me. Some years ago, I ran that possibility by a very elderly man who couldn't understand why the Lord saw fit to sustain his wife, who couldn't even feed herself—a task that had fallen on him in the weeks prior to our conversation. Would this man consider that the Lord was using his believing wife, who loved him dearly, to help him to grow in things like compassion, helps, service, and love, and to draw him closer to Himself? He tearfully realized that this was indeed taking place, and we wept together as we were overwhelmed by God's gracious hand upon both of them.

I knew that their experience was true to the Word and to the character of God, but it was not *my* experience—until last year, that is. After the first of my four surgeries, I began to see the doctors and nurses as those whom the Lord had provided to minister to me. I was their opportunity. Those who were believers (a number were) were fulfilling their ministries. Seeing myself as their God-appointed opportunity, my thinking shifted to "How can I contribute to helping them fulfill their ministry?" Those who were not Christians were no less appreciative of my attitude of cooperation. Still, I wondered what someone in my condition could do that might be helpful. My agenda began with a "thank you," a smile, a kind word, remembering their names, and showing real interest in them.

Opportunities, I soon discovered, beget opportunities. After a few days, I could see the Lord creating occasions for me to minister to them. My favorite decree for every doctor and nurse ministering to me was boldly declaring "my two rules": 1) Trust in the Lord, and 2) Do what the doctors and nurses tell me. That always received either a hearty "amen" or a thankful smile.

Living up to my own rules, however, wasn't as easy as I thought. When I was given instructions to get up a certain number of times for walks, or to continually use the lung-strengthening apparatus (neither of my favorite things), it initially took God's grace and enablement to meet the minimum goals. Soon, however, I was breaking my own records. The nurses quickly got the idea that I was there to *help them help me*, and my room became a place for some of them to hang out on their breaks and just chat. The conversations usually picked up where something briefly discussed during their rounds left off. Much of it was about the Lord and the Bible.

I was always looking for ways to talk about Jesus and His Word without “preaching” to my ministers. One day I noticed that the sign on the mirror over the sink was a directive for the nurses to wash their hands. As mundane as that was, it provided a wonderful opportunity for me to talk about the Bible. As each nurse stood at the sink I would ask her if she ever heard of a doctor named Ignaz Semmelweis. Some said the name sounded familiar. I would then explain that he introduced the practice of hand washing at his Viennese hospital in the mid-1800s as a method of preventing disease, particularly that which caused the deaths of newborn babies.

He observed that doctors and medical students often went directly from working on cadavers to assisting with childbirths, sometimes using the same medical instruments. The death rate of newborns in his hospital was close to 30 percent. After directing his staff members to wash their hands and instruments in a solution of water and chlorine, the death rate dropped below 2 percent.

Such a hygienic procedure preceded the discovery of germs as transmitters of diseases by a few decades, yet it was indicated in the Scriptures 3,000 years before this Jewish doctor instituted the hand-washing practice. Semmelweis believed what Moses had to say on the subject although, tragically, the medical profession did not believe Semmelweis. He was driven from his hospital, the high death rate among newborns returned, and Semmelweis was committed to an insane asylum where he died. He could not fathom his profession’s rejection of his simple plan for saving babies. Sad as that story is, it provided a few opportunities to bring up the Good News of the Bible, the simple truth of God’s plan for saving souls.

I love what I do at The Berean Call, and my calling in that ministry has primarily been to help Dave do what God has put on his heart to do. I’ve been privileged to work with him in different ways over the past 30 years. Last year, however, I was fearful at times that I couldn’t fulfill that calling, especially in light of the fact that Dave was suffering from a number of quite debilitating ailments. Again I questioned the Lord: “How can I contribute to TBC when I’m here in the hospital?” I’m not in the habit of questioning the Lord, but sometimes circumstances have driven me to it. Or, I should say, my flesh drove me to it. The answer that nearly always floods

my heart is, “Trust and obey Me, Tom.” I did, and what followed was both amazing to me, and a true adventure.

First of all, I learned that every waking moment is an opportunity to be used of the Lord in ministry, inside or outside of TBC—whether talking to Him in prayer, meditating upon His Word, or doing whatever He wants wherever He wants. I’ve learned that He allows conditions to take place and then uses them for His glory and for beneficial results. We need only to follow His lead as He prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane: “...not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36).

What brings me great joy as I look back is seeing that each hospital experience following my surgeries was wonderfully fruitful as a time of ministering and being ministered to. No dramatic healing took place. In fact, there were complications and setbacks. Nevertheless, I was released earlier than expected following each surgery and back to work within

Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

—Psalm 25:4-5

a couple of days (or sooner) after each hospital stay.

What about the adventure? That came, in part, from learning to function (at work and traveling to speaking engagements across the country) with catheter and ileostomy bags! They became temporary parts of my body for a number of months, followed by additional months of self-catheterization. When fear overcame me in anticipation of not being able to function ministry-wise because of my new devices and procedures, the Lord arranged an unexpected divine appointment with a brother-in-Christ whose condition involved the same apparatus—yet on a permanent basis.

He was incredibly encouraging as a “been there, done that” resource of what I could be facing. That’s when my mind shifted from dread to “I know the Lord can help me through this.” Moreover, I knew He could give me a new attitude about it all that would be a blessing to those ministering to me. That began with the restoration of my sense of humor, which had dried up for a while and which I would need for some of the adventures

(or mis-adventures!) ahead. Did you know that an ileostomy bag will explode right off one’s body after dining on spicy chili? I didn’t, but I do now. Or that same bag will inflate like a life-preserver as one drives over a very high-altitude mountain pass? Self-catheterization (the anticipation of which was my worst nightmare) was, to my surprise, a practice that I got used to after about a week. Never fun, but then again I’m still laughing about attempting the procedure during some of the worst turbulence I’ve ever experienced on an airplane!

The hundreds of letters and emails I’ve received from saints all over the world telling me they were continually praying for Dave and me were a comfort beyond description, and that became especially meaningful when the Lord opened my eyes to what He was accomplishing. His ways and means were not mine; they were *exceedingly beyond* what I could have imagined or even hoped for. Best of all was how He made His Word absolutely real to me as it spoke to my heart more during that time than ever before in my life in Christ.

Here are two of the many verses that greatly encouraged me:

For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many rebound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:15-18)

For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. (Psalm 22:24)

Because of His Son, He not only hears us, but He allows us to experience that which “worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

All of my surgeries were completely successful (no more bags of any kind!), but the experience for which I will be eternally thankful is the Lord’s graciousness in enabling me to see the things to which I was previously blinded, and for His unseen renewing of my inward man.

TBC

Quotable

It is a happy way of soothing sorrow when we can feel—"HE careth for me." Christian! do not dishonor religion by always wearing a brow of care; come, cast your burden upon your Lord. You are staggering beneath a weight which your Father would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden, would be to him but as the small dust of the balance.

O child of suffering, be thou patient; God has not passed thee over in His providence. He who is the feeder of sparrows, will also furnish you with what you need. Sit not down in despair; hope on, hope ever. Take up the arms of faith against a sea of trouble, and your opposition shall yet end your distresses. There is One who careth for you. His eye is fixed on you, His heart beats with pity for your woe, and His hand omnipotent shall yet bring you the needed help. The darkest cloud shall scatter itself in showers of mercy. The blackest gloom shall give place to the morning. He, if thou art one of His family, will bind up thy wounds, and heal thy broken heart. Doubt not His grace because of thy tribulation, but believe that He loveth thee as much in seasons of trouble as in times of happiness.

What a serene and quiet life might you lead if you would leave providing to the God of providence! With a little oil in the cruse, and a handful of meal in the barrel, Elijah outlived the famine, and you will do the same. If God cares for you, why need you care too? Can you trust Him for your soul, and not for your body? He has never refused to bear your burdens, He has never fainted under their weight. Come, then, soul! have done with fretful care, and leave all thy concerns in the hand of a gracious God.

C. H. Spurgeon, Morning & Evening

Q&A

QUESTION: How do you pray to Jesus without seeing an image of Him?

RESPONSE: I never see an image of Jesus when I pray. From my background as a Roman Catholic and one having a degree in fine arts, I've seen a lot of images of Jesus that men have painted, drawn, or sculpted—but none were true images. They were depictions of what artists have in their minds regarding what they think Jesus looked like. No matter how impressive any image may have been, it was nevertheless a false image.

I've been told by some Christians that having an image of Jesus in their mind helps them with their prayer life. It may seem to help, and I'm sure they are sincere, but their practice is neither practical nor biblical.

It's impractical because the person is not praying to Jesus but rather to a false image of Him. It would be like having an artist draw a picture of someone I have phone conversations with—someone neither the artist nor I have ever seen. Yet I declare that when I stare at the picture during my phone conversations, it makes me feel good about the person to whom I'm talking. That's not only a delusion, it's idolatry.

Conjuring up an image of Jesus in my mind—that is, a depiction of what He looked like, although I've never seen Him—is a form of idolatry. It is idolatry because Jesus Christ, the God Man, is being fashioned according to the mind of a fallen, finite human being. The result, no matter how helpful it may seem, would be both demeaning and degrading in comparison to the true, godly image of Christ.

For those who, when they pray, are bothered by man's images of Jesus (seen in movies, paintings, statues, icons, etc.), I recommend meditating on verses that so glorify Jesus that one's fleshly imagination will be put to shame and be delivered from such a distraction. For example: "[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Colossians 1:15-19). Any image of Jesus that falls short of those characteristics (which they all do to the extreme!) is "another Jesus," a "false Christ," of which Jesus declared there would be many in the last days.

QUESTION: Does the Bible allow for defending oneself or one's family?

RESPONSE: There is no teaching in Scripture that forbids self-protection. There are, however, special conditions in which such an effort may not be what God desires. The Old Testament abounds with examples of armies and individuals raised up for the defense of Israel. David, as a young man, took on the Philistine giant Goliath for the

glory of God and the protection of Israel. Gideon and Deborah, among other judges, were also used of God for the protection of Israel. Yet many of the prophets of Jehovah were martyred for speaking what He told them to say.

In the New Testament, we're told that governments restrain harm against their people by bearing arms "to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:4). Soldiers were exhorted by John the Baptist to repent of intimidating and extorting people; they weren't told to leave their occupation. Jesus commended the Roman centurion for his faith, with no indication that his profession was unbiblical. Paul used military analogies throughout his Holy Spirit inspired writings. There are far too many scriptures that cannot be reconciled with pacifism.

Other than fashioning a whip and chasing the moneychangers from the Temple, Jesus never acted in an aggressive militant way. Neither did He defend Himself beyond eluding those who wanted to destroy Him prior to His going to the Cross. His mission at His first coming was as the meek and lowly Lamb of God, who came to sacrifice Himself to pay for the sins of humanity. On the other hand, at His second coming He will protect Israel as He rescues her by destroying the armies of the nations that have gathered to destroy her. "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him [Jesus] that sat on the horse, and against his army....And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:19, 21).

When Jesus was physically with His disciples, He kept them out of harm's way. Just as when He sent out the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples and empowered them, He would miraculously be their provider and protector. His disciples were never told to form themselves into an army for their own or His protection, or to take over Israel and the world for Christ. However, just before Jesus went to the Cross, He indicated that His followers would need to do some things in His physical absence. "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among

the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough" (Luke 22:35-38). Peter missed the point on two counts: first, the necessity of what Jesus must suffer when he tried to hold back the mob coming to take Jesus by force, and second, that they should be reasonably armed and only when conditions warranted it.

Some Christians believe that it shows a lack of faith to arm oneself even in the face of imminent danger. To be armed is to not trust God as one's protector, or so I'm told. I certainly trust God as my protector. I also trust God as my provider, yet I work. I trust God as my healer, yet I go to the doctor. The same holds true for protection. I look to the Lord ultimately to protect me and my family, yet there may be a time when arming myself for their protection is the prudent thing to do. It may be a matter of simply deterring wickedness, or more actively preventing the rape or murder of one's loved ones.

There also may be a time for a believer to give up his life for the testimony of the gospel and for Christ, just as Stephen, all the apostles except John, and the martyrs who are cited in Hebrews 11. How do we know when to defend ourselves and when not to? "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). It's a matter of scriptural conviction and being led of the Lord.

QUESTION: I'm a parent of children who are a few years away from becoming teenagers. We live in an area of a city in which personal safety is a real issue. My husband and I have had numerous discussions about this particular concern for our children and we both want to do that which is consistent with the Word of God. We've considered enrolling our son and daughter in a martial arts class, but I understand some classes involve occult practices.

RESPONSE: My views are based upon my experiences as well as my understanding of the Scriptures, so they are simply offered as a perspective that you need to consider as a Berean. In other words, you need to check out what I write, first and foremost, to see if it rings true to the Word of God. Then you need to do your own research regarding any class or program in which you have your children participate.

I practiced Judo and Aikido while in college and beyond, the former for eight years, the latter for about six months. Judo is a sport that was derived from Jujitso, a self-defense practice. Its techniques are

purely physical, that is, a player of the sport utilizes athletic abilities such as quickness, strength, agility, and leverage in attempting to throw an opponent to the mat, the primary method of winning a contest. Matches can also be won by grappling techniques. It's similar in many ways to wrestling. In my experience, there were no mystical or occult methods involved in the sport.

Aikido, on the other hand, is a self-defense practice that has as its foundation what is alleged to be a spiritual energy known as "ki." Supposedly ki is a nonphysical energy that flows through all things. It is claimed that humans have it within themselves and have the ability to connect with "ki" in others and beyond themselves in the cosmos.

Common demonstrations of "ki" that I witnessed are "unbendable arm" and "unliftable body." An instructor would have students try to bend his arm or lift his body off the ground. It made no difference how many students attempted to bend the sensei's arm or lift him, my class was never successful at it. However, there is no physical explanation for how it works.

The idea of a spiritual energy or power is central to Eastern religions such as ki in Japanese Buddhism and Shintoism, prana and kundalini in Hinduism and its practice of yoga, and chi or qi in Taoism and Chinese Buddhism. Those religions espouse an impersonal god or Life Force that permeates everything. That belief is contrary to the biblical God, who is personal, transcendent, and not part of creation.

Any Christian who participates in a martial arts practice (or healing program such as reiki, or exercise program such as yoga) that involves a spiritual energy (ki, chi, qi, prana, etc.) is engaging in a belief system that cannot be reconciled with the Word of God, that fosters a false view of God, and that offers powers that are very likely supplied by the Adversary of God and his demonic spirits. The Bible gives many examples of demonic powers, from Satan afflicting Job and others to the superhuman strength of a demon-possessed man who couldn't be restrained by chains. Scripture indicates that Satan will use such deception to keep people from receiving the gospel ("...after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"—2 Thessalonians 2:9-10).

Obviously, a Christian needs to steer clear of anything that promotes "spiritual energy." Even martial arts programs that

avoid such practices need to be closely scrutinized by parents who are considering enrolling their children. More important, parents need to question the value for each child. For some, it may be detrimental, while for others worthwhile. Yet the bottom line is, will the activity be consistent with their godly obligation to raise their child in the fear and admonition of the Lord? Again, this is a faith decision that needs to be submitted to the Lord and supported in prayer.

QUESTION: Didn't Jesus' teaching that we are to turn the other cheek when physically assaulted instruct Christians to not defend themselves? That's my view as a pacifist.

RESPONSE: My understanding of Matthew 5:39 and Luke 6:29 is that they have to do with retaliation regarding an insult or litigation pertaining to one's personal goods. To apply the verse to a life-threatening assault is to dismiss the context, as well as contradict the many other verses and examples throughout the Bible that would deny pacifism.

True Love Part 1

Dave Hunt

Jesus was asked to name the “great commandment in the law.” His reply lays the foundation for obedience to every commandment from God: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Mt 22:36-38). Adding an essential explanation of true love, Paul declared, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love [charity], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.... Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor 13:1-13).

“Science falsely so called” (1 Tm 6:20) has lately decided to debunk human love under the guise of supporting it. “Science” claims to have identified a part of the brain where “lasting love” resides. Scientists have located the same in the brains of swans, voles, and grey foxes. Is it supposed to be an encouragement to a couple who, for example, has been married for 25 or even 50 years to know that there is a “scientific explanation” for what they had thought, all these years, was genuine love? Am I suggesting that if there is a scientific explanation for love, therefore love cannot be genuine? Yes! That raises the question, “What is genuine love?”

Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the language in the DNA molecule, was so enamored with science that he declared in triumph, “You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”

Does it make one happy to have this epitaph pronounced on what one thought were genuine experiences of joy, altruism, sacrifice, satisfaction, and so forth? Why do I say that a “scientific” explanation of these emotions, which are so real in our lives, pronounces their death?

One is reminded of the man who, every time he went to a friend’s home and was offered a drink of water, would throw the contents in the host’s or hostess’s face. After this happened several times, his bewildered friend said, “Do me a favor and go to a psychiatrist. I’m not going to allow you back into my house until you’ve been cured of this outrageous habit!”

Hearing that the man had been in intensive psychotherapy for six months,

the friend invited him to dinner again. The hostess was a bit wary when she put some water at his place setting, and, sure enough, in the middle of the meal, he suddenly threw the whole glass of water into the hostess’s face.

“I’ve never been so humiliated in my life!” she exclaimed. “This is a new dress. It can only be dry-cleaned and now you’ve ruined it!”

The apologetic guest explained, “I’ve been under intensive psychotherapy for six months and the psychiatrist said I was cured!”

“Cured? He must be crazy!”

“I *am* cured. I used to feel horrible about doing this, but now that he’s explained why I do it, I don’t feel guilty anymore!”

Psychologists want to create a guilt-free world where no one is ever at fault. Defense attorneys can always plead for their clients, “He couldn’t help himself—it’s in his genes!” Of course, this is simply a modern version of “The devil made me do it.”

This ready excuse clearly does not hold true in everyday living. Leading atheist Richard Dawkins seems bewildered by real life. It doesn’t follow the rules according to his understanding of natural selection. For example, in his book *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins writes:

Anything that has evolved by natural selection should be selfish.... If we find that... human behavior is truly altruistic, then we shall be faced with something puzzling... that needs explaining.¹

“Any *thing*?” *Things* are neither generous nor selfish. Yet a major thesis of Dawkins’s first book was that genes are selfish.²

Why does Dawkins say “if”? Can he possibly be ignorant of the well-known fact that there are thousands of examples of altruistic behavior on the part of humans? Quite a number of them even illustrate what Jesus referred to when He said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Consider the following example, which is only one out of many:

President Bush awarded the military’s highest honor to a 19-year-old soldier who was killed in Iraq after falling on a grenade to save his fellow soldiers. Private Tom McGinnis, of Knox, Pa., was killed in a Baghdad neighborhood on Dec. 4, 2006, when a grenade was thrown into the gunner’s hatch of the Humvee in which he was riding.... Private McGinnis had enough time to jump out and save himself but instead dropped into the hatch and covered the grenade with his own body, absorbing the fragments. He was killed instantly. All four crew members were saved.³

History records many such acts of self-sacrifice, including quite a number of them in recent years. Dawkins has “explained” none of them. Certainly none of the heroes was controlled by “selfish genes.”

We know by experience that human behavior is not consistent. One can be very generous today and much the other way tomorrow. That fact explains why the booming and lucrative psychology industry was doomed before it began. It is impossible to make a science of human behavior. Why? Because the subject of the experiment is hopping about capriciously with a free will, and one never knows what it might do next! If human behavior could be explained “scientifically,” we would no longer be humans but stimulus-response mechanisms.

Of course, that would make atheists happy. If there were no soul and spirit, no free will, and if nothing but matter existed, then human behavior would have to be covered by scientific laws. That would destroy man as God made him and as our experience and intuition tell us we are. Gone would be free will and everything else that makes man a moral agent. We all intuitively know that human behavior cannot be explained by what one’s genes may be doing, yet this is the “hope” of atheists, who of necessity deny free will.

No wonder the atheist flounders badly. He finds his ship sinking, and he can’t bail out the water fast enough to keep it afloat. As the other psychiatrist in the film *What About Bob?* remarked as he turned his former patient over to Dr. Leo Marvin, “We’re a dying breed, Leo!” In spite of this fact, the number of psychology’s victims continues to grow.

Psychologists and psychiatrists have struggled for years to have their profession recognized as a science, apparently unaware that if their ambition were fulfilled with a general acceptance of this wish, man would no longer be the free-will agent that God created him to be.

Atheist Sam Harris, one of the leaders, like Dawkins, in the New Atheist movement, tries to sound authoritative but fails miserably:

While we do not have anything like a final, scientific understanding of human morality, it seems safe to say that raping and killing our neighbors is not one of its primary constituents. Everything about human experience suggests that love is more conducive to happiness than hate is. This is an objective claim about the human mind, about the dynamics of social relations, and about the moral order of our world. It is clearly possible to say that someone like Hitler was

wrong in moral terms without reference to scripture.⁴

Moral order of our world? What is that, and who decides what it should be? Is it in our genes or in our conscience—and why? What is the conscience? Groping for a psychological, and thus presumably “scientific,” explanation, atheists speak of “love” in purely utilitarian terms. What would be the relationship of love between an engaged couple or husband and wife or mother and child if each party were only interested in one’s own happiness? The initial “happiness” would degenerate (as it so often does) into quarreling over who was not being fair with whom.

Researchers at Stony Brook University in New York...scanning the brains of people who have been together for 20 years...found that about one in 10 couples still display elements of “limerence,” the psychologists’ term for the obsessive behavior of new lovers....Scientists call them swans (swans mate for life).... Arthur Aron, leader of the researchers...and his team have established a biological basis for romance...hav[ing] found identical brain patterns in lovers from New York to Beijing. Unromantically, they say love is born in the brain’s reward-seeking circuitry, not the heart, but we are no worse off for that. Love matters.⁵

The Bible states quite clearly, and our common sense agrees, that the heart *is* the appropriate term to use when speaking of love. This has been the intuition of mankind from the beginning. I can still remember when a young man would carve his initials in a tree, place a plus sign with his girlfriend’s initials just beneath, then surround the whole thing with a heart. As long as Valentine cards have been sent, the heart has always been a symbol of true love. And now, “researchers” tell us that for all of these centuries men and women have been victims of a cruel hoax: it’s not the heart that matters but certain concentrations of molecules in various parts of the body. According to this new view from “science,” it doesn’t really matter.

If that is the case, then the Bible is wrong. If the psychologists are right, then why would God command that “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy *heart*, with all thy *soul*, and with all thy *might*”? (Dt 6:5). Why did Paul declare, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”? (Rom 10:9). Of course, by “heart” the Bible signifies “sincerity,” and this has

always been the common understanding of mankind.

An article in *Science Daily* (9/8/08) tells us that scientists at Karolinska Institute [outside Stockholm, Sweden] claim to have found a link between a specific gene variant and the way men bond or don’t bond to their partners. Then they admit that the effect is relatively modest and cannot be used to predict future behavior with any real accuracy.

Why would anyone pursue research in something that will have no predictive value? Clearly, the research has no other purpose behind it than to prove somehow that God is not needed to explain human behavior—or really anything else. Yet scientists all over the world persist in trying to catch this will-o’-the-wisp of a scientific explanation for human behavior. And when they think they’ve caught it, they find they really have nothing. Having gone to all the effort of locating a “specific gene variant” that “explains” romance and love, we’re told that its predictive powers aren’t really that accurate or significant. In other words, the researchers have wasted their time and ours because of their desire to prove that there is no God. One could liken this experience to the discovery by a sculptor that the huge stone he’d been carefully carving and polishing was not marble after all but ordinary fieldstone.

These “scientists” are trying so hard to support their atheistic view of man that they overstate their case. It has been the common opinion in every generation that the greatest movies, operas, music, and poetry have one thing in common: they are all claiming, though in a variety of ways, that love is the greatest experience one could have. Who would dare to argue with that?

There are problems, however. “Love” can quickly turn to hate. This fact is demonstrated more clearly every day as the divorce rate climbs ever higher. A young couple stands before witnesses and swears their undying love “till death do us part.” Six years—or it could be six months, or in some cases, six weeks or even six days—what each party had thought was genuine, lasting love has turned to quarreling, accusations, bitterness, and in some cases, even threats of violence. That pledge, “till death do us part,” becomes worse than empty. How is this possible?

Will the answer to this enigma be found in the genes or somewhere in the brain? On the contrary, the answer is not found in any part of the anatomy but in the soul and spirit and will. Perhaps each one thought that the pledge of lasting love they gave to one another would never grow cold, much less

turn to hatred. They discover that true love is not just a passing emotion; it involves a commitment for life. If those who later develop what the world calls “marital problems” honestly examined their hearts, they might be forced to confess that they had never really intended to establish an unbreakable bond.

Not just Valentine cards that come from mankind’s common understanding, but the Bible itself has much to say about the heart. Jeremiah tells us that the “*heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” David, in Psalm 139, says, “Search me, O God, and know my *heart*.” Proverbs commands, “Trust in the LORD with all thine *heart*...;” Luke 8:15 tells us, “On the good ground are they, which in an honest and good *heart*, having heard the word, keep [it], and bring forth fruit with patience”; and Luke writes in Acts 2:37: “Now when they heard [this], they were pricked in their *heart*, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do?”

To answer the question, “What is true love?” the last place we should look is to psychologists. They are very good at explaining love away by giving us a psychological definition but very short on what we need to know. We need rather to consult God’s Word. True love comes only from God, as we yield to Him and allow Him to pour His love through us to others. “We love him, because he first loved us,” (1 Jn 4:19); “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

None of us is the wellspring of love. We are at best empty vessels that He can fill with His love and make us conduits of that love to others. Many of us are too full of ourselves to have any room left for loving God or genuinely loving others. It doesn’t have to be this way. We can make it a continual prayer: “Lord, help me to love You with all of my heart, mind, and soul. Then pour Your love through me to others.”

True love is God’s love and is described like this:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love [is] strong as death; jealousy [is] cruel as the grave: the coals thereof [are] coals of fire, [which hath a] most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if [a] man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned [rejected with disdain]. (Song 8:6-7)

TBC

[To be continued]

Quotable

The Holy Scriptures are the divinely inspired Word of God, and therefore to be fully believed, highly revered, and strictly obeyed. Since faith comes from hearing the Word of God, and the just live by faith, we must ever remember that the basis of the Christian life is a constant meditation upon and simple acceptance of all that the Bible would say to us. But as Christ's work of redemption in the flesh was only preparatory to His future indwelling us by the Spirit, so the written doctrines of Scripture are only a means to all that inward teaching and powerful working of Christ's Spirit within us. As we must beware of neglecting the Word of God, so also we must beware of resting in the mere letter without expecting through the indwelling Holy Spirit a real and living experience of all that Scripture holds out to our faith. Nothing of divine love, life, or goodness can have birth or place in us but by inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. So they who imagine these virtues can be acquired by studying the letter of the gospels and epistles are under the same deception as the Jews that Christ said would not come to Him because they thought eternal life was in and by the Old Testament Scriptures alone.

William Law, The Power of the Spirit

Due to the favorable response we received from the inclusion of some Q&As from the past in our December 2008 issue of TBC, we are delighted once again to bring you some "vintage Dave" answers to tough questions.

Q&A

QUESTION: In your gospel message you emphasize that salvation is based on the fact that Christ "paid the penalty for our sins." *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* has no entry for "penalty," nor did Jesus or the Apostles ever mention that a penalty for our sins was paid. If I ask fellow Christians where to find this view in the Bible either they are perplexed (they don't know the answer) or they imply that I am not saved. Since you use that statement so often in your gospel presentation, I pose that question to you.

RESPONSE: Nor is the word "trinity" in either the Bible or *Strong's*, yet it is a basic teaching of Scripture. Was not the casting of Adam and Eve out of the Garden a

penalty for their sin? Isn't the death which came upon Adam and Eve and upon all of their descendants to this day also a penalty for sin that would continue in eternal separation from God without His pardon? In declaring, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezk 18:13, 20)...sin bringeth forth death (Jas 1:15)...the strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor 15:56), is Scripture not saying that death is the penalty for sin? Does not a penalty have to be paid?

Granted, the Bible nowhere uses the exact terminology we would today about Christ paying the penalty for sin. But isn't that what is implied when it says "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5), or "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3), or "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb 2:9), as well as in many similar verses? If death is the penalty for sin and Christ died for all, then surely He paid the penalty in full for all of us or we would have to pay that penalty ourselves. Our salvation is a matter of God's justice, "that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). I don't understand your objection to saying that the penalty was paid. Is not that the force of Christ's triumphant cry from the cross, "It is finished [*tetelestai*]!" meaning paid in full? I am grateful that Christ paid in full the penalty for my sin and sins so that God can be just in pardoning me, the sinner! There is no other means of salvation.

QUESTION: In your book, *In Defense of the Faith*, I liked your explanation of "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Isaiah 45:7). You explained that darkness is not something God created, but the total absence of light; and that just as light reveals darkness, so God's holiness reveals evil—it is not something God causes people to do. I liked that explanation. But what about Amos 3:6, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

RESPONSE: The Hebrew word there translated "evil" is *ra*. It primarily means adversity, affliction, calamity, distress, but it can also mean sin. Of these two possible meanings, how do we know what is meant in a given instance? The context will tell you.

In this short book of Amos, *ra* appears seven times; only twice (5:14,15) does it mean sin, the other five times (3:6; 5:13; 6:3;

9:4,10) it means judgment from the Lord. The Lord tells Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (3:2).

As His special people, they have known His protection; no calamity, adversity, affliction or distress could come upon them except the Lord allowed it. Now they will know His judgment. God will bring *ra* upon them as punishment: "I command the sword, and it shall slay them [the disobedient people of Israel]: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil [*ra*], and not for good (9:4)."

"Evil" in Isaiah 45:7 is also *ra*. It could be understood to mean calamity or affliction. That would seem appropriate because the phrase "I make peace, and create evil [*ra*]" contrasts peace with *ra*. Surely *ra*, as calamity or destruction is the opposite of peace, just as darkness is the opposite of light.

In *Defense*, I took the most difficult understanding, that of *ra* as sin. Even with that meaning it is clear that God is not the author of sin.

QUESTION: I realize that some investigation of cults and the occult and false teachings in the church is necessary if we are to rescue those who are thereby deceived. But it would be too disquieting for my soul to spend enough time to investigate and understand every current error. How far is one obligated to go in explaining what the Word means to those who have been led astray? In my own experience, nothing anyone could tell me would have made any difference until God himself opened my heart.

RESPONSE: The time one spends pointing out error and attempting to persuade others of the truth depends upon one's God-given ministry and the people whom the Lord brings across one's path. Confronting and correcting error is apparently considered by God to be an important ministry, since so much of the Bible is devoted to it. Much of Christ's teaching was corrective, as are all of the Epistles. Paul corrected Peter publicly, named those who were leading others astray, and continually combated error. We must do the same if we are to obey God's Word and contend earnestly for the truth.

We are told to be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pt 3:15). Sometimes that asking may come in the form of a challenge from two Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses knocking at one's door, or from a colleague

at work who is a Buddhist or Muslim.

One needs at least a minimal understanding of opposing beliefs, but most important is the gospel. Paul was conversant enough with the Greek philosophers to be able to dispute with them in the marketplace and on Mars' Hill. In fact, he disputed daily (Acts 17:17,23). Sunday-school classes and youth groups ought to train our youth to such an extent that they can stand toe-to-toe with atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, cult members, etc., and confound them not so much by pointing out their errors as by presenting the truth.

You say nothing could have convinced you until the Lord opened your heart. But didn't God use someone's words and efforts in that process? We must be ready always to be used of God in the same way. Christ set the example for us to follow. He was gentle with those who had been deceived, but He sternly rebuked the rabbis who had perverted God's Word by false teaching, and He did so publicly.

One need not become an expert on cults and false religions. Many who thought that was their calling and immersed themselves in such studies have become obsessed with false teachings to such an extent that they have fallen by the wayside for lack of nourishment in God's Word.

Love the Lord your God and His Word, study it daily, meditate upon it with the intent of being always prepared to "preach the Word." The Bible itself is the sword of the Spirit. Therefore, our primary focus should be on knowing God's Word and presenting it convincingly in the power of the Holy Spirit. A workable knowledge of the cults and false religions should only take a secondary place.

QUESTION: I have trouble coming to grips with the idea that God uses trials to increase a believer's faith and trust in Him. This seems to be out of character with a God who is love. Can you help me get a better handle on this matter?

RESPONSE: The writer of Hebrews declares in no uncertain words that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb 12:6). James 1:17 tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Paul in turn says that God gave him a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor 12:7). He further explains that he asked God to remove it and the Lord said no (vv. 8-9). Paul gave some medical advice to Timothy to help relieve this young man's stomach problems and his "often infirmities" (1 Tm 5:23).

Why did Paul not heal Timothy like so many others? The answer is obvious. Just as God's gift of a "thorn" to Paul was accomplishing a specific purpose, so too did Timothy's affliction. David was willing to walk through the "valley of the shadow of death" (Ps 23:4) because God was with him. This same verse also says, "thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Consider the implication here. While the shepherd's staff was used to gently pull a wayward sheep back into the fold, the rod was used to drive off predators and even at times to direct straying sheep with a judicious whack or two. If a sheep were prone to wander, the shepherd might break its leg. He would then set it in a splint, and during recovery the sheep must of necessity remain close to the shepherd and afterwards would stray no more. What some might mistakenly regard as a cruel act (or abuse) is really a gift of life.

In the midst of severe judgment, Jeremiah wrote down God's declaration: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer 29:11). Many faithful Christians are able to echo the testimony of the psalmist: "Before I was afflicted I went astray..." (Ps 119:67).

Yes, Jesus promised joy, peace, happiness in Him (not in the world). While promising that tribulation would come, He gave us the promise that He had overcome the world (Jn 16:33), not that He would necessarily remove our affliction. Paul and the rest of the apostles testified of the myriad troubles that came their way. And even though their "outward man perish," yet their "inward man is renewed [or strengthened] day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). While it is not always easy to see how problems can strengthen a believer's faith, the Apostle Paul testifies to such a fact (vv. 17-18; 5:1-21; 6:1-10, etc.).

The Scriptures are full of examples (neatly summarized in Hebrews 11) of those who through trial, troubles, and great loss were brought closer to God. And this does not exclude the deliverance from afflictions (Ps 34:19). We too must all walk in faith. Of even more concern is your assertion that you are unable to find these things in Scripture.

QUESTION: The idea that the Antichrist will be resurrected from the dead by Satan seems to be the prevailing opinion among evangelical pretrib teachers. I would appreciate your opinion.

RESPONSE: This popular idea comes from Revelation 13:3. For example, in his book, *The Prewrath Rapture of the Church*, Marvin

Rosenthal states, "According to the Word of God, the Antichrist is a man who lived before. He ruled one of the seven great empires which directly impacted Israel....He will literally be raised from the dead. Concerning this raised ruler...the Word of God has much to say. 'And I saw one of his heads as though it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed...' (Rv 13:3)."

Note, however, that it is one of the beast's seven heads, not all of them, that is affected. Furthermore, the head (much less the beast) is not killed but appears "as though it were wounded to death." Seemingly, the beast could have died from this wound, but verses 3 and 12 declare that its "deadly wound was healed." So we have a healing, not a resurrection.

I believe it is referring to the Roman Empire which has indeed suffered from a deadly wound but has never died and is being revived before our eyes. Only God can raise the dead. Satan has no such power. At best he might pull off a "fake death and resurrection" of Antichrist, which John MacArthur suggests in his Study Bible as a possibility.

Endnotes

1. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4.
2. Ibid.
3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/03/washington/02end-medal.html?ref=us>.
4. Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2006), 24.
5. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article5439242.ece.

The Battle over Truth for Our Youth

T.A. McMahon

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. Psalm 119:9

Believers throughout every generation have experienced manifold problems in their attempts to live for Christ. Although circumstances and situations may vary greatly over millennia, God has nevertheless provided His remedy, which is both timeless and completely sufficient: “by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

When God has provided the solution, it doesn’t take special insight to recognize that Satan, God’s adversary, will make *God’s Word* the chief focus of his strategy of subversion. It began in the Garden of Eden, when the Serpent, in dialogue with Eve, cunningly seduced her into reconsidering what God had commanded: “Yea, hath God said...?” Dialogues have a way of subverting God’s absolutes by either adding erroneous content or subtracting critical truth. That has been Satan’s amazingly effective game plan throughout the ages as he has “blinded the minds of them which believe not” and shipwrecked the faith of some who believed (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Timothy 1:18-19).

The “Yea, hath God said...?” tactic is nearly always followed by a direct rejection of Scripture, as took place in the beginning (“Ye shall not surely die”—Genesis 3:4) and opens the way for God’s Word to be denigrated, scorned, distorted, mocked, lied about, and so forth. Although the Bible has been assaulted for thousands of years, Scripture tells us, and observation confirms, that the offensive against the Word will be unprecedented in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1; 4:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-2).

My personal observation of the Adversary’s strategy began as a biblical Christian some three decades ago, beginning with my work with Dave Hunt in exposing the cults (*Cult Explosion* and *The God Makers* documentary films), and shortly thereafter, alerting the church to cultic beliefs and practices that had crept in among Christian fellowships (*The Seduction of Christianity*). For what it’s worth, I’ve spent more than a quarter of a century observing and writing about trends within evangelical Christianity. Let me identify the tactics that I believe best exemplify

Satan’s assaults on the Word in these last days before Christ’s return.

I was a Roman Catholic before being born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” neither can he “enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:3, 5). I was both blind and separated from the kingdom of God until my spiritual rebirth, which Jesus declared was imperative: “Ye must be born again” (v.7). Although Jesus made it a “must,” many if not most evangelicals today pay little heed to what He commanded, and they consequently have accepted the more than one billion Roman Catholics as “brothers and sisters in Christ.” Among their numerous distortions of the teachings of Scripture, many Catholics profess to being “born again” based upon their having been baptized as infants. The Church of Rome similarly accepts all baptized non-Catholic Christians as “separated brethren.”

Thirty years ago, some young adult evangelicals confronted me with the fact that I was not their “brother in Christ” and explained to me what the Scriptures taught, which alone could make that relationship with Jesus a reality. Today, the influence of organizations such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together, Promise Keepers, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, most parachurch ministries on college campuses, the evangelical-supported Catholic movie *The Passion of the Christ*, and the rapid growth of ecumenism have created an atmosphere of accepting Catholics as believers. Consequently, I (and many others that I know) have been rebuked by evangelicals for pointing out that the Roman Catholic Church has a gospel that is contrary to the Scriptures—and therefore can save no one. Moreover, we’ve been told that we have offended “fellow Catholic Christians” by witnessing to them. This is an unprecedented latter-day development among evangelicals, especially those in Christian universities and colleges.

Today’s “twenty-something” age group, give or take a few years, has become a targeted generation by the Adversary in ways that are unparalleled in modern church history. This objective is in keeping with the undermining of the Word of God by diluting, even denying, its authority. What makes the strategy particularly insidious is that it’s an inside job, i.e., it’s being perpetrated by those who claim to be evangelicals or who at least have evangelical roots. Referred to as the Emerging Church Movement, it’s a development that

is attempting to reach today’s post-modern culture for Christ by “reinventing Christianity,” making it more accommodating to the attitudes of young adults. For example, since the post-modern generation is characterized by a disdain for authority, whatever seems to suggest authority, such as preaching or teaching, is downplayed or revamped as “conversation.” (See *TBC* 1/08,3/08,8/08,12/08)

Sound doctrine, which 2 Timothy 4:3 tells us will not be endured in the last days, is antithetical to this movement. Its most prolific author, Brian McLaren, demonstrates this throughout his writings: “The church latched on to that old doctrine of original sin like a dog to a stick, and before you knew it, the whole gospel got twisted around it. Instead of being God’s big message of saving love for the whole world, the gospel became a little bit of secret information on how to solve the pesky legal problem of original sin.”¹ Elsewhere he says, “I don’t think we’ve got the gospel right yet. What does it mean to be saved?... None of us have arrived at orthodoxy.”² On the contrary, I know a number of five and six-year olds who have “arrived at orthodoxy” by understanding and believing the simple gospel.

The Emerging Church Movement comes closer to fulfilling Paul’s prophetic warning to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20: 28-31) than any other recent trend of which I’m aware. Indeed Emergent leaders are “speaking perverse things” and “drawing away disciples after themselves.” TBC has received numerous letters from parents and evangelical pastors who find their young people seeking out emergent churches for the “new” experiences, which they offer in abundance: religious art (primarily impressionistic images of “Jesus”), “biblical” films, rituals based upon Catholic/Orthodox liturgy, “community,” personal relationships, contemplative spirituality and mysticism (some include yoga), Bible “dialogues,” ecumenical interaction with “people of faith,” a social gospel, plans to save the planet, restore the kingdom, and so forth.

The “Yea, hath God said...?” strategy has been very successful in undermining the critical belief in the *sufficiency* of the Word of God. Although the Bible claims to be sufficient for “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3), many Christians who profess to believe the Bible no longer regard it as sufficient. This is particularly evident regarding counseling. Many evangelical churches have become a major referral source for secular psychotherapists;

shepherds more often than not are committing their sheep to such God-denying hirelings for resolving life's issues.

This may be Satan's most cunning scheme in his assault against the Word and the Body of Christ. It is a process of *seduction* and *intimidation*. Psychological counseling has been advertized as a scientific endeavor that will help resolve the mental, emotional, and behavioral problems that Christians encounter in their daily life. Nothing could be further from the truth! It is neither scientific nor is it helpful (see *Psychology and the Church: Critical Questions, Crucial Answers*). Furthermore, its more than 500 psychotherapeutic concepts and methods are contradictory to biblical truth. Yet believers, especially pastors, have been intimidated by the myth that counseling is for professionals only and that only those with academic training are qualified to address a person's mental and emotional problems. Not only is that a rejection of what the church has practiced for two-thousand years, it is at odds with current research showing that professionals do not possess demonstrably superior therapeutic skills compared with nonprofessionals. Moreover, studies reveal that professional mental health education, training, and experience are not necessary prerequisites in order to be an effective and God-ordained helper.

Foundationally, psychotherapy and the teachings of the Bible are diametrically opposed to each other. Psychology teaches that man has within himself, that is, his *self*, all that he needs for his mental and emotional wellbeing. His problems, therefore, stem from issues external to himself. The Bible declares that man has a sinful nature that he himself cannot change. His *heart* is the problem, for from it originates every sort of evil (Mark 7:21-23). When attempts are made by Christians to combine psychology with the teachings of Scripture, it is, wittingly or unwittingly, the addition of "a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12) and a variation of the "Yea, hath God said...?" dialogue, resulting in the corruption of God's Word.

The influence of psychology has spread throughout the church today like a plague. The Apostle Paul prophesied that the root lie of psychotherapy would prevail in the days before our Lord's return: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves" (2 Timothy 3:1-2). This humanistic cornerstone of self-love has become a new doctrine within

evangelical Christianity, taught from many of the most popular pulpits. Sermons more often than not quote psychologists and teach their unbiblical psychological concepts for credibility. National evangelical conferences that do *not* include a prominent psychologist as an "expert" on problems of living are few and far between.

So-called Christian psychologists are often better known and more respected by evangelicals than preachers and teachers. In fact, the most prominent and most influential evangelical in America is not an evangelist, not a preacher, not a Bible teacher—but a psychologist: Dr. James Dobson. He heads up a list of "counselors" who integrate psychology with the Bible and have become household names among Christians, including Gary Smalley, John Trent, Henry Cloud, David Stoop, Larry Crabb, John Townsend, Les and Leslie Parrot, H. Norman Wright, and on and on. Chief among organizations that undermine Scripture by mixing it with psychotherapy is the evangelical-founded American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC). It recently produced *The Bible For Hope*, a "newly revised counselor's Bible," which features 116 theme articles—most of them contributed by those with psychological counseling backgrounds, from psychiatrists to clinical psychologists and to marriage and family counselors.

Although the AACC boasts "50,000 members and growing stronger every day!", it pales in comparison to another entity of great influence that is producing hundreds of thousands of young people who are taught to integrate psychology with Scripture: Christian colleges and universities. The second most popular career choice among evangelical institutions of higher learning is the pseudoscience of psychology. The "Yea, hath God said...?" subversion of Scripture rages on today, with accepted "truths" from Freud, Jung, Maslow, Rogers, and a host of other atheists, humanists, and anti-Christians.

The battle for this generation of youth is intensifying. Dave Hunt addresses another onslaught, the new militant atheism, in his soon-to-be published book, *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*, and notes a particular assault that is without precedent: "The Blasphemy Challenge":

The Rational Response Squad is giving away 1001 DVDs of *The God Who Wasn't There*, the hit documentary that the *Los Angeles Times* calls "provocative—to put it mildly." There's only one catch: We want your soul. It's simple. You record a short

message damning yourself to Hell, you upload it to YouTube, and then the Rational Response Squad will send you a free *The God Who Wasn't There* DVD. It's that easy. (<http://www.blasphemychallenge.com/>)

What can we do to prevent our young people from being seduced by the advancement of the apostasy? Teach them the Word. Disciple them. Teach them to be sound in doctrine.

I recently spent some time with young adult leaders here and in England. Many feel overwhelmed by what's taking place but are not without hope. They see the apostasy as a flood that cannot be turned back (outside of a sovereign act of God), yet they are optimistic that many can be rescued. They are aware that most of their peers who profess to be Christians have not been grounded in the faith, many are distracted by and attracted to the world, and some even think they are Christians because of their family ties. Nevertheless, these committed leaders are hopeful that the older generation—those mature in the Lord and who love His Word—will reach out to the younger generation, whether in Bible studies or one-on-one situations, as disciplers, mentors, teachers, and encouragers in Christ. They believe that the Lord will help them to reach those who He knows are willing to take up their crosses and follow Him. Their continual prayer is for more seasoned laborers from the older generation to come alongside their peers.

The Bible is the most exciting book there is, yet for years here in the U.S. our children have been fed a "let me entertain you" diet with only a hint of scriptural nutrition. That's part of Satan's "Yea, hath God said...?" strategy. The consequence is an upcoming generation that is, for the most part, spiritually anemic and ripe for the various schemes of apostasy. Deprived of the objective truths of Scripture, they are easy prey for those who would entice them through the subjective and experiential, that is, their "feelings." Nevertheless, our marching orders involve a rescue operation as found in 2 Timothy 2:24-25: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

Pray for our young people that they would have a heart for truth, but then seek out those of their generation to whom the Lord would have you minister His love and truth. **TBC**

Quotable

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, but when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. —1 Peter 2:23

Every person who suffers can measure, according to the depths of his own suffering, the sublimity and divinity of our Lord—who, when he suffered, “threatened not.” Jesus did not retaliate or make threats toward the person or group who caused Him to suffer.

Jesus did not suffer because He was a wrongdoer. Oftentimes you and I have. One who suffers as a wrongdoer often responds in rancorous spite and with threats. Suffering, when the heart knows nothing of trust in God nor love for Him, is damning, not saving; it will respond in venomous threats and evil deeds.

Sarcasm, cynicism, slander, murder, war, and lawsuits spring from suffering—which springs from wrongdoing and a wrong temper.

Suffering is the heritage of the *bad*, the *penitent*, and the *sons of God*. All end at the Cross. The bad thief was crucified, the penitent thief was crucified, and the Son of God was crucified. All three represent the widespread history of suffering in our world.

Oswald Chambers

The following Q&As were selected from our archives.

Q&A

QUESTION: Doesn't the Bible use visual language? Didn't Jesus speak in parables and expect us to visualize?

RESPONSE: No, it does just the opposite. The Bible is, in fact, unique for its non-visual language. When you go back over the Bible and compare it with a novel, you will find that the Bible offers few descriptions, even in the parables. God's Word is written in the simplest of literary styles upon which objective truth can be hung.

When you read something written by a novelist, you see in your mind a picture that the novelist is painting. This is a legitimate use of the imagination. An architect properly visualizes, as does a dress designer. If you think, however, that you can create reality with your mind or you can get God to do something for you, manipulate Him, then you've stepped over into the occult. God creates out of nothing while man is

limited to the use of what God has created. To prove that fact, try to visualize a new prime color in the rainbow. It can't be done.

QUESTION: But don't most people think in pictures anyway?

RESPONSE: We do not think in pictures, but in words. Have you ever visualized justice, or truth? What picture would you have for God, who is not to be pictured at all?

Yes, the Bible does give visual descriptions of God and Christ. Let's look at some examples. Let's take the description of Jesus in Revelation 1. He has a two-edged sword coming out of His mouth. Are we expected to visualize a literal sword? No, the description is telling us something we can't even visualize. The image that is given is intended to teach us something deeper. Or how about in Psalm 91:4 where it says that He (God) will cover us with His feathers and under His wings we shall trust? Should we conjure up an image of a big bird and say that God is like that?

In every case where the Bible gives us what one would call visual language, it is to teach us something beyond the literal reality. In fact, visualization would only lead us astray.

QUESTION: Is it not true that the teaching in the gospels is for Israel and the millennium and that the teaching for the church is found in the epistles as the enclosed booklets teach?

RESPONSE: Was it not in the Gospels that Jesus said He would build His church? He trained and commissioned His disciples to do just that during His earthly ministry as related in the Gospels. In Matthew 28 Christ tells the twelve to make disciples. Shouldn't we? In Mark 16 they are told to “preach the gospel.” Don't we preach the gospel? Is it different?

No! Where does our authority to preach the gospel and to make disciples come from if not from Christ's command to the twelve? They were to teach the disciples they made to observe all that Christ had commanded them, which would include making disciples...down to us today.

If Paul was the one who brought teaching to the church and the Gospels are only for Israel, how do we deal with the fact that the church was formed before Paul came along! That wasn't Israel being formed or restored on the Day of Pentecost!

Peter and the other disciples preached the gospel before Paul was converted. It was clearly the same gospel by which Paul

was converted and which he later preached. How can one say that Paul's epistles are for the church but that Acts was a “transitional” period between Israel and the church, when Paul wrote his epistles during the period of the Book of Acts?!

So, we cannot ignore the Gospels and teachings of our Lord as though they apply to some past and future age but not to the church or Christians right now.

QUESTION: There seems to be a growing teaching that only those Christians who are living holy, victorious lives at the time of the Rapture will be taken by Christ to heaven. The rest will have to face the Antichrist and be purified by martyrdom. Is this biblical?

RESPONSE: I agree with those who are urging Christians to live holy lives of submission to Christ, His Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. We need more emphasis upon holiness and separation from the world.

However, the Bible does not teach that genuine Christians who are not living fully for Christ at the time of the Rapture will be left behind. If so, then what about Christians who at the time of their death were not living fully for Christ? They can't be “left behind.” Their souls and spirits, no longer having a living body to inhabit, must go somewhere. If those souls don't go to heaven then where do they go? We would have to propose some kind of evangelical purgatory! And if all Christians, on the basis of their saving faith in Christ, regardless of their lives, go to heaven upon death, why would not all Christians be raptured?

Moreover, if those left behind at the Rapture are purified by facing Antichrist, how will those who have previously died be purified? In fact, we will all be purified in heaven the same way: “For we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10). If one is truly a Christian, even though not living for Christ, the soul and spirit go to be with Christ at death: “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). In heaven, the redeemed are in conscious bliss in God's presence, awaiting the resurrection of their entombed bodies, which “sleep in Jesus” (1 Thes 4:14).

Paul's desire was to “depart and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil 1:23), though he was willing, for the sake of those who needed his ministry, to continue “in the flesh” serving them and Christ here on earth (v 24). Paul would not have wanted to leave this life of service to Christ and the church—and surely would not have called

being with Christ “far better”—had it meant to slip into an unconscious state of “soul sleep” as some teach.

It is the souls and spirits of those who died trusting in Him whom Christ brings with Him (1 Thes 4:14) to rejoin their bodies at the resurrection. Notice that “the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air...”

(vv 16-17). Surely “the dead in Christ” must mean all who died with faith in Christ. Therefore, “we who are alive and remain” must also mean all of the living whose trust is in Christ.

It makes no sense nor does the Bible teach that Christians alive at the time of the Rapture must be living better lives than many who have died, in order to join them in heaven.

QUESTION: My church seems to believe that one must be a “scholar” or a “theologian” to be a pastor or a credible Christian author or Bible teacher. It even seems to be implied that those without such degrees are not competent to question what those holding theological (and now even psychological) degrees teach from the Bible. That sounds to me like elitism. What is your opinion?

RESPONSE: I must agree with you. No degree in and of itself spiritually qualifies the one to whose name it is attached. Yet that is the mentality today, to such an extent that some pastors, authors and conference speakers are going to diploma mills to purchase (with little study) a “Dr.” to put in front of their names. Just those two letters (almost no one ever asks how or where acquired) seem to elevate the individual to a new level of biblical understanding and spiritual authority.

The Bereans certainly had no theological degrees. Yet they checked out the great Apostle Paul’s preaching against Scripture and were commended for doing so (Acts 17:11). Every Christian is both qualified and obligated to do the same with every Bible teacher and preacher, no matter how highly regarded or academically certified.

No one is immune from error or correction, and that includes this writer. Nor were the disciples “theologians” or “scholars.” Among them were fishermen, a tax gatherer, etc. The idea that those who have academic degrees from theological seminaries have thereby a monopoly on interpreting the Bible is both illogical and unscriptural. Such elitism is simply the Protestant version of Roman Catholicism’s claim that its hierarchy of bishops, cardinals and popes

alone can interpret Scripture.

Christian leaders should be respected and honored. This regard, however, should not be based on degrees they may have acquired, but on the extent to which they demonstrate godly lives, biblically qualified and consistent leadership, and the teaching of sound doctrine based on their study of the Word.

QUESTION: The Bible tries to make morality consist of absolutes which are supposedly commanded by God. Yet most people in the world never read the Bible, so they don’t know these rules. What could be more foolish than a book which claims to be God’s Word and sets rules that most people never heard of and then condemns them for not obeying these rules?

RESPONSE: It can be easily demonstrated that the Ten Commandments (minus the command to keep the sabbath) are written in the heart and conscience of every person. That fact accounts for the similarities in the morality of various religions. Thus it is not foolish at all for the Bible to hold mankind to these standards.

The atheist tries to discredit Christianity by showing that the applications of the Mosaic law expressed by Christ in His sermon on the mount are echoed in the sayings of a Buddha or Confucius. In fact, such similarities can be explained in no other way than that God exists and has written His law in every human conscience. And that the account of the giving of this law is found in the Bible is further proof that it is God’s Word.

The first chapter of Romans tells us that the fact of God’s existence is proclaimed and fully demonstrated in convicting evidence to every thinking person. The second chapter argues just as clearly that every man knows both that he is morally accountable to God and that he has violated the standards which God has set: “For when the Gentiles [non-Jews], which have not the law [that was given to Moses at Mt. Sinai], do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another...” (Rom 2:14-15).

Those raised in different cultures adopt habits and customs and regard taboos peculiar to their society. Nevertheless, beneath the surface of seeming differences, there lies a common fabric of moral conviction which is the same for all

mankind. If morality were simply a matter of custom or legislation, there would be no basis for discussing whether such practices were good or bad, right or wrong. That there is a common conscience, which though dulled or warped by generations of peculiar and even contradictory custom, is nevertheless alive within all mankind becomes immediately apparent in any discussion with those of non-Christian and even primitive pagan cultures.

Endnotes

1. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/12/36.html?start=4>.
2. Brian MacLaren, *The Last Word After That* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 134.

True Love Part II: Morals and Meaning

Dave Hunt

The atheistic understanding of love, the highest human virtue, is badly skewed. Sam Harris, in his book *Letter to a Christian Nation*, says that the fact that “love is more conducive to happiness than hate” is the key to “the moral order of our world.”¹ So morality depends upon what makes one happy? Any child whose parents have disciplined him at all knows that isn’t true. The saddest thing is that not only Harris but the multitudes who have read and turned this book into a bestseller really imagine they have escaped from God with nonsense that would be laughed out of any elementary ethics class.

In another burst of absolutely dazzling profundity, Harris adds, “While feeling love for others is surely one of the greatest sources of our own happiness, it entails a very deep concern for the happiness and suffering of those we love.”² “Feeling love”? What does that mean? With deep *feelings* of love, a young man says to the young woman beside him in his car, “I love you with all my heart!” What he really means, although neither of them understands it, is “I love me, and I want you!”

If this is what his “selfish genes”³ (as Richard Dawkins would say) and the molecules in his brain are causing him to think, who can blame him? Clearly, the logic of atheism, evolution, and natural selection will inevitably bring us to the day when no one can be blamed for anything. Blame will have lost all meaning. The physical construction of our bodies will have to bear the responsibility. The universal excuse (and it will have to be accepted by every court of law) will no longer be “The devil made me do it” but “My selfish genes made me do it!” Who believes in the devil anyway? But surely we all believe that genes are selfish, don’t we? No, we do not. We still have enough common sense to reject this amorality that now governs our ethics and morals.

Harris criticizes the Bible for condoning slavery.⁴ He deliberately ignores the fact that in biblical days the only other alternative for those taken captive in war was death. Those hopelessly in debt didn’t have the modern escape of bankruptcy; they had to sell themselves into slavery. Nor was the solution so simple as to set a slave free. Where would the freed slave

go? For many, this was the only means of sustenance.

Christ did not come to reform earthly society but to die for the sins of the world so that we can go to heaven when we die. The teachings of the Bible, however, caused both slave and master to act with respect and even love toward each other. And as society changed and other possibilities developed, Christians led the way in freeing slaves.

President Eisenhower said, “Our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith—and I don’t care what it is.”⁵ Ike had the right to express his own opinions, but his position of leadership obligated him to make rational pronouncements—and that statement makes no sense. There are differences in religion so great that they contradict one another. Hinduism’s belief in 330 million gods surely contradicts Islam’s belief that Allah is the only god; and the Qur’an’s teaching that Christ neither died on the cross nor resurrected⁶ certainly contradicts the very foundation of Christianity. Ike was accepted as a Christian by many evangelicals, and he attended church regularly (politically correct behavior for presidents). Clearly, however, what he really believed and publicly expressed contradicted Christ’s declaration, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6).

Many who call themselves Christians implicitly accept the superiority of science over the Bible. Thus, whenever “science” disagrees with the Bible, as its presently accepted dogmas so clearly do with regard to the creation of the universe and life, “Christians” surrender their faith in Scripture, which is really a surrender of their faith in its Author. Or they attempt to twist what the Bible says in order to make it seem that it agrees with atheism’s Big Bang and evolutionary account of man’s descent from fish and reptiles and chimpanzees. In a sense they become partners with atheists, incredibly allowing them to dictate the terms of the discussion.

In his book, *Reason in the Balance*, Phillip Johnson argues that only creation by God can account for man’s moral conscience. Nature has no morals. Man’s sense of ethics and morals cannot contribute to survival but would work against it. If evolution is true, we ought to shut down all hospitals, cease all medications, and let the weak die to strengthen the race. Kindness and compassion cannot be reconciled with survival of the fittest. Man,

however, is compelled by conscience and compassion to sacrifice for others—proof that he is made in the image of a *God of mercy and love* (Dt 4:31; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:8; 117:2; Heb 8:12).

If the “Big Bang” theory is correct, then the sentence I’m typing now came from, and is a product of, this giant explosion. Every thought and theory (including the greatest scientific discoveries and the worst political blunders), every ambition and emotion, including love—all resulted from the Big Bang. From what other source could they have come? This is the absurdity that we must embrace with this theory that removes all meaning from life. Whatever anyone believes, decides, says, or does is simply the result of the chance antecedent motions of the atoms in their brains, which all began with a gigantic explosion that has been pushing matter away from its epicenter ever since.

But human existence involves morals, ethics, ambition, purpose, meaning, hope, love and hate, jealousy, self-sacrifice, pride and humility, frustration and patience, anger, a sense of right and wrong, justice and injustice, compassion, forgiveness, ad infinitum. How could such qualities of human existence have attached themselves to exploding matter? The Big Bang offers no explanation for these human qualities, which have no relationship to energy and matter. Rather, it denies their significance. All human experience, having resulted from a giant explosion, would be totally meaningless. Anyone who imagined otherwise would be the victim of a cruel hoax. And finally—so what?

Ah, but evolution took this exploding matter and turned it into what we are today. Really? *Time* magazine’s cover story the first week in October 2006 claimed that there really isn’t a chasm between man and animals but only “tiny differences, sprinkled throughout the genome.” So we don’t really experience love and joy, fulfillment, a deep concern about injustices in the world, but our “selfish” genes cause us to have these feelings? Is it our genes, too, that cause us to reject this statement that reduces humans to programmed robots? The summary of the article, posted on CNN.com, explained:

As scientists keep reminding us, evolution is a random process in which haphazard genetic changes interact with random environmental conditions to produce an organism somehow fitter than its fellows. After 3.5 billion years of such randomness, a creature emerged that could ponder its own origins—and revel in a Mozart adagio.⁷

So there you have it: we are what we are as a result of “3.5 billion years” of purposeless “randomness.” Where is moral responsibility? How can any criminal be held accountable for what his genes have caused him to do?

Then why have an education? What are governments and elections about? Why do we care about anything? Why is it that this “randomness” coming out of a giant explosion eons ago produced such different results in different people, including firm convictions that cause arguments, anger, and even wars?

There wouldn’t be one in a million people who experience the reality of life and love who would not be insulted to be told that their deepest convictions and greatest joys and fears were merely phantoms of their genes. Yet they will embrace such theories when pronounced in the name of science without realizing that this is where they lead. Those who promote this theory have no explanation for the unanswerable questions it logically raises. And what about logic and convictions? Could they, as well, be the result of a giant explosion and in the end are but delusions created by our “selfish genes”?

In contrast to atheistic attempts to explain moral behavior without God, the Bible tells us that these personal and moral qualities demonstrate the fact that we were created “in the image of God” (Gn 1:26-27). We were designed to reflect His attributes, but not as robots. Man was given the power of choice, which he used to rebel against his Creator, seeking independence from Him as a little god in charge of his own destiny. Our present world of disease and suffering of all kinds is not the world God made. It is the world we have made in our proud rebellion against Him.

The Bible shows us where we are wrong, and what we ought to do about it. Everything it says rings true to our consciences. Evolution has nothing that even comes close to this logical explanation of human existence and behavior, both good and evil. The Bible explains how God came as a man through a virgin birth to die for the sins of all mankind so that He could justly forgive those who would repent of their rebellion and accept the payment for sins that Christ accomplished in order to bring us back into a right relationship with Himself. It all makes sense—certainly much better sense than imagining that we are the chance offspring of a huge explosion.

Furthermore, the Bible proves itself to be God’s Word through hundreds of fulfilled prophecies—proof that is unique to the

Bible and totally missing from the Qur’an, Hindu Vedas, and all other religious scriptures. These are not cheap psychic predictions but history-making, world-shaking events, foretold in plain language centuries and, in many cases, thousands of years before their fulfillment. These are inarguable, precise fulfillments in every detail, which the world has witnessed as part of its history.

Why not believe the Bible, when its statements are supported not only by prophecy but by mountains of evidence? Many of the greatest scientists of all time who discovered the principles foundational to today’s science were firm believers not in a Big Bang but that God created the universe. Faith in God and His Word, the Bible, was the foundation of their lives. The same is true of many of today’s space scientists and astronauts. Werner von Braun, founding director and for many years head of NASA’s space flight center, was always eager to testify:

Manned space flight...has opened...a tiny door for viewing the awesome reaches of space. An outlook through this peephole at the vast mysteries of the universe should only confirm our belief in the certainty of its Creator. I [cannot] understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe.⁸

Atheistic evolution has many close allies in the environmental (sometimes known as the “Green”) movement. In 1993, Mikhail Gorbachev, former Soviet leader, founded (and remains its president today) the Green Cross International, headquartered in the Hague, to build upon the work started by the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Green Cross? The biblical Cross was stained with the blood of Christ when He died for the sins of the world, including those who mocked and crucified Him. The “Greening of the Cross” (see *TBC* 7/97) is a growing movement worldwide. Gorbachev says that the main purpose of the Green Cross is “to bring nations together... to stimulate the new environmental consciousness...returning Man to a sense of being a part of Nature.”

The idea that man must be persuaded to act as though he were “part of Nature” is in itself an admission that he is not. Nature’s creatures need no such coaching. This return to nature, however, is a powerful factor in encouraging the immorality of today’s world.

There is no “right” or “wrong” in

nature. Clearly, it is not “wrong” for a volcano to spew forth lava and poisonous gases. Whatever Nature and her offspring do is simply “natural.” If man is a product of nature through evolution, then whatever he does must likewise be natural. No one complains about the destruction wrought upon the environment by parasites or creatures that destroy entire forests; or hurricanes and tornadoes and floods that wreak terrible destruction. These occurrences are all “natural,” and no complaint can be made against anything Nature does. But if man is the product of evolution, then he, too, is a child of Nature, and whatever he does should be as “natural” as the actions of any creatures in his evolutionary ancestry or of his present evolutionary “relatives” all around him today, most of whom would poison or devour him.

And what about the great concern among environmentalists over the possible extinction of so-called “endangered species”? Once again man reveals that he is not a product of natural forces. *Endangered species?* Isn’t that how evolution works? Hasn’t evolution been doing away with species through natural selection and survival of the fittest for millions of years? Why should man, if he is simply a product of evolution (and one that has only lately arrived on the scene), be working against evolution while claiming to believe in it and to be its offspring?

One cannot logically believe both in evolution and the environmental movement. Evolutionists should neither be concerned for “endangered species” nor for the ecological well-being of this planet. If man, as a result of the evolution of his brain and nervous system, succeeds in destroying the earth in a nuclear holocaust or ecological collapse, that must be accepted as a natural act in the evolving universe.

The mere fact that man can reason about ecology and the survival of species is proof enough that he is not the product of such forces, but, having the power to interfere with them, must have a higher origin. Man was created in the image of God. Only an intelligent Creator could have brought mankind’s reasoning powers and moral and ethical concerns into existence. Consequently, the solution to the problem of evil on this earth is not in hugging trees and getting in touch with nature. *True love?* In the bloody Cross, as declared in the Bible, God is saying to all mankind, “I love you.” Accepting His love is man’s only hope. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). **TBC**

Quotable

To love God with all our heart we must first of all *will* to do so. We should repent our lack of love and determine from this moment on to make God the object of our devotion. We shall soon find to our great delight that our feelings are beginning to move in the direction of the “willed tendency of the heart.” Our emotions will become disciplined and directed. We shall begin to taste the “piercing sweetness” of the love of Christ. The whole life, like a delicate instrument, will be tuned to sing the praises of Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. But first of all we must will, for the will is master of the heart.

A. W. Tozer, Man: The Dwelling Place of God

Q&A

QUESTION: I just wanted to know if you have ever read L. A. Marzulli's *Politics, Prophecy, and the Supernatural* and if Dave or T. A. concurs with the writer's thoughts about the Nephilim [of Genesis 6] being of Satanic origin.

RESPONSE: There are a number of things in the Bible that aren't stated plainly and are open to reasoning from various facts found in relevant Scripture verses. The “sons of God” in Genesis 6 is one topic about which a great deal has been written, much of it relying on speculation. The premise of such speculation is that the sons of God were angelic beings who procreated with human females, from which a race of giants sprang. To derive such a conclusion from Jude 6 is not warranted: “Kept not their first estate” more likely refers to their rebellion against God and following Satan.

The volumes written about pre-Adamic races, angelic overlords, and giants begotten by angels make fascinating reading but ought to be regarded as fictionalized interpretations, since their factual basis is questionable at best.

The Bible does not tell us that angels procreate, nor does it specifically tell us whether or not begetting offspring is possible for them. In Matthew 22:30 we are told specifically that angels do not marry. Moreover, the fact that angels are spirit beings would seem to eliminate the possibility of their having sexual relations with human beings.

We realize that there are some doctrines that must be derived from a number of

verses, so we're not against the inductive or deductive approach. (Take the Trinity, as just one example. The supporting verses that teach the Trinity are not speculative in nature.) In addition, when we rely on speculation to fill in areas not clearly addressed by Scripture, of necessity we create a situation generating even more questions. For example, Jesus states that “a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Lk 24:39). Since angels (good and bad) are spirit beings, they would have had to obtain bodies capable of reproduction. Being created beings, however, angels are incapable of the creative act necessary to produce such bodies. We know that they may on occasion appear in bodily form (2 Cor 11:14, Gal 1:8), but this is a long way from a physical habitation among men. Did God enter the process by making it possible for them to assume living, breathing, and sexually functioning bodies? Hardly! It is easy to see how more questions are raised than satisfactory answers given, when one begins to speculate.

Since the evidence for such an occurrence is so scanty and open to interpretation, there is no basis for assuming a dogmatic position. Sadly, some have been so taken up with the “sons of God” or other speculative issues that their effectiveness for the kingdom is compromised. May God grant us the wisdom to know when and where to stand and what is necessary in order that we might therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom 14:19).

QUESTION: I wonder if I really have to honor my father and my mother. My father [sexually abused] my brother and myself when we were very young and through middle school. My mother knew about this (she even saw this happening). [She] neither said nor did anything to try to stop it. Do I really have to honor my parents if they did such things to my brother and me? And, where was God when all this was happening? Why didn't He keep it from happening? I've tried to forgive my parents for their sin, but it is extremely difficult.

RESPONSE: In Ephesians 6:1-3 we read, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

We are to “obey” our parents “in the Lord.” Not everyone may have godly parents who

are “in the Lord.” This directly implies that we are not obligated to obey ungodly commands or submit to the evil they propose. The Lord's commandments have the precedence in our lives. Neither does it mean that we have any contact with them, particularly if they pose a danger.

“Honor,” however, is something else. To “honor,” in your circumstance, may simply mean not speaking evil of them and continuing to pray for their repentance and salvation. Further, the Scriptures tell us to forget “those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before” (Phil 3:13). Even secular commentators note that it is not healthy to dwell upon the past. The Lord has given us lives that may be lived in accordance with His will and plans. We serve the Lord in hope, not in bondage to the past.

You ask “Where was God when all this was happening?” He was where He always is. We can either blame God for failing to act as a policeman in a world that has rejected Him, or recognize that the sin of man for a time holds sway upon the earth. That knowledge alone may not be comforting, but we need to remember that in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus proclaimed, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Lk 4:18). To heal the brokenhearted means that there *will* be brokenhearted people. To bring deliverance means there *must* be captives. The recovery of the sight of the blind means that there *must* be blind people. And to set at liberty those that are bruised means there first *must be* those that have been bruised by the cruelty and injustice of the world.

To apprehend these promises, however, means to forsake the past, which cannot be changed, and look to the Lord who can bless and guide one's life ahead. The Scriptures are filled with examples of how the Lord will comfort those who come to Him. We also have available the testimonies of those who underwent horrendous experiences (Corrie Ten Boom, Richard Wurmbrand, and others), who testified of the healing and restoring power of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city,

in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren” (2 Cor 11:25-26). We might very well ask “where was God during those times?” That wasn’t the response of Paul, who wrote further, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Cor 1:3-4).

Paul spoke of being able to comfort others because of having experienced the comfort of God. May the Lord encourage us, as we have opportunity, to minister “by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

QUESTION: My question is in regards to after the Rapture. Will people still get saved? Who are they? The people who have heard the message before the Rapture but did not accept it—will they be able to get saved? I heard that after the Rapture people cannot be saved, because we are saved by faith, and after seeing the Rapture, it is no longer faith.

RESPONSE: No scripture teaches the impossibility of salvation after the Rapture. We know that Revelation 7:13-14 speaks of the martyrs who will be killed during the Tribulation: “And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Since the church is removed at the Rapture, these martyrs have to come from somewhere.

Further, there are scriptures indicating that Jews saved during the Tribulation period will enter the Millennium (Zec 13:9). Further, Zechariah 14 indicates that there will be a remnant of “all the nations” also entering the Millennium.

QUESTION: I am studying Isaiah and was wondering about Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” I have understood this prophecy to apply directly to Ahaz. Therefore, this had to come true in the time of Ahaz. (I also understand that this is referring to the Messiah.) How would Ahaz know who this virgin was?

RESPONSE: We always need to keep a close eye on context. The context of Isaiah 7:14 includes the historical narrative of Ahaz, the king of Judah who was faced with an

invasion from both Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel. Isaiah prophesied under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to King Ahaz. In verses 10-11, the Lord inspired Isaiah to tell Ahaz, “Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.” What a tremendous opportunity!

Ahaz, the grandson of Uzziah, was twenty when he came to the throne of Judah. Of his reign, the writer of Scripture recorded that he “did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God...” (2 Kings 16:2).

To the Lord’s gracious invitation, King Ahaz replies, “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.” This almost sounds like a humble response until one reads Isaiah’s (still under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) rejoinder: “And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?” This clearly indicates that Ahaz’s motives for refusal were not right. As a consequence, the Lord went beyond the immediate need of deliverance for Judah and its king. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

The Lord is giving a prophecy so far-reaching that it offers a deliverance to the entire world. In context, the time frame of this promise goes beyond the time of Ahaz. We know this because Isaiah 7:16 notes, “For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.”

Before the child born of a virgin shall grow to maturity (“know to refuse the evil, and choose the good”), the threatening nations shall have their kings removed. This would come about through the conquest and domination by another power. This prophecy could not possibly have been limited to the reign of Ahaz. Further, we have the testimony of Matthew that (speaking of Mary’s miraculous conception), “all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...” (Mt 1:22).

There are a number of other Scriptures that go beyond their immediate time frame. Hosea 11:1 states, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” Clearly there is the historical record of Israel’s slavery in and deliverance from Egypt. That would be an immediate application. Yet, the apostle Matthew, writing of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, said that they would be “...there until the death of

Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Mt 2:15). Bible doubters and skeptics have sought to discredit Matthew’s application of this prophecy, as (to their preconceived ideas) Hosea 11:1 is speaking of Israel in Egypt only. Yet, we see that is not true.

Consequently, we cannot say that what Isaiah was speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was limited to Ahaz alone. We have noted Isaiah 7:16, which in context furnishes details for a fulfillment that simply did not happen in the time of Ahaz.

Israel and Prophetic Proof Part I

Dave Hunt

About 250 years ago, the King of Sweden had troubling doubts about whether the Bible was really true in every word. He asked Count von Zinzendorf, bishop of the Moravian Church, to give him proof that the Bible was truly inspired of God. The King had set aside 10 hours to hear what might be said. To his majesty's surprise, Zinzendorf informed him that the time allotted was far too much. He only needed to say one word. Astonished, the King asked what that could be. The Count replied, "Jews."

Today we would add one more word, "Israel." In Zinzendorf's day, that tiny and beleaguered nation, born on May 14, 1948, did not exist except in the hearts of Zionists who had never given up awaiting the fulfillment of the "God of Israel's" solemn promises. The continued existence of Israel today, surrounded by more than a billion Muslims who have sworn to exterminate her and who continually plot and repeatedly attack her in the attempt to do so, is one of the most astonishing miracles of modern times.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has blessed the Jewish people with a brilliance that generally far exceeds their cousins the Arabs and the rest of the Gentile world.

The Arabs have the oil, but the Jews have the brains. Lest I be accused of racism, one need only compare the numbers of Nobel prize winners among them. In the Arab/Muslim world of 1.4 billion there are 6 Nobelists: 3 for Peace, and 1 each for Chemistry, Physics, and Literature.

In the Jewish population of 14 million (one hundredth of the Arab world) there are 165 Nobelists: 51 for Medicine, 45 for Physics, 27 for chemistry, 22 for Economics, 11 for Literature, and 9 for Peace. This is astonishing!

Supporting the amazing facts surrounding Israel, there are literally dozens of biblical prophecies foretelling her sudden rise to become the world's premiere military power, the persistent attacks upon her from Muslim nations, and the fear of Israel that grips hostile Arab neighbors today. Yes, well might they fear her. Israel could wipe them out very quickly if she chose to do so. Instead, she has all too patiently endured their outspoken hatred, insults, repeated open threats of extermination, persistent rocket and terrorist attacks, and their

continued feverish efforts to build the nuclear capability to destroy her.

Israel's patience ends when the threat becomes too dangerous. As it was with Syria, that may soon be the case with Iran, which is hoping one day to launch a nuclear attack on Israel. Iran would then become the hero of the Islamic world. If such an attack became possible, it would force Israel to preemptively destroy Iran's nuclear facilities, as it did after Syria's attempt to develop nuclear capabilities.

For months, by satellite, Israel followed ship after ship from North Korea as they landed in Syria and watched the convoys of trucks as they discharged their cargo in a "secret" desert destination. She patiently watched the construction of a nuclear facility disguised as a "cement plant" and ridiculously surrounded by the latest Russian radar and surface-to-air missiles. The evidence was shown to President George W. Bush, including photos taken inside the facility and missiles and radar protecting

AND I WILL BRING AGAIN THE CAPTIVITY OF MY PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, AND THEY SHALL BUILD THE WASTE CITIES, AND INHABIT THEM....AND THEY SHALL NO MORE BE PULLED UP OUT OF THEIR LAND WHICH I HAVE GIVEN THEM, SAITH THE LORD THY GOD.

—AMOS 9:14-15

the unusual "cement."¹ (Condoleezza Rice, whose "Replacement Theology" prevents her from being a true friend of Israel, was not consulted. The State Department has long been the enemy of Israel.)

With Bush's tacit approval, Israeli planes went in and destroyed the nuclear facility along with the latest Russian protection surrounding it. How did Israeli planes pierce these sophisticated defenses? They are not sharing that secret with anyone, least of all with our "friends" in the State Department.

These current events, like so many others, have been foretold in the Bible. In spite of their accuracy, critics deny their relevance. Some claim to be former Christians. One can only wonder what kind of "Christians" they were to remain in such complete ignorance of the Bible while pretending to know it so well. Gary Lenaire, for example, says that he "spent 15 years in the church...released nine contemporary Christian music albums, was nominated for six Gospel Music Awards...preached the gospel...around the world [and] served as a voluntary Chaplain for the Military Department."² He writes in *An Infidel Manifesto*:

Biblical prophecy is perhaps the most powerful tool for religious delusion....Look at any so-called prophecies [sic] in scripture: the wording is so general that you could attach almost any event and say, "Look, this is a fulfilled prophecy!" That is exactly why there are thousands of people today saying that they are witnessing prophecies being fulfilled in our generation....Most of the so-called prophecies were never intended...as prophetic in the first place...the words are so general you could make them to mean almost anything. Take a look at them without the dogma of your local preacher.³

This is so pitiful that it is embarrassing. This "expert on Bible prophecy" offers little more than inexcusable ignorance and prejudice. He says, "any so-called prophecies." While some prophecies are difficult to understand, there are *hundreds* that clearly have been fulfilled to the letter and some are still in the process of being fulfilled.

"So general you could make them to mean almost anything"? In fact, they are so specific that Lenaire's statements would be laughable were they not influencing so many to turn from God.

Here is one of numerous prophecies (circa 600 BC), of which the specificity cannot be denied. "Therefore behold the days are coming, says the Lord, that they shall no longer say 'As the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but 'As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I have driven them'" (See Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8).

Notice the detailed prophetic elements. As the deliverance from "the land of Egypt," spoken of in the book of Exodus, was what Jews looked back to each year in the Passover as a reminder of God's love and power, that event would fade from its prominence in their minds to be replaced by something more recent. The prophecy has two distinct parts: 1) a confirmation of many previous prophecies that the Jews were going to be led captive into "every nation" (Lk 21:24), and 2) their eventual deliverance and return to Israel would almost eclipse from the national memory their deliverance from Egypt. And so it has happened.

The great proof that the Bible repeatedly offers of its veracity is the fact that God, through His prophets, tells what will happen centuries and even thousands of years in advance. There is no arguing with the precise detail and accuracy of any of the Bible's hundreds of prophecies. Yet, Lenaire, in typical atheist fashion, declared that most prophecies were so general that one could

make them mean almost anything. Not so!

Lenaire is either deliberately attempting to mislead his readers, or he is displaying an abysmal ignorance. Most prophecies are, in fact, so specific that no one could argue with their meaning.

In Joel 3:2 (circa 800 BC), God declared that the day was coming when all nations would join to divide the land of Israel: "I will also gather all nations...and will plead with them [punish them] for my people and [for] my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and *parted my land.*"

This is remarkable! Throughout its entire 3,000-plus-year history, the land of Israel had never been divided. It had been conquered by various nations, but even when the Turks held it as part of their Ottoman Empire for 400 years, they did not divide the land. A conqueror keeps the land he has conquered intact for himself. Why divide it?

This division of Israel has occurred only in our day. Britain, which had been placed in charge of "Palestine" by the allied forces who had conquered it in World War I, had been given the mandate by the League of Nations to see that this land should remain as a refuge for the Jews, who had been scattered everywhere.

Instead of fulfilling this mandate, Britain gave about 75 percent of the land to the Arab Muslims in exchange for oil. In 1947, the United Nations, through Resolution 181 and in fulfillment of Joel 3:2, formalized this breach of trust. Israel finally received a mere 13 percent of what they had been promised. This is now history. Britain and the UN infamously fulfilled Joel 3:2 and parted God's land.

The God of Israel, knowing all that would happen, had warned in advance that He would avenge Himself for this brazen robbery of His people. After being attacked by Muslim nations, who were following Allah's edict through Muhammad that all Jews must be destroyed, Israel, in self-defense recaptured some of this land.

Christ himself made a number of prophecies before His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Like many other Hebrew prophets, Christ foretold the scattering of Jews all over the earth and the coming Great Tribulation (Luke 21:24-26). Also in Luke 21:24, there is a remarkable and very specific prophecy concerning Jerusalem itself: Jesus declared "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

When did this "treading down" of Jerusalem by Gentiles begin? In fact, it has been going on for centuries, beginning with

Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem (2 Ki 24:10-11), dated 587-586 BC. This prophecy tells us of what Christ called "the times of the Gentiles." As it has so often, the existence of the United Nations played a key role. In partial fulfillment of Christ's prophecy, a vital part of UN Resolution 181 was the declaration that Jerusalem would be a *corpus separatum*, never part of Israel and never under the control of Jews.

Consider how specific the following is from the prophet Zechariah:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto *all the people round about*, when they shall be *in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem*. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though *all the people of the earth* be gathered together against it. (Zec 12:2-3)

Two groups are distinguished by the prophet: "all the people *round about Judah and Jerusalem*" and "all the people of the *earth.*" These groups are identified by two separate prophecies. To the first group, Jerusalem will be "a cup of trembling" and to the second group, "a burdensome stone." The first group is further identified as being united together "in a siege" against Judah and Jerusalem, the second group as "gathered together" against her.

Why will Israel be a "cup of trembling" to her neighbors? As we have just pointed out, Israel is the premier military power in the world, and she could wipe out her Arab neighbors very quickly but refrains from doing so. As for being a "burdensome stone," how better to show the fulfillment of this specific prophecy than by the fact that, from 1967-1989 out of 865 resolutions in the Security Council and General Assembly of the UN, 526 were against Israel.

As we have pointed out, that was the first time that Israel had ever been divided. Now we also see the first time that all nations surrounding it have been united in a common goal. Traditionally, these nations had been enemies. What unites them now? They are all Muslims, and it is Islam (which did not even exist at the time of the prophecy) that joins them in the common desire to destroy Israel.

For *all nations* to be united against Israel, there would have to be an organization of "all nations." The United Nations came into existence in 1945, just in time to be the means of fulfilling this prophecy. This 2,500-year-old prophecy is both specific in its details and flawless in its accuracy.

Another amazing prophecy concerns

anti-Semitism. There is no rational explanation for this implacable hatred that has continued over several thousand years. What fuels this insane obsession is the determination to exterminate the Jews. No other national people have been the long-term targets of such a goal. In *The Secret War Against the Jews*, Mark Aarons and John Loftus write:

For more than twenty centuries [Jews] have...been persecuted, uprooted, and annihilated. [Yes] many [other] groups have suffered grievously at the hands of tyrants, but there is a crucial difference....

In each of these cases, the genocide was intended to serve a deeper purpose—the conquest of territory, the acquisition of wealth, the enlargement of political power....In contrast, the genocide of the Jewish people was not...attempted in order to achieve a more fundamental purpose. *It was the fundamental purpose.* This is what makes the Nazi Holocaust unique.⁴ [Emphasis added]

Yes, many groups of people have suffered greatly. The Muslims wiped out more than a million Armenians as well as millions of other peoples throughout history. Thousands of blacks were transported from Africa to the American colonies to become slaves in a trade begun by Arabs and assisted by Africans. However, the quote above indicates that the intent was not to exterminate these people, as has been (and still is) the Muslims' goal with the Jews.

Incredibly, the obvious lie persists by religious and political leaders such as recent popes, former leaders President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and now President Obama, that Islam is a religion of peace and has been maligned by critics. In fact, Muslims have murdered millions in their long-standing goal to take over the world, and there is an ongoing slaughter that continues to this day in Indonesia, Sudan, Nigeria, and elsewhere.

In contrast to the persistent praise of Islam as a force for peace in the world, Israel, which has never voiced unprovoked threats against other nations and has acted only in self-defense, has been accused repeatedly in the United Nations of aggression against innocent neighbors.

Fulfilled biblical prophecy stands as undeniable proof that the God of the Bible exists. Furthermore, these many prophecies, of which we will, God willing, have more to say next month, stand as a warning to the world of coming judgment. We will also review the many promises of blessing for those who will heed God's Word concerning Israel. **TBC**

Quotable

Spurgeon said that “the world pays scantily indeed. What will it do for those it loves the best? When it has done all it can, the last resource of the world is to give a man a title (and what is that?). And then to give him a tall pillar and set him up there to bear all weathers, to be pitilessly exposed to every storm; and there he stands for fools to gaze at....”

C.H. Spurgeon, quoted in William MacDonald, Worlds Apart

Master, we would no longer be

At home in that which hated Thee,

But patient in Thy footsteps go,

Thy sorrow as Thy joy to know;

We would—and O confirm the power—

With meekness meet the darkest hour;

By shame, contempt however tried,

For Thou wast scorned and crucified.

J. G. Deck, quoted in William MacDonald, Worlds Apart

Q&A

QUESTION: On the last night of the Tulsa Prophecy Conference, during the Q&A session, a question was directed to Dave Hunt that related to Calvinism. He stated that election and predestination were never unto salvation but unto service. Mike Gendron responded by reading 2 Thessalonians 2:13: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Doesn’t that sound like God has chosen certain ones to be saved, which of course would mean that the rest are chosen to damnation by default?

RESPONSE: I had already stated that I did not want to prolong a discussion about Calvinism. Looking back, I do not want to leave the impression that I had no answer to the verse Mike read. One thing you will notice when this subject comes up: there are a few favorite verses that Calvinists quote. This is one of about four or five, and Mike didn’t mention any of the others.

Had I wanted to continue the discussion, I could have noted that whereas Calvinists have a handful of favorite verses, there are literally hundreds proving that God has not chosen certain ones for heaven and others for hell. For example, Christ introduces and

explains John 3:16 (“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”) with a reference to the incident in the wilderness involving the brazen serpent: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This reference is to Numbers 21. Let’s notice the wording there: “*Every one* that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live....If a serpent had bitten *any man*, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (Nu 21:8,9). This was the way Christ explained John 3:16. The Calvinists say that Christ was not talking about the whole world but only the world of the elect. Christ’s example shows that this is not the case.

Christ does not allow this misinterpretation. Here is one of the reasons Calvinists generally avoid references to the Old Testament. Calvinism, far from being supported there, is refuted. It was not the homes of a few elect over which the destroying angel passed but every home where the blood had been applied. Who went through the Red Sea on dry land? An elect few? No, everyone who had been delivered from Egypt by the blood. Who ate of the manna in the wilderness? For whom did the water flow out of the rock? Who was led by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night? Was it an elect few among the Israelites? No, it was all of them, even though all did not believe.

Such examples could be multiplied by the dozens. In comparison, the few verses of doubtful interpretation that Calvinists hold out to prove their case are far from conclusive on their side. Even 2 Thessalonians 2:13, which Mike read, includes the proof that there is more involved than God simply choosing some to heaven. Something more is required of man: “through... belief of the truth.”

QUESTION: What information can you give me about the theory that Christianity copied the “messianic” characteristics of the Egyptian God Horus to create Jesus? In that account, Osiris (father of Horus) meets his death at the hands of the evil god Set. Isis, the wife of Osiris, reassembles his dismembered body, bringing about a “resurrection.” Horus, “the son,” is the one who eventually defeats Set. I had never heard of this comparison to Christ before, and it recently came up in a discussion.

RESPONSE: There are messianic figures in other religions, but if the Bible is true, that

would be expected. Just as many cultures have stories that parallel the accounts in Genesis (creation of man, the fall, the flood, the tower of Babel, the longevity of the patriarchs, etc., which were all known and passed down from the beginning), it should not be surprising that these groups have messianic figures as well. Because the Bible *is* true, these things exist. The adversary is always ready with a counterfeit.

Genesis 3:15 is the earliest prophecy of the Messiah. In this one verse we find certain elements. His “heel” was to be bruised. The serpent’s head was to be bruised as well as the Messiah’s heel. This “wounding” (speaking of the prophesied death and resurrection of the Messiah) is aped by the later Osiris/Horus myth. The importance of the “woman” in the narrative also would serve as inspiration for the mourning women of other “messianic” stories.

As one example, it is claimed that Quetzalcoatl of Mexico was crucified in 587 BC for the sins of the world. According to legend, he also was born of a virgin mother, descended into hell, and rose on the third day. Psalm 22, with many details about the crucifixion of Christ, was written between 1000-965 BC. Isaiah’s prophecies of the Messiah were recorded between 740-700 BC—plenty of time to be appropriated for Quetzalcoatl’s claims.

The few details included in the Osiris/Horus myth (circa 2400 BC) parallel (in a distorted form), only the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, which was known to humanity from the beginning. Despite claims by skeptics, there are no further parallels. It is instructive that “messianic” stories containing additional details occur at a later date. They appear *after* all the prophecies concerning “He who was to come” were recorded in Old Testament Scripture.

If there is a Satan who tries to disrupt the plan of God (and there is); how better to do so than by introducing a counterfeit? Satan knows the Scriptures and selectively quotes them when he deems it advantageous (Mt 4:6, etc.). He can only counterfeit, however, what has been revealed. Consequently, it is not surprising that at a later date, when more prophecy was known, the “fuller” account of Quetzalcoatl came along. The virgin birth, forty days of temptation, fasting, etc., had by this time been prophesied in Scripture. Satan is an adversary who is a master of the counterfeit (2 Cor 11:13-14). That being said, among the many differences between these would-be messiahs and the true Messiah, one especially must be noted: all of the “other” messiahs proclaimed a “gospel” of works. This is a far

cry from the Gospel of Grace proclaimed by Christ.

QUESTION: I have been aggravated for some time with the controversy surrounding the security of the believer. In other words, the “Once Saved, Always Saved” issue is very controversial in many Christian circles, and there seem to be few resources on this issue. Could you please address this in a future issue of the *Berean Call* newsletter?

RESPONSE: We first addressed the security of the believer in the June 1989 issue of the newsletter. This article has since been reformatted and is now available as the tract “Once Saved, Always Saved?” (www.thebereancall.org).

Regardless of our own perceptions or convictions, we must begin with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and compare all other scriptures (such as James 5, Ezekiel 18, or the “difficult” passages in Hebrews) to His words. The clearest statement of the Savior’s intent can be found in John 10:26-29. He makes six declarative statements with absolutely no qualifications:

1) My sheep hear My voice. 2) I know them. 3) They follow Me. 4) I give unto them eternal life. 5) They shall never perish. 6) Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand, nor out of My Father’s hand.

The language used in the original is very adamant, as the phrase translated “any man” is all inclusive—which includes “us” in the “any man” category. Hebrews 12:5-12 is an excellent (albeit painful) example of how God works in the lives of His children as He disciplines them. There are no qualifiers re how closely they follow, how far they stray in their waywardness, or how dim the voice of the Shepherd may become to them. Furthermore, “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Cor 3:14-15).

QUESTION: Choo Thomas has written a book called *Heaven Is So Real*. It is making the rounds of Christian church circles, and many Christians are very excited about it. Even when you confront them with the obvious occultic practices that the author claims are biblical, they refuse to acknowledge that she is a false teacher. I think that what she is doing is nothing more than Astral Projection...an occult practice. What do you think?

RESPONSE: This book should be a “slam dunk” for every Christian. In our copy, nearly every page is tagged as error. It

is filled with contradictory statements, unbiblical doctrine, and Scripture-twisting to explain her experiences.

We are told repeatedly that the author is a specially chosen vessel, indeed, “the most fortunate individual who had ever existed” (p. 65). “The Lord,” sounding more like a Hollywood agent than Creator of the Universe, assures Thomas, “I will make you famous” (p. 70) and “everyone will know you” (p. 75). “My daughter, you are an End-Times propheticess...and you are living proof of My Word and My prophecies...” (p. 168). During one visit to “heaven,” she examines “my mansion” (p. 64). Hers is larger and more sumptuous than many others and has her name on the door.

“Heaven” has different departments. There is a place for “disobedient Christians” located near the pit of Hell (p. 46). Anyone who doesn’t “tithe” to Christian ministries is one of the “disobedient children” (p. 21), a useful point for those promoting “seed faith” (see *TBC*, 1/87). When asked how long these disobedient children stay “in this barren, lifeless place,” “the Lord” replies, “Forever, My daughter” (p. 46). Another area is an “endless valley” of “sinful Christians.” This congregation is “mostly men with a few women” and “most of them will go to the Lake of Fire after the judgment” (p. 58).

On another visit, Thomas is shown a huge room filled with naked babies (p. 38). These aborted babies are kept in this vast room (with no apparent attendants) until their mothers are saved, at which point “they can have their babies back.” Those whose mothers are unsaved will be given to others, “when all My children come into the kingdom” (p. 38-39).

Thomas is confused about grace, often stating her unworthiness, while “the Lord” speaks of her good works—she indeed has earned everything, including her mansion in heaven *and* a mansion on the earth (pp. 134-35). Thomas sums up her writing with the statement, “The truth is, however, that most of the things God has shown me are recorded in the Bible.” She quotes Scripture, but fails to demonstrate her claim.

The Bible tells us that Heaven is a place of joy, where the Lord God will wipe away all tears from all eyes (Is 25:8), not a place where we, like Thomas, are able to look into the pit of Hell and see our mother (or other relatives) “screaming for help from the gaping pit of Hades” (p. 50).

It is impossible even to imagine the blessings of heaven. First Corinthians 2:9 tells us, “But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered

into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

We are given glimpses. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11). “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4). “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat” (Revelation 7:16).

Contrasted to the truth of Scripture, which glorifies God alone, much of this book is a direct appeal to the fleshly needs and wants of man.

Endnotes

1. <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/israel-north-korea-helped-syria-build-nuclear/64545/>; also <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/20/AR2007092002701.html>.

2. Gary Lenaire, *An Infidel Manifesto: why sincere believers lose faith* (Baltimore: PublishAmerica, 2006), back cover.

3. Lenaire, *Infidel*, 120-21.

4. John Loftus and Mark Aarons, *The Secret War Against the Jews: How Western Espionage Betrayed the Jewish People* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994).

Israel and Prophetic Proof—Part II

Dave Hunt

Israel is the major topic of Bible prophecy, mentioned more than 2,900 times, nearly twice as many times as her Messiah. Without Israel there would be no Messiah and no salvation for anyone, Jew or Gentile. The first mention of His coming is in God's rebuke of the guilty parties involved in man's fall in Eden: the serpent (an identity that Satan retains from Genesis to Revelation) and Adam and Eve. The Bible account is not myth but history. In many places around the world, archaeologists continue to find ancient representations of three figures appearing together: a woman, a serpent, and a tree.

God foretells a long conflict between the serpent and the Messiah and the latter's ultimate triumph that would occur in a way Satan could never have imagined. An old hymn tells it beautifully:

In weakness like defeat,
He won the victor's crown;
Trod all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down.
He Satan's power laid low;
Made sin, He sin o'er threw;
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death, by dying, slew.

God's declaration to the three guilty parties is simple and to the point. To the serpent He said, "I will put enmity between thee [serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed [the Messiah]; it [the woman's seed] shall bruise thy head [a death blow], and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gn 3:15).

The fact that God does not say "thy seed and Adam's" must indicate that no man would be involved. From that moment, Satan was eagerly awaiting this virgin birth in order to kill the babe. Watching closely as events unfold, Satan learns that the Messiah will be of the seed of Abraham. Ishmael (father of the Arabs) is Abraham's firstborn, but by Hagar, Sarah's maid (Gn 16). Finally, Abraham is given a second son by his wife. He is Isaac, "the son of promise." It seems a miraculous birth because for 90 years Sarah had been barren though not a virgin. Satan watches and waits.

Both Ishmael and Isaac were born "in the land of Canaan" among Canaanites who had lived there for centuries (Gn 11:31; 12:5-6; 13:7, etc.). There was no such place as "t" nor any people called "Palestinians." No Arabs would live in so-called Palestine until the

savage Islamic conquest of the world began in the seventh century, and they would not claim descent from "the original Palestinians" until the 1950s. Anyone making such a claim via descent from Ishmael is deluded by tradition. Ishmael's father (Abraham) was a Chaldean (Gn 11:31; 15:7) and his mother (Hagar) was an Egyptian (16:1).

President Obama continues to apply pressure upon Israel to deal justly with the "Palestinians." He asks these misnamed people to cease their violence against Israel. He must know that this is like pleading with a hurricane for mercy. Since long before the days of Arafat and his partner, Mahmoud Abbas, the y Charter's call for Israel's annihilation has been the sworn purpose of every Islamic government in obedience to Muhammad and has been reiterated hundreds of times throughout the Muslim world.

As Mortimer Zuckerman, in his *U.S.*

AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT IN ALL THE LAND, SAITH THE LORD, TWO PARTS THEREIN SHALL BE CUT OFF AND DIE; BUT THE THIRD SHALL BE LEFT THEREIN. AND I WILL BRING THE THIRD PART THROUGH THE FIRE, AND WILL REFINE THEM AS SILVER IS REFINED, AND WILL TRY THEM AS GOLD IS TRIED: THEY SHALL CALL ON MY NAME, AND I WILL HEAR THEM: I WILL SAY, IT IS MY PEOPLE: AND THEY SHALL SAY, THE LORD IS MY GOD.

—ZECHARIAH 13:8-9

News and World Report editorial of June 9, 2009, recently reminded world leaders demanding that Israel make "peace" with the Palestinians, the latter's violence is fueled by "the incessant spewing of hatred against Israel in schools, mosques, and the media, especially TV. This poisoning of the mind of the next generation is not just the stock in trade of Hamas and Hezbollah but also of the schools and media controlled by Fatah and reporting directly to Abbas."

In spite of the facts, political and church leaders persist in avoiding any mention of Islam or Muslims when referring to their violence. That is always blamed on "extremists." In fact, Muhammad himself began this trail of death, and his followers have obeyed, as supported by the Qur'an. The simple truth of history is brushed aside by the UN and almost the entire world, including the church and, sadly, our own president.

Being repeatedly condemned by the world for trying to defend itself against suicide bomber attacks that were costing

the lives of hundreds of Israelis, including women and children, Israel's only alternative was to build a barrier that would cut off the attackers from entering her homeland. World opinion expressed outrage. The World Court ruled 14-1 that construction must cease immediately and everything be dismantled, with compensation to the Palestinians. The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on July 20, 2004, 150-6, calling on Israel to respect the World Court ruling. Only the United States, Israel, Australia, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau voted against the resolution. Israel rejected world opinion and, from necessity, has proceeded with construction. Though the barrier has not been completed as of this date, it has already almost totally cut off the infiltration of terrorists.

Israel subsequently "gave back" Gaza, which historically belonged to her. She generously left operative the huge greenhouses that had fed Israel and much of Europe with fresh vegetables and could have done the same for the new "owners." Instead, these new owners tore the structures apart, and the mob carried off the materials for their individual use, thereby losing the potential income from exports that Israel had derived as well as the ability to feed themselves.

Going back to history, in 135 A.D., the Romans destroyed 1,000 Jewish villages, killed 500,000 Jews, and enslaved thousands. Furious that they'd been forced to bring in more legions to quell the rebellion, the Romans angrily renamed what had for more than 1,500 years been known as Israel. They called it Provincia Palestina after the Philistines, Israel's ancient enemies. Those living there became known as Palestinians. Who lived there? Jews! So Jews, ironically were the first "Palestinians." This is what they were called (along with many derisive names that have followed them as they've been hunted from country to country). Only in the 1950s did the Arabs begin to call themselves "Palestinians" in order to gain worldwide sympathy for their acts of terrorism even as UN pressure squeezed Israel into an ever-smaller corner in order to facilitate her destruction. (We document all of this and much more in *Judgment Day*.)

Since 1948, Israel has been arming herself and fighting back. Her vow of "never again" will be fulfilled but not before Jewry worldwide suffers the worst horror of her history. Under attack by all of the world's armies (Zec 12:3; 14:2; Jl 3:2, Ezk 38:8,9 etc.), Israel will call upon the Messiah, and He will rescue her. It is all declared plainly by

the ancient prophets of Israel in the Old Testament (the Tenach).

It has taken the Lord many years and many circumstances to open my eyes to these prophecies. It was all there in His Word, but I didn't understand. How blind I was!

In 1966-67, my wife and I, with our four young children, were living on the third floor of a small seventeenth-century castle in Switzerland. That year was to have been an intensive time of ministry to university students, but God had something far different in mind. Suddenly, an overwhelming urgency to pray for Israel came upon me toward the end of 1966. Even when giving thanks to God at mealtime, I was compelled to include this prayer, "O Lord, I pray that you will defeat, confound, confuse, and frustrate all those who plot the destruction of Israel; turn their counsel into foolishness and protect your ancient people from their evil designs. In Jesus' name, Amen!"

I didn't understand that prayer at the time, but my naiveté was soon dispelled. In Cairo, Egypt, I went into a travel agency and asked, "How can I get to Israel?" The man waiting on me took me aside and whispered, "If you mention that [expletive] word again in this country they'll kill you!" I was shocked. I knew the Bible well but had never realized the significance of Psalm 83: "...thine enemies...that hate thee...have taken crafty counsel against thy people, [saying] let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." This destruction has been the determined goal of Islam since it was founded by Muhammad.

Muslims are fighting against the God who calls Himself the "God of Israel" 203 times in the Bible. What an embarrassment it would be if Israel could be destroyed! It could never happen, for that act would destroy "the God of Israel" as well. He will not allow it.

Interacting with the very friendly people our family met as we drove the length and breadth of Egypt in our VW minibus in late May 1967, we repeatedly heard the words, "The 19-year war." What war was this? It took a while for that cryptic phrase to sink into our dull understanding. From the so-called 1948 cessation of hostilities until 1967 was 19 years. Even as they professed peace, but inspired by Egypt's dictator, Gamal Abdul Nasser, the 40 million Muslims surrounding Israel had been arming nonstop to achieve her destruction. Nasser had sworn to lead the Arab world to a glorious victory. The humiliating defeat of the Arab armies in "The Six Day War" of 1967 ended Nasser's bombastic boast that

he would destroy Israel. He subsequently had a nervous breakdown from which he never recovered.

In May 1948, Israel had declared its independence and was instantly attacked by the combined might of 40 million Arab/Muslims surrounding her. This tiny nation of 600,000, with its hastily assembled, hurriedly trained, and poorly equipped army of 60,000, with weapons smuggled in from Czechoslovakia (France, Britain, America, et al., would sell them nothing) fought for its survival against an enemy that had sworn its utter annihilation. They "crushed 600,000 soldiers of four Arab armies, well trained and heavily armed [with tanks and planes, of which Israel had none], reinforced by units from seven additional Arab countries, not to mention the active help of the British." This quote is part of the lengthy endorsement of *Judgment Day* by a retired Israeli General. (See Resource Pages.)

Three times God calls Israel the "apple of his eye" and warns: "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zec 2:8; Dt

AND IN THAT DAY THERE SHALL BE NO MORE THE CANAANITE IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD OF HOSTS.

—ZECHARIAH 14:21

32:10; Lam 2:18). The statements that Barack Obama continually makes in favor of Islam are not only alarming for his own sake and the sake of the United States but are a slap in the face of the God of Israel. I can only warn him with what God himself told Abraham regarding the subsequent mistreatment of his descendants: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gn 12:3).

In a hotel room in Tyre, Lebanon, the evening of June 3, 1967, our family prayed for direction from God. We had visas to drive through Syria into Jordan and then return by the same route. The newspapers the next morning gave the answer clearly. We immediately headed north through Syria and had, by God's grace, barely gotten across the border into Turkey when the war broke out.

In spite of hundreds of very clear declarations by Jewish prophets and the promises that God has given to His people, about 30 percent of today's Israelis claim to be atheists. He wants to bless them and protect them, but how can He, when they continue to reject Him? The following is just a sample of what God has repeatedly said to

His people: "I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries...fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.... But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would [have] none of me" (Ps 81:11-16).

Israel is both under God's judgment because of its continual rejection of the God of Israel, but at the same time, He has not abandoned her, and woe to those who take God's judgment into their own hands!

In the meantime, the nations of the world continue to become a party to Islam's deception by attempting to force Israel into what can only be a false "peace." What Islam has in mind is not what the peacemakers naively intend. It's called a *hudna*, the "peace" that Muhammad made with the Meccans for ten years. Long before then, under a pretense, Muslims attacked and took over that "holy" city, which had so long been the goal of the *hajj* (long practiced before Muhammad's birth by most Arab tribes). Of course, this ancient custom, along with others, such as the feast of Ramadan, have been taken over by Muslims. Thus, history is perverted to make it seem that these had always been Islamic practices.

Ramadan had for centuries been agreed upon by warring Arab tribes to be 30 days of peace. At just the right time to allow him to attack a passing caravan, Muhammad received a "new revelation" that Muslims could fight during this time. Ramadan has become a time of the deadliest attacks of Shiites against Sunnis (does this demonstrate to the world that "Islam is peace?")

These prophecies are so important for the strengthening of our own faith, but what about those whom we want to bring into the faith of the God of Israel? We need to provide to everyone with whom we speak (as I often do for those with whom the Lord puts me in contact everywhere, but especially on airplanes) first of all, proof of God's existence. How better to do this than to take the approach of Zinzendorf with the King of Sweden, as we mentioned in Part I of this article, using biblical prophecies about Israel?

We can talk to others about God and Jesus Christ, but when we say "God," what do we mean? A "higher power" of some kind? We have to be sure that those whom we want to introduce to the God of Israel understand who He is, why we believe in Him, and why we think the most intelligent decision they could make is to believe in Him as well. **TBC**

Quotable

God has called every Christian to a holy life. There are no exceptions to this call. It is not a call only to pastors, missionaries, and a few dedicated Sunday School teachers. Every Christian of every nation, whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned, influential or totally unknown, is called to be holy. The Christian plumber and the Christian banker, the unsung housewife and the powerful head of state are all alike called to be holy.

This call to a holy life is based on the fact that God Himself is holy. Because God is holy, He requires that we be holy. Many Christians have what we call a “cultural holiness.” They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. But God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God.

Jerry Bridges, The Pursuit of Holiness

Q&A

QUESTION: President Obama has recently stated, “If you actually took the number of Muslim Americans, we’d be one of the largest Muslim countries in the world.” He also seems to be apologizing for America’s cultural “arrogance” and no longer refers to the “war on terror.” Instead, he speaks about the need to learn about Islam and repeated a statement he made in Turkey in April 2009. “In Ankara, I made clear that America is not—and never will be—at war with Islam.” At the same time, we have seen the shooting of two U.S. soldiers outside a recruiting office by a convert to Islam. What do you think?

RESPONSE: Whether or not we acknowledge it, we are indeed at war with those promoting the core beliefs of Islam. Some people were shocked with the release of a report in 2008 showing “Nearly one third of Muslim students believe it can be acceptable to kill in the name of religion, according to a survey published [July 27, 2008]. It also found that 40 percent want to see the introduction of Islamic sharia law in Britain, 40 percent think it wrong for Muslim men and women to mix freely together, and 33 percent want to see a worldwide Islamic government based on sharia law.” (“One third of British Muslim students say

it’s acceptable to kill for Islam,” *This is London*, July 28, 2008). It must be borne in mind that these are not recent immigrants but many who had been raised and educated in English schools and who have long interacted with English culture.

Their attitudes really should not be surprising, as *jihad* is something openly advocated by Islam: “Allah’s Apostle was asked, ‘What is the best deed?’ He replied, ‘To believe in Allah and His Apostle (Muhammad).’ The questioner then asked, ‘What is the next (in goodness)?’ He replied, ‘To participate in Jihad [religious war] in Allah’s Cause’” (The Hadith, Volume 1, Book 2, Number 25).

In what has been described as Obama’s sugarcoating of “the pathologies of the Islamic world,” the president glossed over the tyranny of its various regimes, its very vocal hatred of Jews, and the institutionalized intolerance in its societies. It must be remembered that Islamic eschatology demands the complete and utter destruction of every Jew from the face of the earth. The pronouncements in the hadith and other writings have not been hidden but are often quoted by their religious teachers: “. . . Allah’s Apostle said, ‘The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say, “O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him!”’” (Volume 4, Book 52, Number 177). “The Hour” being “established” means, “the last day [the day of resurrection] will not come” until the last Jew hiding is located and killed. (One must profess belief in the “last day” to be a Muslim.)

To be fair, the president did say (regarding the inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank), “They have to deal with incitement issues. There’s still a tendency, even within—among Palestinians who say they are interested in peace with Israel, to engage in statements that are—that incite a hatred of Israel or are not constructive to the peace process. Now I think, to his credit, President Abbas has made progress on this issue—but not enough” (Remarks by U.S. President Barack Obama [June 5] at a press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel at Dresden Castle, Germany). It is disappointing, however, that these same remarks were not emphasized more during the speech in Cairo to those who needed most to hear them. Further, the PLO has never removed the clause.

Although no one would disagree that the Arabs of Gaza must abandon their plans for the destruction of Israel (something still contained in the Palestinian Charter), how can the incitement “of hatred” cease,

inasmuch as it is a core value of the religion taught by Muhammad?

Consider the case of the convert to Islam who recently shot two U.S. soldiers at a recruiting center in Arkansas. He was described as “the latest in a series of Muslim converts accused of planning or launching violent attacks in the U.S., part of what security experts call an alarming domestic trend” (Abrams, Fox News Online, 06/02/09: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,524799,00.html>). After converting to Islam as a teenager and changing his name in March 2006 to Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, the young man went to Yemen in 2007 to teach English. “There, ‘he felt at peace with these people,’ even marrying a Yemeni,” and was reported to have “studied jihad with an Islamic scholar” (Ibid.), before ending up in a Yemeni prison, where it is alleged that he was tortured and brainwashed into becoming a jihadist for Islam.

He may have felt at peace “with these people,” but he came back from Yemen with a plan to target others as he practiced jihad. Because of this, we do need to learn the real nature of Islam and avoid the popular, though fallacious, “understanding” promoted by the president and, unfortunately, past presidents.

The 1968 amended text of the Palestinian Charter contained a number of clauses calling for the destruction of Israel. Prior to the 1993 Oslo Accords, PLO Chairman Arafat agreed that those clauses would be removed from the document. The Palestine National Council voted on April 26, 1996, to nullify or amend all such clauses. President Clinton received a further letter from Arafat in 1998 listing the same clauses to be removed. Nevertheless, a new Charter with these clauses actually removed has never been produced. In 2002, PLO Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi acknowledged that the PLO National Covenant (with its many clauses calling for violence and the destruction of Israel) has never been changed (http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=29242).

Concerning his remarks that the United States is “one of the largest Muslim countries in the world,” depending upon actual population data, there are 30-35 countries with a larger percentage and population of Muslims.

QUESTION: I heard a pastor/teacher on the radio state that when Joseph refused Potiphar’s wife’s sexual advance, he was a godly man and honoring God. That makes sense, but he also said that if Joseph had given in to her it would not have been a sin, since this was prior to

the Ten Commandments. Were killing, adultery, stealing, etc., not sinful prior to the Ten Commandments? God destroyed the earth with a flood because mankind was so wicked, or evil. Evil based on what?

RESPONSE: One might very well wonder why Joseph asked, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gn 39:9). We are also reminded of Romans 5:14: “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”

“Death reigned from Adam to Moses.” In other words, there was a standard by which one could judge what was sin and what was not.

It is instructive that even the most isolated tribal groups have distinct concepts of what is sin. In Romans 2:14-15 we read, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law to themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” According to Scripture, there is a “law written in their hearts.” This explains why there are universal prohibitions throughout the world. This is certainly not an assurance that men will fulfill that law, but in the mercy of God he has caused His law and standards to be revealed to humanity.

Consequently, Joseph (before the law) stated, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” He knew very well that what Potiphar’s wife proposed was sin, and if he yielded to the temptation, he would be sinning.

QUESTION: In the archival Q&As that you selected for the April newsletter, I can’t believe the lack of Scripture references in your response to those who believe there is a Gospel for the Jews and a “Gospel of Grace,” as preached by Paul. Those teaching this have gained quite a following in our area. I suspect that you have probably been reading, listening, and watching these same people. Please! Some of these things need a bit more consideration.

RESPONSE: There is only one gospel. It is eternal and changeless. It is the gospel of the Kingdom, the only gospel that Jesus or His disciples or Paul preached, and the same gospel that we must preach today. Unfortunately, seldom is the gospel

preached in the way Paul preached it in Acts 17:2-3, in Romans 1, etc. Romans 1, for example, reveals what must shock a Jew: that Christianity is not some new invention but the fulfillment of the same message the Hebrew prophets had proclaimed.

Though the prophets didn’t fully understand it, Paul still called it “the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures” (Rom 1:2). One of the most powerful arguments we have for Jews or anyone else is the fact that the entire gospel, from Christ’s birth to His death and resurrection, was all foretold in detail in the Old Testament. We are simply preaching today what God has proclaimed in His Word for thousands of years!

Some have asked, “When did the gospel change from the preaching of the kingdom (Lk 9:2,6) to the preaching of the Cross (1 Cor 15:1-4)?” It didn’t. The gospel doesn’t change: The Messiah comes to us through Abraham and his descendants, Israel (Gn 12); God promised a land to Israel, and the Messiah will reign over that land, His people, and the whole world from Jerusalem. That is all part of the gospel and is an offer that was made through Jesus and His disciples to Israel, but they rejected and killed Him. Thus, Israel had something special to repent of, and Peter’s remarks at Pentecost reflected that fact.

Yet Christ’s rejection by His own and His death on the Cross for our sins were foretold in the Old Testament. That gospel (of the Cross) was, in effect, preached in Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:26, etc. Though few understood, it was still there.

It isn’t true that the preaching of the Cross began with Paul. John the Baptist hailed Christ as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” though he didn’t understand what that meant. Jesus preached the gospel of the Cross to Nicodemus, and, although the disciples didn’t understand that gospel before His resurrection, they surely did afterward and before Pentecost. In Luke 24:25-27, Jesus rebuked two disciples for not knowing from the Scriptures the gospel of the Cross; and in verses 44-48, He explained to the eleven the gospel of His death and resurrection—and it is this gospel that He sent them forth to preach to the whole world (v. 47).

We have this commission to “all the world,” or “all nations,” also in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. Jesus surely wouldn’t have used that language if He knew that this “gospel of the Kingdom” was only temporary and for Israel alone. The gospel of the Kingdom concerns the reign of Christ over

all creation, which begins in our hearts, has a special Israeli fulfillment in His Millennial reign—and its ultimate fulfillment in the New Creation. That the gospel of the Kingdom couldn’t have been temporary and applicable only to the Millennium is obvious, for “flesh and blood” cannot inherit the Kingdom (1 Cor 15:50). One must be “born again” to be in it (Jn 3), and it is everlasting and without war (Is 9:6-7), but the Millennium ends, and in war.

Refashioning God

T. A. McMahon

Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

—2 Samuel 7:22

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

—John 17:3

Every man, woman, and child has the opportunity to spend eternity with God. That's mind-boggling! There is nothing imaginable that could possibly be more exciting and wonderful. Moreover, that possibility isn't something that man has invented. From Genesis through the book of Revelation, the Scriptures declare and explain how that becomes a reality. It's what the Bible is all about.

In God's revelation of Himself through His Word, we learn of His attributes and personal qualities in the only way that mankind can know Him accurately. Without His revelation, we are left with finite man's speculations and guesses about an infinite God. Such guesswork is often the basis of all the religions of the world. Their deities and their beliefs are the product of the imagination of fallen humanity (with the help of fallen angels). Biblical Christianity is the only exception. God has declared Himself in very specific terms to mankind. Without an accurate source of information, which only God Himself could and did provide, mankind would be left with nothing more than mythology, and most of the world is mired in this.

Tragically, a similar condition is infecting those who profess to be biblical Christians; they are slipping into the same swamp of delusion. That's one of the reasons why so few Christians seem truly excited about eternity and spending it with the Lord. They can't relate to it—or to Him—with real confidence. Many are tossed to and fro by their thoughts about God drawn from extra-biblical sources, from the latest best-selling Christian books, to Christian television programming, to what Oprah and her guests have conjured up. What's being communicated about God is usually pleasing (albeit to the flesh) but is rarely true to His holy character. Even the most appealing ideas about God, when they don't ring true to the Scriptures, contribute to a misleading and superficial relationship with

the One we are to love in truth and with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

John, the beloved Apostle, tells us in his epistle that believers love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). That love for Him began with a basic understanding of who He is and what He has done for us. When we finally understood and believed the simple gospel (that God so loved us that He became a Man in order to reconcile us to Himself through His life, death, and resurrection), Jesus saved us. He did what only God could do—provided salvation for all mankind by paying the infinite penalty for sin that God's perfect justice required.

At our new birth in Christ, which begins each believer's personal relationship with Him, He gives us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to live within us, to teach us His Word, and to help us to grow in the knowledge of God our Savior. That's the only way we can truly know, and mature in our relationship with, Jesus. Anything that deviates from God's way of knowing Him is a delusion that leads down a slippery slope to destruction. In this day of quick fixes, running after instant gratification, and experiential catharses, we need to heed Isaiah's counsel regarding spiritual maturity: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:9-10). These precepts are God's instructions, His full counsel, which are completely sufficient for His children. As Peter declared, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). That's God's way of developing maturity and fruitfulness (not to mention confidence in and a greater love for Him!) among His saints: "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8).

There is nothing complicated about God's plan. So, what's the problem? Each one of us has to ask himself or herself that question, whether indeed, we have not taken to heart, or have willfully deviated from, God's instructions. As Isaiah pointed out, the learning/maturing process is quite simple ("precept upon precept"), but it does require learning what the precepts are and a willingness to do them. I'm speaking to my own heart as much as anyone else's when it comes to whether or not I fall short of what God desires in all of this.

For thirty years prior to accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior by faith alone, I had many beliefs about Him that were without support from the Scriptures—even contradictory. Some of the ideas came from the nuns and priests who, in many ways, were a wonderful part of my life growing up Catholic, whether in elementary school, private school, or high school. What they taught me was mostly unbiblical, including many things that were not even accepted as official Church dogma. The most notable example was the common belief that Jesus, for all practical and even eternal purposes, was subject to His mother, Mary. Her position as *Mater Dei*, the Mother of God (we were told), made her the most advantageous source of obtaining favors from Jesus. That certainly made sense to me and to the friends of my youth. After all, what good son would refuse his mom anything? Imagery of Christ as a small child with the Madonna was seemingly everywhere Catholic, from classic art and statuary to the many apparitions of Mary holding a baby—from the 1600s right up to the present, including Medugorje and Egypt. No one I knew who had collected holy cards (a popular practice of Catholics of my generation) of the Infant Jesus of Prague, or St. Anthony, or St. Joseph holding the infant Jesus, gave any thought to the biblical fact that Jesus was in His early thirties when He ascended into heaven. Such things created an impression about Jesus that was endearing yet deadly in its straying from the truth about our all-knowing and all-powerful sovereign God.

The erroneous Catholic ideas about Jesus (that a piece of bread is changed into the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist, that He did not pay the full penalty for our sins, etc.) may not seem too surprising to evangelicals because, as most know, the Church of Rome doesn't strictly adhere to the Bible. To that she has added Sacred Tradition and the Sacred Magisterium, through which the bishops claim to infallibly interpret Tradition and the Bible. What is tragic is that evangelicals, who traditionally have regarded the Bible alone as their authority in all matters of faith and practice, are increasingly turning to extrabiblical sources for their instruction regarding spiritual matters. That's not exactly new; popular Christian books have displaced the books of the Bible in many so-called Bible studies throughout the land. Multitudes seem to prefer the insights of Beth Moore, John Eldredge, and Max Lucado over the Holy Spirit-inspired prophets of Scripture. Sadly, man's opinions and subtle and not-so-subtle psychobabble have become the oracles of

wisdom for most of Christianity.

For decades, because of the influence of psychology on the church, professing Christians have integrated psychotherapeutic concepts into the way they view themselves, as opposed to what the Bible teaches about humanity. For example, many if not most Christians, believe the humanistic concepts of self-esteem and self-love to be consistent with Scripture, although they are absolutely contrary to the Word of God. Why, then, are those concepts accepted by evangelicals? Primarily because Dr. James Dobson and a host of other influential Christian psychologists promote them. Man's ideas and pseudo-scientific speculations have become the so-called guiding light of increasing numbers of Christian families. Yet there is something even more ominous than the leaven of man's ways mixed with God's way in the life of a Christian. It amounts to refashioning one's view of God from a human perspective.

All of us, from time to time, have had thoughts about God that did not square exactly with what He himself has declared in the Scriptures, but that generation of misinformation has reached appalling levels among evangelical Christians today. This development has been stimulated primarily by the Church Growth and Emerging Church movements in their approach to allegedly reaching our culture for Christ. Reinventing Christ and Christianity, in order to make them more acceptable to the unsaved masses, is both the method and the goal. It amounts to recreating God in the fallen image of man. As delusory as that approach may seem in attempting to reach the lost, astonishingly, it has millions of professing Christians caught in its web of deception.

Though many examples could be cited, the most popular vehicle of this tactic is a fictional book that has been atop the *New York Times* best-seller list for about 60 weeks, is available in 35 languages, and has sold more than seven million copies. I'm referring to *The Shack*, by William Paul Young. Multitudes have claimed that the book has transformed their lives by giving them a "new and wonderful awareness about God that they never understood from the Bible." The story centers upon a man, Mack Philips, whose young daughter was abducted during a family vacation. Although her body hadn't been found, evidence pointing to her murder was discovered in an abandoned shack in the wilderness of Eastern Oregon; hence the title.

After several years, which have played

emotional havoc with Mack and his family (he calls this time "The Great Sadness"), he receives a note in his mailbox inviting him back to the shack. The note is signed, "Papa," a very private and intimate name that Mack's wife affectionately uses for God. Mack apprehensively follows through with the invitation and encounters the godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in ways, means, and manifestations that are both unbiblical and bizarre. God the Father appears as a stereotyped, overweight black woman, who, nevertheless, is called Papa. She's a bit crude at times, likes to boogie to funk music, and some of her dialogue makes you wonder if she got past the third grade: "Well, Mackenzie, don't just stand there gawkin' with your mouth open like your pants are full"; "Take it easy on those greens, young man. Those things can give you the trots if you ain't careful." And when asked if there was anyone in the world of whom she was *not* especially fond, she replies, "Nope, I haven't been able to find any. Guess that's jes' the way I is."

The book may be fiction, but God is not. If God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit say and do things in this novel that are out of character with how they are revealed in Scripture, they are obviously false representations. Insights and explanations about God constitute doctrine. They are either true to God's Word, reflecting sound doctrine, or they are lies or fables that men concoct. Paul's prophetic words of warning in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 are evident in the popularity of *The Shack*: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

The Jesus character is a giggling "good ol' boy" who is enamored by His creation. A bit of a klutz, he drops a bowl of sauce that splatters all over Papa's skirt, giving the three persons of the "Trinity" a good laugh. When questioned by Mack about his less-than-good looks, Jesus blames it on his "big Jewish nose," which he says he got from Mary's side of the family, specifically his grandfather. We learn that Jesus likes to fish for trout by trying to chase them down as he runs on water. He has yet to be successful but thoroughly enjoys the sport. Referring to the female Papa's unexpected crudeness, he declares, "She's a riot." Throughout the story, Jesus can't seem to restrain his giggles and chuckles. He and the other persons of the Trinity are so like us that many readers claim they are now "more

comfortable" with God. It's astonishing that what amounts to slandering the character of our holy God could make a professing Christian *comfortable*.

Nearly all of the literary devices in the book are either emotional or psychological hooks. The bait is "meeting felt needs." For example, Jesus the Carpenter constructs a coffin for the now-found body of Mack's daughter, although she makes her daddy feel better by communicating to him from heaven (necromancy?) that she's quite happy. As another example, the reason that God the Father appears as a woman to Mack is because he had a bad attitude toward his own dysfunctional father (who made it to heaven anyway, in keeping with the universalism [everyone is finally reconciled to God] implied in the novel). Heresies and distortions of biblical truth are found in page after page of *The Shack* (see Extra Page).

Thinking of Jesus' words in Matthew 24 that false Christs would arise and lead many astray, the Jesus of *The Shack* readily qualifies as a fulfillment of that prophecy. Again, more than seven million people have thus far been presented a bogus Jesus, and, for some, that may be their one and only introduction to him. That grieves me deeply. A false Jesus can save no one. Erroneous ideas about Jesus will destroy any hope of a *truly fruitful* relationship with Him. Jesus was, and is, certainly human. But He is also God, and His humanity was and is perfect in every aspect. In that light, all attempts to make Him seem more like us—sinful humanity—either in a book or in our minds, is an act of blasphemy. Blasphemy isn't just bad-mouthing God or Jesus; it's attributing characteristics to Him that are not true—*any* false characteristics. It is conjuring up "another Jesus," which Scripture condemns.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:17-18). The success of *The Shack* among those who profess to be evangelicals is as shameful as it is destructive, yet it also indicates that "vanity" of mind and "ignorance" are not the exclusive domain of unbelievers. Only a love for the truth and a willingness to do what the Word of God says will preserve us from the apostasy that Scripture tells us will overtake the world.

Lord, help us to remain steadfast in the faith, submitting to You in all things, and worshiping You in Spirit and in truth. Maranatha!

TBC

Quotable

Error is like leaven, of which we read, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous. God hates such a mixture! Any error, or any truth-and-error mixture, calls for definite exposure and repudiation. To condone such is to be unfaithful to God and His Word and treacherous to imperiled souls for whom Christ died.

H. A. Ironside

Q&A

QUESTION: Hebrews 9:27 says: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Lazarus of Bethany, who died physically, was resurrected and then, of course, died again. So, how many times did Lazarus die? The answer is “twice.” We have other cases where Jesus gave His disciples the power to raise people from the dead who later died again physically. How are we to understand? Which is it, once or twice?

RESPONSE: As you point out, Hebrews 9:27 says, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” “Men” is generic, speaking of all mankind. That the Lord, of His own will and sovereign choice, has, on occasion, brought back to life individuals (temporarily) does not affect this general ruling. Both Elijah and Elisha raised individuals from the dead by the power of God. Jesus raised a number of people from the dead. Again, these exceptions did not change the ruling under which humanity lives (and dies), as Hebrews 9:27 summarizes.

The fact that the Lord Jesus walked on water (Mt 14:26) or that Elisha made the head of an axe float (2 Ki 6:6) did not overturn the law of gravity. In short, we need to discern the plain meaning of the Scriptures.

This is important, as Muslim “apologists,” for the sake of argument, often bring this up as “yet another contradiction” in the Bible. With careful examination of context and word meanings in Scripture, such a conclusion is insupportable. Let us strive to be diligent as we search the Scriptures daily.

QUESTION: Many of the younger people (and some of the older ones) at our fellowship are getting tattoos. Some are saying that a tattoo can be used as a witnessing tool. What do you think about this?

RESPONSE: It must be noted that this appears to be growing in acceptance among professing Christians and with the profusion of “Christian” tattoo artists, someone voicing their disapproval may soon discover that they threaten another person’s source of income (Acts 19:24-27). Further, it is commonly heard that those disapproving of tattoos appeal to Old Testament passages no longer applicable to believers. What do the Scriptures say concerning tattoos and body piercing?

It is important to see in what context the prohibition against tattoos appears. In Leviticus 19:26-29, the admonition against marking or cutting the flesh comes in a section that forbids eating blood, using enchantments, observing times, or prostituting one’s daughter. No one would say that these instructions were abrogated because they are “Old Testament.” Further, some would point to verse 27: “Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard” and presume that this is a simple command regarding shaving. It is not. Elements of pagan worship include cutting or otherwise marring the face and body. Hair was cut from the face and head (Lv 19:27; Dt 14:1; 1 Ki 18:28). Both blood and hair had a role in idol worship and pagan ceremonies.

Further, since the Leviticus prohibition against marking the flesh comes in a sequence including eating blood, we know from Acts 15:20 that abstaining from eating blood is one thing specifically enjoined upon Gentile believers. Other passages in the New Testament also leave no doubt that believers are not to be involved with occult practices such as enchantments or astrology. It seems logical to conclude that God’s intent concerning “marks upon you” covers more than pagan funeral rites.

It is difficult to see how one can avoid the pagan connections tattoos have. Scripture and history are unanimous in noting that the pagan priests of most cultures either inflicted ritual scarring or tattoos upon themselves. The Lord wants us to be different from the nations. The apostle Peter tells us (as Christians) that we are a “peculiar” or special, people (1 Pt 2:9). The fact that so many believers are getting tattoos shows no leadership on our part but rather a tendency to be little more than followers of trends.

God certainly has absolute ideas on how we, as His creation, can decorate or adorn ourselves. Consistently, throughout Scripture (1 Pt 3:3-5), God respects the inward adorning of humanity over external marks

or signs. Paul spoke of bearing “in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal 6:17). These were not self-inflicted wounds—persecutors inflicted every single one. “Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep” (2 Cor 11:25).

Finally, despite our best intentions, tattoos by their very nature draw attention to us. We don’t need that. James warned about those who say they have faith, but their works deny it. One may have all kinds of evangelistic slogans liberally tattooed that allegedly proclaim one’s faith. James didn’t need to advertise. He said, “I will show thee my faith by my works” (Jas 2:18).

What is that work? “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas 1:27). May we take up that challenge.

Some have asked the question: “What about those who come to the Lord and are already covered with tattoos? What should they do? One of the blessings of the gospel is that the Lord receives us as we are. As the hymn so wonderfully puts it, “just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me.” Although we repented of the sins of the past as we came to Christ, we still have the same bodies we have always had, including tattoos. Some choose to keep their tattoos as a reminder of what Christ has delivered them from, but perhaps our tattoos are immoral or occultic in nature.

The Lord may call one into missionary service. Depending on the culture, our tattoos may very well be a stumbling block to those we are trying to reach with the message of the gospel. Paul discloses his heart for the lost: “Conscience, I say, not your own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience?...Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:29-33). In such cases, there are certainly a number of alternatives for tattoo removal. Paul writes, “Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:19-20). How indeed can tattoos glorify the Lord?

QUESTION: I have been receiving TBC’s mailing for more than 10 years and am normally highly impressed with the level of scholarship supporting the information presented. That is why I was

extremely shocked by the obvious lack of scholarship in your figures [in the June issue] regarding the African slave trade, and your very limited explanation of it as being of Arab and African making. First, the minimal figures of the number of Africans (not “blacks”, these people all had a country, culture, language, heritage) brought to the “new world” is between 9-12 million, not thousands, as you reported.

Secondly, though it is correct that Africans and Arabs had been involved in slave trades for centuries before European participation, there was a difference in the way the slaves were treated (as evidenced by the fact that Europeans did not want slaves from North African [Muslim] areas because many had been educated and were rife for rebellion; further, in many African kingdoms the slaves were eventually given full privileges including land ownership)....It is extremely disheartening and frustrating that the far-reaching ramifications of the African slave trade are largely ignored in this country, especially when we are continually reminded of genocides and holocausts that happened on *other lands*, while the vile abuse suffered by those whose labor largely forged not only U.S. existence but that of just about every country in the Western hemisphere, goes largely ignored, undervalued, and unrecognized.

RESPONSE: We are clearly compelled to be as accurate and correct as possible. We know that to underestimate the magnitude of slavery is a disservice to the truth, and we also note that exaggeration tends to destroy credibility. What is in view here, however, is our mistake not in quoting statistics but failing to distinguish that the reference was specifically regarding the American colonies, to which some 645,000 slaves were taken. We have since corrected that.

“Twelve million Africans were shipped to the Americas from the 16th to the 19th centuries” [Ronald Segal (1995) *The Black Diaspora: Five Centuries of the Black Experience Outside Africa*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 4.] “It is now estimated that 11,863,000 slaves were shipped across the Atlantic.”

[Note in original: Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature,” in *Journal of African History* 30 (1989), 368.] Of these, an estimated 645,000 were brought to what is now the United States. The largest number were shipped to Brazil.

Second, it was after 1832 that specific anti-literacy laws were enacted, codifying

the practice that you mention. They were not there at the beginning but represented a hardened attitude of those whose institutionalization of slavery was viewed as essential to economic survival. We mention this because your statement can undermine the points being made: “those [slaves] whose labor largely forged not only U.S. existence but that of just about every country in the Western hemisphere, goes largely ignored, undervalued, and unrecognized.”

On the contrary, slavery actually limits the development of economies. Compare industrial and economic development prior to the Civil War. The North far outstripped the South (as well as Central and South America), in economic development, arguably because it was not based upon the labor of slaves but of free men. This is another reminder that great evil can never produce long-term success.

Regarding the alleged better treatment of slaves in Muslim lands, slavery is horrendous regardless of who practices it:

Harrowing eyewitness accounts tell of the vast scale and miserable conditions of the slave trade in Africa. In the 1570s, many thousands of black Africans were seen for sale in Cairo on market days. In 1796 a caravan was seen by a British traveller leaving Darfur with 5,000 slaves. Black eunuchs became favoured for the royal harems. Even after Britain outlawed the slave trade in 1807, a further 2 million Africans were enslaved by Muslim traders. (The Barnabas Fund, published in *Barnabas Aid*, April-May 2007).

While education was viewed as subversive by Western slavemasters, “Two-thirds of African slaves were female. The males were considered to be troublesome. Further, while Western slaveholders preferred men as workers, in North Africa the women were incorporated into harems and served as concubines. ‘High prices were paid for eunuchs...Islam prohibits physical mutilation, so many eunuchs were castrated before entering Islamic territory’” (Ibid.).

QUESTION: Why do Christians quote Leviticus condemning homosexuality, while they ignore the rest of the prohibitions?

RESPONSE: Leviticus contains two types of prohibitions for a precise reason. Much of the book (as well as Numbers, Deuteronomy) is given over to specific prohibitions the nation of Israel was to observe as “a special people unto Me.” Consistently, whether these prohibitions concern eating of particular foods, wearing of specific garments, or other ceremonial considerations,

the Lord says to Israel, “these are unclean [or an abomination] to you” (Lv 11:7,11, etc.). This is one kind of prohibition, clearly applicable to Israel alone.

On the other hand, moral issues, such as adultery, sorcery, child sacrifice, bestiality, incest, homosexuality, etc., are said to be abominations (period). Penalties against those who commit these behaviors are assessed because it is “My [God’s] judgment” (Lv 18:4).

The Old Paths

T. A. McMahon

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. —Jeremiah 6:16-17

Why wouldn't the Israelites want the "good way" and "rest for their souls"? Why wouldn't they "hearken to the sound of the trumpet," i.e., want to hear what God has to say? Let me suggest one reason that could certainly apply. They were so far removed from doing things God's way that they couldn't relate to the "old paths." Furthermore, their idea of "good" was not God's good, and the "rest" they sought after was not the rest of God. Doing their own thing for their own selves for so long may have pushed God's way well beyond their interests and comprehension. This condition was not unique to ancient Israel; we also see it in the church today.

For decades Dave Hunt and I have been addressing the detrimental influence of psychological counseling among evangelical Christians. Trying to convince believers that psychotherapy is both pseudoscience and antibiblical quite often has been like endeavoring to paddle a canoe upstream, mostly in the face of rapids and occasionally as though challenging a Niagara Falls. One reason for this is similar to what probably contributed to the rebellion documented by Jeremiah: the church has been so seduced by psychological counseling for so long that anything that seems at odds with the current counseling practices is usually considered a consequence of ignorance.

I recently received a book written by Dr. Martin and Deidre Bobgan titled *Person to Person Ministry: Soul Care in the Body of Christ*. It is, in part, an indictment of the unbiblical way the evangelical church has gone about counseling. It is also a call to return to the "old paths," that is, God's instructions for how He wants believers to minister to one another. This is not a critical treatise directed at the problems inherent within professional psychotherapy; the Bobgans have shined the light of Scripture in that dark arena in their many other books (see resource materials). Rather, *Person to Person Ministry* reproves those approaches that call themselves biblical counseling

yet have gleaned much from the way the world counsels.

My experience has shown me that questions rush through the minds of many who take exception to our criticism of psychological counseling (although they may appreciate our addressing other things): "So what are you saying? Are you now telling us that even biblical counseling is wrong?" In a few words, yes—in most cases. The Bobgans' book gives enough examples to make anyone who loves the Lord and His Word very cautious about recommending someone who calls himself a biblical counselor, even if he claims that he is anti-psychology. On the other hand, the greater value of what the Bobgans have written is in their "sounding the trumpet," that is, exhorting and encouraging believers by reminding them that God has provided everything they need to deal with and benefit from the troubling issues of life "through the Word of God, the work of the Holy Spirit...[and] the fellowship of the saints..." (p. 172).

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

—2 Timothy 2:15-16

What will perhaps make *Person to Person Ministry* upsetting to some is not necessarily the content, which is simply and clearly biblical, but the fact that unbiblical ways and means of counseling have so permeated the church that anything that challenges them is likely to be regarded as extreme. Here are some "counseling" problems that should concern those who want to minister, and be ministered to, God's way. As I list some of the errors they expose, see if there is either a practice or teaching found in the New Testament to support these current practices. In other words, in reference to the old hymn, was it "good for Paul and Silas"? Many "biblical" counselors mimic the way professional counselors counsel. They have a counseling office, a calendar of appointments, meet with people on an hourly basis often once a week or more, and that sometimes goes on for months or years. They charge fees or accept donations for their church (which pays their salaries). Some don't see a problem here as long as the counselor is "using the Word of God." Other than the fact that the methods are at odds with what Scripture teaches, I'm

not sure what "using the Word of God" means, because the "biblical" concepts and methods vary from biblical counselor to biblical counselor. For example, most biblical counselors integrate psychological concepts in some fashion, often incorporating humanistic or behavioral psychology that has been spiritualized, so they sound as though they were biblically consistent.

Teachings such as Freudian psychic determinism and the unconscious, or Jungian dream analysis and the collective unconscious, or behaviorism, or inner healing, etc. (without using those specific terms), are rampant among those who nevertheless claim to counsel *sola Scriptura*. Exploring the past and looking for causes for sinful decisions based upon one's parents or one's environment or a life trauma are also common. Some specialize in deliverance from demons while others major in the unbiblical four temperaments. Most of those who practice the healing of memories would argue

that they are adhering to the Scriptures rather than psychology. However, as the Bobgans point out, "Each counselor uses the Bible according to some combination of personal experience, secular theories, biblical doctrines, and common sense.... While some have attempted to control the field through certificates, diplomas, degrees, and organizations, there is no single model or method of biblical counseling" (p. 49). Yet for all the differences among biblical counselors, including those who attempt strictly to adhere to God's Word, they all have this in common: they have set themselves up (some unwittingly) as experts in solving the problems of living that are adversely affecting Christians. This problem-solving approach is plagued with problems of its own, as the Bobgans demonstrate.

First of all, neither the God of the Bible, nor His instructions in Scripture, nor the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is about fixing our daily mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. Every believer is a new creature in Christ, and his objective in life is to have Christ formed in him. That is the process of sanctification—being set apart from the ways, means, and lusts of the world to a life that is in submission to the Lord and in which choices are made that are pleasing to Him, the One with whom every true believer will spend eternity. It's a growth process, which at times involves sufferings and trials that the Lord allows in our lives to help us depend upon Him and mature in our relationship with Him. Yet most biblical counseling is

trapped in a “just fix the problem” or “get rid of the symptoms” mentality and mode, along with other concepts that are contrary to the biblical way. The Bobgans write,

Problem-centered counseling appeals to the flesh of both the counselor and the counselee....The counselor appears as the expert who has it all together and who is able to fix the one who does not.... The appeal to the counselee's flesh exists because the counselee can present their case usually without being contradicted, condemned, or judged, but with gaining great sympathy and support. The more directly problem-centered one becomes, the more self-centered the counseling is. Problem-centeredness and self-centeredness are linked.

[J]ust as the psychotherapists are looked up to as experts in the world, so too have their problem-centered biblical counterparts been looked up to as experts in the church. The counselor is often regarded more highly than the pastor, and counseling is often regarded more highly than the teaching, preaching, and evangelizing. (pp. 24-25)

Preaching, teaching, and evangelizing are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Counseling, however, is *noticeably absent* from among the gifts. Why is counseling missing, especially since high profile counselors and others in that position are arguably the most influential people, either nationally or at the local church level, in the evangelical community today? The answer is that counseling is not a biblical ministry. Those who function as counselors (biblical or otherwise) are erroneously involved in an activity that is primarily a function of the Spirit of Christ. He is our Counselor. More often than not, counselors supplant the Spirit of Christ as they try to do in the life of a believer what only God can do. They attempt to peer into the heart of the counselee, grasping for motivations, connections, sin inducements, and other insights, in order to remedy troubling conditions. They are grasping at straws because such an activity can only result in man's speculations at least, and, even more important, it displaces the convicting, correcting, and comforting ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as the only true “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

So, if psychological counseling is out, and biblical counseling is rarely—if ever—biblical, what are believers left with? The “old paths”! The old paths, as applied in this article, are simply the way God wants us to minister to one another. One-third of the Bobgans' book is titled “What Can

Be Done: Christ-centered Ministry.” What they supply from the Word of God is so simple and true that it no doubt will seem alien, even incredulous, to multitudes of believers conditioned by psychology's pervasive influence on the church. That, sadly, is not a wild guess. I've experienced such a reaction for years when I've voiced my concerns about the unbiblical nature of psychological counseling.

Let me give you a current situation, which I believe is analogous to what the Bobgans are encouraging in the Body of Christ. I hope that it will help some to better understand. The American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association have spent billions of dollars, over decades of years, searching for the cure for cancer and heart disease respectively. At some point, both organizations recognized that a better strategy would be to promote a program of prevention rather than putting all their time, energy, and funding into curing the illnesses themselves. Today, they are mostly committed to recommending changes in a person's lifestyle that would help to prevent cancer and heart disease, particularly through health-sustaining diet and exercise. It's a secular “old path” plan, and it has produced “good” results for those who have followed their advice. As Benjamin Franklin noted, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Yet many have decided, “We will not walk [or run or bicycle] therein.” The discipline necessary for a lifestyle involving a beneficial diet and reasonable exercise is not high on their agenda, preferring (wishfully) a quick fix or cure of the disease, should it show up in their bodies.

God's “old paths” are primarily *preventive*. The emphasis is on the growth and maturity of the believer. Again, the Bobgans point the reader to the Scriptures: “The just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38). Therefore faith in all that Christ has done (to overcome sin, secure salvation, provide new life and power through the process of sanctification, and give believers the solid hope of eternity with Him) constitutes the primary emphasis of all New Testament ministry” (p. 171). A believer's life in Christ is to be led of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within every believer, enables him to make righteous choices, helps him to be fruitful, to understand and know better the Word and the Word made flesh, to love Jesus more, and thus to do what pleases Him. Such an approach is not a method or technique or program or anything else conjured up by man but rather a miraculous life superintended by

God. It is a life of faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Problem-centered counseling is tragic by comparison. The Bobgans write,

Becoming mature in the faith far surpasses any change in circumstances or immediate solutions to temporal problems, though temporal change does accompany spiritual growth. What we are talking about here has eternal consequences, not just solutions that make people feel better for the time being. (pp. 171-72)

Those who have concluded that what the Bobgans are urging is impractical for dealing with life's problems need to consider this: which troubling issues can you think of that do not involve “the lust of the flesh,” i.e., sin? They need to take that up with the Apostle Paul, who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would....If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16-17, 25). These are God's instructions, His “old paths,” which the church has followed successfully for two millennia. *Nothing could be more practical*. Furthermore, His words are for every believer, every one of whom He has equipped to minister to fellow believers. That is the clarion call of *Person to Person Ministry*:

By God's grace and enabling, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are walking daily with Him and maturing in the faith through the trials of life are already equipped to minister to fellow believers who are suffering from the same kinds of problems generally addressed by trained counselors. These believers are equipped to do this by what Christ has already done in them through the Word of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, the trials of life, the fellowship of the saints, and opportunities to serve.

Paul wrote the following for every one of us who desires to follow the Lord and minister in His truth: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:1-2).

This should be the heart's cry of each of us: *Lord, concerning the “old paths”—Your ways—help Your Body of believers to “walk therein.”* TBC

Quotable

In a world of constant flux, it is assuring to find something that is unchanging, namely, the love of Christ. Our love moves in cycles. It is an emotional roller coaster. Not so with our Lord. His love never tires or varies.

And it is a pure love, utterly free from selfishness, unrighteous compromise, or unworthy motive. It is untainted and without a breath of defilement.

Like His grace, His love is free. For this we can be everlastingly thankful because we are paupers, beggars, and bankrupt sinners. And even if we owned all the wealth in the world, we still could never put even a down payment on a love so priceless.

William MacDonald
The Disciples Manual

Q&A

From the TBC archives:

QUESTION: Where do you get the courage to expose what you believe are false teachings of some of the best-known and most popular Christian leaders? Have you gone to each of them privately first, as the Scripture says we should? Can't correction be accomplished simply by referring to the false teachings without bringing in personalities? Is it really productive to identify by name those who teach these things? Wouldn't that instead be counterproductive by offending them and their admirers? And isn't it very costly financially by causing you to lose the support of many people?

RESPONSE: This is the most frequently asked of any question and I am confronted with it everywhere. First of all, it is not a matter of courage but of obedience to our Lord and to His Word. We have no choice but to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3) and as we preach the Word to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tm 4:2; 3:16). There is no alternative. We dare not ignore these commands—for the glory of our Lord and for the sake of those who have been deceived and whom we must do all we can to rescue.

We believe that correction must be as public and widespread as was the erroneous teaching. This is necessary both for the sake of the teacher and for his or her followers. Error which has been taught publicly must be corrected publicly. Private discussion about it does not benefit the multitudes who have been thereby deceived. We have found

private discussion to be largely unproductive. Those whom we have confronted privately seem to agree with us at that time, then continue to teach the same error.

Yes, we believe that in most cases it is necessary and productive to identify false teachers by name. How else can reproof be accomplished? To identify false teaching in a general way is of little benefit. We must specifically identify not only the error taught but those who teach it because they are often so highly regarded that whatever they say is unquestioningly accepted without even noticing what is wrong with it—and thereby many are led astray.

The biblical requirement to go to someone alone is only when one has been *personally* "trespassed" against: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone" (Mt 18:15). Any Christian leaders we identify by name have not offended us individually but have publicly taught what we sincerely believe to be false doctrine harmful to hearers and readers by the thousands (in some cases by the millions).

Does it keep us off radio and TV shows and take away from donations we might otherwise receive by standing for the truth and identifying those more popular than we are who teach error? Yes, but that is something we leave with the Lord. God forbid that we should ever allow such concerns to influence in any way our fidelity to our Lord and to His Word! That would be as foolish as exchanging the praise of God for the praise of men and an eternal heavenly reward for a temporal earthly one.

QUESTION: I know God's Word is infallible and inerrant, but I can't reconcile Jeremiah's statement that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years either with history or the Bible. When did this 70-year period begin and end? Nor can I get it straight concerning Darius, Cyrus, the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra's time and the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah.

RESPONSE: The entire subject of the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem seems to contain several apparently hopeless contradictions. I have learned that God allows seeming contradictions to force us to dig deeper and in the end to have our faith strengthened thereby.

First of all we encounter the apparent contradiction about the duration of Daniel's time in Babylon. Daniel 1:21 says, "Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus..." But 10:1 says, "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed

unto Daniel..." If Daniel continued only unto the first year of Cyrus, how could he still be alive and receiving revelations in Cyrus's third year?

Obviously 1:21 can't mean that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus. The statement is made because it was in his first year that Cyrus allowed the Jews to return. Thus we are told that Daniel lived to see the return of the captives under Cyrus. That the first wave of captives returned in the first year of Cyrus is stated clearly in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-4, 5:13 and 6:3.

This brings us to what appears to be a hopeless contradiction due to the fact that Cyrus II, known as Cyrus the Great, ruled from about 550-529 B.C. The first year of his reign, in 550 B.C., would be much too early for a return of the captives to Jerusalem if that indeed marked the end of the 70-year desolation thereof. Even if we count from the first carrying away of captives into Babylon in 605 B.C., that gives only 55 years instead of the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 25:3-11; Dn 9:2). We could legitimately extend the period to the first year of his reign in Babylon, which he captured in 539 B.C. This is undoubtedly when the decree was given and what is meant by the first year of his reign (he had no jurisdiction over the Jewish captives until then) but that would still leave us 4 years short of the necessary 70-year desolation.

However, it seems clear that the first wave of returnees to Jerusalem by Cyrus's decree, resulting in the commencement of temple reconstruction, did not end the 70-year desolation. Eight years after the death of Cyrus, Daniel is still praying for the restoration of Jerusalem (Dn 9:1-19) in the first year of Darius. Cyrus died in 529 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Cambyses, who in turn was succeeded by Darius in 521 B.C. (after an eight-month interlude of a usurper in 522 B.C.). So at least 18 years after the first wave of captives returned to Jerusalem and began to rebuild the temple, Daniel is still fervently praying for an end to the desolation of Jerusalem (Dn 9).

Obviously, then, the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem is not considered by Scripture to have ended with the decree of Cyrus allowing the captives to return. The unfounded belief that the desolation ended at that time creates this confusion. While we are told at least four times that this decree was given in the first year of Cyrus (the first year of his reign in Babylon), nowhere is it stated that this decree marked the end of the prophesied desolation of Jerusalem.

That the desolation did not end at that time becomes clear from a careful reading of the book of Ezra. The foundation of the temple had no sooner been laid than opposition arose. The adversaries “weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building...frustrate[d] their purpose, all the days of Cyrus...until the reign of Darius...” (Ezr 4:1-5). Although Cyrus no doubt had good intentions, apparently after giving the decree he was too preoccupied to make certain that it was being effected in Jerusalem. The captives had been allowed to return, and the fact that they were frustrated in building the temple was overlooked if ever reported to him. Verse 6 tells of the opposition during the reign of Ahasuerus (known as Cambyses in secular history). Verses 7-23 refer in more detail to the decree by Artaxerxes, which caused the work of the temple to cease by force and power. This Artaxerxes was also known as Smerdis, a usurper, who seized the throne in 522 B.C. and was murdered eight months later and was succeeded by Darius. The suspension of temple reconstruction held unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia (Ezr 4:23-24). Now we see the answer to Daniel’s prayer with the restoration of temple construction in 521 B.C.! The temple was then finished in the sixth year of the reign of Darius (Ezr 6:15), in 516 B.C.

Thus the 70-year desolations are actually counted from the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. until its completion in 516 B.C., exactly 70 years. All of the apparent contradictions disappear and the biblical account perfectly fits a very complex scenario, further reason for absolute confidence in whatever else the Bible has to say.

QUESTION: The Bible does seem to state a number of times that the Jews (the people of Israel) are God’s chosen people. They mean something special to Him. I don’t understand, however, why there even had to be a chosen people. Can you explain this?

RESPONSE: To bring the Messiah into the world is one reason for a chosen people. The Messiah had to come through a special line of descent; He couldn’t be a member of all races. One particular group of people had to be chosen, and God had to keep them isolated and identifiable in order to fulfill prophecies concerning Messiah’s coming first of all to them and their rejection of Him. Numerous prophecies were given so that there would be no doubt as to the identity of the Messiah and His mission.

His genealogy was an important factor in His identity.

Another reason for a chosen people is that God needed a special people through whom He could reveal Himself and also to show, in them, the relationship He wanted with all nations. Yes, He wanted to bless all nations, but in order to do so He must start with a particular people.

The Jews were also chosen to receive and preserve God’s laws. They were chosen to be a holy people. They were chosen to be an example of both God’s discipline and His grace. By their history of continued rebellion and God’s patience with them, the Jews have provided assurance that God does not go back on His promises and is infinite in grace and mercy.

Another major reason God chose a special people was to prove His existence to the world by foretelling through His prophets centuries and even thousands of years beforehand exactly what was going to happen to them. We have gone into this in detail biblically and historically in several books, among them *A Woman Rides the Beast* and *Judgment Day!*

To summarize briefly, God promised the people of Israel the land of Canaan; when He brought them into the land He warned them that if they disobeyed Him they would be cast out and scattered everywhere. They would be hated, persecuted, and killed as no other people (anti-Semitism is a phenomenon unparalleled in history), but God would not let them be totally destroyed. After hailing the Messiah as He rode into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass, bringing salvation, Israel would reject Him; He would be crucified, and Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed once again and the Jews scattered to every nation in the final diaspora. Nevertheless, they would be amazingly preserved as an identifiable, ethnic group of people and brought back into their land in the last days. At that time, as God foretold 2,500 years ago, He would make Jerusalem a cup of trembling and a burdensome stone around the necks of the nations of the world. Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

We have seen in our generation, exactly as prophesied, Israel’s restoration as a nation to her own land (actually a small part of it thus far), the determination of the world not to let Israel have sovereignty over Jerusalem, the repeated attacks against her by her Muslim neighbors, and Israel’s triumph each time through God’s preservation. Today Jerusalem (and especially

the Temple Mount) is a burdensome stone around the necks of all the nations of the world, as the news continually reports. The Bible tells how it will all end, but the world is unwilling to believe and to submit to God’s plan.

None of these proofs would have been possible without there having been a chosen people. There is much more in Scripture, but space limitations govern.

The Messiah & The Cross

Dave Hunt

The coming of the Messiah has been the great hope of the Jewish people from the very beginning. *Messiah* means “anointed.” The Greek equivalent is *Christos*. In the Old Testament, the priests (Lv 4:3, 8:12; Ps 105:15) and kings (1 Sm 15:1, 24:7-11; 1 Kgs 1:34; Dn 9:24-26) are referred to as the “anointed.” In 1 Kings 19:16, we have the anointing to the office of prophet. The Messiah of Israel was to embody all three offices: prophet, priest, and king—and thus would uniquely be “the anointed one.” Though “Christ” is simply the Greek form of “Messiah,” Jews seem to take a special offense at that word, perhaps because they have endured so much hatred and persecution from many who call themselves “Christians.”

Neither Jesus nor His disciples ever used the term, which was unheard of in their day. It may surprise the Jews to learn that the followers of Jesus were “called ‘Christians’ first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). It was a derogatory term that marked them out for scorn and persecution.

More Christians than Jews have been slain by Catholics. That statement would surprise Jews. Why were they killed, and why by Catholics? It was because true Christians, out of love for the Messiah, have always refused to give allegiance to popes and have rejected the false doctrines of that false church. For that refusal they were slain by the thousands for hundreds of years, even before the Reformation. Both Jews and Christians were victims of the Inquisitions, a horror of which the Roman Catholic Church has never repented.

Prior to his recent death, Ted Kennedy, a devout Roman Catholic, wrote a letter to the present pope requesting prayer and addressing him as “Most Holy Father.” True Christians find that title an abomination.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name....” He also said, “Call no man on earth your father [excepting, of course, one’s natural father]: for one is your father, which is in heaven.” The popes have usurped that position, and Roman Catholics, in ignorance of Christ’s command, willingly give it to them and obsequiously bow in their presence. History records that many of the popes were among the most evil scoundrels the world has ever seen, yet they are all honored as successors of Peter. Tragically, Mother Teresa, following the

example of the popes, looked to the Church and especially to Mary instead of to Christ for answers to prayer and for salvation. The rosary never left her hand, though she was haunted to her dying day by the fear that she would not get to heaven.

Jesus is almost always portrayed as a babe in Mary’s arms and even appears as a babe in acclaimed apparitions, which are then honored in shrines in many countries. There are nearly a thousand such shrines in France alone. One would have to search long and hard throughout the world to discover more than a handful of Catholic shrines honoring Jesus.

The cross-waving soldiers of the First Crusade, motivated by Pope Urban II’s promise of instant entrance into heaven without suffering purgatory for those who died, slaughtered Jews all along their path to Jerusalem. In 1096, not one of the 1,600 Jews living in Worms, Germany, survived when the Crusaders passed through that city. About half were hunted down in their homes and on the streets. Those who fled

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

— John 19:19

to the bishop’s palace were given temporary shelter, provided they converted by baptism. Locked in a large conference room to contemplate their decision, all 800 killed themselves rather than convert. It was Masada repeated over and over all along the Crusaders’ path. In the process of “liberating” Jerusalem, the Jews were chased into the synagogue, which was set ablaze, incinerating all those within its walls.

Sadly, there are Christians who deny that the Messiah came to be the Savior of all. They seem to contradict what John the Baptist declared: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of *the world*” (John 1:29). This is also a contradiction of the message given by the angels to the shepherds in announcing the birth of the Messiah: “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Lk 2:10). These good tidings could hardly be to all people if they are, as some would tell us, *effective* only for the elect (specially chosen for heaven), leaving the “unchosen” to go to hell.

Jesus preached His good news from the Old Testament, often using events in the history of Israel as illustrations. He

introduced the best-loved verse in the New Testament, John 3:16—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”—with an illustration from Numbers 21:8-9. There had been an insurrection among the children of Israel against Moses and Aaron. In judgment, God sent “fiery serpents” among them. The remedy was for Moses to quickly form a likeness of the poisonous serpents and put it on a pole where all could see it. *Everyone* who had been bitten was marked for death, while *everyone* who looked upon the brazen serpent on the pole was healed.

The serpent, of course, is a picture both of sin and Satan. Every human being has been bitten by both: “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23); and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). This illustration at first seems difficult to understand. Was Jesus, lifted up on the Cross, both a picture of sin and Satan? “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21). We know that Jesus was entirely sinless. He knew no sin. He did no sin. In Him there was no sin. Then what does it mean: “made to be sin for us”? It could only mean that He was punished as though He were sin itself. How else could John the Baptist have said that this Lamb would “[bear] away the sin of the world”? It was through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that Satan, the serpent, would be destroyed. We read of his final demise in Revelation 12:7-11: “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.... And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

The serpent on the pole was certainly not indicating that Satan would be the co-redeemer of the world, any more than the serpent on the pole in the wilderness indicated that the serpents that bit them had any part in their cure. Satan was not on the Cross, but through the Messiah’s death, he would be destroyed.

Of the Messiah it was prophesied: “He shall not cry...nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth” (Is 42:2-3). Jesus quotes this

passage, then adds: “and in his name shall the Gentiles trust” (Mt 12:21). Jesus was not forbidding street preaching. I myself have preached on Wall Street in New York, where, of all places, it would seem that I was casting my pearls before swine in the sense that the passers-by had their minds on everything but the gospel. Nevertheless, who knows what seed from the Word of God may have somehow taken root?

Jesus did not come to start a crusade. The gospel is not to be forced upon anyone. Unfortunately, special efforts to preach the gospel are often called “crusades,” even today. No poorer word could be chosen for spreading the good news of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah to Jews, who Scripture specifically declares are to be given priority in receiving it. Special efforts to preach the gospel, rather than using this offensive word, “crusades,” could be called “campaigns,” or “presentations,” or something else to make it clear that we are not in any way taking an example from the Catholic Crusaders sent out by the popes. We want to avoid any possible misunderstanding about some relationship that could hinder spreading the good news to the world.

Paul said, “God forbid that I should glory, [except] in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*” (Gal 6:14). Paul’s emphasis is clearly upon the One who was crucified, not on the *means* of His death. How many people emphasize the Cross rather than the One who died upon it? Nor does the Roman Catholic Church remedy this omission with crucifixes that have Jesus perpetually hanging on the Cross. The Cross itself, rather than *what transpired upon it* 20 centuries ago, has become the focus of attention. The power of the Cross lies not in its display but in its preaching; and that preaching has nothing to do with the Cross itself but with *our Lord’s death upon it*, as declared in the gospel (see 1 Cor 15:1-4).

It comes as a shock to many that the gospel includes no mention of a cross. Why? Because a cross was not essential to our salvation. This was the *manner* of the Messiah’s death, foretold in Psalm 22—not because the Cross itself had anything to do with our redemption. What was essential was the shedding of Christ’s blood in His death, as foreshadowed in the Old Testament sacrifices (Lv 17:11; Heb 9:22).

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave bread and wine to His disciples, explained that this was His body and blood, told them to partake of these elements, and commanded them, “This do in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19-20). Evangelicals have varying ways of

attempting to obey this command. Some do it weekly, others monthly, others quarterly, some annually, and some never. Generally, this is done at the end of a sermon and the usual Sunday morning service, with little time for meditation and with no hymns or prayers specifically in remembrance of Jesus. Such remembrances are a form, as though going through these motions has some efficacy in itself. It is up to everyone’s conscience to decide *how* this is to be done, but it is very rare to find a fellowship of believers who make the remembrance more than form.

Our topic is “The *Messiah* and the Cross,” not “The *Cross* and the Messiah.” Nor was it the scourging, mocking, and physical abuse He suffered at the hands of men; the wicked Roman soldiers who scourged Jesus could hardly have been God’s instruments for punishing Him for the sins of the world, as the Catholic film *The Passion of the Christ* portrays. Isaiah 53:10 says, “It pleased the *LORD* to bruise him, *he* hath put him to grief: when *thou*

FOR CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE, BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL: NOT WITH WISDOM OF WORDS, LEST THE CROSS OF CHRIST SHOULD BE MADE OF NONE EFFECT.

—1 CORINTHIANS 1:17

shalt make his soul an offering for sin....”

Obviously, *The Passion of the Christ* could not possibly portray the fact that it was not the physical sufferings that saved us. What man did to the Messiah could not save but only add to our condemnation. Ever since Eve believed the serpent’s lie that physically eating the forbidden fruit would turn her into a god, her descendants have been materialists. Materialism has carried over into everything man touches. It has turned love into physical lust. Human beings imagine that happiness and possessions are what make life worth living. The lives of many men and women are consumed with acquiring physical things and the money that purchases them. Jesus said a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of things that he possesses. Jesus did not say that money is the root of all evil. In fact, it is necessary. He condemned “the *love* of money.”

Materialism has even perverted the gospel and religious observances. This is particularly true of Roman Catholicism, a large part of which involves physical acts or objects: baptism, relics, statues, robes, etc.

The bread and wine of communion, which are only *symbolic* of the body and blood of Jesus, through the magic of transubstantiation are allegedly turned into the *physical* body and blood of Jesus.

For Catholics, baptism is another physical act that “confers” salvation, yet salvation is a matter of the heart: “If thou shalt confess...the Lord Jesus, and...believe in thine heart...thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9). Catholics “bring converts to heaven” through water baptism, though, like many Protestants, they think baptism only involves sprinkling the water on someone’s head. Thus it can be administered to babies. Mother Teresa’s “Sisters of Mercy” have been known to put a damp cloth on the foreheads of dying patients and whisper a prayer that allegedly forgives their sins and gives them free passage through death into heaven.

This “way to heaven” was forced upon many unwilling people under threat of death during the days of the Inquisitions. Catholicism was spread across Latin America with the sword. In a heated discussion, Cortez rebuked Aztec chief Montezuma for offering human sacrifices. With amazing insight, Montezuma responded, “At least we don’t eat the flesh and drink the blood of our god.” The Spaniards slaughtered thousands of Aztecs in their attempt to force them to submit to baptism into the Roman Catholic Church.

One need go no further south than to Mexico to see the effects of Roman Catholicism in its continuing dominance throughout Latin America. Evangelicals attempting to bring the gospel to Latin America still encounter stiff opposition from the priests in every town and city.

Common sense recognizes that forcing one to “believe” something is a futile effort. There is an old saying, “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.” Yet in Islam, force is the main means of “conversion.” Muhammad even boasted that to become a Muslim, one does not need to believe.

The Messiah simply said to Jews and Gentiles, “Follow Me,” an invitation that may be accepted or rejected. The Bible ends with this gracious offer, “Whosoever will may come.” The Messiah, who came to the world through Israel, forces nothing upon anyone. One is free to choose hell or heaven. Jesus paid the penalty for all of mankind’s sin, but this payment is effective only for those who believe and receive His sacrifice on their behalf. Tragically, most Jews still remain resistant to the salvation that God offers through the promised Messiah. **TBC**

Quotable

God delights to increase the faith of His children. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God's hand as a means. I say, and say it deliberately: trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith.

George Müller

Q&A

QUESTION [composite of several]: You offer Mark Dinsmore's confusing articles (*TBC Extra*, 4/09; 7/09) with no clarification of his connection to your ministry....I was disturbed and confused as to what your purpose is for advancing his particular ideas on "Christian patriotism." What if our forefathers had taken this pacifist attitude when we arrived in the New World? If the Founders had not rebelled against England, then the U.S. would never have been established!

RESPONSE: We try not to use up precious space with biographical details, but since a number of readers have inquired:

For nearly six years Mark has served as Creative Director and Print Production Manager and in other capacities (including research and editorial) at *The Berean Call*. Mark has a B.S. from San Diego Christian College (formerly Christian Heritage College) in El Cajon, California, and since 1988 has served several Christian ministries and publishers in writing, design, and pioneering of resources for the Creation Science and Homeschool movements. Mark has a lifelong passion for apologetics research and writing, citing a favorite Scripture: "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works" (Ps 26:7). Mark and his wife are both active in their local church body and enjoy growing in knowledge and grace and teaching God's Word together. They have three teenage sons.

Mark's articles have struck an emotional chord with many readers, some responding very negatively, but his position was clearly and biblically articulated. Long-time readers and supporters of *The Berean Call* should not be surprised at the critical distinction between historical, biblical Christianity and its Americanized form. Although many do not recognize it, "popular" Christianity is often rooted in nationalism and influenced by "kingdom-now" and "dominion" theology. The reaction of some readers reveals the need for increased

discernment in this area.

From time to time, *TBC* has directly addressed matters and movements related to Christian activism and "civil disobedience" (11/89; 1/97; 9/99; 11/99; 4/00; 7/06), particularly when it has proved to be a diversion from the propagation of the gospel. Consequently, our "purpose" for printing Mark's Extras is not to promote *his* ideas but to sound a warning to those being swept up in an emotional and fearful *reaction* to the actions of our leaders and the headlines of these perilous times rather than a reasoned and biblical *response* to increasing persecution—of which Scripture repeatedly warns *will* come (Jas 1:1-2; 1 Pt 1:7; 4:12-16).

A few readers have jumped to conclusions not drawn or even suggested in the two Extras. Although we fully acknowledge, as did the deist Benjamin Franklin, that "God governs in the affairs of men," it does not mean that all actions of men, whether godly believers or pantheistic pagans, are sanctioned by God. Clearly, even what evil men have designed, God can use for good (Gn 50:20; Rom 8:28), but this does not make God the author of evil. Similarly, armed rebellion by believers against a tyrannical ruler is clearly not sanctioned in Scripture nor supported by any biblical principle—yet such resistance has been "used" by God "for good."

"What if" our forefathers had never rebelled against England? Is God's hand shortened? Is not the Sovereign Creator capable of raising up rocks themselves to proclaim His gospel, if necessary (Lk 19:40)? Surely, if there had never been an "American Revolution," He would still have been able to raise up individuals or nations to fulfill His commission. As Mark clarified, the cry, "Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God," is no more a biblical statement than the imagined proverb, "God helps those who help themselves." Both of these popular aphorisms are the wisdom of man and are demonstrably contrary to Scripture.

Although it is true that many of the original Pilgrims left England in search of religious freedom, these Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were as far removed from the Declaration of Independence as we are today—*by the space of 200 years!* In other words, the values, convictions, and causes of those on the Mayflower were in many ways quite different—even at odds with—the values, convictions, and causes of those initiating and fighting in the War for Independence.

Today, more than 500 years after Columbus "sailed the ocean blue," we

understandably confuse the pursuit of "religious liberty" with patriotism because we are so far removed. In reality, the Puritans were largely pacifists—not "red-blooded patriots." Furthermore, at the time of the Revolution, only a small minority of colonists were in favor of war with England. Is war over *taxes* a biblical cause? Christ said, "Render...unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt 22:21).

Whether the cause be taxes, gun control, or freedom of speech or religion, there is simply no biblical passage nor any precedent for the *church* that Christ established to support such a violent uprising. There are many cases in which God used the sinful actions of men "for good," including His own children who acted in rebellion against His authority: Moses (although he struck the rock a second time instead of speaking to it, God still brought forth water) and Jonah (whose rebellion served to give us the *only* sign that Christ used in reference to those seeking such—Mt 16:4), for example. But again, God's sovereignty and foreknowledge do not justify violent acts of rebellion, even for dearly held *spiritual* convictions.

The point of these two Extras was not to advocate pacifism nor disarmament but to specifically address the question, "should Christians jointly resist a tyrannical government with force—and if so, on what biblical grounds?" Compelling biblical arguments can be made for protection of the innocent, including the use of arms as a deterrent or defensive response. The primary point, however—that followers of Christ, as a unified body of believers, clearly have *no* biblical command or precedent for armed conflict or aggression against *their own government*—is unwaveringly clear.

As Dave Hunt noted in his article "Christian Activism" (11/89): "Increasing numbers of Christians are engaging in social and political activism for the astonishing purpose of attempting to coerce an ungodly society into adopting Christian standards of conduct....There are numerous cases of civil disobedience in Scripture, but it was never engaged in for the purpose of forcing an ungodly society to obey biblical principles. Christ 'suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.' He sternly and repeatedly rebuked Israel's false religious leaders, yet He *never* spoke out—*not even once*—against the injustices of Roman civil authority! Nor did He advocate, organize, or engage in any public protests to pressure Rome into changing its corrupt system, or the society

of His day its evil ways. He submitted to unjust authorities, as Romans 13 tells us we should do today [see also 1 Pt 2:21-25]...

“Yes, Paul told the centurion, who was about to have him unlawfully scourged, that he was a Roman citizen; and he told the local officials at Philippi to come and apologize for beating him and Silas without trial. That was not, however, political/social activism. He was not attempting... to change society. He was simply standing up for his personal rights under the law (as we also should do), and that includes voting. Paul was determined to obey God rather than men and never held back from preaching the gospel, though it meant his life. If Christian activism [were] God’s will, Paul would have been the first to pursue it fearlessly at whatever cost.”

Dave further addressed this matter in his article “Political/Social Activism?” (1/97):

“In attempting to justify [‘Christian uprising’] from Scripture, one of [the church’s] major errors is in confusing Israel and the church. Gideon, Jeremiah, David, et al., were not [born again believers]. Nor were their actions in smashing idols, in ridding Israel of homosexuals, and stopping the practice of offering children to Molech—or the setting up of righteous judges by Moses—either political or social ‘activism.’ These were the deeds of Israel’s leaders, ruling God’s “chosen people,” of whom He said, ‘And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy,’ (Lv 20:26). Israel is unique (Ps 147:20)...The promises of the Messiah’s rule...pertain to a redeemed Israel back in her land....Far from telling the church to take over the world, Christ said that His kingdom was not of this world, that His servants did not fight. He promised us, ‘If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me...ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world....If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying [which the world did not], they will keep yours also [obviously we won’t be influential in the world]’ (Jn 15:18-21).

“Paul warned the Ephesian elders with tears night and day for three years (Acts 20:28-31)! Did he warn about the abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and other evils rampant in society at that time and call for political/social action to oppose it? No. He warned about the coming apostasy and told them to ‘feed the flock of God.’

“More than 40 years of civil protest and persistent Christian activism (Focus on the Family, Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, etc.) have not stopped abortion. Instead of the hoped-for moral awakening,

morals have declined. Crime, drug addiction, pornography, divorce, etc., increase. Scarcely 10 percent of Americans believe in all of the Ten Commandments, a third of all married Americans have had an affair, and a fifth of the children have lost their virginity by age 13. Would all of the effort that has gone into political and social action have done more good if instead it had been expended upon reaching the lost with the gospel as Christ commanded us?

[These statistics are not improving, but worsening—if believers cannot even reform the church by “earnestly contending for the faith” then how can it possibly “restore America”??]

“My sympathy is with [all who labor for social justice]....The question remains, however, What are we to do? We must follow Scripture....The Great Commission is not to go into all the world to reform its morals...but to ‘preach the gospel’ and convert sinners. In the end, the conversion of sinners will have a far greater impact on society than all of the lobbying, protest marches, and passionate appeals to morality that consume the time and energy of concerned Christians.”

Truly, Christians in America are blessed to be “free” (for the time being) to exercise certain “rights” to speak, write, assemble, vote, and run for political office, according to one’s conscience and God’s Word. The Bible is explicit that true worldwide peace will come only when the feet of the Prince of Peace touch down on the Mount of Olives (Zec 14:4). Since war begins in the human heart, until humanity can realize the vain hope of changing the same through forcible means, there will be no final peace.

QUESTION: Why do you Protestants fail to see that without the tradition and pronouncements of an authoritative Church, you wouldn’t know what was Scripture? The New Testament was certainly not available for many years. Without the oral teachings of the Apostles, how could people know what was truth?

RESPONSE: Catholicism would dearly love to claim the mantle of being *the* “authoritative” church, but all she has been able to produce through threat of force is a surface conformity riddled by internal dissension and corruption. In contrast, believers are truly given an unfailing authority.

Second Timothy 3:16 is rightly cited as evidence for *sola scriptura* [by Scripture alone]. Verse 15 says: “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures....” The “scriptures” here must refer to the Old

Testament because Timothy did not have the New Testament in its entirety. Nevertheless, he had at least the two epistles written to him. Furthermore, this verse tells us that “from a child” he had known the Holy Scriptures, undoubtedly taught to him by a godly mother and grandmother. The Apostle Paul is declaring that the Scriptures available were sufficient to lead one to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts is filled with examples of the apostles expounding the Scriptures, but we will consider just a few.

In Acts 8, Philip was led of the Lord to where a certain Ethiopian eunuch was passing by. As Philip approached, he heard him reading from the book of Isaiah. Apparently, the Scriptures weren’t so scarce that a courtier in Ethiopia couldn’t obtain a copy. Philip and the man had an exchange, and the Ethiopian invited him to ride along in the chariot. Then “Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). The book of Isaiah, used at the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, was sufficient to lead this man to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament Scriptures were also sufficient for the Lord Jesus Christ when He confronted the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-27). Imagine what a Bible study that must have been! Consider the case of Apollos (who was “mighty in the scriptures”) in Acts 18. He was preaching the “things of the Lord,” but he knew only the baptism of John (v. 25). He did not know that the Messiah had come, lived, bled and died on the Cross, been buried, and then raised again, in power. Two disciples, Aquila and Priscilla, took him aside and “...expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (v. 26). At that point, he did not begin teaching a tradition solely on the basis of something orally communicated to him; rather, he continued to preach and exhort, “showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:28).

The First and Final Lie: Self Deification

T.A. McMahon

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

—Isaiah 14:12-14

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die....

—Genesis 3:4

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

—2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe [the] lie.

—2 Thessalonians 2:10-11

Incredibly, the first sin of those whom God created took place in a perfectly holy environment: heaven. That would seem to be incomprehensible, given what Scripture tells us about heaven, the dwelling place of God. Just as astonishing, Adam and Eve, who were also in a perfect environment and had yet to know sin, were seduced by the same sin as Lucifer (“light bearer”), later called Satan (“adversary”) and “that old serpent” (Revelation 12:9; 20:2).

Scripture doesn’t tell us specifically what was in the hearts and minds of Lucifer and Adam that prompted them to sin; regarding Eve, however, we get a little more insight. She “saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6). One thing, however, becomes obvious concerning all three of these created beings: they chose *self* over God. That is the bottom line of all sin.

Again, it all began in Heaven with Lucifer. His “I will’s” are all about self—

from self-improvement to self-esteem to self-exaltation to self-deification. That progression inevitably leads to two other selfisms: self-delusion and self-destruction. Satan, being completely self-deceived, and perhaps looking for more support to prove his “I will be like the most High” thesis, brought his lie to earth, where he seduced Eve with the offer that she also could be “as gods.”

Godhood as a goal for humanity is the Adversary’s religion, and it will culminate with a man who is possessed by Satan himself. As we see in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, the Antichrist “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” This may be the only way the Devil can achieve his ultimate objective of having the whole world worship him. The very thought that he could entice the Lord, his Creator, to “fall down and worship” him (Matthew 4:9) demonstrates not only his egotistic ambition but also just how self-absorbed and self-deceived he is. This is a major trait of humanity as well.

Scripture indicates that following Adam and Eve’s sin, their first response to God was to defend themselves. After their futile attempt to hide from God, each one shifted the blame: Adam accused Eve, and Eve blamed the Serpent for their disobedience. As a consequence, a self-serving bias (the tragic result of their sin) had impregnated the hearts of humanity. As we can see from its beginning to our present day, this bias has moved through the entire human race like an unstoppable plague.

Self rules in the heart of every person, even at times among new creatures in Christ. Satan has not missed any opportunity to entice the world into seeking his delusionary prize of godhood. The idea that man could become a god, or part of God, or that he *is* a god but doesn’t yet realize his divinity, may seem farfetched to some people, but that’s because they are simply unaware of how prevalent this belief is. Furthermore, from a biblical perspective, the criterion for being a god is rather simple. Everyone who has not submitted to Jesus Christ and has not been reconciled to God through faith in Christ’s finished sacrifice as payment for his sins qualifies as a god—that is, an autonomous, or self-governing, being who has *elevated self over his Creator*. As Dave Hunt has noted, “The basic cause of the many problems in the world today is not that man fails to recognize his godhood but rather that there are about seven billion gods on this planet, each one doing his or her own thing.”

Satan has long sold godhood, in some form, as religion, or as some facet of a particular religion. Nearly one billion Hindus believe they are gods—and so is everyone else—because, in their view, *everything* is God. Their godhood is achieved, or realized, through yoga and self-realization in the attempt to reach the ultimate spiritual state: *union* with Brahman (God). Five-hundred million Buddhists reject a transcendent Creator God but seek the equivalent of godhood (known as Buddhahood), which is attained as enlightenment, or perfect wisdom, by following the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Tibetan Buddhism is promoted throughout the Western world by the Dalai Lama, who has inducted hundreds of thousands (including thousands in U.S. cities) into the Kalachakra Tantra Initiation. Kalachakra is both a Tantric deity and a meditation practice. The former is a manifestation of Buddha, who is called upon to lead the initiate into becoming a *bodhisattva*, or enlightened god, a status claimed by the Dalai Lama himself.

Eastern Mysticism, with its goal of godhood, has come to the West like a tsunami, depositing its blasphemous debris throughout Christendom. Yoga (yoking oneself with Brahman), which decades ago became a staple offering at YMCAs (Young Men’s Christian Association), is now offered and practiced in numerous Christian churches, including many that profess to be evangelical. Hindu gurus, such as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Swami Muktananda, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, helped spawn the New Age Movement, a homogenized hodgepodge of Eastern mystical beliefs and practices refashioned in order to make them readily acceptable to the culture of the West. Muktananda speaks for all gurus and New Age advocates alike: “Honor your self, worship your self, meditate on your self, God dwells within you as you.”

The late Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, guru to the Beatles, revised his Spiritual (read “Hinduism”) Regeneration Movement into the more acceptable, incredibly profitable, and allegedly scientific technique of Transcendental Meditation. TMers have all but taken over the town of Fairfield, Iowa, site of the Maharishi University. The school claims to have transformed the community through the Maharishi Effect, a TM-Sidhis program begun in the early 1980s, claiming to reduce crime by the positive effect of collective meditation. Statistics for Fairfield/Jefferson County during the decade of the nineties, however, belie the claim, showing a constant increase

in crime (http://www.behind-the-tm-facade.org/maharishi_effect-mdefect-fairfield.htm).

The lie of godhood is always followed by the deceit of the so-called god-men. Rajneesh was deported back to India after his chief disciples were arrested in Oregon on attempted murder charges. Maharishi took in hundreds of thousands of dollars selling the fraudulent ability to levitate through TM. Muktananda, the guru to many Hollywood celebrities in the 1980s, though preaching celibacy, was accused by top leaders in his cult of a history of seducing young women. Ironically, his successor is a woman, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda. Gurumayi, who teaches the mantra, "Om Namah Shivaya" ("I honor the divinity that resides within me") is guru to Elizabeth Gilbert, author of the best-selling, *Eat, Pray, Love*. The Oprah Winfrey-endorsed book documents Gilbert's time at Gurumayi's ashram in India and is now being made into a theatrical film produced by Brad Pitt and starring Julia Roberts.

Deifying self is hardly exclusive to Eastern religions. Where the leaven of mysticism is found, it inevitably spreads to some form of union with God, meaning *becoming* God. Consider Mormonism, Islam, and Roman Catholicism, for example. All three are quite legalistic while at the same time very experiential. Mormon males are taught that they can become gods through closely following LDS teachings: "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." Most Mormons claim that the veracity of the doctrine of godhood (and for women, a goddesshood of eternal pregnancies) is affirmed through prayer, followed by a "burning in the bosom" sensation from "God." In contrast to its Sharia legal system, Islam's mysticism is found in Sufism, where devotees whirl themselves into altered states of consciousness in order to reach union with Allah.

The ancient Roman Catholic mystics known as the Desert Fathers (who have become spiritual icons for the "evangelical" Emerging Church Movement) developed beliefs and practices little different from the yogis, gurus, and priests of Hinduism and Buddhism. That's one reason why modern Catholic mystics such as Trappist monk Thomas Merton and priests Henri Nouwen and Thomas Keating have such large followings among the Church's priests and nuns (as well as among many evangelicals). One need not go to their writings to find the Church of Rome's position regarding godhood. It's spelled out quite clearly in paragraph 460 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

For the Son of God became man so that we might become God. The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.

Godhood as a doctrine plays a large part in the methodology of the Word/Faith, Positive Confession teachings. Kenneth Copeland's version of "the lie" was similar to what most of his fellow Prosperity teachers were promoting:

And you impart humanity into a child that's born of you....Because you are a human, you have imparted the nature of humanity into that child.

God is God. He is a Spirit....And He imparted in you when you were born again. Peter said it just as plain, he said, "We are partakers of the Divine Nature." That Nature is alive—eternal in absolute perfection, and that was imparted into you by God just the same as you imparted into your child the nature of humanity.

That child wasn't born a whale. It was born a human....Well, now, you don't *have* a human, do you? No, you *are* one. You don't *have* a God in you. You *are* one.

Another leader of the Word/Faith Movement declares the practical necessity of godhood: "Until we comprehend that we are little gods and we begin to act like little gods, we cannot manifest the Kingdom of God." The modern roots of this heresy can be traced back to the religious science cults such as Christian Science and Unity School of Christianity, which gleaned many of their basic beliefs from Hinduism (see *The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in the Last Days* by Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon for details, promoters, and many other connections related to this article).

Fulfilled biblical prophecy is irrefutable proof that God's Word is exactly that, and we can easily recognize what He said would come to pass when it does. The Lord will have raptured us out of this world before the Antichrist declares himself to be God, so we won't be around for that event. However, there is a verse related to self-deification that has so much evidence, that no reasonable person can deny its present-day fulfillment. In 2 Timothy 3:1-2 the Apostle Paul writes, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...." Although humans have been enamored with themselves since the Garden of Eden, there is no generation in history that has been so preoccupied with self, even to the point of making self the key to solving all of mankind's problems. Here is a litany

of popular selfist concepts and activities: self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-acceptance, self-forgiveness, self-assertion, self-improvement, positive self-regard, positive self-talk, positive affirmation, positive mental attitude, positive thinking, possibility thinking, human potential, etc., etc. The prerequisite for all of these is *self-love*, the cornerstone of humanistic psychology and, consequently, because of the overwhelming influence of so-called Christian psychology, a false but popular doctrine among evangelicals.

The connection between psychology and Eastern mysticism, with their necessary emphasis on self, is clear, as American philosopher and historian Jacob Needleman observes:

A large and growing number of psychotherapists are now convinced that the Eastern religions offer an understanding of the mind far more complete than anything yet envisaged by Western science. At the same time, the leaders of the new religions themselves—the numerous gurus and spiritual teachers now in the West—are reformulating and adapting the traditional systems according to the language and atmosphere of modern psychology.

With all these disparate movements, it is no wonder that thousands of troubled men and women throughout America no longer know whether they need psychological or spiritual help. The line is blurred that divides the therapist from the spiritual guide (Martin & Deidre Bobgan, *Psychoheresy*, EastGate Pub., 1987, 22-23).

The Antichrist, empowered with lying signs and wonders and seeking worship, will be the ultimate therapist and spiritual guide. Although claiming to be God, he will offer the potential of godhood, including the demonically enabled powers he exhibits, to all those who will follow him in deifying self. The lie from the beginning is the lie at the end.

The leaven of *the lie* seems to have worked its way through the entire world, including much of the church, which has looked more to the world than to the Word. What is God's response? He will send a strong delusion upon those who have not a love for the truth, that they should believe the lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). Yet the Lord has not left believers without a defense against being seduced by the lie. To the Father, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). His exhortation in John 8:31-32, if obeyed, will free us from the stronghold of self: "If ye continue in My word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

TBC

Quotable

If these pages fall into the hands of any anxious, troubled soul, desirous of finding the way of peace and earnestly seeking to be right with God, let me urge such a one to give up all struggling. Just believe God. Tell Him you are the sinner for whom the Saviour died, and trust in Christ alone for salvation. His own word is clear and simple: “Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

H. A. Ironside, *Unless You Repent*

Q&A

QUESTION: Someone sent me a copy of a book by Chuck and Nancy Missler titled *Kingdom, Power, and Glory: The Overcomer’s Handbook*, and I found it rather troubling. I have a lot of respect for Chuck and his ministry, but this really threw me. Have you had an opportunity to review the book? I’d like to get another opinion to help me decide whether or not I’m understanding what the book is saying.

RESPONSE: We, too, have great respect for Chuck and consider him a good friend. Nevertheless, the book he co-authored with his wife, Nancy, has, in our view, serious doctrinal errors. The main thesis they present is that born-again believers fall into two categories: “overcomers” and “carnal Christians.” When both stand before Jesus at His judgment seat for rewards, those saved carnal Christians (whose lives have produced few, if any, good works) will be relegated to a place of outer darkness during the Millennium when overcoming Christians will rule and reign with Christ.

The Misslers claim support for their view by interpreting verses in Matthew 24 as applying to true believers though they be carnal Christians. Those verses declare that the lord of “that evil servant . . . shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (vv. 48-51). The authors interpret as metaphors the language describing the punishments listed by Jesus, thereby softening the consequences. Even so, one is still left with a purgatory-like condition for believers. How does a believer know he or she will not be cast into outer darkness, “in the darkened courtyard outside the light of the Holy Place” (Missler, p. 198), where “there is going to be much ‘weeping and gnashing

of teeth’”? The Misslers tell us “it is impossible for us to know who is carnal and who is spiritual. Only God knows the truth. We are not to judge! That’s God’s business at the Bema Seat.”

In truth, all of the verses that refer to “outer darkness” and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” are directed by Jesus at Jews who have, or will have, rejected Him, their Messiah. Applying any of the consequences to believers does serious harm to the gospel. At the very least, it implies punishment of sin for the believer, which he must suffer and somehow expiate during his time in outer darkness. Exactly how that’s to be accomplished we’re not told. At worst, like the purgatory of Roman Catholicism, the carnal Christian must pay for something that the blood of Christ did not cover.

In addition to the implications regarding the gospel, it grieves me deeply that the Misslers’ book may spread anxiety and fear among evangelicals, much like I had as a Roman Catholic. I knew I had punishments awaiting me, even if I made it to purgatory. Being delivered from that fear when I put my faith in the One who paid the full penalty for my sins, my heart joyfully rested in His words: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-2). There are many, many other verses that clearly show that Jesus will never separate Himself nor cast the believer away from Himself. We have His blessed assurance.

A number of brothers and I have discussed our concerns personally with Chuck about *Kingdom, Power, and Glory* through conference calls and emails. To date, Chuck’s position is: “Nan and I believe it to be the most important work of our lifetime.”

QUESTION: I’ve been astonished at how some are predicting 2012 as the end of this era. These lies are permeating the hearts of all kinds of people, Christians and non-Christians. Could you please respond regarding 2012 as the end of the world?

RESPONSE: The date 2012 is most commonly a reference to the “end” of the Mayan Long Count Calendar. This date has been picked up by a number of individuals. Others attest that ancient Romans believed 2012 would be a historic year. The Ancient Chinese I Ching predicted the apocalypse in 2012. Sixteenth-century English prophetess Mother Shipton is said to have prophesied that history would end in 2012!

Jack Van Impe, who claims to be the “Walking Bible,” advertised on his website: “Do these prophecies from all over the world correspond with the truth of God’s Word? Could various cultural and secular sources be right about earth’s final day? . . . In their exciting video teaching, Drs. Jack and Rexella Van Impe demonstrate the very real possibility that 2012 could be a year of culmination—could December 21st 2012 be history’s final day?” (Van Impe, *December 21st 2012: History’s Final Day?*, online resources).

We have no doubt that in the Last Days’ coming together of religious believers, this teaching may be one common item of “agreement.” The famous Mayan Long Count calendar begins on August 11, 3114 BC (Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 2005, p. 167). The Mayan Long Count calendar, upon which this prediction is based, is reset to day 0 every 1,872,000 days (counting from 3114 BC), a period known as The Great Circle (Diamond, *Collapse*, p. 167). Depending on how one calculates it, the next reset date is December 21, 2012. Yet, the Maya have several calendars. The “Tzolk’in” calendar ran for 260 days and the “Haab’” was a solar year of 365 days. Both the Tzolk’in and the Haab’ were combined to form the “Calendar Round,” lasting 52 Haab’s (every 52 years, or what was thought to be a human lifetime). In addition, the Long Count calendar (beginning in 3114 BC contains roughly 394-year periods known as “Baktuns.” Thirteen was a significant, sacred number for the Maya, and the 13th Baktun ends around Dec. 21, 2012 (Mark Stevenson, “2012 isn’t the end of the world, Mayans insist,” AP, Oct 11, 2009).

With all of these ending cycles, this of course means that there have already been several “resets” of time, and, to all appearances, the universe continues to exist. More important, “of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Mt 24:36).

There are other admonitions in Scripture: “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Lk 21:28). This is sufficient. We can see the conditions of the world indicating that the time of the end is drawing near, but we are not given a specific date.

The Lord Jesus said in the last chapter of Revelation, “behold, I come quickly . . .” (Rv 22:12). He said this with the full knowledge that from the perspective of humanity, it sure seems like a long time. Peter, however, reminds us that from the Lord’s perspective, it is but a few days (2 Pt 3:8-12).

QUESTION: You have promoted books by A.W. Tozer, yet Tozer constantly quoted from Catholic mystics, and some have said that he even practiced “*Lectio Divina*.” In view of your warnings regarding the Contemplative Movement, how could you offer his books, knowing of his practices?

RESPONSE: Tozer did not practice *Lectio Divina*, a method that many mystics and occultists have used to supposedly experience God. The exercise involves reading a Bible verse or phrase, often repeating it many times like a mantra, for the purpose of stimulating insights that transcend what might be gained from the normal reading and understanding of the Scriptures. Rather than understanding a passage based on the *objective* meaning of the words, the grammar of the verses, and the context, the words become devices for receiving personal, *subjective* revelation from God. Anyone who is familiar with the writings of Tozer knows that such a technique is completely foreign to what he taught throughout his lifetime. Nevertheless, that hasn’t stopped some people from referring to him in order to support their promotion of mystical methods and teachings. John Armstrong, for example (who is general editor of *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Unites and Divides Us*, Moody Press, 1994), has stated that Tozer “listened to God and practiced *lectio divina* in his reading habits.” The “Emerging Thought” blog, among other Emergent writers, has commented, “I am going to go through the book by Brother Lawrence called *Practice of the Presence of God: The Best Rule of Holy Life*. I already had someone on the leadership team comment (jokingly) about me teaching RCC stuff. Yet, I see that John Wesley and A. W. Tozer both recommended him.”

To quote someone does not necessarily include recommending him. Yet, we would take issue with Tozer regarding some of the people he quotes. In chapter 3 of *The Pursuit of God*, “Removing the Veil,” Tozer quotes Chinese sage, Lao-tze: “That is the first step, and as...Lao-tze has said, ‘The journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step.’” Quoting this one point, which is hardly profound, is not “endorsing” Lao-Tze. One might wonder, however, where Tozer stood when one considers the Roman Catholics (Augustine, Nicholas of Cusa, Thomas á Kempis, Francis of Assisi, von Hugel, Bernard of Clairvaux, the poet William Blake, and hymn writer Frederick Faber, a convert to Catholicism)

that he has quoted or referred to in his books. That’s rather puzzling, since the gospel that Tozer preached and wrote about so well couldn’t be more contrary to the gospel and dogmas of Catholicism, beliefs strictly held by those mentioned and most of whom were canonized as saints by the Church of Rome. TBC does not condone Tozer when he quotes those with whom we have serious theological disagreement (and with whom, we are sure, he would also disagree). Moreover, instances of such quotes are so few in his many, many volumes that it’s clear they were in no way significant to his teaching.

Tozer himself recognized the confusion he generated by quoting those noted for their Roman Catholic mysticism. He wrote in his own defense, “Some of my friends good-humoredly—and some a little bit severely—have called me a ‘mystic.’ Well I’d like to say this about any mysticism I may suppose to have. If an archangel from heaven were to come, and were to start...telling me, teaching me, and giving me instruction, I’d ask him for the text. I’d say, ‘Where’s it say that in the Bible? I want to know.’ And I would insist that it was according to the scriptures, because I do not believe in any extra-scriptural teachings, nor any anti-scriptural teachings, or any sub-scriptural teachings. I think we ought to put the emphasis where God puts it, and continue to put it there, and to expound the scriptures, and stay by the scriptures. I wouldn’t—no matter if I saw a light above the light of the sun, I’d keep my mouth shut about it ’til I’d checked with Daniel and Revelation and the rest of the scriptures to see if it had any basis in truth....I don’t believe in anything that is unscriptural or that is anti-scripture” (A.W. Tozer, “What Difference Does the Holy Spirit Make?”)

Even so, some object that quoting Tozer to prove he wasn’t a mystic ignored his advice to “get still to wait on God” with the “Bible outspread.” To say that Tozer practiced *lectio divina* because of this statement is to be driven more by surmise than substance. The full paragraph reads: “It is important that we get still to wait on God. And it is best that we get alone, preferably with our Bible outspread before us. Then if we will, we may draw near to God and begin to hear Him speak to us in our hearts. I think for the average person the progression will be something like this: First a sound as of a Presence walking in the garden. Then a voice, more intelligible, but still far from clear. Then the happy moment when the Spirit begins to illuminate the Scriptures, and that which had been only a

sound, or at best a voice, now becomes an intelligible word, warm and intimate and clear as the word of a dear friend. Then will come life and light, and best of all, ability to see and rest in and embrace Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and All.”

There is a vast difference between Tozer’s teaching and *lectio divina*. The Lord tells us to “be still” at times. To “be still” is not to empty our minds, as in *lectio divina*. Reading Scripture without distraction, we trust the Lord to bring illumination, or “understanding.” Though Tozer speaks of a “sound as of a Presence walking in the garden,” he means that the Holy Spirit begins to bring understanding (1 Cor 2:11). “Then a voice,” denotes better understanding of a formerly opaque Scripture. Tozer speaks of “an intelligible word” consistently throughout his writing. His focus remains “the Word.” “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein” (Jos 1:8).

The Scriptures warn us to fully discern the truth of a matter. Discernment is more than suspicion. We are cautioned in the scriptures against “evil surmising” (1 Tm 6:4), which today might be called “evil suspicion.” To establish Tozer as a “Catholic mystic” cannot be done objectively, without exaggeration, and with only selective use of evidence.

The Cradle and the Cross

Dave Hunt

[ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN
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Another Christmas season is here. Why December 25, since it's unlikely that Jesus was born at this time of year? The Roman Church simply took the Saturnalia, a licentious celebration of the winter solstice dedicated to Saturn, and Christianized it in order to convert pagan Rome. The actual effect was to paganize official Christianity. For example, statues of Isis and Horus were renamed Mary and Jesus so that pagans could continue their idolatry under Christian names. Pagan customs involving vestments, candles, incense, images and processions were incorporated into Church worship and continue today. No authentic history denies these facts.

Would the world, then, be better off without Christmas? Atheists think so and wish to remove all manger scenes and crosses from public places. Rather than joining the enemies of God in denouncing Christmas, however, might we not better cultivate the bits of truth that shine through the lamentable commercialization and paganism? This is a unique time of year for presenting the gospel to the world, so let us take advantage of the opportunity.

Christ's birth and the details of His life, death, and resurrection were foretold centuries before by the Hebrew prophets. No such prophecies preceded the births of Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad, et al. Biblical prophecy fulfilled is the most powerful persuader we have. Paul used it in converting the lost and turned the world of his day upside down. So should we.

In Romans 1:1-4 we see Paul's approach. He refers to "the gospel of God, (which he [God] had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures)." Christianity is not a first-century invention. It is, in fact, the fulfillment of that which, with one voice, the Hebrew prophets consistently foretold for centuries.

There are more than 300 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. Why? So Israel could identify Him, when in the fullness of time God would send forth his Son (Gal 4:4). The third chapter in the Bible contains the first prophecy of the Messiah's coming, His virgin birth ("the seed of the woman") and His destruction of Satan (Gn 3:15). The prophets declared that He must be of the "lineage of David" (2 Sm 7:10-16; Ps

89:3-4; Jer 23:5) and rule upon David's throne. To prove that Jesus met this criteria, Matthew and Luke begin with the genealogy of Joseph and Mary.

Having rejected Jesus, the Jews still hope for their Messiah to come—but they hope in vain. Jesus Christ fulfilled Malachi 3:1 ("the Lord [Messiah], whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple") when He cast out the money changers and merchants (Mk 11:15). The destruction of the temple 38 years later in A.D. 70 made it impossible during the last 1,923 years for any would-be Messiah to fulfill that scripture. Moreover, all genealogic records were lost in the destruction of the temple, so a future "Messiah" would not be able to prove the necessary descent from David.

Yes, the temple will soon be rebuilt. Instead of cleansing it, however, as Christ did, Antichrist will defile it with his image and force the world to worship him as God: "he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thes 2:4).

Jacob prophesied, "The sceptre shall not

**WE HAVE ALSO A MORE SURE
WORD OF PROPHECY; WHEREUNTO
YE DO WELL THAT YE TAKE HEED,
AS UNTO A LIGHT THAT SHINETH IN
A DARK PLACE...**

— 2 PETER 1:19

depart from Judah...until Shiloh [Messiah] come..." (Gn 49:10). Shortly after the birth of Jesus, about A.D. 7, the sceptre departed when the Jews lost the right to enforce the death penalty. Thereafter, it was forever too late for Messiah to come. By God's grace, however, He had already come; and He will come *again* to rescue at Armageddon those who rejected Him the first time. They will know Him by the marks of Calvary ("they shall look upon me whom they have pierced"; Zec 12:10). The sceptre having departed from Judah, Christ, instead of being stoned by the Jews, was executed by the Romans, whose supreme penalty was crucifixion. Thus was fulfilled yet another prophecy: "...they pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps 22:16)!

But back to the cradle. Caesar Augustus had no inkling of the momentous effect of his decree "that all the world should [return to the city of one's birth to] be taxed" (Lk 2:1). That decree brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in time for the birth of her "firstborn son" (so she had other children) in fulfillment of Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem...out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel..."

What depth of meaning there is in the

simple statement, "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son" (Gal 4:4)! His birth had to occur before the sceptre departed from Judah; His death, after. His birthplace was determined by a Roman decree; His death and its method of execution, by the Roman occupation of Israel. He had to come before the temple was destroyed and with it the genealogic records.

The "fulness of time" has passed. No one else can meet the Messianic criteria laid down by the Hebrew prophets! That simple phrase, however, carries a much deeper meaning than we have seen above. If the timing of His birth causes us to marvel, the timing of Christ's death is even more precise and full of meaning. Daniel prophesied the very day of His death.

Through the writings of Jeremiah, Daniel learned that the Babylonian captivity would last 70 years (Dn 9:2). God had commanded that each seven years the Hebrew slaves should be set free, debtors forgiven and the land given a one-year sabbath of rest (Ex 21:2; Lv 25:2-4; Dt 15:1,2,12). For 490 years Israel had disobeyed this precept. As judgment, Jews became slaves of Babylon while their land rested the 70 years of sabbaths it had been denied.

While confessing this sin, pondering and praying, Daniel was given the revelation that another period of 490 years (70 weeks of years) lay ahead for his people and for Jerusalem (9:24). At the end of that time all of Israel's sins would be purged, all prophecy fulfilled and ended, and the Messiah would be reigning on David's throne in Jerusalem. These 70 weeks of years (490 years) were to be counted "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (v 25). That crucial date is given to us in Scripture.

Nehemiah tells us that it was "in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king" (2:1) that he received the authorization to rebuild Jerusalem. When the day of the month was not given, the first day was intended. There were several Artaxerxes, but only one, Longimanus, who ruled more than 20 years—from 465-425 B.C. Thus we have the key date from which this incredible prophecy was to be calculated: Nisan 1, 445 B.C.

At the end of 69 of these "weeks" (7x69 = 483 years) "Messiah the Prince" would be made known to Israel (Dn 9:25) and then "be cut off [slain], but not for himself" (v. 26). Counting 483 years of 360 days each (the Hebrew and Babylonian calendar), a total of 173,880 days from Nisan 1, 445 B.C., brings us to Sunday, April 6, A.D. 32. *On that very day*, now celebrated as Palm Sunday, Jesus

rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey and was hailed as Messiah the Prince! (Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled at the same time.)

There is, however, an even deeper meaning to the phrase, "In the fullness of time..." April 6, A.D. 32 was, on the Hebrew calendar, Nisan 10. On that day the passover lamb was taken from the flock and placed under observation for four days to make certain that it was "without blemish." During the same four days, Christ, whom John the Baptist had hailed as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29), was likewise on display before Israel. On the fourteenth of Nisan, "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it [the passover lamb] in the evening [between 3:00 and 6:00 P.M.]" (Ex 12:6). It was during that precise time period that Jesus died on the cross!

It is fascinating to see how God uses man's decrees and even man's connivings against Him to fulfill His Word. The rabbis had determined not to arrest Jesus during Passover, "lest there be an uproar of the people" (Mk 14:2). Yet that was when He had to die. Judas was not only Satan's pawn, but God's. Even the "thirty pieces of silver" he so shrewdly bargained for fulfilled prophecy (Zec 11:12-13). As Peter would declare in his Pentecost sermon, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Paul wrote, "Christ our passover [lamb] is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7).

The fourteenth of Nisan began, as Jewish days did, at sunset Wednesday evening. That night Jesus and His disciples had the "last supper" in the upper room where they were preparing to eat the passover the following night. At this meal "before the feast of the passover" (Jn 13:1), Jesus told His disciples, "One of you shall betray me" (Jn 13:21). Earlier He said, significantly, "I tell you before...that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he" (Jn 13:1). The word "he" is in italics and does not appear in the original. Jesus was declaring once again to His disciples that He was Yahweh, the I AM of Israel, who tells beforehand what will happen and makes certain that it comes to pass (Is 46:9-10).

Arrested by the Judas-led troop in the Garden later that night, Christ was taken secretly to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. A sham trial before the Sanhedrin, with hastily called false witnesses, convened sometime after midnight, condemned Christ to death as dawn broke. Shortly thereafter, Pilate, the Roman governor, was notified of the emergency. Hurriedly taken down side streets, the prisoner was received into the

citadel at "the third hour" (Mk 15:25), about 9:00 A.M., Nisan 14. All over Israel preparations were underway to kill the passover lamb, which was to be eaten that night.

Jerusalem was crowded and in a state of great excitement. Valuing public relations, Pilate consulted his ever-volatile citizens and let them decide the prisoner's fate. Incited by the rabbis, the bloodthirsty rabble suddenly turned against the One who had miraculously healed and fed so many of them. "Crucify him, crucify him" (Lk 23:21). "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Mt 27:25). The horrible chant echoed down Jerusalem's narrow streets.

Shortly before noon, the soldiers had finished their vicious, depraved sport. Jesus, scourged almost into unconsciousness and beaten about the face until He was nearly unrecognizable, was led through the frenzied, screaming mob out of the city to "the place of the skull." By high noon, the One whom Jerusalem, in fulfillment of prophecy, had the previous Sunday hailed as its long-awaited Messiah, was hanging

**I AM GOD, AND THERE IS NONE LIKE ME,
DECLARING THE END FROM THE BEGINNING,
AND FROM ANCIENT TIMES THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT YET DONE...**

— ISAIAH 46:9,10

naked, in shame and agony, on the center cross between two thieves. Man had crucified his Creator! Angels recoiled in horror and the sun hid its face.

The next three hours of that Thursday afternoon the earth was darkened mysteriously (Mt 27:45) as God "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:6). Thursday? Not "Good Friday"? Indeed not. Jesus himself had said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [i.e., in that part of Hades known as 'Abraham's bosom']" (Mt 12:40; Lk 16:22). The gospel includes the declaration that Christ "rose again the third day" (1 Cor 15:4).

Obviously, had Christ been crucified on Friday, He couldn't possibly have spent three days and three nights in the grave by Sunday morning. We are distinctly told that the angel rolled away the stone "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week" (Mt 28:1). The tomb was already empty at that point, so Christ must have risen from the dead sometime prior to dawn.

Yet the myth of a "Good Friday" crucifixion persists, with much ritual and dogma built upon that obvious mistake. In this fact

alone we have sufficient evidence of Rome's manufacture and endorsement of untruth to cast doubt upon everything else it affirms with equal dogmatism. And what can be said for the Protestants who, by the millions, so willingly go along with this error?

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—does it really matter? Yes! The day of our Lord's crucifixion is of the utmost importance. If Christ was not three days and three nights in the grave, then He lied. Moreover, His death, to fulfill prophecy, had to occur at the very time the passover lambs were being slain throughout Israel. It is an astronomical fact that Nisan 14, A.D. 32, fell on Thursday.

"And it was the preparation of the passover...The Jews therefore...that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day...besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away" (Jn 19:14,31). Wait! Not a bone of the passover lamb (Ex 12:46) or of the Messiah (Ps 34:20) could be broken. Not knowing why he did it, "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side" (Jn 19:34), fulfilling yet another scripture: "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (Zec 12:10).

John explains that the "sabbath" which began at sunset the Thursday Christ was crucified "was an high day." It was, in fact, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, of which the first and last days were special sabbaths during which no work was to be done. That "high" sabbath ended Friday at sunset and was immediately followed by the weekly sabbath, which ended at sunset on Saturday. Thus two sabbaths followed Christ's death, preventing the women from coming to the grave until the third day, Sunday morning.

The rabbis thought that having Jesus crucified proved He was not the Messiah. In fact, it was one more proof that He was! In taking His clothes for a souvenir, in gambling for his robe and giving Him vinegar mixed with gall to drink, the soldiers unwittingly added to that proof the fulfillment of yet more prophecies (Ps 22:18; 69:21). The nails driven into His hands and feet by Roman soldiers and the spear that pierced His side drew forth the blood of our redemption—all in fulfillment of prophecy!

It is impossible to remain an honest skeptic after comparing what the prophets said with the historical record of Jesus Christ, from the cradle to the Cross. Proof of the Resurrection, which we must leave for another time, is even more powerful! We have solid reasons for our faith in Christ. Knowing the facts increases our joy and gives us courage to present the gospel with boldness and conviction. **TBC**

Quotable

One great use that Christians should [make] of the scripture is to learn the language of prayer. O that Christians would learn how to pray for their brethren in tribulation; that they would censure less, and pray more. Instead of speaking of one another, speak more for one another. Show ourselves Christians indeed, not professors of the letter but of the spirit. We would gain our brethren instead of blasting them.

Thomas Case, When Christians Suffer, pp.121-22

Q&A

QUESTION: I came across a supposed contradiction that has stumped me. John 1 “seems” to say Jesus was baptized between verses 34 and 35. Verse 35 says “again the next day...” (day one). Verse 43: “the following day” (day two). Chapter 2, verse 1 says on “the third day...in Cana of Galilee....” So John seems to say that Jesus was in Cana three days after His baptism, even though John doesn’t mention His baptism. The other gospels seem to say that Jesus went to the wilderness for 40 days right after His baptism (Matthew 3:13-11). Mark 1:9 tells us that Jesus was baptized, while verse 12 says “immediately” the Spirit drove him into the wilderness; Luke seems to also say that Jesus went to the wilderness after he was baptized. The question is “Where was Jesus three days after His baptism?”

RESPONSE: Paul admonishes in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” In view of this, what is the context of these verses and how might they rightly be divided?

We don’t believe this is a contradiction, particularly since John’s discourse regarding Christ (Jn 1:29-36) speaks of the baptism as past tense. After identifying Jesus as the lamb “which taketh away the sin of the world” (v. 29), John states “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him” (v. 32). He’s speaking of an event that has already occurred. Consequently, we see no contradiction in the other gospels that speak of the Lord’s temptation in the wilderness following shortly thereafter. John 1 is speaking of a separate event, and one that took place after those recorded in the other gospels.

QUESTION: The Bible often speaks against following tradition more than the Word of God. The martyrdom, however, of almost all of the apostles is known to us because of tradition. My question is, why do we give this tradition more weight than other traditions?

RESPONSE: You rightly point out that tradition can never be given the weight that Scripture has. Because of this, you wonder why “we” give the tradition concerning the martyrdom of the disciples more weight than other traditions.

We don’t. On the extremely few times we would reference the “traditions” concerning the death of the apostles, we should point out that they are just that, only traditions. Consequently, if we say “traditions,” our readers should recognize that this does not carry the weight of Scripture, and should be treated as such.

Further, the tradition regarding the martyrdom of the Apostles is used in clarifying history, not in formulating doctrines as the traditions of Catholicism are used. That’s a vast difference.

Moreover, in the Scriptures we are given glimpses of the martyrdom the Apostles would endure. Paul, from his prison cell in Rome wrote, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tm 4:6). Jesus told Peter, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him, Follow me” (Jn 21:18-19). Where wouldn’t Peter previously go?

In John 13:36-38 we read, “Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.”

Peter wouldn’t go all the way to the cross. Tradition holds that Peter was crucified upside down on a cross. The words used in Scripture would seem to support this scenario, but one cannot be dogmatic about the tradition, although it may seem “plausible.”

QUESTION: If believers are raptured, they will return to earth during the millennial reign. Yet we know that children will be born and death exists during this period...how do we find agreement between the two? Wouldn’t it be impossible for believers who are transformed to live in a world where death exists—indeed death results from sin unless the notion is that the believers who reign, do so in a different bodily form?

RESPONSE: In Revelation 20:6 we read, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

The Scriptures must always have precedence over speculation. In this passage of Scripture we are told very clearly that the resurrected saints will rule and reign with Christ during the thousand years of the millennium. In 1 Corinthians 15:52 we are given further information: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

“We shall be changed...” What a blessed promise! You ask whether it would be impossible for believers “who are transformed to live in a world where death exists.” No, for “we shall be changed.” The transformation we shall undergo will also equip us to reign with Christ for a thousand years. If we know ourselves, we know the necessity of being completely changed in order to be worthy regents with Christ.

Although we are not given the details of our transformation, it must be far beyond our imagination in order to enable us to “bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:49). May the Lord encourage us with His faithfulness.

QUESTION: I recall instances when TBC has said that everyone, even Christians, will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Yet, Jesus, the Lord, the Living Word, in John 5:24 says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath [past tense] everlasting life, and shall not [future tense] come into condemnation [judgment]; but is [already] passed from death unto life.”

It seems we are told by God that Christians will not come into any judgment whatsoever; they have already, in spirit, passed from death to life, as Jesus was judged as being fully guilty for all

their sins. Yet, despite John 5:24 supporting that position, TBC insists upon the idea that everyone, even Christians will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ to answer for their every word and deed in the flesh.

RESPONSE: The fact that all believers must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ is something affirmed more than once in Scripture (Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10). The act of denying this certainty looks to be generated by the assumption that the "Judgment Seat of Christ" judgment is synonymous with the "condemnation" of John 5:24. It is a mistake to assume that every usage of "judgment" throughout Scripture is only speaking of the Judgment of unbelievers. Context is always critical in meaning. We need not follow the example of others such as Jehovah's Witnesses who insist that every usage of a word must therefore mean exactly the same thing regardless of context.

There is more than one type of "judgment" spoken of in Scripture and we are to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tm 2:15). What is in view in John 5 is "everlasting life" (John 5:24a, the eternal bliss of the believer), and "condemnation" (John 5:24b, the eternal punishment of the lost). The "condemnation" of John 5:24 is a judgment the believer will never face. This is borne out by verses 27-29 in which the resurrected dead (both saved and lost) are either welcomed to the resurrection of eternal life or "condemned" into the "resurrection of damnation" (v. 29). Certainly this is a "judgment," but one far different than the judgment by the Lord Jesus concerning the believer.

The Lord repeatedly warns of the penalty faced by believers at the judgment seat of Christ. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor 3:13-15).

QUESTION: In view of the finished work of Christ, is it possible that real animal sacrifices will be offered by the Jews in the Millennium? What possible need would there be for these sacrifices?

RESPONSE: It is asked, "If all these things are merely meanings and symbols, why does the Lord then institute it at the end of time again?" Well, there are a number

of things the Lord is reemphasizing. For example, there will be literal blood sacrifices performed by the Jews during the time of the Millennium (see Ezekiel 40-48). Please bear in mind that the Lord is faithful to fulfill everything, and He overlooks nothing. There is a purpose in view here. We need to understand it, regardless of what it does to our preconceived ideas and theology.

Regarding the Millennial temple of the Jews, they will not be offering sacrifices for their sins; the sacrifices they offer will be a memorial for what the Lord has done. This will apparently be a requirement for the Jews alone. Just as the church has been given communion so that "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor 11:26), so the Jews will perform an ordinance that will continue to remind them of what Christ has done, but only during the Millennium.

While this act will not have the same significance for Gentile believers, consider how much meaning this will have to Jewish people, in view of their past failure to keep the law. Being consistent, do we then insist that these blood sacrifices continue without end, as the language in which they are couched parallels those verses speaking of the Sabbath in the Millennium? Certainly not!

As many have pointed out, the references to keeping the Sabbath in the New Testament are limited to Jewish observances. We pointed to the clear witness of Acts 20, which has consequently been attacked by those to whom its witness is not convenient.

Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny (Part 1)

Dave Hunt

Despite all our failures to bring peace and good will on Earth, America can at least boast of her much-vaunted space program. Our astronauts have walked on the moon. Our astronomers have searched the far reaches of the universe with their telescopes and have uncovered much of its mystery. But wait. Let us face some realities.

Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny, my newest book, begins with a brief look at the vastness of the universe. Even if we could build space vehicles that might travel at the speed of light, it would take 100,000 years to cross The Milky Way, our relatively small galaxy, and billions of years to reach the trillions of galaxies beyond. These facts show how foolish is man's dream of "space exploration." Each time I board a passenger jet and glance into the cockpit at the incredibly complex instrument panel, I think of the Arctic tern. This bird breeds in the tundra of the far north, then flies for eight months across thousands of miles of trackless ocean to reach its destination near the edge of the Antarctic ice pack, only to return to its breeding grounds. It will cover more than twenty thousand miles in its lifetime. Its instrument panel is in its tiny brain and its guidance system is instinct, a capability that no evolutionary process could develop nor any man explain.

Atheism, partnering with Darwinism, is the fastest growing non-political movement in the world today. It is Satan's master weapon in his battle with God. The world's leading atheist, Richard Dawkins, a former Oxford University professor, is atheism's loudest mouthpiece. His books regularly appear on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Becoming convinced of Darwinism at the age of fifteen turned him from a nominal Anglican into a fervent atheist. He has declared that "A belief in God is not only stupid but wicked."

The same transformation occurred in Charles Templeton's life. He was at one time the preaching partner of Billy Graham. Darwinism turned him into an atheist. In his book, *Farewell to God*, he tells of writing to Billy:

Billy, it's simply not possible any longer to believe, for instance, the biblical account of creation. The world wasn't created over a period of days a few thousand years ago;

it has evolved over millions of years. It's not a matter of speculation; it's demonstrable fact.

Templeton was wrong, tragically so. Darwinism continues today to turn multitudes into atheists. Many authors have argued both sides of the creationism vs. evolutionism dispute. It is really theism vs. atheism, God vs. Satan. This ancient conflict is soon to come to its dramatic conclusion. That is what *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny* is all about.

We boast of the great cities we've built and keep track of our highly praised athletic records: how fast we can run, how high or far we can jump, etc. As we have seen with the arctic tern, insects and animals outdo us in every physical feat. It is astonishing, however, that almost no one on either side of this debate ever mentions the one key factor that separates man from all lower creatures: man's ability to form conceptual ideas and to express them in words and music and art! We are made in the image of God our Creator and the lover of our souls. The same cannot be said of any other living creature.

This simple fact reveals the futility of searching the world of fossils to find a "missing link" between man and lower creatures of any kind. It is equally futile to search the DNA of man and animals for a missing link. Neither the skeletal structure nor the DNA has anything to do with who the person really is. The DNA of a chimpanzee is 96 percent like that of humans. This does not indicate any evolutionary connection between man and chimps as Francis Collins, a professing Christian recently appointed to head the National Institutes of Health, suggests. Even if the complete skeletons and DNA of Albert Einstein, Charles Dickens, and Ludwig van Beethoven could be discovered, would they hold the key to the genius of these men? Of course not! The real person is a nonphysical being living inside the physical body. This fact is indisputable.

As for your brain, it does not originate your thoughts. You are the thinker who will live on endlessly after the body lies rotting in the grave. Souls and spirits are not subject to the laws of physics and chemistry that govern our bodies. These facts bear serious consequences for each of us. What happens to the soul and spirit after death? Hebrews 9:27 states, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." You can laugh your way into hell, but you can't laugh your way out.

Nevertheless, the rebellion against God that Adam began has been carried on ever since with determination. Undeniably, the major goal of today's scientific endeavor is to prove that God does not exist.

The purpose of space probes, for example, is to find signs of water that might indicate how life could have had its inception somewhere outside of earth and then evolved. The goal, of course, is to show that man is not a unique creation but that there are similar intelligent beings scattered everywhere throughout the universe—and thus there is no need of a "god" to explain anything. Such speculation flies in the face of the law of biogenesis, which states that life only comes from life.

Atheists want to avoid the question of origins. They talk about a sudden burst of energy that one critic named the "Big Bang," but they cannot tell us what energy is, where or why it was hiding, or why it suddenly showed itself in a cosmic explosion. Nor can they explain how life could spring forth from a universe that had experienced temperatures hotter than the interior of the hottest star. They can't tell us what life is or how it could be imparted to lifeless chemicals that the body comprises. Isn't it dishonest to talk about evolution without first of all facing certain foundational questions?

What is behind the diligent search for fossils all over the globe? What else than to find some evolutionary chain from microbes to man that would eliminate God? So it is with the exhaustive search through the human genome—to find an evolutionary link from lower creatures to man. We've already proven that man is more than his physical body, but that fact is avoided by atheists because it points to God.

Atheists are materialists. For them nothing exists except matter. Allegedly, man is no more than his physical body. The materialist thesis is easily disproved. Thoughts are not physical nor are ideas. Dictionaries and encyclopedias are filled with words for which there are no physical descriptions. What is the color of ethical? What does stupendous smell like? How much does remarkable weigh? Materialism is a stupid as well as a wicked philosophy. What is the texture of stupid, the sound of wicked, or the taste of philosophy, etc.?

The truth cannot be avoided, and honestly facing it must not be delayed! Twice the Bible declares, "The fool hath said in

his heart, There is no God” (Ps 14:1, 53:1). Atheism is the religion of fools.

The story is told of a man preaching on Speakers’ Corner in Hyde Park in London, England, who in his sermon said that anyone who didn’t believe in God was a fool. A man in the crowd of listeners shouted out, “I’m an atheist. If you can’t prove that I’m a fool, I’ll publish it in the papers and we’ll run you out of town!”

“You really don’t believe in God?”

“You bet I don’t! I’ve been fighting against God all my life!”

“Tell me,” replied the preacher, “if a man who spends his life fighting against someone who doesn’t exist isn’t a fool, then who is?”

Representations of the terrifying scene of man standing before God’s throne have been attempted by poets, artists, and authors, but our imagination could lead us astray. The Judgment Seat of Christ is where the Christian receives rewards or suffers loss for “the things done in his body” (2 Cor 5:10). At that awesome event we will each face Christ whose “eyes [are] like a flame of fire” (Rv 1:14; 2:18).

On the other hand, those who have rejected Christ and laughed at God’s offer of salvation will stand before the Great White Throne and confront the One sitting upon it from whose face “the earth and heaven [will flee] away” (Rv 20:11). Those who have scoffed at God’s offer of forgiveness will be tormented eternally with the haunting memory of their evil thoughts, words, and deeds, with the realization that all this didn’t have to be. It was their rejection of the forgiveness God offered them through Jesus that sealed their doom. At last it will become clear what David confessed to God: “Against *thee, thee only*, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Ps 51:4). When remorse overtakes us and we repent of any sin we’ve committed, we must not forget to include David’s brief statement that was at the heart of his confession. All sin is rebellion against God.

For the unbeliever, the fires of hell are the burning torment of one’s God-given conscience that Solomon describes so vividly:

Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh...as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a

whirlwind: when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” (Prv 1:24-31)

Until we, even as Christians, realize the seriousness of what we might dismiss from our minds as hardly worth mentioning, we haven’t even begun to repent. Any sin, no matter how seemingly trivial, must be recognized as grand larceny and treason against God. Grand larceny? We have robbed God, in small or large measure, of the life He entrusted to us, a life to be lived to His glory, and instead have lived for ourselves. Treason? In our hearts we have launched an insurrection against the Lord of the universe.

Only when we see sin in this light, have we begun to repent. Most of the old hymns of the faith reflected the solemnity with which worshippers ought to enter God’s holy presence. Sadly, these former favorites have been set aside to make way for today’s “contemporary music,” with lyrics that lower God from Lord of the universe—a God whose majesty causes us to fall on our faces in holy reverence—to a buddy.

In many of today’s so-called evangelical churches there is little fear of God, which Solomon said was “the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10, Prv 1:7; 9:10). The Lord’s lament as He wept over Israel must surely be His cry as he looks at the church today: “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name” (Mal 1:6)?

I speak to my own heart. How many of us live as though we really believe the time is short and that Jesus could come at any moment? We need to pause and ponder this question very seriously. We need a heart renewal, a fresh realization of the awesomeness of God. I often tell the Lord that I tremble to think of standing before Him. I know that I am redeemed and secure in His love, but when I think of how great He is and what a pitiful nothing I am, it seems presumptuous to dare to say, “I love you, Lord.”

The Scriptures speak with awesome

solemnity to those who reject God as Creator and Savior. No, we did not evolve. That theory was one of Satan’s cleverest lies. In one stroke he lowered man to an animal and at the same time catered to his pride by making him believe that he could understand how he came into existence without God and thus remain free from accountability to any authority higher than himself. What a grand delusion for paving the broad road to destruction!

How could one put such vital truth into a book containing a scientific discussion about man’s origin and the purpose of his existence? That is what has been attempted in *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny* in order to awaken readers to the wonder of God’s love and the glorious destiny He has planned for those who will open their hearts to Him. How true are the words of the hymn “How Great Thou Art”:

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made:

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed!

.....
When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,

.....
And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in—
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin!

.....
When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

.....
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee:
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

Quotable

[Let us] turn from our limitations to God, who has none. Eternal years lie in His heart. For Him time does not pass, it remains; and those who are in Christ share with Him all the riches of limitless time and endless years. God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which He must work. Only to know this is to quiet our spirits and hearts.

A. W. Tozer

[TBC: This sounds like a good Rx for the coming year, and we wish it in glorious measure for all of our readers.]

Q&A

QUESTION: I have a friend who keeps insisting that it is necessary for me to keep the Old Testament feasts of the Jews. They also keep the Saturday Sabbath. It is said that the early church kept the Sabbath, Gentiles and Jews together. Many times we read that Paul wanted to return to Jerusalem to keep the feasts. In the Millenium, Zechariah 14 verses 16-21 says that any nation that does not keep the Feast of Tabernacles will be punished and not receive rain. If all these things are merely meanings and symbols, why does the Lord then re-institute them at the end of time?

RESPONSE: We have addressed the issue of the Sabbath for believers in past issues of the newsletter. Several seminar ministries make a point of offering a large sum of money for one verse in the New Testament stating that Sunday worship was exchanged for the Sabbath. They might as well offer the same sum of money for one verse proving that Gentile believers are required to keep the Sabbath and Jewish feasts. Both positions are equally secure. In contrast, during what some have called the first church council, the question came up as to whether or not Gentile believers should keep the law: "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment..." (Acts 15:24). This same thought is in Acts 21:24-25.

Further, we need to realize that we are *Abraham's* seed. That is the point, as the Law was not given to Abraham, something the book of Galatians makes quite clear. The law was given 430 years after Abraham. The Law was temporary (Gal 3:24-25), the promise to Abraham was

eternal: "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal 3:17-18).

Galatians itself was written by Paul to instruct us that the "law was our schoolmaster [or teacher] to bring us unto Christ..." (Gal 3:24) and that "after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (v. 25). Although given by God, in view of its temporary nature Paul said, "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Gal 4:9).

The Law, which the Lord calls "good," "holy," "just," "praiseworthy," and other positive adjectives, is also called "weak and beggarly." In Colossians 2, the law (including the Sabbath and the feasts), are said to be a "shadow." The Law is portrayed in a negative manner because Paul is making a comparison. The Law, with all its implications, types, shadows, and facets, was designed to bring us to Christ. Compared to the finished work of Christ, however, it is weak and beggarly. In Galatians, Paul compares Mt. Sinai (where the law was given) to Hagar, the concubine with whom Abraham had a child. This portrays the works of the flesh and "gendereth to bondage." But "Jerusalem which is above" (speaking of the finished work of Christ), "is free."

To insist on keeping the law is to be like someone with a photo of his fiancée, who only looks at the picture, when in fact she has arrived and is sitting there with him. To continue looking at the photograph instead of at the actual person is to turn aside to "weak and beggarly" elements.

It is disappointing to see unsupported generalizations: "many times Paul wanted to return to keep the feasts." According to Scripture, this is an exaggeration. There is no evidence that Paul (a Jew) urged Gentiles to keep the feasts. Paul had purposed to go to Jerusalem but not at the express leading of the Lord, for the disciples at Tyre (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4).

The New Testament is full of euphemistic statements. We see this in Paul's use of "the letter" (which kills - 2 Cor 3:6) to describe those who take a legalistic approach to the Scriptures. We see this when the Apostle Paul exhorts us to "keep

the feast" (1 Cor 5:8), which some have used as presumed support for keeping the Old Testament feasts. We have already noted the conclusion of Acts 15:24 and Acts 21:24-25.

QUESTION: In a future edition of the newsletter, I would like to see an evaluation of Mr. Wiese's book, *23 Minutes In Hell*. I have serious doubts that God selected this man to show us a glimpse of hell.

RESPONSE: As we have noted, there are any number of books, both secular and purportedly Christian, which deal with so-called eyewitness accounts of heaven and hell (as in the case of Bill Wiese). Along with near-death experiences and out-of-body experiences, we cannot recommend any of these books, videos, or audio presentations. Many introduce clearly extrabiblical ideas and the accounts demonstrably contain narrative contradictions.

In the case of Mr. Wiese, he has highlighted his live presentations with clips from Hollywood productions, where all sorts of imagery are said to greatly resemble what he saw during his "23 minutes in hell." These demons are actively engaged in tormenting individuals in ways that seem to be intensified versions of torments found on earth.

While acknowledging that Satan and demons will be consigned to the Lake of Fire, he then goes on to say, "However, I believe Scripture indicates that currently in hell (Sheol or Hades), God does allow the demons to torment lost souls..." and admits, "This may not be absolutely conclusive in Scripture, and some theologians may disagree; however, I believe there are enough verses to consider this torment to be more than conjecture. What Scripture says is all that matters, not what I have to say. I am simply reporting the events" (p. 130-31).

Wiese may be merely "reporting" the events, but the imagery he has used in his presentations is certainly not faithful to Scripture. He writes, "...truth is found in the pages of the Bible. But there are many who do not want to recognize God's Word as truth because of the light it sheds on our sin" (p. 84). The Word also sheds light on whether any experience we have is biblical and therefore from God. Consequently, though Wiese quotes numerous Scriptures, they have little to do with his supposed revelations.

For example, he quotes Deuteronomy 32:22-24: "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, And shall burn unto the lowest

hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat and bitter destruction: I will also send against them the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust." Wiese then concludes that in hell "...there are teeth of beasts upon you." Then are we also to believe that there are archers in hell? One can see how careless usage of Scripture opens the door for a number of problems.

QUESTION: Can you give your thoughts on such scriptures as Revelation 1:3, Revelation 22:6,7, and verses 12 and 20? All of them state that the Lord's coming is very near. Yet, it's been nearly 2,000 years since those verses were first written by John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16).

RESPONSE: Scripture must be understood in the entirety of its context (i.e., the entire Bible). We should not make a few verses our focus without seeking to "rightly divide" (2 Tm 2:15). To "rightly divide" means to handle correctly. Each Scripture has a place in the whole. Therefore, they are rightly divided and placed in their correct context.

When Satan tempted the Lord in the wilderness, he quoted Scripture daring him to jump from the pinnacle of the temple, "For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Mt 4:6). Satan was quoting out of context, ignoring the remainder of Scripture. Jesus rebuked him, saying, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Mt 4:7).

The Lord Jesus said in the last chapter of Revelation, "Behold, I come quickly..." (Rv 22:12). Although it may seem like a long time, Peter reminds us that from the Lord's perspective it is but a few days (2 Pt 3:8-12).

In verse 9, Peter reminds us, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Jesus also stated very plainly in Matthew 24:14, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Prior to ascending to heaven, the Lord gave what is called The Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt 28:19, see also Mk 16:15, Lk 24:47, Jn 20:21, Acts 1:8). We conclude very properly then, that the proclamation of the gospel to all nations will take time.

Nevertheless, the coming of the Lord is consistently spoken of as "soon." A. W. Tozer once wrote an essay entitled "The Decline of Apocalyptic Expectation." He began with an overview of Christianity at the end of the nineteenth century. The various "advent" movements were strong and there was an increased sense of expectation that this would indeed be the last generation. This led to excesses, causing problems with some of those involved with these movements. As he looked at the good things that emerged from these movements, however, he concluded that the average Christian needs a strong sense of expectation as an incentive towards more holy living.

QUESTION: I was asked this question by a new Christian: Why did God allow people in the Old Testament to marry multiple wives?

RESPONSE: In Matthew 19:4-5, the Lord Jesus states, "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and *they twain* [two] shall be one flesh?" Not "they three, or four, or five, etc.," but "they two." Jesus is reiterating the intent of God. Our Creator designed marriage to be between one man and one woman for life. The first disagreement to this intent came from Lamech (Gn. 4:19), who had two wives. Lamech was of the cursed line of Cain, which all perished in the flood.

Speaking of the kings of Israel, the Lord God commanded, "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away..." (Dt 17:17). Those that have authority have high standards. As such, we are not surprised to see that regarding church leadership, Paul wrote that "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach" (1 Tm 3:2).

Yes, David and Solomon had many wives. Do we envy the disaster this brought? The envies, murders, and hatred in David's family is hardly an endorsement for polygamy. Speaking of Solomon, the Scriptures note: "And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart" (1 Ki 11:3).

No one can produce one Scripture purporting to indicate that the Lord approved of polygamy. Much like divorce, it was "tolerated" but never "approved." Of divorce, the Lord Jesus noted, "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so" (Mt 19:8). Again, what is in focus is "in the beginning." What did God intend? The biblical focus is never what man has made of the Lord's original intent.

In conclusion, any usage of biblical texts to support polygamy must of necessity fly in the face of Scripture, a process the apostle addressed in 2 Peter 3:16 where "they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny (Part 2)

Dave Hunt

Last month we began with the vastness of space and the utter folly of man's imagining that he could explore it in manned vehicles. Now we turn to the equal folly of man's efforts to find an evolutionary link between himself and lower creatures. Evolutionists have been digging desperately to find a physical link but to no avail. There are no fossils to show such a link. Furthermore, even if there were, it would prove nothing.

If the complete skeletons and DNA of Albert Einstein, Charles Dickens, and Ludwig van Beethoven were discovered, they would not reveal the genius of these men. The real person is a nonphysical being living inside the physical body.

Man's body temporarily houses the soul and spirit that make up the real person. A. S. Eddington was praised by Einstein for writing the best layman's explanation of his general theory of relativity. Eddington firmly believed that the brain is not the mind. The real person is a nonphysical being who began existence when God "breathed into his [Adam's] nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Gn 2:7).

God distinguishes between the body, the soul, and the spirit. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Lk 12:15, also 1 Thes 5:23). Yet mankind ignores this wisdom and persists in pursuing the accumulation of wealth and the possessions and pleasures it will buy, none of which last beyond death. Man is an eternal being living temporarily in a physical body. Those who believe that the body is all that we consist of spend their entire lives trying to fulfill the desires of the flesh.

Jesus asked, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36)? He shows the folly of a materialistic outlook in the parable of the rich farmer, whose crops were so abundant that he told himself, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Lk 12:16-21).

In the forthcoming book *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*, we deal with

issues that one would not expect to find in a book about science and atheism, but they cannot be avoided if we are to face the matter of human destiny. For the atheist, human destiny is a hoped-for oblivion upon death, whereby one escapes God's judgment. This is the vain hope of the godless. Will that hope be granted? Never! Death is not the end of man's existence, for God has declared, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27).

Though the body decays when it dies, the soul and spirit are destined to exist forever. We are eternal beings. Killing the body offers no escape. After death, Christians stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards or to suffer loss. The damned will face Jesus at the Great White Throne judgment and from there will be cast into the Lake of Fire, which is called "the Second Death."

As we show in *Cosmos*, although life is at best very short, most people give little thought to the eternity that lies beyond death's door. This shortsighted outlook is rank folly. What a tragedy!

Atheists are fervent evangelists, determined to drag the whole of mankind into hell with them. They hate God with a passion. It seems rather odd to hate so fervently someone who doesn't exist, yet Paul foretold that there would be "haters of God" (Rom 1:30). In *Cosmos* we quote numerous atheist scientists who vent this venom. Tragically, their numbers and influence seem to be growing.

Cosmos was written to rescue the multitudes caught in this net of evil and deceit. After God, there is nothing that Richard Dawkins and his colleagues hate more than the idea of purpose, plan, and design for the cosmos and all it comprises. Yet they cannot escape the fact that these ideas permeate our lives. That raises the question of how such ideas could have come out of the chaos of an alleged Big Bang.

Dawkins, one of the Four Horsemen of the New Atheists, pronounces with all the authority of a Papal Bull, "Most of what we strive for in our modern life uses the apparatus of goal seeking that was originally set up [by natural selection] to seek goals in the state of nature. But now the goal-seeking apparatus has been switched to different goals, like making money, or hedonistic pleasures of one sort or another."¹

Goal-seeking apparatus? How does Dawkins know that such an "apparatus" exists? What might that "apparatus" be? In what organ of the body or in what gene is it centered—in the ambitious part, perhaps? And where is that? And what letters in the DNA define it? Of course, he has

no evidence that such an "apparatus" ever existed. This is wild speculation like most of what Dawkins pronounces so authoritatively. It is part of the shameless nonsense that has been the stock in trade of evolutionists from the very beginning: guesses garnished with endless "perhapses...may-bes..." etc.

Does anyone experience life as a slave of selfish genes or as the victim of an illusion created by the molecules that make up one's body? Such are the absurdities to which atheism leads. "What is my purpose in life?" is the logical question every reasonable person must face. This realization does not arise from an evolutionary development in the brain or DNA but from the reasoning of the nonphysical mind.

Genes don't know what kind of body or what part of it they occupy, nor could they care. Carrots, garden slugs, and fungi have the same DNA that we have, but the genes don't know the difference. The DNA alphabet is identical in all living things. The arrangement of the words in the DNA is what matters, but genes no more understand the meaning of the words they contain than do the paper and ink in a dictionary or encyclopedia understand the information they offer. One's physical brain is no more capable of thinking than is a head of lettuce.

Yet matter is all that materialistic atheists claim exists. In fact, the brain is like a computer, very useful for a thinking person, but the computer no more thinks than do the fingers purposefully punching the keyboard. A theist, who believes that the mind is nonphysical like the ideas it conceives and uses, knows very well that he/she is the thinker who will be held responsible for every thought, word, and deed.

Has there been any verification by careful and extensive experimentation to show how and when natural selection developed a moral and spiritual nature in man? Such a development would be impossible because natural selection can only affect man's physical being. Morality and spirituality are clearly not physical. Dawkins can't acknowledge this widely accepted scientific fact without renouncing his atheism. Has there been any proof demonstrating that this spiritual side is unnecessary because ethics, morals, compassion, a love of beautiful music, reverence, and worship can all be described and explained in purely physical terms? Has any atheist demonstrated that the barrier that Mortimer J. Adler declared that evolution could never cross has, in fact, been, or could theoretically be, crossed? No one has tried because even atheists know there is a great gulf separating the

physical, mental, and moral worlds.

Atheism and its corollary, materialism, are speechless when asked to account for the human qualities that we all value so highly and that distinguish us from all other creatures: the appreciation of music and poetry, the enjoyment of beauty in nature (in which even Dawkins exults), the ability to form conceptual ideas and express them in words, to understand mathematics in relation to the universe, to use the imagination as do architects and engineers, or to feel and express a love that is so clearly unique to humans. We all know that animals do not share these qualities and capabilities with us. Lesser creatures possess none of these purely human characteristics that we value so highly, nor can these capabilities be explained by natural selection or evolution. We owe nothing to these allegedly scientifically proven processes for our moral, ethical, and spiritual qualities.

Dawkins protests loudly, as we've heard him do in a number of debates, "Of course evolution couldn't come about by chance! Natural selection is the very opposite of chance!" Dawkins is guilty of denying the problem of origins. When theists say evolution and natural selection could not come about by chance, they speak the truth. Atheists forget that these theories upon which they rely require the prior existence of a replicating organism. Where did this organism come from? It must have come about by chance, but the mathematics clearly proves that it is impossible. No matter how loudly Dawkins protests, it is irrefutable that evolution and natural selection cannot explain the *origin* of biological life.

What about the common moral conscience that all humans share? It cannot have evolved because it is not a physical quality that resides in the physical body. Atheists deny this unseen world of thoughts and ideas as well as the conscience and moral concepts. This attempt to deny what every person knows is true in daily life further reveals the desperate position in which atheists find themselves.

One of the many problems confronting atheists is the matter of information, without which there can be no life. Where does the information come from to begin with a single-cell bacterium and end up with the human brain? Dawkins never tells us. He makes a number of attempts in two of his books but fails. Information can only originate from a *mind*. What mind could that be? It could only be the infinite mind of the Creator.

What could possibly be the source of the new DNA required to change to a "higher" species? Without such a change, there is no

evolution. The change, however, cannot occur without the introduction of new information, because it is the information in the DNA that defines and distinguishes between species. The information essential to define new species could only come from an infinite intelligence. Who could that be but God?

Johns Hopkins University Professor Steven Stanley of the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences declared, "The known fossil record fails to document a single example of phyletic evolution accomplishing a major morphologic transition [a structural change relating to descent] and hence offers no evidence that the gradualistic model can be valid."³ In the same vein, Professor Heribert Nilsson, director of the Botanical Institute at Lund University, Sweden, declared after forty years of study:

The fossil material is now so complete that...the lack of transitional series cannot be explained as due to the scarcity of the material. The deficiencies are real; they will never be filled....The true situation is that those fossils have not been found which were expected. Just where new branches are supposed to fork off from the main stem it has been impossible to find the connecting types.⁴

Stephen Jay Gould admitted that "The eyes of early trilobites have never been exceeded for complexity or acuity by later anthropods."⁵ Does that sound like "evolution" from the simple to the complex? Something is terribly wrong with that theory!

A starfish has been discovered with more than 1,000 eyes, each with an identical lens that surpasses today's technology. Evolutionists date this creature millions of years prior to man in the evolutionary time scale. Yet its many eyes are in some ways superior to those possessed by humans. This is such a ridiculous number of eyes that they could hardly have been produced by natural selection as essential for survival. Is the Creator laughing at evolutionists? Does the following brief description sound at all like something that would have been developed by chance mutations so early in the alleged evolutionary process?

Built into the starfish's tough, calcite skeleton are arrays of microscopic crystals that focus light 10 times more precisely than any manufactured micro optics. Such was the finding of Joan Aizenberg and her colleagues at Lucent Technologies and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Molecular biologist Daniel Morse, who directs the marine biotechnology

program at UC [University of California] Santa Barbara, said, it's significant because it demonstrates that living organisms control nanostructures...with a precision beyond the reach of present-day engineering.

"Linked by networks of nerve fibers, the thousands of micro-lenses together appear to form a kind of single compound eye that covers the creature's entire body in all-seeing armor," said Aizenberg, an expert in biomaterials.... "The actual optical performance of these lenses is far beyond current technology."⁶

Indeed, for microengineers trying to craft infinitesimal lenses for faster optical computers, sensors, and switches, the brittlestar's (*Ophiocoma wendti*) eye, is a living blueprint. It could lead to better-crafted and more efficient telecommunication systems and optical networks. Lobster eyes, with their precise geometrical relationships of individual units, have been copied by NASA X-ray telescopes.

The human eye couldn't possibly function for assistance in survival without the cornea, iris, pupil, macula, vitreous humor, the rods and cones, the 100 million light-sensitive cells that send information to the brain through the one million fibers of the optic nerve, the brain itself, and the 100 billion nerve cells joined by some 240,000 miles of nerve fibers and the 100 trillion connections between nerve cells in the brain. As has been pointed out, "Since the eye is obviously of no use at all except in its final, complete form, how could natural selection have functioned in those initial stages of its evolution when the variations had no possible survival value...? And there are other equally provoking examples of organs and processes which seem to defy natural selection...."⁷ To imagine that vision's many essential parts could have developed over millions of years, while contributing nothing to survival until it all worked, is wishful thinking by those who will grasp at any idea to prop up a bankrupt theory.

We've already seen that there is something missing from all of the purely materialistic scientific inquiries and endeavors. Why are we interested in this pursuit? Why should the scientific facts about the universe leave such questions unanswered? There is a part of man that demands such answers, and they will never come from the examination of the physical universe itself.

Everything in the universe points to the Creator. How can we help but exclaim with the Psalmist, "As the hart pants after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God...." TBC

Quotable

Better in bitterest agony to lie
before Thy throne,
Than through much increase to be
lifted up on high,
And stand alone.

Yet best—the need that broke
me at Thy feet in voiceless prayer,
And cast my chastened heart,
a sacrifice complete,
Upon Thy care.

—John Oxenham

Q&A

QUESTION: In light of Joshua 21:43-45, and 2 Corinthians 1:20, do you have a list of the specific unfulfilled promises to Israel...not fulfilled by either the initial entering into the Promised Land, and/or by Jesus Christ Himself? It has always been very curious to me that dispensationalism, as a major, influential doctrine within the church (actually, only within the United States, to be more accurate), rose in prominence at precisely the same contemporary time period as political Zionism under Theodor Herzl and the World Jewish Congress (I refer, of course, to the initial publication and promulgation of the *Scofield Reference Bible* as the crowning achievement of the efforts introduced in America by Darby a few decades earlier in the 19th century). So, is modern Israel a move of God or a satanic counterfeit?

RESPONSE: Joshua 21:43-45 tells us, “And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.” Some believe this to mean that all prophecy concerning Israel and the land was fulfilled at this time.

Yet, the Book of Judges records that Israel did not act upon every promise of God concerning the land. Manasseh didn’t drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean...Ephraim didn’t...Zebulon didn’t...Asher didn’t...etc. (Jdgs 1:27-31 et al.). Looking at other verses, the Jews haven’t received all that God has promised (Gn 15:18-21, Nm 34:1-15, Ezk 47:13-20).

Second Corinthians 1:20 states, “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” All prophecies concerning Jesus’ life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection are “yea and amen” by the Father. But other prophecies tell of His triumphant return and earthly reign. Zechariah 12:10 says, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” This hasn’t been fulfilled.

Furthermore, some say that most, if not all, prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70. Some even say we are now in the Millennium. During the Millennium, the “wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Is 11:6). Today when the lamb dwells with the wolf, the lamb is inside the wolf!

We do not have space within the confines of a Q&A for an exhaustive list of unfulfilled prophecies, but the few examples given are a good start.

John Darby and the Brethren movement were birthed in Britain, not America. Not influential in Britain? It is the conclusion of some that British Prime Minister Lloyd George was greatly influenced by dispensational doctrine of the return of the Jews to Israel, as was Lord Balfour. It has been said that modern Israel might not have been birthed were it not for evangelical influences on the British government. Although Darby is alleged to have invented premillennialism, interpretations by a number of Puritan writers predate Darby’s by centuries (See *For Zion’s Sake*, Paul Wilkinson).

Isn’t it reasonable to consider that the “coincidental” emergence of Zionism, dispensationalism, Darby, et al., was the orchestration of the Lord? “Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Is 66:8).

QUESTION: Jesus said, “When ye fast...” (Mt 6:16), not “IF ye fast...” What are some guidelines for fasting? We know a young, married man who has more than once gone on a 40-day fast. He is now underweight yet considering another fast.

RESPONSE: Isaiah 58 has some pertinent things to say. “Is not this the fast that I have

chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” (Is 58:6). Of what benefit (other than health) is a fast if not chosen by the Lord? We believe it is only for the Holy Spirit and Scripture to tell whether, when, or for how long individuals are to fast.

Fasting is commonly promoted by demons who pose as the Virgin Mary. For example, the apparition of “Our Lady of Medjugorje” exhorts, “Christians have forgotten that they can stop war and even natural calamities by prayer and fasting” (“The Truth Will Set You Free,” TBC, 5/92).

Fasting can easily become ritual and show. Jesus warned in Matthew 6:16: “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

What does the Scripture tell us about biblical fasting? Paul told married couples, “Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (1 Cor 7:5). There are, therefore, times for fasting and prayer.

When John’s disciples questioned Jesus regarding this, the Lord replied, “Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast” (Mt 9:15).

Finally, Paul wrote in Colossians 2:20-23: “Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”

As we can clearly see, there are times to fast and there are times not to fast. There are times when fasting is helpful for spiritual growth. Unfortunately, there are also times when fasting may be motivated by the desire of the flesh to draw attention to oneself. These things should be carefully and prayerfully considered before the Lord.

QUESTION: I was appalled to see an article in the *Christian Research Journal (CRJ)* saying that (by implication) horror movies are an acceptable medium to

teach Scriptural truth. The author even says, “God himself enjoys the horror genre.” How could we benefit from these frightening, bloody movies?

RESPONSE: Screenwriter Brian Godawa authored “An Apologetic of Horror” (*CRJ*, Vol 32/No. 04, 2009). He must of necessity set aside the very plain words of Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are *of good report*; if there be any *virtue*, and if there be any *praise*, think on these things.” Godawa notes that Ephesians 5:11 tells us to “expose them” (the evil deeds), believing this is license for depicting horror. Yet, Ephesians 5:12 tells us that “it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” There is no room in this passage for dwelling upon evil, as recent movies explicitly do. Godawa does say that his premise doesn’t justify “all horror and thriller movies, in practice” (p. 51), but he doesn’t seem to understand that his position opens the door for almost anything. We know this because he lists several movies as examples of “a strongly biblical medium for God’s social commentary” (p. 50). These include *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Underworld*, *28 Days Later*, et al. All depict horror in the explicit, colorful, and bloody detail that computer graphics allow.

He goes on to say that “it is also true, honorable, and right to show the suicidal rotting flesh of Judas” (p. 48). He is simply wrong. Refer back to Philippians 4:8 and what we should think upon. No one honestly imagines the Lord saying there is benefit in viewing explicit details of the suicide of Judas or what rot, or decay, does to a human body left hanging in a tree. Godawa admits that evil thoughts and images can be an obsession for some, so why furnish explicit details?

There is a vast difference in Scripture’s clinical report of the death of Judas. By “clinical,” we mean that in Scripture, details are sparse: Judas “went and hanged himself.” In Acts 1:18 we learn that “falling headlong, he burst asunder...and all his bowels gushed out.” The Bible does not need to describe rotting flesh, the smell of decay, or the spillage from his burst body to make a point. On the contrary, the Lord does not major on graphic depictions (see *Showtime for the Sheep?*). Instead, the writers of Scripture use short and simple narration. For example, a man’s concubine was turned over to depraved individuals

who sexually abused her to the point of death. There are no details or closeups of her wounds nor description of the dismemberment and sending of body parts to all Israel (Jdgs 19:1-30). In no case does Scripture dwell on dripping blood, wounds, or the common elements of a horror movie. It is a marked contrast.

Some skeptics have called the Bible “pornography” because it unflinchingly lists the sins of those whose lives are recorded. Yet the account of the sexual relations between Lot and his two daughters is short of detail (Gn 19:31-38). Contrary to cinema and fiction, Scripture furnishes no prurient details beyond that Lot was drunk, his daughters had sex with their father, and sons were born. Unfortunately, Godawa must use hyperbole to make a point.

He calls Revelation an “epic horror fantasy sequel to Daniel, complete with science fiction special effects,” labeling the same as “darker than anything in a David Cronenberg Grand Guignol theater of blood.” Film director Cronenberg, acknowledged to be always “testing [some would say ‘trampling’] limits,” is said by a secular reviewer to be “desperate to explore the unnatural ideas rolling around in his head.” This is what Godawa compares to the Bible.

He then goes on to list the horrific events in Revelation. Again, he simply misses the fact that the Lord chose to present this without dwelling on specific details. Not only does Godawa miss this, he exaggerates. For example, “In this apocalyptic prophecy we read of a huge demonic spectacle of genetically mutated monsters chasing and tormenting screaming people” (Rv 9:1-11)... “the dragging of rotting corpses through the streets while people party over them” (Rv 11:7-13—*CRJ*, *Ibid.*, p. 46). On the contrary, Revelation 11:8 says nothing of people dragging around rotting corpses. Instead the “dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city” (Rv 11:8). Godawa adds his own details, as he adds to Revelation 9. The “locusts” of chapter 9 are certainly horrific creatures, but Godawa would imagine them as modern screen “genetically mutated monsters.” This involves great imagination and goes far beyond Scripture.

An old hymn goes, “’Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, Just to take Him at His word; Just to rest upon His promise, Just to know ‘Thus saith the Lord!’” Along these lines, can we not simply believe the plain meaning of the Holy Spirit inspired words of Philippians 4:8? Let us think on these things.

Endnotes

1. “Dawkins, Darwin’s Dangerous Disciple,” Interview with Frank Miele, <http://sceptis.ru/eng/articles/id3.php>.
2. Mortimer J. Adler, *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1967).
3. Steven M. Stanley, *Macroevolution: Pattern and Process* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1979), 39.
4. N. Heribert-Nilsson, *Synthetische Artbildung (The Synthetic Origin of Species)* (1953), 1212.
5. Stephen Jay Gould, “The Ediacaran Experiment,” *Natural History*, February 1984, 22-23.
6. Robert Lee Hotz, “A Lens into Nature’s Gifts: A Starfish Grows Tiny Crystals that far Outperform Synthetic Optics Yielding a Design Breakthrough,” <http://www.rdrop.com/~cary/html/naontech.html>.
7. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959) 320-21.

The *Avatar* Gospel

T.A. McMahon

Movies are today's most popular means of influencing cultures on a worldwide scale. They have been effective in that way for the greater part of a century. They are, and always have been, teaching machines.

Although most people regard them as simply escapist fare or a mode of entertainment, they nevertheless always teach something. That fact became shockingly clear to me in my pre-Christian days when I was in Iran as a screenwriter on a Hollywood production. The time was just prior to the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. The revolution was literally ignited by Muslim clerics who had ordered their followers to set fire to movie theaters (packed with audiences). It was a protest against the teaching and influence of Western culture contained in the films, particularly the immorality and degenerate conduct displayed. With obviously less drastic reactions and consequences, no place seems to be out of the reach of the influence of movies no matter where one travels these days.

That is certainly true of one of the most expensive films to date, the quarter-of-a-billion-dollar production of *Avatar*, which has already grossed 2 billion dollars. No film thus far has matched its stunning production value in creating a fantastic world of computer-generated characters that seamlessly match and interact with the physical actors and the world we know. Believability is the "do or die" quality of every movie of any kind, and *Avatar* makes believers of all but the most critical film goers—few of whom could complain that this extraordinary production did not give them their money's worth.

My objective in writing this article is not to complain about the movie production (I paid the matinee, senior-citizen price, so I hardly felt cheated) but rather to give my view of the theology communicated in *Avatar*. We at TBC have received questions from concerned parents who aren't sure the film would be appropriate for their young teens to see and want to know how to discuss the movie's content with them. *Avatar*'s theology is my primary concern.

First of all, it shouldn't be surprising that the beliefs of most people are not derived from Sunday school or church teaching but rather religious ideas they pick up from a wide variety of sources as they go through life. Prior to being born again and becoming a biblical Christian, for example, I had received

a great deal of religious instruction, growing up Catholic, to which I added all kinds of contrary spiritual ideas, from reincarnation to the denial of hell to the universal salvation of everyone. I've had conversations with those who claim to hold the Bible as their only source of faith and practice yet who also hold ideas they have gleaned from Oprah Winfrey or some of her New Age guests. Humanity in general seems to be a magnet for all kinds of beliefs about God, and this would include not only the very religious but the agnostic and the atheist as well.

Movies often teach theology. Some have greatly influenced our last two generations about the character and qualities of God and perhaps none more than the *Star Wars* series, which began in the late 1970s. This series promoted the supreme deity as an impersonal, amoral energy "Force" that could be tapped into and used for one's own end through mental techniques. "May the Force be with you" was even interpreted by some sincere (but sincerely wrong!) Christians as Jesus being the true "Force." Such a promotion attributes characteristics to Jesus that both distort and demean His character as presented in the Scriptures—resulting in "another Jesus." *Star Wars* wrapped the beliefs and practices of Hinduism in a high-tech, science fiction saga. Obi Wan was a sorcerer; Yoda was a yogi by design and practice, and the incredibly successful film series propelled Eastern mysticism into the minds of Western youth. *Avatar* does the same for shamanism.

Shamanism is the religion of nature and spirits and is the most widespread of all the religions in the world. It's found among every indigenous people group throughout the earth, and its beliefs and techniques are the same wherever it is found. This is due to the fact that shamanism is a practice that comes from the spirit realm, with the spirits themselves not restricted by distant geographical locations. The term *shaman* comes from the Tungus people of Siberia and has been preferred by anthropologists over "witch doctor," "medicine man," "wizard," "sorcerer," etc. According to noted authority Michael Harner, an anthropologist and shaman, "a shaman enters an altered state of consciousness at will to acquire knowledge, power, and to help other persons. The shaman has at least one, and usually more, 'spirits' in his personal service. To perform his work, the shaman depends on special, personal power, which is usually supplied by his guardian and helping spirits."

Avatar is a spectacular platform for preaching shamanism. The story line is neither unique nor complicated. A distant moon

planet called Pandora is colonized by a corporation that is mining a metal of great value for the earth, which has been ravaged by the exploitation of its own natural resources. The enterprise, however, is hampered by a tribe of indigenous humanoids called *Na'vi*, whose village and land cover the main core of the precious metal. Diplomatic attempts to persuade the *Na'vi* to resettle elsewhere have ended in failure, primarily because of the *Na'vi*'s religion of shamanism. They worship Eywa, a goddess akin to what the Greeks called Gaia, or Mother Earth. Eywa appears to be an impersonal, godlike force that is responsible for maintaining the balance of all life. Everything in Pandora is linked to Eywa mystically and biologically. The biological emphasis amplifies the critical nature of preserving the planet's physical ecological system for future survival. Demonstrating the connectedness of all life forms, the spirits of animals that are killed for food or in self-defense are addressed by the *Na'vi* either in thanksgiving or apologetically.

Nothing of the sort is found among the humans. The mining enterprise is protected by mercenary soldiers who are gearing up to remove the *Na'vi* should they ultimately refuse to vacate their land.

The hero of the movie is a paraplegic former marine (Jake Sully) who learns the way of the *Na'vi* by utilizing a *Na'vi*-human hybrid body, a creation of incredibly advanced bio-technology. It is called an *avatar*. Jake, in his avatar body, is accepted by the *Na'vi* because of initial signs that he is favored for some purpose by Eywa and the spirits.

Director and writer James Cameron makes his theological (and ecological) bent quite clear in nearly every frame of the film. The movie's title and image of the *Na'vi* are derived from the Hindu god Krishna, a blue-skinned incarnated avatar of the god Vishnu. Hinduism teaches that throughout history avatars have manifested in human and/or animal forms to restore the balance of good and evil. The emphasis on trees in the movie is consistent in all shamanism. The huge Hometree that housed the *Na'vi* clan and is destroyed in the attack by the humans is representative of Eywa providing for the *Na'vi* through "Mother" nature. The luminescent Tree of Souls, which provides direct communication with Eywa, is also a power center that can transfer souls to other bodies. In traditional shamanism, the tree is a universal communication medium for such cultures to connect with deceased shamans, ancestors, and the spirits themselves.

Cameron has added his own twist to native shamanism by having the *Na'vi*

communicate with the Eywa, spirits, and animals through fiber optics in their braided hair tails. The Na'vi plug the strands into similarly compatible devices found in animals and plants. Although at odds with the actual practice of shamanism, this does reflect the necessity of “experiencing” a god that cannot be “known” through reason, intellect, or science. It also solves a problem for Cameron the filmmaker. In what was no doubt a box office-related decision, he avoids the method commonly used by shamans to contact the spirits: inhaling or imbibing hallucinogenic drugs. Na'vi “doing drugs” would have forced *Avatar* out of a PG-13 rating, eliminating an age group that is prone to seeing such a movie many, many times, as well as being a top consumer of *Avatar*-related merchandise.

In true shamanism, there is no physical “plugging into” or direct biological connection to the spirits. The spirits are nonphysical entities. Other than the drugs that are taken to produce an altered state of consciousness, connecting with the spirits is a mental process. Yet Cameron's deviation from true shamanism ultimately leads to the belief in Eywa. Dr. Grace Augustine, the female scientist in the movie, declares that all of the so-called spiritual phenomena she has observed on Pandora can be explained biologically. In the end, however, Dr. Grace undergoes a conversion. As she lies dying beneath the Tree of Souls, her final words are those of a materialist who allows her “experience” to override her “science” as she declares her belief in the panentheist goddess of the Na'vi: “Eywa—I see her. She's real!” Grace became what C. S. Lewis described as the ideal work of Satan—a “materialist magician.” She submitted to a “Force” god without acknowledging the reality of personal spirits behind such an entity, i.e., demons. Jake, on the other hand, although he initially disdained what he called the “tree-hugging” stuff of the Na'vi, fully commits himself to their “natural” way of life and their mother goddess Eywa.

After reading dozens and dozens of comments by young people enamored with the theology in *Avatar*, it is apparent that its false gospel is finding fertile soil worldwide as it introduces and attracts millions of moviegoers to shamanism.

James Cameron has presented what the Bible calls the “doctrine of devils” promoted by Satan, the father of lies, and taught directly by demons. Cameron's pagan beliefs are diametrically opposed to what the Bible teaches. Furthermore, his idealistic view of the natural purity of an indigenous tribe such as the Na'vi is pure propaganda (see my interview with a former

Yanamamo shaman in *TBC* 11/03). The belief that naturalism produces a life of harmony, fruitfulness, and peace is a lie taught by many anthropologists yet contradicted by the experience of every shamanic society wherever they may be found. How can I be so sure? All indigenous groups are made up of people, who, like all people everywhere, are sinners. This innate evil, moreover, is compounded by seducing spirits bent on deceiving and destroying the humans who find themselves in bondage to them. No anthropologist has ever produced a tribe that was an exception to this destructive condition.

Cameron is certainly entitled to preach the shamanic gospel of *Avatar*. Christians, however, need to be aware of what they are being fed along with the overpriced popcorn. It is a general lack of discernment among them that is often maddening and spiritually treacherous for the upcoming generation of believers. The maddening part comes when professing believers attempt to read Christianity into popular movies that

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

— 1 Timothy 4:1

are thoroughly antichrist. It happened with *Star Wars*, the *Harry Potter* series, and too many others to list. It's a foregone conclusion that we will see much of the same for *Avatar*. *Christianity Today*, for example, often leads the way in anointing the world's popular delusions as Christian. In its supported blog site directed at women and titled *Hermeneutics* (ironically a play on the word that fosters accurate Bible interpretation), a female Princeton Seminary student writes the featured article, suggesting that the character of Grace (mentioned above) may have been “*Avatar*'s Christian character” and then adds a qualification, “Well, Christian-ish anyway.”

Christian-ish?! James Cameron would be appalled at the suggestion; I am angered. The only insertion of any thing “Christian” in the entire movie is the name of a floating mountain range (“Hallelujah”) and the mention of the Lord's name, which is used as a curse word. That's also a paradox for a story set more than a thousand years from today, seemingly far removed from the religious content missionaries supposedly used to “spoil the purity” of the noble savages. Although Christianity has obviously died out in the movie's future

setting, ironically its God remains in the psyche and on the foulmouthed lips of the characters in the movie.

Christianity Today, the Emerging Church Movement, Rick Warren's Global P.E.A.C.E. plan, and those among some mission and parachurch organizations (e.g., those that follow the leadership and teachings of C. Peter Wagner) have a penchant for trying to find buried nuggets of Christ in the culture, or accommodating Christianity to the culture, and vice versa. Many are about sanctifying and redeeming the paganism of a society, or at least trying to harmonize and work with all religions. This is all fodder for syncretism and ecumenism. They are contributing to the religion of the Antichrist. A. W. Tozer took such an endeavor to task by noting that Moses did not enter into a panel discussion with the Israelites for finding some spiritual merits of the golden calf, nor did Elijah trade edifying insights with the prophets of Baal, and neither did Jesus seek a meeting of the minds with the Pharisees. Furthermore, promoting a “group hug” among contradictory religions with the intention of solving the world's problems is a grand delusion at best. Isaiah, speaking for Jehovah God, makes His view absolutely clear: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this [God's] word, it is because there is no light in them” (Is 8:20).

Warnings are also clear in the Word of God that a great spiritual battle is being waged all around us, that we are in the days of rampant apostasy in the church, and that we are being subjected to an increasing antichristianity in the world. What then must a believer do? We must diligently follow the Lord's prevention and protection program, the heart of which is found in Psalm 1: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” But certainly there's more: prayer and fellowship, for example. We need to circle the wagons at times—for spiritual protection, counsel, encouragement, and ministry to one another. If such things become our disciplined practice of life, though the Apostasy dries up the spiritual environment around us, we and our families nevertheless shall be fruitful in the Lord.

TBC

Quotable

Worship is far more than prayer, or the enjoyment of the most helpful ministry. It is the Spirit's adoring occupation with God Himself, not merely in gratitude for His gifts, but because of Who He is. It is this that the Father seeks. Worship is lowered as we become occupied with the externals, even of Christianity. It reaches its highest points as our spirits are absorbed in contemplation of the matchless perfections of the eternal God, in light of the Cross and the empty tomb.

—H. A. Ironside

Q&A

QUESTION: I recently received my first print newsletter in the mail, and one of the letters raised my eyebrows a bit. First of all, I appreciate your transparency in publishing letters that dispute or oppose you. However, in this case, my mother found it interesting and pointed out that the specific topics of dissension were edited out. I assume this was done for space constraints....The gentleman in question stated that he is a retired pastor with a Master's Degree in Pastoral Theology and has studied the Bible for 60 years, 24 of which he has spent reading the Bible cover to cover annually. His contention is that many people have taken mere theories as Biblical truth, and apparently he is including your ministry in perpetuating these false doctrines. Considering both the fruit of your ministry here at TBC and his background, I don't want to jump to conclusions either way right off the bat. What I'm very curious about is exactly what teachings of yours he is claiming to contest as falsehoods or misinterpretations. The fact that they were left out of the printed letter, and that he wishes to distance himself from you, makes me slightly uneasy. If he is the one who is mistaken, though, I can understand you not wanting to take up extra space in the newsletter detailing a pointless argument. Scores of credentials and a lifetime of study don't necessarily mean a person is infallible.

RESPONSE: We appreciate the admonition for greater clarity. As you also point out, our space is limited, in view of the large number of questions and requests we receive—we try to fit as much as we can in the space available. Because we were presenting the letter on the Letters page and not in the Q&A section, it was decided to omit all

of the “objectionable doctrines,” since we were not going to offer a response at that time and hoped to avoid confusion.

The letter writer listed the following as objectionable doctrines: “The Gap Theory,” “the origin of Satan,” the “Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory,” the “acceptance of Christ by the Jews,” the “earthly reign of Christ, and the millennium.” In the next paragraph, the writer noted that he found “no scripture anywhere in the Bible to support any of these teachings, except the millennium.”

We are a bit puzzled by these statements, as we have never promoted “the Gap Theory” and clearly have noted its unbiblical nature. Further, it is difficult to respond concerning “the origin of Satan.” There are no details given to show where we might err concerning this topic.

Concerning the Pre-Trib Rapture, we stand guilty of teaching the same, and numerous Q&As and articles attest to why we consider it biblical (see 2/88, 7/90, 12/90, 9/91, 9/98, 9/01, 4/08, 3/09, and others). Our online radio archives also contain a number of programs in which we discuss the biblical reasons for this position.

Regarding the “acceptance of Christ by the Jews,” we also are handicapped by lack of specific details. We recognize that some falsely teach that the Lord has nothing more to do with Israel. The Scriptures clearly prophesy the rejection of Christ at His first appearance (Is 53:3), and His acceptance by Israel at His triumphant return. Zechariah 12:10 tells us, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” Further, Paul affirms, “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom 11:26).

Finally, we have discussed the biblical teachings on the Millennium, most recently in the February 2010 issue of the newsletter. May the Lord encourage us with the certainty of His Word.

Question: I have been challenged by a Catholic regarding the supposed miracle of “Our Lady of Guadalupe” and the image of the Virgin Mary that appeared on the cape of the peasant Juan Diego. They said that the endurance of this account and Diego's canonization by John Paul II (July 31, 2002) is evidence

enough of the truth of this story. What do you say?

RESPONSE: Even those described as devout Catholics have long questioned “Our Lady of Guadalupe.” The head of the Spanish Colony's Franciscans, Francisco de Bustamante, read a sermon in 1556 before the Spanish Viceroy and the Royal Audience. Bustamante disparaged the origins of the image and contradicted Archbishop Alonso de Montúfar's previous sermon of two days earlier. Bustamante stated: “The devotion that has been growing in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady, called of Guadalupe, in this city is greatly harmful for the natives, because it makes them believe that the image painted by Marcos the Indian is in any way miraculous” (Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997). The name “Marcos” may have meant Marcos Cipac de Aquino, an Aztec painter active in Mexico when the icon first appeared.

The fourth viceroy of Mexico, Martín de León, a Dominican, condemned the “cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe” in 1611 as a syncretized worship of the Aztec goddess Tonantzin (Ibid.). Catholic missionary and anthropologist Bernardino de Sahagún agreed with de León's judgment, writing that the Tepeyac shrine, although popular, remained a concern because shrine visitors called the Virgin of Guadalupe, “Tonantzin.” Sahagún recognized that some worshipers believed “Tonantzin” meant “Mother of God” in the native Nautl language, but he pointed out this was simply not true (http://hispanic.cc/la_reina_de_mexico.htm).

The existence of Juan Diego (the Spanish equivalent of “John Doe”) is also suspect. During the 1800s, Mexico City Bishop Labastida appointed historian Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta, another devout Catholic, to investigate. Icazbalceta's confidential bishop's report clearly doubted the existence of Juan Diego (Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta, “Juan Diego y las Apariciones del Tepeyac,” Mexico City: Publicaciones para el Estudio Científico de las Religiones, 2002, pages 3-8). David Brading of Cambridge University (among others) points out that the image of the virgin was supposed to have been miraculously imprinted on Juan Diego's cape in 1531 (Steinfels, “Beliefs: As sainthood approaches for Juan Diego, some scholars call his story a ‘pious fiction,’” *New York Times*, 7/20/02). Nevertheless, the first recorded mention of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe doesn't appear until 1555 or 1556.

Further, Stafford Poole of Los Angeles,

another Catholic historian/priest, points out that Juan Diego himself doesn't appear in any account until 1648 (Stevenson, "Canonization Of First Indian Saint Draws Questions In Mexico," Associated Press, 7/1/02), the date when Miguel Sanchez, a Spanish theological writer in Mexico, mentions Diego in his book *The Apparitions of the Virgin Mary*.

Father Poole stated in *Commonweal*, a Catholic biweekly, "More than forty documents are said to attest to the reality of Juan Diego, yet not one of them can withstand serious historical criticism" (Vol. 129, 6/14/02).

QUESTION: How can you say that Adam wasn't with Eve (TBC Extra, 1/09) during the temptation? The English text of the Bible clearly says "she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her..." (Genesis 3:6). Why also do you appeal to the Hebrew as if the English translation isn't sufficient?

RESPONSE: We "appealed" to the Hebrew because John Eldredge supported his premise by referencing the same. We believe he is in error. As we noted, the literal rendering of the Hebrew means "took away, carried away, or removed." This is contrary to what is argued in *Wild at Heart*. We do not need the Hebrew, however, to point out the falsity of the idea that Adam idly stood by during Eve's temptation.

To begin, the English "with" is not limited by geography. One might say I was "with" my wife all day when most of the time she may be in a very different part of the home or the yard. Adam was "with Eve" in the garden but not necessarily at her side. Biblically, the adversary is at his best picking off those whom he would devour when they are alone. Indeed, chapter 3 begins with the serpent asking Eve a question, and she answers as if she is the only one present, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Gn 3:2-3). Yet, in Genesis 2:16-17, we read "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

During the dialogue between Eve and the serpent, there is no indication from Scripture that Adam is present.

One last clear statement of Scripture must also be considered. The Lord pronounced Adam's punishment because,

"thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Gn 3:17). In contrast to Eve, Adam hadn't "hearkened unto the voice of the serpent." The inspired writer Paul tells us "Adam was not deceived..." (1 Tm 2:14). With eyes wide open, he joined his wife in sin.

QUESTION: Pat Robertson has stated that the earthquake that devastated Haiti is a result of Haitians making a pact with the devil in order to obtain Satan's help in overthrowing the French. Is there any basis to this story?

RESPONSE: Robertson's statement jumbled up several facts of history. He noted that the Haitians were under the heel of the French, "Napoleon the Third and whatever." He probably meant Napoleon Bonaparte, but since this alleged pact was supposedly enacted in 1791, the first Napoleon didn't come into power until several years later. Napoleon III didn't assume power until 1848, years after Haiti had won their freedom.

There is a basis for considering some kind of a "pact" when reading the prayer of Dutty Boukman (a Haitian slave leader), which was uttered during the "Bois Caiman Ceremony," a Vodou rite. Boukman addresses a "god" who is different from that of the Catholic French. He prays, "The white man's god asks him to commit crimes. But the god within us wants to do good. Our god, who is so good, so just, He orders us to revenge our wrongs. It's He who will direct our arms and bring us the victory. It's He who will assist us. We all should throw away the image of the white men's god who is so pitiless. Listen to the voice for liberty that speaks in all our hearts" (<http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Boukman>).

The "god" to which Boukman prays orders "revenge," an attribute quite different from the God of the Bible, who states, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom 12:19).

The religion of Voudon acknowledges one main deity and several demi-gods called "loas." These loas have a function in Voudon similar to the Saints in Catholicism. Some historians estimate that by the 1750s, 30,000 slaves a year were bringing the religion of Voudon into Haiti. Among the Dahomey tribal groups, "Voodoo"

(Voudon) means "gods or Spirits." Practitioners believed that these spirits had the ability to enter the worshippers. Boukman prays to a god who is "within us," a god who is within them as a result of a Voudoun ceremony.

That's enough to warrant judgment, but then the "whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 Jn 5:19). Consequently, Haiti certainly isn't the only nation to qualify for judgment.

Reflections on a Reasonable Faith

Dave Hunt

A false idea exists in both the world and in the church that faith and reason do not go together when, in fact, one cannot exist without the other. When God called out, “Adam, where art thou?” it was not Adam’s physical location He was asking about but his moral and spiritual relationship with his Creator. “What happened to that relationship we once had, Adam? I miss it and am grieved.” As a bumper sticker says, “When you feel far from God, guess who moved?”

We move on to the prodigal son, who demanded to receive his inheritance before the designated time, which would have been after the death of his parents. Instead of investing his inheritance wisely, he spent it all on harlots and wild living. When those he thought were his friends saw that he had exhausted his resources, they deserted him, leaving him destitute, thus showing what kind of “friends” he had accumulated on his downward path to poverty and shame.

God wants to get our attention. “Come now, and let us reason together,” says God to His wayward children. His Word has much to say to us in regard to this exhortation. He wants us to meditate upon it day and night. My earliest memories of my father were of seeing him on his knees with his open Bible. I never had to try to memorize the Bible. I had heard it so many times in our family devotions and had read it so often in my personal study that it became a part of me.

A wedding is coming. It will take place in heaven. As the hymn says, “What a day that will be, when my Jesus I shall see. When He takes me by the hand and leads me through the Promised Land...what a glorious day that will be!” This should be our eager anticipation.

When someone asks, “How soon do you think the Rapture will be?” I often respond, “How soon do you want it to be?” The story is told of a preacher asking his audience, “How many of you want to go to heaven?” All the children raised their hands except one small boy sitting in the front row. When the meeting ended, the preacher sat beside the lad and asked, “Don’t you want to go to heaven?”

“Oh, yes, sir,” he replied.

“But when I asked all those who wanted to go to heaven to raise their hands, you didn’t raise yours.”

“Oh, sir, I thought you meant right now.”

Of course we want to go to heaven, but there is so much we want to do on earth first that we lose our sense of urgency. We are the Bride of Christ. How tragic if we lack the eagerness of anticipation that the bride ought to have as the day of her wedding draws near! On the one hand, we desire to be with Christ. We know that the Lord loves us, but to think of standing before the I AM is awesome beyond belief. May we all look with renewed longing for His promised coming.

It is amazing that God wants to reason with us, His creatures. The Word speaks much of *understanding*. What does this mean? God may explain why He has done certain things, but He will not consult with

SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART: TRY ME, AND KNOW MY THOUGHTS: AND SEE IF THERE BE ANY WICKED WAY IN ME, AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY EVERLASTING.

— *Psalms 139:23-24*

us about anything nor debate issues. He does not look to us for advice but delights in our obedience. We are to love God with our whole heart and love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus said this was the essence of the law and the prophets.

God has no obligation to explain Himself to us. Even so, God says, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Is 1:18). I think this is His way of trying to share His heart with us. I often think of how great God is and marvel that He would desire our fellowship, but such is His heart. With salvation, all things are become new, and that includes the beginning of an intimate relationship as between father and child.

Scripture says, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Prv 4:7). God is not trying to force anything upon us, but he wants us to understand and to delight in the relationship that He desires to have with His children.

Of course, faith is not a leap in the dark and the hope of a soft landing. We must seek to know where God wants us to go and what His will is for our lives. He *wants* us to know. He wants us to understand. He does not wish to treat us as slaves

but as dearest friends. How astonishing! How glorious! Abraham was called “the friend of God.” Jesus said to His disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants...but friends” (Jn 15:15). This is hard to fathom—that we could be God’s friends, and not only His friends but the dearest objects of His heart’s affection.

How well George Matheson expressed this truth, which came, as he said, “like a dayspring on high”:

Oh, Love that will not let me go!
I rest my weary soul on thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flick-ring torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine’s blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life’s glory dead,
And from the ground there
 blossoms red
Life that shall endless be. Amen.

We are commanded to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. This is not a suggestion from God but a command. Jesus said, “When you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, or your heavenly Father will not forgive you.” That’s hard for us to face, but the language is clear. Jesus goes on to explain that “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt 6:15). This is part of what we know as the “Sermon on the Mount.” It pierces our hearts. I remember a long cab ride when I was trying to explain the gospel to the driver. He claimed that he had never sinned. I quoted the same scripture to him and asked him if he had followed this admonition: “Do you love your neighbor as yourself?”

With a short laugh, he said, “I haven’t done that for one second.”

“Well,” I replied, “the words of Christ are clear: if you hold anything against

anyone, you must not expect God to forgive you any of your sins.” Of course, without the new life that Christ’s death imparts, such forgiveness was beyond his ability. What was impossible for the cab driver is incumbent upon us as followers of Christ.

This is difficult to face. What we call “The Lord’s Prayer” is really the prayer that Christ gave to His disciples and to us as well. We can address the Almighty God:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Mt 6:9-13)

I often think how amazing it is that we could have a *personal* relationship with God and that He should call us His friends. This is awesome! I often tell God, “We are such pitiful creatures. You are so great. How can we even dare talk to You? You are without beginning or end; You are infinite in power and wisdom, yet You call us Your friends. What gracious condescension! O give me the ability to respond in like manner!”

The Psalmist said,

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. (Ps 8:3-6)

Why should God want us to love Him? What could our love mean to Him? He really doesn’t need anything from us. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwelt in perfect harmony, complete in fellowship with one another for all eternity past. There is no question that man was made not only in the image of God but for a unique companionship with Him. That’s too much for us to even begin to understand!

Surely God didn’t *need* a companion in man. It was a special relationship that He desired. That relationship was lost when man sinned and God could no longer have fellowship with him. We don’t understand

this loss, but I believe that every human being feels it. How deeply God himself must have felt that loss!

There is an emptiness in every human heart that only God can fill. God and man were meant to dwell in fellowship—in companionship. The angelic beings who did not follow Lucifer in his fall could never have this relationship with God, for as sinless beings, they could never experience the redeemed sinner’s debt of gratitude. Only man could (Lk 7:47).

The breach between God and man affected the entire universe. Romans 8 says that the whole creation groans in travail, waiting “for the manifestation of the sons of God.” I believe every human being knows that something is wrong with this universe that goes deeper than the headlines about war, murder, rape, robbery, and all of the evils in human society. There is something else behind all of this.

The old writers knew this and tried to

BUT KNOW THAT THE LORD HATH SET APART HIM THAT IS GODLY FOR HIMSELF: THE LORD WILL HEAR WHEN I CALL UNTO HIM.

— *Psalm 4:3*

express it. Dickens put it into his writings, as did Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and many others. In contrast, the vast majority of films that Hollywood turns out today are not only repulsively immoral but generally shallow in their expression of what humanness is all about, and fail to reveal the emptiness in man’s heart. Many of our older writers presented the evil of man’s heart and, although they were not Christians, their writings were filled with examples pitting good against evil. That does not come out in the popular novels and movies of today, where God is not honored but often derided. They reflect God’s sad commentary: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps 14:1; 53:1).

When we present the gospel, we must be prepared to reason. We know that the Word of God is living and powerful, the sword of the Spirit, yet we are given the privilege of sharing it with others. We must share the *reasons* for believing in God: “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pt 3:15). This raises a question. Why would

anyone ask us for a “reason”? It presumes that we must have given some occasion to arouse the question—hopefully, the personal witness of our godly life.

We often hesitate to share the gospel because we don’t know how to begin. I think of the illustration my father used. He told of the barber who was shaving a man and raised the open blade above his head and said, “Are you prepared to die?” The man ran out of the barbershop in terror. Obviously, this is not a good opening in presenting the gospel!

I remember a well-dressed, well-coifed, and obviously wealthy woman sitting next to me on a plane. I tried a couple of times to open a conversation, but she remained aloof. I prayed to the Lord, “I have tried twice to find a way to talk with this woman so that I could present the gospel to her. If anything is going to happen, this woman is going to have to open the door.” I was reading Richard Dawkins’s book, *The Selfish Gene*, and had it in the pocket of the seat in front of me. I pulled it out to read it and my seat companion looked at it and said, “Who would write a book like that?” That was the opening I was waiting for, and we had a wonderful conversation. She turned out to be a seeking soul.

There are those all around us who are waiting for someone to present the gospel to them. I once sat next to a man who was contemplating suicide. He was certainly ripe for the gospel. If we want to share the Good News with someone, the Lord will open the door. I do not advise trying to force the gospel on anyone. Let the Holy Spirit do His work. We must seek God’s direction if we are to be about His business effectively.

Modern man has no time for God. An old hymn asks, “What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be. One day your heart will be asking, ‘What will He do with me?’” For all eternity, lost souls will be haunted by the realization that heaven’s door could have been opened to them by the Savior they rejected.

Happily, we can still proclaim that the door remains open and whosoever will may enter in. How much longer this may be the case we cannot tell. While there is still time, every true Christian ought to be alert to eagerly seize every opportunity that presents itself to share the good news of the gospel. It is our Lord’s “reasonable” expectation. **TBC**

Quotable

Murmuring not only repudiates God's work in us, but it also tarnishes God's work through us.

Jerry Benjamin, Little Nuggets Series

Q&A

QUESTION: Our church has recently introduced an Easter service called Tenebrae. It began as a solemn service that included worship songs and scripture that led into a contemplation of the sufferings of Christ during his crucifixion. This year they are having "stations that show the 'Way of the Cross'" (quoted from service outline). A table as you walk in represents the Passover Supper; at the doors, the essence of wintergreen will be offered to mask the smell of death; the four stations: Humility—foot washing (reenactment of disciples feet being washed by Jesus); Fellowship with the Father—prayer station; Apathy— Pilate washing his hands/allow people to do the same; Suffering—table with crown of thorns and bloody shroud, bowl of nails for everyone to pickup. There will be a recreated tomb [with] soldiers rolling a stone over [the entrance]. There will be 30-40 minutes given for everyone to go through the stations and then the service begins. As an ex-Catholic, I would really like your input on this. We are told to remember the Lord in communion; is there any value in this kind of service? This is confusing!

RESPONSE: What your church is doing, while sincere, is rife with potential problems, in our opinion. Although your fellowship is putting together all kinds of things that it hopes will increase a person's interest (some may even believe that these will increase one's spirituality and knowledge) in the Lord and in what He has done for them, the program may have the opposite effect. Here are a few things to consider.

The New Testament gives no such examples of remembrance productions or ceremonies for the edification of believers. Although baptism and communion have become "efficacious" rituals and ceremonies in much of the church today, that's not what we find in the Scriptures. Baptism and communion are simply personal ordinances to be followed. Baptism is a public declaration of one's commitment to Christ; communion is an act of remembering Christ's sacrifice for humanity.

Most of what you described from the service outline has been taken originally from Catholic and Orthodox traditions and rituals. Since they were created to support their works-oriented way of salvation, they have little if any value in leading a person to the biblical gospel or biblical truth.

Nearly all church productions are of poor quality, even embarrassing. Yet even if they were magnificent, they would still be greatly inferior to the preaching and teaching of the Word. Jesus said, "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." It is God's Word that sets a person free, not man's ceremonies and productions.

The Scriptures give us the most direct way of knowing and believing what Christ has accomplished for humanity on the Cross. They are *God's* words given to the writers of the Old and New Testaments. As a person reads or hears God's words, the Holy Spirit brings conviction and enables one to understand the words of God.

The subjective nature of presentations such as you describe cannot teach *objective* truth—only the Word can do this. People respond to the imagery presented in the productions experientially. It would be like you and me describing a painting that we had both seen. Our evaluations would be different because they would be based upon our impressions, feelings, and other subjective criteria. If, however, we saw a sign next to the painting that said, "For sale," we would both know exactly what the sign was communicating because of the objective meaning of words.

When Moses went up to Mount Sinai, he was given objective instructions in words that he was told to write down. On the other hand, the Israelites, with Aaron's help, were involved in a production. They opted for the subjective way of paganism and idolatry. Sadly, at the very least, the church is unwittingly moving in that direction.

Another problem with so-called sacred ceremonies is that most people "feel" they are being spiritually edified or that they have had a legitimate spiritual experience; thus, they have pleased (or have drawn closer to) God in some way. No. These are experiential acts of the flesh, which the Word says, "profits nothing" ("It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"—John 6:63).

Anything that attempts to supplement the Word through productions, ceremonies, processions, rituals, etc., in order to encourage people to believe in what it says, is at best adding a secondhand,

fleshly representation of what the Bible teaches. At worst, such productions mislead people into thinking that the activity itself has some efficacious spiritual value, thus preventing them from worshiping the Lord "in spirit and in truth," which believers are commanded to do (John 4:23).

QUESTION: After suffering with congestion and a sinus infection, I decided to try using a neti pot...a system of nasal irrigation using warm water and a saline solution. I found instant relief that lasted several hours. However, this morning...I discovered its ties to yoga. Apparently, neti is one of six purification techniques performed prior to practicing yoga as a way of preparing the body for the yoga practice. My intent is strictly medicinal, but do its ties to yoga serve as warning that this is a practice that should be avoided?

RESPONSE: The neti pot is just one method of "irrigating" the nasal passages. Another includes using a bulb syringe to introduce a therapeutic liquid solution into the nasal cavities. Some believe this may cleanse and remove infectious microorganisms from the nasal passageways, reduce the frequency and duration of colds, and alleviate the effects of allergies. Although "yogis" place a spiritual emphasis upon this procedure, it remains a natural process using elements of God's creation. Similarly, yoga involves stretching exercises. It is not the "stretching" that is in question but the occult meaning behind the stretches that should concern us. Yet no one need use any element of yoga (such as a mantra) in order to stretch one's muscles, a healthful exercise that may benefit the body.

There are many procedures that might be used by those practicing yoga. Just as yoga teaches meditation, so the Scriptures also teach "meditation." There is a vast difference, however, between what the Bible teaches regarding meditation (Joshua 1:8, Psalm 104:34, etc.) and the teachings of yoga. Medicinal techniques (such as the neti pot) may be used in yoga and other unbiblical practices. Those who practice yoga may also drive automobiles. Their use of a natural process created by God (i.e., internal combustion) doesn't preclude usage by a Christian. There is much in this world that is neutral but that may be used in a corrupt manner.

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:20, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor."

Some people mistakenly think the vessels of gold and silver are to honor, while those of wood and earth are to dishonor. Not so. There are vessels of gold and silver that are also to dishonor and those of wood and earth that are to honor. The key is in the usage. In a similar manner, irrigation of the nasal passage is a simple medical preventive procedure, and we don't believe the corrupt use by those practicing yoga precludes us from using the technique, but for a far different reason. If the neti pot itself, due to the fact that it was introduced through Ayurvedic medicine, remains an issue, why not simply use a bulb syringe? The potential benefit would be the same and there certainly wouldn't be any connotation of using a device developed by practitioners of yoga.

QUESTION: I think it is stunning that... the most influential Christians of the past 2,000 years have been Augustinians. Which Arminian writers can you name of the stature of Augustine, Aquinas, Edwards, Calvin, Luther, Warfield, MacArthur, Sproul, Spurgeon, John Piper, John Murray, Hodge, Whitefield, Tyndale, the Puritans, J. I. Packer, Zwingli, Knox, almost every single missionary from the modern missions movement, etc.? I can think of precious few Arminians who come anywhere near the theological insight of these people. [Furthermore] however you understand Romans 9, why does Paul insert the following phrase right after he says that "God has mercy on whom He wills and He hardens whom He wills": "You will say to me then, Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" (Romans 9:19). Could this be any more clear, brothers? Explain why Paul would say this if he weren't responding to the Arminian idea that God should give everyone a chance?

RESPONSE: Your statement that "the most influential Christians of the past 2,000 years have been Augustinians" does injustice to history. "Almost every single missionary"? The Moravians, under the leadership of Nicholas Von Zinzendorf, are viewed as the founders of modern missions. The Moravians were under suspicion because they were not Calvinists. It was the saintly behavior of Moravian missionaries that impressed John Wesley by their peace (which he lacked) during the ferocious storm that threatened to sink the ship in which they traveled. It was from John and Charles Wesley, who were so "methodical" in their service to God, that "Methodist" became the name

of those congregations that sprang from their ministry.

Dwight L. Moody served the Lord faithfully, and his ministry was instrumental in the salvation of many. It was Moody whose preaching was the catalyst for the conversion of the father of C. T. Studd and subsequently his sons. C. T. Studd founded Heart of Africa Mission, now known as Worldwide Evangelization for Christ.

A. B. Simpson was the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Paul Rader influenced Paul Fleming to eventually found New Tribes Mission, which is now sending forth multitudes of native missionaries who show promise of surpassing the tally of Western missionaries who preceded them. What about Jack Wyrzten and Harry Bollback, who founded Word of Life, which has planted hundreds of churches, has sent many missionaries, and has established Bible training centers in many nations? There were quite a few Puritan writers who wrote of their disagreements with Augustine, particularly concerning prophecy.

Regarding Romans 9:19, we know that it is not wise to single out one verse apart from full context. The issue of Jacob and Esau and their being loved or hated by God before their birth has occupied more than one discussion throughout history. If one confines the argument to portions of Romans 9, it does sound like God arbitrarily selects some for salvation and others for damnation, but Romans 9 does not occur in a vacuum, and the rest of Scripture furnishes the balance. God's foreknowledge enters into the equation at this point. Some theologians have stated that it would be accurate to translate the passage, "Jacob have I chosen, but Esau have I rejected." Specifically, in the case of Esau, the implication of "rejected" is a judgment based upon knowledge of his actions. God, who declares "the end from the beginning," (Isaiah 46:10) knew, before they were born, the course each child would take.

The example is also given of Israelis, who are currently "blinded" (Romans 11:7). Yet they, too, have the possibility of repenting and returning to God "if they abide not still in unbelief" (11:23). It doesn't sound as though God arbitrarily relegates individuals to perform a role no matter what. Otherwise, there would be no "if." As we have pointed out before, if there were no moral response possible on man's part, "choose you this day" (Joshua 24:15) would be impossible.

Romans 9:19 in context gives the example of Pharaoh. Verses 32-33 furnish

more information. Within the confines of Romans 9 we clearly see both the sovereignty of God *and* the accountability of man: "Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but...by the works of the law.... They stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and *whosoever believeth* on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 9:32-33). We see that the promise is to "whosoever" believes on him. We see a "seeking" but also a rejection of that seeking because "they sought it not by faith."

Look also at John 3:14-15. The Lord Jesus utters this amazing promise with the historical example of Moses lifting "up the serpent in the wilderness...." In Numbers 21:4-9 we find that *anyone* bitten by the serpent was simply to look at the serpent on the pole to save his life. Nothing a person could do, no antivenom he could concoct, no tourniquet he could apply, would otherwise save him. Yet, *all* could look. The Lord Jesus identifies Himself with the serpent on the pole and says, "whosoever" believes will be saved. The natural, logical, and biblical conclusion is that the invitation is open to all.

The Value of Suffering

T. A. McMahon

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. —1 Peter 4:12-14

The topic of this article is intimidating for me personally. What would I, or, for that matter, nearly anyone else who lives in the U.S., know about suffering and persecution for the name of Christ? Anyone who reads *The Voice of the Martyrs* magazine knows that we experience nothing comparable to the persecuted saints in other places.

Of course, that's not the only kind of suffering the Scriptures address. There is suffering due to physical afflictions, infirmities, suffering in doing good, suffering as a consequence of one's own sin, suffering according to the will of God, sufferings of trials, satanic afflictions, collective suffering in fellowship with other believers, etc.

I had a bout with a physical affliction not too long ago, yet I wouldn't compare my suffering to what many I know are going through nor to the suffering of those who write to TBC for prayer concerning their own physical ailments. The reason I believe the Lord put it on my heart to write this article has little to do with my own situation or anyone else's. I'm concerned about the prevailing attitude in American Christendom germane to suffering, which is, "Avoid it at all costs!"

Although part of me wants to add an "amen" to such thinking, I know that it doesn't reflect what the Bible teaches. In fact, such erroneous thinking will have disastrous effects. It is an insidious leaven that will distort one's relationship with the Lord and will ultimately affect one's walk. Moreover, a wrong view of suffering will greatly hinder a believer's true understanding of God and the truth of His Word.

Suffering is a consequence of sin. It did not exist before sin entered the heart of mankind. Genesis chapter 1 indicates that God's creation prior to the disobedience of Adam and Eve was "very good," that is, perfect in every way. Sin changed all of that for all creation. Suffering followed the inescapable and deadly virus of sin. Even

so, God, in His foreknowledge of what man would do and what the consequences would be, provided the solution for the sins of mankind through Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. Divine justice was perfectly satisfied through our Savior's full payment for our sins. Nevertheless, temporal suffering remains. Why?

The redemption provided by Jesus Christ, although complete, is still a *choice* for sinners to reject or to receive by faith. Christ's gift of salvation will be available for humanity until the last willing soul repents and believes. Until then, the choice to sin and its consequence of suffering will remain a temporal fact of life.

Although the world can point to some successes in minimizing suffering, its most noble and far-reaching attempts do little to either confine the amount or to cover the extent of it. The all-pervasive pseudoscience of psychotherapy, for example, is a multi-billion-dollar industry tilting at the windmill of alleviating mental suffering. To end *all* suffering is clearly beyond the capacity of humanity, yet the presumptuous efforts continue.

That's the secular world's attitude, but what about the thinking among the religious? Buddhists believe that *desire* is the cause of all suffering and therefore teaches that ceasing to desire solves the problem. Hindus hope for the elimination of suffering through a process of reincarnations. They believe that each improved go-round will supposedly lessen and eventually end all suffering. That's what yoga is all about.

What is the view among Christians? Most reflect the world's thinking and actions, to some degree, rather than what the Bible teaches. This has led to serious doctrinal errors among many who claim to be biblical Christians. Perhaps the most widespread promotion of this is in the "healing and prosperity" movement that commands a large part of so-called Christian television (see *The Seduction of Christianity*, resource pages). Followers of this movement promote the false idea that suffering was done away with at the Cross. Therefore, this teaching claims, issues that produce suffering are caused by a lack of faith on the part of the sufferer. As error begets error, the proponents of "healing and prosperity" distort biblical faith into a *method* that can be used to ward off illness and bring about riches.

The whole process works its way into a form of religious and mind science, thereby turning God into an entity or force that works through spiritual laws, especially by faith, which Christians and even pagans can apply. This has led to the doctrine that one's *belief* is the determiner of one's condition:

thinking that you have an illness is "negative" thinking, which causes the illness. Positive thinking, on the other hand, brings about good health and prosperity. Mankind, in this system, becomes the arbiter of his condition by his thoughts (see *The Secret Seduction*, resource pages). We're told that this is the way God works and that we, too, can do the same as "gods under God." In addition to being completely blasphemous and a deadly form of occultism that deters people from seeking medical help, the healing and prosperity movement spawns ultimate rebellion in the name of God.

Suffering is a condition of life to which we are all subjected. How we understand it is crucial to how we deal with it. In suffering, and in much else included in the Word of God, we need to look to the Lord for understanding: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7). Let's begin our "getting" with what is obvious in Scripture.

God hasn't completely eliminated suffering from anyone's life. Jesus, who is both God and the perfect, sinless Man, nevertheless suffered as a man on this earth. All the patriarchs suffered; Job suffered; all the apostles suffered; Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, suffered; the disciples suffered, and Paul gives us some fear-provoking details of what he himself suffered. We understand the *origin* of suffering and the *fact* of suffering—but why would God allow it in the lives of those who love Him? Knowing what the Scriptures teach about the character of God, we can conclude that if there were no value in allowing humanity (and especially those who love Him) to suffer, God would not allow it.

Scripture, however, sets the conditions and the time frame. Suffering is temporal for all and eternal for some. For believers, it will cease at eternity's door (Revelation 21:4); for those who reject God's salvation through Jesus Christ, suffering will be everlasting (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). What then of the suffering today of both the lost and those who love the Lord?

For those who have not yet turned to the Lord for His salvation, their condition of suffering often creates compelling opportunities for them to cry out to God for His help. To those who do so in truth, He shows His mercy for their temporal plight and provides grace for their new life in Christ and their eternal destiny (Acts 2:21). But what of the temporal suffering of those who have been born of the Spirit and have received the gift of eternal life? What possible value could there be in their suffering?

To borrow part of a verse from the Apostle Paul, “Much in every way!” The problem is, however, that other than in general, the *details* of God’s specific purposes for the suffering of a believer, with few exceptions, are beyond our ability to discern. The general purposes, however, abound throughout the pages of Scripture.

God’s purpose for allowing suffering in Job’s life is made clear to us and to him. A closer relationship with the Lord is the outcome: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). He discovered during his affliction—during his intense preoccupation with himself—that his personal knowledge of God was greatly constricted by his self-life. Although God restored to Job far more than Satan destroyed in his life, Job’s material gain could not be compared to the temporal and eternal gain and value of his more intimate relationship with the Lord. Job’s suffering experience speaks to us about our own God-restricting preoccupation with self.

The epistle to the Hebrews was written primarily to Jewish Christians who were being persecuted by their legalistic kinsmen, and many were consequently pressured into slipping away from living out what they had been taught in the faith (Hebrews 2:1). Yet those sufferers were *exhorted to steadfastness* by the example of earlier saints who suffered even more: “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings...bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned...sawn asunder...tempted...slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins...destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts...in mountains...in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise” (Hebrews 11:35-39).

What value can we find in what these saints who are included in the “Hall of Faith” suffered? On a personal basis, we can only guess, although it’s a given that the Holy Spirit used their testimony to greatly encourage the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews, and to us as well.

Just so there is no confusion, a couple of qualifications are necessary here. The saints referred to in Hebrews are simply those true believers of old, just as everyone today who has been saved by faith alone in the finished

work of Christ our Savior is a saint. That’s a biblical saint. In my youth as a Roman Catholic, I collected devotional cards of canonized “saints.” It was commonly taught that those “saints” who suffered the most were the most saintly. Many of them contributed to their own suffering by purposefully inflicting pain on themselves. Why? The Catholic Church teaches that it is through personal suffering, either on earth or in Purgatory (where supposedly sins need to be completely purged before anyone can enter Heaven) that sins are expiated. All of this is a rejection of the gospel and a perversion of biblical suffering.

The Apostle Paul’s incredibly productive and exemplary life features a litany of suffering that has been referred to as the “perils of Paul.” Just listing them all would fill up the rest of this article; even so, here are a few examples: Paul was whipped, beaten, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked, adrift at sea, dangers in journeys, weariness, painfulness, sleeplessness, often in hunger, thirst, in cold and nakedness (2 Corinthians 11:22-27). He went through mental anguish and physical afflictions yet he could declare in absolute truth: “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (2 Corinthians 12:10). How could that be? He tells us: “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

If Paul’s attitude seems strange or foreign to us, it could be because, although we may know Jesus personally, we don’t know Him well enough to have experienced the depths of His power in our lives. It may also be that we don’t understand how much Paul wanted everything in his (and our!) brief temporal life to contribute to his life in Christ, at present, surely—and for eternity, especially. That rings out in his words: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10). His heart in this and his eternal perspective are also reflected when he exulted, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). “[W]hether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8). This reveals a profound love for Jesus that is missing in many of our lives. Paul’s great desire was for all believers to follow him in the intimate love and personal identification he had experienced with Jesus. Paul was looking forward to far greater experiences throughout eternity!

When Paul wrote regarding his ministry to the Colossians of his rejoicing “in my

sufferings for you” and admonished them to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24), he certainly wasn’t saying (contrary to what I was taught as a Catholic) that Christ’s payment for our sins was insufficient in any way. Nor that he could expiate the sins of the Colossians by suffering for them (another false Catholic teaching). The “afflictions of Christ” remain only in the sense that believers in Him, His body, will experience trials, persecutions, and tribulations (2 Timothy 3:12). Paul, the other apostles, and Christ’s disciples down through history have all “fill[ed] up” sufferings by ministering to one another and as a consequence of their preaching and living out the gospel.

How could Paul “rejoice” in his sufferings for fellow believers? Some of the reasons are found in the first chapter of 2 Corinthians. He and they would be ministered to by the “Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.” His comfort from the Lord in his tribulation would enable him to comfort others in their suffering: “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation [i.e., strengthening them through their trials]...or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation” (vv. 5-6).

For the believer in Jesus, every trial of suffering is an opportunity to grow in the faith, to grow in our relationship with the Lord, and to see Him work in our lives in a uniquely personal way that demonstrates His compassion, His comfort, His tender mercies, His loving kindnesses, His grace, and His endless love. Only God knows what each of us needs to experience and learn in order to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (2 Corinthians 1:4-5; Romans 8:29).

Whether we or those the Lord has put on our hearts are suffering, let Paul’s unceasing intercession for the Colossians be our prayer for ourselves and for our loved ones. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Colossians 1:9-11). Note that it concludes with “longsuffering with joyfulness.” No trial of suffering can rob us of our joy in Christ as we are strengthened by Him. **TBC**

Quotable

The school of affliction teaches us to pray...Affliction causes men to pray more frequently. God's people are vessels full of the spirit of prayer, and God draws it out by affliction. Alas, it is sad to consider that in our peace and tranquillity, we pray carelessly by fits and starts many times... but affliction keeps us on our knees. He also teaches us in affliction to pray more fervently. Even Christ, being in agony, prayed more earnestly....When you call to mind your short, slight, cold, dead, sleepy, formal devotions, you will be ashamed of them and stir up your heart to take hold of God. For this very end, God sends his people into captivity that he may draw out the spirit of prayer which they have allowed to lie dead within them.

Thomas Case, When Christians Suffer

Q&A

QUESTION: For the sake of argument, let's say I'm a Roman Catholic who is prepared to renounce the Church. Please tell me, which Protestant church should I join? After all this time being in a "false religion," I am ready for the complete truth untainted by error, and will settle for nothing less. Please tell me how I can determine with absolute certainty in which church I will find the fullness of Christian truth, since there are many dozens of large denominations, hundreds of smaller ones, and thousands of independent churches, all teaching differing and often contradictory versions of "sound, Biblical doctrine" on critically important doctrinal issues which relate to salvation.

RESPONSE: I can't tell if you are really a Roman Catholic or someone who is truly interested in and seeking the truth. I'm guessing the former but hoping the latter (which is why I'm taking the time to respond).

First of all, no one is saved by belonging to a denomination or church, whether Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, Catholic, Orthodox, or whatever. Salvation is neither a group plan nor a "membership thing." Everyone is personally accountable for his every belief, thought, word, or deed, before the Lord. Everyone stands alone before God in judgment, with no board of elders or magisterium backing him up.

So, whatever church a person attends is only worthwhile to the degree that it

helps him to know, believe, and live out the truth of the gospel. Jesus prayed for those who would believe in Him, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (Jn 17:17). Only God's Word, therefore, is where the "fullness of Christian truth" is found with "absolute certainty."

"Christian" churches can range from being wonderful blessings to being cults; their conformity to the Scriptures is the deciding factor. Who decides? Anyone who can read the Scriptures and compare what a church teaches and practices with what the Bible says (Acts 17:10-11)! That's the same "anyone" who will stand by himself or herself in judgment before the Lord. When Jesus addressed the seven churches (Rv 2,3) that are representative of churches throughout history, there was only one He did not correct: the church at Philadelphia. All the others (except for Laodicea) had some good points, but then some bad points that needed to be corrected.

If you are actually serious about joining a church, it would be great if you could find a "Philadelphia" type church—one that Jesus could commend fully because it was true to His Word. That not being the case, it is hoped that you would choose a church that preaches the biblical gospel, looks to the Bible as its absolute authority, and is open to being corrected by it. Those three points, by the way, disqualify the Roman Catholic Church as an option.

QUESTION: My son is reading *The Five Books of Moses*. Its author promotes the idea that Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). What is your opinion and why?

RESPONSE: According to the Lord Jesus, Moses wrote the Pentateuch: "For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me" (Jn 5:46). The idea that Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible is based upon the "Documentary Hypothesis" theory of Julius Wellhausen (a German "higher critic"), though it was not his invention. Its premise is summed up by the acronym JEDP. The J stands for "Jahwist," the E, "Elohism," D for "Deuteronomist," and P for "Priestly." Each is supposed to identify different authors who lived and wrote from 950 BC to 500 BC.

The "evidence" consists of the "change of divine names" in the "two creation accounts" of Genesis 1-3. *Elohim*, the Hebrew word for "God," is used in chapter 1, while in chapter 2 the name used is "Yahweh/Jehovah Elohim." The alleged differences in the "creation accounts" are

said to be proof of two different sources compiled later.

The theory hasn't aged well. It is recognized that Genesis demonstrates "an incredible linguistic unity and artistry of the composer of all of Genesis [The J and E sections share an extremely high number of theme-words and linking-words, puns, etc.!]...it becomes simply incredulous that J wrote 12:1-4a, 12:6-9 about the start of Abraham's spiritual odyssey...E wrote 22:1-19 about the climax of his spiritual odyssey, and...two authors living approximately 100 years apart and in different parts of ancient Israel time and again chose the same lexical terms. Surely this is too improbable, especially when such examples can be and have been multiplied over and over" (Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, 1986, p. 104-5).

Most important, however, is the judgment of the Lord Jesus. Here is another example: "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spoke to him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" (Mk 12:26, see also Mt 19:7-8, Mt 22:24, Mk 7:10, Mk 12:24, Lk 24:44, etc.). That is the bottom line.

QUESTION: Do you have any information concerning Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series that is currently being promoted by Christian organizations? I know of Christians who are reading her *Breaking Dawn* book from the series.

RESPONSE: With "Christian themes" supposedly being found in everything from *The Beverly Hillbillies* to *The Simpsons*, we shouldn't be surprised by claims about vampire stories. Ephesians 5:11-12 tells us to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

These novels supposedly bring out the "good" of the vampire hero, Edward. He desires to drink the blood of Bella, but falls in love with her and doesn't kill her. According to the story, this makes him a "good vampire." Apparently Meyer has forgotten about others that Edward must kill. Scripture forbids the drinking of blood (Acts 15:20, etc.): "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life" (Dt 12:23). This good vampire is noted for a number of quotes, posted on *Twilight* fan websites: "'I've decided that as long as I was going to Hell, I might as well do it thoroughly'—Edward Cullen, *Twilight*."

Meyer "received" *Twilight* in a dream on June 2, 2003. The vision compelled her to start writing the story immediately.

She says she had an additional dream after *Twilight* was finished, when her vampire character Edward came to speak to her. Her novel, *The Host*, is about demon possession.

"*Twilight* books and movies have been recommended by the Christian Stay-at-Home Moms website, Focus on the Family's Plugged In Online, ChristianityTodayMovies.com, and Campus Life's *Ignite Your Faith* Christian teen magazine" (Caryl Matrisciana, "Occultic *Twilight* Movie Praised by Christian Groups," December 9, 2008).

QUESTION: I continue to hear about the "joy of the Lord" as our strength in these challenging times. Looking up the phrase in the Bible, the only scripture [I found] was from Nehemiah and referred to the Passover Day celebration. Nowhere in the New Testament is the phrase spoken, and the closest allusion is from First Thessalonians, [where] the reference is "The joy the Holy Spirit brings." I feel that there are a great many Christians, especially the biblical and fervent ones, who are experiencing trials (such as myself) and would appreciate some biblical input that is not pabulum. If called to stand for Christ in these Last Days, we need to know the sources of the strength [necessary] to continue standing.

RESPONSE: In 1 Peter 1:8, we read, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This passage assures us that "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 1:7). And don't forget Jesus' words in John 8:56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." The phrase "rejoice in the Lord" occurs at least nine times, including Habakkuk 3:18: "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Concerning our faith, even "though it be tried with fire," we know the certainty of His appearing, and thus we still have joy. In John 15, the Lord Jesus instructs the disciples to abide in the vine (Jn 15:1-8) and later warns of persecution that will come to those who follow him (Jn 15:18-21). Before this, however, He says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (Jn 15:11). Why should our joy be "full"? Well, because "the joy of the Lord" enables us to withstand the trials that will come. This

is not some masochistic concept. As you point out, Nehemiah 8:10 tells us, "The joy of the LORD is your strength." But this applies to more than the Passover. The Jews had returned from 70 years of exile and had rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, witnessing the Lord's protection from their enemies. So they read the Scriptures celebrating the Passover, which portrays the Lord's first coming.

QUESTION: I have a friend who commented, "I'm so puzzled why the U.S. is giving Israel all the weapons they ask for. They're forcibly taking over Palestine, [that has] nothing... no weapons, nothing. Israel is just bombing the heck out of them...leaving nothing and taking over everything. More people need to learn about this... Israel's cause is not a good one, a Christian one, or a justified one in any sense of the word." How should I answer this?

RESPONSE: Your friend's errors concerning Israel need to be corrected. The U.S. has never given them "all the weapons they ask for." Neither is it true that the "Palestinians" have no weapons. One of the reasons for Operation Cast Lead, the last Israeli incursion into Gaza, was that the Arabs were constantly firing missiles, rockets, and mortars into Israeli cities. Have we forgotten Israel's invasion of Lebanon in the 1980s, where, after pinning the PLO in Beirut, the PLO was evacuated to Cyprus? In 1982, I was amazed to watch trucks loaded with all sorts of munitions being loaded for transport during this evacuation.

Have we forgotten that in 1948 the UN partitioned the promised land, and the Arabs were given Gaza, the West Bank, and substantial portions of the land? They refused to accept it, and shortly thereafter, five Muslim armies invaded. Had they accepted the land, the so-called Palestinians would have had their state then. The term "Palestinian" was only adopted because the Arabs perceived its political value. Not too long before the Six-Day War, the Jews were called "Palestinians." During WWII, the British had a Palestinian Brigade, all Jews. The *Palestinian Post* (now *The Jerusalem Post*) was a Jewish newspaper. The Palestinian Symphony was an all-Jewish orchestra.

There is certainly enough documentation to demonstrate that Arabs wanted nothing to do with the name "Palestinian" or "Palestine" until they saw the advantage of the same. As Walid Shoebat has asked, "Why is it that on June 4th, 1967, I was a Jordanian and overnight I became a Palestinian?"

Consider the following quote: "There is no such country as Palestine. 'Palestine' is a term the Zionists invented. There is no Palestine in the Bible. Our country was for centuries part of Syria. 'Palestine' is alien to us. It is the Zionists who introduced it" (Auni Bey Abdul-Hadi, Syrian Arab leader to British Peel Commission, 1937).

If Israel is "bombing the heck out of them...leaving nothing and taking over everything," why did they relocate settlers out of Gaza and turn it over to Hamas? It cannot be overemphasized that the Palestinian Charter has always called for the literal destruction of Israel. We often forget that Islamic prophecy demands the literal extermination of every Jew. Imams are often fond of quoting from the hadith: "Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, 'The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say, 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him'" (Volume 4, Book 52, Number 177). The "hour" means "the last day." So, for the last day to come, the last Jew must be killed. This is Muslim theology.

Some feel that the Jews no longer occupy a special position with the Lord. Jeremiah 31 spoke of the time to come when the Lord would make a new covenant with them. In that day, the nation of Israel would no longer need the old covenant that He had made with their fathers (i.e., the law). More wonderful yet, each one would know the Lord from the least of them unto the greatest (vv. 31-34). This same passage states that the Lord has given specific signs (the sun, moon, and stars), promising that He will never totally cast away the nation of Israel. If there is no sunrise, phases of the moon, or if the stars cease shining, we'll absolutely know that the Lord has cast away Israel. We must not let our preconceptions dictate the pronouncement of Scripture.

The Works-Salvation Delusion

T. A. McMahon

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come[s] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. —Galatians 2:21

When we compare biblical Christianity with the religions of the world, using the Scriptures to guide us, we see that the gap between them is unbridgeable. In fact, one is forced to the conclusion that there are really only two religions in the world: biblical Christianity—and all other religions. (Note: I refer to biblical Christianity as a “religion” only for comparative purposes: a religion is a manmade belief system, whereas biblical Christianity is what God has revealed to mankind.)

These two “religions” are set apart primarily by what they teach about salvation—how one can get to heaven or paradise or Valhalla or Nirvana or the abode of God, or whatever else people believe about the afterlife. Each of the two can be placed under one of two categories: Human Achievement and Divine Accomplishment—or, to put it simply, the religions of “Do” and “Done.” I’m referring to the fact that either there are things you *must* do (Human Achievement) or there is *nothing* you can do because it has already been done (Divine Accomplishment) to earn entrance to heaven.

Biblical Christianity alone comes under the heading of Divine Accomplishment. All the other religions of the world must be placed under the label of Human Achievement. Let’s first consider some of the major religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and certain denominations or cults that profess to be Christian.

Hinduism has about 330 million gods who must be appeased through some type of ritual. A couple of years ago I was given a tour of a massive Hindu temple just outside Chicago. The parking lot was filled with luxury cars. There was imported stonework from Italy. No expense was spared. Inside, doctors, lawyers, and engineers, among others, according to my guide, were serving meals to the idols, Hanuman, the monkey god, and Ganesha, the elephant god.

Hinduism is a system of works—things that one must do to reach *moksha*, the Hindu heaven. It involves the practice of yoga, which, contrary to what many have heard, has never been for improvement of one’s health but is rather a means of dying

to one’s body in the hope of delivering oneself from the physical realm. This is supposed to yoke one to Brahman, the Supreme Deity of Hinduism. Reincarnation, a system that supposedly enables one to work one’s way to heaven through many births, deaths, and rebirths, is one of the teachings of this religion.

Buddhism is also all about works. Buddha believed that the key to reaching Nirvana, which is allegedly the state of perfect peace and happiness, is through an understanding of the Four Noble Truths and by practicing the Noble Eightfold Path.

In essence, the Four Noble Truths declare that we endure suffering because of our desires or cravings. These “Truths” claim that suffering will stop when we cease trying to fulfill those desires. According to Buddhism, we can achieve this by following the Noble Eightfold Path, which has the elements of “right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.” This is all done by man’s *achievement*, i.e., “doing things right” in order to reach Nirvana.

In Islam, paradise is attained when Allah weighs a follower’s good works against his bad deeds on a scale at Judgment Day. The Qur’an declares: “For those things that are good remove those that are evil” (Surah 11:114). It’s a quantitative process. Good deeds need to outweigh or blot out evil deeds. From the Qur’an again: “The balance that day will be true: Those whose scale [of good works] will be heavy, will prosper: Those whose scale will be light will find their souls in perdition” (Surah 7:8,9).

Here’s an interesting example of what a Muslim faces to get into paradise: On April 3, 1991, the Egyptian magazine, *Akher Saa*, recorded a heated debate between four female journalists and Sheik Doctor Abdu-Almonim Al-Nimr, who holds a high position at Al-Azher Islamic University. One of the journalists asked him: “Is the *hijab* [veil or head covering] obligatory for women in Islam? If I do not wear the *hijab*, shall I go to hell in spite of my other good deeds? I am talking about the decent woman who does not wear the *hijab*.”

Dr. Al-Nimr replied, “The ordinances in Islam are many, my daughter, Allah made us accountable to each. It means if you do that ordinance you earn a point. If you neglect one, you lose a point. If you pray, you earn a point; if you do not fast you lose a point, and so on.” He continued, “I did not invent a new theory...for every man there is a book in which all his good and evil deeds are recorded...even how do we

treat our children.”

The journalist said: “That means, if I do not wear the *hijab*, I will not enter the hell fire without taking into account the rest of my good deeds.” Dr. Al-Nimr replied: “My daughter, no one knows who will enter the hell fire...I might be the first one to enter it. Caliph Abu-Bakr Al-Sadik said: ‘I have no trust concerning Allah’s schemes, even if one of my feet is inside of paradise who can determine which deed is acceptable and which is not.’ [See *TBC*, 10/91] *You do all that you can do...* and the accountability is with Allah. You ask him for acceptance [Italics added for emphasis].”

In Judaism, heaven is attained by keeping the Law and its ceremonies. Obviously, that isn’t consistent with what the *Tanakh* (the Old Testament) teaches, yet that has been the practice of Judaism for millennia. As Jesus said, “In vain they do worship [God], teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

His words also apply to a number of “Christian” denominations and cults that stress works as necessary for salvation. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Christ adherents, Roman Catholics, Eastern and Russian Orthodox members, Lutherans, and many others all include something that needs to be accomplished or is necessary for salvation, whether it’s baptism, the sacraments, or joining their particular organization and fulfilling their requirements.

Here is an example from the first 30 years of my own life as a Roman Catholic. I lived by a religious system of laws, many of which a Catholic is obligated to keep. It began with baptism. If one is not baptized, the Church says he can’t enter heaven. It also says that although baptism is required, it is *no guarantee*. There are many other such rules that a Catholic *must* keep.

I have a book in my office called the *Code of Canon Law*. It contains 1,752 laws, many of which affect one’s eternal destiny. Sins recognized by the Roman Catholic Church are classified as either mortal or venial. A mortal sin is one that damns a person to hell, should he or she die without having had it absolved by a priest. A venial sin doesn’t need to be confessed to a priest, but whether confessed or not, all sin adds to one’s temporal punishment, which must be expiated either here on earth through suffering or good works or else be purged in the flames of purgatory after one’s death.

There are obligations that a Catholic must fulfill regarding both beliefs and deeds. For example, one is required to believe that Mary was conceived without sin (an event called

the Immaculate Conception). If a Catholic doesn't believe that, he commits a mortal sin, which carries the penalty of eternal damnation. The feast day of the Immaculate Conception is a holy day of obligation, a day on which all Catholics are *required* to attend Mass. Failure to do so could result in commission of a mortal sin.

All the belief systems that I've mentioned, and many others as well, consist of doing or not doing certain things to reach "heaven." All are based upon human achievement. But what about biblical Christianity? How is that different?

Ephesians 2:8-9 spells it out for us: "For by grace are ye saved *through faith*; and that [salvation is] not of yourselves: it is the *gift* of God: *not of works*, lest any man should boast [emphasis added]." That's pretty straightforward. Our salvation doesn't have anything to do with our *achievements*.

Verse 8 tells us that it is by *grace* that we are saved. Grace is unmerited favor. If any merit is involved, it cannot be by grace. It's the gift of God. So if it's a gift, it can't be of works. That should be obvious. Someone puts in a tough month of work and his employer comes to him with his paycheck and declares, "Good job, Joe, here's your gift!" No—Joe *worked* for what he was paid. No gift was involved.

Regarding a person who works, Romans 4:4 tells us that his wages are a payment for the debt his employer owes him, and his paycheck has nothing to do with grace or a gift. A worker who has done a good job can boast or feel a sense of pride in the work he has accomplished. Yet all of that is contrary to grace or a gift. Grace rules out any sense of merit, and a gift does away with any sense of something earned or paid for.

Paul's teaching in Ephesians is affirmed in his epistle to Titus, chapter 3, verse 4:

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, *not by works* of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. [Emphasis added]

We can see that this is consistent with Ephesians 2:8-9. It's not by our *works* that we are saved—not by works of righteousness that we have *done*—but it's *by His mercy* that we are saved.

You may well imagine that, as a Roman Catholic conditioned by a life of Church rules and rituals, I had great difficulty

believing that *faith* was the only basis by which I could enter heaven. It didn't make sense to me.

Well, not only does it make sense—it's the only possible way anyone can be saved. It is *miraculously sensible!*

First of all, what keeps anyone from heaven or eternal life with God? We know that the answer is "sin." Here is a small sampling of the applicable verses: All have sinned (Romans 3:23); the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23); sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2); the soul who sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:20); sin brings forth death (James 1:15).

In Genesis 2, God explains to Adam the consequences of disobeying Him. Adam was told not to eat from a certain fruit in the Garden of Eden. It was a commandment that was related to obedience and love—not of God's withholding something from Adam, as the Serpent implied. Remember, Jesus said "If a man love me, he will keep my words," that is, His teachings (John 14:23). Our love for God is demonstrated by our obedience.

What was God's penalty for disobedience? Genesis 2:17: "...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam and Eve loved themselves more than they loved God, because they didn't "keep [His] words." They disobeyed Him, and the consequence was death. "The day you eat of it you will surely die." In the Scriptures, death always involves separation, and in God's judgment upon them, two applications are found: 1) physical death (the degeneration of the body, leading ultimately to its separation from the soul and spirit), and 2) eternal separation from God.

Adam and Eve did not die instantly, but the death process began at that point for them and for all creation. However, their *spiritual* relationship with God changed immediately and forever. God's judgment for sin is eternal: separation from God *forever*. It's an infinite penalty. And God, who is perfect in all of His attributes, including justice, had to carry out the punishment. He couldn't let them slide by and just give them another chance. That would have meant that He was not perfectly true to His Word. The penalty had to be paid.

So what could Adam and Eve do? Nothing, except die physically and spiritually, which is to be separated from God forever. And what can the rest of mankind do, seeing that *all have sinned*? Nothing. Well, one might ask, what if we do all sorts of good deeds that might outweigh our sins, or if we go to church a lot, or get baptized, do religious things, receive the sacraments, and so forth? None of those things will help us.

Why? Because they don't pay the penalty. So what *can* we do? There is nothing that we can do—except to pay the penalty ourselves by being separated from God forever.

Our situation would be absolutely hopeless except that God has some other attributes in addition to being perfectly just. He is also perfect in love and mercy! "For God so loved the world" that He sent His only begotten Son to pay the penalty for us (John 3:16).

And that is exactly what Jesus did on the Cross. It is incomprehensible to us that during those three hours of darkness (when He cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?") He took on the sins of the world and suffered the wrath of His Father—for us. On the Cross He "tasted death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9), that is, He experienced and paid the infinite penalty for everyone's sins.

When that *divine accomplishment* ended, Jesus cried out, "It is finished," meaning that the penalty had been paid in full. It was a *divine* accomplishment because it was something that only God could do! God became a man and died physically, because physical death was part of the penalty. Yet, as the God-Man, he was able to experience fully the penalty that every sinner would experience—being spiritually separated from God forever.

God's justice demands payment. Either we pay the penalty ourselves or we turn to Jesus by faith and receive the benefits of His sacrificial atonement. What does Roman 6:23 say? "For the wages of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Bible could not be more clear that salvation can only be "the gift of God" and that we can only appropriate that gift by faith.

Any attempt to merit salvation by our works is not just futile—it is impossible: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Worse yet, it is a denial of the infinite penalty that God imposed, a rejection of God's "unspeakable gift," and a repudiation of what Christ accomplished for us.

It used to be that most evangelicals would agree. This is no longer the case as the apostasy gathers momentum in these Last Days. Recently, a Pew Forum survey of more than 40,000 Americans found that 57 percent of those who said they were evangelicals believed that Jesus is not the exclusive way to heaven. Since Jesus is the only one who provides divine accomplishment, all that remains is the futile delusion of human achievement for salvation. **TBC**

Quotable

Prevailing prayer is not so much prayer that knocks at the gates of heaven and extorts an answer from an unwilling God, as the prayer which, having received the answer and promise, carries it forth against the gates of the enemy and beats them down, as the walls of Jericho fell [at] the tramp and shout of Israel's believing hosts....It is faith putting its hand on the omnipotence of God and using it in fellowship with our own omnipotent Head until we see His name prevail against all that oppose His will.

A. B. Simpson

Q&A

QUESTION: My dad was very disturbed by Matthew 18:9 and asked me about the verse "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." I wonder if you have some information about that. I assumed it had something to do with sin in your life and doing whatever it takes to get rid of it.

RESPONSE: The Scriptures condemn religious activities such as self-mutilation or inflicting wounds or pain (Lv 19:28, Dt 14:1), so we know that the Lord is not advocating the literal removal of one's eye. Even in an act such as fasting, the Lord commanded, "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Mt 6:17-18).

The issue is, what things impede our coming to Christ? Due to the seriousness of this question, the Lord used this extreme example. It is instructive to consider how many prison inmates write to us and confess that going to prison was an extreme act that acted as a stimulus to bring them to Christ.

Similarly, Paul wrote to believers, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8:13). The literal meaning of "mortify" is to "put to death." Please note that it is the "deeds of the body" that are to be "put to death." Clearly, there are good deeds done by the body, but it is "through the Spirit" that believers discern what is proper and right and what is better set aside.

QUESTION: Genesis 3:15 mentions the serpent's seed and the seed of the

woman, which was Jesus Christ. Does it not appear that if the serpent's seed wasn't real, that Jesus could not have been real?

RESPONSE: You are saying that if the "seed of the serpent" is not a literal seed, then how could the Lord Jesus be real as well? It sounds as though you support what is called the "Serpent Seed" doctrine, in which the sin of Eve was having sexual relations with the Serpent.

There is no biblical support for this heresy. The "serpent seed" doctrine is nothing new, having been a part of the teaching of William Branham in the earlier part of the last century. Other false teachers have taught the same, probably going back to the very early church. After all, Paul warned that, "...after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30). As Jeremiah records in 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Here is where prayer comes in, for the very next verse states, "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins..." (Jer 17:10).

Who, then, is the Lord talking about in the Genesis 3:15 prophecy? In truth, those who would "bruise his heel" were those who would follow Satan. The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). Can anyone imagine that Jesus is saying that the Pharisees were the literal *physical* seed of Satan?

During the flood of Noah, "every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (Gn 7:23). That "living substance" that was destroyed included every descendant of Cain, who, according to this teaching, was fathered by the Serpent.

Genesis 4:1 tells us that "Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain...." It wasn't until Adam had relations with his wife that she conceived. Any other idea must be willfully forced upon Scripture. Consequently, how can anyone conclude that the "seed of the serpent" in Genesis 3 is talking about more than those who would follow Satan and reject the Lord? We cannot, without departing from Scripture.

QUESTION: Could you please address the views of some who believe that Christians shouldn't smuggle Bibles, Christian literature, or printing presses into restricted nations? They also seem to feel that believers shouldn't meet in unregistered or home churches. The reason for this belief is that they are breaking the laws of those nations, disobeying the Bible's command to obey authorities.

RESPONSE: Romans 13:1 tells us, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." God has ordained for there to be civil authorities over human affairs to execute His righteousness, to punish evildoers—and they "bear not the sword in vain" (Rom 13:4). Of course, many rulers have not upheld God's moral laws.

The passage clearly tells us to be subject to the "higher powers." There is no higher power than God, and there are times where God must be obeyed despite the command of the authorities. The apostles were reminded, "Did not we straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name?... Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28-29).

There are earlier examples. The midwives were told by Pharaoh to kill all baby boys at birth (Ex 1:16). The midwives did not do so, and the Lord commended their actions (Ex 1:20-21).

Daniel knew that King Darius had signed a decree forbidding any petition (including prayer) to anyone other than the king:

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. (Dn 6:10)

Any such disobedience, however, would have consequences. Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, but the Lord "hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me" (Dn 6:22).

In like manner, those who engage in Bible smuggling and similar activities will also be subject to consequences should they be caught by the authorities of these respective countries. Consider another biblical example:

If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace....But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor

worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Dn 3:17-18)

During World War II, Corrie ten Boom and her family preserved the lives of Jews contrary to the will of the authorities. Those who smuggle Bibles are bringing the Word of Life to those without Bibles. Concerning illegal house churches, we must remember that the early church took precautions:

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst...." (Jn 20:19)

QUESTION: Could you explain what "suffer in the flesh" (1 Peter 4:1) means and whether it is part of God's chastisement?

RESPONSE: In context, Peter is addressing the finished work of Christ and its application to believers. Christ died on the Cross. That He "suffered in the flesh" is a synonym for that death. In like manner, Christians are to "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11).

To a dead man, sin no longer has any appeal. We may parade any temptation past a dead man. None will entice him. Peter goes on in chapter 4 to explain, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (1 Pt 4:3-4).

Finally, it is certain that this passage does not support the false idea (as portrayed in *The Passion of the Christ*) that physical sufferings bought our salvation. It was through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that Satan, the serpent, would be destroyed (see *TBC* 10/09).

QUESTION: Between Matthew 13:30 and Revelation 14:14-19 there seems to be a conflict as to which will be harvested first—the weeds or the crops. Matthew 13:30 says it is the tares, while the passage in Revelation seems to say something else. Which is it?

RESPONSE: As to whether the weeds will be harvested prior to the crops (Mt 13:30 vs. Rv 14:14-19), we would suggest that in the full context of Revelation 14 it is the weeds that are indicated here as well. For example, verse 19 tells us that the objects of this "harvest" are "cast into the great winepress

of the wrath of God." This clearly cannot be the main crop (i.e., true believers). May the Lord encourage us with the consistency of His Word.

QUESTION: Can you please explain the difference between a sect and a cult?

RESPONSE: A "sect" has been defined as a group that has preserved the essentials of the gospel but who has a particular distinctive teaching creating a separation between the group and other members of the body of Christ.

A "cult," on the other hand, may deny nearly every fundamental teaching of the Bible and often attacks the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. They may do this by directly denying it or by presenting it in a way contrary to the teaching of Scripture. For example, Herbert W. Armstrong taught that the Godhead was a polytheistic family of "gods." Joseph Smith and Brigham Young taught similar things. On April 9, 1852, during a sermon in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle, Brigham Young proclaimed that Adam was, in fact, "our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do."

In 2 Peter 2, addressing false teachers, Peter lists the characteristics of these individuals. These "false prophets" (2:1) are "wells without water" (v. 17). A well without "water" ("water" being a consistent biblical metaphor for the Holy Spirit) has the same appearance as a genuine well unless one looks inside (1 Sm 16:7). These false teachers are not guided by the Holy Spirit and speak with their own words, repeating the counterfeit teachings of the adversary. As pointed out above, the Lord warned the church of cultic teaching that was going to come.

Mormons attest that their revelations began with the appearance of an angel to a young man named Joseph Smith. Paul warned in Galatians 1:8, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Joseph Smith spoke with an entity who identified himself as the angel "Moroni." Catholics around the world flock to alleged appearances of "Mary."

Often, cults have a leader who has the ability to charm and sway those he deceives. His teaching, when shown to be unbiblical, is said to be a "new revelation," or a new insight that transcends Scripture. He may teach that he and his followers are the possessors of information lost to everyone else. The leader is the recognized

authority, often teaching that he is God's voice for this generation.

As time goes on, a cult may become very protective and closed, believing they are under imminent threat from anyone outside the group. What a contrast to the church, of whom the Lord Jesus promised, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). To keep ourselves from deception, let us follow the example of the Bereans who "...searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The New Inquisition

Dave Hunt

[Portions were taken from the April 1999 TBC article, "Islam and the Gospel."]

It was the year 1569, at the height of Catholicism's Spanish Inquisition in Holland. Dirk Willems, a humble and pious follower of Jesus Christ, lay in prison awaiting a fiery death at the stake. His crime? Having been rebaptized upon confession of faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The official town records stated that the prisoner, "...persisting obstinately in his opinion...shall be executed by fire, until death...."

One day, Dirk, finding his cell momentarily unguarded, took the opportunity to escape. Across the nearby frozen lake he fled. The alarm was quickly raised, however, and a "thief catcher" was summoned to pursue the fleeing man. Hearing the crack of ice behind him, Dirk turned to see his pursuer break through into the frigid water. Pausing only a moment, he returned to rescue his enemy from certain death. In deepest gratitude, his pursuer pleaded that Dirk might be allowed to go free. His plea was denied. Dirk's date with death was upheld. Official records, preserved to our day, tell us that "...a strong east wind blowing that day, the fire was driven away from the upper part of his body...in consequence of which this good man suffered a lingering death."

Do we see some reflection in this account of Christ's own suffering for us sinners? The Scripture declares that "God is love." Love is His very nature. God's handiwork in creating the perfect environment for man showed in exquisite detail His forethought on behalf of the coming recipients of His love, culminating in His plan for man's redemption after the Fall. The sacrificial lamb prefigured the ultimate sacrifice of God's only begotten Son, when, in the dark hours of Calvary, He poured out His wrath against the dearest object of His love. From the Cross came Jesus' cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus knew the answer to that question, though its reality was so agonizing. God's Son became sin itself and thus must suffer His Father's rejection (2 Cor 5:21).

Do we dare compare Dirk Willems's act of "redemption" with that of our Savior? Should we, as Christians, take that step beyond happily rejoicing in our salvation to that of also taking the role of sacrificial lamb, as Dirk Willems did, when the opportunity arises?

Let's enter another arena, far removed

from the times of the Spanish Inquisition of the sixteenth century. We have another "inquisition" arising farther east and reaching alarming proportions in our day.

In Saudi Arabia, for example, there is a total blackout on anything Christian: one cannot carry a Bible on the street or have a Bible study in the privacy of one's own home. Even in our embassy, over which the American flag flies, Christian church services are banned. It is officially the death penalty in Saudi Arabia and some other Muslim countries (and enforced unofficially elsewhere) for a Muslim to convert to any other religion.

Only Muslims can be citizens of Saudi Arabia. Even in Arab countries where *shari'a* (Islamic law) is not enforced by the government, Islam's influence prevents freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, and of conscience. In PLO territories, Christian Arabs, who once had freedom under Israel, now suffer persecution, imprisonment, and death for their faith. Yet neither the UN nor our own government protests such oppression behind the Islamic curtain. Muslims build mosques and worship freely in the West, but in their own countries they deny such freedoms to others. Instead of reporting this hypocrisy, the world media covers it up.

Islam spread rapidly under Muhammad and his successors through *Jihad* ("holy war"). Muhammad himself planned 65 campaigns and personally led 27 involving naked aggression and treachery. This incredible "evangelism" made "converts" by the millions at the point of a sword. At its peak, Islam had conquered all of North Africa and almost took over Europe.

Islam continues its conquest worldwide. Today's invaders are millions of immigrants who make converts to Islam through misrepresentation. One sees on TV well-coifed and fashionably dressed women who claim to be converts to Islam and testify to its joys and peace-loving ways. Yet in Saudi Arabia, they would have to be veiled with only their eyes showing, would have to wear plain, dark full-length robes, could not drive a car, could be one of four wives habitually mistreated by their husband, could be divorced by mere denunciation, and would be virtual slaves under *shari'a*.

Islam's earnest goal, set forth in the Qur'an (references given herein are from three versions) and *Hadith* (Islamic written tradition), remains the same: to bring all mankind into submission (that's what "Islam" means) and to kill or enslave all "infidels" (i.e., unbelievers in Allah and

Muhammad his prophet—Surah 2:190-92; 4:76; 5:33; 9:5,29,41;47:4, etc.). Islam (in obedience to the Qur'an and Muhammad's example) is the driving force behind most terrorism today. According to the Hadith, Muhammad declared, "The last hour will not come before the Muslims fight the Jews and the Muslims kill them."

Many Westerners naïvely accept Allah, who inspired Muhammad, as the God of the Bible. Yet Allah has no son and rejects the Trinity (4:171), is unknowable, and was the pagan idol/god of Muhammad's tribe before he was born. Allah tells Muslims, "Take not the Jews and Christians for friends...slay the idolaters [infidels] wherever ye find them...Fight against those who...believe not in Allah nor the Last Day" (5:51; 9:5,29, 41). But the triune God of the Bible *wants* men to know Him (Jer 9:24), a knowledge essential to salvation (Jn 17:3). Jews are His "chosen people" (Ex 6:7; Lv 20:26; 1 Chr 16:13; Ps 105:6, etc.) and Christians are His dearly beloved children (Rom 8:16,21; Gal 3:26; Eph 1:5; 5:1, etc.).

Instead of conversion by force, Christ said that His disciples did not fight because His kingdom was not of this world (Jn 8:36). Indeed, He told His disciples, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Mt 5:44).

Christ gave His life to save sinners, and His followers must be willing to lay down their lives to bring this good news to the world. Biblical salvation is a free gift paid for by the death of Christ, who said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). That command includes today's one billion Muslims. They present a tremendous (and inescapable) challenge to every Christian. But how can we bring the gospel to those who may be killed for believing it, or who may kill us for offering it to them? To die fighting infidels is the only sure way for a Muslim to gain Paradise. Yet Christ also died for Muslims, and His love compels us to share the Good News.

Attempts to evangelize Muslims have had little success for obvious reasons. Lately, however, a new and *seemingly* more fruitful approach is being adopted: using Muslim scriptures to present Christ. The Hadith attests to the virgin birth, sinless life, and miracles of Christ, who is called "the Word of Allah." Some portions of the Qur'an, too, speak highly of Christ: that He was born of the virgin Mary (Surah 3:45-47; 21:91, etc.); He is the highest example (43:57); and He alone is called "Isa," which

means Savior (3:45). Whereas Muhammad was unable to perform miracles (17:90-96; 29:50-52, etc.), Christ did so (2:252-53, 3:49); and unlike others such as Moses, who did miracles at God's command, Jesus did miracles on His own initiative (26:63 etc), even raising the dead (3:49; 5:110; 36:78-79, etc.). Further, the Qur'an declares that Muhammad was a sinner (9:43; 40:55; 47:19; 48:2; 294:1-3, etc.), but Jesus was sinless (19:17-19). The Antichrist (*Dajjal*) is a major topic of the Hadith, which warns of his coming. He is called the "false Christ" who will deceive many near the end of time. The Hadith teaches that Jesus will return at the end to destroy the *Dajjal*. Belief in "the Last Day" is an essential part of the Muslim's faith (2:62).

In spite of the honor and reverence accorded Jesus, however, the Jesus of Islam is *not* the Jesus of the Bible but "another Jesus" (2 Cor 11:4). While the Qur'an in its early passages honors at least parts of the Bible as "the Book" and both Jews and Christians as "the people of the Book," it often contradicts the Bible: it denies that Jesus is God (3:59, 62; 4:171) and that He died on the Cross (4:157-58; 5:116-20) for our sins. Early tradition held that at Christ's request a look-alike disciple rescued Him from the Cross by dying in His place. Other passages, however, seem to declare that Christ did indeed die (3:33,55; 5:117; 19:33), and many Islamic scholars take that view today. The Qur'an denies that one person could die for another (17:13-15; 35:18). Actually, it says that no "soul laden [i.e., sinner] bears the load [sin] of another." Since Jesus was without sin, He would have to be an exception.

For the sinner to be righteously forgiven, Christ had to pay the penalty demanded by God's justice; but that concept is foreign to Islam. The Qur'an breeds uncertainty: "Forgiveness is only incumbent on Allah toward those who do evil in ignorance [and] then turn quickly [in repentance] to Allah....Lo! Allah pardoneth...all save [except] that to whom he will not..." (4:17,116). Neither "ignorance" nor "quickly" are defined nor why Allah forgives some and not others. Nor does repentance guarantee forgiveness.

In contrast, the Bible offers forgiveness to all. Christ even died to redeem those who hated Him and asked His Father to forgive those who crucified Him (Lk 23:34).

In real life, Allah's forgiveness never comes in time to prevent a hand, foot, or ear from being cut off as the penalty for stealing. Hundreds of Iraqis, mutilated by this inhumane Islamic decree, flee to camps

bordering that country. Yet kidnapping requires no such mutilation because a person is not considered to be property. Fornication also requires no such mutilation, while petty thievery does.

The Qur'an's contradictions of the Bible are excused by claiming that the Bible was corrupted. But the Qur'an was sent to stand "as a guardian" over the Bible (5:48); therefore, if the Bible was corrupted, the Qur'an failed. The Muslim's Holy Book itself admits that much of its text is ambiguous (3:7); Muslims are even to ask "the People of the Book [Bible]" for enlightenment (21:7)!

The Qur'an also contradicts itself. Allah created everything "in the twinkling of an eye" (54:49,50), "in two Days" (41:9,12), "in four Days" (41:10), "in six Days" (7:54; 10:4, 32:4), "a Day," equaling "a thousand years" (70:4); Jesus is not the Son of God (4:171), yet He is (19:17-21), etc.

In quoting the Qur'an and Hadith, we must avoid the impression that we are endorsing these writings. Consider Paul's discussion with the philosophers on Mars Hill: "...as certain also of your own poets have said" (Acts 17:28). Paul was not suggesting that these writers were inspired of God—and he went beyond them to present the gospel. Likewise, we must be careful to go beyond what the Qur'an and Hadith say about Jesus to present the true gospel; otherwise there is no basis for salvation.

For a Muslim to become a true Christian, he must renounce Islam's false God, Allah, and its false gospel of salvation by works. Unfortunately, the gospel is being compromised to make it appealing to Muslims. (In the West, it's being made appealing to nearly everyone.) Many "converts" have never understood the gospel and thus have not believed that which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16). The gospel is definitely *not* in the Qur'an. Yet Muslims are supposedly being saved by heeding it. The author of *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam* (NavPress, 1997) gives the testimony of a Muslim "converted" to Christianity in Pakistan (p. 27):

As I was listening to the Qur'an read on the radio day after day, I heard that Christ was highly honored...and near-stationed to God. I said to myself, "If I wanted someone to intercede for me to God, who would be better than someone like Christ...?" And so I prayed, "Lord Isa [Jesus], please come to my help. I want to devote myself to God through you. Since you are highly honored and sitting near Him, you can do it."

The author then comments, "After that, he felt like a changed man, much happier than before...."

This is a delusion similar to that of those who say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?...and in thy name done many wonderful works?" to whom the Lord responds, "I never knew you: depart from me..." (Mt 7:21-23). Asking Islam's Isa to intercede for oneself will not save. One must believe the gospel to be saved: "[H]ow that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:1-4); "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16). That gospel is not in the Qur'an, and there is nothing in this "convert's" testimony to indicate that he knew or believed it.

The same author declares that "60 percent of Muslims who are approached with the methods explained in this book put their trust in Christ..." Yet Christ and His apostles experienced no such percentage of converts. Jesus said that few would be saved (Mt 7:13-14). The author enthusiastically refers to Muslims converted to Christ "while remaining [for years] in the fold of their Islamic community...without becoming detestable to their own communities" (p. 10). But Jesus warned His disciples, "And ye shall be hated by all men for my name's sake..." (Mt 10:22; Jn 15:20). All men, except Muslims?

We want to be wise and not needlessly offend in our presentation of the gospel (1 Cor 10:32), whether to Muslims or anyone else to whom the Lord gives us the grace to present the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). But there is an unavoidable offense because of Christ (Mt 26:31; Rom 9:33; 1 Pt 2:8) and the Cross (Gal 5:11). We must be careful that we actually present the gospel, which one must believe to be saved. It will only damn souls if in our zeal to get the world to accept the gospel, we preach another gospel acceptable to the world.

Let us remember Dirk Willems, who, as Christ's representative on earth in another age, willingly embraced the Cross that his enemy might live. May we, too, minister life to Christ's enemies in our age, even as we see the followers of Allah minister death. The Cross proclaims that God *is* love, a love that conquers by the shedding of Christ's own precious blood for sinners:

In weakness like defeat He won the victor's crown;
Trod all His foes beneath His feet by being trodden down.

What a victory!

TBC

Quotable

We cannot limit the extent to which God may use us as instruments in communicating blessing if we are willing to yield ourselves to Him and are careful to give Him all the glory.

George Müller

Q&A

QUESTION: An elderly man in my congregation is suffering from some physical ailments. He has been drawn to the Be in Health healing ministry headed by Henry Wright, whose book *A More Excellent Way* has influenced many Christians. I'm very suspicious about such ministries and wonder if Wright is at all biblical.

RESPONSE: Wright's premise is that if one only has enough faith—or is able to appropriate specific promises—one will never be sick, though he issues a disclaimer that nothing is guaranteed and that neither he nor his staff are professionals or healers (p. xv). Nevertheless, he claims that “God has honored this teaching” (p. 18) and says, “When you apply the principles that I have given you and you go before God and the Word, you will walk away from certain diseases just like you never had them” (pp. 61-62).

Wright says, “If someone is not healed, there is a spiritual root...” (p. 34). This parallels “word faith,” positive-confession teachings and shows the influence of psychology, although Wright sometimes denounces the same (p. 70). Nevertheless, he says that many ailments are caused by a “lack of self esteem” (p. 67).

Mind science teaching is evident in the book: “If you were to create something... the first part of the concept would come from where? Your mind... The final stages should be what? Do it, create it, make it... That is God's very essence: He thought it, He spoke what He thought and He did it... If you are in fellowship with the Godhead and if you are in fellowship with God by His Word, you should be an extension of the will, the Word and the power as a way of life” (p. 57).

Beyond teaching “positive confession,” Wright lists generational curses as one cause of disease: “If you do not deal with what has happened in your family tree... your children will inherit your curses... (p. 68). [W]e can break the power of sin and

so genetically inherited diseases no longer exist” (p. 69). According to Scripture, however, “...the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin” (2 Kgs 14:6).

Wright claims that he has “documented evidence of genetic code changes” (Ibid.) after the “healing” of someone's “cursed DNA” has taken place. The book provides no such documentation.

He confidently asserts that he has identified the *cause* of many diseases. For example, his editor notes, “Henry Wright has identified a specific fear issue as a root for asthma. That root is fear of abandonment coupled with insecurity” (p. 209). Colon cancer is said to be “deeply rooted in bitterness and slander with the tongue... When you speak evil against someone, it is a curse and what you speak against another returns” (p. 231). Wright selects John 20:23 as a proof text: “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (p. 231-32). He apparently believes this verse is applicable to someone “slandering” another.

Is it God's explicit will to heal *all* of our diseases every time? Wright says, “Yes. It says so in Psalm 103:3; 3 John 2; and 1 Thessalonians 5:23” (p. 131). Rather than looking at each verse, however, Wright engages in some freewheeling interpretation that places a person's healing primarily upon themselves. “You actually can choose your health and He will work with you” (Ibid.). So much for “if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1 Jn 5:14). Wright handles “God's will” by insisting that healing is *always* His will.

On the other hand, Wright says that all healing is “conditional,” the condition being the removal of sin. Thus, since Fanny Crosby never regained her sight, Joni Eareckson Tada has not had her spinal cord healed, or [see 5/10 TBC Extra] Paul Davis was never healed of rheumatoid arthritis, they (according to Wright) were hindered by unconfessed sin—their own, or perhaps from a generational curse. Scripture does not support these ideas.

Many were healed through the ministry of the Apostle Paul, but he told Timothy how to relieve the symptoms of his physical problem (1 Tm 5:23). Paul also said, “and Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick” (2 Tm 4:20). God still heals, but Scripture disagrees with the unbiblical theories of Wright, including the idea that all sickness is the result of personal sin. When the disciples of Jesus asked

Him, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” the reply from the Lord was, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (Jn 9:2-3).

QUESTION: What can you tell me about *End Time Delusion* by Steve Wohlberg? A friend of mine read the book and says that all I have heard about the Rapture is wrong and that until 100 years ago the Rapture had never been taught. He gave the book to a pastor friend, who said it is true—he gave the book to other pastors, and now they have doubts or have changed their views of the Rapture. He also seems to be anti-Israel.

RESPONSE: *End Time Delusions*, by Seventh-day Adventist Steve Wohlberg is circulating, parroting the teachings of Ellen G. White, including Replacement Theology.

Wohlberg uses Margaret MacDonald as “the smoking gun” (*End Time*, p. 129) behind John Darby's pre-trib teaching on the Rapture. Wohlberg doesn't give the text of MacDonald's vision, otherwise one would see: “I saw the people of God in an awfully dangerous situation, surrounded by nets and entanglements, about to be tried, and many about to be deceived and fall. Now will THE WICKED be revealed, with all power and signs and lying wonders, so that if it were possible the very elect will be deceived.... This is the fiery trial which is to try us.... It will be for the purging and purifying of the real members of the body of Jesus; but Oh! it will be a fiery trial. Every soul will be shaken to the very centre. The enemy will try to shake every thing we have believed—but the trial of real faith will be found to honour and praise and glory. Nothing but what is of God will stand” (Margaret's revelation as published in *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets In the Catholic Apostolic Church*, 1861). This is *not* a description of a pre-trib Rapture. Even preterists understand that Darby spoke of a pre-trib Rapture in 1827, three full years before MacDonald's “vision.”

Regarding Replacement Theology, Ellen G. White prophesied, “The Jews have long ceased to have any significance.” Consequently, she states, “Palestine will never become their home!” She goes on, “I was pointed to some who are in the great error of believing that it is their duty to go to Old Jerusalem; and think they have a work to do there before the Lord comes.... I saw that Satan had greatly deceived some in this thing.... I also saw that Old Jerusalem never

would be built up; and Satan was doing his utmost to lead the minds of the children of the Lord into these things now in the gathering time" (*Early Writings of Mrs. White*, page 75).

White didn't see the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948, but many of her followers certainly have. Wohlberg should take note and learn. It can't be pointed out too often that although Deuteronomy 28 lists the fearsome penalty for Israel's disobedience, the penalty is loss of *residence* (for a time) but not loss of *ownership*. In his writings, Wohlberg selectively quotes Scripture, saying "Zionism did not meet [the] spiritual condition in 1948." This "spiritual condition," in Wohlberg's opinion, is "if they return and obey His voice, then He will regather them." (*Exploding the Israel Deception*, p. 70). Scripture tells us that the Lord will bring Israel back into the land before their endtime national repentance (Jer 5:10, 5:18, 30:11; 46:28; Ezk 11:13, etc.). In Zechariah 14, the Lord returns to save Israel before their prophesied repentance. If the Lord returns to save Israel *in the land*, they must return prior to this event!

Wohlberg writes, "Because of today's global religious confusion, especially about Bible prophecy, millions of the Lord's people now believe false theories about the end of time" (*Ibid*, p. 101). Along with E. G. White, Wohlberg consistently implies that any who hold a differing view (i.e., futurists) are part of the "endtime system." Prophecy, although misinterpreted by White and Wohlberg, is nevertheless a recruiting tool for their "faithful remnant."

On page 74, Wohlberg quotes Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness, adding that he "was considered to be one of the three greatest preachers of his day...." Wohlberg, mind you, disagrees with much of what Guinness writes, yet he calls Irishman Guinness "the Northern Spurgeon" and "a deep student of prophecy." The quote Wohlberg uses from Guinness reads: "This is not, and cannot be, any Jewish Temple." Wohlberg has stated that he is not a replacement theologian, but he has clearly stated that "...there is nothing in Scripture about the rebuilding of a third Jewish temple on the Temple Mount" (*Exploding the Israel Deception*, p. 90).

In truth, Guinness fully believed in the restoration of Israel to her land. "Guinness...measured off eras of 2,520 years from the many consecutive starting points in Biblical history when first Israel and then later Judah were swept away into captivity to Assyria and Babylon. On the strength of his findings, he confidently pointed ahead to the years 1917, 1923, and 1934 as bound

to see movement relating to the restoration of Israel to her land" (*Guinness Is Good for You: Memories of the Legacy of Rev. H. Grattan Guinness, D.D., F.R.A.S.*, Compiled by J. L. Haynes, "The Vision of the Seven Times of Daniel 4"). Interestingly, "1917" was the date that the Balfour Declaration was issued.

Finally, Wohlberg misuses history to support his theology. For example, he says that during the "time of Constantine, a large portion of the church compromised key Bible truths and decided to line up with the Roman State" (*End Time*, p. 88). Constantine was *indeed* detrimental to the early church (see 11/98 *TBC*). What Wohlberg seeks to prove, however, is that Constantine introduced Sunday worship, a key point for SDAs. On the contrary, Constantine's decree reads as follows: "On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed" (*Constantine*, March 7, 321. Codex Justinianus lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, p. 380, note 1). Constantine mandated a day off, not a day of worship. In choosing this day, however, he was probably influenced by those already meeting on Sunday, as Acts 20:7 documents. Much more could be said, but these points begin to show the problems of Wohlberg's book.

Christianity Today's Anti-Christianity Today

T. A. McMahon

According to the online encyclopedia wikipedia.org, "*Christianity Today* [*CT*] is an Evangelical Christian periodical based in Carol Stream, IL. It is the flagship publication of its parent company Christianity Today International, claiming readership of 290,000. The founder, Billy Graham, stated that he wanted to 'plant the evangelical flag in the middle-of-the-road, taking the conservative theological position but a definite liberal approach to social problems.'

"Today it, and its 13 sister publications, reach well over 2 million readers in its traditional paperbound form, and more than 10 million pageviews per month in their Internet form."

It was right after I became a born-again Christian more than thirty years ago that I encountered my first copy of *Christianity Today*. Having grown up Roman Catholic, my appetite for anything evangelical was ravenous. Yet even in those early years of my faith, there were things that I read in that magazine that troubled me. I recognized, in Mr. Graham's own words, "a definite liberal approach to social problems" in the promotion of "Christian" psychological counseling (see *TBC*, July 1999).

Of even more concern, however, were articles that clearly favored Roman Catholicism. This was disconcerting for one who had recently been delivered from the bondage of the false gospel of Rome. I remembered also reading an old quote from Billy Graham, which he had spoken nearly a decade before he started *CT*. He declared that "The three gravest menaces faced by orthodox Christianity are Communism, Roman Catholicism, and Mohammedanism" (*Plains Baptist Challenger*, March 1984). Incredibly, years later, among *CT*'s contributing editors and writers were Roman Catholics, including Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus. It was Neuhaus, along with *CT* editors Chuck Colson, J. I. Packer, Timothy George, Thomas Oden, Richard Mouw, and Mark Noll, among others, who formed, were promoters of, and/or were signers of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." Their news release proclaimed: "[L]eading Catholics and evangelicals are asking their flocks for a remarkable leap of faith: to finally accept each other as Christians....[E]vangelicals including Pat Robertson and Charles Colson joined with conservative Roman Catholic leaders today in upholding the ties of faith

that bind [them]....They urged Catholics and evangelicals...to stop aggressive proselytization of each other's flocks."

The Catholic bias of *CT* is reflected in the *modus operandi* of Graham's crusades: they were, and continue to be, publicized and subsidized by each Catholic diocese where they take place. Additionally, the crusades continue to be outfitted with Catholic counselors who guide those Catholics that "come forward" to return to their local Catholic churches.

The list of Catholic luminaries celebrated by *CT* includes popes Benedict XVI and John Paul II (Graham told Larry King that he and the pope "agree on almost everything"), Mother Teresa, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, Buddhist/Catholic monk Thomas Merton, and mystic Catholic priest Henry Nouwen. Catholic mysticism is further promoted by *CT* contributing editor Richard Foster, who is the godfather of the modern contemplative/mystical (read "Eastern") movement within evangelical Christianity.

It seems that no voice that advances apostasy has been omitted from *CT*'s list of contributing editors or writers: Ron Sider, President Obama's leftist theologian; Notre Dame professor Mark Noll; Eugene Peterson (who wrote his own bible called *The Message*); Eastern Orthodox followers Frederica Mathewes-Green and Bradley Nassif; former executive editor Terry Muck (who writes of his love for the Buddha); Leith Anderson (who promotes the experiential over the propositional, i.e., that emergent experience trumps doctrine); and psychology and Bible integrationist Eric L. Johnson, to name but a few.

All of this leads us to *Christianity Today*'s senior managing editor, Mark Galli, and his article of July 15, 2010, titled "Divine Drama Queen," which is his characterization of the God of the Bible. We've reprinted here extensive excerpts of *CT*'s God-demeaning/man-exalting article (albeit reluctantly, due to its wicked content) as further evidence of this "evangelical" magazine's continuing slither into the last days' apostasy. What Galli has written is *CT*'s latest installment of corrupting the faith, generated from decades of undermining the Word of God and distorting the God of the Bible. Editor Galli makes this so obvious that what he writes needs few comments on my part. Nevertheless, his writing is in italics, and my words appear in brackets and regular type:

I like a tranquil, even-keeled, self-controlled God. A God who doesn't fly off the handle at the least provocation. A God who lives one step above the fray. A God who

has that British stiff upper lip even when disaster is looming.

When I read my Bible, though, I keep running into a different God, and I'm not pleased. This God says he "hates" sin. Well, he usually yells it. Read the prophets. It's just one harangue after another; all in loud decibels. And when the shouting is over, then comes the pouting.

Take his conversation with Hosea....He orders Hosea to take a prostitute for a wife; she becomes a symbol of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. This is no down-on-her-luck-but-with-a-heart-of-gold prostitute like those so often portrayed in movies. This is some sleazy woman who, even when given a chance at a decent life, keeps "whoring."

God then tells Hosea to have children with this woman. When the children are born, he tells Hosea to call the first Jezreel, explaining, "I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel." The second, God calls No Mercy, because "I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all." The third he calls Not My People, "for you are not my people, and I am not your God" (Hosea 1:1-9).

This God is like the volatile Italian woman who, upon discovering her husband's unfaithfulness, yells and throws dishes, refuses to sleep in the same bed, and doesn't speak to him for 40 days and 40 nights.

[I refrained from drawing conclusions up to this point on my first reading of this article because I suspected that Galli would indicate his own misunderstanding of God. I guessed wrong. This is the kind of blasphemy that one would expect from militant atheists and humanists, such as Richard Dawkins, or foul-mouthed, Christ-mocking comedians like Bill Maher. It is total blasphemy—a mischaracterization of God as well as a denigration of His perfectly holy character.]

We may think this a crude depiction, except that Jesus—God with us—seems to suffer the same emotional imbalance. He rants about Pharisees and Scribes—or "snakes" and "hypocrites," as he calls them. So upset is he over sacrilege in the Temple, he overturns tables and drives people out with a whip. And then we find him lamenting, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate!" (Matthew 23:37-38). This God knows nothing about being a non-anxious presence. This is a very anxious God, indeed.

[It's difficult to restrain anger here. The Creator of the universe, the sacrificial Lamb of God, who paid the full penalty for our sins, and His Father, who sent Him to the Cross for our sake—they suffer from “emotional imbalance”?! They—whose Word tells us to be anxious for nothing—they are anxious?]

I'd rather have a God who takes sin in stride. Why can't he relax and recognize that to err is human. I mean, you don't find us flawed humans freaking out about one another's sins. You don't see us wrathful, indignant, and pouting. Why can't God almighty just chill out and realize we're just human?

[Has the reader been manipulated by Galli into fleshing out his own similar thoughts about God? Will he now set the record straight?]

It's that little phrase, “we're just human,” that may be the rub with God. Sin seems to be a big deal to God because apparently we're a big deal to him. That little phrase, “we're just human,” signals that we may not be as big a deal to ourselves....[God] believes that to be human is to be destined for glory. As Peter put it, he has “called us to his own glory and excellence,” that we “may become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:3-4).

[So much for repenting of the character assassination of God the Father and God the Son. Instead, Galli panders to mankind's self-image, dangling before us the “glory” of humanity. He then leads the reader to the next step, self-deification—the same lie that Satan offered to Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:5).]

That's right: he [God] thinks “just humans” can become nothing less than gods. Not in the sense of beings who should be worshipped, but beings who have become, in the fullest sense, bearers of the image and likeness of their Creator.... He created beings with deep awareness of themselves and their Creator, who could envision the absolute heights they could scale and the perfect love they could enjoy, and who knew they could have all this forever and ever....

[Nowhere in Scripture do you find the word “god” (with a lowercase “g”) ever used to denote a righteous person or entity.]

...And yet God gambled. He has thrown everything into this grand enterprise. He made the creation of these beings not a matter of course or compromise, but a matter of life or death. Everything was on the line with this roll of the dice. To win meant for

these creatures a bliss that only God knows. To lose meant death and eternal destruction. There was no holding back. God was going to make human glory a winner-take-all proposition, even if it killed him.

[God gambled? Does he mean that God doesn't know how things will turn out? This is the heresy of Open Theism, which denies God's omniscience—denies that He is the God of prophecy as He proclaimed in Isaiah 46:9-10: “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done....”]

So when things start going south, we find him throwing dishes and slamming doors.... God rants at us as an Olympian curses himself for losing concentration during a crucial part of the race. Or as a novelist chastises herself for lazy writing. For the righteous perfectionist (versus the neurotic perfectionist), every detail matters. God wants nothing less than perfection, because he knows that perfection is the only way for us to become what he created us to become: godlike.

[Galli must be having flashbacks to his college Greek mythology classes. At least I hope that's his excuse. Of course, he could plead insanity. How much more irrational could one be than to posit a “righteous perfectionist” who throws dishes, slams doors, rants, and curses himself. Again, this is unashamed blasphemy. It is anti-Christianity from *Christianity Today*.]

When the stakes are so high, of course, the consequence of failure, even in the smallest detail, spells disaster. It's like a space shuttle—one of the most sophisticated and marvelous of machines—crashing to earth because of a faulty oil ring. When God sees the space shuttle hurtling toward its destruction, he weeps, he rants, he pulls his hair out. And something inside him dies. Our God cares about us frail, fickle, weak human beings because he knows something we often forget: we're not “just human.” He'll go to any length to get us to grasp and live into our glory, even if it kills him.

[Our glory? What about the glory of God that Galli has dragged through the gutter of his paganized imagination?]

This is why the Bible traffics in such dramatic language. There is nothing cautious, careful, or reasonable about the human enterprise. It's about being lost or saved. Living in darkness or in light. Knowing

despair or being filled with hope. Death or life. The Bible is not interested in a religion that merely improves the human condition, or makes life manageable. It's not about success or happiness or helping us all get along. These are paltry aspirations. No, what God wants is to raise the dead and make gods out of sinners.

[No! Once again, that was Satan's goal.]

So what we have, for better or worse, is a melodramatic God. He yells and throws dishes, and walks off in a huff, slamming the door behind him—and then he turns around and gives his life for us. In a foreshadowing of Jesus, he says to Israel through Hosea: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?...for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath” (Hosea 11:8-9). He's anything but calm and collected, reassuring and reasonable. He's as mercurial as gods go.

[God is] like the crazy uncle in the family. At some point, you have to let your friends know about him, but you'd just as soon avoid having to introduce him.

I much prefer reasonable religion with reasonable expectations, and a God who doesn't get bent out of shape every time his people trip up. But then again, I don't love as God loves. Not God. Not others. Not myself.

[So, are we to suppose that Galli was just trying to get our attention with his blasphemies for effect? Did we misunderstand his “literary cleverness”? No. What he paraded before us was a mockery of God akin to what Jesus suffered from those who gathered to watch Him being crucified and to what every God-hating humanist has since voiced.]

The road to hell is paved with reasonable religion with a non-anxious god. Most days, I'm pretty happy driving down that road. But I keep running into this Crazy Fellow along the way. At every stop light, he jumps up and down to get my attention. He pounds on my window asking me where the heck I think I'm going. He stands on the front bumper, shouting at me to turn around. When all else fails, he throws himself in front of the car. He's such a drama queen.

[Galli is “pretty happy” driving down the road to hell? God is a Crazy Fellow? God is a Drama Queen? I have two suggestions: 1) Send your reaction to Galli's article to the founder and honorary chairman of CT, Billy Graham, noting what seems to be the ultimate degeneration of what he started, and 2) Pray for Mark Galli, that he will repent. “[Regarding the wicked] there is no fear of God before his eyes” (Ps 36:1).] **TBC**

Quotable

One day at a time, with its failures and fears,
 With its hurts and mistakes, with its weakness and tears,
 With its portion of pain and its burden of care;
 One day at a time we must meet and must bear.

One day at a time to be patient and strong;
 To be calm under trial and sweet under wrong;
 Then its toiling shall pass and its sorrow shall cease;
 It shall darken and die, and the night shall bring peace.

One day at a time—but the day is so long,
 And the heart is not brave, and the soul is not strong,
 O Thou pitying Christ, be Thou near all the way;
 Give courage and patience and strength for the day.

Swift cometh His answer, so clear and so sweet;
 “Yea, I will be with thee, thy troubles to meet;
 I will not forget thee, nor fail thee, nor grieve;
 I will not forsake thee; I never will leave.”

Not yesterday’s load we are called on to bear,
 Nor the morrow’s uncertain and shadowy care,
 Why should we look forward or back with dismay?
 Our needs, as our mercies, are but for the day.

One day at a time, and the day is His day;
 He hath numbered its hours, though they haste or delay.
 His grace is sufficient; we walk not alone;
 As the day, so the strength that He giveth His own.

—Annie Johnson Flint

Q&A

QUESTION: I’ve come across something that’s been called the “Sacred Name Movement,” and I’m curious if any of you have heard of it. They disparage Jesus’ name as a pagan conglomeration of Zeus and a Greek healing goddess named Ieso and say that salvation is only achieved by calling upon the (varying) properly pronounced name of God, the Tetragrammaton, YHWH (or YHVH). They deny the Trinity and claim that the name of the Messiah also had to be YHWH or some variation. They seem to treat Hebrew as the original perfect language and also

seem to deny the validity of the Greek NT and choose to believe that it was first written in Hebrew or Aramaic. I’d appreciate your thoughts or observations on this.

RESPONSE: We haven’t yet particularly addressed groups in the Sacred Name Movement such as the Assembly of Yahweh. To know that “Yahweh” (the closest to the four letters YHWH) is correct, and that Jesus could and can correctly be called Yahshua—or, even more correctly, Yahweh-shua, or “God” (Yah) “the Savior” (Shua)—is wonderful, but we do not recommend fellowshiping with any group that establishes this as their basis for separating from other believers. Their apparent intent is to help Christians better understand the Scriptures through Hebrew eyes and culture.

If any group, however, places extreme emphasis upon these aspects, it can be quite easy to begin to have a cultic mindset; i.e., that they are the only ones who have the truth and everyone else is anathema. From there, it’s only a short distance to legalism and presenting error that often goes undetected by followers. The Jews regarded the name of God as so holy that they would not dare even to write or pronounce it, instead using *Adonai* or *Elohim*. To make this a main teaching, or to say that it is “suppressed” information (as some groups do), can easily lead the unsuspecting to feel unsafe with any version of the Bible, any teacher of the Scriptures, or any group other than the one promoting this teaching.

Legalism is discussed in the article “Jews, Gentiles, and the Church” (see September 1989 TBC). We’ve been freed from the law (of sin and death) and from the penalty that we would otherwise have to pay if we were under the law. But we are to *abide in Christ*, who came to fulfill the law and in whom we’re enabled to live lives in obedience to His will and in accordance with His purpose. Galatians 3 explains this. We are now under the “law” of love (Jn 14:15).

Do we not think that when we refer to our Lord as “Jesus” that God knows exactly whom we mean—and men as well? Further, this “understanding” didn’t compel the writers of the New Testament to adhere to the sole use of “Yahweh” and “Yahshua. On the contrary, *Kurios* (Iēsous), is used by Paul when quoting Psalm 117:1. Instead of “O Praise the LORD (Yahweh), all ye nations...”, the apostle Paul writes, “Praise the Lord (Kurios), all ye Gentiles...” (Rom 15:11). That is one reason why some in the “Sacred Name Movement” deny the validity of the Greek text of the New Testament. The Scriptures do not support

their preconceived ideas.

Nevertheless, in the Old Testament, the inspired Jewish writers of Scripture used “Elohim,” as in Psalm 59 (see vv. 1,5,9,10,13,17). David does record “Yahweh” in verses 3 and 8, but why not in the others, if the premise of these folks is correct? It isn’t.

The idea that “Jesus” (Iesous) is derived from “a pagan conglomeration of Zeus and a Greek healing goddess named ‘Ieso’” is unsupportable. The name “Iesous” is found in the Greek Septuagint. Regarding the derivation or origin of the name, it is easy to find the following: “Jesus, (je’zus) [Latin from Gr. Iesous, which is for Heb. Jeshua, a late form of Jehoshua or Joshua...]” (John D. Davis, *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1944).

In Scripture, the term *elohim* is used as a generic term for “god” as when speaking of the Philistine god Dagon (“elohim”—1 Sm 5:7); Chemosh, the god (“elohim”) of Ammon and Moab (Jdgs 11:24; 1 Kgs 11:33); Ashtarte (or Ashtoreth), the Sidonian goddess (1 Kgs 11:33); and Milcom, another god of the Ammonites (1 Kgs 11:33). For that matter, in Exodus 7:1 we read, “And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god [elohim] to Pharaoh...” Yet, no one paying attention to context and usage imagines that “Elohim” in Genesis 1:26 refers to anyone other than the Almighty God.

QUESTION: Could you please explain to me whether the soul and spirit are the same. If they are, why does the Word make a distinction between the two?

RESPONSE: First Thessalonians 5:23 clearly states, “I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless...” How might one differentiate between the soul and spirit?

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the “dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” There is a distinction between soul and spirit and it takes an extremely sharp (i.e., supernatural) instrument to discern it. Consequently, any attempt at human definition must fall short. The soul is said to include the mind, the will, and the emotions. Jesus, in His humanity, said that His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death...” (Mt 26:38. See also Job 10:1, Ps 119:28, Zec 11:8, etc.).

Some might point out that Jesus was also troubled in His *spirit*: “When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me” (Jn 13:21). It is clear that the spirit addresses issues beyond

the mind, the will, and the emotions.

When He was dying on the Cross, Jesus committed his “spirit” into His Father’s hands (Lk 23:46). As for the human spirit, we know that at death it returns to the Lord who gave it (Ecc 12:7, 2 Cor 5:8, Phil 1:23). Prior to the resurrection, it is “souls” that stand before God. “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God” (Rv 20:4). Although Scripture gives us no exact definitions of soul and spirit, from the verses quoted and many others, we are assured that they are different parts of the makeup of humans.

QUESTION: If the thoughts, desires and feelings come from the soul and spirit, and the brain is just the mechanism to express and exercise those issues then what is the spiritual condition of a person that suffers from dementia? If his brain is not working right anymore what is going on with his spirit? My grandmother was a devoted fruitful Christian, and then at age 79 she developed some kind of brain deterioration that had the same as Alzheimer’s symptoms.

RESPONSE: The brain is a physical organ of the body. Therefore, it is clear that any deterioration of that organ may severely restrict what the spirit is inputting. Sir John Eccles received his Nobel Prize for research on the brain. He describes the brain as: “A machine that a ghost can operate.” To “operate” a “machine” clearly shows a distinction between the “brain” and the human soul and spirit (the mind), or what Eccles calls the “ghost.” The mind of the individual operates the “machine” (the human brain), which subsequently causes the human body to function as needed (<http://www.thebereancall.org/node/7230>).

Thus, if there is a damaged “machine” (i.e., the brain), it is not the spiritual condition of an individual that is in question. The person inside can no longer “get out.” A radio that has a damaged speaker or a short in the volume control can certainly not deliver a broadcast of the most carefully enunciated words. It is impaired. If Eccles’s hypothesis is correct, a brain dysfunction would adversely affect a spirit’s ability to effectively utilize the brain. That circumstance, however, cannot tell us anything about the condition of one’s spirit.

[Taken from TBC Q&A July 1986]:

QUESTION: When the Scriptures talk about “self,” what do they mean?

RESPONSE: The Bible doesn’t give a definition for self [but] it tells us some things about self. Look at Luke 9:23, where Jesus says, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Self, independent of God, must be denied. That includes my will and everything that I am. Jesus said that I must even hate my life—I must lose my life in order to gain it. If I cling to my life I’ll lose it, but if I give it up I’ll find a new life. We were made “in the image of God” (Gn 1:27). We’re like a mirror. It has one purpose: to reflect a reality other than its own. What would you think of a mirror that tried to develop a “good self-image”?

We are to reflect the image of Jesus as the Holy Spirit empowers us. Matthew 16:24-26 says the same thing.

Jeremiah 10:23 is a powerful scripture that every Christian should memorize: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” We are made in the image of God. That means we are not self-contained, and it’s the power and the life of God that is to be lived through us. And when we try to be self-contained entities we are in rebellion to God’s design for us.

Even the personalities within the Trinity do not operate independently. Jesus said in John 5:30 that as a man on this earth “I can of mine own self do nothing.” John 16:13 says that even the Holy Spirit “shall not speak of himself [i.e., independently of the other members of the Trinity]; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak....” If He will not act independently, then how can we possibly act independently of Him?

So, this “self,” which He wants us to deny, attempts to act independently of God.

The Temporal Delusion

Part 1

T. A. McMahon

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)

I'm fascinated by timelines. They give me an idea of what events took place in history, how they relate timewise to other historical events, and whether or not former events may have influenced later ones. I especially like biblical timelines. They often begin with the event of creation and end with the future Millennial reign of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem, supplying a host of details in between. Due to their temporal nature, however, they can only hint at eternity, which is infinite, and for which our life on earth is only a preparation.

The "timeline" presented on the cover of this newsletter is a simple attempt to symbolically remind believers that spending eternity with Jesus is our *raison d'être*, i.e., it is the reason for our existence.

Why am I making an issue of this? Because the world and, sadly, much of the church are caught up in a *temporal* delusion: clinging to this earth rather than hoping for heaven. It's part of Satan's strategy to deceive the world into building his kingdom. For thousands of years, he has seduced both professing and true Christians into joining his labor force, with the goal of establishing his own religion, which will be headed by his puppet ruler, the Antichrist. As the intensity of his program increases in these last days, particularly in Christendom, the leaven of this apostasy has been deposited in all theological camps: charismatics, Calvinists, conservatives, liberals, Pentecostals, Baptists, left-leaning Christians, supporters of the Emerging Church Movement, promoters of the "social gospel," et al.

In its simplest form, it is an attitude of disdain for what Paul admonishes us to do in Colossians 3:2: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Although even those who truly know and love Jesus may struggle sometimes with keeping their affections on Him, there are others who profess Christ and claim to follow His Word yet who continue in their attempts to set up His kingdom here on earth prior to His return. That unbiblical objective,

sometimes referred to as Dominion Theology and Kingdom-Dominionism, has taken many forms throughout church history.

One early example was the Holy Roman Empire. The idea was that "godly" (i.e., in support of the papacy) emperors would bring the world into the fold of Christ. When that wasn't successful, the papacy took control, ruling over most of the world at that time. As one historian describes it: "[The Church of Rome governed the medieval world and] had all the apparatus of the state: laws and law courts, taxes and tax-collectors, a great administrative machine, power of life and death over the citizens of Christendom and their enemies within and without....Popes claimed the sole right of initiating and directing wars against unbelievers. They raised armies, conducted campaigns, and made treaties of peace in defense of their territorial interests."¹ Like most of the dogmas and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, this was contrary to what Jesus taught: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight...but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Amillennialism was the theological belief of the age, which posited that the Millennial, or 1,000-year, reign of Christ was already taking place, albeit spiritually. The worldly successes of the Roman Catholic Church seemed to support this view, but before long it succumbed to its own excesses and corruption. Although the Reformation was a reaction against the abuses of Catholicism, the Reformers kept the Catholic amillennial eschatology, along with many of its teachings and practices such as infant baptism and replacement theology (the belief that the church has replaced Israel). Verses from Scripture that spoke of blessings for Israel were spiritualized to denote the church; verses regarding Israel's punishment were ignored.

John Calvin attempted to make the city of Geneva a model of the kingdom of God, and, for his controlling effort, earned the title "the Protestant Pope." Although his goal was admirable, the results of his implementation were little different from what he had objected to in the Roman Catholic Church. Historian Will Durant writes, "The new clergy...became under Calvin more powerful than any priesthood since Israel. The real law of a Christian state, said Calvin, must be the Bible, the clergy are the interpreters of that law, civil governments are subject to that law, and must enforce it as so interpreted."²

Another historian writes, "In a class by themselves stood crimes against Calvin. It was a crime to laugh at Calvin's sermons, it was a crime to argue with Calvin on the

street. But to enter into a theological controversy with Calvin might turn out to be a very grave crime."³ Geneva was hardly heaven on earth, though that was the intent. For example, "an overabundance of dishes at the table, a too-elevated headdress, an excessive display of lace, a proscribed color in dress—all were fair subjects of debate and punishment,"⁴ and one never knew when the consistory (the church police) would make a house call. One year saw 400 citizens indicted for moral offenses, and, in 60 years, 150 people accused of heresy were burned at the stake.

Calvin's Christianized society was simply not biblical, substituting law for grace. Not only that, it was inconsistent with Calvinist theology. How was one to "Christianize" those in Geneva who were not among God's elect? Characterized as "totally depraved" and not able to respond righteously because they were not extended "irresistible grace," the "non-elect" could never be the Christian citizens that Calvin demanded.

Kingdom-Dominionism took on a new form in the 1940s in Saskatchewan, Canada. An alleged spiritual revival broke out that spawned the "Manifest Sons of God," or, more commonly, the Latter Rain Movement. The eschatology of this movement shifted from the dispensational view, which is the Rapture of the church followed by seven years of tribulation and ending with Armageddon. The movement promoted a more "positive," even triumphant, scenario, looking for God to pour out His Spirit in a great worldwide revival, which would produce "Manifest Sons of God," a.k.a. Joel's Army. These would be believers, continually filled with the Spirit, who would manifest the same signs and wonders that Jesus did and would judge and conquer the world as they ushered in the 1,000-year reign of Christ.

One of the leaders of the movement has said: "God's people are going to start to exercise rule, and they're going to take dominion over the Power of Satan....As the rod of [God's] strength goes out of Zion, He'll change legislation. He'll chase the devil off the face of God's earth, and God's people...will bring about God's purposes and God's reign."⁵ This movement, however, ran into the same problems that plagued Calvin in Geneva. The so-called Manifest Sons of God couldn't live up to godly moral standards in practice, even though strict (read "abusive") measures, known as "shepherding," were applied.

The dominionism of the Latter Rain Movement spread far and wide among Pentecostals and Charismatics. Here are some quotes from men whose names you may recognize:

Yes, sin, sickness and disease, spiritual death, poverty, and everything else that's of the devil once ruled us. But now, bless God, we rule them—for this is the Day of Dominion! (the late Kenneth Hagin)

Those in [Joel's] army will have the kind of anointing...[Christ's] kind of power... anyone who wants to harm them must die. (the late John Wimber)

The manifestation of the Sons of God [are] the "overcomers" who will become perfected and step into immortality in order to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. (George Warnock)

The movement was further promoted by the late Bishop Earl Paulk, who taught that Christ was "held in heaven" until His Body, the church, purified itself and the world. Paulk, however, had problems purifying himself, having had a long history of sexual immoralities and was later convicted of perjury. In the 1980s, under Paulk's leadership, charismatic Kingdom Theology joined forces with Calvinistic Dominionist Theology, also known as Christian Reconstructionism, or Theonomy.

Christian Reconstructionism was popularized by Rousas Rushdoony and his son-in-law, Gary North. Reconstructionists believe that by applying the laws of the Old Testament and the principles of the New Testament, the world will be morally transformed by Christians. This, they claimed, would draw people to Christ. Their eschatology is postmillennial, which means that they expect Christ to return after 1,000 years (viewed by some as a symbolic number, meaning that it could be much longer) of successfully reaping the fruit produced by applying the law.

From the 1980s through the turn of the century, a Reconstructionist group called the Coalition On Revival, or COR, greatly influenced conservative evangelicals to seek to transform the U.S. into a Christian-run nation by using the political process. Although the Reconstructionists and the charismatic Kingdom-Now proponents were far apart theologically, the dominionist beliefs that are basic to both camps drew them together. Gary North noted that this surprising liaison made sense in another way: "...bringing together the postmillennial Christian reconstructionists and the 'positive confession' charismatics, with the former providing the footnotes, theology, and political action skills, and the latter providing the money, the audience, and the satellite technology [e.g., TBN and Christian Broadcasting Network]."⁶

A number of years ago, a friend of mine sat in on a meeting of Reconstructionists and asked if they truly intended to apply the biblical laws such as stoning and other capital

punishments, to which a national leader of the movement replied, "Absolutely!" It seems that the Calvinist Reconstructionists learned little from the failure of Calvin's totalitarian experiment in Geneva.

The Kingdom-Dominionist movement continues, especially among charismatics, to our present day. Jack Hayford, George Otis Jr., and C. Peter Wagner promoted a form of Kingdom Theology that involved taking back the dominion that Adam and Eve lost in the Garden of Eden. One of the movement's leaders explains, "Jesus gave us His authority and...we are supposed to reclaim, restore, organize, and rule over the earth—not only in a spiritual sense, but through economical, political, educational, and social reform as well." Here is why, this same person tells us, Christians must put to use their God-ordained authority: "Jesus is held in the heavenlies until all things are restored under His feet. He will not and cannot physically return to earth until the church [has brought] a measure of God's ruling authority back to this earth."⁷

This form of Kingdom-Dominionism is rife with methods, rituals, and techniques to be followed in order to seize control. C. Peter Wagner's books *Breaking Strongholds In Your City* and *Confronting the Powers* contain what he calls "state-of-the-art spiritual methodologies" for taking dominion: identifying territorial spirits, prayer journeys, spiritual mapping, strategic level spiritual warfare, identificational repentance, reconciliation walking, city transformation, praise marches, redeeming the culture, taking our cities, workplaces, and schools for Christ, etc.

I personally experienced the implementation of these techniques during the heyday of Wagner's "strategic level spiritual warfare" influence when some students attempted to "take our local high school for Christ." They buried crosses on the football field and anointed the school windows with oil. Not only did they *not* take their school for Christ, but they almost caused every Christian student organization to be thrown off campus.

C. Peter Wagner is the chief of operations behind this, and the methods that he says God has given to him are seemingly endless. He is the one who brought John Wimber to Fuller Theological Seminary (FTS) to teach "Signs, Wonders, and Church Growth," later renamed "The Miraculous and Church Growth," which Wagner co-authored with him. Wagner was also the academic mentor who supervised Rick Warren's doctorate dissertation at FTS.

Jack Hayford spent years meeting with Lloyd Ogilvie and other local pastors at Hollywood Presbyterian Church as they

applied various spiritual techniques to "transform Los Angeles for Christ." Hayford candidly admitted the failure years later: "My city's [still] being torn on the inside by gang violence and murder, polluted by homosexuality and pornography on the dark side, and suffocated with pride, self-centered snobishness and sensuality on the 'show' side...[it's] enough to self-destruct us."⁸

All of these movements from church history hold this in common: they are *earth-bound*. Focused on setting up the kingdom of God here on earth prior to or in order to expedite our Lord's return, all have a very serious problem. According to the Scriptures, the next kingdom to come on this earth is the kingdom of the Antichrist, which will last for seven years. True believers in Christ will have no part in that kingdom. They will have been removed from this planet by the Lord Jesus and taken to heaven. This event is called the Rapture (John 14:1-3; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11; 4:16-18; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 John 3:2-3; Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 6:14; Revelation 3:10; 2 Timothy 4:8, Luke 12:35,37,40), which will happen prior to the Great Tribulation period, during which time those who have followed the Antichrist will suffer God's wrath.

As Dave Hunt has noted in *Whatever Happened to Heaven?*: "The great seduction is to turn us from heaven to earth, from the true God to ourselves, from the denial of self to the acceptance, love, and esteem of oneself, from God's truth to Satan's lie. At the heart of this seduction are beliefs that have a deceptively spiritual appeal, but which actually turn us from loving Christ and His appearing to the earthly ambition of taking over society and remaking this world into the paradise that Adam and Eve lost" (p. 308).

Much of what has been presented here are some of the historic seeds of an earth-bound dominionism that have been sown in Christianity throughout the last 1,000 years. They have taken root and are thriving in the church in this fledgling twenty-first century. In part 2 of this series, the Lord willing, we will address what is being promoted in Christendom today in an attempt to draw the Bride (true believers in Christ) away from eagerly looking for the coming of the Groom to take her to their wedding in heaven. We will question whether or not efforts within the church (the ecological movement, the ecumenical movement, social gospel endeavors, political activism, "redeeming the culture" techniques, solving the world's problems through a global P.E.A.C.E. plan, etc.) can be supported by the Word of God. TBC

Quotable

“Thy throne is established from of old: thou art from everlasting.”—Psalm 93:2

We often hear of ancient dynasties, but what are they when compared with the Lord? Are they not as the bubble on the breaking wave, born an instant ago and gone as soon as seen?...The ungodly are all foam and fury, noise and bluster during their little hour, and then the tide turns or the storm is hushed, and we hear no more of them; while the kingdom of the Eternal abides in the grandeur of its power.

Charles Spurgeon

Q&A

[TBC: The following timely questions and responses are taken from past issues of The Berean Call.]

QUESTION [MAY 1988]: Could you please explain briefly some of the teachings of Kingdom/Dominion, or Dominion Theology? What is the problem with it, if any?

RESPONSE: The attempt to fit Scripture into the false mold of “dominion theology” has created strange theories and contradictions. We are accused of “defeatist eschatology” and gross “pessimism” for believing that Christ will soon rapture His bride home, marry her in heaven, then return with her and the armies of heaven to rescue Israel, conquer His enemies and rule this earth in righteousness and peace for 1,000 years.

Yet their teaching that it will require a minimum of 36,600 years (and perhaps hundreds of thousands of years) of continuing ungodliness, and billions dying without Christ, as Christians gradually take over the world before our Lord can return is called “an eschatology of victory.” They will not allow Christ to be present to rule over the Millennial kingdom. Although He was personally humiliated, rejected, and crucified upon earth, they will not allow Him to be exalted, honored, and triumphant upon earth by personally reigning during the Millennium....

In fact, they say, Christ has already come. His promise to “come quickly” was the comforting assurance to the Christians in AD 65 that He would return in the person of the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem! Nor is the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19 a future event for Christ’s bride to eagerly anticipate, but a symbolic expression of the new meaning in the Eucharist since Israel’s excommunication

by God when “Christ” destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.

Israel has allegedly been replaced by the church. Gary North would have [had] us become excited about the prospect that by the year 2000 “Christians and [non-Christian] conservatives will be swept into most elective U.S. offices by ridiculous margins.” There is such enthusiasm about... the hope of taking over this world that the church has lost its vision of heaven. I think it is high time that the bride of Christ became excited about that heavenly marriage and the prospect of seeing and being with her Bridegroom forever. Oh, that a great cry would arise from the church: “We love you, Lord Jesus! Please come and take us home! The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! Come, Lord Jesus, come!”

QUESTION [OCT 2008]: Today much is made of “prayer walking”...etc. Yet the Bible says “enter your closet to pray.” Please comment.

RESPONSE: Prayer drives...like the National Day of Prayer, call unsaved to join believers on Christ in prayer, which is like Paul asking fellow Roman citizens to join with the church in prayer—the worst kind of ecumenism.

As for private prayer, Christ said, “Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men....They have their reward [the praise of men]. But...enter into thy closet... shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Mt 6:5,6). Christ does not say that this is the *only* way to pray but one way to curb our pride.

Never does the Bible suggest that certain techniques are to be adopted....“Prayer walking” is part of the “Spiritual Warfare Movement,” which began at the 1989 Lausanne II evangelism conference in Manila attended by 4,000 evangelical leaders from around the world. C. Peter Wagner says, “...[T]he Lord [told] me...‘to take leadership in the area of territorial spirits...’” This involved “Spiritual Mapping,” (to “identify” the demon controlling an area of a city or country in order to “bind” it in the name of Jesus) and a host of other “techniques” that God “revealed” to leaders of this unbiblical movement. C. Peter Wagner...became the coordinator of the International Spiritual Warfare Network. To defeat the powers of darkness through strategic “spiritual warfare,” special prayer teams were sent to the northern-most, southern-most, eastern-most, and western-most points of every continent.

In 1989, YWAM’s John Dawson wrote *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds*, giving a “fivefold approach to bringing down our cities’ [demonic] strongholds....” In the foreword, Jack Hayford called it “a book of Holy Spirit insight....” Similar books kept coming off the press. Typical was one edited by Wagner titled *Breaking Strongholds in Your City: How to Use Spiritual Mapping to Make Your Prayers More Strategic, Effective, and Targeted*. Yet in the 20 years since this movement began, not one city has been “taken for God.” Instead, some of the leaders have lost the spiritual battle in their own lives to sexual sins. Yet the books continue to sell and seminars and conferences continue to arouse excitement and anticipation.

QUESTION [JUNE 2005]: In your article [May 2005] on the pope’s passing you said, “like the pope, the Church he led firmly rejects Christ’s promise of eternal life.” Contradicting your statement, the May 2005 *Christianity Today* bears an American evangelical missionary’s testimony that the pope’s message was “the clearest presentation of the gospel that I ever heard.” The pope also gave Billy Graham the invitation he needed for his crusade in a country where evangelicalism was considered cultic. Bill Bright and Campus Crusade were able to accomplish far more in Poland with his help and assistance. The Catholic youth organization, Oasis, even adopted Campus Crusade’s evangelical materials as part of its curriculum, and the soon-to-become pope defended the relationship between Campus Crusade and Oasis in 1977, allowing the evangelical-influenced curriculum to continue being distributed. Shouldn’t we thank the Lord for the gospel of the late pope?

RESPONSE: The pope was the head of the Roman Catholic Church [which] proclaims a false gospel of salvation through prayers to Mary and various “saints,” works and rituals, purgatory, medals, scapulars, and the Mass that denies Christ’s once-for-all-time sacrifice on the Cross and its sufficiency. The late pope was the leader in proclaiming this false gospel, which has sent billions to the Lake of Fire while promising them heaven (after an uncertain amount of time in purgatory, from which the Church will deliver them through countless Masses for a price). I will let you try to reconcile the claim of the CT article—that the pope was truly an evangelical Christian—with the truth that I present[ed] about him and his beliefs....I gave ample evidence that

no matter what the pope's public relations statements to evangelicals, he had no hope of salvation through faith in Christ but looked to Mary to get him to heaven.

I'm no expert on Poland, having only been there once for a series of meetings in a number of cities—but I do know the Bible and the gospel. At one meeting in Warsaw, the Campus Crusade Director for Poland stood up and defended the Roman Catholic Church. I met with the leader of the Catholic Charismatic Movement in Poland, who admitted that his church had a false gospel centered in the Mass and Mary. I brought to Bill Bright's attention the fact that all of his staff in Ireland were practicing Roman Catholics. He thought I would be pleased that they were getting Catholics to embrace Christ through the Four Spiritual Laws. I told him that every Catholic already believed these "Four Laws," but other things they believed nullified the gospel and that Campus Crusade was only reinforcing Catholics in Rome's false gospel. That is the same situation that Campus Crusade embraced in Poland. These are not the only places where Campus Crusade has compromised with false gospels. As you may know, they licensed the Catholic Church to make its own version of the *Jesus* film, including a purely Roman Catholic ending.

Christianity Today praise[d] a Polish Roman Catholic youth movement called "Oasis" [which] was founded in communist times by Franciszek Blachnicki, a priest who had become a close friend of then Cardinal Wojtyla of Krakow, who became Pope John Paul II. The article mentioned that Blachnicki had had a "conversion" experience in a Nazi prison. If he had been converted to Christ through the biblical gospel, he would never have become a Roman Catholic priest presiding over the Mass that denies the gospel....The *CT* article state[d] that Oasis retreats that Blachnicki organized involved "spiritual renewal exercises structured around the mysteries of the rosary"—to which Wojtyla was also devoted all of his life...[T]he Rosary...derives from apparitions of the alleged "Virgin Mary" and focuses upon her instead of on Christ...for protection and eventually salvation.

The *CT* article also mention[ed] that Wojtyla opened the door to [the] Billy Graham...crusades in Poland. We have quoted Graham in the past declaring that his beliefs were basically the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics and that any differences in belief between him and the pope were not important as far as salvation was concerned. He consistently referred Catholics who came forward at his Crusades to the nearest Roman Catholic Church. To

show that Bright and Graham were not "theologically naïve," the article mentioned that Trinity Evangelical Divinity School professor Norman Geisler was recruited by Crusade as guest speaker for a joint Crusade/Oasis Polish summer retreat. After returning from Poland, Geisler wrote of his trip in *The Christian Herald*: "What I experienced was a dynamic, joyous, Christian, and evangelistic community of believers...more eager than most American evangelicals I know to learn and live the Word of God." *CT* went on to say that "Geisler described that summer as the most gratifying experience of his then 25-year ministry."

I'm sure that whatever Graham and Geisler preached in Poland, it did not correct Catholicism's false gospel. Had Oasis youth believed that Christ paid the full penalty for our sins on the Cross, they would have left that church. And had Blachnicki preached this, he would have been cast out.

The *CT* article declare[d], "Certainly John Paul II's biggest accomplishment was his ecumenism"—as though that were good! I pointed out that his ecumenism gathered leaders of world religions such as Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, et al., for prayer and declared that they all believed in the one true God.

The facts I presented in my article prove that the late pope was not a true Christian trusting in Christ alone for his salvation. Posing as the friend of evangelicals in the U.S., he vigorously opposed them in Mexico. He was an ecumenist uncertain of his own salvation and willing to embrace followers of any religion who would submit to Rome. Indeed, he was the guiding hand behind Chuck Colson and Catholic priest John Neuhaus in their composition of ECT... You might ask the opinion of former Catholics who received Christ and had to leave that church (there are millions), and let them explain the facts.

QUESTION [MAR 2002]: I am deeply concerned about the increasing frequency of articles and comments in *TBC* that are harshly critical of Calvinism....To disagree with us on theological issues is understandable. But to verbally attack "us" because of our theological understanding is quite another. ...[W]e are your brethren in Christ, not a bunch of Moonies....In the December 2001 issue of *TBC*, an unidentified person made a blatantly inaccurate and defamatory editorial comment following the Associated Press item of 11/14/01...that said, "Whether it's the Catholic Inquisition or Calvin's Geneva or one of today's Islamic states, 'a man convinced against

his will is of the same opinion still!'" The inescapable conclusion is that Calvinism is equally oppressive and erroneous as Roman Catholicism and the Taliban demonic Islamic "faith."

RESPONSE: I appreciate your concern. However, you seem to have misunderstood what was said. For example, the editorial comment to which you object refers specifically and very pointedly to "Calvin's Geneva," not to Calvinism in general or to Calvinists. Yet you have made that connection. I think, also, that if you would read again the editorial remark (made by T. A. McMahan) you would see that he is not equating even Calvin's Geneva with the Taliban and the Inquisition—although Calvin was widely known as the "Protestant Pope of Geneva." The only connection he has made between them is the common attempt to force people to change their belief....

If you are familiar with "Calvin's Geneva"—the scores who were burned at the stake, the floggings and torture and banishment of those who disagreed with John Calvin—then you would understand what was said and that Calvinism in general and Calvinists of today were not the subject. If you are not familiar with what occurred in Geneva under John Calvin, then please consult some accurate and unbiased historical accounts for yourself.

Endnotes

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3. Edwin Muir, *John Knox: Portrait of a Calvinist* (The Viking Press, 1929), 106-8, cited in Hunt, *Heaven*, 174-75.
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5. Ern Baxter (associate of William Branham), cited in Sandy Simpson, "Dominionism Exposed," <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/dominionismexposed.html>.
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Knowing & Loving God

Dave Hunt

[The following is from the November 1993 issue of *The Berean Call*.]

"Hear, O Israel:...thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deuteronomy 6:4,5)

"Jesus said...This is the first and great commandment." (Matthew 22:37,38)

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23)

Both the Ten Commandments given to Israel and the moral law God has written in every conscience (Rom 2:14-15) require each of us to love God with our entire being. Such a demand is laid upon us not because God needs our love, for He is infinite and lacks nothing. Nor is it because God is self-centered or proud and thus demands that we love Him above all else. He commands us to love Him with our whole heart because nothing else could save us from our incorrigible enemy, Self.

This first and greatest commandment is given for our own good. God loves each of us so much that He wants to give us the greatest possible blessing: Himself. He does not, however, force Himself upon anyone, for that would not be love. We must genuinely and earnestly desire Him. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13) is the promise of God, who otherwise hides Himself (Is 45:15). And again, "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6).

This fervent seeking after God with the whole heart, without which no one can know Him, has always been the mark of His true followers. One of the psalmists likened his passion for God to the thirst of a deer panting for water (Ps 42:1,2). David expressed it the same way: "O GOD...I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee..." (Ps 63:1). What greater desire could one have than knowing GOD? Yet this most worthy pursuit is neglected even by Christians.

How astonishing that the infinite Creator of the universe offers Himself to such degraded creatures as ourselves! Nor is His love an impersonal cosmic force; it is intimately personal. Think of that! Such love should awaken a fervent response within us. Yet how many of us express our love

to God even once a day, let alone love Him with our entire being? Sadly, even Christians are caught up instead in the forbidden love of the world (1 Jn 2:15) and the pursuit of its deceitful rewards.

Loving God is the first commandment because our obedience to all His other commandments must be motivated by love for Him. Moreover, since God commands us to love Him with our whole being, then our entire life—yes, everything we think and say and do—must flow from that love. Paul reminds us that even giving everything one possesses to the poor and being martyred in the flames is in vain unless motivated by love for Him.

If loving God with one's whole being is the greatest commandment, then not to do so must be the greatest sin—indeed, the root of all sin. How is it, then, that loving God, without which all else is but "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1), is not even found in the course lists of our theological seminaries? How can it be that this "first and

[LOVE]...SEEKETH NOT HER OWN [SELF]...

— 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

great[est] commandment" is so neglected in the church? The sad truth is that among today's evangelicals it is not loving and esteeming God but self-love and self-esteem that are presented as the pressing need!

I speak to my own heart. At times I weep that, like Martha (Lk 10:38-42), in the busyness of serving Christ, I give so little thought or time to loving Him. Oh, to be more like Mary! How does one learn to love God without ever having seen Him (Jn 1:18; 1 Tm 6:16; 1 Jn 4:12,20)? Obviously, there must be a reason for loving God—or anyone. Yes, reason and love do go together. Love must result from more than a physical attraction, which, in itself, can only arouse a fleshly response. In addition to the outward appeal there are the inner beauties of personality, character, integrity, and, of course, the other's love response. God loves without such reasons. Our love, even for Him, requires them. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19).

Our heavenly Father loves even those who make themselves His enemies, those who defy Him, reject His laws, deny His existence, and would tear Him from His throne. Christ proved that love in going to the Cross to pay the penalty for all, even asking the Father to forgive those who nailed

Him there (Lk 23:34). Such is the love that the Christian, having experienced it for himself, is to manifest through Christ living in him: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Mt 5:44).

To love God with our whole heart and our neighbors as ourselves is not something we can produce by self-effort. Love for our fellows must be the expression of God's love in our hearts; nor can we love God except by coming to know Him as He is. A false god won't do. Yet at the 1993 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., Vice President Al Gore said, "Faith in God, reliance upon a Higher Power, by whatever name, is in my view essential." No one can love the "12-Step God as you conceive Him to be." That would be like loving some imaginary person. To know the true God is to love Him; and to know Him better is to love Him all the more.

Most of us have an all-too-shallow knowledge of God. Nor can our love for God grow except from a deepening appreciation of His love for us—an appreciation that must include two extremes: 1) God's infinite greatness; and 2) our sinful, wretched unworthiness. That He, who is so high and holy, would stoop so low to redeem unworthy sinners supremely reveals and demonstrates His love. Such an understanding is the basis of our love and gratitude in return and will be the unchanging theme of our praise throughout all eternity in His glorious presence (Rv 5:8-14).

There can be no doubt that the clearer one's vision of God becomes, the more unworthy one feels, and thus the more grateful for His grace and love. Such has always been the testimony of men and women of God. Job cried out to God, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor [hate] myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). Isaiah likewise lamented, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Is 6:5).

Such recognition of their sin and unworthiness did not decrease but enhanced the saints' love for God and appreciation of His grace. The more clearly we see the infinite chasm between God's glory and our sinful falling short thereof (Rom 3:23), the greater will be our appreciation of His grace and love in bridging that gulf to redeem us. And the greater our appreciation of His love for us, the greater will be our love for Him.

There is no joy that can compare to that of

love exchanged. Nor is there any sorrow so deep as that of love spurned or ignored. How it must grieve our Lord that His redeemed ones love Him so little in return! That grief comes through in scripture passages such as these: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Is 1:2). "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer 2:32).

Even more reprehensible than forgetfulness and neglect is the teaching of Christian psychology that God loves us because we are lovable and worth it. Richard Dobbins, best known Assemblies of God psychologist, suggests that one repeat, "I am a lovable, forgivable person." Bruce Narramore boasts, "The Son of God considers us of such value that He gave His life for us." If that were true, it would not increase but decrease our love for Him and our appreciation of His grace. The Bible teaches that our love for God and our appreciation of His love and forgiveness will be in proportion to the recognition of our sin and unworthiness.

Such was the lesson Christ taught Simon the Pharisee when He was a guest in his house. Jesus told of a creditor who forgave two debtors, one who owed a vast sum and another who owed almost nothing. Then He asked Simon, "Which of them will love him [the creditor] most?" Said Simon, "I suppose...he, to whom he forgave most." "Thou hast rightly judged," replied Jesus. Then, rebuking Simon for failing even to give him water and a towel, and commending the woman who had been washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair, Christ declared pointedly, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Lk 7:36-47).

It is both logical and biblical that the more sinful and worthless we realize we are in God's eyes, the greater our gratitude and love that Christ would die for us. By whatever extent we imagine that we are lovable or worth His sacrifice we lessen our appreciation of His love. The Bible teaches that God loves us not because of who we are but because of who He is. "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16). If God loved us because something attractive or worthwhile within us elicited that love, then, changeable creatures that we are, we could lose that appeal and with it God's love. But if He loves us because God is love, then that love can never be lost, for God never changes. Therein lies our security for eternity (Jer 33:3)—and all the glory is His!

We often find it difficult, especially in

trying circumstances, to rest in God's great love for us—no doubt because deep within our hearts we know how unworthy we are. Christian psychology tries mistakenly to cure this sense of unworthiness by persuading us that we are worth it after all. Robert Schuller declares, "The death of Christ on the cross is God's price tag on a human soul....[It means] we really are Somebodies!" Not so. Christ didn't die for Somebodies but for sinners. Dobbins says, "If we hadn't been worth it He wouldn't have paid the price." On the contrary, the greater the price the costlier our sin, not our worth. That the sinless Son of God must die upon the Cross to redeem us shouldn't make us feel good about ourselves but ashamed, for it was our sins that nailed Him there. Yet Bruce Narramore calls the Cross "a foundation for self-esteem!"

This humanistic, self-inflating false gospel is being increasingly embraced by evangelicals. Establishing the counselee's self-worth is a key concept utilized at Rapha

**BUT WHOSO KEEPETH HIS WORD,
IN HIM VERILY IS THE LOVE OF
GOD PERFECTED...**

— 1 John 2:5

counseling centers founded by Robert S. McGee. Anthony A. Hoekema writes, "Surely God would not give His Son for creatures He considered to be of little worth!" Thus the love and gratitude toward God that the Cross ought to arouse in us is stifled by the perverted new belief that He did it because we are worth it. Jay Adams points out the horrible error of teaching that what God does for us is "a response on His part to our significance rather than an act of His love, free mercy, goodness and grace!"

Our song for eternity will be, "Worthy is the Lamb" (Rv 5:12). Heaven has no place for the erroneous belief that Christ died because we are worth it. Christ's death in our place had nothing to do with our worth but with the depths of our sin, the demands made by God's justice, and His eternal glory.

Of course those who brought humanistic psychology's selfism into the church attempt to support it from Scripture. Bruce Narramore quotes Psalm 139 and suggests that the "wonderful pattern for growth, fulfillment and development" that "God built into our genes...is the ultimate basis for self-esteem." Surely the genius of the genetic code should cause me to bow in

wonder and worship at the wisdom and power of God—but self-esteem? Seeing the marvels of God's creative power in my genes is no more cause for self-exaltation than seeing God's creative power in another's genes or in any other part of the cosmos—I didn't create it!

Paul declared, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor 15:10). No basis for self-esteem there! Dare we think that we will ever be able to erase from our memories the fact that we are unworthy sinners saved by grace? Yes, God in His grace will give us crowns and rewards and we will even hear from our Lord's lips, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant:...enter thou into the joy of thy [L]ord" (Mt 25:21; 1 Cor 4:5) But will that give us a positive self-image, a sense of self-worth and self-esteem? C. S. Lewis answers: "The child who is patted on the back for doing a lesson well,...the saved soul to whom Christ says, 'Well done,' are pleased and ought to be. For here the pleasure lies not in what you are but in the fact that you have pleased someone you rightly wanted to please. The trouble begins when you pass from thinking, 'I have pleased him,' to thinking, 'What a fine person I must be to have done it.'"

Our love for God even influences whether we yield to temptation. Lust is called both "deceitful" (Eph 4:22) and "hurtful" (1 Tm 6:9) because it entices us with pleasure that is brief and involves disobedience to God and thus leads to pain and ruin in the end. Those whose focus is upon themselves think of God's commandments in terms of pleasures denied. But those who are enraptured by God's love have been delivered from self and find true and lasting pleasure and joy in obeying and thus pleasing Him. There is a joy that comes from pleasing God that is so far beyond any pleasure of this world that temptation loses its power in comparison.

The new theology denies us this path of victory. Its joy is selfish. To obey the first and great commandment is necessarily to deny self as Christ commanded (Mt 16:24). Nor can one deny self and at the same time love, esteem, and value self. Seeing God's love as a response to my significance and worth salvages just enough value for self to deny God's truth. Let us forget ourselves, our needs and hurts, and seek to know and love God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) because of who He is and His love and grace to us. His love will then flow through us to others, whom we will then esteem better than ourselves (Phil 2:3). Such is the path to true joy (Heb 12:2). **TBC**

Quotable

Those who trust in the Lord will never be disappointed. Some who helped us for a while may fall asleep in Jesus, some may grow cold in the service of the Lord, some may be as desirous as ever to help but no longer have the means, and some may have both a willing heart to help and the means but may see it to be the Lord's will to give in another way. If we were to lean upon man, we would surely be disappointed; but in leaning upon the living God alone, we are beyond disappointment and beyond being forsaken for any reason.

George Müller

Q&A

QUESTION: Some Calvinists have argued that 2 Peter 2:12 clearly shows that there are some who are “made to be taken and destroyed.” How do you explain this verse?

RESPONSE: Second Peter 2:12 reads: “But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” These individuals are “like” (“as,” or “similar to”) “natural brute beasts” who—the beasts—are “made to be taken and destroyed.” “Brute beasts” like tigers or lions who lose their innate fear of man and begin to prey upon humans must be destroyed. The false prophets of 2 Peter 2 are like brute beasts since their behavior (“speak[ing] evil”), makes them deserving of destruction. While their behavior parallels that of brute beasts, it is not that they are chosen to be “taken and destroyed” but rather that their behavior makes them worthy of the same treatment as animals. They “shall utterly perish in their own corruption.”

Interestingly, if someone argues election from 2 Peter 2, they inadvertently trample “limited atonement” (the “L” in T.U.L.I.P.). Verse 1, in context speaking of the false prophets, reads, “But there were false prophets also among the people... who...shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” So much for “limited atonement.” The price for redemption (the death of Jesus, who “bought them”) was paid even for those who would ultimately reject Him and His provision.

QUESTION: Do you think President Barack Obama is a Muslim? I respect your answers to questions.... I just read an article in which the author thinks Obama is a “closet” Muslim.

RESPONSE: It would seem that rather than being a closet Muslim, Obama is more of a universalist with some new age beliefs thrown in. Consequently, he may be sympathetic to Muslims but always identifies himself as a “Christian.” His “Christianity,” however, is not biblical Christianity, and those with whom he has associated are known for their Liberation Theology—an attempt to marry Christianity with Socialist/Communist principles.

It has been shown through “interviews with dozens of former classmates, teachers, neighbors and friends...[that] Obama was not a regular practicing Muslim when he was in Indonesia, despite being listed as a Muslim on the registration form for the Catholic school, Strada Asia, where he attended 1st through 3rd grades. At the time, the school most likely registered children based on the religion of their fathers, said [Israella Pareira] Darmawan, Obama's former [1st-grade] teacher. Because [his stepfather] Soetoro was a Muslim, Obama was listed as a Muslim, she said. ‘...Obama was an irregularly practicing Muslim who rarely or occasionally prayed with his stepfather in a mosque’” (<http://www.hudson-ny.org/1485/a-muslim-view-of-obama>).

When he took his oath of office, he was sworn in with his hand on the Bible. Regarding his “faith” in Christ, he has said, “I believe that there are many paths to the same place, and that is a belief that there is a higher power, a belief that we are connected as a people....

“Jesus is an historical figure for me, and he's also a bridge between God and man, in the Christian faith, and one that I think is powerful precisely because he serves as that means of us reaching something higher” (Cathleen Falsani, “Barack Obama: The 2004 ‘God Factor’ Interview Transcript,” June 24, 2008, posted at Falsani's blog).

In conclusion, the evidence indicates that Obama is a universalist who believes that all paths lead to God. His overtures to Muslims would seem to be more pragmatic than heartfelt. Indeed, although some Muslims hopefully consider him a closet Muslim, others have considered him anything but a follower of Islam, as has been well attested in articles and statements in Islamic media.

QUESTION [The following comments were received in response to a TBC

update quoting ex-Mormons discussing the false prophet Joseph Smith]: I very much appreciate your ministry. However, the grace you give to prophets and prophecy in the church appears to me to be lacking. It is one thing to be diligent about testing prophets and prophecy and another thing to be outright skeptical. I would like to call you to account for a statement regarding Deuteronomy 18:20-22. The following is what you said: “The Bible gives a criteria for testing prophets in Deuteronomy 18:20-22. One false prophecy is enough to dismiss a person as a false prophet—forever!” Deuteronomy does not say that. This scripture says that we can know if a prophecy is from God. If the prophecy does not come to pass, then [it] is not from God. It does not say that we can know if a prophet is not from God if his prophecy does not come to pass. If it does not come to pass, then the prophet has spoken the prophecy presumptuously. He was not called a false prophet.

RESPONSE: You are correct that there is no specific verse in Scripture stating that one false “prophecy is enough to dismiss a person as a false prophet—forever!”

We're a bit puzzled, however, regarding your idea that “the grace [we] give to prophets and prophecy in the church appears...to be lacking,” particularly since the excerpt that we quoted from ex-Mormons addresses a genuine false prophet who was never in the church. It seems a bit odd that calling Joseph Smith to account prompted the comment, especially linked with the idea of our being “outright skeptical.”

This does raise a concern, particularly when considering that some regarded today as prophets teach that “prophets” have a learning curve. One has said, “Prophets are really messy. Prophets make mistakes; And sometimes when a prophet makes a mistake, it's a serious mistake” (Jack Deere, National School of the Prophets, “Mobilizing the Prophetic Office,” May 11, 2000, 11:30 AM tape #3). Rather than excusing wrong behavior by using the word “mistake” instead of “false prophecy,” consider the biblical example of Samuel: “And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground” (1 Sm 3:19). No low expectations here.

The passage in Deuteronomy 18:20-22 concludes that others should “not be afraid of him.” This certainly indicates that one should have no further respect for nor pay attention to that individual. Why? Because he has shown himself to be false. When the Scriptures discuss “prophets,” there are two

categories: true or false.

Finally, there is one more criterion for judging a prophet. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 states, "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

Verse 5 continues, "And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee." The Lord is very serious concerning those who presume to speak in His name.

QUESTION: I just watched the Glenn Beck show from 8-17-10. He spent the whole show trying to link the North American Indians to a Jewish heritage. He is now promoting Mormon doctrine on his show.... He knows that if he can link the American Indians to Israel he can validate Joseph Smith's claims. When is the church going to wake up to this guy?...He is corrupting the church with ecumenical unity by using national restoration as his unifying point. Do we stand for the real Gospel, or do we stand for America? Please expose this.

RESPONSE: The focus of the church is always the presentation of the gospel. To reform a political system without changing the hearts of men is ultimately futile. We are on a rescue mission, sent by our Creator, the One who came to earth to pay the penalty for the sin of humanity: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:8).

Professing agreement with this, Glenn Beck appears to hold contradictory ideas. In conflict with Mormon teaching, on his July 13, 2010, broadcast, he said, "You cannot earn your way into heaven. You can't! There is no deed, no random act of kindness, no amount of money to spread around to others that earns you a trip to heaven. It can't happen. It's earned by God's grace alone, by believing that Jesus died on the cross for you. This is what

Christians believe."

In direct contradiction to Beck, Mormon Apostle Richard G. Scott wrote, "The demands of justice for broken law can be satisfied through mercy, *earned by your continual repentance and obedience to the laws of God* [our emphasis]. Such repentance and obedience are absolutely essential for the Atonement to work its complete miracle in your life" (Scott, "The Atonement Can Secure Your Peace and Happiness," *Ensign* [Conference Edition], November 2006, 42).

If Beck truly believes the biblical gospel, he is on an inevitable collision course with the teachings of Mormonism. Nevertheless, Beck at times uses Mormon terminology, as at his May 15, 2010, commencement address at Liberty University: "Beck urged graduates not to underestimate the power of the atonement. When he was 13, his mother took her life. He said he nearly followed in her footsteps. 'As a man who needed the atonement...I read the promise. He will carry your burdens. I made Him a promise. You keep your word and I will keep mine,' he said. 'He will never break his promise, and now it's all up to me'" (David Hylton, Liberty University Online, May 15, 2010).

Of great concern are the "bridges" Beck is building as a representative of Mormonism. In that same commencement address, Beck stated that his appearance at Liberty was "an endorsement of your faith. This is a time when we all need to come together. We may have differences, but we need to find those things that unite us" (Ibid.).

As you point out, there is also the problem of Beck promoting the made-up history of The Book of Mormon as he attempted to "prove" that American Indians are the surviving descendants of Hebrews who came to North America. As the documentary *DNA vs. The Book of Mormon* demonstrates by presenting evidence from DNA researchers, including Mormon scientists, there is no link between the Mongoloid American Indians and Semitic Jews. Neither has any objective evidence of the great civilizations promoted in The Book of Mormon ever been found (see August 2003 *TBC*). Consequently, if Beck is serious about basing his faith on the Bible, he must forsake Mormon teachings and the "Jesus Christ" of the Latter Day Saints.

QUESTION: I have recently become an evangelical and am now seriously studying the Bible for the first time in my life (though I was in the Roman Catholic Church for years). Can you interpret Colossians 1:24 for me, please? This passage appears to deny the efficacy of

Christ's sufferings as the sole means of salvation.

RESPONSE: Colossians 1:24 in the KJV reads, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."

This isn't speaking of working for Paul's own salvation. His "sufferings" were for "his [Christ's] body's sake." The very next verse begins, "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God" (Col 1:25).

Christ finished the work the Father had given Him to do (Jn 19:30). Consequently, *everything that can be done for our salvation has been done*. Nevertheless, according to Luke 4:18, Jesus said, "he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Jesus did not personally do this for every person who was living then or who would be born. He is now seated at the right hand "of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

We have been commissioned (Mt 28:19, Mk 16:15, Lk 24:47, Jn 20: 21, Acts 1:8) to be His ambassadors; *we* will now "preach the gospel to the poor," etc. That is what's "lacking" in Christ's afflictions and why Paul was "made a minister."

The Temporal Delusion Part 2

T. A. McMahon

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him....And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

— (1 John 2:15-17)

This series addresses a troubling trend within Christendom today. Our concern is that if professing believers in Jesus Christ are hung up on the temporal aspects of life on earth, then they are caught up in a delusion at best. They are missing the heart of what God wants for them, and, at worst, they could be unwittingly contributing to the kingdom and religion of the Antichrist.

As was indicated in part one of this series, this earthbound focus is not a new condition in the history of the world—or the church, for that matter. From the tower of Babel on, humanity has attempted to create a utopia and build a kingdom, either independent of God or, allegedly, in the *name* of God but for its own end. For those who call themselves Christians, there is a simple test to discern whether they have fallen prey to such a delusion: are their thinking and actions consistent with what the Word of God says about the kingdom of God, the rapture of the church, the prophetic end-time warnings of the Word, the final plight of the world in rebellion, and the eternal destiny of those who love the Lord?

The mark of a true Christian is that he or she conforms to what the Scriptures teach. Those who conform to the goals or agendas of the world, either personally or by participating in organized programs that compromise what the Bible teaches, although they may indeed be believers, are nevertheless drifting away from the faith (Hebrews 2:1). This means that one's temporal fruitfulness in Christ and eternal rewards will be adversely affected—but not one's eternal future with Jesus, which was secured by our Lord's full payment for all our sins.

The Bible doesn't make an esoteric issue or a cryptic mystery of what lies ahead for life on this planet. It simply and clearly informs us as to what has taken place in ancient times and what will take place in the future.

From the time of man's first sin against God in the Garden of Eden to our present day, the effects of that sin spawned a progressive evil among mankind. Early on, in response to the proliferation of wickedness, God destroyed all but eight people in

a worldwide flood (Genesis 6). Sin has not abated as it continues to separate man from God. Since the days of Noah and his family and their repopulation of the earth, there have been few instances of collective obedience to God. Even among a people chosen of God to whom He would send His Messiah to save the world from sin's consequences, obedience was only sporadic, concluding initially with the rejection and crucifixion of God's anointed Savior, Jesus Christ.

All of that was known to God before the beginning of time, as well as what He would do for mankind in keeping with His unfathomable love for His created beings. His solution for reconciling man to Himself was first indicated after the fall in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15,21) and then foretold by the prophets throughout the Old Testament. God's Savior would become a man through a virgin birth. He would be the God-Man and a suffering Servant, whose sacrificial death would pay for the sins of mankind. His resurrection from the dead certified that the infinite penalty He suffered for a condemned humanity was acceptable in satisfying God's perfect justice.

In the Book of Acts, after commissioning His disciples to share with the world the good news of His salvation, we read of Christ's ascension from the Mount of Olives to heaven and of His future return to that same place (Acts 1:8-11). Both Old Testament and New Testament prophets tell us about significant events that will take place here on earth prior to the Lord's return—and afterward: the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people (Deuteronomy 28:64; Leviticus 26:33); the re-gathering of the Jews to the land of Israel from their worldwide dispersion (Isaiah 11:11-12; 43:6; Ezekiel 20:33-38; 36:24) the return of Jesus for His bride, the church, and His catching believers up to Himself to take them to the wedding in heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18); the seven years of the Great Tribulation, involving worldwide catastrophes that will follow the Rapture of the saints (Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:21-22); the Antichrist's rise to dictatorial leader of the world (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 13); the pouring out of God's wrath upon the earth during the seven years of tribulation (Revelation 6-19); the nations of the world turning against Israel to destroy it (Joel 3:1-2,9-15; Ezekiel 38); the return of Jesus from heaven with His saints, and the destruction of those who have sought to annihilate Israel (Zechariah 12); Jesus' setting up of His throne in Jerusalem and ruling the earth from there for 1,000 years (Revelation 20; Isaiah 65:17-25), and the healing of the earth from the devastation that took place during

the Great Tribulation (Isaiah 11:1-10; Ezekiel 47:1-12). At the close of the Millennial reign of Jesus, He will put down a worldwide rebellion led by Satan (Revelation 20:7-9). All those who have rebelled will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8). The heavens and the earth will dissolve, and God will form, in perfection, new heavens, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem for those who love Him, and where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:7,10-13).

Just as all the prophecies related to the first coming of Jesus were fulfilled in the smallest detail and with 100 percent accuracy, we can be absolutely sure that the biblical prophecies regarding the future will be just as accurate. Furthermore, they spell out spiritual and physical conditions that will take place. One thing that should be obvious from the prophetic scenario above: this world has a temporal purpose that is incredibly brief compared to eternity. To miss that is to lose sight of the fact that a believer is a "sojourner" here whose "[citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

Our responsibility then, as Bereans (Acts 17:11), is to search the Scriptures and compare the movements, programs, agendas, and so forth, that are being promoted today in the world—and especially in Christendom—with what is foretold in God's Word. That will tell us what we may support and what we need to disregard—or even stand firmly against (Ephesians 5:11)

Certainly the world is all about solving its problems without the God of the Bible. Yet many professing Christians are rushing to remedy the world's troubles in ways that are without the support of Scripture, some even in contradiction to what the Scriptures teach. Rick Warren's global P.E.A.C.E. plan is one of many programs and teachings that, for the most part, cannot be reconciled with God's prophetic Word. It is Warren's "50-year plan" to cure global issues such as "pandemic diseases, extreme poverty, illiteracy, corruption, global warming, [and] spiritual emptiness" (see www.thebereanall.org). He claims that his social-works agenda developed from his reading of the Gospels—that Jesus gave him the model that was the antidote to the five biggest problems on the planet (see www.thebereanall.org). Warren subsequently expanded that model from an exclusive endeavor of Christianity to one requiring the support of *all* religions. The "P" in his P.E.A.C.E. plan originally stood for "Planting Churches" as the key antidote for curing the world's ills. Later, however, before a panel and audience of

representatives of the world's religions, he changed the "P" from "Planting Churches" to "Promoting Reconciliation" (see www.theberean.org).

Warren announced unequivocally that the universal problems *cannot* be solved "without including people of faith and their religious institutions" [Ibid.]. He told his audience at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland (1/24/08) that the various houses of worship are needed for distribution centers of resources to help eradicate global problems. His shift, however, to an ecumenical program that includes Islamic mosques, Hindu temples, Jewish synagogues, and other religious establishments as participants in meeting social needs may impress the world, but it is contrary to what God says in His Word. The God of the Bible is an exclusive God: "I am the LORD, and there is none else, and there is no God beside me" (Isaiah 45:5). There is to be no participation with the purveyors of false gods. The Apostle Paul tells us we are not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

Rick Warren's "ill-curing" ecumenical agenda is illogical as well as unbiblical. How can his game plan for remedying "spiritual emptiness" work with those who promote a false spirituality? Peter tells us, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name [Jesus Christ] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus himself declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). If there is no other true God but the God revealed in the Bible, and if salvation comes only through Jesus Christ—as the Scriptures declare—then all other gods and all other ways of salvation are false, with no hope for their followers. Yet Warren told his Davos religious audience that he was not concerned about their *motivation* in doing good, "as long as you do good." Tragically, he reinforced the very lie that keeps billions of religious people blinded to the truth and from turning to Jesus Christ: works salvation.

The influence of this fix-the-earth program is staggering. Warren's best-selling *Purpose Driven Life* (30 million copies-plus sold worldwide) introduced his "50-year" global P.E.A.C.E Plan and has been translated into 52 languages. According to his website, more than 500,000 evangelical

churches are partnering with him in his unbiblical ecumenical effort.

Although Warren's attempt to solve the world's problems is more than misguided, it's not the only prophecy-denying, earth-bound enterprise that's gaining followers today. Rob Bell, in his book *Velvet Elvis*, reflects the "fix the earth" eschatology of nearly all Emerging Church leaders: "Salvation is the entire universe being brought back into harmony with its maker....But we can join a movement that is as wide and as big as the universe itself. Rocks and trees and birds and swamps and ecosystems....God's desire is to restore all of it....The goal isn't escaping this world but making this world the kind of place God can come to. And God is remaking us into the kind of people who can do this kind of work."

Brian McLaren, arguably the best-known emergent leader, has a low, if not distorted, view of biblical prophecy, as do most of his peers in the Emerging Church Movement. He regards the Book of Revelation as "literature of the oppressed" to inspire "each generation," rather than God's warning of future events and judgments to come upon mankind.

Those future events and judgments are clearly at odds with the agenda of solving the world's problems and turning it into a paradise. McLaren declares: "In this light, [that is, removing the prophetic aspect of the Book of Revelation] Revelation becomes a powerful book about the kingdom of God here and now, available to all." He believes, as does Rick Warren (who also has a low view of prophecy), that it is necessary for all the religions of the world to work together for the greater good of society: "I think our future will also require us to join humbly and charitably with people of other faiths—Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, secularists, and others—in pursuit of peace, environmental stewardship, and justice for all people, things that matter greatly to the heart of God." That sentiment, although pleasing to the flesh, is far removed from the "heart of God" and His Word.

Restoring or preserving this planet as a rallying cause in the church has far exceeded the biblical principle of stewardship today and has become an *earthbound* mindset. Scripture is quite clear that any *abuse* of what God has provided for mankind is sin. Yet some are using the Bible erroneously to support their unbiblical agendas. Eugene Peterson, in his 10-million-bestselling *The Message Bible*, has no qualms about distorting the Scriptures for "the cause." He translates John 3:17 to say that Jesus "came to help, to put the world right again," rather

than "that the world through Him might be saved" (meaning the salvation of *souls*—KJV). He then promotes the ecological Green Movement by adding the adjective "green" to Romans 15:13: "Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy...."

Marketing Bibles is big business today, and where there's a "cause," there's usually an attempt to come up with a Bible that implies that the agenda is supported in Scripture. *The Green Bible* is just one example. It is presented in conjunction with the Sierra Club, The Humane Society, and the National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Program. It features an introduction by arch-heretic Archbishop Desmond Tutu and contributions by emergent leader Brian McLaren and theologian N. T. Wright, both of whom preach "redeeming the earth." Sales promotions claim that because the Bible mentions the *earth* twice as often as "heaven" and "love," it "carries a powerful message for the earth." That rationale is both delusory and deceptive. The "powerful message" of the Bible is the "good news" of what God has accomplished to reconcile man to Himself that we might spend life everlasting with Him. This present earth plays a very minute part in God's eternal plan.

The next issue in this series addresses other promoters of the temporal delusion such as Shane Claiborne, Jim Wallis, and Glenn Beck, as well as *The Hole in Our Gospel*, a very popular book advancing the cause of the social gospel.

Sadly, increasing numbers of believers are attempting to secure their lifeboats to our *Titanic*-like earth for the purpose of redeeming it. Instead, our "agenda" needs to line up with the biblical mandate of evangelist and soul winner John Harper (see TBC Extra, p. 8). We are told that he was guided of the Lord to change his passage and sail a week later to America on the *Titanic*, knowing that that was where God wanted to use him. Remembered as "the true hero of the *Titanic*" and "God's minister to the perishing," he ran to and fro on the deck helping those in need, giving up his life jacket to another, and asking all that he encountered to turn to God for salvation through Jesus Christ. As the huge ship began to slip beneath the icy Atlantic waters, Harper leaped from the deck and began swimming toward everyone within sight, pleading with them to come to Christ.

There is no redemption for this earth—only for its people.

Lord, give us that same love for the perishing that You gave to Your servant John Harper; and, by Your grace, use us according to Your Word.

TBC

Quotable

Referring to the Parable of the Sower (Mt 8:4-15), John Nelson Darby wrote: "If, on hearing, I possess that which I hear, not merely have joy in receiving it, but possess it as my own, then it becomes a part of the substance of my soul, and I shall get more; for when the truth has become a substance in my soul, there is a capacity for receiving more."

Cited in *Believer's Bible Commentary*,
William MacDonald

Q&A

QUESTION: At a Bible study, the subject of who can understand the Bible came up. I said that a person who is born again and is depending on the Holy Spirit can understand it. My pastor said that we are too depraved and sinful to fully understand the Bible on our own and that we need a "consensus of teachers." He then said that anyone who thinks they can understand the Bible without this consensus of teachers is "Satanic and arrogant." I believe that teachers are important, but with all the false teaching going around, it is not only possible but necessary that we arrive at an understanding of the Bible independently of people, or how would we know who is a false teacher and who isn't? What about Psalm 119:98-100 and 1 Corinthians 2:14-16?

RESPONSE: We agree with you. The idea that we need a "consensus of teachers" sounds much like a Catholic Magisterium. Who are the chosen ones? Further, "consensus" is an agreement that may or may not be true. Moreover, how does one correct an authoritative magisterium?

In words applicable to all saints, Paul exhorts Timothy *the individual* to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tm 2:15). Are we not all workmen?

In Scripture, the Lord exhorts to "...take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deut 4:9).

Second Timothy 3:16-17 is often rightly cited as evidence for the sufficiency of Scripture. We may sometimes forget that immediately preceding that portion is verse 15, which states that "...from a child

thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Paul is speaking of Timothy's familiarity with the Word of God. Was this familiarity the result of exposure to a "consensus of teachers"? On the contrary, Paul wrote, "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tm 1:5). According to Romans 10:17, "so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

It is true that the Lord has gifted individuals as teachers (Eph 4:11) "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (v. 12). Yet in Acts 8:1, "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles." These ordinary believers subsequently "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Certainly these folks understood the Word of God!

Consider, in Acts 18, the case of Apollos (who was "mighty in the scriptures"). He was preaching the "things of the Lord," but he knew only the baptism of John (v. 25). He did not know that the Messiah had come, lived, bled and died on the Cross, been buried, and then raised again in power. Two disciples, Aquila and Priscilla, took him aside and "...expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (v. 26).

In conclusion, yes, there are those equipped to be teachers, but even teachers can go astray, regardless of any official consensus. Paul wrote that the saints were to "prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thes 5:21).

QUESTION: I do not recall your ever having addressed the subject of cremation. Is it unbiblical? Isn't it a heathen practice? Also, don't our bodies belong to the Lord?

RESPONSE: Everything we have and everything we are is the Lord's. There are a number of ideas on the subject of handling human remains. We'll comment on some of them, then give our position.

In Genesis 50:25, we see that Joseph wanted his bones kept specifically so that he might be buried in the Promised Land when God's people returned there (Ex 13:19, Josh 24:32). This wasn't intended as a requirement for everyone but as an assurance to the people that God would be faithful to release them from exile. According to the

scriptures, Joseph commanded the embalming of his father, Jacob. Later, Joseph's body was also embalmed (Gn 50:26). For other examples of bones being left intact, see Jeremiah 8:1.

The "dust and ashes" as used in Genesis 18:27 is simply a figure of speech expressing Abraham's humility and reverence before the Lord. Job 30:19 similarly uses the term. (Note: People in biblical times and lands would sometimes express their sorrow and mourning by throwing ashes over their heads. Or they might speak of being "on the ash heap." Neither of these has any implications concerning cremation or embalming.)

What we're trying to point out is that a word study of "bones" and "ashes" might be edifying but may not apply nearly as much as what seems far more important: understanding that *God will do what He says He will do*, which is to raise us in our glorified bodies at the last day. There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that regardless of how one dies (even if in an explosion or, as in Hebrews 11, sawn in half), the Lord would have any difficulty in resurrecting our bodies. "I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (Jer 32:27).

Yes, pagans often dispose of bodies through burning. They also embalm (the Egyptians, for example) and surround the dead with great wealth. Today, there is a unique argument that "morticians make an idol of our bodies"! Any mortician (or mortician's client, for that matter) is accountable for his own spiritual condition. Whether someone else (pagan or otherwise) worships his own (or someone else's) body need not and should not apply to one's decision; it is the heart upon which the Lord looks.

"To dust we shall return" doesn't require or command that we do anything in order to reach that state. The Bible speaks of the body being sown a natural body and raised a spiritual one. We cannot oppose cremation on scriptural grounds; neither does the Bible recommend it. There may be some practical considerations, as, for example, bodies that were burned during the bubonic plague. Although there is plenty of scriptural precedent for embalming the body, there is not for cremation. Insofar as embalming is a *practical* consideration, we can also see that cremation may on occasion be a practical choice. In New Orleans, the water content of the soil does not allow the burial of coffins, and above-ground tombs are limited.

Let me encourage you to be at peace

about the subject, since the Lord is far more concerned about what you do while you live in your body than after you leave your “earthly tent” to meet Him face to face.

QUESTION: To “repent” means to “change one’s mind.” Where do you or anyone get the idea that it means to “turn away” from sin? I realize that a lot of Bible experts teach that repentance means turning away, but shouldn’t Christians go to the Bible themselves and not rely on what the “experts” tell them? I’m not interested in modern day retractions of words. I believe that “repent” has been redefined over the last 2,000 years, because changing your mind and believing the Gospel is all that is necessary for salvation. “Turning away from sin” is a work, and adds work to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

RESPONSE: You are correct that the meaning of words is of paramount concern. It is also true that context and implication play a role in proper biblical interpretation. Paul wrote in Acts 20:21 of “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” This certainly implies a “turning” on our part.

When Jesus told the parable of “the prodigal son,” He gave the following sequence of events. The prodigal son was brought to a teachable point in his life: “And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!” (Lk 15:17). He is in the process of changing his mind, but it is instructive that the change of mind is followed by this action: “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee” (v. 18). Repentance begins in the mind and the heart, but it affects the course of our life.

Salvation clearly is by faith alone. With the prodigal son as an example, we can readily see that his “repentance” was accomplished with a change in his heart or mind. His repentance was *demonstrated*, however, when he purposed to “arise and go” to his father. His acceptance by his father prior to even uttering a single word of repentance is shown as “he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Lk 15:20). He still “repented” before his father (v. 21), but he certainly wasn’t working for his forgiveness.

Some attempt to create a conflict between Paul (Ti 3:5) and James and have

James 2:14-26 saying “not by faith alone, but by works also.” On the contrary, it says that works should follow faith. “...I will shew thee my faith by my works” (Jas 2:18). This agrees with Ephesians 2:10, “for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*” (our emphasis). If we are truly saved by faith, there should be visible works showing that our repentance and consequently our salvation is real. Otherwise, “...faith without works is dead also” (Jas 2:26).

QUESTION: After Jesus was crucified, what happened to His body? The gospels claim that Jesus was buried in a tomb and on the third day ascended into heaven. I believe this is only partly true. Jesus was not buried in a tomb, but He did ascend into heaven. Biblical scholars agree that the gospels were written 35 to 70 years after the crucifixion of Jesus. Moreover, they assert, based on surviving manuscripts, that the gospels were written in Greek by educated Greeks, not by uneducated Jews. They also maintain that the authors didn’t reside in the Holy Land. How do you explain this?

RESPONSE: In other words, you recognize that the Scriptures tell us that Jesus was buried in a tomb, but you do not believe what is written. In Mark 15:46, Joseph of Arimathea “...bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.”

We don’t need to be intimidated by generalizations. Many skeptics strive to “late date” Scripture in order to get around very clear prophetic claims such as those in the book of Daniel. It sounds very authoritative to say “Bible scholars agree,” yet this must be subject to careful examination.

In Matthew 24:2, Jesus said unto the disciples, “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” All through Matthew’s gospel, the apostle recognizes the fulfillment of prophecy. Yet, if the gospels were written “35 to 70 years” after the crucifixion, why then is the fall of Jerusalem not mentioned in Matthew or any of the gospels?

In Acts 1, the learned physician Luke wrote to Theophilus, citing his earlier writing (the Gospel of Luke). Luke mentions his “former treatise...of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he

had chosen” (Acts 2:1-2). Again, although Acts was written after the events of the Gospel, there is still no mention of the fall of Jerusalem.

Acts records events that are dated by secular history, such as the appointment of the Procurator Festus (Acts 24:27), sometime between A.D. 55 and 59 (Mays, James Luther, Ph.D., Editor, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, Harper and Row Publishers, 1988, cited in Slick, “When were the gospels written and by whom?”). The book itself ends prior to Paul’s death at the hand of Nero, which indicates that it was written no later than A.D. 63 (Robertson, A.T., *A Harmony of the Gospels*, Harper & Row, 1950, 255-56).

Christ and Christmas

(Written December 1989)

Dave Hunt

Christmas as generally celebrated today is one of many carry-overs from Roman Catholicism that survived the Reformation. Historian Will Durant reminds us that Roman Catholicism grew out of the merger between paganism and Christianity that took place under Constantine in the early 300s. Commenting upon the resulting “Christianization” of the Roman Empire, which Reconstructionists such as Coalition on Revival (COR) director Jay Grimstead look back to fondly as a model of what they hope to achieve, Durant wrote:

Paganism survived...in the form of ancient rites and customs condoned...by an often indulgent Church....Statues of Isis and Horus were renamed Mary and Jesus...the Saturnalia [Festival of Saturn in celebration of the winter solstice] was replaced by Christmas celebration...[I]ncense, lights, flowers, processions, vestments...which had pleased the people in older [pagan] cults were domesticated and cleansed in the Ritual of the Church....

In spite of its pagan/Roman Catholic origins and crass commercialization, we can rejoice that Christmas annually brings a reminder of the Savior’s birth. Unfortunately, however, Christmas festivities generally perpetuate the confusion concerning who Jesus Christ really is, why He came, and what He accomplished. This is not surprising, considering the misunderstandings even among His own disciples at the first advent—and the far greater confusion that the Bible warns will precede His second coming. Indeed, the whole world—including millions of “Christians”—will follow and worship the Antichrist, convinced that he is the true Christ.

Christmas celebrations remind us that the same misunderstandings that prevented so many from recognizing Christ when He came to earth will prevail when He returns. The causes of confusion 1,900 years ago remain the key issues today: What is the Messiah’s true mission—and the nature of His kingdom? When, how, and by whom will the Kingdom be established—and what is its relationship to Israel and the church? Many “Christians” today are blind in the same way as those early “disciples” who turned from Christ because He didn’t meet their false messianic expectations.

Even John the Baptist became so disillusioned that he demanded of Christ, “Art

thou he that should come, or look we for another?” (Mt 11:3). Such doubts seem impossible for the one whom God had sent to “prepare the way of the Lord”! Already filled with the Holy Spirit as a six-month-old embryo, John had leaped in the womb of his mother Elizabeth upon hearing the voice of the virgin Mary, who had just learned that she would give birth to the Son of God. Called and inspired of God to be the “forerunner of the Messiah,” John testified, “He that sent me to baptize...said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he...and I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (Jn 1:33-34). Confident in that supernatural revelation, John boldly declared, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29). Yet the day came when, in despair, he

JESUS ANSWERED, MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD: IF MY KINGDOM WERE OF THIS WORLD, THEN WOULD MY SERVANTS FIGHT, THAT I SHOULD NOT BE DELIVERED TO THE JEWS: BUT NOW IS MY KINGDOM NOT FROM HENCE.

— John 18:36

sent two disciples to ask Christ whether He really was the Messiah after all!

Although given supernatural revelation as to His identity, John completely misunderstood Christ’s mission. Hadn’t the prophets said that the Messiah would set up His kingdom and reign in Jerusalem? Then why was *he*, the herald of the Messiah, in prison! John did not understand that Christ had come to die for our sins so that both Jew and Gentile, united in one church, could go to heaven. Nor did he comprehend that there had to be a *Second Coming*.

So it was with the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. Amazed, they watched the One whom they thought had all power, as, seemingly powerless, He was arrested, bound, and led away. Obviously, Jesus of Nazareth couldn’t be the Messiah after all! Dreams shattered, they fled for their lives. Likewise the two on the road to Emmaus: “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel...[but they] crucified him!” (Lk 24:19-24). His death, which we recognize today is the very heart of the gospel and without which we have no life, convinced Christ’s contemporaries that He could not possibly be the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

“If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will

believe him!” (Mt 27:40-44) was the jeering taunt of the bloodthirsty mob and the religious leaders gloating at the foot of His cross. “If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us!” echoed one of the thieves hanging beside him. Whom He came to save, from what, to what, and how, was clearly not understood at the time by anyone—not even by His closest disciples.

When Christ tried to explain that He must die for the sins of the world, Peter rebuked Him for being so “negative.” Yet Peter, only moments before, had declared by revelation from the Father that Jesus was the Christ (Mt 16:16-17). Obviously he didn’t understand the Messiah’s mission, even though he knew who He was. “Get thee behind me, Satan!” (Mt 16:22-23), Christ had retorted quickly to Peter, showing the importance He put upon correcting such a gross misunderstanding of His mission.

So it was with those in Jerusalem (Jn 2:23-25) who “believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.” They believed He was the Messiah, but they had a false view of what that meant. “Jesus did not commit himself unto them” because He knew what was in their hearts and that they would not believe the truth. We see the same error in those in John 6, who, because Christ had healed and fed them, wanted to “take him by force to make him [their] king” (Jn 6:15). There were many who called themselves His “disciples” (today they would be called “Christians”) who had a false view of the Messiah, and when He tried to explain the truth to them, would not hear it but “went back and walked no more with him” (Jn 6:66).

We learn from Christ how to handle the multitudes who want to follow Him for the wrong reasons. We must do today what He did then. Many came “forward” to tell Jesus they believed in Him and would follow Him faithfully. Contrary to today’s methods, Christ didn’t have His disciples quickly sign up such persons as “church members” before they changed their minds, and get them involved in the choir or some committee in order to keep them active in the church. “The foxes have holes and the birds head” (Mt 8:20), Jesus told the eager would-be converts. “Are you certain you really want to follow me?” Such “negativism”!

“So you want to follow Me?” Christ would say. “Then let Me tell you where we’re going. I’m heading for a hill outside Jerusalem called Calvary where they’ll nail Me to a cross. So if you would be faithful to Me to the end, you might as well make up your mind: take up your cross right

now, and follow Me, because that's where we're going!"

Today we're far too sophisticated to present the gospel in such negative terms. We've studied success motivation, psychology and Dale Carnegie courses in "How to Win Friends and Influence People" and consider such new techniques to be ideal for "winning people to Christ." So we fill the churches with multitudes who imagine that Christ's mission is to make them feel good about themselves by building up their self-esteem, answering their selfish prayers and fulfilling their self-centered agendas.

The Reconstruction/Kingdom/Dominionists are more confused than John the Baptist, though their error is similar. They refuse to walk in the rejection of Christ, bearing the reproach of His cross, because that would be "defeatism." They imagine that we're in the Millennial kingdom already and are supposed to act like "King's kids." They think that it's our task to establish that Kingdom through taking "dominion" over the media, educational institutions, and political leadership. The "signs and wonders" promoters imagine that they are in the process of taking dominion over all disease and even over death itself without the resurrection and return of Christ.

It's all very positive and ecumenical. Christian lobbyists are willing to work with Moonies and Mormons and all others who are in favor of bringing traditional values back to America. And at Christmas time, once again, being able to publicly display a cross or a crèche becomes a rallying point—a very low common denominator indeed for ecumenical agreement. In defense of such folly, Christian leaders stoutly defend the correctness of working with all those "who call Jesus 'Lord.'" Seemingly forgotten are the words of Christ: "Many will say to me...Lord, Lord, have we not...in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me..." (Mt 7:22-23). There are multitudes, such as Mormons and Catholics (to say nothing of many Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, et al.) who call Jesus "Lord" but are not saved.

On October 17 [1989], Paul and Jan Crouch welcomed three Catholics to their *Praise the Lord* program: two priests and a woman lay leader. Paul displayed his usual naïveté and incredible ignorance of theology by smoothing over any differences between Protestants and Catholics as "simply matters of semantics." In his eager embrace of Transubstantiation, a heresy so great that thousands died at the stake rather than accept it, he declared: "Well,

we [Protestants] believe the same thing. So you see one of these things that has divided us all of these years [Transubstantiation] shouldn't have divided us all along because we were really meaning the same thing but just saying it a little differently....I [am] eradicating the word 'Protestant' even out of my vocabulary....I'm not protesting anything anymore...it is...time for Catholics and non-Catholics to come together as one in the Spirit and one in the Lord." But Catholics have a different gospel of salvation by works and ritual through the essential mediation of that Church.

Christmas, with its emphasis upon "baby Jesus," tends to perpetuate another serious Catholic heresy: the pernicious myth of Christ's subservience to His mother, which Roman Catholicism has deliberately promoted for centuries. Mary certainly should be called "blessed" as the mother of our Lord—but she is not "Co-Mediatrix" and "Co-Redemptrix" as Romanism teaches. In Catholic cathedrals throughout the world, for example, one quickly notices that the paintings, statuary, and stained glass give Mary the dominant role. She is even at times shown on the cross as our Redeemer. Jesus is either a helpless babe on His mother's breast, a small child between her knees, or a lifeless victim of the Cross in her arms. Never is she in subjection to Him, and rarely if ever is He shown in the triumph of His resurrection. She is the "Queen of Heaven," where Jesus remains a child subject to her direction.

Typical is the beautiful thirteenth-century stained-glass window we recently observed in a church in France. At the top are the words *Le Pergatoire*, indicating that it is a depiction of "purgatory." Mary and Jesus are shown on a cloud (i.e., in heaven), with the tormented souls in the flames of purgatory below them, arms extended upward in supplication. Are they crying out to *Christ* for help? No, they are appealing to *Mary*. She wears the regal crown.

And Jesus, the Lord of Glory, who triumphed over Satan at the Cross and now sits at the right hand of the Father—how is He depicted? *As a child about seven years old*, standing between the "Queen of Heaven's" knees! No wonder the souls in "purgatory" do not appeal to Him for help. At the bottom of the beautiful stained-glass depiction of this abomination are the words: *Mère Marie, sauvez nous!* ("Mother Mary, save us!")

Such heresy does not originate in the imaginations of the artists but in tradition and dogma not only tolerated but promoted by the Roman Catholic Church. The fear of purgatory is very real to a Catholic, and

"Mary" has provided an escape for those faithful to her. She allegedly appeared to St. Simon Stock on July 16, 1251, and gave him what is known as "The Great Promise": "Whosoever dies wearing this Scapular [two pieces of brown cloth containing Mary's promise on one, her picture with "Baby Jesus" on the other, worn one in front, one in back, connected over the shoulder by two strings] shall not suffer eternal fire." Like the Mormon's magic underwear, the Catholic's scapular will supposedly accomplish what the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ could not. In 1322, Pope John XXII received a further promise from "Mary" known as "The Sabbatine Privilege": "I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death and whomsoever I shall find in Purgatory [who died wearing the scapular], I shall free." St. Simon Stock's famous prayer ends thus: "O Sweet Heart of Mary, be our salvation!"

Christmas offers a rare opportunity to share the true gospel of Jesus Christ and to expose and correct the ecumenical and confused picture it presents annually to the world. Millions are seduced into thinking they are Christians because they have a sentimental feeling for the "baby Jesus." Let us remember what Christ said to those who believed on Him: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). It is that truth that we are called upon to proclaim in clarity and power.

[TBC: This twenty-year old message from Dave has not lost any of its relevance for the church today. There is still much confusion about the mission of Jesus and the kingdom of God. Many diverse movements that profess to be Christian and biblical are coming together in an attempt to help establish Christ's physical kingdom on earth prior to His return. Since the time that Dave first penned this article, the "kingdom here and now" proponents seem to be increasing in their influence exponentially, as we have been pointing out in our series "The Temporal Delusion." Part III is scheduled for January 2011.

Although Dave has, for the most part, retired from ministry, we are thankful to be able to mine the treasury of what he has written over the years and present his material to our readers on an ongoing basis. The Lord has graciously given him tremendous insights as a watchman regarding trends and issues that continue to adversely affect the church today and in the days to come.]

TBC

Quotable

The Christian life is the Spirit of God reproducing the life of the Son of God in the child of God. For this reason, when a Christian does something that others call “good,” but it attracts attention to oneself, promotes oneself, persuades others of one’s own spirituality, and brings credit to oneself, we have robbed God of His glory. As a believer, we will still be part of the redeemed but there will be no reward....Christ will not be appraising, “what did we do for Him?” but rather, “why did we do it?”

Jerry Benjamin, What Is the Most Important Thing God Asks of Us?

Q&A

QUESTION: In the December '09 article you stated, “Shortly after the birth of Jesus, about A.D. 7, the sceptre departed when the Jews lost the right to enforce the death penalty.” How can this be, as the Jews took up stones to kill Jesus (John 8:59) and talked of executing the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)? These took place well after the birth of Jesus.

RESPONSE: In Genesis 49:10, Jacob prophesied: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...until Shiloh [Messiah] come.” By the time that Jesus was arrested, the Jews had already lost their independence and now answered to the Roman government. Consequently, they no longer had the authority to order the death penalty. This is why, in John 18:31, we read, “Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death*” [emphasis added].

The attempt to kill Jesus with stones (Jn 8:59) must have been a spontaneous act in reaction to the convicting words He spoke. The Jewish leaders brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus, reminding Him of what Moses said in the law and asking Him what *He* would do (Jn 8:3-5).

In Mark 10:33, with full knowledge of prophecy, Jesus told His disciples, “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles.” All these things happened, “That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die” (Jn 18:32).

Rome’s control was also demonstrated

by the experience of Paul in Acts 21: “And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar” (Acts 21:30-31). It is significant to note that when the Jews “saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.”

QUESTION: I am being bombarded by material from friends [enclosed article by Chuck Pierce and Robert Heidler] insisting that as New Testament Christians we should still be observing Passover and the other Old Testament feasts. Should we?

RESPONSE: We have addressed the issue of keeping the Law in previous issues of the newsletter (01/2010), but because Pierce and Heidler integrate mysticism with legalism there is a good reason for an additional examination.

Chuck Pierce, along with his partner, Robert Heidler, teaches much more than keeping the Old Testament feasts. Indeed, they have gone far beyond keeping such celebrations as Passover and have delved into “Christianized” forms of astrology, numerology, etc., and the *kabbalah* (embraced by celebrities Rosie O’Donnell, Madonna, et al.)

An infatuation with mysticism will always take one away from the Scriptures and now takes Pierce and Heidler into *Jewish* mysticism. For example, consider the following statement from Kabbalah 365, “Daily Fruit from the Tree of Life,” Day 131: “Although the air of the earthly atmosphere is thick in volume and mass, the mystery wisdom of the spirit realm still manages to enter this world because of the birds. For when the birds are in flight, their flapping wings cut through the thickness of the atmosphere, enabling in the moment for the mystery wisdom of the spirit realm to come through to our world.”

On May 2, 2008, Pierce issued what he calls “A Key Prophetic Word!” that parallels the kaballah: “I have come to make room for you to ascend to a new height. Extend your wings. Then extend them again. Stretch them to the left and the right. It is time for you to take flight!” (http://www.glory-of-zion.org/outmail/5-2-08_EuropeTripLetterOnline.htm).

Here’s another example: “I am sorting out those situations that are presently confining you. I am coming in with a sorting instrument to begin to sort that which has kept evil in your midst, working against My best purpose for your life. I will sort

out the confusion that is around you. I am sending help now. What you need will be sorted out and your path will be rearranged. I AM coming down and cutting through the atmosphere that has been too thick for your vision to progress” (Ibid.).

That’s another parallel to kabbalah: “Your mind serves as a mail sorting room, where thousands of pieces of mail flow in to be sorted. The items that cannot be ‘sorted’ are swept into a pile, which we call the subconscious. Kabbalah gives you ten slots (Sephiroth) to sort the incoming mind processes in to, and making things manageable!” (<http://www.thelivinglightfoundation.com/classesKabbalah.php>).

Pierce and Heidler run roughshod over Scripture. First, regarding the Passover (and by implication the Law), they say, “The Bible tells us it is to be a permanent ordinance...a celebration for all time.” The Bible does state this. What Pierce and Heidler fail to recognize, however, is that most sacrifices (bloody and unbloody) are also said to be “continual,” or “perpetual.” For example: “Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season. And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering” (Num 28:2-3). One would think that Pierce is not perpetually offering burnt offerings. But according to his reasoning, both the feasts and the sacrifices are said to be “perpetual.” The word “perpetual,” or “continual,” means this sacrifice lasts as long as the covenant is in effect (Gal 3:23-25).

These traditions ended when the veil was rent in two. Further, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool” (Heb 10:12-13). Paul writes very plainly in Colossians 2:14, that with His sacrifice, Jesus blotted “...out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

Unfortunately, along with many in what is called the “New Apostolic Reformation,” Pierce often presumes to speak for God as in the following “utterance” recorded in the November 18, 2008, *Elijah List* online newsletter:

I AM brooding over many areas in the earth—government, economic and spiritual structures—and changing the structures of how these systems have operated in past

seasons....There are sounds that are flowing through your blood. There are sounds that I am rearranging in the bloodlines of nations. Get in step with My harmony and the earth. (http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word/7073)

This sounds like new age environmentalism. Consider the following statement from the new age publication *New Dawn*: “The great spiritual teachers tell us that the chaos of the modern age is merely part of the natural order, that out of this chaos, a new age of harmony and grace will emerge. Many of us are moving beyond this phase in the cycle, realigning ourselves with spirit and feeling the great call to the light. We are planting the seeds for the world to come” (Sharon Rose, “2012: A Time Odyssey,” No. 106, Jan-Feb 2008).

The words that Pierce attributes to God sound very much like the above, and which continue: **“I AM shaking nations into MY next order. Trees are clapping their hands and root systems are becoming renewed. Fruit that hasn’t been seen in the last season will burst forth before the eyes of My people this year”** [emphasis in original].

Pierce claims that he is speaking for God. It is now nearly two years since his “this year” prophecy was given. We need to give greater attention to the biblical guidelines for prophets and those who presume to speak in the name of the Lord (Dt 13:1-3, 18:20-22, 1 Jn 4:1-3, etc.)

QUESTION: I’ve homeschooled for over 20 years. Our group’s former homeschool leader is now into this thing called “Integral Christianity.” I’m having a hard time understanding what it even is, but this, taken from her blog, tells me that it is very new age and ecumenical: “On Sunday I sat in the presence of at least seven of what I believe to be some of the world’s greatest spiritual luminaries of our time and only a few were from a Judeo/Christian heritage. It was an awesome and life-changing event for me....While sitting there, I thought...to be integrally spiritual (for me) is to be able to be a fully devout Christian and Biblical scholar while holding in reverence the wisdom and spiritual appropriateness of the collaborative Integral Spiritual Community....” My question is: are you getting much feedback on Integral Christianity?

RESPONSE: There is certainly enough information to recognize the ecumenism above. It also sounds like universalism. It is of grave concern when evangelicals link up with other religions. It is one thing

to work amicably with those of differing religious views in a secular setting. It is something else to come together with others on the basis that we are all “people of faith.” There is a lack of discernment in speaking of “some of the world’s greatest spiritual luminaries.”

Our calling is to present the Gospel of Truth—how much more should we avoid giving tacit approval to false teachers? In 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.” There are vast disagreements on the person and nature of God between religions, and those who speak favorably of “Jesus” can easily be speaking of “another Jesus.”

Paul warned the Corinthians, “If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Cor 11:4).

Finally, with a little digging, one can see the name Ken Wilber listed as an influence of Integral Christianity. As we noted on a radio broadcast (<http://www.thebereanall.org/node/519>), New Agers will recognize the name and one of his books, *The Atman Project*. “Atman,” we assume, means the Hindu idea of the individual god Atman. Brahman is the universal god. Wilber says that if men and women have “ultimately” come up from amoebas, then they are ultimately on their way toward God. Here is the New Age lie (and there is nothing new about it—it’s right out of the Garden): “ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gn 3:5).

As Roger Oakland has written, “Ken Wilber was raised in a conservative Christian church, but at some point he left that faith and is now a major proponent of Buddhist mysticism. His book, *A Brief History of Everything*, which Rob Bell recommends, is published by Shambhala Publications, named after the term that in Buddhism means ‘the mystical abode of spirit beings.’ Wilber is one of the most respected and highly regarded theoreticians in the New Age movement today” (Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone*, p. 110).

Wilber is perhaps best known for what he calls “integral theory.” On his website, he has a chart called the Integral Life Practice Matrix, which lists several activities one can practice “to authentically exercise all aspects or dimensions of your own being-in-the-world.” A few of the spiritual activities that Wilber promotes are yoga,

Zen, centering prayer, kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), TM, tantra (Hindu-based sexuality), and kundalini yoga. There are others of this nature, as well. *A Brief History of Everything* also discusses these practices in a favorable light.

The Temporal Delusion Part 3

T. A. McMahon

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip [away].
—Hebrews 2:1

The importance of knowing what the Bible teaches and making sure that our thoughts and actions conform to God's Word is underscored by warnings given throughout the New Testament. Consider 2 Timothy 4:3-5:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

The Apostle Paul's prophetic exhortation speaks of a time when those who profess to be Christians will not "endure sound doctrine." Incredibly, they will actually *refuse* to regard the teachings of Scripture as their authority. They will "turn away their ears from the truth" of the Bible and look to the perspective, opinions, and speculations of men. Not only has the Bible ceased to be their authority, but they are denying its *sufficiency* as well. Has that time come upon us?

Although some teach that we are in the Millennium, that Satan has been bound, Christ is ruling mankind from heaven, and things are getting better and better daily, neither the Scriptures nor experience confirm this Amillennial temporal delusion. There is, however, much evidence to support the belief that we are in the "time" of Paul's warning to the church. These are days of increasing apostasy, a stunning abandonment of "the faith" (Jude).

Over the last two decades, "the Church Growth Movement" has had an enormous influence in leading the evangelical church into apostasy. For centuries, "evangelical" described the conservative part of Christianity that believed the Bible to be inerrant and the sole authority in matters of faith and practice. "Evangelical" Christians regarded the Bible as sufficient in all things that pertain to life and godliness. Though many evangelicals still claim to hold to those beliefs, their numbers are decreasing drastically due to recent trends in Christendom.

The Church Growth Movement (CGM) in particular has been a major catalyst in

the demise of biblical faith among evangelicals today. In its attempt to attract non-Christians and nominal Christians to its churches, the CGM has implemented worldly concepts and methods to achieve its goal—primarily by employing *marketing* techniques. Central to this approach has been the development of "seeker-friendly," "seeker-sensitive," or "purpose-driven" churches. We have written about this movement extensively (See *TBC*, 2/05, 3/05, 8/08, 3/09, etc.), so we will only address here the devastating effect that it has had on "sound doctrine."

Marketing has its place in the business world. When applied to the church, however, it is terribly destructive to biblical teaching. The obvious problem is that the chief focus of marketing is on the customer, or consumer: he or she must always be pleased with what is being offered. This has caused thousands of "evangelical" churches that have subscribed to the seeker-sensitive approach to filter out those things from the Bible that are offensive to the unsaved people who have been attracted to their churches. From a marketing standpoint, certain teachings found in the Bible (even though they constitute sound doctrine and include conviction of sin—not to mention the gospel itself) may offend the consumer. Thus, they must be disregarded in order to ensure that "the customer" will keep coming back.

The CGM has infected thousands of churches around the world and has contributed greatly to the fulfillment of 2 Timothy 4:3-5. The result is an "evangelical" church that has been weaned away from the Word of God. Such a spiritually anemic condition has created hundreds of thousands of weak and biblically shallow Christians who, like dumb sheep, have been relegated to being spoon-fed by marketing-oriented shepherds. Not only will they not "endure sound doctrine," but they will no longer be capable of discerning biblical truth from error. Moreover, the call to be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures to see if what one is being taught by Christian leaders is biblically true (Acts 17:10-11) has been functionally silenced for multitudes of evangelicals.

The CGM is just one of the religious trends in our day that has caused the church to "slip away" from the Scriptures. The drifting away process itself is Satan's primary strategy of turning humanity away from the Word of God, which he effectively accomplished right from the beginning in his seduction of Eve in the Garden of Eden: "Yea, hath God said...?" Planting seeds of doubt and using deceit are obviously his

means, but what is his goal and where is all of this heading?

According to the Scriptures, the world is moving toward a one-world religion headed by Satan's man of lawlessness, the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). His religion will be an apostate Christianity that will be a great distortion of what the Bible teaches yet will maintain a "positive" Christian veneer. Although the Antichrist will not be revealed nor will his apostate church be officially recognized until after true believers have been removed from the earth in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18), his religion and church have been developing for millennia. It doesn't take great insight to see it taking shape before our eyes.

Ecumenism, which originally meant a process of unifying Christian denominations, aberrant groups, and "Christian" cults, has been expanded today to include "people of faith" (i.e., any and all faiths). This is the chief means of developing a one-world religion and church. Since most biblical doctrines are a stumbling block to ecumenical accord, they are dismissed in the interest of harmony. As indicated above, the prophesied rejection of sound doctrine has paved the way for ecumenical unity. With the doctrine of Christ and of God distorted or negated, God himself has been effectively abandoned: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

For those who profess to follow Christ, the void left by removing sound biblical doctrine as the discernor of God's instructions has been seductively filled by ways that seem "right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Death involves separation. In physical death, this means the separation of the soul and spirit from the body. Yet it also refers to the separation of oneself from the truth by turning to man's ways. This condition is rampant in Christendom and has fostered agendas that indeed seem right but will have dire consequences in their advancement of apostasy.

In Parts 1 and 2 of this series, we presented examples from church history of various attempts to set up the Kingdom of God or Christian utopias, or to impose a Christian dominionism upon the earth. The fact that all have failed in fulfilling their unbiblical agenda has not deterred further efforts, which seem to be all the more zealous in our day. What is even more striking about such efforts, as we've noted in Part 2 (See *TBC* 11/10), is how separate movements that

claim to be Christian have come together in support of the “fix,” “restore,” “redeem,” “take dominion of,” or “solve the problems of” the world prior to the return of Jesus. Some declare that Christ *cannot* return until His servants (i.e., Christians) have fulfilled the “Great Commission” of restoring and establishing God’s Kingdom on the earth.

As we’ve seen, much of what has been proposed above is taught by widely diverse Christian groups and movements that nevertheless claim to adhere to the Bible: the Latter Rain/Manifest Sons of God and the Kingdom Dominionism of Pentecostals and Charismatics, the Amillennialism of Roman Catholics and Lutherans, the Reconstructionists and Preterists of Calvinism and Reformed theology, the global P.E.A.C.E agenda and the Green and Environmental movements of neo-evangelicals, and the earth-bound promotions of the Emerging Church movement. Not coincidentally, Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses have related eschatological views. What, then, of the liberal and left-leaning “social gospel”-oriented Christians who show little interest in biblical truth but are a very large and vocal part of Christendom? Amazingly, they too fit comfortably into this unbiblical “fix the earth” religious unity.

A recent book that demonstrates this clear connection is titled *The Hole in Our Gospel*, authored by Richard Stearns (Thomas Nelson, pub., 2010), president of World Vision U.S. (see p. 8 for a review). Bill Hybels’s Willow Creek Church purchased 10,000 copies, and churches that are part of the Willow Creek Association have likewise ordered thousands of the books. Five pages of endorsements include Chuck Colson, Kay Warren, Bono, Jim Wallis, Tony Campolo, Max Lucado, Ron Sider, Eugene Peterson, Alec Hill, and Leighton Ford, among others. This volume (on which we are planning an extensive critique) is sprinkled with quotes from Catholic saints and mystics along with Nobel Laureate Mother Teresa (the “poster child” for Stearns’s message). An alleged quote from St. Francis of Assisi sets the theme of the book: “Preach the gospel always; when necessary use words” (p. 23).

Stearns’s thesis is that Christians have a hole in their gospel if their lives don’t demonstrate good works. The “good works” that Stearns has in mind focus mainly on meeting the physical needs of the poor and correcting social injustices throughout the world. Whether or not this is feasible, few could argue with his sincerity—or doubt the nobility of his objective. But is it biblical? From beginning to end, Stearns misuses and abuses Scripture in his attempt to prove his

case. For example, he is at the very least confused about the *biblical* gospel. He erroneously speaks of Matthew 25:31-46 as the Final Judgment of the saved and the lost: “Those whose lives were characterized by acts of love done to ‘the least of these’ were blessed and welcomed by Christ into His Father’s kingdom. Those who had failed to respond, whose faith found no expression in compassion to the needy, were banished into eternal fire” (p. 53). Although he attempts to qualify his works-gospel by saying, “This does not mean we are saved by piling up enough good works to satisfy God” (p. 59), he tells us elsewhere that in the example of Lazarus and the rich man, “The plain conclusion is that the rich man went to hell because of his appalling apathy and failure to act in the face of the gross disparity between his wealth and Lazarus’s poverty” (p. 187).

The entire tenor of the book reinforces a social gospel that exhorts the reader to work at restoring our planet to righteousness: “Jesus seeks a new world order in which this whole gospel, hallmarked by compassion, justice, and proclamation of the good news, becomes a reality, first in our hearts and minds, and then in the wider world through our influence. This is not to be a far-off and distant kingdom to be experienced only in the afterlife. Christ’s vision was of a redeemed world order populated by redeemed people—now” (pp. 243-44). He chides Christians for being “so heavenly minded, you’re no earthly good,” (p. 2) and adds, “if Jesus was willing to die for this troubled planet, maybe I need to care about it too” (p. 2). Scripture indeed teaches that believers are not to abuse this planet, but that’s a far cry from the delusion of trying to renovate it morally and physically through one’s “good works.” The epistle to the Hebrews, honoring the saints of old as models of faith whom we should emulate, tells us that they saw themselves as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” and that their desires were for “a better country,” i.e., heaven (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Nevertheless, Stearns declares: “The gospel itself was born of God’s vision of a changed people, challenging and transforming the prevailing values and practices of our world. Jesus called the resulting new world order the ‘kingdom of God’ . . . and said that it would become a reality through the lives and deeds of His followers” (pp. 2-3). In contrast to the title of his book, there is more than a “hole” in the gospel Stearns is fostering. It is clearly “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6-7), a “social revolution” (Stearns’s term) that will mislead many and save no one, though it shall bring many together. Stearns quotes

Rick Warren: “The first Reformation . . . was about creeds; this one’s going to be about our deeds. The first one divided the church; this time it will unify the church” (p. 51).

This book, even more than Warren’s immensely popular *Purpose Driven Life* (which was a platform for solving the world’s problems through his Global P.E.A.C.E Plan), will rally professing Christians and the followers of the world’s religions, as well as atheists bent on demonstrating their morality sans God—by doing good works. Works-salvation is the faith system for all beliefs but biblical Christianity. Furthermore, the various programs promoting such a faith and practice are gaining the respect and financial support of the world—as long as it accommodates the social welfare of the masses without proselytizing.

According to the Scriptures, there is something terribly wrong when the world is championing the church and its programs. We have seen examples of this throughout the centuries regarding ministries that had wonderful beginnings but now have drifted away from the faith. When was the last time you were exposed to anything remotely Christian at the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men’s Christian Association)? When did you last receive a gospel tract from that Salvation Army “bell-ringer” at the shopping mall? Moreover, try to find the gospel or an exhortation to directly share the gospel in World Vision U.S.’s mission statement. It’s simply not there—by design. These organizations have all succumbed to temporal delusions.

These delusions are manifested when the ways of man are implemented in order to satisfy physical needs at the expense of what God desires for us for eternity. Nothing is to take precedence over the proclamation of the biblical gospel, for it is not just mankind’s only hope but his *eternal* hope. Any approach to presenting the gospel that does not clearly and directly reflect the Bible’s true content will be a perversion of it, no matter how right or practical it may seem. Any person who participates in programs, practices, or beliefs that dismiss prophetic warnings of the Word of God regarding Last Days events may well become an unwitting contributor to the apostate religion of the Antichrist.

Jesus gives the antidote and the preventive measure that will protect a believer from being influenced and “taken captive” (2 Timothy 2:26) by an increasing number of temporally oriented trends and movements today: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). **TBC**

Quotable

Forcible revolution is not the Bible way to correct social evils. The cause of man's inhumanity lies in his own fallen nature. The gospel attacks the root cause, and offers a new creation in Christ Jesus.

William MacDonald (From Believer's Bible Commentary, the Epistle to Philemon)

Q&A

QUESTION: I recently heard the term "progressive Christian" in conjunction with some controversial speakers, Jim Wallis and Shane Claiborne, at a Lifest Music Festival. I'm not familiar with the term or the controversy surrounding the speakers. What can you tell me?

RESPONSE: Jim Wallis and Shane Claiborne's beliefs place them among socialist, or "progressive," Christians who advocate deeds and actions that they believe will achieve justice and peace upon the earth. Wallis is the founder and editor of *Sojourners* magazine. He oversees a Washington, D.C., Christian community of the same name and is one of President Obama's spiritual advisors. Claiborne studied under Tony Campolo at Eastern University, did a 10-week internship with Mother Teresa in India, and later started a "new monastic" community in Philadelphia that ministers to the poor.

Claiborne's Christianity majors in "good works" yet is rooted in the experiential, often expressed through mysticism. His frequent ecumenical statements speak of a "mystical" bonding between "people of faith":

Rarely are people converted by force or words, but through intimate encounters. Perhaps one of the best things we can do is stop talking with our mouths and cross the chasm between us with our lives. Maybe we will even find a mystical union of the Spirit as [Saint] Francis [of Assisi] did.¹

Since mysticism is completely subjective and experiential, it lends itself to Claiborne's openness to those whose beliefs are contrary to Scripture (e.g., Mother Teresa and Francis of Assisi, who put their faith in the false gospel of Roman Catholicism): "One of the barriers [between religions] seems to be the assumption that we have the truth and folks who experience things differently will all go to Hell. How do we unashamedly maintain a healthy desire for others to experience the love of God as we

have experienced it without condemning others who experience God differently?"²

Jim Wallis says his mission "...is to articulate the biblical call to social justice, inspiring hope and building a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church and the world." Wallis, viewed as a Marxist by his critics, doesn't shy away from the label. He stated that "private charity to help the poor was insufficient, and...true social justice could be achieved only by an omnipotent central government empowered to redistribute wealth"³

At the Lifest Music Festival, Claiborne proclaimed to a crowd of thousands of young people, "As my friend Jim Wallis... says, 'We look at the world and we don't believe the evidence of poverty and war. We believe despite the evidence, and we watch the evidence change'....I am so excited today, because I see a whole generation like you guys, who are totally nonconformist to the patterns of this world." His influence among young evangelicals is growing rapidly, especially among those who want more from their Christianity than their consumer-oriented and spiritual-education-by-entertainment-dispensing churches fed them. The problem is that too few of our young people have been taught to be "conformist to the patterns" of *God's Word* rather than "this world."

Some of Claiborne's agenda toward the poor is commendable and may be well suited to social welfare programs such as the Peace Corps or UNESCO, but it does a terrible disservice to the biblical gospel. "Biblical" needs to be underscored here because the gospel has specific content that can only be derived *from the Bible*. The gospel is what the Bible is all about. It is God's way of salvation, of which an understanding and an acceptance—by faith alone in Christ alone—are necessary for a person to receive the gift of eternal life. Since the gospel has an *eternal* objective (e.g., it is a person's only means for spending eternity with God), there is nothing of temporal significance that should be given priority over it.

The history of the social works-oriented gospel, of which so-called progressive Christians Wallis and Claiborne are only two of the latest representatives, is a testimony to what may have begun with sincere intentions or even "in the Spirit" (Galatians 3:1-3) but has degenerated into various forms of works-salvation, which constitutes "another gospel" (Galatians 1:6-9)—a gospel, of course, that can save no one. When "good works" take priority over the clear proclamation of the gospel

by preaching and teaching, they become a leaven that ultimately *subverts* the gospel. Good works can only result from salvation—they are the cart that follows the horse. When the cart leads, the horse is in serious trouble.

The Apostle Paul was adamant about the necessity, power, and *priority* of the gospel versus man's methods of "good" works: "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:2-5).

Claiborne and Wallis are regarded in some circles as champions of alleviating the plight of the poor and as stalwarts against social injustice. We take no issue with such works as long as what is attempted is in keeping with the Word of God. Jesus said, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good" (Mark 14:7). And in Galatians 6:9-10, Paul tells us: "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

QUESTION: I'm concerned that my friends who are committed Bible-believing Christians seem to be smitten with Glenn Beck. Other than the problematic fact that he is a convert to Mormonism (which should raise red flags about his wisdom), many are seeing him as someone who will lead this country back to its Christian roots. Don't Mormons have a kingdom eschatology, and do you see Beck's influence as part of the "temporal delusion" you've been writing about?

RESPONSE: There is no doubt that Glenn Beck's charisma, candor, cutting humor, and profession of "faith" have contributed to his becoming an icon among conservatives and a major galvanizing force for Christians and patriots of all persuasions who are concerned about the direction and future of our nation. He appears to be well-informed on many issues of critical concern to political conservatives and Christians alike, and his forthright "fireside chat" teaching style is entertaining, educational, and persuasive.

For example, Beck warns of conditions that could lead to economic collapse in the United States and exposes the globalist,

socialist agenda of “progressives” like billionaire George Soros, the “philanthropist” founder of Open Society Foundations. Beck, along with a few evangelical whistle-blowers, has also exposed Obama’s long-time friend and spiritual advisor, Sojourners founder Jim Wallis, as a leftist “Christian,” who receives funds from anti-American sources including George Soros. It is therefore quite understandable why patriots and conservatives, including many Christians, are enamored with someone whom they feel could champion their cause.

Beck’s enthusiastic conversion to Mormonism over a decade ago has made him a highly visible “evangelist” for the cult founded by Joseph Smith in the early 1800s.⁴ As one writer noted, “Beck, who was raised Catholic in Washington state, has produced, with the help of Mormon Church-owned Deseret Book Company, the DVD *An Unlikely Mormon: The Conversion Story of Glenn Beck* (2008); Mormon fansites invite visitors to learn more about Beck’s beliefs by clicking through to the official Web site of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints...It is likely that Beck owes his brand of Founding Father-worship to Mormonism, where reverence for the founders and the United States Constitution as divinely inspired are often-declared elements of orthodox belief. Mormon Church President Wilford Woodruff (1807–1898) declared that George Washington and the signers of the Declaration of Independence appeared to him in the Mormon Temple in St. George, Utah, in 1877, and requested that he perform Mormon temple ordinances on their behalf.”⁵

Mormons espouse a “last days” view that has the “Kingdom of God” established on this earth, with its headquarters in Independence, Missouri. Latter-Day Saints’ prophets declared that the U.S. Constitution would come under attack and be severely weakened, yet it will be restored by true followers of the Mormon faith. Their tenth article of faith states: “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent....”

Brigham Young stated: “When the Constitution of the United States hangs, as it were, upon a single thread, they will have to call for the ‘Mormon’ Elders to save it from utter destruction; and they will step forth and do it.”⁶

Mormon “Apostle” Bruce R. McConkie wrote, “With the restoration of the gospel and the setting up of the ecclesiastical

Kingdom of God, the restoration of the true government of God commenced. Through this church and Kingdom, a framework has been built through which the full government of God will eventually operate.... The present ecclesiastical kingdom will be expanded into a political kingdom also, and then both civil and ecclesiastical affairs will be administered through it.”⁷

Although the Mormon “prophets” saw their church as ruling through the Kingdom of God, there has been a shift of late toward ecumenism. We’ve seen the repackaging of the LDS church as simply another “denomination” of Christianity—and many are buying it. Prominent evangelical scholars and theologians from Biola University and Fuller Seminary have been “dialoguing” with top LDS apologists for nearly a decade. This fact is alarming enough, but some leaders, such as Richard Land (president of “The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission” of the Southern Baptist Convention) have even gone so far as to call Mormonism “the fourth Abrahamic religion.”

More than a quarter of a century ago, in their book *The God Makers*, Ed Decker and Dave Hunt saw this political/social/religious ecumenism coming: “There is increasing evidence of a new and growing secular/religious ecumenism persuasive enough to accomplish this unprecedented and incalculably powerful coalition [of diverse groups with similar objectives]” (p. 258). Though Glenn Beck is seen to be a voice against the thunder of socialism blaring from our capital (and making incredible inroads in our left-drifting evangelical churches), his Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, on the other hand, has a foundational doctrine of socialism. Its “United Order,” which is defined as “the Lord’s program for eliminating the inequalities among men,” is a theocratic form of socialism in which the Church owns everything and distributes its goods for the welfare of all, something that would seem to please Soros and Wallis.⁸

Endnotes

1. “On Evangelicals and Interfaith Cooperation,” an Interview with Tony Campolo by Shane Claiborne, *Cross Currents*, Spring 2005, No. 1.
2. Ibid.
3. Joan Harris, *The Sojourners File, Accuracy in the Media*, New Century Foundation, 1983.
4. See “Mormon Fiction,” *TBC*, www.thebereancall.org/node/2594, and *The God Makers*, offered in the resource pages.
5. <http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/politics/1885/>.
6. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 2, 317.
7. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 338.
8. *Documentary History of the Church*. Vol 7, 412-13.

Apostasy and Its Antidote

T. A. McMahon

Apostasy is the desertion of one's faith or religion. It is the *forsaking* of the belief to which one had previously adhered. In Acts 21:21 the Apostle Paul is falsely accused of encouraging the Jews to "forsake" the teachings of Moses. The Greek term that is translated "forsake" is *apostasia*. Apostasy, however, rarely comes about abruptly. It is more often a process, and some may contribute to it without becoming complete apostates.

It began in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were in a perfect environment and in perfect fellowship with God. They submitted to God in all things—until, that is, Eve got into a dialog with God's adversary, Satan, the first apostate (see also Isaiah 14:12-14). He had her reconsidering God's Word by questioning what He commanded: "Yea, hath God said...?" The Serpent's objective was to get her to "forsake" the commandment God had given to Adam: they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17; 3:1). Eve succumbed to the seduction, Adam joined his spouse in rebellion against God, and the seeds of apostasy took root.

The seed of apostasy sprouted in Cain, who forsook God's instructions for bringing an acceptable sacrifice and instituted his own type of offering. Apostasy increased with the building of the city and the tower of Babel. It unified people to the degree that God had to "confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:9). Later, among the Israelites, Aaron participated in apostasy when he assisted them in their idolatrous worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32).

Throughout the history of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel many of the kings became apostate. King Ahaz of Judah was a prime example. William MacDonald suggests in his commentary that the prefix of Ahaz's name, "Jeho," which stands for the name of Jehovah God in "Jehoahaz," may have been omitted by the Holy Spirit "because Ahaz was an apostate" (*Believer's Bible Commentary*, pp. 409-10). He endorsed idolatry in Judah and had his son pass through the fire in a ritual to the

god Molech. Submitting to Ahaz's instructions, Urijah the priest (who is nevertheless commended in Isaiah) participated in the apostasy by carrying out the king's command to make a copy of a pagan altar and set it up for divination purposes. Ahaz then had the altar incorporated in the Temple worship in Jerusalem.

Apostasy has been a part of every generation since the fall of mankind. Scripture tells us that it will culminate in the last days when the Antichrist is revealed. His religion will be an apostate Christianity—the total antithesis of biblical Christianity. It will accommodate all religions. Although the apostasy will not be fully realized until after the Rapture of the church, its develop-

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

— *Psalm 1:1-3*

ment has been ongoing from the time when sin entered the human race. Furthermore, down through biblical and church history, many true believers, either in ignorance or because of the weaknesses of their flesh, have contributed to apostasy. Solomon seems to exemplify this. As a believer, he was used of the Holy Spirit to build the Temple and to write much of the Book of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes, yet he also married many pagan women, which was contrary to Scripture. These women turned him to idolatry and he built temples for them to worship their false gods.

In church history, men such as Augustine and Martin Luther are regarded as true believers, especially by those who hold to Reformation theology. Yet Augustine conceptualized many of the dogmas that are foundational to the false theology and false gospel of the largest apostate institution in Christendom—the Roman Catholic Church. Luther is to be commended for his heroic stance against the Church of Rome but certainly not for his replacement

theology and his anti-biblical hatred of the Jews. Later church history is replete with professing and confessing Christians who (knowingly or unknowingly) participated in the development of apostasy.

In summary of the above, apostasy began with the sin of mankind, will greatly increase in the Last Days, and will be complete when the Antichrist rules this earth during the seven-year Great Tribulation period. Therefore, as the world moves toward the apostasy's total fulfillment, *all Christians* will be vulnerable to its destructive seduction.

What is the antidote? How can we keep ourselves from succumbing to those things that would draw us into the apostasy? Let's start with the prevention program presented in Psalm 1: *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

The psalmist gives instructions for a spiritually fruitful life in the Lord. These instructions are centered upon our being strengthened by God's Word and begin with the admonition that we are not to follow the counsel of the ungodly. This doesn't mean avoiding counsel only from those who are obviously evil but rather rejecting *any counsel* that does not conform to what is taught in the Word of God. Twice we find in Proverbs (14:12; 16:25) that there is a way that seems right to people but it is not *God's* way. If it is not God's way, it leads to the ways of death, which means a separation from God's truth that will ultimately lead to destruction in one's life.

A major factor related to the apostasy's subversion of the evangelical church is that fewer and fewer professing Christians really believe in the *sufficiency* of the Word of God for "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Instead, evangelicals are turning more and more to the ungodly wisdom of the world. The evangelical church is one of the leading referral entities for psychological counseling services. The shepherds are turning their flocks over to professional psychotherapists, who are, in a sense, the biblical equivalent of hirelings. In addition, they are attempting to increase the numbers of their flocks by turning to marketing techniques, which the Church Growth Movement gleaned from the world. These have proven deadly to biblical faith.

Scripture's warning against walking in

the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the path of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful reveals a progression, which is actually a *regression*—from waywardness to wickedness. By listening to and heeding what the lost—and even the enemies of the faith—have to say, one settles in comfortably with *their* perspective and eventually practices what they preach. The tragic result is that the heart becomes hardened to God’s truth, and one’s attitude turns to scorn when confronted with it.

The psalmist then shifts from what believers need to avoid to the primary preventative measure they need to incorporate into their lives: “...his delight is in the law of the LORD [meaning the Law, the Prophets, and the Testimony], and in his law [the Scriptures] doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

The main reason that apostasy is spreading so quickly among evangelicals today is that many are functionally biblically illiterate. This means that although nearly all “Christians” have Bibles and are able to read, too few *do* read them, and those who do don’t make it a practice that guides their lives. This is one of the reasons for a shocking response revealed by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. It published a survey of more than 35,000 American adults and found that 57 percent of those who claim to be evangelicals believe that “many religions can lead to eternal life.”

Obviously, they were not aware of nor did they take seriously the verses in which Jesus declared, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father; but by me*” (John 14:6) and Peter exclaimed, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). Scripture tells us that such a condition will be pervasive in the last days: “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

In our day, biblical absolutes and an exclusive way of salvation are viewed by the world as the epitome of intolerance, an accusation that many evangelicals can’t handle—especially those who don’t know the Bible well enough to give a biblical response. Meditating upon the

Word continually is the obvious solution to rectifying such a condition. Furthermore, there is both encouragement and help from our Lord. Consider His prayer to the Father for believers: “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth*” (John 17:17). Jesus wants us sanctified, or set apart, as those who, regardless of what the world thinks and says, are confident that His Word is the truth. He said, “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32). Part of that freedom is a confidence to “*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 1:3). One cannot “contend” for something of which he is mostly ignorant. Being able to defend one’s faith can only come about through a disciplined study of the Scriptures.

In the Book of Proverbs we’re told, “*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding*” (Proverbs 4:7). God has made His wisdom available to us in His Word. Furthermore, to all who have put their faith in Jesus, He has given the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to help us to “get understanding.” Knowing the Holy Scriptures is God’s prevention program against apostasy, and it is available to all who seek after Him. That is the biblical criteria for getting wisdom and understanding. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “*From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Timothy 3:15). Clearly, it is not a matter of one’s intellectual ability or education but rather one’s desire to know God’s truth and to diligently pursue it. The Lord’s choice of uneducated fishermen as apostles to be the primary messengers of His Word—rather than those highly educated within the religious establishment—should speak volumes to anyone who thinks he doesn’t qualify.

The believer who meditates continually on God’s Word will find that his efforts will be both preventive against apostasy and for the strengthening of his faith. Furthermore, it is the basis for being spiritually fruitful: “*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*” (Psalm 1:3). It is also the means

for equipping the believer for the spiritual war that is now raging.

The crux of the spiritual battle is over the Word of God. The adversary’s strategy is to discredit the Scriptures in every way and by every means possible. As we noted, it began in the Garden initially by the questioning of God’s Word, followed immediately by the denial of its truth (Genesis 3:4-5). Those who do not recognize that they are in such a battle may have already been captured by the lies of the Adversary. The Apostle Paul wrote that we are not to be ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11) and used military metaphors for more than a literary device; he underscored the reality of the spiritual warfare taking place and sets up the believer’s defense:

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:13-17)

Our fight is the good fight of faith, remembering that our weapons are not carnal but spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:4). It is “warfare” over the truth, with the goal of being “able to withstand in the evil day.” Our victory is simply to *stand* for God’s Word.

As the battle intensifies, which Scripture indicates it will prior to the Lord’s coming for His saints, we need to be “*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*” (Ephesians 6:18). We need to circle the wagons with other believers for fellowship and spiritual protection, for counsel, for encouragement, for correction, for comfort, and for ministry to one another. If such things become our practice while we wait upon the Lord, even though the Apostasy dries up the spiritual environment around us, we shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever we do shall prosper in the Lord. TBC

Quotable

If we could only find some means of curing everybody of disease, of feeding them and putting them on a good social basis, what a marvelous thing it would be. That is the way we are being told that the kingdom of God is to be established on this earth. "We do not need any more of this talk about the Atonement, and the shedding of blood; what is needed today is to spend ourselves for others." That is the lure of the wrong road to the kingdom, and we cannot keep out of it if we forget to watch and pray. "Watch with Me," said Jesus; "Mine is the only road to the kingdom."

Oswald Chambers

Q&A

QUESTION: I've been a Christian (or so I thought) for over 33 years. By "Christian," I mean someone who rests in the blood of Christ, who trusts in the sacrifice of Christ—and that alone—for salvation. The problem is that over the last few weeks, while researching the ECM [Emerging Church Movement] and Purpose Driven movement on various apologetics websites—whether they be of an Arminian or Calvinist bent (including TBC)—sometimes I can't help coming away wondering if Christians are allowed to do anything recreational without it being a sin—a lapse of devotion. I don't mean things that are [obviously] sinful like getting drunk or fornicating. I mean things like having a hobby, participating in sports, appreciating art, etc. From what I infer from articles on the sites I've checked and from many commentaries and sermons, a Christian can't do much else but pray, study the Bible, and "witness." Indeed, a truly devoted Christian supposedly wouldn't want to do anything else, or so these people seem to be saying. (Sleeping and eating seem to be ok, but just barely.) Such a requirement sounds like legalistic bondage to me. Isn't that what asceticism is all about?

RESPONSE: According to the Scriptures, if you have indeed trusted "in the sacrifice of Christ—and that alone—for salvation," you are a true Christian. Furthermore, we don't know what websites you are researching so we can't know what they are saying. We can only guess at what you may be applying to us as well. TBC is neither Arminian nor Calvinist. Our "bent" is simply to be biblical, and we hope that we are pointing our readers to the Scriptures.

The Bible declares that believers have been "called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Galatians 5:13). It also says that whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Our understanding of these verses and others is that we are free to have a hobby, participate in sports, appreciate art, etc., as long as our involvement is consistent with God's Word and therefore with His pleasure and glory. "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

For the true believer, there is no dichotomy between the secular and the sacred. Whether alone or with others, he or she may both glorify God in meditations of the heart and still be ready for "reasonable service" as the Spirit leads and provides opportunity "to give an answer to every man [woman, girl, and boy] that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). The key is that we must first "sanctify the Lord God in [our] heart" and "be ready always."

It seems that your question wrestles with the judgments often leveled against the Emerging Church and Seeker-Sensitive movements, which often focus on lifestyle choices, personalities, and preferences rather than "non-negotiable" doctrines of the gospel. Unfortunately, some who rightly take issue and sound the alarm at the rise of the apostate church do not always exhibit grace nor follow the biblical admonition, "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all...apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25). Paul gave a similar exhortation to Titus, "Avoid foolish questions...and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:9).

There are clear, God-given guidelines that govern the behavior of Christians—especially those in leadership, who will incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1). However, what many "discerning" individuals fail to realize is that believers are also given great grace and liberty with regard to personal preferences in the practice of their faith. The Apostle Paul made this clear: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient [profitable]: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not" (1 Corinthians 10:23).

Regarding food and drink, Paul praises God, who "giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17b) and elsewhere affirms, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (1 Corinthians 10:26). At the same time, "stronger" believers (those able to exercise liberty with restraint) are exhorted to not cause the "weaker" to stumble: "If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now

walkest thou not charitably. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Romans 14:15, 21). In other words, a believer should govern himself according to his conscience and convictions, which may permit certain liberty that should not be cause for shame or guilt: "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth" (Romans 14:22); "For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" (1 Corinthians 10:30).

Clearly there are limits: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come on you unawares" (Luke 21:34). In addition, there are stricter requirements for those in positions of authority within the church (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1). Paul sums up the bottom line well, and adds an important exhortation against selfishness: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God...not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

Unfortunately, as many well-intentioned critics point out, leaders of the Emerging Church Movement often model or encourage the abuse of God's grace when it comes to Christian liberty. Many followers—and leaders—of the ECM appear to take pride in being "Christian rebels," thus violating God-given principles in word and deed.

May we point out that your take on Christian activities being limited to prayer, Bible study, and witnessing makes it sound as though you think these are joyless endeavors. In reality, no hobby or other activity can come close to producing the joy that results from prayer, Bible study, and sharing the love of Christ with others. Of course, these are no joy to the flesh, which continually opts for things that appeal to one's fleshly nature. You may want to check your own heart in this matter.

In conclusion, there is indeed a biblical balance that must be prayerfully and scripturally sought by the believer. Neither legalism nor the abuse of liberty is pleasing to God. Furthermore, contrary to the conflicting extremes that you encountered in your research, sleeping and eating are more than "barely okay" to our Creator, who knows exactly what we need: "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he gives his beloved sleep" (Ps 127:2).

QUESTION: I need an answer for the following question: On September 26

my pastor gave a message titled “The Power to Forgive.” I detected a strong reference that as a Christian I had the power to forgive those who had sinned directly against God (i.e., blasphemy). I got the CD of the message and listened to it twice, which verified my concern.

His message was based on several scriptures: Matthew 9:2-8, Mark 2:1-22 and Luke 5:17-26....My main problem, however, was John 20:21-23: “And Jesus said unto them again, “Peace to you! As the father has sent me, I also send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Here are some statements that my pastor made: “The purpose of us having the Holy Spirit is to forgive sin. We have been given the authority to say: ‘I wipe that from the record.’ [And] Jesus said: You are my representation. You have my spirit to forgive sins.” The problem is that while being completely convinced that we have the power and the Christian obligation to forgive *one another’s sin towards each other*, (Colossians 3:12-15), does that power include the ability to forgiving sins against the Holy Spirit? This is one of the problems that I have had concerning the priest in the Catholic Church.

RESPONSE: We share your concerns. In Mark 2:1-22 and the parallel accounts in Luke and Matthew, the Scriptures tells us: “Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?” (Mark 2:7).

This is a rhetorical question with an obvious answer: Only God has the power to forgive sins. Sins are committed against the Lord. Though we may sin against others, our primary sin is against God first, who has revealed how we are to treat one another.

In Psalm 51:4, David wrote that although his sin was against another person, it was ultimately against God: “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” Since sin *is* against God—because we have broken His laws—then it can only be forgiven by Him. Our forgiving someone for sinning against us, which God commands, does nothing to *remove* that sin. The only full payment for sin is that which Christ accomplished on the Cross, with the result that: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgression from us” (Psalm 103:12).

In Mark 2:8-10, we read, “And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy).”

The deity of Jesus was often in question by Israel’s religious leaders. Jesus bluntly told them that His act of healing was so “ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins” (v. 10). Jesus didn’t deny that only God had the power to forgive sins. The point was that He, as the “Son of man,” also had that power. Simply put, Jesus is God. These exchanges happened throughout the Gospels (John 10:30-39, for example).

John 20:21-23 is given as support for the idea that we can forgive sins. It is also used as a “proof text” for Catholics to support their teaching that Christ instituted the power for “priests” to “sacramentally forgive” sins in His stead.

One must read one’s own presuppositions into these verses to support this idea or the idea that believers forgive sins. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus says nothing about passing such a supposed authority on to a select group of individuals like Catholic priests. In fact, the Scriptures are consistent in testimony that only God can forgive sins (Luke 5:21). Finally, our mission is to preach the gospel. The message of the gospel is what makes it possible for someone to have his sins forgiven. Our proclaiming it is the only way that we play a role in the forgiveness of sins.

The Lord Jesus assured them that “he [everyone] that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12).

In conclusion, it is a great presumption to say that we have been given the power of God to forgive sins. Our proclamation of the gospel to the unsaved and their receiving the same is what leads them to repentance, which brings forgiveness from the God of the Universe against whom they have willfully sinned.

QUESTION: When I read 1 Peter 4:17 (“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”) it seems to me that this applies to persecution of the church. I’m aware of wholesale

persecution of believers in places like China, Pakistan, Sudan, and other foreign countries, but I don’t think that has ever happened in the U.S. Are we exempt for any particular reason, or do you think it is going to take place here?

RESPONSE: We believe that the judgment referred to in 1 Peter 4:17 is a judgment of persecution that God allows His church to go through for the purpose of purifying and strengthening it. As the process takes place, believers are supported by His grace and mercy. It has value for them, and it glorifies Him—even when it ends in the death of the saints. The contrast is judgment *without* grace and mercy, which takes place against those who reject God’s salvation and will suffer eternal punishment.

Consider the record of the persecuted believers in Hebrews 11. Their testimony has been an encouraging witness to those who followed after them. Persecution has caused the church to grow just as a pruned fruit tree increases in its fruitfulness. History confirms that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, and as Tertullian noted, “The more we are cut down, the more we persist.”

Certainly, believers in the U.S. have never suffered persecution—as a body—such as we’ve seen in other parts of the world down through the ages. Yet America has been subjected to something of a more spiritually destructive nature that few countries have experienced: seduction. In Satan’s game plan of attempting to destroy the church, seduction has been by far his most successful tactic.

It may be that the consequences of seduction, which have resulted in a church that has drifted away from the Word of God “in the latter times” and is “giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” and will “not endure sound doctrine,” will foster a condition of persecution in this country (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Some have already been subjected to it as they have been thrown out of their “seeker-friendly, purpose-driven, marketing, and/or psychology-oriented” churches for simply questioning the biblical basis for such programs.

As believers, we simply and with meekness hold fast to God’s Word and reflect its truth in our lives. Be aware, however, that we will invite persecution from both the world and from a professing church that regards us as intolerant, racist, bigoted, self-righteous, lacking compassion, arrogant, and on and on. As the apostasy increases in the U.S., there is every indication that persecution will also increase.

Beck's Bogus Beliefs

T. A. McMahon

Glenn Beck, the television and radio talk show host who is best known for his conservative political views, isn't someone whom we would normally address in our newsletter. Our concerns are usually directed at individuals, programs, or organizations that promote spiritual or theological views contrary to the Word of God. Beck, of late, seems to be making himself at home in that realm, and he's attracting many who call themselves Bible-believing Christians.

His influence among evangelicals is rather odd and may say more about the state of evangelicalism than about Beck's engaging personality. His popularity is proof that there is very little discernment that's based on testing things by the Scriptures—a consequence, in part, of the Church Growth Movement. Marketing principles have become the rule and are being used to fill churches. Biblical doctrines, which convict, have been set aside in favor of psychotherapeutic sermonettes—something to keep the folks feeling good about themselves and coming back for more. There's no doubt that this trend has dumbed down much of the church and has done away with discernment to a great extent.

Anyone who proclaims the name of Jesus—even though his understanding of who that is may be far removed from the biblical Jesus—is nevertheless accepted as a brother in Christ. Conservatism, political or otherwise, is seen to be the glue of spiritual fellowship, and its characteristics have taken on scriptural status and a basis for kinship. I've been told that "Beck must be a Christian because he's all about turning our country back to its Christian roots." That's erroneous on at least two counts.

First of all, Glenn Beck is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He may refer to himself as a Christian, but he's certainly not a *biblical* Christian. The distinction is as wide as hell is from heaven: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (2 John:9). Mormon doctrine is "another gospel" that exalts "another Jesus." Both false beliefs came out of the deceived and deceiving mind of Joseph Smith. Secondly, "our country" doesn't have "Christian roots," even though some are claiming that our founding fathers were true Christians. Many were not biblical Christians but Christians in name only, who followed the faith of Deism, Masonry, and the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Any early influence in America's history of a

biblical nature very likely came from the Pilgrims and the Puritans.

Since I spend very little time watching television or listening to radio programs, I wasn't familiar with Glenn Beck, other than seeing him by chance on Fox News. I found his Catholic background and his conversion to Mormonism rather curious, given my own Catholic upbringing and, years later, my writing for the film documentary *The God Makers*. What I know about the overwhelming fictional nature of the Book of Mormon had me wondering why Beck's work as a conservative political analyst didn't give him the ability to discern the blatantly erroneous teachings, practices, and historical claims of Mormonism. However, it wasn't until he was invited to speak at Liberty University's Commencement in 2010 (the largest evangelical college in the U.S.) that I was first made aware of his growing influence among evangelical Christians.

The rationale, I was told, for having him speak to the graduating class was that his conservative point of view was consistent with the school's philosophy, and his message was needed at a time when the Obama administration seemed to be pushing this country down a path of socialism. The fact that he is a Mormon was not a concern because his address would be of a *political* nature, not *spiritual*. I learned after the event that he rewrote his talk just before speaking because he felt compelled to address *spiritual* issues. He said that his invitation to speak was not an endorsement of his religion by the university. "[But although we have] differences... we need to find those things that unite us." His speech was infused with religious terms that would appear to bring people together—except for the fact that these terms have very different meanings for Mormons and evangelicals. He frequently referred to the power of the Atonement, to faith, to the gospel, to the Holy Spirit, to personal revelations from God. Does it matter that a Mormon has a completely different understanding of the Atonement and the gospel from what is taught in the Bible?

Beck said, "Turn to God and live." What God might that be? The Mormon one, who has a physical body and lives on a planet near a star called Kolob? Or the One who is spirit and exists outside His creation?

Beck exhorted his audience to seek the truth. But which *God* is true? He closed his speech by challenging these mostly evangelical graduates to "question everything, including everything I have just told you" and to "read the Scriptures every day...."

Would these include Latter-day Saints' scriptures such as the Book of Mormon, *The Doctrine & Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*? What about "The Inspired Translation of the Bible," which Joseph Smith wrote to make sure that the Bible was "translated correctly"?

Beck's last words were greeted with a standing ovation from the faculty, the graduates, and their families and friends: "I leave these things with you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen." Were they cheering wildly for the *biblical* Jesus... or for the Jesus Christ of Mormonism? The two couldn't be more dissimilar.

For those enamored with Glenn Beck and upset with my concerns about him, let's take him up on his challenge to question his words. Many of the thoughts in his Liberty University speech can be found in his new book titled *The Seven Wonders That Will Change Your Life*, which he co-authored with psychiatrist Keith Ablow. In it, Beck sets the record straight as to his understanding of Mormonism. That's important because I have heard all kinds of explanations—from his being naïve about the faith fabricated by Joseph Smith to his being led to biblical salvation through faith alone in Jesus Christ by various evangelical leaders who have appeared on his television and radio programs. Beck, however, dispels any and all speculation:

I read everything there was to read on [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints'] websites and every word of Mormon Doctrine. I treated Mormonism as if it were a hostile witness. For a while I went to the anti-Mormon literature for hints, but I found most of it to be unfair or just plain wrong. I tried every trick I could think of to find a contradiction. The problem was that I couldn't. Mormonism seemed to explain the world and my place in it better than any other faith I had looked at. It answered many spiritual questions that had gone unanswered for me for my entire life. (Beck & Ablow, *The Seven Wonders That Will Change Your Life*, p.149)

In his Liberty University speech, which was often very emotional, he referred to the Old Testament book of Ezekiel and how he (Beck) felt that the call to be a "watchman," i.e., someone who stands guard to alert the people to the evil that could overtake them, was something God had put on his heart to do. It was his calling. If Beck's book is any indication of his "watchman" competency, he is either asleep at his post or has gone AWOL. Isaiah sets the criterion for God's watchman: "To the *law* and to the *testimony* [i.e., the Scriptures]: if they speak not

according to *this* word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). Does Beck speak according to God’s Word? Even if one assumes that he is talking about the God of the Bible rather than the god of Mormonism, or what the Bible declares, it is clear by comparing his views with the teachings of the Bible that he’s got them both wrong.

He and his psychiatrist co-author declare throughout their book that God is within *everyone*: “If God is everything and everywhere and inside everyone, then I figured He had to be inside me, too....” That is a foundational premise to most of what Beck presents. It is pantheism, a belief common to Hindus, Eastern mystics, and popular among New Agers.

The truth is that the God of the Bible is not part of His creation. He created everything out of nothing. If He were inseparable from His creation then He would be subject to the death and destruction that the universe is undergoing. That would deny His perfection.

The Word of God says that the born-again believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and that his body is the temple of God (Ephesians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 3:17). This is conditional, based upon faith in the biblical Jesus, and it involves God’s taking up residence within the believer. God is not, nor does He become, a part of humanity.

If God were part of everyone and within everyone throughout all eternity (Beck & Ablow, *Seven Wonders*, p. 85), then He would be part of the evil makeup of every human. Of course, Beck and Ablow fervently deny that mankind is evil: “People are inherently good. Our souls are magnificent and capable of extraordinary performance” (p.165). That may make some “feel good about themselves,” but it’s contrary to numerous Scriptures that address the nature of man. The prophet Jeremiah tells us, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (17:9), and Jesus said in Mark 10:18, “There is none good but one, that is, God.”

That truth of the Bible poses a huge problem for psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, especially a Freudian psychotherapist like Keith Ablow. How so? He’s in the business of facilitating a person’s relief from the troublesome problems of living by helping him find his “true self, the really lovable and loving person you are at your core...” (Beck & Ablow, p. 185). The key to recovering the “real you,” Ablow and Beck explain, involves a process of “digging up the painful parts of your life story...” (p. 107).

Nearly all psychotherapies assert that mankind’s problems are caused by painful

issues external to the person, such as emotional traumas, parental abuses, environmental conditions, a bad hair day, etc. Ablow tells us to “Accept that today’s negative emotional and behavioral patterns are almost certainly connected to painful memories and unresolved conflicts in the past” (p. 131).

However, if it were acknowledged that the root of the problem is the innate evil *within* humanity (as the Bible declares, yet psychology denies), Ablow and his colleagues would be out of business. Just as a leopard can’t change its spots, neither can the mental health practitioners do anything to change a person’s sin nature. Only God can do that. Yet the charade in pursuit of the “higher self,” “human potential,” “self-discovery,” and “the God-given reservoir of personal power inside you,” (p. 50) continues to delude and deceive the masses.

Beck’s description of his “life story,” especially how he was led into Mormonism, is a reflection of what the pseudo-Christian cult is all about: it majors on the *subjective* and the *experiential* (e.g., a personal “burning in the bosom” experience from God). He believes that God guided him into the faith of Joseph Smith through a series of inexplicable events in his life. He says that God-ordained “coincidences,” which he calls “bread crumbs,” are available to help everyone “find their paths to embracing the truth” (p. 152). He and Ablow continually exalt the subjective and experiential through their promotion of “gut feelings,” “intuition,” “the third ear,” and “the inner voice of truth inside us—the voice of God” (p. 265). They write, “Practice listening to your gut... In order to do this, you need to listen for inner voices inside you” (p. 274).

When discernment depends upon gut feelings and inner voices, it’s a recipe for spiritual disaster: “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). The Bible tells us to put no trust in subjective experiences but rather to trust in God’s written Word: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Jesus’ prayer to His Father certifies how He wants believers in Him to know Him and the truth of His teachings: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

Mormonism is rife with occult beliefs and practices, whether they be rituals taken from Masonic ceremonies to supposed communication with the deceased

through baptism for the dead. This makes the Latter-day Saints extremely susceptible to demonic deception. Yet Glenn Beck seems to have added more false doctrine to an already bizarre belief system. He lauds the first-century heresy of gnosticism and gnostic books such as “The Gospel of Thomas”; he endorses communication through silent meditation (“Connect with the miracle of spirit, of God, that has lived inside you from long before you were born. You will be rewarded...” (p. 85); and he and Ablow espouse the Eastern mystical teaching of spiritual energy as an “immeasurable force that you can tap into to dramatically improve your existence... It is nothing less than your connection to God” (p. 113).

Lest someone object to one or another of the religious or psychological concepts Beck and Ablow are serving up, the two fall back on ecumenical pragmatism: “How can you begin to do this? Some people go to psychotherapists. Others go to pastoral counselors. Others begin to meditate. Still others start with twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous or Al-Anon. Whatever works for you is what you should do, but we’ve developed a four-step plan to help you get under way.”

Perhaps the reason I quote the following more than any other in my recent articles is because I see the church and its shepherds looking more and more to the ways of man rather than to the Word of God: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). Glenn Beck has no answers for those who are truly God’s people. Nevertheless, I pray that he will come to the knowledge of the truth.

I also pray for greater discernment among those who claim to follow the biblical Jesus and the Word of God. Jesus declared to His disciples (which all true believers in Him are) that they were to “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4). He was referring specifically to the last days, the time just prior to His return. It would be characterized by massive spiritual deception. For more than three decades Dave Hunt and I have been addressing the various elements the adversary of God has used to deceive the world and the church. Of late, our *TBC* articles have pointed out how the unifying beliefs that are common to diverse religious groups (and anti-religious groups!) are rallying them together with amazing speed. Their mission is fixed upon the earth as they unwittingly work toward building the kingdom of the Antichrist and his apostate religion.

TBC

Quotable

Prayer does not mean that I am to bring God down to my thoughts and my purposes and bend His government according to my foolish, silly, and sometimes sinful notions. Prayer means that I am to be raised up into feeling, into union and design with Him; that I am to enter into His counsel and carry out His purpose fully.

Dwight L. Moody

Q&A

QUESTION: I recently purchased and watched the DVD *The Hidden Faith of the Founding Fathers*....As a homeschool mom, [I have found that] much of the material out there for homeschool use speaks of the godly foundations of this country [with] a real call in the homeschool community to raise up the next generation of Godly leaders to “take back” our country for Christ. I have always struggled with this idea and have felt uncomfortable using materials that teach this view. I was wondering if you could recommend any books that might help us further understand the role of Freemasonry in our nation’s history and the significance of a whole generation being raised to believe that our nation has “Christian” roots and that we must take it back for Christ?

RESPONSE: Thanks for your comments and concern. Although there are few books written on this subject from a Berean’s perspective, our prayer is to continue addressing this matter in the articles we write and in the resources we offer through *The Berean Call*. (See also Resource Pages.)

The Masonic deception is deep and wide and somewhat esoteric, yet in our day it is becoming increasingly obvious in all forms of human expression through architecture, art, the media, ecumenism, and works salvation. At the heart of Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism is the worship of Lucifer, the “light bringer,” who promises enlightenment and exaltation (self-deification) to mankind through occult mysticism and ritual. Of course, we know that this ancient lie began in the Garden (Gn 3:4-5) and remains unchanged to this day.

Once reserved strictly for cults of “Christianity,” what we are witnessing today is a revived interest in various strands of Kingdom-Now “take over the world” dominionist theology interwoven with mysticism. This “convergence” shares the same spiritual core of demonic deception

that lies at the heart of Freemasonry. Some participants believe they are working for “good” (to establish a physical kingdom of God), while others focus on the universal brotherhood of man, seeking “hidden knowledge” of enlightenment and divine power (Prv 14:12, Mt 6:23). Masonic goals and beliefs transcend religious organizations and are found among those who seemingly have no connection with the spiritual.

Glenn Beck is a prime example. His popularity among conservatives and Christians has spawned a growing *spiritual convergence* of Catholics, Mormons, evangelicals, and political conservatives who are joining hands to beat back the encroaching tyranny of socialism through political activism and unity of “faith.” For starters, such an unequal yoke is forbidden by God (2 Cor 6:14). Although few may be aware of what they are ultimately contributing to, they are nevertheless working toward the establishment of a humanistic New World Order of “peace and prosperity” that will ultimately be ruled by a false messiah, Antichrist, who will be seen initially as “an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:3-15). Their faith in him will be the final “strong delusion” that will even deceive many who profess to be Christians (2 Thes 2:3-12).

Beck’s personal fascination with and admiration for the Founding Fathers—some of whom were committed Freemasons—is not surprising, considering that the principles of The Lodge (a.k.a. The Brotherhood and The Craft) are quite compatible with the goals and ideals of Mormonism: “Ye shall be as gods.” When compared to the declaration of one of the most revered authorities in all of Freemasonry, Albert Pike, Beck’s own spiritual ideas fit well with Masonic teachings. In *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry*, Pike affirms:

The true Mason is not creed-bound. He realizes with the divine illumination of his lodge that as a Mason his religion must be universal: Christ, Buddha, or Mohammed, the name means little, for he recognizes only the light and not the bearer. He worships at every shrine, bows before every altar, whether in temple, mosque or cathedral, realizing with his truer understanding the oneness of all spiritual truth.

This declaration is highly compatible with what Beck writes in his latest book *The Seven Wonders That Will Change Your Life*, especially his declaration of the universal truths found in all religions. Moreover, Beck’s Mormon faith draws heavily from Masonic doctrine and ceremonies. As you may know, Joseph Smith himself was, for a time, a Mason who “borrowed” many of the secret rites and rituals to start his own brand of “illuminated” religion that came to be The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

As the strong delusion (that man is part of God, and/or may become a god) begins to manifest more profoundly—even in conservative and evangelical circles—it is critical that believers test all things and hold fast that which is good (1 Thes 5:21). Furthermore, Christ’s Bride is instructed to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph 5:11).

Therefore, while it is alarming to see this satanic deception enticing Christians to join forces in an unequal yoke with Mormons and other “people of faith,” it is simultaneously very exciting to realize that God’s Word is proving itself true, even before our very eyes (2 Tm 4:3-4). This realization should only serve to spur us to evangelism and service to God, with an eye on eternity rather than on “fixing” this present world to secure “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Instead, may our hearts and minds be set on “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16).

TBC believes that *The Hidden Faith of the Founding Fathers* presents a perspective that is more historically accurate than the popular “Christian History” writers who in effect glorify the Constitution over God’s Word and glamorize Washington, D.C. as a “Christian” capital.

Upon a more careful inspection and study of our nation’s capital, it becomes plainly (and painfully) evident that many of the buildings, monuments, inscriptions, paintings, and zodiacs in D.C. clearly point to a Greco-Roman-Egyptian-Babylonian origin that is tied to a worship of stars and their mythological deities—which in turn serve to “hide in plain sight” their true source of inspiration and deception: Lucifer, the light bearer of Masonry and the first fallen angel, who masquerades as the “morning star” (Is 14:12).

For all of these reasons, we exhort Berean-minded believers to recognize the dominionist-oriented, “manifest destiny” theology and to carefully and prayerfully examine these “back-to-our-Christian-roots” and “Patriotic” teachings in the light of God’s Word, to see “whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

QUESTION: Why are you and other “discernment” writers so critical of Rick Warren and his new Daniel Plan? What difference does it make that Rick Warren turns to some of the best secular doctors in the nation to help the church with its battle over obesity, physical fitness, and mental health? After all, Christians don’t have to ensure that their cars are repaired only by Christian mechanics, and their toilets unstopped

only by Christian plumbers. If you've got a problem with your physical body, isn't it far more important to have the very best doctor's advice, regardless of their religious background?

RESPONSE: As long as one's mechanic or plumber isn't incorporating unbiblical spiritual content in his service to a believer, his religious background shouldn't be a problem. However, that is not the case with the eminent doctors that Rick Warren has selected to minister to his congregation and those hundreds of thousands who follow his ministry. All three of the medical doctors are practitioners of various forms of Eastern mystical meditation and occultism, which they promote in their well-being programs of body, mind, and spirit. No doubt their medical science education gives them valuable insights into the workings of their patients' bodies, but what of mind and spirit? The mind is not the brain; it's part of man's nonphysical makeup. There is no objective science of mind. There is only the metaphysical kind. There is no objective science of the spirit. There are no scientific instruments for evaluating a person's spirit. It's purely a subjective religious matter.

Furthermore, your question reflects the religious pragmatism ("whatever works") that leads many believers to abandon biblical authority, compromise their faith, supplant the gospel, and even endanger their very lives. The journey of departing from the Truth may not begin with such stark choices, but often ends with tragic spiritual consequences. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal 5:9).

In reality, however, your question presents a textbook-perfect "straw man" argument—defined as "creating the illusion of having refuted a proposition by substituting it with a superficially similar yet unequivocal proposition...without ever having actually refuted the original position." In this case, you are comparing the evaluation and repair of a physical object, such as an automobile or toilet, to the diagnosis and prescription for human beings, with regard to their physical as well as mental and spiritual health. As followers of Christ, we should indeed be convinced (and convicted) of our need to care for our physical bodies, all the while recognizing that they are temples of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 3:16). As Paul explained to Timothy, "Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tm 4:8). Attempting to care for our bodies in ways that are *antithetical* to God's Word is sinning against our Creator.

An additional concern over Rick

Warren's latest church marketing campaign has nothing to do with helping believers improve their level of physical fitness (which is understandably connected to emotional health as well). Rather, it is Warren's boastful claim that The Daniel Plan is nothing short of "God's Prescription for Your Health," a statement that must be thoroughly evaluated and challenged.

To begin with, the biblical Daniel wasn't in need of a diet or program to help him get into top physical shape. To attempt to use him as a spiritual model to motivate Christians to healthy living demonstrates either an ignorance of the Scriptures or a dishonest marketing ploy.

The fact that the three doctors chosen by Warren to implement his church-wide regimen are widely recognized in their field of medical expertise is not in question. What every participant must ask is how the doctors' personal religious worldviews shape their understanding of the human mind, body, and spirit—and whether or not these extra-biblical worldviews will infect the so-called Daniel Plan's "prescription" with spiritually dangerous ideas and practices.

Dr. Mehmet Oz was born to first-generation Muslim parents in Cleveland, Ohio. His father's side of the family embraces Sharia law. Dr. Oz claims to be influenced by Sufism ("whirling dervishes"), a mystical Islamic contemplative practice in which the "adept" spins himself into an altered state of consciousness in order to commune with Allah. Through the influence of his Protestant wife, he adopted some of the teachings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, the founder of a pseudo-Christian cult that denies the Trinity, believes the Last Judgment is past, and teaches that "all who do good from the truth of their own religion" will be accepted into heaven, since "doing good conjoins oneself to God" (http://www.religiousherald.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=650&Itemid=110).

Oz believes hypnosis can and should be used to address emotional and addictive behaviors. One of his secrets to maintaining a calm presence, says Oz, is practicing Transcendental Meditation, of which he is a national spokesperson: "When I meditate, I go to that place where truth lives," he said. "I can see what reality really is, and it is so much easier to form good relationships." Oz's wife, Lisa, is a Reiki Master, a very occult form of deep massage. He praised Reiki as his "favorite treatment that could change the future of medicine forever." He explained, "It broadens dramatically the spectrum of where we might be able to go in our bodies, and this is the area of energy medicine." Concluding one episode of his popular TV program, Oz ordered millions of viewers: "Try Reiki!"

Dr. Daniel Amen, another of Rick Warren's "Daniel Plan" doctors, is founder of the famous Amen Clinic, which purports to diagnose brain-behavior disorders and prescribe dietary, chemical, and meditative treatments. Licensed in both child and adult psychiatry, Amen is an ADHD specialist who practices non-medical treatments, including hypnosis, meditation, relaxation, and eye-movement desensitization. Dr. Amen recommends that everyone should strive to meditate daily for 12 minutes and recommends "an active form of yoga meditation called Kriya Kirtan." He explains that this Kundalini-based Hindu practice "is based on the five primal sounds: *saa, taa, naa, maa, and aa.*" (An interesting choice and order of syllables for Christians to "contemplate:" *Sa-ta-na...*).

In his bestselling book, *Making a Good Brain Great*, Amen instructs readers to "write a poem or love letter to your brain" (p. 240). He is also an enthusiastic activist for tantric sex, which is a Hindu practice that incorporates mysticism during intercourse to attain a higher state of pleasure—and divine consciousness. In reality, this ritual behavior invites demons into the marriage bed.

Dr. Mark Hyman is the third member of Rick Warren's "Daniel Plan" triumvirate. He is the author of: *UltraCalm: A Six-Step Plan to Reduce Stress and Eliminate Anxiety*. The book presents his "simple, powerful method for generating a peaceful and harmonious state in the body-mind." Hyman's "prescription" to achieve this level of "natural healing intelligence" is not even camouflaged in pseudo-scientific language but expressed in outright New Age terminology. His "audio learning program" presents "breathing meditations and visualization exercises for feeling calm, confident, and in good spirits." (Can you say "contemplative self-hypnosis and self-affirmation"?) On this, he certainly agrees with Dr. Oz and Dr. Amen: that "mind-body medicine...is now the most important medical frontier." Dr. Hyman's books are quite popular throughout the New Age and metaphysical community. Our great concern, however, is that they will be featured and promoted wherever The Daniel Plan is taught.

Rick Warren, as a shepherd of thousands of sheep and one who has been called "America's pastor," is responsible to the Lord for what he is feeding them. Tragically, he has brought in hirelings (and worse) who will lead his sheep into meditative techniques that are "doctrines of devils" and will open them to direct communication with "seducing spirits" (1 Tm 4:1).

Ready for the Wedding?

T. A. McMahon

The disciples were greatly troubled as they sat and listened to Jesus say that He was leaving them and that they could not follow Him for a period of time: “Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards” (John 13:36). He was going to the Cross. They would also be going the way of the cross, but not just then. He would pay the penalty for their sins and ours. They would later proclaim to the world that Jesus fulfilled divine justice, thereby making the way for mankind to be reconciled to God.

The disciples did not understand the words of Jesus beyond being saddened by them. But then He said something that should have caused them to rejoice: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

Jesus was speaking to them in terms that were comforting but at the same time perplexing. Though the Gentile mind may not grasp it, His words pictured a wedding that would take place. His part was that of the Groom; their part would be that of the bride. As it was with most of what Jesus had taught them in their short number of years together, they missed the significance. That would all change, however. Following His departure, the Holy Spirit would take up residence within them and give them understanding. “These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:25-26). Better yet, and amazingly so, their relationship with Jesus would be far more personal and intimate than when He walked with them. The Holy Spirit would indeed bring to their “remembrance” Jesus’ words pointing to a future wedding, and the disciples’ increasing love for Him would echo a bride’s desire to be with her husband-to-be. In other words, the disciples would embrace the reality that they are *the bride* of Christ.

Since true believers in Jesus are disciples of the original disciples, what Jesus had to

say to them in John 14:1-3 certainly applies to those of us who have likewise believed upon Him. *We* are the bride. He has prepared a place for us in heaven. One day, he will return for His bride. In the custom of the ancient Jewish wedding, when the groom left the bride to prepare a place for her in his father’s house, she went about making her own preparations for the wedding and her life with her husband-to-be. There’s little doubt that her excitement increased as the day of his return drew near. What, then, about “*we*, the bride”? Are we increasing daily in our excitement as we anticipate the coming of our Lord, our Savior, our Groom, our Blessed Hope? If not, there is something terribly wrong. What might put that excitement off?

Perhaps some are only infatuated with Jesus. Although they call themselves

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

— Revelation 19:7-9

Christians, He’s like spiritual eye candy that they find attractive in vague “spiritual” ways—but there are too many specific things about Him that they don’t care for. Submission is at the top of their “can’t take Him too seriously” list. Jesus did, after all, pose the question, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Their commitment may never have involved giving their heart fully to Him through belief in His death, burial, and resurrection as the only One who could pay the complete penalty for their sins. They were never born again, a criterion Jesus said was necessary for entering the kingdom of God (John 3:3). There is neither an engagement nor a wedding for such folks, nor could there be.

As for those who are truly saved by faith, their affections for Him may have been hindered or cooled down by two common obstacles: their love of themselves and their love of the world. That won’t prevent the wedding, but it plays havoc with the

bride’s preparation. Preparation? Some don’t seem to be aware that every believer is going through a preparation of readiness for the day when he or she will see the Lord. The preparation time involves a myriad of things related to our growth in love for Jesus: sanctification, i.e., truly being set apart for Him; growth in our desire to obey and please Him; thankfulness for His choosing us; increasing fruitfulness in our lives, and joyfulness and excitement in our expectation of seeing Him. The Word of God is filled with the bride’s preparation instructions. Sadly, the interest in reading and applying what the manual says is on the wane for many of the betrothed.

Critics of the biblical doctrine of Christ’s return for His bride characterize it as a false teaching that encourages an escapist mentality—a kind of “get-your-ticket-and-lounge-around-the-airport” way of thinking, waiting for the “flight to heaven.” There are certainly those who think and act that way, supporting the critics’ accusations. Although some may cite instances among believers, neither they nor those whom they give as examples have understood the clear teaching of Scripture. John, the beloved of Jesus, gives the bridal preparation instructions: “...abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28). Moreover, John seems to exude a bride’s excitement for seeing Jesus and pleasing Him as he declared, “...we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3). The Apostle Paul says as much in his epistle of encouragement to Timothy: “But thou, O man of God, flee [sinful] things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God...that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 6:11-14).

Too often, when we are *commanded* to do something, our flesh may react in a way that robs us of the joy that should be involved in obedience; or perhaps we will be deterred from being joyful in our thinking, which then plays out in our lives. That could make for an unenthusiastic bride, at the very least. Yet Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments...He that hath

my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:15,21). Furthermore, an erroneous view of what God wants us to do obscures what He has made available to us through our life in Christ. *Nothing* should rob us of our joy in serving the Lord. Peter makes that quite clear: “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory *at the appearing* of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye *rejoice with joy unspeakable* and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:6-9).

Each of us needs to answer this vital question regarding our own bridal preparation: How much of it involves rejoicing “with joy unspeakable”? Is that our experience more often than not? Any lack thereof is no fault of the Lord: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). There is no task, no circumstance, no condition, no problem, no event, no person (other than ourselves!) that can rob us of the joy we have in Christ, especially when we remember that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). Then we can joyfully fulfill the preparatory works “which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

“But Tom, you have no idea what I’m going through!” That’s true, but neither am I oblivious to such things in my own life, as well as the toll of problems in our world, which is still reeling under the curse of sin. Nevertheless, through it all God has made a way for us to “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:12). Was Paul conning the Corinthians when he wrote, “I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation” (2 Corinthians 7:4)? Hardly! He further encourages us with his prayer and exhortation to the Colossians: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all

wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (1:9-11). That prayer is God’s promise. It may not always be our *experience*, but it is God’s Word and His Truth: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33).

Dave Hunt writes:

Ours is a “heavenly calling” (Hebrews 1:3). We have been “blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3); and it is in heaven that God has reserved for us “an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 1:4). Indeed, our hope is in heaven (Colossians 1:5) where our names have been written (Luke 10:20). No wonder, then, that our resurrection bodies are “spiritual” (1 Corinthians 15:44) and “heavenly” (v. 49; 2 Corinthians 5:2), suited for living in God’s presence.

The joy in heaven will be so great eternally that we will need new and glorious bodies to appreciate and express it. Heaven is often thought of as a solemn place of pomp and protocol. We forget what David knew: “In thy presence there is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11).

Christ endured the cross “for the joy set before him” (Hebrews 12:2), a joy He wanted to share with us in heaven. [Dave Hunt, *When Will Jesus Come?*, Harvest House, 1993]

Growing up Roman Catholic, which involved a continuous and somewhat extensive Catholic education, I was never taught that I was the “bride of Christ”; that was reserved for the nuns. Neither was I taught that Jesus was coming back to take me to heaven. Those who were brought up in churches that strongly adhere to the teachings of the Reformation would most likely be just as uninformed as I was and perhaps even opposed to the doctrine of Christ returning to catch His bride away to heaven. Although the Reformers rejected the false gospel of Rome, they kept some of its baggage, such as infant baptism and particularly its eschatological teaching of amillennialism, which practically dismisses the return of Jesus for His bride. The sad irony here is that the cry of the Reformation was *sola Scriptura*, meaning that the Bible is the believer’s *only* authority on matters

of faith and practice.

Does the Bible indeed teach the return of Jesus to catch away His bride in order to take her to heaven for the wedding and the feast that He has prepared? Or, as the critics charge, is that the delusion promoted by a 19th century anglo-Irishman named John Nelson Darby? Darby claims that the teaching came from Scripture (see *For Zion’s Sake*, offered in our resource section). The critics and the mockers of this teaching, even in our day, say no. Darby aside (although I believe we owe him a great deal of thanks for encouraging the church to seek out what the Scriptures tell us about this matter), as Bereans, let us “search the Scriptures” to see if these things be so.

As we began this article, Jesus was declaring to His disciples that He was going away to prepare a place for them and said that He would return. The metaphorical context clearly implied a wedding. How might that take place? “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Are these words a comfort to you? I hope so, because that is our “blessed hope,” the eternal reality of “ever be[ing] with the Lord”! Or are you distracted by focusing on an earth-bound temporal delusion that is causing you to miss the sublime truth that your eternal citizenship “is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20)? Our prayer is that we all might be that bride who looks excitedly, expectantly, “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). We need to heed the words of our wonderful Groom: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord....Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching....*Be ye therefore ready* also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Luke 12:35-37, 40). **TBC**

Quotable

yLove invaded space and time and history,
 Hung the stars in place, stooped down a man—O mystery!
 Chose no palace, but a stable for his lowly birth:
 Love in sandaled feet had come to walk this earth.
 Strange new words were spoken by a bearded Jew:
 “Do unto others as you’d have them do to you.
 Love your enemies; and you must be born again.”
 Love in sandaled feet had come to talk with men.
 Love in sandaled feet, sweaty, muddy feet,
 God and man at last could meet,
 Having been so long, so very long apart.
 Tired legs, a throbbing human heart,
 Stagger up a lonely hill to die.
 Pounding nails and quivering flesh—
 a cry!
 “Forgive them, Father, no one understands.”
 Love in nail-pierced feet and bleeding,
 outstretched hands.
 Those who fled in fear returned to say,
 “He lives!”
 Millions hear, receive the life and peace
 He gives.
 Hate is turned to love and enemies are brothers—
 Love in sandaled feet lives now in many others.

Dave Hunt

Q&A

QUESTION: Did God take away Pharaoh’s free will when He “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (Exodus 10:1-2)? What verses point to free will in the Bible?

RESPONSE: According to Adam Clarke’s commentary, the Hebrew word translated *harden* “literally signifies to strengthen, confirm, make bold or courageous.” An illustration commonly heard is that of a sponge squeezed (made hard) in the hand. Anything that comes forth from the squeezed sponge was already there. When God “hardened” Pharaoh’s heart, He simply forced out what was already there, strengthening Pharaoh’s own convictions.

The Bible teaches that God elected (predestined) to save all (any) who “feareth him, and worketh righteousness” (Acts 10:34-35). According to Ephesians 2:10, one must fear God (be

saved) before he can work righteousness, the works themselves being foreordained. Long before the creation of man, God predestined that men would be saved “in Christ” (Eph 1:3-4,7-12). The Lord God “predestined” His plan for the redemption of man (Eph 3:10-11).

God has also granted that man would have free will, which is simply the ability and responsibility to choose to obey Him (Gn 3:1-6; Josh 24:15; Mt 11:28; Jn 3:16). As we have noted in previous Q&As, if there were no moral response possible on man’s part, then “...choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Josh 24:15) would therefore be impossible. James 4:17 instructs us that “...to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” This verse recognizes accountability based upon ability to do good or evil. Again, if there were no possibility of making that choice, then this verse is also meaningless.

The argument advanced by some Calvinists is that to acknowledge any measure of “ability” (i.e., “free will”) in man is to leave room for boasting. The exhausted, drowning man, who hears the voice of those in the boat, cries out, “save me,” and then permits the strong arms of his rescuer to pull him into the boat, has certainly done nothing to contribute to his salvation. Yet we know that some drowning men will push away their rescuers in their unreasoning panic. In each case, both are exercising choice, but neither has cause to boast. There is no room in heaven for a regenerated human heart and mind to indulge in imagined boasting for simply acknowledging one’s inability to save oneself and then not interfering with the subsequent rescue.

Finally, God is certainly sovereign, but we must not deny the clear responsibility of man, regardless of our human inability to fully comprehend these differences.

QUESTION: Where did the concept that “God is going to give the wealth of the wicked to believers” come from? The Financial K.E.Y.S. Conferences are telling people how to gain their part in the wealth. Speakers have included Bruce Cook, Lance Wallnau, Os Hillman, Cindy Jacobs, Rick Joyner, and C. Peter Wagner. The name of the conference —Financial K.E.Y.S.— refers to the teaching that money is the key to global transformation and establishing God’s kingdom on earth.

RESPONSE: First Timothy 6:10 tells us, “The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” The love of money is too often used as motivation in mind science teaching, which has influenced

word faith teaching and the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). A Financial K.E.Y.S. Conference took place February 16-19, 2010, in which believers learned how the wealth of the wicked will be supernaturally transferred to them. Consider these comments from NAR “apostle” C. Peter Wagner:

If you check back through human history, you will find that three things, more than any others, have produced social transformation: violence, knowledge and wealth—and the greatest of these is wealth! (*Dominion! How Kingdom Action Can Change the World*)

It is instructive that someone identifying himself as an “apostle” should fail to see the gospel as “the greatest thing” that has produced social transformation! Jesus proclaimed in Luke 4:18: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

Wagner continues:

They will not be traditional financial planners who are satisfied with annual returns of 5 percent to 20 percent or so.... I have faith that we will see the biblical standard of 100 percent returns or more become the norm. (p. 196)

Proverbs 13:22 is “the verse” for Wagner and others promoting this theology. They are, however, selectively quoting “and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.” Bereans who check out Wagner will find that he omitted the first half of the verse. The full verse reads as follows: “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.”

This is not some supernatural transfer of wealth. It is an admonition toward diligence. Through diligent stewardship, the Lord blesses the work of the righteous, and they store up an inheritance. In this context, the sinner wastes his money, which, in the providence of God, can end up in the hands of the just. Scripture tells us that there is nothing new under the sun (Ecc 1:9). The concepts promoted by the Financial K.E.Y.S. conferences have been around as long as have human greed and avarice.

QUESTION: Considering the catastrophic devastation in Japan, how can you be so certain that extreme weather, earthquakes, animal deaths, and even nuclear disaster have nothing to do with divine judgment [TBC Extra, 3/11]? Did not God work “signs and wonders” upon the earth as a means of judging Israel as well as Egypt and other pagan nations? Since He never changes, why would God not be using “nature” in this way today?

RESPONSE: There is no doubt that God can, and does, intervene miraculously in our world today. Furthermore, His past judgment of Israel, Egypt, and other people groups (like Sodom and Gomorrah) continues to be instructive for modern generations. In fact, Scripture says these things happened as an “ensample” (2 Pt 2:6). In fairness to our Creator, however, these catastrophic judgments were the direct fulfillment of divine “if...then” statements. Although this principle still operates today, it is in the context of God’s great grace, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (Jn 3:17)

This current Age of Grace, however, does not let mankind off the hook: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7). In many cases, there can be a direct and immediate penalty for sin—as illustrated in sexually transmitted diseases, for example, which Romans 1:27 tells us is a fitting “recompense of their error.”

“How long, O Lord?” is an increasingly common cry as believers witness the present prosperity of the wicked. But as the Lord revealed to a humbled and repentant Asaph (Ps 73), this final judgment will be certain and swift—and it is yet future.

In the same way, the present earth is indeed under “judgment” as a result of the fall: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8:22). Some of these birthpangs include “natural” disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis, which can often trigger further death and devastation, as illustrated by the tragic nuclear plant catastrophe in Japan.

In this dispensation, however, it is wrong to assume that all of these are overt “Acts of God,” as the customary insurance term suggests. Rather, it should be clear that most can be understood as the natural result of *entropy* (sin/death/decay), set in motion by the Fall. Furthermore, as previously discussed, these “natural” disasters can be greatly exacerbated by the sin of mankind, through weapons of mass destruction and lethal technology—including conventional, nuclear, biochemical, and electromagnetic.

Indeed, since the advent of the atomic bomb, many respected prophecy scholars have speculated that the Bible may be describing a future nuclear war as part of the outpouring of God’s wrath in the “great and terrible day of the Lord.” Although this is certainly possible in the framework of Scripture, it is also important to note that *no such weapons were needed to*

accomplish God’s divine judgment at the Flood and in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We know with certainty that God is a just God, and righteous. He is not the author of confusion and sin. We also know that both the righteous and the wicked are blessed and cursed, at various times, by circumstances and conditions on the earth, and that the Holy Spirit functions as a restrainer against the forces of darkness in this world. Therefore, it stands to reason that evil—including the direct and indirect consequences of sin—although divinely sanctioned, is not divinely *caused*. Compounding mankind’s problems is Satan, who comes to “steal, kill, and destroy.” It is the “Great Dragon,” not God, who “roams to and fro, seeking whom he may devour.”

Of course, the account of Job vividly illustrates this and documents that the atmospheric realm of earth, including its physical properties, is well within Satan’s ability to manipulate. Nevertheless, when believers are adversely impacted by forces beyond their control, even these have the promise of working together for good (Rom 8:28) and in no way compromise God’s sovereign control.

Jesus warned the disciples of “wars and rumours of wars,” and most would agree that these are the result of human-caused conflict. When it comes to “famines and pestilences,” however, it has only recently become possible for man to devise technologies that not only alter the weather (helping or harming crops) but also have the potential to cause horrific mass casualties through germ warfare. (Could man’s increasing experimentation and industrialization of bio-chemical agents be a potential cause of so many “unexplained” symptoms of sickness today?) In addition, man’s poor stewardship of earth’s most valuable natural resource—pure water—is increasingly causing concern with regard to drought, famine, and disease.

Furthermore, the ability of modern scientists to “play God” with the sacred building blocks of life (animal, plant, and human DNA) is a very recent achievement on the timeline of history—which may also explain why certain “signs of the times,” of which Jesus warned, are increasingly manifested today. It is important to note, however, that Scripture does not attribute *any* of these signs to God. “Wait a minute!” some will ask. “What about earthquakes? volcanoes? floods? hurricanes?”

Just as the world’s most powerful men seek to harness the power of the atom—both for its profitable energy potential as well as its immense destructive force—they also seek to manipulate the earth’s atmosphere and ionosphere. Many scientists believe that the earth’s electromagnetic spectrum holds the key to the unlimited prosperity of mankind by “directing”

geophysical events such as weather. Others point out the possibility of “weaponizing” these technologies, which some scientists maintain can be used to destroy climates and trigger catastrophic seismic events.

In a 1997 interview, William Cohen, Secretary of Defense under President Bill Clinton, acknowledged:

Some countries...are engaging...in an ecotype of terrorism whereby they can alter the climate, set off earthquakes [and] volcanoes remotely through the use of electromagnetic waves. There are plenty of ingenious minds out there that are at work finding ways in which they can wreak terror upon other nations. It’s real. (<http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=674>)

Does this sound like far-fetched science fiction? So, too, did the atom bomb prior to 1945. Presently, an abundance of evidence indicates that this technology not only exists but has been in “experimental” use for some time. Should this really be any surprise to us today, as our society hurtles into the End Times at the speed of a laser beam?

Recall that in addition to rebellion, one of the primary reasons that God confused the original universal language at the Tower of Babel was out of concern that “nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (Gn 11:6b). As Dave Hunt pointed out in 1998, an ad from Lockheed Corporation in *Scientific American* jubilantly proclaimed that it was “undoing the Babel effect.”

Given the fact that Scripture tells us plainly that in the time of the end, “knowledge shall be increased,” is it any wonder that science is once again declaring man to be divine? And, that through demonically inspired use of technology, he is now acquiring Frankenstein-like power to “create” and control life—which will lead once again to its ultimate corruption and potential destruction?

Man’s frightening manipulation of created matter and energy is unquestionably playing a role in the signs of these increasingly perilous times—but even the “kings of the earth,” who work to implement their “enlightened” Master Plan, will one day flee in fear to their underground bunkers and laboratories in their vain attempt to hide from God (Rv 6:15-17).

In conclusion, although Scripture *foretells* the prophetic signs (Mt 24, etc.) that are increasing today, they are not necessarily direct acts of divine judgment. Doctrinally, they are best understood as events that God *allows* rather than *causes*, as He lovingly waits:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pt 3:9)

Is Heaven is for Real for Real? An Exercise in Discernment

T. A. McMahon

There have been quite a number of books written by or about people who claim to have personally visited Heaven. Some of these authors profess to be Christians while others do not. The descriptions of their experiences vary regarding such things as entering into a dazzling white light at the end of a dark tunnel and being greeted by deceased loved ones, or being in the presence of God and seeing the shed feathers of angels dotting the grand floor of His throne room. Many of their stories contain information that would seem to be beyond their ability to know at the time—or at all.

Although these individuals supply much information, the content raises many questions. Obviously, everything they say can't be true because some of the content in one book contradicts what's written in others. How do we know who is giving us an accurate and truthful account?

A biblical Christian might say that he would compare what they say with what is presented in the Scriptures about Heaven. If it rings true to the Word of God, then it must be true. Well, yes and no. Yes, it must be true to Scripture. What is presented certainly cannot be at odds with what the Bible teaches about Heaven; nevertheless, just because it conforms to Scripture doesn't prove that the person's declaration or experience of *being* in Heaven actually took place.

I know a good deal about Heaven from my study of the Bible. If I told you that I had recently visited there and only communicated what I knew was recorded in the Bible about it, you couldn't object to what I said on the basis of my being biblically inaccurate. Accuracy, however, is not the only criterion for biblical discernment. There are many other instructions and examples that we must take into consideration. For example, the Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 12 of a "man in Christ" (no doubt Paul himself) who was caught up to Heaven. He didn't know at the time whether it was an experience in which his spirit had left his body, or a vision while his spirit remained in his body. Nevertheless, he states that what he saw and heard in paradise was not lawful for a man to utter. Paul's experience was followed by a humbling infirmity, which he states that God allowed him to suffer "lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the

abundance of the revelations..." (2 Corinthians 12:6-7). That isn't always the case in Scripture. The Apostle John obviously was given permission to declare what he witnessed in Heaven in the Book of Revelation. This would seemingly apply as well to the writer of the Book of Job.

But can we be sure that the visions and personal experiences of these writers are true? Absolutely—because their words are found in the *Scriptures*. Of the Word of God, the psalmist writes, "Thy word is true from the beginning..." and Jesus said, "Thy word is truth" (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17). *That* is the ultimate verification that the experiences of those men of God indeed took place as they described. Furthermore, since the canon of Scripture was closed in the first century A.D., no one since that time can have his vision of—or his alleged visit to—Heaven validated in the same way.

Jesus gave us another insight to help our discernment when He told of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man, who had died, was in a place where he was tormented and suffering remorse. Yet he begged Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers so that they would not end up with him in "this place of torment." Abraham's response was: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And again, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:19-31).

Armed with the above scriptural teachings for the purposes of discernment, let's apply these and other biblical admonitions and critical questions to a book that is having an impact on Christendom and the American public. *Heaven Is for Real* was published in 2010 and made the *New York Times* Best-Sellers list. It has also been the cause of controversy in some fellowships, as believers have been divided in their support of and disputation over the book's veracity.

Heaven Is for Real is a nonfiction account that documents the experience of a three-year-old boy who believes that he visited Heaven. The story is told by the boy's father, an evangelical pastor. He and his wife initially seem to be rather startled by their son's revelations, which he shares over a period of about three years. There is nothing *not* to like about this Christian family, and much that is quite admirable. The little boy is a typical three- or four-year-old—hardly precocious, but simply matter of fact in relating what he seems to have experienced.

That experience took place when three-year-old Colton was undergoing emergency surgery for a ruptured appendix. Not too

long afterward, he told his parents that he saw them praying for him outside the operating room. When they asked how he knew what they had been doing he said, "Cause I could see you...I went up out of my body and I was looking down and I could see the doctor working on my body. [Scripture tells us that death takes place when the spirit vacates the body. Yet there was no medical report of a clinical death during Colton's surgery.] And I saw you and Mommy. You were in a little room by yourself, praying; and Mommy was in a different room, and she was praying and talking on the phone" (pp. xx-xxi). The accuracy of Colton's disclosure rocked his parents to the core. But that was just the beginning of revelations that far and away defy natural explanations.

Colton's other revelations included: angels singing "Jesus Loves Me" to him; his sitting on Jesus' lap; meeting John the Baptist and the angel Gabriel; petting Jesus' rainbow-colored horse; his descriptions of Jesus' wounds and attire, including a crown with a pink diamond that Jesus wore; the prevalence of kids in Heaven; his description of everyone there having wings like the angels—all except Jesus, that is; his being recognized by his great grandfather, who died decades before Colton was born; and the description of God as "really, really big."

Although most of Colton's observations in Heaven are not outside the realm of possibility of what *could* take place there, they are nevertheless extra-biblical insights and information, some being more problematic than others. For example, Colton explains that "Everyone kind of looks like angels in heaven," sporting wings (the size of which are dependent on the individual's size) and a halo. Since the resurrection of believers' transformed physical bodies has yet to take place, their form now in Heaven must lack physical attributes. Hence the need for wings of whatever size makes no sense. Moreover, other than the descriptive visions of the heavenly creatures known as cherubim and seraphim and the decorative designs in the Temple and upon the Mercy Seat, angels that appear to humanity are never described as having wings.

Many supporters of the book claim that any and all objections pale in the face of the supernatural knowledge that Colton reveals—things that were humanly impossible for him to know. For example, he said that he had met his other sister in Heaven. When told by his mother that Cassie was his only sister, his shocking response was, "No...I have two sisters. You had a baby die in your tummy, didn't you?" (p. 94).

Colton had never been told of the “painful episode” of the miscarriage, and his parents never knew the gender of the fetus. Colton added, “In heaven, this little girl ran up to me, and she wouldn’t stop hugging me.... She said she just can’t wait for you and Daddy to get to heaven” (p. 96). That revelation seemed to be the most convincing for Colton’s parents that their son had indeed visited Heaven: “We had wanted to believe that our unborn child had gone to heaven. Even though the Bible is largely silent on this point, we had accepted it on faith. But now, we had an eyewitness: a daughter we had never met was waiting eagerly for us in eternity” (p. 97).

Was Colton truly an *eyewitness* in Heaven to everything he described? Much of it is quite mindboggling, notwithstanding the fact that *all of it* is extra-biblical. Yet it provides alleged insights about Heaven; e.g., a girl dies as a fetus, grows into a little girl in heaven, and then is eagerly awaiting her parents’ arrival. What if one or both parents reject the gospel? Would there then be disappointment in a place of perfect bliss?

Consider how Colton’s father mentioned that “the Bible is largely silent” on a certain issue. It is also completely silent on the specific things that Colton has revealed. This raises the question as to why God would leave out something of value for us in His inerrant Word, which was given through His prophets “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21)—only to reveal it later through a little boy (as well as many others who make similar claims). On the back cover of the book we read, “*Heaven Is for Real* will forever change the way you think of eternity, offering the chance to see, and believe, like a child.”

The Bible is *God’s* precise, absolute, and eternal communication to mankind (Luke 21:33; Hebrews 4:12). It did not come by nor was it left up to the will or imagination of *man* (2 Peter 1:20). Paul writes, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Our faith can be childlike, but it is faith placed in God’s Word, not in anyone’s alleged “eyewitness” account, be they a child or an adult. Peter was an eyewitness to an incredible event. He saw Jesus supernaturally transfigured before his very eyes and heard the voice of God. We can be *sure* that the personal experience he had was true because it’s reported in Scripture. Nevertheless, he tells us that his personal

experience (or anyone else’s) is *not as trustworthy as the Word of God*: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed” (2 Peter 1:19).

At the time and in the years following Colton’s experience, his dad was very interested in having him describe Jesus. He wrote that “as a pastor, I wound up spending a lot of time at hospitals, in Christian bookstores, and at other churches—all places where there are lots of drawings and paintings of Christ.... When we came across a picture of Jesus we’d ask Colton, ‘What about this one? Is that what Jesus looks like?’” (p. 93). Time after time, Colton would reject the dozens of misrepresentations. Then, nearly three years after Colton’s surgery, he was shown a portrait of Jesus painted by a young girl named Akiane, who also claims to have visited Heaven beginning at the age of four. Colton’s reaction was, “Dad, that one’s right.” His confirmation convinced his father: “Knowing how many pictures Colton had rejected, Sonja [his mother] and I finally felt that in Akiane’s portrait, we’d seen the face of Jesus. Or at least a startling likeness” (p. 145).

In Exodus, we find a definitive statement against anyone attempting to make an image of God (Exodus 20:4-5; Acts 17:29). That applies to images of Jesus, whether of statues or great religious paintings or on the silver screen. One of the many problems is that they inevitably lead to idolatry, which in turn breeds superstition and occultism. Another related problem is that they must *all* be false representations because they have no basis in Scripture—other than being condemned. Jesus therefore could not encourage a young girl to paint His portrait.

Those who believe that He did encourage Akiane (because she could then point people to Him through her amazing art skills and her testimony concerning Him) need to compare with Scripture what she, at age 16, says about Jesus: “Jesus shared with us: ‘I am the way, the truth and the light. No one comes to my Father, but through me.’ I feel that he invited us to participate in the divinity. Each of us is one of kind [*sic*] original path to the way of truth and light, and without our individual love and effort we cannot understand and reach God” (<http://akiane.com/blog/?tag=akiane>). Her misquote and misrepresentation rejects Jesus as being the only way for mankind to be reconciled to God. It opposes what Jesus taught in favor of Satan’s promise of divinity to Eve (Genesis 3:5). Akiane’s paintings and words clearly reflect “another Jesus.”

What puzzles many people is how

Colton, as a three-year-old at the time of his experience, could attain information, most of which was completely foreign to him at his young age. His parents don’t know for sure but believe their son received the visit to Heaven as a gift from God. Their “faith,” however sincere and biased toward their little boy, does not have the support of Scripture. How, then, was he able to describe what he did without the input gained from actually being in Heaven? No one can say for sure—not even little Colton. He was in an operating room, surrounded by attending medical personnel, and under the influence of an anesthesia-produced altered state of consciousness.

What we do know about that and other types of drug-induced conditions of mind (even dream states, meditation, and an overworked imagination) is that multitudes of people have reported experiences that seem to validate everything from clinical or near-death events to past-lives journeys to abductions on UFOs. They also reveal information for which they had no basis of knowledge prior to their experiences. It may be that an altered state of consciousness creates a condition in which the mind is like a blank screen, open to outside input. Spirit entities, whose goal it is to undermine the Word of God and deceive the world, might have that ability to program the blank screen and could therefore take advantage of anyone in such a highly susceptible condition (see Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion*, pp. 187-90). But again, no one knows for sure how such things take place.

The critical issue for discernment is not “how it works” but “what is being communicated.” All that a Bible-believing Christian can do in ascertaining the truth of a matter is to be vigilant by “searching the Scriptures” to see if what is being presented is true to the *full counsel of God’s Word* (Acts 17:11). If we don’t do that, whether we are young believers or mature in the faith, we are just as vulnerable to false teachings as those whose circumstances have directly opened them to deceptive experiences.

A believer’s life in Christ is shaped by a great many experiences that the Lord allows for our growth in Him. It begins with one’s believing the gospel, to which sound doctrine is added. As we abide in Christ’s teachings, our discernment will increase, thus protecting us from “being carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). Let us therefore take to heart Paul’s warning: “I have laid the foundation [of the gospel], and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (1 Corinthians 3:10). **TBC**

Quotable

Oh, for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free;
A heart that's trusting in the blood
So freely shed for me.

A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither death nor life can part
From Him that dwells within.

Charles Wesley

Q&A

QUESTION: I have heard of a number of churches that are giving copies of Rocky Fleming's *The Prayer Cottage and the Sacred Garden* to church members. Are you familiar with the book, and is there a reason to be concerned?

RESPONSE: This devotional book is promoted as an invitation to those "overwhelmed by the pressures of life" to "enter the Prayer Cottage and the Sacred Garden." Those who accept this invitation will "want to read this beautiful allegory again and again, returning to the Prayer Cottage and the Sacred Garden to find the peace you seek." That's quite a promise—and rather presumptuous when compared to Scripture.

In John 14:27, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Our peace and our rest are to be found in Christ alone. He commands us to come unto *Him* and "learn of me," and we are to seek Him with all our heart.

The question to ask, therefore, is whether or not this book leads one to a greater relationship with Christ. Does it bring us closer to Christ, who is "our peace" (Eph 2:14), or to "another Jesus" (2 Cor 11:4)?

Beginning with an out-of-body experience that transports the author of this allegory to the "Prayer Cottage," much of what follows sounds more mystical or psychological than devotional. The emphasis is on the *experiential*. The writer states that it is the Lord who is speaking to him. The words, however, rarely sound like the words of the Lord from Scripture. Instead, these words in the mouth of the "Lord" sound like those of the Shaolin martial arts instructors in the old *Kung Fu* TV series: "Remain quiet, My child. Say nothing, right now," the Lord whispered.

Consider the biblical model: "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" (Ps 46:10).

Several experiences follow, sometimes with

sentient inanimate objects. For example, when the writer enters the Prayer Cottage, he finds himself in "the Grace room." He sits down in an overstuffed chair and "immediately feels its loving acceptance" (p. 19). A chair may be comfortable, but is it really "accepting" or "loving"?

Next is the "Examination room," in which the writer tells us that in the "deep recesses" of his mind, this "room had effectively revealed something awful in my life that I had hidden from myself" (p. 27). No, it is the *Lord* "who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor 4:5). It is the *Word of God* that "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

Between the Prayer Cottage and the Sacred Garden is a courtyard, where Fleming realizes that he is on a "vision journey." Shamans and pagans go on vision journeys, but there is no biblical precedent for believers. We are not to go on a *vision journey*—we are told to come *unto Christ*.

Next is the Sacred Garden, where "my children and I do our best communicating. In this place poetry, songs, and inspired words are written." Here is where the writer is overwhelmed by his own inadequacy but is reassured by the Lord, who tells him, "The Holy Spirit, right this minute, is speaking heavenly words to Me that are from your heart. He is translating your deep feelings for Me into heavenly words of praise" (p. 35).

What does the Lord grow in the Sacred Garden? "Many other fruits...are provided for special occasions...If special words are needed to encourage someone, I have fruit for that. Or, if a particular person requires extra understanding, I will provide that fruit for My child to give to that person" (p. 37).

The writer is taken to "Meditation Rock," which at first seems more biblical in that he is told "if you really seek understanding, you will find it in My Word." What we find, however, are the "meanings and mysteries of Me from My Word" (p. 45).

Jesus said plainly, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Mt 11:29). No "mysteries" here. What Jesus offers is what we need: "rest unto [our] souls."

The writer is shown a glimpse of the "Valley of Abundance," which is only reached by going through the "Shadow of Death." The path he takes is hundreds of feet high and at points is "only a little wider than a tightrope" (p. 52), sounding as surreal as a painting by Salvador Dali.

After a harrowing journey over the heights to "Restoration Pool," the Lord begins "ministering to me in a way I had never experienced

before. Heavenly music filled my ears and found lodging in my soul. A gentle humming anointed me with tranquility and calmness" (p. 61).

Finally, "the Lord" says, "As my champion, you will engage in spiritual warfare, and you will experience spiritual wounds from the enemy." "The Lord" then states that He will deal with the wounds "in the deepest possible way," explaining that many do not have a "concept of Me as a loving Father, because their own earthly fathers wounded them so deeply...I want to be their Abba, their Daddy, if they will let me...I am the Abba that their inner being is crying for" (p. 63).

That may be Freudian psychology, but it certainly isn't biblical truth. It's the same as with the writer of *The Shack* (see Aug 2008 *TBC*). God has identified Himself as the "Father" in Scripture, and He certainly must have a reason. That is where our understanding must begin. The failure of fathers (or mothers, or friends) is no excuse for looking to psychobabble.

Furthermore, Fleming's writing is blasphemous in the sense that he is ascribing to God much that is contrary to His Word, and he compounds the error by telling the reader that this is what Jesus communicated to him. Certainly Jesus can speak to a person's heart, or even audibly, if He so chooses. But that will always be subjective and personal for the one receiving the communication, which then must be held up to the light of Scripture (Is 8:20). When it becomes a published communication of the Lord's alleged words, it is nearly always received by the undiscerning as a valid word from the Lord that supplements Scripture. Regarding that serious error, we all need to be reminded: *Christ supplemented is Christ supplanted*.

The danger in Rocky Fleming's *The Prayer Cottage and the Sacred Garden* is that it alludes to Scripture, and although the experiential nature of the book may stir emotions, it provides the reader no insight or practical truth to draw closer to the Lord Jesus Christ who "loved us, and hath given himself for us..." (Eph 5:2).

QUESTION: Mark Dinsmore went to great lengths [Mar 2011] to negate the possibility of God's intervention in happenings around the world, using adjectives such as "immature," "mystical," "false prophets," etc., toward those who would contemplate such a thing....To say dogmatically that God did not send the earthquake to Japan, Haiti, and elsewhere, or the Katrina event, is to be a false prophet himself....Is [he] saying that God is doing nothing such as chastenings, wake-up calls [etc.] in any way in men's lives to bless or to call them to repentance?

RESPONSE: We invite you to examine the March 2011 TBC Extra more carefully. You'll find that it does not mention earthquakes in Japan or Haiti, nor Hurricane Katrina; neither does the article state "dogmatically" that God does not intervene in such affairs. To say this is to misquote and misrepresent the author, who wrote, "As even the limited evidence we've presented *suggests*, this winter's extreme weather, animal deaths, and even earthquakes are not the beginnings of divine judgment... but rather these events *appear* to be the consequences of entropy, in conjunction with the wickedness of men" and Satan's power.

When responding to calamity and catastrophe, one must be very careful before automatically attributing such deadly, destructive force to "God's voice," or "God's hand." Can He individually, and collectively, gain our attention through such events? Yes, indeed—but to say that He *causes* them is an entirely different matter and is a key distinction between a false prophet, who "declares," and a Berean, who seeks to rightly divide the Word.

Isn't a sin to simply ask the question, "Why is there evil in the world?" It is wrong, however, to attribute such activity to the Lord. There is no question that the nations of the world are *deserving* of judgment. But if the Lord is indeed the One doing the "shaking," one should ask, "Why are the most wicked cities and nations of the world not being devastated first?"

You mention God's chastenings in men's lives, to either bless them or call them to repentance. It is true that the Lord chastens those whom He loves (Heb 12:6). This principle applies to God's children—those who have been made joint heirs through faith in *Christ* (Rom 8:17). Scripture tells us that it is not God's wrath but His *kindness* that leads us to repentance (Rom 2:4). Even in the case of wicked Sodom, the Lord was willing to spare that city if there had been as few as ten righteous individuals within its boundary.

With the professing church, it's important to note that in the New Testament we see God's judgment of unrepentant believers: "deliver[ing] such an one *unto Satan* for the destruction of the flesh" (1 Cor 5:5). This may occur in a sudden, catastrophic manner, or perhaps in a slow but obvious deterioration of health. God simply allows Satan to do what comes naturally as the thief and destroyer and sworn enemy of God's people. This method of justice seems consistent with what we see in regard to peoples and nations today.

Of course, God is sovereign in all the affairs of men and His creation—and nothing occurs that doesn't first pass by his "desk" for approval. That God is able to use disastrous events to draw men, women, and children to Himself is also without question. And

we should, indeed, pray that when calamity strikes, not only will men's hearts be turned toward God but that also believers are prepared to minister to those in need, both with the gospel and with material aid. After all, "God sent not his Son...to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn 3:17).

There is no scriptural or physical evidence to suggest that our Creator is presently doing the "thundering" or "shaking" that results in catastrophic death and devastation. Instead of a biblical view of love, grace, and mercy, this paints the Lord as a spiteful, vengeful being, who indiscriminately hurls lightning and waves upon the continents. Such a picture is largely indistinguishable from that of a mythological or pagan perspective.

In the book of Job, the Lord gave Satan permission to destroy all of Job's material wealth and family, in part by using the forces of nature—including fire "from heaven" (Job 1:16) and "a great wind from the wilderness" (1:19). Some believers today attempt to interpret earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and tornados as signs of *God's* judgment upon mankind. But is not this faulty reasoning identical to the flawed "logic" of Job's friends, whom God soundly rebuked? Clearly, Job's calamity was not the result of his sin—God's Word declares that Job was "perfect and upright" (Job 1:1). Although Job's suffering was *allowed* by God, it was clearly not *executed* by Him.

There is absolutely no doubt that the professing church today is *deserving* of God's cleansing fire. In fact, considering the Laodicean nature of the American church, which is filled with biblically illiterate milk-drinkers—and observing the abysmal behavior and antichrist attitudes of those who reject sound doctrine altogether—we should *expect* it to come (1 Pet 4:12). While noting that the context here primarily applies to *spiritual* persecution, it is also true that God allows *physical* trials, personal loss, political unrest, and even environmental upheaval, which can—and should—cause us to draw near to him (Jas 1:2-4, Rom 8:28). However, this season's catastrophic events are hardly *selective* and so are clearly not signs of divine "justice." Rather, God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5:45)—not for judgment, but for *blessing*. Indeed, what a strange way for God to demonstrate His love if the Scriptures said, "For he maketh his *fury* to fall on the evil and on the good, and sendeth *earthquakes and floods, tornados and wildfires* upon the just and on the unjust."

Again, is the world—and the church—*deserving* of God's judgment? Absolutely! But it is of the Lord's *mercies* that we are not consumed, because his *compassions* fail

not" (Lam 3:22). Meanwhile, our mission is to redeem the time (Eph 5:16)—warning both the world *and* the church that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise [of his future earthly return and fiery judgment]" (2 Pt 3:9).

QUESTION: Evangelist James Robison has openly declared [that] God is using Glenn Beck. How many have addressed the issues that Beck has addressed this past three years? Yes, he's mixed up on theology, but so was Balaam's ass! Matthew 3:9 states that if God's children do not do their part in assuming their responsibilities, "God will raise up children through these stones." John the Baptist got executed for doing that. Paul got thrown into prison for shutting down an idol-manufacturing business in Ephesus. If evangelical pastors want to straighten out Beck, they should adopt his courage in their own ministries, with the addition of correct Biblical theology.

RESPONSE: God may be using Glenn Beck, but if that's the case then it is certainly not as an oracle of truth. He may seem to be a champion of conservative politics, for which we would laud him were it not for the fact that he has mixed his erroneous theological beliefs with his misunderstanding of American history. For example, he declared at last year's Liberty University commencement ceremony that it was "God's finger that wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. This is God's country. These are God's rights." Try to find the "*pursuit* of happiness" as an unalienable right in Scripture. You should also be aware that Latter-Day Saints' prophets declared that the U.S. Constitution would come under attack and be severely weakened, yet it will be restored by true followers of the Mormon faith.

You wrongly imply that the biblical examples you cite are acts of social and political activism. Not even close—although you are reflecting ideas that are greatly influencing evangelicals today. Pastors who love Jesus yet have addressed the political issues that Beck has "addressed in the past three years" have very likely been diverted from the exhortation that Jesus gave Peter to feed His sheep the Word of God.

The main problem as we see it is not "straighten[ing] out Beck with correct biblical theology," although we do pray for his salvation. Our primary concern is regarding those who profess to follow Christ yet are abandoning "correct biblical theology," which is the only basis for a fruitful life in Christ—temporally and eternally.

This is a War Briefing

T. A. McMahon

It is imperative that everyone who follows Jesus Christ understands that we are in a war. It's a war that is spiritual, but it may have physical consequences. If you're not aware that you are in that kind of war, you very likely have already been taken captive. If you are a pacifist in this war, you have been at least effectively neutralized. Neutrality is capitulation. There is no fence-sitting as the battle rages. Jesus said that he who is not with Him is against Him (Matthew 12:30).

So, if we are indeed in a war, what's it all about? It's a war for the hearts of humanity—and the adversaries are God and Satan.

"Tom, are you serious? Are you telling me that God couldn't defeat Satan in a heartbeat—that one of His created beings is a match for Him?" No. I know that God could wipe out Satan in an instant and, for that matter, all the rest of God's created, rebellious beings collectively, should He so desire. He did it once before, save eight.

The war on God's part is not about defeating His adversary. It is a battle over the prize. It's about winning the hearts of mankind. "My son, give me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26).

This is a theme that runs through the entire Bible. It starts out with the "first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38). We're to love God with *all our heart*. That's what heaven and eternal life are all about. Those who have believed the gospel and have given their hearts to Jesus will spend eternity with Him. This is what God desires, and it is the crux of the battle.

There are some who say there is no free will—that there is no choice on our part—and that God has predestined everything. God certainly knows everything, but if He has determined ahead of time *everything* that would take place, then we're not really *giving* Him our hearts—we've been programmed to do that, or not to do that. If that's the case, then He's the one who's really doing it. The command to love Him with all our heart would depend on *His* keeping that command.

The command then becomes some kind of charade. And the battle—well, there could *be* no real battle because He's doing all of it. If God has predestined everything, then what would be the point of Scripture verses that exhort us to "fight the good fight of faith," or "put on the whole armor of God"; or verses that use terms like the "weapons of our warfare," or tell us that we

are to be "good soldier[s] of Jesus Christ," and that we are to "wage the good warfare"? If everything was predestined, and if we took those verses seriously, at best, our fight would be like shadow boxing or play-acting. No! We are in a real war—the battle of the ages. It's a war between God and Satan, and the prize is humanity.

Often, before soldiers go into a battle, they attend a briefing where strategies, critical information, and certain objectives are presented. Sometimes they are reminded of the overall game plan of the war. That's the approach I'm taking in this "war briefing," beginning with an overview of God's game plan.

God's goal, according to the Scriptures, is to win the hearts of men and women with whom He desires to spend eternity: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have [desires] all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life..." (John 3:36). These, and many, many other verses declare God's wonderful objective.

God's *primary means* for achieving His goal is to *communicate* through His Word His desire to spend eternity with those whom He created, as well as revealing what He has accomplished for their sakes that would enable them to spend eternity with Him. Without God's revelation to us concerning His unfathomable act of love on our behalf, we could not know it. But He has communicated in His *Word* all that He has done for us and what He requires of us in order to be reconciled to Him and to receive the gift of eternal life: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that [i.e., salvation is] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God..." (Ephesians 2:8).

Since understanding that God's *communication* is key to His goal of winning the hearts of mankind, it's not surprising that *His Word* would be the major target for His enemies. Shutting down, or at least disrupting, communication is the most effective tactic for defeating an enemy. If the troops can't get orders from their leaders, they are terribly vulnerable. Which brings us to God's main adversary, Satan, and his strategies. Scripture tells us in 2 Corinthians 2:11: "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Although we're not to major

on the deceptions of the devil, we nevertheless must be aware of them.

On the other hand, we look to God and *His* strategy for us: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:11-13).

Sounds like a war briefing to me! Satan (which means "adversary") and his troops seem to be the opponents here. And we are not to be ignorant of his devices, or his "wiles." "Wiles" is translated from the Greek word *metho daa a*, meaning his methods, e.g., cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery. These are all part of his methods—the strategies that the "father of lies" has crafted in the war against God for our hearts.

Satan's master strategy is the same that he has used from the very beginning on humanity, and he has certainly expanded on it throughout the ages: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1).

First of all, some people have trouble with a talking serpent. They can't take that as a literal statement, probably because they've never seen a serpent talk or communicate with a person. However, since none of us were there, we can't know for sure whether or not communication with animals was a normal condition before the fall of mankind into sin. The Bible doesn't tell us.

Nevertheless, for those who continue protesting that such a thing is absurd, I wonder why don't they protest against our government and try to get some of their tax money back from the multimillions of dollars the U.S. has spent on research trying to communicate with animals such as gorillas, chimpanzees, and dolphins, or at least curb their "conversations" with their own pets.

If a person claims to be a believer but has trouble believing that Satan literally spoke through a serpent and needs some further assurance, here are a couple of verses: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Furthermore, Peter, under the inspiration

of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 2:16), confirms another incident in Scripture in which an animal, this time a donkey, literally spoke “with a man’s voice [and] forbad the madness of the prophet” Balaam.

For those who consider the Genesis account of the serpent a myth of Judaism and Christianity, even a cursory search of the pagan religions of the world will reveal an amazing emphasis on serpent worship. India has the hooded cobra of Hinduism; Scandinavia has the Midgard Serpent; the Greeks have the god Python; the Egyptians have Uraeus; the Aztecs have their savior-god Quetzalcoatl, the plumed Serpent; Haitians worship the Great Serpent; American Hopi Indians perform the ceremony of the snake dance, and there are multitudes of others. Even the medical profession has paid homage to Aesculapius, the Greek god who is said to have received a healing herb from the mouth of a serpent. The original Hippocratic oath taken when doctors received their M.D. degrees began, “I swear by Apollo the physician, and Aesculapius and Health, and All-heal, and all the gods and goddesses....”

In all of the pagan religions above and many more, the very lies that the serpent fed to Eve are accepted as truth. The serpent for them is the symbol of perennial wisdom and eternal life—the good guy. This focus on the serpent by many cultures separated by time and distance—cultures that never had contact with one another yet who worship the serpent—is an amazing worldwide development stemming from something that supposedly never happened! But for those who believe the Bible, it’s certainly consistent for one who is called “the god of this world,” “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (2 Corinthians 4:4 and Revelation 12:9).

Serpent worship, however, is neither Satan’s ultimate goal nor his master strategy for deceiving the world. He is intent upon destroying the *communication* between God and His created beings. That strategy began by introducing doubt in the mind of Eve: “And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said...?” God gave a command to Adam. It was an absolute. He told him that he could eat of any tree of the Garden except one—and if he ate of that one, he would die. It was a test of obedience to see if he and Eve loved God. Jesus said in the Gospel of John, chapter 14, that if a man loves Him (Jesus), he will do what He says. The consequence of disobeying God’s absolute command was death—physical death and separation from God forever.

Separation from God forever is Satan’s

end, and he is bent on taking mankind down with him. His strategy for accomplishing this is clear in Genesis 3:1. He is dialoging with Eve for the purpose of breaking down her commitment to what God commanded: “Yea, hath God said?” To begin with, it was a subtle interrogation, probably not unlike the rationalization that goes on in our own minds from time to time, especially if our flesh isn’t thrilled with what God’s Word says. Eve was given something to think about, wrapped up, of course, in a very seductive sales package and delivered with a smooth pitch by Satan: getting her to think that God was withholding that particular fruit from her, causing her to wonder if there might be something special about it, or in it—something that would improve her situation, or even give her god-like powers.

That’s the strategy of the Adversary’s dialogue. But one doesn’t *dialogue* about absolutes. When that happens, something is either being added to or subtracted from the absolute. And that addition or subtraction, whether from Satan or from man, is a “way” (a solution, a path) that may seem appealing, even right, but that will inevitably lead to destruction (Proverbs 14:12). The strategy is designed for disrupting God’s communication—for undermining the authority of God’s Word. In verses 2 and 3 of Genesis 3, we see by Eve’s response that she seems to have added something to God’s command: “neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.” This wasn’t part of the command that God gave to Adam. Although her addition seems to strengthen what God said, it still misrepresents what God actually commanded. You see, when we get into a dialogue over something that we believe to be absolute truth, an adversary’s goal is simply to get us to move from our position—in any direction. That effectively negates its absolute characteristic or quality. Once we’ve moved away from our steadfast position, the slide begins that ultimately ends in destruction.

This tactic, which began in the Garden of Eden, has been used throughout history to get people to change their views—particularly fixed views. It was used effectively by Marxists to convert millions to communism, and it is used extensively today in the socialization process of our government, corporations, and educational system. Its aim is to tear down absolutes, dogmas, fixed ideas, traditional views, individualism, and so forth, in favor of a more social view based upon *consensus*, or what most people think. It’s a technique of getting people to conform to what the majority says is best and is directed at “nonconformists” such as...well, biblical Christians would fit that definition.

You can trace the serpent’s lies of Genesis 3 all through the history of mankind and find them in nearly all religions, in psychology, in education, in entertainment everywhere—and growing with an intensity that is increasing exponentially in our day. In Satan’s grand strategy to “nullify” God’s communication to mankind, his process involves 3-Ds: Doubt, Denial, and Deceit. Planting Doubt begins the process: “And he [Satan] said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said...?” That’s followed by Denial: “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die...,” which is then followed by Deceit: “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Of course, we could also add three more “D”s to describe the consequences for anyone who is seduced by the Adversary’s tactics: Delusion, Destruction, and ultimately Death, which is eternal separation from God.

Peter, in his first Epistle, gives those of us who would “fight the good fight of faith” our marching orders: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in [experienced by] your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

We are to “be sober, be vigilant,” and on our guard to “resist [the devil] stedfast in the faith.” Ephesians 6 tells us that we are to take up the “sword of the Spirit” (God’s Word). It is a defensive posture, that we “*may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*”

As we’ve seen, Satan’s primary objective is to nullify God’s objective communication to mankind through various means: his wiles are to attack it, undermine it, dismiss it, bad-mouth it, distort it, counter it, eradicate it, subsidize it, falsify it, abolish it, denigrate it, and so on and so forth. If he is effectively doing that in any of our lives, he, the father of lies, has cut us off to some degree from God’s truth. If we don’t know the Word of God, we won’t be able to tell what’s from Him and what’s not. For example, if we don’t understand money concepts, we won’t be able to tell when we’re being short-changed. In the same way, we need to have a good idea of what God’s marching orders are. In a war, we need to be able to discern whether or not the orders have been tampered with or corrupted by the enemy. Tragically, that lack of preparedness in this spiritual war has left much of the church terribly vulnerable today. The war is only going to

Quotable

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,

In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;

Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,

Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,

And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party thou shalt stand,

Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the dust against our land?

Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 't is Truth alone is strong,

And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around her throng

Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her from all wrong.

Backward look across the ages and the beacon-moments see,

That, like peaks of some sunk continent, jut through Oblivion's sea;

Not an ear in court or market for the low, foreboding cry

Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers, from whose feet earth's chaff must fly;

Never shows the choice momentous till the judgment hath passed by.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record

One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word;

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—

Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,

Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

We see dimly in the Present what is small and what is great,

Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn the iron helm of fate,

But the soul is still oracular; amid the market's din,

List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave within,—

"They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin."

James Russell Lowell

EXCERPT FROM *The Present Crisis*

Q&A

Question: Are you familiar with Rob Bell's book *Love Wins*? It is subtitled, "a book about heaven, hell, and the fate of every person who ever lived." It seems to teach universalism, although I have seen Bell deny that he is a universalist.

RESPONSE: We first addressed Rob Bell's heresies in a December 2005 *TBC* review of *Velvet Elvis*. Although professing fidelity to Scripture, the content of both *Velvet Elvis* and *Love Wins* clearly denies the sufficiency of Scripture. "This is part of the problem with continually insisting that one of the absolutes of the Christian faith must be a belief that 'Scripture alone' is our guide. It sounds nice, but it is not true" (Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, p. 67). His denial of scriptural authority has turned him from God's specific revelation, and he must therefore look elsewhere for insights that only God can and has provided.

His denial of the biblical doctrine of hell begins with misrepresentation, "A staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell," which he then characterizes as "...misguided, toxic, and ultimately subvert[ing] the contagious spread of Jesus' message of love, peace, forgiveness and joy that our world desperately needs to hear" (Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*, Harper One, 2011, viii).

Bell seems to be blind to the numerous Bible verses that categorically deny his thesis, such as, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thes 1:7-9). Furthermore, five times in chapter 9 of the Gospel of Mark (vv. 43-48) Jesus repeats that the fires of hell will not be quenched.

Bell seeks to offer a message without offense, but not the biblical gospel. However, the Apostle Paul wrote clearly of the offense of the Cross: "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased" (Gal:5:11).

Bell admits that Jesus was "unbelievably exclusive," [our emphasis] with his declaration that "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me" (Ibid.). Still, he argues, "He's also fantastically inclusive," pointing to other statements that Jesus made such as "I, if I am lifted up, ... will draw all people to myself" and that there will be a "renewal of all things" [author's emphasis] (Lillian Kwon, "Rob Bell Denies Being a Universalist," *Christian Post*, 3/15/11). Although Christ indeed draws all people to himself, Bell implies that the drawing is unconditional. No! Here is the condition: "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk 16:16).

Bell's low view of Scripture was evident during an interview with Pakistani-born Christian journalist Martin Bashir. "I'm asking you, is it irrelevant, as to how you respond to Christ in your life now, to determine your eternal destiny, that is irrelevant? Is it immaterial?" (Bashir, MSNBC Interview, March 15, 2011 transcript). Bell's answer is double-talk at best. "It is terribly relevant and terribly important. How exactly it works out and how it works out in the future, when you die we are in the realm of speculation. And my experience has been a lot of Christians built whole dogmas about what happens when you die and we have to be very careful we don't build whole doctrines and dogmas on what is speculation" (Ibid.).

Speculation? That is what a person is left with when he turns from the Word of God, which is epidemic among many who profess to be evangelical Christians. No doubt we are seeing the prophetic fulfillment of Paul's last day's warning: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tm 4:3).

QUESTION: Are you familiar with the book *The Girl Who Could Fly*? It is being used in my daughter's class at her Christian school. The plot involves a girl named Piper McCloud, who was born with the power of telekinesis, which gives her the ability to fly. When we discussed this book, my daughter excitedly told me that this was just like Jesus telling the disciples, "whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mark:11:23).

RESPONSE: In our opinion, there are a number of problems with using a fictional book in a Christian educational setting that features characters with superpowers. The subject matter may motivate the students to read, normally an ordeal for most visually oriented young people these days, but it has a serious downside.

First of all, it endorses the possibility of a condition that is not consistent with God's creation and a biblical worldview. Second, much of the literature that includes paranormal powers connects the abilities to the occult or witchcraft techniques. It may be "just fantasy" for some, but it is very seductive, especially for young people who might dream of being able to exhibit such powers. Furthermore, the bait here is a "socially redeeming" teaching of tolerance. As found in movies such as the *X-Men* and the Harry Potter series, the heroes and heroines are victims of an intolerant and prejudiced society that only sees their "gifts" as abnormal or even demonic. That

“teaching” may well influence a young person to see the tree of intolerance but be blinded to the forest of occultism.

More serious, however, is the attempt to relate biblical miracles to alleged super powers. That’s like equating the miraculous to magic; the result reduces miracles to techniques that a person can apply by adhering to occult instructions. The example you give is how the so-called faith teachers turn biblical faith into a technique, or method, that supposedly enables a person to perform signs and wonders. That is a terrible distortion of Scripture and has led many to attempt to use God like a genie in a bottle in order to achieve healing, prosperity, or other false signs and wonders. This is both a distortion of biblical faith and a blasphemous mischaracterization of God.

If someone protests that the superpowers of *The Girl Who Could Fly* have no connection to the “faith” teachers other than the exception of this one Christian school, he needs to consider Benny Hinn, who stated that before the Fall, Adam could fly like a bird and swim underwater while breathing like a fish. According to Hinn, Adam even went to the moon and walked on water long before Christ. His conclusion was that Adam was the first superhuman being that ever lived. Either Hinn made all of this up, or the Holy Spirit chose him as a vessel to reveal what was not revealed in the Scriptures. It must be the former at least because although Hinn is extremely popular (even though he has a long track record of false prophecies; see *TBC* 3/97), his alleged insights and teachings are contradictory to the Word of God.

QUESTION: How can you believe both in God’s foreknowledge and that man has the power of choice? If God knows ahead of time that Mr. A is going to do something, how can Mr. A decide for himself? Isn’t foreknowledge the same as predestination?

RESPONSE: The biblical doctrine of foreknowledge simply states that God knows everything that will happen before it happens—which as God He must know. Prophecy, in which God reveals His foreknowledge, is the major part of Scripture, the great proof that God exists and that the Bible is His Word (Is 42:9; 43:10; 46:9-10; 48:5, etc.). Prophecy is also the foundation of the gospel (Rom 1:1-3; 1 Cor 15:1-4, etc.). Scripture never says or even implies that God knows all beforehand because He has caused it—much less that He must cause it in order to know it. The future is as plain to Him as the past.

The future is part of time, which is part of this physical universe. God is not part of the universe (which He created out of nothing), but He is separate from it. Perhaps

He observes the universe from the outside, including past, present, and future time, seeing it all at once. It is not necessary for us to know how God knows the future, but we know He must.

Scripture makes it clear that God is no passive observer, entirely disinterested in events taking their own course in the universe He has created. He keeps a watchful eye and plays an active part because He has an eternal purpose for all creation. He exerts His influence upon men and events in order to create the future which He desires. He makes no last-minute emergency adjustments but has eternally foreknown whatever He would do to implement His plans: “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18). Predestination and foreknowledge cannot be the same. God’s foreknowledge doesn’t make things happen. To know something in advance is not the same as predetermining that it will happen. Nor does God need to predestine something in order to know it will happen. Were that the case, God would not be infinite in His knowledge. There is a vast difference between saying that God fully foresees everything that will happen and allows much that is not His perfect will—and saying that God predetermines everything that occurs and it is therefore all just as He would have it. The latter view makes man a mere puppet and God the cause behind all wickedness and sin.

Martin Luther asserts that “God foreknows and wills all things.” He argues that if this is not true, then “how can you believe, trust and rely on His promises?”¹ The answer is, “Quite easily. We rely upon God’s promises because He is God and cannot lie.”

Furthermore, it is neither logically necessary nor biblical that unless God wills all things He cannot make and keep promises. Clearly, what God promises and determines to do He will do regardless of the will or actions of man or nature. That He is able to protect us and bring us to heaven does not require that He must will every event that swirls about us—only that He must have known them and taken them into account in effecting His eternal purpose.

You ask how God’s foreknowledge and man’s free will could both be true. Surely whatever God foreknows will happen, must happen, or His foreknowledge would be wrong. Nothing can prevent what God foreknows from happening, so a person might ask, how can man be a free moral agent? Even though God may be looking in upon time from outside, doesn’t the fact that He knows the future eliminate man’s choice? If the future must happen, as God knows it will, isn’t everything predetermined? Claiming that the issue of free will was the very heart of the Reformation and of the gospel itself,

Luther dogmatically declared that it was impossible for God to foreknow the future and for man at the same time to be a free agent to act as he wills. Believing firmly in God’s foreknowledge, Luther wrote *The Bondage of the Will* to prove that the very idea of man’s free will is a fallacy and an illusion. In fact, *Bondage* is full of fallacies, both logical and biblical, which I point out in *What Love Is This?*, my book in defense of God’s character.

Calvin states no less dogmatically than Luther that foreknowledge leaves no room whatsoever for free will. Period. We are astonished that Calvin repeatedly makes fallacious, unbiblical statements; and doubly astounded that so many leading evangelicals continue to praise him for being so logical and such a great exegete.

If God cannot know by His foreknowledge what every person will think and do by their free will, then He is not God. Moreover, the fact that God is able to allow man freedom of choice while still effecting His eternal purposes unhindered is all the more glorifying to His sovereign wisdom, power, and foreknowledge.

What is future to us may not be future to God: He sees not only our past but our present and future as already having happened. From this understanding, God’s knowledge of what in our experience hasn’t yet happened would have no effect upon its occurrence and therefore would leave us free to choose.

Even Augustine (known as the father of modern Catholicism), whom both Calvin and Luther admired, clearly affirmed that there is no incompatibility between God’s absolute sovereignty and foreknowledge and man’s free will:

Therefore we are by no means compelled, either, retaining the prescience of God to take away the freedom of the will, or, retaining the freedom of the will, to deny that He is prescient of future things, which is impious. But we... faithfully and sincerely confess both.²

We don’t accept something just because someone, no matter how great their reputation, says it. The Bible is our authority. We believe that what we have said here is scriptural, but each reader must be a Berean and come to his or her own conclusions on the basis of Scripture alone.

Endnotes

1. Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (trans. J.D. Packer and O.R. Johnston, Fleming H. Revell, 1957), 83-84.

2. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* (n.p.n.d.), V. 10. 1977), 35.

Seduction: A Primer for Persecution?

T. A. McMahon

For the last three decades, Dave Hunt and I have addressed many trends and teachings that have influenced the evangelical church, particularly in the United States. Our concern has focused primarily on unbiblical beliefs and practices that were turning Christians away from the Word of God. Twenty-five years ago, we wrote *The Seduction of Christianity*, a rather controversial book that was motivated by feedback from those who had read Dave's earlier books and had watched the film documentaries to which I had contributed in the early eighties. Some dealt specifically with religious cults (*Cult Explosion*, *The God Makers*, etc.). Responses from Christians who read those books and watched the films, however, alerted us to the fact that the cult beliefs that we identified were also being taught in their churches, which were being influenced by leading Charismatic and Word/Faith teachers. Those same false teachers were also spreading cultish doctrines throughout the country on Christian television networks.

One of the principal false teachings at the time was the belief that godhood could be attained by created beings. Though that is foundational to Mormonism ("As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become") and Hinduism (self-realization is realizing that man is God), it had worked its way in various forms and methods into different "Christian" movements, teachings, and practices. Much of it was promoted by extreme Charismatics, but it was also finding its way into conservative evangelical churches through so-called Christian psychology (with its emphasis on self and self-esteem, leading to the exaltation and deification of self). Of course, the lie that man could become a god was the cornerstone of Satan's *seduction* of the human race (Genesis 3:1-5).

In his war against those who have committed their lives to the true and living God, Satan, as God's chief adversary throughout history, has majored in *seduction* and *persecution*. Although persecution would seem to be more effective in its prohibition of Christianity than seduction (and it certainly generates more fear), it is far less productive for the Adversary in achieving his objective. The saying that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" has been demonstrated throughout church history. Martyrdom and other forms of persecution have always increased and/or *strengthened* the body of Christ. The same,

however, cannot be said for seduction.

Believers in the United States have never experienced significant religious persecution—certainly nothing like what has taken place in China, India, or throughout countries controlled by Islam. Historically, true Christians in the West as far as Europe have suffered violence from the Caesars of Rome, the Church of Rome, and Communism, among others, but a comparable level of persecution has yet to reach our shores. On the other hand, spiritual seduction has proliferated here and has shipwrecked the faith of many within Christendom.

Unlike persecution, there is not even a remote value associated with seduction; it is spiritually debilitating and deadly. Stories abound of those believers who have survived and been strengthened in their faith during the persecution they suffered in communist countries only to have their walk with the Lord devastated after they escaped to the West. They could endure persecution, but they could not resist seduction.

The thesis of this article, which is that seduction will ultimately bring about persecution, is intimidating for me personally. Why? Partly because Dave and I have only rarely addressed the potential for persecution in the U.S. and partly because it's only beginning to show its nasty head here. Then why write about it now? From my observations, increasing signs point to a pending clash between the professing—and even true—Christians who will conform to the world by compromising biblical teachings and those who will remain steadfast in the faith. Nevertheless, I put little value in my observations unless I'm confident that they reflect what the Scriptures teach. Nor should anyone who reads this article.

Following are seven pertinent verses (among others that could be given) that have influenced my observations and this thesis:

In Matthew 24:4, Jesus warns that the last days prior to His return will be a time of religious deception: "Take heed that no man deceive you." He adds (v. 24) that the deception will be so great that if it were possible the very elect could be deceived. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus refers to the "strait gate" and "narrow way" that leads to life and announces that "few there be that find it." Luke writes (18:8) the sobering words of our Lord regarding the time of His return: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?" Since His Second Coming is for the purpose of judgment and to save Israel from annihilation, His words here seem better suited to His coming for His bride in the midst of a professing Christianity that has joined the

apostasy. The Apostle Paul gives this insightful explanation as to how apostasy could manifest among those who call themselves Christians: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Sound doctrine will not be endured in the last days because many who began with the milk of scriptural truth have already been weaned away from it, i.e., seduced, by their own lusts and by false teachers. More than that, sound doctrine will become an issue that will foster division among Christians. Paul instructed the Roman believers to identify those who teach things "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). It's clear that believers who desire to stand firm for the teachings of God's Word will be at odds with Christians whose beliefs and lives are not conformed to the Scriptures.

Could division over doctrine result in persecution? Both history and the Word of God indicate as much. In the Book of Acts, we are told that "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1). It involved violent assaults, imprisonments, and deaths, and the issues were doctrinal—pitting those who fiercely defended the religious traditions of men against those who followed the teachings of Jesus the Messiah. Persecutions continued as Christians who stood firm in the doctrine of Christ refused to bow down to the deified Caesars or conform to the pagan rituals of Rome. They became vicious entertainment for those who packed the coliseums to see them burned and torn apart by animals. Later, a "Christianized" Rome persecuted those who attempted to reform Roman Catholicism. From there, doctrinal inquisitions and trials by torture proliferated against the "protestants" and other biblical non-Catholics. Today, persecution continues against believers in Islamic countries and in those places in the West where Roman Catholicism still controls the society, such as cities, villages, and even some states in Mexico and South America.

Although none of the above has manifested itself substantially in the United States, could such religious persecution take place here? Roman Catholicism has never been in a position to impose its dogmas on the American populace; Islam has only begun to control some neighborhoods here with its Shariah legalism ("Terror's Secret Weapon: Shariah," *Townhall*, 4/20/11). But what about a scenario of Bible-believing Christians being

persecuted by other Christians who will “not endure sound doctrine”? Is that likely? Some who have previewed this article were doubtful that “Christians killing Christians over doctrines” would ever take place here, a law-abiding country where, for the most part, “doctrinal apathy” rules among evangelicals. I tend to agree, yet if someone had told me 25 years ago that evangelicals would shift from the then highly influential moral majority/Christian Right to the socialism-oriented Christian Left—I would have laughed. No one is laughing at that reality now (Q&A 1/11). Only the Lord knows how extreme the oppression will become prior to His return for His bride, but there are many forms of persecution, short of martyrdom.

In previous *TBC* articles, we have addressed significant trends among evangelicals that have “weaned them off the Word,” seducing them into following the ways, means, and agendas of *man* contrary to the Scriptures (See *TBC* 3/04; 2/05; 3/05; 2/07, 3/07, 9/07, et al.). In the midst of that process of compromise, increasing numbers of professing and true Christians have accepted the ideals of the world, including moral, social, and religious tolerance. “Intolerance” in thought, word, or deed of that which the world believes is good for humanity identifies a person as antisocial at least and as bigoted, prejudiced, or a practitioner of hate crimes at worst. Furthermore, what if a social gospel that is based upon “good works” became widely accepted as a better form of “salvation”—one that had the potential to rally *everyone* together, including governments, the world’s religions, liberal Christians and cults, humanists and even atheists? Everyone, that is, *except biblical Christians*. What might be the consequences for those who would object to such a world-supported “Christian” development because it did not conform to sound doctrine?

Sound doctrine, i.e., the teachings of the Bible, is what a true Christian is to abide by as one lives his life for Christ. Sound doctrine is the *absolute criterion* that dictates what beliefs, practices, and programs he can accept and what he must reject. Moreover, Scripture exhorts him to be discerning and steadfast in its teachings: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. . . . And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:13-14,17).

But would God allow persecution to

take place *within* the church? That’s what Peter seems to be acknowledging: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17). Judgment, in the sense of correction and strengthening that results from God’s allowing of persecution, as we’ve noted, has always been a part of Christianity. The Epistle to the Hebrews also indicates that persecution is one of the things that God has used as a spiritual pruning and purifying process for Hebrew Christians.

If you’re not sure how (or why) persecution might take place within Christianity, consider these examples: When Promise Keepers enjoyed popularity among evangelical men, it became known that one of its goals was to “break down the walls” between Catholics and evangelicals. Part of that process involved turning churches against ministries that evangelized Roman Catholics. When Rick Warren’s “40 Days of Purpose” began to influence hundreds of thousands of churches throughout the U.S., long-time members who protested on doctrinal grounds were either disfellowshipped, or threatened with disfellowship, unless they submitted to Warren’s program in their own churches (see *TBC* 10/04 and 9/08). To question a pastor or the elders’ support for introducing yoga or “Christianized yoga” in a church has been grounds for disfellowship.

Although the above examples may seem marginal to some, they and other endeavors, including church-growth marketing programs, emerging church methods and mystical practices, ecumenical overtures to Muslims and Mormons, an ecumenical global P.E.A.C.E. plan that involves all the world’s religions, movements aimed at solving the world’s ecological, poverty, and social injustice problems, etc., have driven multitudes of believers to start home churches.

What if you were to preach against the various agendas mentioned above because they were a rejection of sound doctrine? Remember the Apostle Paul’s admonition? “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. . . .” (2 Timothy 4:1-4). What would be the reaction among those within and without the church who were supportive of those agendas?

Or what if even *without* your preaching or protesting it simply becomes known that

you are one of those biblical Christians who is intolerant toward other religions, who rejects evolution, who won’t go along with psychology, who is anti-abortion, anti-genetic manipulation, and anti-euthanasia; that you view homosexuality as a sin rather than an alternative lifestyle, and that you are against gay rights and gay marriage? Furthermore, you seem to be out of touch with the acceptable morality of the day (marriage now being statistically a minority as a practice in the U.S.) by having a “problem” with cohabitation, and it’s been said that you believe sexual abstinence should be practiced outside of marriage. You are suspicious about the alarm over “global warming.” It’s become known that you support Israel against the alleged right of the Palestinians to be restored to the land they believe is theirs. How will such a person be dealt with in Christendom—as well as by the world that champions everything that a believer opposes? The dark clouds of persecution appear to be gathering over the church in the U.S.; signs indicate that the seats of the “coliseum” are beginning to fill with a widely diverse audience (see *TBC* 1/11) that, at least in a figurative sense, has “a taste for the blood” of those who reject their programs and teachings on the basis of sound biblical doctrine.

The seduction of Christianity has created a condition in which biblical discernment and steadfastness in the faith are the exception rather than the rule. Standing for the truth and righteousness of the Word of God while the opposition increases within and without the church can only result in some form of persecution. Paul makes that quite clear: “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (2 Timothy 3:12). Although that verse may distress some believers, it shouldn’t. Why? Because the beginning of the verse gives a believer the key to receiving the grace to glorify God and to benefit others through persecution: living godly lives in Christ Jesus! That is a believer’s only preparation and it is more than sufficient. Jesus, who is the Word made flesh, gave His disciples this astonishing word of encouragement regarding standing for His teachings: “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven. . . .” (Luke 6:22-23). Our prayer is that the Lord Jesus will help us to live godly lives and by His grace remain steadfast in the faith as we look for His soon coming. TBC

Quotable

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:1)

Paul was in a dark place. He was a prisoner of Nero in degrading circumstances and awaited death at any moment. Many thoughts filled his mind. Yet, above these were two others: the will of God and the promise of life. Whatever was happening to him he was convinced was in the will of God; it could not be otherwise. While Nero might be the means of his death yet he had the promise of life in Christ Jesus. Man's worst efforts opened up God's promises. Somewhere in this darkest hour was God's will and somewhere in the confusion was God's promise of life. May we also try to remember these wonderful truths in our dark times.

— R. Hill, in *2011 Choice Gleanings*

"If God is your co-pilot...you need to switch seats."

— Anonymous

Q&A

QUESTION: In your article on heaven, May 2011, you stated that the man in 2 Corinthians 12:2 was "no doubt" Paul himself. May I ask for some clarification? Paul had stated that the prophets never lose mental control (1 Corinthians 14:32). They did not go into trances, comas, or out-of-body experiences. If that is a true interpretation, then Paul would have known whether he was in the body or out of the body. There was a person who had such an experience in Revelation 10:1-4. John was also caught up into the third heaven (Revelation 1:10) and given words he could not reveal—the third heaven, not pertaining to altitude, but time, as Peter explained in 2 Peter 3:6,7,13. As best as I can interpret, Paul never spoke of himself in the third person, as the case would be in 2 Corinthians 12. It seems that 2 Corinthians 12:5 clarifies beyond doubt that this man was not Paul. If I am missing something, please let me know.

RESPONSE: It seems very likely to be the case that the Apostle Paul is referring to himself in 2 Corinthians 12:2-7. First of all, it is a very personal account of an exalted experience, and Paul, in his humility, seems to use the third person to temper any glory that might be bestowed upon him. Verse

7 clearly indicates his reluctance to boast lest he himself be exalted. Why should Paul himself need a "thorn in the flesh" if he were speaking of another man's revelation?

Additionally, it would certainly not be out of character—nor out of biblical context—for Paul to speak of himself in the third person. John ("the beloved") appears to have done so (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 21:20). In like manner, Paul wrote, "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities...lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me" (2 Corinthians 12:5-6).

Regarding your statement that "prophets never lose mental control," you've missed the context of 1 Corinthians 14:32: "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." That verse simply indicates that the prophets, i.e., teachers or preachers, have control of what they say and when they are to say it, so that there is no confusion or disorder in a gathering of believers. Acts 10:10 and 11:5 declare that Paul and Peter, both prophets, had trance experiences.

One of the most striking aspects of this entire account is that while Paul clearly intended to speak about "visions and revelations of the Lord" (v. 1), in the end, he not only "failed" to describe what he *saw*, but he was also forbidden to repeat what he had *heard!* (Obviously, he was redirected by the Holy Spirit, in much the same manner as was Jude in verse 3 of his epistle).

The Word of God gives many examples of believers who had supernatural spiritual experiences, and we know that what they experienced was true because it was reported to us in the Scriptures, God's objective truth. Spiritual experiences in the Lord for believers today, although they may indeed have taken place, are nevertheless personal and subjective, and if others cannot verify them objectively, there is minimal value, if any, in sharing them. For some believers, too often the experiential becomes more significant than God's Word, and that is a pathway to delusion and worse.

QUESTION: There are many who advocate that a born-again believer in Christ can commit suicide and still be saved. They stress the fact that there is only one sin that God will not forgive: blaspheming the Holy Spirit. They use King Saul, Samson, and Judas Iscariot. My thought on this is that no saint can/could ever give up on life, self, or God because His Spirit is in them and is the Life of the believer. The works of the flesh are described in

Galatians 5:19-21a. Could you explain the differences between these three men (Samson, Judas, and King Saul) as to what their deaths proved? Is it possible for a saint to commit suicide?

RESPONSE: The answer to your question has little to do with King Saul, Samson, nor especially Judas. The answer is predicated upon this biblical absolute: Everyone who is truly born again, who has by grace alone through faith alone believed that Jesus paid the full penalty for one's sins (which He did—past, present, and future!) has therefore received the gift of eternal life.

One might as well ask if a saint of God could commit adultery, steal, or even murder. Tragically, it has proved to be possible for Christians to commit all manner of wickedness. Such is the nature of mankind, whose heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). As such a person goes through life and, for whatever reasons, is overtaken by the world, the flesh, or the devil—even to the point of suicide—his fruitfulness in life and his eternal rewards will be affected, but it cannot affect his gift of eternal life, which he neither earned nor could pay for.

A believer who is truly saved and maturing in Christ should not desire to commit *any* sin. The Word of God abounds in exhortations directed at believers to live their temporal life for Christ, to fight the good fight of faith, to beware of the wiles of the devil, who goes about seeking whom he may devour, etc. There would be no such admonitions directed at believers if they were immune to those things that would shipwreck their faith. But as God's Word repeatedly affirms, we are assured that His gift of eternal life extends even to those saints who fail.

QUESTION: A frequent reaction to your book *The Seduction of Christianity* is that it causes division within the Body. What is your response to this criticism?

RESPONSE: I agree that we as Christians are to love one another genuinely and to seek unity. However, I would remind you that it is the "unity of the *faith*" that we are to maintain; and it is the *truth* that we are to speak in love. If members of the Body have erred, then we must in love correct them.

Furthermore, division is not always bad. Christ caused division everywhere He went (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). He even declared that He had come into the world to bring division (Luke 12:51)!

I've heard Romans 16:17 misquoted repeatedly on this subject: "Mark them

which cause divisions and avoid them.” That is not what Paul says. We are to mark and avoid those who “cause divisions and offenses contrary to [sound] doctrine....”

If division arises due to opposition to the truth, it is not the one teaching or standing firm for sound doctrine who is at fault, but those who “will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). That doctrine is despised today is one of the clearest signs of the last-days apostasy, which is growing at an alarming rate.

Let those who oppose *The Seduction of Christianity* point out from the Bible where we have erred. If they cannot do so, it is a pitiful cover-up of their aversion to truth to raise the cry of “division”!

QUESTION: Regarding the May TBC article on “An Exercise in Discernment,” the scriptures in Exodus 20:4-5 and Acts 17:29 say that the Lord is against anyone attempting to make an image of God. We are grandparents and have given Christian children’s books about Jesus. The books have images of Jesus. We also have a Nativity set with an infant Jesus. Missionaries are using the *Jesus Film* to explain the gospel in rural third world nations where there are no Bibles in their languages. We want to be obedient to the Lord’s Scripture. What do you suggest we tell our grandchildren?

RESPONSE: Most of us are no doubt familiar with the analogy of a frog in a pot of water. As the heat slowly increases, the frog, a cold-blooded animal, doesn’t notice it and ends up being cooked to death. In a Christian culture, certain seemingly insignificant things creep in from the world that don’t appear to be contrary to Scripture, and they slowly increase and become acceptable over time. Religious art has had such a development in church history, in particular in the acceptance of icons by the Orthodox Church and the proliferation of statues and paintings in the Roman Catholic Church. Since the Bible was not the final authority of either of these churches, both of them disregarded the biblical prohibitions against such imagery. Centuries later, it is common for evangelicals to fully accept “religious art” as something useful and even helpful for “meditating” on the Lord.

All of that goes to say that although artistic depictions of biblical characters and topics have been around for a long time and have increased in our visually oriented culture, that still doesn’t give it the support of Scripture. An image of Jesus has serious problems: 1) Scripture prohibits it (Exodus

20:4-5; Acts 17:29). 2) No representation of Jesus, the God/Man, can accurately portray Him. 3) All such images of Jesus are false images. 4) Art is a subjective form of communication and unless it is ordained and directed by God (Exodus 31), it is a fleshly misrepresentation of what is presented in God’s objective Word. Even when God has ordained something for a specific purpose, man has used it for idolatrous purposes, such as the bronzed serpent (2 Kings 18:4). Centuries of the idolatrous imagery of the Catholic Church have been a major catalyst for all of its many superstitions.

There is a vast difference between generic representations of Jesus (for example, the characters on a flannel board) used for the purpose of teaching young children who don’t have the ability to read or write, and a detailed painting or sculpture purporting to represent our Lord, as is so often seen in contemplative practices. Children don’t seem to “cling” to the flocked figures as idolatrous objects. But we must remember Paul’s admonition: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11). When your grandchildren are old enough to read the Bible, that is how they should be taught—by the Word of God itself. Pictures may attract and entertain children, but they do not teach objective truth. Today’s animated and cartoonized characterizations of Bible stories seem increasingly objectionable and offensive—regardless of how cute and clever and well-produced they may be.

The same may be said for attempts to translate the Bible into a movie. No matter how sincere the attempt, it will always be a corruption of God’s inerrant Word, replete with images conjured up by fallen humanity.

What should you do? Ultimately, each of us is accountable to the Lord for our position and beliefs. Romans 1:17 tells us that the just shall live by faith. The challenge is before us to apply both grace and truth in dealing with these situations. We suggest that you explain to your grandchildren the biblical understanding that you have come to regarding imagery.

Fortunately, the Lord does not apply His righteous judgment upon us in the same manner as realized by Uzza, when he innocently (by human standards)—and with “good intentions”—reached out to keep the Ark from falling, or Ananias and Sapphira, who were not quite so ignorant in their sin. No one goes to hell for reading a picture book or seeing a movie with images that supposedly represent Jesus, but

as depictions that are not true to Him, they cannot lead one to the true and living Christ.

QUESTION: Many of today’s Christian leaders (including my former Pastor), matter of factly state that we live in a “Post-Christian Era.” My question is: aren’t these leaders conveying a defeatist attitude about Christian values in the United States and other parts of Western Civilization? Isn’t that what the enemy would have the church believe so that we would stop evangelizing the lost?

Response: It is true that what is commonly being heard in the West (i.e., America, Europe) is that we are living in a post-Christian era. The influence of Christianity has diminished greatly and there is a growing number of pagan, Islamic, Hindu, etc., religions moving in to fill the void. This is often used to fuel the argument that Christianity needs to change, something advanced by the Emerging Church.

Regarding the other side of the coin, Paul wrote, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). It is clear that the gospel is out of season for many. It has always been out of season in the world, but Paul clearly is addressing the church as well, for he goes on to say, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (v. 3). The Scriptures speak again and again of an apostasy in which “professing” believers will depart from the faith.

It is instructive to see how believers in Third World nations are so much more emphatic in their preaching of the gospel from Scripture. Even mainline denominational believers in Third World nations are more “evangelical” than many who identify themselves as evangelicals in the West.

We must also remember, however, that biblically there will never be a “Post-Christian Era.” John spoke in Revelation of “...a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands” (Revelation 7:9). He was told, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (v. 14). So even in those last of the last days, Christianity will be on the earth. Consequently, God will always have a faithful remnant, and the fruit of that remnant “no man could number.”

From Oprah to Oz —And Beyond

T. A. McMahon

If you were asked to name America's most influential spiritual advisor for the past 25 years, what would your response be? Billy Graham? Robert Schuller? Perhaps Rick Warren or Joel Osteen? It may surprise you to learn that none of these men have been as successful numbers-wise as Oprah Winfrey! Her programs drew a daily audience as high as 12.4 million and averaged 7.4 million in 2007, diminishing only slightly when she touted Obama during the 2008 election year. Her closing program had its highest-ever rating, with 16.4 million viewers.

All of this adds up to an incredible amount of influence. What do I mean by including Oprah in this group of "spiritual advisors"? What religion might she have been promoting? Oprah hinted at the answer to those questions on her final program: "People often ask me, 'What is the secret of success of the show? How have we lasted 25 years? I non-jokingly say, 'My team and Jesus.' Because nothing but the hand of God has made this possible for me'" (http://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/The-Oprah-Winfrey-Show-Finale_1/1). She then further identified the God to whom she referred: "I'm talking about the same one you're talking about. I'm talking about Alpha and Omega, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Ultimate Consciousness, the Source, the Force, the All of everything there is, the One and Only G-O-D" (<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/05/oprahs-last-show-a-recap-in-quotes/239483/>).

If it's still not clear to you exactly who or what this "One and Only G-O-D" is, you're not alone. All the commentaries that I've read regarding Oprah's farewell program have noted that reviewers also were confused about the deity to whom she paid homage. What *should* be clear is that the "Jesus" and the "God" whom she describes are not the biblical Jesus and God. But that may *not* be so clear for some—especially those who consider themselves Christians and who think that Oprah is talking about the same Jesus in whom they believe.

No matter what anyone has in his or her mind about Jesus, only the Scriptures can set the record straight, and here's why. Mankind has only three options when it comes to our knowledge about God. Either God has revealed Himself to humanity in both general (His creation) and very specific terms

(His words), or man has conjured up his own ideas about God. The third option is by far the most common: it's a mixture of the two that includes bits and pieces of God's revelation combined with mankind's opinions and speculations. Of the three, which one will be the most accurate? Obviously, communication from God himself would be best.

Is that a reality? Well, that's what the Bible claims. More than 4,000 times throughout the Scriptures, God's prophets have written phrases such as "Thus saith the LORD" and "The word of the LORD came to me." If that isn't the case, then they were all lying. That would be amazing because the "lies" were consistent among all 40 who wrote the Scriptures—men who lived during different cultural times over a period of 1,600 years and who reflected quite diverse occupations in life: Moses was raised in the court of Pharaoh of Egypt; others were fishermen or shepherds; one was a tax collector, another a physician, and a few were royalty.

Further proof that God has communicated to mankind through His Word are the miraculous aspects of what He says, especially through prophecy: "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them....Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them [pagan idols] bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isaiah 42:9; 43:9-10).

Only God is omniscient, and He challenges any gods that humans have concocted to demonstrate their ability to foretell the future. In contrast to the failed prophecies of the idol worshipers, the record of the Scriptures contains hundreds of prophecies accurately detailing events foretold by the God of the Bible that would take place days, months, and even hundreds or thousands of years from the time they were issued. Fulfilled prophecy is the *foremost verification* that God's Word is just that: the Word of God (*TBC*, 8/06; 9/06, et al.).

Oprah's widespread influence on America's spirituality can be attributed to many factors, from the popularity of the New Age Movement (of which she was a chief promoter, by featuring wannabe gurus such as Shirley MacLaine, Marilyn Ferguson, and Marianne Williamson), to the national rush

to psychotherapy as the solution for all of life's problems, to our historic Yankee love affair with self-help theology and practice. All of these, Oprah dished up daily.

The reason for the incredible acceptance of her spiritual teachings, however, must be credited primarily to her ability to make even the most far-fetched Hindu/Buddhist concepts appear to fit with Christianity—a mix that she has fed to viewers who, for the most part, profess to be Christian yet are largely ignorant of the teachings of the Bible. This has effectively disabled their ability to recognize God's direct revelation as the authority for spiritual truth and has opened the door for any mixture of thoughts one has about God (e.g., opinions, speculations, guesses, or whatever a person "feels" regarding the nature of God).

Oprah's own "Christianity" leans heavily upon the Christianity of the Mind Sciences, including New Thought, Religious Science, Christian Science, and Unity School of Christianity, all of which incorporate into their teachings ideas drawn from Eastern mystical religions. Although some feature the Christian name, they are diametrically opposed to biblical Christianity. Oprah is a latter-day composite of Madame Blavatsky and Mary Baker Eddy, the former a co-founder of Theosophy, who popularized Buddhist occultism in the West in the last half of the 1800s, and the latter, who founded the Christian Science cult in New England in the same century. Oprah's background is Baptist, which she left in her late 20s.

She claims that her eyes were opened to the fact that "God" was bigger than the doctrines she had been taught, and she later was excited to discover views that taught that there were many ways to God besides through Jesus. The Cross, to her, was not a matter of Jesus' reconciliation of man to God through His payment for the sins of the world but rather a preeminent lesson in overcoming the obstacles in one's life. She recalls that transition period in her life as the time when she began her search for more than Bible doctrines. She turned to those who have Westernized and homogenized Eastern religious concepts for the American consumer, such as Eckhart Tolle, Gary Zukav, Deepak Chopra, Iyanla Vanzant, Carolyn Myss, and Elizabeth Lesser.

According to the Scriptures, when people like Oprah either drift away from or reject biblical doctrine, they have turned from God's instructions to the rationalizations of men, at least, and/or to the doctrines of demons at worst (1 Timothy 4:1). She raised false spiritual teaching to new technological heights when she began her

series on *A New Earth* with Eckhart Tolle. The initial program reached 139 countries with simultaneous, interactive worldwide instructions and grew from there. Another attraction that drew the multitudes were her celebrity guests with “spiritual insights” that she paraded before her audience (80 percent of whom were women) day after day, including Scientologists Tom Cruise and John Travolta, Unity minister Della Reese, Eckhart Tolle-disciple Jim Carrey, and Kabbalah devotee Madonna, among a litany of others. Tragically, for untold millions, she’s paved the broad road that leads to eternal destruction.

Although Oprah and her friends seem to be all over the spiritual map, their beliefs and practices can be simplified from a biblical perspective. They all promote 1) the deification of self, and 2) salvation through good works. Here is what Oprah gleaned from her spiritual advisors: Jesus came not to pay for everyone’s sin but to teach Christ consciousness—the idea that each person is a part of God and needs to be conscious of that. Hindus call it “self-realization,” i.e., realizing that one’s own self is God. That was the ultimate message of *The Secret* (see TBC’s *The Secret Seduction*), a book and DVD that millions purchased due primarily to Oprah’s endorsement and enthusiastic promotion.

In Oprah’s words as she considers one Christian woman’s view against a non-Christian woman’s path to God: “[There are] many paths to what you call God. Her path might be something else, and when she gets there she might call it the Light, but her loving and her kindness and her generosity, if it brings her to the same place it brings you, it doesn’t matter whether she calls it God or not.” This is “works salvation,” and it is the foundational belief system of all the world’s religions. Only biblical Christianity rejects works unequivocally as a path to being reconciled to God: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5); “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that [salvation] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Scripture is emphatic that no loving act, no kindness, no generosity, or any other “good” deed qualifies anyone for eternal life with God. The problem is *sin*, regarding which every human (except the sinless God/Man Jesus Christ) is guilty (Romans 3:23), and for which no sinner can do anything to pay off the penalty that God established. Why not? The penalty is eternal separation from the presence of God. Oprah and all her

spiritual teachers may reject the biblical teaching concerning sin and its penalty, but the absolute fact is—it *must be paid* in order for God’s divine justice to be satisfied and for one to receive the gift of everlasting life with Him: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Their “many paths” statement is a rejection of the most unfathomable act imaginable. In fact, it is so incredible that none of the non-Christian world religions have ever even hinted at such a deed: the Creator of the universe Himself would pay the penalty for His rebellious creatures and would offer the free gift of eternal life to them on the basis of their simply receiving it by an act of faith. Charles Wesley immortalized Jesus’ astonishing achievement in song when he wrote, “Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

It’s doubtful that Oprah Winfrey will be giving up her pulpit; it is more probable that she’ll seek effective ways and means to spread her gospel in other venues. Of her many “apostles” (a.k.a. Oprah’s Allstars) whom she has established over the years, it will very likely be Dr. Oz who will fill the gap and keep the bastion of false spirituality thriving on daytime TV.

Mehmet Oz is highly qualified for the job. He is a Sufi Muslim, given more to the metaphysical and experiential than to the legalism of Sharia law, which is practiced by most Muslims. His medical expertise lends credibility to his religious offerings, which reflect the Indian guru Mahesh more than Mohammed.

Oz is a national spokesperson for Transcendental Meditation, or TM, which was introduced to the U.S. in the late ’60s by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (guru to the Beatles) as The Spiritual Regeneration Movement. It was pure Hinduism packaged for the West. However, legal issues related to the introduction of religion into the schools prevented its spread until the name was changed to TM, and it was subsequently repackaged and promoted as a scientific stress reducer that employed the use of meditation.

TM is currently back in the limelight not only for millions on daytime TV but also for evangelicals. Oz and two other medical doctors have been drafted by Rick Warren to “shape up” himself and his Saddleback Community Church, as well as all the thousands of evangelical churches that partner with Saddleback. Warren’s “Daniel Plan” is an attempt to give biblical support for improving the physical welfare

of overweight and out-of-shape believers. The “Daniel” reference is to the young man described in chapter one of the book of the Old Testament that bears his name. This is one more example of the biblical illiteracy that has infected the church through marketing, seeker-friendly, and purpose-driven programs that have weaned Christians off the Word of God and have all but completely eliminated their ability to discern what’s biblical and what’s not. Daniel was hardly an overweight teenager in need of an exercise, nutritional, and meditation program but rather a godly youth whose fear was that he would defile himself before his holy God.

But that doesn’t sell today. All three doctors to whom the shepherd of Saddleback has turned his sheep over for their physical well-being feature occult meditation (See TBC Newswatch 2/11; Q&A, 3/11) in their programs under the pseudo-scientific labels of TM and the Relaxation Response (See *America, the Sorcerer’s New Apprentice*; also <http://www.saddleback.com/thedanielplan/webcast/>).

The spiritual climate of America in the 21st century is neo-pagan in general, neo-gnostic among most professing Christians, and severely lacking in biblical discernment among those who may well be true believers. We are in the throes of rampant spiritual delusion. What can be done to stem the tide? Nothing that the Bible seems to indicate. On the other hand, God has given believers marching orders for these times—orders that appear to be designed more for a rescue operation than for a reversal of widespread apostasy: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Furthermore, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). **TBC**

Quotable

God-sent ministry, heeded and bowed to, leads to enlargement and blessing; but the Spirit's testimony rejected increases the guilt of him who hardens himself against it, and makes his condition far worse than before. It is ever the case that light refused makes the darkness all the deeper. Hence the need of a tender conscience, quick to respond to every word from God.

H. A. Ironside

Q&A

QUESTION: In Genesis 44:5, did Joseph use divination? If so, was this divination godly, or was it a sin?

RESPONSE: In Genesis 44:4-5, Joseph told his servant to follow after his brothers and, upon exposing the hidden cup, to ask, "Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?" Then, in verse 15 we read, "And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? [Know] ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?"

We don't believe that Joseph was actually saying that he practiced divination. We need to remember that he had not revealed his identity to his brothers and they regarded him simply as an Egyptian official who had the power of life and death over them. Furthermore, Joseph had also manipulated events in order to "frame" his brother Benjamin. We know that Joseph led an exemplary life before the Lord during his time in Egypt. Consequently, the "frame" was something that he was doing specifically in order to serve a certain purpose. It didn't reflect the conduct of his life in anything else.

Therefore, these verses don't indicate that Joseph used occult divination at all; they merely record what Joseph told his steward to say to his brothers upon overtaking them on their journey home. From what we know of Joseph, according to the Scriptures we cannot imagine that this man who had said that "interpretations belong to God" (Gn 40:8, 41:16) could possibly engage in this occult practice.

His brothers' response is also interesting in that they give no credence to the pagan practice of divination, but instead Judah says, "What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found" (44:16).

Joseph himself says nothing further about divination, but states, "...God forbid that I

should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."

The larger question here could be "why did Joseph use deception to determine his brothers' loyalty?" After suffering treachery and deceit at the hands of his family in the past, this was an effective means of doing so. Furthermore, it wasn't done with malicious intent or secret glee for trickery's sake but rather for the purpose of proving their hearts in order to accomplish redemption and restoration. Among many other types of Christ seen in the life and trials of Joseph, his temporary "deception" of his brothers may be compared to the Lord's veiling of His identity from the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as a means of searching out their hearts and minds. And just as Joseph began to reveal himself to his brothers at a meal, Jesus revealed himself in the breaking of bread after His resurrection: "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Lk 24:30-32). Isn't it likely that the hearts of Joseph's brothers "burned within them" when he arranged them at his table in order of birth (Gn 43:33)?

QUESTION: I know that 1 Timothy 2:1 says that "...prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" But my question is: since no one can be forced to get saved without their choosing Jesus as their Savior for themselves, what does praying for the lost do? I heard one man say, "My family prayed for me to get saved for 26 years," etc., but since their prayers didn't force him to trust Christ, nor did it force God to save him against his will, what's the practical use of it, other than it being a command here from the Apostle Paul?

RESPONSE: Your question would be even more puzzling if you added the fact that God is omniscient and has known from eternity what a person will pray, how He will answer the request, and what the results will be regarding the person for whom the prayers are being offered. Although that doesn't help us to fully comprehend how prayer works, it does show us that the value of prayer is for man and not for God. What are the values? When we pray to God, we communicate with Him, and if our prayers are earnest, they involve faith: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). As we see our prayers answered, we grow in our faith and

relationship with God. The more we pray, the more we see Him at work in our lives. The more things we pray about, from the little things to the seemingly impossible things, the more we see His consideration of all aspects of our lives.

What then does that have to do with praying for someone who must, of his own free will, put his faith in Jesus? God already knows who will put their faith in Him and who will not. Prayer will not change the latter, but it will have a tremendous effect on the person who eventually comes to Christ. Ask any of those Christians who knew that believers were praying for their salvation before they were born again. Most of them will say, upon looking back, that they saw God's influence in their lives.

First Timothy 2:1 is not just "a command from the Apostle Paul," as if it were only Paul's considered opinion. In writing about the inspiration of Scripture, Peter identified Paul's writings as "Scripture" (2 Pt 3:16) and also said in 2 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Consequently, it is the Lord's directive that we pray for the lost. Paul's obedience to this command was clearly seen when he wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved" (Rom 10:1). Paul knew that though there is coming a time in which "all Israel shall be saved" (11:26), he no doubt recognized that he was unlikely to see that day in his lifetime. Nevertheless, he prayed. Paul's heart was revealed when he wrote, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:3).

Additionally, the context of the passage that you quote suggests that we not only pray for "kings, and all that are in authority" in general terms but in order to fulfill the will of God, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (v. 5). Obedience is the first "practical" fruit of prayer. (If for no other reason, it may be that prayer changes our spiritual posture as much as it changes anyone or anything else.) But as far as how prayer works as an evangelistic tool, we have little information on which to base any scientific inquiry. It is certainly not based in the inherent "power" of words or vain repetition, for that is occultism (Mt 6:7). However, we know that praying for "all men"—even for those who persecute us and despitefully use us (Mt 5:44)—is in accordance with God's will. And what greater prayer can we offer than the request that God may grant such men (and women) repentance, which is

His stated desire throughout Scripture (Jn 3:17; 2 Pt 3:9). Conversely, Satan seeks to disparage prayer and discourage its use.

So, while we are shielded from the understanding of how prayer “works” in the spiritual realm, we do know that it is a true weapon of warfare (2 Cor 10:4), as Scripture affirms: “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas 5:16b). Fortunately, the effectiveness of our prayer is not dependent on our flowery speech or persuasive words (Ex 4:10, 2 Cor 10:10) but is carried to the throne by the Holy Spirit, who “helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26).

As countless testimonies of individuals affirm—even of those who have been lost for decades and may have at one time spit in the face of God (and of those praying for their salvation)—prayer does work. And while neither prayer nor the Holy Spirit can “force” anyone to receive the truth, it is evident that they work together with the living Word of God (Eph 6:17-18, Heb 4:12) to grant opportunity for spiritual discernment and understanding to all “natural men” (1 Cor 2:14, Jas 1:23). Thus praying for others is not a form of spiritual manipulation, but an act of love, out of concern for the eternal destiny of human souls, in accordance with the will of God.

Finally, regarding the man whom you mentioned whose family had prayed for him for 26 years, God’s answers are not held to a time limit. My wife and I prayed for a relative for more than 20 years. It was only over time that the Lord’s circumstances broke down her idols, played upon her heart, and brought her to the place where she cried out to the Lord for salvation. How many of those circumstances came in answer to prayer? We can’t answer that, but we do know that the consistent message of Scripture is that we are to pray and that God answers all prayers, in His way and in His time.

QUESTION: Christ said, “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” In view of such scriptures, how can you believe in a Rapture and Resurrection at the beginning of the Great Tribulation? Doesn’t Revelation 20:4-5 teach that the “first resurrection” takes place after the Battle of Armageddon?

RESPONSE: Beware of teaching that is built on one isolated verse. What do “first resurrection” and “last day” mean? The answer can only be found in the context of all Scripture. In John 5:28-29, Jesus spoke of two resurrections:

The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the [1] resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the [2] resurrection of damnation.

Undoubtedly Revelation 20:4-5 refers to the resurrection of life. That the reference is not to the resurrection of all believers, however, but only those martyred by Antichrist during the Great Tribulation, is clearly stated: “them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark....”

Then what about Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, Spurgeon, Moody, and Christians who have died more recently, none of whom was slain by Antichrist? When are they resurrected? At the Rapture, as 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 declares, “the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air.” No mention of that in Revelation 20, so it must have already occurred—another argument for a pretrib Rapture.

The only resurrection after Revelation 20:4-5 takes place 1,000 years later and must be what Christ called “the resurrection of damnation.” Those who are raised then are still “dead in trespasses and in sins” (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13): “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books...” (Rv 20:12). This is the Great White Throne Judgment of the lost. As for Christians, they have already “appear[ed] before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10) right after the Rapture. In Revelation 19:7-9, we read of “the marriage supper of the Lamb” involving, of course, His bride, the church (Eph 5:23-32).

When and how did she get to heaven? Obviously, at the pretrib Rapture! She is clothed in fine linen, white and clean (v. 8). Next, Christ descends with “the armies which were in heaven...[also] clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (v. 14) to confront and destroy Antichrist at Armageddon. Surely the church comprises that army.

Enoch prophesied that Christ would return to this earth “with ten thousands [i.e., an innumerable company] of his saints, to execute judgment” upon Antichrist and his followers (Jude 14-15). Zechariah 14:4-5 states that when Christ comes to earth to rescue Israel and “His feet stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...all the saints” come with Him. Surely these are not disembodied spirits waiting to be resurrected! The saints who accompany

Christ from heaven (Rv 19) to reign on earth must be in their glorified bodies—and they must have been taken to heaven previously in order to descend from there with Him at Armageddon.

That this resurrection in Revelation 20 involves only “the souls of them” who were martyred by Antichrist is a clear indication that all other saints have been previously resurrected. Then why wait until after Armageddon for these martyrs to be raised?

We are told why. Some of these same souls are seen earlier:

I saw under the altar the souls of them ...slain for the word of God...and it was said unto them, that they should rest...until their fellowservants also...that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (Rv 6:9-11)

Since all Great Tribulation martyrs are resurrected together—and Antichrist kills believers to the very end—their resurrection must await the end of Armageddon. If the resurrection of believers who lived and died prior to the Tribulation took place seven years previously, why is the resurrection in Revelation 20 of those slain by Antichrist called “the first resurrection”? Clearly, it is in order to show that these martyrs are part of that company which has already been resurrected, the church. It specifically says that they “reign with him [Christ] a thousand years” (Rv 20:6) as do the saints of all ages.

What about Christ raising all believers “at the last day”? This “last day” is surely not the 24-hour period in which these martyrs are raised, for there are many more days that follow. The “last day” is a lengthy period of time called “the day of the Lord [God]” (Is 2:12; Jer 46:10; Ez 30:3; Jl 1:15, etc.) or “the day of Christ” (1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:10; 2 Thes 2:2). It “comes like a thief in the night” when men are saying “peace and safety” (1 Thes 5:2-3) and do not expect Christ to return or God’s judgment to fall but boast that “all things continue as they were from the beginning” (2 Pt 3:3-4,10).

Clearly this day cannot begin with the Millennium, for it involves God’s wrath upon mankind prior thereto. Nor can it begin “as a thief” in the midst of the Tribulation, for by Revelation 6 the world is in ruins and men are crying out to the rocks to hide them from God’s wrath. It can only start at the beginning of the Tribulation with the Rapture and resurrection. It must also last until the end of the Millennium and the destruction of the old universe, for Peter says, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away...the day of God, wherein the heavens...shall be dissolved...we...look for new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pt 3:10-13).

The Less Than Truthful "Truth Project"

T. A. McMahon

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
—John 17:17

The Truth Project (TTP) is a 12-part DVD series produced by Focus on the Family to encourage Christians in an understanding of a biblical worldview, and especially its application for their lives. Now, before anyone gets too excited (or put off) regarding the title of this article, let me say that there is much in this series that deserves praise. There are, however, some serious problems.

The first thing that blessed me as I began my 13-hour tour through the episodes was Del Tackett's exhortation to his mostly college-age students to "think!" That's not exactly a common characteristic among today's postmodern and experientially prone generation, and that includes young evangelicals whose biblical "education," for the most part, has consisted of some form of entertainment. Of course, Tackett wants them to think biblically and deeply. Amen to that!

Del Tackett is an excellent communicator. He not only has a command of his subject matter, but he also exudes an infectious passion for the Lord and for His Word. You can see that those "students" selected to participate in the program weren't just props for a well-designed production and set—it appears that they were really understanding, perhaps for the first time, some of the biblical insights that were being taught.

Many of the teachings are solidly biblical, such as the episode that addressed "The Family," which alone may be worth the price of the entire series. We couldn't agree more with Tackett's professed desire to encourage all believers to have a love for the Scriptures and to get to know the heart of God through the revelation of His Word. In view of the sad fact that there are very few quality productions that deal with apologetics and are directed at young adults, I initially wrestled with whether to raise any of the critical issues that concerned me. In other words, I didn't want to put people off regarding a series that I believe has biblical value. What finally motivated me to address what I found to be problematic teachings were two thoughts: 1) Everything in life, in every way possible, needs biblical scrutiny. If it has the support of Scripture, then we need to be encouraged to make it a *life support*. 2) A stated objective of TTP is to exhort believers to *think through all teachings*, test all theories, doctrines, and

dogmas. They encourage one to ask relevant questions, especially concerning the consequences regarding what is being taught—in particular, where is it leading or headed? That seemed to be the video's marching orders, so there should be no objections to my doing just that.

In spite of all that impressed me about The Truth Project, there were still some troubling aspects that tempered, even dampened, my enthusiasm at times. It reminded me of an ocean voyage that I took before I started graduate school. It was a terrific cruise if you could handle the seas that the North Atlantic was dishing up. I'm not easily susceptible to seasickness, so it was quite enjoyable for me. The last thing that entered my mind was whether or not the ship was on course to Southampton, England. I assumed that it was and gave it no further consideration. That memory resurfaced as I thoughtfully sailed with the "good ship Truth Project."

I wasn't too far along into the series when I realized that some of the "crew and its captain" were Calvinists. Del Tackett, according to his biography, was introduced to the Reformed faith in the late 1970s and started The New Geneva Theological Seminary as a branch of Knox Seminary in 1992. Knox Theological Seminary is a ministry of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and is a bastion of Calvinism. Tackett is now associated with Coral Ridge Ministries and does a weekly TV program for them called *Cross Examine*. One of the main contributors to TTP is R. C. Sproul, perhaps one of the most influential Calvinists of our day. Although there is no overt teaching regarding Reformed Theology, its influence is noted throughout, including quotes from *The Westminster Confession* and a powerpoint slide presentation declaring man's needs: "Grace, Regeneration, Redemption." Calvinists teach that a person must be *regenerated* by (irresistible) grace before he can *believe* and be *saved*.

Perhaps even before my concerns about Calvinism, the fact that TTP was a production of Focus on the Family bothered me. Why? I can think of no ministry that has sown the seeds of psychotherapy among evangelicals more deeply than Focus on the Family, with psychologist James Dobson. Focus on the Family has made the humanistic teachings of self-esteem and self-love the pillars of their organization. Del Tackett was president of Focus on the Family Institute during the TTP production, and his organization's self-esteem bias shows itself as he declares that God has given everyone a "hunger for significance." That selfist teaching is certainly biblical—but not in a good way. It caused the fall of

angels and mankind. Lucifer's desire to raise his "significance" level in heaven (Isaiah 14) and Eve's desire to be "as the gods" (Genesis 3) obviously indicated their "hunger for significance." Nevertheless, Tackett recognizes the errors of humanist psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. His criticism takes place in a TTP episode labeled "Anthropology." I find that odd because the issues in this episode are related specifically to *psychology*, which, curiously, is rarely mentioned in TTP. That missing topic appears less than honest, given the Focus on the Family connection.

Focus on the Family has not only been a chief promoter of psychological counseling; it is the foremost referral service among evangelicals for professional psychotherapists. Although TTP says that it desires to turn young people from the ways of the world to a biblical worldview, it seems to have intentionally avoided that "sphere" of psychology and its devastating effects upon mankind.

The prestigious *Princeton Review* reports that the number two most popular field of study for all U.S. college students (secular or Christian) is psychology. Young evangelicals, perhaps even more so, are attracted to and encouraged to choose a career in the pseudo-science of psychotherapy. Ironically, here is what Dr. James Dobson recommends: "Christian psychology is a worthy profession for a young believer, provided his faith is strong enough to withstand the humanistic concepts to which he will be exposed...." No. So-called Christian psychology is both a contradiction in terms and the chief dispenser of "self" teachings in the church (see *Psychology and the Church*, www.thebereancall.org), yet too few are warning our next generation about this incredibly destructive worldview.

There was certainly no hint of an alarm in The Truth Project! The series devotes two hour-long sessions to exposing the pseudo-science of evolution but clearly avoids the even more spiritually deceptive pseudo-science of psychological counseling.

The single-most puzzling item in TTP is the inclusion of a man who unequivocally represents a *false gospel*: Roman Catholic priest Robert Sirico. Who made *that* decision? And why is he in The "Truth" Project? Although nothing could be worse than featuring a man, under the *guise of truth*, who participates in leading one billion-plus souls *away* from the biblical truth, Sirico has some other issues. Prior to his being ordained a Paulist priest, he was a minister for the Metropolitan Community churches, a professing evangelical

movement that was developed to refute the biblical condemnation of homosexuality. In 1975, Sirico performed the first-ever civil-licensed same-sex marriage. He is now a pastor of St. Mary Catholic Church in Kalamazoo, MI, and president of Acton Institute, an organization that promotes the “coming together of faith and liberty” through “integrating Judeo-Christian Truths with Free Market Principles.” His “faith” is not *the* faith, for which Jude urged believers to contend. But such distinctions are increasingly blurred in this ecumenical age. One of Acton Institute’s board members is Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, the current president of Calvin College. Sirico seems to hold the same attraction for evangelicals as does Mormon Glenn Beck, both of whom are very vocal in their promotion of “getting America back to her Christian roots.”

Almost none of “Father” Sirico’s involvement in TTP seems to make sense (especially considering the historic anti-Catholicism of Calvinism) until one pulls back to see the direction in which the “ship” is headed. It seems to be a reprise of Christian Reconstructionism directed at this next generation of evangelicals. Reconstructionism is a Calvinist-based movement that was popularized by Rousas Rushdoony, Gary North, Greg Bahnsen, and Gary DeMar. Also known as Theonomy, it proposes social and civil governments that are based strictly upon the Laws of God in the Old and New Testaments.

Reconstructionists believe that through the application of God’s Laws the earth will be transformed and the Kingdom of God ushered in. Del Tackett preaches that concept in subtle and not-so-subtle ways throughout the series. There’s little doubt that he is attempting to emulate John Calvin’s vision for the city of Geneva, which Calvin hoped would be a utopia of Christian principles worked out in daily life. That may be the reason Tackett called the seminary that he founded The New Geneva. He is currently on its Board of Directors and a faculty member. Calvin’s “biblical Law” experiment in Geneva, however, became so legalistic that he was referred to as “the Protestant Pope.”

Calvin’s historic failure to apply the Law didn’t seem to dissuade Tackett in The Truth Project. For example, he turns to the Fourth Commandment as a principle for New Testament Christians to incorporate into their lives regarding what he calls “The Sphere of Labor.” Although the commandment is directed at the Israelites, instructing them to “remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” Tackett presents it as a principle meant for believers, especially

regarding their attitude toward work. This is Theonomy, as well as being a misapplication of the Scriptures. Nine of the 10 Commandments involve moral issues (do not steal, lie, murder, etc.) that are written upon the conscience of man; the Fourth Commandment is not. It is a separation law written for and to be obeyed exclusively by the Israelites (Exodus 16:29; 31:14-16; Deuteronomy 5:15, etc.). We can certainly appreciate Tackett’s application of New Testament instructions for the believer today, but attempting to apply the Laws of Moses could constitute legalism, as well as leading to “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6-7).

Reconstructionism is never mentioned, but The Truth Project’s suggested reading material list is loaded with Amillennialists/Calvinists such as Abraham Kuyper and A.W. Pink, some key Reconstructionist figures such as Rushdoony and DeMar, and Coalition On Revival enthusiast Gary Amos, among others. Reconstructionists are Calvinists, and many, if not most are amillennialists and preterists (with some notable exceptions).

This means they believe that the church and the world are now in the Millennium and that nearly all the prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled. That may be why prophecy is nowhere to be found in The Truth Project, which is a huge loss for the hope of developing a confident biblical worldview. Fulfilled prophecy is the best apologetic for proving that the Word of God is of supernatural origin and that we can turn to it with great assurance. It also indicates what lies ahead for the church and the world. Simply and clearly, Scripture foretells that the imminent Rapture of the church, the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming, the Millennial Reign of Christ, the Dissolving of Our Present Heavens and Earth, and the Creating of a New Heaven and New Earth, will all take place, in that order. (see *Temporal Delusion*, www.thebereancall.org)

The reason that this isn’t presented in TTP no doubt has to do with its eschatological perspective. The above prophetic biblical scenario does not fit with amillennialism (or postmillennialism) or any of the other attempts to “transform our culture,” “restore our nation,” or “fix the world’s temporal economic, social, health, injustice, ecological, and other problems.” All of this contributes to a temporal delusion, which is simply not biblical. The “worldview” of Scripture is not *global transformation*, a term used throughout TTP—not, that is, until the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Even then, it will not be a perfect society because the Bible tells us that it will end with the rebellion of those who went along with the laws and principles

of Christ’s rule but who never committed their hearts and minds to Him.

Tackett chides those who have a “why polish the brass on a sinking ship?” mentality. He seems to be referring to Christians who have abandoned their biblical responsibilities because of an erroneous interpretation of Scripture. We would also take issue with those who think like that, if it indeed characterizes their attitude. The true scriptural view is that the events presented above will literally take place and need to be considered in regard to any plans or agendas of men or ministries. We should not expect worldwide revival when the Bible indicates that the Last Days will be characterized by great spiritual deception in the world and apostasy in the church. Does that mean that we bail out on the world? No. But there is no scriptural basis for believing that the world will be or can be *transformed* through biblical law or biblical principles. To truly believe that, one would have to literally excise the Book of Revelation from Holy Writ, along with hundreds of other scriptures.

We believe that the mandate for believers in our day is a rescue operation of individual lost souls, not a program of collective global transformation. True believers certainly need to reflect the teachings and love of Christ in every aspect of their lives, but they are to do so first and foremost to please the One who saved them. It may be that some will turn to Christ because of a believer’s steadfastness and fruitfulness in the faith, but that will be the *exception* in this rebellious world, as biblical prophecy clearly indicates. The message of the gospel will never be popular in the world because “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness....unto the Jews [it is] a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness....” (1 Corinthians 1:18,23). Furthermore, rather than drawing the multitudes to Christ by example, Scripture states, “...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus declared, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18-19).

In summary, The Truth Project, in our view, is akin to a troop support ship with a mixture of supplies aboard that need to be carefully scrutinized. More importantly, if the ship’s compass is off even a few degrees, the vessel will not reach its intended port. TTP has some excellent content along with some erroneous teachings, but its “intended port” of transforming the world is not on the course set by the Scriptures. **TBC**

Quotable

The vigor of our Spiritual Life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts. I solemnly state this from experience of fifty-four years.

The first three years after conversion I neglected the Word of God. Since I began to search it diligently the blessing has been wonderful. I have read the Bible through one hundred times, and always with increasing delight. Each time it seems like a new book to me. Great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God.

George Müller

Q&A

QUESTION: You have criticized preterism and amillennial teaching as being unbiblical, but teachers such as R. C. Sproul present what clearly are reasoned conclusions for their positions. What do you say?

RESPONSE: Some believers insist that most Bible prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 at the destruction of the Temple. Yet we must ask, When was Jerusalem surrounded by the armies of all nations? When did Christ's feet touch the Mount of Olives? When did He begin to reign over the world from Jerusalem? Did those who had pierced Him look upon and recognize Him as their Messiah; weep and mourn and believe on Him? Was Israel established in AD 70 in her land, never to be removed again? Can we seriously believe that Zechariah 12, 13, 14; Jeremiah 30:6-12, 31:27-40, 32:37-44; Ezekiel 37-40, and scores of other like prophecies, were all fulfilled in AD 70? And if not, how and by what authority can we apply such prophecies to the church?

Yes, there are a growing number of those who promote preterism or amillennialism, and whether they are Calvinists, Charismatics, or something else, they share common beliefs that are worthy of concern.

The late Bishop Earl Paulk called the Rapture an escape theory. He said that those who bless Israel are manifesting an anti-Christ spirit. He also said that the church is Israel and that Israel has no further place in God's plan. Many still say the same thing. Paulk also taught that we are "little gods" and that Jesus Christ cannot return until we rise to the full stature of our godhood, take over this world, and establish His kingdom for Him. Some details may differ, but this is dominionism, i.e., only when Christians take dominion over the earth can Christ return—not to rapture us home to heaven

but to rule over the kingdom that we have established for Him. With this idea, the reign of Christ during the 1,000-year millennium is denied, though this period of time is specifically stated twice in Revelation 20 (vv. 2,7). According to explicit statements in the Old Testament, during the Millennium, Earth will experience worldwide peace such as has never been seen before (Is 2:4; Joel 3:10; Mic 4:3).

Do we really believe that AD 70 saw the greatest tribulation in the history of the world—even greater than the slaughter of Jews and Christians under Hitler, Stalin, Mao ("nor ever shall be" - Mt. 24:21); that Christ came visibly like lightning flashing across the sky (v. 27), that the sun was darkened and the moon didn't give her light, that "the sign of the Son of man" appeared in heaven, that He sent His angels to "gather together his elect from the four winds" (vv. 29-31), etc.? Are we in the Millennium now? Is Satan bound? Is Christ the King now ruling over the earth and turning the world into a paradise? *None* of these things can be said to have taken place unless these scriptures are spiritualized.

As the old hymn goes, "tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His word, just to rest upon His promise, just to know thus saith the Lord."

QUESTION: I have a Christian friend who studies philosophy to attempt to pick out the flaws of atheism and all general non-Christian philosophy. He says that an ounce of philosophy is worth a pound of exegesis. He said that he's trying to stay in the realm of philosophy, since that's where the atheists' argument remains. He's also questioning his own existence (after reading Kant), believes that the physical world doesn't exist (and that what we perceive as "God's creation" is a sort of "thought projection" from God), that we are born a blank slate with no innate knowledge of the divine (also called *tabula rasa*), that General Revelation might not exist. I've given him [many verses] from the Bible that reject *all* of these ideas, but he says that Scripture is moot if one is attempting to stay within pure philosophy and pure reason. I've even quoted Colossians 2:8 to him, but to no apparent avail. What do you suggest?

RESPONSE: We strongly suggest prayer for your "Christian" friend. Only the Holy Spirit can deliver him from his being seduced by intellectualism. "Philosophers," whether "Christian" or otherwise, cannot provide final answers. They *absolutely* insist that there are no absolutes, that it is *true* there is no *truth*, and they are *certain* that there are no *certainties*. As you pointed out, Paul warned in Colossians 2:8 to let no one take

us captive through "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Your friend has failed to heed the inspired warning and has been taken captive.

The Adversary loves to have us enter the arena of philosophy, knowing, after thousands of years of experience, that when we move away from the certainty of God's Word we are absolutely vulnerable. Was not Satan's question to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" Yes, He has said—and we must not forget that truth!

In short, it's futile to seek to persuade others through philosophy. It's rather like being challenged to a wrestling match with the provision that our "arms and legs be tied." It's no wonder that too many are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph 4:14). The Lord declared regarding His Word, "it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Is 55:11). That is our assurance. With your friend's captivity, he is turning to the foolishness of men rather than the wisdom of God. We suggest that he read Dave Hunt's latest book, *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*, for a reasoned approach.

In Acts 17, Paul went to the Areopagus to speak to the "philosophers of the Epicurians, and of the Stoics" (Acts 17:18). These philosophers spent their "time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (v. 21). Without the intervention of Paul, who spoke of the absolute Word of God, the descendants of those philosophers would still be sitting there, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tm 3:7). Yet although "some mocked...others said, We will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17:32).

QUESTION: If not *The Secret*, then what books do you recommend to get people out of their self-fulfilling prophecy for a mediocre life? I mean I hear people all the time say "they can't do this or that." Please let me know of any tools I could use.

RESPONSE: *The Secret* is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible. Moreover, we're concerned that your goal seems to be getting "people out of their self-fulfilling prophecy for a mediocre life." As Christians, we are called to an "objective" life, not a "subjective" one.

David wrote, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Ps 63:1).

An objective focus is consistent

throughout Scripture: “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:1-2). We run this “race” looking unto Jesus, not at ourselves.

In short, when we live our lives focused upon “self,” it is not surprising that we conclude we “can’t do this or can’t do that.” Consider the contrast with Paul’s assurance that “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil 4:13). The difference is, he wasn’t focused on self, his was an objective faith.

This world has turned the biblical model upside down. We are told to seek after experiences. Not so. We are told in the Bible to *seek God*. In Acts 3, Peter and John weren’t seeking an experience when they went down to the temple at “the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1). They were seeking God in prayer. Along the way, however, they had an experience with a “certain man lame from his mother’s womb.” Before the Holy Spirit-directed series of events was finished (including their confrontation with the religious leaders), more souls were added to the church (Acts 4:4).

Even those who opposed them were affected: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it” (Acts 4:13-14).

Regarding other books than the Bible, William MacDonald’s little book *True Discipleship* has proven to be an encouragement to many, as has Dave Hunt’s *Seeking and Finding God*. (www.theberean.org)

QUESTION: If unbelievers do not have the Holy Spirit, how do they get answers from God? Are they not separated from God, as Romans says? How do they go to the throne of grace with their petitions? Please explain, because I had always learned that the only prayer an unsaved person could make was one related to salvation, yet in 1 Kings 8:39, God is talking to Israel and to pagans as well.

RESPONSE: Unbelievers have no access to God to have their “petitions” fulfilled by Him. Furthermore, rarely would they turn to Him (in whom they don’t believe) unless they were in a life or death situation in which only a miracle would help them. As

you point out, the only prayer the unsaved can make is a prayer of repentance. Man is separated from God by his sin, it is not surprising that some pray to Mary, the “saints,” or other deities. Even the religious counselors of King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged, “There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king’s matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh” (Dn 2:10-11).

On the other hand, God does intervene in the life of an unbeliever for His own sovereign purpose, to draw someone whom He knows will repent and come to Him, and in answer to the intercessory prayers of believers praying specifically for the salvation of unbelievers. In Scripture we see examples of individuals such as Hagar, weeping over her inability to protect the life of her son Ishmael (Gn 21:14-19), though previously God had already heard and responded to her “affliction” (Gn 16:11). God had not only protected him (21:19-21), but God blessed Ishmael exceedingly (Gn 16:10-11).

The people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah with the hope that Nineveh might be spared (Jon 3:5-10). God, in his mercy, did not destroy the city of Nineveh as He had threatened. The people of Nineveh may not have approached God as the Scriptures demanded, but they did know what repentance was.

In 1 Kings 8:38-39 we read, “What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men).”

Solomon is interceding for Israel and acknowledges the necessity of “knowing the affliction of his own heart...” Consequently, we see examples such as Cornelius the Roman centurion who met the Lord in Acts 10:4: “And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.”

In 1 Peter 3:12, Peter writes, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”

Again, the testimony in Scripture is

clear, as in Psalm 34:17-18: “The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”

The mercy of God is such that in Psalm 51:17, we also see, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

QUESTION: Help me to understand 1 Samuel chapter 28. This chapter disturbs me greatly, and I have found no one who can explain it. How can someone living communicate with someone dead? If this is possible, why aren’t we doing it now? I am sure many others could benefit from your position on this. Thank you for your help.

RESPONSE: The Bible forbids communication with the dead (necromancy). Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9-12, 15; 1 Samuel 28; 1 Chronicles 10:13-14; Isaiah 8:19 are some of the scriptures that may be cited.

The passage in Isaiah is quite to the point regarding communication with the dead: “And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Is 8:19-20).

First Samuel 28 is a special case. Saul was the king of Israel, and he had violated the Law by seeking out a spirit medium to conjure up Samuel. The woman complied, and, instead of a deceiving spirit (demon), she was startled to see Samuel actually appear (1 Sm 28:12). That it was Samuel is beyond question, for the inspired writer of Scripture specifically calls him “Samuel” five times. Furthermore, the prophecy given by Samuel is spoken as the word of the Lord (vv. 16-19).

Samuel also specifically tells of Saul’s upcoming judgment and death (1 Sm 28:19), no doubt for his necromancy as well as his other acts of disobedience. There is no encouragement in this verse to engage in communication with the dead. Indeed, this passage stands as a severe warning against this practice.

If someone needs communication with someone wiser than himself, should he not consider the biblical promise of our Lord? James tells us that “if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not...” (Jas 1:5). The writer to the Hebrews urges us to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

Is Your Eschatology Showing?

T.A. McMahon

When I became a believer, the most popular Christian book of the day was *The Late Great Planet Earth*, written by Hal Lindsey. It stimulated a great deal of interest in biblical prophecy and, in particular, in the doctrine of the Rapture of the church. Prophecy and the Rapture were two theological concepts that were foreign to someone like me, who had been raised in the Roman Catholic Church. I couldn't figure out what either one of them was about or what they had to do with Christianity.

As I grew in my understanding of the Scriptures, however, I began to get very excited about both doctrines. The idea that Jesus could be coming back at any time to take me to heaven to be with Him was indeed a blessed hope (Titus 2:12-13). Yet only a few years later I noticed that some of my evangelical friends (and just Christians in general) didn't share my excitement—or at least the interest in it seemed to be on the wane.

Enthusiasm appeared to be fading into a blasé attitude regarding the imminent return of Jesus for His bride. Great expectation wilted to a posture of semi-confusion: "He *could be* returning prior to the Great Tribulation," or "He *may* come back for us midway through the Tribulation," or "*perhaps* at the end of the Tribulation." To keep it from becoming a debate issue among evangelicals, some called themselves "pan-tribbers," meaning pre-trib, mid-trib, post-trib—whatever panned out would be fine with them.

A number of things contributed to that attitude. It was recognized that the timing of the Rapture was not a doctrine that was essential for salvation, nor was a belief in it critical. It would take place for those who were truly born again—*whether or not they believed* that it would, and *no matter when* they believed it would take place. Thus the feeling among many grew that it was no big deal what one believed.

Some were also intimidated by the rise of anti-Rapture teachers, who were quite militant and aggressive in their attempts to prove that the doctrine wasn't in the Bible or even that it was heretical. The problem with these objections is that they reflect the thinking of men rather than the teaching of God, something that is always a recipe for serious problems (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). This also raises a question (which for most

evangelicals didn't seem relevant 30 years ago but today begs an answer) that is quite significant: *Is your eschatology showing?*

Eschatology is the study of what the Bible teaches about the End Times. It considers the events that *will take place* related to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: *what will precede* His return, *what will happen* during His return, and *what takes place following His coming back to earth*. Obviously, since He hasn't returned yet (though some would dispute that), all of the related teachings make up biblical prophecy. So, eschatology has to do with what the Scriptures teach *prophetically* about the Last Days.

What, then, do I mean by asking, "Is your eschatology showing?"

Scripture tells us that the just (i.e., justified believers) shall live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38). This means that what we believe *must be lived out* in order for our lives to be fruitful and pleasing to the Lord. If our understanding of what the Word of God says will take place in the future is not true to the Scriptures, our activities based upon that misunderstanding will be unfruitful and even spiritually destructive. I have given some reasons above why people avoid eschatological issues, to which I could add that some regard them as *too far in the future* to be of any practical concern or value in their lifetime. That's never been the case, and the practical realities of eschatological beliefs are becoming more evident every day.

The most prevalent eschatological teachings in church history are Premillennialism and Amillennialism. Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus Christ will return to earth in an event known as the Second Coming, which will be at the beginning of His thousand-year reign from Jerusalem. Then there is Amillennialism. Amillennialists do not believe in a literal thousand-year reign of Jesus on the earth; rather, He is said to have taken dominion over the earth right after His resurrection and now rules from heaven.

A somewhat related view is that of Post-millennialism, which declares that Christ's Second Coming will take place following His *figurative* millennial reign from heaven.

Is the eschatological view of Amillennialism showing? Yes, and it has been for millennia, starting back in the fourth century. Augustine, the chief architect of the major dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church, is credited with introducing Amillennialism in his book *The City of God*.

To maintain some semblance of biblical

veracity, Amillennialists must spiritualize nearly all of the prophetic scriptures related to Israel and the Millennium because a literal interpretation completely contradicts their eschatology. Spiritualizing is a process of interpretation that disregards the plain sense of the text in order to ascertain a "higher" meaning, especially one that reinforces one's doctrinal bias. That approach to interpreting the Word of God, however, has had terribly destructive consequences. For example, the prophetic scriptures that refer to Israel have been spiritualized by Amillennialists to apply to the church. That false doctrine is known as *replacement theology*, although in replacing Israel with the church, those who teach such things major on the blessings and rarely if ever apply to the church the curses directed at Israel.

Roman Catholicism started the Amillennial ball rolling, and it was continued by the Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, with the difference, of course, being their belief that the Protestant church rather than the Church of Rome had replaced Israel. Among its other problems, replacement theology has been instrumental in sowing the seeds of anti-Semitism within Christendom. The Catholic Church published more than 100 anti-Semitic documents between the sixth and twentieth centuries (see *A Woman Rides the Beast* by Dave Hunt).

Luther, in particular, exemplified anti-Semitism among the reformers. The vicious diatribes in his writings such as *On the Jews and Their Lies*, although not based solely on his Amillennialism, were certainly dependent on it.

Calvin's Amillennialism was the basis for his attempt to create a Christian utopia in the city of Geneva, which he controlled. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Amillennialism was the breeding ground for Preterism. During the counter-reformation, Jesuit priest Luis de Alcasar interpreted the prophecies of the Book of Revelation as having already been fulfilled in the first century A.D. It wasn't until the early eighteenth century, however, that Preterism, the belief that most, if not all, biblical prophecies have been fulfilled, began to be espoused by Protestants.

That, of course, was then—but what about today? Amillennialism is the most common eschatological belief among professing Christians. It is the view of Roman Catholics, Greek and Russian Orthodox churches, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Episcopalians, the Church of Christ, some Independent Baptists, and most Calvinists (with some notable exceptions). In the last quarter-century

Amillennialism has spawned Christian Reconstructionism/Theonomy, a latter-day attempt similar to Calvin's failed experiment to set up the "City of God" in Geneva.

The goal today, however, is far more ambitious as it seeks to take dominion over the world. The Reconstructionists, a.k.a. Theonomists, are all about setting up the Kingdom of God on earth through the implementation of the Old and New Testament laws and principles. An offshoot of Reconstructionism is the Coalition On Revival, or COR. This is a movement that made some headway in the decade of the '90s through the support of leading evangelicals and through the political activism of the religious right.

Its strategy is to make the Christian worldview dominant in all "spheres of society": education, science, politics, the arts, the military, and so forth. As the name more than implies, the eschatology of COR, or Coalition on Revival, is focused on bringing about worldwide revival, something that most Christians would find favorable. That may be the reason that some highly visible evangelical leaders who do not hold to an Amillennial theology—or its offspring—signed the original COR Manifesto. As one might expect, the Coalition On Revival is decidedly anti-Prophecy and anti-Rapture. The biblical doctrines of Prophecy and the Rapture do not support the agendas or goals of the Amillennial-driven COR proponents.

Though Christian Reconstructionism and the Coalition On Revival seem to be past their heyday of influence within Christendom, they are regarded by some as nothing more than a passing trend. I disagree. Trends such as the Manifest Sons of God, the Shepherding Movement, the Word/Faith teachings, the Church Growth trend, the Emerging Church Movement, and so on and so forth, come in waves much like an ocean wave, which approaches the beach, crests, and then crashes upon the sand, dumping whatever debris it carries. What's deposited by the wave sometimes sticks in the sand, while other flotsam disappears back out to sea. That's the way it is with unbiblical teachings and trends that have attracted large numbers of Christians throughout church history.

The Kingdom-dominionism of the Latter-rain, Manifest Sons of God movement that I mentioned earlier is a classic example. It started in Canada in the mid-1940s, and has ebbed and flowed throughout Christendom, particularly among Pentecostals and Charismatics. You can see its heretical teachings reflected today in

so-called spiritual revivals and movements such as the Toronto Blessing, the Brownsville Revival, the Kansas City Prophets, the International House of Prayer (IHOP), and the New Apostolic Reformation.

Christian Reconstructionism influences and Coalition On Revival concepts are also making a modest yet effective return. There is a high-quality apologetics series produced by Focus on the Family titled *The Truth Project* (see TBC 9/11) that has been capturing the hearts and minds of young-adult evangelicals throughout the country. Significant doctrinal problems arise, however, because a major "scriptural worldview" of the series, albeit unstated, is Amillennialism. Some of the key teachers are Calvinists. Reconstructionism is never mentioned; nevertheless, the central teachings of Reconstructionism and Theonomy are apparent.

Scripture clearly rejects Amillennialism. The Bible foretells that the imminent Rapture of the church, the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming, the Millennial Reign of Christ, the Dissolving of Our Present Heavens and Earth, and the Creating of a New Heaven and New Earth, will all take place, in that order. That prophetic biblical scenario, however, does not fit with Amillennialism (or Postmillennialism) or any of the other attempts to usher in the Kingdom of God (See *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* by Dave Hunt).

The true scriptural view is that the biblical events that I just listed will literally take place and need to be considered in regard to any plans or agendas of men or ministries. We should *not expect worldwide revival* or a global Christian transformation—not, that is, until the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ, because the Bible declares that the Last Days will be characterized by great spiritual deception in the world and apostasy in the church. Does that mean that we should bail out on the world? No. But there is no scriptural basis for believing that the world will be or can be *transformed* through biblical law or biblical principles.

It should be apparent that one's Amillennial beliefs have practical consequences for anyone who lives those doctrines out in his life. However, the same is true for those who claim to be *Premillennialists*, who believe that Jesus must return in order to begin His literal one-thousand-year reign on this earth.

What does the Bible say regarding the living out of a Premillennial eschatology? First of all, the doctrine is characterized primarily as a believer's "blessed hope": "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our

Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13). Verse 12 indicates what our lives should be like as we are "looking for that blessed hope": "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," John, the beloved, and likely the last of the apostles to go to be with Jesus, gives us this exhortation, which no doubt he himself lived out: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him *purifieth himself*, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). And in Luke 6:46, Jesus posed this question: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" We need to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, once and for all delivered unto the saints.

Paul wasn't simply passing on some platitudes or a take-it-or-leave-it suggestion to young Timothy when he wrote, "But thou, O man of God, flee [sinful] things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God...that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 6:11-14).

Our lives need to reflect what Paul wrote as we look forward to Christ's appearing. To that John adds, "...abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). Peter not only wraps it up for us, he mentions the difficulties involved and then underscores where our hearts need to be as we look forward to an event that will be more exciting than anyone of us can imagine. He declares, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:6-9).

I hope and pray that our true biblical eschatology is showing. *Maranatha!* TBC

Quotable

Second Corinthians 5:10 assures us, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Do you really believe as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ that there will be a day on which you will stand before His throne? We will each go one-on-one with the God of this universe. Can you imagine that? Do you think it will matter on that day whether you told a very lost and dying world about the only answer for a soul—Jesus? Yes, it will. It will matter whether you shared the most precious thing you have with everyone you could.

Mark Cahill, One Thing You Can't Do in Heaven

Q&A

Question: I just read about how Governor Perry's prayer meeting got started. [I had never] heard of the New Apostolic Reformation [NAR] but for the last two years, I have seen and felt the need for Christians to pray for the “church” to come to repentance....I do not see or hear any other “Christian Leaders” or shall I say, “Berean” leaders, taking the stand or sounding the trumpet in Zion. I was blessed by seeing such a diverse group of people coming together to call upon the mighty Name of our Almighty God, humbling themselves, fasting, repenting, praying, asking God to have mercy on our nation. If there was ever a time in history that Christians should be coming together and calling on God to have mercy upon us, it is now!

RESPONSE: We couldn't agree more regarding the need to pray for the church and for God's mercy upon our country, especially as we see the church drifting away from the Scriptures and our country turning against the God of the Bible and His truth. However, our prayers will be futile at best if we are praying for something that is opposed to God's will, or with those whose objective is contrary to what the Bible teaches.

Governor Perry of Texas is, wittingly or unwittingly, participating in prayer with those who have a false biblical eschatology. The New Apostolic Reformation preaches dominionism. They believe that Christians must take control and establish dominion over this world before Jesus can return to this earth. It may be that Perry is ignorant of the NAR objectives and thought it good to pray for the well-being of our country with those whom he considers Christians, or his involvement may have been a political move to garner Christian

votes. We doubt that he's a part of the NAR movement, but we don't know.

Much of what passes for prayer these days is an attempt to get God to do man's will and meet what many Christians believe constitutes success. More often than not the criteria is pragmatic and usually quantified in terms of numbers. That's not the biblical way: for 120 years, Noah *prayed, preached, and warned of coming judgment*, though in the end only eight people took shelter in the ark. According to Scripture, we are to preach the gospel of God's grace and bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ.

More than 50 years ago, A.W. Tozer wrote, “Pragmatism Goes to Church,” in which he sarcastically stated, “It is useless to plead for the human soul, to insist that what a man can *do* is less important than what he *is*. When there are wars to be won, forests to be cleared, rivers to be harnessed, factories to be built, planets to be visited, the quieter claims of the human spirit are likely to go unregarded. The spectacular drama of successful deeds leaves the beholder breathless. Deeds you can see. Factories, cities, highways, rockets are there in plain sight, and they got there by the practical application of means to ends. So who cares about ideals and character and morals? These things are for poets, nice old ladies and philosophers. Let's get on with the job.”

You ask, where are the legitimate ministries (Berean leaders) who are taking a stand for the Lord? They are individuals who are seeded throughout society. The Christian principles that influenced the founding of this nation did not come via “Christian activism” such as we're seeing today. On the contrary, it was the preaching of the gospel by Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, the Wesleys, and others, that was used by the Lord to redeem men and women, whose transformed lives impacted society in the Great Awakening.

Should a Christian participate in politics? As citizens of this nation, we can affect its course to a certain extent by prayerfully voting for the best candidate we can. As citizens of heaven, we realize that the only real hope for our nation lies with our Lord. We may become partakers of a politician's deeds because of the effect that his decisions and actions will have on our country. When a nation falls into captivity due to its evil behavior, all inhabitants are certainly affected (Mt 5:45). Our responsibility is to “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (2 Tm 4:2).

QUESTION: I have wondered about the “Queen of Heaven” (Jeremiah 44) that the people of Judah were burning incense to.

Who was this “Queen” they were venerating? I wonder if they were putting her ahead of God? [TBC: Attached to this question was an article from a Catholic apologist disavowing any connection to Mary as the Queen of Heaven.]

RESPONSE: Catholic apologists point out that the Jews (Jer 44) were *worshipping* a pagan goddess, while the Catholic catechism speaks of only *venerating* Mary. Yet the veneration of Mary, according to the Catholic Church, is termed *hyperdulia*. It is a special veneration of Mary as the holiest of creatures (merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hyperdulia). Catholic apologists will insist that no worship of Mary is performed, though millions of Catholics believe the apparition of Mary at Fatima who promised, “The soul which recommends itself to Me by the recitation of the Rosary, shall not perish” (Number 5 of “The 15 Promises of Our Lady to Christians Who Recite the Rosary,” *Our Lady of Fatima Online*). Consequently, millions of Catholics are simultaneously praying to and venerating Mary, something that should only be accorded to deity.

Ignoring this, following the May 13, 1981, assassination attempt, Pope John Paul II was not praying to God or calling on the name of Jesus during the ambulance ride. Instead, he repeated over and over, “Mary, my mother!” (James McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome*, pp. 181-84; 199-200).

Though not “official” Catholic doctrine, the Vatican declared Alfonsus de Liguori (1696-1787) a “saint” and a “doctor of the Church.” This founder of the Marianist movement and author of *The Glories of Mary* declared that there is no salvation outside of Mary (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, p. 87). Catholic apologists would say that his views are extreme and not representative of Catholic Church teaching, yet Pope Pius IX said, “Our salvation is based upon the holy Virgin...so that if there is any hope and spiritual healing for us, we receive it solely and uniquely from her” (“The Encyclical of February 2, 1849,” cited in Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 1, page 196).

Although many Catholic apologists deny that Mary is treated as deity, the Catholic catechism states, “God has exalted Mary in heavenly glory as Queen of Heaven and earth” (Catechism 966). “She is to be praised with special devotion” (Catechism 971, 2675).

We have reported on the move to make Mary “Co-Redemptrix” with Christ. The latest figures we have seen cite 550 bishops, 43 cardinals, and nearly 7 million ordinary faithful from 157 countries in 6 continents who have signed petitions urging the pope to proclaim, as the Fifth Marian dogma, Mary

as “Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate.” (<http://www.all-about-the-virgin-mary.com/coredemptrix.html>). Though saying that this position is not equal with deity, they nevertheless admit that “Coredemptrix, therefore, literally means ‘the woman who buys back with,’” clearly assigning Mary a role in redemption beyond simply being the mother of the earthly Jesus (Ibid.). This echoes the Douay (Catholic version of the Bible) translation of Genesis 3:15, which reads, “I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: *she* shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for *her* heel.”

It is instructive to consider the response of Jesus when someone exalted His earthly mother. Jesus replied, “Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (Lk 11:28).

QUESTION: You and your people are by no means Bereans. You have taken away very important truths of the Bible and have replaced them with falsities. Let me point out that “faith without works is dead.” A dead faith will get you nothing from the Lord. God is the “God of the living and not the dead.” Eternal life is a gift but requirements must be met, such as: “Keep my commandments and live, saith the Lord.” This is a requirement. Not by faith alone is one saved but by keeping God’s commandments. Grace is given to the obedient, not the rebellious. We must “work to show ourselves to be approved” just as Scripture says....The Bereans knew the Scriptures. You teach that faith is all one needs. Nowhere in the Bible is this taught....I hope this has helped you to see the light!

RESPONSE: We have addressed the question of “faith vs. works” on a number of occasions in past issues (see June 2010 *TBC*). That a person can only be saved by faith and not by works is both biblical and logical. Scripture tells us that all have sinned and that the penalty for sin is eternal separation from God. Consequently, there are no works that a person can do in order to pay the debt of that never-ending penalty. Only Jesus, who is God and the perfect Man, could—and did—pay the eternal penalty for everyone. The only way to receive the forgiveness of one’s sins and Christ’s gift of eternal life is by faith alone.

Some of the remarks in your letter clearly show that the biblical concept of “grace” is simply not understood. “Grace” has been

defined as “unmerited favor,” but what does this mean? The testimony of Scripture is unanimous in stating that nothing that involves “work” will “earn” you salvation.

Yet, you say, “requirements must be met.... Not by faith alone is one saved but by keeping God’s commandments.” What *are* the commandments? The Lord gave many more than the 10 Commandments. Jesus spoke of “new commandments.” How do you know you’ve kept *all* the “requirements?”

In blessed contrast, when the disciples asked, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”, Jesus replied, “This is the work of God, that *ye believe* on him whom he hath sent.”

Again, the Scriptures unanimously present the same message of the grace of God. Going back to the passage in Numbers 21 concerning anyone bitten by “the serpent,” we find that “whosoever” looked at the serpent on the pole was saved.

The Israelites who died when bitten by the serpent were receiving the just punishment for their sin. There was nothing a person could do—no anti-venom he could concoct, no tourniquet he could apply, which might otherwise save him. God, in “grace,” however, provided a remedy. Moses was told to cast a brass serpent and place it upon a pole that anyone who was bitten, when “he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (Num 21:9).

The Lord Jesus utilizes this historical example and likens Himself to the Serpent on the pole, saying that “whosoever” *believes* will be saved (Jn 3:14-15). Other than to believe, where, indeed, is “our part” in the agreement? What do the Scriptures say? “But to him that worketh not...” (Rom 4:5). “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...” (Ti 3:5). Three verses later, Paul instructs Titus to be careful to “maintain good works. These... are good and profitable to *men*” [our emphasis].

James 2:14-26 doesn’t say “not by faith alone, but by works also.” On the contrary, it says that works should *follow* faith: “I will show thee my faith by my works” (Jas 2:18). Faith in the grace of God must come first. This agrees with Ephesians 2:10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*” [our emphasis.] If we are truly saved by faith, there should be visible works showing that our salvation is real. Otherwise, “faith without works is dead also” (Jas 2:26).

We would strongly urge you to go back over the Scriptures that you have taken out of context and see how the “light” you believe to present is in reality a turning away from the grace of God.

QUESTION: The “Christian Identity” movement is huge in the United States. It’s a “conservative” sway away from Scripture. They are using Scripture to say that the 10 “lost” tribes of Israel are the “Aryan race,” though they don’t use those words. They also state that racism is acceptable. Could you please discuss this?

RESPONSE: The idea that Jews are not “Jews” but are actually descendants of Russian Khazars was answered in the November 1992 and May 1996 issues of the newsletter.

Groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the neo-Nazis, and individuals like Timothy McVeigh and the Atlanta Olympics bomber, Eric Rudolph, share some common ideas that reflect the small but growing influence from so-called Christian Identity. The movement, or “Identity,” as it is known, has no central doctrine, though a fundamental belief is that Europeans are the true descendants of the Hebrews of the Bible. This parallels the teaching of British Israelism.

Elements of Dominion theology (see *TBC* 2/87, 3/87) parallel teachings of Christian Identity. Kingdom/dominion or “reconstructionism” can be traced back several centuries, but its recent promotion comes from the Latter Rain, or Manifest Sons, movement that began in 1948 in Canada. Its relationship to the “positive-confession” and “discipleship” movements is clearly established. By teaching that we can get whatever we confess, it’s a short step to confessing healing and immortality and peace and prosperity and salvation for the world. This is, in fact, where the name “Manifest Sons” comes from: the last-days overcomers must manifest total victory over all foes in these bodies without a resurrection, even over death.

Christian Identity “has concocted a bizarre theological infrastructure to support a militant anti-semitic white supremacism.... According to the Christian Identity [teaching], Adam was the progenitor of the white race; only members of the white race have a spirit: members of the lower non-white races are the ‘beasts of the field’ of Genesis 1:24 and they only have a body and soul but no spirit” (Schultz, “A Review of Soldiers of God: White Supremacists and Their Holy War for America,” August 1, 2003, <http://vantilttool.blogspot.com/2005/06/christian-identity-its-beliefs-are.html>). In stark contrast, the Lord says: “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever” (Jer 31:35-36).

God's Plan for the Clueless A personal testimony

T.A. McMahon

When I speak to young Christian adults, whether they are in the workplace or in college, a message that I hope encourages them concerns God's willingness to guide their lives if that is their desire. I use His involvement in my own life throughout my 67 years as an example. The following is an abridged version of God's gracious guidance, much of it well before I came to know Him personally.

I was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and baptized Thomas Aloysius McMahon in the Roman Catholic Church. In my early grade-school years, my family moved to Apple Creek, Ohio, where my dad was a psychiatrist at the state mental health facility. Our home was on the 2,000-acre grounds of the institution. That aspect of my background came to light during the times when Dave Hunt and I were both speakers at conferences. Dave enjoyed mentioning to the audience that "Tom grew up in a mental institution, so you really need to be Bereans in checking out what he says." They thought he was joking until I admitted that he was correct on both accounts.

My education was mostly under Catholic instruction, including elementary school, military school, and high school, as well as a brief time in a Catholic fraternity. I enjoyed my Catholic upbringing and looked upon many of the nuns and priests in my life as extended family members. Those fond memories remain.

I attended The Ohio State University, which brings to mind two quotes from my parents. When asked by friends what I was majoring in, my father noted with a touch of amusement, "The path of least resistance." (I was a Fine Arts major in undergraduate school.) My mother, years later, surmised that my career objective seemed to be to "stay in school." There's little doubt that my sense of humor sprang from both parents, although I'm not sure that Mom was kidding: I was entering my seventh year at Ohio State at the time of her comment!

To be fair to myself (sort of), my last years there were in graduate school. I stayed on the "path of least resistance" by majoring in film, which primarily entailed watching lots and lots of movies. If I read a book during that time, I don't remember it. My goal from there was to "earn" a Ph.D. and settle into a teaching position,

perhaps at Ohio State. Although it looked like a straight shot to achieving my final academic degree, I was troubled by a lack of professional experience on the part of those who would oversee my dissertation and thesis project. Only one of my professors had actually worked in the theatrical movie industry. So I decided to head for Hollywood, get some big-time experience, and then return to campus as a "professor."

Prior to that adventure, another "adventure" took place: I got married. There were complications, however. My bride-to-be, Peggy, was an Episcopalian. My plan was for us to be married in a ceremony co-officiated by a Catholic priest and an Episcopal priest. The Church of Rome side, however, had some conditions to which Peggy had to conform. I was hopeful that the Paulist priests on campus would supply me with reasons that would make sense to my first-year law student fiancée. What they offered, however, was basically the same response that I had received throughout my own days in Catholic elementary and high school: "...because the Church says so!" Consequently, we were married in an Episcopal church, and that was the beginning of the end of my life as a practicing Catholic.

Our trek to Southern California in our VW bus began with Peggy's transfer from Ohio State to UCLA to begin her second year of law school (which she gave up the first day of class in favor of surfing, an activity that we both greatly preferred at the time over our potential career choices). Nevertheless, as our financial resources were thinning, I doubled my efforts to gain employment at any of the major film studios and, amazingly, was soon hired by 20th Century-Fox (TCF). This was surprising because my film education had no bearing on their hiring me. It was rather my design background in fine arts! I worked in TCF's Advertising/Publicity department for a number of years, all the while trying to get a job on an actual movie production. Although I had met many film producers, they all said pretty much the same thing. Any movie position for which I was qualified was always meted out on the basis of nepotism, i.e., reserved for sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews—and no one was interested in adopting me.

One producer who showed some interest in my dilemma offered a suggestion: write a script, sell it, and make a production position part of the deal. Great idea! Except for the fact that I couldn't put two sentences together—and I had the English Comp. grades to testify to that fact. Yet it

was my only hope. On the studio lot at TCF, there were a number of young "wannabes": aspiring actors, directors, producers, script-writers, etc. In that group was a young lady who was a gifted writer. We teamed up. She supplied most of the writing and I learned how to write scripts in the process. My role, for the most part in the beginning, was to take our screenplays and try to sell them to the producers whom I knew at TCF. After a few "good try, but not commercial enough" rejections, we sold a couple of scripts and then had the opportunity to translate an epic novel to the screen: James Michener's *Caravans*. The movie starred Anthony Quinn and was shot on location in Iran, a country where the seeds of an Islamic revolution were being sown at the time by the Ayatollah Khomeini and eventually resulted in the overthrow of the Shah.

By that point in my life, between my studio experience and film production involvement, I had accomplished my "Hollywood experience" teaching objectives and considered returning to school as a professor. But some dramatic events in our household now complicated that decision.

Peggy was pregnant with our first child, and she had also become "one of those born-again Christians." I was very excited about the former, and perplexed—even put off—by the latter. Although I had ceased to practice the faith of my youth, my attitude was: "I was born a Catholic and I'll die a Catholic." That mantra, of course, had no basis in reason, logic, or any value whatsoever, particularly for someone like me, who hadn't been in a Catholic church in nearly a decade. Nevertheless, I stuck to it as my main defense when evangelicals—including many of my former Catholic family members—began to witness to me. The onslaught at times seemed fierce, particularly when my three-year-old niece would call periodically and ask with a zeal well beyond her age: "Uncle Tommy, have you asked Jesus into your heart yet?" I managed rage control as I sweetly asked to speak to her mother, my sister. Then I let it fly.

I rejected every effort on the part of one and all to influence me spiritually. I rejected offers to attend church, lectures, special speakers, Bible studies, and so forth. I did attend Peggy's baptism, which only confirmed my bias against those non-Catholics. Not only was she "dunked"—she was dunked in a swimming pool! How spiritual could that be? The most difficult part of maintaining my wall of resistance, however, was the group of evangelical friends that Peggy had met. I liked them

a lot and enjoyed socializing with them, except for the annoying witnessing part.

Of course, they and all my believing family members and their friends were praying for me, and God was working in unexpected ways. Peggy and her friends got me to go to an evangelical church for the first time by telling me that I could bring my surfboard. Surfing was not part of the service, but the meeting did take place at a beach. Initially, only the waves and the other aspects of beach life that might attract and distract a young guy captured my attention. But gradually, I spent more time listening to the message. That led to questions, an exercise that had often gotten me into trouble during my childhood catechism classes and that the priests had answered with the usual: “because the Church says so!”

As I listened to the preaching, I began to ask our evangelical friends questions, just as I had the nuns and priests throughout my life. Rather than giving me a Church’s authoritarian response or some “expert’s” declaration, I was shown what the Bible had to say on the subject. That was different, even encouraging. Although not a believer yet, I participated in a couples Bible study, which for them was a bit like having a Michigan Wolverine in attendance at a Buckeye pep rally. For me, however, I was given much information that helped me understand that my sins had separated me from God, and the only way I could be reconciled to Him was to accept by faith the reality that Christ had paid the full penalty for my sins—past, present, and future. I came to understand that there was no other way to be saved, yet my lingering Catholic works-salvation background kept me at bay.

I had a lot to think about during that time period: a baby on the way, a potentially life-changing commitment to Christ, a trip to Iran for the filming of *Caravans*. The last item was resolved quickly. It all came down to Anthony Quinn’s and the producer’s wife’s alterations to the script versus this young writer’s objections—and consequently, someone had to go. I was unceremoniously put on the next plane to London and then back to the U.S. The good news in that experience was that it showed me that I couldn’t trust in circumstances but rather that I needed to put my complete trust in the Lord, which I did by faith shortly after my return home.

What followed can only be truly understood as God’s further orchestration of my life. I was soon introduced by a Christian filmmaker to a man who had a story idea

for a movie. The content involved UFOs, psychic phenomena, Eastern mysticism, and other rather bizarre ideas. After reading his story treatment, I returned to his house and told him that I had no clue what any of that stuff had to do with Christianity. I added that although it was certainly exciting, I nevertheless couldn’t write the screenplay. I *could* help him, however, to put it into script form if he wanted to work together on it. (The script eventually became the basis for the novel *Mind Invaders*, formerly *The Archon Conspiracy*.) Thus began thirty-some years of my helping Dave Hunt to do what God had called him to do. I had no understanding of what a biblical calling was, but I knew in my heart that I was to help this man whom I had just met by God’s leading.

Equipped with simply a calling and the gift of helps (1 Corinthians 12:28), I saw by faith God’s amazing guidance in my life for His own purposes. The Berean Call (TBC) is a fairly complex, international ministry involved with newsletter publishing, book publishing, audio and video production, radio broadcasting, broad resource material sales and production, an extensive website, etc. It began 20 years ago, with me, nearly computer illiterate, working on a card table in Dave’s make-shift bedroom-turned-office.

It was *The Seduction of Christianity* that motivated us to begin TBC. After Dave had written *The Cult Explosion* and *The God Makers*, and I had been involved in the production of the film documentaries of the same name, we received numerous letters from Christians who were concerned that many of the cult teachings that we had exposed were coming into their charismatic and evangelical churches. *The Seduction of Christianity* was written to address those biblically erroneous teachings and practices, which have grown exponentially over the last quarter-century.

To underscore the point of this article, that God guides (in my case) the clueless—also known as the “foolish things of this world” (1 Corinthians 2:27)—here is a likely interview if the world were to consider hiring me today for the position of executive director of TBC based upon my background, education, and resume: “Let’s see, you grew up Roman Catholic...you spent a portion of your childhood at a mental institution...you have a degree in Fine Arts...you majored in film in graduate school....Hmm...I see no business education or experience. I see no formal theological training. No seminary or Bible school....You worked

for a major Hollywood movie studio. You wrote screenplays for movies. So, Mr. McMahon, why do you think any of that could possibly qualify you to direct a Christian ministry?” The way the world thinks, I’m sure I would hear... “Are you sure you didn’t wander into this interview by mistake?” No, I wandered into Dave Hunt’s house about 30 years ago by God’s providence and direction, and I knew that I was supposed to help Mr. Hunt do what God had called him to do. That was the *only* part about which I was not clueless.

I had no other game plan, no vision, no marketing strategy—but what I did have was a willingness to be used of the Lord in Dave’s life. The Lord has orchestrated all the rest over the last three decades or so.

Would you like some examples of the Lord’s “practical” orchestration? My Catholic background has helped me to write extensively about the unbiblical teachings of Roman Catholicism. I was one of the co-founders of a co-operative ministry called Reaching Catholics for Christ, which was supported by The Berean Call. My growing up in the mental health community helped me to write first-hand about the pseudoscience of psychological counseling. My Irish heritage has blessed me with “a kiss of the blarney” that has enabled me to do radio. My Fine Arts and film background have helped me to produce Christian documentaries and videos such as *A Woman Rides the Beast*, *Israel, Islam, and Armageddon*, and *Psychology and the Church*. My screenwriting in Hollywood has helped me to learn a craft that was terribly foreign to me called... writing.

I tell young people that for the first 30 years of my life I wasn’t a believer, yet who can deny that God was orchestrating my life? How much more so, then, will He do the same for those who know Him and are desirous of and pray for His will in their lives? All that a believer needs to be fruitful in his or her life in Christ is to be willing to be used of the Lord. God supplies the rest through the Holy Spirit, who leads, guides, directs, corrects, gifts, and enables.

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). **TBC**

Quotable

Our critical faculties are given us for the purpose of self-examination, and the way to examine ourselves under the control of the Spirit of God is to ask ourselves—"Am I less sensitive than I used to be to the indications of God's will, less sensitive regarding purity, uprightness, goodness, honesty and truth?" If I realize that I am, I may be perfectly certain that something I have done (not something done to me) has seared my conscience. It has given me, so to speak, a bloodshot eye of the soul and I cannot see aright.

Oswald Chambers,
Our Brilliant Heritage

Q&A

QUESTION: Every time I [think I've found] an "outlet" for expanding God's Word, i.e., a program that seems to be of "His Word and Truth," it is exposed as false. To be honest, it hurts that we who contend for the faith find so much deception being projected through Christianity! I understand that the Bible declares that these will come, but it still hurts! What do you think about those who have subjective truth sprinkled with false premises? Should one be focused on the Berean Call only, or do you have sites that you welcome "in truth"?

RESPONSE: We don't believe that anyone should focus on the The Berean Call or any other ministry, although they may be helpful. According to Hebrews 12:1-3, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Consequently, our focus should be on the Lord. Psalm 119:9 asks, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" and answers, "by taking heed thereto according to thy word." Two verses later it says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (v. 11).

In other words, we need to get as much of the Bible as we can into our hearts. That means that we read as much as we can. Before you begin reading, pray, asking the Lord to open your understanding. That is where our focus begins.

Further, as Christians we are not designed to live in a vacuum. We need encouragement and admonition from others. We also need to be accountable to other believers and they to us. We need to fellowship with other Christians so that we can develop relationships in which we can be open, honest, and accountable.

Finally, when we are so convinced of the genuineness of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we see clearly where the counterfeit may seek to intrude. We can discern the subjective (man-focused) from the objective (God-focused).

We are reminded of the old hymn "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less":

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand;
all other ground is sinking sand.

"I dare not trust the sweetest frame...."

Here's an individual who had gone through this issue before and had realized that it is not the organization, the people, or the teaching. It is Christ, and Him alone. May the Lord encourage us with this.

QUESTION: There is a Christian woman at work who told me that she has been praying for Satan's salvation. I shared with her that I believed this to be a worthless effort but could not come up with the scriptural references to back me up. Would you please provide me with references to Satan's fall and his nonredeemable nature?

RESPONSE: Although your co-worker may be quite sincere in her effort to see Satan saved, she has no biblical basis for it. The Scriptures give us no indication that the devil and those angels who followed him in rebellion can be saved. Instead we are told that he will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will spend eternity (Rv 20:10).

His rebellion began in heaven, where self-exaltation and self-deification became his goal: "I will be like the most High" (Is 14:14). It is Satan who "deceiveth the whole world" (Rv 12:9). He is the "accuser of our brethren" (Rv 12:10). He goes about "as a roaring lion... seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pt 5:8).

Although God has allowed Satan some reign in the cosmic battle for the hearts of mankind (see TBC 6/97), your co-worker's prayers should not be directed to God for Satan but rather for believers, so that they may be able to resist him by being "stedfast in the faith" (1 Pt 5:9). God gives us His spiritual

warfare instructions regarding Satan in James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Prayer for ourselves and for our fellow saints is critical in every aspect of our lives, especially in being "able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11).

QUESTION: I have expressed my concerns about a Spiritual Formation Retreat to be conducted at the Catholic Benedictine Abbey in Mt. Angel, OR, in January 2012 for Oregon Christian Convention events. I spoke to the pastor organizing the event about New Age mystical experiences now being taught to Christians seeking a deeper relationship with God. I asked him why he promoted this, because its origins are from ungodly, even occultic, sources. He said that he liked the liturgies, the architecture lending to a sense of awe/worship/peace. He also said that New Age proponents "hi-jacked" the contemplative prayer practices from the early church fathers. I asked him what church fathers he was referring to, since I knew that none of the apostles had taught this in the Scriptures. He named Origen, Tertulles, Augustine, and a few others whom I don't recall. My question is: who copied whom? Where can I find the documented history for this?

RESPONSE: Having recently visited the Mount Angel Catholic Benedictine Abbey, I can say this: The building is an imposing, towering structure, identical in pattern to ancient cathedrals—but it is a fresh, clean facility unstained by centuries of European smokestacks. There were painted arches that stretched heavenward, breathtaking stained glass, stations of the cross, and five massive, elaborate altars up front, all with ornate statuary.

The building is certainly impressive as a work of man, but as a work of the flesh, it profits nothing spiritually. Furthermore, the "worship" that takes place within is an abomination before God. Every Roman Catholic Cathedral—however simple or ornate—is in reality a pagan temple that celebrates perpetual human sacrifice, the worship of Mary as co-mediatrix, occult ritualism, and idols in nearly every nook and cranny. So although such edifices are amazingly artistic and architecturally impressive, all that they reflect is contrary to God's Word (Eph 5:6-11, 2 Cor 6:14-17).

The pastor is simply wrong in saying that New Age proponents "hijacked" these practices. The so-called "Church Fathers," more specifically, the "Desert Fathers," either hijacked the occult practices from eastern mystical religions or got them

directly from seducing spirits or doctrines of demons (1 Tm 4:1).

By resorting to the “Church Fathers,” one abandons the sure foundation of Scripture, forgetting Paul’s warning that, “after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). Paul and the other writers of the New Testament gave us God’s Word rather than the mixed teachings of the “Church Fathers.” It is to the *Scriptures* that we must look, especially since Paul warned that in his time there were already false brethren who would do damage to the body of Christ.

Basing anything upon the “Church Fathers” exchanges the “more sure word of prophecy” for the shifting sands of human opinion. Consequently, though some of the “Church Fathers” may have advocated contemplative prayer practices, the question remains, “What do the *Scriptures* say”:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (Joshua 1:8)

Scriptural meditation is an objective practice. It is simply thinking through God’s Word for the purpose of understanding. *Contemplative* meditation, which has been derived from Eastern mystical meditation, is a process of mind *clearing*, i.e., *thoughtlessness*, that opens the mind to external spiritual content (much of which is filled with doctrines of demons). Contemplative meditation could not be more opposed to biblical truth.

We need to take heed to Paul’s admonition to “prove [test] all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes 5:21). Testing by the unfailing Word of God (2 Tm 2:15) is the theme throughout Scripture.

QUESTION: Will God choose to heal our 13-month-old daughter with heart failure based on our faith in Him, or does that not matter? Does it make a difference how many people are praying for her? Does it help if we have her anointed with oil by an elder?

RESPONSE: Only God knows if He will heal or not heal your daughter. Whatever He does, however, will be perfectly good for her and perfectly good for those who love her and are praying for her. We know this because He is perfect. Too often we let

what we *think* that He should do prejudice our expectations of what He *will* do. That’s a distortion of the verse that says, “unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...” (Eph 3:20). In other words, God is way beyond us in knowing what is best regarding our situation and request.

Why, then, should we even bother to make requests, if God’s answer is “above all that we ask or think”? It wouldn’t make sense if prayer were simply a wish list, in which we more than likely wouldn’t get exactly what we (and, in particular, our flesh) wanted. Prayer is so much more, especially regarding its relationship to faith. “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6).

So praying to God is an act of faith. It’s a matter of believing that He exists and that He will reward those who seek Him. Obviously, faith matters (although thankfully, God’s working in our lives is not restricted to or dependent upon our faith). The so-called “faith preachers” tragically distort faith, turning it into a method (like magic or witchcraft) that forces God to act on a person’s behalf. They claim that when the healing or finances do not take place as expected, it is due to a lack of faith on the part of those who prayed. George Müller, whose life was an incredible testimony of God’s answers to prayer, had it “spot on,” biblically, as he responded to someone who had complimented him on being “a man of great faith.” He said, “No, I’m a man of little faith...but it’s in a great God!”

Does it matter how many people are praying for her? No. Prayer is not a quantitative process that pressures God to respond to numbers. Yet the more believers who are involved in prayer, the more will be seeking *God*, and the more will be blessed by God’s answering their prayers. But what if your little child dies? Wouldn’t that grieve all those praying for her healing? Yes. It grieved Jesus when Lazarus died, even though Jesus knew He would raise Lazarus from the dead. Why did He weep? Because He knew that death, which began when sin entered the world, involves separation. We don’t want to be separated from our loved ones, who we know will be with Jesus, even though it is only for a brief time (temporally speaking) until we see them again.

Our prayer is that God will heal your little daughter for your comfort’s sake, just as Paul was spared “sorrow upon sorrow” by the healing of Epaphroditus, who “was sick nigh unto death” (Phil 2:27). Nevertheless, we pray for God’s will, i.e., “above

all that we ask or think,” for you and your daughter, knowing that He will answer our prayers in the best way possible. That’s where faith has an important role in this. God does not and cannot show us all the details of how He is using your daughter’s condition in her life, in your lives, and the lives of other loved ones, and how He will further use her and you and others to His glory and for their benefit. He may give us some insights now, but the “explanations” must wait until we see Him (1 Cor 13:12). Therefore we trust Him—completely.

Trusting Him completely is an act of faith. Scripture tells us in numerous places that “the just shall live by faith.” This means that we are to follow God’s instructions by an act of faith. If the Lord puts it upon your heart to have the elders of your church pray for your daughter and anoint her with oil in His name, do it as an act of obedience by faith (Jas 5:14).

QUESTION: Is it not true that the teaching in the gospels is for Israel and the Millennium and that the teaching for the church is found in the epistles?

RESPONSE: Was it not in the Gospels that Jesus said He would build His church? He trained and commissioned His disciples to do just that during His earthly ministry, which is related in the Gospels.

In Matthew 28, Christ tells the twelve to make disciples. Shouldn’t we? In Mark 16, they are told to “preach the gospel.” Don’t we preach the gospel? Is it different? No! Where does our authority to preach the gospel and to make disciples come from if not from Christ’s command to the twelve? They were then to teach these disciples to observe all that Christ had commanded them, which would include making disciples...on down to us today.

If Paul was the one who brought teaching to the church, and the Gospels are only for Israel, how do we deal with the fact that the church was formed before Paul came along? That wasn’t Israel being formed or restored on the Day of Pentecost!

Peter and the other disciples preached the gospel before Paul was converted. It was clearly the same gospel by which Paul was converted and that he later preached.

How can one say that Paul’s epistles are for the church but that Acts was a “transitional” period between Israel and the church, when Paul wrote his epistles during the period of the Book of Acts? So, we cannot ignore the Gospels and teachings of our Lord as though they apply to some past and future age but not to the church or Christians right now.

The Day Christ Was Born

Dave Hunt

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We are not referring to December 25. That may or may not have been when Christ was born. There are conflicting theories: 1) that December 25 was set by Christians to counter the Roman Saturnalia celebration each December 17-23, which “led to widespread drinking and debauchery, so that among Christians... ‘saturnalia’ came to mean ‘orgy’”; 2) that early Christians set the date of December 25 by assuming that Mary visited Elizabeth immediately after her (Mary’s) conception, and then calculating the time of Elizabeth’s conception as six months earlier (Lk 1:23-25)—based on Jewish records and tradition concerning the schedule of priestly temple duties and Zacharias’s “course of Abia” (Lk 1:5);¹ and 3) that it replaced the feast of Saturnalia, as Will Durant claims,² which is probably the most popular criticism of the date.

Regardless of the day, Christ’s virgin birth into this world as a babe was an event of such stupendous proportions that Paul declared: “great is the mystery...” (1 Tm 3:16)! The Creator of all (Jn 1:3) entered into His creation as one of its creatures, knowing everything He would suffer at the hands of those rebels that He had brought into existence through Adam and Eve. The hatred, misunderstanding, false accusations, abuse, rejection, mockery, and finally, the scourging and crucifixion that He would endure from those who owed their very existence to Him had long been foretold by Hebrew prophets under His inspiration.

His mother, Mary, was not “the spouse of the Holy Spirit,” as Roman Catholicism says. She was the spouse of Joseph and not a polygamist. The “Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8) humbled Himself to live as a baby, child, man, and finally unto “the death of the cross” (Phil 2:5-8). As a child, he was subject to his “parents.” When Mary or Joseph asked the boy Jesus to do some menial task, He didn’t respond, “Who do you think you’re ordering around? I’m God!” He quickly and humbly did their bidding.

Joseph was not His father, yet the child Jesus lived such a normal life that even Mary, who had at first pondered much in her heart (Lk 2:51), fell into the habit when speaking to Jesus of referring to Joseph as “thy father” (Lk 2:48). Joseph was certainly the head of the household, and the child

Jesus obeyed him.

The One who had made the universe out of nothing and who knew every particle—from the innermost depths of each atom to the outermost reaches of the cosmos—confined Himself to an obscure life in a small home and carpenter shop in Nazareth. There, as Joseph’s bright young apprentice, He “learned” to fashion wood with crude tools and became known as “the carpenter’s son” (Mt 13:55). His workmanship and creativity must have been fantastic. We are told nothing about those early days, except for His visit to the temple at the age of twelve (Lk 2:41-52), when He astonished the rabbis and reminded Mary and Joseph that His real Father had sent Him into this world for a special purpose.

It was infinite love beyond our comprehension that caused our Lord to leave the glory and power He had rightfully known for eternity as God the Son, to become a man in order to purchase a bride with His own blood. He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10). When He accepted that mission from His Father (“my Father hath sent me”—Jn 3:17, 10:36, 20:21; Heb 1:6), our Lord well knew that the incarnation would not be temporary but eternal. He forever became one of us but without sin.

On David’s throne in Jerusalem, as Israel’s promised Messiah, He will “reign over the house of Jacob for ever” (Lk 1:33). He remains “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tm 2:5), the only mediator between God and man, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). For all eternity He will bear the marks of Calvary, and heaven’s throne will forever be “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rv 22:1).

How could anyone have known who He really was, since His glory was veiled in human flesh? Any true believer of that day who was in touch with God, knew the Word, and looked for the Messiah, would have known Him. Daniel 9 and Nehemiah 2 plainly told everyone who was willing to read and understand that it was the prophesied time for the Messiah to come. Anna the prophetess and Simeon, a devout Jew who looked for the Messiah, both recognized Him immediately, even as a baby (Lk 2:25-38).

Though there was some excuse for not knowing Him as a child, there was no defense for not recognizing Him after He began His ministry. The miracles alone that He did were sufficient to prove that He was the Messiah. And He must have been a very special person. Even the officers sent by the Pharisees to arrest Him acknowledged,

“Never man spake like this man” (Jn 7:46)!

Who could have failed to realize that here was “God...manifest in the flesh” (1 Tm 3:16)? Almost everyone! Very few recognized and admired the God-likeness of Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, their innate sinfulness despised His purity. Of the vast majority, in fulfillment of prophecy (Ps 35:19, 69:4, 119:161), Christ sadly declared, “They hated me without a cause” (Jn 15:25). It seems incredible!

John the Baptist recognized that Jesus was sinless: “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” (Mt 3:14). Yet later, even he doubted (Lk 7:19), in spite of all of the proofs God had given him (Jn 1:33-34). The Apostle John was one of the few who recognized Him: “We beheld his glory...as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth....That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested...” (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1,2).

Tragically, “though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him” (Jn 12:37). The Pharisees knew that His miracles were genuine, that He had raised Lazarus after four days in the grave; but they still justified themselves in determining to kill Him and Lazarus to preserve their positions of leadership. No wonder God declared, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9).

The devils recognized Him during His ministry, even though they may not have known who He was as a babe: “I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God” (Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24). Jesus did not cast out demons in the name of the Father but by His own authority, and they obeyed Him (Mt 8:28-32; Mk 1:25; Lk 4:35).

The universe, which He as the eternal Word had spoken into existence, knew and obeyed His voice. He calmed storms with a word (Mk 4:39). Yet even then His disciples did not know who He was. They were afraid and “said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (4:41).

Jesus said, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Jn 17:3). That does not mean that any neighbor acquainted with Him as a child when He grew up in Nazareth had eternal life. It means to know Him in spirit and in truth—the way that we must worship God (Jn 4:24). It is not enough to say the words with one’s

lips (“I love you, Lord...I worship you”) but to know and love Him in one’s heart as He truly is.

Even though Jesus is God, and Mary is the mother of Jesus, that does not make her the “mother of God,” as Catholicism teaches. Nor did she remain a virgin. The birth of her “firstborn son” (Mt 1:25) in Bethlehem was not the birth of Christ as God but of His human body, soul, and spirit—“a body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5). She was the honored mother of the man Christ Jesus. But she was not the mother of the eternal Son of God, who created this universe, is one with the Father, and “was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14).

Christ existed as God’s Son long before the incarnation (Ps 2:12; Prv 30:4; Is 9:6; Dn 3:25, etc.). He had, from all eternity, ruled with the Father on His throne as the Son of God: “Unto the son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom” (Heb 1:8); “whose goings forth have been from...everlasting” (Mic 5:2). To call Mary “the mother of God” is the worst blasphemy possible.

Paul makes a particular point of saying, “He was...seen of angels.” They witnessed the unfolding of this mystery. We are not told the angels’ thoughts or whether they had any advance notice of the incarnation, but Christ’s birth into the world as a man must have been a mystery even to the “multitude of the heavenly host” that praised God at Christ’s birth (Lk 2:13).

Could this really be the One they had worshiped as the eternal Word, the Creator of all—and here He was a helpless baby in Mary’s arms nursing at her breast?! Could that be possible? Yes, there was the command: “When he bringeth the firstbegotten into the world...let all the angels of God worship him.” (Heb 1:6). What a mysterious occurrence that day when Jesus was born!

Paul calls this most amazing and important event in the history of the universe not only a great mystery—but *the* mystery: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tm 3:16). The mystery of godliness was unveiled in the incarnation of Jesus Christ!

Invading this rebellious planet from heaven itself came the only perfectly godly man who would ever live. All the rest of mankind are sinners. Eternally, those in heaven will be sinners—saved by grace.

Yes, “all have sinned and come short of

the glory of God”—except for one man. It is a great mystery how anyone who is fully man, as Christ is, could live without ever sinning. Yet Scripture assures us: He “did no sin” (1 Pt 2:22); “who knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21); and “in him is no sin” (1 Jn 3:5).

Indeed, it was not possible that Christ could sin. He faced every temptation, but He never had to struggle to keep from yielding. Sin had no attraction for Him: “The prince of this world [i.e., Satan] cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Jn 14:30). There was nothing in the “Holy One of God” (Lk 4:34) that was in the least attracted to sin.

He left us “an example, that [we] should follow His steps” (1 Pt 2:21). But how can we follow the steps that lead to the Cross? If we are to be godly, the only godly One must live in us: “I travail in birth...until Christ be formed in you” (Gal 4:19). It must be “not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal 2:20). But how can He indwell sinners? This is another part of the “mystery of godliness.”

There was only one way mankind could be redeemed from the penalty of eternal death. For a holy, righteous God to justly forgive sinners, the full penalty for sin must be paid (Rom 3:9-28). A sinless man, undeserving of death, would have to die for the rest of mankind: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19).

Although the eternal Son of God, through the virgin birth, became fully man, He remained fully God. As sinless man, He could justly die for sinners. And only as infinite God could He pay the full penalty for the sins of all mankind. Even as a fetus in Mary’s womb, He did not cease to be the One who said, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal 3:6). This is the most difficult part of the mystery. We cannot understand it, but we believe it because God says it—and we realize there was no other way.

As God and man in one person, Christ took the full weight of God’s wrath upon sin for all mankind. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). He tasted “death for every man” (Heb 2:9). That had to include “the second death,” which all who refuse to believe on Him who died for them will endure for eternity in the Lake of Fire (Rv 20:11-15).

Calvinism, however, teaches that Christ died only for an elect whom God had predestined to heaven. It claims that God loves the entire world—but not with the same kind of “redeeming love” for all: those who are predestined to eternal torment are loved with a lesser love, but

loved nevertheless, because God blesses them in this life with sunshine and rain, etc. That is why we titled the book, *What Love Is This?* It is not love of any kind to fail to rescue any who could be rescued. Calvinism claims that God could save everyone if He so desired, but doesn’t. That is not love.

The parallel Old Testament passage to “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23) is “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way...” (Is 53:6). Isaiah adds, “and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The iniquity of all who “have gone astray” [i.e., who have sinned] was laid on Christ at the Cross.

Christ said that “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15). Poisonous serpents were sent by God as punishment for Israel’s sin. Those bitten were dying. The serpent is a picture both of Satan and of sin that has bitten all mankind unto the death. God’s remedy was: “Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and...[not an elect among those dying, but] every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. [It] came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (Num 21:5-9—emphasis added).

Christ said that just as all who had been bitten could look in faith upon the brazen serpent and live, so all who have sinned can look in faith to the “Lamb of God [on the Cross] tak[ing] away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29), and receive eternal life as a free gift of God’s grace. That is the good news of the gospel. We need to proclaim it everywhere.

What a day it was when Christ was virgin-born in Bethlehem! And what a day it is when He comes to live eternally in the hearts of those who believe on Him! This is the victory of godliness that every Christian should be experiencing—yet many do not know all that is theirs in Christ. Let us live godly lives and proclaim the good news to all. **TBC**

Endnotes

1. Richard Ostling, Associated Press, http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2004/12/23/special_reports/religion/21_50_1412_22_04.txt.

2. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1950), VI 75, III 657.

Quotable

I prayed for Faith, and thought that some day Faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But Faith did not seem to come.

One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "Now Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." I had closed my Bible, and prayed for Faith. I now opened my Bible, and began to study, and Faith has been growing ever since.

D. L. Moody

God's infinite knowledge boggles the mind. Our human brains strain under the weight of the idea. It is too exalted for us to comprehend. But when we come to the frontier of our capacity to understand and can go no farther, we can still bow in worship of the immensity of the knowledge of God!

William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary, Psalm 139:6

Q&A

QUESTION: In view of Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:6,23, and Acts 17:6, it would appear that all the world has already heard the gospel and heard it within the first 50 or so years after our Lord returned to heaven. The world's inhabitants continue to increase in number, so this would seem to be an unattainable task. What am I missing?

RESPONSE: The verse reads, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." It is the disciples' "faith" that is spoken of. That is, in general terms, their faith is known and commented upon. It is clear from the context that "world" as used in Romans 1:8 (for example) doesn't mean the entire earth but is limited to the "world" of the Roman Empire. Much the same could be said of Acts 17:6, when the Thessalonians spoke of the disciples as having "turned the world upside down." They were simply saying that wherever the disciples had gone, the "world" system was impacted, as in Ephesus (Acts 19) where the idol makers' craft was "in danger" because of the preaching of the gospel (Acts 19:27).

The gospel is not convenient to the world system and cannot coexist with it. In Colossians 1:6,23, Paul is again speaking of the known world (i.e., the Roman Empire) into which the gospel has gone. In verse 6, Paul

writes that the gospel "bringeth forth fruit" wherever it has been preached. Colossians 1:23 reads, "...if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."

It is the "hope of the gospel" that has been "preached" to every creature under heaven. God has certainly left a general witness of Himself for every individual in the world.

Titus 2:11-12 tells us, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

In Psalm 19 we learn, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun" (vv. 1-4).

Paul writes in Romans, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (1:20).

Although it can be reliably stated that the gospel during the lives of the first apostles was taken as far as India and China, nevertheless, Paul still knew that there were "regions beyond" (2 Cor 10:16) where the gospel had not yet gone.

Regarding the attainability of the Great Commission, we have nothing less than the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ, who prophesied, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mt 24:14).

QUESTION: I believe in the Pre-trib Rapture and could be considered a dispensationalist, but I remember when Israel captured the temple mount in the Six-Day War. That's getting close to 50 years ago, and the Lord hasn't returned. Besides that, in 1998 Israel celebrated her 50th anniversary as a modern nation. I'm getting so fed up with the idea that "soon and very soon" we're going to see the King.

RESPONSE: Let's see if we can figure out what's behind your being "fed up." If you are a born-again Christian, then previous to that you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

a condition of separation from God forever; you were His enemy, subjected to His wrath, headed for the everlasting torment of the Lake of Fire. In order to save you from that condition, Jesus, who is God, became a Man and loved you so much that He went to the Cross, where He paid the penalty for every one of your sins—past, present, and future. You can't comprehend, let alone imagine, what He suffered for you (and me, and every one of His human creatures). After He rose from the dead, He said that He was going to the Father to prepare a place for you and that He would return for you in the same way that a groom returns for his bride. In the meantime, He expects you to grow in your personal relationship with Him, desiring to be with Him more and more, day after day.

Prior to His physical return for you, He gave you His Word so that you might know Him more intimately by following His instructions. He said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (Jn 14:23), and in another place He admonished those who dismissed His instructions: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Lk 6:46). Are you following His instructions? Paul's letter to Timothy tells us what Jesus desires in us as we wait for Him: "But thou, O man of God, flee [sinful] things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God...that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tm 6:11-14). You appear to be like the bride who is more focused on herself than on her husband-to-be. That will kill a relationship and end any hope of true joy. The Apostle Peter, however, gives us the antidote for being "fed up": "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pt 1:6-9).

QUESTION: A while back, my daughter and I visited a local church and [they] gave an altar call for people who had some special need. My daughter, who had been looking for work nearer to home, went

up and asked for prayer. The pastor's wife laid hands on her, and during her prayer asked "the many-breasted god" to clear the path for her. [My daughter] was shocked, and as we left told me about the incident and asked where in the Bible God was referred to in such a way. I told her frankly that the only reference to a many-breasted "god" came from pagan sources. A short time later, we went to hear an evangelist speak, and during the music and praise time, there it was again! He praised the many names of God and then added the phrase "the many-breasted god," which greatly saddened us. My question is, have you ever heard of this particular thing?

RESPONSE: To focus on the literal meaning of the Hebrew word *shad* ("breast") as the root for the name *El Shaddai* is a shallow interpretation at best. Our concept of God cannot be limited by one attribute lest we miss the fullness of meaning. "Shad" literally means "breast," which speaks of "sustenance." But "Shaddai" should not be limited to this one meaning. The attributes of God are complementary, so the compound name "El-Shaddai" presents much more meaning than the feminine allusion that political correctness would demand.

"El Shaddai" is often translated as "the Almighty God." This title speaks of strength, and while some would explain El Shaddai to mean "the many-breasted God," it is very correct in context to translate it "the mighty-breasted God." Again, this speaks of the *strength* of God, a very masculine image. Other linguists have noted that the Akkadian (ancient Semitic language) word *Šadu* means "mountain," which suggests strength and power and contributes to the overall meaning.

Recent efforts to "feminize" God have influenced writers, including the author of the heretical book, *The Shack* (See *TBC*, 8/09). We are created in the image of God (Gn 1:26), but too many try to create God in the image of man. If it is wrong to portray the Father as an old man with a long, white beard, it is just as wrong to portray Him as a red or yellow, black or white man, woman, or child. None of these images sufficiently brings us closer to a fuller understanding of the Godhead.

Consider how often the Scriptures present metaphorical images, such as the agrarian references to God as a mother hen brooding over a nest or gathering her chicks. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent

unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Mt 23:37), or Psalm 91:3-4, indicating that God shall cover us with His feathers. No one would reasonably consider God to be a mother hen, but we can understand the image of a mother hen caring for her chicks.

In John 13:23, we see John "leaning on Jesus' bosom." This is hardly a feminine image or limited to the nursing image some would promote. God has consistently identified Himself as the "Father" in Scripture, and that is where our understanding must begin.

QUESTION: Doug Batchelor, the Seventh day Adventist teacher with the Amazing Facts prophecy seminars, has tried to say that the word "everlasting" (Matthew 25:46), as in the "everlasting" punishment of hell, doesn't necessarily mean "forever." He says the only thing everlasting is the finality of the Lord's judgment. Is he correct?

RESPONSE: The "everlasting punishment" of the wicked and the "life eternal" of the righteous parallel each other. Both involve duration (i.e. "everlasting"), but with a vast difference in experience. Further, "eternal" and "everlasting" are both translated from the word *aión*. Batchelor is arbitrarily assigning meaning to Scripture based upon his preconceived ideas.

The same argument that Batchelor uses to discredit the idea of an everlasting hell can also be used to argue against an everlasting heaven. In contrast, Revelation 20:10 clearly tells us, "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Literally, their torment is everlasting. The phrase "day and night" denotes a passage of time and certainly does not refer to a one-time annihilation.

Concerning the saints, those taken alive into heaven at the Rapture will "...ever be with the Lord" (1 Thes 4:17). Those saved who die before the Rapture, "...know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1).

Hell and heaven are both everlasting.

QUESTION: I was always taught from Isaiah 14 that Satan was a fallen angel originally named Lucifer. Recently I've been taught that isn't so, for the one being spoken of in Isaiah 14 is obviously "the king of Babylon" (v. 4). Then was Satan

created by God as he is now, the most evil of creatures?

RESPONSE: Satan was not created by God as he is now. God does not create evil beings. Satan was originally as the Bible describes him in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and elsewhere. He is a fallen cherub with great power and cunning. (The cherubims appear to be the highest order of angels closest to God, overshadowing His very dwelling place—and Satan was originally the chief cherub [2 Kgs 19:15; 1 Chr 13:6; Heb 9:5, etc.]. Psalm 99:1 says of God, "He sitteth between the cherubims.")

Satan still has access before the throne of God (Job 1:6; 2:1) as the "accuser of our brethren" (Rv 12:10). The day is yet future when "that old serpent...the Devil" will be cast out of heaven (Rv 12:9). Until then, he continues to accuse the believers "before our God day and night" (Rv 12:10).

Yes, the king of Babylon is being addressed in Isaiah 14. However, much of what is said could not apply to him at all, but only to Satan. For example, when did the king of Babylon have a position in heaven from which he fell? At times the Bible addresses Satan through ungodly earthly rulers to show that he is the real power behind them just as he will be the power behind Antichrist, of whom it is said, "the dragon [Satan] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Rv 13:2). In fact, all these despotic and evil rulers are types of Antichrist.

That Satan is being addressed through such kings is clearer in Ezekiel 28:2-19. Here the "prince of Tyrus" is being addressed: "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering....Thou art the anointed cherub [highest order of angel closest to God]; and I have set thee so....Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (vv. 13-15). Obviously, none of this was true of the literal "prince of Tyrus," but only of Satan, who inspired and directed him in his ungodly activity.

Note the many similarities in Ezekiel 28 to what is said of "the king of Babylon" in Isaiah 14: "I am a God, I sit in the seat of God..." (v. 2); "thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God" (v. 6), etc. Clearly Satan is being addressed as the power behind both the king of Babylon and the prince of Tyrus.

Satan is "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). Christ did not dispute his claim to ownership of the world system when, in the temptation in the wilderness, Satan offered to give the kingdoms of the world to Christ if He would bow down and worship him (Mt 4:8-9). Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 carry the same message.

Chrislam? Christian Palestinianism??

T. A. McMahon

Whenever we, as biblical Christians, think that things couldn't possibly become more preposterous in Christendom, we need to call to mind the Scriptures that tell us that the time will come when *Christians* will not endure sound doctrine, and many will corrupt the Word of God (2 Timothy 4:3; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Peter 3:16). The Apostle Paul further declares to Timothy that those who bring such doctrines shall turn people away from the truth to fables, that is, myths, of their own invention (2 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14). Today, such teachings and practices are increasing at a staggering rate—practices that range from the patently absurd to the insidious, even menacingly dangerous, both spiritually and physically.

Chrislam? That attempt to combine Christianity and Islam in a common worship service would be a bad joke if it were a joking matter, but it's far from it. As I understand it, this teaching began as a way to help stop the genocide and bring peace between Muslims and Christians in Africa. Sincere in its concern, no doubt, yet sincerely wrong. Muslims who truly follow the Qur'an, and Christians who believe what the Bible presents, regard Chrislam as a blasphemous contradiction of their beliefs.

Why? The differences, which are very apparent, *cannot* be reconciled. Allah is a false god of man's making and is nothing like the God of the Bible, who sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the full penalty for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Allah has no son and condemns all those who believe that he does (Surah 18:4-6; 23:91). Allah is a singular entity (Surah 4:171); the God of the Bible is a Triune God: one God—three Persons. Isa (Jesus) of the Qur'an is not God; he is simply a prophet of Allah (4:171). The biblical Jesus is God who became a Man (John 1:1-4; John 10:33). Allah denigrates Jews (Surah 5:59-60); God refers to the children of Israel as the "apple of his eye" (Deuteronomy 32:9-10). The Hadith (the sayings of Muhammad allegedly received from Allah) declares that the Judgment Day of Allah won't come until the rocks and trees cry out to Muslims to kill the Jews that are hiding behind them (Sahih Muslim Book 041, Number 6981-4). That is anti-Semitism at its worst.

The fundamental teachings of Islam and Christianity allow no compromise. Anyone can certainly believe or make up whatever he wants to about Islam or

Christianity, but no one can make them compatible with each other on the basis of either one's sacred texts. Nevertheless, that obstacle is not holding back the multitudes who are letting their desires rush ahead of reason. Furthermore, such irrationality is being exploited by those who have as their agenda: "Faith Shared."

It seems that the apostasy (the undermining of biblical faith to prepare the way for the religion of the Antichrist) is developing at an exponential rate, and contributions are being made through a diversity of unbiblical agendas (see *TBC* 4/86, 5/90, 8/90, 1/95, 2/00, 2/05, 3/05, 9/08, 4/09, 2/08, 3/10). One that is particularly aggressive as well as vicious in its attack on biblical Christianity is referred to as "Christian Palestinianism" (CP). The term was coined by Paul Wilkinson in his book, *For Zion's Sake* (see *TBC* resources), which presents the biblical reasons why Christians need to support the restoration of the modern state of Israel, an endeavor known as "Christian Zionism." The enemy of that effort is Christian Palestinianism, which includes far more than a concern over the plight of the so-called Palestinian people (see Dave Hunt, *Judgment Day*, Resource Pages).

Here are quotes from three *anti*-Christian Zionism sources that characterize the movement:

It is... a total misunderstanding of the story of salvation and a perversion of God's plan for a Christian to want to re-establish a Jewish nation as a political entity.... The Christian conscience should always discern what is the authentic vocation of the Jewish people and what is the other side of the coin, that is, the racist State of Israel. (The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1970)

We categorically reject Christian Zionist doctrines as a false teaching that corrupts the biblical message of love, justice and reconciliation.... With urgency we warn that Christian Zionism and its alliances are justifying colonization, apartheid and empire-building. ("The Jewish Declaration on Christian Zionism," 2006)

The Christian Zionist worldview has cataclysmic consequences for a religiously integrated and lasting peace in Palestine/Israel." (General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 2007)

"Now, alas, we see apartheid in Israel." This last quote in support of the Palestinian cause is from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who likens the condition to regimes of "Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Pinochet, Milosevic, and Idi Amin..." (Tutu, Foreword, *Speaking the Truth*, Michael Prior, ed., 2005).

In a booklet we offer titled *Prophets Who Prophecy Lies in My Name—Christian Palestinianism and the Anti-Israel Crusade*, Paul Wilkinson begins by quoting what the Lord spoke to Jeremiah regarding those who prophesied that which was contrary to His Word: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.... I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.... Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies" (Jeremiah 23:16-32).

The most shocking aspect of what Wilkinson writes is not just the fact that these modern-day "prophets" are teaching "that God has rejected Israel and replaced her with the Church" or that they are attempting to marshal forces through the church against Israel politically, economically, and theologically; it is that many are highly esteemed Christian leaders who profess to be evangelicals, i.e., Bible-believing Christians!

For the most part, these false "prophets" present a veneer of biblical teachings but are rarely challenged when they go off track because today's evangelical Christianity has been nearly stripped of biblical discernment, thanks (or rather, no thanks) to decades of conditioning through seeker-sensitive, church-growth marketing tactics. That approach to drawing the "unchurched" and the unsaved into the church moved Bible teaching to the back burner, if it was implemented at all. Conviction of sin and other biblical teachings that might put off the new attendees was replaced with "positive messages" and entertainment for young and old alike. The pervasive dumbing down of biblical discernment was the result, and the body of Christ is reaping the tragic consequences today.

For example, Wilkinson presents a litany of biblical errors taught by those promoting Christian Palestinianism that should be recognized easily and rejected by all believers: "All the basic elements of a Christian Zionist eschatology are reversed, so that the Bible is seen to be Christian, not Jewish, the land of the Bible is Palestine not Israel, the Son of God is a Palestinian not a Jew, the Holocaust is resented not remembered, 1948 is a catastrophe not a miracle, the Jewish people are illegal occupiers not rightful owners, and Biblical prophecy is a moral manifesto and not a signpost to the

Second Coming” (Wilkinson, *Prophets*, p. 51).

Not every one of the Christian leaders who supports Christian Palestinianism would hold to all the beliefs mentioned above, but they all promote it in general and in opposition to what the Bible declares prophetically. The unofficial ringleader in this movement is an Anglican priest named Stephen Sizer, whose church is a member of the Evangelical Alliance and the Willow Creek Association of Churches (Lynne Hybels, the wife of Willow Creek Community Church’s pastor, is a supporter of Sizer. She rejects the modern state of Israel as a fulfillment of prophecy). Sizer’s first book, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?*, received numerous endorsements from evangelical leaders. Wilkinson notes that reviewers praised it as the “most important and most comprehensive on the subject to date,” and the “scholarly treatment to counteract the *rabid prophecy pack*” (italics added), condemning Christian Zionism as “pernicious,” a “totally unbiblical menace,” “a powerful force that encourages the destruction of millions of people,” and “one of the most dangerous and heretical movements in the world which fuels the Arab-Israeli conflict” (*Prophets*, p. 10).

Sizer summarizes his beliefs presented in *Christian Zionism*: “There has only ever been one people of God through history—‘the Church’; All biblical covenants are subsumed under one covenant of grace; The Jewish people, as an ethnic nation, have fulfilled their role in history, which was to prepare the way for the Church/Christianity; The Church is the new Israel, enlarged through Christ to embrace all peoples.” Sizer’s second book, *Zion’s Christian Soldiers?*, contains a sermon by evangelical scholar John Stott, who characterizes Christian Zionism as “biblically anathema to the Christian faith.”

Although Sizer’s books are just a few among the proliferating titles that are in opposition to Israel, Zionism, and Christian Zionism, they are a signpost revealing the beliefs of those highly influential evangelicals who have endorsed his position and his writings. Who might they be? Hank Hanegraaff is known to thousands of evangelicals as the head of the biblical apologetics ministry Christian Research Institute and host of the national radio program, the *Bible Answer Man*. He writes, “Sizer’s Christian Zionism dramatically demonstrates how a politicized religious movement with a dubious pedigree is a prescription for disaster. From caricaturing Arabs to catalyzing Armageddon, Christian Zionist beliefs and behaviors

are the antithesis of biblical Christianity” (*Prophets*, p. 11).

Hanegraaff’s perspective is hardly recent. He formerly was associated with D. James Kennedy at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church. Its seminary’s eschatology was clearly showing in 2002 when the faculty, along with its founder, chancellor, president, and Professor of Evangelism (Kennedy), issued “An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel.” This statement denied that the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (i.e., the Jews) have any special blessings or place in prophecy, much less any claim upon the land of Israel. It was initially signed by 71 evangelical leaders, among them R. C. Sproul and Michael S. Horton. This document declares:

Section VI: The inheritance promises that God gave Abraham...do not apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel....*Section IX:* The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the “Holy Land” cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel [meaning the Church] in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua.

Gilbert Bilezikian was one of the founders (with Bill Hybels) of Willow Creek Community Church. This is his endorsement of Sizer’s book: “Some theologies, that make Israel central to the purposes of God and to the processes of history, reduce the Church to the status of concubine while Israel becomes the Bride. Sizer’s work provides a timely reminder that, according to the New Testament, God’s people is to be identified on the basis of grace, not of race” (*Prophets*, p.11).

Tony Campolo is a well-known Baptist pastor, evangelical youth conference speaker, and sociology professor at Eastern University in Pennsylvania. He lauds Sizer’s book as “A comprehensive survey describing how Christians have embraced a theological perspective that has encouraged justice for Jews but has also led to the oppression of Palestinian people and extreme hostility between Christians and Muslims worldwide” (*Prophets*, p. 11). In another place, he writes, “The most serious threats to the well-being of the Palestinians in general, and to the Christian Palestinians in particular, come not from the Jews, but from *Christian Zionists* here in the United States. With this theology, called ‘Dispensationalism,’ they argue that according to

their interpretation of Genesis 15:18-21, the Holy Land should belong *exclusively* to the Jews. They contend that *all* of this land is what was promised to the seed of Abraham....”

Brian McLaren, the most influential writer of the Emerging Church Movement, whose background is Plymouth Brethren, has obviously abandoned the faith of his early days, as he declares “the need to confront the terrible, deadly, distorted, yet popular theologies associated with Christian Zionism and deterministic dispensationalism,” which “use a bogus end-of-the-world scenario to create a kind of death-wish for World War III, which—unless it is confronted more robustly by the rest of us—could too easily create a self-fulfilling prophecy” (*Prophets*, p. 42).

Former president Jimmy Carter may seem out of place among the evangelical theologians presented here who support Christian Palestinianism, but that’s not the case. His book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, embodies all that the others mentioned above stand for in their opposition to Israel and the Word of God—and then some. Furthermore, he will have the opportunity to spread his spurious beliefs among even more evangelicals, since he recently signed a three-book deal with the evangelical publisher Zondervan.

These false teachings are neither obscure nor new. Men such as Augustine (AD 354-430), Martin Luther (1483-1546), and John Calvin (1509-1564) have made substantial contributions to such unbiblical beliefs. What is new is the incredible rate at which they are being received. When Jesus was asked by His disciples about the days prior to His return, He characterized it as a time of great deception (Matthew 24). We are seeing just that in our day, and we therefore need to heed His words. Paul’s warning to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28-31) also applies: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” The chief preventive measure against being caught up in the increasing deception of our day is a disciplined life of studying and living out the Word of God. Lord, help us to that end. TBC

Quotable

F. B. Meyer tells of hearing Hudson Taylor preach from Mark 11:22, translating it thus: "Reckon on God's faithfulness." Today, whatever may be your situation, count on God's faithfulness. Assume God will be faithful to walk through the hours ahead with you. God guarantees He will be faithful—so we must act on that fact, going forward, putting all our confidence and leaning all our weight on the towering faithfulness of God (Psalm 36:5).

M. MacMullen, Choice Gleanings 2011

Q&A

QUESTION: In a previous *TBC* newsletter, you wrote about a book titled *Heaven Is For Real*. You introduced the article as an "exercise in discernment." I was recently sent a book that rather shocked me. Its title is *Have Heart: Bridging the Gulf Between Heaven and Earth*. It seems to do what you objected to in *Heaven Is For Real*—that is, supply information about heaven that is not taught in Scripture. Actually, it goes well beyond that problem by seeming to promote things prohibited in God's Word. The most disturbing aspect of the book for me, however, was that two of the endorsers are men for whom I have great respect: Greg Laurie and Chuck Missler. What is your discernment regarding *Have Heart*?

RESPONSE: *Have Heart* was written by Steve and Sarah Berger, a couple who suffered the tragic loss of their 19-year-old son, Josiah. Their stated objective is to use what God showed them through their experience surrounding his auto accident in 2009 and beyond that event to comfort and help others who have had a similar loss of a loved one.

My wife and I (T. A.) recently experienced the loss of her mom, who lived with us for the last three years. Yet, as difficult as that was, I can't imagine such a heartrending event as losing one of our five children. For those who have had such an experience, the first part of the Bergers' book fulfills much of their goal: they do give wonderful comfort and some sound biblical counsel. For example, they write, "From the beginning of our pain, we asked the Lord for only His truth. We didn't want to be comforted by a lie or counterfeit sympathies. We wanted God and His truth.... The Holy Spirit also convicts believers of what is true and what is not. He is the ultimate Teacher and Comforter. In His comforting, He brings not only the truth,

but He also proves God's Word time and time again in our hearts.... We need to be rooted and grounded in this truth so that no matter how hard the wind [of brokenheartedness] blows, we'll stand.... Our words need to match biblical truth" (pp. 32-33, 36, 60). This concern for God's truth is repeated throughout the book.

Sadly, however, midway through *Have Heart*, the Bergers take leave of their statements regarding the objective Word of God and begin introducing their subjective experiences involving their deceased son, Josiah. Dreams become a vehicle of communication between Josiah and his family and friends: "And then one night, Josiah showed up in a dream" (p. 69). In that episode, Josiah cryptically communicated that he was "pickled," i.e., his term for his life being preserved in heaven. "He [God] used a dream in my life to further unfold the greatness of Heaven, to reinforce the supernatural preservation of my son..." (p. 71).

Communication through dreams featuring a deceased loved one quickly led to direct communication: "Only two weeks after Josiah went to Heaven, I (Sarah) made it a habit to talk to Josiah... I would then be in instant conversation with Jesus and Siah [Josiah]" (p. 82).

Sarah declared to her son that she needed "to be involved with your life even now... and I want to be involved in what you are doing" (p. 82). She then pleads with God to allow that to take place. Supposedly, God answered Sarah through the dream of an unbeliever, a Muslim friend of the family. Others supplied details of Josiah's "job" in heaven through their own dreams.

The authors introduce many things that are allegedly taking place in heaven that are not specifically taught in the Bible. "Are our loved ones in Heaven able to occasionally see things that are happening on earth?... Do the saints intercede for people who are going through hard times? Yes—they know what is happening, as much as God allows, and they are praying for us!" (p. 76). Although the authors intend to comfort people with their insights, they don't seem to be thinking the process through. Knowing what loved ones are doing on earth—perhaps in rebellion and sin—would certainly bring grief to those in heaven, a place of consummate joy. They seem to recognize that problem yet address it with another extra-biblical assessment: "It's not all the time; they don't get to see everything. But every once in a while the Lord grants them permission to look on this earth, and based on what they see, they intercede on our behalf." Where is that found in Scripture?

The authors note the biblical prohibition of contacting the dead in Deuteronomy

18:10-12 but then issue a qualification presumably for believers: "We need to understand that God has the power to temporarily lift the veil between Heaven and earth at any time according to His good pleasure" (p. 95). They offer support for the legitimacy of their view experientially by adding that "Several people in our family and inner circle of friends have experienced similar meetings with Josiah..." including their pastor. The latter declares, "The next thing I knew, Josiah came into [the church] sanctuary... and he got down on one knee and bent to speak into my ear... I stood up and went over to my wife and told her, 'Josiah was just here'" (pp. 99-100). The gist of Josiah's communication was an encouragement regarding what his pastor had gone through during Josiah's hospital stay.

The Bergers claim that such events surrounding their deceased son are proofs of biblical truths: "This visit *proves* that our loved ones in Heaven are spiritually active and that they care—they are aware of the times that we need special encouragement.... God granted Josiah permission to make an appearance... it serves as *proof* that our son is not dead and gone, but merely moved to a different place to do other things for God. It *shows* he is happy there, and it demonstrates his continued presence in not only our lives but in the lives of his friends as well" (p. 100; italics added).

Although perhaps well meaning in their attempt to uphold the faith by "proofs," the Bergers are nevertheless undermining biblical faith. Jesus gave the example of Abraham speaking to the rich man who wanted Lazarus to appear to his five brothers, saying that if they hear not Moses and the prophets, i.e., the Scriptures, they wouldn't believe someone returning from the dead. Furthermore, Jesus chided Thomas for not believing that He had resurrected from the dead without physical proof, adding, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Experiences never trump faith that is based upon the Word of God. Peter had an incredible experience on the Mount of Transfiguration when he saw Jesus glorified and in the presence of Moses and Elijah. Yet Peter declares that even better than that, we have "a more sure word of prophecy" and exhorts believers to "take heed" to the written Word (2 Pt 1:19).

In further attempting to legitimize their experiences (in view of Scriptural prohibitions), they appeal to the "spontaneity" of the "visitations" as the difference between that which is "condemned by God" and that which is "orchestrated by God" (p. 102). This is wishful thinking on their part, not Scripture's truth.

In fact, much of what the Bergers hold for their hope in heaven is not stated in the Bible. They say that loved ones in heaven are “enjoying some pretty rockin’ new bodies,” whereas Scripture indicates that a deceased believer will receive his immortal body not right after death but when Christ returns for His church at the Rapture (1 Cor 15:52). They transfer things they love about their temporal life into the eternal realm, particularly their family relationships, and they see that relationship continuing with their deceased son: “We want all of us to continue to have relationship with Siah right up until the day that we are face-to-face in Heaven with him” (p. 103).

Just because someone wants it doesn’t make it so. We know that our relationships with *unbelieving* family members will not continue in heaven. How joyful, then, would a family unit be there with perhaps multiple missing members? Will there be family relationships in heaven? No matter what our rationale, Scripture simply does not tell us. We do know that there is neither marrying nor those given in marriage in heaven (Mt 22:30). Furthermore, all that the Bergers describe seems to lose sight of, even diminish, the extraordinary relationship every believer will have with Jesus Christ.

One of the dangers of this book for a person who doesn’t study the Word of God for himself (which is epidemic today) is that he is disarmed by the multiple claims of biblical veracity, which give way to human speculations—which are then accepted as biblical truth. With no scriptural support, the Bergers write, “We know that [Josiah] can see us, hear us, and even be involved, not only in our lives but also in the lives of his friends. We are continually hearing of Siah coming to friends in dreams....The dreams are incredibly profound and always prove God’s Word, point to the glory of God, and compel us to get closer to Jesus” (p. 104). They add, “We mean no disrespect to the prophets, but the idea of Siah being able to observe the choices we make here on earth is *way more motivating* as we seek to live for God moment-by-moment. The cloud of witnesses [of “Christian loved ones in Heaven”] is personal, and we believe it is part of their work in the spiritual realm to cheer on their loved ones still on earth...” (p. 107; italics added).

In their attempt to comfort those who have also lost loved ones to death, the Bergers fail to give the biblical warnings of spiritual deception, especially since their grieving state may make them terribly vulnerable to Satan’s ploys, such as transforming himself “into an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14-15).

In our day, when biblical discernment is practically nonexistent among most who call themselves Christians, to emphasize the experiential, as the Bergers do throughout their book, is playing right into the hands of the Adversary. Tragically, they call such supernatural experiences with their deceased son “God Nods” and encourage their readers to seek their own: “Be on the lookout for God Nods in your own life” (p. 104). They give examples of Josiah kissing his sister after his death (p. 115), and his dad crying out to God for a sign: “I was begging God for a sign, a sign...out of the ordinary...that my Josiah was all right.... I was asking God to give me something I could behold with my physical eyes” (p. 118). Scripture, however, warns that “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Mt 12:39).

In contradiction to the biblical counsel the authors give at the beginning of their book, in the end they not only capitulate to a view that disagrees with the Bible but they promote it enthusiastically: “Our loved ones may show up in dreams or visits or other ways (who can limit God’s imagination?), but the fact is that we’re connected....There is a thin veil, and we’re connected to them, forever, in Christ” (p. 110). They conclude, “You don’t father or mother a child for nineteen years and then hear God say, ‘Oh, now you can’t talk to him. You no longer have a relationship with him until you see him face to face in Heaven....’ We still talk to Josiah, and it’s going to be so great when we’re together again” (p. 125).

In our view, *Have Heart* is an example of how a tragic event in the lives of believers can lead many into an even more tragic misunderstanding of God’s Word.

QUESTION: The NewsWatch article about Governor Perry’s prayer meeting with two pastors in the August 2011 TBC reminded me of Luke 9:49-50: A man was casting out demons in the name of Jesus, and He said, “do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.” [By the same token] Governor Perry stated that the main purpose of the prayer gathering was to turn to God/Jesus (yes, he did “name the name of Jesus”). God’s Word says that this type of prayer is pleasing and glorifying to Him. Shouldn’t that give us all reason for joy?

RESPONSE: We have the word of Jesus that the man in Luke’s account was “not against us,” and we can conclude that this man was truly casting out demons in the name of the true “Jesus.”

Scripture, however, warns us: “For if he that comes preaches another Jesus,

whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Cor 11:4). We do not have the testimony of Jesus concerning the two pastors who came to pray with Governor Perry. Indeed, what we do have is “a prophetic message from Chuck Pierce, an influential prophet (son-in-law and heir to C. Peter Wagner’s Latter-Rain legacy) from Denton, Texas.” God had supposedly commanded some of Pierce’s followers to “pray by lifting the hand of the one I show you that is in the place of civil rule”—and the claim is that Rick Perry was the one.

We have addressed the false teaching and prophecies of the Latter Rain movement and in particular those of Chuck Pierce (see *TBC*, 12/11) in past newsletters. How can one have any assurance that the “Jesus” spoken of in this political gathering was the Jesus of the Bible? The Latter Rain movement and its offspring in the New Apostolic Reformation speak of visions, prophecies, and great spiritual experiences and sometimes interactions with angels. Nevertheless, we are expressly warned in Galatians 1:8, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

God commands the church to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17) and He certainly answers prayer. Of course, we do not receive Christ just so we can get our prayers answered; nevertheless it’s a wonderful blessing and even a promise to believers. Certainly we should pray and certainly we should gather with others for prayer.

But consider the instruction of the Lord concerning prayer. The Lord will not “hear” when we have sin in our lives: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Ps 66:18). Can the Lord respect the prayers of those who teach and prophesy falsely in His name? Indeed, we are exhorted to “prove all things, hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes 5:21).

We’re told in the Gospel of John that God desires that those who worship Him “must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:23-24). Since gathering together in prayer is a form of worship, the same condition of “spirit and truth” applies to prayer. Therefore, discernment is required before believers join in prayer with others. Would Governor Perry’s joining in prayer with Mormons or Roman Catholics (who have another Jesus and a false gospel of works) be “pleasing and glorifying” to God and a “reason for joy”? No. The same applies to all of those who do not abide in the teachings of Christ (2 Jn 1:9-11).

Warning the Witnesses

T.A. McMahon

One has to admire the zeal of the Jehovah's Witnesses. They put in many hours going door to door trying to convince people they don't know to believe what they believe. Although the zeal is commendable in one sense, it's tragic in another. Their incessant labor to attain salvation is worse than fruitless; even more important, it is a rejection of the only way they can be saved.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Jesus is God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). He declares that He is Jehovah God and that those who do not believe in Him cannot be saved: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

There are many very good ministries and resources that address the errors and deceits of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Even though I am familiar with a number of such ministries and their books, articles, and videos, I have to admit that I am hardly the well-equipped, ready-to-straighten-them-out apologist I should be when JW's come to my door. One of the problems is that they come by at unexpected, even inopportune, times, and too often my flesh would much rather avoid them or send them packing. My wife takes another tack (which doesn't help matters). She uses the "honey approach," which is not to be confused with the "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar" tactic. After she greets them, she calls out to me, "Honey, it's for you!" To say that I've had a good attitude in the past about engaging them would be as truthful as their New World Translation. So, I'm under much conviction to repent of my former ways and, by God's grace, be willing to minister to those who are just as lost and in bondage as I was before Christ transformed my life.

To that end, this article is hardly the "be all and end all" for witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses, but some may find it helpful. Part of the problem is that the JW's have so many false teachings that it can be a dilemma remembering them, not to mention deciding what to address. They have their own error-filled bible, which was fabricated in order to support their unbiblical doctrines. They have false prophecies. They have another gospel. They have an erroneous view of death and eternal punishment.

WORDS FROM JEHOVAH

- "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." — JOHN 8:24 KJV
- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." — JOHN 1:1 KJV
- "...I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any." — ISAIAH 44:6,8 KJV
- "I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." — JOHN 10:30-33 KJV
- "I, even I, am the LORD [JEHOVAH]; and beside me there is no saviour." — ISAIAH 43:11 KJV
- "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ...." — TITUS 2:13 KJV
- "Thus saith the LORD [JEHOVAH] the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD [Jehovah] of hosts...." — ISAIAH 44:6 KJV
- "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." — MATTHEW 4:10 KJV
- "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him...." — MATTHEW 2:11 KJV
- "And Thomas answered and said unto [Jesus], My Lord and my God." — JOHN 20:28 KJV
- "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." — JOHN 3:36 KJV

And they have dangerous practices that are based upon their false beliefs. To compound the problem, at least one of the JW's who comes to your door is a veteran and well trained to argue against anyone who would object to his cult's beliefs.

What I propose, for those who want to minister to the JW's yet who identify with my own shortcomings, is to keep things simple by zeroing in on their chief problem: they do not believe that Jesus is God, but rather a created god. Their New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT) spells that out quite clearly by corrupting John 1:1: "In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." Jesus, whom JW's believe is "the Word," is "a god." The problems with that teaching defy both what the Bible teaches and reason. Exodus 20:1-3 declares, "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Jehovah God forbids the manifestation of other gods simply because there is only one God: "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any" (Isaiah 44:6,8). Isaiah declares that same truth over and over again (Isaiah 43:10; 45:5-6,18,21-22). Therefore, all other gods are false gods.

(See resource pages.)

The biblical objections to Jehovah God having created Jesus as *a god* are found throughout Scripture. First of all, no verse in the Bible testifies to that JW teaching, and, as we've seen, it clearly contradicts the many verses declaring that there is only one God. Moreover, Jesus, rather than being a "created god," is the creator and sustainer of all things: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17). The NWT injects the bracketed word "[other]" between "all" and "things" in order to deny the exclusive aspect of Jesus creating "all things," of which only God is capable. Written to support the false teachings of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the NWT nevertheless elsewhere unwittingly confirms Jesus as the exclusive creator of "all things": "All

things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence" (John 1:3 NWT).

The false JW teaching that Jesus is inferior to Jehovah God as a "created god" makes His many statements of claiming to be God a lie, and therefore He himself a liar. In Exodus, the Lord declared to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM: and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). In Isaiah 43:10, as well as many other places, Jehovah announces that He is the only true God by declaring Himself to be the "I am," that is, the eternal self-existing One. JWs argue that Jesus is not Jehovah, which contradicts the numerous times Jesus identifies himself as Jehovah, the "I am" (John 8:28; 11:25; 13:13; 14:10-11, and many others). In John 8:58-59 Jesus proclaimed, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Although the Watchtower Society doesn't accept the fact that Jesus was claiming to be Jehovah God by His declaration, the Jewish religious leaders took Him at His word when He said that He and His Father are one: "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:30-33). Jesus did not correct their accusation because He indeed is God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are in serious trouble and they need to be told so. The denial of the biblical teaching that Jesus is Jehovah God is a direct rejection of the only One who can save them. They say that's not the case because they believe Jehovah is their savior. They are half-right because Jehovah is certainly *the* Savior. In fact—Jehovah is the only Savior: "I, even I, am the LORD [JEHOVAH]; and beside me there is no saviour.... There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 43:11; 45:21-22). Yet their being "half-right" is akin to a bridge that only spans halfway; travelers attempting to cross it will go to their death. Jesus said if they do not believe that He is Jehovah they will die in their sins (John 8:24).

If there is only one Savior, what then of the verses proclaiming "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"? (2 Peter 1:11; 3:18) Jesus and God can be our Savior only if they are one in the same. That's exactly what we

are told in Titus 2:13, which refers to Jesus as "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The Greek grammar is indisputable in support of this verse that God and our Savior Jesus Christ are the same.

Only the teaching of the Trinity can reconcile those verses declaring that there is only one God and one Savior, yet Jehovah is the Savior and Jesus is the Savior. JWs, however, not only reject the Trinity doctrine, they also distort what biblical Christians actually believe, insinuating the false idea that they worship three Gods. Not true. The God of the Bible, that is, Jehovah God, consists of the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit: one God, three Persons. Although a comprehension of God existing in three persons is beyond the grasp of the human mind, that is the clear teaching throughout the Scriptures. Furthermore, the revealed character of God offers many logical reasons why God cannot be a singular Being as the Jehovah's Witnesses claim. Consider, for example, the truth that God is love (1 John 4:8). God is also eternal and perfectly complete. Yet love demands an object to love. As a singular Being, He would need to create an object of His love in order to love. Such a need, if true, would exhibit His lack of being perfectly complete. But couldn't He simply love Himself? No. Self-love is unbiblical. Since 1 Corinthians 13:5 teaches us that love isn't self-seeking, God would be contradicting His own Word. Love, therefore, must always have existed in the Trinity, in which all three Beings of the Godhead love each other.

Are there two Jehovahs? The first part of Isaiah 44:6 declares, "Thus saith the LORD [JEHOVAH] the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD [JEHOVAH] of hosts," and just so there is no misunderstanding, the Lord Jehovah sets the record straight in the latter part of verse 6: "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." Again, only the doctrine of the Trinity makes sense of this verse. Furthermore, the King of Israel and His redeemer the LORD of hosts both signify Jesus, who is the King of Israel and the King of kings and our redeemer (John 18:33,37; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16; Titus 2:14).

Further proofs abound that Jesus must be Jehovah God. Consider for example His acceptance of worship. Jesus himself declared that only God is to be worshiped (Matthew 4:10) yet He accepted worship as a child by the wise men (2:11), by a leper (8:2), by a ruler (9:18), as the Son of God by His disciples (14:33), by the two Marys after His resurrection (28:9), and by many others

including Thomas, who declared to Him, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). By Him all things consist (vs. 17). Jesus is identified as the Son, the mighty God, the everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus is the "Almighty" God, as the Book of Revelation proclaims throughout (Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:15-16). He made Himself equal with God (Phil 2:6; John 5:18). In Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). Only God can forgive sin, yet Jesus forgave sin (Luke 5:20-25).

Jehovah's Witnesses have been deceived into believing that their zealous works are what Jehovah requires for His forgiveness of their sins and their acceptance by Him. Jesus, however, set straight those who had the same belief: "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29). Only Jesus, as God and Man, could (and did!) pay the penalty for the sins of mankind. This He fully accomplished as He hung upon the Cross. Tragically, JWs have rejected their only hope of eternal life with Jesus because they are looking to "another Jesus," a created one of their own fabrication. They need to be warned, however brief one's encounter with them might be.

I suggest that the first question to ask the Jehovah's Witnesses at your door is whether or not they believe that Jesus is Jehovah God. You are not looking for their rationale but rather a declarative yes or no! "No" will be their obvious response, and following that, I recommend that you give them the solemn warnings from the Scriptures, beginning with Jesus' words: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Then, "if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12), and "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). And finally, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). Those verses contain the seeds of conviction that I believe need to be planted, followed, of course, by prayer that God's Word will take root within those lost souls at your door and deliver them from their temporal bondage and eternal separation from Jehovah God.

TBC

Quotable

TIME

If we could ask that time stand still,
 what season would we choose?
 Oh, the glories we would forego,
 the mercies we would lose!

How could we know the very best
 in time, with our small mind?
 We'd pause before His so "right time,"
 and His "fullness" never find.

Then we will with the psalmist grant,
 "My times are in Thy hand,"
 in fleeting life enjoy each day,
 our God in love has planned.

To know Him and to hear His voice
 eternal life is this,
 and not one moment of His mercy
 would we choose to miss!

Ruth Salinger

A very great portion of modern revivalism has been more a curse than a blessing, because it has led thousands to a kind of peace before they have known their misery; restoring the prodigal to the Father's house, and never making him say, "Father, I have sinned." How can he be healed who is not sick, or he be satisfied with the bread of life who is not hungry? The old-fashioned sense of sin is despised....Everything in this age is shallow....The consequence is that men leap into religion, and then leap out again. Unhumbled they came to the church, unhumbled they remained in it, and unhumbled they go from it.

C. H. Spurgeon, 1882

Q&A

QUESTION: I wonder why you mix amillennialism with reconstructionists? Reconstructionists are Postmillennial. It is the reconstructionist post mils who have the "golden age" ideas and who share the worldview of the dominionists. Amils share your view that in this evil age, evil men will wax worse and worse. We do believe that the gospel will advance, not as do the golden agers but after the pattern of our Lord: living by dying, being poor yet making many rich, winning by losing, etc. Anyway, a little more research is needed—I've noticed most pre-mils equate the two views (amil & postmil) and they are VERY far apart.

RESPONSE: Generally, "Amillennialism teaches that the thousand year reign of Christ in Revelation 20:1-6 is symbolic of the current church age, rather than a literal future 1000 year reign. It contends that the period described in Revelation 20 began at Christ's resurrection and will continue until His Second Coming" (<http://www.theopedia.com/Amillennialism>).

"The postmillennialist believes that the millennium is an era (not necessarily a literal thousand years) during which Christ will reign over the earth, not from a literal and earthly throne, but through the gradual increase of the Gospel and its power to change lives. After this gradual Christianization [dominion] of the world, Christ will return and immediately usher the church into their eternal state after judging the wicked" (<http://www.theopedia.com/Postmillennialism>).

You say that the two views are "very far apart"? In both theologies, the passage in Revelation 20 is spiritualized, supposing that it is not necessary to view it as a literal thousand-year reign of Christ. Reformed amillennialist David Engelsma states: "The New Testament instructs us to interpret Old Testament prophecy spiritually." The Postmillennialist does the very same thing. That's why reconstructionist Kenneth Gentry asks, "Why cannot there be a spiritual Israel" that replaces physical Israel (Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, p. 167)? Their conclusions may vary in small details, but the principle is the same. Since both theologies teach forms of Replacement Theology, all the promises God gave to Israel must be fulfilled spiritually. As John Walvoord observes, "In order to find fulfillment of millennial promises in the present age it is necessary for [post-millennialism] to follow an allegorical or figurative system of interpretation in great areas of Biblical prophecy (*Millennial Series: Part 2: Postmillennialism*, Study by John F. Walvoord).

Consequently, the term "spiritual Israelites" and the teaching of Replacement Theology is something seen in both postmillennialism and amillennialism. Professed disagreements do not prevent agreements in several key areas. Consequently, it is difficult to sustain your point that "the two views (amil and postmil) are very far apart."

As Ron Merryman reminded us in the October 2011 *TBC Extra*, "We can thank Augustine of Hippo for spiritualizing Messiah's Millennial Kingdom, then medieval Romanism for popularizing Augustine's amillennialism, and the Reformers for not correcting the error."

QUESTION: We disagree with your premise on what God has in store for

fleshly Israel, the nation. Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament promises wholesale salvation for the Jews in the end times. We believe that the church is the New Israel of God as the Bible teaches. It's His New Bride. He divorced His once chosen people. The divorce was finalized in 70 A.D. Prophet Hosea's divorce from Gomer mimics God's divorce from fleshly Israel, which was finalized when they murdered Jesus.

RESPONSE: Speaking to "fleshly Israel," the Lord promised that although they would be scattered across many nations, they would be gathered again (Dt. 30:3).

With the increasing influence of Replacement Theology, it cannot be repeated too often that the Lord distinctly said that "though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer 30:11). As to their importance as "signs of the times," the prophet Joel recorded that "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land" (Joel 3:2; see also Zec 7,8, etc.).

In Luke 21:24, speaking to Jewish listeners, the Lord Jesus proclaimed, "And they [Israel/Jews] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In Matthew 23:39, the Lord Jesus tells a disobedient Israel, "For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Jesus was simply repeating the promise of Zechariah 12:10, where it is promised that the Lord will return, and "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." How can this be the church? When did the church "pierce" the Lord? It just doesn't fit.

Further, how can "Hosea's divorce from Gomer mimic God's divorce from fleshly Israel, which was finalized when they murdered Jesus"? The Lord specifically tells Hosea to "Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flogons of wine" (Hos 3:1).

The Lord then tells Hosea to buy back his wife, and Hosea obeys (v. 2). Under the

inspiration of the Lord, Hosea declares to his wife, “Thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee” (v. 3).

In a prophecy that is based upon Hosea’s reconciliation with his wife, the prophet writes “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim” (v. 4). So it has been since A.D. 70, but we are told, “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days” (v. 5).

Finally, the Apostle Paul noted that God was far from finished with the nation of Israel (Rom 11:1-26). We know from the context that Paul is talking about “fleshly Israel,” a nation into which he was born. “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom 11:26).

QUESTION: In *Occult Invasion*, Dave Hunt wrote that “water witching,” or divination, is an occult practice. The well drillers who drilled the well for my own domestic water told me how they had located the best place to drill. They also demonstrated how the “rod” reacted to the presence of water. Are you saying that I should stop using the well and pay thousands of dollars to have them drill another somewhere else when this one is strong and healthy, [and] in a perfect place? James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning.” Why not just accept that this is what God wants for me, since it perfectly fits my needs?

RESPONSE: Dave’s perspective regarding “water witching” is that it seems to be an occult practice akin to divination because there is no scientific basis for the process. He gives an example of “water witching” over a map by a person in Maine, who not only located water in *Bermuda* but told the drillers the depth at which they would find water, its quality, and its quantity! Clearly that process is not scientific. Either it’s occult (divination), or it’s just a lucky guess. Dave’s concern is that it may promote divination as a legitimate method for people.

You have misappropriated James 1:17, implying that the Lord agrees with human pragmatism, i.e., “If it works, it’s a good thing.” The fact remains that divination is an ungodly, unbiblical, and occult practice.

No one is saying that you should stop

using the well. That’s between you and the Lord: “the just shall live by faith.” If you weren’t aware before the drilling that the well drillers used water witching and neither did you seek them out for their occult technique, your situation seems to be similar to those who unknowingly ate food offered to idols. In 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote that it was permissible for a believer to consume meat that had been offered at a pagan altar, with the caveat being the conscience of a weaker brother. In Corinth, there were many believers who had worshiped these same idols. They did not fully know that God was absolutely sovereign over all other pretenders. For them to eat food offered to idols created something Satan could and would exploit (1 Cor 8:1-13). The same may be said for those dabbling in dowsing. Whom might they influence?

QUESTION: What do you think about the teaching that we all hate ourselves and have to learn to love ourselves?

RESPONSE: First of all, I’d say it’s not even rational. Ephesians 5:29 says no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it.

Having to learn to love ourselves is a totally new “doctrine” within the church. Read A. W. Tozer, Moody, Torrey, Spurgeon, Andrew Murray. You won’t find it in any of them. It’s been picked up the last 45 years from psychologists; men who did not get it by studying the Word of God on their knees in prayer.

Erich Fromm, an atheist, popularized the idea of self-love. He got it from Nietzsche. One of Fromm’s books was *Ye Shall Be as Gods*. He took the lie of the serpent for its title. In his book, *Man for Himself*, he justified the idea that we all hate ourselves and that we need to learn to love ourselves by saying that Jesus taught it when He said, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Mt 22:39).

Let’s look at Matthew 22:36-40. Jesus gave the two great commandments: love God and love your neighbor. Today, a third one has been introduced: love yourself. However, if we were deficient in self-love, Jesus wouldn’t have said to love your neighbor as you love yourself, because he said it to everybody and not to a certain class or category of people.

So it’s a given—we must already love ourselves. And He couldn’t say “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Mt 7:12) if we all innately hated ourselves and wanted to do ourselves harm.

This teaching came into the church from psychology and was picked up by Robert

Schuller in his book, *Self-love: The Dynamic Force of Success*. Since then, it has moved throughout the church and has been picked up by men in the best pulpits. There are no scriptures to support it. Read Philippians 2:3 and Romans 12:2.

Remember, God made man in his image. C. S. Lewis wrote, “We are but mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright at all, depends entirely on the Son which shines upon us.”

If there’s something wrong with the image in the mirror, the mirror needs to get back in line with the one whose image it was designed to reflect. But instead of being turned toward God and a relationship with Him, we’re being turned to ourselves, a self-image psychology.

The Scriptures say, “but we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image” (2 Cor 3:18). What we’re being taught today is that we need to visualize our self-image as we want it to be—focus our self-concept and then we’ll be transformed into that. That is absolutely opposite what the Bible says, and it is destructive to biblical Christianity.

QUESTION: Many are teaching that the church must be united and purified before Christ can return. Is that biblical?

RESPONSE: It is neither biblical nor logical that the small fraction of the church that is alive on earth at the time of the Rapture must have attained to a status that was unknown by Christians who have died in order to join them at that heavenly marriage to our Lord. Yes, the Bride is made ready and robed in white linen (Rv 19:7-8)—but the Bride is the entire church. If this purification is a prerequisite for being raptured, then what about those who died before the Rapture? Clearly, they must be “made ready” after they get to heaven. Then why wouldn’t this happen to all Christians up there, rather than on the earth?

Surely this final cleansing can only take place at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) when we give account to our Lord, our works are tried in the fire (1 Cor 3:11-15) and we are rewarded or suffer loss. There is no biblical basis for a “last-days revival” that will make Christians worthy to be raptured to heaven. We are worthy of heaven through Christ’s finished work alone. Moreover, the Bible speaks of the last-days church as apostate (2 Thes 2:3). Christ even questions whether He will find faith on the earth when He returns (Lk 18:8). Even the wise fall asleep while the bridegroom tarries (Mt 25:5). Hardly the “last-days revived church”! Let us therefore watch and be ready for our Lord!

A Generation Adrift Part 1

T.A. McMahon

This is an observation, an assessment, and some prayerfully considered recommendations for the upcoming generation of evangelicals. There are rough seas ahead for them, far more hazardous than what their parents have experienced. They are heading into a perfect storm of apostasy for which few of them seem to be prepared. Much of what they will face and the fact that they are ill equipped to successfully weather what's ahead is at least in part the fault of the preceding generation—my generation. That is not to say that each generation is not responsible for their own sin (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20), or that they are merely victims of their environment, but nevertheless, my own generation failed specifically (although I thank the Lord for the exceptions) to do what God commanded of the Israelites:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And **these words**, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: **And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children**.... Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: **but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons**; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them **hear my words**, that they **may learn** to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, **and that they may teach their children**.... **And ye shall teach them your children**, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, **and the days of your children**.... (Deuteronomy 6:4-7; 4:9-10; 11:19-21)

“Evangelical,” as the term is used in this article, refers to Christians who consider the Bible to be their authority in all matters of faith and practice. In other words, they profess to go by the Scriptures to guide their lives. Sadly, that isn't much more than lip service for most professing evangelicals, if

various surveys identifying their beliefs and practices have even a modicum of accuracy. But does the same apply to the upcoming generation of “Bible-believing” Christians? There's little doubt of that, although the blame for their condition can certainly be shared with my generation.

Who among believing parents can honestly say that they heeded the instruction that God gave to the Israelites to “diligently” teach their own children the Word of God? As I think back on raising my five children, now in their 20s and 30s, my wife and I “coulda done better.” Although we knew that their instruction in the Lord was to be first and foremost *our responsibility* at home, too often we turned them over to a Sunday school class, a church program, and/or a youth pastor (who in my view has one of the most difficult callings in ministry). Not that those experiences were all bad; some of them truly blessed our kids. The basic problem was that we lost sight at times of our personal responsibility to

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

—2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

“bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” allowing the church to become our family's “spiritual babysitter.”

That fault is hardly unique to my family or my generation but is widespread among evangelicals today. The outcome is of no small consequence, contributing to a generation of true and professing Christians who are *functionally biblically illiterate*. They know how to read, they have Bibles, but they rarely put the two together. That creates a serious quandary. James exhorts us in his epistle to be “doers of the Word” and not hearers only. Obviously, if they don't know God's Word, they can't do what it says. Furthermore, most have come to rely on what others tell them the Bible says. They have been conditioned by being “spoon-fed” the Scriptures, and many seem okay with that. Spoon-feeding is reasonable for baby believers until they are ready for the meat of the Scriptures, but God's Word tells us to wean them off that process as soon as possible (Hebrews 5:12-13). It's tragic that such a condition prevails among young

evangelical Christians today.

Tragic? Yes. First of all, it brings into question whether they were taught and have understood and truly believed the gospel, the good news that Jesus paid the full penalty for their sins and that He offers salvation to mankind as a free gift that must be received by grace through faith alone (Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 2:17). Although the acceptance of eternal life with Jesus requires only child-like faith, living one's life in Christ is a growth process that begins with a new birth (being born again spiritually) and then develops into spiritual maturity. At least that's the biblical plan. For the majority of the next generation of believers, however, their situation seems to be a case of arrested development. The reasons for, and the dire consequences of, such a condition are numerous.

During the last three decades, many have experienced Christianity in church settings that major in entertainment rather than in teaching the Scriptures and discipling those who attend. Thus, they are the products of years of church-growth marketing schemes that have attempted to fill pews with the “unchurched” and keep them coming back by using consumer-oriented tactics. It's a “keep the customer happy,” seeker-friendly approach that has critically diluted biblical content as churches compete with the world in order to interest their youth. The game rooms of some mega-churches could put to shame their cities' most popular arcades. The marketing mentality of “do whatever it takes to attract and keep the kids coming back to church” reflects a “bait and switch” scheme, and in most situations the “bait” (games, music that mimicks the world, and entertainment) overwhelms the intended “switch” (learning the Bible). That endeavor has both trivialized and marginalized the instruction of the Word of God for those who have been subjected to that worldly approach. The outcome has resulted in a shallow Christianity for millions of young professing Christians.

Biblical shallowness, however, has many contributors. Even in situations where scriptural content has made an impact on our youth, quite often it has been accepted simply because an engaging preacher or teacher captured their imagination. Although that condition is not exclusive to the next generation of believers, it has the overall effect of stunting one's growth. If one believes a biblical doctrine only because they were persuaded by a compelling teacher, they may become dependent upon the teacher instead of being rooted in the understanding of the Scriptures. Believing something because

“so-and-so said so” is faith by proxy, a faith that isn’t one’s own. Such an attached belief is not only wrongly applied, but it does little to strengthen one’s faith. Moreover, it may be tied to the spiritual status of the person who taught the doctrine, and should the preacher/teacher go south morally or doctrinally, so may go his followers.

Akin to a faith by attachment, and just as potentially destructive, is a faith acquired by osmosis. Both are secondhand. Faith by osmosis rarely goes beyond what a person has “picked up” from his believing family members, friends, teachers, and assorted Christians throughout his life. Scripture does say that “faith comes by hearing,” but for that to produce fruit, the verse goes on to say that the “hearing” has to be “by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). To this James adds that we are to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only,” the latter causing one to be vulnerable to deception (James 1:22).

If deception is a potential problem for one who hears the Word of God but doesn’t do what it says, what might be the situation for those who only incidentally hear the Word and have nothing more than a superficial knowledge of it? Ignorance may be bliss for some, but scripturally it makes one the “devil’s delight.” Since the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is the only formidable weapon against the one whom the Bible calls “devoid of truth, the father of lies, a liar and deceiver, who goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,” what then of those who can’t handle the sword of the Spirit—whose Christianity has been shaped by most of the conditions mentioned above? When you add it up, they are indeed functionally biblically illiterate and therefore defenseless against God’s adversary.

Young evangelicals who are involved in ministry tell me that the increasing state of easy access to information through the internet, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and various blogs and apps has compounded the difficulty of encouraging their peers to study the Bible in depth; what’s more, it reinforces their appetite for instant gratification. That’s comparable to some in my generation, who were of the mentality: “Why read the book when you can read the CliffsNotes version?”—on steroids! It’s also been noted that such believers are *aware* that they are seriously deficient in understanding the Scriptures—which has led to other problems: a) they are easily intimidated by those who tell them to leave the Bible answers to the scholars and experts, and b) they tend to seek out the latest Christian books for enlightenment rather than gleaning insights from the Bible

itself. Once again, all of this makes them ripe for deception.

If that real-life scenario regarding the next generation of evangelicals sounds disheartening, brace yourself for the rest of the story that they will be facing. When Jesus was asked about the last days, His first words were, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4). Deception was His characterization of the time prior to His second coming. In Luke 18:8, He further underscores the situation when He implies that *the faith*, the actual *living out* the truth of God’s Word, will be scant among men at His return. We are given many prophecies that tell us what to look for and when that time will be drawing near. Scripture overwhelmingly declares that escalating apostasy will precede His second coming. No one other than God knows the exact time of Christ’s return for His church, the Bride of Christ, to take her to heaven, but as these apostasies escalate, it makes a rapture event even more imminent. The apostasy is primarily geared to the advancement of the religion of the Antichrist. It will include seductive beliefs and practices, most of which have a form of godliness but are diametrically opposed to what the Bible teaches. They are beliefs that seem right unto men (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25), and they are taught either by those who are themselves apostate—deceived professing Christians—or by true believers, the latter unwittingly (Acts 20:28-31). This false universal religion won’t just suddenly arrive; its preparation began at the fall of mankind and will culminate following the rapture of all believers prior to the beginning of the Antichrist’s seven-year reign.

Has the apostasy captured the hearts and minds of our young generation of evangelicals? Certainly there are many who have not succumbed to the rampant deception, even though they may be ill equipped to maintain a steadfastness in the faith. No doubt it is their love for Jesus and the grace of God that has kept them thus far. Furthermore, among young people, there are encouraging signs that they have a desire to see biblical Christianity manifested in their lives as they pursue a closer walk with the Lord and a deeper understanding of His Word. Yet too few are truly prepared for the spiritual battle and the rough seas ahead, which will only intensify. Although the next generation may not be the generation in which the Lord returns, it will nevertheless face conditions unprecedented among the generations that preceded it.

The Lord willing, in part two we will address specifically some of the more serious issues that have already led multitudes

off course from God’s Word and have shipwrecked the faith of many. Those turbulent waters feature the unbiblical “self” teachings, such as self-esteem and self-love; the fear of being considered intolerant; the desire to be accepted and respected by the world. These times also exhibit gross lack of discernment by churches and individuals who allow community and relationships to overshadow biblical truth; who buy into the pseudo-sciences of evolution and psychotherapy; who appear to have an inability to recognize the heresies of the emerging church movement, the contemplative movement, and mystical and occult practices, the word-faith and healing and prosperity movement, and the inner-healing movement. There is a lack of understanding regarding Replacement Theology; the rise of anti-Semitism within the church; yoga in the church; the false gospel and anti-biblical dogmas of Roman Catholicism; and no apparent concern regarding the errors of the youth-oriented para-church organizations; the misdirected propensity to help others by means of a social gospel, eliminating social injustice, and other programs that lead to “works salvation.”

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his spiritual son in the faith and one of the pastoral leaders of the generation that would succeed his own, these sobering words of warning:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

In addition to the warning, he also gave Timothy instructions for helping to correct those things that would take place and would draw believers away from God’s truth:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season [always be ready!]; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine [hang in there with the teachings of Scripture]. (2 Timothy 4:2)

That’s the simple solution to anchor a generation adrift: simple, as in “not complex.” Yet neither is it easy—it demands discipline and diligence.

It is our prayer that this ministry and believers who are of my generation will, by God’s grace and enablement, come alongside those of the next generation of believers, helping them in their walk with the Lord, supplying information where it is needed, and, most important, encouraging them in the diligent study of the Word of God. **TBC**

Quotable

Men will look at the life I lead,
See the side I take, and the things I love;
They judge my Lord by my every deed
Lord, set my affection on things above.

Author Unknown

Q&A

QUESTION: In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, when Paul says "All Scripture is God-breathed," is he referring to his own writings and the remainder of the New Testament? What evidence do we have that these should be considered Scripture as the Old Testament is?

RESPONSE: When Paul said all Scripture is "God breathed," the Old Testament was fully compiled, but the New Testament was in the making. The Lord may well have revealed to him the importance of his own epistles.

Second Timothy 3:16 is often rightly cited as evidence for *sola scriptura*. Immediately preceding 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is verse 15, which states that "...from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Paul is speaking of Timothy's familiarity with the Old Testament, as he did not have the New Testament in its entirety.

Nevertheless, Timothy had the two epistles written to him. He may have had copies of other epistles as well. Furthermore, this verse tells us that "from a child" he had known the Holy Scriptures, undoubtedly taught to him by a godly mother. The Apostle Paul is declaring that the scriptures available were sufficient to lead one to a saving knowledge in Jesus Christ and were "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tm 3:16-17).

Further, the Apostle Paul quoted Luke 10:7 as scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18, linking it to Deuteronomy 25:4: "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." Paul places the same emphasis upon the Lord's words in Luke as those in Deuteronomy.

Peter wrote of Paul's epistles in 2 Peter 3:16: "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Consequently, the New Testament Scriptures themselves witness to the conclusions the apostles had reached under the inspira-

tion of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION: I disagree with your article on "The Gospel in the Stars" (TBC 5/89). I just think of Genesis 1:1, 14-19, Job 38:31-32, and Psalm 19:1-14. I think about the fall of man, the tower of Babel, the Flood, and before the Abrahamic Covenant. God didn't just leave mankind alone. He had to leave them some text or scrolls to know of His redemption plan. And I do believe that the first scroll was in the sky, showing the times and seasons, a plan of salvation and redemption.

I have read Bullinger, Seiss, Martin, and read Enoch, Jubilees, Jasher, and I find it very plausible and acceptable to understand that in the age of innocence and conscience, early man had to have some information and knowledge of Truth, and how he would come back to God and fill that void in his heart. "The heavens declare the glory of God..." I stand on the Bible. I have no faith in man, and man's opinions; I trust in God, and I pray for the truth about things I want to know about.

RESPONSE: If we trust the Lord and stand on the Bible, we shouldn't say that Bullinger, Seiss, Martin, and apocryphal books such as Enoch, etc., are "plausible." They can't be plausible if they contain teachings contrary to the Word of God. We can't say that we have "no faith in man" and yet find human reasoning "acceptable."

Let's begin with Psalm 19:1. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." They "declare" His glory. They demonstrate in every speech and language that there is a Creator who called into being this amazing, ordered universe. But they do not give any details about the gospel that saves man.

In the beginning, the Lord created the heavens and the earth. We are specifically told that "God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Gn 1:14). The heavens both declare the glory of God and serve to mark time. But they cannot be our spiritual focus. Indeed, Jeremiah warned Israel: "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them" (Jer 10:2). Being separated from their Creator, they began worshipping the creation more than the One who made them. Though the stars witnessed eloquently of the Lord's greatness and glory, they were not the medium used of God to communicate the gospel of salvation.

Paul asks rhetorically, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in

him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" The stars are glorious, but the stars are mute. They are not a "preacher."

Too many who are teaching the Gospel in the Stars theory are really just trying to "Christianize" astrology. They incorporate ancient structures such as the pyramids into this unbiblical goulash. Even the late D. James Kennedy tells his readers that the key to understanding this way of salvation is the sphinx: "I know it will surprise you, but the sphinx actually unlocks the mystery of the zodiac" (Kennedy, D. James, *The Real Meaning of the Zodiac*, Coral Ridge Ministries, 1989).

This creates other problems. The signs of the zodiac are not visible above the Arctic Circle. There are no "signs" for any Aleuts, Eskimos, Siberians, Greenlanders, and Scandinavian people living above 66 degrees of latitude. In other words, for many people, the "first scroll" is blank.

Finally, to see the Gospel in the Stars as plausible is to give credence to the theories of man and place our belief in the Babylonian-based system of astrology. May the Lord deliver us from this.

QUESTION: I have read your article exposing the mind science used by those teaching The Secret. That's the way I've always felt about The Secret, but when I express those opinions to others, they retaliate with Proverbs 23:7. How would you handle that?

RESPONSE: Proverbs 23:7 reads, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee."

Those who use this verse to support their preconceived ideas are not reading the verse in context or in its entirety. It's like using an 8-foot board to bridge a 50-foot chasm—it just won't stretch that far.

These verses are an admonition to discernment, for verse 6, right before this one, reads, "Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats." Thus it is the man who "hath an evil eye" of whom it is said, "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...."

As a man "thinketh in his heart"—this tells us that the key to his true character is in his *thoughts*, unseen. The verse goes on to read, "Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee." What is "in his heart" differs from what comes out of his mouth.

The followers of mind science, who use Proverbs 23:7 as evidence, are "wresting" (twisting) the Scripture to suit their own purpose and agenda. Of these individuals, Peter warned, "They that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pt 3:16).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

A Leap in the Dark

QUESTION: I have always understood that there is a difference between belief and faith—that belief is based upon fact and that faith, since it is related to religion, must be divorced from evidence and reason. That seems reasonable, but lately I’ve been wondering whether, and why, this should be true. Can you help me?

RESPONSE: You are struggling with a serious misunderstanding that has brought multitudes throughout history into religious bondage. The Bible puts belief and faith on an equal footing, with no difference between them. Common sense itself and a little reflection will tell you that faith must have as sure a factual foundation as belief. Faith is not a leap in the dark. Furthermore, faith in God and His Word, because it involves eternal matters, is far more important than belief about things of this life.

Faith, therefore, ought to have an even more solid basis than mere belief. One may be willing to allow some uncertainty in earthly matters, but only a fool would be comfortable with even the smallest degree of doubt in things that affect him eternally. No wonder the great Apostle Paul wrote, “*Prove* all things; hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Luke tells us that during the 40 days Jesus spent with His disciples after His resurrection, He “showed himself alive . . . by many *infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3). Clearly, Christ did not consider it enough merely to show Himself to His disciples without providing irrefutable evidence of His resurrection. He considered it both legitimate and essential to *prove* that He was the very same One who had been crucified and that He had risen from the dead in the same body (but now in a new and glorious form) that had been placed lifeless in the grave.

“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself,” Christ told the shocked disciples the first time He came to them after His resurrection. “Handle me and see, for a spirit [ghost] hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). They had thought they were seeing a ghost, but He proved otherwise to them. To doubting Thomas, who had not been present on this first occasion, Christ declared later: “Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side . . .” (John 20:27). Here was irrefutable, tangible evidence.

It is only common sense that strict proof should be demanded before making a commitment or an investment in this life. How much more important, then, to be absolutely certain, based upon solid proof, before accepting by faith those things which affect one’s eternal destiny. True “faith,” as we shall see, can only be founded upon fact—not upon feelings, intuition, or emotion. Much less does faith arise out of blind submission to some religious authority.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PG. 13-14) by DAVE HUNT

Who Can Understand the Gospel?

Dave Hunt

Calvinists emphasize that their theology rests upon solid biblical exegesis, being “firmly based...upon the Word of God.” Some have gone so far as to assert that “this teaching was held to be the truth by the apostles,” and even that “Christ taught the doctrines that have come to be known as the five points of Calvinism.”

According to the Bible itself, however, no one should accept such claims without verifying them from Scripture. Any doctrine claiming to be based on the Bible must be carefully checked against the Bible—an option open to anyone who knows God’s Word. Relying upon one supposed biblical expert for an evaluation of the opinions of another would be going in circles. No matter whose opinion one accepted, the end result would be the same: one would still be held hostage to human opinion. Each individual must personally check out all opinions directly from the Bible. Yet I have been advised to keep silent on the basis that only those with special qualifications are competent to check Calvinism against the Bible, an idea that in itself contradicts Scripture.

The inhabitants of the city of Berea, though not even Christians when Paul first preached the gospel to them, “searched the scriptures daily, [to see] whether those things [Paul preached] were so” (Acts 17:11)—and they were commended as “noble” for doing so. Yet leading Calvinists insist that it requires special (and apparently lengthy) preparation for anyone to become qualified to examine that peculiar doctrine in light of the Bible. Why?

After all, the Bible itself declares that a “young man” can understand its instructions and thereby “cleanse his way” (Psalm 119:9). Even a child can know the Holy Scriptures through home instruction from a mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Timothy was certainly not a seminary-trained theologian, yet Paul considered him competent to study and “rightly divide” God’s Word. If special expertise were required to test Calvinism against Scripture, that would be proof enough that this peculiar doctrine did not come from valid biblical exegesis. Anything *that* enigmatic, by very definition, could not have been derived from the Bible, which itself claims to be written for the simple.

Many friends, whose obvious sincerity

was appreciated, have told me that in spite of my quoting John Calvin directly from his writings, along with quoting leading Calvinists of today, I was still likely to misrepresent Calvinism. Even after many hours of detailed discussions with Calvinist friends, they still told me, “You just don’t understand Calvinism.” Then what of the claim that Calvinism *is* the gospel and true Christianity? Could multitudes of mature and fruitful evangelicals have somehow misunderstood the gospel and Christianity?

In contrast, “Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein” (Luke 18:16-17).

Should Calvinism remain a mystery

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty....That no flesh should glory in his presence.

—1 Corinthians 1:26–29

for the common Christian? That very fact, if true, would be additional proof that Calvinism was not derived from the Scriptures. How could something so complicated possibly come from that upon which every person is capable of meditating day and night (Psalm 1:1–2), and joyfully received—even by a “little child”? If the essential nourishment God’s Word provides is to be every man’s daily sustenance for spiritual life (Deuteronomy 8:3), could Calvinism really be the biblical gospel and biblical Christianity and yet be so difficult for the ordinary Christian to understand?

Why should Calvinism be such a complex and apparently esoteric subject that it would require years to comprehend? Such an attitude could very well intimidate many into accepting this belief simply because such a vast array of highly respected theologians and evangelical leaders espouse it. Surely the great majority of Calvinists are ordinary Christians. On what basis, then, without the expertise and intense study that I apparently lacked, were they able to

understand and accept it?

Most Calvinists (but not all) agree upon five major points. Some insist that there are ten or even more relevant points. Edwin H. Palmer, in his book *The Five Points of Calvinism*, suggests, “Calvinism is not restricted to five points: it has thousands of points.” It’s not likely that we can cover all those alleged points in these pages! Palmer himself deals with only five.

There are a number of disagreements between “five-point” and “four-point” Calvinists. For example, Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, called himself a “four-point” Calvinist because he rejected Limited Atonement. Laurence M. Vance points out that “Many Baptists in the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches are four-point Calvinists” [Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, rev. ed. 1999), p. 147]. To deny one point while accepting the other four, however, has been called by five-point Calvinists the “blessed inconsistency.” They are correct. We shall see that each point is a logical consequence of those preceding it. It is not possible to be a Calvinist and hold *logically* and consistently to less than all five points.

God’s foreknowledge, predestination/election, human choice, God’s sovereignty, and man’s responsibility are widely alleged to be mysteries beyond our ability to reconcile. Therefore, some insist that these concepts should be accepted without any attempt at understanding or reconciling apparent conflicts. The illustration is used repeatedly that as we approach heaven’s gate we see written above it, “Whosoever will may come,” but once we have entered we see from the inside the words, “Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.” We respect the many church leaders who continue to offer such an explanation as though that were sufficient. There are, however, several compelling reasons for not acquiescing to that popular position.

First of all, God intends for us to understand His Word rather than to plead “mystery” over vital portions of it. He has given it for our learning. Of God’s Word the psalmist said, “it is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105), and such it is intended to be for each of us today. Peter acknowledged that there are “things hard to be understood” and warned that Scripture is sometimes twisted by some, resulting in destruction to those who do so (2 Peter 3:16). God never suggests, however, that there is any part of His Word that we should not attempt to understand fully.

Inasmuch as many passages in Scripture are devoted to the difficult themes we will address, we can confidently expect that the Bible itself will clarify the issues.

Second, the history of the church from its earliest beginnings has involved sharp differences of opinion on many vital subjects, including the gospel itself. Numerous destructive heresies have developed and have been vigorously opposed. Neither Christ nor His apostles considered divergent views on the essentials of the gospel to be normal or acceptable, but commanded the believers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). That command applies to us today.

Third, it hardly seems that our Lord would have us draw back from seriously considering and understanding foreknowledge and election/predestination, as well as man’s responsibility and how it all fits together in God’s sovereign grace. Although we may never see the entire body of Christ in perfect agreement, each of us is responsible to understand these issues as clearly as each one is able, through diligent study—and to help one another in the process.

Finally, God calls upon us to seek Him in order that we may know Him, though His ways and His thoughts are as far above ours as “the heavens are higher than the earth” (Isaiah 55:8-9). Surely, as we come to know God better, we will understand His Word and His will more fully. God is our Savior; to know Him is life eternal (John 17:3). Knowing God must include a deepening understanding of all He has revealed to us in His Word.

We are to live, as Christ said (quoting His own declaration as the *I AM* to Israel through Moses in Deuteronomy 8:3), not “by bread alone, but by *every* word that proceedeth out of the mouth of” (Matthew 4:4). Solomon said, “*Every* word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5; italics added).

Then we must carefully consider and seek to understand *every* word.

It is a general assumption that, whatever other disagreements we may have, when it comes to the gospel of our salvation both Calvinists and non-Calvinists are in full agreement. Some Calvinists, however, disagree, claiming (as we have already seen) that the biblical gospel *is* Calvinism. For example: “God’s plan of salvation revealed in the Scriptures consists of what is popularly known as the Five Points of Calvinism.” Loraine Boettner declares, “The great advantage of the Reformed Faith is that in the framework of the Five

Points of Calvinism it sets forth clearly what the Bible teaches concerning the way of salvation.” Others insist that “if you do not know the Five Points of Calvinism, you do not know the gospel, but some perversion of it....” B. B. Warfield claimed, “Calvinism is evangelicalism in its purest and only stable expression.”

Such claims that the Five Points *alone* constitute the gospel raise concerns about Calvinism to an entirely new level! If much special study is required to understand Calvinism, and if years of Bible study still leave one ignorant on this subject, and if Calvinism *is* the gospel of our salvation—then where does that leave the multitudes who think they are saved but are ignorant of Calvinism? This question may seem divisive but it cannot be ignored.

Another grave question is raised concerning the proclamation of the gospel to the whole world as Christ commanded. Calvinists insist that their doctrine does not diminish the zeal with which the gospel is to be preached. To support this assertion, they name some of the great preachers and missionaries who were staunch Calvinists, such as George Whitefield, Adoniram Judson, William Carey, and others. And it is true that, although they know that many to whom they preach are not among the elect, some Calvinists nevertheless preach earnestly so that the elect may hear and believe.

Certainly, however, the zeal of such men and women in bringing the gospel to the world could not be *because* of their Calvinism but only *in spite* of it. To believe that those who will be saved have been predestined to salvation by God’s decree, that no others can be saved, and that the elect must be regenerated by God’s sovereign act without the gospel or any persuasion by any preacher, or by any faith in God on their part, could hardly provide motivation for earnestly preaching the gospel. No matter how the Calvinist tries to argue to the contrary, such a belief can only lessen the zeal that a reasonable person might otherwise have to reach the lost with the gospel of God’s grace in Christ.

The gospel that Peter and Paul and the other apostles preached was for everyone in the audiences they faced, wherever they went. It was not a message that only the elect could believe. In contrast, Calvin’s gospel says that Christ died, and His blood atones, for only the elect. This is the way Calvin put it:

To many this seems a perplexing subject, because they deem it most

incongruous that of the great body of mankind some should be predestinated to salvation, and others to destruction.... From this we infer, that all who know not that they are the peculiar people of God, must be wretched from perpetual trepidation.... [John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998 ed.) III:xxi,1]

Could this be the same gospel Paul preached? Paul proclaimed to audiences, “We declare unto [all of] you glad tidings...” (Acts 13:32). The “glad tidings” of the gospel that Paul preached echoed what the angel of the Lord had said to the shepherds at the time of Christ’s birth: “I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people...” (Luke 2:10). These tidings of great joy concerned the fact that “the Savior of the world” (Luke 2:11; John 4:42) had been born.

Calvin’s gospel, however, says that Christ is not the Savior of the world, but only of the elect. How could that message be “tidings of great joy” to those whom the Savior did not come to save and for whose sins He refused to die?

Could it really be true, as Arthur C. Custance insists, that “Calvinism is the Gospel and to teach Calvinism is in fact to preach the Gospel” [Custance, *The Sovereignty of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), 302]? Is Calvinism founded upon the plain text of Scripture? Or...[is] a peculiar interpretation of Scripture required to sustain this doctrine?

Our concern is for the defense of the character of the true God, the God of mercy and love whose “tender mercies are over all his works” (Psalm 145:9). The Bible declares that He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9); “who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Such is the God of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

Open examination and discussion of important issues—especially the gospel and the very nature and character of God—can only be healthy for the body of Christ. It is my prayer that our investigation of Calvinism and its comparison with God’s Holy Word...will bring helpful and needed clarification.

TBC

Excerpted from T.U.L.I.P. and the Bible: Comparing the Works of Calvin with the Word of God.

Quotable

The inconsistencies of Christian people who, while professing to believe their Bibles, were yet content to live just as they would if there were no such Book, [has always] been one of the strongest arguments of my skeptical companions.

Hudson Taylor

Q&A

QUESTION: Recently I joined a yoga class for fitness and relaxation. During the class, mantras are used. The teacher explained the meanings such as “all is truth.” Is it wrong to participate in these mantras? Can I just substitute Christian words such as “Jesus”? Or should I not participate in the class at all? Everyone I have asked seems to think there is no problem with this but I feel uncomfortable and do not know why.

RESPONSE: I am glad that you feel uncomfortable about being involved in yoga. Drop the class immediately! Yoga is the very heart of Hinduism. It is sold in the West as science but in fact is religion. It is promoted in the West as beneficial to health, but in the East it is a technique for dying. The goal is to reach *moksha*, allegedly escaping the world of illusion (*maya*) of time and sense into liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death and rebirth through reincarnation.

The latter is another of Satan’s appealing lies that offers endless chances by denying God’s declaration that it is “appointed unto man once to die” (Heb 9:27). Many Roman Catholic priests and nuns practice yoga, and some who have become deeply involved in Eastern mysticism of various kinds, such as Thomas Merton, are highly honored among Catholics.

Yoga is a sanskrit word that means “yoking” and refers to union with Brahman, the ultimate god in Hinduism. The goal of yoga is “self-realization,” to realize that *atman*, the individual soul, is identical with Brahman, the universal soul, i.e., that you and god are one; indeed, that you are god but just don’t know it and need, through yoga, to discover this great “truth.”

Your yoga teacher will probably deny all of this, but he (or she) cannot deny that this practice comes from Hinduism. It was not invented in the West. Yoga was introduced by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita as the sure way to the Hindu heaven. Shiva, one of the most feared Hindu deities, known as The Destroyer, is addressed as Yogeshwara, which means “Lord of Yoga.”

Hatha yoga, known as physical yoga,

is alleged to be devoid of the mysticism in other forms. Not so. One of the most authoritative hatha yoga texts, the fifteenth-century *Hathayoga-Pradipika*, declares that Lord Shiva was the first hatha yoga teacher. As for the mantras, if one of them means “all is truth,” that should give you the pantheistic Hindu connection. You know that all is not truth; indeed, this very idea is a satanic lie!

Substitute “Jesus” as your “Christian mantra”? No! Any mantra (like the Catholic rosary) violates Christ’s command to “use not vain repetitions as the heathen” (Mt 6:7). I don’t know what mantras you have been taught, but the fact is that true yoga mantras are all the names of Hindu gods. Furthermore, the greatest yoga teachers all declare that the repetition of a mantra is a call to that god (i.e., the demon it represents) to come and possess the meditator. I have interviewed people who became demon possessed through yoga. The great yogis all warn of the grave dangers involved, even though at the same time they promote the alleged benefits.

Yes, you could benefit physically from stretching your muscles, etc. However, the spiritual price you pay is not worth it. If you are interested in physical fitness, then practice exercises designed for that, not those designed specifically for achieving union with Brahman!

One of the most popular forms of yoga in the West is Transcendental Meditation (TM). Maharishi Mahesh Yogi at first introduced TM to the West as a Hindu religious practice. He openly taught that its purpose was to produce in the meditators’ bodies “soma,” a legendary substance that would allegedly feed and awaken the pantheon of Hindu gods. But when TM was excluded from public schools and government funding, Maharishi quickly and dishonestly deleted all reference to religion and began presenting TM as pure science. Such deliberate deceit says much about Maharishi’s integrity. Nothing was changed except the labels.

Former TMers have filed lawsuits asking millions of dollars in damages because of the traumas they suffered through the practice of TM. More recently, TM has practically taken over the town of Fairfield, Iowa, where Maharishi University of Management is located.

The latest push in the promotion of TM comes from television personality Dr. Mehmet Oz. This protégé of Oprah Winfrey is a national spokesman for Transcendental Meditation, as well as being a medical advisor/teacher in Rick Warren’s “Daniel Plan,” an alleged biblical health and fitness program begun at Saddleback Church. The curriculum features occult meditation advocated by Oz

and two other medical consultants [see also *Yoga and the Body of Christ*].

QUESTION: Do you believe smoking to be a sin? Please don’t quote “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple are ye.” That verse is about causing divisions in the Church....From my studies, I cannot say that smoking is a sin. Otherwise breathing in smoke from burning firewood would be a sin since that is harmful. God did not specifically prohibit breathing in smoke in the Old Testament and Jesus did not specifically speak about it in the New Testament.

RESPONSE: Although 1 Corinthians 3 begins with a discussion of divisions in the church, in context verses 10-13 speak about the judgment of individuals: “Now if *any man* build upon....*Every man’s* work shall be made manifest....If *any man’s* work abide which he hath built thereupon, etc.” Yes, the “temple” speaks of the entire body of believers, but the judgment is against *individuals* whose choices, whose actions, defile the body. “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought *under the power of* [controlled by] any” (1 Cor 10:23). Are you under the power of cigarettes?

Regarding specific verses, “Thou shalt not kill” doesn’t limit whether the killing is instantaneous or spread out over many years. Look at the statistics. You are destroying your body. Look at it from God’s view, see how it violates what He made you for, and ask Him to help you to hate and despise it for what it is and what it does. Drinking a “little wine” is recommended by Paul. But if you drink it to excess, it ruins your life, destroys your liver, etc. Again, simple common sense would deliver you from desires that are destroying you. Don’t leave it up to God to miraculously cause you to stop something that you yourself have the willpower to do and every reason to stop. He will help you if you desire to stop for the right reasons: because it is sinful, harmful, and dishonors Him. We need to confess our sin as sin and believe that Christ can deliver us.

Paul’s heart for the church seems so much greater than ours at times: “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend” (1 Cor 8:13).

Finally, I think it’s a given that we all know there is a vast difference between someone accidentally inhaling smoke from a fireplace or woodstove and purposely from a cigarette. How many people have you had to stop from sticking their heads into a fireplace to inhale? Let’s be objective.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

Is Seeing Really Believing?

QUESTION: A famous adage says, “Seeing is believing.” Yet the Bible says, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). These two ideas seem to be in direct conflict with each other. Which one is right?

RESPONSE: The first saying, although partially true, can be very misleading; the second is totally true. While it helps to “see” something with one’s own eyes or to witness an occurrence, one doesn’t always “see” accurately. Thus, “seeing” is not always a sufficient reason for believing. Nor is “seeing” essential for believing, because we obviously believe in much that we have never seen.

No one has ever seen gravity, though we have observed what we believe to be its effects. Nor has any scientist seen energy, but we now believe it to be the stuff out of which the entire universe is made.

Moreover, appearances can be deceptive....A mirage can make it seem that the burning sand of a dry desert is water. A stage magician can deceive his audience into “seeing” the impossible. In fact, in no instance do we really “see” what we are looking at. The reader doesn’t actually see the page and print of this book. What he “sees” is the impression made upon his brain cells of a reflection carried by light waves into his eyes and then along nerve connections to the brain. Whether that impression is precisely what the page and ink really “look” like or really “are” can never be known by mortals. So “seeing” isn’t what one thinks it is and is surely not the best basis for believing. British astronomer Sir James Jeans declared:

The outstanding achievement of twentieth-century physics is not the theory of relativity . . . or the theory of quanta . . . or the dissection of the atom . . . [but] it is the general recognition that we are not yet in contact with ultimate reality. [The Mysterious Universe (The MacMillan Company, 1929), p. 140]

The words of Jesus when He showed Himself to doubting Thomas are very instructive: “Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Of the risen Christ, now at the Father’s right hand in heaven, Peter wrote: “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). If “seeing is believing,” then those alive today...could not believe in Him.

Indeed, if “seeing is believing” were true, no one could ever believe in God, because He dwells “in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see . . . (1 Timothy 6:16). The Apostle John declares that “no man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). Yet we are to believe in God, and multitudes of intelligent people do so without ever having seen Him. Obviously, then, faith does not involve seeing with one’s eyes, but faith makes contact with that which is invisible. The great faith chapter of the Bible begins with “Faith is . . . the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1)....

The most important elements in this physical life (love, joy, peace, purpose, contentment, truth, justice, etc.) can neither be seen nor explained....Nobelist Sir John Eccles pointed out that the recent recognition that minds are nonphysical entities has caused the collapse of scientific materialism [With Daniel N. Robinson, *The Wonder of Being Human—Our Brain & Our Mind* (New Science Library, 1985), p. 54]. Nobel laureate Erwin Schrödinger, who played a vital role in giving the world today’s new physics, put it very bluntly:

The scientific picture of the real world around me . . . is ghastly silent about all . . . that is really near to our heart, that really matters to us. . . . [I]t knows nothing of . . . good or bad, God and eternity. . . . Whence came I and whither go I? That is the great unfathomable question, the same for every one of us. Science has no answer to it. [Cited in *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World’s Great Physicists*, ed. Ken Wilbur (New Science Library, 1984), pp. 81-83]

“Seeing” has serious limitations and therefore has little to do with “believing” and nothing to do with “faith.” If we are to know those most important things in life—which science cannot reveal and concerning which it has nothing to say (love, joy, peace, truth, purpose, etc.)—we must have faith. Yet that statement immediately raises the serious question of how one can possibly believe in what or whom one has never seen and indeed cannot see. *Faith must stand on the basis of evidence that is independent of physical sight and scientific verification but that is irrefutable.*

A Generation Adrift Part Two

T. A. McMahon

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. —Philippians 1:9-11

The Apostle Paul's prayer for believers in Philippi is also a prayer for all believers everywhere and at all times. Moreover, it is a prayer that all believing parents should be praying for their children, especially those in their late teens, twenties, and early thirties who know the Lord. Why those in particular? Well, there are a number of reasons, although I thank the Lord for the personal exceptions. That age group is quite vulnerable to the adverse influences of their peers. Their lives are also beset by practical distractions: school, the workplace, social life or lack thereof, career choices, marriage considerations, etc., which sidetrack them from the very thing that would sustain them as they deal with the temporal issues of life.

Paul's prayer for the Colossians expands upon his intercession for the Philippians:

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. (Colossians 1:9-11)

Notice that he wanted them to be "filled with the knowledge" of God's will, "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...being pleasing [to the Lord and] fruitful in every good work." This prayer, however, would be so many empty words *unless* those for whom he is praying desire to have a walk worthy of the Lord and pleasing to Him. The good news is that many young believers today have that desire and zeal. The not-so-good news is that too few seem to be putting forth the effort necessary to increase in the knowledge of God. Again, it could be due to distractions, but whatever the case, it will have troubling consequences.

Without the "increasing knowledge of God," which is predicated upon reading His

Word and doing what it says, a believer's walk will be hit and miss in pleasing the Lord and will be mostly unfruitful regarding good works. Furthermore, he will not "abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment," meaning that he will have no basis for *biblical discernment*.

Without biblical discernment, this upcoming generation is "adrift at sea"—heading for a rocky coast and pending shipwreck. As I have had the opportunity to speak with young people throughout the U.S. and around the world, many of whom seem to be biblically knowledgeable, I've found that they are largely ignorant of false teachings, movements, and practices, along with the false teachers who are seducing multitudes of Christians today. I have no sense of their being like the "children of Issachar...that had understanding of *the times*, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32). They don't seem to be heeding the many, many warnings in Scripture regarding the prevalence of spiritual seduction and deception (Matthew 24:4; Mark 13:21-23; 2 Corinthians 2:3-4; Galatians 3:1; Colossians 2:4,8; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:26, 3:1-2, 3:6, 4:3-5, 1 John 2:26, etc.). They seem to be out of touch with the exhortations of John and Peter and Jude concerning those who would deceive them. They are missing Paul's cry to the Ephesian elders:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:29-31)

When the full counsel of God's Word is *not taken to heart* and *put into practice*, there is little basis for spiritual growth. Often the result is an *experiential* faith, based upon subjective feelings rather than the objective Word of Truth. Such a condition produces a shallow if not *false* faith and completely eliminates biblical discernment. Such a one cannot be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), whom Luke commended because they listened to the Apostle Paul and then searched the Scriptures to see if the things he taught were true. Dependence upon an experiential faith is pervasive among Christians whether they are Pentecostals, Charismatics, or conservative Evangelicals. Here are just four influences that are experientially based, major seducers of the upcoming generation: the Emerging Church Movement, the International House

of Prayer, Christian psychology, and Progressive Christianity.

The Emerging Church Movement (ECM) has no official organization or leadership, although some of its adherents have "emerged" as recognized leaders and spokesmen. It is an attempt to attract the post-modern generation to Jesus through a *refashioned* Christianity. ECM leaders believe that today's Christianity has been distorted by a *cultural* Christianity. This "reinventing" was initially a response against the marketing ploys of the church-growth movement, which gave rise to what have become known as seeker-friendly churches. These churches added consumer-oriented ingredients to attract the "unchurched" to church: "positive" sermons of short duration, top-forty style contemporary music, dramatic productions, food courts, and video arcades and rock-style worship for the youth. That approach, however, didn't satisfy the desires of those young people, who were craving a deeper spiritual experience. Rather than turning to the Bible, leaders of the ECM turned to what they called "authentic" or "vintage Christianity."

Although the ECM claimed that they were returning to early church traditions, they went back no further than the rituals, elements, and practices of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. The sensuality of the images, candles, and incense, as well as the rituals, attracted scores of young evangelicals. Even biblically solid fellowships were seeing their youth caravanning to Emergent churches to experience "authentic Christianity." Bells, smells, and imagery became a powerful seduction. Altars, religious icons, and even the Stations of the Cross have found their homes in the youth rooms and basements of evangelical churches. This affinity for the experiential opened the door to further unbiblical practices and teachings, particularly contemplative prayer and the occult techniques of the so-called Desert Fathers and other Catholic mystics.

The Emerging Church Movement's commitment to the experiential in opposition to the objective Word of God eased the way for the rejection of sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Among its numerous false teachings are these: Jesus is not the *exclusive* way to God; "truth" may be found in all religions; a social gospel displaces the biblical gospel; a "restore the earth" agenda is emphasized over the eternal; and, mingled with all of these, we find universalism, visual idolatry, and an aggressive undermining of the Scriptures. (See *TBC*,

9/07, 2/08, 3/08)

Another movement, the International House of Prayer (IHOP) is the latest Pentecostal/Charismatic development that features an appeal to youth. It grew out of a series of alleged “manifestations of the Holy Spirit” dating back to at least the 1940s. Known as the Latter-Rain/Manifest Sons of God (LR/MSG), the movement initially was declared to be heretical by the Assemblies of God, but that did little to slow its growth among Pentecostals and Charismatics. The foundational LR/MSG belief is that God is pouring out His Spirit in these last days and raising up Prophets and Apostles to direct an army of Spirit-filled believers, particularly young people, who are empowered to perform signs and wonders and who must take dominion over the earth before Jesus can return. The dominionist doctrine has been a part of the so-called Holy Ghost revivals from the Toronto Airport Vineyard manifestations to the Brownsville Revival and the Todd Bentley/Lakeland, Florida, escapades—all of which drew millions of people from around the world to participate in counterfeit signs and wonders. That emphasis upon spiritual signs and wonders has continued at IHOP through its leader, Mike Bickle, and his association with the leaders of the Toronto Renewal and Redding, California’s Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry.

Today’s leaders of IHOP were heavily influenced by those known as the Kansas City Prophets, with whom Bickle was associated, and whose doctrines and methods came from the Latter-Rain/Manifest Sons of God teachings. One foundational IHOP method derived from the LR/MSG is the doctrine that the anointed leadership can hear from God directly, and that communication (known as *rhema*, said to be the spoken word) supersedes the written Word of God as the authority to which all were to submit. In the past, that controlling doctrine (called “shepherding”) led to cult-like abuses of LR/MSG followers and is reportedly still in effect, according to concerned parents of IHOP students. Followers of IHOP defend the movement by claiming that their parents lack the spiritual maturity to understand what’s taking place. Even though IHOP places an emphasis on prayer, its “prayer techniques” border on the occult, particularly those practices that follow mystical contemplative methods.

Although IHOP’s influence is having an impact on many young people of Pentecostal or Charismatic backgrounds, there is another “experiential” seduction

that will influence an incalculable number of young believers who were brought up in conservative evangelical churches. The prestigious *Princeton Review*, in its survey of U.S. colleges and universities, reported that the second most popular career choice of students is psychology. It’s the same at Christian colleges, where there is a focus on the pursuit of degrees in psychological counseling. If that trend holds true, the next generation of evangelical Christians will be flooded with individuals who have fallen into the trap of a pseudoscience that is far more destructive to their faith than the false science of evolution. The fact that psychotherapy is not and cannot be a science has been well documented from numerous secular sources and in the articles and books offered by TBC. A simple reason that it cannot be scientific is its subjective and experiential nature; it clearly falls outside the methodology that true science demands.

From a biblical perspective, psychological counseling not only denies the sufficiency of Scripture, but its foundational “self” concepts and its chief dogma of the innate goodness of mankind are diametrically opposed to the biblical truth about the sinful nature of man. That fact makes the attraction of so-called Christian psychology delusory at best and of an anti-christ spirit at worst. Furthermore, there is no psychological counseling method that either addresses or deals with (or can deal with) the issue of sin. Nevertheless, that hasn’t stopped nearly all professing Christian universities and colleges from promoting psychotherapeutic programs in order to attract more Christian students.

Even though most Christian schools of higher education teach some form of evolutionary development, be it theistic or atheistic, there are nonetheless a number of excellent organizations and individuals that have informed Christians about the pseudoscience of Darwinian evolution. The same cannot be said for informing evangelical Christianity, and its youth in particular, about the more insidious pseudoscience of psychotherapy. Too few are addressing this travesty while two very influential evangelical organizations, Focus on the Family and the American Association of Christian Counselors, lead the way in attempting to integrate the Bible and psychology. Tragically, this major seducer of the next generation of evangelicals is an anti-biblical development that has set up shop and is thriving in the evangelical church.

Another development within U.S. Christendom that has drawn young evangelicals

away from biblical truth is a phenomenon related to political changes in our country. More than three decades ago, evangelical Christianity was a platform and voting base for the Moral Majority and the Christian Right. Despite its inherent problems, evangelicals nevertheless hoped to change society through their own conservative political candidates. Today, there has been a drastic shift from the political right to the left. Although hardly complete, the change is nevertheless apparent, particularly among the young who profess to be Christians. Many have joined the ranks of Progressive Christians, a.k.a. the Christian Left (CL).

A primary attraction of the Christian Left is its emphasis upon meeting the needs of the poor and rectifying conditions stemming from social injustice. Although a zeal for such things is admirable, in practice and in CL teachings, the departure from Scripture is quite radical. Whereas the Bible certainly addresses such things, they are never to be emphasized over the saving of souls through the preaching of the gospel. The difference too often is a temporal need met at the expense of eternal life with Christ. The majority of the teachings of the CL leaders (Jim Wallis, Shane Claiborne, Tony Campolo, Ron Sider, among others) are at odds with Scripture at nearly every turn, from liberation theology to the “presence of Christ” within the poor (because of their condition) to a social gospel predicated upon works-salvation. Again, we have a generation that hasn’t been grounded in the Word of God, and this lack of biblical discernment has made it vulnerable to seemingly good works and a motivation fueled by emotions. More significantly, it is a generation that is being deceived by a movement that has distorted the Scriptures for its own humanistic agenda.

The preceding examples are just the tips of a few icebergs threatening the faith and fruitfulness of the upcoming generation. Our hope is that you can see that we must take to heart the Apostle John’s warning: “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you” (1 John 2:26). Our prayer and cry to the Lord is that TBC and other like-minded ministries, fellowships, and fellow-believers will, by God’s grace and enablement, do all that we can to reach and to help equip young evangelicals biblically, and to encourage them to grow in the knowledge of God and *in all discernment* as they await our Blessed Hope, the return of our Lord and Savior.

TBC

Quotable**This Is the True God**

The Maker of the universe,
As Man for man was made a curse.
The claims of Law which He had made,
Unto the uttermost He paid.

His holy fingers made the bough,
Which grew the thorns that crowned His
brow.

The nails that pierced His hands were
mined
In secret places He designed.

He made the forest whence there sprung
The tree on which His body hung.
He died upon a cross of wood,
Yet made the hill on which it stood.

The sky that darkened o'er His head,
By Him above the earth was spread.
The sun that hid from Him its face
By His decree was poised in space.

The spear which spilled His precious blood
Was tempered in the fires of God.
The grave in which His form was laid
Was hewn in rocks His hands had made.

The throne on which He now appears
Was His for everlasting years.
But a new glory crowns His brow
And every knee to Him shall bow.

F. W. Pitt

Q&A

QUESTION: I have friends who say that if you pass judgment on sin, you will be judged according to the verse: "judge not lest you be judged." But Paul judged the immoral man in 1 Corinthians 5. How does one correctly interpret Matthew 7:1? I was told about a man who "judged" a brother for leaving his wife. A few years later, he ended up leaving his wife and felt terrible for having spoken out about this man. My friend was implying that he was being "judged" for "judging" by reaping the same scenario in his own life.

RESPONSE: The Scriptures exhort to judge all things. Paul very specifically instructed the Corinthian church on the areas where believers are required to judge the behavior of others for the health of the congregation. First Corinthians 5 speaks of the man living in an immoral relationship with his stepmother and yet continues to meet with the church. Paul points out the sin in this situation and then exhorts, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within?" (1 Cor 5:12). If we fail to judge, we are not doing anyone a service. We are not showing

biblical love. The Corinthians hearkened to Paul and judged the man, with the result that he repented. In 2 Corinthians 2:7, following the man's repentance, Paul, with compassion, told them, "Ye ought [now] rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."

Because of false teaching regarding "not judging," the correction and restoration that would come through biblical accountability is missing, and the church is corrupted. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prv 27:6).

Matthew 7:1 must be taken in context, not dragged from it. The Lord Jesus very clearly explains that we cannot judge rightly if we have sin in our own lives. Jesus admonishes, "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and *then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye*" (Mt 7:3-5).

If Jesus were telling us that no one should ever confront others about their sin because *all* men are sinners, He would not have sent prophets (also sinful men) to tell others to repent. Neither would He have said in John 7:24, "Judge not according to the appearance, but *judge righteous judgment*." He clearly wants us to make judgments. First Corinthians 6:3 tells us: "Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?"

Regarding the example of the man you reference, we don't base our responses on someone's experience but ask, "What does the Scripture say?" There is no scriptural precedent for "fate" or "karma" that would cause an individual to commit the same sin and experience the same consequences. We can't know the thoughts and intents of the heart of the sinner or what choices and decisions brought him to that point, "but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (Jas 1:14).

QUESTION: I ran across some new information that rings true...about seeming contradictions in the Bible, especially with regard to Paul's teaching. No, I do *not* believe that Paul's words and teaching have been "twisted" over the centuries. Of course, not all of what Paul wrote was untrue (some of my favorite Bible verses are in Paul's letters), *but* when a few lies are peppered in with the truth, it all becomes tainted. Is Paul a tare, planted by Lucifer (God's perfect flaw) who blinded Saul on the road to Damascus, parading as Jesus to deceive Paul? I'm convinced Paul is a tare, and many will follow him instead of following Jesus.

RESPONSE: We examined the "new information" you recommend, and frankly, it is

nothing new. This is the same old twisting of Scripture to justify preconceived ideas. The teacher you cited (in your much longer letter) is teaching the same things the Judaizers of Acts 15 and Galatians taught. The reason for antagonism against Paul is evident. Paul's epistles expose the person's false teaching—therefore, Paul must go.

You say that you don't believe that "Paul's words and teachings have been twisted over the centuries." You're right, they haven't. Note that Peter said that Paul's epistles were "Scripture" (2 Pt 3:16). Before that, however, Peter had written, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pt 1:20-21).

Paul's words, as "Scripture," were not just his private opinion; he wrote as he was "moved by the Holy Ghost." How then could he be a "tare?" He couldn't! But unbelievers have been voicing similar ideas for centuries.

The Maronite Catholic mystic and poet, Kahlil Gibran, wrote in *Jesus the Son of Man*: "This Paul is indeed a strange man. His soul is not the soul of a free man. He speaks not of Jesus nor does he repeat His Words. He would strike with his own hammer upon the anvil in the Name of One whom he does not know." Gibran's Jesus was another Jesus (2 Cor 11:4), and he drew his conclusions from a mixture of Christianity, Islam, Sufism, Hinduism, and theosophy. So, Paul had to go.

By rejecting Paul's epistles, it is not surprising to see a growing rejection of the remainder of Scripture. According to adherents of this idea, Luke's record of Paul's conversion in Acts 9 is said to portray Lucifer "parading as Jesus." Luke's account may be denied, but he plainly stated, "*The Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest...*" (Acts 9:5) [our emphasis]. There is no room for the insertion of Lucifer. To do that is to *add* to Scripture. Proclaiming this to be Lucifer in disguise denies Scripture. As on a slippery slope, the first downward step triggers many unexpected consequences.

Throughout the Book of Acts, Paul is called an apostle. Also, in the council of Acts 15, Paul is given a leading role: "Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them" (Acts 15:12).

This clearly shows that the church recognized Paul as an authoritative voice, called by the Lord as "a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).



IN
DEFENSE
of the FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Is It Wrong to Want Evidence for What One Believes?

QUESTION: I was raised from childhood in a particular church and believed everything the priest and my parents taught me when I was young. As I grew older, however, I began to have many doubts; but when I asked the priest, he told me that I must accept what the Holy Father and the bishops declared. I want to believe, but the questions keep nagging at me. Is it wrong to want some evidence and even proof for what a church teaches?

RESPONSE: It is amazing how many people who regularly attend a church have accepted the illogical and dangerous idea that when it comes to religion one should never raise any questions, because to do so shows a “lack of faith.” On the contrary, questions *must* be asked, and one must not be satisfied until one is certain of the answer. Skepticism is in fact *essential* as the first step toward faith so long as it doesn’t harden into pride or become a cloak for prejudice. Gullibility is no help to true faith but is actually its enemy.

Faith is absolute and total trust. Clearly, no one nor anything other than God is worthy of our absolute and total trust and thus of our faith. Jesus said, “Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22). Therefore, whenever faith is associated with someone (pastor, priest, guru) or something (church, religion, institution) other than God, it is misplaced. Only God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent and therefore cannot fail us when we trust in Him. Only He is worthy of our total trust; and He holds each of us accountable to know Him personally and on that basis to put our total trust in Him *alone*.

Know Him *personally*? Yes. Both the Bible and common sense tell us that. Any priest, pastor, guru, or church that claims to act as a mediator between man and God and says “Trust *me*” is by that claim demanding the total trust that we are to place in God alone. Obviously, if any person is to act as the mediator between God and the rest of mankind, He must also *be* God, for no one else is worthy of our unquestioning confidence. Jesus Christ is God, who became man through the virgin birth. That is why the Bible says, “There is one God, and one [and *only one*] mediator between God and men, the man [who is also God] Christ Jesus . . . (1 Timothy 2:5).

Any religious system that demands faith in its teachings on the basis of its alleged *authority* rather than on the basis of hard evidence, and that is unwilling to allow its doctrines and claims to be examined freely by sincere, inquiring minds, should not be trusted. The idea that only an elite priesthood or clergy is qualified to determine truth in the area of religion, morals, or faith, and that their dogmas must be accepted unquestioningly, is a lie that has cost multitudes their freedom and peace of mind on earth and damned them for eternity. God himself has said to mankind, “Come now, and let us *reason* together . . . (Isaiah 1:18).

The Harbinger—A Matter of Critical Discernment

T. A. McMahon

The Harbinger is a novel that is becoming very popular among both Christians and non-Christians, even reaching the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list at this writing. What makes it worthy of review, like other books that we have addressed is that it offers an important opportunity for believers to exercise critical discernment. In this case, author Jonathan Cahn believes that he has discovered prophetic signs from God that are found in the Old Testament and directly apply to the United States, referring in particular to the events surrounding the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Because *The Harbinger* (*TH*) is a fictional novel with a large dose of nonfiction added (Scripture), this critique involves two aspects: 1) a personal, subjective opinion, and 2) a more objective consideration of the author's application of Scripture in his novel.

Whenever we read a fictional story or see a movie, our evaluation is almost always subjective, e.g., what we like or don't like about it. As the untutored art critic might say, "I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like!" Even an art aficionado with some expertise rarely gets beyond the subjective, although he has a great deal more criteria than the everyday art lover for evaluating a work of art. In the end, it's still just his opinion.

In my opinion, *The Harbinger* is a poor script. I say "script" because it reads more like a script than like a novel, lacking nearly all of the elements that go into making a first-rate work of fiction. It tries to fit into the genre of *National Treasure* and *The Da Vinci Code* but fails miserably in my view—and I'm hardly an admirer of *The Da Vinci Code*. The redundancy throughout the book borders on being insufferable. If it were eliminated, *TH* could easily have been reduced to half its size. In addition, the dialog is repetitious, yet little if any insight into the story's characters is provided, with the result that we don't get to know them any better than we would a stranger whom we might sit next to on a three-minute subway ride.

Good fiction has drama. *TH* reads like a nine-part seminar, ending with a two-chapter tract. I actually liked some aspects of the last two chapters (though I thought

I'd never get there as I struggled through the previous ones). If there had been a clear gospel presentation, these chapters might have the basis for a good tract—but definitely not for a good fictional story. Again, these are simply my opinions. I have little doubt that some will disagree, especially those who are fans of the book.

On the other hand, although *TH* is a fictional account that invites subjective criticism, it makes numerous claims regarding actual signs or harbingers from God—which it attempts to justify by supporting them with Scriptures. God's Word, however, is not fiction. That subjects *TH* to factual evaluation, because the Bible is God's objective truth. Therefore, we can challenge Cahn's claims objectively by searching the Scriptures to see if they indeed are true (Acts 17:11). As Isaiah wrote, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to [God's] word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Jesus reinforced Isaiah's exhortation in His prayer for believers to His Father: "Sanctify [meaning 'set them apart']... through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

The clarion call of *The Harbinger*, which seems to be quite sincere and is one with which all Christians might agree, is that the American people must repent of their evil ways and turn to God in truth. Amen to that! The major problem, however, is the way that the fictional story attempts to encourage such repentance. It declares that God has sent signs—nine harbingers—to the United States as a wake-up call that the country might take heed, repent, and thus ward off His impending judgment. If Cahn is mistaken about the harbingers and multitudes believe what he asserts, then he has led them astray. That is a serious issue and would identify him as a false teacher. Teaching God's people wrongly carries a "greater condemnation" (James 3:1).

The main characters in the story are a journalist and a mysterious prophet. The central contemporary event related to the harbingers is the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center in New York City. As the fictional story unfolds, it is revealed that the harbingers of warning and judgment are directly related to a prophecy found in the Book of Isaiah. Here is where the major thesis of the book fails the Prophet Isaiah's own challenge of Isaiah 8:20: the author, Jonathan Cahn, has spoken "not according to [God's] word" but has misapplied the scriptures in an attempt

to support his own ideas throughout *The Harbinger*.

Cahn gleans nearly all of his correlations connecting America with a prophecy made to Israel from one verse—Isaiah 9:10. To begin with, this verse applies only to the tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who, along with the Southern Kingdom of Judah, comprise God's covenant people. All the way through *TH*, the United States is presented implicitly as a nation in covenant with God. No, God has only one covenant nation—the nation of Israel. This is a critical error of the book. Although that may be overlooked by someone eager to recognize the U.S. in Isaiah's prophecy, one must read the entire context, which begins with verse 8 and runs through verse 21 of chapter 9.

Cahn flip-flops between God's judgment and God's warning, giving the latter more emphasis as he promotes the idea that if the U.S. will heed the warning and repent of its evil ways and turn back to God, restoration and blessing will follow. Although that principle is true for every individual who turns to Him, Cahn picked the wrong passage of Scripture as a hopeful warning for America. In fact, the entire context of Isaiah 9:8-21 is a prophecy of judgment of the most devastating kind. God declares that He will send Israel's enemies to "devour" them (v. 12), destroying her corrupt leaders and lying prophets (vv. 15-16), and "for all this," His anger would not subside, and in His wrath He would not show them mercy. The carnage would result in civil war among the tribes of Israel—brother against brother—with utter destruction, starvation, cannibalism (vv. 19-20), and finally captivity by her enemy. Even so, "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out [against Israel] still" (v. 21). No "warning" is even hinted at in these verses.

Cahn's isolation of Isaiah 9:10 and his symbolic interpretation of that verse to make it fit the September 11, 2001, jihadist attack on the U.S. is preposterous. (It's also very odd that nowhere in the book is Islam or the term "Muslim" mentioned.) Nevertheless, as tragic as 9/11 was, what reasonably discerning person would see this as comparable to Isaiah's account of God's judgment on the Northern Kingdom of Israel? Furthermore, even a cursory review of American history will bring to mind far more devastating events than 9/11, from Washington, D.C. being burned and sacked in the War of 1812, to the Civil War, to Pearl Harbor, to the debacle in Vietnam, etc. Ignoring such events, Cahn zeroes in on

the devastation of “Ground Zero” as verification that God has removed His “hedge of protection” from the United States. How Cahn decides what events of contemporary history God is using for His very specific purposes is troubling. Are they Cahn’s own prophetic insights or just his speculations? If the former, he is on very tenuous ground.

For many, selectivity on Cahn’s part creates some of the most compelling assertions in the novel. Again and again, as G. Richard Fisher of Personal Freedom Outreach has noted, “Cahn is playing on the old mistake of saying [that] similarity means identity.” The nine harbingers are selectively (and erroneously) taken from Scripture and are then given life by the comparison to similar things surrounding 9/11, which are then identified with Isaiah 9:10. That’s the faulty method. Fisher explains, “Similarity is not identity. A \$100 bill is similar to monopoly money, which is paper, has numbers on it, and is referred to as money.” To attempt to tie them together beyond that similarity, like paying a bill with monopoly money, will have embarrassing consequences at least.

Isaiah 9:10 cannot be identified with America and 9/11, and that’s all one has to understand in order to reject Cahn’s book. Yet, for those enamored with *The Harbinger* and still not convinced of its serious biblical problems, consider a few of the harbingers themselves (there’s not enough space here to evaluate all of them). The sycamore and cedar trees are mentioned in Isaiah 9:10: “The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.” The passage uses sycamores as a metaphor for weaker trees being replaced by stronger, taller cedars in an act of arrogant defiance by the Israelites, who will not submit to God. Cahn points to a singular sycamore and what he refers to as a type of cedar tree (actually a Norway Spruce) that replaced it at Ground Zero as harbingers connected to Isaiah 9:10. Although there is a *similarity*, it takes a great deal of subjective wrangling by Cahn in his attempt to make it match Isaiah’s prophecy. The context does not allow Cahn’s claims.

Another harbinger of warning to America is referred to as “The Tower.” Cahn seems hard pressed to make a biblical connection to a tower other than a vague reference that the main character makes when he’s asked how he would know what the Tower of Babel looked like. He replies,

“I don’t, but I’ve seen pictures of it.” That inane statement aside, Babel was not a Jewish tower. Nevertheless, Cahn finds a Jewish tower that he believes fits. But he had to go to the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, for help. Isaiah 9:10 in the Greek is translated thus: “The bricks are fallen down, but come, let us hew stones, and cut down sycamores and cedars, and let us *build for ourselves a tower.*” So, he has his “tower,” but not without an inherent problem for “harbingers six and seven.” Those harbingers are dependent upon a cedar replacing a sycamore tree. The Greek translation says “sycamores and cedars” are “cut down”; the Hebrew says that sycamores (plural) will be changed with cedars (plural). It would seem that Cahn can’t have both his “Septuagint” tower and his “Hebrew” replacement cedar (singular). They contradict one another. [For further explanation, refer to the *TBC* Extra page in this issue.]

There are numerous other problems with the harbingers, even though they are constructed subjectively and selectively by Cahn. Granted, the author does raise an intriguing date phenomenon related to the economic misfortunes connected with 9/11 when he attempts to link the Jewish *shemitah*, the Torah law of letting the land lie fallow and the forgiving of debts in the seventh year of a seven-year cycle, as a warning to the U.S. No matter what one conjectures regarding the significance of a stock market crash occurring on the first day of *shemitah*, the *shemitah* itself has no bearing on anyone or anything other than the nation of Israel. It has never applied to the Gentile nations, either in actual practice or figuratively in Scripture. To superimpose a connection with America is just that—a superimposition.

Another imposition from Cahn’s imagination is his suggestion that the inauguration of George Washington in New York City was a “consecration” of America to God similar to Solomon’s consecration of the Temple in Jerusalem. To even compare the two verges on blasphemy, especially because history reveals that much Masonic ritual was involved, as well as the “works-salvation” doctrine of Masonry contained in Washington’s speech. It was more suitable to the god of the Masonic Lodge, the Great Architect of the Universe, than to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of the Bible.

Part of the dilemma in criticizing *The Harbinger* is that if the foundational error

in it is not acknowledged (that America has some sort of covenant with God, and that there is a direct biblical correlation between Israel and the U.S. in the events of 9/11 and following), that opens the door for the acceptance of the book’s many fallacious ideas. This creates a perception of “credibility” simply by entering into a dispute over them. Even so, because most of them are so obviously wrong, pointing any one of them out to someone enthralled with the book may still be helpful. Some of these things are addressed in other parts of this newsletter and will be touched on in our future issues as questions arise.

One final thought—we all know the saying, “You shouldn’t judge a book by its cover,” and that’s a reasonable statement. But I like to check out book covers to see who’s endorsing them. That’s hardly a failsafe practice, but it can put me on “discernment alert” if it raises red flags. In the case of *The Harbinger*, a big red flag went up regarding the publisher. Though the cover says “Front Line,” it’s actually an imprint title of Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group, the publisher of *Charisma* magazine. For those not familiar with *Charisma*, there is no other publication that has supported and promoted more of the unbiblical Word/Faith teachers, the “wealth and health” preachers, the Kingdom/Dominionists, the Apostles and Prophets of the New Apostolic Reformation, the so-called spirit revivals of the Toronto Airport Vineyard, the Brownsville Revival, the Lakeland Revivals, the Latter Rain/Manifest Sons of God, and so forth. There is some irony in the fact that in chapter 9 of Isaiah, *TH*’s key biblical chapter, God brings down His judgment upon Israel because of “lying prophets.” *Charisma* has over the years featured many who fit that description. That doesn’t automatically throw *TH* into a bin of rotten apples, but it should at least cause one to examine its fruit very carefully. Jesus said, “A corrupt tree [cannot] bring forth good fruit” and “by their fruits ye shall know them.”

These are days of rampant and beguiling apostasy. We need, therefore, to test all things by the Scriptures so that we do not “slip” away from God’s truth (Hebrews 2:1). We also need to pray for and encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ that we all might be biblically discerning regarding the latest agenda, movement, trend, or *popular book* that is adversely influencing multitudes in the body of Christ. **TBC**

Quotable

Happiness is caused by things that happen around me, and circumstances will mar it; but joy flows right on through trouble; joy flows on through the dark; joy flows in the night as well as in the day; joy flows all through persecution and opposition. It is an unceasing fountain bubbling up in the heart; a secret spring the world can't see and doesn't know anything about. The Lord gives his people perpetual joy when they walk in obedience to him.

A great many people are trying to make peace, but that has already been done. God has not left it for us to do; all we have to do is to enter into it.

D. L. Moody

Q&A

QUESTION: Your TBC Daily Update on *The Hunger Games* (4/4/2012) seems to have missed the point. The intention of *The Hunger Games* is to show what humans are capable of, and the teenagers I know who saw it were horrified and ready and willing to discuss the horrors of the film, including the adults in the film, etc. They couldn't stand watching most of it, but the moral lessons were certainly there, very much so. Did you miss them?

RESPONSE: In this regard, one should not presume to know "the intention of" the author. (The plotline is hardly original, but may still be analyzed in far greater philosophical and political depth than is initially evident). It is grievous, however, to overlook repulsive "horrors" in order to frame a discussion of morality. Similar attempts have been made to defend the "moral lessons" in the violent occult fiction of the *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* series—both of which were the products of spirit-channeled "inspiration," according to the authors (http://goodfight.org/a_co_twilight_harrypotter.html).

In contrast, the Lord's instructions are to "set no wicked thing before mine eyes: [and] hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (Psalm 101:3). The Lord calls us to a life of holiness and obedience. Consequently, Paul wrote to the Romans, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil*" [our emphasis] (Romans 16:19).

Furthermore, attempts to teach moral lessons by "fear" has a demonstrated rate of failure. Social programs such as "Scared Straight" used in-your-face threats of violence

by convicts to convince teens of the consequences of crime. The program was discontinued after it was seen to be inspiring too many adolescents to *copy* the behavior they were allegedly being "scared" from. Why should we not anticipate the same results from attempts to "moralize" *The Hunger Games* (THG)? At best, the morals and ethics of every character in THG is situational—and encourages (or at least excuses) vigilante justice. This is an appeal to the flesh, not to biblical truth: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Consider the comments of just one reviewer: "This is a very poignant criticism of our culture, and one that deserves to be taken seriously. But for all the beauty and moral high ground this story contains, it's just as true that the world Collins has created is terribly evil. Teenagers are dispatched throughout the movie by knives, swords, and mutated dogs; adults are either too powerless or corrupt to help; and Katniss herself experiences an inward despair that will (in coming installments) lead her to attempt suicide. For some viewers at least—especially younger or more impressionable teens—*The Hunger Games* may produce the same deadening effect on the conscience that Collins seeks to warn us against" (<http://www.worldmag.com/articles/19312>).

QUESTION: If all of the Bible is inspired by God and is good for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16,17) and if God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), can't Old Testament teachings and especially prophecies made to Israel also be applied to America?

RESPONSE: The Old Testament does contain numerous things applicable to believers today, including the history of God's dealing with humanity, and in particular, with Israel. "Now all these things happened unto them [Israel] for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Clearly, we can draw an application for our edification from the Old Testament.

It also gives us prophecy, some of which (but not all, as yet) have been fulfilled in the New Testament, giving us assurance that our faith is not a "blind faith" but established by testable evidence. It tells of creation and the Lord's design for this world and its inhabitants. It also speaks of the salvation that will be fully revealed in Christ.

The key to understanding how the Old Testament is to be used today is basic to Paul's admonition, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be

ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Consequently, we must discern *to whom the Lord is speaking* and *what applications may reasonably pertain* to a certain subject. This is a matter of recognizing the context and understanding the content. As the saying goes, "A text taken out of context is a pretext." When that happens, the text cannot be correctly understood at best and will be misleading at worst.

For example, if a believer today takes David's words in the Psalms: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (51:11) and attempts to apply them to himself, he has missed the context and has contradicted a New Testament doctrine. When David sinned, as he did with Bathsheba, the Holy Spirit left him. When he repented by confessing his sin to God, the Holy Spirit was restored to him, enabling him to write the Psalm. The Holy Spirit did not take up permanent residence within a believer until *after Christ ascended into heaven* (John 16:7). When a believer sins today, God will convict and correct him (Hebrews 12:5-7), but He will not take His Holy Spirit from him (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The Old Testament provides for believers today a historical record of the people and events that can be proven. We can get a glimpse of our God's longsuffering with His people. We learn to have a fear of the Lord (for this is the beginning of wisdom—Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10). We see that in spite of all that Israel has done, our God is merciful. He does not completely destroy them (Isaiah 10:20-22). We get a view as to the holiness of God and see how seriously God reacts to sin. These are only a few.

Looking, however, to prophecies given specifically to Israel and attempting to apply them to the American people in anything more than a general or spiritual way is taking erroneous liberties with both the context and the content.

We can learn from a prophetic judgment against Israel that God will deal with us *personally* regarding our sins of idolatry. But God does not judge America as a nation because He has no covenant with America—or any other Gentile nation for that matter. God has a covenant only with the nation of Israel, whom He has judged and will continue to judge in accordance to His prophecies.

God's *call to repentance*, on the other hand, certainly goes out to unbelieving Americans (as well as to believers who need to repent), as it does to unbelievers throughout the world. There is, however, no collective salvation for Gentile nations, although salvation is offered to *individuals* within those nations.

We need to heed Paul's exhortation to be careful regarding how we apply the Word of God (1 Corinthians 3:10).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What Role Do Evidence and Reason Play?

QUESTION: I can see that it makes no sense and would be very dangerous to believe something simply because some church or religious leader says I must do so. Clearly there must be some basis for believing. But I'm confused, because it wouldn't seem to be "faith" if reason and evidence support my belief.

RESPONSE: Your confusion comes from imagining that if reason and evidence were involved at all in faith, that would cause faith to become completely rational—which, I agree, would make no sense. Clearly no faith is required to believe anything that is self-evident or that can be proved completely, such as the fact that the sun is in the sky and sending its warmth to earth.

ON THE OTHER HAND, reason and evidence may legitimately point the direction for faith to go—and must do so. Indeed, faith must not violate evidence and reason or it would be irrational. Faith takes a step beyond reason but only in the direction that reason and evidence have pointed.

The idea of a "leap of faith" (that faith must be irrational) has been promoted by some schools of philosophy and religion. If that were true, however, there would be no basis other than feelings or intuition for what one believes. As a consequence, one could believe or have faith in anything. As the saying goes, "If it works for you, it's okay"—a senseless idea that denies the absoluteness of truth.

By this theory, it is *faith* that is important rather than the *object* of one's faith. Never mind *what* one believes. One has to believe in *something*, so take the leap. It is the *believing* that causes the effect one seeks—a theory that has some temporary and limited truth. Yes, believing in the Star Wars Force or that God is some kind of magic genie who exists to do one's bidding may indeed bring a superficial sense of well-being for a time. Eventually, however, that belief will prove to be a delusion, and the bubble of euphoria will burst, leaving the person worse off than before.

Faith Is a Response to Proven Truth

On the surface it may seem legitimate to reject reason and evidence, because God is far beyond our ability to fully comprehend and thus beyond any *proof* we could understand. How could evidence, much less proof, have any part to play in one's faith in God? As we have noted, however, if reason doesn't have *some* role to play, then one could believe in any kind of "god"—an idea that is clearly false. One must have *some* evidence even to believe there is a God. Otherwise, how could the idea of God be sustained?

Thankfully, the evidence is all around us: "The heavens declare the glory of God. . . . For the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by

the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they [all mankind] are without excuse" (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20). One cannot learn very much of the incredible nature of the universe, from the beautiful simplicity of the atomic structure of the elements to the incomprehensible complexity of a living cell with ten thousand chemical reactions going on at once in perfect balance with one another, without realizing that it couldn't have happened by chance.

The design of a leaf (and how much more so of the human brain) demands an intelligent Designer who Himself is beyond our highest thought or He wouldn't be capable of creating and governing the universe. It is certainly appropriate to observe the incredible order in the universe and from such evidence to draw the conclusion that the universe and we ourselves couldn't have happened by chance but must have been designed and created by an intelligent Being capable of doing so. *Evidence and reason point to God.* This is not only legitimate but an essential first step in knowing Him.

This God, however, in order to be the Creator and Sustainer of the universe must have capabilities that are infinitely beyond our capacity to comprehend. Reason can follow the evidence only so far and then finds itself beyond its ability to go any further. It is at this point that faith takes the next step, a step that is beyond the capacity of reason to accompany it but that is (and must be) in the *direction* that reason and the evidence have pointed.

The atheist sees the same evidence, and he too takes a step of "faith" beyond reason. Sadly, however, in trying to escape the consequences of admitting God's existence and thus his accountability to his Creator, the atheist takes a "leap of faith" in the opposite direction from which reason and the evidence so clearly point. He chooses to deny the evidence, and thus his "faith" is totally irrational and therefore not genuine faith at all.

There is much other specific evidence for believing both in God and in the Bible as His Word, and we will deal with that evidence later.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 19-22) by DAVE HUNT

Roman Catholics: The Neighborhood Mission Field

T. A. McMahon

Thirty-five years ago I was delivered from the bondage of Roman Catholicism. That may sound somewhat unkind to many evangelicals today, but it is nevertheless true, as all former Catholics who have been saved by faith alone in Christ alone will attest. Why would we claim that we were set free from bondage? Isn't that an insult directed at a long-established professing Christian Church that has more than a billion followers? Or is it a reality for all of them? Those who grew up Catholic, as I did for thirty-some years, know what it's like to have experienced spiritual bondage. But the fact of that bondage is demonstrated simply by contrasting the gospel of Roman Catholicism and its salvation process with the biblical gospel.

Rome's gospel is a process of attaining *salvation by works*. It begins with the Sacrament of Baptism, which starts a person (the overwhelming majority are infants) on a course to heaven. Throughout the process, the individual must stay the Church's course by *remaining in the state of sanctifying grace*. Catholicism offers a multitude of Sacraments, sacramentals, and works that it claims will enable a person to do just that. At death, a Catholic *must be in* the state of sanctifying grace in order to enter Purgatory, an alleged place of purifying fires where the last vestiges of sin are said to be removed before one can enter heaven.

Here is my personal story—echoing that of a billion souls, many of whom are your neighbors, work associates, school friends, and acquaintances (every one in four people in the U.S. is Roman Catholic). As an infant, I was brought to the priest, and in the presence of godparents received the Sacrament of Baptism, which brought me into the Church and started me on my way to heaven. Baptism cleansed me of original sin and infused me with sanctifying grace. Although we didn't use the phrase “born again” when I was growing up, more and more Catholics today refer to their baptism that way. (Clearly, that is not what the Scriptures teach about being “born again.”)

Hypothetically, if my godparent had slipped on the holy water, dropping me right after my baptism and causing my death, I would have gone straight to heaven. No Purgatory—just right straight into the presence of God. This is explained by the

Church's teaching that only the sinless can enter heaven. An infant is stained only by original sin, which is removed at baptism. Thus Purgatory is not necessary for a baptized baby who dies in infancy.

There does come a time, however, when a child adds his own sins to his soul. When I reached that point and committed what the Church considered a mortal sin, the process of working my way to heaven stopped. A mortal sin short-circuits the process by condemning me to hell. When a child reaches the age at which the Catholic Church considers him or her capable of committing mortal sins, two Sacraments are made available: Penance and the Eucharist.

The Sacrament of Penance enabled me to confess my sins to a priest, who alone can absolve Catholics of their mortal sins. I made my First Confession at age 7, which was followed by my First Holy Communion. When partaking of communion, also known as the Eucharist, I was told that I was eating the “body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine.” That ritual infused sanctifying grace into me and restored the process of my working my way to heaven.

It's at this point in a Catholic child's life that Purgatory comes into the picture. Although the priest absolved my sins (both the deadly sins, known as mortal, and the lesser sins, which are known as venial) at confession, they still needed to be expiated, or atoned for. That is accomplished by doing “acts of penance.” The Catholic teaching is that all sins must be paid for through purifying punishments. Vatican II explains:

Sins must be expiated. This may be done on this earth through the sorrows, miseries and trials of this life and, above all, through death. Otherwise the expiation must be made in the next life through fire and torments or purifying punishments....[In] purgatory the souls of those...“who had not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions” are cleansed after death with punishments designed to purge away their debt. (V2IDchp1:2, 3)

Where does Jesus fit in regarding the expiation of sins? The Roman Catholic Church views Christ's atonement as *helpful* but not completely sufficient in and of itself. Other “help” is needed:

[W]e are able through Jesus Christ to make satisfaction to God the Father not only by punishments voluntarily undertaken by ourselves to atone for sins or by those imposed by the judgment of the priest according to the measure of our offense, but also...by the temporal

afflictions imposed by God [on the sinner].... (CoT14Schp9)

Canonized Catholic saints also contribute to expiating sins of others:

They [i.e., the saints] have carried their crosses to make expiation for their own sins and the sins of others. They were convinced that they could help their brothers to obtain salvation from God who is the Father of mercies....Indeed, the prayers and good works of holy people were regarded as of such great value that it could be asserted that the penitent was washed, cleansed and redeemed with the help of the entire Christian people.... (V2IDchp2:5, 3:6)

Here is a historical overview of all of this, again from Vatican II:

From the most ancient times in the Church good works were also offered to God for the salvation of sinners, particularly the works [i.e., sufferings and miseries] which human weakness finds hard. (V2IDchp3:6)

I would go to confession on Saturday so that I could receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at Mass on Sunday. My life as a Catholic was a continuous cycle of ascending toward heaven and plummeting toward hell. To sustain the upward process, I would add whatever good works and sacramentals I could in order to stay in the state of sanctifying grace: rosaries, novenas, stations of the cross, Eucharistic holy hours, blessed medals, scapulars, indulgences, personal sufferings, appeals to Mary, prayers to the saints for help, etc., etc. The best I could hope for was that I would die while in the state of grace, while on the ascent, working my way up the ladder. I knew I'd have to face a time of suffering in Purgatory, but eventually I'd get into heaven, or so I hoped.

How it would turn out for me I couldn't know; nor could anyone assure me. To tell me that I could know for certain that I was going to get to heaven was itself a ticket to hell. That's a mortal sin, sometimes referred to as the *sin of presumption*. Not even the pope knows—and he is called the Vicar of Christ, literally one who stands in the place of Christ on this earth! Nor *can* he know. The best a Catholic can do is to increase his odds by doing all that the Church tells him to do.

One thing that needs to be understood is that obedience to the Church is critical for a Catholic to get to heaven. Now, some readers may be thinking about Catholics they know who don't agree with everything the Church teaches. Such people are sometimes referred to as “cafeteria Catholics”—picking and choosing what they want to obey.

They may say they don't believe in certain dogmas of the Church, but that doesn't change the Church teaching—or their obligation or the consequences of disobedience—that is, if the Church teaching is true.

Most Catholics say they don't believe in obtaining indulgences (the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin)—they believe that their use was done away with 500 years ago. Not so. The latest Catholic Catechism supports Vatican II's declaration that the Church “teaches and *commands* that the usage of indulgences—a usage most beneficial to Christians and approved by the authority of the Sacred Councils—should be kept in the Church; and it *condemns* with *anathema* those who say that indulgences are useless or that the church does not have the power to grant them.” (V2IDchp4:8)

Anathema, by the way, means excommunication. In other words, those who do not believe what the Church teaches on this are condemned to hell.

What most Catholics don't realize is that they must believe *all* that the pope and the Magisterium—that is, the infallible teaching office of the Church—declare as teachers of the faith.

The Christian [read Roman Catholic] faithful...are bound by Christian obedience to follow what the sacred pastors...declare as teachers of the faith or determine as leaders of the Church. (Code of Canon Law - Canon 212-1)

This loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and that one sincerely adhere to decisions made by him.... (Vatican II Lumen Gentium 25)

[The Bishops when] assembled in an ecumenical council, they are, for the universal Church, teachers of and judges in matters of faith and morals, whose decisions must be adhered to with the loyal and obedient assent of faith...[When] the Roman Pontiff, or the body of bishops together with him, define a doctrine, they make the definition in conformity with revelation itself, to which all are bound to adhere and to which they are obliged to submit.... (Vatican II Lumen Gentium 25C2)

Refusal to submit is a mortal sin.

Hopefully, you have been comparing the Catholic teachings I've been presenting here with what you believe as a biblical Christian. If you have been, you're probably aware that much of this relates to salvation. Now let's look at very specific official teachings of the Church of Rome

as they relate to salvation in contrast to the biblical gospel.

The gospel according to God's Word is that we are saved by grace through faith, that salvation is not of works but it's a gift of God, as Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us. We are justified, that is, reconciled to God, by faith alone. Jesus said, "...he that believeth on me *hath* (present tense) everlasting life (John 6:47). Jesus alone is our Savior. There is no other Savior (Isaiah 45:21). Nor is there any one who can contribute to his or her own salvation. "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). This is the testimony of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation.

If you interact with believers who are former Catholics, you will very likely hear, "I never heard the gospel as a Catholic." As a matter of fact, there was a time after getting saved that I thought, *Catholics never hear the gospel because the Church doesn't really understand the biblical gospel. It's lost in all the added rituals and liturgy.* But what I found surprised me. The Roman Catholic Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church, clearly understands and articulates the gospel better than many evangelicals today—although it *condemns* it.

According to the infallible Council of Trent—6th Session, Canon 9:

If anyone says that...the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification..., let him be anathema.

6th Session, Canon 12:

If anyone shall say that...justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified: let him be anathema.

6th Session, Canon 30:

If anyone says that...after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.

Here is one more from the Council of Trent....7th Session, Canon 4:

If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law [canons and decrees of the Church] are not necessary for salvation but...without them...men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of

justification...let him be anathema.

That is exactly the message the Catholic Church has been promoting since the mid-1500s. The Council of Trent was a direct response to the Reformation. There has been no substantial change in Catholic dogma since that time, nor could there be, given the Church's belief in its own infallibility. To change an infallible teaching decreed by an infallible council or pope means to reject the doctrine of infallibility, which in turn would undermine the entire Roman Catholic hierarchy system.

From the time I was born again (thirty-five years ago) until today, I have observed a grievous change in attitude among evangelicals regarding Roman Catholics. Conditioned throughout those years by such things as the Billy Graham Crusades, Promise Keepers, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in The Third Millennium," contemplative spirituality, The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, *The Passion of the Christ*, and the Emerging Church Movement, among many other influences (see TBC archives), few believers recognize the eternal consequences of the false gospel that Catholics believe. Thankfully, that wasn't the thinking of those who witnessed to me three decades ago; they were keenly aware that I faced separation from God forever.

Tragically, fewer and fewer American believers understand that they are in the middle of a mission field right where they live. Much of that ignorance can be attributed to the popular and therefore highly influential evangelical leaders of our day (try to name more than a couple of well-known leaders who speak out against the false gospel of Rome). But here we have exposed something that raises a question that may be at the heart of the problem: "Why are so many of those who claim to be *biblical* Christians following leaders who are not following the *Word of God*?" An individual's ignorance of the Scriptures is basic to the problem, as is an unwillingness to obey what God's Word says.

"But Catholics love Jesus just as we do" is the refrain that is common today among most evangelicals. It should be absolutely clear from the official documents quoted above that the Roman Catholic Church has a gospel that rejects Christ's full payment for the sins of mankind and replaces it with a process of "works salvation." Tragically, a belief in the Jesus of Roman Catholicism will save no one. This fact needs to weigh upon the heart of every believer who interacts with Catholic friends, neighbors, co-workers, and relatives. **TBC**

Quotable

The essence of Christianity is that we give the Son of God a chance to live and move and have His being in us, and the meaning of all spiritual growth is that He has an increasing opportunity to manifest Himself in our mortal flesh.

— Oswald Chambers

Q&A

QUESTION: John Piper, in a discussion on creation, tries to draw a distinction between the creation of man, which was recent, and the universe, which could be much older. He comments, “So that [view] has the advantage of saying that the earth is billions of years old if it wants to be—whatever science says it is, it is—but man is young, and he was good and he sinned. He was a real historical person, because Romans 5 says so, and so does the rest of the Bible.” What do you think?

RESPONSE: You’re asking for our opinion as to whether the days listed in Genesis 1 were literal days or long periods of time. We believe that the Scriptures are unambiguous in their meaning that these are 24-hour days.

We think that Piper’s statement is a compromise that seeks to find a nonexistent middle ground to “balance” all the views that Christians may hold. He lays stress upon the (brief) time that “man” has existed. Yet the Lord distinctly told Moses, “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day...” (Ex 20:11).

This seems to be critical, for Jesus said in John 5:46, “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.” What did Moses say? Moses wrote that the “heavens and the earth” (and man) were created in six days. God directly confirmed this in Exodus and again in John. Was the Creator confused? Certainly not!

QUESTION: You have attacked the teachings of Calvin and Augustine. We’ll see which lasts the longest and stands the test of time—the writings of Augustine and Calvin and their contribution to orthodox theology or those of the writers and staff of TBC. Sorry, but history shows that in the world of art, music, literature, and theology God has given some to be head and shoulders above the rest of us. If I was sick I would seek the best, most brilliant surgeons possible. When studying Scripture I will continue to trust and rely on the great theologians, flawed as they may be.

RESPONSE: It is good counsel to “seek the best, most brilliant surgeons possible.” However, regarding spiritual matters, the intent to lean upon “the experts” clearly avoids the scriptural admonition to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes 5:21). Who are the experts when it comes to the Scriptures? Should we not test them? We are all flawed. More important, do Augustine and Calvin consistently and accurately “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15)? We have simply pointed out some of their obvious contradictions and errors.

The Lord notes on a number of occasions that “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD” (Jer 17:5). Are we to place people upon pedestals? Even the Old Testament priests were told to not “go up by steps unto my altar, lest thy nakedness be discovered.” We are living in a time when socially, politically, and most important, spiritually, men are turning from their responsibilities and surrendering their thinking to “the experts.” The failure of this approach is becoming only too obvious.

If people regard us as the “answer men,” then we have failed in the task the Lord has given us. We seek to point individuals back to the Scriptures, following the example of the Bereans (Acts 17:11). What you advocate is contrary to the Lord’s admonition and is detrimental to the health of the Body. Those who accept the pronouncements of “big names” such as Calvin or Augustine without “searching the Scriptures daily” are insubordinate to the commands of the Lord.

When Christ rebuked individuals, it wasn’t because they failed to listen to Gamaliel or other prominent teachers. He went to the heart of the matter. The Scriptures were sufficient for the Lord Jesus Christ when He confronted the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-27). He told them, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets [not the commentators] have spoken.” And, “...beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (v. 27).

Again, we have not advocated our “TBC opinion” as the standard, and any accusations to the contrary are unsupported and very selective generalizations. What about Calvin and his abuses in Geneva? What about the anti-Semitism/Replacement Theology generated by the teachings of Augustine? It is more than the fact that these men were flawed. As we acknowledged, we all are. The problem is that what they taught is at times greatly in conflict with what the Scriptures say. The Great Physician is the “best, most brilliant surgeon possible.”

It is He who warned against the traditions of men. Now, let’s be obedient to the commands of Christ and although we may find the comments of “great theologians” helpful at times, like all commentaries, the *inspiration* ceases when we move from the biblical text to the comments of men. We would greatly encourage a prayerful and scriptural reexamination of the position that you have advocated.

As another writer notes, “The reformers had proclaimed the priesthood of all believers, but the Anabaptists, their contemporaries, were not impressed with what they found in the reformers’ churches. The monopoly of the Catholic priest seemed to have been replaced by the monopoly of the reformed preacher. Experts were still disempowering the congregation and hindering it from becoming mature” (Stuart Williams, “Interactive Preaching,” 3/3/08, The Anabaptist Network).

QUESTION: It seems like more and more churches and commentators use Philippians 2:7 to support the “Doctrine of Kenosis,” the idea that Christ “emptied Himself” of His divine abilities and became just a man. This doctrine appears to violate 1,600 years of Biblical Christianity. Am I mistaken?

RESPONSE: The problem is that people are taking the biblical account far past what it is meant to say. It is true that Jesus humbled Himself, or literally “emptied himself” (“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men”—Phil 2:7).

That doesn’t mean that He “couldn’t” act as God, for He was and *is* God. It means that during His earthly sojourn He “wouldn’t” act contrary to humanity but relied fully upon His Father. John 5:30 tells us, “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” His “emptying himself” was a determined, voluntary submission, not a “divestment” in that He temporarily ceased to be God.

So many teachers, as you point out, are using the humanity of Christ (and He was fully human, and also fully God) to postulate the idea that in our humanity we can be “god-like.” That is the heretical teaching of the word faith/Latter Rain/etc. movements and is simply unbiblical. It produces teachers such as Kenneth Copeland, who tell us that we are “little gods.”

Once again, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tm 3:16).



DOES TBC FOLLOW MATTHEW 18?

QUESTION: *Does TBC follow “Matthew 18” and first go to the authors and/or leaders it critiques in newsletters and books?*

RESPONSE: Matthew 18:15-17 has to do with *private* (not public) sin committed by one brother or sister in the Body against another. “Moreover, if thy brother shall *trespass against thee...*” (KJV). All translations agree that the subject is *sin* or *trespass*, not false teaching. Although a few do not specifically state in verse 15 that this is a trespass by one Christian against another, the context makes this clear in *all* translations. Look for example at verse 21, where Peter, in response to what the Lord has said, asks Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother *sin against me* and I forgive him?” (KJV); “how often shall my brother *sin against me*” (RSV); “how many times can my brother *wrong me*” (Phillips); “how often shall my brother *sin against me*” (NAS), etc.

The entire context has to do strictly with a personal problem between two Christians, where one has wronged the other, and is therefore to be kept private unless it can’t be resolved in that manner. In contrast, many other scriptures make it very clear that sin which is known publicly is an offense to the entire Body and must be dealt with *publicly*: “Them that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear”

(1 Tm 5:20, KJV). This is both for the benefit of the body of Christ and also to let the world know that the church doesn’t tolerate sin. False doctrine is not the subject of Matthew 18, but something else entirely, and does not come under the instructions Christ gives in that passage. It is impossible for erroneous teaching that is presented publicly ever to be considered a *private trespass* of one person against another, which must therefore be dealt with privately between the two.

False doctrine is *never* a private matter and is *always* to be dealt with publicly. Much of the New Testament was written to publicly correct false teaching. Even the beloved Apostle John named Diotrephes in 3 John and promised that when he came to that church he would publicly correct the Offender in person. Paul withstood Peter to the face publicly for his false interpretation of the law that caused Him not to associate with Gentile believers (Gal 2:11-14). In a day of mass media, particularly when denied access to Christian TV networks, the only method of public correction of false teaching is to write books [and blogs] to call the attention of the Body to errors that affect the whole Body.

In keeping with many other scriptures that could be cited, 1 Corinthians 14:29 clearly states, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.” Clearly the issue is not whether an individual listener is offended by what one of the preachers has said, even if one could stretch that to be a “sin” against his brother. It would be entirely inappropriate for a listener to take aside the prophet he felt had spoken falsely and have a private discussion with him, and only if he refused to hear, then tell it to the church. The issue is the doctrinal purity of the Body, which must be guarded at all cost. And what has been publicly stated must be discussed publicly. It may well be that the prophet spoke truly and the offended listener was wrong.

So when he speaks out against what the prophet has said, he himself will be corrected by others. It is this kind of open discussion among believers that the Bible teaches, and that is the only protection against error being introduced and allowed to corrupt the church. Never is it suggested that no one must disagree with what is being taught because to do so would cause “division.” On the contrary, we are told that we *must* correct error in teaching and do so *publicly*.

Furthermore, what has been said in books and on TV etc. is part of the public domain, subject to review, analysis, critique of any kind. Any-

one who makes public declarations intended to influence large audiences through books, radio, TV etc. ought to know that he is responsible for what he says, and will be held accountable. No one has ever asked me for permission or even discussed with me critiquing any of my many books, and some reviews have been very unfavorable. That is expected.

It is not necessary to talk with a writer or speaker in order to be accurate and fair. It is a rather weak excuse to say that some writer/leader really didn’t mean what he said. Then he should have said what he meant. Unfortunately, there are thousands and, in the case of some, millions who have read and/or heard and taken it at face value, as any reasonable person would. Words have meaning and it is assumed that the normal meaning applies. Even if one of these teachers has changed his beliefs, we must still deal with what has been published for the sake of those who have been affected by it. If a person has changed his beliefs, then he ought to publish just as widely in tape and book form a renunciation of any false or misleading teaching he has given in the past rather than make a private explanation to me.

— DAVE HUNT (TBC’S VERY FIRST Q&A, FEBRUARY, 1986)

“FURTHERMORE, *what has been said in books and on TV etc. is part of the public domain, subject to review, analysis, critique of any kind. Anyone who makes public declarations intended to influence large audiences through books, radio, TV etc. ought to know that he is responsible for what he says, and will be held accountable. No one has ever asked me for permission or even discussed with me critiquing any of my many books, and some reviews have been very unfavorable. That is expected.*” — Dave Hunt

Are We Too "Negative"?

Dave Hunt

Critics have long leveled the charge of “divisive” and “negative” against those who would warn the church of unbiblical teachings and practices. I prayerfully consider such accusations, for my heart echoes the same concern. I long just to preach the gospel and to put behind me the controversy that has become such an unwelcome part of my life. Yet in preaching the pure gospel one must carefully distinguish it from the clever counterfeits all around.

How negligent it would be not to warn the sheep of poisoned pastures and false shepherds who promote lies in the name of truth. Yet the odds are staggering. Norman Vincent Peale’s magazines, for example, have 16 million readers monthly, many times our small circulation! The flesh faints with weariness and frustration. Then why persist in a task so lonely and burdensome? Yes, *why this burning passion?*

There are, thank God, the many letters of encouragement from those who offer their love, support, and prayers. There are, too, the earnest “thank you’s” from the thousands who have been set free from the delusion and bondage of false gospels—from Catholicism and “Christian psychology” to positive/possibility thinking and positive confession. Yet even without any such encouragement we would be compelled to carry on and would urge you to do the same.

Jeremiah was hated, maligned, imprisoned, and threatened with death because he preached repentance and warned of God’s impending judgment when the “positive prophets” promised peace and prosperity “by the word of the Lord.” Popular opinion opposed him. He became so discouraged that he declared that he would no longer speak for God nor even mention His name. But God’s Word was in his heart and burned like a fire in his bones, so that he had to speak (Jer 20). *Yes, above all, it is God’s Word burning within that compels us.*

Distressed by accusations of “negativism,” I cry out to God and turn to His unfailing Word. And what do I find there? The very message I am constrained to preach! Christ himself was far more “negative” than I have dared to be. He continually warned of judgment and hell, exposed sin, demanded repentance, rebuked the

religious leaders and indicted them as hypocrites, whited sepulchers, blind leaders of the blind, fools. Without doubt, He would be banned from most Christian pulpits and media today!

The Sermon on the Mount is not intended to enhance one’s “self-esteem.” It encourages one to be poor in spirit, to mourn, to be meek and merciful, and promises that those who are true to God and His Word will be hated, persecuted, and vilified (Mt 5). But didn’t Jesus say, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Mt 7:1)? Isn’t it unbiblical, then, to accuse a Christian leader of any wrong? On the contrary, Christ could only have meant that we were not to judge *motives*, for He clearly told us to judge teaching and lives: “Beware of false prophets [i.e., teachers]... by their fruits [lives] ye shall know them” (vv. 15-20). Surely He is calling us to judge

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

— 2 Timothy 4:1-2

false doctrine and deeds!

When Paul exhorted Timothy to “preach the word,” he explained that to do so one must “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tm:4:2). Paul warned of “vain talkers and deceivers... whose mouths must be stopped [from teaching false doctrine].” He urged Titus to “rebuke them sharply” (Ti:1:10-13). He told Timothy, “Them that sin rebuke before all [i.e., publicly], that others also may fear” (1 Tm:5:20). Clearly such reproof requires a *judging* that does not violate Christ’s prohibition but which, in fact, He *commanded* and the apostles practiced—a judging which Satan hates because it unmasks his lies.

The International Genocide Treaty signed by President Reagan in November 1988, makes it a crime to try to convert anyone of another religion or to suggest that their beliefs are wrong. It will soon be a serious crime to call homosexuality a sin. The day is coming when, to protect “minority rights,” we will be prohibited by law from preaching the gospel except in the most “positive” manner. Sadly, much of the evangelical church has already conformed.

It is not enough simply to “preach the truth” when there are lies that counterfeit it so closely that many can’t tell the difference. It is both logically and scripturally essential to expose and refute today’s pernicious false gospels. Yet to do so is to be opposed by church leaders and barred from most platforms. I am banned even from such evangelical networks as Moody Radio lest I expose the humanism they promote in the name of “Christian psychology.” Why not allow an open discussion of vital issues before the whole church? Are church leaders concerned for truth—or with protecting their own interests?

“Christian psychology” may seem to help for a time, but it undermines our real victory in Christ by redefining sin as “mental illness.” This heresy inspired a host of new terms such as obsessive-compulsive behavior, dysfunctional families, addiction—and more recently the increasingly popular co-dependency myths and Twelve Step recovery programs spawned by Alcoholics Anonymous. In *12 Steps to Destruction*, the Bobgans point out that Bill Wilson, founder of AA, based his system upon what was a revolutionary new theory: that drunkenness was not a “moral defect” but an excusable “illness.” Wilson was relieved to learn that he was an “alcoholic”—a new term at the time.

Enlarging upon this lie, “Christian psychologists” have redefined as mental illness all manner of behavior that Jesus, the Great Physician, diagnosed as sin. John MacArthur tells of hearing a woman call into a “Christian psychology” radio program to confess that she couldn’t keep from having sex with anybody and everybody. She was told that her problem arose from an overbearing mother and milquetoast father and that it was an “addiction” that could take years of therapy to cure. So much for Christ’s “Go, and sin no more” (Jn:8:11). Disobeying God is no longer sin if one has a compulsion or addiction or has had a traumatic childhood.

In his book, *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, MacArthur writes, “The depth to which sanctified psychotherapy can sink is really quite profound. A local newspaper recently featured an article about a 34-bed clinic that has opened in Southern California to treat ‘Christian sex addicts.’ According to the article the clinic is affiliated with a large well-known Protestant church in the area.” Several leading “Christian psychologists” interviewed for the article “coffed at the

power of God's Word to transform a heart and break the bondage of sexual sin." The director explained that his treatment center would serve to rescue many Christians who had been taught that "the Bible is all you need." Yet that is what the Bible itself claims and the entire church believed for 1,800 years until the advent of Christian psychology.

In *The Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine*, Dr. Robert Maddox warns that "all manner of sin...from gluttony to fornication, from stealing to bestiality... is [being] labeled as disease, to be cured with chemical, electrical and mechanical treatments." The Bobgans also quote from University of California professor Herbert Fingarette's book, *Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease*: "I just don't understand why any churches would go for the disease idea...[it] denies the spiritual dimension of the whole thing." They also quote Stanton Peele from his book, *Diseasing of America: Addiction Treatment Out of Control*: "...disease definitions undermine the individual's obligations to control behavior and to answer for misconduct...[and] actually increase the incidence of the behaviors of concern."

How astonishing that as the secular world is abandoning the sinking ship of psychotherapy, Christians are jumping aboard, imagining that this doomed vessel will not only stay afloat but add needed buoyancy to the ark God has provided!

It makes me weep to watch the growing deception, to cry out against it, and to be heeded by so few and opposed by so many. Why is that essential correction, which Scripture so clearly demands, left to a few of us nobodies and shunned by church leaders who would be heeded by millions? Write to the most influential evangelical leaders and ask how they can "preach the Word" without involving themselves in the reproof and rebuke of rampant error that Paul said must be at the very heart of biblical preaching!

Today I received a memo from a researcher who, along with her husband, is among the nobodies crying out against heresy in the church. Her concern was *The Ragamuffin Gospel* by Brennan Manning, a Catholic, published by Multnomah Press. In part she said, "Manning teaches...that [a Christian] may continue to live a life of debauchery...describes himself as a [heavy] smoker and someone who became an alcoholic after conversion...wants active

homosexuals accepted into full fellowship (p 26) along with other immoral people... teaches an eastern-type meditation (pp 43, 205-206)...twists scripture (pp 23, 28, 73, 173); he says that everyone, but the self-righteous [those that obey God by Manning's definition], will go to heaven (pp 17, 26, 29)...This book is dangerous...a ploy by a new age Catholic to invade the evangelical church... Christian[s] must be warned that...the once trusted names of Multnomah, Thomas Nelson and Fleming Revell [to name a few] are no guarantee of orthodoxy. What a shame!"

I called her to make certain she hadn't overstated her case. She read excerpts from the book to prove she had not. Christian publishers can no longer be trusted to publish truth but have become purveyors of death! A dump truck would not have been large enough to haul all of the heresy out of the recent Christian Booksellers convention in Orlando. Even Roman Catholic

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake....This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith...

— Titus 1:10, 13

publishers of the most awful blasphemy and incredible nonsense, such as Paulist Press, were represented alongside evangelicals.

Take, for example, the booth of another Catholic publisher, *Our Sunday Visitor*. One of their books on display told the story of Padre Pio, a recently deceased Catholic monk admired by Pope John Paul II. Pio manifested the "stigmata," a bleeding from his palms *to make up the deficiency in Christ's redemptive work on the cross!* Pio believed he was *suffering for the salvation of sinners!* He claimed that literally *millions* of the spirits of the dead, whom he saw with his physical eyes, came to him on their way to heaven to thank him for gaining their release from purgatory! *This is only one of Rome's many heresies.* I confronted *Sunday Visitor* employees concerning the demonic delusion promoted by their books and objected to their presence at a convention of evangelical publishers. They pointed to a nearby booth promoting horrendous, allegedly "Christian"

rock music and declared, "We have as much right to be here as they do!" I could only agree.

Mission Frontiers, the bulletin of the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, Vol. 13, No. 4-5, has a biblical passion for world evangelization. In contrast to the Manning/Multnomah justification of smoking, the editorial declared, "Tobacco causes more deaths each year in the United States than heroin, cocaine, alcohol, AIDS, fires, homicides, suicides, and auto accidents combined...More Colombians died last year from smoking American cigarettes than did Americans from using Colombian cocaine." "Addiction," or sin?

The editorial also highly commended Pope John Paul II's recent encyclical on world missions. Disappointment was expressed that the encyclical was "marred by reference at the very end to the idea that...the work of the church is done 'together with Mary.'" Yet the encyclical was praised and an address given where it could be purchased because it spoke of "people groups," a term in vogue at the World Center. Sadly, however, 950 million Catholics who need to be evangelized—a special "people group" comprising nearly 20 percent of the world's population—were overlooked! The editorial, in fact, implied that Catholicism's evangelism is biblical.

Throughout Central and South America, Catholicism is in the most blatant partnership with spiritism and paganism. In Brazil, I visited Aparecida, the largest cathedral in the world next to St. Peter's in Rome. It is dedicated to a small idol of a "Black Virgin"—pulled from a nearby lake in a fishing net—which now performs "miracles." The pope came recently to honor this idol. At the Mass the priest led the people in prayers and songs to the idol, asking it for salvation and dedicating their lives to it. Aparecida's large bookstore carries many of the same "positive" books that delude Protestants—books in Portuguese by American authors, from Norman Vincent Peale to "Christian psychologists."

Today's evangelical leaders shun their duty to oppose heresy. Many of them promote Catholicism, occultism, and humanistic psychology. Therefore we, the nobodies, though few heed us, must cry out even louder to warn the sheep of poisoned pastures and false shepherds. "Positive" or "negative" is not the issue, but rather truth and simple obedience to our Lord and His Word. TBC

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Quotable

The devil is not fighting religion. He's too smart for that. He is producing a counterfeit Christianity, so much like the real one that good Christians are afraid to speak out against it. We are plainly told in the Scriptures that in the last days men will not endure sound doctrine and will depart from the faith and heap to themselves teachers to tickle their ears. We live in an epidemic of this itch, and popular preachers have developed "ear-tickling" into a fine art.

— Vance Havner
Playing Marbles With Diamonds

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

— (2 Cor 11:13-14)

Q&A

QUESTION: I don't understand why Bill Johnson and Bethel Church in Redding are not classified as a cult (along with Word-Faith). They deny the deity of Christ, they deny the Scriptures and add to and subtract from them, their schools of ministry are lessons in how to operate in the occult and demonology (I was shocked when a friend told me what techniques they used). They are false teachers and wolves in sheep's clothing. What do you think?

RESPONSE: Bill and Brenda Johnson are the Senior Pastors of Bethel Church in Redding, California. Bethel Church is firmly aligned with the Word-Faith movement and identifies with the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), or the Third Wave Movement with its "prophets," "apostles," and alleged manifestations. Bill Johnson is called an "apostle" by C. Peter Wagner (See *TBC* 5/97, 2/07). His theology has amounted to what some call a "*de facto* denial of the deity of Christ."

By this, they are referring to Johnson's teaching that Christ set aside His deity during His earthly sojourn. Johnson has said, "Jesus was (and is) God. Eternally God. That never changed. But He chose to live with self-imposed restriction while living on earth in the flesh—as a man. In doing so, He defeated sin, temptation, the powers of darkness as a man. We inherit His victory—it was for us. He never sinned!" (Bill Johnson, Facebook 3/21/2011).

If Johnson had stopped at this point, his

view of Christ would seem to be biblical—but he didn't.

Consequently, that's not all that he's taught or all that his followers have said. Speaking of Jesus, Johnson wrote, "He performed *miracles, wonders, and signs*, as a man in right relationship to God...not as God. If He performed miracles because He was God, then they would be unattainable for us" (Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p. 29). That's human reasoning, and by implication opens the way for a deification of man.

Johnson's view of our Lord's "emptying Himself," of which the literal meaning is "humbled himself" (Philippians 2:7), aligns very well with the Latter Rain/Word-Faith "little gods" teaching of Kenneth Copeland and others. Johnson has gone on to say, "*God gave every believer the power to heal as Jesus did*" (Johnson, "You've Got the Power," *Charisma Online*, March 2012). In line with Word-Faith teaching, Johnson and his followers speak of these presumed abilities in a way that sounds very much like mind science and departs from Scripture.

Though differing from Jehovah's Witnesses, who deny the deity of Jesus, Johnson's view of Christ is confusing at best, and he endangers his followers by leading them away from the security of the Word.

Johnson writes, "Those who feel safe because of their intellectual grasp of Scriptures enjoy a false sense of security. None of us has a full grasp of Scripture, but we all have the Holy Spirit. He is our common denominator who will always lead us into truth. But to follow Him, we must be willing to follow off the map—to go beyond what we know" (Johnson, *When Heaven*, p. 76).

In conclusion, Johnson is advocating extrabiblical revelation. Going "off the map" is forsaking the safety and sufficiency of Scripture.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (Joshua 1:8)

The human tendency is to focus on experience, which then can lead to a number of problems. The charismatic movement is full of examples of people who did not "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and it eventually led to pride, an attitude of superiority, imitating and covetousness by followers, and ministries full of error and imbalance. The works of God are indeed splendid *and hand tailored*, but how we handle them must glorify Him and Him alone.

QUESTION: I recently heard the teaching that Genesis 41:25-32 spoke of a great end-time gathering of souls or revival right before the Great Tribulation. And I always thought that Luke 18:8 was speaking of Jesus' return for the church and the condition of the earth at that time. I honestly can't find in the Word a great "last days revival," or in-gathering. And to me, the Luke reference makes more sense if it means His return for the church in the midst of a great apostasy. I love and respect the godly minister who spoke these things. He is very knowledgeable in the Word and in his teaching. I don't want to be confused, could you please help me?

RESPONSE: We agree with your concern. Unfortunately, too many may come up with an idea and then seek out Scriptures that would seem to support the idea. Sometimes, the wresting of Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16) appears so blatant, particularly if we look at the simple meaning of the words as well as considering the full context of the passage. Genesis 41:25-32 specifically and expressly details the dream given to Pharaoh, which Joseph, through insight given by the Lord, interpreted. It was a specific warning to Egypt for a specific time in their history. Whether an individual believer might receive an application for their own life is something that only the Lord can give. We can't just lift the Scripture from context and apply it to a doctrine. Consequently, there is no biblical basis for using those verses from Genesis to support the idea of a great endtimes revival. It just doesn't fit.

In contrast, Luke 18:8 is very straightforward. The Lord asks specifically, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The implication is obvious. The Lord knows the heart of man and his susceptibility to deception and his willingness to follow another. "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). The Lord will return to the earth not during a time of great revival but in a time of apostasy. The question naturally follows: "Shall he find faith on the earth?" The apostasy we see today is increasing, leading naturally to the conclusion that the time of the Lord's return draws near. With so many false teachers, cults, and false Christs being presented, "shall he find faith on the earth?"

Finally, for the teacher you respect, this is a wonderful opportunity to pray that the Lord might correct any errors and, if given an opening to speak to him, the right words for you.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Beware of Trying to “Force” Yourself to Believe

QUESTION: I have struggled with this thing called “faith” all of my life. I want to “believe” in God and the Bible but can’t make myself do it. I keep having these nagging doubts. What am I supposed to do?

RESPONSE: By all means, don’t “make” yourself believe in God or the Bible. Let me suggest that you begin by facing the logical necessity of God’s existence. Without God, neither the universe nor we ourselves would exist, and there would be no purpose or meaning for anything. The Bible begins like this: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). It doesn’t argue God’s existence, because that fact is self-evident from the universe we see around us and has been implanted by God in every person’s conscience.

THE BIBLE unapologetically declares, “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). Any thinking human being must agree with this pronouncement. Only a fool could believe that the universe came into existence by chance. Just one living cell in the human body is, according to Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling, “more complex than New York City.” To imagine that life itself (which is a mystery beyond the capability of science to fathom) and the incredible complexity of matter that sustains life could happen by chance is absurd.

All the Evidence Points to God

Suppose two survivors of a ship that sank have drifted for days in a life raft across the South Pacific and at last are washed ashore on an island. Their great hope, of course, is that the island is inhabited so they can find food, medical attention, and a means of returning to their distant homes. Pushing their way into the jungle, they suddenly come upon an automated factory operating full tilt. Though no person is visible, products are being manufactured, packaged, and labeled for shipping.

One of the parties exclaims, “Praise God! The island is inhabited! Someone must have made and oversees this factory!”

“You’re crazy,” replies his companion. “You’ve been out in the sun too long. There’s absolutely no reason to believe that this thing was designed and put together by some intelligent being. It just happened by chance over who-knows-how-many billions of years.”

The first man looks down at his feet and sees a watch with a broken wristband lying in the dirt. Again he exclaims, “Look! A watch! This proves the island’s inhabited!”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” retorts his companion. “That thing is just a conglomeration of atoms that happened to come together in that form by chance plus billions of years of random selection.”

No person in his right mind could imagine that a factory or a watch could just happen by chance. Then how could any rational person insist that the universe came into existence by chance, much less that the complex life forms on earth did so! A single cell in a leaf or in an animal’s body is thousands of times more complex than the factory

and the watch put together. The human body consists of *trillions* of cells, thousands of different kinds, all working together in perfect balance. Our top scientists can’t produce a human brain even with all of the computers and technology that exist today. Only God could do so. Chance certainly could not!

Nor does it make sense that God would create man without having a definite purpose for him. Nothing is so frustrating to an intelligent person as having no purpose in life. Yet the very idea of purpose could not arise by chance, for purpose and chance are opposites. There can’t be design without a designer. We know, therefore, that God had a purpose for creating us. And if so, He must have a way to communicate that purpose.

The Bible claims to be the Word of God to mankind and explains God’s purpose and plan. We are not expected to believe that claim without sufficient evidence, but in fact that claim is supported by a vast body of evidence, much of it held in museums around the world and so irrefutable that no one capable of reading the Bible has any excuse for doubting its claims. We will present many such proofs throughout this book.

The major proof of God’s existence that the Bible offers is the fulfillment of hundreds of specific prophecies. In Isaiah 46:9–10, God says that He will prove His existence by telling what will happen before it happens. In Isaiah 43:10, God tells Israel that she is His witness, both to herself and to the world, that He is God. How is that so? Because of the many prophecies God made concerning Israel that have come to pass: that the Jews would be scattered to every nation on earth; that they would be hated and persecuted and killed as no other people (anti-Semitism); that they would be preserved in spite of a thousand Hitlers trying to exterminate them; that they would be brought back to their land in the last days . . . and many other prophecies that have clearly been fulfilled and are in the process of being fulfilled before our very eyes.

We won’t go into these details here because we have dealt thoroughly with prophecy in other books. The point, however, is that no one should believe anything without a solid reason for doing so, and the evidence compelling mankind to believe in God and the Bible is absolutely overwhelming.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 22-24) by DAVE HUNT

Jesus Gets Tough... Part 1

T. A. McMahon

When writing or even thinking about the biblical Jesus, problems may arise. One of them occurs when we focus on just one of His attributes and lose sight of His many others. This can give us a distorted view of our Lord and Savior. It's also possible for us to not even consider a particular attribute of His, which likewise can distort our true understanding of His character as revealed in Scripture. All of Christ's attributes are related, and, of course, they are all perfect in every way. Moreover, Jesus is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). He doesn't change. So, what's with this title—"Jesus Gets Tough"?

Well, the title has to do primarily with *our reaction* when we read that Jesus acted or said something in a way that may startle us. We're surprised because we may not have considered that particular characteristic of our Lord although it is clearly presented in Scripture. For example, He is called the "Lamb of God," and quite often we see Him reflecting qualities of meekness and gentleness, including the aspect of His being the sacrificial "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." But in contrast to that, He is also "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" (Revelation 5:5). He appeared to Joshua with sword in hand as "captain of the host of the Lord" (Joshua 5:14).

At His Second Coming, He will lead an army to rescue Israel from the nations that desire to destroy it. No characteristics that we think of as lamblike will be involved in that scenario. Neither did He reflect the characteristics of a lamb when He overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple. Yet He is and will forever be the Lamb of God *and* the Lion of Judah along with all that those titles imply. They all are an indication of the perfect qualities of the *biblical* Jesus. I emphasize the adjective "biblical" because it is only through the Scriptures, through which Jesus Christ has revealed Himself, that anyone can know Him in truth. All other perspectives are mostly what men think about Him. Mormons perceive Him as a family man, married to Mary Magdalene and Mary and Martha. The PETA people say that He was a vegetarian. The gays promote Him as gay, and so on.

But believers can also fall prey to a distorted view of Jesus. We therefore need to question ourselves as to where we

are getting our thoughts about Him. Is our understanding from the Word Himself, or from man's opinions, speculations, and even "scholarship so-called"? If it's the latter group, then it's certain that "another Jesus" will be fashioned in our minds (2 Corinthians 11:4). He will be a counterfeit Jesus who can benefit no one. A continual refrain from the Emerging Church leaders, who desire to "reinvent Christianity" to make it more accommodating to our culture (particularly to young adults), is "We love Jesus, but we don't like his church."

You have to wonder what Jesus they're talking about. Even a cursory reading of the Bible would show them that the church is His *bride* (temporal flaws and all) who will be taken to heaven when He returns for her. Additionally, there are popular movements, trends, and books that feature *isolated characteristics* of Jesus and doctrines of the Word that distort a correct biblical view. These include books such as Rob Bell's bestseller *Love Wins* and Brennan Manning's *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, both of which take the doctrine of love far beyond the teaching of Scripture—the former in the heresy of universalism, the latter implying that God, in His love, simply winks at our sins.

Yet even we who have walked with Him for many years, who love Him and desire to please Him, can also fashion a distorted view of Jesus if we major on a particular attribute of His at the expense of others. Understanding that a biblically balanced view of Jesus is vital, we need to consider one characteristic that seems to have been intentionally dismissed—or at least purposely avoided—in the church today. In fact, in my more than three decades as a believer, I don't remember ever hearing a sermon preached on the subject of Jesus "getting tough" with His church.

To leave that characteristic out of our understanding of Him will lead to problems in our walk with Him. The gospels certainly give us information regarding His sternness with the Jewish religious leaders as Jesus confronts their hypocrisy. The Lord also offers a few rebukes directed at Peter and the other apostles, whose inspired writings became foundational for the developing church. The Epistle to the Hebrews, however, is the first book that indicates a rather tough characteristic of Jesus for those who are His own—who are, in fact, His bride: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what

son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:6-7).

We're given specific reasons for the Lord's discipline of those whom He loves: it is "...for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). Nevertheless, it's not until the Book of Revelation that we see Christ in a lengthy and very stern light regarding His bride. John, the apostle beloved of Jesus, is taken aback by the appearance of the One upon whose breast he had rested his head when Jesus dined with His disciples (John 21:20).

That former intimacy with Jesus seems to have been lost in this startling vision of his Savior:

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. (Revelation 1:12-16)

We can't know what was going through John's mind at seeing such an imposing image of his Savior, but we do know his reaction: *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead...*(v. 17).

Jesus could have appeared to His beloved disciple as when John last saw Him after His resurrection, but He chose to send John (and us) a very different message. I certainly don't understand all the symbolism involved, but one doesn't need to in order to come away with a very sobering impression. His hair, His eyes, and His feet all seem to represent purity and the process of purification. The instrument Jesus chose for His purifying process is "a sharp twoedged sword." That which comes out of His mouth can only represent the "Sword of the Spirit," His Word (Ephesians 6:17), which we learn in Hebrews 4:12 is living and powerful and is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

There is nothing timid about the symbol that Jesus selected to represent *His Word*. A sword is not only a weapon of war; it is also used for clearing one's path—for cutting away that which would entangle and choke out life; moreover, a surgeon's "sword," the scalpel, can pierce one's "joints and

marrow” to excise cancerous tumors. That is how sin in one’s life must be dealt with. The psalmist wrote, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psalm 119:9). Jesus prayed to the Father that those who follow Him would be *set apart* from the world by Scripture: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). That was our Lord’s prayer for the disciples who walked with Him then, and it is the same for those of us who follow Him today. The first three chapters of Revelation are quite unique in Scripture. In them we see Jesus directly addressing, encouraging, but mostly correcting the church. To say that He “gets tough” with His bride would hardly be an abuse of the text.

The churches to whom He was speaking existed during the time that John wrote Revelation and were located in the Roman province of Asia, which is now modern-day Turkey. Six of the churches were within 100 miles of each other; Laodicea, the furthest south, was about 200 miles from the northernmost church of Pergamos. None of those churches exist today, although the problems that Jesus raised can be seen throughout church history.

William MacDonald, in his *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, gives an overview: “*Ephesus*: The church of the first century was generally praiseworthy, but it had already left its first love. *Smyrna*: From the first to the fourth century, the church suffered persecution under the Roman Emperors. *Pergamos*: During the fourth and fifth centuries, Christianity was recognized as an official religion through Constantine’s patronage. *Thyatira*: From the sixth to the fifteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church largely held sway in Western Christendom until rocked by the Reformation. In the East, the Orthodox Church ruled. *Sardis*: The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the Post-Reformation period. The light of the Reformation soon became dim. *Philadelphia*: During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were mighty revivals and great missionary movements. *Laodicea*: The church of the last days is pictured as lukewarm and apostate. It is the church of liberalism and ecumenism.”

Such general observations ring true to history, but they are not exclusive. One can also see various aspects of the things Christ addressed to the seven churches in local assemblies throughout the world today. In other words, the churches of Revelation are alive and not so well (five of them at least) wherever believers dwell together

today. Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea all had issues that Jesus wanted corrected. And He still wants this in our own churches. As the text clearly shows, these are not merely *suggestions* on His part.

The church at Ephesus had many standout qualities: good works, perseverance, and critical discernment regarding doctrine and leadership. Even so, Jesus takes the fellowship to task regarding a very important issue: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hath left thy first love” (Revelation 2:4). We are not told exactly how the believers came to lose their “first love,” but we can get an idea from Scripture. Their good works, which should have been a byproduct that grew out of their love for Jesus, very likely took precedence over the relationship the Ephesian believers had with Him. The Apostle Paul’s admonition to the Galatians seems applicable here: “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3). A believer’s love of the Lord *must* be central to whatever he does. When that begins to slip, what follows is an automatic slide into efforts generated and accommodated by the flesh. To whatever degree the flesh has its way, to that degree God’s grace is displaced. Our works need to be “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

There’s little doubt that the church in our day would be even more prone than the Ephesians were to displace their love for the Lord, considering that we have been so influenced by the “self” teachings that have entered the church: self-esteem, self-love, self-worth, self-image, self-confidence, and on and on to self-*ad nauseam*. Furthermore, a preoccupation with self makes it difficult to recognize and receive a stern correction. We’ll see that clearly when we consider the church of Laodicea.

The common refrain is “You can’t mean me!” because most of us have been conditioned to think more highly of ourselves than we ought (Romans 12:3). Moreover, many Christians are of the opinion that Jesus surely wouldn’t say or do anything to lower a believer’s self-esteem. That’s the Jesus of psychobabble and so-called Christian psychology, who is a false Christ fashioned by fleshly men. This is the Jesus whom the world loves, who is all about accommodating mankind, and who certainly doesn’t square with His Word. He is especially

foreign to the chapters of Revelation that we are presently considering.

The consequence for the Ephesians, who were drifting away from their “first love” and who failed to repent of having abandoned their focus on the Lord, would be the removal of their “candlestick”: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:5). There is no deep secret in the symbolism of the candlestick. It represents quite simply the light of Christ, who is the “Light of the World,” i.e., the Word. The only way for one’s love for Christ to increase is for believers to grow in their personal relationship with Him by the *continual reading and living out* what the Word of God teaches.

Without that discipline, the love of Christ, who is “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,” will inevitably wax cold. And as that light dims, it follows that a believer will have no basis for biblical discernment and will therefore cease to produce any spiritual fruit. Notice that Jesus said, “*I will* come quickly, and will remove thy candlestick....” One of the points I want to emphasize here is the fact that it is *Jesus himself* who is correcting His church. He is the one “getting tough” here.

There has been a tendency throughout church history that continues today to deal with biblical correction when it is presented by “shooting the messenger” rather than heeding the message and repenting. Although the messages have been true to the Scriptures, a common ploy in rejecting the message has been to dodge the convicting biblical subject by diverting attention to God’s less-than-perfect messengers, who thus become vulnerable targets. But that’s not the case with the Messenger to the churches in the Book of Revelation. Both He and His message are perfect and cannot be subverted. Furthermore, Christ’s strict admonitions have never been more needful for His church to heed and make the necessary corrections than they are today, in this time of great spiritual delusion and rampant apostasy to which His bride finds herself more and more susceptible.

As this series continues through chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, many will have to come to grips with a characteristic of Jesus of which they may not have been aware—but it is imperative that we all know Him and love Him as He is in truth.

TBC

Quotable

The word of God is His perfect message to men. If that be spurned, He has nothing more to say to them until they meet Him in judgment. Wherever that word is proclaimed, it puts those who hear it in the place of responsibility such as they never knew before. The light shines from the word. If they refuse its testimony, they prove that they love darkness rather than light. That word contains all that is necessary to show the way of life. Moses and the prophets all spake of Him. But in the New Testament we have the full-orbed revelation of Him who has come in grace to seek and to save the lost. He who believes finds deliverance. He who turns away will perish in his sins.

— H. A. Ironside
The Continual Burnt Offering

Q&A

QUESTION: We are trying to stand to defend the faith and have come across people believing in the evidence of gold dust, jewels from heaven – stuff from the Toronto guys ages ago. Is God limited in the way he performs miracles today in the modern era? If there is no example in the Word, then basically it's not from the Holy Spirit but another spirit? Are we "limiting" God by unbelief? Where do we draw the line between these "new miracles" and miracles mentioned in the Scriptures? If we stick to the Word-based miracles only—is that limiting God?

RESPONSE: We have had opportunity to see these areas of concern close up and have heard statements such as "touch not the Lord's anointed," or "don't quench the Spirit with your unbelief." This attitude is one of the weaknesses of the Pentecostal, or Charismatic, movement. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:21, we are to "prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Since the Lord is not politically correct, "all things" means "all things," including the things that are His. There is a direct implication that the Lord is confident that the things that are His will stand the test. So, no, we do not limit the Lord by the test. In fact, testing is what He commands.

Further, the signs and wonders movement turns the biblical model upside down. Too many are going from place to place seeking to have an experience. The biblical model shows us people who were seeking God, who then, in turn, had an experience.

Peter and John were not seeking an

experience as they "went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer..." (Acts 3:1). They sought God in prayer. It was God who drew their attention to "a certain man lame from his mother's womb [who] was carried [and] laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple" (v. 2). We know the "experience" and opportunity created as the formerly lame man entered "walking and leaping and praising God." The experience was something arranged and orchestrated by God, not by a controlled setting, music, or other stimuli.

As you point out in your [full] letter, there is no end of fraud that has been uncovered. The "gold dust" falling from heaven has sometimes been scientifically tested, as in the case of Brazilian evangelist Sylvania Machado. As *Charisma* magazine reported, "John Arnott of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (TACF) canceled a scheduled four-day appearance by Machado after sending a sample of the flecks that cascaded from her head on the first night for testing. A geochemist at the University of Toronto concluded the specks did not contain any gold or platinum but were some type of plastic film" (www.charismanews.com/news.cgi?a=145&t=search.html, cited 5/7/01).

Satan always seeks to counterfeit the genuine. When Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, it became a serpent. Pharaoh's sorcerers, however, "...also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" (Exodus 7:11-12). Up until the sorcerer's serpents were swallowed, their "feat" might have been convincing to some.

God's servants are not validated by the most amazing miracles. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Some point to Acts 16:20, which reads, "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Please note, however, the "signs" confirmed the "word." The word remains the focus. There may be all sorts of wonderful signs, but if the word is deficient, the signs are of no value.

QUESTION: We're asking for counsel on the matter of biblical reproof. My first inclination is to follow the admonition in 2 Timothy 2:24-26 and 4:1-4. In light of this what do you believe is the appropriate response and action to be taken when young believers are living in error? Some of the issues include friends who are

living with their boyfriends/girlfriends before marriage, were pregnant before marriage, are contemplating divorce and remarriage, dating nonbelievers, going out on the weekends and getting drunk at bars, joining yoga sessions, getting involved in psychology programs, fail to recognize false gospels (Catholicism, Mormonism, etc). Any advice on how to approach dear friends and discuss these issues from your experience would be appreciated. We have lost friends over this.

RESPONSE: You point to 2 Timothy 2:24-25, which tells us, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

This approach is consistent throughout Scripture. In Galatians 6:1-2, we read, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Even the verses speaking of conditions approaching the last days do not depart from this approach: "I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:1-5). "Reproving," "rebuking," and even "exhorting" must be done with "great patience" and "instruction." Biblical instruction does not hastily resort to the rod. "Longsuffering" (godly patience) should be our attitude towards those being ministered to. Nevertheless, we preach.

Finally, Ecclesiastes 7:5 tells us, "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools."

It is also important to remember that though we may be initially rejected, that doesn't mean our words weren't heard or that the Lord has ceased working in the lives of these individuals, as we pray. For example, we recently heard from a woman who related that in the mid-1970s she had witnessed to her employers (a husband and wife) and had been immediately fired. Nearly twenty years later they contacted her to tell her that since then, their family had gotten saved, and the man was now a minister of the gospel. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). Well doing involves reproving, rebuking, and exhorting "with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:1-5).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Given Evidence and Reason, Why Faith?

QUESTION: If evidence and reason are essential parts of faith, I don't see why God should demand faith at all. Why not give us the proof of everything? To have to take that step of faith seems unreasonable to me.

RESPONSE: The answer to your question is dictated by our own limitations, not because of some unreasonable demand that God makes. In order for everything to be proved and reasoned out for us, we would have to be equal to God. Obviously we are not: We are finite and God is infinite. We simply don't have the capacity to understand everything about God and His universe. Therefore, we need to trust Him when He tells us about things that we cannot fully comprehend. That's where faith comes in.

What we can understand of the universe and of our accountability to God from reason and our conscience is sufficient to point us in the right direction. Knowing on the basis of the evidence that God exists, we ask Him to reveal Himself to us and to show us His will for our lives. We are willing to trust Him in whatever He tells us, even though we cannot understand it all. We discover (as we shall see) that He has spoken to us in the Bible, and very clearly and comprehensively.

Faith Reveals a Universe Beyond Human Comprehension

True faith opens to us a knowledge of God and His truth that we could not otherwise discover. Such is the value of faith in God. Once we know Him and have confidence that we are indeed hearing from Him, then we understand His truth by believing what He says. As a result, we can know and understand what would otherwise be impossible for us to grasp. For example, the Bible declares:

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. (Hebrews 11:3)

These words, penned nearly two thousand years ago, clearly tell us that the universe was made out of an invisible substance. No one at that time nor during the many centuries that followed had the scientific knowledge to provide the evidence to support this statement. The *proof* had to wait until modern science had caught up with what the Bible had said 1,800 years earlier.

Today we know that the entire universe is composed of an invisible substance called energy. In spite of the brilliant advancements of science, however, though we know much

about energy, we still don't know exactly what it is. Yet by faith the believer knew all he needed to know: that God spoke the universe into existence by His infinite power and that He made it out of something that is invisible.

That these words are found in the Bible is one of many reasons to believe it rather than any of the other scriptures that are sacred to the world's many religions. By contrast, those scriptures, far from containing statements that science can only confirm and never refute (as is the case with the Bible), contain numerous ridiculous ideas that reflect the level of understanding of mankind at the time and of the culture when and where they were written.

It was once believed that the earth was flat and was supported on the back of a tortoise floating in a sea. The Greeks thought that Atlas, a giant, held the universe in his arms. The Egyptian account of creation involved gods (such as the sun god, which was born on a flower), some of whom were part animal and part human. Plato thought the world was a living being and that earthquakes were caused when it shook itself. The Bible, though written in the same time period and by men who lived in these same cultures, is completely free of such myths. Even the Qur'an, of far more recent origin, contains Arabian myths. As it has often been pointed out:

The Bible is the only ancient book that is accurate in all scientific details. Other ancient holy books from the East include legends and errors too childish for consideration. Even comparatively modern books like the Koran abound in historical and chronological blunders.

There are many just a few of the many reasons for believing that the Bible is, as it claims to be, God's infallible Word.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 25-27) by DAVE HUNT

Jesus Gets Tough... Part 2

T. A. McMahon

In this two-part series we're considering characteristics of Jesus that are revealed clearly in the Scriptures but that seem to be avoided or dismissed in the church today. As we noted in part one, Jesus presents Himself to John in chapter 1 of Revelation in a highly symbolic way—a way that is far different from the years when Jesus was physically with John and they walked together. John, the beloved of Christ, who seemed to have had a more intimate relationship with His Lord and Savior than the other Apostles, nevertheless is confronted visually by an image of Jesus so overpowering that he can only react by dropping to his face before Him. There is little doubt that John's relationship grew deeper with Jesus after His ascension, as it should with all believers as they mature in the faith. But it seems that even John was not prepared for what he witnessed.

The symbolic image represented a characteristic of Jesus that He wants His church, His bride, those who believe in Him, to understand concerning their relationship with Him. He wants His followers to be pure, to be holy, just as He is pure and holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). That seems to be indicated by His hair and the fiery image of His eyes: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace..." (Revelation 1:14-15). All of these symbolic elements appear to represent judgment. That seems to be underscored by the "twoedged sword" protruding from the mouth of the image of Christ (Revelation 1:16). The sword is His Word, the Scriptures, by which everyone will be judged. He is the Word, and it is His words that will judge and condemn unbelievers. His words will also judge believers in the sense of correcting and pruning so that their lives might conform to the truth and be increasingly fruitful.

We need to be aware that the symbolism surrounding the rather intimidating figure of Christ and His exhortation in the first three chapters of Revelation is not directed at the world, but rather at His bride, His church. These are the ones whom John declares the Groom loves: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). Yet any believer who doesn't grasp that Jesus is "getting tough" with His bride is missing

a very important aspect of His message to the seven churches, that being—He wants her to "shape up" before the wedding.

It seems to me to be a "prenuptial" exhortation, and a rather frank one at that. But why would Jesus speak to His bride the way He does? It certainly isn't the way young men today go about wooing their brides in order to ensure that they show up at the church. Of course, what seems right to us because of worldly or cultural influences rarely conforms to the teachings of Scripture. Nevertheless, the question remains: why would Jesus "read His bride the riot act," as He seems to be doing in His messages to the seven churches? Let me suggest some possibilities.

First of all, and bottom line, it is for her good. That's a safe conjecture because everything Jesus says and does is good and for the good of those He addresses. Yet there is much more that we can surmise. Although we are to expect the Lord to return from heaven at any time for us His bride, and we can't know the day or the hour, we do know the spiritual condition of the world at that time. It's indicated in the words of Jesus in Luke 18:8: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord tells His disciples that the days prior to His return will be characterized by spiritual deception (24:4) that will be terribly seductive: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (v. 24).

Some claim that this verse teaches that the elect are immune to such deception. That view has many problems. Jesus was speaking to His disciples, who were certainly His elect, yet He warned them not to be deceived—which doesn't make sense if they *couldn't* be deceived. Believers have always been subject to deception. Scripture warns us against falling for Satan's "devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Furthermore, all of the epistles, which are written to believers, contain corrections of false doctrines that either had seduced them or had that potential. These are all things the Lord knows His bride will face.

Christ's sternness in one way may be compared to a drill sergeant who prepares his raw recruits for warfare. A drill sergeant, no matter what the army, is universally known for his being hard on his men. His approach is no-nonsense because of his concern not only for his troop's survival but also that his soldiers will be victorious in the battles

they will face. Similarly, believers in Jesus down through the ages have been subjected to intense spiritual battles. Our Lord's concern is for how they fair in what they are facing. He points out issues to the seven churches (and to us today) that will seriously undermine one's relationship with Him and consequently one's effectiveness for His kingdom. The Ephesians, for example, were commended for many things, but their foundation was being undermined as their active love for the Lord was fading. That may seem insignificant compared to all the good works they were doing, yet it is more critical than we may realize, and simply so. If the love of Christ is not our first and foremost motivation for the works that we do, then what *will* be our motivation, even though we may not be aware of it? Self. And where the leaven of self enters in, the loaf of pride rises, which is the primary recipe for works of the flesh.

The issue is so serious that the Lord declares to His bride, the Ephesians (and again to us as well), that if they do not repent He will "remove their candlestick out of its place" (Revelation 2:5). A candlestick is a light-giving instrument, a symbol that "giveth light unto all that are in the house," and in the passages of Matthew 5:14-15 Jesus called his disciples "the light of the world." They were only that light in the sense that they taught others to "observe all things" that Jesus taught them (Matthew 28:20), i.e., His Word. Peter refers to the Scriptures, which he calls the "word of prophecy," as a "light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19). I believe the action of the removal of the "candlestick" (also referred to as a lampstand) is primarily the drifting away from the light of God's Word as believers' love for Him waxes cold. Furthermore, in John 8:12, Jesus, who is the Living Word, referred to Himself as "the light of the world." Isaiah, as well, shows clearly the relationship of light and the Scriptures: "...if they speak not according to [God's] word, it is because there is no light in them" (8:20).

As we noted in part one of these articles, the seven churches of Revelation were not only specific churches functioning at the time when John wrote the book, but they are also reflective of what the church in general experienced at certain times throughout its history. Moreover, the issues that Christ addresses can be found in local churches throughout the world today. So, as we are repeatedly urged, we need to heed what Jesus said to the historic churches and apply that to our local churches and to ourselves

as individual believers—His bride—today.

To two of the seven churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, Jesus offers no correction. They are only shown comfort and encouragement because of what they have suffered and will suffer for their steadfastness in the faith. There are multitudes of fellowships undergoing similar persecution for their witness for Christ today and many more that perhaps will be subject to the same in the future. Christ's words, therefore, as they are heeded, will strengthen and give heart to His bride not only to endure what's ahead but to be victorious and fruitful in the midst of it.

The Groom's address to the other five churches consists mainly of a list of issues that will create major spiritual problems for His bride—problems that will seriously affect a believer's relationship with Him and one's fruitfulness for His kingdom. To underscore what is central to correcting the churches that have drifted away from His Word, our Lord repeats the symbol for the Word that He first identified Himself with in addressing the church in Pergamos: "These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges" (2:12). That is not only central, but it is the *only* basis for the necessary discernment the bride must have in order to recognize deception and repent of the erroneous spiritual practices she has gotten into or may yet face.

The church at Pergamos had problems that were hardly unique to that fellowship. Some of its members were teaching false doctrine, likely for material gain, and were fostering sexual immorality. The church had those who held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which no doubt involved some form of elevating the leaders to a higher spiritual level and control over laity, that is, the brothers and sisters of that fellowship. This is apparent today in churches where there is a hierarchy and a distinct clergy class. Jesus declares that He *hates* that, and He will deal directly with it through His Word if the fellowship does not repent.

Christ speaks to the church of Thyatira in terms that clearly indicate judgment, reiterating the earlier symbols that represent the same: "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass" (2:18). That church has a woman, a false prophetess, who has introduced sexual immorality, spiritual fornication, and practices related to idolatry. In His mercy and longsuffering, He has given her time to

repent. In His concern for this fellowship of believers, He uses His most sobering and sternest words: "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give every one of you according to your works" (2:22-23). If the Lord's words seem shocking to some of us, it may be because we've been so mesmerized by our politically, socially, religiously, and psychologically "correct thinking" that we've become blinded to the many strong deterrents (e.g., Ananias and Sapphira) found throughout the Bible. Furthermore, we may have lost sight of the fact that He is speaking as the One who *loves* those whom He is addressing and has washed them from their sins in his own blood (Revelation 1:5).

To the church at Sardis, which has only a remnant of steadfast believers, He gives exhortation to "be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain" (3:2) and to remember what they have "received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." If they will not watch, our Lord declares that He will "come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (3:3). I believe this is a visit for corrective judgment of His church, His bride. This is what Peter prophetically confirms: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17).

The Groom has gentler words for the bride at Philadelphia, a fellowship of "little strength" yet they have "kept [Christ's] word, and [have] not denied [His] name" (3:8). He declares His love for them and praises them for living out His Word in patient perseverance. Nevertheless, they are warned to "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (3:10-11). It seems that the Groom not only will have His bride "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white" (19:8) because of his imputed righteousness, but He also wants her to be adorned with crowns earned by her loving obedience to His Word.

Many have suggested that the church of the Laodiceans is the church most representative of the churches of our day, particularly churches in the West. One definition I found for the word Laodicea is "rule of the people"; another was "judgment of the people." Both seem to be appropriate to Christ's admonitions, in that the people are doing their own thing and

He is outside their fellowship. They seem to be so self-absorbed in their materialistic self-sufficiency that they cannot recognize that they are spiritually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (3:17). How does the Bridegroom address this condition? In the strongest language yet! Regarding those whom He characterizes as "lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot," He declares, "I will spue thee out of my mouth" (3:15-16).

Here we must ask again: why would the Lord speak to His bride in such a way?

In the last passages of Revelation 3, He spells out the reasons quite clearly for what I've referred to as His "prenuptial exhortation" to the seven churches. In verse 19 He declares, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

He *loves* the bride, and He counsels her to receive from Him things that have been purified and will purify her life and love for Him—spiritual "gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see" (3:18).

He concludes His exhortation to His bride, to us who profess to believe in Him, who claim to follow Him, with an offer that implies a reality check, a check of our relationship with Him as the One to whom we are betrothed. Has our love for Him become "lukewarm"? Or have we drifted away from our first love for Him? Whatever our condition may be, He urges and encourages us, "Be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (3:19-20).

The Bridegroom is willing...but what about the bride? Whatever instruction we find in the Word of God, we are to take heed. But when we find in Scripture something repeated, such as Jesus saying, "Verily, verily..." it seems that He is making His instruction very emphatic. What then of His instructions to His bride, which He emphasizes with an exhortation that He repeats seven times? "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."—Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17). TBC

Quotable

Do you tell the Lord about everything in your life that concerns you? Do you expect Him to be interested in what might be the small and relatively unimportant details? He wants you to bring everything to Him, and it is His answers in the small things that makes us appreciate His intimate nearness and faithfulness.

— Brian Russell
Choice Gleanings 2011

Q&A

QUESTION: Has anyone written anything about the secular acquisitions [of Christian companies] and the impact this has on Christian publishing? Why would Christians allow this to happen in the first place?

RESPONSE: These once solid Christian publishers are in the hands of individuals who have lost the vision of the founders. Paul tells us that “the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith... (1 Tm 6:10). Enticed by the offered purchase price, the company is sold. Rupert Murdoch and other secular publishers have recognized the potential for profit in “Christian” materials.

The dangers associated with such takeovers are clear. “There is something going on there that is saying we need to turn a greater profit at a risk of compromising our beliefs as Christians,” said John Thompson, vice president of marketing for Broadman & Holman Publishing, an arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. HarperCollins, he noted, also publishes books offensive to evangelicals, such as *The New Joy of Gay Sex* (Kirkpatrick, “Evangelical Sales Are Converting Publishers,” *New York Times*, Arts, 6/8/02). Rupert Murdoch recently acquired Thomas Nelson (TN) publishers, who in 2006 had printed the book *Hot Moms* under the TN imprint, Naked Ink (See *TBC Extra*, www.theberean.org/node/2779 for a brief history on TN Publishers).

TN and other publishers had already begun offering less-than-biblical materials. A Christian literary agent wrote positively of how TN had published “...Christianity lite versions of material presented on Moody’s Radio Network by the Minirth/Meier team” (<http://stobbeliterary.com/the-myth-about-crossover-books.html>). We have addressed the psychoheresy of the now defunct partnership of Minirth/Meier in past issues of the newsletter (see May 1995 *TBC*).

Christian writer Jim Fletcher noted in a 2009 article, “In the 1990s...there was a shift in philosophy. Publishers, stores, and distributors began to realize the vast

potential for making money....To appeal to the broadest possible audience, works began to creep in that were decidedly not aligned with the Bible” (<http://www.lighthouse-trailsresearch.com/blog/?m=20090801>).

Although some good materials are still being published, there is a growing list of unbiblical materials, such as Blomberg and Robinson’s *How Wide the Divide*, published by InterVarsity Press. The authors (a Mormon and an evangelical), seek to find “commonalities” between the two faiths.

Paul warned, “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Corinthians 11:4).

For biblical believers, it should be well known that Mormons clearly taught and teach “another Jesus.” Perhaps the most horrendous claim still held by Mormons is that Jesus was the “spirit brother” of Lucifer. The late President Spencer W. Kimball stated: “Long before you were born a program was developed by your creators.... The principal personalities in this great drama were a Father Elohim, perfect in wisdom, judgment, and person, and two sons, Lucifer and Jehovah [Jesus]” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 32-33). One of the LDS General Authorities, Milton R. Hunter taught, “The appointment of Jesus to be Savior of the world was contested by one of the other sons of God. He was called Lucifer. . .this spirit-brother of Jesus desperately tried to become the Savior of mankind” (*The Gospel Through the Ages*, p.15, 1945, see also *Mormon Doctrine*, pp.192, 546-47, 589-90 and *Gospel Principles*, p.15-16).

As far back as 1985, InterVarsity Press published the booklet *One Catholic to Another* by Peter Kreeft. The booklet is written in the form of a fictional conversation between Catholics:

Dusty: Why do you go [to Mass], Sonny?

Sonny: Jesus is there.

Dusty: How is he there?

Sonny: He’s really present in the Eucharist and he’s really present in his people. They’re both called the body of Christ, you know.” (p. 8)

In conclusion, though the effect of secular ownership hasn’t fully been felt, there already has been a growing compromise among some Christian publishers. In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul wrote, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” His becoming “all things to all men” never compromised the essentials of the gospel. Rather, in becoming “like” either Jews or Gentiles, he did this “for the gospel’s sake” (v. 23).

QUESTION: “What can you tell us about the upcoming “America for Jesus” rally taking place in Philadelphia Sept 28&29? The leadership calls for a “solemn assembly” based on 2 Chronicles 7:14. Is there any hope for America based on this promise, and is there any practical benefit to participating in such national rallies?”

RESPONSE: Anne Gimenez of The Rock Church is the national chairman of this rally, originally launched by her late husband, John Gimenez, on April 29, 1980, with participants including Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker, Bill Bright, and Jerry Falwell.

Even political commentators have noted that “the prominent role of New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) leaders in the event reveals just how much the Religious Right has changed and grown even more extreme, as leaders now not only claim that they have a divine mandate to change politics but also that they are actual apostles and prophets with the same divine appointment as the apostles and prophets of the Bible and receive direct prophecies from God” (Brian Tashman, “Washington for Jesus Returns as the ‘America for Jesus’ Prayer Rally in Philadelphia,” *Right Wing Watch*, 02/21/2012).

Other speakers include Lou Engle of the International House of Prayer (IHOP). In the May 1990 issue of this newsletter Dave warned: “This ‘Latter Rain’ movement is growing with astonishing speed in association with the Vineyards and Kansas City Fellowship under the influence of ‘prophets’ such as John Wimber, Paul Cain (former associate of William Branham), Rick Joyner, Mike Bickle and others. Increasing numbers of churches are ‘submitting’ themselves to these ‘prophets’ in what appears to be a rapidly growing new discipleship movement based upon ‘signs and wonders,’ which is *bringing dangerous heresies into the church in the name of holiness and unity* [emphasis added].”

Also manifested in a group known as the Kansas City Prophets, this 1940s Latter Rain movement was declared a heresy by mainline Pentecostals (among others) and lost momentum for many years. Unfortunately, it seems you can’t keep a heretical idea down, and various aspects of it have surfaced again. The happenings at Toronto and Pensacola (Brownsville Revival) and various spots around the world are simply manifestations of these same ideas, with the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) contributing the continuation of these unbiblical teachings.

Word faith teachers such as Kenneth Copeland and Gordon Robertson of the *700 Club* have also endorsed the event as these separate movements draw closer together in their goals and objectives (See May 2006 *TBC*).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Is Faith a Power of the Mind?

QUESTION: One of my favorite books has been *The Power of Positive Thinking*. In it, the author says that “positive thinking” is just another word for “faith.” I notice that his chief disciple says much the same thing: that “faith” is what he calls “possibility thinking.” He has called Jesus Christ “the greatest possibility thinker of all time.” Something about that bothers me, but I don’t know why. Can you explain?

RESPONSE: We have already noted that Jesus said, “Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22), and that faith can only be in God because He alone is worthy of complete trust. Yet an atheist can teach “Positive Thinking” seminars, and many atheists do so. Obviously, then, positive thinking has nothing to do with faith. It is, in fact, the exact opposite of faith.

The theory of positive thinking is that one’s thoughts, whether “positive” or “negative,” influence one’s own body and personality and thus health. Moreover, one’s thoughts are believed even to influence other people and the world around. Thus success or failure is allegedly created by the power of one’s mind. This is actually an ancient occult belief, which its modern proponents claim works through some mysterious psychic power that we all possess but have to learn to use.

Faith, on the other hand, is placed in God and His omnipotence, not in the alleged power of one’s own mind, whether conscious or unconscious. What a difference! For positive thinking, it doesn’t matter whether God is real or not; what matters is one’s *belief*. Thus, “God” is turned into a placebo that activates belief. One could believe in some cosmic energy source or anything else. All that matters is simply that one *believes*. It is the power of belief that supposedly causes the desired effect. What triggers this *belief* is unimportant. Clearly, then, whoever confuses positive/possibility thinking with faith has turned from God and His truth and power and has been badly deceived in both temporal and eternal issues.

An Inescapable and Vital Choice

Here is the choice we face: Either we trust in the power of a firmly held belief activating some mysterious psychic power of the mind, or else we trust in God and His infinite power, which is obviously demonstrated everywhere in the universe. Only a fool would choose the power of the mind over the power of God. True faith looks to God to do that which neither one’s mind (conscious or unconscious) nor talents nor efforts could accomplish.

An important element of faith, therefore, is *submission to God’s will*. Faith could hardly be expected to believe that God would do what is contrary to His will, nor would faith desire Him to do so. Faith trusts God to fulfill His Word and

to effect His will in one’s life.

Here is another error: Many religious people try to use “faith” to cause God to put *their* will into effect. Many people think of prayer as a religious technique for getting their own way. They set their sights on what they want and then use prayer as a means of trying to talk God into making it work out for them. And if someone comes along offering a seminar on techniques for getting prayers “answered” (such as visualizing what one is praying for, or speaking forth with confidence that one has already obtained what one is praying for, etc.), people will sign up by the millions to learn how to get their own way.

By His example, Jesus made it clear that no one has even begun to pray until he can first say from his heart to God, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Paul exemplified the same truth. He had an affliction that he referred to as his “thorn in the flesh” and from which he asked Christ to deliver him:

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities [weaknesses], that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:8–9)

No one can have faith in God—that is, absolute and total trust in Him—without knowing Him. And if one truly knows God, then one sincerely wants God’s will rather than one’s own will. Obviously, God is wiser than any mere human. Furthermore, He has proved that He loves us. Then doesn’t it make sense, rather than trying to get one’s own finite and fallible will to be done, to trust God’s infinite wisdom and love to effect what is best in one’s life? That is true “faith in God.” Nothing else makes sense.

The Upcoming Psychologized Generation

T. A. McMahon

When Dave Hunt and I wrote *The Seduction of Christianity* more than 25 years ago, the conservative evangelical church was more than pleased that we were addressing some of the erroneous teachings and practices of the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, particularly those that promoted the unbiblical prosperity and healing doctrines. Yet that enthusiasm was short-lived when many such readers got to chapters 12 and 13. Why? Those chapters addressed the biblical problems with *psychological counseling* in the church, a phenomenon that had installed itself within evangelical Christianity in a major way.

That was more than a quarter of a century ago, and one might guess (or hope) that the body of Christ would have become aware of the preponderance of studies from some research psychologists who demonstrate that psychotherapy is not only practically worthless but is even quite harmful in many situations. Few, however, have taken notice. As a consequence, psychotherapy has become so accepted among evangelicals today that rarely is anyone aware of the dangers.

How did the evangelical church slide into such an astounding lack of discernment? The fundamental reason is shockingly simple: most Christians, including many who claim to look to the Bible as their *authority* in all matters of living their lives in submission to the Lord, give only lip service to the *sufficiency of God's Word*. In other words, they contradict their professing belief in biblical authority by looking elsewhere for solutions to solving life's problems, primarily by turning to so-called authorities or "experts"—and particularly to psychologists. This is a tragic mistake because God's Word is sufficient: "*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*" (2 Peter 1:3). The Word of God is the Manufacturer's Handbook, with instructions for humanity regarding "*all things that pertain to life and godliness.*" What exactly are the "all things"? Certainly everything that pertains to or involves moral issues and anything that is sin related—either how to avoid it or how to repent of it. Clinical psychology cannot deal with sin—although most if

not all of the issues for which people turn to psychotherapists are *due* to sin. The outcome of seeking psychotherapeutic help is always destructive for the faith of the believer for what should be obvious reasons.

Psychological counseling is an anti-biblical replacement program for the Manufacturer's Handbook. Its essential doctrine is that *self*, which is declared to be *innately good*, is the key to solving all of life's problems. Therefore, foundationally, it stands in direct opposition to the Scriptures, which declare that *self*, i.e., man, is *innately sinful* (Jeremiah 17:9). If self, also known as the heart of man, is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" as the Bible declares, then self is the *problem* rather than the solution. Just as a leopard cannot change its spots, there is nothing within self that can change its sinful nature. Nothing in the theories or practices of psychotherapy can change this fact. So why would psychotherapists, in view of all of the horrendous evil that we see demonstrated daily throughout the world, hold to a premise that simple observation denies? They have no choice. Without God, only self remains. And so the delusionary charade based upon the innate goodness of man goes on (as well as the terrible consequence) for people who have turned from God to a *deified* self.

The good news is that God knows the problem that besets humanity and He has provided the solution through His Son—a solution that will change the heart of every human who will turn to Him and accept His offer. Christ's full payment for the sins of humanity not only makes those who receive His payment for themselves *new creatures* in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), but they are also sealed with the Holy Spirit of God, the only true Counselor and Comforter of all believers. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is the One who enables the born-again Christian to understand the Manufacturer's Handbook and live out its instructions (John 14:26; Zechariah 4:6). That's what the Bible declares; so why would those who profess to believe in the Bible forsake its wonderful claims? Jesus announced that He came that those who believed in Him "might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

So why do believers look elsewhere? One of the major reasons is simple—and therefore correctible. If a believer is not reading his Bible and is relying on other sources for his biblical intake, he will have only a vague idea of what's in it, and much of his thinking about it may be deluded or distorted. That contributes to one's having

a serious lack of confidence in God's Word. Such a person is rendered incapable of recognizing what's biblical and what's not. Yet the condition is hardly hopeless. Biblical discernment doesn't depend upon scholarship or knowing Greek and Hebrew or attending seminary or having an apologetics degree from a Bible college. It's simply a matter of a believer's disciplined reading (meaning every day!) of the Word of God, followed by a willingness to apply what one is reading to one's life. How can a believer expect to recognize truth from error if he or she is not disciplined in reading and doing what the Scriptures teach? Biblical discernment is basically a matter of comparing what's being promoted or taught in the world *or the church* with what the Bible teaches. A person cannot make that assessment if he is doubtful about biblical content. What is needed is the very thing that the Jews in the synagogue of the Greek city of Berea were commended for: they searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things that the Apostle Paul was preaching were true to the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11). If those Jews were so commended, how much more important it is that believers today follow their example.

Sadly, from my observation over more than three decades, the evangelical church has succumbed to nearly every seductive device the Adversary has dished out, all in support of his major strategy: *to destroy the effectiveness of God's Word in the church*, as well as in the world. The seductive program began in the Garden of Eden with Eve: "Yea, hath God said...?"—a ploy to get her to rethink God's commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had indeed declared to Adam, "...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Satan then denied God's command by telling Eve, "Ye shall not surely die..." (Genesis 3:4).

It is important to note that *the sowing of doubt followed by the denial of the truth of God's Word* has been the Adversary's tactic in his quest to destroy mankind ever since. His chief strategy is to *undermine the Scriptures*. To the degree that a believer turns from the Word of God—whether through apathy, laziness, being spoon fed, having a self-serving interest, turning to outside sources, being deceived, listening to extra-biblical misinformation, etc.—to that degree his ability to discern has deteriorated. Without biblical discernment, a believer is ripe for any and all of Satan's deceptions, which brings us back to what may be the Adversary's most effective

contemporary scam: “psyching out” the evangelical church.

It began, as most seductions do, in small doses and influences, all of them somewhat subtle and appearing to make sense. In the mid-20th century, psychologists such as Erich Fromm began writing about love, and in particular the value of self-love. Abraham Maslow, in the 1940s, included self-esteem near the top of his “hierarchy of needs.” Evangelicals took note. Norman Vincent Peale and psychiatrist Smiley Blanton early in the 1950s established the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry. The Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS), took root at the same time. Also, at that time, the American Psychiatric Association set up luncheons around the US, in which psychiatrists suggested to the religious community that working together to meet the needs of their flocks would be a match made in heaven. As that relationship grew, it was gradually impressed upon the pastors and priests that they were ill equipped to deal with most of the issues of their congregations’ problems of living. Many pastors fell into that erroneous idea and returned to school to earn degrees in psychology.

What began as a trickle turned into a flood from the 1970s through the 80s. Psychologist James Dobson released his book, *How to Build Self-Esteem in Your Child: Hide or Seek*. Robert Schuller’s book *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* was sent out gratis to 250,000 pastors. Toward the end of the 1980s, the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC), an organization that strongly endorses the integration of psychology and the Bible, had its beginning. Today it boasts on its masthead: “Nearly 50,000 Members and Growing Stronger Every Day.” The list of leaders who have spoken at AACC conferences consist of a *Who’s Who?* of the evangelical community. My Middle Eastern friends would characterize what I’ve described early on as “the camel getting its nose in the tent.” It should come as no surprise, then, that years later the camel is right at home *within* the tent. That “beast,” however, has displaced God’s way and His truth and is causing much destruction within the body of Christ.

Unless there is a dramatic recognition of the antibiblical nature of psychological counseling and its “spiritualized” counterparts (inner healing, Theophostic Counseling, Bethel’s Sozo, etc.), the worst is yet to come. What makes me think so? It has to do with our upcoming generation

of evangelicals. Many are aware that evolution is a false science—a pseudoscience—thanks to the teaching and influence of organizations such as the Institute for Creation Research and Answers in Genesis and individuals such as Carl Kerby, Jobe Martin, and many others. Psychological counseling, however, is *also* a pseudoscience (which we have documented in numerous articles and books that we have offered for years). Can you name any ministries equivalent in influence to that of ICR or AiG that are pointing out the pseudoscientific nature of *psychotherapy*? Not that there aren’t some out there, but they are small voices crying in the wilderness.

Now here is the really bad news. Our evangelical young people are being led by the pied pipers of so-called Christian psychology and through the greed of professing Christian universities to become practitioners in an antichrist field. It’s tragic enough that the upcoming generation is functionally biblically illiterate—they know how to read, and they have Bibles but don’t read them, but add to that grievous condition the fact that they are being *ushered into* psychology. A survey by the prestigious *Princeton Review* noted that psychology was listed as the number-two major among college students. It’s very likely that the percentage is even higher for Christian students at professing Christian colleges because of their belief in the *myth* that psychology is a scientific way of helping people and that jobs may be available for them as counselors at evangelical churches. There is also other encouragement for them to seek such careers.

Dr. James Dobson is one of the many highly influential evangelicals ushering this next generation into psychotherapy. He writes: “Christian psychology is a worthy profession for a young believer, provided his faith is strong enough to withstand the humanistic concepts to which he will be exposed” (*Focus on the Family*, Dec. 1988). Dr. Dobson couldn’t be more wrong in his counsel to young believers. To begin with, “Christian psychology” is a misleading term. According to CAPS, “there is no acceptable Christian psychology that is markedly different from non-Christian psychology...as yet there is not an acceptable theory, mode of research, or treatment methodology that is distinctly Christian” (From a paper presented at the Western Association of Christians for Psychological Studies, 1976, cited in *Psychoheresy* by Martin & Deidre Bobgan, Eastgate Pub., 1987, p.5). As noted, scarce is the young believer today whose faith is strong enough

and whose discernment level high enough (because of his study of the Word of God) to withstand the onslaught from such a pursuit. And finally, it isn’t merely a matter of being able to stand against some of the humanistic concepts in psychotherapy. No, the entire field of psychological counseling is *rooted* in the humanistic concept of self.

It is also rare that a Christian academic institution would reject psychology for biblical reasons (although there are a few). Some offer psychological counseling for the same reasons that they teach evolution in their so-called science departments—they accept it by faith. But it’s also a matter of “filthy lucre,” i.e., it’s an economic proposition: students keep the school afloat financially. If the school does not offer psychology, “the number-two most popular major,” the students will go elsewhere; if they go elsewhere, the school sinks economically.

What all of this leads up to is a generation of evangelicals who will have been heavily psychologized and further conditioned against the belief in the *sufficiency of the Word of God*. And because most of the church is supportive of the psychological way, there will be few warnings regarding the spiritual disaster that lies ahead.

Is there any hope of averting such a tragic end result? Yes...but the term “hope” may seem a bit optimistic. Nevertheless, we have a potential remedy and encouragement from the Book of Nehemiah. Upon returning to Jerusalem from Babylon, Nehemiah was confronted by a development that outraged him: the Jewish leaders had given to Tobiah, the servant of the wicked Sanballat and enemy of Israel, a “*chamber in the courts of the house of God.*” Nehemiah’s response, as a man of God, as a type of the Holy Spirit, as a watchman who oversaw the building of the wall surrounding Jerusalem for protection, was God ordained: “And it grieved me sore: therefore I *cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber*” (Nehemiah 13:7-8).

Unless today’s men of God, shepherds of God’s flock, those whom God has privileged in leadership positions do likewise with the “psychological stuff” that is in the church, they are unwittingly contributing to the last days apostasy (2 Timothy 3:1-2). And by failing to warn this and the next generation, their “blood,” i.e., the resulting spiritual destruction, will fall upon those who will be held accountable—those who *could* have done something but did nothing. It doesn’t have to be that way. TBC

Quotable

Think it not strange, then, pilgrim,
neither faint,
Much less indulge in murmuring and
complaint,
If what you meet with in your heavenly
road
Is hard to bear; since all is planned by
God,
His child to train in wisdom's holy
ways,
And form a chosen vessel for His
praise.
Now we are slow those ways to under-
stand;
But let us bow beneath His mighty
hand,
Sure that His wisdom over all presides,
His power controls, and love unerring
guides.

— J. G. Deck

Q&A

QUESTION: How do you respond to Christians who say, "As long as we Christians believe in the Trinity and that Jesus died for our sins...and we preach the gospel—let's just put our theological disagreements aside"? Different denominations teach God's Word differently from other denominations. For example, one church baptizes babies and the other doesn't. Both believe they are teaching scripture! How do we reconcile this?

RESPONSE: It's one thing to say that one believes in "the Trinity," but one's belief needs to be defined and compared to the Scriptures. Paul warns, "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him [i.e., they embrace the false teaching]" (2 Cor 11:4) Are their beliefs concerning Jesus, the nature of the Godhead, the gospel, etc., biblical?

Catholics affirm the Trinity, yet Catholics baptize babies because it is (in their view) an integral part of the salvation process. So Catholics may believe in the Trinity, but they have "another gospel." Other groups that insist upon baptism for infants have also formulated "another gospel." They may very well believe in the deity of Christ and the Godhead comprising the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But they are preaching a *false* gospel.

There is only one gospel. It is eternal and

changeless. It is the gospel of the Kingdom, the only gospel that Jesus or His disciples or Paul preached, and the same gospel that we must preach today. Unfortunately, seldom is the gospel preached in the way that Paul preached it in Acts 17:2-3 and elsewhere. Romans 1, for example, reveals what must shock a Jew: that Christianity is not some new invention but the fulfillment of the *same message the Hebrew prophets had proclaimed*.

Yes, the gospel does pertain to the death and resurrection of Christ for our sins, as Paul declares in Romans 2, as David and the prophets declared, as Peter preached in his Acts 2 and 3 sermons, and as foretold in all of the Old Testament sacrifices. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, Christ was a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and although the disciples didn't understand fully what it meant that Jesus was the Messiah (Peter in Matthew 16, for example, acknowledged Him as such), they did point their listeners to Him as the fulfillment of the prophets' message.

Regarding baby baptism, the Bible shows us through the example of the early church that baptism is *a declaration to the world of an individual's receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior*—a visible demonstration of an invisible occurrence, in which the person has died to sin, thus identifying with Christ in His death, and is born to a new and living hope, identifying with Christ in His resurrection. That's not possible for infants.

One must exercise discernment in all of these areas, searching the Scriptures to see what God's Word, not man's, really has to say about it.

QUESTION: OK—you have questions about Mother Teresa. I agree with some of your reservations. However, she made Jesus famous in India as few have. I suspect that many dying Hindu's cried out to the loving Jesus that she and her sisters presented in actions of love no one could deny. Most evangelicals have a lot to learn from that if we are honest.

RESPONSE: We have the choice to objectively evaluate the evidence or to ignore it. Evaluated by Scripture, Mother Teresa taught "another Jesus," which will save no one: "Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name [than the biblical Jesus] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

We cannot honestly find any examples of Teresa speaking the truth of the biblical

gospel. Rather, we can find numerous documented examples of her professing to help people become "better Muslims, Hindus," etc. Either her words have no meaning, or they should be evaluated objectively in the light of Scripture. You say that you "suspect." Is that the criteria by which we operate? Paul was "not ashamed of the *gospel of Christ*: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16).

The "gospel" that Mother Teresa presented was powerless because it was incomplete. We have the testimony of her own words and actions. Mother Teresa wrote, "We never try to convert those who receive [aid from Missionaries of Charity] to Christianity but in our work we bear witness to the love of God's presence, and if Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, or agnostics become for this better men—simply better—we will be satisfied" (Mother Teresa, *Life in the Spirit: Reflections, Meditations and Prayers*, pp 81-82).

In her poem "On Suffering," Mother Teresa wrote, "He allows us to share in His suffering, And to make up for the sins of the world." This is Catholic doctrine. It is not the biblical gospel. Was this what the inspired writer of Hebrews meant when he wrote of the One who, "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever..." (Heb 10:12)? Official Catholic doctrine denies that Jesus paid the full penalty for sin. This is what Mother Teresa believed.

Native Calcuttan Aroup Chatterjee wrote in his book *Mother Teresa: The Final Verdict*:

On 15 June 1995 she was touring the neonatal unit at St Elizabeth's Medical Centre in Brighton, Massachusetts. Parents could not believe their luck when she left the babies (many of them premature) her blessings and her hallmark, an oval aluminum "miraculous" medal. She told the media, "I have 200 small babies in my hospital in Calcutta. This is a beautiful place" (*Boston Globe*, 16 June 1995). She, however, does not have any hospitals in Calcutta, nor anywhere else in the world (Aroup Chatterjee, *Mother Teresa: The Final Verdict*, Meteor Press, chapter 1).

We cannot do more than speculate about the impact of her works. What about the suffering of those denied painkillers because she believed "suffering was a gift from God" and efficacious in helping those suffering to enter purgatory? What about those defrauded of money that she refused to return? Is this the testimony that leads an individual to Christ?

Regarding examples, we have far greater ones in the ministries of Amy Carmichael, Dr. Paul Gupta (see *God of the Untouchables*), William Carey, Henry Martyn, etc.

As others have noted, “The primitive hospice in Calcutta was as run down when she died as it always had been—she preferred California clinics when she got sick herself—and her order always refused to publish any audit.”

May the Lord deliver us from Christian political correctness and may we never flee from truth. The stakes are too high for anything less.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Dave Hunt

In 2 Samuel, beginning in chapter 13, we are introduced to a tragic sequence of events in King David's life. God's fourfold judgment for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, is about to come upon him (2 Samuel 12:1-4). David's son, Amnon, forces himself upon one of his sisters, Tamar, committing incest. David's favorite son, Absalom, takes vengeance and has Amnon killed, then flees from David's wrath.

Joab craftily engineers Absalom's return to Jerusalem, and the latter proceeds to turn the hearts of the people of Israel away from David. That accomplished, Absalom "sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron" (2 Samuel 15:10). This was the city where David had first been crowned king (2 Samuel 5:1-5).

Upon learning that Israel has rejected him in favor of Absalom, David leaves his throne to the usurper and flees from Jerusalem with his 600 mighty men and many servants (2 Samuel 15:13-22). In allegiance to David, the priests Zadok and Abiathar, together with the Levites bearing the ark of the covenant, seek to join the procession fleeing Jerusalem.

David, however, demonstrates again why God said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts:13:22). He tells the priests, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again...but if [not]...let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (2 Samuel 15:25-26). David then arranges for Ahimaaz the son of Zadok and Jonathan the son of Abiathar to act as spies and bring vital information to him (15:27-29).

David is told that Ahithophel is part of Absalom's conspiracy. Known for his wisdom, this man had been David's chief advisor and was probably the most brilliant strategist the world has ever seen: "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom" (16:23). David instantly offers a prayer that goes to the heart of the matter. It is a model for us today of insight, brevity, and effectiveness: "O LORD, I pray thee, turn

the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (2 Samuel 15:31).

Almost immediately, Hushai the Archite, loyal friend and longtime counselor, appears "with his coat rent, and earth upon his head" (v. 32). David recognizes in him the answer to his prayer: not a miracle but a means. Often we ask God to do for us what we could have a part in doing for ourselves if we would use what He provides! David tells Hushai, "...if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king...then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel" (vv. 33,34). And so it would be.

Ahithophel urges Absalom, "Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed...and I will smite the king only" (17:1,2). Ahithophel's counsel was the only possibility. But playing on the reputation of David and his men as invincible warriors, Hushai cautions, "The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time...thou knowest thy father and his men [are] mighty men...chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps...thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people...Behold, he is hid now... [W]hen some...be overthrown...whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. And he...whose heart is...of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men. Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee...as the sand that is by the sea for multitude...that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him... as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one" (17:7-12).

Absalom and his men are attracted by the thought of having hundreds of thousands united to attack David's 600 men, and they accept the counsel of Hushai that "the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel" (v. 14). The latter knows that if David and his men have time to get some food and rest, all the men of Israel will not be sufficient to defeat them.

Ahithophel is a tragic figure—a master strategist whose amazing career has been driven, not by love for the God of Israel and loyalty to David whom He has chosen to be king, but by his love for outwitting Israel's enemies and being admired as the brains behind the phenomenal success that

God has given to David. The fact that the despised shepherd boy David defeated Goliath and the Philistines simply by faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has never gripped the soul of Ahithophel. For him, there are no more challenges in serving David after Israel's enemies have all been defeated—whereas guiding Absalom's revolt will bring him out of virtual retirement and into action again.

Ahithophel apparently sees in Absalom's rebellion the opportunity for new demands upon his genius. Here is an exciting task worthy of his remarkable talents. But now his wise counsel has been rejected. Knowing exactly what the outcome will be, he doesn't hesitate a moment: "And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass...gat him home...put his household in order, and hanged himself..." (17:23).

David, too, knows that all Israel is no match for his 600 incredible warriors, one of whom "lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time" (2 Sam 23:8); another "smote the Philistines until...his hand clave unto the sword:... and the people returned after him only to spoil" (23:10); still another slays 300 at one time (23:18). David pleads with his invincible army, "Deal gently for my sake with...Absalom" (18:5). And so it happens precisely as Ahithophel, Hushai, and David have foreseen: under Absalom's leadership, Israel suffers a stunning defeat.

In spite of David's passionate plea, Joab kills Absalom in order to remove any further challenge to David. Israel is ashamed of her disloyalty to her rightful king but doesn't know what to do. Perhaps recognizing God's judgment upon his own sin, David weeps inconsolably in seclusion for Absalom: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33).

Joab, who for all his perversity is a man of keen insight, rebukes David: "Joab... said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants...for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died... then it had pleased thee...if thou go not forth [to the people], there will not tarry one with thee this night....Then the king arose, and sat in the gate....And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent" (2 Samuel 19:1-8).

The people remember that David, after all, has delivered them from the Philistines and other enemies and has ruled them well.

With Absalom dead, the word spreads quickly, “Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?” (v. 10).

Even though Absalom has been defeated, David will not go back to his throne in Jerusalem until the hearts of the people have changed toward him and they welcome his return. But David is not idle. He sends Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, to the elders of Judah to say unto them, “Ye are my brethren...my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?” (19:11,12).

This appeal “bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.” Only then “the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king...” (19:9-15).

Surely this story has prophetic implications for the last days in which we find ourselves. In spite of those who claim that God is finished with Israel and that the church is the “new Israel,” scores of prophecies foretell a full and final restoration of Israel in her land, with the Messiah ruling over her forever on David’s throne. This restoration must be yet future because nothing that comes close to these prophetic promises has ever occurred in Israel’s history (we will add italics to highlight the permanence of these promises as further evidence that the fulfillment is yet future):

“He that scattered Israel will gather him...they shall come and sing in the height of Zion...they shall not sorrow *any more at all* (Jeremiah 31:10-12)...The city [Jerusalem] shall be built to the LORD...It shall not be plucked up nor thrown down *any more for ever* (vv. 38,40)...As a shepherd seeketh out his flock...so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered....And gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land,...And I will set up one shepherd over them,...even my servant David;...he shall be their shepherd....And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen,...they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid (Ezekiel 34:12,13,23,28). And I will...do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD....Neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people *any more*...(Ezekiel 36:11,15). A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:... This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden (vv. 26,35). I the LORD [will] build the ruined places, and plant that

that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it and I will do it...(v. 36). And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt;...they, and their children, and their children’s children *for ever*: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever....My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them *for evermore* (37:24-28). So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name *any more*....[T]he house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God *from that day and forward*....Neither will I hide my face *any more* from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD (39:7,22,29).”

David is one of the clearest Old Testament types of Christ. Therefore, we can see prophetic implications concerning the Second Coming of Christ in the incident from 2 Samuel cited above. This fact becomes even clearer in the passage from Ezekiel 37. That the promised Messiah is referred to as David reflects the fact that He is the ultimate “son of David” who will reign upon David’s throne in Jerusalem over restored Israel and the world forever.

Zechariah gives further details in enlarging upon these prophecies: “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle;...Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations,...And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem...My God shall come, and all the saints with thee....And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced...” (Zechariah 14:1-5; 12:10a).

Clearly God is speaking—but what could He mean that He has been pierced by Israel? And why does He seem to refer to another when He goes on to say, “...and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son...” (12:10b)? They pierced “me,” says God, but they will mourn for “him.” Do not the words of Christ explain this when He says, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30)?

Israel’s mourning can only be in remorse for having “pierced” her God. But how is that possible? Only if God himself had become a man through a virgin birth and had been rejected and crucified as Isaiah foretold: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]” (Isaiah 7:14); “For unto us a child is born,...a son is given: and

the government shall be upon his shoulder [i.e., He is the Messiah who will reign]: and his name shall be called...The mighty God, The everlasting Father...” (9:6); “He is despised and rejected...wounded for our transgressions...bruised for our iniquities...and with his stripes we are healed” (53:3-5). Furthermore, only on the basis of the Messiah, who is God himself, paying the penalty for our sins could Zechariah go on to say that, as a result of Israel’s recognition and mourning, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1).

Surely Israel stands today in relation to the coming “David” where she stood in relation to the original King David after his rejection. Upon being rejected, Jesus said, “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39). That will indeed happen in the midst of Armageddon as Israel, attacked by the armies of the entire world under Antichrist, faces annihilation and cries out in desperation for her Messiah. He comes to rescue her and they see that He is a man who was pierced to the death and is risen again, the very Jesus they have despised and rejected, as their own prophet Isaiah foretold so clearly (Isaiah 53).

Could we also find application for the church? Christ has promised to come and take us to His Father’s house of many mansions (John 14:2-3). Could it be that, as David waited for Israel to invite him back, Christ will return only when His bride earnestly calls upon Him to do so? The Absaloms of this world have captured the hearts of Christians everywhere. We are in the midst of apostasy. The last thing many Christians want is the Rapture because it would interfere with their earthly plans.

Christ foretold that “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (Matthew 25:5-6). *Is it not time for that cry to resound throughout the church?* Could this be why Revelation ends, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come....Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:17,20)? *When will the church “speak a word for bringing back the king”?* Let us who “love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8) sound the midnight cry: “Behold the bridegroom cometh! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” And let us urge many others to join us in this plea to our Savior. **TBC**

(ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN APRIL 2002)

Quotable

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name.

CHORUS:

*On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*

When darkness seems to hide His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.

When He shall come with trumpet
sound,
Oh may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

— Edward Mote

Q&A

QUESTION: I sent a copy of your recent TBC Update on Joel Osteen [author of the bestseller, *Your Best Life Now*] (<http://www.theberean.org/content/joel-osteen-unsure-if-jesus-was-poor>) to a friend of mine on staff with Joel's ministry asking if he had any thoughts in regard to the article. He stated [excerpts from a long reply], "To be honest, I can't really discern what [the writer's] point is. Does he have some inside knowledge that I don't regarding the actual amount of funds that were carried in the treasury that Judas oversaw? Like Joel [Osteen] says, it's curious that the robe Jesus was wearing was valuable enough that the soldiers were dividing it up. But also like Joel, I don't really think about it much."

"Why is it so important that Jesus be poor? Is that like a tenet of faith? If so, I never got the memo. As for the 'foxes have holes' quote, I don't see how that refers to financial wealth. To me it's far more likely about the fact that He was not stationary. He was on a mission and on the move. That to follow Him meant that one would have to do the same, forsaking all and going with Him wherever the Spirit led them.... Joel simply believes, as do I, that God has promised to supply *all* our needs. He believes...that the apostle John

meant what he said when he wrote, 'I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.'"

RESPONSE: Our concern here is the distortion of what the Bible teaches about biblical prosperity. Those who are word-faith/healing and prosperity gospel teachers (including Joel Osteen and, previously, his father, John, in his ministry) have all supported the unbiblical idea that the spiritual hallmark of a faithful follower is riches and good health. According to their claim, if a person lacks those things, it's due to his or her lack of faith. They also mistakenly use Jesus as the model of the result of such beliefs, especially wealth.

There is no indication in Scripture that Jesus was wealthy. What He did have was through the generosity of those who ministered to him. Luke 8:3 indicates where the Lord Jesus may have obtained not only the robe but much of His earthly support: "Johanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others...provided for Him from their substance." In Scripture, we see several wealthy women who had a role (no doubt moved by the Holy Spirit) in giving to Jesus' ministry. Since the giver was likely wealthy, the garment given to Jesus would naturally reflect that. Such scriptures document that Jesus was not rich in earthly possessions. He relied on others in order to support His travels and earthly ministry. Furthermore, Scripture teaches us how He lived and how the apostles who were trained by Him lived. Paul wrote that he knew both how to "abound" and how to be "abased." The "abasing" part is what the word-faith teachers do not teach other than to say that it reflects a lack of faith.

A common argument in support of Christ's wealth is the fact that He wore a seamless garment, supposedly of greater value than a two- or three-piece one would have been. Yet a study of history reveals that Roman soldiers were allowed to "supplement" their income by confiscation. The point of the seamless garment being mentioned was that it could not easily be divided. The soldiers gambled for it, thus fulfilling Psalm 22:18: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." Therefore, even if the one-piece garment was more valuable, that hardly supports the belief that Christ was wealthy. It may have been a gift.

Regarding the "foxes have holes" quote, Jesus said in Luke 9:57-58, "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee

whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." In fact, this states that the Lord had no earthly home to return to, let alone a mansion. Christ was indeed "on a mission and on the move," as your friend notes, and to follow Him meant that one would have to do the same, "forsaking all and going with Him wherever the Spirit led them."

Certainly the Lord provides faithfully, but that provision is often diametrically opposed to human expectation and the distortion the "faith" teachers give it. Everything the Lord provides for a believer is according to His will. That fact, however, rails against the teaching that God's provision works according to spiritual laws, which the practitioner must learn in order to implement them. If that doesn't produce the desired result, then the fault lies with the one misapplying the laws. That delusion is no different from witchcraft.

Some prominent word/faith ministries have not one but two Gulfstream jets, which means that not only must they purchase two planes, but they must also pay two trained flight crews for each one, not to mention ongoing hangar costs and maintenance. Is that what constitutes biblical prosperity? Consider Benny Hinn's take on God's provision: "Years ago they used to preach, 'O we are going to walk on streets of gold.' I would say, 'I don't need the gold up there. I've got to have it down here'" (Praise-a-Thon, TBN, April 2, 1991).

Yes, the Lord provides all things necessary for us, but emphasizing the "abounding" that Paul on occasion experienced, we miss the point that the Lord is teaching: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." He states that at times he was "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 11:27). Was Paul out of God's will? No. God had allowed him to experience such conditions for his growth in the faith. Learning to be content in every state doesn't come about when one is only prospering materially.

The saddest part in all of this is that many who follow Joel Osteen's "positive" gospel are not taught the Bible's clear warnings that we will suffer on this earth, and therefore they miss the biblical truth that such suffering provides excellent opportunities for spiritual maturity (see "The Value of Suffering," theberean.org/content/value-suffering.)

WHO IS JESUS?

CORRECTING LDS FALLACIES - BY DENNIS & RAUNI HIGLEY

WHEN an LDS person is asked the question, “Do you know Jesus?”, many will say, “Of course I know Jesus, I have read stories about Him, I have heard talks about Him, I pray in His name, and I belong to a church that has His name on our buildings.” When they say this, the next question to ask is, “Does He know you?” More often than not they then tell about the preexistence, heavenly parents, and how Jesus is our elder brother and that we grew up there with Him – and thus we know Him and He knows us as His siblings, for we all came from heaven. This answer gives an opening to ask how this could be, for the Bible tells us that Jesus alone came from heaven—we did not (John 8:23; 3:13, 31; 6:62; 1 Corinthians 15:46-47). The Bible teaches of Jesus who is God who became a man to save us from our sin (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1, 14, 29; 3:16).

When Adam sinned and death entered the human race, God promised to send a Redeemer, “the seed of the woman” (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14). Jesus of the Bible is that Virgin-born Son of God; God, who is Spirit (John 4:24; Luke 1:26-31). Jesus is indeed Immanuel, God with us. (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1, 14; Galatians 4:4). He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Jesus compared knowing Him to having eternal life (John 17:3). In other words, just knowing about Him without knowing WHO HE IS will not give us eternal life. We have to have a personal relationship with Him. The Bible warns about false prophets and teachers who teach of another Jesus (same name but a different person – 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15). Jesus himself said “Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.” Knowing His name and even having done “wonderful works” in His name but not having personal relationship with Him will not do. “On that day,” Judgment Day, He will have to say, “I never knew you: depart from Me” (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus is God who came to save us from our sins, but if we do not know and acknowledge *who He is*, the Great I AM, we will die in our sins and therefore cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (John 8:24; 58-59). Only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:7). Jesus is 100 percent God and 100 percent man. “In Him dwells all fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). He came to fulfill all that the prophets of the Old Testament had foretold about Him. Every book of the Bible is about Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). His life, death, and resurrection is for all who in faith accept Him (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9). When we receive Him, we BECOME children of God (John 1:12-13; 3:7) and are born again of the Spirit of God.

The Mormon Church and its leaders have taught that Jesus was married and a polygamist—as their God the Father also is married and a polygamist—and that all mankind were born as spirit children

to him and his many wives in the preexistence, Jesus being the eldest of all of them/us. They teach that since marriage is a requirement for gaining exaltation and godhood in the celestial kingdom, Jesus likewise had to be married in order to become fully a god.

It is amazing how many different ways the enemy of our souls tries to confuse people’s minds of the purpose of God becoming a man in Jesus; namely that He became a man to die for our sins, and through faith in Him as our substitute to provide the way for us to go to heaven.

A few years ago, there was Dan Brown’s popular novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, which many, many Mormons and others took as a sure confirmation that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that they had at least one child.... This same confusion, and even excitement is up again among Mormons because some fourth century “faded papyrus fragment, only 1.5 inches by 3 inches, likened to the size of a business card or small cell phone has been found—suggesting that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was actually married.” This fragment was brought to light a couple of weeks ago by Harvard Divinity School professor, Karen King, who also says “the papyrus fragment, even if it’s determined to be authentic, does not provide evidence that Jesus was married, but merely that hundreds of years after Jesus’ death and resurrection, some believed He had a wife.... The Bible never even hints that Jesus was married.” Wolf-Peter Funk, a Coptic linguist, (among others) doubts the authenticity (of this fragment), calling its form “suspicious.” He told the AP “there’s no way to evaluate the significance of the fragment because it has no context. There are thousands of scraps of papyrus where you find crazy things,” said Funk, (co-director of a project editing the Nag Hammadi Coptic library at Laval University in Quebec). “It can be anything,” he said. “Part of the mystery of the fragment is that no one seems to be sure of its origin and provenance, a history of where it has been. Plus, its owner has asked to remain anonymous. This is now being labeled by experts as fraudulent....” (Copied from *WND* report of 9/19/12, emphasis added.)

It is amazing to see how gullible people indeed are. The New Testament, written during the First Century A.D. by eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life and His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, does not say anything about Jesus being married, but a tiny fragment by an anonymous writer, without context to anything, written about 350 years after Jesus’ life, is all of a sudden taken as “proof” that He was married! It is incredible that people are so eager to believe something like this, and by so doing they discredit God’s purposes and Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).



ABOUT H.I.S. (HE IS SAVIOR) MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

HISMIN is dedicated to helping Mormons who have questions about their belief system being Christian or not.

Dennis was a sixth-generation Mormon who became an Elder’s Quorum president while still in his early twenties. About a decade later, he was ordained a High Priest and called to serve on the Stake High Council. Rauni worked as a translator and language coordinator for the LDS Church for over 14 years, and held teaching positions in Sunday school and in the Relief Society. Her privileged position allowed her to study Mormon history from

many books not generally available to LDS membership, which eventually led her to share these growing concerns about discrepancies hidden by the Church with her husband. Together they launched the helpful website, hismin.com (use this exact link to reach the Higleys).

The Best 2013 (and beyond) Resolution

T. A. McMahon

Many of us start off the New Year with resolutions that we hope will improve our life in some way. Too often, however, our commitment to what we have resolved doesn't make it past March. That's an odd thing considering that we nearly always pick the resolution because we know it will be good for us in some way, whether it's losing weight, getting in shape, eating healthier, etc. So, what is our problem? It's usually a matter of discipline, or the lack thereof. Scripture recognizes that "the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). The flesh may also have gotten us into the trouble that we are attempting to correct, and the correction could involve a major struggle because the troubling condition may have been habitual. The solution should be obvious: counter a bad habit by implementing a good habit—one that will eliminate the bad habit. Obvious? yes. Easy? no. Here again, the stumbling block is a lack of self-control. Although there are some people who are amazingly disciplined, most of us need help.

One necessary source of help is to recognize the discipline issue: we need to say yes to some things and no to others. In other words, we need to make the right choices. That may also seem too obvious, but "obvious" today is often clouded by excuses that have been conjured up by psychotherapeutic myths, like psychic determinism or so-called addictions. No, it all boils down to *choice*. We can choose to eat healthier or not, to exercise or not, to smoke or not, to drink or not, or to submit or not to submit to any other activity that may create health problems.

Another potential source of help is our motivation. What might motivate us to make the right choice? The world's answer is *self*. Although some have had limited success by "believing" in themselves, at least for a time, that ultimately leads to self-preoccupation and other forms of self-indulgence. The biblical way is to be motivated by a *love of others* rather than a *love of self*. If we desire to get healthier because we know that potential health risks can create all kinds of difficulties not only for ourselves but also for our family members, our concern and love for them could

be strong motivation for making the right choices healthwise.

Hopefully, most will find the simple truths presented above to be of value in addressing the physical issues that plague many of us. However, other than in principle, this article is far more concerned about the discipline that is related to the spiritual side of life rather than the physical; the former has both temporal and eternal consequences, whereas the latter is tied primarily to our brief time on this earth. The Apostle Paul writes that we are to exercise ourselves "rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise" is of some profit "but godliness is profitable unto *all things*, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

In some Bible versions the term "discipline" is used rather than "exercise." In other words, we need to *discipline* ourselves unto godliness. That is the best 2013 (and beyond) resolution we can possibly make. In fact, it is critical for spiritual fruitfulness and protection (and even for

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

— 1 Timothy 4:7-8

spiritual survival, in some cases) as the apostasy overtakes professing Christianity and even seduces true believers (Matthew 24:24) in these last days prior to the Lord's return for His bride, the church.

How do we "exercise," or "discipline," ourselves to godliness? The good news is that it is quite simple: we *read* the Word of God and *do* what it says. Better yet, God provides the grace to help us to do those very things. In Matthew 26:41, quoted in part above, Jesus exhorted His undisciplined disciples to "Watch and pray." They failed at both. All activities of godliness must begin, continue, and conclude in prayer, not as some legalistic methodology but simply as a personal communication to the Lord, asking for His help. If prayer is missing, the result is a work of the flesh at best—and complete failure at worst. The prophet Zechariah's word of the Lord to Zerubbabel indicates the way that believers should approach every godly act: "This

is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). Zerubbabel had the task of rebuilding the Temple during very difficult times, and the Lord communicated to him through Zechariah that he would be able to accomplish it through the power of the Holy Spirit. God is more than able to enable us in every task, even regarding our discipline in reading His Word.

If there is any one thing that could be identified as the grease that has caused the slipping of Christianity into the pit of the apostasy, it is *ignorance of the Word of God*. That is stunning because it is taking place at a time in which there are more Bibles and greater access to the Scriptures than anytime in history. Yet most Christians are functionally biblically illiterate—they know how to read, and they have Bibles, but they are not serious about reading them. Too many fall into the "spoon fed" category, relying on what they get secondhand

from a church sermon or a radio or TV preacher rather than studying the Bible for themselves. When believers gather for "Bible study" in small home groups, they often study books by popular Christian authors, or they might study the pastor's latest sermon. That's not to say that there is no value in such activities, but for many believers it displaces the direct study of the Scriptures. In Revelation 21:4-5, the Apostle John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives insights into what believers will experience in the "holy city, new Jerusalem": "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." God's words are indeed "true and faithful." There is no guesswork involved, neither do the Scriptures contain the speculations and opinions of mankind. Many Christians have picked up ideas about heaven, for example, from popular books and preachers—some of which seem to be, and may even be, correct, while others might be dead wrong. The dilemma for a believer who has lapsed into getting his biblical information secondhand is that he has put himself into a situation of not being able to discern *man's ideas* from *God's truth*.

How critical is such a condition? Twice in Proverbs we find this exhortation: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (14:12;16:25). We can take a clue from Scripture that when the Holy Spirit repeats something in the Bible, we need to give it special attention. The repeated "ways of death" referred to isn't necessarily physical death. Death is *separation*. In physical death, the soul and spirit are separated from the body. Both proverbs may also be understood as teaching that those things that seem "right to a man" involve a separation from God's truth. That inevitably leads to what Jesus warned the disciples about concerning the apostasy in the end times: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). If believers are relying on someone else for what they believe rather than studying God's Word for themselves, their faith will be vicarious, that is, not their own. The consequence is that they will be ripe for being deceived and are being conditioned to follow men rather than what the Lord says in His Word. Furthermore, they cannot be Bereans.

It's interesting that when Jesus wanted to chide the Jewish religious leaders, He pointed to the faith of certain Gentiles (the Roman centurion [Matthew 8:5-10], the woman of Canaan [Matthew 15:22-28]) as having faith not found in Israel. On the other hand, in Acts 17:10-11, Luke commends the Jews in the synagogue of the Greek city of Berea to exhort Christians to emulate the *Jewish* Bereans' response to the teaching of the Apostle Paul: "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The reason why those who are being spoon fed the Bible by others cannot be Bereans should be obvious: they aren't reading the Bible for themselves, so they have no biblical basis for questioning what they are being taught. Moreover, that will be the case even if a false teaching is rather blatant. They simply are incapable of discerning biblical truth from error.

Without a disciplined study of the Scriptures, there is nothing to prevent one's being seduced spiritually, and there is no protection for true believers from

being seduced by the apostasy and even unwittingly contributing to the developing religion of the Antichrist.

The Apostle Paul issued this warning regarding a condition that we have seen manifested to such a degree in our day that it boggles the mind: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine..." (2 Timothy 4:3).

Sound doctrine is simply God's instructions found in His Word. All of the concerns written above have contributed to what Paul prophesied, and the disregard for sound doctrine today pervades the entire church. How can Christians "endure sound doctrine" if they lack a disciplined, consistent, prayerful study of the Scriptures? How can those who do not read the Bible and therefore do not obey its instructions even have a clue as to what constitutes sound doctrine? They can't. The consequences are many, and they are all spiritually destructive. Ulti-

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

— 2 Timothy 4:3-5

mately, they cannot please the Lord. He asked, "And why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" John adds, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments [i.e., doctrines]. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whose keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (Luke 6:46; 1 John 2:3-5). Dare we answer, "Sorry, Lord, I don't really know the things that You said, aside from what others have told me"?

All who have been born again, who have understood the gospel and put their faith in their Savior Jesus Christ who paid the full penalty for their sins, begin (or began) their new life in Christ as spiritual babies. They need spiritual

nourishment in order to grow in the faith. The food they need is not that which is "processed" by man, but rather "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). That growth also involves developing a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Personal, intimate relationships are not vicarious; they do not require a third party to mediate or facilitate them. The relationship is strictly between Jesus and the believer, and it develops as the believer grows in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior through His Word. Jesus said, "If you *continue in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). How can anyone grow in his relationship with Jesus if there is no communication, no getting to know Him firsthand? The Bible provides the direct communication on our Lord's part as well as the knowledge of Him. The Apostle Peter writes, "According as his divine power hath given unto us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness, *through the knowledge of him* that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Living one's life as a biblical Christian is not complex, nor is it so difficult that only someone with certain attributes, great intelligence, or other qualifications can abide in it. On the other hand, as noted, it does involve a *commitment* to the person of Jesus Christ. It involves a *willingness* to do that which pleases Him. Yes, we may say, our spirit is willing, but our discipline is lacking. Nevertheless, just as the father cried out for the healing of his child, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24), Jesus will also help us to overcome our lack of discipline, if we are indeed willing.

Therefore, as we resolve to spend time in the Scriptures daily in the year ahead, the strategy is quite simple: I recommend reading through the New Testament a couple of times and then begin reading through the Old Testament. The time and pace of one's reading each day can vary; it's the consistency that is most important. The goal is to make our daily reading a habit that compels us to keep it going. The objective is familiarity: the more we read, the more familiar we become with the Lord and what He wants us to know and do. The more we read, we find that Scripture interprets Scripture, and that increases our understanding of God's Word. Once again, there is no better resolution for the year ahead (and beyond!).

TBC

Quotable

The law demands strength from one who has none, and curses him if he cannot display it. The gospel gives strength to one who has none, and blesses him in the exhibition of it.

— C. H. Mackintosh

Q&A

QUESTION: You believe that the “Woman” riding the beast in Revelation 17 is the Catholic Church. But what about all the other religions and sects in this world? Surely they are not going to all convert to Catholicism? Further, Revelation 18:24 tells us (speaking of the Great Harlot), that, “in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” Are you saying Catholicism is responsible for “all that were slain upon the earth”?

RESPONSE: As to the “woman” being the Catholic Church alone, it is certainly true that the endtime religious system will have representatives from every “faith.” The late John Paul II worked overtime bringing representatives of all the major religions together at his first “World Day of Peace.” It was October 27, 1986, in Assisi, Italy, when Pope John Paul II called together the world religions and leaders “to pray and work towards world peace.” His successor has kept up the pace. On October 27, 2011, Pope Benedict observed the 25th Anniversary by having a “Day of Reflection and Prayer,” where he assembled the world religions and leaders in the same “holy place” of Assisi known to “Saint Francis and Saint Clare.”

The frequently uttered phrase of Catholic apologists is “home to Rome.” One group is named “the Coming Home network.” As we have pointed out, these organizations all talk about bringing people to Rome—but never to Christ.

This is important. For example, a Muslim would not willingly join an organization if the biblical Jesus were presented. A religious system may, however, contain elements that are attractive to many. Within Catholicism are the many alleged apparitions of Mary, including those at “Fatima.” John Paul II attributed his survival from the May 13, 1981, assassination attempt to the intervention of the Virgin of Fatima. The favorite daughter of Muhammad was named Fatima.

Interestingly enough, a palm-shaped amulet popular in Muslim North Africa is called “the hand of Fatima.” Depicting the open right hand, the amulet is used as a sign of protection, providing protection

against the “evil eye” (Bernasek, Lisa. *Artistry of the Everyday: Beauty and Craftsmanship in Berber Art*. Peabody Museum Press, 2008, p. 12). It was so named to commemorate Muhammad’s daughter Fatima Zahra. In the Ottoman Empire, some of those calling themselves Christians called it “the hand of Mary,” for the mother of Jesus.

The pope, being an enthusiastic promoter of Mary, has used this commonality to snare the interest of those within Islam, and there has been a response.

You imply that the Roman Catholic Church could not be the woman on the beast because of Revelation 18:23-24 saying: “in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” If these verses were a literal accounting of *all the blood spilled* upon the earth, you would have a point. It is not, however, *all those slain* upon the earth, but *of those slain* upon the earth, specifically including “prophets” and “saints.” The “blood” of victims from all these peoples are found “in her.”

The Roman Catholic system has a presence in every nation upon the earth, and pioneer missionaries working in remote tribes must prepare for the inevitable arrival of Catholic missionaries seeking to assert Rome’s “authority.” Although the Roman system claims to be the authority of Christ upon the earth, it is promoting a “gospel” that keeps people from the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The anathemas of the Council of Trent (reaffirmed by Vatican II) are still in effect. They still warn “anyone [who] says that the sinner is justified by faith alone...let him be anathema” (Canon 9).

QUESTION [composite of several]: I keep reading reports about persecution of Christians in Indonesia and other places. I agree that it is horrible, but why do these people draw attention to themselves by insisting on meeting for church services? The body of Christ doesn’t need buildings or many people. One can worship and be alone with Christ in one’s heart. Christ didn’t require them to meet. They could alleviate some of the persecution by worshiping by themselves rather than gathering with others.

RESPONSE: It is true that the body of Christ needs no buildings. It is also true that one can worship the Lord all by oneself. Yet the greatest growth in the church has come during times of persecution. The Bible indicates that this is only going to increase.

The Scriptures always emphasize the importance of the collective body in ministering, exhorting, rebuking, and building up one another. The Holy Spirit inspired the

author of the epistle to the Hebrews to write, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

So, contrary to your statement, Christ does indeed admonish the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews (10:24-25) to “assemble together.” Let us consider what these verses are saying. We are told to *not forsake* “the assembling of ourselves together” as “*the manner of some is*.” In other words, we’re not to be like those who *do* forsake that unity with other believers—for any reason. If the Lord inspired the writer to exhort believers to assemble together, “and so much the more as ye see the day approaching,” then we know that He is not giving instructions that cannot be obeyed, no matter how dark the times may be.

Some ministries estimate that millions of Christians in China meet “illegally in private homes, fields, and even caves,” risking their lives to worship God outside the government-controlled churches, “obey[ing] God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). It is instructive that the house church movement in China grows in spite of periodic increase in persecution. In fact, almost everywhere that there is persecution, Christianity seems to thrive, whether in Islamic countries, Africa, India, or many other places around the world. In Sudan, according to Voice of the Martyrs:

Deliberate attempts to eliminate a viable Christian presence are extreme and include bombing of Sunday church services; destruction of churches, hospitals, schools, mission bases and Christian villages; massacres and mutilation; and murder of pastors and leaders....Despite this, the number of Christians [grew] from 1.6 million in 1980 to 11 million in 2010. (<http://www.persecution.net/sudan.htm>)

The Apostle Peter addressed his first letter specifically to the persecuted church, exhorting them to *rejoice* in the midst of their trials (1 Pt 1:6-7). He encouraged believers to *show hospitality* to one another and *minister* to one another (1 Pt 4:8-10). They would need to gather together to do that. He admonished them to “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you,...but *rejoice*, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings....If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, *happy* are ye...” (1 Pt 4:12-14). Great suffering, endured in the right spirit, can yield great joy, when one remembers to “[cast] all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pt 5:7).



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Confronting Lenin's Dilemma

QUESTION: Obviously, the whole idea of faith in God was invented by religious leaders in order to deceive and enslave their followers. That's one thing all religions have in common: an elite class of clergy who get the people to believe in some mythical God and then pretend to be the go-betweens to this God to hold the people in their power—and charge them plenty for it!

RESPONSE: That was Lenin's theory. He was also a materialist. Nothing existed for Lenin except the physical world, and the only way to know about that world was to come in contact with it. In agreement with Freud, Lenin believed that man was a stimulus-response mechanism without spirit or soul, just a lump of protein molecules wired with nerves. Man's behavior was learned from experience and could therefore be reprogrammed through "behavior modification," a polite word for "brainwashing," which the Communists developed to a fine art—except that it only worked by destroying the person.

Of course, there was no room for God in such a theory, and that was precisely what created problems for Lenin when he dared to think about it. Man can only know about that which exists in the physical realm. Animals don't have gods, so why should man, in the evolutionary process, have ever developed such a fantasy?

Since man is a stimulus-response mechanism, according to this theory, he can only know of that which stimulates him. He touches something hot or cold and learns of "hot" and "cold." He touches something hard or he is hit by something hard and he learns about "hard." All he can know of anything is what he has experienced: the stimulus from the physical world and his instinctive response inherited through millions of years of evolution and then modified and reprogrammed by his own experience. Even science has no other source of knowledge.

Man can't even *think* or *fantasize* about something that doesn't exist in the physical world, according to this theory. Of course, with the help of a little alcohol, he can have visions of pink elephants, but pink exists and so do elephants. He could dream of "paradise" or "heaven," but it would always conform to his experience: the "happy hunting ground" of the American Indian or a land of luxury for Pharaohs, evidenced by the bows and arrows or robes and jewelry buried with the dead.

What "Stimulus" Caused the Response, "God," in Human Minds?

The theory seemed consistent and could be demonstrated by challenging doubters to visualize a new prime color for the rainbow. No one could. Obviously, then, nothing exists but the material world, and no one can even conceive of anything that doesn't exist and that he hasn't experienced. There was only one flaw: Foolish people have this fantasy about God. Where did that come from?

Those despicable clergy must have invented "God" and have ever since been filling the minds of the common people with this delusion in order to keep them in bondage. Communism would set them free from this opiate of the people! Yes, but where did the clergy get this idea, if no one can think of anything that doesn't exist? What was the "stimulus" that caused this "God-response"? There's the rub. By Lenin's own theory, God had to exist or no one would have ever dreamed up the idea.

Isn't it interesting that in contrast to the philosophers who have been trying to develop proofs for the existence of God for centuries, the Bible doesn't waste its time in that manner? The Bible is the one Book where one would certainly expect to see many complex arguments presented for God's existence, yet not one is given!

Surely, that very fact says something important about the Bible and about God: *He has already made contact with every person in his or her conscience.* Everyone knows that God exists, and that includes you. So the Bible doesn't even argue about the issue, because the very fact that all of mankind has this concept says that He exists.

The Demise of Biblical Discernment

T. A. McMahon

In last month's issue of this newsletter we exhorted our readers to discipline themselves to read the Word of God daily. The emphasis was on developing a habit, the best and most necessary habit—one that every believer should have. Of course, we encouraged reading the Bible as a basis for living one's life by what it teaches, which is the only way that one who is born again spiritually can mature in the faith. Yet, here is the simple truth that too many Christians have missed: if we don't read God's Word for ourselves, we can't truly know its instructions. If we don't know God's instructions, we can't follow Him, and we therefore can't do what pleases Him. Tragically, many if not most Christians haven't considered that simple truth. Their spiritual beliefs tend to be a collection of things they've heard (sermons, radio, TV, books, movies, etc.) mixed with what they may or may not have gotten from the Bible. They have been spoon-fed rather than getting their spiritual meals directly from God's Word.

Why is that tragic? Wouldn't it be of value to get input from the various Christian media regarding the teachings of our Lord? Hasn't our Lord gifted teachers to help believers better understand His Word? Certainly, but if that is our primary feeding of God's Word, it leads to a spiritual anemia at best and makes us defenseless against spiritual deception at worst. How can a believer tell the difference between a good teacher and a false teacher? Although Scripture tells us that God gave some to be teachers (Ephesians 4:11), His Word also tells us, "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). So how can we know what's what and who's who?

Most Christians are not asking such questions—nor do they seem to be concerned about the consequences related to a lack of biblical discernment. The second chapter of Hebrews begins with a warning that we could drift away from the Scriptures and find ourselves going along with something that seems biblical but is not. More and more frequently these days, I hear confessing and professing Christians excusing themselves and others for their unbiblical beliefs and practices by declaring that they all nevertheless "love Jesus." What Jesus might that be? Is it the biblical Jesus—the One who declares that He is "*the way, the truth, and the life*"? Is it the Word incarnate,

who challenges everyone who professes to be a believer in Him by asking: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Would our reply be, "Sorry, Lord, I wasn't aware of most of the things that you said"? If that's the case, having "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16) is a wishful delusion.

Just so there is no misunderstanding, the heart of this article is a *concern for the fruitfulness* of everyone who truly knows the biblical Jesus, everyone who has by faith alone put his or her trust in Christ as Savior, the One, the only One, who could (and did) pay the full penalty for the sins of mankind. For those who have put their faith in Him and have received His gift of eternal life, what follows is their life *in Christ*, which is all about living a godly and productive life. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). A believer's fruitfulness not only greatly enriches his own life, but his new life in Christ becomes a testimony, a witness to the truth of the gospel that changed his life, so that others may be drawn to Jesus. Yet a believer's life in Christ will be spiritually futile if he (or she) doesn't really know what Jesus taught.

An unproductive life in Christ is bad enough, but it can go far beyond just being spiritually feeble. Not knowing the Word of God sets one up for being spiritually deceived. Again, it should be rather obvious: if we don't know what the Bible says, we can't discern what is true to it and what is contrary to it. Consequently, a person who is ignorant of the Scriptures is ripe for being led away from God's truth. When such a condition becomes epidemic among Christians, they become collective pawns of God's adversary, Satan, and participants in the apostasy as well as unwitting contributors to the emerging religion of the Antichrist (Revelation 13). But could such a thing happen?

Both Dave Hunt and I have been observing trends in the evangelical church for 35 years. In those three and a half decades significant developments have taken place, all of which have greatly undermined the belief in and dependence upon the Scriptures. We have documented such developments in the twenty years of TBC's existence and five years prior to that in *The Seduction of Christianity*. In past articles we have shown from God's Word that Satan's primary strategy as the deceiver of mankind is reflected in his initial statement to Eve in the Garden of Eden, a tactic calculated to weaken her trust in God's Word by questioning it: "Yea, hath God said...?" (Genesis 3:1). Down

through history, he has expanded his assault on the Word beyond planting seeds of doubt to distorting, denigrating, corrupting, compromising, and outright lying about the Scriptures. In the last 30 years, some of his most effective devices have seduced Christians away from the written Word of God, replacing it with subjective and experiential content (feelings-oriented beliefs). Briefly (see our archives for more extensive writings on these subjects and others), that drift has been a major contributor to the *demise of biblical discernment*.

For example, the false teaching known as *Rhema vs. Logos* says that God *speaks* today to believers with the same or even greater authority than is found in the Bible. For decades this doctrine has led millions of Charismatic and Pentecostal believers away from the objective, written Word of God.

The subjective pseudoscience of Christian psychology, with its goal of integrating psychology with the Bible (primarily through psychological counseling), has infected the conservative evangelical church with the humanistic doctrines of self-love and self-esteem. Even more damaging, it has all but eliminated the belief in the *sufficiency of the Scriptures* for multitudes of Christians.

The Church Growth Movement (the attempt to increase church membership through various consumer-oriented devices aimed primarily at meeting the "felt needs" of the lost) has turned to the "way that seemeth right unto a man" (read *marketing*) in opposition to God's way. That development has been a major factor in ushering man's so-called wisdom into the church and distancing it from the Scriptures.

The youth-oriented Emerging Church Movement (ECM) is an attempt at supposedly reaching the "culture" for Christ by emulating that culture and much of its worldly affinities. ECM writers (many of whom have conservative evangelical backgrounds) have advocated "reinventing Christianity" in order to reconcile it with what the world *believes* and acts upon socially, psychologically, politically, morally, scientifically, and theologically. Because it claims *absolute authority* in its *doctrines*, the Bible itself is the chief obstacle to the ECM, and therefore "must be re-imagined" in order to accommodate man's thinking. Such distortion of God's Word is deceptively tragic for a generation of young Christians, few of whom have been disciplined in the faith.

These are just a few of Satan's most successful assaults against the doctrines of the Bible and the people of God. Should

anyone be surprised that the Adversary would be so effective among those who profess to be Christians? Shocked perhaps, but not surprised. When an army lacks training, discipline, and is ill equipped to do battle, should it come as a surprise that the enemy is taking many of its soldiers captive?

Let's spell out the problem in spiritual terms once again: lack of training (no discipleship), lack of discipline (not reading the Scriptures daily), and being ill equipped (mishandling the Sword of the Spirit). But don't take my word for it! Let's go to God's infallible Word. Regarding the particular *time* when biblical truth will be abandoned by great numbers in the church who have been deceived, Jesus gives us a sobering warning, characterizing the last days prior to His return in these words: "Take heed that no man deceive you...." He then adds that the deception will be so great that the very elect will be vulnerable (Matthew 24:4,24). Furthermore, most of the epistles also address the subject of believers drifting away from sound doctrine.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul wrote, "For the time will come when they will *not endure sound doctrine*" (2 Timothy 4:3). Paul is obviously speaking to the church. Those in the church who do not study the Scriptures for themselves cannot endure (take to heart and live out) *sound doctrine* (God's instructions). He wrote to the church at Ephesus, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14).

Scripture seems to be making it quite clear that not enduring sound doctrine opens one up to spiritual deception. To the Ephesian elders Paul issues a warning of what would take place after his departing: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30). This was Paul's parting warning to his beloved Ephesian believers, a message of critical concern for their future in Christ. Paul knew what devastating destruction would result from their turning to *false doctrine*. It was a message that he preached continuously and tearfully during his three years with them.

Those who do "endure sound doctrine," besides having the primary foundation for a fruitful life in Christ, are also equipped to *discern and resist* the wiles of the Adversary's many deceptions. That's the good news. The not-so-pleasant news is that they will find themselves on the front lines of a spiritual battle that is increasing in intensity daily. One need only conduct a cursory review of the Scriptures and later church history to get an idea of how destructive, even deadly, have been the consequences related to the church's non-adherence to biblical doctrine. We see many reacting today by claiming that it is the doctrines of the Bible themselves, especially when they are accepted dogmatically, that create division. Such thinking is a fulfillment of "not enduring sound doctrine." It is *false doctrine itself* that divides because it separates a believer from the truth.

Paul clears up the misconception: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). Incredibly, it is that verse, misapplied, that has been used against the multitudes who have contacted us because their church leadership would not hear their concerns regarding false doctrines and programs that had entered their fellowship. Most have been threatened with "disfellowship" for actually *enduring* sound doctrine. Such situations are intensifying throughout the church, undoubtedly for some of the reasons listed in this article but perhaps in fulfillment of Peter's prophecy: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God..." (1 Peter 4:17).

Although for decades we at TBC have been exhorting and encouraging believers to be Bereans (i.e., to check out everything they are being taught by searching the Scriptures—Acts 17:10-11), we too have experienced the increased intensity of the spiritual battle and witnessed its exponential growth. The latest issue, which we submit to you for prayer support, is a threatened lawsuit over the book we published by David James (*The Harbinger: Fact or Fiction?*). The complaint is that the author used too many quotes from the *New York Times* best-selling book, *The Harbinger*, without permission from author "rabbi" Jonathan Cahn and publisher Charisma Media Publications (CMP). The complaint further states that our use of the quotes has inhibited the sales of *The Harbinger* and has thus financially damaged Cahn and CMP in an amount yet to be determined. In effect, we are being told that we must limit our documentation in warning the body of Christ

of the biblical errors in *The Harbinger*. In other words, we cannot be Bereans or like the watchman of Ezekiel 3:17-19 without Cahn's permission.

This is the first time in my 35 years of working with Dave Hunt and our addressing nearly every major religion, religious cult, aberrational Christian sect, unbiblical trend, religious publication, book, media production, etc., that any organization or individual has even hinted at suing us. Now, however, we are being threatened with legal action by those claiming to be in the church. More critical than the unbiblical action of a brother threatening to take another brother to court (1 Corinthians 6) is the issue of preventing the biblical evaluation of a work that is influencing hundreds of thousands of professing and confessing Christians, as well as those who don't profess to know Christ. We have hired a copyright attorney to address the legal issues and have responded to the attorney for Cahn and CMP. Even so, we covet your prayers that the Lord will be glorified throughout the process.

As the spiritual battle rages around us, the Word of God gives us directives regarding how we are to function in it. Paul gives Timothy general instructions: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). In ministering correction, he writes: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Then there may be times that, as the Spirit leads us, tougher action is to be taken: "These things speak, and exhort, and *rebuke with all authority*. Let no man despise thee..." (Titus 2:15). Titus was to minister the Word of God to his flock, his authority was the Scriptures, and he was exhorted to stand fast in them that he not be despised for backing away from sound doctrine.

Our prayer is that all who name the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will follow Paul's encouragement to Timothy and to us as well: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee....Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13,16; 2 Timothy 4:2). **TBC**

Quotable

Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God. Some people mature into an understanding of God's will more quickly than others because they obey more readily; they more readily sacrifice the life of nature to the will of God; they more easily swing clear of little determined opinions. It is these little determined opinions, convictions of our own that won't budge, that hinder growth in grace and makes us bitter and dogmatic, intolerant, and utterly un-Christlike.

— Oswald Chambers

Q&A

QUESTION: The Bible is important to us personally; we memorize whole chapters of it for truth and meditate on them (as God in Scripture directs us to) for deeper understanding. In this way, the Bible is of great help. But I have to oppose those who teach that the Bible is essential, is vital for anything, especially for salvation. Enoch and Noah walked with God and didn't even have Genesis. Jesus informed us that His sheep hear His voice, as Enoch, Noah, Daniel, Job, and innumerable others did—and still do, since the Lord does not change. "Bibliolatry," the belief that the written word is more important, more to be sought for answers, than the Living Word who gave it, is very prevalent in America's churches. Have you addressed this?

RESPONSE: There is little danger of "Bibliolatry" being seen today, although the invented term itself bears a lot in common with other inventions such as "homophobia." In both cases, each word seems very well designed to pursue an agenda but leads us far away from the truth.

There are other utilitarian sayings, such as "too heavenly minded to be any earthly good," which have been crafted by the adversary to sound clever and to divert attention away from what should really be considered. Actually, if a person is truly "heavenly minded," he or she will be of immense earthly good!

It is true that Enoch, Noah, Job, and others didn't "have Genesis" in their hand. They did, however, walk with God, and it was His *Word* upon which they fed. There is no logical, compelling reason to doubt that very early on godly men began to record man's interaction with His Creator.

Skeptics like to argue that writing itself didn't widely exist in the time of Abraham. This belief came into popularity in the middle of the 1800s, when the liberal

march of heresy was well underway. Liberal "Christian" college teachers put forth the notion that the Bible came after centuries of oral tradition because *no one could write in the time of Moses*. This folly has been destroyed by evidence of writing that took place 1,800 years *before* Moses. In addition, linguistic scholars have noted the archaic phrases in the book of Job, and there are also "more references [in Job] to creation, the flood, and other primeval events than any book of the Bible except Genesis" (Henry M. Morris, in "Introduction to the Book of Job," *The Henry Morris Study Bible*, Green Forest, AR. Master Books, 2012). Bible scholars have a number of other reasons for asserting that the writing of Job preceded Moses' writing Genesis. Simply put, the book of Job is old.

Yes, we memorize and meditate upon the Bible but not just for "deeper understanding." Joshua 1:8 tells us, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: *for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*"

Many passages in the Old Testament establish the fact that the Scriptures are to be the basis of how we live our lives: "And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth" (Dt 11:20-21).

You say that the Bible is "not essential?" The Lord Jesus Christ has a far different view. Jesus confronted the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-27). He rebuked them for their failure to believe the Word of God. According to the narrative, "...beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (v. 27). In other words, He taught them the *essentials*.

"Not essential?" Then why did the Lord inspire Paul to write Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God?" This clearly is speaking of more than what some call the "Living Word of God" as opposed to the written word of God. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14).

There is very little evidence that a presumed Bibliolatry "is very prevalent in America's churches." On the contrary, we are seeing (as we have documented) an increasing *rejection* of Scripture in favor of mysticism, emotionalism, and "every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14). Many self-proclaimed prophets are claiming to have had great

spiritual experiences and warn those who would test their words against the Scriptures to "not touch the Lord's anointed."

This is what we should be concerned about in these days. The Prophet Amos warned of a time that sounds very much like today: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Am 8:11).

Knowing Jesus is absolutely vital, but how do we know that it is the real Jesus unless we are able to discern between the genuine and the counterfeit? "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him [i.e., you gladly embrace him]" (2 Cor 11:4).

May the Lord give us His balance and the discernment He has promised in His Word.

QUESTION: Does God hear and respond to the prayers of the unsaved? I know that believers have the privilege of prayer as children of God, but what about the Lord?

RESPONSE: It is clear that God hears every prayer—meaning that He is aware of the petitioner and his or her prayer. The pertinent question, however is, does God hear and respond to every prayer? It has often been said that the only prayer of the unrighteous that the Lord will hear is a prayer of repentance. The following Scriptures come to mind: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps 66:18). "The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous" (Prv 15:29).

In 1 Peter 3:12, the apostle writes, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

The intent of the heart is key. The Roman Centurion Cornelius was a just (not *justified*) man, who told Peter, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God" (Acts 10:30-31). Earlier, the angel told him to contact Peter, "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). Cornelius was clearly seeking the Lord, and in this instance we can see that the prayers of a man who was not yet saved were heard.

Again, it is clear that the Lord will hear the prayers of the repentant man, and the one who is earnestly seeking Him: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13).



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS to CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

"A Higher Power by Whatever Name"?

QUESTION: Why are Christians so adamantly opposed to the many other concepts of God that are honored in other religions? I agree with what Vice President Al Gore said at the 1993 Presidential Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C.: "Faith in God, reliance upon a Higher Power, by whatever name, is in my view essential." Think of the unity there could be if religions would stop quarreling and honor all concepts of God in an open-minded and brotherly fashion!

RESPONSE [Excerpts]: Yes, think of the unity there could be if we would all agree that two plus two equals five—but that wouldn't make it so. A "Higher Power"? How high? Higher than what? And what does this mean?

With all due respect to you and the Vice President, what you both propose is completely irrational. Furthermore, you aren't being "open-minded and brotherly," as you think you are. By insisting upon the acceptance of any "Higher Power" and thus any god, you thereby refuse to honor the one true God or even to admit His existence. . . . Alan Bloom's book *The Closing of the American Mind* point[s] out that "openness" has become the new fad in America, especially in education. Every idea must be respected, nothing can be wrong, and no one should be "put down" by suggesting that someone might be in error. He explained that Americans have in fact become so open to everything that they have become closed to the idea that something might be right and something else wrong. The closing of the American mind . . . by openness! In much the same way, you and the Vice President have become so open to every god that you are closed to the possibility that there just might be one true God and all the others false.

Let's put your proposal on a practical level. How would you like it if everyone denied your unique individuality and specific personal identity and looked upon you as simply a representative of the general concept of humanness? Would you like being confused with a murderer, rapist . . . or some other criminal simply because each one of them also represents humanness? And what would you think if, to justify this travesty, it was said that "any human" will do? Why not, if "any Higher Power" will do?

There could hardly be any greater insult than such a denial of the truth about you as a unique person! You have definite qualities and traits that distinguish you from all other persons who have ever existed or will ever exist on this earth. . . . To deny your individuality would be to deny your very existence.

Suppose that your wife or husband and your children . . . cared not whether it was you or some other form of humanness sharing their home and intimacies of the husband-wife relationship! After all, such a relationship need not be with a particular person but merely with any person—just as any "Higher Power, by whatever name" is good enough. Let's not be narrow-minded!

Is it not an even greater farce to suggest that God's personal qualities and attributes, which separate Him by an impassable gulf from His creation and all beings in it, are meaningless? . . . How dare you say that God's love for you means nothing but that you would be just as happy worshipping and trusting and loving some cosmic energy source or an idol or even the devil!

To Create the Universe Requires
Definite Qualities

The fact is that no thinking person can embrace just "any god" as the Creator of this universe—and there must be a Creator. The logic of our own existence and the incredible design and structure of the universe around us force us to certain conclusions about God. Based upon such conclusions we must reject any concept of God that violates these requirements. It isn't true that "any god" will do. And no "power," no matter how "high," could create the universe and mankind in it. Only a personal God of infinite power, wisdom, and love could do so.

Certainly, no one could reasonably attribute the creation of this universe to some idol made by human hands out of clay or wood or stone! . . . Who could possibly believe that an idol, which itself was made by human hands and has to be carried about, had any power at all to do either good or evil? Yet the majority of mankind down through history has trusted in idols. Even in today's supposedly modern world, with radio and television widely publicizing the amazing advancements of science, several billion people still worship idols. . . . Such misplaced trust leads to spiritual darkness and bondage.

Mankind will be judged for such folly, and justly so. The very conscience and intelligence that God has given us contradict such superstitious madness. The Bible points out the folly of trusting in idols:

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not; noses they have, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet they have, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them. (Psalm 115:4-8)

When he gathered snake worshipers, fire worshipers, spiritists, animists, and witch doctors—along with Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims . . . to pray for peace, Pope John Paul II made the astonishing statement that they were all praying to the same God! Obviously, there are innumerable false gods and false religions, and the Bible denounces every one of these because they seduce mankind from knowing and obeying the one true God.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 35-38) by DAVE HUNT

They Claim to Speak for God

Part 1

T. A. McMahon

A very large part of Christendom in the United States is enamored with those who claim to speak for God. If you think that's an overstatement, simply tune into some of the programming on Trinity Broadcasting Network or some of the other cable religious networks. What you will see are churches filled with thousands of Christians hanging on to every word of a man or a woman who is declaring what God has just revealed to him or her. The content ranges from the mundane to the bizarre. To some observers who are fairly well versed in the Scriptures, what they are hearing and seeing is laughable. But that's a tragic reaction by some who are forgetting that many of those being led astray by the so-called new prophets and apostles are their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Most North American believers are wonderfully and prayerfully sympathetic to the plight of fellow Christians who are undergoing terrible persecutions for their faith in foreign lands, yet too few have a real concern for fellow believers here in the West who are being spiritually seduced and whose biblical faith is being critically undermined. The tendency is to write off most false preachers and teachers as religious kooks and to think no more about their captive audience. All true believers, whether or not they have been led into false teaching, make up the body of Christ. When one part of the body is seduced and suffers, it affects the entire body (1 Corinthians 12:25-27).

Not only is such a cavalier attitude wrong biblically, but it is extremely short-sighted and therefore blinds a person to the seductions and ultimate deceptions that are involved. In this series of articles we want to present a wider view of what's involved with those who "claim to speak for God," demonstrating that it's far more than a few delusional zealots but rather a host of men and women, ministries, and movements that have an agenda and methodologies, all of which are contrary to the Word of God. In that endeavor, they have captured the hearts and minds of multitudes of Christians, mostly those among the Pentecostals and Charismatics, as well as staggering numbers of young adults, many from conservative evangelical backgrounds.

Dave Hunt and I have addressed this

subject in bits and pieces in our books and in many articles in *The Berean Call* newsletters, but we haven't communicated in a comprehensive way the extent of the spiritually destructive teachings and practices involved in this movement nor the scope of this development and its agenda. Now, however, there is a book available that covers the topic more extensively than anything yet in print. *Wandering Stars: Contending for the Faith with the New Apostles and Prophets*, authored by Keith Gibson, not only explains the methods of this movement from beginning to end, but it also exposes its satanically inspired contribution to the progressive development of the kingdom and religion of the Antichrist. Gibson's observations need to be heeded: "The majority of the church has not taken seriously the claims of the modern apostles and prophets [that they are] introducing a new paradigm into the Body of Christ. These claims are far more than idle boasts. Indeed the paradigm shifts have already begun in many segments of Christianity. To say that the

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

—1 Corinthians 12:25–26

movement has grown rapidly would be a gross understatement" (p. 10).

The root fallacy of the movement is the view of how one receives communication from God. Most if not all of the leaders subscribe to the teaching that the Greek terms *rhema* and *logos* found in the Bible describe different ways of hearing from God. This has been a fundamental teaching among historic religious movements such as The Latter Rain, Manifest Sons of God, and the prosperity-and-healing-promoting Word/Faith teachers. They conclude that *logos* refers to the written word and *rhema* refers to the spoken word. Although the Bible uses the terms interchangeably, making no distinction, in practice this false teaching elevates what (supposedly) God has spoken to them as *equal to* or *above* what is written in the Scriptures. It goes far beyond someone stating that he "believes" that the Lord has impressed something

upon his heart. Gibson comments: "It is far different to claim an impression than it is to loudly pronounce, 'Thus saith the Lord.' The former is the hesitant expression of a thought, something that may or may not be completely true. The latter is a claim to divine revelation that by definition cannot contain anything but truth and which carries divine authority and must be obeyed." Whether implied or declared, Gibson adds, "The words 'Thus saith the Lord' change everything. A higher level of authority is being claimed. One should be extremely careful before one puts words in the mouth of God" (p. 8).

Many do not realize the dire consequences of being seduced by the "hearing from God" teachings. First of all, they completely undermine the objective nature of the Scriptures. In other words, when the Word of God is mixed with what some *believe* they've heard from God, it is difficult to objectively determine what is truly *from* God. That fundamentally destroys the value of the Bible in the lives of those who buy into the so-called new prophets of God. God's written word is no longer relied upon as a determiner of truth, especially regarding the new doctrines presented, which those who are "hearing from God" promote in abundance. Unfortunately, that's fine with such false teachers because their "new thing that God is doing" cannot then be challenged by the "old written words" found in Scripture.

Gibson notes with great concern: "No doctrine is under more regular assault from within the prophetic community than the doctrines relating to the Scriptures"

(pp. 67-68). He adds, "Today's prophets, and consequently their followers as well, are consistently sloppy in their approach to Scripture, frequently ignoring context, history, and grammar. They can even be seen redefining words when necessary to force verses to fit their preconceived ideas. The intent of the author of the text is rarely considered. The Bible is left to mean whatever the prophets say it means today" (p. 71).

If conservative evangelicals think that this drift away from God's Word is a problem unique to Charismatics, they need to consider their own churches. Is *discipleship* a significant part of your fellowship? How about *apologetics*? In your Bible studies, are you actually studying books of the Bible or books by contemporary authors? Is the term *hermeneutics* a foreign word to most members of your fellowship? If that's the case, you also have something to be very concerned about.

In *Wandering Stars*, Keith Gibson underscores the critical necessity of hermeneutics for every believer. “Hermeneutics has been described as the art and science of biblical interpretation. In handling the Bible properly, one should consider such things as context, history, grammar, and the genre of the literature among other things. The goal of hermeneutics is to understand the passage according to the original intent of the author, as inspired by the Holy Spirit.” Simply stated, “The Bible should be studied in its historical and grammatical context and with the normal understanding of the words used. The intent is to discover the meaning intended by the author of the particular passage....It is essentially a belief that God meant the Bible to be understood by the normal believer within the community of faith. This is sometimes referred to as the ‘plain sense’ principle of interpretation” (p. 70).

Simplifying it further, it involves not much more than what happens when two people have a normal conversation. Both are aware of the context of what they are communicating, know enough grammar to converse in sentences, and understand the meaning of the words used. We all do this every day, so it’s mystifying that most misunderstandings of Scripture stem from not following the simple rules of hermeneutics.

Following such “plain sense” rules would eliminate the “prophetic hermeneutic” (i.e., believing what a dynamic preacher says just because he claims to be a prophet) that has caught many believers in the web of blindly following those who claim to be speaking for God. Gibson has seen the damage this has done to many believers’ trust in God’s Word. He writes, “The impact of this ‘prophetic hermeneutic’ is serious indeed. In the first place, as has already been stated, this type of approach to Scripture causes the Bible to lose its ability to provide boundaries for doctrine and practice because the Bible simply has no objective meaning. The Scripture means whatever any particular prophetic teacher declares that the Spirit has told him it means today. This style of teaching also serves to remove any definite understanding of Scripture from the common man who realizes that he simply cannot see all the things in Scripture that these teachers are seeing. This makes the average church person dependent on these ‘inspired teachers’ in order to know what the Lord has said” (p. 78). Once that happens, the individual is vulnerable to whatever such a teacher dishes out and whatever direction

the teacher wants to lead him.

Gibson spells out the tragic consequences of which few of us are aware: “Because these prophetic teachers do not approach God’s Word properly, they reach false conclusions. These false conclusions then support aberrant doctrines and unbiblical practices. These unbiblical practices and false doctrines undermine the historic truths of the church and distract Christians from the pure faith and the true work of the ministry” (p. 80).

It isn’t only ignorance of the Scriptures or mishandling them on the part of many of the leaders of the prophetic movement. Some seemingly distort them for their own purposes. Gibson quotes Wendy Alec, from her very popular book *Journal of the Unknown Prophet*. This is what she claims she has received from Jesus: “For the Word alone is yesterday’s manna and even they [prophetic teachers] have seen deep in their hearts that it is no longer enough to feed my people” (quoted in *Wandering Stars*, p. 86).

So the written Word of God is not only “no longer enough,” but it’s also “yesterday’s manna.” Scripture tells us that leftover manna “bred worms and stank” (Exodus 16:20). Who would believe that Jesus, who is the living Word, the same yesterday, today, and forever, the One who said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33), would have anything to do with such a blasphemous statement? Yet thousands accept it unquestioningly. We can’t judge Alec’s heart in this, but it is obvious that she has relegated the written Word at least to an inferior position in comparison to what she and others are supposedly hearing from God today. Again, tragically, this is infecting our brothers and sisters who are part of the body of Christ.

The Scriptures give us a sober warning that I believe is most applicable to the day in which we live: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” Again, sound doctrine is simply the teachings of the Word of God, which every believer is to read, heed, and obey. Yet, according to these teachers, since biblical doctrine stands in the way of the “new things God is doing,” it must be downgraded.

Gibson quotes prophetic movement leader Francis Frangipane: “We have instructed the church in nearly everything

but becoming disciples of Jesus Christ. We have filled the people with doctrines instead of Deity; we have given them manuals instead of Emmanuel” (p. 122).

Frangipane and his cohorts have in fact done none of that. Gibson notes: “Frangipane seems oblivious to the fact that teaching people to become disciples of Jesus Christ would necessitate doctrinal instruction if for no other reason than because to teach them who Jesus is necessitates a doctrinal discussion. Additionally, how else is the church to follow the words of Christ given in the great commission and ‘teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you’ without instruction in doctrine?” (p. 114). Gibson’s response is stunning in its simplicity, yet what is even more amazing is that so many are not thinking through what they are accepting. He adds, “It is simply neither possible nor profitable to attempt to bypass doctrinal instruction. Discipleship may certainly involve more than merely doctrinal instruction but it cannot involve less” (p. 114).

The leaders of the prophetic movement of necessity must make it “involve less.” Rick Joyner, for example, declares: “We must first understand that our unity is not based on doctrines. Such unity is superficial at best. Our unity can only be found in Jesus. To focus our attention on Him and learn to love and cover one another is far more important than agreeing on all doctrines. Having like doctrines is not a basis for unity...it is a basis for division!” (p. 115). Although “doctrine divides” is the mantra of the new prophets and apostles, they are correct in a way with which they would not agree. Romans 16:17-18 sets the matter straight: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” It is false doctrine, i.e., that which is “contrary to the doctrine” taught by the biblical apostles, that “cause[s] divisions.”

Of necessity and hopefully for edification, this first article majored on the fundamental erroneous teachings of the New Apostles and Prophets movement, i.e., its own false doctrines. With that understanding, it should come as no surprise as to how bizarre their beliefs and practices could and have become. In the next part of this series, the Lord willing, we will glean (primarily from *Wandering Stars*) who the leaders are and what is involved in their global dominionist agenda. TBC

Quotable

Seeking to perpetuate one's name on earth is like writing on the sand by the seashore; to be perpetual it must be written on eternal shores.

— D. L. Moody

Q&A

QUESTION: I understand that you believe that Jesus died on the cross on Thursday, not Good Friday. Why do you say that, and does it matter?

RESPONSE: Scripture reveals the answer. Through the writings of Jeremiah, Daniel learned that the Babylonian captivity would last 70 years (Dn 9:2). God had commanded that each seven years the Hebrew slaves should be set free, debtors forgiven, and the land given a one-year sabbath of rest (Ex 21:2; Lv 25:2-4; Dt 15:1,2,12). For 490 years Israel had disobeyed this precept. In judgment, the Jews became slaves of Babylon while their land rested for 70 years of sabbaths.

Daniel confessed this sin, pondering and praying, and was given the revelation that another period of 490 years (70 weeks of years) lay ahead for his people and for Jerusalem (9:24). Then all of Israel's sins would be purged, all prophecy fulfilled and ended, and the Messiah would reign on David's throne in Jerusalem. These 70 weeks of years were to be counted "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (v. 25). That crucial date is given to us in Scripture.

Nehemiah tells us: "in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king" (2:1), he received the authorization to rebuild Jerusalem. When the day of the month was not given, the first day was intended. There were several Artaxerxes, but only one, Longimanus, who ruled more than 20 years—from 465-425 BC. Thus we have the key date from which this incredible prophecy was to be calculated: Nisan 1, 445 BC.

At the end of 69 of these "weeks" (7x69 = 483 years) "Messiah the Prince" would be made known to Israel (Dn 9:25) and then "be cut off [slain]" (v. 26). Counting 483 years of 360 days each (the Hebrew and Babylonian calendar), a total of 173,880 days from Nisan 1, 445 BC brings us to Sunday, April 6, AD 32. On that very day, now celebrated as Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey and was hailed as Messiah the Prince! (See also Zec 9:9)

There is, however, an even deeper meaning to the phrase, "In the fulness of time": April 6, AD 32, on the Hebrew calendar was the tenth of Nisan. On that day, the Passover lamb was taken from the flock and placed under observation for four days to make certain that it was

"without blemish." During the same four days, Christ, whom John the Baptist had hailed as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29), was likewise on display before Israel. On the fourteenth of Nisan, "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it [the passover lamb] in the evening [between 3:00 and 6:00 PM]" (Ex 12:6). It was during that precise time period that Jesus died on the cross!

In fact, the rabbis had determined *not* to arrest Jesus during Passover, "lest there be an uproar of the people" (Mk 14:2). Yet that was when He had to die. Judas was not only Satan's pawn but God's. Even the "thirty pieces of silver" for which he so shrewdly bargained fulfilled prophecy (Zec 11:12-13). Peter would declare in his Pentecost sermon, "Him...delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Paul wrote, "Christ our passover [lamb] is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7).

The fourteenth of Nisan began at sunset Wednesday evening. That night, Jesus and His disciples had the "last supper" in the upper room where they were preparing to eat the Passover the following night. At this meal "before the feast of the passover" (Jn 13:1), Jesus told His disciples, "One of you shall betray me" (Jn 13:21). Earlier He said, significantly, "I tell you before...that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he" (Jn 13:19). The word "he" is in italics and does not appear in the original. Jesus was declaring once again to His disciples that He was Yahweh, the I AM of Israel, who tells beforehand what will happen and makes certain that it comes to pass (Is 46:9-10).

Arrested by the Judas-led troop in the Garden later that night, Christ was taken secretly to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. A sham trial with hastily called false witnesses convened sometime after midnight and condemned Christ to death as dawn broke. Pilate, the Roman governor, was notified of the emergency. Hurriedly taken down side streets, the prisoner was received into the citadel at "the third hour" (Mk 15:25), (about 9:00 AM), Nisan 14. All over Israel preparations were underway to kill the Passover lamb, which was to be eaten that night.

Pilate let his citizens decide the prisoner's fate. The bloodthirsty rabble turned against the One who had miraculously healed and fed so many of them. "Crucify him, crucify him" (Lk 23:21). "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Mt 27:25).

Shortly before noon, Jesus, scourged and beaten, was led out of the city to "the place of the skull." By noon, the One whom Jerusalem, in fulfillment of prophecy, had hailed as its

long-awaited Messiah, was hanging naked on the center cross between two thieves. Man had crucified his Creator!

The next three hours of that Thursday afternoon the earth was darkened mysteriously (Mt 27:45) as God "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:6). Thursday? Not "Good Friday"? Indeed not. Jesus himself had said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [i.e., "Abraham's bosom"]" (Mt 12:40; Lk 16:22). The gospel includes the declaration that Christ "rose again the third day" (1 Cor 15:4).

Had Christ been crucified on Friday, He couldn't possibly have spent three days and three nights in the grave by Sunday morning. We are distinctly told that the angel rolled away the stone "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week" (Mt 28:1). The tomb was already empty, so Christ must have risen from the dead sometime prior to dawn.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—does it really matter? Yes! The day of our Lord's crucifixion is of the utmost importance. If Christ was not three days and three *nights* in the grave, then He lied. His death, to fulfill prophecy, had to occur at the very time the Passover lambs were being slain throughout Israel. It is an astronomical fact that Nisan 14, AD 32, fell on Thursday.

"And it was the preparation of the passover....The Jews therefore...that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day...besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away" (Jn 19:14,31). Wait! Not a bone of the Passover lamb (Ex 12:46) or of the Messiah (Ps 34:20) could be broken. Not knowing why he did it, "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side" (Jn 19:34), fulfilling yet another scripture: "they shall look upon me whom they pierced" (Zec 12:10).

John explains that the "Sabbath," which began at sunset the Thursday Christ was crucified, "was an high day." It was, in fact, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, of which the first and last days were special sabbaths. It ended Friday at sunset, immediately followed by the weekly sabbath that ended at sunset on Saturday. Thus two sabbaths followed Christ's death, preventing the women from coming to the grave until the third day, Sunday morning.

The rabbis thought that having Jesus crucified proved He wasn't the Messiah. In fact, it was one more proof that He was! The soldiers took His clothes for a souvenir and gambled for His robe (Ps 22:18; 69:21); He was given vinegar mixed with gall to drink, nails were driven into His hands and feet, and a spear pierced His side, drawing forth the blood of our redemption—all in fulfillment of prophecy! [Adapted from "The Cradle and the Cross," Dave Hunt, 1992]



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS to CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Who is “Allah”?

QUESTION: “Allah,” contrary to what you have written in *A Cup of Trembling, Judgment Day!*, and elsewhere, is the one true God of the Bible. This is proved by the fact that the Hausa translation of the Bible in northern Nigeria, where there are many Muslims, uses Allah as a designation for the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Jehovah of the Old Testament, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. What better way could we encourage Muslims to believe the Bible?

RESPONSE: Unfortunately, this is a common error that is found in Arabic translations of the Bible as well, which are used in some Muslim countries. It is a serious mistake. Far from helping Muslims, it leaves them trusting their false god, Allah. Identifying Allah as Jehovah has caused a great deal of confusion and harm.

One of the major promoters of this delusion is the Roman Catholic Church....For example, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Vol. 1* declares that Allah is the “Creator...the one, merciful God, mankind’s judge”—in other words, the one true God of the Bible. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

The Moon God of Muhammad’s Tribe

Allah is *not* the generic Arabic word for God but the *name* of a particular god among many deities....Allah was the chief god among the approximately 360 idols in the Ka’aba in Mecca. In that pagan idol temple...there was a deity to suit each of the thousands of travelers passing through in the trade caravans.

Allah is a contraction of *al-Ilah*, the name of the moon god of the local Quraish, Muhammad’s tribe, which they had worshiped with animal and human sacrifices for centuries before Islam was invented. Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad’s earliest biographer, tells how Muhammad’s grandfather was about to sacrifice one of his sons, Abdullah (who would later become the prophet Muhammad’s father), when a sorceress persuaded him to sacrifice a camel instead. The name of Muhammad’s father, Abdullah, is a contraction of *Abdul Allah*, which means “servant of Allah.” It is a historic fact that Allah was worshiped long before Muhammad was born. When Muhammad rejected polytheism, he took the name of his own tribe’s traditional deity, the moon god, as the designation for the one God of Islam, his allegedly new religion.

Pagan Practices Continue in Islam Today

Much of Islam is a carryover of primitive tribal laws and customs already in existence in Muhammad’s day. Even the holy month of Ramadan had long been established. Nor can Muslims deny that for centuries before Muhammad, Allah had been one of the many pagan deities (such as Baal or Molech) whom the God of the Bible, Jehovah, had forbidden His people, the Israelites, to worship....

Allah’s symbol was the crescent moon, which Muhammad also carried over into Islam. This symbol is still seen on mosques, minarets, shrines, and Arab flags. When he conquered Mecca... Muhammad smashed the idols in the Ka’aba, including Allah, and began preaching against idolatry. Nevertheless, the new self-proclaimed prophet kept the idol temple and retained the pagan ritual (long an integral part of the worship of the idols) of kissing the black stone....That stone, actually of “dark red material, oval in

shape, some seven inches in diameter,” remains in its centuries-old position to this day and must still be kissed by Muslims on their required pilgrimage to Mecca....

Deceptive and Grievous Confusion

...Allah is no mere linguistic designation for God, as *Dios* in Spanish or *Dieu* in French. Allah is the *name* of an ancient pagan idol adopted as the god of Islam. If Allah were merely the generic Arabic word for God, then Muslims would not hesitate to use the word for God in each language into which the Qur’an has been translated. Instead, they insist that Allah must be used in every language....The God of Israel, too, has a *name*, YHWH, now pronounced Jehovah but anciently as Jahweh or Yahweh...God told Moses, “By my name YHWH was I not known to them” (Exodus 6:3); and at the burning bush God explained the meaning of His name: “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:13–14). YHWH means not just one who *is*, but the self-existent One who *is in and of Himself*.

Contrasting “Allah” and “Yahweh”

That Allah is *not* the God of the Bible is very clear—His very character and characteristics are the opposite of the biblical God’s. The Qur’an says that Allah is not a father, has no son..., and is not a triune being but a single and unknowable entity. Allah destroys rather than saves sinners, has compassion on only the righteous, does not deal in grace but only rewards good deeds, and has no just and righteous way to redeem the lost....That Allah should become a man to die for the sins of the world would be heresy to a Muslim....

In contrast, the God of the Bible *is love*, an impossibility for Allah. As a single entity, Allah is incomplete: He was lonely and could not love or fellowship until other entities came into existence. Not so with YHWH or Jehovah. YHWH is three Persons in One: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, complete in perfection and in need of no others to love and fellowship with....Only of this God could it be said that He *is love* in Himself.

Allah could never say, “Let us make man in *our* image” (Genesis 1:26). The Muslim scholar has no explanation for this expression, which is even found in the Qur’an’s paraphrase of this Bible verse. We could point out other reasons, but this should be enough to show that to use the *name* Allah for the God of the Bible in the Hausa translation or in any other translation is a grave error!

Catholicism— Christian? Or Cultic?

Dave Hunt

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The evangelical church today is being seduced as never in its history. It faces a danger so grave that, although we have discussed this problem before, it must be addressed again with new insight and vigor. If evangelicals succumb to the seduction, as they increasingly are doing, then their gospel witness will be submerged in confusion and could eventually be lost—a tragic and new dimension to the apostasy from which the church and the world will never recover. Most astonishing and alarming is the fact that (with few exceptions) evangelical leaders and even the major cult watchers refuse to acknowledge this threat. We are therefore compelled to address the subject once again with renewed concern.

For decades evangelicals have diligently and faithfully attempted to identify, analyze and warn the church against *cults*. Included in the standard list are Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Unity School of Christianity, Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, etc. Yet the most seductive, dangerous, and largest cult (many times larger than all of the rest combined) is not included in the list! Most cult experts refuse to identify this horrendous cult as such! Instead, they accept it as "Christian."

Worst of all, this cult (which preaches a *false gospel* that is sending hundreds of millions into a Christless eternity) is now embraced as a partner in "evangelizing the world" by many groups that preach the biblical gospel. Major denominations, such as the Anglican and the Episcopal church, are involved in merger talks with this cult. The Assemblies of God hierarchy has been engaged in "fruitful dialogue" with this cult, whose members are now widely perceived as born-again Christians. As a consequence, the evangelical church faces an unprecedented crisis that threatens its very survival.

The above is a severe, solemn, and devastating charge to make—a charge that we have documented in the past and in support of which additional evidence will now be given. We challenge any church leader to a public debate who declares that this assertion is false. If proven wrong, we will publicly repent. But if this accusation

is true, then a major shake-up in the evangelical church is required, including repentance by many of its most highly regarded leaders. We solicit your help in providing church leaders with the facts they need to identify this cult—facts of which I [Dave] was ignorant years ago when I, too, failed to identify the Roman Catholic Church as the cult that it is.

What is a "cult?" In his book, *Rise of the Cults*, Walter Martin defined cultism as "...any major deviation from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith." Though unmentioned by Martin, Roman Catholicism is undeniably a "major deviation from orthodox Christianity" on many "cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith," and thus, by his own definition, a cult. Recognition of this fact ignited

"JOIN ME TODAY IN FASTING AND PRAYER
FOR THE 115 CARDINALS SEEKING
GOD'S WILL IN A NEW LEADER."

— RICK WARREN
TWITTER, 03/12/13

the Reformation! To deny that Roman Catholicism is a cult is to repudiate the Reformation and mock the millions of martyrs who died at Rome's hands, as though they gave their lives in vain.

But, says someone, since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Roman Catholic Church no longer teaches and practices what it did at the time of the Reformation. That popular idea is false. To counter the Reformation, Rome's foremost theologians met from 1545-63 in the Council of Trent. Its *Canons and Decrees*, which rejected every Reformation doctrine, remain the standard authoritative statement of Roman Catholicism, and adherence thereto is required by Catholic catechisms. Opening Vatican II, Pope John XXIII declared, "I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent." Vatican II went on to reaffirm Trent's *Canons and Decrees*. No, Rome has *not* changed since the Reformation—except superficially.

Were Luther, Calvin, and the other Reformers alive today, they would denounce Roman Catholicism as the largest and most dangerous cult on earth! Yet the Christian Research Institute and other counter-cult groups refuse to classify it as a cult. In the above book, Martin

emphasized that the five major cults at that time had "a following exceeding 8.5 million persons...." Yet he overlooked Roman Catholicism's *hundreds* of millions!

Answers to Cultists at Your Door presents another example. Its authors, Bob and Gretchen Passantino, are described as "experts in cult research [who] have spent years in countercult ministry" (outside back cover of *Witch Hunt*). They include such marks of a cult as the claim that it "is the only organization on earth that is following God's will" and that its leader is "uniquely chosen by God to lead God's people" and that it alone "offer[s] the Bible's 'true' interpretation on all matters." Again, the Roman Catholic Church fully fits all of the criteria. It claims to be the only true church, says that its pope is uniquely chosen to lead all of God's people, and explains that *only* its hierarchy can interpret Scripture. Yet the Passantinos, like most other "cult experts," fail to include Roman Catholicism as a cult, though it meets all their own tests!

Mormons must blindly obey Joseph Smith and his successors, JW's dare not question The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and other cultists must submit to their leaders. Such authoritarianism is the primary mark of a cult. The same blind submission is required of all Catholics. Canon 212 of Catholicism's *Code of Canon Law* requires that Catholics *must* give absolute obedience to their "sacred pastors." Vatican II states repeatedly that *only* Catholicism's hierarchy can interpret the Bible and that papal pronouncements must be obeyed without question. Canon 333 (Sec. 3) declares, "There is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff." Vatican watchdog Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's recent 7,500-word "Instruction" declares that dissent about church teachings *cannot* be "justified as a matter of following one's conscience." No cult demands surrender of mind and conscience more fully or arrogantly than Roman Catholicism.

Roman Catholicism is not only left out of the list of cults by the experts, but it is explicitly approved. For example, in *Scripture Twisting*, James W. Sire, longtime Editor-In-Chief of InterVarsity Press, defines a cult as having "*doctrines and/or practices that contradict those of the Scriptures as interpreted by traditional Christianity as represented by the major Catholic and Protestant denominations...*" (emphasis his). Sire makes Catholicism a

standard of orthodoxy against which cults are to be judged. Yet he accuses the cults of twisting Scripture, a technique of which Rome is surely the ultimate master. Sire indicts Mormonism as a cult for adding other revelations to the Bible—but Rome has added far more new revelations to the Bible than the Mormon Church. Sire declares, “There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come”—yet that is exactly the situation in the Roman Catholic Church! How, then, does he make it the standard of orthodoxy?

Consider also *The Agony of Deceit* published by Moody. Each chapter is written by a leading evangelical about a specific false teaching within today’s church. While *Agony* mostly repeats much that was found in *Seduction of Christianity* five years earlier, it is another voice issuing many of the same warnings, for which we are thankful. Yet it, too, whitewashes Roman Catholicism. On page 65 it states, “Traditional Roman Catholicism...hold[s] to biblical inerrancy.” In fact, Catholicism explicitly *denies* biblical inerrancy! The next sentence does acknowledge that the “messages [of Protestantism and Catholicism] are poles apart,” but moves right on without identifying the vital differences.

Page 111 declares, “The Catholic church resisted the mounting heresies with regard to the Person of Christ, and...Protestants would continue to affirm Catholic Christology.” Again, terribly false! Catholicism’s Christology is heretical. It denies Christ’s exclusive role as mediator between God and man, making Mary “co-mediatrix”; it denies the exclusivity of His redemptive work, making Mary “co-redemptrix” (Vatican II credits Mary with a perpetual “salvific role; she continues to obtain by her constant intercession the graces we need for eternal salvation”); and it denies the sufficiency of His redemptive work, declaring that the redeemed must, in addition to Christ’s suffering for them upon the cross, suffer for their own sins here and/or in purgatory, etc. A great deal more heresy is involved in Catholic Christology, such as presenting Him as perpetually an infant or child subject to His mother, perpetually on the cross—but lack of space prevents further detail. The “Christ” of Roman Catholicism is just as false as its “Mary”—as much “another Jesus” as that of Mormonism or any other cult. Let’s admit it!

Several times in *Agony* it is stated that Protestants and Catholics embrace the same apostolic creeds. This is a partially true but seriously misleading statement. The implication is that the creeds are an all-encompassing statement of biblical Christianity, which they are not. Furthermore, there is a vast difference between the meaning that Catholics and Protestants attach to what the creeds say. For example, while affirming that Christ “suffered under Pontius Pilate,” Catholicism teaches that His suffering was insufficient. In addition to Christ’s suffering, we must each suffer for our sins in order to be saved. We can even suffer for the salvation of others. (The Apostolic Constitution of Jan. 1, 1967, *Indulgentarium Doctrina*, #1687, urges Catholics to carry “each one his own cross in expiation of their sins and of the

“...THOSE WHO BELIEVE ROME’S LIES AND FOLLOW HER GOSPEL OF WORKS FOR SALVATION ARE LOST. FAILING TO RECOGNIZE THIS FACT, MANY EVANGELICAL LEADERS AND CULT EXPERTS HAVE THEMSELVES BEEN DECEIVED BY ROME AND NEED TO BE CONFRONTED AND INFORMED.”

sins of others...assist[ing] their brothers to obtain salvation from God.”) This is rank heresy to Protestants. Yet *Agony* implies that Catholics mean the same thing as Protestants by the creeds—an inexcusable and deadly error in a book by eminent Christian scholars written to point out errors within the church. Though this and the other books cited above contain much that commends them, their approval of Catholicism is tragically misleading.

The deviation by Catholicism from biblical Christianity goes to the heart of the faith, to salvation itself, and thus affects the eternal destiny of those who are deceived thereby. Roman Catholicism rejects salvation by faith and preaches a false gospel of works that cannot save—salvation is not in Christ but in the Church through submission to its edicts and sacraments. The *Basic Catechism of Christian Doctrine* calls the sacraments “the chief means of our salvation.”

The first of the seven sacraments is baptism, which is performed upon 98 percent of Catholics as infants. It is declared in Canon 849 to be the means “by which men and women are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God...” The *Basic Catechism* declares

that baptism “is necessary for salvation...cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians...” Another sacrament is the Mass, which the *Catechism* declares to be “one and the same Sacrifice with that of the Cross, inasmuch as Christ...continues to offer himself...on the altar, through the ministry of his priests.” Canon 904 states that “the work of redemption is continually accomplished in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice,” thus denying Christ’s triumphant “It is finished!”

Let me remind you of Hugh Latimer’s last words, spoken through the flames to his companion who was bound to the same stake: “Be of good courage, master Ridley...for we shall by God’s grace this day light such a ‘candle’ in England as I pray shall never go out!” Tragically, the “candle” lit by hundreds of thousands of faithful martyrs burned at the stake, if not already out, is barely flickering and in danger of being snuffed completely. Paul Crouch, head of the largest Christian TV worldwide network, demeans the martyrs by calling the issues they died for mere semantics; and he makes a mockery of the Reformers by declaring orthodox the heresies that sparked the Reformation.

Those who believe Rome’s lies and follow her gospel of works for salvation are lost. Failing to recognize this fact, many evangelical leaders and cult experts have themselves been deceived by Rome and need to be confronted and informed. How tragic to assume that Catholics are Christians who merely have some peripheral beliefs and practices which seem peculiar to Protestants but which will not prevent them from being saved. A false gospel is a false gospel, and it damns those who believe it, whether preached by Mormonism or Catholicism. A cult is a cult. Roman Catholics, like the members of other cults, need to be treated with compassion, warned of cultic lies, and presented with the true gospel, which alone can save them.

If you are concerned about the growing cooperation between Catholic organizations and major evangelical ministries, please write to them and ask where they stand on this critical issue. The questions could be: 1) What is your organization’s position regarding Catholic doctrines? 2) What is your position regarding organizational participation with Catholics in matters of world evangelization? 3) Are you presently either officially or unofficially involved with any Catholic lay or clerical groups or organizations? If so, on what basis...and to what end? **TBC**

Quotable

Like the prophets of old, we must warn Israel of their impending travail and stand with the nation as it approaches the birth pains of the Tribulation. And, like the prophets of old, we must bring to Israel the comforting message that there is hope and victory in Jesus, the Messiah.

—David M. Levy,
Revelation: Hearing the Last Word

Q&A

QUESTION: With the pope's suddenly stepping down, what's Mr. Hunt's view on the St. Malachy prophecy as it relates to Bible prophecy and Revelation 13, 17, and the false prophet being the pope?

RESPONSE: Dave has stated in the past that he believes the St. Malachy prophecies are a distraction from the truth. St. Malachy was a medieval Irish priest and Kabbalist. Consequently, giving credence to the man is a step in the direction of much of the metaphysical nonsense afflicting too many today. Malachy's prophecies allegedly came in a vision and have no connection to Scripture. That is sufficient reason to reject them.

With the excitement of a true believer in St. Malachy, a Catholic writer for the *Cleveland Leader* wrote: "In 1139, Malachy was Archbishop and traveled to Rome from Ireland to give an account of his affairs. While in Rome, Malachy received a vision about the future, which included the name of every pope, 112 in total, from his time until the end of time" (<http://www.clevelandleader.com/node/20116>).

In truth, and in stark contrast to the detailed prophecy of Scripture, Malachy didn't specifically name all the popes. Instead, he gave a phrase supposedly describing each pontificate. Much like the quatrains of Nostradamus, these little phrases are open to speculation and can mean almost anything to anyone. Therefore, one can always find an "amazingly accurate" point of agreement with whichever pope is in the line of succession.

The Catholic apologist group Catholic Answers dashed the hopes of Malachy's followers further when they wrote, "There have been many more misses, though. Describing the popes to follow John XXIII are the phrases 'flower of flowers' (Paul VI), 'from a half-moon' (John Paul I), and 'from the toil of the sun' (John Paul II), none of which is an obvious connection. After our current pope, there are only two left in Malachy's prophecy, 'the glory of the olive' and 'Peter the Roman.' The latter will supposedly

lead the Church through many tribulations, concluding with the last judgment" (<http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/do-the-prophecies-of-st-malachy-suggest-we-are-living-in-the-end-times>).

In short, these prophecies may be exciting and interesting to some but in the end simply lead us away from the sure word of Scripture.

QUESTION [COMPOSITE OF SEVERAL]: I am a new convert to the truth in God's word of eternal security. I was once a "conditional securist," but I no longer believe in this false doctrine. However, I have a question. In the book of John, in many places it is recorded that Jesus says that we *have* eternal life now in the present, but elsewhere in the Scriptures it seems to say that we have the *hope* of eternal life but don't actually possess it. Does the Bible mean that we actually have eternal life now and will just enter into it when we die? Or does it teach that we don't yet have eternal life, but we will obtain eternal life in the future?

RESPONSE: When a person honestly responds in faith to the gospel (see 1 Cor 15:1-4) recognizing that he is a lost sinner and that only Christ's sacrifice on the Cross can pay the penalty for his sin, he is "eternally secure." Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...."

What else does God's Word say? The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye *have* eternal life...." That *knowing* is present knowledge and that *having* is present possession. When anyone puts his faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, he receives the "gift of God," which is "eternal life" (Rom 6:23, our emphasis). The gift is received immediately and lasts forever.

We must also understand that "eternal life" refers to more than *quantity* of life (i.e., "never ending"). It also refers to the *quality* of that life. Salvation in Scripture is discussed in the following manner:

I. Positionally, we "are saved." Consider the Savior's declarations throughout John (for just one example). John 5:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation; but is *passed* from death unto life." [Our emphasis]

John 6:37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

John 6:39: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should

raise it up again at the last day."

John 6:40: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:51: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

The clearest statement of the Savior's intent can be found in John 10:27-29. He makes eight declarative statements with absolutely no qualifications: 1) My sheep hear my voice. 2) I know them. 3) They follow me. 4) I give unto them eternal life. 5) They shall never perish. 6) Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 7) My Father...is greater than all. 8) No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

What this scripture doesn't tell us is how closely they follow, how far they straggle, or how dim the voice of the Shepherd may seem to them during their straggling, which brings us to the next aspect of salvation:

II. We are "being saved." That is, we come into this relationship with a lot of baggage, habits, behaviors, etc. We are "being saved" in that the Lord is daily working in us to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). Also, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6). Consequently, we are being "saved" from our past lives. We are being *changed*.

III. We "will be saved"—that is, when we leave this world and stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will not be condemned with the world, who will stand before the Great White Throne (Rv 20:11-15). And yet, there will be an accounting of how our life is spent: "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: *but he himself shall be saved*; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor 3:14-15).

Regarding the time when we finally step into eternity with our King, the Bible tells us: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). And 1 Corinthians 13:12 gives us a little more: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." What a day that will be!



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Contradictory Concepts of God—Which Is Correct?

QUESTION: The oldest and most popular concepts of God are either pantheism, the belief that everything [i.e. the universe] is God, or polytheism, the belief that there are many gods.... Why is the Bible so adamant against these beliefs, and why does it so severely condemn what it calls the pagans who have...held these beliefs...long before Jesus Christ came along?

RESPONSE: Pantheism is really the same as atheism. Obviously, if *everything* is God, then *nothing* is God, because the very term has lost any meaning. Pantheism leads to numerous contradictions: God would be the emptiness of a vacuum as well as the substance of matter; He would be sickness as well as health, death as well as life, evil as well as good. Furthermore, if the universe itself is God, then there is no outside reference point from which the universe can be evaluated and given purpose and significance. Nor is there any hope of changing its downward course or that of mankind.

Nothing has meaning or value in and of itself but only as some personal being has use for it and values it.... A car has no meaning in itself, no purpose unless there is someone to drive it. The most costly diamond ring has no value unless there is someone who wants to buy and own and wear it, and so on. Obviously, what is true of every part of the universe is equally true of the whole.

According to the law of entropy, this universe is running down like a clock. Left to itself and without some outside Intelligence of infinite power rescuing the universe from its certain doom, all of man's personal and corporate dreams and schemes will one day be like sand castles washed out into a cosmic ocean of nothingness. The entire universe will be approaching absolute zero, and all will be as though it had never been.... Without a Creator who had an eternal purpose for His creation and who is able to reach in from outside (not with reincarnation or evolution but with *resurrection* and new creation), neither the universe nor man in it could have any ultimate meaning. Pantheism can offer only meaninglessness, hopelessness, and ultimate despair....

In academia...*ecothology* (the old pantheism) is now [respected] by some highly educated people.... Georgetown University professor Victor Ferkiss, says it "starts with the premise that the Universe is God." Ferkiss seems to think that the pantheistic worship of nature will "prevent the environmental exploitation of the Universe."

One can't worship both the creation and the Creator. The Bible says there are serious consequences that come from worshiping the creation *instead of* the Creator (Rom 1:18-32). One's conscience becomes dull, and mankind falls prey to all kinds of evil and cruel behavior because there are no morals in nature....

Historian/philosopher Herbert Schlossberg reminds us, "Animals do not act morally or immorally; they only act naturally. A system of ethics that says human beings ought to base their behavior on nature...justifies any behavior, because nature knows no ethic." Nobelist Sir John Eccles agrees: "The concepts of injustice, unfairness...the obligations to honor, to respect...are intelligible only within a *moral* context and to moral beings. In the mindless universe of mere nature...there is neither justice nor mercy, neither liberty nor fairness. There are only facts."

The temptation to worship the universe seems to be an occupational hazard for atheistic scientists. Their arguments against God betray an...adoption of pantheism both as an excuse for denying the

infinite Creator (to whom man would be accountable) and an attempt to find another basis for purpose and meaning.... A compendium of atheism titled *400 Years of Freethought*, published in 1894 explains the cornerstone of Freethought...as the rejection of "all authority" and "the conquest of nature." Athiest Carl Sagan [now deceased] became very reverent and worshipful in the presence of the Cosmos, which he credited with having spawned us and all life.... He says it makes sense to reverence the sun and moon! On what basis? And how is that different from bowing down to a piece of wood or stone as one's god? What could the sun or moon have to do with morals, with purpose and meaning, with love and beauty?

...If one God is stronger or has more authority than the others, then none of the rest of the gods can really be God, so we are back to monotheism. As the Bible says: "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O LORD...For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone" (Ps 86:8, 10).

If there are many gods, to which god should one pray? To one's favorite? On what basis is it a favorite?...St. Christopher, the patron saint of travelers to whom millions looked for protection, has been removed from the Catholic pantheon. It is now admitted by the Church that Christopher was a myth and that any power he seemed to have wielded...was obviously a delusion. So it is with all the gods of the world's many religions. In fact, they are worse than myths; they are representatives of Satan and his minions. Behind each idol is a demon using it to draw people away from the true God, as Paul states: "The things which the Gentiles [pagans] sacrifice [to their gods] they sacrifice to devils and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils" (1 Cor 10:20-21).

There is no compromise with God. At stake is the eternal destiny of every person who has ever lived or will ever live. Suppose a certain man convinces a large group of people to give him their possessions and to follow him to what he promises will be a veritable paradise on earth—and instead he leads them into a swamp where they are all swallowed up in quicksand. Should he not be prosecuted as a liar and murderer? How much more serious is it to promote false gods and to sell tickets to heaven that actually take people to hell!

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 43-47) by DAVE HUNT

The Lord's Watchman

T. A. McMahon

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

— EZEKIEL 3:17

I have had the tremendous blessing of working with Dave Hunt for 35 years. Only those who have known Dave personally can really understand how wonderfully privileged I have been. It began the day I was taken to his house by a Christian filmmaker. Only a few months earlier I had been on location in Iran as the screenwriter for the production of the James Michener novel *Caravans*. Upon my return to the US, however, something temporally and eternally more significant occurred: I became a born-again Christian.

I was praying about what I should do with my new life in Christ when the Lord directed me to meet Dave. The catalyst was a screenplay that Dave wanted to see written based upon a fictional story that he had been developing. I read his story idea and told him—regretfully—that although I knew how to write screenplays, my knowledge of biblical Christianity was almost nonexistent, and I was sure that it would greatly hinder my ability to translate his story to the screen. To my unending thankfulness, he said that if I wouldn't object to our working on it together, he could supply the biblical input as needed. I was too new a believer to shout "Praise the Lord!" but I know that something equivalent raced through my mind. At that time, I had no idea as to what a "calling" was, or the biblical gift of helps, but I somehow knew in my heart that I was to help Dave do what God had put on his heart to do. That was the beginning of three and a half decades of learning about and living out the Scriptures through my association with the most godly man I have ever known. And I got to know him quite well.

The first 30 years of my life before being exposed to the biblical gospel and believing it for salvation had been spent as a Roman Catholic. Through the witness of young evangelicals, I was shown from the Bible that Christ paid the full penalty for my sins and that I could receive the gift of eternal life by simply acknowledging my own sin and receiving His forgiveness by faith alone. So I did this, even though I was still pretty clueless about most of the

other teachings in the Bible. When I began to work with Dave, my schooling in the Scriptures also began. "Schooling" may not be the best choice of words because there was never an academic approach to my biblical education through Dave. In the beginning, it was primarily by my asking questions about something he had said or written. His response then was to consistently direct me to the Bible: "Here's the passage, Tom. Read it for yourself!" Later, that was reduced to simply, "Be a Berean! Check it out."

Although Dave respected scholarship, he was a firm believer in and proponent of familiarity with the Word of God. I've never met anyone with a more intimate knowledge of the Scriptures. That may not seem like a big deal to some, but it's huge when one realizes that Scripture itself is the best interpreter of Scripture. To say that the Bible explains itself would not be an overstatement. Knowing the full counsel of God is critical to our understanding of it. Jesus often chided the religious leaders and even His own disciples for not being aware of what the Scriptures taught. Dave's most valuable lessons for me, which came steadily by example over the years, were seeing his love of God's Word, his diligence in reading it, and then watching him actually live it.

The other thing that most impressed me about Dave was the humility and graciousness with which he handled religious controversy. Such controversy was something that was foreign to me growing up Catholic—not that it didn't exist within the Church of Rome, but other than recognizing that some Catholics were more liberal than others and that not everyone agreed on contraception and certain other dogmas of the Church, the issues were rarely if ever discussed. I learned very quickly that this was definitely not the case among evangelicals, especially in my association with "the man of controversy," Dave Hunt! I think one reason why controversy is more pronounced among evangelicals is because they traditionally have held to the Scriptures as the authority for their beliefs and practices. When teachings arise that are contrary to God's Word, it creates divisions among those who profess to be Bible-believing Christians—often rather hostile divisions.

Early in my relationship with him, I was surprised that when I mentioned to some evangelical acquaintances that I was working with Dave Hunt, they had serious reservations about my association with him.

When I asked them to give me some reasons why Dave was so controversial, they couldn't really say. Most of the concerned people didn't know Dave personally nor had they read his books or heard him speak. That was a mystery to me, which came into better focus when I had the privilege of helping him with *The Seduction of Christianity* (although he was hardly in need of my contributions). Nevertheless, the controversy aspect was hardly complex. A teaching is either true to the Scriptures or it is not. If it is not, division rears its ugly head (Acts 16:17).

The Seduction of Christianity came about primarily because of responses to two prior books by Dave, *The Cult Explosion* and *The God Makers* (written with Ed Decker). Although those books addressed the unbiblical doctrines and practices of numerous *cults*, as did the film documentaries with the same titles, which I worked on, there were unexpected and even shocking responses from believers who had read those books and watched those films. These conservative evangelicals and Charismatics had begun to recognize that some of the occult teachings that we had exposed were being taught in their own churches! This was easily proven yet what was even more disturbing, Christian bookstores were loaded with numerous titles promoting such occult methodologies. Many of them were promoted by the "faith healing" ministries popular among experientially driven Charismatics and Pentecostals and included the belief that Christians were "little gods under God." Furthermore, even conservative evangelicals were being introduced to techniques such as occult visualization under the guise of psychotherapy. We discovered that those examples were not only the tip of the false-doctrine iceberg, but they were also afloat in the backwaters of the church. We felt that we had no choice but to bring the issues before the church at large.

Seduction became a best seller, but sadly for the wrong reason—controversy. It may have been the first book by an established Christian publisher to name names and document the false teachings of highly visible Christian leaders. Dave made it clear in the introduction that the book was not an indictment of individuals, but rather, it was written to alert them and those who read their works of the unbiblical nature of some of their teachings, in many cases promoted unwittingly and in ignorance. Nevertheless, that made *Seduction* quite controversial.

Many pastors added to the controversy by condemning the book from their pulpits, warning their fellowships against reading it. Although by this time, I had been working with Dave for a half-dozen years, I wasn't prepared for what took place. The number of people who confronted me personally for my involvement was intimidating, to say the least. Dave told me to respond by telling them that we were more than willing to correct anything in the book that was in error or not true to the Scriptures. As I began communicating that, I was shocked by the overwhelming numbers of my confronters who boldly declared that they hadn't read the book, nor would they.

On the other hand, *The Seduction of Christianity* impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of believers. We still receive correspondence from countless individuals, even decades later, whose lives were turned around and revived in the Scriptures because of the influence of that book. The most memorable was from a prisoner on death row. He had committed his life to intercessory prayer until he started reading a Word/Faith positive-confession book. He bought into the lie that his faith was the key for him to be delivered from his situation. He began confessing his release from prison continually. He wrote to us that he had destroyed his once-fruitful intercessory prayer ministry by turning to the mind-science corruption of true biblical prayer. It wasn't until the prison book cart came by with a used copy of *Seduction* that his eyes were opened. He said that the Lord used our book to "set him free" from the self-serving bondage of the false faith teaching and then restored his ministry of praying for others.

Although multitudes were blessed, some of the religious leaders mentioned in *Seduction* were not. At their invitation, Dave and I met with a few of them to discuss why they were included and what our concerns were. Not all of the meetings were cordial. Some called him divisive and accused him of harming "God's anointed." Another complained that he was "a murderer" for turning Christians away from psychological counseling. Others gave lip service agreement to Dave's explanations, but only one leader actually corrected what he had written. Through it all, Dave was courteous yet firm in his steadfastness for what the Bible taught. I was merely a fly-on-the-wall at these meetings, but I learned how a godly man corrects someone. This was the closest thing to Paul's admonition to Timothy

about the way to minister to a brother in error that I had experienced up to that point (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Those who had read some of Dave's books but didn't know him personally and had never heard him speak were only exposed to the written words of his fervent commitment to the truth of the Scriptures and his zeal for sound doctrine. Too often, many people miss the compassion and the heart of the man whose works they are reading. We at TBC realized that problem when listeners told us that they really felt that they came to know Dave better through our years of doing radio together. Although the program was pre-recorded, it had a live "feel" to it because Dave was not given our subject matter ahead of time, so his reactions were always spontaneous and lively, especially regarding the latest outrageous item infecting Christianity that I would present. Some things would cause him to "bounce off the walls" of our recording booth, much to the delight of our listeners.

Without any doubt, all of God's children are wonderfully unique; there seem to be no two alike. Therefore, I can say with confidence that there will never be another Dave Hunt. His gentleness and humility were obvious to all who met him. He was mentally brilliant. His memory was unsurpassed by any that I've witnessed. He could quote entire books of the Bible, poems that seemed to go on for days (many of which he wrote), and little-known stanzas, which few knew were even part of an otherwise familiar hymn. When dining with Dave, if someone told a joke, he would follow up with a non-stop litany of jokes that seemed to go on endlessly. His sense of humor wonderfully countered those who characterized him as a "mean-spirited heresy hunter." Although he was not given to promoting humor from the pulpit, from time-to-time he would start off with stories making himself the butt of his own jokes. That was always greatly effective because few congregations expected it. He was not only humorous, but he was the most positive, upbeat guy I knew. Certainly, he could be overwhelmed by grief, yet I never saw him depressed.

Everyone who knows me personally knows that I love to fish. That, too, can be attributed to Dave. Our hikes beyond the timberline in the high Sierras in search of the elusive golden trout were mind-boggling and absolutely mind-refreshing. Dave was an expert fly fisherman. The mountain adventures I had with him, along

with many other stories, could fill volumes. If there was any rivalry between us, it was only over who was the best camp cook; my wife's birthday cake, baked by myself over a campfire, settled that issue for me. Dave was impressed—but not necessarily convinced!

However, the favorite "Dave stories" among the TBC staff were the accounts that he would share upon his return from speaking engagements. He would tell us matter-of-factly that he could prove the existence of God by the very people that the Lord placed next to him on his various flights—people who seemed to be prepared and ready for Dave's witnessing. If someone was skeptical regarding "divine appointments," it only took a couple of examples from Dave to convince them otherwise. I was never skeptical, but my confidence in his reports got huge boosts from several personal experiences. As one example, we had just boarded a plane and noticed that one of our two assigned seats (with extended leg room) was occupied by a Marine corporal. Since someone my size doesn't require extra legroom for comfort, we didn't ask the Marine to move, and Dave sat down beside him. In their lengthy conversation, Dave learned that the Marine was on his way to a Pagan conference and ceremonial festival. The young man listened eagerly while he received an education in the theology and fallacies of Paganism. What's the probability of that situation occurring by chance? Divine appointments not only happened to Dave, but they seemed to happen regularly.

Again, there will never be another Lord's watchman quite like Dave Hunt. So, the question now on the minds of many is "what's next for TBC and the watchman's sidekick" (who will sorely miss his best friend in the Lord)? As stated earlier, I believe that my calling for more than three decades has been simply to help Dave do what God has called him to do. Now that Dave is with the Lord, I believe my calling has shifted to preserving the integrity of what Dave has produced and, by the grace of God, getting his books, articles, sermons, videos, and audio materials to the next generation of believers. Certainly, in keeping with the legacy that Dave has left us, a legacy centered upon the Word of God, we will cover new issues as they come up that are adversely affecting the body of Christ. Therefore, we truly covet your prayers that God will enable us to maintain the course on which He directed Dave. We are blessed and privileged to continue that work. TBC

I Love THE LORD

THIS IS A TRANSCRIPTION OF DAVE HUNT'S FINAL TALK AT OUR TBC CONFERENCE IN 2008.
IT HAS BEEN EDITED FOR SPACE AND READABILITY.

WE ARE IN A COSMIC BATTLE. This is a mystery. How could there be a battle between God and Satan? Isn't God much stronger than Satan? It depends on what you mean by "strong."

God draws His people to Himself with love; Satan, with deception. There are so many mysteries that it's beyond our comprehension. In Revelation 5:1-6: "I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof? No man in heaven, nor on earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals. And I [turned around to see this Lion] and I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain."

In Revelation 22:1: "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." I think you know that is not H₂O. The Bible does use metaphors. When you take the bread and the cup in remembrance of Christ, that is not His body and blood. It's a symbol, and we do this in *remembrance* of Him.

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life..." (v.2). Adam and Eve got thrown out of the Garden lest they should eat of the tree of life and live forever. And now, here it is! I don't know whether it's the same one—I rather think it is. "...The tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits..." I don't understand this. We're in glorified, resurrected bodies. This is in eternity. So, we're talking in mystery language here, but it's something that God wants to reveal to us. "...Bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the

tree were for the healing of the nations."

Why do they need healing? I don't understand it, but our focus is on the Lord. "There shall be no more curse, but *the throne of God and of the Lamb* shall be in it, and his servant shall serve him" (v.3). So the throne of God to the very end is the throne of God and of the Lamb. And the Lion of the tribe of Judah is the Lamb, and He is there as though He had just been slain.

We were talking about the cosmic battle being fought. It's for control of the universe! Why does God still have to fight with Satan for control of the universe? This is not a Star Wars battle with weapons of mass destruction. It's something deeper than that. Revelation 12:7: "There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon fought with his angels."

The Bible says so much in a few words. Why would you find dragons everywhere—all over the East, on the temples, and so forth? Why do you find serpents? Satan loves to be called a dragon. He's not ashamed to be called a serpent. He loves to be the serpent!

"The great dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven" (Revelation 12:7-8).

Praise God! "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world..." (v.9). He is the deceiver. He deceives the whole world! "...He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night" (vv.9-10).

We see that "accuser" in the book of Job. The sons of God appear before God, and Scripture says, "And Satan came with them." Satan still has access to God, and he has authority.

Then it turns the focus onto us, because we have a very important part to play in this battle. This is a battle for the soul, for the heart, and for the mind of man. And what

was our part? "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." Satan still doesn't understand. Look at what he offers to mankind: "Follow me, and you'll have all the free sex you want, all the drugs—everything! How could they resist it?" I think of that poem "On the King's Highway":

'Twas on the King's highway near
a century ago

That a preacher stood, though of
noble birth,

Telling the fallen and low

Of a Savior's love and a home
above

And a peace and a joy they all
might know,

While slow through the crowd a
lady proud

Her gilded chariot drove.

"Make way!" cried the haughty
outrider.

"You're blocking the king's
highway.

Our lady is late, and her majesties
wait.

Give way there, good people, I
pray."

But the preacher heard, and his soul
was stirred,

And he cried to the driver, "Nay!

This is the king's highway, but I
hold it today,

In the name of the King of kings."

And then he says that there is an auction for this woman's soul and for all that she has, and he continues (loosely quoted):

I see three bidders, the world steps up at the first, and Satan, and so forth, and they tell what they're offering, and then the third bidder speaks:

And what hast thou to offer, thou
man of sorrows unknown?

He gently said, "My blood was
shed to purchase her for my own.

To conquer the grave and her soul to save, I trod the winepress alone.”

And then she’s converted. She takes off her jewels and her coronet, and lays them, as it were, at the Savior’s feet.

Satan thinks he’s going to win. Look at what he offers! But what does Jesus offer? “You’re not of the world. I’ve chosen you out of the world. Because you’re not of the world, the world will hate you. If you want to follow me, take up the cross, follow me. That’s where we’re going” (John 15:29; Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23; Mark 8:34; 10:21).

So, we come to the climax throughout the Bible. In Job 13:15, Job says, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” Job was an overcomer through the blood of the Lamb!

In 1 John 4:19, we read: “We love him because he first loved us.” I love the Lord! Why do I love Him? There must be a reason why we love Him. In fact, there are many reasons! Have you told Him today, “I love you, Lord”? You should tell Him over and over.

I tell my wife every day, “Ruth, I love you more today than before! You are beautiful, and I love you so much!” You ought to tell your wife, your spouse, but we need especially to tell the Lord.

In fact, it is a command. When He was asked, “What’s the first and great command?”, Jesus replied, “The first commandment is Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all of thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might, and the second is like unto it... thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37).

How can it be love if it’s commanded? We’ve mentioned some of these atheists, Christopher Hitchens, very brilliant, Jewish, raised as a Christian, who really speaks in fond terms of his Sunday school teacher way back then. But he hates the Lord. And this is one of the things he would say: He calls God “that heavenly dictator up there.” He says, “We’ve got to love him, but at the same time, we’re supposed to fear him. Now, how are you going to work that out?”

Well, he doesn’t understand.

How can love be commanded? “If a man love me, he will keep my commandments.” I love Psalm 27, a psalm of David. David writes, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord...”

What do I know of the beauty of the Lord? I think about that a lot. “...To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

Why do I love Him? He’s beautiful! Remember Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1?

It’s very powerful. Paul tells us in verse 15: “I cease not to pray for you...” In verse 16, he prays “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”

And the psalmists, the apostles, cry out “O that I might *know* him!” And you know what keeps us from knowing Him? And being like Him? John gives that to us in 1 John 3: “When we see him, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.” Now we see through a glass darkly... I sometimes cry, “Lord, I don’t even know You! I wish I knew you better!” It’s beyond our ability, but one day when the veil is removed, the blindness of our hearts and eyes will be gone. We will see it suddenly! *This is Jesus as He really is!* And that is going to transform us.

So Paul says “...that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened...” We need understanding. In Matthew 13, the sower goes forth to sow. The first seed falls by the wayside, remember? And the birds of the air come and pluck it. The disciples don’t understand the parable at all. They say, “Lord, tell us, what does this mean? And what about these birds plucking up the seed?”

And Jesus says, “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and *understandeth* it not...” We’re not trying to just talk people into something. They’ve got to *understand* what they’re getting into. That’s what Jesus said: “Take up the cross, and follow Me.” He’s telling us that this is not a beautiful trip that you’re going on. It’s going to be an arduous journey, a strait gate, a narrow way.”

He wants us to *understand*, so He says, “When they hear the word and they don’t understand, then comes the wicked one and takes out of the heart the seed that was sown.” We’ve got to get people to understand!

This is Paul’s prayer: “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints...” We have an inheritance. We have an inheritance in Him. It’s going to be glorious for all eternity.

But in Ephesians 1:19-20, Paul writes: “...what is the exceeding greatness of his power, to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power...”

What would you think would be the greatest expression, the greatest demonstration of God’s power? “When I consider thy heavens, and the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars that you’ve made”? Or when we sing, “How great Thou art”? No. What is it then? “...According to the

working of his mighty power, *which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places...*”

I don’t fathom that, but I do get some inkling of it. This is the greatest demonstration of God’s power—that He could save sinners, those who hate Him; that Christ would die for them, and that somehow He would pay the penalty. That is something that I’ve discussed with philosophers. It is not just! The innocent man is punished for the guilty! And that brings forgiveness? How can the innocent pay for the sins of the guilty? It’s not just. How is that going to do anything for God—or for anybody?

Paul tells us, Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ.” It wasn’t just that Christ died. *We died in Him.* I don’t know how God works that out, but haven’t we experienced it? I know that something happened to me.

He did something that transformed us that Satan doesn’t understand. We were born again through faith in Christ when we accepted Him as our Savior and we recognized that He died for us—in our place! That does something.

“The exceeding greatness of his power... that he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand...far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:19-23). That’s what God accomplished. Satan doesn’t understand it to this day, and he probably never will—but he will face the consequences of it.

I need to say a few words about Islam, because it is growing everywhere. Let me just give you one contrast: “*La Ilaha Illa Allah, Muhammad rasulu Allah*”—“There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.” You either repeat that, or it is off with your head, wherever they can do it. And they don’t care—you don’t even have to believe it! That’s one of the things that Islam glories in: “Just repeat the words, that’s all Allah wants.”

In contrast, what does the Bible say? “Love the Lord your God with all your *heart*” (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37), and “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus... (Romans 10:9).”

According to Islam, “If thou shalt confess Allah and Muhammad with your mouth—that’s okay.”

But the Bible tells us, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead...” You remember what Jesus said? He quoted from the Old Testament—God speaking to Israel: “You honor me with your lips, you draw nigh to me with your mouth, but your heart is far from me. In vain you worship me.”

Islam is spread by the sword. I sometimes quote them facetiously, “Islam is peace. And if you deny it, we’ll kill you to prove it!” I wish that I could reason with Muslims. Are they convinced?

People used to talk about “shotgun” weddings, but we don’t even bother with that anymore. You don’t drag your bride to the altar by her hair with a gun in one hand and say, “You will marry me, and you will promise to love me!” That’s not the way it works. You haven’t won her heart, and God is not going to get us to heaven by threats, but by love.

This battle is going to be won by love. I remember the hymn, “O the deep, deep love of Jesus...” It’s a mystery. “I am crucified with Christ.” Something happened when I met Jesus. I was born again by the Spirit.

And He’s promised us something. We read it in Ephesians 1—Paul is praying that these people will know *the hope of His calling*. First Peter 5:10 tells us what is the hope of His calling: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you...” So the God of all grace has called us to His eternal glory!

By contrast, atheism is materialism. There is nothing but matter. Francis Crick, atheist, co-discoverer of the DNA alphabet, said: “You, your joys, your sorrows, your memories, your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.” Isn’t that wonderful to know! It is meaningless! It is hopeless! What is the hope that the atheist offers? According to them, a quiet grave at the worst.

Listen to Bertrand Russell: “All the labor of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the death of the solar system.” It couldn’t be said more clearly. One day all of the dreams, one day all of the corporate ambition and all of the monuments man has built, the skyscrapers and all the libraries will be burned up. They’re gone, like sandcastles washed into a cosmic ocean of nothingness. What did it all matter?

So you have to ask the atheist: “Richard Dawkins, why do you work so hard? Why do you write so many books? They’re all going to be burned up. Why do you struggle to stay alive a little longer so that you can pen a few more words to the glory of the molecules?”

And when “Sagan the Pagan” got in the presence of the cosmos, he exulted, “Oh! The *cosmos*! Do you want to know who you are? Why you’ve got nitrogen, you’ve got hydrogen cells in your body that once were part of a distant star system, and they’re in your body! And one day, some of the molecules in your body will be out there in another star system...” I think that’s insanity cloaked in pride, and they’ve all got a good dose of it.



By contrast, look at Werner von Braun, the German space scientist, founder and former director of NASA’s space flight center. He was always eager to testify. Listen to what he said: “Manned spaceflight has opened a tiny door for viewing the awesome reaches of space. An outlook through this peephole at the vast mysteries of the universe should only confirm our belief in the certainty of its Creator. I cannot understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe.”

The first Apollo astronauts to circle the moon sent a message back to planet Earth: “We’ve got a message for you.” And they read the first 10 verses of Genesis: “In the beginning, God created...”

Do you remember the first food and drink that was consumed on the moon? It was the bread and wine of communion! Atheists say, “No scientists believe in God.” Yet these men were scientists.

God is being glorified, and the poor atheist doesn’t understand that He has something wonderful for those who love Him: “Eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Listen to the hopelessness of atheist Sam Harris: “Tens of billions of viewers passed in the growing darkness of a universe condemned to become a galactic graveyard.” That’s what they have to look forward to. That epitaph is pronounced in advance upon everything that Bertrand Russell wrote, everything that Dawkins ever did or wrote, so why do they insist, “I want to convert you to atheism! I want you to hate God. And I want you to have this beautiful future lying ahead of you. What a hope we give you!” Expending such a great effort to extend their life, merely to stave off death a short while longer in order to leave some meaningless record of one’s having been there. But there’s no record. Nothing will be left of all the proud structures that man has built.

Richard Dawkins writes: “We are staggeringly lucky. However brief our time in the sun, if we waste a second of it, or complain, couldn’t this be seen as a callous insult to those unborn trillions who will never be offered life in the first place?” He is speaking of those who apparently didn’t get into the right space in the gene pool, and they were sloughed off. To the living he says, in effect, “But you made it in the lottery! And here you are. Your genes brought you here.” He also says, “The knowledge that we have only one life should make it all the more precious. The atheist view is life-affirming and life-enhancing.”

But we say it a little bit differently:

Only one life; ’twill soon be past.

Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Because we have something that’s going to last, but they have nothing like this: Daniel tells us, “We will shine as the stars of the firmament.”

“I love the Lord, because He’s heard my cry, as long as I live” (Psalm 116:1-2). And in eternity, we’ll praise Him. In 1 John 4:4-8 we read: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you that he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for *God is love*.”

God is love. This says more than just that “God loves.” It’s saying that the very essence of God’s being is love. *God is love*. We don’t

understand it. But then you get to verse 19: “We love him because he first loved us.”

I love you, Lord! Why? Spend a little time in His presence beholding the beauty of the Lord. Get to know Him.

The testimony of Rabi Maharaj, the ex-guru, is written in his book *Death of a Guru*. At that time, Rabi, a young guru, was being worshiped as “god” by his followers. His cousin Krister, a believer in Christ, took Rabi to this little meeting. Rabi had come to the conclusion that the gods he worshiped were out to kill him! Krister had brought him to this old building with the paint peeling off and Rabi thought that he heard an orchestra in there—a huge crowd of people. They went in, and I think he said there were about 15 people, and the orchestra was a little girl with a tambourine! But he had never heard people sing “Sunlight, sunlight, in my soul today.”

“No,” he said, “my heart was filled with darkness.” You don’t sing about how you love Krishna. You don’t sing about how you love Shiva, the Destroyer. You don’t sing about your love for Muhammad, or Allah. But these people—who were they? What had happened to them? And what a love they had for this God whom they serve and worship, and for this Jesus who had died for them.

Eventually, Rabi was on his knees before the preacher, who happened to be a former Muslim, a schoolteacher. And he didn’t need to have an “exorcism.” He said that as soon as he put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as the one who had died for his sins, “tons” of dark things went out of him.

Something happened to us all. We love the Lord. I love the Lord because He’s heard my cry. I love Him because He first loved me. How could you not love Him? I speak to my own heart.

It’s amazing what God can do in our hearts if we allow Him. It’s the new birth. We’re born from above, born in the Spirit of God, when we believe the gospel message.

Just as the DNA is in words, and there’s no life—no physical life—without words, there is no spiritual life without words. And you know what they are: 1 Peter 1: “Being born again by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

Why do we preach the gospel? People don’t have a transformation if the Word of God doesn’t come into their hearts and they don’t understand who they are in sin, or who Christ is and why He came, and then believe this. We don’t come to God as that proud lady driving in her chariot with all of her jewels. We come as broken sinners, recognizing our guilt and our need of Christ.

The Bible is so clear: “The wages of sin

is death” (Romans 6:23). That’s what Dawkins is reaping. That’s what “Sagan the Pagan” reaped. That’s what the cosmos gave him. Death. The cosmos—finally all dead. “The wages of sin is death...,” but it’s even worse than that. The second death is the Lake of Fire, and it goes on forever and forever and forever. An eternal dying, with regret and remorse: “How could I have been such a fool? I didn’t need to be here. Christ died for me. He paid the penalty for my sins, and here I am because I rejected Him.” No hope....

“...But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Let me remind you what a gift is. If you are going to receive forgiveness, if you are going to receive eternal life from God, you must receive it as a gift. A gift? What does that mean? It means you can’t work for it, you can’t earn it, you can’t merit it. A lot of people try to pay for the gift of God with church membership, good deeds, penance—it won’t work. Everybody’s on the same level. We come as hopeless, lost sinners for whom Christ died, and we must be willing to receive a gift. The gift of God is eternal life. You don’t want a gift? You want to work for it? You want to earn it? You want to show God how good you are? And that you deserve it? Sorry! You must receive this as a gift, and you can’t pay for a gift.

“The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” He can’t give it to you any other way, but only because Christ paid the penalty for our sins.

To summarize what’s been going on here, we are in a cosmic battle for the universe, and we’ve read the end of the story: war in heaven, Satan and his demons—his angels—are fighting against Michael and his angels, and Satan does not prevail and he’s thrown out, because the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who defeats them all, is the Lamb! A slain Lamb is on the throne. You think about that. You ponder it.

I love the Lord because He first loved me.

I don’t want to forget the Father, because the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. He knew what was going to happen. He knew that His Son would be mocked and hated, spat upon, crucified, and you see that so beautifully in Genesis 22.

God calls Abraham: “I want you to kill your only son, the son you love.” What a picture of Christ: “The Father sent the Son...” The Father gave His Son to be the Savior of the world. In Genesis, Isaac says, “I’ve got the wood, father!” So he wasn’t a little tiny kid. He was carrying the wood for the fire, as Jesus carried the cross. “Here’s the wood,

you’ve got the fire. Where’s the lamb?”

Abraham replied, “God will provide himself a lamb.”

I love that verse: “So they went *both of them together*.” Abraham and his son. It was a joint operation. We don’t want to forget God the Father, who gave His Son, and Christ, who suffered for our sins—they went both together.

Prayer: Father, you are so wonderful. Your grace and your love are beyond our comprehension. Lord, we love you because you first loved us, and herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And you demonstrate your love, Lord, in dying for our sins. Who could doubt it? Who could doubt that you love us? You never sinned, but you were treated as though you were all of the sins of the world, and you were punished in our place. Lord Jesus, we love you.

We love you with all of our hearts. Oh Lord, forgive us for not saying that often enough to you. Lord, we ask for a deeper understanding. Help us to know you. Help us to have an understanding. Lord, we grope. We see through a glass darkly. We understand so little, but we understand enough to know the gospel message that you sent your Son, and He came willingly and took our place. And Lord Jesus, we love you for this. We ask that you would reveal yourself to us more fully. We want to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in your temple. So draw us closer to you. We want to get to know you better. Like the song, “Down from His Glory”—“Without reluctance, flesh and blood his substance, He took the form of man, revealed the hidden plan. O glorious mystery! Sacrifice at Calvary. Now I know He is the great I AM!”

God and the Son, the Holy Spirit—a joint operation, “I and my Father are one.” We don’t understand it, but, Lord, we want to draw closer to you. We want to please you in our lives, we want to serve you, we want to honor you, and, Lord, we want to take this glorious gospel, without which no man can be born again, wherever we go. So, Lord, give us opportunities and help us. And, Lord, we just love you, and may that be reflected in our lives, we pray. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

They Claim to Speak for God - Part Two

T. A. McMahon

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

— JEREMIAH 14:14

In the first part of this series we addressed a movement within Christendom that is undermining the faith of multitudes of Christians, especially those who consider themselves to be Bible-believing Christians. Whether done intentionally or unintentionally by the leaders of the movement, their teaching and methods seriously deprive their followers of a true basis for biblical discernment. The primary means that they employ involves disparaging the objective nature of the Scriptures. When a believer buys into that teaching, he is being led into the arena of subjectivity, meaning that he cannot objectively determine what is truly from God versus what is nothing more than content from the imagination of man.

In his excellent book *Wandering Stars: Contending for the Faith with the New Apostles and Prophets* (see TBC 03/13), which has been a chief resource in this series, Keith Gibson summarizes the foundational errors of the movement regarding the Bible: “So what can we conclude after this brief survey of the attitudes and words of the modern apostles and prophets concerning the Scripture? One would have to conclude that the Bible alone is an insufficient guide for the end-time church. New doctrines, not found in the Bible, are needed to perfect the church. Scripture is generally inspiring but basically unreliable. It is insufficient to convince the world of God’s truth....It does not provide the parameters to faith and practice and does not give us the norms for the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Canon of Scripture is not closed, and, in fact, many of the words of today’s prophets carry a higher level of revelation, anointing, and authority than some of the words of Scripture. And lastly, the Bible cannot be understood by any normal means. Grammar, history, and context are completely irrelevant. The words of Scripture can be redefined and ripped out of context to discover the ‘deeper’ meaning for today’s church. There is no objective interpretation or understanding of Scripture. The Bible means whatever one wants it to mean” (pp. 105-6).

This flagrant assault on the Scriptures is clearly a reflection of Satan’s grand scheme to undermine the Word of God, which he demonstrated first in turning Eve away from obeying what God had commanded. God declared: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). That was God’s word to Adam and Eve.

Satan’s first words to mankind were aimed at undercutting God’s instructions: “And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Genesis 3:1). After leading her to reconsider what God had commanded, God’s adversary follows up with a flat denial of the consequences of her disobedience: “...ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). This undermining of God’s Word was successful with Eve, and it has been Satan’s main strategy throughout history. As previously noted, the obstruction of the Scriptures is at the heart of the teaching from those who claim to hear from God, and it opens the doors for the acceptance of their outrageous practices and manifestations, including their goal of taking dominion over the world for Christ.

For a true believer in Christ to accept manifestations such as falling and writhing on the floor, uncontrollable shaking, hysterical laughing, and making various animal sounds as though they were the work of the Holy Spirit would seem to indicate that the person has taken leave of his senses. It is more reasonable to conclude, however, that they have taken leave of *the Scriptures*. Although there may be power from the adversary involved in some of this (“We wrestle not against flesh and blood”), we can be sure that the victim of those manifestations is devoid of the full armor of God, which is available for every believer’s protection (Ephesians 6:10-18), especially the “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” When that is missing in a believer’s life, he or she is terribly vulnerable to the “wiles of the devil” and his minions, who sometimes present themselves as angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Many Christians are aware of the bizarre manifestations and some of the outlandish personalities involved, such as Todd Bentley, the tattooed preacher given to head butting and kneeling followers in the groin (followers who number in the thousands and came to his meetings from all over the world) in order to supposedly impart the power of the Holy Spirit for their healing. Yet few are aware of the

organization, agendas, and networking of those who claim to speak for God. There are countless numbers of ministries, websites, blog sites, and the like, that advance the false doctrines and manifestations of the movement. To name but a few, there is the Elijah List, The International House of Prayer (IHOP), Bethel Church (Redding, CA), Identity Network, Morning Star Ministries, Streams Ministries International, Glory of Zion, City Bible Church (Portland, OR), and the Christian International Apostolic Network. C. Peter Wagner’s International Coalition of Apostles has a membership of hundreds who profess to be apostles manifesting apostolic authority.

Although not all such ministries agree on every fine point, they all believe that God is restoring to the church things that have been lost over the centuries, which they believe have rendered it ineffective. Gibson sums up their goal: “The end-time body of Christ must go on to maturity and restore the apostles and prophets, and these restored ministries must lead the church to a new and final dimension of power and authority not only bringing in the final harvest but establishing the Kingdom of God upon the earth” (p. 28).

According to one of their “modern” prophets, “Ever since the dark ages, God has been restoring Truth to the Church in order to get us back to the place of fullness where we can actually rule and reign in the world rather than be dominated by the very things we are to have victory over” (p.29). Another adds, “Jesus, having won back authority on earth, could now mediate and rule in the affairs of earth. However, Jesus did not stay on the earth to rule it. He ascended to the Father and is seated at His right hand. So who now is responsible to rule and reign in the earth? Believe it or not, the church, which is the body of Christ” (p. 160).

More specifically, they mean that it is to be the new apostles and prophets who are to run the show, and since there is little concern for doctrine learned from the objective Word of God, their rule will major in shooting from the lip, i.e., speaking forth whatever these leaders believe they have heard from God. They see themselves leading an end-time army.

Nearly all of the leaders in this movement teach some form of “Joel’s Army” doctrine, which states that the hope of the church in transforming the world rests solely on *today’s youth*. These young people will be instrumental because they will receive a super-anointing for setting up a theocracy, which they will rule under

God. According to John Crowder, author of *The New Mystics: How to Become Part of the Supernatural Generation*, “Everyone born after abortion’s legalization can consider their birth a personal invitation to take part in this great army.” Gibson gives an example of how this is being implemented: “One young man who spent a significant part of his upbringing in a church steeped in these messages told of a service in which the older members of the congregation gathered to wash the feet of the teens of the church—not to teach them about Christ-like humility and service [John 13:1-15] but to pay homage to them because they were the anointed generation. His heart was broken as he recounted seeing elderly saints who he knew had spent their lives serving Jesus bowing in servitude before young people who were being told that it was their birthright to be the greatest believers in the history of the church” (p. 274).

How seductive might this be for young Christians today? Consider the popularity of Mike Bickle’s International House of Prayer (IHOP), which has drawn tens of thousands of young people to its 24-hour prayer hall and many as well to its university. Lou Engle, an “apostle” in residence at IHOP, draws similar numbers of youth to “The Call,” an annual prayer and fasting event held at major US cities and aimed at bringing about national repentance and revival. Sadly, the zeal exhibited by the young people is misdirected because they lack the discernment necessary to recognize that what they are being taught is either without biblical support or is contrary to Scripture. Much of it seems right to them but as we are told twice in Proverbs, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (14:12; 16:25). Heartbreakingly, this is the *experiential* environment into which their leaders are directing them.

One emotionally seductive doctrine they are taught is called the Bridal Paradigm, which Gibson notes reflects most of IHOP’s programs: “All of the Scripture is seen as the relentless pursuit of the heavenly lovesick groom for the bride of His heart’s desire, or the search of the Father for a bride for His Son, who will be equally yoked to Him in love. This message truly stands the gospel on its ear. No longer is the emphasis on a God who is working for His own glory and displaying His majesty in redeeming a lost and unworthy humanity. Now the story of redemption is about God seeking a suitable mate for His Son. No longer is the cross seen primarily as the place where Jesus makes propitiation for our sin and satisfies the

justice, holiness, and wrath of God, or the place of redemption, where the price is paid for our ransom, which are the pictures the Bible uses. Now the cross is the dowry that is paid for the bride, [p. 193] a statement that the Bible never makes. Dowries (or, more accurately, bride prices) are paid because of the worth of the *bride*. But according to the Scriptures we had no worth. We had nothing to commend us to God. It was all grace” (pp. 166-67). What young adult who has a heart for Jesus but lacks maturity in the Word can resist these erroneous romantic notions applied to Christ?

The false doctrines that are coming forth from those who claim to hear from God range from the foolish to the fraudulent, from the bogus to the blasphemous. This two-part series could touch upon only a few such teachings, but thankfully Keith Gibson’s *Wandering Stars* is available to shine a light upon much of this darkness. Too often when an absurd teaching raises its seemingly silly head, it is dismissed as so much nonsense and not to be taken seriously. In most cases, the relationship to a *major heresy* is missed altogether. For example, the so-called prophecies by the new prophets are nearly always wrong when they can be checked out. Nevertheless, we’re told that a 65-percent accuracy rate is *acceptable* among the new prophets as determined by the new prophets themselves. The absurdity in this is that the new prophets claim to be working at a higher level of anointing than the prophets of old, yet those supposedly inferior old prophets were to be *stoned* if their accuracy dropped below 100 percent!

The even more critical issue is the new prophets’ rationale to cover their lack of accuracy: it is the heresy of *open theism*. This is a doctrine that declares that “God can’t foreknow the good or bad decisions of the people He creates until He creates these people and they, in turn, create their decisions.” So now, prophecy for the modern prophets is little more than a godly guess, and the omniscience of God has been trashed along with some of His other attributes. Gibson underscores the result of these erroneous beliefs: “God does not possess exhaustive foreknowledge of the actions of His creatures because these actions have not been performed; therefore, there is nothing for God to know. Thus God is not *omniscient* in the sense that the church has historically defined omniscience. God is not *immutable* because He grows in His knowledge of His creatures as they act out their free choice and as He adapts to these choices. God is more *omnicompetent* than *omnipotent*. God is not completely beyond time. He learns by

watching the actions of His creation” (p. 134). That is not the God of the Bible.

The false teachings of those who claim to hear from God, the so-called new apostles and prophets, have attracted millions into unwittingly contributing to their anti-biblical and therefore antichrist agendas. All of it turns biblical spiritual warfare upside down. Their methods for achieving dominion and rule over the world include Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare (see *The New Spiritual Warfare Strategies* Parts 1 & 2 TBC 5/97, 6/97) using techniques of “taking cities for Christ” through spirit mapping, binding territorial spirits, prayer-walking, prayer journeys, prayer expeditions, national repentance, deliverance from generational sins, mysticism, and contemplative prayer, to name but a few.

The number of those Christians who believe and practice such things is alarming. For the most part they are among the Pentecostals and Charismatics. But in their goals they are certainly not alone. The agenda of turning the world into the Kingdom of Christ before His return—or in order for Him to return and rule—is compatible in many ways with more conservative branches of Christianity that hold to amillennialism, or Christian reconstructionism, or post-millennialism, or national restorationism, or those who subscribe to a form of “good-works salvation” by solving the world’s problems of hunger, disease, poverty, injustice, and environmental problems using ecumenical cooperation (see “Is Your Eschatology Showing?” TBC 10/11). The numbers then become staggering. These variations of “kingdom building” prior to the return of Jesus will add to the development of the next kingdom to come, according to the timeline presented clearly in Scripture: the kingdom of the Antichrist.

The bad news in all of this is that many who have been seduced into this deception are our brothers and sisters in Christ; the good news is that their eyes can be opened to the temporal delusion that has taken them captive. Scripture declares that the apostasy will increase in the last days and gives no indication of worldwide revival. Nevertheless, God’s Word does give us our marching orders for a continuing *rescue operation*: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26). TBC

Quotable

The closer a believer walks with God, the more he will realize the incurable corruption of his Adamic nature.

—H. A. Ironside,
Unless You Repent

Q&A

QUESTION: A dear friend of mine, on fire for Jesus, is following John Crowder. I'm concerned about the wording of his ministry. His teachings are called "mystical school." I just wonder if you know about him and what you think.

RESPONSE: John Crowder is part of the movement known as the New Apostolic Reformation, which we've addressed in past issues and this current newsletter. Much of what he teaches is unbiblical.

He follows the example of Benny Hinn, who revealed that he periodically visits Aimee Semple McPherson's and Kathryn Kuhlman's graves to partake of their "anointing": "Friday I am gonna go and visit Kathryn Kuhlman's tomb. It's close by Aimee's in Forest Lawn Cemetery. I've been there once already and every so often I like to go and pay my respects 'cause this great woman of God has touched my life. And that grave, uh, where she's buried is closed, they built walls around it. You can't get in without a key and I'm one of the very few people who can get in. But I'll never forget when I saw Aimee's tomb....I actually, I—I, hear this, I trembled when I visited Aimee's tomb. I was shaking all over. God's power came all over me.... I believe the anointing has lingered over Aimee's body....It's amazing. I've heard of people healed when they visited that tomb" (Benny Hinn sermon, "Double Portion Anointing," Part #3, Orlando Christian Center, Orlando, Fla., April 7, 1991. From the series, Holy Ghost Invasion. TV#309).

John Crowder says much the same thing, and it is not difficult to find video footage of him and his students at the graves of charismatic superstars such as Alexander Dowie (Scottish evangelist and faith healer) and Maria B. Woodworth-Etter (pentecostal evangelist and healer, known for trances occurring during her services). "We've just come to the grave today to release to you an impartation of healing revival, of city building, restoration city-taking anointing, master-building apostolic anointing, and so we just *rip it right out of the ground, we just suck it right off his dead bones, in Jesus name*, and loose it to you, a healing-revival-glory-master-building-apostolic anointing glory [emphasis added]." Crowder is advocating necromancy, or

contact with the dead—something expressly forbidden by Scripture (Lv 19:31; Dt 18:9-12, 15; 1 Sm 28; 1 Chr 10:13-14; Is 8:19, etc.).

If a person desires spiritual communication with someone wiser than he, should he not consider the biblical promise of our Lord, who has promised never to leave us nor forsake us? James tells us that "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not..." (Ja 1:5). The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews urges us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

Crowder's teaching is riddled with drug references, such as "Toking the Ghost" (the title of a CD he produced), which compares the fullness of the Spirit to being stoned on drugs. The first track on the CD "Holy Ghost Hits" has the sounds of a "bong," or water pipe, bubbling as a background to a recitation of a portion of the 23rd Psalm.

Crowder attempts to explain the drug references by saying, "even atheistic people on the street understand that when we get 'high on Jesus,' we are not endorsing drugs. In fact, the opposite is true! The exact reason we use 'addiction' terminology in relation to God is to get people free from drugs through the power of the cross" (http://www.thenewmystics.com/Articles/1000040967/Home_Page_of/Articles/Teachings/Toking_the_Ghost.aspx). At best, Crowder's references are confusing: "'Get whacked, stay whacked, never go back!' 'We're huffin' olive wood from the garden of Gethsemane,' he tells an interviewer in Israel. 'And we been snortin' some dust from the tomb of our Lord and Savior. We been smokin' Baby Jesus'" (<http://www.wittenburgdoor.com/blogs/bloom/2008-05-16.html>).

Drug references aside, Crowder's embrace of mysticism raises further concerns. "Toking the Ghost's" liner notes inform us that excerpts have been taken from Brother Lawrence, the Vulgate, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and various Bible translations, including *The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles*. As Crowder notes concerning his Mystical Schools, "Our Mystical School is an intensive, three-day course with in-depth instruction, activation and hands-on impartation with John Crowder. These deeper courses in contemplative, supernatural Christianity are geared for a smaller group environment, with limited registration, to foster an atmosphere of intimacy, personal prophecy and vigorous impartation. There will be ample time for questions and answers, with sessions running 6-8 hours each day and mornings free for prayer, soaking and reflection. In these courses you will: Operate

in Trances, Raptures & Ecstatic Prayer, Experience Physical Phenomena of Mysticism, Get Activated in Creative Miracles, Signs & Wonders, Understand Your Access to New Creation Realities, Be Activated in the Seer Realm, Prophecy, Spirit Travel..." and similar claims.

Unfortunately, his "New Creation Realities" are not biblical realities. They are satanic deceptions. These are just a few of the issues that should be a concern to us who love His word.

QUESTION: Can you sometime soon address the content of the new Bill O'Reilly book entitled *Killing Jesus*? I was furious when he stated that the Bible was simply an allegory and that his book would shock and surprise us with what he found.

RESPONSE: We shouldn't be surprised that O'Reilly would say these things. He is a cradle Catholic who has made it clear that he leans toward universalism. Although he recognizes the need for a hell for extreme sinners such as Hitler or Stalin, others, such as Mahatma Gandhi, in O'Reilly's opinion, have done enough good to qualify for heaven.

In short, he believes in a graduated system of "works salvation." His dismissal of the Bible as allegory is to be expected. Without a sufficient, authoritative Bible, Mr. O'Reilly's man-centered religion is free to draw its own conclusions, unfettered by the intrusions of a righteous God, who declared Scripture to be His perfect Word.

O'Reilly, whose book *Killing Jesus* will be published in September 2013, revealed his bias against Scripture when he interviewed Roma Downey and Mark Burnett about their mini-series, *The Bible*. This program, produced by mind science practitioners Downey and Burnett, is bad enough, but during the interview, O'Reilly went even further. After insisting that much of the Bible is allegorical, he went on to promote his upcoming book, noting that "his job was to 'cut through the contradictions' that were found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John 'and to try to give a narrative of what actually happened to Jesus.'"

One critic of those remarks was informed that she was "entitled to her opinion" but not "entitled to impugn...my Christian status." O'Reilly said "there are millions of Christians who don't take parts of the Bible literally," and concluded, "If you want to believe that Jonah was swallowed by the whale...don't demand that I believe it, too" (<http://truthmatters-blog.wordpress.com/2013/02/28/dear-bill-oreilly-please-quit-teaching-the-bible/>). Regardless of the failure of "scientists" (1 Tm 6:20), O'Reilly's position is not objective but entirely subjective—and is perfectly conformed to his own judgment.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS**Knowing God**

QUESTION: I would like to know God, and I have asked Him to reveal Himself to me, but nothing happens. No lights have gone on, no messages in the sky, no sudden revelation. It seems to me that if God really existed, He would want us to believe in Him, and He would therefore do something tangible to let us know He exists. Is it wrong to ask for *some unmistakable evidence* of God's existence?

RESPONSE: No, and the evidence is all around you—more than you need. The kind of evidence you seem to be hoping for, however, wouldn't help at all. Suppose some message with your name in it suddenly appeared in the sky. How would you know that God put it there? Suppose right now you heard an audible voice saying loudly, "I am God! Worship me!" What would that tell you about God—and how would you know He had actually spoken?

In fact, God *has* spoken to you. The design of the universe is a message from God telling you of His existence as Creator and of His infinite wisdom and power. Those things that you value most highly and that you know in your heart make life worthwhile—love, joy, peace, moral purity, goodness, truthfulness, justice, kindness—tell you of God's character. Your conscience tells you that you are morally accountable to God, that you have violated His laws and have fallen short of His perfect standard. Your conscience also tells you that there is no way you can make up for having broken God's laws. You can't buy Him off with sacrifice, prayers, good deeds, or ritual.

Suppose you got a speeding ticket. Would you waste your time telling the judge that you've driven that stretch of highway *within* the speed limit more often than *above* it? Would he let you off under the theory that your "good deeds outweigh the bad"? You know that won't work with an earthly judge, and it certainly won't work with God.

Would you tell him that if he lets you off this time you will never break the law again? You know what the judge would say: "If you never break the law again, you're only doing what the law requires. You get no *extra* credit for that. It doesn't make up for having broken the law in the past. The penalty will have to be paid as the law prescribes it." You know it's the same way with God.

The Witness of Conscience

Your conscience tells you that the only way you could possibly escape the severe penalty that God's infinite justice must demand for having broken His laws would be if He forgives you. And you know He can't just wipe the slate clean for no reason. For one thing, that would hardly encourage you to improve your behavior. Furthermore, it would violate His own law. He must have some way of paying the penalty Himself—a penalty you can't pay—so that you can be forgiven by His grace.

You don't know what that method may be, but you know that a God of perfect love and perfect justice would somehow provide it. If there is an explanation of this good news, it would surely be in the Bible. In fact, God has explained it all in those pages. Have you seriously studied the Bible and checked out the evidence that shows it is God's infallible Word?

There is more than sufficient historic, archaeological, and scientific evidence to prove that the Bible is God's infallible Word. But you don't really need it. That kind of proof is like icing on the cake. If you just read the Bible with an open heart and mind, you will know that God is speaking to your heart as only He can speak.

I recommend that you begin with the Gospel of John and continue through Acts and Romans, then read those three books again. God has promised in His Word: "Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). That is a promise you can count on! Seek God with all your heart and put Him to the test by looking in the Bible for the revelation of Himself!

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 47-49) by DAVE HUNT

The Bible According to Hollywood

T.A. McMahon

Hollywood has a long history of making Bible-based movies, including epics by Cecil B. DeMille and John Huston; Italian directors Pasolini, Rossellini, and Zeffirelli; American Martin Scorsese, and Australian Mel Gibson. Broadway musicals have also been made into “biblical” movies and videos such as *Jesus Christ, Superstar* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Smaller productions abound including the Visual Bible’s *Matthew*, *Acts*, and *The Gospel of John*, the TV presentation *Judas*, Campus Crusade’s *The Jesus Project*, and Johnny Cash’s *The Gospel Road*. Then there are upcoming movie epics with proven box-office stars. *Noah*, for example, features Russell Crowe and Anthony Hopkins, and there are other offerings planned by two major studios. Warner Bros. and 20th Century Fox are planning productions on the life of Moses, with Steven Spielberg being sought to direct one of them. Randall Wallace (*Braveheart*, *Secretariat*) will direct the upcoming film version of the *New York Times* bestseller *Heaven Is for Real* (see May 2011 feature article), which, although not a biblical story, claims to give the first-hand experiences of a young boy who visited heaven.

It seems that Hollywood has been attracted to the Bible more than ever, thanks in large part to the financial success of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*. The History Channel’s recent 10-hour miniseries titled *The Bible* did nothing to dampen the ongoing enthusiasm as it broke viewer records, making it “the most-watched cable entertainment telecast of the year.” It played to more than 13 million viewers. Many Christians might conclude that much of the interest from secular entertainment companies is reason to rejoice. Of course, that would prove to be a hasty conclusion, especially for those who would call themselves *biblical* Christians.

Let’s start with a definition of true biblical Christians. They would be individuals who regard the Bible as God’s direct communication to mankind. They believe that Peter’s words were inspired of the Holy Spirit when he wrote, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). They believe that all the words were without error as they were given to and written down by the writers of Scripture. Both Matthew and Luke proclaimed that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word...of God”

(Luke 4:4; Matthew 4:4). Paul commended the Thessalonians for receiving the “word of God,” which they had been taught, “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Jesus prayed to the Father that His disciples be set apart by God’s “truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Luke writes to his friend Theophilus that he had “perfect understanding” in all that he wrote and that Theophilus could receive them with confidence: “That thou mightest know the *certainty* of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (Luke 1:1-4). The point of all those verses (and many more) is that they are a support for a biblical Christian who believes in the supernatural accuracy of the Scriptures.

For those who aren’t on that page, let’s reason together. There are three possibilities regarding the sources of information found in the Bible: 1) The words came directly from God; or 2) They came from men, that is, the words are based upon man’s speculations, opinions, and guesses about God; or 3) The words in the Bible are a mixture of 1 and 2. Biblical accuracy would suffer greatly under possibilities 2 and 3 but not under 1, the belief that the Scriptures came directly from God.

God’s claimed attributes of omnipotence and omniscience support His ability to produce a book that is without error—that is, if the claim is true. We believe that the claims of God in the Scriptures are indeed true and that they are supported by the amazingly detailed prophecies that constitute nearly 30 percent of the Bible (see *TBC* 11/01; 6/09; 7/09; Q&A 3/04, etc.). Prophecy is the astounding device that God uses to verify that He alone is God and that He alone knows the future. In numerous chapters of the Book of Isaiah, God declares His sovereignty, challenging the worshipers of the idols and false gods of the pagans to ask their gods to produce accurately fulfilled prophecies. They can’t—although down through history there have been continual bogus attempts (fortune tellers, crystal ball gazers, wizards, astrologers, psychics, channelers, etc.) to prove that the God of the Bible has made a false claim regarding His uniqueness.

If the Bible is of any value to mankind whatsoever, it *must* be accurate. Those who have no problem with a bible that includes the speculations and opinions of men, even in part, are putting their faith in something with contributions by fallen, finite people rather than the words of an infinite, righteous, and holy God.

Preferences for various Bible translations are issues of controversy among many Christians and are beyond the scope of this article, except in principle. In terms

of scriptural accuracy, however, few would disagree that a *literal translation* would be the most objective and therefore the most accurate. Literal versions rely on prayerful biblical scholarship familiar with the most accurate data in translating the Hebrew and Greek words into English (for English Bibles). Furthermore, they are far less subjective, meaning they do not involve the personal biases of what men *think* a verse *should* say. The most popular Bibles today lean to the subjective. These would include *dynamic equivalent* versions, which feature the personal opinions of a translation committee as to what the sense of a verse is rather than a literal translation of the terms. More subjective yet are *paraphrase* versions—those that are based upon the ideas of an individual in declaring what a verse says and means. As one can clearly see, in the slide from a literal translation to a paraphrase version, the movement is from the *objective* to the personally *subjective*, and from God’s words to man’s suggestions, opinions, and guesses.

If you need an example of the kind of damage that the subjective departure from God’s words has caused, you need only to read Psalm 1:1 in *The Message* (*How well God must like you—you don’t hang out at Sin Saloon, you don’t slink along Dead-End Road, you don’t go to Smart-Mouth College*) to recognize that what Eugene Peterson wrote could never fit with the phrases, “Thus saith the Lord,” and “The word of the Lord came to me,” which occur thousands of times throughout the Bible. Those phrases would seem ludicrous when applied to *The Message*, which can only say, “Thus saith Eugene Peterson.”

Considering the blasphemy (“blasphemy” meaning a distortion of the character of God and His Word) of *The Message*, one might think that’s as bad as it could get in terms of inaccurate Bible versions. Yes and no. It may be the worst thus far (it’s used by more than 10 million evangelicals), but in terms of overall adverse influence, no written version’s effects can compare to the damage done to the Bible when its content is translated to the silver screen or television. Those numbers of viewers are incalculable, and the effect has been devastating beyond measure. Hopefully, most who are reading this are getting the picture (pun intended). If not, I recommend *Showtime for the Sheep?* (see resource pages), which gives many more reasons why much harm is done when attempting to translate the Bible visually. This brief article will focus primarily on the necessity of biblical accuracy.

QUESTION: *How does a biblical movie satisfy the necessity of biblical accuracy?*

ANSWER: It doesn't, and it can't—and the reasons are many. Here's a short list:

- 1) A movie takes what God has directly communicated in the Scriptures and makes the visual translation of what He said dependent upon what is in the minds and the craft of a film production crew (writers, director, cameramen, art director, actors, and a host of others).
 - 2) Other constraints that determine what shows up on the screen have to do with budget, locations, weather, and the inevitable "Murphy's law" of filmmaking, which states, "If anything can go wrong, it will." Those are hardly "let's be true to the Scriptures" considerations.
 - 3) Any movie must begin with a screenplay. The Bible cannot be translated into a biblically accurate movie because nearly all movies need dialogue, which the Bible provides only in limited situations. Hence, the screenwriter (whether he is a believer or not) has to supply the dialogue to maintain story continuity, which means that he must add to the Scriptures, thus including false information. "Adding to the Scriptures" is forbidden by God's Word (Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). A few such productions try to avoid some of the translation problems by incorporating only those words that are found in a particular Bible version. This is greatly misleading because it gives the false impression that the production is more accurate. More accurate than what? A movie is, first and foremost, a visual medium. When a person exits a theater after watching a powerful movie, I can almost guarantee that it will be the images that he will leave with, not the words.
 - 4) "Biblical" movies are an assemblage of false images and scenes. Not one frame is accurate. Yet *The Passion of the Christ* was lauded by many highly regarded evangelical leaders as "the most accurate biblical movie yet." Yet?—as if the film medium were capable of a progressive movement toward truth? No! Suppose that I were to watch a video by someone who claims that he has produced a documentary featuring my family. After watching the video, I tell him that he has gotten a few things right but that everything else is wrong: yes, my wife's name is Peggy; no, she doesn't weigh 300 pounds. Yes, I have five children; no, they are not all girls. Yes, my kids are excellent athletes; no, they are not on the synchronized swimming team.
- I've been told all too often that my concern for accuracy misses the fact that God can "use" these movies. Some have said, "Admittedly there are problems, but... but...the Lord can use a movie to get

people interested in reading the Bible," which, by the way, was a stated goal of the History Channel's *The Bible*. Should I likewise conclude that the inaccurate documentary of "my family" might get some people interested in knowing my real family? Would they be disappointed that my kids are all very good runners but that my three sons are not huge fans of the "sport" of synchronized swimming? What happens when the multimillions who might be motivated to read the Bible because of all the Hollywood drama, effects, dialogue, and compelling music realize that it's not in the "book version"?

A similar situation occurred when the *Bibleman* (a character playing off the popularity of super heroes Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Iron Man, etc.) video series and tour, through the "wisdom" of marketing, attempted to get pre-teens excited to read the Bible. They found that if the kids even bothered to look at the Bible at all, they were disappointed at not finding the fleshly excitement in the written Word that they had loved in the video.

- 5) There are many more aspects unique to the medium of film that work against the translation of the Bible into that means of communication. Through this art form, one is attempting to convince the audience that what they are seeing is believable. Shooting a scene in the place where the actual biblical event took place may help its accuracy, but often, if that location doesn't quite satisfy what the film director believes an audience will accept, then it's "on to a more 'believable' location." For example, *The Passion of the Christ*, featuring Christ's crucifixion in Israel, was shot mostly in Italy.
- 6) This point may be the most serious error. Those who have played the character of Jesus in Bible-based movies from the last century on have all portrayed false Christs. Many spoke words that Jesus never spoke and misrepresented the character of the biblical Jesus. In a made-for-TV movie, as one example, Judas questions the Jesus character regarding his actions in clearing the moneychangers out of the Temple. Jesus' reply was that he blew it. This is a misrepresentation of the perfect, sinless God/Man. Yet, tragically, that—along with all the other misrepresentations of Jesus—are the only representations that millions upon millions around the world may ever see or hear about the One who came to save them from their sins.
- 7) Finally, the problem isn't only for the lost worldwide, but it is also a stumbling block for many evangelical Christians, even those with a reasonable amount of biblical

discernment. I spoke at a conference about a year after *The Passion of the Christ* had its theatrical release. As I sat chatting with a group of young adult believers, Mel Gibson's movie somehow became the topic of our conversation. I listened, somewhat uncomfortably, to their glowing praises of the film and wondered how I might make an important point without seeming to be "preaching" to them. Then the thought came to me, *Why not give these somewhat biblically literate Christians a Bible quiz of sorts?* Having seen the movie a couple of times and written a book on the subject, it was easy for me to describe eight scenes in detail. The quiz part was, "Tell me which of the scenes are found in the Bible and which are not." The consensus of the group was that five were biblical and three were not. To their shock, they only got three correct; all eight were either from Mel Gibson's movie-making mind or the mystical nun's book (*The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*) to which Gibson had looked for more content in creating his script. I have great concern for our upcoming visual generation.

Ignorance of the visual medium with regard to so-called biblical productions is a serious problem among evangelicals of all generations. Without the support of evangelicals, whose churches bought out theatres so that their sheep and guests could view the film, Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* would have been a box-office flop. In *Showtime for the Sheep?*, I could have filled nine pages with endorsements from evangelical leaders for this production that Gibson described to *Christianity Today* as "his very Marian movie."

Yet the lack of discernment continues to abound. Here is a list of some of the advisors/endorsers for the History Channel's *The Bible*, most of whom were thrilled with the series' "biblical accuracy" or "bringing the Bible to life": Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, Nicky Gumbel, Luis Palau, Tony Campolo, Erwin McManus, T. D. Jakes, Leith Anderson of the National Association of Evangelicals, and Jim Daly of Focus on the Family (details of their endorsements, as well as more endorsers can be found at <http://www.outreach.com/the-bible/about.aspx>).

As overwhelming as this lack of discernment may seem in the church today, it has only just begun as Hollywood continues with its mistranslation of the Bible for Christians. Pray that the Lord's people will take to heart His words of warning: "Take heed that no man deceive you." Only the habit of daily reading God's Word and living it out will equip us with the discernment necessary to avoid being deceived. **TBC**

Quotable

“Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men” (Mark 8:33). What was it that so roused our Lord? The very snare to which we are all so exposed: the desire of saving self; the preference of an easy path to the cross. Is it not true that we naturally like to escape trial, shame, and rejection; that we shrink from the suffering which doing God’s will, in such a world as this, must ever entail; that we prefer to have a quiet, respectable path in the earth—in short, the best of both worlds? How easily one may be ensnared into this! Peter could not understand why the Messiah should go through all this path of sorrow. Had we been there, we might have said or thought yet worse. Peter’s remonstrance was not without strong human affection. He heartily loved the Savior too. But, unknown to himself, there was the unjudged spirit of the world.

—William Kelly,
quoted in William MacDonald’s,
The Believer’s Bible Commentary

Q&A

QUESTION: It’s a shame that if I accept a mid-tribulation (pre-wrath) position, I’m said to have accepted a heretical position and my fundamentalist Baptist brethren will separate from me....I think the pre-trib [supporters] have pulled scriptures out of context to stitch their position together....If the Rapture is a secret event that is imminent, why would God say to “watch”? We must be looking for more than the signs and seasons.

RESPONSE: Our position should never be based upon who is for or against a teaching. The Scriptures instruct us to “rightly [divide] the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15). We know that each verse must be understood in its place and in harmony with the rest of Scripture. As we labor toward that end, we will become “fully persuaded in [our] own mind” (Rom 14:5).

Being fully persuaded—there is where we must stand. Consequently, whether or not your IFB brothers will separate from you is not by itself proof for the truth or error of what you believe. *What do the Scriptures say?* The believer in a pre-wrath or post-trib position will certainly not argue with the Lord on the way up: “Wait, wait, this isn’t how I understood the Scriptures!”

In truth, many of those abandoning the pre-trib position are also abandoning pre-millennialism entirely, choosing instead such positions as preterism, amillennialism, or post-millennialism. From there, the declension spreads to replacement theology and, in

extreme cases, anti-Semitism.

Why would God tell us to “watch”? The Scriptures from the beginning to the end enjoin the Lord’s people to watchfulness. Jesus admonishes His followers: “If the good-man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up” (Mt 24:43). Mark 13 parallels Matthew 24 and concludes with Jesus saying, “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mk 13:35-37). There is a purifying effect that is understood in the doctrine of the pre-trib Rapture. Christ could return *at any time!* “When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 Jn 3:2-3). It’s safe to conclude that the Lord desires us to be watching, regardless of what our personal theology may be.

Finally, we need to stand in the light that God has given us in the Bible. That is why the Lord urges a frequent and diligent reading of and meditating upon Scripture. Part of the controversy generated by eschatology is due to the fact that certain things haven’t happened yet. Ultimately, what will happen will be the will of the Lord, regardless of our view or understanding. Further, the book of Revelation does contain both figurative and literal things. No wonder the Lord told us to “rightly divide” (or put each piece in its proper place) “the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15).

QUESTION: I never quite understood your objection to Calvinism [but] in the last year I have been beaten up pretty badly by many covenant theology [another aspect of Reformed doctrine] people and have begun to reflect on the question of whether their doctrine is somehow toxic and produces that antagonism, or if people with toxic personalities are attracted to the doctrine. I am coming to the conclusion that the covenant doctrine places an emphasis on the Christian (both individually and collectively) that elevates our works such that the Spirit is quenched and the flesh is elevated. I see this producing the works of the flesh listed in Galatians. I see this path (Galatians) as leading to the destination defined by the Pharisees. I would be interested if you could share with me your views on this subject.

RESPONSE: Our objections to Calvinism are primarily biblical, but we have experienced reactions that were hardly Christian from many Calvinists to articles that we have

written and books by Dave Hunt on the subject. Such hostile responses have not gone unnoticed by Calvinists themselves. A number of commentators have spoken of the “intellectual” appeal (i.e. “pride”) that is too often seen in prominent Calvinists. Calvinism, according to one promoter of Reformed teaching, draws followers “Because it possesses an intellectual appeal and spiritual depth over-against a reigning Christian anti-intellectualism and general evangelical superficiality” (<http://modernmarch.com/2011/05/13/david-naugle-on-the-appeal-of-calvinism-to-the-younger-generation/>).

Calvinist John Piper wrote, “The intellectual appeal of the system of Calvinism draws a certain kind of intellectual person, and that type of person doesn’t tend to be the most warm, fuzzy, and tender. Therefore this type of person has a greater danger of being hostile, gruff, abrupt, insensitive or intellectualistic....It’s a sad and terrible thing that that’s the case. Some of this type aren’t even Christians, I think. You can embrace a system of theology and not even be born again” (Piper, “Why Are Calvinists So Negative?”, Desiring God Blog, 5/21/2008).

Another Calvinist, Greg Dutcher, states, “I love the doctrines of grace with all my heart, and I think they are pride-shattering, humbling, and love-producing doctrines. But I think there is an attractiveness about them to some people, in large matter, because of their intellectual rigor. They are powerfully coherent doctrines, and certain kinds of minds are drawn to that. And those kinds of minds tend to be argumentative.” (*Killing Calvinism: How to Destroy a Perfectly Good Theology from the Inside* [Cruciform Press, June 2012], p. 88)

It’s too easy to become infatuated with an “ism” rather than drawing closer to Christ through His Word. The Apostle Paul reminds us that the Lord, “also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor 3:6). He isn’t speaking of the Old Testament law but is saying that it’s possible to preach the New Testament truth in a spiritless manner that will ultimately bring death to the hearers.

It has been said, “Don’t ask the Lord to use you. Rather ask Him to make you usable.” He doesn’t waste His efforts. If the Lord instructs us to minister with “meekness” (2 Tm 2:24-26), we must do so, believing that He will perhaps change those ministered to, and if not, we will have been faithful to the Word. Do we believe Him or do we reach for the rod out of human habit and in disobedience to the Word of God?

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom 14:19). We can’t possibly hope to edify sheep that have been taught by experience to run from us.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Must I Believe God Exists Before I Seek Him?

QUESTION: In my daily Bible reading, I came across a verse that really puzzles me: “Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Rather than God revealing Himself to a seeking heart, it sounds as though one must already believe in God before seeking Him. How can that be the case?

RESPONSE: Would someone seek God if he didn’t already believe He existed? It would be a waste of time. In fact, everyone, including you, knows that God exists.

The true story is told of a London street preacher who announced to his audience that every atheist was a fool because the Bible said so. A well-known atheist in the crowd shouted back at him that it was a slanderous insult, which he took personally, and that he would sue the preacher for damages. The preacher responded, “It’s not slander to tell the truth.”

The atheist countered, “And it’s not truth unless you can prove it! You’ll have to prove in court that I’m a fool, or I’ll take every pound you’ve got!”

“I don’t have to go to court to prove it,” said the preacher calmly. “You say you’re an atheist?”

“Yes, and not just a casual one. I’ve spent my life proving God doesn’t exist. It’s a pernicious myth!”

“Spent your life proving God doesn’t exist, have you?” replied the preacher. “Tell me this: if a man who spends his life fighting against something that doesn’t exist isn’t a fool, who is?”

Likewise, one would have to be a fool to spend any time at all seeking to know a God without being convinced that He exists. God expects every person, as the first step in knowing Him, to admit the obvious fact that He exists. Furthermore, God expects each person coming to Him to have a proper concept of who He is. He won’t honor prayers to an idol or to some “force” or “higher power.” Each person is accountable on the basis of the evidence to come to a proper understanding of God and not to be seeking some false god. God also requires that those who come to Him truly believe that He is not a God of caprice or trickery but a God who “rewards those who diligently seek Him.”

What is it that any sincere seeker should already have concluded about the God he wants to know? Reason and evidence dictate the following: To create the universe, God must be all-powerful (omnipotent) and all-knowing (omniscient) and in touch with every part of the universe at once (omnipresent). He would have to be at least as personal a Being as we are in order to create us. He would need to perfectly embody all that we recognize as the highest qualities to which mankind could aspire—love, truth, justice, patience, kindness, compassion, etc.—or there would be no explanation for our admiration of such attributes. Furthermore, He would have to know the future consequences of every action in His universe. Otherwise, He could make some terrible blunders. And of course He must have existed eternally as God. He certainly couldn’t have evolved or developed out of something or someone that was less than God.

The true God must also be able to create everything out of *nothing*

and not just build or manufacture His universe out of materials already available. Not energy, not matter, not gravity or electricity, but *God alone* must be self-existent in order to be the cause of all. Finally, He must be perfectly good and just, or there would be no explanation for the common recognition of right and wrong written in the conscience of all mankind all over this earth. These are the minimum qualifications of the true God, without which we couldn’t trust and worship and love Him.

Although we can understand the necessity of the above abilities, it is also completely beyond our capacity to comprehend such a Being: a God who has *always* existed and thus is without beginning or end; who not only created everything out of nothing but in order not to lose control of His creation must know where every subatomic particle in every atom ever was or ever will be; who must also know what every person who ever lived or ever will live has ever thought or ever will think or say or do, etc. Obviously, such a God is beyond our ability to fully comprehend.

At the same time that God is beyond our comprehension, however, we have seen that both reason and evidence demand such a God as the only explanation for our own existence and that of the universe around us. To deny this God, though He is incomprehensible, would fly in the face of reason and common sense. It is both impossible and unreasonable for there to have been a time when nothing existed and to have everything, including God, somehow arise out of that void of nothingness. It is totally unreasonable to suggest that life and intelligence sprang unaided from dead, empty space and thereafter evolved by chance.

Having come to these conclusions about God on the basis of the evidence all around him and in his own conscience, the seeker is now in a position to cry out to this true God to reveal Himself. The precise steps and circumstances and inner convictions through which God will reveal Himself vary with each individual. It is through His Word, however, that the fullest and clearest revelation of God comes. And in this Word, God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, who declared, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus also said, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). Whoever wants to know God must get to know Jesus. He is revealed in God’s Word, and He reveals Himself to those who open their hearts to Him. As He said, “Behold, I stand at the door [of every human heart] and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him” (Revelation 3:20).

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 49-52) by DAVE HUNT

The Ultimate Falsehood

Dave Hunt

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

— 1 JOHN 2:18

Somewhere at this very moment on Planet Earth, the Antichrist is almost certainly alive—biding his time, awaiting his cue. Banal sensationalism? Far from it! That likelihood is based upon a sober evaluation of current events in relation to Bible prophecy. Already a mature man, the Antichrist is perhaps active in politics and might even be an admired world leader. Or he could be the head of a multinational corporation, a little-known international banker of great wealth and behind-the-scenes influence, a sports hero—or he might arise suddenly from total anonymity. Somewhere he is being meticulously groomed, though as yet he probably has no more inkling than do those who encounter him daily of the ultimate role for which Satan is preparing him and will, one momentous day, utterly possess him.

Whoever and wherever he is, one passion rules this remarkable man—a lust for power. Even so, benevolence, prudence, integrity, and principle mark his circumspect public behavior. It may be that at this point in his life he is still convinced that his motives are altogether pure and unselfish.

Antichrist! The media has so conditioned our minds that the very word instantly conjures up the image of a sinister man who exudes evil from every pore. But Hollywood caricatures play into the hands of the real Antichrist, since no suspicion will rest upon this one whose admirable qualities so well conceal his dark designs. When the time has come for his surprising world takeover, precipitated by an unprecedented global crisis, he will be hailed as the world's savior—and so he will appear to be.

The Apostle Paul dispels popular misconceptions and gives us the awesome facts: “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness...” (2 Corinthians 11:14,15). We may be certain that Antichrist will appear as the purest “angel of light” that Satan can produce.

Society has been undergoing a step-by-step preparation for the advent

of Satan's messiah, and in our moment of history has at last produced a generation so perverted that it will actually mistake the Antichrist for Christ. In the name of freedom and right of choice, our most blessed of nations has condemned its unborn to the cruelest of deaths, has made a mockery of the sanctity of marriage, entertains itself with films and music centered on themes of violence, Satanism, and sexual perversions, has all but destroyed millions of its youth with drugs, and has created an urban war zone and a poisoned planet. Evil will soon be ripe for harvest.

Jesus warned that *many* would come claiming to be the Christ. These numerous lesser antichrists who were already in the world, as the Apostle John explained in 1 John 2:18, would prepare the way for the real Antichrist who would appear in the last of the “last days.” Behold the ultimate deception: Satan posing as God, Antichrist masquerading as the true Christ, and not just the world but an apostate church as well totally taken in by the bold fraud. Instead of a frontal assault on Christianity, the evil one will pervert the church *from within* by posing as its founder. He will cunningly misrepresent Christ while pretending to *be* Christ. And by that process of substitution, he will undermine and pervert all that Christ truly is. Anything less than such a diabolically malevolent strategy would be unworthy of Satan's foul genius.

This is an altogether different scenario from that envisioned by most people. If they believe in a literal Antichrist at all, they presume he will be an obviously evil ogre whom any child would immediately recognize. In fact, however, he will be the closest counterfeit of Christ that Satan can produce. Completely deceived by this brazen masquerade, the world will hail him as its deliverer.

And right there is where the plot thickens. If the Antichrist will indeed pretend to be the Christ, then his followers must be “Christians”! The church of that day will, with scarcely a dissenting voice, hail him as its leader.

Such perversion and deception are beyond the ability of the imagination to conceive. It is certainly not what the average person has been led to believe. Yet this is the picture which the Bible presents and to which current events ever more clearly seem to point.

It becomes immediately apparent that such an unthinkable scenario requires certain preconditions to make it credible.

First of all, the apostate church in the last days must become so corrupted that it actually opposes what Christ taught while at the same time insisting that it is faithful to Him. Satan's lie will be honored as God's truth—without the church leaders who deceive, and those who are deceived, even knowing that such a metamorphosis has taken place. Moreover, the preparation for the great delusion must have been well in process from within the “last days” church itself even before the Antichrist appears.

Could Paul have meant anything less when he warned, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [apostasy, turning from the faith] first, and [then] that man of sin [the Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3)? In that day, sound doctrine will be despised (2 Timothy 4:1-4). For many people, objective truth will have been replaced by feelings and experience. For others, intellectualism and skepticism will have justified what will seem to be a very reasonable improvement upon “Christianity.”

Jesus himself, who raised the question whether there would be any faith whatsoever on the earth when He returned (Luke 18:8), used language similar to Paul's. When His disciples asked Him what would characterize the last days just prior to His return, Jesus explained that it would be a time of the greatest religious deception the world had seen to that point, or would ever see again. He prefaced His remarks with this solemn warning: “Take heed that no man *deceive you*” (Matthew 24:4; cf. 5,11,24).

Those who truly know the Lord and heed such warnings will not succumb to the spirit of the last days. Like God, who weeps over a rebellious world and delays His judgment to give men time to repent, they will have a passion to bring His truth to the world. Everyone who loves God more than this world, and to whom His evaluation of one's life means more than the fickle opinions of men, will be kept from the delusion that will sweep the world. Those who fear God and keep His Word have no fear of what others may think or say or do to them, because they fear God with deep reverence.

The world must be prepared both religiously and politically to embrace the Antichrist when he suddenly rises to power. If “Christianity” is to be the official world religion (which must be the case if the Antichrist claims to be Christ returned), then it must become broad enough to accommodate all of the world's

faiths. As for the political climate, the world must be united in the twin causes of global peace and ecological rescue when this man appears.

There are only two persons who will hold absolute rule over this world. The first is the Antichrist and the second is the Lord Jesus Christ. Every person must choose between these two antagonists and their opposing kingdoms. There is no neutral ground.

Those who suggest that we can retain the idea of Christ's return to reign over Planet Earth as the *symbol* of some "spiritual truth" suitable for all religions deny the very foundation of the Christian faith. Christianity is based upon the claims that Christ made about *Himself* and the eyewitness accounts of His life, death, and resurrection as recorded in the New Testament in undeniable fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The distinctions that make Christianity unique are irreconcilable with any other religious belief, and any attempt at ecumenical unity is a denial of biblical Christianity. Consistent with the distinctiveness of Christianity, the Bible also teaches that peace will not come to this world through the triumph of Christ's *teachings*, but only through His *personal return to reign from Jerusalem*....

How dare anyone think that a world ripening for judgment can be rescued by Christians working together in political/social activism with the followers of all religions, and with humanists and atheists! Scripture says repeatedly that nothing but the personal and physical return of Christ to this earth can put an end to its wickedness and suffering. Paul declared that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" as it longs for a release that can come only through "the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19-22). Paul makes very clear what this means: That only when Christians have received their immortal bodies and are glorified with Christ (verses 23-25), ruling and reigning upon this earth with Him, will earth be delivered from its turmoil and pain.

The last days before Christ's return are indeed prophesied as a period of growing evil, error, and spiritual delusion, manifested in both the world and the professing church. There are also, however, indications in Scripture that in the last days, millions of people around the world will receive Christ as Savior and Lord, thus hastening His return. Many of them will be the most unlikely candidates for salvation—New Agers, drug addicts,

prison inmates, communists, Muslims, Catholics, the poor and the outcasts of society—as Christ seemed to indicate in the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:21-23).

Evangelicals tend to present the gospel exclusively as a remedy for personal sin and the procurement of an eternal home in heaven. They generally neglect to proclaim it as God's means of bringing peace to this troubled planet, as did the angels at the birth of Christ and as did the early church. It is the duty of every Christian political leader, whether president, ambassador, or other official, to make very clear to the entire world that all human efforts to achieve peace are in vain unless Jesus Christ is invited back to this earth to reign in individual hearts and over all nations.

Skeptics argue that the early Christians and even the apostles, as well as countless others down through the centuries, all thought they were living in the last days, and that the term is therefore meaningless. It is true that in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17), Peter seemed to apply an Old Testament prophecy about the "last days" (Joel 2:28-32) to the outpouring of the Spirit at that time upon the disciples. However, carefully reading the context in Joel, along with Peter's words, makes it clear that Peter was not declaring that what was happening at that moment was the fulfillment of Joel's promise. Rather, it was a sample of what *could have occurred* if Israel had repented of her rejection of Christ: She could have experienced the millennial reign of her Messiah, which Joel went on to describe. It was an offer that Israel refused (as it had been prophesied she would) but one that she will accept at a future time, after God's judgment has been fully visited upon her.

The Apostle John, writing in about AD 95, declared: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). Yet John was by no means asserting that the "last days" had fully come, as some claim. He made it clear that although there were already many antichrists, *the Antichrist* was to appear at a future time.

Let us be reminded that the *Rapture* could have occurred at any moment. Indeed, then as now, the early church watched and waited in eager anticipation of being taken to heaven in that glorious event. There are no explicit signs

to indicate that the Rapture is about to occur. The "last-days signs" are not for the *church* but for an unbelieving *Israel*; not for the Rapture but for the Second Coming. Nothing stands between the church and that "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) of being caught up to meet her Bridegroom in the air.

Those events that Christ prophesied when He was asked for signs of His coming are intended to warn *Israel* of Antichrist's appearance and that after guaranteeing her peace he will seek to destroy her. Those specific signs also herald the coming of Israel's Messiah to rescue her from Antichrist's attacking armies, an event that Christians refer to as Christ's Second Coming in power and glory. Since the Rapture comes first, however, certain signs that indicate the nearness of the Second Coming may cast their shadows far enough in advance to tell the church that the Rapture must be soon. Nevertheless, we are always, regardless of any signs, to expect the Rapture to occur at any moment and to live in that expectancy (Matthew 24:44; Luke 12:35,36; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:3; Revelation 22:17,20).

As for the Second Coming, it would have been premature for Israel to expect it when only a few of the signs were yet in evidence. Jesus declared: "When ye shall see *all* these things, know that it [the Second Coming] is near, even at the doors" (Matthew 24:33). Israel has been alerted so that she might know exactly when the moment of her Messiah's intervention to save her has come. How many of these signs will cast their shadows before them at the time of the Rapture, no one can say. We do know, however, that our generation is the first for which *any* of these shadows have appeared, and we now have *many*.

The New Testament writers seem to have understood the "last days" as a time that began with the ascension of Christ and would culminate with His second coming. That event would be preceded by specific signs indicating that the generation that would exist on earth at that time would be living in the *last* of the "last days." It is exciting to note that *no generation* has ever had solid biblical reason for believing that it was living in the *last* of the last days preceding the second coming of Christ—*no generation until ours*. TBC

[Excerpted from Countdown to the Second Coming.]

Quotable

A traveler among the high Alps often feels overwhelmed with awe amid their amazing sublimities; much more is this the case when we survey the heights and depths of the mercy and holiness of the Lord. "Oh God, who is like unto thee!" Psalm 71:19.

—C. H. Spurgeon

Q&A

QUESTION: My father abused my siblings and me...for years. Recently, he demanded that we come to his house to receive an early part of our inheritance. We would no longer be considered his children if we did not show up and obey his decree. His "gift" had some specific conditions that I believed were wrong. Due to these conditions, I and several other siblings could not "obey" and declined or returned the money. This made him furious. How do I honor this man...who has shown no evidence of repentance at all...and when I am no longer his child, by his own vow? How do I address him as "father" or "dad" ever again?

RESPONSE: Paul wrote, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph 6:1-3).

So, first, children are to "obey" their parents "in the Lord." We may not always have godly parents, and some of their commands may contradict the revealed will of the Lord. Paul writes in Romans 13:1, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Our first obligation is to obey the Lord, regardless of our age.

Second, we are told to "honor thy father and mother..." Some may think that to "honor" our father or mother means to obey every demand they may make. This isn't true. Again, our first priority is the express will of God, and when our earthly parents stand in opposition to this, we certainly cannot disobey the Lord.

There is a difference between a *child* in submission to their parents and adults who no longer live with their parents. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gn 2:24). In our view, adult children are accountable first to the Lord and are no longer under the direct authority of their parents.

What does it mean to "honor" someone? In 1 Peter 2:17 we are told, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." Certainly "honoring" all men doesn't include agreeing to or obeying every demand

they may make. It does mean, however, to be respectful: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Pt 3:9).

What should be our response before authorities? When Paul was before the "chief priests," the High Priest commanded one of his aides to strike him (Acts 23:2). Paul replied, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall..." (Acts 23:3).

Regardless of the unjustness of his "trial," when the authority of the high priest was pointed out (v. 4), Paul's reply (v. 5) was, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Paul "reviled not again" (1 Pt 2:23).

When Daniel's three friends appeared before Nebuchadnezzar, they answered firmly, but without railing, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us....But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dn 3:17-18). God did intervene and the king "promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon" (v. 30).

You ask how you can "address him as 'father' or 'dad' ever again." Shouldn't the question be "how do I respond according to the Scriptures?"

Despite what your father has said or done, he remains your father. Neither you nor he can change that fact. If his "decree," however, means there will be no further contact with him, that rests with the Lord. Who knows how the Lord may intervene as He did for Daniel's three friends? Your godly conduct may be used of the Lord to convict, bring repentance, and change the heart of your father. And of course, you should never cease to pray for him.

QUESTION: Some Seventh day Adventist friends have what they call "The Clear Word Bible." Something doesn't sound quite right, and it looks like verses have been changed to support their teachings.

RESPONSE: We would agree with your concerns about the Clear Word Bible. One doesn't have to go through much of this version to determine that words have been added or meanings changed in order to "more clearly" support their particular teachings.

For example, Deuteronomy 5:3 in the KJV reads, "The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." In this passage, Moses is stating that the Sabbath Day was given by God to a named people (the Jews) as part of the Mosaic Law. This verse reads the same in all alternate translations that we

consulted (NIV, NASB, ESV, NLT, etc.).

The same verse from the SDA paraphrase (the Clear Word Bible) reads, "It wasn't only with our ancestors that He made a covenant, but with us and with all who are alive today." It is clear to see that the meaning of the passage has been changed. There is a reason. Many SDAs believe that those who came before—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the patriarchs—all kept the Sabbath. So, Jack Blanco, who produced the Clear Word Bible, changed "not with our fathers" [did He make a covenant] to "It wasn't *only with our ancestors* that He made a covenant...." This is clearly wresting the Word of God.

Consider Exodus 5:5: "And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens" (KJV).

The Clear Word Bible: "You've created enough problems by making them rest every week on your Sabbath...." Pharaoh is made to be complaining about the Jews keeping the Sabbath prior to the Law! In truth, this passage says nothing about keeping the Sabbath, and this twisting of Scriptures removes the meaning from this passage of Holy Scripture. From the context, it is clear that Pharaoh is the one adding to the burden of the Jews.

SDAs have historically gone through a "purging" process every few decades or so. The last major one was in the 1980s, when many theologians, pastors, and members left when Ellen G. White's plagiarism was highlighted and the governing body nonetheless issued the directive to recognize the "spirit of prophecy" (i.e., Ellen G. White's status as a prophet) and submit.

In SDA President Ted Wilson's inaugural sermon he chastized those who don't emphasize the Sabbath and those who speak against "the spirit of prophecy." In his address "Go Forward" (General Conference Sabbath Sermon from July 3, 2010), he emphasized the "correct way" to interpret Scriptures: "hold your leaders, pastors, local churches, educators, [et al.] accountable to the highest standards of belief based on a literal understanding of Scripture. Utilize wonderful resources such as the Biblical Research Institute's new book on hermeneutics that helps us know the correct way to interpret the Scriptures."

Again we read in *Selected Messages*, Book 1 (by Ellen G. White), on p. 170, "Do not overstrain the meaning of sentences in the Bible in an effort to bring forth something odd in order to please the fancy. Take the Scriptures as they read."

The irony of this is that many SDA doctrines, such as the Investigative Judgment, do not take the Scriptures as they are read. With the "Clear Word" Bible, there has been some "wresting" that slants the verses in this paraphrase towards particular doctrines of SDAs.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH
BIBLICAL ANSWERS to CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Was Jesus Christ Really God?

QUESTION: Our adult Bible class teacher says Jesus was half God and half man. He insists that God can only act in response to our prayers and that when the one prayed for isn't healed it's because there hasn't been enough prayer and fasting. Are these ideas biblical?

RESPONSE: No. Until evidence to the contrary arises, however, let's give the teacher the benefit of the doubt and assume that he believes what is right but is having difficulty expressing it. Yes, God is Jesus' Father and Mary is His mother, but that doesn't make Him half God and half man. That error is similar to the Roman Catholic teaching that Mary is "the mother of God." Jesus existed as God from all eternity and thus eons before Mary was born. Obviously, then, she is not the mother of Jesus as God but only of the human body by which He was born into this world.

Mary was a virgin when Jesus was born. Consequently, as the Bible tells us, the baby she gave birth to was conceived by no man but by the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for us to understand fully what that means, but we know what it doesn't mean. The virgin birth is not like having an Irish father and French mother and thus being half Irish and half French.

Jesus is fully God and fully man: "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16), not half God manifest in half flesh. The same verse calls this a "great . . . mystery." Isaiah called the virgin-born child "Emmanuel," which means "God [not half God] with us" (Isaiah 7:14; cf. Matthew 1:23) and "the mighty God [not half-God], the everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6). If this were not the case, Jesus could not be our Savior.

Throughout the Old Testament God says that He is the *only* Savior (Isaiah 43:11; 45:15, 21; Hosea 13:4). Obviously, this must be true because salvation is an infinite work, including as it must the full payment of the infinite penalty for sin required by God's infinite justice—something that only *God* could accomplish. Consequently, for Jesus to be our Savior, He must be *God*. Paul called Him "God our Savior" (1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3–4; 2:10, 13; 3:4), as did Peter (2 Peter 1:1) and Jude (verse 25).

Yet the Savior must be *man* as well, because it is man who is the sinner, not God. The penalty for sin is pronounced against *man*, not against God; therefore it must be paid by a *man*. But no finite man could pay that penalty. Thus, God, in His infinite love and grace, became a man through the virgin birth so that He, as a

man, could take the judgment we deserved and make it possible for us to be forgiven.

To be our Savior, Jesus had to be *fully God* (Isaiah 43:11) and *fully man* (Romans 5:12–21), not a hybrid composed of half of each. Ask your teacher if this is what he means.

That God doesn't need our prayers to act is obvious. He managed to exist for an eternity and to create the universe and angels and mankind without our prayers. Certainly our prayers didn't cause Christ to be born into the world and to die for our sins. Nor is it our prayers that will usher in a new universe, though God gives us the privilege to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

If God could act *only* in response to our prayers, He would be at our mercy, His hands tied most of the time, unable to do what He in His infinite wisdom and knowledge knows ought to be done but that we in our limited understanding were ignorant of or hadn't thought about. Moreover, He couldn't meet emergencies that we didn't know would occur and thus hadn't prayed about. The idea that God "can only act in response to our prayers" is unbiblical and illogical.

To say that failure to be healed results from too little prayer and fasting is equally false. That teaching implies that we can cause God to do whatever we pray for if we pray and fast long and hard enough—in other words, that we can impose our will upon Him. What about God's will? It also suggests that God's will is to heal everyone every time. On the contrary, He has something better for us than perpetuating our lives endlessly in these bodies of sin.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PG. 52-54) by DAVE HUNT

The Critical Value of the Bible — Part One

T. A. McMahon

But [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

— MATTHEW 4:4

Those of us who have been Christians for a number of years can sometimes lose sight of the critical value of the Bible in our lives. I'm not referring to those whose walk with the Lord could be characterized as lukewarm at best. I'm thinking more of those who consider themselves to be Bible-believing Christians, who attend and participate in a Bible-based church, who enjoy fellowship with committed believers, and who generally see the fruit of the Spirit in themselves and in their families. As great as those things might be, however, they can also dull one's awareness, to some degree (call it a "creeping complacency"), of how miraculous and necessary the Scriptures are. What I have in mind for this article is to underscore some things about the Bible that perhaps we've heard before and some things of which we may not have even been aware. The goal is to refresh our thinking and our thankfulness for God's supernatural communication to mankind.

Here are some general thoughts about God's Word that relate to all of mankind: without the Bible, humanity would be nearly clueless about God; without the Bible, people would be completely deluded about their moral condition; without the Bible, humanity would have no idea what its purpose might be; without the Bible, mankind is lost in a condition of hopelessness and worse. For Christians, however, if we are not serious about the Word of God, we may still be semi-clueless about God, about our moral condition, about our purpose in God's plan (or clueless about the plan itself), and ill-equipped to deal with the problems of life. In fact, we may struggle as much as nonbelievers. So, what we think about the Bible and what we do about it are very important concerns.

Without the Bible, as I said, mankind would be nearly clueless about God. I say "nearly" because creation does give us indications of God's attributes—in particular His omnipotence and His omniscience. Although evolutionists rail against intelligent design, it is obvious to

any reasonable mind that the Intelligence behind creation must be all powerful and all knowing. Both the vastness of the universe and the incredible complexity of cellular and molecular life would indicate that the Designer must be omnipresent as well. Regarding creation, Romans 1:20 tells us (although in somewhat general terms) that mankind is without excuse, i.e., we are accountable to God, in terms of acknowledging and seeking after Him.

God has not, however, left humanity without *specific information* regarding what He wants us to know. What information has He given us? We can read about His attributes, His personality, His purpose and plan for mankind, and His relationship with His created beings (or lack thereof). That's what the Bible is about, and then some. Furthermore, through it we can learn about the nature of humans when they were first created, as well as

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

— *Jeremiah 9:23-24*

the change in that nature due to Adam and Eve's disobedience, which affected all creation.

The Bible is a *history* book. From man's creation, to God separating and preparing the Israelites as a chosen people to whom He would send the Savior of the world and to whom their Messiah will return.

It is a *prophetic* book, declaring the significant events that will take place in the future, including the Lord's return for His church, after which will fall a time of unprecedented devastation and tribulation upon the earth. Next those left in the world will experience the thousand-year earthly reign of Christ, followed by the end of this present world and the creation of a new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1).

The Bible is the Manufacturer's Handbook, an *instructional manual* telling mankind what God wants us to *know* and *do* in order to live our lives righteously,

fruitfully, and in a manner that is glorifying to Him.

The Bible is the only *objective source of information* for developing a personal, intimate relationship with God, who is love. It is His personal letter to us containing His words of counsel, comfort, encouragement, blessings, correction, protection, forgiveness, judgments, mercy, and grace.

The Bible *reveals the true nature and heart* of every human. It sets the record straight on what is morally and spiritually good...and evil.

Without God's Word, His direct communication to His rational creatures, we have only man's opinions, speculations, and guesses about God, not to mention the lies introduced by God's chief adversary, Satan. Regarding the latter, his strategy from his first dialogue with Eve had been to turn humanity away from God's words: "Yea, hath God said...?" (Genesis 3:1).

But *are* the words of the Bible indeed God's words? That's what the Scriptures claim. From Genesis through Revelation, in addition to the more than 4,000 explicit phrases such as "Thus saith the Lord" and "The Word of the Lord came to me," we find God personally speaking to various prophets and other individuals. For example, in Jeremiah 9:23-24 God discloses characteristics about Himself that are beyond man's ability to discover without His revelation of them: "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

God the Father spoke to Jesus after His baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration. After His ascension, God the Son spoke to Saul on the road to Damascus and He spoke to John on the island of Patmos. The Apostle Paul declares to Timothy that, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God.*" He also thanks God for the believers in Thessalonica because when they received the teachings from Paul they "received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). Peter, referring to his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, declared, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Although we have a host of biblical statements claiming God's personal communication to mankind, the Bible nevertheless gives a prerequisite, something that must come first, before anyone can understand His communication and truly know God. We must be *born again*. Speaking to Nicodemus, one of the religious leaders of the Jews, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Paul explains why being born of the Spirit of God is the only way that God can be known: "But the natural man *receiveth not* the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Once we turn to God and by faith believe the gospel, the good news that Jesus, who is God, became a man to pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind, we are born of the Spirit. We become new creatures in Christ, in which the Holy Spirit dwells. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Unless I have the Spirit of God, I have only my fleshly mind to rely upon to know God—which is an impossibility. Jesus declared that "the flesh profiteth nothing." Paul wrote, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (John 6:63; Romans 8:5-6).

Not only does the Bible claim that its words are God's direct revelation to mankind, but it also claims that the words of God are absolutely true. Psalm 119:160 states, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Not only does the Bible make numerous claims of being the truth of God, but it gives support of those claims in a verifiable way. That is called *prophecy*.

In the Book of Isaiah, God establishes Himself as the God of Prophecy. He challenges the pagans to prove the reality of their gods by having them foretell future events, something only He can do: "Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former

things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together....And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any" (Isaiah 41:22-23; 44:7-8).

Nearly a third of the Bible contains detailed prophecies of future events, most of them related to Israel and the First and Second comings of the Messiah. Israel, the Lord declares, will be a witness to the world of God's direct involvement with humanity: "Ye are my witnesses...and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isaiah 43:10). In other words, God will use them and their land to be "witnesses" both to themselves and to the world—not only that He exists but that He is actively involved in shaping the history of Israel as well as bringing about His purpose for all of mankind.

Prophecy is compelling proof for the existence of God, and it is also evidence that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be—His Word! "What proof?" someone might ask. The answer is found in the fulfillment of what God prophesied. He announced to Abraham (Genesis 12:1), and then to Isaac (Genesis 26:3), and after that to Jacob (Genesis 28:13) that He would give them the land "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18), and that this Promised Land would be theirs. It's a fact of history, as the book of Joshua records, that the Israelites took possession of the land that God promised. Although His promise was irrevocable, He nevertheless warned them that should they cease to obey Him He would cast them out of the land for a time: disobedient Israel "shall be plucked from off the land whither [they go] to possess it" (Deuteronomy 28:63).

They were, and He did—resulting in the Assyrian captivity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Babylonian captivity of the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Jeremiah prophesied that the captives would return from Babylon to Jerusalem "when

70 years [were] accomplished" (Jeremiah 25:12). Even so, a still more devastating dispersion of the Jews was foretold: "And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deuteronomy 28:64).

This, the last major diaspora, took place when the Roman army under Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Not only have the Jews been widely dispersed, as the Bible predicted, but God's Word also gives details as to how they would be treated: "And I will...deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them" (Jeremiah 29:18). This treatment would be known as anti-Semitism, carried out by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, raised to a demonic level by Hitler, practiced from the 7th century onward, and continued today by Islam—yet it was first prophesied by Moses (Deuteronomy 28:37) 3,500 years ago!

It would seem that this dispersion, along with accompanying persecutions and attempts at annihilating the Jews, would have placed God in an untenable position. After all, He *promised* unconditionally to Abram (Abraham) that the Promised Land "which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis 13:15). The Lord declared also that while Israel would not go unpunished, He would "not make a full end of thee" but would "save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob [Israel] shall return" (Jeremiah 30:11; 46:27). That a scattered and persecuted minority could live for 2,000 years or more among other races without being absorbed into them (especially when doing so could have avoided endless repression) and yet remain a uniquely identifiable ethnic group, is inconceivable—it is certainly beyond chance and without precedence in world history. Add to this astonishing fact that they would then be gathered from around the world and brought back to the land that God had promised to them more than three thousand years ago. Yet as the world knows, this took place "officially" in 1948 when Israel was recognized as a sovereign nation.

God's Word is indeed just that: the very words of God. Fulfilled biblical prophecy is the undeniable proof that mankind has direct access to the God of all creation. That fact should make the Bible the most exciting book in the world, which it is. Believers who have lost that excitement need only to get back into it on a daily basis.

More on the critical value of the Bible in Part Two. **TBC**

Quotable.....

God is not impressed with our accomplishments and achievements any more than He was impressed with Babylon's global reputation of military might. What the Lord delights in and takes pleasure in is people who fear Him and find hope in His mercy. Don't get me wrong; God loves us and is delighted when we excel in our gifts and talents and acknowledge them as blessings from Him. But God takes even more pleasure in those who fear Him and hope in His mercy.

—Barry Stagner

Commentary on Psalm 147:10-11

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I would really like some input on whether Satan and Lucifer are one and the same. Some say yes, others, a firm no.

RESPONSE: We are convinced by Scripture that Lucifer and Satan are the same entity. We recognize that there are those who seek to deny that Isaiah 14 refers to Satan, limiting the passage only to the King of Babylon. Yet, exactly like Ezekiel 28:12-18, this passage speaks of an individual who transcends an earthly king. The statement made in Isaiah 14:12 is, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning." Clearly, the king of Babylon never fell from heaven, just as the earthly king of Tyrus was never "in Eden" (Ezekiel 28:13).

It has been pointed out that the word "Lucifer" appears in only some translations of Isaiah 14:12 and that Lucifer is a Latin word. Isaiah was originally written in Hebrew. Translated, the word "Lucifer" means "light bearer" and was the Latin equivalent of the Hebrew *Heylel ben Shachar*. This Hebrew term means "shining one, son of the dawn." The descriptions we read in Isaiah 14:12-20 and Ezekiel 28:12-18 establish him as the enemy of God called "the serpent" in Genesis 3:1 and Satan in Job 1:6 and other places. Again, his activities clearly transcend earthly entities. The name "Satan" is derived from the Hebrew *ha-Satan*, literally meaning "the adversary." Man is not the adversary of God, as the Scripture clearly teaches. For the Christian, "...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). The name "Satan" is actually a title rather than a name. Revelation 12:9 tells us, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 20:2

reads that at a certain point in history, an angel will lay hold of "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan."

Again, Isaiah 14:12 tells us, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"

The Hebrew word translated "ground" in this verse is *erets*. The same word, however, is translated as "earth" 712 times. We know from Scripture that although Satan had access to heaven on occasion, he himself stated that his station involved "going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 2:2). It is on the earth that Satan, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Going further, Satan is rebuked because, "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the *mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north*" (Isaiah 14:13). This parallels Psalm 48:2, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is *mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*" This speaks of Jerusalem, clearly, but verse 1 of Psalm 48 identifies it as the "city of our God." We can see the reference to the Messiah, the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:16). Again, this very clearly speaks of more than the earthly king Cyrus.

Isaiah 14:14 further details boasts of this great pretender to the throne: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." This has always been Satan's goal, that is, to be God. It is the very temptation he used on Eve in the Garden of Eden: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

"Lucifer" and "Satan" are names for the same individual.

QUESTION: You have exposed several modern translations that are corruptions of the Word of God. Is The Berean Call KJV-only?

RESPONSE: We use the King James Version in our publications and in public meetings. Several of Dave's early books, at the request of his publisher, used the New American Standard Bible, but after investigating some of the problems with modern translations, it was decided that subsequent publications use the KJV. There are some compelling issues concerning modern translations that bolster such a decision.

We do not, however, support the position of KJV-only individuals such as Gail Riplinger or Peter Ruckman. In reviewing some of the books dealing with the issue of

translations of the Bible, we have found that quite a few of the "KJV-only" promoters take extreme positions that cannot be reasonably supported. For example, not a few claim that the King James Version itself is inspired and therefore an inerrant version; they consider the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to be the highest form of language and therefore the inspired language.

Those who attest that the KJV is without error go far beyond what the translators themselves claimed, who, in their introduction to the 1611 KJV titled "The Translators to the Reader," acknowledged that this is not a perfect translation. As the KJV translators noted, "Now to the latter we answer; that we do not deny, nay we affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession, (for we have seen none of theirs of the whole Bible as yet) contains the word of God, nay, is the word of God." As God has promised to preserve His Word, they also seemed to have greater confidence in His preserving ability than some of us do today.

We have heard of some KJV-only promoters stating that all foreign language speakers must learn to read and understand the English of the KJV in order to have God communicate accurately to them. On page 8 of *Which Bible Is God's Word?*, We have contacts with some missionaries who have been greatly concerned about the confusion that is introduced when an existing foreign language translation (based upon the same text family as the KJV) is replaced by using the English KJV to produce a "new" foreign language translation. We have seen this happen in Korea and Mexico and have heard of similar developments in other nations.

In short, we see that the devil doesn't much care which side of the road one runs off of, as long as we still end up in the ditch. It seems that as much damage is done by the extreme elements of the KJV-only movement as is done by those promoting corrupt translations. On page 8 of *Which Bible Is God's Word?*, Gail Riplinger has stated that "there will never be a version that would be as reliable as the King James Version...." William Tyndale was burned to death for the crime of trying to translate the text of the Scriptures into the common language. The Lord answered his dying prayer with a series of events that eventually produced the King James Version, which itself owed much to Tyndale's translation, the Great Bible, and the Geneva Bible that preceded it. The language that we speak continues to change. Should the Lord tarry, the gulf between modern vernacular and King James English may become as great as that between Latin and the English of 1611. Can He not move with the same power and force as He did then? He certainly can.

A SPECIAL NOTE FROM:

Ruth Hunt

Dear TBC Family,

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you for your dear cards and letters and prayers. They have meant so very much to me. I hope that you will understand that I am no longer able to respond individually, but please know that every note has been read and is cherished. I am truly blessed to have so many dear friends.

I must now share with you that my doctors have declared me terminally ill and have given me approximately four months to live. I am not in any pain and am being well cared for by family, friends, and caregivers.

I truly look forward to this glorious transition and the fact that I will soon be with my beloved Savior and with Dave and others who have gone on before me. The Lord was so kind to me in answering my prayer, which was that He would allow me to stay well enough to care for my dear David until he went home to be with Him. I was blessed to be there, holding his hand, as he drew his last breath, and I knew that he was with Jesus! How kind of God to have given me that privilege.

I thank each one of you for the many, many years of loving fellowship that we have shared, and I pray that you will be comforted by the fact that I am perfectly at peace. I look forward with much joy to our grand reunion in heaven one day soon! "What a day, glorious day, that will be!"

Affectionately Yours,
Ruth Hunt

The Critical Value of the Bible—Part 2

T. A. McMahon

The entire Bible is prophecy, with God both *telling forth* and *foretelling*. God's *telling forth* through His prophets includes all that He wants mankind to know and do, including His attributes, His commandments, His instructions, His corrections, His blessings, and so forth.

Beyond the aspect of proving that God exists and that His Word is His direct communication to mankind (as we noted last month), *foretelling* is a way that God informs and in some cases warns His people of things to come. Two examples among hundreds that could be given from the Old Testament are in Genesis 15, in which God tells an aging Abraham that he will have a son and that his descendants (some 400 years later) will take the land that God promised to him, and Jeremiah 25, which contains God's prophecy of the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites that would last 70 years.

The New Testament contains hundreds more prophecies, many of which have come to pass, with some yet to be fulfilled. They all underscore the critical value of the Bible for the upcoming generation. How so? Well, it's pretty simple.

If a believer reads the Bible consistently and diligently (meaning seriously, and not in a "here a verse there a verse, whenever the mood strikes" manner) and is not being spoonfed but is feeding himself on the Word of truth, he will be acutely aware of prophetic events when they take place in his lifetime or as they begin to make their appearance. Without such an awareness, a believer becomes vulnerable to seduction by unbiblical movements, teachings, practices, and agendas that may appear to be good but are, as we are told in Proverbs 14:12, "...a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Death in Scripture doesn't always mean physical death, but it does always involve separation. In physical death, the soul and spirit are separated from the body. In the proverb just quoted, it means a separation from the truth.

As a consequence, deception runs rampant because without the knowledge of what the Bible clearly says, a believer won't recognize the unbiblical agendas mankind is promoting. For example, the world is into different forms of preserving and restoring the planet, from warnings of

so-called global warming to the promotion of population control to worries regarding a dwindling food and potable water supply. These issues are high on the world's agendas because the earth's survival is their only hope. That's all that the world has with regard to the future.

Biblical Christians should also have concerns about the stewardship of the land that God has blessed us with, but within the context of what the Bible teaches will take place. Then why do most professing Christians support or conform to various restoration agendas that are at odds with what the Bible teaches?

For example, amillennialists, those Christians who reject the literal thousand-year reign of Christ on this planet, see the earth and the Kingdom in the process of being restored before Christ physically returns. The claim is that Satan has been bound and that things are getting better

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

— Acts 20:28-29

and better. Amillennialism is the most common eschatological belief among professing Christians. It is the doctrinal view of Roman Catholics, Greek & Russian Orthodox, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Church of Christ, some Independent Baptists, and most Calvinists (with some notable exceptions).

Kingdom/dominionists, most of whom are charismatics and Pentecostals, believe that Christ cannot return until His Kingdom is restored through an army of new apostles and prophets. They declare that those positions are being filled by the young people of the upcoming generation.

Then there are those Christians who are into other forms of restorationism such as Rick Warren's Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan, the social gospel of World Vision, and the Religious Left's socialism (aka Progressive Christianity). The goal is to

solve the world's problems of poverty, social injustice, environmental abuse, and political corruption through religious ecumenism and political activism. As the church seeks to correct the so-called social injustice in the world, there has been an increase in the support of "Christian Palestinianism" by young people. Some very influential evangelical leaders are accusing Israel of being an illegitimate government in the land that belongs to the Palestinians. This is the slippery slope that fosters anti-Semitism. In the words of arch heretic, former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "We want to see an end of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the oppression of its people."

The Scriptures are completely barren of support for any of those agendas. What all of these movements have in common is a shared view of the Bible in one or more of the following ways: 1) ignorance of its teaching, or 2) distortion of the Word to accommodate their agendas, and/or 3) rejection of its teachings as God's words. If a believer is unaware of the eschatology of the Bible (the teachings of the end times, which are hardly complex or esoteric), he or she could find themselves in the position of actually contributing to a program or agenda that is contrary to what the Bible says will take place.

For example, the biblical timetable tells us that the next kingdom on earth will not be the Kingdom of *Christ* but the kingdom of the *Antichrist*, which will last for seven years. So, am I implying that some Christians, including true believers, may be supporting the development of the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist? No, I'm not *implying* such a thing; I'm saying it straight out—because that scenario is already taking place. And the fundamental reason that such Christians have been seduced into working for the Adversary is because they don't know what the Bible says because they are not reading the Bible. Or they are *not believing* what they are reading and consequently they are *not doing* what it says.

In our August newsletter, the feature article is a reprint from Dave Hunt's book *Countdown to the Second Coming*. In it, Dave points out some characteristics of the Antichrist that most people don't realize. The Antichrist won't first appear as, in Dave's words, "a sinister man who exudes evil from every pore." He will be Satan's human masterpiece transformed into an angel of light and a minister of righteousness, the ultimate false Christ.

The Scriptures teach that true believers will be raptured before the Antichrist is revealed—so, no worries, right? Wrong. The preparation of the religion and the kingdom of the Antichrist, which precedes his being revealed, has been in the works since Satan's deception and seduction of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. And it is increasing in our day at an exponential rate. This is what Jesus indicated would take place when His disciples asked Him about the last days just prior to His coming. He characterized those days with this warning: "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). In verse 24 He adds, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Jesus' words in Luke 18:8 give us further confirmation that the apostasy will be in full bloom at His coming: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The Apostle Paul gives us a major reason why the apostasy will develop at an astonishing rate: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). They (meaning some and possibly most Christians) will not endure sound doctrine, that is, the teachings of Scripture. That being the case, they are going to buy into whatever feels right to their flesh. They've obviously drifted away from God's Word (Hebrews 2:1), often a consequence when one's manner of living conflicts with the Bible's admonitions. In any case, they have rejected the truth, or they may never have known it in the first place.

Paul's words of warning to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:27-31) couldn't be more applicable for a time such as ours when biblical discernment is more necessary than ever. Let's consider these verses line by line and pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to take them to heart and show each of us how we can apply them.

27: *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

All the counsel of God is found from Genesis through Revelation. If we're not familiar with it, it won't help us.

28: *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased*

with his own blood.

We may not be overseers of a fellowship, but we might be dads, granddads, moms, grandmas, big brothers, big sisters, aunts, uncles, those who have some responsibility or at least the opportunity of spiritually feeding their own flock.

29: *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

The gravity of Paul's concern here is underscored by his choice of words, inspired by the Holy Spirit: "grievous wolves...not sparing the flock."

30: *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

A mob of highly visible leaders who call themselves evangelicals but who are "speaking perverse things" (unbiblical teachings and practices) are working overtime to draw away disciples after themselves. Many of those who are being seduced are our brothers and sisters in Christ, young and old alike.

31: *Therefore watch, and remember; that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

I used to think, *Paul...what's your problem? You don't have to deal with TBN...Charisma Magazine and Publishing...The New Apostolic Reformation...Christianity Today (or more often, Anti-Christianity Today)...so-called Christian Psychology...Replacement Theology...Charismania...Hyper-Calvinism...The Emerging Church...Latter Rain/Manifest Sons of God...Joel's Army...The Contemplative Movement...The Message "Bible"...The Purpose-Driven Marketing Movement...The Christian Right...The Christian Left (Progressive Christianity, as mentioned)...and on and on and on....* Then it dawned on me what I had missed. It's not primarily what Paul had to deal with, but it's his heart in this for his brothers and sisters in Christ. It's his love for his fellow believers who could be seduced and have their faith shipwrecked and their fruitfulness devastated. That should cause all of us to search our own hearts as the apostasy ensnares believers, particularly those in our upcoming generation. I hope and pray that we will search our hearts regarding Paul's tearful plea.

I also covet your prayers for the spiritual success of the Bible Survival Series. Obviously, the spiritual outcome for the upcoming generation does not depend upon it. But that's not our deal—it's God's. We are simply planters and waterers. As

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:7, "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

The things that are taking place in the world and in the church do seem, at times, to be overwhelming. That's because they are overwhelming and the situation is getting worse. But again, that's God's problem, not ours. He can handle it. We can't. He could turn it all around. We can't. Although I don't see any indication from Scripture that this is part of His plan before Christ returns, He nevertheless has given us work to do, which I believe is essentially a rescue operation. We're to go about informing people of God's truth wherever and whenever He provides the opportunities. It will not be by our own might or power but by His Spirit. Whether young adults or anyone else, we are only going to reach those who are willing to receive the truth. That may mean one or a few at a time, whether it's believing the gospel for salvation or saving a person from a false teaching that destroys his or her fruitfulness.

Knowing and doing what the Bible says is at the heart of its critical value. Yes, true faith is drying up all over the world, just as Jesus declared would take place prior to His return. On the other hand, the psalmist, in Psalm 1 gives us the prevention program that will keep us spiritually hydrated:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

The Bible's encouragement in this psalm or anywhere else throughout God's Word is not altered by what the world or the Adversary is foisting upon believers. It is only conditional upon a believer's obedience to diligently and faithfully read and do what the Scriptures instruct. And when that has been done, "...he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." TBC

Quotable.....

How voluntary was the death of our Lord Jesus! Five times we read that He “gave Himself.” He gave Himself for our sins (Galatians 1:4). He gave Himself a ransom for all (2 Timothy 2:6). He loved the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). How blessed it is to know that He gave Himself for us (Titus 2:14). But what a personal privilege to be able to say that He loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

—Jim Flanigan,
Choice Gleanings 2011

Q&A.....

QUESTION: My question regards the “home church.” I have a friend who is involved in one. I attend an Independent Fundamental Baptist church. My friend used different passages out of the Bible to show me what he would consider “faults” in our church, such as having a pastor, tithing, being too formal, having a building, having a name, etc. We both believe the same way about doctrines such as salvation, baptism, KJV Bible, being independent fellowships, etc. Is it sinful for me to stay at my church?

RESPONSE: The book of Acts is valuable for showing how the early church began to function, and Paul’s epistles instruct us further. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 contain the qualifications for leadership. Ephesians 4 speaks of the various ministries that operate in the church, as do 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.

In Ephesians 4, the ministry of “pastor” is listed. Ephesians 4:13 tells us that these ministers will be in operation “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” The Scriptures also speak of “elders” in authority in the church (Acts 20:17-32; 1 Tim 3; Ti 1:5-9; etc.). Nevertheless, the ministry of “pastor” remains (Eph 4:13).

No Scriptures forbid a group of believers from purchasing a building. In a time of inflation and economic uncertainty, it would seem to be good stewardship to do so in order to control costs. Regarding scriptural settings, Paul spoke of Priscilla and Aquila and wrote in Romans 16:5 to “greet the church that is in their house.” (See also Col 4:15; Phil 2)

In Acts 19:8-9, Paul was ministering in a synagogue. When dissension arose between the disciples and the Jews who didn’t believe, “he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.” A large group of some 3,000 disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41) met together

in a public space, which was the outer court of the temple (Acts 2:46) and in smaller groups in homes (for example, in Acts 12:12, the house of Mary, the mother of Mark).

Consequently, whether the members of the Body of Christ meet in a home, a rented building, or in a purchased building, the purpose of meeting together is for edification of believers.

The church is made of many members whom He has gifted for service (1 Cor 12:4-14). When our times here are finished, the church will be made up of people from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue. The church was God’s intent from the beginning but was kept a hidden mystery (Eph 3:1-6).

There is no order of service given in Scripture, though the early church “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). That certainly should give us more than a hint of what is important in the estimation of the Lord.

The Bible is a book of instruction. The correct belief in and practice of it is contingent on one’s knowing the full counsel of Scripture. Regarding your concern of whether it is sinful to stay at your church, that’s a matter of your own searching the Scriptures related to what’s being taught and whether the Lord would have you stay. We are told that “the just shall live by faith,” which is belief in “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Although no church is perfect, a believer nevertheless has to decide whether or not he can abide in a fellowship by faith. “...whatever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23).

QUESTION: I knew it wouldn’t be long, once Dave was gone, that Berean Call would start sinking fast! Berean Call has joined up with Satan’s great favorites—Rick Warren, Dr. Dobson, and Billy Graham, along with other professing Christians. Before leaving Berean Call, I want to know how your predictable apostasy and blindness began. “OnePlace.com” is a one-religion stop for all.

RESPONSE: Oneplace.com is a clearinghouse for religious broadcasters, and we began posting there many years before the Lord took Dave home—and with his knowledge. We recognize that our presence on the Internet places us in proximity with untold numbers of false prophets, but before we are accused of “predictable apostasy and blindness,” it needs to be determined if TBC’s message has changed. Has it really conformed to match the others?

Paul went up to Mars Hill, which was a gathering place for Epicureans, Stoics, and other occult and humanist philosophers. It might be considered the OnePlace.com of

its day. People “which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21).

Yes, the Rick Warrens, Dr. Dobsons, etc., of that day were all there, and they said of Paul, “What will this babbler say?...He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods...” (v. 18). Paul’s message was very different, and, as a result of his going there, “some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter” (v. 32).

The question is, was Paul compromised because he went to Mars Hill? We won’t know until we join Dave in heaven what seeds were planted by Paul as he presented the distinct message of the gospel, and we won’t know who came to salvation through Paul’s ministry on Mars Hill. We do know that we have received many emails from folks who found us at the “one-religion stop for all.” They were encouraged by our consistent, biblical message.

And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Mk 2:15-17)

The message of Jesus never changed to avoid offending sinners, and had He not been dining with these folks, some would not have had the opportunity to hear His message.

Guilt by association “asserts that qualities of one thing are inherently qualities of another, merely by an irrelevant association.” Some of the printing we do is with a firm that has printed Rick Warren’s material as well. Does our message parallel Warren’s because we happen to use the same printer? We have also received criticism because we have a website on the Internet, which is clearly a corrupt medium. We appreciate those who are concerned for the integrity of our message, but we hope that they actually monitor what is taught or written.

John 17:14-15 tells us, “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.” Christians are “in the world,” but they are “not of the world.” May the Lord give us wisdom to understand this and use our liberty to preach an unchanged Gospel where any opportunity may be presented.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH
BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

“Nothing Exists Except God”?

QUESTION: I saw an interview with Sir John Marks Templeton in Robert Schuller’s *Possibilities* magazine. He is the man who awards the annual Templeton Prize for promoting an appreciation of the benefits of all the world’s religions. I was shocked to read in the interview that Templeton believes that “nothing exists except God.” I’m confused. I thought this was pantheism, yet there it was promoted in the magazine of a man who is looked up to as an evangelical leader. How can this be?

RESPONSE: It *is* pantheism. It is also a basic tenet of cults such as Science of Mind, Religious Science, and Christian Science. What they teach is basically the same as Peale’s positive thinking and Schuller’s possibility thinking, which explains why the latter would promote it in his magazine. Here is how “nothing exists except God” works in the mind science and positive/possibility thinking arena: God is good and God is all. Therefore, all is good. Thus, anything that isn’t good—sin, sickness, suffering, death, etc.—is not real but is a delusion of one’s negative thinking. The way to be delivered from these negative delusions is to become a positive or a possibility thinker.

The Bible, however, teaches that sin, suffering, sickness, and death are real indeed. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4) is the pronouncement of God’s just judgment and certainly treats both sin and death as real. Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead. He didn’t teach them to deny the reality of these things through positive thinking or possibility thinking. Such concepts are completely alien to the Bible.

Our deliverance from sin and death comes not by denying the reality of these evils through the power of the mind, but by faith in Christ, who suffered the agony of the Cross and paid the penalty that His own justice had pronounced upon sin. He died for our sins and “was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). If sin and death don’t exist, then the death of Christ for our sins and His resurrection are merely allegories and not real events—contrary to the historical facts.

If “nothing exists except God,” then the universe is God, and we ourselves are all part of God and thus divine and perfect beings. Indeed, if “nothing exists except God,” then Satan, who is certainly presented in the Bible as real, is God. One could not imagine a greater delusion.

The God of the Bible is separate and distinct from His creation, which He made out of nothing. That creation is running down like a clock because it is separated from Him by the rebellion of His creatures (Satan and his minions joined by mankind), a rebellion that caused God to pronounce His judgment upon this entire creation. If God were the universe, then He too would be running down like a clock. That is *not* the God of the Bible!

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH
(PP. 54-56) *by* DAVE HUNT

The Secret of Biblical Self-improvement

T. A. McMahon

The popularity of self-improvement, or self-help, books throughout the history of publishing is rather amazing. The reasons given for the wide acceptance of such books, historically, and especially in our day, are many, but they all boil down to man's desire to improve his condition or situation, whether financially, socially, educationally, physically, psychologically, spiritually, or "all of the above." Although the goals are improvement and the bettering of one's circumstance, the primary method and motivation is *by self* and *for self*: how can *I* improve *me*?

Since *self* is the fundamental focus of self-improvement, we need to give some serious thought to what it is. A gathering of definitions from contemporary dictionaries reveals *self* to be: the entire person; an individual's typical character or behavior; an individual's temporary behavior or character; a person in prime condition; the union of elements (as body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations) that constitute the individuality and identity of a person; personal interest or advantage. Simply stated, it's you and me and all that makes up each of us as individuals. The definition of "self" becomes more confusing, however, when words are added to the front or back of it, such as one's *true self* or *self-realization*. Moreover, the number of hyphenated "self" words are in the hundreds, from *self-actualizing* to *self-worth*, and each one adds its own meaning or nuance to "self."

Two "self"-related adjectives convey the best and the worst condition of self. *Selfless*: concerned more with the needs and wishes of others than with one's own: "an act of selfless devotion." Its synonyms clarify its wonderful qualities: unselfish, altruistic, self-sacrificing, self-denying; considerate, compassionate, kind, noble, generous, magnanimous, ungrudging, charitable, benevolent: "Her love was manifest in selfless service." *Selfish*, on the other hand, has no redeeming qualities: (of a person, action, or motive) lacking consideration for others; concerned chiefly with one's own personal profit or pleasure: "I entertained them for selfish reasons." Synonyms include: egocentric, egotistic, egotistical, egomaniacal, self-centered, self-absorbed, self-obsessed, self-seeking, self-serving, wrapped up in oneself;

inconsiderate, thoughtless, unthinking, uncaring, uncharitable; mean, miserly, grasping, greedy, mercenary, acquisitive, opportunistic; looking after number one: "He is just selfish by nature."

Scripture uses the term "self" in a very straightforward way, i.e., the entire person, and most often as reflexive pronouns such as "himself" and "themselves." So the "secret" of the biblical use of the term is not in its definition but in what the Word of God says about self and what it instructs us to do with it, which is in direct opposition to what the so-called wisdom of the world advocates.

According to our world, which has been heavily influenced by humanistic psychology (the contemporary breeding ground of all the selfist teachings), "self"—meaning the entirety of a human being—is *innately good*. Flaws or dysfunctions within a person's life stem from sources of influences external to the person himself, e.g., his par-

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

— Matthew 22:37-40

ents, or his physical, social, and educational environment, and so forth. The belief in inherent goodness is involved in all psychological counseling—and not as an option; it is foundational. The reason is obvious. If a person is not inherently good but has a fundamental defect in his nature that affects to some degree every aspect of his life, there is nothing a psychotherapist can do to alter the defect and its ultimate consequences. It's like the proverbial attempt to change a leopard's spots. One could dye the leopard's skin or cover it in some fashion, but such superficial acts would do nothing to truly change the spots. The leopard's genetics won't allow it.

But if self is indeed innately good, then it's simply a matter of a psychological counselor getting a client to recognize the goodness of his "self" and to psychotherapeutically remove all the things that are preventing the success of that belief. There are more than 500 different psychotherapies that have been conjured up to do just that. But many of them conflict with one another, and none of them proves or even makes a

plausible case for man's inherent goodness. Consequently, all of the methodologies only address a client's problems as symptomatic issues, because they can do nothing to change the nature of humanity. However, what is impossible for man is possible with God!

The Bible declares unequivocally that the heart of man is *not good*:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?; For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23)

Scripture tells us that "men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19) and that "all have sinned..." (Romans 3:23). These verses, and many more, describe the fallen nature of humanity, and there is nothing that anyone can do to change it or improve it.

Only God can change self and make it better, but He doesn't do it by man's way. That's the "secret" of biblical self-improvement, which is only secret in the sense that Christianity has lost sight of what the Scriptures clearly teach and what the church has practiced since the time of the apostles. That blindness began in earnest in the middle of the last century as psychological counseling made deep inroads to Christendom. By the 1970s some of the most influential names in the evangelical media were Christian psychologists, psychotherapists, and psychiatrists such as James Dobson, Frank Minirth, Paul Meier, Gary Collins, John Trent, and Gary Smalley, to name but a few. Books promoting "self" flooded the Christian marketplace, including *Hide or Seek: How to Build Self-esteem in Your Child* by psychologist Dr. James Dobson and *Self-esteem: the New Ref-ormation* by Robert Schuller, whose book was sent out *gratis* to 250,000 evangelical pastors. Self-love and self-esteem became new doctrines that were taught by most of the popular evangelical pastors of the day.

What too few Christians realize is that the rise of the unbiblical teachings of self-love within the church in our day is a matter of prophecy being fulfilled. In 2 Timothy 3, the Apostle Paul warns Timothy about a "perilous" time when self-love will be foundational to sins that will wreak havoc among believers: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves..." (vv. 1-2).

Some might wonder why that is prophetic, when mankind has had a self-serving bias going clear back to the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Looking out for “number one,” Adam blamed the woman whom God had given him, and Eve blamed the serpent (i.e., Satan), who seduced her into disobeying God.

Self-love has created problems for humanity throughout the centuries, but it wasn't until the last 100 years or so that the selfisms were promoted as the basic solutions to nearly all of mankind's ills, especially our mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. Much of that began with the “looking within” and the self-analysis practiced by Freud and Jung, but ironically—and more specifically—it involved a chiding by anti-Christian Friedrich Nietzsche that Christians didn't love themselves enough. That was picked up and promoted by psychologist and humanistic philosopher Eric Fromm, as Dave Hunt noted:

Fromm, an atheist, popularized the idea of self-love. He got it from Nietzsche. One of Fromm's books was *Ye Shall Be as Gods*. He took the lie of the Serpent for its title. In his book, *Man for Himself*, he justified the idea that we all hate ourselves and need to learn to love ourselves by saying that Jesus taught it when He said, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” (TBC, Q&A, 9/1986)

That distortion of the Scriptures was then accepted by increasing numbers of evangelical preachers and teachers who should have known better. First of all, it's a simple error in math. The proponents of self-love have made loving one's neighbor as oneself into a third commandment, whereas Matthew 22:37-40 declares:

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

It's *two* commandments, not three. Furthermore, as Dave points out, “...if we were deficient in self-love, Jesus wouldn't have said to love your neighbor as you love yourself, because he said it to everybody and not to a certain class or category of people. So it's a given—we must *already* love ourselves. And he couldn't say ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ (Matthew 7:12) if we all innately hated ourselves and wanted to do ourselves harm.” That error is further contradicted by Ephesians 5:29:

“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”

Loving self before loving God and others is mankind's natural bias, whether he or she is a committed Christian or not, and the consequence of that is associated with nearly all of the difficulties we experience in life. Paul's words to Timothy give a litany of the after effects of loving self:

...covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:2-7)

So that's the bad news. What, then, of the good news of how God can change our nature and improve self? It can happen only by turning to Him for the salvation that He alone has provided for all of mankind. That involves being reconciled to Him by admitting our sinfulness and accepting Christ's full payment for our sins by faith alone. Nothing more is required to receive the gift of eternal life, other than trusting in Jesus for saving us from the infinite penalty that our sin deserves. That's the gospel, and it's the only way that humanity can be saved.

Once a person puts his trust in Jesus for salvation, he becomes a new creature: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). He has been purged from his old sins and is no longer under the bondage of sin (2 Peter 1:9; John 8:31-32). As a believer in Christ, he has been born again spiritually, is in communion with God, and is fully able to love and obey Him. This was impossible prior to becoming a new creature in Christ. He is a “new man,” a new *self* (Ephesians 4:24), someone who can now live his life according to God's instructions in His Word.

The first instruction for a blessed and fruitful life is, however, that just as he could not save himself, neither can he do the things that will improve his life *by himself*. Biblical self-improvement is nothing like the world's “self-improvement”; in fact, it's the opposite. Although a believer's new life in Christ has set him free from the bondage of sin, he still retains his old nature with its self-serving bias. That is a major battleground

for every believer in Christ. Yet for all who have committed their lives to the Lord, He has provided through His Word and the enablement of the Holy Spirit all that they need to win the battle over their flesh and to do the things that please God. Contrary to the world's loving, esteeming, glorifying, even deifying self, Scripture tells us to deny self—to submit oneself completely to God and the instructions of His Word:

And he [Jesus] said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23)

Denying self is not the same as denying one's existence. For the believer, it's the recognition that although “self,” which was formerly in rebellion against God, continues to have autonomy (the capacity to make moral decisions for good or evil), it has now been enabled to choose and to live in righteousness in one's desire to please the Lord.

Scripture abounds with verses exhorting us to put the Lord and others before ourselves. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10); “Let no man seek his own, but every man another's [well-being]” (1 Corinthians 10:24); “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself” (Romans 15:2-3). Furthermore, the Word of God gives us instructions on how we can do those very things, in essence “biblically improving self.” Ironically, it involves a dying process.

We are to die to self—that is, to our autonomous will (also known as self-will)—not only by turning it over to the Lord and submitting to Him, but also by allowing Him to live His life *through* us:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

The issue of self is one of the most confused and distorted doctrines among Christians today, including those who profess that the Bible is their authority in all matters of faith and practice. That's the primary reason why the troubles of non-Christians differ little statistically from those who profess to be Christians. The hope for this series is that we might clarify what the Bible says about self and how we can biblically improve it. There is no doubt that such an understanding and a carrying out of what the Scriptures teach will transform us and improve every aspect of our lives in Christ. TBC

Quotable.....

Faith means implicit confidence in Jesus, and that requires not intellect only but a moral giving over of myself to Him. . . . It is this point of moral surrender that nearly every man “shies off.” We sentimentally believe, and believe, and believe, and nothing happens. We pray “Lord, increase our faith,” and we try to pump up the faith, but it does not come. What is wrong? The moral surrender has not taken place. Will I surrender from the real centre of my life, and deliberately and willfully stake my confidence on what Jesus Christ tells me?

—Oswald Chambers

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I’m confused. Where will the church (Grace-Age believers) spend eternity—Heaven or Earth? I’ve heard both.

RESPONSE: Regarding the destination of church-age believers, the Apostle Paul stated emphatically that he was “willing to be...absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). Paul’s declaration is given further weight when he declares that he had a desire to “depart and be with Jesus, which is far better” (Phil 1:23).

The Lord Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise.” This tells us that on that very day the Lord took the thief to “paradise” in accordance with His clear promise.

Ephesians 4:8 tells us: “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” When Jesus ascended into heaven, He took all the righteous dead with Him. That’s where they currently are dwelling, awaiting the Rapture when believers now alive will join them.

Regarding that subject, we have the promise that “Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thes 4:17).

In the Millennium, the book of Revelation tells us that we will be “priests of God and of Christ” and we will “reign with him for a thousand years” (Rv 20:6).

At the end of the Millennium, there will be a final rebellion (Rv 20:7-10), followed by the “Great White Throne Judgment” (Rv 20:11-15). Following this, in Revelation 21:1 we are told, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

The new heavens and the new earth will be a place “wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pt 3:13). Since the new heavens *and* new earth are designed to be a place of dwelling

for the righteous, Scripture doesn’t seem to hold any limitations as to whether the righteous are restricted to either heaven or earth. Nevertheless, we shall always be with the Lord, and the Lord is omnipresent.

Beyond these few details, we are given glimpses. Heaven is a place of joy where the Lord God will wipe away all tears from off all faces (Is 25:8). Psalm 16:11: “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” Revelation 21:4: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 7:16: “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.”

In short, the details of our eternity with Christ will be completely different from anything we’ve experienced in our lives and unimaginably better, regardless of where our resurrected bodies are found.

QUESTION: (Referring to Matthew 27:51-53): “And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city; and appeared unto many.” In his study Bible, Dr. Henry Morris writes: “The saints whose bodies were raised could only have been the men and women who had died in faith before the first coming of Christ. Until Christ set them free, their souls had been resting in that division of Hades called ‘Abraham’s bosom’ (Lk 16:22). However, when ‘he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive’ after He had ‘descended first into the lower parts of the earth’ (Eph 4:8-9). The Old Testament saints could only receive their glorified resurrection bodies after Christ had been raised, for Christ must ‘become the first-fruits of them that slept’ (1 Cor 15:20). This is apparently the only specific reference to the resurrection of these pre-Christian-era believers, yet no other interpretation seems plausible. Evidently their new bodies were seen by people on the earth during the brief period between Christ’s resurrection and His initial ascent to heaven (John 20:17).” Do you agree with this point of view?

RESPONSE: We appreciate what Morris is saying. Scripture gives us the illustrations of Enoch and Elijah, who were taken *bodily* into heaven. They must have received bodies that would be able to exist in the presence of God.

It’s interesting that the resurrection of

Christ and this limited number of saints (Mt 27:51-53) appears to be analogous to the Feast of First Fruits. In the Law, when a farmer harvested his field, he grabbed a sheaf of stalks, cut it off, and offered it to the Lord for a wave offering. Now, we know that Christ is “risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor 15:20). “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land ...and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD...on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it” (Lv 23:10-11).

Isn’t it interesting that “on the morrow after the Sabbath” (Sunday), this offering was made? What a parallel to the resurrection of the Lord! Men have long pondered why this group of saints in Matthew 27 was raised from the dead and seen by many, indicating that they must have had bodies of some sort. What is not mentioned is whether they went on living, only to die again, or whether they were taken up to be with the Lord. We know that this appearance had to have happened for more than just shock value. We believe that Morris provides excellent insight.

Some may have never considered that in that sheaf of grain, the farmer was holding more than just one stalk. Christ was the “first fruits,” but those saints who resurrected at that time seem to have been included in that sheaf, again, fulfilling the type.

QUESTION: In Luke we read about the little girl who was “asleep,” as Jesus said. Some say she was dead. But in Luke 8:55 it says “that her spirit returned to her,” signifying that she had been dead. If she was only asleep, as Jesus said, why did her spirit “return” to her? Yet, we cannot disbelieve Jesus when He said she was “asleep.”

RESPONSE: “Sleep” in Scripture is often used of those who are “dead” (Dn 12:12; 1 Thes 4:15).

From the perspective of man, she was dead. But to the Lord of life, she was only “asleep,” and He would awaken her.

The disciples “knew” that she was dead and laughed when Jesus said she was “sleeping” (8:52-53). They were limited to what they saw. No breath, she’s dead.

With a superior perspective, the Creator said she was “asleep” and that He would awaken her, even from the “sleep” of death. No one else could do this, for only He calls those “things which be not as though they were” (Rom 4:17). The Bible doesn’t tell us whether her spirit went to paradise, but from wherever it was, the Lord called it back to her body.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH
BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Do the Dead Sea Scrolls Reflect Badly on the Bible?

QUESTION: It is my understanding that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was a blow to the Bible. The oldest copies of some Old Testament texts ever found were included in this find and turned out to be far different from the later copies already in our possession. If the copyists had made such errors in those few centuries, how far must the Bible of today be from the original Old Testament manuscripts!

RESPONSE: I don't know where you got your information, but it is false. It was anticipated by Bible critics that great differences would be found, but that turned out not to be the case. Consider, for example, the manuscript of Isaiah now housed in its own museum in Jerusalem. The earliest copy we had of Isaiah prior to the Dead Sea discoveries was dated about AD 900, and the one discovered in the Dead Sea collection was dated about 100 BC. So here was an opportunity to see what changes might have occurred through copyists' inadvertent errors over the span of 1,000 years.

A comparison revealed a few spelling variations, some stylistic changes, and a rare word here and there that had either been left out or added but that did not change the meaning of the text. So in 1,000 years of copying, the text had been preserved without any real or significant change. The fact is that the discovery of the Isaiah scroll in the Qumran cave provided hard evidence that we have in our hands today the Old Testament as it was in the original documents.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH
(PP. 63-64) *by* DAVE HUNT

The Secret of Biblical Self-Improvement Part 2

T. A. McMahon

As we noted in part one of this series, everyone wants to improve himself or herself, whether it's one's situation, condition, image or whatever else people feel would make them happier. The world has conjured up a host of approaches in attempting to accomplish that goal, but its successes are rare and, at best, short-lived.

The biblical approach, on the other hand, has, as its objective, temporal improvement *and* eternal outcomes. In His Scriptures, God has given mankind instructions that will vastly improve one's condition on earth as well as prepare us for eternal rewards to come. As our Creator, God alone knows every aspect of every human being, from the most minute part of our physical bodies to every thought our mind thinks. In other words, there is nothing that God doesn't know about us. Therefore, as we deal with situations and circumstances that come our way, we can't do better than to turn to the One who knows us best.

According to the Manufacturer's Handbook (the Bible) the first humans, Adam and Eve, were created in perfection but then disobeyed God, which resulted in the corruption of their natures and subsequently the natures of their offspring (Romans 5:12). Their sin affected their relationship with God, separating them and all mankind from Him spiritually and physically for all eternity (Romans 3:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Yet God in His mercy sent Jesus to pay the infinite penalty required for mankind to be reconciled to Him. Our Lord's sacrifice satisfied God's perfect justice and made the way for all who by faith accept Christ's payment on their behalf to receive the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23).

Those who put their trust in Christ are born again spiritually. Their nature has been changed from one that is in bondage to sin and under God's condemnation to one that belongs to God and is no longer controlled by sin. A born-again Christian still retains his old nature and can therefore choose to sin, but his new nature enables him to refrain from sinning. Although his sins—past, present, and future—have been completely paid for by our Savior Jesus Christ, thus securing his eternal destiny, whatever sins he may commit nevertheless still have temporal consequences. They adversely affect his relationship with the

Lord, the answers to his prayers, and his relationships with others. He will reap what he has sown, experience the ill effects of immoral activities, will have to pay penalties for breaking civil laws, and so forth.

Those consequences can be avoided by simply obeying the instructions that God's Word presents. That's the "secret" to biblical self-improvement, which, as I mentioned in the first part of this series, is only a secret in the sense that too few Christians know their Bibles well enough to be aware of the instructions of the Scriptures. Even if a believer is willing to obey God, he can't do what God wants if he doesn't know His instructions.

That brings us to the first imperative of biblical self-improvement: we have to know what God says, and that can come about only by diligently reading His Word. A habit of reading the Scriptures daily is not only the best habit a believer can have—it is critical to his having a fruitful life in Christ and maturing in his relationship with the Lord.

Self-improvement, biblically, as we have noted, is diametrically opposed to the world's way of going about improving "self," as well as being contrary to the world's understanding regarding "self." The world sees "self" as inherently good; it is to be highly esteemed and held foremost in one's endeavors; it is to be loved above all, and even deified, according to some religions and psychotherapies. The Bible, in contrast, deems "self" as mankind's major problem, as inherently evil, as continually biased toward the person himself. Even among believers, it is their greatest hindrance to a life of following Jesus, which is what Christianity is all about. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus declared to His disciples: "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" Nothing and no one must come before our Lord. Moreover, believers are to consider others before themselves. That's what the Bible teaches, and when we do what it teaches, the effect is that our temporal lives, whether as individuals, families, or churches, are transformed because we are drawing closer to the Lord.

Biblical Christianity is all about selflessness. It is about being "other-directed," putting others first. Jesus exemplified that and taught it: "*...But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [servant]; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [slave]: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto [served], but to minister [serve], and*

to give his life a ransom for many." "*And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.*" (Matthew 20:26-28; Mark 9:35).

Our Savior's sacrifice for us on the Cross was the supreme act of selfless love, as Charles Wesley noted in his hymn: "Amazing love! How can it be, that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" Jesus not only paid an immeasurable ransom for our salvation; He gave us a commandment that reflected His sacrificial love in our relationship with others: "*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:12-13).

Too often we think of astounding acts, such as a sacrificial death on someone else's behalf, and miss the everyday opportunities that we have to manifest selflessness. Jesus gave us such an example when He washed the feet of His disciples: "*So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*" (John 13:12-17).

Foot washing is certainly a wonderful act of humility, but the Lord's example is much more than that. Jesus is telling us that serving one another needs to be *the rule* in the realm of everyday life. Foot washing was a very common activity when the chief mode of traveling to and from was walking on dirt paths in sandals.

Consider verse 17: "*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*" This is the "secret" to biblical self-improvement, which has been displaced in our Laodicean, humanistic, psychologized, self-serving end-time church. The church is not "happy" because it isn't practicing what Jesus, our Lord of lords and King of kings, demonstrated and taught. The consequences are that there is little difference statistically between the ills of the world and the problems that beset Christendom, i.e., both professing Christians and true believers.

Take, for example, divorce among believers. If there is a case in which one's

self-interest on the part of one or both is not the root problem, I haven't seen it in my experiences over the years in ministering to couples considering divorce. What about relationships that are mostly in turmoil among family members—husband and wife, parents and children, between siblings themselves? Pick an issue and consider whether or not *self* has raised its ugly head in causing dissension. That is the battlefield we are all in. The Apostle Paul in his letters (inspired by the Holy Spirit) describes the battle regarding “self” and the condition of the combatants. The troubles among the Philippians were caused by their doing things through selfish ambition and conceit. Paul’s corrective instructions zeroed in on the “self issue”: “...but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other[s] better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” Paul underscores the fleshly “me-first” bent that we all struggle with from time to time: “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Philippians 2:3-4; 21).

Again, being a bondservant of the Lord, putting Him first, serving others and putting them before ourselves, are the marching orders for those who have received the “unspeakable gift” of eternal life. Scriptures abound with teachings regarding selflessness: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10). “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities [scruples/conscience] of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me” (Romans 15:1-3). “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more” (1 Corinthians 9:19). “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth [well-being]” (1 Corinthians 10:24). “Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Corinthians 10:33).

In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, who were racked with selfish leanings, he wrote a profound chapter on love, in which he stated that true love “seeketh not her own” (1 Corinthians 13:5). In other words, biblical love is concerned first and foremost with others. The Corinthians of Paul’s day were

not the only believers with a “self” problem; it was a characteristic of many believers in all of the churches, with notable exceptions such as the church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) and others of similar mindsets down through history. Yet Paul prophesied of a “perilous” time prior to Christ’s return when a chief characteristic on earth would be that “*men shall be lovers of their own selves*” (2 Timothy 3:1-2). That prophecy, as noted in Part One of this series, not only has been manifested in an unprecedented way in the last hundred years in the world, but incredibly, it has become a false doctrine in the church and is taught by many popular evangelical preachers and Christian psychologists. This is a shocking development in the face of so many Scripture verses that clearly teach the opposite. Yet in light of another prophecy by Paul, we can see how it was possible for such false teachings (self-esteem, self-love, self-image, self-worth, and on to self-*ad nauseam*) to enter the church: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:3).

Prophecy, however, is not deterministic. God’s foreknowledge of events that will take place doesn’t predestine individuals to fulfill the prophecies regarding these events. His knowing that the “me generations” will manifest themselves in our day does not relieve those generations of being held accountable for their self-serving choices. Although the acts and consequences of selfishness are seemingly everywhere, that doesn’t mean that believers have to conform to them or be controlled by them. The solution to preventing our lives from reflecting the destructive “self” litanies of our day are hardly complex. In fact, many of those problems of living can be averted by implementing two words: Stop it!

Temptation comes along, whatever it may be, and we can either buy into it... or not. We can *stop it* before it becomes sin. The “stop it” solution can certainly be overstated, but too often we bypass the truth that correcting a sin or a potential sin is always a matter of our wills. Scripture, for example, tells us to flee youthful lusts. That’s what Joseph did when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him. We don’t find him standing around hoping and praying that the Lord would take his lust away as she grabbed him by his garment. No. He split, leaving his garment behind. James tells us to resist the devil. Peter writes that we are to “resist steadfast in the faith.”

Obviously, we are to make choices. We either choose to serve ourselves and sin or serve God by acting in righteousness. In our willingness to please God rather than self, we have God’s grace, we have the true wisdom from the Word of God, and we have the help of the Holy Spirit, the prayers, encouragement, and support of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Here’s a very short “self” checklist for our consideration and correction: 1) Am I making decisions based on what pleases me rather than what pleases the Lord? That’s a *self-love* issue: Do I love me more than Jesus? Think about our situations regarding the opportunity to sin. Guess what I’m going to decide if I love me and want to please me rather than loving Jesus and pleasing Him! 2) In a marriage situation, are we giving preference to ourselves rather than to our spouses, and in the process not treating each other with loving kindness, affection, and respect? 3) What about the way we talk to one another? Does our communication with others reflect a sharp tongue, sarcasm, and put-downs rather than loving and esteeming them? Regarding 1 through 3, two words need to be implemented to correct the problem: Stop it! 4) As parents, are we teaching our children to obey the Scriptures in the way that they treat their siblings and friends? 5) Are we examples to our children regarding the Bible’s instructions, and do we consistently and biblically correct them when they act selfishly toward others?

Although this list is just the tip of the iceberg regarding the application of God’s Word for living our lives as biblical Christians, I guarantee that even those few things, when obeyed according to the Scriptures, will have a transformational impact in our personal lives, our family relationships, our relationships outside our families, our witness to unbelievers, and, most important, our growth in our relationship with Jesus. Why am I so confident? Simply because we are doing what God tells us to do, and in doing so, we will be enabled and supported by an abundance of His grace through the Holy Spirit.

So the “secret” of biblical self-improvement has been exposed in the light of the Scriptures. Let it no longer be so removed from our lives that it seems a mystery to us. Rather, by God’s grace and enablement, let the application of biblical service and selflessness help to demonstrate to the world the truth of the Bible and the reality of a Christianity that obeys what our true and living God has communicated to us. TBC

Quotable.....

Life has no ultimate meaning unless it continues not temporarily but eternally, beyond both the grave and the passing existence of this physical universe. Consequently, life is only lived wisely to the extent that it is spent in preparation for the eternity which follows.

—Dave Hunt,
Whatever Happened to Heaven?

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I've heard several speakers say that Jesus was afraid that Satan would kill Him prematurely in the Garden of Gethsemane before He could get to the cross. And that's why He cried out, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," the "cup" being a premature death in the Garden. Is that true?

RESPONSE: Hardly. Dying on the Cross as the sacrifice for sin was the culmination of Christ's purpose in being born into this world. The prophets had foretold it, and Christ himself had confirmed it (Mt 16:21; Jn 12:32-33). Nothing and no one could have killed Him or otherwise prevented the fulfillment of His mission.

Jesus is God. Neither man nor Satan could take His life. He declared, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn 10:17-18).

Christ is also perfect, sinless man—the one and only God-man. As man, He would not for a moment have been in fear of Satan's slaying Him, for He was walking in perfect obedience to and under the complete care of His Father. To suggest such a fear indicts Christ with the rankest unbelief.

Remember, also, that after asking if the cup might pass from Him, Christ said, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk 22:42). If the "cup" he wanted to escape was death in the Garden, then by saying, "nevertheless...thy will be done," Christ was suggesting that it might be the Father's will for Him to die in the Garden at the hands of Satan rather than to pay for our sins upon the Cross, which is unthinkable.

Nor was the "cup" the physical pain of being crucified. Many had bravely endured crucifixion and Jesus was no coward. The "cup" from which He shrank was the awful separation from God that His justice required as the penalty for sin: that His holy soul would be made "an offering for sin" (Is 53:10)—He would literally be "made [to be] sin for us" (2 Cor:5:21). His prayer, therefore, was an earnest request from Son to Father: "Might

there not be some other possible means of saving sinners?" The Father's answer was "No." We know, therefore, that Christ's death upon the Cross as our sin-bearer was and is the only way of salvation. Horrible beyond comprehension, what He endured we will never know. He fully paid that penalty for us.

QUESTION: Is it not true that the teaching in the gospels is for Israel and the Millennium and that the teaching for the church is found in the Epistles?

RESPONSE: Was it not in the Gospels that Jesus said He would build His church? He trained and commissioned His disciples to do just that during His earthly ministry related in the Gospels.

In Matthew 28 Christ tells the Twelve to make disciples. Shouldn't we? In Mark 16 they are told to "preach the gospel." Don't we preach the gospel? Is it different? No! Where does our authority to preach the gospel and to make disciples come from if not from Christ's command to the Twelve? They were to teach the disciples they made to observe all that Christ had commanded them, which would include making disciples . . . down to us today.

If Paul was the one who brought teaching to the church and the Gospels are only for Israel, how do we deal with the fact that the church was formed before Paul came along? That wasn't Israel being formed or restored on the Day of Pentecost! Peter and the other disciples preached the gospel before Paul was converted. It was clearly the same gospel by which Paul was converted and that he later preached.

How can one say that Paul's epistles are for the church but that Acts was a "transitional" period between Israel and the church, when Paul wrote his epistles during the period of the Book of Acts? So, we cannot ignore the Gospels and teachings of our Lord as though they apply to some past and future age but not to the church or to Christians right now.

QUESTION: I've been told that you are not cessationists. If that's the case, how do you explain the fact that nowhere in the church today do we see anything close to the signs and wonders that took place during the time of the Apostles?

RESPONSE: We simply try to be biblical Christians, thereby avoiding cessationist, non-cessationist, continuationist, or any of the other labels and definitions imposed by man on certain beliefs. We believe that the gifts of the Spirit are given for the edification of the church and will continue through the church age. If the gifts had ended after the death of the last apostle, then all of Paul's instructions regarding the gifts and the work

of the Holy Spirit would have been seriously short-lived. That makes no sense.

Why don't we see miracles like there were in the days of the apostles? A couple of reasons should be evident: 1) Those who take a cessationist perspective (that the gifts have ceased) would hardly storm the throne of God seeking His miraculous intervention. That would include a large portion of those within conservative evangelical churches. 2) Sadly, many of those who do seek after signs and wonders don't demonstrate the prerequisite holiness for God to work through them. Certainly God, for His own glory, can and does sovereignly override such limitations.

Miracles that were manifested through the apostles confirmed that what the apostles taught was indeed the word of God. Yet that was not the only reason why God worked through them; they were not only "talking the talk, they were walking the walk." In other words, as God's vessels, they reflected His truth through holiness.

When one considers the landscape of the church today, whether Pentecostal, Charismatic, or conservative evangelical, God's holiness is sorely lacking.

If you're going to have the power of God operating in this way, then you can't have people who claim to be miracle workers who are committing adultery and involved in homosexuality and lying and cheating and so forth. How are we going to have a church that is demonstrating God's miracles to the world when they're not living pure lives? That would be a horrible testimony of God. He could hardly put His stamp of approval on such a church.

So basically, as far as seeing this in the church as a whole, you're not going to see it. It might happen in some special cases. We've all seen Him do some amazing things, but as a general rule, we're going to have to live holier, purer lives if we're going to see what they had in the first century. They lost it because of sin entering in, just as with Israel.

And yet we still hear of God moving in miraculous ways today. We hear of genuine healings and provision for needs (in ways that only God could have orchestrated). We hear of God's deliverance of individuals from certain death and His placing people in the right place at the right time to accomplish His will. It's usually done quietly and behind the scenes. God is always God. He doesn't change. And His Spirit is still working. Unfortunately, much of what is done in His name and promoted as "miraculous" is not His work at all. So, yes, we believe that the Holy Spirit is still active in believers' lives today, but much of what is splashed around out there as "miracles" is coming from another spirit.

*O*H, love the LORD, all you His saints! For the LORD preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD.

— PSALM 31:23-24

OVER THE YEARS, numerous people have told me that they appreciate the fact that I am a humble person. I have always taken great pride in that! But seriously, folks, if pride is something God repays, then obviously He attaches great magnitude to this sin.

It is also worth noting that David here contrasts faith and pride as receiving opposite rewards, and therefore they are opposing attributes. Preservation from the Lord for the faithful and repayment from the Lord for the proud tell us that humility is of the Lord and pride is...well...of the devil.

David also reminds us that the life lived by faith requires courage. This courage is necessary to deal with elements in our day that have always been present but never quite as flagrant as they are now. In biblical times, pride was often associated with the rich, but pride today is marketed to the rich and poor alike as an essential aspect of getting ahead. We know this is true simply by walking through a modern bookstore and counting the number of rows and shelves containing books under the theme of self-help.

But the Bible tells us, friends, that exaltation is reserved exclusively for the humble (Matt. 23:11). There is no help in self; our help is in the Lord. However, it takes courage to be humble, and it takes courage not to promote self or climb over others on the ladder of success.

The fact is, God hates pride. He says, “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). So there you have pride’s reward: destruction and a fall. But conversely, divine preservation, courage, and strength are the reward of the humble.

In this age of self, strength and courage await the *humble*. Give it a try today and see how you stand out. Also, you’ll see just how hard it is to do! But don’t return insult for insult, and don’t try to climb above others by tearing them down. Be humble today, which simply means, “Don’t exalt yourself.” It takes no strength to be proud. Any weakling can do that!

— Excerpted from *Body Builders: A Daily Devotional* by Barry Stagner, Sr. Pastor at Calvary Chapel Tustin, CA, and featured speaker on the nationally broadcast radio program *The Truth about God*.

Time and Eternity

Dave Hunt

First published in January 1996

Once again we have entered upon a new year welcomed with wild celebrations at midnight, December 31. Such festivities are questionable at best. And why celebrate the reminder that, just as a year has vanished into the past, so all too quickly must our earthly lives pass as well? That fact should bring sober contemplation and prayer rather than loud rejoicing.

Time passes and cannot be recalled. The poet wrote of her memory running “like a hunted thing down paths I cannot retrace.” Time is mysterious, beyond our ability to fathom. We know some things *about* time, but what it really *is* eludes our most advanced science. Essential for change and motion in the physical universe, time will be absent in eternity. Nothing changes or ages in eternity; it is one eternal *now*, impossible for us at present to comprehend.

Won't we travel in eternity across the universe, necessitating time? Not as we understand “travel.” Space as a measurement of distance between places or objects may no longer exist, or at least it will lose its meaning. There will be millions of redeemed in heaven. Will some therefore be far from Christ on the fringes of the vast throng? In fact, all will be in His immediate presence—a joy beyond our current understanding.

Already in the Millennium, our resurrected, glorified bodies, like Christ's, will no longer be part of the physical universe and will thus be changeless and timeless, able to be seen, then vanish, and to pass through closed doors and walls. “Jesus himself stood in the midst of them...but they were terrified...[thinking] they had seen a spirit...[H]andle me, and see,” said Christ, “for a spirit hath no flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Lk 24:36-43). Paul informs us, “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:44). We don't know what that means except as it was demonstrated in Christ's resurrection.

Without His resurrection there is no hope for eternity. Yet Christ's triumph over death, the very heart of our faith, is denied by some who claim to be in the faith. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) considers it no longer essential to believe that Christ rose from the dead.

A book recently published by the Augsburg-Fortress Press of the 5.6 million-member ELCA, by Professor Gerd Luedemann, comes to the conclusion that the body of Jesus decayed in the grave.

A similar denial of the Resurrection comes from the highly celebrated convert to Christianity (more recently converted to Roman Catholicism), Malcolm Muggeridge. I was impressed with the great testimony he gave at Billy Graham's 1974 Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland. Then I read Muggeridge's book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, in which he said that it didn't matter whether Jesus resurrected or not. “I even prefer to suppose,” he added, “that some body snatcher...drags the stone away [from the grave], and then...decamps with the body...[later] abandons the body to the vultures, who in their turn leave the bones to whiten in the sun—those precious bones!”

The apostles, then, were liars because they testified that Christ rose from the dead and “shewed himself alive...by many

book gave me one of my earliest perceptions that some who reject the very heart of Christianity pretend to be His true disciples and thus destroy Christianity from within. I was learning, to my dismay, that the “last-days apostasy” is upon us and gaining alarming momentum.

Our calendar supposedly marks the years since the birth of Christ. Elaborate plans are being laid to celebrate Christ's 2,000th birthday in the year A.D. 2000. In fact, we reach that milestone in 1996 due to a four-year miscalculation in starting the calendar. Christ was actually born in 4 B.C. There is no more reason, however, to celebrate his 2,000th “birthday” than there was to celebrate his 1,999th or any other. He changes not.

The celebration in A.D. 2000 of Christ's birthday (if Christ has not yet come and it occurs) will be indistinguishable from and probably confused with the many other celebrations to be held at the same time, thus sacrificing the uniqueness of Christ and the true meaning of His coming into

the world (see *TBC* 6/95, 9/95 and 12/95). For example, Robert Muller, former Assistant Secretary of the United Nations and a New Age leader, has written, “My great personal dream is to get a tremendous alliance between all the major religions and the UN... humanity should hold in the year 2000 a worldwide Bimillennium Celebration of Life...[leading to] a peaceful, happy, and godly society on earth.”

Birthdays remind us that everyone and everything, due to time's passage, grows irrevocably older and will soon pass from this scene. Time moves on without regard to dates or events or human sentiments, though it makes space in a brief, elusive present for their fleeting moments before they are swallowed up in the past. One can even take comfort in that fact. I've been helped to endure many a difficult or painful situation by reminding myself that “This, too, shall pass.”

There is another side to that coin. While the realization that the discomfort must inevitably end is heartening when one is in the dental chair, it has the opposite effect when one is enjoying a vacation. As surely as pain will pass, so will pleasure. And so it is with one's entire life, which, no matter how lengthy, is like “a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas 4:14).

That simple fact is forgotten by *most* of us *most* of the time. Plans are usually laid as though life on this earth will never

**SO TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS,
THAT WE MAY APPLY OUR HEARTS
UNTO WISDOM.**

— *Psalm 90:12*

infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3). Who was this imposter, with nailprints in hands and feet and a spear wound in his side, who spent 40 days with the disciples and convinced them that he was Jesus come back from the dead? The grave was definitely empty. It is ludicrous to imagine a “body snatcher” emptying a tomb that was being guarded by Roman soldiers!

Moreover, if Christ is not risen then Christianity is just another philosophy of life like Buddhism or Confucianism. In fact, it would be worse because Christ himself promised that He would rise from the dead, that because He lived so would His disciples, and that one day He would come back to take them to heaven. Unlike Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam, whose leaders made no such claims, if Christ didn't resurrect, He is a liar and Christianity a fraud!

Our very salvation is dependent upon believing that Christ rose from the dead: “[I]f thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9). Muggeridge's

end. Solomon said, “It is better to go to the house of mourning [a funeral], than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart” (Ecc 7:2). Does this sound morbid? It surely refutes the idea that one must always be “positive”! Moses put it like this: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps 90:12).

Thus, true wisdom involves a recognition of the shortness of our days upon earth. The fact that this life (no matter how successful and full of pleasure or how painful and difficult to endure) passes, and that eternity never passes, must temper all of our choices. Without that reminder we would live for time (with which we are too absorbed) rather than for eternity (to which we scarcely give a thought).

Yes, we need to make prudent decisions pertaining to this life. Every decision, however, must be made in light of eternity. A choice that weighs only the consequences for time and produces detrimental effects for eternity is the utmost folly. Jesus warned that to “gain the whole world” is not success but the worst failure imaginable if such earthly gain is made at the cost of one’s soul, i.e., one’s eternal destiny (Mk 8:36).

The changing of the year is the time when “New Year’s resolutions” are solemnly sworn, promises are made, hope springs once again and optimistic plans are laid for the year ahead. In his classic book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, William Law mentions two men, each completely absorbed in planning a retirement mansion. One plans to build his on earth, the other on Mars. Everyone thinks the second man is a fool. Law, however, shows that they are both fools and that the difference in the degree of their folly is only a short period of transient time. The one plans a house on Mars where he will *never be*; the other on earth where he *cannot stay*.

This is not to suggest that we should not plan for this life. No plans, however, for retirement or even for tomorrow, should be made without submitting them to God’s will. As James has written, “Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.... For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil” (4:13-16).

Both Blaise Pascal and John Locke argued that if death ends it all, the man who misses out on what this life offers in order to prepare for the next loses nothing eternally. However, the man who, in living wholly for this world’s brief rewards, brings torment upon himself for eternity has gambled against impossible odds and has only himself to blame for such folly. Some 250 years ago, William Law illustrated this fact powerfully through *Penitens*, a “very prosperous young tradesman...about to die in his thirty-fifth year.” *Penitens* had this to say to friends who had come to express their sympathy:

You look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead, but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life.... And yet what folly of the silliest children is so great as this?

Our poor friend Lepidus died, you know, as he was dressing himself for a feast. Do you think it is now part of his trouble that he did not live till that entertainment was over? Feast and business and pleasure and enjoyments seem great things to us whilst we think of nothing else; but as soon as we add death to them they all sink into an equal littleness....

If I am now going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve that this happened to me before I was forty years of age? Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven before I had made a few more bargains or stood a little longer behind a counter? And if I am going amongst lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content that this did not happen to me till I was old, and full of riches?

Now that judgment is the next thing that I look for, and everlasting happiness or misery is come so near me, all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem vain and insignificant....But, my friends, how I am surprised that I have not always had these thoughts....

What a strange thing is it that a little health or the poor business of a shop should keep us so senseless of these great things that are coming so fast upon us!

Whether it be through the Rapture or through death, all of us will very soon stand before God to give an account of our lives. The longest life ends abruptly and one is suddenly ushered into eternity. Time has vanished into the past—except as choices and words and deeds have affected eternity. Yes, how we live this brief life carries eternal consequences

for good and ill. The lost stand before the “great white throne” to hear their doom (Rv 20:11-15), but Christians are also held accountable for every thought, word, and deed: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10-11).

Compromise may be more difficult to resist even than sensual sin—and it is becoming increasingly necessary to compromise to retain the favor of today’s evangelical leadership. The very correction that the Bible requires is no longer acceptable. Yet everything else must be accepted. The following fax arrived at this very moment from the former host of a Christian radio talk show: “Our show was cancelled...on Oct. 6 amidst a tremendous protest from listeners....A couple of weeks ago [my replacement] did a show on false teachings....Promise Keepers came up [from a caller], caused the usual flap...management hauled [him] in for a dressing down and pulled him from the show.... As a 30-year pro in broadcasting, I can see ‘Christian’ broadcasting locking into a religiously correct format...and that is tragic for the body as a whole. The effort to smash free speech and thought is worse in religious media than in secular.” We have lost the vision of eternity, and heaven has become the place everyone wants to go—but not yet.

Facing eternity motivates us to be faithful and true to our Lord and His Word in anticipation of the great joy that Christ looked forward to: “...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...” (Heb 12:2). Paul urged us to “Set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:1-4). John encourages us, “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2). Again Paul holds before us a hope that makes earth’s best alternatives shrink into nothingness: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13).

The old hymn says: “These earthen vessels break, the world itself grows old; but Christ the Lord our dust will take and freshly mold. He’ll give these bodies vile a fashion like His own. He’ll make the whole creation smile and hush its groan.” That hope is worth living—and dying—for!

TBC

Quotable.....

If we were in our right senses, we should be so softened and sweetened by all His benefits that we should be grieved over even the slightest transgression.

—Vance Havner

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I've been watching the *Wide Is the Gate* video series with some friends. We watched "Youth Movements and the Social Gospel" from volume 2 in which T. A. McMahon states: "in trying to solve the problems, fix the world, many Christians don't realize that they're actually going to be helping the Antichrist develop his kingdom." My friends were disturbed by this statement and understood it to mean that Christians should not help with anything that makes the world a better place. The world is destined to be destroyed and only those who are going to follow the Antichrist want to make it better. Is this what you meant?

RESPONSE: Sometimes in an interview when a somewhat lengthy answer is given, the context can suffer in the editing process. I'm not sure that was the case in my *Wide Is the Gate* interview, but since I've addressed the subject a number of times, let me fill you in on what I was trying to communicate. There are many programs today throughout Christendom that could be categorized as biblical good works (Eph 2:10). That's because they are consistent with the Word of God. On the other hand, there are programs that have lost touch or possibly never were in touch with what the Scriptures teach about good works. They replace the Gospel of God with the social gospel of man. Examples would be attempts at curing the world's ills of poverty, illiteracy, injustice, disease, and so forth. That objective may seem good to the world but it's not the objective of the Bible. It is also impossible. Only as the Word of God changes hearts can the root of sin that has produced such problems be eradicated. Temporal solutions provide no answer to the dilemma of where the lost will spend eternity.

As biblical Christians, our dealings with these matters must be in line with the Word of God. Our priority in good works needs to be the eternal salvation of souls. Jesus didn't come to earth and go to the cross to make the world a better place for its inhabitants. He came to pay the penalty for our sin. He came to reconcile us to God so that we could be with Him for all eternity. That's the good news of the gospel. Yet the Bible tells us that

as we have "opportunity, let us do good unto all men...." Obviously, the best "good" is to encourage unbelievers to turn to the Lord. We can demonstrate the love of God through sharing His Word and providing for physical needs. These "opportunities" are a blessing and a natural result of living our lives for Christ.

Biblical Christians also need to be very discerning regarding the "good works" of ministries we support. Although sincere in their intention to minister to the world, more than a few have agendas that are contrary to Scripture. Two examples among many that could be given: World Vision does not proselytize, it conforms to and uses the sociological strategies of the world, and it is pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel; Rick Warren's Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan encourages working with the world's religions in order to solve social issues, including the problem of "spiritual emptiness."

As I stated in the video, and in regard to the above, Christians who are participating in ministries that are ignoring the Bible in favor of manmade agendas may be unwittingly contributing to the development of the kingdom of the Antichrist. The chronology of Scripture indicates that the next kingdom on earth will be the seven-year reign of the Antichrist. If believers contribute to a ministry that believes it is literally ushering in God's Kingdom here on earth now or that is working toward restoring the earth in disregard of what the Bible declares prophetically, again, they will be unaware that they are furthering the plans of the Adversary. Your friends, as well as the rest of us who love the Lord, need to consider whatever we do in the light of God's Word.

QUESTION: Are you familiar with Randy Frazee [co-editor Max Lucado] and his book called *The Story*? Our church is promoting it for small group study and I have a few concerns. Would appreciate any information you may have.

RESPONSE: We have been going through a copy of *The Story* for some time. When someone condenses the Bible into what they perceive are the important parts, what becomes quickly apparent is the truth of Paul's inspired statement that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..." (2 Tm 3:16-17). What some deem to be unimportant often contains the most pertinent details.

The Story contains 21 chapters from the Old Testament and 10 from the New Testament. Summaries are used to "fill in" the missing portions of Scripture. For example, the entire incident of Sodom and Gomorrah is omitted. Instead, we are given the following

summary:

Lot made some bad decisions [in taking] up residence near Sodom. In retrospect, it was a poor choice of real estate....The kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, and three other kings squared off in battle against an enemy army. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah lost, and the cities were looted. Lot and his family were among the captives.

...Abram...set out to rescue his nephew..., freed the captives, and recovered the spoil. Meeting a priest [named] Melchizedek, he gave him a tenth of the spoils....

Despite Abram's growing sense of God's power, one problem remained that even the Almighty seemed unable to solve. It was Abram's greatest worry and the main topic of his dialogues with God. [TBC: *And what was this great worry of Abram's? Was it his fear that God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, where his nephew lived, for their great wickedness? No, it was the fact that he didn't have a son.*]

Lucado and Frazee's omission of the full story of Sodom and Gomorrah is a great error. The Lord warned against adding to or taking away from Scripture (Dt 4:2, Rv 22:19), and with good cause. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is referenced throughout the Bible as a warning of God's judgment on those who do wickedly (see Dt 29:23; Is 1:9, 13:19; Jer 23:14, 50:40; Lam 4:6; Am 4:11; Zep 2:9; Lk 17:29; Jude 7; 2 Pt 2:6; etc.).

At times, the summaries seem to contain unsupported assumptions:

Abram believed that the promised child would come from his own body, but *as far as he and Sarai knew, God didn't specify that Sarai would be the mother*. In a move common during this time, they decided that Sarai's slave, Hagar, would be a surrogate mother for the promised child....

Regarding the "poetic books," nothing from Job, Ecclesiastes, or Song of Solomon is included. Concerning Psalms and Proverbs, only a relative few examples make it into *The Story*. The New Testament comprises summaries of the Gospels, some of Paul's epistles, Acts, and Revelation. The Sermon on the Mount is condensed, with much omitted. The epistle of James is omitted. What is called the Golden Rule is missing although Jesus calls it the summation of the entire Law and Prophets. Finally, very important teachings on the Kingdom of Heaven given by the Lord in Matthew 25 are also missing. Much as we could not recommend the *Reader's Digest Bible* from years ago, we cannot recommend a similar mutilation of the revealed Word of God.

What About the Trinity?

QUESTION: Christians generally believe in the Trinity, a “God” who is three Persons and yet one Supreme Being. But the word “Trinity” doesn’t appear even *once* in the Bible, which plainly declares that there is only *one* God, not *three*. How can you possibly justify a belief in the “Trinity” from the Bible?

RESPONSE: There are only two basic concepts of God: 1) pantheism/naturalism—that the universe itself is God; and 2) supernaturalism—that God or gods exist distinct and apart from the universe. We have already shown the folly of the first concept, which leaves us only with the latter. Within supernaturalism are two opposing views: 1) polytheism—that there are many gods (Mormons as well as Hindus are polytheists); and 2) monotheism—that there is only one God. We have shown that polytheism, too, has fatal flaws. Its basic problem is diversity without unity.

There are also two opposing views within monotheism: 1) the belief that God is a single personage, as in Islam and Judaism, which insist that Allah or Jehovah is “one,” meaning a single being. The same belief is also held by pseudo-Christian cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Oneness Pentecostals, who deny the Trinity and claim that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are God’s three “titles” or “offices.” Here, the fatal flaw is *unity without diversity*.

The Necessity for Both Unity and Diversity

That God must have *both unity and diversity* is clear. The Allah of Islam, or the Jehovah of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jews, or the God of unitarian “Christian” groups would be incomplete in Himself. He would be unable to love, commune, or fellowship before creating other beings capable of interacting with Him in these ways. The quality of love and the capacities for fellowship and communion, by their very nature, require another personal being with which to share them. And God could not fully share Himself except with another Being equal to Him. Yet the Bible says that “God is love” in Himself alone. This could only be true if God himself consisted of a plurality of Beings who were separate and distinct, yet one.

Although the actual word “Trinity” does not occur in the Bible, the concept is clearly expressed there. The Bible presents a God who did not need to create any beings to experience love, communion, and fellowship. This God is complete in Himself, existing eternally in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, individually distinct from each other yet at the same time eternally one. These three loved, communed, fellowshiped, and took counsel together before the universe, angels, or man were brought into existence.

In contrast, the god of Islam and contemporary Judaism could not *be* love in and of himself, for whom could he love in the solitude predating his creation of other personal beings? Such a deficiency in God would affect man, who is made in His image, at every level of his being.

Plurality and Singularity: Both Apply

The very first verse in the Bible presents God as a *plural* being: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” If God were a single personage, then the singular word for God, *Eloah*, would be used. Instead of the singular form, however, the plural, *Elohim*, which literally means *Gods*, is used. Yet a singular *verb*, *bara*, is used with *Elohim*. This *plural noun* (*Elohim*) is used for God more than 2500 times in the Old Testament and almost always with a singular verb, thus indicating both unity and diversity and both singularity and plurality in the God of the Bible. It was Elohim (Gods) who later in this first chapter of Genesis said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness” (verse 26).

At the burning bush God (*Elohim*—literally *Gods*) said unto Moses, “I AM THAT I AM . . .” (Exodus 3:14). Here *Gods* speak but do not say, “We are that we are” but “I AM THAT I AM.” Nor is the word *Elohim* the only way in which God’s plurality is presented.

Consider, for example, Psalm 149:2 NKJV: “Let Israel rejoice in their Maker” (in the Hebrew, “makers”); Ecclesiastes 12:1: “Remember now thy Creator” (Hebrew,

“creators”); and Isaiah 54:5: “For thy Maker is thine husband” (Hebrew, “makers” and “husbands”). Unitarianism has no explanation for this consistent presentation of both God’s unity and plurality throughout the Old Testament.

At the very center of Israel’s confession in Deuteronomy 6:4 of God’s oneness (known as the *shema*) is the plural form for God (*elohenu*): “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (*Shema yisroel adonai elohenu adonai echad*). The word used for “one,” *echad*, often means a unity of more than one. Were that not the intention, then *yachid*, which means a single and *absolute one*, would have been used. The word *echad* is used, for example, in Genesis 2:24, where man and woman become “*one* flesh”; in Exodus 36:13, when the various parts “became *one* tabernacle”; in 2 Samuel 2:25, when many soldiers “became *one* troop”; and elsewhere similarly.

The great Hebrew prophet Isaiah declared of the birth of the Messiah: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, *the mighty God, the everlasting Father* . . .” (Isaiah 9:6). Such a concept is found nowhere else in the world’s religious literature but is unique to the Bible: A Son would be born into this world who, though a man, would be the Mighty God. And though a Son, He would at the same time be the Everlasting Father.

Isaiah clearly presents the *deity* of Christ, the Fatherhood of God, and the oneness of the Father and the Son. All three Persons in the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are clearly seen in the following: “. . . from the beginning . . . there am I; and now the Lord GOD and his Spirit hath sent me” (Isaiah 48:16). It could only be God who is speaking, this One who has been in existence from the beginning; yet He says that He has been sent forth by God and His Spirit. In the Trinity, two Persons are invisible (God the Father and the Spirit of God), while one is visible, the Son of God who became man.

Some Helpful Analogies

How can we fully understand this concept of three Persons, each separate and distinct (the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit) yet which are all encompassed by one God? We can’t. Critics argue that because the Trinity can’t be fully explained by human reasoning, it therefore cannot be true. Yet who can fully explain God even if He is only a single entity? No one. We can’t even explain the *human* soul and spirit, much less the Spirit of God, yet these terms are used repeatedly in the Bible.

We can, however, see analogies to the Trinity everywhere. The universe comprises three elements: space, time, and matter. The first two are invisible, but matter is visible. Each of these is itself divided into three: length, breadth, and height; past, present, and future; energy, motion, and phenomena. Length, breadth, and height are each separate and distinct from each other, yet they are one because each is the whole. The length takes in all of space, as do the width and height. So it is with time: past, present, and future are each distinct from one another, and yet each is the whole. And here again, two (past and future) are invisible while the present is visible.

Man himself, who is made “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27; 9:6, etc.) is composed of three elements: body, soul, and spirit, of which again two (soul and spirit) are invisible and one, the body, is visible. The way man functions as a being also reflects the same analogy to the Trinity. We conceive something in our minds (invisible), perhaps a poem or a symphony; we express it in speech or writing or in music and it enters the present, visible world; it is then appreciated in the emotions, once again invisible.

We could offer more analogies, but these should be enough. There is no doubt that the Bible clearly presents three Persons who are distinct, yet each is God. At the same time, we repeatedly have the clear statement that there is only one true God. Christ prays to the Father. Is He praying to Himself? We are told, “The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). Did He send Himself? Or did one “office” pray to and send a “title,” as the United Pentecostal Church would have us believe?

Christ said, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself [on my own initiative], but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 14:10); “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16–17). Throughout the New Testament, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each separately honored and act as God, yet only in concert with one another.

The Strange Fire Conference: Spiritual Discernment According to Calvinism

T. A. McMahon

In October 2013, John MacArthur and Grace Community Church hosted a conference to address what he and the other speakers believe are major errors in the teachings and practices of the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements. The conference introduction states: “Strange Fire, part of Grace to You’s Truth Matters conference series, evaluates the doctrines, claims, and practices of the modern charismatic movement, and affirms the true Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit.” Seventeen messages were presented and two Q&A sessions offered. Besides MacArthur, the speakers were R. C. Sproul, Steve Lawson, Conrad Mbewe, Tom Pennington, Phil Johnson, Nathan Busenitz, Justin Peters, Todd Friel, and Joni Eareckson Tada.

Prior to listening to all 19 of the presentations and carefully reviewing the transcripts of each talk, I hoped that the conference would add to the voices of discernment that have been addressing the false teachers of the Word/Faith, Healing and Prosperity, and the Signs and Wonders movements. It’s a huge problem worldwide and continues to grow. Nothing the speakers said was new to me or to the ministry of The Berean Call, but it was good to hear these issues addressed before an audience who wasn’t necessarily aware of the mostly Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and Charisma cast of characters.

Nearly three decades ago, I had the privilege of helping Dave Hunt with *The Seduction of Christianity*. That was a book in which we were heavily critical of the Word/Faith movement, Prosperity gospel, and Signs and Wonders teachings, which at the time made up most of what aired on so-called Christian television. *Seduction* was published in 1985. Dave’s 1987 follow-up book *Beyond Seduction* further explained the scriptural errors of the false teachers. Similar books by other authors followed: *A Different Gospel*, 1988, by D. R. McConnell; *The Agony of Deceit*, 1990, Michael Horton, (Editor); *Charisma vs. Charisma*, 1992, by Chuck Smith; *Charismatic Chaos*, 1992, by John MacArthur; *Christianity in Crisis*, 1993, by Hank Hanegraaff.

Seduction also motivated many of the apologetics ministries that focused on cults to address the cultic beliefs and practices that were influencing growing numbers of Charismatic, Pentecostal, and evangelical churches. TBC has also continued to address

such issues through our newsletter and website. The Internet has also given access to apologetics groups and individuals on websites, blogs, and via Facebook and Twitter, as many defend the faith. Sadly, in spite of all that “contending for the faith,” the number of false teachers, false teachings, and practices, along with their followers, continues to swell.

As I began listening to the Strange Fire Conference (SFC) presentations, it seemed odd to me that there was no reference to some of the long-established discernment ministries such as Personal Freedom Outreach, Herescope, Christian Witness Ministries, Midwest Christian Outreach, Watchman Fellowship, and many others that have addressed the conference’s topic for years and no doubt supplied a good deal of the research for the content that was presented there. At this point, something very disturbing became clear. The primary thrust of the conference subject matter was *cessationism* (the belief that some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased for the church after the apostles died) and was presented *by* Calvinists and *for* Calvinists; this was the *modus operandi* of the entire program. Reformed theology and Calvinism were set up as the screen through which the doctrines were evaluated.

Under the banner of *sola scriptura* (“the Bible alone”), the speakers claimed to have the antidote for restraining the exponential growth of false spiritual teachings: “Rightly dividing the Word of Truth,” God’s Word. No argument there. In fact, the good that came out of the conference took place when the Bible was, at times, “rightly divided.” Too often, however, the speakers deviated from the Scriptures to support the doctrines and practices of men. That was not good. Many of them turned to theological *systems* such as Calvinism and Reformed theology. They leaned on fallible Calvinist icons as guardians of truth and were overtly biased against those outside the Reformed camp. The most damaging aspect was the confusion caused by the support of Calvinist cessationism. That’s a double whammy error in my view: Calvinism “proving” cessationism.

In view of the stated objective of the conference, a launching platform for MacArthur’s latest book *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship*, we agree that millions of professing and even true Christians have been duped by false teachers and spiritual con artists who prey upon those who are ignorant of what the Word of God teaches.

Even a cursory glance at the activities surrounding the spiritual charlatans in the movement should reveal enough to ward off

anyone with common sense. The conference speakers had no shortage of outrageous examples of what transpires in the name of the Holy Spirit—things that are laughable to non-Christians and grievously blasphemous to true believers. Over the decades, many have addressed the erroneous teachings and the deceitful purveyors of what could be characterized as spiritual debauchery in a circus atmosphere, but very few have been rescued from the delusion in comparison to those who have been swept into it. The chief reason, as was correctly communicated by some in the conference, is the preference in Christendom for *subjective* and *experiential* spirituality over a diligence in studying and obeying the objective Word of God, which is *sola scriptura* in actual practice.

Why are Christians so easily drawn into false teaching? Perhaps they have an affinity for the temporal things of the world rather than the eternal; a desire for being spoon-fed the Scriptures rather than undertaking a disciplined reading of the Bible for themselves, and certainly the seductive power of the Adversary in drawing Christians away from God’s Word comes into play. In short, it’s a combination of “the world, the flesh, and the devil” (1 John 2:15-17; Galatians 5:17; 1 Peter 5:8-9) in these days of increasing apostasy. Had the conference addressed those issues strictly from the Bible, there would have been much to agree with, but that was far from the case.

To begin with, the speakers reflected an “*us and them*” mentality. “Us” were all those in the Calvinist/Reformed cessationist camp. “Them” consisted of anyone who rejects the Calvinist/Reformed cessationist teaching (with the exception, of the Charismatic Calvinists, who at least are among the elect). Others were almost always marginalized by being indiscriminately thrown in with the obvious false leaders of the Signs and Wonders movement.

By direct teaching and/or implication, all the speakers adhered to the view that Calvinistic cessationism is *the* teaching of the Bible and is therefore the silver bullet for killing off the false doctrines and practices of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. John MacArthur declared, “...read the Reformers, and read the Puritans, and follow the flow of the truth through history.... You’re not going to go to an association of Reformed churches, those who believe the doctrines of the Reformation that take us back to the doctrines of the New Testament, and find false miracles....” (All conference quotes are available at: www.gty.org/resources/sermon-series/325)

Steve Lawson said, “Those of us who are

Reformed in our theology are enormously grateful for the revival of Reformed Theology that has swept through the body of Christ over these last years.... In fact, Dr. MacArthur has said, 'If you're not reformed right now, you are basically irrelevant.'" Lawson strengthened that statement, adding "If you're not reformed, you're wrong."

African pastor Conrad Mbewe sees Reformation theology as the hope for his continent, which has been ravaged by the biblically distorted Signs and Wonders and Prosperity teachings: "I'm glad to say there is a growing Reformed Movement on the continent. But it's still very much a trickle and we need to pray and do everything we can to get Christianity back to the Bible [through Calvinism]." The Bible, yes, Calvinism, no.

A litany of Calvinist icons were paraded before the audience to support the idea that Reformation theology is not only foundationally biblical, but it is also clearly cessationist. None of the speakers made mention of some of the renowned men of the faith who were clearly non-cessationists such as John Wesley, D. L. Moody, H. A. Ironside, A. J. Gordon, George Müller, Andrew Murray, and A. W. Tozer, to name but a few.

Nevertheless, after presenting John Calvin's cessationist position, MacArthur says, "This is a time for the people who now stand on the shoulders of the Reformers in every area of their theology to be faithful to Reformation theology to its full rich intent. If we claim allegiance to the Reformers, then we ought to conduct ourselves with the same level of courage. Don't call yourself a Charismatic Calvinist. John Calvin would reject that. John Calvin did reject that. You'll have to drop the Calvinist part."

Calvin wrote his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* at age 26, only two years after leaving the Catholic Church. That ought to give one pause, but it doesn't seem to prevent Calvinists from voicing their overwhelming praise of him for his knowledge and insights of the Bible. Philip Schaff is quoted by Lawson: "Calvin was an exegetical genius of the first order. His commentaries are unsurpassed for originality, depth, perspicuity, soundness, and permanent value. Calvin was the king of the commentators."

Former Westminster Seminary president John Murray is also quoted regarding Calvin's proficiency: "Calvin was the exegete... of the Reformation and in the first rank of biblical exegetes of all time." Lawson declares, "I do believe that Calvin towers over church history as the most substantial theologian that has been given to the church, its most powerful influence, and we would do well to hear from our older brother."

Of course, they are referring to John Calvin, aka "the Protestant pope of Geneva." Geneva, at that time, was a city of about 20,000 in which Calvin instigated the torturous persecution of hundreds, including more than 50 executions of residents, many of whom were drowned for simply disagreeing with his "biblical" doctrine of infant baptism (see Dave Hunt's *What Love Is This?*). Calvin, "the [church's] most substantial theologian" and foremost "exegete," interpreted Luke 14:23 to support his cruel and often lethal manner of "compelling." (See this issue's Q&A)

The SFC speakers also highly esteemed Augustine (Roman Catholicism's doctor of its major dogmas), John Chrysostom (who taught prayers for the dead), Martin Luther (who taught infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, and wrote a vicious anti-Semitic tract), Jonathan Edwards (who taught that God is the author of sin and evil), B. B. Warfield (who taught theistic evolution and honored Darwin as "...one before whom we gladly doff our hats in true and admiring reverence"), as well as contemporary Reformed theologians J. I. Packer (a signer of Evangelicals and Catholics Together) and R. C. Sproul (who teaches partial preterism).

Obviously, these Reformed models and their heroes are not superheroes of the faith except in the minds of the SFC speakers and the audience. They got some things right, but they also had some very significant doctrinal problems. My point is that no matter what position one takes on a doctrinal issue, *sola scriptura*—not the views of fallible men (1 Corinthians 1:12-13), no matter what side they take—is the determiner of doctrinal truth.

Although the contributions to Christianity of Calvinism and Reformation theology were declared throughout the SFC as bastions of biblical truth compared to the abuses that have been fostered by non-Calvinist non-cessationists, none of the speakers mentioned that we can credit the Reformers and their inspirers and followers for many erroneous beliefs. These include amillennialism, post millennialism, Theistic Evolution, Replacement Theology (which leads to anti-Semitism), pedobaptism, preterism, Christian Reconstructionism, Theonomy, and Lordship Salvation, all of which are unbiblical. Nevertheless, Lawson states, "If we are to see a new Reformation in this day, if we are to see this resurgence of reformed truth that has now begun in these last decades continue to expand...we must be exclusively committed to the written Word of God." To the former, no; to the latter, absolutely.

The SFC must be recognized in terms of its promotion of Calvinist cessationism as

the antidote that will remedy all the ignorance and abuses of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That is at best a "biblical" placebo that will do little to stop the current plague of the Word/Faith, Healing, Prosperity, and Signs and Wonders false teachings and practices. For all of its continuous claims of *sola scriptura*, Reformed theology denies that *sola* in doctrine and practice. Its advocates, past and present, got some things right and others dreadfully wrong. *Sola scriptura* is indeed the authority for every true believer, but it must be the *full counsel of God*.

The key address regarding cessationism was delivered by Tom Pennington. He began by noting that non-cessationists point out that the New Testament nowhere directly states that the miraculous gifts will cease during the church age. His reply was that the New Testament doesn't directly say they will continue either. He continued with seven arguments as to why the miraculous gifts disappeared at the end of Apostolic age. We appreciate his diligence in searching the Scriptures in order to come to the position he has. That's what we all need to do. We have done this as well, but our understanding from the Scriptures is that the gifts of the Spirit (and of Christ—Ephesians 4:7-12) did not cease with the passing of the Apostles. The Apostle Paul wrote quite a bit in his letters to the Corinthians addressing the subject of the gifts (given for the edification and building up of the church). What would be the point of his rather lengthy teachings if the gifts and the edification received from them were soon to cease?

Obviously, cessationism and non-cessationism cannot both be correct. Unlike the gospel and other essentials of the faith that are objectively clear, the gifts of the Spirit are not essential for salvation and are more difficult to discern. Conclusions about them are developed in a more subjective process. Although what we believe about the gifts is not *essential*, it doesn't mean that our belief is unimportant. The gifts are given for the edification, strengthening, and enabling of the body of Christ—His church. A wrong belief regarding the gifts of the Spirit will hinder the church's edification and fruitfulness. Scripture tells us that "the just shall live by [the] faith" (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). Influential writers with opposing views may present their arguments and convince others, but in the end, we are all personally accountable for rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15) in determining what we believe and why we believe it. That must be both our declaration and our practice of *sola scriptura*.

For a further critique of the Strange Fire Conference, see our Q&A section. **TBC**

Quotable.....

It is not true that a definite limit is placed in Scripture upon the manifestation of sign gifts, and that such gifts have never appeared since the days of the apostles.

—H. A. Ironside,
Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You seem to have a bad attitude regarding Calvinism, yet I noticed that you also minister with Calvinists and offer resource materials written by Calvinists. It seems to me that you are being hypocritical or at least inconsistent. Is this reflective of McMahan’s taking the helm of the ministry, or is he just following Dave Hunt’s lead in this?

RESPONSE: Anyone who has read Dave Hunt’s classic *What Love Is This?*, published by TBC, would have a very good idea regarding the ministry’s stance on the doctrines of Calvinism. We base our stand on the Bible, and therefore we do not offer materials that *promote* Calvinism. On the other hand, we do offer resource materials produced by some who hold to certain aspects of Calvinism and who may prefer not to be called Calvinists even though they hold such beliefs personally. Our involvement with them has to do with their specific ministries, which we believe are edifying and valuable to the body of Christ, the content of which has nothing to do with Calvinism. All of this is consistent with the position held by Dave, who, although he had significant differences with the beliefs of Calvinism, nevertheless spoke at conferences with Calvinists and supported some of them personally. He considered many of those to be brothers and sisters in Christ as well as good friends.

QUESTION: I’ve been told by a Calvinist that if I’m not a Calvinist, then I’m an Arminian. As a Christian, do I have to be one or the other?

RESPONSE: As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, I have a major problem with labels. More often than not, they characterize a person according to the definition imposed upon him by the questioner. They are also very subjective because the person who imposes the label on another rarely knows what the labeled person actually believes. In your situation, rather than clarifying anything, it is terribly misleading.

The dichotomy usually has to do with salvation and whether a believer is eternally secure or not. Calvinists claim to believe in eternal security; “Arminians” are said to believe that a Christian can lose his salvation. Both statements have their problems.

First, “Perseverance of the saints” (the P in T.U.L.I.P.) is hardly an assurance of eternal salvation, as Calvinists claim.

Second, Jacob Arminius himself believed in eternal security. (See Dave Hunt, *What Love Is This?*, p. 91, footnote 17, from *The Works of James Arminius*, Vol. 1 and 2)

If someone feels like they need to label me, the only label I would go along with is a “biblical Christian.” At least with that label there is an objective basis for determining the Scriptural basis for what I claim to believe rather than being entangled with the doctrines and definitions that men make up.

To demonstrate how ridiculously complex man’s labels can become, consider someone whom I might label as a Calvinist. Would that label really represent the person’s actual beliefs? It’s hard to say. Is he a hyper-Calvinist? Is he a 27-point Calvinist? A 5-point or a 4-point, a 3-point, 2-point, or a 1-point Calvinist? Does he believe in limited atonement or particular redemption? Is he a supralapsarian (also referred to as an antelapsarian) or an infralapsarian (also referred to as a sublapsarian)? Is he an amillennial Calvinist, a postmillennial Calvinist, or a premillennial Calvinist? Is he a Christian Reconstructionist or a Theonomist Calvinist? Is he a neo-Calvinist or a neocalvinist (Kuyperian Calvinist)? Is he a preterist or partial preterist Calvinist? Is he a Calvinist cessationist or a Calvinist continuationist? Is he a providentialist Calvinist? Those are just a few of the categories to which some Calvinists subscribe.

QUESTION: In John MacArthur’s Strange Fire Conference, the speakers make a big deal of what superb interpreters of the Scriptures John Calvin and others who followed his teachings were. How does that fit with the fact that many of the Reformers continued to hold some Roman Catholic beliefs and practices?

RESPONSE: It doesn’t. Every believer is accountable for the way in which he understands the Bible. No system of man, whether Calvinist or otherwise, gives anyone special insights. It comes down to *exegesis* or *eise-gesis*, the former having to do with *objectively discerning* from the text what God is communicating. The latter is when a person *subjectively imposes* his own ideas upon the text of Scripture without regard to its context

or other rules of hermeneutics.

I noted in this month’s article that men such as Augustine and Calvin used Luke 14:23 to justify their use of coercion, punishment, and even death in dealing with those whom they believed to be heretics. Augustine reasoned, “Why therefore should not the Church *use force in compelling her lost sons to return?*... The Lord Himself said, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in....’ Wherefore is the power which the Church has received... through the religious character and faith of kings...the instrument by which those who are found in the highways and hedges—that is, in heresies and schisms—are compelled to come in, and let them not find fault with being compelled.” (E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church* [Port Colborne, ON: Gospel Folio Press, reprint 1999], 49.)

That is a clear case of eisegesis as Augustine imposed his view on Scripture with complete disregard to its context. John MacArthur does the same in his interpretation of the “widow’s mite” in Luke 21: “I don’t know what you have been taught about that story of the widow giving her last two cents—that was not an example of Christian giving. God doesn’t expect you to give your last two cents and go home and die. That’s what happens to a widow who is succored by a religion of works. She was trying to buy with her last two cents her way into the Kingdom because that’s what she had been taught. And Jesus says, ‘Any system that sucks people down to the place where they have nothing left in a false hope is coming down.’ And it did.” (www.gty.org/resources/sermons/TM13-6/testing-the-spirits-john-macarthur)

Then there’s the confusion of Calvinists being consistent with 5-point Calvinism, and especially the denial of free will and predestination. John MacArthur is lauded at the Strange Fire Conference as one of “a host of gifted [Calvinist] teachers,” and one of the influential Reformed “standard bearers” of this generation. Nevertheless, he declares that *choice* is involved: “Anyone who *will not* confess Jesus as Lord *cannot be saved*. But the shock is, there are people who will confess Jesus as Lord who are not saved. They will profess Jesus as Lord loudly and repeatedly on their way to hell. This *invitation* at the end of the Sermon on the Mount forces anyone and everyone who reads *to choose*. It’s a very sharply defined contrast between false faith and true faith; non-saving faith and saving faith. Two paths, two ways and *it’s still the choice*.” (emphasis added)



IN DEFENSE of the FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What About Divine Inspiration?

QUESTION: The Judeo-Christian Bible is not the only book that claims to be inspired of God. There are the Qur'an, the Hindu Vedas, the Book of Mormon, and others that claim to have come from God. Doesn't the very fact that Christianity teaches that the other books are not true cast serious doubt upon the Bible as well? If so many others could be wrong, why not one more? After all, an atheist only doubts one more book than the Christian doubts.

RESPONSE: Whether the scriptures of other religions are true or false has no bearing upon the Bible's validity or lack thereof. The fact that 10 of 11 contestants failed to win a race could hardly be taken as a plausible argument that therefore no one could have won. That there is counterfeit money in abundance does not suggest for even a moment that real money doesn't exist. In fact, it argues *for* its existence, because otherwise counterfeiting would have no purpose. That billions of people are willing to accept the sacred writings of various religions as having been inspired by God shows a deep hunger within mankind for divine revelation that has always existed in all ages, in all races and cultures, and in all places.

Such a universal and powerful hunger could not have been developed by evolution. The human body does not hunger or thirst for some nonexistent food or drink but only for that which exists and would sustain its life. The only exception would be if one had tasted something that was harmful but delicious or that produced deceptive feelings of well-being or power and then craved it unnaturally. A craving for that drug or intoxicating beverage would never have arisen, however, had it not actually been tasted or experienced. Thus, one could not claim that belief in God was "the opiate of the masses" without admitting God's existence. Someone must have "tasted" something real, as the Bible challenges us: "O taste and see that the LORD is good..." (Psalm 34:8).

Logically, then, the universal hunger for God argues persuasively for His existence; and the hunger for revelation from Him argues that such revelation exists as well. Whether what claims to come from God actually does so, however, can only be determined on the basis of the facts—and only the Bible passes that

test, as we shall see.

The fact that the world is filled with false prophecies claiming to come from God is exactly what one would expect, given this innate thirst for God and the willingness of the human heart to deceive itself and others. Nor can it be inferred from the fact that many false prophecies have been proclaimed that therefore no true prophecy has ever been uttered. That mankind has universally in all places, at all times, and under all religions been susceptible to false predictions is evidence of an intuitive belief that true prophecy must be possible and important.

The Bible must be examined on its own merits. It will be shown to be either true or false on the basis of the internal and external evidence taken together—not by comparing it with the sacred writings of other religions. Furthermore, the Bible's very claim to be the *only* revelation from God to mankind requires that all other sacred writings be false. So their falseness, far from proving that the Bible can't be true, is an argument in its favor.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 64-66) *by* DAVE HUNT

"Spiritualized" Counseling

T. A. McMahon

The Bible gives the body of Christ complete instructions for ministering to one another, yet in rebellion to its teachings and the enablement that the Word of God supplies, the church for decades now has turned to man's ways and means.

In numerous past articles (most of which are found in *Psychology and the Church: Critical Questions, Crucial Answers*) we have dealt with the destructive invasion of psychological counseling in the church. Few movements within evangelical Christianity have turned believers away from the sufficiency of the Word of God in their lives as has psychological counseling, and tragically so. This article deals with some of the influential teachings and practices that claim to be biblical but cloak the psychological concepts and practices they incorporate in *spiritual language*.

In order to recognize where alleged biblical counseling programs deviate from the Scriptures it's important to understand what is central to most forms of psychological counseling. It has been referred to as mesmerism, initiated by Anton Mesmer, an Austrian physician (1774-1815). Mesmer's work—referred to today as hypnosis—became the basis for the psychotherapy of the fathers of the modern counseling movement, especially Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. That may seem irrelevant to those who wouldn't consider using it as a technique in counseling, especially biblical counseling, but as you will see, very few are aware of how pervasive it is in nearly all forms of counseling.

First of all, "hypnosis" does not refer only to putting someone into a trance to entertain an audience (a very dangerous practice); it has many forms and techniques (some of which you may recognize). These include deep hypnosis, Eastern meditation, relaxation techniques, induced suggestions, monotonous stimulation, stimulation of the imagination, imagery suggestions, guided imagery, activation of unconscious motives, visualization, regressive therapy, altered states of consciousness, trance phenomena, induced hallucinations, hypnotherapy, autosuggestion, medical hypnosis, shamanic hypnosis, et al. Although the list is quite diverse, the activity is basically the same: *the individual becomes receptive to the suggestions of a person or an entity other than himself*.

The Bible has its own list of activities related to the practice of hypnosis: sorcery, wizardry, enchantments, "charming," necromancy, astrology, consulting with familiar spirits, and practicing magic arts. None of these, as we all should be aware, are okay with God. In fact, they are condemned, and all involve deception.

Research regarding hypnosis and its variations does not speak favorably for the practice. Renowned research psychiatrist Thomas Szasz calls hypnosis the therapy of "a fake science." Eminent research psychiatrist E. Fuller Torrey sees the contemporary techniques of hypnosis as no different from that of witchdoctors and shamans. "Medical" hypnosis runs the whole gamut of therapies from relaxation inducement to Freudian regression into the so-called traumatized realm of early childhood development and the "unconscious" mind, to "past lives" and "future lives" therapy. Again, none of these have anything to do with true science, yet millions of Christians are seduced by the medical label. As Dr. Martin and Deidre Bobgan have noted, "Hypnosis in the hands of a medical doctor is as scientific as a dowsing rod in the hands of an engineer."

A seductive myth of hypnosis is that memories recovered through that process are more accurate than normal memory and provide the key to inner healing. This delusion is a major boon to the acceptance of techniques used in the "healing of memories" ministries, nearly all of which claim to be biblical. To identify the errors resulting from the use of hypnosis in recovering memories, researchers use the term "confabulation," meaning the tendency to remember past events to be different from the way they actually were... and even to remember fantasized events as having actually happened. This is very common in "regression" therapy, used by many Christian counselors. But in fact, as the *Harvard Mental Health Letter* states, "In reality, all memory is a reconstruction rather than a reproduction, and it is almost always deeply unreliable, threaded with fabrications and distortions.... Hypnotic subjects readily confuse real with imaginary events and...become overconfident about their memories" (cited in Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *Hypnosis*, p. 69).

Memory expert Dr. Elizabeth Loftus declares, "There's no way even the most sophisticated hypnotist can tell the difference between a memory that is real and one that's created" (*Hypnosis*, p.71). According to the American Psychological Association, "...it is impossible, without corroborative evidence, to distinguish a true

memory from a false one" (Ibid., p. 74). The Bobgans write: "Exploring the past through conversation, counseling, hypnosis, guided imagery, and regressive therapy is as likely to cause a person to create false memories as to remember accurate accounts of past situations" (Ibid., p. 76).

Bernard Diamond, a professor of law and a clinical professor of psychiatry, says that court witnesses who have been hypnotized "often develop a certitude about their memories that ordinary witnesses seldom exhibit." They "graft onto their memories fantasies or suggestions [that were] deliberately or unwittingly communicated by the hypnotist" (cited in *Hypnosis*, p. 76).

Researchers have found that subjects who are put into deeper states of hypnosis have spiritual experiences very much like the state described by the Eastern mystics, including "an emerging sense of infinite potentiality, a separation of mind and body, and ultimately reaching the sense of oneness with the universe." This should come as no surprise even to secular researchers, since various forms of hypnosis are found throughout ancient occult religions and have continued to be the primary techniques that shamans, witchdoctors, and medicine men use to contact spirit entities and employ in their healing techniques. Medical doctor William Kroger notes that "for centuries, Zen, Buddhist, Tibetan, and Yogic methods have used a system of meditation and an altered state of consciousness similar to hypnosis" (Ibid., p. 84).

Although the connection between hypnosis and the occult spiritual realm is obvious, it's important to understand that the findings of the researchers regarding this apply *not only* to those who are put into a trance state. Even more critically, these findings apply to people who have been given "suggestions" by a counselor—whether he calls himself a psychotherapist or a "biblical" counselor—who is employing techniques that are directly *related* to hypnosis.

Given the pervasiveness of various forms of hypnosis in counseling, a Christian needs to realize that whatever form hypnosis takes, 1) it is not scientific, 2) it is no more helpful than a placebo, 3) it is not true to its positive claims, 4) it is often mentally and physically dangerous, and 5) it cannot be isolated from its occult roots. Furthermore, from a biblical Christian perspective, hypnosis and its various techniques a) are specifically condemned in the Old Testament, b) are never taught as a method for spiritual or physical healing, c) use deception and a submission of one's will to another person or created spiritual

entity, d) employ techniques that are occult, and e) can open a person up to doctrines of demons and demonic oppression, and, in the case of the unsaved and professing but not true Christians, demon possession.

Even though a great deal of information is available from secular researchers discrediting hypnosis and its stepchildren, and, more important, the teachings of Scripture that are in opposition to it, numerous professing Christian counseling programs have opted for spiritualized psychotherapeutic versions that use hypnotherapeutic concepts and practices. This is very evident in programs that major in inner healing.

The Inner Healing Movement may be the oldest of the erroneous contemporary approaches that claim to be biblical but are psychological at best and occult at worst. It is simply a Christianized version of Freudian psychoanalysis that uses the power of suggestion (again, a form of hypnosis) to supposedly solve the problems that in most cases it has actually created. The healing of memories process that was supposed to solve problems in fact has created pseudomemories. In numerous cases, false memories induced by the therapist have destroyed the lives of the client and those who, based upon the false memories, were wrongly accused of everything from Satan worship to child molestation and rape. Furthermore, this methodology displaces a believer's reliance, through simple faith, upon the promises of the Bible.

Tragically, Christians become dependent upon practitioners and practices that attempt to mediate God's blessings through emotional experiences and periodic catharses created by guided imagery through visualization. It was brought into the church by Agnes Sanford, the founder of the School of Pastoral Care, where she trained or influenced a host of "inner healers" who had a huge influence in Christendom in the '70s and '80s, including John Wimber, Richard Foster, John and Paula Sandford, Francis MacNutt, Ruth Carter Stapleton, and David Seamands, a pioneer of the movement, who declares, "The imagination is used to 1) recreate the painful memory... visualize it as it once took place" and 2) to visualize Christ present at the time of the painful incident (cited in Hunt, *Beyond Seduction*, p. 205). This is possible, he claims, because Jesus transcends all time and space. Jesus isn't the only one whom inner healers visualize. Spiritual counselors include visualizing all sorts of inner guides, one's inner child being a favorite.

How serious a concern is the use of visualization, a technique of hypnosis, by

Christian psychologists and inner healers? "Visualization" and "guided imagery" have long been recognized by sorcerers of all kinds as the most powerful and effective methodology for contacting the spirit world in order to acquire supernatural power, knowledge, and healing. Such methods are neither taught nor practiced in the Bible as aids to our faith or prayer. Those who attempt to do so are *not* following the leading of the Holy Spirit or the Word of God, but are practicing an ancient occult technique for communing with demons.

Two of the most popular spiritualized psychotherapeutic programs among Christians that are shrouded in religious terms are Theophostic Counseling and Sozo. Theophostic Counseling, now known as Theophostic Prayer Ministry, or TPM, was developed by Ed Smith in the mid-1990s. Its counselors pray for the counselee that the Lord, who is *visualized*, will give a specific revelation as to the source of his or her problem. The counselor determines whether the visualized Jesus with whom he is communicating is in fact Jesus or a demon masquerading as Jesus. Smith gives his basis for discernment: "I have found that when a person looks carefully at the face of a demon 'Jesus,' it will usually be dark or hazy, or look angry, scornful, or evil" (See TBC Extra, 09/06).

TPM is said to work equally for non-Christians. According to Smith, "People consistently say [the resolution and subsequent peace] was from God. This is even the case with those who do not profess any relationship with God" (Ibid.). And later he says, "God does not seem to require confession of sin from a nonbeliever" (Ibid.).

To put all of this in perspective, we have a Christianized counseling methodology that: 1) is contrary to the Scriptures, 2) is Freudian, (i.e., it allegedly searches out deterministic traumas in the past that are buried in the subconscious), 3) involves occult techniques producing a false Jesus, and 4) even works for unbelievers, resulting in the "peace of God" without repentance. It's shocking that so many Christians would buy into this!

Sozo is one of the latest inner healing practices to enter the church, particularly among those who are into signs and wonders, healing and prosperity, word-faith, and the Latter Rain/New Apostolic Reformation movements. The Sozo website declares that "Sozo is a unique inner healing and deliverance ministry aimed to get to the root of things hindering your personal connection with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. With a healed connection, you can walk in the destiny to which you have been called." Sozo

was developed and is led by two women, Dawna DeSilva and Teresa Liebscher. Another leader, teacher, and mentor in Sozo is Randy Clark, who instigated the bizarre manifestations allegedly of the Holy Spirit at the Toronto Airport Vineyard.

Although claiming to be biblical, Sozo is a *problem-solving approach* based upon discovering root issues that are blocking spiritual growth. The issues supposedly reside in the subconscious memories of the individual and are identified as a person is regressed by the use of guided imagery and suggestion by the Sozo therapist. Of course, the Sozo therapist is trained to believe that the guided visualization is superintended by the Holy Spirit. This again is spiritualized psychotherapy, using techniques drawn from occult methodologies.

There is neither chapter nor verse nor example in Scripture supporting the approach promoted in the Sozo program. Since there have been a number of healing-of-memories therapists successfully sued for inducing through suggestion incredibly destructive false memories in their clients, ministries such as Sozo have their clients sign a liability release form. It should certainly raise a red flag when a believer needs to sign a liability release in order to have someone pray for him (For more information, see 03/14 TBC Extra).

The Bible says that *all believers* in Jesus Christ are to minister to their brothers and sisters in Christ, and they are to do so *according to the Scriptures*: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, *ye which are spiritual*, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

There is no gift of counseling, but there are numerous other gifts of the Spirit to be used for ministering and building up of the body of Christ. Being "spiritual" refers to anyone who is walking in the Spirit (Romans 8:1,4; Galatians 5:16,25) and not in the flesh. That should be every believer in Christ. We are to minister to other believers by bearing their burdens (coming to their aid during trials, tribulations, failures, struggles, restoration from sin, giving them counsel from the Word of God, etc.) That is fulfilling the "law of Christ," that is, His love. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). "Ye" means ye—*all* of ye. Until the true church returns to the truly biblical way of ministering, it will continue to suffer the same destructive problems of living that are evidenced by an unbelieving world. TBC

Quotable.....

Did all my beloved fellow disciples, who seek to work for God know the blessedness of looking truly to God alone, and trusting in Him alone, they would soon see how soul refreshing this way is, and how entirely beyond disappointment, so far as He is concerned.

—George Mueller

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Do you have any information on Dr. Scott McQuate? I have never heard of him, but his book *The Tribulation* has been recommended. The advertising seems so bizarre I am a little afraid to buy it.

RESPONSE: That uneasy feeling you have may certainly be the Holy Spirit warning you about this book, which in truth leads one away from the Scriptures rather than to the Scriptures.

What we have seen of Dr. Scott McQuate and his books has revealed that he advocates extrabiblical sources, as do many in the Hebrew Roots Movement and “Nephilim/Genesis 6 Sons” teachers. This means that books outside the Bible, such as Enoch, Jasher, Jubilees, and others that are outside the canon of Scripture, are relied upon to support their views. McQuate’s subtitle for his *The Tribulation is Hidden Secrets Revealed from Texts Predating the Bible*.

Although many in this movement stress the authority of the Bible, their subsequent teachings show little regard for those same Scriptures. McQuate doesn’t even give lip service to the Scriptures. He has taken the next logical step down the path that so many Nephilim/Genesis 6 teachers have taken.

Consider McQuate’s claims: “The Tribulation period is *highly-misunderstood* because of many doctrinal lies and misconceptions that have been touted as fact, and unbeknownst to present-day Scholars, Pastors and Theologians, the subject of the Tribulation is not unique to the Bible. The shocking facts of this epic, all-important event were also spoken of within cultures long pre-dating the Bible, such as the Mayan, Sumerian, Hindu, Canaanite and others but they have been intentionally concealed for millennia...until now. For a *watered-down and tremendously adulterated understanding of the Tribulation, we can look to the Bible* and to those who teach the tribulation ‘doctrines’ that have been corrupted, but if we want to understand the Tribulation accurately and truly know what this imminent, earth-altering event is about, we must look to other cultures pre-dating the Bible from which

nearly all of the Biblical stories were taken. These are the ‘old paths’ spoken of by Jesus, which He stated were ‘good’” (our emphasis).

No, they are not. Jeremiah 6:16 tells us, “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

As Scripture clearly tells us, Israel’s downfall occurred because they were doing what McQuate recommends—they were looking to other cultures. In wonderful contrast, Joshua 1:8 admonishes, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

In short, this man reflects the mindset of a cultist who elevates his understanding above everyone else. His blog blatantly claims that, “This is information that is not available from any other source, is exclusive to Dr. McQuate’s research, and will transform your thinking.”

We’re certain that it will “transform your thinking” but not to your eternal benefit. He is a false teacher.

QUESTION [composite of several]: Do you believe that people get saved by being told there is a hell? It seems to me that the idea that people who choose not to follow God will suffer eternal torment may be thought of as inconsistent with a God who is supposed to be just and loving. That may deter them from turning to the Lord. What are your thoughts?

RESPONSE: There has been much speculation regarding whether someone may or may not come to the Lord because of the biblical teaching of hell. We must always ask: “What do the Scriptures say?” The Lord Jesus Christ warned of hell fourteen times in the Gospels—far more than He spoke of the joys of heaven. Peter wrote of it three times, James mentioned it once, and the four references in Revelation give us a total of twenty-two times that the word “hell” occurs in the New Testament. Jesus specifically said that hell is a place of torment in a “fire that never shall be quenched” (Mk 9:43-48).

Those who have been judged at the “great white throne...according to their works” shall be “cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15). Dave Hunt rightly observed that “they have been confronted by the One on the throne, ‘from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away...’ Every self-justifying excuse has been stripped away, leaving the stark reality of the extreme wickedness of their sin. They will

for eternity mourn the folly of their irrevocable decision. Imagine the pain of the full realization of one’s eternal state, with the ‘blood’ of Jesus on one’s ‘hands.’”

God revealed Himself and gave the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai showing Himself to be “...merciful and gracious...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Ex 34:6-7). Some will ask, “Then why doesn’t He just forgive the whole human race?”

Scripture tells us that God sent His Son “that the world through him might be saved” (Jn 3:17), that He desires “all men to be saved” (1 Tm 2:4), and that He is “not willing that any should perish...” (2 Pt 3:9). He has made provision for salvation from sin for *all*, but not everyone will accept that provision. Nor would those who refuse to accept it be happy in heaven with the One whom they rejected.

Of course, fear of hell alone is not usually enough to lead one to salvation. Although it may be a catalyst, a person needs an understanding not only of his own sinfulness but must also realize that God *is* loving and fair to require that we *accept* the penalty that Christ paid for our sins and *believe* in Him so that we wouldn’t have to go to hell at all.

Love is certainly one of God’s attributes. He is also perfectly just. He judges righteously at all times. Some scriptures seem to imply that suffering in hell is proportional to the deeds done. In Revelation 20:12 we read, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

In Matthew 11:21-22, Jesus said, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be *more tolerable* for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you” (emphasis added).

The writer of Hebrews warned, “Of *how much sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:29—emphasis added).

No matter what we think may influence people toward accepting or not accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior, the only thing that truly matters is what the Bible teaches. And it teaches “everlasting fire,” “everlasting punishment,” and “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (Mt 25:41,46; 2 Thes 1:9).

IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

How Reliable Are the Biblical Documents?

QUESTION: I was taught in seminary and have read the same charge in a number of scholarly books that the New Testament is not reliable because it was written centuries after the time of Christ by men who weren't even alive in Christ's day. The "Jesus Seminar," a group of scholars with impressive credentials, makes this claim today. Is there any evidence to the contrary?

RESPONSE: That accusation is disproved not only by the manuscripts themselves but by the quotations that we have of the entire New Testament in other writings from the late first to early second century. There is proof even from the writings of Christianity's enemies. For example, Celsus, a bitter opponent of Christianity who was born early in the second century, referred to the four gospels as part of the sacred books of Christians and already well-known in his day. Just that one piece of evidence disproves the claim that the New Testament wasn't written until centuries later! In addition, there is more than sufficient proof from within the New Testament itself that it was, as its writers claim, written by contemporaries of Jesus.

The authors of the epistles of Peter and John testify to having known Christ personally and to having been eyewitnesses of all He said and did during His ministry. Peter writes: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). Speaking for himself and the other apostles, John testifies to an intimate relationship with Christ: "That which . . . we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . ." (1 John 1:1).

If the New Testament, which includes such sworn testimonies, was not written by the apostles themselves but was concocted centuries (or even only decades) later by other parties, the whole thing is a fraud! Whoever wrote such tales was lying and was doing so with the deliberate intent of deceiving untold multitudes throughout the coming centuries. And tragically, if this is the case, the deceit has been swallowed by hundreds of millions ever since. That very scenario, however, contains numerous insurmountable problems.

Irrefutable Internal Evidence

First of all, there is an internal consistency within the Bible's 66 books, even though they were written over a period of about 1,500 years by more than 40 persons, most of whom had never met one another. Living in different historical eras and widely differing regions and cultures, the only thing these writers of Scripture had in common was the claim that what they wrote was inspired by the one true God. The intricate pattern of truth woven without contradiction throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation bears powerful witness to the validity of that claim, which can

be explained in no other manner. As for seeming contradictions, we will deal with them.

This continuity and agreement throughout the Bible is one of the most powerful arguments that it is the Word of God. To show how remarkable this argument is, Josh McDowell tells this true story:

A representative of the *Great Books of the Western World* came to my house recruiting salesmen for their series. . . . I challenged him to take just 10 of the authors, all from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language and just one controversial subject (the Bible speaks on hundreds with harmony and agreement).

Then I asked him: "Would they (the authors) agree?"
He paused and then replied, "No."

Obviously, any fraudulent writer (for example, of the life and works of Christ) would have to know the entire Bible intimately and be able to maintain its supernatural internal consistency. It is highly unlikely that any deliberate liar would have either the motivation or the ability to do so.

There is a further problem. Careful study of the New Testament reveals a sincerity and truthfulness that would be virtually impossible to fake. Moreover, the Bible has demonstrated a supernatural power to rescue human beings from sin and degradation and to bring liberty, joy, love, and a transformation of life to all who believe its message. That a deliberate fraud could effect so much good is preposterous. It would require more faith to believe *that* scenario than to accept the Bible's claim to divine inspiration!

Contemporary Corroboration

Additional proof abounds of a different nature. We know from archaeological discoveries of quotations in other writings that the New Testament in its entirety was in circulation at least by the end of the first century. Many people were still alive at that time who had known the apostles and to whom their writings rang true to fact. There would have been an enraged outcry had the epistles not told the truth—yet we have no such evidence. The Jewish rabbis unquestionably would have jumped on the slightest lie or exaggeration and used it to discredit this “new religion,” as they considered it, which was undermining their leadership and resulting in conversions by the thousands from Judaism. There is no record of any attack on those grounds from that quarter.

Furthermore, there is abundant and indisputable evidence within the New Testament itself that it was written by eyewitnesses. Luke, for example, referred to the other gospel writers as having been eyewitnesses “from the beginning” and affirmed that what they had recorded was “most surely believed among us.” He was not some gullible idiot who was willing to believe any tale that came along but claimed himself to have had “perfect understanding of all things from the very first” (Luke 1:1–3). He declared that he had undertaken to write down the story of Jesus for his friend Theophilus so that he could “know the certainty of those things” (Luke 1:4).

Modern archaeological discoveries have confirmed the veracity of Luke’s testimony and the fact that he was indeed a contemporary of the apostles and thus in a position to know and report the facts. In chapter 2, Luke refers to “a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” and asserts that this occurred “when Cyrenius was governor of Syria” (verses 1–2). Some critics continue to dogmatically state that Cyrenius (known also as Quirinius) didn’t become governor over Syria until AD 6, too late a date for the birth of Christ. They ignore more recent findings that show that Quirinius was governor over Syria *twice*, the first time from perhaps as early as 7 BC to about AD 1. Luke was obviously referring to his *first* governorship, not the second.

Watertight Historical Verification

In chapter 3, Luke provides a whole list of detailed information of names, places, offices, and dates that surely would not have been known by someone writing even decades (much less centuries) later:

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias
Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea,

and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests. . . .
(Luke 3:1–2)

Note that Luke’s reference is not to just any Caesar but to *Tiberias*. Even the time of the decree is given: in the “fifteenth year” of his reign. These facts have been verified by modern historians and could not have been known by someone writing centuries later, as the skeptics claim was the case. The technical titles of the offices held by the other parties named—governor, tetrarch, high priest—are given, together with the locations of each. Each fact presented has been verified in recent years after laborious digging and research. It would have been impossible to have made such precise statements even 50 years after the fact. We therefore have every reason to believe that Luke, as he claims, was present when these reported events occurred.

Yes, but what about Pilate, whom Luke says was governor of Judea at this time? The skeptics denied his very existence for many years because no trace of him could be found. Josephus mentioned Pilate in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, but that was suspected to be a later addition by someone tampering with the text. And then one day proof positive was uncovered in an archaeological dig: a large quarried stone about five inches thick in the jumbled ruins of an ancient Roman theater in Caesarea.

It turned out that Caesar, having been offended by Pilate, decreed that all evidence of his existence be obliterated. This particular stone, however, because of its precise size, had been saved and used as a seat in a theater. Of course, the side containing the inscription regarding Pilate had been turned downward so it couldn’t be seen—until its discovery in the ruins. The stone stands today in Caesarea in modern Israel as one more testimony (among many others) to the reliability of the biblical record.

Today the accumulated evidence authenticating the Bible in every respect is overwhelming. Any critic who continues to parrot the specious charges formerly leveled against the Bible is doing so *in spite of* and not *because of* the facts. Even Bishop Robinson of “God Is Dead” fame, a foremost proponent a few years ago of a centuries-later date for the biblical writings, [later acknowledged] the historicity of the New Testament documents and that they were written early in the first century by eyewitnesses.

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The Bible According to Hollywood 2

T. A. McMahon

Here we go again. For those who may agree but are a little tired of my crying out for discernment regarding “biblical” movies, you have my apology...in the midst of my growing concern. Nevertheless, I covet your prayers for our brothers and sisters in Christ and for the multiple millions of the lost who are being presented with a caricature of the biblical Son of God in yet another Hollywood translation of the Word of God.

“So what?” some have asked. “It gets people interested in Jesus and the Bible, and that’s a good thing.”

Is it? Who is the Jesus that is capturing their attention? How close is the movie presentation to the biblical account? Does it make any difference?

No matter how close a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill is to the real thing, it’s still a fake. Legal issues and deception aside, it has *no value* as a currency. Yet someone who isn’t aware that the bill is fake may be thrilled initially if he were to stumble upon a satchel of such twenties. The thrill would end quickly, however, when he tried to spend the bogus money. Although the analogy is a bit rough, it still brings to light some important issues.

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, who is the image of the invisible God and the One in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, is not someone who should be portrayed (counterfeited would be more accurate) by a fallen, finite being—Christian or otherwise. Any such attempt will result in another Jesus, a false Christ.

According to the Bible, all Christians who have been truly born again have a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, and that relationship has (or should have) developed and matured by one’s getting to know Him through His Word, through prayer, and through obedience to His teachings. I’ve known Jesus personally for nearly four decades, and by God’s grace, my relationship with Him continues to grow. How would that relationship be strengthened by my watching someone who is obviously not Jesus but who is attempting through his acting to reflect the divine attributes of the Son of God? It can’t happen.

Let’s consider some other examples that I hope will show just how wrong is any attempt to depict Jesus, who Scripture tells us is the brightness of God’s glory and the

express image of His person, and just how impossible it is to reveal His supernatural attributes and His divine personality on the screen. A recent movie gave historic as well as Hollywood insights into the life of Abraham Lincoln. The actor who played Lincoln was superbly convincing. He certainly looked like Lincoln, at least based on the photographs we have of our former president. He did some things that we know Lincoln did from historic accounts, to the degree that the accounts are true. Beyond that, we have a view of Lincoln that was conjured up by the creative artists of Hollywood and was convincingly realistic but not accurate to the man himself. Nor could it be. Why? None of the creative artists of Hollywood were around when our former president lived, so none of them knew him personally. They have created an image of Lincoln that *may* reflect some truths about him, but they have also added much of their own conjecture.

Let’s expand our reasoning a bit. Consider this made-up scenario: I take my wife to a screening of a Hollywood movie of her life that I produced and directed. I have had an intimate relationship with her through 45 years of marriage—in other words, I know her really well—and I want to share her qualities with the world through a motion picture. I hire an “Academy Award-winning” screenwriter to do the script, cast a beautiful and gifted actress to play the role, spare no expense creating an authentic production of where the scenes from her life took place, and feature the noble aspects of her life story. After viewing the movie she turns to me and says matter-of-factly, “It’s a flattering film...but that’s not me. I don’t look like that, I don’t talk like that, I don’t think like that. Some of the scenes never happened that way, and if I weren’t given the names of the people the other actors in the film were portraying, I could only guess who they were supposed to be in my life. Besides, Honey, that’s just not me.”

Obviously, in my enthusiasm to share the love of my life with others via the medium of film, I would have erroneously given them a view of her that was neither accurate nor true. *But hey, no big deal!* It’s only a movie—just a popular form of entertainment, even if the claim is that it’s based on a true story or character. “Based on a true story” is a Hollywood euphemism for “we made up most of the story.”

Now let’s get to the point of the two examples. Suppose that Jesus was sitting beside me in a theater as we watched a marathon of “biblical” movies that featured an actor who was attempting to

portray Him. Would He consider these to be merely a form of entertainment—just a dramatization of His earthly life? Would He be thrilled by the ones that seemed to be the “most accurate”? No. I wonder if His response might include the word “blasphemy.” Noah Webster (who knew the Bible well), in his 1828 dictionary, wrote that blasphemy is “an injury offered to God by denying that which is due and belonging to Him, or attributing to Him that which is not agreeable to His nature.” That would cover every attempt by men to portray the God-Man Jesus. The result can only be a false Christ, and Jesus warned that a proliferation of such would characterize the days prior to His return (Matthew 24:5).

Since a host of very influential evangelical leaders (Rick Warren, Luis Palau, Max Lucado, Francis Chan, Pat Robertson, Andy Stanley, Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes, Sam Rodriguez, Geoff Tunnicliffe, Leith Anderson, Ro Chang Soo, Erwin McManus, Jim-Bob Park, Bill Hybels, James O. Davis, Craig Groeschel, Miles McPherson, Jimmy Mellado, along with a number of Catholic bishops and a Cardinal) have been singing the praises of *The Son of God* and the History Channel’s Bible series that spawned it, it raises a very serious question regarding *their view of the Bible*.

If they truly believe that the Bible is the Word of God, that it is His God-breathed, inerrant revelation to mankind, how could they glorify a production by men that claims to bring “the story of Jesus’ life to audiences through compelling cinematic storytelling...” and in the process utterly destroys the critical truth aspect of the Scriptures? Evidently these leaders had no problem with the distortion of the Word in scene after scene. Did the wise men show up at the stable right after the birth of Jesus? Did Jesus entice Peter to follow him by filling his nets with fish? Did Jesus draw the fish into Peter’s net by swishing the water with his fingers? Was Mary Magdalene the lone woman among the small band of disciples (if not one of the apostles)? Did Nicodemus play the good Pharisee/bad Pharisee, even challenging Jesus about paying taxes? Was Pilate a brutal military leader who threatened to shut down the temple? Did Jesus have confrontational exchanges with Barabbas? Did Jesus tickle a little girl and playfully tell her that the temple would be utterly destroyed? At the Last Supper, did Jesus drink the wine that he had just called his own blood? Did the mother of Jesus wash his bloody body in preparation for his burial? Did Jesus *unsymbolically* appear to John on Patmos? The

list of unbiblical and extra-biblical scenes goes on and on.

One would think that a Christian leader who truly cares about the Scriptures would take seriously the admonitions not to add to it. Nevertheless, nearly every scene in the film features conversations that the screenwriters made up along with numerous contrived monologues by “Jesus.” How could any believer condone putting words into the mouth of biblical characters and especially into the mouth of one’s Lord and Savior? Yet that must take place in order to make a cinematic dramatization of the Bible. Neither the words of Scripture nor the descriptions found within its pages suffice—therefore every scene has to be fabricated from the creative albeit fallen minds of men.

Jesus declared in John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” But in defense of the movie, one might argue that much of what was presented upheld the truth of the Scriptures. How much? We could say the same thing in defense of the erroneous New World Translation bible produced by the Jehovah’s Witnesses or the blasphemous *Message* bible. “Much,” or “quantity,” is not the criterion for qualifying something as true to God’s Word. The Bible, which is God’s inerrant communication to mankind, is a believer’s absolute authority in all matters of faith and practice. If only *much of it* were true, then it is neither inerrant nor can it be a believer’s authority.

A so-called biblical movie—any biblical movie—can never be truly biblical for what should be obvious reasons. This is an attempt to *visually* reproduce a Book that is itself objective and supernatural. First of all, the Bible cannot be translated visually without removing it from its objective nature. Moses did not receive a picture book on Mount Sinai. God communicated to him in words that were written down. Therefore, the communication can be objectively understood through hermeneutics, the science of interpretation. That has to be the basis for believers to come to a common understanding of what God has communicated.

The interpretation of pictures, on the other hand, lacks that objectivity and nearly always involves a subjective understanding. For example, ask a handful of people to give you their impressions of a certain painting and you will get quite varied responses. Then ask what they believe the artist is communicating. Again, their replies will nearly always be different because the communication is in a subjective medium

rather than one that is objective. A biblical movie is a *visual* interpretation.

The making of theatrical movies is a very expensive collaborative process that involves creative input from numerous personnel and has as its primary goal the entertainment of audiences that will ultimately translate into a box office success.

**AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID
UNTO THEM, TAKE HEED THAT
NO MAN DECEIVE YOU.**

**FOR MANY SHALL COME IN MY
NAME, SAYING, I AM CHRIST;
AND SHALL DECEIVE MANY.**

— *Matthew 24:4-5*

Decisions are often made on the basis of production costs, location problems, actors’ egos, the director’s and writers’ ideas, producers’ whims, studio pressure, weather, etc., etc. Rarely, if ever, would the *truth* of the content presented be a major issue, especially to the degree that it would trump other considerations. What does that tell you in regard to bringing the Bible, the Word of God, to the silver screen?

One of the amazing characteristics of visual media is the power of imagery. Scenes that appear on the screen can remain with a viewer, popping into the mind occasionally over his or her lifetime. That can be spiritually devastating. I’ve heard that some believers who watched Mel Gibson’s “biblical” movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, had great trouble dismissing the face of James Caviezel when their thoughts turned to Jesus, even while in prayer. Not everyone saw that as a problem. One woman complained about our criticism of *The Passion*, noting that she believed she was greatly blessed to have Caviezel as a tangible image of Jesus for her prayers. In contrast, as Dave Hunt and I left the theater after reviewing Mel’s movie, I remember Dave crying out to the Lord to remove the imagery of the counterfeit Christ that had just invaded his mind!

The Bible doesn’t describe Jesus for us in any detail. Why is this? Could it be that God knows that His image in our minds might become the basis for idolatry, which the Scriptures condemn (Exodus 20:4-5; Acts 17:29)? Even with no biblical basis and in

light of its condemnation, false images of Jesus abound, from Eastern and Russian Orthodox icons to classic Catholic works of art; and to those we must add the numerous portrayals of Christ in the movies. Scriptural censoring aside (because too few seem to care or heed what the Bible says), of what possible value would there be in a *misrepresentation* of Jesus—especially for those who claim to know Him personally? As Dave Hunt has noted, “Wouldn’t that be like a man carrying a picture of a beautiful actress in his wallet under the guise of ‘she reminds me of my wife’”? What might his wife think of that? What might it do to their relationship? We could ask the same question regarding our own intimate relationship with Jesus. Wouldn’t that grieve Him?

When Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him, Peter replied, “Thou knowest that I love thee.” Following Peter’s responses, Jesus commanded him to “feed My lambs, feed My sheep.” What, then, of today’s shepherds who are feeding their sheep a diet created by Hollywood, put together by hirelings? What of those highly influential Christian leaders who have endorsed the *Son of God*, who have given themselves to ad campaigns for the movie, whose churches have purchased nearly 500,000 theater seats (prior to the film’s opening) for their flocks? Is it truly the love of God’s sheep and His Word that is persuading them to lead His flock into grievous error?

The incredible power of the medium of film resides in its capacity to impact emotions through imagery, acting, dialogue, and music. Tears can flow even in animated movies. People can have artificial “life-changing” experiences based upon what they see on the screen, but the Word of God declares: “the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63). A movie-generated catharsis may affect a person *experientially*, but it cannot enrich him *spiritually*, nor can it save anyone who is lost.

More and more “biblical” movies will continue to be produced for a time because Hollywood, which has historically been opposed to biblical truth, recognizes that right now Christians, and particularly their “leaders,” are a viable revenue source. The movie industry will continue to seduce the shepherds and fleece the sheep until the “evangelical” marketing scheme plays itself out. Tragically, we are seeing in all of this the words of Peter fulfilled: “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you” (2 Peter 2:3).

TBC

Quotable.....

If God's *day* of grace is as a *thousand years*, there is an *eternity* of suffering in the compressed *three hours* of darkness of the cross.

In the daylight we see our Lord's suffering at the hands of men; in the darkness He suffered at the hands of God. In the former it is the injustice of men; in the latter it is the justice of God. It is man's hatred of the Bearer of sin; it is God's hatred of the burden of sin.

—Neil M. Fraser,
The Grandeur of Golgotha

Q&A.....

CORRECTION: Your ministry has blessed us for many years. We rely on your attention to detail (fact-checks) and integrity. The Strange Fire Conference article implied that *Seduction*, published in 1985, influenced/motivated Chuck Smith to write *Charisma vs Charismania* (e.g., "similar books by others followed.... *Seduction* also motivated..."). *Seduction* certainly was a powerful book that (I would guess) influenced many apologetic ministries. But Chuck Smith wrote *CvC* in 1983, two years before *Seduction*. *CvC* was published in 1992 but it was first published in 1983.

RESPONSE: We stand corrected, and we thank you for bringing this error to our attention. We had only seen the 1992 publishing date and suggested that *Seduction* may have been an influence. Although we don't like to report anything erroneously and are thankful to those like yourself who take the time to keep us on track with the truth, I can see an additional blessing stemming from our mistake. It gives us the opportunity to affirm the spiritual integrity of Chuck Smith, the founder of the Calvary Chapel movement, who, as you point out in your letter, was disparaged at the SFC by some who were "equating Calvary Chapel with the excesses of the Charismatic movement." As you noted, "Chuck always spoke *against* the excesses of the movement," and he was doing it before many of us.

QUESTION: I've spent countless hours talking to those who support biblical movies, and no matter what concerns I raise that are abundantly clear from the Scriptures, the final word on their part is, "I hear what you're saying, but I still feel that God can use such movies to win people to Jesus." I am continually frustrated by their lack of biblical discernment. What do you say to those

who respond based upon what they feel?

RESPONSE: God, in His abundant mercy, can certainly bring conviction of sin and draw a person to Himself in ways and means that seem to be an exception to what we would normally see. Consider these scenarios: 1) A Roman Catholic at Mass hears a verse quoted from Scripture during the priest's homily. The verse speaks to the person's heart and leads him to the biblical gospel and salvation. 2) A Jehovah's Witness is reading through his New World Translation bible, and some of its verses that contradict Witness doctrine lead the person to trust in the biblical Jesus. 3) Some of the writings in the Book of Mormon (which were plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible) are read by a Mormon, who is then convicted by those words; they help lead him out of the cult, and to salvation. God's Word, as we know, will not return void but will accomplish what He intends (Isaiah 55:11).

Can we then say that the Mass, the New World Translation, and the Book of Mormon are legitimate means of bringing the lost to Christ? No. To support such erroneous, even blasphemous, spiritual devices as valid for evangelizing is to give credence to those things that are an abomination before God, not to mention that they are a pack of lies. God cannot support such things for evangelizing that contradict or corrupt His Word, and He does not. Again, in His mercy He may *use* such things even when they contain only a slight hint of truth to help deliver a person from spiritual bondage.

Biblical movies are similar to the above examples because in the attempt to translate the Bible to the screen, the content must be altered to fit the medium. That involves adding dialogue to the Scriptures not found in the Bible, scenes not found there, characters who are portrayed out of their biblical context, emotions and drama not indicated in Scripture, locations not consistent with Scripture, and the list goes on. In other words, they are a major distortion of God's Word. For those who still cling to the belief that God, nevertheless, is using such errors to draw multitudes of the lost to Himself, we appeal to them to consider these two words: *damage control*.

Although God may use whatever truth may be gleaned from any medium, the unsaved meanwhile will have been subjected to a truckload of unbiblical teaching. God's objective would not be to have people partake of the errors but rather that the lost would respond to the truth. Those evangelical Christians who know the Lord, however, and who watched movies such as *The Passion of the Christ* and *Son of God* have consequently been fed imagery that confuses their biblical literacy at best and corrupts the truth of what

they have already been taught at worst. This is damage that has serious consequences and must be dealt with for the sake of *both* the lost as well as believers.

QUESTION: I get the idea that you just have a bad attitude about movies. Is that the case?

RESPONSE: You are only partially correct. My "bad attitude" is primarily directed at *biblical* movies. As someone who was trained and who worked professionally in the film industry and has a great love for the Bible, I've tried to explain in many writings that the Word of God cannot be presented visually without destroying its truth. On the other hand, I do like *some* movies, although the number of them you could put on the head of a pin with room to spare. *Chariots of Fire* and *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* have made my list of favorite movies with Christian content, if that personal information is of any interest to you.

Here is a brief synopsis of my concerns regarding biblical movies and the body of Christ: Movies are the most influential communication medium today. The power of a movie itself lies in its ability to influence and even control the emotions of the audience. Scenes are put together to elicit emotional responses from viewers. Powerful images combined with heartrending music all too often compel the person to react beyond his or her control. Who has never unexpectedly shed a tear at a movie?

Sadly, that can even be a problem for Christians who have a personal relationship with the Lord and are somewhat familiar with the Scriptures. Discernment can easily take a back seat to emotions that have been manipulated by compelling images. For example, believers may supply or fill in what they know about Jesus from Scripture when the screen version doesn't warrant it and may even contradict what the Bible says. Consequently, they can easily miss the obvious biblical errors. What results may be a kind of emotional catharsis, that is, a fleshly experience mistaken for a spiritual experience based upon truth.

Furthermore, visual screen errors have a way of clinging to the mind of the viewer. As I mentioned elsewhere (TBC, 07/13), I have interviewed young adults who were biblically literate, questioning them about scenes they remembered from "biblical" movies. More often than not, they couldn't discriminate between scenes added by Hollywood that were in their minds and those they thought were in the Scriptures. At best their understanding of the Bible was terribly confused. That is a huge problem in these days of apostasy where biblical discernment is vital for the spiritual welfare of believers.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Must We Become Experts on All Religions?

QUESTION: Since there are so many sacred books of various religions, all of which claim to be true, how can anyone be sure that the Bible is the true Word of God without first examining all the others? Even though another sacred writing might be mostly false, couldn't it still have enough truth in it to make it worth the time and effort to examine all religious writings?

RESPONSE: That philosophy leads to liberalism's conclusion that there is no definitive truth and no conclusive answer to any question whatsoever. For example, how could one be certain that two plus two was only four without first examining whether it might not also be three or five or six or seven or every other number? Since numbers are infinite, one would never come to the end of the search. So it is with religion: No one could live long enough to examine every claim of every religion that has ever existed. Nor is such an effort necessary.

Thankfully, truth is not arrived at by a process of elimination. The fact that two plus two equals four *and only four* can be proved without looking at every other number. And so it is with the Bible: its validity can be determined from examining it alone.

The Exclusivity of the Bible's Claims

Whether the Bible is true or not depends upon the facts relating to that particular book. It is not to be arrived at by examining all other sacred books, concluding that none of the others is true, and then because the Bible is the only religious book left, accepting it. Every sacred book, including the Bible itself, could be and would be false if there were no God and/or if God had not chosen to reveal Himself and His will to mankind in written form. Whether He has done so or not is a question that cannot be answered by a process of elimination but must be determined factually.

Furthermore, if the Bible is the Word of God, as it claims (such terms as "Thus saith the Lord," "The word of the Lord came unto me," etc., are found about 3,800 times in the Bible), then all other sacred books must be false just as all other gods must be

false. The God of the Bible says He is the only true God: "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any. . . . There is no God else beside me . . . for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 44:6, 8; 45:21-22). If He is God alone, then the Bible through which He speaks must be His Word alone also.

Once one has come to know the true God, there is no need to check out all other possible gods just in case one of them might have some legitimacy. That possibility has been eliminated by knowing that the God of the Bible is the *only* true God. And once one has verified the Bible's claim to be the *only* Word of God by internal and external proofs, by archaeological and historical evidence, and, most of all, by meeting the Christ and God of the Bible, then there is no need to examine any other sacred books to see whether one of them might not have some truth in it as well.

The only reason for becoming familiar with other religions and other religious writings would be in order to show those who follow these false systems wherein the error lies and thereby to rescue them.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 71-73) by DAVE HUNT

The Power of the Gospel

Dave Hunt

First published in December 1993

God's holiness and justice require that sinners be eternally separated from Him. To be cut off completely and eternally from that Love for which one was created will be to burn with a thirst that will only grow ever more unbearable. God, however, graciously and freely offers salvation from that most dreadful condemnation. "The gospel of God's grace" declares that God became a man through virgin birth, that this sinless God-man died for our sins, satisfying His own justice by suffering the eternal punishment we deserve, resurrected the third day, and that all who believe in Him are forgiven and receive eternal life as a free gift. Salvation is that simple—and wonderful—and must be preached in that simplicity.

It is not the academic credentials, brilliant oratory, or persuasiveness of the preacher, but the pure gospel that convinces hearers. We must not attempt in human wisdom and zeal to embellish, improve, or in any way make the gospel more appealing to the unsaved. The gospel, presented in its unchanging purity, is the message that the Holy Spirit honors by convincing and convicting those who hear it (Jn 16:8-11). This truth must grip evangelicals once again!

Contrary to popular belief, expertise in preaching (the "homiletics" taught in seminary) cannot help but hinders communication of the gospel. Proficiency in public speaking or in the latest salesmanship techniques may be helpful in a secular profession but not in "the foolishness of preaching." Unless such methodologies and capabilities are laid aside to proclaim God's truth, they obscure the gospel.

Though the above may sound like an extreme and anti-intellectual view, such was the teaching and practice of the Apostle Paul. A learned rabbi, Paul was no doubt an eloquent orator who could sway any audience. In preaching the gospel, however, he deliberately laid aside "excellency of speech" (1 Cor 2:1) and carefully avoided "the words which man's wisdom teacheth" (v 13). Knowing that his own ideas, embellishments, and persuasive abilities were hindrances rather than helps, the great apostle stood before his audience "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (v 3). So must we.

Paul declared that the "wisdom of words" made Christ's cross "of none effect" (1 Cor 1:17). Therefore, he determined that

his preaching would not be "with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" so that his converts' faith "should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:4-5). Many well-meaning Christians, however, do exactly what Paul avoided, convinced that the gospel and the Holy Spirit need the help of scholarship, psychological persuasion, and modern promotional packaging. Consequently, the faith of many believers today stands upon the wisdom of men instead of in the power of God—and can thus be undermined by human argument as well.

FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE
GOSPEL OF CHRIST: FOR IT IS THE
POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION
TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH...

—Romans 1:16

The gospel is being compromised and even denied by many professing Christians. President Clinton, who claimed to be a Christian, said when his number two legal aide, Vincent Foster, Jr., committed suicide, "My deepest hope is that...[his] soul will receive the grace and salvation that *his good life and good works earned*" (emphasis added). At a prayer breakfast in which Clinton participated, Senator Kerry read John 3:1-21 (*skipping verse 16*), said Christ was speaking of "spiritual renewal," and that "in the spirit of Christ...Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, Christian" were meeting and "there is renewal...with a new President and Vice President..." Billy Graham added, "I do not know a time when we had a more spiritual time than we've had today."

The terms "spiritual" or "spirituality" legitimize much error. "Spirituality" is now evidenced by ecumenism and enhanced by New Age techniques. *Christianity Today* (CT) (11/8/93) favorably reports upon an apparent widespread movement toward spiritual maturity. Unfortunately, in its promotion of modern "spirituality," CT touts Richard Foster and his "contemplative prayer" techniques, which involve passivity and visualization taught by such occultists as Ignatius of Loyola (founder of the Jesuits) and Agnes Sanford. (See *The Seduction of Christianity and Beyond Seduction*.) Several articles uphold Roman Catholicism as sound Christianity. Introducing a major article, CT's executive editor praises

Roman Catholic mystic Thomas Merton as having led the way into a deeper relationship with God, even though Merton, a New Ager, rejected the gospel, without the acceptance of which one cannot know God.

It is not methodologies or techniques but truth and love that establish and mature spiritual life in the believer. Nor can genuine love of God and others spring from anything but acceptance and appreciation of the gospel (1 Jn 4:19). That "old, old story" reveals God's love. Those who preach it in truth must be motivated and empowered by that same love.

Well, you might say, I'm not a pastor or preacher, so advice about preaching the gospel doesn't apply to me. "The foolishness of preaching" includes sharing Christ with a neighbor over a fence or with a friend on the phone. Christ's command to "preach the gospel" and to "make disciples"—the so-called Great Commission of Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:18-20—applies equally to every Christian, past, present, and future. That fact is clear from Christ's words, "teaching [converts] to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20). Christ's original disciples were to teach their converts to obey every command He had given them—including preaching the gospel and teaching their converts as well to obey Christ's every command. And so down to us today. We also must obey all He commanded the original twelve.

These words of Christ correct a number of popular errors, such as the idea that His teachings in the four Gospels are only for Israel, or only to be obeyed in the Millennium, and thus are not for the church today. Also eliminated is the idea that "the gospel of the kingdom" that Christ and the disciples preached prior to the Cross is somehow different from the gospel we are to preach today. And a major source of Roman Catholic error—that the pope is Peter's successor and that only the hierarchy of priests, bishops, cardinals, et al., are the successors of the other apostles—is also proved false. Every convert to Christ is both commanded and empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey everything Christ commanded the original twelve and thus to act in every capacity for which He trained and commissioned them.

The gospel is the only solution to sin's destructive effect in daily life. Yet even many evangelicals have lost their faith in the power of the gospel and imagine that something else is needed, be it enticing programs, psychological counseling, or new revelations from modern prophets. Paul

referred to “the foolishness of preaching” because the simple gospel he preached was despised. So it is in our day.

In contrast to the simplicity and purity of the gospel presented in Scripture, new methods and innovations are being employed today. The gospel is no longer thought to be sufficient in itself. It is now taught that believing the gospel may leave a host of demons hiding within, left over from past sins or even prior generations. The Bible calls the one who believes the gospel “a new creature” in Christ for whom “old things are passed away [and] all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). In denial of this clear truth, “deliverance” ministries have sprung up to cast demons out of Christians.

The simple gospel was all the apostles needed and used. Yet today so much else is added. Take, for example, the new belief that many Christians (especially returning missionaries) through “stress” or “burnout” develop multiple personalities—another heresy from psychology. “Deliverance” allegedly comes by leading each “personality” to saving faith in Christ! Closely related is “Spiritual Mapping,” another new fad, which *Christianity Today* (11/8/93) calls “a complicated and controversial technique developed by missiologist C. Peter Wagner, that claims to identify satanic strongholds in a city....”

Last July saw the first ever “North American Spiritual Mapping Consultation,” offering “a methodology for discovering specific barriers to soul-winning in North American locales.” According to *National & International Religion Report* (NIRR),

The consultation was sponsored by the Sentinel Group (SG) of Lynnwood, Wash., and drew 130 invited pastors, lay leaders, and missionaries from 30 states and provinces....The ‘growing influence of new and powerful spiritual forces on the continent’ necessitates such research, said SG President George Otis, Jr., who is also co-coordinator for the United Prayer Track of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement.... A Spiritual Mapping Field Guide distributed at the conference outlined ways participants could prayerfully research the social bondages, allegiances, and spiritual barriers of their respective communities. It included 200 discovery questions, methodological cautions, and networking recommendations. SG’s Lisa Otis told NIRR that the research methods include interviews, observation, library backgrounding, and prayer logs. The group has planned seven regional meetings in hopes that results will

help develop effective prayer and evangelism strategies.

Questions immediately arise. *New* spiritual forces? Is there a new breed of demons more clever or powerful than those faced by the early church? If the gospel needs such help, why doesn’t the Bible say so? Why weren’t these methods taught and practiced by Christ and the apostles? How could Paul have “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) through evangelism of the pagan Roman Empire without employing these techniques? Would Paul have been even more effective had he used “spiritual mapping” and employed the new “methodology for discovering specific barriers to soul-winning”?

Surely Corinth, Greece’s most splendid and prosperous city, the mecca of trade between East and West, was as enslaved by Satan as any city today. The cult of Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, whose mythic example encouraged sexual promiscuity and perversion, had long flourished there. When Paul arrived in Corinth about A.D. 50, the massive, columned Temple of Apollo had for 600 years dominated the commercial center of the city (where much of the meat sold for consumption was first offered to idols). Yet we find no hint that Paul engaged in “spiritual mapping” of Corinth’s demonic powers. He relied solely and entirely upon the gospel to rescue pagans from Satan’s clutches: “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).

Or take the city of Ephesus, whose wealth came in large part from the sale of images of the goddess Diana. Her temple was the center of Ephesian life and, as was always the case with idolatry, involved prostitution, sexual orgies, and every depravity. If ever a people were bound by Satan and his minions it was the Ephesians. Yet without “spiritual mapping” or other “deliverance” techniques touted today, multitudes came to Christ, and the church formed there was among the strongest and truest. Yes, Paul reminded them that their battle was not against flesh and blood but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:10-12). He gave no hint, however, that these demonic powers should be mapped or tracked or that psychological techniques for dealing with multiple personalities should be employed. The believers were to stand fast in the faith, clothed in the armor of God, their sole weapon “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v 17).

The “old, old story of Jesus and His love,” as the classic hymn says, “is ever new” and best loved by “those who know it best.” We will never advance, even in eternity, to a higher spiritual experience or understanding than that produced by faith in the simple gospel that saves us. That God loved us so much as to become a man and, though hated, rejected, despised, and crucified, died in our place to reconcile sinners to Himself will ever be, for ransomed souls, the wellspring of love, joy, and worship in heaven. In all eternity we will never have a newer or better song than the “old, old story,” which is ever new.

“Thou art worthy...for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” is the highest praise possible for the redeemed in God’s presence (Rv 5:9). Herein lies the secret of joy for those who inhabit heaven! Why are some Christians depressed, insecure, selfish, earthly minded, and lacking love, joy, peace, and victory in Christ? The “old, old story of Jesus and His love” has become old indeed to them, neglected and forgotten. They don’t need psychological counseling but a return to their “first love” (Rv 2:4). We need to meditate unceasingly upon this most wonderful truth, the simple gospel, which alone ignites the genuine love and sincere gratitude that we ought to continually express to our Lord.

It is commendable if someone, concerned to know God better, studies Greek. However, if proficiency in that language were essential for knowing God’s Word and living a more fruitful Christian life, then one would expect the Greeks to be the most Christlike and fruitful of all people, and God would have had us all speak Greek. Surely the Greeks in Christ’s and Paul’s day knew their native tongue much better than today’s Greek scholars, yet they had as much difficulty living for Christ as anyone else. The love relationship God desires needs only a sincere, believing heart in which to grow.

“Oh, the wonder of it all” said the hymn-writer, “that God loves me!” It is so simple that a child can believe it, yet so profound that it will take eternity to begin to fathom the depths of that love! God’s love is revealed in Christ’s dying in our place. Surely those who have tasted that love must be impelled by that love to tell others of the salvation available by God’s grace. Only that appreciation of God’s love and grace aroused by the gospel transforms sinners into joyful, victorious saints—and continues to keep the saints in joy and victory now, and eternally. **TBC**

Quotable.....

So often the way in which we repent to God or apologize to someone shows that we have not truly judged ourselves. We betray the fact that we feel the wrong is only an unfortunate slip, and that we have on this occasion acted out of character with our true selves. What deception! The truth is we have not acted out of character at all, but in accordance with our true form, as declared to us by that Figure hanging on the cross for us! It might do us well to add, when we are putting something right with another, “So you see what I really am.” The head must be bowed low to the dust to admit that we are no better than what Jesus had to become for us. Then we find Him a door indeed.

—*Roy and Revel Hession,*
We Would See Jesus

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I am concerned that debates are not profitable regarding Scripture. Could you please address the matter of debates?

RESPONSE: Much depends upon the spirit in which the debate is engaged. A debate can degenerate into a bitter argument where neither party is listening to the other, each merely reiterating his entrenched and opposing views. One’s opponent is rarely convinced, but a clear-cut presentation of both sides helps the listener to be better prepared when faced with challenges to biblical truth. In order to contend for the faith, one needs to be knowledgeable. Jesus entered into some very frank exchanges with the rabbis in His day. Paul debated publicly everywhere he went: “Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him: (Acts 17:17).

QUESTION: If Christ took upon Himself the grave and the Lake of Fire, then there is no need of repentance and trusting Him for our salvation. Wouldn’t both penalties be paid in full?

RESPONSE: We could not be saved unless Christ paid in full the penalty demanded by God’s judgment against our sin. The penalty of sin is death. Death has already passed upon man and will culminate in his separation from his body and from this planet and from God forever unless he can be justly forgiven. God cannot merely make a bookkeeping entry in heaven. The debt demanded by His justice must be paid in full for man to be pardoned. Calvinism says that He paid the full penalty for only the elect, but the Bible repeatedly says it was for the

whole world (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 2:2, etc).

Why do we need to repent and believe in Christ if the penalty has been paid in full for everyone? The good news of the gospel is that salvation is offered to all. That offer requires acceptance on man’s part. God does not force His love and grace upon anyone. Even the Calvinist, though denying any volition on man’s part, acknowledges that the offer must be accepted through the work of God’s grace.

There is no hint that sin’s penalty for individuals can be isolated from the whole or that Christ paid for each one’s sins individually. Just as to break one commandment is to be guilty of breaking the entire law (Jas 2:10), so payment for one sin is necessarily payment for all.

QUESTION: Roman Catholic apologists such as Gerry Matatics, Scott Hahn, and Karl Keating claim that the apostles’ oral teaching was as authoritative as Scripture, that it was passed down through history as “tradition,” that the Catholic Church has been its careful guardian and that evangelicals lack a full understanding of God’s truth because they reject tradition. How do you respond?

RESPONSE: Not every word the apostles spoke was inspired of God. Catholics don’t even claim that for the popes, alleged successors of Peter. Moreover, without a written record, no one could be certain even 100 years later, let alone today, that orally transmitted teaching had been passed down accurately. Obviously, we must have an infallible written record, which is why the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to write the New Testament. We are assured that all Scripture is inspired of God. No such assurance is given for tradition. In fact, the opposite is implied.

Certainly while the canon of the New Testament was in the process of composition much of the apostles’ teaching had only been given orally. That’s why Paul reminded the Thessalonians of “the tradition...received of us” (2 Thes 3:6) and admonished them to “stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2:15). It is equally clear, however, both logically and biblically, that whatever applied to and was to be observed by the church down through the ages was included in the permanent New Testament record. The apostles’ teaching certainly has been preserved nowhere else.

Do we have examples of apostolic teaching first given orally then written into the New Testament scriptures? Yes. Paul repeats to the Corinthians in writing what he had previously taught them orally (“delivered unto you”) concerning the

Lord’s supper (1 Cor 11:23). Likewise he puts in writing in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians what he had previously taught them orally concerning the Antichrist: “when I was yet with you, I told you these things” (2 Thes 2:5). There are other examples.

Far from promoting extrabiblical tradition, the Bible condemns it. Except for 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6 quoted above, every other mention of tradition in the New Testament is disapproving. Both Peter (1 Pt 1:18) and Paul (Gal 1:13-16; Col 2:8) reveal its errors and the need to be delivered from human tradition. Far from supplementing and being equal to God’s Word, as Rome insists, tradition is always contrasted with and declared to be contradictory thereto. It is Rome’s traditions (like those of the rabbis) which have led her so far astray. Christ rebuked the Pharisees for voiding the Word of God by their tradition (Mt 15:2,3,6; Mk 7:3,5,8,9,13). Surely He wouldn’t then have His church guided by extrabiblical tradition! In fact, none were passed down from the apostles.

Absolutely no tradition held by Roman Catholics today can be traced back to the apostles. Catholic traditions and dogmas such as the Mass, rosary, prayers to Mary and the “saints,” etc., developed gradually over the centuries, directly contradict Scripture, and therefore must be rejected. Matatics, Hahn, Keating, et al., are clever but wrong—not only on this point but in all their defense of Rome’s heresies.

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IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What Does Archaeology Say About the Bible?

QUESTION: I have been told that there is a great deal of archaeological evidence proving that the Bible is not reliable. I don't remember the details, and perhaps none were given, but the impression I've gotten from several professors at the university is that the archaeological evidence against the Bible is pretty solid.

RESPONSE: There have been many claims that the Bible is not true, but none of them has been able to stand up under careful scrutiny. The Bible claims to be the Word of God, which He inspired prophets and apostles to put in writing for the benefit of all mankind. As such, it must be infallible and without any error. Therefore, it would not take "a great deal" of archaeological or any other kind of evidence to disprove the Bible. One piece of evidence would be enough.

Paul wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), and Peter declared that "holy men of God spoke [or wrote] as they were moved [inspired] by the Holy Ghost [Spirit of God]" (2 Peter 1:21). Even one error in the *substance* of the Bible (not a copyist's or printer's error) would prove it was not what it claims to be, the holy Word of God. You have given me no specific examples, so I can only reply in general.

The Bible is without doubt the most remarkable as well as the most controversial book in the world. Its claim to be inspired of God has caused those who don't believe in God and those who follow rival religions to attack its credibility. In fact, it has been attacked by determined skeptics and professional critics for centuries as no other book in history. In every instance, however, when the facts have been established through archaeological findings, the Bible has been proven correct and its critics wrong. This has been the case 100 percent of the time—as it would have to be if the Bible is indeed God's Word.

As just one example, the early chapters of the Bible have a great deal to say about the Hittites. According to the biblical account, they were a numerous and powerful people in the days of Abraham and continuing at least into the time of King David. We are told that one of David's army captains was a Hittite named Uriah. David arranged for Uriah's murder in order to cover the sin of having made his wife pregnant. Yet decades of digging had failed to uncover any archaeological evidence for the Hittites. Consequently, the skeptics claimed that the Bible was a book of myths because it presented fictitious details concerning a people who had never existed.

Then the discoveries began to pour in. Today we have abundant archaeological evidence that what the Bible said concerning the Hittites is absolutely true. One entire museum in Ankara, Turkey, is devoted to Hittite relics.

A more recent development comes through the finding in 1993 at Tel Dan of the "now-famous Aramaic [stone] inscription fragment referring to the House of David. Some scholars . . . [had] denied that David was a historical figure or that a united kingdom preceded Judah and Israel." Once again the Bible was vindicated. In 1994, two more fragments of the same stone inscription were discovered, again mentioning the House of David. Many other similar examples could be given.

Today no one doubts the existence of King David and the history of his reign as recorded in the Bible. In September 1995, all of Israel began a 15-month-long celebration of the three-thousandth anniversary of the founding of Jerusalem by David.

As a result of its continual verification by archaeological findings, the Bible is used by many of today's archaeologists as a guide in locating ancient cities. In fact, Israeli public schools teach students the history of their land and ancestors from the Old Testament, knowing that it is unfailingly accurate.

The truth is that rather than archaeological evidence pointing *against* the Bible, the archaeological evidence is all in its *favor*. Anyone who says the contrary is either ignorant of the current evidence or is heavily biased and unwilling to face it.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 73-75) by DAVE HUNT

How Does Your Church Counsel?

T. A. McMahon

How does your church provide counsel for its fellowship? That's a critical question for the body of Christ. The answer ought to be "God's way." Yet for more than half a century, due primarily to the influence of so-called Christian psychology, the church, with rare exceptions, has been counseling *man's way* in one form or another. The consequence has been that many believers have little more success in overcoming sins that are related to problems of living than do unbelievers. Indeed, even when the flesh is well-meaning—it profits nothing. Jesus declared, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10), but this lack of success would seem to deny His words. Furthermore, looking to worldly sources for help in sin-related mental, emotional, and behavioral problems is a rejection of the authority and the sufficiency of God's Word.

The Bible is absolutely clear regarding its authority and sufficiency for every believer. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as *his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness*, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:2-4).

In addition to the instructions the Scriptures supply for every believer, God's Word also supplies *power* for every believer who obeys its instructions: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, *according to his glorious power*, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1:10-11). "For the word of God is quick, *and powerful*, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of

the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

So, the body of Christ has at its disposal the teachings of God's Word, the empowerment of the Word itself, and the enablement of the Holy Spirit to carry out its instructions. Why then would believers turn elsewhere? That's what every Christian, especially every church leader, those who shepherd the sheep, must consider. More often than not, even among fellowships that consider themselves to be biblical, the counseling techniques they use have little to do with scriptural teachings; instead they favor the methods with which the psychologized world has been mesmerized.

My hope in this article is that believers in Christ, especially those in leadership, will evaluate biblically how they and their fellowship are fulfilling the scriptural mandate to "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). I want to present a list of practices that deviate from the biblical way and have been implemented as an aid to facilitate in counseling. Some miss the mark by miles, while others introduce subtle errors that nevertheless can contribute to serious problems. My list is hardly exhaustive and simply represents what I have observed personally, what I know biblically, as well as the extensive studies from psychological researchers supplied by Dr. Martin and Deidre Bobgan in their many volumes addressing the biblical way versus psychotherapeutic concepts and methods.

The most obvious counseling error is for a church to refer a believer to a professional counselor, be it a clinical psychologist, marriage and family counselor, or a psychiatrist who practices psychotherapy. Psychotherapy, if you are not aware, *does not deal with medical issues*; rather it is "talk" therapy drawn from some of the more than 500 concepts that professional counselors employ. We, and others, have written extensively about the anti-biblical theories and the pseudoscience of psychological counseling, which can be found in our website resource materials and in the book and DVD *Psychology and the Church: Critical Questions, Crucial Answers*. Yet here, in brief, are our fundamental problems with referring believers to those trained in psychological counseling: 1) The basic concepts were conjured up by those who were atheists and anti-Christians. Scripture tells us in Psalm 1 that believers are not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly. 2) The foundational belief of psychological counseling is that mankind is inherently good. Jeremiah 17:9 states the opposite. 3) It is an intimidating myth that psychological counseling is

scientific and that only professionals are equipped to counsel. 4) Since nearly all issues related to counseling are symptoms of sin, psychological counselors have no basis for addressing sin. 5) All Christian psychologists attempt to integrate psychotherapeutic concepts with the teachings of Scripture. 6) Referring believers to professional counselors is a shameful denial of the authority and sufficiency of God's Word. It is a matter of shepherds turning their flock over to hirelings at best—wolves in disguise at worst.

Some churches that recognize the problems with referring their members out to professional counselors have one or more professional or trained counselors on staff. That approach solves nothing. It simply brings the inherent problems of psychological counseling under the roof of the church. The fellowship is still being subjected to professionals trained in psychological counseling and who counsel psychologically or attempt to integrate their professional training with biblical teaching, which always corrupts God's Word. The method of setting up an individual as the counselor (e.g., an academically degreed professional or a certificated biblical counselor) for a fellowship is foreign to New Testament ministry. Moreover, it undermines body ministry within a fellowship as a function of the *members* rather than a particular individual. Too often it mimics methodologies of professional counseling that feature procedures that are contrary to what the Bible teaches.

What then does the Bible teach about how believers in a fellowship are to go about ministering to one another? How are believers to deal with everyday issues that adversely affect their walk with the Lord and consequently their relationship with others? First of all, ministry is required of all the believers in a fellowship. Scripture does not say that only a select individual is to "bear another's burdens." It says "ye," a plural form of "you," meaning *all* are to be involved in ministering to fellow believers. Every true believer is indwelt with Jesus, who is our Counselor, and the Holy Spirit, who is our comforter and teacher.

Even as a babe in Christ, a believer can be used in ministering. Furthermore, every believer has a gift or gifts of the Holy Spirit that he is to utilize for the building up and edification of the body of Christ. These gifts are essential to effective ministry. Since the gifts are a function of the Holy Spirit as He wills, their implementation is not dependent upon the maturity of the believer. Nevertheless, when it comes to

someone who has walked with the Lord for many years, who has experienced His deliverance through trials and tribulations, who knows and has obeyed the instructions of His Word, the Holy Spirit certainly has much to draw upon in using that person to minister to other believers.

Halting a specific sin issue in a fellow-believer's life should *not be* the primary goal of those who minister. Sin is nearly always symptomatic of a believer's having distanced himself from Christ. All ministering must therefore begin with where a believer is in his relationship with Jesus—and a recognition of where he needs to be. That includes one's submission to our Lord, reading His Word, obedience to what it says, time in prayer, fellowship with other believers, and one's service in fellowship. As should be apparent, such things are the substance of being steadfast in the faith and resisting iniquity: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but *yield yourselves unto God*, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:12-13).

There is no sin that cannot be prevented when a believer is walking in obedience to God's Word. Moreover, the increased spiritual growth of the believer is the ultimate prevention program to resist sin and advance fruitfulness: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10). "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Although many Bible-believing fellowships would agree with what is stated above, rarely does their approval mean that they have put those principles into practice. Too often, very little discernment is used in biblically evaluating their approach to counseling. Most would claim that they provide "biblical counseling"—meaning they disdain professional psychotherapy in favor of counseling from the Word of God. Yet a worldly leaven is too often introduced as churches reject psychotherapeutic concepts but fall prey to "the way the professionals do it." In the spirit of 2 Corinthians 13:5 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21 ("Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."), we would encourage

fellowships that desire to be faithful to the Scriptures to consider these biblically contrary practices:

1) If counseling in a church becomes the function of an individual or a select few, that procedure rejects the biblical instruction that all should be involved in ministering to one another. It also puts a tremendous burden on the counselor (pastor or trained biblical counselor), and it erroneously sets that individual up as the one to go to in order to have life's problems solved.

2) If an individual has been selected as a church's "biblical counselor," does he or she betray the biblical way in practice? Does what takes place involve any of the following:

- a) Counseling by hourly appointments over an extended period of time
- b) Charging a fee or soliciting donations for services rendered
- c) Avoiding fellowship with counselees outside of the counseling sessions
- d) A male counselor counseling a female, or a female counselor counseling a male
- e) Searching a counselee's past to "discover" supposed issues that determine or influence present behavior
- f) Allowing counselees to "unload" on spouses or those with whom he or she has a relationship issue
- g) Attempting to know the heart of the counselee with regard to the veracity of what is being admitted
- h) Encouraging a counselee to be "transparent"

As you may have perceived in this list, all are compatible with professional psychological counseling and are contrary to God's instructions for believers to minister to one another. They are also rife with problems, according to studies by research psychologists themselves. Counseling by appointments of usually an hourly duration for a fee turns the counselor into a "paid friend." Friendships "outside the office" between counselor and counselee are considered a breach of professional ethics. Counseling between males and females has often led to sexual involvement. Delving into the past is a Freudian concept known as "psychic determinism," which has led to the inducing of destructive beliefs, such as the creation of false memories. "Unloading," or "venting," has been shown to be more emotionally damaging than holding something within. Denigrating a spouse or someone in a relationship "gone bad" greatly inhibits

reconciliation. Transparency is nearly always selective, lacks honesty, and is biased in favor of the counselee. Obviously, if such concepts don't work for secular counselors, they won't work for "biblical" counselors. Pragmatism, however, is not the standard for a follower of Christ. Doing things His way is.

How the body of Christ goes about ministering to one another in their fellowships is exceedingly significant beyond the practical considerations, although we can thank the Lord for seeing much fruit borne through our obedience to His instructions. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul writes what I believe is specifically directed at our generation, which even the world has recognized as our psychologized society, the "me" generation. Prophetically, he declares that "in the last days perilous times shall come." In verses 2 through 5 one could not identify the "perilous" consequences of psychological counseling any more clearly than the results of an epidemic of humanity's being "lovers of their own selves," generating those who are "covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Counseling, when reflecting the way the world does it, indeed has "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Therefore, we, as believers, must heed Paul's Holy Spirit-inspired exhortation that "from such turn away." Our repentance, our turning away, must be followed by our turning *back* to God's way, as we are told in Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." That is the only antidote to being seduced by the "perilous times" in which we live. Let us, as the church of Christ, *not* end up like those in the times of Jeremiah who boldly declared "We will not walk therein."

For more detailed information regarding our concerns as well as biblical input regarding how fellowships go about counseling we recommend the following books by Martin and Deidre Bobgan: *Person to Person Ministry, Christ-Centered Ministry, and Stop Counseling! Start Ministering!* **TBC**

Quotable.....

You'll never get relief from worry until you confess it as sin. Worry doubts the goodness of God; it says He doesn't care. Worry doubts the wisdom of God; it says He doesn't know what He's doing. Worry doubts the power of God; it says He cannot deliver me from the thing that's causing me to worry.

—William MacDonald,
“The Revolutionary
Teachings of Jesus Christ”

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

—Psalm 18:2-3

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You confuse me. You seem to be very much opposed to psychology yet you quote some psychologists favorably and seem to rely upon the research that psychologists supply.

RESPONSE: You may be confused because you have missed some of what we have said in the extensive writings we have done on psychotherapy. We have stated that the American Psychological Association (APA) has more than 50 distinct divisions of psychology, of which only a few are scientific or lend themselves to the scrutiny of science. As an undergraduate in college, I majored in industrial design and used the research provided by psychology as it related to perception, signing, and ergonomics (man-machine interface).

The psychology we address critically in our ministry is psychotherapy (psychological counseling, clinical psychology), which is clearly not scientific. We often quote research psychologists and psychiatrists who supply studies demonstrating that psychotherapy is not scientific. There is a great gulf between those who do research on the effectiveness of psychotherapy and the practitioners, who generally disregard the research.

We could certainly address the problems with psychotherapy from only a biblical perspective and establish how contrary to the Scripture it is, but we have found that it is helpful for some Christians when we supply the abundance of evidence against psychological counseling from secular researchers.

QUESTION: My daughter, who is a committed Christian, is a high school junior

who would like to attend a Christian university and major in counseling. She loves people and has a heart to serve others. I believe she has the gift of counseling. Could you recommend a good school for her?

RESPONSE: We hate to be blunt in responding to your daughter's hope for a career in counseling, but biblical truth demands it: there is no good school for her and there is no gift of counseling. The reason there is no good school is because all school programs for counseling are either psychological or a mixture of psychotherapy and the Bible. Even degreed or certificated programs that claim to be strictly biblical are not biblical. Why do I say that? Because the Bible does not support the belief that an individual is to be the counselor (i.e., problem solver) within a fellowship of believers. The Bible describes no counseling techniques like those presently used by those who call themselves “biblical counselors.” Counseling, or, to be more correct, *ministering*, according to the Scriptures is to be a function of all believers in a fellowship. That being the case, it is not a valid career for a Christian.

In their Jan/Feb *Psychoheresy Awareness Letter*, Martin and Deidre Bobgan supply more information that a Christian who is considering a career in counseling needs to be aware. They write:

Psychologically trained and licensed counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychotherapists, and psychiatrists are chained to their training and licenses, both of which determine much of their practice. Not only do “Christian psychologists” dip into the same cisterns of psychological theories and therapies; they are also bound by law to practice in a similar manner. What does this mean? This means that licensed “Christian psychologists” must follow the codes of their state license. For instance the “Non-Discrimination” clause from the “Code of Ethics for Marriage and Family Therapists” states: “Marriage and family therapists do not condone or engage in discrimination or refuse professional service to anyone on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic, or marital status.” These restrictions are also espoused by all the national associations for psychologists and psychiatrists, and they are included in much of the state licensing.

Consider the reference to “sexual orientation.” Every state has its own licensing requirements for clinical psychologists and

marriage and family therapists, as well as other therapists such as psychiatric social workers. We decided to ask our two state licensing offices here in California questions with regard to a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) person coming to a licensed counselor. Could the psychologist or marriage and family therapist (MFT) refuse service to such a person? Could the psychologist or MFT attempt to talk the person out of his/her orientation? If the LGBT person desires to live more peacefully as an LGBT person, would the psychologist or MFT be obligated to assist with this objective? Of course the answers to these questions apply equally well to a Christian licensed psychologist and MFT. In each case the answer from our California State offices was that if an LGBT person filed a complaint because of the refusal to serve him/her, or an attempt to talk the person out of his/her sexual orientation, or failure to assist, an investigation would surely follow. Although we were not told what the outcome would be, it doesn't take much imagination to see that at minimum there would be a reprimand and a need on the part of the licensed Christian psychologist or MFT to follow the “Non-Discrimination” section of the “Code of Ethics” or lose his/her license.

These anti-discrimination rules also apply to university psychology and counseling programs, which are subject to the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics. There have been at least two cases of students being dismissed from counseling programs, one because of referring a LGBT individual to another counselor and the other because she expressed her biblical beliefs about sexuality and refused the university's “remedial training,” which she contended would be against her beliefs.

Other requirements for licensed Christian psychologists and MFTs, about which we will not elaborate, have to do with abortion and same-gender marriage. In addition, Christian psychologists and MFTs would be required to assist atheists, occultists, Satanists, and individuals of all faiths without being able to proselytize, persuade, or dissuade in matters of faith and practice. In summary, Christian licensed counselors are obligated by the bounds of using their psychological methodologies within the framework of a professional code of ethics, absent their Christian beliefs, no matter how contrary their counselees' beliefs and practices are to the Bible. *That is one more reason why we recommend against Christians becoming licensed as psychological counselors of any kind.*



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Where Does Prophecy Fit In—And Why?

QUESTION: I have heard it said that the prophecies in the Bible are worded in such a way that their alleged “fulfillment” could fit almost anything. Is this true? And if not, what is the purpose of prophecy? It seems to me that for the Bible even to be involved in prophecy puts it in the realm of speculation and detracts from its credibility and reliability and its excellent teaching on morals.

RESPONSE: The Bible is about 30 percent prophecy, and for this reason alone it is absolutely unique. There are no prophecies in the Qur’an, in the Hindu Vedas or the Bhagavad-Gita, in the sayings of Buddha and Confucius, in the Book of Mormon, or anywhere except in the Bible. Nor are there any prophecies concerning the coming of Buddha, Krishna, Muhammad, Zoroaster, Confucius, or the founder or leader of any other of the world’s religions. The Jewish Messiah is absolutely unique in this respect. His coming was foretold in dozens of specific prophecies that were fulfilled in minutest detail in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are a number of reasons for biblical prophecy: to prove God’s existence by telling us what will happen in advance; to identify the Messiah by specifying numerous details concerning His coming, including even when and where; and to warn the faithful of conditions and dangers in the last days. (We deal with these elements of prophecy in other books.) As for being “worded in such a way that its alleged ‘fulfillment’ could fit almost anything,” that simply is not true, as any examination of biblical prophecy proves.

An Impeccable Prophetic Record

Inasmuch as fulfilled prophecy proves conclusively both the existence of God and that the Bible is His Word, the Bible’s prophecies have been critically examined in many strenuous attempts to disprove them. For example, so many factual details are given in the book of Daniel concerning the Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires that the skeptics tried hard to prove that these prophecies had actually been written after the events had occurred. Otherwise, they would have to admit that the Bible had indeed foretold the future. The date of Daniel was therefore attacked from every imaginable angle over the past two centuries. Every assault failed, however, and the book of Daniel stands impregnable today.

It was, of course, a complete waste of time to attempt to prove that Daniel had been written after the rise and fall of the four world empires of which it foretold. Even the most critical skeptics had to admit that this book had been part of the canon of the Old Testament at least before the coming of Christ and that events subsequent to Christ’s birth were presented accurately. The book of Daniel, for example (as we shall see later), foretold the very day

(April 6, 32 AD) that Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (as Zechariah 9:9 had prophesied) and be hailed as the Messiah—the day that is now celebrated as Palm Sunday. Daniel foretold the splitting of the Roman Empire into two parts (East and West) centuries before it occurred. Politically and militarily, that split between East and West came in AD 330, when Constantine moved his capital to Constantinople. Religiously it came in AD 1054, when Pope Leo IX excommunicated Michael Cerularius, Patriarch of Constantinople.

We will go into specific prophecies later. Before moving on, however, let us consider one brief quote concerning prophecy from the fascinating book *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*:

The prophecies about the Jews—as about the coming Messiah...[are] specific (in contrast with the Delphic and other Pagan oracles who...hedge[d] against mistake[s])... [and are] so numerous as to make accidental fulfillment almost infinitely improbable...[and] of such nature that the events predicted seemed beforehand mutually destructive and were and are unparalleled in human history....

[Consider] the fact that the Jewish Passover has been celebrated continuously...[for] 3,500 years (although the sacred fires of Persia and those tended by the Vestal Virgins of Rome which were to be kept burning forever have been out for centuries)...in the light of the words we find in this same old Book:

And...ye shall keep it [the passover] a feast to the Lord throughout your generations...forever. (Exodus 12:14)

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 79-81) *by* DAVE HUNT

What Think Ye of Heaven?

T. A. McMahon

If I could go back and correct anything attitude-wise about my walk with the Lord for nearly four decades, it would be that early on I would like to have had more of an eternal perspective. I didn't exactly buy the lie that "to be too heavenly minded is to be no earthly good," but in some ways my thoughts and actions reflected that idea. I'm much older now, which has certainly increased the amount of time I spend thinking about Heaven. I'm sure that happens to all of us seniors who know and love the Lord. Wanting to be with Him for eternity is an exciting desire soon to be realized by us, unless—better yet—the Lord hastens the event by His imminent return for His saints.

What then of those born-again young people starting out on life's journey, looking ahead to college, careers, marriage, raising a family, and all the rest of the wonderful opportunities life can provide? For many, Heaven is a distant destination and a remote hope. Yes, it's a nice idea, but that's "way down the line of life," according to the thinking of many. Some might even complain that spending one's life occupied with thoughts of Heaven is a dreamer's folly or indicates an escapist mentality that shies away from dealing with the truly important issues of life and might be considered impractical to the point of negligence.

People can and do make up their own ideas about Heaven, but all of us are better served by going to the One who created Heaven and who has revealed to us the truth about it and its purpose. That, of course, would be God and His Word. It behooves us to survey the Scriptures for the truth about Heaven—which God alone can and has provided.

First of all, Heaven is an actual place. It's not some sort of wishful location where it will be "kinda nice to reside" after our life on earth is over. It's not some sort of Pleasure Island, nor is it our Native American's happy hunting ground, nor the Viking's Valhalla, nor the eternal lakeside cottage we've always desired. Nothing to inspire self-gratification will be found there—nothing to fulfill the lust of the flesh—as that would greatly diminish the glorious wonders that God has prepared for the believer!

Heaven is a joyous mystery: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for

them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). It will be an environment of bliss that has no earthly comparison, and we are blessed to read of some earthly experiences that *won't* be found there: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH. FOR YE ARE DEAD, AND YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD. WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, SHALL APPEAR, THEN SHALL YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY.

— Colossians 3:2-4

Heaven is presented throughout Scripture as a place where those who are saved will receive rewards for their fruitful works on earth: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:9-10). One's eternal treasure is generated by good works: "Charge them...that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to [share]; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Continually we are told "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19), but rather produce "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" (Luke 12:33). The comparison is between earthly goods that are temporal and heavenly treasure that is eternal. Jesus told the rich young man whose wealth had captured his heart, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

We don't know what "treasure in Heaven" exactly means, but we do know that its value far and away exceeds anything our earthly life has or could produce.

Beginning perhaps with the gracious words of Jesus, "Well done, good and faithful servant," it will include rewards and crowns, as well as opportunities to rule and reign with our Savior and King during the Millennium (Revelation 20:6). Again, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Furthermore, whatever God has prepared, as supremely wonderful as it will be, it will nevertheless pale by comparison with our being in the presence of Jesus, whom we love and who loves us more than we can comprehend. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). No matter what Jesus has prepared, nothing could be better for believers than to be where He is. Paul was totally aware of that joyful expectation when he wrote, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot [know] not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; *which is far better*" (Philippians 1:21-23). It's *far better* because our "life is hid with Christ in God" and when "Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:3-4). Being with Jesus forever is both the purpose and pinnacle of life. It is the believer's *raison d'être*, his or her reason for living.

What then is the criterion for entrance into Heaven? When the religious leaders asked Jesus what they must do to work the works of God, He replied, "This is the work of God, that ye *believe on him* whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29). That is the only condition that must be met. The Philippian jailer was instructed: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). Peter, as well, declared, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Believing the gospel—the good news that Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, paid the full penalty for one's sins—reconciles one to God and makes him fit for eternal life with Christ. The psalmist writes, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath [Jesus] removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12),

which Paul underscores in Romans 6:22: “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Sin is still a factor in the temporal life of a believer, but its infinite penalty has been completely paid for and its power will cease at Heaven’s door. Again, one’s entrance into Heaven, a place where sin cannot appear, is only possible because of Jesus, “who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

The Bible does not present Heaven as a place for believers to move on to after they have done their best to shape up the world into the Kingdom of God. That’s not going to happen. The Kingdom of God will not be manifested on earth until the King himself returns, and He will return with those whose residence has been in Heaven while the earth and its inhabitants will have been subjected to worldwide destruction through God’s righteous judgment. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). The prophet Jeremiah refers to it as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” out of which a remnant of Israel will be saved (Jeremiah 30:7).

What does all the above say about one’s activities here on earth? For the most part, what the Scriptures teach has been marginalized if not outright rejected even by those who claim to be Christians. Mankind has attempted to set up its own utopian kingdom from the time of Babel to the Holy Roman Empire to Calvin’s “kingdom” in Geneva to Hitler’s Third Reich to the Kingdom Now and Take Dominion enthusiasts to the Christian Reconstructionists and Coalition on Revival proponents to many of today’s cults. Also of that biblically erroneous mentality are those Christians whose emphasis is on solving the world’s problems such as disease, hunger, poverty, illiteracy, immorality, and social injustice. Although some such organizations include sharing the gospel in their “good works” endeavors, the majority have drifted away from what Christ commanded: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you [always], even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20). Since sin is at the heart of all the

world’s problems, then even good works that avoid the salvation that only Christ provides, no matter how sincere, are anti-christ endeavors.

Not only is the great commission being undermined by various forms of “works salvation” but a very significant emphasis of Scripture is being rejected: namely, that believers in Christ are to recognize that *this planet is not our home* but simply a starting point, intended for our temporal existence, which has, as the objective, to be with Jesus for all eternity. We are sojourners here, pilgrims, Heaven-bound to be with our Savior.

FOR OUR [CITIZENSHIP] IS IN HEAVEN; FROM WHENCE ALSO WE LOOK FOR THE SAVIOUR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

— *Philippians 3:20*

“If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 12:26; 17:24). We must not forget that Scripture tells us that this present universe is headed for termination following the thousand-year reign of Jesus: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

Those who take a dim view of Christians who are highly motivated by the hope of Heaven have not read the Scriptures, or, if they have, they must not believe them. Chapter 11 of Hebrews characterizes the heroes of the faith as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” who desired “a better country, that is, an heavenly [one],” and adds that the world was not worthy of them (Hebrews 11:13,16,38). The complaint is that a focus on Heaven results in a “do nothing” time here on earth. Again, such complainers aren’t taking the Word of God at its word. Over and over we find verses exhorting us to holiness and fruitfulness as we look forward to Heaven: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;

and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23); “That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to [give], willing to [share], laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:18-19); “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1 Peter 1:17). “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [conduct] and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:11-14)

Jesus gave a number of parables that instruct us about how we, as believers, should regard Heaven. Therefore, we need to heed His words in order to keep from being sidetracked in our sojourning through this temporal life. “And the disciples came and said to him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matthew 13:10-11). Those who would reject Christ would also reject Heaven. How important, therefore, should Heaven be in the lives of those who believe? Nothing here should supersede it. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:44-46).

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1-2). “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34). “For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). Amen and amen. **TBC**

Quotable.....

The sin of man and the love of God are inseparable components of the gospel, and both must be preached.

—Barry Stagner

Q&A.....

QUESTION: What is your take on the “Blood Moons” teachings we’re hearing from John Hagee, Mark Biltz, and others? Is there any validity in what they’re saying?

RESPONSE: We have a number of concerns with this popular distraction. The first eclipse of the highly publicized “blood moon” tetrad—a series of four sequential total lunar eclipses—passed on April 15 without event; yet there is still confusion in the body of Christ.

The term “blood moon” as popularly used misses the biblical sense of the term. There is no evidence to suggest that the perceived discoloration of the moon during a total lunar eclipse is what is referenced in Scripture. Eclipses are of relatively short duration, are entirely predictable, are visible only to part of the planet—and although purported to be a potential herald of Christ’s return to the Mount of Olives, three of the four in this tetrad cannot even be viewed from *anywhere* in the Middle East, and the fourth only partially in the Promised Land. [See NASA maps here: <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/lunar.html>]

Attempts to connect the tetrad with the Second Advent are based on speculation and faulty interpretation of Scripture, most notably Joel 2:30-31, Matthew 24:29-30, and Revelation 6:12-17.

And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. (Jl 2:30-31)

...[A]fter the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven...and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Mt 24:29-30)

And... when he had opened the sixth seal... the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth.... And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and... [all men] hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and

rocks, Fall on us, and hide us... from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rv 6:12-17)

The “blood moon” teachers focus on the moon’s apparent color and timing as the primary signs; but as the above scriptures reveal, comparing a total lunar eclipse to this prophetic context is like comparing a firecracker with a nuclear device. Most importantly, while we affirm the doctrine of imminency for a pre-Tribulation rapture (which indeed *could* fall on a Jewish feast day), speculation that the “blood moons” tetrad of 2014-2015 may be a harbinger of the Apocalypse is completely without basis—and quite literally impossible, as we shall see.

Mark Biltz, pastor of El Shaddai Ministries in Bonney Lake, Washington, is generally recognized as the first to report (as early as 2007-08) that all four eclipses in the current tetrad cycle directly coincide with Jewish feast days. Biltz, a popular teacher in the Hebrew Roots Movement, suggested that this tetrad—the last to occur in this century—could herald the Second Advent of Christ:

When I talk about the second coming I am not referring to the rapture but to Messiah’s feet landing on the Mt of Olives in Zech 14. I am not setting dates for the rapture. The only dates I am giving [are] the dates NASA gives us for eclipses and the dates God gives us on His calendar and then I bring in the connection. ...I did say, and again say, IF these eclipses in 2015 are what the Lord was referring to, then 2015 would look like a possible year for His feet to land on the Mt of Olives. And, IF this is true then the tribulation could, not would, start this fall [2008] at the Feast of Trumpets. (<http://archive.today/hZES>)

This scenario is theologically untenable for all who hold to a pre-Trib, mid-Trib, or post-Trib Rapture. Why? These perspectives would presently place the church in the latter half of the “great and terrible day of the Lord.” Only those who dismiss the biblical timeline of seven years of the Great Tribulation following the Rapture and spiritualize end-times prophecy (e.g., amillennialists and preterists) could possibly expect the Second Advent in conjunction with the “blood moon” tetrad that concludes September 28, 2015.

Believers may be certain of one thing: *All* prophecy pertaining to the Second Coming must be *literally* fulfilled in order for Jesus to return to Jerusalem. This includes the Rapture, global government, the Gog-Magog war (Ezekiel 38-39), the peace treaty with Israel, construction of the third temple, its desecration by Antichrist, the mark of the beast, etc. Therefore, if even *one* of these prophecies is not fulfilled *by 2015*, then the entire “blood moon” tetrad is nothing more than a delusion.

In spite of this reality, WND (World Net

Daily) has just published Biltz’s book, *Blood Moons: Decoding the Imminent Heavenly Signs*. Readers may recall that WND founder and publisher, Joseph Farah (another Hebrew Roots proponent), was similarly captivated by Jonathan Cahn’s *The Harbinger*. In the Foreword to Biltz’s book, Farah writes:

God is trying to get our attention. And I am convinced He has anointed Mark Biltz to help us understand the times in which we live and the urgent warnings God is trying to deliver to us all. I have not been as enthusiastic about a powerful spiritual teaching since I worked with Rabbi Jonathan Cahn... *Blood Moons*... is that kind of message—one so detailed, so improbable, so mysterious it could only be the result of divine handiwork.

In truth, the coincidence of the timing with Jewish feast days is not a mathematical miracle. A total lunar eclipse can occur *only* during a full moon, and the Hebrew calendar is based on lunar cycles. As the website *Israel Today* reminds us: “Since both Passover and Sukkot are scheduled on the full moon, both have occasionally coincided with blood moons, the last time being the start of Sukkot in 1996” (emphasis added). (<http://www.israeltoday.co.il/Default.aspx?tabid=178&nid=24559>)

Our modern ability for virtually anyone to calculate exactly when and where these events will be visible (using NASA websites and home computer software) raises another question: If *predictable* lunar and solar eclipses are of *prophetic* significance concerning *Israel*, why are many of them only visible *elsewhere*? By comparison to the Scriptures, are such relatively mundane events truly a sign from God heralding the Apocalypse—the Unveiling, the *Revelation* of Jesus Christ as Messiah, King of Kings and Lord of all?

Unfortunately—should these dates come and go without any earth-shattering event taking place in conjunction with the tetrad—this rampant speculation by peddlers of false prophetic views will give four more reasons for the world to speak evil of the truth. As Dave Hunt exhorted:

Christ, who rebuked the rabbis for not knowing and heeding the signs of His first coming (Lk 12:56), gave specific endtime signs by which the nearness of His second coming would be recognized—and surely He gave these signs for a purpose. Unfortunately, some prophetic writers and speakers attempt to identify details where only a broad picture is given in Scripture.... Such attempts lead to confusion.... [We must] stick to the plain language of Scripture and to the unvarnished facts. (<http://www.thebereanall.org/content/may-1999-q-and-a-1>)

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IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What About the Manuscripts?

QUESTION: It is my understanding that the Bible we have comes from a handful of ancient manuscripts that are copies of copies of copies of the originals that have long been lost. These originals, especially for the Old Testament, could have been several thousand years older than the oldest manuscripts. How do we know that what we have today is even close to the originals?

RESPONSE: Bernard Ramm reminds us: “Jews preserved it [the Old Testament text] as no other manuscript has ever been preserved . . . they kept tabs on every letter. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity—scribes, lawyers, Massorettes. Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle, Cicero or Seneca [as the Jews did for the Old Testament]?” No wonder, then, that the Isaiah scroll found among the Dead Sea Scrolls showed no significant variation in 1,000 years of copying. In contrast, as already noted, there are many questions concerning the text of Shakespeare, which is only about 400 years old.

Biblical scholar F. F. Bruce writes: “There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.” J. Harold Greenlee explains: “[T]he number of available manuscripts of the New Testament is overwhelmingly greater than those of any work of ancient literature . . . [and] the earliest extant manuscripts of the New Testament were written much closer to the date of the original writing. . . .” For the sake of comparison, here are some well-accepted, ancient secular works showing the author, the date written, the number of manuscripts surviving, and the number of years after the date written for the earliest manuscript:

Sophocles	496–406 BC	100	1,400
Herodotus	480–425 BC	8	1,300
Euripedes	480–406 BC	9	1,500
Thucydides	460–400 BC	8	1,300
Plato	427–327 BC	7	1,200
Aristotle	384–322 BC	5	1,400
Demosthenes	383–322 BC	200	1,300
Caesar	100–44 BC	10	1,000
Lucretius	60 BC	2	1,600
Tacitus	100 BC	20	1,000

In contrast, there are about 24,600 copies of New Testament manuscripts, some of which date back within a century of the originals and many others within about 300 to 400 years. Then why does one continually hear the false claim that the biblical manuscripts are not reliable? The fact that this lie persists in academic circles demonstrates the extreme prejudice against the Bible *because of what it says*. God’s Word convicts the conscience. How interesting that questions about the accuracy of the manuscripts are never raised for other ancient writings—unless they offer proof of the Bible’s validity. *The Antiquities of the Jews*, by Josephus, offers considerable verification of the New Testament and the life and death of Jesus, so it, too, comes under vicious attack.

The Bible is the most quoted book in the world, thousands of times more so than any secular work. That is not only true today but has always been the case. Consequently, one can reproduce the entire New Testament and much of the Old Testament by quotations contained in personal letters and epistles written within a century after Christ commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel.

Incomparable Reliability

As for the validity of the Old Testament manuscripts and their reliability, consider the following from Princeton's Robert D. Wilson in his book *Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*. Fluent in over 40 Semitic languages, he was one of the greatest language experts and scholars of all time. Professor Wilson writes:

"For forty-five years continuously . . . I have devoted myself to the one great study of the Old Testament, in all its languages, in all its archaeology, in all its translations.

"[T]he critics of the Bible who go to it in order to find fault . . . claim to themselves all knowledge and all virtue and all love of truth. One of their favorite phrases is, "All scholars agree." When a man [says that] . . . I wish to know who the scholars are and why they agree. Where do they get their evidence. . . ? I defy any man to make an attack upon the Old Testament on the ground of evidence that I cannot investigate.

...
 "After I learned the necessary languages I set about the investigation of every consonant in the Hebrew Old Testament. There are about a million and a quarter of these; and it took me many years to achieve my task. I had to observe the variations of the text . . . in the manuscripts, or in the notes of the Massorettes . . . or in the various versions, or in the parallel passages, or in the conjectural emendations of critics; and then I had to classify the results . . . to reduce the Old Testament criticism to an absolutely objective science; something which is based on evidence, and not on opinion. . . .

"The result of those 45 years' study which I have given to the text has been this: I can affirm that there is not a page of the Old Testament concerning which we need have any doubt. . . .

"[For example, to illustrate its accuracy]: There are 29 ancient kings whose names are mentioned not only in the Bible but also on monuments of their own time.

. . . There are 195 consonants in these 29 proper names. Yet we find that in the documents of the Hebrew Old Testament there are only two or three out of the entire 195 about which there can be any

question of their being written in exactly the same way as they were inscribed on their own monuments [which archaeologists have to date discovered]. Some of these go back 4,000 years and are so written that every letter is clear and correct. . . .

"Compare this accuracy with . . . the greatest scholar of his age, the librarian at Alexandria in 200 BC. He compiled a catalogue of the kings of Egypt, 38 in all. Of the entire number only 3 or 4 are recognizable. He also made a list of the kings of Assyria; in only one case can we tell who is meant; and that one is not spelt correctly. Or take Ptolemy, who drew up a register of 18 kings of Babylon. Not one of them is properly spelt; you could not make them out at all if you did not know from other sources to what he is referring.

"If anyone talks about the Bible, ask him about the kings mentioned in it. There are 29 kings referred to, and ten different countries among these 29; all of which are included in the Bible and on monuments. Every one of these is given his right name in the Bible, his right country, and placed in correct chronological order. Think what that means. . . !

"While the study of the religious systems of the ancient peoples has shown that there was amongst them a groping after God, nowhere is it to be seen that they reached any clear apprehension of the One True God, the Creator, Preserver, Judge, Saviour and Sanctifier of His people. Their religions were of an outward kind; the Old Testament religion is essentially one of the mind and heart; a religion of love, joy, faith, hope, and salvation through the grace of God. How can we account for this?

"The prophets of Israel declared that their teaching came from God. The modern critical school is antagonistic to this claim. They say that the prophets gave utterance to the ideas of their own time, and that they were limited by their environment. But if this is so how does it come about that neither from the oracles of Thebes and Memphis, nor from Delphi and Rome, nor from Babylon, nor from the deserts of Media, but from the sheep-folds and humble homes of Israel, yea, from the captive by the river of an alien land, came forth those great messages of hope and salvation?"

*J*EW^S preserved it [the Old Testament text] as no other manuscript has ever been preserved . . . they kept tabs on every letter. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity . . .

— BERNARD RAMM

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pg. 75-79) by DAVE HUNT

Prophecy Run Amok

T. A. McMahon

Prophecy is a very important part of Scripture. In fact all of Scripture is prophecy. In some places, the Bible gives us God's words as He reveals to us what He wants us to know and do (or not do), and in other places, it gives us His revelation concerning what will take place in the future. Prophecy has been referred to as "forth telling" and "foretelling."

There is no better apologetic for the claim that the Bible is indeed the Word of God than prophecy. Speaking through Isaiah, God characterizes Himself as the God of prophecy and challenges the gods (i.e., the demons) behind the idols to prove their validity by their prophecies being fulfilled: "Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together" (Isaiah 41:22-23).

Only God knows the future. His prophecy is proof that He alone is God: "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things [things that had been spoken of in the past—foretold—and had now come to fruition]? let them bring forth their witness, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isaiah 43:9-10). "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done*, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9-10). [Emphasis added]

More than a quarter of the Bible is predictive prophecy. Much of it centers on the person of Jesus Christ. In the Book of Genesis (3:15) the first prophecy is given indicating God's solution through Jesus to reconcile mankind to Himself following the sin of Adam and Eve. Numerous very specific prophecies throughout the Old Testament are given so that Israel might look forward to and recognize Jesus as its Messiah, the "Lamb of God, which taketh

away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). All prophecies related to the first coming of Jesus Christ have been *accurately fulfilled*.

Even more prophecies are found in Scripture foretelling our Lord's Second Coming. Not only do the prophecies deal with the person of Jesus, but they also address events and conditions of which believers need to be aware, both for encouragement and for their spiritual welfare. It's a wonderful reassurance to recognize prophecy being fulfilled in our day.

Certainly the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 was a thrilling experience for all of those believers who were alive at the time. This event was an astonishing fulfillment of many prophecies such as Amos 9:14-15: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God."

There is no denying that God's words have been realized in modern Israel over the past six-plus decades. The land has become an agricultural phenomenon whose fruitfulness has fed much of Europe. Israel, against overwhelming odds from its beginning, has defeated the surrounding nations that were bent on its annihilation. In the wars that followed with those same nations, God has fulfilled His prophetic word that Israel "shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them" (v. 15).

The Apostle Paul's prophetic statement of a condition that is also being fulfilled in our time is another proof of the foreknowledge and accuracy of the Scriptures. He wrote this warning to Timothy: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves..." (2 Timothy 3:1-2). We are certainly in such "perilous times" as psychology, specifically humanistic (self-love) psychotherapy, has dominated counseling and much preaching outside as well as inside the church.

Those are just a couple among numerous examples presented in Scripture that give believers insight into God's prophetic timeline for the world and the church. They are a heads-up concerning what lies before us. A believer who disregards prophecy that foretells future events removes himself from the discernment that God has provided in His Word. He may find himself supporting programs and agendas that seem "right

unto a man" but in fact are at odds with what the Scriptures tell us will take place. For example, if he supports a ministry that is attempting to transform or solve the problems of the world with the goal of ushering in the physical Kingdom of God, then he is unwittingly opposing the clear biblical teachings that tell us that the next kingdom to be manifested is the kingdom of the Antichrist.

There are also a host of abuses of biblical prophecy, such as the denial and mockery cited by Peter: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:3-7).

Furthermore, there are those who set themselves up as prophets similar to the false prophets about whom the Lord warned Jeremiah: "Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart" (Jeremiah 14:14).

Among the false prophets of our day are those who set dates for prophetic events. In the past, such false claims have instigated religious cults and doctrinally aberrational groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventism. One of the latter's major figures is Ellen G. White, who was alleged to have "the spirit of Prophecy" yet made numerous predictions that never came to pass. Besides a number of failed prophecies regarding the return of Jesus, she also predicted that the population of the earth (which was at 1.6 billion at the time) would decline due to many diseases. Today's population of 7 billion proves her wrong. Just prior to the 20th century, Mrs. White prophesied that slavery would be revived in the Southern states. That has yet to take place and is contrary to US law.

The false prophecies of Jehovah's Witnesses are also numerous and continuous. Early leaders C. T. Russell and Judge J. F. Rutherford made many false predictions

about the coming of Jesus and Armageddon, i.e., the end of the world. Rutherford had a ten-room mansion built in San Diego, California, for those who would rule the earth. Among these coming leaders, he believed, would be King David and other Old Testament figures, who he taught would be appearing soon. The mansion featured a two-car garage with a 16-cylinder automobile deeded to King David.

The foremost prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Joseph Smith. His numerous declarations included a prediction (made in 1835) that Jesus would come in 56 years, that the New Jerusalem and its Temple would be built in his lifetime in Zion, Missouri, and that the US government would be “utterly overthrown and wasted” for its “wrongs committed upon the Saints in the state of Missouri” not the least of which was forcing Mormons to flee the state before Smith’s prophecy could be fulfilled.

Many of today’s false prophets, acting *within the church* (Acts 20:29-31), have been spawned by an alleged movement of the Holy Spirit that began in the 1940s in Saskatchewan, Canada.

A key figure in the movement (which has gone under the name of The Latter-rain/Manifest Sons of God) was a very influential “prophet” named William Branham. Branham’s false theology included Oneness Pentecostalism (a denial of the Trinity), works salvation, a false Jesus, restored prophets and apostles, Eve’s alleged sex with the serpent of Genesis 3, and the claim that the Egyptian pyramids are a revelation of God’s Word. Among his false prophecies are the return of Christ in 1977 and the impossibility of man’s reaching the moon. Nevertheless, he greatly influenced later “prophets” such as Paul Cain, Bob Jones, Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, A. A. Allen, and, more recently, Rodney Howard Browne, Todd Bentley, and those involved in the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) under C. Peter Wagner’s guidance.

Branham’s claim to be guided and empowered by angels was allegedly passed on to those who were leading the “Toronto Blessing,” a sideshow of alleged manifestations that was supported by John Wimber and the Vineyard churches. Branham’s disciples and leaders in the Latter Rain movement, in the days shortly following his death, believed that God would physically restore him to life, an event that never happened.

Oral Roberts, who died in 2009, was the most prominent of the so-called “faith” healers as well as a false prophet. His “seed

faith” teaching, which perverts biblical faith, duped multitudes of Christians into giving millions of dollars to him in order to get more from God for themselves. Roberts claimed that God told him to build the City of Faith Hospital, and a vision of a 900-foot Jesus confirmed that the project would be a success. In another appearance of “Jesus,” Roberts declared that he was instructed to use the medical school to find a cure for cancer. In 1989 the bankrupt medical school and hospital shut down for good. Roberts was not only endorsed by his fellow Faith and Prosperity teachers, but conservative Christians such as Billy Graham and Bill Bright also supported his ministry. Graham introduced Roberts at the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966 and dedicated Oral Roberts University a few years later; Bright visited the university at Oral’s invitation and brought Campus Crusade to ORU in the early 1980s.

Today’s reigning false prophet is Trinity Broadcasting Network’s favorite, Benny Hinn. Despite the fact that his prophecies are false, ongoing, and go beyond the ludicrous, his supporters’ enthusiasm hasn’t faded. A few examples of Hinn’s false prophecies: he predicted that there would be rows of the dead in caskets next to a TV as they awaited the TBN preachers to successfully resurrect them; Fidel Castro would die in the ‘90s; the homosexual community in America would be destroyed no later than the mid-‘90s; Jesus would appear physically at Benny’s crusades in Nairobi, Kenya; the Rapture would occur in two years (prophesied in 1990, then again in 1997).

Although Benny Hinn is so well known, it’s possible that even more people have heard of Harold Camping. Camping generated his own date-setting publicity by spending \$5 million of donations on billboards throughout the country. His predictions of the return of Jesus and the end of the world failed in 1994 and then again in 2011.

Failed prophecy isn’t the only sign that a person is not speaking words from the Lord. In Jeremiah 23:16-17, we are told that some prophets speak “a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD...” claiming “ye shall have peace” and “No evil shall come upon you.” A recent example of this is Rodney Howard Browne, one of the initiators of what has been called the “laughing revival” that was manifested at the Toronto Airport Vineyard. Sobering up, at least to some degree, Browne sees a revival ahead and claims that God commissioned him to tell America

and the church to get ready for it. Joining him in his revival-promoting conference Celebrate America was “rabbi” Jonathan Cahn, the author of Charisma Publishing’s *The Harbinger*. Cahn’s book corrupts the prophecies of Isaiah chapter 10, a judgment upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and misapplies them to the Islamic terrorist attack on New York City in 2001. That constitutes false prophecy. Despite the distortion of God’s Word, Cahn was featured on the cover of a conservative Christian discernment magazine with the title: “An End-Time Prophet to America.” No. This is “End-Time” delusion. (See *The Harbinger: Fact or Fiction?*)

Prophecy, as noted, is a very significant part of Scripture. The Apostle Paul used it on his missionary journeys to prove to the Jews that their Messiah had come in the person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament prophets gave the messianic criteria, which Jesus *had to* and *did* fulfill perfectly. Biblical prophecy tells believers in our day what to expect prior to the Lord’s return for His saints—a period that Jesus characterized as a time of great deception (Matthew 24:4). As the world, professing Christianity, and the church demonstrate what Jesus warned about, there is no hint from Scripture or from the moral condition of the world, that either global or national reformation or revival is ahead, especially regarding the countries in the West.

So what is the situation today for biblical prophecy—that is, what the Bible actually says will take place? It is more critical than ever. Believers need to recognize its value in order to have discernment and to understand the times in which we live. Because of the importance however, Satan has flooded Christendom with false prophets uttering bogus prophecies that have seduced multitudes and subjected the Scriptures (true prophecy) to the confusion of believers and the ridicule of the world. Blood moons, conjured harbingers, setting dates for Christ’s return and the end of the world, a global revival, Bible codes and mystery interpretations, prophecies regarding America, the takeover (dominion) of the world by Christians, etc., may attract huge numbers of followers, but the paths lead to delusion at best and destruction at worst. The antidote for what may seem to be an overwhelming flood of deception is very simple and is available to every true believer: we all, by God’s grace, must be Bereans (Acts 17:11), diligently searching the Scriptures daily to know whether or not what is being taught or declared is true to the Word of God. **TBC**

Quotable.....

But I do protest against the careless spirit of slumber which seems to seal the eyes of many in the church, and to blind them to the enormous perils in which we are placed by the rise and progress of false doctrine these days.

I ask you to pay special attention to this point. Such is the simplicity and innocence of many in the church today, that they actually expect false doctrine to look false, and will not understand that, as a rule, the very essence of its ability to do harm is its resemblance to God's truth.

—J. C. Ryle,
Apostolic Fears

Q&A.....

QUESTION: My friend is a Buddhist, a great guy, and I have a real love for him. We've gone around and around about our beliefs, and I've been accused of being somewhat of a bully when I talk to others about God and His Word. How should I be when it comes to the truth of the Bible and trying to show others it isn't "my opinion" or "my truth" that I'm trying to show?

RESPONSE: Second Timothy 2:24-25 tells us, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

This approach recognizes that it is God who draws individuals (John 6:44). Consequently, although we must speak freely and boldly, we need to be careful lest our aggressiveness speaks louder than the words of Scripture. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

A "prayerful" approach cannot be emphasized enough. How wonderful it is that the Lord God of heaven can touch those areas that all our cleverness cannot. Proverbs 18:19 tells us, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city." This being so, we must be careful to maintain our relationships and trust God to provide an opening for further discussion of these issues. If the Lord was capable of opening your eyes, why would it be any different for your friend?

We create our own problems when we tire of waiting on the Lord and try to "help" Him, usually with indifferent or disastrous results. We do not need to have a perfect stratagem prior to meeting with someone. Often we are just there to be with them and listen. If you are praying for your friend and he is at all open to the Lord, then he will be having thoughts that are just as disquieting

to him as yours once were.

We need to be careful to discern when the Lord is creating an opening for us—and then we must be bold to act, trying not to run ahead of Him. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

It is helpful to learn some things about the other's beliefs and then compare that with what the Bible teaches. From that basis, we can take a position of asking *questions* about the individual's personal faith. This approach is usually less threatening and, more often than not, may plant some seeds that raise questions because now the individual must make some sense of what they believe—and manmade religions quickly become contradictory and irrational once they are placed under more than a cursory scrutiny.

With this understanding, and at the prayerful urging of the Lord, you can begin to introduce some foundational concepts. There is a God who made *all* things, who is above all and greater than any other entity who is called "god" (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Paul used a similar approach in Athens when he spoke to those gathered around the Areopagus. He sought to lay a foundation of truth. "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24-25).

Prayer must be a constant in the process; as you know, it's really the work of the Holy Spirit that brings about a change of heart.

QUESTION: In your Daily Update you quoted Corrie ten Boom: "When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy." That's a colorful quote but 100 percent unscriptural. Where do we draw the line?

RESPONSE: You are certainly correct that there is no explicit scripture stating what ten Boom has said about Satan's reaction to the failures of believers. On the other hand, we do know that Scripture gives us the fundamentals of our Christian walk, among which are fellowship with other believers, feeding upon the Word of God, and a consistent prayer life. Though not *explicit* in Scripture, ten Boom has highlighted some things that are very much *implicit*.

For example, Jude 19, speaking expressly of false prophets, warns of those "...who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."

For the believer, Hebrews 10:24-25

warns, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Consequently, the adversary must surely smile when he sees a believer taking the first steps away from the fellowship that the Lord has provided for the stability of his faith.

Concerning the Word (for just one example), Joshua 1:8 instructs, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." The Lord Jesus confronted the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-27). They were sorrowful and despondent, but the Lord Jesus didn't succumb to human methods when he rebuked them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). According to the narrative, "...beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (verse 27). Can we not see the devil laughing at those who have neglected the Scriptures and opened themselves up to his attacks?

Regarding prayer, Paul writes in Philippians 4:6-7, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Our prayers are made in faith to God "[who] cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). Clearly, the believer who doesn't pray has become an easy target for the fiery darts of the adversary (Ephesians 6:16). Psalm 1:1-2 tells us, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." To repeat, the progression that ten Boom details may not be explicit, but what she has stated is clearly implied in Scripture.

You ask where we draw the line. There are a number of things in the Bible that are not clearly stated but that nevertheless are clearly implied and can be supported by the entirety of Scripture. Cultists often argue that the Bible never uses the word "Trinity." No, it doesn't, though the concept is more than clearly indicated for those who rightly divide the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15). In view of Satan's stated purpose in Scripture, can we not see what his reaction would be to a believer's neglect of these Christian imperatives?



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

An Overworked Lie

QUESTION: My psychology professor at the university claims that anyone can get any idea he wants out of the Bible. It can be made to say anything the person reading it wants to believe. And he says that's the reason why there are so many differences among those who claim to follow the Bible: for example, between Catholics and Protestants and between the hundreds of Protestant denominations. How then can anyone rely upon the Bible for anything?

RESPONSE: A moment's thought would show the absurdity of the basic premise in this argument. Language has meaning. A statement may be so constructed that its meaning is uncertain, or it is ambiguous and thus seems to support *two* contradictory ideas. In such cases, the uncertainty or ambiguity is readily recognized by anyone reading or hearing such a statement. No one would be deceived by nor pay any attention to that which has no clear meaning.

The professor's amazing claim, however, goes far beyond saying that the Bible is contradictory or ambiguous. He is saying that *any* idea can be derived from it and apparently justified logically. If that were actually true, then for that reason alone the Bible would be the most remarkable book in the world, for no other piece of writing can be taken logically to mean anything one chooses.

As for the numerous differences in doctrinal opinion and interpretation between Protestants and Roman Catholics and even within the many Protestant denominations and within the Catholic Church as well, this is only to be expected. It is inevitable that human opinions and interpretations will differ, simply because we are finite beings. Tragically, stubbornness and pride also enter the equation. These are normal differences,

given human frailties, and certainly require no such explanation as the ridiculous idea that the Bible is capable of any interpretation one wishes to find there.

I challenge your professor or you or anyone else to construct even one sentence that can logically be taken to mean anything one wants it to mean. No word has an infinite variety of meanings, much less could a sentence or paragraph of many words put together in meaningful sequence be so constructed as to support numerous contradictory ideas. I, too, have heard this accusation made against the Bible many times. It shows how badly people want to be able to dismiss the Bible and what foolish ideas they will embrace in the process of doing so.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 81-82) *by* DAVE HUNT

Great is the Mystery

Dave Hunt (May 2003)

In spite of thousands of years of inquiry into the universe and the super-technology of today's computer-aided science, we still know almost nothing in comparison to all there is to know. We don't know what energy is, or what gravity or light or space are. Referring to the physical universe, British astronomer Sir James Jeans declared that "we are not yet in touch with ultimate reality."

Much less do we know what life is. Living things are made up of chemical machines. The secret of life, however, lies not in the correct combination of the chemicals of which living things are built. Science seeks to discover how life is imparted to otherwise dead matter, hoping to reverse the death process and thereby create eternal life. The right conglomeration of chemicals that moments before was alive is still intact, but no scientific process can restore the life that has left a corpse. That secret will never be found by examining living creatures because the life they have is not their own.

We now know what Darwin never imagined: that life is based upon *information* encoded on DNA (See *TBC* Aug '02). Indisputably, no information is originated by the medium in which it is communicated (printed page, audio- or videotape, DNA, etc.).

Information can originate only from a conscious intelligence, a quality found only in personal beings. Clearly, the information that provides the instructions for constructing and operating the incredibly small and complex machines that make up living cells could only originate with an Intelligence beyond our capacity to comprehend.

Jesus claimed to be the Source of life: "I am the resurrection, and the life" (Jn 11:25)—and He proved it by laying down His life and rising from the dead. He said, "No man taketh [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself...and I have power to take it again..." (Jn 10:17,18). And so He did.

There is, however, something more vital than physical life. Unquestionably, there is a nonphysical side to man. Words and the conceptual ideas they express (including those imprinted on DNA) are not a part of the dimensional, physical universe. The idea of "justice," for example, has nothing to do with and cannot be described in terms of any of the five senses. It lies in another realm.

Thoughts are not physical. They do not originate from matter nor do they occupy

space. Our brains do not think, or we would be the prisoners of that few pounds of matter inside our craniums, waiting for the next orders it might give us. Man has not only physical but "intelligent" life. What could be its source?

Of Jesus, John said, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (Jn 1:4). Christ declared, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn 8:12). The reference is not to physical light but to the spiritual light of truth—another abstract concept without any relationship to the physical universe.

NO MAN TAKETH [MY LIFE]
FROM ME, BUT I LAY IT DOWN OF
MYSELF...AND I HAVE POWER TO
TAKE IT AGAIN...

— John 10:17, 18

"Truth" takes us beyond animal life; it has no meaning for animals. Their "intelligence" knows nothing of love, morals, compassion, mercy, or understanding but is confined to instinct and conditioned responses to stimuli. B. F. Skinner tried to fit man into the same mold, but our ability to form conceptual ideas and express them in speech cannot be explained in terms of stimulus/response reactions. There is an impassable chasm between man and animals.

Intelligence is nonphysical because it conceives of and uses nonphysical constructs that clearly do not originate with the material of the brain or body. This takes us beyond the physical universe into the realm of spirit. We do not know what a soul or a spirit is, or what it means that God "is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24) who "created man in his own image" (Gn 1:27).

God has given us sufficient proof in what we can verify to cause us to trust completely whatever His Word declares concerning things we cannot fully comprehend. That is where faith enters. There is much that, although we cannot understand it, we know is true. This is the case, for example, with the fact that God is without beginning or end. It boggles our minds, but we know it must be.

While seeking to unravel the secrets of the universe, science neglects its Creator. The universe can lead man only to a dead end, since ultimate knowledge is hidden

in the God who brought all into existence.

Though not idol worshipers in the primitive sense, scientists, university professors, business executives, and political leaders, no matter how brilliant, who do not know Christ fit the description in Romans 1 of those who reject the witness of the universe and worship the creation instead of the Creator. It is possible for Christians also to be caught up in this same materialistic ambition and to miss *what God offers us in Himself*.

Paul's earnest desire was that all believers might attain unto "the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2,3).

Our knowledge of both the physical and spiritual is limited at best. But one day we will fully know when we are with Christ in our glorified bodies: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor 13:12). When in His presence we wholly know Christ as He truly is, all limitations will have vanished, even our lack of power to fully overcome sin: when we see him, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). Knowing Christ is everything!

Secular knowledge pursued in our universities looks in the wrong direction. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ can never be discovered by scientific inquiry but can only be revealed by His Spirit through His Word to those who believe in Him.

The concept of one true God who exists eternally in three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is rejected even by some who claim to be Christians. Yet this is taught all through Scripture, in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Consider: "I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I..." Surely the speaker who has been in existence forever must be God himself. Yet He declares, "the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me" (Is 48:16). We cannot comprehend the mystery of the Trinity; yet that is no more reason to doubt it than to doubt anything else that we know is real but cannot comprehend.

If God were a single being (as Muslims believe Allah to be and most Jews believe Yahweh is), He would have had to create creatures in order to experience love, fellowship and communion. The biblical God *is* love in Himself, manifesting plurality in the Godhead: "The Father loveth the Son..."

(Jn 5:20). God must be one; but He must comprise both singularity and plurality.

Only God could pay the infinite penalty His justice demands for sin. But that would not be just, because “God is not a man...” (Nm 23:19). The incarnation is therefore essential—but impossible if God were a singular being. “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn 4:14). It was Jesus who died on the cross, not the Father nor the Holy Spirit.

Neither could a mere man, being finite, pay that infinite penalty. All through the Old Testament, Yahweh declares that He is the only Savior (Is 43:3,11; 45:15,21; 49:26; Hos 13:4, etc.). Thus Jesus had to be Yahweh but also a man. When God the Son became a man He did not and could not cease to be God. Jesus was both God and man.

How could God become a man? Again that is only possible through the Trinity. The Father didn’t become man, nor did the Holy Spirit. Even though we cannot understand this, we know it must be so. The penalty for our sins is infinite because God and His justice are infinite. Consequently, those who reject Christ’s payment on their behalf will be separated from God forever.

How evil could arise in God’s “good” universe (Gn 1:31) is a mystery—“the mystery of iniquity” (2 Thes 2:7). It will reach its fullness in Antichrist through whom Satan will rule the world. In Antichrist, Satan will be manifest in the flesh, as God was, and is, in Christ.

Satan must be brilliant beyond our comprehension, apparently second only to God in power and understanding. It is a mystery that Satan, having known intimately the holy and glorious presence and power of God on His throne, could ever have dared, much less desired, to rebel. How could he have imagined that he could ever defeat God? Surely this is a great mystery!

Satan was not raised in a “dysfunctional family” or in a ghetto, nor was he “abused as a child.” None of the standard excuses for rebellious and selfish behavior accepted by today’s Christian psychologists applies to Satan—or to Adam and Eve. To accept any explanation for evil that doesn’t fit them is to be deceived. Certainly today’s popular diagnosis of “low self-esteem” or a “poor self-image” was not Satan’s problem!

Scripture says he was lifted up with pride: “O covering cherub....Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Ezk 28:16-17). He is apparently a self-deceived ego-maniac, blinded by pride in his own power and abilities.

Here is the mystery of iniquity: In the

very presence of God, in the heart of the cherub closest to God, the ultimate evil was conceived. By one fateful choice, the most beautiful, powerful, and intelligent angelic being became for all time the ultimate in evil: the arch enemy of God and man, the “great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Rv 12:9; 20:2).

Paul warns that a man should not become an elder until he is mature in the faith, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tm 3:6). This tells us again that pride was Satan’s downfall—and is man’s besetting sin as well. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prv 16:18).

It is also a mystery that Eve would believe the serpent’s lie contradicting what her gracious Creator had said. Adam was not deceived (1 Tm 2:14). No doubt out of love for Eve and not wanting to be separated from her, he joined her in disobedience, knowing the consequences. It remains a mystery, however, that anyone would rebel against God, that *anyone* would choose the pleasures of the moment in exchange for eternal separation from God.

The heart of this mystery is the autonomy of intelligent created beings who clearly have something called self-will. At least some angels (Satan and those who joined his rebellion) and all men have the power of choice. In deciding upon beliefs or actions, though evidence may be weighed, ultimately reason is set aside in order to bow before the throne of self. We are our own worst enemies.

Self had its awful birth when Eve made the choice of disobedience for all of her descendants. Christ said there is no hope except we deny self (Mt 16:24). And the only way that can be done effectively is to embrace the cross of Christ as our own so that we can say with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...” (Gal 2:20).

The solution to evil through the incarnation is also a mystery: “...great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tm 3:16).

“*God was manifest in the flesh.*” What a mystery! God could become a fetus in Mary’s womb? John the Baptist as a 6-month-old fetus leapt in the womb of Elizabeth in recognition that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah. Amazing!

“*Seen of angels.*” These heavenly beings must have watched in astonishment. The

One whom they had known as God the Son, one with the Father, for at least 4,000 years by earth time (we know not how much earlier angels were created), was growing in the virgin Mary’s womb, soon to be born a babe needing a mother’s milk and care—truly man, yet at the same time truly God. Mystery of mysteries!

“*Believed on in the world.*” The Apostle John speaks in awe of this One whom “we have heard...seen with our eyes...looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)” (1 Jn 1:1,2). In his Gospel John says, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

Yes, “*Believed on in the world.*” Certainly John believed, as did Paul, that Jesus the Messiah of Israel was truly “God manifest in the flesh.” To be a Christian one must believe that Jesus Christ is God come as a man to redeem us. What love to come from so high to stoop so low—to be rejected, hated, misunderstood, mocked, maligned, stripped, scourged, and crucified by those He came to redeem!

“*Received up into glory.*” His sacrifice accepted by the Father, He is glorified at the Father’s right hand and interceding there for us (Rom 8:34). But even before that great meeting in His presence in the Father’s house, “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [we] are changed into the same image...by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18).

Surely if the incarnation is the great mystery of godliness, then for us to live godly lives we must have Christ dwelling within us and living His life through us: “Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach...” (Col 1:27,28). This is the “hope of his calling” which Paul prayed that the Ephesian saints would understand. Peter explains that God “hath called us unto his eternal glory” (1 Pt 5:10). We are going to be like Christ. The glory that the disciples beheld in Christ will be manifested in us!

We are transformed by His Word, the Word of Truth upon which we feed for spiritual nourishment. The written instructions which God spoke into DNA and which are essential for physical life present a powerful picture of the “words that...are spirit, and...life” (Jn 6:63). This is the living Word of God, which when believed (1 Pt 1:23-25) creates and nourishes spiritual life.

TBC

Quotable.....

If fellowship with God is our first concern, then we can have fellowship with Him in the kitchen, in sickness, in any kind of trying and difficult situation. Whatever lies across our path to be done, even the most irksome chore, is there to be done for God and for His glory. Gone will be the former striving, bondage, and frustration. We shall be at peace with our God and ourselves.

—*Roy and Revel Hession,*
We Would See Jesus

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I disagree with your stance regarding Rome being identified with Catholicism. Vatican City is a separate entity from Rome. Rome itself is associated with Catholicism, as you state, but they are not married. The Vatican is married with Catholic dogma for sure. You have stated that the responsibility is upon Catholics to disprove the premise that Revelation 17-18 is speaking about the harlot. I immediately thought of the rebuttal that Catholics have made.

RESPONSE: The “rebuttal” the Catholics have made is of no value at all, particularly since Catholic eschatology teachers and commentators recognize the identification of the Great Harlot with an “apostate Rome” in comparison with today’s supposedly non-apostate variety. Catholic “apologists” have a problem with any supposed rebuttal.

We would suggest that some critical points have been missed regarding Rome. You said, “Rome itself is associated with Catholicism, as you state, but they are not married.” That’s not true. Many of the titles used in the Vatican are taken from Roman sources. “Pontiff” and “Vicar” are derived from Imperial Rome. Note the following: “Pontifex - (Latin: ‘bridge builder’)...member of a council of priests in ancient Rome. The college, or collegium, of the pontifices was the most important Roman priesthood...”(Britannica.com).

Catholic sources note: “[*Pontifex maximus*] borrowed from the vocabulary of pagan religion at Rome...designated...members of the council of [pagan] priests forming the Pontifical College, which ranked as the highest priestly organization at Rome and, was presided over by the pontifex maximus” (New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. XI).

Catholicism has always been identified with Rome, and its “borrowings” are but further evidence of the linkage. As Dave Hunt noted, “Though it is built on seven hills,

there would be no reason to accuse Rio de Janeiro of spiritual fornication. It makes no claim of having a special relationship with God. And though Jerusalem has that relationship, it cannot be the woman riding on the beast, for it is not built on seven hills. Nor does it meet the other criteria by which this woman is to be identified.

“Against only one other city in history could a charge of fornication be leveled. That city is Rome, and more specifically *Vatican City*. She claims to have been the worldwide headquarters of Christianity since its beginning and maintains that claim to this day. Her pope enthroned in Rome claims to be the exclusive representative of God, the vicar of Christ. Rome is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church, and in that too she is unique” (Hunt, “A City on Seven Hills, *A Woman Rides the Beast: The Roman Catholic Church in the Last Days*,” p. 69). From time immemorial the Catholic Church has been referred to as the *Roman Catholic Church*, not the *Vatican Catholic Church*.

QUESTION [COMPOSITE OF SEVERAL]: In April’s Q&A you stated, “I’ve tried to explain in many writings that ‘the Word of God cannot be presented visually without destroying its truth.’” If this statement is true, how can we attempt to show God’s love through our daily lives?

RESPONSE: The attempt to present the Scriptures visually in dramatic form (a movie or a play, for example) is far different from believers living their lives in obedience to God’s Word, which is a witness to all who observe their godliness being manifested. We are commanded to do the latter in God’s Word: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

The major problem with attempting to translate the Bible visually is that it will always be a subjective presentation based upon the requirements of the visual medium and therefore at odds with biblical truth. The *written* Word is an objective medium. Believers discussing the meaning of particular scriptures can “reason together” by considering things such as context, grammar, meanings of words, the literal-versus-figurative use of words, etc., in order to come to an objective understanding of what God has communicated. That is what hermeneutics is all about.

The nature of a *visual* translation of the Bible, on the other hand, does not allow for such objective scrutiny. Evaluations are based upon cinematography, directing, acting, art direction, and many other considerations and decisions that go into a production. Both the

decision-making and its evaluation by viewers are nearly always subjective, i.e., involving emotions and feelings. Furthermore, a visual interpretation of the Bible will always involve adding to or subtracting from God’s Word, which Scripture condemns. The actor Russell Crowe, star of the movie *Noah*, made a statement that biblical Christians need to consider. He noted that the Bible itself does not provide enough information for a feature film, and therefore dialogue and other information must be added. That insight alone should be enough to turn true believers away from translating the Bible visually, but there are many other problems as well. (See McMahon, *Showtime for the Sheep?*)

QUESTION: I have been born again for 20-some years and began taking an [exercise] class about four years ago. My teacher is a self-proclaimed gay man. I struggle with supporting him even in a small way. He does sometimes question me about Bible issues, [and] I never back down but quote the verses that condemn homosexuality. Am I wrong taking lessons from him?

RESPONSE: To begin, we shall be praying that the Lord will give you wisdom and discernment as you seek to witness for Him.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 we are told, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: *Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world*, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; *for then must ye needs go out of the world.*” (Emphasis added)

Verses 11-12 of that passage tell us that we are not to continue to fellowship *with those within the body of Christ* who continually engage in immoral behavior, but that they are to be judged. On the other hand, the scripture tells us that to avoid those who are not believers and are living contrary to the Bible would be impossible. As long as we are in this world we will be in contact with sinful people. We may have no idea whether the grocers, repairmen, service personnel, doctors, et al., are engaged in homosexuality, or are drunks, fornicators, extortionists, or involved in any other immoral behavior. If we use the opportunity of this contact to share the gospel, who knows what seeds we may sow for His kingdom? You say that you have had liberty to share Scripture with this man. Isaiah 55:11 tells us that God’s Word shall not “return unto [Him] void, but it shall accomplish that which [He] please[s], and it shall prosper in the thing whereto [He] sent it.”

To sum up, because we will have some contact with those who continually practice sin, we must be prepared to share the gospel, to pray for them, and to trust the Lord to give the increase.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Must We Become Experts on All Religions?

QUESTION: There is no doubt that the Bible contains some of the most sublime teachings on morals to be found in the world's literature. Whether these words were borrowed from other religions or came from the pen of Solomon or the lips of Christ or were written centuries later and wrongly attributed to them seems to me to be beside the point. It is the teachings that count. Nor does the fact that the Bible obviously has many errors and contradictions in it detract from its moral teachings. I don't see why the Bible has to be defended as infallible.

RESPONSE: There are several problems with your thesis. The Bible doesn't just present some "sublime moral teachings," but it makes many inescapable claims that have a bearing upon its teachings. It repeatedly claims to be the inerrant Word of God and that its teachings are inspired from God, not invented by men or borrowed from some religion. If it lies about its very foundation, then why should I accept anything else it offers? Furthermore, such a mixture of lies and sublime moral precepts would present a contradiction difficult to explain.

The Bible also claims to tell the true history of the Jews and of other ancient nations; the true account of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ; the true account of the early church, its persecution by the rabbis and Roman authorities, the conversion of Paul and his missionary travels, and Paul's teachings, which he claimed to have received not from the other apostles but directly from the resurrected Christ in heaven, if these and many other claims are not true, then the Bible is literally filled with lies. Would you not admit that if the Bible is filled with lies, that fact would reflect badly upon its moral teachings?

Furthermore, these other elements presented in the Bible in addition to its moral teachings are so interwoven with the whole as to constitute an integral part of the Christian faith. The Bible must either be accepted or rejected in its entirety. If it is not true in even one area, then Christianity becomes untenable. Each part of the Bible is intimately tied to every other, so that if one falls the whole falls with it. The Bible does not contain errors and contradictions, as you suggest; and if it did, it would not be worthy of our trust.

Attorney Irwin H. Linton carefully examined the Bible just as he would a case in court. He based his faith in the Bible upon the evidence. Linton explained

the vital importance of whether or not the Bible in its entirety is actually God's Word:

"The accuracy of the record of a case on appeal is a thing that must be settled beyond dispute before an appellate court will undertake or form an opinion about the trial below; and the infallibility of the record upon which rest the eternal essentials of our faith—the deity of Christ, His voluntary, atoning death, bodily resurrection and impending return in power and glory—are all rendered uncertain in a mind in which the accuracy of the Bible record is in doubt.

"If we do not give full faith and credit to the Written Word which we have seen, experience proves that we are in great danger sooner or later of diminishing the love and honor we give the Living Word [Christ] whom we have not seen; for our conviction that . . . God became flesh and dwelt among us . . . is based upon the facts on which such conclusion rests; and if the record of the facts be impugned, who can retain the conclusion based upon them?

"The deadly effect upon my faith and the insuperable difficulties in which I found myself involved when I made a tentative trial of the view . . . that the Bible may be wrong, and is only human in all but its religious teachings, made this matter clear to me for all time."

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 83-84) *by* DAVE HUNT

Understanding the Times Survey

T. A. McMahon

“And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times....”

— 1 CHRONICLES 12:32

As many of you know who subscribe to this newsletter, one important objective of The Berean Call is to help equip the upcoming generation of believers so that they might be steadfast and fruitful in the faith. We believe that to be biblically steadfast, a believer must have the ability to discern truth from error as he or she begins to understand and live out the teachings and practices given in Scripture.

Foundational to biblical steadfastness is a love for and diligence in studying God’s Word. Without that foundation, a believer will lean upon his own ideas about what is true. Proverbs warns us about this because although it may seem right it will inevitably separate us from the truth of Scripture (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). So all of us, young or old, mature or new to the faith, who profess to know Christ and desire to follow Him, cannot do that very thing unless we know what constitutes *following Him*. Jesus made that quite clear in John 8:31-32: “... If ye *continue in my word*, then are ye *my disciples* indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” God’s Word, which is *the truth*, reveals His instructions for life.

We can only understand the times in which we live by heeding the warnings given in Scripture by our omniscient God who alone knows the future. We are told that as the days draw near to the return of Jesus Christ, evil will increase in the world, a situation that will also manifest itself in Christendom. Who could deny that reality today? We are told that evil will escalate in preparation for the development of the religion and the kingdom of the Antichrist. Jesus characterized such times with the warning that we are to “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall *deceive many*” (Matthew 24:4-5).

Until the Lord removes the church in the Rapture, all who follow Christ will be subjected to increasing deception. Believers will find themselves confronting mounting pressures that will challenge their steadfastness in the faith. There will be tremendous

persecutions and treacherous seductions that will constitute what Scripture declares is the end-times apostasy. This is made abundantly clear in Scripture.

The Bible also gives the underlying reason why the church will be, perhaps even to a great degree, affected by the deception and seduction of the apostasy—because the church itself will *turn from the Word of God*: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). “...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). It seems that Jude changed the direction of what he had originally intended to write as the Holy Spirit moved him to deliver a warning to the church regarding impending deception: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4). The Apostle Paul gave a similar warning in Acts 20:28-31: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” Paul notes that the “latter times” seduction will involve “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils”: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

Those are just a few of the verses that indicate what lies ahead, and it’s certainly not going to be a walk in the park. The world is being prepared for God’s judgment. God told Abram that He would give

his descendants the Promised Land—but not just yet. They were to wait until the “iniquity of the Amorites” (i.e., those occupying the land) would reach the point (400 years later) when their sins were “full.” At that time, God would use Israel to judge them. Similarly, the world, under the power of the god of this world (Satan), is progressively being prepared by him to follow the Antichrist and will, at the apex of its iniquity, reap God’s judgment.

Is there any good news in that scenario? Absolutely! The Lord will return for all true believers in Him prior to the Tribulation to take them to heaven. Not so, however, for those who reject Christ. Their rebellion will cause them to suffer the wrath of God in a tribulation never before experienced by mankind. Should the Lord tarry regarding His return for His bride in the Rapture, and as the apostasy increases, the born-again believer will be faced with increasing seductions, persecutions, and even martyrdom. Christians in the West, who haven’t experienced these extremes before, will likely face moral and financial testing of their faith that may be more difficult to endure than even the threat of persecution and death. So, where’s the good news in this prior to the Rapture?

Scripture tells us “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). Jesus supplies that grace, which He told Paul was sufficient for his trial. He also said that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Additionally, every believer has been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), the One who equips and enables us to be steadfast in the faith. The Holy Spirit is also called the Comforter, which, in the context of John 14-16 means “one who strengthens.” So all of this and a great deal more God has provided for every trial of life. But there is a condition for receiving what God has provided. Our hearts must be willing to diligently study God’s Word both to learn of it and to obey it.

We are at a time in history in which we find the greatest number of Bibles ever available, yet biblical illiteracy is rampant. According to Scripture, we can expect that collectively. Yet, every individual believer has the opportunity to receive what God has provided in His Word in order that he or she might be strengthened in the faith. This is God’s “spiritual prevention program” in the face of rising apostasy, and it is a message that we must send to the upcoming generation.

TBC

Quotable.....

Isn't that encouraging? That's what we're to encourage one another with—our blessed hope! Yes, we can talk about Israel; we can talk about the antichrist, the tribulation, and everything that's wrong, but let's keep in focus our blessed hope, which the Lord, by His Spirit, has placed within our hearts.

—Paul Wilkinson,
2014 TBC Conference,
“When the Trumpet Call Shall Sound”

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I was reading today's Apples of Gold, and it was talking about the difference between the Israelites killing the inhabitants of Canaan versus those who believe that their “god” tells them to do the same. Here's my question: a quote from the entry is, “...the Lord gave the inhabitants of Canaan more than 400 years to repent, but He eventually came to the point where He had to stop the unending sacrifice of infants and institutional outpouring of blood.” But if the reason for God's judgment on the people group was the sacrifice of infants, why did He not have the Israelites save the babies? Why were they commanded to kill them, as well? I understand that the babies went straight to heaven, but considering that little children don't have the capacity to understand good and evil, why did the Lord not have the Israelites just adopt the children and raise them with the knowledge of the true God instead of totally wiping the people group out?

RESPONSE: You bring up a good point that clearly shows the need for further elaboration concerning the sins of Canaan. Their sacrifice of infants was just one sin that was endemic in their culture. The Bible is explicit concerning the sins of the Canaanites, which included idolatry, incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality.

Consequently, the Lord's judgment was to execute these people. One commentator notes, “Israel's response to Canaanite sin is a parable of how their own sinfulness empowered them to ape the sin of the Canaanites and thereby procure God's judgment on them. For God does not show favoritism. Israel was warned not to let the Canaanites live in their land, but to completely destroy them (Ex 23:33; Dt 20:16–18), lest the Israelites learn the Canaanite ways (Ex 34:15–16). If they did not destroy them, the land would ‘vomit’ them out just as it had vomited out the Canaanites

(Nm 33:56; Lv 18:28; Dt 4:23–29, 8:19–20)” (<http://www.equip.org/articles/killing-the-canaanites/>).

Regarding the little children, we have a difficult point to recognize. The part that is hard to comprehend is how a culture of death is inculcated into the very young. We have a glimpse of a modern culture in which that is happening in the case of the Palestinians. Here is a group of people who are literally taught from birth to kill Jews. The footage of children's television programs with Muppet-like puppets wearing explosive belts and singing songs about rivers of blood and slaughtering Jews (men, women, and children) is hard to view. The images of the Palestinian crowd literally tearing two Israeli soldiers to pieces with their bare hands is an evil hard to comprehend.

And, considering the evidence of the sin of the Canaanites, it is understandable that even many young children would have already been corrupted. Consequently, if God wanted to remove their wickedness from the Promised Land, He couldn't allow them to grow up following the example of their birth parents, which they had already witnessed.

Little children may not fully understand good and evil, but they clearly still can be influenced, and these early influences apart from the grace of God will certainly emerge as they mature. Deuteronomy 20:16-18, “But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.”

The bottom line for those who know the Lord is not the “why” but the “what” of that which God does. He rarely tells us the “why” nor does He accommodate what anyone thinks or feels. He does things that are consistent with His character, which is perfectly righteous. What He does is confirmed by His righteousness and His love by His going to the cross and paying for the sins of every man, woman, and child.

QUESTION: I'm very troubled every time I get an email from the Berean Call. Your opinion of the interview/event/article is never mentioned at the beginning of the email so we never know from what angle it is presented to us. Take, for example, the Daily Update regarding the Catholics trying to globalize the entire Christian

world. That is bad. The pope has been an antichrist from the onset. Where's the Berean Call's statement thereof? It doesn't show up until after all the liars are quoted and their wonderful adjectives and superlatives are presented to the reader. I am troubled because I see the Berean Call slipping away from true biblical Christianity. I may be unsubscribing soon, but I will wait to see how you respond.

RESPONSE: We do know that whenever we excerpt an article from another source, there is the danger that the information will be misunderstood. One of the principles that we have operated under from the very beginning of this ministry is that we are not seeking to become the “Bible Answer Men” for people but rather to “exhort believers to give greater heed to biblical discernment and truth regarding teachings and practices being currently promoted in the church.”

In short, if we have taught people to ask “what does the Berean Call say?” we have in essence failed by encouraging them to lean upon us and not upon the Scriptures. Nevertheless, our stand against the errors of Catholicism and our concern for evangelicals who are being led astray by ecumenicalism have never changed. We are troubled by your statements, particularly when we state very clearly at the end of the excerpt that you mentioned: “TBC: Rome has consistently stated that it has never changed. Consequently, only the ‘evangelicals’ have compromised their position. In the hope of sharing ‘love’ to a ‘hurting world,’ we must first of all share the biblical gospel—something denied by Catholicism with its gospel of works.”

It is also difficult to respond to statements such as “I'm very troubled every time I get an email from the Berean Call.” *Every time?* Or, “Where's the Berean Call's statement?” Well, it is there. We always appreciated Dave's refusal to tell people *what* to think. The world tells people what to think, but we are not of the world. Dave wrote quite clearly about his position on many issues; on others, he has not. He didn't want to be anyone's “spiritual guru,” and our aim is definitely to help individual believers grow in personal discernment, for ultimately we will each be accountable before God for our position on matters. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom 14:5).

Finally, Acts 17:11 clarifies our position on this: “[The Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” We encourage our readers to follow that example.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

QUESTION: It seems to me that the strongest case against the Bible is the miracles it describes. These are so fantastic as to render whatever else the Bible says unreliable. As Reinhold Seeberg said, “Miracle was once the foundation of all apologetics, then it became an apologetic crutch, and today it is . . . a cross for apologetics to bear.” Obviously the Bible was written by very gullible and superstitious men for whom fantasy was normal and who were therefore not embarrassed by telling about alleged miracles. How can you possibly trust a book that presents such obviously fictitious tales, especially when modern science has proven that miracles don’t happen?

RESPONSE: On the contrary, not only has science never “proven that miracles don’t happen,” but such proof would be categorically impossible, since science deals only with natural phenomena. Of course miracles don’t happen *naturally* or in *nature*. A miracle, by very definition, is *supernatural*. It defies all physical laws or it wouldn’t be a miracle in the first place. *A miracle must be beyond the ability of science to explain*, and thus it is also beyond the ability of science to disprove.

Consequently, there is no valid scientific or logical basis for saying that miracles can’t occur precisely as the Bible describes them. To insist upon such a position betrays a prejudice that in itself prevents one from facing the abundant evidence in favor of miracles. When Albert Einstein was asked what effect his theory of relativity would have upon religion he bluntly replied, “None. Relativity is a purely scientific theory and has nothing to do with religion.”

Miracles are impossible only if the universe is a closed system and all there is. In that case, of course, whatever happens must be a natural occurrence functioning according to the laws that govern the universe. The famous evolutionist and atheist Thomas H. Huxley “proved” that miracles couldn’t happen by defining “nature” as “that which is; the sum of the phenomena presented to our experience; the totality of events, past, present, and to come.” For all of his claim to honor evidence and logic, however, Huxley gives not one piece of evidence or reason to support this assertion. He simply does away with miracles by setting rules that make them impossible, which is like proving atheism by declaring that God by

very definition doesn’t exist. Miracles would be impossible in pantheism, as well, because in that belief system nature is everything.

However, if God, the infinite and transcendent Creator of the universe, exists as separate and distinct from His creation, then miracles are possible. Indeed, they are *inevitable* if God is to intervene at all in the downward course of human affairs and of nature. Whenever God reaches in from outside to effect anything that is not according to the normal course of events (such as salvation or raising the dead), it is a miracle. So if you believe in God, you believe in miracles.

Christianity Alone Requires Miracles

Christianity isn’t embarrassed by the recital of miracles in the Bible. On the contrary, Christianity is based upon the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of Christ. Unlike Muhammad, Buddha, Confucius, or any other religious leader, none of whom even dared to make such a claim, Jesus said He would rise from the dead. If He didn’t,

He is a liar and Christianity is a fraud. Listen to Paul's testimony:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel . . . how that Christ died for our sins . . . that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day . . . and that he was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve. . . .

And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ. . . . (1 Corinthians 15:1, 3–5, 14, 15)

Christianity doesn't apologize for miracles or back away and shrug its shoulders as though it isn't really important whether miracles happen or not. Christianity *requires* miracles. This is not the case with Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam or any other of the world's religions, which get along quite well without miracles. Their leaders left a philosophy of life and certain rules to follow that have no bearing upon whether Buddha, Krishna, Muhammad, et al., are alive or dead or even lived at all. Not so with Christianity.

The Christian faith stands or falls upon the sinless life, the sacrificial death, and the miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ—and all other miracles are minor occurrences in comparison to that one. If the resurrection actually happened, then for God to open blind eyes, heal any illness, make the lame walk, or even to open the Red Sea is obviously within the realm of possibility.

Testimony That Stands the Severest Tests

As for the specious claim that those who recorded the miracles were so simple and ignorant that they thought such things were normal, the evidence is all to the contrary. The disciples were frightened when they saw Christ walking on water (Matthew 14:26). They were fearful of Him, wondering what kind of person He was, when He calmed the storm with a word (Mark 4:41). Thinking they had seen a ghost, they were terrified when He stood in their midst alive after His resurrection (Luke 24:37). In fact, they were so skeptical that He had to prove to

them that it was really He!

This was not the behavior of gullible persons who lived in a fantasy world. On the contrary, the disciples had a very clear grasp of what was normal and were frightened by Christ's miracles, which suddenly shattered their world. We hear the ring of truth in their accounts of these events as they confess their fear and unbelief.

We will consider the specific evidence for the resurrection in a later chapter. At this point, however, let us quote some of the world's foremost experts on evidence, experts who were convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ precisely on the basis of the evidence. Lord Lyndhurst, recognized as one of the greatest legal minds in British history, declared: "I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet." Simon Greenleaf, America's foremost authority on legal evidence during his lifetime, came to the same conclusion, as did Sir Robert Anderson, head of the Criminal Investigation Division of Scotland Yard, plus scores of others whom we have insufficient space to name. Professor Thomas Arnold, who held the chair of Modern History at Oxford, wrote:

I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.

Many a youthful seeker has been swept into unbelief by the contemptuous declarations of liberal clergy or university professors, delivered with the finality of superior wisdom, that "no intelligent person believes in the miracles in the Bible, much less in the resurrection!" But in fact nothing could be further from the truth. The few statements above should be enough to counter such misinformation. Indeed, many of the most humble and earnest Christians have been the most brilliant, the most knowledgeable, and the best qualified to examine and evaluate the evidence that we will be considering carefully.

— An excerpt from *IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH* (PP. 85-88) by DAVE HUNT

Prophecy Run Amok 2: Fearmongering

T. A. McMahon

As was noted in part one of this series, prophecy is a very important ingredient in the Bible. In a general sense, the entire Bible is prophecy because God has given mankind His words through His prophets. It is also God foretelling what will take place in the future. That forecasting is what God presents to set Himself apart from the false gods that mankind is deceived into worshiping. God alone knows the future events, which He has declared hundreds and even thousands of years before they take place. Moreover, His foreknowledge of such events, revealed in more than a quarter of the Scriptures, is proof of the supernatural origin and nature of the Bible—that it is indeed God’s communication to mankind (Isaiah 42:9; 46:9-10; 48:5).

Prophecy is often a warning regarding what lies ahead so that believers can discern the times and take appropriate action. This gives unbelievers the opportunity to repent in order to avoid God’s judgment. Noah, a preacher of righteousness, was told by God that He would destroy everything that lived upon the earth by a flood (which didn’t come until about 120 years later) and that He would save Noah and his family; He told Abram that his descendants would remove the Canaanites from their land because of their wickedness, an event that took place four centuries later; Joseph was able to interpret the dream of Pharaoh warning of the famine to come upon Egypt in seven years, and then he was given a plan to keep the Egyptians from potential starvation; Jonah warned the Ninevites of God’s impending judgment unless they repented, which they did. Yet most of the Old Testament prophecies from Genesis 3:15 through Malachi 3:1 anticipated the first coming of Israel’s Messiah and have been fulfilled perfectly by Jesus Christ.

Prophecies in the New Testament primarily address events associated with the time period of the Second Coming of our Lord. Matthew 24 begins with Jesus characterizing that time with a warning of great deception, including false christs, false prophets, and lying signs and wonders. It then foretells “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (vv. 21-22). The book of Revelation supplies some of the Tribulation details as God pours out His

wrath in judgment upon the earth. There will be a conquering army of the Antichrist, world war, worldwide famine, the death of half of the world’s inhabitants (Revelation 6:8, 9:15), the massive martyrdom of believers, worldwide physical catastrophes involving mountains moved out of their places, and mankind trying to hide itself from God’s judgment. Of those who turn to Christ and are martyred for their faith during the Great Tribulation, Scripture tells us, “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17).

So there is good news and bad news in biblical prophecy. The best of the good news was the first coming of Jesus in order to pay the full penalty for our sins and to reconcile us to God by our faith in Him alone. Having received the gift of eternal life, the next best prophetic good news for a believer is the first phase of Christ’s Second Coming, known as the Rapture. The Apostle Paul refers to that event as the believer’s “blessed hope,” which we are to anticipate with joy because Jesus is returning to take us, the bride of Christ, to Heaven for a wedding: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). “For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). “And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Revelation 19:9). That is indeed good news.

Sadly, when a professing or true Christian *sets a date* for the Rapture to take place, an act that is contrary to what the Bible teaches (Matthew 24:36, 44; Mark 13:32; 1 Timothy 6:14-15), and that event fails to happen, people grow disillusioned and the good news becomes bad news. In some cases, the date setting arises out of a sincere desire for Christ to return for His bride. At other times, it comes from the pride of having an alleged insight into a biblical interpretation that no one has discovered before. Although both predictions may be sincere, they are sincerely wrong and have caused physical and/or spiritual problems among those who believed their erroneous teachings.

No matter who brings the false teachings, some experience disastrous consequences from them. In the 1980s, millions believed the calculations of former NASA scientist Edgar Whisenant regarding Christ’s return through his booklet *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988* and his other misfires in 1989, 1993, and 1994. Also in the

’80s, Southwest Radio Church published *Apocalyptic Signs in the Heavens*, which saw catastrophic consequences for the earth due to the “Jupiter Effect,” a planetary alignment that would purportedly alter our solar system. Just prior to that, Southwest Radio’s David Webber and Noah Hutchings co-authored *Is This the Last Century?* published by Thomas Nelson. Based in part on Hal Lindsey’s calculation that the Rapture would take place in 1981, they concluded that the seven-year Great Tribulation would begin soon after.

Although many conservative Christians considered the “rapture and doom” prognosticators to be sensationalists, attitudes changed as the turn of the century drew near. The increasing talk of a worldwide computer meltdown was too much for many Christians to brush off, especially when Y2K concerns were being raised by respected evangelicals such as James Dobson, Gary North, Jerry Falwell, Jack Van Impe, Chuck Missler, and many others. The year 2000 made its debut in grand fashion when the world, rather than hunkering down, began celebrating the new century with spectacular fireworks. On the other hand, many of those who were misled by church leaders suffered “survival” consequences: losses from selling their homes, quitting their jobs, and relocating to the country, along with the expenditure of large amounts of money for stockpiles of survival food, firearms, generators, and other survival equipment. Many were overtaken by fear, and some succumbed to suicide over their financial losses.

Fast-forward to 2012 and the Mayan Calendar scare, another “prophesied” end-of-the-world apocalyptic nightmare that turned out to be wrong. Fear is often the response of those who have no hope, not having put their trust in Jesus, the only One who can make us eternally secure. Sadly, even many of those who claim to have a personal relationship with Christ by faith alone demonstrate by their actions that their trust is elsewhere.

Of course, we are not saying that we shouldn’t be prudent in making preparations for potential disasters whether they are natural, technological, or financial. Having a one- or two-week supply of food and water on hand could be very helpful, especially if one lives in an area that is prone to weather-related catastrophes. A reasonable amount of accessible cash may also be practical. In most cases, however, to go much beyond this may lead to a self-oriented “survivalist” mentality, which is at odds with the examples and instructions

of the Word of God. Stockpiling food or turning to gold for survival could create an attitude of selfishness, especially when others in the disaster are without and in great need. To share, or not to share, that is the biblical question. Does one protect his goods at all cost? Scripture tells us, “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:21). Who would deny that they would want someone to share their food with them if they and their families were hungry? Furthermore, the Bible tells us how we are to treat our neighbors and even our enemies: “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink” (Romans 12:20).

Believers need to think such things through in the light of Scripture, particularly since our days are loaded with fearmongering false prophets and some “survival food” con men preaching certain doom. The latest to conjure up forthcoming dark clouds on the horizon are those who promote the teaching that there *may well be* a combination of two prophetic events taking place in the year 2015 that *could* result in unprecedented physical cataclysms and financial crashes. The use of italics for “may well be” and “could” is given to note that those purveyors of disasters have used such language in order to cover themselves from being accused of false prophecy. Even so, those “disclaimer” terms are lost in the hyperbole of their fearmongering.

The two leaders in this alleged confluence of biblical tribulations are Jonathan Cahn (*The Mystery of Shemitah*) and Mark Biltz (*The Blood Moons*). They are supported by a cast of false teachers and sensationalists and their associated organizations that include Jim Bakker, Sid Roth, John Hagee, Pat Robertson of the *700 Club*, and Joseph Farah of WorldNetDaily, to name but a few.

What then of the biblical significance of the so-called mystery of shemitah and blood moons? There is none in the context in which Cahn and Biltz present them. Cahn promotes shemitah as a universal principle that applies to all nations and “their financial and economic realms.” No. Shemitah was given exclusively to Israel as a blessing should God’s chosen people follow His commandment. It involved obeying the seventh day of the week as a day of rest and every seventh year as a year of rest. God promised to make provision on the sixth day and year to supply the Israelites’ needs during their day/year of rest. Also, during the seventh year there was to be a “release” of all the debts of the Israelites. Jonathan Cahn further compounds the central error that he taught in his book *The Harbinger*

by applying a law of God to America—a law that applies only to God’s exclusive covenant people: the Jews. This is false prophecy in the sense that it seriously misrepresents the Scriptures. Cahn is heavily promoted by WorldNetDaily, which heralds him as a modern-day prophet and revealer of “*The Ancient Mystery That Holds the Secret of America’s Future*.” Joseph Farah, WorldNetDaily’s chief, is the producer of Cahn’s documentary *Isaiah 9:10 Judgment*, and the website is a chief supporter of Cahn’s books.

The blood moons teaching of Mark Biltz is also false prophecy because, as with Cahn’s abuse of Scripture, Biltz forces the biblical term into his own agenda. The Bible clearly applies the conditions and the consequences of a blood moon (singular) to the seven-year Tribulation period: “Immediately *after the tribulation of those days* shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matthew 24:29); “I beheld when he had broken the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth” (Revelation 6:12-13). If Biltz concurs that the “blood moon” verses take place during the Great Tribulation, then 2015 must occur in the latter part of the Tribulation. What does that indicate for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture? It either took place in 2008 and was a partial Rapture, or it will be a Post-Tribulation Rapture, neither of which is biblical.

If Cahn’s and Biltz’s beliefs were merely a matter of false teachings that are of the faith-wrecking kind among the multitudes of those who buy into their unbiblical assertions, it would be tragic enough. They have, however, become the latest tool of the evangelical fearmongers as they apply their prophetic distortions to alleged soon-coming financial crashes and physical catastrophes worse than any thus experienced on the earth. Their promotional appearances with Jim Bakker, as just one example, would give credibility to the snake oil pitchmen of yesteryear (2 Peter 2:3). After Biltz declares, “I think we have one year to really prepare for what God [has] coming,” Bakker responds, “It’s time to get ready. That’s why God has called me to tell you to store food...you don’t have to order from us to hear the Word of the Lord. But you should have food.... What are you gonna do when the stock market crashes?... We have the Morningside recipes.... We have the Year of Food for \$550 dollars.... One of these days it will all

be gone. One more event... I’m telling you, if we have a big earthquake on the West Coast or say a volcano going on, or something major, there will not be any food left for months and months.... We have... ‘The Time of Trouble’ offer, and that’s a seven-year food offer, and that’s for a donation of \$3,000... [that’s] 7,700 meals.” Biltz adds that what’s ahead is the “Super Bowl of human history and people need to get ready and that’s what I believe these are signs of” (<http://jimbakkershow.com/video/mystery-sevens/>).

WorldNetDaily devotes numerous pages to selling survival food as well as self-defense and preparedness gear. Thomas Horn, author of *Nephilim Stargates*, is another distorter of biblical prophecy who claims that the Nephilim have returned and who also sees blood moons as a foreboding of things to come. As CEO of SurvivorMall.com, his website features hundreds of supplies to supposedly help Christians to be prepared for the last days.

What’s wrong with the present conjured-up scenarios that relate to pending catastrophes? Will there be a time of utter devastation that the world hasn’t experienced since Noah’s worldwide flood? Yes. However, it will happen according to God’s chronology and not according to man’s ideas about when it will happen and how to prepare for and survive it. The timeline is given in the Scriptures, beginning with Christ’s returning for His bride (believers in Him) to take them to Heaven prior to the time of Jacob’s trouble, the Great Tribulation, during which God pours out His wrath upon the entire world. Even a cursory reading of what takes place as presented in the Book of Revelation clearly shows the futility and folly of imagined survival tactics. No, survival during the Great Tribulation will be only by God’s miraculous intervention for those who come to Christ during that time period. Prior to the Tribulation, believers are “to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come,” keeping in mind that “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9-10).

Our living together with Him involves pleasing Him in every way, and our waiting involves opportunities by His grace to be fruitful and productive with joy as we look for our “blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

TBC

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Quotable.....

As long as you have the tiniest bit of spiritual impertinence, it will always reveal itself in the fact that you are expecting God to tell you to do a big thing, and all He is telling you to do is to “come.”

—Oswald Chambers

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I recently saw a post [TBC, 03/14 Q&A] regarding a man by the name of Dr. Scott McQuate. Having been a pastor myself, and having read all of Dr. McQuate’s books that I can locate, I find it quite disconcerting that someone from your organization would actually call this man a false teacher. I personally would find it hard to believe that it would be Dave Hunt. I have also spoken with Dr. McQuate [many times] and I can tell you [that he] has done some of the finest biblical research I’ve seen. Whether you agree with his exegesis or not does not justify this kind of attack on his or anyone else’s character. That is what the Pharisees did to Jesus. I would hope you would remove the post, or at the very least, please explain your justification for it. The author mentions Dr. McQuate’s reference to books such as Jasher, Enoch etc., but you probably know that these and other books are either referenced in our current Bible or were once actually contained in the Canon, prior to Nicea. I will be waiting for your answers to these questions.

RESPONSE: You have stated that you have “read all of Dr. McQuate’s books that [you] can locate....” And, you find it of concern that we have specifically noted “Dr. McQuate’s reference to books such as Jasher, Enoch etc.,” with the point that we “know that these and other books are either referenced in our current Bible [or] were once actually contained in the Canon, prior to Nicea.”

It is true that there are a few references to Jasher, Jubilees, Enoch, and other books, now lost, and it must be remembered that those citations were given by men who no doubt had access to them. That is demonstrably not true today. There are at present six competing editions of the book of Enoch, and the majority of other extra-biblical books are directly traceable to the Gnostic cache called the “Nag Hammadi library.” As

we know very well, the early church had to confront Gnostic teachings, but these heretical teachings have been successfully creeping back into the church in the past few decades.

Dave Hunt, who went home to be with the Lord a year and a half ago, has specifically written concerning the Apocryphal books, “These books were not accepted by the early church. Christ never quoted from them or referred to them as Scripture.” He also pointed out that “no church council decided what books would be included in the New Testament. The inspired writings were recognized by consensus of the entire body of believers on the basis of the Holy Spirit indwelling them, not by decree of a council. The Council of Nicaea (325) argued from the New Testament books but did not list them. The Council of Laodicea (363) decreed in its 59th Canon that only canonized books of both Old and New Testament were to be read in the churches. Yet it didn’t even list them, showing that the canon had already been so well established by common consent that everyone knew the books it contained” (www.thebereancall.org/content/october-1995-q-and-a-3).

You consider that Dr. McQuate “has done some of the finest biblical research [you’ve] seen in 22 years as a pastor.” We take issue with that conclusion since so much of the “research” is clearly seen to be “extra-biblical.” On his website, Dr. McQuate advertises his research library, which includes, “*The Apocrypha, The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered, The Complete Exhibit of the Dead Sea Scrolls, The Koran, The Egyptian Book of the Dead (from which the 10 Commandments were derived)*, a 400-page *Biblical Law Course* and more, including the 159-page *Sumerian Lexicon*”! [our emphasis]

Are we not rightly concerned when Dr. McQuate has specifically stated, “The Tribulation period is *highly misunderstood* because of many doctrinal lies and misconceptions that have been touted as fact, and unbeknownst to present-day Scholars, Pastors and Theologians, the subject of the Tribulation is not unique to the Bible. The shocking facts of this epic, all-important event were also spoken of within cultures long pre-dating the Bible, such as the Mayan, Sumerian, Hindu, Canaanite and others but they have been intentionally concealed for millennia... *until now*. For a *watered-down and tremendously adulterated understanding*

of the Tribulation, we can look to the Bible”? [our emphasis]

In common with too many, McQuate is claiming extra-biblical insights that have been hidden from nearly everyone else. Should we not in the interest of truth be properly concerned for this man’s spiritual life? Or, for the sheep who may be led away from the truth of Scriptures to these “exciting” and controversial revelations?

Regarding other cultures’ understanding of God’s laws, the Scriptures do speak of the Law written upon the heart, about which in Romans 2:14-15 Paul notes, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”

Concerning “the law written” in the hearts of men, this is why cultural prohibitions show an amazing parallelism. Do not lie, do not steal, do not murder, do not commit adultery, etc. (the notable exception being the Sabbath)—these demonstrate what Paul is talking about. That is a provision for man that the Lord made. Consequently, we should not be surprised to see *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* having some (skewed) parallels to the Ten Commandments. But McQuate’s research runs hard aground by claiming that the commandments given by God directly to Moses upon Sinai are “derived” from the Egyptian source.

“The part of the Book of the Dead in question is the Papyrus of Ani, where a ‘negative confession’ is given. That is, a person who has died and is entering the underworld is listing sinful things that they have refrained from doing, and thus declaring themselves worthy to enter the underworld. These aren’t commandments being given here, simply statements the person is saying about themselves, though they are declaring these things to be sinful, as the ten commandments are doing” (www.kingdavid8.com/_full_article.php?id=aa5da8cc-6283-11e1-be10-176ee32615f7).

The more we look at Dr. McQuate’s writing, the “finest research” will not bear close scrutiny. The Lord inspired Paul to write, “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The command to “prove” (or “test”) all things is critical in our day when teachings such as the Nephilim theory, the Blood Moon prophecies, Hebrew Roots promotion, and the growing infatuation with mystical

Catholic practices have departed from the Word of Truth and turning Christians to extra-biblical sources. All these movements of necessity require material apart from Scripture. The Scriptures, which are "...given by inspiration of God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" are being minimized.

TBC's critique has never been an analysis of Dr. McQuate's character but only of what he has publicly taught and has been documented.

The Finality of the Cross

Dave Hunt

First published in October 1995

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..."

— GALATIANS 2:20

Anti-Christian elements in the secular world would like very much to do away with all public display of the cross. Yet it is still seen atop tens of thousands of churches and in religious processions, often made of gold and even studded with precious stones. Most frequently, however, the cross is displayed as popular jewelry hanging around necks or dangling from ears. One wonders by what strange alchemy the bloodstained, rugged cross of torment upon which Christ suffered and died for our sins became so sanitized and glamorized.

No matter how it is displayed, even as jewelry or graffiti, the cross is universally recognized as the symbol of Christianity—and therein lies a serious problem. *The cross itself* rather than *what transpired upon it* 19 centuries ago has become the focus of attention, resulting in several grave errors. Its very *shape*, though devised by cruel pagans for punishing criminals, has become holy and mysteriously imbued with magic properties, fostering the delusion that displaying a cross somehow provides divine protection. Millions superstitiously keep a cross in their homes or on their person or make "the sign of the cross" to ward off evil and frighten demons away. Demons fear Christ, not a cross; and any who have not been crucified with Him display a cross in vain.

Paul declared, "For the *preaching of the cross* is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18). So the power of the cross lies not in its *display* but in its *preaching*; and that preaching has nothing to do with the peculiar shape of the cross but with *Christ's death upon it* as declared in the gospel. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16), not to those who wear or otherwise display or make the sign of the cross.

What is this gospel that saves? Paul states explicitly: "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...by which also ye are saved...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose

again the third day according to the scriptures..." (1 Cor 15:1-4). It comes as a shock to many that the gospel includes no mention of a *cross*. Why? Because a cross was not essential to our salvation. Christ had to be crucified to fulfill the prophecy concerning the manner of the Messiah's death (Ps 22), not because the cross itself had anything to do with our redemption. What was essential was the shedding of Christ's blood in His death as foreshadowed in the Old Testament sacrifices, for "without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]" (Heb 9:22); "for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev 17:11).

WHO HIS OWN SELF BARE OUR
SINS IN HIS OWN BODY ON THE
TREE, THAT WE, BEING DEAD
TO SINS, SHOULD LIVE UNTO
RIGHTEOUSNESS...

— 1 Peter 2:24

This is not to say that the cross itself has no meaning. That Christ was nailed to a cross reveals the horrifying depths of evil innate within every human heart. To be nailed naked to a cross and displayed publicly, to die slowly with taunts and jeers filling the air, was the most excruciatingly painful and humiliating death that could be devised. And that is exactly what puny man did to his Creator! We ought to fall on our faces in repentant horror, overcome with shame, for it was not only the screaming, bloodthirsty mob and derisive soldiers but our sins that nailed Him there!

So the cross lays bare for all eternity the awful truth that beneath the polite facade of culture and education the heart of man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9), capable of evil beyond comprehension even against the God who created and loves him and patiently provides for him. Does any man doubt the wickedness of his own heart? Let him look at the cross and recoil in revulsion from that self within! No wonder the proud humanist hates the cross!

At the same time that the cross lays bare the evil in man, however, it also reveals the goodness, mercy, and love of God as nothing else could. In the face of such unspeakable evil, such diabolical hatred vented against Him, the Lord of glory, who could destroy this earth and all upon

it with a word, allowed Himself to be mocked and falsely accused and scourged and nailed to that cross! Christ "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*" (Phil 2:8). When man was doing his worst, God responded in love, not merely yielding Himself to His tormenters but bearing our sins and taking the judgment we justly deserved.

Therein lies another serious problem with the symbol, and especially with Catholicism's crucifix, which portrays Christ perpetually on the cross, as does the Mass. The emphasis is focused upon the *physical suffering* of Christ as though that paid for our sins. On the contrary, that was what man did to Him and could only condemn us all. Our redemption came about through: His bruising by Jehovah and "his soul [being made] an offering for sin" (Is 53:10); God laying "on him the iniquity of us all" (v. 6); and His bearing "our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pt 2:24).

The death of Christ is irrefutable evidence that God in righteousness must punish sin—the penalty must be paid or there can be no forgiveness. That God's Son had to endure the cross even after crying to His Father in agonizing contemplation of bearing our sins, ("[I]f it be possible, let this cup pass from me" — Mt 26:39), is proof that there was no other way mankind could be redeemed. When Christ, the sinless, perfect man and beloved of His Father, took our place, God's judgment fell upon Him in all its fury. What then must be the judgment of those who reject Christ and refuse the pardon offered in Him! We must warn them!

At the same time and in the same breath that we sound the alarm of coming judgment, we must also proclaim the good news that redemption has been provided and God's forgiveness is offered for the vilest of sinners. Nothing more evil could be conceived than crucifying God! Yet it was from the cross that Christ in infinite love and mercy prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). So the cross proves, too, that there is forgiveness for the worst of sins and sinners.

Tragically, however, the vast majority of mankind rejects Christ. And here we face another danger: that in our sincere desire to see souls saved we adjust the message of the cross to avoid offending the world. Paul warned that care had to be taken not to preach the cross "with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1 Cor 1:17). But surely the gospel can be explained in a new way

that is more appealing to the ungodly than those old-time preachers presented it. Perhaps today's techniques for packaging and selling could be used to clothe the cross in music or a beat or entertaining presentation such as the world uses that would give the gospel a new relevancy or at least familiarity. Psychology, too, can be drawn upon to provide a more positive approach. Let us not confront sinners with their sin and the gloom and doom of coming judgment, but explain that their behavior isn't really their fault so much as it is the result of abuse they have suffered. After all, are we not all victims? And didn't Christ come to rescue us from victimization and our low view of ourselves and to restore our self-esteem and self-confidence? Blend the cross with psychology and the world will beat a path to our churches, filling them with new members! Such is today's new evangelicalism.

Confronting such perversion, A. W. Tozer wrote: "If I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is rather a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity....The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it....The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before that cross it bows and toward that cross it points with carefully staged histrionics—but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of the cross it stubbornly refuses to bear."

Here is the crux of the issue. The gospel is designed to do to self what the cross did to those who hung upon it: put it utterly to death. This is the good news in which Paul exulted: "I am crucified with Christ!" The cross is not a fire escape from hell to heaven but a place where we die in Christ. Only then can we experience "the power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10), for only the dead can be resurrected. What joy that promise brings to those who long to escape the evil of their own hearts and lives; and what fanaticism it seems to those who want to cling to self and who therefore preach what Tozer called the "new cross."

Paul declared that in Christ the Christian is crucified to the world and the world to him (Gal. 6:14). That is strong language! This world hated and crucified the Lord whom we now love—and in that act it has crucified us as well. We have taken our stand with Christ. Let the world do to us what it did to Him if it will, but we will never again join in its selfish lusts and ambitions, its godless standards, its proud

determination to build a utopia without God and its neglect of eternity.

To believe in Christ is to admit that the death He endured for us is exactly what we deserve. Therefore, when Christ died, we died in Him: "[W]e thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead [i.e., all have died]: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor 5:14-15).

I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST:
NEVERTHELESS I LIVE; YET NOT I,
BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND
THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN
THE FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH
OF THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED
ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME.

— Galatians 2:20

"But I'm not dead, "is the earnest response. "Self is still very much alive." Paul, too, acknowledged, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom 7:19). Then what does "I am crucified with Christ" really mean in daily life? It doesn't mean that we are automatically "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11). We still have a will and choices to make.

Then what power does the Christian have over sin that the Buddhist or good moralist doesn't have? First of all, we have peace with God "through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). The penalty has been paid in full, so we no longer try to live a good life out of fear that otherwise we will be damned, but out of love for the One who has saved us. "We love him, because he first loved us (1 Jn 4:19); and love moves the lover to please the One loved at any cost. "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (Jn 14:23), our Lord said. The more we contemplate the Cross and meditate upon the price our Lord paid for our redemption, the more we will love Him; and the more we love Him, the more we will desire to please Him.

Secondly, instead of struggling to overcome sin, we accept by faith that we died in Christ. Dead men can't be tempted. Our faith is not in our ability to act as crucified persons but in the fact that Christ was crucified once and for all in full payment of the penalty for our sins.

Thirdly, after declaring that he was "crucified with Christ," Paul added, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by [faith in the Son of God], who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). The just "live by faith" (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38) in Christ; but the non-Christian can only put his faith in himself or in some self-help program or phony guru.

Tragically, the Catholic's faith is not in the redemption Christ accomplished once and for all upon the cross, but in the Mass, which allegedly is the same sacrifice as on the cross and imparts forgiveness and new life each time it is repeated. It is claimed that the priest transforms the wafer and wine into the literal body and blood of Christ, thereby making Christ's sacrifice on the cross perpetually present. There is no way, however, that a past event can be made present. Moreover, if the past event accomplished its purpose, then there is no reason for wanting to perpetuate it in the present, even if that could be done. For example, if a benefactor pays a creditor the debt someone owes, the debt is gone forever. It would be meaningless to speak of re-presenting or reenacting or perpetuating the payment in the present. One could well *remember* with gratitude the payment that was made, but no *reenactment* would have any virtue since there no longer remains any debt to be paid.

As Christ died, He cried in triumph, "It is finished," using a Greek expression that meant that the debt had been paid in full. Yet the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God" (par 1414, p 356). That is like trying to continue paying installments of a debt that has been paid in full. The Mass is a denial of the sufficiency of the payment Christ made for sin upon the cross! The Catholic lives with the uncertainty of wondering how many more Masses it may take to get him to heaven.

Many Protestants live in similar uncertainty, fearful that they may yet be lost if they fail to live a good enough life or lose their faith or turn their backs upon Christ. There is a blessed finality to the cross that delivers us from such insecurity. Christ need never be crucified again; nor can those who have been "crucified with Christ" be "uncrucified" and then "recrucified"! Paul declared: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). What assurance for time and for eternity!

TBC

Quotable.....

The church is not the agent God will use to usher in His Kingdom of righteousness and justice. That position belongs solely to God's Son, the Messiah. To say otherwise is to deny Jesus the glory ascribed to Him alone.

—James A. Showers,
Israel My Glory, *Sept/Oct 2014*

Q&A.....

This month's Q&As were answered by Dave Hunt and were originally printed in October 2005 and June 2007

QUESTION: [You have] objected to the use of the terms "Messianic Jew" and "Messianic movement" as not biblical....I would differ with your explanation of Jesus and His followers not being observant Jews after the cross. The apostles did continue to observe Sabbath after the cross (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4, 11; two Sabbaths at Antioch, one Sabbath at Philippi, three Sabbaths at Thessalonica, seven to eight Sabbaths at Corinth). The feasts of Scripture were to be everlasting for the Israelites and could be partaken of by the strangers among them. Most were everlasting observances, and...will continue in the future....God does not change His mind (Lv 23:14, 21; Zec 14:16-19). As a Gentile in a "Messianic" congregation, I have the liberty to keep these Feasts.

RESPONSE: I am sorry if there are Christians who want Jews to deny their heritage as the chosen people of God descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were delivered from Egypt and brought into the Promised Land. That is wrong. Yes, the stranger who became a Jew through keeping the law, including being circumcised, was to keep the feasts of the Lord. But for a Gentile to keep those feasts today would be a fraud. His ancestors were not delivered from Egypt by miracles and brought into the Promised Land to inherit it, nor has he joined the nation of Israel.

None of the verses you list declares that the apostles kept the Sabbath but only that they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Obviously, that was because the Jews gathered together there on that day, and this was the best way to reach them with the gospel. In the early days, the apostles did observe the law and keep the feasts in order not to offend the unsaved Jews. This was only, however, for the sake of winning them to Christ: "For though I be free from all...yet...unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain

them that are under the law....that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:19-22).

There are many warnings against becoming entangled in Jewish observances: "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike....He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it" (Rom 14:5-6). That passage certainly closes the door for Jew and Gentile upon obligatory observation of the Sabbath or any other Holy Day.

The very term "Messianic Jew" makes a distinction between Jews and Gentiles that does not exist in Christ. Am I a "Messianic Gentile"? There is neither Jew nor Gentile; we are one in Christ.

QUESTION: I have read your articles on replacement theology and Israel. You stated that Gentiles observing the festivals and other Torah laws were frauds. Could you please explain?

RESPONSE: That is not what I actually said, nor would I accuse those who sincerely think they are doing God's will of being "frauds." I would reserve that term for those to whom it properly applies. What I did say was that "for a Gentile to keep those [Jewish] feasts today would be a fraud"—and I stand by that.

The Passover, for example, was clearly to be kept by Jews as a "memorial" of the deliverance of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt and as proof that they were the chosen people of "the God of Israel" to whom that land belongs today. It would, therefore, be improper for Gentiles to celebrate the Passover—and the same is true of the other Jewish feasts. Though all relate to the gospel symbolically, they are specifically for Jews to keep as part of their heritage in relation to the land God gave to them alone.

And yes, I have made it clear that I reject categorically the very word "Messianic." It is confusing and is not found in the Bible. To speak of a "Messianic Movement," or "Messianic Christians," or "Messianic Jews," etc., is not biblical. Such expressions were never used by Christ, the apostles, or the early church. Yet one gets the impression from "Messianic" believers that they are being more biblical by using that term.

The Hebrew word "Messiah" (*mashiah*) appears only twice in the Old Testament, both in the same passage (Dn 9:25-26). The Greek form of it, *Messias*, appears only twice in the New Testament (Jn 1:41; 4:25). In Israel, prophet, priest, and king had to be anointed with a special oil symbolic of the Holy Spirit. The words "Messiah" and "Christ" signified the Anointed One, in whom all three offices would be fulfilled.

In contrast to only four appearances of "Messiah/Messias" in the entire Bible,

the word "Christ" (Gr. *Christos*) occurs hundreds of times in the New Testament. So it would seem more biblical to refer to "Christ Movement," or "Christ Christians," or "Christ Jews" than to "Messianic." That word purports to call us back to the "Jewish roots" of our faith. Unfortunately, "Messianic-whatever" implies that observing Jewish practices ensures that one will be closer to God—and it often becomes an excuse for imposing the law and Jewish observances upon Gentile Christians. This is unbiblical and something that Paul combated in his epistle to the Galatians.

The gospel is all about Christ, who died for the sins of the *world*. Everyone, Jew or Gentile, must believe on Christ in order to be saved. All who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ in response to the gospel have embraced the Messiah—but not in the exclusively Jewish sense of the Anointed One who will rescue Israel at Armageddon and reign on the throne of David forever.

The term "Messianic Christian" makes an unbiblical distinction between two classes of Christians: "Messianic" and "Non-Messianic." Yet Jews and Gentiles who believe the gospel have been made one in Christ. If one is a Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, he has believed on Christ the Messiah as Lord and Savior. There is no other basis of salvation.

The gospel that the apostles preached and that we are to preach doesn't have the word "Messianic" in it. The gospel is that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:1-8). It would not be more biblical to preach, "Believe on the Messiah, who died for our sins." The early church was all Jews, but it is never called "Messianic."

Scripture refers to "Jews...Gentiles...the church of God" (1 Cor 10:32). "Messianic" describes none of these. Jews and Gentiles who believe on Jesus before He comes visibly at Armageddon are in the church; Jews and Gentiles who do not receive Christ as Savior until He appears at the Second Coming will inhabit the earth for eternity—Jews in the special relationship to their Messiah promised to Israel, Gentiles as part of the nations that remain on earth (Rv 21:24; 22:2) along with Israel but distinct from her.

Again, it is presently impossible for anyone to be "Messianic" because all who believe on Christ (Jew or Gentile) are in the church, with Christ ruling as Lord in their hearts. They are part of the bride that will rule and reign with Him eternally. They will not be among the Jewish subjects in the Kingdom over whom the Messiah will reign on the throne of David. To call some Christians "Messianic" is not biblical but confusing.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What Year Was Jesus Born?

QUESTION: Matthew says Christ's birth was during the reign of Herod [the Great] (Matthew 2:1). Herod died, by all accounts, in 4 BC, so Christ could not have been born any later than that. Yet Luke says that Jesus had just turned 30 years old in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1, 23), who began to reign in AD 14. So that would mean Jesus was 30 in AD 29? and thus was born in 1 BC, three years after Herod's death, thoroughly destroying Matthew's timing! In a further contradiction, Luke puts Christ's birth when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, but he didn't take that office until AD 6. Episcopal Bishop John S. Spong of Newark, New Jersey, says that such contradictions prove the Bible isn't reliable. I believe the Bible is true. Can you help me?

RESPONSE: The seeming contradictions you mention (as well as many others) have been eagerly (in fact, too eagerly) raised by a number of skeptics as "proof" that the Bible contains errors and thus cannot be God's Word. One needs to remember that the Bible has been "proven" wrong many times on the basis of then-available knowledge either of science or history. However, in every case, when all the facts were at last uncovered, the Bible was vindicated and the critics were red-faced. It is the same here.

Quirinius—Cyrenius Was Governor of Syria Twice

First of all, the dates that Bishop Spong and other critics use in this presumed refutation were never by any means certain. Historians did not accept them. It would be foolish to throw away one's confidence in the Bible on the basis of dates that are questionable at best. For example, Will Durant, in *The Story of Civilization*, Volume III, indicated that he did not know when Quirinius (another spelling for Luke's Cyrenius) began his governorship over Syria. If Durant, one of the most highly respected of all historians, said the exact date was unknown, I would be suspicious of a critic who, in order to "prove" the Bible wrong, states dogmatically that Quirinius began his reign in AD 6!

Furthermore, on the basis of new evidence since Durant wrote his history, as already noted, other historians such as A. W. Zumpt are convinced that Quirinius was governor over Syria *twice*, the first time from at least as early as 4 BC. That governorship ended in AD 1. John Elder believes Quirinius' first time as governor began as early as 7 BC. Christ's birth, of course, had to be no later than 4 BC, which would have been when Quirinius was governor the *first* time, exactly as Luke states.

As for Tiberius Caesar— Most Interesting!

As for the alleged problem with the date of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the historical evidence for its resolution has been well-known for many years. Yes, Augustus Caesar died in AD 14, and that date is therefore generally listed as the official beginning of the reign of his successor, Tiberius Caesar. However, the skeptics are so eager to find a flaw in the Bible that they fail to dig deeply enough to discover the perfectly sound reason for an earlier date.

In actual fact, Tiberius, though technically not yet the Caesar, had already begun to rule the empire some years before Augustus' death, because the latter was elderly and in poor health. Rebellions had cost the lives of those possible successors closest to Augustus. Left without either aide or successor, Augustus had in AD 2 adopted Tiberius as his son and coregent. Subsequently, Tiberius had been sent out by Augustus to put down the rebellions and had done a masterful job. Will Durant writes:

When he [Tiberius] returned in AD 9, after five years of arduous and successful campaigning, all Rome, which hated him for his stern puritanism, resigned itself to the fact that

though Augustus was still prince, Tiberius had begun to rule.

Counting his rule as having actually begun in AD 9, “the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar” (Luke 3:1) would be AD 24–25. If Jesus was born 4 or 5 BC, just before Herod’s death and during the *first* governorship of Cyrenius over Syria, that would make Him 29 years of age in AD 24–25, at the beginning of His ministry. Notice that Luke says that He “*began to be about thirty years of age.*” Of course, if He was born in 6 BC, He would have been 30 sometime during AD 24. We don’t have precise dates, but what we know certainly confirms the accuracy

of Luke’s testimony.

The above demonstrates once again how mistaken and deceitfully *biased* are the wishful criticisms of the supposed scholars such as those of the Jesus Seminar (and apostate religious leaders such as Bishop Spong) who claim that the New Testament cannot be relied upon because it was not written until centuries after the time of Jesus. In fact, the dating Luke gives, which archaeological discoveries took years to verify, could not possibly have been known and recorded with such precision even decades, much less centuries, later, as the critics insist. It could only have been known to eyewitnesses on the scene at the time, which the Bible writers claim to have been.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 91-94) *by* DAVE HUNT

Why Did God Allow Seeming Contradictions?

QUESTION: You Christians seem to have a way of somehow coming up with a “reconciliation” of whatever contradictions and inconsistencies “unbelievers” are able to discover in the Bible. However, no matter how convincing the “reconciliation” may seem to be, I am left with a question: Why should there be so many problems that you have to work so hard to solve? It seems to me that the very fact that there are so many inconsistencies (even if you supposedly solved every one) is in itself evidence that the Bible is badly flawed and therefore could not possibly be God’s Word.

RESPONSE: On the contrary—the many *seeming* contradictions and inconsistencies constitute a very convincing proof of the reliability of the Bible. If three witnesses who claimed to have seen an accident each described it in exactly the same language, word for word, one would have good reason to suspect collusion and to throw out their testimony. However, if each described it in his own words and from his own perspective, one would tend to believe them. Moreover, if there seemed to be some conflict in their testimonies, but if that conflict were resolved by probing deeper into the incident, that would add significantly to the trustworthiness of their testimony. So it is with the seeming contradictions in the Bible.

Irwin Linton, in *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*, puts it well: “The frank and artless narratives of the Bible are so obviously indifferent to the *appearance* of consistency, and show so clearly that irregularity which is the sure mark of honest handwork in the Oriental rug and of spontaneity in human testimony, that they have often lured opponents into attempts at destructive cross-examination which have only brought the Bible’s truth and consistency into clearer light.”

One of the Bible’s great strengths, then, is the reinforcing power of *apparent* inconsistencies, which, in the reconciling, prove the truthfulness of the narrative.

William Paley draws attention to this fact in his writings:

Now, in historical researches, a reconciled inconsistency becomes a positive argument. First, because an impostor generally guards against the appearance of inconsistency; and secondly, because when apparent inconsistencies are found, it is seldom that anything but truth renders them capable of reconciliation.

The existence of the difficulty proves the absence of that caution which usually accompanies the consciousness of fraud; and the solution proves that it is not the collusion of fortuitous propositions which we have to deal with, but that a thread of truth winds through the whole, which preserves every circumstance in its place.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 94-95) *by* DAVE HUNT

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Spiritual Fitness

T. A. McMahon

The term “fitness” is one of the favorite marketing buzzwords that has attracted many to health clubs and spas, and it even has an appeal for those who are so out of shape that it remains yet wishful thinking. There is little doubt that the physical part of life just seems better when one is physically fit.

The Bible gives some credence to this idea in 1 Timothy 4:8, where Paul tells Timothy that bodily exercise profits [a] little. The verse continues, “but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” In other words, godliness, which is the spiritual exercise of *living out what the Word of God teaches*, is significantly more to be sought than “bodily exercise” in order to improve a believer’s everyday life on earth as well as to yield rewards in one’s eternal life.

The goal of spiritual fitness, according to the Scriptures, must be godliness. The Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to “exercise thyself” unto godliness, and Peter declares that God has given believers “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Peter 1:3). I hope that every believer reading this desires to achieve that goal no matter how far short of it he might feel that he comes right now. The good news is that there is good news, no matter what one’s condition!

In the sports world, when a team is struggling in more than one aspect of the game, many coaches have their teams return to practicing the fundamentals of the sport. That usually gets things turned around and headed in the direction of improvement. Such an approach may also be helpful for those who want to achieve spiritual fitness but are not exactly sure how to go about it. (And I am not recommending seeking out so-called “spiritual directors” or “spiritual coaches,” who frequently utilize the latest trends, methods, or techniques that are far from what the Scriptures teach.)

What are the scriptural fundamentals for growing in godliness? First of all, it must begin with a new birth. As Jesus declared to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....Ye *must* be born again.” (John 3:3,7—emphasis added). Without that transformation of being born spiritually from above, it is impossible for anyone to manifest godliness. This new birth comes about when a person

admits that he is a sinner, turns to Jesus by faith alone, believes that He paid the full penalty for his sins, and accepts the free gift of salvation that only Jesus could and did provide. He then becomes a “new man”: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Even though he has been miraculously transformed into a new being, a born-again believer retains his old nature, but no longer is he under its sinful control: “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

FOR BODILY EXERCISE PROFITETH LITTLE: BUT GODLINESS IS PROFITABLE UNTO ALL THINGS, HAVING PROMISE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS, AND OF THAT WHICH IS TO COME.

— 1 Timothy 4:8

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have *put on the new man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:8-10 —emphasis added). “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). We shouldn’t be surprised, however, when within the born-again believer, the resident old nature, though no longer in control, causes a sometimes-fierce struggle in our hearts and minds. This spiritual battle will continue throughout our temporal lives, but daily victory can be ours. Why? Because God himself has provided *everything* that a believer needs to grow in “righteousness and true holiness.”

What are some of these things that He has provided? One help that is foundational is that the Holy Spirit *indwells* every Christian at the moment that he believes the gospel. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him;

for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17).

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is foundational, for without the Spirit of Christ, there would *be* no life *in Him*. This could be compared to having the latest model car but the engine is missing. Just as an engineless car would be useless regarding the purpose for which it was intended, so a person who doesn’t have the Holy Spirit (and thus does not belong to the Lord), is helpless when it comes to living above one’s circumstances, being a light in the world, and ultimately spending eternity fulfilling God’s plan for us. The analogy may be a little rough, but I think you get the point. On the other hand, the person who is indwelt by the Spirit of Christ has all that he needs to live a life of godliness—as long as he avails himself of it—which certainly includes being spiritually fruitful and productive.

Consider the incredible abundance that the Holy Spirit provides for the believer. He, the third *person* of the Godhead, is the born-again Christian’s comforter (which includes the meaning “strengtheners”), teacher, enabler, empowerer, guide, convicter of sin, revealer of truth, baptizer, and impartor of numerous spiritual gifts. It was through the Holy Spirit that we received the Word of God: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). And it is through the Holy Spirit that we gain understanding of the Scriptures: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

The Holy Spirit’s involvement in giving us the Word of God and its value in equipping us in Christ is clearly revealed in 2 Timothy 3:15-17: “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Indeed, God’s miraculous revelation through the Holy Scriptures is truly the Lord’s instruction manual, informing us of what we need to know in order to live a life of godliness (2 Peter 1:3), and the Holy Spirit is the One who empowers us to carry out the teachings of Jesus, who is the Living Word.

Jesus is the God-Man. He is eternally

God, and through the incarnation He became the perfect Man. He will never cease to be both God and Man. We are finite beings, so that idea, along with others (such as the doctrine of the Trinity), may seem incomprehensible to us. As long as we are still in these earthly bodies, we will never be able to *fully* comprehend our Infinite God. Therefore we trust what He has communicated to us through His Word, and one day, we will be with Him and will know Him in perfect truth (1 Corinthians 13:12). In our pursuit of godliness, Jesus not only gave us instructions, but He, as the perfect Man, also demonstrated the necessity of depending upon the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. Consider the following verses:

"And the *Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him*, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). "And Jesus *being full of the Holy Ghost* returned from Jordan, and was *led by the Spirit* into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). "And Jesus returned *in the power of the Spirit* into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about" (Luke 4:14). At a synagogue in Nazareth He declared himself to be the prophesied Messiah by reading from the Book of Isaiah. His words began with the statement, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Luke 4:18). Our Lord not only demonstrated the importance of the Holy Spirit in His life as the perfect man, but He also emphasized the same for all who would follow Him: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him *must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23-24—emphasis added).

Although this article began by making references to physical fitness as an analogy, there is a critical difference between one's penchant for physical exercise and one's pursuit of godliness. Too often the former focuses on self, whereas the latter cannot. It must be "other-directed." Godliness is manifested in one's love for God and for others. This is made abundantly clear through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which God has provided to every believer in order to enable each one to grow in godliness and to be of benefit to one another. Paul, writing to the church at Ephesus, said: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto

men....And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7-13).

As described above, the gifts of the Spirit will certainly generate individual godliness, but, as noted, they also help us to grow even more as we minister to others. Peter, in his first epistle, confirms that the gifts are for all believers and are to be directed for the good of one another: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

The development of spiritual fitness is directly related to one's dependence upon the Holy Spirit. He has given to every believer one or more gifts to be used as He wills and enables. If we do not yield to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, then the gifts are not being exercised, and both we and the body of Christ are deprived of what has been given for the equipping, building up, and edification of the saints. Sadly, in these days of prevailing end-times apostasy, the church is backing away from the spiritual strengthening that God has provided through the Holy Spirit, who is often a much-neglected Friend. This is most evident in the area of spiritual discernment.

Although spiritual fitness is certainly aided by the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, there is another important exercise of the Holy Spirit that is a support for godliness and is necessary for God's exceptional empowerment in order to accomplish His will: *being filled with the Spirit*. The Scriptures are very clear in the exhortations for believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit; John the Baptist was filled with Him, as were his parents; Peter was filled, and so were Paul, Stephen, Barnabas, and the disciples. In addition to these, every believer is exhorted to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and with the fruits of righteousness (Philippians 1:11).

In his *Believer's Bible Commentary*, the late William MacDonald (who was a TBC Board member) shared these biblical principles regarding Ephesians 5:18, "How then can a believer be filled with the Spirit? The Apostle Paul does not tell us here in Ephesians; he merely

commands us to be filled. But from other parts of the word, we know that in order to be filled with the Spirit we must: 1) Confess and put away all known sin in our lives (1 John 1:5-9)... 2) Yield ourselves completely to His control (Romans 12:1-2)... 3) Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16)... 4) Finally, we must be emptied of self (Galatians 2:20)...." Mr. MacDonald then quotes an unknown author: "Just as you have left the whole burden of your sin, and have rested on the finished work of Christ, so leave the whole burden of your life and service, and rest upon the present in-working of the Holy Spirit. Give yourself up, morning by morning, to be led by the Holy Spirit and go forth praising and at rest, leaving Him to manage you and your day. Cultivate the habit all through the day, of joyfully depending upon and obeying Him, expecting Him to guide, to enlighten, to reprove, to teach, to use, and to do in and with you what He wills. Count upon His working as a fact, altogether apart from sight or feeling. Only let us believe in and obey the Holy Spirit as the Ruler of our lives, and cease from the burden of trying to manage ourselves; then shall the fruit of the Spirit appear in us as He wills to the glory of God" (pp. 1945-1946).

No one can obey Jesus' command, "Take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21), without the enablement of the Holy Spirit. A person who claims to be a Christian but doesn't utilize the power of the Holy Spirit in his life, perhaps because of wrong teaching or simply because of personal apathy, will likely be crushed by the cross that he is attempting to carry.

Spiritual fitness is vital and more crucial for believers than ever before. Times of persecution loom on the horizon for Christians in countries in the West, where seduction rather than overt persecution has until now prevailed. We can learn from the example of Paul and Barnabas: "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 13:50-52).

Therefore, our encouragement and prayer for all of us who know Jesus and desire to glorify Him is this: Let the study of His Word be our continuous habit, and let the leading, guiding, and filling of the Holy Spirit be our daily experience. That is true spiritual fitness! **TBC**

Quotable.....

If even a very few Christians in every place would begin to “speak often one to another” about the Coming of the Lord, they would soon come together to pray for His return . . . and to pray the prayer which He himself has given to us, “Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

—Sir Robert Anderson

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have encountered a minister who considers himself to be a non-practicing homosexual. He has said that his sins are forgiven. Will he be accepted by God into heaven? I do understand that having faith in Jesus Christ for what He has done for us recognizes that He has nailed our past, current, and future sins to the Cross. This minister considers himself to still be a homosexual but says he isn't involved with the sinful homosexual acts. My question is this: If a homosexual is not involved in those sinful homosexual acts but still considers himself a homosexual, will he/she go to heaven?

RESPONSE: The individual you mention may be deceived by the idea that homosexuals are born that way and cannot change. But one of the glories of the power of the gospel is that we *can* be changed. Drunks can cease to be drunks, homosexuals can cease to be homosexuals. The habits of a lifetime may be extremely difficult to overcome, but the Scriptures assure us that we can be changed. One of the worst ideas humanity has ever come up with is that one cannot change. For example, 12-steps programs teach that one will always be an “alcoholic.” Where is the victory that we are promised in Christ? In fact, 2 Corinthians 5:17 states, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, *all things are become new* (emphasis added).”

With this in mind, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul lists those who will not inherit the kingdom of God: “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” This means active involvement in these practices. And lest anyone feels hopeless about shedding the image attached to his former sin, Paul continues in verse 11: “And such *were* some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

This minister states that he lives a celibate life. This is good and is perhaps an indication

that he truly has been saved. What he says about remaining a homosexual, however, puts him in direct conflict with Scripture. It's one thing to say that you're not a practicing homosexual, but is that action the result of a changed heart? Does he fully understand how God views homosexuality? God was very clear in the Old Testament about this matter, calling it an abomination (Lv 20:13, et al.). He is equally clear in the New Testament, particularly in Romans 1:18-32, on the consequences of giving oneself over to that lifestyle. And yet, in both the Old and New Testaments, God's directions are explicit regarding those who belong to Christ who sin: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prv 28:13); “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn 2:1).

If this man is truly a born-again believer (even though deceived by popular but unbiblical ideas), he will go to heaven. But even so, he still needs to discard the world's ideas and embrace the promises of God. What a testimony he will have if he yields himself entirely to the Lord to forgive him, wash him, and make him as “white as snow”!

QUESTION: Why do some people see UFOs and some don't? Why do even some sincere Christians see UFOs but others don't? I believe these UFOs reveal non-physical demonic activity, but they have been captured on video, and even the US military has claimed to have seen them. Do you believe that UFOs can manifest themselves in a visible physical manner? Or are these fancy camera tricks in order to hype up something that isn't real?

RESPONSE: We agree with you that UFOs are demonic manifestations. The fact that they have been captured on video only confirms what Scripture tells us. Angels (whether good or evil) have, on occasion, appeared in a recognizable form, such as the serpent in the Garden. Second Corinthians 11:14, speaking of the devil and his demons, notes, “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

We should therefore not be surprised to hear reports of “heavenly” apparitions appearing to Catholics or the alleged angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith. This is of particular interest in view of the warning in Galatians 1:8: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

Furthermore, it is not surprising that UFOs /ETIs have been reported throughout history. Why a UFO may appear to one

individual and not to another is open to speculation. Perhaps some may be more open to deception, such as treasure-hunting occult practitioner Joseph Smith. We know from Scripture that “[Our] adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pt 5:8). The implication is that not everyone is readily devoured. Why would Satan waste his limited time and effort on people who wouldn't believe it?

Historically UFO appearances have mimicked the technology of the age. Ancient Egyptian accounts tell of a time when “sky gods” came down to Earth. They flew through the sky in what were described as “flying boats,” bringing laws and wisdom to men. Sightings in the late 1800s took the form of spheres or cigar-shaped craft similar to early dirigibles or balloons. Disk-shaped flying objects have been allegedly recorded since the Middle Ages, although one publicized sighting of a saucer-shaped object as late as June 24, 1947, is much better known. This was followed by what have been described as thousands of similar sightings. With such sightings being very common, the term “flying saucer” was interchangeable with “UFO” into the 1960s. In recent years, the flying saucer has been superseded by other alleged UFOs, such as “black triangles” (“Unidentified Aerial Phenomena in the UK Air Defense Region: Executive Summary,” *Scientific and Technical Memorandum*, 5/2/00), mimicking more recent developments in military aircraft such as the F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter/bomber. Satan is not a creator; he is a counterfeiter.

In *TBC* April 1995, Dave Hunt wrote: “There are no physical ETIs. The only intelligent life beyond earth is all in spirit form: God, angels, Satan and demons. Satan and his minions are able to invade the physical realm. Satan put boils on Job, caused Sabeans and Chaldeans to rob Job and kill his servants, caused a ‘great wind’ to destroy a house and kill Job's children—and in each case one person was left alive to bring the news to Job. Satan transported Christ to the top of a mountain and to the pinnacle of the temple. Jannes and Jambres (2 Tm 3:8) were able to duplicate by the power of Satan many of the miracles Moses and Aaron performed by the power of God.

“What limits there may be upon satanic ‘power and signs and lying wonders’ (2 Thes 2:9) we don't know: Satan will cause the whole world to worship Antichrist as ‘God’ (Rv 13:8). [Since the Garden of Eden], mankind has remained open to contact and receiving advice and help from demons who are manifesting as UFOs and masquerading as ETIs. All of this helps to set the stage for the last days ‘strong delusion’” (2 Thes 2:11).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Two Genealogies for Jesus

QUESTION: There are two contradictory genealogies given for Christ, tracing his ancestry back through Joseph. Matthew says Joseph's father was Jacob, but Luke says his father was Heli. Since both can't be true, at least one is wrong, but we couldn't know which. Probably both are wrong. Nor can I see how Christians could defend either genealogy, since they both say Joseph was Jesus' father and thus deny the virgin birth.

RESPONSE: If one is determined to prove the Bible false in order to justify an unwillingness to believe in God, then I suppose this argument might look like a good possibility, though it would take considerable mental gymnastics to maintain it. On the other hand, a little thought—and fairness—resolve the seeming problem.

First of all, neither Matthew nor Luke says or even implies that Joseph was the father of Jesus. On the contrary, both give a clear account of the fact that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was born. One is entitled to reject the virgin birth of Christ, but it is absurd to justify that rejection by claiming that, in spite of clear statements that Joseph was *not* the father, Matthew and Luke nevertheless then turn right around and offer a genealogy saying that Joseph *was* the father.

Let's look at the genealogies. Matthew's carefully calls Joseph "the husband of Mary," *not* the father. He explains this apparent anomaly: when "Mary was espoused [engaged] to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." He explains that Joseph "knew her not [had no sex with her] till* she had brought forth her firstborn son" (Matthew 1:25; cf. 1:16, 18). In addition, Matthew declares that the birth of Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (v. 23, Isaiah 7:14).

Matthew's genealogy is definitely that of Joseph. This is clear because of the use of the word "begat" for each generation, ending with "Jacob begat Joseph, the *husband* of Mary" (1:16). Though not the father of Jesus, Joseph was the head of the household and functioned as the "adoptive father." Because the kingly line ran through the males, Joseph had to be of the house of David.

Luke's genealogy is just as clearly through Mary. The word "begat" is not used. Luke says that Jesus "was supposed [i.e., imagined]" to be the son of Joseph, who was "of Heli" (Luke 3:23). The word "son" is not in the original. Obviously Joseph was the *son-in-law* of Heli, Mary's father.

Logical Consistency

Luke gives the full account of the angel Gabriel's appearance to tell Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah. Her astonished response is recorded: "How shall this be, seeing I know not [have not had sex with] a man?" (1:34) Far from suggesting that Joseph was the father of Jesus, Luke makes it clear that he was

not: that she was a virgin and that the Messiah was conceived in her by "the Holy Ghost" (1:35). Immediately thereafter Luke isn't going to offer a genealogy telling us that Joseph *was*, after all, the father of Jesus! Let's give both Matthew and Luke credit for at least reasonable intelligence.

Nor would Luke contradict Matthew and come up with an entirely different genealogy for Joseph. Matthew tells us that Jacob was the name of Joseph's father and traces his full genealogy. The records were available in the temple and were also kept by each family. Even without consulting any records, Luke would at least know the name of Joseph's father and grandfather merely by talking to friends and neighbors. And he wouldn't give an entire genealogy without knowing that it was accurate. Luke certainly knew the facts, "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first... (Luke 1:3) and having taken great care to investigate so that he could apprise his friend Theophilus of "the certainty of those things . . ." (1:4). One can only conclude that he gives the genealogy through Mary, the mother of Jesus, and there is good reason why he should have done so.

That Jesus was born of a virgin meant that He had none of King David's blood, through male descent, in His veins. Therefore, to have a physical relationship to David, it was essential that His mother be descended from David. Consequently, Luke, whose focus has been almost entirely on Mary up to this point, supplies the missing information by giving us Mary's genealogy. To assert otherwise is to charge both Matthew and Luke with a stupidity that is clearly contrary to the intelligence and honesty to which their full testimonies bear such clear and convincing witness.

**Matthew is quite clearly indicating that Mary and Joseph had a normal marriage relationship after the birth of Jesus, thus denying the dogma of Mary's "perpetual virginity," which was invented some centuries later. This is consistent with both Matthew's and Luke's description of Jesus as Mary's firstborn (Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7), implying the subsequent birth of other children, who often accompanied their mother; Mary (Matthew 12:46; Mark 3:32; Luke 8:20), some of whose names were even recorded for us (Matthew 13:55-56).*

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 95-98) by DAVE HUNT

Bowing the Knee to Rome

T. A. McMahon

We live in strange times. When I became a born-again believer nearly four decades ago following thirty years as a Roman Catholic, not one non-Catholic Christian chided me for leaving the Church of Rome. In those days it was fairly obvious to evangelicals that the teachings and practices of Roman Catholicism were at odds with the teachings of the Bible. Yes, there were a few things, at least superficially, that Catholics and Bible-believing Christians held in common. The virgin birth of Christ, which involved the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, is one example. Yet, regarding Christ's miraculous birth, the Catholic Church added to the virgin Mary the dogmas of her Immaculate Conception, i.e., her having been conceived without sin, and her perpetual virginity. Although those extra-biblical teachings are serious errors, they do not directly contradict the gospel that is essential for salvation.

I would hope that everyone who is reading this article, (particularly if they profess to be Bible-believing Christians) has understood and received the true gospel, which requires the belief (and *belief* alone) that Jesus, through His sacrificial death and resurrection, paid the penalty for sin in full for every man, woman, and child. That is the gospel that the Bible teaches explicitly in more than one hundred verses and implies in hundreds more. However, that is *not* the gospel according to the Roman Catholic Church. In truth, the Catholic Church's opposition to the biblical gospel in its teachings and practices has been made evident through its councils and murderous inquisitions down through history.

During the Reformation, many individuals (primarily former Catholics) worked to restore the biblical gospel. In truth, it had never ceased to be believed by a remnant outside the Catholic Church. Yet the Reformation helped to get the Scriptures back into the hands of multitudes of believers. In response, the Church of Rome made its official position on the gospel crystal clear in its counter-reformation Council of Trent (1545-1563). Here are just three of the so-called infallible Council's more than one-hundred condemnations for those who believe what the Bible teaches about the gospel: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification...let him be anathema" (6th Session, Canon 9). It is because

the Catholic Church requires far more than faith for salvation that it must anathematize (condemn) those who reject its sacramental works.

"If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified: let him be anathema" (6th Session, Canon 12). Again we see that according to Rome, belief alone in Christ's finished sacrifice on the cross is condemned.

"If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema" (6th Session, Canon 30). Though many Catholics wrongly believe that their Church has moved beyond the declarations of its Councils such as Trent, they nevertheless cling steadfastly to the necessity of Purgatory in the hope of burning off their residue of sins, thus making them fit to enter Heaven. That is a rejection of the finished work of Christ and therefore a "gospel" that will save no one.

It is essential for everyone who claims to be a Christian and says that they love Roman Catholics—and who believe that most Catholics are saved simply because they "love Jesus"—to understand the official Catholic "gospel" (which every Catholic is obligated to believe) and to realize how diametrically opposed it is to the biblical gospel. To truly love Jesus means to love Him as the Scriptures declare: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). The Catholic "Jesus," who did not pay the full penalty for sin and who remains on crucifixes above the altars in Catholic churches is said to be "immolated" during the Mass. Immolation means to be *killed*—and not simply as a symbolic gesture, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "The sacrifice of the altar, then, is no mere empty commemoration of Calvary, but a true and proper act of sacrifice, whereby Christ the high priest by an unbloody immolation offers himself a most acceptable victim to the eternal Father, as he did on the cross. 'It is one and the same victim; the same person now offers it by the ministry of his [Catholic] priests, who then offered himself on the cross. Only the manner of offering is different'" (pp. 445-46).

This direct denial of the finished sacrifice of Christ takes place daily on millions of Catholic altars in clear-cut contradiction to Hebrews 10:10: "By [God's will] we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*."

The truth is that if we honestly love Catholics and want them to receive the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of eternal life that Jesus has paid for and that He offers through a simple act of faith on their part, then any form of encouraging the false gospel of Rome (no matter how well-intentioned) by those who profess to know Christ is a betrayal of the truth and insures for Catholics eternal separation from God. Tragically, that leaven of compromise is what has been infiltrating the church for the last three decades.

Through its newsletter articles and resource materials over many years, TBC has addressed such lethal appeasement of Roman Catholic dogmas by highly visible leaders in their evangelism efforts—men such as Billy Graham, who used Catholic priests and nuns as counselors at his crusades; Bill Bright, who placed practicing Catholics in Campus Crusade leadership positions in Ireland; and Luis Palau, who collaborated with Catholics in South America. Under the leadership of Chuck Colson and Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus, among others, influential evangelical and Catholic leaders signed the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document, thereby committing themselves to working together to convert the world to Christ. Promise Keepers, led by Roman Catholic Bill McCartney, strived to break down the historic wall of division between Catholics and non-Catholic Christians. Hank Hanegraaff's *Christian Research Journal* ran a series on Roman Catholicism, declaring that the Church held a biblical view of justification by faith. It was written in part by apologist Norm Geisler and defended by Hanegraaff on his radio program, claiming that the gospel of Rome is fundamentally biblical. Tridentine Catholic movie writer and director Mel Gibson won the hearts of multitudes of evangelicals with his *The Passion of the Christ*, which was based on the sacred Catholic ritual of the Stations of the Cross, a rite that is dedicated to Mary as co-redemptrix with Jesus.

Dave Hunt, writing about the response to the death of Pope John Paul II, noted,

The praise heaped on the pope upon his death by evangelical leaders is incomprehensible! Incredibly, Billy Graham praised John Paul II for "his strong Catholic faith." Increasing numbers of evangelicals are

joining Colson, [J. I.] Packer, Billy Graham, and others in accepting as fellow Christians Roman Catholics who embrace this false gospel. . . . Pat Robertson said that “the most beloved religious leader of our age [has passed] from this world to his much-deserved eternal reward.” . . . Mark Oestreicher, president of Youth Specialties, called the pope’s death “a key point in history where we have the opportunity to embrace [Catholics as] fellow children of God.” That is like failing to set up flares and warning signs for motorists traveling along a highway where a bridge is out and waving them on to their death instead!

Like Billy Graham, Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptists’ Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, emphasized that any disagreements Protestants may have had “with John Paul II are [irrelevant] to the foundations of the faith.” Land praised the pope’s “staunch defense of traditional Christian faith. . . .” Yet John Paul II, on more than one occasion, gathered together for prayer witch doctors, spiritists, animists, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and other leaders of world religions, declared that they were all “praying to the same God” and credited their prayers with generating “profound spiritual energies” that would create a “new climate for peace.”

The 4,000-member Evangelical Theological Society’s president Francis Beckwith resigned to return to his Catholic roots (with the official blessing of ETS’s leadership). Rick Warren brought his Purpose Driven church-growth program to the Catholic Church showing no apparent concern for that church’s false gospel.

But that was then; so what is the situation now? Anyone who is saddened over what has taken place in the recent past, e.g., the blatant disregard of the biblical gospel as the only hope for the salvation of mankind, should be deeply grieved at what’s taking place today. The Vatican appears to be turning up the heat in its efforts to romance “Protestants,” a misnomer for non-Catholic Christians. Vatican II’s declaration referring to baptized non-Catholic Christians as “separated brethren,” a change from their having been referred to historically as “heretics” as defined by the Council of Trent, has been surprisingly successful in endearing many evangelical leaders to Rome. There is a saying related to this approach that is borne out in the Church of Rome’s practice: “Rome, when in minority is as gentle as a lamb, when in equality is as clever as a fox, and when in the majority is as fierce as a tiger.” We seem to be in the “clever as a fox” stage here in the US, if what is taking place is any indication.

The “retired” Benedict XVI, the former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (with its roots in the Roman Inquisition), surprised many by his extraordinary ecumenical efforts as pope. Doctrine became a nonissue, at least on the surface. His successor, Pope Francis, has not only followed the lead of popes John XXIII, John Paul II, and Benedict, but he has put ecumenism in warp speed. Early last year, Francis sent an iPhone video greeting to the audience at a Kenneth Copeland Conference via Anglican-Episcopal bishop Tony Palmer (now deceased), who was also a director of the Kenneth Copeland Ministries in South Africa. For those not aware, Copeland and his wife, Gloria, have led millions into their unbiblical prosperity-and-health doctrines, which feature a false gospel and “another” Jesus who paid for sins by being tortured by Satan in hell. The greeting led to an invitation from the pope to Copeland and some of his false teaching compatriots (James Robison, Geoff Tunnicliffe, John and Carol Arnett) to meet with him at the Vatican. Influential Charismatic mystic and false prophet Kim Clement declared that God told him that He had chosen Pope Francis to bring Spirit-filled Protestants and Catholics together.

Rick Warren has hardly taken a back seat on the journey to Rome. In a series of interviews that he gave last year to EWTN, the Catholic network (which, by the way, he confessed was one of his favorite TV channels), Rick defended Catholicism and attempted to explain the misconceptions held by evangelicals. In keeping with his unbiblical Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan, which stresses the cooperation of the world’s religions, he spoke at the Vatican’s International Religious Colloquium on the Complementarity of Man and Woman. He later “called for adherents of various Christian denominations to unite with Roman Catholics and Pope Francis to work together on three shared goals, focusing on the sanctity of life, the sanctity of sex, and the sanctity of marriage” (www.aleteia.org/en/religion/article/megachurch-pastor-rick-warren-joins-pope-francis-in-support-of-common-mission).

Hopefully, every believer reading this is asking “What of the sanctity of the biblical gospel?” Without that, all other attempts at “sanctity” are a temporal delusion and an eternal tragedy! Yet fewer and fewer of those who profess to be Bible-believing Christians seem to be concerned about this and are comfortable with what has become Warren’s ecumenical mantra: “If you love Jesus,” he claims, “we’re on the same team.”

If you are puzzled or perhaps even dazed by what’s going on in Christendom, the

Scriptures supply the answers: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Where sound doctrine has given way to experientialism, subjectivism, and emotionalism, as it has among the millions of followers of the false Signs and Wonders teachings, biblical discernment has been abandoned; being a Berean is impossible.

However, hyper-Charismatics and Pentecostals are not the only ones ripe for Rome’s seduction. Consider again conservative theologian Francis Beckwith, the former head of the *Evangelical* Theological Society who returned to his earlier Catholic faith (emphasis added). How could he have done this if he had truly understood and received the simple and foundationally *sound doctrine* of salvation? How could one rationally give up the unfathomable free gift that Christ provided and turn instead to a salvation by works—unless he had never received that gift? You could also ask how Beckwith could have been elected president of such a prestigious “Protestant” organization.

Beckwith, however, provides some insights that are reflective of the attitude and beliefs of most Christians today. When asked if he thought the historic hostility between Catholics and evangelicals is eroding, his response was: “Yes. I think it is largely the result of working together on cultural questions [Rick Warren’s approach], which has led to more careful and charitable reading of each other’s beliefs. So, for example, it is rare today to find a serious Evangelical accusing the Catholic Church of believing in ‘works righteousness.’ Sure, the more flamboyant voices say such things, but most sophisticated Evangelicals do not take them seriously” (*The Catholic World Report* 11/5/2014). “Flamboyant voice” here refers to a vocal, narrow-minded fundamentalist, versus “sophisticated Evangelical,” which describes one who takes “more careful and charitable reading of each other’s beliefs.” Tragically, such a mindset is the growing trend among professing evangelicals.

I thank Jesus every day that the evangelicals who witnessed to me more than three decades ago loved me enough to reject such soul-damning “sophistication” and to minister to me in truth. For this I am eternally grateful, and I pray that my fellow believers will do the same for their Catholic acquaintances, friends, and loved ones.

TBC

Quotable.....

We need to worship and to adore as well as to analyze and explain. Mary of Bethany learned much by just sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to Him and loving Him. Our generation's greatest lack is just here.

—Isobel Kuhn

(Isobel and her husband, John, served with China Inland Mission from 1928 to 1954.)

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I recently read some of St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*. That night I had bad dreams and was troubled in spirit. Some of what I read suggested that we should not meditate or reason when feeling far from God but simply contemplate, because God is doing something new. Am I imagining it, or is this work counter-Christian?

RESPONSE: What “St. John of the Cross” offers is Medieval Catholic mysticism that is divorced from the sure Word of the Lord. According to Catholic sources, John, a Spanish mystic and Carmelite friar, was one of the major figures of the “Counter Reformation.” He studied the humanities at a Society of Jesus (Jesuit) school, and was canonized as a saint by Pope Benedict XIII (1726). He quoted extensively from the Bible in his works (Peter Tyler, *St. John of the Cross* [New York: Continuum, 2010] p.116), but it is clear that what he taught is contrary to Scripture.

Like “St. Teresa of Avila” (1515-1582), he was of the Carmelites, a religious order dedicated to the Virgin Mary (“Mary and the Holy Spirit in the Writings of John of the Cross,” www.icspublications.org/archives/others/cs6_10.html). According to Catholic teaching, he regarded pain and suffering as an integral part of salvation. Gerald Brenan, biographer, wrote, “With stones for pillows, their feet wrapped in hay, among... crosses and skulls, the friars remained praying from midnight to daybreak while the snow drifted through the tiles onto their clothes.... Their only other possessions were a few books, some scourges [for self-administered penance and sharing in Jesus' suffering] and bells and five hour-glasses [for precisely regulating their schedule]” (Gerald Brenan, *St. John of the Cross: His Life and Poetry* [Cambridge University Press] p. 15).

In a review, Gary Gilley notes, “*Dark Night of the Soul* is not a complete treatise on mysticism, focusing almost entirely on the first tier—purgation. It was apparently St. John's intention to write on illumination and union, but either he chose not to do so or his manuscripts have been lost (p. 193).

“Concerning ‘purgation’ we are told that there are two stages: purgation of the senses

and of the spirit....The dark night is a description of these two levels of purgation. In the first stage...the senses and affections are killed in order that they not obstruct the spirit” (Book review at: www.svchapel.org/resources/book-reviews/4-christian-living/113-dark-night-of-the-soul-by-st-john-of-the-cross).

Rather than “killing” the senses and affections, Scripture clearly tells us, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2). Biblical meditation doesn't involve disabling or setting aside the mind, but instead, as Psalm 1 tells us, godly men (and women) take delight in God's Word, and meditate upon it both day and night (Ps 1:2). In Joshua 1:8, the Lord instructed, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein....”

QUESTION [abridged]: With the false doctrine of a “rapture” as the main focus, it's hard to believe that Bereans would advocate [this] nonbiblical doctrine. Nothing in 1 Thessalonians or in any other New Testament passages teaches that Jesus will return secretly to take believers to heaven for seven years and then return with them for another thousand years....So, where did the “rapture” doctrine come from?

Eusebius, Origen, Clement, and Ignatius, et al., never mentioned...the dispensational rapture or earthly reign of Christ....Jesus will never set foot on planet earth again. He arose from the Mt. of Olives - at the next and only trip, all the saved will meet the Lord in the air. That's what the Bible teaches. You folks can thank John Nelson Darby, Hal Lindsay, Tim LaHaye, Cyrus Scofield and other “latter day prophets.” Throw in William Miller and Ellen G. White for being *bedazzled* by their sundry array of false prophecy.

RESPONSE: Bereans, who indeed search the Scriptures diligently (Acts 17:11), have no reasonable choice other than to believe in the doctrine of the Rapture. We can start with John 14:1-3, where Jesus tells his disciples (which includes all believers in Him) that He is going to the Father but He will return for them and take them where He will be. Paul tells us that the event is a mystery in which all believers will be miraculously changed when the Lord descends from heaven and catches them up to meet Him in the air, promising that they shall always be with Him (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). Scripture promises that Jesus delivers His bride from the wrath to come known as the time of Jacob's trouble and the great tribulation (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9-10), for which Daniel 9 supplies the seven-year timeline. Jude 14 tells us that the Lord will return

with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon the ungodly, and Revelation 1:7 adds that every eye shall see Him. Matthew 24:30 states that all the tribes of the earth shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Job 19:25 and Zechariah 14:3-4 declare that at His return the Lord shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, specifically upon the Mount of Olives. Zechariah further adds that living waters will go forth and the Lord shall be king over all the earth. Multiple other verses supply more details, which every believer can search out and truly have confidence in the doctrine of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

Regarding doctrine, a “Berean” should have only a passing interest (if that) in the commentaries or the writings of *men*—certainly those of the early church fathers (who were a mixed bag of truth and heresies) and especially of the false prophetess Ellen G. White, who did not believe in a pre-trib Rapture. Confidence in any doctrine must be based solely upon one's own understanding of the Scriptures, especially since the Word of God declares that we are all personally accountable for what we believe. (See 1 Cor 2:9-16)

QUESTION: I just saw a trailer for a documentary titled *Left Behind or Led Astray?* that takes a post-tribulation Rapture position. One of the featured participants chides pastors who teach a pre-tribulation Rapture for not equipping their congregations to go through the seven-year great tribulation. What is your response?

RESPONSE: First of all, how does a pastor, a shepherd, prepare his flock to go through the most horrendous circumstances this side of the worldwide flood of Noah's time? Even a cursory reading of the book of Revelation regarding what takes place during the Great Tribulation gives enough description of cataclysmic events that would make survival preparedness a delusion at best. Add to that the rabid persecution of all those believers who do not take the mark of the Beast. Nearly all of them will be caught and martyred by the armies of the Antichrist. Yet those who do survive won't be thanking their alleged readiness but rather the miraculous intervention of the Lord. Furthermore, Dave Hunt referred to the placing of the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation as a classic non-event. Why? Because there would be very few believers left to be caught up to meet Jesus in the air. Moreover, when all believers, both Jews and non-Jews, are removed from the earth they are given immortal bodies (that do not procreate) and will be with the Lord forever. Post-tribulation has no answer for who will then populate the earth during the millennial reign of Christ.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

A Confusion About Roosters Crowing

QUESTION: In Matthew, Luke, and John, Jesus tells Peter that before the cock crows once the next morning he will deny Him three times. Yet in Mark 14, Jesus just as clearly tells Peter that his denial will come before the cock crows twice. Can you help me resolve this apparent contradiction?

RESPONSE: This is one more of a number of seeming contradictions that skeptics and critics have exploited in attempting to discredit the Bible. However, a little investigation and clear thinking shows that they are not contradictions at all. Indeed, the fact that different language is used in the four gospels proves that the authors weren't all copying from "Q" or some such document theorized by critics. It also shows that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not destroy the freedom of different witnesses to express themselves. And that very freedom of expression explains many of the apparent contradictions.

Let's carefully compare the story as told in all four gospels. Matthew 26:34 says "before the cock crow," while Luke 22:34 and John 13:38 use the negative form, "the cock shall not crow." Obviously, Christ is not referring to a particular rooster crowing, nor to some rooster crowing *once*, but to that time in the morning known as "the *cockcrowing*." Such is the expression used in Mark 13:35, for example, when referring to the time ("at even, or at midnight, or at the *cockcrowing*, or in the morning") when Christ might return. So Jesus warns Peter that before the usual *cockcrowing* the next morning he will have denied his Lord three times. In fact, all four gospels agree that this is what happened.

Far from contradicting the other gospels, Mark simply gives a further detail in Christ's warning to Peter and thereby provides additional insight. He lets us know that Christ also told Peter: "Before the cock crow *twice*, thou shalt deny me thrice" (14:30). This in itself was an unusual statement. When roosters start crowing, the first is followed rather quickly by a second, third, fourth, and many subsequent crowings building to a chorus if there are many roosters in the vicinity.

Mark then reveals (14:66–72) that although Peter's first denial was long before the time of "cockcrowing" that morning, yet a rooster (or perhaps several) crowed immediately after the words were out of Peter's mouth. How do we know this first crowing was long before the time of "cockcrowing"? Though we are not told how much time elapsed between the first and second denials, Luke does inform us that "about the space of one hour" (22:59) elapsed between the second and third denials.

A Gracious First Warning Unheeded

The unusual crowing of a rooster an hour or more before the normal time and immediately after Peter's first denial should have brought him to repentance—which was no doubt why the Lord provided that special warning and unusual circumstance. Instead, though Peter had sworn he would die for Christ, he continued in denying his Lord two more times, at the end with extreme profanity (Mark 14:71). Immediately after the third denial, the morning's chorus of roosters (the "*cockcrowing*") sounded, and at last, repentant, Peter went outside to be alone and to weep bitterly (Matthew 26:75; Luke 22:62).

The honesty of the accounts is revealed in the fact that neither repeats the other but that each provides a piece of information that is necessary to the whole. And the inspiration of God guiding what each says, though from independent points of view, is seen in that this remarkable blending together of all four testimonies is necessary to provide us with the whole picture.

In probing deeply enough to reconcile what at first seemed like a contradiction, we have learned a valuable lesson. We see God's grace to Peter, causing a premature crowing of one or more roosters immediately after his first denial to prevent him from going any further. And has God not given similar warning at times to each of us to call us back from the brink of shame and disaster? Sometimes we have heeded, while at other times, like Peter, we have gone headlong until, overwhelmed by remorse, we have wept in repentance.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 98-100) *by* DAVE HUNT

Self: Mankind's Number One Problem

T. A. McMahon

VIEWS ABOUT “self” today are confusing at least. The world has a number of them. All teach the importance of one’s having a positive regard for one’s self. The Bible, on the other hand, has nothing good to say about self. Nevertheless, the church, particularly in the last one hundred years, has increasingly reflected what the world preaches rather than what the Scriptures teach. As Dave Hunt reminds us, “Although we cannot define self any more than we can define soul or being or beauty, we can clearly see where self was first manifested, how it happened, and the eternal result. We can also see that self not only defines one person as distinct from all others, but it also defines man as distinct from God. *What the Bible seems to mean by self is man cut off from God, acting and possessing independently*” (Hunt, *Beyond Seduction* [Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers] 153).

The Word of God reveals that self first reared its ugly head in Heaven. Lucifer was an anointed angel who became God’s adversary (Satan) by exalting himself: “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14). Thus Lucifer’s “I will,” that is, his *self*-will, supplanted submission to God and His will, and the consequences were not good: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” (Ezekiel 28:15; Isaiah 14:15).

Satan brought his rebellious “self” concept to earth and seduced Eve with it. His strategy began with sowing confusing ideas about what God had said (Satan’s principal program) and then feeding Eve self-oriented lies: “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). That initiated the lie of self-deification and godhood for humanity, in which the Serpent’s deception found fertile ground: “And when

the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6). Adam and Eve’s act of disobedience against the single prohibitive command given to them by God set sin and self on their destructive course. Hence all mankind was separated from God and pursued self.

The world’s focus is to highly value self. Why? Because there are only two options regarding any potential hope for humanity: Self or God (meaning the God of the Bible). Self is the choice of the world: man’s will and way as opposed to God’s will and way. Self is the only option left for everyone who rejects the God of the Bible. Although there may seem to be other options, including religious ones, they are all variations

I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST:
NEVERTHELESS I LIVE; YET NOT
I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND
THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN
THE FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH
OF THE SON OF GOD...

— Galatians 2:20

of willful “works-salvation” and self-righteousness, with some being more obvious than others.

Islam, for example, teaches works-righteousness. At Judgment Day, Allah weighs one’s good deeds against one’s offenses, and the weight of the former against the latter determines one’s salvation, i.e., whether or not a person may enter paradise.

Catholicism takes a similar approach. Entrance to Heaven is dependent upon one’s good works and adherence to the Sacraments as well as the expiation of one’s sins through temporal sufferings here on earth or in Purgatory. Doing good works in order to achieve salvation is denounced in Scripture: salvation is “not of works lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:9).

All religions, from the most legalistic to the most liberal to the mystical, have self at the core of one’s achieving a positive consequence regarding life after death. Only biblical Christianity teaches that *denying self* and turning to Jesus alone for one’s salvation is acceptable to God. The Bible indicates that Satan’s lie that humanity can achieve godhood will

ultimately manifest itself in the last days through the Antichrist, who “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, [showing] himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Satan’s lie is not only prevalent in cults such as Mormonism, but the Roman Catholic Church teaches mystical union with God in its official Catechism: “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God...The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraph 460).

Self-deification attained through sacred rites is found throughout the religions of the East. The Dalai Lama’s Tibetan Buddhism teaches initiation rituals to enable one to become a *bodhisattva* or enlightened deity. Shintoism, which is the primary religion of Japan, involves numerous self-purification ceremonies that open the way for followers to become *kami* or ancestral gods. Deifying self, as noted in Genesis 3:5, is evident in forms of Hinduism that teach self-realization methods, that is, techniques for achieving godhood. It is taught that the individual self is a god whose goal is to merge with the All, Brahman, the supreme deity of Hinduism. That is what yoga is all about.

Self-realization has its counterpart in humanistic psychology where it is termed “self-actualization.” The connection between Eastern mysticism and psychology has long been recognized by research psychologists, who have documented the fact that Hinduism was brought to the West and made popular through the vehicle of psychology. Although not immediately recognized as self-deification, it is the aim of self-actualization, which is simply defined as reaching toward the ultimate fulfillment of one’s potential. This is the basis for the Human Potential Movement, which is pervasive throughout many of the West’s most prominent corporations and their training programs.

Self is the cornerstone of all psychological counseling. All of its more than 500 concepts are contrary to the Word of God, and psychotherapy essentially rejects God himself. With God removed by psychology, only self remains, and thus *self* becomes the *only hope for resolving humanity’s problems*. A fundamental teaching of psychological counseling is that man is innately good. Any mental, emotional, or behavioral difficulties he

experiences must therefore stem from things external to him, e.g., his environment, his parents, his beliefs, emotional and physical traumas, etc. If, however, adverse issues in a person's life are primarily the consequence of a sinful heart, then the psychotherapeutic approach is a delusion. Why? Because, according to the Bible, mankind has a sinful nature: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9), and "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:18-19). Psychological concepts and practices can never change an individual's sin nature. Furthermore, the biblical teaching about sin is antithetical as well as offensive to psychological counseling.

We know that self is the chief vehicle of sin. What then does the Bible say about how a person is to deal with self? In order to understand that, one needs to understand the biblical perspective regarding self. "Self" is synonymous with sin. All humans (Christ as the sinless God-Man excepted) are born with a sin nature. No part of Scripture makes this more clear than Psalm 51:1-5: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Self also involves the will—which is autonomous—and therein lies the problem. Man's will, because of his sin nature, is naturally and continually disposed toward himself. That is the breeding ground of rebellion: not *Thy* will but *my* will be done. Self is not given to submission to anyone other than itself. Philippians 2:21 confirms that "all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ's." Yet God has the solution for humanity's self-oriented, self-willed dilemma. It must start with a new birth—a spiritual birth from above.

When one receives the simple gospel by faith alone, he is submitting himself, from the heart, to God and to obeying His teachings found in the Scriptures. Although

he is then born again spiritually and has become a new creature in Christ, he still retains his old sin nature, but he has been delivered from its control. Nevertheless, a spiritual battle follows between doing his will versus God's will. God has given every believer the Holy Spirit to help him win every battle in favor of God's will. Moreover, He has also supplied born-again Christians with instructions for the spiritual battle of His will versus man's will and self.

Submission to God is paramount: "If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." That commitment pertains not only to select issues but to one's whole life: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24). Jesus gives an illustration of what a believer's saved life must entail: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:24-25).

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31) and "For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Timothy 2:11). In Colossians 3:3 he declares, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." What did he mean? In Galatians 2:20 he explains: "I am *crucified with Christ*: nevertheless *I live*; yet *not I*, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." After listing some of his continual tribulations Paul writes, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). The "death" is the death of one's autonomous self-will and the "life" is one that is completely given over to God's will.

The Word of God exhorts believers to be *other* directed. Consider the following: "[Christ] died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory [selfish ambition, conceit]; but in lowliness of mind let each *esteem other* better than themselves. Look not every man on his own

things, but every man also on the things of *others*" (Philippians 2:3-4). This is biblical selflessness.

First Corinthians chapters 10 and 13 (the "love" chapter) provide additional exhortation. It boggles the mind when one considers how the insidious and unbiblical doctrines of self-love and self-esteem have been so widely preached and promoted within Christendom. Were it not for Scripture prophesying that this would take place in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1-2), the invasion of selfist-psychology in the church through so-called Christian psychology would seem incredible. But we are living in those days!

Jesus, who is completely God and Man, shows us in His own life *perfect selflessness*: "Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13). Furthermore, He demonstrates for us His own submission to the will of God the Father. As a Man, He is the perfect sinless Self. Yet He, as part of the Godhead, nevertheless subjected His own will to His Father: "And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless *not what I will, but what thou wilt*" (Mark 14:35-36; see also Luke 22:44).

What Jesus demonstrated regarding selflessness would be impossible for any believer except for the fact that every true follower of Christ has been sealed with the Holy Spirit, who enables one to live out Christ's instructions: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man... Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (Ephesians 3:16; 6:10).

May the prayer found in Hebrews be our continual cry to the Lord and our encouragement in order to win the battle over self: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work *to do His will*, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21). And amen.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Like me, you folks at TBC probably do not agree with all of Mark Biltz's theology; however, my wife and I enjoy very much Mark's teaching on the Hebrew picture language, his teaching on the Lord's Feasts, and many insightful concepts of his teaching as well as some of his guest speakers. We encourage you folks to watch and promote their [good] agenda, which seems to us to be very accurate.

RESPONSE: There is a good reason why the Scriptures tell us that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9). Although Mark Biltz may at times give some helpful information, his agenda is never far beneath the surface, and it cannot be called good.

For example, his teaching on the Feasts of the Lord involves more than biblical exegesis or "rightly dividing" the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). In an interview on *Prophecy in the News*, Biltz states, "When we hear the word 'feast,' we think food. But the Hebrew word has nothing to do with food. It has to do with a divine appointment, as if God has a Day-timer, and He says, 'OK, I'm gonna mark the day and the time when I'm going to signal My appearance'" (cited in *World Net Daily [WND]*, www.wnd.com/2008/04/63076/).

Although careful to use words such as "possible" or "could be," Biltz has linked the Feast Days to his theories concerning the "blood moons" of 2014 and 2015. *WND*, which strongly promotes Biltz's materials, said, "The pastor is now sounding the alarm about what the celestial events could mean for our immediate future here on Earth." Biltz told *WND*, "Four total lunar eclipses happening the next two years herald possible war in the Middle East as well as global economic collapse" (www.wnd.com/2014/02/blood-moons-mania-to-shake-planet-earth/).

Defenders of Biltz have pointed out that he often says, "I do not set dates, but I will teach you God's appointed times or Festivals." So, what does that mean, according to Biltz? Regardless of his disclaimer, the urgency of his teaching is clear: "This has happened only eight times over the last 2,000 years! And the last two times [that] these occurred on the Jewish holidays, there was a war in the Middle East regarding the nation of Israel...The Jewish *Talmud* records that total lunar eclipses are indicators

or omens for the nation of Israel," said Biltz (Ibid.).

We see that Biltz's agenda involves more than just teaching the Hebrew roots of our biblical faith. In fact, his citation of the *Talmud* raises additional concerns. Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) teachers like Biltz often tell you, with some truth, that Christianity (generically speaking) has been influenced by paganism and the traditions of men. Invariably, however, they teach that their way is the true way to worship YHVH, and Christians are uninformed, not knowing Torah from a Hebrew perspective. For Biltz, this includes the *Talmud*, which is the writing containing Jewish civil and ceremonial law, commentary on the *Torah*, and Jewish legends.

Their perspective, however, too often leads to a modern Judaism that is not derived from the Five Books of Moses. Rather, as Reformed Judaism writers tell us, "The Talmud (Hebrew for 'study') is one of the central works of the Jewish people. It is the record of rabbinic teachings that spans a period of about six hundred years, beginning in the first century C.E. and continuing through the sixth and seventh centuries C.E. The rabbinic teachings of the Talmud explain in great detail how the commandments of the Torah are to be carried out" (Ronald H. Isaacs, *A Taste of Text* [URJ Press, 2003] and Mark Washofsky, *Jewish Living* [URJ Press, 2010]). As Jesus, in the "first century C.E.," told the religious leaders, "[You make] the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:13).

It is also certainly true, as our ministry has sought to demonstrate, that too many in the evangelical church in the West today have succumbed to the deceptions of the Emergent Church, mysticism, Purpose Driven Life, etc., and have set aside sound doctrine. As 2 Timothy 4:3-4 tells us, "For the time will come when *they will not endure sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

This is but one of Scripture's warnings about turning from sound doctrine to fables, i.e., fictions or myths. Others include Paul's warning in 1 Timothy 1:4: "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions [cause disputes], rather than godly edifying which is in faith:

so do" (See also Titus 1:14).

Until recently, Mark Biltz stated on his website "We do not want to convert Jews to Christianity or Christians to Judaism. The Scriptures say: The LORD will magnify the Torah and make it honorable, and those that love Torah will have great peace (Is 42:21/Ps 119:165). Yeshua loved Torah and loving what He loved will bring true Peace!" When Biltz teaches the Torah, that teaching comes with implicit demands. Biltz states, "Shabbat is a critically important Torah picture telling us the Good News is [that] we don't work to earn our salvation; it's a free gift. The Sabbath is the gospel message. When we don't keep the Sabbath, we are denying the good news!" (Yeshua our Cornerstone Series, "Feast of Shabbat," Notes, p. 1). On the contrary, if we are obligated to "keep the Sabbath" we've rejected the good news.

Whatever sound insights teachers such as Biltz may have, their promotion of unbiblical teaching remains a problem. The potential danger is that one not grounded in the Word might be drawn away from the faith. Jude exhorts, "Beloved...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (v.3).

In conclusion, any insights gained come with unbiblical baggage. Biltz states in his book, *Blood Moons: Decoding the Imminent Heavenly Signs*, that a person will not be able to understand the Bible without studying the Hebrew language. He goes beyond that premise and claims insights that are kept from the average Christian because every Hebrew letter represents a word, a number, and a picture. Consequently, he is essentially teaching a Bible code that the average believer must be able to read in order to understand the Scriptures. Without interpreting the picture meaning of every Hebrew letter, we cannot comprehend what the Bible is teaching. He labels this as the decoder ring for being able to see what God is hiding. The subtitle of the *Blood Moons* book is *Decoding the Imminent Heavenly Signs*. This subtitle gives us a clue as to where Biltz gained his insights. Mark Biltz is into Jewish mysticism, or, more precisely, the Kabbalah. The Kabbalah movement argues that the full message of the Bible is never on the surface, but must be discovered through divining its secrets (Biltz, *Blood Moons: Decoding the Imminent Heavenly Signs* [WND Books, 2014], 16).

May the Lord give us wisdom concerning these teachers.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

More Contradictions Involving Peter's Denial?

Question: I read something about Peter's denial of the Lord that stumped me in a paper published by a group of atheists. It pointed out that according to Mark's account, Peter's second denial was the result of questioning by the same maid who precipitated his first denial (Mark 14:69). But Matthew 26:71 says it was another girl, and Luke 22:58 says it was a man. After Peter's first denial, Mark 14:66–69 and Matthew 26:58, 71 have Peter leaving the fire in the courtyard and going to the gateway, where he was questioned by whoever it was. But John 18:25 has Peter warming himself at the fire in the courtyard when he was queried. How do we reconcile all of this?

Response: I am always impressed at the great deal of time and effort expended by critics in attempting to find some flaw in the Bible. Someone had to work very hard to assemble this series of apparent contradictions. Here is one more instance where it would seem that the desire to find discrepancies zealously manufactures nonexistent problems.

Mark 14:69 clearly says "a maid," not the same maid, consistent with Matthew's "another maid." Luke 22:58 doesn't say it was a man who queried him. Peter's reply, "Man, I am not," could be an expression he used habitually; and if not, then Peter would likely have used it because of the men surrounding him who heard the maid's question. She wasn't whispering in Peter's ear in an attempt to save him embarrassment! Peter's main concern would obviously be to defend himself in the eyes of the men standing around the fire with him, who had heard this damning accusation.

In fact, precipitating the second denial, the maid, as one would expect, is indeed speaking not only to Peter but to the men warming themselves at the fire with him. This is clear from both Matthew 26:71 ("said unto them that were there") and Mark 14:69 ("began to say to them that stood by"). John

18:25 shows more clearly that the men around him got involved in Peter's questioning, exactly as one would expect. No wonder he said, "Man...." There is absolutely nothing contradictory in these accounts, though they are being told from slightly different perspectives. To insist upon contradiction betrays the wish as father to the thought.

As for Peter "going to the gateway," there is no such statement or implication in any of the accounts. John tells us that Peter stood outside for a short time when he first arrived until he was brought inside. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are consistent in having Peter in the palace, then going onto a porch but still within the palace during his three denials.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 100-102) *by* DAVE HUNT

Revival or Apostasy?

Dave Hunt

First published in October 1997

KNOWING THAT we are in the last of the last days, with an imminent Rapture a very real hope, our thoughts often (and indeed should) turn to the signs that Christ said would herald the nearness of His return. The signs that are most widely cited include “wars and rumours of wars...[when] nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...and...famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes...these are the beginning of sorrows” (Mt 24:6-8).

Unquestionably, these specific “sorrows” have been both prominent and accelerating since Israel again became a nation in 1948. Since that time, the intensity and frequency of these signs have increased like the birth pangs of a woman approaching her time of delivery, exactly as Christ foretold. However, the first sign that Christ gave has been largely overlooked and His solemn warning neglected:

And Jesus answered and said...Take heed that no man *deceive* you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall *deceive* many....

And many *false* prophets shall rise, and shall *deceive* many....

For there shall arise *false* Christs, and *false* prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall *deceive* the very elect. (Mt 24:4,5,11,24) [Emphasis added.]

Concern for this prophesied deception has marked this ministry. Let us take a closer look at the *religious deception* that Christ foretold. He issued a warning: “*Take heed* [beware] that no man *deceive* you.” Its seriousness is emphasized by being thrice stated. Its nature is specified: *false Christs, false prophets, and false signs and wonders*. His repetition four times of the word “many” indicates a worldwide deception of multitudes.

Paul issued a similar warning: “Let no man deceive you by any means....” He explains that the spiritual deception to which Christ referred will infect the professing church. That is evident from his words “falling away,” or apostasy:

For that day [of the Lord] shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin [Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition.” (2 Thes 2:3)

Although a true Christian cannot fall away, a false Christian can. Fall away from what? From the faith in Christ that he or she has outwardly professed without inward reality. Those few apostates who announce themselves as atheists or convert to Buddhism or Hinduism are not the concern of Christ and Paul in this verse. They are warning of a turning from the truth within the professing church. Other scriptures confirm this, as we shall see.

Paul warns us not to be deceived into thinking that the apostasy won’t come. It *must*. Such a warning can mean only that in the last days many will reject the biblical teaching that apostasy is inevitable. The false prophets to whom Christ refers will use their signs and wonders to support their false teaching that revival, not apostasy, is underway. Paul therefore warns us not to be deceived with talk about revival: the apostasy *must* come, or Christ will not return!

False signs and wonders will be an integral part of the apostasy. The departure from the truth will be spearheaded by apparent miracle workers, and the delusion will be made possible by a prevailing emphasis upon experience over doctrine: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tm 4:3). Christ declares,

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Mt 7:22-23)

These apostates of whom Christ speaks do not *lose their salvation*; they were *never saved* (“I never knew you”). Yet they are high-profile Christian leaders apparently performing signs and wonders *in the name of Christ*. Tragically, they seem to think that their ability to prophesy and to perform wonders proves that they belong to Him. The signs and wonders are so impressive that doctrine no longer matters—exactly what we see today!

Surely these of whom Christ speaks in Matthew 7 must be the same “false Christs and false prophets” to whom He refers in Matthew 24. Moreover, the signs and wonders they are able to perform are apparently so impressive that without discernment by the Holy Spirit even the very elect would be deceived by them. Obviously, something more than mere trickery is involved. These miracle workers are backed by the power of Satan, whom they unwittingly serve in

the name of the Lord.

The Bible clearly predicts a last-days signs and wonders movement—but it will be of Satan, and thus a delusion that will deceive many. After a solemn warning that in the last days “perilous times [not revival!] shall come,” Paul makes this remarkable statement:

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these [apostates] also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. (2 Tm 3:8)

Jannes and Jambres were the magicians in Pharaoh’s court who, through the power of Satan, duplicated (up to a point) the miracles that God did through Moses and Aaron. Paul thus declares that the last-days opposition to the truth will not come so much from outside the church but from those within who are *reprobate* concerning the faith: depraved men who corrupt the truth. And they do so by performing apparent miracles in Christ’s name some of which (when more than mere trickery) are actually of Satan. In that way, they deceive and lead many astray—not out of the church but into false doctrine and thus a false hope *within* the church. Satan has no more effective tactic to damn souls!

Such [deception] involving the whole gamut of today’s revival scene must be seriously faced! Videos of the services show people crawling on the floor, howling like wolves, barking like dogs, roaring like lions, going through bodily contortions impossible without the aid of some spiritual power, unable to speak or even remember their names when they try to give a testimony—and worse. Many of those being baptized seem to lose consciousness or shake so violently that they must be carried out of the baptismal tank or they would drown. Others flail about so wildly as to require several men to handle them. That such things could now be widely accepted as evidence of the Holy Spirit can only testify to the depths of the delusion!

Jude exhorts us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Contend against whom? Surely not primarily against godless enemies outside the church. The warning concerns those within: “For there are certain men crept in unawares” (v. 4). *Crept in* can only mean inside the church.

Paul confirms Jude in addressing the Ephesian elders: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples

after them” (Acts 20:29-30). The spiritual deception of which Christ warned would be rampant *within* the church.

In further confirmation, Christ warned His disciples that “the time cometh, that *whosoever* killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (Jn 16:2)—a most remarkable prophecy. He can’t be referring to the slaughter of Christians by the Caesars or by Mao or Stalin or Hitler, for they did not believe they were thereby serving God. Yes, when the Jews of Jesus’ day killed the early Christians, they thought they were serving God; so did the Roman Catholics when they slaughtered the true Christians before and after the Reformation; and so it was when Muslims killed Christians. But none of this was the complete fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy.

“Whosoever” is the key. Neither the Pharisees, the popes, nor the Muslims were alone in killing Christians. Others pursued them to the death at the same time. But Christ is saying that a time is coming when *whosoever* (in other words, *everyone*) who kills Christians will think he is serving God thereby. That can only mean that a world religion to which *everyone* must belong is coming, a religion that will seek to exterminate true Christians in the name of God. John saw the same scene in the future:

And it was given unto him [Antichrist] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them....

And I beheld another beast...he exerciseth all the power of the first beast...and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast....

And he had power to...cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. (Rv 13:7-15)

To summarize, the scriptural warnings foretell the very delusion we find in our day: 1) a false signs and wonders movement led by *many* false prophets; 2) *many* being deceived through these seeming miracles; 3) the rejection of the biblical teaching concerning apostasy, and the insistence that we are in the midst of, or at least building up to, the “greatest revival in the history of the church.” The promise of revival will be part of the last-days *deception*, Paul warns, so beware! Instead, in the days preceding the Rapture there will be a great apostasy, a falling away from the faith. Don’t be part of it!

That we must earnestly contend for the faith against those who have crept

into the church implies that the battle is not so much one of *faith* against *unbelief*, but rather of *true* faith against *false* faith. And that, too, is precisely what we see today. Articles in leading medical journals cite studies showing that those who have *any* “religious faith” are more likely to recover from illness. *Christianity Today* ran a major article naïvely promoting these studies as though they were supportive of the truth.¹ Thus God has been reduced to a placebo that can come in any shape, size, or color.

Multitudes of Christians imagine that faith is believing that what they are praying for will happen and that if they truly believe, they will have whatever they ask. Obviously, if things happen because one believes they will, then one doesn’t need God. This is mind power, not the faith in God that Christ taught (Mk 11:22)....

The topic on everyone’s lips and mind today is *revival*. Christian TV and radio and best-selling books persuasively argue that we are in the midst of the greatest revival of Christianity in the history of the world....It comes as a shock to many to learn that the word “revival” does not appear even once in the entire King James Bible. The hope of revival, which excites so many today, is not even a biblical concept. Ask yourself a few questions: Is Christ not indwelling us? Is He not in our midst each time we meet? Are we not to be filled with the Holy Spirit at all times? Is not the Word of God sufficient? Why, then, run after signs and wonders as though unusual manifestations prove that God is at work while neglecting what God has already given us? In the meantime, undertake a study to see what the Bible says. Check every source (including TBC) against Scripture! Be a Berean. TBC

ENDNOTES

1. *Christianity Today* (Jan. 6, 1997), 20-30

An Afterword from T. A. McMahon

In the eighteen years since Dave wrote the above article, the apostasy has intensified in ways that are mind numbing. I write this from the perspective of one who worked with Dave for more than three decades and learned from him how to discern trends that are taking hold in the church, drawing both professing and even true Christians away from the Word of God. I remember that just three years following our book *The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in*

the Last Days (1985) we were astonished by how much worse things had become, spiritually, during that short time. But that was then.

Today seems like light years (or “dark years”) away. At that time, the New Age was dawning. Today we have “Christian” yoga practiced in church sanctuaries. Back then, evangelical leaders were dialoguing with Roman Catholic leaders; today Lent, Ash Wednesday, and the sacred Catholic ritual of the Stations of the Cross have become popular among “Protestants.” In those days, Christian youth were mostly being entertained in their fellowships; now they are being led into emergent contemplative and social gospel ideas. Then, the cults were making headway; today cultic teachings abound throughout Christendom. Then, “Christian” psychology was infecting the church; now, that pseudo-science has contaminated “biblical” counseling. Bible studies (where the Bible was actually studied) and prayer meetings were then rare; currently, books by popular Christian authors have *displaced* Scripture completely, and prayer has turned into “Lord, give me...” sessions. Back then, faith was being turned into a “force”; today, rare is the Christian who can tell you what biblical faith even is. False prophets used to be found primarily on “Christian” TV; now they proliferate on bestseller lists and head up prosperous “non-profit” organizations. We used to see TV preachers encouraging greed; currently, they sell survival food that they promote through fear-mongering techniques.

We are in those days characterized by Scripture as ones in which the church “will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tm 4:3). Discernment has all but disappeared. The only antidote lies in the Word—diligence in studying it, reading it, and obeying it by the Spirit.

The most common request we receive here at TBC is: “Please help me to find a biblically sound church in my area.” Sadly, we can’t help them. Not because there are no such churches but because we don’t know where any church will stand doctrinally even tomorrow. It grieves us to see what we once believed to be solid churches become “purpose driven” or Calvinist almost overnight. We counsel believers to be Bereans when looking for a place to fellowship. Seek out leaders, however imperfect, who truly want to feed God’s sheep according to His Word.

Q&A.....

QUESTION [COMPOSITE OF SEVERAL]: What does the Bible say about water baptism? Does infant baptism have any value? I'm very confused on this subject, and there seem to be many different opinions of why we should or shouldn't be baptized. Is water baptism still applicable to the church today?

RESPONSE: Water baptism was commanded by Jesus and is for believers, who are to be baptized as an act of obedience. Christ commanded His original disciples to go into the entire world and preach the gospel (Mk 16:15). He told them to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt 28:19). These new believers were then told to also go and preach the gospel everywhere and to baptize those who believed (v. 20).

Baptism in the early church was by immersion: "They went down into the water...[W]hen they were come up out of the water..." (Acts 8:38-39), etc. Why immersion? Because baptism symbolizes the believer's identity with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection: "We are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead...we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4).

Unfortunately, various innovations and heresies were gradually introduced regarding baptism: e.g., the false teaching that one must be baptized to be saved, and that baptism saves the soul when administered to infants. These heresies became known as the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. On the contrary, the Bible is clear that baptism was only for those who had believed the gospel: "What doth hinder me to be baptized?...If thou believest [in Christ] with all thine heart, thou mayest" (Acts 8:35-37). Since infants are unable to understand and believe the gospel there is no reason for them to be baptized (Acts 10:33,44,46-48).

(Adapted from the tract *Baptismal Regeneration?* www.reachingcatholics.org/baptism.html)

QUESTION: I want to thank you for your newsletter and radio programs. They have been a great encouragement to me to take the Bible more seriously. I especially like what comes off as a genuine enthusiasm, a real love, for the Scriptures. But I'm curious. Do you

recommend a certain way of studying the Bible?

RESPONSE: Our recommendation is to just start reading it. And read it, and read it, and read it—certainly with a prayerful heart, a sincere heart, a heart that wants to do what it says, but read it! Get familiar with it (2 Tm 2:15) and ask the Holy Spirit for understanding (Jn 16:13).

As you read the Scriptures, you will inevitably come across something that provokes curiosity: "What does that mean?" So then, you're going to have to probe deeper. You need to compare Scripture with Scripture. We believe that the Bible is its own best commentary. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* and a good Bible dictionary, such as *Vines*, which is keyed to *Strong's Concordance*, are excellent helps along the way. Using these tools, one can see where else in Scripture a certain word has been used and begin to understand the context.

The Bible is a deep book and we'll never get to the bottom of it but let's not read it superficially—let's work at understanding the depths of what it says.

We need to read the whole Bible. We can't just know a few verses here and there; we shouldn't have only a couple of favorite places in the Bible that we like to read over and over again. We need to know it from Genesis to Revelation. This takes time and diligence, but the more you study it the more you will see! This is God's Word. And it really speaks to our hearts—it draws us into a deeper understanding.

QUESTION: In Colossians 1:23 it seems to indicate that the gospel has been preached to every creature under heaven. When and how did this take place?

RESPONSE: Colossians 1:23 states, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;..." We believe that Paul is speaking of God's general revelation to mankind through the creation, as we see in Psalm 19:3: "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

Obviously, the gospel hasn't been preached by human beings to every creature under heaven, but it has been preached by God to every human conscience. Romans 2:14-15 tells us this: "When the Gentiles, which have not the

law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not *the law*, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." (emphasis added)

Whether we want to admit it or not, we do understand that we are sinners. We know in our hearts, simply by observing the visible universe, that God must exist, and we recognize that we fall far short of the glory of this One who has made all of this. Our consciences also make us aware of our own guilt, and we realize that we can't make up for having broken God's laws in the past by promising to keep them in the future. We understand that our sin has separated us from God.

Titus 2:11 says, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." It doesn't say that every man knows every aspect of the gospel of Jesus Christ because, obviously, that hasn't been revealed in our consciences. But we do understand that grace is necessary. If a person is honest, he knows in his heart that he is a sinner and that if he is going to be forgiven, it will have to be by God's grace. Our consciences also give us a sense of *justice*—why else do people complain, "That's not fair! Isn't there any justice?" How do we know that it's missing? Because we are *created in the image of God*, and He has placed an understanding of that in our consciences.

Those who resist the gospel—who reject the fact that God had to become a man to die for our sins, to pay the penalty we couldn't pay—want to offer their own good works, their own good deeds, their gifts to charity, their prayers, and so forth. We believe that they are deliberately going against what their own consciences tell them and the witness that God has given to them as described in the Scriptures.

Quotable.....

I am only an ordinary man. I have no special gifts. I am no orator, no scholar, no profound thinker. If I have done anything for Christ and my generation, it is because I have given myself entirely to Christ Jesus, and then tried to do whatever He wanted me to do.

—F. B. Meyer



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Who Saw the Resurrected Jesus—When and Where?

Question: Some of the most blatant contradictions in the Bible involve the account of the supposed resurrection of Christ upon which Christianity is founded. For example, Mark 16:1–2 says Mary Magdalene came to the tomb when the sun had risen. John 20:1 says she came to the tomb while it was still dark. Which was it?

Response: I checked more than 20 translations of Mark 16:1–2, and only one (NASB) says “when the sun had risen.” I found *one paraphrase* (NEB), which says “just after sunrise”; all other *translations* say “at the rising [*anatello*] of the sun.”

The Greek *anatello* is not an exact statement of time and really means the start of the action. The Greek implies that the sun had just appeared on the horizon. Anyone without an axe to grind would allow “sunrise” to include a period just before the sun peeped over the horizon as well as just after. Furthermore, the expression “cometh Mary” in John 20 would include her entire journey toward the tomb from her home. Some distance being involved, she would have set out that morning “when it was “yet dark” (John 20:1) to arrive at the tomb just as the sun was coming above the horizon.

Mary sees, obviously from a distance as soon as she has a clear view of the tomb’s entrance, that the stone has been rolled away. John doesn’t record her being at the tomb until much later. Moreover, the Greek word *skotia*, translated “dark,” includes the meaning of dimness, not necessarily pitch-black darkness. To be perfectly honest, if you took these two statements into a court and tried to prove them contradictory, the judge would quickly dismiss the case.”

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 102-3) by DAVE HUNT

Knowing Our Triune God

T. A. McMahon

THE DOCTRINE regarding the Trinity (the three Persons of the Godhead) isn't something that any finite individual can fully comprehend. The concept is beyond the grasp of our mortal minds. And yet, God has given to mankind a great deal of information about the Trinity throughout the Scriptures—information that His created beings may and must understand, albeit imperfectly. Although the term "Trinity" isn't found in any Bible verse, that which the Trinity comprises is found from Genesis through Revelation. In Genesis 1:26, God declared, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness" (emphasis added, here and throughout). Isaiah 48:16: "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am *I*: and now the *Lord GOD*, and his *Spirit*, hath sent *me*." The Gospel of Matthew ends with this commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the *Father*, and of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Ghost*" (28:19).

What the Bible declares about the *Godhead* (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9) is very clear: *there is only one God*. "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is *no God beside me*: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is none beside me*. I am the LORD, and *there is none else*" (Isaiah 45:5-6, et al.). There is only one God, yet God is made up of three Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That they are individual divine Persons is also very clear. Jesus, who affirms His own deity (John 8:24-27), continually refers to the person of God the Father as *His Father*. The religious leaders of the Jews sought to kill Him because He said "that God was his Father, making himself *equal with God*" (John 5:18). In John 14:26, Jesus tells of the "Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things..." Again, three divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In Genesis 1:1 we find "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The Hebrew word for "God" there (and in more than 2,000 other OT places) is *elohim*, which means "gods." Moreover, the plural noun *elohim* is nearly always used with a singular verb, which plays havoc

with the grammar. Likewise, throughout the Old Testament, God is presented as a plurality by using the plural pronouns "us" and "our," e.g., "Let us make man in our image." "The man is become as one of us." (Genesis 1:26; 3:22). Since Scripture declares God to be "One," such usage either loads the Bible up with multiple contradictions, or what is presented simply underscores the fact that the Bible teaches that God is one, yet made up of three Persons. The Godhead has not only perfect harmony and unity but diversity. That's why there must be more than one divine Person included within God.

Although we cannot naturally fathom a triune God due to the transcendent nature of such a concept, we can see that reason and logic support the very idea. God must be *perfectly unified* in mind and in purpose

THEN SAID THEY UNTO HIM, WHO ART THOU? AND JESUS SAITH UNTO THEM, EVEN THE SAME THAT I SAID UNTO YOU FROM THE BEGINNING.

I HAVE MANY THINGS TO SAY AND TO JUDGE OF YOU: BUT HE THAT SENT ME IS TRUE; AND I SPEAK TO THE WORLD THOSE THINGS WHICH I HAVE HEARD OF HIM.

— John 8:25-26

in all things—which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit indeed are. When Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19), He was not saying that He had no power to do anything but that He was conforming to the will of His Father in everything. He confirmed this in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44) as He faced what He would have to experience in order to pay for the sins of mankind. He prayed to the Father: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless *not as I will, but as thou wilt*" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus completely submitted Himself to His Father.

The "God" that is worshiped by Jews, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Oneness Pentecostals is a single entity and

is therefore incomplete. How so? The Scriptures teach that God is love, and love must have an object. Therefore, a singular Eternal Being would have no one to love prior to His creation of human beings, whom He *could* love. That would make such a god imperfect and in need of created beings, which isn't the case with our triune God. Throughout eternity, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35). "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou [Father] hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). At the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father declared regarding Jesus: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5).

One of the major features of the Bible is God's revelation of Himself. Without such information coming directly from God, man is left with only his own speculations about his Creator, which is always a dangerous position. The great commandment is to *love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength*. It is impossible to love God this way unless we know Him in truth—and that can occur only if we understand, with the help of the Holy Spirit, what He has declared about Himself in His Word (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Jesus prayed for and continually exhorted His followers to be unified in the faith and to demonstrate this through their love for one another: "That they all may be one; as thou, *Father, art in me, and I in thee*, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). His relationship with His Father is the perfect expression of what He desires, even commands, of those who follow Him. Love is ultimately what is being revealed: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:9-10).

Consider the following, not only in regard to the unreasonable concept of God as a solitary Being, who would be therefore incomplete, having never had another eternal person to love and with whom to have fellowship prior to the Creation, but more so in what takes place within the perfectly unified relationship among the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Those who preach the superiority of the Father based upon Jesus' statement: "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all" (John 10:29) miss the context, which underscores God's power to

keep those who believe in Him.

The following verse puts to rest any superiority of one member of the Godhead over another: “I and My Father are one” (v. 30). Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are *all co-equally God* and are in absolute agreement with one another. Nevertheless, they have different roles within the Godhead. God the Father is the chief authority of the Godhead and oversees His Son and the Holy Spirit regarding His purpose for creation and His plan for salvation: “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish *his work*.” “The Father loveth the son, and hath given all things into His hand.” “And [Jesus] said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about *my Father’s business*?” (John 3:35; Luke 2:49). Jesus points to the sovereignty of the Father in His answer to Pilate: “Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, *except it were given thee from above*” (John 19:10-11).

God the Father’s plan is quite clear: “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14). It was in His love for mankind that He sent the Son into the world: “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world *through him* might be saved” (John 3:17). In Isaiah 43:11 we are told that there is only one Savior: “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me *there is no saviour*.” Yet in Titus it is declared that *God is our Savior* and that *Jesus is our Savior*. Moreover, the Scriptures proclaim that Jesus is our “great God and our Saviour” (Titus 1:3-4; 2:13). These verses can be reconciled only in our triune God. Both the Father and Jesus are God. They send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7). All three glorify one another (John 17:1). Jesus submits to the Father, and the Holy Spirit submits to both the Father and the Son (Matthew 26:39; Luke 11:13; John 15:26).

Although each divine Person has a different role within the Godhead, they nevertheless all function in perfect accord with one another. When Jesus, whom the Father sent, became a Man, the God-Man, and went to the cross to pay the full penalty for the sins of mankind, the Father accepted Christ’s sacrifice in order to reconcile humanity to Himself: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope

by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). This was the plan of God, authorized by the Father, executed by Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to “testify of [Jesus]” (John 15:26). Furthermore, He convicts the world of sin, enables sinners to be born again, seals them, helps them to understand the Scriptures, and guides and empowers them for godly living and witnessing (John 16:8; 3:5; 2 Corinthians 1:22; John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8). Although in submission to the Father and the Son, He is nonetheless fully God, “the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth [goes forth] from the Father” (John 15:26).

Of the three Persons of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the most misunderstood and thus is often diminished or rejected, both within and without the church. Cults such

AND I WILL PRAY THE FATHER,
AND HE SHALL GIVE YOU ANOTHER
COMFORTER, THAT HE MAY ABIDE
WITH YOU FOR EVER;

EVEN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH; WHOM
THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE,
BECAUSE IT SEETH HIM NOT,
NEITHER KNOWETH HIM: BUT YE
KNOW HIM; FOR HE DWELLETH
WITH YOU, AND SHALL BE IN YOU.

— John 14:16-17

as Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Way International, Armstrongism, and Unitarian Universalists teach that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal active energy force. They have either changed the personal pronouns referring to the Holy Spirit in their bibles or have rationalized the Scriptures to fit their unbiblical doctrine. John 14:16 and 16:13-15 are among numerous others that plainly identify the Holy Spirit as a personal Being: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that *he* may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth *him* not, neither knoweth *him*: but ye know *him*; for *he* dwelleth with you, and shall be in you....Howbeit when *he*, the Spirit of truth, is come, *he* will guide you into all truth: for *he* shall not speak of *himself*; but whatsoever *he* shall hear, that shall *he* speak: and *he* will show you things to come. *He* shall glorify me: for *he* shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that *he* shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.”

Other related verses involve actions that cannot reasonably be applied to an impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is lied to and resisted; He personally communicates, forbids, reacts favorably, authorizes, helps one to love, helps believers to pray, and prays for them. He teaches, personally indwells believers, gives spiritual gifts to believers, is grieved, and seals believers; He prophesies, and He superintended the writing of the Scriptures (Acts 5:3; 7:51; 13:2; 16:6; 20:28; Romans 5:5; 8:13, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 6:19; 12:8-11; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 2:1; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Such things can be the function only of a personal Being and can be denied only by imposing one’s unbiblical and prejudiced view of the Holy Spirit.

Although the doctrine of the Trinity gives believers wonderful insights into the character of God, it also provides clarity regarding how we’re to relate to one another in a manner that’s pleasing to Him and that produces fruitful results in our lives. For example, we can use the picture of the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to learn about the way that God intended for a marriage between a man and woman to function. As noted, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-equally God. In the same manner, the husband and wife are co-equal—though their roles differ, neither is considered superior in God’s eyes. He is biased toward neither. Submission is another area in which the union of man and woman in marriage is a picture of the Trinity. The husband is the spiritual head, with his wife in submission to him, just as Jesus is in submission to His Father, and the Holy Spirit submits to the Father and the Son.

Just because someone doesn’t understand all that the Bible says about the Trinity doesn’t mean that he is unable to believe the true gospel and be saved. However, when one’s ignorance of the Godhead turns into a *rejection* of what the Scriptures teach about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that becomes a belief in a false god and consequently another gospel that can save no one. Searching out what the Word of God says about the Persons of the Godhead will increase our understanding and therefore our love for them: “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an *understanding*, that we may know *him* that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have always believed in moral absolutes, which must be determined by some ultimate standard outside of any opinion that originates with mankind, and thus by God alone. Recently, however, an atheist friend has tried to persuade me that ethics and morality can be derived simply by determining what behavior would be beneficial for most people and thus for the survival of mankind. I find it difficult to dispute his point. Can you help me?

RESPONSE: First of all, your atheist friend will heartily agree that because of its changeable nature human opinion cannot be the source of moral absolutes. Consequently, all those who argue for a system of ethics or morality without God must deny the very possibility of moral absolutes. By that decision, however, they have established an absolute. They are thus on the horns of a dilemma, for they dare not open the door to absolutes; but by keeping that door closed, they unavoidably establish a contradiction—an absolute of their own. The humanist, with his head in the sand, pushes on in denial of his own obvious inconsistency.

One must then ask what the point of morals could be if no one can be certain whether the morality in vogue is right or wrong, good or bad. Indeed, such concepts have no meaning without some absolute standard by which they are determined. And here, again, the humanist blithely pretends to stand for what is right and good, while at the same time denying any validity to such terms.

The UN Pavilion at Expo 86 in Vancouver, Canada, provided a classic example of such folly. Upon entrance, one was exposed to exhibits purporting to show that life began and developed totally by chance. Obviously, then, there could be no meaning or purpose to life. The main attraction in the pavilion, however, was a propaganda film in a large theater that made no sense at all if there were no meaning to life. Appealing for unity to establish peace in a troubled world, the movie demanded, “Why must there be good and bad, right and wrong, us and them?” The implication was clear that

such concepts were a mistake and stood in the way of goodwill and brotherhood among men.

As one exited the theater, a further appeal for worldwide cooperation met the eye, with this surprising heading in large, bold print: FOR THE COMMON GOOD. Having just been advised so authoritatively of the nonexistence of good or bad, one was puzzled by an appeal for something called “the common good.” What could that mean, and how could one be certain of it?

No Escape from Standards

Quite clearly, as a practical matter, those who insist upon *absolutely* no absolutes find it impossible even to carry on a meaningful conversation let alone deal with society’s serious deficiencies and problems within the framework of their standard of “no standards.” The concept of good and evil obviously must be granted a deeper meaning than convenience or comfort. Like every other false religion, humanism also has its priests. Having denied that there can be any good and bad or right and wrong, they proceed to impose upon the rest of us what they have decided is “for the common good.”

The high priests of humanism are quick to tell us (from their lofty perspective and after assuring us that there is no right or wrong) that much is *wrong* in our world and that they alone know how to make it *right*. Even those who deny absolutes cannot avoid arguing that their view is correct. No one can live without purpose and meaning. The question is: Who is to decide the answers to the ultimate questions?

A politician or a teacher must have a goal in mind, some standard by which to guide pupils or society. What folly, then, to deny any basis at all for determining the validity of such guidance. One can’t even play a game without rules. And how can one have a meaningful discussion apart from some basis for judging which view is right or wrong? As C. S. Lewis observed in his day:

Their skepticism about values is...for use on other people’s values: about the values current in their own set they are not nearly skeptical enough.... A great many of those who “debunk” traditional

or (as they would say) “sentimental” values have in the background values of their own which they believe to be immune from the debunking process.

Why Is Survival Good?

The atheist can claim that “good” or “evil” are established only in terms of whether or not an action helps the race to survive. The idea that something would help society to survive, however, provides no reason why it *ought* to be done. Why should the race survive? No ethical or moral reason can be given if man is merely the product of chance. And what if his survival conflicts with the survival chances of other species?

One of the necessary by-products of evolution is supposed to be the extinction of species. There is no basis in that theory for valuing one species above another. Evolution mourns the passing of none of them. Evolutionary theory cannot value man more highly than an animal—or even than a leaf or rock—inasmuch as we all supposedly came from the same ingredients and merely “progressed” by chance. The very concept of “value” has no meaning in a universe ruled by chance. Furthermore, what is “progress”? And if, according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the entire universe is heading for oblivion and all will one day be as though it had never been, what does anything matter?

In the meantime, society is falling apart. Even the humanist must reluctantly admit that murder, rape, war, poverty, and rampant venereal diseases are not desirable, whether they threaten our survival or not. Will the remedy be a “return to traditional moral values,” as some propose? Who is to say *what* tradition and by *what* authority? By mutual consent of decent society? How is “decent” to be defined?

There is no hope unless man was created by God for a purpose that his Creator will eventually effect. Before any help can come from that Source, however, there must be the admission of one’s unworthiness, repentance for one’s rebellion against God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior who paid the penalty for sin.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

When and Where Was the Sermon on the Mount?

Question: Concerning the famous Sermon on the Mount, Luke:6:12,17 says Jesus came down from a mountain and stood in a plain to address his audience. But Matthew:5:1 says Jesus went up on a mountain and sat down to address his audience. How many contradictions such as this does it take before Christians admit that the Bible is not God's infallible Word?

Response: Is it possible that in your eagerness to prove the Bible fallible you have overlooked the obvious? Surely you must know that the gospels do not tell every event in time sequence. In Luke:6:12–19, Jesus goes into a mountain and prays all night, then the next day chooses His 12 disciples. This same incident is told in Matthew 10. It is not connected with the Sermon on the Mount—much less immediately followed by it, as you imply—an event that Matthew presents long before in chapter 5.

There is a break in Luke chapter 6 between verses 19 and 20. Beginning at verse 20, an earlier incident, the Sermon on the Mount, is recited, *out of sequence*. There is no connection between that part of the gospel, which is recounted in verses 12–19 and the Sermon on the Mount, which begins at verse 20. There is no contradiction between Matthew and Luke.

Contradictory Accounts of the Transfiguration

Question: The stories of the so-called “transfiguration” of Jesus on the mount seem to contain a serious contradiction. Matthew:17:1 and Mark:9:2 say that it happened six days later than the incident just presented. But Luke:9:28 says it was eight days later. I'm stumped. Can you help me?

Response: Actually, both Matthew and Mark say, “After (Greek *meta*) six days,” which would be at least the seventh day; and Luke says “about an eight days.” “An eight days” is an idiomatic expression (like “fortnight”) for a week later, and the word “about” indicates that the timing is not precise. This criticism of the gospel account splits meaningless hairs, and once again the skeptic accusing the Bible of contradiction would be laughed out of court.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 103-4) by DAVE HUNT

THE ONLY ANTIDOTE: THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

T. A. McMahon

THESE ARE troubling times for every born-again Christian. The apostasy seems to be increasing exponentially. Biblical Christians are having greater difficulty finding churches that preach and teach the Scriptures. Extra-biblical content has captured the imaginations of growing numbers of Christians as they turn to religious best-sellers and “biblical” movies rather than to the written Word of God. Even with the rise of discernment ministries and “watchmen” blog sites, doctrinal confusion has increased, seemingly unabated.

The Bible warns that such conditions will take place and tells us that we are not to be surprised when they do. The Bible also gives us some of the reasons why this is occurring. Scripture declares prophetically: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Again it says, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils...” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Whether we’re in the *last days*, or even the last of the last days, it should be obvious to every biblical Christian that “sound doctrine” is scarcely being “endured.” In fact, it’s ironic that at a time in the Western world when access to the Bible has never been greater, biblical *illiteracy* among Christians abounds. Rare is the believer who can name the twelve Apostles; more critical, however, is the number of Christians who have difficulty *explaining* the simple gospel. The “slipping away” from the truth, of which Hebrews 2:1 warns, has become a steep slope for the church.

The Bible doesn’t downplay the struggles that accompany a believer’s life in Christ—some of these may be revealed as the bad fruits of one’s old nature, but others are the consequences of the world and Satan’s opposition to God’s Word. Jesus declared: “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me...” (John 15:20-22). After

Christ’s ascension and the martyrdom of Stephen, the church was scattered by great opposition to the gospel. The Apostle Paul, formerly a persecutor of Christians, was subsequently subjected to persecution after his conversion and throughout the rest of his life. Nevertheless, he wrote, “As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:36-37).

It may seem that continual trials in a believer’s life could have no such good end, but Peter gives further insights: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be

FOR THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; BUT AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS SHALL THEY HEAP TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS, HAVING ITCHING EARS...

— 2 Timothy 4:3-4

reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” (1 Peter 4:12-14).

Few believers in the US have experienced the kinds of physical trials that Paul and Peter have described, yet there are trials of a different sort that are destructive spiritually even though they are not necessarily physical. There are the trials of one’s faith in the realm of religious seduction, e.g., being deceived by popular false teachers and unbiblical doctrines, being ostracized from one’s fellowship for not going along with a new teaching or practice that isn’t supported in Scripture, or for being a “thorn in the side” at a Bible study group for not compromising the truth of God’s Word. These are things that often create conflicts simply by one’s trying to be steadfast in the faith.

Then how can that steadfastness be maintained without causing conflict and division? It can’t, except in rare situations where there is a willingness to repent and to submit to the truth of God’s Word.

Nowhere does Scripture promise that there won’t be opposition to God’s Word. Instead it makes available a condition of “exceeding joy” that takes place within the heart and enables the believer to “conquer” or handle the situation in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. How is that accomplished? First Peter 4:14 tells us: “...for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you...”

The work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary in the life of a believer. That’s why Jesus said, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you....Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:7,13-14). Every true believer in Jesus is born of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5), sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), and enabled, empowered, and led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13, 8:14) in order to glorify God and to live one’s life in a way that is pleasing to Him. According to the Scriptures, this is the only way that a believer can be spiritually fruitful.

In the late 1960s, Dave Hunt edited a book by William Law titled *The Power of the Spirit*. In the 18th century, Law wrote *An Affectionate Address to the Clergy* (full title: *An Humble, Affectionate, and Earnest Address to the Clergy*). It was brought back into print in 1896 by one of Dave’s favorite Christian authors, Andrew Murray. Murray retitled Law’s book *The Power of the Spirit* and said of it: “I confess that in all my reading I have never found anyone who has so helped me in understanding the Scriptural truth of the work of the Holy Spirit....I beg of my brethren in the ministry to give it no cursory perusal. I am confident that a patient and prayerful study will bring a rich blessing.”

Dave certainly concurred: “It is my conviction that Andrew Murray has not been unduly high in his praise of this volume by Law. And although, like Murray, I cannot agree with all of Law’s teachings, I too believe all included herein to be soundly based upon Scripture.” Dave further noted the relevance of Law’s writing to the current issues stemming from the spiritual abuses of the Pentecostals and Charismatics and the criticism of conservative and fundamental Christians: “What William Law had to say is, I believe, a very important contribution to this present discussion.

He would rebuke the pride, lack of love, and inconsistencies in both camps, and would seemingly take side with neither extreme. But he would unquestionably maintain a Scriptural basis for the present full display and vitality of New Testament Christianity. To the mainline denominational adherent he would press home the necessity of the sovereignty and power of the Holy Spirit for today; and upon the Pentecostal he would impress the fact that the power of the Spirit is bestowed primarily to enable one to witness and to live a holy life. And his very delineation of that life would bring conviction of sin and a sense of falling short to both fundamentalist and Pentecostal.”

The following excerpts are from chapter one, “The Indwelling Spirit of God Essential to Salvation,” of TBC’s exclusive edition of *The Power of the Spirit*, edited for today’s reader by Dave Hunt:

The Spirit of the triune God, breathed into Adam at his creation, was that alone which made him a holy creature in the image and likeness of God. A new birth of this Spirit of God in man is as necessary to make fallen man alive again unto God as it was to make Adam at first in the image and likeness of God. And a constant flow of this divine life by the Spirit is as necessary to man’s continuance in his redeemed state as light and moisture are to the continued life of a plant. A religion that is not wholly built upon this supernatural ground but that stands to any degree upon human powers, reasonings, and conclusions has not so much as the shadow of truth in it. Such religion leaves man with mere empty form and images that can no more restore divine life to his soul than an idol of clay or wood could create another Adam.

True Christianity is nothing but the continual dependence upon God through Christ for all life, light, and virtue; and the false religion of Satan is to seek that goodness from any other source. So the true child of God acknowledges that “no man can receive anything except it be given him from above” (John 3:27). All goodness comes from God just as surely as all life comes from God....

Man’s fall from his first state brought separation from God and thus from the life, light, and virtue that is in Him. Man’s salvation can

therefore only be effected by a reconciling of his spirit with the Spirit of the Creator. “Be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20), wrote Paul. Nor can this reconciliation be accomplished by man’s own efforts, but it must by its very nature be a gift from God. No angel or man could begin to show any love, faith, or desire toward God without a living seed of these divine affections being first formed within him by the Spirit of God. And as a tree or plant can grow and bear fruit only by the same power that first gave birth to the seed from which it sprang, so faith, hope, and love toward God can grow and fructify only by the same power that created the first seed of them in the soul. Therefore, the continuous inspiration and working of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of man is no less essential to that salvation, which God has provided through Jesus Christ, than the new birth itself.

This divine life in man can never be in him but as a growth of life in and from God. Hence it is that resisting the Spirit, quenching the Spirit, grieving the Spirit, gives growth to every evil that reigns in a fallen creation and leaves men and churches an easy and inevitable prey to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Nothing but obedience to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, trusting Him for continual inspiration can possibly keep men from being sinners or idolaters in all that they do. For everything in the life or religion of man that has not the Spirit of God for its source, direction, and end is but earthly, sensual, or devilish....

A lack of...complete submission to the will of God, and a failure to realize that our salvation can be worked out only by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit forming the very life of Christ within the redeemed heart, has placed the Christian church today in the same apostasy that characterized the Jewish nation. And it has occurred for one and the same reason. The Jews refused Him who was the substance and fulfilling of all that was taught in their Law and Prophets. The Christian church is in a fallen state for the same rejection of the Holy Spirit, who was given to be the power and fulfilling of all that was

promised by the gospel. And just as the Pharisees’ rejection of Christ was under a profession of faith in the Messianic Scriptures, so church leaders today reject the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit in the name of sound doctrine.

The Holy Spirit’s coming was no less to fulfill the gospel than Christ’s coming was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. As all types and figures in the Law were but empty shadows without the coming of Christ, so the New Testament is but dead letter without the Holy Spirit in redeemed men as the living power of a full salvation. This is clear from these words, “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I go away; I will send him to you” (John 16:7). Without the cross and resurrection, Christ could not have “gone away.” These antecedent events made possible His ascension, for it was “by his own blood that he entered into the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:12, 24). Thus the coming of the Holy Spirit, being the fruit of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, is essential to the fulfillment of the salvation Christ procured.

Where the Holy Spirit is not honored as the one through whom the whole life and power of gospel salvation is to be effected, it is no wonder that Christians have no more of the reality of the gospel than the Jews had of the purity of the Law. It could not be otherwise than that the same lusts and vices that prospered among apostate Jews should break forth with as much strength in fallen Christendom. For the New Testament without the coming of the Holy Spirit in power over self, sin, and the devil is no better a help to heaven than the Old Testament without the coming of the Messiah. Need any more be said to demonstrate the truth that the one thing absolutely essential to man’s salvation is the Spirit of God living and working in the spirit of man? And though we still cling to a religion that does not acknowledge this, it is a full proof that we are not yet in that redeemed state in our communion with God that is intended by the gospel.

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I'm questioning the premise of [your TBC Notes 5/15] "NBC's *A.D.: The Bible Continues*...[to be contaminated by Hollywood]." We all know that whenever anything is produced for TV or movies, it will be dramatized. That's just a fact, and how it works. So...when people say things like [you did], are they basically saying that no TV show or movie should ever be made about Jesus or the Bible? It seems to me that's the conclusion we'd have to come to, if [as you said] we cannot add anything at all that our imaginations come up with or that [might] have happened.... When we...read the Bible or study it as a group, don't we often come up with what...may have happened "between the lines"?...We might paraphrase certain things.... Aren't there some things that we simply have to conclude from what makes sense or could have happened in context?...The Bible doesn't give us every detail of what happened and what was said or thought by various people....Are we supposed to...never think any further or deeper into things, never make any speculations or suppositions?... Should stories from the Bible never be portrayed on film?

RESPONSE: Before I respond to your questions specifically, let's consider something very basic. We need to start with one's view of the Bible based upon its claims. It claims to be God's words, not man's. The words were given by God through the Holy Spirit and written down by the prophets of God (2 Peter 1:20-21; Luke 1:68-70). The objective of the reader is to understand what the Author of the Bible (God) is communicating. If man adds to the Scriptures his own thoughts or what he imagines, he has corrupted the Bible (whether intentionally or not). Mixing Scripture with man's thoughts further exacerbates the problem of our understanding what God has supernaturally communicated through His Holy Spirit.

It is impossible to translate the Bible as a theatrical motion picture without adding to the Scriptures, which is forbidden according to Proverbs 30:6 and Revelation 22:18-19. All movies, biblical or otherwise, begin with a screenplay that is created by one or more persons. The screenplay includes story continuity, character establishment and development, dialogue,

production value, dramatic scenes, action sequences, descriptions of various locations, and much more. Having been a Hollywood screenwriter, I can assure you that entertaining an audience takes precedence over biblical *accuracy* or *truth*. Viewing just one or two of the episodes of *A.D.: The Bible Continues* proves my point. In what verse or verses do we find Caiaphas's wife (referred to as Leah on screen)? What about the father-daughter relationship between Peter and Maya—or perhaps you weren't aware that Peter had a daughter and her name was Maya? If you're familiar with the Bible, did it surprise you that Pilate escaped assassination...or that an attempt was even made? Or that Pilate and his wife were having marital problems? Or that he took it upon himself to execute one of the soldiers who guarded the burial tomb of Jesus? Pilate is a central figure in *A.D.* (which is about the book of Acts) and yet he appears nowhere in the Book of Acts. Mary, the mother of Jesus is referred to only once in the Book of Acts. It says simply that she prayed with the disciples (Acts 1:14). Yet she has many lines of dialogue in *A.D.*, thanks to the screenwriters.

"Artistic license" may be acceptable when a popular book is translated to the screen (though some might weep over what Hollywood did to their favorite novel), but it's hardly nitpicking to object to seeing this being done to God's Word, though too few evangelical pastors and leaders seem to be as concerned as Paul was in Acts 20:28-32. Speculation, reading between the lines, and using one's imagination all involve the flesh of man and contribute nothing to our understanding of the Scriptures. At best, they involve a slipping away from God's truth (Hebrews 2:1); at worst, they lead to another Jesus and a false gospel.

You say, "We all know that the Bible doesn't give us every detail of what happened and what was said or thought by various people. We often try to come up with that on our own. Are we supposed to...never make any speculations or suppositions?" Speculations and suppositions are human guesses, so they can give us *no assurance* in our attempts to understand God's Word. There is little doubt that some passages of Scripture are more difficult than others to comprehend. But as we diligently read through the entire Bible we often find related verses that give further explanation. Scripture indeed interprets Scripture, and

when we study God's Word with that truth in mind we can be confident that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, rather than our own thoughts, is guiding us.

God has given His Word by His Holy Spirit to those who believe in Him. The Holy Spirit also enables believers to understand His Word. To the degree that we turn to our own ways in trying to understand Him, we have drifted away from Him by that same degree. The flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). Please consider again the excerpt of the poem by William Blane that I added to the special email we sent back in April. It was one that Dave Hunt repeated often:

They come from God if they be right,
If true they lead to Him;
But who would shun the noonday light
To grope in shadows dim?

And who would leave the Fountain Head
To drink the muddy stream,
Where men have mixed what God hath said

With every dreamer's dream?

QUESTION: What about *Veggie Tales*? I know that the *Veggie Tales* stories are based on Bible stories, but they take many liberties in the way they're portrayed in order to make them more "fun," interesting, and understandable for kids.

RESPONSE: Your question raises a number of other questions. At what point would you have your child take the Bible seriously? Does a talking cucumber and a precocious tomato encourage biblical understanding? Does the "fun" approach trivialize the redemptive work of Christ? How easy will it be for a child to transition from the "cute" entertainment characteristics of *Veggie Tales* to God's Word, which is devoid of "fun" but packed with temporal life-changing and eternal truth? These important principles can also be presented simply so that a child can understand (2 Timothy 3:15).

On the other hand, some of the "biblical principles" presented in *Veggie Tales* are really more reflective of popular teachings that are *contrary* to the Scriptures (e.g., "A Lesson in Self-Esteem"). Your responsibility for the spiritual growth of your child demands that you consider these things practically and prayerfully.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Let's Get the Angels Straight

Question: The resurrection of Jesus is the very foundation of Christianity, yet those who wrote the gospels seem to be in conflict even on this most important subject! Matthew says an angel came down from heaven, rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary approached and were frightened. The angel told them not to be afraid, and invited them into the tomb to see where Jesus had lain (Matthew 28:1–6). • In contrast, Mark says that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome did not see the angel until they entered the tomb. The angel then pointed to where Jesus had lain (16:1–6). • In further contradiction, Luke says the women entered the tomb, and, as they looked for the body of Jesus, suddenly two angels appeared to them (Luke 24:1–4). Note also that Mark says his angel was sitting when he addressed the women, whereas Luke states that his two angels were standing (Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4). • One account says the women saw Jesus and then went to tell his disciples; another says Jesus met them on their way to tell the disciples (Matthew 28:9); and yet a third version says they “fled from the sepulchre” and didn’t tell anyone or see Jesus (Mark 16:8). The disciples were told that Jesus would meet them in Galilee (Matthew 28:7; Mark 16:7), yet Luke and John say He came to them in Jerusalem. What can you make of this hopeless tangle of contradictions?

Response: Let’s go over the accounts more carefully, remembering that each of the gospel writers presents a condensed version of what happened. Not every movement and word of angels, the women, and disciples is recited in each gospel. Moreover, each account is told from a different perspective.

First of all, Matthew does not say that the women saw the angel outside and he invited them in. That is nowhere stated in any of the four gospels.

Matthew begins the story from the point of view of the Roman soldiers. He tells us that the military guard, seeing the angel roll the stone away and sit upon it, were terrified: They “did shake, and became as dead men” (28:4). They then fled to the city (28:11).

Obviously, the soldiers had already gone, and the angel who rolled the stone away must have been inside by the time the women arrived to find the stone already rolled away from the sepulchre (Mark 16:4; Luke 24:2). We know that the soldiers could not have still been there and the angel still outside of the sepulchre and sitting on the stone, his “countenance . . . like lightning” (Matthew 28:3). Could anyone imagine such circumstances and these women having the courage to walk through a platoon of terrified soldiers and right up to the awesome angel to ask him where Jesus was?

The invitation by Matthew’s angel, “Come see the place where the Lord lay,” is similar to Mark’s, “Behold the place where they laid him.” Both are compatible with directions from inside the tomb given to women who were cautiously peering in, then hesitantly entering. That one gospel refers specifically to one angel in a certain position (and is silent about the other angel in a different position) while the other mentions both angels is no contradiction at all but is simply the normal variation one would expect from two true accounts of the same event given from two different perspectives.

Different Women Do Different Things

As for the action taken by the women, no gospel says they saw Jesus before they went to call the disciples. Nor is there any contradiction in the fact that some women fled to their homes

and others went to tell the disciples of the empty tomb. There were a number of women (“and certain others with them”—Luke 24:1; “and other women that were with them”—verse 10), not just the three named; and Mary Magdalene acted on her own and not as part of any group of women. She did not enter the tomb but immediately hurried to tell the disciples. The other women went into the tomb and saw the angels, who instructed them to tell the disciples He had risen. Some of the women fled in terror, while others went to tell the disciples, and on their way into the city Jesus met them. There is no “tangle of confusion” here at all.

Mary had already alerted the disciples and returned with Peter and John to the grave (John 20:1–11). After they had seen that the grave was empty and went away wondering, she lingered there, confused and heartbroken, and that was when Jesus came to her.

Some of the women returned to their homes, frightened and bewildered, and said nothing. Others of them went to tell the disciples. There is no conflict here at all but simply the normal differences in action that one would expect among a number of women.

Nor is there any conflict between the instructions to go to Galilee and the fact that the disciples didn’t immediately pack up and go but were in an inner room in Jerusalem that evening when Christ appeared to them. Their reluctance to obey further commands from the One they had thought was the Messiah but no longer appeared to be, in spite of rumors of a resurrection, was understandable. There is no conflict whatsoever in the accounts.

One fact is indisputable: The grave where the body of Jesus had been was empty the morning of the third day. All of the accounts make that clear, and all of the evidence supports that fact. Nor were either the Roman authorities or the rabbis able to produce the body of Jesus, though both would have done so had they been able in order to stop this revolution that was creating an uproar everywhere and that later became known as “Christianity.”

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 104-7) *by* DAVE HUNT

SORCERY: USHERING IN A "BLISSFUL" CHRISTLESS ETERNITY

T. A. McMahon

A few years ago I had the wonderful privilege of ministering to a very elderly lady who was about to be operated on for a cancer issue. It was not a life-or-death-related surgery, but at her advanced age there were some definite concerns. As we awaited the gurney to transport her to surgery, I asked her a question that had been pressing on my heart. I was aware that she may not have known the Lord beyond her social Christian upbringing. She knew a number of things *about* Jesus, but I wasn't confident that she was born again. So I asked her simply, "What's next?" I could tell that she was apprehensive about the pending surgery, and my question startled her. She asked what I meant. Trying to be as sensitive to the situation as I could, I nevertheless told her that I felt compelled to ask her if she thought about what was next for her should she not survive the surgery.

That may seem like the wrong thing to ask. There are those who would have me say things that would build up her confidence regarding the outcome of the operation. Many believe that a positive attitude increases one's chances of survival when the body goes through a physically traumatic event. There is little doubt that one's attitude can influence a person's condition for wellness or harm, and a good attitude certainly wins out over a bad attitude (*see* Proverbs 15:13, 15; 17:22), but it's *no guarantee* regarding the hoped-for outcome.

I wanted her to be both encouraged and to have a guarantee as she faced surgery. I interrupted her perplexed look by straightforwardly asking if she wanted to spend eternity with Jesus.

I knew that she had enjoyed "listening in" on conversations when my wife and I and our children talked about Jesus and our love for Him. None of that involved "preaching at her." It had primarily consisted of family members talking about the One we each loved above all and what He was doing in our lives, such as answering our prayers, helping us to grow in our biblical faith and enabling us to share the gospel and do the things that pleased Him.

She never hesitated in her "yes" response. Hers was not a fear-of-the-surgery reply. It was obvious at that moment that the Lord had given her peace and His perfect love had cast out her fear. I then repeated the

simple gospel (which she had heard in our home numerous times) and asked her if she believed in her heart that Jesus had paid the full penalty for her sins and if she was willing to accept His offer of the gift of eternal life. Again, there was no hesitation in her affirmation. It seemed to me that the Holy Spirit was bringing to her mind the things we had previously talked about related to the gospel. She survived the surgery, but it was not too long afterward that she received that for which she had asked. She went to be with her Savior, who had promised that she would spend her eternity with Him.

There is no greater promise given in the Scriptures and, therefore, no greater encouragement: "[Christ] in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest [guarantee] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

As I mentioned, the lady was elderly. She lived until her mid-90s. The children she had birthed were a part of the "baby boomer" generation (those born right after World War II and into the early '60s). It is the largest generation thus far in US history, peaking at nearly 79 million at the end of the 20th century. The first of the baby boomers (1944-'46) are now entering their 70s, and most are suffering the plight of old age with its accompanying illnesses.

The baby boomers introduced the subculture of the hippies, a youth movement that began in the US and rejected the establishment with its traditional social customs. They protested war and violence and instead promoted peace and love. Much of the movement was fueled by mind-altering drugs that were greatly encouraged by influential men such as Harvard professor Timothy Leary ("Turn on, tune in, drop out."), a major advocate of LSD. The use of psychedelics grew exponentially during the 1960s. Drug companies and psychiatric researchers tested them "on alcoholics, people struggling with obsessive-compulsive disorder, depressives, autistic children, schizophrenics, terminal cancer patients, and convicts, as well as on perfectly healthy artists and scientists (to study creativity), and divinity students (to study spirituality)." The 1970 Controlled Substances Act, however, put the experimentation and use of LSD and other psychedelics practically out of business—but only for a time.

Today, those of the psychedelics-prone hippie generation are now part of the establishment. They may have "turned on" and

"tuned in," but many did not "drop out." In fact, some are running our largest and most prestigious institutions, from medical institutions to research organizations to universities. In a rather stunning article published in the *New Yorker* magazine titled "The Trip Treatment," subheading: "Research into psychedelics, shut down for decades, is now yielding exciting results," author Michael Pollan documents the surprising return of medical experiments featuring hallucinogenics. Psilocybin, a.k.a. the sacred or magic mushroom, is the lead experimental drug. That's primarily because it doesn't carry some of the "political and cultural baggage" of LSD, which is "stronger and longer-lasting in its effects and is considered more likely to produce adverse reactions." The research is taking place in respected institutions such as Johns Hopkins, UCLA Medical Center (Harbor), New York University, the University of New Mexico, London's Imperial College, the University of Zurich, and many other universities. Pollan notes that "Researchers are using or planning to use psilocybin not only to treat anxiety, addiction (to smoking and alcohol), and depression but also to study the neurobiology of mystical experience, which the drug, at high doses, can reliably occasion."

The *New Yorker* article cites the case of a man whose cancer had spread throughout his body and was given no hope of recovery by his doctors. Facing death drove him to seek options to relieve his extreme anxiety. Quoting researchers, Pollan writes, "Cancer patients receiving just a single dose of psilocybin experienced immediate and dramatic reductions in anxiety and depression, improvements that were sustained for at least six months.... People who had been palpably scared of death—they lost their fear." Novelist and drug proponent Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) is often quoted for support regarding using psychedelics with terminal patients "in the hope that it would make dying a more spiritual, less strictly physiological process." Huxley, a humanist and anti-Christian, was injected with LSD at his deathbed. His "spiritual" process (read *hallucination*) may have given him temporal relief, but his ecstasy, according to the Scriptures, eased him into an eternal separation from his Creator in a place where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth in darkness forever (Matthew 22:13). The Word of God would have us think about death and what follows as *life's most critical consideration*.

Huxley's so-called spiritual process has been an important subject of many of the

researchers. Pollan writes, “Perhaps the most influential and rigorous of these early studies was the Good Friday experiment, conducted in 1962 by Walter Pahnke, a psychiatrist and minister working on a Ph.D. dissertation under [Timothy] Leary at Harvard. In a double-blind experiment, twenty divinity students received a capsule of white powder right before a Good Friday service at Marsh Chapel, on the Boston University campus; ten contained psilocybin, ten an active placebo (nicotinic acid). Eight of the ten students receiving psilocybin reported a mystical experience, while only one in the control group experienced a feeling of ‘sacredness’ and a ‘sense of peace.’ (Telling the subjects apart was not difficult, rendering the double-blind a somewhat hollow conceit: those on the placebo sat sedately in their pews while the others lay down or wandered around the chapel, muttering things like ‘God is everywhere’ and ‘Oh, the glory!’).” Further evaluation of the experiment noted that some of the subjects had to be given antipsychotic drugs in order to counter the side effects of psilocybin. For some of the early researchers “it was difficult not to conclude that they were suddenly in possession of news with the power to change the world—a psychedelic gospel.”

What then of this “gospel” from a biblical perspective? It contributes to a fulfillment of what the Scriptures indicate will be an end-times deception. It is referred to as *sorcery*. The term in Revelation 9:21 and 18:23 in the Greek is *pharmakeia*, which *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* defines as “the use or the administering of drugs.” Galatians 5:20 translates the term *pharmakeia* (from which we get our word pharmacy) as *witchcraft*. It should be apparent from those scriptures that drugs will play a major part in the “strong delusion” of the Last Days (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Revelation 18:23 declares that “thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” Furthermore, the commitment to the use of drugs will be so strong that even after God pours out His wrath upon the earth during the Great Tribulation none will repent of their sorceries (Revelation 9:20-21).

Satan’s devices often come progressively like ocean waves that arrive in sets. When a wave crests and crashes on a beach, it deposits its debris and then retreats. That wave is followed by another wave, which deposits more debris. This analogy fits the use of hallucinogenic drugs by the baby-boomer generation followed by a new wave, which is taking place today. This is not intended to condemn the use of

all drugs, some of which, notwithstanding their abuses, have been helpful to mankind. Hallucinogenic drugs, however, have a long history in many cultures as key ingredients in religious rituals. The drug-induced altered state of consciousness transcends euphoric experiences and becomes a means of contacting spirit entities. That has been the mainstay of shamanism throughout the world by people groups and cultures that have had no contact with one another. The shaman or witchdoctor, by ingesting or inhaling a hallucinogenic substance, is enabled to commune with the spirit world. He is thus “equipped” to mediate between the spirit beings and his tribe or village. The Bible censures the practice as a form of divination that results in *communication with demons* (which explains the uniformity of shamanism throughout the world).

Although there is a great deal of research to document the harmful effects of psychedelic drugs, even so, many participants in the psychedelic experiments are convinced of the value. Pollan reports that support for the use of hallucinogenics is gaining ground. The prestigious *Psychopharmacology* journal published a supportive landmark article titled “Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical-Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance.” One might judiciously wonder exactly what pharmacologists were taught about the mystical and spiritual realm.

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned having asked my friend: “What’s next?” This is a question that must be answered by everyone who faces death, because our eternal destiny depends upon it. Scripture is unambiguous: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). It is an extraordinarily deceptive scheme of the Adversary to deny a dying person what may be the final opportunity for salvation by wrapping one’s last days of physical life in a cloak of psychedelic bliss. Heartbreakingly, this drug wave will certainly increase in the days ahead, as Pollan points out: “Many of the researchers and therapists I interviewed are confident that psychedelic therapy will eventually become routine. Katherine MacLean hopes someday to establish a ‘psychedelic hospice,’ a retreat center where the dying and their loved ones can use psychedelics to help them all let go.” The former hippies will likely help with its formation: “Many of the people in charge of our institutions today have personal experience with psychedelics and so feel less threatened by them.”

Fifty years of the ever-increasing influence of Eastern mysticism, however, through its homogenized and westernized form known as the New Age Movement, has corroded away the last chains of opposition. The gurus rushed to the West, trumpeted in by the Beatles under the guidance of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Eastern meditation took its practitioners to a higher level of altered states of consciousness than the banned hallucinogenic drugs. (See *America, the Sorcerer’s New Apprentice: the Rise of New Age Shamanism* by Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon for a detailed account of sorcery’s surprising impact on the West.)

Maharishi’s Spiritual Regeneration Movement, which was barred from US schools because of its blatant teaching of Hinduism and Eastern mysticism, has come back even stronger as the fraudulent *science* of Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Popular TV medical doctor and Sufi Muslim, Dr. Oz is the national spokesperson for Transcendental Meditation’s mystical mind-altering Hindu practice. Yoga, which is the heart of Hinduism, rivals Starbucks in popularity and can be found everywhere throughout the country, including in Christian churches. Its meditation is a more direct vehicle to a mystical altered state of consciousness. The legal use of marijuana (the psychedelic drug cannabis) began under the belief (some would say “ploy”) that it has significant value for *medicinal* purposes. It has recently been ushered into the realm of a *recreational* substance in a few states. It’s hardly a wild guess that the rest of the country will follow.

The astounding and pervasive use of drugs (which, again, the Bible terms *sorcery*) in our day is one more proof of the prophetic accuracy of Scripture. Certainly the world is falling prey to the deceptive scheme instigated by the father of lies, Satan himself, and, tragically, so are many who profess to follow Christ. The Israelites heard from the Prophet Jeremiah God’s words of correction and His pleading with them to return to Him, yet they refused to repent of their spiritual adulteries. Christendom today is on that same path.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict the hearts of believers who, knowingly or unknowingly, have succumbed to sorcery, that they would repent and obey His Word. TBC

Other than scripture citations, all quotations above were derived from one article: Michael Pollan, “The Trip Treatment” in *The New Yorker*, February 9, 2015, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/09/triptreatment

Quotable.....

*Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be.
I sink in life's alarms
When by myself I stand;
Imprison me within Thine arms,
And strong shall be my hand.*

—George Matheson

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have a question that I hope you can help with. Is God's "Permissive Will" a biblical concept or just a man-made theory?

RESPONSE: We know from Scripture that God declares "the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10) and that no subsequent event surprises Him. Since He is "omniscient" (all-knowing) he can use all circumstances to accomplish His will. When Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave to the Ishmaelites (Genesis 37:27-28), God certainly didn't force them to do it. Their envy and hatred of Joseph were contributing factors in what they themselves chose to do. Nor did God stop them from doing this. We can consider this an example of His "permissive will." He *allowed* Joseph to be sold by his brothers into Egypt.

After the death of their father, Jacob, the brothers feared that Joseph would seek revenge for what they had done. Joseph, however, had a different perspective. He told them, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20). God knew of the great famine that lay ahead, and in protecting His people, His permissive will allowed the brothers to carry out what their evil hearts imagined, and in so doing set in motion a chain of events that culminated in Joseph's appointment to second-in-command in the kingdom. This position enabled him to assist and protect his family, and, ultimately, the promised Seed (Genesis 3:15).

Proverbs 16:9 tells us, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." When we make decisions outside of God's *perfect* will for our lives, we are experiencing His permissive will. He allows us to choose, even to make wrong choices, but in so doing, we must suffer the consequences

of our actions. Pharaoh was a very real threat to the people of God, but even Pharaoh was allowed by God's permissive will to make choices and do things that brought harm to the children of Israel, as he laid on them terrible burdens. In Exodus 9:16, the Lord instructed Moses to tell Pharaoh, "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." In Pharaoh's defiance of God, he became an example to others who might learn from the consequences he had to suffer.

In his well-loved devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers wrote, "Always make a distinction between God's perfect will and His permissive will, which He uses to accomplish His divine purpose for our lives. God's perfect will is unchangeable. It is with His permissive will, or the various things that He allows into our lives, that we must wrestle before Him. It is our reaction to these things allowed by His permissive will that enables us to come to the point of seeing His perfect will for us. 'We know that all things work together for good to those who love God...'" (Romans 8:28).

QUESTION: [Composite] Some professing Christians are claiming that the Bible doesn't need any explanation and we don't need teachers to understand the Bible. Although I don't condemn their face-value embrace of the Bible, I strongly believe that we do need to have teachers who are able to help us to understand some things that may be more difficult. Do we need teachers today?

RESPONSE: In John 16:12-14, Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

The instruction of the Holy Spirit is a promise to believers. In 1 John 2:27, we are told, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." The bottom line is that the Holy Spirit is the main teacher of each individual.

However, God's Word makes it very clear that teachers are a vital part of church structure. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul admonished Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

To Titus, Paul wrote of the elder women teaching the younger (Titus 2:3-5). In the list of ministries in Ephesians 4:11-13, "teachers" are listed as those given as gifts to the body of Christ, along with "apostles...prophets...evangelists...and pastors...for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Yes, some are called to be teachers, but James 3:1 warns of the accountability that is required of such: "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."

Finally, in Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gives what is known as the Great Commission. "Go ye therefore, and *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: *Teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." To be obedient to this command requires something to teach (i.e., the Scriptures), someone to do the teaching, and those who desire to be taught.

One of the problems for a believer regarding the teaching of the Word of God in our day of abundant media resources is becoming *dependent* upon teachers and commentaries for an understanding of Scripture. We will all be held personally accountable for our beliefs. Spoon-feeding the Scriptures is okay for new Christians, but it inhibits real growth and maturity if it continues. Ironically, that is a dilemma even for those excellent teachers and preachers who become popular. Popularity often breeds followers. The exhortation to be like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures to see if what they were being taught is true to the Word of God is the scriptural recipe for spiritually discerning what is presented by finite man and for encouraging individual confidence in God's Word.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Couldn't Paul Count?

Question: There seems to be a major flaw in the testimony of Paul concerning the resurrection of Christ. He says that after Christ appeared to Peter, he then appeared to “the twelve” (1 Corinthians 15:5). Yet the gospels clearly state that Judas, one of the original twelve, had committed suicide before the resurrection and that there were only eleven disciples alive for Christ to appear to. Is there a way to escape this contradiction? Otherwise it puts all of the rest of the resurrection story in doubt.

Response: Of course, Christ “appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief” (Mark 16:14); “The eleven gathered together... [and] Jesus himself stood in the midst of them” (Luke 24:33, 36). But He also “was seen of above five hundred brethren at once” (1 Corinthians 15:6). Among them was undoubtedly Matthias, who was chosen to take the place of Judas, rounding out the number of the disciples to twelve once again. No doubt, from what Peter said (quoted below) when Matthias was chosen, this man had also seen Christ on other occasions as well.

In Acts 1:15–26, we find “about an hundred and twenty” (verse 15) disciples gathered together. Peter reminds them that the prophets had foretold Judas’ betrayal of Jesus and his death and had also foretold that “another [would] take” his place (verse 20). To be an apostle, as Paul reminds us, one must have “seen Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 9:1). Therefore, as the eleven disciples were about to choose Judas’ successor, Peter declared that the replacement could only be from among “these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us” (Acts 1:21–22). It is quite clear, then, that although the focus of the four gospels is upon the special inner circle of twelve disciples, there were others who were also with Christ at all times, and among them was Matthias.

Meeting these qualifications, Matthias was chosen to take Judas’ place and became one of the twelve apostles, having been a witness of all that the other eleven had witnessed, including the resurrection. In fact, he was probably present when Christ first appeared to the eleven. We aren’t told how many other disciples were present at that time. Whether he was present that night or not, Christ had appeared to Matthias and he became one of the twelve.

Paul became a Christian some years after the replacement of Judas by Matthias. It would only be reasonable, then, that when Paul declared that Christ “was seen . . . of the twelve” (1 Corinthians 15:5), he would mean the twelve (including Matthias) in existence in his day, not the twelve when Judas was one of them.

— An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 110-11) by DAVE HUNT

Victory Over Sin

Dave Hunt — Last published in
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TORN BETWEEN their sincere desire to serve and honor their Lord and the inner turmoil of fleshly lusts and the seductive pull of worldly pleasures and honors, many Christians struggle to live for Christ. For them, Christianity involves great effort, little joy, much frustration and disillusionment, and the loss (when they have enough will power to deny themselves) of so much they once enjoyed in life. They struggle to avoid Paul's list of "don'ts" in Colossians 3:5-8: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry...put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." Failing repeatedly, they repent remorsefully and puzzle over their inability to live as they know they should—but seemingly can't.

They fare no better with Paul's list of "do's" that follows (vv. 12-25): "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving...put on charity....Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly....And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him...[etc.]"

Is it really possible to be sweet, kind, humble, loving, and forgiving at all times? The spirit is willing, but the flesh proves ever to be embarrassingly weak. How can one live up to the high standards the Bible sets for Christian living? Is there some secret to victory we are overlooking? The two key expressions, "mortify" in verse 5 and "put on" in verse 12, only increase the bewilderment and sense of failure. Is it really possible to "put to death" ungodly desires and, shedding that body of evil, as it were, to be clothed in a resurrection body of godliness? Surely Paul, led of the Holy Spirit, is not taunting us with goals that cannot be attained and that, in fact, are not at all practical. Was he not, himself, an example of this kind of life, and did he not say more than once, "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1, etc.)? Then why do we fail? From whence comes the motivation and the strength to accomplish what is at once so desirable

and yet so seemingly impossible?

There is a general failure to recognize the importance of one little word that occurs in both verses 5 and 12. It holds the answer to our dilemma. Paul does not say, "Mortify your members" and "Put on...bowels of mercies, kindness...." That would impose a "do-it-yourself" religion of gritting one's teeth in determination and struggling to live up to high moral standards—no different from the atheist's or Buddhist's attempt to do the same. That

IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST,
SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE
ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH
ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS
ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE
EARTH.

FOR YE ARE DEAD, AND YOUR
LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD.

WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE,
SHALL APPEAR, THEN SHALL
YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN
GLORY.

MORTIFY THEREFORE YOUR
MEMBERS WHICH ARE UPON
THE EARTH; FORNICATION,
UNCLEANNESSE, INORDINATE
AFFECTION, EVIL CONCUPIESCENCE,
AND COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS
IDOLATRY...

— Colossians 3:1-5

is not Christianity! Paul carefully and pointedly says, "Mortify *therefore*... Put on *therefore*..." Clearly "therefore" refers to something that Paul is convinced gives the Christian the motivation and power to do what he is commanding and lifts the Christian above the impossible struggle of flesh trying to live a godly life. It is, therefore, the Christian's secret to a happy, fruitful and holy life pleasing to God.

The mortifying of the old deeds and the putting on of the new is possible only because, as the previous verses declare, "Ye are dead, and...your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:2). Certainly the same

thing could not be said of the followers of Buddha, Muhammad, Krishna, et al. Christianity is thus unique and separated from all religions. Herein lies the secret dynamic of the Christian life. Why, then, doesn't every Christian experience this power in daily living? Sadly, many who call themselves Christians have a very superficial understanding of the gospel they claim to have embraced: "[H]ow that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day..." (1 Cor 15:3-4).

For many who believe that Christ died for their sins, this event is more mystical than historical. The horrible death on the Cross is something that happened to Christ but has only a theoretical rather than practical connection to them. They have such a faulty understanding of what Christ's death means that they are not true Christians at all. They have imagined that the death of Christ in their place delivered them from their deserved eternal punishment in hell, so that, like Barabbas, they could live as they pleased. They have never desired what Paul rejoiced in: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

Paul was not expressing an inspiring but empty platitude. For that great apostle, the Cross was no mere religious symbol, but the place where he had died to life as he would have lived it and had begun to experience the very life of Christ being lived in him. He knew that Christ gives resurrection life; therefore only those who have died can experience it. With wonder, amazement and deep gratitude he realized that Christ had actually taken his place before a righteous, holy God—and that God had put Christ to death in payment for his (Paul's) sins. Therefore, Paul was a dead man. Christ's death in his place was literally his own death, and he rejoiced in that fact. If he was to experience life thereafter, it must be the resurrected Christ living in him.

The transformation in Paul was at once remarkable, yet not surprising. The most seductive temptation Satan can devise will arouse no response from a dead man. Insult a dead man to his face, and he will not retaliate in anger. As a dead man, Paul experienced a new freedom over sin that he had never known before! Yet, in spite of being dead, Paul was more alive than he had ever been: "I am crucified...

nevertheless, I live.” Dead to sin, he was alive to God through Christ. So real was this to Paul, that it was as though Christ himself were living in him—and, indeed, He was! Christ had become his very life—and this, said Paul, was what Christianity was all about!

Paul reminded the saints at Colosse that victory over sin and self was not possible through willpower and fleshly struggle. True victory could come only through understanding and believing what it really meant that Christ had died for their sins and had been resurrected for their justification. Paul declared that this was the secret of his own complete transformation—and so it must be with them.

But how could Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection be as real to them as it was to Paul—so real that their very lives would be totally transformed? Paul explained: They must believe that Christ was coming any moment to take them to heaven, where they would thereafter appear with Him in glory! It was the hope of Christ’s imminent return that would make the difference between victory and defeat in the Christian life!

That this hope is the key to victorious living is clear. Notice again Paul’s staggering declaration: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory[!] Mortify therefore....” That was such a vibrant hope and of such certain accomplishment that Paul began this entire section with the statement, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2). Herein lay the secret to the godly life that Paul himself lived and expected of the Colossians as well. They were to be so heavenly minded that the things of this earth would have no appeal and thus no power over them.

Nor was this orientation away from earth toward heaven to be merely a “mental attitude” they had adopted without any basis in reality. It was not wishful “positive thinking” but truth that would change their lives. Through Christ’s cross Christians have been crucified to the world and the world has been crucified to them, as Paul had firmly declared (Gal 6:14). A man who has just been taken down, dead, from a cross has no interest in this world nor does it have any claims upon him. The person crucified and those who crucified him have nothing further to do with each other. So it is with the Christian and the world through the cross of Christ. The vicious hatred this

world has for Christ, and its irreconcilable animosity against all that He stands for, have been fully exposed in its rejection and crucifixion of our Lord. Christ declared that the world would hate and persecute us as it had Him (Jn 15:18-20;16:2;17:14). By His cross we have been cut off from this world just as surely as He has been.

Death, however, did not end it all. Christ rose triumphant from the grave and ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. Moreover, He is coming again in power and glory to judge and take vengeance upon those who have rejected Him—and we, who have identi-

BEHOLD, WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THE FATHER HATH BESTOWED UPON US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD: THEREFORE THE WORLD KNOWETH US NOT, BECAUSE IT KNEW HIM NOT.

BELOVED, NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD, AND IT DOTHT NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE: BUT WE KNOW THAT, WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.

AND EVERY MAN THAT HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM PURIFIETH HIMSELF, EVEN AS HE IS PURE.

— 1 John 3:1-3

fied ourselves with Him in His rejection and death, will participate in His triumph and glory. Nor is that Second Coming so far in the future that it has no practical meaning for us now. On the contrary, it could occur today. The glorious fulfillment of the hope that the gospel has instilled within our hearts could burst upon us at any moment! This fact causes eternity to invade the present and makes the Christian no longer of this world!

Hear Paul say it again: “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Consenting to be dead and willing for Christ to be their life was not only the Colossians’ basis for victory but the essential meaning of the gospel they must embrace. Otherwise, there could be no

salvation. Without that, they were mere Barabbases, grateful that Christ had died in their place but mistakenly assuming that they had been “saved” in order to live for self. If they were not willing to acknowledge Christ’s death as their very own and to give up life as they would have lived it so that Christ could become their life, then they could not experience the victory over sin and self that Paul preached. Indeed, they had not consented to the message of the gospel at all!

And what made the fact of their death, burial, and resurrection with Christ the dynamic power that transformed their lives? It was this promise: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Once that truth had gripped their hearts so that His “appearing” had become their daily expectation and hope, Christ’s death and resurrection were so real to them in the present that they were changed into new persons. As such, Paul told them, they were to “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” May we each pursue that challenge wholeheartedly!

The “pretribulation Rapture” is thus no mere hair-splitting thesis for theologians to discuss, nor is it a theory without practical effect. It is the overlooked secret to victory in the Christian’s life. John said, “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure” (1 Jn 3:3). Paul indicated that it had been his love of Christ’s appearing that had motivated him to holiness and faithfulness and had made him victorious—and that the same “crown of righteousness” was for “all them also that love his [Christ’s] appearing” (2 Tm 4:8). On the other hand, Christ associated wickedness with failing to love His appearing: “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken...” (Mt 24:48,49).

Let us diligently and enthusiastically “seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” Let us “set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Why? “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil 3:20-21). Praise God!

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: A Christian friend recently asked us if it is wrong to burn wood and use it to heal people. She says that her father used to do it in Morocco—he was not a believer. Apparently, the idea is to burn wood, then extinguish the flame and apply the burned part to wherever the aches and pains are. We advised her not to get involved in this, as it isn't biblical, whereas the prayer of faith in James 5 is what God has shown us. Do you have any knowledge of this practice of burning wood to heal?

RESPONSE: Ritualistic burning of wood and other objects for healing/cleansing or other purposes is a pagan practice. The ancient Nordic (Scandinavian) pagan religious practice of putting ashes on one's forehead was believed to invoke the protection of the god Odin. It is said that this ritual then entered Europe during the Vikings' raids and conquests. The ashes were applied on Wednesday, the day named for Woden, the Germanic deity that is the equivalent of the Norse god Odin.

Catholics and other groups are perpetuating a form of this practice through "Ash Wednesday" observances. We are never told in Scripture that this is something we should do. Ash Wednesday, which is a part of Lent, is practiced by most Catholics and even by some Protestant denominations. According to the website Catholic Online, "Ashes are a symbol of *penance made sacramental by the blessing of the Church*, and they help us develop a spirit of humility and sacrifice" (emphasis added).

The burning of wood for "smudging," is most often thought of as a Native American practice, but the "spiritual" ritual use of rising smoke has been seen in many cultures for thousands of years. Smudging is the burning of wood, herbs, or incense, with the goal of causing a desired change in one's thoughts, emotions, dwellings, circumstances, or reality. Hindu texts acknowledge that this was practiced thousands of years ago through the burning of incense. Egyptian records speak of *purification by smoke*, burning aromatic resins in their various religious ceremonies.

In contrast, we read in the Old Testament that although the priests were to burn a specific mixture of spices and frankincense on the golden altar of incense (before the Holy of Holies) every morning and evening, this was a part of worship and *not* a healing methodology. Moreover, God forbade the use of that same incense outside the tabernacle for the Israelites' own purposes. If

they disobeyed, they would be cut off from their people (Ex 30:34-38)!

There are also examples in Scripture of the use of ashes (sometimes translated "dust,") often accompanied by sackcloth to indicate repentance or mourning. "Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son [Joseph] many days" (Gn 37:34). After the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, "The elders of the daughter of Zion [sat] upon the ground...: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth..." (Lam 2:10). At the rebuke of Elijah for the death of Naboth, "Ahab...rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly" (1 Kg 21:27). After David's sin in numbering the people, "Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces" (1 Ch 21:16).

Among the pagans, the King of Nineveh, hearing the preaching of Jonah, "arose from his throne,... laid his robe from him,... covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes" (Jon 3:5-9). Jesus noted in Matthew 11:21, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin!...Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

The point is that although dust or ashes could reflect repentance or mourning, "smudging" and similar rituals are pagan in origin and are man-devised methodologies. In direct contrast, for the people of God, the Lord will "give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified" (Is 61:3).

QUESTION: Does Satan have to ask permission from God before he can afflict a person?

RESPONSE: It seems clear from Scripture that Satan has access to humanity to tempt us through various means. Peter warns, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pt 5:8). This directly implies that the adversary has liberty to take advantage of mankind's weaknesses in order that he may "devour them"; thus the admonition to "be vigilant," especially regarding those weaknesses.

But we also have the example of Job, where we find that on occasion, in order to "prove" them, God may grant Satan special access to afflict individuals. In Job 1:10, Satan says to God, "Hast not thou

made an hedge about him, and...his house, and...all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased...." The protection given to Job and his family was *lifted* at the request of Satan so that he might torment him. Job ultimately responded faithfully to the Lord through the trial and was greatly blessed in the end.

First Kings 22:20-21 gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of God giving specific permission to a demonic being: "The LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?...And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him."

To Peter, "[Jesus] said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not..." (Lk 22:31-32). The Lord Jesus, very aware that Satan especially wanted to tempt Peter, had already been praying for him, with the intent that Peter's faith would not fail.

Thus we see that although Satan is the enemy of mankind, his "freedom" to exercise his wrath on humanity is limited to what God *allows* him to do. We read in Scripture that there is coming a time when the Lord warns, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rv 12:12).

In all of this, remember that the Lord doesn't leave us defenseless. He gives us weapons with which we can counter the enemy's attacks: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas 4:7). And also: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities...powers...rulers of the darkness of this world...spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints..." (Eph 6:11-18).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Copyists' Errors— Even in the King James Version?

Question: I came across a list of numerous contradictions in the Bible. Here are just a few: 2 Samuel 8:4 says David took from Hadadezer “seven hundred horsemen,” but 1 Chronicles 18:4 says David took “seven thousand horsemen.” A similar discrepancy occurs between 2 Samuel 10:18 (“seven hundred chariots [and] forty thousand horsemen”) and 1 Chronicles 19:18 (“seven thousand chariots [and] forty thousand footmen”). These are just a few of the errors—and they’re in the King James Bible, which I have always believed was perfect in every word. Help!

Response: The Bible is inerrant in its original manuscripts, not in every copy that someone has produced since then. Not every copyist or every translator worked so flawlessly that every copy of the Bible in every language is perfect in every word. These errors you point out were made by someone in centuries past when the documents were copied by hand.

One would have to go to the available manuscripts themselves to determine when these particular errors arose. And no doubt by comparing the many manuscripts we still have with one another it would be possible to determine what the original actually said—whether 700 or 7,000, whether footmen or horsemen, etc. However, it wouldn’t be worth the time and effort to determine this because these errors do not affect any doctrinal teaching.

Certain kinds of copying or translating errors that affect doctrine could also theoretically

have crept into a particular manuscript, but we have so many copies of manuscripts dating back so many centuries that by comparing these with one another such mistakes can be discovered and corrected. In fact, none of the major Bible translations on the market today contains doctrinal errors. Although there are certain significant translational differences between the King James Bible and the modern translations (including many deficiencies in the latter), any discrepancies in most translations are corrected by other verses in that same version.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 111-12) by DAVE HUNT

Fellowship: Fortification against Apostasy

T. A. McMahon

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

—ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12

WARNING AGAINST apostasy in our day seems to be akin to alerting Christians to the potential coming of a flood when they are already up to their knees in incoming tide-water. Sadly, for many, not even floating objects (i.e., the very obvious corruptions of Scripture) seem to get their attention. Nevertheless, we keep hoping and praying that the message will reach those who have eyes to see and ears to hear what the Word of God clearly foretells. For those who do acknowledge things happening as the Bible describes, it can be a bittersweet experience. The unhappy part is the recognition of the overwhelming, destructive consequences of the apostasy that is taking place in the world, in the church, and among our friends and loved ones who have succumbed to the increasing deceptions and seductions. Yet, on the other hand, we can rejoice that the Bible is confirming its miraculous prophetic nature, as it is in truth the Word of God! Furthermore, the fact that such events, long ago foretold, are taking place indicates that our blessed hope, the return of our wonderful Savior for His saints, is drawing closer, although no man knows the day and the hour.

In the meantime, how should we go about dealing with these troubling times that aggressively oppose the Bible's instructions for living our lives in a way that is pleasing to the Lord? The simple answer is: Learn what the Bible teaches, and then *do* what it says, in spirit and in truth. Such understanding and *doing* in the life of a believer is possible only by the Holy Spirit who dwells within every born-again Christian. Rarely, however, does the Spirit of God work in a vacuum, which means that the believer must fill his heart and mind with the teachings of Scripture so the Holy Spirit can give him understanding

and help him to apply the wisdom that God has provided in the Word.

One such teaching that is an issue of increasing concern is *fellowship* (or the lack thereof) among believers. An all-too-common request from readers of *The Berean Call* is that we might help them to find a truly Bible-believing church. To participate in such fellowship and teaching, some are willing (as many already do) to drive for hours to be fed from the Word of God. Our response is that we can't recommend *any* churches. That isn't because there aren't some solid churches around; it's because we've seen so many churches buy into questionable teachings and unbiblical programs, seemingly overnight. Our counsel for those who are earnestly seeking a church is to call and question the church's pastor or an elder regarding the fellowship's view of God's Word, i.e., how serious the church is about it. A statement of faith, although it may appear biblically sound, is rarely a true indicator of the biblical discernment and practice within that church. Again, questions need to be asked and acceptable responses need to be followed up by personal attendance to see if indeed the church lives up to what has been claimed.

Often, the reasons why Christians leave one fellowship for another have more to do with a "consumer attitude" rather than from a desire to hear God's Word and to serve their brothers and sisters in Christ. A "feed me" mentality often transcends scriptural edification and prioritizes things such as a worship music preference, the length of a sermon or service, the pastor's charisma, availability of popular programs, a lack of pew cup holders, etc. Although such thinking can creep into even the most committed believers, it's the seeker-friendly, market-driven churches that have led the way in compromising biblical doctrine. The seeker-sensitive approach (see TBC articles) may increase a church's numbers (usually by drawing from the "have not" churches mentioned above), but it has also created refugees who are looking for doctrinal integrity. The bad news/good news is that *both* will increase in the days ahead.

Biblical compromise, the bad news, is on the rise. This will compel true believers to find fellowship with believers who are standing fast according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 16:13). The good news is definitely good, but even it is not without problems. As has been noted, it can be quite difficult to find a biblically solid church. Some simply stop looking and give up on attending a church. They begin to seek

"fellowship" through ministries that communicate via the media, and although the teaching may be edifying, it doesn't satisfy the scriptural mandate regarding fellowship (Hebrews 10:24-25). Such an approach may foster a self-focused mentality and hardly ever lends itself to the biblical admonition to serve others (Galatians 5:13). Moreover, what may be the most spiritually damaging consequence of disregarding fellowship is that the believer risks becoming a "Lone Ranger" Christian. Such a person is an easy target for the one who goes about as a "roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Christians who have no fellowship, regardless of the reasons or rationale, have consequently brought upon themselves more than a few potential problems. To begin with, as the verses above from Ecclesiastes assert, they have put themselves into a weak and vulnerable position: *Two are better than one....For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.* A believer who has no one to support him spiritually will find himself in trouble sooner or later. When any of us gets knocked down spiritually, we need a fellow believer to help us up—mentally, emotionally, and, most important, *spiritually*.

As for those who declare, "The Lord is all we need," too often, their subsequent thinking is out of line with God's Word. Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Certainly we need Jesus first and foremost, but He has given us instructions that we are to follow, and they include involving other believers in our lives. His Word tells us that we are not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Hebrews 10:25). That isn't merely a suggestion! Even if we weren't aware of the reasons for our Lord's *mandate*, it must still be obeyed, and numerous reasons are given throughout Scripture. Included among those are accountability, encouragement, praying for others and being prayed for, edification of one another through the Word, correction, personal support and strengthening in the faith, showing empathy and compassion, helping others to use discernment, increasing in our love for one another, and sustaining biblical steadfastness.

Practically speaking, avoiding or disdaining fellowship eliminates our ability to fulfill the important exhortations for believers to serve one another. Anyone's claim that they "follow Jesus" rings hollow

at the very least if he evades our Savior's example of coming *not to be served but to serve*, even to give His life for others (Matthew 20:28). We are to "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Paul's epistles to the Corinthians are replete with examples of believers ministering to each other, accepting one another, edifying each other, correcting each other, meeting the needs of other saints, and so forth. Too often, we miss the fact that in Paul's writings to the churches he gives us a wonderful example of how *we* are to minister to one another. That should be evident to us when we read, "Brethren, *join in following my example*, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern." His commitment to and love for his fellow believers throughout his God-inspired writings is both extraordinary and convicting.

Even if our future holds persecutions, which have not formerly been much on the horizon in the West (but are a fact of life for many of our brothers and sisters in Christ in numerous countries), the importance of fellowship is even more imperative for believers, as the Scriptures make clear. As the persecution of biblical Christians in the West will surely increase, those who desire to be true to the faith "which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) will be marginalized at least, with even worse experiences in the days ahead. After decades of spiritual seduction due to unbiblical teachings, false practices, compromise with the world, the pervasive acceptance of the pseudo sciences of evolution and psychotherapy in the US, the acceptance of social "correctness" regarding homosexuality, and the eagerness to do things man's way rather than God's way, we have arrived at the time when "judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). How exactly that will take place remains to be seen, but the history of persecution within Christendom indicates that it more than rivals martyrdom executed by governments. One needs only to consider the historic religious inquisitions to recognize that.

Will the world really turn on Christians? Some governments already have, but it will soon grow worse. Why? Because our planet is headed for a one-world government that will be under the rule of the Antichrist. The religion of the Antichrist, as Dave Hunt has pointed out, is not just in *opposition* to biblical Christianity; it is a seductive *counterfeit* of Christianity. Retaining a form of biblical Christianity without its truth, without

its gospel, without its instructions, it will become a self-love-oriented, self-deifying belief system that initially has "a form of godliness" but denies its power (2 Timothy 3:5). *Professing* Christians will therefore be given a pass—but not biblical Christians, those who stand steadfast in God's Word.

Could the Christian church ever turn on its own? Yes, but that will be the *professing* Christian church, with its blinded leaders and deluded hirelings. They will pose as true shepherds, but they are really ravenous wolves dressed in sheep's clothing, and in fact are those who have acted the part but were never truly born again. In Acts

...AND LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS:

NOT FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER, AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS; BUT EXHORTING ONE ANOTHER: AND SO MUCH THE MORE, AS YE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING.

— Hebrews 10:24-25

20:28-31, Paul warns the Ephesian elders of what will take place *in the church* after his departing: "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*"

What then is the biblical Christian to do as we see these situations proliferating prior to the return of Jesus for His bride? Much of what we are being told *and sold* by some Christian websites and Christian bestselling authors who disregard the imminent return of Jesus and the pretrib Rapture is that we must prepare to physically survive the seven years of tribulation.

These individuals conveniently have survival gear and food for sale for what the Bible describes throughout the Book of Revelation and declares in Matthew 24:21-22 as a time "such as was not since

the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be, and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." Even a cursory reading of Revelation demonstrates clearly that cataclysmic events, martyrdom, and God's wrath will leave only a remnant of believing Jews and non-Jews alive at the Second Coming of Christ with His saints. Yet one Christian documentary promotional trailer chides pastors for not preparing their flocks to go through the "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21).

Believers shouldn't be surprised or overwhelmed when they are called upon to endure tribulation (John 16:33) but the Great Tribulation is not in our future. Christ will remove His bride in the Rapture before the "time of Jacob's trouble," an event so devastating that Jeremiah declares, "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it" (30:7). How then should believers prepare for potential troubles, especially within Christendom, prior to the Rapture? The prevention program is hardly complex, although it may be a real struggle for some, depending on where they are in their walk with the Lord. Like any exercise program, it can be initially difficult for those who are new to it. The struggle has to do primarily with discipline. Daily reading of God's Word is a foundational exercise that needs to become a habit for every born-again Christian. The content of the Scriptures—what one reads—must then be lived out in the believer's daily life. That disciplined familiarity with God's instructions is not only necessary to guide one's life, but it forms the basis for protecting one against spiritual deception.

Fellowship with likeminded brothers and sisters in Christ is a major part of the Lord's instructions, given for our protection, strengthening, and fruitfulness. We need to "circle our wagons" now and in the days ahead. Our best option is in a church fellowship, supporting the leadership that is steadfast and staying the course of God's Word and serving the body. When that is not an option, we must ask the Lord to help us find another committed believer or believers with whom we can have a Bible study, with whom we can pray, with whom we can minister to one another, encourage one another, and, again, with whom we can circle our wagons for spiritual protection. "*And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*" Let that third strand be the Lion of Judah, our Lord Jesus himself. **TBC**

QUESTION: Some of our friends are former Catholics who have forsaken the traditions of Rome for the truth of Scripture. Recently, however, we have been saddened to see them being drawn to word-faith teaching. What can we tell them?

RESPONSE: We praise the Lord that your friends have come away from Rome, but it certainly would be tragic to see them ensnared by yet another system that is contrary to the Scriptures.

Regarding word-faith teaching, they should be aware that they will be taught that God *must* obey people's words. According to word-faith beliefs, our spoken words have power. As Dave Hunt pointed out in the July 2007 issue of the newsletter (see *TBC Reprints* or our online archives), these things are, in reality, "recycled Hinduism, shamanism, and New Age folly. One of many huge lies is its claim: 'You create your own reality with your mind.' This was the serpent's false promise to Eve—the promise of godhood (Gn:3:5). Embracing that delusion cost Eve and her descendants Eden's paradise—and would have barred mankind from heaven had not Christ died for the sins of the world. In the 6,000 years since Eden, the serpent's promise has not been fulfilled in even one person's life."

Word-faith preachers use verses like Mark 11:24, emphasizing the "belief" aspect: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." The Bible, however, must be read in its full context. We can see that it teaches that *God's will* determines the answer to our prayers: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 Jn 5:14-15).

Also, "Likewise...we know not what we should pray for...: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27). Word-faith teachers teach that "God is going to give the wealth of the wicked to believers," citing Proverbs 13:22. They are, however, selective in what they quote: "and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just."

Bereans should check out this citation! In fact, the full verse reads: "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." This is not talking about some supernatural transfer of wealth. It is

an admonition toward diligence. Through diligent stewardship, the Lord blesses the work of the righteous and they store up an inheritance.

God tells us to avoid greed: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). Yet word-faith theology promises unending health, wealth, and happiness, especially for those who contribute to their "ministries." Sadly, we have seen the record (even recently) of those who indulge in private jets, luxury automobiles, mansions, and designer clothes.

Many word-faith teachers declare that we can attain deity—that is, we become "little gods." They use the scripture: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High" (Psalm 82:6). The "gods" in this verse refer to the rulers of the earth whom God has ordained (see also Rom 13:1-2). Clearly, God has placed into positions of power (Ps 75:6-7) fallible men who will enforce the law and enable others to live in as much safety and peace as this world offers. Many of them use their authority as an excuse for believing themselves to be higher than others (i.e., "gods"). God, in turn, brings them "back to earth" by pointing out the sure judgment that will come to them: "...but ye shall die like men..." (Ps 82:7).

These are only a few of the pitfalls within the word-faith movement. Your friends may soon discover that they have simply traded their freedom in Christ for another false "faith" system.

QUESTION: What is the extent of God's "Divine Providence"? Does it encompass all things that happen?

RESPONSE: We believe that God is sovereign, omniscient, and His providence encompasses whatever happens. The English word "providence" comes from the Latin word *providentia*, which means "foresight." God *sees* all that happens before it happens and allows it to happen. This is not to say that God *causes* all things to happen, as some Calvinists claim. Colossians 1:17 tells us, "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." In other words, by Him, all things are established. The Lord provided the seasons in order that life on earth might be sustained. The earth goes through seasons with times of rest and times of production. Our Creator set all these things in motion. He doesn't need to continually cause them to happen.

We can clearly see the benefit of the Lord's providence in these things. What we struggle with is that which He allows to happen in this sin-cursed world. The seasons

continue, but we also have drought, tornadoes, floods, and other calamities.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David wrote in reference to God's actions in the life of man, "Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways" (Ps 139:3). The word translated "compassest" literally means "winnows" (as in removing the chaff from grain). This tells us that in the "providence" of God, believers can trust that the Lord has thoroughly "winnowed" the path we walk in life. "All" that happens has been allowed. It is good to remember the perspective of Joseph concerning his brothers selling him into slavery and everything that came afterward. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gn 50:20).

Consequently, we may ask, "Lord, why have you left this tragedy, this disappointment, and these trials in my path? They sure look like chaff to me." In truth, the Lord in His providence leaves these things as part of His express will. They are designed to accomplish his purpose. Since God is omniscient, His providence does encompass all that happens. He allows these things.

John Rippon, wrote these words in *How Firm a Foundation*:

In every condition, in sickness, in health;
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.

Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,

For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.
When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress

When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

For the believer, the providence of God is a particular blessing.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Was Stephen Confused?

Question: In his speech before the rabbinical council in Acts 7:15–16 Stephen said that Jacob was buried in Shechem “in the sepulchre that Abraham bought . . . of the sons of Emmor.” In clear contradiction, Genesis 50:13 says Jacob was buried in Hebron in the Cave of “Machpelah, which Abraham bought . . . of Ephron the Hittite.” Was Stephen confused? I find this very disturbing. Why didn’t God inspire him to say everything correctly?

Response: Since Luke is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we may be certain that Stephen said what Luke records. We can’t blame any mistakes upon Luke. The most obvious possibility, therefore, is that Stephen indeed was confused. Nor would that fact reflect badly upon the Bible, much less prove that the Bible is not God’s Word, as the skeptics would like to maintain.

Remember, the Bible records the words of many persons who were clearly not inspired of God: Adam and Eve’s excuses, Cain’s lie about being innocent of Abel’s murder, the lengthy speeches by Job’s “comforters,” Pharaoh’s denunciations of Moses and Aaron, King Saul’s fulminations against David, the High Priest’s accusations against Jesus, and on and on. The Bible does not guarantee the truthfulness of every speech that it records unless it is clear that the person was speaking under the inspiration of God.

Stephen is not said to be speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit any more than the many others whose words are recorded in Scripture. The Bible makes no attempt to hide the sins or errors of even its greatest characters, such as Abraham and David, so why should Stephen be protected from a slip of the tongue? However, let us look a bit deeper to see whether

or not and to what degree Stephen was actually confused.

First of all, Stephen did not specifically state that Jacob was buried in Shechem. Here is that part of his speech: “So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem” (Acts 7:15–16). Stephen’s reference to “our fathers” did not include Jacob (“he and our fathers”) but rather his sons. It was the “fathers” who were buried in Sychem (Shechem). We know that Jacob was buried in the Cave of Machpelah next to the bones of Sarah, of Abraham, Isaac, and his wife, Rebekah, and of Jacob’s wife, Leah. Do we know that any of Jacob’s 12 sons, the “fathers” of the Jews, were indeed buried at Shechem? Yes.

We are told specifically that Joseph was buried at Shechem: “And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver” (Joshua 24:32). This agrees with the statement that “Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem . . . and he bought a parcel of a field . . . at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for an hundred pieces of money” (Genesis 33:18–19). If Joseph, one of the “fathers,” was buried in Shechem, it could well be that some of his brothers who were also “fathers” of the children of Israel were buried there as well. The Old Testament doesn’t tell us where they were buried, so we have no basis for saying that Stephen was inaccurate on that score.

A Possible Explanation

The only problem remaining is Stephen’s statement that Abraham bought the field in Shechem. While there is no record that Abraham was ever in Shechem, he may well have passed through this centrally located city in his many travels. He could even have bought a field there and years later Jacob purchased an additional portion of it. Thus we cannot be dogmatic that what Stephen said was not true. He may have known then what we cannot know today.

On the other hand, it may be that Stephen made a slip of the tongue, and it was recorded in the Bible exactly as he said it. He had to be under tremendous pressure, surrounded by those who hated and were going to kill him. He had all the elements of the truth together but got them slightly and understandably confused. Stephen was only an ordinary mortal. He could make mistakes like the rest of us, and it is refreshingly honest that the Bible lets us know about such mistakes not only with him but with others.

Yes, we are told that Stephen was “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom . . . full of faith and power [and] did great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:3, 8). Thus we learn that to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be inspired of God doesn’t turn one into a mechanical robot incapable of human error—so long as one is not uttering prophecy, which must be without error.

Why Would God Let Stephen Err?

If Stephen did make a blunder, why didn’t God prevent him from doing so? Why should He? It made no difference. The rabbis didn’t even react. One reason for allowing this mistake (if that is what it was) and recording it could be to teach us the very lesson we have just mentioned. Another reason, no doubt, is to strengthen the Bible’s credibility in the eyes of honest seekers who are examining it to see whether or not they can trust it. In fact, the honest recording of this small inaccuracy is in the Bible’s favor.

If the Bible had been put together by deliberate fraud centuries or even years later and this speech was simply manufactured as part of a fictitious story, the forgers would surely not have made such a blunder. They could have and no doubt would have looked up in the Old Testament anything they were uncertain of to make sure they had it right. The Old Testament is consistent and forgers surely would have stuck to that story and avoided this seeming contradiction.

The fact that this apparent mistake in Stephen’s speech remains is one more proof that the Bible is an honest record. Furthermore, it shows us that no subsequent scribe dared to take it upon himself to “correct” the error. And that fact demonstrates once again the reverence with which the copyists handled what they knew to be God’s infallible Word and refrained from tampering with it, even when there seemed to be a mistake that needed correction.

—An excerpt from *IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH* (pp. 113-16) by DAVE HUNT

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Homosexuality and the Reign of Terror

T. A. McMahon

THE TITLE of this article may provoke cries of “homophobia” from some, even those not connected with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. A person *may* come to that conclusion after reading what I’ve written, but any thoughts prior to that reflect a bias founded upon ignorance. Before I get to an explanation of the title, however, I need to address the accusation of being called “homophobic,” a label that is used in wholesale fashion by many and applied by some to anyone who takes issue with homosexuality.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines homophobia as an “irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals.” Other meanings include “hatred of or prejudice against gays and lesbians,” “bigotry,” and even “racism.” No doubt there are individuals who manifest those characteristics, but to apply the words to those who are critical of the practice of homosexuality is a blatant abuse of a term that is questionable at best.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the chief reference book of psychotherapists, which includes all that they consider to be psychological phobias, has no listing for *homophobia*. This would indicate that the term is viewed to be without merit by the American Psychiatric Association, which produces each edition of the *DSM*. The APA could hardly be considered biased in favor of so-called homophobes since, after being pressured by the LGBT Task Force in 1973, it voted to remove from the *DSM* the term *homosexuality*, which it had previously defined as “sociopathic personality disturbance” and “sexual deviation.” Homophobia can thus be dispensed with as nothing more than a derisive epithet that falsely characterizes those who oppose any aspect of homosexuality.

Why did I title this article “Homosexuality and the Reign of Terror”? That may seem greatly overstated right now, and perhaps “the Reign of Intimidation” would be a description better suited to what we are experiencing today. One doesn’t need the gift of prophecy, however, to recognize the direction of the serious “judicial” incidents that have taken place thus far. For example, here and in Canada we’ve seen the rise of “human rights commissions” that major on issues related to homosexuality, primarily prosecuting as “hate crimes” the act of writing or speaking out against the practice.

One Canadian columnist gives his perspective: “For more than twenty years...I have been writing against the human rights commissions, which have quasi-legal powers that should be offensive to the citizens of any free country. They are kangaroo courts, in which the defendant’s right to due process is withdrawn. They reach judgments on the basis of no fixed law. Moreover [in addition to heavy fines], ‘the process is the punishment’ in these star chambers—for simply by agreeing to hear a case, they tie up the defendant in bureaucracy and paperwork, and bleed him for the cost of lawyers, while the person who brings the complaint, however frivolous, stands to lose nothing.”

Here in Oregon we have our own kangaroo court system in the works. Aaron and Melissa Klein are bakers who refused to make a wedding cake for a homosexual marriage. The lesbian couple who tried to order the cake complained to the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (OBLI). The Labor Commissioner levied a fine of \$135,000 and issued a gag order preventing the Kleins from speaking about the religious beliefs that had caused their refusal to honor this homosexual marriage with a cake. In his review of the proceedings, C. H. Fisher noted, “The Kleins were not charged and prosecuted in a traditional court of law. There was no due process, no jury of their peers, and their Constitutional rights were violated, including the First Amendment regarding freedom of religion. It amounts to Christian persecution not unlike what is occurring in some foreign nations.”

Now we have not only kangaroo courts in place, but we have a recent decision by this country’s highest court ruling in favor of homosexual marriage. As one consequence of this ruling, litigation scenarios will take place that involve churches that refuse to marry two males or two females. Pastors are ripe for lawsuits by those claiming that they have been psychologically damaged by such a refusal. One needs only to review the list of more than fifty grievances (Crying, Disappointment, Distrust of men, Resumption of smoking habit, Upset stomach, etc.) brought by the two lesbian women against the Kleins to see the potential for financial awards (e.g., \$135,000 in damages) for whoever would appeal to the courts.

Biblically steadfast churches will face a great deal of trouble, both legally and socially. Sadly, they will constitute a small remnant out of the multitudes of churches that claim to be Christian. The Scriptures indicate this prophetically, and it is what we are seeing take place throughout this country. The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of

the Holy Spirit, wrote that most Christians in the latter days will not follow the teachings and instructions of the Bible: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3).

That condition may well bring about much contention *within* Christendom, especially in the West. As governments put more pressure on Christianity through their laws, with threats of removing tax exemptions, and because of their growing opposition to biblical teachings, multitudes of churches that have been less than serious about following Scripture will submit in order to protect themselves legally and financially. False shepherds and false teachers will defend their compromises with the world by assailing those who remain steadfast in the faith.

Doctrinal disputes down through church history have led to murderous consequences. Saul’s persecutions of the early church were brutal. The Catholic Church’s inquisitions were horrendous. Even the Reformers were guilty of deadly persecutions over doctrinal disagreements. Could all that is taking place in opposition to the teachings of Scripture lead to a scenario of a reign of terror? A reading of the Book of Revelation gives a clear answer to that question. The most intense persecution occurs against those who turn to Jesus and will consequently be martyred during the Great Tribulation, which takes place after the Rapture of the church. Nevertheless, prior to that time, the church will experience events akin to a reign of terror unlike anything previously known in the US, although many of our brothers and sisters around the world have increasingly experienced more than a taste of it.

Historically, the phrase “Reign of Terror” was applied to a notorious period of the French Revolution. A few characteristics of the Reign of Terror correlate with what is developing today in the US—where the issue centers around homosexuality. It’s rather stunning that the LGBT community, consisting of less than 4 percent of the US population, has had such power and influence over the media and in our legal institutions and is thereby seemingly able to force its will on the masses.

In 18th century France, the Jacobins, although small in number, took control of the government of France aided by the popular support of the *Sans-Culottes* (the far more numerous poor of France). The objective of the Jacobins was to coerce and conform the thinking and actions of the French people to their own ideology. Their leader, Robespierre, attempted to replace

traditional Christian morals and values with his own concept of a “Republic of Virtue.” This has been the chief strategy of the LGBT movement in America. One has only to consider what has been implemented in our school systems, from kindergarten through high school, and to check out the pro-gay resource materials that have been mandated for use by school boards throughout the country.

According to French history, one-time supporters of the Jacobins who began to believe that their means were becoming too extreme, were guillotined. Although that’s not the case in the US, some who have fervently objected to the LGBT agenda have been fiercely targeted by the movement in order to counter their influence. Much of the LGBT propaganda has left many Christians in a confused state, particularly young adult Christians who see the church’s bewilderment over how to respond. They battle accusations of being unloving, intolerant, and bigoted. The only confident response for anyone who calls himself a *biblical* Christian (one who desires to know in truth the instructions of the Bible and to obey what it teaches) is to abide in the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul, in the first chapter of Romans, gives God’s view of homosexual-ity in no uncertain terms:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was [due]. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a

reprobate mind, to do those things which are not [fitting]. (Romans 1:20-28)

All sins separate mankind from God: “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2); “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Death here means separation. For those who reject Christ’s free gift of salvation, that separation is forever. For those who have believed the gospel and yet fall into sin, their temporal relationship with God is affected, but it can be restored immediately when they repent.

Both heterosexual sins (e.g., fornication, adultery) and homosexual sins (men with men, women with women) result in separation from God. God is no respecter of persons regarding “the wages of sin.” Yet there is a major difference. Homosexuality is an assault against the way God made things—His creation order. It goes far beyond disobedience to His instructions; it is an affront to the Creator of nature by glorifying His creatures, by exalting humans, and by corrupting natural sexuality. It is a sin (although that is vigorously denied by many “within” the church) of such consequence that should the LGBT community achieve its goal of worldwide acceptance of its practice of sex as an “alternate lifestyle,” it would sound the death knell for the human race. Men do not procreate with men, nor do women have babies with women.

Homosexuality is about sexual immorality. Period. All of the propaganda circulated by the LGBT proponents is aimed at obfuscating that simple fact. It is a grievous distortion of what God created as something good. Scripture couldn’t be any clearer in its opposition to homosexual acts as seen both in its words and phrases. The New King James version of the Bible underscores the Bible’s disdain in contemporary language: “uncleanness,” “lusts,” “dishonor their bodies,” “vile passions,” “exchanged the natural use for what is against nature,” “committing what is shameful,” “receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due,” “a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting.”

The Bible describes the sinful fruit of rejecting God and what ensues from a homosexual lifestyle: “Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful” (Romans 1:29-31).

Although each sin may not apply to every homosexual, the context of the verses makes a specific connection. It’s similar to 2 Timothy 3:2-5, where the sins listed are those that are produced by an individual whose life centers upon self-love.

Scripture clearly teaches that the God/Man Jesus, the Creator of humanity, through His sacrifice on the Cross, paid the immeasurable penalty for the sins of *every* man, woman, and child. He did that although we were as yet His enemies. Amazing love! His forgiveness is available for every sinner—heterosexual or homosexual—who repents by turning to God in faith, receiving His forgiveness, and, along with that, His gift of eternal life. That is the only way mankind can be reconciled to God.

How then shall we respond to what is taking place in our society and our churches—perhaps even in our own families—regarding homosexuality? We have to do things God’s way. We have to obey His instructions because that’s the only way any endeavor will benefit anyone and also be pleasing to God.

Again, homosexuality is a sexual sin. Those who commit such sins are bringing destruction and God’s wrath upon themselves if they don’t repent. Those who struggle with that sin within the body of Christ must be ministered to with much compassion, as we remember that Jesus, our Lord and Savior, already paid the penalty for that sin.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness [gentleness NKJ]; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)

A believer caught up in homosexuality must have a heart that is willing to repent of the sexually immoral practice. They must be ministered to in the spirit of gentleness, but the practice of this sin must never be accepted within a fellowship by true believers.

The ordination of practicing homosexuals and support of gay marriage within Christendom is increasing, but it is in direct contradiction to God’s Word. If a fellowship intends to remain true to the Scriptures, its position regarding homosexuality must be made clear. It cannot be practiced among believers.

How should we react to laws in our society that support homosexuality in opposition to the Scriptures? The only response a Christian can have is in the God-inspired words of Peter and the other Apostles: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION [COMPOSITE OF SEVERAL]: Why do you ignore the evidence in Scripture that the early church baptized “in the name of Jesus”? Even if Matthew 28:19 is correct [for the baptismal formula]..., Peter carried it out, as in Acts 2:38. Are you saying that Peter was wrong to baptize in the name of Jesus alone?

RESPONSE: “Even if Matthew 28:19 is correct?” Do you really believe that the inspired words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ are “incorrect?” The one true God eternally exists in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Among those denying God’s triune nature is the United Pentecostal Church (UPC). It also teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation and that it must be done only “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Yet Christ told His disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mt 28:19).

A major verse for the UPC is Zechariah 14:9: “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.” That doesn’t mean that He will have a single name—much less that it is “Lord Jesus Christ.” Moreover, “that day” hasn’t yet come, so this verse won’t help the UPC now. As the context shows, during the Millennium the entire world will know who the one true God is, and He will not be called by any false names.

Jesus said to baptize specifically in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nothing could be more fitting to symbolize the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The *Father* gave and sent the Son to be our Savior; the *Son* died for our sins; and it was through the *Holy Spirit*, by which we are born again, that Christ “offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb 9:14).

Paul demonstrated this in Ephesus when he asked whether they had received the Holy Ghost, and they said, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” Paul’s shocked response was, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” (Acts:19:2-3). Why ask about their baptism? Because no one could be baptized “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost” and not hear of the Holy Ghost! Paul wouldn’t have asked that question if baptism was to be only “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The UPC also argues that “Without... *water baptism*...it is impossible to enter into the Kingdom of God.” Paul’s understanding of baptism, however, was quite different. He writes to the Corinthians,

“I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius...and [the] household of Stephanas...” (1 Cor 1:14-16). Yet Paul calls himself the “father” of the Corinthians and explains why: “For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you *through the gospel*” (4:15). They had been born again into God’s family as His children, and Paul had been the means of their salvation—*without baptizing them*.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were saved through *believing the gospel* (1 Cor 15:3). He repeatedly declares that we are saved *only* by believing the gospel: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth [it]” (Rom 1:16). Salvation comes through believing the gospel, not by being baptized. Paul declared, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor:1:17). Clearly baptism is no part of the gospel and thus has nothing to do with salvation.

QUESTION: Is an “apostate” one who was never a believer to begin with? Or is it the way the dictionary defines it: a person who abandons/rejects a faith he previously actually believed in?

RESPONSE: We are in the midst of widespread apostasy. By that term we mean: departure from “the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” for which we are to earnestly contend (Jude 3). I believe that apostates include two types of people:

- 1) Those who have knowingly turned completely from Christ and no longer even pretend to be Christians; and...
- 2) Those who still claim to be Christians but have departed from the faith, e.g.:
 - a) Those who deliberately twist the Scriptures, perverting the gospel “to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30) or who endorse false teachers (though they know better) because they want to share their fame and power (Jude 16) —or who simply want to be “positive” so as to “offend” no one.
 - b) The naive, who are genuinely deceived by false prophets/teachers.

Most of the epistles involve correction of false doctrine and practice that was already in the church in those days. It is the mushrooming, widespread incidence of the apostasy in number 2 above among those who *claim* to be Christians that I believe Scripture points to as a specific sign of the last days just prior to the Rapture.

When asked, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Mt 24:3), Christ identified apostasy as the foremost sign of the last days, i.e., religious deception, which He mentioned three times:

Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (Mt 24:4-5) And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many (v. 11) For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect (v. 24).

Christ’s warning made several things clear: 1) The major sign of the nearness of His coming would be religious deception by professing Christian leaders; 2) A central feature of the deception would be false prophets showing “great signs and wonders,” which, though convincing, would also be false; 3) The repetition of the word “many” indicated that this religious deception would be widespread, apparently worldwide; 4) The words “Christs,” “prophets,” “signs and wonders,” and “elect” indicated that the deception would be among professing Christians, i.e., those inside the church.

The first reason that Jude gave as to why we must “earnestly contend for *the faith*” was the fact that “there are certain men crept in [inside the church] unawares... ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

But what is *the faith*, a departure from which marks one as an apostate? Some might say that as long as a person believes that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose the third day, he is saved. But that declaration doesn’t explain the full gospel. As defined by Paul, the gospel declares the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3-4). Surely that involves who the biblical God is, who the biblical Christ is, what the biblical problem between God and man is, the biblical and only means of man’s forgiveness by God, and the eternal consequences for those who reject the biblical gospel. None of these is a peripheral point of doctrine to be ignored or compromised. To do so would be a departure from the faith into apostasy to proclaim a false gospel.

Just as Israel, to whom God sent His prophets to warn them of their apostasy and its dire consequences, would not listen, so it is today with many professing Christians. Glad to follow any pied piper and unwilling to hear the Lord, they dance merrily on to judgment.

Time on this earth is drawing to a close. Let us determine to remain true to and earnestly contend for “the faith once delivered unto the saints.” And may we rescue many before it is forever too late.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Is the Millennium the Ultimate Kingdom?

Question: Referring to Christ’s prophesied future reign over this world from Jerusalem, the Bible says, “Of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:7). Yet the Bible also says that His reign will only last a thousand years and that it will end with a world war (Revelation 20:6–9). Which is it—forever, or a thousand years; peace or war? It can’t be both. How can anyone believe that the Bible is God’s infallible Word when it contains so many contradictions, and particularly on such fundamental concepts as the reign of Christ, which is supposedly the culmination of all?

Response: There is a very simple and obvious explanation: the millennial reign of Christ is not the “government and peace” that the Bible says will never end. That fact is clear for a number of reasons. Certainly 1,000 years is not endless, and war cannot be equated with peace. Yet most Christians imagine that the Millennium is the “kingdom” for which we are to pray “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10), and that is the subject of so many biblical prophecies. In fact, it is not.

It is amazing that the obvious contradictions are ignored by Christians who persist in equating the Millennium with Christ’s eternal kingdom. The critics, however, who diligently search for every seeming contradiction they can find, have noted the problem, but in their eagerness to condemn the Bible, they overlook the simple solution: The Millennium is not the kingdom.

Christ said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see . . . [or] enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3, 5). Clearly, there will be many individuals living during the Millennium who have not been born again, or they would not follow Satan: “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations

which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them” (Revelation 20:7–9). These rebels are obviously not born-again Christians! Yet only those who have been born again can be in the kingdom.

Moreover, Paul tells us that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). Yet the earth will be inhabited during the Millennium by great numbers of “flesh-and-blood” people. Here, then, is another reason why the Millennium

cannot be the kingdom. (The unique role that the Millennium plays will be discussed later.)

What then is the kingdom? It is eternal, which indicates that it will exist in the new eternal universe that God will create after He has destroyed this one: “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:10, 13).

Obviously, no kingdom nor anything else on this earth can be eternal until the present universe

has been destroyed and a new one created. Only then will the kingdom have arrived that is eternal, whose peace will never end, that cannot be inherited by flesh and blood, and for which the entrance requirement is being born again. As Paul informed us:

Then cometh the end [consummation], when he [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. . . .

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24, 28).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 116-18) by DAVE HUNT

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Pre- or Post-Trib Rapture?

Dave Hunt — First published in October 2003

THE RAPTURE of the church involves all believers being caught up to heaven—those just resurrected together with those alive at the time (1 Thes 4:13-18). If it occurs at the beginning of the tribulation period, then clearly Christ's Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon is a separate event. According to Zechariah 14:3-5, "all the saints" must accompany Christ back to earth. But if the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, it must be simultaneous with the Second Coming, making them one event. Which is it: two events separated by seven years, or one event with two diverse purposes?

This question, although it has nothing to do with the gospel of salvation, divides much of the evangelical church. Happily, it can be settled rather easily. The descriptions in Scripture of the Rapture and Second Coming respectively are so different in so many details that they could not possibly be describing the same occurrence. We can't cover all of these distinctions, but here are a few:

- 1) At the *Rapture* Christ does not return to earth but catches believers up to meet Him above the earth, taking them directly to heaven: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn 14:3); "caught up...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thes 4:17)

In contrast, at the *Second Coming* Christ returns to this earth to rule Israel and the world from David's throne in Jerusalem: "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem" (Zec 14:4); "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk 1:32-33); "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him....The armies which were in heaven followed him....Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rv 19:11-15).

- 2) At the *Rapture* there is a resurrection of all believers who have died up to that time: "The dead shall be raised incorruptible" (1 Cor 15:52-53); "the

dead in Christ shall rise first...." (1 Thes 4:16)

In contrast, at the *Second Coming* there is no resurrection until Antichrist is defeated, he and the false prophet have been "cast alive into a lake of fire" (Rv 19:20), and Satan has been bound in the "bottomless pit [for] a thousand years" (20:1-3)—none of which is even remotely related to the rapture of believers to heaven. Then, to "the first resurrection" that occurred at the Rapture are added a unique group: "Them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (4-5).

- 3) At the *Rapture*, the bodies of living believers (like those who are resurrected) will be changed to become immortal: "We shall not all sleep [i.e., die], but we shall all be changed...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [who are living] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:51-53); "We which are alive...shall be caught up together with them [the resurrected saints]...to meet the Lord in the air [clearly requiring immortal bodies]." (1 Thes 4:17)

In contrast, at the *Second Coming* all of the saints return with Christ from heaven and will therefore already have been changed into immortality: "The LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zec 14:5); "I saw heaven opened [and one] clothed with a vesture dipped in blood...and the armies which were in heaven followed him [to] smite the nations" (Rv 19:11-15).

- 4) The *Rapture* occurs during relative peace and prosperity when the world does not expect judgment from God: "And as it was in the days of Noah [the last thing they expected was God's judgment]...they did eat, they drank...married wives... were given in marriage [and as in] the days of Lot...they bought, they sold...planted...buildd....Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Lk 17:26-30)

Again in complete contrast, the *Second Coming* occurs in the midst of the worst war the world has ever seen and following the greatest devastation this planet has ever suffered or ever will: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world...nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Mt 24:21-22); "Behold a pale horse: and his name

that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed...power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger....There was a great earthquake...every mountain and island were moved out of their places...[men] hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks...for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rv 6:8-17); "And the four angels were loosed...to slay the third part of men" (9:15); "and the...sea...became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. And...the rivers and fountains of waters...became blood...the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and...men were scorched with great heat...and...there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth....And every island fled away and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail [of large stones]... every stone about the weight of a talent" (16:3-21); "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True....And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen.... And I saw the beast [Antichrist], and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and...the false prophet [and they] were cast alive into a lake of fire..." (19:11-21).

- 5) The *Rapture* occurs when conditions in the world seem to indicate that all is well—when very few expect Christ to return, and He catches even the church by surprise: "Of that day and hour knoweth no man...in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Mt 24:36, 44)

In contrast, when the *Second Coming* occurs, not even Antichrist is caught by surprise—the many visible signs alert everyone that Christ is right at the door: "When ye shall see all these things, know that it [Christ's coming] is near, even at the doors" (Mt 24:33); "The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse" (Rv 19:19).

- 6) The *Rapture* occurs when the church is sleeping, with little expectation of the Lord's return: "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Mt 25:5); "Watch ye therefore...lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." (Mk 13:35-36)

In contrast, the *Second Coming* occurs at the end of the Tribulation in the midst

of worldwide devastation and hopeless distress; the Antichrist and his armies are attacking Israel, much of Jerusalem is already captured (*Zec* 14:1-2), and Israel is on the verge of annihilation. It is inconceivable that the church, if it were still here, would be slumbering in complacency and under the delusion that “surely Christ wouldn’t come now”!

- 7) Since the *Rapture* instantly takes us, without dying, out of this world of sin, pain, and sorrow to be forever with Christ and like Him, never more to grieve Him, it is called the “blessed hope”: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (*Ti* 2:13); “every man that hath this hope.” (*1 Jn* 3:3)

In contrast, the *Second Coming* (or a post-trib rapture at that time) could hardly be called a “blessed hope,” inasmuch as very few Christians (if the church were still here) would survive to enjoy it. Having refused to receive the 666 mark of the beast “in their right hand, or in their forehead” and therefore being unable to “buy or sell,” and refusing to “worship the image of the beast [they would] be killed” (*Rv* 13:15-17). It makes no sense to suggest that if you can secretly eat out of enough garbage pails to avoid starvation and still keep one step ahead of Antichrist’s world police death squads, “Blessed hope! You’ll be raptured at Armageddon!”

- 8) As for the *Rapture*, unquestionably, the early church was taught to expect it at any moment and to eagerly watch, wait, and look for Christ’s return, when He will catch all believers up into His Father’s house to be with Him eternally: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that *wait* for their lord...” (*Lk* 12:35-36); “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we *look* for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (*Phil* 3:20-21); “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to *wait* for his Son from heaven...even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (*1 Thes* 1:9-10); “*looking* for that blessed hope” (*Ti* 2:13); “unto them that *look* for him shall he appear the second time without sin

unto salvation” (*Heb* 9:28). One does not watch, wait, and look each day for something that cannot happen until Antichrist’s advent or the end of a seven-year tribulation. Thus, there *must* be a coming of Christ that could happen at any moment.

In contrast, the *Second Coming*, by very definition as described in Scripture, cannot be expected momentarily. Therefore, none of the scriptures just quoted concerning watching and waiting and looking for the Lord could refer to the *Second Coming* or to a post-trib rapture of the church. These scriptures could therefore refer only to a *pre-trib* rapture.

- 9) The pre-trib *Rapture* has a powerful, purifying effect upon those who have this hope in Him. The fact that it is to be expected at any moment can only mean that it must come before Antichrist is revealed and before the Tribulation. If Christ could come at any moment, there is no time to waste, no time to delay witnessing, no time to indulge in sin with the idea of repenting and changing one’s ways later: “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (*1 Jn* 2:28); “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (3:3)

In contrast, anticipation of the *Second Coming* (or a post-trib rapture at that time) could hardly have a purifying effect, because it can’t take place for at least seven years—plenty of time to delay witnessing, getting right with the Lord, and holy living until later. In fact, the Lord said that believing He couldn’t come at any moment would have the *opposite* effect from purifying believers: “If that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants...and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come at an hour when he is not aware” (*Mt* 24:48-50; *Lk* 12:45-46).

- 10) The *Rapture* is not only an event that we are to expect momentarily and to eagerly anticipate, but we are to ask our Lord to come immediately. Here is how the Bible ends: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.... Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (*Rv* 22:17,20)

In contrast, the *Second Coming* is not of such a nature and timing that we could ask

Christ to effect it right now. Since Christ obviously cannot return to the earth in judgment to rescue Israel, stop the destruction at Armageddon, and destroy the Antichrist along with his kingdom and his armies until the end of the Tribulation, for us to cry out to Christ, “Come, Lord Jesus!” would be like demanding payment on a debt that isn’t due for seven years. Yet, “the Spirit and the bride” *do* cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus.” We can only conclude that there must be a coming of Christ that could occur at any moment. It cannot be the *Second Coming* or a post-trib rapture. It can only be a pre-trib rapture.

- 11) There are at least two events that occur in heaven for which the church must be present and that therefore cannot take place until the *Rapture* occurs: the judgment seat of Christ, and the marriage of the Lamb to His bride: “for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (*Rom* 14:10); “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (*2 Cor* 5:10); “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted [to] be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white [as a result of her cleansing at the judgment seat of Christ]” (*Rv* 19:7-8). Both these events occur prior to Christ’s return to earth and thus demand a prior rapture.

It is clear that the *Second Coming* cannot occur until these two vital events, which demand the presence of the church in heaven, have taken place. It is only after the Lamb has been married to His bride that she accompanies Him back to earth to rescue Israel and to destroy Antichrist and his armies: “And the armies which were in heaven followed him...clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (*Rv* 19:14).

We know not why the Bridegroom tarrys, but exactly as He foretold, the church is asleep. In that context, our Lord added: “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (*Mt* 25:6). May each of us be listening eagerly for that cry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Indeed, we ought to be sounding it aloud, for the Lord could come at *any moment* to take us to Himself. So let us watch and wait and look for Him in eager anticipation—and encourage others to do the same. It will have a purifying and motivating effect in our lives.

TBC

Quotable.....

The signs of the present times point strongly towards the Holy Land and the once glorious city of Jerusalem; and the eyes of many (both Jews and Gentiles) are turned hither in anxious expectation of the approaching fulfilment of those promises of favour and restoration which are so strikingly set forth in Scripture, with reference to that land and her scattered and degraded people. The threatened judgments have been awfully and literally accomplished, and shall not the promises of God be found to be equally sure? It will be no hard matter for the same Almighty power which has turned her fruitful valleys into a desolate wilderness, to cause that “wilderness” once more “to blossom as the rose”; and the same Hand that has scattered her inhabitants over the whole earth, and made them a mark for the scorn and reproach of the Gentile nations, can as easily gather them together and bring them again into their own Land.

—Mrs. J. B. Webb, in the preface to her novel *Naomi or The Last Days of Jerusalem*, December 1840

Q&A.....

Question: We can’t seem to find a church in our area that has godly leadership and biblical preaching. We feel so alone and now just read the Bible and pray at home. What should we do? And how do we find a “good” church?

Response: It is a sad commentary on the state of the church that we receive many such queries.

What marks a “healthy” church? Crucial to the answer is Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst...” Christ himself must be the central focus—not a pastor, gripping sermons, a strong missionary emphasis, exciting youth programs, compatible fellow members, or even agreeable doctrines, important as all these factors are. A fervent love for Christ and a heartfelt corporate worship of His Person must be the primary mark of a healthy church.

The early church was thus characterized. It met regularly on the first day of the week in remembrance of His death. That weekly outpouring of praise, worship and thanksgiving had one purpose—to give God His due portion. It isn’t primarily a matter of

my need, my edification, my enjoyment, or my spiritual satisfaction, but of His worth in my eyes and the eyes of the church.

As I see it, our secondary focus should be our opportunity for servanthood with a corporate body of believers. I give myself to a needy, imperfect people for whom I can pray, for whose needs I can concern myself in practical ways, to whom I can be an encourager and a minister of the Word, and among whom I can demonstrate and work out Christ’s desire that His own “might be one.” This fellowship is commanded: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). Is it our joy to gather with God’s people in intercessory prayer and study of the Word, or is Sunday-morning-only quite enough? A healthy church will not only gather unto Him, but with each other.

Lastly, I need to assess my own spiritual needs. The shepherds must provide the spiritual food that will nurture the flock, that it might be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17). That’s a big order and requires, of course, a teachable flock that loves the Word and is in willing subjection to it. The shepherds must also guard the flock of God by keeping out false and dangerous doctrines contrary to the truth. They must adhere to the pure Word of God as the only authority for faith and morals.

You say, “Wonderful! Lead me to such a church.” Remember, however, the order of priority: worship (do you worship sincerely, wholeheartedly, and in a manner satisfying to the object of that worship?); servanthood (do you serve, even as Christ gave us an example, with humility and with joy?); personal needs (are you growing, maturing, taking on Christ’s character?).

The final decision as to your church affiliation must be, prayerfully, yours. Is your personal worship of the Savior so joyful and satisfying a thing both to you and to Him that it supersedes other considerations? Do your opportunities for service render your fellowship sufficiently meaningful and significant? Or do doctrinal concerns or lack of biblical preaching and teaching cancel out the other two? You must seek the Lord for His answer. God’s comforting assurance remains: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

How Can God Repent?

Question: In Genesis 6:6 we are told that “it repented the LORD that he had made man.” Jonah 3:10 says that “God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them.” A number of other times throughout the Old Testament the same Hebrew word expresses a similar repentance on God’s part. How can God, who is supposedly perfect, repent? And why would He need to if He knows in advance all that is going to happen and allows it?

Response: It is true, as you say, that if God is perfect and knows in advance all that will happen, then He could not possibly “repent” in the sense of having been wrong. In fact, there are so many verses in the Bible declaring that God cannot repent in this sense that we may be assured He never has and never will. For example: “God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19).

Then what are we to understand when it says that God has repented or will repent? A number of verses provide the necessary insight. For example: “Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil [judgment] that he hath pronounced against you” (Jeremiah 26:13). When God offers to “repent” of the judgment He has pronounced upon the wicked if they turn from their wickedness, it is quite clear that His “repentance” is simply His gracious response to man’s repentance. That fact is made clear by many Scriptures such as the following:

If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. (Ezekiel 18:21)

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. (Jeremiah 18:7–8)

A Change of Action, Not of Mind

Obviously if after the conditions He has set forth are fulfilled God then “repents,” He has not changed His attitude or actions because He was wrong or because He didn’t foresee the future. He has simply changed His action toward those who repented, exactly as He promised. There is neither remorse nor regret; nor is either of these possible for God. Such was the nature of His “repentance” in not destroying Nineveh, as Jonah had declared He would.

In each case where “repentance” is attributed to God, His action is quite consistent with the principle He has repeatedly laid down in His Word. Where there is repentance and turning from wickedness on the part of a person or nation, He will forgive and not execute the judgment that He has previously pronounced.

What then about God’s “repentance” in Genesis 6? It is evidently the converse of the above. Instead of the wicked turning to good, and as a result God “repenting” of the judgment He had pronounced upon them, those whom God had created and pronounced good had instead turned to wickedness. Consequently, God “repented” of the blessing He had promised them. In fact, so great was their wickedness that the whole of mankind that He had made deserved to be destroyed.

Fortunately, one man, Noah, “found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8). This fact

tells us that although grace is free, as it must be, there are conditions for receiving it. God said, “My spirit shall not always strive with man” (Genesis 6:3). The time for judgment had come, but one man, in distinction to all the rest, was willing to repent and to obey God and thus could be a recipient of God’s grace.

Parents need to pattern their discipline after God’s example. There is a point of diminishing return, and finally of no return, in extending forgiveness to an erring child who always begs piteously for mercy. If there is never a punishment, then grace is meaningless and the required lesson is never learned. The grace that God extended to Noah had meaning only in relation to the judgment meted out upon all others. And so it is with the salvation God provides in Christ: it is meaningful and desirable only in light of the eternal judgment that we would otherwise have to endure for our sins.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 121-23) by DAVE HUNT

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The Enigma of Calvinism

T. A. McMahon

CALVINISM, FROM my first exposure to its teachings and practices to and through today, has not ceased to be an enigma to me. In fact, the more I have learned about it, the more perplexing I find it to be. I've been told by a few of its advocates that I'm too dull of mind to grasp its teachings. Rather than being offended by that accusation, I consider it a criticism that puts me in great company. Dave Hunt, one of the most intelligent men I have ever known, was once accused by two young Calvinist pastors of "not having the ability" to understand Calvinism (i.e., being too stupid), primarily because he wasn't knowledgeable of Greek and Hebrew. Dave's gentle-yet-pointed response to them was that their own relatively brief education in Greek and Hebrew was hardly comparable to the first century Christians' knowledge of the languages. Yet their knowledge of those languages didn't appear to give the early believers any advantage when it came to living out the Scriptures, because much of the New Testament was written to correct their errors.

This article, however, is not an apologetic regarding Calvinism. Dave and others have written volumes critiquing that belief system, so anyone who is interested can readily access their perspectives. If you are not familiar with the beliefs of Calvinism, our extensive resource materials, from Dave's comprehensive *What Love Is This?* to smaller books and booklets, are loaded with helpful information.

What I am presenting here are just some of the thoughts I've had over the years that are disturbingly puzzling to me, and I have yet to hear them reasonably explained beyond being told that "God's ways, means, and thoughts are higher than my thoughts and understanding." That's certainly the case, although God does say, "Come let us reason together," and He has given us his Holy Spirit to help us in our lack of understanding (Isaiah 1:18; John 16:13; 1 Co 2:14). Nevertheless, the thoughts that follow are some of the things that I find terribly perplexing.

Growing up as a Roman Catholic, educated in a Catholic elementary school, a Catholic military school, and a Catholic high school, I was quite serious about and knowledgeable of my faith. I was what was then referred to as a "devout Catholic," meaning I took my religion seriously.

One of the most highly esteemed Catholic "saints" was Saint Augustine. I was taught that he was the Father of and Doctor (Teacher) of the Catholic Church. He inspired some—and confirmed all—of the major dogmas of Roman Catholicism. He believed and taught the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine in the Mass; that the Mass, including the Eucharist, was an ongoing immolation (sacrificial killing) of Jesus; that baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation; that Mary was sinless and a perpetual virgin; that the Apocrypha was part of the Old Testament canon; that the popes were a fulfillment of apostolic succession; that Christ would not literally reign a thousand years on the earth, and that all spiritual authority rests in the Roman Catholic Church. Regarding this last point, Augustine wrote, "If you should find someone who does not yet believe in the gospel, what would you [Mani] answer him when he says, 'I do not believe'? Indeed, I would not believe in the gospel myself if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so" (*Against the Letter of Mani Called "The Foundation" 5:6*). If there is any doubt that "Saint" Augustine was thoroughly Catholic, it has to be the product of wishful thinking or a less-than-honest support for one's Reformation theology bias.

How does Augustine's Catholicism qualify as an enigma? Calvinist Protestants, those who protest against the Church of Rome including John Calvin himself, held and continue to hold Augustine in a reverence bordering on idolatry. Calvin referred to him as "holy father" in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and cites him more than 400 times. Calvinist Francois Wendel acknowledges that "Upon points of doctrine [Calvin] borrows from Augustine with both hands" (*TBC 7/12*). Dave Hunt points out in *What Love Is This?* the great praise of Augustine by leading Calvinists: "One of the greatest theological and philosophical minds that God has ever so seen fit to give to His church" (Talbot and Crampton, cited in Dave Hunt, *What Love Is This?* [Bend, OR: The Berean Call, 2006], 56). "The greatest Christian since New Testament times...greatest man that ever wrote Latin" (Souter, cited in Hunt, *What Love?*, 56). "[His] labors and writings, more than those of any other man in the age in which he lived, contributed to the promotion of sound doctrine and the revival of true religion" (Rice, *Ibid.*). This is from those who represent a religious system that has historically opposed the Roman Catholic Church—at least, that's

the general perception.

If that isn't mystifying, consider this: One of the revered icons of Calvinism, B. B. Warfield, who headed Princeton Seminary, claimed that Augustine was both the founder of Roman Catholicism and the father of the Reformation (Warfield, *Ibid.*, 59). It takes more than a creative imagination to make sense of that perspective.

The cry of the Reformers was *sola scriptura*, which means that the Bible alone is to be the Christian's authority in all matters of faith and practice. I couldn't agree more. However, although Calvin and Luther, among others, waved that banner, they did not live by its important truth. They kept some baggage from their former faith that isn't even found in God's Word, or it is contrary to the teachings of Scripture. Infant baptism, for example, was kept, and it was claimed that it makes children Christians and opens the doorway to heaven. The ritual of baptism, rather than being a public declaration of one's identification with Christ, involved the removal of sins and granted spiritual regeneration. They also continued clericalism, giving special authority to their priests. They pushed Christ's ordinance of communion far beyond its scriptural instruction. Communion became an efficacious sacrament with its sacred elements. It could be administered only by the clergy rather than performed as a simple act carried out by all believers in remembrance of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Calvin, in particular, continued the Catholic practice of state churches, in which the secular government of Geneva supported his sometimes lethal decrees. Obviously, the *sola scriptura* was functionally lost by those who said they desired to reform Roman Catholicism. I'm bewildered and grieved that such a critical abandoning of Scripture is passed over by Calvinists.

But there is much more that baffles me, and the Calvinist teaching on predestination is at the top of the list and infects the rest. I cannot comprehend how any Bible-believing Christian could possibly accept Calvin's view of predestination and God's sovereignty, which he took primarily from the writings of "Saint" Augustine. Calvin declared, "I say with Augustine, that the Lord has created those who, as he certainly foreknew, were to go to destruction, and he did so because he so willed. Why he willed, it is not ours to ask...."

Calvin taught that everything depends upon the mere will of God. Calvinist R. C. Sproul Jr. writes, "God wills all things that

come to pass... God desired for man to fall into sin... God created sin" (Sproul Jr., *Ibid.*, 275) Another Calvinist adds, "God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen... He has foreordained everything 'after the counsel of his will': the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist—even sin" (Palmer, *Ibid.*). Think for a moment about the implications of what these men have said, and what multitudes of other Calvinists who agree with them likewise teach. Do they truly believe that God is the author of every wicked act of mankind? If so, and I can't see how they can rationalize their way around such a conclusion, it is the ultimate blasphemy directed at the character of God. My mind-boggled reaction is how men who profess to know and love God and are highly esteemed in Christendom, could even think that, let alone preach it? Has their "intellectual reasoning" blinded them to the clear and overwhelming number of Scriptures that contradict their theology? I don't get why they don't get it.

This is not so-called hyper-Calvinist thinking. Predestination is central to Calvinism's teaching on sovereignty, foreknowledge, unconditional election, the denial of free will, irresistible grace, limited atonement, regeneration prior to belief, and most certainly the eternal destiny of millions, perhaps billions of souls, who were predestined to the Lake of Fire before time began.

I could fill up every page of this newsletter and more with the contradictions, the absurdities, and the tragic mischaracterizations of our God and Savior that the Calvinist beliefs in predestination and sovereignty generate. They are a dreadful offense to biblical truth and common sense. The space designed for this article however limits me to just a few. Nevertheless, I hope that those who call themselves Calvinists or lean toward that belief system will give some serious thought and prayer to them.

My questions: Why would Jesus preach repentance to the multitudes (Matthew 4:17) if their fate had already been predestined? What was the point of Jesus upbraiding cities where His miracles were done because they did not repent? Did they have a choice? Why would Jesus beckon all who labor and are heavy laden to come unto Him (Matthew 11:28) if those who are not of the elect cannot? Why would Jesus draw a little child to Himself (Matthew 18:4) and say, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter

the kingdom of heaven"? Shouldn't He have qualified that: "Elect little children"? He said further (Matthew 18:14), "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these [elect?] little ones should perish." Why would Jesus call "all the people unto Him" (Mark 7:14) and say, "Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand," if they could *not come or understand* until they were regenerated? Did the angel who appeared to the shepherds (Luke 2:10) get his message wrong when he said, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people"? If Jesus predestined untold numbers of souls to a horrendous destiny, why would He say, "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56)? Why is there "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10) if it was coerced by "irresistible grace" and was previously programmed? John writes, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14) and "Many more believed because of [Jesus'] own word; and said unto the woman [at the well], Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:41-42). Were all those Samaritans regenerated before coming to Him?

Those are just a few of the verses that raise reasonable questions about Calvinist beliefs. Both the Old Testament and the rest of the New Testament are filled with hundreds more. Regarding the Old Testament, why would Joshua say, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" and "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" if, in fact, he and they had no choice in the matter? In the Book of Revelation we are told of the great white throne judgment of the lost (Revelation 20:11-15). If the Calvinist's teaching of predestination were true, i.e., that the souls standing before Christ for judgment were preordained to the Lake of Fire before mankind was created, giving them no opportunity for salvation, what is to be judged on their part? If Calvinism is true, and not only the destiny of the lost was predetermined, but the sins that they committed were authored by an absolutely sovereign God, there is nothing to judge. Any attempt to reconcile those judgment verses with Calvinism turns what the Scriptures teach into a charade at best, and a mockery of Jesus and a travesty against God's Word at worst.

Reading Calvinist writers, we find that

the one thing that is consistent is their inconsistency. John MacArthur's commentaries in his *Study Bible* are loaded with teachings that contradict his five-point Calvinism. For example, referring to Deuteronomy 30:15 he writes, "Here Moses pinpoints the *choice*—to love and obey God is life and good, to reject God is death and evil. If they *chose* to love God and obey His Word, they would enjoy all God's blessings" (emphasis added).

For me, Calvinism has been an ongoing enigma. Having been a Roman Catholic for 30 years of my life, I'm grateful for the Reformers' having stood up to the most powerful religious institution of the day and turning Christians in the direction of the Scriptures. I'm nevertheless grieved and appalled at the unbiblical theology the reformers created under the banner of *sola scriptura* and the distortion it presents of the character of God and its potential for misrepresenting the Gospel. Its growing influence is also very troubling and personally unsettling due to the fact that some of my good friends and family members are Calvinists or hold to some Calvinist teachings. Although I'm thankful that through prayer God provides opportunities to challenge their views through the Scriptures, it continues to be a burden that weighs upon my heart.

Even so, God provides encouragement. At one point, when I seemed to be getting nowhere with my Calvinist friends and it was getting me down, I blurted out a question to a pastor with whom I was riding. It had nothing to do with anything that we were talking about previously, so it took him by surprise when I asked him what he thought about Calvinism. He reflected on that for a moment and then explained that when he was in seminary nearly all of his favorite professors were Calvinists. Many of their favorite Christian writers were Calvinists, and he had read some of their books. Therefore, while he was in school, he believed that he was a Calvinist as well. My glum response was, "So, you're a Calvinist," which was more of an unhappy conclusion than a question. He looked at me with a grin. "No, I'm not!" At that point, I think I laughed in relief. To my question of "So, what happened?" he replied matter-of-factly that the more he read the Word of God, the harder he found it to reconcile his Calvinist beliefs with the Scriptures.

The only thing I can add to the above is my prayer that all who are attracted to Calvinism would do likewise by searching the Scriptures to see if such teachings are true to God's Word. **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Augustine used Ezekiel 44:2 as “proof” that Joseph and Mary did *not* consummate their marriage: “This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it. Because the LORD the God of Israel hath entered in by it” (Ezk 44:2). He interpreted the “closed gate” through which passed the “prince” in Ezekiel 44:2 as a “type” of Mary’s perpetual virginity. Mary is the closed city, and the prince miraculously passed through the closed gate.

Augustine’s “explanation” went on: “What means this closed gate in the house of the Lord, except that Mary is to be ever inviolate? What does it mean that ‘no man shall pass through it,’ save that Joseph shall not know her? And what is this: ‘The Lord alone enters in and goeth out by it,’ except that the Holy Ghost shall impregnate her, and that the Lord of Angels shall be born of her? And what means this – ‘It shall be shut for evermore,’ but that Mary is a Virgin before His birth, a Virgin in His birth, and a Virgin after His birth.”

RESPONSE: Augustine’s reduction of the Bible by spiritualizing it has generated all sorts of evil, as has been pointed out in other places [See <https://goo.gl/sX8E7f>; <https://goo.gl/coEYSc>]. Proper exegesis of the passage by “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15) could never honestly allow this Scripture to support the idea of a perpetual virginity for Mary. Only the limited imagination of man as he is influenced by Satan would dare to place unholy hands upon a holy text in such a manner. Matthew 1:25 states plainly that Joseph “knew her not *till* she had brought forth her firstborn son...” (emphasis added). Yes, they consummated their marriage, and Mary and Joseph had children (Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3).

What do these verses mean? If one reads the full context of Ezekiel 44, not only does it *not* support Augustine’s spiritualization of the passage, but it also roughly handles Augustine’s replacement theology, or the false idea that the Lord has finished His dealings with physical Israel. When the Lord Jesus returns to the earth, He specifically does so at Jerusalem, fulfilling the promise to physical Israel that “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39). In Ezekiel 44:2, Scripture clearly says, “Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall

not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.” At His triumphal entry (Matthew 21:1-5) the Lord Jesus came via the Mount of Olives and entered the city by the Eastern Gate. That hardly parallels or suggests a human birth.

History reveals that the East Gate was closed by the Muslims in 810, but it was reopened in 1102 by the Crusaders for the short time they controlled the land. It was Ottoman leader Saladin who had it walled up again after taking Jerusalem back in 1187. The Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent kept the East Gate walled up when he rebuilt the city walls. It has remained sealed since 1541. It has been suggested that Suleiman may have taken this decision purely for defensive reasons. In any case, it has remained that way until today.

So, the gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened. We see the fulfillment of that today. Who hasn’t seen a picture of the blocked up East Gate entrance of Jerusalem, before which the Muslims have placed a cemetery? Muslims learned that Jewish rabbis spoke of the Messiah as a great military leader sent by God from the East. The Messiah would enter the Eastern Gate and liberate the city from foreign occupation. The Muslims sealed the gate and put a Muslim cemetery in front of it believing that such a holy man as the Messiah would not defile himself by walking through a Muslim cemetery, little knowing that they were fulfilling prophecy by doing this! Though the cemetery was placed there to make the ground unclean for the Lord to tread upon, Ezekiel 44:3 tells us, “It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.”

Acts 1:9-12 states, “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey.”

Zechariah 14:3-4 prophesies of the Lord’s return to the earth: “Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those

nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east....” Ezekiel 43:2,4 tells us, “And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a *noise of many waters*: and the earth shined with his glory.... And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.” The Holy Spirit, which departed from the temple in Ezekiel 8-11, will return as the glory of the “Son of Man,” whose voice is, “...as the *sound of many waters*” (Revelation 1:13-15). The Mount of Olives faces the Eastern Gate, which will be opened by the Lord at His coming regardless of what man may plan or spiritualize concerning the plain meaning of Scripture (emphasis added).

QUESTION: I’ve been reading Matthew 5:13-16 and 2 Peter 1:5-7. Could you help me understand how these verses tie together?

RESPONSE: Matthew 5:13-16 tells us that we are the “salt of the earth” and therefore must *walk in a manner that will keep us from spoiling the effectiveness of that salt* as we are witnesses to those around us. Salt is used both to purify and preserve. If it is spoiled (loses its savor), it’s good for neither purpose.

Second Peter 1:5-7 is part of the equation by which we keep ourselves from ruining our *value* as salt on the earth. It tells us, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall *neither be barren nor unfruitful* in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Incorporated into all of this, 2 Timothy 2:15 tells us that one must “*Study to show thyself approved unto God*, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

All of these work together to show us that our lives as Christians are not designed to be static. We are to continually grow in our relationship with the Lord and in His Word. As a consequence of this, we will be strengthened in our walk and in our testimony to the world. If these areas of our lives are made stronger, we are less likely to lose our value as the “salt of the earth.”



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Did Jesus Study in India Under the Gurus?

Question: The gospels are silent about the approximately 18 years between the last time we hear of Jesus in the temple as a boy of 12 (Luke 2:41–52) and the beginning of His ministry at about 30 years of age (Luke 3:23). I have come across the report a number of times, not only in *The Aquarian Gospel*, but in newspapers as well, that during these missing years Jesus was in India studying under the gurus. The wisdom He acquired there supposedly became the basis for His ministry. Why not?

Response: The most widely circulated report involved an alleged Nicholas Notovitch, who claimed that while traveling in Tibet in the late 1800s he was told by Tibetan lamas that a record reporting the visit of Jesus existed in a Himalayan monastery. In the early 1900s another visitor to Tibet was allegedly told the same thing. However, no one capable of reading and translating such “records” ever saw them, no copy was brought to the West for examination, and now the story is that the “records” have been destroyed.¹

If the Bible were based upon no better evidence than that, the critics would have justifiably dismissed it long ago. Yet such speculative claims are instantly given credence by those who demand proof for anything the Bible says. That double standard betrays an intense bias on the part of skeptics who claim to be interested only in the truth.

All of the Evidence Is to the Contrary

First of all, there is not a particle of historical or archaeological evidence that Jesus ever visited India, much less studied there. Moreover, this theory is refuted by everything that Jesus said and did during His ministry. The teachings that Jesus brought to the Jews were in agreement with all of their Scriptures (which He frequently quoted as authoritative) and without the

slightest taint of either Hinduism or Buddhism. Had He studied under the Masters of India or Tibet, He would have been obligated to uphold their teaching and to honor His guru. In fact, His teachings were the very antithesis of Eastern mysticism of any kind.

Furthermore, the New Testament account, which holds together consistently, is not compatible with Jesus ever having made such extensive travels. The people in his hometown of Nazareth knew him as “the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and of Juda and Simon” (Mark 6:3). The implication certainly is that He was a familiar hometown personality who had grown up and continued in the local community, not that He was a Jewish Marco Polo who had traveled to exotic and distant places.

Friends and acquaintances were astonished when Jesus suddenly began to travel about Galilee and preach to great crowds. To family and neighbors it was a scandal for Jesus to present Himself as a religious teacher. They treated him with a contempt born of familiarity, not with the awe they surely would have given one who had traveled widely and studied in such far-off lands as India and Tibet.

Every guru who comes to the West lauds and honors his Master, because every Hindu, including the gurus themselves, must have a guru whom he follows. Yet the alleged “Guru Jesus” never referred to His guru or quoted any religious writings except the Jewish Scriptures. He claimed to have been sent not by some Master in the East but by His Father in heaven (John 5:23, 30, 36; etc.), a term unknown to the gurus and hated by the rabbis.

The gurus claim to be men who, through yoga and ascetic practices, have attained to the mystical “realization” that “Atman [individual soul] is identical with Brahman [universal soul]” and have thereby become “Self-realized” gods. Had Jesus studied under them, He would have taught the same delusion. Yet in complete contradiction to that impossible dream and far from claiming to be a man struggling upward to godhood, Jesus presented Himself as the very I AM (Yahweh) of the Old Testament, the God of Israel who had stooped down to become a man:

If ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins. . . . Before Abraham was, I AM. . . . Now I tell you [this] before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I AM. . . . A little while, and ye shall not see me . . . because I go to the Father. . . . I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father.

. . . I and my Father are one. [Emphasis added] (John 8:24, 58; 13:19; 16:16, 28; 10:30)

Irreconcilable Differences Between Christ and the Gurus

The gurus deny the existence of sin or of any absolute moral standards. Each person’s dharma is different and an individual matter to be discovered on the mystical journey to union with Brahman. In complete contrast, Christ claimed to be the “light of the world” (John 8:12), whose very life exposed the evil in mankind. Moreover, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to convince the world of “sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). Jesus announced that He had come to call sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17) and to save them from eternal judgment by His sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the whole world.

Christ’s life and teachings stand in the fullest contradiction to the Hinduism He would have learned in India had He studied there and which He surely would have practiced and taught to the Jews when He returned to Israel. This theory finds absolutely no support in the New Testament record given to us by eyewitnesses:

- The gurus teach a continuing cycle of death and reincarnation, whereas Jesus was resurrected as He said He would be, and He promised the same deliverance from death to His followers. Reincarnation and resurrection are opposites; one cannot believe in both.
- The gurus teach a continual returning to this earth in life after life to work out one’s supposed “karma,” while Jesus taught forgiveness of sins by grace, thus fitting one for heaven.
- To the gurus, heaven is a mystical state of oneness with the Absolute. Jesus, on the other hand, taught that being in heaven is to

dwell forever in His Father's house of "many mansions" (John 14:1-4).

- The gurus are all vegetarians. Jesus ate the Passover lamb, fed the multitudes with fish, and even after His resurrection ate fish as a demonstration to His doubting disciples that He was bodily resurrected and not a "ghost," as they supposed.
- There have been thousands of gurus, but Jesus claimed to be the one and only Son of God, the only Savior of sinners.
- The gurus teach that there are many ways to God. Jesus declared: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).
- Everything Jesus said and did opposes the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism and

disproves the false claim that He studied in India or Tibet.

This fraudulent theory demonstrates once again how impossible it would be to invent a fictitious history of Jesus and to make it fit into actual events on this earth. The erroneous theory that Jesus studied in India under the gurus simply won't fit into the New Testament record at all—and if it did, the New Testament would be incompatible with the Old instead of being its fulfillment, as it had to be. Nor would either the Old or New Testament records fit into the history of the world unless both were true. The perfect harmony of Scripture with established history is revealed by any careful and honest study of both.

1. Larry Whitham, "Book backs theory Jesus visited India before public life," in Washington Times, November 27, 1987, p. E6.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 123-27) by DAVE HUNT

Do We Have a Prayer?

T. A. McMahon

DO WE have a prayer? There are a lot of ways we can consider that question. As examples, we've probably all heard someone say, "You don't have a prayer" when the odds of what is hoped for are overwhelmingly against it. There are last-resort appeals, sometimes referred to as "foxhole prayers," in which a soldier cries out to God to save him from the enemy overrunning his position. There are "a deal with the devil" invocations. Some prayers also take on the form of incantations that supposedly can manipulate the powers of the universe by being spoken. Within Christendom, prayer too often has become an attempt to manipulate God. Positive confession, which is basically commanding God to act, is a favored technique among growing numbers of Christians. Throughout the years, TBC's articles and books have dealt with the many abuses of prayer. Our objective in this article is to focus on *biblical prayer*—primarily, what does the Bible say about it, and *are we* as believers *conforming* to its teachings?

From our beginning here at The Berean Call, prayer has never been theoretical or theologically academic. In fact, we never begin our workday without first spending time together, as a staff, in prayer. Our Thursday morning staff meetings are dedicated to intercessory prayer for others who call, write, or email us with their prayer requests. We wanted to establish that right up front in this article because, as we look at what the Scriptures declare about prayer, we'll be referring back to our prayer time as a testimony to the truth of God's Word.

"In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6). First and foremost, prayer is a believer's *personal* communication with God. In nearly all religions and belief systems, prayer is usually memorized and ritualistic, lacking any personal interactive qualities. Biblical Christianity is the exception because a true Christian, one who is born again by the Spirit of God, begins his or her life in Christ in a very personal way: with a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus. Rote, mechanical, or ritualistic prayer impersonalizes what should be very personal communication between the believer and the Lord. Yet one of the latest trends within Christendom that claims to promote the personal and experiential practice of contemplative prayer teaches

repetitive praying (*Lectio Divina*), e.g., saying a word or phrase over and over again, sometimes hundreds of times. That is not only impersonal but it's *nonsensical* communication. In spite of that, an influential evangelical leader within the Emerging Church Movement claims that he prays to Jesus each morning by repeating His name hundreds of times. More importantly, this practice is unbiblical: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them" (Matthew 6:7-8). All the teachings on prayer throughout the Scriptures clearly reveal its *personal* aspects.

Although the popular question, "What would Jesus do?" seems to have morphed into somewhat of a marketing scheme (e.g., the bracelet and ball cap emblem "WWJD?"), it could motivate us to check out what Jesus actually *did*. Prayer is definitely something He did, and He did it continually. The Son was ever in com-

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munication with the Father. In spite of the fact that He was daily being sought by the crowds, He nevertheless made time to get away to pray: "And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone" (Matthew 14:23). If that was important to the perfect, sinless God/Man, it should speak volumes to our own less-than-perfect hearts that are vulnerable to sin and terribly needy. *We* need to do it. Scripture tells us further that He "continued all night in prayer" (Luke 6:12) and that He referred to the Temple as "the house of prayer" (Luke 19:46). Our Lord prayed for Peter that he might be protected from Satan: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not..." (Luke 22:31-32). He told His disciples to "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41), to love their enemies and to "pray for them which despitefully use you" (Luke 6:27-28). Jesus gave His disciples a pattern for prayer (Luke 11:1-4), and for believers and new believers He declared: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word"

(John 17:20).

Sometimes we forget (if we once knew) that Jesus not only exhorts us to pray, but He has prayed for us, and He *continues to pray for us*. He prays for our protection and effectiveness in the world: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he [Jesus] ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

Having Jesus pray to the Father for us is as good as it gets regarding intercessory prayer. I certainly don't know how that works, but I do know that it was important enough for the Holy Spirit to tell us this through God's Word. Furthermore, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we are given instructions regarding *how we are* to function in prayer. The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that prayer is not an incidental issue for a believer in Christ. Prayer is more often than not accompanied by the words "without ceasing" or similar expressions. The Apostle Paul, who used those terms more than any New Testament writer, presented his own life as a pattern and example of how believers should live their lives in Christ (Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:10), and his emphasis on prayer underscores all that he did. To the Ephesians he wrote that "[I] 'cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers'" (1:16). To the Colossians he wrote, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (1:3) and "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (v. 9). And to the Thessalonians he said that "Night and day [he was] praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (1 Thessalonians 3:10).

Paul wrote that, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do" (Philippians 4:9). He was such an outstanding believer that we may lose sight of the fact that he was no different from those of us who are believers. He was a sinner saved by grace, as all believers are. His life was lived by God's grace, which is available to every believer. So what was his "secret" for spiritual success? No secret at all: Prayer! He not only prayed continually

for others, he continually asked others to pray for him. “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me *in your prayers to God for me*; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints” (Romans 15:30-31). “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And *for me*, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:18-20). “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal *praying also for us*, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds” (Colossians 4:2-3).

Paul had no problem with asking others to pray for him, but believers are sometimes reluctant to ask. The primary excuse, especially as it’s related to family members, is “I don’t want to worry them.” Although there are exceptions, too often it is a “lame excuse” or worse. By our own self-consciousness, we deprive others of the opportunity to petition the Lord for His grace and mercy on our behalf. Moreover, it eliminates the opportunity for our fellow believers to see God’s intervention, and without a knowledge of one’s situation that needs prayer, the encouragement that could come from a praise report may be lost. There are other excuses for not asking for prayer, yet they nearly always involve some form of pride, some form of what others may be thinking about us. Even, “it’s too small a deal to bring before God or to ask others to do so,” which translates “I can handle this myself.” Seriously? When “self” enters the picture nothing good can come of it.

Those of the “God helps those who help themselves” groups (Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanac* gospel and the Positive Confession confessors’ mantra) tell us that deferring to God’s will is a “copout” that undermines our “faith” in ourselves. Aside from the fact that our faith in ourselves *needs* to be “undermined,” what biblical Christian would ever think that God’s will—what He desires for us—would not be the absolute best that we could conform to and receive? Jesus certainly encouraged that by asking, “Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if

he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7:9-11). Didn’t Jesus, at perhaps the most difficult point in His life, pray to God the Father, saying, “Father, *if thou be willing*, remove this cup from me: nevertheless *not my will, but thine, be done*?” (Luke 22:42). Was that a “copout?”

Prayer is sort of a mystery in the sense that God knows what we need before we ask, and He knew what we would ask for. Some would question, “Why then pray to God if He knows all that?” Well, He knows; we don’t. How would we know if God were intervening in our lives if we had no prayerful communication with Him? If there are no requests, then there can be no confidence that God is doing things for us.

Another aspect of prayer is what may involve our prayers *never reaching* the

CONFESS YOUR FAULTS ONE TO ANOTHER, AND PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER, THAT YE MAY BE HEALED. THE EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILETH MUCH.

throne of God. Hebrews 4:16 exhorts us to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” What blocks our prayers? “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”; “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; *that your prayers be not hindered*” (James 4:2-3; 1 Peter 3:7). Walking in disobedience to the instructions given in God’s Word stops any request cold: “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12).

Dave Hunt, my best friend in the Lord (who is now with the Lord), had a wonderful sense of humor, and it was often self-deprecating. He would say (tongue-in-cheek), “People avoid my speaking engagements by the thousands.” Congregations would laugh, knowing that was hardly the case for their gifted speaker. But here is something that is not laughable: Christians

avoid *prayer meetings* by the thousands... and more. Not convinced? Have your church schedule a weekly prayer meeting and do a head count after the second or third week. Although we praise the Lord for the exceptions, the initial enthusiasm (which may be an overstatement) goes away in a short time.

The most grievous part of such a development is what those who avoid prayer meetings and those who bail out on them are *missing*. As just one example, we refer back to TBC’s daily staff prayer time. First of all, we all know one another, love each other, and care about what is going on in each one’s life. Therefore we pray five days a week or more for each other’s needs and requests. That continuity enables us to hear many of the details of how God has answered our prayers, which is a tremendous encouragement and confidence builder in our Lord as He confirms the teachings of His Word. That’s an abundance of prayer requests and praise reports. It also reinforces the fellowship we are to have as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Prayer is neither a suggestion nor a “pray when you feel like it” option for biblical Christians. In his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul tells him to urge the believers in Ephesus to pray for others: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1). Everything a believer does, in the sense of “whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”; “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”; “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17, 23), needs to start with prayer and be sustained by prayer. Again, our prayer must be a continual, personal communication with the Lord seeking His help in all that we do.

Do we have a prayer? Absolutely. And it’s our *prayer* that prayer will be our primary modus operandi—our continual way of going about what we do—for the year ahead, all for the glory of God and that His grace and mercy will be abundantly manifest in our lives. **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: God is holy and dwells apart from man in a holy place. How, then, can the Holy Spirit indwell the human heart? My heart is not pure; I am a believer and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but I am still a sinner. I am not holy. Only God is.

RESPONSE: Certainly God is holy, but according to Jesus, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and *make our abode* with him” (Jn 14:23). Jesus, as our great High Priest, was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb 7:26), yet God “was made flesh, and *dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). God dwells among men. He says so.

You ask how the Holy Spirit may indwell a human heart. When Jesus began preparing His apostles prior to His death on the Cross and subsequent departure from them, He said, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (Jn 14:16). Where will He abide? According to 2 Corinthians 1:22, God “hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit *in our hearts*.” That is His promise to every believer.

Our Lord came and lived in the “midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (Phil 2:15) and did so without sin (Heb 4:15; 1 Pt 2:22). Remember, He was “holy, harmless, undefiled...” (Heb 7:26), yet that same Jesus in Revelation 3:20 said clearly that “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Paul preached to the unsaved men on Mars Hill and told them plainly, “He be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27).

You say your heart is not pure, yet Scripture promises, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17). There is a solution for the believer who sins: “If we confess *our* sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9). If you are “a believer,” do you believe that we are holy, cleansed, and made perfect in God’s sight? Does He “cleanse us from all unrighteousness?”

Yes, there is a struggle, as old habits die hard. But remember the promise of Scripture: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). Ephesians 2:10 tells us, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,

which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (See also Rom 12:1-2; 1 Pt 1:13-16)

John explained that “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7).

Paul encouraged the Corinthians, “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:14-15).

The Holy Spirit indwells the human heart because of the finished work of Christ, not by our merit. It is He who “purifies” our hearts. Ephesians 2:13 tells us, “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” And it is *only* through His blood that this is possible.

QUESTION: Our local paper published an op-ed piece trying to support the idea that the Bible doesn’t recognize that a baby is a living being until it is born and takes its first breath. They make the following points: “In Genesis 2:7, God ‘breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and it was then that the man became a living being.’ Although the man was fully formed by God, he was not a living being until after taking his first breath.” And, “In Job 33:4, it states: ‘The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.’” Also, “Ezekiel 37:5-6, ‘Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live....’”

Finally [the article stated], “Most people don’t know (or want to know) that the Bible contains an abortion ritual. In Numbers 5:11-31, it involves forcing a woman accused of adultery to drink ‘bitter water’ designed to cause a miscarriage. ‘Her belly will swell, and her thigh will rot’....It can be said with absolute certainty that ancient scripture does not consider a zygote or a fetus even to be alive, because it has not yet drawn breath.”

RESPONSE: If “taking a breath,” i.e. ingesting oxygen into one’s system, is the criteria for when life begins, then the fetus clearly qualifies as a living being. There is no doubt that the fetus in the womb is ingesting oxygen (and other essential elements) through the blood circulating in its body, filtered

from the mother’s blood system. Indeed, the writer’s citation of Ezekiel 37:5-6 undermines the premise they advance. In truth, the Lord has caused “breath to enter into you [even a fetus], and ye shall live.” Clearly that process begins in the womb. We must consider these things carefully and thus avoid the confused opinions generated by political positions. A similar idea is expressed in Job 33:4b: “The...breath of the Almighty hath given me life.”

In Jeremiah 1:5, the Lord clearly says, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” That takes us back to before conception, where, in His foreknowledge, God recognized the existence and ministry of Jeremiah, and it was then that God “ordained” him “a prophet.” And, it was the Lord who “formed” him (not “it”) in the womb (See also Ps 139:13-16).

It is important to read the text in context and discern what the words are saying. Numbers 5:11-31 has nothing to do with miscarriage. Nothing is said about the woman being pregnant. If the unsupported assumption that the statement, “Her belly will swell,” refers to pregnancy, then what about “her thigh will rot?” The “swelling” of the belly is not with pregnancy but is rather a symptom of the physical breakdown of her body as a result of the curse if guilty. Rather than “abortion,” the end result of the curse is infertility, and if not guilty, she is promised conception: “And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed” (Num 5:28).

The author is imposing his/her interpretation onto the scriptures rather than drawing out the real meaning. Such assumptions result in a misinterpretation of Scripture, leaving no leg on which to stand.

EDITOR’S NOTE:
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The following is a clarification of a statement made by Paul Wilkinson in his article “Left Behind or Led Astray?—Exposed” (11/2015) that the documentary *Left Behind or Led Astray?* was endorsed by Ray Comfort of Living Waters Ministry:

Although the inclusion of the quote by Comfort in the trailer promoting the post-trib documentary *Left Behind or Led Astray?* left viewers with the distinct impression that Ray was endorsing the movie, Living Waters Ministry responded to our inquiry by stating that “the impression received from the trailer is understandable in context, however, Ray was only endorsing Joe’s ministry in general. He has not seen the video nor did he give any endorsement of it.”



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

The Relationship Between Mythologies and the Bible

Question: The Bible claims to have been inspired of God. Yet we find very similar accounts of some of the stories it records (Adam and Eve, the temptation in the Garden, Noah and the flood, etc.) in the myths of many ancient peoples scattered around the world. Some of these myths seem to be much older than the Bible. There are, for example, Assyrian tablets predating the books of Moses that tell of creation, the temptation in the Garden, the flood, and the tower of Babel in language very similar to the Genesis account. The first man in the Babylonian myths was called Adami. Is it not possible, then, that at least some of the Bible was derived from pagan mythology rather than from divine inspiration?

Response: To suggest that the Bible borrowed the Genesis accounts from pagan myths creates more problems than it could seem to solve. We are still left with two questions: What was the source of the pagan accounts, and what is the explanation for the close similarities in all accounts, including the Bible's? It is mathematically impossible that different races and cultures widely scattered around the world and without contact with one another would all develop independently such similar mythological accounts of mankind's origin and history. The odds against that happening are astronomical, never has and never will. For example: "God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

All accounts, therefore, including the Bible's, must have come from some *common source* that originated outside of any race or culture. There can be no doubt about it. That fact confronts us once again with the question of the *identity* of that common source and *how* all of these widely scattered peoples came in contact with it—or it came in contact with them.

Interestingly enough, the accounts themselves provide the only plausible explanation: that all peoples of every race and color are descended from one set of parents created by God and

that there was a worldwide flood, which left one family from whom all peoples on earth today are descended. Mathematically, evolution is impossible. If gradual evolution from apes to man had occurred over thousands of years, it would have left millions of fossils of missing links (creatures that were neither ape nor man) scattered over a wide area, yet *not one* has ever been found. If evolution were a fact, there would not be one pair of common parents for all peoples; there would be hundreds and perhaps thousands of such pairs and thus no explanation of how a single mythology became known to all peoples.

Adam and Eve, however, would certainly have passed the story of their creation, the serpent's deception, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden on to their children, they to their children, and so on. That story would surely have been known by Noah's family, who would have passed it on to their descendants along with their account of the flood as they had experienced it. There is no other possible rational explanation for the worldwide existence of the common mythology recounting these events.

Furthermore, to this day, in Turkey, in the proximity of Mount Ararat, where the Bible says Noah's ark settled after the flood (Genesis:8:4), the native people living there still refer to that lofty summit as "the Mount of Noah." Even without the various accounts of those who claim to have seen a huge ship high in a glacier on Mount Ararat that could only be the remains of Noah's ark, we have compelling evidence. A local tradition of long standing agrees with a story that is known worldwide. Such confirmation speaks loudly and cannot be ignored.

Perverted Mythologies Make the Bible Shine Brighter

Wherever archaeologists dig around the world, they find, in corroboration of the Genesis account, ancient representations of a woman, a serpent, and a tree in close relationship with one another. Therefore, we know there is at least that core of truth in this widespread story. When we look at the non-biblical accounts, however, there are obviously mythological elements perverting the transmission of

what must have been a historical event. Of great significance is the fact that the serpent is universally presented as the symbol of wisdom, or the Savior-god, exactly the opposite from what the Bible says.

In addition to perverting the role of the serpent, all pagan accounts embody obviously mythological and fantastic elements. The biblical account alone has the factual ring of history rather than myth. It fits the rest of the Bible and agrees with what we know of mankind's history to the present time. Thus the biblical account stands on one side and all of the others, in spite of their similarities to the Genesis story, stand together in opposition to it.

That distinction between the Bible and all other accounts is significant. It indicates that the biblical account was not borrowed from the others. Clearly, all non-biblical accounts originated from the same historical events, and their differences developed later. The pagan myths all vary from one another, so none can be trusted as authentic. They must have all become perverted in one way or another. Inasmuch as the biblical account is consistent with the rest of the Bible, it can claim the same infallibility of inspiration as all of God's Word. The pagan accounts are similar enough to confirm the biblical account, but different enough so that the latter stands alone as the only authentic record.

The biblical account does not originate from oral tradition handed down from generation to generation (and thus it escapes the inevitable error inherent in such a process); but it was given by inspiration of God.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 128-30) by DAVE HUNT

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New Age Mysticism Déjà vu — Part One

T. A. McMahon

IN THE mid-1970s, Dave Hunt wrote a book chronicling the life of Paul Gupta, a Christian convert and the founder of Hindustan Bible Institute. That biography began Dave's research efforts regarding Hinduism and Eastern mysticism. Shortly thereafter, Dave met a former Hindu guru who had converted to Christianity, and Dave collaborated with him on his conversion story titled *Death of a Guru*. It was during that time period that the New Age Movement (NAM) got underway in the US.

Defining the NAM is rather challenging given all the different perspectives and influences involved, yet its fundamental teachings are rooted in Eastern mysticism. New Agers also declare a common belief in what has been termed the "perennial wisdom," a guiding principle stating that all religions, at their core, worship the same God, which is defined as Ultimate Reality. The New Age Movement encompasses a staggering variety of individuals, ideas, themes, and practices, all emphasizing the nonphysical/spiritual realm. Some of the movement's most influential individuals include Helena Blavatsky, Marilyn Ferguson, Teilhard de Chardin, Deepak Chopra, Dr. Oz, Benjamin Creme, Michael Harner, Barbara Marx Hubbard, Shirley MacLaine, Aleister Crowley, Timothy Leary, Yogi Bhaajan, Helen Schucman, Neale Donald Walsch, Marianne Williamson, Ken Wilber, Oprah Winfrey, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Beliefs and practices include alternative healing methods, astrology, spiritual energies, meditation, parapsychology, witchcraft, yoga, quantum mysticism, Gaia and goddess worship, reincarnation, UFOs, channeling, karma, hallucinogenic drugs, feng shui, altered states of consciousness, the martial arts, spiritualism, the kabbala, transpersonal psychology, and the human potential movement.

In the late 1980s, Dave Hunt and I wrote *America, The Sorcerer's New Apprentice: The Rise of New Age Shamanism*. The motivation and purpose for writing that book was to give Christians a better understanding of what the NAM and Eastern mysticism were all about. We were greatly concerned that much of what was clearly New Age was entering and taking hold within Christendom. Not everyone concurred with our concerns, however, including a Christian apologetics author who announced that we

had "made up the whole idea of the New Age Movement." Surprising as that was from someone professing to encourage *discernment*, it nevertheless underscored the need for an informative work explaining what the NAM believed and practiced, its physical and spiritual dangers, and how its religious concepts were diametrically opposed to biblical Christianity. As noted, the ultimate reality of the NAM is an impersonal force or energy of which everything consists. Although there are various names for this energy (ki, chi, qi, prana, mana, barakah, innate), it is described in god-terms as pantheism, which is the teaching that everything in the universe consists of God. That widespread belief clearly does *not* describe the personal, infinite God presented in Scripture. Furthermore, if God were everything or in everything, then "it" would be subject to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which tells us that energy is inevitably degenerating toward a terminal stage. Undoubtedly, the eternal God of the Bible is *not* an impersonal energy force.

Many today believe that the New Age Movement is itself in a state of entropy or decline. On the contrary! Though the name may not be bandied about as it was thirty years ago, its beliefs and practices are more universally accepted than ever. That would hardly be significant were we considering only India and the countries of the Far East, where the prevalent religions for millennia have centered upon a spiritual energy force. No, it's the "Christian" West that has been seduced in staggering proportions by the East. Though the stratagems that have ushered in that spiritual flood are too numerous for this two-part series, some of the most significant ones will be identified. And, of course, the prophetic Word of God will be given to underscore the fact that what is taking place is hardly random but rather the orchestration of God's chief adversary, Satan himself. "Now the [Holy] Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

"Seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" may seem too extreme for most Christians today. Understandably, that reaction may arise due to the notoriety of some ministries that "find" Satan in everything and behind everything. Or it could be that most Christians today simply don't know the Scriptures or the validity of Bible prophecy. Those words that Paul wrote to Timothy were not his own ideas but rather the words of God given to Paul by the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "For this

cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). We see what should be obvious from Scripture: "Seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" reflect Satan's lies at the very beginning of his communication with mankind, which constituted 1) a *repudiation* of God's command to Adam that he not eat of the fruit of a certain tree in the Garden of Eden, resulting in the penalty of death for his disobedience, and 2) the seductive offer to Eve that she and Adam could be "as gods." These self-willed and god-wannabe doctrines are indeed demonically inspired and are the very centerpiece of the NAM and Eastern mysticism.

Most people are aware that the 1970s era was a time of anti-war protest, psychedelic drug use, the hippie movement, the end of the war in Vietnam, the enormous popularity of the Beatles, and the search of young people to "find themselves." That search led many from the West to India. What few know, however, is that at that time there was likewise a massive missionary effort from the East coming into the West to convert "Christians" to Hinduism by spreading its beliefs and practices. In his book *Yoga and the Body of Christ*, Dave Hunt reported, "Hindu gurus from the East, such as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Baba Muktananda, Yogananda, Yogi Bhaajan, Vivekananda, Bhagwan Shri Rajneesh, and a host of others, were pleased to learn in the late '50s and early '60s, that through the popular use of psychedelic drugs, millions of Westerners were experiencing a nonphysical reality that Western science had long denied existed. They were quick to recognize that a vast market for their teachings had thereby been opened up in the West. The New Age movement was birthed. Yoga, once practiced in the East only by 'holy men,' was made available to the masses in the West, and it soon spread everywhere, even into churches and among evangelicals.

"The call went out to Hindus and yoga enthusiasts, 'The New Age movement...has accepted the great ideas of the East... Let us invade the American Campuses armed with the vision of Vedanta' [from *America: The Sorcerer's New Apprentice*, p. 281]. Few, if any, realized that the West had fallen victim to the largest and most successful missionary campaign in history.... Most Westerners find it difficult to think of these smiling, bowing, obsequious, and supposedly broadminded

yogis, swamis, and lamas as missionaries determined to spread their mystic gospel. It comes as a great surprise that the largest missionary organization in the world is not Christian but Hindu—India’s Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP)” (Dave Hunt, *Yoga and the Body of Christ* [Bend, OR: The Berean Call, 2006], p. 12).

Those gurus found their audiences throughout the West, from college campuses to Hollywood. But none were more successful (or deceptive) than the Beatles’ guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Launched into the public’s eye by the British pop group, he introduced his religious beliefs and practices as the “Spiritual Regeneration Movement.” However, opposition arose against his effective attempts to get his program into public schools. Stymied by the courts, he changed its name to “The Science of Creative Intelligence” and later to Transcendental Meditation (TM). That success was unparalleled and set the basic stratagem for promoting Hinduism in the West: disguise its religious roots in the fog of pseudoscience. Proclaim that it’s for self-improvement, for health, for peace of mind, even for “spiritual enhancement” as long as it’s “not religious!”

One aspect of the NAM that boosted its acceptance in the West was the spiritual vacuum created by materialism, which didn’t pan out as the scientific answer to solving mankind’s increasing problems. On a mundane level, many realized that having more material goods did not bring about the happiness and peace of mind they thought it would. So, the “spiritual/mystical” solution became ripe for acceptance, and multitudes joined in, especially because there were no “accountability or judgmental strings” attached. Yet there was a major “string” that had to be accepted by the rational Western mind.

In Hinduism the *physical reality* of the universe is not real at all. It is *maya*, an illusion, the escape from which is the ultimate goal of yoga. The true reality is found in the nonphysical realm, according to Eastern mysticism. Some in the West were given an inkling that such might be the case based on their experience of reaching altered states of consciousness through psychedelic drugs. Timothy Leary and Aldous Huxley led that mind-expanding drug parade, oblivious to or in denial of its destructive results, physically (and spiritually). Yet those “bad trips” opened the doors wide for the gurus who taught a supposedly harmless method for reaching what they claimed to be higher consciousness.

So what is being sold in the West by the gurus, the Eastern mystics, and the NAM leaders? Although “perennial wisdom” over

thousands of years seems thus far to have failed to solve the extensive problems in the East, are we to accept its claim that it is going to vastly improve the West? Really? It hasn’t worked in its purest form in the East. (A recent comment by a native of India in *The Times of India* declared: “I am convinced. We are amongst the MOST deprived of societies in the world. And it’s only going to get worse.”) Are we now to believe that the homogenized versions practiced in the West (including Doga [yoga for dogs], Snowga [yoga and snow sports], laughter yoga, and SUP yoga [stand up paddleboard yoga]) will bring about the solution to what ails America?

Again, what is being promoted? It’s the idea that the physical world is an illusion, i.e., true reality exists in the nonphysical realm, which is entered by suspending normal consciousness. This suspension is accomplished by experiencing an altered state of consciousness primarily through drugs and/or meditation.

I suggest that rather than suspending our normal consciousness, let’s instead apply the biblical definition of *meditation*, which means to deeply consider what’s being communicated. The philosophies of the gurus et al. attempt to persuade us that achieving a *higher* state of consciousness is far better than retaining our normal state, which is supposedly preventing us from realizing that we are all part of the divine Being. Moreover, they insist that our ordinary consciousness is keeping us from experiencing continual peace and bliss in our lives.

Should I then opt for spending most if not all of my time in an altered state of consciousness? There are yogis in India who do so. Ironically, their physical needs must be attended to by those who function in a normal state of consciousness. One doesn’t need much insight to recognize the dire consequences of attempting to live one’s life alternating between the two states of consciousness.

Since it began, the New Age Movement never got around to addressing the practical issues of its spiritually eclectic teachings and practices. It simply pushed forward as though it were a given that the spiritual grass (pun intended) was greener in another reality. But that was then. Have the world and the West moved on? Not quite. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the name “New Age Movement” may be little used today, but its content is hidden in plain sight and its seeds have taken root seemingly everywhere.

Next month, the Lord willing, I will point out some of the many manifestations of

Eastern mysticism—in particular the deep inroads the concepts and practices have made in the evangelical church. As shocking as that is, it is nevertheless confirmed by prophecies related to the apostasy that Scripture declares will take place prior to the Lord’s return. Among the many verses that indicate this apostasy are 2 Timothy 4:3-4: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables,” and Luke 18:8: “...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” Although that condition is prophesied, it is a statement referring to Christendom collectively—not Christians individually. In other words, apostasy will indeed take place and will infect, perhaps, most Christians, but each Christian will be held personally accountable for his or her walk with the Lord. Not every Christian will be seduced by the end-times deception.

Just as the Beatles were the main springboard for launching the Eastern mysticism of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, so *Star Wars*, which premiered in 1977, popularized the religious concept of God as a Force. George Lucas, the creator of *Star Wars*, told Bill Moyers that since childhood he had been puzzled by the number of religions in the world and concluded that they all worshiped the same God. Hence, the perennial wisdom of the Force, which he believes accommodates all religions. He clearly did not mean biblical Christianity, yet that truth has hardly dampened the world’s enthusiasm for an impersonal god that holds no one accountable.

Although Lucas no longer controls what he created 38 years ago, the Force is back and may be more influential than in all its previous series of films. Based upon its opening successes, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is on its way to becoming the biggest box office hit in movie history. For those in the movie’s audience who may not be aware of what the Force is all about (I can’t imagine who that might be, including the light-saber-swinging very young), it is explained throughout the film, including a basic teaching by Han Solo. This is indeed New Age mysticism déjà vu.

Although one might expect the world to relish the spiritual pie-in-the-sky offered by New Age mysticism, it is both shocking and disheartening to see Christians taking it in with little or no biblical discernment. Next month: “Christianized” Eastern meditation, “Christianized” yoga, and related “Christianized” practices. TBC

Quotable.....

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
—ISAIAH 53:6

Here we have the entire story of the Bible epitomized: man’s ruin both by nature and practice; and God’s marvelous and all-sufficient remedy. The verse begins with *all* and ends with *all*. An anxious soul was directed to this passage and found peace. Afterward he said, “I bent low down and went in at the first *all*. I stood up straight and came out at the last.” The first is the acknowledgment of our deep need. The second shows how fully that need has been met in the cross of Christ. Happy to be numbered among those who have put in their claim and found salvation through the atoning work which there took place!

— H. A. IRONSIDE

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I’m about ready to pack it in. There are so many so-called teachers of the Word of God out there contradicting one another that I don’t know who to believe. Wouldn’t I be better off just locking myself up with the Bible and look to the Holy Spirit alone as my teacher? After all, doesn’t the Bible say that I don’t need any man to teach me?

RESPONSE: Peter tells us that the Bible did not have its origin in the thoughts or will of men; rather, holy men of God spoke and wrote what the Holy Spirit communicated to them (2 Pt 1:21). Not only did the Scriptures come by the Holy Spirit, but we’re told that to truly understand God’s Word, we must have the Holy Spirit to teach us (1 Cor 2:11-14). So no one can deny the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit regarding both scriptural inspiration and illumination. However, by taking the position that you plan to exclude everyone but the Holy Spirit in learning what the Word of God says, you’ve already missed part of the Holy Spirit’s instruction.

Teaching is a function of believers in Christ. The Great Commission includes the command to teach all nations to observe all things that Christ taught His disciples (Mt 28:19-20). One of the principal ministries in the body of Christ is that of teacher (1 Cor 12:28); the selection of elders includes as a criterion the ability to teach (1 Tm 3:2); and Galatians 6:6 tells the person who is taught to share in all good things with him who

teaches. God has gifted the church with these individuals who have the ability to teach “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” and this process is to continue until “we all come in the unity of the faith” as well as maturity in Christ (Eph 4:11-13). If you read on in Ephesians you will find that teachers are also given to help us grow in discernment (v. 14), even to recognizing false teachers. At best, to deny the value of those whom God has gifted as teachers is to miss His grace and ministry to His own, through His own.

We can appreciate the frustration you have with teachers who miss the mark, either in part or for the most part. The Scriptures are not naïve with regard to the problem of false teachers. Paul warns about them with tears (Acts 20:30-31); Peter and John also raise strong concerns (2 Pt 2:1; 2 Jn 7). When the full counsel of Scripture is considered, you can see that avoiding all teachers doesn’t solve the problem of false teachers. A godly teacher (who can instruct in discernment) is merely a vessel of the Holy Spirit; for anything to be truly worthwhile from such an individual, it must be the work of the Holy Spirit within him. However, when a teacher relies upon his own wisdom or flesh rather than the Holy Spirit, he has, at the very least, polluted the truth. Granted, human vessels are not the most trustworthy instruments, but God has chosen them for service and has given safeguards: His Word and His Spirit.

When John wrote “ye need not that any man teach you” (1 Jn 2:27) he wasn’t contradicting those Scriptures previously mentioned. He was referring to false teachers (v. 26) and stating that the anointing of the Holy Spirit (v. 20) would enable the believer to discern what was true and what was false. Being like the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11) is the biblical solution to recognizing whether or not a teacher is in line with the truth. Remember, it says they received “with all readiness of mind” Paul’s teaching and searched the Scriptures daily to see if what he had to say was true to God’s Word. Paul taught under the power of the Holy Spirit, and it was the same Spirit who enabled those Berean Jews to recognize scriptural truth. That’s the way it has to be for godly teachers and those who want to learn and grow in the faith, no matter how confusing and deceptive the days become.

QUESTION: I overheard a lady saying that she thinks we shouldn’t argue over doctrine, but we should instead just point people to Jesus. In other words, that

[Christianity] is a personal relationship with God, and so the Scriptures mean different things to different people. How would you respond to that?

RESPONSE: It takes doctrine to “point people to Jesus.” Doctrine is teaching the rightly divided Scriptures (2 Tm 2:15). In her pointing people to Jesus, she may not realize it, but if she is correctly giving the Gospel, she is “arguing doctrine.” The elements of the Gospel are so important that the Lord inspired Paul to write, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8).

Doctrinal arguments can be wearying and can turn people away. Nevertheless, we still need doctrine—not meaning ongoing arguments, but as the only way to understand the faith. “Doctrine” is a “teaching.” The substantive teachings of Scripture are those giving us truth about God. “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Indeed, not preaching correct doctrine is specifically prophesied to be a hallmark of the Last Days (2 Tm 4:3-4). The response of the believer is clearly given. “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine” (2 Tm 4:1-2).

The doctrine of the gospel is important because of who is at the center of the gospel. It is all about the Lord Jesus Christ and what He accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection. Anything that makes Jesus secondary or teaches an unbiblical Jesus is not the gospel. Any message that ignores His death or minimizes sin is not the biblical gospel. In this age, the emphasis often is on a non-offensive, non-confrontational gospel, but such a gospel is disobedient to the command of Christ (Mt 28:19-20).

Furthermore, preaching the true Gospel is bound to offend at least some, as 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 says: “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

Teaching sound doctrine is absolutely essential.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What About Moving Mountains with Faith?

Question: Jesus very clearly said, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew:17:20). I’ve never heard of a Christian moving a mountain yet, nor have I ever heard of a Christian to whom nothing was impossible. Yet there are absolutely no conditions; this promise is unequivocal. Either Matthew and Luke (who gives his own version—17:6) lied, or Jesus lied. Which was it? In either case the Bible is proven to be contradictory, is it not?

Response: Neither Matthew nor Luke nor Christ lied. Let us be careful to approach the Bible with due reverence. Even if we cannot quickly explain or reconcile every difficulty in the Bible, the corroborating evidence for the accuracy and authenticity of those passages that we are able to understand is overwhelming and points to its divine origin. R. A. Torrey reminds us:

“What would we think of a beginner in algebra who, having tried in vain for half an hour to solve a difficult problem, declared that there was no possible solution to the problem because he could find none! . . .

“The difficulties that confront one who denies that the Bible is of divine origin and authority are far more numerous and weighty than those which confront the one who believes it to be of divine origin and authority.”¹

In this case, the apparent conflict is created by a misunderstanding of faith. It is not some power that can be aimed at circumstances or people or things to move them into alignment with one’s ambitions and desires. If that were the case, then Christ would be telling us that this hidden power of the mind is so incredibly strong that we only need a miniscule amount

of it (the size of a tiny mustard seed) in order to effect whatever we desire. The universe would then be under man’s control instead of God’s. It would be terrifying if men had such power available to them. Fortunately they don’t, nor did Christ promise it.

Faith is not a power one possesses but complete trust in and dependence upon another person or object. Faith must have an object. Nor is there anyone or anything worthy of one’s total trust except God. Jesus said, “Have faith in God” (Mark:11:22). What then is faith? It is a confident trust in the love and grace and power and wisdom of God.

It is easy to show the absurdity of “faith” as some power that man wields. Suppose two men want to move a mountain, but each in a different direction. Which one of them

will manage to move the mountain when and where he wants it to go? The man with the most faith? That common misunderstanding is dispelled by Christ's statement that it only takes a very small amount of faith to move a mountain.

God Alone—Not Faith—Can Move Mountains

The mountain (or whatever else) will not move by the power of faith, because faith has no power in and of itself. The mountain can only be moved by the power of God. It will, therefore, move only when and where God wants it to move.

Surely, then, no one can have faith that a mountain is going to move at a particular time and in a certain direction unless he knows such a move to be God's will. And how can one

gain such insight and confidence? Obviously, only by getting to know God personally and learning to trust Him. It would be utter folly to trust a stranger or someone who has not yet demonstrated his reliability.

Faith puts man in touch with God, causing him to know and trust God and to know His will. By faith, man can become an instrument in the effecting of God's will here on earth. Literal mountains rarely, if ever, require moving. That would be possible, however, if it were God's will. Jesus used the extreme example of a mountain being moved in response to one's faith in God to show that nothing is impossible to those who are in touch with God and who are the obedient channels of His purposes and power.

1. R. A. Torrey, *Difficulties in the Bible: Alleged Errors and Contradictions* (Moody Press, no date), pp. 9-10.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 131-33) by DAVE HUNT

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New Age Mysticism Déjà vu — Part Two

T. A. McMahon

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT seems to have faded away since it came on the scene quite vigorously in the 1970s. Actually, it hasn't faded away but has "faded into the woodwork." Many of its teachings and practices have become so accepted in Western society that they're commonplace, seemingly far removed from their Eastern mystical roots. Terms like karma, yoga, meditation, guru, mantra, etc., have become part of our everyday language, without any hint of their religious origins and connections for most people. Additionally, a number of programs have arisen that deceptively promote Eastern meditation as non-religious science by calling it *mindfulness*.

Yet there are some who are sounding the alarm that potential danger lies hidden in the spiritual foundations of meditation. They recognize that the faith of Christians who participate in these practices is being undermined. Gaylene Goodroad, researcher and writer for *Herescope*, quotes former mystic Christine Pack regarding her first meditation experience: "In the space of 20 minutes (because that's all the time it takes to do a meditation), my worldview shifted dramatically...the Christianity of the Bible was no longer a valid spiritual path for me. Why? Because Christianity is the only religion with such unbending and exclusive truth claims. ('I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life...no one comes to the Father but through Me.'—John 14:6)... And meditation counters this claim by generating an experience in which a person feels a profound sense of interconnectedness and oneness with 'all' that feels completely counter to the exclusive truth claims of Christianity. It feels like you have just had an encounter with God, that you have been in the presence of the Divine...only, you haven't. Let's look at the logical conclusions that practicing mystics must come to if they are staying true to their belief system: If I can experience God through meditation, if I can 'cross the divide' through my own efforts, then the Cross of Calvary has no meaning. And Jesus was a liar when He said that He was the only way to God. And the Bible was wrong where it says that without Christ we are dead in our sins and trespasses (no 'divine inner spark' already living within each person)."¹

The experience of "oneness with 'all'"

doesn't necessarily happen to everyone who meditates, but the potential is there for everyone who practices it, no matter the goal of the practitioner—whether seeking spiritual enlightenment or simply relief from stress. That latter point, including being more productive in one's job, school, or family environment, is what is being heralded by the promoters and publishers. Noted Hollywood director David Lynch, a disciple of Transcendental Meditation's (TM) founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, started the Foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace. Yet while denying its religious roots and basis, he declares, "If you don't already meditate, take my advice: Start. It will be the best decision you ever make."² Another meditation foundation that is being eagerly received by educators is MindUP. It has Buddhist roots, whereas TM's source is Hinduism—although that information is often hidden by their promoters.

MindUP's mindfulness meditation claims to train the brains of both adults and children to develop the "social and emotional skills to reduce stress and anxiety for healthier, happy lives," with no religious attachments. That's quite attractive to Americans, a society given to self-helps and whatever else may seem to solve their problems. Yet the rush to solutions in the US is nearly always based upon a zeal without knowledge. That would account for the overwhelming growth of another "mind-adjusting" business—psychotherapy, the pseudoscience that has created far more problems than it has solved while becoming a multi-billion-dollar industry.

Should American consumers be concerned about the increasing number of meditation offerings? Have any warning labels or *caveat emptor* (buyer beware) caution signs been attached to TM or MindUP by their promoters? Not even in the small print. Is that because, as they say in the sports world, "No harm, no foul"? Hardly, as a growing number of concerns of late are being reported, such as this article in *The Washington Post* titled: "Meditation and mindfulness aren't as good for you as you think: There are negative side effects that no one ever talks about." Here are some excerpts: "Mindfulness is a technique extracted from Buddhism in which one tries to notice present thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment...What was once a tool for spiritual exploration has been turned into a panacea for the modern age—a cure-all for common human problems, from stress to anxiety to depression. By taking this 'natural pill' every day,

we open ourselves up to the potential for myriad benefits and no ill effects, unlike synthetic pills, such as antidepressants, with their potential for negative side effects...Mindfulness has been sold to us, and we are buying it...After examining the literature from the last 45 years on the science of meditation, we realized with astonishment that we are no closer to finding out how meditation works or who benefits the most or the least from it."³ So much for the "science" of meditation!

It's interesting that this report by a secular newspaper states simply and clearly what TM and mindfulness meditation programs have lied about from their introduction: "Mindfulness has been separated from its roots, stripped of its ethical and spiritual connotations and sold to us as a therapeutic tool. While this may not deny its power as a technique to change our state of consciousness and with implications for mental health, it arguably limits its 'naturalness,' as well as its potential—at least as originally intended." The secular article concludes with this: "So if you go into it [the practice of mindfulness meditation]—as with taking any other kind of pill—keep your eyes open. Don't consume mindfulness blindly."⁴

The undisclosed "negative side effects" run the gamut from continuing depression to demonization to suicide. *The Atlantic* printed an article titled "The Dark Knight of the Soul: For some, meditation has become more curse than cure." Dr. Willoughby Britton oversees a retreat center that ministers to meditators who are there not to restore themselves with meditation—they're recovering from it: "I started having thoughts like, *Let me take over you*, combined with confusion and tons of terror," says David, a polite, articulate 27-year-old who arrived at Britton's Cheetah House in 2013. "I had a vision of death with a scythe and a hood, and the thought, *Kill yourself*, over and over again." Another young man being treated is "Michael, 25, a certified yoga teacher [who] made his way to Cheetah House. He explains that during the course of his meditation practice his 'body stopped digesting food. I had no idea what was happening.' For three years he believed he was 'permanently ruined' by meditation."⁵

Dr. Britton is an assistant professor of psychiatry and human behavior at the Brown University Medical School. The *Atlantic* article continues: "She receives regular phone calls, emails, and letters from people around the world in various states of impairment. Most of them worry that no one will believe—let alone

understand—their stories of meditation-induced affliction. Her investigation of this phenomenon, called ‘The Dark Night Project,’ is an effort to document, analyze, and publicize accounts of the adverse effects of contemplative practices.”⁶ *In America: The Sorcerer’s New Apprentice*, Dave Hunt and I attempted to inform the Body of Christ of our concerns about the spiritual and physical dangers of Eastern mystical techniques and practices that many Christians were being attracted to and seduced by, believing they were simply engaging in physical and mental exercises that would improve their minds and bodies. Few seemed to be listening as we explained that Eastern meditation leads to the same kind of altered state of consciousness as psychedelic drugs, even though meditation and other related mind-altering techniques (repeated mantras, visualization, sensory deprivation, yoga asanas, etc.) were being touted as a “natural” approach without the side effects of drugs. In that 1988 book, we noted some of the New Age organizations that have faced up to the claimed “non-existent,” yet real, horrendous side effects, such as the Spiritual Emergency Network, which maintained a hotline and referral treatment service for those whose lives had been spiritually and physically wrecked. The Spiritual Emergency Network continues today although with the adjusted new title: “The Spiritual Emergence Network.”

Even among those who are acknowledging the present and potential damage of mystical practices, there seems to be a type of bondage involved. Dr. Britton, for all of her great concerns, candidly admitted, “There are parts of me that just want meditation to be all good. I find myself in denial sometimes, where I just want to forget all that I’ve learned and go back to being happy about mindfulness and promoting it, but then I...meet someone who’s in distress, and I see the devastation in their eyes, and I can’t deny that this is happening.”

Tragically, there are many in the church, whether Christians in name only or true believers, who are ignorant of, oblivious to, or in denial regarding the dangers of New Age/Eastern mystical beliefs and practices. Dave Hunt, in his 2006 book *Yoga and the Body of Christ*, reported that “Astonishingly, there are about 586,000 references on ‘Google Search’ under the heading ‘Yoga for Christians.’” Today that same search brings up more than a million resources. Anyone concerned?

Let’s review some undeniable facts. New Age mysticism is a latter-day re-establishment and reworking of Eastern mysticism

for the West. At the heart of it all is the view of God as an impersonal spiritual Energy or Force that can be manipulated by the mind of man, a concept that rejects the personal Creator God who reveals Himself in Scripture through His Holy Spirit. The way to connect with the “God” of Eastern mysticism is through experiencing an altered state of consciousness via mind-altering methods such as drugs, meditation, visualization, yoga positions, repetitious chanting, sensory deprivation (Sufi whirling, Indian sweat lodge experiences, isolation cells, etc.). All of these are forms of sorcery, a term found in Scripture (in the Greek, *pharmakeia*, translated as magic, sorcery, enchantment), and a practice condemned therein. Writers for major secular newspapers and magazines have recognized the fact that the meditation promoted by organizations (e.g., MindUP, TM) that declare it to be scientific with no religious connection, as well as beneficial with no side effects, are misguided if not fraudulent.

If the secular press can discern the harmful errors contrary to the claims of the meditation businesses, where is the discernment among Christians? The criticism that they seem to be climbing aboard the *Titanic* even though it’s lurching is sadly true. Consider Rick Warren, who is arguably the most recognized and influential evangelical pastor today. Hoping to help those among his church members who struggled with weight loss, he introduced The Daniel Plan. As part of that plan, he turned himself and his flock over to the guidance of three medical doctors, all of whom promote mystical meditation: Dr. Mehmet Oz, Dr. Daniel Amen, and Dr. Mark Hyman. Dr. Oz is a Sufi mystic, the national spokesman for TM, and a devotee of New Ager Oprah Winfrey. Dr. Amen is a psychiatrist who teaches the Japanese spiritual-energy practice of Reiki. Dr. Hyman teaches Buddhist meditation. Furthermore, on his RWToolbox Twitter page Warren directs followers in the contemplative meditation practice of “centering prayer”: “Choose a simple word, phrase, or verse from Scripture.... Take time to become quiet.... Let them [your thoughts] go.... Be with Jesus. Listen. Be still.” Warren is hardly alone in Christianity’s slide into Eastern mysticism.

Evangelical conferences for youth have started their days with yoga. A writer for *Christianity Today* says “Yes to Yoga.” She claims, “The three hours a week I spend doing yoga not only make me more flexible, tone my muscles, and relax me. They also draw me closer to Christ. They are my bodily-kinetic prayer.”⁷ Can yoga

have some physical value? Yes. But at what cost? Smoking also has some value in that it calms and relaxes the smoker. However, unlike yoga meditation, it carries a warning label regarding its potentially deadly consequences.

Amazingly, there is a network of Christians who practice different forms of yoga, such as Jesus Yoga, Yahweh Yoga, Holy Yoga and Kid’s Holy Yoga, Praise Moves, Yogafait, and Christoga. They have a website that speaks for all regarding its purpose: “We are drawn together through our individual and collective experience that yoga and meditation deepens our Christian faith.... We simply feel called to share our experiences with the hope they’ll draw others to deepen their faith through embodied contemplative practices” (See www.christianspracticingyoga.com/). The *Christian Yoga Magazine* website declares that it is a resource “for people of all religious traditions to explore how they can integrate Eastern physical and spiritual practices—such as yoga, meditation and Tai Chi—into their daily lives while remaining true to their deepest spiritual beliefs” (See www.christianyogamagazine.com/about/).

There’s little doubt that many of the proponents of Christian yoga are sincere people who just want to make Christianity and yoga compatible. It seems obvious that this would be inexcusable, but given the present state of Christianity—which seems to welcome, with arms wide open (despite glaring contradictions), any additions or modifications—we find it happening with increasing frequency. This is experiential ecumenism, part of the process at work in the development of the religion of the Antichrist. Furthermore, it’s a fulfillment of prophecy, along with an encouragement to press on: “Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts... sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye... building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:17-23).

The only faith that can be deepened in truth is biblical faith, which is diametrically opposed to the teachings and practices of Eastern mysticism and its Westernized stepchild. **TBC**

Quotable.....

Wherever Christians meet these days one word is sure to be heard constantly repeated; that word is *revival*.

In sermon, song, and prayer we are forever reminding the Lord and each other that what we must have to solve all our spiritual problems is a “mighty, old-time revival....”

So strongly is the breeze blowing for revival that scarcely anyone appears to have the discernment or the courage to turn around and lean into the wind, even though the truth may easily lie in that direction....

It is my considered opinion that under the present circumstances we do not want revival at all. A widespread revival of the kind of Christianity we know today in America might prove to be a moral tragedy from which we would not recover in a hundred years.

—A. W. Tozer, *Keys to the Deeper Life*, pp 7-8

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Will Antichrist be a Jew (just as Judas, a fellow Jew, betrayed Jesus)? If so, will he be of the tribe of Dan (Danish)?

ANSWER: Danes are not Jews and therefore cannot be from the tribe of Dan! The argument for Antichrist being Jewish is not because Judas was a Jew, but because it is speculated that Israel would only accept a Jew. Unquestionably, Israelis will embrace Antichrist as their deliverer: “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (Jn 5:43). But why must he be a Jew?

The majority in Israel today would receive anyone as their Messiah who brought peace—whether he were Jew or Gentile. The fact that Antichrist will establish a false peace that will deceive Israel seems clear: “them that are at rest, that dwell safely...having neither bars nor gates...that are gathered out of the nations...that dwell in the midst of the land [of Israel] (Ezk 38:11-12); and by peace shall [Antichrist] destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (Dn 8:25).

Antichrist could be Jewish, but he need not be. He must, however, according to Daniel 9:26-27, be born within the borders of the ancient Roman Empire: “The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy

the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [temple] and he shall confirm the covenant [for peace and rebuilding the temple]...for one week [seven years]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease....”

The “covenant” must have provided for rebuilding the temple; the sacrifices could only be stopped if they had started, and for that the temple is essential. Surely the Muslims, UN, EU, and USA would never all agree to the rebuilding of the temple unless it were *forced* upon them—and that is the meaning of the Hebrew. Of course, only Antichrist, empowered by Satan, could impose this upon the world. (Israel will imagine he is their friend, whereas he has the temple rebuilt because he himself intends to sit in it declaring that he is God and demanding that all mankind worship him.)

The “people of the prince that shall come,” who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, were, of course, the Roman armies under Titus. Thus Antichrist, whether Jew or Gentile, must have been born within the boundaries of the ancient Roman Empire. It would be fruitless and a waste of time to speculate regarding the identity of Antichrist (who can only “be revealed in his time” – 2 Thes 2:6), though that has always been a popular pursuit for many.

QUESTION: (from a Muslim): Doctors tell me that I have cancer and only two months to live. I am only 45 years old and know nothing about God. Is Muhammad alive and can I trust him and pray to him? Is Jesus alive and can I appeal to Him? How can I go to heaven? I do not have time to study religion. I need urgent help. I am dying!

RESPONSE: I am sorry to hear this, but death comes, sooner or later, to all mankind—and after that comes judgment. Jesus died for you, for your sins, so you could be forgiven. He is God who became man without ceasing to be God. Even the Qur’an admits that Jesus never sinned. He rose from the dead, is alive, and gives forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe in Him. He is your only hope.

Muhammad was a sinful man. The Qur’an tells him to confess his sins to Allah—but Allah is not the true God and never claims to have a just basis for forgiving sin. Islam says to do the best you can, hoping that at the “last day” your good deeds will outweigh your bad. You know that no court on earth would allow such injustice. You can’t even pay for

a parking ticket by parking legally the next time! To save the lives of a hundred people from drowning would not make up for murdering one! We cannot pay the penalty for breaking the law in the past by keeping it in the future. If you lived a perfect life from now on (even if that were possible), you thereby could not make up for having sinned in the past, because you get no “extra credit” for doing what the law requires. “Good deeds” cannot nullify “bad deeds”—and that Islam offers such fraud proves that it is a false religion.

Muhammad is dead, cannot hear your prayer, and can do nothing for you. Muhammad’s grave in Medina is still occupied with whatever remains of his dead body. Christ’s tomb at Jerusalem is empty; He rose from the dead. No one could kill Jesus Christ, but He willingly gave up His life for your sins; Muhammad was poisoned by the widow of a man he murdered. Muhammad did not die for anyone’s sins but for his own.

Muhammad promised paradise as a reward from Allah to those who die in jihad. But your conscience knows that any “god” who rewards suicide bombers with paradise for killing innocent women and children is not the true God and is unworthy of your trust. Muhammad also promised paradise without dying in jihad to a select few, of whom Abu Bakr, his father-in-law and successor as the head of all Muslims, was the first. But Abu Bakr said that even if he had one foot inside paradise, he could not trust Allah, who might push him out!

Common sense tells you that Muhammad, a sinner, had no right to promise paradise to anyone. He deceived those who believed him. God alone decides our eternal fate, and that can only be on the basis of justice. The penalty His law demands must be paid. We have all broken God’s laws and are unable to pay the penalty because God’s justice is infinite, and we would suffer in hell forever. Since Christ is God and man in one person, He was able to pay that penalty for all mankind. You cannot earn His forgiveness; you need only to believe on Him as your Lord and Savior, and you will live forever with Him in heaven. Trust Christ and rest in His promise.

God says that He loved the world so much that “he gave his only begotten Son [Jesus Christ], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16). Believe in Him and accept this endless life!



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Why Didn't Jesus Show His Resurrection to the Romans and Rabbis?

Question: Why didn't Jesus, if He really rose from the dead, show Himself openly to the rabbis and to the common Jews and to the Romans? Wouldn't that have established once and for all the fact that He had come back from the grave? And would not such a public appearance of Christ have converted the entire world of that day to Christianity? The fact that even the Bible admits He didn't do so is presumptive evidence against the alleged resurrection, is it not? If He really was alive, why didn't He prove it openly?

Response: You underestimate the proud stubbornness and evil in the human heart. There were many eyewitnesses, in addition to Christ's disciples, who testified to multitudes of friends and relatives and to the rabbis as well that Christ had raised Lazarus from the dead after his body had been in the grave for four days (John:11:43-46). There was no doubt that this incredible miracle had occurred. In fact, the rabbis admitted to one another in their council that Christ was doing "many miracles" (verses 47-48). That fact, however, did not soften their hearts nor make them willing to face the truth about Christ.

On the contrary, the fact that Christ had raised Lazarus from the dead before many witnesses (and that because of this undeniable miracle many of the people believed He was the Messiah) only increased the rabbis' determination to kill Christ. And now they were determined to kill Lazarus also in order to prevent him from being a testimony to Christ's divine power (John:12:9-11)! Such fanatical opposition to Christ is not rational and therefore would not have been changed, no matter what further facts had been witnessed.

No, it would not have changed the minds and actions of the secular and religious leaders at all had Christ himself, the very One whom they had crucified, stood before them alive

once again. And why should He have done so? Through His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, and in the miracles that had been confirmed by the many witnesses (who, like spies, had reported to the rabbis—John:11:46), Christ had given Israel's religious leaders more than enough evidence that He was the Messiah. Undoubtedly, some of the rabbis themselves had witnessed Christ's miracles. But they still crucified Him.

Both Romans and Rabbis Had More Proof Than They Needed

Furthermore, the rabbis had even more powerful evidence for the resurrection of Christ than the witness of the ordinary people

who had testified that they had seen with their own eyes Lazarus come out of the grave “bound hand and foot with graveclothes . . . ” (11:44). They had the eyewitness account of the trained and disciplined Roman soldiers who had guarded Christ’s tomb and had reported their terrifying confrontation by the angel who rolled the stone away to expose the empty tomb. Yet in spite of this testimony of a platoon of tough and now badly shaken soldiers, so hard were the rabbis’ hearts that they bribed the guards to say that the disciples had stolen the body while they slept (Matthew:28:13)!

Both the rabbis and the Roman authorities knew full well that Christ had risen from the dead. To supply further proof of the resurrection to those who were determined to deny it would not have changed anything. It would only have made their judgment all the more severe because of the additional evidence for which they would have been accountable. So Christ was actually merciful in not appearing to the rabbis and to the multitudes of others who would not have believed under any circumstances. Clearly He was following His own advice not to cast “pearls before swine” (Matthew:7:6).

As for the rest of the people, they were confronted by many resurrected individuals who undoubtedly testified to them of the resurrection of Christ: “The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose . . . after his [Christ’s] resurrection, and went into the holy city [Jerusalem] and appeared unto many (Matthew:27:52–53).

Thereafter, both the rabbis and all the people had additional proof of the resurrection in the miracles that were done through the disciples in the name and power of Christ:

With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (Acts:4:33)

By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people . . . ([and] the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women), insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folks and them that were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one. (Acts:5:12–16)

The very transformation in the disciples, which the Pharisees acknowledged, was more than sufficient proof of the resurrection. The disciples, like the cowards they were, had abandoned Christ in the garden and had fled to save their own lives. Yet here they were, these “unlearned and ignorant men” (Acts:4:13), now no longer afraid, but boldly indicting the rabbis for having delivered Christ to be crucified. In spite of beatings and threats of imprisonment and death, these former cowards were now courageously standing up to the rabbis and with great conviction testifying that their Lord had risen from the dead. Moreover, in His name they were doing astonishing miracles that were convincing multitudes. No further proof was needed.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 133-36) by DAVE HUNT

Endnotes

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The Power of His Resurrection

Dave Hunt — First published in January 2009

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE Ephesian believers is very specific. He asks God to bestow upon them a deeper knowledge and understanding of Christ that we do well to seek for ourselves. This is not something that one can learn in a seminary or even in a Bible study or from reading devotional books. Paul's desire for them was that they would willingly receive from God "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of [Christ]" (Eph 1:17-23).

Specifically, Paul prays that they would know the "exceeding greatness" of the power that God wanted to demonstrate in their lives. His explanation of this power is most instructive. Paul tells us about it in Philippians 3. It was, in fact, what he desired so much for himself. He called it the "power of his resurrection" and declared: "[Oh] that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Was Paul uncertain of his salvation, concerned that he might not qualify for the resurrection of believers at the Rapture? Hardly! He is telling us that the Resurrection of Christ is not only a historical event that we look back to with satisfaction and joy. It is the greatest event in the history (past, present, or future) of the entire cosmos!

The greatest event that the universe will ever see is also one of the most difficult to understand. We mention it so casually, but here is the hinge upon which all history hangs and is forever divided. The division of time ought to be not only BC (Before Christ) and AD (meaning After Christ); it ought to be BR (Before the Resurrection) and AR (After the Resurrection).

With modern telescopes and the means of apparently probing farther into space than ever before, David's words in Psalm 19 take on deeper meaning: "The heavens declare the glory of God...." Creation is the greatest visible expression of His

power, and we bow in awe and worship when we think of the infinite God behind all that we can see. But Paul says that is *nothing* in comparison to the power displayed in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and this is the great power that Paul desired for the Ephesians to experience in their daily lives.

In fact, Paul tells us that the Resurrection is the greatest display of God's power ever to be demonstrated, nor can it ever be surpassed. We need to understand why this is so and why Paul prayed as he did. After all, "In [Christ] was life" (Jn 1:4). Jesus said, "I have power (*dunamis*) to lay down [my life] and...to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father" (Jn 10:18). Then why did it take such power to raise Christ from the dead?

During His life on earth and before His own resurrection, Christ had raised many from the dead. Those resurrected, such as Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44) and the widow of Nain's son (Lk 7:11-16), died again after some days or years, to await the resurrection of all believers at the Rapture.

How could the Giver of life, by whom all things were created (Jn 1:3), be killed? Here we have a seeming contradiction. Christ himself said, "No man taketh [my life] from me...I lay it down of myself" (Jn 10:18). Yet Peter indicts the Jews with having killed Jesus: whom "ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). In addressing the rabbinical council, Stephen uses even stronger language: "of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers..." (Acts 7:52).

The answer to the question of why it took the greatest power ever displayed to raise Christ from the dead can only be found in relation to the death He died.

God had declared that the penalty for sin is death, which is eternal separation from Him. Isn't that rather harsh? Adam and Eve were driven out from the garden paradise by their Creator, who had placed them there, for the seemingly minor infraction of eating some fruit. How could that be worthy of eternal punishment?

We have such a careless view of sin, looking at the act alone and forgetting against whom the act was committed. The sin of Adam and Eve was not merely eating the forbidden fruit. It was deliberate defiance of and rebellion against the One who had created them and the entire universe. From our viewpoint, David's

sin of adultery, murder, and lying was far more reprehensible. But David knew what sin was: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps 51:4).

At its heart, sin is deliberate treason, open and defiant rebellion against the Creator and Ruler of the universe. We need to remember this fact. Most Christians who, when convicted by conscience, fall on their faces and confess their sins are not really confessing the horror of what they've done. It is not enough to repent of the deed. We must confess also that, no matter how trivial we think the act was, we have repeated Adam and Eve's treason *against the Lord God*. Without that admission deeply felt as a conviction in our hearts, the confession is incomplete.

Now we begin to understand why it took the "exceeding greatness of God's power" to raise Christ from the dead. The hymn writer put it well, "'Twas our sins' vast load that laid Thee, Lord of life, within the grave." *What does that mean?* How could our sins have been laid upon the sinless Christ? This certainly was not accomplished by Pilate's condemnation of Christ nor in the scourging and being nailed to a cross by godless Roman soldiers. Yet this is what that unbiblical film, *The Passion of the Christ*, portrayed—and it was praised by thousands of evangelicals including hundreds of leaders.

What really happened on the Cross not only could not be portrayed in a movie but by omission was denied. Isaiah wrote, "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Is 53:10). Clearly, what men did to Christ physically had no part at all in the Lord's bruising Him and making His soul a sacrifice for sin. There is a moral and spiritual dimension to sin that Christ had to endure for every individual, and none other could.

Not only did our Savior have to be perfectly sinless to pay for the sins of others but He had to be infinite. No one less than God could accomplish this satisfaction of justice. But the penalty had been pronounced against *mankind*. Thus, God, though infinite, could not pay that penalty unless, without ceasing to be God, He became fully *man*. This is what the one and only virgin birth was all about.

Atheists complain that it would be unjust for an innocent party to pay the penalty for the guilty. That would be true were it not for another dimension to the

Cross. For those who believe, God considers Christ's death and resurrection to be as their own. A miraculous inner transformation occurs, which Christ promised and which He called being "born again" (Jn 3:3-16). That's not a cliché but reality.

Pilate could not have known what he was saying when he presented Christ to the howling mob: "Behold the man!" This was man as God had intended him to be. Paul called Him the "second man" and also the "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45-47). In other words, from Adam, freshly created by the hand of God in the Garden, to Jesus, the *last* Adam, freshly formed in the womb of a virgin, there was no one of whom it could be said, "Behold the man as God intended him to be."

"Sins' vast load," which would have held mankind in the Lake of Fire forever, could be fully endured by the infinite One upon the Cross, where He stood between God and Man. If Infinite Justice had not been satisfied through Christ's full payment for our sins, He could not have come out of that grave.

The penalty for sin is eternal banishment from God's presence and from His entire universe into the Lake of Fire. That is what high treason against the Creator of all merits in His court. One of the greatest horrors of the Lake of Fire will be the fact that even in that place of torment, these haters of God find no escape from Him. He is there in the consciences of the damned, consciences that will no longer find any excuse behind which to hide. There will be no escape from the truth they rejected, and that will haunt them eternally. David said, "If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there" (Ps 139:8).

It would be impossible for any finite being to pay the infinite penalty demanded by God's infinite justice. No man attempting to pay for his own sins could ever finally say, as Christ declared in triumph on the Cross, "It is finished!" The debt has been paid. But the penalty *must* be paid in full. How else can the prison gates of justice be torn open?

In the Book of Job we get some inkling of the very real struggle between Satan and God for the cosmos. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them" (Jb 1:6). In that amazing account, we are given an insight into what is involved in this battle between God and Satan. It is a conflict of cosmic proportions for control of the universe, and man is the prize that both sides seek. This is a very real battle for

man's heart and affection. Nor is there any guarantee that God will triumph in every individual case. With the gift of free will, every man has an individual choice to make concerning which side he will join in this battle.

Christians have a vital role to play in Satan's ultimate defeat: "They overcame [that old serpent, the Devil - Rv 12:9] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rv 12:11). With the love of Christ in our hearts, we follow the example that Christ himself left to us: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pt 2:21-25).

Satan continues to enter God's presence boldly, as he did in Job's day. How do we know? He still accuses the brethren before the throne of God day and night and will do so to the very end (Rv 12:10). As we've said before (and it bears repeating), Satan is like a lame duck president. He can still walk the corridors of power unopposed and wield considerable influence behind the scenes. He has not yet been thrown out of heaven, but that day is coming soon:

There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rv 12:7-9)

How will Satan finally be cast out? An old hymn expresses clearly and beautifully what scripture portrays: "In weakness like defeat, He won the victor's crown; Trod all our foes beneath His feet by being trodden down. He Satan's power laid low; Made sin, He sin o'erthrew. Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so, and death, by dying, slew."

Satan cannot understand how Christ, through meekness and seeming weakness, could triumph over him. Everything about the Cross confuses him. First he inspired Peter to prevent Christ from going to the Cross: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Mt 16:21-22). We know that Satan inspired Peter because of Christ's reply: "Get thee behind me, Satan." Then he inspired Judas to betray Jesus to the rabbis so that

they could have Him crucified: "Satan entered into him [Judas]" (Jn 13:27). Satan doesn't understand to this day.

In my opinion, Satan really thinks he could be the final victor in this battle for the hearts and minds of mankind. And why not? He offers what he has trained man's greed and lust to desire: wealth, possessions, hedonistic pleasure, free sex, popularity, fame, drugs and alcohol in abundance, and satisfaction of every lustful desire. Yet multitudes choose instead to follow Christ, though He offers hatred and rejection by the world, with persecution and suffering—but eternity in His presence, where there is true happiness: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11).

And what of those who make the wrong choice and opt to join Satan in committing treason? God does not take pleasure in punishing the wicked (Ezk 33:11), but each one's punishment must be suited to the crime. When one reads what the atheist leaders say about God in blatant and defiant rebellion, we know they would tear Him from His throne if they could. They *hate* God. It is clear that torment for eternity in the Lake of Fire for their treason will at last be the reaping of what they have sowed.

Consider the following from Richard Dawkins, leader of the New Atheist movement, in a debate with John Lennox, a fervent Christian, also an Oxford professor and scientist with two earned Ph.D.s, who in his closing remarks testified to his faith in Christ and to our Lord's resurrection: "Yes, well, that concluding bit," said Dawkins, lips curled in contempt, voice dripping with venom, "rather gives the game away, doesn't it? All that stuff about science and physics...that's all very grand and wonderful, and then suddenly we come down to the resurrection of Jesus. It's so petty, it's so trivial, it's so local, it's so earthbound, it's so *unworthy* of the universe."

Yet God calls the Resurrection the greatest display that could ever be known of His majesty and power. How pitiful is this vitriolic outburst from Dawkins! This pagan, who obviously worships creation instead of its Creator (Rom 1:21-23), is beside himself with rage. This expression of his hatred of God will mock him eternally (Prv 1:20-33), while heaven will ring with the eternal yet ever new song of praise to God and the Lamb: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Rv 5:12). TBC

Quotable.....

To know one's self to be foolish is to stand upon the door-step of the temple of wisdom; to understand the wrongness of any position is halfway towards amending it; to be quite sure that our self-confidence is sin and folly, and an offense towards God, is a great help towards the absolute casting of our self-confidence away, and the bringing of our souls, in practice as well as in theory, to rely wholly upon the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Nobody will err about the way to God if he really resolves to follow that way. The Spirit of God will guide those whose hearts are set upon coming to God.

— C. H. SPURGEON

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You teach that God is not the creator of evil.... Hear God: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Is 45:7)....The reason, of course, is that the creation is a step-down process....The Creator is perfectly cyclic whereas creation is semi-cyclic. All those with eternal life have [fallen short] and must be with Christ to get eternal life from Him. They must be "added to" from time to time, as there is no immortality in themselves; only God is immortal....Perhaps you will answer this in your newsletter, for God tells us that He creates evil.

RESPONSE: First of all, God is not "perfectly cyclic," whatever you mean by that, for He says, "I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal 3:6). As for having eternal life "added to" Christians, that is an impossibility. Eternal life is complete, everlasting, and nothing can be added to it or taken away; it doesn't wane, lessen, or wear out—nor do those who have received eternal life and belong to Christ need to have anything "added" but are complete for eternity.

Secondly, the Hebrew word here translated "evil" is *ra*, which does not mean moral evil but primarily disasters or trials that God creates from time to time for discipline or punishment. But even if the subject is moral evil, the verse you quote has the answer within itself. God "creates" evil the same way that He "creates" darkness. Darkness is not a "thing" that God makes. Darkness is revealed by light to be the *absence* of light. In the same way, "evil" is not a "thing" that God creates with any existence in itself. Sin is defined as coming

"short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23)—and it is God's perfect holiness that *reveals evil by contrast*.

Christ declared, "Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mk 7:21-23). God only "creates" evil in the same way that light "creates" darkness—by exposing it for what it is by His holiness. He is not the cause of evil or wickedness, which comes from the heart of man. Evil is likened to darkness many times in Scripture. And we are told that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5).

QUESTION [edited]: We can see from Scripture that God removed his people from the land of Israel when they sinned, and He scattered them. In the Old Testament, the Jews were brought back to their land after they repented. It was then that their enemies were defeated.

I do not see any such repentance by the Jews—not even after the Holocaust. The vast majority have never accepted their Messiah. It seems to me that their "return" could simply have been the British after World War II settling the Jews in "their own land" and thereby breaking their treaties with the Arabs. Since the Jews had not repented, how do you know that God put the Jews back there after the war? How can we know the timeframe in which He was going to do it? Didn't the Jews always have to repent before they were allowed to return to Palestine?

RESPONSE: We have often shown that "Palestine" isn't a legitimate name for what God calls "the land of Israel" (see "Israel and Prophetic Proof, Part 1" [July '09], also May '03 Q&A, and January '04). Deuteronomy 28 gives the awesome penalty for Israel's disobedience, including giving up their temporal residence in the land, but never the loss of ownership of the land. As Dave Hunt often pointed out, historically and as the scriptures (Ezk 36:21-28) bear out, the Jews have maintained a continual presence in the land ever since Moses led them out of Egypt and Joshua led them into the land. There is always a remnant.

Furthermore, it would be incorrect to state that modern Israel's presence is not in God's timing, as numerous scriptures testify that the Lord will bring them back into the land *before* their ultimate end-time national repentance (Jer 5:10, 18; 30:11; 46:28; Ezk 11:13, etc.).

In Matthew 23:39, the Lord prophesied to Israel that, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." In Zechariah 12:9-10 we read, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Clearly, these verses show that the Jews are already in the land and are then repenting.

Zechariah 14:1-3 tells us. "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle."

As Zechariah clearly shows, the Lord's return to save Israel occurs before their prophesied repentance, and the Scriptures reveal that the Jews are in Israel when the Lord returns to the earth. They therefore must return to the land and it is a legitimate conclusion that today's occupancy is a part of that.

In past dispersals from the land, there is no national repentance seen when Israel was brought back to the land (for example) following 70 years of captivity. Indeed, the Lord had prophesied 70 years in Babylon and then they would be returned, with no indication of a national repentance.

God has never cast away Israel. Though He prophesied that they would be scattered throughout all nations, He also said they would be gathered again (Dt. 30:3). Furthermore, the Lord distinctly said that "...though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer 30:11).

As to their importance as "signs of the times," the prophet Joel recorded that "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land" (Jl 3:2; see also Zec 7,8, etc.).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

A Gross Injustice?

Question: Some of my friends think that the teaching that Christ's death upon the Cross paid the penalty for our sins (which is the very heart of Christianity) is itself reason for rejecting Christianity. They argue that it is unjust for an innocent party to suffer imprisonment or execution in the place of a criminal and that such a practice would encourage sin. I'm stumped. Can you help me?

Response: Their problem is a lack of understanding of what actually happened on the Cross. First of all, Christ is absolutely unique. He is God and man in one Person, the only One who could die for the sins of others. Therefore, His death in our place is not to be taken as a suggestion that others should "suffer imprisonment or execution in the place of a criminal."

Furthermore, Christ did more than simply die in our place. If that were all that occurred, then Barabbas had the greatest "Christian" testimony of all time. It was literally true that Christ died in the place of Barabbas and thereby set him free. Yet Barabbas knew nothing of the true meaning of the Cross. He did not, so far as we know, understand that Christ had died for his sins, nor did he put his faith in Christ as his Savior. All Christ's death accomplished for that criminal was to set him free from prison to continue living his old sinful life. That is not the gospel!

Christ's work of redemption did more than simply pay for our sins. When Christ died, those who would trust Him as their Savior died in Him. The believer has accepted Christ's death as his very own and, in that act of faith, has given up life as he would have lived it so that the resurrected Christ can live in him. Giving his own testimony, Paul declared:

I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

So the believer does not merely escape from death but is brought through death in Christ into resurrection life on the other side, a life that is no longer his but the life of Christ in him: "If one died for all, then were all dead [i.e. have died in Him] . . . that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. . . . Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:14-17):

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall

appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:3–4)

An Injustice, Yet the Ultimate Justice

Yes, in a sense it was an injustice for Christ to have died in our place. No ordinary person could have satisfied the demand of justice by taking the prescribed punishment for another person. Nor could any ordinary person have accomplished the glorious results of Christ's death for us by being imprisoned or executed in the place of some criminal.

It is often forgotten that in His death on the Cross, Christ suffered not merely what man

did to Him but the eternal judgment that His own righteousness had decreed against sin. He took our sins upon Himself. Thus, the ultimate justice was accomplished because the penalty for sin was paid in full, a penalty that could not have been paid any other way.

Therefore, those who believe in Christ are given eternal life as a free gift of God's grace on a righteous basis. Such a transaction would not otherwise have been possible. In Christ we see a perfectly righteous and just forgiveness for sin that none of the world's religions can offer.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 136-138) *by* DAVE HUNT

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New Age Mysticism Déjà vu — Part Three

T. A. McMahon

IN HIS 2006 BOOK, *Yoga and the Body of Christ*, Dave Hunt noted that there were more than 500,000 references on Google Search for “Christian churches and yoga.” Today, that search brings up more than 10 million! In part two of this series “New Age Mysticism Déjà vu” (March 2016), I explained that the heart of yoga is an Eastern mystical view of God as an impersonal force or energy. In light of that belief, so-called Christian yoga is an attempt to reconcile two contradictory beliefs and practices, which can never happen. Any endeavor that tries to Christianize the practice of yoga is akin to turning to Christ-rejecting pagan religions in order to draw closer to Him. That is both nonsensical and blasphemous.

In this series dealing with the intrusion of Eastern mysticism into the church, it would be a huge error to overlook another growing practice among Christians—a practice that may even exceed the numbers of those involved in yoga: *Christianized martial arts*.

The information contained in this article is drawn primarily from two former practitioners and teachers of the martial arts, Gaylene Goodroad and myself. Throughout my college days, I competed in the sport of intercollegiate Judo and participated in AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) tournaments. As head of my college Judo club I helped instruct new members and teammates. After graduate school, I moved to the West Coast and studied aikido at what then was considered the top aikido dojo [training center or school] in the country. For more than a decade I was engrossed in the history and cultures that produced the martial arts.

Gaylene Goodroad’s experiences were more concentrated and advanced than my own due to the fact that she had studied under the personal guidance of highly revered teachers (whom I could only access by reading their books). She has written of her involvement in karate (advanced black belt degrees in two of the arts, and as a sensei) and has presented her evaluation of the martial arts in general in her booklet *My Life in “The Way.”*

The truth is that anyone who claims to be a Christian, i.e., to be a *follower* of Jesus Christ, needs to follow His teachings! As obvious as that should be, and as much as it is professed, fewer and

fewer Christians (a group that includes many who call themselves *Bible-believing Christians*) truly adhere to the necessity of going by the teachings and instructions of the Word of God. Although the Bible is wonderfully profound, its fundamental truths can be readily understood by every believer who is born of the Spirit of God. God, who is no respecter of persons, does not play favorites regarding one’s intellect (Acts 10:34; 1 Corinthians 1:27). He makes very clear the revelation of Himself, His characteristics, His plan for His creation, His solution for the problem of sin, the reconciliation of the lost to Himself, and other essential issues.

A major characteristic of our eternal creator God is that He is *personal*. He is the Creator of everything. Furthermore, He created mankind in His image, i.e., with personal attributes. The gospel is the revelation of the personal God of creation who so loved His personal creatures that He

BUT GOD HATH CHOSEN THE FOOLISH THINGS OF THE WORLD TO CONFOUND THE WISE; AND GOD HATH CHOSEN THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD TO CONFOUND THE THINGS WHICH ARE MIGHTY

—1 Corinthians 1:27

became one of them in order to save them from their sins. What Christian would deny that? There are those who do—those who are in cults that carry the name of Christ in their title but who deny the biblical Jesus, and those in liberal denominations whose theology is as fickle as the wind. Yet there are also Christians who are *unwittingly* entertaining a view of God that denies the personal God of the Bible. Who might they be? Those who are involved in the Eastern spirituality of martial arts.

Goodroad quotes Gichin Funakoshi, the father of modern-day karate: “By the time I had been practicing Karate for some years, and as I became more familiar with the art, I became more conscious of its spiritual nature...” (*Karate-Do* p. 86).

The preponderance of martial arts is rooted in the foundational belief of Eastern mysticism, which is that God is an impersonal energy—a nonphysical force. This nonphysical energy is what makes up the mystical power in nearly all of the martial arts practices. Everyone who has long been part of the martial arts scene has, at some

point, witnessed the actual power itself, whether it was related to the utilization of *ki, chi, quigong, kundalini, prana*, or other Eastern mystical power devices. From my experience, aikido demonstrated the most obvious use of such power, and that power is all the more desired the longer one continues in his or her own particular practice. Sooner or later, one discovers that physical techniques have a limit, and further advancement can be realized only through *spiritual* development. An exception to this would be a short-term self-defense class that is devoid of any spiritual aspects and utilizes only the physical techniques found in some of the spiritually oriented martial arts.

The spiritual seduction, on the other hand, is real and can attract any practitioner at any level. One well-known writer/devotee of karate, who had no interest in karate’s religious aspects, notes what is most common among martial artists: “Only after several years of training did I come to realize that the deepest purpose of the martial arts is to serve as a vehicle for personal spiritual development” (Joe Hyams, *Zen in the Martial Arts*, cited in Gaylene Goodroad, *My Life in the Way*, p. 9). Exactly what is involved in that spiritual development? I personally witnessed my own aikido instructors and others in public exhibitions performing feats that defied any natural explanation. The founder of aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, who was a disciple of a grand shaman (one who is said to mediate between mankind and the world of the spirits), was able to demonstrate extraordinary abilities that are beyond the laws of physics. He claimed that his abilities were derived from his spiritual beliefs: “Each one of us is inherently a god or a goddess. Cooperate with all the myriad deities of this world, and fulfill your duty as a messenger of the divine” (John Stevens, *Aikido*, p.9, cited in Goodroad, *My Life in the Way*, p. 12). It is no coincidence that Ueshiba’s words reflect the lie of godhood that was offered to Eve by Satan speaking through a serpent in Genesis 3:5.

What then of *Christian martial arts*? As with *Christian yoga*, there is a denial of any Eastern mystical influence in the Christianized program, which it is claimed has been modified to conform to Christianity. Even if that were the case, which it is not, what part of any martial arts endeavor is reflected in the New Testament teachings related to the church, which is the bride and the body of Christ? None whatsoever! Yet various “Christianized” programs emulate many of the aspects that are clearly unique to

the Eastern martial arts with its spiritual roots. For example, many work out in a *dojo*, dress in traditional *gis*, wear color belts to signify ranks, and bow to a *sensei*, or teacher. Aside from the original spiritual meanings related to those things, where is any of that found in the Scriptures? If it's not found in the Bible, why label it "Christian"? Somehow the mystical aspects of the martial arts have blinded multitudes of Christians from seeing what should be obvious.

In regard to various forms of self-defense, which is what the martial arts are all about, would it make biblical sense to start a "Christian" wrestling club or a "Christian" boxing association? What do those endeavors have to do with Christianity? How about a "Christian" mixed martial arts organization? As absurd as that clearly is, one such organization crowned an American *Christian* Mixed Martial Arts champion last year [emphasis added]. The inclusion of such things is both unbiblical and irrational. Worse yet, some identify the demonic power of *ki* or *chi* energy to be the power of the Holy Spirit. In a book titled *Christianity & Martial Arts Power*, by Michael Chen, a back-cover endorsement declares, "Throughout the book, [the author] uses numerous appropriate and instructional passages from the Holy Bible and connects them to essential martial art concepts such as *chi*, or life energy."

In her testimony booklet, *My Life in "The Way": From the Broad Way of the East to the Narrow Way in Christ*, Gaylene Goodroad documents the overwhelming influence of Chuck Norris and his mixing of the Eastern mystical worldview with his Christianity. No one has been more effective than Norris in promoting the martial arts in America, which he has done by means of his wins in karate championships, his martial arts programs for young people, and the many movies and TV series in which he has starred and exhibited his skills. Norris's first autobiography tells of his having learned occult metaphysical concepts from Napoleon Hill and others (see *The Seduction of Christianity* re Hill). In a 2004 rewrite of his autobiography, *Against All Odds: My Story*, Norris tells of his relationship with Jesus Christ: "...a very real transaction between God and me took place at [a Billy Graham Crusade] that night. I committed myself to follow him... and he committed himself to me as my Savior and Lord..." (Norris, pp. 29-30, cited in Goodroad, *My Life*, p. 45).

Whether or not Norris is a true believer

is between him and the Lord. However, he has nowhere repented of his belief in the Eastern occultism that he endorses in his books, such as *The Secret Power Within: Zen Solutions to Real Problems*: "The monk finally told me to open my eyes, and when he did so, it was like waking up...that was when I first became aware that there was more to the martial arts than just the physical, and it was a turning point in my life..." (pp. 3-5). Norris knows the spirituality of Eastern religions far better than he knows the Bible. That lack of biblical awareness, unfortunately, has led to a spiritually disastrous mistake: the unwitting attempt to syncretize the personal God revealed in Scripture with an impersonal energy. He declares, "The fact is that everyone has *ki*, which is really little more than a technique of visualization allowing one to utilize the internal energy that we all have and letting it flow through the body" (pp. 127-30). No, it is far more, according to martial arts literature: It is the energy that governs the universe and the individual, the cosmic truth, i.e., god as a "force." One cannot hold to both ideas: God as a force and the God of the Bible, which are diametrically opposed to one another.

In this day when many appear to have lost the ability to really *think*, holding contradictory beliefs is commonplace. Sadly, not thinking biblically is also commonplace in the church with the same results for professing Christians. Gaylene Goodroad, however, writes that after confessing her sinfulness and putting her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way for her to be reconciled to God, the Lord saved her. He then opened her heart and mind, enabling her to recognize the false beliefs she not only had held but had taught for a number of years. She writes, "At the time of my conversion, I had also dedicated over thirteen years of my life to the martial arts. Through the literal sweat of my brow, I had achieved not one, but two, coveted black belts, promoting that year to second degree—Sensei Nidan. I had studied under some internationally recognized karate masters, and had accumulated a room full of trophies while [husband] Steve was stationed on the island of Oahu.

"I had unwittingly become a teacher of Far Eastern mysticism, which is the source of all karate—despite the American claim to the contrary. I studied well and had been a follower of karate-do: 'the way of the empty hand.' I had also taught others the way of karate, including a group of marines stationed at Pearl Harbor. I had led them

and others along the same stray path of 'spiritual enlightenment,' a destiny devoid of Christ. In 1992, I renounced both of my black belts, after discovering the sobering truth about my chosen vocation in light of my Christian faith. For the years since, I have grieved over the fact that I was a teacher of 'the Way' to many dear souls—including children. Although I can never undo that grievous error, my prayer is that some may heed what I have written here." (Her booklet *My Life in "The Way"* is available as a free download on TBC's website).

As noted, the popularity of martial arts among Christians is staggering. Certainly, the huge numbers show that it has reached far beyond a fringe element within Christendom. One would expect better discernment among conservative Christians and their organizations even though we are in a time when the Word of God is neither studied nor endured and is rarely referenced. Bob Jones University has the Judo-Gentlemen and the Champions for Christ Karate team. Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru) has short-term mission trips that teach *tae kwon do*. Liberty University conferred an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree on Chuck Norris, who is also a contributing columnist for *WorldNetDaily* (WND). The list goes way beyond those few examples, and it would seem to be overwhelming when one considers the appeal to Christian youth through the influence of movies. No one has to explain to a youth today what the "Force" of *Star Wars* is all about. They also get the *Yin Yang* symbol that adorns their lunchboxes, along with the image of Master Splinter of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Many are all the more confused by being told that *God is the Force*. I wonder how many children of Christian parents understand the uncomplicated characteristics of the personal God who is revealed in Scripture and who created them. Just recognizing His personal attributes would be helpful. My encouragement to parents and grandparents is to start with that lesson for their children's sakes.

There is no justification for incorporating Eastern concepts and practices into one's walk with the Lord. They lead multitudes of Christians to participate in techniques that come from the world of the occult and will ultimately deceive them regarding the character of God and, therefore, the very Gospel itself. Our prayer for this three-part series is that believers who read the articles will better recognize the inherent dangers of the New Age Movement and Eastern mystical concepts.

TBC

Quotable.....

If we love our Lord, then we will want to see Him revealed to the world and made known for who He is. We want to see Him honored and praised where He was rejected. We long to see Him rule, whose right it is to rule, and we want to be at His side, singing His praises, pointing men to Him who is the Lover of our souls. Our relationship with Christ and with God through Him will forever be one of perfect love. When we see Him, faith and hope will have given place to sight. But love, the greatest gift of all, will endure forever.

—Dave Hunt in *An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith*, p. 250

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Is Islam’s aggression any different from the routine bloodshed of the Old Testament? Israel claimed at that time to be following God’s orders, as Muslims claim to follow Allah’s.

RESPONSE: There is a huge difference. Muslims claim to follow Allah. He is not the God of the Bible (see Q&A Feb ’02). Muhammad claimed that Allah commands Muslims to “fight against all people [world-wide] until all confess there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger.”

By contrast, Israel was not commanded to convert anyone under threat of death, nor to take over the world, but to exterminate the Canaanites because of their wickedness and to go in and possess that specific land. Its boundaries are given in Genesis 15. Prior to this, Israel was held captive in Egypt and was restrained from invading Canaan for 400 years because “the iniquity of the Amorites [was] not yet full” (Gn 15:16). Only then did the evil of these people reach such proportions that God’s holiness forced Him to use Israel to annihilate them.

Muslims also point to Crusader killings in the name of God and Christ. That slaughter of Jews and Turks, however, was in disobedience to the Bible and to the teachings and example of Christ.

The murder of millions of both Christians and Jews by Muslims all through history, and today’s terrorism, are in obedience to the Qur’an, Allah, Muhammad, and the example that he and early Muslims set. What a difference!

QUESTION: Should the conditions set forth for discipleship be mentioned prior to (or during) a gospel appeal? Since the NT designates every Christian as being a disciple, and Jesus said to “count the cost,” would it not be appropriate to

do so? I know that repentance doesn’t necessarily have to be mentioned for the Holy Spirit to effect repentance in the heart, and perhaps discipleship doesn’t either. I’m just concerned that people who “believe” the gospel, may be just giving mental acquiescence to the facts of it and are in fact resting in a false assurance.

RESPONSE: It is instructive to study both the gospels and the book of Acts to see the example of how Jesus ministered to people and how the apostles and early Christians presented the Gospel.

Jesus said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,” when his disciples asked “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” (Jn 6:28-29). Furthermore, both Jesus and the apostles spoke to the people “where they were.” In other words, they began with an individual’s understanding, corrected any misunderstandings, and confronted wrong attitudes. At times discipleship was emphasized; at other times, repentance; and sometimes the Lord so prepared the individual that the Gospel presentation was simply (so to speak) “bare bones.” We often don’t know how the Lord has been preparing an individual to hear the Gospel.

For example, consider the jailer in Acts 16:29-31: “Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” This man had sat through Paul and Silas singing the praises of the Lord, and then the Lord threw in an earthquake!

To the “rich young ruler,” Jesus said, “One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions” (Mk 10:21-22). This man loved his possessions more than he loved the certainty of eternal life. He was unwilling to follow the Lord or observe the Lord’s condition that directly answered his question about the greatest obstacle in his life that was keeping him from salvation.

In conclusion, the Gospel presentation can be given only at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. There really isn’t a checklist. Clearly, we are given the example of being attentive to the other person and responding to them at their point of need. For this reason, we agree with your concern that too many are simply giving a mental assent to

whatever is said without the heart being engaged.

QUESTION: You seem to discount the value of studying Greek and Hebrew in order to be able to understand the Bible better. A friend of mine is trying to persuade me to go to seminary in order to learn the original biblical languages. Why shouldn’t I?

RESPONSE: If the Lord leads you to seminary, by all means go. But let’s be practical. How many years of study and experience do you think the translators of the King James Bible had in order to qualify them for that job? How long would it take a beginner to learn Greek and Hebrew well enough to discover where these men made a poor translation (if they did) and to improve it? Does your friend, or do you, intend to reach that level of expertise? Is that remote possibility worth the time and effort?

If you say that Greek is a richer language than English, and that knowing it would give you a deeper understanding, I won’t argue. But wouldn’t the time you’d have to spend learning Greek to any beneficial level be better spent in studying the Bible itself on your knees, seeking understanding from the Holy Spirit and getting to know Him and His Word? Comparing scripture with scripture, and using a good concordance, you can see how the same Greek or Hebrew words and expressions are used in different passages. The Bible interprets itself.

I have been told lately by several Calvinists that I can’t understand the Bible—not even John 3:16—because I don’t know the original languages. If so, then neither does the average Christian, but must look to experts to interpret it for him—experts who therefore stand between him and God. Far from biblical, this is elitism similar to Roman Catholicism, which discourages ordinary members from studying the Bible because only the magisterium (bishops in concert with the pope) can interpret it.

Saying this doesn’t make me popular and offends some of my dearest friends. But a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew has been elevated so highly that one must conclude that the Wycliffe Bible translators have wasted their time all these years. Why translate the Bible into native languages if these people still couldn’t understand it because they don’t know Greek and Hebrew? Wouldn’t it be more efficient and less time consuming to teach Greek and Hebrew to native peoples so they could read the Bible in those languages instead of translating it into their native tongues? May the Lord give you wisdom in coming to your own conclusions.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Why Can't the Gospels Agree?

Question: Christians try to explain away the contradictions in the narrative in the four gospels as resulting from four different witnesses, each presenting his own perspective on what happened. But that could not account for the variations in the words attributed to Jesus. Did He use the words that Matthew records, or did He actually say what Mark writes, or what Luke or John offer us? Words can't be changed! If these writers really were eyewitnesses, why don't their memories agree? And if they were inspired by the same Holy Spirit, why the contradictions?

Response: First of all, there are no contradictions between the four gospels. There are variations in the accounts, but they are exactly what one would expect from accurate independent eyewitnesses. Furthermore, as we and others have already noted, these variations prove that the gospel writers were not in collusion nor were they copying from some common document, as the critics charge. They give us independent reports exactly as each claims.

The variations are actually an important evidence of the Bible's authenticity. They offer further proof that later copyists or translators did not alter the record in an attempt to make all the accounts superficially agree. The very fact that seeming contradictions were left in the gospels is verification that these records were considered by the church to be inspired of the Holy Spirit and therefore not to be revised but to be reverently left as they were. There was obviously not a "progressive revelation" or any "development" in the record, as the critics insist.

Why even have four gospels? If the record is inspired of God, why do it this way? Why not just one account, which would have saved space and paper and reading time, since the four gospels seem so repetitive? The Holy Spirit, who inspired these accounts, had good reasons.

One major purpose for having four separate gospels is the very one we have just noted: to demonstrate the authenticity of the record in a way that could not have been accomplished otherwise. Four witnesses provide an attestation that a single witness could not. Moreover, to tell the story from four different perspectives presents a broader view of Christ's works and teachings than one account could give.

Nor were the disciples simply relying upon their faulty memories. If that were the case, we could have little confidence in the record they offer. Obviously they had no shorthand transcription, much less a tape recording to rely upon. They wouldn't dare pretend to give us the very words of Jesus unless they were relying upon the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Then why the variations in those words, if those who report them have provided an

accurate record under the inspiration of God?

There are several reasonable possibilities. Jesus surely gave similar teachings on certain subjects a number of times in different settings to different people. In such cases, the wording would not and should not be exactly the same. Knowing the hearts of His listeners, Jesus no doubt introduced a particular variation in one place and a different innovation elsewhere.

There are, however, instances when such an explanation would not apply. Sometimes when the same teaching is given in different gospels it is clear that the same location and occasion is being described by each; and yet there is a difference in the wording recorded in the different gospels. How can that possibly be?

Here, as an example, is one of those instances that is given to us in each of the first three gospels. John, who provides incidents and teachings not found in the other gospels, doesn't mention this particular occasion. All three other gospels record the same teaching and in the same setting—in the presence of publicans in the house of Matthew (also called Levi), whom Jesus had just called to be His disciple. The Pharisees criticized Jesus to His disciples for eating with sinners, and Jesus replied:

They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. (Matthew:9:12–13)

They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick; I came not

to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. (Mark:2:17)

They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. (Luke:5:31–32)

A Reasonable Explanation

Although these three statements by Christ vary slightly in wording, they all have the same meaning. Matthew alone gives us something additional: “But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. . . .” Why don't the others record it? Why should they? Isn't once enough? It is ironic that the skeptics, on the one hand, criticize the gospels for repeating the same incidents and teachings, yet when there is some legitimate variation they complain!

Matthew's account lets us know that Christ made a pointed remark for the Pharisees' benefit. He referred them to Hosea:6:6 as a rebuke for their lack of mercy. And He let them know that they needed to repent and that forgiveness of sin could only be on the same basis as physical healing—by God's mercy.

We have three accounts in perfect agreement. The only difference is that two of the three don't tell us all that Jesus said. In fact, perhaps none of them does. We don't really know. There is no contradiction in the three accounts, however, nor is there anything to suggest either collusion or tampering with the record or to deny the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The same conclusion will be reached by thoroughly examining all of the gospels. Personal research can verify this fact for all other apparent inconsistencies.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 128-30) by DAVE HUNT

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TBC's Mission: Damage Control

T. A. McMahon

WITHIN THE LAST SIX MONTHS I have visited a number of countries and had the privilege of working with missionaries and ministering among their fellowships. I am continually in awe of what Bible-believing missionaries do, as well as what they have accomplished by God's grace. The difficulties, in many cases, might seem overwhelming, because...well, they are! Even a very short list would intimidate most Christians: getting into certain countries, obtaining visas to stay and work, learning the language, understanding and adjusting to the culture, social adjustments for their children, and facing sometimes-fierce opposition by those opposed to biblical Christianity. No doubt they need "professional psychological scrutiny" before entering the mission field—or so we're being told. Really?

My friends Martin and Deidre Bobgan, who have written extensively about the adverse influence of psychology in the church, have surveyed major mission agencies along with many of those church entities that send out missionaries. The disheartening result was that too often the candidates for the mission field were required to undergo psychological testing in order to be accepted and supported by the sending agency. That may sound reasonable to most Christians today, but it is in fact contrary to the results of research in that area as well as completely unbiblical. First, and most important—and true to any work of ministry—the individual must be certain that this endeavor is the calling of the Lord. Without that, it would be at best an exercise of the flesh devoid of God's grace. What psychological test can reveal a person's *calling*? Furthermore, the most used tests, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, have *no scientific validity*. They simply reflect what the world presumes. That's hardly the criteria for fruitfulness in the mission field. Someone has noted that you really have to be a bit crazy to be a missionary. True, but the same could be said for every biblical Christian. Why? Because a true believer is to have the mind of Christ, consistent with His teachings, and that would more often than not be at odds with what the world thinks and does.

Too often, we as believers let worldly thoughts influence what we think and do. I have friends who are missionaries in what many would consider to be the most anti-Christian nation in the world. When incredulous fellow Christians ask why they would go to such a place, I love their simple, yet compelling and convicting response: "We believe the people of North Korea need Jesus as well."

The opportunity to be used of the Lord to encourage someone to turn to Jesus and receive, by faith alone, the gift of eternal life is the greatest endeavor in which a Christian can participate. No other temporal activity can compare. There are a host of good things a person might do that could help and bless people, but these are short-lived in their value compared to something that has eternal significance.

While in Cape Town, South Africa, one

I HAVE PLANTED, APOLLOS WATERED; BUT GOD GAVE THE INCREASE.

SO THEN NEITHER IS HE THAT PLANTETH ANY THING, NEITHER HE THAT WATERETH; BUT GOD THAT GIVETH THE INCREASE.

NOW HE THAT PLANTETH AND HE THAT WATERETH ARE ONE: AND EVERY MAN SHALL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOUR.

—1 Corinthians 3:6-8

of my hosts pointed out the hospital where the first human-to-human heart transplant was performed. That was an incredibly significant feat by the physicians, yet its value is confined to the physical side of life on earth. *Eternity* has two options: a person is either with the Lord, or he is separated from Him—*forever* (2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 2:17). Our finite minds can't truly grasp how horrifying such a condition would be. Yet, to personally know that God has privileged me (or you, or any other believer) to be involved in ministering to a person in a way that helped to turn him to the only One who could, and did, pay the full penalty for his and for all the sins of mankind—reconciling him to the Lord forever—is *unrivaled*. Nothing comes even close. As the Scriptures ring out: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Christ our Savior took that "sting"

from all those who repent of their sins and receive His free gift of salvation.

We rejoice in the truth that "by the righteousness of one [Jesus Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18). Jesus did it all! However, the Apostle Paul gives us insights into his and also our own privileged part: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Corinthians 3:6-8). God's reward notwithstanding, what could bring more joy to a believer's heart here on earth than to know that he is being used of the Lord to help to turn a person from the consequence of his sin (eternal punishment and everlasting darkness) to the total and complete forgiveness made possible only by Jesus our Savior (Matthew 25:46)? There is nothing—*nothing*—that can compare.

Therefore, we as believers are all missionaries. Our mission is to spread the gospel: to preach it, teach it, reflect it through our lives, witness of it, explain it, etc., to whomever the Lord brings into our lives. And He exhorts us as His disciples to pray to that end: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

Although we at The Berean Call understand that each of us is to be a personal witness of the gospel, as a ministry we have a calling that is supplementary to encouraging the lost to receive salvation through the Lord our Savior. It's actually a necessary follow-up for many of those who have recently come to faith in Jesus. I refer to it as a mission of "damage control." It involves primarily those who are new to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). What we're seeing more and more is that the Adversary and his minions are sowing false teachings among those who are immature in the Scriptures. His strategy is to shipwreck the faith and therefore the fruitfulness of those young believers. His game plan is certainly not only for new Christians, but they are often the most vulnerable.

Much of the New Testament addresses false teachings and practices that have infected the body of Christ, but the Epistle to the Galatians seems to be the strongest example of sowing a false gospel among believers. The Galatians were Paul's spiritual children, yet they were deceived into adding works to their faith in Christ

for salvation. It's my belief that they received the true gospel from Paul and were therefore truly saved. However, the false gospel that they later accepted from the Judaizers added the requirement of the works of the law for salvation, a belief that can save no one. Paul refers to it as "another gospel" and a perversion "of the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7). William MacDonald comments, "What sorrow and disappointment must have filled Paul's heart when such news from Galatia reached him! Had his labors among these people been in vain?...He took up his pen and wrote this indignant letter to his beloved children in the faith. In it, he sets forth the true character of salvation as being given by grace from beginning to end, not earned by law-keeping either in whole or in part" (*Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 1874, See Resource Pages).

Paul must have been greatly grieved over what was taking place among "his beloved children in the faith." Another gospel had put a halt to their receiving the grace necessary for fruitfulness in Christ. Although Satan could do nothing regarding their personal salvation if they were truly saved, his (and now, their) false gospel rendered them spiritually unproductive. Could Paul get them back on track regarding the biblical gospel? As noted, the Epistle to the Galatians stands out in its forthrightness, which appears to be his objective. This seems to me to represent serious damage control.

In two of the countries where I was recently asked to speak, the invitation came for me to address teachings that were undermining the biblical faith of brothers and sisters in Christ in Mongolia and in Albania. The church where I spoke in Mongolia was vibrant and demonstrated an encouraging enthusiasm for the Word of God. That's the good news. So what was the problem? The country itself had experienced a boom in prosperity as the outside world looked to "Minegolia" for its untapped natural resources of coal, gold, and copper. That taste for riches turned sour, however, as the country's economy hit bottom and foreign investors bailed out. Yet the appetite for wealth continues to grow, and, as one financial analyst noted, "With trillions of dollars in mineral resources underground, I just can't think of a way for us to stay poor" (<http://goo.gl/JkshN8>). That mentality has attracted the prosperity preachers, who have had their books translated into Mongolian. Their distortion of Scripture has whetted greedy mindsets not only under

the guise of Christianity, but it has also corrupted the biblical teachings of many Mongolian believers. My mission was one of damage control, helping to turn them from the false teachings of man to what the Word of God says about prosperity. Although what brought me to Mongolia was specific to exposing the deceptive gospel of greed, the messages over the week I was there majored in exhorting my brothers and sisters in Christ to be like the Bereans of Acts 17:11 by holding every spiritual teaching they received up to the Scriptures for confirmation that they are biblically true.

Albania was similar in terms of damage control except that the issue was more theologically sophisticated and focused on more than only those believers young in the faith. I was invited to speak to a number of the fellowships that were dealing with the adverse effects of Calvinism. Churches were being disturbed by individuals who aggressively promoted the teachings of John Calvin and his later followers, and that zeal had led to members being drawn into Calvin's Reformation and Augustinian theology. Much confusion has resulted, and in a number of cases it has caused church splits. The condition has become so troubling that a few leaders of the relatively young Albanian churches have had Dave Hunt's book *What Love Is This?* (his excellent exposition on Calvin's teachings) translated into the Albanian language.

How young is the church there? It's just over 25 years old. From the mid-1960s until the early 1990s in particular, Albania had the worldwide reputation of being the strictest of all the Communist countries and the first and foremost atheistic nation in history. All religions were banned, and many of their places of worship (mosques, cathedrals, temples, churches, etc.) were turned into warehouses, sports arenas, and youth cultural centers, while others were simply demolished. Although the pagan religious superstitions have continued among the country and mountain folks, the generation born during those decades had no religious beliefs outside of individual musings. Then, in 1990, the official lifting of the ban on religious observance opened the door for all religious practices.

Most of the older folks would consider themselves Muslim, although it's more of a secular Islam that goes back to the historic influence of the Turks rather than the Sharia law-oriented Islam we know today from the Middle East. The same holds true for

"Christianity," primarily consisting of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic religions, which the Albanians have adjusted to fit into the Albanian culture. *Biblical* Christianity, introduced through missionaries, is relatively new. Thus, as noted above, the believers in the young Albanian fellowships are vulnerable to false teaching, so there's a necessity for spiritual damage control. It's understandable that those young in the faith would look to teachers to help them grow in the faith, and I was greatly encouraged by the leadership I found there. Yet, as the Scriptures warn continually, the need for checking out all teachings to see if they are true to the Word of God is critical for every fellowship, whether young or old.

Doctrinal damage control is a major part of the New Testament. Although the Word of God is sufficient regarding every instruction that a believer needs in order to be pleasing to our Lord, it nevertheless contains warning after warning regarding false teachers and teachings that pervert the Scriptures. Paul's counsel to the Ephesian elders underscores how serious the problem is: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:30-31). We can surmise that his warning is all the more crucial today as the church fails to "endure sound doctrine" and is being further seduced by the increasing apostasy prophesied by the Word as Christ's return draws near.

Even so, as necessary as damage control is, in order to correct false teachings and practices in certain cases the prevention program to minimize the effect of false teachers on young believers (and even the more mature) *must be* Bible study and discipleship. No matter where the Lord sends me, and no matter what particular false doctrine He would have me address, the heart of the message is the *habitual* study of and living out what the Scriptures teach, and then an exhortation to be like the Bereans of Acts 17:11: "These [Jews] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things [that the Apostle Paul taught them] were so."

Pray for the fruitfulness of our missionary brothers and sisters in foreign countries, and pray for those whom they reach with the gospel, that these new believers will grow strong in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). **TBC**

Quotable.....

His lamp am I, to shine where He shall say,
 And lamps are not for sunny rooms,
 Nor for the light of day.
 And as sometimes a flame we find,
 Clear, shining through the night,
 So bright we do not see the lamp,
 But only see the light;
 So may I shine—His light the flame—
 That men may glorify His name.
 —Annie Johnson Flint

Q&A.....

QUESTION [EDITED FOR LENGTH]: I have long been an avid reader of both Mr. Hunt’s books and your website, eagerly looking forward to each month’s issue. I was, however, taken aback by the May newsletter and the article about martial arts—not because I disagree with Mr. McMahon. On the contrary, I agree with him regarding the dangers of syncretism. No, I was taken aback by the references to Bob Jones University’s “Judo Gentlemen” and “Champions for Christ Karate Team.” ... I did a little digging after reading your article, and it seems to me that the “Judo Gentlemen” was a campus organization back in the 1960s, and there is no mention on BJU’s current website of any martial arts organizations or karate teams. This is not to say that BJU never had any such organizations, as apparently they did, but I...can say with certainty that I have not observed [any of this] on campus. In this instance, I believe you fell a bit short on giving due diligence to fact checking, which reflects badly on any organization. I only bring this up because I love The Berean Call and the stand you take for orthodoxy, and such a godly endeavor is worthy of the highest order of scholarly integrity.

RESPONSE: We are always pleased when a reader, as a “Berean,” responds to what we write. That’s an encouragement based upon what we do. We want our readers to check out what we write and correct us if necessary. Regarding your concern about our “giving due diligence to fact checking,” that is something we major in, although we have missed the mark at times over the years. Below are some links that document what has been written specifically related to BJU.

Although we didn’t acknowledge that the “Judo Gentlemen” was a 1960s organization in the article, there wasn’t space to explain in detail why we mentioned it. That may come in a future Q&A. Nevertheless,

it raises other questions: Why did Judo Gentlemen not continue at BJU? Lack of interest? I would guess that the reason for its ending was *not* because its spiritual aspects are at odds with the Scriptures. If that were the case, why then a later school endorsement of Champions for Christ Karate Team? My point is that those at BJU (and many other Christian organizations, churches, and individuals) don’t seem to understand the Eastern mystical basis for the martial arts. Are you aware of any statements or articles by BJU recognizing the biblical *problems* with the martial arts? There was no intent in our May article to condemn BJU, Campus Crusade, or others, but simply to exhort them to greater biblical discernment, i.e., to be Bereans.

The following links will provide further documentation: <http://goo.gl/v5G6zo> • <http://goo.gl/0StweP> • <https://goo.gl/HS7t68>

QUESTION: Where does it specifically say in the Bible that individuals should not have sex before marriage, especially given the biblical examples of men having multiple wives, concubines, etc., going clear back to Abraham and even through King David, a man after God’s own heart?

RESPONSE: The Bible is quite clear on the matter. Jesus said in Mark 7:20-22, “That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, *adulteries, fornications*, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness [our emphasis].” Jesus condemns both “fornication” (sex before marriage) and adultery (sex with a person other than your spouse) after marriage.

Multitudes of Scriptures declare that sex before marriage is a sin (Acts 15:20; 1 Cor 5:1; 6:13,18; 10:8; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Thes 4:3; Jude 1:7, etc.). Scripture consistently admonishes us to abstain from sex before marriage. Sex between a husband and his wife is the only form of sexual relations of which God approves (Heb 13:4). “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Cor 7:2).

Regarding polygamy, the original intent of God is clear in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, which is reiterated and reinforced by Jesus in Mark 10:6-8: “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain [two] shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.”

This leaves no room for multiple wives (or husbands).

The kings of Israel were specifically commanded, “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away” (Dt 17:17). We see the consequences of ignoring this warning fulfilled in the life of Solomon, and although God praised David as “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22), the subsequent consequences concerning his children from his polygamous marriages were horrible. Of Abraham and Sarah’s “solution” to her barrenness (i.e., Abraham’s taking Hagar as a concubine), we have the verdict of history: strife, bloodshed, and hatred, all birthed from that one fatal decision.

Polygamy disqualifies one from serving as a church elder or deacon: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach,” and “Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well” (1 Tm 3:2,12).

This is not for elders only, however, because Paul also wrote that, “Each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). Paul continues writing of marital duties in terms that can apply only to one husband and to one wife: “Therefore as the church [singular] is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph 5:24).

Throughout Scripture we see the parallel of husband and wife with Christ and the church in Ephesians 5:22–33—a principle that can be fulfilled only through monogamy. The Lord Jesus will not have multiple brides. Monogamy is even directly implied in the Law. The 10th Commandment tells us, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife [singular]” (Ex 20:17).

It’s instructive that polygamy originated through the line of Cain, the first murderer, and not through the godly line of Seth. The first reported polygamist was another murderer, Lamech (Gn 4:23–24). We see that Esau “despised his birthright” and brought much grief to his parents by marrying two pagan wives (Gn 26:34). And his humanistic solution to his parents’ grief? To marry additional women!

One thing that is very important to remember is that not every behavior recorded in the Bible is approved of by the Bible. By comparing scripture with scripture, we can begin to discern the difference between what God *commanded* and what He merely *permitted*, which usually carried severe consequences.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What About That Old Sinner and Idolater, Solomon?

Question: We are told that “when Solomon was old” he worshiped false gods and goddesses, tried to kill Jeroboam (whom God had chosen as his successor), and did other evils. How then could God have inspired him to write parts of the Bible, how could he have been “the wisest man who ever lived,” and how could it be said of him that he “slept with his fathers,” which presumably meant that he went to heaven?

Response: Solomon began well. His heart was right with God and God loved him and blessed him abundantly (1 Kings:3:11–13). His God-given inspiration to write (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and The Song of Solomon) occurred long before he fell into sin. His downfall, which came in later life, was his love for beautiful women. He couldn’t get enough of them:

Solomon loved many strange [foreign] women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in to you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods; Solomon clave unto these in love. . . .”

It came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods. . . . For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. . . . Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab . . . and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto

their gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon. . . . Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon . . . I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. (1 Kings:11:1–11)

How could he be the wisest man (apart from Jesus Christ) who ever lived and fall into such folly and gross sin? Indeed, for that very reason Solomon serves as a special lesson to us all: that a man so wise, far wiser than anyone else could ever hope to be, could wander so far from the God he loved ought to make us all the more careful to heed Paul’s admonition: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians:10:12).

The reason for Solomon’s sin is also sobering: He disobeyed the Lord. How solemn to realize that one step of disobedience leads to another, until one gathers such momentum on the downward path that there is little hope of recovery!

The very fact that the sins of Solomon and other major figures in the Bible are honestly presented in Scripture is one more evidence of its authenticity. A fictitious account would tend to glorify its main characters and cover up their faults. Such was the nature of the accounts written at that time about the Pharaohs and other rulers. They were treated as deities. Moreover, the mention of the sins of Solomon, David, and others raises questions and creates conflicts that a fictitious account would avoid. Here we have further evidence of authenticity and the impeccable integrity of the record.

As for the statement that “Solomon slept with his fathers” (1 Kings:11:43), that does not refer to being in heaven. No one is asleep in heaven. It refers to being in the grave with one’s ancestors. For example, when Jacob was about to die, he said to his sons, “I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave which is in the field of Machpelah. . . . There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah” (Genesis:49:29–31).

Is Solomon in heaven or in hell? I think he is in heaven, but I do not know beyond doubt. Solomon is not mentioned in Hebrews 11 along with David, his father, and other heroes of the faith. However, that chapter honors those who were particularly triumphant in faith, so it is not surprising that Solomon would not be named among them.

We Are All Sinners Who Need God’s Mercy

It would be strange indeed if Solomon, who wrote some of the Bible under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration and who built the original temple at Jerusalem, where the glory of God was manifested for so many years, went to hell instead of to heaven. God disciplined Solomon in this life more in the way He deals with His own than with unbelievers.

Solomon’s sin was inexcusable and exceedingly grievous. In fact, it merited the death penalty under the law. But so did his father David’s sin, yet God forgave him. And so did her adultery merit the death of the woman whom the Pharisees brought to Jesus. And yet in mercy He forgave her too. There is no doubt that God’s mercy, made possible by the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross for the sins of the world, could also have been extended to Solomon.

Let us hear again and heed the words of Jesus to the Pharisees, who did not want any mercy for this adulteress:

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John:8:7). John tells us, “And they . . . being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone [with] the woman. . . .” (John:8:9)

Whoever would himself receive the merciful pardon of God dare not withhold pardon from Solomon or from anyone else. The destiny of each of us is in God’s hands alone. We rest in the assurance that “the Judge of all the earth” shall indeed “do right” (Genesis:18:25).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 141-44) by DAVE HUNT

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How Then Shall We Live?

T. A. McMahon

THE BIBLE IS AN amazing book. Although this is certainly true, it's also a huge understatement. All accolades fall short; no adjectives come close. Yet that should hardly be surprising since God is the author. As we've written elsewhere, the Bible is God's direct communication to mankind. And since He is infinite, apart from His Word there's no way that finite man can know in truth anything beyond God's *general attributes* that are revealed in creation (Rom 1:20). Everyone can surmise that the material world, from the sweeping expanse of the universe to the intricate complexity of a cell, could not have created itself. A Designer had to have been involved, and the Designer must have attributes of astonishing intelligence, power, and presence. Observation and logic are enough to lead anyone to that conclusion.

On the other hand, the *specifics* regarding God's character, as well as His purpose and plan for those whom He created, cannot be arrived at through human opinions, speculations, and guesses. Finite man is basically clueless when it comes to the specifics, which is a major reason why there are so many different religious beliefs and practices in the world. God must inform humanity about things it cannot figure out, which He has done clearly through the Scriptures. One of those things (which is the focus of this article) is the way that a biblical Christian, one who has believed the gospel for salvation and desires to obey the instructions of God's Word, should go about living his life.

The Bible is sometimes referred to as the "Manufacturer's Handbook," which is a good description regarding the overall content of Scripture. However, not too many people care to read instruction manuals. This attitude doesn't serve them well when it comes to the functioning of their latest kitchen appliance or video entertainment device, leading to the inevitable frustration of "why isn't it working?" The same attitude regarding the Bible will cause a believer to reach that exasperation stage and far worse. As Proverbs states in two verses: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (14:12; 16:25; emphasis added). "Death," in

this case, means separation from God. In those areas of a believer's life where he hasn't looked to the Scriptures for God's instruction, he has to supply his own ideas. That causes him to go his own way, thus separating him from God's "way." The "end thereof" ultimately leads to a condition that at best is devoid of God's grace and at worst is destructive physically and spiritually.

Recently I've been reading the Apostle Peter's Epistles and found the first chapter in his second letter to be a compact volume of God's instruction for believers as well as a great exhortation *to do* what it says. Though it's not God's full counsel regarding His instructions for everyone who claims to follow Jesus, it's an excellent self-evaluation piece for us to consider, no matter our degree of maturity in Christ.

FOR IF THESE THINGS BE IN YOU,
AND ABOUND, THEY MAKE YOU
THAT YE SHALL NEITHER BE BAR-
REN NOR UNFRUITFUL IN THE
KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST.

—2 Peter 1:8

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as, they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:1-21)

These are indeed God's words, relayed by His Holy Spirit, and written through the human instrument whom He chose to pen them, Simon Peter. Although Peter was gloriously transformed at Pentecost from the hit-or-miss Peter we read about in the Scriptures prior to that event, these were *God's* words and not Peter's own ideas but expressed through Peter's manner of communication. This is made clear at the end of the chapter but needs to be underscored at the beginning: the declarations are from God himself.

Verses one through four assure us that Jesus is God and that He has supplied believers in Him with precious faith through the knowledge of Him, empowering us with *all things* that pertain unto

life and godliness. “All things” means *all* things. That phrase asserts the sufficiency of God’s Word. What source other than God could supply anything that pertains to life and godliness? There is no other source. What Jesus has fully supplied enables every believer in Him to join in His divine moral nature, His godliness. As we are reminded in 1 Peter 1:15-16: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of [conduct]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” That is the only way that the sinful, lustful corruption of the world can be overcome.

If, as His Word proclaims, the Lord has given us all that is necessary for us to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to Him, what then is our part? This involves a willingness to do what He has instructed. That answer may seem obvious, but it is either resisted or avoided by many Christians today. Verses five through seven of 2 Peter 1 exhort the believer to cultivate what our Lord has provided, helping our faith to grow. For a mature faith to flourish, we must add virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, i.e., love. Love, of course, is the chief quality of godliness and must superintend all of God’s promises.

Too often we read those words and blow past them as if they were simply platitudes or spiritual clichés. On the contrary, there aren’t many verses that are *more practical* in their fruitfulness. If we will only put them into practice, “they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8). This, by the way, is not “head knowledge” but knowledge that produces godly fruit. Those individuals who miss that, for whatever reasons, the Scripture characterizes as blind and forgetful as to what Jesus has already done for them by paying for their sins.

Some Christian writers have addressed their concern over the lack of good works produced by those who claim to follow Jesus. Sadly that is a reality of our day. However, a few authors have sought to correct that condition by teaching that true believers who lack good works will receive temporary punishment at the judgment seat of Christ where rewards are bestowed. No. That is an error and is not supported by Scripture; moreover, it creates a Roman Catholic-type of Purgatory, which involves the expiation of sin by the individual himself. It’s also a denial

of Christ’s full payment for our sins, i.e., the gospel. What has been referred to as the Bema Seat of Christ for *rewards and losses* has nothing to do with the *sins* of believers. Jesus will judge our works by rewarding those endeavors that have eternal value and dismissing those that are worthless (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

Second Peter 1:10-11 is an exhortation to diligently fulfill the ministry, the works, and the purpose that the Lord has called us to. Our willingness to do just that is a guarantee of spiritual fruitfulness: “For if you do these things, ye shall never fall.” It also encourages us to press forward earnestly that upon entrance into heaven we may hear those wonderful words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

Peter knew from the Lord that he was close to the time of his death, and his heart was to remind fellow believers of the things he had taught that would cause them to grow in the faith. To that end, he gives us some insight regarding a glorious event that he, James, and John had witnessed. Even beyond Peter’s personal preview of Jesus being glorified (as He will be again when He returns), the teaching stresses the foundation to all that he had written above. In conclusion, he notes that what he is relating was a fact of history, and that he was an eyewitness of what he saw, heard, and felt on the Mount of Transfiguration. Be assured that in our present times when the *experiential* has become the guiding authority of most people’s lives, both in the world and in the church, *no one* has had an experience like that (2 Peter 1:16-21).

Peter, James, and John saw Jesus glorified before their very eyes. It was no altered state of consciousness, no visualization, no conjured-up imagery produced by some contemplative, Eastern mystical method. It was a God-produced reality. None of those who teach that God cannot be known by the senses, the intellect, or the written Word but can only be experienced, have ever, nor could ever, produce such an extraordinary event. Moreover, what they do produce through their occult methodologies is fake—if not a direct demonic deception.

Peter certainly acknowledges the amazing experience on the Mount. But then he says, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed” (verse 19). Why, however, should we *accept as true* the personal, subjective experience that Peter described? Some

modern so-called Bible scholars consider it a myth. It would definitely be questionable except for the fact that Peter’s experience is documented in the Word of God, and according to Jesus, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Furthermore, the true experience is supported by “a more sure word of prophecy,” and we are exhorted to “take heed” to God’s written Word. Believers are certainly privileged to have experiences in the Lord, but those experiences must never take the place of nor diminish the authority of Scripture.

As wonderful as spiritual experiences can be, they are neither personal and subjective and are a byproduct of a believer’s relationship with the Lord. They lack the objective basis for one to discern whether or not they are true. For example, a Christian friend relates how the Holy Spirit was leading him in a certain situation. Although that experience was consistent with Scripture as a principle, yet because of its subjective nature, one can’t really verify that it was indeed Holy Spirit led. In some cases, the situation may be so contrary to the Word of God that it can be readily dismissed as *not* of the Lord.

Scripture, on the other hand, *is* objective. It is a believer’s plumbline against which he is to determine what he believes or is being taught. As Isaiah wrote, “To the law and to the testimony [God’s Word]: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (8:20).

Peter concludes the chapter by underscoring the fact that prophecy (meaning the written words of Scripture) did not originate from man (himself included), but the words came through chosen men of God who wrote them down as they were given by the Holy Spirit. Numerous other verses confirm this, including 1 Thessalonians 2:13: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

So, we have the *words of God!* My hope is that everyone who has just read that sentence will take the significance of it to heart. God has given us *His words!* And, as we’ve noted here in Peter’s second Epistle as one example, His Word contains instructions for every follower of Jesus Christ that we all must obey if we are to be fruitful and productive in our lives as believers. There is no other way to please God. **TBC**

Quotable.....

The gospel contains nothing about baptism, church membership or attendance, tithing, sacraments or rituals, diet or clothing...The gospel is all about what Christ has done. It says nothing about what Christ must yet do, because the work of our redemption is finished. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3). His death on the cross is in the past, never to be repeated. Nor does the gospel say anything about what we must do, because we can do nothing (Ti 3:5; Eph 2:8-9). Instead...the gospel requires faith. It is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe (Rom 4:5; John 3:26). The gospel is a two-edged sword. It declares, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The same verse also says, "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn 3:36).

—Dave Hunt in *An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith*

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have a question that I hope you can help with, please: "Where did Jesus get His blood?" As I understand it, a child only gets its blood from the father and not the mother, so presumably, the characteristics of His blood came from God.

RESPONSE: In Hebrews 10:5, the inspired writer says concerning the Lord Jesus: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, *but a body hast thou prepared me...*" [emphasis added].

"A body have you prepared me..." means that the Lord Jesus Christ's human body, including the blood, was prepared especially by the Father.

He was a real man of flesh and blood. Is the blood of Christ precious? Indeed it is, because, like His entire body, Christ's blood was without sin and was shed on the cross for our sins. He is "God manifest in the flesh," but the flesh in which He was manifest was not "God flesh," for there is no such thing. It was perfect, sinless human flesh.

Leviticus 16:14 tells us that on the Day of Atonement, the high priest in Israel took some of the blood of the sacrifice (without blemish) into the Most Holy part of the tabernacle. Jesus Christ, as the final High Priest, entered into heaven itself but not with His blood. That had been poured out on the ground (Jn 19:34). With the death of His human body, the purpose for which it

had been made was completed.

After the Resurrection, Christ had a body of "flesh and bones" (Lk 24:39) but no longer blood in His body, because it was all poured out for sin upon the ground. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor 15:50). In Leviticus 17:11, we are told, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

We don't know the creative process that God used in preparing Christ's body, but whatever the process, it was supernatural.

QUESTION: In Mark 9:24, a man tells our Lord Jesus that he believes but asks him to help him with his unbelief. This scripture was in my mind all night, and I was wondering if maybe you could help me to understand it a little better?

RESPONSE: Mark 9:24 is a precious verse for us. It reads, "straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Simply put, even as born-again believers we have doubts. As for the father of this child, he may have *intellectually* believed that the Lord was absolutely capable of healing, but as a human, he knew very well his own capacity to doubt. In Mark 9:23, Jesus had specifically stated, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (our emphasis). It was his own capacity for *belief* that gave reason for his cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

When it comes to our need for healing, as believers we long for the time when the Lord "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil 3:21). "And...ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23).

In the meantime, we must cast ourselves entirely upon the Lord for our deliverance, remembering that when we acknowledge, as this father did, that our faith is weak, He is strong, no matter what the issue, affliction, need, or fear may be. The Bible tells us that our Savior is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb 4:15). And whether or not He

chooses to heal the illness or solve the problem or deliver us from the issue, even still we can take comfort knowing that He will never fail nor forsake us (Dt 31:6; Josh 1:5), and that He will strengthen and sustain us until the very end (Ps 55:22).

QUESTION: In Genesis 11:1-9, Nimrod builds the Tower of Babel in the land of Shinar. In Zechariah 5:5-11, the city needs to be rebuilt on its base. What keeps that city from being rebuilt now? The river still runs by there to make it a hanging garden city. I know Rome fits the description to many people in some ways, but I wouldn't confine myself to that possibility alone when I read other scriptures that apply to Babylon. Many people believe that the "temple" that the Antichrist will desecrate is the Dome of the Rock. That is not a temple, it's a mosque. What do you think?

RESPONSE: The Dome of the Rock could not be desecrated by the Antichrist because it is already an abomination to God, so there is nothing to desecrate—and certainly nothing in Babylon. We are clearly told that Antichrist will "sit in the temple of God..." (2 Thes 2:4), and that could only be the Jewish Temple rebuilt on Temple Mount. It must happen. We have shown why the Muslims will want the Dome moved to Medina where it belongs, making way for the Temple (*Judgment Day!* <https://goo.gl/yKNvf4>).

Could the ruins of Babylon in Iraq (now under reconstruction) become the headquarters for the Antichrist? Anything is possible. It would, however, seem highly unlikely that Antichrist would establish his headquarters in such an inconvenient place. There is not and never will be a deepwater port on the Euphrates next to Babylon. Yet upon her destruction, sailors and ship owners made wealthy by Babylon's demand for goods of all kinds (who are apparently coming and going in and out of her port at the time) can see the smoke of her destruction (Rv 18:17-19).

There were originally no chapter divisions between Revelation 17 and 18. Both concern the same city. Some of the same descriptive elements given in Revelation 17:2,4 are repeated in 18:3,9,16. And the description given in 17 identifies the woman as Rome/Vatican/false worldwide church of the last days—not as a rebuilt Babylon in Iraq (See *TBC Jul/Aug '93 and A Woman Rides the Beast*).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Isn't the Importance God Gives Man Preposterous?

Question: In comparison with the almost infinite reaches of the cosmos surrounding us, this planet that man calls home is but an infinitesimal speck of dust. In view of that fact, it seems the height of absurdity and self-importance (rather than the humility that Christians are supposed to embody) for such insignificant microbes to boast that God loves them and even came to this earth to become one of them and to die for their sins! Doesn't such a preposterous scenario seem the height of absurdity?

Response: On the contrary, God's love would not be genuine if He bestowed it upon us because we were so important as to merit it. In fact, love cannot be merited. It is the very nature of love to bestow itself upon the unworthy. This is difficult for the average person to comprehend today because of the popular acceptance of the deceitful Hollywood idea of love. One "falls in love" and just as readily "falls out of love" with that person and then "in love" with another person. This is not the love that the Bible presents.

If God's love for me were predicated upon how lovable, attractive, or worthy of His love He presently found me, I would feel insecure indeed. Being far from perfect, and subject to change, I would be fearful that I might change in some way that would cause God to love me no longer. But since my relationship to Him depends upon His love and faithfulness and unchangeableness and not upon my love or my appeal to Him, I am at peace. I have perfect assurance that His love for me will never wane and that I am secure in my relationship to Him eternally.

Moreover, our puny insignificance in relation to the vastness of the universe only makes God's grace and mercy all the more worthy of

our praise and gratitude and thus all the more glorious. The more unworthy the object of love, the greater and purer must be the love that embraces it.

Throughout the vastness of the universe we see God's attention to the smallest detail, whether it be the design of a snowflake or the interior of an atom. Though He is infinite in might and knowledge and wisdom, nothing is too small for God's consideration. It is far from ludicrous or presumptuous for a Christian to believe that God loves him and sent His Son to die for him. On the contrary, that fact rings true to the character of God as we would expect Him to be, as the Bible depicts Him, and as the universe reflects Him.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 144-45) by DAVE HUNT

God of Jacob, God of Israel — Part One

Dave Hunt — First published in August 2006

ACCORDING TO THE LATEST *Fox News* polls updated June 26, 2006 (other polls basically agree), “fully 92 percent of Americans say they believe in God”; only 5 percent say they don’t, while the remaining 3 percent are not sure [ed. note: the numbers have not changed substantially today]. In *How We Believe*, Michael Shermer, director of the Skeptics Society and publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, claims that “Never in history have so many, and such a high percentage of the [American] population, believed in God. Not only is God not dead as Nietzsche proclaimed, but he has never been more alive.”

This statistic, however, is not as encouraging as it sounds. When we ask what respondents mean by “god,” very few believe in—much less know—*the God of the Bible*. Yet belief in a false god is no better and could be even worse than believing in no God. For many, “God” is simply a “higher power.” Higher than what? *Power*? What kind? And how could a “power” of any kind have the infinite intelligence (or *any* intelligence) to design the atom, the universe, imprint the written instructions in a coded language on DNA for constructing and operating every cell, and create intelligent, personal beings with a moral conscience and a passion for purpose?

The very thought of a “power” creating *anything* is ridiculous! Then why is belief in a “power” so appealing? Did the *Star Wars* slogan, “May the Force be with you,” have that much influence? It went a long way toward changing movie fans’ thinking, especially among American youth. Of course, this has always been a popular idea because a power/force can’t impose moral laws, demand obedience, or judge and punish anyone—instead, it can be used for one’s own ends. Clearly, the true God who created us for a purpose holds mankind responsible for creation’s witness to His existence and for obedience to the moral laws He has implanted in every conscience (Rom 1:18-25; 2:14-16). He will not be *used*.

Furthermore, just as human beings are jealous of their individual identities, obviously the true God would insist on being properly identified. He will neither reveal Himself to, nor enter into a relationship

with, anyone who will not acknowledge Him as He truly is. Nor will He look with broad-minded favor on those who call Him a “higher power.” To do so is an insult to the true God! The God of the Bible (whose existence we have infallibly proved in prior articles) declares to wayward Israel, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13). Those who hope to find a god that suits their imagination will not find the *true* God.

It is common sense that the true God would only reveal Himself to sincere and earnest seekers who want to know Him in truth in order to obey Him. The first prerequisite to knowing God is the willingness—indeed, the passion—to know Him as He really is, not as one imagines or would like Him to be. It is no less idolatry to create an imaginary god in one’s mind than to make one out of clay, wood, or stone. So, who is the true God who proves Himself by unfailingly foretelling the future in the Bible?

As we have seen in past articles, the Bible identifies Him as “the God of Israel” 203 times, “the God of Jacob” 28 times, “the God of Abraham” 17 times, and “the God of Isaac” 13 times. Never is He called the “God of any other ethnic group.” These designations are foundational to everything the Bible teaches, including the very character of God. To profess to believe in God and at the same time to hold a prejudice against God’s chosen people, the Jews, or against Israel, which turns these clear biblical identifications into meaningless titles, casts doubt upon whether one really knows the true God.

In His refutation of the Sadducees’ denial of the resurrection, Christ’s primary argument was based upon God’s statement to Moses: “I AM...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob... this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Ex 3:14-15). Clearly, this was the identity of the true God then; it is now and will be forever. God never changes.

Notice Christ’s reasoning: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God...[H]ave ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mt 22:29-32).

Christ is saying that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will not live eternally through a resurrection, then it would be a mockery for God to be identified with them eternally. He would be the God of, and have

identified Himself with, beings of limited existence—scarcely a blip in eternity. To be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, if they no longer existed, would demean God.

If the nation of Israel is dead, or has been replaced by the church and does not have an eternal future, then the very term “God of Israel” would not be to God’s glory but a slur upon His character in view of His many promises that Israel would never cease to exist. Yet that is the position taken by those who say that Israel has been replaced by the church. In *The Last Disciple* (p. 88), Hank Hanegraaff has a key character say, “The covenant between God and Israel was broken with the rejection of His Son.”

Hank gives no explanation how an “everlasting covenant” could ever be broken, nor how Israel’s rejection of Christ could break a covenant that was not conditional upon her accepting Him, for which there were never any conditions Israel had to fulfill, and which God said He would bring to completion in the last days.

Indeed, at the same time that God promises eternal blessings to Israel in a full restoration in the last days, He also recites her unfaithfulness to Him without a hint that the many sins of Israel and the Jewish people would be any deterrent to His fulfilling all of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

...the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them...the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever...I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen...be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel...in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities...For I will...gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land...and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD...I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. (Dt 1:8; Jer 7:7; Ezk 36:11, 22-26, 32-36)

Here again, as elsewhere (as we have said), it is quite clear that there are no conditions for Israel to fulfill, but God will, for the integrity of His name, fulfill every promise in spite of Israel’s rebellion against Him. Furthermore, the prophets foretold that the Messiah would be rejected by Israel and crucified, yet in all of those prophecies

there is never a suggestion that because of this rejection God would break His everlasting covenant with Israel. The covenant was made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—not with their descendants (Gn 12:1-3; 15:7, 18-21; 17:7-8, 19, 21; 26; 28:13; 1 Ch 16:14-18, etc.); it was never conditioned upon the obedience of their descendants, and therefore could not possibly be broken by anything those descendants did or failed to do. It is a slap in the eternal God's face to say that Israel has been replaced!

Scripture records literally hundreds of promises from God that Israel *as a nation* would never cease to exist (Jer 31:35-37, etc.). These cannot be annulled even by God himself. To do so would make Him a liar. Nor can they be spiritualized away as though the land of Canaan, which became the land of Israel, could simply mean the heavenly inheritance of the church.

It is irrefutable that Israel once possessed a physical, historical land that was given to her by God's eternal decree. It is equally an historical fact that she was expelled from this land by God himself for her rebellion. And it is no less an historical fact that Israel became a nation once again, May 14, 1948, and that millions of Jews have since returned to that Promised Land from more than 100 countries, just as Scripture foretold. This can be nothing less than the beginnings of God's promised restoration of Israel so that her latter end would be better than her beginning. A very few of God's many promises follow:

Unto thy seed will I give this land...forever...from the river of Egypt unto the...river Euphrates...I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee...for an everlasting covenant... And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession...for unto thee [Isaac], and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father... the land whereon thou liest, to thee [Jacob] will I give it, and to thy seed.

Be ye mindful always of his covenant...which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant...Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance...(Gn 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:7,8; 26:3; 28:13; 1 Ch 16:14-18)

Citing the hatred of Israel's neighbors at that time, Psalm 83:3,4 foretells the Muslims' openly and oft-stated plan to wipe Israel off the map: "They have taken crafty

counsel against thy people...Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation..." In the same effort to destroy her, Christian denominations have initiated a boycott against companies that do business with Israel. Replacement theologians such as D. James Kennedy, R.C. Sproul, and many others allied with them have rejected modern Israel as of any significance in the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In "An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel," they declare:

The inheritance promises that God gave to Abraham...do not apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel...The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the "Holy Land" cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua. [See *Judgment Day*, pp. 276-77]

An everlasting covenant fulfilled under Joshua, who only lived 110 years?! Hundreds of "promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament" had not even been foretold by Israel's prophets until centuries after Joshua died! Even the prophecies made by Moses during the lifetime of Joshua that Israel would sin and be cast out of the land were not fulfilled "under Joshua." This declaration by Kennedy, Sproul, et al., is such a defiance of the God of Israel that one finds it unbelievable coming from biblical "scholars"! Here is the Word of the Lord:

Therefore, behold, the days come saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, the LORD liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt [in Joshua's day]; But, the LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country [Russia et al.], and from all countries whither I had driven them....(Jer 23:7,8)

This is being fulfilled in our day. When God told Moses that He would destroy Israel and make of him a great nation, Moses reasoned with God that He would be going back on His Word if He did that, and His critics would say that He was not able to keep His promises. If even one failed, it would reflect on all His other promises. (Ex 32:9-14). Yet today, growing numbers of

those who claim to be Christians are declaring that God's eternal covenant with Israel has been annulled!

If the everlasting covenant that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob swore to these patriarchs of Israel is not kept, then God has denied Himself. The same holds true for the literally hundreds of promises God has made that He would restore Israel fully to her land. If just one fails, then God has denied Himself and is not worthy of our trust. Here are a few of the many that could be cited:

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock... so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered...and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel...in a good pasture....I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away...therefore, will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey....I will set up one shepherd over them...even my servant David [i.e., the Messiah].... And I the LORD will be their God...there shall be showers of blessing...they shall be safe in their land...no more be a prey to the heathen...none shall make them afraid...And...I will...do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD...neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more...for I will...gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land...that I have given unto Jacob... and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes...and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore...(Ezk 34:12-16, 22-28; 36:11, 15, 24, 27; 37:25-28)

If "everlasting," concerning Israel, doesn't mean *everlasting*, then how can we trust the promise in John 3:16 of everlasting life to those who believe on Christ? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, is the only true God. The Messiah promised to Israel by Jewish prophets of God came 2,000 years ago. He is the Savior of all who believe on Him as the one who, in fulfillment of what the Hebrew prophets foretold, died for the sins of the world, rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father's right hand. He is coming in power and glory to punish the world for its abuse of His people Israel and to rule the world from David's throne in Jerusalem. Let us stand firm on the truth of Scripture and preach the true gospel of God, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. **TBC**

Quotable.....

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. —Luke 2:10,11

The angel’s message was one of joy and gladness, designed to banish fear and fill the heart with hope and peace. But, alas, there were few indeed who responded to it. And although their glad message has been sounding through all the centuries since, this world is still a scene of strife, and often of terror, and the great majority of earth’s inhabitants are strangers to that peace which Jesus came to give. Men are so slow to learn that it is only as they receive Him and own Him as Saviour and Lord, that they can appropriate and enjoy the blessings He delights to give. From Bethlehem His path led to the cross, where He made peace by His own blood, and now all who believe have peace with God.

— H. A. Ironside

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I am struggling with the terms “surrender” and “submission.” We have all heard the saying that when we become Christians we surrender or submit to Christ. And to a certain extent this is true. I can’t even find the word “surrender” in the New Testament. When I hear the term “surrender,” I think of it as something you do when you “surrender” to the enemy, are put into prison, or worse. You are put into a prison camp until the war is over. You don’t have the liberty to simply walk out of the camp. The term is also used in AA to describe one of the 12 Steps. Paul was a literal prisoner for Christ, and a prisoner by choice. But Paul’s letter to Philemon did not ask Philemon to receive Onesimus as a slave or prisoner but as a friend and brother in Christ. That seems to be the model. Now I could be wrong...but I did want to run it by you for your thoughts.

RESPONSE: Although there are aspects of both “surrender” and “submission” that seem to overlap, as you point out, “surrender” is a military term. It is what the losing side does in a battle when they are overcome by those with whom they are in conflict.

You are correct that the word “surrender” isn’t found in the New Testament. Nevertheless, in Romans 8:7, concerning the unsaved, Paul points out: “The carnal mind is enmity

against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” “Enmity” is conflict. Nevertheless, in His grace, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” And, although Jesus never used the word “surrender” (i.e., in the English translation), nevertheless, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24).

To “deny” ourselves means to abandon our own interests, priorities, and goals. In essence, we would then be “surrendering” to the one with whom we are in conflict. As commentators have pointed out, the individual who is not willing to deny “self” will not trust Christ. Nor will he who is unwilling to suffer hardship or persecution trust Him. In the same way, if a person is unwilling to follow Christ in the path of suffering, he will not learn to truly trust Christ. Yet, these are the very things that the Lord asks of those who follow Him. This doesn’t mean that there won’t be joy, peace, satisfaction, and other blessings, but the Lord warned believers that if they are *in* the world but not *of* it, their path may well be very difficult. If we read the book of Acts or read a history of the church, we will see this. The young man known to us as the “rich, young ruler” was told to give away everything and follow Jesus.

Even though the word “surrender” is not in Scripture, the principle certainly is. So then, what about submission? Is there a difference? It does seem that these words overlap. But it is instructive to look at their use in context. The word “submit” is indeed used in Scripture. In the epistle of James, the writer is addressing his message to Jewish believers. To those who followed the Messiah, James wrote: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7).

At salvation, the enmity that formerly existed and was dealt with on the Cross is removed from the life of the person who believes and appropriates God’s provision (i.e., is “saved”). Consequently, from that point on we must learn to submit ourselves to the Lord. A man and a woman are equal before the Lord. Nevertheless, the Lord has an order for the family that includes submission of the wife to her “own” husband (Eph 5:22-24, Col 3:18). As you point out, Paul, in his letter to Philemon, asked him not to treat Onesimus as a slave or prisoner but as “a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord” (Philemon 16).

The order mandated by God is as follows: Believers are called upon to submit

“yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so [let] the wives [be] to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph 5:21-24).

In conclusion, although we have “surrendered” to Christ at salvation, the rest of our life will present opportunities to “submit” ourselves in love and obedience to Him.

QUESTION: Is there a significance in Revelation 2 and 3 for verses to speak of “an ear to hear” versus the plural “ears to hear”?

RESPONSE: Though some translations render the passages in Revelation as “ears to hear” (plural), some render each instance as “an ear to hear” (singular). In the Gospels, however, (Mt 11:15, Mk 4:9, etc.) the phrase is most often plural (“he that has ears to hear”). Jesus often used physical examples when discussing spiritual principles. He used bread and wine to convey truth about His sacrifice on our behalf. He spoke of Himself as a “door” to show that He was the way to salvation. When He spoke of ears and hearing, He meant much more than just hearing sounds and words that had meaning. Many people “listened” and “heard” the words that Jesus spoke but didn’t respond in a way that indicated that they fully understood and were obedient to what He had said.

If there is a specific distinction to be seen, the Scriptures often speak of our *focus*, i.e., for the person to be listening to what they are hearing with both ears, or seeing with both eyes. In Matthew 6:22, the Lord states, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”

For the eye to be “single” (we have two eyes), they need to be focused on the same thing. Consequently, whether it says “ear” or “ears,” the distinction is on the *focus*. In fact, ears or eyes, both are the “gateway” to the *heart*. According to Psalm 86:11, “Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.” To “unite” is to remove division and to “focus” the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12) on serving the Lord. Our eyes must “be single” and our “ears” must “hear.” In other words, don’t be distracted! The message given by the Lord in Revelation is of extreme importance, and both “ears” must clearly hear that the mind may understand.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Did God Accept Jephthah's Sacrifice of His Daughter?

Question: The Bible records some of the most horrible deeds ever perpetrated by men. There is, for example, Jephthah's vow to sacrifice his daughter to Jehovah, a vow that he then fulfilled. How can one reconcile a "God of love" with the acceptance of human sacrifices?

Response: This tragic story is told to us in Judges 11:30–40. Once again, of course, we see the honesty of the Bible in presenting not only the sin but the folly of its major characters. Let it not be forgotten, however, that the Bible never condones the sins that it faithfully records. God was no more pleased with Jephthah's rash vow and deed than with Solomon's idolatry or David's adultery with Bathsheba.

The vow itself was not only reckless but insane. He offered to sacrifice to the Lord as a "burnt offering" whatever first came out of the doors of his house to meet him when he returned victorious from battle. Did he even imagine that his daughter, the apple of his eye, his only child, might come out first? Surely not! Yet how could he have overlooked that possibility? Did he expect a sheep or a chicken or his favorite dog to be the first to come out to greet him?

Whatever his warped or confused thinking may have been, the vow was Jephthah's doing, not God's, and the latter is not to be blamed for it. Furthermore, it is not at all clear that Jephthah actually killed his daughter and offered her as a sacrificial burnt offering to God. Then why did she go about for two months mourning her virginity? Could that have meant that her father

dedicated her to the service of the Lord as a virgin? We can't be certain.

It does say that after this period of mourning, Jephthah "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed" (verse 39). If, in fact, he actually offered her up as a human sacrifice, such an offering would have been an abomination to God and would not have been accepted by Him. In fact, it would have brought God's wrath upon him.

Jephthah's vow and act was not inspired of God, was not according to God's will, and certainly cannot be blamed upon God. Yet the Bible candidly records such follies and sins. That fact, rather than reflecting badly upon the Bible, is actually one further evidence of its authenticity and honesty.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 145-46) by DAVE HUNT

God of Jacob, God of Israel — Part Two

Dave Hunt — First published in
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LAST MONTH WE NOTED that the only true God, the Creator of the universe and all things therein—the God of the Bible—has linked His name with and tied His integrity to Israel. Yet many evangelicals, including well-known leaders, insist that Israel is of no significance to God any longer, having been cut off for rejecting Christ and now having been replaced by the church. There are even groups (not only among white supremacists or cults such as Herbert W. Armstrong’s die-hard followers today) who persist in the ridiculous theory that the “Ten Lost Tribes” of Israel migrated to the British Isles and that therefore all those of British descent are the true Jews today. Some go so far as to say that all of the “white races” are the true Jews—as though not only England but all of Europe and Russia was uninhabited wasteland until these remnants of the “Ten Lost Tribes” settled there.

We have proved that the ten tribes taken to Assyria (2 Ki 17:6-23) were not “lost” but make up most of those called Jews today (see 2 Chr 34,35; Q&A Nov ’92, May ’96). Far from Israel being cut off, hundreds of prophecies foretell Israel’s importance in world affairs in the last days, the attack of all the world against her at Armageddon, her rescue by the Messiah, and her glorious final restoration in the Millennial Kingdom. Nor is there ever a reference to Israel anywhere in Scripture that could possibly be interpreted as meaning the British Isles or the British people, much less the “white races”!

Most of the more than 2,000 references to Israel or Israelites in the Bible and the thousands of prophecies (already fulfilled or yet to be fulfilled) pertain to the historical land of Israel in the Middle East, whose boundaries are clearly described (Gn 15:18-21), or to the people who lived there for nearly 2,300 years, were cast out under God’s judgment, and will be brought back by God so that not one ethnic Jew will be left outside Israel (Ezk 39:27-29).

We know who the Jews are today by DNA testing. The Israeli Immigrant Liaison Bureau requires DNA tests where there is some question as to the authenticity of claimed Jewish ancestry. Such tests would draw a complete blank if applied to the average person of British descent, and prove British-Israelism to be utter folly. No other ethnic group without its own land and scat-

tered around the world for more than 2,000 years has or could maintain its DNA identity as have the Jews.

It is not important to know who is an American, German, Arab, Greek, et al. In contrast, it is vital to know who is a Jew. Why? About 70 percent of the pages of Scripture are taken up in recounting Israel’s history and prophesying her future: her continued and unrepentant rebellion against God, His reluctant and long-delayed but finally severe discipline (the worst of which is yet to come), the Jews’ worldwide dispersion, their re-gathering from all over the world back into their own land in the Last Days, hundreds of prophecies concerning Israel’s present key role in world affairs, of her greatest trial just ahead (Jer 30:7) when two-thirds of all Jews on earth will be killed (Zec 13:8,9), and of her final restoration under the Messiah (Zec 12-14). Unquestionably, Israel is the major subject of God’s Holy Word. To be wrong about Israel is therefore to be wrong on almost everything in the Bible.

The One whom the Bible 203 times calls “the God of Israel” has sworn by an everlasting covenant that Israel, three times called the “apple” of His eye (Dt 32:10; Lam 2:18; Zec 2:8), will *never* cease to exist as a *nation*: “Therefore fear thou not...O Israel...though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I...will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (Jer 30:10-11). “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city [Jerusalem] shall be built...it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever” (Jer 31:38-40). The language could not be clearer here and throughout God’s Holy Word.

These and hundreds of other promises from God to Israel recorded in Scripture are a sharp rebuke to those such as Hank Hanegraaff, D. James Kennedy, R.C. Sproul, et al., who teach that the church has replaced Israel. “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day...moon...and...stars...by night...if those ordinances depart from before me...then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever...” (Jer:31:35-36); “While the earth remaineth...day and night shall not cease” (Gn 8:22); “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger...and I will bring them again unto this place [Israel], and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God...so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them” (Jer 32:37-42).

Israel has failed to fulfill her calling to be an example to the world of holiness in

dedication to God (Lv 20:22-24, 26; Dt 6:4-5; 7:6, etc.). While there are many believing Israelis, some even within the military, Israel today as a whole remains as wicked and godless as America and the rest of the nations. God’s “chosen people,” living once again in the Promised Land in fulfillment of many specific biblical prophecies, refuse to honor in their daily lives the God of their fathers who has brought them there. Even in the present distress related to Gaza and Lebanon, the vast majority of Israelis trust in their own arms and determination instead of trusting the only One who can protect them and has promised to do so.

The triumph of tiny Israel in every war and against impossible odds is admitted by many in the IDF as defying ordinary explanation. Military officers giving pep talks to new recruits often tell of amazing events they have witnessed in past wars, but rarely is God’s intervention hinted at, even when no other explanation would be possible. Israel as a whole has not yet been humbled to the point of acknowledging what the Psalmist prophesied: “If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say...when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick... Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth...Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Ps 124:1,2,6,8). At Armageddon, however, this prophecy will become a reality to all who survive.

In contrast, Britain, along with America, will be among those “all nations” that God will gather and destroy at Armageddon (Jer 30:11; Jl 3:2; Zec 12:9, 14:2, etc.) for their mistreatment of Israel, and especially for dividing His land. In fact, Britain played a key role in robbing Israel of its land and giving most of it to the Arabs for oil. Both Britain and America have betrayed Israel many times, and the U.S. State Department and British Foreign Service have opposed Israel from the beginning, as we document in *Judgment Day*. Those facts alone prove the lie of British Israelism.

So why would God faithfully help faithless Israel? He makes it clear to Israel from the very beginning, “...because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out...from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt...” (Dt 7:8). As we noted last month, referring to her ultimate restoration and blessing (which He has promised through the Messiah), the God of Israel declares: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which

ye have profaned among the heathen...be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel...I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it" (Ezk 36:22,32,36, etc.). In spite of Israel's present disregard of Him, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex 3:15,16 and ten other places in the Bible) is fulfilling His promises to those patriarchs through their descendants—and the day is coming when all Israel who survive Armageddon will believe.

Most Jews worldwide await the Messiah's first coming, unaware that He already came and was rejected and crucified. Jesus warned the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43). Tragically, it will take Armageddon for the surviving Jews to repent, turn to the God of Israel, and embrace the One who comes in His Father's name. In that greatest distress ever faced by Israel, God declares that the one-third whom He will bring alive "through the fire...refine[d] as silver is refined...as gold is tried [shall] call on my name, and I will hear them" (Zec 13:8,9).

When they see with their own eyes the Messiah come to rescue them, and discover to their shame who He is, "...they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him...a great mourning in Jerusalem..." (Zec 12:10-14). Why such extreme sorrow at being rescued by the Messiah? The God of Israel declares: "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (12:10)!

At Armageddon, when Yahweh comes to the rescue, He reveals Himself as the One whom Israel has pierced! Pierced?! When and how could Israel pierce the One who told Moses, "there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex 33:20)? God, "a Spirit" (Jn 4:24), cannot be pierced—but the Messiah coming as a man could be. Jesus, who fulfilled every Messianic prophecy, was pierced on the cross. Why was He crucified? For claiming to be God (Jn 10:30-33)!

Yahweh is speaking in the first person, yet two persons seem to be involved: "...they shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for *him*..." This *him* seems to be another person—and yet He must also be Yahweh! Is Yahweh two persons? In fact, He declares Himself to be three in one! Consider this: "I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I..." (Is 48:16). Surely the one speaking must be God because He has been speaking from the very beginning. Yet He adds, "The Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me" (Ibid.). Here we encounter God, the Lord GOD, and

the Spirit of God.

Could this be what the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle John to write, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"? Surely this One called the "Word," who existed from the beginning and *is* God, must be the same God to whom Isaiah refers who speaks from the beginning.

But the similarities in these two verses don't end there. Both raise almost identical questions. In Isaiah, how can God be *sent* by God; and in John, how can God be *with* God? There is only one solution: the Messiah must *be* God. When Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30), the Jews accused Him of blasphemy. When they picked up stones, Jesus asked why they wanted to kill Him. Their instant reply was, "for blasphemy...thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (vv. 31-33). For the Messiah to declare His deity was the ultimate heresy, worthy of death? No!

According to the Hebrew prophets, the Messiah *had* to be God and, at the same time, the Son of God. If God has a Son, who *Himself* is God and one with His Father, that would dissolve the rabbis' objections. We encounter God's Son a number of times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Speaking prophetically, the Psalmist presents God as declaring of one who is to come, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Ps 2:7). Jehovah's Witnesses and others who deny Christ's deity take this as referring to Christ's birth on earth as the beginning of His existence. That cannot be the case, however, because God speaks of His Son as already existing and warns a God-defying world, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry... Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (v 12).

That the Son of God already existed before His incarnation is clear from a number of other statements by the Hebrew prophets. Solomon quotes the prophet Agur asking this question: "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment?" The obvious answer is "God." Then he asks, "what is his son's name..." (Prv 30:4), proving that the Son of God already existed at that time. Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into a huge furnace so hot that the flames killed those who threw them into it. Nebuchadnezzar, astonished to see these three Hebrews walking alive in the flames, observes another with them and in wonder exclaims, "the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dn 3:25)!

While promising salvation through

the coming Messiah, Yahweh repeatedly declared that He himself was the only Savior: "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior" (Is 43:11); "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Is 45:22). And yet this salvation goes to "the ends of the earth" by another who must Himself be God and the Messiah: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Is 49:6). Of whom does God speak?

Unquestionably, the Hebrew prophets all agree that God exists as a tri-unity: three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) but one God—and that in the Messiah He becomes man without ceasing to be God. Christ's claims that He was God and man, and one with His Father, agree with the prophets. Isaiah declared: "For unto us a child is born..." (Is 9:6). This refers to His humanity, derived, as foretold, from His virgin mother, Mary: the "seed" of the woman (Gn 3:15). But Isaiah adds, "unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder...Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David..." (Is 9:6,7). Surely the Son given must be the already-existing Son of God—and He must be the Messiah, because He will rule on David's throne.

But Isaiah declares that the Messiah is God! His name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God." And He is also "The everlasting Father." Here is the same mystery: God is both Father and Son, and He alone is the Messiah! Most Jews still refuse to recognize this identity of the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." This is one place where they agree with their bitterest enemies, the Muslims. The Qur'an condemns to hell anyone who believes in the Trinity (Sur 5:72-74)!

So the fact that Yahweh has come as a man who was pierced to the death, resurrected, and will return to rescue Israel at Armageddon is in perfect agreement with the Hebrew prophets. When Israel sees her God in this form coming to her rescue, it will be painfully clear that He has been to earth before, where He was rejected and pierced to the death. So Jesus was only echoing the prophets when He said to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as He was being "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Is 53:7) on the way to the Cross: "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mt 23:39). At last they will understand "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"—and "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26)! **TBC**

Quotable

The fact that the glorified, holy Son of God could step through the door of heaven at any moment is intended by God to be the most pressing, incessant motivation for holy living and aggressive ministry (including missions, evangelism, and Bible teaching) and the greatest cure for lethargy and apathy. It should make a major difference in every Christian's values, actions, priorities, and goals.

Since the imminent coming of Christ is intended to have such a tremendous practical effect on the lives of individual Christians and the church as a whole, and since all views of the Rapture except the pretribulation view destroy the New Testament teaching of the imminent coming of Christ, we can conclude that the issue of when the Rapture of the church will take place really does matter.

—Renald Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* p. 256

Q&A

QUESTION: Do you know anything about groups called “gene-testing services?” Apparently they have convinced many to believe they come from monkeys.

RESPONSE: It has been well documented that man actually is closer “genetically” to pigs. That’s why we have for decades used biological parts that have been grown in pigs. As a scientific publication notes, “Pigs share a number of surprising comparable traits with humans. For instance, we both have [relatively] hairless skin, a thick layer of subcutaneous fat, light-colored eyes, protruding noses and heavy eyelashes. Pig skin tissues and heart valves can be used in medicine because of their compatibility with the human body. Medical students often practice suturing on pig’s feet.”

We have not thoroughly researched “customer gene-testing services” and consequently cannot respond with specific details to your question. Nevertheless, there is one point of particular interest: “Apologists” for the theory of evolution point to a similarity between man and chimpanzees of up to 96 percent, leaving only a 4 percent difference in DNA. But even evolutionists point out that, although humans and chimps are judged to have many identical genes, the biological functions are often used in different ways.

Going further, another scientific writer notes, “The sheer fact that pigs and humans are mammals means that we share some genes. But it is simplistic to put an actual figure on the amount of genetic material we have in common,” says animal geneticist Professor Chris Moran from the University

of Sydney’s Faculty of Veterinary Science.

“Making broad comparisons by saying...98 percent of [human] genes are similar to a chimpanzee or whatever else... tend to be a little bit misleading,” says Moran. The amount of genetic material we share with other species depends upon what you compare. All living organisms have genetic information encoded in deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), divided into units called genes. Information is transferred from the genes via a chemical called ribonucleic acid (RNA). Some RNA is translated into chains of amino-acid that make up proteins, the building blocks of every living cell. Scientists have discovered about 20,000 mammalian genes that encode proteins with similar basic functions. So if you compare the protein-encoding portion of our DNA we have a lot in common with a lot of mammals.

“Mammals have most of the same genes for similar biochemical and physiological functions. If you look at the details of the genes...there’ll be differences between them, but they’ll still be doing the same kind of function,” says Moran (<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2010/05/03/2887206.htm>).

As Dave Hunt wrote in the February 1997 newsletter, “In his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, Oxford University zoologist Richard Dawkins, a leading evolutionist, calls biology ‘the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose’ (Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (England: Longman 1986, 1). Indeed! One cell, the smallest living unit, could have 100,000 molecules and 10,000 intricately interrelated chemical reactions going on at one time. Cells couldn’t arise by chance! Dawkins admits that every cell contains in its nucleus ‘a digitally coded database larger... than all thirty volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* put together.’ You can’t even imagine the odds against chance creating a thirty-volume encyclopedia! That’s for one cell—and there are trillions in the human body, thousands of different kinds, working in unbelievably complex and delicately balanced relationships!”

Of course, since the Lord used the same building blocks in the creation of all life, we shouldn’t be surprised to see some similarities. Nor do we ignore the distinctions. And, we don’t see people rushing to admit they descended from pigs.

QUESTION: In the July 2016 newsletter, in answer to the question “Where did Jesus get His blood?” you said: “Jesus Christ, as the final High Priest, entered into heaven itself but not with His blood. That had been poured out on the ground (Jn:19:34)...If Jesus did not enter heaven with His own blood, how do you reconcile your statement with Hebrews 9:11-12, which says:

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (NKJV).

RESPONSE: You are quite correct that the NKJV says “with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all.” Other translations render it “*through* His own blood” or “*by the merit of* His own blood” (emphasis added). That clearly means that He didn’t physically take some of His blood with Him to the heavenly sanctuary, but on the merit, or the finished work, of His sacrifice He entered.

In Romans 5:9 we read, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” Death from crucifixion came by heart failure, suffocation, or other physiological trauma but not primarily from loss of blood. Jesus didn’t die from loss of blood. When the soldiers who came to break His legs to hasten His death, they were surprised to see that He was dead already. Even so, one of them thrust his spear into Jesus’ side, and a great volume of blood mixed with water came out and poured on the ground.

Colossians 1:20 tells us that Jesus, “made peace through the *blood of his cross*, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...” (emphasis added). Now, the cross certainly didn’t have blood, so we recognize that the phrase “through the blood of his cross” simply speaks of His *death* upon the Cross. Throughout the Scriptures, it is clear that the consistent message is that the debt of sin was paid *by His death*. Hebrews 9:12 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, *Christ died for us*” (emphasis added).

As Leviticus 17:11 tells us, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”; and as Hebrews 9:22 tells us, “...without shedding of blood is no remission.” Again, this speaks of the death of the sacrifice.

We think that it is clear and consistent throughout Scripture that when it speaks of shedding the blood of the Lord Jesus, it is speaking of His death. Philippians 2:8 states, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” His death, however, was not the end of the story. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Who Really Killed Goliath?

Question: First Samuel 17 says that David killed Goliath, but 2 Samuel 21:19 says that Elhanan killed Goliath (if we eliminate the italics, which weren't in the original text). It does say Elhanan killed "the brother of Goliath," but the words in italics were obviously added later to avoid the contradiction. That bothers me. I read a statement by a certain bishop who said that inserting "the brother of" in italics was a dishonest cover-up and proved that the Bible has been doctored up not only here but elsewhere as well. How do you respond to this charge?

Response: First of all, we can quickly dismiss the charge of dishonest doctoring of the Bible. Would someone who was trying to change the meaning of a passage put his amendment in italics? That would be like a counterfeiter writing across the face of each of his phony bills, "This is a counterfeit." In fact, the italics are added by the translators to provide what is implicit but not expressed.

It often seems that a word or words were left out because of the lack of exact word equivalents between languages. In this case, however, it was necessary for the translators to insert "the brother of" for a number of reasons. First of all, because that was the only thing that made sense. Obviously this was not Goliath. To imagine that the original manuscript said it was Goliath is to accuse whoever wrote First and Second Samuel of having an unbelievably bad memory. After all, the author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had already recorded some 34 chapters earlier that David had killed Goliath 45 years before this incident. One can only say to the skeptics at this point, "Me thinkest thou protesteth too loudly!"

One is sorely tempted to lose patience with the critics who have been dragging out this alleged contradiction in the Bible for at least 200 years. How can they search every page of the Bible so

diligently as to come up with numerous apparent discrepancies and at the same time overlook the fact that 1 Chronicles 20:5 records the same incident and states, without italics, that the giant Elhanan killed was "the brother of Goliath"? Moreover, there we are given the name of this giant. His name was not Goliath, but Lahmi.

That Lahmi was Goliath's brother is not nearly as interesting as the fact that we learn from this passage that he was only one of four brothers of Goliath. So there were five of these fearsome Philistines living in Gath at the time David killed Goliath! One understands, then, why it was that when he went out to dispatch Goliath, David carefully chose exactly five smooth stones for his sling from the brook to take with him (1 Samuel 17:40)! That fact also gives us further insight into the incredible accuracy that David had with a sling—he only needed one stone for each giant.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 146-48) by DAVE HUNT

Mysticism and the Coming World Religion — Part One

T. A. McMahon

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

—2 THESSALONIANS 2:3-4

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

—REVELATION 13:3-4

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

—REVELATION 13:8

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, in the last days prior to Christ's return a religion will appear that will deceive virtually the entire world into following it. It will be led by the Antichrist ("the beast"), who will be worshiped as God.

Scripture also indicates, however, that the bride of Christ will be removed from the earth in the Rapture (Jn 14:1-3; 1 Th 4:16-18) before that religion is fulfilled. If true, then why would the knowledge of the coming world religion be of value for true believers in Christ?

There are a number of reasons. First of all, the biblically false content of the coming world religion doesn't suddenly appear overnight. The seeds of it began in the Garden of Eden with Satan's seduction of Eve (Gn 3:1). His first words, "Yea, hath God said...?", set forth his strategy of undermining God's commands and instructions. That has continued right up to this present time and is increasing exponentially. Secondly, Satan's offer of godhood to Eve has manifested itself throughout history. Most of the religions of the Far East teach that

God *is* everything or *in* everything, making everything and everyone God or part of God. Many of the Caesars and other rulers imposed the worship of themselves as deities upon their people. Those forms of idolatry will culminate in the worship of self, the Antichrist, and Satan.

Thirdly, Jesus characterized the days prior to His return for His bride as a time of great deception. He told His disciples, "Take heed that no man *deceive* you" (Mt 24:4 - emphasis added). His warning included deceptions such as false Christs, lying signs and wonders, and unbiblical doctrines and teachers. Some have wrongly concluded that Christ's warning wasn't for believers, asserting that verse 24 implies that it would be impossible to "deceive the very elect" (24:24). That can't be the case because Jesus addressed this warning (v. 4) to His disciples—who were certainly His "elect." Fourthly, the Word of God gives multiple instructions on how to protect ourselves from the lies of Satan that can adversely affect our fruitfulness in the Lord.

These seductive and deceptive devices of God's chief adversary will increase prior to the Rapture, but God's Word gives us the prevention program against being seduced by Satan's lies: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pt 5:8).

The Apostle Paul pointed to a time in the history of the church when a condition would be prevalent that would greatly undermine the faith of professing and true believers: "For the time will come when they will not endure *sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tm 4:3 - emphasis added). Sound doctrine—what is that? It's simply the teachings given to mankind by God through His prophets. It is God's written Word, His *objective* communication to humanity, containing information that comes directly from Him without the input of mankind. That's what makes it *sound* doctrine. God, being infinite, has communicated to finite man what He wants him to know and do. That's the only way finite humanity can truly know their infinite Creator and what He has in mind regarding them.

Undermining sound doctrine is Satan's primary goal in his attempt to shipwreck the faith and fruitfulness of believers. The strategy involves corrupting the Word of God by adding to it or subtracting from it. Thus the Scriptures are distorted through

the input of fallen, finite man and the contributions of seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tm 4:1). Such modifications demolish the objective truth of Scripture. The Bible no longer stands as God's Word when "adjustments" are made by other sources. This is taking place today in unprecedented fashion, especially through the introduction (or re-introduction) of mysticism.

The antithesis of the objective Word of God, mysticism is defined by *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as "the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through *subjective* experience such as intuition or insight," and adds that it is "vague *speculation*, a belief without *sound* basis (emphasis added)." Google gives this definition: "belief characterized by self-delusion or dreamy confusion of thought, especially when based on the assumption of occult qualities or mysterious agencies." A mystical worldview, which is intensifying in both the world and its religions, will be foundational to the coming one-world religion.

Among many reasons, the primary one is that mysticism has a universal appeal that will attract and unify all the religions of the world. Why? Because it avoids doctrine (rules, regulations, commandments, obligations, requirements, etc.). The doctrines of the Bible are given by God and are to be obeyed; not obeying them is rebellion, which is the state of the world as well as the state of many within the church. The religions of the world also have doctrines, albeit false ones, against which their followers often rebel. Doctrines divide because people don't particularly like rules that demand obedience. The stricter the rules, the less attractive the religion. That's a potential problem for the religion of the Antichrist because its goal is to attract other belief systems and draw all people into its spiritual web.

Mysticism avoids objective rules and requirements, whether biblical or not. It's a belief system without a sound (objective) basis that majors on subjective experience, insights, intuition, dreamy confusion of thought (e.g., altered states of consciousness), speculation, and mysterious agencies. So the arbiter of what is right and true is how one *feels*: "If it feels right, then it must be right, and therefore ultimately true."

In order for mysticism to become the foundational belief system of the one-world religion, it must include all the world religions. With rare exceptions, the religions of the Far East are fundamentally mystical,

so little change is necessary for them. But what of the law-oriented religions of Roman Catholicism and Islam? Their combined numbers exceed two billion followers, so they must be included in the religion of the Antichrist. Yet they are both legalistic—Catholicism with its canons and decrees, inquisitions, and obligations, and Islam with its Sharia laws. Obviously this must change in order for them to fit in with the necessary ecumenism of the one-world religion.

Such a change will likely be facilitated by the roots of mysticism that have been a part of both religions for centuries. In Roman Catholicism, for example, the influence of the Desert Fathers began in the third century, just before Constantine, and continued past the time of Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries. These were hermits and mystics, living in seclusion, in caves, some of them attempting to imitate Jesus in His personal desert confrontation with the devil. Their fleshly attempts at overcoming Satan and his demons often led to madness. They lived in caves, isolated from the rest of civilization, which also led to altered states of consciousness. As we know today, that condition opens a person to communication with the spirit world, i.e., demons. An altered mental state often creates the illusion of oneness, or union, with God—the ultimate goal of mysticism.

This system of isolation was in place at the beginning of the development of the Roman Catholic Church. It was furthered through monasticism, in which monks and nuns withdrew from society by entering monasteries. The idea was to fully commit themselves to God by separating from the secular world. Some monastic orders took vows of silence. That left them vulnerable to the spirit realm. (Silence, by the way, is a huge feature of and heavily promoted by the contemplative movement today.)

In the sixteenth century, a Spaniard named Ignatius Loyola, who was the founder of the Jesuits, fostered mysticism through his Spiritual Exercises. They are enormously popular among Catholics and contemplative evangelicals today. One Jesuit source tells us: “Ignatius was convinced that God can speak to us as surely through our imagination as through our thoughts and memories. In the Ignatian tradition, praying with the imagination is called contemplation” (Kevin O’Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, p.141). “Praying with the imagination,” by the way, is another term for creative visualization, a powerful occult technique that ushers the visualizer into the spirit realm.

Contemplative techniques have divorced

the practitioner from the objective Word of God, leading one into the subjective arena of the imagination and feelings. This is what people like Richard Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*) and Sarah Young (*Jesus Calling*) are promoting. The practical consequences of disregarding critical judgment are often disastrous. Yet that is and will be the outcome of a religious system that people will flock to in the Last Days.

Following the mystical practices of Ignatius Loyola in our day were Catholics Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen. Both are deceased. Merton was a Trappist monk and priest; Nouwen was also a priest, and both were well-known mystics. They were paragons of the modern contemplative movement and greatly influenced leading evangelicals such as Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson, Beth Moore, Kay Warren, and others. Merton studied the Desert Fathers and the Christian mystics and recognized their connection with the meditative practices of Eastern mysticism in Zen Buddhism, Taoism, and Sufism, which he taught and practiced. Asked if he felt that “turning away from traditional Christianity toward the East” would cause “an eventual turning back to a different form of Christianity, one that might even be more genuine,” Merton replied, “Yes, I think so” (Merton, *Thomas Merton: Preview of the Asian Journey*, 53-54).

Henri Nouwen has become the favored mystic among evangelicals. One of his most popular books is *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons*. It’s an instruction manual on how to use imagery as the window of heaven in order to enter into the deeper things of the soul. Nouwen espouses mysticism because he sees it “as my call to help every person claim his or her own way to God.” That doesn’t seem to faze Rick Warren, who quotes him favorably in his best-selling *Purpose Driven Life*, or Kay Warren, who recommends Nouwen’s books, or Philip Yancy, who sings his praises in *Christianity Today*, or Chuck Swindoll, who is enamored with his contemplative teachings, or Tony Campolo, who calls the deceased Catholic priest “one of the great Christians of our time.”

Of late there is Pope Francis. Surging ahead at an ecumenical and mystical speed that thrills the world’s religions and has left traditional Catholicism in its wake, the pope and his ecumenism has many professing Christians flocking to Rome at his personal invitation: Kenneth Copeland, James Robison, Rick Warren, Geoff Tunnicliffe, John Arnott, and Joel Osteen, to name a few. After meeting with the pope, Osteen said, “*I like the fact that this pope is trying to make the church larger, not smaller. He’s not pushing people*

out but making the church more inclusive. That resonated with me.” Luis Palau has been a long-time friend of the pope, and Timothy George wrote an article for *Christianity Today* titled “Our Francis, Too: Why we can enthusiastically join arms with the Catholic leader.”

The most influential evangelical pastor today, Rick Warren, refers to him as “our new pope.” Pope Francis is certainly the man for the renewal of mystical Roman Catholicism. He’s a Jesuit, fully rehearsed in the Spiritual Exercises. In his address before the US Congress recently, he praised mystic monk and priest Thomas Merton.

Many were appalled that one of the first overtures of the new head of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to winning and influencing evangelicals was to send a personal greeting to a conference led by Kenneth Copeland. Was the pope clueless about Copeland’s false doctrines, his charismatic abuses, his prosperity distortions of Scripture, not to mention his con-man-like greed? I think not. Why? *Because it doesn’t really matter.* Doctrines, whether true or false, take a back seat—or no seat at all—in mysticism. Remember, as noted, *doctrines divide.* Therefore they need to be pushed aside in order to make room for what helps people to get along, what encourages relationship building, what *feels right.* That was the gist of the *Christianity Today* article, “What Evangelicals Like about Francis.” Never mind the theology of the pope. It’s how he makes everyone *feel.* More and more, it seems, this is what’s important to people.

Fewer and fewer evangelicals today seem to care that all the *feel good* stuff that Francis reflects personally won’t save him or anyone else. Neither will the gospel of his Church save anyone—whether it’s the new or the old Catholicism. The following quotes in the official Catholic catechism have been a mystery for quite a while. Many within and without the Church have been at a loss as to how to interpret them: “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God....The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods” (CCC paragraph 460). What is now becoming apparent is the way those statements fit perfectly with the foundational objective of mysticism: union with God.

The seeds of mysticism have certainly found fertile soil within legalistic Roman Catholicism, but what of the even more oppressive Sharia law that is foundational to Islam? Are Muslims therefore impervious to mystical beliefs?

[TO BE CONTINUED]

TBC

Quotable.....

The child of God must be willing to be a channel through which God’s abundant blessings flow. This channel is narrow and shallow at first, yet some of the waters of God’s bounty can pass through. If we cheerfully yield ourselves to this purpose, the channel becomes wider and deeper, allowing more of the bounty of God to pass through. We cannot limit the extent to which God may use us as instruments in communicating blessing if we are willing to yield ourselves to Him and careful to give Him all the glory.

—George Müller

Q&A.....

QUESTION: A recent Berean Call email quoted Samuel Davies, 4th president of Princeton University in “The Things Omitted.” It seems that the first eight presidents of Princeton were slave owners—Berean Call “omitted” that fact! See the AP article on Georgetown University repenting of selling slaves in the 1860s and offering acceptance of formerly owned slave descendants as students. Your comments?

RESPONSE: Slavery is (not *was*) an enormous evil and is probably practiced today across the world in far greater numbers than at any other time in history. Political systems such as communism essentially institutionalize *economic* slavery, with the majority being ruled by a tiny group of elites. Increasingly, our culture is dividing those “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” into a small group of elites who rule over those who, in all practicality, are slaves to the state. This certainly is preparing the world for the ultimate tyranny of the Antichrist.

When the founders of this nation included the “unalienable rights” language in our Declaration of Independence, many at the time recognized that what became known as the South’s “peculiar institution” was on its way out.

We did not deliberately “omit” listing Davies as a slave owner. What we published was simply a quote, and a very good quote, from a very flawed man—just like you and me. Neither do we omit the following: Paul wrote an epistle to the slave owner Philemon, urging him to receive Onesimus the slave back, “...not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord” (v. 16).

It’s almost a cliché to point out that

David, whom the Lord considered “a man after mine own heart,” was an adulterer and murderer. Do we refrain from quoting the Psalms?

Of the author, however, “Davies, himself a slave owner, made the evangelistic outreach to the slave population a significant priority of his ministry. By 1755, nearly three hundred slaves attended his church services. With the help of friends in England (John and Charles Wesley numbered among them), Davies provided spelling books, catechetical material, and the hymnals of Isaac Watts for the slaves. The slaves especially valued Watts’s hymnals. Davies recounted that at times the ‘sundry of them were lodged all night in my kitchen; and sometimes, when I have awaked about two or three o’clock in the morning, a torrent of sacred harmony poured into my chamber and carried my mind away to heaven’” (Pilcher 1971:112).

It is well recorded that these slaves had equal access to partake of communion at his services. Davies countenanced no segregation. Although “personally not opposed to slavery, Davies believed that slaves deserved direct access to the word of God the same as their masters” (Richards, Jeffrey H., “Samuel Davies and the Transatlantic Campaign for Slave Literacy in Virginia.” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, p. 111). Though a flawed man living in a flawed culture, this is a clear indication of the work of the Holy Spirit that reaches the hearts of men no matter the time or setting—even in our arguably more corrupt society today.

Yes, Davies owned slaves. Whatever the motivation in another culture, his subsequent treatment of them (including literacy) was a long step toward emancipation. That’s the reason why prior to the Civil War, in some states, teaching a slave to read was against the law, as in 1831 North Carolina.

QUESTION: In your answer to “Were Adam and Eve created perfect? If so, how could they sin?”, I would like to have your clarification on the following: you mentioned that it is false to say that God causes all things to happen with regard to Adam’s sin. If God did not cause Adam to sin, then it seems that Adam created sin on his own or at least worked with Eve and the serpent to create sin. Is that your stance on this subject? I understand that we all sin because we have a sinful nature. If God created Adam without such a sinful nature, then what made him sin?

RESPONSE: God never caused Adam to sin, but in their creation, He well recognized that fallible man would fail. Lucifer, who dwelt in the presence of God as the “angel [cherub] that

covereth” (Ezk 28:14), had already fallen when Adam and Eve were created and placed in the garden. It was not a matter of Adam “creating” sin but of succumbing to what was already in the world in the person of Satan. Certainly God allowed the circumstances that Satan used in his temptation of man, but the Scriptures clearly note the accountability of Adam.

Eve, according to 1 Timothy 2:14 was deceived by Satan. “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” Yet Adam sinned with full knowledge of the deception, and Romans 5:12 tells us, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned....”

As to what made Adam sin, there has been much speculation regarding his “love for Eve” and his “loyalty” to her. Yet, though man was created perfect, he did have a free will, which he could and would exercise in making choices. Now, some may argue that Adam’s “potential” to sin means that he wasn’t perfect, but clearly Adam’s relationship with the Lord was indeed perfect until he made the choice to sin.

As Dave Hunt often observed, for love to exist requires the free exercise of the human will. In the process, God’s judgment and His mercy are displayed in His response to the fall of mankind. We could never know and experience God’s grace unless we needed grace. God’s plan before creation for the atonement and redemption of man, whom He knew would fall into sin, demonstrates His grace and mercy. These were revealed through Adam’s and mankind’s subsequent transgressions in that God did not exercise deserved judgment by destroying man. Instead, His grace and provision were proven by the covering He provided (Gn 3:21). That covering was a foreshadowing of the eternal work of atonement provided by “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rv 13:8).

God’s patience and forbearance were later demonstrated as mankind went deeper and deeper into sin. His justice and wrath were seen when He sent the flood, and His grace and mercy shown in saving Noah and his family. Even after His chosen people sinned again and again, God yet preserved a remnant though the whole deserved destruction. “And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this” (2 Ki 19:30-31).

God’s perfect justice will be absolutely revealed in the future once-for-all judgment of Satan (Rv 20:7-10) and the eternal bliss and joy of a redeemed people.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Did Christ Ride an Ass, Its Colt, or Both?

Question: The supposed prophecy in Zechariah:9:9 and the alleged fulfillment in Matthew:21:2-7 both say that Christ came riding into Jerusalem “sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” The accounts recorded in Mark 11 and Luke 19 mention only the colt, so there is an obvious contradiction. Furthermore, it is clearly absurd that Christ would ride upon both a colt and its mother at the same time. How can you make sense of this?

Response: Matthew simply quotes Zechariah:9:9. That statement is easily explained as a common type of poetic emphasis used in Old Testament times. The Messiah sits on an animal. It is an ass. More than that, it is a colt, the foal of an ass, meaning very young. That this expression, “upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass,” was descriptive of the one animal on which the Messiah would sit is clear from the fact that both Mark (11:2) and Luke (19:30) replace that phrase with “whereon never man sat” and “whereon yet never man sat.” It is highly unlikely that no man had ever sat upon the ass, but that statement was only true of her colt.

Mark and Luke are concentrating upon the animal upon which Christ sat. Neither of them quotes from Zechariah, where both the colt and its mother are mentioned, so there is no need to mention the mare. Matthew, who quotes Zechariah, then accounts for the mare as well. Matthew explains that the ass and its colt were tied together and were both loosed. It seems clear that the mare accompanied its colt because it was so young, apparently walking alongside, because garments were placed upon both. One can imagine Christ letting an arm rest upon the donkey as He rode its colt.

Far from being absurd, the picture shows two things. First of all, it reveals our Lord’s control over nature and all created beings. A colt, so young that it has never been ridden and is even accompanied

by its mother tags obediently along. Secondly, it emphasizes the meekness with which this One comes, exactly as Zechariah says: “lowly, and ... riding upon...a colt...” This is no conquering king who has destroyed Israel’s enemies and is riding triumphantly into Jerusalem at the head of an army, but upon a colt hardly able to support His weight. This is the Savior who has come to die for the sins of the world: “He is just, and having [bringing] salvation...” (Zechariah:9:9).

That the multitude would hail Him as Messiah, as the prophets had said, in spite of such a humble entry, is all the more remarkable. Of course, the same enthusiastic crowd that hailed Him on this occasion turned against Him and demanded His crucifixion a mere four days later. That fact was a no-less-remarkable fulfillment of prophecy.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 146-48) by DAVE HUNT

Mysticism and the Coming World Religion — Part Two

T. A. McMahon

AS NOTED IN PART ONE of this series, there is a coming world religion (CWR), and it is advancing rapidly. One of the significant elements that expedites its growth is mysticism, which is a belief system that ultimately rejects teachings that involve objective laws, rules, requirements, obligations, dogmas, doctrines, and the like, in favor of subjective experiences and intuitive feelings. The goal of the CWR (also known as the religion of the Antichrist) is to bring all religions under its patronage and control. Since all religions have doctrines that separate them from one another, even to the point of hostility in some cases, their doctrines must be compromised or altered in order to be acceptable to all—or they must be removed altogether. Mysticism facilitates doctrinal compromise because of its subjective nature. In other words, the objective meaning of a doctrine must give way to one's subjective interpretation, i.e., how one *feels* about it. When such a belief system is in place, there can be no absolute truth; so-called truth is whatever an individual feels it is. It's in the mind of the beholder.

Religions that are heavily legalistic in their theology must change in order to fit in with the ecumenical CWR. Two such religions are Roman Catholicism and Islam. In part one of this series we documented how the Church of Rome is well along the way of shifting from its highly legalistic system of rules and obligations toward a more mystical process. The Catholic Church has more than a billion followers, and they also must be included in the religion of the Antichrist. Islam, too, has greater than a billion adherents, so it also must become a part of the CWR. However, it is legalistic—and aggressively so—in its doctrine and practices, far more so than any other religion in the world. Consequently, many doubt that it could ever change.

Some have suggested, therefore, that the religion of the Antichrist will be Islam itself. For that to happen, the conversion of the world to Islamic beliefs would follow its historical method, which is at the point of a sword. Although that worked to a large degree in the past, it falls far short of what is necessary to spiritually transform the entire world. Additionally, there are obvious problems for this belief system regarding the coming religion of

the Antichrist. The fact that the entire world will worship the Antichrist as God is inconsistent with and opposed by the Muslim worship of Allah. Sharia law, which is the Islamic code of law, is derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Muhammad's teachings and examples). Consequences for disobeying Sharia laws are the harshest among religions. Its rules are overtly abusive regarding women. Furthermore, Islam's collectively intense hatred of Jews and Christians, as well as "all infidels," is diametrically opposed to the CWR's necessary ecumenism. These doctrines of Islam work against its efforts to attract followers to the coming world religion. What then, if anything, is there within Islam that might reconcile the billion-plus Muslims to the religion of the Antichrist, with its mystical underpinnings? The answer is *Sufism*.

Sufism is the mystical Islamic belief and practice through which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge by way of a direct personal experience with Allah. This is Islam in the throes of experiential and subjective beliefs and practices. Being functionally at odds with Sharia laws and practices, many Sufi practitioners reject the rules of Sharia outright, regarding mysticism as the most direct way to achieve union with Allah. Moreover, where it has been historically practiced throughout the world, Sufism has had no problem coexisting with other religions. This is not the case, as we're well aware, for Sharia-law Islam.

One mystical aspect of Sufism is for its practitioners to put themselves into an ecstatic trance or altered state of consciousness through whirling. These individuals are known as Whirling Dervishes. According to one source, "The hundreds of the Dervish twirling rotations (20-30 per minute) coincide with the *theta* rhythm in the brain, and the chanting (they repeat the word 'God' [more likely 'Allah,'] about 99 times) makes the dancers dissociate from reality and enter a different state of mind. When the ceremony is over, the dervishes return, side by side, in front of the sheikh [master and guide] and then move to another room to meditate. The physiological goal of the whirling is for the dervish to 'empty' himself of all distractions" (www.sleepandhealth.com/whirling-dervishes-altered-state-consciousness/). It should be obvious that this is just another form of Eastern mystical meditation along with the contemplative forms practiced by more and more professing Christians in the West.

The various exercises of mysticism are similar throughout the world, even where there has been no connection between the

cultures or people groups. Sufi meditation and yoga employ the same lotus sitting position and a *hasta mudra* (with the thumb curled and touching the tip of the forefinger). Sufi whirling has the same effect as the uncontrollable shaking in the Dynamic Meditation practiced by the followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. The Sufi Shaykh is similar to the guru in yoga in terms of the practitioner's absolute submission to him and obedience to the guidance given. In some practices, the Shaykh is a transcended spiritual entity channeled by the meditator. The *Encyclopedia of Islam* lists a number of manifestations found within the meditation practices of Sufism, e.g., "barking and howling" (MacDonald, D. B. "Darwish (Darwesh)," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by: P. B. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs, Brill Online, Augustana, 21 Sept 2009), behavior that was also exhibited through the so-called impartation of the Holy Spirit in places such as the Toronto Airport Vineyard, Pensacola and Lakeland, Florida, International House of Prayer (IHOP), and Bethel Church in Redding, California, among numerous others. These experiences taking place throughout the world should give one more than a hint that spirit entities, contacted through altered states of consciousness and meditation, as well as some people's faith in the false signs-and-wonders methods, have been facilitating Satan's goal of seducing and controlling the consciousness and beliefs of mankind. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

Mehmet Oz, better known as Dr. Oz, is someone whom I would describe as the poster boy for everything that I've been noting in this article, which is the acceptance of *all religions* in the formation of a one-world religion. He is a Muslim—a Sufi Muslim. He is also a New Ager and a national spokesman for Transcendental Meditation or TM (www.doctoroz.com/videos/oz-transcendental-meditation). TM is the pseudo-scientific title conjured up by Hindu guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The Maharishi, who came to fame as the spiritual advisor and guru to the Beatles, began teaching meditation in US schools as the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, but it was shut down because the courts realized that it was clearly a religion. The Maharishi simply renamed it *The Science of Transcendental Meditation* [emphasis added]. This incredibly important alteration was not only successful in promoting his Hinduism in schools,

but it also opened the door for other pseudoscientific forms of meditation such as Mindfulness and MindUP, which have been overwhelmingly accepted by our school systems here in the US.

Dr. Oz is a protégé of Oprah Winfrey, who is the leading advocate of New Age beliefs and practices in America. Dr. Oz, a Muslim, is a close second. How can that be? Oz has explained that he grew up in America with parents who were diverse in their Muslim beliefs—one leaned toward Sufism and the other toward Sharia law. “I found myself tugged more to the spiritual side of the religion rather than the legal side of the religion....[Sufism] is the order I resonate to because it’s much more mystical....[Sufis] are more concerned with the true connection with God....But when you get caught up in the religious legal aspects of religion, it frustrates me to no end.” Dr. Oz also noted with enthusiasm that his wife, a “Protestant,” is a follower of the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg who was heavily involved in mystical experiences (as well as blatant biblical heresies).

Dr. Oz *personifies* what I have been trying to explain regarding what could attract humanity to the coming subjective, experiential, and feelings-oriented one-world religion. Laws, rules, doctrines, and requirements are out; intuition, feelings, and mystical experiences are in. Dr. Oz’s charisma and enthusiasm for the mystical have already deceived millions, Christians and non-Christians alike, toward the direction of the CWR. Rick Warren had Mehmet Oz as a teacher of meditation (read “occult meditation”) for the “Daniel Plan” weight loss program that Warren promoted for his Saddleback Church members and his followers.

Changes are taking place in the world—new concepts that are speeding along at a breathtaking rate. Furthermore, these are changes that defy logic and reason. As the lyrics of a modern song plead seductively, “If it feels so right, how can it be wrong?” And an even more recent popular tune exclaims in its title, “Wrong feels so right!” The very idea that something could be considered “wrong” has not only been questioned, but it is now regarded as belonging to the “archaic realm of judgmentalism.” Daring to call something wrong has become the social sin of the day, and it’s being drowned in the deluge of “let your feelings be your guide.”

In the 1977 blockbuster, *Star Wars*, which was the most financially successful (and therefore influential) movie series in

the history of motion pictures, Yoda (as in “Yoga” — see www.yogapoint.com/articles/yogaand-starwars.htm, etc.) instructs Luke Skywalker to control the Force with this admonition: “Luke, trust your feelings.” Eastern mysticism has gone viral in the West. What were once foreign terms such as *karma* or *guru* or *deva* or *mantra* have become commonplace. What used to be the Young Men’s Christian Association has morphed into the Yoga Mastery Coaching Association. The latest survey has the number of practitioners of yoga at 37 million people in the US, with projections of 80 million over the next few years. Numerous evangelical churches have pushed aside pews in their sanctuaries in order to practice “Christian” Yoga. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!* (Isaiah 5:20).

The chief reinforcement from the world for the development of the mystical religion

AND JESUS ANSWERED... TAKE HEED THAT NO MAN DECEIVE YOU.

FOR MANY SHALL COME IN MY NAME, SAYING, I AM CHRIST; AND SHALL DECEIVE MANY.

—*Matthew 24:4-5*

of the Antichrist, however, comes from the pseudoscience and religion of psychology. Psychology has duped mankind into accepting psychotherapy as a science when it has *no basis* in true science. Most of the practice comprises a subjective belief system, i.e., a religion. This is abundantly clear particularly as it pertains to counseling, which is overwhelmingly the largest field of psychology. How, then, does psychotherapy bolster the development of the Antichrist’s mystical spirituality? Consider just a few of psychotherapy’s Antichrist beliefs: 1) Mankind is innately good. That innate goodness, we are told, is the source of the “true self.” Getting back to our true self is accomplished through the psychotherapeutic process of self-actualization. Self-actualization, conjured up by Abraham Maslow, is no different from the Eastern mystical teaching of self-realization—realizing one’s godhood. 2) Sin is simply wrong thinking. Sin, we are told, is a construct of judgmental religions imposing their beliefs and practices

upon humanity. It is a control mechanism that prohibits mankind from reaching its potential—which, again, is godhood. 3) Being guided by one’s feelings is the basis for true wellness. Feelings emanate from one’s subconscious, which, we’re told, is where one’s true self resides. Being true to one’s feelings, therefore, is the ultimate path of truth.

Carl Jung, who is highly favored in Christendom, claimed that the comprehension of Eastern mystical thought was essential if Western psychology was to develop. *Psychology Today* years ago added its own confirmation to the changes we’re seeing now by declaring that Eastern mysticism would come to the West through psychology. It has, and it will continue until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The demonic strategy of mysticism (which is *union* with God) is to make man believe that he *is* God. That lie had its beginning in heaven when Lucifer declared, “I will be like the most High [God]” (Isaiah 14:14). His prideful self-delusion turned him from being a “light bringer” (which was what his name meant) to what he is now—God’s chief adversary and the ruler of the darkness of this world, Satan. He then introduced the lie of Godhood to humanity by convincing Eve that she could become a god (Genesis 3:5) and this lie will culminate with the Antichrist, “...who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Of course, the lie of godhood will not be exclusive to Antichrist but rather will be all-inclusive. Universally, it will likely take on the form that we find in the *Namaste* of Hinduism, where a person “recognizes the divinity of another” by declaring, “I bow down to the god in you,” or the grand delusion of Mormonism: “As man is, God once was; and as God is, man may become.”

That is the religion of the Antichrist. It will continue to increase in various forms until it reaches its fulfillment when the “man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). As our Lord warned us, the times prior to His return for His church will be days of great spiritual deception (Matthew 24:4). How, then, should believers who are living in these perilous days not only protect themselves spiritually but also be fruitful and productive in order to do His will and look forward to His coming? That will be the subject of a soon up-coming article. **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: On a recent Sunday, my pastor prayed for Hillary’s health. I am wondering if we should pray for an unbeliever’s health. I know we pray for their salvation, but for their health?

RESPONSE: We know that if Hillary (or anyone else) is elected, we have a clear admonition to pray for her. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:1-8, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

If the Lord’s motive for this is that He “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” then we can understand that they first of all must be living to be saved and that would necessarily involve the Lord sustaining their health until salvation might come. And we know that the Lord is the one who has determined the number of days accounted to anyone (Job 14:5-7).

It is clear that the grace of God far exceeds ours. Knowing the corruption and injustice of a political candidate would not naturally make us wish the best for the individual. But that should not be our heart. In Romans 2:4, Paul asks, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

Also, even in “imprecatory” psalms (Psalms 7,35,55,58,59,69,109, and 139, for example), where David called for God to judge nations and individuals, he leaves the response and result to God. David clearly desires for God to deal with the injustice and the unjust person promptly and with that which the crime deserves.

Finally, though there is no direct mention

of praying for the *healing* of unbelievers, we know what the Lord Jesus admonished in Matthew 5:44-45: “....Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

QUESTION [Compilation of questions received]: When I confronted someone who was teaching unbiblical things and presented what the Bible says, they told me that it seemed obvious that we would disagree profoundly on many, many issues. So they said, “I don’t really think further dialogue would be profitable for either of us.” Is their response commonly seen and how can it be a biblical response?

RESPONSE: It isn’t a biblical response. Sadly, this is something too many have reported, and we should not be surprised. Speaking of the apostasy of the endtimes, Paul exhorted Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

What you have heard seems to be the stock reply anymore. And, it is key that they speak of a “dialogue,” which, indeed, “people of faith” may have, but which in practice doesn’t generally reach beyond neutral questions such as, “Hi, how are you?” “Well, you’re looking good,” and if it moves into the spiritual at all, not much more than “Is God blessing you?” Mind you, the *God of the Bible* and His Word are not allowed a place at these discussions. We need wisdom in ministering to people who are bound up in cultic or unbiblical teaching. They stand on a faulty foundation, and if they are forced to grant any admission of error, their whole theological structure crashes.

It was A. W. Tozer who wrote of the error of “dialogue” as man defines it and what it has become: “It is a truism that people agree to disagree only about matters they consider unimportant. No man is

tolerant when it concerns his life or the life of his child, and no one will agree to negotiate over any religious matter he considers vital to his eternal welfare. Imagine Moses agreeing to take part in a panel discussion with Israel over the golden calf; or Elijah engaging in a gentlemanly dialogue with the prophets of Baal. Or try to picture our Lord Jesus Christ seeking a meeting of minds with the Pharisees to iron out differences” (Tozer, “Some things are not negotiable”).

Consequently, those who have been seduced by things that tickle their ears are in desperate need of having the blinders removed from their eyes. Only the Lord, in answer to our intercessory prayers, can accomplish this.

QUESTION: Would you tell us your understanding of the endtime events? I believe in the Rapture, but when does it take place?

RESPONSE: Scripture seems to indicate that there are believers during the Great Tribulation, and yet it is clear that we who are alive at that time shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.

I believe that there will be many who will come to believe the gospel *during* the Great Tribulation after the Rapture, and most will be killed by the Antichrist or his forces (Revelation 6-7). You ask when the Rapture (the event in which we will be caught up together with them [the dead, who will be raised] to meet the Lord in the air) takes place. Jesus said that He would come like a thief: “At such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh” (Luke 12:40). He seems to be saying that He is going to come at such a time that if we sat down and looked at conditions around us, we would think that He wouldn’t come then, and that is when He *will* come! I don’t see this at the end of the Great Tribulation. In fact, there would be few if any to rapture then, for those who take the mark of the beast will suffer the wrath of the Lamb, and most of those who don’t are killed. Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah . . .” (Luke 17:26). The last thing they expected was the flood [judgment]. They were partying it up, in the midst of peace and prosperity. That hardly sounds like the end of the world, Armageddon, etc.! I would suggest that if you haven’t read it, please read [Dave Hunt’s book] *Peace, Prosperity, and the Coming Holocaust*. He explains much of this in that book.

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King of the Jews

Dave Hunt — First published in December 1999

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, people who otherwise give little or no thought to God or Christ give lip service to the idea that more than 1,900 years ago Jesus was born in Bethlehem and “there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” (Mt:2:1-2). Oddly, many Christians who believe Jesus was born “King of the Jews” attach no literal meaning to that title, especially one that has anything to do with *Jews*. Prophecies concerning Christ ruling the world from David’s throne in Jerusalem are taken as metaphors referring to His present rule from heaven.

Jerusalem was founded by King David 3,000 years ago. No fewer than 40 times the Bible calls Jerusalem “the city of David.” There God established David’s throne forever, and on that throne the Messiah, King of the Jews, descended from David, must reign over Israel and the world (2 Chr 6:6; 33:7; 2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:3,4,20,21,29-36, etc.). Jerusalem is named more than 800 times in the Bible and is central to God’s plans. He has placed His name there forever.

Knowing that only the Messiah, descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, can defeat him, Satan has inspired 3,000 years of anti-Semitism. Destroying all Jews would have prevented Messiah from being born. Satan lost that round. But if all Jews were destroyed today, God couldn’t fulfill His promises that Christ would reign as King of the Jews on David’s throne at His second coming. God would be a liar and Satan the winner. God’s integrity and eternal purposes are linked to Israel’s survival!

Yasser Arafat claim[ed] that Israel has always belonged to Arabs and that Jerusalem has been an Arab city for thousands of years. In fact, it isn’t even mentioned in the Qur’an! On July 15, 1889, the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* reported that of Jerusalem’s 40,000 residents, 30,000 were Jews and most of the others were Christians. In 1948, when Israel declared its independence, only 3 percent of Palestine was owned by Arabs. Israel has its Knesset in Jerusalem. But the world won’t accept that, and foreign embassies are located elsewhere. In defiance of God and His King (Ps 2), the world has its own plans for Jerusalem.

Here we confront the broader aspects of anti-Semitism’s war against God and the King of the Jews: the attempt to control Jerusalem and God’s land (Lv:25:23). Incredibly, the UN Security Council has

devoted nearly a third of its deliberations and resolutions to Israel, a country with less than one-thousandth of earth’s population! The UN has never condemned the Arabs for their terrorism but has condemned Israel more than 370 times for defending itself. In March 1999, the EU notified Israel again that it “does not recognize Israel’s sovereignty” over Jerusalem. In a papal bull on the Year 2000 Jubilee, Pope John Paul II once again rejected Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem.

We see the continuing fulfillment of Christ’s remarkable prophecy that Jerusalem would be “trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk 21:24). The capture by Israelis of East Jerusalem in 1967 seemed to mark the end of the “times of the Gentiles.” But in a surprising move, Israel turned the Temple Mount back to the custodial care of King Hussein of Jordan, leaving the very heart of Jerusalem in Gentile hands. In 1994, Yasser Arafat and his PLO took control.

Roman Catholic doctrine that the nation of Israel has been replaced by that Church is spreading increasingly among evangelicals. This replacement of Israel is a subtle form of anti-Semitism. Instead of sending Jews to ovens, their significance and even their existence is denied: by some twist in history, those now commonly called Jews are supposedly not really Jews—the *real* Jews are Mormons, or British Israelites, or Catholics, or Christians!

The shameful horror of historical anti-Semitism provides a shocking exposé of the human heart. Satan found multitudes of partners (many of whom called themselves Christians) only too eager to malign, persecute, and kill God’s chosen people. Hitler’s “final solution to the Jewish problem” was known to Roosevelt, Churchill and other allied leaders, who did nothing. Neutral Switzerland and Sweden turned escaping Jews back to Hitler’s ovens. [See Mar 2000 Q&A]

Incredibly, a typical Jordanian textbook equates Zionism with Nazism! Yet Arabs applauded and aided Hitler—and Islam pursues Hitler’s “solution” to this day. Hitlerian threats pour continuously from Muslim religious and political leaders on TV and over radios and loudspeakers in mosque and street. The battle between Yahweh, the God of Israel, who loves Jews as His chosen people, and Allah, the god of Islam, who hates them with a passion, is building to an awesome climax.

It is every Muslim’s *religious* duty to exterminate the Jews. Muslims dream of destroying Israel. They name holidays and

streets after murderers of innocent Israeli citizens and hold celebrations honoring terrorists. Islam’s leaders have called for a spiritual revival as the key to Israel’s destruction—and Islamic fundamentalism, which brazenly employs terrorism worldwide, is now sweeping the world.

Islamic scholars agree that it is the sacred duty of every Muslim in every age to wage *jihad* (holy war) to force the entire world to submit to Islam. There are more than 100 verses in the Qur’an about fighting and killing in that quest. A Libyan cabinet minister explained, “Violence is the Muslim’s most positive form of prayer.”

In spite of his rape of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein [was] beloved by millions of Arabs because his scud missiles heavily damaged Israeli civilian targets, and he repeatedly call[ed] for Israel’s destruction. When Kaddafi scream[ed], “The battle with Israel will be such that... Israel will cease to exist!” he [spoke] for every Muslim. Islam’s founding prophet, Muhammad, declared, “The last hour will not come before the Muslims fight the Jews and the Muslims kill them.”

Islam’s desire to exterminate Israel is taught from childhood. A Syrian Minister of Education wrote, “The hatred which we indoctrinate into the minds of our children from birth is sacred.” A ninth-grade Egyptian textbook declares, “Israel shall not live if the Arabs stand fast in their hatred.” And a fifth-grade textbook states, “The Arabs do not cease to act for the extermination of Israel.” It is suicidal for Israel to trade strategic land for “peace” with such enemies—but the world forces her.

Muhammad showed Muslims how to make “peace.” In AD 628 he made a peace treaty with his own Kuraish tribe. Two years later, he suddenly attacked Mecca and slaughtered every male. Arafat publicly declared, “In the name of Allah...I am not considering it [the Israeli-PLO peace accord] more than the agreement signed between our prophet Muhammad and the Kuraish tribe....Peace for us means the destruction of Israel....” No place for the King of the Jews! This is Islam—take a close look!

Muslim nations arm themselves with missiles capable of delivering chemical, biological, and nuclear warheads. Syria has manufactured thousands of chemical warheads, has huge stores of biological weapons, and has tripled its military and air power since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The whole world knows these weapons have one purpose: to destroy Israel. But Israel also has nuclear weapons (now deployed in new,

efficient submarines) and would use them if needed. Who will bring peace?

Christ warned of such incredible destruction that if He did not intervene to stop it, no flesh would be left alive on earth (Mt 24:21-22). That remarkable prophecy anticipated today's modern weapons. No wonder the God of the Bible, who twelve times calls Himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," promises repeatedly to defend Israel and Jerusalem in the last days! Having brought Israel to birth in 1948, God will complete His purpose. He declares, "Shall a nation be born...? Shall I bring to the birth,...saith the LORD...and shut the womb?" (Is 66:8-9).

In its mad rebellion against God, the world rejects the "King of the Jews" and His promised rule of international peace from David's throne in Jerusalem and makes its own plans. The ideal of a humanistic world government has been pursued since Babel. In 1921, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) was established. The next year its journal, *Foreign Affairs*, stated that there would be "no peace or prosperity for mankind...until some kind of international system is created..." In 1934, H. G. Wells declared, "There must be a common faith and law for mankind... The main battle is an educational battle." Children are being educated to reject God and embrace Antichrist. In 1973, in the *Saturday Review of Education*, Gloria Steinem, feminist leader, stated that by the year 2000 "we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in Human Potential, not God."

In May 1947, Winston Churchill declared, "Unless some effective world supergovernment...can be set up and begin to reign, the prospects for peace and human progress are dark and doubtful..." In 1948, in *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*, Sir Julian Huxley, its first director-general, explained that "The general philosophy of UNESCO should be a scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background...to help the emergence of a single world culture..." UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the "concept of national sovereignty" is being redefined and would have to be set aside. In 2000, in a step toward a world religion, "the UN will extend its peacekeeping role into spiritual territory" and call for "its first summit for world religious leaders."

No matter the form of government, rulers are selfish and oppressive. That has been repeatedly demonstrated worldwide. Africa threw off white colonial rule, but instead of freedom, there was new bondage to black despots. Instead of peace and prosperity,

there is growing chaos, poverty, unrest, and tribal and ethnic wars, with blacks killing blacks, repeated coups, and revolutions that gain nothing.

Communism was once the big hope. The communist revolution in Russia was financed to a large extent by some of the wealthiest and most powerful men in America. Praising its enforced atheism, John Dewey wrote in *The New Republic* in 1928 that communism would "counteract and transform...the influence of home and Church" and ultimately fulfill the goals set forth in The Humanist Manifesto.

It sounded so good: equality for all. But those who enforced this "equality" were tyrants, looking out for their own selfish interests, who oppressed and stole from the people under them. Corruption flourished in the Soviet Union and China and still does in every communist nation.

The same has always been true of Islam. Muhammad imposed Islam with the sword. As soon as he died, much of Arabia tried to abandon Islam, but was forced back into submission in the Wars of Apostasy, in which tens of thousands were killed. Nor did that bring peace. Muhammad's closest companions and relatives fought savage wars for leadership, slaughtering one another for Allah and their dead prophet. Thousands of Muhammad's followers were butchered by one rival faction or another.

Islam hasn't changed. Between 1948 and 1973, there were 80 revolutions in the Arab world, 30 of them successful, including the murder of 22 heads of state. Sunnites, the largest Islamic sect, and Shi'ites, the next largest, still fight one another. In the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, 1,000 tons of poison gas were used, and there were more deaths than in World War I. Islam can't even bring peace among Muslims. Yet British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that Islam is synonymous with "peace, tolerance and a force for good." Incredibly, the [former] Crystal Cathedral housed a joint "Christian and Muslim Institute for peace."

Peace? Islamic countries are dictatorships that were led by ruthless murderers and international terrorists such as Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Libya's Kaddafi, and Hafez Assad of Syria. In the name of Allah, these men and others have imprisoned, tortured, and killed tens of thousands of their own citizens and train and finance worldwide terrorism. In PLO territories taken from Israel, as in every Muslim country, there is no freedom of conscience, speech, religion, election, or the media.

Israel is the only democracy in the

Middle East, and she has the problems that democracy breeds. The Holy Land is plagued with drugs, pornography, prostitution, youth rebellion, rape, robbery, and murder. Selfishness pits Israeli against Israeli. More than 200,000 Israeli women are victims of domestic violence each year. The savagery in Israeli schools rivals that of the United States. Violent crime among Israeli youth more than doubled from 1993 to 1998. There is hostility between religious and secular Israelis and increasing disillusionment with Judaism, especially among youth.

Were Jeremiah alive today, he would warn Israel once again of coming judgment. Israel must repent to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But what if she were to do so? The rabbis have no forgiveness to offer. They've had neither temple nor sacrifices for sin for 1,900 years—exactly as foretold (Hos 3:4; Lk 21:20-24)!

Why would God prophesy and allow this condition? Only if Jesus is the Messiah who, as the Lamb of God, died for the sins of Jew and Gentile. *If His sacrifice on the cross fulfilled all the Old Testament sacrifices, they are no longer needed.* That is the only explanation for God having left Israel without temple and sacrifice all these years.

The Hebrew scriptures contain more than 300 prophecies telling when and where the King of the Jews would be born, all about Him, including His rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection. All were fulfilled *to the letter* in Jesus Christ. If He is not the Messiah, there *is* no Messiah. On the very day the angel Gabriel foretold to Daniel (Dn 9:25), Jesus rode into Jerusalem, was hailed as the Messiah as Zechariah had prophesied (Zec 9:9), then was crucified for our sins and resurrected as Israel's prophets had foretold. On the cross above His head, Pilate placed this accusation: "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Mt 27:37).

According to undisputable history and Israel's own prophets, it is over 1,900 years too late to expect the *first coming* of the Messiah. Israel's only hope is His *second coming*. Tragically, it will take Armageddon for Israel to recognize her Messiah. When Yahweh personally appears to rescue Israel from destruction, every Jew alive will see that He is the man who was pierced to the death for their sins and resurrected, the very Messiah promised by their prophets, whom they have rejected. Then all Israel that is still alive will believe. And the King of the Jews at last "shall reign for ever and ever"! Right now He offers forgiveness, peace, eternal life, and a benevolent reign on the throne of every heart that will open to Him. TBC

Quotable

Once I prayed—
 (I knew not what I said)
 “Show me myself, O Lord!”
 Alas, I did not dread
 The hideous sight
 (Which now I shudder to behold),
 Because I knew not self aright.

And I was led
 In answer to my prayer,
 As step by step, to see
 My wretched heart laid bare;
 Then I prayed,
 “Stay, Lord, I cannot bear the sight!”
 And pityingly His hand was stayed.

Now I pray
 (I know the prayer is right),
 “Show me Thyself, O Lord,
 Be to my soul the Bright
 And Morning Star,
 To shine upon the grave of self,
 And lead my heart from earth afar!”

—HELEN MCDOWELL

Q&A

QUESTION: Knowing that the Word of God prophesies that the age will end with apostasy both in the world and in the professing church, does this truth leave us with no hope of a revival in the American church that would alter the social and moral state of the nation? Can there be a true spiritual awakening in America where the power of evil is turned back and a return to righteousness occurs?

RESPONSE: We don’t read of anything like that in the Bible for any time in history, much less in the last days. Jesus made it very clear that few are saved: “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mt 7:14). There have been spiritual awakenings at times that have apparently influenced segments of the population, but none have lasted.

Reconstructionists misinterpret Christ’s command, “Go ye therefore, and teach [disciple] all nations” (Mt 28:19), to mean that entire *nations* are to be disciplined. In fact, discipleship is for individuals. We are to call *individual* disciples out of the nations as Christ has called us out. That Christians are not of this world but have been called out of the world is stated by Christ; indeed, the world will hate those who belong to Him (Jn 15:18-20; 17:14,16). That hardly sounds like a vast number of people will be saved so that society itself is changed.

Christ, Paul, and Peter all warned of apostasy

in the last days, that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse,” that false prophets would proliferate, that even those who call themselves Christians would not endure sound doctrine, that not only the five foolish but also the five wise virgins would be asleep at the time of the Rapture, etc. This does not mean that we should not continue to oppose heresy, to preach the gospel and seek to win as many as we can for the Lord. But rather than indicating a revival that would reform society, the Bible indicates the opposite.

QUESTION: Please expound upon how you all study the Bible—like step by step. I’ve never been taught how to study the Bible. I know I should pray while I read, but I want to know how you all come to the conclusion that a verse means something without someone else telling you that’s what it means. Do I need another book to look up meanings of words?

RESPONSE: First of all, the Lord Jesus gave the promise of a “comforter,” that is, the Holy Spirit. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13; see also John 14:26).

With this promise, we recognize that the Holy Spirit must be the primary teacher. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men [and women] liberally, and upbraideth [reproaches] not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

As you point out, we do need to begin with prayer. And, it may be profitable to have a dictionary, some basic commentary, or other study tools. We must, however, recognize that the writer of a commentary doesn’t have the authority of the Holy Spirit, and too often he may only give his best guess. He may even be very wrong on some passages due to bias or preconceived ideas.

A Bible with marginal notes can also be helpful, particularly when pointing out parallel texts in the Scriptures, such as Old Testament verses cited in the New Testament.

Further, we must understand that our learning will at times seem very slow, but we need to realize that the Lord is thorough and establishes foundations on which other things may be added. In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter (speaking of Paul’s epistles) says that in them, “...are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest (i.e., twist), as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

That brings us to the important consideration of “context.” A verse is not understood by pulling it from the context. Rather, the meaning of a verse is determined by context. That is, we must read the verses prior to it and those following. If a verse in a chapter catches your attention, don’t

stop there. Finish the chapter. You may that find the context (or theme) of a chapter may begin in the previous chapter and continue into the following chapter. These are some basic principles in studying the Word of God.

QUESTION: You once made a comment in the Q&A section that “the lighting of candles in conjunction with religious observance is a pagan and occult practice.” I beg to differ with you. God commanded the use of candles in worship of him in the Torah (Ex 25:37) and more than 50 other places in the Old Testament. The Menorah (candles) were commanded by God to be used in worship. This custom was practiced by the Jews to obey God. This is alluded to in the New Testament. Jesus is a/the [sic] light (candle). Revelation chapters 1-3 talk about candles and worship. Candles in worship are not prohibited or condemned in Scripture; in fact they are encouraged and commended. I think you need to reconsider your statement.

RESPONSE: On the contrary, neither the word “candle” nor “candles” is ever used in the Bible in relation to worship. The words “candlestick” and “candlesticks” (prior to Revelation) refer to objects used exclusively in the tabernacle and/or temple. There was, in fact, no “custom practiced by the Jews” involving candles or candlesticks. These items were unique. Their use was solely in conjunction with the priestly duties inside the tabernacle or temple, and there were no copies of them in use outside the tabernacle or temple for the Jews to involve in any of their customs.

Any religious use today of candles or candlesticks would signify a return “to the weak and beggarly elements” of the old covenant” (Gal 4:9) with its animal sacrifices. That would be a blatant denial of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross. Candles and candlesticks were “a figure for the time then present...in meats and drinks...and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until... Christ being come an high priest of good things to come...by his own blood...entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb 9:1-12).

In Revelation, seven candlesticks are seen in heaven in Christ’s presence. These are not used in worship but represent “the seven churches” to which Christ writes (1:20). There is one further mention of a candlestick: Christ warns the church at Ephesus to repent or He will “remove thy candlestick,” i.e., no longer acknowledge it as a true church.

Candles are, however, used in witchcraft, and in Roman Catholicism as a symbol of prayer to the alleged saints. It would be unbiblical and could open the door to further error for true Christians to start to use candles as part of prayer or worship.

TBC EXTRA

A special edition article from TBC's executive director T. A. McMahon

Mysticism, the Coming World Religion, and Dr. Strange

IN THE OCTOBER and November 2016 issues of *The Berean Call* newsletter, a thesis was presented based upon Scripture and an observation of what has been taking place in the world and Christendom. It is simply this: the coming worldwide religion of the Antichrist is rooted in and will establish itself as *mysticism*. Definitions of mysticism include: belief that one may attain a direct knowledge of and a final union with God or some Supreme Deity (personal or impersonal) through subjective experiences, altered states of consciousness, meditation, feelings, and occult manifestations. It is the turning from objective reality (reason, true science, facts) to metaphysical assumptions and speculations. Mysticism is believed to be the pathway to the spiritual realm that ultimately controls the physical universe. This article is a review of the latest global promotion of mysticism in the movie *Dr. Strange*.

Before I became a biblical Christian—one who was graciously saved by putting my faith in the sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the full payment for all my sins—I was a Hollywood screenwriter. One of the things I learned in my time at 20th Century-Fox studios and with independent productions was that as a screenwriter my primary objective was *entertainment*. The formula was hardly complex: the more entertaining the movie, the bigger the box office success. There are many other things that may go into a movie: for example, a message, a teaching, or a political, religious, or philosophical slant. But to the degree that any of those things detract from the entertainment value, they can put financial success in harm's way. That is a major reason why the majority of theatrical movies fail at the box office.

On the other hand, the movie medium is the most effective vehicle for promoting specific beliefs in the world today, and that potential is not lost on the screenwriter. For example, there are three movies that have had enormous success by featuring a religious teaching and yet lost no enthusiasts because the films were highly entertaining. *Star Wars* introduced the Force as a spiritual energy field that connects all living things. Director George Lucas wanted to “awaken a certain kind of spirituality in young audiences, suggesting a belief in God without endorsing any specific religion” (*The Mythology of Star Wars* [2000 documentary]). The ongoing theme of controlling the power of the Force produced occult manifestations throughout the *Star Wars* episodes such as telepathy and using the mind to manipulate matter. From the late 1970s on, children have been inculcated with “May the Force be with you,” and Yoda’s instruction to Luke Skywalker for manipulating the Force: “Luke, trust your feelings.” Entertaining? Yes. Spiritually seductive? Yes. Antithetical to Scripture? Totally.

In 2009, *Avatar* (a Hindu term for an incarnated spirit or god) at one point surpassed *Star Wars* at the box office, becoming the highest grossing film in history. As *Star Wars* is to Eastern mystical occultism, the movie *Avatar* is to the largest non-centralized and non-structured religion in the world: shamanism. Shamanism is practiced throughout the globe, from Siberia to the Solomon Islands, from Africa to the Far East. Yet the fact that it functions identically among people groups who have never been in contact with one another confirms that the shaman’s guidance comes from a nonhuman (i.e., spiritual) source. *Avatar* portrays a litany of anti-biblical beliefs, albeit in a highly entertaining way: through

reincarnation, the worship of nature and nature spirits, Gaia as supreme deity, Hinduism, goddess worship, panentheism, the connection of humans and nature, the purity of those closest to nature, and spirit/soul travel. Writer/director James Cameron loaded his film with Hindu nuances (e.g., the blue skin of the Na’vi, akin to the gods Krishna and Rama) and declared that he “tried to make a film that would touch people’s spirituality across the broad spectrum” (*The Times of India*, retrieved March 20, 2010).

Both *Star Wars* and *Avatar* teach various aspects of mysticism indirectly through their focus on the Force and shamanism respectively, but *Dr. Strange* (the latest of the Marvel super heroes to come to the big screen) is a narrative that specifically and clearly explains mysticism as the story unfolds. A surgeon at the top of his profession loses the use of his hands due to a horrific car crash. Nothing scientifically attempted is able to restore his surgical skills. Dr. Strange, therefore, having lost all but a fleck of hope, journeys to Katmandu. His huge ego, wrapped in a materialist mindset, sets the stage for Mysticism Apologetics 101. There he is led to the “Ancient One,” a sorceress who dismantles his zealous disbelief in nonphysical reality.

Dr. Strange: “I do not believe in fairy tales about chakras or energy.... There is no such thing as spirit. We are made of matter and nothing more.” Brushing his ignorance aside, the sorceress pushes him into *experiences* and makes pronouncements that have no correlation outside of a mystical worldview. Dr. Strange (and the audience) are taught that “At the root of existence, mind and matter meet. Both shape reality.” Yet we learn quickly that the mystical realm is far more powerful than physical matter, and we follow the path of Dr. Strange, the former hardcore materialist, as he develops into the “Supreme Sorcerer,” supposedly drawing only upon the “good side” of mystical power.

Like the other Marvel movies, *Dr. Strange* is highly amusing, well written and directed, includes humor, dazzling special effects, and very likeable characters. That’s the good news for the ticket purchaser: you get your entertainment-money’s worth. That good news however is bad news for biblical Christians, those who are aware that the chief mystical ingredients of the Antichrist’s worldwide religion are spreading like wildfire, and who are grieved over the multitude of souls who are deceived in the process. Those ingredients include sorcery (Acts 8:9-11; Revelation 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15), lying signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Revelation 16:13-14), and a supreme sorcerer-to-come who is empowered by Satan himself (Revelation 13:11-14). Jesus warned that these things would take place just prior to His return (Matthew 24).

Among those who profess to be Christians, confusion is further induced by a myriad of attempts to spin anti-biblical movies as Christian, including the *Harry Potter* series, which offers pure, unadulterated instructions in witchcraft. *Christianity Today*, a professing Christian journal that has been fostering the apostasy in copious ways for years, provides an obvious example of *sanctifying mysticism* in its review of *Dr. Strange* (<https://goo.gl/e9Ytyx>). Understanding, therefore, that what is taking place is actually a fulfillment of prophecy that will continue its course until Jesus returns, what is a biblical believer to do? We need to *know* what the Bible declares about the days ahead, and we must *pray* that the Lord will give us the opportunity to point out these things to people who don’t know what the Scriptures teach, including the lost, professing “Christians,” and sincere but uninformed believers.

— T. A. MCMAHON

Mysticism and the Coming World Religion part 3—Spiritual Protection

T. A. McMahon

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand... Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

—EPHESIANS 6:13, 16-18

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

—ACTS 2:42

WHAT LIES AHEAD, according to the Scriptures, regarding the increasing development of mysticism today has been addressed in the previous two articles presented in October and November. That's one of the purposes of biblical prophecy: to have believers "take heed." But being aware of what's coming is only part of what God would have us know. There is also the "what we are to *do*" part. And the good news is that He enables us by His grace and His Holy Spirit.

How we go about our life in Christ is critical. Whether in peace or persecution, in poverty or prosperity, in sickness or in health, our condition cannot *determine* a response that keeps us from being fruitful, productive, and pleasing to the Lord. That certainly makes no sense to the world and, sadly, many Christians are confused by it. Yet that's the gist of John 10:10: "I [Jesus] am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." How can persecution, poverty, and sickness equate with an abundant life? That doesn't seem right, but perhaps one's definition of "abundantly" inhibits a correct biblical understanding of the word.

If we're thinking that the abundant life is one filled only with the physical pleasures

and provisions of life to the suspension of things not so pleasant or seemingly favorable, we've misunderstood John 10:10, as well as other verses throughout Scripture. That erroneous mindset cannot reconcile the joy indicated in verses such as 2 Corinthians 7:4: "...I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation," and 2 Corinthians 8:2: "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Words such as "tribulation," "trial of affliction," and "deep poverty" seem at odds with "abundance" and may lead a person to a misunderstanding that could play havoc in a believer's life in Christ.

Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (Luke 6:22-23). The point of bringing these verses to our attention is because as we draw closer to the return of Jesus Christ, the obstacles, both physical and spiritual, will increase. Many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world are already undergoing horrendous persecution. Where that is limited, such as here in the West, spiritual deception and seduction are running rampant, thereby shipwrecking the faith of multitudes of believers. Ignorance of what the Scriptures teach is a major contributor to said conditions, but there are numerous verses that every biblical Christian needs to understand in order to successfully weather the trials and tribulations that will surely come.

The good news is that God has provided "abundantly" everything a true believer in Jesus needs in order to be fruitful in his or her life in Christ. The Apostle Peter wrote, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). "All things" means *all things*, and therefore that must include spiritual protection in the days that Jesus characterized by declaring, "Take heed that no man deceives you," and "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; inso-much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:4, 24). Furthermore, the good news is that the biblical prevention program against being led astray by the cunning deceits of the Adversary is that it is neither complicated

nor formidable. Here are the basic elements for preventing being deceived: the Word of God, prayer, and fellowship.

"All things" that the Lord has provided are empowered by the Holy Spirit and enabled through His grace. The preventative process against being spiritually duped isn't complex, but it does demand a willing heart, a love of the truth, and the exercise of discipline. Avoiding being deceived or seduced by the apostasy must begin with the Word of God and our commitment to it, meaning a consistent reading of the Bible—daily. There is no better *habit* for the man, woman, and child of God. James gives the primary exhortation for that: "Submit yourselves therefore to God." (James 4:7) That must include submitting ourselves to God's instructions. Two things here: we can't submit to instructions we haven't read, and submission involves doing what God has instructed.

God's Word has long been held as a Christian's *authority*. Today, although many evangelicals profess that they do believe in the authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice, in actuality they deny them in practice. A young man who was a local leader in promoting the Emerging Church Movement came in to see me one day. Previous to that, I was praying about how I could explain some things to him and perhaps help him to get back on track with God's Word. As we were about to start our conversation, I said that I thought it would be very helpful if we acknowledged to what spiritual authority each of us was submitting. With my Bible squarely in front of him, I said, "This book is my authority. What's your authority?" He looked around, and looked around, as though searching for a response, and then finally said, "My God is bigger than that book." I wasn't shocked by his answer because I've heard it a number of times. Nevertheless, I followed that by responding that he must therefore have *other authorities*, and who might they be in whom he was trusting in place of God? Needless to say, our "conversation" went nowhere worthwhile after that.

Most Christians tend to hang on to the belief in the authority of God's Word, but functionally they bail out on it. That's because they don't really believe in the *sufficiency* of Scripture. That's unfortunate. It's also senseless. Why? Because anyone who claims to believe in the authority of God's Word but denies its sufficiency means he doesn't believe it has all the answers that it claims. Therefore, if a person feels he must go elsewhere for answers, he's doing...what?

He's looking for another authority.

It should be obvious that not believing in the Bible's sufficiency is a rejection of its authority. Again, the Bible makes it absolutely clear regarding its sufficiency. Second Timothy 3:16-17 proclaims: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." These expressions—"inspiration," being "profitable," giving "instruction" in order to grow in maturity, and being "furnished" (equipped) for every good work—certainly confirm sufficiency. Ephesians 2:10 spells out a major reason for God making His Word sufficient for every believer: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And by "*all things* that pertain to life and godliness," which we noted in Peter's second epistle, Scripture is referring to all that is necessary to please God regarding things that have both temporal and eternal value. To what or to whom should a believer in Christ turn for that?

The daily habit of reading the Word of God, recognizing its sufficiency for our growth, maturity, fruitfulness—and then doing what it says by God's enablement—is necessary for protection against spiritual deception. And that must be undergirded by prayer. "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" Philippians 4:6.

Hopefully, we all realize that when the verse says "every thing," it means everything. A number of years ago when I was in England I was with a couple of believers, guys I hadn't met before, but after spending a few days with them, I was stunned by their approach to what we were doing: *they prayed about everything*. Although I wasn't used to their zeal for prayer, the way they went about it reflected it as a seamless part of their lives. They prayed at the day's beginning, prior to a drive to a meeting, for the spiritual blessing of the meeting, thanking the Lord at meals, for those we met along the way, and on and on. I found myself singing phrases from the hymn *What a Friend We Have in Jesus: All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer*. That experience with them got me both excited and re-invigorated about how important prayer is.

When I came out of the Roman Catholic Church and into a personal relationship with Jesus, it was difficult at first (on my part) to make that relationship truly *personal*. My early prayer life more closely reflected the

rote prayers I practiced for decades when Jesus was hardly a "friend" to me—certainly far less so than His mother. As the evangelical church of late has become enamored with the Church of Rome, many are practicing contemplative prayer, which has been a historic part of Catholicism from the Desert Fathers to the modern-day promotions of mystic priests such as Henri Nouwen and Thomas Merton. Although the claim is that contemplative prayer is more intimate and draws one closer to God, the reality is that it involves hundreds of vain repetitions of phrases and singular words, a process that is condemned in Scripture (Matthew 6:7-8) and renders intelligent communication totally absurd.

Biblical prayer, on the other hand, consists of a believer's personal communication with his Creator. Although fully God, Jesus is also fully Man. He demonstrated the intimate relationship we are to have with Him and with God the Father in numerous ways He drew away from the crowds in order to commune with His Father: "And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone." and at times He "continued all night in prayer" (Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12). Prayer, according to the Scriptures, is set forth as an imperative for the believer. We are to pray "without ceasing," "always," "exceedingly," "night and day," regarding whatever conditions beset us. We are to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ (Romans 15:30), for our rulers, as well as for our enemies (1 Timothy 2:1-2; Luke 6:27-28). The simple reason that biblical prayer is so important is that we cannot do anything that has eternal value except by God's grace, and that is mostly received through prayer.

Specific to spiritual protection we are exhorted to pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18). The Apostle Paul asked for prayer "that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men"...declaring that "the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil" (2 Thessalonians 3:1-3). Moreover, and better yet, we have Jesus, who prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32), and who now is at the right hand of the Father making "intercession for the saints" (Romans 8:27, 34).

Another necessary element in regard to preventing being seduced or deceived by the increasing apostasy may be the most difficult one to satisfy or maintain. It has

to do with fellowship. Scripture declares "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Those verses give simple insight regarding how we should go about dealing with these troubling times that aggressively oppose the Bible's instructions for living our lives in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. Fellowship with like-minded brothers and sisters in Christ is a major part of the Lord's instructions, given for our protection, strengthening, and fruitfulness. Ecclesiastes implies that those who disdain fellowship have put themselves into a weak and vulnerable position: "Two are better than one.... For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." A believer who has no one to support him spiritually will find himself in trouble sooner or later. When any of us gets knocked down spiritually, we need a fellow believer to help us up—mentally, emotionally, and, most important, *spiritually*. As for those who declare, "The Lord is all we need," too often, their subsequent thinking is out of line with God's Word. Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" We as believers need to "circle our wagons" now and in the days ahead. Our best option is in a church fellowship, supporting the leadership that is steadfast and staying the course of God's Word, and especially—*serving the body*. When that isn't an option, we must ask the Lord to help us to find another committed believer or believers with whom we may have a Bible study, with whom we can pray, with whom we might minister to one another, encourage one another, and with whom we can gather together for doctrinal discernment and spiritual fortification. "And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." First and foremost, that third strand must be the Lion of Judah, the Lamb of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus himself.

In summary, the Word of God, prayer, and fellowship are the biblical keys empowered by God's grace for a believer's spiritual protection. By His grace, may we be motivated to make these a priority as we see the spiritual darkness overtake the world around us. **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have a question that I hope you can help with: Is it true that the greater the affliction (pain/suffering) the Christian suffers in this life, the greater the reward he/she receives in heaven?

RESPONSE: You ask if the greater pain and suffering we experience in our lives means a greater reward in heaven. That concept is certainly a hallmark of religious systems based upon our works as the criteria for salvation. Islamic writings in the Qur'an and hadith abound with such ideas: "The greater the hardship or trial or tribulation, the greater the reward. The greater the difficulty, the greater the reward...will be for you and for me from Allah" (Tabarak wa ta'ala).

The Scriptures certainly indicate rewards for the faithful, for Jesus taught, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (Lk 6:22-23).

In Mark 10:29-30, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

The Lord promises eternal life, which is far more than a mere quantity (unending life). It also includes the *quality* of life that we shall experience in heaven. That alone is a sufficient focus for eternity.

The Lord warns of the judgment faced by believers at the judgment seat of Christ: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor 3:13-15).

The Scriptures do not give us details about rewards that are greater than other rewards. Rather, the comparison is made between "rewards," and "loss of rewards." Is not every reward given by God "great?" According to 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath

done, whether it be good or bad (i.e, worthless)." The "rewards" or "losses" experienced by believers in heaven are the result of our work, that is, our conduct, as we live out our lives in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is commonly expressed about rewards seems to be based more upon the aspirations of man than the promise of Scriptures.

QUESTION: I am having a "debate" with a fellow believer who says that the idea of "love the sinner, but hate the sin" is an unbiblical concept. It seems that essentially we are to hate both the sin and the sinner. What do you think?

RESPONSE: It is certainly true that the phrase "love the sinner, but hate the sin" doesn't appear in Scripture. And there are those who teach that it is impossible to separate the sin and the sinner, so therefore they must hate them both. The statement itself is traceable to Augustine, but no doubt he wasn't the first to articulate this. Regardless of who first uttered this phrase, what do the Scriptures say?

Regarding the biblical basis for the idea, Jude 23 says in regard to seeking to rescue sinners, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." The hate is not directed at the one who is sinning, for all have sinned, but is directed at the action of sin and unrepentance. We also have the example of the Lord: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). James 1:27 tells us, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." May the Lord give us wisdom in these things.

QUESTION (from 1993, excerpts): You say that the need for self-esteem and self-love are not taught in the Bible but that we naturally esteem and love ourselves too much. Yet Jesus Christ said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." How can we obey that command if we hate ourselves? I've heard people sincerely say, "I hate myself!" Dr. Dobson and other Christian psychologists aren't the only ones who emphasize the need to acquire a positive self-worth, self-esteem, self-love, and self-image. Many preachers have taught the same. Who are you to disagree with them?

RESPONSE: Any Berean comparing such teaching with God's Word will find that it doesn't pass the test, e.g., "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other[s] better than

themselves" (Phil 2:3). Romans 12:3 warns us not to think of ourselves "more highly than [we] ought to think." *Nowhere* does the Bible warn us against thinking too poorly of ourselves. The Bible frequently reminds us that we are sinners and unprofitable to God in and of ourselves. How reluctant we are to admit that truth!

Yes, there are people who sob, "I hate myself!" Common sense, however, tells us it isn't true. They may hate their status, stature, physique, ineptness, looks, job, salary, academic record, or the way people treat them, but they don't hate *themselves*. If they did, they would be *glad* they were unattractive, poorly paid, abused etc. Psychology has convinced millions of a lie. The Bible tells the truth: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh [i.e., himself]" (Eph 5:29).

When Christ said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," He wasn't telling us we hate ourselves and need therapy or seminars to teach us to love ourselves. Christ was correcting the obsession with self that is our natural bent. He was saying, "Give some of the love and attention and care to your neighbor that you give to yourself!"

Look at Paul. Hated by the Jewish community and rejected by most of the church ("no man stood with me" [2 Tm 4:16]; "all they in Asia ...turned away from me" [2 Tm 1:15]), he considered himself the chief of sinners (1 Tm 1:15) and "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8). Did God seek to build up Paul's self-image and self-esteem? No, Christ declared that His strength was made perfect in Paul's *weakness* (2 Cor 12:9). Try to reconcile Paul's self-evaluation, "when I am weak, then am I strong" (v. 10) and "in me dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18), with psychology's three essentials: self-esteem, self-worth, and self-acceptance. Nowhere in the Bible is God enriched by man. It is man who is always benefited by God...God, being infinitely rich and needing nothing, cannot be enriched by anyone or anything.

Christian psychology has promoted the lie that God loves us because of some value He sees in us; and even that Christ's death proves we are of infinite value to God. In fact, He died for our *sins*. Spurgeon said it well: "Jesus did not come to save us because we were worth saving, but because we were utterly worthless, ruined, and undone [nor] out of any reason that was in us, but solely ...because of reasons which He took from the depths of His own divine love. In due time He died for those whom He describes...as ungodly, applying to them as hopeless an adjective as He could."

It is only since psychology entered the church that the selfisms of today became popular. Let us get back to the Bible!



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Liberals Must Blame Christ Himself

Question: One of the things I find most objectionable about Christians is the insistence that their particular formula for finding God is the only way. Such a narrow view does violence to the sincere beliefs of millions of followers of other religions. With such intolerance from Christians, what hope is there for peace among politicians and military leaders?

Response: It is not by virtue of some formula they have invented that Christians insist that Jesus Christ is the only way. Christ himself said: “If ye believe not that I am [God the only Savior], ye shall die in your sins...[and] whither I go [heaven] ye cannot come....I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 8:24, 21; 14:6). So your quarrel is not with Christians but with Jesus Christ himself.

It will do no good to suggest that Jesus didn't really make these claims, for we have the testimony of eyewitnesses. Furthermore, what Jesus said agrees with centuries of declarations by Hebrew prophets who all testified with one voice (though most of them didn't know one another) that only God could be the Savior of mankind and that in fact God himself would come to this earth through a virgin birth to pay the penalty that His own justice demanded for mankind's sin. And the Bible is history's most fully established document, with hundreds (and in some cases, thousands) of times more reliable manuscripts than any other ancient literature.

Lunatic, Liar, or God Come as Man?

There is no doubt about what Jesus said. The question that no one can escape, therefore, is whether or not He was telling the truth. If He wasn't, then there are only two other options: either He was a sincere egomaniac, so insane that He truly thought He was God come in the flesh and the only Savior of sinners, or else He was a deliberate deceiver who knew He was a fraud but who persisted in a masquerade so Machiavellian and clever that He deceived billions of people during the course of 20 centuries. In fact,

neither of these two alternatives makes sense. He could only have been telling the truth.

The problem with many critics is that, far from having carefully examined the claims of Christ and honestly rejected them, they have a deeply ingrained (but totally irrational) prejudice against moral absolutes that will not allow them to seriously consider Christ's claims. They reject the very possibility that there may be only one way of salvation. They won't allow God to have any moral and spiritual standards even though it is clear that the physical universe couldn't function without precise direction. (The law of gravity, for example, is very narrow, with no exceptions. It operates whether one believes in it or not. And so it is with the laws of chemistry and physics.)

Nor can the way to heaven be any less definite. And since it has been fully paid for and is offered freely by God's grace to whoever will receive it, there is no valid basis for complaint by those who reject it. Furthermore, as His followers, Christians are obligated by duty and love and concern for the lost to remain true to Christ and to seek to persuade the lost that He is the only Savior of sinners.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp 149-151) by DAVE HUNT

Hebrew Roots and the Leaven of Works Salvation — Part One

T. A. McMahon and G. Richard Fisher

Purge out therefore the old leaven... —1 CORINTHIANS 5:7

THE APOSTLE PAUL warned about being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). These days, the winds of false doctrine are blowing hard against the church.

Most people who believe in God have the notion that there are certain things we can do that will please Him, thus improving our position with the Almighty and gaining certain benefits for ourselves. There is some truth to this idea, but there are also serious problems that can result, such as a form of works salvation. We must remember that grace is God's kindness to the undeserving, and it cannot be worked for or earned in any way (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Of course, true salvation will always have works that accompany it (Titus 2:11-13;3:8). That truth is found in the Scriptures. For example, "Jesus answered and said unto him [one of the apostles], If a man love me, *he will keep my words*: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Children are instructed to "*obey your parents* in all things, for this is *well pleasing* unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:20). In Ephesians we are told that honoring one's father and mother is the "first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 6:1-2). First John states, "Whatever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing* in his sight" (1 John 3:22). Obedience to the teachings of the Word of God indeed produces benefits and pleases the Lord (emphasis added to all above). Jesus accepts us as we are but does not leave us as we were. Genuine salvation produces sanctification and good works as we are motivated by the Holy Spirit.

Asking God for something involves more than just making a request. Yes, Jesus said, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14). Scripture, however, further tells us "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3). God's response to our requests is often dependent upon our motives, our walk with Him, the desires of our heart in conformity to His desire, His will, His grace, His mercy, and

so forth. Such conditions challenge the false teachings of the Word/Faith, Prosperity, and Healing preachers, who try to bend certain verses of Scripture into a system of cause-and-effect laws, which thereby appear to turn God into a genie in a bottle who *must respond* to one's demands. Supposedly, when a verse is "claimed," God has no choice but to comply.

Not only is any attempt to interpret the Word of God in such a way that it becomes a system of *spiritual laws* (or methods or techniques) dead wrong, but it is little different from the beliefs and practices of magic, occultism, and witchcraft. At the very least, it generates legalism. For example, the response heard most often by those who have not been healed after following the teaching of the Word/Faith preachers (as well as the response of the preachers themselves) is that the healing could not take place *because there was a lack of faith* on the part of the sick individual. Legalism results in this system as individuals are coerced into adhering to the particulars of the false teaching (*laws* of their own making) in order to get the expected outcome. Furthermore, all of this is akin to "works salvation," which will be considered later. Another aspect of legalism is creating unbiblical, man-made rules and practices not found in Scripture (Colossians 2:20-23).

Although the errors of the Word/Faith and Prosperity teachings should be obvious for diligent biblical Christians to discern, there is a growing movement that is related in many ways (although far more subtle and seductive) called the Hebrew Roots Movement.

The Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) is, in general, an attempt by its adherents to draw closer to God by gleaning things from Judaism that are perceived to be biblically significant and valuable. Though the movement includes Jews who have professed faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah, for the most part, it comprises non-Jewish professing and true Christians (Gentiles). The HRM technically is not a movement as we would normally define one. There is no national organization or hierarchy of leadership among this group, yet there are leaders and writers from diverse ad hoc organizations, churches, and ministries who favor the trend. Within the subculture, churches may be called synagogues, pastors may be called rabbis, Jesus may be referred to as Yeshua, depending on the whim of the leader or leaders. That make-it-up-as-you-go-along concept was demonstrated when one "Christian Rabbi" wrapped a prosperity teacher in a Torah

scroll, called the teacher King, seated him in a chair, and had ushers parade him around on their shoulders.

The attraction for many to the HRM is often motivated by a love for the nation of Israel and its culture and traditions. However, those feelings have taken multitudes *beyond* a biblically acceptable attitude toward things Jewish and into beliefs and practices that are contrary to the teachings of Scripture. For some, the HRM has led them into a gospel of works salvation, which the Apostle Paul warned against and condemned in his Epistle to the Galatians: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3)

So there appear to be three different layers within the HRM: (1) Those who see Jewish practices with the accoutrements as a means of salvation, (2) Those who see some kind of a Jewish lifestyle as a means of sanctification and as a more godly spiritual life, and (3) Those who immerse themselves in Judaism as a way to understand the customs and manners of biblical times. Layers 1 and 2 create huge problems for their followers. They also create "levels" of Christians and a divisive elitism, while layer 3 could simply be called Hermeneutics 101. Layers 1 and 2 employ imitation, but the third layer includes those seeking better illumination and insight into the Word. Most exegetes fall into that third category.

Every sincere believer has been born again spiritually by faith in what Jesus Christ accomplished on the Cross. Eternal salvation is the result. The Holy Spirit then takes up residence within that person and becomes his *enabler* for living a life that is fruitful and pleasing to the Lord. This is the *only way* for one to be saved from everlasting separation from God. Nevertheless, there is a certain kind of "salvation" (sometimes referred to as *sanctification*) that a believer is to work out by God's grace (Philippians 2:12-13). But again, as Galatians makes very clear, the born-again Christian began in the Spirit, and his life in Christ can be carried out only by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. The flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8) and, furthermore, it profits nothing (John 6:63).

Many of those who are attracted to the Hebrew Roots Movement recognize that works play no part in the Gospel. Yet all who hold to the various HRM beliefs and

practices have succumbed to a form of works salvation regarding their relationship with the Lord and their hope of drawing nearer to Him. For many, there is a false sense that “Jewishness is next to godliness.” Therefore, they see spiritual efficaciousness in Jewish rituals, dietary laws, paraphernalia, and the like. For a number of followers of the HRM, their affinity for such things may be unintentional when it comes to falling back under the Law to achieve righteousness. Nevertheless, it’s a leaven that rises and leads in that direction. No matter how insignificant that leaven may seem, it is at least a rejection of the grace of our Lord: “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come[s] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21).

The false teachings found within various groups of the Hebrew Roots Movement run the gamut—from a clear rejection of Christ’s full payment on the Cross for the sins of mankind as *necessary and complete* for salvation, to the arbitrary guesswork of what laws are to be obeyed, or to a dual-covenant salvation. Within that mix are numerous ideas that are declared to be based upon Scripture but have no biblical basis whatsoever. The HRM, with its Law/works emphasis and inclusion of extra-biblical content, is a major contributor to the last-days apostasy and therefore needs to be exposed and judged biblically. Not every enthusiast holds to all the particular teachings of the HRM, but if the doctrine or activity is unique to the particular HRM group, it is not scriptural.

The following information constitutes much of what is promoted within the HRM. The purpose for its inclusion in this article is to aid in discernment and to offer spiritual protection so that believers might follow the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This is accomplished by being a Berean, i.e., by searching the Scriptures to discern whether or not what’s being taught is consistent with the Word of God (Acts 17:11).

The HRM, however, thwarts that critical exhortation for discernment. Many followers of the movement are taught that the synoptic Gospels were originally written in Hebrew in a version that was supposed to be superior to the Greek texts, containing Hebrew idioms that provided deeper insights. Since no one has ever produced copies of the original Hebrew language version, adherents are told that much of what has been “missing” can be gleaned from rabbinical sources, even the mystical, occult Kabbalah. The obvious fallacy in this is that it points a participant

toward the extra-biblical material and speculations of men in order to supposedly explain the inspired Word of God. This greatly undermines dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit for a believer’s understanding of the Bible, and it does great harm to the belief in the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture. Furthermore, those who promote the idea of a necessary original Hebrew New Testament disparage the Greek text of Scripture that God chose in which to originally present the New Testament. Not only is that wrong, but it misses the obvious reasons for a Greek New Testament. Greek was the universal language of that day, understood by both Jews and Gentiles. Hebrew was the language specific to the Jews. The Gospel, however, was not for the Jews only, but God’s mandate to the disciples was that they were to preach it to the Gentiles as well (Matthew 28:18-20). To further compound the error, HRM followers are exhorted to learn Hebrew in order to increase their spiritual understanding and become more like the Jewish Jesus.

The Apostles had a knowledge of Jesus from being with Him when He physically ministered here on earth. Yet Paul wrote, “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer” (2 Corinthians 5:16 - NKJV). The implication is that a believer’s spiritual insight is far more necessary for understanding and growth in Christ than anything obtained through one’s flesh. In spite of that, the HRM majors in things of the flesh that are drawn from customs and traditions having no biblical support and are centuries removed from the time when Jesus walked the earth.

Going back to the Law has been a problem for Christianity down through its history. From Paul’s issues with Peter (Galatians 2:11-14), to the Judaizers of Galatians, to the obligatory dogmas of Roman Catholicism and the Russian and Eastern Orthodox Church, to the legalism of Seventh-day Adventism and other “Christian” cults of today—all teach abiding by the Law. Yet none teach that a person must observe the *whole* Law. All are very selective regarding which laws they choose to obey. The HRM also reworks Old Testament observances that only *seem* to reflect what God ordained. The Passover practiced today, for example, is not the same Passover observed during the Exodus and up until the first century. The contemporary Seder is based on an extra-biblical Jewish tradition that Christians attempt to recreate but that has no meaning for the non-Jew. Those of the HRM however, are not the only people who

participate in the Seder. It is widespread among Evangelicals who are attracted to the present-day practice, thinking that it is consistent with Scripture. The biblical Passover celebrated Jewish liberation from Egypt, which does not apply to people who were not delivered from Egypt but from sin. Jesus gave to the Church the Lord’s Supper, not the Passover. Jesus’ death is the fulfillment of the Old Testament practice of Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). Honoring the Seder ceremony for the sake of witnessing to Jews may be well meaning on the part of Christians who participate but in fact promotes the invented content of the Talmud and sends the message that the Messiah has yet to come.

There is one incontrovertible fact that is ignored by nearly all in the HRM groups. That inescapable fact is that first-century Judaism is not the same Judaism that exists today. In fact, to be correct we would have to refer to *Judaisms*. There are a dozen or more subcultures and divisions within Judaism today. Orthodox, Conservative, Ashkenazic, and Sephardic Judaisms are only the tip of a very large iceberg. The huge question that the HRM has yet to answer is, *Which Judaism?* An arbitrary “take your pick” philosophy simply adds to the confusion and chaos.

The representation of the teachings of the HRM as leaven is fitting, as it has been slowly rising within the churches of our day. But there are indications that the movement may increase like a flood. The names of some of those who promote certain of the teachings and practices of the HRM within Christendom have highly influential organizations or ministries. They include Joseph Farah of *WorldNetDaily*, *Blood Moons* author Mark Biltz, *The Harbinger* author Jonathan Cahn, pastor John Hagee, blogger and cultist Michael Rood, and pastor James Staley (now in prison for fraud).

There is much more that needs to be addressed regarding the Hebrew Roots Movement, which we plan to continue in Part II. It will include the belief in dual-covenant salvation (one for Jews, based upon obedience to the Law, and one for Gentiles, who receive the gift of salvation based upon the finished work of Christ in payment for their sins); it will also focus on Jewish feast days, the Sabbath, denial of the Trinity, the Worldwide Church of God connection, the elitism that is generated by HRM participation, as well as providing further information.

TBC

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Quotable

Whence comes the strength to stand against overwhelming opposition and suffering and to triumph as Christ's faithful disciples? Oddly enough, victory comes not through our strength but through our weakness. When Paul cried out for deliverance from a severe trial, Christ replied that He had allowed that suffering in order to make Paul weak enough so that he would trust only in the Lord, rather than in his great abilities. "My strength is made perfect in [your] weakness," our Lord promised (2 Cor 12:9).

Paul exhorts us, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Col 2:6). Did we not receive Christ in weakness as helpless, hopeless sinners crying out to Him for mercy and grace? That, then, is the way we are to walk this path of triumph in suffering—as sinners saved by grace, weak and helpless in ourselves and trusting totally in Him.

We are earthen vessels, but we contain a great treasure: "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor 4:7). Such is the secret of our triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil. The load is too heavy for us to carry. What a relief to turn it over to Him!

—In *An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith* by Dave Hunt

Q&A

QUESTION: Does "complete unity" in John 17:23 mean unity on the essentials, such as the Trinity, Salvation by Grace Alone, and the Resurrection of Jesus? Or does it speak of unity on "nonessentials" also?

RESPONSE: John 17:23 reads, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

The comparison is that as Jesus is in them and as the Father is in Him, so "they may be made perfect in one." This clearly involves more than an agreement on "essentials." Rather, it speaks of a progressive unity that may be reached only when we leave this world (through death or the Rapture). This is the same agreement that the Son has with the Father. In I John 3:2, we are told, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Of that event, 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

We shall be *changed*, and in that changing, we will move beyond the limitations of our life influenced by the "flesh." The prayer of Jesus will be answered fully in that we shall one day have perfect agreement and unity with every member of the Body of Christ. In the

meantime our focus remains on our responsibility: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3).

QUESTION: I hope you can help me: Even though God does not cause evil, is He in control of all that happens, including the circumstances that affect our lives?"

RESPONSE: We know from the record of Job that the Lord is sovereign over our circumstances in that He allowed Job to be afflicted by Satan, although limits are placed upon the adversary. Job 1:12 tells us, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD."

Psalms 139:1-5 states, "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways....There is not a word in my tongue, but...thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me."

The word translated "compassed" is an interesting word. In most places of Scripture it is translated "winnow" (or a variation thereof). Winnowing is part of the harvest process during which the wheat or other grain is separated from the chaff. After it is shaken loose or beaten off the stalk, the grain is tossed into the air, where the lighter chaff is blown away and the heavier grain falls back to the ground to be gathered.

This is interesting because it literally means that the Lord "winnows" our paths in life, removing the chaff and preserving the whole grain. From our perspective, we might very well ask, "Lord, you said you removed all the chaff, but I have experienced disappointments, trials, and great loss at times. Aren't these things chaff?"

The Lord leaves things that will be used to strengthen us. As much as our flesh hates the principle, we know that "tribulation worketh patience" (Rom 5:3). Job confessed, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Paul, when petitioning the Lord to remove his "thorn in the flesh," understood that the Lord allowed it for his own good and would not remove it. He writes, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..." and concluded, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor 12:9). Thus we can see that the Lord is in control over the things that come into our lives, and He uses them for our good and for His glory. But He never forces or causes us to act in any certain way, whether for good or for evil.

QUESTION: I know that soul winning is supposed to be a really important part of the Christian life, but can you explain

further about what the Scriptures say on this subject?

RESPONSE: It is certainly true that Proverbs 11:30 tells us, "He that winneth souls is wise." Further, in Luke 19:10, our Lord declared, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." In 1 Corinthians 9:16, Paul wrote, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

The principle of soul winning and its necessity is there. That's the challenge and admonition our Lord left when He gave the commission in Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of] all nations;..."

What we aren't given is a "methodology." We are given examples of the disciples preaching the gospel: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).

Consequently, some people don't seem to believe they are soul winning unless they are preaching publically or house to house. Yet the Lord Jesus had many meetings with people who came to Him to speak. And, while the term "friendship evangelism" is a popular focus today, too often it can be an excuse for never confronting someone with the claims of the gospel. The gospel by its very nature is an offense (1 Cor 1:18).

Also, we need to remember that the Lord uses circumstances and often will bring us to places where the gospel can be shared with individuals. The point is that we are to be ready. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pt 3:15).

In Acts 8, Philip was given an opportunity to minister the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch whom God had prepared. Philip simply had to be ready both to minister and to obey the Lord's command to "join thyself to this chariot" (v. 29).

Paul always went to the synagogues or places "where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither" (Acts 16:13). He went to these places both to minister to his people and to join with those who clearly were pursuing spiritual things. In short, they were alert to and took advantage of opportunities that presented themselves.

There certainly are good reasons for keeping tracts available to give to people. We may not always be going door to door, but we should prepare by praying and asking the Lord to give us a heart for evangelism and study to know the gospel message. As much as possible, prayerfully seek to build relationships with neighbors, friends, and relatives, and be alert for opportunities. Finally, if no opportunities are readily available, then prayerfully seek to create them as led by the Lord and be content if you only plant a seed, trusting Him to water and give the increase.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Was Paul Ignorant or Sarcastic?

Question: In Acts 23, Luke tells us that Paul was brought before a council of the leading rabbis. Paul calls the presiding priest a “whited wall.” When he is rebuked for that, he apologizes and gives the excuse that he didn’t realize that Ananias was the high priest. This reads like badly written fiction. Paul was supposedly an ex-rabbi. The high priest must have been wearing his robes and in charge of the proceedings. How then could Paul have been so stupid as not to know who the high priest was? Can you believe this scenario? And if not this, then how much else that Luke wrote?

Response: Once again this apparent flaw in the biblical record is in fact another convincing proof of its authenticity. The passage in question is found in Acts:23:1-5. Paul, who is a prisoner and allowed by Roman law to face his accusers, opens his defense to the rabbinic council, “I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day.”

Ananias, who is presiding over the proceedings as high priest, commands Paul to be struck on the mouth, presumably because he doesn’t believe that anyone could always live in “good conscience before God.” Paul, who knows the Jewish law and is far from being intimidated, retorts immediately, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall, for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?”

Some of those standing around Paul exclaim in shock, “Revilest thou God’s high priest?”

Paul then replies, “I wist not [didn’t realize], brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.”

This is a most intriguing exchange. Yes, one

might well wonder about it, but Luke simply presents the facts without explanation.

Insight From Josephus

It becomes quite clear and all the more fascinating, however, upon reading Josephus. He tells us that Ananias had indeed been the high priest, but that he had been deposed. Subsequently his successor had been murdered and no replacement had been appointed for him. In the meantime, Ananias had stepped in and illegally usurped the office of high priest.

Knowing that background, the plot thickens. It is more than likely that under those conditions Ananias would not have been wearing the robes of the high priest, and so Paul could be excused for not recognizing him. Therefore, it is entirely possible that

Paul, who had been absent from Jerusalem for some time, was simply unaware that Ananias was acting as high priest at this time.

Knowing how astute Paul was, however, it is highly possible that, having spent a few days in Jerusalem upon his return after a long absence, Paul knew the status of the high priestly office. Paul was therefore speaking from knowledge rather than from ignorance. More than likely, then, and in keeping with his character, this man who had “turned the world upside down” (Acts:17:6) was suing biting sarcasm to point out the uncomfortable fact that Ananias was not the legitimate high priest

but a usurper and was thus without authority to sit in judgment upon him.

In any case, it should be obvious to any fair-minded person that this account could not have been written even decades, much less centuries, later, as the critics insist it was. It could only have been written by an eyewitness who was reporting accurately the proceedings and what Paul said. Moreover, this particular incident, far from discrediting Luke’s testimony, was allowed of the Holy Spirit and recorded as one more unique and interesting proof of the authenticity of the New Testament record.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 153-155) by DAVE HUNT

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Hebrew Roots and the Leaven of Works Salvation — Part Two

T. A. McMahon and G. Richard Fisher

*I do not frustrate the grace of God:
for if righteousness come by the law,
then Christ is dead in vain.*

—GALATIANS 2:21

THERE IS A great amount of “frustrating the grace of God” by those involved in the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM), primarily due to a lack of understanding regarding the difference between the Covenant of Law and the New Covenant of Grace. We celebrate this difference when we partake of communion. An all-inclusive explanation is beyond the scope of these two articles, but there are clarifying points that can be made in brief. Beginning with Galatians 2:21, we see that righteousness cannot come “by the law,” nor do salvation and sanctification. Just as salvation is the gift of God, so too is righteousness: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the *gift of righteousness* shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment *came* upon all men to condemnation; even so *by the righteousness of one* the free gift *came* upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:17-18). As H. A. Ironside noted, “We are not only freed from the law as a means of attempting to secure justification, but are also freed from the law as a means of sanctification.”

Matthew 28:20 is clear: as we disciple others, we are to teach them everything that *Jesus* commanded (a huge responsibility), not everything that *Moses* commanded. The believer in Christ who looks to the law as a means of righteousness is in serious error. All the righteous requirements of the law are not fulfilled *by us* but are fulfilled *in us* by Jesus Christ, who satisfied the requirements of the law *for and in* every believer (Romans 8:1-4). Christ fully completed every righteous requirement of the Law, and He gives that victory and standing to His followers. Swedish theologian Anders Nygren writes, “They who are ‘in Christ’ are by that very fact righteous, and not by a keeping of the law made possible by that fact. Their righteousness consists in the fact... that they no longer live of themselves but ‘are in Christ.’ Therein, and not through

any keeping of the law is the righteousness of the law fulfilled” (Romans 10:4, see also Galatians 3:24-26).

In AD 70, the Temple in Jerusalem was completely destroyed. First-century Judaism died. In the fourth century, there was an aborted attempt at rebuilding the temple by Emperor Julian. We know from Scripture that when Jesus was sacrificed on the Cross, He, as the Lamb of God, satisfied the eternal penalty for mankind’s sin, and at that point He rendered the Temple and the priesthood obsolete (Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:1-9; 12:26-29). When Jesus cried, “It is finished,” He meant that not only was redemption complete but, as a result, biblical Judaism had completed that for which it was intended. Jesus alone was the focal point of salvation. The ripping in two of the Temple veil as Christ gave up His spirit (Matthew 27:51) signified that He had accomplished what the Old Testament had prophesied. Christ’s death both fulfilled and ended the function of the biblical practices of Judaism with its temple, sacrifices, and priesthood. The way into the Holy of Holies and the very presence of God was now open and available to all. The Hebrew Roots Movement, however, seems to want to sew the temple veil back together.

To that end, in order for the religion of Judaism to continue without a Temple or a sacrifice or a priesthood, it had to be totally revamped to compensate for its losses. Israel’s way to God no longer existed. A new way had to be cobbled together. Old Testament requirements, additional traditions, modifications, and contributions from leading rabbis, were put together in documents known as the Mishnah (AD 200), the Jerusalem Talmud (AD 400) and the Babylonian Talmud (AD 500). The Talmud, with its more than twenty volumes containing input from hundreds of rabbis, is the book that dictates much of Jewish religious life today. Jewish Midrash consists of paraphrases of Scripture and Rabbinical commentaries. These are an added component in *latter-day* Judaism. The Talmud, however, is the chief source of its practices and beliefs, and a large portion of Talmudic practice is found within the Hebrew Roots Movement.

A notable exception would be the Jews who are called Karaites. They reject in total the Talmud and ultra-orthodox Judaism (calling it Phariseism) and use only the Old Testament—period. The brilliant Hebrew Christian Alfred Edersheim said that applying the Talmud to Christianity was a huge mistake and that the Talmud had follies and superstitions of former days that

needed to be refuted (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Volume 1, page VIII).

Many in the HRM claim to be “*Torah* observant” (living according to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), when what they actually are is *Talmud* observant. Adherents of the HRM believe that they are following biblical customs when, in fact, they are recreating later practices and even medieval traditions. For example, the wearing of the *yarmulke* or *kippa* (a type of skull cap) by Jewish men is a human tradition with no basis in the Law of Moses. Another apparent necessity in the HRM is the wearing of what is called a “prayer shawl,” also called a *Tallit*, a Hebrew term that is found in the Talmud but *nowhere* is there evidence of such a practice in the Hebrew Old Testament. The widespread practice of interpreting Talmud content as though it were true to biblical content creates misinformed Jews. Among HRM followers there is a serious lack of searching out the *genuine biblical roots* of their beliefs and practices, including the aforementioned erroneous belief that the Gospel of Matthew, and perhaps the other three Gospels, were first written in Hebrew. More critical, it seems, is the lack of understanding of the Old Testament versus the New Testament, and the concept of Law versus grace.

The New Testament in every way surpasses the Old Testament, spiritually and functionally. John Reisinger explains: “The whole subject is as clear as crystal the moment we see that Christ established a New Covenant that replaces the Old Covenant, and that the New Covenant brings with it new and higher laws of conduct that are based entirely on grace. These new laws are just as objective as any law under the Old Covenant. These objective commands can demand a kind of behavior that Moses could never demand simply because these new laws are based upon truth and power of grace.” The Old Testament reaches its intended goal in Christ, and that fullness and fulfillment is given to believers by virtue of Christ in them (Galatians 2:20-21). Living it out can take place only by the enablement of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling those who have been born again. As Lewis Sperry Chafer points out, “The law of Moses presents a covenant of works to be wrought in the energy of the flesh; the teachings of grace present a covenant of faith to be wrought in the energy of the Spirit.” In other words, Grace empowers us while the Law condemns us.

Many who participate in the HRM may not realize that in their misplaced zeal to

draw nearer to God they are actually moving in the opposite direction. They keep bits and pieces of the law, with neither rhyme nor reason for their choices, as they ignore or avoid the *judgments* meted out by the law. The law is an entirely unified system much like a seamless garment. One cannot arbitrarily keep what one wants and ignore the rest. That is simply “cafeteria Judaism,” as if the law were a pick-and-choose smorgasbord. James 2:10 is clear: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” The law confronts us with the fact that we need mercy and grace found in Jesus alone.

Sadly, those of the Hebrew Roots Movement understand neither law nor grace, and are unwittingly fulfilling what Hebrews 2:1 warns against: “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” The current slippage includes major doctrinal errors by HRM leaders, e.g., those involved with Dual Covenant salvation.

Dual covenant teaching promotes the belief that Gentiles are saved *through* Jesus, and Jews are saved *without* Jesus, presumably under the Mosaic or Abrahamic Covenant as they try to keep the various parts of the Law of Moses. Those who recognize the impossibility of keeping the law respond that nevertheless Jews by birth are automatically and unconditionally saved. If that were the case, why would Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declare regarding his kinsmen, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (Romans 10:1)? Paul is clear that the Gospel is for the Jews (Romans 1:16) first and foremost. Furthermore, John writes, “But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name: *which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*” (John 1:12-13). Scripture is absolutely clear: Jesus is the *only way* for Jew or Gentile to be saved (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Grace trumps race.

The drift away from the Word of God—and especially the New Covenant—has become a flood within the HRM. Its affinity for Judaism screams for an answer to the question we brought up earlier—*which Judaism?* Is it Orthodox, Reform (Progressive), Conservative, New Age, or any of the other sects and subdivisions of Judaism? This question is not being answered in the HRM let alone even being asked. None of these subcultures in Judaism represent *biblical* Judaism, nor do they come even close. Superstitions, divination, necromancy,

and kabbalistic practices abound. Modern Judaism in *all* of its forms is monotheistic (and in some cases agnostic) and rejects the essential scriptural doctrine of the Trinity.

Where the HRM yearns for legitimate Old Testament practices, it misses the all-important fact that they were only a *shadow* of things to come. All of the types pointing to those things have been completely accomplished by Jesus. Yet followers are taught that such things are *spiritually* efficacious and therefore necessary for the Gentile believer today. Not so. “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come...” (Colossians 2:16-17). Notice that verse 16 includes *feast days* and the *Sabbath* as insubstantial shadows; how much more then are the non-shadow paraphernalia derived from nonbiblical traditions and customs, e.g., yarmulkes, prayer shawls, modes of dress, twisted payots (side curls), Western Wall prayers, red strings on the wrist, shofars, etc. For the Jew, these things have some supposed spiritual value even though they are not by God’s instruction. According to Scripture, employing unbiblical practices in an attempt to gain spiritual merit opens the practitioner to dire consequences—perhaps not as dramatic as what took place in the lives and “strange fire” deaths of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1), but nothing good can come from approaching God by using man’s ways.

Adherents of the Hebrew Roots Movement are attracted to things of the Law and to an obsolete Judaism, both past and present. Some early connections include cultish doctrines such as are found in Seventh-Day Adventism, with its penchant for selective laws, and the Worldwide Church of God (WWCG). Dean Wheelock, who trademarked Hebrew Roots in the mid-1990s and publishes a magazine under that name, was educated at the WWCG’s Ambassador College. He left the WWCG, yet declared, “Most of what I learned from that organization, I still hold to [i.e., laws].” Joe Kovacs is an executive editor for *WorldNetDaily* (WND), a major promoter of the HRM (WND offers a luxury Alaskan cruise coming this fall featuring Hebrew Roots’ writer Mark Biltz). Kovacs’s writings feature the theology of the late Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of the Worldwide Church of God (See TBC article: <https://goo.gl/m1zk1C>).

In its erroneous endeavors, the HRM has drifted away (if indeed it was ever there) from the Church, the bride and the body of Christ which comprises Jews and

Gentiles. Galatians 3:28 makes that clear: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Colossians 3:11 confirms that the new believer in Christ is “neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all.” Elwood McQuaid reminds us, “Today’s church is a body of twin remnants of Jews and Gentiles. It is not a Gentile institution; and when a Jewish person becomes a believer in Jesus, he or she does not become a Gentile. Nor, for that matter, is it an extension of Judaism. Gentiles are not transformed into Jews, nor do they become a new branch or extension of Judaism. The church is unique.”

The HRM confuses both Jews and those in the church. The movement becomes something of a hybrid that is neither Judaism nor Christianity. It is a charade of both Judaism and Christianity. It has synagogues that are not synagogues, rabbis that are not rabbis, and anachronistically mixes Talmudic traditions with New Testament concepts and words, thus creating a new religious belief system and practice. Both sides are very confused. Its elitism is illusory; its pretended insights and superiority are often imaginary. In summary, the HRM is a form of manmade spirituality and therefore stands in opposition to the Word of God.

How might we minister to those who have become involved with the Hebrew Roots Movement? Although conditions of engagement may be very different at times, involving family members, or friends, or those in leadership who are believers, we must recognize that any change of their hearts can be accomplished only by the Holy Spirit who alone can bring about repentance. Nevertheless, we can be used of the Holy Spirit to explain what the HRM teaches and how it is contrary to Scripture. Paul instructs us regarding biblical correction: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26). We are to be steadfast not strident, gentle, patient, teaching with meekness, and most of all remembering that only God can bring them to “the acknowledging of the truth.” Finally, and most important, our endeavor on their behalf must be supported by unceasing prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 4:16). TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Did Isaiah expose himself totally when the Lord commanded him to go naked before Israel? If so, this really concerns us. We can hardly imagine the Lord approving of a man or a woman completely exposed for three years! This is just mind boggling.

RESPONSE: The Hebrew word translated “naked” in our English translations can speak of a partial nudity or full nudity. In the context we read: “At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, *Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia.*”

“Sackcloth” was an outer garment that went over what they wore as undergarments. They may not have had jockey shorts or briefs, but they did have garments that covered their private parts. Yet, it was regarded as nakedness when individuals humbled themselves by removing their outer garments. David’s wife Michal criticized him when he danced in a linen ephod during the return of the Ark to Jerusalem: “Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows *shamelessly uncovereth himself!* And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. And *I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour*” (2 Samuel 6:20-22, our emphasis).

Michal said David had “shamelessly uncovered himself,” but it is clear that he had set aside his kingly robes and was wearing a linen ephod. “And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod” (2 Samuel 6:14).

How many times have we heard some pastors preach that David exposed himself totally? He did not, yet in putting aside his normal attire he did show his own humility and desire to please the Lord as much as Isaiah desired to show the “nakedness” of Israel before its enemies.

QUESTION: What does it mean in Isaiah 43:7, when it says that God made us for His glory? If we humans made something for our glory, that would sound arrogant. I know that God is not arrogant.

RESPONSE: Isaiah 43:7 reads, “Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” This simply means that the good that people may see in us, in our conduct, our work, and our accomplishments, is designed to point to the grace, mercy, and Lordship of God, who truly is the one working in our lives.

The Lord Jesus stated in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

The noted Bible commentator Matthew Henry wrote, “If a man can take up the profession of Christ, and yet remain graceless, no other doctrine, no other means, can make him profitable. Our light must shine, by doing such good works as men may see. What is between God and our souls must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open to the sight of men, we must study to make suitable to our profession, and praiseworthy. We must aim at the glory of God.”

Conversely, when David sinned with Bathsheba, the Lord judged him, saying, “By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.”

The point is that God desires all to be saved, although all will not be. Nevertheless, our conduct as we walk with the Lord should reflect the glory of God who is working within us. As 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us, God “...will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”!

QUESTION: Believers are spoken of as being “adopted” into God’s Family, but the Bible also speaks of believers being born of God. I don’t understand how a person can become a member of a family by birth and adoption. Can you give me any insight?

RESPONSE: The terms are not contradictory but are in fact “complementary.” That is, they speak of *aspects* of a believer’s salvation. Adoption is commonly defined as “the act of leaving one’s natural family and entering into the privileges and responsibilities of another.” In the Bible, adoption is one of several family-related

terms used to describe the process of salvation and its subsequent benefits. God is a father who graciously adopts believers in Christ into His spiritual family and grants them all the privileges of heirship. Salvation is much more than forgiveness of sins and deliverance from condemnation; it is also a position of great blessing. Believers are children of God” (*Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*: Adoption).

So, “adoption” speaks of the “positional” status of the believer who is “adopted” into the Family of God.” Yet, the adoption isn’t all that happens to a believer. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). And, 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

In other words, when we experience the “new birth,” we are “fitted” to enter the family to which we, in the grace of God, are adopted into. We are by grace “forgiven” and “delivered from condemnation.” We are a “new creation,” created to be part of the Family of God.

QUESTION: Why do Christians quote Leviticus condemning homosexuality while they ignore the rest of the prohibitions?

RESPONSE: Leviticus contains two types of prohibitions for a precise reason. Much of the book (as well as Numbers and Deuteronomy) is given over to specific prohibitions that the nation of Israel was to observe as “a special people unto Me.” Consistently, whether these prohibitions concern eating of particular foods, wearing of specific garments, or other ceremonial considerations, the Lord says to Israel, “These are unclean [or an abomination] to you” (Leviticus 11:7,11, etc.). This is one kind of prohibition, clearly applicable to Israel alone.

On the other hand, moral issues, such as adultery, sorcery, child sacrifice, bestiality, incest, homosexuality, etc., are said to be abominations (period). Penalties against those who commit these behaviors are assessed thus, because it is “My [God’s] judgment” (Leviticus 18:4). The Law remains the standard to judge the world (Rom 7:7), but the believer “fulfills” the intent of the Law by the Spirit, who dwells within us (Galatians 3:25). For more information see TBC feature article October 1, 2015 (<https://goo.gl/KPn9cW>).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Answers to the Critics' Favorite Lie

Question: If the Bible is true and Christianity was founded by Christ as it states, then shouldn't there be at least some confirmation in the writings of non-Christian contemporaries? In fact, there is none. How do you account for that? How could Christianity have the impact that the New Testament claims for it and have been completely overlooked by all the writers of those times?

Response: On the contrary, there is overwhelming corroboration of the New Testament in the surviving non-Christian writings of that period, including even some of those of Christianity's sworn enemies. This false accusation of no evidence outside the New Testament is repeated authoritatively by atheists, who even boast that this charge has never been answered. In fact, it has been answered by many Christian writers for at least a hundred years.

To show how long the evidence refuting this irresponsible allegation has been published, let me quote from one of the most brilliant educators and thinkers of a century ago, Mark Hopkins. President James A. Garfield declared that his idea of a college would be "a log with a student on one end and Mark Hopkins on the other." Hopkins was not only a remarkable educator but an earnest and effective apologist for the Christian faith. In his 371-page book *Evidences* Hopkins writes:

"The Talmud [compilation of oral rabbinic tradition dating to about AD 200]...speaks of Christ, and of several of the disciples, by name...of His crucifixion...that He performed many and great miracles, but imputes His power to...the magic arts which He [allegedly] learned in Egypt....

"[Flavius] Josephus [Jewish historian c AD 37-100] lived at the time many of these

events...happened and was present at the destruction of Jerusalem...[and] he confirms the accuracy of our books [New Testament writings]. Everything said in relation to the sects of the Jews, and the Herods, and Pilate, and the division of Provinces, and Felix, and Drusilla, and Bernice had just that agreement with our accounts which we should expect in independent historians.

"The account given by Josephus of the [strange] death of Herod is strikingly similar to that of Luke [Acts:12:21-23].... Josephus confirms all that is said [in the New Testament]...of Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians...[and much about Christ himself].

"[Cornelius] Tacitus [Roman historian c AD 55-117, governed Asia as proconsul 112-113] tells us that Christ was put to death by Pontius Pilate...under Tiberius, as a malefactor; that the people called Christians derived their

name from him; that this superstition arose in Judea, and spread to Rome, where...only about thirty years after the death of Christ, the Christians were very numerous...[and] that the Christians were subjected to contempt and the most dreadful sufferings...some were crucified; while others, being daubed over with combustible materials, were set up as lights in the night-time, and were thus burnt to death. This account is confirmed by Suetonius, and by Martial and Juvenal....

“Pliny [the younger] was propraetor of Pontus and Bithynia [AD 112]...Many [Christians] were brought before him for their faith in Christ. If they remained steadfast, refusing to offer incense to the idols, he condemned them to death for their “inflexible obstinacy.” [Some, to escape death] said they had once been Christians but had abandoned that religion...some even twenty years before... that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and to sing among themselves...hymn[s] to Christ as God and to

bind themselves by an oath not to commit any wickedness, nor to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery, never to falsify their word...[and] to come together to a meal, which they ate in common....

“How strong must have been that primitive evidence for Christianity, which could induce persons of good sense, in every walk of life, to abandon the religion of their ancestors, and thus, in the face of imperial power, to persist in their adherence to one who had suffered the death of a slave!

“We might also refer to Celsus, and Lucian, and Epictetus, and the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, and Porphyry – who all throw light on the early history of Christianity, and all confirm, so far as they go, the accounts in [the New Testament]... as do coins, medals, inscriptions” (Collier’s Encyclopedia (F.P. Collier & Son Corporation, 1959), Volume 10, p. 155).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 155-159) DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

Humanism denies absolute truth and biblical values. Thus, there is no right or wrong. Students are to accept relative answers based on personal needs. Public school literature now teaches children to become better citizens in a new world order. Country, family, and God are no longer goals to be achieved, but instead they are seen as causes for bigotry, narrow-mindedness, prejudice, and intolerance. The humanist teaches our children new thought patterns that meet the goals of the emerging elitist class who will equip society for global governance.

During the past one hundred years, humanism has grown

bolder in its attack against the founding fathers of our nation. In the field of public education more schools have closed their doors to the Bible. In many instances, teachers are prohibited from encouraging students to follow the teaching of Christ. Ironically, it is easier to teach the Koran, the writings of Buddha, or Yoga than Christianity. Fewer teachers are familiar with the exhortations of the men who established our nation; and as a result, relativism has inflicted great harm to a once great nation, as well as to a once vibrant Christian evangelical movement.

—Paul Smith, in *The New Evangelicalism: The New World Order*.

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Road Map to Armageddon

Dave Hunt — First published in January 2004

[This article by Dave Hunt was written in January of 2004. Although it speaks directly regarding the plans of the world's government leaders for Israel that were contrary to the Scriptures, it also sends a message to our newly formed US government today. The players have changed for us, and hopefully for the good. —T. A. McMahon]

THE “QUARTET” OF Bush, Putin, UN, and EU is determined, through a division of land, to bring a “just and lasting peace” into the Middle East between Israel and her neighbors. Assuming they are sincere and not just working for their own interests, their mental state must be on a par with those who gave the Nobel Peace Prize to Yasser Arafat, a mass murderer, habitual liar, and the world’s leading terrorist, who has done more than anyone to destroy world peace. How thankful the West should be that Al Gore (who repeatedly, as vice president, warmly received Arafat into the White House) is not there now as president!

In fact, Muhammad, whose word cannot be changed, imposed upon every Muslim in every age the duty of exterminating all Jews. Only then can the “Last Day” (the climax of Islam) arrive. That fact makes “peace” between Israel and Muslims impossible—ever. Any apparent “peace” agreements signed by Muslim leaders are not worth the ink in their signatures! In the ten years prior to the signing of the Oslo Accords, 211 Israelis were killed by terrorists; in the ten years since, about 1,200 have been killed and 5,000 wounded [that number has only increased since then].

No Arab/Muslim political or religious leader can contradict Islam’s founding prophet. Thus to continue to pursue a negotiated “peace” in the Middle East is the height of folly! Yet Western political and religious leaders continue to hold out that vain hope and to force concessions upon Israel that pave the road to her destruction!

Modern Israel occupies a relatively small piece of land. Arabs possess 700 times as much, with vast amounts of oil and minerals. Why are they determined to possess tiny Israel too? *Islam* says

it belongs to them! A sovereign Jewish state proves that Muhammad was a false prophet, and that Allah is not God. Muslims must destroy Israel!

Both the Bible and Qur’an agree that 4,000 years ago God gave the Promised Land to Abraham and his Israeli descendants. Yet, the Arabs claim ownership through Ishmael, Abraham’s first son. But God declared that not Ishmael, but Isaac, who would be born to Sarah, was the son and heir He had promised (Genesis 17:15-21).

Like his father, Isaac also had two sons, Esau and Jacob; and again the Lord rejected the firstborn and gave the inheritance to the second—so the inheritance flows from Abraham to Isaac and on to Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. Twelve times Yahweh calls Himself “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” declaring, “This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial to all generations” (Exodus 3:15). More than 200 times, from Exodus 5:1 to Luke 1:68, Yahweh is called “the God of Israel.”

Muslims claim that the Bible was corrupted by later revisions. However, the Bible’s thousands of manuscripts, historical and prophetic accuracy, and the intricate integration of themes from Genesis to Revelation (none of which the Qur’an can boast!) reduce such a claim to nonsense. Furthermore, the Qur’an itself *supports* what the Bible says concerning Israel’s claim to the Promised Land: “We made a covenant of old with the Children of Israel” (Surah 5:70); “We brought the children of Israel across the [Red] sea, and Pharaoh with his hosts pursued them...” (10:91). “[B]ut we drowned him and those with him all together. And we said unto the Children of Israel...dwell in the land [and] hereafter...we shall bring you...out of various nations” (17:103, 104); “[W]e delivered the children of Israel... from Pharaoh....We chose them, purposely, above all creatures” (44:30-32); “favored them above all peoples” (45:16); “Remember Allah’s favor to you...He... gave you what he gave no other of his creatures. O my people, go into the Holy Land which Allah hath ordained for you” (95:20, 21); etc.

The territory God gave to Abram (later renamed Abraham by God) and to his descendants was not “Palestine,” but Canaan: “Into the land of Canaan they came” (Genesis 12:5-6). There were no “Palestinians” from whom those who take that name today claim to be descended: “the Canaanite and Perizzite dwelled then in the land” (13:7). Abram remained there the

rest of his life: “...Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan” (13:12). God told him, “For all the land...to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (13:15); “...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8). Abram settled in Hebron in Canaan and “built there an altar to the LORD [Yahweh]” (13:18)—not to Allah.

Ten years later, Ishmael (the product of Abraham’s and Sarah’s unbelief) was born to him through Sarah’s maid, Hagar. Fourteen years later, when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90, Isaac was born in Hebron to Abraham by his wife Sarah, exactly as God had promised. Thirty-seven years later, at the age of 127, Sarah died. Abraham was still living in Hebron, having been there more than 70 years. To bury Sarah, he bought the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite (23:1-20).

Thirty-eight years later, at the age of 175, Abraham died. Isaac and Ishmael buried him in Machpelah next to Sarah. Isaac lived in Hebron 110 more years. Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah were also buried in the cave of Machpelah. Abraham had entered Canaan 400 years after the flood and 300 years after the Tower of Babel. It was sparsely settled, the land was his for the taking, and he, Isaac, Jacob, and their families, lived there more than 300 years before temporarily moving to Egypt to escape a famine. There, for 400 years they were slaves, just as God had said, until the Canaanites became so wicked that He was forced to destroy them. God used Israel for that task, giving them Canaan as an everlasting heritage (Genesis 15:13-16), as He had promised. God referred to Isaac as Abraham’s “only son” (Genesis 22:2). Thus Ishmael was not buried in Machpelah, but where he had settled far away, having “died in the presence of all his brethren” (Genesis 25:17, 18).

No Arab or Muslim was ever buried in Machpelah. Arabs can’t claim a pure descent from Ishmael. Ishmaelites intermarried with Midianites (Judges 8:5, 12, 22, 24), Edomites (Genesis 28:9), and Hittites (26:34; 36:1-4). In contrast, during 400 years as slaves in Egypt, the Israelites became an identifiable ethnic people who were led *en masse* into Canaan. We know who they are today. Denying Israel’s God-given heritage, Yitzak Rabin, who had secretly promised Clinton he would give up the Golan, declared, “The Bible is not a geography book.” Shortly thereafter, he was assassinated, preventing him from giving to Syria the most strategically vital part of Israel.

It was not Arabs but Hebrews who set-

tled in ancient Hebron and all of Canaan, creating Israel, whose kings ruled from Jerusalem over an empire stretching from the Sinai to the Euphrates. Around 600 BC they were conquered by the Babylonians and scattered to many nations.

Chased out of their land under God's judgment in the Babylonian dispersion, and later twice by the Romans, numbers of Jews always returned. This despised people continued living in Israel under the oppressive heel of various occupying foreign invaders for another 2,500 years. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared itself an independent nation once again. The Jews once again possessed their own land, as God had promised—but only that small fraction of it that had been allotted by the UN partition on November 29, 1947. In contrast, the Arabs *never* lived in Canaan but settled in the Arabian Peninsula. Not until the seventh century AD, through the Islamic invasions, did Arabs come in any significant numbers into the land of Israel, which, in AD 135, the Romans had angrily renamed Syria-Palestina, after Israel's chief enemy, the Philistines.

The so-called Palestinians of today are Arabs whose ancestors came from Arabia. They are a Semitic people, with no relationship either to the Canaanites or the Philistines, who were not Semites. It is a blatant lie that today's "Palestinians" (who at the same time claim descent from Ishmael) are descended from the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan, which God promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their heirs. David was first crowned king in Hebron and ruled there seven years before moving his throne to Jerusalem. This ancient city has no significance to Arabs/Muslims. Yet they have built a mosque at Machpelah, have forbidden access to Jews, and, at various times in history, have massacred Jews living there. Today Muslims are attempting to force out the few remaining Jews. They claim all of "Palestine" and state that Israelis are occupying land that belongs to them! And this fraud is the foundation for a so-called road map to peace!

President Bush, as a Christian, ought to tremble at God's solemn warning that He will destroy all who *divide* His land (Joel 3:2). Yes, *His* land: "the land shall not be sold [or traded] for ever: for the land is mine" (Leviticus 25:23)! Quartet, take heed: you are defying the God of Israel and will not escape unpunished! Those who make "peace" by taking land from Israel, which God gave her, will be destroyed: "[A]ll that burden themselves with it [Jerusa-

lem] shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it" (Zechariah 12:3). On September 13, 1993, under the triumphant gaze of a smiling President Clinton, Arafat signed, with Yitzak Rabin, the Oslo Accords on the White House lawn.

The ink was scarcely dry when Arafat began publicly apologizing in Arabic to Muslims around the world. In fear for his life (remember Anwar Sadat's murder by fellow Muslims for making "peace" with Israel), Arafat pleaded that he was only following the example of Muhammad and the Islamic law he established. In AD 628, Muhammad led a few of his followers (recent converts to the new religion of Islam) from Medina back to Mecca, hoping to join thousands of pagan Arabs in the *hajj*. This annual pilgrimage to the Ka'aba (Islam, incredibly, claims it was built by Abraham and Ishmael!), with its elaborate ceremonies, had been practiced by pagan Arab tribes for centuries before Muhammad was born. He was turned back by the Meccans, but both parties signed a 10-year ceasefire known as the Treaty of Habbaybiya, as part of which Muhammad relinquished his claim to being "the prophet of Allah." This treaty allowed Muhammad the next year (AD 629) to lead a group of Muslims in the *hajj*. They joined thousands of "infidel" Arabs in the same pagan ceremonies that their ancestors had practiced for centuries (See *TBC* Q&A July '03 for the rituals). In 630, Muhammad broke the ceasefire on a pretext and took over Mecca. At first, he allowed pagan Arabs to continue in the *hajj*, mingling with the new Muslims in the ancient rituals. Then he gave the pagans four months in which to convert to Islam or be killed. Thereafter, no non-Muslims were allowed into Mecca, as is true today.

So it is with Ramadan, which President Bush (like previous US presidents) and other western leaders naively honor as a "holy Muslim holiday." Beginning with the first sighting of the new moon in the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar, Ramadan was celebrated by pagan Arabs in honor of Allah, the moon god, for centuries before Islam. To the *hajj* and Ramadan, Muhammad added the horror of *jihad* and commanded Muslims to take over the world. That belief has cost millions of innocent lives and drives terrorism today. Those promoting the Road Map to Peace are following a history of good intentions on the part of Israel and the West, which invariably have been betrayed by the Arabs/Muslims and have steadily

made Israel's position more untenable. American presidents, one after another, have cajoled Israel into compromise after compromise with Arab/Muslim leaders that could only have been uproarious jokes as far as the latter were concerned.

Always, the good intentions of Israel and the West have led only to their further humiliation. Pursuing their impossible peace initiatives, world leaders defy the God of Israel and of the Bible. As the "heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing [and] the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:1-2), those with "ears to hear" (Deuteronomy 29:4; Ezekiel 12:2; Matthew 11:15; 13:9, etc.) detect the terrifying sound of laughter: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision" (Psalm 2:4).

We are in the late stages of the awesome fulfillment of Bible prophecy, behind which lies the omnipotent hand of God himself: "*I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem*" (Zechariah 12:2, 3). That remarkable prophecy is being fulfilled today. *Never before in history* have *all* those surrounding Israel been united to destroy her. This significant development in history and Bible prophecy has come about through the rise of Islam. Bush wants a "democratic, viable" Palestinian state living in peace with Israel, but no democracy exists, *or can exist*, in a Muslim society. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. Bush is trying to create democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq. If that could happen, it would shake the entire Muslim world. Islam cannot survive in freedom. No wonder there is such fanatical opposition from Muslims worldwide, even for the capture of that sadistic mass torturer and murderer, Saddam Hussein. Muslims hold 80 percent of the world's political prisoners.

America's precipitous withdrawal from Lebanon 20 years ago, fleeing from known Syrian/Iranian-sponsored terrorists instead of pursuing them, encouraged the terrorism rampant today worldwide. Can Bush really, with terrorist partners, stand up against the evil of terrorism? When will he admit that it is endemic to Islam? Will the strategic (politically correct?) time ever come for telling the truth? It remains to be seen whether the US can eliminate terrorism, when our State Department secretly opposes Israel and favors Arabs.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Someone I know has a burden for her church. It has split several times. She said that once during a service she was so burdened for the church that she began to cry and ended up lying face down, prostrate on the floor in the back of the church crying and moaning into her tissues and the carpet. She said it didn't draw attention to her because she was in the back where no one could really see her. Can you explain to me what this was all about?

RESPONSE: There are a number of examples of people in Scripture who have had a similar reaction and assumed a prone position before the Lord. When the Lord appeared to Abraham and made a covenant with him, Abraham acknowledged his unworthiness before God and "fell on his face" (Genesis 17:1-22). When the leaders of Israel were confronted with sin or very difficult situations, they knew that only God could deliver them. Consequently, they fell on their faces before Him and sought His favor and help. During the rebellion of Korah, the Scriptures tell us that "when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face" (Numbers 16:4). "And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them" (Numbers 20:6).

When Israel was defeated in their first attack on Ai because of the sin of Achan, "Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads" (Joshua 7:6).

When the prophets of God received a message or vision from God, they often fell upon their faces. Ezekiel wrote, "And when I saw it [the vision], I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke."

A leper who came to Jesus for healing fell on his face and begged for mercy, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Luke 5:12).

We clearly see a precedence. What we don't see is a methodology. In other words, if the burden of prayer (prompted by the Holy Spirit) brings you to this position, that is one thing. Too many, however, teach positions of prayer, actions taken during prayers, and other practices as something that guarantees the success of your prayer. That is a methodology and has no biblical support.

For the believer, however, "the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

QUESTION: I've been told that the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in God. Besides the statement in Genesis 15:6 about Abraham being saved by believing what God had told him, are there any other Old Testament verses that show that men and women under the old covenant were justified by their faith in God apart from the Law?

RESPONSE: Genesis 15:6 is perhaps the key verse that shows how Old Testament saints were saved: "And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.." Paul references that verse in Romans 4. Verse 13 sums it up, saying "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

Sometimes the references may be slightly veiled, but nevertheless they are there. For example, Job, by faith, declared in 19:15, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth..." How did he know? By faith!

Galatians 3:11 tells us, "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." We can't limit this passage to being only applicable to the New Testament, because Paul is quoting Habakkuk 2:4: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but *the just shall live by his faith.*" Salvation by faith, not from the Law, was an Old Testament principle.

This issue is apparently never far from Paul's mind, for in Romans 4:6-8, Paul is quoting Psalm 32:1,2,5: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile....I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Paul explains further in verses 23-24, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."

It is apparent that salvation has always been by grace through faith.

QUESTION: A pastor preached that we should have a humble mind like Jesus and that Christians are slaves to God and to one another. He said that Jesus was like a slave to the Father, because he humbled Himself to God's will to die on the cross, and that we should have the mind of Jesus. Then he used the words 'Slaves' and 'Servants' interchangeably, giving the impression that the two words mean the same. Are we slaves of God? This is affecting some of my Christian friends who've told me that they want only God's will for their lives and they would really like and be satisfied to be God's slaves.

RESPONSE: It is true that Scripture teaches we are "servants" of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "servants" literally means slave. In Romans 1:1, Paul wrote that he was, "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God..."

Regarding each other, we are not called to be "slaves" to our fellow brethren. Rather, "...brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Although we're not slaves, our attitudes should be that we are willing to serve one another. Romans 15:1-2 tells us, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."

Also, "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Again, it is the attitude of servanthood that we are to have, not that we are slaves to each other.

In John 8:36, the Lord Jesus declared, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Before we were saved, according to Galatians 4:3, "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." The Lord Jesus will set us free, but He also said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29). So although we are free from the bondage offered by the world, we are to be willing slaves of Christ, who loves us and willingly gave Himself up for us, and servants of one another.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

A Testimony Too Good to Be True?

Question: The Antiquities of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus, is often cited by Christians as proof that Jesus Christ actually lived, did miracles, was crucified, and rose from the dead as the New Testament declares. However, I've been told that all of the real scholars agree that the section in Josephus referring to Christ is a forgery that was introduced later, probably by Eusebius, who was the first writer to cite it. This passage is not found in any of the older manuscripts. That such a forgery was necessary would indicate that legitimate supportive records did not exist. Isn't this an almost fatal blow to Christian apologetics?

Response: We have already shown that there was more than sufficient corroborative evidence of various kinds, including other contemporary writings, so there was no need for a forgery. Critics love to say that "all of the real scholars agree" to this or that when they really mean certain scholars of a particular bias. The fact is that the passage to which you refer is found in all ancient copies of the works of Josephus. It is accepted by most scholars and referred to as authentic by other ancient writers besides Eusebius. For that reason alone it could not have been added later as the critics want to believe and have unsuccessfully tried to establish.

Those who dispute this section in Josephus do not do so on the basis of any evidence but because what it says is so favorable to the cause of Jesus Christ. Here is the passage:

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ.

"And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him.

"And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

No wonder anti-Christians don't want to admit that the above is authentic! If they face the evidence, however, they have no choice. In fact, there are two passages about Christ in Josephus. The authenticity of the second (which is also cited in ancient works) has never been disputed, yet it makes little sense unless the author had mentioned Jesus Christ previously in more detail. The second passage reads:

"Ananus [Ananias] assembled the Jewish Sanhedrin, and brought before it James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ, with some others, whom he delivered over to be stoned as infractors of the law." (Whiston, "Josephus," 598)

It is quite clear that Josephus has already mentioned and made some explanatory remarks about Jesus. Otherwise it would be unreasonable for him to make such a superficial reference to such a major figure, whom this passage itself admits was at least "called Christ." This is especially true inasmuch as Josephus

mentions elsewhere in some detail several pretenders who claimed to be the Messiah. Thus his “silence” about Jesus in this brief passage would have been highly suspect had he not explained something about Him previously.

Verification of Josephus by His Contemporaries

At the end of his translation of *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, published in 1737, William Whiston includes “Seven Dissertations [appendices] concerning Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, James the Just...etc.” In these he cites numerous secular and Christian writers from AD 110 to the end of the fifteenth century who quoted Josephus as authoritative concerning what he said about Jesus, John the Baptist, and other persons and events named in the New Testament.

One further comment by Professor Hopkins is in order. He explains why it would have been impossible for the contested passage to have been forged by Eusebius or anyone else:

“Had such a forgery been attempted, it would unquestionably have been detected by some of the acute and inveterate enemies of Christianity; for both Josephus and his works were so well received among the Romans that he was enrolled a citizen of Rome, and had a statue erected to his memory. His writings

were also admitted into the Imperial Library.

“The Romans may further be considered as the guardians of the integrity of his text; and the Jews, we may be assured, would use all diligence to prevent any interpolation in favor of the Christian cause. Yet it cannot be discovered that any objection was ever made to this passage by any of the opposers of the Christian faith in the early ages; their silence therefore concerning such a charge is a decisive proof that the passage is not a forgery. Indeed, the Christian cause is so far from needing any fraud to support it that nothing could be more destructive to its interest than a fraud so palpable and obtrusive.”

There is at least one suspicious attestation to Jesus attributed to Josephus. This is found in Josephus—*The Jewish War*, translated and with an introduction by G. A. Williamson (Penguin Books, 1959). Unfortunately, this bogus account has been promoted by overzealous Christians because it is longer than the above and seems to more fully testify to the divinity, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus, even claiming that His tomb was guarded by 30 Roman soldiers and 1000 Jews! The latter claim is obviously not true, since Jews would not stand guard on a Sabbath, especially the high Sabbath of Passover. Moreover, the spurious passage contains other embellishments that conflict with the New Testament, whereas the authentic account quoted above agrees with the accounts in the four Gospels.

—An excerpt from *IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH* (pp. 159-162) by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

He was better to me than all my hopes
He was better than all my fears;
He made a bridge of my broken works
And a rainbow of my tears.

Oh, tender and true was the chastening sore,
In wisdom, that taught and tried,
Till the soul that He sought was trusting in Him,
And nothing on earth beside.

The billows that guarded my sea-girt path
But carried my Lord on their crest;
When I dwell on the days of my wilderness march
I can lean on His love for the rest.

He guided by paths that I could not see,
By ways I could not have known;
The crooked was straight, and the rough was plain
As I followed the Lord alone.
I praise Him still for the pleasant palms,
And the water-springs by the way,
For the glowing pillar of flame by night,
And the sheltering cloud by day.

He emptied my hands of my treasured store,
And His covenant love revealed,
There was not a wound in my aching heart
But the balm of His breath hath healed.

—ANNA SHIPTON (1877)

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"How's Your Walk with the Lord Going?"

T. A. McMahon

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

—JOHN 8:31-32

YEARS AGO, we at the Berean Call had a board member who also pastored a church not too far from Bend, Oregon, where TBC is located. His name was Bob Zachary, and he was a true shepherd of his flock. He was highly respected in his community, and it seemed as though everyone knew Pastor Zachary. Even here in Bend, when I would go places with him, we would often run into former members of his fellowship who were now living here. His amiable greeting was always charged at some point with these words, "How's your walk with the Lord going?" What a wonderful question that was, revealing his love and concern for his sheep, former and present, and opening the door for encouragement or conviction or correction. Bob was graciously "old school"—or perhaps I should say old "biblical" school—not influenced by the social correctness of the day or given to small talk. His conversations were concise gems of ministry, as he focused upon Jesus and His Word. He deferred to the Holy Spirit to have His way in the communication, knowing that he was simply a planter of spiritual seeds for thought or sometimes a waterer of seedlings, encouraging their growth (1 Corinthians 3:7), and that any fruitfulness that might come would be produced by God himself.

Churches in our day sorely need pastors like Bob Zachary, who is now home with the Lord, enjoying the rewards of his labor in Christ. In these times, where consumerism reigns in fellowships, where seeker-sensitive/seeker-friendly approaches, marketing surveys and strategies, and self-oriented psychotherapies are implemented for church growth, questions like "How's your walk with the Lord going?" are anathema. Why? Because they may bring about conviction of sin, which is a turn-off for the "consumer Christian," one who is led by things that primarily make him or her feel good. When that doesn't happen, the consumer goes elsewhere.

This is the paradigm of our times. It's a shift from objective truth to subjective *feelings* and is apparent in the world and in the church as both unwittingly contribute to the development of the "self is a god" religion of the Antichrist. Joel Osteen didn't produce the largest church in America by preaching sin and repentance. Quite the contrary! Consumer Christians must hear what makes them happy—or, again, they're gone. The irony of the Church Growth Movement was that its stated intention to woo the lost or "unchurched" to church didn't increase their numbers by conversions. They simply enlarged their congregations by offering the most attractive programs! That increase, in fact, was drawn from smaller churches that couldn't afford "feel good" offerings, such as a video arcade for the youth, a food court, theatrical programs, sports programs (includ-

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE: AGAINST SUCH THERE IS NO LAW.

AND THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S HAVE CRUCIFIED THE FLESH WITH THE AFFECTIONS AND LUSTS.

—Galatians 22-24

ing "Christianized" yoga), etc. Winning souls to Christ through conviction of sin and repentance has no place in church-growth marketing schemes. Neither does a worldly approach solve a believer's problems that arise from living on this fallen planet.

Asking someone how his walk with the Lord is going has been, in my experience, the basis for a rapid exit in more than a few counseling sessions where I've ministered. Over the years, as I've had opportunities to help brothers-in-Christ and couples who profess to know the Lord, my initial approach has been to pass over the problems they want solved and focus on the status of their walk with Jesus. That didn't gratify those who were merely interested in a quick fix. They missed the fact that nearly all of our problems are actually symptoms created by an anemic or worse relationship with our Lord. The basis of that alienation can be summed

up in our Savior's own words: "And why call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Those seeking help for their marriages most often want the faults of their spouses addressed and corrected ASAP! Even if that were to take place (I've yet to see it happen swiftly), it never gets to the root of their problems. And by "root," I'm *not* referring to their family history, childhood traumas, economic conditions, low self-esteem, lack of self-love, or the myriad of fabricated psychotherapeutic therapies. No. The root of my concern for them is *where they are in their obedience and love for Jesus*.

Jesus declared: "If a man love me he will keep my words..." (John 14:23). That's hardly complex, nor does it demand months and years of "inner" therapy. If they are on track with the Lord's exhortation, then I can guarantee that problems are going to get solved and things are going to get better for them. How quickly? That depends on the willingness of those involved to do things God's way. Relationships don't usually go south overnight and therefore may take time to be restored. The restoration, however, doesn't come through session after session with a counselor—Christian, biblical, or otherwise. It comes through reading what God's Word says...and doing it. The good news is that although we may drift away from Jesus, He is always there for us (Hebrews 13:5). Furthermore, the believer has the Holy Spirit resident within to enable him or her to repent and then do things God's way with His help.

As believers, we need to continually evaluate where we are in terms of doing things according to God's Word: Scripture exhorts us to "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except [unless] ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5). We are told that we as followers of Jesus are in the world but not of the world. Our program is not the world's program. Consequently that difference will create problems for us—problems that may come along *for the sake of Christ*. As difficult as that may be for us, such conditions are fully covered by God's grace. In other words, nothing that happens can displace God's loving kindnesses, tender mercies, compassion, blessings, and even the joy He has for us. James tells us that we are to "...count it all joy" when we undergo trials and tribulations in the testing of one's faith (James 1:2-3). Without the supernatural

help of God's grace, that joy would be impossible.

On the other hand, grace does not exempt the believer from the repercussions of doing his own thing (i.e., walking his own walk rather than following Jesus). Even so, God's mercy is always available for His children. Sin does have consequences: "The wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23), meaning the resulting separation of a believer in his relationship (not his eternal security) with Jesus as well as reaping what he has sown. Even so, by God's mercy, the repentant believer is delivered from what he has done in disobedience to God's Word, at least to some degree. God's mercy notwithstanding, walking our own disobedient walk will bring nothing but grief to our lives and to our loved ones, directly and/or indirectly.

The prophet Jeremiah underscores what our own sins do to us: "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?...Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee.... Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart" (Jeremiah 2:17; 19; 4:18).

The Word of God gives instructions that must be obeyed if our lives are to bear fruit. As we examine problematic areas in our lives, we need only check to see if what we are doing lines up with the Scriptures. Yes, some things that occur may be out of our control, but for most things, we can discover the answer regarding our problems in what we are *doing* or *not doing*. How are we ministering to our children? Why are they creating havoc in our family? Might it have something to do with our own walk, which they are observing? Are we reflecting the light and life of Christ? How are we treating our spouses? That's one condition that can hinder answers to prayer (see 1 Peter 3:7). Are we self-serving? Has the fruit of the Spirit gone AWOL, either partially or altogether? What of Love? Joy? Peace? Longsuffering? Kindness? Goodness? Faithfulness? Gentleness? Self-control? The simple truth is that doing things man's way leads to destruction (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Doing things according to God's instructions, and with His help, leads to a fruitful temporal life and eternal rewards.

Referring to those who have received the gospel of salvation, Jesus said that

the free gift was made free for us by His paying the full penalty for our sins: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). That must include every believer's life here on earth as well as our future life throughout eternity, or else biblical Christianity is nothing more than powerless moral and ethical platitudes, a self-help program of supposed good works. Scripture speaks continually of God's rewards in heaven for a believer's commitment and service to Him on earth. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Yet it also tells us of God's blessings here on earth for those who obey His instructions. John 10:10 makes it clear that Jesus came not only to give us eternal life but life that may be lived "more abundantly." Reactions to the lies of the so-called prosperity teachers have caused many Christians to either jump aboard their health-and-wealth gospel or disregard what the Scriptures actually teach about prosperity. When John writes in 3 John 1:2 about prosperity, his focus isn't upon financial blessing for a believer but rather for one's whole life in Christ—body, soul, and spirit. Wealth may indeed come, but only as it enriches the saint's overall life in Christ. Moreover, affluence, according to God's Word, is a more difficult condition in which to submit to the teachings of Christ. The rich young ruler of Matthew 19:16-24 and the seed of the Word being choked out by "the deceitfulness of riches" in Mark 4:19 indicate as much. It's not impossible, but it's not a path that many want to pursue in their desire for wealth. What we may be missing here is of what the *abundant life in Christ* may truly consist.

Do wealthy people have problems? Perhaps not related to finances, but there are many other problems that a more-than-adequate bank account can't fix. Everyone has problems. Yet they can all be solved in Christ through the abundance of what He has provided for every believer. Consider what was mentioned earlier—the fruit of the Spirit. As those qualities are truly manifested in a

believer's walk with the Lord, think of all the consequences of sin they will remedy: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:8-11). We need to be reminded of Jeremiah's words here: "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jeremiah 5:25). God indeed has good things for believers that the world can neither prevent nor acquire. Beyond solving our personal problems, He wants us to be fruitful in this world, in our families, in our communities, in our workplaces. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Good works, as I hope we all know, can't save anyone. No one is saved by them. We are saved *by Jesus*. Yet, as His workmanship, He saved us *unto* good works, enabling us to live a life that is fruitful, productive, a blessing to others, and most of all—pleasing to God. All of those things are contingent upon our relationship with Jesus, our walk with Him. So....

How's *your* walk with the Lord going? As we've indicated, that question is definitely not rhetorical. It demands self-examination. It demands a soul-searching answer, and your answer will reveal those things that you need to *maintain, obtain, restrain*, and, in some cases, from which you must *abstain*. Paul's prayer for those in the church at Colosse is a prayer that we should pray continually for ourselves, for our loved ones, and for all who claim to follow Jesus. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1:9-11). **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: How can the Berean Call stand behind Israel and the Jews who occupy it?...They don't believe the Bible, Old or New Testaments....They hate Jesus (God). The Talmud teaches that He's burning in hell....If they hate Jesus, they hate the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! They teach their people to spit at Christian cemeteries when they walk by! They do not believe Jesus is the Messiah (1 John 2:22-23)! If the Jews don't believe in Jesus, they don't believe in God, plain and simple! Christians are supposed to back them no matter what? You're out of your mind!

RESPONSE: Although examples can be found of those following the error of Talmudic teaching, clearly all Jews do not practice these things. To answer some of your questions, however, who has said "Christian's are supposed to back [Jews] no matter what"? Support for the right to exist of the state of Israel or any other nation or people does not mean that we condone or approve the wrong they may do.

Much of what you have said is another reminder that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). It's one thing to recognize what the Lord has said in regard to Israel and something else to understand that many in Israel (as everywhere) are sinful and lost. Many Jews consider themselves agnostics or atheists. Consider what the Lord himself has stated regarding mankind in general: "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way,...become unprofitable...none that doeth good....Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom 3:10-18).

What you have said about Israel is applicable to all of humanity. Yet the Lord speaks of the purpose that He yet has for them—that He will bring Israel back into the land *before* their prophesied end-time national repentance (Jer 5:10, 5:18, 30:11; 46:28; Ezk 11:13, 16-17, etc.). He will return to save them before that time as well (Zec 14). *They must return to the land*, and many are there now, though still in disobedience and rebellion to their Creator.

Nevertheless, the Lord distinctly said, "Though I make a full end of all nations

whither I have scattered thee, yet will *I not make a full end of thee*: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer 30:11—emphasis added). And that's not the end of the promises of God. Scripture declares, "And I will sow her [Israel] unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God (Hos 2:23).

We cannot too often be reminded that the prophet Joel recorded that the Lord said, "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for *my heritage Israel* [emphasis added], whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land" (Joel 3:2; see also Zec 7,8, etc.). Finally, the Apostle Paul also noted that God was far from finished with the nation of Israel. "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot [Know] ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? How he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars... But what saith answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal" (See Rom 11:1-25). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul writes in Romans 11:5, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The authenticity of the entire Bible rests upon the continuation of the nation of Israel according to God's plan.

QUESTION: Besides Genesis 15:6 concerning Abraham, can you give me other verses that state that the Old Testament saints were declared righteous by their faith in God?

RESPONSE: We are told, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image...can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year...make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because...the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sin. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb 10:1-4).

Clearly, if the sacrifices demanded by the Law cannot take away sins or provide

salvation, then salvation must be by faith in something else. Paul continues, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God...is evident...The just shall live by faith" (Gal 3:11). We can't say that this passage refers only to the New Testament, because Paul is quoting Habakkuk 2:4, part of the Old Testament. Consequently, salvation by faith *apart from the Law* must be an Old Testament principle. Paul stated that the Law was "our schoolmaster [guardian/tutor] to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). Paul also makes the point that keeping the Law did not save either Old or New Testament Jews because "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20).

Even the Old Testament sacrificial system prefigured salvation by faith alone. Speaking of the priestly garments, Ezekiel wrote that "they shall have linen bonnets upon their heads...linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat" (Ezk 44:18).

Man was to "earn" his living by "the sweat of thy face..." (Gen 3:19). But nothing that involves "work" will "earn" you salvation. The Lord's commands concerning construction of an altar further reinforced this theme: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings... in all places where I record my name I will ...bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Ex 20:24-25; See also Leviticus 14:32 for similar thoughts).

Paul demonstrates that the Old Testament way of salvation was the same as in New Testament times, pointing to Abraham, who was saved by faith: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom 4:3). For scriptural proof, Paul references Genesis 15:6, pointing to Abraham, who could not have found salvation by keeping the Law, which was still more than 400 years in the future for him. He then singles out David, who was also saved by faith (Rom 4:6-8), quoting Psalm 32:1-2. Paul goes further in establishing that in the Old Testament, salvation was by faith only, writing in Romans 4:23-24, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him...." Simply put, righteousness is "imputed" ("credited" or "given") to those with faith in God, e.g., Abraham, David, and now us who are saved by faith.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Are the New Testament Books the Right Ones?

Question: There were at least 15 apostles. That only four of them [Peter, James, John, Paul] would be “inspired” to write the New Testament seems rather odd. One would logically expect many others to have written “inspired” accounts. How do we know there weren’t several other records written that were lost - or even that all of the genuine works were lost or destroyed and that the ones we have are frauds substituted in their place?

Response: Don’t forget Matthew Mark, and Luke, the first an apostle, the other two sincere disciples. Why should there be any other divinely inspired written record? The New Testament is complete in itself and needs no further witness. As for how we know that the ones we have are the true record, we are answering that legitimate question from many different angles with overwhelming evidence. Another observation by Mark Hopkins from the last century deals with this issue:

“That such a movement as Christianity... involving the origin of so many new institutions and such ecclesiastical and social changes should have originated at such a time and in such a place, and that no written document [true account] should have been drawn forth by it, is incredible. And that the true account should have perished, leaving not a vestige behind it, and that false ones, and such as these, should have been substituted is impossible.

“Of the origin of such institutions we should expect some account. That of our books [New Testament] is adequate and satisfactory. There is nothing contradictory to it, for even spurious writings confirm the truth of our books, and there is no vestige of any other” (Hopkins, *Evidences*, cited in Linton, *Lawyer*, pp. 165-69).

Yes, there is one other book that claims to be an inspired record of early Christianity: the Book

of Mormon. It purports to give an account of Christ appearing in America to natives who were allegedly the descendants of certain Jews who supposedly sailed the Atlantic to the new world and built large cities, fought wars, etc. Here we have a classic example of outright fraud, and it provides a most striking contrast to the Bible. The Book of Mormon is pure fiction, like the Bhagavad-Gita, the Hindu Vedas, and much of the content of the sacred writings of other religions. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has spared no archaeological effort in its attempt to authenticate this spurious account and has utterly failed, as must be the case with every such fabrication.

The Book of Mormon: An Instructive Comparison

The ruins of cities mentioned in the Bible have been located and their inhabitants identified

and their histories verified in proof of the biblical accounts. Secular museums around the world contain vast quantities of ancient inscriptions, documents, coins, utensils, and weapons dating back to Bible times and which thoroughly confirm its pages. This plethora of evidence verifies beyond any question the authenticity and accuracy of the historical record found in the Bible concerning peoples, cultures, places, and events.

In striking contrast, no evidence of any kind has ever been found to support the Book of

Mormon. This remains the case today, in spite of decades of the most aggressive archaeological exploration throughout North, Central, and South America. This Herculean effort, supported by the vast wealth and determination of the Mormon Church, has left no stone unturned in the search for verification of the book of Mormon but has come up empty-handed. Not one piece of evidence has ever been found to support the Book of Mormon – not a trace of the large cities it names, no ruins, no coins, no letters or documents or rivers or mountains or any of the topography it mentions has ever been identified!

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (pp. 162-164) by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE.....

If anyone desires to live a life of faith and trust in God he must:

1. Not merely say that he trusts in God, but must really do so. Often individuals profess to trust in God, but they embrace every opportunity where they may directly or indirectly tell someone about their need. I do not say it is wrong to make known our financial situation, but it hardly displays trust in God to expose our needs for the sake of getting other people to help us. God will take us at our word.... We must be satisfied to stand with Him alone.
2. The individual who desires to live this way must be content, whether he is rich or poor. He must be willing to live in abundance or in poverty. He must be willing to leave this world without any possessions.
3. He must be willing to take the money in God's way, not merely in large sums but also in small amounts. Many times, I have had a single shilling given to me. To have refused such tokens of Christian love would have been ungracious.
4. He must be willing to live as the Lord's steward. If anyone does not give out of the blessings which the Lord gives to him, then the Lord, who influences the hearts of His children to give, would soon cause these channels to be dried up. My good income increased even more when I determined that, by God's help, His poor and His work would be helped by my money. From that time on, the Lord was pleased to entrust me with more.

—GEORGE MÜLLER

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The Perfect Spiritual Storm Looming

T. A. McMahon

Perfect storm defined: a mixture of seemingly varied events that converge together creating a greater magnitude of devastation.

I REMEMBER AS though it were yesterday a conversation I had with Dave Hunt not too long after he had moved to Bend, Oregon. He wanted me to move to Bend also that we might continue communicating with those who had responded favorably to the book I'd had the privilege of co-authoring with him, *The Seduction of Christianity*. That book and many of his later books, articles, and sermons gave insights into most of the things that would prove to be portents of the developing apostasy that we see moving ahead at overwhelming speed and in wide circulation today.

In our 25 years of ministering through The Berean Call, we have extensively covered various aspects of the apostasy. Although some of the highly promoted deviations from Scripture have had their heyday and then appeared to have faded, in fact they have simply undergone alterations, changed players, assimilated other heresies, adjusted to the times, and become more devious, i.e., hidden in plain sight. One example of this is the Word/Faith Movement (W/FM). The popular leaders of days past included Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, Sr., Charles Capps, David (formerly Paul) Yonggi Cho, and Gloria and Kenneth Copeland. The Copelands are still around, along with their followers, and are promoting the same false teaching, but the W/FM has expanded to the Faith Healing Movement, the Prosperity Teachings, the Positive Confession Movement, and the Inner Healing Movement, all of which have been raised to a new level of sophistication as major tactics of the Adversary. These perversions of the Word of God originated when Satan deceived Eve in Genesis 3:1 with his words, "Yea, hath God said...?" Questioning and then repudiating what God has declared has been Satan's strategy from the beginning and will continue until he is thrown into the Lake of Fire.

That Deceiver and Father of Lies has also employed a host of seemingly diverse deceptions that are nevertheless

connected. The Word/Faith teachings are not merely a perversion of biblical faith, but they are of late gleaned from the mind science cults, with concepts that go back to Hinduism and other Eastern mystical religions. The teachings of this movement are found within Transcendentalism and New Thought, as well as the writings of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science and Helena Blavatsky's Theosophical Society brought Eastern spiritual beliefs into mainstream America.

E. W. Kenyon (1867-1948) is said to be the father of the Word/Faith Movement. Many of his teachings were the product of his New England education at The Emerson School of Oratory, a hot bed of Transcendental philosophy. Some authors, such as Thoreau, gleaned beliefs from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Vedas*, and other sacred Hindu texts. Kenyon's writings and preaching were a mixture of religious science, godhood for humanity, and the Scriptures, all of which became foundational to the myriad of W/FM-connected offerings.

The relationship to Eastern mysticism is irrefutable. Hinduism, Buddhism, and other Eastern religions teach that the physical world is *maya*, an illusion, and thus can be manipulated by various techniques: thinking (meditation, mind power), speaking (mantras), and imagery (visualization). The supreme deity of Hinduism is an impersonal god—a spiritual energy of which everything consists. That energy force is positive and negative (yin and yang) and can be controlled by the gods, i.e., all humans. Self-realization—to realize one's own godhood—is the goal of yoga.

Even a cursory review of the Word/Faith teachings reveals its clear connection to pagan and occult origins. Terms such as positive confession, faith as a power, negative thinking, speaking forth healing, commanding wealth, visualizing what's being prayed for, realizing that humans are gods under God, and the like, abound in this movement that has corrupted the biblical doctrine of faith for millions. The latest development among W/FM adherents is the New Apostolic Reformation agenda, which claims to produce new Apostles and Prophets who will take over the world and turn it into a paradise, setting up Christ's kingdom before He can return from heaven. They will minister in power as gods.

These heresies are being taught to the upcoming generation of Christian youth at schools connected with Mike Bickle's

International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri, and Bill Johnson's Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry in Redding, California, and their worldwide satellites.

Also related to the beliefs of the Word/Faith Movement is the teaching of Positive Mental Attitude and Possibility Thinking brought into the church primarily by Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller and advanced by "Christian" business organizations such as Amway and Mary Kay Cosmetics. Among Peale's numerous false teachings is his endorsement of occult visualization as a biblical prayer technique; Schuller championed the building of one's self-esteem (as presented in his book *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, which was sent out to 250,000 pastors) as the primary objective of his psychologized gospel. Peale was instrumental in ushering in psychology as a means of counseling in the church, which then paved the way for the practitioners of so-called Christian psychology, whose major therapeutic methodology is the unbiblical doctrine of self-love.

As I move on to psychology, I hope you are seeing the links between the beliefs and practices that I've mentioned thus far. All these things have been documented in the books, articles, videos, radio programs, and talks that Dave and I have presented over the years and are archived on TBC's website. What then of psychology? An editor for *Psychology Today* declared that Eastern mysticism would come to the West through the teachings of psychology. Although there are more than 50 different fields of psychology, together they pale in influence when compared to psychotherapy or psychological counseling. Though posing as science, secular researchers tell us that the methods used in psychotherapy are little different from those used by shamans and witch doctors (who are mediators between man and the spirit realm). Psychology's spirit connection is most blatant in the field of transpersonal psychology, also known as spiritual psychotherapy. Its relationship to Eastern mysticism is undeniable. Yoga meditation, which has overtaken the West since the 1970s, has been incorporated into psychotherapeutic programs such as MindUp and Mindfulness and touted as a cure-all for life's various problems. It is claimed that these programs are especially helpful for children.

The answers to life's questions, we are told, are found by looking within, delving into the subconscious where the true self

is found. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung taught that it is in the subconscious where everything that has happened in one's life resides, and those events psychically determine every aspect of that life. It is the supposed workings of the subconscious that offer a pseudo-scientific explanation for what Hindu yogis have taught for thousands of years as *karma* and reincarnation.

Psychology's salvation for humanity is rooted in "self," and its self-actualization concept is the same as the self-realization belief of Hinduism. Both have the ultimate goal of the deification of humans and the worship of self. This should come as no surprise for the biblical Christian, because the Bible tells us that self-delusion began with Lucifer in heaven, and he brought it to earth in his deception of Eve (Isaiah 14:12-14; Genesis 3:1-5). Furthermore, Scripture tells us that the demonically possessed Antichrist will "sit in the temple of God, [showing] himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). That's *the Lie*.

"The Lie" takes on many forms, some far less obvious than what's been described. Yet they can all be recognized by asking this simple question: Does what is being presented involve man displacing God by endeavoring to save himself, whether by fixing his temporal issues or securing his eternal destiny? Whatever contributes to those objectives is a form of "works salvation," i.e., man playing God. Every religious belief system (including atheism) other than biblical Christianity is an attempt made by humanity to save itself without the help of the true and living God. Saving mankind is something that only Jesus Christ can do. Scripture calls humanity's rebellious attempt at salvation the broad way that leads to destruction, which, tragically, many will follow (Matthew 7:13).

The lie of godhood is found in some form in all that has been noted above and in much more than this brief article can cover. It's important, however, to have given some details to prove the Satanic connection between these numerous diverse movements. Why? Because they will converge in these last days prior to the Lord's return for His bride and will be firmly established after the church is removed. At present, cries for unity and oneness abound, declaring that we are all connected. Their mutual beliefs and practices are components that will come together forming the *perfect storm* of godlessness—the religion of the Antichrist.

If the church will be removed in the Rapture (which it will!), why should we be concerned about a religion that will come

together after believers are removed? First of all, the religion of the Antichrist doesn't pop up overnight. It's been in the works since Satan deceived Eve in the Garden. Secondly, Jesus gave the answer to His disciples when they asked about the End Times. He characterized those times by saying, "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4-5). That deception about which He warned His disciples has two consequences: 1) It hinders the lost from turning to the Lord, and 2) It prevents believers from being fruitful and productive. Regarding the latter, all believers have been saved *unto* (not by) good works, and, in the Lord's words, we are to "bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

So it would seem that diverting or wrecking a believer's good works is Satan's only effective stratagem against the Lord's bride. This ploy is found in some "Christian" agendas that have duped believers into supporting programs that, in fact, contribute to setting up Christ's kingdom before the King himself returns. A number of very influential yet diverse programs today are attempting to do that very thing in the camps of the Kingdom Dominionists, the Amillennialists, and the Ecumenists. The Bible's timeline of events to come clearly reveals that the kingdom that will emerge following the Rapture of the church is the kingdom of the Antichrist, and thus all believers who are presently caught up in those unbiblical programs today are unwittingly and unfruitfully serving the cause of the Adversary.

It is hoped that everyone reading this is aware that conditions in the world and especially in the church have changed dramatically over the last two decades. The warnings presented in the book of Acts, in 1 & 2 Timothy, Jude, 1 & 2 Peter, and the first three chapters of Revelation, have been blatantly manifested. Verses that prophesy "when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"; "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...and they shall turn away their ears from the truth..."; "in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves..."; "grievous wolves shall enter in among you...Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Luke 18:8; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:1-2; Acts 20:29-30). In my four decades as a believer involved in observing, speaking, and writing about issues that have adversely affected the body of Christ, those verses, among so many more that could be given, seem like

understatements—a high tide compared to the spiritually dark tsunami we are presently experiencing. Could a revival forestall the flood? That's not impossible with God, but there is neither any hint of collective repentance in the world or in the church nor is there prophetic scripture to support such a hope. Therefore the apostasy will continue unabated.

How then should we deal with it? We at The Berean Call see our function as workers in a rescue operation, praying that our materials reach those "who [have] ears to hear...if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (Mark 7:16; 2 Timothy 2:25). We want to get information regarding discernment issues to our brothers and sisters in Christ, especially encouraging one another to hold up to the light of God's Word what they are being taught. As for those in leadership positions, we want to support them as they deal with specific erroneous doctrines and practices, influential false teachers, and extra-biblical trends and agendas that can enter into a fellowship. Our heart is with Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

To this end we have developed a new "Topics" section on our website that features 25-plus years of archived resource materials. It may be accessed at www.thebereancall.org. Just click on "Topics" at the top of the page. There you'll find a list of subjects with which we have dealt over the years, along with links to newsletters, Q&As, radio programs, and more, for each topic.

If you don't have access to our website, we haven't forgotten you! In July we plan to release our first printed "Topics" booklets. They will contain much of the same information presented on our website in an abbreviated but comprehensive format. Booklets on Mysticism, Hebrew Roots, and the Emerging Church are in the works now and, the Lord willing, will be followed by a host of other subjects. We want these inexpensive little booklets to be a great resource for those who seek information, enabling them to quickly get up to speed on a specific issue, or to share with someone else. We're hopeful that we can become more effective in our desire to assist the body of Christ, especially those who have been called to be shepherds and are ministering to the Lord's sheep. We covet your prayers for this endeavor.

TBC

Quotable

To give any kind of prediction about world events apart from the Scripture is to practice a form of religious insanity that serves only to confuse people, who then finally give up and say, "I can't understand prophecy; I guess it's not for me." Any prediction of our Lord's return that relies on education or technology is sure to be wrong and leads only to discouragement, and finally to abandonment of what the Bible has to say about Jesus' return. The Blessed Hope is for the believer, and it brings comfort, assurance, and confidence to the heart of the believer in the midst of this world's turmoil. Our focus is not on the calamity around us, but on His glorious coming. Prophecy is not for the critical or curious eye, but for that eye focused on and looking for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Coming One.

Therefore, the point of Bible prophecy is not to alarm us but to alert us to circumstances leading up to the Lord's return. This alertness is to spur us on to be ready; and the Bible says a lot about how we can be ready for His return.

—A. W. Tozer in *Preparing for Jesus' Return*

Q&A

QUESTION: We are studying angels in a Bible study at our church. The question of who or what demons are came up and the teacher said that they are not fallen angels. We were under the impression that they are. Your help would be most appreciated.

RESPONSE: We agree with you that demons are fallen angels. That conclusion cannot be avoided, particularly since we know that Satan was once an angel (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:14-17), is a spirit being, and has been called the tempter, the adversary, that great dragon, and other similar titles. Further, according to Scripture, angels are spirit beings, intelligent, and have wills. They have personalities and are immortal and powerful.

The Scriptures also speak of fallen angels (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7-9). "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." When God created angels, they were "good" because all creation was good (Genesis 1:31). The King James Version uses the word "devils" to describe these demonic beings who are commonly called "demons" in other translations.

With this in mind, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 25:41: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Speaking of Satan, Paul described him in Ephesians 2:2 as a spirit who works within "the

children of disobedience." In the New Testament, a number of cases of demonic possession or oppression are highlighted.

The Scriptures warn us concerning the devil and his tactics. Second Corinthians 11:13-15 reveals that one of the adversary's favorite roles is to present himself as an angel of light. Paul further warned us in Galatians 1:8 that, "...though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Devils (demons) are fallen angels.

QUESTION: Some believe Jesus is Michael the Archangel in Daniel 12:1 and other verses of the Bible. I would like to know where this teaching came from.

RESPONSE: Biblical speculation, like everything else, falls under the category of being "nothing new under the sun." More recently, of course, this teaching has become common among Seventh-day Adventists. In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, written in 1890 by the SDA "prophetess," Ellen G. White wrote, "Again: Christ is called the Word of God. John 1:1-3. He is so called because God gave His revelations to man in all ages through Christ. It was His Spirit that inspired the prophets. 1 Peter 1:10, 11. He was revealed to them as the Angel of Jehovah, the Captain of the Lord's host, Michael the Archangel" (p. 761).

White isn't the earliest writer to promote this teaching, however. Isaac Watts, writer of many beloved hymns, wrote on page 223 in *The Glory of Christ as God-Man* (published 1795, but clearly written before his death in 1748), "And may not Christ himself be this Michael the Archangel, the Prince of Israel? It has been observed by some writers, that the scripture never speaks of archangels in the plural number; perhaps there is but one archangel and that is Christ."

The issue is further complicated because on page 224 Isaac Watts comments that some (unnamed writers or preachers) believed that the angel appearing to the prophet Daniel was not Gabriel. Rather, he was "Christ." And Watts doesn't appear to be giving his own theological opinion but is passing on what he has read or heard elsewhere. It has been also pointed out that John Calvin was discussing this teaching 200 years prior to the time of Watts.

So, is there is any truth to the idea that Michael the archangel is just another name for the Lord Jesus Christ? No! Hebrews 1:8-14, speaking of the Son, specifically contrasts Jesus with the angels and very bluntly asks, "but to which of the angels said he at any time, 'Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?' Are they not all [my emphasis] ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs

of salvation?"

The Lord Jesus directly rebukes Satan, as recorded in Matthew chapter 4 regarding the account of the temptation in the wilderness. In contrast, "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil...durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9).

Speaking of His humanity and His relationship with the Father, the Scriptures declare that Jesus was made "a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands" (Hebrews 2:7). All the angels (Michael included) are part of "the works of thy hands." Jesus, on the other hand, is the only begotten (not created) son of the Father (John 1:14; 3:16). When the Father brought His only begotten son into the world, He said, "And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6).

QUESTION: What does "complete unity" mean in John 17:23? Does complete unity mean unity on the essentials such as the Trinity, Salvation by Grace Alone, and the Resurrection of Jesus? Or does it speak of unity on "non-essentials" also?

RESPONSE: Thank you for your question regarding what "complete unity" in John chapter 17 means. John 17:23 reads, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

The comparison is that since Jesus is "in them" and the Father is in Him, thus the outcome is that "they may [all] be made perfect in one." This clearly involves more than an agreement on "essentials." Rather, it speaks of a progressive *unity* that may only be reached when we leave this world (through death or the Rapture), which is the same agreement that the Son has with the Father. First John 3:2 tells us, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Of that event, 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

We shall be changed, and in that changing we shall move beyond the limitations of our life here, which is greatly influenced by the "flesh." Although the prayer of Jesus will be answered fully in that we shall have *perfect agreement and unity* with every member of the Body of Christ, in the meantime our focus remains upon our... "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Christianity is not historically accurate?

Question: I have friends who have been convinced by university or seminary professors that the New Testament is not historically accurate but is a fictional story written long after the events supposedly took place. They can't prove that to me, but neither can I prove them wrong. Is there some simple way, without going into a detailed study of archaeological evidence and historical research, to help them to see that Christianity began as the New Testament said it did?

Response: Yes. There is a purely logical argument made famous by Mark Hopkins, though not originated by him, that should be helpful. In his *Evidences*, he referred to an earlier writing titled *Short and Easy Method with the Deists*, by Leslie. That author presented four essential criteria, which, if met by any event recorded in writing, would establish it as truly historical: "1) That the matter of fact be such that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it; 2) That it be done publicly, in the face of the world; 3) That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed; and 4) That such monuments, and such actions and observances, be instituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done."

Leslie explains that "the first two rules make it impossible for any such matter of fact to be imposed upon men at the time, because man's eyes and ears and senses would contradict it." We know that the Gospels and most of the epistles were written within a few years after the events recorded therein. Thus there were many people still alive who would have refuted what was written if it had not offered a true account of events witnessed by them. For example, the account of Christ calling Lazarus from the grave, if not true, would have been rejected and exposed as fraud by numerous friends and relatives who would have responded indignantly either that Lazarus had not yet died and been laid in any grave or, if he had, that he was still dead and buried.

It is unthinkable that anyone in the small country of Israel and so soon after the supposed events would dare to publish fictitious reports of alleged miracles, naming persons and places. Multitudes of people who were still alive from those days and from those regions would have rejected the accounts as lies. Rather than helping to authenticate Christianity, such false accounts would have become known as frauds and the new movement would have been promptly and publicly discredited.

"On-the-Spot" Authentication

Remember, Christianity began right there in Jerusalem. It was based upon the claim that this Jesus, the carpenter-from-Nazareth-turned-

prophet, who was acclaimed as the Christ by multitudes and whose miracles were spoken of all over Israel and whom the Romans had crucified, was alive, having died for the sins of the world. The very fact that 3,000 people converted to Christ on the day of Pentecost in the heart of Jerusalem and that thousands more in Jerusalem continued day after day to join this “new faith” is irrefutable evidence that these events really happened. The opposition did not deny the facts. Christianity was opposed only because it contradicted the authority and teachings of the rabbis.

There is no escaping the fact that this was not a political movement based upon arguable ideologies, nor was it a religious movement based upon emotional attraction to unprovable spiritual theories. Christianity was based upon events that had happened in the small country of Israel and had been consummated right there in Jerusalem. The claims could not have been presented (that Jesus of Nazareth had healed the sick, opened blind eyes, raised the dead and Himself rose from the dead, leaving behind an empty tomb) right there in Jerusalem and throughout Judea unless these events had actually occurred. It was for this reason that Jesus told His disciples to begin their preaching first in Jerusalem, to establish the church there first of all, and only then to spread the word to a wider audience.

Obviously, the multitudes who heard Peter and the other apostles preach knew the facts and could not refute the message. That short walk outside the city wall to verify that the tomb, which all Jerusalem well knew had been guarded by Roman soldiers, was indeed empty must have been taken by many skeptics. The word quickly spread in confirmation of this greatest of miracles, a miracle that seemed to put the final stamp of approval by God himself upon the claims of Jesus Christ.

Why Christianity Couldn't Have Been Invented Later

Leslie then points out that deception would be possible only if the tale were “invented some time after, when the men of that generation wherein the thing was said to be done are all past and gone, and the credulity of later ages might be imposed upon to believe that things were done in former ages which were not.” This was clearly not the case with Christianity, for it was proclaimed openly in Jerusalem from the very beginning.

How can we be sure, without checking historical and archaeological records, that Christianity began as it is claimed at the very time of Jesus and the apostles? Leslie points out that the last two criteria he prescribes prevent the fabrication of a fictitious story years after the supposed date of the alleged event being foisted upon later generations as though it were true. He goes on to explain:

For, whenever such a matter of fact came to be invented, if not only monuments were said to remain of it, but likewise that public actions and observances were constantly used ever since the matter of fact was said to be done, the deceit must be detected by no such monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child who must know that no such actions or observances were ever used by them.

For example, suppose I should now invent a story that for the past thousand years every man at the age of twelve years had a joint of his little finger cut off...it is impossible I should be believed... because everyone could contradict me as to the mark of cutting off the joint of the finger; and that being part of my original story, must demonstrate the whole to be false.

Applying this line of reasoning to the New Testament and its testimony of Jesus Christ and the founding of Christianity, Hopkins then argues:

For any man to have invented the New Testament after the time of Christ, and to have attempted to cause it to be received, would have been as if a man had written an account of the [American] Revolution, and of the celebration of this day [July 4, 1776] from the first, when [in fact] no revolution was ever heard of, and no one had ever celebrated the Fourth of July. Nor, when such a festival was once established, would it be possible to introduce any account of its origin essentially different from the true one.

But the case of... Christian[ity] is even stronger; because we have several different institutions which must have sprung up at its origin; because baptism and the Lord's Supper have occurred so much more frequently; and because the latter has always been considered the chief rite of a religion to which men have been more attached than to liberty or to life. (Hopkins, Evidences, cited in Linton, Lawyer, pp 164)

No Escape from the Truth

There is no refuting these arguments. That Christianity involves established customs, churches, and a history going back to its very foundation by Christ is beyond dispute. That secular historical evidence supports these claims as far back as we are able to trace cannot be called into question. Furthermore, it can be shown that at many stages in history disputes have arisen as to what the true practice of Christianity ought to involve. In each case, the disputants have gone back to the Bible as the authority.

Even today, when some practices differ widely between Catholics and Protestants, between various Protestant denominations and among factions in the Roman Catholic Church, the appeal is continually both to

Scripture and to history. Although Protestants [in theory] look to the Bible alone as the final authority, Catholics look to tradition as well, which they claim goes back to Christ, and to the decisions of Church Councils, which have maintained this continuity. Hopkins then concludes the argument:

We have seen that it was impossible that the apostles should have been either deceivers or deceived, and that the books [New Testament] could not have been received, either at the time they purport to have been written, or at any subsequent time, if the facts recorded had not taken place

The testimony of the New Testament highlights the very logic in the above arguments. On more than one occasion we have the account of the accusations made by the Jewish religious leaders who wanted Paul executed, and we have Paul's defense. The complaint against Paul had to do with Christianity being contrary to Judaism. Never was there an accusation that it was based upon fraud or that any of the facts Paul presented were simply false.

Paul appealed to the knowledge that the Roman officials had of the facts. We are told that Governor Felix had "perfect knowledge of that way" (Acts:24:22) – i.e., of Christianity. Indeed, far from seeing anything contrary to the facts in Paul's testimony, "Felix trembled" as Paul reasoned with him (v. 25). And when he defended himself before Felix's replacement, Festus, and King Agrippa, Paul declared:

The king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him, for this thing was not done in a corner. (Acts:26:26)

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

Christ and Antichrist

Dave Hunt — First published in July 1990

ANTI IS A GREEK prefix that not only means “opposed to” but “in the place of.” Antichrist will indeed *oppose* Christ but in the most diabolically clever way possible: by pretending to *be* Christ. For the world to follow and worship him, a false Christianity must become the world religion—a “Christianity” that all religions can accept and that embraces all religions into “one faith.” Hence the necessity for today’s growing apostasy: to create an apostate church to be the Antichrist’s earthly bride, just as the true church is Christ’s heavenly bride. Such is the important role of the New Age movement and the many accelerating delusions and seductions in these “last days.”

Through a false gospel, false prophets, occultic religious practices and lying “signs and wonders,” today’s churches are being filled with millions who call themselves Christians, but who are not. Left behind at the Rapture, and happy that the “negative” influence of the vanished troublemakers has been removed, they will worship and follow the Antichrist, thinking he is the true Christ and that they have “never had it so good.” An ecumenized “Christianity,” in partnership with all religions, will carry on and prosper even more after the Rapture than before. The unifying factor will be concern for Mother Earth. Working for peace and ecological wholeness will have replaced truth as the basis of Christianity, as the World Council of Churches has already decreed.

Far from being a cop-out invented by those who desire to escape persecution (which could become very severe in America *before* the Rapture), a pretribulation Rapture is essential for a number of reasons: first of all, to remove the true Christians from earth. If they were present when Antichrist was revealed, they would oppose and expose him. Such opposition must be removed in order to give Satan and man, under Antichrist’s leadership, full freedom to prove that this earth can be turned back into a garden paradise without God. The Holy Spirit, who is omnipresent, will still convict and draw many to Christ during the Great Tribulation. The

restraining influence, however, that He has wielded in this world through the millions of true Christians, will have suddenly been removed, leaving a moral and spiritual vacuum in homes, neighborhoods, businesses, and schools such as we cannot even imagine.

A pretrib Rapture is also necessary because the Antichrist will be given authority by God “to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Rv 13:7). Such a fate could not befall the church, for Christ said that the “gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). Moreover, true Christians have authority and power to “resist the devil” and “he will flee” (Jas 4:7), for “greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world” (1 Jn 4:4). So the fact that Antichrist is given power

AND EVERY SPIRIT THAT CONFESSETH NOT THAT JESUS CHRIST IS COME IN THE FLESH IS NOT OF GOD: AND THIS IS THAT SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST, WHEREOF YE HAVE HEARD THAT IT SHOULD COME; AND EVEN NOW ALREADY IS IT IN THE WORLD.

YE ARE OF GOD, LITTLE CHILDREN, AND HAVE OVERCOME THEM: BECAUSE GREATER IS HE THAT IS IN YOU, THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD.

—1 John 4:3-4

by God “to make war with the saints and to overcome [i.e., kill] them” is proof that the true church is no longer present.

The “saints” mentioned are those who have not heard and rejected the gospel prior to the Rapture and who believe in Christ during the Great Tribulation. They will pay for their faith with their lives. Those who take the mark of the beast suffer the wrath of the Lamb, while those who don’t are slain by Antichrist. Thus a post-trib rapture would be a classic nonevent, for there would be very few if any surviving believers to be raptured at that time. And surely those Christians who were left alive, seeing the judgment of God poured out upon mankind and earth’s armies gathered for the battle of Armageddon in an attempt to destroy Israel, would know beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Second Coming was

about to occur—and would be watching for their Lord to appear. Yet Christ declared that He would return at a time of such ease that even the “five wise virgins” would “slumber and sleep.” He warned, “[F]or in such an hour *as ye think not* the Son of man cometh” (Mt 24:44). Hardly likely in the midst of the greatest tribulation and destruction the world has ever seen or ever will see!

To understand how the stage is being set for the final conflict between Christ and Antichrist, it is helpful to consider some comparisons and contrasts between these two antagonists. First of all, the procession of events is in God’s hands. Although we cannot know the day or hour of our Lord’s return, the Bible does give us many clues as to the general timing of this great occurrence.

There is a precise time for Christ’s second coming just as there was for the first: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son...” (Gal 4:4). The same is true of the Antichrist. Quite possibly already present in the world and waiting in the wings, this “man of sin” known as “that Wicked [one]” (2 Thes 2:3,8) can only take power when it is God’s time: “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed *in his time*” (2:6).

Interestingly, the Roman Empire plays an integral part in the timing for the revelation both of God’s Messiah and Satan’s. Ancient Rome set the stage for Christ’s birth: “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (Lk 2:1). It was this decree that caused Joseph and Mary to be in Bethlehem so that Christ would be born there in fulfillment of Micah 5:2. And of course He also had to be executed during the time of the Roman Empire, which introduced crucifixion, in order to fulfill Psalm 22.

For Christ to return, the Roman Empire must be revived. This is clear from Daniel’s interpretation that the distinct parts of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar “...head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron” (Dn 2:32-33) represented four world kingdoms: the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman. That the “feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron” (2:41) represent the fourth world kingdom revived in the last days is clear from the statement,

“And in the days of these kings [i.e., represented by the ten toes] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed...[and] it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (2:44).

Christ did not establish His kingdom the first time He came, so He must come again to do so. When? “In the days of those kings”—i.e., when the Roman Empire has been revived, out of which the Antichrist will arise. No longer “as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa 53:7), but now returning in power and glory to execute judgment upon those who crucified Him, Christ will destroy this evil empire in its revived form at His second coming. So although the date is not given, the *timing* of Christ’s return is clearly indicated.

It is also essential for the Roman Empire to be revived in order for the Antichrist to appear. Daniel prophesied that “the people of the prince that shall come [i.e., Antichrist] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary...” (Dn 9:26). The Roman armies under the command of Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. It is therefore from these people that the Antichrist must arise. That doesn’t necessarily mean that he has to be Roman, since her legions came from many parts of the Empire. It does mean, however, that he must come from that world kingdom—and for that to happen, the Roman Empire must be revived. We are seeing the fulfillment of this most remarkable prophecy in our day.

Calling Antichrist “the prince that shall come” indicates that he, like the ancient Caesars, will rule the Empire when it is *revived*. Moreover, the ancient Roman Empire was not only a political, economic, and military entity but also a religious one with the god-emperor the head of the pagan priesthood. So in conjunction with a world *government*, a world *religion* headed by the new Caesar, the Antichrist, must be established in the last days, exactly as Revelation 13 indicates.

During the periodic waves of Roman persecution that the early Christians endured, all citizens of the Empire were required to bow down to an image of the current Caesar and worship him as god. Those who did not were killed. Such will also be the case under Antichrist in the *revived* Roman Empire: “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life...[and] as many as would not wor-

ship the image of the beast [Antichrist] should be killed” (Rv 13:8,15).

The contrasts between Christ and Antichrist are also instructive. Our Lord was despised and rejected by Israel and by the world: the Antichrist will be hailed and embraced. Christ was mocked and jeered: the Antichrist will be praised. The cry of those who rejected Christ was, “We’ll not have this man to reign over us!” It is incredible to realize that in contrast the Antichrist will be accepted not only by the world but by Israel as well. Jesus told the Jewish leaders in His day, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (Jn 5:43).

Christ’s kingdom of light and truth is heavenly (“My kingdom is not of this world” - Jn 18:36); Antichrist’s kingdom of darkness is built upon a lie and is totally of this world. It is sad to see so many evangelical Christians becoming increasingly entangled in this world, joining with Catholics, Mormons and other cultists and occultists to pursue its political and social agendas—and in the process losing their hope of heaven. It was characteristic of the early church that they knew they were the *ekklesia*, the called-out ones, who were no longer of this world (Jn 17:6,14,16) but were eagerly waiting (1 Thes:1:10) and watching for Christ to return to take them to heaven (Heb 9:28; Jn 14:2-3). That hope must be awakened!

Mystery surrounds both Christ and Antichrist. Of Christ, Paul wrote, “great is the *mystery of godliness*: God was manifest in the flesh...” (1 Tm 3:16). And of Antichrist he wrote, “[T]he *mystery of iniquity* doth already work” (2 Thes 2:7). Each has a mysterious bride, one a virgin, the other a harlot. The mystery of godliness, which will be revealed in Christ’s bride, the church, has been “kept secret since the world began” (Rom 16:25) and is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). It can only be fully revealed at the last time (1 Pt 1:5).

The mystery of iniquity, which could conversely be called “Satan in you, the hope of damnation,” will also be revealed through a bride, the Antichrist’s. She is called “mystery, babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rv 17:5). As Christ loves and preserves His bride, so Satan will “hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire” (Rv 17:16).

The fact that the second coming of Christ in power and glory to rescue Israel,

destroy the armies that are about to destroy her, and to set up His kingdom upon the throne of His father David is a separate event from the rapture of His bride, the church, is very clear. Some try to make them one event by suggesting that we will be “caught up to meet the Lord in the air” on His way to earth and will immediately turn around and accompany Him to the Mount of Olives and His intervention at Armageddon. However, Revelation 19:7-14 tells of Christ’s marriage to His bride *in heaven before* He comes to earth to execute judgment and set up His kingdom.

A major purpose of the Second Coming is to destroy Antichrist: “whom the Lord shall...destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thes 2:8). Thus it is clear that the Second Coming cannot take place until the Antichrist has been revealed and has established his kingdom upon earth. If the Rapture were not a separate event from the Second Coming *before* the Antichrist is revealed, then Christians would not be watching, waiting, and looking for Christ, but for the Antichrist, which is unthinkable!

One of the growing delusions today is the belief that the church is not to be raptured at all but that when we have taken over the world (and not until then), Christ will return to reign over the kingdom we have established for Him. Yet Christ promised, “And if I go and prepare a place for you [in heaven], I will come again, *and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*” (Jn 14:3). Paul wrote that “the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air [obviously to be taken home to His Father’s house of many mansions]: and so shall we ever be with the Lord [in heaven, where He has gone to prepare a place for us]” (1 Thes 4:16-17).

Instead, many who claim to be Christians are looking forward to meeting a “Christ” with their feet planted firmly on planet earth—a “Christ” who has not arrived to take them to heaven but to reign over the kingdom they have established for him. What a delusion! Such have not been working for the true Christ, but for the counterfeit, the Antichrist. They have not been “lay[ing] up...treasures in heaven” (Mt 6:20), but have been building an earthly kingdom. May our Bridegroom reawaken our love for Him, and may our hearts, as it should be with a bride, long to see and be with Him! **TBC**

Quotable

“...His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: Great is thy faithfulness.”
—Lamentations 3:22-23

God is faithful and true. He cannot lie or deceive. He cannot go back on His word. He is absolutely trustworthy. No promise of His can ever fail....

God wants His people to be faithful and true. He wants us to be true to our word. He wants us to be dependable in keeping appointments. We should not be given to lies, exaggeration, or half-truths. We should be faithful in keeping our promises. Christians, above all people, should be faithful to their marriage vows. They should be faithful in discharging their commitments in the assembly, in business, and in the home.

How we should praise and thank the Lord for His faithfulness. He is the God who cannot fail.

—WILLIAM MACDONALD

Q&A

QUESTION: A while ago I read in the Bible that God does not answer prayers from those who are not saved [but] if you have accepted Him as your Lord and Savior, He will give you anything you ask. I have searched and cannot seem to find the “very clear” answer I found once before. I found a few other references, but not the exact statement I was looking for. Can you help me?

RESPONSE: Concerning the Lord answering prayers of unbelievers, we know that He inspired the writer of Psalm 66:18 to state, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” After declaring that His power and ability has no limit, the Lord in Isaiah 59:2 declared to a sinful and disobedient Israel, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”

Nevertheless, Scripture does on occasion speak of God both hearing and answering the prayers of unbelievers. Concerning these passages, prayer was clearly involved. For some, God answered the heart cry of the individual. Hagar lifted up “her voice and wept” as she considered the imminent death of Ishmael (Genesis 21:14-19).

For others, the prayer is presented with an attitude of repentance. Those in Nineveh prayed that God might spare Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10). God answered this prayer and did not destroy the city. But in other examples, the prayer or petition concerned an earthly need or blessing, and God responded out of compassion or in response either to the genuine seeking or the faith of the person. The Lord sent the apostle Peter to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, because Cornelius was an unsaved

but “devout” man (Acts 10:2), who “prayed to God always.”

Jesus spoke of the prayer of a tax collector in contrast to that of a self-righteous Pharisee, saying “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:11-14).

Although we can have confidence that God answers prayers, there clearly are points where the Lord exercises His sovereignty and wisdom: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

Our loving Father knows what’s best for us, and His answers to prayer are given for our best interest. In John 15:7, Jesus stated, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” The Lord is clearly concerned about our “abiding” in Him. Consequently, we cannot say that as believers “He will give you anything you ask....” We also need to remember that “no” or “not now” is also an answer.

In James 4:3, the inspired writer points out, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” For example, the believer who is mishandling his finances cannot expect a prayer for material blessing to be answered. Rather, the Lord’s priority for believers is to be “conformed to the image of His son” (Romans 8:29). That priority will clearly affect how the Lord answers the prayers of a believer.

QUESTION: We are not called to social activism but to preach the gospel and convert sinners. That should have a major good effect on society—far more than social activism. The question is, what happened when there was far less social activism and far more “preaching of the gospel” by the likes of Billy Graham, etc.? It seems like things just got worse in society, just as they have when there is much less gospel and more social activism.

RESPONSE: Never does the Bible suggest that the gospel is going to convert the world or that the church will influence the world’s morals. The statement that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse” (2 Timothy 3:13) is not conditional but unequivocal.

The question is not whether the gospel will have a greater impact upon the world than social and political action. We are told to preach the gospel, not to try to change the world. Christ has assured us that we will be hated by the world, not that we will influence it for good, much less convert it. And, sadly, very few heed the gospel and become saved (Matthew 7:14; Luke 13:23-25).

QUESTION: Was the Great Commission only for the original apostles? At that time there were very few nations. Did they go to them? Or, does “nations” imply or suggest something else?

RESPONSE: In Matthew 28:19, Jesus is speaking to the disciples, giving them what is called the Great Commission and specifically commanding them to teach all nations and baptize all who become converts throughout the nations. In verse 20, He instructs them to teach “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The word “nations” is the Greek word “ethnos” from which we get our word “ethnic.” Therefore, the reference is not to geographical nations but as Revelation 7:9 tells us, “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues....”

Since the apostles were to teach the disciples who would follow them to observe “all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” we can conclude that the Commission was not meant only for the apostles.

Furthermore, in Acts 1:8, the Lord Jesus tells the apostles, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem...Judaea...Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” So now we know the geographical extent of the Great Commission—to the ends of the earth! This means that the Gospel is to be shared in every place on the earth where people may be found.

The rest of the book of Acts describes the progress of the Gospel, telling of its first being preached in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-47). Many Jews were gathered there, where more than 3,000 people received the Gospel and were baptized (Acts 2:41,47; 3:1-4:31). Despite persecution, the number of disciples continued to increase, with many men and women in Jerusalem being added to the church, including a sizeable number of the priests (Acts 5:14-15; 6:7; 8-9:31). The Gospel spread to Judea, Samaria (Acts 6:8-7:60), and ultimately, to the “uttermost parts of the earth.” As for the time frame, the Lord’s admonition in Matthew 28:20 was that He would be “with you always, even unto the end of the world,” referring to the end of the age. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus tells us, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.”

No, the Great Commission was not for only the apostles.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

The Challenging Mystery of Light

Question: I've had several atheists challenge me with the very first chapter of Genesis – not with the usual arguments about the universe being created in six literal days, for which I think there are scientific answers, but with one I can't solve. Verses 14-19 say that God created the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day. Yet on the very first day, "God said, Let there be light, and there was light....And the evening and the morning were the first day" (verses 3-5). Where did the light come from on the first day if the sun, moon, and stars weren't created until the fourth day?

Response: These are among the favorite verses used by the critics as one more "proof" that the Bible contains contradictions and thus could not be the Word of God. As usual, however, they are too eager to come to such a conclusion. In fact, this passage presents one more unique evidence of the Bible's authenticity and inspiration. Let us think about this problem logically for a moment.

If this is indeed a contradiction, it is certainly so obvious that whoever penned these words would have become immediately aware of it and revised the order of creation to correct it. And if the original writer inexplicably failed to take care of it, then that inexcusable blunder would surely have been "corrected" by a later scribe. But neither revision occurred. The very fact that this apparent contradiction remains in the text to this day forces upon us a logical conclusion.

Obviously Moses, who originally wrote these words and certainly was too perceptive and intelligent not to notice the problem, must have believed he was inspired by God and therefore put the account of creation down exactly as it was revealed to him even though he probably did not understand all that he recorded. Moreover, as we have already noted, the subsequent scribes, too, who painstakingly

copied and preserved this ancient record must have been so certain that it was the Word of God that they dared not tamper with it, even leaving intact what might seem to be a number of blatant "contradictions."

Whether or not Moses himself fully understood what God inspired him to write is a question about which we need not concern ourselves. The prophets whom God inspired to record His Word dared not second-guess God on the basis of their imperfect understanding or of the myths current in their day. For example, at the time of superstitious explanations of earthquakes, from the belief that the earth was sitting upon the shoulders of the god Atlas to the theory that it was resting upon a tortoise floating in a huge sea, the Bible declared that God "hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job:26:7). The Bible, unlike other religious or even ancient scientific and

philosophical writings, far from reflecting the limited knowledge and popular superstitions of the culture and time in which it was written, contains truth and understanding neither known by nor available to mankind at the time of the writing. That fact alone is one of the great proofs that the Bible was inspired of God.

Revealing Knowledge beyond the Times

As further evidence of its divine origin, the Bible contains hidden wisdom (1 Corinthians:2:7) that was not fully revealed even to those “holy men of God” (2 Peter:1:21) who were inspired to write it. Though its writer probably didn’t understand what he had been inspired to declare, Hebrews:11:3 stated centuries before science came to that conclusion that the universe was made out of something invisible. We are specifically told that those who wrote the Old Testament announced things that they didn’t fully understand (Romans:1:1-2; 16:25-26; Ephesians:3:3-5). So Moses, too, may not have understood all that was meant when he wrote, “And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.”

In keeping with the mystery surrounding light in Scripture, to this very day science has been unable to explain it. Light acts like both a wave and a particle, which is impossible – but it’s true. What is light? We still don’t know.

We are given a glimpse of a truth in these first few verses of Genesis, which is revealed more fully only in the last chapters of the Bible. The

secret of the “light” that surrounded the earth prior to the creation of the sun, moon, and stars is made known in this description of the new creation after this present universe (with its sun, moon, and stars) will have been destroyed and replaced:

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it....

And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life....

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.... (Revelation:21:1-2, 23-24, 27; 22:5)”

The Bible tells us that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John:1:5). That light pervaded the universe from eternity past. Before sin entered the world and until the celestial bodies were created that supernatural light was apparently directed by God to illuminate this earth. After sin has been removed, the light that God is, and that Christ, who is God, also is, will fill the new universe once again.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

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ANTI-CHRISTIANITY ASCENDING—Part 1

T. A. McMahon

WHEN I FIRST BEGAN speaking at prophecy conferences years ago, I was intrigued by the fact that during the panel question-and-answer sessions there were always a few questions related to the Antichrist. It was a bit unsettling—probably because I knew little about that end-time biblical figure and cared even less. I therefore avoided adding my uninformed remarks and usually passed the microphone to the speaker to my right or left. Then there came a time when that wasn't an option, and I had to say something. As I remember it, my comment was something that I now regard as astute sounding but in reality was ignorance verging on stupidity, i.e., some sort of babble about “Why should we concern ourselves with the Antichrist when we believers will be raptured before he comes on the worldwide scene?” I know people who feel that way today, but I gave up that misconception early on, and here's why.

The Bible is very clear in its pronouncements regarding the Antichrist and what he will accomplish, which includes deceiving the entire world into submitting to him, taking control of world economics, manifesting unprecedented military might, exhibiting supernatural powers, and setting up a religious system that involves the world's worship of him. In my privileged years of working with Dave Hunt, he addressed, as few others, the increasing apostasy that was seducing Christianity. I then began to realize that the things he was pointing out (such as the information contained in his classic DVD *Beyond Seduction*) were moving in a direction that would culminate in a condition unparalleled in human history. As I reaffirmed in the June 2017 *TBC* newsletter, the assorted false religious beliefs, dogmas, and practices, although appearing to differ greatly from one another, have always been rooted together and headed toward the same end. My attitude regarding the significance of the Antichrist and his religion changed with the realization of something that should have been obvious to me: all that entails the Antichrist's deception of the world and the seduction of Christianity *does not wait* until after the rapture of the church for their effects to be realized. Those deceits go clear back to Satan's deception of Eve in Genesis chapter 3, and have continued, and will continue more aggressively, until they climax during

the reign of the “son of perdition.”

Obviously, the Rapture has yet to take place. The Apostasy, however, and its impact upon Christendom, is without a doubt growing exponentially, and Scripture gives no indication that the dire effects of the Adversary's program for his Antichrist will be abated, e.g., that a worldwide revival or some type of collective repentance or reformation will turn things around. Nevertheless, Jesus admonishes and exhorts His bride, the church, as He addresses the seven churches in Revelation chapters one through three, giving them instructions that, if obeyed, will be effective for His glory and their fruitfulness. The Apostasy cannot hinder those laborers in Christ who are steadfast in the faith and empowered by the Holy Spirit. That's not to say that a spiritual battle won't ensue, resulting in trials and tribulations as we fight the good fight of faith, but being obedient and persevering by His grace will enable us to accomplish what God will help us to do. I believe the results will be the rescuing of many of those who have been deceived, whether they are among the lost or among our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are now in a rescue operation situation, attempting to reach “any man” who has “ears to hear” with the truth; and, as for the body of Christ, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Mark 4:23; Revelation 2:17).

Although I have been addressing at times over the last few years specific aspects of the coming world religion, it's a great encouragement to have those whom I respect in the Lord confirm my writings on the subject. One of those friends told me to read a book that he believed would be of further encouragement. I got it and read it. To use one of Dave Hunt's favorite expressions: “Wow!” That would have been his response, without a doubt. The book is what I would call a “pre-confirmation,” meaning it confirms what we've been describing regarding the Apostasy with this amazing distinction: It was written in 1898!

Its title is *Christianity and AntiChristianity in Their Final Conflict*. In this and next month's article, I hope to present some of the author's observations and biblical evaluations, which are rather extensive and primarily cover the years during the late 1800s. Yet the issues addressed read as if they were happening today, because they are all part of the Adversary's scheme to establish the religion of the Antichrist and his kingdom. The author, Samuel Andrews, claims no special prophetic insight. He simply does what he exhorts all Christians

to do, and that is—search the Scriptures for its prophetic information, and discern the things that are taking place in our own day. He wants believers to be like the children of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32) who had understanding of the times and knew what Israel ought to do.

The value of this for every believer should be obvious. Andrews writes: “It is in the light of the present that we must re-examine the prophetic problems of the past. As the purpose of God draws nearer to its fulfillment, passing events will tend to show in their distinctive features the nature of that fulfillment. It is, therefore, for us of today to note the religious tendencies of the present, and to consider carefully their bearing upon the Divine purpose in man as it has been made known to us in the Scriptures. To those who believe that God, who knows the end from the beginning, has through His prophets and His Son declared this purpose in its outlines for the guidance of His children, our inquiry is of deepest interest. ‘We ask, To what stage of His actings have we come? What are the religious characteristics of the present time?’”

He continues: “To ignore the Antichrist of whom she has been forewarned, is for the church to expose herself defenseless to his wiles, deceptions, and attacks.... But for all who accept the Scriptures as an intelligible revelation of a Divine purpose, the first duty is to ask what they teach us. Putting away all prejudices and unreasoned beliefs, we must ask what the Holy Ghost, speaking by the prophets of old and by the Lord and His apostles, has told us of the final stages of the great conflict between good and evil so long waged in the earth, and of its chief actors in the time of the end. It is only through Scriptural light that we can fully know the character and work of the Antichrist; and to this light it is of vital importance that we give heed.... It need not be said that this man and his kingdom are not the accidents of an hour; *there is a long preparatory process*. As with our Lord, so with him. There is a ‘fullness of time’ for his appearing, and this is not till the antichristian leaven has spread through Christendom” (emphasis added).

Although Andrews identifies much of what that “leaven” entails, he underscores the sickly spiritual condition of the church that has initially allowed that leaven to enter and to permeate the body of Christ: “If we now ask for the cause of this change, its deepest root, we find it in the Lord's words addressed from heaven to the church at Ephesus—the representative of

the church of the apostolic age: ‘Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love’ (Revelation 2:4). Here was the first step in the falling away. In all other respects the Lord highly commends the church. Let us carefully note the significance of this first downward step—the loss of the first love.... Love is the bond of all true spiritual unity and communion, and finds its fullest scope in the relation of the church to her Head. *If it fails, there comes estrangement, separation* (emphasis added). If the church ceases to be one with the Head through her loss of love, she no longer has full communion with Him, and cannot grow up into Him in all things, and come unto the measure of the stature of His fullness.” He adds, “Let us now note what the Lord said of the spiritual condition of the church just before His return. It would be one of great worldliness. ‘And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold’” (Matthew 24:12).

In chapter two of Hebrews we find this warning: “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (v. 1). Andrews’s emphasis upon believers letting their love of Jesus “slip” as a critical aspect of their diminishing judgment and disobedience to His commands sets his book apart from most others I’ve read that stress biblical discernment. Too often they major on the symptoms (specifics of a false teaching) and miss the root cause. Andrews identifies the *cause* that begins the process of drifting away from the truth of God’s Word and then describes many of the disastrous consequences as that trend had impacted the church throughout history, and especially during the late 1800s.

What are some of those consequences that he noted one hundred and eighteen years ago? See if you recognize any relationship with the erroneous beliefs, practices, and religious and political agendas of our day.

Here are a few glaring issues that he addresses:

- 1) The increasing antagonism of the world toward biblical Christianity
- 2) The apostasy as it grows exponentially within Christendom
- 3) The [growing] belief that worldwide revival is coming, the world will be converted, and Christianity will take dominion prior to Christ’s return

- 4) The idea that a “new age” is dawning, with pantheism being its chief doctrine
- 5) The teaching that God is all and is in all
- 6) The hope that science will ultimately reveal all knowledge
- 7) The belief that evolution is how the world came about
- 8) The concept that mankind is evolving into godhood
- 9) The argument that these false beliefs will unify humanity

Andrews describes how those concepts were not just in the domain of the religious leaders of his day but worked their way down to the masses from the philosophers and scientists through the literary authors, poets, artists, popular novelists, newspapers, and trendy magazines.

The author’s approach to discerning his times was quite simple and unique yet foundationally biblical. He shows what the Scriptures decree will be the *culmination* of history prior to the return of Jesus Christ. That end will include the establishment of that kingdom of the Antichrist followed by its utter destruction. Andrews then draws from God’s Word the many characteristics of that man of lawlessness, who is revealed to be the demonically empowered epitome of deception, and extrapolates those features back to his own era. For example, Scripture tells us that the Antichrist will set himself in the temple of God showing that he is God and is to be worshipped as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Andrews points out that for the world to believe and accept such an idea there must be a previous and perhaps long-term conditioning that precedes the event. He then considered the populace of his own day (118 years ago) in order to see if the deification of a human might be rationally acceptable.

He didn’t have to look very far. The basis of the idea was promoted seemingly everywhere. Unitarians, Transcendentalists, Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science, and Helena Blavatsky’s Theosophy spread the word. The enthusiasm for naturalism, socialism, evolution, and pantheism aggressively rejected biblical Christianity and exalted mankind through the various media. The favored writers of that day, such as Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman, all believed in and advanced their faith in the divinity of humanity. They drew heavily from their readings of the sacred texts of Hinduism, which we recognize today as being central to the beliefs and

practices of the New Age Movement. The belief in godhood for humanity was the “new age” hope of Samuel Andrews’s day. He notes, “Philosophy and science in many eminent representatives agree in affirming that there is no personal God, only a universal, impersonal Spirit or Energy, of which everything that exists is a part. This, viewed on the material side, is atheism; on the spiritual, [it] is pantheism” (i.e., God is all and in all). When Andrews uses the term “new age,” however, which he does throughout his book, he means it as a complete change from biblical Christianity: “We have come to a new age, and a new age must bring with it a new religion, not a revivification of the past; one based upon a new conception of God, simple, comprehensive, and fitted to be a world religion.” That “new age” and “new religion” is embodied in the religion of the Antichrist.

Christianity and Antichristianity in Their Final Conflict was quite controversial, and the author addressed his critics in his book’s second printing. Some objected to what they considered the overall “pessimistic tone” of Andrews’s work, and others were upset by the fact that he painted a picture of “the world as growing worse, rather than better.” Professing Christians and some true believers of his day were greatly influenced by evolutionary thought and believed that humanity was evolving upward. Consequently, they could “find no place for any development of evil and an Antichrist.” Andrews’s response: “In all questions as to the future of humanity, we must either picture this future for ourselves, or accept Divine revelation.” And it is “Divine revelation,” God’s written Word, that sets the course for his book.

In Part 2, we will glean more insights from this amazing book that was written more than a century ago yet reads as though it were penned today. Two things come to mind as I begin the follow-up article: 1) God’s prophetic Word has been and is being manifested for each believing generation for the spiritual protection and fruitfulness of those who read it and act in obedience to its warnings. 2) It’s greatly encouraging to know that previous generations were aware of the things we see taking place today. Only the Adversary’s players have changed, as well as the increase and intensity of the apostasy.

Our hope is to reprint *Christianity and AntiChristianity in Their Final Conflict* and have it available in the Fall. We covet your prayers for that endeavor. **TBC**

Quotable.....

“When I cannot read, when I cannot think, when I cannot even pray, I can trust.”

—JAMES HUDSON TAYLOR

Q&A.....

QUESTION: How much power do Satan, his minions, and the Antichrist have? Can they heal?

RESPONSE: That Satan has great power is unarguable, as Job, chapters 1-2, demonstrates. He is, however, restricted in this power: “And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power [within a specific limit]; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord” (Job 1:12). Regarding an “ability” to heal, however, we must recognize that Satan is not the Creator and can’t bring life and healing. As Paul clearly told the pagan philosophers on Mars Hill, “For in him [the Lord] we live, and move, and have our being;...” In Exodus 15:26, the Lord declared, “for I am the LORD that healeth thee.”

In contrast, Satan can only afflict. Job 2:7 tells us, “So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.” Although Satan can afflict, he can also withdraw the affliction, thus giving the appearance of a healing. “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14).

During His earthly sojourn, Jesus encountered a woman who for 18 years had been crippled by a spirit (Lk 13:11). Jesus identifies her infirmity as being from Satan: “[T]here was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and...could in no wise lift up herself....And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” (Lk 13:11,16). Satan’s power is real but easily overcome by our Lord. Jesus’ miracle of healing clearly showed His authority over Satan.

The hallmark of Satan’s endtimes deception is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10: “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” He is the master of deception, and if “healing” will

attract those being deceived, he will produce a counterfeit healing.

QUESTION: I have a question that I hope you can answer for me, please: Is lack of confidence or social anxiety a sin?

RESPONSE: Lack of confidence may simply be called “fear.” Social anxiety can be simplified to “anxiety,” regardless of what causes it. In the trials and circumstances that come before us, we may be tempted to yield to fear and anxiety in a sinful manner. On some occasions, the Lord may want us to stand and see His salvation. At other times, we clearly know to remove ourselves from the situation. We all face fear and anxiety to one degree or another, but do we allow them to cause us to flee from circumstances under which we know the Lord would want us to remain for His purposes?

In the book of Esther, a royal decree has been issued that will bring a massacre of all the Jews in Persia. Queen Esther is anxious and fearful because she was asked by her uncle Mordecai to risk her life on behalf of her people. The possibility of death and the unknown is certainly cause for fear and anxiety for anyone! Mordecai specifically tells Esther that “[I]f thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall... deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (4:14).

Had Esther yielded to her fear and anxiety and fled or refused to follow through, her action, it is directly implied, would have been sinful and would have resulted in tragedy for her. Although fear and anxiety are part of the human condition, it only becomes sin when we yield to the temptation to flee from challenges that we know God is allowing.

For those who are the children of God, our very necessities such as food and clothing are not to be the cause of worry. Jesus points to His creation, showing that our Heavenly Father knows our needs, is concerned with them and for us (Mt 6:25-31). If God cares for grass, flowers, and birds, why shouldn’t He also care for His children who are created in His image? Chapter 6 ends with the admonition to “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (v. 33). Rather than yielding to our fears and anxieties, we must turn to God and His Word. The promise of our Lord is that “all these things shall be added unto you.” What things? The necessary things of life.

To yield to our fears and anxieties is to

doubt the promise of God. That common scenario of mankind showed up in the Garden when Satan asked, “Yea, hath God said...?” (Gn 3:1). Yes, it was doubt that led to the sin that brought in the curse.

You speak of social anxiety. Interaction with other people can certainly bring anxiety along with the temptation to avoid or flee. But we are called to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20) and that involves social interaction with others.

Finally, James 1:2-4 exhorts, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

QUESTION: Are there consequences for the individual who denies the existence of the Devil?

RESPONSE: In warfare, one of the most effective ways to take an opponent by surprise is camouflage. If one doesn’t know of their enemy’s existence, they are clearly not on guard. Peter warns in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour...” (emphasis added).

In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul also warned, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” The Bible very clearly teaches the existence of Satan. He is the father of lies (Jn 8:44), the accuser of the brethren (Rv 12:10), and the enemy of man (Gn 3:15), whose head the Lord Jesus was prophesied to crush. “Satan” itself means “adversary.”

Satan’s chosen purpose is to oppose God and His plan while leading as many people as he can into rebellion against their Creator. Satan does have a “limited” authority in this world (Job 1:12, 2:6). He is “the god of this world [who] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor 4:4).

The Bible declares that Satan exists, and it describes how he operates. We must not be intimidated by Satan, for his power is wholly inferior to God’s. The Bible, however, teaches us to be informed of the spiritual battle before us (Eph 6:10-18). We are admonished to first submit to God before resisting the devil (Jas 4:7), and we know that our Lord has defeated him forever at the Cross, and Satan’s certain end and eternal judgment are assured (Rv 19:20).

There certainly are consequences for those who refuse to acknowledge his existence. They are basically unsuspecting targets.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Was Saul/Paul sincere but deluded?

Question: The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a rabbi, to Christianity, seems to be the strongest argument that Christian apologists can muster for the resurrection. Even if we accept it as having been written by Luke, the book of Acts presents an account of Saul's conversion that is less than convincing. Yes, he claimed he saw Jesus Christ alive on his way to Damascus; and, yes, he was willing to die for his belief. "That does not prove, however, that Paul actually saw Christ. It only proves that he sincerely thought he saw Him alive years after His crucifixion. He could have imagined that he saw Christ. He could have hallucinated due to a sense of guilt for having persecuted Christ's followers. How can Christians make so much out of Saul's conversion when it stands on such flimsy ground?"

Response: First of all, it is rather doubtful that a man of Paul's obvious intellect and emotional stability could have experienced such a vivid hallucination and allowed it to change his life. Furthermore, the event was accompanied by visible phenomena – a supernatural light at midday brighter than the sun (Acts:9:3; 26:13), and a voice from heaven – which those accompanying Paul also saw and heard (Acts:9:7). Paul's companions would have refuted his story if they had not also witnessed these things.

There was also Paul's sudden blindness and miraculous recovery through a disciple in Damascus who could confirm the facts. Many witnesses must have seen Paul led into Damascus totally blind. Had there been any flaw in Paul's testimony, refutation discrediting him would have followed from many quarters. Yet no one disputed his testimony when he declared it before religious and secular leaders and crowds of Jews who opposed his message on religious grounds. The evidence is compelling.

Saul of Tarsus had been the chief enemy of the church at its very beginning, arresting and imprisoning many believers and persecuting some even to death. This course so diligently pursued must have made him very popular

among the religious Jews. As a young rabbi Saul was already a hero well known for his zeal against Christians. He had everything to live for in remaining true to Judaism. That he would forfeit a brilliant future and become one of those whom he had persecuted, knowing that the same beatings, imprisonment, and eventual martyrdom would befall him as well, is indeed powerful evidence that he was convinced beyond doubt that Jesus Christ was alive and that he had personally met Him. Hallucination simply doesn't fit the known facts.

Convincing Evidence of another Kind

Even more convincing is the leading role that Paul quickly assumed in the explosive growth of early

Christianity. He had inside knowledge and taught new doctrines completely at odds with his years of training and practice in Judaism, doctrines that he couldn't possibly have acquired except from Christ himself. Yet Paul had never met Him prior to His crucifixion. He claimed to have learned all he knew of this new faith directly from the risen Christ. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

“I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians:11:23-25)

Paul wasn't present on that occasion, so how did he know what happened at that final intimate meeting between Christ and His 12 disciples? Why was it left to Paul to explain what happened at the Last Supper and its meaning? Why not Peter or James or John, who were there? Clearly the Holy Spirit had Paul write these words as part of the proof of Christ's resurrection. He testifies that he “received of the Lord” all that he is now teaching. We repeat: Everything that he knows about this new faith and now teaches with such authority Paul claims to have received personally and directly from the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ himself. Nor is there any other explanation.

Unquestionably, Paul had never studied under Christ with the other disciples. He was a rabbi opposed to Christ during the latter's life. Yet suddenly, he became not only the chief spokesman for Christianity but its chief authority. He even rebuked Peter to his face and

Peter had to acknowledge that Paul was right and he was wrong (Galatians:2:11-14). Whence this sudden authoritative knowledge?

Of course the skeptics suggest that Paul had hurriedly gone to the apostles and said, “I'm a believer in Jesus now, but I don't understand this Christianity thing. I want to preach it, so you'd better give me a crash course. Otherwise I could make some horrible blunders!” Could that be true? Did Paul learn what he knew of Christianity from Peter or from other apostles and Christians?

Undeniable Internal Proof

On the contrary, it was three years after his conversion that Paul finally came to Jerusalem. And when he attempted “to join himself to the disciples...they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple” (Acts:9:26). Paul solemnly testifies: “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ...I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia.... Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ; but they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me. (Galatians:1:11-24)

That he is telling the truth is clear from the fact that Paul was the revealer of truths unknown to the other apostles. It was Paul to whom Christ made known by revelation (Ephesians:3:3-10) “the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans:16:25) and gave to him the privilege of preaching it (1 Corinthians:15:51; Ephesians:5:32; Colossians:1:25-27). He became the leading apostle and authority on Christianity and the other apostles had to admit that he knew more than they

and that he had indeed learned it directly from the risen Christ.

Paul wrote most of the epistles, more than all of the original apostles combined. It was he who stood up against the false doctrine being taught by the Judaizers who came from Jerusalem, where the apostles still resided. Paul confronted the apostle and church leaders

in Jerusalem with this heresy (Acts 15) and changed the thinking in the church.

There was no explanation for Paul's knowledge except that Christ had indeed risen from the dead and had revealed Himself and His teachings to this former enemy. Hallucination cannot account for such knowledge and authority.

—An excerpt from *IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH* by DAVE HUNT

Anti-Christianity Ascending — Part 2

T. A. McMahon

IT USED TO BE that if I wanted a confirmation of what Dave Hunt and I were writing regarding the spiritual changes we observed taking place in the US and, more specifically, in Christendom, I'd talk to missionaries who had returned home on furlough after spending a couple of years ministering overseas. Many were quite shaken by what had transpired here in their absence, especially in their local churches. Among the changes they saw were the strong influences of so-called Christian psychology, the Purpose Driven and seeker-sensitive approach to church growth, militant Calvinism, Replacement theology with its tendency toward anti-Semitism, the Contemplative movement, the Hebrew Roots movements, the Emerging Church movement, kingdom dominionism, etc. Some found themselves in situations in which they had to decide whether or not they could continue fellowshiping in the church that had sent them into the mission field and was their primary support. "Heartbreaking" only partially describes their reactions.

It *used to be* that their responses were clear indicators of changes that we here in the US often miss or don't immediately realize because they appear slowly and even stealthily. It's much like the old "frog in the pot" parable, in which a frog was placed in a pot of tepid water, with the water temperature being very gently increased. The frog adapted to the warmer water until it eventually cooked to death. Now it appears that Christendom is being cooked at a fast-food rate. False teachers have abandoned trying to ease in "new teachings" and are now racing headlong into heresy after heresy. One example among a multitude of shockers that could be given: pews are pushed back in the sanctuaries of many evangelical churches to make room for the practice of Jesus Yoga, Yahweh Yoga, Holy Yoga and Kid's Holy Yoga, Praise Moves, Yogafaith, or Christoga (see "New Age Mysticism Déjà Vu Part 2")! Forget subtlety. It's anti-Christianity, full speed ahead!

How could such a thing happen? Samuel Andrews's book *Christianity and Anti-Christianity In Their Final Conflict* gives us answers. But how did he acquire his acute awareness? Simply from the same source that he challenges readers of his book to seek out answers regarding

such things—the Bible: "It is only through Scriptural light that we can fully know the character and work of the Anti-Christ; and to this light it is of vital importance that we give heed, for we are forewarned that he will present himself to men under an aspect best fitted to deceive." Andrews claims no special prophetic insights, and although his approach is somewhat unique, it isn't complex. Reading the Bible and taking it at its word is the first prerequisite. The Scriptures prophetically declare that apostasy *will* take place in the last days before Jesus returns, and it begins with what Hebrews 2 warns believers against: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (v.1). That slippage has become a landslide today. Jesus is more specific in Revelation 2 as He addresses the church at Ephesus, first acknowledging their good works, and then: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

The departure from one's love of Jesus, no matter how slight, is still a departure. Good works, regardless of how seemingly good, without the love of Christ included, will result in a slippage. At what cost? Jesus told the "church of many good deeds" that if they didn't return to their love for Him, He would remove the lampstand (i.e., the light given to them), and they would no longer reflect Jesus, who is that "true Light" (John 1:9). So began the bride of Christ's slide into apostasy.

Andrews realized that if there is a departure from the faith it will have serious consequences that will escalate to an awful conclusion resulting in devastating spiritual wreckage. He found this stated, in no uncertain terms, in the Book of Revelation. Andrews's rather unique approach was to ascertain all that Scripture said about the last days prior to Christ's return and, in particular, about the man who is the embodiment of wickedness, the Antichrist. Using those characteristics of the "man of sin" and what he is enabled by Satan to do, Andrews searches through the chronology of the Bible and church history, looking for traces and traits of the apostasy and its numerous elements that will contribute to the formation of the religion of the Antichrist.

Andrews provides an example based on this statement: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that

is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Andrews surmises that the reception by the entire world of someone who claims to be God and who will be worshiped as God is not something that humanity will readily accept without great cause and expectancy. He recognizes that the conditioning of the world by Satan is necessary in order to make his "man of sin" credible: "It need not be said that this man and his kingdom are not the accidents of an hour; there is a long preparatory process." The world's rejection of Christ, the only true God manifested in the flesh, demonstrates that there must be more to convince people that worshiping the man of sin (rather than the sinless God/Man) is both advantageous and right. Andrews finds in Scripture what has been referred to as "the lie" (Romans 1:25), the belief that finite created beings can be as God, or are a part of God. The lie began in heaven when Lucifer declared, "I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:14). The lie came to earth in Satan's offer to Eve: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

Throughout Scripture and history we find examples of people worshiping mortal men, from the Caesars to the Roman and Greek gods to individuals such as Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:22). Even the Apostle Paul was thought to be a god by the barbarians on the Island of Melita, and the people at Lystra, referring to him, exclaimed: "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men." Yet those local incidents were a far cry from what will take place regarding the worldwide worship of the Antichrist.

Andrews's approach to end-times prophecy is not complicated. He read what the Bible declares will take place just prior to the Lord's return, and then he surveyed his own time (the late 1800s) to see if what was being popularized had any relevance to the fulfillment of latter-day prophecy. Unlike some in our day who turn every news event into a literal prophetic fulfillment, Andrews addressed the big picture conceptually: mankind *will* universally come to believe in the deification of man and the worship of man. The evidence that this development was well on its way was plentiful in Andrews's day, primarily due to the belief in pantheism and panentheism. They are the belief that God isn't personal but a Force, the substance of which everything consists and which is in everything. Thus, man is God or is a part of God.

The teaching that God is an impersonal

Force is foundational to Eastern mysticism, especially Hinduism. In the West, Andrews saw that the philosophers who greatly influenced his era (Kant, Hegel, Spinoza, etc.) drew upon Eastern mystical concepts in formulating their views of God. He quotes a well-known historian of the early 1800s who recognized the same: "Among the different systems, by whose aid philosophy endeavours to explain the universe, I believe Pantheism to be one of those most fitted to seduce the human mind in democratic ages..."

The belief in Pantheism was further promoted by well-known literary figures (Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Shelley, Browning, et al.), whose writings advanced their belief in the exaltation of nature and the deification of mankind. Many in the sciences joined their ranks based on the endorsements of Huxley and others promoting evolution, especially in the rejection of a Creator.

As the affinity for the pseudoscience of evolution grew, ideas were added that reinforced the belief in mankind's evolution to a higher state. Darwin predicted that "in the distant future man will be a far more perfect creature than he now is." Andrews writes, "In this belief as to the future of man, the leading evolutionists... look chiefly to the gradual evolution of humanity under the law of the survival of the fittest.... Philosophy and science in many eminent representatives agree in affirming that there is no personal God, only a universal, impersonal Spirit or Energy, of which everything that exists is a part. This, viewed on the material side, is atheism; on the spiritual, is pantheism [with its deifying affirmations]."

Andrews wrote extensively of the many things taking place in his time period of 120 years ago that advanced the idea that all humanity is God. The abundant information on that one prophetic point alone brought him to a conclusion that was evident in much of what he observed: worshiping the Antichrist will surely include the recognition of one's own godhood. He further explains: "It is also to be remembered that in rendering homage to one who appears as the rival of Christ, men will not do homage to *one who differs in his nature from themselves*, and superior to them; but to *their own nature as embodied in him*. In exalting him, they exalt themselves" [with the *only* difference being] "that they recognize in him one in whom is a larger measure of Divinity" (emphasis added).

Christianity and Anti-Christianity In Their Final Conflict reads as though it were

written today, with two differences: 1) All the things that Andrews identified in his era are found today albeit in widely diverse, yet connected and expanded, versions, and 2) Their exposition and promotion in our day seems to be taking place worldwide at light speed by comparison.

The following brief summary of just some of his insights leaves one in awe of his biblical and historical discernment:

- As a result of the loss of the bride of Christ's main focus upon Jesus and her love for Him, her desire to please Him through obedience to His commands will decrease, and apostasy will follow.
- Though a remnant will remain steadfast, the end-time church will supplant the headship of Christ with the rule of men, organizations, and the state. All attempts within Christendom to set up Christ's Kingdom prior to His return will fail.
- The state will rule over the church very likely through some form of socialism, and Christ will be regarded as little more than a model of social and moral correctness.
- The world will look forward to a more highly evolved human instead of looking back to one in the archaic past, like Jesus.
- Biblical Christianity will be ultimately disparaged and rejected, especially with its doctrine of the sinfulness of man in need of salvation through Jesus Christ alone.
- Neo-Christianity will conform to the ways, means, and beliefs of the world.
- Christ, when He is considered, is said to be simply a revealer of the divinity that exists in all mankind.
- Mankind will look to all of its accomplishments in science as proof of its superior human potential.
- Pantheism, as noted above, will be the primary belief that sets the stage for acknowledging and worshiping the Antichrist, as well as humanity's own divinity.
- The Antichrist will be the chief human adversary of Christ as well as a counterfeit substitute who will set up a false worldwide kingdom. He and his kingdom will be destroyed when Jesus returns to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

Samuel Andrews is clearly a watchman on the wall who, from the Scriptures and his understanding of the times, has set

about warning the body of Christ of the evil that is looming and will take its toll on both professing and true Christians. His book was criticized in his day as being too negative, although "proof" of his so-called negativity was drawn from Paul, Peter, Jude, John, not to mention the words of Jesus to the seven churches in Revelation. Some of his detractors thought he should put humanity in a more positive light, recognizing that man is evolving upward, although such an idea had no scriptural support. Prophecy, of course, was disparaged then as it is today. Nevertheless, Andrews forewarned that "Those despising the prophetic word, and not believing in his appearing, will be attracted and fettered by the power of his person: and those whose conception of him is that of an open blasphemer of God, a bitter enemy of all religion, detestable because of his vices, will not discern him should he appear as a saviour of society and a religious leader."

We believe the Scriptures teach that the Antichrist will not be revealed until after the church has been removed from the world in the Rapture (2 Thessalonians 2:2-8, John 14:1-3), and at Christ's return His saints will accompany Him (Jude 1:14) as He destroys the Wicked [one] (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Yet the acceptance of the kingdom of the Antichrist and his religion, as Andrews well supports through the Word of God and to which the history of the church testifies, involves "a long preparatory process" that finally seduces the entire world. Our succumbing to the accelerating spiritual deception of our day can be prevented only by God's grace as we put our love for Jesus first, do diligence in reading and doing what His Word says, praying without ceasing, and maintaining the fellowship of like-minded believers.

One of the endorsers of *Christianity and Anti-Christianity In Their Final Conflict*, James M. Gray, who followed D. L. Moody and R. A. Torrey as president (1904-1934) of the Moody Bible Institute, wrote, "Pastors, missionaries, Sunday-school teachers and social workers, bear with me if I say, you must read [Samuel J. Andrews's] book.... Here are no wild fancies, no foolish setting of times and seasons, no crude and sensational interpretations of prophecy, but a calm setting forth of what the Bible says on the most important subject for these times. The Christian leader who does not know these things is no leader, but the blind leading the blind. And, oh, there are so many of such leaders!" To that we can only add our "Amen." **TBC**

Quotable.....

Some are now making an attempt to accredit the Bible by presenting it as a book for literary study. It is said that by “a judicious selection” of its most graphic and eloquent passages it may be made a source of literary, as well as spiritual, stimulation. As expressed by one writer: “Who shall say that it is not to be included in the curriculum of polite learning as a theme, perhaps of equal moment with Shakespeare?”

This is meant to do the Bible high honour. But how could we find a more significant sign that it is ceasing to be regarded as an inspired book, unfolding to men the character and purpose of God, His mercy and grace in His Son, salvation from sin, and the terrors of judgment? Instead of being read as a book in which the voice of God is heard calling all to repentance, to obedience, and to righteousness, a voice which no man may disregard but at the peril of his soul, we are told to read it as literature—a collection of elegant extracts, of biblical masterpieces. Doubtless the purpose is by appealing to the literary taste, the imagination, the sense of the beautiful and sublime, to obtain for the Bible a new hold upon the attention of cultivated people.

But its sacred character is thus lost. It is merely a book among books—of value for intellectual culture, but no more the one book, able to make us wise unto salvation, to which we come, upon the bended knee, praying for that light from the Spirit who inspired it, without which we read in vain.

—SAMUEL ANDREWS,

Christianity and Anti-Christianity In Their Final Conflict

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Jesus said, “I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven...if two of you shall agree on anything it shall be given you....” Why can’t we make this work today?

RESPONSE: The Catholic Church teaches that the “keys” were only for Peter (and his “successors,” the popes) and that the “binding and loosing” authority was for all of the apostles (including Peter) and their “successors,” the bishops et al. But what does the Bible say?

Jesus promised Peter, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth

shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19). But He also said virtually the same thing to the rest of the apostles (18:18). Clearly the “keys” in Matthew 16 are connected with the “binding and loosing” authority given to Peter at that time, and later to all the disciples in Matthew 18. And, again, to all of the disciples after His resurrection Christ declared, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (Jn 20:23).

Surely, the gospel and sound doctrine (which all true disciples are to preach) are the “keys” to the Kingdom. Peter used these keys to unlock the Kingdom to the Jews through his sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and in Acts 15:7 Peter seems to indicate that he used these keys again when he preached the gospel to the Gentiles in Cornelius’s house in Acts 10. Every Christian is a successor to the apostles, and we have the same authority they had to bind and loose. What does it mean?

The “binding and loosing” in Matthew 16 is further illustrative of “keys.” Keys are used both to lock (bind) and unlock (loose). The gospel of Jesus Christ that we preach sets free from sin (looses) those who receive it and condemns (binds) those who reject it. Furthermore, in Matthew 18, “binding and loosing” is linked with the promise, “Where two or more are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” That promise applies not to some special “prophet” or “official church hierarchy” but to all Christians.

QUESTION: One commentator suggested that you do not know the difference between redemption and salvation. He claimed that they are not the same—indeed, we are all redeemed, whether Christians, Jews, Muslims, or animists, because this is basic Christian doctrine held even by traditional Protestants. How would you respond?

RESPONSE: This idea is just plain wrong. In fact, there is no distinction between “redemption and salvation,” and I have not seen any biblical references to prove there is. Anyone who is redeemed is saved, and one can only be saved by being redeemed, as numerous verses prove. Take, for example, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14); and “...the gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). Redemption is tied to forgiveness of sins and comes through Christ’s blood being shed for us—but salvation comes the same

way, through believing the gospel, which is about Christ dying in our place to obtain forgiveness of sins for us. Hebrews 9:15 states that redemption gives the promise of “eternal inheritance [life]”; and Galatians 4:5 says that we receive the “adoption of sons” (i.e., are born again) through being redeemed by Christ. But to be born again and to receive eternal life is what it means to be saved—or to be redeemed; both terms have the same meaning.

Beyond that, it is *not* “basic Christian doctrine, even [held by] traditional Protestants,” that “we are all redeemed—Christians, Jews, Muslims, animists.” The Bible teaches that Christ paid the price for the redemption of all mankind; redemption from Satan’s power is *offered* to all, but it is only *effective* for those who personally accept Christ as Redeemer. They are known as “the redeemed”; for example: “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so” (Ps 107:2). That’s a definite group of people, not the whole world. Consider also, “they sung a new song, saying...thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rv 5:9). If the redeemed were redeemed *out of* the rest of mankind, then one cannot say that all mankind is redeemed!

Look up the words “redemption,” “redeemed,” and “redeemer” in a concordance. These words are *never* used of the world in general but only of God’s people, whether Israel in the Old Testament, or the saints (believers in Jesus Christ) in the New. To be redeemed means to be set free “from the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13), to be “justified freely by his grace” (Rom 3:24) and to have “the forgiveness of sins” (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). *None* of these blessings accrue to Jews, Muslims, or animists, but *only* to those who have received the LORD Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

QUESTION: God tells Abraham and Isaac that their descendants (Hebrews) will be as numerous as the stars. Considering the number of stars there are in the universe, that would have to be on the order of 10²⁰ Jewish people. Is this not a failed prophecy?

RESPONSE: In Genesis 15:5 we read, “And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell [count] the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”

To Abraham, a man whose wife was barren, the Lord issued a challenge to him

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IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

All Martyrs Not "Created" Equal

Question: I don't deny that the early Christians were thrown to the lions, crucified, burned alive, and otherwise killed for their faith. But I object to using their willingness to endure such treatment as proof of Christianity. The followers of many other religious leaders, even of cult leaders later proven to be frauds or evil, have been willing to die for their faith. Look at the 900 followers of Jim Jones lying dead in the jungles of Guyana. Muslims (suicide bombers and other terrorists, for example) are willing to sacrifice themselves for Allah and Muhammad. How can you say that the martyrdoms of Christians prove Christianity any more than the martyrdoms of others prove their religions?

Response: There are huge differences between the martyrdom of Christians and the others you mention. Most of those who died with cult leaders such as Jim Jones and David Koresh had little or no choice. Therefore, their martyrdoms cannot be compared with that of Christians who were given the chance to save their lives if they would deny Christ, yet persisted in their faith in Him though it meant torture and death.

Islam [1], which was spread with the sword, is now maintained by the same means. Today one must be a Muslim to be a citizen of Saudi Arabia. It is the death penalty there and in other Islamic nations for a Muslim to convert to any other religion. Try to imagine what it would be like if one had to be a Southern Baptist or a Methodist (or member of any other religious group) to be a citizen of the United States and that the death penalty would be carried out upon anyone who converted to another religion! In fact, such will be the case if Islam [1] ever accomplishes its goal of making the United States and every other nation Islamic countries.

Loyalty to Islam [1] is maintained under the threat of death, whereas loyalty to Christ

is maintained by love. Jim Jones and other cult leaders tricked their followers into dying. They were not killed for their faith by persecutors. And they submitted to the death in the belief that not to do so would be to miss heaven. So it is with Muslims who sacrifice their lives in jihad. They are taught that this is the only sure way to paradise, so they give their lives to gain eternal life.

In contrast, the followers of Christ are assured of heaven without any required good works or sacrifice on their part. Christ has paid the full price for their salvation [2]. They know they have eternal life and need not die to obtain it. Their submission to persecution and death is out of love for their Lord and their unwillingness to deny Him or to compromise

what they believe is the truth.

Dying for Facts Versus Loyalty to a Religion

To recognize the greatest distinction between Christian martyrs and all others, however, one needs to go back to the apostles themselves and to the early Christians. They died not out of loyalty to a religion but for testifying to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The importance of that fact seems to be overlooked by the skeptics. For example, the famous nineteenth-century atheist Robert Ingersoll wrote:

All the martyrs in the history of the world are not sufficient to establish the correctness of an opinion. Martyrdom, as a rule, establishes the sincerity of the martyr – never the correctness of his thought. Things are true or false in themselves. Truth cannot be affected by opinions; it cannot be changed, established, or affected by martyrdom. An error cannot be believed sincerely enough to make it a truth

What he says is true as far as it goes, but he misses the distinction of Christian martyrdom. The apostles and early disciples died for insisting that Christ had risen from the dead; and they insisted upon it not merely as a religious dogma but as an event in real time to which they themselves had been eyewitnesses. Ingersoll admits that people generally won't die for what they know is a lie, yet all of the apostles, except perhaps John) died as martyrs. Not one backed off at the point of death and bought his freedom by confessing that the apostles had dreamed up the story of the resurrection and that it hadn't really happened – or that maybe they weren't really sure they had seen Him alive but perhaps had only thought they had.

We know for certain, even by Ingersoll's standards, that the apostles were sincere – and

not just concerning their belief that Jesus was the Messiah but that they had spent 40 days with Him after His resurrection, and He was indeed alive. That is the point. To disprove their solemn testimony, one would have to show that they had simply all imagined that Christ had spent those 40 days with them, showing Himself alive “by any infallible proofs” (Acts:1:3). For such an imagined tale they would all die? Never!

Eyewitnesses of the Resurrection

The apostles suffered almost unbearable persecution and then went to their graves as martyrs still affirming that the events that they had witnessed had actually occurred. They all testified, to the very death, when they could have bought their freedom by denying it, that Christ's miracles, His teachings, and His resurrection were factual events that they themselves had witnessed and therefore could not deny. Greenleaf argues:

*From these absurdities [of men willing to die for a lie] there is no escape, but in the perfect conviction and admission that they were good men, testifying to that which they had carefully observed and considered and well knew to be true. (Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists*, p. 31)*

It is often forgotten that not only those to whom Christ appeared during that historic 40 days but all Christians testify to the resurrection of Christ. The very heart of Christianity is the certainty that one is in personal contact with the resurrected Christ, resident in one's heart.

Linton picks up that fact when, as a fellow lawyer, he pursues an argument similar to Greenleaf's:

Nothing in history is better established than the fact that the Gospel writers, and those who believed their report and became Christians,

were subjected to lifelong persecution, frequent torture, and ultimate death. This occurred both at the hands of the Jews, who were incensed at being told that they had slain their own promised Messiah, and of the pagans, who were enraged at being told that all the gods in their Pantheon were but myths and the Pontifex Maximus at Rome but the perpetrator of a hoax, and that the only true God was the One who became incarnate as a Jew and died on a cross.

Now as surely as the human frame shrinks from pain and death, no man ever lied when the natural and sole result of his lying was to incur all the evils possible to suffer in this life and punishment for his lie in any possible life to come. (Irwin H. Linton, *A Lawyer*

Examines the Bible (W. A. Wilde Co., 1943), p. 31
 Therein lies the great distinction. The apostles died for testifying to the resurrection, a question of fact, not merely of faith. They were convinced of an event. And their willingness to die in attestation of that event is far more convincing than the willingness of others to die for a mere belief or because of loyalty to a religion or religious leader. As Linton points out, “Christ is the only character in all history who has four contemporary biographers and historians, every one of whom suffered persecution [and martyrdom] in attestation of the fruitfulness of his narrative.”

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

Q&A.....

to count the stars with his unaided eye (if he were able) and promised that in a like manner, “so shall thy seed be.” With no telescope, Abraham could hardly arrive at a total of 10²⁰ stars.

Indeed, there is no indication that Abraham even began counting stars before it was said, “And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gn 15:6). The simple point is that Abraham looked at the sheer number of stars that the unaided eye could see and he believed God.

The Lord also speaks of the “sand along the seashore” and this hyperbole is clearly indicating a number of descendants far more than he could imagine.

The context and the entire tenor of Scripture make it clear that Jesus is not handing His disciples a magic power to wield as they please. He is telling them that as His representatives they are to act in His name. This is no different from His promise that “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you” (Jn 16:23). Invoking His name in prayer is not a magic formula whereby we receive automatic answers to our requests. His name must be stamped on our character and engraved in our hearts, not just on our lips. To ask in His name means to ask according to His will and to His glory. The same is true with “binding and loosing”—it must be in His name and through His Word.

Bless God

T. A. McMahon

“Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!”

—PSALM 103:1

WHAT DOES IT mean to “Bless the Lord”? What does it mean to “bless”? The latter is a bit easier to define than the former, but when it comes to definitions, especially of terms that relate to Scripture, I like to see how the 1828 Webster’s Dictionary (accessible online) defines it. Nearly all of the explanations given there for “bless” and “blessed” include examples of their use from the Bible (Genesis 2:3; 28:3; Deuteronomy 15:4; 33:11; Psalm 103:1; Jeremiah 4:2; Luke 9:16; Revelation 14:13).

Many of the other terms found in the Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* also feature examples from God’s Word. I remember the first time I used this dictionary. I wanted to get a better understanding of the word “blasphemy.” My thinking was that it simply meant using the Lord’s name in vain. That’s an example of blaspheming, but it misses a main explanation of the word cited by Webster: “Blasphemy is an injury offered to God, by denying that which is due and belonging to him, or attributing to him that which is not agreeable to his nature.” In other words, the term also has to do with mischaracterizing God and therefore includes all the false teachings that abound about God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. It goes without saying that no contemporary dictionary defines words by referring to the words of God.

So what does Noah Webster’s dictionary say about “bless” or “blessed”? He begins with the definition “expressing a wish or desire of happiness,” e.g., “Isaac blessing Jacob” (Genesis 28:3). Then he adds “the desire to make happy; to make successful; to prosper in temporal concerns”; as in “we are blessed with peace and plenty.” Deuteronomy 15:18, he notes, declares “The Lord thy God shall *bless* thee in all thou doest” (emphasis added). Revelation 14:13 tells of those who die in the Lord being blessed for eternity. Consecration for God’s purposes is found in Genesis 2:3: “And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” “Blessed” means to consecrate by prayer; to invoke a blessing upon, as in Luke 9:16: “And

Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven he blessed them.” It also includes praising and glorifying God for all of the blessings we have received.

Then we come to an aspect of blessing that is mostly lost today, and that is—blessing God. I remember that for months following the Islamic terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, on the US, the foremost rallying cry was “God bless America!” That was certainly something we all very much wanted. But that wish begs one critical question: *why should God bless America?* Even a cursory look at where America is heading spiritually should give one second thoughts about God blessing us.

Why *should* God bless America? The

I WILL EXTOL THEE, MY GOD, O KING; AND I WILL BLESS THY NAME FOR EVER AND EVER. EVERY DAY WILL I BLESS THEE; AND I WILL PRAISE THY NAME FOR EVER AND EVER. GREAT IS THE LORD, AND GREATLY TO BE PRAISED; AND HIS GREATNESS IS UNSEARCHABLE....

MY MOUTH SHALL SPEAK THE PRAISE OF THE LORD: AND LET ALL FLESH BLESS HIS HOLY NAME FOR EVER AND EVER.

—Psalm 145:1-3, 21

litany of offenses against the righteous God could fill the rest of this article. Anyone who balks at using the term “antichrist” to characterize our country is either a) spiritually burying his head in the sand, or b) clueless regarding the teachings of the Bible, God’s holy Word. For those who may be of that mindset, consider the issues of abortion, homosexuality and gay marriage, marijuana legalization, prayer censorship in schools, evolution, transgenderism, increasing legislations directed against biblical beliefs and practices, e.g., public preaching and evangelizing, even against public praying and witnessing, etc. Whatever is opposed to the teachings of Christ is antichrist and quite obviously cannot receive the blessings of God. Tragically instead, this country will collectively reap what it has

sown. In Jeremiah 4:2 we learn that “The nations shall *bless* themselves *in him*, and *in him* they shall glory.” If the “in him” is missing, so is the blessing.

Yet for some, the reaping will be blessings: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:7-9). Our blessings are due to our blessing God: “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name” (Psalm 103:1). That involves a host of things, including our praise, our worship, our adoration, our submission, our obedience, our thankfulness, and our trust in Him, all of which please our Lord and Savior.

The testimony of Enoch found in Hebrews 11:5-6 incorporates pleasing God and the resulting blessing: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that *he pleased God*. But without faith it is impossible to *please Him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that *He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*” (emphasis added). Some believers tend to shy away from seeking God’s blessings as an overreaction to the corrupted teachings of the “prosperity preachers.” But that can be as wrong as the false teachings themselves, leading to not pleasing or blessing God by not obeying His Word. Clearly, these verses declare that we *must* “believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” When the “seek Him,” however, takes a back seat in favor of pursuing the reward, God is no longer being blessed. Our blessing the Lord is the antidote for a wrong emphasis on His blessings or for taking His blessings for granted. When we begin with Him—when He is our focus—we will be motivated to do things His way. That’s blessing God!

Therefore, blessing God should be our first concern as believers, and the foundation of that is revealed in the “first and great commandment”: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30). That certainly reflects the “O my soul: and all that is within me” of

Psalm 103:1. And the command to “love the Lord thy God” will manifest itself in obedience to Him: “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me” (John 14:23-24).

Disobeying God’s Word is the antithesis of blessing God. Jesus indicated as much in His admonishment of those who claim to love Him: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). He then added this parable as an encouragement for those who would do what He said and as a warning to those who would reject His words: “Who-soever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:47-49). Disobedience leaves a man foundationless and subject to great ruin.

Not doing what God says quite obviously does not bless Him, but what about not being thankful for what He has done for us and continues to do for us? “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Psalm 103:2), which includes *all* of His benefits. Yet how many of our meals have gone by, personally and with others, without blessing God for them? No big deal? Well, Jesus thought thanking His Father was important enough to set the example for us, whether feeding the thousands or having a meal with His disciples.

What should be a big deal is blessing God in thanks for what took place on Calvary’s hill, Golgotha, where they crucified our Lord and Savior. “And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20). The most important act in the history of mankind has been, in many churches, relegated to a once-in-a-while

add-on event with the elements served up in businesslike efficiency in order to expedite the experience. When that takes place as little more than a custom, it’s wrong. But even given the misuses of communion, we can be grateful that that’s not the only time the overwhelming sacrifice of Jesus is remembered. Even so, it’s terribly grievous that thanking God for His “unspeakable gift [indescribable, far beyond being expressed in words]” (2 Corinthians 9:15) seems to have gone awry. But that’s not new for God’s people.

In Psalm 95, which contains wonderful words of blessing God, we nevertheless find God warning His people not to slip away from Him as their fathers did, losing sight of His ways, falling into temptation, and consequently rebelling against Him.

“O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our

AND JESUS ANSWERED HIM, THE FIRST OF ALL THE COMMANDMENTS IS, HEAR, O ISRAEL; THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD:

AND THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH: THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

—Mark 12:29-30

salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not

enter into my rest” (Psalm 95).

Those are glorious words followed by a serious warning. It’s comparable to the admonishment Jesus gave to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:4-5. Those believers, the bride of Christ, had “left their first love.” The consequence would be losing the light of God’s words and turning away from His truth.

Psalm 96, on the other hand, rights the wrong of failing to bless God as it looks forward to Christ’s Second Coming. “O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth” (Psalm 96).

Lastly, blessing God by extolling His attributes must be a major part of our witnessing. As the psalmist wrote, “Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day” (Psalm 96:2). “The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen” (Psalm 98:2). This reveals the purpose of blessing. Too frequently we hear the words “God bless you” (even shortened to “God bless”) reduced to a contentless gesture following a sneeze or the closing of correspondence. God does indeed bless, as we noted, but it would serve us all better in this day of overwhelming self-preoccupation if we would give priority to *blessing God*. TBC

Quotable

Blessed it is to recognize in the temporal, creative mercies of each day, the evidences of a loving Father's care. "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy." To receive all as from His own hand, giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus, is to honor the Giver in the use of His gifts.

There is a golden mean between fleshly asceticism on the one hand which discounts many of God's gifts and thus throws discredit on Him who provides them, and carnal self-indulgence on the other hand which uses the mercies of God with no regard of Him from whom they come, and in such a way as to turn even our blessings into curses. We should ever recognize the bounty of our Father in these things, and, whether we eat or drink, do all to His glory, our hearts going out to Him in adoring gratitude.

—H. A. IRONSIDE

Q&A

QUESTION: In the past, you've talked about being "sure about going to heaven." Would you please comment on the following statement by Dr. A. W. Tozer in his *Renewal Day by Day*: "The man who is seriously convinced that he deserves to go to hell is not likely to go there, while the man who believes that he is worthy of heaven will certainly never enter that blessed place."

RESPONSE: The only certainty of heaven to which I have ever referred is based upon faith in Christ and His Word, which promise eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. Heaven is the believer's sure destination, not because he merits it but because of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: "I give [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:27-28); "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13); etc. Although confident of heaven because of what Christ has done, the believer is at the same time very conscious of his own unworthiness. It is, in fact, the realization that he deserves hell that has caused him to turn to Christ. In contrast, Tozer is referring to "the man who believes that he is *worthy* [in himself] of heaven." That person is lost because obviously he has not believed the gospel and is not trusting in Christ alone for his salvation.

QUESTION: I've heard several speakers lately say that Jesus was afraid that Satan would kill Him prematurely in the Garden of Gethsemane before He could

get to the cross. And that's why He cried out, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," the "cup" being a premature death in the Garden. Is that true?

RESPONSE: Hardly. Dying on the cross as the sacrifice for sin was the culmination of Christ's purpose in being born into this world. The prophets had foretold it and Christ himself had confirmed it (Matthew 16:21; John 12:32-33). Nothing and no one could have killed Him or otherwise prevented the fulfillment of His mission.

Jesus is God. Neither man nor Satan could take His life. He declared, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17-18). How, then, could He have been afraid that Satan might take His life? Christ is also perfect, sinless man—the one and only God-man. As man, He would not for a moment have been in fear of Satan slaying Him, for He was walking in perfect obedience to and under the complete care of His Father. To suggest such a fear indicts Christ with the rankest unbelief. Furthermore, Christ is God and infinitely stronger than Satan!

Remember, also, that after asking if the cup might pass from Him, Christ said, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). If the "cup" He wanted to escape was death in the Garden, then by saying "nevertheless...thy will be done," Christ was suggesting that it might be the Father's will for Him to die in the Garden at the hands of Satan rather than to pay for our sins upon the cross, which is unthinkable.

Nor was the "cup" the physical pain of being crucified. Many had bravely endured crucifixion and Jesus was no coward. The "cup" from which He shrank was the awful separation from God which His justice required as the penalty for sin: that His holy soul would be made "an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10)—He would literally be "made [to be] sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). His prayer, therefore, was an earnest request from Son to Father: "Might there not be some other possible means of saving sinners?" The Father's answer was "No." We know, therefore, that Christ's death upon the cross as our sin-bearer was and is the only way of salvation. Horrible beyond comprehension, what He endured we will never know. He fully paid that penalty for us.

QUESTION: We can't seem to find a church in our area that has godly leadership and biblical preaching. We feel so

alone and now just read the Bible and pray at home. What should we do? How do we find a good church?

RESPONSE: It is a sad commentary on the state of the church that we receive many such queries.

What marks a "healthy" church? Crucial to the answer is Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst..." Christ himself must be the central focus—not a pastor, gripping sermons, a strong missionary emphasis, exciting youth programs, compatible fellow members, or even agreeable doctrines, important as all these factors are. A fervent love for Christ and a heartfelt corporate worship of His Person must be the primary mark of a healthy church. The early church was thus characterized. It met regularly on the first day of the week in remembrance of His death. That weekly outpouring of praise, worship, and thanksgiving had one purpose—to give God His due portion. It isn't primarily a matter of my need, my edification, my enjoyment, or my spiritual satisfaction, but of His worth in my eyes and in the eyes of the church.

As I see it, our secondary focus should be our opportunity for servanthood with a corporate body of believers. I give myself to a needy, imperfect people for whom I can pray, with whose needs I can concern myself in practical ways, to whom I can be an encourager and a minister of the Word, and among whom I can demonstrate and work out Christ's desire that His own "might be one." This fellowship is commanded: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25). Is it our joy to gather with God's people in intercessory prayer and study of the Word, or is Sunday-morning-only quite enough? A healthy church will gather not only unto Him, but with each other.

Lastly, I need to assess my own spiritual needs. The shepherds must provide the spiritual food that will nurture the flock, that it might be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:17). That's a big order and requires, of course, a teachable flock that loves the Word and is in willing subjection to it. The shepherds must also guard the flock of God by keeping out false and dangerous doctrines contrary to the truth. They must adhere to the pure Word of God as the only authority for faith and morals.

You say, "Wonderful! Lead me to such a church." Remember, however, the order of priority: worship (do you worship sincerely,

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IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Prophecy, the Great Proof

Question: In several of your books you offer prophecy fulfilled as proof that God inspired the writing of the Bible. But that's proving the Bible by the Bible, which is circular reasoning. Any religion can offer similar "proof" by using their Scriptures in the same way.

Response: There is overwhelming evidence of many kinds for the inspiration of Scripture. Prophecy is only a part of the evidence. Nor is there anything wrong with "proving the Bible by the Bible" any more than with proving a mathematical theorem by mathematics. However, prophecy fulfilled proves the Bible not by itself but by verification from secular history that what the Bible foretold did indeed occur. As for suggesting that "any religion can offer similar 'proof' by using their Scriptures the same way," that is simply absurd.

Give me just one example of a prophecy for the coming of Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Krishna, or Muhammad, much less one that was fulfilled! There simply aren't any. Yet there are scores of specific prophecies for the Jewish Messiah throughout the Old Testament. Moreover, we have documentation for the detailed fulfillment of every one of these prophecies in Jesus both from the eyewitnesses who recorded the events and from Josephus and others. There is far more evidence for the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus than for any of the

Caesars, for Plato, for Alexander the Great, or for any other ancient historical character. The skeptic rejects Jesus Christ out of personal prejudice rather than from thorough and unbiased investigation and evidence.

Scores of specific prophecies foretold unique events that literally were fulfilled to the letter in the factual history of the Jews as a people. There is no parallel in the history of any other race or ethnic group. We have dealt with this proof provided by biblical prophecies in detail in other books.

Q&A

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wholeheartedly, and in a manner satisfying to the Object of that worship?); servanthood (do you serve, even as Christ gave us an example, with humility and with joy?); personal needs (are you growing, maturing, taking on Christ's character?).

The final decision as to your church affiliation must be, prayerfully, yours. Is your personal worship of the

Savior so joyful and satisfying a thing both to you and to Him that it supersedes other considerations? Do your opportunities for service render your fellowship sufficiently meaningful and significant? Or do doctrinal concerns or lack of biblical preaching and teaching cancel out the other two? You must seek the Lord for His answer. God's comforting assurance remains: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Knowing What We Believe and Why

Dave Hunt — First published August 1991

WE'VE SEEN OVER and over that the New Testament defines and defends the true gospel and condemns all false gospels. We also can see why this is the case: the battle for souls is between God's truth and Satan's lie. Thus, each person's eternal destiny depends upon what he or she believes. One cannot believe both the Truth and the lie. Even though one believes in God (who is He?) and that Christ is our Savior (what does that mean?), if God's truth has been compromised or perverted, such a gospel doesn't save but eternally damns those who believe it.

Why is this so? Doesn't such condemnation seem harsh? Why is what one believes so vital? Isn't it enough to be sincere? Yet how can one be sincere and believe Satan's lie instead of God's truth? Surely God has given each of us the capacity to know the difference! Thus, those who reject the Truth condemn themselves.

Among the most solemn and terrible verses in the Bible, we must include 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. There we are told that when the Antichrist controls the earth, to all who "received not the love of the truth" God will send "a strong delusion that they should believe the lie: that they all might be damned." Can anyone complain if God helps them to believe the very lie that they insisted upon embracing? The damned are caught in the net of their own rebellion and left for eternity with the lie they loved. How horrible! Yet how just! From such a fate Christ died to save us.

Our rebellion against the infinite God requires an infinite penalty that we as finite creatures could never pay. We would be separated from God eternally. He could not simply make a "bookkeeping entry" in heaven and forgive us, for that would violate His justice. God so loved mankind that He came down through the virgin birth and became a member of our race in order to be, on the Cross, the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Having paid the penalty in full demanded by His own justice, God can righteously forgive all who admit their guilt and accept the pardon He graciously offers.

When the Philippian jailer cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?", Paul and Silas gave a simple answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Surely that means

more than simply believing that someone called Jesus Christ existed. Who was He? Lord means "God"; Jesus means "Savior from sin"; Christ means "Messiah," the one promised in the Scriptures. His very name indicates that He is God who became a man to die for our sins in fulfillment of what God's prophets foretold.

The Old Testament repeatedly presents God as the only Savior. He offers to save Israel from her enemies, and he also desires to save all men, both Jews and Gentiles, from the judgment sin brings. God declares, for example, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22). Thus, when Christ said that He had come "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), He was declaring that He was God the Savior—exactly the name that the New

LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: FOR I AM GOD, AND THERE IS NONE ELSE.

I HAVE SWORN BY MYSELF, THE WORD IS GONE OUT OF MY MOUTH IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND SHALL NOT RETURN, THAT UNTO ME EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW, EVERY TONGUE SHALL SWEAR.

Testament repeatedly calls *both* Christ and God the Father.

Paul wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." He went on to explain why they were not saved, though they had "a zeal of God": "For they... [seeking] to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end [goal] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:1-4). Despite their zeal for God, the Jews were lost because they would not come to God on His terms.

Suppose one claims to believe that Christ died for man's sins but that one must add to their beliefs good deeds, trust in Mary to intercede, suffer in purgatory, belong to a certain church or keep certain rules or sacraments in order to be saved, or that Christ must be sacrificed again in the Mass. Is that man saved? The Bible

says no. To believe that anything else is necessary for salvation is to *deny that Christ paid the penalty in full, thus rejecting the gospel*. How can those who trust in a church for salvation be trusting only in Christ and His finished work? Or what about those who agree to accept some church's interpretation of God's Word? Can it be said that they personally know God and are believing in Him?

Many who claim to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" have attached their own meanings to the seemingly biblical words they use. Thus are manufactured the many false gospels that usually include false concepts of "Christ." The Science of Mind cult, for example, teaches, "We do not deny the divinity of Jesus, but rather we affirm the divinity of all people..." They call Jesus a Savior, but add, "Any world teacher [Buddha, Muhammad, Freud, et al.] who helps mankind to be free from material, intellectual, or emotional bondage is a spiritual 'savior.'" Yet Robert Schuller put a picture of Della Reese, a leader in Science of Mind, on the cover of his *Possibilities* magazine and featured her as a Christian.

Mormonism teaches that "God" (who has another "God" over him and so on endlessly) was once a sinful man redeemed by a "Christ" on another planet. The "Christ" of our planet (Satan's half-brother in a pre-earth spirit world) was conceived when "the God of this world" came to earth in his physical body and had sex with Mary. Mormonism's "Christ" was not God who became man, but a spirit entity who came to earth to get a physical body so he could become a "God," a metamorphosis that is the ambition of every Mormon male (females become goddesses). To a Mormon, eternal life is not a free gift of God's grace but must be earned and culminates in one's becoming a "God," who manufactures another world with another Adam and Eve, another Satan, another fall, another Jesus, and so on, *ad infinitum absurdum*.

Yet Robert Schuller has Jack Anderson, a leading Mormon, as a guest on his *Hour of Power* and passes him off as a Christian—and our four living ex-presidents [as of 1991] and President Bush, all professing Christians, along with Billy Graham and other leaders, praise Schuller for his *Hour of Power*. Earl Paulk likewise calls Mormons "Christians." The Church Council of Greater Seattle apologized to American Indians for Christianity's opposition to traditional Native American spiritual practices (i.e.,

their pagan religion). The “formal apology” was read to a group of Indians by Episcopal Bishop Robert Cochrane. Pope John Paul II has likewise endorsed the same paganism. Ecumenism is both appealing and appalling.

In Catholicism, everyone, no matter of what religion, is somehow “saved” through some mystical association with the Roman Catholic Church. Summarizing this doctrine in a popular Catholic newspaper, Fr. Benjamin Luther writes, “The Catholic Church has not and cannot change its teaching that it is itself necessary for salvation...” This priest then goes on to explain how Catholics can, nevertheless, deny that Rome teaches that outside of her there is no salvation. One need not be a member but can be saved through “some form of participation in the life of the Church. Pope Pius XII spoke of ‘hidden bonds’ joining nonmembers [with the Church]. So, the Orthodox, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and even those following the great pagan religions, such as the Hindus and Buddhists, can share in the supernatural life—and the grace—found solely within the visible boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, through the Church alone they [all] can gain salvation” (*Catholic Twin Circle*, Jan. 8, 1969, p. 15). Amazing! Although opposing God’s truth and persisting in their pagan practices, all religions can be united under the Vatican! What a perfect setup for the apostate world religion under Antichrist!

St. Olaf (a Lutheran college) in Northfield, MN, features courses in Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Hinduism. Anantanand Rambachan, a Hindu scholar who has taught at St. Olaf for five years, argues that “the biggest barrier to creating understanding among the great religions is the Christian claim that there is only one way to be saved.” In agreement, Lutheran pastor Clark Morphey declares that “Worldwide religious harmony [is] hampered by ‘one way’ dogma.” Christ’s claim that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6) is brushed aside by professing Christians in the interest of “religious harmony.” Tolerance for Satan’s lie has become the one virtue! How prophetic were Gorbachev’s words: “Tolerance is the alpha and omega of the new world order.” Truth is not a factor!

With the growing apostasy and popularity of New Age ideas, of ecumenism and disdain of doctrine even among evangelicals, the distinctions between the Truth and the lie are being ignored as

if what one believes makes no difference after all. Standing for truth is considered to be “negative,” and letting those who believe false gospels go to hell without telling them the truth is considered an act of “love.” After all, that’s what Mother Teresa, the ultimate exemplar of loving one’s neighbor, has been doing for decades. Rather than giving the gospel to recipients of her charity, she has encouraged Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, et al., to draw closer to their gods—and has been praised by evangelical leaders for launching those in her care from a clean bed into hell!

Souls are being lost eternally! It has never been more important than now to be ready and able “always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). Why a *reason*? Because “faith” is not blind; it is not a “leap into the dark” but is based upon solid evidence. Why must there be *evidence*? Isn’t it enough simply to “believe”? Believe *what*? One would be a perverse fool to believe anything and everything. Then *what* and *in whom* is one to believe? Obviously, there must be a *sound reason* for believing “x” and not believing “y.”

The gospel is the “good news.” We have *great news* to rejoice in, to be excited and happy about, and to share gladly with others. But we must know how to explain it so that the issues are made crystal clear. We owe it to those around us to present the gospel so clearly that they have every fact necessary for making the right choice. And that includes soundly refuting Satan’s lies. As Paul exhorted Titus, “In all your teaching show the strictest regard for truth, and [for]...the seriousness of the matters you are dealing with. Your speech should be [so] logical...that your opponent may feel ashamed...” (Titus 2:7-8, Phillips trans.).

One of the greatest needs in the church today is for training in sound apologetics not only to counter atheism (which is the real “faith” of very few) but false religions, which have ensnared so many more. Why do young people so often “lose their faith” or get caught up in cults when they go off to college or university? Those who “lose” it never had genuine faith—didn’t know *why* and *in whom* they believed—or it would have stood every test.

Parents often worry that their children will be persuaded by their peers to abandon their “faith” and to indulge in evil. Peer pressure in school, however, can only *destroy a faith that was itself the product of peer pressure* in church or family and lacked sound reason. It may have been

pressure from parents, spouse, or friends to “believe” in order to gain their approval. Or pressure from pastor or preacher to “go forward” in order to be accepted into the group and enjoy the benefits of belonging. Or it could have been the call to “come to Jesus” for the wrong reasons: perhaps for healing and prosperity instead of cleansing from sin.

Many Christians who reject the false gospel and know the truth are yet afraid to have their faith challenged by non-Christians at work or at school. We dishonor God if we fear that our faith will not survive the battle that comes from witnessing boldly for Him. As a young man at UCLA I read everything I could find written against the Bible by atheists, agnostics, or skeptics. It strengthened my faith to see what pitiful arguments they had in comparison to God’s truth! We must put what we believe to the test, especially in daily life, living triumphantly for Him rather than for self.

It isn’t how intelligent we are that counts but whether what we believe is the truth. Our Lord promised, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and *ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32 [emphasis added]). It is a freedom from the fear that others may embarrass us if we proclaim the gospel, with the freedom that it offers from the power of sin to deceive and attract us. What we really believe not only determines our eternal destiny but our conduct here and now. Thus, God’s truth guards us from evil.

As an 18- to 20-year-old in the armed services during World War II, I saw those around me indulge in every sin imaginable, and they tried to persuade me to join them. Yet I was never tempted even in the slightest to conform. Is that to my credit? No, for according to what I believed about the eternal consequences of such behavior I would have been a fool to join in. What you and your children will do depends upon what each one *really believes*.

An entire generation is being lost because a false psychological gospel of self-esteem and a lack of sound doctrinal teaching that explains *why* God’s way is best is robbing them of the Truth that is worth living and dying for. Let us be “lovers of truth” and effective witnesses with our lips and lives for our wonderful Savior. Be enthusiastic and bold! What good news of freedom in Christ we have to proclaim to those who are enslaved by Satan’s lies!

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION [DIRECTED TO DAVE HUNT IN 1996]: I heard that you denied you were Protestant. The word we use derives from *Pro-testari*, meaning to testify for or in behalf. To then deny that you are a Protestant is to inadvertently affirm that you are not a witness for Christ. How terrible! I affirm that the history of Protestantism is the history of the true Church.

RESPONSE: We seem to have a serious misunderstanding. So far as I know (and as the dictionaries and encyclopedias affirm), the words Protestant and Protestantism never existed until the sixteenth century when the Protestant movement was birthed at the Reformation. The harsh determination to stamp out Lutheranism expressed by Roman Catholic authorities at the Diet of Speyer in March 1529, prompted a number of independent German princes to assert the right to live according to the Bible and conscience. They expressed their firm resolve in the famous “Protest” of April 19, 1529, from which the term “Protestant” was coined.

The term refers specifically to those former Roman Catholics who protested against the evils and heresies of Rome and as a result were excommunicated or came out for the sake of conscience. Although the term was used thereafter of those who followed in the footsteps of the Reformers and who belonged to so-called Protestant churches, it was never used of Christians who had previously existed apart from Rome and whom the true church had comprised, who for centuries before the Reformation had been persecuted and slaughtered in numbers reaching the millions by the Roman Catholic Church. Those Christians never called themselves Protestants because they had never been part of the Roman Catholic Church. Nor have I ever been part of it, nor do I call myself by any other name than “Christian,” as the disciples were designated.

I am astonished that you would suggest that not to be a Protestant is to fail to be a witness for our Lord. Jesus told His disciples, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8). Such witness had nothing to do with protesting against the Roman Catholic system, which didn’t even exist at the time. Therefore, I conclude that being a witness for Christ has nothing to do with protesting against Rome today—though it is only proper

for any true Christian to stand firmly against apostasy and error of every kind.

QUESTION: I do not believe in evolution. Yet I find it difficult at times to present a precise argument refuting it. It seems that my discussions can go on and on and eventually deteriorate into futile arguments that get nowhere. Do you have a simple argument that gets right to the point quickly and is irrefutable?

RESPONSE: Let me suggest that you present the facts concerning DNA. This is the simplest and most powerful proof of the necessity of an intelligent Creator that I know. Were he alive today, Darwin would be shocked to see his theory shattered by what has been recently discovered about DNA.

We each begin as a single cell smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. Instructions for building the body are encoded in the DNA in an ingenious language that only certain protein molecules can decode and read. These words give that microscopic cell (and all those it will produce) the instructions for constructing trillions of living cells out of nonliving materials and arranging them in the precise relationship with one another to eventually function as a human body.

The ability of DNA to store information is so incredibly vast that were the contents of a mere pinhead’s-worth printed out in English, it would take a stack of books 500 times as high as the distance from earth to the moon to contain it. We don’t have computers that can come even close to that storing and processing power.

Obviously, the DNA itself did not originate (and can’t even read) the information it carries. Those words point irrefutably to an Intelligence that alone could design the body. This “instruction manual” could not grow out of a series of fortuitous evolutionary chance developments over billions of years. Such a theory is totally *unreasonable*. Yet it is forced upon school children around the world by bigots who are so insecure in what they believe that they will not allow an alternate view to be expressed.

QUESTION: I began a study on the “bride of Christ” and am very bothered as to why Christians use the term! Since the primary example of the church is “the body of Christ”...

how can the Lord’s very own body be feminine when He is masculine? To be fair, how could a person not steeped in religious tradition ever get the idea that we are Christ’s bride?

RESPONSE: If the church is not the bride and thus the wife of Christ, then who is? To whom (if not the church) do such verses as the following refer? “For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7); “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come....” (Revelation 22:17); “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (v. 20). If the bride here is not the bride of Christ, why would she be longing for His return; and whose bride is she, if not His? She is called the bride because she has not yet been married to Him.

John the Baptist said of Christ, “he that hath the bride is the bridegroom” (John 3:29). The bride clearly belongs to Christ and will be married to Him in heaven (Revelation 19:7-9). Who else is in heaven at this time to be married to Christ except the saints of all ages who have been caught up to heaven at the Rapture? That the bride is composed of such saints is clear, for she is “arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,” and the “fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (v. 8). Is it not the church that is expecting Christ and longing to be taken to His Father’s house in heaven (John 14:2-3)? That promise is for none other.

That the church is the body of Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12; Colossians 1:18), as you admit, is all the more reason to believe that it is also His bride. Man and woman, when married, become “one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31). In the very next verse Paul writes, “This (being one flesh) is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” As the wife is with her husband, so the church is one flesh with Christ.

This entire passage (Ephesians 5:22-33) is about the relationship of husband and wife and is likened to Christ and His church. You say that Christ’s body “can’t be feminine when He is masculine.” You are separating Christ from His body. The “one flesh” that husband and wife become is neither male nor female but something new made up of both of them, a “mystery.” So the body of Christ, of which He is the head, comprises Christ and His bride. It can’t be separated from Him but is one with Him and is neither male nor female. Indeed, because of our union with Christ in one body, Paul writes that in the church “there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Jesus Promised, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything ...

Question: In Jesus promised, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew:18:19). I have never seen it demonstrated that any two Christians getting together can have anything from God upon which they agree. Was Christ's promise not true??

Response: Perhaps nothing is more badly misunderstood by the average person, both Christian and non-Christian, than prayer. It is generally thought to be a means of persuading God to fulfill one's dreams and ambitions and to satisfy one's desires. But a moment's reflection should quickly dispel that deadly delusion.

The basic problem in the world is the conflict of wills and the resulting competition for power and supremacy. Prayer, then, would only make matters worse if it released a supernatural power that each person could call upon in order to impose his will upon others and upon the universe. Rather than bringing unity and peace, prayer would then only increase division and conflict by giving each person the power to enforce his will upon others.

God must remain in charge of His universe. Of course, there is much that is done that is not according to God's will because He has indeed given man the power of choice. God will not, however, become an active partner in effecting the will of man. He will not lend His power to merely fulfill our selfish desires. Prayer must be according to God's will: "If we ask anything according to His will...we have the petition" (1 John:5:14-15). Prayer must also meet certain other conditions in order for God to grant the request.

The agreement of two or more together is only one of the conditions for prayer being answered. Here are a few of the others presented in the Bible: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew:21:22); "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John:15:7); "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James:4:3); "Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John:3:22).

These are not all of the conditions for answered prayer. These are enough, however, to suggest why so many prayers are not answered in spite of the earnestness of those who meet together to petition their heavenly Father for whatever it is they desire.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

Reconciliation

T. A. McMahon

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight...

—COLOSSIANS 1:20-22

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

—2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-20

THERE ARE A number of things that God our Creator desires for His created humanity, and certainly at the top of that list is reconciliation. First and foremost, He wants His created beings, all of whom have been separated from Him through sin, to be brought into fellowship with Him. That separation began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. The penalty was death (Gen 2:17)—spiritual death, immediately, and physical death, eventually. In both cases death involved eternal separation (Mt 25:41).

Scripture tells us that all have sinned, a fact that no one can honestly deny, although the attempts are widespread. Yet the Bible reveals mankind's condition with absolute clarity: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom 5:12); "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). The consequences of sin are likewise given: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa 59:2).

The penalty for sin is eternal, therefore the reconciliation must be eternal: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal redemption* for us" (Heb 9:12). Reconciliation with humanity's Creator is impossible for a man or a woman to achieve through his or her own efforts. Why? Divine justice demands that the penalty must be paid and the penalty is infinite—*endless*. Finite humanity itself cannot bring about reconciliation by satisfying divine justice because the punishment is without end, i.e., "*everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess 1:8-9). What is impossible for man, however, is possible for God (Mk 10:27).

Jesus, who is God, and who became a man—a perfect, sinless man—could (and did) pay the eternal penalty for all of mankind. "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2). "But we see Jesus...that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb 2:9). As God, He could experience and pay that eternal penalty; as Man, He could die physically—all of which He did on the cross. Although His complete payment for the sins of humanity is beyond our ability to comprehend, Scripture proves that the reality of His atonement is undeniable. Christ's final words as He hung on the cross are both clear and certain: "It is finished."

The Greek term used for "finished" is *tetelestai*. One lexicon explains: "The word *tetelestai* was also written on business documents or receipts in New Testament times to show that a bill had been paid in full.... The connection between receipts and what Christ accomplished would have been quite clear to John's Greek-speaking readership; it would be unmistakable that Jesus Christ had died to pay for their sins" (goo.gl/no6yxC).

Christ's sacrifice for all has only one requirement in order to bring about reconciliation between God and every human being. His death, burial, and resurrection according to the Scriptures must be believed and received as Christ's payment for a person's sins. Faith alone brings about God's free gift of salvation, and anything added to that is a rejection of Christ's unfathomable gift that brings about reconciliation.

As I said, being reconciled to God is first and foremost. What then of reconciliation in our personal lives with

others once the "first and foremost" takes place? "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). That ministry, which all believers have been given, has to do with simply explaining the good news of the gospel to everyone with whom God provides the opportunity. Sharing the good news of the gift of eternal life that we have freely received should be one of the easiest things for Christians to do but, sadly, too many believers are reluctant to do it. There's another aspect of reconciliation that some Christians find terribly difficult, and it has to do with our personal relationships.

Scripture gives us instructions and commands regarding how we, as believers, are to effect reconciliation in our relationships. Matthew 5:23-24 gives us a sense of the priority of personal reconciliation with others before God: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; *first be reconciled to thy brother*, and then come and offer thy gift." It seems that God won't accept one's service to Him when we are at the same time disobedient to His commands.

Obviously, reconciliation between individuals is very important to God and examples are found throughout the Bible. The brothers Jacob and Esau were reconciled (Gen 33:4). After terrorizing believers, Saul, aka Paul, was accepted by those Christians whom he had terrorized! The Corinthians separated themselves from the young man who had his father's wife, but after he repented he was reconciled to them. Regarding that situation, Paul wrote: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2 Cor 2:6-7). Paul's letter to Philemon consists primarily of his exhortation to receive back his escaped slave Onesimus. Paul himself had issues with John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, which caused Paul to separate himself from him. However, those issues must have been resolved, for Paul later declared, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim 4:11).

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to reconciliation among believers is reluctance, even refusal, to forgive an offending

individual. That's why the Lord, knowing the heart of man, underscores the necessity of forgiveness throughout the Scriptures: "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven" (Mt 18:21-22); "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mk 11:25-26).

So what are the factors that prevent us from obeying the commands of God's Word? Pride...self...our old nature...to name a few. Because pride is a major factor, it keeps us from availing ourselves of God's grace, because "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet 5:5).

Who is ever eager to admit that he or she is to blame—or willing to reconcile when not guilty? All of the things that keep us from reconciling with others can be overcome by simply doing what the Scriptures tell us to do. If we're willing to do things God's way, He'll enable us to obey Him. If that sounds too simple, let's consider a few ideas that might help a person to turn from his own way to God's way. Although those justifications shouldn't be necessary, the examples are much like the deterrents listed in the Bible itself, warning readers of the dire consequences of disobedience.

Just what is to be gained by being *unwilling* to reconcile or forgive? Nothing good! It's all about self. But pride blinds one to the fact that unwillingness to forgive is self-destructive. Rarely does it have an effect on the person against whom the grudge is held. For many who refuse to reconcile, it conjures up feelings that feed their prideful sense of superiority. Yet Proverbs 12:1 calls the person who rejects biblical instruction and correction brutish, or stupid. Furthermore, the longer that such feelings are sustained, the easier it will be for a root of bitterness to take hold. At the very least, a bad attitude will prevail, affecting others, especially the family members who have to live with the individual. So we see that nothing is gained, but much is lost.

Worst of all, refusing to reconcile injures a believer's relationship with the Lord. God certainly does not change or go back on His declaration that He will

never leave nor forsake a believer (Heb 13:5), but those who disobey God will hardly draw closer to Him! By choosing their own way, they're in the process of drifting away from Him (Heb 2:1; Rev 2:4), or worse. Verses such as Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:12-13 are not suggestions but rather commands that must be obeyed: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, *forgiving one another*, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and *forgiving one another*; if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*." Those who claim to be believers but refuse to comply need to take to heart the admonition given by Jesus: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Lk 6:46).

Throughout the Word of God believers are exhorted to deny themselves, putting Christ first and then others: "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor 5:14-15); "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself" (Rom 15:2-3); Love "seeketh not her own" (1 Cor 13:5); "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1-3). An unforgiving heart stands in direct opposition to those verses and many more.

In my four decades of being a biblical Christian, I had to learn about reconciliation the hard way, which meant through my own experiences rather than by simply obeying what the Scriptures clearly present. I lost a number of friends during that time for a number of reasons, whether through what I did, or said, or wrote. Early on, my approach was to engage them in communication, mostly to defend myself, regardless of whether or not I was at fault. That attitude never brought about reconciliation, even when I made my case using scriptural support. More often than not, it worsened the relationship.

So what did I learn? I needed to do what the Word of God commanded. When convicted of my own wrong in a situation, I needed to repent of whatever it was and try to make amends. What about when I wasn't at fault, or when I was biblically

correct in what I had written, but a brother took offense? I would often respond in order to better explain my point of view or to clarify what I had written that would provide a better understanding. It appeared to be the right thing to do, as long as I could make *reconciliation* my goal rather than my defense of myself. But even when I did what I could to reconcile, rarely did my attempts meet with success, at least for a while.

What I learned over the years helped, however. First of all, it takes two to reconcile. Both parties must be willing to obey the Bible's teachings and do things God's way, which may involve the instructions found in Matthew 18. If, however, I'm willing but the other person is not, we can't be reconciled. That doesn't excuse me from doing all I can to obey God's Word regarding the matter. To not do so doesn't please the Lord, nor does it help to bring about the possibility of a resolution to the situation. What I've also learned is that when I've attempted to dispute the issues of disagreement, no matter how meekly, more often than not I've unintentionally created obstacles that thwart resolution. The more I "debated," the greater the disagreement seemed to grow. In other words, I realized that I was hindering what might have been an eventual reconciliation.

On the other hand, I have experienced a few truly miraculous reconciliations! How did they happen? I believe they were all helped by my getting out of the Lord's way, meaning that I stopped defending myself. Instead, I turned the circumstances over to God, doing what His Word said, with His help, and committed those situations to continual prayer. It was the Lord who turned the hearts of those in opposition toward reconciliation, which only He could do. As it says in 2 Timothy 2:25 regarding those in opposition, "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

God knows everyone's heart and what needs to be done to effect change, which only He can do. Others, however, cannot know or do anything about our hearts, but they can see how we as Christians handle things. God's Word instructs us to "Be not wise in your own conceits," not repaying "evil for evil," but rather do good to others "in the sight of all men" striving to "live peaceably" (Romans 12:16-18). That's God's way, and anyone who wants to experience peace in his own life but has departed from God's way must begin the reconciliation process first and foremost with Him. **TBC**

Quotable.....

Evangelism that ignores the fact of sin in every individual life while decrying the corporate sins of society is an exercise in sociology and not the proclamation of the gospel. Humanitarian concerns are compatible with the thinking of an unregenerate world. The preaching of the cross, with all its implications, is utter foolishness to all but those who believe. Lose sight of man's spiritual need and all is lost. The need of all humanity is acutely personal, and the gospel tells man where his need can be met. Omit this, and a man remains "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) and without hope in a godless world.

—PAUL RICHARD SMITH,
in New Evangelicalism

Q&A.....

QUESTION: In his book *The Autobiography of George Mueller*, the author tells how God uses trials to increase our faith. Such an interpretation would have to be read into the Bible. Abraham's life (for example) proves that notion wrong. Otherwise, God would be a child abuser! It is Satan who tempted Christ and goes about as a roaring lion seeking to destroy believers.

RESPONSE: You seem to think that no Christian should face any trials; or that if they do come, they could only be from Satan. But was it not God who commanded Abraham to offer Isaac? Was Job wrong when he said submissively, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Paul clearly says that God gave him a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me," and he explains why: "lest I should be exalted above measure." Paul also rejoices in the blessed result: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor 12:7, 9).

Surely, if anyone was in God's perfect will it was Christ himself. Yet He endured many trials and was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Is 53:3). Indeed, He learned obedience by the things which he suffered (Heb 5:8). And Christ declared that Christians would likewise suffer for His sake: "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (Jn 15:20).

There was no greater apostle than Paul, yet he suffered "in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep...

in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen...in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst...in cold and nakedness..." (2 Cor 11:22-33).

Those who preach the "prosperity gospel" today, and who claim that difficulties and sufferings come from a lack of faith, must conclude that Paul didn't know how to make a "positive confession," or he would have prospered financially and have been free of difficulties like them. We would have to conclude the same concerning the heroes and heroines of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 who suffered such horrible trials. On the contrary, the trials strengthened their faith.

Indeed, how else could one demonstrate one's faith without it being put to the test? Thus Peter speaks of "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold... [which] might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ..." (1 Pt 1:7).

The Bible is literally filled from beginning to end with the thrilling testimonies of those whose faith our gracious Lord strengthened through many trials. Perhaps the church's neglect of that part of Scripture today has contributed to a warped view of living the life of faith.

QUESTION: You have said that the marks of Calvary will eternally be in Christ's body, but you haven't given proof from the Bible. Wouldn't such scars mar His perfect resurrection body?

RESPONSE: There is no question that the marks of Calvary were in Christ's body after the resurrection when He appeared to the disciples. What other meaning could there be to the disciples when He first appeared to them, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself...and...he showed them his hands and his feet" (Lk 24:39-40).

To doubting Thomas He said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands [e.e., the nail holes in them]; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side...and be not faithless but believing" (Jn 20:27). That He is seen in heaven as the "Lamb as it had been slain" (Rv 5:6) could hardly be without the marks of Calvary, inasmuch as that is how He was slain. Moreover, for all eternity the center of the new creation will be "the throne of God and the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1, 3).

QUESTION: I know that I'll be in heaven, but I still have a fear of the moment of death, the process of dying. Can you help me?

RESPONSE: We are aware of a poem (from the Gospel Tract Society in Springfield, MO) that goes something like this:

To bid farewell to Earth and its toils and troubles and pains—afraid of that?

To exchange this arthritic, bent body for an incorruptible form—afraid of that?

To greet loved ones who've gone before and behold their joy—afraid of that?

To exchange a tear-stained vale for a land without tears—afraid of that?

Some thoughts to ponder indeed. Consider this: If we've become faithful servants, keeping our eyes fixed not upon death but upon Jesus, the author and finisher of faith (Heb 12:2), we will be less likely to succumb to the one sorrow for a believer at death: no, not even the farewell to loved ones but the regret that while on Earth we could have done more for our Lord, especially bringing others to Him.

First Corinthians 15:26 tells us that the last enemy that will be conquered is death, that we will be raised in incorruption, not corruption; in glory, not dishonor; in power, not weakness (vv. 42-43); changed (v. 52); and in victory (v. 54)! How much better could it get?

You mentioned as well fearing the *process* of dying. None of us knows what the hours or moments before death will hold, but since the *Lord* has worked in our lives, superintended, orchestrated, guided, and led through all the vicissitudes of this world, why would we not trust Him even more as He guides and leads us toward that glorious moment when we see Him face to face and He welcomes us home? Would that compassion that is "new every morning" and "fails not" (Lam 3:23) wane one iota at such a wondrous hour?

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:37-39).

The physical process of dying can be painful and prolonged. This, of course, can be especially true of those who are called to be martyrs. The following poem expresses well the basis of courage even when entering that trial—the joy that awaits us in Christ's presence:

In weakness like defeat,
He won the victor's crown;
Trode all our foes beneath His feet,
By being trodden down.

He Satan's power laid low:
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew.
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so;
And death by dying slew.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Three Conditions for Prayer to be Answered

Question: I have been a Christian for many years and have attended hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prayer meetings. I have heard many earnest prayers for good purposes but rarely have I seen an answer. This is rather shattering to my faith. Why are so few prayers answered?

Response: First of all, you admit that you have personally seen at least some prayers answered. In addition, you have surely heard or read the testimony of others who unquestionably have had miraculous answers to prayer. Consider, for example, George Müller, whose life was an amazing testimony to answered prayer. He housed, clothed, and fed thousands of orphans, made it a point never to ask for any financial help from man but only from God, and recorded in his diary literally thousands of specific answers to prayer. Müller wrote:

“Now if I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith obtained *without asking any individual*, the means for establishing and carrying on an Orphan-House, there would be something which, with the Lord’s blessing, might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God, besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted, of the reality of the things of God.

This, then, was the primary reason for establishing the Orphan-House. I certainly did from my heart desire to be used by God to benefit the bodies of poor children, bereaved of both parents, and seek in other respects, with the help of God to do them good for this life...[and] to be used by God in getting the dear orphans trained in the fear of God – but still, the first and primary object of the work was (and still is) that God might be magnified by the fact that the [thousands of] orphans under my care are provided with all they need, only by *prayer and*

faith without anyone [other than God] being asked by me or my fellow-laborers [for help or funds] (A. E. C. Brooks, compiler, *Answers to Prayer from George Müller’s Narratives* (Moody Press, undated paperback), p. 10.)

We could multiply other examples to show that God does answer *many* prayers. Robert Ingersoll, who was the epitome of agnosticism and who ridiculed Christians for praying, demanded “just one little fact” proving that prayers are answered. There are facts by the thousands that he and other agnostics and atheists have refused to accept – not because it could not be proved that prayers are answered, for that has been proved repeatedly, but because their prejudice wouldn’t allow them to face the truth.

In fact, an entire library could be filled with testimonies of answers to prayer that cannot be explained away as mere coincidence. The issue,

then, is not whether God is able to, or even does, answer prayer but why His answer to so many prayers is *no*. There are, according to the Bible, at least three factors that determine whether a prayer will be answered or not: 1) whether it is God's *will* to answer it; 2) whether it is God's time to answer it; and 3) whether those praying are living in such a relationship with God that it would be *appropriate* for Him to answer the prayer.

We can thank God that many of our prayers are not answered. We are supposed to pray at all times, "Not my will but thine be done." Yet many of our prayers are not in that spirit at all but are actually attempts to persuade God to do man's will, to bless or bring to pass man's plans. Since we are far from perfect in wisdom, it could bring disaster upon us if God always did what we asked.

There is the matter of timing as well. Consider, for example, Hannah's prayer for a son. It was years before the Lord gave her the son for whom she had prayed. At last Samuel was conceived and brought into the world. It must have seemed a long and inexplicable wait to his parents-to-be; but Samuel had to live at a certain time in order to accomplish a particular mission in Israel.

Or consider Nehemiah's prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. We are told of one occasion when he "wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before God of heaven" (Nehemiah 1:4) for the restoration of Jerusalem. The implication is clear, however, that Jerusalem was on his heart continually and that he must have prayed for months and probably years without any answer. The answer came in God's time, and how important that timing was! It had to

occur on a specific day foreordained of God. From that date, 69 weeks of years (483 years) would be counted to determine the very day that Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and be hailed as the Messiah (Daniel 9:25). Yet Nehemiah may not have even suspected the importance of this timing, although the prophecy of Daniel declaring this remarkable fact had already been recorded.

Finally, an affirmative answer to prayer, when it comes, is at least in part a blessing from God that indicates that the petitioner is living according to God's will (1 John 3:22). How does one get to know God's will? Based upon his life and experience of many years of walking with God, George Müller gives us some advice as he explains one of the secrets to answered prayer:

I never remember, in all my Christian course a period now (in March, 1985) of sixty-nine years and four months that I ever *sincerely and patiently* sought to know the will of God *by the teaching of the Holy Ghost*, through the instrumentality of the *Word of God*, but that I have been always directed rightly.

But if *honesty of heart* and *uprightness before God* were lacking, or if I did not *patiently* wait upon God for instruction, or if I preferred *the counsel of my fellow men* to the declarations of *the Word of the living God*, I made great mistakes. (Emphasis in original) [Brooks, Answers, inside title page].

Prayer is not a one-way street on which we get everything we want and God gets nothing. Prayer, in fact, is to conform us to God's will. For God to answer the prayers of those who are not willing to take time to know His will and are careless about obeying Him in their daily lives would only encourage them to continue to live in disobedience.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

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Psychology and Psychotherapy (part 1)

Dr. Martin & Deidre Bobgan
and T. A. McMahon

ACCORDING TO THE *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, psychology is “the science of mind and behavior.” Is psychology a science? Well, yes and no, depending on one’s understanding of the term “science.” If one views the study of psychology as simply the pursuit of the knowledge of human behavior, some are satisfied with its definition as a science. Yet that rather vague meaning is far removed from real scientific knowledge gained through a scientific methodology that involves objective observation, evidence, hypotheses testing, induction, repetition, and verification, and ultimately resulting in a commonly accepted cumulative knowledge. Psychology differs greatly, for example, from the sciences of astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology, and biology, the knowledge of which has been amassed through objective means.

Psychology hints at being a science but has failed to produce a significant body of information to prove itself in that way. Its primary emphasis is on human behavior, which can’t be quantified in any meaningful manner. The nature of human choices is extremely subjective, involving emotions, values, and consciousness—none of which can be measured; nor can the mind, being a nonphysical part of the human makeup. The issue of whether or not psychology is a science wouldn’t be worth debating except that just the term “science” carries a great weight of influence. Legitimate or not, the “science” label impresses the masses.

Nearly 100 disciplines of psychology cover a wide spectrum of undertakings, from applied behavior analysis to transpersonal psychology. Psychotherapy, i.e., psychological counseling or clinical psychology, is the most prevalent. Americans spend more than \$200 billion a year attempting to have their mental and emotional disorders cured, usually through psychotherapy.

Psychotherapy, “also called ‘talk therapy’ or just plain ‘therapy,’ is a process whereby psychological problems are treated through communication and relationship factors between an individual and a trained mental health professional.”¹ Psychotherapy is *psychoheresy*. Its subtle deception opens the door to other deceptions, replacing and/or adding unproven, unscientific opinions of men to the Word

of God, thus taking away from absolute confidence in the biblical truth about God.

Psychoheresy denies the sufficiency of Scripture for issues of the mind, soul, and will. This intrusion of psychological notions stems from the wisdom of men and reaches into the preaching and practices of Christianity, especially in terms of man’s nature, how he’s to live, and how he changes. It’s imperative that we examine how these psychological ideas can deceive Christians. Turning to psychotherapy for the problems of living undermines a believer’s faith regarding matters of the soul. Once a person moves away from faith in the inerrant, authoritative, sufficient Word of God, he’s open to deceptions from many realms.

Psychotherapy is based on theories of personality that are simply unproved opinions originating from atheists, agnostics, and other non-Christians. These theories aren’t like scientific theories. They’re simply collections of unscientific, secular, and, in many cases, anti-Christian beliefs that often contradict one another. The therapy itself is simply “talk,” which includes talking about the client and the client’s problems and helping the client to see himself/herself from the perspective of whatever particular theory is being used by the therapist. Psychotherapy (psychological counseling) is the most subjective and therefore the most deceptive branch of psychology.

“Syncretism” is “the combination of different forms of belief or practice.” It’s one of Satan’s most deceptive and appealing techniques, devised to destroy true faith and undermine the Christian’s confidence in God’s Word and dependence on Christ. Psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies are actually religious in nature and practice. They’re like oil and water! The euphemism for this kind of syncretism is “integration,” which occurs when two or more ideas or systems are combined. However, psychotherapeutic beliefs cannot truly be integrated with Scripture. One works with the old man of the flesh (carnal); the other works with the new man in Christ (spiritual). They’re at enmity with each other, just as the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to each other (Gal. 5:17) and just as the carnal man is at enmity with God (Rom. 8:7). They can’t mix, because they’re enemies just as the idols of the nations around Israel were at enmity with God.

Christians who mix psychology and the Bible aren’t practicing and promoting ordinary integration but rather religious syncretism, overlaying their psychology with the

Bible. This ultimately disguises the psychological religious systems they’re using, and then this psycho-syncretism subverts and subtracts from the faith. The “integrating” of psychology and Christianity appeals to those Christians who believe that what is being discovered about the mind, the will, and the emotions is *science*—that it’s part of God’s creation yet to be discovered in the same way that discoveries have been made in physics, chemistry, and biology. Since psychology misrepresents itself as a science, and psychotherapeutic ideas are organized into theories, many pastors don’t even realize that these scientific-sounding theories are simply another competing belief system.

Instead of knowledge being added to knowledge with more recent discoveries resting on a body of solid information, in this case, one system contradicts another, one set of opinions is exchanged for another, and one set of techniques replaces another. Psychotherapy changes along with current cultural trends. Just the knowledge that there is an accumulation of about 500 separate psychotherapeutic systems, each claiming superiority, should discourage anyone from thinking that so many diverse opinions could be scientific or even factual. Psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies are amassed in confusion, with their pseudoknowledge and pseudotheories resulting in pseudoscience.

The dream of a scientific study of human nature and a scientific method of treating unacceptable behavior was most alluring. The hoped-for science of behavior promised much to those who had been struggling to unravel the vast complexities of individual personalities in equally complex circumstances. Thus, through study and imagination, psychologists pursued the dream of discovering scientific methods of observing, explaining, and transforming human behavior.

Clinical psychology and its active arm of psychotherapy have indeed adopted the scientific posture. However, from a strictly scientific point of view they haven’t been able to meet the requirements. In attempting to evaluate the status of psychology, the American Psychological Association appointed Sigmund Koch to plan and direct a study that was subsidized by the National Science Foundation. This examination involved eighty eminent scholars in assessing the facts, theories, and methods of psychology. The results of this extensive endeavor were then published in a seven-volume series entitled *Psychology: A Study of a Science*.²

Koch describes the delusion of people regarding psychology as a science: “*The hope* of a psychological science became indistinguishable from the *fact* of psychological science. The entire subsequent history of psychology can be seen as a ritualistic endeavor to emulate the forms of science in order to sustain the delusion that it already is a science”³³ (italics his).

Koch says: “Throughout psychology’s history as ‘science,’ *the hard* knowledge it has deposited has been uniformly negative”³⁴ (italics his). He contends that much of psychology is not a cumulative or progressive discipline in which knowledge is added to knowledge. Rather, what is discovered by one generation “typically disenfranchises the theoretical fictions of the past.” Instead of refining and specifying larger generalizations of the past, psychologists are busy replacing them. He adds, “I think it by this time utterly and finally clear that *psychology cannot be a coherent science*”³⁵ (italics his). Koch suggests, “As the beginning of a therapeutic humility, we might re-christen *psychology* and speak instead of *the psychological studies*”³⁶ (italics his). And he would certainly criticize psychotherapy for living under “the delusion that it already is a science” when it is not.⁷

Another reason why psychotherapy cannot legitimately be called a coherent science is because it attempts to deal with deep human complexities that can’t be directly observed or consistently predicted. Furthermore, the therapist and client are each individually unique, and their interaction lends an additional dimension of variability. When one adds time and changing circumstances, it’s no wonder that the therapeutic relationship escapes the rigors of science. In considering the dilemma between science and personal individuality, Dr. Gordon Allport says: “The Individual, whatever else he may be, is an internally consistent and unique organization of bodily and mental processes. But since he is unique, science finds him an embarrassment. Science, it is said, deals only with broad, preferably universal, laws.... Individuality cannot be studied by science, but only by history, art, or biography.”⁸

We could add that the individual not only escapes the formulas of science, but also defies the descriptions of literature. Nevertheless, if one must choose between the two, it appears that literature has more ably revealed human beings. Language describes the complexities of individuality far better than formulas. Language and literature, rather than personality

theories and psychotherapy, better portray human nature and provide a glimpse into the depths of the soul, but it is the Bible that best portrays and gives accurate truth about mankind.

There are subtleties and similarities between certain ideas from psychology and Christianity that increase the vulnerability for one to begin thinking and ministering psychologically rather than biblically. The deceitful heart finds its friendliest friend in a psychologized gospel, where the sinful nature of man is given free reign and where sinful speaking can be expressed without restriction, questioning, or proof. That is why Christians must spend time in the Word and in prayer instead of looking for answers to life’s dilemmas outside Scripture and the church. Again, psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies *are not science*. They are human speculations about the soul, with a pseudo-scientific façade.

There has been so much searching outside of Scripture to find ways to minister to suffering saints that a whole cadre of psychologically trained (or at least psychologically tainted) professionals and lay counselors are prepared to minister the ways of men and the wisdom of men along with Scriptures that appear to support their practice. This is syncretism. Others guilty of false integration are: (1) Christian schools and seminaries that positively promote the use of counseling psychology and/or prepare individuals to become licensed as psychotherapists, especially Christian schools that have programs accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA), (2) pastors or others who promote and affirm those psychological ideas and/or refer congregants to psychotherapists, (3) authors and organizations that promote a psychological understanding of man, (4) professing Christians who are deeply committed to this “integration,” which comes from not believing that Scripture is sufficient for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3).

The delusion nevertheless continues despite this disclosure by members of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, a group that includes psychologists and psychological counselors who are professing Christians: “We are often asked if we are ‘Christian psychologists’ and find it difficult to answer since we don’t know what the question implies. We are Christians who are psychologists, but at the present time there is no acceptable Christian psychology that is markedly different from non-Christian psychology. It

is difficult to imply that we function in a manner that is fundamentally distinct from our non-Christian colleagues....”⁹

We are not questioning the faith of Christians who, as psychotherapists, pastors, and church leaders, support psychotherapy and clinical psychology. We are critical, however, of their practice and support for these activities that deny the sufficiency of Scripture. The Word is true; the theories and practices of psychotherapy that speak in place of God’s written Word and its promises are counterfeits. This *psychologizing of the faith* has come to full flower so that those who know better will not for the sake of the Gospel do better. There are many pastors and church leaders who believe as we do regarding psychotherapy but will not make an issue of this false religious compromise of true faith in God’s Word. We have often challenged Christians who believe as we do regarding psychotherapy to ask their pastors if they have any problem with referring those with life issues to a psychotherapist.

Psychoheresy deceives the soul. O. Hobart Mowrer, in his book titled *The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion*, asks a penetrating question: “Has evangelical religion sold its birthright for a mess of psychological pottage?”¹⁰ Christians need to take an objective, hard look at their birthright and the mess of psychological pottage. Without a firm hold on the Word of God they will be led astray and more so as deception will increase exponentially in the days preceding Christ’s return.

When asked about the time of His return, Jesus said: “Take heed that no man deceive you.” How deeply deceived might those Christians be after seeking help from psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies? How will they be able to discover how much they are deceived, if they have already mixed deceptive psychological notions and nonsense into their understanding of the Bible? Twice in the book of Proverbs (14:12; 16:25) we’re told that there’s a way (the world’s way) that seems right to a man, but it is separated from God’s truth and leads to death.

Nearly all of those who believe they’ve been helped by psychological counseling eventually recognize that their mental and emotional problems have neither been resolved nor lessened. In part II of this series, we’ll address the myth of psychological counseling being efficacious and the value of ministering God’s way through the sufficiency of His Word and the enablement of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:3). **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You emphasize that salvation is based on the fact that Christ “paid the penalty for our sins.” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* has no entry for “penalty,” nor did Jesus or the apostles ever mention that a penalty for our sins was paid. If I ask fellow Christians where to find this view in the Bible, either they don’t know the answer or they imply that I’m not saved. I pose that question to you.

RESPONSE: Nor is the word “trinity” found in either the Bible or *Strong’s*, yet it’s a basic teaching of Scripture. Was not the casting of Adam and Eve out of the Garden a penalty for their sin? Isn’t the death that came upon Adam and Eve and all of their descendants to this day also a penalty for sin that would continue in eternal separation from God without His pardon? In declaring, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Eze 18:13, 20); sin bringeth forth death (Jas 1:15); the strength of sin is the law” (1 Cor 15:56), isn’t Scripture saying that death is the penalty for sin? Does not a penalty have to be paid? Granted, the Bible nowhere uses that exact terminology about Christ paying the penalty for sin. But isn’t that what’s implied when it says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5), or “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor 15:3), or “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9), as well as in many similar verses? If death is the penalty for sin and Christ died for all, then surely He paid the penalty in full for all of us, or we would have to pay [it] ourselves. Our salvation is a matter of God’s justice, “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9), et al. Our salvation is a matter of God’s justice, “that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26).

I don’t understand your objection to saying that the penalty was paid. Wasn’t the force of Christ’s triumphant cry from the cross, “It is finished [*tetelestai*]” (Jn 19:30), meaning “paid in full”? I am grateful that Christ paid the full penalty for my sins so that God can be just in pardoning me, the sinner! There is no other means of salvation.

QUESTION: We’re told that “one day is with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pt 3:8); and that “a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and

as a watch in the night” (Ps 90:4). Is there any special prophetic significance that might tell us how close we are to the LORD’s return?

RESPONSE: There is no prophetic significance. The phrases “with the LORD” and “in thy sight” are the keys to understanding this rather simple and straightforward declaration: God is outside of time and therefore, in relation to Him, time is meaningless. Thus Paul can say that we are already seated “together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). God, being independent of time, sees not only what to us is past but also our present and future as having already happened. Thus His foreknowledge of what in our experience hasn’t yet occurred would have no effect upon its happening and would leave us free to make genuine choices.

Here is what John Wesley said in a sermon more than 200 years ago: “There is no such thing as either foreknowledge or afterknowledge in God. All time, or rather all eternity (for time is only that small fragment of eternity which is allotted to the children of men), being present to God at once, He does not know one thing from another, or one thing after another; but sees all things in one point of view, from everlasting to everlasting. As all time, with everything that exists therein, is preset with Him at once, so he sees at once whatever was, is, or will be to the end of time” (John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 1833, p. 39).

QUESTION: What did Paul mean when he said that he and the other Apostles were “the last appointed unto death”? Did that mean that no one else after them would ever be martyred for their faith? If so, he was wrong.

RESPONSE: Paul wasn’t wrong when he wrote these words: “For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Cor 4:9). Some argue that Paul and the other Apostles thought that the Rapture would occur in their day. Not so. Although he taught believers to *expect* the Rapture at any moment (Php 3:20-21; 1 Thess 1:9-10; Titus 2:13, etc.), Paul knew that he would be martyred before it occurred: “For I know... that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in...” (Acts 20:29); “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tm 4:6). Likewise, Peter wrote, “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle... I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things

always in remembrance” (2 Pt 1:14-15). The Apostles didn’t expect to be raptured but knew they must each die for their LORD.

Christ declared that His disciples in all ages would be hated by the world and would suffer the same as He had at its hands (Jn 15:18-21); Paul implied that Christians would continue to suffer martyrdom (Rom 8:35-37) and warned that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tm 3:12). We know that has been the case throughout history, and even greater numbers of believers will be killed by Antichrist (Rv 6:9-11; 13:7, 15; 20:4). Obviously Paul did not mean that the Apostles were the last who would be martyred for Christ. They were the last who were “appointed unto death;” i.e., who must die for Christ. Their lives would have been spared had they denied Christ. No one is fool enough to die for what he knows is a lie. The fact that not one of the disciples retracted anything to save his life is powerful evidence of the validity of the Gospels and the Book of Acts. It was thus essential that they die as martyrs, and they were the last upon whom that necessity was imposed.

QUESTION: The Apostles’ Creed says that Jesus “descended into hell.” I’ve read your rejection of the Hagan/Copeland teaching that Jesus was tortured in hell by Satan. Did Jesus descend into hell or not? I searched the Scriptures and have no answer.

RESPONSE: The word *sheol*, “place of the dead,” is translated “hell” or sometimes as “grave.” In telling the fate of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus taught that before the Cross, there were two compartments in sheol: one for the lost, and one for the saved, called “Abraham’s bosom” (Lk 16:22). To the latter Christ went in death, as did the thief crucified with Him to whom He said, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43). There He proclaimed to the redeemed the good news of His death having paid for their sins. Those in sheol could hear what Jesus said (see Lk 16:23-31); and He may even have addressed a few words to them. Thus Peter writes, “He preached to the spirits in prison [sheol]; which sometime were disobedient...” (1 Pt 3:19-20). After His resurrection, Jesus took the souls and spirits of the redeemed to heaven (“he led captivity captive” [Eph 4:8]). Now the souls and spirits of the redeemed upon death go immediately to be with Christ (“absent from the body, present with the Lord” [2 Cor 5:6-8]), when He will bring them to rejoice in their resurrected bodies at the Rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Discipline and Maturity through Prayer

Question: It is my understanding that Christians should pray “according to God’s will.” Why doesn’t God just do His will without being advised how to do it? And if He knows everything, why does He need anyone to tell Him what needs to be done? If God “cares for His own,” as I have so often heard preached, then why do “His own” ever have to cry to Him to supply their needs?

Response: No one who truly understands prayer believes that, by this means, one advises God of anything He doesn’t already know or of how or when to do His will. Prayer is the expression of our desire to God, but true prayer is not an insistence upon that desire. Nor would anyone who knows God want to persuade Him to do anything that is contrary to His will even if such persuasion were possible. After all, God is wiser than we are. To express in prayer as Christ did as a man is to acknowledge, “Not my will, but thine be done” (Luke:22:42).

Then why pray at all? Let’s look at a specific example. Suppose a person is seriously ill. Prayer for that person’s healing is an expression of one’s love and concern. It is also an admission that healing is in God’s hands and a confession of utter dependence upon Him. Suppose the person recovers so miraculously that there can be no doubt that God intervened. Would God have healed the person without prayer? Inasmuch as full recovery was clearly God’s will, we may be certain it would have occurred without prayer but perhaps not in an obviously miraculous manner.

So what was the point of prayer, if basically the same effect could have occurred without it? All prayer that is not self-centered is an opportunity to express to God one’s love and concern for others and at the same time to obediently submit to His will. Prayer can

have a powerful effect in molding one’s character and bringing one closer to God. The godly person’s prayers begin to reflect more and more the will of God as He changes the character and thoughts and deeds of the one praying to conform to His will and plan in all things. God’s Spirit moves us to pray for the very thing that He is going to do. Thus the petitioner becomes God’s partner in the working out of His will on earth.

As for why those who are His own and for whom God cares should ever have any needs, there are several reasons. First of all, as any wise parent on earth would do for his children, our heavenly Father may be teaching patience and molding character by delaying answers to prayers for certain needs. There also may be conditions that must be met in one’s life before God sees fit to meet some need.

A child will never learn self-control and self-discipline and the other essential lessons in life if the parents instantly give him everything he wants. Knowing this and being confident of God’s love and care, one does not despair when prayers are not answered but seeks to

learn what God is teaching. Of course, there is also the difference between what we may think are real needs and those things that God, in His wisdom, considers to be unnecessary or even harmful desires. Thankfully, we wait in vain for Him to provide those for us.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

“For thou art my rock and my fortress: therefore for thy name’s sake lead me, and guide me” (Psalm 31:3)

When you are wounded and stricken, seek refuge in God’s abiding presence. Carry your burdens to Him. Pour your heaped-up troubles on Him. He understands, my precious friend, when the heart is apparently gone out of you. God pities you, as a father does his little child. The gentleness of a mother is harsh compared with the gentleness of God.

When perplexities and troubles come, go to Jesus. Listen as He says, “Let not your heart be troubled...” (John 14:1). He will guide you by His sympathy. He will guide!

The prophet Isaiah shared with us a spiritual secret with these comforting words, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

—OSWALD CHAMBERS

END NOTES

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The Bobgans website is: www.psychoheresy-aware.org

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Psychology and Psychotherapy (part 2)

Dr. Martin & Deidre Bobgan
and T. A. McMahon

PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY, with its underlying psychologies, is questionable at best, detrimental at worst, and a spiritual counterfeit at least. On one hand, there's enough biblical and scientific evidence to shut down the secular psychology industry and with it the "Christian Psychology" industry. On the other hand, we're not naïve enough to believe that the overwhelming amount of scientific evidence supporting its demise will be heeded by the majority of Christians.

Regrettably, many will not be interested in reading about the biblical and scientific evidence because it contradicts their established assumptions about psychological counseling. According to sound research, not only is psychotherapy less effective than it is purported to be, but in many cases it's even harmful. After examining numerous efficacy (effectiveness) studies on psychotherapy, university professor and widely recognized researcher Dr. Robyn Dawes says, "There is no positive evidence supporting the efficacy of professional psychology."¹¹ Dawes further says "Evaluating the efficacy of psychotherapy has led us to conclude that professional psychologists are no better psychotherapists than anyone else with minimal training—sometimes those without any training at all; the professionals are merely more expensive."¹²

In fact, Dr. Lawrence LeShan, when he was president-elect of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, said: "Psychotherapy may be known in the future as the greatest hoax of the twentieth century."¹³

Although biblical ministry to the soul has existed for thousands of years, psychotherapy is relatively new. It has only been during the latter half of the twentieth century that Christians began to trust psychology more than the Bible in dealing with problems of living. As a result, psychology has displaced much of Christianity and the care of souls. Even for those who are Christians, psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies have contaminated the pure ministry of the Word of God and the life of Christ in the believer.

Today people wholeheartedly believe that psychological counseling theories, dressed in a wide variety of styles and shades, contain the secrets and answers for

helping troubled souls. Their confidence in the curative power of psychotherapy has increased in spite of the absence of substantial proof of any great degree of effectiveness.¹⁴ Persuaded by the claims of psychotherapists, they fail to question the validity of those claims, refuse to examine research, and blindly believe popular myths about psychotherapy.

In our local and national surveys, we have found that the large majority of churches refer their people with personal, marital, and family problems to these licensed professionals. Prior to 60 years ago, no such referral from a church to a psychotherapist's office ever happened, because licensed psychotherapists did not exist then. Now the church that does not refer out to the licensed therapist or use their books is a major exception.

What's the problem with pastors directing their people away from the oracles of God to the offices of the God-usurpers? The radical wrongdoing in all of this is that by sending people to psychotherapists, pastors and other ministers in the church are, in effect, denying the sufficiency of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to minister to the trials, tribulations, and suffering that we face in life!

The church has great and godly promises available in the Word, which always trumps the current-day prestige, promises, and pronouncements of the psychotherapists, but there are many Christian leaders and organizations that, by their actions, must not believe this. Their very acts contradict their claims of belief in the sufficiency of Scripture.

We have repeatedly said that Christians should not become psychotherapists. Neither should Christians go to psychotherapists for help. In spite of our warnings, for which we have provided biblical and scientific support, Christians continue to become licensed psychotherapists or are using their services.

All licensed psychotherapists have been educated in clinical psychology, from which psychotherapy (counseling psychology) comes. When they counsel, they must do so according to their secular psychological training and their license. Each state licenses its own psychotherapists, with the two most popular titles being Clinical Psychologist and Marriage and Family Therapist. The standard that psychotherapists must follow is that they are to practice according to the educational requirements for licensing. A licensed-by-the-state psychotherapist who is honest cannot turn the therapist/client relationship into a godly Christian session, as

that would be a dishonest use of the license and could lead to suspension of it.

Any licensed-by-the-state psychotherapist must serve clients without discrimination. That means a Christian who is licensed by the state to be a psychotherapist must perform professional services for married lesbians and gays, homosexual singles, Satanists, cult leaders, et al. For example, if two married gays come to a psychotherapist licensed by the state, she¹⁵ must do her best to assist the gay couple with all of her professional training to help them live more happily with one another. Some of these Christian psychotherapists will tell you that they would rather lose their license than to do that. However, no Christian should be involved in such unfaithfulness to begin with.

From the very beginning of the Christian church there was a method and a ministry for dealing with mental/emotional problems. The method depended upon the Word of God, which describes both the condition of man and the process of relief for troubled minds. The ministry within the early church was a prayer-and-healing ministry, which dealt with all nonorganic mental/emotional disturbances. This entire process was known as the "cure of souls." John T. McNeill, in *A History of the Cure of Souls*, describes this ministry as "the sustaining and curative treatment of persons in those matters that reach beyond the requirements of the animal life."¹⁶

Whereas once the church believed in, spoke of, and practiced the cure of souls, it has shifted its faith to a secular cure of *minds*. Dr. Thomas Szasz very ably describes how this change came about: "...with the soul securely displaced by the mind and the mind securely subsumed as a function of the brain—people speak of the 'cure of minds.'"¹⁷ The brain is a physical organ; the mind is not. With this subtle semantic twist, the mind (disguised as an organ of the body) was elevated as a scientific and medical concept in contrast to the soul, which is a theological reality. A choice was made between a so-called scientific concept and a theological one. The average person does not see that both mind and soul are abstract concepts. One is an abstraction of psychotherapy and the other is an abstraction of religion.

At the same time that a physical organ (the brain) was replaced by an abstraction (the mind), another change took place. Whereas the church had believed that there was a relationship of sin and circumstances to mental/emotional disorders, the psychotherapist introduced the medical concept

of sickness to explain such disorders. Nevertheless, mental suffering is not synonymous with sickness—we've only been deluded into thinking that it is. We easily accepted the word "sickness" to refer to mental-emotional problems because that was the "loving" and "understanding" way to cover up moral responsibility—ours as well as theirs.

There's a serious problem when people confuse emotions with tissue and sin with sickness. Such confusion of words leads to erroneous thinking. This very confusion and error virtually ended the cure-of-souls ministry in the church. Through a semantic trick, the mind was confused with the brain, and the misnomer of sickness replaced the concept of sin. Thus the entire subjective, theoretical process of psychotherapy ensconced itself safely in the realm of science and medicine. In reality, psychotherapy is a misfit as medicine and an impostor as science. With the rise in psychotherapy, there was a decline in the pastoral cure of souls until that ministry is now almost nonexistent.

Christianity is more than a belief system or a theological creed. Christianity is faith in a living Lord and in His indwelling Holy Spirit. Christianity involves the entire life: every day, every action, every decision, every thought, and every emotion. One cannot adequately treat a Christian apart from Christ's indwelling presence. Neither should one segment the mental and emotional from a Christian's faith.

True Christians, who have God's Holy Spirit living in them, are spiritual beings; they need spiritual solutions, not mere psychological attempts at solving the problem. Yet, for too long Christians have looked to the church to answer our theological questions and have looked elsewhere for answers to problems of living.

It's understandable that the world would reject the Living Water when attempting to understand and help individuals suffering from problems of living. However, as the world rejected biblical answers, the church began to doubt its own doctrine of sin, salvation, and sanctification in the area of personal and relationship problems. Many ministers even left their pastorates to become licensed psychotherapists.

In the past sixty years, psychological theory has usurped the place of spiritual practice, and even Christians turn to psychotherapy rather than to sanctification as a means of dealing with soul problems. The Bible provides both a spiritual basis

for mental/emotional health and a spiritual solution for non-organically caused mental/emotional disorders. True mental health involves spiritual and moral health as well as emotional wellbeing. It's imperative that Christians take a fresh look at the Bible and at the provisions that God has made available for mental-emotional health and healing. *No one has ever proved that psychotherapy produces better results than biblical ministry in the church from the day of Pentecost onward.*

The Bible is the only authoritative document that is sufficient when it comes to matters of the soul. God himself created humans. He not only gave them a soul, but He gave them His Word concerning matters of the soul, including "all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pt 1:3). The soul itself is a person's non-physical inner life, the core of one's being. No psychological theory, psychotherapist, or psychological counselor can even approach what the Bible is able to do regarding the soul: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:12-13).

The soul resides in every person in his *inborn nature*, which is common to all who are "in Adam" (they have inherited the sin nature.) The human spirit is made alive when people are "born again" (Jn 1:12-13; 3:3-5) and have the life of Christ in them. This plays out in Galatians where the "flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal 5:17). This battle within every believer between the flesh and the spirit continues until believers enter into glory with Jesus Christ. The Word of God reveals a person's "thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God is not only powerful and authoritative; it is God-breathed and sufficient to enable a Christian to live a life pleasing to God: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tm 3:16-17).

The Word of God ministered by the Holy Spirit in the fellowship of believers has far more to offer than the psychological wisdom of men. God's plan for salvation

and sanctification is clearly laid out in the Bible. Instead of turning to psychotherapy, believers need to turn to Scripture, which describes both what God accomplishes in a believer and how the believer is enabled to respond.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power..." (Col 2:6-10).

In this passage, we see that just as Christians receive salvation by grace through faith, they are to live each day by grace through faith. And just as Jesus is central in salvation in that He offered Himself for their sins and gave them new life, He is to be central on a daily basis—moment by moment. Their new life is to be grounded in Christ and built up in Him. They need to be established in the faith (the teachings and doctrines) by remembering what Christ has done and responding accordingly. And they are to be thankful, not just a bit here and there but "abounding therein with thanksgiving"! Christianity is not a part-time activity. It must be fulltime—when life is easy and when it gets hard.

The scripture above also warns about psychotherapy: being spoiled through "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world," all of which ruin believers by taking away from their dependence on Christ and God's Word. The passage extols Christ, in whom is "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (v. 9) and who is "the head of all principality and power." Christ has made believers to be "complete in Him." Believers need to encourage one another with these God-breathed words from Scripture, because there is a tendency to forget these truths, which are so very essential and life giving.

Twice in the book of Proverbs (14:12; 16:25) we're told that there's a way (the world's way) that seems right to a man but it leads to a separation from God's truth (i.e., the ways of death). Pray that we all might heed the counsel of the Lord given in Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: The Bible says, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Then why do I so often fail to do His will and to please Him? I more often please myself by doing my own will. Why?

RESPONSE: The previous verse says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” We don’t “work for salvation” but must “work out” the salvation God has given us. Paul declares that “we are his [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:9-10). It is God’s will that we should do good works—but it is our responsibility to do them.

Created in a beautiful garden, Adam was “to dress it and to keep it [and] freely eat” its fruit (Gn 2:15-16). God gave Adam the ability, but he had both to harvest and to eat the fruit. God didn’t do either of these tasks for him. So it is with the life we are to live by faith in God and in obedience to His will. God’s work in us neither overrides our will nor our efforts but guides and empowers us as we obey Him. Just as Adam failed to do God’s will, we too fail at times. God had a provision for Adam’s sin, and He has one for ours as well: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9). Why do we so often seek our own will? Whether we live for Christ or for self depends upon our understanding and faith.

Christ loves us so much that He paid the full penalty that His justice demanded for our sins. When this fact becomes more real to us than this passing world, we become overwhelmed with love for Him and the desire to do His will. When we really believe that this life is brief and eternity is unending, the shortness of time in relation to eternity compels us by logic and even self-interest to live for eternity. The life we live day-by-day depends upon what we really believe. Paul’s passion was to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” To that end he said, “Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Col 1:28-29). Understanding, faith, and love provide the foundation for a partnership in which God is able to work mightily in us as we work diligently and trust Him.

QUESTION: You justify God for sending people to hell because He has provided

salvation for them in Christ. That won’t do, for millions and probably billions will spend eternity in hell. God knew that! How could a good God create anyone whom He knew would suffer eternally?

RESPONSE: God created each person with the capability to choose. One cannot have real human beings without the possibility of evil. So the issue is the existence or nonexistence of the human race: “To be or not to be.” The only way to have forever eliminated evil and suffering on this earth would have been not to create man at all. Although that would have eliminated all suffering and sorrow, think of the beauty and joy and love it would have eliminated as well.

God wants no one to go to hell, and He has provided salvation for everyone through Jesus Christ, whom He sent into the world “that the world through Him might be saved” (Jn 3:17). He is not “willing that any should perish” (2 Pt 3:9) but desires for “all men to be saved” (1 Tm 2:4). Those in hell have only themselves to blame for rejecting the full forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life offered to all freely, by His grace, through Christ’s payment of the penalty for their sins.

Why would God create those He knew would ultimately reject the gospel? Why didn’t He only create those who would believe the gospel and leave uncreated those who would reject Christ? God knew that many of those who would, by their own free will, reject Him (although having the same opportunity to receive Him as all the rest) would be the mothers and fathers, the aunts and uncles, the children and grandchildren and cousins of millions and millions who would believe in Christ and therefore whose destiny is the eternal bliss and joy of heaven. If the former hadn’t come into existence, then neither could the latter. The only place for those who do not accept His offer of salvation is to be consigned to the lake of fire for eternity. “Not fair!” you say? On the contrary. God created the lake of fire for “the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41), and it is not His will (Jn 3:16) that any should perish.

QUESTION: “Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Mt 7:13). How has God “won” if there are more souls in hell than in heaven?

RESPONSE: Are you sure there will be “more souls in hell than in heaven”? The verse you quote refers to those who reject

the narrow way to life—it does not refer to those who die in infancy or to aborted babies. If these, having neither sinned nor rejected the gospel, are indeed purchased by Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of the world (as I believe they are), on that account alone there could be more in heaven than in hell because of the high infant mortality rate in most countries where the gospel is little known. Furthermore, even if no one went to heaven, God has “won.” He did not compromise His justice but insisted that the penalty be paid and will allow no one into heaven who has rejected Christ’s payment on their behalf. Christ conquered Satan by living a sinless life of perfect obedience to the Father—and then by laying down that life in full payment for sin. God has proved both His love and His justice, both His mercy and holiness. Through Christ’s payment for sin upon the cross, God has won the victory over Satan, sin, and death, and has made salvation available to all who will receive it as the free gift of His grace.

QUESTION: Is it really biblical for you or anyone else to point out others’ faults? Isn’t this judging when we are not to judge? Doesn’t the Scripture say that the servant is to be left to the correction of his master, who is Christ?

RESPONSE: It’s not a matter of pointing out “faults” but of correcting unbiblical doctrine and behavior. Publicly taught doctrinal error must be corrected publicly for the benefit of those who have been misled thereby. In fact, correction should be a major part of any teaching from God’s Word. Paul tells Timothy that “all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God” with the purpose being “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tm 3:16). A primary purpose of all of the epistles is correction!

It’s impossible to teach sound doctrine and to instruct in righteousness without warning concerning what is false. Thus Paul declares that to “preach the word” one must “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tm 4:2). And reproof and correction are incomplete without specifically identifying the offenders. How many of today’s popular Christian leaders are being true to God’s Word in this regard? Could that be a major missing element in today’s church, explaining at least in part why “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tm 4:3-4)?



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Prayer Is Much More Than Asking

Question: Jesus said we are not to use “vain repetitions” in prayer nor will we be heard for our “much speaking” (Matthew:6:7). Yet He also said that we should persist in prayer. That seems to be a contradiction. Why isn’t it enough to ask God once? He’s either going to grant the request or not. Why repeat a prayer?

Response: Prayer is communion with God and thus involves getting to know Him intimately in a relationship of heavenly love. Understandably, then, He does not respond to casual inquiry but to the passion of the heart. In the Old Testament God said, “Ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah:29:13). In the New Testament God says He is “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews:11:6). Prayer requires diligent and passionate persistence. Nothing less shows the fervor of sincerity and love that God desires in our relationship with Him.

Jesus said that we should always persist in prayer and not give up (Luke:18:1). He said that a characteristic of God’s elect is that they “cry day and night unto him” (Luke:18:7). He encouraged us to keep asking, seeking, and knocking at the door of God’s mercy and grace until we receive our petition from Him (Luke:11:5-10). Such persistence is not the “vain repetition” that Christ condemned.

The latter need not come from the heart but can be recited mechanically without any thought, much less passion. As Christ said, vain repetition operates on the premise that God will hear us because of the sheer volume of our words—i.e., quantity instead of quality. This is the “much speaking” that He rejected.

To repeat a prayer again and again because of passion, however, is not “vain repetition” but reflects the sincerity and earnestness that God loves to reward.

Why isn’t it enough to ask once? Often it is. David asked only once for God to defeat “the counsel of Ahithophel” (2 Samuel:15:31). That defeat was the key to victory over those who, led by David’s own son Absalom, had chased him from his throne. But Jesus indicated that God sometimes listens long to the cry of His elect without responding (Luke:18:1-8). The implication is that He delays not because He doesn’t want to answer their cry but because He desires to mature and mold them to His will.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

Ye greatly rejoice, though now...ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold...though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ...receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls (1 Pt 1:6-9).

From my own experiences during fiery trials, I can testify that the pain, the angst, and other suffering are conquered the instant I surrender to the flames. It is like falling backwards off a steep cliff into the hands of God. There is no parachute and no stopping halfway. If He doesn't catch you, then you will hit the bottom and die. That is literally the goal of faith—to trust God with your life and everything in it. All that is not put into His hands is unprotected and causes us angst and suffering. However, when all is surrendered, we receive a deep serenity that the fire will not burn anything except what needs to be consumed. That's when the gold shines.

—CEDRIC H. FISHER

Endnotes.....

- 11 Robyn Dawes, *House of Cards: Psychotherapy Built on Myth* (New York: The Free Press/Macmillan, Inc., 1994), 58.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 101-102.
- 13 Lawrence LeShan, *Association for Humanistic Psychology*, October 1984, 4.
- 14 APA Commission on Psychotherapies, *Psychotherapy Research: Methodological and Efficacy Issues* Washington: American Psychiatric Association, 1982, 192.
- 15 Because counseling is essentially a female-friendly activity and because women make up the large majority of the counselors and counselees, the professional journals will often use the feminine gender alone when referring to the counselors and counselees.
- 16 John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), vii.
- 17 Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Psychotherapy* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday/Anchor Press, 1978), p xviii.

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Choosing God's Will

Dave Hunt — First published in May 1991

DURING THE TEMPTATION in the wilderness, Satan offered to give Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world...and the glory of them” (Lk 4:5-6). He wasn’t bluffing. This world really is Satan’s to give to whom he will. Jesus didn’t dispute Satan’s boast that this world had been “delivered unto me [by God]; and to whomsoever I will I give it.” The conditions upon which Satan offered this world to Christ were clear: “If you bow down and worship me”—which, of course, Jesus refused to do. Beware! For the kingdoms and glories of this world are still the favors Satan bestows in order to entice today’s recipients into worshipping him.

Like their Lord, Christ’s true followers refuse the kingdoms and glories of this world. This refusal includes the highly touted new world order, which will still be under Satan’s control. Christ has promised believers something far better—an eternal and heavenly kingdom procured through His defeat of Satan at the cross. As a result of that victory, “the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev 11:15). Worldly kingdoms will soon pass away, and in their place the kingdom of God will come to earth. Then Christ, together with those who have shared in His rejection and suffering (Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12), will reign in glory and ultimate joy forever.

It would be a denial of their Lord for Christians to bask in the popularity and honors that this present world may bestow upon them. That isn’t to say that a Christian should never be successful in business, science, the academic world, sports, etc. Indeed, Christians should be the very best they can possibly be at whatever they do. But their skill, talent, and diligent efforts are expended for God’s glory, not for their own. This world has no attraction for believers; they neither love it nor its plaudits. They are not swayed from the course they must run (1 Cor 9:24-27; 2 Tm 4:7-8) either by the world’s criticism or its compliments. They know that ultimately nothing matters except God’s opinion of them.

We are warned, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jn 2:15). Satan is called “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), and those who love this world are siding with and honoring Satan, whether they realize it or not. Indeed, they are on the road to Satan worship, which will be the worldwide religion during the Great Tribulation (Rev 13:4). One obvious

evidence that Christianity has been seduced by Satan is the fact that those who are highly honored by the world are, on that basis alone, given instant and special honor in the church. The Christian media fawns over a sports hero, an attractive actress, a wealthy businessman, or a highly placed politician who has supposedly become a Christian. These too-often immature, worldly new believers are paraded and lauded on Christian TV and held up to the church as heroes of the faith and role models for youth—and Christians turn out by the thousands to “ooh” and “aah” at their testimonies. Yet the humble, godly missionary, mature in the faith, who has remained true to Christ through decades of privation, temptation, hardship and danger, and who has won souls in difficult fields of labor, can scarcely draw an audience. Obviously, the average Christian admires worldly success far more than godliness. Something is badly askew!

Jesus told His disciples, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are *not of the world*, but I have chosen you *out of the world*, therefore the world *hateth you*” (Jn 15:19). Thus, to Pilate, Jesus declared, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18:36). He didn’t mean that His kingdom is totally detached from this *earth* but that it’s not of this *world system*. In fact, it stands in opposition thereto. This present world system (including the new world order), which belongs to Satan, must be destroyed for the kingdom of God to be established.

Christ came to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8), which He accomplished upon the cross (Jn 12:31-33). Such is His purpose in all those who receive Him as Savior and Lord. The works of Satan in and through our lives, and any attachment to this world, must be destroyed if Christ is to reign within us. This goal can be effected only through the work of His cross applied to one’s daily life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then can God’s love and His will and Christlike character be manifested in one’s heart and life.

The unsaved love the world. In contrast, Christians do not love the world; they love the Father. We are citizens of heaven, “from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...” (Phil 3:20-21). Instead of trying to make our mark in this world and enjoying its benefits and pleasures, we seek to please the Father because we desire a *heavenly* and *eternal* reward.

The choice we face isn’t, as many imagine, between heaven and hell. The choice is between heaven and this world. Even a

fool would exchange hell for heaven; but only the wise will exchange this *world* for heaven. You can’t have both. One can’t live both for God and for self. Many so-called Christians find it difficult to resist the temptations of this world and to live wholly for Christ.

Why should it be difficult to choose life instead of death, joy instead of sorrow, eternal fulfillment instead of remorse, God’s truth and love instead of Satan’s lies and destructive lusts? The choice is only difficult for those who are deceived by Satan, and who thus, in believing this liar, doubt and dishonor God. What an insult it is to their heavenly Father for Christians to act as though surrendering to God’s will were a great sacrifice—as though exchanging this world for heaven were a bad bargain!

Motivation is a key element. One powerful motivation comes by comparing the length of eternity with one’s brief life on this earth. Only a fool would trade the heavenly and eternal for that which is earthly and temporal—and, remember, *we can’t have both*. “Christians” who habitually live for what they can gain and enjoy in this world, instead of “lay[ing] up treasures in heaven,” (Mt 6:19-21) deny with their lives the faith they profess with their lips.

Those who in their daily lives opt for this world instead of for heaven shouldn’t be surprised when God gives them for eternity the choice they have made. How can one complain if he’s not taken in the next life to the heaven he consistently rejected in this one? Someone has said there are only two kinds of people in the world: those who say to God, “Not my will, but Thine, be done,” and those to whom God says, “Not My will but thine be done.” What a tragedy to be chained for eternity to one’s own will instead of His—forever imprisoned with self and separated from God!

Christ’s declaration to the Father, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Lk 22:42) put Him on the cross. We, too, must deny self in submission to the cross (Mt 16:24). Doing so puts an end to self, and Christ becomes our very life—our all. This is the path of wisdom (Job 28). The wise will “shine...as the stars for ever” (Dn 12:3) with His light in their hearts; pure vessels eternally radiating His glory. Fools will inherit the blackness of darkness *forever* because they insisted on doing their own thing and being their fallen selves. Man’s destiny is eternal joy in the presence of God and His angels and saints—or a lonely and eternal agony, shut up to self.

William Law expressed with unusual clarity the choice between heaven and this world. He pointed out that a man would be

considered insane who spent his life planning the house, tennis court, swimming pool, retirement condominium, etc., that he expected to build on Mars—yet someone who spent his life equally absorbed in planning, achieving, and enjoying such things in this world would be respected as successful and prudent. In fact, said Law, both are fools! The first is obsessed with a world where he *cannot live*—while the other is attached to a world where he *cannot stay*. The degree of their folly differs only by a few short years.

Jim Elliot, a young missionary martyred in Ecuador in 1956, put it succinctly: “He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose.” What a tragedy to barter eternal life for the pleasures of this world. The Bible doesn’t say that sin has no pleasure; it says that the pleasures of sin can only be enjoyed “for a season” (Heb 11:25)—and a very short season it is, compared to the endless ages of eternity. A bad bargain indeed!

The phrase “eternal life” refers not only to the quantity of the life God offers but to its quality—a quality of life that God wants us to begin to experience here and now. Jesus said that eternal life was *knowing* (not *knowing about*) God and His Son (Jn 17:3). Paul warned that Christ would one day take vengeance upon those who “know not God” (2 Thes 1:8). In keeping with the truth of these and similar scriptures, evangelicals profess that they don’t practice a religion *about* God but that they have a personal relationship *with* God. Sadly, this boast has become almost a cliché—it sounds good in theory but there’s often little practical evidence seen in daily life.

Recognizing that eternity is infinitely longer than one’s most optimistic life expectancy provides a powerful motivation for living for Him (and thus choosing heaven instead of this world). But to truly know God provides an even more powerful motivation.

Knowing God leads to holiness. He alone becomes one’s consuming passion, displacing all other desires and overcoming the power of sin in our lives. His presence within is sufficient to satisfy every longing. For to know God is to love Him—and there is no higher motivation for obedience to His commands than love. In fact, no other motivation is accepted. It is no accident that the first commandment is, “Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut 6:5).

Obedience to God’s laws must spring from love for Him. Otherwise, obeying the letter of the law is nothing (1 Cor 13:1-3). We

could give all our possessions to the poor and submit to martyrdom at the stake for Christ’s name, but if our motive is not love, it would all be in vain. Christ declared, “If a man love me he will keep my words...he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings” (Jn 14:23-24).

Loving God is the secret of the Christian life. If we truly love Him, then we want to serve and please and glorify Him. We wouldn’t want to do anything or even think a thought that would displease or dishonor Him. A genuine love for God—and only that love—produces consistent holiness and godliness in our daily lives. Love is also the great wellspring of joy and peace. It causes us to witness to the lost about us with passion and without shame. For who is ashamed of one’s lover? And who does not rather speak well, boldly and continually, of the one he loves!

Where shall we find this love that we must have for God, and without which we cannot please Him? It’s not hiding somewhere in our hearts waiting to be discovered. Nor is it a potential that we have that only needs to be developed. We can’t work it up. It can’t be produced by effort. This love is not in us at all. Though it involves our will and emotions, it comes from God alone.

How then is this love produced? Love is the fruit that the Spirit bears in our lives (Gal 5:22). It is miraculous, like the fruit on a tree—something that only God could produce. Yet we aren’t like a tree, which has no will or emotions. Obviously, much more is involved when the Spirit bears fruit in the believer’s life than is involved in fruit-bearing in nature. His love is the key.

“We love him because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). This tells us that our love for God comes as a response to His love for us. We know of His love through His Word. Our hearts are stirred as we believe what the Bible tells us of His love in creating us, giving His Son to die for our sins, patiently bearing our rejection, pardoning and saving us from the penalty that His holy law demands for our sin, providing heaven at infinite cost. Surely to meditate upon God’s love for us must produce, by His Spirit, fervent love for Him.

Much more, however, is involved than reading and memorizing and believing what the Bible says *about* God and His love. Jesus reproved the Pharisees for searching the Scriptures and at the same time refusing to come to Him, the One of whom the Scriptures testified. What the Bible says about God is there in order to lead us into a personal relationship with Him. We must know not only His Word, but we must know *Him* personally. There

is an intimacy with God that is promised to those who love and thus obey Him, an intimacy that is missing in the lives of many Christians.

To those who love and obey Him, Christ offers an incredibly wonderful promise: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (Jn 14:21). This promise to *manifest* Himself to those who love Him implies a real communication of His presence. This is more than a strong belief that He is with us. It is a spiritual *manifestation* of His presence.

This intimate fellowship begins at conversion with a real communication from God’s Spirit to the believer’s spirit. God’s Spirit “beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). It is not simply inserting one’s name in John 3:16 and taking it “by faith.” There is a *knowing* God, a very real *knowing* that we are His, and an ongoing communion with Him in prayer. This doesn’t involve visualization, journaling, or any technique, but an intimacy that He initiates and promises to maintain with those who love and obey Him.

Most people, Christians included, would jump at the chance to become an intimate friend and confidant of some world leader, perhaps an astronaut, Olympic gold medalist, the head of a multinational corporation, or a famous heart surgeon. How many, however, neglect the infinitely more wonderful opportunity to know the God who created the universe, to have continual and intimate fellowship with the One who has all power, all wisdom, all knowledge, and Who loves us immeasurably! As with anyone else, God’s companionship must be cultivated. It takes time. And we will only devote the time if we really believe that we can know God and that it is worthwhile.

“He is a rewarder of them that *diligently* seek [not success, pleasure, health, or wealth but] him” (Heb 11:6). God said to Abram, “I [not land or cattle or other possessions that I will give to you, but *I*] am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward” (Gn 15:1). God wants to reward us with *Himself*. Let us not settle for any lesser rewards—for mere gifts instead of the Giver. Let us diligently pursue this intimate fellowship with God that He desires for each of us. Let us say with David, “O God...early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee” (Ps 63:1); and with Paul, “That I may know him,...the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phil 3:10). May knowing and loving God be our passion, as it was theirs **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: To many who claim to have done signs and wonders in His name, Christ says He will say, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:22-23). Are these nominal Christians? People who “think” they’re Christians? Born-again Christians who messed up?

RESPONSE: This scripture is a solemn warning! Those He addresses apparently were accepted and honored by many as Christian leaders and seemingly did great exploits in Christ’s name—or so they thought. They even seem to be sincere in telling Christ: “LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 7:22).

Jesus (who says, “I know my sheep”—John 10:14) declares, “I never knew you.” Thus they were never true Christians (His sheep) “who messed up,” nor could they be “nominal Christians” but leaders and presumed miracle workers!

They do seem to “think” they are Christians, but they clearly never understood the gospel. Obviously, they are false prophets. Works, no matter how seemingly miraculous, are not the basis of salvation and cannot provide assurance of salvation. Their plea ought to have been, “LORD, You promised eternal life to those who believe in You. We believed and are saved by faith, so You can’t turn us away.” The true gospel was neither the emphasis of their “ministry” nor the basis of their assurance.

Sadly, we find the same dominant emphasis upon “miracles,” or signs and wonders, within much of the charismatic and “faith teaching” and “positive confession” sectors of the professing church today. Take heed!

This is also a powerful scripture for eternal security. If salvation could be “lost,” surely Christ would have said to at least one of them, “You were doing well until you lost your salvation.” He says that to none of them. They never had salvation to “lose.”

QUESTION: The Bible makes it very simple as to what one must believe in order to be saved. The Ethiopian eunuch merely said, “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). Upon that confession, he

was baptized. Romans 10:9 says, “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” From Paul’s delineation of the gospel, one need only believe that “Christ died for our sins... was buried, and rose again” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Yet I have heard you say that to be saved one must believe in His virgin birth, His deity, His sinlessness, etc. How can you justify this?

RESPONSE: I believe this is a serious matter. Let me explain why. That the virgin birth, deity of Christ, etc., are not mentioned every time the gospel is briefly summarized in Scripture doesn’t mean that they are not essential elements that anyone who is to be saved must believe. Every detail need not be specifically mentioned, because each would be understood from having been stated elsewhere.

Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 is only a summary, and not the full gospel that he preached to the Philippian jailor or that Jesus explained to Nicodemus, to the woman at the well, or to others. Surely, to “preach Christ” necessarily means more than merely saying that someone called Jesus Christ died in our place, without explaining who He is!

The very scripture upon which you rely (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) contains the vital phrase “according to the scriptures”—which surely includes all that the scriptures have to say relating to the gospel. Certainly Paul and Silas preached the full gospel in “the word of the Lord” (Acts 16:32; 1 Peter 1:25). How can we ask someone to believe in Jesus without explaining fully who the biblical Jesus is? Would not this be “another Jesus” and “another gospel” (2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6) against which Paul warns?

You suggest that if someone believes in an undefined “Jesus Christ” he is saved and will eventually discover that the Jesus he believed in was virgin born, was truly God come as a man, lived a sinless, perfect life, paid the full penalty for our sins upon the cross, etc. Suppose this person, upon being told that truth, doesn’t believe it! Jesus himself said very clearly, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I AM he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Or suppose that this “convert” dies before he learns that Jesus is God?!

We are making false converts by not

clearly preaching the full gospel according to the scriptures. This is a serious matter, because “the gospel...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). This statement itself means that if someone believes something less than, or more than, or otherwise contrary to, the gospel, he is not saved.

Yes, many come to Christ with an imperfect understanding. Yes, God, who knows whether the heart is sincere, and who wants all to be saved, will reveal Himself to earnest seekers, but that is no excuse for being vague or inaccurate in our presentation of the gospel.

QUESTION: I have often heard you say that God does not bestow spiritual gifts through physical means but only through spiritual means. This is logical, but I have a question. Why then did Jesus tell His apostles in Mark 9:29, when they were unable to drive out a particularly stubborn unclean spirit, that “this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting”? This seems to contradict your position.

RESPONSE: Prayer is certainly not a “physical means.” Nor is prayer a magic technique that frightens demons away. Prayer is petitioning God to intervene, while at the same time submitting to His will rather than trying to impose one’s will upon Him. Nor could fasting be a “physical means” unless it were the direct or indirect cause of obtaining answers to prayer.

Fasting has no such powers and does not appease God or earn from Him an answer to prayer. In prayer man humbles himself before God. Fasting adds to that humility (Psalm 35:13). It also demonstrates one’s earnestness by setting aside the normal desire and need for food, and the time involved in eating, in order to more completely devote oneself to petitioning God.

The humility of submission to and dependence upon God for His mercy is further demonstrated by clothing oneself in “sackcloth and ashes,” as practiced at times in the past along with fasting (Esther 4:1, 3; Jeremiah 6:26; Daniel 9:3; Jonah 3:6; Matthew 11:21). Scripture says, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). Fasting is a mark of fervency; it is not a physical means of obtaining a spiritual gift.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

“In the Name of Jesus”: What Does It Mean?

Question: Jesus said, “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John:14:14). I’ve heard thousands of prayers that were offered, in reliance upon that promise, “in the name of Jesus” or even “in the mighty name of Jesus,” sincere prayers from simple people that were never answered. Wouldn’t these many unanswered prayers offered “in the name of Jesus” prove that Christ doesn’t or can’t keep His word?

Response: “In the name of Jesus” is not a magic formula like “Open Sesame,” which merely had to be spoken once in order for the secret door to the thieves’ treasure to swing wide open. Merely repeating the words “in the name of Jesus” doesn’t make it so. For a prayer to be truly “in the name of Jesus,” it must be as He would express it if He were praying. It must be for the furtherance of His interests and to His glory. His name must be stamped on the character and engraved on the heart and life of the one praying “in His name.”

Many years ago I managed the affairs of a multimillionaire. In order to do so, I had been given the authority to act in His name. Powers of attorney giving me the right to sign his name and to conduct business in his name were registered in various counties and states. There was nothing on the face of the documents that would prevent me from making out a check for a million dollars, signing his name to it, and depositing it in my own bank account. Had I done so, however, he could have recovered from me in a court of equity.

Though the documents didn’t state it explicitly, it was understood that I had the power to use another person’s name only for his good and in his best interests, not my own. And so it is with our Lord. There are no restrictions stated in His promise that he will do whatever we

ask in His name. It is understood, however, that to pray in His name is to ask as He would ask for His interests and glory.

Tragically, all too many Christians imagine that “in the name of Jesus” are magic words that, if added to a prayer, no matter how self-seeking, will enable a person to get from God whatever he or she desires. When the desired response doesn’t come from God there is often great confusion as to why earnest prayers aren’t answered, and even at times resentment against Christ for not keeping what is perceived to be His promise. James explained it well:

Ye ask [in prayer] and receive not because ye ask amiss, [not to God’s glory, but] that ye may consume it upon your lusts (James:4:3).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

Some of the heaviest burdens I have borne as an adult had to do with my children. The enemy will attack us through our children in an attempt to distract us, weaken our faith, and ultimately separate us from God. Therefore, we must pray unceasingly for strength, wisdom, and comfort. While God does not require us to pray on our knees, I suggest that praying parents take a knee whenever possible to pray for their children. A sincere act of respect and honor toward our Heavenly Father on behalf of our children demonstrates true humility. The Bible teaches us that “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). For our children’s sake, parents should pray fervently and daily before God. We will worry far less and sleep more soundly as a result.

—PATRICK CROUGH

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Can't Find a Church?

T. A. McMahon

THIS IS THE most common request we receive here at TBC, and it has been for more than two decades. Sadly, we've been reluctant to recommend any specific churches, and it's not because there aren't any good Bible-teaching churches around. It's because doctrinally we don't know where they stand today! We've seen even good churches change overnight. The hope of this article is to give those who are presently seeking fellowship with believers who love God's Word and who want to grow in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) some suggestions that we believe will be helpful in their circumstance.

Before I begin with some *suggestions* regarding what to do when looking for a church, let's start with the qualities of a church worth seeking—in general. The most important attribute is a church's view of the Bible. Do the leaders believe that the Scriptures are God's inerrant communication to mankind, which were received and written down by God's chosen prophets? Do they believe that all the words of the Bible are inspired of God with nothing added to them by the Scriptures' original transcribers? "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Any deviation from the belief in the inerrancy of God's Word, no matter how small, is akin to a puncture in a life raft. At some point, sooner or later, the raft will deflate, ceasing to preserve life.

A fellowship that teaches the Scriptures expositionally, i.e., verse by verse, offers a more effective situation for learning God's Word than a church that features only topical preaching. Certainly both approaches can be abused, but topical preaching has many inherent problems that are difficult to avoid. Too often, topical preaching substitutes what God has said with man's thoughts no matter how sincere the intention. How does that happen? 1) Rarely is the correct context of the verses explained; 2) The preacher has leeway to avoid difficult

and even controversial words or passages by skipping over them; 3) Due to the first two points above, it's more difficult for the listener to follow the message in a biblically discerning way as a Berean (Acts 17:10-11), and 4) It can readily take the listener away from what should be the main focus of any sermon, which is, "What is God Himself telling us directly through His Word?"

Bible study programs are important. Sometimes, when I've inquired among some as to whether or not they were involved in a Bible study at their church, the enthusiastic response is "yes!" When I ask what book they're studying, an all-too-common response is that they are using the latest book by a popular Christian author. To call that a "Bible study" is more than a misnomer, no matter how edifying the book might seem. We need to make sure that the Bible is what's actually being studied. Does a prospective church have a youth program that has the teaching of God's Word as its primary objective? Entertainment used in youth groups has ruled for decades, all but eliminating true discipleship of young people. Paul's words to Timothy should show us what's valuable as a church's youth-oriented objective: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

The vital qualities of worship and the importance of serious collective prayer should also be a consideration in joining a fellowship. Outreach is another significant characteristic to be weighed when selecting a church, whether that means supporting missionaries abroad or believers within the community, and sharing the witness and love of Christ in serving.

Some, especially those who've been actively seeking to find a "good church," may be thinking at this point, "Great! Point me to the church with the qualities you mentioned, and I'll be there next Sunday!" I have little doubt that there are churches that even exceed the few things that I've outlined, but I also know that most don't measure up. When Jesus addressed the seven churches in the first three chapters of Revelation, only two of the seven were commended without reservation. The rest had issues that needed to be corrected, and if they didn't comply, Jesus said, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else

I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5). The "candlestick" is the church that is to represent the light of God's Word, and that light is getting dimmer. On the other hand, there are many churches today that are at least maintaining a flicker of God's light. But what good is that?

Someone might respond, "I'm not interested in attending a church where God's light only flickers!" That would be my first inclination as well. But then, as the old saying goes, "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride." In other words, all the wishing in the world won't turn the majority of churches into what has been described above. The reality of the situation for many church-seeking believers today is that they have only "flickering churches" available to them.

Let me define what I would refer to as a flickering church. It's one that has overloaded its fellowship with the debris of man's programs and practices, but beneath that spiritually adulterated and doctrinally confused pile there's a spark of the light of Christ (the biblical Jesus) and the true gospel. As a veteran camper, one thing I know is that a spark found buried in the ashes of a recently used fire pit can sometimes be fanned into a flame.

With that in mind, here are my further *suggestions* when the churches in one's community reflect little or almost none of the criteria mentioned at the beginning of this article. When the only reasonably close churches seem repugnant to one's biblical sensibilities, sometimes the reaction is, "No way, Tom! I'm not setting foot in any of those churches. I'll just stay at home, read my Bible, and listen to you on your TBC broadcasts."

Okay, I just threw that last comment in to underscore what a bad option that is. Reading the Bible is okay, but not doing what it says is completely counterproductive. The Bible tells us, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Why would I encourage someone to set foot in a church that has multiple issues that are of man's making and his delusions, some of which are deceptions and seductions of the Adversary, and, all things con-

sidered, have led to much unfruitfulness as a body? I can hear someone saying, “Dave Hunt would be rolling over in his grave if he could read this!” I think not. Hear me out as I give some reasons why I know Dave would support what I’m saying.

In my forty years of observing Christendom, I have witnessed the activities of the church at large (including both nominal and true believers) devolve into what is essentially a consumer operation. Whether through the covetousness that pervades the hearts of individuals, or methods like the church-growth movement (spawned by a worldly marketing scheme), church seekers have been making decisions based primarily upon a “feed me” mentality. Yes, believers need to be fed, especially the Word (Luke 4:4). But a believer’s approach to church life that’s primarily a one-way “serve me” process loses sight of the necessity of one’s own service to the body and is missing what the Christian life is all about, not to mention the loss of the fruit and blessings that are won by selfless ministry. It doesn’t take a terribly deep personal evaluation for any of us to recognize our own self-serving culpability. If in doubt, check your “complaint gage” and service record concerning your involvement in your present fellowship.

What I’m getting at here—what is really necessary—is having a heart to serve. It shouldn’t require a huge transformation for any honest person who claims to be a biblical Christian but fails to support the service ministries in one’s church. If this isn’t happening in your life, you need to get back in line with what a Christian’s life in Christ is all about. Apply that to the person quoted at the top of this article who doesn’t have a church and is crying out for help to find a good one.

Now, let’s consider a scenario that’s more difficult and distressing and is becoming more and more common for believers. They have no church and no fellowship, period. Why? Because they disagree with all the churches they’ve visited.

If a church *holds to the biblical gospel and the biblical Jesus*, even if they are buried beneath a heap of worldly teachings and programs, my recommendation is to attend that fellowship. What? Wouldn’t such a church lead a believer into teachings and programs that aren’t biblically sound? It could, but those who are struggling to find a good church very likely have enough biblical discernment to recognize what doesn’t match up with sound doctrine. It’s also

very likely that they could be a blessing to such a church if they were to attend with a servant’s heart. I know of a very discerning person who, when questioned as to why he decided to attend a church that offered programs that weren’t supported by Scripture, replied, “I was thinking that I might be able to help the church biblically.”

I also know a young couple who are making a wonderful contribution to a church that probably wouldn’t allow *me* to teach, given the number of programs they endorse about which I’ve written unfavorably. Yet this couple’s ministry to young adults (involving a Bible study and personal discipleship) in the church has been praised by the leadership. They established right up front with the leaders that when they serve within the body, the Word of God would be their guide and authority. Their heart’s desire is to encourage young adult believers (their own peers) to learn and to apply the Scriptures in their own lives. They don’t address the programs in the church in which they’re not in agreement, unless asked. When that happens, their response is, “We just want to go by what the Bible says and to teach what it teaches”—and they’ve yet to receive a complaint. They don’t want to compromise their beliefs or be regarded as divisive. Others like them have this in common: they simply want to *serve* the body of Christ in any capacity they can, and wherever they can. They believe that the Holy Spirit will help them to *strengthen* their brothers and sisters in Christ no matter how much a church has been weakened by unbiblical programs and practices.

There’s another situation regarding seeking a church, or rather *not* seeking, that we hear about more and more these days. The claim is that the seekers can’t find like-minded believers in a community, so the individual or family makes the choice to isolate themselves due to their circumstance. They end up with no church, no fellowship with other believers, no one outside themselves to serve, or with whom to pray. They’ve shut themselves off from the diverse gifting of fellow believers for the edifying and building up of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27, 14:2-5, 12, 26; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10). They rely mostly on preachers who teach over radio, TV, or other communication devices for biblical instruction. For these, servanthood and fellowship are among the most important components that are lost.

For believers in that detached condi-

tion, I have a few questions and thoughts. Is it possible for the Lord to help you to find other believers? My guess is that, among all the people attending churches in a community, there must be a *potential* believer, or perhaps even a true believer, or two or three. Maybe they’re not mature in the faith but are genuinely seeking to know God in truth. Churches, therefore, would seem to offer the best opportunity for meeting other believers in Christ. Finding another believer could lead to fellowship that begins by simply praying for one another. Or it could lead to helping one another out by meeting a need. Eventually, it might even open the door for a Bible study. I believe that Jesus will help those who are actively seeking fellowship to find fellowship—by His grace. Fellowship doesn’t involve merely the comfort of being with like-minded believers, but it is the setting to best carry out the Lord’s instructions for living out the Christian life.

The last scenario is the most extreme, yet some believers are in this situation today. It may be that, should the Lord not return soon for His bride, true believers won’t have the option of assembling together in churches. Nevertheless, they won’t stop gathering together privately. Why? That’s the exhortation and the instruction for believers that is given continually throughout the New Testament. Believers desperately need fellowship, especially as the days grow darker the nearer we get to Jesus’ return for His bride, His body. “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Corinthians 12:27). One among a host of instances of instruction related to the necessary interaction of the saints is 1 Thessalonians 5:11-14: “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” All those things are best—and perhaps only—accomplished as we assemble ourselves together with brothers and sisters in obedience to our Lord and Savior. That’s what Christ commands for our good, and for His good pleasure. TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You once made a misleading statement that needs to be corrected. You said, “In spite of Pentecostal and charismatic claims that no Christian need ever be sick....” I am an Assemblies of God pastor. Neither my denomination nor I believe that.

RESPONSE: Certainly I didn’t mean that all Pentecostals and charismatics believe that “no Christian need ever be sick,” nor do I think most people took it that way. However, it would have been clearer had I said, “In spite of the claims by some Pentecostals and charismatics....” I recognize that there are many such as yourself who do not hold that extreme position. There is, however, some confusion. The Assemblies of God “Position Paper on Divine Healing” doesn’t say that one can always claim a healing and admits that not everyone is healed, but it does say, “Healing is in the atonement.” Yes, healing is ours by faith in the same way as forgiveness of sins. Unfortunately, the Position Paper puts its major emphasis upon the parallels between healing from sickness and from sin in a way that could leave some readers with the wrong impression.

I have encountered many within the AOG who teach that one can always claim a healing from anything. This impression is certainly given in the way many pastors command the sick to be healed in the name of Jesus. Is it not destructive to a young person’s faith to hear the pastor week after week, in the name of Jesus, command the sickness to depart and note that it very rarely does? I agree with your denomination’s official position. Unfortunately, something else is often practiced and believed by many within its ranks.

QUESTION: Contrary to what you’ve said, “By His stripes ye were healed” does refer to physical healing. Matthew 8:16-17 quotes Isaiah 53:4 and does indeed show that it is physical. I pray our LORD will show you this truth. God warns of a form of godliness, denying its power.

RESPONSE: I believe in miracles and have seen God do many. God still heals in answer to prayer. I have been instantly healed myself and have seen others, for whom I prayed, instantly healed.

The Bible, however, does not promise anyone physical healing from sickness in this life “by His stripes” in the same way

that it promises spiritual healing from sin. I can assure anyone who will believe the gospel that he or she will be instantly saved from the eternal penalty of sin and receive eternal life as a free gift of God’s grace. I cannot give anyone the same assurance of being perpetually healed from physical ailments. Can you?

If we have physical healing through the cross of Christ in the same way we have spiritual healing, then Christians ought to live much longer than non-Christians and there ought to be at least some Christians who have lived 100, 200, 300 or more years. But this is not the case. Our souls and spirits have been redeemed and as proof we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), but we together with “the whole creation groan and travail...[until the redemption of our body (Romans 8:18-25).

You correctly say that Matthew 8:16-17, when it speaks of the healings by Jesus before He went to the cross, quotes Isaiah 53:4 (“he that hath borne our griefs [sicknesses] and carried our sorrows [pains]”). It does not quote Isaiah 53:5 (“by his stripes we are healed”). That verse, which deals with sin (wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities”), is quoted in 1 Peter 2: 24 (bare our sins... by whose stripes ye were healed”). Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled by Christ’s healing ministry: Isaiah 53:5 was fulfilled at the Cross.

As for “denying the power thereof,” Paul reminds us that the gospel “is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). I do not deny the power of God in any way today. I simply oppose those who profess the “power of the Spirit,” claim healings that don’t occur, and destroy the faith of many with unbiblical promises of healing, which bring guilt when not realized.

QUESTION (FOR DAVE HUNT, FROM THE ARCHIVES): I appreciate much of your work, but I think you’re too critical and too dogmatic. You would do well to temper your teaching with the admission that you aren’t infallible and that all you can offer is your own opinion.

RESPONSE: If I have ever given the idea that I imagine myself to be infallible, then I apologize for such folly. The very name, The Berean Call, was chosen to emphasize the fact that no pastor, preacher, evangelist, or biblical scholar is infallible and that all teachings must be tested against the Word of God. This ministry is no exception. We are not infallible and urge readers to test our teachings as well. Every Christian must make up his or her own mind based upon Scripture and the

leading of the Holy Spirit.

Christians may not always all agree on every point. The expression of varying and prayerful convictions is helpful to the body of Christ. In viewing the growing apostasy in the church and in answering questions addressed to us, we can only present the facts and the truths of Scripture as we understand them. Those with differing views may do likewise, being careful to cite specific factual or doctrinal errors. Scripture enjoins us to receive valid correction from one another gratefully.

QUESTION: I don’t see how anyone can spend his time reading and screening all the books that Christians may read. I don’t know how far one is obligated to explain what the Word means to those who are in error. In my own experience, nothing anyone could tell me would have made any difference until God himself opened my heart. How do you handle all of this?

RESPONSE: We don’t spend all or even a large percentage of our time trying to screen everything being printed, or to track down every heresy in the church. Our work would be impossible were it not for the many “Bereans” around the world who act as our eyes and ears and pass along their concerns and useful information.

As for one’s obligation to point out error and to persuade others of the truth, most of the New Testament and much of the Old (certainly the major and minor prophets and the epistles) was written for that very purpose. Paul corrected Peter publicly, named those who were leading others astray, and continually combated error in his epistles. We must do the same if we are to obey God’s Word and “earnestly contend for the faith once [for all] delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Paul said that the Bible was given for “doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), and he exhorted Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (4:2).

Christ himself set the example we must follow. He was gentle with those who had been deceived, but He sternly rebuked the rabbis who had perverted God’s Word by false teaching, and He did so publicly. As for the unsaved, Paul disputed daily in the synagogues and in the marketplace (Acts 17:17), doing all he could to “persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11). Yes, only the Holy Spirit can convict and convert the soul, but He is pleased to use us as His instruments. What a responsibility and privilege we have!



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

How to “Believe That You Receive” When Praying

Question: Christ promised, “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark:11:24). There are no conditions stated such as abiding in Christ, being obedient, asking according to God’s will, or anything else. Do you know any Christians for whom this promise is fulfilled in that that they always get whatever they ask for in prayer? I’ve never met one for whom that is true. How can you explain away Christ’s failure to fulfill this promise?

Response: One must first of all understand exactly what “believe that ye receive them” actually means. Christ’s phrase “when ye pray” is all-important. Prayer is to God. Obviously, then, if the prayer is going to be answered, God must answer it. So to “believe that ye receive them” means to believe that God will grant or do that for which one is praying. Clearly, to attempt to believe that God would do anything that one is not certain is His will would be presumptuous.

On that basis, then, could one have whatever one desires by believing that one receives these things? Is there some mysterious power of the mind that is activated by “believing” and that literally creates what one “believes”? That idea has been at the heart of occultism for thousands of years. The teaching was popularized in the secular world by a variety of motivational speakers and writers such as Claude Bristol (*The Magic of Believing*, etc.), Denis Waitley (*Seeds of Greatness*, etc.), and others. The same belief in the magical power of belief has even become popular in the church beginning with the writings of Norman Vincent Peale (*The Power of Positive Thinking*, etc.) and the many books on *The Power of Possibility Thinking* by Peale’s chief disciple, Robert Schuller. The latter states:

Through possibility thinking...[an] amazing power will unfold in your life...[Schuller,

Peace of Mind through Possibility Thinking (Spire Books, 1977), p. 14]. You don’t know what power you have within you...! You make the world into anything you choose! Yes, you can make your world into whatever you want it to be! [Schuller, “Possibility Thinking: Goals,” an Amway Corporation tape.]

So we can take God’s world and reshape and remake it to whatever we wish through possibility thinking? Here we have a serious and deadly contradiction. If what we pray for comes to pass because we believe it will, then God has no real part to play in the answer to our prayers. Instead, we are producing the results by the power of our own belief.

There is a vast difference between believing that what I’m praying for will happen because I believe it will happen and in believing that God

will make it happen in response to my faith in Him. To recognize this difference (which is as wide as the distance between heaven and hell) is crucial in understanding the promise of Jesus quoted above.

If believing does not in and of itself create the answer to prayer, might it not at least cause God to answer the prayer? It takes a little thought to realize that we cannot make God do something merely by “believing” He will do it. If we could,

then we, rather than God, would be in charge of our lives and even of the entire universe.

Genuine faith (in contrast to the power of belief) is a gift of God (Ephesians:2:8). We can only conclude that Christ was speaking of true faith in God. When God gives the faith to know for certain that He is going to grant our request, then and only then can we believe that we receive our request from Him. Wonderfully, we find that our desires more and more coincide with His will.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

Whence comes the strength to stand against overwhelming opposition and suf

Have you ever done something that you regretted? Something that hurt yourself or grieved God’s Spirit, and you experienced a loss of a sense of peace? Obedience and adherence to the Word will take care of that! But even more than that, do we see and live as if God’s Word is more to be desired than gold and sweeter than honey? Listen to me: part of the heritage of knowing the Lord is joy of heart, even when you’re being persecuted without cause, overlooked, belittled for belief, and even when you can’t ever seem to get ahead, and trials seem to be without end. What’s our heritage? It’s a heart that rejoices all day because of the righteous judgments of God! One day, you’ll walk on streets of gold. One day, you’ll never be sick again or be treated unfairly. It only gets better! Knowing what’s coming will affect how we handle what is now. The more we live by the Word, the more time we’ll spend rejoicing, because, friends, there is great peace in not stumbling.

—BARRY STAGNER

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A Crucial Address to the Overseers — Part One

T. A. McMahon

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

—JOHN 21:15-17

IT'S ALWAYS AN honor and a privilege for me to address those who are in church leadership, and by God's grace to share some thoughts that I pray will prove helpful as you minister to God's flock. I consider yours to be the most difficult of all the Lord's callings. Certainly it's an impossible task without the conviction of God upon you. I've known some who have attempted to shepherd the Lord's sheep without His calling, and it was a disaster, both for the presumptuous leader and the congregation he led.

The words of Jesus to Peter (referenced above) cut to the heart of the matter when it comes to one's calling. It all comes down to whether or not one loves Jesus.

Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, and three times Peter says yes. His last response is a great deal more emphatic than the other two: "*Thou knowest that I love thee.*" More often than not, some of us, perhaps many of us, throw out the phrase "I love you" or just "love you" as a nice sounding thing to say...or a reflex...but we do little or nothing to support the words. Yet Jesus doesn't let Peter's response rest on words, however sincere. He gives him instructions that when obeyed will prove Peter's love for his Lord.

There's a strong connection between obedience and love. In fact, obedience is often a demonstration of one's love. I've

been asked, "So what's the deal with Adam and Eve's sin? Seems like much ado about nothing. All that fuss over eating a piece of fruit! I don't get it." I wouldn't get it either, if taking a bite of the forbidden fruit was the issue. No. The critical issue was "obedience."

Jesus, in John 14:21, 23, 24 and in many other places, underscores the relationship between love and obedience: "He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:* and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him....Jesus answered and said unto him, *If a man love me, he will keep my words:* and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings:* and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" [emphasis added].

Those of you who are raising children, or who have raised them, know that a child who says he loves you but majors in disobedience is demonstrating love in this way: he loves himself more than he loves his parents. Adam and Eve demonstrated that they loved themselves more than they loved their Creator. Jesus gave Peter instructions that he was to follow—"feed My sheep"—thereby demonstrating the love that he had repeatedly declared to his Lord and Savior.

What then should Peter feed the Lord's sheep? How about this: everything that Jesus said and did! I love the way this is presented throughout Scripture. It's called the "full counsel of God," "all Scripture," "the Word of the Lord," "the Gospel," "sound doctrine," "the entirety of Thy Word," "every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God," and so on. In other words, Peter was to feed them—Jesus! Jesus is *the* "Word...made flesh."

Jesus underscored the *overall content* of that food when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Think about that for a moment. What's left out of that? With what might we supplement it? Absolutely nothing! If you were to survey those who profess to be biblical Christians, you would very likely find that many would claim to believe in the *inerrancy* of the Scriptures and the *authority* of the Bible. However, there's another claim made by the Word of God that, *in practice*, is missing from many who profess to believe it, and that is the *sufficiency* of the Scriptures.

This is a huge problem. In what way, you ask? Well, consider a three-legged stool. Let's say one leg stands for the Bible's inerrancy, the second leg its authority. The third leg is its sufficiency. What happens to a three-legged stool when one of the legs is missing? It becomes unstable and is no doubt ripe for a collapse. Here's how the matter plays out logically. If the Bible is viewed as not sufficient (contrary to its claims), then its complete authority breaks down. That being the case, one will look outside the Bible for information, turning to other so-called authorities or experts. Being viewed as insufficient and therefore lacking absolute authority, what does that say about the belief in its inerrancy? Well, we're left with a confusing mixture of God's perfect wisdom and fallen mankind's imperfect wisdom (and worse), which renders the inerrancy of God's Word meaningless.

But does the Bible claim to be sufficient? Peter tells us that it does. Second Peter 1:2-4 states, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us *all things that pertain unto life and godliness*, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" [emphasis added].

Other scriptures, such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17, declare that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

But I love Peter, especially the incredible change seen in Him from Pentecost on, and also in his two Epistles. Earlier on, it seemed that he suffered at times from "foot-in-mouth" disease. Nevertheless, his words to Jesus as recorded in John chapter 6 indicate that he knew of the sufficiency in Christ. When others were turning away from the Lord, Scripture tells us, "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Peter got that right, but, sadly, more and more believers in Christ today are going elsewhere for "things that pertain to life and godliness." Tragically, in some cases many

are being led that way by their churches, in which the leadership refers members of their fellowship to professionals for psychological counseling. If this is taking place in your fellowship—whether they call themselves Christian psychologists or Marriage and Family counselors or whatever label they choose to give themselves—I have two words for your fellowship: *stop it!*

We need to take the counsel given by Nehemiah, who, when he learned that a chamber had been made for the wicked Tobiah in the courts of the Temple, Scripture tells us, was “grieved sore; therefore [he] cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.” The church needs to do the same today with the psychobabble that has set up shop within its hallowed walls.

(If you would like more reasons than just psychology’s denial of the sufficiency of God’s Word, TBC has a host of resources spelling out psychotherapy’s damaging effects, both from the secular researchers and—more importantly—the Scriptures. You can see more at thebereancall.org or thebereancall.com).

Let’s consider a little deeper the words of Jesus in John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” What might there be outside of what He claims that would be of eternal value? Nothing. What about our temporal side of life? Can’t we look to experts in certain fields to help us in matters of living? Of course! I’m not interested in having my appendix removed by someone whose only degree is in theology or whose education was obtained through attending a Bible college or who simply reads the Bible and does what it says.

On the other hand, I would love to be ministered to or helped by any person, whether in the medical profession or otherwise, who is tops in his or her field and is also a born-again Christian. Such a person with medical expertise would provide temporal value by meeting my particular need, e.g., successfully removing my appendix, but that person could also minister to my spiritual needs as a brother or sister in Christ. That spiritual support might happen through prayer, encouragement from the Word, and doing their business according to the spiritual/moral/ethical teachings of the Word, and so forth. It’s a mixture of physical temporal values *and* spiritual eternal values.

Continuing with the words of Jesus, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” what’s

missing regarding “all things that pertain to godliness through the knowledge of Him...”? Is there anything in these words of eternal value that Jesus has left out? No! There is no other way, no other truth, and no other life.

Yet if you can believe the current surveys by Barna and others who are asking evangelical Christians if they believe there’s another way to heaven apart from Jesus, more than half declare that there is! Perhaps they’re sincerely trying to show how loving and accepting God is. I don’t know their hearts. But I do know that they’re unwittingly demonstrating that they are “ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16). Worse yet, they’re calling a liar the One who claimed, “...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

The same slanderous implication of being a liar would also apply to Peter in Acts 4:12, when he declared, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” In obedience to Christ’s instructions, Peter fed to Christ’s lambs and sheep Jesus himself. He fed them “the way, the truth, and the life.”

I grew up Roman Catholic, and I was taught that when I received the wafer at communion I was eating the literal body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine. Still today, supposedly the priest has the power to transubstantiate, or change, the bread and wine into Jesus, although it continued to resemble bread and wine. The transubstantiated bread or host was then worshiped as Jesus himself.

Many Catholics accuse evangelicals of taking everything they read in the Bible literally. Not true. If that were the case we would believe that God is a chicken. Why do I say that? Psalm 91:4 says that God “shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” We don’t take it literally that God has feathers and wings. We recognize that the words are figurative, meaning they simply indicate that God will protect believers from the snare of the fowler, referring to Satan. Catholics, on the other hand, make a huge error by taking literally a verse that is clearly figurative. In John chapter 6:53-54 Jesus declares, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my

blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

How do I know that we’re not to take that literally? There are three obvious reasons: First of all, to eat human flesh is the horrific outcome of people who are in dire straits under the judgment of God (Lv 26:28-29; Jer 19:8-9). Jesus would never condone such an evil activity as cannibalism. Secondly, the act itself is devoid of any physical or spiritual benefit. What does one learn from that repeated ritualistic act performed on Catholic altars? Nothing is learned, at least as it relates to what the Bible tells us. In fact, it denies the truth of the *finished* work of Christ on the cross and turns the biblical act of taking communion into a mystical rite.

Do you know what the phrase “hocus pocus” means? It’s commonly used by those who perform magic tricks. Originally, however, it was used by Protestants to mock the Catholic priests who performed transubstantiation in the Mass. The priests used the Latin phrase *Hoc est corpus meum*, which is translated “This is my body.” That Latin phrase was later corrupted as “hocus pocus.”

Thirdly, Jesus makes it clear that His words given in John 6:63 are not to be taken literally but figuratively. He says, “...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

Getting back to Peter as he was instructed by Jesus to feed the Lord’s sheep, what might that food consist of? Jesus said in Luke 4:4, “It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Jesus is “the Word of God” (Revelation 19:13). So, I would surmise that Peter fed the Lord’s sheep *Jesus himself—His way, His truth, and His life—and all that is presented in His Word*. That’s the meaning of Christ’s words in John 6:53-54: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

The question for you shepherds of the Lord’s flock, then, is: What are you feeding the sheep whom the Lord has given to your charge? Is it, first and foremost, Christ himself in all of His ways, His truth, and His life? How critical is one’s personal relationship with Jesus in regard to a believer’s fruitful life in Christ? Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

TBC

Q&A

QUESTION: I just went to see *Paul, Apostle of Christ*, and I thought it was the best biblical movie I've seen so far. I heard that the Berean Call does not approve of biblical movies, so I'd like to hear your criticisms.

RESPONSE: I went to see *Paul, Apostle of Christ* the day it opened, and I would agree that it was an excellent presentation in terms of its movie qualities, specifically the directing, acting, art production, cinematography, storyline, and the musical score. Writer/director Andrew Hyatt dealt with the movie's Christian content in many ways that seemed consistent with the Scriptures, a feature blatantly missing to the level of caricature in movies such as *Noah*; *Exodus: Gods and Kings*; *A.D. The Bible Continues*, and *Son of God*.

Yet *Paul, Apostle of Christ* flunks right alongside other terribly inferior efforts at bringing the Bible to the screen. Why? Because any attempts to translate the Bible into a visual medium is condemned by the Bible itself. Before I get to that, consider this:

A major problem in discussing movies is that the conversation almost immediately enters the subjective arena. This Q&A began with the questioner's thinking that the movie "was the best biblical movie I've seen so far." That's what he *felt*. Do I, on the other hand, with my graduate-school major in film and more than a decade as a Hollywood screenwriter, have a more objective perspective about movies? *No!* Forget the credentials—it all comes down to what we either like or dislike about the movie we're discussing. We may have different gauges for evaluating a film, but in the end it still comes down to personal, subjective, and experiential criteria, i.e., the way we each feel about *Paul, Apostle of Christ*.

When feelings become the main criterion of evaluation, there can be no satisfactory conclusion as to who's right or who's wrong. In fact, I've seen marriages break up because of heated differences over movies. That could also apply to some readers being upset with me based upon my response in this Q&A, so, I'm going to attempt to remove myself from any potential skirmish by deferring to the Scriptures. I simply want to ask some questions of those who consider themselves to be biblical Christians and desire to submit to God's Word.

Do you believe in the Bible's claim of inerrancy, i.e., that it is without error in the original communication to the writers and their recording (Psalm 19:7; John 17:17; Galatians 1:11-12), its claim of authority in all matters of faith and practice (1 Thes 2:13; 2 Tm 3:16-17),

and its claim of sufficiency? If yes, then you take it as God's perfect communication to mankind, the content to which believers must submit, and believe that it is sufficient for all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pt 1:3). If no, then your problem is with God's Word, not with me.

The claim of the Bible is that it is absolutely sufficient and will not tolerate any additions or subtractions from mankind. Obviously, that would make the Bible the product (even in part) of fallen, sinful humanity—which would render it worthless.

Scripture declares: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Pr 30:5-6).

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pt 1:19-21).

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rv 22:18-19).

Starting with the first frame of a "biblical" movie and ending with the last, and every frame in between, additions to and subtractions from Scripture fill the screen. Here's a quote from actor Russell Crowe when he was questioned as to why so much was added to the biblical story of Noah: "There are very few lines in the Bible, few specific lines that tell the story. So if you are going to make that tale into a narrative for a feature film, you've got to fill in some of those gaps."

Filling in "those gaps" subjects an audience (perhaps millions of people) to man-supplied content that pretends to be Scripture. I could stop right there and confidently rest upon what the Bible clearly says, certainly in the verses mentioned above and others that could be given. Yet I will add this additional consequence for believers, as well as unbelievers.

When *The Passion of the Christ* had its theatrical release, I wrote a book addressing my concerns titled *Showtime for the Sheep*. It includes a personal example of a survey in which I interviewed some biblically astute

young adults who were enamored with the movie. I described a number of scenes from the film and asked them to tell me which scenes that I mentioned were "accurate" to the Bible and which had been added by the screenwriter. They believed that five were true to the Scriptures and three were added. Wrong. All eight were made up by Mel Gibson, the writer/director. Tragically, viewers now have scenes in their minds that they believe are scriptural. Even worse, how sad for the millions of lost souls whose only "biblical insights" have come from a Hollywood production of God's Word.

QUESTION: It is my understanding per Jesus' own words in Matt 26:39, 42, Mark 14:36, and Luke 22:42 that He was *not willing* to die but *chose* to do the Father's will, not His own. I am struggling, as our pastor is preaching that Jesus was willing to be our "rescuer." Am I wrong or is there some other way to interpret these Scriptures?

RESPONSE: In Matthew 26:39 we read, "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." We also read, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 14:5).

Jesus was tempted in all ways, just as any human, yet He never yielded to that human nature. Any unwillingness He experienced never stopped Him from exercising His will to be obedient to the Father.

We know that Jesus was "willing" in that He submitted himself to the will of the Father. In Luke 18:31 the Lord, "took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man *shall be accomplished*" [our emphasis].

Jesus knew that the prophecies could be fulfilled only by His willingness to go all the way to the Cross. "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51). He made up his mind to do so by the exercise of His will. Christ's will was in agreement with the Father's will. Regardless of His very human temptations, Jesus remained in harmony with the will of the Father.

Finally, throughout His ministry, the Lord Jesus spoke of what He was willing to do. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.... As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 15).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Jesus Never Prayed the Lord's Prayer

Question: In his famous "Lord's Prayer," Jesus prayed "and lead us not into temptation" (Matthew:6:1. Yet we are told that He was in fact "led up of the [Holy] Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew:4:1). So even His own prayer wasn't answered! How can you explain this?

Response: First of all, the "Lord's Prayer" is misnamed. This was not a prayer that the Lord Himself prayed, nor was it to be repeated word-for-word by anyone. It was a pattern for prayer – "After this manner therefore pray ye" (Matthew:6:9) – which He taught His disciples in response to their request "Teach us to pray" (Luke:11:1). It ought to be called the "Disciples' Prayer."

In giving them this pattern or model prayer, Jesus said to His disciples, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name...etc." (Luke:11:2). There is no suggestion that Christ Himself ever prayed this prayer. Indeed, it would be entirely inappropriate for Him, because the prayer includes the phrase "And forgive us our sins" (Luke:11:4), something that Jesus, being sinless, would never have prayed. So in responding to your question, I am doing so with the understanding that this is a prayer for His followers to pray, but it is not for Christ. That fact takes care of the question about the phrase "lead us not into temptation," as far as Christ is concerned.

What about this phrase for His followers? No one who asks God "Lead us not into temptation" is guaranteed immunity from being, like Christ Himself, tempted by Satan. That phrase, like all the rest of the prayer, comes in the context of the affirmation "Thy kingdom come; they will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Thus the person repeating this prayer is ready to submit to God's will, whatever that may be, even including being tempted by Satan.

Then why ask not to be led into temptation? It is the voice of humility acknowledging our own frailties. It is the opposite of praying proudly, "Lead us into

all the temptation You want, Lord, because we're ready to handle it!" Praying the biblical phrase acknowledges the appropriateness of Paul's warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians:10:12). At the same time, it is the voice of trust in God in case temptation should come.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

Some believers suffer needless anxiety that they have committed the willful sin of Hebrews 10:26-27. They reason that since their will is involved when they do sin, therefore they are guilty of the willful sin and are doomed to the judgment and fiery indignation that will devour God's adversaries. But that is simply not true. It is essential for us to realize that there is a difference between acts of sin and the willful sin of Hebrews 10. The willful sin is apostasy. It is defined in v. 29 as trampling underfoot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulting the Spirit of grace. No true believer can ever be guilty of that! The very fact that a person worries that he has committed this sin is an indication that he has not. Those who apostatize from the Christian faith are so hardened and arrogant that they never give it a second thought. They have no fear of God or of His punishment.

—WILLIAM MACDONALD

A Crucial Address to the Overseers — Part Two

T. A. McMahon

IN PART ONE, a number of issues were addressed to those in leadership regarding the spiritual feeding of the sheep that have been placed under their care. Like Peter, they are exhorted by Jesus to demonstrate their love for Him by feeding His sheep.

Central to the spiritual feeding of believers in Christ is their personal relationship with Him. The first three chapters of Revelation contain our Lord's address to the churches. His first admonition was directed at the believers in Ephesus regarding their personal relationship with Him. That fellowship was doing many good works, but there was a serious issue that Jesus brought to their attention. The Ephesian church had "left thy first love"—Jesus himself (Rev 2:4). It seems that in their zeal to promote good works instead of feeding the sheep, as they had been instructed, Jesus had been left in the background.

The consequences, if that situation were to continue, would not bode well for the Ephesians. Jesus declared: "*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*" (Rev 2:5).

Biblical Christianity separates itself from all religions in many ways, but two things especially stand out to me as a former Roman Catholic. First, biblical Christianity rejects salvation through works, which is the basis of every "religion." Secondly, biblical Christianity is not a religion but a relationship. It teaches that the believer in Christ is brought into a personal, intimate relationship with God through Jesus, who is God in the flesh.

My life as a Catholic was fabricated upon "works salvation" (being saved by one's own efforts), which functionally separated me from Christ by the Church, or Rome itself, which claims to be the mediator between God and mankind. It operates through the priests, sacraments, rituals, and canonized saints, especially Mary, the "Mediatrice of All Graces." The closest thing I had to a personal relationship with divinity was—with Mary! She held first place in my practice of Catholicism, even to the point of disregarding the biblical Mary's Son.

In school I held the position of Prefect

of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which aimed "at fostering in its members an ardent devotion, reverence, and filial love toward the Blessed Virgin Mary." Today we are told by Catholic apologists that Catholics did not and do not worship Mary. This is not true, even though they say she's merely revered as "*hyper-dulia*," which places her above the reverence of the saints (*dulia*) and below the worship of God (*latria*). Never were there any restrictions or reservations in our honoring of Mary. Most of us considered her our co-redemptrix along with Jesus. We were taught that we needed to go through the mother of Jesus (also referred to blasphemously as "the mother of God") because He would do whatever his mother wanted! That is a bogus belief, and mine was a bogus relationship.

I recently did an audio recording of an article written by Dave Hunt in 1988, in which he underscored the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus. He wrote, "Christianity is unique because of the uniqueness of Christ our Lord. He alone is both God and man. He alone could by His own death pay the penalty for the sins of the world and thus fully satisfy the demands of divine justice. And in contrast to Buddha or Muhammad or other religious leaders, whose graves contain their decayed remains, the grave of Jesus is uniquely empty. He alone conquered death and promised His disciples, 'Because I live, ye shall live also' (Jn 14:19). Everything we have is in Him and Him alone—and thus depends entirely upon our relationship with Him.... And it is that *personal* relationship that each Christian has—and must have—with the Lord in order to be a Christian, that constitutes the most wonderful uniqueness of Christianity."

So shepherds, when you "feed" your sheep Jesus, are you nurturing them in their personal relationship with Him? Are the good works at your fellowship, the programs, the services, the outreach, and the like, causing your sheep's focus to slip away from the person of Jesus Christ? Hebrews gives us a warning: "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away" (2:1). And what have we heard? Let's hear Jesus's words: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love" (Jn 15:9-10). Drifting away from that has serious consequences. Remember the words of Jesus that I quoted at the

beginning of this article from Revelation 2:5. If we drift away from our personal relationship with Jesus, whether individually, or collectively as a church, for whatever supposedly good work, that person or church will eventually cease to reflect the light and true love of Christ. Their "candlestick" will be removed. Furthermore, the enabling power of Christ will also be lost to a work of the flesh no matter how good those works appear to be.

Let's just consider the power of Christ. There have been tremendous abuses by men regarding God's power within Christendom, from the Word/Faith and Healing and Prosperity heretics to the so-called signs-and-wonders "power evangelism" of C. Peter Wagner and John Wimber. But let's face it: if the power of Christ is not involved in what we're doing for Him, then it's merely a work of the flesh—and Scripture tells us that "the flesh profits nothing" (Jn 6:63). The point is that our being empowered to do what pleases Him, to do what His Word instructs us to do, is related to our walk with Him, e.g., our personal relationship with Him.

Scripture affirms that God will make us complete "in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:21). We can know and experience "the power of Christ" that strengthened the Apostle Paul (2 Cor 12:9-10)! The Bible also tells us that when Paul was abandoned by his co-workers at his first defense, "the Lord stood with [him], and strengthened [him]" (2 Tim 4:16-17).

If there's any verse that reveals a personal relationship with Jesus more than that one, to me it would be this: Acts 23:11. Do you remember what took place when Paul was imprisoned after nearly being "pulled to pieces" by the religious leaders in Jerusalem? "And the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." I love the verses that tell us that Jesus will never leave nor forsake us, which are tremendously encouraging, but to know and have confidence that Jesus will *stand by me* in a terribly difficult situation and might even say to me, "Cheer up, Tom, I've got you covered," or the like, is the epitome of personal relationship wrapped up in amazing grace.

Not only is Jesus there to "cover us," but He's also there for our spiritual protection. I'd like to suggest a particular "food" for your sheep, which is crucial, given the difficult times in which we live. What is it?

Prophecy! To me, prophecy is extremely important—and perhaps in a way you may not have considered. One of the things I love about prophecy, *besides* it being the best apologetic for proving that the Bible is God’s supernatural revelation of Himself to humanity, is the fact that it’s a “heads-up,” alerting believers to what will take place in the future. God lets us know what will happen in the world and in the church so that we can prepare for and avoid the dire consequences of the conditions that will occur prior to the Lord’s return.

Prophecy is a major part of God’s *spiritual protection plan* for His sheep who abide in His Word. I underscore “spiritual protection” because prophecy also has a history of spiritual *distortions* within Christendom. For example, in the 1800s the early version of Seventh-day Adventism declared that Jesus would return to earth in 1844 to purge the world of its sins. Ellen G. White was their false prophetess. Charles Taze Russell was a part of the Adventists until he left to start his own cult, known as the Watchtower Society, or the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who are infamous for their false prophecies. One of their more bizarre prophecies involved the purchase of a 16-cylinder Cadillac roadster and a 10-bedroom mansion in San Diego in the 1930s to accommodate their claim that Israel’s patriarchs would soon arrive and begin ruling on the earth. Mormonism doesn’t major in prophecy, but it had a couple of prophets who rivaled those of the JWs. Joseph Smith decreed that the moon was inhabited by folks who dressed like Quakers, and Brigham Young said the sun was also inhabited by people (*Journal of Discourses*). Young was prophesied to become president of the United States.

We’ve watched recent prophecy date setters destroy the financial lives of those who sold their homes and other assets and headed for the hills to wait for Jesus or to escape Armageddon. The latest examples have come from the fear-mongering hucksters, such as *WorldNetDaily*, and the *Jim Bakker Show*, who push their survival foods and goods that are supposed to see the recipients through the Great Tribulation, which was to have been started off by the convergence of the Shemitah curse and the blood moons in 2015 (which came and went as a non-event).

Yes, there will be physical events that will take place according to prophecy. But there are no instructions given in Scripture telling believers how to physically survive should some of these last-days “perilous times” (2 Tim 3:1), e.g., “wars and rumors of

wars,” “kingdom against kingdom,” “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes,” take place prior to the Rapture (Mt 24:6-7). The emphasis for believers is on what will take place *spiritually* and how we can be protected from the destructive consequences. And, as you’ll see, the Lord’s prophetic warnings give us an amazingly simple tool for developing discernment, especially when apostasy and confusion abound throughout Christendom.

Did I say “simple”? Yes. Jesus informs us of the problem that lies before us and gives us the biblical solution. Consider Matthew 24: Jesus was asked by His disciples about the End Times and the signs related to His coming. His response began with this heads up: “Take heed that no man deceive you” (v. 4). He warns us about spiritual deception in the Last Days, adding, “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many” (v. 5).

Are we in the Last Days? I know of many highly respected Bible teachers, including my friend, the late Dave Hunt, who taught that we are, indeed. Is there any evidence that spiritual deception and seduction are running rampant? Unless you’ve had your head buried in the sand, you must know that this is the case.

Jesus is warning us that there will be a plague of persuasive deception in the days just prior to His return. Other prophecies warn: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim 4:3); “...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Lk 18:8). We have the warning, and we have the condition that we’re being warned about: *spiritual deception will abound*. Sound doctrine and faith will *decrease* exponentially.

In Matthew 24:5, we’re given some specific details: We’re told that there will be a proliferation of false Christs. Do we see this today? Well, there’s the “Jesus Christ” of the Latter-day Saints, and there’s the Catholic “Jesus,” who hangs on a crucifix because he hasn’t fully paid the penalty for sin; there’s the “Jesus” of Seventh-day Adventism, who will decide who gets into heaven through his Investigative Judgment, and the “Jesus” of Calvinism who long ago predestined some to salvation and some to the Lake of Fire and must regenerate the elect before they can believe in Him. Islam has its own “Jesus,” known as Isa, who is not the son of God because Allah has no son, according to the Qur’an. Considering just the followers of the Catholic Jesus and the Muslim Jesus, that’s about four-and-a-half billion followers of false Christs.

Jesus gave us the warning of what’s

to come. In briefest terms, apostasy will increase exponentially until the Rapture and beyond, culminating in the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist. Leaders, you must feed your sheep those things that will protect them and enable them to be fruitful as they wait for the Groom, our blessed Hope, to return for His bride. I often remember Paul’s extraordinary warning to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.

He wrote in verses 28-31: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*”

Verse 28 underscores our responsibility to respond to Christ’s instruction to Peter to feed the church of God. Paul revealed his heart as he exhorted the elders to feed their church at Ephesus. His great concern had to do with their responsibility to keep the Ephesian flock, his spiritual children, from being deceived. Shepherds should understand verse 29 very well. Just as in Paul’s day, when “grievous wolves” could come in among the flock, how much more so in our times, with the overwhelming amount of media to which the sheep have access?

I don’t come even close to having the heart of the Apostle Paul regarding his compassionate concern for the Ephesians and their spiritual protection. After 40 years in ministry, I admit that I have yet to declare what Paul declared: “I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” It’s likely that very few leaders are at that level, but it’s imperative that we strive to move in that direction. The task of feeding the sheep the importance of biblical discernment is beyond daunting in our day but not beyond God’s grace! Thank you, Jesus, that Your grace is sufficient to feed His flock through Your Word and to encourage His lambs in their personal relationship with Him, as well as helping them to be discerning Bereans in these days of strong delusion. Our prayer is that all those who have been called of the Lord to minister in the body of Christ will take to heart the exhortation of Paul in Colossians 4:17: “And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.”

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: My husband loves to play golf, and he mentioned that a number of his golfing friends are excited about a technique they're learning from their golf pro to improve their game. Parts of it sound okay to him but it does involve "visualization." Should he be concerned for his friends?

RESPONSE: Visualization may or may not be something about which to be concerned. It can be a normal function that almost every person is able to do to some degree. It is the ability to "see" images in your mind. For example, if upon hearing someone talk about a chocolate ice cream cone you were able to picture it in your mind, that would be considered normal visualization. The ability to visualize is a great help to anyone who needs to picture something in his mind before executing or constructing it. Artists, designers, architects, engineers, novelists, screenwriters, are only a few of the occupations that can benefit from "normal" visualization. There is also, however, "occult" visualization.

When a person tries to create or manipulate reality by mental imagery, he or she has become a participant in the realm of the occult. Getting the new car you've always wanted through occult visualization, for example, would involve conjuring a mental image of all the car's desirous details and keeping that image almost continuously in your mind until the physical car actually becomes your own. This goes far beyond being merely a mental motivator that may drive a person to work diligently *within the bounds of reality* in order to obtain what they want. The technique of occult visualization is itself the means of magically *manipulating reality* so that somehow, in some mysterious way, the actual object becomes the property of the visualizer.

Millions of people are naïvely turning to occult visualization techniques to solve their problems, yet few inquire as to what makes the technique work. Though there are many visualization variations, the simplified, central concept is this: the true essence of all things is Mind, which is non-physical. What some refer to as "God" is actually the impersonal, all-encompassing Mind of the cosmos. Because Mind/God is impersonal it can be manipulated. In fact, it "must" be controlled by the thoughts or mental images of personal intelligences. So visualizing something you desire to have or want to take place is believed to activate the Mind, which must then turn your thoughts or images into reality.

The visualization techniques that have been promoted to increase proficiency in sports are usually a mixture of normal and occult visualization. Since you asked about golf, here is a scenario that shows how visualization can make the transition from normal into the realm of the occult.

The proper technique of swinging a golf club is very complex, featuring a host of physical and mental requirements. Once a player has learned and physically practiced the correct motions of a swing, it's possible to improve his skill level by normal visualization. What that involves is nothing more than "mental practice." In his mind, a player goes through all the motions of what he must do to correctly hit the ball. He sees or visualizes himself addressing the ball, checking his position, starting his backswing, shifting his weight, noting his elbow position, etc., etc., ending with his follow-through. Although there are differing views as to how helpful such mental practice is, most agree that whether mental or physical, practice is the key to improvement. In any case, nothing occult is involved so far. The normal functioning of the mind involves interactions with the body, so there is nothing unusual taking place when, for example, a golfer thinks about the proper grip and then positions his hands so that they conform to the image he envisioned.

The transition to an occult technique usually takes place when the visualization instruction deals with what happens to the ball after the golfer strikes it. Some teach that visualizing the desired trajectory of the ball has a definite influence on its actual flight. The concept now leaps beyond normal mind/body interaction to include mental influence over an external object. So how does visualizing the ball's flight trajectory influence the actual flight of the ball? That explanation is rarely offered in advance because it's based upon concepts that promote either a metaphysical, mind science, "new" physics, New Age, Eastern mystical, or ancient occult worldview—all of which subscribe to the belief that God is an impersonal Mind/Force.

Two basic dangers face those who get involved in occult techniques: 1) When a person participates in any form of occultism, he will at some point be exposed to and very likely be influenced by its underlying philosophy. If the person is a Christian, he has involved himself in an anti-Christian belief system and practice. 2) Because occult techniques are primarily inducements that seek to validate an anti-biblical view of reality, they are sometimes

empowered by demons (2 Thes 2:9) in order to deceive and win converts. Therefore, anyone who dabbles in the occult makes himself vulnerable to influence and (in the case of the unsaved) even possession by the demons who are behind occult manifestations.

This explanation has been limited to just one application of occult visualization in the field of sports (basketball, baseball, tennis, and almost all the other ball sports have similar teachings). There are, however, dozens more such occult techniques being promoted in the fields of psychology, medicine, education, politics, and religion (including promotions by evangelical Christians). Bringing about inner peace, world peace, physical healing, inner healing, greater creativity and intelligence, financial prosperity, and help from spirit guides (including Jesus) are just a few of the popular enticements.

As a postscript to what's been written, if you're bothered by the fact that no scriptures have been included, it is not because none are applicable, but rather that the *entire Word of God* is a condemnation of the occultic worldview. From the creation accounts (Genesis) to the personal involvement of a personal God (Genesis through Revelation) with those whom He created, to the repeated prohibitions against turning to false gods and occult methods used in worshiping and contacting them (Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Revelation), to the many cautions related to the imagination (Genesis, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Romans, 2 Corinthians), the Scriptures speak categorically and absolutely regarding the spiritual dangers of occultism.

QUESTION: An old article on your site contains what I consider a false statement that could lead many astray: "For [Israel] eternal life came through keeping the Law...." It might be well to publish a correction as this statement could cause confusion.

RESPONSE: My statement should have said that eternal life was *offered* to Israel for keeping the Law. Of course, no one ever attained to it on that basis, because no one could keep the Law. Justification comes as a free gift of God's grace through the finished work of Christ. Nor can one be sanctified (i.e., gain the victory over the practice of sin) by keeping the Law, because of the weakness of human flesh. The good news is that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God accomplished in "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" (Rom:8:3-4).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What Is “the Prayer of Faith”?

Question: The Bible very clearly states in unmistakable language with no conditions attached, “The prayer of faith will heal the sick” (James:5:15). Yet thousands of such prayers for healing have gone up to God unanswered. How can one reconcile the promise with the results?

Response: Once again, the key is in understanding that “faith” is not some power we aim at God to get Him to do our will. On the contrary, true faith is complete and total trust in God, which by very definition must include submission to His will. That fact helps us to understand what the Bible means by “the prayer of faith.” It obviously means absolute and total trust in God to heal the sick and the complete assurance that He will do so.

On what basis could such a prayer be offered to God? Obviously only if the one who is praying had complete faith that God was going to do what was being asked. How would one have such confidence without knowing that it was the will of God to do so? There is no verse in the Bible that promises anyone a healing every time it is asked or that says it is always God’s will for every Christian to be healed of every instance of illness.

Thus the kind of faith Christ is talking about could only come as a gift from God. I have experienced this on rare occasions, sometimes for others and sometimes with regard to myself when I was ill. At those times, when praying for a sick person (or for my own healing), I had complete confidence that healing would occur instantly – and so it happened.

No one can “work up” this kind of faith. It would be presumptuous to try to “believe” that God was going to heal someone unless one was absolutely certain that it was God’s will to do so. The so-called “faith healers” teach that healing can be claimed at all times for anyone and everyone. Their failure to put this into practice, however, on TV and in large rallies is so evident that one wonders how they continue to gather large crowds. The complete assurance that healing will take place in any given situation in response to prayer can come only by direct revelation from God.

Then should we not pray for the sick unless we have received such a revelation? No. Christ said that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint [i.e., give up]” (Luke:18:1). There are many examples in the bible of godly people (and even Christ Himself) praying for something that God refused to grant. We may always ask God to do what we believe would be for the good of others and to His glory. And we should persist in asking until we know it is not God’s will to grant the request..

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

Praise means to set a high value on God, and to express this value in words. Praise is an essential as well as an initial element in religion. When God converts a soul, He puts in it, as a germinal and organic principle, the spirit of praise. A true conversion is clothed in the garment of praise in exchange for the spirit of heaviness. The presence or absence of praise marks the depth and intensity, or the beggary, of our spiritual life. Prayer and praise are joined as the sun and its light are joined, as the flower and its sweetness are joined. If prayer be the life of religion, praise is the wing by which that life soars to Heaven. Prayer brings God down to the soul and praise lifts the soul up to God. Prayer has much to do with our sins and ourselves and God; praise has much to do with grace, gratitude, and God.

—E. M. BOUNDS

Judgment Day Approaching

Dave Hunt — First published in June 2005

ISRAEL IS THE major topic of the Bible. The word “Israel” occurs 2,565 times in 2,293 verses. More than enough prophecies have already been fulfilled in Israel’s unique history to prove that “the God of Israel” (203 times) is the true God. In Zechariah 12:2-3, He declares:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

This is an amazing prophecy not only that Jerusalem, which was then in ruins, would become a burden to the whole world, but that all of Israel’s neighbors would be united against her. They have fought one another in the past. Yet today, for the first time in history, “all the people round about” are united by Islam to destroy Israel.

For more than [60] years, Israel’s neighbors have launched surprise attacks against her and she has proved too strong militarily, even though they outnumber her forty to one. God said, “I [will] make...Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood...and they shall devour all the people round about...” (Zech 12:6). Soundly defeated every time, her Muslim neighbors feign a desire for peace, hoping to deceive and ultimately destroy her—a strategy established by Muhammad.

The real battle is not between Arabs and Jews, but between Allah and Yahweh. There is no question of the outcome, but it will be costly for both sides: Israel will be severely punished for rebellion, and her enemies will be destroyed.

Exactly as foretold, Jerusalem is a burden to all people of the world. More than 60,000 individual votes have been cast in the UN against Israel. This tiny nation with one 1,000th of the world’s population has occupied one-third of the United Nations’ time—a burden indeed!

Skeptics accuse Christians of trying to fit current events to the Bible, claiming that no one recognized such prophecies until

Israel was formed in 1948. On the contrary, for centuries most evangelical Christians have preached from the Bible the return of the Jews to their own land. Even John Owen, a leading Calvinist, wrote in the 17th century: “The Jews shall be gathered...into their homeland.”¹ This was also the opinion of the poet John Milton, of John Bunyan, Roger Williams, Oliver Cromwell, and many others.

Martin Luther wrote: “If the Jews are Abraham’s descendants...[they should be] back in their own land [with] a state of their own. But...[they are] scattered and despised.”² He therefore wrote off the Jews as God’s chosen people and persecuted them. But today the Jews are back in their own land after 2,500 years of being scattered worldwide, speaking Hebrew just as King David did 3,000 years ago. No other people have returned to reestablish their own nation and language after being cast out of their land for such a period of time.

Some prophecies applicable only to our day are frightening, foretelling God’s judgment. The language is often graphic:

If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies...my sword shall devour flesh...(Deut 32:41-42). For, behold, the LORD will come...to render his anger with fury...by his sword...(Isa 66:15,16). And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other...they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried.... (Jer 25:33)

The question is often asked as to whether the United States (or Canada, Australia, et al.) is in Bible prophecy. Of course! Scripture declares that every nation in the world will join together to invade Israel in the last days and be destroyed in the battle of Armageddon: “I will gather all nations [surely “all” includes America] against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken....Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations...” (Zech 12:9; 14:2-4).

But wouldn’t the United States be spared for being Israel’s friend? In fact, the U.S. State Department has often been against Israel. This was true in the Yom Kippur War. In a sneak attack (October 1973), 80,000 Egyptians overwhelmed 500 Israeli defenders along the Suez and 1,400 Syrian tanks swept down the Golan with only one Israeli tank brigade in service to oppose them. Israel was taken by surprise. Most of her armed forces were on holiday. The initial success of the attackers so electrified the Arab world that nine other Arab

states rushed to get in on the slaughter.

Historian David A. Rausch writes: “Jordan’s King Hussein sent two of his best armored brigades to Syria. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait financially underwrote the huge cost while sending thousands of troops to fight the Israelis. Kuwait lent her British-made Lightning jets to Egypt. Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi turned over forty French-made Mirage III fighters and 100 tanks. Iraqi MiG fighter jets as well as tank and infantry divisions fought on the Golan Heights, while a squadron of Iraqi Hunter jets were utilized by Egypt. Arabs predicted the extermination of the Jewish state and the ‘liberation’ of Palestine...”³

The Soviet Union blocked any UN attempt at a cease-fire and re fortified the Arab forces with armaments and supplies by sea and air. It was the closest Israel ever came to being defeated. But when the war ended, the Israeli tank columns were on the outskirts of Damascus and Cairo and could have taken those cities had they not turned back. Tragically, Israel suffered about 3,000 dead—which would be comparable to the U.S. losing 150,000. Except for a series of miracles from God, Israel would not have survived.

Where was her friend, the United States? Dozens of notices were sent to the Nixon White House by America’s National Security Administration (NSA) that an Arab Pearl Harbor was about to be launched against Israel. Nixon sat on them. Kissinger hid at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York the day of the attack and waited another three days before convening the UN Security Council. Declining to rush desperately needed military supplies to Israel, the White House said it had to be careful not to upset the Arabs and cause an oil crisis.

Six years earlier, on June 8, 1967, the fourth morning of the “Six-day War,” the *USS Liberty*, an electronics eavesdropping vessel, arrived off the Sinai coast and began to suck in every Israeli military communication, relaying it all to the British Secret Service’s giant computer installation on Cyprus. From there, complete maps of every Israeli military move were transmitted in advance to the Arab armed forces. With that help, the Arabs might have been able to use their overwhelming numerical superiority to turn the tide of the war. Israel had no choice except to sink the *Liberty*. Of course the media screamed about this “cold-blooded attack.” No one believed Israel’s public excuse that the *Liberty* had been mistaken for a hostile Egyptian ship—and neither the U.S. nor

Israel has publicly told the truth.

Yes, the United States, too, will attack Israel and will be punished at Armageddon. God declares plainly that He will bring all nations against Israel to destroy them:

In the latter days...I will bring thee against my land...my fury shall come up in my face...there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel...the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things [on] the earth, and all the men [on] the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence...[all nations] shall know that I am the Lord. (Eze 38:16-23)

This is terrifying language! What causes this “great shaking” of the entire planet and every living creature upon it? God is personally coming to earth as He did at Mount Sinai when He gave the Law—and He is going to take vengeance upon the enemies of Israel!

There are two specific reasons for God’s judgment: “I will also gather all nations...into the valley of Jehoshaphat [between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, where God miraculously destroyed invading nations without Israel lifting a finger (2 Chr 21:10-25)], and will plead with [punish] them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have [1] scattered among the nations, and [2] parted my land” (Joel 3:2).

Of course, all nations have participated in persecuting and scattering the Jews from country to country for 2,500 years. The second reason for God’s judgment falling on all nations, however, is something that has only occurred within our generation: “they have...parted [divided] my land.”

Israel has been overrun by invaders many times—but never did any conqueror divide the land. The victor does not share its spoils with others. Since World War I, however, all nations have joined to divide the land of Israel.

The 1917 Balfour Declaration, the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, and the 1922 Declaration of Principles by the League of Nations all recognized that the land that had become known as “Palestine” (since the Romans renamed Israel in A.D. 135) belonged to the Jews. It was set aside to become the national homeland of the Jewish people “internationally guaranteed, and...formally recognized to rest upon ancient historic connection.” Of course, history ties Israel to all of “Palestine.”

Britain was given the mandate to see that the Jews were safely settled there. The discovery of huge reservoirs of oil under Arab lands caused Britain to keep Jewish immigrants out and let in tens of thousands of Arabs. Just when millions of Jews desperately needed a haven to which they could flee from Nazi Germany, Britain’s 1939 White Paper limited Jewish immigrants to 10,000 per year for a maximum of five years, plus an additional 25,000 “refugees” during that period—then the door to Palestine would be shut entirely to the Jews. Since the Nazis had marked for extinction 11 million Jews in Europe, the quota of 25,000 defied God and conscience.

A year earlier, President Roosevelt had gathered delegates from 32 countries in Evian, France, to discuss the worsening plight of the Jews. Roosevelt made it clear that the United States would do nothing. Britain said there was no room in Palestine and it was not to be discussed. Professing their great sympathy for Europe’s Jews that everyone knew were to be exterminated, the nations offered various excuses why they could do nothing to intervene.

Hitler shrewdly declared, “We...are ready to put all these criminals at the disposal of these countries...even on luxury ships.” When the conference ended with the Jews completely abandoned, Hitler mocked the participants: “It was recently regarded as wholly incomprehensible why Germany did not wish to preserve in its population...the Jews...[yet these] countries seem in no way anxious to [receive them] now that the opportunity offers.” The entire world was Hitler’s partner in destroying the Jews!

In 1944, Hitler offered to sell to the allies 500,000 Hungarian Jews for \$2 each—and no one would take them! England said there was “no room” in Palestine for them! In 1943, Britain and America had agreed to say and do nothing about the Holocaust, fearful that if pressed, Hitler would dump the Jews on his critics. The Allies steadfastly refused the repeated urgent appeals from Jewish organizations to bomb the rail lines going in and out of the extermination camps. God will judge all nations!

After the war, a trickle of emaciated survivors of Hitler’s death machines sought to reach “Palestine” in half-sinking ships. Some who got within sight of the land God had given to them as an everlasting inheritance (1 Chr 16:15-18) were driven back by the British navy and put into internment camps on Cyprus.

Many who did manage to find shelter within what would become the new Jewish State of Israel were rounded up by the British and removed to those camps. Britain created Jordan out of most of the Promised Land. The demise of the British Empire, upon which “the sun never sank,” can be counted from the time Britain betrayed the Jews—one more fulfillment of the prophecy, “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee...” (Gen 12:3).

When the UN finally voted to partition Palestine on November 29, 1947 (UN Res. 181), God’s “chosen people” received about 13 percent of the land that had once belonged to them! Thus Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled that all nations would join to divide Israel. The only part of that prophecy remaining to be fulfilled is the judgment on the nations for having “parted” God’s land: “The land shall not be sold [partitioned] for ever; for the land is mine” (Lev 25:23).

God’s anger is growing hotter against the nations of this world for robbing Israel of what He gave to her. Yet in continued defiance of God, every peace proposal that the West has imposed upon Israel has involved further dividing of God’s land. President Bush, a professing Christian, originated the so-called “road map to peace,” which calls for a further dividing of the land of Israel. He ought to tremble and repent, as should President Putin, the EU, and the UN, who have joined Bush to make up the “quartet” sponsoring this plan.

On her part, Israel has been willing to give away more and more land in exchange for promises of “peace” from the PLO in spite of the fact that its charter calls for the destruction of Israel and that its maps and those of the entire Arab world do not even acknowledge Israel’s existence. The fact that Israel has been forced to do so by the West is no excuse. For this she will be punished severely in what is called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7). Yes, God will deliver her, but only after two-thirds of all Jews on earth have been killed (Zec 13:8,9).

There is no more appropriate place and way to destroy the nations that have abused Israel than when they, in the spirit of Satan, come to effect once and for all what Hitler called the “final solution to the Jewish problem.” Believers are to meet together to encourage and exhort one another from Scripture, “so much the more, as ye see the day [of judgment] approaching” (Heb 10:25). Fulfilled prophecies are heralding that day as never before. **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I read with empathy and agreement your excellent article “Jews, Gentiles, and the Church.” However, one thing you said puzzled me. It was this: “Essential also is an understanding that the church was created through offering to both Jews and Gentiles a ‘new covenant’ relationship with God.” My understanding of the “new covenant” is Jeremiah 31:31-40. This covenant is identified clearly as the New Covenant. It is a covenant addressed solely to the Nation of Israel. The church has no part in it—indeed it will not be instituted until after the close of the church age (the catching up of the church). Your statement, quoted above, seems to imply that the new covenant was offered to the church. Is that what you meant, or have I misunderstood you?

RESPONSE: As you note, the Scriptures speak of “covenants.” When Israel came to Sinai, and before the giving of the Law, the Lord said, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and *keep my covenant*, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6, our emphasis).

The only “covenant” in view is the one that God made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), which would be a blessing to all nations. We know this because the Law that was given, beginning in chapter 20, limits the priesthood to the tribe of Levi alone. Yet, in Exodus 19, the Lord states to all Israel “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Israel refused, and the Law was instituted.

That offer would be repeated centuries later by the promised Seed: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). It was the *fullness of time*. “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

In his first epistle, Peter echoes the words spoken by God in Exodus 19 (1 Peter 1:1).

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . . But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

The New Covenant is not “instituted?” It is “solely for Israel?” The longest quotation of any Old Testament passage by any writer in the New Testament is said to be in Hebrews 8:8-12. There, the unidentified writer quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 in full. It is the core of the inspired writer’s argument that Jesus is “the mediator of a better covenant” and that the old covenant (the Law) was insufficient. The inspired writer proclaims, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (Hebrews 8:7). The covenant of Jeremiah 31 must be in operation. The language will not allow a differing opinion.

Between Hebrews 4:14 and 10:18, the writer argues that the sacrifices performed by the priesthood of the old covenant could not bring about the forgiveness of sins. Therefore (he concludes), a new sacrifice and a new priesthood were necessary. They came as a result of Christ’s once-for-all death on the Cross. In light of the “operational” New Covenant, the Old Covenant has ceased to have a role in the lives of New Testament believers, for, “...he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13). In Hebrews 10:16-17 he clinches the argument by repeating Jeremiah 31:31-34 in Hebrews 10:16-17 to show that Jesus’ sacrifice of himself as the “Great High Priest” is the one truly effectual sacrifice for sins. Consequently, the New Covenant has no need of bloody sacrifices or Levitical priests to offer the sacrifices. As Jesus declared, “it is finished!” (John 19:30).

QUESTION: A neurosurgeon applied electric currents to the brain’s surface. Probing some areas would trigger whole memory sequences—even a familiar song that sounded so clear the patient thought it was being played in the operating room. So it seems that the memory is physical, yet you say thoughts even about physical things are nonphysical. If memory is part of the brain, then I can’t see why thoughts, too, can’t be part

of the brain. If memory is nonphysical and has a physical source, then why can’t thoughts have a physical source, too (i.e., the brain)?

RESPONSE: First of all, even the memory of a physical event must result from its having been observed by a nonphysical intelligence (i.e., the spirit within us), or there would be no memory imprinted upon the brain, which in itself neither observes, thinks, nor understands. Memory involves thought, and thoughts are clearly not physical because they include nonphysical ideas such as truth, justice, perfection, etc. Amazingly, however, because of the mysterious connection of the mind to the brain, what the mind thinks is recorded upon the brain.

Obviously, no event of itself creates memories. Neither is the mechanism by which a memory is recorded the source of the event, nor is it the source of the memory of the event. Thus the brain is no more the source of memories physically stored on it than a video or a DVD, an audio cassette, or a computer is the source of the sights and sounds physically stored on it.

Dr. Wilder Penfield described the brain as “a computer programmed by something independent of itself, the mind.” That a computer (or the brain) can have “memories” of ideas or events implanted on its physical structure does not mean that the computer (or brain) originated such ideas or events. Just as an intelligence that exists outside and is independent of the computer must put into it whatever “memory” it has, so it is the mind (the independent intelligence) that imprints memories on the brain.

Simple logic tells you that if thoughts originate with the brain, then the person living in that body is not doing the thinking but is at the mercy of the brain—and who will monitor the brain to see whether its thoughts are accurate? The physical brain serves many essential functions, but in all of them it is either directed by the mind or operates as an integrated part of autonomic body systems. The brain itself is not an intelligence. The fact that memories are physically recorded in certain parts of the brain and can be awakened by an electrical stimulus of such areas does not say that the brain either originated or even knows the significance of these memories. In the case of an event that was observed, both the awareness of the event and comprehension of its relevance requires a nonphysical mind. A memory has no existence without a mind to recognize and give it meaning.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Where Is God's Will in Faith and Prayer?

Question: I've heard a number of preachers on Christian TV say that to ask for something in prayer and then to say, "If it be Your will, Lord," or "According to Your will, Lord," will destroy one's faith. I tend to agree. What do you say?

Response: Although there is much good, unfortunately there is also an abundance of heresy on Christian TV. Far from being supported by the Bible, this teaching contradicts it. After making a request of His Father in heaven in prayer, Jesus added, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt" (Matthew:26:39). That sounds very much like "If it be Your will, Lord" or "According to Your will, Lord." The words are only slightly different, but the meaning is exactly the same.

Instead of submission to God's will being a hindrance to faith, it is the only way to have faith. Faith in God causes one to trust Him and to want His will above all and thus to obey Him. Would you desire, even if you could, to persuade God to do something against His will? We have dealt with this question in some depth earlier, so I won't go into it again.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE
FAITH by DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

Backsliding resides in the heart, and these other things are only external aids to the devil. When a man is backslidden in heart, he tends to get a little bit bored. If a glowing, earnest Christian bores you a little; if when you are in a little group drinking coffee or soda, and it bores you a little or embarrasses you when somebody brings up the thought of God, you had better look to your own heart. Whenever talk of God and His Word and His work in the world bores us, be sure that we are wrong inside.

—A. W. TOZER

The Importance of Fundamentalism — Part One

T. A. McMahon

I'm a fundamentalist...and I hope that all who consider themselves to be biblical Christians would declare that as well. The term, however, is used in a derogatory way by many people today. I don't know why, other than the fact that many simply don't like Christianity, especially biblical Christianity. But regardless of what its detractors think, fundamentalism is a very valuable concept.

Let me give you an illustration from the sports world. During the college and pro football seasons, the teams' schedules usually include a bye week. That's a week that has no game scheduled, so it's dedicated to practice, and the practices rarely involve tricky new plays. Instead, the focus is nearly always on returning to the fundamentals of the sport.

Throughout the season, players often drift away from fundamental techniques and develop some bad habits that decrease their effectiveness. But sports aside, if one's fundamentals are wrong in *anything*, the results aren't going to be good.

In biblical Christianity, sound doctrine is critical, and how sound it is depends upon whether or not it is *fundamentally* sound. There are numerous important doctrines found throughout Scripture, but I want to focus on just one, which I firmly believe is the most important fundamental teaching, and that is the gospel.

No one is saved unless he has heard and believed the gospel, whether by hearing it or reading it—and then believing it. The gospel isn't complex. In fact, even a child can hear and believe it and be saved. Yet too often a message of "salvation" is given that doesn't contain a fundamentally sound gospel.

I was speaking at a conference in Kansas City a few years ago, and on Sunday a friend of mine took me to a popular church there. The guest speaker was a well-known evangelist. The pastor who introduced him was excited that the speaker was going to give one of his "classic evangelistic messages." Following the message, an altar call was given and about 250, at least one-third of the people in that service, went forward. I was stunned.

Why? The gospel was nowhere to be found in the message! It was purely an emotional appeal. I wrote to the pastor

afterward, asking him about the missing gospel. I really wanted to also ask him if it concerned him that so many in his fellowship went forward. That would seem to indicate that they weren't saved, but I decided to hold off on that question until I got a reply from him—which never came. If they weren't saved beforehand, they certainly weren't saved by the *gospel-less* message to which they were responding! It was a grievous situation.

On the other hand, in many churches, even when a gospel message is given that includes enough information for a person to put his or her faith in Jesus for salvation, *rarely is it explained*. Why do I think that's so important? Well, those who have yet to accept the gospel are being asked to make a decision that has *eternal consequences*. How many important decisions do any of us make without explanations being given as to what we should do and the consequences that are involved? Hopefully, very few.

WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM: AND WITH ALL THY GETTING GET UNDERSTANDING.

—Proverbs 4:7

Proverbs 4:7 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." There are a number of reasons why *understanding* is very important, especially in evangelism. An explanation of the gospel itself is not only critical, but the hearer must also be helped to understand the fundamental foundation necessary for one's life and growth in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, what happens afterward—after a person has, by God's grace, received the gift of eternal life? What are believers to do with that free gift?

In the book of Matthew, we are reminded that which a believer has freely received, he or she is to "freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Jesus came to save sinners. It's my understanding that once we're saved and have received the gift of eternal life, we are to "freely give" out the information of what that gift is and how it can be obtained. That's known in Scripture as the "great commission." In Mark 16:20, we see that "they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them,

and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

The "great commission" is for every believer in Christ. What better way could you spend your life than being used of the Lord to encourage someone to spend eternity with Jesus Christ? Our lives may be wonderfully fruitful in a secular sense. Some of us might be doctors, heart surgeons, cancer specialists, nurses, educators, military personnel, caregivers, etc. We may be great parents or good children to our parents. Such endeavors are meaningful, but they are of little or no value beyond this earth, rewards notwithstanding. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. I'm just comparing the good things that we do temporally with those things that have *eternal* value—which are far better. What could be greater than being used of the Lord in such a way that would result in eternal salvation for someone? Our temporal life lasts on the average about 75 years. Compare that with living *forever* with Jesus!

But what might be an obstacle to any of us freely giving what we have freely received? In fact, nearly all revolve around *self*. Self-love, self-esteem, self-preoccupation, self-worth, and especially self-consciousness, are among the chief obstructions to witnessing.

Regarding self-consciousness, no one likes to be thought of as stupid or ignorant. Few if any of us enjoy finding ourselves in a position in which we're at a loss to give to anyone who asks a sensible answer to an important question. That certainly applies to believers regarding their understanding of the gospel, or perhaps, for some, a lack or a weakness in that area. A lack of *confident understanding* of the gospel too often creates a potential embarrassment that prevents some from sharing it with others.

Who would attempt to explain anything that's important if he wasn't sure of the subject, and I mean really convinced of it? Sadly, most people *who call themselves* Christians do not share the gospel because 1) they've never really heard or accepted the biblical gospel, or 2) they've heard enough truth to be saved but have never grown in their confident understanding of it. Many Bible-believing Christians either cannot or have great difficulty *explaining* the gospel, so they simply don't share it.

I hope these articles will help to increase our understanding of the gospel so that we can be more confident and even bolder, as the Lord provides opportunities to share His message of hope with oth-

ers. Romans 1:16 exhorts, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Sometimes, because of some of the reasons I’ve noted, we don’t realize that drawing back from sharing the gospel is, in a sense, being “ashamed” of it. We need to keep that in the back of our minds as we go about understanding it better.

So, exactly what is the gospel? The word itself means “good news.” What’s good about it? Well, it solves a problem. In fact, it solves humanity’s greatest problem, which is that mankind, early on, was separated from their Creator because of disobedience.

At the beginning of the human race, God gave Adam a command that he was not to eat of a certain fruit in the Garden of Eden—a command that Eve, and then Adam, disobeyed. God had warned them that the penalty for that sin was death, meaning that they would be separated from God spiritually and then physically, through death. The condemnation was eternal. The hopeless fact was that once they sinned, there would be nothing they could do about it except to pay the infinite penalty, which is impossible for finite human beings.

Scripture tells us that the wages of sin is death and that all have sinned. Therefore, God’s perfect justice demands that all who sin are under the penalty for sin, which is separation from Him forever. Yet God, because He is merciful, had a solution to reconcile mankind to Himself.

We see it first in Genesis 3:15 right after Adam and Eve had disobeyed God. Speaking to Satan, who had successfully tempted Eve to taste the forbidden fruit, the Lord said, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” This is a prophecy concerning Christ (the seed of the woman), who would pay the penalty for all mankind Himself, thereby destroying the works of Satan and giving humanity the opportunity to be reconciled to God. Verse 15 is referred to as the “First Gospel.”

Throughout the Old Testament we find prophecies and types that point to God’s solution to mankind’s condemnation through Israel’s Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Consider the sacrifices of Abel and Cain, the two sons of Adam and Eve. Abel’s sacrifice was accepted by God. Cain’s was not. Why? Abel’s was a blood offering of a sacrificial lamb necessary for the atonement of sin, a “type” (or a

foreshadowing) that pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that without the *shedding of blood* there is no remission of sin. Cain did his own thing, offering his veggies rather than what God had instructed.

The Old Testament is filled with representations and concepts that point to the coming Savior of the World. They symbolized the Messiah-to-come, and thus those living in that time period before His arrival could look ahead to Him—by faith—and thus be saved.

Space limitation restricts me from giving more than a couple of examples, yet they are staggering in their significance. Consider Abraham in his obedience to God through the impending sacrifice of Isaac, his only son, the son of God’s promise (Genesis 22:2-16). As the father of three sons, I can’t imagine myself in that situation without trembling uncontrollably with grief. Yet Abraham *believed God*, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Romans 4:3). What did he believe? He knew that if he slayed Isaac in obedience to God, even then, God would raise Isaac from the dead. He had even told his servants that he would return from the Mount *with his son Isaac*.

If anyone cannot see the relationship of this with God the Father sacrificing His only begotten Son, I don’t know what I can add, except maybe for this. In Isaiah 53 are found verses that prophesy what the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would experience when He paid the penalty for our sins, past, present, and future. We see Christ our Savior, “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). “He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. . . wounded for our transgressions. . . bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and. . . afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the

rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:4-12).

This is the Creator of the universe, the Creator of all living souls (identified here as transgressors), who interceded for us! Words can scarcely put that in a way we can truly fathom. Neither now—nor perhaps for all eternity. All I can think of in response is, “Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus!”

To sum up: we see that the *gospel* is indicated throughout the Old Testament, and it was to this that the Jewish believers of that era looked ahead by faith—and were saved. But it wasn’t only the Israelites. Job lived at the time of the patriarchs and was not a Jew but rather a Gentile. His belief in the coming Savior is made clear in Job 19:25: “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”

Why study the Old Testament, which some see as merely a history book? Because it lays the foundation for “the first principles of the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12)! Without it, the Bible makes no sense. Christ and the Cross become meaningless. Still, many who profess to be Christians have abandoned the inerrant Word of God, like those enamored with pseudoscience, such as the theistic evolutionists, who deny its very clear fundamental teachings such as the global flood and the literal six days of creation. Of late are highly influential Christians who seek to accommodate the culture by making the Old Testament into a seeker-friendly offering, avoiding, or even eliminating, the truth of God’s Word, which doesn’t appeal to the world.

In part 2 of this series, we’ll turn to the New Testament, where we find the prophecies and Old Testament types of our Savior perfectly fulfilled in confirmation of the fundamentals of biblical Christianity. **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have heard you say on a few occasions that all babies and children are saved. I do not dispute this, but could you back this up from Scripture?

RESPONSE: The sense of justice we have in our consciences assures us that God would not send innocent babes, who were never conscious of having sinned, to hell to suffer eternally for sin. We can rely upon Abraham’s pleading with God not to “slay the righteous with the wicked,” and his appeal, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” and God’s apparent agreement (Gn 18:25). We also have David’s statement regarding his dead baby son: “But now he is dead...I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Sm 12:23).

Christ’s attitude toward, and His statements regarding, small children gives us additional assurance of their salvation: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Mk 10:14); “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Mt 18:10). Although I don’t fully understand the latter statement about “their angel,” it seems to indicate a relationship with God during their innocence. Furthermore, everyone must “receive the kingdom of God as a little child” (Mk 10:15).

QUESTION: You once attempted to answer a question about Matthew 1:21 [“He shall save his people from their sins”]. Your answer could lead one to believe (using Jn 1:29, 1 Jn 2:2, 4:14, and 1 Tm 4:10 out of the context of the whole Word of God), that everyone is saved. You quoted 1 Jn 4:16, Jn 3:16-17, 2 Pt 3:9, and 1 Tm 2:4 and implied from them that God loves everyone! I suppose then we should ignore verses like Ps 5:4-5, Prv 8:13, Mal 1:2-4, and Rom 9:11, 13-24? If no one can understand God’s Word without the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:4) and if Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2), how can we choose God? Rom 3:10-12 says that no one either understands or seeks God. We would all go to hell unless God chose to reveal Himself to us and to give us saving faith.

RESPONSE: Matthew 1:21 doesn’t say that Christ will save *only* His people from their sins—or most of us wouldn’t be saved. “His people” refers to Israel. They were the first to be called God’s elect (Is 45:4; 65:9).

Again, it is Israel to whom Christ referred as the elect in Matthew 24:31, which is not describing a post-trib Rapture of the church into heaven but the gathering by angels of all Jews back to Israel at the end of Armageddon. That God loves all, and Christ died for all, obviously doesn’t mean that all are automatically saved. Salvation is for “whosoever believeth” (Jn 2:16, 36; 5:24; 6:35; 7:38; 1 Pt 2:6; 1 Jn 5:10, etc.). Those who are lost are separated from God eternally, not because God didn’t love them enough or Christ didn’t die to save them but because they refused the salvation He offered freely by His grace.

You insist that “world” refers only to the “elect” in statements such as “God so loved the world” or “sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.” There is no basis for such an interpretation. Furthermore, the meaning of “all men” or “world” is undisputable in other similar verses. For example, “[Christ] is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Tm 4:10). Here the “all men” is clearly different from “those that believe” (i.e., the elect). So too with the statement that Christ “is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” “Whole world” can only mean “whole world.” It cannot mean the elect, because it is contrasted to them.

Nor does the fact that God must draw us to Himself by His Spirit negate a genuine response to that drawing on the part of those who are saved. The same is true of Christ’s statement, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (Jn 15:16). Every employer could say to his employees, “You didn’t choose me; I chose you.” That would only mean that the employee could not force the employer to hire him. It was the employer’s decision that determined the hiring. But the one hired still had to apply for the job and agree to the conditions of employment.

Likewise, we could not force Christ to save us. God must initiate and only He can consummate the transaction. However, it would be meaningless if we were incapable of responding to God’s offer of salvation and thus didn’t genuinely choose to believe in, receive, and follow Christ in response to the conviction and wooing of the Holy Spirit. That we consented to being saved and believed in Christ is neither a “work” nor anything to our credit. The drowning man who allows his rescuer to pull him to shore has nothing to boast of or take credit for, nor has he played any role in his rescue. He can only be grateful to the one who saved him.

QUESTION: If we are to believe OT prophecies about Jesus, aren’t we also to believe OT prophecies about Mary? The Catholic Eternal Word Television Network [EWTN] has posted articles with lists of these prophecies.

RESPONSE: To come up with these conclusions, Catholics must “read into” the Scriptures meanings that aren’t there. EWTN provides a list regarding “prophetic” scriptures referring to Mary: 1) Old Testament Prophecies of Mary; 2) Old Testament Pre-figurings of Mary; 3) Daughter of Zion, and 4) Ark of the Covenant. One has to exercise great imagination to turn the phrase “Daughter of Zion” into a prophetic scripture of Mary! The phrase occurs several times in the Old Testament, mostly in the prophetic Scriptures. “Zion” has always applied to Jerusalem—and also to Israel—as the people of God. Thus, the “Daughter of Zion” does not refer to a specific person such as Mary. It’s actually a metaphor for Israel that also refers to the relationship God has with His chosen people.

It’s true that Scripture states, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Even in that, however, we see that the focus is to be on the *Messiah* to come. Mary’s conception of Jesus is a sign of His coming, but He himself is the focus.

Any attempt to find a prophetic focus on Mary in the Ark of the Covenant only serves to obscure the absolute focus on our Lord. In John 5:39, speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures, Jesus specifically said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of *me* [emphasis added].”

In Luke 1:34, concerning her announced pregnancy, Mary asks “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” The Catholics try to use that verse as proof that Mary had made a vow of continual virginity. But we have Scriptures such as Matthew 13:55-56, which plainly states, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?” Catholics claim that this refers to either stepbrothers and sisters or cousins. Yet, the words, context, and plain meaning will not allow this wresting of Scripture to stand. Furthermore, Matthew 1:25 clearly states that Joseph had no sexual relations with his wife “...*till* she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS [emphasis added].”



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Christ's Unanswered Prayer in Gethsemane

Question: I think the classic example of unanswered prayer is the one Jesus supposedly prayed in Gethsemane on His way to the cross: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matthew:26:39). We are told that the "cup" He feared (of going to the cross) didn't pass from Him. Why was He so afraid of the cross? Thousands were crucified by the Romans, many bearing it bravely and some even defiantly. Doesn't the fact that Christ was so afraid and that His prayer wasn't answered disprove the claim that He was God in the flesh?

Response: Jesus did not fear the cross. It was not the thought of the intense physical suffering He faced that made His sweat seem like drops of blood. Instead, His holy soul shrank from becoming the very thing He hated: sin. As Paul explained, "He [God] has made him [Christ] to be sin for us, [he] who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians:5:21

As for this being the classic example of unanswered prayer, you are not far wrong. The fact that Christ's prayer was not answered speaks volumes to us. We thereby know that there was no other possible means for our redemption. Had there been any other way, God would not have insisted upon the cross.

We are assured that not even God's infinite love for His Son could cause Him to go back upon His promise to save the world from the penalty that His own righteous law demanded for sin. The cross that Christ endured in obedience to the Father and out of love for mankind stands forever as proof of God's love and assures us that we can never be lost. For as Paul said:

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans:8:38-39).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH
by DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

To create, God had but to speak, and it was done. But to redeem, He had to bleed. And He did so in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He sent to take the place of death upon the cross which our sin had so richly deserved. Redemption, however, was no last-minute thought, brought into being to meet an unexpected emergency. No sooner had sin entered the garden than God spoke of One who was to come and who was to bruise the serpent's (that is, Satan's) head, His own heel being bruised in the process (Gen. 3:15), and to restore all the damage which sin and Satan had done. God thereby revealed that the sad turn of events had not taken Him by surprise, but that there was One in reserve to meet this very situation. Scripture calls Him "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), because with God the remedy antedated the disease. And all this was done with the one purpose of bringing us fallen men with our sinful, proud, unbroken natures back to that relationship with God of submissiveness and God-centeredness that was lost in the Fall—that position where once more He can delight in us and we in Him.

—Roy and Revel Hessian, *We Would See Jesus*

The Importance of Fundamentalism — Part Two

T. A. McMahon

DURING ONE OF the Apostle Paul's missionary trips he entered the Greek city of Berea. There he preached in the synagogue of the Jews. Luke, writing in the book of Acts, points to Paul's experience there, commending the Jews (17:10-11) for being noble minded. Why? Because they listened to what Paul had to say, and *they searched the Scriptures daily* to see if what he was saying was true to the Old Testament prophecies. Many, therefore, believed on Jesus as their Messiah because He had fulfilled what God's Word declared they were to look for regarding their coming Savior.

The New Testament not only contains the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, but it also continually explains and clarifies the fundamental gospel. Let's start with a verse that for most of us was one of the very first that we learned: John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This verse is loaded with information. First of all it begins with repentance. Although it is not stated directly, it is more than implied. Repentance means turning to God, and one cannot "believeth" in the Son without turning to Him. The verse also gives the "why" (because of God's love) and the "what" (God the Father sent His Son Jesus) of the gospel. Furthermore, it indicates that those who do not believe in Him will perish. That condition is underscored in John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Dave Hunt, who is now home with the Lord, wrote: "In Hebrews 2:3 the vital question is asked, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' There is no escape. The Bible makes that solemn fact abundantly clear. To reject or add to or take from or otherwise pervert or embrace a substitute for 'the gospel of God' is to perpetuate the rebellion begun by Adam and Eve and to leave one eternally separated from God and under His wrath. No wonder Paul wrote, 'knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...' (2 Cor 5:11). So must we persuade through the gospel."

In order to do that effectively we must *know it well*. This has tremendous benefits, going far beyond being merely an

encouragement to witness. For one thing, it strengthens us in the faith for which Jude exhorts us to earnestly contend. It also enables us to be steadfast in the gospel "wherein ye stand" and "by which also ye are saved" (1 Cor 15:1-2). This is all the more important in our day, which Jesus characterized in Matthew 24 as a time of increasing apostasy and deception.

Again, here is more scriptural insight from Dave Hunt: "[The gospel] is simple and precise, leaving no room for misunderstanding or negotiation: '...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures' (1 Cor 15:3-4). This 'everlasting gospel' (Rev 14:6) was promised 'before the world began' (2 Tm 1:9) and cannot change with time and culture. There is no other hope for mankind, no other way to be forgiven and brought back to God, except through this 'strait gate and narrow way' (Mt 7:13). Any broader road leads to [eternal] destruction. The one true 'gospel of God's grace,' which God offers as our *only* salvation has three basic elements:

- 1) Who Christ is—fully God and perfect, sinless man in one person (were He less He couldn't be our Savior);
- 2) Who we are—hopeless sinners, already condemned to eternal death (or we wouldn't need to be saved); and
- 3) What Christ's death accomplished—the payment of the full penalty for our sins (any attempt by us to pay in any way rejects the Cross)."

I'm going to share a list that includes various descriptions of the gospel, which is the good news of what Jesus has accomplished in order to save us from an eternity of separation from God forever.

In Acts 16:30, the Philippian jailer cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" The response to that simple question (v. 31) was equally simple: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Notice that nothing in that response even hints at anything other than *belief*. No good works, no rituals, no sacraments. Nothing but faith—and faith alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Some are confused by Ephesians 2:10, where it says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works* [italics

added], which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." They erroneously *add* good works as a condition of salvation, reading into the verse that we are saved *by good works*. No, that's not what it says! It says *unto* and *for* good works in the KJV and NKJV. Moreover, that would contradict Ephesians 2:9, which declares that salvation is "not of works." Moreover, no one can do "good works" that have any eternal value *until after* he or she is saved.

Most of us, I'm sure, are familiar with the verses I've mentioned, but there are many others that we may not think about that also relate to the gospel—literally hundreds more! I don't know of a greater encourager, a better confidence builder in the faith, along with the experience of a more profound sense of awe and thankfulness for what Jesus has done for us than to simply read and allow these gospel-related verses speak to our hearts and minds. Here are just a few of them:

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

To [Jesus] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (Acts 10:43)

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... (Rom 5:1)

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (Rom 10:8-11)

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Rom 5:10)

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor 1:17-18)

For he hath made him to be sin for

us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor 5:21)

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. (Gal 1:3-4)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Eph 1:6-7)

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)... (Eph 2:5)

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby... (Eph 2:13, 14, 16)

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (Eph 5:1-2)

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight. (Col 1:20-22)

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. (1 Thes 5:9-10)

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. (1 Tm 1:15-16)

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar [special] people, zealous of good works. (Ti 2:13-14)

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Ti 3:3-7)

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit... (1 Pet 3:8)

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince [ruler] of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood... (Rev 1:5)

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation... (Rev 5:9)

Those are just a few of the hundreds presented throughout Scripture. Sometimes there are phrases that jump out at me when I'm searching for other teachings. For example, I may have been looking for verses that encourage discernment among church leaders, such as in Acts 20:28, "Take

heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God," and I read "which he hath purchased with his own blood." Wow! I can't help being reminded that this is the Creator of the Universe, who became a man, and purchased *us*—you and me—by paying the full penalty for our sins on the cross!

As Charles Wesley wrote in one of his hymns, "Amazing love, how can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me?" That, as I mentioned earlier, is so profound a love, and it may take an eternity to plumb its wonderful depths. Yet in this day of pervasive false teaching and skepticism, some would question this, asking, "If Jesus paid the full penalty for the sins of the world, why isn't everyone saved?" A popular heresy, in fact, brought to us by the book and the movie, *The Shack*, teaches universalism, the belief that everyone ends up in heaven no matter what.

Christ did indeed pay for every sin, past, present, and future. He "gave himself a ransom for all... ye are bought with a price" (1 Tim 2:6; 1 Cor 7:23). That payment would be like a check that's made out to each and every individual. It has his or her name on it, but if the check isn't cashed, it has no value.

The gospel, as mentioned earlier, cannot be received without repentance. That does not mean "cleaning up one's life" before turning to Jesus. That would be impossible. The lost have no power to do so. Sanctification can only be accomplished after becoming a believer and through the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells within every born-again Christian. Repentance simply involves a change of heart, desiring to turn from one's own way and looking to God in order to do things His way. His way is the *only way* to be saved. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (Jn 14:6). Simply believing and receiving what Jesus has done for us is the way that the check may be cashed. This is the way—the only way—for one to receive the free gift of eternal life.

I hope that everyone reading this has understood the fundamental truth of the gospel and has "cashed that check" or is now ready to do so. I pray that if you've never humbly given your life to Jesus but realize that He's been preparing your heart even as you read the words in these Scriptures, that you find that you're ready to do so now.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I want to thank you for your newsletter and radio programs. They have been a great encouragement to me to take the Bible more seriously. I especially like what comes off as a genuine enthusiasm, a real love, for the Scriptures. But I'm curious. Do you recommend a certain way of studying the Bible?

RESPONSE: Our recommendation is to just start reading it. And read it, and read it, and read it—certainly with a prayerful heart, a sincere heart, a heart that wants to do what it says, but read it! Get familiar with it (2 Tm 2:15) and ask the Holy Spirit for understanding (Jn 16:13).

As you read the Scriptures, you will inevitably come across something that provokes curiosity: "What does that mean?" So then, you're going to have to probe deeper. You need to compare Scripture with Scripture. We believe that the Bible is its own best commentary. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* and a good Bible dictionary, such as *Vine's*, which is keyed to *Strong's Concordance*, are excellent helps along the way. Using these tools, one can see where else in Scripture a certain word has been used and begin to understand the context.

The Bible is a deep book, and we'll never get to the bottom of it. But let's not read it superficially—let's work at understanding the depths of what it says.

We need to read the whole Bible. We can't just know a few verses here and there; we shouldn't have only a couple of favorite places in the Bible that we like to read over and over again. We need to know it from Genesis to Revelation. This takes time and diligence, but the more you study it, the more you will see! This is God's Word. And it really speaks to our hearts—it draws us into a deeper understanding.

QUESTION: I have been born again for 20-some years and began taking an [exercise] class about four years ago. My teacher is a self-proclaimed gay man. I struggle with supporting him even in a small way. He does sometimes question me about Bible issues, [and] I never back down but quote the verses that condemn homosexuality. Am I wrong taking lessons from him?

RESPONSE: To begin, we shall be praying that the Lord will give you wisdom and discernment as you seek to witness for Him.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 we are told, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: *Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world*, or with the

covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; *for then must ye needs go out of the world.*"

(Emphasis added)

Verses 11-12 of that passage tell us that we are not to continue to fellowship *with those within the body of Christ* who continually engage in immoral behavior but that they are to be judged. On the other hand, the scripture tells us that to avoid those who are not believers and are living contrary to the Bible would be impossible. As long as we are in this world, we will be in contact with sinful people. We may have no idea whether the grocers, repairmen, service personnel, doctors, et al., are engaged in homosexuality, or are drunks, fornicators, extortionists, or involved in any other immoral behavior. If we use the opportunity of this contact to share the gospel, who knows what seeds we may sow for His kingdom? You say that you have had liberty to share Scripture with this man. Isaiah 55:11 tells us that God's Word shall not "return unto [Him] void, but it shall accomplish that which [He] please[s], and it shall prosper in the thing whereto [He] sent it."

To sum up, because we will have some contact with those who continually practice sin, we must be prepared to share the gospel, to pray for them, and to trust the Lord to give the increase.

QUESTION: If unbelievers do not have the Holy Spirit, how do they get answers from God? Are they not separated from God, as Romans says? How do they go to the throne of grace with their petitions? Please explain, because I had always learned that the only prayer an unsaved person could make was one related to salvation, yet in 1 Kings 8:39, God is talking to Israel and to pagans as well.

RESPONSE: Unbelievers have no access to God to have their "petitions" fulfilled by Him. Furthermore, rarely would they turn to Him (in whom they don't believe) unless they were in a life or death situation in which only a miracle would help them. As you point out, the only prayer the unsaved can make is a prayer of repentance. Man is separated from God by his sin. It is not surprising that some pray to Mary, the "saints," or other deities. Even the religious counselors of King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged, "There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there

is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Dn 2:10-11).

On the other hand, God does intervene in the life of an unbeliever for His own sovereign purpose, to draw someone whom He knows will repent and come to Him, and in answer to the intercessory prayers of believers praying specifically for the salvation of unbelievers. In Scripture we see examples of individuals such as Hagar, weeping over her inability to protect the life of her son, Ishmael (Gn 21:14-19), though previously God had already heard and responded to her "affliction" (Gn 16:11). God had not only protected him (21:19-21), but God blessed Ishmael exceedingly (Gn 16:10-11).

The people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah with the hope that Nineveh might be spared (Jon 3:5-10). God, in His mercy, did not destroy the city of Nineveh as He had threatened. The people of Nineveh may not have approached God as the Scriptures demanded, but they did know what repentance was.

In 1 Kings 8:38-39 we read, "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)."

Solomon is interceding for Israel and acknowledges the necessity of "knowing the affliction of his own heart...." Consequently, we see examples such as Cornelius the Roman centurion who met the Lord in Acts 10:4: "And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."

In 1 Peter 3:12, Peter writes, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Again, the testimony in Scripture is clear, as in Psalm 34:17-18: "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

The mercy of God is such that in Psalm 51:17, we also see, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Do Catholics Really Pray to the “Saints”?

Question: I can't seem to get a straight answer from my Catholic friends concerning prayers to the saints. They seem ambivalent on the subject. Some admit they pray to Mary, while others deny it. What is the truth?

Response: It is not surprising that you have found ambivalence. Roman Catholic apologists generally deny that prayers are offered to Mary and the saints and insist that they only ask Mary and the saints to pray for them, just as one might ask of a friend. This deceit is promoted widely and vigorously to counter valid criticism from Protestants on this vital subject.

For example, a recent major article featured on the cover of the official magazine of the Christian Booksellers Association made this statement: “Catholics only ask saints to pray for them – just as we ask the living to pray for us.” The author, himself a Catholic and university professor, surely knew that he was not telling the truth. And why would the Christian Booksellers Association, and evangelical body, pass along such misinformation?

Here are just a few of the facts. Consider first of all “The Holy Father’s [pope’s] Prayer for the Marian Year [1988].” This was the official prayer for all Catholics to Mary for an entire year and came from the highest authority in the Roman Catholic Church. In it Pope John Paul II never once asked Mary to pray for Catholics. Instead, he asked her to do what she would have to be God to do: to comfort, guide, strengthen, and protect “the whole of humanity....” His prayer ended, “Sustain us, O Virgin Mary, on our journey of faith and obtain for us the grace of eternal salvation.”

Mary: As Great as God and More Sympathetic?

For Mary to guide and protect the whole of humanity and sustain all Catholics on their journey of faith, she would have to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. What supernatural

powers would it take on her part to hear millions of prayers simultaneously in hundreds of different languages and dialects, to keep them all in her memory, and to answer them all by her power! Furthermore, it is blasphemy of the worst kind to ask Mary to obtain the salvation that Christ alone has already provided through His death and resurrection and now offers freely by His grace to all who will believe in Him.

In Denver, at the close of the Sunday Mass for the August 1993 World Youth Day, John Paul II consigned all youth and the entire world to Mary’s protection and guidance. Here again was a prayer by the Pope to Mary asking her to do what she would have to be deity to accomplish:

Mary of the New Advent, we implore your protection on the preparations that will now begin for the next meeting [World Youth Day]. Mary, full of grace, we entrust the next World Youth Day to you. Mary, assumed into heaven, we entrust the young people of the world...the whole world to you! (NRI Trumpet, October 1993, page 14).

Catholics only ask Mary to pray for them? If one asks prayer of a friend, one doesn’t say, “I implore your protection and entrust the whole world to you”! Yet such requests that only God could fulfill are

typical of Catholic petitions of Mary, who is exalted to omnipotence and credited with caring for all who trust in her.

Both the new Catechism of the Catholic Church (approved by the Vatican) and the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) refer to Mary as “the Mother of God to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs.” Why fly to her protection when God’s protection is available. And if this Catholic Mary can indeed protect all Catholics from all dangers and supply all their needs, then she must be at least as great as God. Moreover, she is apparently considered to be more sympathetic than God because at least a thousand times as many prayers are offered to Mary as are offered to God and Christ combined.

Mary is the “Mother of God”? Yes, Jesus is God and she is His mother. She is only His mother, however, through His incarnation. She is the mother of the body that Christ took when He came into the world. Obviously, however, she can’t be the mother of the eternal Son of God (Christ as God before He became man), for He existed an eternity before Mary was born. Yet prayers to Mary, including for salvation, are based upon her imagined status as Queen Mother of heaven.

Salvation through Mary?

The most authoritative book written on Catholicism’s “Virgin Mary” is by Cardinal and Saint Alphonsus de Liguori. Titled *The Glories of Mary*, it is a virtual compendium of what the great “saints” of the Roman Catholic Church have to say about Mary down through the centuries. The chapter headings are staggering, crediting Mary with attributes, abilities, titles, and functions that belong to Christ alone: Mary, Our Life, Our Sweetness; Mary, Our Hope; Mary, Our Help; Mary, Our Advocate; Mary, Our Guardian; Mary Our Salvation.”

It should be quite clear that Roman Catholics are taught to look to Mary not only for the supernatural protection and guidance and help that only God could provide, but also for that very salvation that only God through Christ could provide and, in fact, has already provided. Here is a typical prayer, once again, to Mary, taken from a popular booklet of Marian prayers, and is obtainable at any Catholic bookstore:

In thy hands I place my eternal salvation, and to thee do I entrust my soul. . . . For, if thou protect me, dear Mother, I fear nothing; not from my sins, because thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of them; nor from the devils, because thou art more powerful than all hell together; nor even from Jesus, my Judge himself, because by one prayer from thee, he will be appeased. But one thing I fear; that in the hour of my temptation, I may neglect to call on thee, and thus perish miserably. Obtain for me, then, the pardon of my sins. . . . [St Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary* (Redemptorist Fathers, 1931), pp. 82-83, 94, 160, 169-70].

The Rosary: Most Repeated Prayer to Mary

As one final example from the hundreds that could be given, consider the Rosary. This is the best-known and most recited Catholic prayer, repeated millions of times by the faithful, worldwide, each day. It concludes with this final petition:

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! Our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping, in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus; O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Quite clearly, Catholics do not merely ask Mary to pray for them. They pray to her. And why not, if she is all that the Rosary says she is: our life and our hope? The Bible, however, says that Christ is “our life” (Colossians:3:4) and “our hope” (1 Timothy 1: 1)! Again Paul declares that the “blessed hope” of the Christian is “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus:2:13). Peter confirms that the Christian has been given a “living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter:1:3). Never does the Bible suggest that Mary is also our life or hope! Christ is more than enough!

Do Mary’s “eyes of mercy” actually see everyone in the world? Isn’t that capability an attribute of God alone? Is she really the “Mother of Mercy”? Didn’t God’s mercy exist long before Mary was even born? We read of the “God of my mercy” (Psalm:59:17) and are encouraged to trust in the mercy of God (Psalm:52:8; Luke:1:78, etc.), but we never read a word in the entire Bible about Mary’s mercy toward mankind. Those who know God’s mercy have no need of Mary’s.

Regardless of what any individual Catholic may believe, the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the practice of the vast majority of her members elevates Mary to a position where she is at least equal in power to God and is considered to be far more sympathetic than He. No wonder, then, that Roman Catholics by the hundreds of millions perpetually offer prayers to Mary for every need and desire.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH
by DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

—ISAIAH 53:6

Here we have the entire story of the Bible epitomized: man's ruin both by nature and practice; and God's marvelous and all-sufficient remedy. The verse begins with *all* and ends with *all*. An anxious soul was directed to this passage and found peace. Afterward he said, "I bent low down and went in at the first *all*. I stood up straight and came out at the last." The first is the acknowledgment of our deep need. The second shows how fully that need has been met in the cross of Christ. Happy to be numbered among those who have put in their claim and found salvation through the atoning work which there took place!

— H. A. IRONSIDE

Have You Left Your First Love?

T. A. McMahon

AMONG THE MANY things that separate biblical Christianity from every religious belief system, two truths stand out to me as wonderfully significant. The first is that our infinite God and Creator has communicated directly to us, His created finite beings, through His Word—the Bible. The second is that we are told throughout His Scriptures that not only can we know *about Him*, but we can also have a personal, intimate relationship *with Him*. Every born-again Christian knows this to be true because God said so and because it has been his or her own experience as believers in Jesus Christ.

The very concept of those biblical truths is astonishing to people who follow the world's various religions. Why? For one thing, those followers are given insufficient information about the gods they are to worship, and therefore they can never develop a personal relationship with them. Some teach that their gods can't be known but only experienced in a completely subjective way. This removes any objective means of discerning whether or not what is taught about their gods is true. Moreover, the spiritual information is produced and received through completely subjective means, such as intuition, experiences, hunches, altered states of consciousness, inspiration, guesses, speculations, feelings, etc.

Let's think about the personal relationships we have with our spouses, parents, or children. These will be formed based upon how well we really know the individuals involved and the kinds of experiences we have with them, i.e., whether they are good or bad. If we have little close contact with them, we probably won't have much of a relationship. No matter how weak or strong our relationships are, however, they must also be defined by truth—in other words, are we certain that our knowledge of a person is accurate?

As related to the Lord, all of these issues are answered by the God of the Bible. From Genesis through Revelation we read of our God, our Creator, communicating and communing with His creation! John 14 describes the personal relationship a believer has with the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit):

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you. . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” And “that which we have seen and heard declare we unto to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (John 14:17, 21, 23; 1 John 1:3). Compare that with all the religious belief systems throughout the world. There you will find neither true relationship nor fellowship!

Jesus, who is God manifested in the flesh, has revealed to us exceeding knowledge of the Father throughout His Word: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). That knowledge is found in page after page throughout the Scriptures. And His revelation is absolutely true, as Jesus declared in His prayer to His Father: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). John the Apostle underscored the importance of the truth revealed in God's Word when he declared: “And he [John] that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe” (John 19:35).

Although the Bible tells us that everyone who puts his faith in Jesus Christ begins a personal relationship with Him, that relationship can be subject to many hindrances. Refraining from the continual reading of His Word inhibits a growing relationship with Jesus among those who profess to be Christians and is a major problem today. To develop an intimate relationship with Jesus we must *read* the Scriptures, throughout which He is revealed in depth. It's in those details that we can discern whether or not the Jesus we are following is the *biblical Jesus*.

The sad truth is that although much of the world and its religions pay homage to Jesus, it isn't to the biblical Jesus. Many professing Christians, as well as truly born-again believers, are unwittingly following a counterfeit Jesus Christ. Those who have never come to know Jesus through a spiritual rebirth cannot know Him (1 Corinthians 2:14), but what of those who entered into a true relationship with

Him at one point? The writer of Hebrews (2:1) warned the believers in that epistle that they should be careful not to let what they knew about Jesus “slip.” Jesus admonished the believers in the church at Ephesus for slipping away from Him—their “first love” (Revelation 2:4).

The consequences of departing from our love for Jesus, no matter how slight, will not only result in a diminishing relationship with Him, but Jesus himself warned that unless one restores that love relationship, inevitably the lampstand or light that one has obtained through Scripture, whether individually or collectively as a church, will cease (Revelation 2:5).

In Matthew 24, Jesus warned that at the time of His return, there will be great deception, which will involve many “false Christs” who will “deceive many” (4-5, 22). As we consider this prophesied “great deception” and observe the times in which we now live, is it possible that we're approaching such a day, especially regarding “false Christs”?

Let's begin with the most influential medium in the world today: movies. Every one of the theatrical productions that feature the character of Jesus are presenting a counterfeit Jesus. Although I've addressed my concern about this in numerous articles, talks, a DVD, and a book (*Showtime For The Sheep?*), here are a few brief but very critical points to be considered: 1) How can a man-made visual representation of “God manifested in the flesh” accurately portray the biblical Jesus? 2) How can an actor portray Jesus, who declared, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9)? 3) The Bible states that man is not to add to or subtract from the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 4:2), which is something that *must* be done to create the visual translation for a biblical movie. The *additions* come from the screenwriter, director, cameraman, actors, etc. 4) Any visual image of Jesus is one that has been conjured up by man and therefore must result in “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 5:16; 11:4), a counterfeit Jesus Christ.

Tragically, countless numbers within Christendom, including some of its highly influential leaders, have supported films that attempted to translate the Bible visually. This not only presents to the world a Bible that has been wrongly interpreted by a screenwriter and a Hollywood “Jesus” (i.e., a false Christ), but it continues to distort the truth even among those who consider Him to be their first love.

I once was having breakfast with some fellow believers, one of whom brought along a Muslim friend. During our conversation with this delightful man, he gave a beautiful testimony of his love for Jesus that I've rarely heard among Christians. We were all thrilled at his emotional declarations. But as the conversation continued, I was prompted to know more about this Jesus whom he loved, so I asked him to tell us about him. My initial question was whether or not his relationship was with Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. His answer was simply, "No, Allah has no son." He merely reflected what the Qur'an teaches about Isa, or "Jesus." Sadly, this dear man's relationship was not with the biblical Jesus.

Among Satan's many tactics are his attempts to influence the world to *hate* Jesus (John 15:25). At the same time, he promotes a counterfeit Jesus that the world likes. These "Christs" would include the culture-friendly Jesus, the "buddy" Jesus, the wealthy Jesus of the prosperity-driven false teachers, and the "Joel Osteen Jesus," who is all about making people feel good about themselves. The Adversary's scheme is also to undermine the deity of Christ by making him just like us—or by elevating humanity to godhood just like Jesus, the *lie* that the Antichrist will foster.

Counterfeit Christs are also found throughout Christendom. A billion-plus Roman Catholics worship a false Jesus. One symbol of him that is found in nearly every Catholic Church is a crucifix, which is a cross with a body hanging on it. The body is still portrayed as being on the cross because the Catholic "Jesus" didn't pay the full penalty for the sins of mankind. Catholics must complete the expiation of their sins through temporal sufferings here on earth and later in purgatory before they can enter heaven. Furthermore, that sacrificial act of Christ is continued on Catholic altars throughout the world, where bread and wine is transubstantiated into the body and blood, soul and divinity, of Jesus and then immolated (sacrificially killed). That Jesus can save no one.

All cults have a counterfeit Jesus. However, some denominations that are not regarded by many as cults still believe in another Jesus. The United Pentecostal Church has a Jesus who alone is God, rejecting his position in the plurality of the Trinity. Seventh-day Adventism has

a Jesus who is also Michael the Archangel and who is in heaven continuing the work of redemption through what the SDA church calls "the investigative judgment." The denominational Church of Christ rejects salvation by faith alone in the finished work of Christ by requiring baptism in order to be saved. That's not the teaching of the biblical Jesus, who declared to the thief on the cross (who had had no opportunity to be baptized): "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Numerous other churches that have their roots in the Reformation and have retained some of the dogmas of the Catholic and Orthodox Church teach baptismal regeneration, i.e., the necessity of baptism in order to be saved. That continues to be a fundamental belief within Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Episcopalianism, and Methodism (although there are some local churches within those denominations that do not adhere to baptismal regeneration).

What then of a person who holds to the biblical doctrines essential for salvation but *adds* to his belief baptismal regeneration? If that person truly believes that he has no hope of heaven without being baptized, he has rejected both the finished work of Christ and Jesus himself. A relationship with the biblical Jesus under those circumstances is a relationship with a false Christ. For others, who perhaps remain within a denomination that holds to baptismal regeneration even though they themselves do not, their relationship with Jesus may be questionable at least, but not their salvation.

Scripture warns us that "the time will come when they [the church] will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3). This indicates that as we draw closer to the return of Christ for His bride, fewer and fewer believers will know and adhere to the instructions of Scripture. That certainly will include their knowledge of and relationship with Jesus. If I'm not clear on the character and characteristics of the biblical Jesus, which are presented as absolutely true, I'm potentially susceptible to accept another "Jesus." A false relationship with Jesus could very well result in hearing His words, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23).

One troubling and very aggressive teaching within Christianity is Calvinism, and my concern in particular has to do with a Calvinist's relationship with Jesus Christ. I'm convinced that most people who refer to themselves informally as Calvinists would not agree with

the definitions of the acronym TULIP (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints) held by some knowledgeable and very committed Calvinists. Most such Christians consider themselves to be Calvinist because they believe in eternal security, which, in fact and practice, Calvinism does not affirm.

That misunderstanding of Calvinist doctrine may be to the benefit of believers who call themselves Calvinists. How so? Well, regarding the character of Jesus and His payment for sin on the cross, was His atonement limited to only the elect? A yes or no answer reflects what one believes about Jesus and therefore one's relationship with Him. If one believes that He did not die for everyone, when He did, they don't follow the biblical Jesus. If one believes that humans are so totally depraved that they have no ability or will to turn to Christ for His free gift of eternal life—they follow another Jesus. Did the Jesus with whom one claims to have a relationship predestine one to everlasting life with Him, while others, who were not predestined to salvation, are left to suffer in the Lake of Fire for all eternity? The point here is that *ignorance* of what Calvinism authoritatively teaches about TULIP may keep many of those who regard themselves as Calvinists from the distortions of the Jesus of Calvinism.

Those who truly know Jesus through their spiritual rebirth have from the outset entered into a blessed personal relationship with Him. That relationship is both unique among all the world's religious beliefs and exceedingly wonderful. Letting that relationship depreciate in any way is similar to letting our joy of the Lord slip away.

Jesus admonishes the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2 for having left their "first love," a fact that had adversely affected their relationship with Him. To what degree for each individual we aren't told, although they are collectively warned to turn back to Him. That admonition is for every born-again believer. We all need to evaluate where we are in our relationship with our Lord. From the very beginning we need to grow in that relationship by being diligent in the daily reading of His Word and pleasing Him by doing what it says.

"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Christianity has added to the pain and suffering caused by crime by convincing mankind that it has rebelled against God and broken His laws. The threat of eternal punishment haunts everyone who comes under Christianity's influence. Wouldn't the world be better off without these delusions?

RESPONSE [EDITED FOR SPACE]: It's not true that Christianity has created the feeling of moral guilt and coming judgment that haunts mankind. Man is an incurably religious creature, and the religious practices that are found in every race and culture around the world all involve a sense of guilt and the attempt to erase guilt through some kind of sacrifice. It can be traced back in every culture through thousands of years and thus cannot be blamed on Christianity at all.

Even among those brought up in a so-called "Christian country" such as the United States experience this. Although their sense of guilt may have been reinforced through contact with Christianity, that is certainly not the sole source. The universal guilt that haunts everyone would haunt Americans even if Christianity were unknown here. In fact, only Christianity can *deliver* man from the guilt that haunts him. Turning over a new leaf and vowing to live a morally upright life in the future can't deliver one from the guilt of past sins. True deliverance comes only through faith in Christ, the One who paid the full penalty for our sins and effected a full pardon on a righteous basis. Only then can we realize the magnitude of our guilt and can thus thank God all the more for our salvation.

Contrary to your suggestion that Christianity creates an irrational fear of eternal punishment, it alone delivers from such fear all who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ! No one who believes that Jesus Christ paid the full penalty for sins lives in fear of God's judgment. Christ promised that all who believe in Him have eternal life and will not "come into condemnation" but have "passed from death unto life" (Jn 5:24) and are delivered from the very fear that you blame upon Christianity. Nor do those who have heard and rejected that gospel worry very much about God's judgment. If they were truly concerned, they would have accepted His offer of mercy. Take a poll of those who were once under Christian influence but who rejected the gospel, and you will find individuals who have little if any fear of judgment because they don't believe in it.

The truth is that those who know *little or nothing* of Christianity are the ones who are haunted by fear of coming judgment! All non-Christian peoples, from pagans to idolaters, have that fear. Conscious of their sins but without hope in Christ, these poor people visit the witch doctor or rely on fetishes or amulets, or make some other attempt to earn salvation and to appease whatever gods or spirits they imagine exist. When such people believe in Christ, they are delivered from such fear. Religious practices among all non-Christian peoples everywhere and at all times in history always involve a sense of guilt and the attempt to erase it through some kind of sacrifice, sacred pilgrimage, or other ritual. Such practices are similar worldwide and trace back thousands of years before the advent of Christianity and therefore cannot be attributed to it.

Perhaps you came to your conclusions by observing Roman Catholics whom you thought were Christians. Many if not most of them are plagued with the very hopeless sense of guilt to which you refer. Catholicism dogmatically claims that the Church dispenses the graces of Christ through its sacraments—graces that can be lost by failure to live up to its rules—so there is no way to know for sure that one will make it to heaven. Therefore, Roman Catholicism involves its members in many forms of attempted appeasement of God in order to earn heaven and/or lessen one's punishment. Endless Masses offered on behalf of the dead are paid for by their survivors in the hope of lessening the purgatorial suffering of the deceased. There is no peace in this practice.

The late Cardinal O'Connor of New York stated that neither he nor Pope John Paul II nor Mother Teresa (nor anyone else) could know with certainty what their eternal destiny might be. He declared this to be official teaching of the Church. Obviously, such a dogma creates the fear to which you refer—but this isn't Christianity! We need know nothing more than this to identify Roman Catholicism as a non-Christian pagan religion. There are priests and monks and nuns today who (just as in the Middle Ages and Dark Ages) wear haircloth undergarments, flagellate themselves, and endure other self-inflicted suffering, hoping to thereby earn forgiveness of sins and become worthy of heaven. Millions of Catholics all over the world make pilgrimages to shrines, light candles, pray to saints in heaven, wear scapulars and medals, and employ crucifixes and other means to "appease" God in the hope of meriting His forgiveness.

True Christianity delivers from guilt and fear of judgment. The gospel promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life as a free gift of God's grace, not by works or sacraments but to all who will believe. Catholicism involves numerous pagan practices, and the fear of judgment it creates cannot be laid at the door of Christianity.

QUESTION: According to *Science Digest*, the mother's blood never mingles with that of the fetus. With no contact with the mother's blood, how can the blood of Jesus be "normal human blood"? If the blood of Mary didn't mingle with Jesus's blood, where does His blood come from?

RESPONSE: Your concern seems to center on the idea that Jesus somehow had "God blood," in spite of the fact that God does not have blood. You ask, "If the blood of Mary didn't mingle with Jesus's blood, where does His blood come from?" Since His blood was part of His body, it must have come into existence in the same manner as His entire body. Did He have a "God body"? God doesn't have a body, nor is there such a thing as "God blood." God is not a man and does not inhabit a body of flesh and blood. You suggest that His blood must have come from God his Father or from the Holy Spirit, by whom He was conceived in Mary's womb (Mt 1:20; Lk 1:35). The body "prepared" for Him (Heb:10:5) was created by God in Mary's womb just as Adam's was created by God in the Garden. Jesus is the "second man" and the "last Adam" (1 Cor:15:45,47). Did Adam have "God blood" and a "God body"? Then why would Christ? Christ's body did not come into existence by either the Father or the Holy Spirit physically "fathering" Him. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit have bodies or blood, so they could not pass on through Mary either body or blood in the manner of a human father.

So, "How is Jesus's blood unique from mankind yet the same?" We're told that God sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Does that mean that His body wasn't fully human? No. Christ's body wasn't part God and part human. The Scripture doesn't say He was in the "likeness" of a human but not human. It says He was in the "likeness of *sinful flesh*" but without sin. Jesus was a real man of flesh and blood. Is the blood of Christ precious? Indeed, it is, because, like His entire body, Christ's blood was without sin and was shed on the cross for our sins. He is "God manifest in the flesh," but the flesh in which He was manifest was not "God flesh," for there is no such thing. It was perfect, sinless, human flesh or He is not really man.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Who Has the “Keys” to “Bind and Loose” Today?

Question: Jesus said, “I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.” That sounds as though we have the authority not just to ask God for something in prayer, but to command Him. Why can’t we make this work today?

Response: You have mixed two Scriptures. The promise “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew:16:19) was given to Peter individually, the singular “thee” and “thou” making that clear. Shortly thereafter, the same promise of binding authority (minus the statement about the “keys of the kingdom of heaven”) was repeated word for word to all of the disciples: “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew:18:18). The plural, “Ye,” makes it clear that on this occasion the promise was given to all of the disciples.

How do we understand the “keys of the kingdom heaven” given to Peter individually? That Peter did not have a “key” or “keys” by which he alone could open the door into the kingdom for all who would enter is very clear. One enters the kingdom by believing the gospel and as a result being born again by the Holy Spirit (John:3:3-5). That gospel was preached by Christ (Luke:4:43), and He commissioned all of His disciples to preach it as well (Luke:9:2) long before the “keys” were given to Peter. Christ said that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be in the kingdom (Luke:13:28), but they certainly were not given entrance by Peter, having entered it for centuries before he was born. Many entered the kingdom through the preaching of Philip (Acts:8:12) and Paul (Acts:14:22; 19:8; 20:25, 28:31) and, by implication, through the preaching of the other apostles when Peter was neither present nor referred to as holding any required “key.”

When the Keys Were Used

The only unique actions by Peter that could be associated with opening the kingdom to anyone were

on the day of Pentecost and at the home of the Roman Centurion Cornelius. These were historic occasions on which Peter undoubtedly used the “keys of the kingdom”: one key to open the kingdom through the gospel to the Jews (Acts:2:14-41) and the other key to open the kingdom to the Gentiles (Acts:10:34-48). Although Paul was “the apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans:11:13), Peter was the first to preach the gospel and offer salvation to non-Jews. He reminded the church leaders of that fact when they gathered in Jerusalem to discuss the status of Gentiles:

Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles [the household of Cornelius] by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bore them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith (Acts:15:7-9).

Obviously these keys given to Peter by Christ, one for the Jews and the other for the Gentiles, needed to be used only once. The door of the kingdom having

been opened to all mankind, the “keys” had served their purpose. The Roman Catholic Church, however, teaches that the “keys” bestowed a unique and lasting authority upon Peter, which then passed to his alleged successors, the popes. There is no support for this belief either in Scripture or in history. Peter never again used “key” in his lifetime. Obviously, having served their purpose, they were no longer needed. Nor is there a word about5 Peter’s alleged successors or subsequent use of the “keys.” That the popes were not by any stretch of the imagination successors to Peter is very clear from both the Bible and history, a fact that we document thoroughly in *A Woman Rides the Beast*.

Successors of the Apostles Today?

Furthermore, it is clear that all Christians are the “successors” to Peter and the other apostles. Jesus told His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel” (Mark:16:15). He commanded them to teach those who believed the gospel “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew:28:19-20). That would obviously include teaching all new disciples to preach the gospel and make disciples, who in turn would be likewise taught. Those of us who are believers today have heard the gospel from others, who in turn heard it from others, and so forth all the way back to the original disciples of Christ. Thus we (and all others who have believed the gospel from the day of Pentecost until now) are bound to obey everything that Christ commanded the original twelve disciples. That would include the command He gave His disciples regarding “binding and loosing” in His name and by His power. No exception is made for anything the apostles were commanded to do.

Roman Catholicism claims that the bishops are the successors of the apostles and therefore they alone can “bind and loose.” Similarly, some Charismatics try to make some special power out of “binding and loosing” available only for certain “prophets or those who have this special gift. Note, however, that the “binding and loosing” in Matthew:18:18 is linked with the promise “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew:18:20). That applies to all Christians, and so does every other promise and command given to the disciples.

As for “binding and loosing,” the context and the entire tenor of Scripture make it clear that Jesus was

not handing His disciples some unique power that they could wield as they please. He was telling them that as His representatives they were to act in His name alone. This is not different from His promise that “whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (John:16:23). Invoking God’s name in prayer is not a magic formula whereby we receive automatic answers to our requests. The same is true with “binding and loosing.” Whether binding demonic spirits in a certain situation or loosing someone from the power of sin in their lives, it must be in Christ’s name, as He would do it, to His glory, through His Word, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Quotable.....

Personally, I could never have overcome my own sinfulness. I tried and failed. My evil tendencies were too much for me until, in the belief that Christ died for me, I cast my guilty soul on Him. And then I received a conquering principle by which I overcame my sinful self. The doctrine of the cross can be used to slay sin like the old warriors used their huge two-handed swords and mowed down their foes at every stroke. There is nothing like faith in the sinner’s Friend; it overcomes all evil. If Christ has died for me—ungodly as I am, without strength as I am—then I can no longer live in sin but must arouse myself to love and serve Him who has redeemed me. I cannot trifle with the evil which slew my best Friend. I must be holy for His sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?

—CHARLES H. SPURGEON

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The Love of God Part 1

Dave Hunt

IT HAS BEEN suggested that the unique ability to form conceptual ideas and to express them in speech separates mankind from all lower creatures by a chasm that no evolutionary process could ever span. Although that is true, there is another capacity that separates man even further from animals. Paul explained it thus: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1). To put it in a contemporary context, without love man is a robot—a computer programmed to meaningless reactions. In a word, it is *love* that makes a human being.

God has given mankind marvelous abilities. Think of the great scientists and philosophers who have probed the mysteries of life; and the poets, novelists, and musicians who have expressed the depth of human experience in compelling ways. We don’t need to argue the absurdity of evolution to be convinced that the ability to look into the mysteries of the atom or to compose or appreciate an opera involves qualities that no animal could acquire by developing a larger brain and a more advanced nervous system. Marvelous as these capabilities are, however, they are not primarily what differentiates between human and animal life. It is *love*.

What do we mean by love? Certainly not the popular notion portrayed in today’s media. The bumper stickers, “Make love, not war,” reflect an all-too-common trivialization of man’s highest capacity. Love is far more than sex. Animals can enjoy that. And if real love is missing, then sex becomes a mere gratification of animal instincts that cannot satisfy the spirit of man.

Yes, there are similarities between human beings and animals as long as we live in bodies of flesh and blood on this planet. We have certain basic needs for food, warmth, and water. We know hunger and thirst, as do animals. We also experience powerful sexual desires and other fleshly cravings, but God intended these passions to be controlled by *love*. The will is no match for lust, but God’s love working in man can conquer evil with

pure desires.

A failure to be motivated by God’s love brings defeat into our personal lives. There are those who can, for selfish motives such as the praise of others, seemingly conquer physical desires and remain faithful to God. True victory, however, is not necessarily won by those who, from outward appearances, seem to be victorious. If love—which Paul reminds us is the essential ingredient—is missing, then even a fiery death at the stake would be of no value in God’s sight.

Without love, Paul reminds us, we are nothing. That “nothing” doesn’t mean we don’t exist but that we are not what we were intended to be by our Creator. We are not fully human without love, no matter how much knowledge we have or how clever we are. It should be clear why this is the case. We are made in the image of God, who, speaking of Himself, has said, “God is love.” Thus, the very essence of the Creator who made man in His image must be the essence of man in the creature. And it is in the perversion of that essence that we have ample proof that something went horribly wrong.

We do not need to know Greek and the difference between the types of love (for which Greek has separate words) to realize that the love that Paul goes on to describe in 1 Corinthians 13 is beyond anything mankind usually experiences or expresses. There is a divine quality that shines through, a quality that rings true to conscience and condemns us. We cannot quarrel with the standard Paul sets. We know that true love ought to be precisely what he depicts, but at the same time we hang our heads in shameful admission that such love is beyond us. Nevertheless, we also know that somehow we were made for that very kind of love and that our failure to experience it is a defect for which we are responsible and for lack of which we feel a deep loss.

Paul is depicting a love that is not of this world. It is additional evidence that we were made for another world. We recognize it for what real love ought to be, and it strikes a chord in us like the description of a land we have never seen but to which we somehow feel we belong. We need read no other part of the Bible than this “love chapter” to know that man is a fallen creature. We can say, “I love you!” and perhaps not even realize that deep inside we really

mean “I love me, and I want you!” Such is the tragedy of present human experience.

Nevertheless, those words, “I love you,” have the power to wonderfully transform both the person who speaks them and the one to whom they are spoken. They are the highest expression of which man is capable, as a creature made in the image of God. Some people find these words difficult to speak, and other people find them embarrassing to hear. What we all find nearly impossible to believe is that the God who created the universe has spoken these wonderful words personally and intimately to each of us. And He has done it in a way that no one else could: by entering into humanity and dying for our sins upon the cross. He has thus so fully proved His love that there is no excuse for our ever doubting it.

It is this unparalleled manifestation of God’s love that makes Christianity what it is. There are many facets of our life in Christ that make it totally unique. Among the most wonderful distinctives is the relationship that each Christian is intended to enjoy with Christ himself—an intimate *personal* relationship that is not only unmatched by any other faith but is absolutely essential if someone is to be a Christian.

In contrast, for a Buddhist to have a personal relationship with Buddha is neither possible nor necessary. Nor is the practice of Islam impaired because Muhammad is in the grave. It is no hindrance at all to any of the world’s historic religions that their founders are dead and gone. Not so with Christianity. If Jesus Christ were not alive today there would be no Christian faith because He *is* all that it offers. Christianity is not a mass *religion* but a personal *relationship*.

At the heart of this relationship is a fact so astonishing that most Christians, including those who have known the Lord for many years, seldom live in its full enjoyment. It isn’t that we don’t believe it intellectually but that we find it too wonderful to accept its implications into our moment-by-moment experience of daily life.

We are like a homely, small-town girl from a very poor family who is being wooed by the most handsome, wealthiest, most powerful, most intelligent, and in every way most desirable man who ever lived. She enjoys the *things* he gives to her but is not able to fully give herself to him and really get to know him because she finds it too much to believe that *he*, with

all the far more attractive women in the world, really loves *her*. And to leave the familiar surroundings of her childhood—the friends and family that have been all she has known and loved—to go off with this one who seems to love her so much and to become a part of another world so foreign and even inconceivable to her is all too overwhelming.

Some of us grew up as children singing, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so,” and found a certain amount of childish comfort in its simple assurance at the time. We never matured in that love, however, because we were not taught to do so. Meanwhile, other loves entered into our lives and were given priority over the love of God.

To be sure, we still read the love chapter (1 Corinthians 13) now and then and sing lustily (and at times even with great feeling) such classics as “The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell. . . .” But we are no longer children, and the simple fact that “Jesus loves *me*” has somehow lost its power for us. Not because it is intellectually too shallow but because its deeper implications, which we now begin dimly to perceive, are spiritually and emotionally too wonderful.

Like the small-town girl, each of us finds it very difficult to believe that Jesus really loves us. Although we appreciate His blessings, we find it difficult to become intimate with our heavenly Suitor, because it seems so inappropriate that the Lord of the universe should be wooing *us*. That He loves everyone and that we are included in that great love is too marvelous. My response falls far short of the joy that He intends for me.

Thus the essence of the Christian life—its true source of joy and confidence and power—is missing in so much that calls itself Christian. We can be very fundamental, evangelistic, and biblical, yet not realize that the heart of our faith is missing. This sad fact is then reflected in the way we present Christ to the world.

Unfortunately, as we have seen, the church, early in its history, departed so far from the fundamentals of the faith that the essential personal relationship with Christ lost its importance and meaning. Eventually it was even denied to those who needed it by those who claimed to represent Him. Christ says, “Come unto *me* . . . *I am* the door . . . the way, the truth, the life.” The

Church, however began to claim that *it* was the means of salvation and called the world to itself instead of to the One of whom Peter had said, “Neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12).

Not only for Catholics but for many Protestants today as well, joining the church has become a substitute for an essential saving relationship with Christ. Although the Reformation repudiated a host of heresies, it left intact a great deal of “churchianity.” From that base, forms and formulas and attitudes have grown until, within much of Protestantism today, the affection and honor that Christ himself deserves is directed toward pastors and denominational loyalties. The passionate love that the bride ought to have for the Bridegroom is all too often deficient, if not lacking.

The love of God creates love for others whom He loves, thus providing the only true motivation for fulfilling the Great Commission. In preaching the gospel, we are to be messengers of God’s love, expressing and sharing it with the world. In making disciples, we are bringing others into a love relationship with Him. We’re not calling them back under the law but into the freedom of God’s grace. It is love that motivates us to obey in a way that legal obligation and fear of judgment could never do. As Jesus told His disciples: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings . . .” (John 14:21, 23, 24).

It is a tragedy that we so easily forget the glory and wonder of God’s love, not only as the joy of our lives and the motivation for obedience but also in its relationship to the gospel as well. We can present the truth of John 3:16, for example, as a judicial act on the part of God and forget that the verse begins, “For God so *loved* the world. . . .” The work of salvation was conceived and executed by divine *love*. We can present the gospel correctly and remain true to its basics concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in our place for our sins, and forget—and thus not convey to others—the heart of God, which is the very heart of the message.

Some of the classic old hymns expressed it so well: “Son of God ’twas *love* that made Thee die, our ruined souls to save. . . .” Another exults, “O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul on Thee. . . .” “O, the wonder of it all!” exclaims yet another. Charles Wesley put it so powerfully:

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior’s blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love, how can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

Many preachers attempt to entice the world to “come to Christ” with the popular offer of lesser rewards: health, prosperity, an improved society, and long life upon earth, when the real essence of salvation is to know God and to be partakers of His love and life. A rejection of the gospel, therefore, is the rejection of God himself and His love.

Man’s problem is not that he was driven from an earthly paradise, but that he was separated from God’s presence. That is the great tragedy. Those who seek to recover the physical benefits of Eden, to restore paradise without the missing Presence, to establish a kingdom without the King himself reigning in power and glory, have misunderstood both problem and solution. Our purpose is to reawaken a hunger for God himself and to stimulate the wonder, worship, and love we ought to have for Him.

Knowing that He loves us not because of anything in us but because He *is* love tells us something else that is very important: God loves all mankind with the same love. There is no special reason why He should love one of us more than another. He is no respecter of persons; there is no favoritism with God. And here we see another reason for rejecting the view that God does not love all mankind enough to want everyone to be in heaven. There is no basis in man (all have sinned and the hearts of all are the same) for God to love some and not others—but neither is there any basis in God for His loving one but not another. Thus we are told that He “so loved the *world*” that He sent His Son into the *world* “that the *world* through Him might be saved.” There is no greater love anywhere! TBC

*Excerpted from Whatever Happened
to Heaven?*

first published in 1988.

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Often when I'm out doing street evangelism I speak to Muslims. Many Muslims bring up the problem they have with Jesus being God in the physical flesh (as Colossians 1:15 says) because they say that the Second Commandment prohibits any images of God. What is a good response to this concern?

RESPONSE: The Commandments are God's Commandments given to Israel at Mount Sinai and by which He judges sin (Romans 7:7). Man is forbidden from doing certain things, including making images by his hand. In Exodus 20:4, the Second Commandment states: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

Nothing the hand of man produced was acceptable by the Lord in regards to the salvation of man. The Lord's commands concerning construction of an altar further reinforced this theme: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Exodus 20:24-25).

The body of Jesus, however, was not made by men. In Hebrews 10:5 we read, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me..." God himself prepared the body of Jesus. The simple point remains: this "image" of flesh and blood was not created by man and doesn't fall under the prohibition of the Second Commandment.

QUESTION: Are we as believers and non-believers responsible for the sins committed by our past generation family members? Does God really allow the past sins of parents/grandparents/great grandparents to affect the life of us, our children, and grandchildren? [Composite of responses by Dave Hunt]

RESPONSE: The covenant of the Lord with Israel included blessings and curses; obedience brought blessings and breaking the law brought curses. Even though the sins committed by God's covenant people would reap destructive consequences throughout generations, nevertheless God's justice, grace, and mercy were made manifest to the individual.

The entire chapter of Ezekiel 18 addresses that fact: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. [But] the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon [the righteous], and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon [the wicked]" (Ezekiel 18:20).

Simple logic tells us that probing into the past to uncover "lost memories" of former traumas, as in psychotherapy or the Christian brand known as "inner healing," is a vain pursuit for two reasons: 1) One can never be sure of the accuracy of such memories, due to a lack of objective verification; and 2) If one "lost memory" could have such a heavy influence upon the person's thinking, emotions, and conduct, who can say that there may not be other "memories" of equal or greater importance that likewise need to be recovered and "worked through" endlessly? Moreover, this practice clearly violates the biblical injunction, "forgetting those things which are behind" (Philippians 3:13—emphasis added), and inhibits pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (v. 14).

So it is with generational curses. If these actually exist, then we face the hopeless task of digging them all out. How far back does one attempt to go? Surely there are hidden sins in the ancestry of everyone. My father was from England and my mother, though Canadian, had similar ancestry. Who knows what involvement with Druids lies hidden in my genealogy! My father's mother was from Norway, so the worship of Nordic demons must also permeate my background. I could never uncover it all.

To search for occult influences in the past as though they had some power over which one needs to be delivered is the same violation of "forgetting those things which are behind." In addition, all of the above deny the basic fact that the Christian's sins were laid upon Christ and paid for by Him; he has been born again by faith in Christ, "old things are passed away...all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Let us therefore "go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works..." (Hebrews 6:1).

QUESTION: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it had not been so, I would have told you. I'll prepare you a place." What are these "many mansions"? I would think there would be several "classifications" and the most beautiful mansions, should be for the most faithful believers who had a greater reward and had worked harder

for the Lord and His Kingdom here on earth, like the disciples. When we get down to the common believers like so many of us, it would seem that we should receive only a modest abode, like a hut. Is that correct? Or will all mansions be the same for all?

RESPONSE: One of the inherent problems when examining the details of heaven is that we are dependent upon speculation, since we're given few specific details about what we will find there. For example, when we see the word "dwellings," we immediately equate that word with conditions here on the earth, forgetting that "we shall be changed," and, consequently, as resurrection beings, our needs will be vastly different. As a result, we're speculating without a full understanding.

Regarding heaven: First of all, it's too easy to rely upon speculation regarding the things that will be available in heaven. First Corinthians 2:9 states, "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." One of the things that God has "prepared" for us is heaven. Although it's impossible for us to see heaven now, we are given glimpses.

Heaven is a place of joy where the Lord God will wipe away all tears from off all faces (Isaiah 25:8). Psalm 16:11 tells us, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." In Revelation 21:4, we read, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." And in Revelation 7:16, we see, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

Finally, when we arrive in that which He has "prepared for us," we can know with certainty that His provision will exceed our imaginations. Yes, there are differences in rewards, but we have no specific evidence that these will involve the size of the houses in which we will live. And we can be certain that there will be no pettiness of comparison there, nor feelings of disappointment. We will be rejoicing because we will see HIM! First John tells us, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). There will surely be no greater joy than that.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What Is the Source of Evil?

Question: Isaiah:45:7 seems to state that God creates evil. How can this be possible if God is totally good? And if He does create evil, why does He do so and what form does it take?

Response: Let's examine this verse: "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. **R**I the Lord do all these things." How does God create darkness? Darkness is really nothing. It is not a "thing" that God created; it is simply the absence of light. No one would know he was in the dark if he had never seen light. Thus by creating light God exposes the absence of it in darkness).

In the same way, God's perfection exposes also exposes all else as evil. Sin is therefore defined as falling "short of the glory of God" (Romans:3:23). In His presence the angels cry continually, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord" (Isaiah:6:3; cf. Revelation:4:8). God's perfection is the blaze of light in contrast to which all else is darkness and evil. Indeed, we are told that God dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Timothy:6:16).

How then does the perfection of God reveal evil if no man can approach unto the light of holiness in which he dwells? Because He has written His law in the consciences of all mankind (Romans:2:14-15) causing us to recognize evil in ourselves and in others.

Dualism and World Religions

In fact, the biblical explanation of evil is unique. The author of *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible* points out that "the Jewish religion, unlike other theologies, considered the one and omnipotent God to be the author of both good and evil, the master of the world." (Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible* [Weathervane Books, 1969], inside back of jacket.) The very idea that one Supreme Being could be responsible for both good and evil contrasts sharply with the beliefs of the world's religions during Old Testament times, which tended toward dualism.

Manly P. Hall, an expert on the occult and non-Christian religions, reminds us: "In all the ancient Mysteries, matter was regarded as the source of all evil and spirit the source of all good." (Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopedic outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* [The Philosophical Research Society, Inc., Los Angeles, CA 90027, 1969], Sixteenth Edition, p. CXVIII.) The mysteries emanate from two irreconcilable opposites: Absolute Spirit and Absolute Substance. For the Gnostics, it was the "positive and negative" principles. In polytheistic mythology, of course, there were both good and evil gods who fought with one another. Isaiah's statement that the one true God of the Hebrews is responsible for both good and evil stands apart from all the world's religions and provides one more piece of evidence that the Bible came from a source of inspiration independent of the culture or religion surrounding its writers.

What Makes Evil Possible?

In the Bible, evil is associated with the power of choice and could not exist apart from it. Only beings capable of choice can have moral responsibility; and this very power of choice makes evil not only possible but inevitable. It is a foregone conclusion that creatures who, though made "in the image of God" (Genesis:1:26-27), are less than God (as any creation of God must be), will think thoughts and do deeds unworthy of God and thus

evil by the very definition.

That being the case, why would God give mankind this exceedingly dangerous ability to choose? Why would God, who is only good, allow evil of any kind or even of the smallest degree in His universe? The answer, of course, is obvious: God wanted to have a meaningful relationship with mankind. Without the ability to choose to love or to hate, to say yes or to say no, it would be impossible for mankind to receive God’s love and to love Him in return, for real love must come from the heart. Nor could there be genuine praise and worship unless it were voluntary.

It would hardly be glorifying to God for robots, who cannot choose to say or do otherwise, to continually sing His praises. And for such beings to be programmed to say repeatedly, “I love you” would be meaningless. The love and praise of God must come from beings who have the choice of not loving and praising but even of hating and denigrating Him, beings whose hearts have been captured by His love and who genuinely love Him in return. That is why, if Islam, through threats of terrorism and death, could force the entire world to submit to Allah—or if Communism through similar threats and force could take over the world today—it would not be a victory for either totalitarian system. Rather, such a world conquest would be the greatest defeat, for it would have failed to win the love and loyalty of its alleged “converts.”

Of course, while giving man the power of choice made love possible, it also opened the door to all manner of evil. It is by our own personal choice that we think evil thoughts and do wicked deeds. God did not cause Lucifer or any angels or any of us to do evil. That tragedy came about by our individual volition. We choose to satisfy our own selfish desires rather than to glorify God, and thus we come short of His glory and demonstrate ourselves to be sinners.

How wonderful, then, that in His love and wisdom God was able to pay the penalty for our sins and thus to forgive us and make it possible for us to be in His presence, loving and praising Him eternally! And surely His love has captured our hearts and created in us a love that is real and eternal. As 1 John:4:19 says, “We love him because he first loved us.” That can only be said meaningfully by beings who are also capable of choosing not to love.

Quotable.....

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

—2 Timothy:4:8

“Also to all who have loved His appearing.” For many years, I thought that this expression referred to those believers who had kindly, sentimental feelings about the coming of the Lord. They would be rewarded with a crown of righteousness because their hearts glowed warm when they thought about the Rapture.

But surely it means more than this. To love His appearing means to live in the light of His coming, to behave as if He were coming today. Thus, to love His appearing means to live in moral purity. For, as John reminds us, “everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John:3:3).

It means to stay disentangled from the things of this life. We should set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth (Colossians:3:2). It means to serve God’s people, giving them “food in due season” (Matthew:24:45). The Lord pronounces a special blessing on those who are doing that when He comes.

In short, it means that we won’t do anything that we would not want to be found doing when He appears. We would not go anywhere that would cause shame at His coming. We would not say anything that be would be offensive in His presence.

If you knew Christ were coming in a week, how would you spend the intervening days? Does it mean you would give up your job, go to a mountaintop and spend all day reading the Bible and praying? Does it mean you would go into “full-time Christian work,” preaching and teaching day and night?

If we are really walking with the Lord today and living in the center of His will, it would mean carrying on as usual. If, however, we are living for self, then it would require some revolutionary changes.

It is not enough to have kind thoughts about the Savior’s return. The crown of righteousness is reserved for those who love it enough to let the truth mold their lives. It is not enough to hold the truth about His coming; the truth must hold us.

—William MacDonald

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The Love of God Part 2

Dave Hunt

WE UNDERSTAND THROUGH the Word of God and through the evidence that daily surrounds us that God's love for each one is the same and that His love for all of mankind is personal. God's love is not some lofty principle, some immutable cosmic power that envelops the masses of humanity in its inexorable process. God loves each person as an *individual* and calls all who will respond to His love. He longs to bestow not just blessings but Himself upon all who genuinely seek Him. And He weeps with deep sorrow over those who reject Him and His love. At the same time, He is allowing Satan to gather disciples and to set up his false kingdom, while giving to men the freedom to choose whom they will serve.

It would be wrong, however, for us to imagine that because God weeps and longs for our love, that in any way He has *need* of us. Here again we have a difference between the God of the Bible and the false gods of the world's religions. Islam's Allah is a single entity, who was therefore alone and could not know love or fellowship or communion until he had created other beings. Hinduism's Brahman, who is the "All," cannot love or fellowship because it is impersonal and all encompassing. Thus there can be no I-thou relationship. In contrast, the God of Israel consistently reveals Himself throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, as one God comprising a unity of three persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have *always* fellowshiped, loved, and communed with one another in perfect completeness, and thus had no need to bring any creatures into that existence.

We are the ones who have need, and our problem comes in giving priority to lesser or even false needs. If we love God because we need His protection and care, then we have missed the joy of loving Him for Himself. Indeed, our great need is for God alone. All else is added blessing. Even Christian leaders have been deceived by accepting the "hierarchy of needs" invented by Abraham Maslow, a godless humanist and one of the fathers of the New Age movement. He declared that man's lesser needs for food, clothing, shelter, etc., had to be met first, and only then could there be any appreciation of the higher ethical and spiritual values. This claim contradicts Scripture ("Seek ye *first*

the kingdom of God. . .") and interferes with the love relationship we ought to have with Christ. Yet Maslow's teaching has infected the church along with much more of psychology's poison.

Think about what you want from the person you love. Not things, not gifts, but closer communion, more love, more intimate fellowship. Thus it is that we are moved to give *ourselves* in our desire to please the One whom we now love with a passion. We are told that God will give us crowns and rewards in heaven. It isn't possible for us to understand what that means because we have such a dim perception of what heaven will be like. Whatever the rewards may be, however, we know that each is an expression of His approval, a declaration that we have in some small way, as He has given grace, pleased Him. Knowing that fact alone is all the reward we could ever desire and will give us joy for eternity. Its anticipation should give us great joy here and now!

It isn't unusual for Christians to feel discouraged and even depressed. At such times it seems impossible to believe (knowing there is no reason in us for Him to love us) that He could ever be pleased with us. Surely eternity will bring sorrow rather than reward for our miserable failure. We long to hear His "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23), but we fear that it could never be so. Such humility of soul, because it reflects the simple truth of our situation except for His grace, is becoming of a Christian—but at such times we do well to remember the amazing and comforting statement of Scripture:

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; *and then shall every man have praise of God.* (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Would not such praise give us cause to be pleased with ourselves and thus to imagine that there was something of value in us after all? If so, that attitude would dim the glory of God and rob us of the real joy of heaven. What is that joy? It is not to become something in and of ourselves so that we deserve praise. It is to ever be in a state of wonder and amazement and gratitude that He would take us and make of us a joy to His heart.

We will never be worthy of heaven or

of His love. A sense of self-worth would ruin everything by turning some of the attention and glory to ourselves. We will always be sinners saved by grace and bought with His blood, and He will ever be our glorious Savior. Because He has filled us with His love, our passion for eternity will ever be to see Him exalted and praised and to love Him with all the capacity He supplies. His eternal joy will be to bless us with Himself.

Such will be the wonder of heaven. That He should be pleased with us will bring joy beyond the possibility of present comprehension. The fact that every man will receive praise of God does not mean that each will be praised in the same way or to the same degree. Every cup will overflow with joy, but some cups will no doubt be deeper than others. There will be no need for us to recognize such differences, however, even if they were apparent, for such comparisons would be meaningless in heaven's bliss. All that He is, the full infinitude of His person, will be equally available to all.

David, who knew the Lord very well, tells us the secret of that intimate relationship that he enjoyed: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:4). There can be no doubt that knowing God and experiencing the wonder of His love was the continual and intense longing of David's heart, as so many of his psalms attest: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee . . ." is the way Psalm 63 begins, and this same passion is expressed in so many others.

In spite of the rejection he experienced by family and friends during so much of his life, David's heart was filled with the joy of the Lord—a joy that strengthened him for the many trials he endured. He also had a deep understanding of heaven and knew that the joy he experienced in part during this brief life of faith would be realized in its fullness there. It is the anticipation of the heavenly joy and, yes, the intense *pleasure* of God's presence that raises our hopes from this earth to heaven. In another psalm, David had written: "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

The apostle Paul indicated that in the last days men would be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4). What an indictment! How it challenges us

to reexamine our priorities. How ashamed we will be one day that the pitiful pleasures of this world could ever have blinded us to the infinite and eternal pleasures God has “prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). What a bad bargain to exchange the heavenly for the earthly!

The hope of Christ’s return has a purifying effect upon those who are looking for it. There is a purity of heart that is required if we are to see God (Matthew 5:8). Jesus seemed to drive that point home when He warned, “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, ‘My lord delayeth his coming . . .’” (Matthew 24:48). It is significant that our Lord associates wickedness with rejoicing in the thought that His return will be delayed—while righteousness is produced by loving His appearing.

Surely He is showing us the importance of holding the hope of His imminent return, the reward for which, Paul tells us, will be “a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8). Again the implication is that not to love His appearing leaves an opening for evil to invade our lives. It shows a lack of love for our Lord and a love of our own selfish ambitions that would be interfered with by His return. We must ask the Lord to examine our hearts on this point.

Are there things we want to accomplish, places we want to go, even victories we want to “win for God” that are more important to us than being caught up by our Lord into His eternal presence? It is the attitude of our heart that counts. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ,” declared Paul, “we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). The joyful Christian has put his hope in heaven. He is not living for this world and makes sacrifices in this life to please his Lord and to be assured of hearing His “well done” in heaven. The Bible is full of examples of those who, in order to please God, turned their backs on earthly rewards and honors. They will rejoice through eternity for that decision.

Such is the message of Hebrews 11, where we are given a list of some of the heroes and heroines of the faith and are told of their exploits. The outstanding characteristic of everyone on that roll of honor was the fact that their ultimate hope was in heaven. Confronted by a choice between this world and the one to come, they chose the latter.

God is no man’s debtor. The idea that many people have of suffering for Christ and missing out on so much in order to please God is a caricature concocted by Satan. It is certain that no one, when it

comes time to die, regrets having missed out on worldly pleasures or treasure or honors as a result of serving God. And how can even those who have lost position and possessions, have been tortured, imprisoned, or killed because of their faith, hold any regret that an eternal reward awaits them? Paul reminds us:

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17)

We know that as His bride we ought to long to be with Christ, and we are sorry that we don’t love His appearing as we should. How can we awaken our love for Him? First of all, we need to remember that love is not merely a sentiment that sweeps over us and is beyond our control. Marriages are breaking up among Christians who claim to no longer love the other and often have “fallen in love” with someone else. This is not love at all but Hollywood-inspired counterfeit.

Love involves unshakable *commitment* of oneself to another—thus it involves not just emotions but an act of the *will*. Christ is our example, and husbands are to love their wives as He loved the church. A Christ-like marriage may well involve one’s suffering hatred and abuse and misunderstanding—and giving love in return. That is what Christ did, and that is the kind of love husbands are to have for their wives.

Not only does love require a faithful commitment, but it is a commitment in response to God’s command: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself” (Luke 10:27). Love does indeed involve deep emotion, but it is first of all obedience to God’s command. We can love our husband or wife or parent or mother-in-law and even our enemy, no matter how much evil we think they have done to us. It simply takes the willingness to let God pour out His love through us.

Christ has committed Himself to us for eternity, and He expects us to make the same commitment to Him. That commitment involves loving others if we truly love Him—for a lack of love for our

brother is, according to Scripture, proof that we really do not love God (1 John 4:20-21). How much more is the insistence that we cannot love wife or husband or parent a betrayal of the fact that our love for God, no matter how loudly we profess it, is not genuine at all.

There’s another motive for loving Christ’s appearing. It isn’t only that we long to see Him for ourselves, but we also want to see Him glorified on this earth where He has been rejected for so long. What a tragedy that “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:10). The hearts of those who love Christ are grieved that this world, blinded by pride, goes about its business building its plastic utopia in complete disregard for the One who longs to rescue it from an eternity of horror that it is bringing upon itself.

If we love our Lord, then we will want to see Him revealed to the world and made known for who He is. We want to see Him honored and praised where He was rejected. We long to see Him rule, whose right it is to rule, and we want to be at His side, singing His praises, pointing men to Him who is the Lover of our souls.

Our relationship with Christ and with God through Him will forever be one of perfect love. When we see Him, faith and hope will have given place to sight. But love, the greatest gift of all, will endure forever.

He desires to have us in His presence even more than we could ever desire to be there. He loves us with a love that will never let us go. And because He has captured our affection, we will be eternally bound by love to Him—a love that not only flows to us from God but which redeemed hearts will return to Him with a purity and joy that will be His eternal gift.

The signs that His return are near are in the world today as never before. The sleeping church may soon be shaken with that cry of which Christ spoke in a parable that is difficult to understand but which could well be fulfilled in our day:

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!” (Matthew 25:5-6)

TBC

*Excerpted from Whatever Happened to Heaven?
first published in 1988.*

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Dave, a good Berean knows that we are only to think upon those things which are true (Philippians 4:8). How then can you be involved in writing and promoting fiction (fantasy)? [From our archives]

RESPONSE: Philippians 4:8 says, “Whatsoever things are true...honest...just...pure...lovely...of good report; if there be any virtue and praise, think [meditate] on these things.” We are being told what to meditate upon. I wouldn’t suggest that you meditate upon the fiction I write, but you can learn from it. Jesus told fictional stories. His parables weren’t true, but they were true to life and illustrated truth. My novels are also true to life and illustrate truth. But truth is not the only criterion in Philippians 4:8. If you applied the rest of the verse as you apply “true,” then you couldn’t be a judge or lawyer, for much that they must deal with is anything but “honest, just, pure.” Nor could the elders confront sin in a church, for that is certainly not of “good report” nor of “virtue or praise.” I believe fiction is a legitimate means of communicating God’s truth. If not, then no preacher may use an illustration, and Jesus should not have used parables.

QUESTION: I have wondered about Matthew 27:52-53 for a long time and have never heard or read an explanation. What do you think about these “saints” who came out of the graves in resurrected bodies and “went into the holy city and appeared to many”?

RESPONSE: We must accept at face value what is said and interpret it within the context of the rest of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church was not yet in existence and had not yet begun the unscriptural practice of giving certain persons the title of “saint” years after their deaths. All believers, living or dead, are saints according to Scripture.

The epistles are addressed to “the saints at Corinth...at Colosse...at Philippi,” etc. The “saints” mentioned here were obviously Old Testament believers such as Abraham or Joseph. We are not told which ones. They could have been unknowns not mentioned in Scripture. It neither says nor implies a temporary resurrection with these people dying again. Therefore, it must have been a special foretaste of the resurrection of “the dead in Christ” yet to come. Note that they did not “come out of the graves” until

“after his resurrection.” We don’t know how long they stayed in “the holy city” appearing to believers, but it sounds as though it was for only a short time.

These resurrected saints must have been taken to heaven by Christ in their glorified bodies soon after His resurrection. This probably occurred when He emptied that part of Hades known as “Abraham’s bosom” (Lk 16:22) and took the souls and spirits of the believers waiting there to His Father’s house (Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8; Heb 6:20). Believers who die today go instantly to heaven: “absent from the body, and...present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:6-8).

Matthew 27:52-53 is an unusual passage. It is also not a major one, not offered as proof of the resurrection, or we would read more about such appearances. It was a sign to those who saw these “saints” but not to us because we’re given so little data. Then what is the value for us today? Their resurrection along with Christ, together with the clear indication in Hebrews 11:13-16 that the Old Testament saints are heavenly citizens of the new Jerusalem and share in the “perfection” we will experience (v 40), answers an important question. It would seem to indicate that Old Testament believers who looked forward to the cross of Christ (“Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad”—John 8:56) are made partakers of the resurrection of Christ and will be raised with the New Testament saints (who look back to the cross) at the Rapture and caught up into heaven at that time as part of the church. There is no indication in Scripture of any other time when they are resurrected.

QUESTION: In the Scofield Bible...we find numerous marginal references, notes between verses and footnotes, stating that Rome was Daniel’s strange fourth beast, that it will be revived in western Europe and produce the coming Antichrist; but in those Scripture verses themselves there is no mention of Rome. When did these additions become part of the inspired Word of God? And are they proof within themselves that old Rome will be revived?

RESPONSE: Marginal notes are not part of the Bible but represent the author’s personal beliefs. It is your responsibility to check Scofield (or anyone else, including this ministry) against the Scriptures just as the Bereans checked the great Apostle Paul in like manner. No, the Bible

doesn’t identify by name the four world empires represented by Nebuchadnezzar’s image and the four beasts in Daniel 7. However, history demonstrates the accuracy of Daniel when applied to the four world empires of the Western world: Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman—so much so that critics have tried desperately to prove that Daniel was written after the fact. And that the Roman Empire must be revived worldwide under Antichrist is also the clear inference of Scripture.

This subject is covered in detail in two of [Dave Hunt’s] books, *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist* and *How Close Are We?*, which provide multiple Bible references. I commend them to your study if you wish further information and explanation in this regard.

QUESTION: I was listening to the TBC radio program entitled “What a Sovereign God Cannot Do.” On the program, Dave said that God could not pardon us until Christ paid the penalty. I agree with that, but what about the pardon that a president can grant a criminal? Is it unjust for a president to pardon the criminal even though the penalty has not been paid? I have heard [commentators] compare God’s pardon of us with a presidential pardon of a criminal, but how can they be the same when in the case of Christ our penalty has been paid by Him, but in the case of a presidential pardon, no penalty has been paid?

RESPONSE: The analogy of a president pardoning a criminal of his crime is a poor example to compare with the pardon of Christ. The president pardons an individual (as you point out) with no payment for the crime, whereas our penalty was paid in full by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The president who pardons a clear criminal is certainly being merciful to that individual, but his mercy cannot be compared to the Lord, whose mercy not only pardoned the criminal, but also paid for his sin. No president has ever put himself in the place of the criminal to satisfy justice as Christ placed Himself in the place of hopeless sinners who could not pay their penalty. The mercy of the Lord goes far beyond that exercised in a presidential pardon.

Simply put, a presidential pardon of an individual is insufficient to serve as an illustration of the “once for all” sacrifice of Christ.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What About Satan?

Question: The Bible blames evil on a mythological figure it calls the devil, or Satan. There is absolutely no evidence that imps and gnomes and gremlins and devils even exist. Furthermore, we don't need that hypothesis. Everything can be explained without it. Name one evil in our world that man is not capable of committing without any help from the so-called devil and his demons!

Response: The Bible never mentions such imaginary creatures as imps, gnomes, fairies, gremlins, etc., nor do these products of superstition have anything whatsoever to do with Christianity. The perverse attempt on the part of critics to pretend that Christians believe in such entities betrays their proud prejudice:

“A man of thought and sense does not believe in the existence of the Devil. He feels certain that imps, goblins, demons, and evil spirits exist only in the imagination of the ignorant and frightened.... Back of this belief there is no evidence, and there never has been.... Now take the Devil out of the New Testament, and you also take the veracity of Christ; with that veracity you take the divinity; with that divinity you take the atonement, and when you take the atonement, the great fabric known as Christianity becomes a shapeless ruin” (Robert Green Ingersoll.).

That they find it necessary to resort to ridicule and overstatement also reveals how weak the skeptics' position really is. Let the critics at least be honest and stick to the facts.

The Bible does not blame all evil on Satan or demons. In fact it actually says, “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed” (James 1:14). Of course man is capable of all the evil being committed in the world; he is the one who is actually doing it. That does not prove, however, that there may not be an outside influence at work. A young man who robs a bank is clearly capable of doing so, but that doesn't nullify the fact that his partner in crime initiated the idea and goaded him into joining him.

Eve was certainly capable of eating the forbidden fruit, and actually did so. That did not, however, negate the possibility that Satan, speaking through the serpent, put her up to it. Nor would the fact of Satan's involvement excuse Eve. She was held accountable by God for her sin. Far from forcing mankind to sin, Satan plays rather the part of tempter, teasing man with evil desires to which he is not only susceptible but inclined.

It is not man's duty to fight off Satan but to rest in the victory Christ has won and to trust in Him both for salvation and for victory over sin and temptation. Although we acknowledge Satan's existence, we resist the seductive impulse to become fascinated with him or to

imagine we can directly engage him in battle. As C.S. Lewis said:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight. [C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (Fleming H. Revell, 1976), Preface.]

—An excerpt from *IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH*
by DAVE HUNT

Quotable.....

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

—PSALM 118:17

A fair assurance this! It was no doubt based upon a promise, inwardly whispered in the psalmist’s heart, which he seized upon and enjoyed. Is my case like that of David? Am I depressed because the enemy affronts me? Are there multitudes against me, and few on my side? Does unbelief bid me lie down and die in despair—a defeated, dishonored man? Do my enemies begin to dig my grave?

What then? Shall I yield to the whisper of fear, and give up the battle, and with it give up all hope? Far from it. There is life in me yet: “I shall not die.” Vigor will return and remove my weakness: “I shall live.” The Lord lives, and I shall live also. My mouth shall again be opened: “I shall declare the works of Jehovah.” Yes, and I shall speak of the present trouble as another instance of the wonder-working faithfulness and love of the Lord my God. Those who would gladly measure me for my coffin had better wait for a bit; for “the Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death!” Glory be to his name for ever! I am immortal till my work is done. Till the LORD wills it, no vault can close upon me.

—C.H. SPURGEON

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Ecumenism Update

T. A. McMahon

WHAT IS ECUMENISM, and why should it be updated? Ecumenism is a movement that began as an attempt to bring about unity within the denominations and groups that call themselves Christian. In the mid-20th century, however, a change took place (led, for the most part, by the Roman Catholic Church), expanding the goal of ecumenism to include all religions. That may seem like a worthy objective, but it is neither biblical nor possible. Nevertheless, the movement is alive today and growing exponentially. Yet most Christians do not recognize its deceptive nature. Hence this update.

Some would claim that the Bible *calls* for religious unity. No, it calls for Christians who are true followers of Jesus Christ to unite themselves in the truth of God's Word—the faith—once for all delivered to those who have put their trust in Jesus (Ephesians 4:1-6; Jude 3). For those who have not received Christ's offer of salvation, unity in the doctrine of Christ is impossible. What's more, many who have been redeemed by Jesus have drifted away from keeping the unity of the faith (John 17:20-23)—examples will follow below.

First, let's consider the religions of the world regarding this hoped-for *unity*. What might be the basis for that unity? It certainly isn't their belief in God or their gods or their doctrines. Why not? Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism serve as prime examples. Followers of Judaism worship one God, who calls the Jews His "chosen people"; Muslims worship Allah, who hates Jews. Hindus worship 330-million personal gods. The supreme deity of Buddhism is an impersonal Force that is in everything. Most Jews consider the material world as the epitome of life, while Hindus regard the material world as *maya*, an illusion. Muslims strive to get to paradise by doing good works in their lifetime—works that are satisfactory to Allah, with the most acceptable "work" being *jihad* (killing infidels). Hindus and Buddhists strive to reach *nirvana* or *moksha*, a state of perfect happiness, through an endless cycle of deaths and rebirths. These are only a few of the dissimilarities in the world's diverse religious belief systems, yet they clearly reveal that the popular belief that all paths lead to God is delusionary at best.

On the other hand, all the religions of the world *will* converge into a one-world religion under the control of the Antichrist, who will be worshiped as

God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 13:8) and offers the same godhood to humanity as did Satan in Genesis 3:5.

Of course, all religions must undergo major modifications, especially those that espouse doctrines that don't fit in with universal acceptance which is a major part of the Antichrist's belief system. Islam, for example, is a religion of coercion and harsh Sharia law legalism, which cannot be reconciled with other religions, whose followers are regarded as infidels. Therefore, Islam cannot be included in the religion of the Antichrist and must be eliminated or drastically changed. That will very likely take place when Russia, in association with Muslim nations, attempts to plunder and destroy Israel. God, however, will obliterate the attacking armies in the battle of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38:18-22). In verse 23, God destroys any hope people have in Allah and Islam when He declares, "Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD." The result for over a billion Muslims and others who are affected by God's intervention and His protection of Israel will not turn many of them to the true and living God. Instead, the religion of the Antichrist will simply gain more followers.

Ecumenism within Christendom is another story and includes both professing Christians (not truly committed believers) and born-again Christians. For example, the cults that profess to be Christian, e.g., Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and Christian Scientists, *do not hold to the biblical gospel which is mankind's only means of salvation!* Yet they all call themselves *Christian*.

Ecumenism is not only a major factor in the development of the religion of the Antichrist, but it is also a leading movement that undermines the teachings of the Scriptures held by those committed to Christ. It dismisses the warnings given throughout God's Word regarding deception (Matthew 24:4) and the drifting away from biblical truth (Hebrews 2:1). Moreover, ecumenism's chief cause among believers is declared in 2 Timothy 4:3-4: "For the time will come when they will *not endure sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall *turn away their ears from the truth*, and shall be turned unto fables [italics added]."

Ecumenism within Christendom over the last seventy-five years has centered around the involvement of evangelicals, Charismatics, and Pentecostals with the

Church of Rome. In the 1940s, Billy Graham declared that the three greatest evils in the world of that day were Communism, Muhammadanism, and Catholicism. A few years later, Graham's crusades were endorsed and financially supported by the Catholic Church! Catholics who responded to Graham's gospel appeal were thus directed back to the Roman Catholic Church by nuns and priests who were utilized as counselors. Graham had a lifetime of association with influential Catholics such as Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Cardinals Cushing and O'Connor, and Pope John Paul II. He declared that his theological differences with the pope were minimal, none involving the essentials of the faith.

Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) was a movement that called for cooperation in evangelizing the world, which was supported by influential evangelicals including Chuck Colson and Pat Robertson. Promise Keepers' main objective was to break down the theological walls between Catholics and Protestants. Charismatics and Pentecostals were drawn to Rome when the Catholic Church approved the teachings of David Du Plessis, who became known as "Mr. Pentecost." The so-called manifestations of the Holy Spirit among Catholics were said to increase their devotion to Mary and their commitment to the Sacraments, especially the Mass. All the above took place despite the fact of Catholicism's clearly false gospel of works salvation.

Freemasonry, with its ecumenical gospel that invites all religions into the worship of its Supreme "God" (the Great Architect of the Universe), drew many Christians into its fraternal organization, especially Southern Baptist pastors and their church members. Social and conservative political causes have also motivated "Christians" to work together for the "common good" of humanity regardless of their doctrinal differences. The Moral Majority, organized by Baptist minister Jerry Falwell, worked with Mormons and Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church in order to achieve Christian Right objectives.

Ecumenism's widespread and rapid increase, however, can especially be accounted for because of the rise of Christian media, including radio and television programs. Many have adopted the format of secular talk shows, emphasizing the entertainment aspects with little concern for sound doctrine. This has resulted in a tsunami of false teachers, practices, and doctrines.

Following the popularity of the best-selling *The Seduction of Christianity*, Dave Hunt was invited to speak at the National

Religious Broadcasters Convention in the late 1980s. Based upon the organization's statement of faith, he expected its leadership to be a watchdog of Christian programming, thereby safeguarding biblical orthodoxy. Since that was clearly not taking place, the Lord put it on Dave's heart to exhort his audience to take personal responsibility for what they allowed to be broadcast on their stations. In his NRB address, he went over what the Scriptures had to say about Hymenaeus and Philetus: "Who concerning the truth have erred... and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:17-18). He then posed the question, "What if Hymenaeus and Philetus had their own TV or radio show today?" Sadly, the answer is—they do, though under different names and in a myriad of formats. Popular "Christian" talk shows are overthrowing the faith of far more than "some." Dave's message apparently did not please his audience or the NRB officials; he was never invited back.

Nearly a decade later, Adrian Rogers brought a similar concern before the NRB after Dave Hunt's admonishment and exhortation went unheeded. Rogers stated: "It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error. It is better to speak the truth that hurts, and then heals, than falsehood that comforts and then kills. Let me tell you something, friend, it is not love, and it is not friendship, if we fail to declare the whole counsel of God. It is better to be hated for telling the truth, than to be loved for telling a lie. ..." The NRB is obviously more concerned about "a multitude" than in standing for "the truth."

In 2009, the NRB issued a Declaration of Unity, "declar[ing] afresh our long-standing commitment to use every electronic medium available to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...[T]aking this opportunity to expressly affirm the faith 'that was once for all entrusted to the Saints (Jude 3)... It is for us to *carefully* and *accurately* represent this message in our culture... We acknowledge that as Christian broadcasters, we bear a special responsibility in this area" (emphasis added).

In its preamble, the document declares, "We...reaffirm this day our devotion to the historic Christian faith and our long-standing commitment..." Really? The "historic Christian faith" has been malformed into "people of faith," meaning that anything religious or spiritual qualifies—unless, that is, it is critical of another faith. NRB's "Declaration" is a sham at the very least. But that was written a decade ago. Has

anything taken place of late regarding NRB's "special responsibility" of biblical carefulness and accuracy? No. The "watchdogs" of Christian broadcasting are chasing their own ecumenical tails while hypocritically yapping "Jude 3!" The masthead for the NRB website features the words "Biblical Truth," yet the ecumenical organization's events continue to be antithetical to those terms.

The speakers for its upcoming 2019 NRB convention (Proclaim 19) include some big names in evangelical Christianity, while others have more to do with marketing strategies and the entertainment business of Hollywood, which, by the way, has found a lucrative audience in movies that appeal to "people of faith." For box office success to take place, the "faith" of the people must remain an *undefined* faith. The headliners are Rick and Kay Warren, Greg Laurie, John MacArthur, Charles Stanley, Joni Eareckson Tada, Devon Franklin, Alex Kendrick, and Kirk Cameron among others. Regardless of what one thinks about these individuals personally, they have all signed on to support NRB's alleged "Declaration of Unity... [and] to *carefully* and *accurately* represent this message [Jude 3] in our culture...."

Collectively they represent a mixed bag of true and false doctrines, yet they seemingly have no concerns regarding appearing together—which is what ecumenism is all about. The Warrens have promoted one heresy after another, from Celebrate Recovery to occult meditation to mysticism to overtures with Islam, and to insistently supporting Roman Catholicism (see *TBC* archives for documentation). Greg Laurie, an NRB Hall of Famer, is seemingly oblivious to Warren's heresies and has joined with him on many occasions, including at his Harvest Crusades. Laurie would seem to be at odds with John MacArthur's 5-point Calvinism, and MacArthur's Calvinist/Reformed cessationism would likewise be opposed to Laurie's and Calvary Chapel's view of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which MacArthur has aggressively criticized. Other influential Christian NRB speakers such as Charles Stanley and Joni Eareckson Tada also have differing doctrinal views, with Eareckson Tada lining up with MacArthur's Calvinism, and Stanley quietly opposed to Reformed theology.

The point of all this is that the NRB Convention strongly conveys the message that doctrinal concern and biblical accuracy are really not critical in view of the overriding need for religious *unity*. That ecumenical mindset was reflected in the

words of Rick Warren when he exhorted a gathering of diverse religious leaders in Davos, Switzerland: "Can't we all just get along?" From there, he moved quickly to working together with them to solve the world's problem of "spiritual emptiness" according to Warren's Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan.

The NRB has also been the chief marketplace for the promotion of Hollywood's attempts at interpreting the Bible for major theatrical productions. Staunch Roman Catholic James Caviezel spoke at the 2018 NRB Convention. He was the star of *The Passion of the Christ* (based on the Catholic ritual of the Stations of the Cross) and recently *Paul, Apostle of Christ*, another endeavor by a Hollywood screenwriter to interpret God's Word. Catholic/New Ager Roma Downey, producer of *Son of God* and *A.D. The Bible Continues* for NBC, corrupted the Scriptures in every frame. Nevertheless, she was given the platform to speak at the 2016 NRB Convention (see *TBC* archives for documentation). Other NRB promotions include "faith-based" movies with serious doctrinal problems such as *Heaven Is for Real*, produced by T. D. Jakes and Devon Franklin, a popular speaker at NRB (2017, 2019). Franklin is also a motivational speaker and a Seventh-day Adventist who strictly keeps the Sabbath in addition to adhering to other cultic SDA doctrines and practices.

Space limitations of this article restrict me from listing the multitude of other individuals who have contributed to NRB's rampant ecumenism. There are also numerous organizations that have been celebrated and awarded for their service by the NRB such as *Focus on the Family* and psychologist Dr. James Dobson's *Family Talk*. These, more than any other "Christian" establishments, have led followers of Christ to become followers of "science falsely so called" and "lovers of themselves" (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 3:1-2). Even a cursory review of Christian radio from the 1970s through today brings to light the ongoing supplanting of biblical programming with so-called Christian psychology.

So what's to be done to turn back the flood of ecumenism that will culminate in the religion of the Antichrist? Nothing, globally. Nothing, perhaps, even for Christian organizations or ministries, unless a work of the Holy Spirit brings about conviction that leads to repentance. Individually, however? Everything—if we begin with a heart that has a "love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). We exhort you to pray for all believers to that end. **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: A previous newsletter misquoted Revelation 17:9-10 to fit your interpretation. Would you correct this, please—your work is too important to be tarnished with such an error. [From our archives, 10/1/1993]

RESPONSE: Your accusation is a serious one, which I don't take lightly. Let me quote directly from the KJV so you can see that I have neither misquoted nor rewritten it: "The seven heads are seven mountains [Gr. lit. a rise of ground, hills, or mountains; and no city could sit on seven high mountains, so the meaning must be hills], on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space."

Certainly the King James doesn't say that the seven mountains are seven kings, nor does it even say that the seven heads represent seven kings, though that could be implied. It says, "...and there are seven kings...." NAS says, "They are seven kings...." It would make no sense to say (as you seem to assume) that the heads mean mountains and that the mountains really mean kings and not mountains. Then why mention mountains at all? The most one can say is that the heads (like many other symbols—the beast itself, for example, means Antichrist, Satan, and the revived Roman Empire) have a dual meaning: hills on which the city sits and also kings. No city sits (i.e., is located) on kings, much less upon kings who are no more or haven't "yet come."

The woman's identity is carefully established beyond mistake: 1) she is a city; 2) that sits or is built (to sit somewhere, a city must have been built there) on seven hills; 3) that rules over the kings of the earth; 4) that has committed fornication with the kings of the earth; and 5) is drunk with the blood of the martyrs. No city except Rome and particularly Vatican City qualifies. I hope this has been helpful.

QUESTION: What does Jesus mean when He says that all things are possible to him who believes? If He cannot make a square circle or sin, what does Jesus really mean?

RESPONSE: The Lord is not dealing with the hypothetical. He's meeting humanity at our point of need. Our greatest need as individuals is salvation. Certainly all things are possible for the Lord, and, if He desired to do so, he could easily take a mountain and cast it into the sea.

But that has no value to individuals. On the other hand, we do have "mountains" in our lives. These include our need for salvation, our emotional needs, physical provision, our relationships with family, friends, and spouses, and other issues of life. It's upon these that He directs His primary focus.

In John 10:10, Jesus declares, "The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Again, He doesn't provide everything we *desire* (wealth, a new car, a huge home, or other material things). Rather, He provides everything we *need*. Likewise regarding healing—the Lord gives us what we need.

For example, in 2 Corinthians 12 Paul wrote of his "thorn in the flesh." We don't know exactly what it was, but it was clearly a physical issue that was painful. Nevertheless, by allowing this to continue, the Lord accomplished some things in Paul's life that he needed to experience.

So Paul writes, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

We are all different individuals with many similar needs. The promise of Jesus addresses those things that are of importance to us.

QUESTION: I am confused about "the dead in Christ shall rise"— what does that exactly mean? Does our physical body actually rise and meet our soul and spirit?

RESPONSE: Romans 8:23 tells us, "And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body."

This explicitly speaks of the redemption (that is "resurrection") of our bodies. There is coming a time when our earthly bodies shall rise, and indeed, our spirit and soul will be rejoined to that body, now changed. In I

Corinthians 15:51, Paul writes, "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed...."

"Sleep" is a metaphor used in Scripture for death, in which the body is unresponsive, similar to a person sleeping. Paul noted that not everyone will experience physical death in this life, because at the Rapture, some will meet the Lord in the air. But all will experience the change to their bodies. Much as the Lord's human body was changed after the resurrection (He entered a room without using the door - Luke 24:36), so, too, shall our earthly bodies be raised.

Those who know the Lord can take encouragement from the testimony of the patriarch Job, who had an assurance of resurrection. "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:26). And we can have the assurance that though our bodies may be "destroyed,...yet in [our] flesh shall [we] see God."

It's amazing how many cults and aberrant religions specifically deny the physical resurrection of the body. On Mars Hill, Paul was instructing the philosophers and religionists who gathered there. They listened to his message until, we read in Acts 17:32, "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter."

Yes, indeed, our bodies *shall* rise and be inhabited by our spirit and soul. And until that time arrives, whether through death or life, Paul wrote, "[May] the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

QUESTION: Would you help me to understand this question from your March 2018 newsletter? You write that "this world had been delivered unto me [by God] and to whomsoever I will give it." Does this include the physical world?

RESPONSE: In Scripture, the term "world" (depending on context) often speaks of the "world system." Satan's emphasis during the temptation of Christ is seen in Matthew 4:8: "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." It was in this context that the adversary said in verse 9, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." In conclusion, Satan was speaking of his domination of this present evil world system. Psalm 48:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

The Collapse of Scientific Materialism

Question: I need no further argument against the existence of Satan and demons than the fact that no one in the history of the world has ever seen such creatures. They exist only in mythology. The Bible tries to get around this obvious problem by claiming that they are not physical and are thus invisible spirit beings. Wasn't this old-fashioned superstition about "spirits" abandoned long ago by thinking people? Surely if Satan existed there ought to be some scientific proof. Where is it??

Response: Belief in "spirits" has not been abandoned. Instead, the scientific community is now endorsing it. Materialism is dead. No longer do the great thinkers imagine that this physical universe is all there is or that everything, including human consciousness, can be explained in physical terms. In his book *Quantum Questions: The Mystical Writings of the World's Great Physicists*, Ken Wilbur has compiled statements made by the greatest physicists of all time that show that they all believed in a spiritual dimension of existence. In full agreement, Sir John Eccles, Nobel Prize winner for his research on the brain writes:

If there are bona fide mental events—events that are not themselves physical or material—then the whole program of philosophical materialism collapses. The universe is no longer composed of "matter and a void" but now must make (spaceless) room for (massless) entities [i.e., minds].

Ideas are obviously not physical. Evil itself is not physical. It may involve physical acts, but it begins in the mind with non-physical thoughts. Morals and ethics are nonphysical things. It would be folly to ask someone to describe the texture, color, or taste of truth or how much one would have to pay for a pound of justice or mercy. As Sir Arthur Eddington said, "Ought' takes us outside chemistry and physics."

All purposeful acts begin with a thought that does not exist as a physical part of a bodily organ, the brain. Ideas are held in the mind. The brain is physical, but the mind is not. Quite clearly, thoughts precede and cause neural activity in the brain. They do not result

from anything happening in the physical brain, nor can thinking be explained on that basis. Thoughts about truth or justice, for example, could not originate through any physical stimulus (and thus could not result from any evolutionary process), because they are totally unrelated to any physical quality such as weight, texture, taste, or smell.

The human brain does not initiate thoughts, decisions, or plans. If it did, we would be the prisoners of this bit of matter in our skulls. Moreover, if evolution were true and our brains the result of random, impersonal chance processes over billions of years, then our thoughts could only be the result of the same random processes and would thus be meaningless. The same would apply to the theory of evolution, which by its own affirmations could only be the result of chance motions of atoms in the brain. Expressing logic's necessary rejection of materialism and evolution, C. S. Lewis wrote:

If minds are wholly dependent on brains and

brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees.

Spirit Beings?

Based upon years of brain research, world-famed neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield declared, "The mind is independent of the brain. The brain is a computer, but it is programmed by something that is outside itself, the mind." The brain is a computer of such complexity that the human genius cannot duplicate; and, like any computer, it requires someone to operate it. That is the function of the human spirit, which uses this "brain/computer" to interface with the physical dimension of life in which our bodies function.

Inasmuch as our own minds are nonphysical, how foolish to deny the possibility of the existence of other minds or even to insist that they must all be attached to physical bodies! Robert Jastrow, one of the world's leading astronomers, and certainly highly regarded by his colleagues in that field, suggests that evolution could have been in process on other planets 10 billion years longer than here on earth and may have produced beings as far beyond man on the evolutionary scale as man is beyond a worm. We are not promoting the false theory of evolution but simply observing that Jastrow sees nothing about this materialist theory that would deny the existence of spirit beings. In fact, Jastrow suggests:

Life that is a billion years beyond us may be far beyond the flesh-and-blood form that we would recognize. It may . . . [have] escaped its mortal flesh to become something that old-fashioned people would call spirits.

And how do we know it's there? Maybe it can materialize and then dematerialize. I'm sure it has magical powers by our standards.

That spirit beings, whatever their origin, do exist has been acknowledged by many other top scientists in addition to Jastrow, Eccles, and Eddington. Among them are not a few Nobel Prize winners: Nobelist Eugene Wigner, one of the greatest physicists of this

century; Sir Karl Popper, the most famous philosopher of science of our age; mathematician John von Neumann, who has been called "the smartest man who ever lived"; and many others. So the skeptics' derisive accusation that only uneducated and superstitious people believe in spirits is nothing more than the bluster of wishful thinkers.

It would only be logical that nonphysical beings, if they did exist, could think and even communicate with our brains by the same means that our own spirits use. C. G. Jung, the famous Swiss psychiatrist, had a personal spirit guide, Philemon, which seemed to demonstrate the powers of materialization suggested by Jastrow and with whom he had lengthy and very real conversations. Jung wrote:

Philemon represented a force which was not myself It was he who taught me . . . the reality of the psyche . . . he seemed quite real. . . . I went walking up and down the garden with him.

Jung wanted desperately to believe that Philemon and other entities who literally appeared to him and conversed with him were nothing more than psychic extensions of his subconscious mind. Eventually, however, the mounting evidence forced Jung to conclude that they were independent beings. He confessed, "On the basis of my own experience . . . I have to admit that the spirit hypothesis yields better results in practice than any other."

The Case for Evil Spirits

In view of the evil of which our own minds are capable, it would be extremely naïve to imagine that all other minds in the universe must be benevolent. Some of Jung's experiences were so terrifying that he became convinced that at least some of these entities were exceedingly evil. Jung discussed his topic at length with James Hyslop, Columbia University professor of logic and ethics. Hyslop expressed his own convictions:

If we believe in telepathy [which Hyslop considered fully demonstrable], we believe in a process which makes possible the invasion of a personality by someone at a distance.

It is not at all likely . . . that sane and intelligent spirits are the only ones to exert [such] influence . . . there is no reason why others cannot do so as well.

In view of the above conclusion based upon evidence that convinced Jung, Hyslop, and many other investigators, there is no reason for rejecting the idea that a being of such evil genius as Satan could exist. Indeed, there is much experimental verification of the existence of demons and of Satan, evidence that has been accepted by non-Christian psychiatrists and scientists not because the Bible said so but on the basis of their own experience. Many examples could be given, but let us conclude with the experience of someone who in recent years has become known as an expert on the subject of "evil," psychiatrist M. Scott Peck.

While Peck was Assistant Chief of Psychiatry under the Army Surgeon General, he served as chairman of a special committee of psychiatrists appointed by the Army Chief of Staff to study the "psychological causes of [the massacre in Vietnam at] My Lai, so as to prevent such atrocities in the future." In the process, Peck became involved in attempted exorcisms. He refers to two specific cases that convinced him of the reality of demonic possession. He even declared with awe that he had "personally met Satan face-to-face." Peck writes:

When the demonic finally spoke clearly in one case, an expression appeared on the patient's face that could be described only as Satanic. It was an incredibly contemptuous grin of utter hostile malevolence. I have spent many hours before a mirror trying to imitate it without the slightest success.

When the demonic finally revealed itself in the exorcism of [another] patient, it was with a still more ghastly expression. The patient suddenly resembled a writhing snake of great strength, viciously attempting to bite the team members.

More frightening than the writhing body, however, was the face. The eyes were hooded with lazy reptilian torpor—except when the reptile darted out in attack, at which moment the eyes would open wide with blazing hatred. Despite these frequent darting moments, what upset me the most was the extraordinary sense of a fifty-million-year-old heaviness I received from this serpentine being.

Almost all the team members at both exorcisms were convinced they were at these times in the presence of something absolutely alien and inhuman. The end of each exorcism proper was signaled by the departure of this Presence from the patient and the room.

The conclusion arrived at by Peck and his team is not a matter of "scientific proof" but an intuitive conviction of conscience arrived at by careful observation. Nor could it be otherwise when one confronts the spirit realm. Eddington points out that if a physicist should try to apply scientific methods to the study of thought by examining the

brain, "all that he discovers is a collection of atoms and electrons and fields of force arranged in space and time, apparently similar to those found in inorganic objects . . . [and thus] might set down thought as an illusion."

Human personality surely exists, yet it cannot be defined or demonstrated scientifically. So it is with the manifestation of demonic power. Unfortunately, although increasing numbers of psychologists and psychiatrists are now acknowledging the reality and horror of demonic possession, their attempt to discover a "scientific" explanation undermines their understanding of evil. If there is psychological explanation for evil, then moral choice and personal responsibility are no longer involved. Furthermore, if evil can be explained as psychologically programmed behavior, then what was the presence that Peck said he and his team could palpably "feel" and whose exit could be felt as well?

—An excerpt from *IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH* by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

You hope to be saved, but what reason have you to give of the hope that is in you? Is it because you have done no harm? or because you have done much good? or because you are not like others, but wise, or learned, or honest, and morally good; esteemed by others, and of a fair reputation? Alas! All this will never bring you to God....Do you know Jesus Christ whom He has sent? Has He taught you that "by grace, we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"? (Eph 2:8-9). Have you received the faithful saying as the whole foundation of your hope: that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? Have you learned what that means, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance? I am not sent, but to the lost sheep"? Are you lost, dead, damned already? Do you know your deserts? Do you feel your needs? Are you poor in spirit? mourning for God and refusing to be comforted? Has the prodigal come to himself and therefore well content to be thought "beside himself" by those who are still feeding on the husks he has left? Are you willing to live godly in Christ Jesus? And do you therefore suffer persecution? Do men and women say all manner of evil against you falsely, for the Son of Man's sake?

O that in all these questions you may hear the voice that wakes the dead and feel that hammer of the Word which breaks the rocks in pieces! If you will hear His voice today, while it is called today, do not harden your hearts. Awake, you who sleep in spiritual death, so that you do not sleep in death eternal!...Leave your old companions in sin and death. Save yourself from this perverse generation. Come out from among them and be separate,... and the Lord will receive you. "Christ will give you light."

—JOHN WESLEY *The Essential Works of John Wesley*

Creation Witnessing

T. A. McMahon

I'M EXTREMELY BLESSED to have friends who are very knowledgeable about science and whose calling it is to use their knowledge to reach the lost and to help believers stay the biblical course in the spiritual battle between beliefs in creation and evolution. I'm blessed because science is hardly in my comfort zone, and my friends are always there for me with explanations that I can understand (no small feat), so I'm thankful for their longsuffering in helping me to that end. I want to use what the Bible says about creation in contrast to evolution just as they do, but I need an approach that is just as solid as theirs but obviously not as deep. I prefer to swim without the fear of drowning. For those who are reading this and have the creation vs. evolution debate well in hand, you still may want to share it with folks or family members who are like me.

There are two things regarding creation witnessing that are foremost on my mind. First, I want to be confident in my knowledge of what God's Word declares about creation, and second, I want to be confident in communicating the necessity of *supernaturalism* as the only basis for bringing about the universe and everything in it.

Beginning with what the Scriptures reveal about creation, here are some major points: 1) God created everything (Genesis 1:1). 2) He created everything out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3). 3) Everything was perfect at the time of creation (Genesis 1:31). 4) Jesus, who is both God and man, created all things (John 1:3), and in Him all things consist and are held together (Colossians 1:17). 5) Man's sin corrupted God's perfect creation (Romans 8:20-22). 6) Mankind's sin separated humanity from God yet not from the awareness of God as their Creator (Romans 1:19-20). Those points are among a host of others supported by many scriptures, and they reveal a Creator who is outside of His creation and infinite in His intelligence and power.

There are two principal beliefs as to how the universe was formed: naturalism and supernaturalism. Supernaturalism, as noted above, has a Creator/Designer who is not part of creation and who brought everything into existence. Naturalism, aka evolutionism, is the belief that everything

that exists came about without anyone or anything initiating its formation or guiding its development, which took place slowly and naturally over eons.

One of the common false ideas among many people, including Bible-believing Christians, is that those who reject evolution are rejecting science. That makes addressing creation vs. evolution a very worthwhile endeavor. It's not a matter of defending a Christian's intelligence but rather challenging the myth that evolution is science. It's been said that it helps to cut down the trees behind which false beliefs are doing their deceitful work. What are some of those erroneous beliefs?

Is the study of evolution a scientific endeavor? No. A scientific endeavor involves observation, measurement, experiment, and the formulation and testing of a concluding hypothesis. Evolution can't go there. What then is the study of evolution? It's a philosophy, a way of thinking about the universe and how it was formed. Although posing as a scientific study, it is in fact *scientism*, a speculative ideology (read "religion") that cannot be verified or falsified by true science.

Why then bother to bring the creation vs. evolution discussion into witnessing opportunities? Here's a very significant reason: it's a great way to start talking about God. A good friend of mine, who is one of my heroes when it comes to sharing the gospel, has taught me that "witnessing is not about presentation but rather 'conversation,'" and conversations usually provide openings to asking questions and getting responses. Questions keep the conversation rolling. Consider this typical example: "Do you believe in evolution?" "Of course I do." "I'm asking about the belief that you evolved from less complex kinds of animals over billions of years. Is that what you believe?" "Yeah." "What's the main thing that causes you to believe in it?" "Hey... it's a scientific fact!" "Seriously?" As you might expect, that conversation could get interesting. But what could give it "legs," meaning it might go in a worthwhile direction (i.e., toward the gospel), is to have plenty of other follow-up questions that are based upon reason, logic, common sense, a bit of science savvy, and certainly biblical truth.

One of the things I love about asking questions is that it usually avoids an immediate defensiveness on the part of those being questioned. Few like to have *answers* forced upon them, especially when

they have no particular interest in or have limited knowledge of the subject. What's hoped for is that the conversation and the questions will lay the groundwork and motivation for a person seeking answers. Here are some questions regarding people's belief in evolution (naturalism) that may get them rethinking what they have supposed (Q= question, R= response, A= answer, C= comment).

Q: "I've been told that there's no God, and that everything came about by an incredibly long process of nature. Does that sound right to you?" R: "Yeah... that's probably correct." My response *could* be: "Can you think of anything that's really complex that came into existence on its own?" Or it *could* be, "So you believe living things evolved from nonliving things. Do you know or have you ever heard of any examples of that?"

Q: "What do you think of the belief that everything that exists came from nothing?" R: "That makes no sense. Things have always existed." My response: "Well, there's a law of physics that says the universe is running down, so it must have had a beginning. But before the beginning, what do you think there was?" His R and Q: "Nothing, I guess. But don't Christians believe God made everything out of nothing?" My R: "Yes." His Q: "How is that possible? Isn't God subject to the same physical law you referred to? So, he must have had a beginning." My R: "No. Not if He exists outside His creation and isn't subject to the laws He created. If that's the case, which the Bible claims, He has always existed."

Some contend that God made everything out of Himself and therefore everything is part of God, meaning everything is God. That is the belief of Hinduism and Buddhism known as pantheism and panentheism and is popularized as an impersonal Force, e.g., *Star Wars*. Hinduism and Buddhism teach early forms of naturalism/evolutionism that propose the existence and development of everything without personal design and superintendence. If everything is God, then God also comprises all the evil that exists. That's the dark side of the Force, not the God of biblical Christianity, who is perfectly good and holy.

Q: "Do you think that humans evolved from something less than human?" R: "It's hard to believe, but that's what all the evidence points to." Q: "So it's from slime to invertebrates to bony fish to creeping/slithering land things to apes to 'Lucy' to

you and me?” R: “That’s what I’ve been taught. Although I think we’ve lost ground when it comes to our sense of morality.” Q: “Can you think of *any* animal that’s a clear transition or link between two different kinds of animals?” R: “I’ve been told there are, but I don’t remember what they are.” Q: “Did you know that there are literally millions of fossils of creatures that supposedly lived in prehistoric times and later, yet there are less than a handful of those that are promoted as ‘transitional fossils,’ all of which are questionable at best? Shouldn’t there be millions of examples of intermediate or transitional fossils?”

Q: “What do you know of the Big Bang Theory...other than the television comedy show?” R: “Supposedly it’s the way the universe began.” Q: “Why do you say ‘supposedly?’” R: “I’m an engineer and I have trouble believing that what I recognize as incredible design in nature and the way we go about building things...I can’t see all of that having started with an immeasurable explosion. I like the TV show, but I don’t buy the so-called scientific theory.” Q: “Are you a Christian?” R: “Not really. I bailed out on organized religion.” Q: “Why was that?” R: “I was a Catholic and got tired of being told what to believe and especially the customary reason given for it: ‘Because the Church says so.’” Q: “Did you stop believing in God?” R: “Probably not. I just don’t go there anymore.” Q: As an engineer, would it be your best guess that God is the Designer of the universe?” R: “It would be more than a guess. My math is pretty good, and the astounding complexities I see in everything—from plants to animals to the human body—render the idea that they evolved naturally a bad guess. As far as probability goes, it’s a farce. It could never happen by chance, in my view.” Q: “Did you know that God said in the Bible, ‘Come let us reason together’? I really enjoy talking with you because you seem like a very reasonable guy.” R: “Where does it say in the Bible God wants to reason with us? I like that.” A: “Isaiah 1:18. Let me show it to you so you can read it for yourself.”

We never know where a conversation will take us when we go about trying to share the gospel. Sometimes we hit a brick wall and that’s the end of it. So we move on, maintaining a pleasant attitude as we look for our next opportunity to point them to their Creator and Savior. Even in those times when we are abruptly rejected

regarding what we share, seeds that may lead to conviction have been planted. Whether or not they take root and bear fruit is up to the person. The process of creation witnessing, with its conversations, questions, and answers, is to be carried out with complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Our part is simply to obey the Lord’s leading and be thankful for the opportunities He provides.

The conversation, questions, and answers I’ve supplied are just samples of what the interaction could be like. Here are a few more: Q: “Do you think that all living things evolved?” R: “From what I understand about evolution, that’s the process, and it includes everything.” Q: “What about some things that can’t work if they had to evolve?” R: “Give me an example.” A & Q: “Your eyes. Their complexity is mind blowing. The number and speed of the functions they carry out are far beyond our most advanced supercomputers (which, by the way, were designed). Yet the eye itself could not function unless every incredibly intricate part was in place. Forget the idea of a potential eye hanging in there for millions of years waiting for what it needs to work.” R: “I hear what you’re saying.” C: “Speaking of hearing, it’s the same situation regarding your ears. Consider their astounding complexity! If ears relied upon random mutation-driven developments progressing from simple to complex over long periods of time in order to function, we’d all be deaf. All the multitude of astoundingly complex components of eyes and ears must be in place at once or neither body part will work.”

Q: “No doubt you’ve heard the question, ‘What came first, the chicken or the egg?’ Did you ever wonder who came first, man or woman?” R: “Never thought about it. I’m aware that Christians believe man was created first, but I don’t know about that.” Q: “Are you thinking they evolved?” R: “Yeah. Q: So which one evolved from the other?” R: “Does it make any difference?” My R: “Probably not...as long as the male or female can evolve the necessary opposite sexual body parts to enable impregnation and child birth.” Q: “How can that happen?” R: “Evolutionists admit that they don’t have a clue.”

All the questions above were ones I made up with the hope that I might get a conversation going with someone I meet. I have some idea of the response I’ll get, but I never really know. So I trust the Lord to give me an answer to the person’s response,

or a follow-up question. As the title of this article indicates, this witnessing approach majors on things related to creation and evolution. One of the goals, in addition to steering the talk in the direction of biblical truth, particularly regarding our Creator Jesus and the gospel, is to get people to *think* about some ideas they have that are actually bogus. What they believe about evolution is a denial of their Creator, and therefore it’s a great subject to address, especially because of all the myths about evolution. Additionally, a science degree is rarely necessary because the myths have more to do with irrationality and a lack of common sense than knowing an atomic number on the periodic table.

As I hope you can see, this is not a “by-the-numbers” witnessing *method* devised by T. A. It’s an *approach* that involves the Holy Spirit helping a believer to put together lots of questions on different subjects that will get a conversation going and then directing it *as He leads*. All of us are well practiced in conversation, so that shouldn’t be a problem. Another question I like is a point blank: “Do you believe in God?” To a “yes” answer I might follow up with “Tell me what you believe and where you got those beliefs.” Or “Do you think it’s possible to have a personal relationship with God?” Or “What do you think about Jesus?” Or, if you know or are in the presence of someone who uses the Lord’s name in vain (more out of habit than intending anything mean-spirited by it), here’s a question you might consider asking: “You keep referring to Jesus. Sounds like you know Him, and I was wondering what you could tell me about Him!” That could be an interesting conversation.

Does that seem a little too bold for you? Remember, boldness is necessary according to the Scriptures. Why? Because the critical issue is where a person will spend eternity. The Apostle Paul declared this prayer for himself—as well as for us: “And for me, [praying] that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19-20). My prayer is that our Creator God will give us all an increasing desire and heart to witness of the love He has for all His created beings. **TBC**

Many thanks to Carl Kerby (Reasons for Hope) and Jay Seegert (The Starting Point Project) for their helpful suggestions regarding this article.

Q&A.....

QUESTION: The “church” is, and always was, “man’s ways and means”; and that is so easy to see now, with all of the information that is at our fingertips. Originally, “Ecclesia” was not buildings and institutions. Words matter! Why did King James have to bind the translators of the KJV to the word “church” if it was the right word? Sadly the word “church” is now so elevated above truth, and so much is built upon it, that few are going to give up the empires and businesses that they have established, no matter what the truth is. What do you think?

RESPONSE: The value of a word and its usage is not determined by the abuse of men. In Ephesians 1:23 Paul clearly states that the church “... is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” In Matthew 16:18, the Lord promised to build His church and said that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” In 2 Timothy 2:19, Paul noted, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

The church is not a building but the people that may meet in a building. Even in the conditions approaching the endtimes, we are to “...consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb 10:24-25).

The church is not a “business” or an “empire,” but too many have forsaken the assembling of ourselves together because of such abuses, though the implication of Hebrews is that if we are commanded to not forsake the assembling, this must be possible (no matter how small the group) until the Lord takes us in the Rapture or by death.

The Lord has some assignments for us, and we need to have the Holy Spirit’s guidance regarding where we are to gather. We may not recognize immediately why the Lord has us where we are. We continue to encourage those who write to us that they aren’t to be fearful of a church that isn’t perfect, since there are none.

If we do as the Bereans did, searching the Scriptures daily to see if what they were taught was so, the Lord can use such a situation mightily in spite of the human failings we may encounter. God has His people everywhere, in the midst of faulty settings, and He may lead us to a place we would not have chosen in order that we might “forsake not the assembling” and fulfill our role among the saints to encourage, help, serve,

admonish, and together become Bereans.

By definition, the word translated “church” is from *ekklēsia* (a word derived from *ek*, meaning, “out of, from, and to” and *kalēō*, “to call”). More properly, “the Church” comprises a people who are called out from the world and to God (see *Strong’s Concordance*). That is what we need to keep in mind.

QUESTION: Are the techniques used on people in psychotherapy reliable? [From our archives, July 1986]

Response: I can’t begin to answer that thoroughly here. I’d suggest you read Martin and Deidre Bobgan’s book, *The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way* and other books by Christians refuting the scientific claims of psychotherapy.

You just can’t escape the fact that psychology has a very, very powerful influence in modern society. We have turned our society over to these people. Here’s a quote from a book, *The Psychological Society*, by Martin Gross. He says, “the major agent of change in modern society is psychology. This cult sits at the very center of contemporary society as an international colossus whose professional minions number in the hundreds of thousands. Its ranks include psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, family therapists, educational psychologists, sensitivity groups and encounter leaders, assorted lay therapists, Christian psychologists” and on and on and on it goes. Here’s what he says: “Its experimental animals are an obliging, even grateful, human race. They [psychotherapists] don’t know what they are doing.”

Just get a subscription to *Psychology Today*. Read it from 10 years ago or 5 years ago and see how the theories have changed. You’ve got 250 psychologies and 10,000 therapies. It’s a smorgasbord of personal preferences, and the research proves that none of them are scientific nor do they necessarily offer any help. Yet the church has become the largest referral agency to psychologists and psychiatrists. Christians have forfeited what used to be called the cure of souls to what is now called the cure of sick minds. It’s not biblical nor is it scientific!

Psychologists also have the highest occupational hazard rate of any profession—divorce, suicide, alcoholism, etc. The Bible is the manufacturer’s handbook that claims to have “everything that pertains to life and godliness.” Why turn to a bankrupt system? I’ve already shared with you that 7,000 of the world’s leading psychotherapists recently gathered in Phoenix to evaluate where psychotherapy has come in 100 years. R. D.

Laing summed it up well. He said he couldn’t think of any fundamental insight into relationships between human beings that has resulted from a century of psychotherapy.

QUESTION: Our pastor preached on Sunday that God crucified Jesus. Does the Bible state this?

Response: The Lord Jesus was sent to earth by the will of the Father. In Revelation 13:8 we learn that Jesus is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Before the world was formed, God knew that the redemption of sinful man would require the death of the Son.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, speaking of Jesus, declared, “Delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain...”

Peter was pointing out that the Lord had known exactly what sinful man would do and that it fulfilled the predetermined counsel of God. Yet, it was by the “wicked hands” of man that Jesus was “crucified and slain.” Some anti-Semites have stated that it was the Jews who killed Jesus, but the Roman government (and consequently humanity) must share the guilt. Rome was the only judicial authority granted the power to exercise capital punishment. The representatives of Rome that day in Jerusalem set aside justice to satisfy an angry mob. They executed an innocent man, of whom Pilate, the Roman Governor of Galilee, declared, “I find no fault in this man” (Lk 23:4).

In the Garden, as He faced the Cross, Jesus declared, “Not my will but thine be done.” Long before the Cross, however, Jesus (remember—He had a choice) had already willed Himself to go. He set His face like a flint (Is 50:7), and “he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Lk 9:51). He didn’t drag His heels on the way to the cross. At any time He could have called for help: “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Mt 26:52). He “willingly” went to suffer the death of the cross. Jesus had said to His disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.... Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Mt 16:24-25). Therefore, in Jesus’s willingness we see Him freely choose to go to the Cross. Yes, the Father sent Him, and the Father didn’t stop the execution to which the Son submitted Himself. Nevertheless, it was humanity who put our Lord to death.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What about Satan as Serpent?

Question: I think one of the great evidences against the authenticity of the Bible is its treatment of the serpent. In the Bible, the serpent is the embodiment of evil, whereas ancient myths and religions give exactly the opposite view. The Bible equates the serpent with the devil, but the most ancient religions, some of which are even practiced to the present time, almost universally identify the serpent as the Savior, or at least as benevolent and to be worshiped. How can the Bible be true at the same time be so much out of touch with what is clearly the common intuition of humanity?

Response: This is a fascinating subject, and its implications go beyond our ability to understand fully. There is no doubt that the Bible repeatedly identifies Satan both as the serpent and the dragon, not only in Genesis 3 but elsewhere. For example, “And the great dragon was cast out, that sold serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation:12:9). In view of the usual human revulsion and fear of both dragons and serpents, one would think that Satan would do everything possible to deny such a connection, yet the opposite seems to be the case, for some strange reason. How intriguing it is that both are so closely associated with nearly all pagan religions. The dragon is found on thousands of temples throughout Asia, while the serpent permeates and even dominates the religion of India.

Serpent Worship Everywhere

In the temples of ancient Egypt and Rome the body of the god Serapis was encircled by the coils of a great serpent. In Hinduism one of the three chief gods, Shiva, has serpents entwined in his hair. Yoga is symbolized as a raft made of cobras, and its goal is to awaken the kundalini power coiled at the base of the human spine in the form of a serpent. Numerous other examples could be given, from the plumed serpent Quetzalcoatl, the Savior-god of the Mayas, to the annual snake dance of the Hopi Indians. One of the greatest authorities on the occult (himself a practitioner of occultism) has written:

Serpent worship in some form permeated nearly all parts of the earth. The serpent mounds of the

American Indian; the carved-stone snakes of Central and South America; the hooded cobras of India; Python, the great snake of the Greeks; the sacred serpents of the Druids; the Midgard snake of Scandinavia; the Nagas of Burma, Siam, and Cambodia . . . the mystic serpent of Orpheus; the snakes at the oracle of Delphi . . . the sacred serpents preserved in the Egyptian temples; the Uraeus coiled upon the foreheads of the Pharaohs and priests—all these bear witness to the universal veneration in which the snake was held. . . .

The serpent is . . . the symbol and prototype of the Universal Savior, who redeems the world by giving creation the knowledge of itself. . . . It has long been viewed as the emblem of immortality. It is the symbol of reincarnation. (Manley P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of all Ages: An Encyclopedic outline of Masonic, Hermetic,*

Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Sybological Philosophy
(The Philosophical Research Society, Inc, Lost Angeles, CA 90027, 1969)

In Greek mythology a serpent was wrapped around the Orphic egg, the symbol of the cosmos. Likewise at Delphi, Greece (for centuries the location of the most sought-for and influential oracle of the ancient world, consulted by potentates from as far away as North Africa and Asia Minor), the three legs of the oracular tripod in the inner shrine of the temple were intertwined with serpents. As one further example, consider the Gree and Roman god of medicine, Aesculapius, whose symbol of modern medicine, the caduceus, was derived.

In the temples erected in his honor, Aesculapius was worshiped with snakes because of ancient myth that said he had received a healing herb at the mouth of a serpent. Here again we have the Genesis story perverted: The serpent is not the deceiver and destroyer but the Savior of mankind, replacing Jesus Christ. At graduation ceremonies of medical schools around the world, where prayers to the God of the Bible or to Jesus Christ would not be allowed, graduates, upon receiving their MD degrees, still repeat loudly in unison the Hippocratic oath. It begins, "I swear by Apollo, by Aesculapius, by Hygeia and Panacea, and by all the gods and goddesses. . . ."

Surely the Bible's depiction of Satan as a serpent and dragon, the deceiver and destroyer of mankind, and then as the god of this world who originates pagan religions, fits the evidence. Furthermore, the very fact that the Bible stands alone against all ancient religions provides further evidence that all of them have a common source and that the inspiration behind the Bible is, exactly as it claims, independent of theirs. In fact, the two sources of inspiration are obviously diametrically opposed.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

"Spiritual values" is a vague term that no one defines, yet everyone seems pleased with themselves for using it, as though common ground for uniting science and religion has been found and something meaningful has been communicated. In fact, neither is true. "Spiritual values" is another form of "the Emperor's new clothes." No one knows what the term means. Yet it has become an integral part of suggested solutions to the world's problems. To put it bluntly, "spiritual values" is the new *shibboleth* of the environmental and peace movements.

Even some evangelical leaders seem pleased with all the talk about "spiritual values." They react as though it indicates that those who use the term are somehow kindred spirits, when in fact they could be atheists and/or occultists totally opposed to Christianity—and generally are.

—DAVE HUNT

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Heard From God Lately?

T. A. McMahon

LET'S SAY I were to voice the question, "Heard from God lately?" to a very large crowd that had a mix of Christians and non-Christians. Among the crowd would be professing Christians, biblical Christians, cessationist Christians, charismatic Christians, pentecostal Christians, contemplative Christians, progressive Christians, conservative Christians, as well as a few agnostics, skeptics, and atheists.

Their first thoughts related to a response to my question, no doubt, would be as diverse as their religious perspectives. For example, atheists and skeptics would think I was delusional. Agnostics wouldn't think much about it nor probably even care. Contemplative Christians would react to my question as supportive of their intuitive feelings-oriented approach to hearing from God. Some of the charismatic and pentecostal Christians might respond in the same way. Conservative Christians and those with a cessationist bent might worry that I had bailed on the written Word of God in favor of personal subjective communication with Jesus. All biblical Christians, I would hope, would restrain themselves from thinking ill of me doctrinally for at least a few minutes. They would give me the opportunity to explain what I meant by my question and then would search the Scriptures to see whether or not it was true.

Let me make a seemingly controversial statement before I start explaining myself. If someone who calls himself a Christian is not hearing from God, he's in trouble—not potential trouble, but serious trouble—guaranteed. His situation is like that of a man in the middle of a minefield without a map or any device to guide him and keep him out of harm's way. That said, what do I mean by "hearing from God?"

I need to begin with what I believe is the Lord's responsibility: God has to communicate with those whom He created. Why? Because there are only a limited number of things we can know about Him without His communicating to us directly. Everyone who recognizes that the universe and everything in it must have had a Creator/Designer would also understand that the Creator must be infinitely intelligent and powerful. That awareness, however, doesn't supply necessary details about the Creator that only He can provide. Furthermore, He is infinite, and we are finite; our own efforts to figure out an infinite God cannot go beyond mere

guesswork. That same ignorance applies to knowledge about ourselves.

Let us reason for a moment. What are some of the things that only God can supply? Well, for one thing, knowledge of who He is! Then there are His characteristics and attributes, as well as His reasons for creating us. What about humanity's condition right after its creation and its later rebellion and separation from Him? Then we learn of His plan for reconciliation between Himself and those very creatures!

Without God communicating such information to us, we're left in a quagmire of speculations, conjectures, theories, and unsubstantiated opinions. Therefore, not only must God communicate with us, but He must do it in a way that we finite and fallen beings can understand. This He has already done through His direct communication to us, which is—His Word. His Scriptures. His Bible!

What then of the question: "Heard from God lately?" If what we've heard isn't grounded in the written Word of God, we're more than likely in that minefield mentioned earlier. Each step is precarious, even though the first one may not blow our feet off. But as National Park rangers instruct and warn hikers, it's the first step off the marked trail that leads to their becoming lost.

The Bible is filled with instructions, exhortations, and warnings regarding the necessity of carefully adhering to what it says. Hebrews chapter 2 begins, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Is "slippage" something to be concerned about? Second Timothy 4:3-4 declares, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Jesus, in Matthew 24:4, warns, "Take heed that no man deceive you." Not earnestly heeding the instructions of God's written Word is the basis for one's drifting away, or, as noted, stepping off the "marked trail" that God, in His mercy, has laid out before us.

What the Bible supplies is "sound doctrine," meaning those teachings that were given to and faithfully recorded by God's prophets through the Holy Spirit. They are objective teachings from God, bereft of the subjective input of men. They are God's words, not man's (Galatians 1:11-12). Yet we are told prophetically that a time will come among professing and true Christians that they will not endure (continue steadfastly) in God's instructions. False teachers will seduce them through their doctrines. That

fact is confirmed in the warning given by Jesus in answer to His disciples concerning the last days prior to His return, which He characterized as being a time of *great deception* (Matthew 24:24). Although that time is certainly upon us, the antidote for individual believers is found in the Apostle Paul's exhortation to Timothy that he "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). "Enduring" sound doctrine means reading it, believing it, and living it out.

Going back to the question, "Heard from God lately?"—how lately is "lately"? I'm hoping the response is overwhelmingly "daily!" There is no better habit for the believer in Jesus Christ than to read the Bible daily—at least none of which I am aware. Here are just some of the reasons. Those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, believing that He paid the full penalty for their sins, have been born again. They have received the free gift of eternal life and have begun a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus their Savior. Of course, that includes loving Him.

For any relationship to develop, an increase in the knowledge that individuals have of one another is key. Everyone knows that's the way it is when it comes to people with whom they physically interact, whether they be newlyweds, or in a relationship with new friends or new co-workers, etc. What about someone we want to personally befriend but whom we can't physically be with? We might consider becoming pen pals or "email pals," which may satisfy the desire to get to know them better.

Well, then what about *developing* a relationship with Jesus? That takes place through the reading of His Word. It's through the Scriptures that we learn who He is, what He has done for us, what He wants for our lives, and how much He loves us. We're told, "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The more we learn of all He has done for us, the more our relationship with Him grows. That's at the heart of my question, "Heard from God lately?" If we're not hearing from Jesus daily through the reading of His Word (He *is* the Word! [Revelation 19:13]), our relationship with Him will suffer—at best. The circumstances that occurred with those in the Ephesian church, who, we are told, had "left their first love," Jesus Himself (Revelation 2:4), happened because of their allowance for things—some of them even good—to hinder their love relationship with Him. So, too, will our love for Him be strangled by our own negligence to connect with Him through the Scriptures.

Why does this happen to many believers who are, or should be, aware of the

horrendous price He paid in order to save them from their sins? The reasons, among many, include worldly distractions, backsliding, laziness, loving self more than Him, and, for increasing numbers of folks, being deceived regarding *how* we are to communicate with Him.

The first means of growing in our relationship with Jesus *must be* through the written words of Scripture, which is God's objective communication to humanity. This is critical, because our interpretation of the Word *can be tested* on an objective basis, according to principles of hermeneutics. The major deception of our day, which began in the Garden of Eden with Satan's ploy of subtly undermining God's command to Adam and Eve, is to replace what God has indeed said with man's false interpretations. Such interpretations are too often formulated through emotions, impressions, personal sensitivities, intuitions, and so forth. Those who take such an approach rely on their feelings for their understanding. This may also lead to the error of eisegesis, i.e., introducing one's own presuppositions, agendas, or biases *into* and *onto* a biblical text. When the experiential dominates a person's life, God's truth is lost.

Next we are going to look at some of the meanings regarding the question "Heard from God lately?" that are understood in ways that are seriously at odds with what's been presented above in this article. Of late, there has been a rush away from the objective interpretation of Scripture. Now, many insist that they are hearing from God *personally* with little or no regard to His Word at all! This is not new in church history. In the third century AD, the Catholic Desert Fathers were all about hearing from God mystically. That precedent continued into the Catholic monastic and cloistered period and through mystical nuns such as Teresa of Avila and Anne Catherine Emmerich, then into the 20th century via priests and monks such as Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen. The latter deceased priest has become a particular favorite of many influential evangelicals, including Rick and Kay Warren. Quaker Richard Foster and his Renovaré organization have been instrumental in influencing the Contemplative Movement, with its mystical methods (meditation techniques and spiritual rituals drawn from Eastern mysticism), to spread throughout evangelicalism today.

What has taken place in a greater way among Pentecostals and Charismatics is the very same spiritual subjectivism, albeit cloaked in biblical terminology. Some of their leaders give the impression (intentionally) that they are in a continual conversa-

tion with God. One of the false doctrines they conjure up to support their heresies is the teaching that God has two basic but different modes of communication: *logos* and *rhema*. Their belief is that *logos* is God's communication through the written word, and *rhema* is His spoken word. No. In fact, the terms are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament. Moreover, according to this doctrine, God's oral transmission has authority (they call it "new revelation") over His *logos*, which means that the hearers are beyond being corrected by Scripture! Like Satan (Genesis 3:1-4), the leaders in this movement continually add to, undermine, and contradict God's Word, while their followers willingly conform to whatever those over them may claim. All of those connected with the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) and ministries such as the International House of Prayer (IHOP), Bethel Church Redding, and the Elijah List are among those who promote this error.

Hearing from God experientially seems to be an accepted practice among some of the most influential women in ministry today. Even a cursory review of the teachings of Beth Moore, Joyce Meyer, Priscilla Shirer, Sarah Young, and Jennie Allen of the IF:Gathering (and her conference speakers) reveals a preponderance of "conversations with God" and little to no exegesis of the Scriptures. It can't be overstated how dangerous this subjective teaching and pursuit is to millions of Christian women spiritually. Worse than just taking a step off the path of God's Word, it's a step off a cliff with nothing objective (e.g., sound doctrine) in sight to grab onto. Once a believer buys into the "God told me" stories of others, biblical doctrine quickly mixes with and is lost in a jumble of personal experiences. More often than not, the subjective experiences and teachings replace sound doctrine and are accepted as being true to and even supplanting the Scriptures. It then becomes a clear case of adding to God's Word, a practice that the Bible condemns (Proverbs 30:5-6, Revelation 22:18-19).

Are all subjective personal experiences with Jesus likewise condemned? No. Everyone who has believed the gospel began a *personal* intimate relationship with Him. That can't take place without the involvement, to some degree, of one's emotions. It may also include some form of personal communication with Jesus—if He chooses, *how* He chooses, and *when* He chooses. The principle of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit personally interacting with believers is found throughout Scripture. Paul's life in Christ reveals his often-subjective guidance and communication with the Holy Spirit.

Subjective? Yes. For example, Paul is forbidden by the Spirit to preach in Bithynia and is redirected to Macedonia (Acts 16:7-10). That communication was subjective, meant only for Paul at that time. Was this an objective command of God, indicating that believers are *never* to go to Bithynia to preach? No! Peter writes to believers in Bithynia, so obviously the gospel was preached and believed there (1 Peter 1:1-2). Three things are demonstrated in those verses and many others: 1) The principle that God communicates to believers is established; 2) He communicates objectively through instructions and commands for all who read His Word, and 3) He communicates personally and subjectively with individual believers.

Should the Lord choose to communicate with a believer on a personal basis, that must neither be received as though it were equal to the Scriptures nor put forth in any way that supplements or supplants God's Word. Furthermore, as with every spiritual experience, it must be tested: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God..." (1 John 4:1). The critical test is whether or not the content of the communication or the experience is a) true to the teachings of Scripture and b) true to the revealed character of the persons of the Godhead.

Books promoting conversations with God such as *God Calling, A Course in Miracles, Conversations with God*, and *Jesus Calling*, to name but a few, have become best sellers within Christendom, mostly because few Christians seem interested in applying biblical discernment, which is in direct disobedience to Paul's exhortation to Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The two women who channeled "Jesus" in *God Calling* said they felt highly privileged for being "selected" to be personally taught by him, and indicated that they were more comfortable not having to rely on written words. Who wouldn't want to be personally spoon fed by Jesus and be convinced that His teaching content was at a higher level than what has been written down in the Bible? That's an incredibly powerful seduction and one that is deceiving millions in Christendom today.

Pray for those who have been drawn in by those who "speak not according to [God's] word" (Isaiah 8:20); and pray for the shepherds who are not shielding their sheep by warning them in solemn words that "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar"

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have a question please: Does Satan tempt us with evil thoughts?

RESPONSE: The pattern of temptation and sin, according to James 1:13-15 is as follows: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

Nevertheless, it is certainly true that during the temptation the adversary does influence our thoughts, as scripture testifies. For example, when King Ahab was planning to go to battle at Ramothgilead, where the Lord had determined he would be killed (1 Kings 22:20-23), we are given a glimpse behind the scenes at how the adversary and his demons influence man: “And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.”

Satan is an adversary to God and to humanity, and, as a consequence, will do anything he can to tempt individuals and turn them away from the Lord. We can see, therefore, that at times Satan may give individuals evil thoughts. We are also given examples in the Bible of people, such as Judas, who betrayed Jesus to His enemies. At that time, the Bible tells us, “Satan entered Judas” (Luke 22:3). Was Judas thus not responsible for what he did next? There is no room for quoting the old comedy line, “The devil made me do it.” In his own greed, Judas willingly accepted the money he was offered to reveal where Jesus could be found, thus betraying the Lord. And in fact, John 12:6 tells us that Judas was (already) a thief. Yes, Satan influenced his sinful desires, but Judas proceeded with that which was already in his heart.

QUESTION: I’ve heard several speakers lately say that Jesus was afraid that

Satan would kill Him prematurely in the Garden of Gethsemane before He could get to the cross, and that’s why He cried out, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” the “cup” being a premature death in the Garden. Is that true?

Response: Hardly. Dying on the cross as the sacrifice for sin was the culmination of Christ’s purpose in being born into this world. The prophets had foretold it, and Christ himself had confirmed it (Matthew 16:21, John 12:32-33). Nothing and no one could have killed Him or otherwise prevented the fulfillment of His mission.

Jesus is God. Neither man nor Satan could take His life. He declared, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17-18). Christ is also perfect, sinless man—the one-and-only God-man. As man, He would not for a moment have been in fear of Satan slaying Him, for He was walking in perfect obedience to and under the complete care of His Father. To suggest such a fear indicts Christ with the rankest unbelief.

Remember, also, that after asking if the cup might pass from Him, Christ said, “nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). If the “cup” that He wanted to escape was death in the Garden, then by saying, “nevertheless...thy will be done,” Christ was suggesting that it might be the Father’s will for Him to die in the Garden at the hands of Satan rather than to pay for our sins upon the cross, which is unthinkable.

Nor was the “cup” the physical pain of being crucified. Many had bravely endured crucifixion, and Jesus was no coward. The “cup” from which He shrank was the awful separation from God that His justice required as the penalty for sin: that His holy soul would be made “an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:10). In other words, He would literally be “made [to be] sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). His prayer, therefore, was an earnest request from Son to Father: “Might there not be some other possible means of saving sinners?” The Father’s answer was “No.” We know, therefore, that Christ’s death upon the cross as our sin-bearer was and is the only means of salvation. Horrible beyond comprehension, what He endured we will never know. He fully paid that penalty for us.

QUESTION: Is there scripture in the Bible that restricts God (Jesus) from personally revealing Himself (one-on-

one) to an individual living in a Godless tribe in darkest Africa or anywhere else? Please state your scripture reference in your answer.

Response: There is no specific scripture that forbids the Lord appearing to and communicating with anyone, regardless of their spiritual state. In Genesis 20, when Abimelech had taken Abraham’s wife, Sarah, into his household, we are told that “God came to Abimelech in a dream by night...” (Genesis 20:3). In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar also received a dream from the Lord, which Daniel interpreted. When King Nebuchadnezzar failed to hearken to the warning and spoke out in pride, the scripture states, “While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee” (Daniel 4:31). There are other examples as well.

That being said, we know that the Lord has also chosen to use His creation to reveal Himself to all: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:1-3). Furthermore, we have Paul’s inspired statement in Romans, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?... so then faith cometh by *hearing*, and hearing *by the word of God*” (Romans 10:14-17; emphasis added).

This is instructive, as seen in the testimony of a Liberian African 14-year-old boy named Samuel Kaboo Morris. He was held captive by another tribe who beat him daily, but his testimony told that one night, during his beating, there was a flash of light, his ropes fell off and his weakened body gained strength to stand.

A voice told him to flee. He ran into the jungle, surviving by eating snails and mangos. Some time later, he came to a coffee plantation owned by a former slave, who also was a Christian. He eventually arrived in Monrovia, where he heard a missionary speak of the Apostle Paul’s salvation and recognized similarities to his own life.

We see that the Lord brought Morris to a place where he *heard* the gospel from a Christian. First Corinthians 1:21 tells us, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe” (emphasis added). Thus we see God’s chosen method in Scripture.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Why Should Satan Exist?

Question: Why would God, knowing all the evil that would follow, create a being that would become Satan? What could be the purpose of Satan's existence? The biblical devil, in fact, is presented as so powerful that he seems to be God's equal. If not, why has it taken God so long to conquer him?

Response: No one reading much of the Bible could come to the conclusion that Satan is God's equal. Moreover, the reason for his existence and why he has not already been locked away becomes clear as we understand the issues involved. God's desire is to capture the hearts of those whom He created in His image. He wants to have them in His presence for eternity, where He will fully demonstrate "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians:2:7).

For God to genuinely win man's heart, there must be no coercion. Man must have complete freedom to reject God and to choose to worship another being or object. Satan presents man with the ultimate alternative to God, and he convinces billions of people to reject God and to give their allegiance to him. Such an alternative is essential in determining man's true desire. To have in heaven those who really didn't want to be there is hardly God's intention and would counterproductive to His eternal purpose.

Satan as the Competitive Suitor

We can illustrate the point like this. Suppose a king wants to marry the most beautiful woman in his realm. In order to be certain of winning her heart, he expels from his kingdom all men who might be his rivals for her affection. Obviously, that is not the way to be assured of her sincere love; she must have the freedom to choose someone else. Only when she has that freedom and, having rejected

all others, consents to marry the king, can he be assured that he has indeed captured her heart.

For the same reason, God has not locked Satan away but allows him to continue to entice mankind with his false promises. As the most powerful and brilliant being next to God, Satan provides the ultimate alternative. The battle between God and Satan for the soul of man is very real. It would hardly be any credit to the world's heavyweight boxing champion to defeat a four-year-old in the ring; the opponent must be worthy. Satan is the strongest opponent, God's ultimate competition in the battle for the hearts and minds of mankind.

Yes, as far as raw power is concerned, God could immediately throw Satan into the "bottomless pit" (Revelation:20:1-3) so that he could no longer deceive mankind. In fact, that will be the case during the millennial reign of Christ upon earth, when it will be fully proved that man is an evil rebel in his own right without any influence from

Satan. In the meantime, however, the battle for the souls of mankind is not to be fought with raw power, for the issues involved are not of that nature. It is a contest for the heart's affection and loyalty; and to that end Satan must be allowed full freedom to tempt mankind with every ploy he can devise.

Satan is not only the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians:4:4), but its kingdoms belong to him (Matthew:4:8-10). He is able to reward those who follow him with great riches and success in this world. However, Satan is doomed, and those who give their allegiance to him will share in that doom eternally.

In the battle for man's soul and destiny, God is completely open and honest, while Satan misrepresents and deceives. Thus the battle is presented in the Bible as between the truth of God and the lie of Satan. God wants those who choose to receive Christ as Savior and Lord to do so on the basis of the facts. If Satan has more to offer, if his way is best, then let mankind follow him.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

When we belong to the Lord and seek to live for Him, we'll see that our own provision isn't limited to earthly means. Who, reading this, has ever faced an impossible situation and could see no solution, when suddenly, the problem was solved in ways that couldn't have been imagined? It was God doing that, not "just a coincidence"! Who but God could take His people from under the whip of the taskmaster and, on the way out of town, see that they were given the taskmaster's treasures to take with them?

Do you question the love of God? Even though we may face impossible situations, God isn't bound by natural ways of providing for us! He is Jehovah Jireh, "The Lord Will Provide," and He will do so in many ways that will astound us. He is the Champion of the chosen. Let us go out today in faith, realizing that He knows our trials and our needs, and He is always faithful in His time.

—Barry Stagner,
Beside Still Waters (see product pages)

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Reflections on a Reasonable Faith

Dave Hunt

A FALSE IDEA exists in both the world and in the church that faith and reason do not go together when, in fact, one cannot exist without the other. When God called out, “Adam, where art thou?” it was not Adam’s physical location He was asking about but his moral and spiritual relationship with his Creator. As a bumper sticker says, “When you feel far from God, guess who moved?”

We move on to the prodigal son, who demanded to receive his inheritance before the designated time, which would have been after the death of his parents. Instead of investing his inheritance wisely, he spent it all on harlots and wild living. It could be when those he thought were his friends saw that he had exhausted his resources, they deserted him, leaving him destitute, thus showing what kind of “friends” he had accumulated on his downward path to poverty and shame.

God wants to get our attention. “Come now, and let us reason together,” says God to His wayward children. His Word has much to say to us in regard to this exhortation. He wants us to meditate upon it day and night. My earliest memories of my father were of seeing him on his knees with his open Bible. I never had to try to memorize the Bible. I had heard it so many times in our family devotions and had read it so often in my personal study that it became a part of me.

A wedding is coming. It will take place in heaven. As the hymn says, “What a day that will be, when my Jesus I shall see. When He takes me by the hand and leads me through the Promised Land...what a glorious day that will be!” This should be our eager anticipation.

When someone asks, “How soon do you think the Rapture will be?” I often respond, “How soon do you want it to be?” The story is told of a preacher asking his audience, “How many of you want to go to heaven?” All the children raised their hands except one small boy sitting in the front row. When the meeting ended, the preacher sat beside the lad and asked, “Don’t you want to go to heaven?”

“Oh, yes, sir,” he replied.

“But when I asked all those who wanted to go to heaven to raise their hands, you didn’t raise yours.”

“Oh, sir, I thought you meant right now.”

Of course we want to go to heaven, but there is so much we want to do on earth first that we lose our sense of urgency. We are the Bride of Christ. How tragic if we lack the eagerness of anticipation that the bride ought to have as the day of her wedding draws near! On the one hand, we desire to be with Christ. We know that the Lord loves us, but to think of standing before the I AM is awesome beyond belief. May we all look with renewed longing for His promised coming.

It is amazing that God wants to reason with us, His creatures. The Word speaks much of *understanding*. What does this mean? God may explain why He has done certain things, but He will not consult with us about anything nor debate issues. He does not look to us for advice but delights in our obedience. We are to love God with our whole heart and love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus said this was the essence of the law and the prophets.

God has no obligation to explain Himself to us. Even so, God says, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18). I think this is His way of trying to share His heart with us. I often think of how great God is and marvel that He would desire our fellowship, but such is His heart. With salvation, all things are become new, and that includes the beginning of an intimate relationship as between father and child.

Scripture says, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7). God is not trying to force anything upon us, but he wants us to understand and to delight in the relationship that He desires to have with His children.

Of course, faith is not a leap in the dark and the hope of a soft landing. We must seek to know where God wants us to go and what His will is for our lives. He *wants* us to know. He wants us to understand. He does not wish to treat us as slaves but as dearest friends. How astonishing! How glorious! Abraham was called “the friend of God.” Jesus said to His disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants...but friends” (John 15:15). This is hard to fathom—that

we could be God’s friends, and not only His friends but the dearest objects of His heart’s affection.

How well George Matheson expressed this truth, which came, as he said, “like a dayspring on high”:

*Oh, Love that will not let me go!
I rest my weary soul on thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*

*O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flick-’ring torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine’s blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.*

*O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.*

*O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life’s glory dead,
And from the ground there
 blossoms red
Life that shall endless be. Amen.*

We are commanded to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. This is not a suggestion from God but a command. Jesus said, “When you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, or your heavenly Father will not forgive you.” That’s hard for us to face, but the language is clear. Jesus goes on to explain that “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15). This is part of what we know as the “Sermon on the Mount.” It pierces our hearts. I remember a long cab ride when I was trying to explain the gospel to the driver. He claimed that he had never sinned. I quoted the same scripture to him and asked him if he had followed this admonition: “Do you love your neighbor as yourself?”

With a short laugh, he said, “I haven’t done that for one second.”

“Well,” I replied, “the words of Christ are clear: if you hold anything against anyone, you must not expect God to forgive

you any of your sins.” Of course, without the new life that Christ’s death imparts, such forgiveness was beyond his ability. What was impossible for the cab driver is incumbent upon us as followers of Christ.

This is difficult to face. What we call “The Lord’s Prayer” is really the prayer that Christ gave to His disciples and to us as well. We can address the Almighty God: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” (Matthew 6:9-13).

I often think how amazing it is that we could have a *personal* relationship with God and that He should call us His friends. This is awesome! I often tell God, “We are such pitiful creatures. You are so great. How can we even dare talk to You? You are without beginning or end; You are infinite in power and wisdom, yet You call us Your friends. What gracious condescension! O give me the ability to respond in like manner!”

The psalmist said, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psalm 8:3-6).

Why should God want us to love Him? What could our love mean to Him? He really doesn’t need anything from us. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwelt in perfect harmony, complete in fellowship with one another for all eternity past. There is no question that man was made not only in the image of God but for a unique companionship with Him. That’s too much for us to even begin to understand!

Surely God didn’t *need* a companion in man. It was a special relationship that He desired. That relationship was lost when man sinned and God could no longer have fellowship with him. We don’t understand this loss, but I believe that every human being feels it. How deeply God himself must have felt that loss!

There is an emptiness in every human

heart that only God can fill. God and man were meant to dwell in fellowship—in companionship. The angelic beings who did not follow Lucifer in his fall could never have this relationship with God, for as sinless beings, they could never experience the redeemed sinner’s debt of gratitude. Only man could (Luke 7:47).

The breach between God and man affected the entire universe. Romans 8 says that the whole creation groans in travail, waiting “for the manifestation of the sons of God.” I believe every human being knows that something is wrong with this universe that goes deeper than the headlines about war, murder, rape, robbery, and all of the evils in human society. There is something else behind all of this.

The old writers knew this and tried to express it. Dickens put it into his writings, as did Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and many oth-

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—1 Peter 3:15

ers. In contrast, the vast majority of films that Hollywood turns out today are not only repulsively immoral but generally shallow in their expression of what humanness is all about, and fail to reveal the emptiness in man’s heart. Many of our older writers presented the evil of man’s heart and, although they were not Christians, their writings were filled with examples pitting good against evil. That does not come out in the popular novels and movies of today, where God is not honored but often derided. They reflect God’s sad commentary: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1).

When we present the gospel, we must be prepared to reason. We know that the Word of God is living and powerful, the sword of the Spirit, yet we are given the privilege of sharing it with others. We must share the *reasons* for believing in God: “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

This raises a question. Why would anyone ask us for a “reason”? It presumes that we must have given some occasion to arouse the question—hopefully, the personal witness of our godly life.

We often hesitate to share the gospel because we don’t know how to begin. I think of the illustration my father used. He told of the barber who was shaving a man and raised the open blade above his head and said, “Are you prepared to die?” The man ran out of the barbershop in terror. Obviously, this is not a good opening in presenting the gospel!

I remember a well-dressed, well-coifed, and obviously wealthy woman sitting next to me on a plane. I tried a couple of times to open a conversation, but she remained aloof. I prayed to the Lord, “I have tried twice to find a way to talk with this woman so that I could present the gospel to her. If anything is going to happen, this woman is going to have to open the door.” I was reading Richard Dawkins’s book, *The Selfish Gene*, and had it in the pocket of the seat in front of me. I pulled it out to read it, and my seat companion looked at it and said, “Who would write a book like that?” That was the opening I was waiting for, and we had a wonderful conversation. She turned out to be a seeking soul.

There are those all around us who are waiting for someone to present the gospel to them. I once sat next to a man who was contemplating suicide. He was certainly ripe for the gospel. If we want to share the Good News with someone, the Lord will open the door. I do not advise trying to force the gospel on anyone. Let the Holy Spirit do His work. We must seek God’s direction if we are to be about His business effectively.

Modern man has no time for God. An old hymn asks, “What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be. One day your heart will be asking, ‘What will He do with me?’” For all eternity, lost souls will be haunted by the realization that heaven’s door could have been opened to them by the Savior they rejected.

Happily, we can still proclaim that the door remains open and whosoever will may enter in. How much longer this may be the case we cannot tell. While there is still time, every true Christian ought to be alert to eagerly seize every opportunity that presents itself to share the good news of the gospel. It is our Lord’s “reasonable” expectation.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Is it correct to say that God doesn't choose our leaders but that He can raise up and bring down leaders using circumstances, without affecting their free will, in order to carry out His purposes?

RESPONSE: It is certainly true that in Psalm 75:6-7 we are told that "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." In the process of "putting down" and "setting up," He will use circumstances to accomplish His will without stifling the free will of the individual. To say that God "does not choose our leaders" is a point that certainly will be debated, in view of the fact that His use of circumstances *reveals* His will concerning the leaders who are set up or put down. That choice, however, is not the same as the Calvinist idea of sovereignty would allege.

The Bible teaches (Acts 10:34-35) that God elected to save every soul who "fears God and works righteousness." Before man's creation, God elected that men would be saved "in Christ" (Eph 1:3-4, 7-12). God gave His plan for the redemption of man (Eph 3:10-11). He also granted that man would have free will, which is simply the ability to choose to obey or disobey Him (Gn 3:1-6; Josh 24:15; Mt 11:28). Again, without at least that measure of "free will," as Dave Hunt has noted, Joshua 24:15 becomes meaningless.

So your statement is accurate, although the idea of God "choosing" someone is certainly reflected in His use of circumstances to accomplish His will.

QUESTION: What does the Bible mean in Romans 12 when it says if your enemy treats you unfairly, "Love and feed him, for in doing so you will dump coals of fire on his head?" I regularly interact with someone who acts like my friend one week, then "plays games" with me the next. But I am tired of their games. I thought of retaliating, but I know that is a terrible witness to Christianity.

RESPONSE: The full context of this thought can be seen in Romans 12:17-20: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt

heap coals of fire on his head."

As you very correctly note, lashing back at those who have treated us poorly is a terrible witness. Furthermore, verse 18 tells us that "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." That's what we're called to do—that is, do all that we can. In addition, we are not to give way to wrath, because the Lord states, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."

The action for us to take, as Paul admonishes, is this: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Romans 12:20). This utterance by Paul was not new at the time, for He was directly quoting Proverbs 25:21-22.

Further, the admonition parallels what our Lord said. In Matthew 5:44-48, the Lord Jesus declares, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

In short, we are to do good (as much as is possible) to these people, knowing that the Lord will be their judge and, in answer to our prayers, may very well bring them to salvation or at the least change their attitude.

QUESTION: Mary worship? The Catholic Church teaches that to worship any person, place, or thing outside of God is idolatry, including the worship of Mary, which is stupid! For Catholics, Jesus Christ is our Lord, Savior, best friend, and our God. Not Mary. Having said that, if Jesus Christ is not your master, those other titles are just a bunch of words. Apparently, since you spread confusion and division, Jesus Christ is not your master....

RESPONSE: Your argument is not with us. After Pope John Paul II was shot, it was not to God that he prayed nor the name of Jesus upon which he called. Instead, he kept repeating, "Mary, my mother!" Vatican loudspeakers broadcast the prayers of the rosary. After he recovered, he gave Mary all the glory for saving his life. and made a pilgrimage to Fatima to publicly thank her.

In his book, *The Glories of Mary*, Italian Bishop Alphonsus Liguori explained how God gave Mary to mankind as the "Gate of Heaven." He was quoting Saint Bonaven-

ture, "No one can enter Heaven *unless by Mary* (italics added), as though through a door." In his book, Liguori affirms that Mary rules over one-half of the kingdom of God. Consequently, Liguori said that people should pray to Mary as a mediator and look to her as an object of trust for answered prayer. The book goes so far as to say that there is no salvation outside of Mary. In response, some Catholics would argue that these are extreme views and not representative of official Catholic Church teaching. Instead of being declared a heretic, however, Liguori was canonized as a saint, and the Catholic Church declared him to be a "doctor of the Church" (a person whose teachings carry weight and authority). Finally, the book is officially promoted by the Catholic Church, and his teachings apparently have influenced a number of popes.

One of the unrealized goals of John Paul II was to pronounce Mary as "co-redemptrix" with Christ, which, for all practical purposes, acknowledged her as deity. Many Catholics annually present such a petition for this recognition. Pope Benedict XV declared of Mary that "[O]ne can justly say that with Christ, she herself redeemed mankind" (*Encyclical Intersodalici*, 1918). Pope Pius IX said, "Our salvation is based upon the holy Virgin...so that if there is any hope and spiritual healing for us we receive it solely and uniquely from her" (*Encyclical*, February 2, 1849). On the contrary, the Bible tells us "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tm 2:5).

Your argument becomes more disingenuous when considering countries that are primarily Catholic. For example, many a Catholic has commented that, "Catholics in Mexico (and throughout Latin America), in their devotion to Mary, do things that we would only do when worshiping God." Official Catholic teaching says that God has exalted Mary in heavenly glory as Queen of Heaven and earth (*Catechism*, 966). Mary is declared worthy of praise with special devotion (*Catechism*, 971, 2675).

There is a growing Marian component to Catholicism that is quite militant about recognizing the fact that "veneration," by definition and in practice, is no different from "worship," which, according to Scripture, is only possible with God. For years, we at TBC received Marian publications (which contributed to our research). Your argument is with them and the huge numbers of likeminded Catholics.

And, sir, regarding your final comment, the confusion and division is already here, and it is honestly and objectively plain.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Satan's Fall

Question: I was always taught from Isaiah 14 that Satan was a fallen angel originally named Lucifer. Recently I've learned that this isn't so, for the one being spoken of in Isaiah 14 is obviously "the king of Babylon" (verse 4). Then was Satan created by God as he is now, the most evil of creatures?

Response: Satan was not created by God as he is now. God does not create evil beings. Satan was originally as the Bible describes him in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 and elsewhere. He is a fallen cherub with great power and cunning. The cherubim seemed to be the angels closest to God, guarding even His very presence—and Satan was originally the chief cherub. Psalm:99:1 says of God, "He sitteth between the cherubims." (See also Genesis:3:24 ; Exodus:25:20 , 37:9; Ezekiel 10; Hebrews:9:5, etc.).

Yes, the king of Babylon is being addressed in Isaiah 14. However, what is said about him could not apply solely to him but ultimately only to Satan. For example, when did the king of Babylon have a position in heaven from which he fell? At times the Bible addresses Satan through ungodly earthly rulers to show that he is the real power behind them, just as he will be the power behind Antichrist, of whom it is said, "The dragon [Satan] gave him his power and his seat and great authority" (Revelation:13:2). In fact, all these despotic and evil rulers are types or symbols of Antichrist.

That Satan is being addressed through such kings is clearer in Ezekiel:28:2-19. Here the "prince of Tyrus" is being addressed: "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub [highest order of angel] . . . and I have set thee so. . . . Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created till iniquity was found in thee" (verses 13-15). Obviously, none of this was true of

the literal "prince of Tyrus" but only of Satan, who inspired and directed him in his ungodly activity.

Note the similarities in Ezekiel 28 to what is said of "the king of Babylon" in Isaiah 14: "I am a God, I sit in the seat of God. . . . Thou [has] set thine heart as the heart of God," etc. Clearly Satan is being addressed as the power behind both the king of Babylon and the prince of Tyrus. Isaiah 14 does indeed present Satan's fall.

Satan is "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians:4:4). Christ did not dispute his claim to ownership of the world system when, in the temptation in the wilderness, Satan offered to give the kingdoms of the world to Christ if He would bow down and worship him (Matthew:4:8,9). Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 carry the same message.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

God is ready, waiting to be gracious. All the infinite stores of His grace and power are at the command of His Church and for the glory of His Son. The result of this winter's work will depend on the attitude of His Church. A heaven-sent revival will come when the Church turns away from the frivolous and worldly spirit of entertainment, applies herself with persevering prayer to her real work, rekindles the wasted fires of zeal and faith, clothes herself with sackcloth and ashes over the follies, feebleness, and sins of the past. Then with every divine and quickened energy the Church can assault the strongholds of sin with invincible might, and show God, angels, devils, and men, she is in dead earnest about saving men from sin and from an eternal hell. Her renewed purpose is to point men to holiness, an eternal Heaven, and hasten the coming of her Lord; she no longer intends to dissipate her strength and dishonor her vocation by her shams, shows, frivolities. Then the Church will be visited by such a revival as we have not seen in all these years, and the "glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former." (Haggai:2:9)

—E.M. Bounds

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Missing the Mark— Missing the Solution

T. A. McMahon

MOST OF US understand that “missing the mark” is one of the biblical definitions of sin. The Apostle Paul uses the Greek verb *hamartano* for sin in Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” That may seem to some as a bit unfair, since rarely would we think that not measuring up to a goal or standard is *sin*. “Missing the mark” doesn’t seem like much of an offense, considering most sins that we’re aware of, especially the horrendous ones. An arrow that falls short of the target is sin? Seriously? To react in such a way reveals much about ourselves and the condition of our hearts in relationship to our Creator.

God is perfect. Everything He says and does is perfect. Therefore, His standard is perfect. Anything that “come[s] short” of His standard must be *sin*. As James tells us, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). That’s God’s criterion for being with Him. We sin, we die. And we have all sinned. Death involves physical and spiritual separation from God. Without repentance, it will last forever.

One might ask, as the disciples did on one occasion, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus responded, “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:25-26). God’s judgment and justice are perfect. The penalty for sin is eternal separation from Him. It’s an infinite punishment, and finite mankind can never pay the full sentence. But God can, and did! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Jesus, the perfect, sinless God/Man, satisfied perfect justice by fully paying for the sins of mankind—past, present, and future.

Although God has provided salvation for all humanity through Jesus, it’s only effectual for those who put their faith in Him as their Savior, understanding that He and He alone can save them. No one and *nothing* else can be added as a solution—not good works, not church attendance, not a denomination, not rituals, not sacraments, not canonized saints or religious leaders, not baptism—*nothing else. Solus Christus*—only by Christ.

Once we are saved, we are trans-

formed—but not perfectly. Not yet. That takes place when we go to be with Jesus. Prior to that perfect transformation we are given a new nature, yet we still retain our old nature. We can sin, but we are no longer in bondage to or controlled by sin. As new creatures in Christ, our lives are enabled to please God by His grace and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit who lives within us (1 Corinthians 3:16). Nevertheless, our new life in Christ involves a struggle between our old nature and our new nature.

How important is that struggle? Although our salvation doesn’t depend on it, since salvation was given to all who received it by faith as a free gift, it does relate to a host of things pertaining to our temporal life in Christ. Such as? Our relationship with Jesus—in other words, our love for Him, our pleasing Him, our maturity in Him, our fruitfulness, our obedience, our witness, our rewards in heaven. Such things and many others are dependent to a degree upon our *not* “missing the mark.” In other words, they must be handled God’s way.

Perfectly? Yes. That must be our goal. Scripture tells us, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16). “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may *stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*” (emphasis added - Colossians 4:12). That must be every believer’s goal.

Is it attainable? No, not in perfection or completely. Then why make the effort? That may sound like a silly question for those who are biblical Christians and who believe that whatever they do, they are to do to the glory of the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:31). Yet even the world gets it. The popular refrain of the self-help and motivational gurus is “Be the best that you can be.” They recognize that even an effort that falls short of the individual’s goal will nevertheless prove to be of benefit. Of course that’s all about self, and far removed from a believer’s motivation... hopefully.

The fervent prayers of Epaphras for his brothers and sisters in Christ in Colosse tell us two important things: a) We are exhorted to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, and b) As a prayer, the efforts of the believers in Colosse will be helped to that end by the Lord. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes similarly to those

in Thessalonica: “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us *how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more*. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus” (emphasis added - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2). Those two verses pretty much sum up and support the points and concerns I have in writing this article.

Here they are: 1) Throughout the Scriptures, we believers are exhorted to do things God’s way as perfectly and completely as we can by His grace. 2) Through His Word He has given us all the instructions we need in order to do things His way (2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). 3) He has given us His Holy Spirit to help us understand and do what He commands (1 Corinthians 3:16; John 16:13). 4) To the degree that we don’t take to heart and do not only what God has provided for us but what He commands us to do and in the way He wants us to do it, that carelessness involves actively “missing the mark.” It’s sin. And sin leads to separation.

Sin, for the believer in Christ (as I hope we know), has consequences that are temporal and not eternal. Christ’s payment on our behalf makes our destiny with Him eternally secure. As Christians, our sins have the temporal effect of destroying our fruitfulness as well as adversely affecting our relationship with Jesus. He will never leave us nor forsake us. Our sins, however, cause us to draw away from Him until we repent. “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*” (emphasis added - Isaiah 59:1-2). However, true repentance of our sins (no matter what those sins may be) enables us to draw near to God, thereby restoring our relationship (James 4:8).

How serious can “missing the mark” become? What follows is an observation that grieves me deeply, which is why I have begun this article by trying to clarify the necessity of God calling us to perfection. His Word, His instructions, His commands, are *perfect*. Furthermore, they are God’s words, not men’s: “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12). God’s words are truth; man’s words added to the Lord’s are “profane and vain” leaven. They may seem godly at first, but “they will increase unto more ungodliness” (2 Timothy

2:16). Moreover, adding to or subtracting from God's Word is condemned: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6).

We are in a time of overwhelming apostasy, which should be obvious to those who are committed to Jesus and, therefore, to biblical discernment. Scripture indicates that such a spiritual condition will increase dramatically as we draw nearer to the Lord's return. Jesus characterized that time as one of unprecedented deception (Matthew 24). Paul states that a major reason for believers being deceived is because "...they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Fables? Fables are stories. Stories can be true or false, but what they are *not* is God's Word, His *doctrine*, His truth. I'm not talking about illustrations that help us to explain biblical doctrine but man's input that takes on a life of its own and, in the process, departs from what God has said. Warnings are given throughout the Bible regarding this, as in Hebrews 2:1: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should *let them slip*" [emphasis added]. Sadly, the slippage today in the church is of avalanche proportions.

The Emerging Church Movement (ECM), having begun not too long ago, made a huge impact among young adult Christians. It seduced many away from adhering to sound doctrine and led them into subjective conversations *about* God, the contemplative approach to knowing God, traditional rituals, the sacramentals of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and the use of allegory and spiritualization of the interpretation of Scripture. That debris of the ECM continues to find fertile ground among millennials. But there is a far more devastating and widespread example in the church of drifting away from sound doctrine, and that, tragically, is through the ministries of some of the most influential women in Christendom.

In the March 2019 *TBC* newsletter's main article, I mentioned the names of Beth Moore, Joyce Meyer, Priscilla Shirer, and Sarah Young. All are prolific writers, have huge followings, and are guilty of supplanting the Word of God and Jesus himself through drifting away from sound

doctrine. They all take teachings, many of which have a biblical basis, and "miss the mark" by pushing them far beyond biblical truth. Their "ongoing conversations" with God have led them and consequently their followers to numerous false teachings. Certainly God can speak to the hearts of His children, but nowhere in the Epistles do we find continuous dialogue between the Lord and believers. We find in the book of Acts that the Holy Spirit at times personally guides and directs the saints but never in the sense that these women teach! God's personal communication with people is for His purpose and at His choosing and timing. Even His prophets didn't have ongoing two-way conversations with Him. Jeremiah had to wait ten days for the Lord to speak to Him regarding his enquiry.

The errors that follow these women's "conversations" (which their numerous books encourage their admirers to emulate) suggest to their readers that the communication content can be taken as "thus saith the Lord." For those who spend more time reading their many books than they do the Bible, a false teaching that sounds biblical can readily be accepted as such. That distorts not only the authority and content of Scripture but also the character of God. Often the claimed dialogue demeans the Lord, as though He were one of their familiar peers. Beth Moore declares that God calls her "Baby" and "Honey" and participates in playfulness with her. Worse yet is what these ladies assert they have heard from Him that *contradicts what His Word says*. That would make Him at the very least "another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:4), certainly not the Word Himself.

All of these women promote some form of mysticism, which is an abandonment of the objective truth of God's Word, giving preference to personal experiences, intuitions, subjective understandings, and feelings. Some teach techniques that are "Christianized alterations" of Eastern mystical techniques and practices. They misinterpret and corrupt the "Be still" of Psalm 46:10 to mean a clearing of the mind in silence in order to hear from God. No. God is simply declaring to those fearful of their enemies (and to their enemies themselves) that He has protected and will protect Israel!

These women all fall into the trap of counseling from the errors of so-called Christian psychology, the principles of which are diametrically opposed to God's Word. All promote the false teaching of self-esteem-building in order to help their

followers feel better about themselves.

Ecumenism is rampant in their writings and their video series, and particularly in their acceptance of Roman Catholics as brothers and sisters in Christ. It may be that they are unaware of the official gospel of Rome, which declares that heaven is available only to those who are baptized, and entrance is dependent upon one's good works after their sins have been expiated in purgatory. That ignorance is not just related to an ignorance of Catholicism and other "Christian" cults and aberrational groups, but it seems to stem from a lack of knowledge of the basic doctrines of biblical Christianity!

Having gone through many of the materials authored by these women, I've yet to find a clear presentation of the gospel, particularly an explanation of what one needs to believe in order to be saved. Although they seem sincere in wanting to help women "go deeper with Jesus," and "develop a more intimate relationship" with Him, that cannot happen unless a person has been born-again. The doctrine of the gospel of salvation is given simply in response to the Philippian jailor who cried out: "...Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." Furthermore, one must believe that He "died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (Acts 16:30-31; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). I found only one clear explanation of the gospel among these women teachers, and that was by Joyce Meyer. However, for the millions who follow her, tragically, she declares that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins by descending into hell, where He was tortured by Satan and his demons. That is clearly a false gospel and a false Jesus.

Presenting a comprehensive presentation of all the false teachings of these ladies would take volumes, certainly far beyond what could be contained in this one article. Other troubling points can be found in this newsletter's Q&A. My challenge to those who are enamored with the books of Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer, Joyce Meyer, and Sarah Young is that they prayerfully consider what I've pointed out, and then be a Berean (Acts 17:11), and compare their teachings with God's Word. I also exhort pastors, as shepherds who have a responsibility to protect their sheep, to come alongside the women in their fellowship, helping them to grow in biblical discernment.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You seem to have an issue with women. Rarely have I found in your newsletter articles either discussing or extolling our virtues, and now you mention four highly influential women in service to our Lord with no evidence of their “heresies.” I’m terribly disappointed.

RESPONSE: You are correct that I have an “issue” with women. My issue, however, is the same as I have with men. I want them both to know and love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to live their lives according to God’s Word. Additionally, I’ve been married to a woman for fifty years who excels far beyond me in numerous categories, which, by the way, gives me great joy to point out, and which I do often because I’m so proud of her (not failing to mention that she’s been my best friend for more than half a century).

You brought to my attention the fact that Dave and I rarely addressed women in our writings. Looking back, I realized that less than a handful of ladies were cited in *The Seduction of Christianity* and only a few (e.g., Agnes Sanford, Marilyn Ferguson, and Rita Bennett) were dealt with at length. That may have been because few women were as influential in Christendom then as they are today. Furthermore, most people are not happy to be mentioned in our writings.

Our calling here at TBC is to be watchmen (see Ezekiel chapters 3 and 33) and to encourage our readers to compare what they are being taught with the Scriptures in order to judge its truthfulness. Christendom has many good teachers and many false teachers, both men and women. Although we name some of the false teachers, we cite them mainly as examples of the false doctrines that seem to abound today. We don’t try to major on the individuals because unbiblical doctrine can show up anywhere, anytime, and from anyone. Encouraging men and women to grow in discernment is one of our main objectives.

Even so, I could give you an extensive list of women writers and researchers whose work has contributed a great deal to The Berean Call and others, and to the cause of biblical discernment. Here are just a few: Carol Matrisciana, Jewel Grewe, Deidre Bobgan, Sarah Leslie, Deborah Dombroski, Gaylene Goodroad, Berit Kjos, and Opel Reddin.

QUESTION: I’m aware that you do not agree with some of the things that the women you listed in your March 2019 newsletter teach, but I hope you would agree that they have helped many women by the things they taught that are biblically sound.

RESPONSE: They have at times presented some sound doctrines, but those are mostly scattered atop quicksand that heartbreakingly draws readers in, only to be suffocated by their many false teachings. Consider this collection of just some of their false teachings and practices: 1) They all claim to have continual two-way conversations with God. 2) Much of what they say they hear from God is received as God’s doctrine, even though it contradicts His Word and character. 3) They promote contemplative theology and practices, which are based primarily on subjective content, e.g., feelings, intuition, and experiences. 4) Their “counseling” is psychotherapeutic, contrary to Scripture, and majors in the unbiblical teaching of self-love and self-esteem. 5) They regard generational sins as the basis for life’s problems. 6) They promote numerous false teachers of the Word-Faith Movement and the Contemplative Movement. 7) They are highly ecumenical and ignorant of the false gospel of Roman Catholicism as well as other aberrational groups and cults. 8) They all corrupt the Scriptures by adding their own thoughts, meanings, and words to them. Stepping into all of this theological quagmire hoping to find a gem of truth is spiritually destructive at best.

Our archives contain numerous resources that address all the issues that are pertinent to what Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer, Joyce Meyer, and Sarah Young are teaching.

QUESTION: I’m concerned about a book a friend gave me written by Jackie Green and Lauren Green McAfee titled *Only One Life*. I was reluctant to read it because it was endorsed by Priscilla Shirer, who is into contemplative spirituality, but then I saw that Joni Eareckson Tada and Kay Arthur were also endorsers, so I was more confident about reading it. I’d like to get your impression if you have time to review it.

RESPONSE: There are a number of things about the book that trouble me for the sake of the women reading it. I’ll give you

just two, and you decide how critical they are in regard to understanding what God’s Word says and what man or woman has added to it—the latter, which I’m hopeful you know, is condemned (Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19). Chapter one includes “information about Esther” that is found nowhere in the Book of Esther. It tells us that she sang Psalm 23 to calm her “racing heart” in fear of the king. “Esther doesn’t belong,” we are told. “She is not of royal descent. She is no princess, let alone a Queen—at least that’s what the voices inside her head are telling her. Worse still, she’s Jewish.” And, “Every day her heart cries out in wonder, *What am I doing here?*... We suspect that the voices inside Esther’s head are the voices you’ve heard as well.”; “Outside the king’s chambers, her feet scuffle on the palace floor, and her heart catches in her throat. And twenty seconds of insane courage seize the outcast girl as she enters the forbidden room for permission to speak.” Those are not God’s words. They are an example of what man *thinks*, not what God has said. That’s called eisegesis.

The women selected throughout the book as models to be followed are a mixture of believers, false teachers, and unbelievers. For example, Saint Elizabeth of Thuringia was thoroughly Roman Catholic. Her generosity may have had temporal value, but her Catholic beliefs could save no one.

Sarah Young’s and Beth Moore’s two-way “conversations” with God are favorably approved. Marilyn Hickey and Christine Caine, both a part of the heretical word/faith-prosperity gospel movement are advocated as models for women to follow. Caine’s mentor is Joyce Meyer, who preaches a false Christ.

The most serious error of the book is that it contains no clear gospel, nor a well-defined salvation statement from those who gave a testimony. Without the biblical gospel presented, the book points toward “works salvation,” especially to its unsaved readers and implies “another gospel” for those who may be saved. Our prayer in exposing these is that even a few eyes will be opened and hearts will be pricked by recognizing the distortion of truth that is taking place right before our eyes in our churches and among “Christian” women’s conferences. The If:Gathering is just one example among many conferences that are leading Christian women away from God’s Word.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What about Satan in God's Presence?

Question: Evil is supposedly not allowed in God's presence because He is so holy. Yet Satan still appears before the throne of God, according to the book of Job. How can that be?

Response: Yes, Satan still appears before the throne of God (Job:1:6; 2:1) as the "accuser of our brethren" (Revelation:12:10). The day is yet future when "that old serpent called the Devil" will be cast out of heaven (Revelation:12:9). , etc.). Until then, he continues to accuse the believers "before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

Before his fall Satan had been given a position of power and authority, and he will retain some residue of that until the battle for the soul and destiny of man has been fought to its finish. The challenge that Satan has been presented to God can only be fully answered and Satan fully defeated by the redemption of mankind through the blood of Christ. Until that time, the relationship of God to evil is one of hatred and rejection, not of complete separation. For example, we know that God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity" (Habakkuk:1:13); yet He sees everything that happens in the earth and must know all evil or He could not be the judge thereof.

Evil was conceived in the heart of Satan even though he dwelt in the very presence of God. The Bible speaks of the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). That evil could originate in God's presence and that it could begin on earth in the perfect environmental paradise of the Garden of Eden is indeed a mystery. And this mystery only deepens when we consider that sin involves rebellion against the infinite, almighty Creator of all. That both Satan and man would be so blinded by self as to embrace the impossible dream of defeating God is mystery indeed.

Satan's continuing appearances before God's throne do not implicate God in evil any more than the fact that creatures whom God created (and whose every thought, word, and deed He knows) have turned to evil by the billions. The day is coming, however, when God will create a new universe "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter:3:13), and from that time on "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Revelation:21:27).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. —Matthew:6:5

Watch your motive; does it arise from a real enchantment? (The word “hypocrites” here is really “play actors.”) The main idea in the region of religion is—your eyes must be upon God, not on men. Do not have as your motive the desire to be known as a praying man. Get an inner chamber in which to pray where no one knows you are praying, shut the door, and talk to God in secret. Have no other motive than to know your Father in heaven.

—Oswald Chambers

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Ecumenism and Catholicism

Dave Hunt

WE HAVE NOTED that the ecumenical movement plays a key role in forming the Antichrist's world religion, which will be a paganized Christianity such as was developed under Constantine and became Roman Catholicism. It is therefore not surprising that behind the scenes, the Catholic Church has been pushing ecumenism for years. It is not only drawing the "separated brethren" of Protestantism back into the fold but uniting *all religions under Rome*, as Revelation 17 indicates.

Catholic popes have been the leaders of worldwide ecumenism. As such, they present an altogether different picture from the inflexible dogmatist determined to convert the world to Catholicism that most people imagine a pope to personify. On the contrary, John Paul II has taken the initiative in contacting leaders of the world's religions, accepts them as working toward the same goals of social justice, ecological wholeness, and world peace, suggests that their prayers are as effective as those of Catholics, and has not attempted to convert any of them. He seems content to be acknowledged as the spiritual leader of the world's religions uniting for peace.

Such a stance on the part of the pope is entirely consistent with the religious system he represents. As we document in *Whatever Happened to Heaven?*, Catholicism was formed through a union of "Christianity" and paganism and has always adapted itself to whatever religion it Christianized. Haiti, for example, is said to be 85 percent Catholic and 110 percent Voudun. Every voodoo ceremony begins with Catholic prayers. Likewise, the deadly spiritist cult of Santeria is a blend of African witchcraft and Catholicism carried on in the name of "saints" who front for African gods. In Rio de Janeiro, Catholic faithful visit cemeteries to petition the spirits of their ancestors along with the Catholic "saints," etc.

Catholicism's paganized Christianity was developed by Constantine to unite his empire. His genius was knowing the value of religious concord in bringing political unity. He seems to have been the first to understand the necessity of ecumenism in arriving at such harmony. Gorbachev apparently had the same insights and, like Constantine, found a willing partner in the Roman pontiff.

John Paul II traveled the world

to promote Catholicism's traditional tolerance of pagan religions. At the Universities of Calcutta and New Delhi in his 1986 visit to India, the pope told huge Hindu audiences that he had not come there to teach them anything but to learn from their "rich spiritual heritage." As worldwide ecumenism's diplomat-at-large he went on to declare,

India's mission...is crucial, because of her intuition of the spiritual nature of man. Indeed, India's greatest contribution to the world can be to offer it a spiritual vision of man.

And the world does well to attend willingly to this ancient wisdom and in it to find enrichment for human living.

Such praise of Hinduism by a leader of world Christendom seems inconceivable. Yet such tolerant acceptance of all religions is exactly what will be required to unite mankind under Antichrist. We cannot stop the ecumenical movement, but we must rescue as many individuals as possible before it is too late. The pope has repeatedly made his intentions clear. Speaking in Geneva, Switzerland, to leaders of the World Council of Churches representing 400 million Protestants worldwide, John Paul II declared:

From the beginning of my ministry as bishop of Rome, I have insisted that the engagement of the Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement is irreversible.

The pope also makes it clear that there can never be any "compromise on the issue of papal authority." Yet this fact seems not to deter Protestant participation in the pope's ecumenical movement. Nor has it diminished the praise heaped upon him, even by prominent evangelicals, for his "spiritual and moral leadership."

John Paul II openly promoted New Age pantheistic ideas. Although the New Age movement has been thoroughly exposed by a number of writers, its basic tenets continue to gain an ever-wider acceptance, even among evangelicals, and will play an important role for Antichrist. As early as 1961, James I. McCord, president of Princeton Theological Seminary, urged Christians to accept as a gift from God the New Age, with its accompanying syncretization of Christianity and other religions. McCord was pleased to note that "Our most widely read historian, Arnold

Toynbee, is an apostle of an amalgam of Christianity and Mahayanian Buddhism."

The energetic pope is several steps ahead of both McCord and Toynbee in his personal diplomacy with Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and the adherents of many other religions. Nor was he out of line with such New Age events as The World Instant of Cooperation and Harmonic Convergence. As we have earlier pointed out, John Paul II openly promotes the same belief: That united prayers for peace of every kind, from yoga to witchcraft rituals, are releasing powerful "spiritual energies" to heal our planet. The Roman Catholic Church, like the World Council of Churches, has been promoting global cooperation among all religions for many years.

Toynbee's penchant for a Buddhist-Christian partnership is shared by many prominent religious leaders. Consider the following from Newark's Episcopalian Bishop John S. Spong:

In the fall of 1988, I worshipped God in a Buddhist temple. As the smell of incense filled the air, I knelt before three images of the Buddha, feeling that the smoke could carry my prayers heavenward. It was for me a holy moment for I was certain that I was kneeling on holy ground.... I will not make any further attempt to convert the Buddhist, the Jew, the Hindu or the Moslem. I am content to learn from them and to walk with them side by side toward the God who lives, I believe, beyond the images that bind and blind us.

"His Holiness" the Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism has long been the pope's trusted friend and has been well received by Roman Catholic leaders around the world. In 1979, at the start of his first US tour, the Tibetan God-king-in-exile was feted at Roman Catholicism's New York City landmark, St. Patrick's Cathedral, where he participated in a "prayer service" described by *Time* magazine as "an extraordinary interreligious festival." New York's Terence Cardinal Cooke was the host. The Dalai Lama, who declared that "all the world's major religions are basically the same," was given a standing ovation by the overflow crowd of nearly 5,000. Said Cardinal Cooke, who "shared his sanctuary with a rabbi and a Protestant minister as well as his Buddhist guest":

This is one of the dramatic movements of the Spirit in our time. We make each other welcome

in our churches, temples and synagogues.

Which “spirit”? The Cardinal could not have meant the *Holy Spirit*, whom Christ said would lead His own *into all truth* (John 16:13). Another ecumenical cardinal was Augustine Bea, a Jesuit and nineteen years rector of Rome’s Pontifical Biblical College [Institute]. Along with Rome’s Pro Deo University, Bea annually co-hosted “Agapes of Brotherhood,” attended by hundreds of guests from scores of countries representing the world’s major religions from Buddhists and Muslims to Shintoists. Typical of Cardinal Bea’s speeches was one at the Seventh Agape, in which he “stressed the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God, which, he said, embraces all men....”

Cardinal Bea was Pope Pius XII’s personal confessor, close advisor to several other popes, and president of the Secretariat for Promotion of Christian Unity until his death in 1968. He sought out David DuPlessis (known as “Mr. Pentecost”), whom he invited to the third session of the Second Vatican Council. Bea saw the blossoming charismatic movement as a vehicle for Rome’s ecumenical goals. DuPlessis and other leading protestant charismatics fell like ripe fruit into his hands. Bea’s supporters included such wealthy and influential Americans as Henry Luce of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* and shipping magnate J. Peter Grace.

Another guiding hand behind the Charismatic movement who likewise used it to further Rome’s ecumenical aims was Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, recipient of the 1976 Templeton Award for Progress in Religion. He called Cardinal Bea one of “the ‘prophets’ of our own age.”¹¹ Suenens was given a special mandate to oversee the worldwide charismatic “renewal movement” in the Catholic Church, an assignment that was reconfirmed by John Paul II.

The Cardinal was influential in the General Council formed in the early 1970s by Shepherding and Protestant/Catholic charismatic leaders. This Council guided the ecumenical charismatic movement for years from behind the scenes. The minutes for its May-June, 1977, meeting reveal that a “covenant relationship” was entered into with Cardinal Suenens, which included the following:

We, as a Council, are committing ourselves to work together with the Cardinal for the restoration and unity of Christian people and world evan-

gelization in projects to be mutually agreed upon. In each project, headship, authority and method of functions will be mutually determined by the Cardinal and the Council in the light of the requirements of each situation.

“World evangelization” with Suenens? What naiveté! Cardinal Suenens hosted and gave the opening speech at the Second World Conference on Religion and Peace in Louvain, Belgium in 1974, which received Pope Paul VI’s blessing. Delegates were particularly impressed with the important role that religious unity will play in establishing the coming world government. A continual call was sounded for “a new world order.” Under Catholic leadership, the Louvain Declaration stated,

Buddhists, Christians, Confucianists, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and still others, we have sought here to listen to the spirit within our varied and venerable religious traditions... we have grappled with the towering issues that our societies must resolve in order to bring about peace, justice, and ennobling quality of life for every person and every people....

We rejoice that...the long era of prideful and even prejudiced isolation of the religions of humanity is, we hope, now gone forever.

We appeal to the religious communities of the world to inculcate the attitude of planetary citizenship....

The World Conference president for many years was a Catholic archbishop from India. The Third World Conference, held in Princeton in 1978, concluded “with a worship service at [New York’s] Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, where Cardinal Terence Cooke [was] the host” to members of dozens of religions “worshipping” together.

Even the prayer breakfasts that are bringing political and religious leaders together across America and patterned after the one that began in Washington, DC—originally conceived by evangelicals as opportunities for a clear witness to Jesus Christ—have largely deteriorated into ecumenical platforms for the acceptance of all religions. “Participating groups” at Los Angeles’s annual Interfaith Prayer Breakfast, for example, “range from the Board of Rabbis and the Buddhist Sangha Council to...the Baha’i faith.”

An entire volume could be filled with

similar examples. The pope’s gathering of leaders from twelve world religions at Assisi in 1986 to pray for peace inspired similar efforts worldwide. Typical is the North American Assisi: A Multi-Religious Meeting, sponsored by the North American Interfaith Network, started by The Temple of Understanding. North American Assisi’s promotional material boasts of bringing together on an equal footing “Baha’is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Native North Americans, Shintoists, Sikhs, Unitarian Universalists, and Zoroastrians.”

At such gatherings it would be in very bad taste, if not forbidden, for Jesus Christ to present Himself and declare, “I am *the way, the truth, and the life*: no man cometh unto the Father, *but by me*” (Jn 14:6). Such dogmatism is not tolerated by those who preach tolerance for all beliefs. Yet who is the more dogmatic—the One who made this true statement, or those who ban it?

The proper Christian attitude toward such gatherings is easily ascertained. Try to imagine the Apostle Paul’s reaction if he learned that Timothy was sponsoring an “interfaith” prayer service to which he invited participation by the Jewish Sanhedrin, excommunicated “Christian” heretics, and priests from pagan temples!

The confusion when those who call themselves “Christians” go along with such compromise for the good cause of world peace is illustrated by the third annual World Instant of Cooperation as it was celebrated in Wichita, Kansas, December 31, 1988. This worldwide “prayer service” was held simultaneously “in over 70 countries and in cities throughout the United States.” The official program, which included talks and prayers by Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Christians, opened with the hymn “Amazing Grace” and concluded with “a song by the Community Baptist Choir.”

Jesus warned that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth to life,” but “broad is the way that leadeth to destruction” (Mt 7:13). The Apostle Paul was so concerned for the truth that while at Ephesus he “by the space of three years...ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). Jesus told those who claimed to believe in Him, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32). Let us be lovers of truth, and disciple others in the pure Truth of God.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I teach high school Bible classes, and here is a question from my students: “If heaven was perfect, where did the temptation come from for Lucifer to fall?”

RESPONSE: Heaven was indeed perfect, but we are told clearly that man and Satan both, having been given a choice, long ago demonstrated their capacity to fall into corruption. Consider Satan (Lucifer). In Ezekiel 28:15, Lucifer was in heaven, with all of its perfection, but the writer of Ezekiel tells us that despite his intimacy with that perfect environment, and even in companionship with the Lord, he was rebuked: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”

So even in that place of perfection, Lucifer came to the conclusion that his exalted position wasn’t high enough. We read: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Is 14:12-14).

Man is much the same: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin... bringeth forth death” (Jas 1:13-15).

In short, as creatures with the ability to make choices, we knowingly and deliberately sin. In the case of Satan, although existing in a perfect environment, in his pride he could clearly see that God was superior and thus willfully chose to rebel.

Adam, too, was accountable for his poor choices that led to sin in the wonderful place that the Lord had proclaimed to be “very good.” Man and woman were in the Garden, which was a perfect environment, and although Satan was doing the tempting, they chose to disobey the Lord of their own free will.

Some put forth the notion that we sin because Satan tempts us and, on occasion, even enters us, causing us to sin. The Scriptures don’t support this idea. As the passage in James 1 tells us, we sin regardless of the influence of Satan. When Eve sinned, and then Adam sinned, it was of their own accord, thus neither could claim, “Satan

made me do it,” although they tried that.

In the original creation, which God himself had declared was “very good,” we see that Satan and mankind had the power of choice. Eve, in the Garden, was persuaded by her own will that the fruit of the tree was desirable to make one wise (Gn 3:6). Satan wasn’t controlling her—he was tempting her, but she was enticed by the desire within herself. Eve was deceived, but according to 1 Timothy 2:14, Adam was not deceived. Nevertheless, he chose to eat the forbidden fruit.

In Satan’s case, God didn’t persuade him to become prideful. We’re told in Scripture that God hates pride (Prv 8:13). His character would never lead Him to cause someone to become prideful. Nor did God deceive Eve. Again, Scripture tells us that although deception and lies work together (Ps 78:36; Prv 12:17), God does not lie, cannot lie, and will not deceive (Ti 1:2; Heb 6:18).

Satan’s own desires brought about his pride (and fall). The entrance of evil into a very good creation could not have been caused by God, in whom is no sin (1 John 3:5). God was certainly not unaware that this would happen, but He permitted it to happen. God is sovereign and acted justly by casting Satan out of heaven after he had rebelled against the Creator. In the case of man, God, in His mercy, had already set in motion the coming of a Savior, who was “slain from the foundation of the world.” By this act of love, God made it possible for any who will choose Him to escape the bondage of sin, which is rampant upon this earth—despite the worst that Satan can throw at us.

QUESTION: When the Scriptures talk about self, what do they mean?

RESPONSE: The Bible doesn’t give a definition for self, but it does tell us some things about self. Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23). Self, independent of God, must be denied. That includes my will and everything that I am. Jesus said that I must even hate my life—I must lose my life in order to gain it. If I cling to my life I’ll lose it, but if I give it up I’ll find a new life! The Bible tells us we were made “in the image of God” (Gn 1:27). We’re like a mirror. A mirror has one purpose: to reflect a reality other than its own. What would you think of a mirror that tried to develop a “good self-image”? We are to reflect the image of Jesus as the Holy Spirit empowers us. Matthew 16:24-26 says the same thing.

Jeremiah 10:23 is a powerful scripture that every Christian should memorize: “O

Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” We are made in the image of God. That means we are not self-contained and it’s the power and the life of God that is to be lived through us. And when we try to be self-contained entities we are in rebellion to God’s design for us. Even the personalities within the Trinity do not operate independently. Jesus said in John 5:30 that as a man on this earth “I can of mine own self do nothing.” Even the Holy Spirit “shall not speak of himself [i.e., independently of the other members of the Trinity]; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak...” (Jn 16:13). If He will not act independently, then how can we possibly act independently of Him? Yet, we see that this self, which He wants us to deny, attempts to act independently of God. [Reprinted from July 1986]

QUESTION: Jesus said, “I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not but are the congregation of Satan” (Rv 2:9; 3:9) Those who believe in amillennialism say that the church is the “New Israel.” Wouldn’t that make them blasphemers?

RESPONSE: It certainly makes them deceived and promoters of error contrary to the Word of God. “Blasphemy” is transliterated from the Greek root word *blasphem*, which sometimes in The New Testament is used for strong insults made against other people (Mk 15:29; Acts 13:45; Eph 4:31; 1 Pt 4:4). On occasion, it sometimes is used for unjust accusations (Rom 3:8). More often it is used to identify insults against God (Rv 13:6 or 16:9). Even if amillennialists would grant that believing that the “Church is the New Israel” may be in error, they might point out that they are not speaking against God. Nevertheless, they very clearly could be seen as promoting error contrary to the revealed Word of God.

Blasphemy in the Old Testament is demonstrated by passages such as Leviticus 24:10-16, which in turn is defined by the command of Exodus 22:28. It states, “Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse the ruler of thy people.” Punishment for such blasphemy was death. This ultimate punishment was demanded because to revile God (or those appointed by Him) was an assault upon the integrity and holiness of God himself.

According to Exodus 22, “to revile God” was an assault upon the integrity and holiness of God himself.” This may also apply to those denying God’s plans towards Israel, whom He has certainly appointed to fulfill the role given to them.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What was the first sin?

Question: We are told in the Bible that sin entered into the world when Adam and Eve took of the forbidden fruit. Yet Eve wanted it and must have looked upon it with desire before she actually ate of it. Was it sin for her to do so, even to touch it and pick it? If so, there was sin before Adam sinned.

Response: You may be technically correct. However the Bible looks upon the temptation, Eve's desire, eating of the forbidden fruit, and Adam's partaking of it as one act. In fact, Adam is blamed: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin . . ." (Romans:5:12

It seems clear that Adam's sin was even greater than Eve's. She was deceived, but Adam was not (1 Timothy:2:14). Apparently Adam knew what he was doing and did it in order not to be separated from his wife. He was determined to share her fate, even though he knew that to do so he was rebelling against the God who had created him.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

Former Beatle George Harrison said in an interview, "There is nothing more important than finding out what is after death. What happens to us after we die?" It was Harrison's faith, the interviewer stated, that got him through his battle with cancer. One of his biggest solo hits was "My Sweet Lord." The only problem was that Harrison was not a Christian; his lord was a Hindu god! Although his faith may have helped him through his illness, it will not help him on Judgment Day.

—MARK CAHILL

A Berean Exercise: "Christian" Magazines

T. A. McMahon

A STAFF MEMBER handed me a couple of the latest magazine issues we received in order to review them. They were *Christianity Today* (CT) and *Charisma Magazine* (CM). We subscribe to them in order to keep up to date regarding teachings that are being disseminated throughout Christendom. In general they are representative of seemingly diverse Christian theological positions. CT was founded by Billy Graham and has been described as "a mainstream evangelical magazine." Its beginnings were conservative, doctrinally, and Graham was considered an icon of fundamentalism. Not too long afterward, however, he began praising modernists (Christian liberals of that day) and involving them in his crusades. His later crusades included Roman Catholic priests and nuns as counselors who were to direct those Catholics who responded to Graham's message back to their Catholic churches! Those seeds have produced the *Christianity Today* of our day. It is unabashedly liberal and pro-Catholic, which underscores its ongoing disregard of biblical Christianity.

Charisma Magazine has been described as "the main magazine of the Charismatic Movement." Unlike CT, it hasn't grown from the seeds of doctrinal changes. Its errors of hyper-charismatic beliefs were in place from the beginning of its publishing in the mid-1970s. They proudly proclaim, "We introduced many now-famous leaders to the charismatic community, from Benny Hinn to T.D. Jakes to Mike Bickle to Jonathan Cahn, and, in recent months, new up-and-comers." Critiques of their false teachings can be found throughout TBC's archives.

The objective of this article is to point out the critical need for biblical discernment when reading (or, for that matter, watching or listening to) anything that claims to be Christian. In the cases of CT and CM, they rarely produce a monthly issue that doesn't exhibit serious doctrinal errors and practices. The following is a typical example from both magazines, which just crossed my desk for the month of May 2019.

One of *Christianity Today's* feature articles is titled "Small Groups Anonymous," subtitled, "Why the best church small groups might take their cues from the Twelve Steps [of Alcoholics Anonymous]."

At first glance, the idea that "church small groups" should look to AA meetings for edification might seem a bit off track, but it's way worse than that, as you will see. Furthermore, that concept is hardly new to *Christianity Today*, which has been an endorser of the psychological way of counseling for decades. Alcoholics Anonymous and its 12-Steps programs actually utilize a psycho-spiritual methodology. This means that it's a mixture of two belief systems—psychotherapy and spiritism.

CT's history of promoting AA and 12 Steps and its religious convictions will be made clear following the perspective given in this article. The author, Kent Dunnington, a professor who teaches a class on addictions at Biola University, begins, "I am not an alcoholic. Alcohol just doesn't do it for me. But Alcoholics Anonymous does. I attended an AA group while writing a book called *Addiction and Virtue*, and I've missed it ever since." His students at Biola are required to attend AA meetings. He notes CT's support of his subject when he states that "This magazine, too, has featured an ongoing conversation about the spiritual power of AA."

He's confident in the AA approach: "...generally speaking—and amazingly—AA works. It has a theory of how people change and a set of practices designed to change real human beings. In this respect, AA has what the contemporary church, or at least a large portion of the contemporary evangelical church, seems to lack: a clear theory of personal transformation codified in practices and traditions that are easily accessible to those who would like to be transformed."

He reveals a higher regard for the false methods of men than for the full counsel of God given throughout the Scriptures. For example, he praises the anonymity of the Roman Catholic confessional as useful in the church: "Roman Catholics, with their practice of private confession, have known this for a long time, as has AA. Anonymity provides a haven in which we may speak about the incoherence of our lives. For the same reason [that] we are more likely to tell our darkest secrets to a stranger on a plane than to our friends, AA is a place of greater honesty than the small group can probably ever be."

As I mentioned, CT's affinity for AA and things psychological is not new with its May 2019 issue. In July 22, 1991, CT's then-senior writer Tim Stafford wrote the featured article, "The Hidden Gospel of the 12 Steps." He declares, "The 12 Steps are Christian," and "We ought to use them

gladly. They belong to us originally. They are doing tremendous good." He further assures CT's readers, "The 12 Steps are a package of Christian practices, and nothing is compromised in using them."

Before I evaluate some of what Dunnington and Stafford have written, it might be helpful for the reader of this article to know a few things about me. I grew up in the mental health community. My father was a psychiatrist, and for a time we lived on the grounds of a very large mental institution. I take a back seat to no one when it comes to having compassion for those suffering through problems of living, especially the sin problem of drunkenness. That was dominant in my family history for generations. I've written books, articles, preached sermons, and given conference talks on the antichristian and pseudoscientific aspects of psychotherapy and so-called Christian psychology. Much of that material can be found in the Berean Call's archives, especially *Psychology and the Church: Critical Questions, Crucial Answers*, chapter 13 of *The Seduction of Christianity*, and chapter 15 of *Occult Invasion*.

First, some general observations. Those issues that AA attempts to remedy are all *sin* problems. The word "sin," however, is found nowhere in the CT article. AA's co-founder Bill Wilson erroneously taught that "alcoholism" is a *disease*. Rarely can an individual be held accountable for contracting a disease. If the root problem is sin, and the claimed solution rejects sin as the problem, then AA has *no* solution. Dunnington's psychologized mindset has him wanting to see church small groups function more as therapeutic or behavioral encounter groups like AA. He never acknowledges that a small group study of—and obedience to—the Word of God has provided the individual with "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). God's Word, the Manufacturer's Handbook, has the only answer to man's sin nature and sinful practices.

Dunnington is not only ignorant of the sufficiency of Scripture, but he is also *dead wrong* about the effectiveness of AA. There are no studies supporting AA's programs over any other forms of treatment. The Harvard Medical School reported, "Most recovery from alcoholism is not the result of treatment. Probably no more than 10 percent of alcohol abusers are ever treated at all, but as many as 40 percent recover spontaneously." One of the leading authorities in this field, Herbert Fingarette, the author of

Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease, writes for the *Harvard Medicine* magazine: “This [disease] myth, now widely advertised and widely accepted, is neither helpfully compassionate nor scientifically valid” (See *12 Steps to Destruction* by Martin & Deidre Bobgan, on page 6).

If AA can make no true claim of being more effective than the (non-treatment) spontaneous remission of drunkenness by alcohol abusers, what of its spiritual input? That “spirituality” is incorporated in the 12-Step philosophy and is foundational to everything that AA promotes. As noted above, Tim Stafford and *CT* declared, “We ought to use them [12-Steps programs] gladly. They belong to us originally. They are doing tremendous good.”

Really? Anyone who takes the time to research how AA’s 12 Steps began would readily discover that it came to Bill Wilson and Bob Smith through the activity of spiritism. That is “the spiritual power of AA”! Dave Hunt writes in *Occult Invasion*, “The official AA biography of Wilson reveals, without embarrassment, that for years after AA’s founding, regular séances were still being held in the Wilsons’ home, and other psychic activities were being pursued, including consulting the Ouija board.”

The biography itself declares: “[T]here are references to séances and other psychic events in the letters Bill wrote to Lois [his wife] during that first Akron summer with the Smiths [Bob and Anne], in 1935... Bill would lie down on the couch. He would ‘get’ these things [from the spirit world]... every week or so. Each time, certain people [demons impersonating the dead] would ‘come in... long sentences, word by word would come through....’ [In 1938] as he started to write [the AA manual], he asked for guidance.... The words began tumbling out with astonishing speed. He completed the first draft in about half an hour... Numbering the new steps... they added up to twelve—a symbolic number; he thought of the Twelve Apostles, and soon became convinced that the Society should have twelve steps.”

The Bible condemns the practice of communication with spirit entities as *divination*. The reason should be obvious. Those spirit entities are demons, whose objective it is to turn people away from the truth of God’s Word. Although Wilson and Smith were clearly intent upon contacting the spirit world through divination devices and techniques for spiritual guidance, the evidence that what Wilson received was and is demonic is found in the content itself. It only takes reading the second and

third Steps to recognize how antichristian the methodology is. Step 2 and 3 state: [We] came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we “understood Him” (emphasis in the original).

“A Power greater than ourselves”? Who or what might that be? The God of the Bible and Jesus Christ, the Savior (from sins!) of the world? They are *never mentioned* in the 12 Steps, nor is sin! Yet there are many “Higher Powers” being put forth and sought after today. AA would have us pick whatever one we favor. Not only that, but we are to “turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we [understand Him].” When Satan deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-5), he was helping her to “better understand” the God she believed in by questioning what she believed He had said (verse 1): “Yea, hath God said...?” He followed that up by denying what God indeed *had* said (verse 4). That’s the demonic origin of Step 3. Proverbs 14:12, 16:25, and 3:5 ring out a sure warning against the allegedly Christian Step 3: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” Pick a God? Any God? No! “For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

I’ve spoken to dozens of men who have gone through the AA program. Nearly all have confirmed what I’ve written and much more than I have the space for. One common complaint among those who came to Christ outside of AA yet continued to attend AA meetings was the resistance, even hostility, toward sharing Christ among the group. You see, you can pick any God you desire—but you can’t claim that your God is any better than the “Gods” of the other members. That’s the problem (for AA) with the biblical Jesus who declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). However, it’s only the first part of the verse that bothers AA. The issue of eternal life is out of their “spiritual” concern. They only focus on keeping a drunk sober and productive this side of heaven.

Those who have clung to AA for years admitted they do so, never missing meetings, regardless of family events or situations, in fear of “falling off the wagon” of sobriety. That’s bondage to a system of man and worse.

Christianity Today and its writers have tragically reinforced for its readership a program that rejects the God of the Bible and His instructions for the lives of those who have put their faith in Him. It’s clear that they also have rejected God’s instructions by attempting to supplement them with the so-called wisdom of the world. Again, that’s tragic. When Jesus, who is the Word, is supplanted, He is *supplanted*. And when He is supplanted, He becomes “another Jesus.”

But *CT* isn’t the only entity that has been turning to the world for its ways and means. The demonically inspired 12-Steps programs have, like leaven, worked their way throughout the church in various forms. My personal experience with 12 Steps involved Celebrate Recovery (CR) at Saddleback Church (see “A Way That Seemeth Right...” TBC October 1, 2005). I enrolled in the Celebrate Recovery Training Program in order to get an “up close and personal” understanding of what’s being taught. I do that whenever I can to make sure I’m not misunderstanding the things I’m critiquing biblically. That can happen, so whatever I can do to increase my understanding I try to do. The Saddleback event brought together thousands of people who seemed to me to be sincere in wanting to help those dealing with various sin issues.

We were all told that CR was based upon the Beatitudes. Wrong. It’s based upon the 12 Steps of AA, and the AA methods displace many scriptural elements that might conflict. For example, the men in my AA group claimed that 12 Step meetings hold sway over Bible studies. The group meetings open with silence, the reading of the Serenity Prayer (a vague-at-best rote prayer to god as you conceive him), and the acknowledgement that one is undergoing the ongoing recovery of one or more “addictions.” This has nothing whatsoever to do with the Beatitudes nor with any other part of biblical Christianity.

What’s clear to me regarding *Christianity Today* is that it reflects the prophecy in 2 Timothy 4:3: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.” *CT* obviously prefers the world’s ways over God’s way, which is proven in every one of its issues. Next month, the Lord willing, there will be a review of the May issue of *Charisma Magazine*.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Jesus Christ resurrected was the third day and was seen by 500 people. Why didn't the resurrected Jesus Christ show himself to the Roman leaders and the Jewish High Priest and their leaders? This would include the Roman soldiers who were at the cross to crucify our Lord.

RESPONSE: The Lord always has priorities. Nevertheless, He has specifically said that there is a day coming when every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7). In Zechariah 12:10, the Lord prophesied, "...they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth."

Regarding the Roman soldiers, including those who guarded His tomb, they were terrified just at the sight of the angel and were shaking with great fear. In fact, "for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men" (Matthew 28:4).

Yet the guard's report was taken seriously by the Pharisees and religious rulers. In fact, the priests informed the elders of the soldiers' report. As a result, a significant sum of money was given to silence the testimony of the guards as to what actually had happened. If the Lord had appeared to them Himself, would that have changed their mind?

Apparently not, because in Matthew 23:39, the Lord Jesus had already told the religious rulers, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Nevertheless, the testimony of the Lord's resurrection had a great impact. In Acts 6:7 "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." In John 20:29, to Thomas, who hadn't seen Him, and only believed in Him when he finally did see Him. Jesus said, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

In addition to all this, the Pharisees, who had witnessed firsthand many of Jesus's miracles *still* didn't believe in Him. Rather, they sought to dismiss His amazing actions by asserting that He was doing his healings and casting out demons by some kind of demonic power. In fact, after Jesus had delivered a number of people from demonic possession, some Pharisees came along and told the people that He was casting out demons "by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

Jesus healed the blind, but these same leaders didn't say, "Jesus restores the sight

of the blind. He must certainly be a great prophet if not God himself!" And therefore, He appeared to his own.

QUESTION: Since we as Christians are meant to love our enemies, does that mean we are also to 1) love Satan? 2) love the Antichrist? 3) love the false prophet who assists the Antichrist? 4) love (the many) false prophets and (the many) antichrists in general? Or are we supposed to pray for them and hope for their salvation?

RESPONSE: To not love an entity such as Satan does not require that we in turn "hate" him. Satan's fate is absolutely fixed concerning his judgment—he will be cast into the Lake of Fire—and that won't be affected by any prayers of ours. Such is also true of the Antichrist and the False Prophet: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20).

As a consequence, we can see that the admonition of Jesus to "love our enemies" (Matthew 5:44) is directed to our relationships in this world. We are called to love God and also love people, including our enemies—all of whom are *made* in God's image, although they're not living up to that, and may not even be saved. We are never told to love angels (or demons) in Scripture, nor were they created in God's image, as people are.

God has already judged that there will be no forgiveness for Satan and neither does Satan seek forgiveness. On the contrary, he remains the adversary. Even after his temporary release at the end of the millennium, he immediately goes about his destructive ways, showing that his choice has been made and his judgment just.

We can certainly, however, pray for false prophets and teachers. The hatred expressed by the world for us is not really directed to us. As Jesus said in John 7:7, "The world cannot hate you, but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil."

QUESTION: Why is the Bible silent about mental illness except for speaking of demon-possessed persons? Could you address this subject?

RESPONSE: The Bible does deal with madness, or insanity (Deuteronomy 28:34; 1 Samuel 21:13-15; Acts 12:15; 1 Corinthians 14:23),

but insanity is not a mental illness. Either the Holy Spirit was ignorant of a class of mental sickness that has only lately, through godless humanists, been uncovered, or what we are being told today by Christian psychologists isn't true. Unfortunately, much sin is being redefined as sickness and thus excused.

If Christian psychology has something vital to offer, then we are confronted with some crucial questions. How did Christians get along without psychology for 1,900 years? Why would God leave His people in such desperate ignorance, and why would He use godless people such as Freud, Jung, et al., as the channels of this "new truth"? And why would the Bible claim that it offers *all we need* [emphasis added] "for life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3-4) and to be "perfect" (i.e., all that God wants us to be) and to be fully prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17) if that weren't true? Did God lie to us? And since Christ lives in our hearts (Ephesians 3:17) and "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:13-16) and are crucified with Him so that it is not ourselves anymore but Christ living through us (Galatians 2:20) and we "can do all things through Christ" (Philippians 4:13), does Christ, who is our very life (Colossians 3:4), need psychological help? If He is our "counselor" (Isaiah 9:6), why do we need psychological counsel? And how did Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, the martyrs in Acts, and the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11, etc., triumph without psychology?

These are serious questions. If we have any confidence in God and His Word, then the answers are obvious. A distinction must be made between the brain (a *physical* organ, which could have a chemical imbalance, nutritional deficiency, or some structural damage), and the *spirit* (a non-physical part of man). We must distinguish between *medical* problems involving the *physical* brain (for which the Bible doesn't claim to be a handbook) and *spiritual* problems involving the spirit, soul, mind, and will (for which the Bible claims to have given us all the guidance we need). The physical brain can be sick, but the nonphysical spirit cannot. Thus "mental illness" is a misnomer.

Demon possession is something else entirely. The problem is either physical (medical) or spiritual (moral). The latter may involve sin, such as disobedience or a lack of trust in God to fulfill what He has promised in His Word, all of which rob us of joy and peace. (From our TBC archives)



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What about Spiritual Warfare?

Question: There is a teaching in the church called “spiritual warfare” that is rapidly growing in popularity. It is even taught that by “binding” in the name of the Lord the “territorial spirit” controlling a city, Christians can take over that city for God. The reference in Daniel 10 to the prince of Persia withstanding the angel Gabriel seems to support this teaching. What is your response?

Response: Today’s teaching about “spiritual warfare” has no biblical basis, either by precept or example. Yes, “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” prevented the angel (presumably Gabriel) for three weeks from coming to Daniel (Daniel:10:12-13). Daniel, however, was seeking prophetic insight, not the “binding” of the “territorial spirit” over Persia. Nor did the angel instruct him to wage such “warfare.” In fact, nowhere in the entire Bible is the idea even suggested that certain demons have special authority over certain cities or territories and that they must be “bound.”)

The angel’s mission was to inform Daniel of last-days events affecting Israel (10:14)—information that would become part of Scripture and which the “prince of Persia” tried to keep from Daniel. There is no hint that “binding” this demon would have delivered Persia from satanic influence or that Gabriel’s victory over this demon (with the help of Michael the archangel) had any effect upon the spiritual climate in Persia or aided in the salvation of a single Persian.

Paul never tried to “bind territorial spirits” in bringing the gospel to the world of his day, so why should we? And although the apostles “turned the world upside down” (Acts:17:6), there is no hint that a single city was ever “taken for God,” as some preachers are falsely promising today. In Corinth, for example, where Paul spent 18 months, God gave him special protection and blessing because He had “much people in this city” (Acts:18:9-10). The issue was not one of delivering Corinth but of calling a company of believers out of it. Nor did Paul’s success change the destiny of Corinth or of any other city or nation. Such teaching simply has no basis in the Bible but comes from the imagination and ambition of men.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH
by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

Christ’s presence is real and abiding in believers. As one great hymn puts it: Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide, Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow—blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! [Chisholm]

This is “the hope of glory” (Col:1:27). In Christ, the Holy Spirit, who “is the earnest [down payment] of our inheritance,” has “sealed” us “until the redemption of the purchased possession [the whole person, body and soul]” (Eph:1:13-24). Our eternal destiny involves His presence until our redemption is completed. As Jesus told His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mt 28:20). Although Jesus would no longer be physically present with His faithful followers, the Spirit whom He would send to take His place would be. By faith we realize that presence now! The Spirit of Christ is both with us and in us (Rom:9:1b)! As did Jesus, Hebrews tells us the people of this promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb:13:5). In this light, Jude’s benediction becomes glorious: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in His presence of His glory blameless with great joy to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

—Larry DeBruyn

A Berean Exercise: "Christian" Magazines Part 2

T. A. McMahon

THERE'S A LATIN saying that is similar to what it means to be a Berean. The Bereans were Jews to whom the Apostle Paul spoke in the synagogue in the Greek city of Berea. Luke commended them (Acts 17:10-11) for listening to what Paul and Silas had to say and then for searching the Scriptures to discern whether or not their words were true to what was written therein. In a secular sense, that's what the Latin phrase *caveat emptor* means: "Let the buyer beware."

That warning is what the Word of God encourages. Jesus characterized the days prior to His Second Coming as ones of increasing apostasy. He forewarned, "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). The Bible also gives reasons for the coming apostasy (a widespread turning away from biblical truth) such as: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3). Without an understanding of, and the application of, "sound doctrine" in one's life, the ability to discern truth from error is nearly impossible. Furthermore, as deception and seduction increase, the errors become more cunning and therefore more difficult to identify. Twice in Proverbs—14:12 and 16:25—we're told, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Death always involves separation, and in these verses, death may be understood as separation from the truth of God's Word, which ultimately leads to destruction.

Over my many years of reading *Charisma Magazine*, subtlety would not be a term I'd use regarding its biblical errors. They were typically more of the blatant "billboard" variety, but that's just my opinion. What I'm seeing now is a more sophisticated maneuver that is very seductive and far less obvious. This has been taking place among many of the Word-Faith, Healing, and Prosperity ministries. Joel Osteen is a frontrunner in this approach. His father, John Osteen, was old-school Word-Faith, with its un concealed heresies, and Joel was his media director. Joel learned how to avoid his father's excesses in his own presentations, although they are still much the same.

In my last visit to Bethel Church in Redding, CA, I could see the same things taking place. It's not that anything had

changed regarding its false theology, beliefs, or practices. It's just that they were no longer as obvious as they'd been in the past. A visit to Bethel's bookstore revealed what was foundational to its teachings for the 3,000 students who are enrolled on its campus. There were books by the Word-Faith, Positive Confession old guard of Kenneth Hagin, Charles Capps, E.W. Kenyon, Smith Wigglesworth, John G. Lake, etc. However, those writings were buried under current books by Bill Johnson, Kris Vallotton, Heidi Baker, Che Ahn, Randy Clark, and others better known to the millennials and the upcoming generation.

The May 2019 *Charisma* issue includes an example of that "new tactic," and it gives me great concern. The two-page article was titled "The Send Mobilizes Tens of Thousands to Kingdom Evangelism," and the subtitle declared, "We are here for the greatest move of God in human history."

THERE IS A WAY WHICH SEEM-
ETH RIGHT UNTO A MAN, BUT
THE END THEREOF ARE THE WAYS
OF DEATH.

—Proverbs 14:12

That grandiose overstatement "outdoes" the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus! Sadly, it is claimed to be for the sake of the evangelization of the lost, something that most Christians would be blessed to participate in. According to the article, "Over 50,000 people gathered on Saturday, Feb. 23, in Orlando, Florida, for The Send, a charismatic mega-event that continued for nearly 12 hours straight." Andy Byrd, of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), one of the event's primary directors who also emceed, declared, "We are here because we are crazy enough to believe that we are here for the greatest move of God in human history!"

What Christian could object to the stated goal of The Send, which is to equip people to evangelize "high schools, universities, neighborhoods, the mission field, and the foster care system?" Speaker Banning Liebscher "urged Christians to take everyday evangelism seriously, emphasizing it as a matter of personal responsibility." He added, "It is not your pastor's job to see your friend saved."

Another speaker, Francis Chan, exhorted the young gathering to make

sure that they were not responding to an event manufactured by man rather than the Holy Spirit, that they were being faithful in little things (sharing the gospel with their neighbors, friends, etc.) before desiring to go to the ends of the earth to evangelize, and most importantly that they were disciplined in reading the Word of God daily. Without knowing the Word, he noted, they would have nothing of value to share.

Who wouldn't agree with at least some of the concerns of those speakers? So what's the problem...or problems?

The fundamental problem is that the crowd of 50,000 or so is being preached at to fulfill the great commission, i.e., "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19) by sharing the gospel. Yet the gospel being preached by most of the speakers is false, and the Jesus being exalted is "another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:4)!

What is this false gospel? Nearly all of the older Word-Faith preachers (Hagin, Copeland, Price, the Crouches, et al.) were and are heavily influenced by E.W. Kenyon, Smith Wigglesworth, and Paul E. Billheimer. Of Jesus, the latter wrote, "He was 'made' sin...impregnated with sin, and became the very essence of sin; on the Cross He was banished from God's presence as a loathsome thing. He and sin were made synonymous.... [I]t was not sufficient for Christ to offer up only His physical life on the cross. His pure human spirit had to 'descend' into hell.... His spirit must not only descend into hell, but into the lowest hell.... The Father turned Him over, not only to the agony and death of Calvary, but to the satanic torturers of His pure spirit as part of the just dessert of the sin of all the race. As long as Christ was 'the essence of sin' he was at Satan's mercy in that place of torment.... While Christ identified with sin, Satan and the hosts of hell ruled over Him as over any lost sinner. During that seemingly endless age in the nether abyss of death, Satan did with Him as he would, and all hell was 'in carnival.'"

Dave Hunt, noting the blasphemy and absurdity of such a belief, pointed out that "That would make Satan our co-redeemer!" Yet there's much more to that shameful heresy in contradiction to the biblical gospel. Jesus paid the full penalty for the sins of mankind as He hung on the cross—not in hell. Following the three hours during which the sky had turned black, He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He, and only He, as the sinless God/Man

could personally experience what was necessary to fulfill divine justice. When that payment for the infinite penalty for sin was completed, His last words were, “It is finished” (*tetelestai*—paid in full), and “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Notice that it was into *the Father’s hands* that Jesus committed His spirit, not into Satan’s in order to be punished.

There is nothing in Scripture that even hints at Satan torturing Jesus as His payment for sin, especially in hell, which is the last place the father of lies wants to be (although that’s where he will spend eternity). That is a false gospel—a doctrine of demons. It also includes a false Christ. What those who hold to such a belief write about Him *never happened to the biblical Jesus*.

Is that the gospel The Send wants the 50,000 young people to take to the ends of the earth? Someone might argue that not all the speakers believe that gospel. Not all? How many such preachers of a false gospel would it take to lead the young people astray, especially when they are up there with the leader they like? Perhaps some of the younger leaders don’t believe that false gospel, but no one can be certain, because a clear biblical gospel *was never given* throughout the twelve hours of the conference. Since some of the elder statesmen of the Word-Faith and Healing and Prosperity “gospel” were there to influence those gathered, there’s little doubt that they held to that heretical belief.

As mentioned earlier, one of the speakers, Francis Chan, encouraged the crowd to discipline themselves to read the Scriptures daily, as he does. One value of that important habit is biblical discernment, which somehow seems to be seriously missing from Chan’s stated diligence. His history of defending the Roman Catholic Church, with its false gospel of works, seems to pale in light of a staggering number of heresies held and practiced by those among whom he preached at The Send. Their heretical examples have filled volumes, especially those of Benny Hinn, Rodney Howard-Browne, Mike Bickle, and Bill Johnson. Where were Chan’s warnings as a biblical watchman (Ezekiel 3:17-21; 33:7-11; Mark 13:21-23) regarding the false teachers and false prophets with whom he shared the stage? Why was there no mention of Paul’s warning to the Ephesian elders?: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased

with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31).

The doctrinal errors among the speakers, in addition to the false gospel, as noted, are numerous and can only lead their followers away from the Word of God. Most of them, and the ministries they represent, are into Kingdom Dominionism. They believe that God is going to use them to bring about a great end-times revival and that Christians will rule the earth prior to the return of Jesus. No! The Bible states that there will be a “great” *tribulation*, not a great worldwide revival!

MANY WILL SAY TO ME IN THAT DAY, LORD, LORD, HAVE WE NOT PROPHESIED IN THY NAME? AND IN THY NAME HAVE CAST OUT DEVILS? AND IN THY NAME DONE MANY WONDERFUL WORKS?

AND THEN WILL I PROFESS UNTO THEM, I NEVER KNEW YOU: DEPART FROM ME, YE THAT WORK INIQUITY.

—Matthew 7:22-23

The next kingdom, according to the Scriptures, is the kingdom of the Antichrist. Kingdom building is a major belief of Bill Johnson and Bethel Church. That fact is made clear in the songs of Jesus Culture. Those who buy into these false teachings will be contributing to, albeit unwittingly, the religion and the kingdom of the “man of sin.”

False teachings run through the entire history of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, not because the Bible doesn’t teach the very critical and necessary work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of every true believer but because that activity has been distorted and abused by many who *seem* to endorse the Spirit-filled life. Christianity, without the true working of the Holy Spirit, is not *biblical* Christianity—it is vanity.

The leaven of false prophecies abounds among many of the The Send’s speakers, of whom Benny Hinn may be chief among them (see *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*). Fake healings at his meetings are well known. The young leaders of The Send emulate their elders, including Michael Koulianos, who is Hinn’s son-in-law. Todd White claimed to have a word from the Lord that a healing was going to take place among all those in the crowd who had physical scars and needle tracks from past drug use. God, he claimed, was going to remove the scars and needle marks as he spoke! After what seemed like an endless harangue for God to heal, and a besieging of the audience for proof of God’s healing, *no one manifested what White had declared*.

Another article in the May 2019 issue of *Charisma* was related to the claim that God was bringing about revival throughout the world. The article was titled “God Is Shaking Europe.” We’re told, “Hundreds of thousands of people in Europe are beginning to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ through massive evangelization efforts.” Sounds really good! But we need to be Bereans and discern *which gospel* is being preached, and by whom. The leader of Awakening Europe is Ben Fitzgerald, a former pastor from Bethel Church. The article notes that “numerous houses of prayer, similar to the International House of Prayer [IHOP] in Kansas City, Missouri...have spread to most major European cities.” IHOP’s beginnings were steeped in the beliefs and spiritual abuses of the “Kansas City Prophets.” Yet a leader of the European IHOP comments that “the growth is driven by the next generation.... The younger generation loves worship and is drawn to real Spirit-filled worship.”

The article opens with a statement related to the thoughts of Todd White and Ben Fitzgerald. I don’t think they recognized the potential—and even frightening—irony of what came to their minds. They “felt oddly compelled to visit the field where Adolf Hitler had held Nazi rallies decades earlier. On that field, Hitler had indoctrinated tens of thousands of youth into the lies behind his murderous regime.” If those individuals who are behind The Send are not preaching the truth of God’s Word to the “tens of thousands of youth” who are attending their rallies, the consequences are more than merely temporal—they’re tragically eternal.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I just read the Q&A in the June newsletter, and now I have a new concern that popped into my head out of nowhere. I hope you can ease my mind.

Heaven was originally without sin, and yet we have Lucifer, who rebelled and changed everything. Then Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world but *chose* to sin, resulting in the havoc of today's world. I'm wondering, when I'm blessed with the place the Lord is preparing for me, and where I expect to live a sinless, peaceful, stress-free eternal life, what assurance do I have that wrong choices won't be made *there* that will affect its perfection?

You would think that after 50-plus years of being committed to Christ (30 of which I've been blessed by your ministry), I'd have thought about this and had it figured out. I'm sure I'm missing something somewhere, but do hope you can get me back on track.

RESPONSE: We are given great assurance that the scenario you wonder about will not happen. According to 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, we read: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

First, we all shall be changed. Second, we shall be raised incorruptible. That encompasses every aspect of our beings. It's not just that our bodies are no longer subject to decay, but that the curse of sin that affects us in this life shall also have been dealt with.

Furthermore, we need to remember the promise of Scripture concerning those who will be gathered in the Rapture of the church. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and *so shall we ever be with the Lord*" [our emphasis].

QUESTION: You claim that Christ became a man to pay the penalty His justice demanded for our sins. Why would He have to become a man? Why would God go to all that trouble when as God He could have just forgiven us?

RESPONSE: God's love, grace, and mercy cannot override His justice. The penalty He has pronounced for sin must be paid. For a judge to fail to mete out the sentence demanded by the law would make him a partner in the crime. God cannot waive the penalty He has pronounced. That would make Him a liar and mean that He gives His approval to the very sin He has condemned. It would be contrary to God's own nature and being to do so.

Why did Christ have to become a man in order to pay the penalty for sin? Man sinned, the penalty has been pronounced upon all mankind, and must therefore be paid by man. But no finite man, being a sinner himself, could pay the infinite penalty for all mankind. Thus, God had to become a man. If Jesus were not God and man in one person, He could not have paid the penalty for the sins of the world.

No religion anywhere offers such salvation, or could offer it. Yet many who call themselves Christians reject what the Bible teaches and what our consciences know about sin and its penalty. Churches and cults, such as Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, offer "salvation" by means that no court of law would accept: rituals, sacraments, works, and prayers in payment for sin. Catholics imagine that Mary will get them into heaven, and to that end seek her favor.

I expose such folly in this way: Suppose I am in jail awaiting trial. You warn me that the judge is strict. I reply, "Don't worry, I'll get off—I know the judge's mother!" We call that corruption, rightly condemned in earthly courts. Certainly, God will not allow it in his heavenly court!

QUESTION: One of the "contradictions" in scripture that some people point out is the number of Abraham's sons. Galatians 4:22 says he has two, but other verses in Genesis say he has more (or just one). I know that one explanation for Abraham's being said to "have two sons" is because Paul used it to model the covenants of law and grace. I generally agree with the explanation, but the tricky part is that in today's world when we say we "have two kids," and we really have three, others may consider that lying. That makes this explanation somewhat difficult. How do we approach this "contradiction"?

RESPONSE: There is no contradiction. We need to examine all the scriptures

pertaining to this. The Lord had promised Abraham that from his "seed" (singular) would come forth many descendants. With the delay of the fulfillment of this promise, Sarah and Abraham devised another plan when Sarah urged Abraham to have relations with her handmaid, Hagar. As a result, "Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael" (Genesis 16:15).

But the Lord rejected their plan, and when Abraham asked God to accept Ishmael as the child of promise, in Genesis 17:18 we read that "Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!" But God repeated His promise: "And God said, *Sarah thy wife* [emphasis added] shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him" (Genesis 17:19).

The Lord viewed Isaac as "the son," that is, the "promised son," regardless of Sarah and Abraham's plan. When the Lord told Abraham to take Isaac and offer him for a sacrifice, He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of" (Genesis 22:2).

By common usage, Isaac wasn't the *only* son, because Ishmael was the eldest son. But the passage in Genesis 22:2 ("your only son Isaac") used a particular phrase. The Hebrew word used for "only" is *yachiyd*, which means "unique" or "only begotten" (that is, "special").

Furthermore, Ishmael had already been rejected and cast out. In Genesis 21:10, Sarah "...said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." The promise applied only to Isaac. He was the heir and the one specifically named by God.

Afterwards, there were other biological sons. Genesis 25:2 tells us that after the death of Sarah, Abraham took another wife named Keturah. "And she bore him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah." Nevertheless, Isaac remains *the only son of the promise*, for in Genesis 25:6 we are told, "...unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country."



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Why Does God Harden Hearts?

Question: I have been greatly troubled by two statements in the Bible: 1) that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:13-14; etc.); and 2) that God will give people a "strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth" (2 Thessalonians:2:11-12). This seems so obviously unjust that it has shaken my faith! Furthermore, it seems to make God responsible for evil or at least a partner in it. Can you help me?

Response: First of all, let's get the facts straight. Before God ever hardened his heart, Pharaoh refused a simple request to let the people of God go "three days' journey into the desert" to offer a sacrifice to their God (Exodus:5:1-9). This desire to worship was hardly unreasonable, coming from people who had been enslaved and prevented from offering the prescribed sacrifices to their God for centuries. They needed to remove themselves from Egypt because their sacrifice of animals to God would have been highly offensive to the Egyptians (Exodus:8:26). Yet Pharaoh's response was not only to sternly deny this request but to viciously increase the rigors of the Israelite's slavery.

We must remember that God did not force Pharaoh to do anything that he had not already determined to do. God simply helped Pharaoh to persist in the path he had firmly chosen. God "hardened Pharaoh's heart" not by changing his will but by strengthening him in his resolve not to let the people go. In dealing with this same question, R. A. Torrey wrote:

"The facts of the case are these: Pharaoh was a cruel and oppressive tyrant, subjecting the people of Israel to most awful bondage, suffering and death. God looked down upon his people, heard their cries, and in His mercy determined to deliver them (Exodus:2:25; 3:7-8). He sent Moses as His representative to Pharaoh to demand the deliverance of His people, and Pharaoh in proud rebellion defied Him and gave himself up to even more cruel oppression of the people. It was then and only then that God hardened his heart.

"This...[is] God's universal method of dealing with men...if man chooses to error, to give him up to error (2 Thessalonians:2:9-12). This is stern dealing, but it is just dealing."

We can better understand what it meant to "harden Pharaoh's heart" by considering why it was necessary. The plagues of God's judgment upon the false gods of Egypt became so unpleasant in their consequences and so obviously supernatural in their cause that Pharaoh was terrified. His heart was not changed, but he no longer had the courage to persist in his desire to keep the people of God in bondage. However, God was not yet ready to terminate his judgments upon Egypt's false gods. God therefore helped Pharaoh to continue in his refusal to let the people of Israel go until He had completed His exposure and punishment of the false gods that served as a front for Satan in his deception of the Egyptian people.

It is also important to understand that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart proceeded precisely because of each new request by Moses and Aaron to let the people go. Each time that he was given the choice of submitting to God and refused, that very refusal was a hardening of his heart, by which Pharaoh continued to dig himself ever deeper into the pit of rebellion. Each act of rebellion and rejection of God hardens the heart that much more.

So it will be with all those who have refused to accept the truth that God has made known to them. How can it be unjust for God to help them believe the lie that they themselves have determined to believe? No, it is only just to do so; and that is the solemn lesson we learn here.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH
by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE.....

“The world is unrelenting in its hostility to us, and determined to wipe out every divine principle for which we stand. It seeks to supplant creationism with evolution. It denies the sacredness of human life by abortion. It achieves the breakdown of the family unit by divorce for any reason. The purity of the marriage relationship is denied by premarital sex. Homosexuality and lesbianism are looked on as acceptable alternative lifestyles. God’s chain of command in the home and in the church is ridiculed by militant feminism. Church and state are so separated as to ban the mention of God and Christ from public life entirely. Obscenity, pornography, nakedness, filth, and violence are treated with amiable tolerance.

And so, drugged and insensate, the world defies every law of God and hurtles on to its fiery doom.”

—William MacDonald in *Worlds Apart*

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Noah Found Grace

Dave Hunt — First published in
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ATHEISTS ARGUE THAT according to the “myth” of the Garden of Eden, evil had too innocent a beginning to be the root from which all the wickedness on this earth could possibly have grown. Adam and Eve merely ate some forbidden fruit—an act hardly worth getting upset about. “Eve talked me into it, Lord, and I did it to share with her, but I only took one bite.”...“But the serpent deceived me, Lord; I thought it would make me wise...and it was delicious and nutritious.”

How could such a simple act bring the horror of selfishness, jealousy, lust, hatred, rage, revenge, crime, war, disease, suffering, and death that has plagued mankind ever since? The biblical claim seems absurd! For this one tiny mistake, God was so upset that He threw them out of the Garden and sentenced them to death? Why couldn't God have just forgiven them—given them another chance? Wouldn't that have been reasonable?

The answer to that question is what the Bible is all about. The question itself reflects an easy-going attitude toward sin and a lack of respect for authority that permeates our society and has even penetrated evangelical churches. “Give me one more chance” became the mantra of the human race, repeated endlessly by everyone from disobedient children to the worst criminals pleading with the judge. God knew that “one more chance” would only encourage evil-doers. But parents, schools, courts, parole boards, psychologists, and well-meaning do-gooders are still honoring this lame excuse—and with devastating results.

A raging epidemic of what the Bible calls “sin” has ravaged mankind. The courage to face that truth, however, is sadly missing from most of today's pulpits. Few dare call it rebellion against our Creator for which we need to repent. God's judgment and the coming day of reckoning are much too negative to hold the interest of modern congregations. Talk about God must be positive, uplifting, reassuring. None of this “separated from God by sin” talk will do. The “unchurched” are not going to be attracted to church if they are confronted with suggestions of guilt. Sermons should inspire listeners to feel comfortable about God and about themselves. And they must

be short, entertaining, and related to the “good life” the world dreams of attaining.

Yet the “good life” isn't life at all but a plastic bubble defined by sit-coms and TV commercials sold to us by a whole industry of denial and designed specifically to insulate us from the awful truth of which the Spirit of truth would convict us: “of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (Jn 16:8). The game is to glorify sin, mock the family, and pretend that suffering, sorrow, and death aren't part of “our world,” or at least to push them into another compartment that doesn't have to be dealt with just yet.

The real world is inhabited by self-centered descendants of the original pair who rebelled against God under the leadership of the serpent. What popular pulpits must avoid at all cost, however, is the horrible truth that man has been the devil's follower and in his service from the very beginning. We'll solve our problems with technology, another committee, another day in court, another peace conference, more catchy slogans, positive self-affirmations, and a little religion of whatever brand seems appealing at the moment.

God had spoken in wisdom and love, His creatures had rebelled—and “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Sam 15:23). This has been the history of mankind. The world is getting worse, not better, and God's judgment is soon going to fall. But unlike Adam and Eve, who were ashamed and tried to hide from God, their descendants openly defy Him and flaunt their mutiny in His face. They have thrown God off this earth and would tear Him from His throne in heaven if they could.

The trees of the Garden behind which Adam and Eve sought to hide have metamorphosed into an asphalt jungle of high-rise apartments and office buildings, with every monument to human achievement crowded with inhabitants who desperately need to repent and return to God on His terms through faith in the One who died for their sins. Scattered throughout the jungle have always been the mushrooms of religion, some more poisonous than others. And now something new has appeared—giant mushrooms spreading everywhere: mega-churches filled with congregants who are being taught a “positive” way to hide from God. He is praised with the lips, but there is no repentance toward Him or real faith in Christ as the Savior of sinners.

Instead of exposing modern culture's contempt for God and righteousness

and its glorification of sin, the church embraces its decadence as a packaging that will make the “gospel” acceptable to those who don't know they need it. Our needing Christ as a shelter from the storm of God's wrath against our sins is not mentioned. The appeal is not to come to Christ to obtain forgiveness and to be rescued from eternity in the Lake of Fire—but to become happier on earth. Christianity is packaged as “spirituality,” a popular commodity today, and sold as a good deal that anyone who wants to be “blessed” would accept. The real issue, however, is sin, not self-esteem, self-love, self-image, etc.—but as we mention in the Q&A, not only the world but the church, too, is peddling the snake oil of self-enhancement as the cure-all.

Nor is this self-centered message confined to today's “seeker-sensitive” churches. Much of the evangelical church in America is preoccupied with “growth,” while millions suffering for Christ in much of the world are forgotten. The hundreds of thousands who are being slaughtered by Muslims in southern Sudan, in northern Nigeria, in Indonesia, and Christians suffering in other Muslim countries would be aghast if they knew that a major concern of Christians in America is how to feel good about themselves—and that when they don't, they have the comforting option of therapy from Christian psychologists!

Genesis chapter 6 presents an astonishing picture: not many generations after the creation of Adam and Eve, their descendants (to whom they surely had passed along the story of their expulsion from the Garden) are so evil that God is ready to destroy them all. And He would have done so but for one man: “but Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8). Only one man out of millions obtained grace from God!

How can that be? Does God reserve His grace for a select company? No, God's grace is freely offered to all; it cannot be earned or merited or it would not be grace. So why was it only Noah who “found grace”? To find, one must seek (Mat 7:7; Lk 11:9). Noah was the only one who sought God's grace! Noah knew that he was a sinner and needed God's grace—and he alone sought and found it.

Hundreds of times in the Old Testament this same Hebrew word (*matsa*), which is here translated “found,” is given the same clear meaning: “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found (*matsa*), call ye upon him

while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:6-7); “And ye shall seek me, and find (*matsa*) me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13).

We must recognize our guilt in the face of God’s holy perfection, and come to Him in deep repentance seeking His grace, not to earn or merit it, but to obtain mercy at His throne of grace (Heb 4:16). Instead, the church offers God’s favor to achieve happiness, success, and earthly blessings. We don’t really appreciate God’s grace until we realize that His righteous judgment is hanging over this present world as it was in Noah’s day. “Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth...it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger” (Zep 2:3).

We desperately need to understand something of the magnitude of sin, of evil, and of gross wickedness in this world if we are to appreciate our redemption. God’s love, grace, and mercy shine all the brighter against the awful reality of evil. Indeed, the very existence of evil is a powerful proof of God’s existence and holiness. God says, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil...” (Isa 45:7). God creates evil? Yes, the same way that light exposes darkness.

A person who was born, lived, and died in total darkness in a cave deep beneath the earth would not know that he lived in the dark until someone came into the cave with a light and the darkness was revealed. In the same way, God’s goodness, perfect holiness, and righteousness reveal evil for what it is. Without God and the conscience He has given us we would not recognize evil. Indeed, evil makes good shine all the brighter—and this world is full of evil.

I wrote a book titled, *Judgment Day: Islam, Israel and the Nations*. It is a shocking exposé of evil beyond one’s wildest imagination manifest especially as anti-Semitism and hatred of Israel on the part of Islam and all nations—including Israel’s frequent betrayal by even the United States. God’s judgment is coming upon the entire world for its mistreatment of His chosen people. He declares, “I will also gather all nations [that includes America], and will...plead with [punish] them...for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land [as every ‘peace proposal’

has done and Bush’s ‘road map to peace’ intended]” (Joel 3:2).

Evil is at its worst when it poses as good and justifies itself with lies. For example, consider the full-page, truth-defying diatribe against Israel, masquerading as a special news report in the *National Catholic Reporter* (4/26/96), which justified Islam’s murder and mayhem and blamed Israel for mistreating “Palestinians” in the city of Hebron. (This is where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives were buried, but not one Arab or Muslim. Yet Muslims have taken control and built a mosque there.) It says trouble started when Jews “*began moving into Hebron 20 years ago.*” In fact, though chased out periodically by invaders, Jews have been there for 3,000 years. Arabs only arrived after the seventh-century Muslim conquest and immediately began to brutalize the Jewish residents for failing to convert to Islam. That mistreatment has continued for more than 1,300 years.

In the vicious pogrom in Hebron of 1929 (one of many), synagogues were desecrated, 67 Jews were murdered, and the rest forced to flee. Jews were slaughtered all over “Palestine.” Typical of what happened was the following report from the British police chief of Hebron:

On hearing screams...I went up a sort of tunnel passage and saw an Arab in the act of cutting off a child’s head with a sword. Seeing me, he tried to aim the stroke at me but missed...I shot him....Behind him was a Jewish woman smothered in blood, with a man I recognized as an Arab police constable named Issa Sheril from Jaffa...standing over the woman with a dagger in his hand. He saw me and bolted into a room close by and tried to shut me out—shouting in Arabic, “Your Honor, I am a policeman.” I got into the room and shot him (Cited in Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, p. 315).

Years later, cautiously and fearfully, some Jews began moving back into one of their most sacred cities, a city where their patriarchs are buried. In 1948, Israel was attacked by six Arab nations. Jordan captured the West Bank and with it, Hebron. All Jewish residents were summarily expelled, synagogues destroyed. Only when Israel retook Hebron in 1967 could Jews return—and the *National Catholic Reporter* castigates them for doing so and

blames the 400 Jewish residents under siege from 120,000 Muslims for causing trouble! Evil is praised as good—and seeker-friendly sermons don’t even acknowledge its existence!

The persecution of Jews in Roman Catholic Europe was mild compared with what Christians and Jews endured for 1,300 years in Muslim countries. The slaughter included more than 1 million Armenians in the last decades of the nineteenth and first of the twentieth centuries—at times with the tacit approval of Western powers. In the great 1915 massacre, “Turkish women were given the dagger to give the final stab to dying Armenians in order to gain credit [with] Allah for having killed a Christian.”

In Ataturk’s destruction of Smyrna (leaving nothing but the Turkish suburb) in September of 1922, about 200,000 Armenian and Greek inhabitants were massacred while English, American, Italian and French warships anchored in the harbor repelled fleeing victims who swam out to them for help. The Western powers didn’t want to offend Muslim Turkey! In his must-read book, *The Blight of Asia*, George Horton, US Consul in that doomed city and eye-witness to the unspeakable cruelty of Islam, writes, “One of the keenest impressions which I brought away with me from Smyrna was a feeling of shame that I belonged to the human race.” Shades of Genesis six!

In its foreword, James W. Gerard, former US Ambassador to Germany, describes Horton’s book as “the whole story of the savage extermination of Christian civilization [by Muslims] throughout the length and breadth of the old Byzantine Empire....” Horton himself writes, “This process of extermination was carried on over a considerable period of time, with fixed purpose, with system, and with painstaking minute details; and it was accomplished with unspeakable cruelties....”

Sin is a horrible fact, in spite of the aversion that popular preachers have for facing its reality. The “positive” sermons in today’s mega churches make a mockery of the judgment that God will shortly unleash upon this wicked world. To lull sinners into thinking that all is well is to fatally deceive those for whom Christ died and to keep them from repenting and finding refuge in Christ from the wrath to come.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I've been saved for nearly ten years. I've gone through four different churches and visited many in between, among different denominations, and I can't seem to find one that's suitable. I'm not looking for the perfect church, just something that is biblically sound and where I feel welcome. I've noticed a number of pastors teaching false doctrines to the congregation. I could write volumes on how much false teaching I've heard. I can't seem to find any kindred spirits. I'm becoming increasingly isolated and wondering why I'm unable to connect.

RESPONSE: Have you considered the implication of Hebrews 10:24-25? These verses are often used to motivate people toward regular church attendance, but the passage also implies that fellowship, even in the darkening times in which we live is still possible. The passage reads: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: *and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching* [emphasis added]."

The Lord will never admonish us to do something that isn't possible. The direct implication is that there will always be a remnant of people who gather to exhort one another. We need to learn from the example of Elijah, who, in 1 Kings 19, said twice, "I, only I am left." When the Lord finally drew him out of the cave where he was hiding, He gave Elijah some tasks, and, in what seems like an afterthought, stated, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him (v. 18)."

There is always a remnant, though finding them may take time. If the denominational churches have compromised their official teachings, it would certainly be good to seek out independent Bible-based churches exempt from such actions that have impacted affiliated churches. Whether meeting in rented buildings, homes, community rooms, or other facilities, faithful saints still gather.

One of the principles by which the Lord operates is summarized in Isaiah 59:19: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him."

QUESTION: I know that false faiths abound, but I don't find edification in focusing on error! Show me in the Word where false doctrine is explained. It seems

to me that the Bible addresses Satan's lies without going into detail of the actual practices.

RESPONSE: We at *The Berean Call* take no pleasure in exposing and documenting false dogmas and practices. We only do so to expose error out of deep concern for souls. Yes, there are many kind, compassionate and self-sacrificing Muslims who oppose terrorism. Yes, the Roman Catholic Church was the major charitable institution during the Middle Ages, often promoting morality and education—and most Catholics today do not know most of Rome's official dogmas (but they still rely upon that Church and its clergy to get them out of "purgatory" and into heaven). Yes, many Mormons and Moonies espouse "traditional morals." We do not oppose individuals but we do oppose the false gospels they preach.

You ask for biblical support concerning exposure of evil and false doctrines. The Bible gives much insight concerning Satan's fall (Is 14:12-15; Ezk 28:12-18), the details of his temptation of Eve (Gn 3:1-7) and his attempt to destroy Job's trust in and relationship with God (Job 1:1-2:7). There are too many accounts of idolatry and pagan practices and warning against them to list all the verses (Lv 19:31; 20:1-6; Dt 18:9-14; Is 47:8-13, etc.). The Bible goes into great detail concerning the apostasy of Israel, telling the sins of its kings and people, from the golden calf (Ex 32:1-28) to the Queen of Heaven (Jer 44:15-23); and again there are too many references to list. Most of the epistles were written to combat heretical teachings that crept into the early church. False doctrine is explained thoroughly and repeatedly. Almost the entire book of Galatians is devoted to describing and combating a false gospel.

To "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3) must include pointing out what is wrong with the counterfeit. Christ himself did so, explaining in detail the evil practices and false teachings of the rabbis (Mt 15:1-20; 23:2-33; etc.). Our exposure of error is moderate in comparison to Stephen's indictment of the Jews (Acts 7:39-43, 51-53). And considering the fact that Paul, out of concern for coming apostasy, for "three years...ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31), we could hardly be accused of extremism in our earnest attempts to point out what is wrong in order for the truth to be understood more clearly in comparison. Our motive is to rescue souls from eternal doom.

QUESTION: According to today's understanding of all people, as indicated in any dictionary today, to "believe" means to

have any mental thought about anything or to simply trust anything. Is this what the Lord intends for men to do, and only this saves them? Is saving faith believing?

RESPONSE: It is clear from Scripture that when the Lord is talking about faith and belief, He is not speaking of having "any mental thought about anything or to simply trust anything." Rather, very simply, faith must have an object. In Mark 11:22 Jesus said, "Have faith in God." One has faith in something or someone. Faith is absolute, total trust. There is no one and nothing in the universe that deserves our complete 100-percent faith except God.

Nelson's *Bible Dictionary* defines faith "as a belief in or confident attitude toward God, involving commitment to his will for one's life." It goes on to say that belief is placing one's trust in God's truth. A person who "believes" takes God at His Word, trusting Him for salvation.

Furthermore, the Lord knows our weakness and in His interaction with men, the Lord Jesus often asked, "Do you believe?" In Mark 9:24 we see an example of how the grace of God helps the one who "believes" but is only too aware of the weakness of that belief. When the father of the possessed child was asked if he believed that the Lord could deliver the child, he "...cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Hebrews 11:11 tells us, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is to the Lord we look for the "evidence of things not seen."

It's difficult to conceive of anything more important in the Christian life than faith. Certainly, the dictionary defines faith as "belief in, devotion to, or trust in somebody or something, especially without logical proof." Yet, it also states that faith is "belief in and devotion to God." Scripture, as you have pointed out, tells us much more about faith and its importance. It is so important that the Bible states that without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). According to this biblical statement, faith is belief in the one, true God, whom we have not yet seen.

Consequently, when we come to Christ in "faith," we are "believing" what He is able to do, and that is saving faith. As we grow in Christ, however, we have every opportunity for our faith to grow. Again, we experience and see His answers to prayer and when we find ourselves in another troubling circumstance, we will have a "track record" on how He can and will answer. Consequently our faith and our belief in Christ grows even stronger.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Is God Fair in His Demands for Obedience?

Question: The Bible says that we must obey God because this is His universe. Doesn't that make Him a tyrant? You say He gave man freedom to choose good or evil, but hasn't He stacked the deck so that man is forced to go God's way or be damned? Is that fair?

Response: The command that God gave to Adam and Eve simply forbade them to eat of a particular tree in the garden. There is no conceivable command that could have been easier to obey. There must have been thousands of trees of every variety in that lush garden of perfection. The tree of which God told them not to eat was no doubt one of hundreds of trees bearing that same kind of fruit. The fruit of the tree did not have magical powers that imparted sin and death to Adam and Eve. It was their disobedience in eating of it in defiance of God's prohibition that constituted sin and brought death upon them and all of their descendants to this day.

We must agree, then that there was nothing unreasonable about God's very first commandment to mankind. Nor can we find any way to excuse Adam and Eve for their disobedience. The same is true of all sin and all sinners.

In the first sin of mankind we see the truth about all sin. The act itself may not seem so bad. Simply eating some fruit isn't evil in itself. A couple committing fornication may excuse themselves by saying they are only expressing their love to each other. The evil lies in defying God, who as our Creator not only has the right to establish laws governing our behavior but only does so for our good.

Furthermore, that defiance is both a rejection of God's authority and a denial that He really loves us and that His way is best. It is man's egotistical and self-centered assertion that he can be his own god, that he can decide his own fate. Such rebellion cannot be allowed in God's universe anymore than the referees on a football field or basketball court can allow the players to violate the rules of the game. In the case of Adam and Eve we also see the horrible consequences of an individual's sin upon future generations. That awesome fact should be enough to make us all shrink from sin.

Two Logical Alternatives

Let me illustrate the point. Though it occurred about 30 years ago, I vividly remember two young men visiting me late one night. One of them was angry at God because he was being shipped out to Vietnam the following morning. His friend had brought him to me to see if I could answer some of his complaints against God.

"I didn't ask to be created," the one going to Vietnam said bitterly, "but here I am without choosing to be here. And now God dangles me over the flames of hell and says, 'Turn or burn. Do it my way or I'll drop you in!'" Hostility seemed to be consuming him.

"Let's look at it like this," I suggested. "Suppose you have just come into existence somewhere in the universe and you have the authority and power to create your own destiny. After spending 3 or 4 billion years planning your ultimate Utopia you put the finishing touches on your blueprint for life and sit back rather pleased with yourself. God immediately lays His blueprint for your life beside yours and you look it over carefully. Now tell me, which blueprint would be better?"

He looked at the floor, then the ceiling, then the fire in the fireplace, and finally at me with an unhappy expression. "I guess I'd have to be the greatest

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The Shameful Social Gospel

T. A. McMahon — First published in September 2008

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

—ROMANS 1:16

FOR VARIOUS REASONS, Christians of different sorts have tinkered with “the gospel of Christ” as though it needed adjustments. Not major alterations, most will tell you, but just some minor tweaking here and there. The changes often begin by one’s declaring that there is no real change involved, simply a shift in emphasis. Yet no matter what the rationale may be, the end result is being “ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”

To be “ashamed of the gospel” covers a number of attitudes, from being totally embarrassed by it to thinking that one can improve upon it a bit to make it more acceptable. One example of the former is the claim by an Emerging Church author that the teaching regarding Christ having paid the full penalty for the sins of mankind through His substitutionary death on the Cross is irrelevant and viewed as “a form of cosmic child abuse.” More subtle examples include trying to make the gospel seem less exclusive and the “softening” of the consequences from which the gospel saves mankind, such as the wrath of God and the Lake of Fire.

Prevalent among many religious leaders who profess to be evangelical Christians (i.e., Bible-believing Christians) is the promotion of a gospel that is acceptable to, and even admired by, people throughout the world. Today, the most popular form of this is the social gospel.

Although the social gospel is common to many new movements among evangelicals, it is not new to Christendom. It had its modern beginning in the late 1800s, when it developed as a way to address the various conditions in society that caused suffering among the populace. The belief was, and is, that Christianity will attract followers when it demonstrates its love for mankind. This could be best accomplished by helping to alleviate the suffering of humanity caused by poverty, disease, oppressive work conditions, society’s injustices, civil rights abuses, etc. Those who fostered this movement also believed that relief from their conditions of misery would improve the moral nature of those so deprived.

Another driving force behind the introduction of the social gospel was the eschatological, or end times, views of those

involved. Nearly all were amillennialists or post-millennialists. The former believed that they were living in a symbolic thousand-year time period in which Christ was already ruling from heaven, Satan was bound, and they were God’s workers appointed to bring about a kingdom on earth worthy of Christ. Post-millennialists also believed that they were in the Millennium, and their goal was to restore the earth to its Eden-like state in order for Christ to return from Heaven to rule over His earthly kingdom.

The social gospel, in all of its assorted applications, helped to produce some achievements (child labor laws and women’s suffrage) that have contributed to the welfare of society. It became the primary gospel of liberal theologians and mainline denominations throughout the 20th century. Although its popularity alternately rose and fell as it ran its course, it was often energized by the combination of religion and liberal politics, e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement. Midway through the last century and later, the social gospel influenced developments such as the liberation theology of Roman Catholicism and the socialism of left-leaning evangelical Christians. It is in this present century, however, that the social gospel has gotten its most extensive promotion. Two men, both professing to be evangelicals, have led the way.

George W. Bush began his presidency by instituting the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. His objective was to provide government funding for local churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious ministries that were providing a social service to their community. Bush believed that programs run by “people of faith” could be at least as effective as secular organizations in helping the needy, and perhaps more so because of their moral commitment to “love and serve their neighbor.” As he prepared to leave office, he declared that he considered his Faith-Based program to be one of the foremost achievements in his tenure as president. Then-presidential candidate Barack Obama stated that, should he win the election, he would continue the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

Rick Warren, the mega-selling author of *The Purpose-Driven Church* and *The Purpose-Driven Life*, has taken the social gospel to places it has never been before: i.e., not only world wide but into the thinking and planning of world leaders. Warren credited business management genius, Peter Drucker, with the basic concept that he is executing. Drucker believed that the social problems of poverty, disease, hunger, and ignorance were beyond the capability of

governments or multinational corporations to solve. To Drucker, the most hopeful solution would be found in the nonprofit sector of society, especially churches, with their hosts of volunteers dedicated to alleviating the social ills of those in their community.

Warren, acknowledging the late Drucker as his mentor for 20 years, certainly learned his lessons. His two *Purpose-Driven* books, translated into 57 languages and selling a combined 30 million copies, reveal the game plan for what Drucker had envisioned. Warren had local churches implement this vision from his books through his enormously popular 40 Days of Purpose and 40 Days of Community programs. To date [as of 2008], 500,000 churches in 162 nations have become part of his network. They form the basis for his Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan.

What is this P.E.A.C.E. plan? Warren’s presentation of the plan to the church is found at <https://saddleback.com/connect/ministry/the-peace-plan>. On video, he identifies the “giants” of humanity’s ills as spiritual emptiness, self-centered leadership, poverty, disease, and illiteracy, which he hopes to eradicate by (P)lanting churches, (E)quipping leaders, (A)ssisting the poor, (C)aring for the sick, and (E)ducating the next generation.

Warren uses the analogy of a three-legged stool to illustrate the best way to slay these giants. Two of the legs are governments and business, which have thus far been ineffective, and, just like a two-legged stool, cannot stand. The third very necessary leg is the church. “There are thousands of villages in the world that have no school, no clinic, no business, no government—but they have a church. What would happen if we could mobilize churches to address those five global giants?” Warren reasons that since there are 2.3 billion Christians worldwide, they could potentially form what President Bush termed a vast “army of compassion” of “people of faith” such as the world has not yet experienced.

In addition to the “*Christian version*,” Warren has an expanded *inclusive version* of the P.E.A.C.E. plan that has drawn support and praise from political and religious leaders and celebrities worldwide. At the 2008 World Economic Forum, he declared, “The future of the world is not secularism, but religious pluralism...” Referring to the ills besetting the world, he declared, “We cannot solve these problems without involving people of faith and their religious institutions. It isn’t going to happen any other way. On this planet there are about 20 million Jews, there are about 600 million Buddhists, there are about 800 million Hindus, there are over 1 billion Muslims, and there are 2.3 billion

Christians. If you take people of faith out of the equation, you have ruled out five-sixths of the world. And if we only leave it up to secular people to solve these major problems, it isn't going to happen" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGytW4yh0C8).

To accommodate working with people of all faiths Warren has revised the "P" in his P.E.A.C.E. from "Plant evangelical churches" to "Plant churches that promote reconciliation," and the "E" from "Equip church leaders" to "Equip servant leaders." Warren has elsewhere acknowledged his practical shift to pluralism: "Who's the man of peace in any village—or it might be a woman of peace—who has the most respect?... They don't have to be Christian. In fact, they could be Muslim, but they're open and they're influential, and you work with them to attack the five giants [to which he has added global warming]." He quotes a secular leader who affirms what he's doing: "I get it, Rick. Houses of worship are the distribution centers for all we need to do."

Warren joined the advisory board of Faith Foundation, established by former British prime minister and recent Roman Catholic convert Tony Blair. The Foundation's goal is to further understanding and cooperation among the six leading faiths: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jewish. How does the Cross fit into this ecumenical gathering? It doesn't. Critical to achieving that ecumenical goal is the elimination of the problem of *exclusive* religions, a concern articulated by one of the World Economic Forum panelists: "There are some religious leaders in different religious faiths who, in seeking to affirm their own faith and its authenticity and legitimacy...deny other people their faith with its legitimacy and authenticity. I don't think we can keep going like this without...spawning the kind of hatred we are all here to try and solve. I think it's up to us to hold the clergy's feet to the fire of whatever faith—that we insist that we affirm what is beautiful in our own traditions while at the same time refusing to denigrate other faith traditions by suggesting that they are illegitimate, or consigned to some kind of evil end."

The Bible declares all the religions of the world to be "illegitimate" and "consigned" not to "some kind of evil end" but to their *just* end. Only belief in the biblical gospel saves humanity: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name [Jesus Christ] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved;...He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not

the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Acts 4:12; John 3:36).

The history of the social gospel is, in nearly every case, a sincere attempt by Christians to do those things that they believe will honor God and benefit humanity. In every case, however, the practical working out of "benefiting humanity" has compromised biblical faith and dishonored God. Why is that? God's Word gives no commission to the *church* to fix the problems of the world. Those who attempt to do so are starting out under a false premise, "...a way which seemeth right unto a man," not *God's* way. So where can it go from there? "The end thereof are the ways of death," i.e., destruction (Proverbs 14:12). Furthermore, the problems of the world are all *symptoms*. The root cause itself is sin.

What percentage of the "people of faith," who comprise all religions and make up five-sixths of the world's population, understand and accept the gospel—the only cure for sin? Or how many of the 2.3 billion "Christians" in the world believe the biblical gospel? The numbers tumble down exponentially. "Yes, but...they are a massive volunteer force and distribution outlet of resources for slaying the giants of world suffering!" What does it profit the billions of "people of faith" who may alleviate some of the world's symptoms yet lose their very souls?

The social gospel is a *deadly disease* for "people of faith." It reinforces the belief that salvation can be attained by doing good works, putting aside differences for the common good, treating others the way we want to be treated, acting morally, ethically, and sacrificially—and that doing so will endear humans to God. No! These are self-deceptive strivings that spurn God's salvation, deny His perfect standard, and reject His perfect justice. Salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." In fact, it is "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus declared Himself to be condemned humanity's only hope for reconciliation with God: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). There is no other way, because God's perfect justice demanded that the penalty for sin for every human ("for all have sinned" [Romans 3:23]) be paid. Only the perfect, sinless God-Man could and did pay that infinite penalty in full by His death upon the Cross. Only faith in Him reconciles a person with God.

The shameful social gospel today not only promotes "another gospel," but it

helps to prepare a kingdom contrary to the teachings of Scripture. "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). He will return from heaven (John 14:3) to "rapture," or "catch up," those who believe in Him (His bride) into the clouds and take them to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The kingdom that remains on the earth will be the kingdom of the Antichrist.

Consistent with its amillennial/postmillennial beginnings, the efforts of the social gospel are earthbound in their attempted restoration of the kingdom of God. Eugene Peterson has infiltrated that heresy into his Message Bible: "God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again" (a perversion of John 3:17).

Rob Bell, in his book *Velvet Elvis*, reflects the "fix the earth" eschatology of nearly all Emerging Church leaders: "Salvation is the entire universe being brought back into harmony with its maker. This has huge implications for how people present the message of Jesus. Yes, Jesus can come into our hearts. But we can join a movement that is as wide and as big as the universe itself. Rocks and trees and birds and swamps and ecosystems. God's desire is to restore all of it...The goal isn't escaping this world but making this world the kind of place God can come to. And God is remaking us into the kind of people who can do this kind of work."

For Emerging Church leader Brian McLaren, this is the future way of life for the Christian. In an interview July 28, 2008, on *ChristianPost.com*, he said: "I think our future will also require us to join humbly and charitably with people of other faiths—Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, secularists, and others—in pursuit of peace, environmental stewardship, and justice for all people, things that matter greatly to the heart of God." No, what matters to the "heart of God" is "that all should come to repentance" and believe the gospel.

Anyone who puts his hope in this social gospel, which employs "people of faith" to make "this world the kind of place God can come to," needs to heed the words of Jesus in Luke 18:8: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" People of *all faiths*, yes, but certainly not "*the* faith," for which Jude exhorts true believers to earnestly contend. Lord, help us all not to be ashamed of Your gospel!

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: When were the angels created? Genesis 2:1 seems to indicate they were created during the week of creation. Some, however, think that they were already created. Does the Scripture have a more definite answer?

RESPONSE: It is true that the Lord *created* “all things.” Angels have not always been in existence. There is a definite point in time when they were created (Colossians 1:16). But we aren’t given the information concerning that time. Genesis 2:1 does say that “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them” and some interpret “host” to mean angels. Yet Deuteronomy 4:19 tells us, “...and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars... shouldst be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.” In this case, the word “host” is referring to “the sun, and the moon, and the stars...” The Hebrew word means “a company of persons or things...” and can refer to “the starry host (Deuteronomy 4:19), to the angelic host (1 Kings 22:19), to the host of Israel (Exodus 12:41), and to the ministering Levites (Numbers 4:23; *Barnes Notes*, Genesis 2:1).

Verses such as Job 38:4,7 tell us that angels were already in existence prior to the creation of earth and man. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

When we consider the function of angels, some have concluded that God created the angels some time prior to the creation of mankind because they are said to be “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). The reasoning is that they were created just prior to the creation of man. But, there are other things to also consider. Scripture indicates that angels were in existence before the Garden of Eden. As further proof, Satan, formerly the angel Lucifer, appeared in the garden already in his fallen state. In addition, there is another point that some consider to be an indication of how long angels have been in existence. Scripture tells us that angels are to exalt God around His throne (Revelation 5:11-14). Consequently, they may have been in existence millions of years before God created the world—worshiping and serving Him. In short, without further scriptural proof, we are open to some speculation.

QUESTION: I recently listened to the August 2019 audio newsletter and praise God for it, but one of the questions had to

do with what would stop the saved from sinning in heaven, and the answer given didn’t satisfy my curiosity. We know that God created Adam and Eve “very good” (i.e., perfect), and their “pre-sin” environment was perfect (much like heaven will be for the saved). So, if they had the capacity to sin/do evil (because love can’t exist without choice), would the saved still have the power to choose to sin in heaven as well? If not, then will it be because: 1) There’s nothing in heaven to tempt us to do evil (as Satan did in Eden) and, if that’s the case, and there are no opposing options, how will we exercise our free-will power of choice to serve God out of a desire to do so rather than only doing so because there’s no other option? Or, 2) Because even though we’ll be perfect like pre-sin/pre-Fall Adam and Eve, we won’t have free will in heaven to choose to sin, which will essentially make us robots. What do I not understand?

RESPONSE: The first paragraph of the answer from last month clearly pointed out the reason why there will be no sin from the righteous in heaven. It reads, “We are given great assurance that the scenario you wonder about will not happen. According to 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, we read: ‘Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.’”

Furthermore, the new nature that we were given when we were first saved will no longer have to compete with the “Old Man.” Not only will we no longer be subject to death and decay, but we will also have received a new “nature.” Since we will be changed in ways we cannot comprehend, the magnitude of this change is really beyond us. Certainly we have free will, and we will also have free will in the eternal state. But we will have been *changed*.

Regardless of how one theologically views the concept of free will, the certainty of Scripture tells us that the following will be true of the redeemed inhabitants of heaven: 1) The saved will be changed to a state of being far better than the one in which they currently exist (Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17). 2) The saved, now glorified, will no longer sin throughout eternity (Revelation 21:4,27).

In Genesis 1:26 we’re told that “God said, Let us make man in our image....” In Titus 1:2 we learn that one aspect of the nature of God is that “God cannot lie....” Notice, it’s not that He *won’t* lie, but He *cannot* lie. It’s not part of His nature. Can we possibly argue that God doesn’t have

“free will?” Certainly not! Romans 8:29 tells us that, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Consequently, concerning being created in the image of His Son, we see that the final conformity to the image of Christ will be fulfilled when we are changed.

In short, speculating about whether there are no opposing options upon which we may exercise our free will overlooks the simple fact that we will “be changed” in ways that our limited perspective cannot comprehend. Certainly the Lord created Adam and Eve without sin, but they had the *potential* to sin. Sin was already there in the person of Satan and those who followed him in rebellion.

QUESTION: In light of the biblical doctrine of regathering the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, what about the 5 million or so Jews still living in the US? Would God call them home? If so, when—before the Tribulation or before the Millennial Kingdom?

RESPONSE: The Lord made many promises to Israel concerning their regathering to the land: “I will take you from among the heathen, and *gather you out of all countries* [our emphasis] and...bring you into your own land” (Ezekiel 36:24). “I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them...and I will bring them again unto this place, and...cause them to dwell safely” (Jeremiah 32:37). “Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity...: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left *none of them any more there*” (Ezekiel 39:28). “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah...in the midst of their fold” (Micah 2:12).

It is clear that the Lord will without fail gather “the remnant” out of “*all countries*.” It is key that the gathering will include the “remnant” of Israel. We know from Scripture that those of Israel shall yet suffer great loss as time comes to the end. “It shall come to pass, that...two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein” (Zechariah 13:8). Thus the remnant of Jews outside of Israel will return at some point. As anti-Semitism continues to rise in all nations, even the temporary relief brought by the current Trump administration will change to a hatred that has existed throughout history. This increased persecution has proven to be a motivation for the exodus of Jews from Europe and Islamic nations.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Is Guilt Actual or Merely a Figment of the Mind?

Question: The pain and suffering caused by crime is bad enough. Christianity, however, has added to that pain and suffering by convincing mankind that it has rebelled against God and broken His laws. Consequently, the threat of eternal punishment haunts everyone who has come under Christianity's influence. Wouldn't the world be better off without these delusions to trouble it?

Response: It is not true that Christianity has created the feeling of moral guilt and coming judgment that haunts mankind. Man is an incurably religious creature, and the religious practices that are found in every race and culture around the world all involve a sense of guilt and the attempt to erase guilt through some kind of sacrifice. Such is the case worldwide. It can be traced back in every culture through thousands of years and thus cannot be blamed upon Christianity at all.

The same is true even of those brought up in a so-called "Christian country" such as the United States. Although their sense of guilt may have been reinforced through contact with Christianity, that contact is certainly not the sole source. The universal guilt that haunts even primitive man would also haunt Americans even if Christianity were unknown here. Jacques Ellul calls the idea that Christianity is to be blamed for guilt a "trite notion" and points out:

"Sacrifice, found in all religions, is propitiatory or else is a sacrifice for redemption or forgiveness. In any case, the sacrifice is substitutionary and proceeds from a deep sense of guilt.

"As far as situations that create guilt are concerned, you can find nothing better than the tangles of prohibitions among so-called primitive peoples."

In fact, it is Christianity alone that can deliver man from the guilt that otherwise haunts him. Turning over a new leaf and vowing to live a morally upright life in the future cannot deliver one from the guilt of past sins. True deliverance from guilt can only come through faith in Christ as the One who paid the full penalty for one's sins and has effected a full pardon on a righteous basis. It is only then that we realize the magnitude of our guilt and can thus thank God all the more for our salvation. Ellul put it well:

"We must also remember constantly that . . . biblically, and in truly Christian thought, sin is known and recognized for what it is only after the recognition, proclamation, and experience of forgiveness. Because I have been pardoned, I realize how much of a sinner

I was. Sin is shown to be sin through grace, and not otherwise, just as the abruptly freed slave realizes, as he sees his chains, how great his misery was."

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

Patience is more than endurance. A saint's life is, in the hands of God, like a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see, and He stretches and strains, and every now and again the saint says, "I cannot stand any more!" God does not heed; He goes on stretching till His purpose is in sight, then He lets fly. Trust yourself in God's hands. For what have you need of patience just now? Maintain your relationship to Jesus Christ by the patience of faith. "Though He slay me, yet shall I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

Faith is not a pathetic sentiment but robust vigorous confidence built on the fact that God is holy love. You cannot see Him just now, you cannot understand what He is doing, but you know *Him*. Shipwreck occurs where there is not that mental poise which comes from being established on the eternal truth that God is holy love. Faith is the heroic effort of your life; you fling yourself in reckless confidence on God. [He] has ventured all in Jesus Christ to save us; now He wants us to venture our all in abandoned confidence in Him.... "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee." The real meaning of eternal life is a life that can face anything it has to face without wavering. If we take this view, life becomes one great romance, a glorious opportunity for seeing marvellous things all the time. God is disciplining us to get us into this central place of power.

—OSWALD CHAMBERS

"The Send" Deception

T. A. McMahon

FOR THE LAST couple of months I have been writing and speaking about a "Christian" gathering of nearly 50,000 young adults at a stadium on February 23, 2019, in Orlando, Florida. This is a summation of my observations made after viewing hours of video of the assembly as well as my knowledge of the producers and speakers of the 12-hour, one-day event.

It began with an enthusiastic exhortation given by mostly young dynamic speakers to the equally enthusiastic crowd to fulfill the great commission: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That urging underscored the theme of the event, which was titled "The Send." The goal was to motivate and send the young adults back to their neighborhoods, their high schools and universities, their workplaces, their cities and nations, and then to countries far and wide in order to share the gospel.

They were told that God would empower them to be extremely successful in their attempts at evangelizing the world. Andy Byrd of Youth With A Mission (YWAM) declared, "We are here for the greatest move of God in human history.... Five years from now, we will be in a Jesus Movement beyond anything we could have imagined, and it all starts tonight." Speaker Lou Engle stated that following the death of Billy Graham a major revelatory shift has taken place, featuring "the proclamation of the gospel, signs and wonders... stadiums will be filled, and Billy Graham's mantle is coming on the nation.... It will be Jesus the evangelist [who] is going to fill stadiums in America.... Why wouldn't I believe that I would see stadiums with massive evangelism, signs and wonders and miracles, and hundreds of thousands of people being saved in America? We believe this day something will transfer and bring us into... worldwide transition into the greatest Jesus movement we have ever seen!" That would be wonderfully exciting if it were true. But it's not.

Why would I conclude that? The reasons are manifold, the primary one being that it's at odds with what the Word of God tells us about the present spiritual condition of the world and the state of the church as the return of the Lord draws near. That situation is characterized by anti-Christianity

outside the church and apostasy within.

In chapter 24 of Matthew, His disciples asked Jesus to tell them what it would be like at the time of His coming. "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you." Additional verses concur: Luke 18:8: "...Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Second Timothy 3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." Second Timothy 4:3-4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Second Peter 2:1-3: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of [blasphemed]. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

Those are just a few of the scriptures that describe the spiritual condition of the last days, and those traits will greatly increase prior to the Rapture of the church and on into the later horrendous wickedness of the great tribulation period. This is what the Bible clearly teaches! So how is it that so many of the speakers at The Send seem to be oblivious to biblical eschatology, that is, what the Scriptures plainly declare will take place as the return of Jesus Christ draws near? They appear to be ignorant of the major conditions and events the Bible says are to come, especially these three: 1) *Apostasy* (Mark 13:22-23; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:13 and the Book of Jude); 2) *The Rapture* (John 14:2-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11); 3) *The Kingdom of the Antichrist* (Revelation 13:1-8; 11-17; 19:19-21). All of these the Word of God sets forth as significant timeline events that will take place prior to Christ himself setting up His Kingdom, the time during which He will reign for a thousand years from Jerusalem.

I encourage all those reading this article, especially those not familiar with biblical eschatology, to read or review the verses listed above, and then compare them with what is being taught by those in The Send

leadership. Here is what those leaders are saying, including those at Bill Johnson's Bethel Church and his School of Supernatural Ministry, Loren Cunningham's Youth With A Mission (YWAM), the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) leaders, along with dozens of likeminded and very influential Word-Faith/Healing preachers and their ministries: They believe that God is pouring out His Holy Spirit in these last days, which will result in worldwide revival. As the revival grows, Christians will be placed in the highest governmental leadership positions throughout the nations. This will culminate in a Christianized world that is responsible to restore it physically (governmentally, environmentally) and spiritually (morally, and through restoring social justice) in order for Christ to return to earth to begin His physical rule.

There is *absolutely no basis* for this teaching in Scripture. One overwhelming obstacle to Christians thinking they can take dominion over the world is the entire book of Revelation. The next kingdom to come in *God's* timeline is the kingdom of the Antichrist! That takes place during the "great tribulation," when God pours out His wrath on the entire world. Jesus himself described what will take place as being so devastating that "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). The prophet Jeremiah adds "that none is like it," calling it "the time of Jacob's trouble," and likening it to a woman laboring through birth pains: "...I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail [labor], and all faces are turned into paleness" (Jeremiah 30:6-7).

What is astonishing about the false scenarios promoted by these "Christian Kingdom-Now Dominionists" is that none of the above verses can be spiritualized (read *twisted*) to indicate worldwide revival. On the occasions when those verses do come up, rationales denying them issue forth, such as "God is doing a new thing that abrogates what He has written." By no means! God tells us, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31). The prophet Isaiah wrote, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Not only do these false teachers have a dominionist objective that is completely at odds with what God's Word says, but also their pronouncements are rooted in a completely corrupt belief system.

This movement has been referred to as

the Word of Faith, Healing, and Prosperity ministry. Its roots go back to false prophets and teachers such as E. W. Kenyon, Kenneth Hagin, Charles Capps, Kenneth Copeland, Fred Price, Marilyn Hickey, Joyce Myers, Rodney Howard-Browne, and, of course, the leader of the pack, Benny Hinn (See *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*). Although all those who teach these unbiblical beliefs and practices have their own specialties (e.g., healing methods, commanding prosperity, positive confession, using faith as a technique, performing as gods under God, etc.), their foundational belief is that God is restoring to the contemporary church the signs, wonders, and miracles that are found in the Book of Acts.

The chief miraculous sign of this movement is healing. An early leader in this was Oral Roberts, whose university (ORU), according to him, was created primarily to promote supernatural healing. Other schools with a similar emphasis on healing include Mike Bickle's International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City and Bill Johnson's Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry in Redding, California.

Does the Bible teach supernatural healings? Without a doubt! So why are we *not* seeing what took place when Jesus healed the multitudes, or later, in the Book of Acts when some were healed simply as the shadow of Peter passed over them (Acts 5:15)? Among many reasons that could be given, I believe the most significant is that all the truly miraculous activities of those days were *confirmations*. They confirmed Jesus, that He was truly God incarnate, and they confirmed that the gospel preached by Peter and the disciples was the truth of God's Word by the signs that followed: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, *the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*. Amen" (Mark 16:19-20).

Jesus is still "confirming the word with signs following," as has been testified by missionaries ministering the truth of the gospel in very challenging places worldwide. What then of the Word-Faith/Healing, and Prosperity preachers? They promote a false gospel, another Jesus (see "A Berean Exercise: 'Christian' Magazines - Part 2", August 1, 2019), and a host of unbiblical doctrines and practices. According to the Scriptures, as noted, Jesus *will not* work with them by confirming their heresies with miraculous signs following. Their so-called miraculous manifestations are

not of the Lord. Yet I believe there is an even more tragic deception inflicted upon the thousands of young people attending The Send. They are being presented with an empty gospel.

It should be apparent to any believer who preaches the gospel, whether it be in one's own church fellowship or home fellowship, that not everyone who has heard the gospel has responded to it, thereby receiving the free gift of eternal life with Jesus that constitutes salvation. This can be the sad outcome, no matter how thoroughly the gospel is explained. If a person is unwilling to accept the truth of what Jesus accomplished on the cross on his behalf (as well as for all of humanity), which was that He paid the full penalty demanded by God's perfect justice, that person has rejected his only hope of salvation (Acts 4:12). What then of a gathering of 50,000?

At one point during The Send's 12-hour session, one of the speakers stepped forth to invite those in the crowd to commit their lives to Jesus. He declared, "I want everyone to lift their hands. We're all going to pray this together in support of those who are praying it for the first time. Are you ready? Say, 'Dear Lord Jesus...I come to you today...a sinner needing salvation...Lord Jesus Christ...as of this day...I say yes...I say yes...I say yes...to you, Lord Jesus. No more hesitation...no more procrastination...no more negotiation...as of this day I belong to Jesus. And Jesus belongs to me. I believe it. I receive it. I confess it in the name of Jesus. And everybody said 'Amen!'" The entire gathering of thousands shouted an enthusiastic "Amen."

Take a closer look. Was that the gospel? What did these emotionally driven young people actually *believe*? First of all, in whom did they put their faith? Jesus? Jesus who? Many false Christs abound in our day. Did they put their trust in God who became a man, while never ceasing to be God and man? Did He pay the full penalty for our sins on the cross? Over a billion Roman Catholics don't believe that. Many of the Word-Faith/Healing/Prosperity teachers likewise do not believe that, claiming that the penalty was paid in the depths of hell as Christ was tortured by Satan and his demons. That's not the biblical Jesus. Were those who nearly filled the stadium in Orlando aware that Christ's sacrificial act of dying for mankind's sins was accepted by God the Father as satisfying divine justice? Did they know that Christ's resurrection was proof of God's acceptance?

The invitation given seemed to be with the intent to have the recipients make a commitment to follow Christ and to go forth sharing the gospel locally and internationally—that is, asking for a *critical commitment* of one's life. Yet the "gospel" they were given was entirely without biblical substance. What transpired was an "altar call" that was purely emotional, and the hoped-for obligation of their lives had no biblical support. Thus the hearers could only depend upon their feelings. That's akin to sending an army into battle fortified with only wishful thinking.

How wishful? A major teaching of the Word-Faith/Healing and Prosperity Movement is Positive Confession. The idea is that anything that has a negative connotation must be avoided because it will cause a negative result. In healing, for example, symptoms of an illness cannot be spoken of because that will reinforce the illness; positive statements of healing (whether true or not) will bring about healing. The Send employs that tactic as it selects only the "positive" signs and wonders and healing verses found in the Book of Acts. Avoided are all the "negative" trials and tribulations that the Apostle Paul suffered as God used him mightily, as well as many of the other saints, some of whom were martyred in their service to Jesus. Not understanding that suffering is a part of life for everyone who serves the Lord is setting a person up for a deceitful expectation. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation..." and then He adds, "...but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In summary, tragically, the thousands of young people who attended The Send were led astray. The deceitful heresies they were exhorted to follow can be readily exposed by simply comparing them to what the Bible spells out very clearly. I have no doubt that the millennial and Z generations will face far more spiritual deceptiveness than any previous generation and, tragically, they are terribly ill prepared. Pray for them continually and with the encouragement that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). That grace, which saves everyone who turns his life over to Jesus by faith, is more than sufficient for him to be used of the Lord no matter how trying the believer's circumstances: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I believe in a pre-Trib Rapture, but I have a difficult time reconciling 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10 with this. Verses 6-8 say: "...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul says that the Thessalonian believers will eventually find relief from their persecution when the Lord returns to judge the wicked and punish them; it is at that time that the believers will be rewarded with rest. So, it seems to me that this relief from persecution is not pretribulation.

RESPONSE: No scripture precludes the salvation of individuals in the Tribulation. Although the Church is removed prior to "the time of Jacob's trouble," there will be those who come to Christ even during this time. Revelation 7:9-14 details a "great multitude... which came out of great tribulation..." In 2 Thessalonians 1, verse 6 speaks of the general principle that the Lord will "recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." Paul warns in Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." During that specific time of Paul's writing to the Thessalonians he states that the "payback" will reach its fullest form when the Lord Himself returns to the earth. "And [our emphasis] to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

Tribulation (not the *Great Tribulation*) is and has been, as Paul notes in 2 Timothy 3:12, the lot of believers throughout history. "...[A]ll that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The Rapture is never to be considered an escape clause for believers. The church has always suffered tribulation, often through direct persecution. But for the entire church, the "relief" will only come at the Second Coming of the Lord to rule and reign with a "rod of iron."

QUESTION: My preacher said that when the Lord Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the man Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. But the Bible declares that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Trinity)

are three in one and working side by side. My understanding was always that His baptism was a "confirmation" that He (Jesus) was truly the Messiah of Isaiah 53 and other places in the Old Testament.

RESPONSE: Concerning the Messiah to come, Isaiah wrote, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). Isaiah 11:2 tells us, "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him...of wisdom and understanding,...counsel and might,... knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." The Hebrew meaning is "to rest, settle down, and remain." The word "rest" indicates a permanent dwelling.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit came "upon" Jesus when He was baptized, giving a visible testimony witnessed by those present. John the Baptist was reluctant to baptize Jesus because he knew who He was, but Jesus insisted. "John [said], I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matthew 3:14). Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). Jesus wasn't being baptized to receive the Holy Spirit but to "fulfill all righteousness."

John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:15) before he was born: "For he shall be great...and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." John testified of Jesus, "There cometh one mightier than I after me...whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mark 1:7). If the forerunner of Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit prior to his birth, can we not conclude that the One who "is mightier" would also be?

QUESTION: The Law of Moses was a "covenant of works," i.e., "works-based" salvation. The Apostle Paul states that "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17), referencing Abraham, who preceded the law by 400 years. Isn't this verse applied to Israel, even though we understand that they were under the law of Moses, a covenant of works? Yet, the Bible also clearly points out that "no man shall be justified by doing the works of the law" (Galatians 2:16). We see that the Law of Moses reigned over Israel for about 1,500 years until Christ's death on the cross. If Israelites were saved by just obeying/keeping the law, this translates into works for salvation. We see that Moses gave Israel the Law, "grace and truth came only after Christ had come into the world." (John 1:17). This passage clearly states that Israel could not be under grace if they followed the Law of

Moses, because grace and truth came after Christ came to the world. Do you see a distinction between the rules of life and faith under these two covenants?

RESPONSE: You've quoted some very important scriptures. In Hebrews 11:30-33, we read of those who lived after the Law: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.... By faith the harlot Rahab perished not...when she had received the spies with peace.... [T]ime would fail me to tell of Gideon... Barak...Samson...Jephthae...David also... Samuel, and the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions."

Some say "Jews were saved by keeping the Law." The Scriptures disagree. As Galatians 3:11 also tells us, "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4, so we can't dismiss this as applying only to the New Testament. It is clear that "salvation by faith" apart from the Law is found in the Old Testament. Paul wrote that the purpose of the Law was to serve as a "schoolmaster [tutor] to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Paul also makes the point that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). The Law was never intended to be the *basis* of salvation. Rather, the purpose of the Law was to make us aware of our sin as part of the process to bring us to Christ.

David was also saved by faith, according to Paul (Romans 4:6-8), where he quoted Psalm 32:1-2. Other citations consistently point out that in the Old Testament salvation was through faith alone (*see* Romans 4:23-24). "Righteousness" is given to those exercising faith in God, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, those that followed—and us. We all partake of the same way of salvation!

As Dave Hunt noted, "Though the prophets didn't fully understand it, Paul still calls it 'the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.' One of the most powerful arguments we have for Jews or anyone is that the entire gospel—Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection—was foretold in detail in the Old Testament. We simply preach today what God has proclaimed in His Word for thousands of years! For those who come to Christ in faith, the Law was their tutor and "...after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

God is not a sadist

Question: The Bible claims that God knows the future. Surely, then, He knew that Adam and Eve would sin and that immeasurable evil and suffering would follow. The Bible's God must have known every rape and murder and war and every bit of pain and sorrow that would follow. Since He went ahead and created man anyway, how can He be anything but a monster or a sadist?

Response: The unreasonable and blasphemous idea that God is cruel can be dismissed immediately. For one thing, there is far too little evil and pain in the world to sustain that theory. If God were the fiend that the skeptics make Him out to be, life would be infinitely worse than it is. There would be no pleasure at all mixed with the pain, but all of life would be only depression and misery; sex would not be exquisitely enjoyable but horribly painful even while irresistible. Linton expressed it like this:

"[If God were a sadist], He could give us infinitely more pain than we do suffer. He could force us to eat, as the drug addict is forced to the use of his drug, by the pain of abstention instead of by the pleasing urge of healthy hunger. All physical functions could be forced by pain instead of invited by pleasure.

"If God were indifferent, why the variety of fruit flavors for the palate, the invariably harmonizing riot of colors in flower and sunset, the tang of salt air and power to vibrate in joy to these things? Why the subtle joys and utter sense of well-being that a believer in Christ often experiences which he cannot even name or describe?

"If God loves His creatures all is explained, except death, pain, and sorrow, and these things indeed present, as they do present to all but believers, an insoluble problem. But the Bible's explanation is as clear as crystal: 'Death came by sin,' and the glorious end is as succinctly put as the explanation, 'And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes'" (Isaiah:25:8; Revelation:7:17; Revelation:21:4).

The universe was clearly not designed by a sadist. We must abandon that theory as a legitimate possible explanation of evil and suffering. Nevertheless, the illogical and unreasonable complaint against God, blaming Him for evil and suffering, has been expressed repeatedly for centuries by atheists. Here is how Samuel Putnam phrased it in the last century:

"In the place of that suffering he [God] could have made happiness. Of his will, and without compulsion,

he made suffering. What is he, then, but an almighty fiend? His good acts cannot excuse his evil acts, any more than the good acts of a murderer can condone his crime . . . God must be all good, or else not good at all."

Putnam was seemingly an intelligent man. How then could the obvious folly of his argument escape him? Could he be blinded by prejudice? I dare say that Putnam (and if not he, then certainly many atheists who have raised the same objection) had children. Did he not know that the children that he and his wife brought into the world would suffer pain and eventual death? Did he not know that it was entirely possible that one or more of his children, like those of many parents, might even become criminals and do great harm to others? Of course he did. Common sense would tell him that.

God Is Not the Author of Evil

Is Putnam, therefore, responsible for all the evil and suffering that may have been inflicted upon his children and/or for that which they may have inflicted upon others? Of course not. Was there any way that Putnam and his wife could have been absolutely certain that all of their children would experience only pleasure and never pain, only joy and never sorrow? Certainly not. Could they be certain that all of the children they brought into the world would turn out to be honest and never be worthy of imprisonment or even execution for their crime? Again, the answer is clearly no.

Any honest person must conclude that neither Putnam nor any other parents who raise this objection

against God could be certain of what kind of lives their children would live, whether good or evil, or of what suffering they might endure or inflict upon others. They could, however, be absolutely certain that their children would suffer at least some sickness and pain and sorrow. Therefore, are not these critics and all other parents just as guilty as God of bringing suffering upon others? If God is a sadist for creating man, are not all parents equally sadists for bringing children into the world?

The difference, it is argued, is that God is in control of the world, and He could make it what He wants it to be. Is He? Can He? On the contrary, has not the world, as it is today, been created not by God but by the willful thoughts, ambitions, lusts, and foul (and often brave and good) deeds of mankind down through history? It is a world as man has made it, not as God made and intended it. If blame is to be attached to anyone, then the pain and sorrow and evil in today's world must be charged to man. Sin and suffering are not God's doing, but man's!

Could God force everyone even against their will to be wise and good and happy, any more than earthly parents could force their children to behave precisely the way they determine? Obviously not, so long as man is allowed to retain the power of choice. And if he were robbed of that power he would no longer be a man but some lesser species of moral cripple no more responsible for their own actions than puppets on a string. Would Putnam or any other atheist want that? Surely not. Then let them cease from unjustly blaming God for the evil in this world!

God's Parental Lament

The prophet Isaiah, inspired of the Holy Spirit, expresses God's grief over the actions of men, actions that are so contrary to His benevolent desire for them. Listen to God's lament:

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

"The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people doth not consider.

"A sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (Isaiah:1:2-4).

These are not the words and sentiments of a sadist who has willfully brought pain and sorrow upon the world. On the contrary, it is the lament of a God of love who desires the best for those whom He has created and grieves that they have chosen to bring pain and death

upon themselves by their own evil actions.

Surely any parent could identify with God's expression of grief at the conduct of those whom He calls His children. Were there ever any parents who did not have some regrets for the behavior, at least at some times and in some degree, of their children? And what could be the solution? Could the parents, having brought the child into the world, force him or her to obey? Could they compel the child to behave according to their dictates? Obviously not.

Yet even if parents could accomplish that task, it would not solve the problem that plagues mankind. The child must respond of his own free will or the "obedience" forced upon him would be meaningless. So it is with God. He has given us the power of choice so that we could love Him, and to deprive mankind of that right would destroy man as God has made him and as man wants to be. Evil is not God's doing but man's, through a self-centered and thus malignant use of the power of choice bestowed upon him.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE • • • • •

To call good evil, as the pessimist does, is not so dangerous as to call evil good. In the former case, we are at least kept on our guard; in the latter, we are taken unawares. If the blind optimist lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Better that the supposed evil should prove to be good, than that the supposed good should prove to be evil. To ignore the Antichrist of whom she has been forewarned is for the Church to expose herself defenseless to his wiles, deceptions, and attacks.

—Samuel J. Andrews, 1899
Christianity and Anti-Christianity in Their Final Conflict

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Tragedy Compounded

T. A. McMahon

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...."

—2 TIMOTHY 3:1-2

THE ABOVE SCRIPTURE is a prophecy. It's one that can be clearly documented as being fulfilled in our days, which are undoubtedly the "last days" prior to the return of Jesus Christ. "Perilous times" have indeed entered the religious and secular arena of our day. Biblical discernment has been all but abandoned in the church. Hatred among those who are normally civil now seems unrestrained. Political viciousness across party lines is unprecedented. Pro-abortion legislation is being cheered. Yet those are just a few of the "perilous" effects of loving "their own selves." Second Timothy chapter 3 verses 2 through 13 give us more: "...covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. . . these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. . . [these] evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." One cannot separate those sins from the aggressive implementation of self-love; they are the inevitable consequence.

The love of self has always been at the heart of sin. We're first made aware of it in heaven. Lucifer declared, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:14). He then promoted that self-deification to Eve: "...ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5). Since self-love has been at the root of mankind's sin problems from the beginning, why then does the Word of God make a specific issue of it in the "last days"? I have a thought or two about that.

In my three-quarters of a century of life, the winds of change have blown furiously. The prevailing attitude in my early years was that selfishness was never regarded as an endearing social quality or a beneficial trait. Rarely did anyone enjoy the company of those who were all about themselves. Fast-forward to the 1960s. My contemporaries in my late teenage years transformed the culture in the US seemingly overnight, going from regarding selflessness as a virtue to being dubbed the "The Me Decade" by writer Tom Wolfe, and the "culture of narcissism" as observed by historian Christopher Lasch. This became obvious to nearly everyone.

How could such a drastic change in culture

take place so quickly? The contributions are many, from a prosperous middle class that nurtured self-indulgent offspring to spiritual self-seekers trying to discover their "true selves" (mostly through mind-altering drugs). Eastern mysticism seemed to legitimize their spiritual quest, and the homogenized Western version known as the New Age Movement made it all the more popular. Yet the foundation (although of sand) for its astounding growth was the pseudo-science of psychotherapy, commonly referred to as psychological counseling. Furthermore, the relationship of psychotherapy to Eastern religions was noted decades ago by *Psychology Today*, which stated that Eastern spiritual beliefs "...seem to be making gradual headway as psychologies, not as religions." Religious scholar Jacob Needleman concurred: "A large and growing number of psychotherapists are now convinced that the Eastern religions offer an understanding of the mind far more complete than anything yet envisaged by Western science." He added that the gurus who have invaded the West are communicating their spiritual concepts in the language of modern psychology.

The extraordinary emphasis on *self* is the common denominator. Eastern mysticism and psychology are two peas in the same pod of self. The supreme goal of Hinduism, Buddhism, and other variants of Eastern mysticism is *self-realization*, to realize one's ultimate destiny, which is godhood. *Self-actualization* is psychology's counterpart, having as its goal "self-fulfillment," i.e., realizing one's self-potential, which leads to self-deification. Neither is scientific; both are *religious* aspirations.

Psychotherapy, like Buddhism, is atheistic, and most of its practitioners are atheists as well. The rejection of God leaves the counselors with only one option in order to fix their clients' numerous problems of living: *self* itself. The secular counselor's fundamental belief is that self is innately good and therefore contains what is needed to resolve the issues that trouble mankind. Is self inherently good? If it's not, then self can't fix itself. As the saying goes, a leopard can't change its spots. Likewise, if evil is within the makeup of self, it cannot deliver itself from it.

The Word of God, on the other hand, reveals the true nature of man: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19).

Only God knows the heart. Moreover, as our Creator, *He alone* can change a person's heart.

That change can come about only through an individual's new birth, i.e., being born again (John 3:3-12). "Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)..." (Ephesians 2:5).

The belief that psychotherapy can remedy the behavioral problems of mankind is a terrible delusion. In practice it is utterly destructive. Why? Because the problems are all related to *sin*! Clinical psychologists can't go there, even if some may acknowledge sin's relevance. Besides the fact that they are helpless to do anything about sin, psychologists' counseling licenses frequently prohibit them from adding the recognition of that trait to their practice. So they are stuck with the impossibility of trying to make *self* the *solution* for their clients.

What then of "Christian psychology?" Anyone who calls himself that and practices with that mindset is actually steeped in and is a purveyor of utter contradictions. The so-called wisdom of man cannot be reconciled with God's Word. "The flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). Introducing psychotherapeutic concepts from the perverted minds of men (if in doubt, read their biographies!) such as Freud, Jung, Rogers, Maslow, and the like, is akin to adding cyanide to a pure drinking well. That's what "Christian" psychology is. It has nothing to offer other than the corruption of biblical truth mixed with the false theories of the "professionals." Furthermore, to add the designation "Christian" to psychology borders on blasphemy; it is a blatant distortion of what the God of the Bible has declared, and especially the *sufficiency* of Scripture: "According as his divine power hath given unto us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Of all the leaven that Christian psychologists have induced Christians to accept, the most spiritually destructive, I believe, is the core teaching of psychology: *self*. During the 1970s and '80s, numerous books written by Christian psychological counselors flooded the church. Influential evangelical preachers quickly echoed their teachings, many believing that the "doctors" of psychology were speaking from science. Although they may not have known that psychotherapy comprises completely subjective theories that have nothing to do with science, they nevertheless failed to be Bereans by not comparing the teachings of the "professionals" with Scripture.

What has ensued are new doctrines in Christendom that are being fulfilled in our day as the prophecy of 2 Timothy 3:1-2 indicates. What are these new and very much accepted doctrines? Self-love, self-esteem, self-worth, self-image, self-acceptance, etc., etc. Two of the leading advocates of the self-heresies in the '70s and '80s were Dr. James Dobson and

Robert Schuller. Schuller wrote *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, which was sent out gratis to 250,000 pastors throughout the US. In that book, he declared, “Sin is any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem” (p.14). He further clarified his blasphemous example of self-esteem in *Living Positively One Day at a Time*: “Jesus knew his worth; his success fed his self-esteem.... He suffered the cross to sanctify his self-esteem. And he bore the cross to sanctify your self-esteem” (p. 201). Dr. Dobson, holding true to the cornerstone of his degree in psychology, sees self as the solution to humanity’s behavioral problems: “If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, it would provide each one of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need” (*What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women*, p. 35). Those views of self are diametrically opposed to what the Bible teaches, and, tragically, they are widely accepted today throughout Christendom.

Of late, the tragedy has been compounded. Heartbreaking events have taken place, which have persuaded those who have been deeply affected by the incidents to turn to the mental health community for solutions. The incidents I’m referring to are suicides. I have no personal experience with anyone close to me committing suicide. I do, however, have a great deal of experience regarding the functioning of mental health practitioners. My father was a psychiatrist and the head of a mental hospital. A number of my relatives held various positions in psychiatric institutions. I grew up in the mental health community. I need to mention my experience in this because it has given me a great deal of compassion for those suffering from mental disorders, which includes not only people in general—but the practitioners themselves. Concerning the latter, psychiatrists have six times the number of suicides compared with the general populace. The proverb, “Physician, heal thyself” comes to mind, but the practitioners can neither heal themselves nor others. Psychotherapeutic “self” concepts exacerbate the mental problems of the counselees rather than solving them.

I’m thankful for the words of comfort from Greg Laurie for the grieving family and friends of his counseling pastor Jarrid Wilson, the young man who recently committed suicide. Laurie noted that it’s not the last thing Jarrid did before he died that determined his salvation but what Jesus did. That’s the assurance that I’m sure ministered to Jarrid’s wife, Juli, and their two young children. It’s the biblical assurance that we all have if we have believed on our Lord and only Savior who paid the full penalty for everyone’s sin—past, present, and future.

Why, then, would I call what took place a

tragedy, and how is it compounded? Suicide is a tragic act. It’s not necessarily tragic for the one who takes his own life but for the sorrow and heartbreak it causes those loved ones left behind. Whatever drives one to it neither excuses nor lessens the emotional pain it causes others. It’s *compounded* by those who endorse the psychological way as the solution or supplementary help for healing mental and emotional problems of living. That has been the response by Rick and Kay Warren following the heartbreaking suicide of their son in 2013. Jarrid Wilson, as a counseling pastor of Greg Laurie’s Harvest Christian Fellowship, was a strong advocate of seeking help for depression from mental health professionals. What has compounded the tragedy of the deaths of the two young men is that two of the most influential pastors in America have wittingly or possibly unwittingly encouraged Christians to seek mental help where only the *delusion* of help exists.

How can I responsibly say that? Not only do I know about the so-called solutions that the professionals offer, but I also know that their “solutions” are diametrically opposed to what the Word of God teaches. If our Creator, who alone knows the hearts and minds of His created beings, has left the solution for mankind’s problems of living to fallen humanity’s “wisdom,” then there is no hope for anyone.

As believers, we not only have hope, but we’ve been given instructions as well: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings [instructions] of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24-25). “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?” (Romans 11:34)

Furthermore, God has also supplied the *ability* to carry out His instructions by His Holy Spirit: “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13).

Regrettably, an all-too-common response is, “Well, I tried going by the Bible, but it didn’t work for me.” If that’s the case for all, then God has deceived us. We can’t really purge out the leaven that is contrary to what the Bible teaches. Moreover, the Word of God must not be truly sufficient, as it claims to be (Acts 20:20, 27; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:2-4; 2 Peter 1:2-4). If its instructions are not really viable—do we turn elsewhere?

Wilson’s decision to take his own life was not prevented by the psychological counseling he sought and that others are now recommending. It is indeed tragic that Warren, Laurie, and many other shepherds are feeding and/

or condoning a mixture of the Bible and psychology that will spiritually malnourish them at best and will ultimately undermine their trust in Scripture at worst. This is in direct disobedience to our Lord’s command to Peter regarding feeding His lambs, His sheep (John 21:15-17). That food is the only true nourishment. It is provided to us from “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Those who have been called to be shepherds by the Lord are accountable to protect God’s flock from the dangers of man-derived, man-centered psychological theories and other self-oriented therapies that comprise the world’s failed attempts at alleviating mental and emotional problems. They are also to exhort those in their fellowship to minister to one another according to Galatians 6:1-2. Verse 2 says “Bear ye one another’s burdens....” “Ye” is plural, indicating that ministry to one another is a function of *the entire body* by means of God’s Word and enabled by His Holy Spirit. It is not for a designated individual.

Jarrid Wilson’s suicide should be a wake-up call for the church. We need to abide by “*the faith* once delivered to the saints,” whereby believers have found an even closer, more powerful walk with the Lord as they turn to Him, trusting Him through the painful circumstances and emotions that occur in life. Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). How can looking elsewhere benefit a believer’s life in Christ? “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections [emotions] and lusts [desires]” (Galatians 5:24). “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your *hearts and minds* through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). “[W]e have the *mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:16). “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*” (Colossians 2:6-7).

Are what those verses offer attainable? Aren’t believers *new creatures in Christ* (2 Corinthians 5:17)? How about “Casting down *imagination*s” and “bringing into captivity *every thought* to the *obedience* of Christ” (italics added)? That constitutes the only true mental health. If they are beyond the reach of any believers, then *biblical Christianity* is a fraud, and we have no hope.

On the contrary, I believe that what is written in God’s Word comes with a guarantee: If we will do things *God’s way*, although struggles with our flesh will likely ensue, conditions nevertheless *will* work out to His glory and our blessing, even though in different ways than we might have imagined. Doing things the *world’s way* guarantees failure. Furthermore, the tragedy is compounded as others who desire to follow Jesus may also be deceived.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I believe in divine healing but am extremely cautious of word-faith and other movements and their claims of divine power. What is your opinion of how to interpret and act upon Jesus's assertion in John 14:12?

RESPONSE: John 14:12 reads, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

In context, Jesus was saying that He would be physically leaving the earth. The "works" He was performing personally in His physical body on the earth would "cease" with His ascension into heaven. Nevertheless, His followers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, would remain on the earth and in great numbers.

It's not a case of the works being performed by those "who believeth on me" being greater or "superior" to the works of Christ. Rather, the Lord would use believers to accomplish the greater (i.e., more numerous) works on the earth. The Book of Acts documents the miracles the Lord performed through His disciples in those early years. We see them performing miracles that Jesus had previously done. None of them were "greater" (i.e., more spectacular or more astounding) than those of Jesus. His miracles had previously been observed by the Old Testament prophets: healing the sick (Genesis 20:17, etc.), raising the dead (1 Kings 17-24, etc.), defying natural laws, e.g., walking on water (Job 9:8), making an axe head float (2 Kings 6:5-6), et al.

The Word Faith/New Apostolic Reformation/Latter Rain movements promise "miracles" the world hasn't yet seen. In their efforts to "produce the goods," they err and actually open the way for fraud, deception, and fakery.

Regarding how we *act* upon what Jesus himself spoke of in John 14:12, these works are performed at the time and place of the Lord's direction. The gifts of the Spirit are not given for self-aggrandizement but rather at the prompting of the Lord, in His timing. In short, all believers must respond to the Lord's leading.

Finally, the primary purpose of the gifts is for the edification of believers and the building of the Kingdom of God (See 1 Corinthians 14:3 and 12; and 1 Corinthians 14:26).

QUESTION: So many people are coming up with ideas about the Rapture and how the disappearance of so many people is going

to be explained by the world. I remember Dave Hunt once put out the figure of 100,000,000 saved Christians in the world. Is it possible the number could be much smaller than that? Is it also possible that the apostasy in the church is pushing Christians into home churches and leaving mostly goats, and in the Rapture, there will be few taken from church congregations and these vanishings won't be easily linked to a Christian event at all?

RESPONSE: We can't know the exact total of those who will be taken in the Rapture. Furthermore, we see the growing number of Christians in Third World Nations who have exerted influence upon the increasingly corrupt Western denominations. Recently, the United Methodist Church in the US upheld their ban on gay clergy, homosexual "marriage," and transgenderism. Those in Third World Nations exerted their influence to keep the biblical position on these issues. This highlights the growing number of believers in these other countries. As far as the Rapture not being a big event in the eyes of the world, it is clear that the apostate would welcome such a disappearance. The event might not even receive much notice. With the removal of the church, the way would be cleared for the burgeoning of the religion based on the satanic deception of the Antichrist.

Dave Hunt noted, "You know, if suddenly we all disappeared, and you were the only one left in a church, sitting there alone, I don't think you would believe it was the Rapture. You'd have some other explanation, and you'd be given a strong delusion to believe the lie—and there are a number of lies, explanations....for most people who are left behind."

QUESTION: I've heard it said that 2 Peter 3:10-12 gives proof that the Bible is scientifically infallible, contrary to what the Roman Catholic Church teaches. All I want to know is how those verses give that proof.

RESPONSE: Second Peter 3:10-12 reads, "...[T]he day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with

fervent heat?"

These verses refer to the destruction of this present universe in order to create a "new heavens and new earth." The means of destruction is described specifically as the universe being "dissolved" in a "fervent heat" that will burn up the very elements. The English word "dissolved" is translated from the Greek *luo*, which is found 46 times in 40 verses in the New Testament. Taken together, these 46 usages consistently indicate that the meaning of this word is a loosing, a letting go, or the undoing of something that otherwise is held together or in place—a scientifically accurate description of the loosing of the force that holds the nucleus of the atom together.

All matter is made of atoms, which consist of negatively charged electrons orbiting around a nucleus composed of positively charged protons and neutrally charged neutrons. The negatively charged electrons are held in orbit by the positively charged protons because of the electromagnetic attraction between positive and negative charges. But since like charges repel one another, what holds the nucleus together, since it is composed of positively charged protons?

Physicists have hypothesized what they call the "strong force" that overcomes the electromagnetic repulsion that otherwise would push the protons apart and destroy the nucleus of the atom. Without this mysterious force, the entire universe would dissolve in one giant ball of fire—exactly what Peter describes. Colossians 1:17 says that everything consists in Christ and is held together by His power (i.e., "strong force"). If He lets go of the atom, the present universe will cease to exist. The Greek word that Peter uses describes the way science indicates the universe would be destroyed—by loosing the protons from the force that binds them together and thus dissolving the atom itself. It may be going too far to suggest that these verses in themselves offer proof of the scientific validity of the Bible, but when one puts them together with many other verses we certainly do have that proof.

The greatest proof, of course, is prophecy fulfilled. This is what God himself points to as proof of His existence and that the Bible is His Word (Isaiah 46:9-10, etc.), and that Jesus Christ, the *Living Word* of God, is the true Messiah and only Savior of the world. The theories and explanations of science change, but God's Word never changes—and prophecy fulfilled is an objective fact that cannot be denied.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

“To Be or Not to Be, That Is the Question”

Question: A friend who used to claim to be a Christian but now calls himself an atheist presented a problem to me that I couldn’t solve. He is willing to concede (for sake of argument, though he doesn’t believe it) that sin comes by man’s wrong use of the power of choice given to him. Even then, however, he insists that we can’t exonerate God because, knowing the evil and suffering that would follow, God nevertheless chose to create man. Even worse, God created billions of beings that He not only knew would suffer on this earth but whom He knew He would consign to suffer eternally in the lake of fire! Can you help me answer him?

Response: The implication of your friend’s thesis (which is simply another variation on an overworked theme) is chilling: It favors the nonexistence of the human race as beings capable of choice. One cannot have real human beings without the possibility of evil. So the issue is the existence or nonexistence of the human race: “To be or not to be.” The only way to have forever eliminated evil and suffering on this earth would have been not to create man at all. Though that would eliminate all suffering and sorrow, think of the beauty and joy and love it would have eliminated as well.

Let’s assume purely for illustrative purposes this impossible scene: A million years ago billions of as-yet-uncreated humans, in hypothetical precreation spirit form, parade before the throne of God demanding not to be created. “We are all going to be in hell and the lake of fire!” they scream in protest. “Therefore, we demand the right not to be created! It would be sadism of the worst sort if you bring us into existence, knowing the torment we will suffer eternally!”

God’s reply would have been something like this: “You inevitably must be the mothers and fathers, the aunts and uncles, the children and grandchildren and cousins of millions upon millions who will believe in Christ and therefore whose destiny is the eternal bliss and joy of heaven. If you do not come into existence then neither can they. I will not allow your selfish desire for nonexistence to eliminate the existence and eternal delight of billions of souls who will be redeemed by the blood of My Son and will therefore spend eternity in My presence where there is ‘fullness of joy’ and ‘pleasures for evermore’” (Psalm:16:11).

“Then you are consigning us to the torment of the lake of fire for all eternity!” they continue to protest. “Your enemies will therefore be able to say

that You are not a good God of love but a fiend who creates men for hell.”

“On the contrary,” God would have replied, “the lake of fire was made ‘for the devil and his angels’ (Matthew:25:41) and if any of mankind ever enters that place of eternal torment it will be contrary to My will. My Son is going to die in payment of the penalty that My justice demands for any sin that any human being will ever commit. The provision for everyone to be in heaven, where I want all to be, will be fully made. If anyone goes to hell instead, it will be due to his willful refusal of the salvation I have provided.”

“But we’ll suffer eternally!” the protesters insist.

“If so, that will be your doing, not mine,” God would have replied. “I will not rob billions of redeemed souls of eternal joy just to cater to your obstinate rebellion.”

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

“Rejoice in the Lord!” Circumstances may at times be anything but conducive to either peace or gladness,

yet the trusting soul can always look above the fitful scenes of earth to the throne where Christ sits exalted as Lord at God's right hand. He is over all. There are no second causes with Him.... Knowing that "all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to his purpose," why should the believer either doubt or fear? Waves may roll high, stormy winds may beat tempestuously, all to which the heart had clung may seem to be swept away, but Christ abides unchanged and unchangeable, the everlasting portion of those who trust His grace.

We read on one occasion how David, when the people spoke of stoning him because of a calamitous event for which they held him largely responsible, "encouraged himself in the LORD his God." "The joy of the LORD is your strength," Nehemiah reminded the remnant of Israel. Before returning to the Father's house from which He came, the Lord Jesus imparted His joy to the trembling company of His disciples. Therefore, it is not only the Christian's privilege, but we may even say his duty, to constantly rejoice in the Lord. Holiness and happiness are intimately linked together. It is well that we should frequently be exhorted to "rejoice in the Lord."

—H. A. IRONSIDE

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What God Wants of You

Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon

BELIEF IN GOD as Creator and in His authority as well as in our responsibility to Him is almost universal among men. The fact that our daily lives do not measure up to God's standards is also quite generally conceded, but the solution to this evident shortcoming is the subject of many theories and religious practices: "How can a man please God and be accepted of Him?" "What does God want of me?" These are questions that have arisen in the hearts of men since the beginning of time.

No matter who you are, there is something that God *does* want of you; but one obvious problem always presents itself in any attempt to please Him or offer some gift acceptable to Him, and that is the fact of man's sin in relation to God's absolute holiness. What intelligent man would deny the basic fact of sin? Positive evidence is displayed with inexorable regularity on the news pages of the whole world, told out in crimes of violence, greed, hatred, jealousy, rage, vice, lust, worldwide mistrust, and strife. Regardless of date, place, names of individuals, or other details that may vary, each story can be told in one short word: *sin*. And every person who is honest enough to admit it knows that this infectious virus has festered to some degree in his own heart and life.

The Bible makes it clear that sin has separated man from God and placed him under the penalty of God's judgment: "As it is written, there is *none* righteous, *no not one*" (Romans 3:10—emphasis added). God is holy and righteous, and, as the great Judge of all the earth, His verdict will be perfectly right for every man and within the scope of His law. This verdict has been announced for centuries from the pages of His Holy Word: "The wages of sin is death—the soul that sinneth, it must die." Death is, of necessity, a complete separation from the Giver of Life.

To think that God can be bought with money, time, or work given to a church or to some good cause, or that His verdict can be swayed by "influence" of church or "saint" is to expect less of the Righteous Judge than you would demand of a man in a similar position upon earth. Surely God cannot be enticed to break His own law.

A prisoner stands before the court. The evidence has been heard and weighed. He is found guilty of a great crime, for which the law demands that the judge mete out a severe penalty. Can any amount of promises to reform through positive thinking, pledges to devote time and money to good causes, or proof of membership in a church and charitable societies ever alter the fact that the prisoner has committed a crime? Would these deeds nullify the penalty demanded by the law? Of course not! Nor can good works or church membership or the act of belonging to any other organization alter for one moment the fact that man is a sinner before God.

In a court of law there is no procedure for adding up the "good" the accused may have done to see if it will outweigh the crime for which he is being tried. The question before the court is simply, "Guilty" or

VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, HE THAT HEARETH MY WORD, AND BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT SENT ME, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, AND SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION; BUT IS PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.

—John 5:24

"Not Guilty." And it is the same in the eyes of God. No amount of good deeds can ever nullify the fact of sin; and the verdict of "guilty" has already been pronounced by God upon the whole race of man: "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that *every* mouth may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19—emphasis added).

When the verdict of "guilty" has been pronounced in a court of law, if true justice is to be done, friends of the prisoner, *no matter who they may be*, must have no power to change the verdict of the judge or sway him in his duty under the law. Do you, then, believe that any church body or official can sway the judgments of Almighty God?

What vanity, therefore, to trust in some church (no matter what type it may be) or in some "saint" that someone may have named as influential to mediate your

cause with Almighty God! Can He be influenced to go back upon the righteous penalty He himself has pronounced upon sin? Can He be persuaded to compromise with the undeniable fact of our guilt before Him?

Certainly basic logic leads us to the inevitable conclusion that if any man is to be accepted of God it must be upon a *righteous* basis—not on the basis of penance, prayers, rituals, good deeds, gifts of time and money, or the influence of a church or a "saint." None of these can alter the fact of our sin and guilt before a righteous, holy God and are therefore only bribes attempting to pervert judgment. These attempts may work at times among men—but never with God.

The teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament gospels very strongly emphasize this point. If there was one thing that Jesus constantly stressed during His life upon earth, it was the fact that God is neither deceived by nor pleased with an outward show of piety, even when it comes to religious attendance to ordinances that He himself gave to the Jews of old. In fact, God's eyes pierce through all of these things to examine man's very heart.

In the well-known Sermon on the Mount, Christ dealt not with externals but with those things that are the result of a right attitude of *heart*: "Blessed are the pure *in heart*, for they shall see God" (emphasis added). That this is not the natural condition of man's heart is quite evident, and the Bible reiterates this fact again and again in such verses as Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart." Thus the question of man's sins (the fruit) must not only be settled in effecting reconciliation to God on a righteous basis, but sin itself (the root) must be put away and the "deceitful... and desperately wicked" heart made "pure" in the sight of God.

Did the religious rituals of the Jews bring about this pureness of heart? Here are the words of Christ spoken to a group of the religious leaders: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?" (Matthew 12:34) "For out of the abundance of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19—emphasis added).

These words of Christ are an indict-

ment of the heart of man as well as of the form, ritual, and hypocrisy of the religious world. Thus Christ proclaimed that because the heart of man is corrupt, his good works cannot be accepted by God. Even religious ordinances once given by God to the Jews as a type and example of truth that was to be revealed in Christ became perverted by their evil hearts, and the empty form that remained had become an abomination to God.

Jesus taught that the very essence of what God requires of man is this: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 23:36-40, Luke 10:25-28). God wants the true love and devotion of *your heart!*

But how can the heart of man, which contains the “root of sin,” as Christ describes it, produce the true love and devotion that God requires? And how can a condemned sinner be brought to the place of reconciliation and love before a Holy God? How can God be just and yet pardon the sinner? How can He dispense love and mercy to a sinful race without compromising righteousness and justice? The answer could only be devised by God’s infinite wisdom, and it is the most wonderful message ever heard by human ears.

God’s answer to this seeming dilemma is proclaimed by the gospel, His “good news” to man. The message is one of perfect love, not prostitution; of infinite mercy, but not compromise; of complete and absolute pardon, yet the strictest of justice. It is the marvelous story of infinite Love giving its all to win us back to Himself: the story of God himself, who came down to earth to inhabit a body of flesh and blood, was born of a virgin that as a man He might be our representative, and, as our representative, might take our place in judgment, paying the extreme penalty demanded against sin by His own holy Law. Nevertheless, many would fail to respond in repentance, submission, and love to the Christ of the cross, who stands with outstretched hands that still bear the nail prints, and pleads—“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

*O the love that drew salvation’s plan!
O the grace that brought it down to man!
O the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary!*

God wants you to bow before Him just as you are, a guilty lost sinner, accepting gratefully and sincerely the pardon and forgiveness He offers in the person of Christ. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Surely, it is evident that what God wants of *you* is not some outward form of religious ritual but is instead an inner reality. He doesn’t want your penance but the complete submission of your will; not your gift of any material thing but the true love and devotion of *your heart*. Yes, our hearts are corrupt by nature, and it is only by the “new birth” through faith in Christ on the basis of His having paid the full penalty for our sins that God can forgive us, create within us a clean heart, and accept us in the person of His Son. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Oh, the wonder of God’s salvation!

JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID
UNTO HIM, VERILY, VERILY, I
SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN
BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT
SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

—John 3:3

Our submission to God is not, in the final analysis, the giving up of anything but rather the receiving of the infinite “everything” that He offers to us in Christ! God wants to bestow *His* love, *His* riches, *His* grace, *His* infinite blessings in an endless flood upon *you* forever and forever! Won’t you right now stop trying to pacify God with religious ritual or some gift of yours to Him, and just by faith accept Christ as your Savior, surrendering control of your will into His hand, and giving Him the true love and devotion of your heart so that He can fill you with Himself?

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ... That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in [his] kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works,

lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:4-9). “Mercy... God’s great love... making us alive... the exceeding riches of His grace... His kindness... [being] saved... through faith... as the gift of God... [throughout] the ages to come...”!

Only the God who has communicated to us through His Word, who is the Creator of the universe, has provided for His rebellious creatures a way for them to be reconciled to Himself, a way for them to live with Him forever. No other God or god or Supreme Deity or Force worshiped among men has offered himself or itself sacrificially for the salvation of his creatures.

No other God claims *to be love* and then thoroughly demonstrates that consummate virtue by subjecting Himself to a humiliating death upon a cross as He pays the full penalty for the sins of mankind.

The penalty *had to be paid* in order to satisfy Divine justice. It involved not only Christ’s physical death but *the experience* of the Son being separated from the Father. The dread of that event was foreseen by Jesus as He knelt before the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:36-39). “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

In the 18th Century, the hymn writer Charles Wesley wrote these incredibly wonderful words: “Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?” That act of love is beyond our ability to fathom, yet it is even more incomprehensible to understand why anyone would not want to receive it. In John chapter 15 verse 13, Jesus informs us of what that act means even for sinful humanity: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Who would not want to be *His friend* for all eternity?

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You once used the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to support the pagan idea of the immortality of the soul. What scripture do you use to support the idea that the “soul” is a separate entity from the body? Ecclesiastes 9:5 very clearly tells us that “the dead know not anything....” First Thessalonians 4:13-18 says that the dead in Christ are “asleep.”

RESPONSE: Regarding your comments on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and the other scriptures to which you refer, we must respectfully disagree with your conclusions about the state of the dead. To speak of the dead as those “asleep” is a common metaphor, particularly applicable from Paul, who was fond of using what some commentators refer to as “Paulisms.” Just one example is his usage of “letter” as a metaphor for a legalistic approach to the gospel.

You mention that the Scriptures support soul sleep. It is interesting to note how heavily supporters of this doctrine rely on passages from the psalms and Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is very clear that its observations are drawn from the viewpoint of the *natural man*. To the limited vision of the “natural man” it does appear that the dead know nothing. If Ecclesiastes 9:5 is speaking literally, as some indicate, is it then also true that their memory is forgotten as well? Verse 6 explains that they (the dead) do not have a “portion forever” in anything “*that is done under the sun*.” That is all the writer is commenting on.

We need to understand the clear statements in the New Testament. Paul did not say that it was better to depart and “sleep until the Resurrection” but rather to “be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23). Nor did he say that to be absent from the body was to be “asleep” (2 Corinthians 5:8). The words used in these scriptures help us to discern where the misunderstanding takes place. It involves the makeup of a man. Those who would deny the “spirit, soul, and body” (1 Thessalonians 5:23) will certainly have trouble distinguishing the differences and implications involved. As Peter pointed out in Acts 2:34, David (his body) certainly had not ascended into heaven. It is a reasonable conclusion that the soul and spirit of David were in heaven. His statement after his baby son died, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23), was not in expectation of a resurrection but of a reunion that would take place immediately upon David’s death. As the old hymn tells us, *’Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to*

take Him at His word.

We must seek to avoid the trap of letting our preconceptions establish our doctrine. Consider the case of the thief on the cross. Jesus did not say, “Verily I say unto thee, you will *sleep* today,” but “Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou *be with me* in paradise.” Some feel that the teaching of soul sleep avoids contradictions in the Scriptures, but a few examples would seem to create myriad contradictions. What about the spirits in prison to whom Christ preached during His time in the grave (1 Peter 3:19-20)? What about the rich man and Lazarus? These events to which Christ referred were real. There are no parables that specifically name an individual.

QUESTION: What are your thoughts on Christians who take their own lives, and what do you believe will happen to them?

RESPONSE: The scriptures are not silent on the subject, including the stories of those who committed suicide (King Saul and Judas, et al). One thing is certain. The sixth commandment of the Lord says very emphatically, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). This verse does not add the word “others” at the end of the command. Consequently, the prohibition covers everyone. You shall not murder others or yourself. God alone is the Judge over His creation (Romans 9:21; 12:19; Psalm 94:2).

Although the scriptures affirm the *security of the believer*, the Lord also strongly warned about the *loss of reward* a believer may suffer because of his actions (1 Corinthians 3:15). The “heroes of the faith” (Hebrews 11) all endured horrendous experiences, with many losing their lives—but not through suicide. Samson’s death involved more self-sacrifice than suicide, unlike King Saul. Samson’s last act of judgment against the Philistines would result in his own death—a vast difference between this and Saul’s cowardly attempt to avoid the consequences of his own actions (1 Samuel 31:4).

QUESTION: In *In Defense of the Faith*, I liked your explanation of “I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things” (Isaiah 45:7). You explained that darkness is not something God created but the total absence of light; and that just as light reveals darkness, so God’s holiness reveals evil—it’s not something God causes people to do. But what about Amos 3:6, “Shall there be evil in a city and the LORD hath not done it?” [From February 2001]

RESPONSE: The Hebrew word here translated “evil” is *ra*. It primarily means adversity, affliction, distress, but it can also mean sin. Of these two possible meanings, how do we know what is meant in a given instance? The context will tell you. In this short book of Amos, *ra* appears seven times; only twice (5:14,15) does it mean sin; the other five times (3:6; 5:13; 6:3; 9:4,10) it means judgment from the Lord. God tells Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (3:2). As His special people, they have known His protection: no calamity, adversity, affliction, or distress could come upon them except the Lord allowed it. Now they will know His judgment. God will bring *ra* upon them as punishment: “I command the sword, and it shall slay them [i.e., the disobedient people of Israel]: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil [*ra*], and not for good (9:4).”

“Evil” in Isaiah 45:7 is also *ra*, and could mean calamity or affliction. That would be appropriate because the phrase “I make peace, and create evil [*ra*]” contrasts peace with *ra*. Surely *ra*, as calamity or destruction, is the opposite of peace, just as darkness is the opposite of light. I chose the most difficult understanding, that of *ra* as sin. Even with that meaning, it is clear that God is not the author of sin.

QUESTION: “...[B]road is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matthew 7:13). How has God “won” if there are more souls in hell than in heaven?

RESPONSE: Are you sure there will be “more souls in hell than in heaven”? The verse you quote refers to those who *reject* the narrow way to life—not to those who die in infancy or to aborted babies. If these, having neither sinned nor rejected the gospel, are indeed purchased by Christ’s sacrifice for sin (as I believe they are), there could easily be more in heaven than in hell. Furthermore, even if no one went to heaven, God has still “won.” He never compromised His justice but insisted that the penalty be paid and allows no one into heaven who has rejected Christ’s payment on their behalf. Christ conquered Satan by living a sinless life of perfect obedience to the Father—and then by laying down His life in full payment for sin. God has proved both His love and His justice, both His mercy and holiness. In the cross, God has won the victory over Satan, sin, and death, and has made it available to all who will receive it as the free gift of His grace.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

“Did God Create Man to Suffer?”

Question: There is no way God can be exonerated from the accusation that He is a sadistic fiend. He says He doesn't want anyone to suffer, yet we do suffer both in this life and are warned that our suffering will be even worse in eternity. In fact, the suffering that God has planned for eternity is horrible beyond words. How can you say that a God who creates man to burn in the fires of an everlasting hell is good?

Response: God did not create man for such a fate, and when man by his own self-will rejects the salvation from that fate, which God so graciously offers, it grieves Him. The Bible clearly says that God is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter:3:9) but that He wants “all men to be saved” (1 Timothy:2:4).

The Bible tells us clearly that Christ paid the penalty for the sins of the whole world, even for the sins of those who reject Him: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world” (John:1:29); and again, “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John:2:2).

We may rest assured that no one will suffer in hell who could by any means have been won to Christ in this life. God leaves no stone unturned to rescue all who would respond to the convicting and wooing of the Holy Spirit. Paul makes that clear: “For whom he did foreknow [would respond to the gospel]...them he also called [with the gospel]; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Romans:8:29,30). Let me try to illustrate.

Like a Fish Out of Water

A fish sees a man on the shore sitting on a chair with legs crossed, smoking a cigar, and holding a fishing pole. The fish decides that it is missing out on real life and determines to be like the man. It manages to jump out of the water, flips itself up on a chair, crosses its fins, and lights up a cigar. But before it can manage to grasp a fishing pole it runs out of oxygen and, its life expiring, falls from the chair and flops around in dirt and gravel, gills opening and closing rapidly in a vain attempt to pull oxygen from the air.

An atheist walking by exclaims in derision: “What kind of a God would create a fish to suffer like that?”

The obvious truth, of course, is that God never made the fish to suffer like that. He created fish to swim in exuberant freedom in rivers, lakes, and oceans. This horrible suffering, which is contrary to God's will, came about because the fish rebelled against the purpose God had for it. Rebelling in his own way against God, man too is like a fish out of water.

God made man to swim in the ocean of His love and to enjoy the full life and freedom of expression of those who do God's will. It would have been so beautiful, but man chose to rebel against God and to do his own thing. Human egos that have rebelled against God find themselves, as a consequence of their selfishness, in conflict with one another as well. What one self-willed person wants to do inevitably conflicts with what other self-willed persons want to do, bringing anger, jealousy, hatred, and all the evils that follow. But don't blame God for this! He created all things in beauty and perfection. It is man who has perverted that perfection and is wreaking destruction upon God's creation.

—An excerpt from *IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH* by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE.....

Even if we are successful at helping someone turn away from atheism, it doesn't necessarily put them in a much better position regarding their eternal destiny. Eternal life is granted not to those who simply believe in "God" but only to those who believe in the God of the Bible and repent of their sins, placing 100 percent of their trust in the death, burial, and Resurrection of God's Son—Jesus Christ. Simply believing in God (or a god) might be a good start, but if that's as far as it goes, the seeker is still hopelessly lost.

—Jay Seegert,
*Creation & Evolution: Compatible or
in Conflict?*

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VANISHING LOVINGKINDNESSES AND TENDER MERCIES

T. A. McMahan

THE IDEA THAT kindness seems to be vanishing in our day and in our country is not a matter of a pessimistic outlook but one of everyday observation. Political differences, as an all-too-obvious example, appear to have reached a new level of ugliness. Kindness hasn't disappeared altogether, yet neither has it taken society by storm. For many people, an act of kindness is little more than a "nice" occurrence, even though some are aggressively promoting the action. Hence the bumper sticker: "Practice Random Acts of Kindness!" Things like holding the door open for a person or letting an individual with very few items go ahead of us in a checkout line are just a few of the countless number of acts that we can all appreciate.

On the other hand, it's grievous that many even consider their acts of kindness to be a contributing factor toward getting their "ticket" to heaven. They erroneously believe that their works add up to making them a "mostly good person"—certainly not one deserving of hell!

None of these views relate to what the Bible has in mind regarding kindness—not even one's accumulated "nice" acts. When I want to get a better idea about the definition of English terms used in Scripture, I've found Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary to be very helpful. His love of God's Word is evident, as he often supplied the KJV scripture verses in which the words are used. In addition, his 1828 Dictionary is easily accessible and can be searched online. He defines "kindness" as an "Act of goodwill; beneficence; any act of benevolence which promotes the happiness or welfare of others. Charity [love], hospitality, attention to the wants of others, etc., are deemed acts of kindness or kindnesses. Acts 28:2."

The primary focus of the biblical Christian is understanding what God is communicating to His creatures through His Word. His major objective is to go beyond what the world thinks, and the Scriptures indeed go far beyond the mindset, practices, and capabilities of the world. How far? God's kindness itself is a significant action on His part that is involved in the salvation of humanity. "But after that *the kindness and love of God our Saviour* toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness

which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:4-6; emphasis added). That's "opening a door for us." That's providing a "kindness" that no one but Jesus could—and did—provide. He has "set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (Revelation 3:8). Notice that the verse in Titus 3:4 connects kindness and the love of God.

Twenty-three times in the psalms we read of "kindness" and "love" as one word. That's rarely, if ever, found in the world's "random acts"—and certainly not God's lovingkindnesses. Here is what's involved in His lovingkindnesses, as given throughout the psalms: physical salvation for those who put their trust in Him (17:7); tender mercies (25:6); truth (26:3); trust, protection (36:7); continuation, righteousness (36:10); proclamation (40:10); preservation (40:11); night and day (42:8; 92:2); worship (48:9); mercy and forgiveness (51:1); better than life (63:3); goodness (69:16); faithfulness (88:11; 89:33); His promises (89:49); redemption (103:4); understanding (107:43); reviving and refreshing (119:88, 149, 159); praise (138:2); guidance (143:8). These are just some of the attributes found within the character of our loving God, whom we are to know and love with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30).

Isaiah declares, "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses" (Isaiah 63:7). Yes, that was for Israel, but better yet, it's made available for all mankind! Yet humanity has a penchant for taking what God has "bestowed" and turning it to self-glorification. The word received by the prophet Jeremiah corrects that self-serving orientation, which completely misses what God's lovingkindness is all about: "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

God wants us to understand Him and know Him. It's not about us; it's about

Him. He wants us to delight in what He delights in, and He delights in our extending lovingkindness to others. To that end, He has enabled us by His grace to reflect His attributes. We are to "be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil [person]" (Luke 6:35). We are to "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12). For all of us who claim to follow Jesus Christ, those are not just things we *do*, but they are who we *are to be* as Christians. True Christianity is wholly others-directed. Selfless. Is that the way the world sees us?

I received an article recently that startled me. It was an interview with Richard Dawkins. What surprised me was his observation that Christianity is losing its influence for good in the world, and, as a consequence, creating a vacuum that is giving rise to increasing wickedness. That is a stunning reflection by a man who is arguably the chief of the atheists. He still doesn't believe in God, but he sees a literal fear of God by those who do believe in Him as a welcome deterrent against evil. He's concerned that losing that fear will give "people a license to do really bad things," and what he sees happening throughout society is shaking his confidence in his own belief in humanity's inherent goodness. He realizes that people need help to do good (<http://bit.ly/2R9eiPs>).

But that's not the main shocker. When a committed atheist can see Christianity failing in its influence while, at the same time, Christendom's own leaders are mostly heedless of that fact, the church is in serious trouble.

What's the problem? *Much of the church is in the world, and much of the world is in the church.* How can the church influence the world for good when it's emulating it? When they both look and act alike, their differences fade away. Consequently, those things that delight God—particularly our emulation of His lovingkindnesses and our "others" directedness—are slowly but surely vanishing.

Perhaps the clearest example of this is what Martin and Deidre Bobgan refer to as "hidden in plain sight" (See <http://bit.ly/30g2UFC>). That has to do with counseling and its errors. The Bobgans have written volumes to enlighten the church as to the true biblical way that believers in Jesus are to minister to one another. This case in point displays a classic irony. Biblical counseling should be an altruistic activity

in which people help one another by first and foremost restoring their relationship with the Lord, and out of that will follow a reconciliation with one another. In other words, growing in our love for Jesus and being obedient to His instructions is the only true solution to a believer's problems, whatever they may be. The irony is that the opposite, through counseling (with few exceptions), is taking place throughout Christendom.

Counseling in the church emulates psychological counseling, which is all about self and is therefore antithetical to the Word of God. "Hold on a minute!" protest those who function in a church as so-called biblical counselors. "We *are* doing it God's way!" The Bobgans have read volumes of biblical counseling instructions and watched hours of such videos and have yet to find counselors doing it "God's way." Here are only two examples that demonstrate just how destructive such "therapy" is for the body of Christ.

Everyone who goes to counseling wants to have his or her problems solved, no matter what those problems may be. When that becomes the focus, however, it departs from the biblical solution, which is only found in one's personal relationship with Jesus. Problems (which never end this side of heaven) for the believer in our Lord must be worked out according to Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." To think that a significant problem of living, especially involving our relationships with others, can be solved by any other means is to invite the disaster of Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Death here means separation from the truth of God's Word.

The second very critical error found in church counseling is the "hidden in plain sight" state of affairs. Counselors and counsees are seemingly oblivious to their opposition to God's Word as they go about their counseling sessions. How opposed are they? Let's start with what is declared all through the Scriptures regarding how we, as believers, should treat others. The golden rule is basic and covers a great deal: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). That's fundamental, yet Jesus sets the bar

way beyond that. After declaring what was the first of all the commandments, He adds the second: "And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31). When questioned by the lawyer as to who was his neighbor, Jesus gave the example of what the Samaritan did for the man attacked by robbers and left half-dead, ending with the admonition to "Go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:29-37). Luke also records, "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for *he is kind* unto the unthankful and to the evil [person]" (Luke 6:35, emphasis added).

The word "kind" in this verse is translated "gentleness" in the passage that lists the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:21-22). It's the same Greek term: *chrēstos*. Similar to fruit, kindness must be cultivated and grown in grace. As noted earlier, a believer's life in Christ must reflect His lovingkindnesses. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10). A host of analogous verses are far too numerous to list here simply because this is what biblical Christianity is all about. Any belief or practice that deviates from those verses is a travesty, meaning a false and utterly destructive representation. Does present-day psychological counseling and psychologically influenced "biblical" counseling qualify as a travesty? Yes, even though its practice clearly perpetuates sin, that fact seems to be hidden in plain sight of the perpetrators.

Typically, as noted above, counsees come to counseling to have their problems solved by a counselor. The counselor believes that he or she must amass details related to the problem to discern what needs to be addressed and fixed. The counselee's primary focus is upon getting the problem solved. Two critical errors are exposed here. 1) The counselor is displacing the Holy Spirit, who alone knows the heart, mind, depth, and complexity of the sin involved, as well as the truthfulness of the counselee. 2) The process bypasses the counselee's current relationship (or lack thereof) with the Lord as the only truly effective way to resolve his or her sin issues.

As bad as that is, it leads to a far worse situation. Both counselors and counsees are clearly sinning against the Lord in their counseling process. That is particularly evident when relationships are involved.

Take, for example, a married couple that is not getting along. In the counseling process, complaints are brought against one another. These complaints inevitably turn into bad-mouthing each other, which the Bible calls "evil speaking." The counselor is guilty of prompting such a sinful activity through his problem-solving attempts. Furthermore, all of this is diametrically opposed to God's lovingkindnesses and tender mercies. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and *evil speaking*, be put away from you, with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31, emphasis added). Tragically, the above describes most attempts at counseling failing marriages. This may also contribute in a major way to the fact that, statistically, the number of divorces among Christians is little different from non-Christians.

In summary, God's lovingkindnesses and tender mercies are vanishing—not from God but from His church. That's because His church is slipping away from Him (Hebrews 2:1) and leaving its first love, who is Christ himself (Revelation 2:40). His bride is turning to the world for ways to solve its problems—ways that will only make her conditions worse. Although Richard Dawkins does not know the reasons for Christianity's failing influence, he recognizes its current state. Counseling that is truly biblical should be what the world sees, and its successes should glorify our Lord and increase Christianity's influence for good.

When psychotherapeutic counseling entered the church in the 20th century, it began as a snowball rolling down a mountainside. It quickly reached avalanche proportions, burying the truth of the sufficiency of Scripture in its destructive path. The only change in this century is the incredibly massive remaining snow and debris that seems to be frozen solid. Turning Christianity back to counseling God's way may not happen, given the increasing apostasy that is and will continue to take place prior to the Lord's return. Nevertheless, as watchmen of God's Word, we must heed the words of Isaiah: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence" (62:6). Our function as watchmen is to warn those individuals who are entrapped by the Christianized psychological delusion. We are to be in a grace-enabled rescue operation, praying that the Lord will help us to reach those who have "ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Revelation 2:7,11,17,29;3:6,13,22).

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: The Bible says, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Then why do I so often fail to do His will and to please Him? I more often please myself by doing my own will. Why?

RESPONSE: The previous verse says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” We don’t “work for salvation,” but we must work *out* the salvation God has given us. Paul declares that “we are his [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:9-10). It is God’s will that we should do good works—but it is our responsibility to do them.

Created in a beautiful garden, Adam was “to dress it and keep it [and] freely eat” its fruit (Genesis 2:15-16). God gave Adam the ability, but he had to harvest and eat the fruit. God didn’t do it for him. So it is with the life we are to live by faith in God and in obedience to His will. God’s work in us neither overrides our will nor our efforts but guides and empowers us as we obey Him.

Just as Adam failed to do God’s will, we too fail at times. God had a provision for Adam’s sin, and He has one for ours as well: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Why do we so often seek our own will? Whether we live for Christ or for self depends upon our understanding and faith. Christ loves us so much that He paid the full penalty for our sins, a penalty that His justice demanded. When this fact becomes more real to us than this passing world, we become overwhelmed with love for Him and the desire to do His will. When we really believe that this life is brief and eternity is unending, the shortness of time in relation to eternity compels us by logic and even self-interest to live for eternity. The life we live day by day depends upon what we really believe. Paul’s passion was to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” To that end he said, “Whereunto I labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Colossians 1:28,29). Understanding, faith, and love provide the foundation for a partnership in which God is able to work mightily in us as we work diligently and trust Him.

QUESTION: In one of your talks you quoted, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4) and, “The wages of sin

is death.” You then said that this means “separation from God forever.” On what grounds do you define “death” as an immortal existence? Re total annihilation vs. ever-burning hell, we do not believe that “the natural man” has innate immortality because of scriptures like the first one above and “rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell” (Matthew 10:28); and “He that converteth the sinner from error shall save his soul from death” (James 5:20). Please give scriptures proving that “mortal man” is really of and by himself *immortal!*

RESPONSE: Unfortunately, your definition of death and immortality does not agree with the Bible. In the very day that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit they died—but they were not annihilated, as you define death in your attempt to escape the biblical statements about eternity in the “lake of fire.”

What did it mean that Adam and Eve were dead, yet still living? Spiritual death brought instant separation from God the moment Adam and Eve rebelled against Him by eating of the forbidden fruit. In this earthly life, however, there is hope of that spiritual separation being ended by reconciliation with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for sin and “tast[ed] death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). Those who reject Christ will experience “the second death” (Revelation 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8), which is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20; 20:10,14,15).

Your idea of “immortality” assumes that the lost must be immortal in order to exist eternally in hell. Not so. The word “immortal” occurs only once in the entire Bible (1 Timothy 1:17) and is a description of God, who alone is eternal, having neither beginning nor end:

“Who alone hath immortality...” (1 Timothy 6:16). The immortality that God gives to man refers to the new body that can never die (1 Corinthians 15:53,54), received by the redeemed. Angels, demons, Satan, and mankind were created and therefore have a beginning. There is not one verse in the Bible, however, to indicate that their existence ever ends—but endless existence is never referred to as “immortality.”

Jesus said, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25). He was, of course, referring to the spiritually dead hearing the gospel and receiving eternal life. Those who reject the gospel remain in spiritual death. Of them, Jesus said, “The hour is coming [clearly a

future “hour,” because He leaves out the phrase “and now is”], in which all that are in the graves...shall come forth” (John 5:28,29). This is the yet future resurrection of the saved at the Rapture to eternal life in heaven; and later (after the last rebellion at the end of the millennial reign of Christ) of the damned to eternal death in the lake of fire.

John clearly states, “I saw *the dead* [i.e., those who remained in spiritual death by rejecting the gospel], small and great, stand before God...” (Revelation 20:12). This is at the end of the world, the final judgment. These people are both spiritually and physically dead, but they are not annihilated. Instead, they are standing before God and being judged according to their works to determine the level of punishment each will eternally endure. Those standing in that judgment have been taken from hell itself (“and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them”—Revelation 20:13). The lost are “dead” and in hell, but they are still conscious. At the final judgment they are brought forth to stand before God, then cast into the lake of fire—and there is never a hint that their consciousness will ever end.

Christ tells us of these poor souls through the story of the rich man and Lazarus. This is not a parable, because He never used names in a parable, but is about real people who have lived on this earth and died. Even if you were to turn it into a parable, what would it illustrate? The very thing you don’t want to believe, i.e., that the punishment of the lost is eternal: “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelation 20:14).

When “death and hell” are cast into the lake of fire,” the “rich man” to whom Christ referred will be among these doomed because he went to hell when he died: “...the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments...” (Luke 16:22,23).

In warning about hell, Christ referred to the “fire that never shall be quenched” (Matthew 18:8,9; Mark 9:43-48). We are told that in the lake of fire, “the beast and the false prophet...shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10). We have every reason to believe that the lost who are taken from “death and hell” to the final judgment and then cast into the lake of fire will also be tormented in that flame forever. This can only be the “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41), which Christ warns man to avoid at all cost.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

“Why Must the Damned Burn in Fire?”

Question: I am distressed by the very thought of anyone suffering eternally. It is particularly troubling to my faith that just as God created man with the capacity for joy, He also gave him the horrible, and I should think unnecessary, capacity to suffer, not only in this life but in eternity. And the suffering that awaits the damned is of the most horrible kind: burning forever in what the Bible describes as a “lake of fire.” How can you reconcile this with God’s goodness?

Response: Many people have suffered the excruciating pain of being terribly burned in this life. By your reasoning, God is to blame for their suffering because He constituted the human body with nerves that could feel pain. Yet those nerves were designed to warn of disease or other destructive forces at work in the body, and thus to save life.

More than one leprous person in primitive societies has had part or all of a foot burned off by a campfire before noticing what was happening because he couldn’t feel the pain. Any doctor will tell you that pain is one of the marvels that help to preserve the body—that pain and life are so inextricably linked as to be inseparable. Pain sends a vital message that we need to heed.

The Burning of unquenchable “thirst”

The “fire” of hell and the “burning” torment of the doomed and damned are consistently likened to thirst. When we look at it in that way we come to a better understanding: that the suffering of hell exists not because of God’s desire to punish but because of His love. He loved man so much that He made him an eternal being capable of knowing Him and dwelling with Him forever. In His love, He so constituted man that fellowship with God is no mere option and thus of little enjoyment. No, it is vital to his very being and thus brings infinite pleasure and satisfaction.

If God made us to have fellowship with Him and to draw our life and purpose from

His direction over us, then the moment we divorce any part of life from Him, whether it be knowledge or love, it becomes polluted and perverted, a caricature of what was intended. That fact is observable everywhere. Man may not experience the thirst for God in this life when he is surrounded with like-minded friends and the pleasures of this world. He is like a man in the Sahara desert who, early in the morning, refuses to take the water offered to him; but in the heat of the day he is dying for lack of the water he earlier despised.

That the Bible likens separation from God’s life and fellowship to a burning thirst provides a metaphor that helps us to understand in some measure what both heaven and hell will be like. Following that analogy, we realize that hell’s suffering will be so excruciatingly painful for the very same reason that heaven will be so exquisitely joyful. That is the way with thirst unquenched—or satisfied.

It is easy to understand that the person dying of thirst burns with torment for the same reason that a drink of cold water quenching one’s thirst tastes and feels so good. Our insight becomes even clearer when we remember that

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thirst burns and torments, and quenching that thirst soothes and exhilarates, because water is absolutely essential to life. In like manner, hell will feel so bad and heaven so good because the intimacy and fullness of God’s presence and love is as essential to our spiritual life as water is to our physical life.

Those in hell burn with an unquenchable thirst for the love of God for which they were made and from which God never intended them to be separated. There is absolutely no quenching of this moral and spiritual thirst for those in hell because they have by their own choice cut themselves off from God for eternity.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

What should we do in the moment of fierce temptation when we are about to be overwhelmed and we feel helpless? The answer is “Call on the Name of the Lord.” “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs:18:10). When Peter felt himself sinking beneath the waves, he cried, “Lord, save me” (Matthew:14:30). The Lord rescued him immediately. He always does.

—*William MacDonald*

Until the Day

Dave Hunt—First published in
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IN 1983, I wrote a book titled *Peace, Prosperity, and the Coming Holocaust*. The first chapter was called, “A Contrary Scenario,” which I based on my understanding of Scripture. Here was the situation as I recall it: interest rates in the US were over 20 percent; the stock market was around 700 on the DOW, and the experts were predicting a crash that would make 1929 seem like prosperity; the housing market was dead, with tens of thousands of houses unsold and apartments vacant; the most popular books in Christian bookstores were about “the death of the dollar, the imminent international financial collapse, the pending Soviet attack on Israel, etc.” Gloom and doom prevailed.

In that first chapter, I gave my opinion based on Scripture that the doomsayers’ predictions were wrong: Reaganomics would work, prosperity was on the way, and there would be no imminent invasion of Israel. Unknown to me at the time, the Soviets had placed a cache of their weapons in Lebanon for a million-man invasion army. Israel hauled it all out, thousands of truckloads, after their invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 to stop the incessant shelling of Israel and to quell terrorism.

This “contrary scenario” held true for 25 years. Then came the current worldwide financial near-collapse after years of building “prosperity” on impossible debt. Very serious problems have bankrupted banks and businesses, have put tens of thousands out of work, and have adversely impacted millions of hard-working citizens. Of course, the problems are being “solved” by governments printing money and accumulating more debt. Where is this taking us now?

Some are fearing the possibility of another 1929-like stock market crash and Depression. Most economists, however, doubt that this could happen with all of the new regulations that are being put into place. Above and beyond worldwide financial problems, my real interest is in the Rapture, which I still believe could happen at any moment.

Christ declares that the days just before the Rapture will be like the days of Noah and Lot. Notice, however, that although those were times of gross immorality, He doesn’t even mention that fact. Here are His words:

“And as it was in the days of Noah, so

shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Luke 17:26-30, Matthew 24:37-39; Matthew 24:44).

In the cases of Noah and Lot, judgment and destruction fell *instantly* after the believers were taken out. But that scenario does not fit with what the Bible tells us will follow the Rapture: further prosperity and even greater persecution of Jews worldwide.

No Old Testament illustration perfectly conveys the full New Testament prophecy. In Noah’s and Lot’s day the phrase, “until the day” or “the same day,” meant *within that very 24-hour period*. The New Testament, however, has in mind “the day of the Lord,” which begins with the Rapture, includes the Great Tribulation and the Millennium, and ends in the new heavens and new earth.

Christ’s warning is centered on the fact that the idea of the Rapture, which should be much comfort to the believer (see John 14:1-3) will instead be the *last thing* most Christians are expecting or even hoping will occur. False prosperity will make many Christians reluctant to leave earth for heaven (“Let the Rapture occur before I die, but not yet!”). It will be a continuation of the spirit of Laodicea, which has played a major role in the apostasy into which the church has been sinking ever deeper since the end of World War II. We could almost say that this spirit has been present from the beginning of the church after Christ ascended back to heaven, having spent 40 days with His disciples in His resurrected body. That was a glorious time for His bewildered followers to come to know their Lord in a new way, to remove any lingering doubts from their minds, and to get them started in fulfilling the “great commission” that He had given to them.

Oddly enough, in spite of fierce opposition and persecution, the thousands of new disciples were not eager to leave their homes and jobs in order to obey their Lord’s parting command to “go...into all the world, and preach the gospel...” (Mark 16:15). It was still too comfortable for them

in Jerusalem. It took the “great persecution” that followed the stoning of Stephen to scatter the disciples “abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria...” (Acts 8:1). Far from going into hiding, as the eleven had done on resurrection day, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where [not ‘giving their testimonies’ but] preaching the word...” (Acts 8:4). The church thrived under persecution. This was a time of real growth, which the “church growth movement” (that Robert Schuller, in a 1974 book, claims he began and of which he said Bill Hybels was his most successful student) eventually corrupted.

From the very beginning, “prosperity” has been a dangerous condition for most Christians to handle. The “health-and-wealth...name-it-and-claim-it” gospel, which Copeland learned from Kenneth Hagin, Sr., and which he claimed the Lord commissioned him to preach, has been promoted by the Crouches and the heretics and frauds of various stripes that they have sponsored on their worldwide TV network. This supposed “gospel” has always been wrong, but with “Christian” television and publishing promoting it to an apostate church, the deadly Laodicean mentality that has been germinating for centuries is now in full bloom. Being “rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing” (something unknown to the “little flock” that Christ left behind and to whom He promised the kingdom—Luke 12:32), has become a sign of God’s “blessing” in today’s “growth-industry Churchianity.”

The Rapture is almost a forgotten hope. Most Christians are too comfortable on this earth to be willing to leave it for heaven. Matthew 24 is a key chapter in understanding the timing of the Rapture. Verse 34 has generated heated controversy: “Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” This is also recorded at Luke 21:32. The disagreement centers around the meaning of the phrase “this generation.” There are three possible interpretations of that phrase:

1. Preterists hold that by saying “this generation,” Jesus referred to those living on earth at that time and that the Matthew 24 prophecy was fulfilled within that generation in the AD 70 siege and destruction of Jerusalem. That is clearly wrong because in those days, all flesh was not in danger of being wiped out (v. 22) by bows, arrows, swords, and spears. Today’s weapons could turn this earth into a glowing ember, devoid of any life, drifting silently through space. Much more is included in Christ’s warning that didn’t occur at that time: the greatest tribu-

lation ever for Jews (v. 21), since exceeded by the Holocaust, with even worse yet to come, ultimately bringing full repentance and salvation to Israel (Zechariah 12:8-13:9). Nor did any of the events foretold in verses 27-31 take place in AD 70.

2. Others think that Jesus meant the generation living on earth when Israel returned to her land in 1948. How could “generation” in that sense be defined? Surely it couldn’t include those not yet born. It must be a generation already established and still alive—and this particular one is now nearly gone.

In my opinion, Jesus was not talking about either of the above. There is a third possible meaning, which I would respectfully suggest. The key is the way Jesus, John the Baptist, and Peter all used the word “generation.” The Bible is its own interpreter: “generation of vipers” (Matthew 3:7; Matthew 12:34; Matthew 23:33; Luke 3:7); “evil generation” (Luke 11:29); “evil and adulterous generation” (Matthew 12:39); “wicked generation” (Matthew 12:45); “wicked and adulterous generation” (Matthew 16:4); “faithless generation” (Mark 9:19); “faithless and perverse generation” (Matthew 17:17, Luke 9:41); “adulterous and sinful generation” (Mark 8:38); “untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).

Scripture indicates that although many *individual* Jews will be saved, Israel as a whole will continue in unbelief and rebellion against the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When will Israel at last repent and return to faith in the only true God, the God of Israel? Not until the armies of the world, led by Antichrist at Armageddon, have pushed Israel to the brink of defeat. That is when Christ himself in His “Second Coming” will return visibly to earth and destroy Israel’s enemies (“every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him” —Revelation 1:7). Then all Israel will repent of their departure from the Lord of hosts and rejection and crucifixion of her Messiah, and “all Israel shall be saved...” (Romans 11:26). There will be an unprecedented time of mourning in Israel (Zechariah 12:10-13:1) as every Jew alive will realize that Jesus Christ, the one they crucified and had despised ever since, died for their sins and is the Redeemer whom their own prophets had promised.

As for the church, anyone who knows God’s Word has mourned the fact that for decades we have been steadily sinking ever deeper into apostasy such as few men and women of God could have imagined only fifty years ago. There are a multitude of causes, but a major one is the way God’s Word is despised today, even by some who

call themselves Christians, and even by many church leaders. What God has inspired “holy men of God” to put down in writing and that the canon of Scripture comprises is looked upon as boring and must be presented in ways that will appeal to the modern mind. We have movies and DVDs by the dozens dramatizing “thus saith the LORD.” For one’s teaching from the Word of God to be recorded onto a DVD is one thing. To present the Bible not in the pure words of Scripture but by a *dramatization* thereof on a DVD is an abomination. Imagine the pride of anyone who attempts to “improve” the Holy Word of God! These revisionists, instead of improving, actually trivialize, mutilate, and destroy what God has said.

Many Christians, especially their children, are so enamored with TV that they can’t sit still to read the Bible. Christ is called “the Word of God.” He is the “Living Word”...the “word of truth” (Psalm 119:43), “word of life” (Philippians 2:16). Never is He called the “picture” of truth. We are “born again...by the word of God...the word which by the gospel is preached...” (1 Peter 1:23-25). There are scores of such verses. Let’s try to modernize a bit for this new generation: “born again by the DVD of God...the living DVD...the DVD of truth...the DVD which by the gospel is preached, etc.” Paul told Timothy to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2). He didn’t say “Revise or dramatize the word”! This is not a matter of semantics. It’s the difference between God’s way and man’s way, between life and death!

We dare not succumb to the apostasy that has invaded the church. As Amos declared, there is a famine for the Word of God—not because it’s not available to hungry readers but because *it is not being preached* in many churches that only a few years ago were sound in doctrine and truly preached the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. The flock has been fed phony “translations.” Surely we are seeing “a famine...of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11). Not only is God’s Word not being preached, but most of those who think they are doing so are using false “Bibles,” to the detriment of their souls and those of their hearers.

Eugene Peterson is a case in point. He dares to call *The Message* “another version of the Bible” when in fact it perverts the Bible! T. A. McMahon has brought us up to date on Rick Warren (TBC, 9/08). The compromises that Rick has made, relative to the gospel, break my heart. I have been reluctant to put him in the same category as such enemies of truth as Peterson, yet *The Message* continues to be Rick’s favorite “Bible” (see TBC, 4/04 for quotations from *The*

Message). He has influenced millions to follow his example in following Peterson. He now seems to believe that it is more important to give lost souls food and medicine for this life through his P.E.A.C.E. Plan than to give them the gospel for eternity; more blessed to give them physical and temporal blessings than to lead them to heaven.

We must ask ourselves repeatedly whether we truly believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and whether we live according to His words. Can we say with Paul, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”? Do we really believe that this gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes” and that the world is lost without Christ? Has the full and awesome meaning of that fact truly gripped our hearts and minds? I speak to my own heart first.

TBC has thoroughly and often exposed the false gospel of Roman Catholicism that is still sending countless millions to hell. Yet in spite of excellent exposés by others as well, the Catholic “gospel” gains an ever-wider acceptance among evangelicals. There used to be many sound authors and leaders who powerfully opposed Roman Catholicism. Now scarcely anyone raises an objection to this religious system that has likely sent as many to hell as has Islam. One becomes exceedingly weary reminding evangelicals from Billy Graham to Rick Warren that Roman Catholicism is damning billions—especially when these two men lead the evangelical church in embracing Catholicism as just another way to heaven. Didn’t the Lord in “the great commission” command His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? Has that command ever been revoked? Absolutely not! It still holds for every Christian today. But which gospel should one preach? The gospel has been so perverted, compromised, and Catholicized that “the power of God unto salvation” has been taken out of it for fear of giving offense. Would those in hell thank us for sparing them the offense that would have taken them instead to heaven?

Do we withhold the gospel from the unsaved for selfish reasons? Are some of us ashamed of the narrow gate that the gospel forces us to present to those who prefer the broad road to destruction? The Word of God is clear: “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25).

Time is short and eternity is forever. We need to reexamine our hearts and begin to live as though we really believe this.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Is there any teaching in the Bible that says men are so different from women? There are so many conferences for women where they are taught differently from what they teach at conferences for men. Is this scriptural? When I read in the Word that “man shall not live by bread alone,” doesn’t it mean “man and woman”? Are all these men’s conferences and women’s conferences born out of the world system of psychology? I would certainly appreciate your answer.

RESPONSE: The Bible certainly takes into account differences between men and women, not only the obvious physical ones, but in the role each is to play in the home and family, and also in the church. The husband has a distinct leadership role in the family. That does not, however, mean that the wife is without influence in decision making. The husband is exhorted to love his wife as himself; and real love seeks the blessing and honor of the one loved. Yet the woman is clearly not “to teach, nor usurp authority over the man” (1 Timothy 2:11-12) in the church, and that would surely include the home. So there are some clear differences. However, as far as salvation, one’s relationship with Christ, and living the Christian life are concerned, there is no difference.

As you point out, very rarely does Scripture address itself to either men or women distinctly. The reasons are obvious: all are sinners, all need the same redemption and maturity in the LORD, and the basis of spiritual growth for each is the same.

The words “man” or “men” as used in the Bible almost always refer to both men and women, such as in the verse you quoted in your letter, and nearly everywhere else. When Psalm 119:9 says, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word,” the phrase “young man” surely also means “young woman.”

The “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22) is obviously for men and women equally; when Paul says, “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), he is speaking to men and women; when he writes to “the saints,” whether at Corinth or Ephesus or Colosse, he is writing to both men and women. It is only on rare occasions, such as when Paul addresses husbands and wives, that any distinction is made. In fact, he states that “in Christ,” just as there is no longer Jew or Gentile, so there is no longer “male or female.” Obviously, while physical differences remain, spiritually there is no distinction.

Spiritual life and growth, the application of God’s Word, the faith that we hold, and our love for God and total reliance upon Christ as our very life, all apply equally to men and women. Therefore, if there were to be separate meetings for men and women, they would be of very limited nature. Today’s growing tendency to hold long conferences and workshops and seminars specifically for men or women should be viewed with caution.

QUESTION: You once stated that “...‘my people’ refers to Israel, not to the church; and ‘I will heal their land’ refers to the promised land of Israel, not to the United States.” If Christians are not God’s people, then who are they? What about Nineveh? Do you not believe that God might heal our nation just as He did Nineveh? I understand that God will not answer prayers addressed to other gods, but is it in vain to pray to Him for a national revival?

You also said that “Christians are ‘not of this world’ but have been called ‘out of this world’ to be in it but not of it.” If Christians and Israelites are two distinctive people in God’s eyes, and if Christians have been called out of this world, then to where are the Israelites called? Are they destined to stay on earth during the Millennium, while Christians are not? I am confused. Would you please clarify these issues for me?

RESPONSE: That Christians are distinct not only from Jews (“Israelites,” as you call them) but also from Gentiles (i.e., from all non-Christians) is clear: “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Corinthians 10:32). The gospel is both to Jews and Gentiles; and when either believes, he or she becomes a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10) and a new member of His body, the church (Ephesians 2:19-22; 5:30, etc.). Nor am I the one who said Christians are “not of this world” but have been called “out of this world.” Christ said that: “Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15:19). Of His followers, Christ said in prayer to His Father: “...these are in the world... I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:11, 15-16).

I don’t say it is vain to pray to God for national revival or to heal our nation. I have often prayed for that myself, and it should be

the heart’s desire of every Christian in this country. I only say that there is no biblical promise that such a prayer will be answered, as there is for Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Prayers for America legitimately express our longing for God’s blessing and salvation to come upon all mankind. We are, however, to pray with understanding.

Thus, when we pray, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” we realize that will never happen until Christ returns and reigns. Yes, Christians are “God’s people”—not His earthly but His heavenly people. The church has no land; it is the Jews to whom God gave a specific land. God never gave America to the American Christians or Germany to German Christians. Therefore I cannot properly apply God’s promise (that when His people cry to Him He will “heal their land”) to anyone but the Jews, His people, and to the land of Israel, which He promised to them.

To inherit the kingdom eternally on earth, Jews must have the same faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that those patriarchs had. In my opinion—and many Bible scholars disagree—everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who believes in Christ both before and after the Rapture, but before the Second Coming, will be in the church. Jews who have rejected Him but who at His Second Coming “look upon” Him and believe in Him when He descends from heaven to rescue them at the Battle of Armageddon (Zechariah 12:10)—like Gentiles who believe at that time as well—will continue into the Millennial Kingdom to experience Christ’s earthly reign on David’s throne.

Jews, of course, will be gathered by angels “from the four winds” on earth to Israel (Matthew 24:30-31). They are destined to dwell upon the earth in the Millennium and in the new heavens and new earth. The prophets promised this blessing to Israel (Isaiah 62; 65:17-25; Jeremiah 30:8-11; 31:1-12, 27-40; Ezekiel 34:11-31; 36:8-15, 22-38; 37:21-28; 39:21-29; Zechariah 12:10-14:21, etc., etc.). All of Israel will believe in Christ when He appears to rescue her in the midst of Armageddon. There will not be an unbelieving Jew left upon the earth, as the verses just referred to declare and so do many others, such as Matthew 24:13, Romans 11:26, etc.

Christ’s bride, the church, will be united with Him eternally. She will always be at His side and will comprise people from all nations, including Jews. All will be made one in Him to rule and reign, both during the Millennium and throughout eternity (Matthew 19:28; Luke 19:12-19; 22:30; Revelation 20:4, etc.).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

“What about 'The Lake of Fire'?”

Question: As I understand it, the Bible says there will be two resurrections: one of the saved and the other of the lost. The latter stand before God in their physical resurrected bodies and are cast into a place of torment called “the lake of fire” (Revelation:20:15). What is the point of eternally tormenting the lost?

Response: The Bible describes the damned who stand before God at the Great White Throne judgment and are cast into the lake of fire in these terms: “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...and the dead were judged...according to their works” (Revelation:20:12). Although their appearance before God is said to be a “resurrection of damnation” (John:5:29

In fact, the Bible tells us that the pain suffered by the damned has nothing to do with bodies and nerves. That Christ’s description of the rich man and the beggar, the one in hell and the other in paradise, is no mere parable is evident from the fact that the beggar’s name is given to us, so must have been a real person. Note Christ’s words:

The rich man also died and was buried; and he hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment... and cried...send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame (Luke:16:22-24).

While the words “eyes” and “tongue” and flame” are mentioned and the torment of thirst for water is implied, these words clearly have another meaning than that which is attached to them in this life. The physical bodies of both the rich man and Lazarus were corrupting in the grave. Therefore the eyes, tongue, finger, and flame referred to could not be physical. If the “flame” that tormented the rich man in hell was not physical, then we have reason to believe that the flame in the lake of fire is not

physical either.

Furthermore, we are clearly told that the lake of fire was “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew:25:41). Physical fire has no effect upon spirit beings. Whatever fire this is must be a special kind of fire for spirits, no doubt far more horrible than physical fire. Indeed, if the damned are in physical bodies and the flames are physical, then it would necessitate a continual, instant-by-instant reconstitution of their burning flesh in order for them to be tormented.

That kind of physical torment hardly seems to be a proper punishment. It makes more sense both logically and biblically for the torment to arise from the burning thirst for God that separation from Him would create, together with the exquisite pain of remorse. The physical torment of incredibly hot fire burning continually reconstituted flesh would be so terrible that it would allow no contemplation of past wrongs, for no remorse, for no regret for having rejected the salvation God offered. There would be no moral dimension to such torment; it would be simply physical and so

overwhelming as to allow for no thought or regret. That hardly seems to fit the crime of rebellion and rejection.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE • • • • •

The uncertainty of life and the inevitability of death are two of the most basic elements of human existence. Logically, then—even for those who think death ends it all—what may lie after death deserves at least some attention and planning before it may be forever too late. And it is only reasonable that prior to that awesome moment of death, which overtakes all in its own time and without discrimination, one needs to be absolutely certain of what death will bring and exactly why. Absolutely certain? Of course, because nothing less will do. Regardless of one’s religious belief or lack of it, death puts its exterminating stamp upon every earthly passion, position, possession, and ambition. There is a finality to death that shouts, “Too late! Too late!” Inasmuch as death could come knocking at any time, regardless of one’s age, health, or expectations, there is a great urgency in knowing—with certainty beyond question—what lies beyond death’s door. No matter how young we may be or how healthy we may seem, that dread event draws steadily and inexorably closer for each one of us—and often comes as an unwelcome surprise.

—Dave Hunt

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Kingdom Dominion Theology

Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon

THERE ARE MANY factors that make up the growing *apostasy* and seduction of the church. One of the most alarming, least understood, and fastest spreading errors is the teaching that this present earth, instead of heaven, is the ultimate home for the church. Accordingly, her goal is to take over the world and establish the kingdom of God. Only then, it is said, can Christ return—not, however, to take us to His Father’s house, as He promised His disciples in John 14, but to reign over the Kingdom that we have established for Him. As we mentioned in the last chapter of *The Seduction of Christianity*, if the real Jesus Christ is going to catch His bride up from earth to meet Him *in the air* (1 Thessalonians 4:17), then those who are working to build a kingdom for a “Christ” whom they will meet with their feet planted on earth have been under heavy delusion indeed. In fact, they have been working for the Antichrist!

One hears a great deal about Christ returning only when the church is a *unified, vibrant, forceful, spotless, wrinkle-free* bride, etc. There is no scripture to support such teaching. Nor is it logical that Christians who happen to be alive when Christ returns will have to attain to perfection in order to join (at that heavenly marriage to the Lamb) millions of Christians from past ages who attained to no such perfection at all.

The only righteousness that any of us have is that of Christ himself. Our works qualify us for *rewards* but not for *heaven*. “Absent from the body...present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8) is as true of carnal Christians when they die as it is for the most victorious. Christians from all ages “must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10), and when our works have been tried with fire (1 Corinthians 3:13-15), and in shame we have confessed our sins and failures (1 John 1:9) and He has wiped “all tears from [our] eyes” (Revelation 21:4), then, and not until then, will His bride (the true church) appear without spot or wrinkle, united before her Father’s throne in heaven and ready to join in that great feast above!

We ought to seek to live holy and faithful lives to His glory. His coming, however, is not dependent upon that small fraction of the church who are alive at the time reaching some form of perfection that millions, and perhaps billions, of Christians already in His presence through death have never

attained.

That teaching can be traced back several centuries, but its recent explosion dates from the Latter Rain, or Manifest Sons of God, movement that began in 1948 in Canada in apparent revival. It was declared to be heresy by the Assemblies of God in 1950. Its relationship to the Word/Faith, positive-confession, prosperity and healing movements (Hagin, Copeland, Capps, Price, et al.) is clearly established. Obviously, if we can get whatever we confess, then we ought to confess healing and immortality and peace and prosperity and salvation for the world. This is, in fact, where the name “Manifest Sons” comes from: the last-days overcomers must manifest total victory over all foes, *including death*, while in these bodies and without a resurrection.

Hardcore Manifest Sons teachers make such statements as, “You can study books about going to heaven in a so-called ‘rapture,’ if that turns you on. We want to study the Bible to learn to live and to love and to bring heaven to earth.” Others are more cautious—and even devious—in their statements. One of the early leaders, the late Earl Paulk, for example, claimed to believe in the Rapture in spite of the fact that he wrote entire books denouncing it. Just as Mormons use words such as “salvation,” “eternal life,” “God,” etc. (but have their own meaning for those words), so those in this movement use terminology that has accepted meanings for other Christians in order to confuse. It is a mistake to assume that by “Rapture” they mean being caught up to meet Christ in the air with the resurrected saints and taken to heaven. Most of those in this movement use the term “Rapture” to signify reaching a new oneness with Christ that enables them to fully manifest His power and glory.

Prophetic scriptures are either denied, interpreted as having already been fulfilled (e.g., much of Revelation happened at AD 70, according to the Preterists and Amillennialists), or they are spiritualized. Some of the terminology they use: “The church is Israel,” with true Israel no longer having any place in prophecy as a nation; “Armageddon” is the ongoing battle between the forces of light and darkness; “the Antichrist” is a spirit, not a person; we are already in the Great Tribulation *and* the Millennium, etc. Instead of exegeting the Scriptures, there are *new revelations*. Such “spiritual insights” come by hearing directly from God (and are erroneously termed “rhema”). We’re told that the new revelations abrogate what is

written in His Word. Furthermore, Christ’s return is being held up by the reluctance of the body of Christ to accept new revelation. Those who institute such teachings are presented as a new class of prophets who cannot be judged but must be obeyed. That is what the New Apostolic Reformation is all about!

Closely related in belief are several other groups. Christian Reconstructionism is a development within Calvinism that is associated with amillennial eschatology, i.e., we are now in the Millennium and adhere to replacement theology (the church has replaced Israel), and John Calvin’s attempt to bring God’s Kingdom to earth in his absolute rule over Geneva. The same was attempted in the US by the Calvinist-influenced Coalition on Revival in the 1990s. That was primarily a Christian political movement that involved the Religious Right and the Moral Majority. Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*, who was President Obama’s spiritual advisor, is a chief advocate of Christian socialism, and his influence continues to grow, especially among those who are zealous for the worldwide establishment of social justice under Christian rule. The claimed focus of the Christian Left, aka Progressive Christianity, is upon cleaning up the earth ecologically, politically, economically, sociologically—leading to Christian dominionism. They imagine that the main function of the church is to restore the Edenic state—hardly helpful, since Eden is where sin began!

Many groups are beginning to work together who disagree on some points but join with Gaia (Mother Earth)-worshiping New Agers in their desire to clean up our *terra firma* and establish the Kingdom. We can expect such cooperative efforts to grow, even involving Christian leaders who are not aware of what they are actually promoting. The Coalition on Revival (COR), for example, included such influential evangelicals as Joseph Aldrich, Pat Robertson, Bill Bright, Jerry Falwell, Armin Gesswein, Josh McDowell and J. I. Packer, who were probably clueless regarding the actual intention of the leaders of COR.

As stated at the beginning of this article, one’s unwitting participation in literally building the Kingdom of God *before* the Second Coming of the King himself, Jesus Christ, is in fact contributing to the establishment of the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist. That will be Satan’s next-to-last stand as he gains possession of “the man of sin, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians) and empowers him to rule the world (albeit briefly), as he, the chief of the devils, seeks universal worship, his ultimate goal for

himself.

What has been presented above is only a partial review of the last fifty years of Satan's efforts to build his demonic kingdom. An earlier insight is given in a book we reprinted titled *Christianity and Antichristianity in Their Final Conflict* by Samuel J. Andrews. Although it was originally written 120 years ago, its content reveals much of the Adversary's contemporary deceptions! Andrews simply looked to what the Bible declares will take place pertaining to false doctrine, false prophecies, false Christs, and ungodly beliefs and practices, and he compared those things with what was taking place in his day. Interestingly, the book reads as though it were written today!

I (T. A.) have a heart for young Christians. My great joy (3 John 1:4) is when I can see them "walk[ing] in truth." My heartache comes about when I see them demonstrating much zeal to serve the Lord, but it is fostered by biblical ignorance and false teaching. A few years ago I visited Bethel Church in Redding, California. The pastor is Bill Johnson. The church has a school (The School of Supernatural Ministry) accommodating 3,000 students from all around the world. Prior to the service I interviewed a few of the third-year students. I then attended the church service there, and following that I was joined at a restaurant by one of the students I had interviewed earlier. He asked me what I thought of the service, which was preached by Johnson's assistant.

I told him I was puzzled by a couple of the major points the preacher had made: 1) that worldwide revival is just ahead, and 2) that God is raising up Christians to transform and rule on the earth before Jesus can return and take control. The young man, an Australian, was surprised that I was perplexed by those points. He obviously was not, since they were key teachings of his education at The School of Supernatural Ministry.

As we talked, I asked him what his understanding was regarding biblical eschatology. He wasn't familiar with the term, so I told him it had to do with the events that would take place just prior to and after the Second Coming of Jesus. I then asked him where the events, as noted by the Bethel preacher, fit in with the chronology the Bible plainly declares, such as the Apostasy, the Rapture, the Great Tribulation, and much of the Book of Revelation. He had no answer. *Biblical* eschatology is neither taught at Bethel church nor in its school because it doesn't square with Bill

Johnson's Kingdom Dominion agenda.

Previous *TBC* newsletters of late, as well as two of my messages at The Berean Call 2019 Conference (<https://bit.ly/2xmrWZ7> and <https://bit.ly/2QzLbW7>), addressed the gathering of 40-50 thousand young Christians at the Camping World Stadium in Orlando, Florida, in 2019. The 12-hour event was titled *The Send*. The stated objective was to motivate the thousands of young people in attendance to take the gospel to their neighborhoods, high schools, universities, communities, countries, and then to the nations abroad. However—few, if any—of the attendees were aware of *The Send's* ultimate objective: Kingdom Dominionism.

The leaders of *The Send* gathering were all advocates of the Kingdom-Dominion points made by the Bethel Church preacher. The young speakers represented Bethel, YWAM, The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), and other like-minded and very influential principals. The elder leaders who were addressing the very enthusiastic, even bewitched, crowd were Benny Hinn, Bill Johnson, Loren Cunningham, Lou Engel, Rodney Howard-Browne, and Francis Chan. All are a part of, or at least allies of, the unbiblical Word/Faith, Positive Confession, and Healing-and-Prosperity Movements.

Jesus characterized the time of His return by telling His disciples, "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). In Luke 18:8, He said, "...when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" This prophesied apostasy and increasing deception will be further extended because, "...the time will come when they [professing and many true Christians] will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The Apostle Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus that those who would subvert their fellowship would come from within their ranks: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that we are not to be ignorant of Satan's devices lest he "should get an advantage of us" (2 Corinthians 2:11). One of his "devices" is to introduce "perverse things [that] draw away disciples after" those promoting his heresies. Some establish themselves as a trendy development such as the Emerging Church Movement (ECM), which gained numerous adherents, especially among young adults. The ECM featured the rituals, liturgy, and sacramentals of the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and High Episcopal Churches. A few critics declared it to be a short-lived fad and that we were "not to worry." What they failed to recognize is that many of Satan's movements are often akin to a large wave that is impressive as it crests, but then it crashes, spreading its debris (i.e., heresies) all across the beach, where aspects of its false doctrines remain, only to be picked up by others. But it doesn't stop there. Waves come in sets. They withdraw and come again. It may take awhile, and they may be reshaped as they form, yet they very likely will return, just as we've seen the resurfacing of the Kingdom Dominion and the Word/Faith/Healing and Prosperity heresies.

What then would the Lord have us to do as we face the growing apostasy? We should certainly grow in discernment through the daily habit of studying His Word, undergirding that study by praying without ceasing, and fellowship with like-minded believers. Additionally, Jesus wants us to be *watchmen*. Dozens of verses exhort us to *watch*. Some of those have to do with the expectation of our "blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Others urge us to be watchful regarding the evil that is here or is soon coming upon us. But it isn't only for us personally; it's for all those who have been ensnared or are ripe for Satan's deceptions. Just as the prophet Ezekiel (chapters 3 and 33) was given the responsibility to be a watchman over Israel, we too are accountable to the Lord to inform our brothers and sisters in Christ regarding the evils of the apostasy.

We are not only charged to do so, the Word of God tells us *how* to go about it. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: A theologian on the radio said that in 1 Corinthians 6:19, when Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit being *in us*, he is using a figure of speech and that the Holy Spirit is not *spatially* present within the believer...that the indwelling is best described as a relationship...as one would say, “My beloved ones will always be in my heart.” I have always believed that the Holy Spirit, after the new birth, literally abides within the believer *in the same way* that my soul and/or spirit lives “spatially” within my body. The use of the word “spatial” is awkward, at best, when attempting to describe the “location” of a spirit being. But is it not correct to say that a human spirit dwells spatially *in a body*? I understand that God the Holy Spirit is omnipresent and not limited by time and space, but does He not *literally* dwell within each believer?

RESPONSE: We don’t understand how the human soul and spirit live within the body, but they do. Paul describes death as the departure of the soul and spirit from the body to be with Christ in heaven: “... absent from the body...present with the LORD” (2 Cor 5:8). Paul desired to “depart, and to be with Christ...” (Phil 1:23). He contrasted that with abiding “in the flesh” (v. 24), again showing that the soul and spirit literally dwell within the body while it is alive and leave it upon death. We can’t pinpoint a “location” of the soul and spirit within the body, but the fact that the souls and spirits of the redeemed who have died are literally with Christ in heaven is further indicated by the statement that they come with Christ to be reunited with their bodies at the resurrection and the Rapture (1 Thes 4:14). We have biblical and logical reason to believe that the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit within the believer, which brings life to spirit, soul, and body, is no less *in each person’s body* than is the human soul and spirit.

Our bodies are called “the temple of God” (1 Cor 3:16-17); the “body is the temple of the Holy Ghost” (6:19). Paul is specific regarding the body: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ [bodily] from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom 8:11). That there is something more than a mere relationship, such as “My beloved ones will always be in my heart,” is quite evident. The believer does indeed have such a relationship, but it is voluntary and by faith, as when Paul

prays for the Ephesians, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17). That also would be true of the analogy Christ makes of the believer’s relationship to Him as that of a branch in a vine (Jn 15:1-10) drawing its life and sustenance for victorious living from Christ. This is a faith relationship, and the cutting off of the branches that don’t bear fruit and throwing them into the fire (v. 6) is due to the failure to live by faith a fruitful life; it does not mean that salvation has been lost.

It is clear that there is an indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit; however, that is neither established nor maintained by faith. Never are we told that to be saved we must believe that Christ and the Holy Spirit come to live within us. That we are born of the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:13, 3:3-8; 1 Jn 3:9, etc.), baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13), sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13), and indwelt by the Holy Spirit is not ours by faith. It is a work God does in all who believe the gospel and who are born again. Indeed, we are told that this indwelling (“the Spirit of God dwell *in you*...if Christ be *in you*”—Rom 8:9-11) is proof of our salvation and the assurance that we will be raised from the dead. Again, “Jesus Christ is *in you*, except ye be reprobates” (2 Cor 13:5).

Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit “dwelleth with you, and shall be *in you*” (Jn 14:17). Surely this difference between being *with* and *in* that occurred at Pentecost is more than a deepening *fellowship*. It cannot relate to the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, which is always true. Jesus promised that those who believed in Him would have flowing out from within themselves “rivers of living water” (Jn 7:38). John explains, “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (v. 39). This promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit was so different from the relationship that the Holy Spirit had to the great prophets of the Old Testament that, by comparison, the Holy Spirit had not yet even been given! This indwelling is referred to as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” God has created a permanent indwelling of the Spirit of Christ and of the Holy Spirit within believers’ bodies—and by faith He lives in our hearts.

QUESTION: A popular Bible teacher has taught that Jesus is not our Creator, that He was only God temporarily, that He is called the Son of God because God the Father sired Him through Mary, and that He is now an exalted man—and only a

man—in heaven. Because this teacher is so highly regarded, his teachings have been widely accepted.

Response: It is tragic that so many Christians follow men rather than God in His Word. To any student of the Bible, such ideas would immediately be seen as the most obvious heresy. But because of their high regard for the teacher, those influenced by him surrender their own understanding of clear biblical teaching in deference to the leader whom they admire. That is how cults are formed.

The Bible clearly says that Mary, while still a virgin, “was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Mt 1:18), not “of the Father.” The Holy Spirit is not called the Father of Jesus, yet it was through His agency that a child was formed in Mary’s womb. Obviously the terms “Father” and “Son of God” contain no connotation of the Father “siring” Jesus. God is said to have a Son in the Old Testament before Jesus was born in Bethlehem: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry...” (Ps 2:12); “[W]ho hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name...?” (Prv 30:4).

That God involves a plurality of persons is taught throughout the Old Testament as well as in the New. The Hebrew word *elohim*, which is used for “God” about 2,500 times in the Old Testament, is a plural form indicating a number more than two.

God says, “I change not” (Mal 3:6). Thus God the Son, who took a human body in becoming man through the virgin birth, must always continue to be God. That Jesus was God, living as a man in this world, is clear. In the Old Testament, the God of Israel repeatedly declares that He is the “only Savior” (Ps 106:21; Is 43:11, 45:22, 49:26, etc.); whereas the New Testament makes it equally clear that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and He is frequently called “God our Savior” (1 Tm 1:1, Ti 1:4, 2:13, etc.). God the Father says to Christ after His incarnation (“when he bringeth the firstborn into the world”), “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever...” (Heb 1:8). And one of the characteristics of God is changelessness: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:8).

That Christ is our Creator must be true because He is God. The Bible states it clearly: “All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made” (Jn 1:3). If man was created (which he was), then he was created by Christ. And inasmuch as Christ made everything that was made, He himself must be a *non-created* being, and by this argument also, He is God.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Is the God of the Old Testament Unchristian?

Question: I read recently a reprint from an old book that gave a story that I think ought to shatter the “faith” of any Christian: “A mother was talking to her little child of the murder of the Amalekites. She explained that in those days enemies were murdered, but revelation was progressive, and Jesus told us that we are to love our enemies and do good to them that spitefully use us. Said the little girl, ‘Now I understand: that day was before God became a Christian!’” It seems to me that the Bible presents two Gods: the vengeful, warring God of the Old Testament, and the compassionate, forgiving and loving heavenly Father of the New, who was introduced by Christ. How can you reconcile two “Gods”?

Response: Again we have an old objection that is based upon a serious misunderstanding of the Bible. The God of the Old Testament is every bit as merciful as the God of the New Testament. Obviously, they are one and the same. The Old Testament prophets made it clear that God took no pleasure in meting out judgment upon sinners. The psalms are filled with praise to God for His mercy, kindness, grace, and love. In every one of the 26 verses of Psalm 136 it is said of God that “his mercy endureth forever.” Consider these further few examples of many more that could be given:

I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. (Psalm:13:5)

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm:23:6)

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies (Psalm:25:10).

I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever (Psalm:52:8).

Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.... Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious, longsuffering and plenteous in mercy and truth (Psalm:86:5,15).

The Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting,

and his truth endureth to all generations (Psalm:100:5).

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy (Psalm:103:8).

It is instructive to go to Mount Sinai, where God revealed Himself to His people Israel and intimately to Moses. It was there that God spoke the law to His people from the midst of fire and smoke on top of the mount that quaked at His presence. It was a terrifying scene where God also executed severe punishment at the base of the mount upon those who turned to idolatry and immorality even while Moses was on Sinai speaking with Him.

Yet in the midst of this frightening revelation of His power and majesty and justice, God revealed Himself as merciful and longsuffering.

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Does God Really Care?

T. A. McMahon

SOME BELIEVE THAT...and some don't. Those who don't believe that God cares for them usually look at their problematic circumstances as proof that God couldn't care less about what they are going through. It's interesting that for many the thought of God is only brought to mind when their situation is bad news. He's at fault. He could have done something about it, but He didn't. He obviously didn't care enough to get involved.

For those who think that way, it's a blame game...and rarely against themselves. When things are going well, God isn't even considered, let alone given credit or thanks. Part of the problem is that such people know nothing about God. Their ideas about Him are mostly culled from hearsay—the opinions of others, which are typically false and too often scornful. They themselves wouldn't stand for that treatment if it were leveled at someone they know well and truly care about.

For those who do believe that God cares for them, what makes them think so? Two reasons come to mind: 1) He says so over and over again throughout the Bible, which is His direct and objective communication to humanity. In other words, what is written in the Scriptures are *His words*. Other than men writing His words down, they had no personal input. First Thessalonians 2:13 tells us, "...when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." 2) They have personally experienced His involvement in their lives as He demonstrates His concern by means of His loving kindnesses and tender mercies toward them. They truly believe that God cares for them. But that belief didn't start there. It began when they committed their lives to Jesus Christ, trusting that He was the only one who could save them from eternal separation from God. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the [reconciliation]" (Romans 5:10-11), which He did

by paying the full penalty for their sins in order to satisfy God's righteous *justice*. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Thus began their born-again, personal relationship with the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father sent the Son (John 3:16; 8:18) to save humanity (Matthew 18:11), and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who proceeded from the Father (John 15:26).

Biblical Christianity is like no other spiritual belief system. No others involve a personal, even intimate, relationship with the God who created all things. None have a God who sacrificed Himself for the sake of His created beings. None have a God who is love personified. Those things and a great deal more of what the Scriptures declare are the basis for believing the words of Jesus in John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Biblical Christians believe God's Word is truth and the truth is: He cares for us.

PSALM 18:2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler [shield], and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

PSALM 25:4-5 Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

PSALM 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

PSALM 31:3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

PSALM 32:8-9 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

PSALM 34:22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

PSALM 37:3-5 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

PSALM 37:7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass.

PSALM 37:23-24 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with his hand.

PSALM 37:39-40 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.

PSALM 56:3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.

PSALM 64:10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in Him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

PSALM 73:22-24 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

PSALM 73:28 But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the LORD GOD, that I may declare all Thy works.

PSALM 91:2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.

PSALM 91:5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day;

PSALM 94:19 In the multitude of my thoughts [anxieties] within me thy comforts delight my soul.

PSALM 107:27-30 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven.

PSALM 112:7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

PSALM 118:8-9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

PSALM 119:133 Order [direct] my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

PSALM 125:1 They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

PSALM 127:1 Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.

PSALM 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

PSALM 141:8 But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.

PSALM 143:10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

PSALM 145:17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

PSALM 146:3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

PSALM 147:10-11 He [God] delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.

PROVERBS 3:5-8 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

PROVERBS 3:25 Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

PROVERBS 14:15 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

PROVERBS 15:22 Without [godly] counsel purposes are disappointed [go astray]: but in the multitude of [godly] counsellors they are established.

PROVERBS 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

PROVERBS 20:24 Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

PROVERBS 21:31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

PROVERBS 28:25-26 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth

his trust in the LORD shall [prosper] be made fat. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

PROVERBS 29:25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

PROVERBS 30:5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

ISAIAH 12:2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

ISAIAH 26:4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

ISAIAH 31:1 Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

ISAIAH 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

ISAIAH 44:8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

ISAIAH 51:7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

JEREMIAH 1:8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

JEREMIAH 46:27 But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid.

In the New Testament we have verse after verse of God not only declaring His love for all people, but in case after case we find Him guiding the lives of believers by His Holy Spirit, protecting them, and delivering them from all kinds of tribulations.

LUKE 1:78-79 Through the tender mercy

of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

JOHN 10:2-4 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

JOHN 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me [i.e., Jesus].

JOHN 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

ROMANS 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:...

ROMANS 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

ROMANS 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

HEBREWS 13:5 Let your conversation [conduct] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

1 PETER 3:14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

1 PETER 5:7 Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you.

God indeed demonstrates His care for those who put their faith in Him and in His Word: "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me," that is, has given me life. (Psalms 119:50)

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Is it not true that there were already many separate antichrists in the time of John? Why, then, do you (and so many others!) continue to claim that “the antichrist” is yet to come?

RESPONSE: We appreciate what you had to say about there already being, in John’s day, many antichrists. That does not do away with the fact, however, that the Antichrist (note the uppercase spelling) is yet to come. Surely the man of sin, or the wicked one of 2 Thessalonians 2, is yet to come, for of him it says, “Whom the Lord will destroy with the brightness of His coming... (v.8).” This is a definite person who obviously has not yet come and who must be upon earth for the Second Coming to take place, because one purpose of Christ’s return to this earth is to destroy this man, whom I believe to be the Antichrist, for whom all the previous antichrists have been preparing the way.

QUESTION: Several Christian leaders have been quoted as justifying from Scripture the murder of abortionists. They claim that taking a life in order to save innocent lives is a biblical principle. What do you think?

RESPONSE: Bible truth is not understood by isolating one verse but by taking the Bible as a whole. For example, although the Bible commands us not to “bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16; Matthew 19:18, etc.), Rahab the harlot was commended for telling a lie that saved the lives of the two spies that Joshua had sent (Joshua 2:4-6). God blessed her for her faith in Him (Joshua 6:17). This is not “situational ethics” but common sense and faithfulness on the side of righteousness, established as a biblical principle.

Likewise, the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13), does not prohibit all taking of life. Christ explained that it means “thou shalt do no murder” (Matthew 19:18). The entire Old Testament indicates that taking up arms in self-defense or to possess the promised land and to protect the people of God does not violate the commandment not to kill because to do so is not murder.

As for today, Romans 13:1-4 reminds us that civil rulers, in enforcing upon their citizens God’s moral laws (which are written in every conscience—Romans

2:14-15) are authorized of God to use the sword. Surely a policeman who is forced to shoot someone in order to save the lives of hostages being threatened with death is acting within the scriptures. Likewise, a citizen could do the same as a *de facto* agent of the authorities acting in the interests of civil order and safety. Then what about abortion foes killing a doctor to prevent him from murdering babies in the womb? The leaders of the pro-life movement *do not* believe such killings are justified by Scripture—and they are correct. There are a number of reasons why such killings are murders and are thus prohibited by Scripture.

The obvious primary reason is that taking an abortionist’s life does not save any lives. Abortion, though wrong, is protected by civil law, and there are always more doctors who will carry on this “legal procedure” in the place of those removed. It is therefore a senseless killing, and thus murder, to shoot an abortionist.

If an abortionist (or group of them) were aborting babies against the will of the pregnant mothers and the only way to stop the slaughter was to forcibly prevent him (or them), that action would be justified. Such, however, is not the case. The primary guilt for abortion does not lie with the doctors performing the operation but with the pregnant women demanding the murders in their wombs. The major accessory to the crime is the government that legalizes these murders. Obviously, abortion cannot be stopped by violent means. Doctors are replaceable, and violence against the patient would kill the baby. Biblically, the only viable option is to preach against abortion, provide public information and warnings concerning the fact that abortion of one’s baby is murder and will be judged by God as such, and to offer biblical counsel and alternatives to pregnant women.

QUESTION: You quoted an excerpt from Sir Robert Anderson’s book, *The Bible or the Church*, in which he says, “Christianity makes salvation a... matter...of personal submission to the LORD Jesus Christ.” Is that salvation? Did Paul say to the Philippian jailer, “Submit your life to the LORDship of Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved?” Does it make sense to imply that in order to become a spiritual baby, you must demonstrate a higher level of maturity/dedication/submission than is demonstrated by many who by

reason of time in the faith “ought to be teachers” but who, in reality, due to their spiritual negligence are still such as “have need of milk”?

RESPONSE: First of all, the way you cut up Anderson’s statement changes the meaning. Here is more of the quote we presented: “The Reformation was...a revolt...[against] ecclesiastical supremacy...the bondage from which those brave and noble men delivered us... Christianity makes salvation a personal matter between the sinner and God. It is not a question of subjection to ordinances of religion but of personal submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.... But...what men crave is...a priest.... Instead of Calvary, we have the ‘Eucharistic sacrifice’ of the mass....”

Clearly Anderson is not discussing how “to become a spiritual baby,” as you suggest. Much less is he offering works to obtain salvation, as you imply. The “it” he refers to is not “salvation” but “Christianity”; not becoming a Christian, but living the Christian life after one is saved. And that involves submission to the Lord, not to a church.

Specifically, Anderson is combating Roman Catholicism’s “ecclesiastical supremacy,” which subjects members to decrees and rituals of men instead of to the Lord. He is stating that salvation, whether in its inception or in the “work” of living it out (Philippians 2:12), is between the individual and Christ and not in obedience to the rituals and regulations of the Church of Rome. We are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, not of any ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Furthermore, one cannot be a Christian without acknowledging that Jesus Christ is God the Lord: “For if ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Paul told the Philippian jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). He wrote to those in Rome, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus... whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:9-13).

If, then, we come to Him as Lord when we are saved, thereafter we follow Him as Lord. Christ asked this solemn question: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). As His followers we obey our Lord—not in order to be saved but out of love for the One who saved us: “If a man love me, he will keep my words...” (John 14:23).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Why Doesn't God Simply Abolish Sickness and Death?

Question: Even apart from skepticism as to whether miracles occur, I have problems with the healings that Christ supposedly effected while upon earth. Some accounts seem so straightforward, while others raise questions. For example, the “healing” didn’t seem to work for one man and had to be done again (Mark 8:22:25). That hardly sounds as though Christ were God in the flesh. Furthermore, if He could really heal, why didn’t He heal everyone? Better still, if God really loves all mankind, why not do away with sickness and suffering completely?

Response: You refer to the man who, after Jesus touched his eyes and asked him what he saw, replied, “I see men as trees walking.” Jesus then touched him again, “and he saw every man clearly” (Mark 8:22-25). The expression “men as trees walking” seems to reveal the reason for a second touch: The blind man’s sight was restored, but he didn’t understand what he saw. Having been blind from birth, he had never seen either a man or a tree and was therefore confused. At the second touch Christ apparently healed his mind so that he understood what he saw. Whatever the explanation, this incident could hardly cast doubt upon Christ’s power to heal, in light of the thousands of other cases where a touch or word was sufficient not only to heal but to raise the dead.

As for why Christ has not done away with sickness entirely, the answer is quite clear both logically and biblically. There are two basic reasons. First of all, sickness, suffering, and death are the result of sin. As long as mankind continues to live in sinful rebellion against God, sickness will prevail. Those whom Christ healed became ill again, and so it would be today.

Furthermore, if God acted so unwisely as to continually heal sinners, He would have removed all incentive for them to repent. Indeed, He would seem to be rewarding their wickedness. Would you have wanted God to keep Hitler alive, immune from judgment, so he could continue his evil? I think not. Then where are we to draw the line between those whom God would always heal and those whom He would not heal? There is no such line, for,

as the Bible says and we all know, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Moreover, those whom Christ raised from the dead, such as Lazarus, died again. God has decreed in His righteousness that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and so long as sin continues on this earth people will continue to die. For God to prevent death would be to unrighteously remove the penalty demanded by His justice. Moreover, it would perpetuate mankind’s existence in these corruptible bodies and in this evil world. God has something far better in mind: the resurrection of the body into immortality and eternal bliss in a new universe that He will create where sin will never enter.

Only those who have by faith in Christ become a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17) will be allowed to dwell eternally in that

new universe of bliss. God’s eternal salvation is offered and available to all. To receive it is a choice that each person must make.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

To create, God had but to speak, and it was done. But to redeem, He had to bleed. And He did so in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He sent to take the place of death upon the cross which our sin had so richly deserved.

Redemption, however, was no last-minute thought, brought into being to meet an unexpected emergency. No sooner had sin entered the garden than God spoke of One who was to come and who was to bruise the serpent’s (that is, Satan’s) head, His own heel being bruised in the process (Genesis 3:15), and to restore all the damage which sin and Satan had done.

God thereby revealed that the sad turn of events had not taken Him by surprise, but that there was One in reserve to meet this very situation. Scripture calls Him “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), because with God the remedy antedated the disease. And all this was done with the one purpose of bringing us fallen men with our sinful, proud, unbroken natures back to that relationship with God of submissiveness and God-centeredness that was lost in the Fall—that position where once more He can delight in us and we in Him.

—ROY HESSION

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Sorcery: Ushering in a “Blissful” Christless Eternity

T. A. McMahon

IN 2015 I WROTE about an article from the *New Yorker* magazine titled “The Trip Treatment,” subheading: “Research into psychedelics, shut down for decades, is now yielding exciting results.”

What drew my attention to the *New Yorker* article was not so much my interest in the drug scene of 2015 but rather how it relates to what the Bible has to say about the increasing use of drugs in the End Times. It’s a significant part of the prophetic picture prior to the return of Jesus. What follows is a recap of my TBC article of 2015 with an update of what’s happening in 2020.

The baby boomers (those born during the rising birth rate just following WWII) introduced the subculture of the hippies, a youth movement that began in the US and rejected the establishment with its traditional social customs. They protested war and violence and instead promoted peace and love. Much of the movement was fueled by mind-altering drugs that were greatly encouraged by influential men, such as Harvard professor Timothy Leary (“Turn on, tune in, drop out.”), a major advocate of LSD. The use of psychedelics grew exponentially during the 1960s. Drug companies and psychiatric researchers tested them on “alcoholics, people struggling with obsessive-compulsive disorder, depressives, autistic children, schizophrenics, terminal cancer patients, and convicts, as well as on perfectly healthy artists and scientists (to study creativity), and divinity students (to study spirituality).” The 1970 Controlled Substances Act, as noted, put the experimentation and use of LSD and other psychedelics practically out of business—but only for a time.

Today, those of the psychedelics-prone hippie generation are now part of the establishment. They may have “turned on” and “tuned in,” but many did not “drop out.” In fact, some are running our largest and most prestigious institutions, from medical institutions to research organizations to universities. Michael Pollan, author of the *New Yorker* magazine article mentioned above, documents the surprising return of medical experiments featuring hallucinogenics. Psilocybin, a.k.a. the sacred or magic mushroom, is the lead experimental drug. That’s primarily because it doesn’t carry some of the “political and cultural baggage” of LSD, which is “stronger and longer-lasting in its effects and is considered

more likely to produce adverse reactions.” The research is taking place in respected institutions such as Johns Hopkins Medical facilities, UCLA Medical Center (Harbor), New York University, the University of New Mexico, London’s Imperial College, the University of Zurich, and many other universities. Pollan notes that “Researchers are using or planning to use psilocybin not only to treat anxiety, addiction (to smoking and alcohol), and depression but also to study the neurobiology of mystical experience, which the drug, at high doses, can reliably occasion.”

Pollan’s article cites the case of a man whose cancer had spread throughout his body and was given no hope of recovery by his doctors. Facing death drove him to seek options to relieve his extreme anxiety. Quoting researchers, Pollan writes, “Cancer patients receiving just a single dose of psilocybin experienced immediate and dramatic reductions in anxiety and depression, improvements that were sustained for at least six months. . . . People who had been palpably scared of death—they lost their fear.” Novelist and drug proponent Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) is often quoted for support regarding using psychedelics with terminal patients “in the hope that it would make dying a more spiritual, less strictly physiological process.” Huxley, a humanist and anti-Christian, was injected with LSD at his deathbed. His “spiritual” process (read *hallucination*) may have given him temporal relief, but his ecstasy, according to the Scriptures, eased him into an eternal separation from his Creator in a place where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth in darkness forever (Matthew 22:13). The Word of God would have us think about death and what follows as *life’s most critical consideration*.

Huxley’s so-called spiritual process has been an important subject of many of the researchers. Pollan writes, “Perhaps the most influential and rigorous of these early studies was the Good Friday experiment, conducted in 1962 by Walter Pahnke, a psychiatrist and minister working on a Ph.D. dissertation under [Timothy] Leary at Harvard. In a double-blind experiment, twenty divinity students received a capsule of white powder right before a Good Friday service at Marsh Chapel, on the Boston University campus; ten contained psilocybin, ten an active placebo (nicotinic acid). Eight of the ten students receiving psilocybin reported a mystical experience, while only one in the control group experienced a feeling of ‘sacredness’ and a ‘sense of peace.’ [T]hose on the placebo sat sedately in their pews while the others lay down or wandered around the chapel, mut-

tering things like ‘God is everywhere’ and ‘Oh, the glory!’” Further evaluation of the experiment noted that some of the subjects had to be given antipsychotic drugs in order to counter the side effects of psilocybin. For some of the early researchers “it was difficult not to conclude that they were suddenly in possession of news with the power to change the world—a psychedelic gospel.”

What then of this “gospel” from a biblical perspective? It contributes to a fulfillment of what the Scriptures indicate will be an end-times deception. It is referred to as *sorcery*. The term in Revelation 9:21 and 18:23 in the Greek is *pharmakeia*, which *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* defines as “the use or the administering of drugs.” Galatians 5:20 translates the term *pharmakeia* (from which we get our word pharmacy) as *witchcraft*. It should be apparent from those scriptures that drugs will play a major part in the “strong delusion” of the Last Days (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Revelation 18:23 declares that “thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” Furthermore, the commitment to the use of drugs will be so strong that even after God pours out His wrath upon the earth during the Great Tribulation none will repent of their “sorceries” (Revelation 9:21).

Satan’s devices often come progressively like ocean waves that arrive in sets. When a wave crests and crashes on a beach, it deposits its debris and then retreats, followed by another set. This analogy fits the use of hallucinogenic drugs by the baby-boomer generation followed by a new drug wave, which is taking place today. This is not intended to condemn the use of all drugs, some of which, notwithstanding their abuses, have been helpful to mankind. Hallucinogenic drugs, however, have a long history in many cultures as key ingredients in religious rituals. The drug-induced altered state of consciousness transcends euphoric experiences and becomes a means of contacting spirit entities. That has been the mainstay of shamanism throughout the world by people groups and cultures that have had no contact with one another. The shaman or witch doctor, by ingesting or inhaling a hallucinogenic substance, is enabled to commune with the spirit world. He is thus “equipped” to mediate between the spirit beings and his tribe or village. The Bible censures the practice as a form of divination that results in *communication with demons* (which explains the uniformity of shamanism throughout the world).

Although there is a great deal of research to document the harmful effects of psychedelic drugs, many participants in the psy-

chedelic experiments are convinced of the value. Pollan reports that support for the use of hallucinogenics is gaining ground. The prestigious *Psychopharmacology* journal published a supportive landmark article titled "Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical-Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance." One might judiciously wonder exactly what part of the pharmacologist's education prepared him or her to address the mystical and spiritual realm.

There is a critical question that must be answered by everyone who faces death, because our eternal destiny depends upon it. Scripture is unambiguous: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). It is an extraordinarily deceptive scheme of the Adversary to deny a dying person what may be the final opportunity for salvation by wrapping one's last days of physical life in a cloak of psychedelic bliss. Heartbreakingly, this drug wave will certainly increase in the days ahead, as Pollan points out: "Many of the researchers and therapists I interviewed are confident that psychedelic therapy will eventually become routine. Katherine MacLean hopes someday to establish a 'psychedelic hospice,' a retreat center where the dying and their loved ones can use psychedelics to help them all let go." The former hippies will likely help with its formation: "Many of the people in charge of our institutions today have personal experience with psychedelics and so feel less threatened by them."

Fifty years of the ever-increasing influence of Eastern mysticism, however, through its homogenized and westernized form known as the New Age Movement, has corroded away the last chains of opposition. The gurus rushed to the West, trumpeted in by the Beatles under the guidance of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Eastern meditation took its practitioners to a higher level of altered states of consciousness than the banned hallucinogenic drugs.

Maharishi's Spiritual Regeneration Movement, which was barred from US schools because of its blatant teaching of Hinduism and Eastern mysticism, has come back even stronger as the fraudulent *science* of Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Popular TV medical doctor and Sufi Muslim, Dr. Oz is the national spokesperson for Transcendental Meditation's mystical mind-altering Hindu practice. Yoga, which is the heart of Hinduism, rivals Starbucks in popularity and can be found everywhere throughout the country, including in Christian churches. Its meditation is a more direct vehicle to a mystical altered state of consciousness. The legal use of marijuana (the psychedelic drug cannabis) began under the

belief (some would say "ploy") that it has significant value for *medicinal* purposes. It has recently been ushered into the realm of a *recreational* substance in a few states. It's hardly a wild guess that the rest of the country will follow.

The astounding and pervasive use of drugs (which, again, the Bible terms *sorcery*) in our day is one more proof of the prophetic accuracy of Scripture. Certainly the world is falling prey to the deceptive scheme instigated by the father of lies, Satan himself, and, tragically, so are many who profess to follow Christ. The Israelites heard from the Prophet Jeremiah God's words of correction and His pleading with them to return to Him, yet they refused to repent of their spiritual adulteries (6:16). Christendom today is on that same path.

That was 2015. The following quotations (some followed by my comment in *italics*) are from an article published in 2019 in *Psychology Today* titled "Ten Reasons Psychotherapists Should Learn about Psychedelics: Here's how therapists can get involved in this groundbreaking field right now." The article [below] reflects the recent views of psychedelic therapy taking place today as presented by the many professional therapists who have contributed to the magazine (which declares them to be "balanced" views).

"After a long hiatus, research in the field of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy is picking up speed again and new developments indicate the immense potential for a revolution in mental health care. The implications are enormous.... Psychedelics are poised to be the next wave of empirically supported treatments for addiction, trauma, and depression. Mental health care providers should be able to provide accurate, clear information, establishing ourselves as authorities and experts on the topic."

Psychotherapy is not science but rather the subjective treatment (through talk therapy) of mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. Psychedelic therapy is focused mainly on treating depression and suicide.

"Spiritual use of psychedelics is consistent with research studies that have found that psychedelics can occasion mystical experiences and that people often rate psychedelic experiences as one of their top five most spiritually significant experiences. In addition, the use of psychedelics for spiritual goals is also consistent with the indigenous use of psychedelics for at least 5,000 years, typically for the purpose of accessing the spirit world and healing."

What valuable insights can psychedelic therapy provide regarding the subjective "spiritual goals" and "accessing the spirit

world?"

"Mental health care providers should know the basics of assessment, red flags, and methods for alleviating excess anxiety, distress, and stigma around such experiences."

"Alleviating excess anxiety and distress" centers mainly on removing the fear of death related to terminal diseases. The FDA has designated psilocybin recently for the treatment of such major depression disorders.

"Therapist competencies include empathetic abiding presence; trust enhancement; spiritual intelligence; knowledge of the physical and psychological effects of psychedelics; therapist self-awareness and ethical integrity; and proficiency in complementary techniques."

What courses in the training of a psychotherapist enhance his or her "spiritual intelligence"? Or what "complementary techniques" raise them to a "proficiency" level?

Psychology Today continues: "Fortunately, there are a wide variety of non-drug methods including meditative and yogic practices, holotropic breathwork, sensory deprivation, fasting, hypnosis, relaxation, and rhythm-induced trances. Non-psychedelic approaches can also be helpful when a person wants to experiment with non-ordinary states of consciousness without taking a drug or as an intermediate safer way to experience altered states of consciousness."

Psychedelic therapy is drug therapy that actually treats sorcery through the use of sorcery. Although it's being advocated by the medical and academic establishment, it's only part of the world of sorcery that produces altered states of consciousness. "Consequently, it's far less than 'fortunate' that 'non-drug methods' including meditative and yogic practices, holotropic breathwork, sensory deprivation, fasting, hypnosis, relaxation, and rhythm-induced trances" can not only produce the same, but have a greater history of physical and spiritual destruction. (See America, the Sorcerer's New Apprentice)

Dave Hunt and I wrote *America, the Sorcerer's New Apprentice* for the purpose of informing biblical Christians about the New Age Movement so that they could witness to their unsaved friends and relatives who were attracted to Eastern Mysticism through New Age teachings and practices. Times have changed. Today, the world and much of Christendom are involved in some form of sorcery, as God's Word has prophesied. We cannot turn this collective inevitability around. Nevertheless, by God's grace, we can prayerfully rescue individuals from this strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11). **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: There seems to be a fad that deals with worship of angels. Books have been written on the topic and people seem to be fascinated by the subject. Some profess that they can tell us how to have a guardian angel, how to see and speak with angels, and even how to command angels to help or do one's bidding. Could you address this topic?

RESPONSE: Although the fad has caught on in both the world and the church at large, various leaders in the charismatic and positive-confession movements have been teaching how to command angels to do one's bidding for many years. Angels are mentioned nearly 300 times in the Bible, but never in the way they are promoted in these false teachings.

In every instance when we are given insight into the work of angels, it is very clear that they are exclusively under God's command and are not subject to man's direction, desires, or prayers. The Bible gives numerous examples of angels intervening in human affairs. However, it is always because God has sent them to accomplish a specific task or purpose. *Not once* in the Bible is there any example of a man or woman praying to or calling upon for help, much less commanding, an angel. Nor is there even one example of anyone praying to God to send him an angel for assistance.

The expression "the angel of the LORD" is found nearly 70 times and has been the object of considerable speculation and disagreement. Some believe that this refers to Christ in pre-incarnation appearances, because at times the "angel of the LORD" speaks as though he were God himself (Judges 2:1; 12:17-18; Zechariah 12:8, etc.). However, that belief hardly fits with the fact that "the angel of the LORD" is active after Christ is born into the world, warning Joseph to take the child Jesus into Egypt (Matthew 2:13), rolling away the stone from Christ's tomb (Matthew 28:2), transporting Philip (Acts 8), delivering Peter from prison (Acts 12), etc.

Angels are God's "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). They are "sent forth" by God, not called down to earth by man. Therefore, we are not to concern ourselves with angels. As for the books being written about angels that are obsessing people with this subject, let us heed Paul's advice: "Let no man beguile you...[into] worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not

seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Colossians 2:18).

QUESTION: You seem to discount the value of studying Greek and Hebrew in order to be able to understand the Bible better. A friend of mind is trying to persuade me to go to seminary in order to learn the original biblical languages. Why shouldn't I?

RESPONSE: If the Lord leads you to seminary, by all means go. But let's be practical. How many years of study and experience do you think the translators of the King James Bible had in order to qualify them for that job? How long would it take a beginner to learn Greek and Hebrew well enough to discover where these men made a poor translation (if they did) and to improve it? Does your friend, or do you, intend to reach that level of expertise? Is that remote possibility worth the time and effort?

If you say that Greek is a richer language than English, and that knowing it would give you a deeper understanding, I won't argue. But wouldn't the time you'd have to spend learning Greek to any beneficial level be better spent in studying the Bible itself, on your knees, seeking understanding from the Holy Spirit and getting to know Him and His Word? Comparing scripture with scripture, and using a good concordance, you can see how the same Greek or Hebrew words and expressions are used in different passages. The Bible interprets itself.

I have been told by several Calvinists that I can't understand the Bible—even even John 3:16—because I don't know the original languages. If so, then neither does the average Christian, but he must look to experts to interpret it for him—experts who therefore stand between him and God. Far from biblical, this is elitism similar to Roman Catholicism, which discourages ordinary members from studying the Bible because only the magisterium (bishops in concert with the pope) can interpret it.

QUESTION: If God is all-powerful, why can demons defy Him? Where do they get their power?

RESPONSE: I have consistently differentiated between the supernatural/miraculous that only God can do, and the natural realm in which all created beings, including Satan himself, are bound by natural laws imposed by God upon them and the entire physical/spiritual universe. What Satan is able to do seems supernatural to us because it violates the laws as we know them that govern our time/space/matter dimension. Yet Satan is

subject to God's laws governing the spirit dimension in which demons ordinarily operate.

I don't know how demons can intrude into our dimension and move things around, but I have no doubt that they can do so. Nor do I doubt that they do this on the basis of powers natural for their dimension of existence but which to us seem miraculous, just as gunpowder would seem miraculous to a native who had never seen it.

Though the power of demons is natural, it does not involve sleight-of-hand tricks that can be duplicated by stage magicians. I think that Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses (2 Timothy 3:8) by the power of Satan, not by stage magic. Nor do I think it was by legerdemain that Satan transported Christ to the top of a mountain or to the pinnacle of the temple. It is true that I have not witnessed these things for myself, but I have had enough eye-witnesses tell me of fire dancers (not the kind we have here who take four steps and are protected by the laws of physics) who get out in the middle of a huge fire ring in Malaysia or Fiji and dance around for many minutes, after having fasted and prepared themselves for many days for this feat. I don't think any stage magician can duplicate it, and I am convinced that they are using a kind of "power" that we in the physical realm on Earth generally know nothing about.

But even so, it's not a matter of "defying" God at all. Everything in our universe is created by Him, and that includes all natural forces, foreign to our senses or not.

QUESTION: When Jesus died on the cross, did He go to the actual place of torment or to Abraham's bosom?

RESPONSE: It was definitely to Abraham's bosom. Sheol was made up of two compartments: one for the damned and one for the redeemed. Jesus preached the gospel to those who were aforesaid the disobedient. In no other parable does Jesus ever name an actual person's name, and I believe that this is in fact not a parable but a real story. However, even if this were a parable, we see that in Sheol the dead were conscious. There is a place of torment in Sheol (but it is not inhabited by Satan or demons). And even though there is a great gulf fixed, apparently those in the place of torment could see and hear those in Abraham's bosom. When Jesus proclaimed the good news to the redeemed in Abraham's bosom, the damned would hear that as well.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Doesn't the Church Face Antichrist?

Question: How could it be any clearer that the church must face the Antichrist? Paul said, “That day shall not come except there come a falling away first [apostasy], and that man of sin be revealed [Antichrist]” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). I would be interested in how you could argue this point.

Response: Paul specifically states that the apostasy comes first, but he does not say that the appearance of Antichrist comes first. He is actually telling us that the Antichrist will be revealed after that day arrives—in fact, in that day. Let me illustrate with a simple example: “Sunday will not come except Saturday comes first, and we have a big dinner.” Now you know what prevents the dinner from being held, and it will not be held until that hindrance is removed.

It is specified that Saturday will come first but not that the dinner comes first. One might be confused over whether the big dinner will be on Saturday or Sunday, because that is not made completely clear. However, when one learns what the hindrance to the dinner is and that it cannot be removed until midnight Saturday, then one knows that the dinner will be on Sunday.

Paul goes on to state unequivocally that someone is hindering the revealing of the Antichrist and that he cannot be revealed until “he who now letteth [hinders]...be taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). This one who hinders is eternal because He has been preventing Antichrist’s takeover for the past 2,000 years. Only God is eternal, and only God is powerful enough to prevent Satan from installing his man as world ruler. The Holy Spirit, however, cannot be “taken out of the way,” because He is omnipresent. Then what did Paul mean?

The Unique and Hindering Presence

There is an indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that has been upon earth since Pentecost. Old Testament saints had the Holy Spirit with them and as an anointing upon them. That presence, however, could be taken away. The Holy Spirit did not indwell believers prior to Pentecost as an abiding presence that would never leave them. This indwelling is unique to the church, a fact that is clear from many scriptures. This new presence, unknown before Pentecost, can only be removed by removing the church—those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

David prayed, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11), a prayer that would be meaningless today and would reflect inexcusable unbelief. Christ said to His disciples, referring to the Holy Spirit, “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). John tells us that when Christ was still here upon earth, “the Holy Ghost was not yet

given, because...Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). After Jesus was glorified, He sent the Holy Spirit “from the father” (John 15:26) to be with His church in a new way that had been unknown up to that time.

It is this unique presence of the Holy Spirit in the church that will be removed at the Rapture, allowing the Antichrist to be revealed and to have free rein to rule the world. Of course, the Holy Spirit, being omnipresent, will remain here to convict sinners of the truth of the gospel and to win multitudes to Christ during the Tribulation period. These are the Tribulation saints, who will be martyred for their faith.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

It is a joy to think that, as Christ has redeemed and sanctified the entire man, and will be honored in the salvation of the entire man, our complete humanity will have the power to glorify Him. The hands with which we sinned will be lifted in eternal adoration. The eyes that have gazed on evil will see the King in His beauty. The mind that now loves the Lord will be perpetually knit to Him, and the spirit that contemplates Him will forever delight in Him and be in communion with Him. Yet, even more than all this, the very body that has been a clog and a hindrance to the spirit, that has been a chief rebel against the sovereignty of Christ, will give Him homage with voice and hand and brain and ear and eye. We look to the time of our resurrection for the accomplishment of our adoption, that is, the redemption of our bodies.

—C. H. SPURGEON

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Furthering the Psychological Delusion: The Consciousness Revolution - Part 1

Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon

The following are excerpts from America, the Sorcerer's New Apprentice: The Rise of New Age Shamanism. Written in 1988, the book documents America's turning to concepts and practices that are rooted in Eastern Mysticism. There should be little doubt that the West is being overrun by the beliefs of the East, in particular that we are all God, which we have allegedly forgotten. It's imperative therefore that we be restored to our godhood, especially through ancient and modern altered states of consciousness devices. This is sorcery, which Scripture declares will dominate in the Last Days. The unabashed shamans of this movement are today's psychotherapists. NOTE: All references to names and organizations herein can be found in the book.

RATHER THAN ABANDON their obviously bankrupt profession, many psychologists and psychiatrists have compounded their error by trying to shore up their collapsing house of cards with Eastern mysticism of one form or another. Having failed miserably to change their clients' behavior, the psychotherapists reached deeper into their silk hat and pulled out *altered states of consciousness*, the same magic long used by the "traditional psychologists from the East"—the gurus, yogis, and shamans. A change of consciousness became the key to everything, even though no one yet knew what it was that was being changed.

Increasing numbers of psychologists and psychiatrists are being drawn into Eastern mysticism because of their discovery that it offers the very transformation of consciousness that psychotherapy seeks to effect. At the 25th Annual Meeting of The Association for Humanist Psychology, held on August 5-9, 1987, participants shared "channeling, rebirthing, energy healing, metaphysical counseling," as well as "consciousness group work." The "traditional morning meditation, yoga, and aerobics programs" were enhanced with "some of the new high-tech, whole-brain synchronization techniques."

Representative of this growing trend, psychiatrist Rudolph Ballentine and clinical psychologist Allan Weinstock have both studied under gurus in India. Weinstock is now known as Swami Ajaya after his ordination as a Hindu monk. Ballentine and Ajaya joined Swami Rama of Chicago's Himalayan Institute in coauthoring *Yoga and Psychotherapy: The Evolution of Consciousness*.

In it they explained that yoga "has offered for thousands of years" what Western psychotherapists "are seeking." As University of California professor Jacob Needleman has said: "A large and growing number of psychotherapists are now convinced that the Eastern religions offer an understanding of the mind far more complete than anything yet envisaged by Western science. At the same time, the leaders of the new religions themselves—the numerous gurus and spiritual teachers now in the West—are reformulating and adapting the traditional systems according to the language and atmosphere of modern psychology."

Eastern religion and various forms of occultism are now packaged in psychological terminology for twentieth-century public consumption. Abraham Maslow's "self-actualization" should have been easily recognized as a Westernized version of yoga's "self-realization," but that connection was slow in being acknowledged. Psychologist Daniel Goleman was among the first to point out that Eastern philosophies "seem to be making gradual headway [in the West] as psychologies, not as religions." That transmutation should have surprised no one, for as LeShan explains, "The basic model of man that led to the development of [Eastern] meditational techniques is the same model that led to humanistic psychotherapy."

"The Medicine Woman of Beverly Hills," Lynn Andrews, recently told the *Los Angeles Times*: "Shamanism is really like gestalt therapy. It's like primal therapy, and it has a lot of Jungian in it."

According to research psychiatrist E. Fuller Torrey, "The techniques used by Western psychiatrists are, with few exceptions, on exactly the same scientific plane as the techniques used by witch doctors." Nobelist Richard Feynman describes psychotherapy as "not a science...but more like witchdoctoring."

Having ridiculed and debunked for nearly 80 years mankind's universal and longstanding belief in things spiritual, psychologists have begun to reintroduce ancient occult beliefs and practices, but with the new labels of their own secular "spirituality." The same occult powers are being sought through basically the same altered states, but now as "human potential" instead of as coming from independent spirit entities. Many of the same words and rituals are used, but with altered meanings that fit the new religion of psychology. God is now "the collective unconscious" and spirits have become "splits of the psyche."

Witchcraft is out of the cocoon and flying, having metamorphosed into a socially and academically acceptable "therapy." And the followers of this new religion are vulnerable to a horror they have been promised is only

a myth. The bait on the hook is the promise that within the psyche an infinite potential awaits discovery and exploration—but the treasure is dispensed by "spirits."

In the process of subjecting his patients to "dream analysis" and hypnotic trance in pursuit of childhood memories, Freud "discovered" that there was an *unconscious* side to consciousness, and he concluded that it was in fact the most important part. He also suspected that it might be greater in scope than the individual's own experience. Jung decided (with encouragement from his spirit guide, Philemon) that at this unconscious level all minds were a part of something that he called the *collective unconscious* and described as the source of mystical powers. Without any scientific basis, these twin beliefs were accepted by faith by the disciples of Freud and Jung and became the foundation for the many psychologies and therapies that followed. As a result, nearly everyone now accepts as scientific fact the religious belief that this vast unexplored region of "inner space" is a reservoir of magical powers that exceed even the wildest science fiction fantasy.

Self-improvement seminar leaders assure us that by simply looking within ourselves, we can discover all truth, all knowledge, and all power. In order to mine this presumably unlimited human potential, psychologists have attempted to explore consciousness through Eastern mysticism's *altered states*—states of consciousness that were first explored through hypnosis, then LSD. Oddly enough, it was decided that the further one retreated from normal consciousness, the more "enlightened" one became.

The lowest level was assigned to ordinary states of awareness, while "higher consciousness" required losing touch with what is generally considered to be normal perception. Thus any basis for objective evaluation of the experience must be relinquished in order to reach "enlightenment," which in itself should make that state highly suspect. Suspicions should also arise on another count. As Shirley MacLaine and so many others tell us, one amazingly discovers in this "higher state of consciousness" that one is actually "God." Interestingly enough, our alleged oneness with "God," or Jung's "collective unconscious," has been the constant refrain of the channeled entities down through history. In *Channeling*, Jon Klimo reminds us: "Virtually all of the sources above the astral levels tell us that...we are evolving... toward an eventual reunion with the one God, which is the underlying identity of All That Is.... The various occult, esoteric, and mystery school teachings repeat the theme. Enlightenment involves realizing [the] illusory state of our daily entranced experience, and awakening to the...oneness

of all.”

Stephen Williamson, director of the Institute for Bio-Acoustic Research, warns against techniques whose goal is to bypass the conscious, rational mind where information is accepted or rejected.

Yet this is precisely one's condition in the “altered state” being sought by millions for “enlightenment.” And Herbert Benson, despite some ambivalent warnings, even recommends his “Relaxation Response” technique as a means of “pass[ing] into the so-called hypnotic state” precisely because, as he says, “in this state of enhanced left-right hemispheric communication...‘cognitive receptivity’ or ‘plasticity of cognition’ occurs, in which you actually change the way you view the world.” It hardly seems advisable to make a major change in one's thinking in such a fluid mental state. Such active promotion of delusory altered states by leading members of the medical and psychological professions has given the New Age consciousness revolution an undeserved aura of “scientific” credibility that has persuaded millions of people to get involved.

With understanding out and experience in, happiness (or almost anything else) became simply a state of consciousness to be sought as an end in itself. By turning the focus inward, the Freudian/Jungian obsession with the unconscious spawned a menagerie of selfisms: self-love, self-acceptance, self-improvement, self-worth, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-*ad nauseam*. Only 40 years prior, self-centeredness was considered a human failing, and an ugly one. Today, self is the center of most psychotherapies, the god at whose altar nearly everyone bows to beg favors—for self is now considered to be the hope of humanity, the inexhaustible source of man's salvation. “*Everything you need is inside of you!*” is the bold promise of the modern hucksters of innumerable ingenious techniques for tapping into the infinite You.

Looking inside oneself to get in touch with one's feelings, however, only intensifies the loneliness and alienation that couples feel who are trying to learn to live with each other while at the same time *Looking Out for Number One*, as that bestselling book instructed. “Dealing with stress” has become a national pastime, and the old methods of self-denial, self-control, and counting to ten are now too laborious. Everyone wants a quick fix, a magical formula—and there are experts by the thousands who claim to have the ultimate technique.

Here is just one more form taken by the ancient nature religion versus the Bible scenario. It is the same old polytheism/panteism/scientism resurrected with a new twist and an even more overt opposition to supernaturalism. The new way of getting in touch with and worshiping nature is getting

in touch with and worshiping *self* as nature's most highly evolved form. The demeaning biblical so-called myth of man's rebellious separation from God has been replaced with psychology's more positive myth of alienation from the self. *Sin* is no longer the root of mankind's troubles; the problem as now perceived is simply *ignorance* of one's true identity and worth. There is no explanation, however, of how perfect beings could have “forgotten” who they were—nor any guarantee that this mysterious ignorance, once dispelled through reaching a “higher” state of consciousness, will not arise again.

Subjective feelings (and how to manufacture and manipulate them) have inevitably become all-important. How one *feels* is now the only criterion, while how one *ought* to feel or act has lost all meaning. Since consciousness is susceptible to control by each individual, there are no longer any moral restraints involved. In justification of psychology's encouragement of hedonism, Esalen has offered techniques for “recognizing that *your feelings—your discoveries—are your truth*, without needing outside validation.” It was this revolutionary gospel, preached by psychologists, sociologists, and educators, that created the “do-your-own-thing” Me Generation.

The basic theories that built Haight Ashbury and Woodstock (and were finely tuned at Esalen) are still being promoted by humanistic psychologists as the gospel truth. The once-upon-a-time “flower children” of the fifties and sixties are the highly respected doctors, lawyers, politicians, schoolteachers, university professors, psychologists, social workers, and scientists who have become our leaders. The drug-spawned consciousness revolution that failed in the fifties and sixties is now being fed to us from the top down, recycled and wrapped in the bright ribbons of thousands of psychotherapies and self-improvement techniques.

That type of thinking has a long history that ought to serve as a warning to us today. Freud was convinced that cocaine was the wonder drug of his day, and some of his theories were no doubt conjured up while under its influence. In addition to using it himself, he prescribed it for others, resulting in the death of one of his friends. Even Bayer, the highly regarded German pharmaceutical company, offered heroin to the world as a promising new cough medicine in 1888, one year before it introduced aspirin. It would be foolish to think we have gotten beyond such delusions. In *Psychiatric Drugs: Hazards to the Brain*, psychiatrist Dr. Peter Breggin points out: “All the major psychiatric drugs are highly neurotoxic (poisonous to nerve cells), all frequently produce widespread brain dysfunction in their routine therapeutic dose range; and all achieve their primary

overriding effect on the patient by producing some degree of brain disfunction.”

As we have already noted, however, Eastern meditation, transcendental meditation, and other forms of yoga, including postures and breathing, produce a similar (but potentially even more powerful) altered state of consciousness than that caused by drugs. “Buddha reportedly recognized only one miracle—the transformation of human consciousness.” That transformation is the major goal of virtually all psychotherapies today.

Increasing numbers of researchers and ex-meditators are warning the world that various techniques for altering consciousness are far more lethal than cocaine or heroin. Yet hardly anyone seems to be listening. No government regulatory agency has required warning labels on yoga, TM, or the many psychotherapies that are based upon dangerous consciousness-altering methodologies. Some of these techniques are specifically designed to mimic drug-induced states. The situation is staggering.

After using LSD on about 4,000 patients, Czech-born psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (for a number of years scholar-in-residence at Esalen) developed his “holotropic breathing” technique. Grof made the discovery that “the [holotropic] breathing itself had psychedelic effects, triggering a mind trip that ran the gamut from waking dreams and flashbacks to birth memories, past life memories, and encounters with spiritual beings.” One observant of a weekend workshop utilizing the Grof method and conducted by UCLA psychiatrist Curt Batiste at Sky High Ranch in Palmdale, California, reported: “The breathers lay on the gray pile carpet breathing with pranayamic gusto. Within minutes, the room was transformed into the bowels of a madhouse a la Hieronymous Bosch...blood-curdling screams and deep moans emerged from many of the breathers.... [One woman] had a vision of herself in the body of a man walking down a street a hundred years ago, preparing to rape a series of women. ‘I was him,’ she gasped.”

Those engaged in such occultic practices sometimes seem to come out of the bedlam with “deeper insights” and to experience “positive” changes in their lives. However, the benefits generally do not last, and all too often new problems arise to replace those originally dealt with. Nevertheless, the game goes on. There seems to be no limit to the faith placed in this magical but unexplained realm of *consciousness* or to the godlike powers its devotees hope to acquire through entering altered states and thereby tapping into the collective *unconscious*. It is astonishing that this faith persists in spite of the obvious absurdities, contradictions, dangers, and disasters. [To be continued] **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: In your writing, you have sometimes used all kinds of antiquated structural forms, such as with verb endings (killeth, hath, shalt, wilt); possessive adjectives (mine, thine); subject pronouns (thou, ye). This reminds me of a verse I memorized in my youth: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth...” (John 3:8).

It makes me tongue-tied just thinking about it. The use of such language leaves the impression that you believe that kind of usage is more acceptable before God or, worse yet, that God talks like that. Maybe you like King James English because you have some qualms about the accuracy of modern-day translations of the Bible. But please don’t take it out on your readers by using structural forms that for hundreds of years have not been a regular part of American speech.

RESPONSE: First of all, I did not use that kind of language. You can only be referring to my quotations from the Bible, which I took pains to provide accurately. Secondly, you make far too much of the alleged difficulty of such language. School children in Europe learn several languages, including the dead language Latin. Operas and literary classics still use Elizabethan language and the audience or readers don’t complain but seem to appreciate it.

Prefer a Bible in today’s English if you wish, but you’ll be hard-pressed to find one that is an accurate translation from the *Textus Receptus*. This is what the New King James claims to be, yet I find some of it to be inaccurate, such as its change of the key word “imagination” into “intent,” etc. The King James Bible is classic English, unsurpassed in its beauty of expression. Stay with your modern English if you must, but allow the rest of us who enjoy the King James Bible to retain it—and have no fear that today’s youth can’t handle it. I have never suggested that “God talks like that,” nor have I ever heard this complaint from anyone else. On the other hand, perhaps King James English brings reverence to the reading of Scripture, which is lacking in today’s English. I think we could do with more reverence.

QUESTION: Some ministries and Christian leaders have said that it isn’t the American people but God who put all the US presidents and vice-presidents

in power and that God is in control of everything. Is that really true?

RESPONSE: God is in control of His universe and every aspect of it to the extent that nothing can happen that He does not *allow*. He is not, however, the *active cause* behind all that happens. If that were the case, we would have to blame God for all evil. The idea that it is God’s perfect will for each ruler in power to be there is a misunderstanding of Romans 13: “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”

Paul is teaching that without God there would be no purpose for life, no order, and thus no basis for authority; and that God has ordained that just as there is order in the natural world, so there must be among men. Therefore, each ruler “is the minister of God for good.” As God’s representatives, rulers are supposed to minister God’s laws in righteousness. Actually, very few do.

God no more specifically chose Clinton, Gore, Bush, [Obama, or Trump, updated] to rule than He did Hitler. He did, however, ordain that there should be rulers, and that they should be His ministers of righteousness. Since Clinton and Gore advocated rebellion against God in their acceptance of homosexuality, the murder of babies in the womb, and the worship of creation instead of the Creator, they hardly represent God. And, like all rulers, they will be held accountable by Him. Far from being God’s choice, as some claim, Clinton and Gore were the choice of tens of millions of Americans—in actual fact, a minority of the American people, something that many people choose to ignore. One way or another, however, our country is getting what it wants and it will reap what it is sowing. Let no one blame God!

QUESTION: I keep encountering the teaching that water baptism has no place in this dispensation; that the entire subject of water baptism is Jewish, and that all mention of “baptism” in the Pauline epistles is baptism of the Holy Spirit...baptism in the gospels and the Acts applies to Jewish believers only.

RESPONSE: Testing this theory against the Scriptures quickly disproves it. In the Great Commission, Jesus very clearly tells the disciples (and us today) to “preach the gospel to every creature [i.e., to every race, tribe, and individual, not only to the Jews]. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). It is clear that although failure to

be baptized does not damn the soul (not one verse says so!), and although it is not part of the gospel (“Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel”—1 Corinthians 1:17; see also 1 Corinthians 15:1-4), yet all who believe the gospel are to be baptized. Christ told the disciples to teach or disciple “all nations [i.e., not only Jews but every nationality], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

The Great Commission required the disciples to teach their converts to obey everything Christ had commanded them (v. 20). Thus each new convert was also to make disciples and teach them to obey all that Christ had taught the original twelve—which included, then and today, baptizing converts from every nation. We have the record that every Gentile convert was baptized. The Corinthians, who were surely not all Jews but mostly Gentiles, were baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14-17), as was an Ethiopian when he believed the gospel (Acts 8:35-39). So were the Roman centurion, Cornelius, and his relatives when they believed (Acts 10:47-48). Likewise, the Philippian jailor (a Gentile) and his house were baptized after they believed on Christ (Acts 16:30-33). There are other scriptures, but these should be sufficient to show that baptism is for today and for all (not just Jews) who believe the gospel. If this generation is to preach the gospel, which it is commanded to do, then it must continue to baptize all who believe it. If only Jews are to be baptized, then the gospel must be only for them. But that is not biblical and would leave the rest of us unsaved. The gospel is “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [non-Jew]” (Romans 1:16).

Although baptism doesn’t save, it is an act of obedience on the part of believers who *are* saved, a declaration to the world that they have been saved not by their good works but by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, of which baptism is a symbol: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like, as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Baptism is therefore not appropriate for infants who cannot understand the gospel and thus have made no choice to believe on Christ.

Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 that baptism is not part of the gospel; one is saved without being baptized. But those who believe are to be baptized, and since salvation is for all, baptism is for all—Gentiles as well as Jews.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

An Unbiblical “Escape Theory (Part One)”

Question: To imagine that the church will be taken to heaven before the Antichrist appears and takes power and the prophesied seven-year tribulation period begins is a delusion, in my opinion. Christ said we would suffer for His sake. The pre-trib rapture teaching seems to offer an unbiblical escape from that suffering. Why should a certain segment of the church be allowed to escape its allotted suffering?

Question: Where does it say that the tribulation under Antichrist is allotted to that fraction of the church that happens to be alive when Antichrist takes power? And why should a certain segment of the church be required to endure suffering at the hands of the Antichrist that no other Christians experienced?

Of course, it *could* be so. Depending upon their time and place in history, different segments of the church have suffered trials and persecutions varying in both kind and intensity. Believers here in the United States, for example have never (at least until now) been called upon to endure the horrors faced by those who for centuries were tortured and killed in the Inquisitions. Nor did those who were burned at the stake endure the years of imprisonment and slow death by hard labor and starvation that befell millions under Stalin, Hitler, or Mao. But what does the Bible say concerning the church and Antichrist?

There are several clear statements in Scripture that tell us plainly that the church will not be on the earth when Antichrist takes power. First of all, the early church was undoubtedly living in expectancy of Christ’s imminent appearing: “from whence [heaven] we *look* for the Saviour” (Philippians 3:20); “ye turned to God...to *wait* for his Son from heaven” (1 Thessalonians 1:9,10); “*Looking* for...the glorious appearing of...our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13);

“unto them that *look* for him shall he appear” (Hebrews 9:28), etc. If the Antichrist had to come first, it would make no sense to be waiting and looking for Christ.

This expectancy of His imminent return was first taught by Christ Himself, who also associated any thought of a delay in His coming with evil:

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord...that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately...be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not (Luke 12:35,36,40). But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming...” (Matthew 24:48).

If Christ were not going to rapture His saints to heaven before the tribulation period, then He couldn’t be expected until the end thereof. In that case, there would be no hope of Christ’s coming or appearing until after the Antichrist

had liquidated the church and the seven-year tribulation period had run its course and Jerusalem was surrounded by the armies of the world and Christ had to intervene to stop the slaughter. Only then could Christ return. Therefore no one would be watching and waiting for His appearing even now, much less in the first century. Such expectant language would not be used in the New Testament at all. It would make no sense.

It is also clear that the church is already in heaven *before* Christ’s second coming at Armageddon. In Revelation 19:7,8 we read, “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white....” This marriage between Christ and the Church is taking place in heaven *while the Antichrist is in charge on the earth beneath*. Surely the church can’t be in two places at once: being killed by Antichrist on earth and simultaneously present at her marriage to the Lamb in heaven.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE •••••

We’ve all experienced the forlorn feeling of being alone in our sorrow—and found out later that God was nearer than we ever suspected. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1) cried David in one breath, and with the next, “I will fear no evil: for thou art with me...” (Psalm 23:4). The anguish was real. No one could have convinced David otherwise at the moment, but when the pain was over and the healing had come, he would have been the first to testify that God had been there all the time

—RUTH HUNT IN *A VERY PRESENT HELP*

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Furthering the Psychological Delusion: The Consciousness Revolution - Part 2

Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon

(Excerpted from *America, The Sorcerer's New Apprentice: The Rise of New Age Shamanism*)

EVEN THE MOST enthusiastic promoters of the consciousness revolution admit that there are bad trips. It takes only one disaster—and there have been thousands—to contradict the basic New Age teaching that we're tapping into a benevolent and good "Higher Self" through "altered states of consciousness." Why, then, the evil and destructive forces that suddenly break out as though a mask has inadvertently slipped off? Why did Paramahansa Yogananda, for example, founder of the Self-Realization Society and one of the greatest Yogis of all, "fall apart" toward the end of his life?

"He was taking on the evil karma of others," was the explanation given. However, what Yogananda's close assistant, Charya Bernard, observed disillusioned him completely.... It caused Bernard to finally admit to himself that of the 40,000 people he had counseled during his years at Yogananda's side, only a handful had received any lasting benefit while thousands had actually been harmed by yoga.

Carl Jung laid the foundation for the consciousness revolution with his own psychic adventures. In the process he encountered "the stuff of psychosis...found in the insane." Jung called this analytical journey under altered states of consciousness "a risky experiment" and he considered it "a questionable adventure to entrust oneself to the uncertain path that leads into the depths of the unconscious." Yet like a man who is torn between the dread of a great danger and a prize he covets, Jung complained that our "rational age" failed to see the value in his "voyage of discovery." However, since Jung's death, and despite disastrous results that are seldom admitted, this voyage has become extremely popular. There was something almost sinister in Jung's desire to see other people involved in what he confessed was an "uncertain, risky and dangerous" path that could well become "the quintessence of horror." The fact that Jung, in order to retain his sanity, had to fight his own altered consciousness by clinging desperately to "ordinary consciousness" should be a warning to others. Describing those years when he teetered on the brink of what he called "total

psychotic breakdown," Jung wrote:

I needed a point of support in "this world," and I may say that my family and my professional work... remained the base to which I could always return...[or] the unconscious contents could have driven me out of my wits....

I have a medical diploma from a Swiss university; I must help my patients. I have a wife and five children; I live at 228 Seestrasse in Kusnacht—these were actualities which made demands upon me and proved to me again and again that I really existed, that I was not a blank page whirling about in the winds of the spirit, like Nietzsche [who died insane].

Here we have a strange paradox: The man primarily responsible—if not for today's consciousness revolution itself, then certainly for the aura of respectability that it bears—had to cling desperately to ordinary consciousness in order to retain his sanity. Yet he suggests that salvation comes through attaining the very altered state that nearly destroyed him. We dare not ignore the fact that altered states of consciousness have traditionally been cultivated in order to experience "spirit possession." If any man was ever "possessed," surely it was Jung himself.

In *Hostage to the Devil*, Malachi Martin relates a number of examples of demonic possession that go beyond the dangers of "negative thinking" that Herbert Benson and other popularizers of psychology's religious "science" consider to be the great evil. There are thousands of such well-documented tragedies that demonstrate that psychological explanations involving the "unconscious" for the phenomenon long known as "possession" are pitifully inadequate. Many of these cases involve intelligent and apparently well-meaning persons who believed and followed the latest psychological theories, only to find themselves "possessed" by an "evil spirit"—in spite of the fact that they had until then considered "possession" to be a religious delusion.

With undergraduate degrees in biology and anthropology from Harvard University and a Ph.D. in ethnobotany, Wade Davis is representative of today's highly educated Westerner. His participation in numerous expeditions to the jungles of Central and South America and elsewhere, however, and his exposure to spiritualist societies have given him another perspective. With his background, it was difficult for Davis to lay aside the superiority that scientists exude when analyzing "primitive" cultures,

but the numerous cases of "spirit possession" that he witnessed forced a reevaluation of his thinking. Davis wrote:

For the nonbeliever, there is something profoundly disturbing about spirit possession. Its power is raw, immediate, and undeniably real.... The psychologists who have attempted to understand possession from a scientific perspective [avoid] issues that cannot be approached by their calculus—the existence or nonexistence of spirits, for example...[and] consider possession a behavior of "psychically disequibrated persons with a mytho-maniacal constitution."

These wordy explanations ring most hollow when they are applied to certain irrefutable physical attributes of the possessed [immunity to fire, etc.]; [upon these] my logic wavered.... In the absence of a scientific explanation, and in the face of our own certain ignorance, it seems foolish to disregard the opinions of those who know possession best.

Such warnings are smugly disregarded by those who have built a "scientific" mythology founded upon the materialistic assertion that a spirit dimension is non-existent. Upset at the emotional reactions aroused in audiences by *The Exorcist*, parapsychologist Loyd Auerbach writes, "To set the record a bit straighter, let me say that the only demons we, as scientists, deal with are one's own 'demons' that may be conjured up by the subconscious and the imagination."

With a healthy fear of evil spirits neatly debunked by psychologists, the barrier that has kept so many people from involvement with the powers of darkness is now gone. There is no longer anything to be afraid of, for nothing is there except "fragments of one's own personality." So goes the refrain. All that is now needed is to accept a new understanding.

Unfortunately, that "understanding" begins with a denial of evidence and is concerned not with truth but with the dogmatic claim of the new religion of psychology that it alone is the true faith of humanity. We now stand in grave danger that psychology's glib pseudoscientific explanations of spiritual power are increasingly opening the West to the very phenomenon psychologists have sought so long to deny: demonic possession.

As we have already indicated, highly educated Westerners are embracing, as sci-

ence, a Hindu gospel that must take much of the responsibility for making India one of the poorest, most superstition-bound countries in the world. This gospel offers to Calcutta's one million beggars who have been born and live and will die in its streets the good news that their running sores, gnawing hunger, and poverty do not really exist but have been created by their own "negative" thinking. There is no suffering, disease, or death; one merely misperceives what is actually there.

In contrast to Eastern mysticism, which denies what sin has produced and offers no real solution, Christianity teaches that the moral laws of God's infinite justice have been violated. There is no way that finite man can pay sin's infinite penalty. By his own choice, man has consigned himself to eternal separation from the God who created him. God, being infinite, could pay the penalty, but it would not be just, because He was not one of us. In the supreme act of love, God became a man in order to satisfy the claims of his own law and died the death that His justice demanded for our sin.

The triumphant cry of Jesus just before He expired upon the cross—"Tetelestai!" "It is finished!"—is an accounting term in the original New Testament Greek (*teleo*, to discharge a debt). The infinite penalty for sin had been paid. According to the Bible, all man needs to do is humble himself to admit that he, as a sinner, deserved what Christ suffered in his place, and to receive the pardon that is offered as a free gift of God's grace and love—a pardon he could never merit or earn. Certainly the staggering nature of such claims (there could be no better news if these claims are true!) would demand a careful investigation. Famed Harvard University law professor Simon Greenleaf (in his day, the highest authority on legal evidence and a confirmed skeptic, who accepted the claims of Christ only after careful research) declared in an appeal to his colleagues to make a similar investigation: "These are no ordinary claims; and it seems hardly possible for a rational being to...treat them with mere indifference or contempt."

In contrast, there is a palpable emptiness to the New Age gospel. Not only doesn't it ring true either to logic or ordinary experience, but it lacks those qualities to which the human heart aspires. Righteousness and truth are missing altogether—yet surely the question of truth ought to far outweigh feelings, personal preference, or mystical experience. Of what value is the most ecstatic experience if it is mere fantasy, or, worse yet, a fraud? To barter away the eternal benefits of truth for the feelings of the moment is a bad bargain indeed.

Moreover, in the Hindu/Buddhist/New

Age philosophy, the forgiveness for which every honest heart yearns is absent. No wrong is admitted, even though our consciences tell us otherwise and long for release. Thus there is no thankfulness or gratitude to God for forgiving and saving us, for we are our own gods and saviors—yet forgiveness and gratitude are universally recognized to be among the noblest human qualities and greatest blessings. Nor is there a taste of mercy or grace, for the same reason.

As an answer to man's deepest longings and need, naturalism/pantheism offers an impersonal cosmic Force with dark and light sides. Instead of love, the greatest virtue and highest experience, we are left with a void.

With the Utopian but empty slogan, "Love is the ultimate first-strike capability," the Pentagon Meditation Club is promoting the erection of a "peace shield"—an alleged force field generated by meditation and prayer. It is hoped that future war will be prevented through enough meditators tuning into mankind's latent inner potential for peace, and visualizing the world's leaders "joining together in fellowship to resolve issues" [<https://bit.ly/3eccazR>].

Similar ideas were promoted by a February 1988 American/Soviet conference co-hosted by Barbara Marx Hubbard and Rama Vernon of the Center for Soviet-American Dialogue, at which delegates explored shamanic techniques for creating peace. Much of the inspiration for the conference grew out of the mystical experiences of Hubbard, whose pseudo-Christian pantheism/naturalism was representative of conferees' beliefs. A conference for American business and educational leaders presenting similar ideas for "conflict resolution" in July 1988 featured Hubbard as the opening keynote speaker, and Soviet director of Global Family, Mikhail Zykov, speaking on the topic of "A Soviet Perspective on Spiritual Community."

The effectiveness of the Eastern gurus (aided by innumerable "spirit guides" and fellow travelers) to convert the Western world to the Hindu/Buddhist/shamanic faith has been unprecedented in all of history. America is in the process of a radical transformation. The success of this effort owes much to America's home-grown evangelists who have surfaced from such a broad spectrum of professional credibility: the Bernie Siegels, O. Carl Simontons, Herbert Bensons, Michael Rays, Jean Houstons, Gerald Jampolskys, John Denvers, John Lennons, and Timothy Learys. Most of these New Age zealots seem to

be motivated by a sincere desire to help a suffering world. Whatever the motivation, however, the determined undermining of Christianity is well on its way, and the establishment of an ecumenical New Age shamanism as the world religion has made astonishing progress everywhere except in Islamic countries (Sufism notwithstanding). The full impact upon every area of society promises to be beyond present comprehension.

Many of America's largest and most powerful corporations, with branches in numerous countries, have now joined this unprecedented worldwide missionary effort. Management-experts-turned-missionaries are taking to the whole world the same Eastern mysticism that the gurus brought to the West but now incorporated into and redefined as the latest techniques for successful personal and business performance. The sophistication, advanced degrees, and affluence of these new jet-set missionaries lend a credibility that makes their seductive gospel almost irresistible.

These are a new breed of business leaders who talk about the interconnectedness of all things, getting back in touch with nature, and the divine spark within us all as the basis for a new planetary unity. They especially want to share the psychospiritual technologies of the mind, which they hope will help mankind to realize its full potential and thereby turn this suffering world into paradise at last. It sounds so good.

As we have seen, the ancient shamanic techniques for contacting spirit guides have been introduced to the masses under the umbrellas of science, medicine, psychology, education, and business, but with the entities explained away psychologically. Yet no amount of scholarly rationalization can change the fact that these consciousness-altering techniques consistently bring contact with, and in many cases possession by, seducing spirits.

Seemingly unaware of the grave danger, America, once the world's leader in finance, business, science, and technology, is reasserting its leadership position but now in a new enterprise—the rise of New Age shamanism. The implications are staggering. An inescapable choice, which will determine our destiny, confronts us. Shouldn't that choice be made on the basis of the evidence and in firm commitment to ultimate truth?

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I know that false faiths abound, but I don't find edification in focusing on error. Show me in the Word where false doctrine is explained. It seems to me that the Bible addresses Satan's lies without going into detail of the actual practices.

RESPONSE: We at TBC take no pleasure in exposing and documenting false dogmas and practices. We do so only to expose error, out of deep concern for souls. Yes, there are many kind, compassionate, and self-sacrificing Muslims who oppose terrorism. Yes, the Roman Catholic Church was the major charitable institution during the Middle Ages, often promoting morality and education—and most Catholics today do not know most of Rome's official dogmas—but they still rely upon that Church and its clergy to get them out of "purgatory" and into heaven. Yes, many Mormons and Moonies espouse "traditional morals." We do not oppose *individuals* but the largely false gospels they preach.

You ask for biblical support concerning the exposure of evil and false doctrines. The Bible gives much insight concerning Satan's fall (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-18), the details of his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-7), and of his attempt to destroy Job's trust in and relationship with God (Job 1:1-2:7). There are too many accounts of idolatry and pagan practices and warnings against them to list all the verses (Leviticus 19:31; 20:1-6; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Isaiah 47:8-13, etc.). The Bible goes into great detail concerning the apostasy of Israel, telling the sins of its kings and people, from the golden calf (Exodus 32:1-28) to the Queen of Heaven (Jeremiah 44:15-23); and again, there are too many references to list.

Most of the epistles were written to combat heretical teachings that crept into the early church. False doctrine is explained thoroughly and repeatedly. Almost the entire book of Galatians is devoted to describing and combating a false gospel. To "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3) must include pointing out what is wrong with the counterfeit. Christ himself did so, explaining in detail the evil practices and false teachings of the rabbis (Matthew 15:1-20; 23:2-33, etc.). Our exposure of error is moderate in comparison to Stephen's indictment of the Jews (Acts 7:39-43, 51-53). And considering the fact that Paul, out of concern for the coming apostasy, for "three years... ceased not to warn every one night and

day with tears" (Acts 20:31), we could hardly be accused of extremism in our earnest attempts to point out what is wrong in order for the truth to be understood more clearly by comparison. Our motive is to rescue souls from eternal doom.

QUESTION: Your reluctance to sanction or engage in "Bible-based activism" is baffling to me. Wasn't Paul one of the greatest social activists of all time? And besides, wasn't the cultural setting of the Bible much different from that of the modern age, with a different kind of government altogether and different social norms? So, don't we have to adapt our conduct and involvement in our own society according to biblical principles, and not necessarily according to what someone else did in a different time and place? I believe we are being trained and groomed for rulership now so that we'll be ready when the Kingdom comes!

RESPONSE: The fact that the setting for the Bible was much different than the setting in which we live is really irrelevant. The power of God is not limited to working within a certain cultural or political setting, nor were the heroes and heroines of the faith in either the Old or New Testaments limited by circumstances. Beyond that, I don't think it puts the US in a different category with respect to social action, because it has a different kind of government, which makes social action easy as opposed to the Roman Empire, where it would have been impossible. As a matter of fact, there were instances of social action in the form of mob action in the early days of the church—but by non-Christians, never by the church. Paul and the other apostles would not have let the difficulty of social action prevent them from engaging in it if it had been the will of God. They were willing to go to prison or to die for the sake of the Lord.

Paul's declaration that he had fought the good fight, had finished his course, and had fulfilled the ministry given to him by the Lord is evidence that social action was not on the agenda—and that, I believe, holds true today, since we are to follow his example. Paul would let nothing stand in the way of His obeying God—so you may be certain that the lack of examples of political or social activism in the Bible wasn't due to circumstances, setting, or anything other than the fact that it wasn't God's will. I cannot escape this conclusion, though my natural inclination is to

agree with you and to join the activists in their good causes.

You say, "...we are being trained and being groomed for rulership now so that we'll be ready when the Kingdom comes." Where do you find that in the Bible? Precisely who is being trained, by whom, and how? Activism is not training to be a ruler. Are only the activists going to rule and reign with Christ? What about the saints of past centuries who didn't have any of the training you say is now in process—will they not reign? The church is the *ekklesia* or "called out ones"—called out of the world and to whom Christ said, "If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19). I sympathize with your position, but I simply cannot find it in the Bible either in practice or precept.

QUESTION: Various people have spoken of a "Christian takeover of the United States and the world" as involving a "paradigm shift." Could you comment on this?

RESPONSE: A "Christian takeover of the world" is neither taught nor hinted at anywhere in the Bible. Jesus certainly didn't teach or engage in such a project, nor did Peter, Paul, the other apostles, or anyone in the early church. We are to preach the gospel and call disciples out of this world for heavenly citizenship, not try to "Christianize" non-Christians.

Revelation 13 and other scriptures make it clear that Antichrist, not the church, will take over and rule the world—*after* the church has been taken by Christ to heaven. The Antichrist will control all banking and commerce, be worshiped by the whole world, and will have authority and power to kill all who refuse him this homage. The purpose of the Second Coming (as distinct from the Rapture, which occurs seven years earlier) is to destroy Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:8) and rescue Israel (Zechariah 12,13,14). At Armageddon, Antichrist will lead the armies of the world to destroy Israel, necessitating Christ's intervention from heaven. That hardly sounds as though a "Christian takeover" has occurred!



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

An Unbiblical “Escape Theory?” —The “Saints” Come from Heaven to Execute Judgment (Part Two)

Response (cont'd): At the end of Revelation 19, the second coming of Christ in power and glory to destroy Antichrist (as in 2 Thessalonians 2:8) is described, and we are told that “the armies which were in heaven followed him...clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (verse 14). This is the clothing of Christ’s bride, the church. So it must be she who accompanies Him in keeping with the promise that we are caught up “to meet the Lord in the air: *and so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). That conclusion is confirmed by Paul’s declaration that “the saints shall judge the world” (1 Corinthians 6:2) and David’s statement that the saints will “execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people” (Psalm 149:7).

We have confirmation in other Scriptures of the saints coming with Christ from heaven to execute judgment. For example, “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all [the ungodly]” (Jude 14,15). The expression “ten thousands” simply means an innumerable multitude. In Daniel, too, we are told that “the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom” from Antichrist, who made war with the saints, “and judgment was given to the saints” (7:18,22).

So we know that those clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and who accompany Christ, are “saints.” Here we have further evidence

that the “armies from heaven” must be the church. Those in the church are consistently addressed as “saints” throughout the New Testament:

“...thy saints at Jerusalem” (Acts 9:13); “the saints which dwelt at Lydda”(Acts 9:32); “to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints” (Romans 1:7); “the church of God...at Corinth...sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2); “the saints which are at Ephesus” (Ephesians 1:1); etc.

Those who truly know God are called saints in the Old Testament as well: “The saints that are in the earth” (Psalm 16:3); “Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psalm 50:5); “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15); “O God, the heathen...have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the beasts of the earth” (Psalm 79:1,2). Thus we are persuaded that they too will be in the army that accompanies Christ from heaven.

Indeed, Zechariah tells us that when Christ returns to earth to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon, “his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount Olives” and He will bring “all the saints” from heaven with Him (14:4,5). Of course, the souls and spirits of the saints who have died were instantly taken to heaven at the time of their deaths to await the resurrection

of their bodies. Surely the armies of heaven are not disembodied spirits but whole persons in immortal bodies of glory, indicating that the resurrection must have taken place prior to this event.

The Rapture, therefore, must have already occurred for two reasons. First of all, Paul assures us that the rapture takes place *simultaneously* with the resurrection. Secondly, for *all* saints to accompany Christ when He comes from heaven to execute judgment, the living saints must have been caught up to heaven in transformed bodies also. So here we have further evidence that the rapture is a separate event prior to the Second Coming and another strong indication of the Pre-Trib Rapture of the church.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

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The Nonnegotiable Gospel

Dave Hunt

WHAT IS THE “good news” of the gospel—and from what does it save us? In order to answer that question, we must begin in the Garden, for it was there, in the most perfect environment that God’s heart of love and His creative power could design, that sin had its awful beginning.

Surrounded by beauty, satisfied by abundance, and enjoying the fellowship of their Creator Friend, our first parents nevertheless fell to the seductive lies of the Serpent. “Ye shall be as gods” was Satan’s promise, while Adam, in loyalty to Eve, whom he loved more than God himself, joined in her disobedience and ate of the forbidden fruit (1 Timothy 2:14).

Thus, “by [this] one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). Death not only ends this short earthly life; it separates the sinner from God forever. In His infinite foreknowledge, wisdom, and love, however, God had already planned how He would restore life and reunite mankind with Himself.

Without ceasing to be God, He would become a man through a virgin birth. Only God could be the Savior (Isaiah 43:11; 45:21, etc.), thus the Messiah had to be God (Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 45:15; Titus 1:3, 4, etc.). He would die for our sins to pay the penalty demanded by His justice: “’Tis mystery all, the *immortal* dies!” hymn writer Charles Wesley declared. Then He would rise from the dead to live in those who would believe in and receive Him as their Lord and Savior. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life would be theirs as a *free gift of His grace*. Centuries before His incarnation, God inspired the Old Testament prophets to declare His eternal and unchangeable plan of salvation.

Definitive criteria were provided by which the coming Savior would be identified. Jesus and His apostles did not invent a “new religion.” Christianity fulfills scores of specific prophecies and is therefore provable from Scripture! So it was not a new gospel that Paul the apostle preached but “the gospel of God (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ...” (Romans 1:1-3).

Thus, the Bereans could check Paul’s

message against the Old Testament (Acts 17:11); and he could use the Hebrew prophets, which were read in the synagogue each sabbath, to show that Jesus was the promised Messiah (verses 2, 3). Not Buddha, not Muhammad, not anyone else—only Christ has the required credentials! The fulfillment of scores of specific prophecies in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth should be absolute proof that He is the true and only Savior.

In Hebrews 2:3, the vital question is asked, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” The answer is so starkly plain: there is no escape. The Bible makes that solemn fact abundantly clear. To reject, add to, take from, or otherwise pervert or embrace a *substitute* for “the gospel of God” is to perpetuate the rebellion begun by Adam and Eve and to leave one eternally separated from God and His proffered salvation.

FOR I DELIVERED UNTO YOU FIRST OF ALL THAT WHICH I ALSO RECEIVED, HOW THAT CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES; AND THAT HE WAS BURIED, AND THAT HE ROSE AGAIN THE THIRD DAY SCRIPTURES.

—1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

No wonder Paul wrote, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Corinthians 5:11). So must we, too, persuade men through the gospel! The “gospel of your salvation” (Ephesians 1:13) “wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved” (1 Corinthians 15:1, 2) is simple and precise, leaving no room for misunderstanding or negotiation: “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day...” (verses 3, 4).

This “everlasting gospel” (Revelation 14:6) was promised “before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2) and cannot change with time or culture. There is no other hope for mankind, no other way to be forgiven and brought back to God except through this “strait gate and narrow way” (Matthew 7:13,14). Any broader road leads to destruction.

The one true “gospel of God’s grace,” which God offers as our *only* salvation,

has **three basic elements:**

- 1) who Christ is—fully God and perfect, sinless man in one Person (were He less, He could not be our Savior);
- 2) who we are—hopeless sinners already condemned to eternal death (or we wouldn’t need to be saved); and
- 3) what Christ’s death accomplished—the payment of the full penalty for our sins (any attempt by us to pay *in any way* rejects the Cross).

Christ has commanded us to “preach the gospel [good news!] to every creature [person]” (Mark 16:15). What response is required? Both the desperate question and uncomplicated answer are given to us: “What must I do to be saved?...*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:30, 31). Neither religion, ritual, nor good works will avail. God calls us to simply *believe*. “For by grace are ye saved through *faith*” (Ephesians 2:8)—whosoever *believes* in him will not perish, but has eternal life (John 3:16).

It is the *gospel* alone that saves those who *believe* it. Nothing else will save. Therefore, we *must* preach the gospel. Paul said, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16). Sentimental appeals to “come to Jesus” or “make a decision for Christ” avail nothing if the gospel is not clearly explained and believed. Many are attracted to Christ because of His admirable character, noble martyrdom, or because He changes lives. Such converts have not believed the *gospel* and thus are not saved. This is the solemn teaching of Scripture (John 3:36)!

Paul said that “the gospel of Christ...is the power of God *unto salvation* to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). He also called it “the gospel... by which also *ye are saved*” (1 Corinthians 15:1, 2); and “the gospel of *your salvation*” (Ephesians 1:13). Clearly, from these and other scriptures, salvation comes *only* through *believing the gospel*. Christ told His disciples to go into “all the world, and preach the gospel” (Mark 16:15), a gospel that the Bible precisely defines.

Salvation comes on God’s terms and by His grace, and we negotiate the gospel neither with God nor with one another. “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour

of the world” (1 John 4:14). Salvation is a work of God and His Son. We either believe it or reject it. We don’t “dialogue” about it. It is also called the “gospel of Christ” (Mark 1:1; Romans 1:16; 15:19; 1 Corinthians 9:12, 18; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Galatians 1:7; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:8). He is the Savior, and salvation is His work, not ours, as the angels said: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

Paul specifies the gospel that saves: “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). “I am the door,” said Christ: “by *me* if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:9). The gospel contains nothing about baptism, church membership or attendance, tithing, sacraments or rituals, diet or clothing. If we add *anything* to the gospel, we have perverted it and thus come under Paul’s anathema in Galatians 1:8, 9!

The gospel is all about what Christ has done. It says nothing about what Christ must yet do because the work of our redemption is finished. “Christ *died* for our sins.” His was a past act, never to be repeated, for Christ triumphantly declared, “It is *finished*” (John 19:30)!

Nor does it say anything about what *we* must do, because we can do nothing. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5); “for by grace are ye saved through faith...the gift of God (is) not of works, lest any man should boast...” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Instead of works, the gospel requires faith. It is the power of God unto salvation to those who *believe*. “But to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5)...“that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The gospel is a two-edged sword. It declares, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” The same verse also says, “and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). Right here we come to the most difficult part of the gospel to accept—that those who do not believe it are eternally lost, no matter what good works they do.

The reasons for that fact are grounded in both God’s love and His justice. God’s justice requires that the infinite penalty for

sin must be paid. In payment we would be separated from God forever, so He became a man through the virgin birth to pay the penalty for us. No one can complain against God. He has proved His love by doing all He could for our salvation. He has himself paid the penalty and on that basis can be both “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

Christ pleaded in the Garden, “if it be possible (i.e., if there is any other way among mankind can be saved), let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). We know that there is no other way, or God would not have required His beloved Son to bear the full brunt of His wrath against sin. The fact that men nailed Christ to the cross would only condemn us. But on the cross,

BUT NOW BEING MADE FREE FROM SIN, AND BECOME SERVANTS TO GOD, YE HAVE YOUR FRUIT UNTO HOLINESS, AND THE END EVERLASTING LIFE. FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH; BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

—Romans 6:22-23

when man was doing his worst to his Creator, Christ paid the penalty for our sins in full. Only if we accept that payment on our behalf can we be saved.

“[T]here is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we *must* be saved” (Acts 4:12); “what *must* I do to be saved?...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:30, 31). To “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” includes *who* He *is* and *what* He *has done*.

Jesus said, “...Ye are from beneath; I am from above...if ye believe not that I AM [this is God’s name, Yahweh], ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:23, 24). Jesus himself says we must believe that He is God, for He is; and no one less than God could save us. We must believe that the sinless One “died for our sins,” and was buried; and that He rose bodily from the grave. Only by believing this gospel are we saved. So says God’s Word.

Why could not even a Mother Teresa get to heaven by good works? Because we are all sinners; and because once we have

broken one of God’s commandments we “[are] guilty of all” (James 2:10); and “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20). Keeping the law perfectly from now on could never make up for having already broken it.

For God to grant salvation by any other means than faith in Christ alone would be an insult to the One whom the Father insisted had to endure His wrath as the sacrifice for sin. Furthermore, God would be breaking His own code of justice and going back on His Word. No, even God himself could not save earth’s most notable “saint.” Christ’s blood avails only for repentant sinners. Oswald Chambers warned lest, in our zeal to get people to accept the gospel, we manufacture a gospel acceptable to people and produce “converts” who are not saved.

Today’s most popular perversion is the “positive” gospel, which is designed to offend no one with truth. One of our most popular televangelists, for example, has said that it is demeaning to call anyone a sinner and that Christ died to restore human dignity and self-esteem. He claims to win many to Christ with that seductive message—but such a gospel does not *save sinners*.

Evangelistic appeals are often made to come to Christ” for the wrong reasons: in order to be healthy, happy, successful, to restore a marriage, or to handle stress. Others preach a gospel that is so diluted or perverted that it deceives many into thinking they are saved. No fraud could be worse, for the consequences are eternal! Religion, not atheism, is Satan’s main weapon. “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ... should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). To combat “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), the great deceiver has many false gospels, but they all have two subtle rejections of grace in common: ritual and/or self-effort. Ritual makes redemption an ongoing process performed by a special priesthood; and self-effort gives man a part to play in earning his salvation. The one denies the finality of the Cross. The other denies its sufficiency. Either one robs God of the uniqueness of the gift He wishes to bestow upon fallen man: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You have said that it isn't biblical to teach that salvation can be lost if one fails to live a good-enough life. What about the story Jesus taught about forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-35? Can we actually claim salvation if we cling to unforgiving and bitter attitudes? It seems to me that God does require certain fruits from our lives in order for us to meet the requirement for forgiveness (John 15:2, Luke 13:24, Matthew 7:21-2).

RESPONSE: There is no question that although I can't *earn* my salvation, if the salvation Christ provided must be *kept* by my living a good-enough life, then I would be able to forever share the glory with Christ for my being in heaven. "He *provided* my salvation, but I *kept* it!" Thus, what I do is equally essential with what *He* does.

In the passage referred to above, as well as others that deal with the holiness, goodness, or charitableness of life that we as Christians are to live, the required good works are presented as *evidence* of our salvation, not the means by which we either earn or keep it. Paul clearly tells us that salvation is by grace through faith and not of works (Ephesians 2:8-10, etc.). James just as clearly tells us that the *evidence* that we are saved comes through works. This doesn't mean that without good works we can't be saved. Paul makes that fact clear: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss [of reward]: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Note that James isn't saying that we're saved by works but rather that a professed faith that isn't evidenced by works is dead and can't save (James 2:14). James warns us that a mere profession of faith can be empty—from the lips but not the heart, and that if we aren't willing to live what we profess, then it's likely that we aren't saved at all, because our faith isn't genuine.

Christ gives us a very practical example. He says that if we've truly received the grace of God, then we will be gracious to others. He's challenging us to examine our professed faith. How can I expect God to forgive me when I am not willing to forgive others?

There are people who claim to be Christians, yet they've nursed grudges, hatreds, and animosities against others for years because of the wrong that they believe someone has done to them. Christ, here and elsewhere, says that such a person needs either to repent and allow God's love to work in his heart the same forgiveness that Christ has effected for him, or he should admit that he is not saved at all: "But if ye do not

forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:26).

QUESTION: I was always taught from Isaiah 14 that Satan was a fallen angel, originally named Lucifer. Recently I've been taught that isn't so, for the one being spoken of in Isaiah 14 is obviously "the King of Babylon." Then was Satan created by God as he is now, the most evil of creatures?

RESPONSE: God does not create evil beings. Satan was originally as the Bible describes him in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 and elsewhere. He is a fallen cherub with great power and cunning. (The cherubims seemed to be the highest order of angels closest to God, overshadowing His very dwelling place—and Satan was originally the chief cherub [2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Hebrews 9:5, etc.]. Psalm 99:1 says of God, "He sitteth between the cherubims"). Satan still has access before the throne of God (Job 1:6; 2:1) as the "accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10). The day is yet future when "that old serpent the devil" will be cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:9). Until then, he continues to accuse believers "before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10). Yes, the king of Babylon is being addressed in Isaiah 14. However, much of what is said could not apply to him at all, but only to Satan. For example, when did the king of Babylon have a position in heaven from which he fell? At times the Bible addresses Satan through ungodly earthly rulers to show that he is the real power behind them, just as he will be the power behind Antichrist, of whom it is said, "the dragon [Satan] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Revelation 13:2). In fact, all despotic and evil rulers are types of Antichrist.

That Satan is the one who is being addressed through such kings is clearer in Ezekiel 28:2-19. Here the "prince of Tyre" is being addressed: "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering.... Thou art the anointed cherub [highest order of angel closest to God]; and I have set thee so: thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (v. 13-15). Obviously, none of this was true of the literal "prince of Tyrus" but only of Satan, who inspired and directed him in his ungodly activity. Note the many similarities in Ezekiel 28 to what is said of "the king of Babylon" in Isaiah 14: "I am a God, I sit in the seat of God..." (v. 2);... "thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God" (v. 6), etc. Clearly, Satan is being addressed as the power behind both the king of Babylon and

the prince of Tyrus.

Satan is "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Christ did not dispute his claim to ownership of the world system when, in the temptation in the wilderness, Satan offered to give the kingdoms of the world to Christ if He would bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:8-9). Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 carry the same message.

QUESTION: A while ago, you wrote a very informative article about evolution, but didn't you put too much emphasis on Catholicism's support of that theory? What about protestants, and even evangelicals? Shouldn't you have pointed out that theistic evolution is quite popular in those circles as well?

Response: The debate over how God created the world...is not a central tenet of Christianity. Christianity is inextricably linked with all of the Bible. If any part contradicts any other part, then the whole of Scripture is undermined. If the Bible is wrong in its account of man's origin, why should we trust its teaching about man's redemption? Like "Christian psychology," "theistic evolution" is one more example of Christians desiring to be academically respected and thereby embracing a worldly wisdom that compromises and contradicts God's Word. What some Catholics don't understand, *The American Atheist* magazine does: "But if death [of evolving prehumans] preceded man and was not a result of Adam's sin, then sin is fiction. If sin is fiction, then we have no need for a Savior.... [E]volution destroys, utterly and finally, the very reason [for] Jesus's earthly life.... If Jesus was not the Redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing." (Cited in *The Christian News*, Nov 11, 1996)

Adam is mentioned about 30 times in the ten books of the Bible. To discredit the biblical account of Adam's creation punctures so many holes in all of the Bible that it can no longer be the container of consistent theology. Darwin said, "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ[ism] existed that could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down." Had Darwin known of the incredible complexity of life on the molecular and cellular level, he probably would not have proposed his theory. Since the discovery of the "black box," evolutionists, right up to the present, have maintained a total silence on this subject—a silence that speaks volumes.



BIBLICAL ANSWERS to CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Who Are the “Saints” Whom Antichrist Kills?

QUESTION: Revelation 13:7 says that Antichrist is given authority (and it could only come from God) “to make war with the saints and to overcome them....” Doesn’t this prove that the church faces Antichrist and gets through the tribulation? If not, who are the saints whom Antichrist kills?

Response: Christ promised that the “gates of hell shall not prevail against” the church (Matthew 16:18). Surely hell would have prevailed if the Antichrist, who is backed and empowered by Satan (Revelation 13:2,4), could “make war with the saints and overcome them.” Furthermore, this fact would mean that a post-trib rapture would be practically a non-event because there would be almost no Christians left alive to rapture. Yet one is given the impression that multitudes are “alive and remain” to be “caught up together” with the dead who have been raised (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Here then is another reason for concluding that during the tribulation the church is already in heaven in resurrected and/or glorified bodies like Christ’s own body. The gospel, however, is still being preached on earth by the two witnesses in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 ½ years (Revelation 11:3) (seen no doubt on worldwide news broadcasts every evening) and by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Revelation 7:3,4) as well as by many others. Souls are being saved through the preaching of the gospel.

Those who have heard the gospel and rejected it prior to the rapture have no chance to be saved. Instead, they are given a “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12). Multitudes, however, who never heard and rejected the gospel are being saved and are paying for their faith with their lives. The Antichrist kills

all who do not bow down to worship him as God: “He had power...to cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Revelation 13:15).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE.....

The job of every Christian is to pray. Yet we want to do something important for God;... Prayer seems like such a small thing to do.... But to Jesus, prayer is everything; it’s a duty as well as a privilege, a right as well as a responsibility. We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but Jesus wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there is nothing else we can do, but Jesus wants us to pray *before* we do anything at all. Most of us...don’t want to wait for God to resolve matters in His good time.... And so we try to help God along. Many times we even try to answer our

own prayers. We have the idea that more people will become Christians if we can make God look good to them. So we try to convince them of God's generosity by proving that He answers prayer. If we can just help God spruce up His image a little, we can get more people on His side, right? Wrong! He wants us to *pray*. Always, and about everything. During times of joy [and] sorrow. He wants us to talk *to* Him, not *about* Him. He even wants us to talk to Him about unbelievers before we talk to unbelievers about Him. Prayer is our holy occupation. Plain and simple.

—OSWALD CHAMBERS (24 JULY 1874 – 15
NOVEMBER 1917)

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The World and The Church: Where Are They Headed? - Part One

T. A. McMahon

THE TITLE RAISES an important question that underscores the importance of knowing biblical eschatology. First of all, what is biblical eschatology, and, second, why is it necessary to have a correct understanding of it?

Biblical eschatology is what the Bible says about the End Times—all that it declares will take place. How do we get a correct understanding of it? Very simply, we need to read what the Bible has to say about it. We can also read some books written about biblical eschatology, but they must be held up to the light of Scripture.

The Bible is a history book of the world—from the beginning of the world's creation to its ending, when it will be replaced by new heavens and a new earth. Why will it be replaced? Because after its creation, something went terribly wrong.

God, our Creator, has communicated to mankind selected details regarding His creation, which He declared to be “very good.” After Adam and Eve were created, He gave them a commandment, which they disobeyed. The consequences of their disobedience brought sin into the world, corrupting all of creation.

Satan, the fallen angel Lucifer, deceived Eve into disobeying God. Adam, who was *not* deceived, sinned willfully. Their sin infected all of their descendants. Mankind therefore had two options regarding its sinful condition. They could 1) accept God's plan of reconciliation and salvation, which He provided by sending His Son, Jesus, to become a man in order to pay the full penalty for all the sins of humanity; or 2) humanity could turn to Satan for his solution as the god of this world, which included his offer of “godhood” to one and all.

From the time of Eve's seduction until the establishment of the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist, the Bible records an ongoing spiritual battle for the souls of humankind. The Old Testament chronicles the events of Israel's being chosen and set apart by God for His purposes—primarily for the establishment of a people to whom He would send His Son. Israel's history included episodes of submission to and

rebellion against God, times of true worship and times of idolatry, as well as attempts fostered by Satan to annihilate the Jews. If the Jews could be wiped out, God's promises would be of none effect, and there would be no Messiah to come to the world through Israel.

The New Testament records Satan's attempt to kill the infant Jesus through Herod, as well as other ploys by the Adversary to eliminate the Jewish Messiah. No doubt Satan thought his battle was won when Christ was crucified, only to be shocked by Jesus's resurrection from the dead! He obviously missed the purpose of Jesus's coming, which was to “destroy the works of the devil” by paying the full penalty for the sins of mankind through His death, burial, and resurrection. Satan's chief works centered on keeping humanity in bondage to sin, a bondage that would be broken for all those who would turn—by faith alone—to Jesus for His atoning sacrifice.

So the battle is over for the souls of mankind, right? No. In fact, it's heating up—big time! Satan's ongoing self-delusion, which started in heaven when he claimed he would “be like the most High,” has been amplified to include his own religion and kingdom on earth. Through it, he will finally receive the worship he desires when he possesses the man whom he empowers, the Antichrist.

What I've summarized sets the eschatological background for the world and Christianity in their final conflict. The world, for a brief time, will be under the control of the Antichrist, who will appear to finally be victorious over Christendom. God will then judge the world through the Great Tribulation.

I want to begin with Samuel Andrews' book, *Christianity and Anti-Christianity in Their Final Conflict*, for a number of reasons. The book was published in 1898. After reading a very old copy, I was highly motivated to have it reprinted through the Berean Call. I recognized that it not only contained tremendous insights regarding the fulfillment of prophecy, but his book also demonstrated an excellent way of better understanding biblical eschatology. Andrews never claimed to have any special gifting related to prophecy. What he did, however, was amazing! Yet it's something we all can do, and *need* to do, in these days of increasing apostasy. Here is what he did.

Samuel Andrews went to the Book of Revelation to glean what it had to say about the Last Days. He considered who the major characters were, what

their game plan was, what their religious beliefs were, their political agenda, and how those things fit in with the truth of God's Word. In addition to John's writing in Revelation and in his epistles, Andrews searched out what the other writers of Scripture—Daniel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul, Peter, and Jude—had to say about the Last Days.

Again, Samuel Andrews didn't do anything that we as believers cannot do. As he gathered that information, he looked to see if anything of what he had read emerged and became influential in his own day. He was such a biblically discerning individual that I doubt he was even surprised to find how much of it was prevalent throughout the world of his day...and even within Christendom. Grieved, I'm sure, but not surprised.

For example, he recognized that most of the highly esteemed and influential philosophers of his time were *opposed* to Christianity, men such as Baruch Spinoza, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Hegel. Most of us are probably more familiar with Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who were both Americans.

If you're wondering where these philosophers were coming from spiritually, they, as well as most of the leading philosophers of the 1800s, were atheists and agnostics. They rejected the God of the Bible, opting for “God” being an impersonal Force that is *in everything and everyone*. They promoted evolution and naturalism, which they, in due course, tied into Eastern mysticism.

Andrews saw the connection between their beliefs and Scripture's declaration that the Antichrist will declare himself to be God and will be worshiped as God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). That's an important observation, because the lie by which Satan seduced Eve—that she would be “as God”—isn't a belief that people would buy into right away, especially those who view God traditionally as a personal Being and the Creator of the universe.

Today that would include about 2.5 billion Christians and one billion Muslims, for example. Whether the belief is in the Christian God or Allah, changing over to believing you *are* God, or are *becoming* God doesn't happen immediately. Andrews writes: “So long as men have faith in a personal God, the Creator of the worlds and of man, One who governs all things according to His will, and exists apart from all, no man can seat himself in the temple of God ‘shewing himself that he is God’; such a claim would be instantly rejected as

both blasphemous and absurd. Before such a claim could be listened to, there must be wrought in many minds such a change in their conception of God that this claim of Divinity would not offend them as something strange and incredible, but would be accepted as wholly consistent with what they believe of the Divine nature, and of its relations to humanity.” Andrews then gives some insights into how philosophies that have religious implications help advance the acceptance of divinity for mankind.

The very nature of philosophy lends itself to explanations of concepts that are based almost totally upon man’s intellect and reasonings. That may seem acceptable for some things, but man’s intellect and reasonings are dead in the water when it comes to answering the most significant issues of life.

One example should suffice. What can philosophers tell us about God? Nothing of truth—other than the little they may have derived from the Bible. As one surveys the most influential philosophers, as I noted, when it comes to religious issues, they are atheists and agnostics. As atheists, they reject the God of the Bible in favor of their own ideas; as agnostics, they plead ignorance about God. In both cases, they nevertheless have much to say about the God revealed in Scripture. They have nothing to say, however, in regard to truth. Their writings about God are hopeless exercises in ignorance. Why is that? Aren’t they esteemed as brilliant men? Then why are the “brilliant” philosophers so ignorant in their reasonings about God?

Very simply, their sinful nature notwithstanding, they are finite beings trying to explain an infinite God. That’s not going to happen, at least in any sense of truth. Have you ever thought about the verse in Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding?” Why *not* lean on our own understanding? Outside of recognizing in creation that the God who created it all must be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, all the rest of our understanding is mere worldly wisdom under the guise of knowledge regarding God. That includes everyone (not just the philosophers).

Everyone who leans upon his *own understanding* is mired in his own fleshly wisdom. Again, finite man cannot know the God of Creation who is infinite, unless...? Unless God communicates to him, and that must include revealing things on which humanity can only speculate: His eternal nature, His perfect

attributes, and His purpose for humanity. God also has to reveal things *about us*. What’s our problem? From whence came our sinful nature? Is there any hope for remedying our sin-infected condition?

All of that, and much more, we cannot know in truth unless God informs us. We don’t even know our own hearts! *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* (Jeremiah 17:9); and *For the word of God is quick* [meaning “living”], *and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12). That insight doesn’t come from the mind or wisdom or intelligence of finite and sinful man!

Getting back to the influential philosophers of Samuel Andrews’ day, e.g., Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Thoreau, and Emerson—these were among those who rejected the God of the Bible and gave the world their own antichrist beliefs. Antichrist beliefs? That’s what a person is left with when he rejects God and His revelation. He’s also left with another huge problem: he has to come up with *his own solution* to resolve the mess the world is in.

The God of the Bible declares that *sin* is the problem and that He has the solution. The philosophers find that unacceptable, and they are adamant about it—even nasty. The world, therefore, must come up with its own remedy. Yet all the remedies it has tried have failed! Examples abound such as:

Scientific materialism: the belief that there is no nonphysical reality. Discussions on this subject can get ugly...as well as stupid. Even so, that topic ruled the day for much of science in the past, but now it’s being mostly abandoned. Why? Because it defies both experience and reason, as well as being an “antichrist” concept.

Samuel Andrews comments: “Science, because it craves absolute and unchangeable law, is favorably inclined to scientific materialism. It dislikes any Divine interposition [rejecting the spiritual realm]; its aim is physical, not moral.”

Thus the claim that “only matter exists.” *Really?*

If I were to ask someone who believes in scientific materialism why he thinks it’s true and he began to cite his reasons, I would stop him in the midst of his explanation with another question: “Is that what *you* think?” His likely response would be, “Absolutely.” My next question would then be, “You think so? Are your thoughts

physical? What about reasons? Are they physical?” From there, we could go down a whole list of things that have no physical basis yet are unarguably a part of life: love, lust, justice, compassion, anger, aesthetics, pride, and so on and so forth.

True science has been helpful to mankind, but it has fallen far short of solving all humanity’s problems—and even more so as it has turned to scientism, which is in fact a religious makeover of science. So scientific materialism has thus dropped out as a solution.

Next, the philosophers looked to evolution: the belief that humanity is evolving upward, transforming from “slime to divine.” Some declare that man is at the top of the evolutionary ladder and will reach a higher state. Yet those who think that way have to overcome a number of barriers. Evolutionary theory is bankrupt—it has no answers for the basic issues of life. For example, how did life begin from non-life? To claim that it did contradicts the law of biogenesis. What is the probability of life—let’s say a human cell—being formed by chance? *Zero* probability!

British astronomer and mathematician Sir Fred Hoyle presented the problem clearly, “...the chance of producing the basic enzymes of life by random processes without intelligent direction would be 10 with 40,000 zeros after it. This *mathematic impossibility* is well known to geneticists, and yet nobody seems to blow the whistle decisively on the theory.”

Among the millions and millions of fossils that have been found, there are *no* (as in *not one*) *transitional fossils*; that is, there are no intermediate species between any two kinds of species. How do time and chance, the bedrock of evolution, bring about the very different yet very necessary elements for reproduction by humans? Males have a very different makeup than females, and the difference between each is critical for the making of babies.

Again, regarding these questions and a host of others, evolution has no answers. Nevertheless, the atheists keep looking for solutions.

Closely related to evolution is Naturalism. That concept includes the belief that humanity is a part of Nature. Yet, somehow, we have lost that connection. Thus, Naturalism’s solution for the mess we’re in is to “get back to Nature.” Why nature? Well, we’re told that nature is pure and good and, for some reason, we’ve become “unnatural,” and thus what we do is mostly against nature.

Really?

When a beaver builds its home or creates a dam, it usually messes up its ecological surroundings, leaving standing trees damaged, half-chewed, and the land flooded. But that's okay because it's "natural," and thus is considered completely beneficial. When engineers build a dam for the good of humanity, however, heeding most every ecological concern, that's considered *not good*. It's *unnatural*.

Hold on a minute! If *man* is indeed a part of nature, as is claimed, then everything he does must be natural, and therefore good, pure, and beneficial. Going back to Naturalism's connection to evolution, a major claim for the process of evolution is "Survival of the Fittest." I have a bird feeder for chickadees. Cute little chickadees. They can clean out my 18-inch cylinder filled with birdseed in a matter of hours. At times it's like watching wild dogs at a banquet. I'm just glad those cute little things don't have fangs!

I guess I'm missing the good, pure, and beneficial part of nature.

Nevertheless, we're told we all need to "*realign* ourselves with nature." As Dave Hunt used to say, try to cozy up to Mother Nature. Hug an erupting volcano. Sure, go for a swim in quicksand. Dry off with poison ivy leaves.

I guess COVID-19 is a good and natural thing. It's Mother Nature's way of balancing the population through sickness and death. She also has a host of other "good and pure" natural diseases: cancers, infections, etc.

No. Naturalism doesn't fix the mess we're in. It's *part* of the mess!

So, if all the attempts by mankind to solve its woeful condition through scientific materialism, evolutionary theory, and a return to nature have failed (which they all have), you might think man would throw in the towel and return to his Creator.

No way! Although the philosophers claim to be atheists and agnostics, they had to—and have to—turn to religion in their quest of solving the mess we're in. They have reasoned that since the personal God of the Bible does not exist, man remains as the supposedly highest self-conscious being. Thus, his position places him in the realm of the divine.

That is *Pantheism*.

It leads to self-exaltation, which is necessary in order to solve the problems that only an almighty God can handle. Thus to realize one's own godhood is extremely important. Ralph Waldo Emer-

son, the much-admired rebel philosopher and pantheist, showed the way:

"Nothing is sacred but the integrity of our own mind. What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions if I live wholly from within?...No law can be sacred to me but that of my [godlike] nature.... I shun father and mother, and wife and brother, when my genius calls me. Jesus was better than others because He refused to listen to others...."

Andrews notes another characteristic, perhaps the primary one with regard to Pantheism. Pantheism is wholly subjective, driven by intuition and feelings, which can neither be proved nor disproved. He quotes Emerson's making *feelings* the judge of what he was willing to accept or reject. The Lord's supper is under Emerson's scrutiny: "If I believed that it was enjoined by Jesus on His disciples, and that he even contemplated making permanent this mode of commemoration as in every way agreeable..., and yet on trial it was disagreeable to my own feelings, I should *not* adopt it."

When it comes down to it, there are only two religious or spiritual options: biblical theism and pantheism. Biblical theism has to do with the God who reveals Himself in the Bible. He alone is God, who has created everything. *He is not part of His creation*—He is totally "other," existing eternally outside of what He created. If God were a part of creation, He would be a part of the "mess" we're in, which He's not. He's the solution!

Pantheism, as we noted earlier, is the belief that God is *in everything* and therefore *everything is God*. The rejection of (or any aberrational view of) biblical theism turns mankind to pantheism. All the philosophers I mentioned earlier (and many more that I didn't) were pantheists. They rejected the God of the Bible and sought their own godhood.

Samuel Andrews, whose 1898 book, *Christianity and Antichristianity In Their Final Conflict*, which I've been quoting, documents the pantheistic beliefs held by the German philosophers that flooded the educated world through the arts, science, literature, and religion. Andrews writes, "As to the former, some proofs have already been given showing that Pantheism, in some of its forms, not only pervades the current modern philosophy, but is more and more penetrating religion, science, literature, and all the departments of human thought. The multitude is made familiar with its principles through magazines and newspapers, through lectures

and the pulpit. Its prevalence is shown in the rapidity with which such systems as those of Christian Science, Mental [Mind] Science, Theosophy, and others kindred to them have spread in Christian communities, for all have a Pantheistic basis. The moral atmosphere is full of its spirit, and many are affected by it unawares."

This is where it's all heading.

Pantheism is not only driven by its appeal to humans to "be as gods" but is reinforced by political action, notably democracy. How so?

Andrews writes, The "...growth of Democracy serves to prepare the way of the Antichrist by making the *popular will* supreme, both as to the choice of the rulers and the nature and extent of their rule; and by giving legal expression to that will.

"When a people elects its legislators, the legislation will be what the majority of the voters demand. In the past, among all Christian nations, such legislation has, in great part, been based upon Christian principles, and involved the recognition of God's authority. So long as this authority, as declared in the Scriptures or by the Church, is recognized, the popular will is not supreme; but according as it is denied, this supremacy is more and more enlarged. If, then, the belief becomes general, either that there is no God, the Law giver, or no expression of His will which is authoritative, what principle shall determine the character and limitations of legislation? The only principle is that of the [supposed] public good; whatever this demands, is right." [In other words, in order to get elected or re-elected, politicians often pander to the will of the voters. That is certainly politics today!]

Again, remember, Andrews' book was written 120 years ago, and we're only touching upon some of the things he reveals of his day, yet his book reads as though he were a news commentator in our day. And it wouldn't be fake news!

This article focused primarily on *the world* and where it's heading. In part 2, the main focus will be *the church*, the true and the professing church, and the apostasy (which, by the way, will include true believers).

I began this message by underscoring the importance of eschatology, especially its value in guarding believers against being deceived, including being drawn into, and unwittingly contributing to, the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist. Tragically, this is happening today in staggering proportions as the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ draws near.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: In your book, *America, the Sorcerer's New Apprentice* (subtitled *The Rise of the New Shamanism*), you lumped all three of the world's major religions together: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. But they are not the same; the followers of Islam do not even worship the same God! How can you be so careless?

Response: We appreciate the concern you express, but we think it is based upon a superficial reading or misunderstanding. You say that we lump together under one heading Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as all apparent believers in the Bible and the God of Israel (and his prohibitions against the occult). We are not aware that we did this; if you disagree, please give us page numbers where it occurred.

We took great care not to cause such confusion, but at the same time, we wanted to appeal to the followers of Islam and Judaism and not anger and chase them away in the early pages. *America* was written specifically for the non-Christian, so you have to understand it from that standpoint. For example, on page 167, we say: "The Old Testament, claimed as their Holy Scriptures by Jews, Muslims, and Christians...." That is not lumping the three religions together or saying that Jews and Muslims are Christian believers, as you say we did. It only says that they claim to follow the Old Testament. Is that not true?

We want them to look at what they claim as their scriptures instead of thinking of opposition to the occult as a purely Christian idea. Isn't that wise? It is not until the last chapter that we begin to present the gospel and make vital distinctions. At page 282, we wrote, "Why is Christianity singled out as the enemy, when we have noted all along that the Bible [i.e., Old Testament] of Jews, Muslims, and Christians opposes the pantheistic/naturalistic worldview? The answer no doubt lies in the fact that the Jewish and Islamic view of these scriptures puts the burden upon mankind to save itself—which, in that respect, is in agreement with the perennial philosophy of the world. Christianity, on the other hand,..." And, at page 287, we said, "...claims which Jews and Muslims reject, thereby further identifying their particular opposition to Christianity.... Neither Buddha, Muhammad, Confucius, nor any other religious leader made such claims." And on page 288: "One may journey to Mecca to visit the grave of Muhammad...[but] the grave of Jesus...stands empty...."

I think you've misread *America, the Sorcerer's New Apprentice* and would appreciate it if you would go back over what you found objectionable and let us know the page numbers. It would be tragic for you not to use this book! We believe it is the best there is for non-Christians.

QUESTION: Whether to enforce the death penalty continues to be a controversial subject, not only among non-Christians but among Christians as well. Should a Christian president or attorney general uphold the death penalty?

RESPONSE: The death penalty very clearly was established by God from the beginning (subsequent to Cain): "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast...and at the hand of man...will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:5-6). "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death...; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die" (Exodus 21:12-14). "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 24:17). "So shall ye not pollute the land wherein ye are: for the blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Numbers 35:30-33). "Thine eye shall not pity [a murderer], but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee" (Deuteronomy 19:11-13).

It is true that the above were directives given specifically to Israel. Yet the Ten Commandments (except for keeping the Sabbath), which were given to Israel, have been written by God in every human conscience (Romans 2:14-15). "Thou shalt not commit murder" is one of these commandments. That fact would indicate that the death penalty for murder should be upheld today by those governing in human affairs, who are supposed to be "the minister[s] of God...to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:4). Even godless rulers are held responsible by God to execute His justice, as Romans 13 makes very clear.

Christians, however, are not part of this world but have been chosen out of the world (John 15, 17; 1 John 2, etc.). They are under the law of Christ as to their individual conduct and the affairs of the church. As to their civil duties, however, they are under the law of the land in which they live and are subject to "Caesar," as Jesus himself

declared: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things which are God's" (Matthew 22:21, etc.).

Whether a true Christian should even aspire to the office of President is a question that each must answer before God in his own conscience. How much compromise must be entered into even to get to that office can only be imagined. Thereafter, the compromise can only get worse in working with the ungodly, in receiving and being friendly with godless rulers, as well as in attempting to apply righteousness to a populace that wants anything but to obey God and His laws.

QUOTABLE.....

It may seem strange that pantheists, agnostics, and atheists should think it worthwhile to employ themselves upon such a work of supererogation [to perform over and above the call of duty] as to attack the Bible in detail, when they have already condemned it in the gross; but many books of this kind of pseudo-criticism are yearly written. We may take as an eminent example Strauss in his "Life of Jesus." With his pantheistic conception of God and of His relations to men, he could not accept the Gospels as possibly true. Such a man as the Incarnate Son, the Christ of the Church, could not ever have lived. Undoubtedly there lived the man Jesus, a super-eminent religious genius, yet in nature a man like other men, without supernatural powers, a son of His age; and the work of criticism is to separate the nucleus of historical truth in the gospel narratives from the encrustations that have grown up around it. The reader, knowing his philosophical starting point, knows from the first to what conclusion Strauss will come; and that, even if there were absolute agreement among the Evangelists as to the details of the Lord's earthly life, the more important of their statements would have been rejected all the same.

—SAMUEL J. ANDREWS



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Isn't the Resurrection on "The Last Day"?

QUESTION: When speaking of the resurrection of those who believe on Him, Christ said that He would "raise [them] *up at the last day*" (John:6:40-44,54). Doesn't Revelation:20:4-5 teach that the "first resurrection" takes place after the Battle of Armageddon, and couldn't this be what Christ meant by "the last day"? Certainly a Pre-Trib Resurrection couldn't be on "the last day"! In view of such scriptures, how can one reconcile a resurrection (and its accompanying rapture) at the beginning of the Great Tribulation?

Response: (Part 1): Nor could a Post-Trib Rapture be on "the last day" if that expression refers to a 24-hour period, *for an entire millennium* of subsequent days follow. Beware of teaching built on one isolated verse. What do "first resurrection" and "last day" actually mean? The answer can only be found in the context of all Scripture. In John:5:28,29 Jesus spoke of two resurrections: "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." That this does not all occur in the same "hour" is clear, for the resurrection of the wicked doesn't take place until the Millennium.

Yes, it says of the resurrection after Armageddon of those martyred by Antichrist, "This is the *first* resurrection" (Revelation:20:5). Obviously, however this can't be the *entire* "first resurrection," or Wesley, Spurgeon, and even Paul (who, though martyred, was not slain by Antichrist) will never be resurrected, because the only resurrection that remains is of the wicked in verses 12-15. As we shall see below, those resurrected at that time are judged and sent to the lake of fire. Then what about Abraham, Moses, Daniel, and the millions of other saints, both from Old Testament and New Testament times, who lived and died before Antichrist came on the scene? One can only conclude that the statement "This is the first resurrection" must mean that this event is *part of and concludes the resurrection which occurred at the Rapture*. Consequently, these

martyrs are also part of the church.

That the Rapture and resurrection described in 1 Corinthians:15:50-52 and 1 Thessalonians:4:13-17 take place previous to the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs is clear from the fact that in Revelation:19:7 we have the church in heaven as Christ's bride at the "*marriage of the Lamb*" (not the marriage supper, verse 9, which takes place later on earth, when Christ introduces His bride to those who enter the Millennium). Christ's bride, composed of the saints of all ages to that time (as we have seen), has already been resurrected, is in heaven with Christ, and accompanies Him at Armageddon, as Zechariah:14:5 and Jude 14 declare.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

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The World and The Church: Where Are They Headed? - Part Two

T. A. McMahon

IN PART 1 we looked at what the Scriptures tell us will take place in the end times just prior to and including the return of Jesus Christ. Our focus was primarily on the world—that is, those who have rejected biblical Christianity, Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation that He has provided for all those who are willing to accept it. We noted that those who rejected Christ’s way for mankind to be reconciled to its Creator turned to mysticism in the form of pantheism. They replaced the true and living God, our Creator, with themselves (Romans 1). They have bought into the lie that Satan had used to deceive Eve (see Genesis 3) and are being prepared to accept the Antichrist’s claim to be God, as described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

We considered the writings of Samuel Andrews in his book *Christianity and Anti-Christianity in Their Final Conflict* and his method of studying the scriptures of the end times. He looked to see if what the Bible said would happen was being manifested to some degree in his own day. He found examples of nearly every deception the Bible warns about. The only difference between his day and ours is that the world and the devil have expanded the lies exponentially. What was just beginning to emerge 120 years ago has become blatant today. I believe the phrase “hidden in plain sight” best describes what’s taking place.

The beliefs of Eastern Mysticism, Hinduism, and Buddhism have all but displaced the traditional Christian beliefs in the West. One of the hundreds of “hidden in plain sight” examples is the Young Men’s Christian Association. It has become a popular center for Yoga lessons. Most people today couldn’t tell

you what the letters YMCA stand for, with many guessing the Y probably stands for Yoga. Teenagers today are unaware of the spiritual basis for the Eastern religious terms they have added to their vocabulary (i.e., karma, mantra, avatar, diva, guru, nirvana).

In Part 1, the focus was mainly on the world being drawn to pantheism, the belief that everything and everyone is God. That is the foreseeable outcome due to the world’s rejection of Jesus Christ and the fact that it is consequently being drawn to the religion of the Antichrist. In this article, we will briefly consider the state of Christendom in Samuel Andrews’ day as it was influenced by the world, then we’ll look at the state of the church today by comparison.

Andrews points to Revelation 2 where Jesus addresses the church at Ephesus. Although the church was doing many good works, Jesus admonishes the fellowship: “I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.” Andrews connects the church’s drifting away from its love for Jesus with apostasy: “It is thus in the loss of the first love, not in doctrinal errors, that we find the root of the falling away [the apostasy] in the beginning, and the key to the whole subsequent history of the Church. Then began that spiritual separation from the Head which cannot cease till the first love has been regained.”

He defines apostasy: “The apostasy, or falling away...means, generally, a falling away from some given standard; a defection. Here it means a falling away from the true standing of the Church as appointed by God. This general meaning leaves undetermined the degree of the apostasy or falling away, whether a total or partial denial of the truth. The Apostle [Paul] distinguishes two forms of the apostasy, one being the corruption of Christianity, the other its absolute rejection. The falling away, beginning with the loss of love, is not to be confined to doctrine; it embraces the whole spiritual life; and therefore the whole external order of the Church.”

When Jesus addresses the churches in Revelation, He is doing so as the Head of the church. He is speaking to His body. As the body’s love for Him decreases, its obedience to Him also decreases, resulting in the body doing its own thing without submitting to Jesus, the Head of the church.

That’s how the apostasy, in its corrupting sense, develops. It’s the forsaking of the truth through ceasing to love and obey the instructions of our Lord and Savior.

Andrews identified much of what had influenced the church of his day. It was a case of the church in the world and the world in the church, all brought on by slipping away from the Head: “Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip” (Hebrews 2:1, emphasis added).

The exhortation from the Head to give “earnest heed” was *not* heeded then...or now. The “slip,” therefore, has turned into a massive spiritual landslide in our day, burying the truth of God’s Word in every demonically conceived way possible—or so it seems. If you’ve been following The Berean Call for a moderate length of time, or even for a decade before the start of the TBC ministry in 1992, you no doubt became familiar with the book, *The Seduction of Christianity*. That being the case, you have been made aware of more heresies and false teachers infecting the church than most Christians probably care to know about. It can be a bit discouraging at times—kind of like swamp swimming. It’s often a sluggish affair, with nasty leeches sticking to your body for the ride...and for lunch. So, I’ll spare you my enumerating most of the heresies, as they would quickly fill up this article.

On the other hand, there’s much exhortation and encouragement in what the Lord has enabled us to do. After all, I’m not the one who said, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4). Or, “...in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1). Or, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3, emphasis added). Or, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:29-31). Or the Book of Jude! Or “...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). So, it never gets boring, even though the times of apostasy are not pleasant.

If you’ve been unsure about apostasy and are thinking along more “positive” lines, such as a pending global revival

and national repentance—and those verses don't give you pause—Scripture gives us dozens upon dozens more. Nevertheless, rather than review the multitude of heresies that abound today, I want to share a perspective that the title of Samuel Andrews book motivated me to consider.

Again, the title is: *Christianity and Anti-Christianity in Their Final Conflict*. This makes me believe that those two entities will be in a battle that will conclude when Jesus returns to destroy all those whom Satan has gathered against Him. Satan, rallying his troops, draws them from a diversity of his deceits, his devices, his frauds, his seductions, his lies, his twisting of Scriptures, his false prophets and teachers, his cults, his appeal to man's lusts, and particularly to man's ego, all of which he uses to entrap them.

Those deceptions have captured not only those who have rejected Christ but also believers who were ensnared by Satan's "angel of light" deceptions and his multitude of lying signs and wonders. My goal is to show how connected the seemingly diverse deceptions of the Adversary are and how they will converge as they contribute to the development and acceptance of the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist.

I see it as the perfect storm, where many elements come together to create something far more volatile and deadly than one might expect under normal storm conditions. Here are just some of the diverse entities that are prepared wholly or in part to contribute to the kingdom of the Antichrist.

Let's begin with the Roman Catholic Church, which is loaded with antichrist kingdom-supporting essentials. First of all, it sees itself as the head of Christianity. Its pope is called the Vicar of Christ, meaning the human representative of Christ on earth. Its eschatology is amillennial. It has replaced Israel and has been trying to set up the kingdom of Christ ever since the days of the Roman Emperor, Constantine, while the popes have ruled over the kingdoms of the world.

Much of Catholicism has been given to mysticism and pantheism through the Desert Fathers, Ignatius Loyola of the Jesuits, and, of more recent times, the Buddhist/Catholic monk Thomas Merton, as well as the favorite priest of leading evangelicals, Henri Nouwen. A more direct connection to pantheism is found in the latest Catholic Catechism: "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God," and, "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting

to make us sharers of his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods." Those quotes, listed in the *official* Catholic catechism, are from St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Athanasius.

Even more could be cited regarding the Church of Rome, but I want to cover as many "perfect storm" contributors as I can in this brief article. Nevertheless, I'm sure you get the picture that a billion-and-a-half Catholics are being set up to receive the pantheistic religion and kingdom of the Antichrist.

Let's move on to a church organization that's trying to rival the Church of Rome in power and money—namely the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mormonism's fundamental belief is that man can work his way to godhood. As the saying goes that was supposedly received from the Mormon gods to man, "As you are, we once were. As we are, you will become." Brigham Young declared, "The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming Gods like Himself...to become Gods like unto our Father in heaven," and, "The devil told the truth. I do not blame Mother Eve for eating the forbidden fruit. That's how we become gods." Mormons obviously are well prepared to accept the pantheistic lies of the Antichrist. They also believe they will rule over the world government set up in the last days as the kingdom of God on earth. Nothing is too farfetched for Mormons to believe, because they are assured that the more unrealistic and impracticable Mormon doctrine seems to them, the greater is their faith when they nevertheless believe it. That includes accepting Mormon teachings that have absolutely no biblical, archaeological, linguistic, geographical, or anthropological evidence to support their claims.

Among the Word/Faith, Prosperity, and Healing preachers, godhood has been a significant part of their conniving. As one of their influential leaders declared: "Just as dogs have puppies and cats have kittens, so does God have little gods." Kenneth Copeland says, "Man was created in the god class. We are a class of gods." Last year, my talks at our TBC conference addressed an earlier gathering of nearly 50,000 young adults at a stadium in Orlando, Florida. The gathering was titled *The Send*. The stated purpose was to send the young people out to evangelize the world, beginning with their neighborhoods, their schools, their communities, their countries, and on to the ends of the earth. What could be wrong with that?

Those who put on the gathering were kingdom dominionists representing YWAM, Bethel Church and its School of Supernatural Ministry, the New Apostolic Reformation, and numerous Word/Faith preachers. The elder leaders of the event were introduced as "mighty men of God." They included false prophets and false teachers such as Benny Hinn, Rodney Howard-Browne, Lou Engels, Bill Johnson, and Loren Cunningham.

What then are kingdom dominionists? They believe that Jesus, as the head of the church, has appointed the body to take over the world in His physical absence and are to set up His kingdom in order for Him to return. Those taken in by this are clamoring for worldwide revival. That's been the call of those Pentecostals and Charismatics involved in the Latter-rain Manifest Sons of God movement of the mid 1940s, and later the Toronto Blessing, the Brownsville Revival, the Kansas City Prophets, IHOP (the International House of Prayer,) and the New Apostolic Reformation.

Why? They believe a worldwide Christian revival will put them in charge. I interviewed a young man who was attending the Bethel School of Supernatural ministry. He was in his third year. I asked him about his eschatology. He didn't know what the term meant. Not surprising. Biblical eschatology isn't taught there. It gets in the way of the school's Kingdom Dominion agenda. Having sat in on a Bethel service, I told him I was curious about the preacher mentioning a coming worldwide revival, and could he tell me where that's found in Scripture? He wasn't sure. I asked him what, according to the Scriptures, was the next kingdom to come. He seemed more than startled when I informed him it will be "the kingdom of the Antichrist." Many of our young Christians, ignorant of what the Word of God declares about the Last Days, are being recruited to contribute to the development of the religion and kingdom of the "man of lawlessness, the beast." I don't believe a true Christian can lose his salvation, but I do believe that by buying into Satan's deceptions a believer's life and fruitfulness can be wrecked.

In next month's newsletter we'll address two more elements of the "perfect storm" that are causing many conservative evangelicals to buy into the beliefs of, and unwittingly participate in, the activities for building the kingdom of the Antichrist.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Jesus said, “I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven...if two of you shall agree on anything it shall be given you....” Why can’t we make this work today?

RESPONSE: The Catholic Church teaches that the “keys” were only for Peter (and his “successors,” the popes) and that the “binding and loosing” authority was for all of the apostles (including Peter) and their “successors,” the bishops et al. But what does the Bible say? Jesus promised Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven:...whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). But he also said virtually the same thing to the rest of the apostles (18:18). Clearly, the “keys” in Matthew 16 are connected with the “binding and loosing” authority given to Peter at that time, and later to all of the disciples in Matthew 18. To all of the disciples after His resurrection Christ declared, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:23).

Surely the gospel and sound doctrine are the “keys” to the Kingdom. Peter used these keys to unlock the Kingdom to the Jews through his sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2; and, in Acts 15:7, Peter seems to indicate that he used these keys again when he preached the gospel to the Gentiles in Cornelius’s house in Acts 10. Every Christian is a successor to the apostles, and we have the same authority they had to bind and loose. The “binding and loosing” in Matthew 16 is further illustrative of “keys.” Keys are used both to lock (bind) and unlock (loose). The gospel of Jesus Christ that we preach sets free from sin (looses) those who receive it and condemns (binds) those who reject it. In Matthew 18, “binding and loosing” is linked with the promise, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” That promise applies to *all* Christians. The context and the entire tenor of Scripture make it clear that Jesus is not handing His disciples a magic power to wield as they please. He is telling them that as His representatives they are to act in His name. This is no different from His promise that “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father

in my name, he will give it to you” (John 16:23). Invoking His name in prayer is not a magic formula. To ask in His name means to ask according to His will and to His glory. The same is true with “binding and loosing”—it must be in His name and through His Word.

QUESTION: Do you ever worry that you’ve become a legalist, constantly holding others to the letter of the law as you see it?

Response: I understand what you mean about legalism. The letter kills, while the Spirit gives life. One can be as clear as crystal on doctrine and just as cold and hard in applying it to others. That fact, however, is no excuse for disregarding sound doctrine but a reminder that truth is to be spoken in love, while not compromising. Of course there are peripheral matters upon which there can be disagreement—but not when it affects the salvation of souls. Unfortunately, a false gospel is being preached today, and Paul said that those who do so are under God’s curse.

Now, you may wonder who has the right to say who (in understanding and interpretation) is right. We must each be convinced in our own hearts. We are to study to show ourselves approved unto God, not unto men. On the one hand, I must be sensitive to heed criticism of others, especially of those who know the Word and live it. On the other hand, however, I am personally accountable to God, and though many church leaders may stand against me, I must be and say and do what I truly believe is God’s will and according to His Word. The fear of man, or a desire to be well thought of by others or to gain some important or influential person’s approval, has led many astray. We need to remember that one day we will give an account to Him. Time is so very short and eternity so long!

QUESTION: I read some time ago that the Vatican justified expenditures for its telescope by saying it would all be worth it “if just a single alien is converted.” You seemed to imply disapproval of that idea. Why? Shouldn’t the gospel be given to extraterrestrials if they are encountered?

RESPONSE: First of all, the gospel is for man and not for beings on other planets: “For God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son...that *the world* through him might be saved” (John 3:16-

17); “Christ died for *our sins*” (1 Corinthians 15:3); “he is the propitiation ...for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2), etc. So even if extraterrestrial intelligences (ETIs) existed, the gospel would do them no good. The fact is, however, that they don’t exist.

Evolutionists are the ones who suggest there are ETIs out there; and the Vatican accepts evolution. Atheists believe that life happened by chance on Earth and could have happened by chance elsewhere, a theory that the Vatican also accepts. On the contrary, life is created by God. If it exists on other planets, He created it—but that idea is both unbiblical and unreasonable. God was not experimenting. Any intelligent life capable of making a choice would make sinful choices. Surely one planet of sinners is enough!

Since “God is love” (1 John 4:16), He would not create intelligent beings and, after they sinned, do nothing to rescue them. But there is only one way for God to forgive *any* sinners: the penalty must be paid by God himself becoming one of them. Jesus had to become a *man* to redeem us. He would have to become one of each kind of ETI to redeem *them*. But that is antichrist doctrine according to 1 John 4:1-3—Christ has come *once* and *for all time* in human flesh. Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8)—the unique Son of God, who is God and man in one Person.

It was to this earth that Satan came to spread his rebellion and to this Earth that Christ came to defeat Satan and destroy his power. It is to this earth that Christ will return to destroy Antichrist and to establish His kingdom; and from this earth He will rule the new universe. Christ died for sin only once, here on this planet and for mankind (Hebrews 9 and 10, etc.). His sacrifice of Himself and His resurrection cleansed the entire universe of sin and made possible a new universe. The Bible has no gaps into which ETIs could fit.

The universe is so vast that it is absurd to imagine contact with physical ETIs even if they did exist. It would take our fastest spacecraft 90,000 years just to reach the closest sun that *might* have planets where life *might* exist. Any “UFOs” with the technology to zoom through “hyperspace” would likely crash when they got here. UFOs are nonphysical *demonic* manifestations sent to deceive mankind. Angels and demons are out there, but not ETIs. Their “gospel” is antichrist.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Why Armageddon?

QUESTION: I have been taught (and it seems to be biblical) that we Christians will return with Christ at Armageddon and destroy those who are attacking Israel. As a Christian, to kill anyone is repugnant to me. Why is this slaughter necessary?

Response: Such destruction is not God’s desire. He assures us, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33:11). Sadly, at that time there will be no way to stop the destruction of Israel—and, indeed, of all flesh upon earth—except to destroy the armies that are attacking her.

For thousands of years, God has patiently endured the rebellion of mankind. At various times throughout history, however, God has had to destroy wicked people and even whole cities because their sin had become too great to tolerate any longer. That will be the case at Armageddon, when God will be forced by His own righteousness to bring judgment upon intransigent rebels.

As for Christians personally confronting and doing battle with anyone at Armageddon, that will not be necessary. When Christ comes back to destroy Antichrist, there will be no battle, no struggle. With one word from Christ those armies will be destroyed. We Christians will simply rest in the victory that Christ will have accomplished in an instant:

To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his might angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to

be admired in all them that believe...(2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE.....

The church was never given the task of establishing an earthly kingdom. After spending 40 days with their risen Lord, during which time He spoke to them “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3), the disciples knew the right question to ask: “Lord, wilt *thou* at this *time* restore again the kingdom to *Israel*?” (v. 6). The italicized words set forth four simple truths: 1) It is *Christ (thou)*, not the church, who will do this special work; 2) it will be done at a *future time* predetermined by the Father (v. 7); 3) a kingdom which once was will be *restored*; and 4) the restoration will be to *Israel* (not to the church) of a kingdom it once had. The church has nothing to do with any of it.

—DAVE HUNT

The World and The Church: Where Are They Headed? - Part Three

T. A. McMahon

THE BIBLE IS God's direct communication to mankind. From Genesis to Revelation we are told how God's creation began and, later, how the earth will be replaced with a new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1). The Bible also tells us of significant events that have taken place (e.g., man's disobedience, Christ's birth, crucifixion, and resurrection to reconcile mankind to God) and what will take place (the Rapture of the church, the Great Tribulation, and the brief establishment of the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist) just prior to the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The focus of this three-part series has been eschatology, which is what Scripture declares about the last days when Jesus will return to set up His 1,000-year reign on the earth.

In last month's newsletter, I gave examples of how diverse religious groups, many professing to be Christian, are being influenced, even conditioned, to fit in with the religion of the Antichrist. That involves various pantheistic beliefs, including that humans are gods or are a part of God, that God is in everything, that man needs to realize his own godhood, achieve union with God, reach one's infinite human potential, tap into one's innate divine powers, etc. The Contemplative Movement within Christianity, although it makes no overt pantheistic proclamations, has nevertheless fostered many of the practices of pantheistic Eastern mysticism.

This also includes the unintentional assistance of Christians in bringing about the kingdom of the Antichrist. Many erroneously believe they are setting up Christ's kingdom as a condition for Him to return to earth. This false teaching is labeled Kingdom Dominionism. The religious groups that have within their teachings and practices elements reflecting pantheism and Kingdom Dominionism are both diverse and numerous. Their hope is to connect with one another and one day converge, creating the "perfect storm" scenario (mentioned in Part 2).

Although much of Antichrist's kingdom theology has been attributed to those who hold to hyper-Charismatic theology, the seeds are found among conservative Christian groups as well. Consider the teachings of Reformation theology and Calvinism, for example. With a few notable exceptions,

most Calvinists are amillennialists. That's part of the doctrinal baggage the reformers held over from their day as Roman Catholics. They do not believe in a literal thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. Calvinism drew heavily on Augustine, the author of *The City of God*, and the father of most of the dogmas of Roman Catholicism.

Many Calvinists follow Augustine's method of biblical interpretation, relying heavily on allegory and the spiritualization of Scripture. That's a subjective way of making the Bible say anything you want. Allegory sidesteps the context of a verse, the common meaning of words, the grammar of a verse, its logic, and discernment regarding whether it should be understood literally or figuratively. Being a Berean when using that approach to the Scriptures is nearly impossible. It's also a doorway to the mystical approach used to promote pantheism. It spells the death of hermeneutics (the biblical way of understanding the teachings of the Bible). It also involves eisegesis—which is reading one's beliefs into the Scriptures rather than concentrating on what God is saying.

A clear example of Amillennial allegorizing is the way in which they view the details given in Revelation regarding the thousand-year reign of Christ. Those passages are not taken literally, including Satan's being bound and later released to deceive the unbelievers at the end of the Millennium. The words are said to have a deeper meaning not signified by the context, the common understanding, or the plain sense of how the words are defined and used.

Amillennialists believe the Millennium began at the ascension of Jesus and continues today. They teach that Satan was bound at the Cross. Since Christ has not returned and we are supposedly in the millennium with Satan bound, setting up His kingdom becomes the chief function of the body of Christ! Again, we have the body taking control from the Head of the church. Following Augustine's *The City of God*, Calvin resolved to establish the kingdom of God on earth in Geneva. That became a disaster fraught with legalism.

One church historian says: "Calvin set to work for the realization of his plan to convert Geneva into the first Kingdom of God on earth,...a community without corruption, disorder, vice or sin;...the New Jerusalem, a centre from which the salvation of the world would radiate.... His life was devoted to the service of this one idea." It was akin to Roman Catholicism's global takeover plans, one reason Calvin was referred to as the Protestant pope of Geneva.

Other later Kingdom Dominion attempts by Calvinists took place in the US beginning

in the '60s and '70s. Led by Reformation theologians, Christian Reconstructionism (*theonomy*), teaches that through the application of God's Laws (including O. T. laws) the earth will be transformed and the Kingdom of God ushered in. Christian Reconstructionism greatly influenced the Christian Right and Moral Majority of the day.

It was followed by the Coalition On Revival, getting Christians elected to local offices, to Congress, to the Senate, and to the presidency. These actions were believed to be necessary in order to fulfill the mandate that would establish the Kingdom of God. In Calvin's words, "the state must consent to be the servant of the church." The church, however, disconnected from the Head (Jesus Christ), often became the servant of the state, a condition that amillennialism produced. Ministers were appointed by government authorities. In many places, such as the Dutch Reformed-dominated Netherlands, state officials arbitrated doctrinal conflicts between religious groups. This was a throwback to Constantine, who legalized Christianity, then stepped in to run the religious show for a while.

Today we see young Christians being increasingly exposed to Kingdom Dominion teachings. The Send was primarily an emotionally driven Kingdom-Dominion vehicle for the 50,000 young attendees. Many are being seduced by the music of Hillsong United and Jesus Culture. Their theology is Kingdom Dominionism, the proof of this being revealed through the lyrics of some of their songs.

Christian Reconstructionism and Calvinism have made surprising inroads into the homeschooling movement. A very successful apologetics series titled *The Truth Project*, produced by Focus on the Family and taught by Calvinists, encouraged the young audience to work for global transformation through leadership in the major spheres of influence of society, in such areas as the state, the family, the community, education, labor, the media, the arts, etc. For all the value that some of these Kingdom of God-building entities may appear, if they are not true to the course set forth in Scripture by the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, these leaders are unknowingly contributing to the schemes of the Adversary.

Amillennialism, with its inherent "setting up the kingdom" motivation, is similar to a ship's compass that is off a few degrees. It cannot guide the ship to its intended destination. Beyond Calvinism's unbiblical eschatology, amillennialism is the most common belief among professing Christians. It is the view of Roman Catholics, Greek and Russian Orthodox churches, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans,

Episcopalians, the Church of Christ, and a growing number of Independent Baptists, particularly those embracing Calvinism.

This final entity that I'm going to address is, I believe, the most effective in its efforts to prepare the world and Christendom for the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist. You may be surprised to hear that it is *psychology*—in particular, psychotherapy or psychological counseling. To make my case, let's apply the criteria I used for the other entities that were also in an antichrist-acceptance conditioning process.

First some background:

- Psychotherapy is a pseudo-science pretending to be science. Its substance is talk—just talk.
- The therapeutic talk is completely subjective. It employs a heavy emphasis on dealing with emotions, experiences, intuitions, feelings, etc.
- Psychotherapy has about 500 therapies and thousands of techniques, most of which contradict one another.
- Psychotherapy is a *religion* that pretends to be science as well as medicine.
- The chief criteria for treatment evaluation in psychotherapy is one's own beliefs or feelings.

A psychotherapist's personal opinion rather than objective science is the principle for diagnosis in psychological counseling.

In Part 1, I addressed the failure of attempts by those who have rejected the God of the Bible and His instructions as the solution to mankind's sin problem and the destruction it has caused. I referred to it as "the mess" humanity and the rest of creation is in. The world is in the process of dying an ugly death. Since no hope has been found in man's attempt to fix the mess through scientific materialism, evolutionary theory, or naturalism, man has turned wholeheartedly to mysticism for his salvation. He is putting his hope in pantheism, the belief that he is God, along with everything else. That may seem to make sense in a last-straw sort of way. After all, the problem *is* God-sized. But believing in "Godhood" begets another problem.

How do you get people to buy into the idea that they are God or gods? The Adversary has been working that lie for a long time with reasonable success. But consider how the success rate could go up if godhood, especially in the West, was given a veneer of science while reducing the religious stigma!

Enter the pseudo-scientific world of psychology. One research psychologist writes about his own profession, "I have personally seen therapists convince their clients that all of their problems come from their mothers, the stars, their biochemical make-up, their diet,

their life-style and even the 'karma' from their past lives." Karma and other Eastern mystical ideas have moved to the top of the therapy list. One past president of the Association of Humanistic Psychology has suggested that psychotherapy will probably be known as the hoax of the twentieth century. Rather than abandon their obviously bankrupt profession, many psychologists and psychiatrists have compounded their error by trying to shore up their collapsing house of cards with Eastern mysticism of one form or another.

As University of California professor Jacob Needleman has said, "A large and growing number of psychotherapists are now convinced that the Eastern religions offer an understanding of the mind far more complete than anything yet envisaged by Western science. At the same time, the leaders of the new religions themselves (the numerous gurus and spiritual teachers now in the West) are reformulating and adapting the traditional systems according to the language and atmosphere of modern psychology."

An article in *Psychology Today* noted that Eastern philosophies "seem to be making gradual headway [in the West] as psychologies, not as religions." Godhood is easier to accept wrapped in the packages of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung's collective unconscious or in a human's higher potential or in self-improvement seminars for the business world. MBA candidates at Stanford University learned to tap into their "inner essence" (a substitute term for God) by seeking inner guidance in a course titled "Creativity in Business" taught by Prof. Michael Ray, disciple of the Indian Guru Muktananda. Eastern meditation practices passed off as "Yoga-for-health" or holotropic breathing techniques open one up to experience "God realization."

Normal consciousness takes a backseat to "higher consciousness" gained mostly through drug-induced altered states and various non-drug yogic techniques. Common sense has given way to uncommon "higher sense." Psychotherapists and psychiatrists themselves have reached an all-knowing, godlike stature before the multitudes. That, along with the influence of their 300-billion-dollar industry, makes them a major force in selling mysticism to the masses.

But what about psychotherapy's influence in the church? During the 1970s, psychotherapy flooded into the church like a tsunami. Led by psychologist James Dobson and others representing "Christian psychology," they reinterpreted the Bible regarding its "self" teachings in order to be consistent with psychology's perspective. "Self" rules in psychology; that's what psychotherapy is all about.

We've been explaining that if we believe

that the God of the Bible is truly God, then it should be obvious that we are *not* God. If a person doesn't believe that, then the position he will be led to is that he *is* God. Christians, whether they be true or only professing, are disinclined to go there. Yet psychology moves them in that direction. In what way? For the believer, there is God and self. Submission to one or the other is the ongoing battle of life. However, during the latter part of the last century, the psychology-derived "self" teachings came pouring into the church: Self-love, self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-worth, and, as Dave Hunt was given to add, self-*ad nauseam*.

These teachings, backed by an army of Christian psychologists and counselors, completely turned the Bible verses on "self" upside down. Instead of dying to self, the church has been exhorted to love and esteem self! I believe that has been Satan's most effective ploy in the last fifty years of church history.

Like Tobiah in the Book of Jeremiah, psychology, which leads to the idolatry of self—even to its deification—has set up shop in the church, causing untold spiritual destruction among our brothers and sisters in Christ.

How then shall we live? What's the antidote, the biblical protection plan, in regard to the warning Jesus gave concerning the deception that will take place in the last days? "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). We need to be like the children of Issachar, who had an understanding of the times that they might know what Israel ought to do (1 Chronicles 12:32). The antidote for deception is not complicated, but it demands diligence regarding discernment. We are first of all to submit to God, who will enable us by His Holy Spirit to resist the devil (James 4:7). Next we are to continue steadfastly in the doctrine and instructions of Scripture. That means *reading the Word of God daily* as a habit, and this is the most important habit we can have. Then we are to do what God's Word says, "not by might, nor by [our own] power, but by the Holy Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6). We are also to be in fellowship with other believers, upholding one another in prayer, as well as praying continually for the Lord Jesus to guide and direct us into His will (Acts 2:42).

Psalms 1:2-3 gives us God's instructions for being fruitful in these troubling times as the Lord draws near. As believers we are to "delight in," and "meditate upon," His Word "day and night." Doing so will make us spiritually "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

TBC

QUESTION [Dave Hunt classic]: You claim that “The Galatian problem remains within some so-called Hebrew-Christian or Messianic congregations today.” You accept your saved brethren in all churches; why are we “so-called”? I do not have any opposition to your suggestion that there is a Galatian problem [but] are you closing the door to accepting us because of some congregations who go overboard in their zeal to be Jewish so that they can reach their families and community with an acceptable Jewish gospel? Do Chinese stop using chopsticks because they accept Jesus, or Asians stop cooking curry? Why can’t you allow us to follow the calling and heritage of our ancestors as with other ethnic minorities...?

RESPONSE: I almost wept when I read your letter. I have a deep love for Israel and for Jewish people and have been involved in seeking to introduce Jews and Israelis to their Messiah for many years. The suggestion that I might be even slightly anti-Semitic and unwilling to accept Jewish believers in our Lord Jesus as brethren in Christ is the opposite of the truth and most distressing.

Perhaps the adjective “so-called” was badly chosen on my part. I meant no offense, merely to suggest that “Hebrew-Christian” is neither a biblical expression nor accurately descriptive. Doesn’t it imply that Hebrew-Christians are different from just plain Christians? Why not French-Christians, Swiss-Christians, etc.? The term “messianic congregation” seems an improper designation. Don’t all Christians believe in the same Messiah? Isn’t the Messiah of Israel the Savior of the world? I made no blanket judgment of such groups; in fact, I often speak to and fellowship with them and have never expressed disapproval of such designations.

Of course, your analogy of chopsticks for Chinese and curry for Asians doesn’t fit because neither has any religious meaning. But I don’t deny to Jewish believers in Jesus the keeping of religious feasts. I appreciate your desire to retain your Jewish customs. Paul did the same. My concern is for the tendency of Gentiles to adopt these things. For them, they could have no meaning, and therefore they become a religious connection between Jews and Gentiles, whereas we are united only in Christ (see Ephesians 2). Keeping the Passover is meaningless for Gentiles.

The concerns I expressed were for the false assumption among some groups that the practice of Jewish customs adds a helpful element to Christianity, and the unbiblical adoption of Jewish customs and feasts

by Gentile believers, as though that makes them more spiritual, along with the well-meaning but improper attempts to teach the gospel from extrabiblical traditions (i.e., the Seder). It could hardly be helpful to find certain parts of Jewish tradition that seem to support the gospel when so much contradicts it.

QUESTION [EXCERPTS FROM OUR ARCHIVES]: You allow Pope Pius XII to take a hit for his lack of action on behalf of the Jews in the face of the Holocaust [but] defend your position for nonsocial action. In all honesty, do you really think that if you had lived in Nazi Germany you would have behaved any differently? Our Lord told the story of the good Samaritan to illustrate that we should help those who are victimized by the world, the flesh, and the devil. The distinction you make between the apostles “preaching the gospel” and “actively working toward improving morality and social justice” is specious. Biblical exemplars like Daniel did use the opportunity to exercise great moral influence over whole societies.... God is not content with personal devotion or individual righteousness (morality) but seeks people who also look out for the interests of others. John the Baptist was beheaded for speaking out against Herod’s choice of a wife, and I believe this is one supporting scripture that shows we can comment on political issues.

RESPONSE: Yes, we can “comment on political issues,” but that doesn’t mean we should. I am not dogmatic on this and not above correction, but I would like that correction to come from the clear teaching and example in the Scriptures, not opinion. John the Baptist rebuked an evil ruler, who then took off John’s head. If this had any influence for good upon the general populace of that day, we aren’t told of it. Is it possible that John made a mistake, causing his until-then fruitful ministry to be cut short? Hadn’t he just violated Christ’s wise counsel, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6)? Should we imagine that ungodly political leaders would welcome moral correction?

Jesus, who was alive and preaching throughout Israel at that very time, never once rebuked Herod (or Caesar, et al.)! Since Christ left us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21) and told His disciples, “Follow me” (Matthew 4:19, etc.), shouldn’t we consider His total absence of political activism as an example that we are to follow?

Daniel is often mentioned as having exercised great “moral influence over whole

societies.” But we certainly find no hint of that in Scripture. Nor did Joseph convert Pharaoh or anyone else in Egypt that we know of, except his own wife. There was no improvement in Egypt, either morally or spiritually, nor does the Bible indicate that Joseph even attempted that. Yes, it was likely through Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar came to believe in God (Daniel 4:37), but that didn’t deliver Babylon from paganism; nor is there a hint that Daniel won any of the king’s other advisors or citizens to the Lord.... Darius always spoke to Daniel of “*thy* God, whom thou servest continually” (6:16, 20) and referred to “the God of Daniel” (6:26) without indication that he himself had come to know the true God. No scripture tells us that Joseph or Daniel wielded a powerful moral influence over either Egypt or Babylon. If anyone was in a position to lead a movement of social and political action it was these two, yet there is no hint that they did so. They had a personal testimony only, did not attempt to change the moral climate as a whole, and were in positions of leadership in order to protect God’s people, not to change either the politics or morals of the country.

We, too, should have a clear testimony and should stand true to our Lord and His Word as individuals, wherever we are. But as for organized political and social action, it isn’t mentioned in Scripture. Should we not take the lack of this on the part of Christ and both the Old Testament saints and the early church as an example for us to follow? As for the Good Samaritan, we too ought to help all those whom we encounter who are in need of our ability. We don’t read, however, that he campaigned to get others to do likewise, or set up an organization to seek out and help those in similar need across Israel, much less that he pressured the government to clean up its own behavior toward the needy. We are commanded to preach the gospel to everyone everywhere, but never are we told to engage in social action. As for your question of what I would have done had I been living in Germany at that time, the pope was not an ordinary citizen and his actions should not be judged as though he were. He was a moral leader with worldwide influence. Moreover, far from being an ordinary person the pope claims to be the Vicar of Christ. Yet he was silent in the face of the wholesale slaughter of Christ’s brethren, the Jews, God’s chosen people.... Do I speak out today against the evil in society? I certainly warn audiences, Christian and non-Christian, of the evils of society, with most emphasis upon the satanic traps that destroy the soul. The only real hope is for these men and women to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What about “Soul Sleep”?

QUESTION: Isn't it true that when the body dies, the soul goes to sleep, only to awaken at the resurrection of the body? Isn't this what is meant by the expressions “them which are asleep” and “which sleep in Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15)?

Response: On the contrary, from what the Bible says, the fact that the souls that have been separated from their bodies by death are conscious is quite clear. We have, for example, the rich man who after his death carries on a conversation with Abraham, who is also dead (Luke 16:19-31). We also have the “souls of them that were slain for the word of God” crying with loud voices to God for revenge upon those who killed them (Revelation 6:9-11). Paul is “caught up to the third heaven,” where he “heard unspeakable words” (2 Corinthians 12:2,4), and he says he doesn't know whether he was “in the body” or “out of the body” (2 Corinthians 12:2,3).

The word “asleep” or “sleepeth” is used in the Bible as a synonym for death (Matthew 9:24; John 11:11; 1 Corinthians 15:6) and refers to the body, not to the soul and spirit. In heaven the redeemed are in conscious bliss in God's presence, awaiting the resurrection of their entombed bodies, which “sleep in Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:14). It is the conscious souls and spirits of “the dead in Christ” that God will “bring with him” when He comes to earth to resurrect their bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Paul's desire was to “depart [from this life] and to be with Christ, which is far better” (Philippians 1:23), though he was willing, for the sake of those who needed his ministry, to continue “in the flesh,” serving them and Christ here on earth (v. 24).

Paul would not have wanted to leave this life of service to Christ and the church simply to fall into a soul sleep. Neither would he have called being with Christ “far better” had it meant to slip into an unconscious state of “soul sleep,” as some erroneously teach.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. —1 Timothy 4:4,5

Blessed it is to recognize in the temporal, creative mercies of each day, the evidences of a loving Father's care. “He giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” To receive all as from His own hand, giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus, is to honor the Giver in the use of His gifts.

There is a golden mean between fleshy asceticism on the one hand, which discounts many of God's gifts and thus throws discredit on Him who provides them, and carnal self-indulgence on the other hand, which uses the mercies of God with no regard to Him from whom they come, and in such a way as to turn even our blessings into curses. We should ever recognize the bounty of our Father in these things, and whether we eat or drink do all to His glory, our hearts going out to Him in adoring gratitude.

—H. A. IRONSIDE

The Necessity of “Being a Berean” Revisited

T. A. McMahan

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

—ACTS 17:10-11

LUKE DOCUMENTS FOR us that the Apostle Paul, having left Thessalonica and recently arrived in the city of Berea, preached in the synagogue of the Berean Jews. Paul’s encouraging experience with the Bereans caused Luke to commend them. He wrote that they were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica because they received the Word of God from Paul “with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily” to know whether or not what Paul had to say was true.

The calling of The Berean Call ministry is to exhort *believers* in Jesus Christ to take the same discernment approach as those Jews in Berea. They not only had a heart to hear the things of God but, more importantly, were able to discern what was truly of Him because they regarded the Scriptures as *the* authority in ascertaining the truth of what they were hearing. They practiced what Isaiah preached: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

TBC’s chief concern is the spiritual welfare of the body of Christ, and, in particular, the encouragement of biblical discernment. We believe the times reflect the necessity of our calling. Even a cursory review of what has taken place in the church during the last 25 years will reveal a fierce undermining of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude v 3). You might even say that the Bereans of Paul’s day were not as menaced in comparison to this generation. In those days the opposition to truth was in the secular world around them—it had not yet infiltrated the church under the guise of

a more enlightened or advanced Gnostic Christianity. Although there were pressing pagan influences as well as some aberrational teachings and practices here and there, they weren’t subjected to anything like the flood of false beliefs, teachings, and practices surging in on the tidal wave of today’s Christian media.

TBC certainly has a heart for saving the lost; we also have a concern for rescuing those in bondage to cults. *Our primary ministry, however, is to believers.* In many ways the church has turned to the beliefs, teachings, and practices of the world and the cults, from the penchant for humanistic psychology among conservative evangelicals to the cultic affinity for godhood and the demonstration of godlike powers among more extreme charismatics. Popular movements and teachers are influencing the church to take dominion over the earth, to set up the Kingdom as a requirement for Christ to return, to produce signs and wonders, and to solve its problems through unbiblical methods such as self-esteem therapies, twelve-step recovery programs, inner-healing rituals, “binding demons” strategies, and “Christian” mysticism. Many professing Christian leaders promote unity by demoting doctrine and encouraging ecumenism to include even overt paganism. They also foster the participation of false religious institutions (Mormonism, Roman Catholicism, Seventh-Day Adventism, etc.) in “Christian” political and social causes.

We believe our calling is to exhort the body of Christ to abide in His Word, allowing the Scriptures, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to be *the* authority and *all-sufficient* resource in the life of every believer. We want to encourage fellow Christians to be *Bereans*—not followers of The Berean Call, not followers of Dave Hunt or T. A. McMahan or of any other man or institution. That would be the antithesis of our ministry! The fruit we desire are believers who proclaim, as Jeremiah did, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (15:16). The basic premise for our approach is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may

be perfect, thoroughly [equipped for] all good works.

We desire committed Christians to take every aspect of those two verses to heart. All Scripture is indeed *inspired* of God. The psalmist confirms, “Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (Psalm 119:160). Peter tells us that the revelation of God didn’t originate from man, “but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).

It is also profitable for *doctrine*. Paul exhorted Timothy with these words: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). Ignoring the Scriptures, numerous evangelical leaders today claim that a concern for doctrine causes division and therefore should be avoided for the sake of love and unity among the brethren. The Word, however, couldn’t be more specific in its opposition to such a teaching: “...[M]ark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). Divisions are created by teachings that are contrary to sound doctrine. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 1:9). Unity in the faith is impossible without the doctrine of Christ. Without such a foundation we have no basis for the faith, for the gospel, for knowing Jesus, or for knowing anything pertinent to the Truth.

All Scripture is profitable for *reproof*. Contrary to popular Christian self-esteem teachings, a biblical reproof is beneficial both for the individual and for a body of believers. Paul publicly reproofed Peter, who, because of a fear of men (Galatians 2:12), was undermining the faith of some believers by withdrawing from the Gentiles and compelling them to live under Jewish law (2:13-14). It’s interesting to note that Peter did not respond by complaining bitterly that Paul’s *public* correction denigrated his ministry or caused a loss of support. In fact, as Peter reflects upon his “beloved brother Paul[’s]” teachings he commends them for their wisdom and value to the church.

Peter rebuked Ananias and Sapphira,

prophesying their death. As a result, the early church was infused with a wholesome fear of God and His holiness. That was a deterrent for believers not to depart from God's instructions (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Examples found continuously throughout the Scriptures demonstrate the value of reproof for the conviction of sin and erroneous teaching that otherwise might have gone unheeded, leading to the destruction of the faith of some.

All Scripture is profitable for *correction*. Designed for the benefit of believers, this teaching of God's Word is very much out of favor among today's church leaders. It's astounding that page after page of the Bible involves some form of correction, yet any such application among Christians is generally avoided or viewed as emotionally harmful, "negative," and "unloving." On the contrary, correction is biblical and necessary. When it is a work of the Holy Spirit, which it must be to be fruitful, it is the most loving of ministries! The psalmist writes, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head" (141:5).

Jesus was continually correcting Peter, Thomas, His other disciples, the Jewish leaders, the multitudes, individuals who came to Him, the woman accused of adultery as well as her accusers, the two on the road to Emmaus, the seven churches of Revelation, and on and on. His words in Hebrews and Revelation may not be popular today, but they cannot be denied: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth..." (Hebrews 12:5-6; Revelation 3:19). Much of the New Testament is corrective in nature. It teaches us what to correct and how to go about it.

Some have complained (a form of "correction"?) that The Berean Call corrects *too* much; that it majors on error rather than on teaching the truth, that it hurts individuals and their ministries by mentioning names, and that the ministry has thus become unloving and divisive. Such a development is far from our intent. And since we believe in correction, we try our best to make sure we're "walking our talk." Our prayerful intention from newsletter to newsletter is to be acutely sensitive to such concerns, while at the same time trying to be true to what the Lord has put on our hearts to communicate. We guard against our corrections becoming intemperate, and we sincerely want them to be beneficial.

We mention the names of Christian leaders or ministries that we believe to be promoting certain errors because, in many cases, their false teachings undermine the faith of millions of Christians and must be corrected publicly. Although it is possible to deal with a false teaching without "naming names," it's impossible to document its scope and impact without giving examples. Paul's naming of Peter and Barnabas, Alexander the coppersmith, Hymenaeus and Philetus, and John's exposure of Diotrophes are just a few biblical examples of public correction.

Some assert that such matters should be dealt with privately, according to Matthew 18. But those verses address matters of *personal* offense—issues between individuals, not false teachings or practices that subvert the gospel and are promoted publicly.

Our love for all who teach in the name of our Lord compels us to exhort them to reflect biblical truth, and we hope and pray they will respond to our concerns. When an influential individual or ministry wittingly or unwittingly teaches something contrary to the Word of God, then recognizes the error and publicly repents and corrects that teaching, the whole body of Christ is encouraged and edified. What man, woman or ministry of God would not want that? This seems to be Peter's heart when (after being publicly corrected) he commends the one who rebuked him and then does some correcting of his own, warning believers to beware of scripture-twisting teachers and of being led away from the faith (2 Peter 3:14-17).

Exhortation to discernment is not without certain occupational hazards, both for us and for those with whom we communicate. We must examine our hearts constantly to make sure we are ministering according to the instructions of 2 Timothy 2:24-26:

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

Falling short of such an approach can open the way for the very antithesis of what we desire: self-righteousness, judgmentalism, a critical spirit, legalism, and "bashing" persons or ministries rather than shedding light on their unbiblical teachings and practices. Nevertheless, as we continue to apply biblical correction to our own personal lives as well as our public outreach, His grace will

help us avoid such pitfalls and enable us to *speak the truth in love*.

All Scripture is profitable for *instruction in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16). As I hope all of you know, TBC is wholly committed to Jesus, who is the living Word. Our perspective is that righteousness is found in knowing God's way through the Scriptures and in doing things His way, according to the absolute authority of God's inerrant and all-sufficient Word. Our heart's desire is to encourage those who love the Lord to major in discernment in these days of religious confusion, delusion, and deception, and to fill their hearts and minds with God's instructions, the only true resource for living a fruitful and productive life.

Concluding its litany of profitable uses of the Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 declares that God's Word is *the sufficient resource* for every child of Christ to become mature in Him, its content consisting of *all* that we need to know in order to lead fruitful lives unto the Lord. Once again, exhorting believers in the truth by pointing them to the Person of Jesus Christ and His Word is our calling. Our heart is simply to encourage those who love the Lord to heed His words: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Though TBC is a small operation, the Lord is enabling us to expand our outreach as He leads and guides us. We want to make a definite impact for good, to be a true and increasing help to more and more of the millions who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

To that end, we hope to offer additional online conferences designed to inform and help pastors deal with unbiblical teachings and practices (particularly those influenced by the church's growing affinity for psychological counseling), and programs for general audiences dealing with critical doctrinal issues in these days of increasing compromise and apostasy. Should the Lord tarry, we believe it will be necessary to develop more effective ways and means of equipping believers in biblical discernment, as well as ways of mobilizing them to contend for the faith.

Please pray that we will "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [we] are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

TBC

QUESTION: The Roman Catholic Church changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Jesus could not have died on Friday and risen on Sunday. He died Wednesday afternoon and rose before sunset Saturday. Could you comment on this?

RESPONSE: The Roman Catholic Church didn't start "Sunday worship." The early church met for communion and worship on Sunday from the very beginning. Acts 20:7 tells us that it was "on the first day of the week" that the disciples came together to "break bread." That this was communion, or the Lord's table, is clear. They met to remember the Lord in the bread and cup as they had been commanded to do once a week—and it was on Sunday. First Corinthians 16:2 confirms this, for it tells us that they took a collection, or offering, on the "first of the week."

Why did they meet on Sunday? It could only have been because that was the day that Christ, firstborn from the dead and progenitor of a new creation, resurrected. This is clear from Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19. It was "early in the morning...on the first day of the week" that Christ rose from the dead. Those who state that Christ "rose before sunset Saturday" are contradicted by Scripture, which not only says He rose on the "first day of the week" (which technically began Saturday evening), but that it was "very early in the morning."

He couldn't have been crucified on Friday afternoon and still have spent three days and nights in the grave, and then resurrected Sunday morning. He was crucified on Thursday and died several hours before sundown (the beginning of the next day), so He spent Thursday (part of it), Friday, and Saturday, three days and nights, in the grave and rose first thing Sunday morning. Why did the evening of His crucifixion begin a Sabbath? The first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were special sabbaths. So the first day of unleavened bread fell on Friday ("that sabbath day was an high day"), which was then followed by Saturday, the regular Sabbath. Two sabbaths intervened from the time of the crucifixion until Sunday morning, thus preventing the women from coming to the grave until that time.

QUESTION: Please comment on the payment of income taxes and turning our country back to God's law, the "common" law. I have studied law and believe that "common law" was originally God's law.

RESPONSE: I, too [Dave], have studied law and have never interpreted common law as God's law, although it does rely heavily upon conscience. My understanding is that we are to preach the gospel of God's grace and lead people to a saving knowledge of Christ rather than attempt to bring them under the law. Sadly, it's a hopeless task to try to reform America, *nor do I believe that task was ever given to Christians.* As for paying income tax, Christ himself told them to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and gave the example of having Peter gather the fish with a coin in its mouth and using that coin to pay tax to the government for Peter and for Himself. Romans 13 states that we are to be subject to those in authority and we are to pay custom to whom custom is due. Therefore, I do not understand from the Word of God any basis for refusing to pay income tax.

The nonpayment *might* be justified due to the evil purposes for which that money is used, but tax money was also used for evil purposes in Christ's and Peter's time, and there is given no justification for withholding it on that basis. We must make up our own minds. One day we will give an account to God.

QUESTION: If you don't believe in Christian activism, what about all the babies who will otherwise be aborted? Aren't you condemning them to death?

RESPONSE: We do not condemn any rescue of babies about to be aborted. In fact, we have an obligation to do all we can to rescue anyone from any harm by which they are being threatened. What we do oppose is the idea that we can reform a godless society by creating social upheaval. That is neither biblical nor practical. The unsaved by far outnumber Christians and can put on larger demonstrations and more pressure than we can. Sadly, there are already those who have been turned off to the gospel by the social/political activism of Christians. They resent the attempts to coerce them into godly behavior for which they have no heart, and as a result they end up hardened *against* Christ.

No matter how sympathetic we might otherwise be to the idea, it must weigh heavily that you cannot find even one example of God's people anywhere in the Bible trying to reform godless societies. Nor did Moses, Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther—much less Christ, Paul, Peter, or the early church.

Yes, John the Baptist rebuked Herod, but

he never tried through social/political activism to pressure him (or society) to adopt a godly way of life. Sin must be indicted publicly. John was right when he rebuked the Jews and their religious leaders—but in contrast to Christ, who never rebuked Herod or Caesar, it would seem that John stepped out of God's will when he rebuked a godless king, which positioned him for death at the whim of Herodias's daughter. Even so, John never tried to use social/political activism to force changes in private or public behavior. It's one thing to rebuke a public leader who may be a professing Christian for his personal sins and bad example, and quite another to picket the White House in an attempt to *pressure* him into righteous living. It is even further from biblical teaching to pressure the entire United States, mostly unsaved, to forsake its evil ways. That is not consistent with God's Word and is part of most "social activism" programs.

Yes, Jesus rebuked God's people and their religious leaders—but not the Roman world. We try to follow His example in speaking out against error *within the church.* But Christ never reprovved Caesar, much less tried to bring social/political pressure upon Roman society to get it to stop abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, et al. Yes, the disciples turned the world upside down, but it was by *preaching the gospel*, not through political/social activism and public protest demonstrations. About ten percent of the Roman Empire became Christians, but that didn't change Roman society or laws, nor was any attempt made to do so.

I [Dave Hunt] have stated clearly in numerous articles and books that we must follow God and not man. There is no law that *requires* a Christian to abort her baby. Obeying God rather than manmade laws *does not involve* forcing the unsaved to obey God. We don't *condemn* Operation Rescue. Peacefully trying to rescue babies about to be aborted is according to God's Word, but the shock value that once caused women to change their minds is no longer there because Operation Rescue is so well known today. Clinic Escorts are there in force, police are there to keep the abortion factories open, and business goes on almost as usual.

Denounce sin, convict them of rebellion against God, and call upon them to repent. God will bless such efforts. But don't deceive yourself into thinking you will turn America back to God by large demonstrations and applied pressure. Don't let this effort become a hindrance to, or a substitute for, preaching the gospel.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Must the church must be united and purified before Christ can return?

QUESTION: Many are teaching that the church must be united and purified before Christ can return. Is that biblical?

RESPONSE: It is neither biblical nor logical that the small fraction of the church that is alive on earth at the time of the rapture must have attained to a status unknown by Christians who have already died in order to join them at that heavenly marriage to our Lord. Yes, the bride is made ready and robed in white linen (Revelation:19:7-8), but the bride is the entire church. If this purification is a prerequisite for being taken to heaven, then what about those who died before the rapture? Clearly, they must be “made ready” after they get to heaven. Then why wouldn’t this also apply to those Christians who are raptured? Why wouldn’t they be “made ready” in the same manner?

Surely this final cleansing can only take place at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians:5:19), when we give account to our Lord and our works are tried in fire (1 Corinthians:3:11-15). It is then that we are rewarded or suffer loss of reward, though not of salvation. There is no biblical basis for a “last-days revival” that will make Christians worthy to be raptured to heaven. We are worthy of heaven through Christ’s finished work and on that basis alone.

Moreover, the Bible speaks of the last-days church as apostate (2 Thessalonians:2:3). Christ even questions whether He will find the faith on the earth when He returns (Luke:18:8). Even the wise fall asleep while the bridegroom tarries (Matthew:25:5). This is hardly the “last-days revived church” we are being told about! Let us therefore watch and be ready for our Lord’s return at any moment.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of

the Almighty
—Psalm:91:1

Study the life of Jesus Christ. Read the story over again. Study the thirty years of quiet subjection at Nazareth. Stand amazed before the three years of service. Think of the slander, the spitting, the backbiting, the hate—think of everything that Jesus endured that was unfathomably worse than you will go through. Yet His peace was undisturbed; it could not be violated. It is that peace that God exhibits in us when we sit in “heavenly places”—not a peace like it, but that very peace.

The circumstances of our lives will not hinder our peace. The rush and turmoil of the world will pass us by practically unnoticed. Why? Because we are sitting in “heavenly places” in Christ Jesus. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty,” where he is secure and safe.

Jesus is all the world to me. The security of His love and peace is sufficient.

—OSWALD CHAMBERS

Why Doesn't Jesus Heal Me?

T. A. McMahon

WE OFTEN HEAR from people who are suffering from various ailments and they don't understand *why* they are being made to endure them. I don't know the *particular reason* why Jesus doesn't heal a person who is ill and who asks Him for healing. There are many conditions of suffering that of course Jesus knows about and for which we don't understand the reasons. None of this negates the truth, however, that He certainly loves all those who cry out to Him to be healed. Psalm 22:24 tells us, "For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him; but when he cried unto him, He heard."

I also know that everyone who repents—that is, turns to Jesus for salvation and thereby receives the gift of eternal life—is *healed spiritually*. That person is born of the Spirit and will ultimately be with Him both temporally and eternally, no matter what earthly circumstances he or she may be enduring. Physical healing from the Lord, however, is only temporal and involves outcomes that God desires to accomplish to His glory and for the benefit of the person seeking healing. One can only *wonder* what betterments He has in mind, but our knowledge of His perfect love and compassion encourages us to trust Him to do what's best for us (Matthew 9:36; 14:14), or for those we uphold in prayer.

As we look to the Scriptures for examples of physical healing, one thing is clear, and that is that no one can systematize healing, i.e., form some methodology or formula for how to produce miracle cures. The diversity of healing instances in the Scriptures won't allow it. As we read through the Bible, we see that some healings involved a person's faith, even "great" faith (Matthew 9:28-30, Mark 5:34, Luke 7:9-10); and for some, little or no faith (Mark 9:23-27, Luke 7:14-15, Luke 22:50-51, Acts 3:2-7). Some were instantaneous (Acts 9:17-18), others involved a procedure (Mark 8:22-25, John 9:6-7). Some healings took place by Jesus's touch (Matthew 8:3), some by His spitting on them (Mark 8:23), some by touching "handkerchiefs or aprons" worn by the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:11-12), some by Peter's shadow passing over them (Acts 5:15). Some illnesses the Lord has allowed to take place so that their healing would manifest "the works of God" (John 9:3). Whatever the case, it was the Lord bringing about the healing for *His divine purpose*.

Healings also take place through natural

means. Luke is referred to as the "beloved physician"; so obviously that involved a medical approach. Paul advised Timothy to "use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities," which involved a natural remedy (1 Timothy 5:23). Sickness is a consequence of a world created in perfection but then ravaged by the sins of humanity. Yet we are told by the "Healing and Prosperity" preachers that no believer in Jesus should *ever* be sick, an idea that they wrongly base upon 1 Peter 2:24: "... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed." If that had to do with physical healing, then Paul was remiss in his counsel to Timothy regarding his "often infirmities" as noted above, and Paul himself failed to minister that so-called truth to Trophimus, whom he "left at Miletum sick" (2 Timothy 4:20). And what of Paul's own affliction, which Jesus did not heal (2 Corinthians 12:8-9)?

Although many of the false healing preachers invoke various methods to achieve healing, they are clearly imposing their erroneous practices on what the Bible tells us. Their errors are countless. They teach such ideas as: 1) Not receiving a healing is *caused by* a person's own lack of faith; 2) Deferring to the will of God is a cop-out that undermines the power of one's own faith; 3) The prayer of faith for healing must be detailed according to what the person determines; 4) The prayer of faith must be stated in "positive" terms while avoiding any negative words that would reinforce the illness. The list goes on and on in accordance with the multiple deceits of the false preachers. Furthermore, many of the "faith healers" preach a false gospel that the Lord, of course, will not confirm "with [miraculous] signs following." Obviously, the Lord is *not* "working with them" (Mark 16:20)!

Oral Roberts, when he was introducing "faith healer" Kathryn Kuhlman, stated that the university (named for him) decided to give her its first honorary doctorate degree as someone representative of the ministry of healing "which is reflected in the background and founding and purpose of this university." That academic respectability did much to promote faith healing ministries, but it was of no help regarding its healing failures.

Medical researcher Dr. William Nolen attended a Kathryn Kuhlman healing service for the purpose of evaluating its credibility. He writes, "During the service, as those who had 'claimed a cure' came down off the stage, two legal secretaries I had enlisted to help me wrote down the names, addresses, phone numbers and diagnoses of everyone who was willing to cooperate in

a follow-up study. We got 82 names. A few weeks after the service, letters were sent to the names on the list, inviting them to come to Minneapolis on Sunday, July 14, and tell us about their experiences. Twenty-three people showed up, and I made arrangements to interview them individually over the next few months. In talking to these people, I tried to be as honest, understanding, and objective as possible, but I couldn't dispense with my medical knowledge and my common sense. I listened carefully to everything they told me and followed up every lead that might have led to a confirmation of a miracle. I was led to an inescapable conclusion: Of the patients who had returned to Minneapolis to reaffirm the cures claimed at the miracle service, *not one* had, in fact, been miraculously cured of anything" (Nolen, "In Search of a Miracle," *McCall's Magazine*, 9/74, italics added).

The same results regarding *physical* healing, or the lack thereof, are found among all the faith healers. As mentioned above, true miracles *confirm* the teaching of the truth of God's Word. When biblical truth is willfully distorted, the Lord cannot sanction what amounts to a deception. "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*. Amen" (Mark 16:20). When God's Word is not preached in truth, there can be *no confirming miracles*. Tragically, it isn't the atheists or the skeptics who lead the way in undermining a belief in miracles; it's those who misrepresent what the Bible teaches by falsely claiming healings in the name of God.

What then of true biblical healings? Have they ceased since the days of the Apostles? There is no verse in Scripture that teaches the cessation of miracle healings. The Lord indeed heals today! Yet, the conditions, including the timing, purpose, and means, are all up to Him—and rarely does He fill us in on what He has in mind.

Let's review some biblical examples. Sometimes the Lord heals a person in order for him or her to continue blessing their brothers and sisters in Christ. Tabitha (also called Dorcas), who had fallen sick and died, was such a person. The saints at Joppa sent for Peter, and, "When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. Peter prayed for her and called out, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her

up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive” (Acts 9:40-41).

Epaphroditus was a tremendous blessing to the saints at Philippi as well as to the Apostle Paul himself. We’re told, “For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow” (Philippians 2:26-27). Continued good works, however, are not always the reason for God healing the saints.

God’s mercy was involved in the healing of Epaphroditus, both for him and for Paul. But isn’t the Lord’s mercy included in all His healings? Certainly, but that may not be His primary purpose. He loves us and knows our hearts, meaning He knows how much sorrow we can handle (through Him), so He was merciful to Paul regarding his sorrows. Yet Paul had his own affliction for which he sought the Lord three times for deliverance—but it never took place. Why not? Paul writes, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). In this case, the spiritual strengthening of Paul through grace was the Lord’s purpose for denying his physical healing. Few, if any, have suffered more trials and tribulations than the Apostle Paul, yet all that he endured did not hinder his fruitfulness (See *TBC* “The Value of Suffering” 5/1/2010). Often God allows believers to experience physical sufferings as a *witness* of the grace He provides to help them deal with their condition. I’m sure many of us know believers who have encouraged us greatly by their witness in handling their afflictions, and who may *not* have been healed. He may have even allowed that simply for the purpose of their testimony to others.

The struggle regarding healing, whether for ourselves or our loved ones, is often highly emotional. Losing a loved one is heartbreaking and the loss causes a time of deep mourning for many. Although Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, He wept. Why? I believe that the reason He did so had to do with death itself, a consequence of sin brought into this world. Death produced the emotional pain of sorrow and separation that Jesus witnessed among those who loved Lazarus: “When Jesus therefore saw her [Mary] weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept” (John 11:33-35). Yes, He raised Lazarus from the

dead, but the reality of death with its consequences of separation remains for everyone.

Why did Jesus weep? It may be because our Lord and Savior was considering the separation He would endure (“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful...”) through His death on the cross. We do know that His understanding of His separation from the Father (completely unfathomable to us) drove Him to his knees at Gethsemane: “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*” (Matthew 26:39). Submission to the Father, yes, and more: for His love for us and for the joy that was set before Him, i.e., our salvation. Our deceased loved ones who put their faith in Him are experiencing for eternity that absolute fullness of joy!

The Book of Ruth speaks volumes about the loss of life through widowhood. Naomi and her two daughters-in-law all lost their husbands, each dealing with their grief in a different way. Naomi initially became bitter toward God for the deaths of her husband and two sons; Orpah, a Moabite, left her mother-in-law and returned to her people in Moab. Ruth, also a Moabite, nevertheless committed herself to caring for Naomi. Her focus was not on her loss or on herself but rather on determination to look after her mother-in-law. Unaware of God’s intention for her, Ruth’s loving ministry to Naomi nevertheless resulted in her marriage to Boaz, which brought forth Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David! By following the God of Naomi, Ruth, though not a Jew, gloriously entered into the genealogy of Jesus. Another widow, Anna, dedicated her life to the Lord after the death of her husband. Through her years of continual service in the Temple, she was present to witness the baby Jesus, her Messiah, being brought there: “And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). She was wonderfully blessed in fulfilling what God had ultimately intended for her.

Scripture abounds with examples of God allowing His children to go through conditions of suffering. Why? The Book of Job gives us a major reason. Job’s suffering experience began with his focus upon himself, defending his righteousness before his “counselors,” and even before God (40:8), as well as the counsel from his wife to end his suffering (“Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die” [2:9]). Chapter 42:5-6 indicates that Job finally came to understand the message regarding his self-preoccupation, and his words leave no doubt about how

his experience changed him for the good: “[Before,] I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Job grew immeasurably in his relationship with the Lord through the trials he suffered!

James points to the Book of Job regarding *the purpose* that God had for what Job experienced, which didn’t take place by chance. That purpose can also be understood as something that was *intended* by the Lord. He *allowed* Job to suffer at the hands of Satan and the faulty insights of his “counselors” so that he might come to the end of himself, which he did! That’s what God had intended for him. In fact, God has intentions for all those who love Him, which is what Romans 8:28 is all about: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *His* purpose.” Everything the Lord allows a believer to go through should, as with Job, draw him or her closer to the One whose love for us knows no bounds. Yet we all have a choice to either submit to God’s intentions for us—or resist, and even reject, His ways and means for us.

In summary, the Lord *spiritually* heals all those who have believed the gospel. They have been reconciled to Him now and forever, forgiven of their sins, past, present, and future, and given the gift of eternal life. Not everyone who cries out to Him for *physical* healing is healed. The reasons are in the mind of God, the details of which He rarely communicates to the person. They are enfolded in His intention for the betterment and fruitfulness of the believer and will take place as he or she submits to the Lord’s will and purpose. The Lord’s choice to physically heal and His denial of physical healing *both serve* to glorify Him! The former demonstrates His power as our Creator, the latter His intention for the believer in order that he or she may be used of Him. The conditions, including the timing, the purpose, and the means, are all up to Jesus. All things do indeed “work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *His* purpose” (Romans 2:28). Desiring and obeying God’s will and His way is the evidence of our love for Him (John 14:23).

Pray for those who need to be encouraged in the knowledge of the love and graciousness of our Lord, especially for those who misunderstand biblical healing. Psalm 23 is a wonderful reminder that the Lord is our Good Shepherd, and through Him, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my [temporal] life: and I will dwell [eternally] in the house of the Lord for ever.” **TBC**

QUESTION: I'm confused about the "security of the believer." To me, it sounds like "once saved, always saved," which doesn't fit in with my understanding that believers *can* lose their salvation by turning their backs on God.

RESPONSE: The doctrine of "Eternal Security" engenders no end of strife. But a discussion of the pertinent scriptures must be according to 2 Timothy 2:15, in which we are told to "rightly divide the word of truth." Everything must be considered *in context*. The passage in John 10 contains declarative statements of the Lord Jesus Christ, with no qualifiers. Jesus made five clear statements concerning His sheep (those who believe and follow Him), in contrast to those who did not believe (v. 26). Some defenders of the "falling away" doctrine try to draw a distinction between Christians who *continue* to follow Jesus throughout their lifetimes and those who eventually turn back.

Jesus, however, shows that He was making a simple distinction between the Pharisees who did *not* turn to Christ and those who *did* (vv. 24-26). The verses put the security of eternal life in the strong right arm of God. The verse says "no man may pluck them out." The good shepherd recovering his lost sheep (Mt 18:12-14) and the Father disciplining His children (Heb 12:5-12) are excellent examples of God *securing* our salvation. Other people argue that in John 10 some have added meanings that do not agree with the words or the context of the passage in John. Perhaps the clearest example is 2 Peter 2:22, which discusses false prophets, not true believers. These "false prophets" (2:1) are "wells without water (v. 17)." A well without "water" (water is biblical metaphor for the Holy Spirit) has the same exterior appearance as a bona fide well but looks entirely different to one who possesses the ability to look inside (1 Sm 16:7). These false prophets are specifically contrasted with Lot who, despite his compromises and disobedience, is still called a "righteous man" (v. 8). As verse 22 carefully explains: "...it is happened unto them according to the true proverb..." Another verse cites the dog that returns to his vomit because that's what dogs do. The sow returns to wallowing in the mire because that's what a hog does. Neither the dog nor the pig has had its nature changed. Nor were they "born again" or changed into another species. The dog experienced a temporary purging and the sow underwent a washing. But there was no eternal meaning, even with spruced up appearances—like the white-

washing of a tomb (Matthew 23:27).

Those who have been drawn by Christ (who draws all men [John 12:32]), may temporarily "escape" the pollution of the world by attempting to conform, but Scripture plainly states that their conformity is not real because their true nature (as that of a dog or pig) soon manifests itself.

QUESTION: In one of your newsletters you said that before man was created, Satan had already rebelled and taken countless angels with him. You stated, "A rebellion led by Lucifer eons ago had taken place...." It sounds like you hold to some form of the "gap theory." Creation had a beginning, and "in six days the LORD made heaven and earth..." (Ex 20:11). I believe it is clear that the angels were created as well in those six days. God said, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (Gn 2:1). This "host" certainly could include angels (Neh 9:6, Ps 103:20-21, 1 Ki 22:19, et al.). God said the serpent was "made" just as the beasts of the field (Gn 3:1) and was "perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created" (Eze 28:15). Where is the scriptural evidence that Satan rebelled "before man was created...eons ago" as you have stated? In the beginning God said "everything" that He had made was "very good" (Gn 1:31). Are you implying a special creation of the angels at a different time and place before "the beginning of the creation?"

RESPONSE: You have clearly put much thought and study into it in the spirit of a Berean. However, you make some incorrect assumptions. The statement, "the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made" (Gn 3:1) does not include *Satan* as a "beast of the field." It includes the *physical serpent* in the garden through which Satan spoke. He is called "that old serpent," but he is not a literal, physical snake created with the other creatures. *When* Satan came into existence cannot be derived from this passage.

Second, you seem to assume that the creation of "the heavens and the earth" (Gn 1:1) includes what Stephen described as "the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56) and what Paul called "the third heaven" (2 Cor 12:2) where God dwells. The words "heaven" and "heavens" are used both for the physical "heavens" related to earth and a part of the physical universe (the atmosphere and the stars) as well as

for *heaven*, the "Father's house," which has neither physical nor spatial relationship to earth. Surely the "place" where God dwells is neither physical nor part of the physical universe and must have *always* existed. This is also where angels dwell.

The creation spoken of in Genesis refers only to the physical universe. The heaven(s) in Genesis 2:1 refer to the stars, not to angels. In other places it is clear when "heaven/heavens" refers to the physical realm and when it refers to God's presence; also when "host" refers to stars and when it refers to angels. You seem to assume that "host of heaven" always means angels, which is not the case. For example: "as the host of heaven cannot be numbered" (Jer 33:22). The statements—"God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gn 1:31), and "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (2:1), as well as "from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female" (Mk 10:26)—all refer to the physical universe, which had a beginning, not to the dwelling of God and angels nor to angels themselves.

We have no biblical reason to believe that angels were created simultaneously with the physical universe and man. We are not told when they were created. Both Old and New Testaments show a close association of angels with God, and it would seem odd indeed if they did not exist until the physical universe was created. Surely the positions of power that angels manifest in the Book of Revelation seem to be of a more permanent nature than to have originated with the creation of the universe and man. One function of angels is to praise God and surround His throne. It hardly seems reasonable that there would have been no angels to worship and serve God before the physical universe (of which they are not a part) was made.

There even seems to be a hint that man's creation came about as a result of Satan's rebellion. Surely man plays the key role in the final defeat of Satan. We see this in the part played by Job in the controversy between God and Satan; Paul tells us that we "wrestle...against spiritual wickedness in high places [i.e., heaven]" (Eph 6:12).

God has existed forever. I think it reasonable that angels have been in His presence for "eons" of time by earth's reckoning, and also that Satan probably rebelled long before man was created.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Didn't Christ Predict Fulfillment of All within His Generation?

QUESTION: According to Matthew:24:34 Christ declared, "This generation shall not pass till all these things [which he had prophesied] be fulfilled." No one can deny that the "gospel of the kingdom" was not preached "unto all nations" (verse 140; that "all the tribes of the earth" did not see Christ "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30); or that angels did not "gather together his elect from the four winds" (v. 31) before the generation to whom Christ spoke had passed away. That this is obviously false prophecy can't be denied. What do you make of it?

RESPONSE: The Greek word *genea*, translated "generation," is open to more than one interpretation. There have been two major theories among Christians concerning what Jesus meant by "this generation." Those known as "preterists" believe, like the critics, that He meant the generation whom He was speaking. Unlike the skeptics, however, those believers insist that everything Christ prophesied, including even the entire book of Revelation through the middle of chapter 20, came true within that generation, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews. By this theory Nero was the Antichrist.

Obviously, however, the generation alive at the time was not in danger of destroying all flesh from the earth with the use of bows and arrows and spears (Matthew:24:22), as our generation can now do with its modern weapons. And we now know, in retrospect, that much of what Christ foretold (as already noted) did not occur in A.D. 70. Therefore, the generation alive in Christ's day could not possibly have been the generation to which he referred.

The more popular theory (until recently) is held by those Christians known as "furlurists." They believe that "this generation" referred to the generation that would be alive at the time when Israel would be brought back into her land in the "last days," as the prophets so clearly foretold. This belief was strengthened by the obvious fact that many of the prophecies throughout the Bible could not be fulfilled until Israel was indeed back in her land.

For that reason, there was great expectancy that the pre-trib rapture would occur in 1981,

a date calculated by adding 40 years (estimated length of a generation) to 1948, when Israel was restored, then subtracting seven years for the tribulation. When 1981 came and passed without the rapture occurring, many Christians were disillusioned and felt obliged to opt for a post-trib rapture. Some even abandoned belief in the rapture ever taking place.

That neither of these first two interpretations is tenable is quite clear on moral grounds. It would not have been just for the judgment of all of Israel's past sins to "come upon this generation" (Matthew:23:36) or for the "blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world," to be "required of this generation" (Luke:11:50-51) that was alive in Christ's day. Nor would it be any more just for such judgment to come upon the generation alive when Israel was restored to her land. Surely, then Christ must have been using "generation" to refer to all wicked and unbelieving and evil people throughout all time.

Indeed, here is the only way to understand what Christ meant by “this generation.” He specified on many occasions the generation to which He referred as a “generation of vipers” (Matthew:3:7), and “evil and adulterous generation” (16:4), a “faithless and perverse generation” (17:17; Luke:9:41), and “adulterous and sinful generation” (Mark:8:38), a “faithless generation” (9:19), and an “evil generation” (Luke:11:29).

These are not pleasant terms and obviously describe sinful mankind in all its generations. We can only conclude, therefore, that Christ is indicating (contrary to the expectation of a last-days great revival or of a Christian takeover of the world) that the human race as a whole (except for the few who believe) will remain in unbelief and rebellion against God until the very end.

There is another variation of this interpretation that agrees with Scripture. Inasmuch as Christ was speaking to Israel, we can also conclude that His words had a special application to the Jews. He was saying that, although some Jews would believe in Him and thus be part of the church, Israel as a whole would remain in unbelief and rebellion until all was fulfilled. Thus Zechariah prophesied that Israel as a whole would remain a “faithless generation” (Mark:9:19) and not believe until Christ appeared in the midst of Armageddon to rescue them:

I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.... In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.... And I will bring the third part [of Israel] through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God (Zechariah:12:10; 13:1,9).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

God’s ultimate kingdom is far more wonderful than human imagination can even conceive: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). The entire universe, so contaminated by Satan’s cosmic rebellion, will be replaced instantly by a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (see 2 Peter 3:13).

The new universe will be inhabited by those who have repented and received God’s remedy so that He could create them anew (Ephesians 2:8-10). In perfect bodies, no longer susceptible to temptation and sin, and filled with Christ’s love, theirs will be eternal bliss in God’s presence and the inconceivable adventure and joy of the wonders He has planned for all eternity.

At any moment it could be too late to respond, but as yet Christ’s gracious offer of pardon and eternal joy is still open: “He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). “Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: Old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17)!

—DAVE HUNT

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The Vanishing Gospel

Dave Hunt—First published
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ONE OF THE greatest sorrows for lovers of God is the fact that the vast majority of mankind selfishly and ungratefully lives day after day without even thinking of the Creator to whom they owe their existence and who holds their eternal destiny in His hands. So it is even with many who claim to know Him. How often do *you* tell God you love Him, and thank Him for His love and grace and the salvation He has given you in Christ? When was the last time?

The miracle of our bodies, with their trillions of unfathomable cells and chance-defying organs such as the eye and brain, the ingenious design displayed in nature, and the mystery of soul and spirit, loudly declare: “[I]n the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1) and He made man “in his image” (1:26-28). Yet most people embrace the outrageous fraud of evolution.

This world’s contemptuous disregard of its Creator makes me weep for His sake; and, as the old song says, “causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble” for the judgment that is coming upon mankind! “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17). And *forget God* they surely have.

Paul declared: “...even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind...[to] all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness.... [They are] haters of God...inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents...without natural affection...who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death...do the same, [and] have pleasure in them that do them” (Romans 1:28-32). The connection is undeniable between the evil foretold for “the last days” (2 Timothy 3:1-7) and the godless “lifestyles” popularized on trendy TV shows.

Hollywood has long glorified and exported all manner of ungodliness. The marketing of evil provides billions of dollars in profits through promoting youth rebellion; sexual “freedom” and wanton perversion; mutilation of the body; obscene, suicidal, and murderous lyrics, gangland, and satanic clothing. Could Sodom and Gomorrah have been much worse?

Homes are invaded and families destroyed by immoral, corrupting media, leaving consciences “seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2). Many Christians enjoy what would have shamed and embarrassed them a few years ago. An estimated 50 percent of professing Christians have been attracted to internet pornography.

And to attract those thus corrupted, many of the largest and fastest-growing churches mimic the world in “seeker-friendly” and “youth-oriented” services that exploit sensuality and compromise the truth. *The Christian Science Monitor* (12/30/03) reported that “megachurches are good at reaching young people raised in an entertainment-saturated culture.... Many have...a rock-concert feel to them.... [At the] largest congregation in the United States, with more than 25,000 attendants each weekend...Victoria Osteen steps to the podium in front of 16,000 cheering Sunday worshipers and proclaims: ‘We’re going to rock today!’” And *Worship Leader* (Nov-Dec ’03) reported, “...the Jesus People erected [a] worship ritual...from the preeminent communal ceremony of their generation—the rock concert.”

Through “contemporary Christian music” and “contemporary worship,” the church has been converted to the “religion” of the world! Some of the largest presumably evangelical churches have designed their Sunday morning services based upon what the ungodly want. Missing are the fear of a holy God’s wrath against sin, trembling repentance, and grateful faith in Christ, the eternal God, who became man through the virgin birth to suffer the full penalty of God’s judgment in our place. Seeker-friendly churches must not “offend” with the Truth but pamper with the flattering “gospel” of self-esteem, self-love, and positive thinking—a “gospel” that cannot save. As Paul foretold, “they will not endure sound doctrine...” (2 Timothy 4:3).

Creating large, rich churches is not new. In *A Woman Rides the Beast*, we show that the Roman Catholic Church—the world’s largest and wealthiest—grew out of a marriage between the Roman world and the church, making “Christianity” the state religion. Historian Will Durant explains, “...the world converted Christianity.... [Paganism] passed like maternal blood into the new religion, and captive Rome captured her conqueror” (*Caesar and Christ*, 657, 672).

Roman Catholicism grew by wedding itself to the dominant pagan religion in

Italy, Spain, Latin America, Africa, the Philippines, etc. Haiti is said to be 85 percent Catholic and 110 percent Vodoun. New Orleans, “the most Catholic city in America” (*Our Sunday Visitor*, 10/15/95), is its voodoo capital.

And now, “Protestantism” is creating megachurches by merging with the “new paganism” in today’s culture—a culture that is becoming ever more anti-Christian and anti-Israel. In blatant defiance of God and His Word, the nations have robbed Israel of most of the land God gave His chosen people as “an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8). In further insolence, and sadly under the leadership of America’s [then] Christian president, the world is determined to give more of Israel’s land to Arabs/Muslims as a reward for their hatred of Christ and religious vows to exterminate the Jews. And Islam intends to take all.

Today’s world doesn’t need more entertainment and “positive” messages assuring the “hurting” that God loves, forgives, “accepts them as they are,” heals their “inner child,” and has an exciting plan for their lives. Mankind needs the changeless convicting truth that leads sinners to repentance and salvation. God’s holy character has not changed; the separation between man and God caused by sin—and the judgment to come—have not changed; nor has God’s remedy in Christ been outdated and revised. On these basic facts the Bible is clear and uncompromising.

Like the father with the “prodigal son” (Luke 15:11-32), a gracious God is ever eager to embrace repentant sinners. But His holiness and justice allow pardon only for those who accept the blood of Christ poured out upon the Cross on their behalf.

We must preach the gospel *everywhere* to *everyone* (Mark 16:15). It must be believed for *anyone* to be saved from eternal separation from God: “the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Romans 1:16); “[T]here is none other name...whereby we *must* be saved (Acts 4:12); “[W]hat *must* I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...” (Acts 16:30,31). The warning is solemn and clear: “[H]e that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

Yet Robert Schuller (whose *Hour of Power* reaches 20 million viewers weekly) once declared, “We have to find God in our own way...” (*Larry King Live*, 12/19/98).

Rewriting the Bible, Schuller turned

God's solemn warning, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," into *Believe in the God Who Believes in You* (Thomas Nelson Publishers). Paul had "no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3)—but God believes in us?

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (1 Timothy 1:15). Yet Schuller, self-proclaimed "founder of the church growth movement" (his annual Institute for Successful Church Leadership attracted tens of thousands of pastors from around the world), claimed that "attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition" is an "unchristian strategy," which is "destructive [and] counter-productive to the evangelism enterprise..." (*Christianity Today*, 10/5/84)!

David F. Wells writes, "In another age, Robert Schuller's ministry...might well have been viewed...as comedy.... 'Sin,' he says with a cherubic smile, 'is not what shatters our relationship to God [but] that we do not esteem ourselves enough. In the Crystal Cathedral, therefore, let the word 'sin' be banished.... Christ was not drawing a profound moral compass in the Sermon on the Mount; He was just giving us a set of 'be (happy) attitudes'..." (*No Place for Truth*, p. 175).

We are commanded to "preach the word...reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). God's Word is the foundation of our faith—yet that foundation is being undermined. "Christian psychology" takes the theories of atheists such as Freud, Jung, Rogers, Maslow, et al., and repackages their lies as "truth that improves" God's holy and perfect Word.

Bruce Narramore, following in his uncle Clyde's footsteps, admits, "Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem. This is a good and necessary focus" (*You're Someone Special*, Zondervan, p. 22). Yet Paul warned *against* thinking too highly of oneself (Romans 12:3) and urged, "[L]et each esteem other[s] better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3)! But that was before today's church surrendered to the surrounding culture.

Attempting to build large and successful churches, many of today's pastors draw upon secular motivational speakers' advice designed to foster worldly success. Tragically, this is the basis of much that is offered by Rick Warren (a graduate of Schuller's Institute), the most popular and

influential "church growth" guru today, whose methods and example are being followed by literally tens of thousands of fellow pastors worldwide—and by millions of lay readers of his books.

Warren does offer much sound advice in *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*. Commendably, he attempts to support most points with "nearly a thousand quotations from Scripture" (*Life*, p. 325). But the "scriptures" he quotes are speculative paraphrases such as *The Message* (see TBC Q&A Oct. '95) by Eugene H. Peterson (NavPress).

"Every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5), we "live...by every word of God" (Luke 4:4), and are "born again...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached..." (1 Peter 1:23-25). Yet *The Message*, like other paraphrases, substitutes man's words for God's words! In his introduction, Peterson says that *The Message* is "not...a word-for-word translation" of God's Holy Word into modern language but *what he thinks God's Word means*—not a translation but an *interpretation*. What audacity, to rewrite the Bible! Yet such shameless perversions of God's Word are Warren's major support for his thesis.

Paraphrases based upon "dynamic equivalency" partake of two destructive errors: 1) instead of translating the words of Scripture, they interpret in modern language what they believe are the ideas presented; and 2) they dumb down the language to make it "understandable."

Interpretation is proper in sermons and commentaries, which listeners/readers can compare to the Word of God. *The Message*, however, is offered as "This *version* of the New Testament..." (p. 7), misleading readers into thinking they have the *Scriptures* in their hands. Even J. I. Packer and Warren W. Wiersbe praise *The Message* as Scripture (on back cover)—which it is not.

John 3:17, for example, "that the world through him might be saved," reads, "He came to help, to put the world right again." "Saved" means redeemed from the judgment we deserve for our sins, and fitted for heaven—but "to help" merely assists our efforts. And "to put the world right again" sounds like social or political reform! Such flagrant perversion of God's Word permeates *The Message*—and Warren turns to it for support.

Such paraphrases rewrite Scripture in simple language to make the *ideas* understandable. But there is much depth in God's Word that even the most mature Christian finds difficult. The "deep things of God"

are revealed by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10), not by simplifying God's words. Peter said that in Paul's epistles were "some things hard to be understood..." (2 Peter 3:16). Obviously, the depth of Scripture is lost in *simplifying* it.

The Purpose Driven Life never presents the biblical gospel that alone saves. Readers are told to "learn to love and trust God's Son, Jesus" (p. 37); that if they "have a relationship with God through Jesus," they needn't fear death (p. 40); that "your identity is in eternity, and your homeland is heaven" (p. 48); and that "Real life begins by committing yourself completely to Jesus Christ. If you are not sure you have done this, all you need to do is *receive* and *believe*" (p. 58).

None of the essential elements of the gospel—that man is a sinner under God's judgment, that Christ is God and man through a virgin birth, that He paid the penalty for our sins, that He resurrected the third day—is given (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Readers are offered "friendship" with God through believing in a "Christ" who went to the cross because He "would rather die than live without us" (p. 79)! That is *not* the gospel!

The reader is told that his genetic makeup, physical features, talents, personality, the details of his daily life, etc., are exactly what God has foreordained: "God prescribed every single detail of your body.... He planned it all for *his* purpose..." (pp. 22, 23). "You're just what he wanted to make" (p. 25). Not so! The cumulative effects of man's rebellion have created a pool of genetic distortions in humanity resulting in a deformed world with distorted beings that God never intended.

Warren justifies this fatalistic view from *The Living Bible*: "You [God]...scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe" (Psalms 139:16)—not even close to what that verse actually says, which is: "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfected; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Is every *sinful* thought and deed exactly what God has planned?! Men are not sinners but puppets if everything is exactly what God has decreed.

Let us be careful to "preach the word" and "obey the word" and allow Christ, the "living word," to live through us as we offer sinners the biblical "gospel of God" (Romans 1:1) that truly saves. And let us "earnestly contend" for this unchangeable faith (Jude 3).

QUESTION: What's your view of extra-terrestrials?

RESPONSE: There are many biblical reasons for not accepting the idea of intelligent life beyond earth other than angels and demons. First of all, it would be impossible for morally responsible humanoids anywhere in the universe to keep from sin. If they had the genuine right of choice, it must inevitably have been used to disobey God. Thus they would require salvation.

Second, Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and His death is the one-and-only perfect sacrifice for sins ever offered in the universe (Hebrews 9:23-28; 10:12-14). If there are morally free agents on other planets, they would have to believe in Christ for salvation.

Third, God has gone to great lengths to give us a historically verifiable eyewitness record of His Son's birth, life, death, and resurrection, and this message is contained in a Bible that can be verified in many ways by the inhabitants of earth (geographically, archaeologically, historically, etc.), and which would not be available to ETIs. It would seem both unfair and a violation of God's way of dealing with mankind for beings elsewhere in space to be required to believe in a Savior who was crucified on a distant planet.

Fourth, the Bible seems to indicate that this earth is the only such place in the universe. When Satan is cast out of heaven, he comes to Earth; it is on this planet that the battle will be fought that results in Satan's defeat and imprisonment in the abyss; it is on this Earth that Christ will reign for 1,000 years while Satan is locked up; it is to this planet that Satan will return when he is released, and it is on this planet that Satan will meet his final defeat and where his eternal doom will be sealed.

Finally, if life happened by chance on this Earth and evolved upward, then it could seemingly happen elsewhere in the universe. But if, as we believe, human life resulted from a purposeful act of God, and if sin is inevitable for such beings, and if the human soul is the prize for which Satan and God do battle, then it hardly makes sense to have this same process repeated on countless other planets throughout the cosmos. That would imply that God didn't know all that would happen, felt that His "experiment" had failed on earth, and

"tried again" elsewhere, which denies His omniscience.

QUESTION: I keep encountering the teaching that water baptism has no place in this dispensation; that the entire subject of water baptism is Jewish;...that all mention of "baptism" in the Pauline epistles is baptism of the Holy Spirit;...[and that] baptism in the gospels and the Acts applies to Jewish believers only.... Can you help me?

RESPONSE: Testing this theory against the Scriptures quickly disproves it. In the Great Commission, Jesus very clearly tells the disciples (and us today) to "preach the gospel to every creature [i.e., to every race, tribe, and individual, not only to the Jews]. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). It is clear that although failure to be baptized does not damn the soul (not one verse says so!), and although it is not part of the gospel ("Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel"—1 Corinthians 1:17; see also 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Yet all who believe the gospel are to be baptized. Christ told the disciples to teach or disciple "all nations, [i.e., not only Jews but every nationality], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

The Great Commission required the disciples to teach their converts to obey everything Christ had commanded them (v. 20). Thus each new convert was also to make disciples and teach them to obey all that Christ had taught the original twelve—which included, then and today, baptizing converts from every nation. We have the record that every Gentile convert was baptized. The Corinthians, who were surely not all Jews but mostly Gentiles, were baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14-17), as was an Ethiopian when he believed the gospel (Acts 8:35-39). So were the Roman centurion, Cornelius, and his relatives when they believed (Acts 10:47-48). Likewise the Philippian jailor (a Gentile) and his house were baptized after they believed on Christ (Acts 16:30-33). There are other scriptures, but these should be sufficient to show that baptism is for today and for all (not just Jews) who believe the gospel. If this generation is to preach the gospel, which it is commanded to do, then it must continue to baptize all who believe it. If only Jews

are to be baptized, then the gospel must be only for them. But that is not biblical and would leave the rest of us unsaved. The gospel is "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [non-Jew]" (Romans 1:16).

Although baptism doesn't save, it is an act of obedience on the part of believers who are saved, a declaration to the world that they have been saved not by their good works but by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, of which baptism is a symbol: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Baptism is therefore not appropriate for infants who cannot understand the gospel and therefore have made no choice to believe on Christ. Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 that baptism is not part of the gospel; one is saved without being baptized. But those who believe are baptized, and since salvation is for all, baptism is for all, Gentiles as well as Jews.

QUESTION: Would you please comment on the following statement by Dr. A. W. Tozer in his *Renewal Day by Day*: "The man who is seriously convinced that he deserves to go to hell is not likely to go there, while the man who believes that he is worthy of heaven will certainly never enter that place."

RESPONSE: The only certainty of heaven that we have is based upon faith in Christ and His Word, both of which promise eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. Heaven is the believer's sure destination not because he merits it but because of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: "I give [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:27-28); "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13); etc. Although confident of heaven because of what Christ has done, the believer is at the same time very conscious of his own unworthiness. It is, in fact, the realization that he deserves hell that has caused him to turn to Christ. In contrast, Tozer is referring to "the man who believes that he is worthy [in himself] of heaven." That person is lost because obviously he has not believed in the gospel and is not trusting in Christ alone for his salvation.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* **FAITH**

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Belief in taking over the world and the Rapture

QUESTION: I’ve been coming into contact more frequently with Christians who seem to love the Lord and believe that we have to take over the world and set up the kingdom before Christ can return. They are convinced that Christ will return to earth to rule here, not to take us to heaven, and that He cannot do so until we have set up the kingdom for Him. They say that those who believe in the rapture will be so shocked to face the Antichrist, when they didn’t expect to, that they will be deceived and think he is Christ? Doesn’t this make good sense?

RESPONSE: The real Lord Jesus Christ, as the Bible says, will raise the dead and catch us up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians:4:13-18 [13]). Consequently, those whose “Christ” meets them on earth and has arrived to rule over the kingdom they have established in his name have been serving the Antichrist. It is that simple when one accepts what the Bible teaches about the rapture.

As for being deceived into believing that Antichrist is Christ, the belief in the rapture, once again, protects us from that. Though Antichrist will be able to do great signs and wonders by the power of Satan (2 Thessalonians:2:9-10), there is one thing he cannot do: he cannot simultaneously raise the dead and catch up the living believers to heaven. Those who are watching for the Christ who raptures us to heaven cannot be deceived by a counterfeit who can only rule on earth.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

I will seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

—George Müller

Dumpster-Diving Christianity

T. A. McMahon

MY BEST friend-in-the Lord, Dave Hunt, who is now in heaven delighting in the presence of the Lord, loved to repeat this poem, which I quote in part:

“Who would leave the noon-day bright to grope ’mid shadows dim?

And who would leave the fountainhead to drink the muddy stream

Where men have mixed what God has said with every dreamer’s dream?”

In today’s lingo, this would be akin to dumpster diving. Many of the poor and homeless are driven to dumpster diving, i.e., scrounging through trash bins next to grocery stores hoping to find salvageable discarded food in order to help them survive. Amazingly, that *method* is the same for many Christians, although the circumstances, spiritually speaking, are as far apart as heaven is from earth.

First of all, true followers of Jesus Christ are not spiritually impoverished. As born-again believers, they have been given all they need to live their lives to the glory of God. Jesus declared, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). The “life” Jesus referred to is a believer’s life in Him, and He has supplied—as in “made available”—all that we need in abundance! “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

That supply began for us when we first believed the gospel, acknowledging that we were sinners separated from God, doomed to spend eternity apart from Him. Our confession also acknowledged that there was nothing we could do to save ourselves. The debt for our sins is infinite and beyond finite man’s ability to pay off. Only Jesus, who is both infinite God and perfect sinless Man, could and did pay the eternal penalty for our sins. Putting our faith in Jesus is our recognition of His immeasurable sacrifice and involves believing and receiving what He accomplished for us. It requires a full commitment of the heart to Him. When that takes place, we are reborn spiritually, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and have immediate access to all that God has provided for

our “abundant life” in Christ!

Why, then, are many Christians today acting like spiritual paupers—even to the point of spiritual dumpster-diving (examples to come)? These are certainly the days prophesied by the Apostle Paul, when those who call themselves Christians “will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). The primary cause is that they do not truly believe in the *sufficiency of God’s Word*. Some give nodding agreement to it, but much of what they actually *do* amounts to mere lip service.

Regarding God’s Word being sufficient, let us be Bereans (Acts 17:10-11)! Does the Bible claim to be sufficient? Absolutely! God “has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). Although there are many others, that one verse is loaded with information confirming the sufficiency of God’s Word. It says “all things”! It says He has “given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him...” The context is all those things that pertain to *life and godliness* and that ultimately have eternal value, as well as blessing us in our temporal lives. However, that doesn’t include one’s ordinary earthly attributes, such as mechanical skills, medical proficiency, intelligence, athletic abilities, artistic talent, and so forth—all of which have temporal value and none of which are gained “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (1:2). Nevertheless, our knowledge of Him instructs us as to how to apply our attributes through godliness.

Second Timothy 3:16-17 is also foundational for confirming the sufficiency of Scripture: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [that is, complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Let’s begin with “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” What does that tell us? Simply that the Bible is God’s communication to mankind. Other than God using men, His prophets, who transcribed what He communicated to them, no additional contributions were added to it. Paul explains, “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12). We’re told that, “It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4).

Let’s go over that again. “Man shall... live by... every word of God.” But what if God left some things out for us as *pertain-*

ing to life and godliness—things necessary for us to have a life filled with the fruit of the Spirit and pleasing to Him? What about having human beings fill in the blanks? That would mean looking to finite, sin-infected, self-serving mankind to complete the task that our infinite, omniscient, and perfectly good and holy God overlooked! Seriously? Of course not. Yet, we’re seeing Christians seeking out “experts on how life should be lived,” looking to those who supposedly have the solutions to all of humanity’s problems of living. We’re told that these “counselors” have supplied what God didn’t address at the time the Scriptures were given. You know, “People were different back then. It’s a cultural-difference thing. Besides, humanity’s wisdom has increased throughout the millennia, right?” Problems abound for those who promote and believe that, not the least of which is that the “new wisdom” is contrary to all that God had written.

Additionally, there’s more than a slight problem with those who are the source of this latter-day wisdom. They would be the founders of psychological counseling, a.k.a. psychotherapy: Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and a host of their disciples right up to our present time. They are all antichrist in the sense that the founders’ lives and their teachings have diametrically opposed God’s Word. Turning to them is in direct disregard of Psalm 1:1: “Blessed is the man that *walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly*, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” The entire field of psychotherapy is reflected in that one verse.

If that’s news to anyone reading this article, I recommend searching the archives of The Berean Call, where you will find articles, books, sermons, videos, and radio programs on the subject. We believe the extensive information we present in critiquing the pseudo-science of psychological counseling is valuable, but it’s not critical. Why? Because simply knowing the fundamentals of what the Bible teaches and comparing that with the concepts of psychotherapy should be enough to turn away every believer from one of Satan’s foremost deceptions. Consider just a few of its antichrist characteristics: psychological counseling is basically atheistic. It neither recognizes God nor does it recognize sin. No sin means no need for a Savior. No God, no Savior, leaves man by himself to fix his own mess, which is what psychological counseling is all about. “Self” becomes one’s savior. It’s a “God replacement.”

Psychotherapy’s cornerstone principle is that humanity is inherently good, and when personal problems arise, they can

be resolved through therapy under the guidance of a psychologist or psychiatrist. The umpteen therapies are subjective, contradictory, ineffectual, and often greatly destructive. They have no scientific basis. Psychotherapy, with its bizarre therapeutic practices notwithstanding, is simply talk, which is meaningless at the very least. Even when it's not directly antichrist talk, it's still a dumpster. You would think that Bible-believing Christians should be able to recognize the anti-biblical concepts and steer clear of them. They should be...but that's clearly not happening.

A major reason for this is there is a more devious and highly seductive dumpster that has waylaid Christians. Although there is *no field of psychotherapy recognized as Christian*, that hasn't slowed down the acceptance of the myth of "Christian psychology," which has grown exponentially since the 1970s, and its "muddy stream," mentioned earlier, has turned into a torrential landslide. Christian psychologists have flooded the church with unbiblical self-love and self-esteem teachings, which one of its leading practitioners revealed as the source of the new "self doctrines." He wrote, "It was humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow who first made us aware of the need of self-love, self-esteem."

It's a rare church that does not refer its members to professional counselors, whether secular or "Christian," for mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. That may seem reasonable to some, but the question should be asked, "Which of those psychotherapeutic issues would not be sin-related?" Tragically, many church leaders who claim to believe in the sufficiency of Scripture are among the chief advocates in such referrals.

As the days draw ever nearer to the return of Jesus, the End-Times apostasy increases. As that takes place, Christianity is being refashioned, subtly for the most part, to conform to the false religion of the Antichrist. Remember, he is called "Antichrist," as in "anti-Christian," meaning a false *Christian leader* (not Hindu, Islamic, or Buddhist!). Therefore, discernment in regard to our recognizing what is true to the Scriptures—and what isn't—is critical. We need to take to heart the words of Jesus, who characterized the deception that would take place just prior to His return: "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:24). Jesus again indicates a lack of discernment among Christians in Luke 18:8: "...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" There's little doubt that the prophesied abandonment of "sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3) and Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders, is happening

right before our eyes. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

Jude exhorts us to earnestly contend for "*the faith* which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "Contending" for the faith, however, can't take place for those who are ignorant of the teachings of Scripture. Being *somewhat familiar* with what the Bible teaches doesn't cut it! If they can't recognize what is truly biblical in contrast to what *seems* to be, but is not, they are ripe for deception.

I've chosen to focus on psychological counseling because it appeals to those Christians who want help for themselves or for others, which makes them highly susceptible to being misled. And as the apostasy creates more problems for Christians, increasing numbers of churches and their leaders are turning away from the sufficiency of God's Word and looking elsewhere for solutions. Recent examples include such high-profile pastors as Greg Laurie and Rick Warren, both of whom have had to deal with tragic suicides—the former, a counseling pastor at his church, and the latter, a family member. That is heartbreaking. Yet the response by both was an exhortation to the church to cease its *abandonment* of guidance from the mental health community! Abandonment?! As I mentioned, since the 1970s the leaven of so-called mental health teachings and practices began to work its way throughout the church, with only a handful raising biblical red flags.

An alarming example of the rejection of the sufficiency of God's Word is a well-known counseling program called Celebrate Recovery. It was birthed at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church in 1991 and has grown ever since, with participants numbering 7 million and involving 35,000 churches. One such church that has turned to Celebrate Recovery recently is Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, CA, under the leadership of Brian Brodersen. This is a classic case of dumpster-diving. How so? Although Celebrate Recovery (CR) claims to have a biblical base in the Beatitudes, the program is infused with teachings and practices derived from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and its 12 Steps methodology. The creator of CR, the late John Baker, drew upon his personal experiences of rehabilitation through AA and attempted to mix the teachings of AA founders Bill Wilson and Bob Smith with the Bible. The entire program is based upon an amalgam of erroneous sci-

ence, e.g., that alcoholism is a disease, that Bill Wilson's spiritism, through which he was given the 12 Steps, through the belief that a participant is always "recovering," never fully recovered, with AA's model of compulsory meetings, and much more (See "A Way Which Seemeth Right..." TBC October 1, 2005 for details regarding Celebrate Recovery.)

Counseling programs are not the only examples of Christian dumpster-diving—they are merely the most obvious. Many Christians, whether professing or even true believers, follow after popular yet clearly heretical preachers or ministries all the while isolating certain aspects that appeal to them, such as with Joel Osteen ("Yeah, I know... but he's so *positive!*") or Benny Hinn ("God *must* be healing through him"). Many women are drawn to Joyce Meyer ("She's so biblically knowledgeable!") or Beth Moore ("I want continual conversations with Jesus like she has"). Christian media, such as TBN or God TV, among others, attracts thousands worldwide to a melting pot of doctrinal errors mingled with bits of truth. Christian music often leads to such thinking as, "I know Bethel Church has serious doctrinal problems, but I just love the music of Jesus Culture!" What then of the spiritual dumpster of Roman Catholicism? "Sure, we don't have the same gospel, but we need to close ranks with them to fight against abortion!" We're told to take the same circle-the-wagons-approach regarding political conservatism: "How else are we going to restore 'Christian America?'" Regrettably, the chief rationale for all forms of Christian dumpster-diving is "The end justifies the means."

Twice in the Book of Proverbs we are warned: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Death always involves separation—physical death, when the soul and spirit separates from the body, or spiritual death, when a person separates himself from the truth of God's Word. Spiritual dumpster diving, as I've pointed out, seems reasonable to many. But it is ultimately a rejection of the sufficiency of what God has communicated to mankind. It is based upon the false belief that God's truth can be generated by finite and sinful humanity, e.g., "All truth is God's truth." Scripture makes it clear that this cannot happen: "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:33-36). TBC

QUESTION: I am a concerned Christian from the “Open Brethren.” In your gospel message, you emphasize that salvation is based on the fact that Christ “paid the penalty for our sins.” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* has no entry for “penalty,” nor did Jesus or the apostles ever mention that a penalty for our sins was paid. If I ask fellow Christians where to find this view in the Bible, they are either perplexed (because they don’t know the answer) or they imply that I am not saved. Since you use that statement so often in your gospel presentations, I pose that question to you.

RESPONSE: Nor is the word “trinity” in either the Bible or in *Strong’s*, yet it is a basic teaching of Scripture. Was not the casting of Adam and Eve out of the Garden a penalty for their sin? Isn’t the death that came upon Adam and Eve and upon all of their descendants to this day also a penalty for sin—a penalty that would continue in eternal separation from God without His pardon? In declaring “the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezekiel 18:13, 20)...sin bringeth forth death (James 1:15)...the strength of sin is the law” (1 Corinthians 15:56), is the scripture not saying that death is the penalty for sin?

Does not a penalty have to be paid? Granted, the Bible nowhere uses the exact terminology we would today about Christ paying the penalty for sin. But isn’t that what is implied when it says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5), or “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3), or “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9), as well as in many similar verses? If death is the penalty for sin and Christ died for all, then surely He paid the penalty in full for all of us, or we would have to pay that penalty ourselves. Our salvation is a matter of God’s justice, “that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

I don’t understand your objection to saying that the penalty was paid. Is not that the force of Christ’s triumphant cry from the cross, “It is finished! (*Tetelestai!*)” meaning “paid in full?” I am grateful that Christ paid in full the penalty for my sins so that God can be just in pardoning me, the sinner! There is no other means of salvation.

QUESTION: We are told that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and

a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8); and that “a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4). What does this mean? Is there any special prophetic significance that might tell us how close we are to the Lord’s return?

RESPONSE: There is no prophetic significance. The phrases “with the Lord” and “in thy sight” are the key to understanding this rather simple and straightforward declaration: God is outside of time, and therefore, in His sight, time is meaningless.

Thus Paul can say that we are already seated “together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).

As we have previously noted, God, being independent of time, sees not only what to us is past, but also our present and future as already having happened. Thus His foreknowledge of what in our experience hasn’t yet occurred would have no effect upon its happening and would leave us free to make genuine choices.

Here is what John Wesley said in a sermon more than 200 years ago: “There is no such thing as either foreknowledge or after-knowledge in God. All time—or, rather, all eternity (for time is only that small fragment of eternity that is allotted to the children of men), being present to God at once, He does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another; but He sees all things in one point of view, from everlasting to everlasting. As all time, with everything that exists therein, is present with Him at once, so He sees at once whatever was, is, or will be, to the end of time!” (John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 1831, p. 39).

QUESTION: Are some people born gay and others straight? The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that some people are born gay and must be accepted as such. How would you respond?

RESPONSE: The “new” *Catechism* (paragraphs 2357-58) condemns homosexuality as “grave depravity...contrary to the natural law...[and] Sacred Scripture.” Unfortunately, it also says that its “psychological genesis remains largely unexplained”—thereby implying that homosexuality is not a psychological problem requiring a psychological solution. Denying moral accountability, the *Catechism* says that homosexuals “do not choose their homosexual condition...[and] must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.”

Thus the implication that “people are born gay.”

That no one is born a homosexual can be easily proved. If that were the case, then God made them that way. Therefore (as many homosexuals insist) homosexuality would not be sin but perfectly natural. This must be false, for (as the *Catechism* itself admits) the Bible condemns homosexuality as an abominable sin: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with woman: it is abomination. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them... shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13). How could God be so opposed to homosexuality if He created the genes that caused it?

Nor is the condemnation of homosexuality only for Jews under the Old Covenant. It is restated to Christians in the New Testament. Romans 1:24-32 says that homosexuals/lesbians “dishonor their own bodies between themselves” (v. 24), engage in “vile affections” that are “against nature” (v. 26) and “unseemly” (v. 27) and do so of their own volition. Even those who reject the Bible and believe in evolution must come to the same conclusion. If evolution were true, being “born homosexual” might possibly occur, but it would require a specific foul-up in the DNA mechanism and would be *extremely rare*. That DNA abnormalities of the precise nature to cause homosexuality could repeatedly occur by chance in millions of people of every generation all over the world is preposterous! Evolution would quickly eliminate homosexuality since it works against survival of the race (homosexuals/lesbians don’t reproduce).

Thus, in the secular world homosexuality has always [until recently] been called “a crime against nature.” Those who engage in homosexuality do so out of choice *against both* their genes and conscience, and they can stop by choice as well. That homosexuals now have favored status, wield great power, and have politicians catering to them to get their votes can only destroy society.

Homosexuality is a choice and not in the genes; this can be seen in the fact that its prevalence among Catholic clergy is at least ten times greater than in the general populace. Obviously chance cosmic rays didn’t zero in on Catholic priests and nuns to make them homosexuals! A contributing factor is the unnatural and unbiblical rule of celibacy, forbidding normal sexual relations provided by marriage, combined with being cloistered together with those of the same sex.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Do all roads go to the same place?

QUESTION: I find it very naïve and objectionable that Christians claim that Christianity is the only true religion. Aren't we all taking different roads to get to the same place?

RESPONSE: Like most people, you apparently consider the popular notion that “we’re all taking different roads to get to the same place” to be commendably broadminded. On the contrary, it is extremely dogmatic and narrowminded—more so than anything Christianity teaches. Yes, it allows everyone to take the road of his or her choice but insists that no matter which road is taken, we must all end up at the same place. I reject such dogmatism and reserve the right to choose my own eternal destiny.

Christianity teaches that there are *two destinations* and that each person has the freedom to choose one of the two: heaven or hell. That Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven can be easily proved. Nor can that fact justify any complaint, since Christ offers Himself freely by grace as the Savior of all who will believe in Him. What folly to insist upon taking your own way to heaven, a place where you have never been and which you don't even know how to reach! Obviously, God alone is entitled to decide whom He will allow to enter there, and upon what terms.

We all know that we have violated God's laws and that keeping the law perfectly in the future (even if that were possible) cannot make up for having broken it in the past. None of the world's *religions* (Christianity is not a religion but a relationship with God through Christ) offers a righteous basis for God to forgive sins and to welcome the sinner into His presence. Neither Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Muhammad, nor any other founder of a religion ever claimed to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. They couldn't even pay for their own sins and thus are still in their graves.

Only Christ (who is God and man in one Person) was able to pay the infinite penalty that His own justice demanded. His resurrection and ascension to heaven proved that fact. On that basis alone can

sinner be forgiven. The choice is yours—either to believe this good news that the penalty has been paid and to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, or to reject Him. Which will it be? If the latter, remember that you can never blame God for your fate. You have chosen it yourself.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

God's mercy goes way beyond what we may expect. The “Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm:145:9). Jesus said, “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew:5:45). Abraham fought with the challenge of those two very different issues. On the one hand, he (like us) had been promised an eternal blessing, but he (like us) saw the apparent success of the wicked and attempted to solve the problem himself.

Perhaps the simplest lesson that we can learn from the biblical narrative as given to us thus far is “let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians:6:9).

—Henry M. Morris III

TBC's Mission: Damage Control

T. A. McMahon—Originally
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WITHIN THE LAST six months, I have visited a number of countries and had the privilege of working with missionaries and ministering among their fellowships. I am continually in awe of what Bible-believing missionaries do, as well as what they have accomplished by God's grace. The difficulties, in many cases, might seem overwhelming because... well, they are! Even a very short list would intimidate most Christians: getting into certain countries, obtaining visas to stay and work, learning the language, understanding and adjusting to the culture, social adjustments for their children, and facing sometimes-fierce opposition from those opposed to biblical Christianity. No doubt they need "professional psychological scrutiny" before entering the mission field—or so we're being told.

My friends Martin and Deidre Bobgan, who have written extensively about the adverse influence of psychology in the church, have surveyed the major mission agencies along with many of those church entities that send out missionaries. The disheartening result was that too often the candidates for the mission field were required to undergo psychological testing in order to be accepted and supported by the sending agency. That may sound reasonable to most Christians today, but it is in fact contrary to the results of research in that area as well as completely unbiblical. First, and foremost—and true of any work of ministry—the individual must be certain that this endeavor is the calling of the Lord. Without that, it would be at best an exercise of the flesh devoid of God's grace. What psychological test can reveal a person's *calling*?

Furthermore, the most-used tests, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, have no *scientific validity*. They simply reflect what the world presumes. That's hardly the criteria for fruitfulness in the mission field. Someone has noted that you really have to be a bit crazy to be a missionary. True, but the same could be said for every biblical Christian. Why? Because a true believer is to have the mind of Christ, being consistent with His teach-

ings—and that would, more often than not, be at odds with what the world thinks and does.

Too often, we, as believers, let worldly thoughts influence what we think and do. I have friends who are missionaries in what many might consider to be the most anti-Christian nation in the world. When incredulous fellow Christians ask why they would go to such a place, I love their simple yet compelling and convicting response: "We believe the people of North Korea need Jesus as well."

The opportunity to be used of the Lord to encourage someone to turn to Jesus and receive, by faith alone, the gift of eternal life is the greatest endeavor in which a Christian can participate. No other temporal activity can compare. There are a host of good things a person might do that could help and bless people, but these are short-lived in their value compared to something that has eternal significance.

While in Cape Town, South Africa, one of my hosts pointed out the hospital where the first human-to-human heart transplant was performed. That was an incredibly significant feat by the physicians, yet its value is confined to the physical side of life on earth. *Eternity* has two options: a person is either with the Lord, or he is separated from Him—*forever* (2 Thessalonians 1:9, 2 Peter 2:17).

Our finite minds cannot truly grasp how horrifying such a condition would be. Yet to personally know that God has privileged me (or you, or any other believer) to be involved in ministering to a person in a way that helped to turn him to the only One who could, and did, pay the full penalty for his and for all the sins of mankind—reconciling him to the Lord forever—is *unrivaled*. Nothing comes even close. As the Scriptures ring out: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Christ our Savior took that "sting" from all those who repent of their sins and receive His free gift of salvation.

We rejoice in the truth that "by the righteousness of one [Jesus Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18). Jesus did it all! However, the Apostle Paul gives us insights into his and also our own privileged part: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every

man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Corinthians 3:6-8). God's reward notwithstanding, what could bring more joy to a believer's heart here on earth than to know that he is being used of the Lord to help to turn a person from the consequence of his sin (eternal punishment and everlasting darkness) to the total and complete forgiveness made possible only by Jesus our Savior (Matthew 25:46)? There is nothing—*nothing*—that can compare!

Therefore, we, as believers, are *all* missionaries. Our mission is to spread the gospel: to preach it, teach it, reflect it through our lives, witness of it, explain it, etc., to whomever the Lord brings into our lives. And He exhorts us, as His disciples, to pray to that end: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

Although we at The Berean Call understand that each of us is to be a personal witness of the gospel, as a ministry we have a calling that is supplementary to encouraging the lost to receive salvation through the Lord our Savior. It's actually a necessary follow-up for many of those who have recently come to faith in Jesus. I refer to it as a mission of "damage control." It involves primarily those who are new to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). What we're seeing more and more is that the Adversary and his minions are sowing false teachings among those who are immature in the Scriptures. His strategy is to shipwreck the faith and therefore the fruitfulness of those young believers. His game plan is certainly not for new Christians alone, although they are the most vulnerable.

Much of the New Testament addresses false teachings and practices that have infected the body of Christ, but the Epistle to the Galatians seems to be the strongest example regarding sowing a false gospel among believers. The Galatians were Paul's spiritual children, yet they were deceived into adding works to their faith in Christ for salvation. It's my belief that they received the true gospel from Paul and were therefore truly saved. However, the false gospel that they later accepted from the Judaizers added the requirement of the works of the law for salvation, a belief that can save no one. Paul refers to it as "another gospel" and a perversion "of the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7). William MacDonald

commented, “What sorrow and disappointment must have filled Paul’s heart when such news from Galatia reached him! Had his labors among these people been in vain?... He took up his pen and wrote this indignant letter to his beloved children in the faith. In it, he sets forth the true character of salvation as being given by grace from beginning to end, not earned by law-keeping either in whole or in part” (*Believer’s Bible Commentary*, p. 1874; see Resource Pages).

Paul must have been greatly grieved over what was taking place among “his beloved children in the faith.” Another gospel had put a halt to their receiving the grace necessary for fruitfulness in Christ. Although Satan could do nothing regarding their personal salvation if they were truly saved, his (and now, their) false gospel rendered them spiritually unproductive. Could Paul get them back on track regarding the biblical gospel? As noted, the Epistle to the Galatians stands out in its forthrightness, which appears to have been his objective. This seems to me to represent serious damage control.

In two of the countries where I was recently asked to speak, the invitation came for me to address teachings that were undermining the biblical faith of brothers and sisters in Christ in Mongolia and in Albania. The church where I spoke in Mongolia was vibrant and demonstrated an encouraging enthusiasm for the Word of God. That’s the good news. So what was the problem? The country itself had experienced a boom in prosperity as the outside world looked to “*Minegolia*” for its untapped natural resources of coal, gold, and copper. That taste for riches turned sour, however, as the country’s economy hit bottom and foreign investors bailed out. Yet the appetite for wealth continues to grow, and, as one financial analyst noted, “With trillions of dollars in mineral resources underground, I just can’t think of a way for us to stay poor” (<https://goo.gl/JkshN8>).

That mentality has attracted the prosperity preachers, who have had their books translated into Mongolian. Their distortion of Scripture has whetted greedy mindsets not only under the guise of Christianity, but it has also corrupted the biblical teaching of many Mongolian believers. My mission there was one of damage control, helping to turn them from the false teachings of man to what the Word of God says about prosperity. Although what brought me to Mongolia

was specific to exposing the deceptive gospel of greed, the messages over the week I was there majored in exhorting my brothers and sisters in Christ to be like the Bereans of Acts 17:11 by holding up every spiritual teaching they received to the Scriptures for confirmation that they are biblically true.

Albania was similar in terms of damage control, except that the issue was more theologically sophisticated, and it focused on more than only those believers who were young in their faith. I was invited to speak to a number of fellowships there that were dealing with the adverse effects of Calvinism. Churches were being disturbed by individuals who aggressively promoted the teachings of John Calvin and his later followers, and that zeal had led to members being drawn into Calvin’s Reformation and the Augustinian theology. Much confusion has resulted, and in a number of cases it has caused church splits. That condition has become so troubling that a few leaders of the relatively young Albanian churches have had Dave Hunt’s book *What Love Is This?* (his excellent exposition on Calvin’s teachings) translated into the Albanian language.

How young is the church there? It’s just over 25 years old. From the mid-1960s until the early 1990s in particular, Albania had the worldwide reputation of being the strictest of all the Communist countries and the first and foremost atheistic nation in history. All religions were banned, and many of their places of worship (mosques, cathedrals, temples, churches, etc.) were turned into warehouses, sports arenas, and youth cultural centers, while others were simply demolished. Although the pagan religious superstitions have continued among the country and mountain folks, the generation born during those decades had no religious beliefs outside of individual musings. Then, in 1990, the official lifting of the ban on religious observance opened the door for all religious practices.

Most of the older folks would consider themselves Muslim, although it’s more of a secular Islam that goes back to the historic influence of the Turks rather than the Sharia law-oriented Islam we know today from the Middle East. The same holds true for “Christianity,” primarily consisting of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic religions, which the Albanians have adjusted to fit the Albanian culture.

Biblical Christianity, introduced through missionaries, is relatively new. Thus, as noted above, the believers in the young Albanian fellowships are vulnerable to false teaching, so there’s a necessity for spiritual damage control. It’s understandable that those young in the faith would look to teachers to help them grow in the faith, and I was greatly encouraged by the leadership I found there. Yet, as the Scriptures warn continually, the need for checking out *all* teachings to see if they are true to the Word of God is critical for every fellowship, whether young or old.

Doctrinal damage control is a major part of the New Testament. Although the Word of God is sufficient regarding every instruction that a believer needs in order to be pleasing to our Lord, it nevertheless contains warning after warning regarding false teachers and teachings that pervert the Scriptures. Paul’s counsel to the Ephesian elders underscores how serious the problem is: “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:30-31). We can surmise that his warning is all the more crucial today as the church fails to “endure sound doctrine” and is being further seduced by the increasing apostasy prophesied by the Word of the Lord as Christ’s return draws near.

Even so, as necessary as damage control is, in order to correct false teachings and practices, in certain cases the prevention program to minimize the effect of false teachers on young believers (and even the more mature) *must be* Bible study and discipleship. No matter where the Lord sends me, and no matter what particular false doctrine He would have me address, the heart of the message is the *habitual* study of—and living out of—what the Scriptures teach, remembering the exhortation to be like the Bereans of Acts 17:11: “These [Jews] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things [that the Apostle Paul taught them] were so.”

Pray for the fruitfulness of our missionary brothers and sisters in foreign countries, and pray for those whom they reach with the gospel, that these new believers will grow strong “in the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). **TBC**

QUESTION: I've read your Q&A on eternal security, but I'm still left with this nagging question: can an individual who made a confession of faith in Christ come to a place where he ceases to believe? Don't we have examples of this in the parable of the sower and the seed in Matthew 13?

RESPONSE: In the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:18-23), we're given examples of those who have opportunity for salvation. We believe the first example represents almost everyone in the world because no one leaves this world without being presented, in some compelling way, the hope of salvation. As Romans 1:20 states, "They are without excuse." The analogy indicates that many are hardened against believing the gospel. The second example tells us that some will show a superficial interest in the gospel, but it won't last long. The third example relates to those who try to make the gospel fit their hope of salvation, which is manmade and worldly. In examples one through three, the people did not believe the gospel. Only example four presents an individual who truly believes the gospel and receives eternal life. Such a person then demonstrates (not gains) the reality of full salvation by showing some degree of growth and fruitfulness in Christ.

Your question, "Can an individual who made a confession of faith in Christ come to a place where he ceases to believe?" is answered by the above. If the "confession" fits one, two, or three, the person never truly believed (1 John 2:19). It can't fit in example four because, in express contrast to the others, there is no allowance made for ceasing to believe.

If maintaining our faith for salvation were dependent on us alone, none could be saved. But in fact it is dependent upon the only One who could *save* us and the only One who can *keep* us. For various reasons, we may waver in our faith and have times of little fruitfulness, but sustaining our eternal security is something only God in Christ can do.

QUESTION: My church seems to believe that one must be a "scholar" or a "theologian" to be a pastor or a credible Christian author or Bible teacher. It even seems to be implied that those without such degrees are not competent to question what those holding theological and even psychological degrees teach from the Bible. That sounds like elitism to me. What is your opinion?

RESPONSE: I must agree with you. No degree, in and of itself, spiritually qualifies the one to whose name it is attached. Yet that is the mentality today, to such an extent that some pastors, authors, and conference speakers are going to diploma mills to purchase (with little study) a "Dr." to put in front of their names. Just those two letters (almost no one ever asks how or where acquired) seem to elevate the individual to a newly perceived level of biblical understanding and spiritual authority.

The Bereans certainly had no theological degrees. Yet they checked out the great Apostle Paul's preaching against the scriptures and were commended for doing so (Acts 17:11). Every Christian is both qualified and obligated to do the same with every Bible teacher and preacher, no matter how highly regarded or academically certified. No one is immune from error or correction, and that includes this writer.

Nor were the disciples "theologians" or "scholars." Among them were fishermen, a tax gatherer, etc. The idea that those who have academic degrees from theological seminaries have thereby a monopoly on interpreting the Bible is both illogical and unscriptural. Such elitism is simply the protestant version of Roman Catholicism's claim that its hierarchy of bishops, cardinals, and popes alone can interpret scripture. Christian leaders should be respected and honored. This regard, however should not be based on degrees they may have acquired but on the extent to which they demonstrate godly lives, biblically qualified and consistent leadership, and the teaching of sound doctrine based on their study of the Word of God.

QUESTION: J. C. Ryle once said that sound theological teaching includes "lifting up the Brazen Serpent." What does that mean? I have always wondered why God would have Moses put a serpent (surely the symbol of Satan) on a pole for the children of Israel to look upon in order to be healed. What is your understanding of this incident?

RESPONSE: God told Moses to make a brazen serpent, to put it on a pole, and to instruct the people who had been bitten with deadly serpents that whoever looked to that serpent on the pole would be healed.

Christ told Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wil-

derness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Nicodemus, like the Jews in John 12:31-34, knew that to be "lifted up" meant to be crucified. Christ was telling Nicodemus that, as it was in the case of the uplifted brazen serpent, all those who would look in faith to Him lifted up on the cross would be saved.

But why would Christ, the Lamb of God, the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices for sin, liken His lifting up to that of the brazen serpent upon the pole? Although Satan is "that old serpent, called the Devil" (Revelation 12:9), the brazen serpent was not a symbol of Satan. The "fiery serpents" were sent among the people because they had sinned grievously (Numbers 21:5-7). The serpents were God's judgment upon it—but more than that, the fact that through judgment there would be salvation. Paul writes, "For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, [he] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Isaiah prophesied concerning the coming Messiah, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he [the Lord] hath put him to grief: when thou [the Lord] shalt make his soul an offering for sin..." (Isaiah 53:10). God punished His Son for the sins of the world, and Christ somehow paid the infinite penalty demanded by God's infinite justice. Christ was punished as though He were the very sin we have all committed. Sin had to be fully judged or we could not be saved. God can't merely make a bookkeeping entry in heaven and wipe the slate clean for all of us. The penalty prescribed by His own righteous and infinite justice had to be paid. But in Christ, God's judgment upon sin became our salvation. This is the message of the brazen serpent lifted up in the midst of Israel, which is fulfilled in Christ on the cross, not only for Israel but for the "sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

None of the Old Testament types of Christ fits Calvinism, which is why Calvinists avoid them. Whether the Passover, the passage through the Red Sea, the manna, the water out of the rock, or the lifting up of the brazen serpent, each picture of Christ is for all Israel, for *whosoever* would believe. There is never any indication that God's salvation and provision is for an elect group within Israel but is always for all.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Narrow-minded and Dogmatic?

QUESTION: There are thousands of religions in the world, each one answering to the needs of a particular culture or individual. To insist that only one (as Christians do) is right and all others wrong is, in my opinion, so narrow-minded and dogmatic as to be unbelievable. Religious exclusivism does violence to man's right to freely choose his belief system. What kind of God would reject a sincerely held belief?

RESPONSE: I'm afraid you presuppose a god of your own making and a theology to fit your god. Suppose I said that we ought to be more broadminded about the sums of numbers and allow any answer on a math test so long as the student is sincere? Such a suggestion would be preposterous. Why? Because "narrow-minded and dogmatic" is an accusation that is absolutely senseless to make against mathematics.

The very nature of reality demands that there be unchangeable absolutes. Without definite and predictable physical laws, this universe could not function. Is it not reasonable that spiritual reality should be just as definitely defined?

Suppose you go to the examining physician for his diagnosis, and he replies: "I wouldn't be so narrowminded and dogmatic as to come up with a definite diagnosis. What would you like? Open-heart surgery has been very popular lately; or I could transplant a kidney. I think everyone is entitled to the operation of his choice." Would you trust yourself to such a physician? Of course not! Then how can you trust yourself to the equally foolish idea that anything goes with God, that He has no definite diagnosis of sin and no definite remedy?

Imagine this announcement coming from the cockpit of a passenger jet: "I'm not narrowminded and dogmatic. I'll just punch some buttons and see where it takes us. All directions lead to the same destination." Would you want to fly with that fool? Wouldn't you prefer a narrowminded, dogmatic, fundamentalist pilot who knows where he is going and follows the rules to get there?

Your theory about religion would bring utter chaos and destruction if it were put into practice in ordinary life. Then why should it be acceptable when it comes to that which is most important in life—one's eternal destiny? Is God less concerned about order in heaven than He is about order here on earth? Less concerned about things of the eternal spirit than of the temporal body? Hardly!

Everyone knows that to fly an airplane or practice medicine or even bake a cake, one must follow specific procedures. One can't even play a game without rules. Then why attempt to avoid the rules that God has set in the realm of the spirit? Why not accept the good news of the gospel? That good news is explained in these verses, which are usually the first ones that every Sunday school child learns by heart:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16-18).

Sincerity won't get astronauts to the moon, nor will it prevent arsenic from killing the person who ingested it by mistake. Yoga won't even pay a traffic ticket. Nor will church attendance or charitable deeds pay for past sins. It makes no sense to set out from Los Angeles to New York without a map. What folly it would be to refuse to allow a map because maps are restrictive and to insist that any road in any direction will do! How much greater is the folly of insisting that any road sincerely followed will take one to heaven!

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” You are not a new and improved version of the old you; you are a new creature in God! God is not an additive in your life; He is a transformer and a redeemer of sinners. Jesus is not some ticket that will save people from Hell; He is the Savior of the world and wants us to submit to Him. He wants to completely change every area of our lives. When we repent of sin, commit our lives to Jesus, and make Him Lord, our lives will be different!

—MARK CAHILL

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Christianity is Not an Addendum

T. A. McMahon

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

—GALATIANS 2:20

WHAT'S AN ADDENDUM? According to most dictionaries it's a supplement or addition to something. So, the question for all of us who call ourselves Christians is: "Is our Christianity just an addition or supplement to our lives?" If that's the case, we're not reflecting what Christianity is all about. Galatians 2:20 spells out very clearly what a biblical Christian is. It's a person who lives his life *fully* according to the teachings of the Word of God. It's not a buffet in which you pick and choose only the items that appeal to you.

Consider some of the points the verse makes. Let's start with "I am crucified with Christ." Being "crucified" has to do with death. Crucifixion and death are not supplements or additions to one's life. "When you're dead, you're dead." Obviously, the verse isn't talking about physical death, although that may take place, but more specifically it has to do with the sense of dying to sin and self: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). Furthermore, the verse declares, "nevertheless I live; yet not I" (verse 2:20). If I live, but it's not I, who is it? It's the One with whom I've been crucified—Jesus! He lives in me (Colossians 1:27) "and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). My life as a believer is therefore to be in obedience to "*the faith*," the Word of God ("If a man love Me, he will keep My words..." John 14:23), and *faith in Jesus* our Savior "who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Biblical repentance, meaning *turning to Jesus* for salvation, isn't a matter of "testing the waters" to see if it's agreeable to you. Nor is it an emotional response to something that sounds or feels good. Certainly, one's emotions may

be involved, but they cannot be the basis for the commitment that must take place. What sort of commitment? Merely *all of one's life*—both temporal and eternal!

Commitments (or lack thereof) are rather diverse in our day and age, especially in the religious arena. Reciting the *Shahadah* three times qualifies one to become a Muslim. Sincerity isn't a major factor, because it's most often superseded by fear of being killed if one refuses to convert. The action of leaving the faith by converting to Christianity is also threatened at the cost of losing one's life. Those who decide to convert to and commit themselves to becoming biblical Christians are more than aware of the cost they may suffer. Therefore, their commitment is without reservation.

Nearly all Roman Catholics and Mormons have become followers of their

AS YE HAVE THEREFORE RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD, SO WALK YE IN HIM: ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN HIM, AND STABLISHED IN THE FAITH, AS YE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT, ABOUNDING THEREIN WITH THANKSGIVING.

—COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

respective religions by being born into it. Choosing to leave their religions commonly involves being shunned by family members, friends, spouses, and children, especially among Mormons. Whereas the consequence is not as severe as it is with Islam, there is still a cost to consider when making a commitment to converting to biblical Christianity: the relationship with one's immediate or extended family members may come to an end.

Sadly, where there is little or no persecution or opposition against Christians, many of the conversions fall into the "easy believism" category. Although that topic has been the subject of much debate with conflicting views, here is how I'm using it. Easy believism entails a lack of understanding of the biblical gospel, or the presentation of, and acceptance of, a false gospel. This has taken place among hundreds of thousands in Africa being led by Word of Faith and Positive Confession evangelists, and I have per-

sonally witnessed hundreds going forth to receive salvation in a large church in the Midwest. In the videos of the former, and in my observation of the latter, the biblical gospel was neither explained, nor were the simple verses (that a child could understand!) from scripture, given so that a person might believe and accept.

A false gospel can only lead to a commitment not sustained by biblical truth, therefore producing a Christian in name only.

What then of those who hear, believe, and receive the true gospel of salvation (i.e., they are born again, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and have received the gift of eternal life) yet his or her life in Christ is more of an addendum than a life that is fully committed to Jesus? To the degree that such a person is not wholly living out his life in Christ, he is missing out on much of what Jesus came to provide for him. As John 10:10 tells us, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." That includes the obvious blessings, but also the grace to deal with all the difficulties of our temporal life, and so much more.

Grace doesn't stop at the day we were saved (without which our being saved would be impossible—Ephesians 2:8-10), but must be central to our walk with Jesus: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7). Again, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk ye in Him*." The only means by which we can walk with Jesus is through His grace. Colossians 3:1-3 spells out our instructions even more clearly: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

If our thinking or our walk with Jesus falls short of what those verses command (i.e., command, not *suggest!*), perhaps a few more verses will help increase our understanding: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, *so ye would abound more and more*. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2).

Here we have an important criterion in our walk with our Lord: “to please God.” That shouldn’t be a difficult evaluation. Are my decisions of *everyday life* glorifying to my Lord and Savior? That may seem a little over the top to many Christians, but is it really? I’ll leave that answer up to the reader of this article after he or she considers some of the daily decisions one makes that would *not* “please God.”

Another issue we need to consider in everyday life has to do with the things we are attracted to and things we desire or are enticed by. Scripture tells us where our focus needs to be: “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:2-4).

Most people have heard the saying, usually intended as a putdown, “You’re so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good!” Hopefully, no believer gives that statement a second thought. The above verse dismisses that ignorance with haste, including reminding us that in “Christ, who is our life...” we are to bring “into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Sometimes as we read through the Scriptures we may miss the gist of what we’re being told. In other words, we don’t understand the application as it applies to much of our lives. For example, there’s John 15:13: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” I pray that should the opportunity arise for me to sacrifice my life for another person, by the grace and enablement of the Holy Spirit I could lay down my life for others.

But what of those situations that are far less dramatic; i.e., in those times when *self* doesn’t take to heart what the Word of God commands. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:3-5).

The thought of sacrificing my life, as I said, is something I believe I could do. What makes me think so? Obviously, that isn’t something you can practice. However, there is a daily conflict that I’m in that may well encourage such a belief. It’s

the recognition of what God’s Word says about my own heart, which is in a battle: “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” To the degree that I’m winning those skirmishes against my own self-interests, my confidence increases that I might be willing to put my life on the line for Jesus. However, if I have accustomed myself to dismiss the sins that I consider “no biggies,” they will hasten the process we learn of in Revelation 2:4, the slipping away from one’s love for Jesus.

But that raises a related question: Do I get more “heavenly rewards” for martyrdom than for performing acts of kindness, putting others first, doing “the [little?] things that are Jesus Christ’s,” and so forth? I don’t find that kind of reward-accounting in Scripture.

What then of my sins, especially those

FURTHERMORE THEN WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, AND EXHORT YOU BY THE LORD JESUS, THAT AS YE HAVE RECEIVED OF US HOW YE OUGHT TO WALK AND TO PLEASE GOD, SO YE WOULD ABOUT MORE AND MORE. FOR YE KNOW WHAT COMMANDMENTS WE GAVE YOU BY THE LORD JESUS.

—1 THESSALONIANS 4:1

that in my own mind seem to be minor or insignificant ones? As a former Roman Catholic, I used to think in terms of mortal and venial sins. According to Catholicism, mortal sins damn one to hell if they are not confessed and absolved by a priest prior to one’s death. Venial sins, we were told, are the lesser of the two types of sin; it was taught they could be expiated in purgatory for however long that might take, and then we move on to heaven. Those unbiblical beliefs hung with me for some time after I was saved, at least to the degree that I continued to view some of my sins as not as offensive to Jesus as are others. I eventually came to a clearer understanding that “the wages of [any and all] sin is death,” and that death is not necessarily physical death but rather a separation that adversely affects my personal relationship with Jesus. He paid the full penalty for my sins and He will never leave me nor forsake me (Hebrews 13:5). Yet my sins will

cause me to slip or drift away from Him, and the so-called little ones have a way of accumulating and increasing that slippage. That concern seems to be indicated in Revelation 2:4 and Hebrews 2:1: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” That can happen to any believer at any time and it will produce destructive consequences. The Hebrews 2:1 antidote to that condition is our giving “*more earnest heed* to the things which we have heard.” What then have we heard?

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12).

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: *for without me ye can do nothing*” (John 15:4-5).

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:24-25).

“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:38-39).

Those verses among dozens and dozens of others describe what biblical Christianity is all about. All believers who do not take to heart to do *all the things* those verses command are, at the very least, depriving themselves of much of what Jesus came to provide for them.

Furthermore, and most significantly, they are seriously hampering their growth in fulfilling the first and great commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27).

All thy heart, *all* thy soul, *all* thy strength, *all* thy mind! Again, an addendum has no place in the life of a biblical Christian.

QUESTION: What is your opinion of Christian rock music? (from our archives)

RESPONSE: I am not an expert on music, but I know that music can be used of Satan as well as by God. It plays a big part in all religions, from Christianity to paganism. In this case, I am referring to the “beat,” or rhythm, not the words. The particular beat of music can put one into an altered state of consciousness where demonic influences can actually invade one’s mind. This is especially true of a loud and monotonous beat that is both hypnotic (monotonous) and isolating (so loud that thinking of anything else is impossible).

There is music that is clearly uplifting, and there are other kinds that are not at all suitable for praising God but rather for arousing man’s baser instincts. You don’t need to be a musician to see the results and to sense it in your spirit as you listen. If that kind of music forms the background for supposedly “Christian” words, then I think we have a perversion.

It has been my limited observation that in most rock, Christian or not, it is nearly impossible to understand the words that are being sung because of the loud music being played. Thus the “beat” is the main element that moves the audience. The words, no matter how good, have little effect except upon those who already have them memorized.

Nor is it just “rock” that is a problem in today’s evangelical church. The old hymns that had solid doctrinal content to teach and bow the heart in worship and grateful praise have been replaced in many churches by shallow, repetitive choruses composed by contemporary writers who are mostly young both in years and in the faith. They have little to offer except catchy tunes, a snappy beat for clapping, loud noise, and very little reverence for our Lord—hardly appropriate for entering God’s holy and awesome presence. This is not a blanket criticism, but it fits the general situation.

Sadly, today’s “worshippers” seem content to sing, over and over, for example, “I will sing of your love forever,” or “I love to praise you, Lord,” or “We have come into your house to worship you,” or similar empty phrases. Why are they “empty”? The answer is obvious to anyone who stops to think for a moment.

To repeat the phrase, “I will sing of your love forever,” is not singing of His love at all. You are only saying you are going to sing of His love. If you are sincere, then stop promising to sing of His

love and get to it! Sing of His love! Recite what He has done in love, how much He has loved you, and tell Him how much you love Him and why. This should be obvious.

The same is true of “I love to praise you, Lord,” or “We’ve come to worship you.” This is neither praise nor worship but merely saying that you love to praise Him or are going to worship Him. If so, then let’s praise and worship Him! Praise is not saying that you love to praise, nor is worship promising to worship. Let’s really do it! How?

There are so many powerful hymns that praise Him for His love and that express our love and gratitude to Him! Here are sample excerpts: “*The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell.... Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the sky of parchment made, were every blade of grass a quill, and every man a scribe by trade. To tell the love of God above would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky!*”

Or, “*Son of God, ’twas love that made thee die our ruined souls to save; ’twas our sins’ vast load that laid thee, Lord of Life, within the grave.... What was it, blessed God, led Thee to give Thy Son, to yield thy well-beloved for us by sin undone? ’Twas love, unbounded love to us, led Thee to give Thy Son for us!*”

What about a more recent favorite: “*I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice to worship You, O my soul rejoice. Take joy, my King, in what you hear. Let it be a sweet, sweet sound to your ear.*” Is that any better? Slightly. At least we say, “I love you, Lord.” But to say, “I lift my voice to worship you,” is again only an empty promise to worship—but without actual worship. Asking the Lord to take joy in what He hears and hoping it will be a sweet, sweet sound in His ear is offering nothing. How about singing words that would actually bring Him joy and be a sweet sound in His ear? But, as with the others, the song contains none of what it seems to promise.

QUESTION: I have long wondered what Paul meant when he said that he and the other apostles were “the last appointed unto death.” Does that mean that no one else after them would ever be martyred for their faith? If so, he was wrong.

RESPONSE: Paul was not wrong when he wrote these words: “For I think that God

hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Corinthians 4:9).

Some argue that Paul and the other apostles thought that the Rapture would occur in their day. Not so. Although he taught believers to expect the Rapture at any moment (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Titus 2:13, etc.), Paul knew that he would be martyred before it occurred: “For I know...that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in...” (Acts 20:29); “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Timothy 4:6).

Likewise, Peter wrote, “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle...I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance [i.e., he was putting in writing what he had taught them orally]” (2 Peter 1:14-15). Thus we see that the apostles did not expect to be raptured but knew they must each die for their Lord.

Christ declared that His disciples in all ages would be hated by the world and suffer the same as He had at its hands (John 15:18-21); Paul implied that Christians would continue to suffer martyrdom (Romans 8:35-37), warning that “all that who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). We know that has been the case throughout history, and even greater numbers of believers will be killed by Antichrist (Revelation 6:9-11; 13:7,15). Obviously, then, Paul did not mean that the apostles were the last who would be martyred for Christ. They were the last who were “appointed unto death;” i.e., who must die for Christ.

The apostles had to be martyred to provide one of the great proofs of Christ’s ministry, teaching, and resurrection. Followers of various religions have been martyred out of fanaticism or loyalty to their leaders and beliefs. The apostles, however, died not only out of love for Christ but in testimony of vital facts: Christ *did* heal the sick; He *did* raise the dead; He *did* walk on water, feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, rise from the dead, etc. Their lives would have been spared had they denied Christ. No one is foolish enough to die for what he knows is a lie. Therefore, the fact that not one of the disciples, in facing martyrdom, retracted anything to save his life is powerful evidence of the validity of the four Gospels and Book of Acts. It was thus essential that they die as martyrs, and they were the last upon whom this necessity was imposed.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

I am the way...no man comes to the Father but by me?

QUESTION: The best argument I know of to discredit Jesus is His statement, “I am the way...no man comes to the Father but by me.” There are billions of people alive now and who have lived in the past who never even heard of Christ and Christianity. And they’re all damned?

RESPONSE: There are also hundreds of millions, if not billions, who have heard the gospel of Christ and have rejected it. How do we know that those who haven’t heard would believe if they did hear? God knows who would and who would not believe, and we may be certain that He will somehow get the gospel to everyone who would embrace it.

Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad” (John:8:56). Yet Abraham grew up in paganism, out of which God called him. If God could do that for Abraham, He can do it for anyone.

Romans:1:18-32 states that every person knows from the universe around him that a God of infinite power is man’s Creator, and yet the vast majority of people have rejected that revelation and indulged in idol worship and gross immorality and “are without excuse.” Romans:2:14,15 adds that every person knows in his conscience that he has violated God’s laws and is under God’s judgment. All those who, under conviction of conscience by the Holy Spirit, cry out to God in repentance for His salvation will, in one way or another, be given the gospel.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

Material things are not our own; they belong to God. Everything that we possess is a sacred stewardship from God. All that can be called our own are the fruits of our diligent study and service here, and the rewards of faithful stewardship there. If we have not proved dependable in handling God’s property, then we cannot expect to be rewarded in the next. No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [material wealth]. Luke:16:13

—William MacDonald

Back to Biblical Basics— Part One

T. A. McMahon

BIBLICAL BASICS: why are they so important to revisit?

First and foremost, if I don't know the fundamentals of what I claim to believe, I can't live it out in truth. I can't understand it, nor can I teach it or share it.

Men who are biblical Christians, Scripture declares, are to be the spiritual heads of our households (Ephesians 5:22-23). This means that we are to teach our wives and children what the Word of God says.

If I don't know the fundamentals of the faith, I can't teach the faith with any sense of accuracy. If what I'm sharing is not accurate, then it's not *the faith* that Jude tells us was "once for all delivered unto the saints."

Knowing the fundamentals, therefore, is critical in just about every area of life. How so? Let's begin with mathematics.

Suppose I were to come up with an investment deal that I say is guaranteed to make you rich. My secret is based upon my unique mathematical formula: 2 plus 2 equals 5!

While that may improve my income (through those who fall for it), that fundamental error will certainly not enrich anyone enticed by it.

It's interesting that when sports teams, including those that are at the highest skill level and performance, have a bye week during their season (which is usually a week off before having to play their next opponent), their practices rarely focus on clever new plays or strategies but rather on returning to the fundamentals of their sport.

The reason for this is because an athlete's most skilled performance is best attained when his or her fundamentals are correct, and those can get sloppy or diminish throughout a season of competition.

Making sure one's fundamentals are correct is a good thing in sports, but it's even more important in one's walk as a biblical Christian. The fundamentals are simply the essential truths and practices that God has communicated to us in His Word, the Bible, to which we must hold fast.

The letter to the Hebrews gives us a sober warning: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (2:1).

Peter, knowing that his death was near, exhorted his brothers and sisters in Christ to keep in mind and in practice what they had been taught: "I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be

mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2 Peter 3:1-2).

Biblical fundamentals make clear the simple yet vital truths of Scripture in our day of widespread deception, and we need to be continually reminded about them. Furthermore, they also supply what Jesus has done on our behalf... and how profound those things truly are.

In the 1920s and '30s Christianity in the US was far less complicated than it is today, at least superficially. The spiritual battle back then was said to be between the fundamentalists and the modernists.

The modernists rejected—or at least compromised—the basic tenets of biblical Christianity, such as the authority of Scripture, its inerrancy, and salvation by faith alone in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in full payment for the sins of all mankind.

Since that time, the errors among Christians have, like leaven, worked their way through the entire loaf of Christianity. They have increased exponentially today to the extent that describing yourself as an evangelical Christian is next to meaningless, and worse.

No one can tell you what being an evangelical stands for because of the mixed beliefs held by those who call themselves evangelicals.

For example, one of the major evangelical magazines, *Christianity Today*, was started in the mid-1950s by Billy Graham, who at that time was known as a fundamentalist. If you are a subscriber, I recommend that you cancel your subscription and throw your back issues in the nearest dumpster.

For the last two decades, I have been referring to the so-called evangelical magazine as *Anti-Christianity Today*. Why would I do that?

Because it has promoted nearly every heresy and false practice that has come into the church over the last half-century. And Billy Graham has to take the blame for most of it, being the one who started it off.

Graham initially was regarded as a fundamentalist, as I mentioned. But before too long, fundamentalism was looked upon as narrowmindedness and exclusionary by the modernists.

For example, in the 1940s, Graham stated that the chief evils in the world at that time were Communism, Muhammadanism, and Roman Catholicism. No argument there.

Then, in the 1950s, for a number of reasons, he did not want to be called a fundamentalist, especially with its exhortation to separate oneself from those promoting

teachings contrary to biblical truth. There was also the increasing accusation that fundamentalism was built upon ignorance and bigotry.

In the spirit of ecumenism, he turned to the Catholic Church for support for his crusades, which was exemplified by his having Catholic priests and nuns as crusade counselors. Catholics who came forward because of Graham's invitation to receive Jesus for their salvation were encouraged by the Catholic counselors to return to their local Catholic church!

Mr. Graham has stated in numerous interviews that he saw no significant theological differences between his "good friend" Pope John Paul II and himself.

The litany of Billy Graham's denials of the fundamentals of biblical doctrine are shocking, to say the least. He received the Templeton Financial Award for Progress in Religion from the founder, the late John Marks Templeton, whose stated goal was to transform all the religions of the world into a *one-world religion*. That, of course, would be the occult religion of the Antichrist.

Graham ultimately rejected biblical creation in favor of theistic evolution. He said he wasn't sure whether or not the flood of Genesis was a global event.

When asked if there would be sex in heaven, he replied that there would be if it were important to our happiness! No. That clearly contradicts what the Bible teaches (Matthew 22:30).

Sadly, I could go on and on regarding Billy Graham's flight from sound biblical doctrine, which only increased throughout his lifetime.

In preparing this message and running it by some folks I respect, a few were concerned that it might be viewed as denigrating a man regarded as an American icon of evangelization. I have no doubt that many people were saved through the Billy Graham crusades when the biblical gospel was preached by him and others.

At the same time, there is no doubt that Graham was a prime example of ecumenicalism, which is the acceptance of various religions and religious beliefs that are not scriptural and which, in fact, undermine biblical truth.

It was also suggested to me that since Billy Graham is no longer living, he ceases to be influential among this generation, especially the youth of today, and therefore, why mention him? That is an approach I usually follow unless the false teachings of the deceased continue to be promoted, as in Billy Graham's case.

Lou Engle, a false teacher and prophet of the Healing and Prosperity movement and

one of the leaders of The Send (a gathering that brought 50,000 young people together to a stadium in Orlando, Florida), declared that the movement was fostered by the mantle of Billy Graham, which Engle said would fall upon the nation right after Graham's death.

This message simply points to Billy Graham as one example, albeit an important one, of what will naturally take place when anyone drifts away from sound biblical doctrine, which is what the Bible prophesies will take place as the Lord's return draws near.

Second Timothy chapter 4 warns us that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." Who can reasonably deny that we are in such a time?

What can be done about it? How about ascertaining that we ourselves have not slipped away from the basics, the fundamentals of the faith?

It seems like a simple solution, right? Well, yes and no.

Yes, for some—but not so simple for others. One's answer is dependent upon the believer's maturity as a Christian, his or her knowledge of the Word of God, and one's walk with the Lord.

Where those things are lacking, building or restoring them is certainly achievable, but it may take some doing. However, in any case, the solution I'm recommending is this: Let's get back to the basics of biblical faith.

And I mean the *very basics*, as you'll see in the two I'm addressing in this and the following article.

Certainly, the gospel is right at the top of the list. In Acts 16:30, the Philippian jailer asked a very basic question that every true Christian *must* be able to answer: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The response of the Apostle Paul and his associates was this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...."

Although the above discourse is given in the Book of Acts, it lacks the details that explain what it means to "be saved" and "to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." These details, nevertheless, are provided throughout the Word of God.

Saved from what? Believe *what* regarding our Lord Jesus Christ? Also, who is the gospel for? Why is it critical? How is it received? What exactly is received? Can salvation, once received, be lost?

Again, the answers to these fundamental questions are found and explained throughout the Scriptures.

You men who are believers, can you answer these questions? You men who are the spiritual heads of your household, can you, and have you, taught your family members the answers?

On a side note to this, if you know the answers, have you ever considered asking

each family member those questions? If you can't readily communicate the answers, you are not living up to the responsibility in which God has placed you.

If you are well aware of the answers, my suggestion is that you have a private one-on-one meeting with each family member and ask each one to give you his or her understanding of what constitutes the biblical gospel.

Why privately? This will prevent family members from simply copying and repeating what another member has articulated rather than each one giving his or her own understanding.

Whether or not the individual believes the biblical gospel is a matter of each one's heart's commitment. What will be made clear by questioning family members is each one's own knowledge of the gospel, something that is critical when it comes to one's personal acceptance or rejection of it.

Although I just referred to the responsibility of men as the spiritual heads of their households, women have their own responsibilities as teachers (Titus 2:3-4), as was exemplified by Timothy's mother Eunice and grandmother Lois (2 Timothy 1:5).

Scripture commands believers to know *what we believe* and *why we believe it*. This begins with our understanding of the gospel regarding our own salvation and is absolutely necessary in order for us to share it with others.

First Peter 3:15 instructs us: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

I hope every believer rejoices at the opportunities God provides when an unbeliever—or even a believer young in the faith or one who is ill-informed regarding biblical truth—asks "a reason of the hope that is in you."

Sadly, even for many true believers, that opportunity is lost because the *reasons* amply supplied by God's Word are not given. Instead, too often, when a response is given, it is not based upon "the faith" (Jude 3) but rather on responses steeped in human emotions and subjective information that requires a leap of faith rather than faith that has been verified by the content of Scripture.

Dave Hunt addressed the erroneous idea that reason undermines biblical faith in one of TBC's Q & As. To the questioner, he responded, "You are struggling with a serious misunderstanding that has brought multitudes throughout history into religious bondage.

"The Bible puts *belief and faith* on an equal footing, with no difference between them. Common sense itself and a little

reflection will tell you that faith must have as sure a factual foundation as belief. Faith is not a leap in the dark. Furthermore, faith in God and His Word, because it involves eternal matters, is far more important than belief about things of this life.

"Faith, therefore, ought to have an even more solid basis than mere belief. One may be willing to allow some uncertainty in earthly matters, but only a fool would be comfortable with even the smallest degree of doubt in things that affect him eternally. No wonder the great Apostle Paul wrote, *Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good* (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

"Luke tells us that during the 40 days Jesus spent with His disciples after His resurrection, He 'showed himself alive . . . by many *infallible proofs*' (Acts 1:3). Clearly, Christ did not consider it enough merely to show Himself to His disciples without providing irrefutable evidence of His resurrection.

"He considered it both legitimate and essential to *prove* that He was the very same One who had been crucified and that He had risen from the dead in the same body (but now in a new and glorious form) that had been placed lifeless in the grave.

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself,' Christ told the shocked disciples the first time He came to them after His resurrection. 'Handle me and see, for a spirit [ghost] hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have' (Luke 24:39).

"They had thought they were seeing a ghost, but He proved otherwise to them. To doubting Thomas, who had not been present on this first occasion, Christ declared later: 'Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side...' (John 20:27). Here was irrefutable, tangible evidence.

"It is only common sense that strict proof should be demanded before making a commitment or an investment in this life. How much more important, then, to be absolutely certain, based upon solid proof, before accepting by faith those things which affect one's eternal destiny. True 'faith,' can only be founded upon fact—not upon feelings, intuition, or emotion. Much less does faith arise out of blind submission to some religious authority."

The gospel therefore must be *understood* in order to be *received*—in order for a person to be saved. That is basic to biblical Christianity.

Yet there is a fundamental aspect of the gospel for every believer who commits himself to it, which too few recognize and emphasize in their lives. It is the first and great commandment. That will be the focus of part two in this series.

TBC

QUESTION: Paul wrote that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Corinthians 14:32). Wouldn’t that mean that a prophet can prophesy at will? If so, wouldn’t that substantiate the belief that those who have received this gift can speak in tongues at will?

RESPONSE: It is “the spirit of the prophets,” not the Spirit of *God*, that is subject to the prophets. Thus a prophet could *prevent* himself from prophesying but could not *initiate* genuine prophecy.

In stating restrictions upon the manifestation of the gifts, Paul makes this statement to let the Corinthian believers know that the Holy Spirit does not force Himself upon anyone. It is the flesh or the devil, not the Holy Spirit, that will cause disorder. No one can say, “But I *had* to prophesy. I couldn’t resist the Spirit!” Each person is able to obey Paul’s guidelines. One of the clearest indications that much of today’s alleged “exercise of the gifts” is not of God is the disregard for these biblical injunctions, leading to the fleshly, even demonic, manifestations that Paul sought to prevent.

Paul is *not* saying that a prophet can prophesy any time he so desires. Not Jeremiah, Ezekiel, nor any of the other prophets could do so! When Jeremiah desired to prophesy to the people, he had to wait upon God: “And it came to pass *after ten days*, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah” (Jeremiah 42:7). Clearly, prophecy comes only by the empowerment and direction of God, and not by the whim of man, as some enthusiasts would have us believe. Nor can the gift of prophecy be taught and learned in a seminar, as John Wimber led people to believe for years. Peter declared, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). No one can initiate, mandate, or activate the moving of the Holy Spirit! Nor is there any distinction in this regard among the various *charismata*.

Whatever the “gift of the Spirit,” it is given in specific instances to effect God’s purpose *at that time*. It does not become a power possessed by an individual that he can wield at his discretion. If someone lays hands upon a sick person, prays, and the person is instantly healed, that was a manifestation of the “gifts of healing” according to God’s will. The person who prayed was the instrument God used at that time, but he does not now possess the gifts of healing so that he can heal anyone whenever he pleases.

To imagine that to be the case is one of the basic errors in the charismatic move-

ment. Consider those who imagine they have a “healing ministry” trying mightily (on TV or during some so-called revivals) to manifest what they imagine is a gift they *possess*—and ultimately falling into error and bringing reproach upon the Lord as a result. If the great prophets in the Bible had to wait until God, in His own time and way and for His own purpose, gave them a word, then it is a delusion for anyone today to imagine that he *possesses* any gift of the Spirit and can exercise it whenever he so desires—and that includes tongues.

To think that a “prayer language” can be “practiced” any time one wants is the great error of what is rightly (because of the obsession with that one gift) called by its critics “the tongues movement.” There is no indication that “tongues” are in a category by themselves, but, like all spiritual gifts, if genuine, can only be a “manifestation of the Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:7) operating “as he will” (v. 11). Beware, then, of a “tongue” or “prophecy” or other “gift” that is initiated or possessed by the human spirit!

We must thank God for any healing, miracle, or tongue that is a genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Very clearly, however, those are in grievous error who promise a “miracle service” at a particular time in a church or on TV and purport to do “miracles” or give seminars to teach how to do “signs and wonders,” or claim that one can speak in tongues whenever one desires. Whatever purports to be the manifestation of a “gift of the Spirit” and is not initiated by Him but comes by the will of man is not of God.

We do well to heed God’s warning through Jeremiah: “The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart” (Jeremiah 14:14). This indictment stands against many who claim to manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit today.

QUESTION: I’ve heard you on radio and read your newsletters, etc., and wondered whether you might be too sharp with the tongue and too quick with the pen when it comes to acknowledging the deeds and misdeeds of others in the faith. Didn’t Christ say, “Judge not, that ye not be judged” (Matthew 7:1)?

RESPONSE: I am particularly sensitive to that sentiment, which often translates into admonitions to be more careful about “wounding our brothers and sisters in

Christ.” However, I think the notion that we should not tell the truth because it can be painful has become “too gracious” by at least half. It is not wrong to wound brothers: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Proverbs 27:6); and “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Revelation 3:19).

Beyond that, I am not in the business of condemnation but of correction. It is much easier to ignore or gloss over error than it is to correct it. One doesn’t gain friends or become popular by engaging in the necessary ministry of correction, which all too few are willing to involve themselves with in spite of Paul’s admonition: “Preach the word; reprove, rebuke, with all long-suffering and doctrine; for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine....” It takes much love to be willing to correct. It would be far easier not to do so, and I would really prefer not to have been called by the Lord to this ministry. Yet Jesus said, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” I would consider it a favor and a help, not a condemnation, were you to point out any doctrinal error in my teaching and practice. If you could show me from God’s Word where I have been wrong and have not followed my Lord, it would be a kindness. Paul wrote that the Bible itself is to be used for doctrine, correction, instruction in righteousness.... I have sought to be faithful to that admonition.

QUESTION: Do you ever worry that you’ve become a legalist, constantly holding others to the letter of the law as you see it?

RESPONSE: I understand what you mean about legalism. The letter kills, while the Spirit gives life. One can be as clear as crystal on doctrine and just as cold and hard in applying it to others. That fact, however, is no excuse for disregarding sound doctrine but a reminder that truth is to be spoken in love, while not compromising. Of course there are peripheral matters upon which there can be disagreement—but not when it affects the salvation of souls. Unfortunately, a false gospel is being preached today, and Paul said that those who do so are under God’s curse. We must each be convinced in our own hearts. We are to study to show ourselves approved unto God, not unto men. I am personally accountable to God, and though many church leaders may stand against me, I must be and say and do what I truly believe is God’s will and according to His Word.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Was a Virgin Birth Essential?

QUESTION: The virgin birth of Jesus is presented as one of the cornerstones of Christianity for both Catholics and Christians. I don't see why this is essential. My pastor says the Bible doesn't even teach it. The Hebrew word *alma*, translated virgin in most Christian Bibles, really means "young woman." Is he right?

RESPONSE: Yes, it is true that *alma* means "young woman." It is never used in the Old Testament, however, except to signify a young woman who is a virgin. In Israel a young unmarried woman had to be a virgin. If not, she was stoned. *Alma* never refers to a married woman.

Only the rankest critic would argue that *alma* in Isaiah:7:14 ("Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son") could mean anything but virgin. It would hardly be a sign for a nonvirgin to conceive and bear a son. Furthermore, the quotation of this verse in the New Testament (Matthew:1:23) uses a Greek word that without question means "virgin."

If Jesus Christ was not born of a virgin, then He was an ordinary man who would have had to die for his own sins and could not have died for the sins of the world. To be our Savior and pay the infinite penalty demanded by God's justice, Jesus had to be God come to earth as a man. Being God, the body He took ("a body hast thou prepared me"—Hebrews:10:5) when He became a man could not have been created through normal sexual intercourse but only by the creative power of God within the womb of a virgin. If Jesus was not virgin born, there is no salvation and Christianity is a hoax.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.—
Mark:1:17 Only by coming after Jesus can we

obtain our heart's desire and be really useful to our fellow man. Oh, how we long to be successful fishers for Jesus! We would sacrifice our lives to win souls. But we are tempted to try methods which Jesus would never have tried. Shall we yield to this suggestion of the enemy? If so, we may splash the water, but we shall never take the fish. Sensational methods, entertainments, and so forth—are these coming after Jesus? Can we imagine the Lord Jesus drawing a congregation by such means as are now commonly used? What is the result of such expedients? The result is nothing which Jesus will count up at the last great day.

We must keep to our preaching as our Master did, for by this means, souls are saved. We must preach our Lord's doctrine and proclaim a full and free gospel, for this is the net in which souls are taken. We must preach with His gentleness, boldness, and love; for this is the secret of success with human hearts. We must work under divine anointing, depending upon the sacred Spirit. Thus, coming after Jesus, and not running before Him, nor aside from Him, we shall be fishers of men.

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Back to Biblical Basics—Part Two

T. A. McMahon

THE OBJECTIVE OF this two-part series is to stress the critical necessity of knowing and living out the fundamentals of biblical Christianity. As was noted in part one, not knowing the essential teachings of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” raises serious questions and creates a host of problems for all who profess to be Christians.

Questions will arise, such as: “What do I believe or need to believe that would qualify me to receive the free gift of eternal life with Jesus Christ?” Since there are numerous diverse, not to mention contradictory, beliefs that are said to be Christian, this series is focusing on *biblical* Christianity, meaning that which is true to God’s Word regarding one’s faith and practice.

The gospel, as noted last month, is first and foremost. What follows for the one who has received the gospel by faith alone is the act of living it out in his or her life. No one is saved except by grace, and no one can live his life in a way that is fruitful and pleasing to Jesus—except by grace. Ephesians 2:8-10: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it [salvation] is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* [not “*by means of*”] good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” God’s grace is administered through the Holy Spirit to everyone who puts his faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins—which Jesus covered—past, present, and future. Once that takes place, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within every believer (John 14:16-17) and enables him or her to live according to the teachings of God’s Word.

The life of a Christian is a miraculous affair. It is neither by one’s own might nor one’s own power but “by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

So, what exactly does the Holy Spirit supply for the believer in our Lord and Savior? That, of course, would take far more space than this article could supply. Romans chapter eight, however, gives us a number of things to consider. The Holy Spirit enables us to walk *not* after the flesh; to be spiritually minded; to experience life and peace; to please God; to experience

His righteousness; to mortify the deeds of the body; to be led of the Spirit; to end our bondage to fear; to be helped in our infirmities; to aid us in our prayer life; to know the will of God, and to know that He makes intercession for us.

All of those things are truly wonderful, but if I were to select one verse in that chapter that encourages us in these days of rampant uncertainty among Christians, both those who are young in the faith and the older ones alike, it would be verse 16: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” In times when our confidence wanes regarding our relationship with the Lord and His promises seem distant, it’s a blessing to know that the Holy Spirit is there to confirm the fact that we are indeed God’s children, and Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us! (Hebrews 13:5)

As God’s children, the Holy Spirit

JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, IF A MAN LOVE ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORDS: AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, AND WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM.

— JOHN 14:23

enables our lives to be fruitful: “But the *fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” And without His enablement, none of those virtues have eternal value.

Regarding the theme of these two articles, which again is getting back to biblical basics, the process of hearing, understanding, and believing *the gospel* is primary. “Faith cometh by *hearing, and hearing* by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an *understanding*, that we may *know Him* that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

Without a *biblical understanding* of the gospel, a person has no true basis for

choosing to be saved. How can he know *why* he needs to be saved? Or know what he is being *saved from*? What of the consequences of being eternally separated from God? What of the horror of having to dwell in the blackness of darkness forever? What about suffering the vengeance of eternal fire? What of the Lake of Fire, where those who have rejected the gospel are tormented day and night forever and ever?

These conditions are part of the penalty for sin (which Jesus paid in full for all mankind). That knowledge is significant when one has to make a choice regarding where he will spend eternity.

One’s choice also involves *knowing* what a person is *saved for*. Jesus Christ Himself suffered the punishment for the sins of humanity so that *all who accept His payment* for their sins will live in His presence forever. That involves living in a place where sin cannot enter. It’s a place where righteousness, joy, and peace abound and where there is no death, no sorrow, no pain, no tears.

Everyone’s temporal life consists of making choices. Some are of little significance while others, such as schools to attend, career decisions, marriage plans, where to live, home and auto purchases—all of these may have an impact on one’s life, and possibly even a major one. It’s rare that these matters are not given a great deal more consideration, because the outcome of an uninformed choice could have dire consequences.

Most people are aware of that and therefore perform due diligence in order to avoid a bad result. Tragically, however, most people do not apply the same criteria to where they will spend eternity.

What then of those who choose to accept the free gift of eternal life for which Jesus paid and that He offers to all who put their faith in Him? What is the (and I mean *the!*) basic, fundamental, and essential component of which a believer’s life in Christ must consist?

The answer is love.

How fundamental is love in a Christian’s life? There is nothing that a born-again Christian can do that has any eternal value whatsoever when love is not both the primary motivator and major ingredient.

That being true—which it is, according to the Word of God—why is it not being actually taught (rather than vaguely referred to) throughout Christendom? Why isn’t it central in every sermon preached,

including those churches that claim to be Bible-believing?

Perhaps you're thinking that I'm pushing this particular fundamental concept too hard. Well, in the light of Isaiah's inspired words, "Come now, and let us reason together" (1:18), let's start with what the Bible sets forth in its teaching regarding Christianity. It begins, as one would expect, with what Jesus called, "The first of all the commandments..." (Mark 12:29). Adding the second, He declared, "There is none other commandment greater than these." He seems to be laying the foundation of the faith for those who have committed to following Jesus. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke give slight variations of those commandments, and John supplies more details. The foundation is, of course, love.

In Mark's gospel, Jesus answered one of the scribes, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (12:30-31). Can everyone truly love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength?

I remember a time shortly after I accepted the gospel. I was formerly a Roman Catholic for thirty years. I had never read the Bible, but after being born again, I had an insatiable appetite to do so. At one point, however, I had to stop reading it and became horribly depressed. I had just finished reading Mark 12:30-31 and realized that I couldn't even obey the "first commandment"! I didn't love anyone more than myself—not my parents, not my sisters, not my wife, and certainly not God!

In a serious panic, I called my then new-friend-in-the-Lord, Dave Hunt. After describing in detail my emotional distress, there was what seemed to me like an unending silence on his part of the line.

His response shocked me. He exclaimed, "Praise the Lord!!" He then went on to explain that no one *in and by himself* can obey that commandment. It can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit working in us and through us. That was when I first learned that my life in Christ, or anyone else's life in Him, must be a miraculous endeavor. It also helped me to recognize the futility of my former Catholic years of self-efforts and works-salvation.

Dave made some thought-provoking points about the first and great commandment—points that may be found in our TBC archives: "If loving God with

one's whole being is the greatest commandment, then not to do so must be the greatest sin—indeed, the root of all sin. How is it, then, that loving God, without which all else is but 'sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal' (1 Corinthians 13:1), is not even found in the course lists of our theological seminaries? How can it be that this 'first and great[est] commandment' is so neglected in the church?

"The sad truth is that among today's evangelicals, it is not loving and esteeming God but self-love and self-esteem that are presented as the pressing need! To love God with our whole heart, and our neighbors as ourselves, is not something we can produce by self-effort. Love for our fellows must be the expression of God's love in our hearts; nor can we love God except by coming to know Him as He is."

Dave continued, "Most of us have an all-too-shallow knowledge of God. Nor can our love for Him grow except from a deepening appreciation of His love for us—an appreciation that must include two extremes: 1) God's infinite greatness; and 2) our sinful, wretched unworthiness.

"That He, who is so high and holy, would stoop so low to redeem unworthy sinners supremely reveals and demonstrates His love. Such an understanding is the basis of our love and gratitude in return and will be the unchanging theme of our praise throughout all eternity in His glorious presence."

He added, "There can be no doubt that the clearer one's vision of God becomes, the more unworthy one feels, and thus the more grateful for His grace and love. Such has always been the testimony of men and women of God. Job cried out to God, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor [hate] myself, and repent in dust and ashes'" (Job 42:5-6).

"Isaiah likewise lamented, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts' (Isaiah 6:5)." Such recognition of their sin and unworthiness did not decrease but enhanced the saints' love for God and appreciation of His grace. The more clearly we see the infinite chasm between God's glory and our sinful falling short thereof (Romans 3:2), the greater will be our appreciation of His grace and love in bridging that gulf to redeem us. And the greater our appreciation of His love for us, the greater will be our love for Him.

Remember the woman who washed

the feet of Jesus with her tears and dried them with her hair? We're told that she loved much because her many sins were forgiven.

Most of us are probably familiar with 1 John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."

I used to think this meant that the Holy Spirit just zapped us with God's love and gave us the ability to love Him when we became believers. That's true to a degree, but loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength has to do with our *personal, intimate relationship* with Him. Although it's a commandment—and to fulfill it God's grace must certainly be involved—it's also a personal act on the believer's part. My "heart" has to be given to Jesus.

Solomon wrote, "My son, give me thine heart..." (Proverbs 23:26). That's what a love relationship with our Lord and Savior is all about. It's a willful action on a believer's part. So, how do we grow in loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Obedience must be included. Jesus said in John 14:23, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." Yet, I believe 1 John 4:19 sets the course—at least it has for me. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

Think back to the last time you received communion (hopefully not too long ago) in obedience to His ordinance for remembering His atoning sacrifice for us. The more we remember and meditate upon what He has done for us, how could we not love Him more? And that's just one aspect of knowing Him. The better we know Him through His Word, the more His love for us becomes clearer to us.

My prayer is that we all will be led to revisit the biblical basics, beginning with the gospel, and thereby deepening our understanding of the "good news" as well as our ability to explain and share it with whomever the Lord gives us the opportunity to do so.

For those who have only a vague understanding regarding what it means to be saved, I pray the Holy Spirit will bring them to an assurance of their salvation through knowing without a doubt what they believe and why they believe it. Being unsure of the clear and uncomplicated gospel is not something to be taken lightly. It may be an indication of whether or not one who professes to know Jesus is truly saved.

TBC

Question: Could you please explain to me whether the soul and spirit are the same? If they are, why does the Word make a distinction between the two?

Response: First Thessalonians 5:23 clearly states, “I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless...” How might one differentiate between the soul and spirit? Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the “dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” There is a distinction between soul and spirit and it takes an extremely sharp (i.e., supernatural) instrument to discern it. Consequently, any attempt at human definition must fall short. The soul is said to include the mind, the will, and the emotions. Jesus, in His humanity, said that His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death...” (Matthew 26:38. See also Job 10:1, Psalm 119:28, Zechariah 11:8, etc.).

Some might point out that Jesus was also troubled in His spirit: “When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me” (John 13:21). It is clear that the spirit addresses issues beyond the mind, the will, and the emotions.

When He was dying on the Cross, Jesus committed His “spirit” into His Father’s hands (Luke 23:46). As for the human spirit, we know that at death it returns to the Lord who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philipians 1:23). It was “souls” that stood before God. “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God” (Revelation 20:4). Although Scripture gives us no exact definitions of soul and spirit, from the verses quoted and many others, we are assured that they are different parts of the makeup of humans.

Question: Recently I’ve been aware of a growing movement that I sense is slipping back into legalism—the modern Messianic congregations. There seems to be an underlying pride that sets them apart from converted Gentiles. They practice a lot of Jewish traditions woven into the Christian service. What do you think?

Response: Many congregations of Jewish believers are very biblical; but others

have, as you suggest, fallen into legalism by putting themselves to some extent under the laws of Moses. Calling themselves “completed Jews” (an unbiblical term), they think it helps to adopt Old Testament Jewish customs. In contrast, the Bible says there is “neither Jew nor Gentile” (Galatians 3:28) in the church, but Christ has made from Jew and Gentile “one new man” (Ephesians 2:15).

Paul rebuked Peter for going back to Jewish separatism and for compelling “the Gentiles to live as do the Jews” (Galatians 2:14). The entire Epistle to the Galatians argues against any Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, observing the Old Testament Law. We have a higher standard: to be like Jesus by allowing Him to live His life through us. Jewish customs have no place in Christ’s church! The freedom we have in Christ from the Law of Moses and from Jewish legalism and customs was difficult for the first Jewish converts to accept. The apostles and elders gathered in Jerusalem to consider this issue and under God’s guidance declared that the Gentile believers were not under the Law (Acts 15).

What about Jewish believers? There is no difference (Romans 10:12) between them and Gentiles in Christ, for He has “broken down the middle wall of partition” (Ephesians 2:14) between them, having “blotted out the handwriting of ordinances [the Law] that was against us... nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14). Jews may honor their ancestral heritage (in the Passover, etc.) but must not mix Jewishness with faith in Christ. Messianic congregations who are trying to act Jewish need to heed Paul’s exhortation: “Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage [Law]” (Galatians 5:1).

Question: I can’t reconcile Jeremiah’s statement that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years with history or the Bible. When did this 70-year period begin and end? Nor can I get it straight concerning Darius, Cyrus, the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra’s time, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah.

Response: The entire subject of the the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem seems to contain several apparently hopeless contradictions. I have learned that God

sometimes allows seeming contradictions to force us to dig deeper, often to have our faith strengthened in the end.

First of all, we encounter the apparent contradiction about the duration of Daniel’s time in Babylon. Daniel 10:1 says, “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel” If Daniel continued only into the first year of Cyrus, how could he still be alive and receiving revelations in Cyrus’s third year? Obviously 10:1 can’t mean that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus. The statement is made because it was in his first year that Cyrus allowed the Jews to return. Thus we are told that Daniel lived to see the return of the captives under Cyrus. That the first wave of captives returned in the first year of Cyrus is stated clearly in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, and in Ezra 1:1-4, 5:13, and 6:3.

This brings us to what appears to be a hopeless contradiction, due to the fact that Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great) ruled from about 550-529 BC. The first year of his reign, in 550 BC, would be much too early for a return of the captives to Jerusalem if that indeed marked the end of the 70-year desolation thereof. Even if we count from the first carrying away of captives in Babylon in 605 BC, that gives only 55 years instead of the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:3-11; Daniel 9:2). We could legitimately extend the period to the first year of his reign in Babylon, which he captured in 539 BC. This is undoubtedly when the decree was given and what is meant by “the first year” of his reign (he had no jurisdiction over the Jewish captives until then), but that would still leave us four years short of the necessary 70-year desolation.

It seems clear that the first wave of returnees to Jerusalem by Cyrus’s decree, resulting in the commencement of temple reconstruction, did not end the 70-year desolation. Eight years after the death of Cyrus, Daniel is still praying for the restoration of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:1-19) in the first year of Darius. Cyrus died in 529 BC and was succeeded by his son Cambyses, who in turn was surrounded by Darius in 521 BC (after an eight-month interlude of a usurper in 522 BC). So at least 18 years after the first wave of captives returned to Jerusalem and began to rebuild the temple, Daniel is still fervently praying for an end to the desolation of Jerusalem (Daniel 9).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What is necessary to be saved?

QUESTION: I'm confused about how one gets saved. As a Catholic, my favorite catechism stated: "What is necessary to be saved? You have to be baptized, belong to the Church established by Jesus Christ, obey the Ten Commandments, receive the Sacraments, pray, do good works, and die with Sanctifying Grace in your soul." That seemed to impose a hopeless burden. If I missed Mass and died with that mortal sin upon me before I could get to confession, I would be lost forever. Since leaving Catholicism I've only become more confused by the contradictory teachings among Protestant denominational churches. Some say baptism is essential for salvation, others that it isn't. Some say that holiness or speaking in tongues are necessary, others say no. How can I know the truth?

RESPONSE: Your very question, "What must I do to be saved?" was asked of the apostle Paul. His concise answer is the truth you seek: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts:16:30-31).

Note that Paul said nothing about baptism, church membership, penance, Mass, Mary or other saints, good works, or anything else. *Salvation comes through faith in Christ and nothing else.* To suggest that more is needed is to deny the Bible's clear teaching that Christ is the *only* Savior of sinners. Never does the Bible suggest (and common sense also rejects the idea) that Christ can only partially save us, and it is up to us or some other pseudo-Savior to make up for what Christ couldn't do. If Christ was not able to complete our salvation, then it would do no good to look elsewhere for supplemental help.

Of course, to believe on Christ one must know who He is, how He accomplished our salvation, and why we *need* to be saved. God's infinite justice requires an infinite penalty for our violation of His holy law. As finite beings we could never pay that infinite penalty, but would be separated from God for eternity. God, being infinite, could in one sense pay the penalty His justice demands, but that wouldn't be right because He isn't one of us.

Consequently, because of His great love, God became a man through the virgin birth. He never ceased to be God (an impossibility) and will never cease to be man. In love, He took our sins upon Himself and paid the infinite penalty we deserved. On that basis He offers complete pardon and eternal life in heaven for all who will repent of their sin against God and receive the forgiveness that God offers in Christ.

The following true account, as I remember Billy Graham telling it, illustrates the point very well. When driving through a small town in southeastern United States, he was pulled over by a motorcycle officer who gave him a speeding ticket and brought him immediately before the local judge to pay the fine. It happened that the judge was a barber, and Billy had to wait until he finished a customer.

Having taken off his barber's apron and put on his black robe, the judge pulled a gavel out of the court's drawer and called the court to order. "What is the charge?" he asked the officer.

“Your Honor,” the officer replied, “this man was doing 35 in a 25-mile zone.”

“How does the defendant plead?” asked the judge, turning to Billy.

“Your Honor,” said Billy, “I wasn’t looking at the speedometer, so I’ll have to take his word for it.”

“That will be \$10,” said the judge, pounding with his gavel. “One dollar for every mile over the limit.” (This was obviously very long ago.)

Billy took out his wallet, opened it, and began to count out some bills when the judge interrupted him. “Haven’t I seen you somewhere?” he asked. Then looking closer, and before his famous defendant could respond, he exclaimed, “Of course! You’re Billy Graham! What an honor! I’ve seen you on TV....”

A friendly conversation followed. In fact, it became so friendly that Billy put his wallet back into his pocket. The conversation seemed to come to an end, and Billy turned to leave.

“That will be \$10,” said the judge firmly, pounding with his gavel. I may just be a barber most of the time, but I try to run an honest court. The ticket has been written out and has to be paid.”

Again Billy pulled out his wallet and started searching for the proper amount, but the judge was quicker. Reaching into the barbershop drawer, he pulled out a \$10 bill and put it in the court’s drawer. Then he wrote out a receipt and gave it to Billy Graham, now a free man.

That’s exactly what Christ did for us! The “ticket has been written out” in heaven on all of us: “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans:3:23) and *it must be paid* because God runs an honest court. Billy Graham could easily have paid the \$10 in his case, but we cannot pay the infinite penalty assessed against each of us. So God himself, becoming a man to die in our place, paid the penalty and gives us the paid-in-full receipt the moment we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

Anyone disputing the proven economic superiority of free enterprise over Marxism is denying the evidence of the past 70-plus years, during which Soviet-led international communism has failed completely to prove Marxist-Leninist theories. Nevertheless, capitalism will never defeat Communism, because the battle is a moral and spiritual one, which the West is ill-prepared to fight. “In God we trust,” once the genuine motto of America, has become for the majority of Americans an embarrassing carry-over of superstition from our forebears. We have doomed ourselves to the fate that William Penn prophesied: “If men will not be governed by God, then they must be governed by tyrants.”

—DAVE HUNT

(EXCERPT FROM *PEACE, PROSPERITY, AND THE COMING HOLOCAUST*)

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Christian Activism—Is it Biblical

Dave Hunt

Originally published November 1, 1989

INCREASING NUMBERS OF Christians are engaging in social and political activism for the astonishing purpose of attempting to coerce an ungodly society into adopting Christian standards of conduct. “Operation Rescue” is one example. Its founder, Randall Terry, explains that its purpose is to create social upheaval and thereby pressure government into changing the abortion laws. A typical brochure declares, “Rescues help produce the social tension necessary for political change... whether for good or bad, political change comes after groups of Americans bring enough tension to the nation and pressure on politicians that the laws are changed.”

No matter how commendable the goal of such tactics, there is *not one example in the entire Bible* of political or social activism ever being advocated or used by God’s people. That fact must weigh heavily upon any consideration of this important topic. There are numerous cases of *civil disobedience* in Scripture, but it was *never* engaged in for the purpose of forcing an ungodly society to obey biblical principles. The Hebrew midwives, for example, disobeyed Pharaoh’s edict and spared the lives of the male babies, even lying to cover up their “rescue operation.” God was so pleased with their obedience to Him that their names, Shiphrah and Puah, have been preserved for us (Exodus 1:15-22). This was, however, a matter of *individual conscience* before God, *not* an organized attempt to pressure the pagan Egyptians by mass demonstrations into adopting Israel’s God-given morals.

The same is true of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s refusal to obey the king’s command to bow to an idol, and of Daniel’s defiance of the royal decree against prayer. Though boldly witnessing for God even to kings, Daniel *never* used his high government position to attempt to pressure a pagan society to abandon its evil practices to begin a godly way of life. Nor did Joseph or Esther pressure the pagan societies, in which they held high positions, to adopt biblical morals. So it was with Ezra and Nehemiah. They used their influence with kings to obtain permission to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, but

made no attempt to change the practices of those societies though they practiced abortion, homosexuality, and other evils.

There are *no biblical examples* to support today’s “Christian activism.” Christ “*suffered* for us, leaving us *an example that ye should follow his steps*.” He sternly and repeatedly rebuked Israel’s false religious leaders, yet He *never* spoke out—*not even once*—against the injustices of Roman civil authority! Nor did He advocate, organize, or engage in any public protests to pressure Rome into changing its corrupt system, or the society of His day its evil ways. He submitted to unjust authorities as Romans 13 tells us we should do today: “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:21-25). No “activism” here! So it was with the apostles and the early church.

Yes, Paul told the centurion, who was about to have him unlawfully scourged, that he was a Roman citizen; and he told the local officials at Philippi to come and apologize for beating him and Silas without trial. That was not, however, political/social activism. He was not attempting thereby to change society. He was simply standing up for his personal rights under the law (as we also should do), and that includes voting. Paul was determined to obey God rather than men and never held back from preaching the gospel, though it meant his life. If Christian activism is God’s will, Paul would have been the first to pursue it fearlessly at whatever cost.

Scripture, then, from Genesis to Revelation, offers neither example nor doctrinal teaching to support the idea that Christians ought to engage in political/social activism, lobbying, the takeover methods of Coalition on Revival—or that Christians in public office could or should influence society to adopt biblical standards of conduct. Don’t forget, any change would have to be effected through a corrupt political system involving an ungodly majority above and below. Romans 13 tells us to obey rulers, and 1 Timothy 2 to pray for them—not to attempt to change them by coercion. It is not only foolish but counterproductive to attempt to persuade the unsaved to live like Christians. They can’t do it—and if they could it would only blind them the more to their sin and need of a Savior.

Acts 19:23-41 tells how a large group of citizens in Ephesus staged a huge

“demonstration” against Paul and the gospel he preached. A crowd of probably several thousand persons tore their clothes, threw dust in the air and for two hours vociferously chanted their praise to the locally manufactured god that was their chief source of income. “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” they cried. Should Paul have gathered a larger crowd of Christians to cry out yet more loudly and longer and thereby impose their will upon the local authorities? Of course not! Such unchristian-like conduct is demeaning of our Lord and His gospel and would have been unthinkable for the early church. Yet that is basically what Christian activism involves today—the well-meaning but foolish attempt to force “Christian principles” upon a godless society through more effective lobbying, larger demonstrations and greater social upheaval than the homosexuals, abortionists or pornographers can produce.

Rather than pressure the ungodly to live like saints, we must win them to Christ that they might live wholly by God. Our *personal lives* must be lived in obedience to God’s laws even if that brings us into conflict with civil laws. In addition to avoiding idolatry and immorality, Christians must *preach the gospel* to everyone everywhere, regardless of government edicts to the contrary. In so doing, the apostles made that historic declaration: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)! Their example has been followed by Christians down through the centuries, from the martyrs under pagan Rome and its successor, Roman Catholicism, to those who smuggle Bibles into Islamic or communist lands.

Though forbidden by the authorities, the apostles persisted in preaching the gospel. Like their Lord, however, they made no attempt to lobby in Rome for an end to prostitution and abortions; nor did they stage public demonstrations for a change in unjust laws. There is a danger of being so caught up in the social aspect of good causes that one forgets and neglects the chief Christian calling. The Great Commission does not involve exerting a Christian influence upon society. We are not to “change society,” but to “convert individuals.” There is much talk today about “changing the world for Christ.” In fact, there is no biblical teaching or example to support that popular slogan. Rather than persuading sinners to live like saints, we must call them to heavenly citizenship

through “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

But aren’t we supposed to be “salt and light” in the world (Matthew 5:13-16)? Yes, Christ said so. To understand what He meant, we must look to Him as our perfect example. Jesus, “the light of the world,” never advocated or tried to effect social/political change. His *light* reveals sin and leads men to salvation, fitting them for heaven (Ephesians 5:8-13). *Salt* purifies the wound that light reveals and reproves.

Significant changes in society have been effected by preaching and example. Nevertheless, the abolition of slavery, the enactment of child labor laws and greater rights for women, while improvements to be thankful for, have not made society any more godly. Nor is it any more likely under these better conditions that a higher percentage of mankind will end up in heaven than before. While such changes are worth working for, many who call themselves Christians have become so absorbed in good causes that they have lost their fervor for saving souls. They have ended up joining forces with non-Christians who also espouse “traditional values” and in promoting a compromised “social gospel” that cannot save.

Yet the good that social/political activism often produces is a strong motivation for engaging in it. Many Christians were involved in the civil rights movement that finally ended segregation. Surely it is not wrong for Christians to engage in such activities! Certainly the innocent babies that are being murdered in abortion clinics, just as the Jews were in Nazi extermination camps, ought to be rescued! Should Christians do nothing? Is there no basis in Scripture for helping those who are downtrodden?

Yes, the Bible warns us: “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?” (Proverbs 24:11-12). The parable of the good Samaritan, too, tells us that we ought to care for all those who are in need of help, even as Christ commands: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” These principles come under God’s law written in the consciences of

all mankind: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31).

We ought to do all we can to rescue babies who are being aborted, just as we would seek to rescue anyone in danger. The Bible doesn’t tell us what individual saints may have done in this regard because it is not specifically a Christian task nor is it something that has been assigned to the church, but is the responsibility of every person. Moreover, “rescues” should be engaged in to save lives—not for the purpose of creating “social upheaval” to coerce an evil society into adopting biblical standards. Even persuading oppressive communist regimes to grant greater freedom can have unforeseen malignant side effects.

AND THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH: THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

AND THE SECOND IS LIKE, NAMELY THIS, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF. THERE IS NONE OTHER COMMANDMENT GREATER THAN THESE.

—MARK 12:30-31

Suddenly Gorbachev is granting freedom of worship and preaching in the Soviet Union comparable to what we have enjoyed in the West. What are his motives? Like Constantine in ancient Rome, he finds this necessary for the good of the empire—and may even think that freedom would destroy the church even more effectively than oppression. Indeed, such has been the case. Sadly, many Soviet Christians who have managed to bring their families out to the West and who have initially thanked God for liberty, have lost their children to drugs, free sex, pride, lust, and worldliness—and that seems to be a greater hazard for believers

in the West’s “freedom” than under communist oppression.

Today’s Christian activism is far too narrow and selective. It addresses certain issues but ignores many others of equal or greater importance. We must not only rescue the unborn but the children in public schools who are being perverted through the teaching of immorality, witchcraft, and occultism. We must identify psychology as the major vehicle of so much of this evil, and root it out of our churches, seminaries and universities. We must denounce sin, call for national repentance, and preach the gospel in convicting power. Christians must call for repentance not only for homosexuality, child abuse, pornography, and abortion but for more subtle forms of rebellion against God and rejection of Christ. The church must be indicted both for its lack of social concern and for its heresies and failure to preach the truth. We must denounce the destructive false teachings that abound. It is hypocritical for the church to protest the world’s sins while tolerating and even honoring within its ranks those who preach a false gospel and are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Instead of protesters we need prophets who call the world to repentance: “Enochs,” who walk with God and warn of judgment (Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14-15); Noahs, preachers of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), who warn of judgment to come and invite sinners into an ark of safety. What if, instead of building the ark, Noah had tried to reform society!

We need Daniels: “Mene, mene, tekel upharsin”—the handwriting is on the wall, America! You’ve been weighed in the balance and found wanting! Murdered babies, the abomination of homosexuality, and society’s flippant, deliberate rebellion against God have aroused His anger beyond any possibility of reprieve! We need Isaiahs and Jeremiahs who had never heard of making a “positive confession” or of the “power of positive or possibility thinking,” but preached truth!

“Christian activism” is not Christian. It represents a detour from the straight path the church is to walk before the world. It can confuse the real issues, lead to compromise and unholy alliances, and divert time and effort that would better be used in proclaiming the gospel. Weigh the demands upon your time and set priorities. Be fully engaged in rescuing souls for eternity.

TBC

QUESTION: You justify God for sending people to hell because He has *provided* salvation for them in Christ. That won't do. Millions and probably billions will still spend eternity in hell.... God knew that. How could a good God create anyone who He knew would suffer eternally?

RESPONSE: God wants no one to go to hell. He has provided salvation for *all* through Christ, whom He sent into the world "that the world through him might be saved..." (John 3:17). He is not "willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9) but desires "all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). Those in hell have only themselves to blame for rejecting the full forgiveness of sins and the eternal life offered to all as a free gift of God's grace through Christ's payment of the penalty for their sins. Why would God create those He knew would reject the gospel? Why didn't He, who knows all in advance, create only those who would believe the gospel and leave uncreated those who would reject Christ?

The human race can't be so divided. Those who reject Christ are still the parents, children, cousins, aunts, and uncles of those who believe. To not create unbelievers would also eliminate believers who would otherwise be born. God will be glorified by those in hell [see TBC, April 2001] because He did not back down from His desire to bless billions in His presence for eternity; nor did He go back on His Word and compromise His justice by unjustly forgiving those who rejected the salvation He freely provided. There is no way to fault God for creating mankind. He loves all and wants to bless all eternally.

QUESTION: IS lack of confidence (e.g., social anxiety) a sin?

RESPONSE: Lack of confidence may simply be called "fear." Social anxiety can be simplified to "anxiety," regardless of what causes it. In the trials and circumstances that come before us, we may be tempted to yield to fear and anxiety in a sinful manner. On some occasions, the Lord may want us to stand and see His salvation. At other times, we clearly know to remove ourselves from the situation. We all face fear and anxiety to one degree or another, but do we allow them to cause us to flee from circumstances under which we know the Lord would want us to remain for His purposes?

In the book of Esther, a royal decree has been issued that will bring a massacre of all the Jews in Persia. Queen Esther

is anxious and fearful because she was asked by her uncle, Mordecai, to risk her life on behalf of her people. The possibility of death and the unknown is certainly cause for fear and anxiety for anyone! Mordecai specifically tells Esther that "[I]f thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:14).

Had Esther yielded to her fear and anxiety and fled or refused to follow through, her action—it is directly implied—would have been sinful and would have resulted in tragedy for her. Although fear and anxiety are a real part of the human condition, they only become sin when we yield to the temptation to flee from challenges that we know God is allowing.

For those who are the children of God, our very necessities, such as food and clothing, are not to be the cause of worry. Jesus pointed to His creation, showing that our heavenly Father knows our needs and is concerned both with them and for us (Matthew 6:25-31). If God so cares for the grass, flowers, and birds, why shouldn't He also care for His children who are created in His image? Chapter 6 ends with the admonition to "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you" (v. 33). Rather than yielding to our fears and anxieties, we must turn to God and His Word. The promise of our Lord is that "all these things shall be added unto you." What things? The necessary things of life! To yield to our fears and anxieties is to doubt the promise of God. That common scenario of mankind showed up in the Garden when Satan asked, "Yea, hath God said...?" Yes, it was doubt that led to the sin that brought in the curse. Interaction with others can sometimes bring anxiety, but we are called to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), and that involves social interaction with others. James 1:2-4 exhorts, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

QUESTION: You object to the idea that there was death, even of animals, prior to Adam's sin. Yet the scripture says "...by one man, sin entered into the

world, and death by sin; and death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Death passed upon all *men*. Animals are not mentioned and certainly don't sin. What would preclude animals from dying prior to the fall? If creation took six literal 24-hour days, and Peter said, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8), this seems to indicate that God's idea of a day can include much more than 24 hours.

RESPONSE: The words "day, day's, days', and days" are used thousands of times in the Bible. How can you say that Peter was referring only to the "days" in Genesis 1? If that were the case, how can you change his "thousand years" to billions of years in order to accommodate the pseudo-scientific evolutionary process? It cannot be justified from Scripture. This is *eisegesis*, not *exegesis*. Had secular scientists not come up with this idea, no one reading the Bible ever would have! Why did they do this? Because evolution *requires* billions of years! This is an evolutionary theory, not a biblical one.

Fifteen-hundred years before Peter, Moses had said: "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4). Was Peter contradicting Moses? How long is a thousand years with the Lord—a day, or a watch in the night? It can't be both. Neither Moses nor Peter said that a day equaled a thousand years with God—and they certainly didn't declare that the six days of creation actually covered billions of years! Both of these spokespersons of the Holy Spirit are simply pointing out that God dwells *outside of time* and that what seems like a long, long time to us is nothing with Him. One cannot read any more than this into these two passages.

As for animals dying before Adam's sin that brought God's judgment of death upon the entire creation, God had pronounced everything He had created as "very good" (Genesis 1:31). It isn't reasonable that He would call animals fighting and eating one another and dying "very good." You are correct that Romans 5:12 doesn't mention animals. But Romans 8:19-13 clearly states that *all creation* shared in the curse pronounced upon Adam for his sin and will be delivered from that curse upon "the manifestation of the sons of God" at the resurrection of the redeemed.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Is the True Gospel in the Stars?

QUESTION: I recently read two books, *Witness of the Stars* by E. W. Bullinger, and *The Gospel in the Stars*, by Joseph A. Seiss. They were interesting, but something about them troubled me. Is it true that the gospel is really in the stars and that ancient men even before the flood had this witness and knew what it meant?

RESPONSE: No. Although the Bible frequently states that the heavens are given for “signs,” it never even implies that these “signs” present the gospel. The Bible says, “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm:19:1) and that every person, no matter what his language, understands that message (Psalm:19:3). Indeed, all of creation reveals God’s glory and power, which are “clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made” (Romans:1:20). Never are we told, however, that the heavens or any other part of creation declare the gospel. That is presented only by God’s Word.

Those who promote this view admit that the gospel can’t be seen in the stars without considerable imaginative interpretation. Seiss confesses that “the starry worlds...do not and cannot declare or show forth Christ as Redeemer...” (Joseph A. Seiss). But without Christ as Redeemer, there is no gospel! D. James Kennedy, who promotes Seiss’s thesis, admits in his sermon *The Gospel in the Stars*: “You can look at the stars in Virgo until you are green in the face and they would never look like a woman!” But Paul says that what the heavens declare is “clearly seen” by anyone who looks at them. Obviously, Paul is talking about something other than what these men promote.

If God had intended the stars to present the gospel, He would have had to arrange them in such a way that they would clearly form the images He wanted man to see in them. Obviously, He didn’t do so. Furthermore, there is no way that mere visual images, no matter how clearly the stars had been positioned, could present the gospel. The clearest image the stars offer is the Southern Cross. Yet who would know by merely looking at such a configuration in the sky that Christ would in the future die, or had already died, upon a cross for our sins and that He was the perfect,

sinless Son of God who was paying the penalty demanded by His own infinite justice? No visual image could explain those facts!

In fact, the “images” imaginatively associated with certain constellations are open to almost limitless interpretations and thus do not carry within themselves any safeguard of their alleged message—a message that Seiss acknowledges has been badly corrupted into astrology and occultism. A major purpose of Seiss’s work, then, is to tell us what these alleged “signs” *really* meant in ages past. He claims to have recovered this true meaning through much research—a meaning that again he admits has not been ordinarily assigned to them for many centuries. So these marvelous signs have actually failed to accomplish their purpose because it is in fact impossible for them to do so in and of themselves.

Without the Bible, and with only the stars themselves to observe, we could not possibly understand the gospel. That obvious fact undermines this entire thesis. The word “gospel” is used 101 times in 95 verses in the Bible (all New Testament), and it is *never* associated with the stars or the witness of creation. The gospel

is *always* preached by *people* and must be perfectly clear and understood for it to be of any effect. The alleged “gospel in the stars” fails to meet these criteria. Moreover, Matthew:24:14, Mark:13:10, etc., indicate that the gospel must yet be preached to all nations. Thus it clearly had not been preached in the stars—certainly not in “all its length and breadth,” as Seiss enthusiastically declares.

The Bible states that the gospel *began* to be preached with the advent of Christ (mark 1:1; Philippians:4:15; 2 Timothy:1:10) and indicates that it had previously been a mystery until then “*kept secret* since the world began” (Romans:16:25). This is hardly consistent with the theory that the gospel had been proclaimed in the stars for thousands of years before Christ. Yet Seiss ardently declares that “all the great doctrines of the Christian faith were known, believed, cherished, and recorded [in the stars] from the earliest generations of our race, proving that God has spoken to man, and verily gives him a revelation of truths and hopes precisely as written in our Scriptures, and so fondly cherished by all Christian believers.” The Bible never once even hints at such a presentation.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds,

reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

—2 TIMOTHY 3

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Counseling in the Church: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly – Part One

T. A. McMahon

IN THIS TWO-PART series I'm addressing what I believe is the Adversary's most successful device among his many deceptions (2 Corinthians 11:3), temptations (1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:5), wiles (Ephesians 6:11), devices (2 Corinthians 2:11) and snares (1 Timothy 3:7), which have captured both professing and true believers in Jesus Christ... and I'm doing it with more than a little help from my friends, Dr. Martin Bobgan and his wife, Deidre. Between them they hold a half-dozen degrees. Martin's Doctorate of Education is from the University of Colorado, and Deidre is a Phi Beta Kappa with a Master's Degree in English. (The reason I'm saying this up front will become significant as I go through my message and will provide information that I'm sure will disturb some of you.)

Regarding my own background, I grew up in the mental health community, literally. My father was a psychiatrist, and during my formative years we lived on the grounds of a large mental institution in central Ohio. He later became the director of a mental hospital in southern Ohio. Many of my relatives were involved in various mental health capacities, so my understanding of psychology is more experiential than academic. In other words, as I said, I grew up surrounded by it.

After becoming a believer, I spent decades comparing psychotherapy's teachings with the Word of God. My personal experiences also contributed to my increasing compassion for those undergoing some of the mental problems of living and the damage that counseling has done not only to them but also to their counselors.

Even so, the title of this message may seem a bit disconcerting to some, and perhaps even confusing. Yet it is an accurate description of the state of counseling by those who profess to believe in Jesus and who claim to adhere to His Word.

Regarding counseling, some of it is good, some of it is bad, and some of it is definitely ugly:

- 1) It's good when it's true to the Scriptures.
- 2) It's bad when it deviates from God's instructions in word and practice.
- 3) It's ugly when its methods follow the concepts devised by the godless founders of psychotherapy and their latter-day disciples.

Having spent close to four decades observing and addressing false teachings and practices impacting the entire church (charismatic, conservative, liberal, fundamental, aberrational, etc.), nothing in my view has been as devious and controlling as psychotherapy.

Its effective deception has convinced the masses that it helps people by healing their mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. One critic of psychology's influence throughout the world writes: "Psychological insight is the creed of our time. In the name of enlightenment, experts promise help and faith, knowledge and comfort. They devise confident formulas for happy living and ambitious plans for dissolving the knots of conflict. Psychology, according to its boosters, possesses worthwhile answers to our most difficult personal questions and practical solutions for our most intractable social problems. In the late twentieth-century United States, we are likely to believe what psychological experts tell us. They speak with authority to a vast audience.... Their advice is a big business" (from *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, c1995.<http://ark.cdlib.org>).

Referring to the ubiquitous (i.e., seeming to be everywhere) nature of psychology, she adds that it has "seeped into virtually every facet of existence."

Tragically, it has come into the church and has overtaken much of it. Considering just one example, a survey of the 39 largest mission agencies in America reveals that one cannot be accepted for missionary work without a psychological stamp of approval, based on a psychological interview and psychological tests.

The contemporary evangelical church was led into much confusion regarding counseling during the 1960s and '70s. That time period gave rise to the myth of "Christian psychology." It's a myth because there is no such thing. Search as you will the numerous recognized fields of psychology and you will not find *Christian* psychology!

Although there is no accredited degree in this field, the profession of "Christian psychology"—along with the regard in which its practitioners are held—is spreading exponentially.

In a message at the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, an organization of psychologists who profess Christ, one speaker admitted that there is "no acceptable Christian psychology that is markedly different from non-Christian psychology," and although there are "Christians who are psychologists, they basically do the same things as non-Christian psychologists" (from

Psychoheresy Revised & Expanded chapter 2, I Sutherland, P and Poelstra, P "Aspects of Integration." Paper presented at the meeting of the Western Association of Christians for Psychological Studies, Santa Barbara, CA, June 1976).

What then constitutes so-called Christian psychology and its practice? It is centered in the field of psychotherapy, also known as clinical counseling, which is simply *talk therapy*. Psychotherapy itself has no scientific basis. Its concepts and practices stem primarily from beliefs originated by influential theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Eric Fromm, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, B.F. Skinner and their latter-day disciples.

The fabrication that psychotherapy is scientific is due to the background of men like Freud and Jung, who earned medical degrees as psychiatrists. Their science degrees, however, had little or no relationship to their practice of psychotherapy.

Most of those who refer to themselves as Christian psychologists have earned degrees in psychology, focusing primarily on psychotherapy. Their training, therefore, is based upon the opinions and motives devised by the theorists previously noted and others.

The "Christian" aspects of their practices come about by attempting to integrate their Christian beliefs with their secular training. Although that may give the *impression* of reflecting Christianity, nearly all of the secular psychotherapeutic concepts are diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible!

Considering just one of the many teachings of psychotherapy that oppose biblical Christianity, a foundational example is the differing perspectives on "self." The Word of God and the psychological wisdom of men couldn't be more at odds with one another!

The Bible teaches that "self" is at the root of humanity's sin nature and must be in complete submission to God. Verses abound to that end: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

Self is the chief focus of psychotherapy, running the gamut from self-love to self-deification. No teaching in the contemporary church has been more insidious and destructive than the self-love/self-esteem heresies of the twentieth-century. They are a fulfillment of prophecy of which the Holy Spirit had the Apostle Paul warn us: "This know also, that in the last days *perilous times shall come*. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*..."

(2 Timothy 3:1-2). They have turned the truth of God's Word upside down and continue to deceive Christians well into this century.

Before addressing specifics regarding the good, the bad, and the ugly, it's important that we understand what the Bible teaches *foundationally* about counseling.

Number one: God is the only One who qualifies as Counselor. The reason should be obvious. God alone (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) knows the heart, mind, thoughts, and motivation of every human being.

And Jeremiah 17:10: "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Revelation 2:23 repeats that of which only God is capable: "...I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

In Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is called "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God. ..." One function of the Holy Spirit is to convict humans of the sins that commence from their hearts (John 16:8). (More on this later, but suffice it to say that these abilities are beyond the capabilities of finite humanity.)

Number two: The content of counseling *must* be true to the Word of God. Acts 20:27: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." And Romans 11:34: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"

Where anything adds to or departs from these fundamental truths, they are "psychoheresies," to use a term coined by the Bobgans. They define the term this way: "Psychoheresy is the integration of secular psychological counseling theories and therapies with the Bible. It is also the intrusion of such theories into the preaching and practice of Christianity, especially when they contradict or compromise biblical Christianity in terms of the nature of man, how he is to live, and how he changes."

In our day, when belief in sound biblical doctrine is diminishing, e.g., "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3), and fewer and fewer Christians are looking to the Scriptures for God's help and guidance in living out their Christian lives, the universality of psychology with its lack of accountability and its focus on self has great appeal.

Much of its acceptance is also because of an underlying intimidation factor. People have been told—and believe—that the "professional experts" know better. They don't. Their theories are clouded in pseudo-scientific language, giving the impression that they have the answers to life's problems. Again, they don't.

To the uninformed, the *self-assurance* of

psychotherapists also appears intimidating. Yet, in truth, it's wrapped up in nothing more than psychobabble. Nevertheless, their false claims are mostly accepted by osmosis rather than by one's searching out the facts, causing many to yield to the self-proclaimed experts.

What are some of their beliefs?

"Psychotherapy is a scientific endeavor."—No. Psychotherapy (i.e., psychological counseling) has no scientific basis. It's simply *talk*. The counselee talks to the counselor and the counselor listens to the counselee. At times the counselor may ask questions and make suggestions.

Research psychologists who study the effectiveness of clinical counseling are in agreement that psychotherapy *is* not and *cannot* be scientific. Nevertheless, the widely believed myth is that it is a scientific practice! The content of the talk is drawn from a number of therapies in which the therapist has been trained. There are about 500 basic ones, but combinations thereof result in *thousands* of related therapies.

Psychological theories are often in conflict, even in contradiction, with one another. Furthermore, the counselee's issues are revamped to fit within one or more of the counselor's favored therapy or therapies.

Given the subjective nature of talk therapy, it should come as no surprise that studies have shown that professional counselors are no more successful than non-professionals—i.e., everyday folks who have never had any training in the field of counseling!

Some researchers point to the similar methods of native medicine men and shamans in "counseling" their tribal people and compare them with today's psychotherapists. They note that the success/failure rate of both is comparable with these exceptions: the shamans charge less and release their "counselees" sooner.

Again, we are addressing "talk therapy." That is hardly a practice in which one needs to earn a degree. Furthermore, it's not the medium of "talk" that is the real problem in counseling. It is the *message*, i.e., the *content* of the talk.

The Bobgans remind us, "Christians should know and affirm that such psychology is merely the hunches, opinions, guesses, and particularly the wisdom of men that God rejects" (1 Corinthians 2).

Pastors who refer their church members out to professional counselors have either been duped by the myths of psychotherapy and fallen prey to its intimidation factor, or they simply do not believe in the sufficiency of God's Word. Either way, they are not living up to their calling as shepherds of God's sheep, if indeed they truly have that calling.

For all the errors that are found within

psychotherapy's theories and practices, the one that should have every biblical Christian fleeing psychological counseling is its concept of the *nature* of mankind. They claim that man is *inherently good*, which is their foundational belief.

What then of man's ever-increasing problems of living, his struggles with relationships, his ongoing hostilities? We're told that they are *learned conditions* stemming from factors outside of the individual: his or her upbringing by their parents, their physical and social environment, influences from their peers, educators, media, and so forth.

All such things are said to have shaped, even determined, the mental, emotional, and behavioral condition of his present state. The goal, therefore, of psychological counseling, through various means (mostly talk), is to restore one back to one's "true [inherently good] self."

On the other hand, if mankind is innately evil, as the Bible declares over and over, psychotherapy is out of business. Why? All the supposed "fixing" of humans through talk therapy *cannot change humanity's deeply-rooted evil nature*. We are all like leopards that cannot change their spots. Only God can truly change us by giving us new life.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 spells out our inherent nature and tells us why only God is able to fix us: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

Further biblical insights regarding the heart were written by English theologian Matthew Poole in his *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* penned in the 1700s. He declares that the deceitful heart is "unsearchable by others, *deceitful* with reference to ourselves, and abominably wicked so that neither can a man know his own heart, neither can any other know our hearts."

Poole continues, "Lest these hypocrites should pretend that their hearts were not departed from God, or should say, Who then can judge us if none knoweth the Heart? Saith God, Though no creature knoweth the heart of another fellow creature, yet I know the hearts of all creatures, I search the secret thoughts and counsels and designs of all my creatures; for I will judge them according to their thoughts and the secret motions and affections of their souls, according to all their ways, and the fruit of their doings. ..."

That is so far beyond the capability of human counselors that any attempt to step into that role smacks of idolatry of self-deification.

QUESTION: I disagree with your statements distinguishing Israel from the church. Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2:11-22 that the church and Israel are “one” grouping of believers.... Romans 9-11 describes Israel...[as] those people of all times, places, lands, nationalities, and ethnic groups who have had faith in God.... Israel is not “God’s earthly people” but God’s spiritual people... believers everywhere.... God’s promises of land do not promise His *earthly* people *physical* land. They promise His *spiritual* people a spiritual country...heaven.

RESPONSE: You spiritualize the truth of Scripture. Paul refers to “my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites... whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came” (Romans 9:3-5). The word *flesh* cannot be turned into *spirit*. The “people of Israel after the flesh” (*physical* descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) have existed throughout history and still exist in the present. Their history is given in the Bible, including their very real possession of the promised land for centuries, their being cast out of it and scattered around the world, their persecution and their preservation—along with hundreds of clear prophecies of their return. If Israel is a *spiritual* people, i.e., all true believers everywhere, then what is that specific nation of Israel whose history the Old Testament gives in detail and is the subject of most Old Testament prophecies? Israel exists today as a distinct people and nation and is once again in possession of part of the land she was promised and once possessed in full. Every news report confirms this. Try to tell the Arabs that those are not the Jews living in Israel today!

The Bible describes Israel as distinct among the nations of the world. As a nation and as a people, the Jews are distinguished from all others in hundreds of verses such as “I will give...unto you...a land.... I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people.... And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine” (Leviticus 20:24-26); “[T]he LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6); “And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee.... And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all the nations whither the LORD shall lead thee.... Ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall

scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth unto the other” (Deuteronomy 28:10, 37, 63, 64); “Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations...He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.... It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever” (Jeremiah 31:10, 40); “And thou [Gog and Magog, et al.] shalt say, I will go up...upon the people that are gathered out of the nations.... And thou shalt come up against my people Israel ...in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me” (Ezekiel 38:11-16), etc.

Zechariah 12, 13, and 14 surely refer to Jerusalem as a “cup of trembling” for all nations in the last days, to Israel being attacked by all nations of the earth, to Christ coming to the Mount of Olives to rescue His people and all Israel seeing Him and believing on Him. You cannot spiritualize Israel without doing violence to history, the present facts, and the Bible. Furthermore, if Israel is the church, then why does Paul say, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel, *is that they might be saved*” (Romans 10:1)? To be in the church, one must already be saved in the sense of John 3:16, Acts 16:31, and Romans 1:16: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3).

Nor does Ephesians 2:11-22 teach that “the church and Israel are ‘one,’” as you state. It declares that the Gentiles are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,” but through Christ they become part of “the household of God.” The message is not about the oneness of Israel and the church but the fact that both Jews and Gentiles (as individuals through faith in Christ) are made “one new man.” There is a new entity, the church, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).

The church came into existence only after Christ’s incarnation and glorification. If Israel was already the church, Christ would hardly have stated that it was yet to be built in the future: “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). Identifying Israel with the church requires such a spiritualizing of Scripture that its entire meaning is changed and the major promises concerning the return of Christ to Israel to establish His kingdom on the throne of His father David become mere allegories.

QUESTION: We’re told that God uses trials to increase a believer’s faith and trust. Isn’t this out of character with a

God who is love?

RESPONSE: The writer of Hebrews declares in no uncertain terms that “whom the LORD loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:6). James 1:17 tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Paul in turn says that God gave him a “thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me” (2 Corinthians 12:7). He further explains that he asked God to remove it and the LORD said no (verses 8-9). Paul also gave some medical advice to Timothy to help relieve this young man’s stomach problems and his “often infirmities” (1 Timothy 5:23). Why did Paul not heal Timothy as he had so many others? The answer is obvious. Just as God’s gift of a “thorn” to Paul accomplished a specific purpose, so too did Timothy’s affliction.

David was willing to walk “through the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4) because God was with him. This same verse also says, “Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” Consider the implication here. While the shepherd’s staff was used to gently pull a wayward sheep back into the fold, the rod was used to drive off predators and to direct straying sheep with a judicious whack or two.

What some might regard as a cruel act (or abuse) is really a gift of life! In the midst of severe judgment, Jeremiah wrote down God’s declaration: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11). Many faithful Christians are able to echo the testimony of the psalmist: “Before I was afflicted, I went astray...” (Psalm 119:67). Even a prolonged bedridden time of illness can be looked upon as “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures...” (Psalm 23:2).

Jesus promised joy, peace, and happiness *in Him* (not in the world). Though promising that tribulation would come, He gave us the promise that He had overcome the world (John 16:33), not that He would necessarily remove our affliction. Paul and the apostles testified of the myriad troubles that came their way. Even though their “outward man perish,” yet their “inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16). Although it’s not always easy to see how problems can strengthen a believer’s faith, the Apostle Paul testifies to such a fact (2 Corinthians 4:17-18; 5:1-21; 6:1-10, etc.). The scriptures are filled with examples (see Hebrews 11) of those who through trial, troubles, and great loss were brought closer to God. This does not exclude deliverance from afflictions (Psalm 34:19). We too must all walk in faith. Of even more concern is your assertion that you are unable to find these things in Scripture.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Beware the Huckster's Gospel!

QUESTION: Something troubles me about some evangelistic crusades and church services I have attended. It seems to me that the appeal to “come to Christ” is linked to deliverance from sickness, from financial problems, from unhappiness, etc. At other times, even when the true gospel has been preached, it has seemed that the appeal has been based more on emotion than on truth. Is something wrong, or am I just too picky?

RESPONSE: Your concern is well founded. Our generation is obsessed with numbers and a false view of success that reflects the values of this world rather than of the world to come. It is assumed that anyone can be persuaded to buy any product if the advertising hype and sales pitch are right. Large corporations spend billions on research and advertising in order to peddle their products to the widest possible market. Unfortunately, that mentality has entered the church as well.

For many evangelists and churches, Jesus Christ has become a “product” to be packaged and marketed using the same techniques that have proved successful in the world. There is indeed much that we could call deceptive in today’s evangelistic sales pitch. Christ is preached as a panacea rather than the only remedy for sin and deliverance from judgment. Instead of truth, we are being offered music and entertainment to get us “in the mood,” and the gospel is often watered down to make it as palatable as possible. As Joyce Main Hanks of the University of Costa Rica declares in the preface of her translation of Jacques Ellul’s *The Humiliation of the Word*:

Public officials are “electable” in the United States today only if they project an attractive television image. Reaction to presidential “debates,” for example, depends almost entirely on image, not substance, truth, or coherent rational argument.

Similarly, the church indulges our desire to “feel good” instead of responding to our need to be spiritually challenged and fed through solid exposition of the Scriptures

The electronic church in particular panders to our appetite for entertainment rather than authentic discipleship and maturity.

When Christ was approached by those who offered to follow Him, He didn’t say to His disciples: “Sign him up quick, Peter! Get him in the choir, John! Make him a deacon, James! Hurry, before he changes his mind!” Instead, Christ said something like this: “So you want to follow me? Let me tell you where I’m going. I’m heading for a hill outside of Jerusalem called Calvary. There they will nail me to a cross. So if you are really going to follow me, you might as well pick up your cross right now!” Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew:16:24).

Christ must be presented not as an inspiring leader who will help us to feel better about ourselves or will heal our bodies or prosper our marriage or business, but as the Savior of those who know they deserve God’s eternal judgment and cannot save themselves. We must call sinners to repentance and to believe the gospel because

it is *true*. All who refuse the truth will be given a strong delusion to believe Satan’s lie, “that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians:2:12). There is a solemnity about the gospel that must be recovered if we are to see genuine salvation in the place of the plethora of false professions.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

Nothing is less suited to a follower of the meek and lowly Son of Man than a contentious spirit and vainglorious bearing. Boasting and bitter words ill become one who has taken the place of death with Christ. If, in lowliness of mind, each esteems others better than himself, how impossible for strife and contention to come in. Alas, that it is so much easier to speak or write of these things than to practically demonstrate them!

It is not in the natural man to live out what is here inculcated. The man after the flesh “looks out for number one,” as he puts it, and is fond of reminding himself, and his fellows, that “charity begins at home.” But the Christian is exhorted to look not on his own things but on the things of others. A heavenly principle this, surely, and only to be attained by a heavenly man, one who walks in fellowship with Him who came from heaven to manifest His love for others. It is characteristic of man’s deceitful natural heart to suppose that his greatest pleasure can be found in ministering to his own desires. But the truest happiness is the result of unselfish devotion to the things of others. Were this ever kept in mind, what unhappy experiences would many of God’s dear children be spared, and how glad and joyous would fellowship in Christ become.

—H. A. IRONSIDE

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Counseling in the Church: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly — Part Two

T. A. McMahon

THERE'S A SAYING that underscores what the Scriptures declare continually: The Bible is not a book that men could write if they would...or would write if they could. Regarding the first part of the saying, finite man obviously lacks the omniscience of our infinite God, so he cannot know the hearts and minds of his fellow man.

As to the latter part, fallen prideful man would hardly be inclined to expose his wickedness, as is presented in Matthew 15:18-20 and numerous other places: "...[t]hose things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man...."

Clearly the Bible is at odds with psychology's view of the nature of man, which this pseudo-science proclaims is *inherently good*. Therefore, any issues adversely affecting our lives are said to be caused by external factors, i.e., parents, friends, enemies, our environment, the media, etc. Moreover, the issue of sin cannot even be addressed in psychotherapy (except for those therapists who will negatively point to belief in it as an obstruction to achieving a healthy mental condition).

Numerous other problems with psychological counseling have been presented in the many volumes authored by Dr. Martin and Deidre Bobgan and a host of others, including books by various researchers and academics. Even so, common sense is often a valued means for discerning what's wrong with psychotherapy. For the believer in Jesus Christ and His Word, he or she is without excuse regarding turning from God's Word to psychological counseling for help related to mental, emotional, and behavioral problems.

For all the claims of believing in the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, many, including biblical Christians and pastors, do not hold fast to the *sufficiency* of the Word of God, which the Bible claims. "...as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

For a believer, what does *not* pertain to

"life and godliness"? Isn't the Bible wholly sufficient to meet the needs of our Christian walk? For example, Psalm 119:9 declares, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto *according to thy word*." Psalm 1:1 adds an instruction that certainly relates to psychological counseling: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

Even a cursory review of the lives of the founders of psychotherapy and their latter-day disciples reveal their blatant ungodliness, let alone their false teachings. Consider 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

What could psychological counseling possibly supply regarding "instruction in righteousness" and the enablement of a counselee to manifest "good works"? Nothing...and worse. The entire field of psychotherapy is spiritually bankrupt, creates confusion and hopelessness, intimidates through its deception and promotions, and keeps people in mental and emotional bondage. Many years ago, secular psychologist Dr. O. Hobart Mowrer, definitely not a biblical Christian, asked this question: "Has evangelical religion sold its birthright for a mess of psychological pottage?"

Time has shown that the answer is "yes!" That's the bad of "the good, the bad, and the ugly" that has influenced counseling in the church. There is much more that could be said to inform Christians about the unbiblical teachings and practices of psychotherapy. And most of those things can be readily discerned by simply being a Berean (Acts 17:10-11), those who compared what they were being taught with what the Word of God teaches. Furthermore, as has been noted, a biblical Christian has no grounds for turning to psychological counseling.

Yet many would agree and declare with great assurance that they have turned from psychology to one of the programs that are a part of the Biblical Counseling Movement. That would include the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC), the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCFEF), and the Biblical Counseling Foundation (BCF). That may seem to be a good thing but sadly, it's

rarely the case.

What's the problem?

Biblical counseling programs look to the Bible, for the most part, for its teachings about the curse of sin, the fallen nature of man, the ways and means of how we can be reconciled to God, and receiving the gift of eternal life by putting one's faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. And they are acutely aware that such beliefs are rejected by the *psychological* approach to counseling. Nevertheless, they have drifted (maybe even rushed!) into some of the methods of clinical counseling that inevitably are counterproductive regarding the spiritual welfare of those involved, and that includes both the biblical counselor and the counselees.

There are a host of practices performed in Biblical Counseling that have no basis in the Scriptures. They include searching one's past to discover the basis for one's sin issues through personal data inventory (PDI), setting up a position of counselor within a fellowship, females counseling males and vice-versa, charging for counseling services, either within the church or external to the church, obtaining licenses from the state in order to counsel, earning degrees and certification in counseling, scheduled fifty-minute counseling sessions, and maintaining an air of professionalism.

None of those things can be found in the Bible as relating to ministering to brothers and sisters in Christ. They are in fact the modus operandi of psychological counseling that inevitably compromises biblical truth. As destructive as they are to ministering biblically—and they are really *bad*—they are not the *ugly* part, although they are related.

"Problem-centered counseling" is the chief cause of the ugliness.

The Bobgans underscore the unbiblical facets of problem-centered counseling in their books *Christ-centered Ministry versus Problem-centered Counseling* and *Stop Counseling! Start Ministering!* They begin by making an important point in their distinction between the terms "counseling" and "ministering."

"Counseling" is a word that carries a lot of baggage, often bringing to mind psychological ways and means when that is never intended. They chose to distinguish the term *counseling* (because it is generic enough to cover both psychological and biblical counseling) and *ministering*, because it puts the emphasis on Christ and

the teachings of His Word.

So, when does biblical counseling not become biblical ministering? In two very critical areas. First and foremost, when the counseling becomes *problem-centered*. Predictably, that leads away from a focus that is Jesus-centered and obedience-to-His-Word oriented. As the Bobgans point out, “We contend that as long as personal ministry remains problem-centered, and therefore person-focused, there will be less spiritual growth and more superficial fixing of the flesh.” Once a problem is “fixed,” it usually lingers on and comes up in future counseling sessions. Whether the counselor is secular or biblical he or she becomes the “fixer.” And the approach becomes a revolving door of dealing with new problem after problem.

On the other hand, the *ministering* approach focuses primarily on encouraging brothers and sisters in Christ to strengthen their walk with Him, thereby maturing the believer in the faith and attaining to godliness. Remember, godliness is one of the traits gained for believers in the verse telling us of the sufficiency of God’s Word (2 Peter 1:3). That will not only help reduce life’s troubles without the need for specifically addressing each one, but it will eliminate many future issues from developing and rearing their ugly heads. Besides that, it does away with dependence upon a fellow human being as the “fixer” and shifts one’s reliance to the Holy Spirit, where it should be.

The problem-centered method is common in the Biblical Counseling Movement, and that may seem reasonable to some. Counseling is in the business of resolving problems. Right? No, not according to Scripture. The problem-centered method is not biblical and has created situations that *foster sin* rather than bringing about repentance. And it often gets *really ugly*. For example, counseling, as we noted, is *talk therapy*. It is conversation. The counselor, in attempting to resolve the conflict between a husband and wife, has them air their problems (which is a problem in itself). That nearly always produces accusations, one against the other, which often results in consequences found and condemned in Ephesians 4:31: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”

The problem-centered exchange between the counselees often exhibits sins such as slander, self-serving biases, backbiting, blame-shifting, etc. Rather than a bibli-

cal counselor halting the sinful speaking, he or she often fosters it by asking probing questions that supposedly give insights that reveal the heart of the problem. The methodology of exploring problems in depth in search of solutions related to sin is an act of vanity. It goes nowhere and, in the process, it exacerbates the conflict. Furthermore, and most important, it’s a diversion from what the Bible clearly says, which can be understood and obeyed without difficulty.

Problem-centered counseling rarely, if ever, directs the counselees past the problems to Christ himself and their walk with Him. Some of the Biblical Counseling organizations have produced videos utilizing their people role playing as counselees. What’s presented in their own productions shows clearly their approach to counseling as I’ve just described. The Bobgans “are not saying ‘Do not talk about problems.’ We do listen to problems; but the way we respond and the direction we take differ from those in the biblical counseling movement.” The ministering approach does not *major* in addressing problems in contrast to the biblical counseling movement’s problem-centered approach. The goal of the ministering approach is to “turn the attention back to the Lord and His Word and the daily walk as soon as possible and as often as necessary. Of course there are exceptions, as when immediate action needs to be taken. For instance, if gross sin has been committed, such as a crime, physical or sexual abuse, or unfaithfulness in a marriage, there must be evidence and there must be action beyond the conversation of personal ministry.”

What of the good in regard to counseling in the church? I know of some, who, although they don’t make the distinctions between the terms “counseling” and “ministering,” nevertheless do not subscribe to either psychological counseling or the hybrid of that found in the Biblical Counseling Movement. They do not refer their people out to professional psychotherapists, do not set apart individuals as counselors, nor do they adhere to any methodology of counseling.

They believe that the full counsel of God, taught through verse-by-verse sermons, Bible studies with like-minded believers, individuals studying the Scripture, much time spent in prayer, and obedience to the Scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit enables all biblical Christians to be fruitful and productive in their life in Christ. Those things are sufficient in

dealing with life’s problems.

Hopefully, the Lord will use these two articles to speak to those who have been confused by, even deceived by, practices and experiences they have had either as counselors or counselees and be encouraged to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

I believe the Bobgans have pointed the church back to the old paths, which the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet Jeremiah both to restore and to warn his people. “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the *good way*, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16). My prayer is that the church will *not respond* as the Israelites did: “But they said, We will not walk therein.”

I can’t think of a better way to end this message than to quote the conclusion given in the Bobgans’ book *Stop Counseling! Start Ministering!*

“We urge all believers to grow in grace, in faith, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and to be ready to minister to one another as the Lord provides opportunities and wisdom. New believers can certainly testify of the Lord’s work in them, which can be a great encouragement to others. As believers talk with one another, they will find opportunities to give a word of comfort, encouragement, and exhortation.

“They may have opportunities to remind one another of essential truths of Scripture that need to be emphasized. And, they may find themselves sought out for personal ministry by those who are enduring trials and various problems of living. Those who are trusting the Lord and His Word, who are giving themselves as ready vessels for the Holy Spirit to work through them, and who have been walking daily with the Lord through both sunny and stormy days are equipped to minister in some of the most difficult situations that fellow believers may be experiencing.

“We thank God for those individuals who, without counseling certificates, degrees, manuals, books, or programs, are not intimidated by a lack of counseling education and training and who minister to others just as believers were doing prior to the rise of the psychological and biblical counseling movements. We say to all who have been prepared by the Lord and are dependent on Him rather than on the wisdom of men: Go forth and minister by grace through faith.”

TBC

QUESTION: Recently I read that when Jesus died spiritually, He took both the first and second death—the grave and the Lake of Fire—upon Himself. I have also heard the claim that Jesus died spiritually. Was the Trinity separated? If the Spirit of God died, who was in charge of the universe while God was dead?

RESPONSE: Confusion arises because “Jesus Died Spiritually” is the label attached to the heresy taught by Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and other “word-faith teachers.” They claim that our redemption comes not from Christ’s death upon the cross but from His being tortured by Satan in hell for three days and nights. Copeland, for example, says:

“He allowed the devil to drag Him into the depths of hell as if He were the most wicked sinner who ever lived.... Every demon in hell came down on Him to annihilate Him...they tortured Him beyond anything that anybody has ever conceived.... In a thunder of spiritual force, the voice of God spoke to the death-whipped, broken, punished spirit of Jesus with resurrection power! Suddenly, His twisted, death-wracked spirit began to fill out and come back to life.... He was being reborn before the devil’s very eyes.... Jesus Christ dragged Satan up and down the halls of hell.... Jesus...was raised up a born-again man.... The day I realized that a born-again man had defeated Satan, hell, and death, I got so excited...!” (*Believer’s Voice of Victory*, September 1991)

It is both fanciful nonsense and heresy to teach that our redemption comes through Satan torturing Jesus in hell. That would make Satan our co-redeemer! If he didn’t torture Jesus enough, we wouldn’t be saved—and if he did, do we thank him? Blasphemy! Satan isn’t the proprietor of hell. Nor will Satan torture the damned but will himself be tortured with “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41) when death and hell have been “cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14).

Before He died, Jesus cried in triumph, “It is finished!” (John 19:30), indicating that our redemption had been accomplished *on the Cross*. Christ told the thief on the cross who believed in Him, “Today shalt thou be with me in *paradise*” (Luke 23:43), *not in hell!* He said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Yet Hagin, Copeland, et al., say He ended up, instead, in the hands of Satan in hell.

Did Jesus die “spiritually”? The Bible says that He “taste[d] death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). All that we deserved He endured, which must have included death to His human body, soul, and spirit. God

the Father and the Holy Spirit didn’t die; Christ did. Was the Trinity, then, separated? No, God is One.

Yet Jesus did cry in agony, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). It is a mystery beyond our comprehension, as is the statement that “it pleased the Lord [*Yahweh*] to bruise him, he hath put him to grief...when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:10). We only know and believe that the full penalty demanded by God’s infinite justice was paid by Christ upon the cross, and that “He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ was punished by God as though He were sin itself so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life as a free gift of His grace.

QUESTION: My church seems to believe that one must be a “scholar” or a “theologian” to be a pastor or Bible teacher. It even seems to be implied that those without such degrees are not competent to question what those holding theological and psychological degrees teach from the Bible. What is your opinion?

RESPONSE: No degree *spiritually* qualifies the one to whose name it is attached. Yet that is the mentality today. Some pastors, authors, and conference speakers are going to diploma mills to purchase a “Dr.” to put in front of their names! Just those two letters seem to elevate the individual to a newly perceived level of biblical understanding and spiritual authority.

The Bereans certainly had no theological degrees. Yet they checked out the great Apostle Paul’s preaching against scripture and were commended for doing so (Acts 17:11). Every Christian is both *qualified and obligated* to do the same with every Bible teacher and preacher, no matter how highly regarded or academically certified. No one is immune from error or correction.

Nor were the disciples “theologians” or “scholars.” Among them were fishermen, a tax gatherer, etc. The idea that those who have academic degrees from theological seminaries have thereby a monopoly on interpreting the Bible is both illogical and unscriptural. Such elitism is simply the Protestant version of Roman Catholicism’s claim that its hierarchy of bishops, cardinals, and popes alone can interpret Scripture. Christian leaders *should* be respected and honored, but this regard should not be based on degrees they may have acquired, but on the extent to which they demonstrate godly lives, biblically qualified and consistent leadership skills,

and the teaching of sound doctrine based on their study of the Word.

QUESTION: “Sleep” seems to be a key word in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. What does “sleep” mean in that context?

RESPONSE: The term is actually “which sleep in Jesus” (v. 14). “Sleep” is often used to signify “death”: “the maid is not dead, but sleepeth” (Matthew 9:24); “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him.” [They thought that he had meant “taking rest” in sleep.]

“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead’” (John 11:11-14). Sleep is only necessary for bodies, which tire, but not for souls and spirits. Therefore, “sleep” can only refer to the body that is in the grave awaiting the resurrection. Although the body is dead, the thinking person who once lived in that body is still conscious but now freed from bodily limitations and constraints. The phrase “asleep in Jesus” refers to believers who have died trusting in Christ and are now secure in Him for all eternity.

The rich man’s body lay in the grave, but his “soul and spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12) were conscious in hell and in torment (Luke 16:19-31). The Christian’s soul and spirit, when separated from the body through death, go immediately into the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8); “...having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23-24).

Unquestionably, Paul is expressing the desire for his soul and spirit to depart the flesh of his body in order to be with Christ in heaven. And just as obviously, he expects to be conscious in the presence of his Lord. To be “with Christ” could hardly mean anything to someone who was unconscious!

Nor could Paul possibly consider an unconscious state of “soul sleep” to be “far better” than remaining alive to serve Christ and the church! The statement “them which also sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thessalonians 4:14) refers to the souls and spirits of believers in Christ whose bodies have been “asleep” in the grave. These souls and spirits have been present with Him in heaven in that “far better” state of “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” Paul declares that the souls and spirits of those who died with faith in Christ are reunited with their resurrected bodies, which are raised to life at the Rapture—then caught up to heaven with those in Christ who have not died but are likewise transformed into Christ’s image at that glorious moment.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Who Is Really Saved?

QUESTION: If a Roman Catholic believes wholeheartedly in the Lord Jesus Christ and is committed to serving Him as his Lord, and if he believes that the only way his sins can be forgiven is through Christ's death as atonement for those sins, and the believer's repentance—isn't he saved? Suppose a person has salvation by faith alone; does he lose that salvation by believing in infant baptism? Does he lose his salvation by believing that communion is really the body and blood of Christ, as the Lord said it was? Does he lose his salvation if he believes in purgatory?

RESPONSE: Anyone who believes the gospel, which is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Romans:1:16), is saved, whether he be called Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, or whatever. If, however, a Roman Catholic “believes wholeheartedly in the Lord Jesus Christ,” as you suggest, then he would find himself in irreconcilable conflict with the doctrines and practices of his Church. It is logically impossible for a Roman Catholic to truly believe the gospel that saves and to believe the tenets of Catholicism at the same time, because they are diametrically opposed.

For example, how can a person believe that Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins is an accomplished fact of history and that He is now at the Father's right hand in heaven in a resurrected, glorified body and at the same time believe that He exists bodily on Catholic altars as a wafer, perpetually suffering the agonies of the cross (as Vatican II says) “in the sacrifice of the Mass”?

Quite clearly, both of these contradictory beliefs cannot be maintained at one time. How do we know which one is truly believed by Catholics who profess both? To remain in the Roman Catholic Church and to continue to participate in the “sacrifice of the Mass” would surely indicate faith in the Roman Catholic Church and its dogma rather than in the true biblical gospel.

How can anyone believe that Christ through His sacrifice on the cross “obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:12) and at the same time believe that “the work of our redemption” is still in the process of being accomplished through the Eucharist (as Vatican II says)? How can a

person believe that Christ's redemptive work on the cross is “finished,” as He himself said (John 19:30), and at the same time believe that the Mass is a perpetuation of Christ's sacrifice? No thinking person could believe both at once.

Vatican II states that in the Mass “Christ perpetuates in an unbloody manner the sacrifice offered on the cross....” How can one “perpetuate” an event that was completed in the past? It is logically impossible. One may remember or memorialize a past event, but one cannot perpetuate it in the present. How can anyone believe that through Christ's death and resurrection more than 1900 years ago the debt of our sin has been paid in full and at the same time engage in the Mass, which purports to be additional payments on that debt?

The Code of Canon Law declares that “the work of redemption is continually accomplished in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice....” Vatican II says that the Mass is “a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated” and in

which “our Lord is immolated...offering himself to the Father for the world’s salvation through the ministry of priests.”

Christ said, “Come unto me and *I* will give you rest. *I* give my sheep eternal life and they will never perish.” One cannot believe in Christ while looking to a church—Catholic or other—for salvation. The many prayers to Mary to “obtain for us forgiveness of sin and eternal life” are in themselves proof that the Catholic has not trusted Christ for his salvation. If I offered to pay in full a debt you owed, would not your continual petitioning of someone else to pay it be sufficient evidence that you neither believed nor accepted my offer?

One cannot believe in Christ alone and at the same time believe in Christ plus baptism and the sacraments and good graces of the Roman Catholic Church. Paul wrote: Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed [anathema]. As we said before, so say I now [for emphasis], If any man preach any other gospel unto you...let him be accursed [anathema] (Galatians 1:8,9).

Paul was referring to and cursing those known as Judaizers because they taught that in addition to faith in Christ’s finished work one also had to keep the Jewish law. That small addition destroyed the gospel. Yet the Catholic Church has had 1500 years to add far more to the gospel than the Judaizers ever imagined. That false gospel *cannot save*, and it merits Paul’s anathema.

Yes, Catholics believe the basics of the gospel: that Christ is God, who came to this earth through the virgin birth, lived a perfect, sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, rose from the grave the third day, and is coming again. But that is not all Catholics must believe. To the true gospel Roman Catholicism has added the Mass (as a propitiatory sacrifice by which sins are pardoned), purgatory, indulgences, intercession with Mary, and the necessity of baptism and

being in the Church and participating in the “sacraments of the New Law,” which Trent and Vatican II say are *essential for salvation*.

One must believe in one or the other of the conflicting gospels: the biblical gospel or the Roman Catholic gospel. One cannot sincerely believe two contradictory propositions at the same time. Anyone who trusts in Christ alone is saved. Sadly, it is at the same time possible to give lip service to the false teachings of one’s church, or not to fully understand its false teachings. God alone can judge such hearts.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. —2 Corinthians 7:1

Careless habits and unholy ways are inconsistent with the truth of the new creation. God has given us exceeding great and precious promises, and because of His goodness we owe it to Him to judge in ourselves every tendency to unholiness.... Once we walked according to the lust of the flesh and of the mind. Now we are called to walk in the Spirit that we may not fulfil these unclean desires. “Perfecting holiness” suggests growth, which should be continuous. As we are daily occupied with Christ and walk in the Spirit, reckoning ourselves dead indeed unto sin but alive to God through Jesus Christ, we shall be kept from sin’s power, and as we go on in faith, we shall enjoy unclouded fellowship with God.

—H. A. IRONSIDE

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"The Chosen" Fiction

T. A. McMahon

AT A CONFERENCE not too long ago, I was asked to give a review of *The Chosen* TV Series. I did so, but before I began my critique, I informed the audience that I hadn't watched even one frame of the series, and my guess was that that revelation would make more than a few people upset with my criticisms. The immediate response by those enamored with the series about the life of Christ was to scorn everything I said, saying, "He's like those who criticize books, even the Bible, without having read them!" I can relate to that. I've had many discussions with some who tell me what the Bible says without having read it themselves, so I can see why my initial review and its approach would put some people off.

Since my first critique I have viewed a couple of the programs, parts of which I'll address. However, I want to explain why I believe watching the series is not necessary for rejecting it. In doing so, my explanations will appeal to Scripture and reason in light of Isaiah's words, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 1:18).

Why isn't it necessary to watch *The Chosen* in order to criticize it, and how would that be any different than critiquing a novel without having read it? First of all, a novel is defined generally as "a fictitious prose narrative of book length, typically representing character and action with some degree of realism." In other words, it's a made-up story. Yet it must be read in order to be evaluated.

Not so with *The Chosen*. It professes to be true to the Bible's teachings, as well as a faithful representation of the Bible's stories and characters. The Bible, however, declares itself to be inerrant and infallible in all that it teaches, as well as God's authority in all that it commands. It's God's Word. If it condemns any attempt to visually represent the content and characters of the Bible (which it does) then one has no need to watch *The Chosen* because it claims to visually represent it—in direct disobedience to the Scriptures.

All biblical movies are *visual translations and interpretations* of the words and narrative presented in the Bible. If a Christian was aware that the Bible condemns visual translations and interpretations of the Scriptures, there would be no need to evaluate a movie or video series based upon the Bible before rejecting them. But does the Bible denounce any such

attempts to translate/interpret it through a visual medium?

It does. And it does so in many indisputable ways. But before I point out the scriptures related to the Bible's denunciation of such productions, I need to present some of the components that are involved in the production of making a movie that must be considered when determining whether or not "biblical movies" can be truly biblical. These are things I know and have experienced while studying filmmaking in graduate school and having worked for 20th Century Fox studios for a number of years. I then moved on to a career as a screenwriter in Hollywood before being saved and spending four decades in Christian ministry with Dave Hunt.

This is how the process works. A movie begins with a screenplay. It's either an original story or a screen adaptation from

**EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE:
HE IS A SHIELD UNTO THEM
THAT PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM.
ADD THOU NOT UNTO HIS
WORDS, LEST HE REPROVE
THEE, AND THOU BE FOUND
A LIAR.**

—Proverbs 30:5-6
(EMPHASIS ADDED)

someone else's work (such as the Bible). The screenplay or movie script, in addition to presenting the storyline or plot, the characters, and the dialogue, consists of visual descriptions of what is taking place in the movie story. For example, if a scene calls for a vehicle, a description is needed for the art director or prop man to find the right kind of car for a particular scene or purpose. If the script calls for the car to be crashed, that needs to be described in detail if the crash is going to be unique and significant to the storyline. This is just one example of the creative input that is necessary for the filmmaking process.

Although the screenwriter is the *initial* composer of the movie script, changes to the script always take place during filming. Such changes are usually made by the movie's director. Reasons for the changes from the original script are seemingly endless: actors' egos, budget cuts, weather problems, location problems, the executive

producer's ego, the cameraman's "inspirational idea" for filming a scene, union problems, stunt failures, the director's ego, etc. The author of the motion picture, for the most part, is the screenwriter, even though contributions of interpretation also come from the director, the actors, and a host of others creatively involved in the filming process.

All of that and much more are involved in every attempt to translate the Bible itself into a theatrical motion picture for the silver screen and/or television. The question therefore, for every Bible-believing Christian, is this: Can the Bible be presented through the filmmaking process and stay true to what God's Word says *about* His Word?

Well, what does it say? Proverbs 30:5-6: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*" (italics added). God's words are *His* words, written down by men, His prophets (2 Peter 1:20-21). "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, *graven by art and man's device*" (Acts 17:29, emphasis added).

"I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

The Bible is God's revelation to all humanity, and *His alone*. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12).

What then of a "biblical" movie? As with other theatrical endeavors, such a production comes about primarily through the screenwriter's interpretation of what has been written in Scripture. Add to that the movie-making necessities and changes, things such as a storyline and dialogue related to the plot that are obviously *lacking* in the Bible and therefore must be supplemented by the screenwriter in order to create a theatrical production.

Character descriptions are limited, at best, and must be added in order for a casting director to select the actors. Along that line, how does one cast the sinless

God/Man, Jesus Christ? The perfect attributes and righteous characteristics of the Son of God could never be displayed by an actor on the screen. When such an idea is incorporated into the script, the end result is a *counterfeit Christ* at best. In fact, such an attempt fits the very definition of blasphemy as one strives to apply human characteristics to Jesus *that undermine* His divine character.

I hope you're getting the picture here (pun intended) that *any* effort to translate the Bible into a visual medium must result in a veritable distortion of God's Word, which is why such attempts are condemned.

For anyone who doesn't understand what I mean by calling such efforts "distortion" resulting from man's input, it begs this question: "What do you really believe about the Bible?"

Do you understand it to be God's direct communication to mankind? Do you realize that the Bible is totally *of* Him and *from* Him? Do you *get* the fact that without His divine revelation about Himself and His created beings, finite and fallen humanity is left with only opinions, guesses, speculations, and the like about Jesus Christ and the gospel of salvation? Those so-called contributions by humans have led to the multitude of man-fashioned religions that purport to give insights regarding God.

Do you believe that God's Word is "given by inspiration of God" (i.e., God-breathed—2 Timothy 3:15-17)? Do you believe the Apostle Paul's Holy Spirit-inspired exhortation to the Thessalonians: "...when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13)? What do you think about Luke 4:4: "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word of God*" (emphasis added)?

The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, did not mince words: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an *angel* from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, *let him be accursed*" (Galatians

1:6-9, emphasis added).

Every believer in Jesus Christ must come to a true *biblical* belief in His Word. If what a person is taught about Jesus is not true to the Person revealed in the Scriptures, that character is "another Jesus," a "false Christ," no matter how endearing and engaging the actor may be (2 Corinthians 11:4; Matthew 24:24). The same is true regarding all the actors representing biblical characters.

Movies are perhaps the most seductive of all media the world over. I learned as a screenwriter that manipulating an audience's emotions was the key to a box-office success: make them laugh, make them weep, frighten them, make them cheer, arouse their passions, their lusts. In other words, control their emotions. That power of persuasion through the film medium seduces believers who normally would recognize that they are being snared by a fictional screen character. The comment most often given by those who enjoy the

...WHEN YE RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD WHICH YE HEARD OF US, YE RECEIVED *IT* NOT *AS* THE WORD OF MEN, BUT AS IT IS IN TRUTH, THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH EFFECTUALLY WORKETH ALSO IN YOU THAT BELIEVE.

—1 Thessalonians 2:13
(EMPHASIS ADDED)

TV series is "I really like a lot of the human qualities displayed by *The Chosen's* Jesus. It's so easy to relate to him." Others have said similar things about their favorite "disciples."

Remember, what is presented in the Bible is wholly of the Holy Spirit. It is exactly what God wants us to know and believe. That's what sets believers apart from the so-called spiritual insights of humanity: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Anything that "adds" to that truth, no matter how emotionally and "spiritually" moving, is condemned as having corrupted God's truth.

I've been told that my writing about and speaking out against "biblical" movies (*Showtime for the Sheep*; and "The Bible According to Hollywood") has come at a time in which the movie industry is finally "supporting Christianity," and therefore I am "speaking out against the cause of Christ."

Although that may seem to be a reasonable objection to many, it's actually a rationalization that dismisses what inevitably takes place in the movie-making process of translating the Bible visually. It also demonstrates an ignorance of the culture of Hollywood, which is no friend of biblical Christianity. Tinsel Town's only motivation is *box-office*—in other words (in the King James version), "filthy lucre." And as we know from Scripture, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10).

Even so, *The Chosen* series is condemned by the Bible *first and foremost* because it *adds* man's ideas (his beliefs, concepts, viewpoints, conceptions, images, perceptions, his religions, and especially his feelings, etc.) to what God alone has communicated. It makes no difference how far afield the additions are—even the smallest contribution would not be of God, but of man.

For those who are still not seeing the problem with this, let's consider a program that makes the highly publicized claim that it's helping people get to know Jesus better and to recognize similarities with the "Jesus of different faiths." What if the Jesus we are being introduced to is not the biblical Jesus, but rather a spirit that was produced in heaven? Suppose he was the spirit brother of Lucifer, and his earthly birth was not by a virgin but came about through sexual intercourse with Mary by his father god who resides on a planet near a star called Kolob? What if this "Jesus" worked toward becoming a god by taking Mary, her sister Martha, and Mary Magdalene as wives, and thereby producing children necessary for him to become a god? And the godhood that this Jesus achieved enabled him to become the god of this world, taking his place among the multitude of gods ruling over numerous other worlds?

Hopefully you're thinking, "That's not the Jesus I know from God's Word!" However, it is the "Jesus" that the executive producer of *The Chosen*, Derral Eves, believes in, as do most of the other series' producers such as Ricky Ray Butler and Jeffrey and Neil Harmon. Neil Harmon, as co-founder with his brother Jeffrey of VidAngel (now ironically titled *Angel Studios*—see Galatians 1:8), the Utah-based distributor of *The Chosen*, declared that he and his brother Jeffrey are "faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. We love Jesus and we love our faith in Christ."

If that were the Jesus that *The Chosen* series is introducing us to, would that be a concern? As some may have surmised, the Jesus described above is not the biblical Jesus but rather the Jesus of Mormonism, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and *the faith* to which many of the series producers belong. But is that the Jesus of *The Chosen*? Thus far in the series the fundamental doctrines of Mormonism have not been plainly presented. Could they be? Yes—but perhaps not yet.

Yes, because *The Chosen*'s audience has been conditioned to accept whatever the screenwriter, director, and other creative personnel contribute, with no apparent concern for biblical accuracy. The program that launched the series, for example, was the background story of Mary Magdalene that included the death of her father when she was young, her being raped by a Roman soldier, and the failure of Nicodemus as he attempted to exorcise demons from her. Those details came not from Scripture but from the imagination of those who contributed to the script. Yet for the greater number of viewers, few of whom have read the Bible, the images they watched were received as though they are actually in the Bible.

I've been told biblical movies are great motivators for people to check the Bible out. Really? What happens when they can't find the movie scenes such as the gritty backstory of Mary Magdalene? Furthermore, most people would rather watch a highly dramatized Bible story with little concern that it's fiction than read the actual words of Scripture. "Based on a true story" is good enough, even though the "based" part is a movie fabrication.

I have interviewed numerous believers who viewed so-called biblical movies, and although most of these Christians knew the Bible pretty well, I was dismayed to find that they actually believed that many of the unbiblical scenes in those productions were found in the Bible! Difficulty in distinguishing between what one may have read in the Bible and what one saw on screen in an alleged biblical movie is one of the damaging effects of presenting biblical content visually. That notwithstanding, why would a believer in God's Word fill his or her head with things that are made to appear biblical by a film company—but are not?

My "perhaps not yet" comment has to do with Mormonism's continual attempt to promote itself as basically Christian in its theology. For years the organization has strived to be accepted as just another

Christian denomination. The only way that can happen is if the LDS Church initially conceals its fundamental beliefs and packs its promotional productions with all sorts of unbiblical scenes and characters. The more that such corruptions are accepted, the wider the door opens for any-and-all beliefs to be introduced, including the bizarre doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It also helps to have a professing evangelical writer/director (Dallas Jenkins) working on *The Chosen*. His promotional interview with a Mormon apologist is a classic example of obfuscatory ecumenism, meaning he does his best to muddy the waters between foundational biblical Christianity (which he claims to believe) and the cultic teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. His ecumenism is made clear in his own words: "I said that many LDS folks and I love the same Jesus. I still believe that.

BUT THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED UNTO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.

—Galatians 1:8
(EMPHASIS ADDED)

It's gotten me in a lot of trouble but I still believe that."

When Jesus was asked by His disciples about the days just prior to His return, He said, "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). That's a penetrating description of the days in which we are living, a time in which "sound doctrine" has all but vanished throughout Christendom (2 Timothy 4:3). Sound doctrine is the full and absolute counsel of what God has communicated in His Word. Anything added to that by man in his attempt to visually portray God's word is a counterfeit—a fictitious deception.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, there is no need to watch any episodes of *The Chosen* in order to decide whether or not they are supported by God's Word. All a Bible-believing Christian has to hear is that the television series attempts to represent the stories and characters found in the Scriptures; that inevitably results in adding all kinds of content to the Bible,

the action of which is clearly condemned.

For those who nevertheless are enamored with *The Chosen* yet claim they know and love the Scriptures, *The Chosen* television series begins with background information about Mary Magdalene nowhere found in the Bible, as noted, but is produced out of the imagination of all the creative movie people, from the screenwriters to the director, and on down the production line. What then of *additions* to the final episode of season two (although examples are found throughout the entire series)? We're shown that the disciples are in charge of producing the speaking events of Jesus (e.g., crowd control, distributing flyers for his events, setting up a stage complete with curtains for his presentation of the Sermon on the Mount). Do the Scriptures tell us that the wardrobe of Jesus for his stage appearance was decided upon by four women? Did Jesus, along with his mother, pine for his stepfather Joseph before his preaching on the Mount...or anywhere else in Scripture? Was Matthew, as seen throughout the series, the continual script advisor regarding the content of the sermons and teachings of Jesus? Did Jesus anxiously have to rehearse his preaching before delivering his teachings to the crowd? All those things are found in *The Chosen*. They are not only missing from God's Word, their inclusion amounts to blasphemy—that is, a blatant mischaracterization of God manifested in the flesh.

Those who are drawn to the Jesus of *The Chosen* have been seduced into believing in a character who is not the perfect God/Man presented in God's Word, but rather a man-made counterfeit Christ whose ministry *had to be enabled* through the input of his disciples. That's not the Jesus Christ of God's inerrant, infallible, and all-sufficient God-breathed Word.

Those who claim to believe the Scriptures but are drawn to *The Chosen* need to heed the Bible's far-reaching warning: "For there shall arise *false Christs*, and *false prophets*, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before" (Matthew 24:24-25).

(For further insights into the problems with visually translating the Bible, we recommend *Showtime for the Sheep* and "The Bible According to Hollywood." For materials related to the cult of Mormonism we recommend *The God Makers* [see page 6] and "Mormon Fiction" [see TBC, August 2003]. More importantly, we highly recommend reading Psalm 119:1-176.)

TBC

QUOTABLE

I am not a proponent of brash methods of evangelism and yelling at sinners that they are doomed to hell, but I do believe we have the personal responsibility to tell them of their eternal destination if they lack a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I fear, however, that many today define Christlikeness as that of never offending anyone. Friends, Jesus is the only way. He is the only truth, and there is no eternal life through any religion or person but Him. That is what He said, so that is what we should say too. But let's also recognize the fact that if we say what He said, we may experience what He experienced. That, too, is part of Christlikeness.

—BARRY STAGNER

QUESTION: From what I've seen, the beliefs of many religious people are little more than sanctified superstitions. Many don't want to face any evidence that might prove otherwise. To me, it seems like a "faith" that isn't based on truth can't be defended and shouldn't be relied upon. Isn't that a dangerous position to take?

RESPONSE: One of the most important decisions one can make in this life is to find out for certain whether or not there is a God. Religions all over the world have their own scriptures and teachings. How can one know for sure that God is real and that He cares? We can go straight to the Bible itself to find answers. For one thing, the Bible declares itself to be the only inspired Word of the one true God who created us. It also states that all of the claims of the world's religions and their scriptures are false and actually in the service of Satan, who also is real, and who the Bible calls "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and thus the author of its religions. So, if we can prove that the Bible is true, we have saved ourselves a lifetime of vain searching through false systems.

In fact, we can prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that every word in the Bible is true. There have been many books written on this subject that offer this proof in detail. As an example, the Bible has several unique features not

found in the scriptures of the world religions that make it possible to substantiate its claims. Christianity is not a philosophy, a mystical experience, nor an esoteric practice. Neither are the major doctrines of Christianity a matter of mere dogma and belief. They are intricately tied into established history unlike the religions of the world, which are based to a large extent upon legends. Christianity alone is based upon undeniable and historical facts. Its doctrines can thus be evaluated on the basis of evidence.

In addition, many of the major events that are written of in the Bible, and also the teachings therein, were prophesied centuries and even thousands of years beforehand in *understandable language*. The fulfillment of these prophesied events is part of recorded world history. The Bible stands upon a four-fold foundation on which every part can be examined and verified, including:

- 1) Prophecy, which foretells events and doctrines in advance;
- 2) Fulfillment of those prophecies in detail;
- 3) Secular history testifying to the fulfillment of prophecies and events; and
- 4) Factual data corroborated by archaeology and science.

None of this is the case with the teachings or scriptures of any of the world's religions.

These differences set the Bible apart as absolutely unique. In fact, Christianity, which is based upon the Bible, cannot even be counted among the religions of the world. Christianity does not seek accommodation, much less ecumenical partnership with world religions; it seeks their overthrow as hopelessly false and destructive to mankind. That may come as a shock to some readers, but it is the clear teaching of the Bible. Christ himself denounced as "thieves and robbers" all who sought to get to heaven except through Him. Such bold claims cannot be lightly dismissed. They deserve to be

carefully evaluated.

QUESTION: I know that we should "rejoice in the Lord always," but with things in the world the way they are now—the chaos, killings, anger, and dishonesty—how do we find honest ways to do that?

RESPONSE: You are being truthful about your feelings, but let's look at the scripture again. It doesn't say, "Rejoice in the Lord always...unless you are unable to do so because of an unhappy childhood, a bout of depression, or adverse circumstances." Nor does it say "Be anxious for nothing...unless you have a nervous disposition." It does not say, "Forgive...unless you are unable to do so because of abuse." Nor are we to be excused from the command, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts" because we have been diagnosed as "susceptible to stress." Neither are we excused from the command to love just because we find certain people unlovable.

Unfortunately, the simple obedience to God's Word that sound doctrine compels has been undermined by "psychological counseling" that nourishes unbelief and rebellion. Therapy then offers to *justify* our disobedience, to *comfort* us in our rebellion, and to provide the peace and joy that only God can give to those who trust and obey Him.

The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23). These are clearly declared to be the fruit not of therapy but of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. How does this take place? Does God somehow "zap" us and we are instantly transformed? No, but as God's truth so grips our hearts, we are fully persuaded to be ruled by His Word, to obey Him, and to trust Him to fulfill in us what He promised. This obviously is not to deny the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit powerfully in our hearts and through us in others, in ways that are beyond human comprehension. Instead, it is merely to say that the Bible clearly declares that God works in our lives through our obedience to His Word. As Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Has God Predestined Some to Heaven and Some to Hell?

QUESTION: I have a friend who turned his back on God after his third year in a conservative evangelical seminary. He was taught that God has already decided who will be saved and who will spend eternity in hell; who will have good things happen to him in life, and who will have bad. Can you help me to help him?

RESPONSE: There is no doubt that God is sovereign and could have predestined some to heaven and some to hell. Or He could send us all to hell because that is what we deserve. The question is not God's sovereignty, however, but His love. And that God wants all mankind to be saved and to be in heaven is clear:

For God so loved the world...that the world through him might be saved (John:3:16-17). The father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John:4:14).

The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter:3:9). Who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy:2:4).

Who gave himself a ransom for all (1 Timothy:2:6). And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John:2:2).

No one will be in hell because God wanted him there or didn't do all He could to persuade him to believe the gospel He has so fully and freely provided for all. Those who perish do so because they reject the salvation that God offers with such loving persuasion. To suggest that God doesn't desire all mankind to be saved is a libel upon His character and a contradiction of the Bible! How could it be that the God who tells us to love our enemies doesn't love all of His? It is inconceivable that God would willingly send anyone He truly loves to hell. That many people

nevertheless go there can only be because they rejected the salvation God provided and lovingly offered by His grace.

If we are to believe that God has predestined certain ones to go to hell, then we must also believe that He predestined that Adam and Eve should sin, and thus predestined all of the evil that followed. That is preposterous. The strict Calvinist says we are so utterly depraved that we cannot choose to receive Christ. But that argument cannot apply to Adam and Eve because they were created in innocence. If they, like us today, could choose only evil, then God's warnings to them not to eat of the forbidden fruit (and His appeals to come to Christ) are a farce.

The rebellion in the Garden of Eden by creatures who were until then innocent and living in a perfect environment could only have been the result of their will acting against God's will. And if it was not a genuine choice, then sin could hardly have entered the world by that act, since they must have already been sinners.

Yes, God foreknew that Adam and Eve would rebel, and He knew all of the evil that would follow. Therefore, He made provision for all sin and all sinners to be forgiven through Christ even

and *all* sinners to be forgiven through Christ even before He created the world (Revelation:13:8). But He did not *predestine* the evil that began in Eden and pervades the world! If He did, then all of the rape, murder, hatred, jealousy, etc., that has occurred in history and continues to this day is because God *predestined* it. Again, that is totally inconsistent with God's character as revealed in His Word.

Romans:8:29-30 declares, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate...called...justified...*glorified*." Clearly, God made certain to get the gospel to all He knew would believe it. Thus, foreknowledge is the key to predestination.

Strict Calvinists object that to make a choice is a "work," and salvation is "not of works." However, that a man chooses to accept the pardon that God offers in Christ does not constitute any work on his part. If a drowning man, helpless to save himself, accepted an offer of rescue, would he thereby have done *anything* to save himself? Could he say that he had been saved by his own works? Could he be proud (as some suggest of

those who receive Christ by an act of their will) that his rescue from drowning was because he was "smart enough, loving enough, wise enough, righteous enough, or anything-else enough..."? Of course not!

Salvation is *all of God* and *all by grace*. Those who accept it have done nothing to earn it. In fact, to be saved, a sinner must confess his total unworthiness and inability to merit or earn salvation. He must simply receive it as a free gift of God's grace.

A gift embodies two essential elements: 1) the giving of it, and 2) the receiving of it. One cannot give a gift to anyone unless that person is willing to receive it. God does not force Himself and His grace upon anyone. We must knowingly and willingly receive the gift of salvation. That is why the gospel is preached and must be believed for a person to be saved.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

"Thy Kingdom Come"

Dave Hunt

Originally published January 1, 2000

THIS PHRASE IS contained in the so-called "Lord's prayer," which, in fact, is not the Lord's prayer (as found in John 17) but the disciples' prayer. It would hardly have been appropriate for our Lord to pray, "Forgive us our sins...and lead us not into temptation" (Luke 11:4). Nor is it a prayer to be repeated over and over but rather a *pattern* for prayer for the *disciples*: "After *this manner* therefore pray ye" (Matthew 6:9). When Jesus gave this pattern for prayer, He told his disciples, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (v. 7). Yet the "Lord's prayer" is generally used exactly that way—repeated by rote with little thought to its deep meaning.

Contrary to some who preach the "prosperity gospel," we are not to request earthly blessings for ourselves, much less riches, but only sufficient provision for each day ("Give us this day our daily bread..."); and to be kept from sin in order to live to God's glory ("deliver us from evil...for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory"). Yet how seldom we think of His glory while we bombard Him continually with endless requests to satisfy our own desires!

"Thy kingdom come" is the heart of this pattern for prayer, and it should be the passion of our lives. Yet for how many of us is this true? Have we not largely forgotten God's eternal kingdom in pursuit of our own temporal ambitions?

Remember the Y2K hysteria and how many Christians were caught up in it at the turn of the century, spending needless time, money, and effort to assure themselves of food, warmth, and protection? Sadly, the lives of many were all but ruined, their Christian testimony spoiled, and our Lord and His Word ridiculed as a result of their irrational fears of a mysterious "bug," which they believed had the power to shut down the world!

More recently, word faith ministers such as Jim Bakker continue to profit from fearmongering, selling survivalist food packs that are often more expensive than the same items that could be purchased elsewhere for less. How much better to have heeded our Lord's admonition not to be anxious, going about saying, "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall

we drink?" or, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:25-34).

Seek ye first the kingdom! Here we have the pattern of life to go with the prayer pattern. But what is this kingdom we are to seek, consumed by the passion, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)? What did Christ mean by His frequent references to "the kingdom"?

Christ referred both to the "kingdom of heaven" (found only in Matthew) and to the "kingdom of God." Significantly, the same things are said about the kingdom of *God* in the other Gospels that Matthew declared concerning the kingdom of *heaven*. Therefore, we can only conclude they are the same.

For example, in Matthew 4:17, Jesus preaches, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," while in Mark 1:15 He says, "the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." In Matthew's presentation of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins with "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:3). But in Luke, Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20). For further study, compare Matthew 8:11 with Luke 13:28-29; Matthew 13 with Mark 4 and Luke 8; Matthew 18:1-4 with Mark 10:14-15 and Luke 18:16-17, etc.

It is generally assumed that the "kingdom" refers to Christ's millennial reign. He promised His twelve disciples, "when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel [ten tribes were not lost after all!]" (Matthew 19:28). Surely this is not a *spiritual* but a *literal* reign that will be established at Christ's second coming when His feet touch the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4, Acts 1:11) as He comes to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon (Zechariah 12-14). Then "every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7) coming to earth "with power and glory" and the angels will "gather together his elect [i.e., the Jews, Isaiah 45:4, etc.] from the four winds" (Matthew 24:29-31) to bring them from all over the world to Israel to share in the millennial kingdom. Having destroyed Antichrist and his kingdom at His second coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8), Christ rescues

Israel in the midst of Armageddon (Zechariah 12, 14) and ascends David's throne (2 Samuel 7:13; Ezekiel 37:24-26, Luke 1:32), from which He will rule the world for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:2-6).

In previous articles and books we have discussed many of the signs Christ gave to indicate the nearness of His return to earth: Israel back in her land (Ezekiel 38:11-23; Zechariah 12, 14, etc.), weapons capable of destroying all life (Matthew 24:22), the technology for a world dictator to control the world militarily (Revelation 13:4,7), and to control all banking and commerce (vv. 16-17), etc. The fact that these signs confront us already can only mean that the Rapture, which precedes the Second Coming, cannot be delayed much longer.

There are no signs for the Rapture, which could therefore occur at any moment! This is why Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples to be ready for His sudden return which otherwise would catch them by surprise: *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh* (Matthew 24:42,44).

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.... Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not (Luke 12:35-40).

Because it is not intended to catch anyone by surprise, the Second Coming must be a separate event from the Rapture. Therefore, it is preceded by many signs. Referring to His second coming, Jesus declares in the Olivet discourse, "...when ye shall see all these things [i.e., the signs He has given in the preceding verses], know that it [the Second Coming] is near, even at the doors" (Matthew 24:33). When *all* signs have been fulfilled, it will be crystal clear that Christ is about to return to earth. Even Antichrist will know and will go out with his armies to repel Christ's invasion from heaven:

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.... And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS....

And I saw the beast [Antichrist], and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet.... These both were

cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Revelation 19:11-20).

Another major sign preceding the Second Coming is a revival of the Roman Empire worldwide. This is clear from Daniel's interpretation of the image of the giant in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2). It represented four world empires: the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman. Each of the first three had a successor, but the Roman Empire did not; it never died, and is in the process of being revived.

Rome was divided in two as the giant's two legs foretold: politically in AD 330 when Constantine moved his capital to Byzantium, which he had captured in 328 and renamed Constantinople; and religiously in AD 1054 between Roman Catholicism in the West and Orthodoxy in the East when Pope Leo IX imperiously excommunicated Michael Cerularius, Patriarch of Constantinople.

The ten toes on the feet attached to the two legs correspond to the ten horns on the fourth beast, which Daniel 7:24 says are ten kings. Missing from history, however, is any record of ten kings reigning simultaneously over Rome. Therefore, Rome, the fourth kingdom, must be revived with ten sub-rulers under Antichrist. That is the worldwide kingdom that Christ destroys to establish His millennial reign. Once again this is clear from Nebuchadnezzar's image. Directly after its description of the feet and ten toes (Daniel 2:40-43) verse 44 declares, "In the days of these kings [represented by the ten toes] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed..." A "stone cut out without hands" smashes the image, becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth (vv. 34-35). These events must be future: i.e., *in the days of these kings*.

This stone can only be Christ, and the great mountain His eternal kingdom. The smashing of the image by the stone clearly means that Christ's kingdom will be established by His sudden personal intervention from heaven to destroy Antichrist's kingdom—not by the church gradually taking over the world as so many teach. What folly to imagine that the church is supposed to establish the Kingdom—or to claim, as many do, that the Kingdom has already been established on earth and Christ is ruling it from heaven!

We have often warned of the solemn fact that those who expend themselves in the attempt to clean up society and to *establish* God's kingdom on earth are playing into Antichrist's hands, for

his kingdom will be established prior to Christ's millennial reign. In fact, a major purpose of Christ's second coming (in contrast to the Rapture in which He takes His bride to heaven) is to destroy Antichrist and his kingdom: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord...shall destroy with the brightness of his coming..." (2 Thessalonians 2:4-9).

Far from the obviously evil ogre he is generally thought to be, Antichrist will be so appealing and popular that "all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Revelation 13:8). His kingdom will begin in peace and prosperity. Tragically, multitudes are being led astray by leaders in the "signs and wonders" movement who claim to use "miracles" to establish the Kingdom; and they believe that only when they have done so will Christ then return to rule over the kingdom they have established in His name. Those who reject the Rapture and look for a "Christ" who comes to this earth to reign without first taking the church to heaven are setting themselves up to embrace Antichrist and his kingdom.

Those who believe in the Rapture cannot be enticed to look for a "Christ" who comes to rule the "kingdom" they've established. They expect "to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17) above earth to be taken to heaven. Critics deride this belief as a "secret rapture theory," but Scripture says, "the dead in Christ shall be raised...we which are alive...shall be caught up together with them..." (1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) to be taken to His Father's house (John 14:1-3).

The great hopes being placed in the new Millennium now being celebrated (which actually begins January 1, 2001) will only increase the satanic delusions that blind the eyes of unbelievers. With Y2K conquered, and with the new software and high-tech equipment developed, there will be an explosion of technology to bolster mankind's belief that it no longer needs God. Ecumenism will take giant strides and fewer believers will expect the Rapture. The Pope (Catholicism denies the Rapture) has great plans for what he calls "The third millennium of Christianity." Sadly, many evangelicals are adopting the same terminology. Ambitious plans for the new Millennium will push Christ's kingdom even further back in the minds of many believers. [Dave's year 2000 perspective, which has come to pass!]

Surprisingly, Christ's millennial reign is not the ultimate Kingdom for which we are to pray. Christ told Nicodemus

unequivocally, "Except a man be born again, he cannot [even] see... [much less] enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5). We are also told that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). Yet there will be many flesh-and-blood people living during the Millennium, and among them multitudes who have not been born again of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Bible declares repeatedly that God's kingdom is "an everlasting kingdom" (Psalm 145:13; Daniel 4:3, 7:27); that Christ shall reign on "the throne of his father David...over the house of Jacob [Israel] for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end..." (Luke 1:32-33). "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end..." (Isaiah 9:7). But the Millennium lasts only 1,000 years, and its peace ends with earth's final war.

The Millennium, in fact, is the final proof of the incorrigible self-centered evil of the human heart. No longer can anyone complain that Adam and Eve alone had the unique opportunity of living in Paradise and that if only *they* (the complainers) had been there, *they* wouldn't have sinned. Billions will live in an even better Paradise because Christ will rule it and Satan will be locked up for 1,000 years. Yet when he is at last released, Satan will "deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," and they will attack Jesus Christ at Jerusalem (Revelation 20:7-9).

The true kingdom of God, with endless peace, will only arrive in the new heavens and new earth. Paul writes, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to... the Father" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Here we see that Christ did *not* refer to the Rapture when He said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). Obviously, the Rapture is not "the end" to which Christ referred, but that which Paul explains.

May what has been for many a "vain repetition" become a passion for prayer without ceasing: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." May our hearts turn from earth to *seek first* the ultimate Kingdom in which heaven and earth are one in the new creation, rebellion is a thing of the past and God's will alone is truly done because it has become the will of all creatures. And as that passion grows within us, we will find that our wills are more and more in harmony with His because "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 Jn 3:3). **TBC**

A RESPONSE ABOUT "THE CHOSEN"

Submit your own questions to: PO Box 7019 • Bend, OR 97708
or e-mail: editorial@thebereancall.org

We received this response from the organization that produced *The Chosen* (TC) television series and what follows is our response (TBC) to the organization's complaints.

TC: We don't mind criticism, but we do expect it to be accurate, particularly when it comes from organizations dedicated to the truth. And this video [the audio of TBC's article posted on YouTube] starts right off with a blatant deception when it says we "profess to be true to the Bible's teachings, as well as a faithful representation of the Bible and its characters," and "it claims to visually represent the Bible."

TBC: The opening statement of season 1 episode 1 of *The Chosen* declares: "The Chosen is based on the true stories of the gospels of Jesus Christ. Some locations and timelines have been combined or condensed. Backstories and some characters or dialogue have been added."

That statement seems to indicate that the intention of *The Chosen* programs is "to be true to the Bible's teachings, as well as a faithful representation of the Bible and its characters."

When a movie company films biblical stories of "the gospels of Jesus Christ," isn't it "visually represent[ing] the Bible"?

TC: That is simply false. We have said EXPLICITLY from day one that we are not a re-enactment of the Bible...

TBC: Evidently, those who wrote this TC response haven't watched their series. Most of the scenes are attempts to "re-enact" stories from the Bible. The exceptions are the numerous "backstories" which feature biblical characters in scenes not found in the Bible but are from the minds of the creative movie production people, and that would include the "dialogue" of the many actors that "have been added."

TC: ...that the show is INSPIRED by the Bible, not based on it verse by verse, and from the first frame of the show, we encourage people to read the Scriptures.

TBC: The use of the phrase "INSPIRED by" (upper case emphasis is TC's) is used in theatrical movie productions to imply to the audience

that historical accuracy is involved. *Accuracy* is rarely if ever a concern in theatrical dramas. "Inspired by" is simply a religious cover for *The Chosen's* artistic license which constitutes blasphemy.

The encouragement to people who watch *The Chosen* to read the Scriptures sounds good, but is fraught with confusion and delusion. The backstories as well as the numerous scene additions and character details of the actors are nowhere found in Scripture. What then of the person who takes *The Chosen's* advice to "read the Scriptures" and can't find what was presented in the TV series? Which is he to believe: The Bible, or the fiction created by the screenwriter and his production associates?

TC: We're not God's Word, the Bible is God's Word, and it is perfect. And as to the silly mention of the Bible verse about "adding to scripture," fear not, we're not adding to Scripture because we're not Scripture.

TBC: Let's consider how silly is the "silly mention of the Bible verse about 'adding to scripture'." "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6). "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18). Silly?

TC: Your Bible hasn't changed since the show was created. Just like any movie or show about any historical period of time or characters, we're a show about the people of 1st Century Galilee, with the Bible as our primary source of truth and inspiration.

TBC: The primary historic person presented throughout *The Chosen* is a fictitious Jesus Christ. The characterization of him whom the Bible declares is God manifested in the flesh is as far removed from "the primary source of truth" as heaven is from hell.

TC: This video [TBC's article] also adds other shockingly false assertions, such as the ridiculous notion that we're introducing

the "Jesus of different faiths." Never said.

TBC: We suggest that you review the many interviews with Dallas Jenkins, especially those with Mormon apologist David Snell. They both agree that they believe in the same Jesus—that would be the LDS Jesus and the evangelical Jesus that Mr. Jenkins professes to believe in.

TC: Or the laughable assertions about the beliefs some of the producers supposedly have about Jesus having multiple wives. Patently false.

TBC: I rather doubt that the committed Mormon producers consider the polygamy of "Jesus" a "laughable assertion." That would be to reject the teachings of Mormon Apostles Orson Pratt and Orson Hyde ("Jesus Christ was married at Cana of Galilee, that Mary, Martha, and others were his wives, and that he begat children" *Journal of Discourses* 2:210) as well as polygamists 4th Mormon President/Prophet Wilford Woodruff and 10th President/Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith. Furthermore, an unmarried and childless Jesus would disqualify him from working his way to become a god.

TC: Not to mention that the creator of the show, the one who has total control of the content, is an evangelical, and the show has zero "Mormon" influence. At least try to be accurate.

TBC: Your reference to professing evangelical Dallas Jenkins as "one who has total control of [The Chosen's] content" tells us that you are ignorant of Mr. Jenkins's contract which is a "Work for Hire Agreement." That means that *The Chosen* Mormon Production Company is ultimately in control.

In consideration of the many biblically compromising interviews given by ecumenist Dallas Jenkins, no one should look with confidence regarding his alleged "control of [The Chosen's] content."

What was stated in our article was that the introduction of the multitude of unbiblical scenes added to *The Chosen* series opens the door for the acceptance of any beliefs about the Bible, including the bizarre doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

How Important is Baptism?

QUESTION: MARK 16:16 says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” In his Pentecost sermon, Peter urged his listeners to be baptized to wash away their sins. I am confused. Is baptism essential for salvation or is it not?

RESPONSE: There is not one verse in all the Bible that says that failure to be baptized damns the soul, but there are scores of verses declaring that those who do not believe the gospel are lost. Nor is baptism even any part of the gospel. As Paul said, “Christ sent me *not to baptize* but to *preach the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 1:17; cf. 15:1-4). In Paul’s clear declaration of “the gospel . . . by which . . . we are saved” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), there is no mention of baptism.

It is upon believing the gospel that one is to be baptized (“What doth hinder me to be baptized? . . . If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest”—Acts 8:36-37). Christ, after His resurrection, sent His disciples forth to preach the gospel worldwide. Of their converts He said, “. . . *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). That all who believe (and they alone) are to be baptized could not be clearer.

Baptism symbolizes the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection: “We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead . . . we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Therefore, baptism in the early church was by immersion: “They went down both into the water” (Acts 8:38-39; etc.). Death could only be symbolized in this type of baptism.

Unfortunately, various innovations (e.g., sprinkling instead of immersion) and even heresies were gradually introduced regarding baptism: that one must be saved—indeed, that baptism itself saves the soul, even when administered to infants. Catholics even practice intrauterine baptism of the fetus when there is doubt that they will be born alive. Such heresies

became known as the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Most Protestants holding similar beliefs today are not aware that they originated in the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages.

For centuries before the Reformation, baptismal regeneration was rejected by non-Catholic believers, who taught from Scripture that baptism was only for those who had believed the gospel. Infant baptism was rejected, because infants have neither understood the gospel nor believed in Christ. Those who practiced infant baptism justified it by citing alleged biblical precedent where entire families were baptized, presuming that there were infants among them.

That this was not the case can be easily proved. Consider Cornelius’s household: They heard the gospel, believed it, and were baptized. That no infants were involved is clear, for they had all gathered “to *hear* all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33), things that an infant could not understand. “The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard [and, obviously, understood and believed] the word” (v. 44); and they spoke with tongues (v. 46).

That they had “received the Holy Ghost” (v. 47) proved that they were *saved*. Therefore, Peter

baptized them (v. 48). Here is proof both that one is saved *without baptism* and that only those already saved are to be baptized.

Neither can infant baptism be supported from the case of the Philippian jailer, who “was baptized, he and all his [household]” (Acts 16:33). Again, there were obviously no infants present because Paul and Silas preached the gospel “to all that were in his house” (v. 32), and “all his house” believed (v. 34) and were then baptized. The gospel is not preached to infants, not even by those who baptize them.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH *by*
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

Paul admonishes us to be diligent in our study and handling of the Scriptures so that we might understand and communicate that which is “approved unto God” (2 Timothy 2:15). Again, this is serious business. When amusement, fun, and entertainment enter into handling the Word of God, no matter how sincere the attempt, the trivialization of the Word takes place. Moreover, an old-fashioned meaning of the word “amuse” applies: “to deceive.” Paul was concerned about such issues in the fulfillment of ministry when he wrote: “But [we] have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2).

—T. A. MCMAHON

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The Flight from Reason

T. A. McMahon

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD...”

—ISAIAH 1:18

THIS IS AN amazing verse! In it we see our infinite God desiring to reason with His finite, created beings. Not only are they incapable and insufficient (in their own ability as finite beings) to reason with their infinite Creator, but they are also in a condition of rebellion against Him. Their iniquity notwithstanding, pointing out that they are far beneath His “reasoning” class is undeniable. That is certainly reflected in Isaiah 55:8-9: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). Also, Romans 11:33: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

How can any of us reason with God? Unlike the animals, He created us with the *ability* to reason! But how does that fit with Isaiah 1:18? Given God’s infinite intelligence, it can’t mean that He’s looking to us for our input. Not at all! He is giving us *information* that He wants us to consider and act upon. We are told that Adam walked with God in the Garden of Eden. That fellowship involved communication and included commands that Adam understood and was therefore to obey: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). Notice that God gave Adam a *reason* for obeying His command. The consequence of disobedience would be death. Adam however, reasoned otherwise, and thus sin entered God’s perfect creation.

The Isaiah 1:18 verse continues: “...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as

wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (verses 18-20). The verses that follow have God setting forth the reasons for what will take place regarding those who choose to either obey Him or disobey Him. Furthermore, God’s reasons for them to consider also point toward the gospel and eternal salvation, the acceptance of which will save them from their sins, and the rejection of which includes both temporal and everlasting destruction.

When I find a word in Scripture of which I desire to have a better understanding, my first go-to resource is Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* (<https://bit.ly/3raiTmk>). The “reason” for that is because many of his definitions are drawn from the way they are used in the King James Version of the Bible. Most contemporary dictionaries lack that scriptural perspective and some even reveal an overt prejudice *against* a biblical Christian worldview.

One of Webster’s definitions of “reason” gives an insight into what Isaiah 1:18-20 declares: “to *reason* one into a belief of truth; to *reason* one out of his [own futile] plan...” God’s reasonings are not of the “you tell Me your ideas” variety. They inform us of the truth regarding what will take place based upon the choices we make. As noted, obedience produces blessings, but disobedience ends in destruction (verse 20). God’s reasons are absolute truth.

Webster also cites 1 Peter 3:15 as an example of the way believers are to use *reason* in defending and sharing their faith: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a *reason* of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” Sadly, that is a rare event in Christianity today, even among those who claim to be Bible-believing Christians. One of the reasons biblical answers are uncommon among Christians is related to the prophecy given in 2 Timothy 4:3-4: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” Rather than look-

ing to God’s Word for *His reasons* that are spelled out clearly through “sound doctrine,” they are turning elsewhere for spiritual understanding. Quite often that involves a dependence upon pastors to tell them the meaning of the Scriptures (which amounts to being spoon fed—i.e., given so much help or information that they do not need to think for themselves). Such a dependence not only hinders spiritual growth, but it also undermines the belief in the authority and the sufficiency of the Word of God itself.

If we are turning to someone to tell us what the Bible is saying, then the Bible ceases to become our authority. Instead, that *person* becomes our authority. Our dependence upon a pastor or a popular Christian author or a so-called Christian psychologist to give us answers not only denies the authority of Scripture, but it rejects its sufficiency. Is God’s Word our authority? The Apostle Paul wrote, “... the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Jesus declared in John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

But is God’s Word sufficient? Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, assures us: “According as his divine power hath given unto us *all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him* that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). If the Word of God is not sufficient, to whom should we go regarding “all things that pertain to life and godliness”? Peter answered that question in response to Jesus, “Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). The Apostle Paul wrote, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

It’s not that a brother or sister-in-the-Lord can’t help us in our knowledge of the Bible and our walk with Jesus, but it becomes a serious problem when our faith develops into a *dependency* upon them. Then it’s not *our* faith! The Lord holds all of us personally accountable for what we believe. I had the extraordinary privilege of working with and learning from Dave Hunt for nearly four decades—yet he never spoon fed me. When I had questions, more often than

not he would have me search the Scriptures in order to *know* what I believe and why I believe it.

Knowing what you believe but not knowing *why* is at the heart of one's fleeing from reason. Certainly, a believer in Jesus Christ needs to know what he believes about salvation in order to be saved. However, that knowledge is rarely helpful in convincing non-believers of the reasons a believer has for committing his life to the Lord and thereby receiving God's gift of eternal life. Dave Hunt tells of when he preached a sermon addressing why biblical faith must be based on reason and proof. Following his message, a number of people came to him saying that if one has proof, wouldn't that eliminate the need for faith? Dave's response was to question their understanding of biblical faith, which is not a leap in the dark—i.e., a belief with no substantial support.

The Word of God, for example, points us to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That event, the most significant and glorious in history, was not presented in the Scriptures as an incident that was to be accepted by blind faith. On the contrary, in referring to the resurrection activities, Luke writes in Acts 1:3, "To whom also he [Jesus] shewed himself alive after his passion by *many infallible proofs*, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." What were some of those faith-encouraging "infallible proofs"? For one thing, He proved to His disciples through His physical appearance that He wasn't a ghost or a mirage: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." You would think their faith would have galvanized through both the appearance and the convincing words of Jesus! But that wasn't enough: "And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them" (Luke 24:39, 41-43). Again, Jesus gave them further "proof." He also gave them *reasons* from the Scriptures to believe that He was resurrected from the dead: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the

prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44).

The point here is that the Bible documents what it declares with irrefutable reasons and "many infallible proofs." These laid the foundation for belief that enables born-again Christians to "earnestly contend for *the faith* which was once delivered unto the saints." That foundation is necessary and it gives believers confidence to accept by faith that which our finite minds cannot comprehend! For example, there are good reasons why God must consist of three Persons, yet that truth of God's Word is beyond our ability to grasp with the mind and can only be professed by faith—a faith built on the groundwork of infallible proofs and

FOR THE TIME WILL COME
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— 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4

reasons. To that we could add the truth of God creating all things out of nothing, and the belief that God has always existed. These are totally faith issues, which Dave points out: "So, faith does encompass some things that are beyond my ability to prove or to fully comprehend, but it only takes that step in the direction that the evidence has pointed and after having been given sufficient evidence to warrant such a step."

Reasoning regarding the truth of Scripture is fading quickly in our day, when the "spiritual correctness" of ecumenism reigns and "friendship evangelism" is preferred over correcting erroneous beliefs of our lost friends. What then of Paul's ongoing evangelistic approach? "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days *reasoned with them* out

of the scriptures"; "And *he reasoned* in the synagogue every sabbath, and *persuaded* the Jews and the Greeks"; "And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and *reasoned* with the Jews"; "And as *he reasoned* of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee"; "And he went into the synagogue, and *spake boldly* for the space of three months, *disputing and persuading* the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19; 24:25; 19:8).

Our day is well into a flight from reason. When one rejects or slips away from God's Word, he is left with his own irrational ways and means to solve his problems (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). That has never worked, a fact to which history attests. Yet that failure hasn't deterred humanity. On the contrary, man's vain attempts are increasing exponentially. Reason has been hijacked and transformed by mysticism. When things can't be fixed in any practical sense, the shift is to the subjective, the imagination, the illusory, the wishful. *Feelings* become the hopeful guide to fulfilling one's expectations—which are never realized. That condition eliminates *reason* as a way of turning someone from their erroneous beliefs. Such conversations almost always end up with, "I hear what you're saying, but I'm sorry, I just don't feel that way." When one's hope is bound up in *feelings*, objective reasoning is dead.

That will be Satan's modus operandi in ushering in the religion and kingdom of the Antichrist. The "feelings" orientation eliminates any sense of guilt, any sense of being judged or of being wrong. How can one's feelings be determined as "wrong"? The person himself becomes the arbiter of truth ("Your truth is your truth and my truth is my truth"). It's only a slight variation of Satan's offer to Eve: "...ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The person himself becomes a "god," which is the lie that began in heaven with Lucifer's self-exaltation (Isaiah 14:13-14) and is the ambition of the Antichrist and all who choose to follow him.

The flight from reason is a trip into utter darkness and separation forever from God, the One who so loves us that He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the full penalty for our sins and offers us the gift of eternal life with Him.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I've heard several speakers say that Jesus was afraid that Satan would kill Him prematurely in the Garden of Gethsemane before He could get to the cross. And that's why He cried out, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," the "cup" being a premature death in the Garden. Is that true?

RESPONSE: Dying on the cross as the sacrifice for sin was the culmination of Christ's purpose in being born into this world. The prophets had foretold it and Christ himself had confirmed it (Matthew 16:21; John 12:32-33). Nothing and no one could have killed Him or otherwise prevented the fulfillment of His mission.

Jesus is God. Neither man nor Satan could take His life. He declared, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17-18). How, then, could He have been afraid that Satan might take His life? Christ is also perfect, sinless man—the one and only God-man. As man, He would not for a moment have been in fear of Satan slaying Him, for He was walking in perfect obedience to and under the complete care of His Father. To suggest such a fear indicts Christ with the rankest unbelief. Furthermore, Christ is God and infinitely stronger than Satan!

Remember also that after asking if the cup might pass from Him, Christ said, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). If the "cup" He wanted to escape was death in the Garden, then by saying, "nevertheless...thy will be done," Christ was suggesting that it might be the Father's will for Him to die in the Garden at the hands of Satan rather than to pay for our sins upon the cross, which is unthinkable.

Nor was the "cup" the physical pain of being crucified. Many had bravely endured the crucifixion, and Jesus was no coward. The "cup" from which He shrank was the awful separation from God that His justice required as the penalty for sin: that His holy soul would be made "an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10). He would be "made [to be] sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). His prayer, therefore, was an earnest request from Son to Father: "Might there not be some other possible means of saving sinners?" The Father's answer was "No." We know, therefore, that Christ's

death upon the cross as our sin-bearer was and is the only way of salvation. Horrible beyond comprehension, what He endured we will never know. He fully paid the penalty for us.

QUESTION: What's your view of extra-terrestrials?

RESPONSE: There are many biblical reasons for not accepting the idea of intelligent life beyond earth other than angels and demons. First of all, it would be impossible for morally responsible humanoids anywhere in the universe to keep from sin. If they had the genuine right of choice, it must inevitably have been used to disobey God. Thus they would require salvation. Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and His death is the one and only perfect sacrifice for sins ever offered in the universe (Hebrews 9:23-28; 10:12-14). If there are morally free agents on other planets, they would have to believe in Christ for salvation.

God has gone to great lengths to give us a historically verifiable eyewitness record of His Son's birth, life, death, and resurrection—and this message is contained in a Bible that can be verified in many ways by the inhabitants of earth (geographically, archaeologically, historically, etc.), and which would not be available to ETIs. It would seem both unfair and a violation of God's way of dealing with mankind for beings elsewhere in space to be required to believe in a Savior who was crucified on a distant planet. The Bible seems to indicate that this Earth is the only such place in the universe. When Satan is cast out of heaven, he comes to Earth. It is on this planet that the battle will be fought that results in Satan's defeat and imprisonment in the abyss; it is on this earth that Christ will reign for 1,000 years while Satan is locked up; it is to this planet that Satan will return when he is released; and it is on this planet that Satan will meet his final defeat and his eternal doom will be sealed.

Finally, if life happened by chance on this Earth and evolved upward, then it could seemingly happen elsewhere in the universe. But if, as we believe, human life resulted from a purposeful act of God, and if sin is inevitable for such beings, and if the human soul is the prize for which Satan and God do battle, then it hardly makes sense to have this same process repeated on countless other planets throughout the cosmos. That would imply

that God didn't know all that would happen and that this "experiment" had failed on Earth and "tried again" elsewhere, which denies His omniscience.

QUESTION: In the past you have talked about being "sure about going to heaven." Would you please comment on the following statement by Dr. A. W. Tozer in his *Renewal Day by Day*: "The man who is seriously convinced that he deserves to go to hell is not likely to go there, while the man who believes that he is worthy of heaven will certainly never enter that blessed place."

RESPONSE: The only certainty of heaven to which I have ever referred is based upon faith in Christ and His Word, which promise eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. Heaven is the believer's sure destination, not because he merits it but because of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: "I give [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:27-28); "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13); etc. Although confident of heaven because of what Christ has done, the believer is at the same time very conscious of his own unworthiness. It is, in fact, the realization that he deserves hell that has caused him to turn to Christ. In contrast, Tozer is referring to "the man who believes that he is worthy [in himself] of heaven." That person is lost because obviously he has not believed the gospel and is not trusting Christ alone for his salvation.

QUOTABLE

We will all worship something. Whether we are atheists, agnostics, or believers in some religion, we are all worshippers. Where do you turn your mind and heart to gain meaning, fulfillment, control, protection, and significance in your life? What has your affection? What do you meditate upon? When you lay your head on your pillow at night, what do you think about? Who or what is your God?

—MARK CAHILL
(EXCERPT FROM *ONE HEARTBEAT AWAY: YOUR JOURNEY INTO ETERNITY*)



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Can Feelings Be Trusted?

QUESTION: I'm a born-again Christian who received Christ as my Savior more than 20 years ago. At that time, I literally *felt* Christ come into my heart and change my life. Yet there are times when I have to fight doubts because I just don't *feel* right with the Lord. I know all the gospel verses and believe them, but it seems to me there must be something I'm missing. Can you help me?

RESPONSE: There could be many reasons for not *feeling* right. A child who is secretly doing something of which his parents would not approve doesn't *feel* right about it. It doesn't mean he is no longer their child, but he knows that if they knew what he was doing they would be upset with him. Of course, God knows all about us.

Are you living a carnal life, consuming that brief span of time allotted to you on this earth in pursuing the world's vain ambitions and pleasures, forgetting that time is very short and that eternity is forever? In your heart you know whether disobedience and neglect are the problem. Beyond these considerations, one's faith can wane with the neglect of God's Word and prayer and failure to fellowship regularly with other believers.

Our confidence in God and in our relationship with Him begins with His Word, feeding upon it, and resting in its promises. You could even be doing that and yet have doubts, because you don't have a solid-enough basis for trusting God's Word. One of the best ways to restore your confidence in the Word is through a study of prophecy. The fulfillment of prophecy provides tangible, empirical evidence that proves beyond any doubt that the Bible is inspired of God and that we can count upon all that it says.

The assurance of faith depends upon the truth of the gospel, and nothing makes that so sure as the fulfillment of prophecies concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. You need to be thoroughly grounded in God's Word in this regard and then tell this good news and share

the infallible proofs with others. The best way to strengthen your faith is to tell others why you believe and to be earnestly involved in seeking to win others to Christ.

Prophecy was the primary tool used by the early Christians in preaching the gospel. We need to do the same today. Paul would go into the synagogue, read from the Old Testament prophecies that promised the Messiah, then show that they had all been fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The Jews had no choice, if they were to be honest, but to believe that Jesus was their Messiah. Here is how Luke, who accompanied Paul on his travels, recorded a typical incident in one of the many towns they visited:

“They came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews; and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:1-3).

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

The Word of God— Part One

T. A. McMahon

THE WORD OF GOD is the chief focus of this message.

This is also a survey regarding the way you and I think about the Word of God. It has to do with how serious we take the Bible to be the actual Word of God.

I took the survey myself as I prepared this message, so I have a good idea of my own thoughts about the Word of God.

I did okay, although there's room for improvement.

Now it's your turn.

This isn't a test. Again, it's a survey between you and the Lord.

I put the Lord in the mix so that I'd remember to be honest regarding my own thoughts in response to the survey. We can kid ourselves, but we can't put anything over on Jesus.

This isn't a judgmental procedure. It's simply a self-evaluation of where we are as Christians. The objective is to get us to where God wants our thinking to be concerning His Word.

So, let's start with this:

Do you believe the Word of God consists of God's actual words that He communicated to men? If you're not sure, what do you think Matthew 4:4 means: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?"

Are you thinking that those who wrote down the Scriptures made their own contributions to it? If so, then what of 2 Peter 1:19-21: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came *not in old time by the will of man*: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost."

Although nearly one third of the Bible is prophecy that has to do with foretelling the future, prophecy also consists of all God's words that He wants us to know and obey. We're told that holy men of God, His prophets, received God's words through the Holy Ghost.

Those verses seem to indicate that the prophets simply wrote down what they were given by the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul declares much the same in 1 Thessalonians 2:13: "For this

cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the *word of God* which ye heard of us, ye received *it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Paul told the Galatians the same: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is *not after man*. For *I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it*, but by the *revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 1:11-12).

Based upon those verses (and many more that are found throughout the Bible), do you believe that the Word of God is *entirely and unquestionably* from Him? In other words, that *absolutely nothing* has been added to God's Word from man?

If we come to that conclusion, then all we should need to believe is what the Scriptures declare *unequivocally*. Even so, we can also look to reason. Consider, for example, that God is *infinite* and humanity is *finite*. As finite beings, we are therefore incapable of knowing our infinite God without His input. The only way we can know God is by His communicating to us directly. Being finite, we are limited to our own ideas about an infinite God.

We can, nevertheless, surmise that God created us. There are only two options for how everything exists: by chance or by design. Chance would be a bad choice, since chance or randomness (aka evolution) in explaining the origin of life and its development explains nothing nor does it prove anything.

Design is the only reasonable choice, given the extraordinary complexity of everything from an atom, to the nucleus of a cell, to our DNA, to the expanse of the universe.

There are nearly 40 trillion cells in the human body, each cell having its own function. A cell's size is smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. The nucleus of a cell occupies about eight percent of the volume of the cell.

That's impressive! Even Richard Dawkins, one of the world's leading evolutionists, has written that the nucleus of a cell has a digitally coded database in information content equivalent to 30 volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Yet he continues to believe that the building information in the nucleus came about randomly. That's ignorance with a purpose.

The Word of God refers to those attributes of our Creator as being omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, and all humanity is held accountable for discerning the differ-

ence between our Creator and creation. Yet finite man, for the most part, has rejected a Designer and opted for worshipping mindless creation, i.e., evolution (Romans 1:18-20, 25).

Have you considered the belief that God used evolution as the method with which He went about creating all things? That's referred to as theistic evolution, and it's gaining followers throughout Christendom, even among leading evangelicals.

Many Christians who believe in theistic evolution do so because they think it supports the Bible and science. It does neither. Furthermore, it contradicts the clear teaching of the Word of God (allowing for death to take place before Adam sinned) and it's at odds with the pseudo-science of evolution.

As noted, finite man is held accountable to recognize that the world was created by God: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20).

Although God's creation attributes "are clearly seen" such as "His eternal power," they do not answer a host of critical questions about God that finite man cannot discern without God revealing the answers.

Yes, we can conclude that God created us, but we can't know *why* He created us without Him telling us. We can't know about His personal characteristics such as His triune nature, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and His perfect and eternal nature.

Nor can we know His personal qualities, His love, His grace, His mercy, His compassion, His long-suffering or His wrath unless He gives us such information.

Scripture also communicates the history of God's relationship with mankind, how man was created in perfection, which was followed by his rebellion and eternal separation from his Creator. Then God brought about man's justification and reconciliation through the payment for our sin by the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

That can only be made known to God's created beings through His direct revelation of Himself, that is, the Word of God.

Back to the survey.

How important is the Word of God to you? Is it just an additive to your Christianity? Something you get a taste of each Sunday? If that's your situation you are heading for spiritual malnourishment, if you're not there already.

If you don't think that's the case, here are three basic beliefs that a biblical Christian

needs to adhere to in order to grow in and be strengthened and fruitful in the Word of God. These beliefs are the *inerrancy*, the *authority*, and the *sufficiency* of God's Word.

Beginning with the inerrancy of Scripture, do you believe that what God communicated to mankind through His prophets was without error? If you think it may have some errors, then you have to conclude that God must have made some mistakes.

What might those errors be?

If you entertain thoughts that God can make mistakes, what does that tell you about the character of God? How can you completely trust in a God who commits errors?

As for those who accuse God of errors and say that His Word is filled with contradictions, are they influencing your thoughts about God? What might those contradictions be?

What of those who say that many of the Bible's teachings are at odds with science? No pushback on that one.

The question is, however, who is in error, the Creator or the creatures whom He created that are either trying to figure out how creation took place or imposing their own beliefs on how it all came about?

How about the Big Bang? That's said to be where science and religion meet. Really?

Where did the stuff that "banged" come from? When has an explosion ever produced order or exhibited purposeful design?

Remember, we have finite men trying their hardest to assess their infinite Creator. That impossibility notwithstanding, all the accusations can be readily dismissed as false by simply comparing what the unchanging Word of God says with the continual corrections found throughout the history of science.

So, a believer's belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and God himself is foundational to biblical Christianity. What then of the authority of God and His Word?

Authority is closely related to inerrancy in one sense. If someone has a record or reputation of being error free, he is usually considered to be an authority in a certain field or practice. We refer to such a person as an expert.

Our lives continually seek out experts for help in every area where we lack expertise. That would include a seemingly endless list involving our health needs, our financial investments, our education, the laws of our state, our safety, and so on and so forth.

When a serious medical condition arises, we often look to a doctor who has a reputation built on success, one who is considered to be

an authority in dealing with the illness we or a loved one is facing. We may even seek out a second opinion from a second authority.

That makes sense regarding physical issues we face temporally. But what about the conditions of life that include not only temporal things but, more importantly, eternal things?

To whom do you look as your spiritual authority? Your pastor? Your seminary or Bible college professor? Your favorite Christian author? A Christian psychologist, or even a Biblical counselor? Or to the Word of God itself?

If your authority is in anything other than God's Word, then God and His Word are no longer your authority. You have turned from the inerrant Word and the perfect One who established it to a fallible and potentially Scripture-corrupting human resource.

The Word of God is its own authority. It is and must be self-authenticating. If not, then we will likely turn to an authority other than God's Word.

There's another sense of biblical authority that is rarely taken seriously today, and that's related to our thoughts about God being in charge.

Is He or isn't He in charge? Is He not God Almighty "who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein..." (Revelation 10:6)? "For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding" (Psalm 47:7)!

As someone noted, God's Word is not a book of suggestions. If you're treating it that way, you may have drifted into a state of complacency verging on disobedience.

Jesus addressed that condition when He said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Those of us who have children have probably said to them that if they really loved us they would do what we say.

In John 14:23 we read, "If a man love me, he will keep my words," and in John 15:10, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

Again, is it God who is ruling in your life, or have you added your own set of rules?

The third point related to how you are living out the Word of God has to do with sufficiency. That is the tell-tale indicator of where you actually stand regarding the inerrancy and authority of the Bible.

First of all, does the Word of God claim to be sufficient? Consider these verses:

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man [woman, child] of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Notice what is described as the realm in which the Word of God is sufficient: "all things that pertain to life and godliness," "instruction in righteousness," and being thoroughly equipped "unto all good works."

What in a believer's life would not involve godliness, righteousness, and good works? There are some things, however, that do not involve what is right or wrong morally.

For example, auto mechanics or fashion design or medical procedures are amoral. They, in themselves, along with lots of other things, are not what the Bible claims to address. Yet such activities are addressed indirectly by God's Word if their practice involves sin.

Of the three points that are critical for a biblical Christian to believe, it is the *sufficiency of God's Word* that is the most professed yet the least heeded. That's astonishing because it reveals a person's actual belief or disbelief in inerrancy and authority.

If someone claims to believe in the inerrancy and authority of the Word of God but looks to other sources for help with his issues of sin, his ungodliness, unrighteousness, and self-serving activities, Scripture is no longer sufficient for him, it is no longer his authority.

That being the case, a belief in biblical inerrancy is pointless and worse. It's like someone extolling a healthy diet while engaging in gluttony.

Part 2 of this series will focus on the ways and means the church has abandoned the sufficiency of the Word of God. Evangelical shepherds are turning their sheep over to supposed experts as authorities that are antichrist in their theories and therapies. Many are even encouraging their flocks to look to visual translations of the Word of God produced by cult members such as *The Passion of the Christ* and *The Chosen*. Obviously, they do not truly believe the words of our Lord and Savior: "If ye continue in *my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: In “The Chosen Livestream: Our 2022 Launch” on Youtube (see <https://bit.ly/3scbKTh> at 1:49), Derral Eves (a Mormon) says he is “excited . . . to go after the unreached.” Are the biblical Jesus and the Mormon Jesus the same?

ANSWER: “For if he that cometh preacheth *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive *another spirit*, which ye have not received, or *another gospel*, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Corinthians 11:4, italics added).

The apostle Paul warns that some will present a “Jesus” to the church who is *not* the Jesus of the Bible but is one who brings a spirit that is *not* the Holy Spirit and a gospel that is *not* the one that can save men’s souls. Paul’s concern is that some members of the church will embrace and “bear with” a false Christ.

The Chosen’s director, co-writer, and chief publicist, Dallas Jenkins, has gone on record stating that the Mormon Jesus is the same as the Bible’s Jesus. In an interview Jenkins did in May of 2020 on a Mormon program, he stated:

“I can honestly say . . . one of the top three most fascinating and beautiful things about this project has been my growing brother-and-sisterhood with people of the LDS community that I never would have known otherwise, and learning so much about your faith tradition and realizing, gosh, for all the stuff that maybe we don’t see eye to eye on, that all happened; that’s all based on stuff that happened after Jesus was here. The stories of Jesus, we do agree on, and *we love the same Jesus*. That’s not something that you often hear. . . . *I mean I’ll sink or swim on that statement*, and it’s controversial, and I don’t mind getting criticized at all for the show, and *I don’t mind being called a blasphemer*. . . . I’ve made it very clear that if I go down, I’m going down swinging, protecting *my friends and my brothers and sisters*. . . . I don’t deny we have a lot of theological differences, but *we love the same Jesus*” (italics added).

In the book *The God Makers*, Ed Decker and Dave Hunt state:

“Mormon missionaries claim to be bringing true Christianity to the world. . . . When questioned, Mormons insist that their gospel comes from the Bible and that they have the same God and the same Jesus as Christians. In actual fact, they have a completely different God from what the Bible presents, a different Jesus, and a different gospel. These differences are denied or glossed over by the missionaries, who are often evasive and unwilling to tell the whole truth to a prospective convert for fear of losing him.”

Below is a list of some of the “attributes” of the Mormon Jesus:

- Jesus is Lucifer’s brother.
- Jesus is a spirit child conceived through physical means between an exalted man (Heavenly Father) and the virgin Mary.
- Jesus is not eternal and had a beginning (i.e., not part of an eternal Trinity).
- Jesus was not always God but earned his way to godhood just as we will become gods someday.
- The work of the Mormon Jesus was insufficient for man’s salvation, and to complete it, one has to believe in Joseph Smith that he came from God to restore the church (i.e., Smith has a role in salvation).
- Mormon doctrine teaches that without our own righteousness, there is no forgiveness of sins (contrary to Romans 4:5 and many other Bible verses).

These, and many other teachings of the Mormon church, clearly show that the Mormon Jesus is *not* the same as the Jesus of the Bible. For Dallas Jenkins to say otherwise helps to legitimize Mormonism as true Christianity and to bring it into the evangelical fold.

In 2021, Dallas Jenkins further defended what he calls his “brothers and sisters” in the Mormon religion when he states: “[The] calling of my life is to make the *authentic* Jesus known to the entire world, and *anyone* who’s going to help me do that *is welcome*” (italics added).

Jenkins’s open invitation to “anyone” who wants to help present his alleged “authentic” Jesus is a prime example of what the apostle Paul was warning about in 2 Corinthians 11:4.

By calling Mormons his brothers and sisters (obviously in a spiritual sense), this implies there is no reason to introduce them to the one eternal God and evangelize them to a true biblical faith.

(THIS IS AN EXCERPT FROM A NEW LIGHTHOUSE TRAILS BOOKLET TITLED *THE CHOSEN SERIES: 10 CRITICAL CONCERNS*. FOR MORE DETAILS SEE COVER PAGE OR GIVE US A CALL TODAY! THE BOOKLET IS ALSO AVAILABLE AT WWW.LIGHTHOUSETRAILS.COM)

QUESTION: In your book *The Seduction of Christianity* you said, “If there is not clear teaching in the Bible to support such a practice, it should not be adopted by the church today.” My pastor said

that application of this would mean that one could lose salvation for baptizing infants, since that is not “in the Bible.” And he suggested that the statement ought rather to be, “Unless a practice is clearly prohibited or contradicted in the Bible, it may be adopted by the church.” Please explain your position.

RESPONSE: It is clear that we have some basic misunderstandings. First, the book *Seduction* was dealing, at that point, with a specific subject: the introduction of psychological methods for producing a spiritual wholeness for which the Bible claims to have the only and sufficient answer, and the statement you quote (from page 179) must be understood in that context, not as a blanket statement applying to everything and anything. Second, *Seduction* does not suggest that the adoption of a practice not supported by clear teaching in the Bible will cause anyone to lose his salvation.

Finally, even if applied generally, the *Seduction* statement is at least safer than the pastor’s. He admits that infant baptism is not in the Bible, so according to his statement it may be adopted, but according to *Seduction* it should not be. Which is right? Although baptizing an infant will not cause the infant to lose its salvation, it could lead that person later in life to imagine that he is saved because of being baptized as an infant, when in fact he is not. This misconception could then prevent him from ever being saved. We ought not to adopt infant baptism, because it is not supported by Scripture, and its practice undermines the biblical teaching on salvation, whereby baptism does not save and is not for the unsaved, but is only practiced by those who are already saved.

QUESTION: I have a question that only leads to more questions: What should I expect from a relationship with Jesus? Some would tell me that the sky is the limit when it comes to God, who will control my life and guide my thoughts and actions. Others make it sound like we can just ask and get whatever we want from him.

RESPONSE: The concept of “name it and claim it” is the pathway to disaster. We don’t tell God what to do or what to give us; we submit ourselves to His holy will in everything. There is nothing so thrilling as to be in God’s will and see Him at work in and through us. Yes, there will be trials and triumphs. As to what we can do? Meditate on God’s Word. Tell Christ frequently that you love Him and want to love Him more and know Him better. You will find then that you have plenty of evidence that He is there and that He hears your prayers.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Isn't There an Inward Assurance of the Holy Spirit?

QUESTION: Is the certainty of the Christian faith confined to the fulfillment of prophecy as demonstrated in verifiable facts of history, archaeology, and science, or is there a spiritual confirmation as well? What about spiritual experiences? Isn't there an inward assurance of the Holy Spirit?).

RESPONSE: Faith cometh by hearing . . . the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). On the one hand, the Word of God stands on its own and needs no outside confirmation, for it is “quick [living] and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Of course, outside confirmation is not *essential*, for even without it the Holy Spirit speaks powerfully to hearts willing to hear: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). Subjective convictions, however, can be misleading. Consider the multitudes who have been led astray by what they thought was the “leading of the Holy Spirit,” but it turned out to be wishful thinking or some other delusion.

There is no deficiency on the part of the Holy Spirit but rather on our part. It is therefore helpful to have some independent confirmation. Human frailty leaves us subject to the deceitfulness of our own hearts: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). We need to be on guard and pray as did David:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23-24).

Furthermore, if we had only what we thought was the inward confidence of the Holy Spirit,

but the archaeological and historical evidence contradicted what the Bible said, we could be left in confusion. Remember, of course, that human efforts to gather data through archaeological and historical and scientific research are subject to error. We do not cast aside our confidence in God's Word when the critics claim to have contradictory evidence. They have been proven wrong every time they disputed what the Bible says. It is helpful, however, to know the evidence that backs up the Bible.

There is, nevertheless, a *knowing* that goes beyond the intellect and the capacity for human understanding. Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers that they might “*know* the love of Christ, which *passeth knowledge*,” that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). There is a fullness of the Holy Spirit that is available to believers and removes every possible doubt, empowering the believer to pass on the message of God in convincing assurance without any outside support.

The greatest experiences of life are all beyond our finite comprehension. Love cannot be explained or analyzed, nor can beauty or goodness or joy.

One could have a Ph.D. in all the subjects that this world's universities offer and not be able to explain why a sunset is beautiful. Yet the simplest child can exult in the joy and exquisite beauty of God's creation.

So it is with knowing God. The psalmist likened his desire to know God to the thirst for water of a deer pursued by a hunter (Psalm 42:1). Paul cried out, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10). This should be the passion of our hearts. Could anything else be more desirable?

Such knowledge of God and assurance of one's salvation goes beyond intellectual understanding and therefore cannot be shaken by intellectual arguments, no matter how seemingly convincing. Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might *know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). God has told us that we will find Him (i.e., have that intimate knowledge of Him that goes beyond the intellect and can only be experienced in the heart by the Holy Spirit) when we seek for Him with our whole heart (Jeremiah 29:13). He has promised to reward with the intimate knowledge of Himself those who "diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Spend time with Him in prayer and in His Word, and your *knowing* Him and *love* for Him will grow, and your assurance of His love and guidance will increase accordingly.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

We mustn't excuse our sinning by passing the buck to the old nature. That is a form of blame-shifting that will not work. God holds the person responsible, not the nature. Perhaps you've heard the fictitious story of the speeder who said to the judge, "Your honour, it was my old nature that was speeding." To which the judge replied, "I fine your old nature £50 for speeding, and I fine your new nature £50 for being an accessory." Blaming the old nature just isn't the way to go.

—William MacDonald

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The Word of God— Part Two

T. A. McMahon

“Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water”

—JEREMIAH 2:12-13

THOSE VERSES INCLUDE a warning from the Lord for His people—and the reason for the warning. They are the consequences of His followers forsaking Him by turning from “the fountain of living waters.” Although addressed to the Jewish people during the time of Jeremiah the prophet, God’s words of admonition also seem to be directed at the Christianity of our day.

In Part 1 of this series, questions were asked in survey form for the reader to evaluate where he (or she) stands in regard to his fundamental beliefs in the Word of God. The survey centered on the *inerrancy*, the *authority*, and the *sufficiency* of the Scriptures, and concluded that the sufficiency of God’s Word is “the tell-tale indicator as to where the reader actually stands regarding the inerrancy and authority of the Bible.” That is the case, because if you claim to believe in the inerrancy and authority of the Word of God but look to other sources for help with your spiritual issues of life, you are indicating that Scripture is no longer sufficient for you; it is no longer your authority, thereby making a belief in biblical inerrancy pointless—and worse.

Thus this article will focus primarily on the sufficiency of God’s Word, which the Bible claims is totally, absolutely, and unequivocally sufficient (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; and many more)! Yet most of the evangelical church, which claims to be Bible-believing, has blinded itself to Scripture’s clear teaching. Of course, this hasn’t happened without help. Leaders in the church, not wanting to be pigeonholed with the fundamentalists (labeled as ignorant and narrow-minded), have therefore turned to the “wisdom” of the world [which the Bible calls “foolishness”—(1 Corinthians 3:19)].

Two of the most obvious and destructive examples of not adhering to the sufficiency of God’s Word have to do with the fact of man’s turning to the pseudosciences of

evolution and psychology. In the mid- to latter part of the 1800s, some influential Christian leaders were impressed with the theories of Charles Darwin. They wanted their Christianity to be respected by the world as being in tune with the latest scientific theories and “discoveries” of their day. However, not all the preachers of that day were so inclined. C. H. Spurgeon wrote, “If God’s word be true, evolution is a lie.” To that completely accurate observation, he added the handwriting on the wall: “The age is getting worse and worse, and man, by a process of evolution, is evolving a devil. Within fifty years children in the school will read of extraordinary popular delusions, and this [evolution] will be mentioned as one of the most absurd of them.”

One might excuse the church for its ignorance in thinking Darwin had it right, were it not for the fact that his theory is diametrically opposed to the Genesis account. But what of the church today? It not only has God’s Word, but it also has access to ministries that show in great detail the delusion of evolution. Even so, evolution has been solidified throughout academia, even though there is not a shred of scientific evidence to support it. Nevertheless, any teachers in secular schools who do not support it are shown the door, and they have great difficulty securing teaching positions elsewhere. Evolution is one of Satan’s major successes. The lie he’s sold to Christendom is that the Word of God knows nothing about science, especially regarding how the world was formed. Scientifically speaking, we’re told, the Bible is not sufficient.

Does Spurgeon’s scathing but true characterization of evolution as “absurd” come to mind here? So, the Creator of everything is clueless as to how He went about His creation process? Really? But don’t be concerned about the Bible not keeping in step with “science.” Some religious-minded folks have stepped in to help God, Christianity, and science out. They came up with the theory of theistic evolution! The idea is that God, through billions of years, used the evolutionary process up to the time that a humanoid male and female evolved, and into which God placed a soul and a spirit. That idea is a joke to evolutionists, but the Catholic Church, liberal Protestant theologians, and many Christian universities and seminaries teach it.

How destructive is the increasing belief in evolution to the biblical faith of millions of Christians? If billions of years of death preceded the sin of Adam and Eve, then what is stated in Genesis 2:17, Genesis 1:31, and

Romans 5:12 cannot be true. If the Bible didn’t get it right about the consequence of mankind’s sin, can it be trusted in what it says about mankind’s salvation? Atheists seem to understand better than professing (and, sadly, some true Christians) how the belief in evolution does away with the sufficiency of the Scriptures and destroys the gospel in the process. *The American Atheist* journal declares, “Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus’ earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the son of god. You will take away the meaning of his death. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and *this is what evolution means*, then Christianity is nothing!”

Similar to evolution, which poses as science, psychological counseling pretends to be scientific as well and has destroyed the lives and beliefs of many Christians. Although there are Christian authors with science degrees and seminary professors with Ph.Ds who teach various aspects of evolution that undermine the Word of God, they do not compare numbers-wise with the host of those involved in Christian psychology. That army is led by Christian psychologists along with the multitude of Christians who have been credentialed with degrees in psychological counseling.

First of all, what is Christian psychology? It is an attempt to shore up the Bible where it is insufficient regarding the mental, emotional, and behavioral problems that afflict Christians. To that end, those seeking counseling degrees study the theories of psychiatrists and psychologists such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and a host of their disciples, all of whom are antichristian to the core and whose theories are diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Word of God. Like evolution, psychotherapy has no scientific basis whatsoever. Yet, since the 1960s, the rise of Christian psychology has sounded the death knell for Christians who look to the Scriptures for “all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge” (2 Peter 1:3) of the truth of God’s Word.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee met with Dave Hunt and me a few months before he went home to be with the Lord. He had read *The Seduction of Christianity* and it confirmed to him what he had personally observed taking place throughout evangelical Christianity. He told us it was symptomatic of

the decreasing biblical content and the increasing humanistic content that we are getting from Christian TV, Christian radio, and Christian books and pulpits. He added that if this trend continues, Christian psychology will be the destruction of the evangelical church.

Psychotherapy's chief teaching, which is central to the more than 500 different psychological therapies, is its view of "self." Self is said to be the key to resolving all of humanity's mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. The erroneous teaching about self-love became the chief therapy of Christian psychologists to which they added self-esteem, self-image, self-worth, self-belief, positive self-talk and all the other selfisms.

The most influential leader among Christian psychologists has been Dr. James Dobson. He declares: "If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, it would provide each one of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need. Whenever the keys to self-esteem are seemingly out of reach for a large percentage of the people, as in twentieth-century America, then widespread 'mental illness,' neuroticism, hatred, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and social disorder will certainly occur..." (Dobson, James, "What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women," Tyndale House, 1975, 60). Not true. Extensive studies by research psychologists studying their own field has proved the exact opposite. High self-esteem, not low self-esteem, is the problem...just as the Bible teaches.

But don't miss my point here. Christian psychologists have been the Adversary's unwitting instrument in undermining the belief in the *sufficiency* of God's Word.

What did believers in Christ do for 1900 years or so before the new psychological "clergy," led by the godless occultists Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, came along? Well, according to the Psalmist, God and His Word provided all they needed for life's troubling issues: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9).

Think of what Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, went through. He was hated by his brothers who sought to kill him, then sold by them as a slave in Egypt, then falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and sent to prison. Was he "hung out to dry," i.e., left without God's support, given all that he had to endure? Read chapters 30 through 50 of Genesis. You won't find a *hint* of his seek-

ing out "counselors" for therapy among the Egyptians because of what his brothers did to him. But you *will* find God cleansing his heart of any bitterness and enabling him to forgive them! He said to his brothers, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5). Isn't the same grace available for all of us who love Jesus Christ and are born of His Spirit? Is Jesus not the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8)? Or was there a gap of insufficiency until Christian psychology came along?

I've been told too many times in my 35 or so years of ministering the Word of God to brothers and couples who professed to know the Lord, "Well, we've tried what the Bible says, and it's never worked out for us." So, that must mean that the Holy Spirit's instruction in Psalm 119 doesn't work for believers today. It isn't practical. It's insufficient. Therefore, according to them, 2 Peter 1:3 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and especially Hebrews 4:12, must be mistaken regarding the sufficiency of God's Word.

What we are now told to do, as more and more pastoral shepherds are doing with their sheep, is to turn away from God's Word and look to "professional" help. In other words, we are to turn to those who have been trained in humanist and occult psychological concepts, who the Scriptures tell us "...receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Pastoral shepherds are turning their sheep away from the One who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6), who is *the Truth*.

The redirecting of believers from God's Word to godless counselors (whose schooling is antichrist) is unconscionable for those pastors who profess to believe in the sufficiency of God's Word.

In giving believers "all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him" (2 Peter 1:3), the Holy Spirit must have left some of the "all things" out for a later time to be supplied by a field that is atheistic to the core. That would be laughable if not for the fact that evangelical churches that profess to be following God's Word act as a *major referral service* for the psychological counseling industry! What does psychological counseling supply? Mostly the lie that *self is the solution* to all their problems!

There is another development of late that is overwhelming Christendom and denying the authority and sufficiency of the

Scriptures. I'm referring to the movie series called *The Chosen*, which we've addressed in part in previous newsletter articles—and its popularity is growing exponentially. You may ask, "How does the film series deny the authority and sufficiency of God's Word?"

First of all, it creates scenes featuring Jesus and his disciples conjured up by a screenwriter who provides dialogue for them (words that were never spoken in Scripture). The screenwriter and film director have the actors portraying Jesus and his disciples doing things they never did. The Bible claims to be our authority regarding what Jesus said and did. That which the screenwriter writes, and the director directs, therefore subverts the authority of God's Word. As viewers fill their minds with the endless unbiblical scenes that *The Chosen* presents visually, that is what becomes their authority.

What then of the sufficiency of God's Word, or lack thereof? The intent of *The Chosen*'s producers was to supply for audiences that which evidently the Holy Spirit was unable to communicate effectively through words actually contained in the Bible. Just as Christianity had to wait nearly 1900 years for the arrival of Christian psychology to meet the psychological needs of Christians, the church had to wait nearly the same amount of time for the invention of motion pictures in order for Christians to relate to the personal character of Jesus.

The medium of film was also necessary in order to make the Jesus of Scripture more acceptable, more human, and less "stoic," as *The Chosen*'s producers claim. Make him "more authentic." We're told by *The Chosen* Mormon producer, Derral Eves, that "The whole purpose of the show is to have people experience an authentic Jesus." Written words that have to be read were obviously not sufficient for one to get to know the *real* Jesus. A common response from the millions of viewers (this one from a Mormon student cited in a BYU magazine) was that "she loves the show because it helps viewers see Christ as a real person. It helped me recognize that he was a regular (though perfect) guy who likes to joke with his friends, loves his mom, and has a special connection with the little children." Those "authentic insights," however, were supplied not by the Holy Spirit but by the series' creative production people. Although the writer/director of the series, Dallas Jenkins, claims that God had told him regarding the production of *The Chosen* that He wouldn't let him "screw it up," Jenkins has done that and worse.

(CONTINUED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE)

Scripture warns us to *try the spirits* “whether they are of God...” (1 John 4:1). *The Chosen*, from beginning to end, is a lie (Proverbs 30:6), and it adds man’s ideas to God’s Word, especially the Person of Jesus Christ, which is condemned (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 and Revelation 22:18). Its content is at odds with and contrary to what the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, has communicated in the Word of God. Furthermore, the Bible makes it absolutely clear that those who add to what is written in God’s Word have not the Spirit of truth, nor can they receive the things of God, neither can they know them, “because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians

2:14). Those things are clearly contrary to what the true Author of the Scriptures has communicated, the very One whom Dallas Jenkins claims had spoken to him.

This series of articles began as a survey of what we think and where we stand regarding the Word of God. If our thinking about God’s Word misses the mark by any degree, we have to that degree slipped away from God’s truth. We have certified from the Scriptures (which are self-authenticating) that God’s words are just that—the words of God communicated to humanity by the Holy Spirit. They are inerrant, they are our authority, and they are sufficient

for every believer’s life in Jesus Christ. Mankind has contributed *nothing* to God’s Word. Therefore, any attempt to add to the Word of God is *resolutely condemned*.

When Jesus’s disciples questioned Him about the days prior to His return, He responded by indicating that those days would be a time of great apostasy and deception (Matthew 24:4; 24:11). Pray for those who have been called to be shepherds of God’s sheep, that they would not lead the people away from *the fountain of living waters*, which is the Word of God.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: When I read 1 Peter 4:17 (“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”), it seems to me that this applies to persecution of the church. I’m aware of wholesale persecution of believers in places like China, Pakistan, Sudan, and other foreign countries, but I don’t think that has ever happened in the US. Are we exempt for any particular reason, or do you think it’s going to take place here?

RESPONSE: We believe that the judgment referred to in 1 Peter 4:17 is a judgment of persecution that God allows His church to go through for the purpose of purifying and strengthening it. As the process takes place, believers are supported by His grace and mercy. It has value for them, and it glorifies Him—even when it ends in the death of the saints. The contrast is judgment *without* grace and mercy, which takes place against those who reject God’s salvation and will suffer eternal punishment.

Consider the record of the persecuted believers in Hebrews 11. Their testimony has been an encouraging witness to those who followed after them. Persecution has caused the church to grow just as a pruned fruit tree increases in its fruitfulness. History confirms that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, and as Tertullian noted, “The more we are cut down, the more we persist.”

Certainly, believers in the US have never suffered persecution—as a body—such as we’ve seen in other parts of the world down through the ages. Yet America has been subjected to something of a more spiritually destructive nature that few countries have experienced: seduction. In Satan’s game plan of attempting to destroy the church, seduction has been by far his

most successful tactic.

It may be that the consequences of seduction, which have resulted in a church that has drifted away from the Word of God “in the latter times” and is “giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” and will “not endure sound doctrine,” will foster a condition of persecution in this country (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Some have already been subjected to it as they have been thrown out of their “seeker-friendly, purpose-driven, marketing, and/or psychology-oriented” churches for simply questioning the biblical basis for such programs.

As believers, we simply and with meekness hold fast to God’s Word and reflect its truth in our lives. Be aware, however, that we will invite persecution from both the world and from a professing church that regards us as intolerant, racist, bigoted, self-righteous, lacking compassion, arrogant, and on and on. As the apostasy increases in the US, there is every indication that persecution will also increase.

QUESTION: I am hearing more and more, lately, that we are surely living in the last of the Last Days. How can we know for certain that time as we know it is winding down, and what should we be doing in our own lives?

RESPONSE: People often ask what are some of the signs that would indicate that the end of time as we know it is near. Jesus actually gave us a number of them. In speaking of the events that would precede His Second Coming, He warned of a time of unprecedented destruction that would be so severe that “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved...” (Matthew 24:22). Such a statement was a puzzle to past generations: How could the destruction of all life on earth be threatened through bows and arrows,

swords and spears, or even the conventional weapons of World War II? Our generation, however, has developed and stockpiled arms unknown in the past and which actually have the potential to destroy all of life on this planet. So we are essentially the first generation for whom this particular prophecy no longer awaits some future development to make it possible.

In the vision of the future given to Him by Christ, the apostle John saw a world ruler controlling the whole earth not only politically and militarily, but economically. No one would be able to buy or sell without Antichrist’s mysterious “666” stamp of approval embedded in his hand or forehead to indicate his loyalty to him (Revelation 13:16-18). While past generations took this threat seriously, there was no way that all commerce and banking on earth could be controlled from a central location. Today there is. We have the computers, communications satellites, and worldwide electronic banking networks that make such control feasible. Moreover, everyone knows that it is only a matter of time until such a system will be in place and enforced.

John also saw that the entire world would worship Satan along with the Antichrist: “And they worshiped the dragon [that old serpent the devil, or Satan—(Revelation 12:9)] which gave power unto the beast [Antichrist]; and they worshiped the beast” (Revelation 13:4). Such a prophecy would have seemed unbelievable to previous generations, but not so in our day. Hardcore satanism has been called “the fastest-growing subculture among American teens.” Satanists have their own chaplains in the US Armed Forces and are protected under freedom-of-religion laws. The acceleration of satanism worldwide is a phenomenon peculiar to our time making the thought of the world worshiping Satan far more plausible than in past generations.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What about Purgatory?

QUESTION: I've recently heard some rather persuasive arguments by Catholics for purgatory. First Corinthians 3:12-15 teaches a purification by fire of the believers after death. Hebrews 12:14 declares that without "holiness . . . no man shall see the Lord." Doesn't that say we must be made absolutely pure to enter heaven? The same standard seems to be required by the statement: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). My assurance of salvation has been shaken. What about such scriptures?

RESPONSE: Purgatory is an invention of the Roman Catholic Church and reflects the fact that it offers no assurance of salvation. If it did, that Church would be out of business. In fact, the Catholic who dares to believe Christ's unequivocal promise of eternal life as a free gift of His grace with nothing left to be done on our part is anathematized. Trent decreed (and Vatican II repropose):

"If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema."
(Schroeder, *Canons*, op. cit., Can. 30, p. 46)

In contrast, let us consider the teaching of the Bible together with simple common sense. Quite obviously, even if such a place as purgatory existed, no *literal* fire could purify the soul and spirit. Fire is not the means of *moral* purification. Furthermore, it is the believer's *works* (which he has *built* upon the foundation of his faith in Christ), not the believer himself, that will be tested by fire:

Now if any man *build* upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's *work* shall be . . . revealed as by fire; and the fire shall try every man's *work* of what sort it is (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

Nor is Paul speaking of literal fire any more than he is of literal wood and gold. He is obviously speaking metaphorically, calling some works

wood, hay, and stubble (which fire consumes) and others gold, silver, and precious stones (which fire purifies). There is nothing here (or elsewhere in Scripture) to support Catholicism's claim that flames in an imagined purgatory purge the individual and thereby expiate his sins. Paul is dealing entirely with the quality of works one has done for Christ and what reward will therefore be received, if any.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

Paul was not the inventor of Christianity, as some have claimed, nor even was Jesus. Christianity is the fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies—not only that there would be multitudes of Gentile believers, but also the specifics of the doctrines of salvation were laid out clearly in the Old Testament. Christ himself pointed to these prophecies, and Paul made them the basis of the gospel he preached (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This is absolutely unique. There is no comparable verification for any of the doctrines of any of the world's religions.

—Dave Hunt

The Call to Discipleship

Dave Hunt

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WHEN OUR LORD Jesus Christ was on earth He repeatedly said to those who would listen to His Word, “Come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21; Luke 18:22, etc.). Large numbers of the Jews, because they or a relative or friend had been healed or fed by Christ, followed Him wherever He went: “And there followed him great multitudes of people...and he healed them all...” (Matthew 5:1; 8:1; 12:15; 13:2, etc.). So large and eager were the crowds that He and His twelve disciples “could not so much as eat bread. And...his friends...said, He is beside himself” (Mark 3:20-21).

Christ’s call to follow Him is extended to all mankind. No hint that Jesus was not sincere in saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37). What He still offers to all is the same “living water [of] everlasting life” which He offered to the woman at the well (John 4:10-14).

Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-42) and mourned, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children...as a hen...her brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34). He thereby identified Himself as the God of Israel who had pleaded with His people throughout their entire existence to repent and turn to Him: “Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up and early sending them...” (Jeremiah 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19, etc.). “But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would [have] none of me.... Oh that my people had hearkened unto me...!” (Psalm 81:11-13).

The multitudes who followed Him were called disciples. Some were genuine, but most had selfish motives and eventually forsook Him. Yes, even Christ himself had a very high dropout rate. Jesus said, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (John 6:70). He was referring to Judas, who would betray Him.

The number of supposed disciples who remained true to Christ was comparable to the low percentage of true disciples today among those professing to be Christians. If we were to add up all of the millions whom Robertson’s CBN, Crouch’s TBN, Billy Graham, Benny Hinn and other evangelists and major denominations declare they have won to Christ in the last twenty years, the

total would indicate that all of America had been converted. Knowing each heart, Jesus declared, “...there are some of you that believe not.... From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:64-66).

From the multitudes, Christ “chose twelve, whom also He named apostles” (Luke 6:13) and trained personally. They failed Him often: Peter and Andrew began to follow twice before they finally remained with the Lord. The first time was when Andrew, who had first begun to follow Jesus, introduced Peter to Him (John 1:37-42). They soon left Him; Jesus found them “casting a net into the sea” and said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18-22). Their partners, James and John, who were “mending their nets,” also began at that time to follow Christ. It wasn’t long until once again they all went back to the old life, but Christ persisted and found them a third time, discouraged and “washing their nets” after fishing all night and catching nothing. He got into Peter’s boat, told him where to throw his net, and so many fish were caught that the net broke. Peter fell down before the Lord, acknowledging his sinful unworthiness, and Peter, Andrew, James, and John finally “forsook all, and followed him” (Luke 5:1-11).

The insincere throng of signs-and-wonders seekers of Christ’s day has its modern counterpart in the huge crowds attracted by “miracle crusades” and televangelists promising prosperity for “seed faith” offerings.

The Bible calls Christ’s followers “disciples.” That plural word is found 244 times in 232 verses; “disciple,” 29 times in 27 verses. Thirty-one of these are found in the book of Acts. Quite clearly “disciple” is the biblical designation of a true believer. The word “disciple” is related to discipline and identifies one who is seriously committed to learn, obey and follow.

Today, however, the word “disciple” has fallen into disuse in favor of the word “Christian”—a rather vague designation which almost anyone can adopt and which, as a result, has become almost meaningless. Multitudes who think of themselves as “Christians” live undisciplined lives without any intention of obeying the One whom they insincerely call Lord. Even heretical cults claim to be Christian.

Many consider America to be a “Christian nation.” The word “Christian” appears only twice in the Bible; the word “Christians,” once. This label was actually

invented by the world as an accusatory and derogatory nickname marking Christ’s disciples for persecution and often for death.

Thus Peter wrote, “...if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16). Knowing that choice would cost him everything, King Agrippa said to Paul, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). In those days there were few pretenders. Churches then were not filled with hangers-on gathering for social or business reasons (that began with Constantine 200 years later) or because they liked the choir, or the pastor’s sermons were uplifting or the people were all so friendly and made one feel welcome and important.

In much of the church today, there is little fear of God, little conviction of sin, and hardly the mention of God’s holiness and His dreadful justice with which one dare not trifle. Unfortunately, salvation is frequently presented without explaining why it is needed. One cannot get saved without realizing one is lost. There must be conviction of sin, sorrow and repentance toward a holy God who hates sin but loves the sinner.

Referring to a good shepherd, Christ declared, “The sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow...for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:4-5). As the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep, Christ said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish” (John 10:11, 27-28).

How can anyone claim to be one of Christ’s sheep and to have received the eternal life He gives, yet not heed His voice and follow Him? He said, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord.... [Then I will say,] I never knew you” (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:22-23).

Most of what is called Christianity today has been made too popular to be genuine. Church growth is sought through surveys and worldly marketing techniques. Of course, worldly methods breed worldly people. Judging by some churches today, one would think that when someone offered to follow Him, our Lord would have called out to His disciples: “Peter, sign him up quick! John, get her into the choir! James, make him an elder, he’s got money.” To remain popular with this unregenerated crowd, many pastors offer inoffensive and pleasing sermonettes

which create only Christianettes.

We entertain our youth, instead of calling them to take up the cross and follow Christ. We're afraid that if we set the standard too high we'll "lose" them—and thereby we lose them for eternity! Rather than those who give up their lives for Christ, the heroes and heroines held up to "attract" today's youth are mostly professional athletes, pop musicians, or movie stars, paraded on stage as though to say, "Look who Jesus has on His side! Doesn't that make Christ appealing?" The Christianity represented by most of the contemporary Christian entertainment industry would shock the early disciples, who would also consider today's popular gospels of prosperity to be heresy.

In his book, *True Discipleship*, William MacDonald quotes an American college student, converted to communism and writing from Mexico to his fiancée to break off their engagement:

We communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money can buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty personal selves into a great movement... compensated by the thought that each of us... is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind. The communist cause is my life—my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night... Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas, actions, according to how they affect the communist cause.... I've already been in jail for communism... if necessary I'm ready to go before a firing squad.

Isn't the cause of Christ far better and greater? Why don't we drop entertainment and challenge our youth with something worth living for, even dying for, if need be? Dying? Yes, Christ expected that His disciples' lives would be expendable for Him and that each take up his cross, ready if need be to die (Matthew 10:38-39; 16:24; Luke 14:26-27). The most repeated verse in the New Testament is "whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25; 10:39; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25).

When Christ was arrested in the Garden, "all the disciples [like many today] forsook him, and fled" (Matthew 26:56). Peter even denied his Lord with cursing and swearing (Matthew 26:74; Mark 14:71). But the Lord forgave and restored him (Mark 16:7; John 21:15-19; 1 Corinthians 15:5), as He graciously does for us.

In giving up our lives in exchange for the life Christ would live through us, we find true life—a life of joy and fruitfulness. C. T. Studd wrote,

I had known about Jesus dying for me, but I never understood that if He died for me, then I didn't belong to myself... If I belong to Him, either I had to be a thief and keep what wasn't mine, or else I had to give up everything to God. When I came to see that Jesus Christ had died for me, it didn't seem hard to give up all for Him.

I was raised in a very devout family and a sound fellowship of believers. Yet discipleship was not considered to be for everyone; it was only for the more spiritual who aspired to a deeper commitment. Biblically, however, if one is not a disciple, one is not a Christian: "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). We need to return to this biblical identification and its reality.

Christ commanded the original twelve to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel..." (Mark 16:15) and thereby to make more disciples, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). Obviously the "all things" new disciples were to be taught included that they also make disciples and teach them "all things" Christ had commanded the original twelve. In other words, each new disciple is responsible to make other disciples and to teach them to observe all things Christ commanded the original twelve (Matthew 28:20). One can hardly tell others to do what one neglects to do oneself.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders that some of them would teach perverse doctrines in order to "draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). The same problem confronts us today in church leaders who compete with each other to establish a following. Tragically, all too many who call themselves "Christians" are more willing to follow a popular leader than to follow Christ.

Christ didn't promise His disciples financial prosperity or popularity, but

persecution: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven..." (Matthew 5:11-12). "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26). "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you... If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." (John 15:18-21). Does not the absence of the persecutions that Christ promised raise serious questions concerning today's Christianity in America?

Has Christianity become a brief game called "church" that we play on Sunday morning and then our duty is done? And unlike other more popular games (NFL, NBA, NHL, etc.) where overtime makes it all the more exciting and enjoyable, woe to the preacher who extends this game into even a brief overtime! How many churches find very few at their midweek prayer meeting because priority is given to more important matters? In a recent survey of teenagers, eight out of ten called themselves Christians. Yet, of 19 goals, they ranked highest the establishing of relationships and achieving a comfortable lifestyle! Being deeply committed to the Christian faith ranked fourteenth and being personally active in a church ranked sixteenth.

Following Christ is not a trial subscription but a commitment for eternity. Discipleship has nothing to do with joining a church but everything to do with knowing, loving, and following Christ.

Christ didn't say, "Follow someone or some church claiming they represent Me." He said, "Follow me.... Learn of me" (John 1:43; Matthew 11:29). We go to His Word to learn of Him. Each of us is expected to know it thoroughly. Yet many who think of themselves as Christians scarcely study the Bible seriously, expecting the pastor and Bible teachers to do that for them.

Along with Christ's "follow Me" was His promise, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Yet many who call themselves Christians have little concern for winning the lost to Christ, instead letting days and even weeks go by without telling another person about Christ and the salvation which He procured at Calvary and offers to all.

May the Lord stir each of our hearts to follow Him fully. It is our prayer that this newsletter not be mere information but that it ignite us all to devotion and action.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: Are the Jews automatically saved? Without going into a lot of detail, can you explain the relationship between Jews, Gentiles, and the “church” as we get closer and closer to the End Times?

RESPONSE: Judaism is as invalid for automatic salvation as Islam. No one is saved simply because he is Jewish. The gospel “is to the Jew first,” so the Jew must need to be saved through the redemptive work of Christ just like the Gentile. That’s basic.

The church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have been made into one new man through the cross of Christ. But again, that does not do away with either Jews or Gentiles, so Paul reminds us that there are now Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God.

On the other hand, as a nation the Jews remain God’s chosen people—with a special place in God’s plan and special promises to them that pertain to the land of Palestine and the coming kingdom. Jesus was born King of the Jews, and, as the Messiah of Israel, He must reign upon the throne of His father David, as Gabriel stated to Mary. This didn’t happen when He was here the first time, and it will be fulfilled when He returns. Read Zechariah chapters 12-14. Christ returns to this earth, not to Washington, DC or London or Paris, but to Jerusalem, where His feet come down on the Mount of Olives.

Why? To rescue His people Israel, not to rescue the church! Those who survive to this moment (about two-thirds of Israel will have perished) will see Him whom they have pierced and will realize that He is indeed the Messiah for whom they have waited, and will believe that He died for their sins, and be saved and enter into the Kingdom—and He will rule that Millennial Kingdom from Jerusalem.

Granted, some have said it is nonsense to maintain that there is some kind of special provision for the Israelites as a nation and as a people, even when they continue to reject the gift of the cross, but anyone who says that obviously needs to read the Bible more carefully. Israel has had a long history of rejecting God, all through the wilderness and even in the promised land, and God has had to judge them for it, but He has not repudiated His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning their land, and He has sworn that He will not.

QUESTION: Although I understand that miracles are possible even today, why is it that we so rarely encounter what might be called “true miracles”? The Bible says that John the Baptist didn’t do any miracles of his own. But Jesus did many, many miracles when He walked on earth. The Apostles also were enabled to perform miracles, including bringing someone back to life. And Stephen, we are told, “full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.” Have Christians become so weak in the faith that we don’t see true miracles anymore?

RESPONSE: One thing we must remember is that miracles are not necessarily the sign of a true prophet of God. There could be no question about the numerous miracles that Jesus did, but even these did not convince the Jews of the truth He proclaimed. In fact, the convincing quality of His miracles only hardened the hearts of the Pharisees and made them all the more determined to do away with Him! In contrast to the “healers” who are exposed as frauds today, the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus because His miracles were *genuine*! John 11:47, 53 states, “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.”

While it is true that genuine miracles have been a means of helping some people to believe, true faith is a matter of the heart and not the head. Submission to God is a moral issue, not an intellectual one. The “devils [demons] also believe and tremble” (James 2:19), but they still persist in their rebellion. No one needs a miracle to believe in God: Conscience and the witness of creation have already convinced even the professed atheists of that. What we need to be convinced of is that God really loves us and that therefore His way is best. This deep conviction will cause us to surrender willingly and completely into His hands and to love Him with our whole heart. Only then will we obey God for His sake alone and not for what we hope to get out of that relationship. Oswald Chambers quotes Jeremiah 45:5—“Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not” and states, “There is nothing easier than getting into a right relationship with God except when it is not God whom you want

but only what He gives.”

No miracle, no matter how spectacular and convincing, can cause any person to love God or to submit to His will. In fact, miracles very often have just the opposite effect. It was because Jesus did miracles that the multitude wanted to “take him by force, to make him a king” (John 6:15). They had no intention of submitting to His lordship. They wanted a figurehead “king” who could overthrow the Romans, heal them when they were ill, and feed them miraculously when they were hungry. Today this carnal attitude is encouraged by the fund-raising appeals emanating from computers and so many “faith” teachers who would sanctify covetousness by offering “miracles” from God in exchange for “seed-faith” offerings to support their ministries. One expects unbelief from atheists and agnostics, but not from Christians.

There were no doubt many people in the crowd who cried, “Away with him, crucify him!” that fateful day, who had been healed and fed by Jesus but would not accept His indictment of their sin nor His remedy for their souls. Those who once followed Jesus for His miracles eventually turned back and “walked no more with him” (John 6:66) because they would not accept His teaching concerning the giving of His flesh and blood for them.

QUESTION: Many scholars from non-Christian religions (with the obvious exception of Islam) teach that “eternal truth” can be found in all religions. How do you respond to that?

RESPONSE: Did God in the Old Testament ever suggest that Israel be open to hearing or seeing “rays of light” among worshipers of Baal? Did Jesus in the New Testament, or Paul or Peter or anyone else in Scripture, ever suggest that there is “truth” in any religion that worships someone other than the one true God? No! In the Old Testament, God constantly warned the Israelites against intermarrying with the heathen tribes and corrupting their worship with false idolatry. In the New Testament, Christ, Paul, and others warned that they “come out” from the world, renouncing and avoiding corrupting influence. Much of the deception in the world today by Satan begins with small kernels of “truth” that seem harmless, but eventually require a step in the wrong direction, leading one away from the true God.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

A Question of Rewards and Remission of Sin

QUESTION: In Revelation 22:12 Christ says, “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.” What kind of rewards is He talking about?

RESPONSE: Entrance into heaven is not in question here. But what about the *reward* that the Christian will receive in heaven for his or her works done on earth—the crowns we will cast at the feet of our Lord who redeemed us (Revelation 4:10)? Paul explains, “For we must all appear [in heaven] before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done [i.e., works] in his body, according to that he hath done [worked], whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

It is possible to grow cold in one’s love for Christ and to live for self instead of for Him and in His service for others. Such carnality causes the loss not of salvation but of a crown or crowns previously won: “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11). Salvation is by grace alone. The reward received, however, is based upon works, which will be tested and their quality revealed at the judgment seat of Christ.

Paul likens the Christian life to running a race for a prize: “They [athletes] do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible [crown]” (1 Corinthians 9:25). Paul called his converts his crown of rejoicing (Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19). There are other crowns to be earned as well: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8); “Ye shall receive a crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:4); “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

As for verses such as Matthew 5:8 and Hebrews 12:14, Scripture is clear in stating that we cannot by our own efforts attain to a personal holiness or purity that qualifies us for God’s presence. We are purged of sin, not by our own suffering here on earth nor by means of an invented purgatory. It is through faith in Christ and His blood that was

shed for our redemption: “when he [Christ] had by himself purged our sins” (Hebrews 1:3).

John reminds us that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth [purges] us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Of the redeemed during the Great Tribulation period, we are told that they had “washed [purged] their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb [Christ]” (Revelation 7:14). There is no reference here or elsewhere in the Bible to a purging that had occurred in some place called purgatory or by any other means than the shed blood of Christ.

—An excerpt from IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH by
DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

“It is to be remembered that although the apostasy may seem to be very general, yet that even in this darkest hour there are many who preserve their faith in God and in His Son, and who constitute the true Church.... We are told that at a certain juncture of affairs the cry is made: ‘Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sin, and that ye receive not of her plagues’ (Rev. 18:4). Those who heed this warning cry are God’s true witnesses during the antichristian tribulation... even if all outward rites of worship may be forbidden.”

—SAMUEL J. ANDREWS (1899 A.D.)

Conversations With Our Children—Part One

T.A. McMahon

THIS ARTICLE IS about having important biblical conversations with our children. I am the father of five children and the grandfather of five grandchildren. The conversations I desire to have with them include discerning whether or not my children and/or grandchildren fully understand the gospel of Jesus Christ, and discovering whether or not they are able to articulate what the Bible teaches that they must believe in order for them to be saved.

In addition to knowing what our children/grandchildren need to believe in order to be saved, these articles are designed to help them explain *why* they believe what they believe.

Certainly, knowing the “what” of their belief is first and foremost. Sadly, for some, even when their belief is biblically correct, what follows for many is spiritual disaster. They cannot give reasons (“a defense”—NKJV, 1 Peter 3:15) as to *why* they believe what they believe.

What we have been observing over the last couple of generations is that children, even though they have been raised in Christian homes, have become biblically defenseless, especially those who go off to college and must endure being questioned by atheistic friends and bullied by antichrist professors. Consequently, most back away from the faith they once professed.

What follows are potential discussions that may be useful for a born-again grandparent and his or her grandchild or a believing parent and his child. Although the content of the conversation should be simplified in the presentation of essential truths of Scripture, the adult involved needs to thoroughly understand what a child must know and do in order to be saved. That may also be a valuable refresher exercise for some parents and grandparents. Part 2 will expand on the parent and grandparent’s biblical responsibilities for teaching their children.

The conversation I’m suggesting should always be a one-on-one interaction between the adult and the child, the objective being that the adult can hear *directly from the child* what he or she personally believes. This one-on-one condition is recommended in order to avoid distractions for the child, whether they be from siblings or friends,

or from one child simply parroting what another says. Again, the goal is to learn what the individual child *believes*.

The responses given by the child in this conversation are *probable* responses. Hopefully, they provide opportunities to help the child clarify what he actually believes. The initial goal of the questioning is to get the child to articulate what he or she understands about being a Christian.

It’s recommended that the conversations take place often and, preferably, shouldn’t last longer than 5 minutes. (The time, of course, can be adjusted according to the child’s ability to maintain concentration.)

Repetition is encouraged! I try to engage my grandchild (my personal focus in these articles) in one particular brief conversation whenever we get together. It starts with a “gimme five”—as in minutes.

My own grandchildren range in age from two to fourteen. I make it a practice to see the ten-year-old boy and the thirteen-year-old girl every couple of weeks. My two other grandsons live quite a distance from me, so I’m having my son carry out the conversation process with his boys. At times I can have a conversation with each grandchild by phone.

Since this is a work in progress, I tell them that I need their help (which I really do!) in trying to understand what kids their age believe about Jesus, and I want to start with them. I ask them to answer my questions as best they can. I begin with “Are you a Christian?” My grandkids all answer “yes.” I then ask the older ones, “What kind of Christian are you?”

I briefly explain that there are many different kinds of Christians, and they do not all believe the same things. I encourage the older child to refer to himself as a “biblical Christian,” which means his Christianity is based on what is taught in the Bible rather than the religious ideas people make up.

It’s unlikely that the child would answer “no” regarding whether or not he is a Christian, since this conversation is designed primarily for children of those whose parents profess to be Christians. Nevertheless, the “no” response could come up and will be addressed in Part 2 of this series.

Following the answer that the child is “a Christian,” I then ask how he or she *became* a Christian. The most common answers are “because my family is Christian,” “I go to a Christian school,” “my friends are Christians,” “I believe in God,” “I go to church,” “I’m in a Christian youth group,” etc.

It’s really surprising how many of the

answers deviate from the biblical teaching of *how* one becomes a Christian. Even so, no matter how erroneous their answers are, they provide great opportunities for the conversation to introduce what the Bible teaches about how one becomes a Christian.

The opportunity here in the conversation is to explain to the child that becoming a Christian has to do with what he or she *believes*, and it needs to *begin* with what they believe about Jesus. So, my next question to the child is just that: what does he or she believe about Him?

The adult may need to help the child articulate his beliefs in order to clarify what the child actually believes. That, however, has to be done without putting words in the child’s mouth. Answers will vary, but they must contain three biblical truths about Jesus: 1) Jesus is God. 2) Jesus became a Man in order to pay the eternal penalty for the sins of mankind. 3) Jesus, who is sinless, is the only One who could pay the penalty for a person’s sins, which He did through His death, burial, and resurrection.

If the child’s answers are not true to the Word of God, or if he has *no* answers, the adult can introduce him to what he needs to believe about Jesus according to the Scriptures. The answers taught must be simple, and, as stated above, they must contain the three biblical truths about Jesus. That conversation should lead to a discussion about whether or not the child recognizes his own condition as a sinner.

The child should be asked if he or she understands what sin is and what it means to sin. Have him give you an example of a sin that he has committed. If he’s not sure, a good question to ask him is if he has ever disobeyed his mother or father. The adult needs to help the child understand his condition before God, that he is a sinner, and that only Jesus can save him from the penalty for his sins.

The next question for the child is, “Do you *know* what the penalty for sin is?” Explain, then, that the Bible says that sin separates the sinner from God forever. Inform the child that God is a holy God, and Heaven is a holy place where sin cannot enter. God cannot allow anyone who has sinned to be with Him in Heaven.

Since every man, woman, and child has sinned, explain that they are all excluded from ever entering Heaven and being with God. That everlasting separation from God is called Hell, a place of utter darkness and loneliness. That’s the

punishment for sin. In fact, all of humanity would thus be without hope of ever being with God, had God himself not provided a solution.

The next question you ask should be: “Do you know the solution that God has provided?”

Some children may know, while others are not sure. This is another place where the conversation provides the opportunity to teach about the character of God, especially related to His justice and love.

Explain that God is not only holy, He is just, meaning entering Heaven can only take place by the penalty for sin having been paid. That’s referred to as *justice*.

When a person breaks the law, justice requires that he has to pay the penalty that the law requires. When a person sins against God, God’s perfect justice requires the payment for his sin must be made. Since the penalty for sin is separation from God forever, no human can fulfill what the law of God requires so he can be reconciled to God.

God, however, is also a loving God, meaning He does not want those whom He created to be separated from Him forever. In view of God being perfect in justice and love, ask the child what he believes was the solution that God provided in order to save mankind.

If the child is still unsure of God’s solution, that presents a great opportunity to go through the John 3:16 verse with him or her: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

This opens the conversation to some great things about God, along with some critical questions. First of all, we see that God is a loving God who loves those whom He created. Refer back to John 3:16, “Who is God’s Son that He sent? and what did He do?”

Here’s where the child’s answers usually come together for him during the conversation, especially if he’s been comprehending what his parent or grandparent has been informing him about what the Bible teaches.

I would expect him to respond that “The Son of God is Jesus” and that “Jesus died on the cross in order to pay the penalty for mankind’s sins.”

Remember, this is a conversation with your child or grandchild. It shouldn’t be perceived by the child as a pass-or-fail test. The questions are for the purpose of seeing

through the child’s eyes what he or she understands and supplying information that the child needs to know.

A following question might be, “What must you do in order to receive what Jesus did for you?” The child’s response must be that he simply *believes* that Jesus did what the Bible says He did: He paid the punishment for sin for everyone who puts his faith in Him.

This point needs to be made absolutely clear to the child. There is nothing that can be added by the child to what Jesus accomplished on the cross in payment for the child’s sins. Salvation is received by faith alone!

Sometimes we forget that the very *terms* we use need to be explained to the child. “Salvation” and “being saved” are good examples. The conversation should have its share of what some of the words we use mean. “Being saved,” for example, can be made clear as one who is simply being forgiven and spared from the punishment for his or her sins.

The conversation should include not only what a believing child is saved *from*, but also what the child is saved *for*. That can be discussed by asking him or her if they understand what took place after they believed that Jesus saved them.

As I mentioned at the beginning, this conversation with our children should take place as often as possible. The sessions need to be brief, with no attempts made to cover all the points in each session. There needs to be repetition, and it should be made enjoyable, even fun!

These conversations with our children and grandchildren are not only to make sure they understand the gospel but also to realize that it’s a *relationship building procedure* with the child that will have temporal and (far more importantly) eternal value. In addition to the emphasis on things the child needs to understand, the way the parent or grandparent goes about implementing the program must reflect his or her love of Jesus and thankfulness for all He has done for us. The significance of that impression upon a child cannot be overstated!

In terms of the conversations being fun (perhaps “joyful” is a better choice of words), the question related to what takes place after Jesus saves the child is nothing but good news! The child can draw upon what he knew prior to the conversation, add things that he may not have known (e.g., eternal life with Jesus), and the adult can add things for the child that the Bible says

takes place once a child is saved.

For example, once salvation has taken place, the child’s sins are completely forgiven. He receives the free gift of eternal life. The child is born again and sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of eternal life. The Holy Spirit indwells the child, enabling him or her to live the Christian life according to God’s instructions.

All of the above constitutes much of the “*what*” that a child should know about being saved! Without an understanding and acceptance of the *what* of the gospel, the child cannot be saved.

More often than not, a child has only heard that he must ask Jesus into his heart. That’s true, but it must be based upon the knowledge of who Jesus is and what He accomplished on the cross (see 1-3). Although the parents or grandparents cannot know the heart of their children regarding their acceptance of the gospel, they can discern what the child understands or—misunderstands—about the doctrine of salvation.

This document is primarily about making sure the child’s understanding of the doctrine of salvation is true to the Scriptures. A false understanding of the gospel can save no one.

Both the “*what*” and the “*why*” are necessary if a child is to defend and/or share his beliefs with others.

I’m very thankful for parents and grandparents who have done their best to raise their children and grandchildren in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.” That has supplied for multitudes of children the “*What?*” necessary for their salvation. However, as I mentioned, a serious condition has developed for many young Christians that has caused them to be shaken in their faith.

Few young Christians today can explain why they believe what they believe. They are not able, as I mentioned, to satisfy 1 Peter 3:15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

Consequently, when they are asked about their beliefs, their responses are nearly always personal and subjective, lacking reasons that would refute the objections of others, or encourage those to believe what they believe. That’s the subject of Part 2 of “Conversations with Our Children.”

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have heard others teach that water baptism is an essential part of New Testament salvation, and that without proper baptism it is impossible to enter into the Kingdom of God. Is this true?

RESPONSE: I do not believe that this teaching can be substantiated from the Bible; I know of no verses that support it. On the contrary, Paul tells us that he didn't baptize any of the Corinthians; then he corrects himself and says that he does remember that he baptized a few of them, but hardly any—Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, but if there were any others, Paul doesn't remember: "I know not whether I baptized any other" (1 Corinthians 1:14-16).

Surely if baptism were essential to salvation, he would have been more careful about this. "Well," you might say, "someone else did the baptizing so they did get baptized." This is possible, but Paul calls himself their father and explains what that means: "...for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15). They have been born again into Christ, Paul was the means of their salvation, and it happened through the gospel but *without baptism*. If baptism were essential, he could not have called himself the father through whom they were begotten in Christ Jesus, because he hadn't baptized them! Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were saved through his preaching of the gospel, and explains what the gospel declares: "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day..." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

We also are saved through believing the gospel, and only through believing the gospel. Paul declares repeatedly: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). Again, this says nothing about baptism being any part of the gospel. In fact, Paul goes so far as to state, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 1:17). Clearly, he distinguishes between baptism and the gospel.

QUESTION: What is the technique that is referred to as "mind-mapping"? Is it legitimate or is it considered an occult technique?

RESPONSE: The concept of mind mapping is interesting, and introduces some good suggestions for organizing one's efforts to prepare a talk, to increase the efficiency of a discussion group or board meeting, or for other pursuits of a similar nature. The

terminology, however, is very misleading. "Mind mapping" has nothing whatsoever to do with mapping one's mind, using both sides of the brain, or with tapping into that "90 percent" of our brain that we allegedly never use.

There *are* no brain cells lying around idle. The entire brain is being used *continuously*, though not all at one time, because different parts of the brain are involved in different processes and functions. Some make references to "brain power," but what does that mean? Are we talking about intelligence? If so, then according to at least one article, each of us is potentially 1,000 times more intelligent than we ever act—and greater intelligence simply involves turning up the power level in the brain.

That theory is absurd. Such "experts" seem to equate "brain" with "mind," which is a common fallacy. One is physical and the other is mental, and, in fact, spiritual. The brain is neither intelligent nor does it even think. It is merely the computer that the mind uses to control the body in order to interface with the physical universe. As for using both sides of the brain, this is another popular fallacy that not only the human potential gurus use but even some Christian leaders (psychologists in particular) have mistakenly adopted. It offers an appealing substitute for the biblical solution to human problems. Developing (what does that even mean?) or using the right side of the brain has nothing to do with being loving or kind, which are spiritual qualities. Some charismatics have even suggested that developing the right side of the brain will help one to speak in tongues, work miracles, etc.

Actual scientists who were involved in research on the left/right brain functions call such delusions "whole-brained half-wittedness." Yet many Christian "counselors" promote this apostasy as scientific fact.

QUESTION: I believe the Bible condemns infidelity of any kind, especially that of a sexual nature. Nonetheless, we see so much of it in our society today! Whether churches have dropped the ball is another question entirely, but I do know that we can't simply stand back, point fingers, and shout simple answers. What is the single most effective, positive concept that you would try to communicate to young people (and older folks as well!) with respect to the sexual temptations that surround them—especially those who know right from wrong but make bad choices anyway?

RESPONSE: We must keep in mind an unchanging perspective on eternity. This

life is so very short, and any person is a fool who barter eternity for a few moments of pleasure that leave a bitter taste and remorse even in this life.

Not long ago, I was counseling with a young couple; he wanted to divorce her because she no longer seemed as beautiful and attractive to him as she once had. (Frankly, I thought that, based upon physical attraction, she would have been the one to divorce him.) However, as I mentioned to them both, decisions depend upon the values we have set. I told him that if he found the most beautiful woman in the world and had a few years of pleasure with her, in the end it would all turn to gravel. There are lasting values to consider that are far more important than temporary pleasure.

Even to the unsaved person who has some ethical standards the same is true. What about honor and commitment? What about the promises that have been made? In the long run, we will find longer lasting, deeper satisfaction, and more genuine joy at having been true to our commitments and having obeyed God and His Word, keeping our promises, and having lived for truth and honor! How could any temporary pleasure make up for the lasting regret one would have at knowing that honor and truth and commitment and righteousness had been trampled?

So it is in our daily lives in our relationship with our Lord. I think we often put a selfish interpretation on the scripture that says of Jesus, "For the joy that was set before Him, he endured the cross, despising the shame..." We think it was the pleasure of having us in His presence, and I'm sure that played a part. However, I am certain from the Word of God that the real joy set before Him was knowing that He had fulfilled His Father's will; that He had been true to His commitment—to His purpose for coming into this world and had pleased His Father.

There is no greater joy for any of us in the final analysis than knowing that we have done God's will, that we have pleased Him, that we have been true to His Word, to His love, and that we have responded in kind to His grace and commitment to us. I think if we keep these things in mind it helps stabilize our Christian life, gives us a real purpose and joy in simply being and saying and doing what He has planned for us. And that is a joy that will be ours for all eternity. At the same time, anything that violates these eternal truths brings only a temporary pleasure but a lasting remorse.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

The Blood of Jesus Christ Cleanses Us from all Sin

QUESTION: How is it possible for us to be redeemed from our sin? How can we know for certain that we are truly saved?

RESPONSE: Matthew 5:8 and Hebrews 9:22 make it clear that we cannot by our own efforts attain to a personal holiness or purity that would qualify us for God's presence. The Bible tells us that "without the shedding of blood is no remission of [purging of sin]." Moreover, the blood shed must be that of a perfectly pure and sinless sacrifice, making it impossible for a sinner to cleanse himself by suffering for his own sins in purgatory or anywhere else.

We are assured that Christ was the "Lamb of God" (John 1:2, 36) "without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter:1:19; see also Exodus 12:5, Ezekiel 46:, etc.). It was by the shedding of His blood alone that we could be purged of our sin. Peter declared, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, [He} the just for [us] the unjust, that he might bring us to God [not to purgatory]" (1 Peter 3:18).

The false doctrine of purgatory keeps Catholics in bondage, dependent upon their Church and her rituals instead of upon Christ for salvation. As a consequence, the Catholic has no assurance of ever reaching heaven because the Roman Catholic Church can never declare how many Masses must be said for the dead in order to release them from purgatory. If the death of Christ was not sufficient, then who can say that even an infinite number of representations thereof in the Mass will ever bring anyone to heaven?

In fact, there is a fatal deficiency in the Mass. It is called "an unbloody" "perpetuation of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. That fact alone robs it of any efficacy. Denying the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice of 1,900-plus years ago a completed past event, the *Baltimore Catechism* states, "In the Mass Christ continues to offer Himself to the Father as He did on the Cross" but in an "unbloody manner under the appearance of bread and wine."

Calvary was a very bloody scene. How there could be an unbloody repetition or continuation thereof is not explained. Furthermore, as already noted, the Bible distinctly says that "without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sins]" (Hebrews 9:22). Yet the "unbloody" Mass is Catholicism's means of providing to its members remission of sins—a remission that Christ already accomplished on the Cross and therefore is not needed by those who have come to and trust in Him for salvation.

The Bible says, "And he took the cup...saying...this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed [on the Cross] for many for the remission [purging] of sins. (Matthew 26:28).

And: "To him [Christi]give all the prophets witness, that...whosoever believeth in him shall receive [as a gift of God's grace] remission [purging] of sins. (Acts 10:43).

Contradicting the Bible, Catholicism says that although Christ endured the *eternal* punishment for sin, we must personally suffer the *temporal* punishment to become pure enough to enter heaven. Not only does the doctrine of purgatory contradict the Bible, but there is an obvious contradiction within the dogma itself. Christ's death, it is said, couldn't purify us because the purification essential for admission to heaven requires us to *personally suffer* for our sins.

It is also taught that after our death, the celebration of the Masses, the recitation of rosaries, the good deeds and suffering of the living on our behalf (such as the stigmata of a Padre Pio), and other means in obedience to the Church can reduce or even eliminate purgatorial suffering entirely. Indeed, “Our Lady of Mount Carmel” promises to personally release from purgatory and escort into heaven all those who, having met certain other conditions, died wearing her scapular!

So we see that the faithful Catholic doesn’t have to *personally suffer* after all! Here is a contradiction so serious that it undermines the entire doctrine of purgatory. Amazingly, what Christ’s redemptive death on the Cross couldn’t accomplish, the repetition of the Mass or rosary, penance, good works, etc., can allegedly accomplish in relieving those in purgatory of the necessity of suffering at all.

In contrast, the Word of God, for those who believe it, gives absolute assurance that the blood of Jesus Christ “cleanses us from *all* sin” (1 John 1:7). No further purification is necessary nor is it possible. Our confidence is in God, in His Word, His promises, but not in any church or religious system, no matter how ancient or large.

—*An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH
by DAVE HUNT

QUOTABLE

“It is to be remembered that although the apostasy may seem to be very general, yet that even in this darkest hour there are many who preserve their faith in God and in His Son, and who constitute the true Church.... We are told that at a certain juncture of affairs the cry is made: ‘Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sin, and that ye receive not of her plagues’ (Rev. 18:4). Those who heed this warning cry are God’s true witnesses during the antichristian tribulation...even if all outward rites of worship may be forbidden.”

—SAMUEL J. ANDREWS (1899 A.D.)

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Conversations With Our Children—Part Two

T.A. McMahon

THE OBJECTIVE OF this series is two-fold: 1) To assess what our children believe about the gospel, and, 2) To see if they can confidently give honest reasons for why they believe what they believe regarding the biblical faith they profess.

I've written these articles from the perspective of a grandfather who has the blessed opportunity of interacting with some of his grandchildren quite often. By God's grace, all my children are walking with the Lord, so I've joined forces with my kids in helping them with the spiritual development of their *own* kids. I'm confident that my children can do quite well in bringing their kids up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Nevertheless, adding grandparents who love Jesus to the mix can and does speak volumes to grandchildren.

Considering the times in which my wife and I raised our five children in contrast to what's taking place today, simply put: there is *no* comparison. In the nearly half-a-century since the birth of our firstborn, our country has become exponentially darkened, and overtly so. Tragically, Christendom has abandoned what flicker of light it had just a while ago, having willingly entered into the world in its ways and means.

How bad are things today? To borrow a phrase from 2 Timothy 3:1: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Noah Webster defines "perilous" in his 1828 Bible-oriented dictionary as "Dangerous; hazardous; full of risk; as a *perilous* undertaking." Our times are definitely that—and worse.

Satan is more than aware that children are terribly vulnerable, and that awareness is no secret among his minions, both spiritual entities and his human yet unwitting followers. As I've noted previously, youth have been instrumental in initiating the major revolutions throughout history. Hitler, Mao, and Stalin worked that angle with much success. One of the reasons, as the Scriptures inform us, is because though zeal among youth may begin well, without biblical knowledge it cannot end well.

Sadly, children today not only lack knowledge, but they are emotionally driven, making them ripe for being controlled by someone or something else. The fierce battle for the control of our children is the chief undertaking of the times in which

we live. Although this is the losing situation in which we find ourselves, it should not take place among Bible-believing Christians.

What is the problem...or problems?

The Barna survey organization gives some insights and makes the following observations in its report addressing "The worldview dilemma of American parents."

The report was based on "a survey of 600 American parents with children younger than 13 conducted in January [2022]. The respondents were asked several-dozen worldview-related questions that 'measure both beliefs and behavior within eight categories of worldview application.'

"While 67 percent of parents with children younger than 13 identified as Christians, just 2 percent of those surveyed subscribed to a biblical worldview as defined by the researchers. According to the report, a biblical worldview 'emerges from accepting the Bible as a relevant and authoritative guide for life.'

"Among the two-thirds of parents who identify as Christian, just 4 percent of them possessed a biblical worldview.

"A parent's primary responsibility is to prepare a child for the life God intends for that child,' Barna, the director of research... said in a statement. 'A crucial element in nurturing is helping the child develop a biblical worldview—the filter that causes a person to make their choices in harmony with biblical teachings and principles.' According to Barna...the 'research confirms that very few parents even have the worldview development of their children on their radar.'

"The typical American parent is either fully unaware that there is a worldview development process, or they are aware that their child is developing a worldview, but they do not take responsibility for a role in the process,' he said." ("Parents lack of biblical worldview puts children at 'spiritual disadvantage' Barna warns," *Christian Post* 3/14/22)

Does the Bible exhort us regarding our responsibility to teach our children the ways of the Lord? Yes—over and over again!

Deuteronomy 6:2: "That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged."

Deuteronomy 6:6-7: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt

teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Second Timothy 1:5: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."

Second Timothy 3:15: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

See also: Deuteronomy 6:20; 2 John 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:4,12; Ephesians 5:1,6,8; Ephesians 6:1,4; Colossians 3:6,20,21; Galatians 4:19; 1 Corinthians 14:20; Luke 18:16; Mark 10:14; Mark 9:27; Matthew 19:13-14; 18:3, 10:21.

As was pointed out in Part 1, our children need to know and understand what they believe from the Scriptures that constitutes a *requirement* for salvation. Although a parent or grandparent cannot know for certain if the child has taken to heart what he or she professes to believe, they *can know* whether or not the stated belief is true to the Word of God, and they should be able to ascertain whether what he or she professes can serve as an encouragement regarding the child's salvation.

If a child or grandchild refuses to participate in the conversation process, that shouldn't stop the adult from loving him and praying for him, as well as continuing in a godly way to build his relationship with him. Coercing a child is counterproductive at best in this recommended process.

What's ahead for a child whose answers seem to indicate that he *is* saved? Challenging times may lie ahead for him. He may have difficulty sharing his faith if he cannot explain why he believes what he believes. The Bible gives all believers this exhortation: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be ready always* to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15; italics added).

The Word of God is God's truth, and it gives believers *hundreds* of reasons to believe it is just that—*God's* truth. Our biblical faith is *founded* on reasons to believe it! It's not a leap in the dark. It isn't based on, nor is it driven by, emotions or feelings. That doesn't mean that we should

deny the fact that emotions or feelings are involved in our born-again experience. This is something that takes place when a believer begins his personal—intimate—relationship with Jesus.

Although an observer may be impressed by seeing these changes in the believer, the changes themselves are subjective, not supported by empirical or convincing evidence. There is no shortage of *proofs* in the Word of God.

Committing one's life to Christ should involve solid reasons. Certainly, that's indicated by Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This means that what the gospel declares objectively must be proven through transformed lives.

Our believing children face another challenge that is overtaking most of them. When they leave home, they have to contend with fellow students and teachers who are antagonistic toward their biblical beliefs. Very few can "defend" (1 Peter 3:15) their beliefs. That's a major part of today's tragedy, as our young people are being overwhelmed by the antichrist teachings of the world, the devious devices of the devil, and their own lack of biblical knowledge. Shipwrecked faith is the terrible outcome.

Nevertheless, conversations with our children can help many to defend their faith. The approach is the same as helping the child understand (by asking him questions) what he needs to believe in order to be saved. But this time, the emphasis is on *apologetics*, i.e., *proofs* for what the child believes. *Are there proofs?* Absolutely!

As noted in Part 1, the parents and grandparents may have their work cut out for them when it comes to supplying their children and grandchildren with biblical answers regarding the "what" and "why" of their beliefs. If you don't think you're up to the task, you need to reread the verses on teaching your children/grandchildren that are listed above. It's a responsibility, not an option.

Although it may seem that there is no end to the questions for the child to deal with—whether hostile or from friends truly interested in why they believe what they believe—I've suggested a few of my questions for them to answer, questions that they may get from others. Hopefully, the conversation will be an exercise in helping the child get accustomed to answering biblical questions, especially among their

peers. In addition, the process of discussing some topics ought to build their confidence in "the faith to which they are to earnestly contend" (Jude 3).

Given the days of apostasy that seem to be increasing exponentially, encouraging our children to grow in biblical discernment is critical. How critical? As has been pointed out, children are a chief target of the Adversary. One example (among hundreds!) is given by a friend of mine, Carl Teichrib, in his book, *Game of Gods*, regarding the promotion of "Earth Day." Throughout the US our school children are taught that we are destroying our "Mother," Gaia, a.k.a. Mother Earth. They're told *they* are the only ones who can save "Her." How? Through worshipping the planet as divine. Through stopping overpopulation (read "abortion"). Through conserving our natural resources (the Green Movement). Through ending the country's belief in the teachings of Christianity, which are declared to be the main reasons for the besetting environmental problems of the earth!

Few Christian children are prepared to answer such false promotions and accusations. Most are intimidated, and consequently overwhelmed, by the lies thrown at them. My approach, which is definitely not the only approach, is to help build some basic apologetics with my grandchild. Again, I begin with questions that they may be asked or confronted by, for which I suggest an answer (unless they already have a good answer, which I then reinforce). Here are some of the questions:

"How do you know there's a God? Why do you believe that the Bible is God's Word? How do you know that Jesus is God? How can you be sure that your belief is the only true spiritual belief? Why is Jesus the only way of salvation? If Jesus is God, and the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, does that mean that you believe in three Gods?"

As you are probably aware, the questions and topics are seemingly endless. Therefore, the goal is to get the child used to responding to questions about his faith.

He or she won't be able to answer every question (I can't!), but the more they can, the more confident they will become regarding God's Word. It's a good thing to remind them that they are responding from the high ground—God's Word—which is *the Truth*.

Here is a sample of conversations I have with my grandchildren, trying to keep it simple.

Question: How do you know there's a God?

Response: Just by looking at your own body! It contains about 100 trillion cells, each cell having its own special function. It's a mathematical impossibility for that to have come about by chance. So, a human's body must have been created by a Designer of incredible intellect and power! Only God fits that description.

Question: What makes you think the Bible is God's communication to mankind?

Response: First, that's what the Bible claims, and it gives hundreds of examples. Second, if God is infinite (which the Bible also claims,) and we are finite (which we are, as created beings), no one can know God unless He reveals Himself to mankind. The Bible fills us in on the details from God about God.

Question: I've been told that the Bible is full of contradictions. What do you say to that?

Response: Do you believe everything you've been told? Have you read the Bible yourself? Give me an example of a biblical contradiction.

Question: Doesn't evolution prove the Bible wrong? Aren't the Bible's teachings opposed to science?

Response: First, give me an example of just one thing that can be proven about evolution. Second, give me an example of a biblical teaching that is opposed to true science. Since God is the Creator of all things, and since true science came about by studying His design, then opposing true science would be a biblical contradiction. Most of the world's greatest scientists were biblical Christians.

Again, these are only a handful of possible questions a child, especially the older ones leaving home for college, may use to challenge those who doubt. Biblical Christians, as I said, have the high ground of God's truth, so I recommend that they respond by putting their hostile questioners on the defensive by responding with questions of their own—and perhaps, not always, planting seeds of God's Word that may well pierce the heart of the most arrogant challenger. Remember—lies can never trump the truth.

My prayer for these two articles is that they might encourage readers to reach out in ministering the Word of God to their children and/or grandchildren. In loving them, we can do no better than to love them *in the Lord in word and in deed*. I pray that our witness to them will reveal our love for them and reflect our love for Jesus, who first loved us, a fact that He made evident by paying the eternal penalty for our sins. **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I don't see how anyone can spend his time reading and screening all the books that Christians may read. I don't know how far one is obligated to explain what the Word means to those who are in error. In my own experience, nothing anyone could tell me would have made any difference until God himself opened my heart. How do you handle all this?

RESPONSE: We don't spend all or even a large percentage of our time trying to screen everything being printed or tracking down every heresy rearing its head in the church. Our work would be impossible were it not for the many "Bereans" around the world who act as our eyes and ears and pass along their concerns and useful information.

As for one's obligation to point out error and persuade others of the truth, most of the New Testament and much of the Old (certainly the major and minor prophets and the epistles) was written for that very purpose. Paul corrected Peter publicly, named those who were leading others astray, and continually combated error in his epistles. We must do the same, if we are to obey God's Word and "earnestly contend for the faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Paul said that the Bible was given for "doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), and he exhorted Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (4:2).

Christ himself set the example we must follow. He was gentle with those who had been deceived but sternly rebuked the rabbis who had perverted God's Word by false teaching, and He did so publicly. As for the unsaved, Paul disputed daily in the synagogues and in the marketplace (Acts 17:17), doing all he could to "persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). Yes, only the Holy Spirit can convict and convert the soul, but He is pleased to use us as His instruments. What a responsibility and privilege we have!

QUESTION: Some writers claim that a Christian can be demon possessed. Do you agree with this?

RESPONSE: Concerning demonization of Christians, I'm not sure what that might mean, but I don't find it in the Bible. I have spoken with those who can recite amazing stories from experience, but when I ask them for either biblical doctrine or example, they can give neither. Usually, they also admit that it can't be supported from Scripture, but they then say that we must therefore look to experience. But experience that has no example in the Bible is

dangerous and should not be relied upon. Of course, the Bible doesn't include every kind of experience to which man is subject, but for something as important as demonization of a Christian the Lord would surely give us careful directions.

The Bible contains *many* examples of the demonization/deliverance of *unbelievers*, yet *not one* example involving a believer. This fact is practically conclusive evidence against the alleged modern experience of the latter. And to say that since the Bible doesn't specifically state that a believer can get cancer, and therefore it need not state specifically that a believer can be demonized, simply doesn't follow—the analogy fails.

Moreover, I can tell of believers who were confused and harmed by allegedly being "exorcised." It seemed real and convincing to them at the time, involving even the manifestation of other voices speaking out of them. Looking back on the experience later, however, they concluded that under the power of suggestion they had been hypnotized to act that way but that actually there had been no demons involved (although hypnosis can open one to demonic influence).

Some people also claim that demonization is no different for a believer than falling into sin. If that is the case, why are there no examples in Scripture when there are plenty of examples of believers sinning? We can no more show from Scripture that demonization is theologically in the same category as falling into sin than we can show demonization of believers in the Bible.

If anyone has really gotten information from demons, then that person has embraced "doctrines of demons," much of which was learned from demons themselves, who are "lying spirits." That is a major weakness in many such claims—what can't be supported from the Bible is justified because "demons said so." Gathering information from demons is forbidden in the Bible.

QUESTION: I have often heard you say that God does not bestow spiritual gifts through physical means, but only through spiritual means. This is logical, but I have a question. Why then did Jesus tell His apostles in Mark 9:29, when they were unable to drive out a particularly stubborn unclean spirit, that "this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting"? This seems to contradict your position.

RESPONSE: Prayer is certainly not a "physical means." Nor is prayer a magic technique that frightens demons away. Prayer is petitioning God to intervene, while at the

same time submitting to His will rather than trying to impose one's will upon Him. Nor could fasting be a "physical means" unless it were the direct or indirect *cause* of obtaining answers to prayer.

Fasting has no such powers and does not appease God or earn from Him an answer to prayer. In prayer, man humbles himself before God. Fasting adds to that humility (Psalm 35:13). It also demonstrates one's earnestness by setting aside the normal desire and need for food, and the time required for eating, in order to more completely devote oneself to petitioning God. The humility of submission to and dependence upon God for His mercy is further demonstrated by clothing oneself in "sackcloth and ashes," as practiced at times in the past along with fasting (Esther 4:1,3; Jeremiah 6:26; Daniel 9:3; Jonah 3:6, and Matthew 11:21). Scripture says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Fasting is a mark of fervency; it is not a physical means of obtaining a spiritual gift.

QUESTION: I have heard you say on a few occasions that all babies and children are saved. I do not dispute this, but could you show me some scripture that would back up that statement?

RESPONSE: The sense of justice we have in our conscience assures us that God would not send to hell to suffer eternally for sin innocent babies who were never conscious of having sinned. In that regard, surely we can rely upon Abraham's pleadings with God not to "slay the righteous with the wicked," his appeal, "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" and God's apparent agreement (Genesis 18:25). We also have David's statement regarding his dead baby son: "But now he is dead. . . I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). Surely David is in heaven, so his baby son must be there also, otherwise how could David "go to him"?

Christ's attitude toward, and His statements regarding small children, give us additional assurance of their salvation: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mark 10:14). "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). Although I don't fully understand the latter statement about "their angels," it seems to indicate a relationship with God during their innocence. Furthermore, everyone must "receive the kingdom of God as a little child" (Mark 10:15).



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Do Some Christians “Not Quite Make It” to Heaven?

QUESTION: Jesus warned that many who thought they were God’s children would be “cast into outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12; 22:13, 25:30). In fact, Matthew 24:50-51 says that “the lord of that [evil] servant . . . shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Are these “servants” carnal Christians who must be in an outer courtyard of heaven for a time while the more spiritual Christians go directly into God’s presence? How can I have assurance of being taken immediately upon death (or the Rapture) into God’s presence?

RESPONSE: Assurance of salvation does not depend upon the believer’s good works, but upon Christ’s finished work upon the Cross. One is either a Christian or not a Christian, saved or lost. There are not two levels of Christians, the lower of which must spend some time in an intermediary state of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth (like the Catholic purgatory) before they are allowed into heaven. Such an idea cannot be found in the Bible (Luke 12:46).

It is apparent that Christ’s words here have a double meaning that can be applied both to Jew and Gentiles. Abraham’s physical descendants are by birth potentially children of the Davidic kingdom and can thus be called “servants” in a way not true for Gentiles. But unless they have the same relationship with God through faith in Christ that Abraham had, they will be lost forever.

The weeping and gnashing of teeth Christ warns of is the weeping and agony of the damned. We have an example of this weeping on the part of the rich man in Luke 16, who sees Lazarus afar off with Abraham in bliss while he is in torment. That those who are cast into “outer darkness” are not, and never were, true believers (though they may have posed even as Christian leaders) is clear from these words of Christ:

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I

profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:22-23).

—An excerpt from *In Defense of the Faith* by Dave Hunt

QUOTABLE

“O Lord Jesus, How continually Thou hast to reprove us for our unbelief! How strange it must appear to Thee, this terrible incapacity of trusting our Father and His promises. Lord! Let Thy reproof, with its searching, ‘Because of your unbelief,’ sink into the very depths of our hearts, and reveal to us how much of the sin and suffering around us is our blame. And then teach us, Blessed Lord, that there is a place where faith can be learned and gained—even in the prayer and fasting that brings us into living and abiding in fellowship with Thyself and the Father.... Do at length teach us the mystery of Thy life in us, and how Thou, by Thy Spirit, dost undertake to live in us the life of faith, to see that our faith shall not fail.... Teach us how, in fasting and prayer, we may grow up to the faith to which nothing shall be impossible. Amen.”

—Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School OF Prayer*

Israel and Prophetic Proof— Part One

Dave Hunt

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“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them....And they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.”

—AMOS 9:14-15

ABOUT 250 YEARS AGO, the King of Sweden had troubling doubts about whether the Bible was really true in every word. He asked Count von Zinzendorf, bishop of the Moravian Church, to give him proof that the Bible was truly inspired of God. The King had set aside 10 hours to hear what might be said. To his majesty’s surprise, Zinzendorf informed him that the time allotted was far too much. He only needed to say one word. Astonished, the King asked what that could be. The Count replied, “Jews.”

Today we would add one more word, “Israel.” In Zinzendorf’s day, that tiny and beleaguered nation, born on May 14, 1948, did not exist except in the hearts of Zionists who had never given up awaiting the fulfillment of the “God of Israel’s” solemn promises. The continued existence of Israel today, surrounded by more than a billion Muslims who have sworn to exterminate her and who continually plot and repeatedly attack her in the attempt to do so, is one of the most astonishing miracles of modern times.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has blessed the Jewish people with a brilliance that generally far exceeds the norm.

In the Jewish population of 14 million (one hundredth of the Arab world) there are 165 Nobelists: 51 for Medicine, 45 for Physics, 27 for Chemistry, 22 for Economics, 11 for Literature, and 9 for Peace. This is astonishing!

Supporting the amazing facts surrounding Israel, there are literally dozens of biblical prophecies foretelling her sudden rise to become the world’s premiere military power, the persistent attacks upon her from Muslim nations, and the fear of Israel that grips hostile Arab neighbors today. Yes, well might they fear her. Israel could wipe them out very quickly if she chose to do so. Instead, she has all too patiently endured their outspoken hatred, insults, repeated open threats of extermination, persistent

rocket and terrorist attacks, and their continued feverish efforts to build the nuclear capability to destroy her.

Israel’s patience ends when the threat becomes too dangerous. As it was with Syria, that may soon be the case with Iran, which is hoping one day to launch a nuclear attack on Israel. Iran would then become the hero of the Islamic world. If such an attack became possible, it would force Israel to preemptively destroy Iran’s nuclear facilities, as it did after Syria’s attempt to develop nuclear capabilities.

For months, by satellite, Israel followed ship after ship from North Korea as they landed in Syria and watched the convoys of trucks as they discharged their cargo in a “secret” desert destination. She patiently watched the construction of a nuclear facility disguised as a “cement plant” and ridiculously surrounded by the latest Russian radar and surface-to-air missiles. The evidence was shown to President George W. Bush, including photos taken inside the facility and missiles and radar protecting the unusual “cement.”¹ (Condoleezza Rice, whose “Replacement Theology” prevents her from being a true friend of Israel, was not consulted. The State Department has long been the enemy of Israel.)

With Bush’s tacit approval, Israeli planes went in and destroyed the nuclear facility along with the latest Russian protection surrounding it. How did Israeli planes pierce these sophisticated defenses? They are not sharing that secret with anyone, least of all with our “friends” in the State Department.

These current events, like so many others, have been foretold in the Bible. In spite of their accuracy, critics deny their relevance. Some claim to be former Christians. One can only wonder what kind of “Christians” they were to remain in such complete ignorance of the Bible while pretending to know it so well. Gary Lenaire, for example, says that he “spent 15 years in the church...released nine contemporary Christian music albums, was nominated for six Gospel Music Awards...preached the gospel...around the world [and] served as a voluntary Chaplain for the Military Department.”² He writes in *An Infidel Manifesto*:

Biblical prophecy is perhaps the most powerful tool for religious delusion.... Look at any so-called prophecies in scripture: the wording is so general that you could attach almost any event and say, “Look, this is a fulfilled prophecy!” That is exactly why there are thousands of people today saying

that they are witnessing prophecies being fulfilled in our generation.... Most of the so-called prophecies were never intended...as prophetic in the first place...the words are so general you could make them to mean almost anything. Take a look at them without the dogma of your local preacher.³

This is so pitiful that it is embarrassing. This “expert on Bible prophecy” offers little more than inexcusable ignorance and prejudice. He says, “any so-called prophecies.” While some prophecies are difficult to understand, there are *hundreds* that clearly have been fulfilled to the letter and some are still in the process of being fulfilled.

“So general you could make them to mean almost anything”? In fact, they are so specific that Lenaire’s statements would be laughable were they not influencing so many to turn from God.

Here is one of numerous prophecies (circa 600 BC), of which the specificity cannot be denied. “Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them...” (See Jeremiah 16:14-15; 23:7-8).

Notice the detailed prophetic elements. As the deliverance from “the land of Egypt,” spoken of in the book of Exodus, was what Jews looked back to each year in the Passover as a reminder of God’s love and power, that event would fade from its prominence in their minds to be replaced by something more recent. The prophecy has two distinct parts: 1) a confirmation of many previous prophecies that the Jews were going to be led captive into “every nation” (Luke 21:24), and 2) their eventual deliverance and return to Israel would almost eclipse from the national memory their deliverance from Egypt. And so it has happened.

The great proof that the Bible repeatedly offers of its veracity is the fact that God, through His prophets, tells what will happen centuries and even thousands of years in advance. There is no arguing with the precise detail and accuracy of any of the Bible’s hundreds of prophecies. Yet, Lenaire, in typical atheist fashion, declared that most prophecies were so general that one could make them mean almost anything. Not so!

Lenaire is either deliberately attempting to mislead his readers, or he is displaying

an abysmal ignorance. Most prophecies are, in fact, so specific that no one could argue with their meaning.

In Joel 3:2 (circa 800 BC), God declared that the day was coming when all nations would join to divide the land of Israel: “I will also gather all nations...and will plead with them [punish them] for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and *parted my land*” (emphasis added).

This is remarkable! Throughout its entire 3,000-plus-year history, the land of Israel had never been divided. It had been conquered by various nations, but even when the Turks held it as part of their Ottoman Empire for 400 years, they did not divide the land. A conqueror keeps the land he has conquered intact for himself. Why divide it?

This division of Israel has occurred only in our day. Britain, which had been placed in charge of “Palestine” by the allied forces who had conquered it in World War I, had been given the mandate by the League of Nations to see that this land should remain as a refuge for the Jews, who had been scattered everywhere.

Instead of fulfilling this mandate, Britain gave about 75 percent of the land to the Arab Muslims in exchange for oil. In 1947, the United Nations, through Resolution 181 and in fulfillment of Joel 3:2, formalized this breach of trust. Israel finally received a mere 13 percent of what they had been promised. This is now history. Britain and the UN infamously fulfilled Joel 3:2 and parted God’s land.

The God of Israel, knowing all that would happen, had warned in advance that He would avenge Himself for this brazen robbery of His people. After being attacked by Muslim nations, who were following Allah’s edict through Muhammad that all Jews must be destroyed, Israel, in self-defense recaptured some of this land.

Christ himself made a number of prophecies before His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Like many other Hebrew prophets, Christ foretold the scattering of Jews all over the earth and the coming Great Tribulation (Luke 21:24-26). Also in Luke 21:24, there is a remarkable and very specific prophecy concerning Jerusalem itself: Jesus declared “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

When did this “treading down” of Jerusalem by Gentiles begin? In fact, it has been going on for centuries, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem

(2 Kings 24:10-11), dated 587-586 BC. This prophecy tells us of what Christ called “the times of the Gentiles.” As it has so often, the existence of the United Nations played a key role. In partial fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy, a vital part of UN Resolution 181 was the declaration that Jerusalem would be a *corpus separatum*, never part of Israel and never under the control of Jews.

Consider how specific the following is from the prophet Zechariah:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto *all the people round about*, when they shall be *in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem*. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though *all the people of the earth* be gathered together against it (Zechariah 12:2-3, emphasis added).

Two groups are distinguished by the prophet: “all the people *round about Judah and Jerusalem*” and “all the people *of the earth*.” These groups are identified by two separate prophecies. To the first group, Jerusalem will be “a cup of trembling” and to the second group, “a burdensome stone.” The first group is further identified as being united together “in a siege” against Judah and Jerusalem, the second group as “gathered together” against her.

Why will Israel be a “cup of trembling” to her neighbors? As we have just pointed out, Israel is the premier military power in the world, and she could wipe out her Arab neighbors very quickly but refrains from doing so. As for being a “burdensome stone,” how better to show the fulfillment of this specific prophecy than by the fact that from 1967-1989 out of 865 resolutions in the Security Council and General Assembly of the UN, 526 were against Israel.

As we have pointed out, that was the first time that Israel had ever been divided. Now we also see the first time that all nations surrounding it have been united in a common goal. Traditionally, these nations had been enemies. What unites them now? They are all Muslims, and it is Islam (which did not even exist at the time of the prophecy) that joins them in the common desire to destroy Israel.

For *all nations* to be united against Israel, there would have to be an organization of “all nations.” The United Nations came into existence in 1945, just in time to be the means of fulfilling this prophecy.

This 2,500-year-old prophecy is both specific in its details and flawless in its accuracy.

Another amazing prophecy concerns anti-Semitism. There is no rational explanation for this implacable hatred that has continued over several thousand years. What fuels this insane obsession is the determination to exterminate the Jews. No other national people have been the long-term targets of such a goal. In *The Secret War Against the Jews*, Mark Aarons and John Loftus write:

For more than twenty centuries [Jews] have...been persecuted, uprooted, and annihilated. [Yes] many [other] groups have suffered grievously at the hands of tyrants, but there is a crucial difference....

In each of these cases, the genocide was intended to serve a deeper purpose—the conquest of territory, the acquisition of wealth, the enlargement of political power.... In contrast, the genocide of the Jewish people was not...attempted in order to achieve a more fundamental purpose. *It was the fundamental purpose*. This is what makes the Nazi Holocaust unique.⁴ (Emphasis added)

Yes, many groups of people have suffered greatly. The Muslims wiped out more than a million Armenians as well as millions of other peoples throughout history. Thousands of blacks were transported from Africa to the American colonies to become slaves in a trade begun by Arabs and assisted by Africans. However, the quote above indicates that the intent was not to exterminate these people, as has been (and still is) the Muslims’ goal with the Jews.

Incredibly, the obvious lie persists by religious and political leaders such as recent popes, former leaders President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and now President Obama, that Islam is a religion of peace and has been maligned by critics. In fact, Muslims have murdered millions in their long-standing goal to take over the world, and there is an ongoing slaughter that continues to this day in Indonesia, Sudan, Nigeria, and elsewhere.

In contrast to the persistent praise of Islam as a force for peace in the world, Israel, which has never voiced unprovoked threats against other nations and has acted only in self-defense, has been accused repeatedly in the United Nations of aggression against innocent neighbors.

Fulfilled biblical prophecy stands as undeniable proof that the God of the Bible exists. Furthermore, these many prophecies, of which we will, God willing, have more to say next month, stand as a warning to the world of coming judgment. We will also review the many promises of blessing for those who will heed God’s Word concerning Israel.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: My friend keeps emphasizing miracles to me, quoting John 14:12 and claiming that if we aren't doing miracles all the time we're not serving Christ. He cites this passage as evidence: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (John 14:12)."

RESPONSE: Certainly John 14:12 has been misused by those who think that miracles are the big thing. The disciples could hardly do any miracle greater in kind than raising the dead—or in greater quantity, considering that John said that the world itself could not contain the books that should be written concerning the things Jesus did in His earthly ministry.

The key to the meaning of this passage is, of course, Christ's statement, "... because I go unto my Father." And John explains what that means. He tells us that when "He the Spirit of truth is come, He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of the judgment to come."

So, the greater works were the winning of far more souls to Christ than even He had accomplished, and this would be through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, who would be given when Christ went to the Father, having finished the work of our redemption and having risen from the dead. On the day of Pentecost, in one sermon Peter brought more into the church than Christ had in three and one-half years of His miracles and preaching.

Of course, this is not to the credit or glory of any of us, nor does it make us better than Christ, since it is in Christ himself indwelling the believer since Pentecost, through the Holy Spirit, who does the work, just as He did nothing of Himself while upon earth but it was the Father in Him who did the works.

QUESTION: I have heard several ministries and Bible teachers call the church the "spiritual Israel." What do they mean by this? Is the real Israel somehow supposed to disappear?

RESPONSE: It is true that you could call the church "spiritual Israel," since we have been grafted in to become the children of Abraham in a spiritual sense. But that has not done away with Israel after the flesh. Although unbelieving Jews are

not the spiritual children of Abraham (because they don't share his faith), yet they are the *physical* seed of Abraham. That is not true of any Gentile, even though born again and in the church.

It would therefore never be appropriate for a non-Jew to call himself a Jew. The issue is not that of being a partaker in the faith of Abraham, but that of being a Jew. A person who isn't a Jew wouldn't pose as one ethnically but would only claim to be one if he thought there was an end of Israel and a new class of persons who were entitled to call themselves Jews. That is the issue in Revelation 2 and 3 and that is the same issue today: trying to apply to the church the covenants that are for Israel.

That the promises pertaining to the land of Israel are for physical Israel is very clear. Jews were scattered around the world not for their faith but for their unfaithfulness; not for their belief but for their unbelief. So, they are certainly not the spiritual children of Abraham!

Yet just as Israel entered her land mainly in unbelief under Joshua, and continued to sin and depart from God under the judges and the kings, and was eventually scattered, so she will be brought back in unbelief and will not come to faith in Christ until He appears (Zechariah 12) in power and glory to rescue her from her enemies.

Paul said that God has not cast away His people (Romans 11:1). Clearly, he refers to physical Israel. He said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). He can't mean Christians, the spiritual seed of Abraham, for they're already saved: and it is not being saved from some tribulation of the soul that is at issue in the context.

QUESTION [FROM OUR ARCHIVES]: I've read that one time (many years ago) a drunk staggered up to Mr. Moody on the street and gave him 25 cents. A friend said, "Mr. Moody, you are not going to accept this coin!" Mr. Moody replied, "Indeed I will; the devil has had it long enough." I fear that you have fallen into one of Satan's traps, character assassination, by besmirching the good names of Billy Graham, Bill Bright, and Charles Colson. All these good men have accepted money from the world to put these gifts to use in their dedicated labor for God. You owe these men a public apology.

If not, I count you as a prime example of a hypocrite.

RESPONSE: Neither Moody nor you nor I nor anyone else sets the standard of Christian behavior. Just because Moody did something does not mean it was right. Moody's acceptance of 25 cents from a drunk is between him and God. I don't think it was wise, for it could have caused the man to think that God needed his money or that a gift of money might help his standing before God. How much better to have refused the coin and to have explained why and used the opportunity to present the gospel! No doubt Moody did the latter, though that isn't included in your telling of the story.

There is a huge difference, however, between accepting a casual gift of money from an unsaved person and accepting the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. The latter is not a *gift* but a *prize*; and it is awarded for a *specific achievement* defined in its own terms. Templeton did not suddenly decide, out of his generosity, to give a huge sum to Graham, Colson, and Bright. It was given as an *award* for their having contributed to what he calls "progress in religion." He spells out precisely what he means by that, as we have documented in earlier accounts.

I made no accusations against Graham, Colson, or Bright. I simply explained what Templeton believes about "progress in religion," and that to accept such a prize is by all reasonable standards to express one's agreement with his goals and to take credit for having furthered them. If one is not in agreement with the purpose behind the prize, then it should not be accepted.

Suppose you received an award check in the mail from the government for having rescued a family from a burning building, when in fact you hadn't done that at all. Wouldn't you return the check and explain that a mistake had been made, and that they did not agree with the very idea of "progress in religion" and had not contributed to the kind of "progress in religion" for which the prize was offered?

Far from besmirching the character of Graham, Colson, and Bright, I never suggested that they were in agreement with Templeton's heresies or the purpose of the prize or that they had contributed to the "progress in religion" that he promotes. I simply reported the facts. If their character has been besmirched, it has been by their own actions, not by my honest reporting.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What about “Eternal Security”?

QUESTION: The Bible clearly says that “he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22); and that we are “made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning or our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14). Our ultimate destiny is therefore dependent upon whether or not we remain true to Christ and maintain our faith in Him to the end. In light of such statements, how can you then teach an “eternal security,” which has no such requirements for remaining saved?

RESPONSE: “He that endures to the end shall be saved” refers to those who have survived the Jew’s worst holocaust (which is yet to come under Antichrist), and are alive when Christ returns to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon. Paul referred to them with the words, “all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26). Surely that couldn’t mean all Jews who ever lived but all those who are alive when Christ visibly returns at His second coming and, seeing Him, believe that He is the Messiah. The subject is not the salvation of those who are in the church, but of Jews alive at the end of the Great Tribulation.

As for the salvation we receive as a free gift of God’s grace through faith in Christ, our Lord said: “I give unto them [my sheep] eternal life, and they shall never perish” (John 10:28). This is a double promise: that He will care for believers as a shepherd for his sheep, and that this secure relationship is eternal. Moreover, we don’t become His sheep in eternity but here and now, the moment we put our faith in Christ. And the moment we become His sheep, we receive eternal life as a free gift of God’s grace: “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). We are given this assurance repeatedly in Scripture.

“Eternal life” would be a strange description of something that didn’t last forever. It could hardly be *eternal life* if one could *have* it and *know* it (1 John 5:13) today and not have it tomorrow. Moreover, if, in spite of Christ’s unconditional promise that His own “shall never perish,” some of those who were at one time His own lost that status and did indeed perish for any reason whatsoever, we could

have no confidence in anything else He would say.

We know, however, that the One who is the truth cannot lie. Therefore we have complete confidence that it is impossible for Christ’s sheep ever to perish. Once we belong to Him, He keeps us and will never let us be lost.

Hebrews 6:1-9 confirms the fact of eternal security. The first three verses urge the believer to move on from those elementary things of the faith that pertain to the beginnings of the Christian life, such as repentance, faith, baptism, and so forth. Verses 4-6 give the reason why we must not engage in what verse one calls “laying again the foundation”:

“For it is *impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance,

seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.”

Clearly, those to whom this passage refers are genuine believers. Moreover, it doesn't say “*when* they fall away” but that “*if* they fall away,” it would be “*impossible*” for them to get saved again. Why would that be?

First of all, if the death of Christ were not sufficient to *keep* them saved, then for them to get saved again would require that Christ die again . . . and again, every time they needed to be saved once more. Secondly, if Christ's death is not sufficient to *keep* one saved, then He is held up to ridicule for having done something so foolish as having procured salvation at infinite cost and then given it to creatures to maintain who are not able to effect their own salvation and certainly can't maintain it. This would be like committing a fortune to the safekeeping of an infant who would surely lose it.

That the falling away is hypothetical is indicated again by verse 9, which says, “But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things *that accompany salvation*, though we thus speak.” In other words, falling away does not “*accompany salvation*.” Those who are truly saved can never fall away.

—*An excerpt from In Defense of the Faith by Dave Hunt*

QUOTABLE

So much of modern activity is of transient importance and of fleeting value. The other day I heard of a man who was devoting his life to a chemical analysis of fifty volatile chemicals in the skin of a Bartlett pear. Even Christians can fall into the trap of building castles in the sand, of chasing bubbles, and of becoming experts in trivia. As someone has said, “We can be guilty of spending our lives straightening pictures in a burning house.”

—WILLIAM MACDONALD

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Israel and Prophetic Proof— Part Two

Dave Hunt

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ISRAEL IS THE major topic of Bible prophecy, mentioned more than 2,900 times, nearly twice as many times as her Messiah. Without Israel there would be no Messiah and no salvation for anyone, Jew or Gentile. The first mention of His coming is in God's rebuke of the guilty parties involved in man's fall in Eden: the serpent (an identity that Satan retains from Genesis to Revelation) and Adam and Eve. The Bible account is not myth but history. In many places around the world, archaeologists continue to find ancient representations of three figures appearing together: a woman, a serpent, and a tree.

God foretells a long conflict between the serpent and the Messiah and the latter's ultimate triumph that would occur in a way Satan could never have imagined. An old hymn tells it beautifully:

*In weakness like defeat,
He won the victor's crown;
Trod all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down.
He Satan's power laid low;
Made sin, He sin o'er threw;
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death, by dying, slew.*

God's declaration to the three guilty parties is simple and to the point. To the serpent He said, "I will put enmity between thee [serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed [the Messiah]; it [the woman's seed] shall bruise thy head [a death blow], and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

The fact that God does not say "thy seed and Adam's" must indicate that no man would be involved. From that moment, Satan was eagerly awaiting this virgin birth in order to kill the babe. Watching closely as events unfold, Satan learns that the Messiah will be of the seed of Abraham. Ishmael is Abraham's firstborn, but by Hagar, Sarah's maid (Genesis 16). Finally, Abraham is given a second son by his wife. He is Isaac, "the son of promise." It seems a miraculous birth because for 90 years Sarah had been barren though not a virgin. Satan watches and waits.

Both Ishmael and Isaac were born "in the land of Canaan" among Canaanites who had lived there for centuries (Genesis 11:31; 12:5-6; 13:7, etc.). There was no such place as "Palestine" nor any people called "Palestinians." No Arabs would live in so-called Palestine until the savage Islamic conquest of the world began in the seventh century, and they would not claim descent from "the original Palestinians" until the 1950s. Anyone making such a claim via descent from Ishmael is deluded by tradition. Ishmael's father (Abraham) was a Chaldean (Genesis 11:31; 15:7) and his mother (Hagar) was an Egyptian (16:1).

President Obama continues to apply pressure upon Israel to deal justly with the "Palestinians." He asks these misnamed people to cease their violence against Israel. He must know that this is like pleading with a hurricane for mercy. Since long before the days of Arafat and his partner, Mahmoud Abbas, the PLO Charter's call for Israel's annihilation has been the sworn purpose of every Islamic government in obedience to Muhammad and has been reiterated hundreds of times throughout the Muslim world.

As Mortimer Zuckerman, in his *U.S. News and World Report* editorial of June 9, 2009, reminded world leaders demanding that Israel make "peace" with the Palestinians, the latter's violence is fueled by "the incessant spewing of hatred against Israel in schools, mosques, and the media, especially TV. This poisoning of the mind of the next generation is not just the stock in trade of Hamas and Hezbollah but also of the schools and media controlled by Fatah and reporting directly to Abbas."

In spite of the facts, political and church leaders persist in avoiding any mention of Islam or Muslims when referring to their violence. That is always blamed on "extremists." In fact, Muhammad himself began this trail of death, and his followers have obeyed, as supported by the Qur'an. The simple truth of history is brushed aside by the UN and almost the entire world, including the church and, sadly, our own president.

Being repeatedly condemned by the world for trying to defend itself against suicide bomber attacks that were costing the lives of hundreds of Israelis, including women and children, Israel's only alternative was to build a barrier that would cut off the attackers from entering her homeland. World opinion expressed outrage. The

World Court ruled 14-1 that construction must cease immediately and everything be dismantled, with compensation to the Palestinians. The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on July 20, 2004, 150-6, calling on Israel to respect the World Court ruling. Only the United States, Israel, Australia, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau voted against the resolution. Israel rejected world opinion and, from necessity, has proceeded with construction. It has already almost totally cut off the infiltration of terrorists.

Israel subsequently "gave back" Gaza, which historically belonged to her. She generously left operative the huge greenhouses that had fed Israel and much of Europe with fresh vegetables and could have done the same for the new "owners." Instead, these new owners tore the structures apart, and the mob carried off the materials for their individual use, thereby losing the potential income from exports that Israel had derived as well as the ability to feed themselves.

Going back to history, in 135 A.D., the Romans destroyed 1,000 Jewish villages, killed 500,000 Jews, and enslaved thousands. Furious that they'd been forced to bring in more legions to quell the rebellion, the Romans angrily renamed what had for more than 1,500 years been known as Israel. They called it Provincia Palestina after the Philistines, Israel's ancient enemies. Those living there became known as Palestinians. Who lived there? Jews! So Jews, ironically were the first "Palestinians." This is what they were called (along with many derisive names that have followed them as they've been hunted from country to country). Only in the 1950s did the Arabs begin to call themselves "Palestinians" in order to gain worldwide sympathy for their acts of terrorism even as UN pressure squeezed Israel into an ever-smaller corner in order to facilitate her destruction. (We document all of this and much more in *Judgment Day!* [<https://bit.ly/3K1Bdai>].)

Since 1948, Israel has been arming herself and fighting back. Her vow of "never again" will be fulfilled but not before Jewry worldwide suffers the worst horror of her history. Under attack by all of the world's armies (Zechariah 12:3; 14:2; Joel 3:2; Ezekiel 38:8,9, etc.), Israel will call upon the Messiah, and He will rescue her. It is all declared plainly by the ancient prophets of Israel in the Old Testament (the Tanakh).

It has taken the Lord many years and many circumstances to open my eyes to

these prophecies. It was all there in His Word, but I didn't understand. How blind I was!

In 1966-67, my wife and I, with our four young children, were living on the third floor of a small seventeenth-century castle in Switzerland. That year was to have been an intensive time of ministry to university students, but God had something far different in mind. Suddenly, an overwhelming urgency to pray for Israel came upon me toward the end of 1966. Even when giving thanks to God at mealtime, I was compelled to include this prayer: "O Lord, I pray that you will defeat, confound, confuse, and frustrate all those who plot the destruction of Israel; turn their counsel into foolishness and protect your ancient people from their evil designs. In Jesus' name, Amen!"

I didn't understand that prayer at the time, but my naiveté was soon dispelled. In Cairo, Egypt, I went into a travel agency and asked, "How can I get to Israel?" The man waiting on me took me aside and whispered, "If you mention that [expletive] word again in this country they'll kill you!" I was shocked. I knew the Bible well but had never realized the significance of Psalm 83: "...thine enemies...that hate thee...have taken crafty counsel against thy people... [saying] let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." This destruction has been the determined goal of Islam since it was founded by Muhammad.

Muslims are fighting against the God who calls Himself the "God of Israel" 203 times in the Bible. What an embarrassment it would be if Israel could be destroyed! It could never happen, for that act would destroy "the God of Israel" as well. He will not allow it.

Interacting with the very friendly people our family met as we drove the length and breadth of Egypt in our VW minibus in late May 1967, we repeatedly heard the words, "The 19-year war." What war was this? It took a while for that cryptic phrase to sink into our dull understanding. From the so-called 1948 cessation of hostilities until 1967 was 19 years. Even as they professed peace, but inspired by Egypt's dictator, Gamal Abdul Nasser, the 40 million Muslims surrounding Israel had been arming nonstop to achieve her destruction. Nasser had sworn to lead the Arab world to a glorious victory. The humiliating defeat of the Arab armies in "The Six Day War" of

1967 ended Nasser's bombastic boast that he would destroy Israel. He subsequently had a nervous breakdown from which he never recovered.

In May 1948, Israel had declared its independence and was instantly attacked by the combined might of 40 million Arab/Muslims surrounding her. This tiny nation of 600,000, with its hastily assembled, hurriedly trained, and poorly equipped army of 60,000, with weapons smuggled in from Czechoslovakia (France, Britain, America, et al., would sell them nothing) fought for its survival against an enemy that had sworn its utter annihilation. They "crushed 600,000 soldiers of four Arab armies, well trained and heavily armed [with tanks and planes, of which Israel had none], reinforced by units from seven additional Arab countries, not to mention the active help of the British." This quote is part of the lengthy endorsement of *Judgment Day!* by a retired Israeli general.

Three times God calls Israel the "apple of his eye" and warns: "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:8; Deuteronomy 32:10; Lamentations 2:18). The statements that some of our political leaders make in favor of Islam are not only alarming for their own sake and the sake of the United States but are a slap in the face of the God of Israel. They need to be warned about what God himself told Abraham regarding the subsequent mistreatment of his descendants: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

In a hotel room in Tyre, Lebanon, the evening of June 3, 1967, our family prayed for direction from God. We had visas to drive through Syria into Jordan and then return by the same route. The newspapers the next morning gave the answer clearly. We immediately headed north through Syria and had, by God's grace, barely gotten across the border into Turkey when the war broke out.

In spite of hundreds of very clear declarations by Jewish prophets and the promises that God has given to His people, about 30 percent of today's Israelis claim to be atheists. He wants to bless them and protect them, but how can He, when they continue to reject Him? The following is just a sample of what God has repeatedly said to His people: "I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries...fed them

also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.... But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would [have] none of me" (Psalm 81:11-16).

Israel is both under God's judgment because of its continual rejection of the God of Israel, but at the same time, He has not abandoned her, and woe to those who take God's judgment into their own hands!

In the meantime, the nations of the world continue to become a party to Islam's deception by attempting to force Israel into what can only be a false "peace." What Islam has in mind is not what the peacemakers naively intend. It's called a hudna, the "peace" that Muhammad made with the Meccans for ten years. Long before then, under a pretense, Muslims attacked and took over that "holy" city, which had so long been the goal of the hajj (long practiced before Muhammad's birth by most Arab tribes). Of course, this ancient custom, along with others, such as the feast of Ramadan, have been taken over by Muslims. Thus, history is perverted to make it seem that these had always been Islamic practices.

Ramadan had for centuries been agreed upon by warring Arab tribes to be 30 days of peace. At just the right time to allow him to attack a passing caravan, Muhammad received a "new revelation" that Muslims could fight during this time. Ramadan has become a time of the deadliest attacks of Shiites against Sunnis (does this demonstrate to the world that "Islam is peace?")

These prophecies are so important for the strengthening of our own faith, but what about those whom we want to bring into the faith of the God of Israel? We need to provide to everyone with whom we speak (as I often do for those with whom the Lord puts me in contact everywhere, but especially on airplanes) first of all, proof of God's existence. How better to do this than to take the approach of Zinzendorf with the King of Sweden, as we mentioned in Part I of this article, using biblical prophecies about Israel?

We can talk to others about God and Jesus Christ, but when we say "God," what do we mean? A "higher power" of some kind? We have to be sure that those whom we want to introduce to the God of Israel understand who He is, why we believe in Him, and why we think the most intelligent decision they could make is to believe in Him as well.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You have stated correctly, “The Christianity that is represented by most of the contemporary Christian music and attractions would shock the early disciples....” I couldn’t agree more. But you also classify “the way in which worship is conducted” as “pet traditions having no basis in the Bible.” This seems to be endorsing the so-called “contemporary worship” and its “contemporary music.” The “anything goes” scene seems to violate the biblical principle of 1 Corinthians 14:40: “Let all things be done decently and in order.” It has rather given credence to a phony “Christianity.” You should clarify your position.

RESPONSE: I have more than once mourned the replacement of the old hymns of the faith (filled with challenging, correcting, and edifying biblical doctrine) by shallow, repetitive choruses in which the rhythm moves the feet and hands but the words too often offer little for either the head or the heart. As for the style of music, I am not a musician and cannot comment, and specific “rules” would be hard to apply.

It often seems that much of what is known as “contemporary Christian music,” rather than being reverent and worshipful and reflecting a wholesome awe before our God, must be loud with a raucous beat and played and sung by “performers” with dress and manner to match. The real question is whether the music we offer and the attitudes of our hearts would be acceptable in heaven before the throne of God and the Lamb. That criteria, I believe, is something that today’s Christian musicians (and their pastors and elders as well) ought to pray about seriously, whether their music is performed at concerts or during “worship time” in a church. Yes, too often it seems like a *performance* to impress audiences rather than worship offered to God.

My comments about following tradition in worship concern the *way* in which worship is conducted. Obviously, that is all we can address, because we can’t look into anyone’s heart. A true believer led of the Holy Spirit could be worshiping the Lord “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23), as Christ said we must, *in spite of* what everyone else may be doing. We do not describe nor criticize any *way* that worship is conducted anywhere as not being biblical, nor do we commend any particular way of conducting worship as more biblical than another. We merely state that the way in which worship is actually conducted is often according to a tradition that is peculiar to certain denominations.

I would not suggest that everyone adopt some “contemporary” *way* of worship, which in itself may already have become another tradition of its own. New tradition is no better than old tradition. My concern is that we must not allow worship to become a matter of *form* rather than of the *heart*, so that the form is all many may know or understand about “worship.” In fact, the Bible dictates no form. We are there to remember Christ in His death in partaking of the bread and cup, which remind us of His body broken and His blood poured out for our sins; and we do this “till he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). We are thus reminded of His resurrection and His promised return to take us to His Father’s house of many mansions (John 14:1-3). But no order of service is prescribed, only that all should be done “decently and in order,” to which our consciences and the Holy Spirit in our hearts bear witness as well.

QUESTION: The divorce question has been around for centuries, but I’d like to hear your take on it. Do you believe a Christian can be divorced?

RESPONSE: I agree that divorce is not God’s will, but in my opinion, we cannot be harsh and allow no exceptions. Christ’s statement that divorce causes adultery must be understood in the following context: 1) Though divorce is not God’s will, the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 24) allows it for what Christ calls “the hardness of your hearts” (Matthew 19:8). 2) Though He charges the divorced parties with adultery, Christ himself indicates that this sterner standard is not to be imposed upon everyone: “All men cannot receive this saying, save them to whom it is given” (Matthew 19:11). 3) Though mentioned repeatedly, nowhere else throughout the entire Bible is adultery described as involving divorced persons who remarried. I do not believe that a young woman who, for example, is divorced by a man who is unfaithful and marries his lover, is by that man’s sinful act forever after consigned to loneliness, and that her young children are to be deprived of a stepfather.

On the other hand, I believe that marriage is taken lightly today. Yes, I believe in eternal security of the believer because the Bible teaches it—but I don’t believe in encouraging those living in sin to delude themselves with false assurance.

QUESTION: You have often defended the idea that man has free will, yet many leading Christian scholars teach that this cannot be true. If a man could establish his own destiny, then God would not be sovereign—His own purposes for

mankind could be influenced and even changed by the whims of mankind. How can you believe otherwise?

RESPONSE: The subject your question introduces is really a Calvinism issue, which we have addressed elsewhere (See *What Love Is This?* [<https://bit.ly/3PwV02w>]). In that book, Dave Hunt mentions and debates some of Calvinism’s most staunch defenders. The fundamental cause-effect concept that he dealt with have major implications for non-believers and non-Calvinists as well.

The essence of the matter is this: Just because God *knows* all that will happen before it happens does not mean that He therefore *causes it to happen*. He knew of all the sin that would occur on this planet, but he surely did not cause it! There is a big distance between *causing* and *allowing*. He likewise knows who will accept and who will reject His offer of grace, but He allows men to reject His offer if that is their decision.

None of us could come to Christ if the Father did not compel us—but we must still consent. Love does not coerce, or it would not be love. Nonetheless, many Calvinists say, “You don’t seem to understand Calvinism. If you are in possession of the truth and are a clear-thinking person, you will do what is best for yourself—that is, you will obey and serve Christ. *You are predestined!*”

On the contrary, Calvin taught total depravity, such that we would almost *never* do what is best for us in a spiritual sense. God would have to *make* us do it, and we would have no choice in the matter. God is sovereign and has the right to send us all to hell and we could not complain, because that is what we deserve. However, his Word assures us over and over that He is not willing that *any* should perish but He desires for all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4); and that Christ did not die only for the elect (Calvin’s unbiblical doctrine of limited atonement) but that “He gave himself a ransom for all, for he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. God sent his Son that the whole world through Him might be saved.... The Father sent the Son to be the savior of the world” (1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2; John 3:17, 1 John 4:14, etc.).

The entire Bible testifies to the fact that God desires all mankind to repent and be saved. Since it is the will of God for all to be saved, we cannot say that men are not saved because God withholds from them the necessary grace. But that is what Calvinism teaches—and it denies God’s love and provision for all.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH
BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Did Jesus Descend into Hell?

QUESTION: I've read your rejection of the teaching that Jesus was tortured in hell by Satan. Yet the Apostles' Creed says that Jesus "descended into hell." Did Jesus descend into hell or not? I've searched and searched the Scriptures and asked several pastors about this and still have no satisfactory answer.

RESPONSE: First of all, the so-called "Apostle's Creed" is misnamed. There is no record that it was either composed or recited by any of the apostles. Even if it had been, like Catholicism's so-called "apostolic tradition," there would be no way to know for certain by tracing it back to the apostles. There were no tape recorders in that day and it is not part of a known written record as are the epistles. Even Catholic encyclopedias admit that this creed does not come from the apostles but is a forgery that was composed sometime in the fourth century.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *sheol*, meaning the place of the dead, is sometimes translated "hell" and at other times simply as "grave." The comparable words used in the New Testament are *hades* or *Gehenna*, the place of the departed dead. In telling the fate of the rich man, ("in hell [*hades*] he lifted up his eyes, being in torments" —Luke 16:23) and of Lazarus the beggar, Jesus taught that before the Cross there were two compartments in *sheol* or *hades*: one for the lost (hell) and one for the saved, known as "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22) or "paradise."

It was to the latter that Christ went in death, as did the believing thief crucified with Him, to whom He said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). There He spent "three days and three nights," as prophesied (Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:40). During that time He undoubtedly proclaimed to the redeemed the good news that His death upon the Cross had paid the full penalty for their sins.

Those in the place of the damned could hear what Jesus said (see Luke 16:23-31); and He may even have addressed a few words specifically to them. Thus, Peter writes, "He went and preached unto the spirits [of the dead] in prison [hell], which sometime were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah" 1 Peter:3 19-20). After His resurrection, Jesus took the souls and spirits of the redeemed to heaven: "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8; cf. Psalm 68:18).

Since Christ's resurrection, the souls and spirits of the redeemed go immediately upon death to be with Christ: "absent from the body . . . present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). From thence He will bring them to rejoin their resurrected bodies at the Rapture of the saints (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). On this subject, as on every other, the Word of God all fits together beautifully and assures believers of eternal salvation.

—An excerpt from *In Defense of the Faith* by Dave Hunt

QUOTABLE

God is no man's debtor. The idea that many people have of suffering for Christ and missing out on so much in order to please God is a caricature concocted by Satan. It is certain that no one, when it comes time to die, regrets having missed out on worldly pleasures or treasures or honors as a result of serving God. And how can even those who have lost position and possessions, have been tortured, imprisoned, or killed because of their faith, hold any regret that an eternal reward awaits them? Paul reminds us: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. . . . For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17).

—DAVE HUNT

Meditating upon the Word of God

T. A. McMahon

“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”

—JEREMIAH 9:23-24

AS WE READ through the Scriptures, too often we may go at a pace that causes us to miss not only its more profound teachings but also some very clear and simple truths. That may be why the Scriptures exhort us to meditate upon God’s Word. Biblical meditation, as I hope we all know, is the opposite of Eastern meditation.

The former is thinking deeply, reasoning through the Scriptures according to Isaiah 1:18, getting a better understanding of what God is communicating to us. The latter is thoughtlessness, clearing out the mind—turning it into a blank slate that may generate feedback from the demonic realm.

Reading the Book of Jeremiah at a somewhat hurried pace may accomplish one’s goal of getting through it in a timely fashion, but at the same time we may fail to notice some important things that the Lord has communicated.

If there’s an upside to growing old, *slowing down* is a condition most of us experience. Of course, I’m not thrilled with the physical consequences of aging, but in this case what I have in mind is growing old in the Lord and having a greater appreciation of how truly wonderful He is. In one sense, it’s more than just stopping to smell the roses. Rather it is taking in a host of other things that we either may have missed or haven’t fully taken to heart.

That is what biblical meditation is all about. “His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2). Not only is that activity for the delight of the meditator, it also delights the Lord! The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to read God’s Word and exhort others to do the same: “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Timothy 4:15).

As an exercise in this, let’s meditate

on Jeremiah 9:23-24. It begins with “Thus saith the LORD.” That clearly tells us that what we’re reading is God’s Word. That phrase and others, such as “the word of the LORD came to me” are found thousands of times throughout the Bible. Each time those phrases are used, we’re being told that it is God himself speaking specifically to an individual, or collectively to a group of people or a nation. It also includes those who read His Word at a later time.

Our infinite God is communicating what He wants His created finite beings to know. How important is that recognition? Sometimes when an admonition is offered, we’re told, “Don’t take it personally.” Whether it’s an admonition, an exhortation, an encouragement, or whatever the case, when we read “Thus saith the LORD,” we need to take it *personally*. The Person of our Lord and God is communicating to us!

Yet, too often in our day, if I told someone that I had recently received a note from God, it would be met with much skepticism for a number of reasons, which I’ll present. Probably few would realize that all I’m saying is that the note I recently read from Him is what He has communicated *in* the Bible to everyone who *reads* the Bible!

Part of the general skepticism comes from those who are aware of people who claim that they are literally hearing from God on a continual and personal basis. It’s not that we don’t believe that could happen (although there’s no example in Scripture of that taking place except between Jesus and God the Father).

In fact, we find that very thing being taught by a highly influential teacher among women: Beth Moore. She *encourages* her followers to engage in *two-way, intimate* conversations with Jesus, which she claims she has continually.

One must wonder from what “Jesus” she claims to be hearing! Moore declares that her Jesus calls her “Baby” and “Honey” and joins in playful conversation with her. Sarah Young also claims to have an ongoing personal communication with “Jesus,” which she describes in her book *Jesus Calling*. Based upon what her Jesus speaks, it is clear that he’s *not* the biblical Jesus! Furthermore, not even Daniel, who is called “beloved of God,” had *ongoing* two-way communications with the Lord. He even had to wait twenty-one days for God’s response to his request for help (Daniel 10:12-13)!

Men have not been left out of this communication delusion, even to the point of supporting it with a heretical practice that exists primarily among those who adhere

to the hyper-Charismatic Word/Faith movement.

They claim that God communicates to Christians in two different ways today. One is known as *rhema*, the other as *logos*. The former is literally hearing from Him, while the latter is the written word. When the communications are in conflict with each other, it is said that the *rhema*-received information supersedes and therefore supplants the *logos*. That is completely false! In fact, both terms are used interchangeably throughout Scripture.

Those misrepresentations of Scripture aside, I’m concerned that too often we overlook the reality that “Thus saith the LORD” tells us that God, the Creator of the universe, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, *is* speaking to us! One of the reasons for this oversight is that the Adversary has sown confusion among Christians regarding their views of the Bible itself.

When I suspect that professing Christians with whom I’m having a conversation have some ideas about the Bible that are clearly mistaken, I often ask them for their view of the Bible, such as, who is the Author? Is it inerrant? Is it their authority, and do they believe it to be sufficient for “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3)?

That conversation usually provides a great opportunity to help a believer, especially a recent convert, to search the Scriptures in order to get biblical understanding regarding things they haven’t read or about which they’re confused.

That confusion often includes whether or not the Bible is solely the Word of God, or is it partially from God, or does it contain human contributions in various places?

The numbers of different translations, such as the cultic New World Translation, the messed-up and ego-centric Message, the NIV, the NASB, the NKJV, the KJV, and others, at the very least, may distract Bible readers from the fact that God’s Word (in its original autographs, and as it was later translated correctly) is *His Word*. It is therefore *inerrant*, meaning it is completely trustworthy.

“And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Proverbs 30:5). So, taking the time to meditate on the simple phrase, “Thus saith the LORD,” will enable us to better understand and receive what follows, especially the recognition that it contains instructions coming from God himself!

“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD....”

In God’s own words, He is underscoring mankind’s chief problem: *self—his* wisdom, *his* might, *his* riches.... Self is not only at the root of humanity’s dominant sin, but it is promoted in the world as the solution to all of mankind’s problems! Self is at the heart of psychological counseling.

It is also at the heart of so-called Christian psychology, which is the attempt to integrate the antichrist teachings of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and their fellow disciples with the teachings of God’s Word.

In the decades of the 1970s and ’80s, those leaders who *professed* to be Christians rejected the sufficiency of the Scriptures and turned to secular psychotherapists for their godless theories. One such Christian psychologist explained: “It was humanistic psychologists, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, who first taught us the need for self-love and self-esteem.”

Arguably, the most influential Christian psychologist of that time period, Dr. James Dobson, declared, “If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, it would provide each one of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need.”

(Dobson, James, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women*, Tyndale House, 1975, 60.)

Greatest need? That conclusion *was not* arrived at by meditating upon the Word of God or even reading it casually. There’s no verse that can be found to support such a statement, yet the belief in the value of self-glorifying (a.k.a. self-love and self-esteem) is still a delusionary stronghold in Christianity today.

“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me....”

Understanding and knowing God is the foremost way of becoming aware of our lowliness before the great “I AM.” Any attempt at making a self-promoting comparison is both the height of rebellion and an act of insanity.

Yet that didn’t hold back Lucifer in heaven from declaring that he would “be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:14), nor

did it keep Eve from buying the lie that she could be as God (Genesis 3:5). Both self-oriented desires preceded and then brought about sin, first for some angelic beings, and afterward for all humanity.

Understanding and knowing God can only come about through the enablement of the Holy Spirit after a person is born again, which is also necessary for anyone to be able to meditate upon the truth of God’s Word.

As the Apostle Paul wrote to the

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

—*Psalm 1:1-3*

Ephesians, he “ceased not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That...the *Father of glory*, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in *the knowledge of him*: The eyes of your *understanding* being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power...” (Ephesians 1:15-19).

John the beloved adds, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and *hath given us an understanding*, that we may *know him* that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20, emphasis added).

Those verses and many more refute the

lie of the Contemplative Movement that is gaining followers within the church. Although Isaiah 1:18 declares “Come let us reason together...”, their claim is that we cannot know God through our reason but only through a mystical experience. The list of influential professing Christians who promote some aspect of this error is huge and increasing daily. It includes Richard Foster and his Renovaré ministry, Beth Moore, John Piper, Rick and Kay Warren, Max Lucado, Larry Crabb, the late Dallas Willard, Brian MacLaren, Tony Campolo, and many, many more. The meditative approach they advocate stems from the practices of the Roman Catholic Desert Fathers, and is clearly rooted in Eastern mysticism, the goal of which is to merge with God. It is also at the heart of the religion of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

As we noted, the Word of God exhorts us to meditate upon what God Himself has communicated to us. That’s the only way we as believers can know Him better and grow stronger in our relationship with Him. How else can we truly love Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength, and all our mind except we immerse ourselves in His Word (Luke 10:27)?

He proclaims, “I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth....”

In getting to know His character, we meditate upon the numerous verses in which He exercises lovingkindness. Psalms 143:8: “Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.” We study the different ways He executes judgment and learn that His judgments are always righteous. John 7:24: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: *for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.*”

Finally, in meditating upon what God Himself has communicated, we find that that joyful activity not only increases our understanding and knowledge of Him, but it *delights* the One “who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and LORD of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15). “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). **TBC**

Q&A.....

QUESTION: I have heard the terms “easy believism” and “carnal Christianity,” with the first applying to the way some people “come to Christ” and the second, I suspect, to apply to what they actually become when they respond to a false, “easy” gospel. Would you please comment?

RESPONSE: The best way to deal with these questions is to examine Paul’s testimony with respect to the Christians in the Greek city of Corinth. Paul spent more time in Corinth, evangelizing and teaching, than he did in any other place. That the church at Corinth was composed of genuine born-again Christians there can be no doubt. First of all, we have the testimony of the Lord himself, who, speaking to Paul in a vision told him to remain there for an extended period of time (it became 18 months), promised him special protection, and explained why: “For I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-11).

Second, we also have the testimony of Paul, who, in his epistles to the Corinthians, declares that the members of the church at Corinth are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and calls them saints. Never does he suggest that they are not true Christians, that they made a false decision, or as a result of their sin have fallen away and are now lost.

Yet at the time Paul wrote to them, in many ways the Corinthians were a disgrace to Christ. Likewise were the Galatians, of whom Paul wrote, “...I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you...for I stand in doubt of you” (Galatians 4:19-20). Was their problem that they had made a false decision and were not Christians at all? Though Paul expresses his doubts, it seems to be for the purpose of shocking them and reasoning with them, for he certainly treats them as true Christians, though confused by the Judaizers of that era, concerning faith and works, and having little understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit to produce godliness.

Indeed, most of the epistles were written to correct errors that had already come into the early church, much of it doctrinal but also much of it involving all manner of fleshly (yes, carnal) conduct that was a reproach upon the Lord. Beware then of taking a simplistic approach to the failures of professing Christians today that explain it all in terms of unscriptural evangelistic methods (e.g., “easy believism”) and deny that they are saved at all on the basis of their carnality. True, a false gospel is in many instances being preached, and there are false methods that produce false converts who are a plague in the church. Yet we dare not deny that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit

against the flesh” (Galatians 5:17). This is as true today as it was in the first century and will continue to be true of every Christian until the redemption of our bodies!

Nor do I encourage Christians to live fleshly lives by acknowledging that it is possible, but, like Paul, exhort them to turn from their carnality. Paul exhorts the Galatians, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” So it must be possible for a real Christian not to walk in the Spirit but in fact to fulfill the lust of the flesh, or Paul would not have needed to make such an exhortation—an exhortation that is just as applicable to us today. And what does Paul call those who, rather than walking in the Spirit, fulfill the lust of the flesh or walk according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 10:2)? He calls them *carnal*. And since he also acknowledges that they are Christians, they must therefore be that which many people today deny can even exist: that is, carnal Christians!

To what, then, does Paul attribute the Corinthians’ horrible condition? Was it poor evangelistic methods? No, Paul said that the problem with the Corinthians was that they were walking after the flesh instead of being led of the Spirit. Again, they were carnal Christians! “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.... For ye are yet carnal.... Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

Now, the difficulty in understanding the above is that many people associate certain false beliefs with the idea that a Christian can be carnal. They call carnal Christians the product of something called “easy believism,” which is not true. Easy believism denies the Lordship of Christ—it makes Him Savior but not Lord, by teaching that He will save us from our sins but not become Lord of our lives and require anything in return, and it does not produce Christians at all.

Finally, if you respond to all this by saying, “The carnal Christian heresy denies that the Lordship of Christ is found in every true believer” I believe you are confused. I believe that a Christian is either led of the Spirit or the flesh, that he is either spiritual or carnal; but I do not deny that Christ must be Lord. Paul, who called the Corinthians carnal, did not deny the Lordship of Christ.

Therefore, earnestly fight the denial that Christ is Lord, but don’t confuse it with the biblical teaching that a Christian can be carnal!

QUESTION: I started a study on the “bride of Christ” and am very bothered as to

why Christians use the term! Since the primary example of the church is “the body of Christ,” how can the Lord’s very own body be feminine when He is masculine? To be fair, how could a person not steeped in religious tradition ever get the idea that we are the bride of Christ?

RESPONSE: If the church is not the bride and thus the wife of Christ, then who is? To whom (if not the church) do such verses as the following refer: “for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7), and “the Spirit and the bride say, Come.... Surely I come quickly. Amen.... Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:17, 20)? If the bride here is not the bride of Christ, why would she be longing for His return; and whose bride is she if not His? She is called the bride because she has not yet been married to Him.

John the Baptist said of Christ, “...he that hath the bride is the bridegroom” (John 3:29). The bride, clearly, belongs to Christ and will be married to Him in heaven (Revelation 19:7-9). Who else is in heaven at this time to be married to Christ except the saints of all ages who have been caught up to heaven at the Rapture? That the bride is composed of such saints is clear, for she is “arrayed in fine linen, clean and white” and the “fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (verse 8). Is it not the church that is expecting Christ and longing to be taken to His Father’s house in heaven (John 14:2-3)? That promise is for none other.

That the church is the body of Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12; Colossians 1:18), as you admit, is all the more reason to believe that it is also His bride. Man and woman, when married, become “one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31). In the very next verse Paul writes, “This (being one flesh) is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” As the wife is with her husband, so the church is one flesh with Christ. This entire passage (Ephesians 5:22-33) is about the relationship of husband and wife and it is likened to Christ and His church.

You say that Christ’s body “can’t be feminine when He is masculine.” You are separating Christ from His body. The “one flesh” that husband and wife become is neither male nor female but something new comprising both of them—a “mystery.” So the body of Christ of which He is the head consists of Christ and His bride. It cannot be separated from Him but is neither male nor female. Indeed, because of our union with Christ in one body, Paul writes that in the church “there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH
BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Are Good Works Essential for Salvation?

QUESTION: James says that faith without works is dead (James 2:20, 26). Paul wrote, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Shouldn’t we conclude, therefore, that good works are necessary for salvation? And wouldn’t we be in a dangerous position if we failed to recognize that good works are essential for salvation? Christ even says that if we don’t forgive others, we can’t expect God to forgive us. What about that?

RESPONSE: If good works are essential for salvation, then we must have some standard for those good works. The gospel would have to specify how many good works and of what kind. Where does one find such teaching? Nowhere.

There is no mention of good works in the “gospel by which we are saved” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). In fact, Paul argues that “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28), and he reminds us that “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5).

Nevertheless, all the world’s religions are based upon works. The idea that we must live up to a certain standard of works to be saved is the foundation of paganism. The gods must somehow be appeased by human effort or sacrifice. The same idea is innate in all people: “If You will get me out of this predicament, God, then I’ll do this or that for You!” Clearly, that is not what James is teaching under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

A works-for-salvation mentality marks every cult. Indeed, even atheists justify their rejection of Christianity on this basis. Famed atheist Robert Ingersoll sarcastically complained against the gospel of God’s grace:

“They [Christians] say a certain belief is necessary to salvation. They do not say, if you behave yourself you will get there; they do not say, if you pay your debts and love your wife and love your children, and are good to your friends and your neighbors and your country [like we atheists are], you will get there. That will do you no good; you have got to believe a certain thing.

“No matter how bad you are, you can be instantly forgiven; and no matter how good you are, if you

fail to believe that which you cannot understand, the moment you get to the day of judgment nothing is left but to damn you, and all the angels will shout ‘hallelujah.’”

Christianity alone rejects this universal delusion. We have already seen that keeping the law perfectly in the future could not make up for having broken it in the past. As Paul said, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). It is therefore clear that we cannot be saved by good works.

—An excerpt from *In Defense of the Faith* by Dave Hunt

QUOTABLE

Just when we think we are not being tempted, that is the time of danger, and so it is with the church. We lean back on our laurels and say, ‘That may be true of some churches, but it is not true of us. We are increased with goods and have need of nothing!’ (see Revelation 3:17). This is to remind us that we must fight for what we have. Our little field of God’s planting must have the necessary weapons and plenty of watchmen out there to drive off the crows.... We must keep our field healthy, and the only way to do that is to keep true to the Word of God. We must constantly go back to the grass roots and get the Word into the church..

—A.W. TOZER

How to "Bible Study"

T. A. McMahan

WE ARE CLEARLY in a day that majors in fulfilling the prophecy of 2 Timothy 4:3-4. *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."*

Examples abound. Many churches that profess to be Bible-believing fellowships do not live up to their claims. They say they believe in the inerrancy, the authority, and the sufficiency of the Word of God. However, in practice they have mixed what God has said with the so-called wisdom of mankind. Here's how that plays out, starting with the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

The evangelical church is a major referral source for the mental health community. More often than not, Christians dealing with mental and emotional problems are referred to psychological counselors by their pastors, especially to so-called Christian psychologists. This is a field that attempts to integrate secular psychological concepts with biblical teachings. As I mentioned last month, the foundational concepts are drawn from the theories of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and to them we could add Karen Horney, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, and many of their disciples. All such theories are antichrist at best.

Yet, even if those men and women had something of value to offer (which they don't) to supplement the Bible, that supplementation in itself would be a denial of the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Does the Bible claim that it is sufficient? Absolutely.

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Then there's 2 Timothy 3:15-17: *"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

Consider just these four verses to which dozens more could be added. God has communicated in His Word "all things that pertain unto life and godliness...." The "all things" includes the "knowledge of Him," as well as that which is "able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Again, the Scriptures are "given by inspiration of God." They are God-breathed, meaning they are *His words*, not mankind's. When His instructions are obeyed, they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Whether we use "thoroughly" or "thoroughly" with the word "perfect," Webster's 1828 dictionary defines them for us: "Fully; entirely; completely. Finished; complete; consummate; not defective. Having all that is requisite to its nature and kind."

When God had the Israelites make the tabernacle and all its related components, its execution was carried out by those filled with the Spirit of God (Exodus 35:31) and gifted in all manner of workmanship, and the material they had was *sufficient* for all the work to be done. They weren't left to their own artistic expressions! How much more so, then, would be the content of His Word that "pertain[s] to life and godliness"? What did He *omit* that fallen and sinful man would need to supply?

One of the major reasons why pastors look to psychological counselors to "assist" the Scriptures is their own ignorance of psychotherapy. Many assume the practice is scientific. That is a myth. The National Science Foundation (not exactly a friend of biblical Christianity!) subsidized a 3-year study involving 80 eminent scholars in order to ascertain the scientific validity of psychotherapy and concluded: "I think, by this time, it should be utterly and finally clear that psychology cannot be a coherent science...." Furthermore, psychotherapy claims to address and solve all the issues of life—in direct opposition to the instructions of the Word of God.

What then of the *authority* of the Bible, which many pastors and believers profess to believe? Too often that belief, like the purported belief in the Bible's sufficiency, doesn't hold up. If one turns from the Scriptures to other sources in order to remedy their mental, emotional, behavioral, or spiritual problems, then those other sources become the person's authority, not the Word of God. That

being the case, claiming to believe in the *inerrancy* of Scripture is meaningless.

Tragically, that is the state of Christianity today as the prophecy of 2 Timothy 4:3-4 declares. So exactly how does "not enduring sound doctrine" come about? In many ways—some of them are quite subtle, others rather blatant. Some Christians don't even bother to bring their Bibles or Bible apps to church. They rely on the pastor to read the verses for them, which often constitutes "spoon feeding" and hardly promotes biblical discernment or maturity. Topical preaching, in contrast to expository preaching (verse by verse), too often allows a pastor's sermon to avoid difficult or controversial passages. That usually takes place when the verses address subjects such as the role of women in the church or homosexuality. Topical sermons also have a way of deviating from what God is saying, which may lead to popular social views that may influence the preacher.

How then should we go about establishing, or in some cases, *re-establishing* sound doctrine? The solution is not complex. Simply read the Word of God and do what it says! One can't do what the Bible says without having *read* what it says. I'm of course addressing this to those who have been born again by the Holy Spirit of God, because no one can effectively do what God's Word says without being enabled by the Holy Spirit. That is true without exception.

There are, however, numerous ways to study the Bible. As a recommendation, here's how I have been studying God's Word for four decades, in which I include things I highly suggest (see as well September 2022's message "Meditating upon the Word of God"—<https://bit.ly/3rtIOHo>) and stay away from things I believe need to be avoided.

I thoroughly enjoy group Bible studies. I take part in one almost daily. That is what I love to do when the opportunity presents itself. The Bible study procedure I follow is always the same in the studies in which I participate. It begins with each person reading a verse or a few verses in the chapter of a specified book of the Scriptures. Typically, that begins with the first verse of the chapter and is read through to the end of the chapter. The idea is to keep in mind the context of the chapter as the study progresses. Once that takes place, the leader of the study begins reading a few verses from the beginning of the chapter in order to initiate the discussion.

The thought of leading a Bible study is intimidating for many people. It shouldn't be! My first qualification for selecting a Bible study leader is: "Does the person know how to read?" Do you think I'm kidding? No! Nearly every Bible study I've been in has been made up of individuals with various levels of biblical knowledge and spiritual maturity. As the verses are read, the discussion is open to comments, questions, and to other verses helping to explain what the specific verse is saying.

From my perspective, a group Bible study is not a Bible class taught by a teacher. It's more of a group discussion where any and all involved are encouraged to participate. Those with greater knowledge of the Scriptures can certainly add to the discussion, but then I've been greatly edified by very young believers through their comments and questions, as well as their spiritual insights. I've had years of experience with Dave Hunt in Bible studies, and he knew the Word of God better than anyone I've ever known. But interestingly, I don't remember him ever dominating any of the studies as the teacher!

When a group Bible study is made up of born-again believers, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who will guide believers into all truth (John 16:13), is present within each of them. They are a Spirit-led resource that can be used for the edification of everyone involved, no matter what their level of maturity and knowledge may be. I certainly appreciate having those in a study who have years of experience in walking with the Lord and studying the Scriptures. Nevertheless, as I said, I've also been blessed by very young believers who are just learning the Word of God.

The group study also leaves opportunities to challenge some unbiblical ideas, no matter the maturity of the participant. That takes place by simply asking for biblical support for what someone is advocating. In other words, asking "can you give me chapter and verse" (from the Scriptures) is an important question for maintaining a continual basis for biblical truth.

Sometimes we get caught up in the way the world thinks and does things, and we forget that putting biblical Christianity into practice is a miraculous endeavor. It's not an exercise that's dependent upon those with expertise, but it's rather an endeavor empowered by the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6).

I believe the main benefit of a group Bible study is to determine *what God himself* is communicating to those who

have put their faith in Him. The theological term for that is "exegesis," the goal of which is to understand and do what God himself has said. When a study drifts away from that purpose, eisegesis takes place, which involves an interpretation that expresses the *interpreter's own impressions or bias* rather than the true meaning of the text.

There are a few things that relate to eisegesis that also occur in a Bible study that need to be avoided. There can be a tendency to focus on one's feelings when trying to explain a verse, usually introduced by the question, "How do you *feel* about that verse?" In truth, one's personal feelings about a verse have no bearing on discerning the truth of it.

Some Bible studies use books that have been produced in order to help the participants get involved in the study. Unfortunately, they often contain directions that lead the group into subjective responses such as feelings, imaginings, dreams, and so forth, that deviate from the objective truth that God has communicated. A typical example of this is when the Bible study participant is instructed to *imagine* oneself as a specific Bible character and how he or she would deal with a certain situation.

The Bible is God's communication to humanity. Other than His prophets transcribing what He, our infinite God, has communicated, the Scriptures include no input from finite individuals. That would be speculation at best, which simply constitutes the *guesses* and other erroneous ideas from the minds of the participants. However, the Scriptures do encourage extrapolation, which involves finding verses that help to explain or support a certain verse. For example, many verses declare that only one God exists. "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). Yet, Colossians 2:9 declares that *Jesus* is God, as well as do many other verses. "For in Him [Jesus] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This clearly reveals that Jesus is God. So, either Isaiah 44:6 is mistaken and there are two Gods, or there is only one God consisting of two Persons.

By including the Holy Spirit, Scripture further explains that indeed there is only one God, and He consists of three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "But when the Comforter [the Holy Spirit] is come, whom I [Jesus] will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall tes-

tify of Me" (John 15:26). Through the help of other Scriptures (i.e., extrapolation), we can see that the Word of God is self-authenticating. In other words, Scripture itself is the best interpreter of Scripture.

Bible studies are the antidote for the consequences of 2 Timothy 4:3-4. They are the remedy for "not enduring sound doctrine." Moreover, they can supply that which the Scriptures declare every believer needs, as is stated in Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They *assembled* together (Hebrews 10:25). They continued steadfastly in biblical teachings and instructions, i.e., doctrine. In our times, fellowship often leads to the sharing of meals together and/or remembering what Christ accomplished for us through His death, burial, and resurrection. Bible studies also feature prayer, praying that the Holy Spirit will quicken the Word in the participants' hearts so that they might be doers of what is read and not hearers only. That's a great way to begin the study. Additionally, one of the major blessings of the Bible studies in which I've been involved included praying for one another at the close of the study. Hearing the needs of a brother or sister in Christ who requests prayer and then praying for him or her is a wonderful way to draw closer to each other in the love of Jesus.

As you might suspect, the most frequent request we get from readers of TBC is to help them find a church that preaches the Word of God. I'm sure there are "7,000" that remain steadfast and true to God's Word. The problem is, however, connecting those in need of a church within a specified area with a solid church. There may not be one within a reasonable distance. We also know from the Bible that as the apostasy increases, the number of churches faithful to God's Word will decline. What can we do?

Although either attending or starting a Bible study is not the *ideal* solution, it does supply many qualities that will help a believer to grow in the Lord as well as provide opportunities to minister to fellow Bible-believing Christians. As the Lord draws closer to His return and the times of apostasy seem to overwhelm us, my prayer is that we will seek the fellowship we all need, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: If the Roman Catholic bishops are not the apostles' successors, then who holds that position?

RESPONSE: The answer is clear from the commission Christ gave the apostles after His resurrection as He sent them into all the world: "Go ye therefore, and teach [disciple] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20).

The apostles were to make disciples through the gospel. And all those who believed on Christ and were baptized were to be taught to obey *everything* that Christ had taught the original disciples. That, of course, meant that the new disciples were to go and make other disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe everything Christ had commanded the original disciples.

If we would obey Christ there is no way to escape the fact that every true Christian is a successor of the original apostles and is authorized and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do everything that Christ commanded, taught, and empowered the original disciples to do. Every Christian must necessarily be the "disciple of a disciple," and so forth all the way back to the original disciples!

There is no elite class in the body of Christ who alone can perform baptisms or preside over the communion of the bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins, etc. The church is not divided into clergy and laity; we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

QUESTION: Are some people born straight and others gay?

RESPONSE: Although the new *Catechism* of the Catholic Church condemns homosexuality as "grave depravity...contrary to the natural law...and Sacred Scripture," it also says that its "psychological genesis remains largely unexplained," thereby implying that homosexuality is not a sin but a psychological problem requiring a psychological solution. Denying moral accountability, the Catholic Church states that homosexuals do not "choose their homosexual condition... [and] must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity." Thus the implication that "people are born gay."

That no one is born a homosexual (or transgender) can be easily proved. If that were the case, then God "must have made them that way." Therefore, as many homosexuals insist, homosexuality would not be

sin but perfectly natural.

This view must be false, for (as the *Catechism* itself admits) the Bible condemns homosexuality as an abominable sin: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind...both of them...shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). How could God be so opposed to homosexuality if He created the genes that caused it?

Nor is the condemnation of homosexuality only for Jews under the Old Covenant. It is restated to Christians in the New Testament. Romans 1:24-32 says that homosexuals and lesbians "dishonor their own bodies between themselves" (v. 24) and engage in "vile affections," which are "against nature." Even those who reject the Bible and believe in evolution must come to the same conclusion. If evolution were true, being "born homosexual" might possibly occur, but it would require a specific foul-up in the DNA mechanism and would be extremely *rare*. That DNA abnormalities of the precise nature to cause homosexuality could repeatedly occur by chance in millions of people of every generation all over the world is preposterous! Evolution would quickly eliminate homosexuality since it works against survival of the race (homosexuals/lesbians don't reproduce).

Thus in the secular world, homosexuality has always been called a "crime against nature." Those who engage in homosexuality do so out of choice *against both* their genes and conscience and can stop by choice as well. That homosexuals now have a favored status, wield great power, and have politicians catering to them to get their votes can only destroy a society.

Homosexuality is a *choice* and not something in the genes; this can be seen in the fact that its prevalence among Catholic clergy is at least 10 times greater than in the general populace. Obviously, chance cosmic rays didn't zero in on Catholic priests and nuns to make them homosexuals! The cause is the unnatural and unbiblical rule of celibacy, forbidding normal sexual relations provided by marriage, combined with being cloistered together with those of the same sex.

In spite of the widespread sexual abuse of minors by so many Catholic priests, a scandal that has rocked the Church in recent years, the pope and Church hierarchy are determined to retain the rule of celibacy. Yet many priests, bishops, and even popes openly had lovers in the early years of the Church. Some popes proudly presided over the marriages of their children in Saint Peter's in Rome. The rule of celibacy was

enforced later to prevent the wealth that priests and especially bishops and popes accumulated from being bequeathed to heirs and thus leaving the Church.

Homosexuality is a sin that results from yielding to temptation. The likelihood is heightened where circumstances prevent normal sexual relationships and is further compounded when conscience is dulled by the lie that homosexuality is natural and normal to some people. That pernicious lie is promoted through movies, videos, music, and the media in general and is taught in public schools under government sponsorship. The approximately 50 percent reduction in life expectancy of homosexuals, transgenders, and lesbians, along with the spread of AIDS and other STDs should be sufficient to make this practice abhorrent to all.

QUESTION: What does it mean to "test the spirits" according to 1 John 4:1-3?

RESPONSE: The usual interpretation has a would-be exorcist demanding of an evil spirit (apparently in possession of a victim) whether Christ has come in the flesh. However, this scripture has nothing to do with exorcism or conversing with evil spirits, but with identifying false prophets and their false teaching. Already in John's day there were "many false prophets," and John is declaring that false prophets are inspired by deceiving spirits.

In 1 Kings 22:22, such a spirit is given permission by God to be "a lying spirit in the mouths" of Israel's prophets: *one* spirit speaks falsely through *four hundred* prophets to deceive King Ahab ("there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness"—21:25) in order to bring about his death in fulfillment of the true prophecy by Elijah.

At issue is an important doctrine: that Jesus Christ has come once and for all in the flesh, fulfilling His mission in *one* life on earth, *one* sacrifice on the cross, and *one* resurrection. Thus two related false teachings are refuted: reincarnation and transubstantiation. The body of flesh that Christ took ("a body hast thou prepared [for] me" —Hebrews 10:5) was *transformed by resurrection power*; not *exchanged for another* through reincarnation.

He came in the flesh *once for all time* when He was born as a babe in Bethlehem; He does not come again and again in the flesh as priests transmute bread into His body. A lying spirit authored both of these deceitful doctrines, which are among the "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1) popular today.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Answered Prayer

QUESTION: I have been a Christian for many years and have attended hundreds, perhaps thousands of prayer meetings. I have heard many earnest prayers for good purposes but rarely have I seen an answer. This is rather shattering to my faith. *Why are so few prayers answered?*

RESPONSE: First of all, you admit that you have personally seen at least *some* prayers answered. In addition, you have surely heard or read the testimony of others who unquestionably have had miraculous answers to prayer. Consider, for example, George Muller, whose life was an amazing testimony to answered prayer. He housed, clothes, and fed thousands of orphans, made it a point never to ask for any financial help from man but only from God, and recorded in his diary literally thousands of specific answers to prayer.

He wrote: “Now, if I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith, obtained *without asking any individual*, the means for establishing and carrying on an Orphan-House, there would be something which, with the Lord’s blessing, might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted, of the reality of the things of God.

This, then was the primary reason for establishing the Orphan-House. I certainly did from my heart desire to be used by God to benefit the bodies of poor children, bereaved of both parents, and seek in other respects, with the help of God to do them good for this life...[and] to be used by God in getting the dear orphans trained in the fear of God—but still, the first and primary object of the work was (and still is) that God might be magnified by the fact that the [thousands of] orphans under my care are provided with all they need, only by *prayer and faith* without anyone [other than God] being asked by me or my fellow-laborers [for help or funds].”

We could multiply other examples to show that God does answer *many* prayers. Robert Ingersoll, who was the epitome of agnosticism and who ridiculed Christians for praying, demanded “just one little fact” proving that prayers are answered. There are facts by the thousands that he and other agnostics and atheists have refused to accept—not because it could not be proved that prayers are answered, for that has been proved repeatedly, but because their prejudice wouldn’t allow them to face the truth.

In fact, an entire library could be filled with testimonies

of answers to prayer that cannot be explained away as mere coincidence. The issue, then, is not whether God is able to, or ever does, answer prayer but why His answer to so many prayers is *no*. There are, according to the Bible, at least three factors that determine whether a prayer will be answered or not: 1) whether it is God’s *will* to answer it; 2) whether it is God’s *time* to answer it; and 3) whether those praying are living in such a relationship with God that it would be *appropriate* for Him to answer the prayer.

We can thank God that many of our prayers are not answered. We are supposed to pray at all times, “Not my will but thine be done.” Yet many of our prayers are not in that spirit at all but are actually attempts to persuade God to do man’s will, to bless or bring to pass man’s plans. Since we are far from perfect in wisdom, it could bring disaster upon us if God always did what we asked.

—An excerpt from *In Defense of the Faith* by Dave Hunt

QUOTABLE

To enable us, when the answer to our prayer doesn’t come at once, to combine quiet patience and joyful confidence in our persevering prayers, we must specially try to understand the two words in which our Lord sets forth the character and conduct, not of the unjust judge, but of our God and Father toward those whom He allows to cry day and night to Him: ‘He is long-suffering over them; He will avenge them speedily.’ The blessing is all prepared; He is not only willing but most anxious to give them what they ask.... God will not delay one moment longer than is necessary; He will do all in His power to hasten and speed the answer.

—Andrew Murray

The “Jesus” the World Loves

T. A. McMahon

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THIS IS AN updated version of a TBC article I wrote in 2008. Normally when I write something for the ministry, my goal is to correct something that has drawn Christians away from the truth of the Bible. I’m always hopeful that I can redirect them back to what the Scriptures teach and that disclosure will turn them from their biblically erroneous beliefs or practices. I’m continually optimistic that by simply showing how the false teachings or practices deviate from the written Word of God, what I write will be effective. Nevertheless, my success rate leaves much to be desired.

This article, written fourteen years ago, is an example of what I and many others who function as apologists (giving reasons for and defending the faith; 1 Peter 3:15) face at times in fulfilling our ministries. The title, “The ‘Jesus’ the World Loves” presents a major obstacle to overcome. The world, which rarely looks to the Bible for information about Jesus, is satisfied with any other source, as long as their Jesus is devoid of judgmentalism, exclusiveness, negativity, and can be reflected in every one’s belief system. Many “like” Jesus, including some atheists who speak highly of the character of their Jesus. Hindu gurus who flooded the West during the 1980s wrote books describing their avatar “Jesus.” Islamic clerics praise Jesus (Isa in Arabic) although they deny that he is the Son of God (i.e., Allah, who has no son).

All of that is expected of the world. Yet in our day when much of the church is heavily influenced by the world, the “Jesus” the world loves is often reflected in the beliefs of professing Christians as well as some of those who may be born again. A false Jesus who manifests characteristics that appeal to the fleshly nature of Christians is a powerfully seductive device of Satan, who is “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Those who profess to be Christians quite often have ideas about Jesus that are just as wrong as those people who don’t claim to be Christians. For example, Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus is a created god and that He is also Michael the Archangel. Mormons believe Jesus is the spirit brother of Lucifer and that

He was married and had children. The followers of Christian Science and the Religious Science religions believe that Jesus was simply a man upon whom the “Christ empowerment” came. Roman Catholics believe that the bread and wine of the Eucharist can be transubstantiated, or changed, into the literal body and blood of Jesus, who is then ingested into one’s stomach. Lutherans believe that Jesus is consubstantiated, or present, “in, with, and under” the bread and wine of communion. Such unbiblical beliefs are a mere handful among hundreds promoted by various Christian denominations and cults. Yet what is even more appalling is that an inquiry about Jesus today among those who call themselves evangelicals (Bible-believing Christians!) too often reveals “another Jesus” and a “false Christ.” How does that happen?

Let’s start with how one comes to a true knowledge of, and relationship with, Jesus Christ. It begins with a simple understanding of the gospel that Jesus is God, who became a Man in order to save mankind from everlasting separation from God that resulted from man’s sin. Jesus satisfied the perfect justice of God by His once-and-for-all payment for the sins of humanity through His death on the Cross. His resurrection from the dead assures the salvation of all those who acknowledge before God their sin and their hopelessness in saving themselves, and who by grace through faith accept Christ’s sacrifice on their behalf and His free gift of eternal life. This is how one is reconciled to God and born again spiritually. This is how one’s relationship with the biblical Jesus Christ begins.

Although that relationship is supernatural in that every true believer in Christ is indwelt by God, it nevertheless progresses, as any good relationship does, by getting to know the person with whom one has a relationship.

The primary way a relationship with Jesus develops is by reading the revelation of Himself given in His Word. This is the only way to obtain specific information about Him that is objective and absolutely true. In addition, not only is the content of Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit, but that same Spirit of Truth is given to believers to understand that content. How then could those who profess to follow God’s Word come up with erroneous ideas about Jesus? Regrettably, many are getting their information about Jesus from sources outside the Bible or second hand from those who claim to

be teaching what the Bible says about our Lord.

To demonstrate how ludicrous a relationship dependent upon such sources of knowledge is, consider what might happen to a husband and wife who try to form an intimate relationship with each other by relying on the insights of other people who claim to know them. That’s a sure recipe for failure, yet Christians often run to extrabiblical sources for their knowledge of Jesus.

Years ago, the amazing popularity of the book *The Shack* (see TBC Q&A, 8/08, <https://bit.ly/3htAPHE>) among evangelicals was just one among many examples of depicting a Jesus who is foreign to the Bible and worse. What does the author think about Jesus? He characterizes Him in a way that may make some people feel more comfortable with Him, yet the Jesus of *The Shack* is clearly a false Christ. He’s a “good old boy,” who likes to fix things and takes “pleasure in cooking and gardening.” He laughs at crude jokes, is a bit of a klutz, engages in trout fishing by chasing one down as He runs on water, carves a coffin for the body of a little girl, and enjoys kissing, hugging, and laughing with the two other members of the “Trinity.” The book is filled with dialogue from the characters of God the Father (portrayed as an overweight Afro-American woman), the Holy Spirit (a petite Asian woman), and Jesus. All three speak as the “oracles of God,” giving insights and explanations neither found in nor consistent with Scripture. Some enthusiastic readers say the words and interactions with the Godhead have comforted them, answered difficult questions about their faith, and made the person of the Lord seem all the more real to them.

The reality is that out of his own imagination the author has put his words into the mouths of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which are then perceived by multitudes as “thus saith the LORD.” This is not only a bogus secondhand source but the arrogance of false prophecy at least and blasphemy and idolatry at worst. It is man, making God in his own fallen image.

More influential among evangelicals than *The Shack* is Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, which became a huge box-office success, thanks mostly to evangelical support. Available now as a “definitive edition DVD,” it features, for those who want the official Catholic theology of the film explained, a discussion with director Mel Gibson, along with

a Catholic apologist and two Catholic priests who were the film's theological consultants. The movie has a false gospel, a false Christ, and is loaded with supposedly biblical scenes from the minds of Gibson and a Catholic nun given to mystical hallucinations (See Showtime for the Sheep?, <https://bit.ly/3UHAAqB>). Yet it continues to be used extensively by evangelical churches, especially during Lent and Easter week.

In response to "What do you think of Jesus?" millions who saw the movie now mistakenly believe that: He was confronted by Satan in the Garden of Gethsemane; He was thrown from a bridge by His captors and dangled from a chain; His image was captured for posterity on the veil of a woman named Veronica; as His cross began to fall, it levitated to keep Him from hitting the ground, and, most contradictory to the gospel, it was the merciless scourging He suffered that paid for the sins of humanity.

These are only a few of the unbiblical images that the world and many in the church have added to their perception of Jesus. Movies are today's most popular form of disseminating superficial information and therefore misinformation. Feature films about Jesus and God have put erroneous ideas about them into the hearts and minds of the masses: *Jesus Christ Superstar*; *The Last Temptation of Christ*; *Bruce Almighty*; *The Da Vinci Code*; *Judas*; *Oh God!*; *Oh God, Book II*; *Jesus of Nazareth*, to name but a few.

What about "more biblically accurate" Bible movies—those that take the words directly from Scripture, for example? When you have an actor portraying Jesus who says only the words of Jesus that are found in the Bible, does that make the portrayal more accurate? More accurate than what? Does the actor actually look like Jesus, or talk like Jesus, or reflect the godly demeanor of Jesus? More critically, can he accurately imitate the God-Man, the Creator of the Universe, the One in whom all things consist? Even if he could, which is impossible, it would still be an imitation! Furthermore, he will leave millions, including believers, with an image of a false "Christ."

A few such movies are sincere attempts at communicating the content and stories of the Scriptures through visual media. Although sincere, they are doomed to failure regarding truth. Why? In addition to what was noted above, the Bible is an objective revelation from God given in words. All attempts at visually translating

those words abandon objective revelation in favor of subjective interpretation.

Take a passage of Scripture, for instance, and have five people give their understanding of the verse based upon the context, the grammatical structure, and the normal meaning of the words. More often than not, the interpretations will be quite similar. Should one of the five come up with something very different, it can be corrected by simply checking it out objectively against the context, grammar, and accepted definitions of the words in the passage. On the other hand, what if five filmmakers were to translate the passage visually? The result would be five very subjective and quite different

EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE: HE IS A SHIELD UNTO THEM THAT PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM.

ADD THOU NOT UNTO HIS WORDS, LEST HE REPROVE THEE, AND THOU BE FOUND A LIAR.

—*PROVERBS 30:5-6*

renderings. Even if only one filmmaker visually translated the verse and four people tried to interpret the image, you would likely have four different views because the medium has no objective criteria comparable to that of words. Are you getting the "picture" here? Imagery is not the way to communicate objective truth.

God did not draw pictures on the tablets He gave to Moses. His continual command to Moses and to His other prophets was to write down His instructions. Visual imagery was at the heart of pagan worship used by people whose lives centered around idols—the chief by-product being unbridled superstition. The same was true of the medieval Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, who fed their followers images rather than teaching them to read and write (as the Jews had done successfully from the time of Abraham). Even today, superstition continues to be rampant within those visually oriented religious systems.

The question needs to be repeated: Where does the world get its ideas about Jesus? Most non-Christians only know what they've picked up from sources they regard as Christian, although rarely

is the content biblical. Many Jews put stock in the alleged Talmudic stories that oppose the gospel accounts. They have been taught that Jesus was an illegitimate child who was born to a harlot and a scoundrel. Declaring himself to be the Messiah, he performed healings by sorcery and consequently was stoned and then hung on a tree for his magic and blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God. Buddhists, such as the very popular Dalai Lama, regard Jesus as a bodhisattva, or enlightened god, among multitudes of gods reincarnated for the service of humanity.

Incredibly, the above erroneous beliefs about Jesus are fostered within professing Christianity by popular practices among Emerging Church fellowships and those involved in the Contemplative Movement. Some invite the followers of the world religions for "conversation" in order to learn more about Jesus from a pluralistic perspective. The goal seems to be to establish a Jesus who is acceptable to people of all faiths—or no faith. A common refrain heard from the Emergent communities is "We love Jesus but not His church." Certainly, as the church has compromised with the world there is much not to like. Yet sadly, for many, it is neither the biblical Jesus whom they love nor the biblical church that they support. Some are under the delusion that Jesus is becoming more respected in our culture. That has never been the case for the Jesus revealed in Scripture (John 15:18).

The Jesus the world loves has deceived and continues to delude the world in its blasphemy, and more grievously—the church. This latest manifestation of promoting a false Christ is the internationally popular film series *The Chosen*. Its influence among evangelicals is shocking considering the fact that it is produced by committed members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and all of what it presents is visual idolatry (see <https://bit.ly/3FZZ4qX>).

What's taking place in the church today is the fulfillment of the prophecy given in 2 Timothy 4:3-4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Pray for discernment for those who have been seduced and taken captive by the fables of *The Chosen*.

TBC

Q&A.....

QUESTION: You once stated that "...‘my people’ refers to Israel, not to the church; and ‘I will heal their land’ refers to the promised land of Israel, not to the United States.” If Christians are not God’s people, then who are they? What about Nineveh? Do you not believe that God might heal our nation just as He did Nineveh? I understand that God will not answer prayers addressed to other gods, but is it in vain to pray to Him for a national revival? You also said that “Christians are ‘not of this world’ but have been called ‘out of this world’ to be in it but not of it.” If Christians and Israelites are two distinctive people in God’s eyes, and if Christians have been called out of this world, then to where are the Israelites called? Are they destined to stay on earth during the Millennium, while Christians are not? I am confused. Would you please clarify these issues for me?

RESPONSE: The often-made statement that Christians are distinct not only from Jews but also from Gentiles (i.e., from all non-Christians) is clear: “Give none offense, neither to Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Corinthians 10:32). The gospel is both to Jews and to Gentiles; and when either believes in the Lord, he or she becomes a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10) and a new member of His body, the church (Ephesians 2:19-22; 5:30, etc.). Nor am I the one who said Christians are “not of this world” but have been called “out of this world.” Christ said that: “...Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15:19). Of His followers, Christ said in prayer to His Father: “...these are in the world” (John 17:11)... I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:11, 15-16).

I don’t say it is vain to pray to God for national revival or to heal our nation. I have often prayed for that myself, and it should be the heart’s desire of every Christian in this country. I only say that there is no biblical promise that such a prayer will be answered, as there is for Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Prayers for America legitimately express our longing for God’s blessing and salvation to come upon all mankind. We are, however, to pray with understanding.

Thus, when we pray, “thy kingdom

come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” we realize that never will happen until Christ returns and reigns. Yes, Christians are “God’s people”—not His earthly but His heavenly people. The church has no land; it is the Jews to whom God gave a specific land. God never gave America to the American Christians or Germany to the German Christians. Therefore, I cannot properly apply God’s promise (that when His people cry to Him He will “heal their land”) to anyone but the Jews, His people, and to the land of Israel, which He promised to them.

To inherit the kingdom eternally on earth, Jews must have the same faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that those patriarchs had. In my opinion—and many Bible scholars disagree—everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who believes in Christ both before and after the Rapture, but before the Second Coming, will be in the church. Jews who have rejected Him, but who at His Second coming “look upon” Him and believe in Him when He descends from heaven to rescue them at the Battle of Armageddon (Zechariah 12:10)—like the Gentiles who believe at that time as well—will continue into the Millennial Kingdom to experience Christ’s earthly reign on David’s throne.

Jews, of course, will be gathered by angels “from the four winds” on earth to Israel (Matthew 24:30-31). They are destined to dwell upon earth in the Millennium and in the new heavens and new earth. The prophets promised this blessing to Israel (Isaiah 62; 65:17-25; Jeremiah 30:8-11; 31:1-12; 27-40; Ezekiel 34:11-31; 36:8-15, 22-38; 37:21-28; 39:21-29; Zechariah 12:10-14:21, etc.). All of Israel will believe in Christ when He appears to rescue her in the midst of Armageddon. Only believing Jews will remain upon the earth, as the verses just referred to declare, and so do many others, such as Matthew 24:13, Romans 11:26, etc.

The church, Christ’s bride, united to Him eternally to always be at His side (from every nation, including Jews), having been made one in Him, will rule and reign with Him both during the Millennium and throughout eternity (Matthew 19:28; Luke 19:12-19; 22:30; Revelation 20:4, etc.).

QUESTION: According to *Science Digest*, the mother’s blood never mingles with that of the fetus. If there is no contact with the mother’s blood, how can the blood of Jesus be “normal human blood”? How is Jesus’s blood unique from mankind, yet the same? If the blood of Mary didn’t mingle with

Jesus’s blood, where does His blood come from?

RESPONSE: I appreciate your concern that I am not putting the importance upon the blood of Christ that the Bible does. However, that is not my intention nor is it the case. Your concern seems to center on the idea that Jesus somehow had “God blood” in spite of the fact that God does not have blood.

You ask, “If the blood of Mary didn’t mingle with Jesus’s blood, where does His blood come from?” Since His blood was part of His body, it must have come into existence in the same manner as His entire body. Did He have a “God body”? God doesn’t have a body, nor is there such a thing as “God blood.” Leviticus 17:11 states, “The life of the flesh is in the blood,” and God is not a man and does not inhabit a body of flesh and blood.

You suggest that His blood must have come from God his Father or from the Holy Spirit, by whom He was conceived in Mary’s womb (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35). On the contrary, the body “prepared” for Him (Hebrews 10:5) was created by God in Mary’s womb, just as Adam’s was created by God in the Garden. Jesus is “the second man” and “the last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). Did Adam have “God blood” and a “God body”? Then why would Christ? Christ’s body did not come into existence by either the Father or the Holy Spirit physically “fathering” Him, as the Mormons believe. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit have bodies or blood, so they could not pass on through Mary either by body or blood in the manner of a human father.

How is Jesus’s blood unique from mankind, and yet the same? We are told that God sent His Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3). Does that mean that His body wasn’t fully human? No. Christ’s body was not some hybrid—part-God and part-human. Note that the scripture doesn’t say He was in the “likeness” of a human, but now human. It says He was in the “likeness of sinful flesh” but without sin!

Jesus was a real man of flesh and blood. Is the blood of Christ precious? Indeed, it is, because, like His entire body, Christ’s blood was without sin and was shed on the cross for our sins. He is “God manifest in the flesh,” but the flesh in which He was manifest was not “God flesh,” for there is no such thing. It had to be perfect, sinless human flesh, or He is not really a man.



IN
DEFENSE *of the* FAITH
BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Christ's Unanswered Prayer in Gethsemane

QUESTION: I think the classic example of unanswered prayer is the one Jesus supposedly prayed in Gethsemane on His way to the Cross: “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). We are told that the “cup” He feared (of going to the Cross) didn’t pass from Him. Why was he so afraid of the Cross? Thousands were crucified by the Romans, many bearing it bravely and some even defiantly. Doesn’t the fact that Christ was so afraid and that His prayer wasn’t answered disprove the claim that He was God in the flesh?

RESPONSE: Jesus did not fear the Cross. It was not the thought of the intense physical suffering he faced that made His sweat seem like drops of blood. Instead, His holy soul shrank from becoming the very thing He hated: sin. As Paul explained, “He [God] has made him [Christ] to be sin for us, [he] who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

As for this being the classic example of unanswered prayer, you are not far from wrong. The fact that Christ’s prayer was not answered speaks volumes to us. We thereby know that there was no other possible means for redemption. Had there been any other way, God would not have insisted upon the Cross.

We are assured that not even God’s infinite love for His Son could cause Him to go back upon His promise to save the world from the penalty that His own righteous law demanded for sin. The Cross that Christ endured in obedience to His Father and out of love for mankind stands forever as proof of God’s love and assures us that we can never be lost. For as Paul said: “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39).

—An excerpt from *In Defense of the Faith* by
Dave Hunt

QUOTABLE

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matthew 6:33.

See how the Bible opens: “In the beginning God.” Let your life open in the same way. Seek with your whole soul, first and foremost, the kingdom of God, as the place of your citizenship, and His righteousness as the character of your life. As for the rest, it will come from the Lord Himself without your being anxious concerning it. All that is needful for this life and godliness “shall be added unto you.”

What a promise this is! Food, raiment, home, and so forth. God undertakes to add to you while you seek Him. You mind His business, and He will mind yours. If you want paper and string, you get them added in when you buy more important goods. And just so, all that we need of earthly things we shall have thrown in with the kingdom. He who is an heir of salvation shall not die of starvation, and he who clothes his soul with the righteousness of God cannot be left of the Lord with a naked body. Away with anxious care. Set all your mind upon seeking the Lord. Covetousness is poverty, and anxiety is misery: trust in God is an estate, and likeness to God is a heavenly inheritance. Lord, I seek thee, be found in me.

—Charles Spurgeon, *Faith’s Checkbook*